The Future of Work: Are We Actually Ready for It?

The way we work is changing, and this change has ensued for decades but has only recently become noticeable economy-wide. In today's world of work, people should be allowed to plan their day instead of fitting them into someone else's schedule. We've known people to prefer shorter work days because they realise their productivity peaks earlier than others. So, instead of fighting them for digital presenteeism, employers should encourage people to work smarter by focusing on the outcome.

This doesn't mean that they don't have to work hard; it just means that they are better at planning and organizing their time. The time for grunt work is over; the era of soft skills has ushered that demands continuous adaptation, more than anything.

More focus on the actual work.
Flexibility for some might mean spending less time commuting and more time working. For some others, it might mean sitting down at their favourite café to enter their work mode. Embracing flexibility at its core gives employees the power to choose their paths through life instead of being forced down a narrow corridor by societal expectations or psychological limitations. The takeaway is that company policy should not rule an employee's world, and there should be an open dialogue to understand what the employees need. This bottom-up approach is key to healthy work culture and avoiding burnout (prevalent in 70% of the managerial positions), leading to The Great Resignation.

Knowledge work can be asynchronous.
Traditional jobs required you to go into an office at 9 a.m. every day, sit in your cubicle all day long and stay until 5 p.m. at least. You were constantly interrupted by emails, phone calls and other people who wanted your attention. The corporate culture has been treating professionals like school kids, whereas even kids are not bound to these traditional restrictions today.
Today we are equipped to work remotely anytime, thanks to high-speed internet access and smart devices that allow us to operate from anywhere. This means fewer distractions and interruptions during work. We were told as kids that early mornings should be dedicated to learning complex topics; the same can be confirmed in a professional career too. Creator ethos has to find a place in the booming digital creator economy that 30% of the American youth seek to join today.

Taking care of employees.
Offices need to be reimagined with scope for office, hybrid and remote employees. It should be a matter of preference for the employees to choose between those options.

- This means setting aside areas within each office building where people can walk around and stretch their legs before returning to the fray for the office goers.
- It may even mean installing small kitchens so employees can access coffee pots and more substantial meals during busy times (before meetings).

- Recreational activities in the office space have been known to enhance productivity.
- Having a mental health expert onboard is vital in our fast-paced, modern lives.
- Investing in upskilling the existing employees rather than over-hiring instils loyalty and reduces attrition.

These minor tweaks might bring more people back to the office than mandating it.

Seeking work-life balance.

When we think about work in this holistic way, then standardisation becomes less critical. This is because we realize that when someone is working in a setting that makes them happy, their productivity might be higher than if they were bound to the office. There is no better recuperation than spending more time with the people who matter to us. Many celebrities have been talking about quitting social media and turning to “dumb phones” to restrict internet usage. Work apps and reporting tools are equally toxic and must be redesigned, so they do not seep into personal lives, as felt by over 50% of the staff. Deadlines need to be reworked to rekindle the professional’s passion for work.

Summing up

Our work lives are being reshaped by trends like the gig economy, remote work, and the rise of AI. The future of work is here, and it has the potential to bring about positive changes for employers, employees and society as a whole. But there are many challenges ahead, namely changing mindsets about how we should measure success.

We must learn to use technology to create more agility and control over our lives while still performing at our best. By redefining what work means, we can find a balance between personal and professional priorities that will help us thrive in today's world.