WHY A HEALTHY DIGITAL CULTURE MATTERS.

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGERS

TO DRIVE LEADERSHIP, PRODUCTIVITY AND EMPLOYEE WELLBEING DURING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION.

11/2021



How can you help your employees overcome digital stress and stay motivated?

We now spend more hours on videoconferences, emails, screens… and sometimes both you and your employees may have wondered if this is the way you want to spend the rest of your lives.
Technology is dramatically disrupting human interactions, our behaviour, how we communicate and even how we think.

Having a healthy digital culture is now essential to a successful organisation. We often say that a company either creates a digital culture proactively, or it will just happen.
Digital culture is created through work practices, management behaviours, reward systems, and decisions on how much autonomy and agency (1) is provided to employees when using technology. It's important to discuss these things, so your people know what's expected of them and are the best versions of themselves: healthy, productive and creative.

Here we share our recommendations, based on the latest research and experience of working with clients globally.

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WHAT IS DIGITAL WELLBEING AT WORK?

It's about creating an environment where your human resources can work creatively, productively and safely with technology. It challenges organisations to achieve a more sustainable balance between the strengths and needs of your employees and the technology they use.

One that supports their physical and mental health, rather than undermines it.

- Are employees more productive or distracted online?
- Are they becoming more fatigued after sitting all day starring at screens?
- Do they regularly take breaks, especially at lunch time?
- Is there a start or finish to the work day, or have they become always connected?
- Is the digital leadership style impacting or supporting moral and motivation?



THE WORKPLACE HAS CHANGED ACROSS THE WORLD

The pandemic has changed the way we work across the world: mental health, flexible work and collaboration, engagement have been impacted.

On average, workers spent 2 hours more working, per day. (3)

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
PTSD is a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a shocking, scary, or dangerous event. (4)
+55% increase in PTSD in the U.S. since the pandemic. (5)

Mental health problems = absenteeism
Mental health problems have become one of the leading causes for absenteeism from work and early retirement all over the European Region. (6)



44%

SAY THEY ARE MORE BURNED OUT ON THE JOB TODAY (2)



+55%

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) (5)

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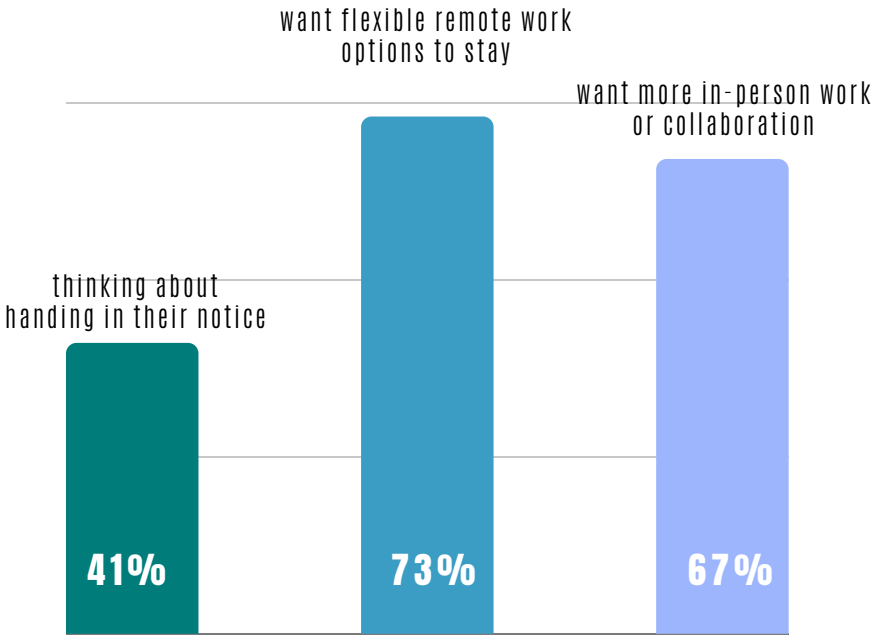
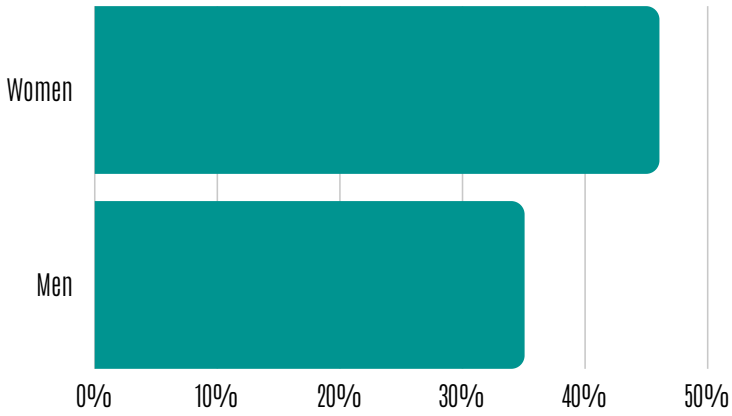
MAJOR TRENDS

Remote work, flexilibility and collaboration post-pandemic



Employees want flexibility
41% of workers globally are thinking about handing in their notice. (7,8)
73% of employees want flexible remote work options to stay. (8)
67% of employees want more in-person work or collaboration post-pandemic. (8)

Employees concerned about burn out



Burn-out is on the rise
44% of employees in the US say they are more burned out on the job today compared to a year ago. (2)

Blurring of work home boundaries disproportionately impacts women, with 46% concerned about burnout - compared to 35% of men.(9)

Digital burnout is a major issue especially amongst junior members of the workforce, including Generation Z.

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THREE WORKPLACE TRENDS TO EMBRACE
1 HYBRID WORK

In an ideal future, office space will bridge the physical and digital worlds to meet the unique needs of every team – and even specific roles. Employees should be able to choose how they work best, according to their job and to their needs in terms of work-life balance.

40% of workers consider quitting their jobs if their employers do not allow them some remote work flexibility. (10)

According to a recent study, an organization's digital culture matters for employees' motivation.

Employees who worked remotely were less motivated, but **those who had no choice of where to work, were the least motivated of all**.

Giving workers the **freedom to experiment and solve meaningful problems in their roles leads to higher motivation,** regardless of where they do the work itself. (11)

Organizations should focus on building trust, flexibility and a shared culture supported by collaboration tools, not necessarily deciding how many days per week an employee is onsite.

Fully embrace hybrid work and make it an opportunity



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QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO REFLECT UPON

- What does “Hybrid Work” mean exactly for your company? Is it more than just working remotely? How could you achieve a sustainable digital culture, where location, time, teamwork and business model are optimized for both organisation and employees’ interests?
- What does it mean to be productive in your organization, when people work remotely? Are employees implicitly assessed based on how fast they respond to emails, or other forms of busyness, as opposed to real productivity indicators?
- What can you change in your organisation’s digital culture to accommodate what your employees really want? How can they embrace the best of both worlds and be able to choose?
- What real life activities are important to promote within the organization in order for employees to stay healthy, creative, engaged?

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THREE WORKPLACE TRENDS TO EMBRACE
2 MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The more digitized our workplaces become, the more people are suffering from the effects of digital burnouts (12, 13). While technologies at work make it possible to work remotely and more efficiently, they create a number of challenges.

1. It encourages **multitasking** (task switching), which leads to increased anxiety and stress after about 20 minutes. (14)
2. The mere presence of a smartphone impacts one's attention and ability to solve problems.This way of working leads to **stress, anxiety and poor decision making** and the organisations digital culture has a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of its employees. (15)
3. Technologies make it possible to be **"always on"**, and blurs the boundaries between private and professional life, to the detriment of both. More than a quarter (28%) of workers say when they do take time off, they check in with work frequently, Robert Half data finds. (2)

Why is it important to leave work at work? The mere expectation of work-related emails outside of working hours can cause emotional **exhaustion** and stress not only in employees, but also in their loved ones. (16)

4. At a physical level, **increased sitting, incorrect posture and poor sleep can lead to serious long-term health issues.**
The drop in physical activity is partly due to inaction during leisure time and sedentary behaviour on the job and at home. Likewise, an increase in the use of "passive" modes of transportation also contributes to insufficient physical activity.

Globally, insufficient activity increased by 5% (from 31.6% to 36.8%) in high-income countries between 2001 and 2016.

Worldwide, around **1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men do not do enough physical activity to stay healthy.**

People who are insufficiently active have a 20% to 30% increased risk of death compared to people who are sufficiently active.

Physical activity contributes to preventing and managing noncommunicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes, symptoms of depression and anxiety while it enhances thinking, learning, and judgment skills and improves overall wellbeing. (17)



The specific pandemic context has contributed to exacerbating all of the above, increasing anxiety, stress and burnout worldwide.

Embed mental health and wellbeing into business as usual

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QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO REFLECT UPON

- Do digital collaboration tools your company uses support employee’s focus or promote distraction?
- Is there an implicit expectation of being always available in your company? How and who is setting the tone? How do you encourage regular breaks from screens in employees?
- Do your managers know how to identify early stress and pre-burnout symptoms in employees? How can they do it with people who mainly work remotely?

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THREE WORKPLACE TRENDS TO EMBRACE
3 LEADERSHIP

There are no simple solutions on how to create a thriving digital culture, and you'll need to use a tailored approach.

The use of Internet and Communications Technologies (ICT's) can both energize and fatigue users, sometimes even at the same time (it is called the Digital Fatigue Paradox). It can invigorate through autonomy and fatigue through overload and conflict. Current evidence is that the fatiguing effect is stronger. (18)

While more than 60% of workers say they are struggling, and 54% of the general workforce feels overworked, 61% of business leaders said they were 'thriving'. (8)

According to a study by Josh Bersin (2021), ten practices of adaptive leadership have the highest impact on success. They fall under three categories:

- Health and Wellbeing (take care of people and their families)
- Business Agility and Change (drive agility and change through mission)
- Adaptive Transformation (reinvent work, jobs, and talent practices)

Adopt a growth mindset for the challenges of technology (19)



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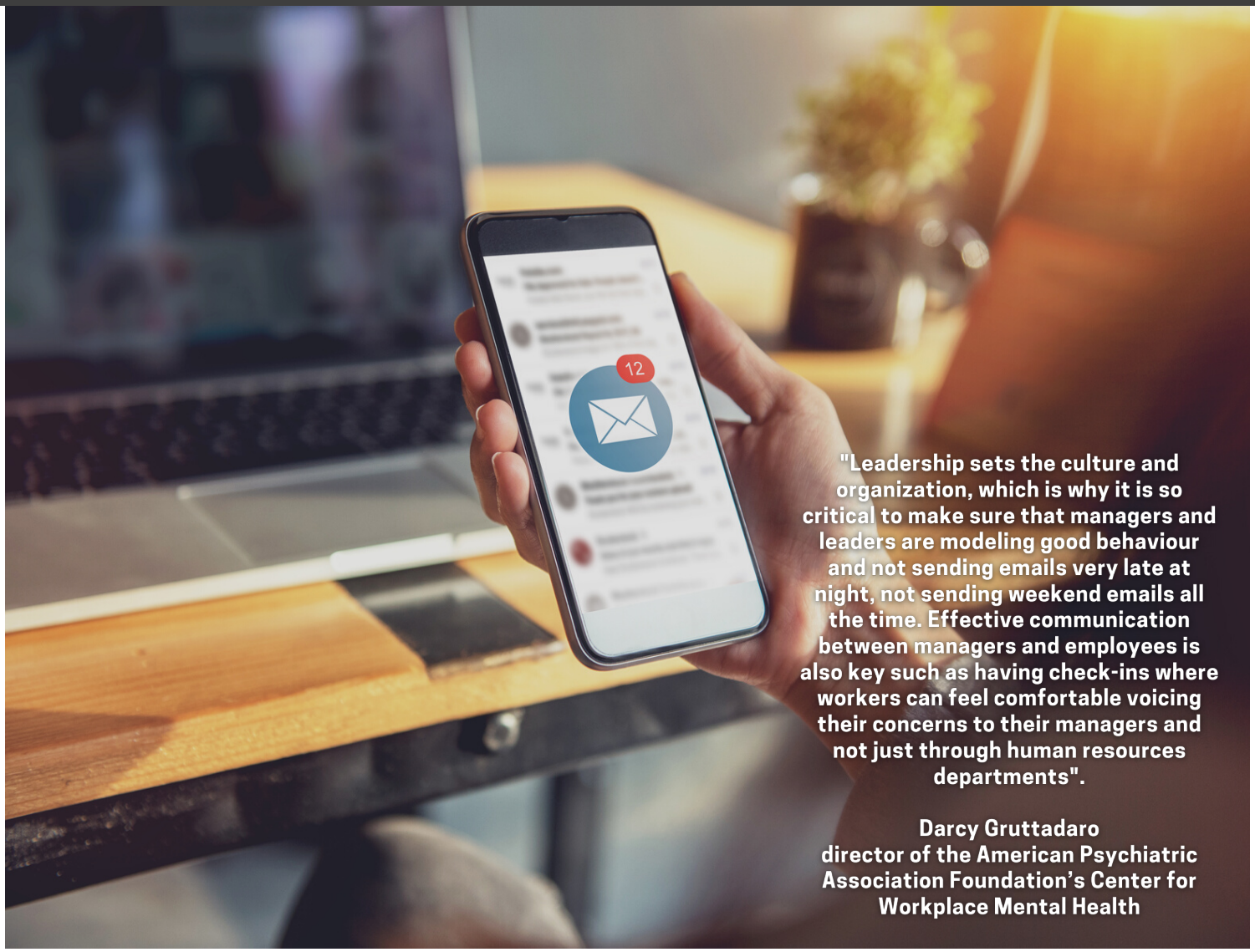

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO REFLECT UPON

- What can you do as a manager or HR professional to promote a healthy balance between the use of technologies and real-life interactions, both at work and out of work? Example: avoid scheduling back-to-back meetings, advise your team not to reply after working hours where relevant, etc.
- How can your organisation support autonomy in the workplace?
- How can you use the data gathered to empower employees instead of controlling them?
- How can you foster effective online and offline communication between managers and employees? How regularly are you going to meet? In which environment (online, offline, formal, informal)?

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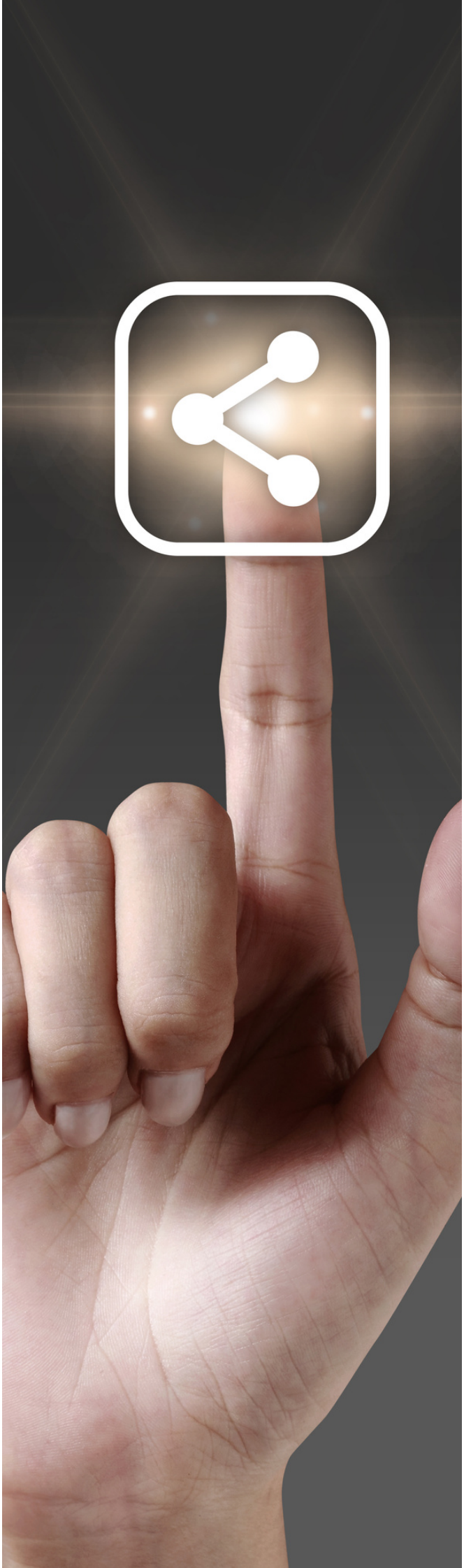
WE CAN HELP YOU TRANSITION TO A HEALTHY DIGITAL CULTURE



WE THINK IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR ORGANIZATIONS TO CREATE A HOLISTIC, MEANINGFUL AND SUSTAINABLE DIGITAL CULTURE.

This will ensure that employees are informed, engaged and empowered and most importantly: stay healthy physically and mentally. Founded on the latest research, the employee experience should:

- **Embrace hybrid working,** by implementing it with transparency and consistency with the values and purpose of the organisation. That also works best for all employees, encourages collaboration and off screen activities. This typically requires training and coaching to create a sustainable digital culture, managers to be more comfortable with risk and be prepared to both aspire and inspire.
- **Recognise that 'burn-out' is not just an employee problem**, it's an organisational one where the digital culture of the organisation has a direct impact on the health & wellbeing of employees. By embedding digital wellbeing into business as usual, and creating the right digital culture, the impact of burn-out can be reduced.
- **Encourage an adaptive leadership style** that has the highest impact on success by adopting practices that balance taking care of people and their families with the needs of the business.

IF THIS SOUNDS APPEALING TO YOU, CONTACT THE AUTHORS TODAY TO BRING DIGITAL WELLBEING COACHES TO HELP YOUR ORGANIZATION CREATE A HEALTHY DIGITAL CULTURE.

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WE CAN HELP YOU TRANSITION TO A HEALTHY DIGITAL CULTURE

WE SPEAK YOUR LANGUAGE!



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About the authors

These guidelines form part of a collaboration with Dr Anastasia Dedyukhina, founder of Consciously Digital, a global leader in the digital wellbeing programs, with a network of over 100+ coaches around the world. An extended version of this guide is available at https://consciously-digital.com/

Stéphanie Formery, Chantal Ménard, Ana Smith and Colin Corby are Digital Wellbeing Coaches from Consciously Digital and based in France, Spain, USA and the UK respectively.
We specialize in coaching organisations to improve their productivity, creativity and wellbeing.

We help your organization create a healthy digital culture.

ASSESS & INSPIRE CHANGE
Digital wellbeing analysis
Public speaking & presentations

FACILITATE & TRANSFORM
Workshops, group coaching
Digital detox, team building & seminars

TRAIN & DEVELOP
Training courses & coaching for leaders, managers and employees

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Reconnecter bien-être numérique

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