With the COVID–19 pandemic still active around the world, there is a need for the development, provisioning of a system, and analytics leading to enhancing the ability to transform companies into what can be described as Hybrid Companies. Employees are working at home more and getting used to it and companies are beginning to realize the benefits. It is anticipated that once the emergency is over the majority of those employees that are now working from home will elect to continue the practice. They will have adapted to the differences posed by being away from other workers and the freedom that is realized in their new environment. At the same time, companies will have had the time and experience to not only understand the differences in the work processes but also the inherent benefits. Both the employees and the companies will come to realize that there are advantages and disadvantages and that, in most cases, the advantages out-weigh the disadvantages.

Not all positions in a company, however, lend themselves to working at home and so the trick is to identify two things; which positions are candidates to become full time remote positions and which are not and which employees are candidates to become full time remote employees and which are not. Once identified, the task is to develop the process for each position and equip the employees to function from a remote location.

By understanding and uncovering the workforce dynamics, to be effective, the system you design will need to enhance the capability of remote workers. There is a need to better position practices, services, and techniques to create effective environments leading to the growth of the remote worker.

There are six questions that must be asked about the employees tagged for remote work and how they will perform their duties.

1. Should all the employees in a particular function be remote?
2. Should there be a rotating schedule that allows all employees to take advantage of working from home while maintaining an ancillary Facility Based workforce?
3. How open is the remote worker to new technology?
4. Are the remote employee's IT skills sufficient for remote communication?
5. Is the remote worker confident working in a remote environment?
6. Is there a work space issue?

Certain functions can be designated "Remote" and considered permanent remote positions. Other functions can never become remote positions. And there are positions that can split their time between remote positions and positions located at the company facility.

Any workforce transformation effort must openly design and introduce new behaviors. The skills and knowledge will follow. To understand behaviors, patterns and trends, you will need to consider several subjects that should include (but not be limited to):

HR

Understand the traits of each remote worker. Evaluate their ability to be self-sufficient, self-motivated, resourceful, responsive, tech-savvy, independent, and confident. Ask questions of them to learn if they like to self-evaluate and if they do, the frequency at which they perform the evaluation. When you understand the individual remote worker's traits you will know how to enable the transformation needed to perform their jobs as remote workers.

Managing Remote Employees

Don't be afraid to restructure or combine roles if that's what is needed. Some tasks will become more valuable and other tasks will be eliminated. In manufacturing companies, jobs may need to be structured very differently. Having a description/purpose for each initiative in which the remote worker will participate will help define tasks and ultimately roles.

Managers will need to assess and coach employees differently, helping them learn to talk to Facility Based employees in a friendlier and more trustworthy way.

Leadership will have to be proactive and empowering to help set priorities, acquire necessary hardware and software, and set goals. They will need to recognize and encourage new ideas while subtlety challenging the remote workers. They will need to supervise without micro-managing.

Articulating the expected business outcomes will help the company leaders define and communicate how the workforce needs to change.

Managing the Environment

Building confidence in the remote workers is extremely important. Giving them lead way to "do things their own way" will pay off in the long run. "People closest to the work know, more than anyone, how it could be done better…GE relies heavily on employee surveys as a part of its learning culture." [1]

The organizational structure should provide the remote worker with appropriate levels of authority and may have to be modified to accomplish this.

Discuss the remote worker's workspace and accommodate what needs to be done to make it comfortable and conducive to performing his/her job functions.

Company Processes

Instill that company processes may be bent to accommodate the remote worker (doing things their own way) but processes cannot be broken. Continuous improvement is the goal of every successful business...knowledge is the driver. So, manage the remote worker to adjust their processes around problem prevention and resolution, communication, behaviors, decision making, documentation, training, project management, web meetings and risk. You must establish that the business processes are robust enough to accomplish transformation, and if they are not, you must do what ever is necessary to modify and enhance them to make them so.

IT

The remote worker must have access to and know how to use the core technologies that are required to perform their duties. User and technology requirements should be formally and regularly reviewed.

Collaboration software should be state of the art, the remote work email application should be addressed and made ready for continuous remote work objectives, Internet speed should be considered and made adequate, and above all, the computer the remote worker is using must be able to handle files of all sizes and all the applications used for company business.

Most important for the IT function is that the remote worker have a vision and long-term commitment to evolving technology.

Home Dynamics

The subject dealing with home dynamics is a very personal one and should be handled individually and confidentially. These are issues that can make or break the success of a specific worker as a remote employee. These issues require the management to make a judgement mimicking the hiring of a new employee; dealing with personal situations in a way you would not consider when hiring a new employee. The objective is not whether or not the person should be employed, but rather if they might change their position in the company to accommodate either their own desires or the desire of the company to make a change in operating procedures. This subject requires you to determine the feasibility that the person would be able to execute their new operating procedures The determination is based on the remote worker's environment.

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[11] The GE Way Fieldbook – Jack Welch 2000

Do company processes change the way the employees execute their duties regarding their children (if there are any children)?

Are there any issues around members of the household that may require home administered medical attention?

Do company processes change the way the employees execute their spousal or other personal duties?

Conclusion

The goal is to look at the remote worker's ability to transform his/her environment and their ability to understand the value of, and accept, better position practices, services, and techniques to create effective environments leading to their growth as a remote worker.

Once you consider these six subjects you will be able to determine whether or not an individual employee is able to complete a complex transformation and only then should you proceed to create a Remote Worker position for that person. Of course, each person must be considered individually because each has different needs and obligations that may reside outside the business environment.

The key is to find a technology that provides strategies and sets priorities that will help the company know what they should adopt on a global level and at the same time help each remote worker understand their "current reality" and what will be necessary to enhance implementation of the Remote Workforce concept.

About the Author:

Michael St. Angelo is the President and CEO of NeuraMetrics Inc. Mike has held executive sales and marketing positions at a company that was the worldwide leader in process automation, an industry analysis firm that studied and advised major corporations and utilities and a company that marketed enterprise software. He has led the development of an efficient and robust method to conduct mission critical, process and organizational assessments, benchmarking and studies. His methodology and tools offer expanded insight into causes of organizational performance including analysis of process behaviors. Mike has taught undergraduate courses and provides freelance articles occasionally for industry publications.