

# Preparing the workforce of the future

Transformation of the world of work creates new needs for employees and employers



While many Canadian workers welcome the chance to return to their offices, others want to stay with remote work or use a hybrid model. No matter where they work, Canadians increasingly value work-life balance. iSTOCK.COM

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE SURPASSES SALARY AS TOP MOTIVATOR FOR CANADIAN WORKERS

Employers responding to shifting employee priorities and values

**T**he impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to ripple through all facets of Canadian life, including the economy, technology and social norms. Transformation has also been dramatic for Canadian workers in terms of where and how they work, as well as their values and motivators related to their employment. A new study by ADP Canada and Maru Public Opinion\* provides evidence that the pandemic has led many Canadian workers to re-examine their priorities as they map out job and career plans. While salary and benefits historically top the list of incentives for current and prospective employees, the survey found that a new priority has risen to the top: work-life balance.

When asked to compare their current priorities to those before the pandemic, 31 per cent of working Canadians say that a job that respects their work-life balance is more important to them now, compared to only 20 per cent who felt salary had become more important.

This focus on work-life balance was even more apparent when it came to remote workers, with 39 per cent saying work-life balance is more important to them now than pre-pandemic. Canadians aged 35 to 54 also felt this way, with 42 per cent putting work-life balance at the top of the list, compared to 37 per cent of respondents aged 18 to 34 and 38 per cent of respondents aged 55 or older.

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**Heather Haslam**  
Vice President, Marketing,  
ADP Canada



And just as culture is ultimately the strength of the people in your organization, the diversity of people within that body strengthens the organization in turn. Unfortunately, it is in this arena of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) that work remains to be done.

**BY ANTHONY ARIGANELLO, CPHR, PRESIDENT & CEO, CPHR CANADA**

While the past two years have carried a devastating cost, revealed long-buried traumas and transformed the way we live and work, the cumulative impact has revealed the truly human potential – and vulnerability – of doing business.

With the majority of us vanquished to our various home workspaces by the pandemic, we watched the world at large seemingly unravel on the small screen. From gender inequities to systemic racism to the unmarked graves of children in communities across Canada, the opportunity for each of us to grow from what we now know has been omnipresent.

For leaders, these very same issues have only served to underscore what the pandemic forced them to realize overnight – people-first thinking is the only way forward.

Fortunately, if there is a silver lining to what we have endured, it lies within our revitalized appreciation of one another and a quantum leap forward for people-first thinking in the workplace. From remote realities being realized and mental health concerns being recognized to the triumph of soft skills in hard

### PEOPLE AT WORK 2022: A GLOBAL WORKFORCE VIEW

A new study from ADP Research Institute (ADPRI) reveals more details about the pandemic-sparked shift in workers' priorities and expectations on a global level.

ADPRI surveyed more than 32,000 workers, including in the gig economy, from 17 countries. Among the key findings:



**Two-thirds (64%)** of the workforce would consider looking for a new job if they were required to return to the office full time.



**A majority of employees** are prepared to make compromises if it means more flexibility or a hybrid approach to work location. More than half (52%) are willing to accept a pay cut – as much as 11% – to guarantee this arrangement.



**Those working from home are more inclined to say they are optimistic (89%)** about the next five years compared to their peers (77%) reporting to an office.

For additional findings and deeper context to the worker perspective in ADPRI's report, *People at Work 2022: A Global Workforce View*, visit ADPRI.org.

working Canadians value within their current workplace, and what they're looking for from future employers," says Heather Haslam, vice president, marketing, ADP Canada. "For what appears to be the first time ever, more and more Canadians – especially those who work remotely – are prioritizing work-life balance over salary."

### REMOTE WORK: FROM SHORT-TERM SOLUTION TO EXPECTATION

The transition to remote work in many industries was one of the early stories of the pandemic. In the beginning, many expected it would be a short-term solution; however, two years on, working remotely has become a new way of life for many Canadian employ-

ees and an expectation for new candidates.

According to the survey, nine out of 10 remote workers hope to continue working remotely some or all days during the week, citing work-life balance as the most important reason.

The pandemic has also affected how working Canadians feel about their industry or current position. According to the survey, 15 per cent of employed Canadians voluntarily transitioned to a new position or new industry, or left the workforce altogether, during the pandemic. Among just remote workers, that number grew to 22 per cent.

Those who moved to a job in a new industry cited the following top three reasons: changes to their personal lives (33 per cent); the need to limit workload and stress (29 per cent); and a desire for more flexible hours (28 per cent). These findings underscore that work-life balance played a key role in their decision to change.

Younger Canadians were the most likely to report transitioning to a new industry during the pandemic. Among the 18 to 34 age group, 13 per cent made such a shift, compared to only three per cent of those aged 35 to 54.

### EMPLOYERS ADJUSTING RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

This prioritization of work-life balance also appears to be influencing how companies recruit new talent.

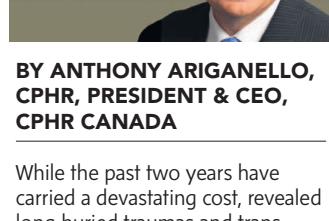
According to the survey, one in five (19 per cent) employed Canadians had been approached by a competing employer in the previous six months offering better work conditions – and this strategy appears to be working. When asked about what might be next in terms of one's career path, 63 per cent of Canadians have started to think about leaving their current role.

As to what they're looking for in a new role, work-life balance topped the list once again, with one-third (32 per cent) of working Canadians stating that an organization that respects their work-life balance is most important to them when they're looking for a new job. This was followed by salary at 25 per cent.

"This data draws a clear picture of what working Canadians are looking for, and what workplaces should be prioritizing as we move forward," says Ms. Haslam.

"Work and life are not independent entities fighting for a 50/50 balance. To attract and retain employees, companies need to acknowledge work and life are intertwined, with one affecting the other. As the world of work continues to evolve, embracing the post-pandemic workplace requires employers to be agile, embrace flexibility and actively listen to employees."

## PEOPLE-FIRST THINKING DRIVES NEW WORK MODELS



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As workplaces are transformed, HR professionals see new opportunities to prioritize equity, diversity and inclusion to strengthen organizations. iSTOCK.COM

times, leaders have grown to accept that we are all human resources.

Moreover, it provided an undeniable proving ground for HR professionals drawing upon ever-evolving toolkits and exactly the people-first mindset needed to help leaders and organizations survive and ultimately thrive amidst the ongoing change. Moving forward, that key recognition of HR as an integral strategic partner can only help to ensure the workplace we return to – whatever form that may take – will be a more

wholly human experience.

Needless to say, that workplace is already taking many forms – from full return to fully distributed – but the new normal for the vast many is in between, a hybrid, as leaders strive to balance occupational health and safety demands with employee demands for continued flexibility. The challenge of maintaining that fine balance – while fostering a culture that unites, and drives and supports teams potentially separated by time and place – has only served to

strengthen leadership's appreciation of HR's "forward-thinking" mindset.

That said, HR professionals have been advancing that forward-thinking, people-centric platform for some time, but now it is being recognized as a pre-requisite for creating cohesion and trust in our often virtual workplace. These elements, along with an alignment of organizational goals with individual opportunity and recognition, provide the fertile grounds in which culture can thrive.

And just as culture is ultimately the strength of the people in your organization, the diversity of people within that body strengthens the organization in turn. Unfortunately, it is in this arena of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) that work remains to be done.

What should not need to be said – particularly in light of the headlines and hashtags throughout the pandemic – is that inequities remain that need to be addressed to ensure that any new normal we build is one to be shared equally by all.

As an association of HR professionals spanning Canada from coast to coast to coast, we know the true value of EDI. We have long recognized the strengths such differences bring to bottom lines and bigger pictures alike, but we are no longer alone in this understanding.

Empowering leaders with this understanding has not only kept business afloat in uncertain seas but will elevate the work experience for everyone moving forward.

Be fair. Be different. Be human.

Manage your HR  
more easily today.  
Find more success  
tomorrow.



Always Designing  
for People®

