

INTERSECTIONS

INSIGHTS

Eighteenth Edition **Change is good...until it isn't. Change in the Time of Covid.**

No matter how well you accept and can roll with change, the pandemic has tested everyone's resilience.

We have all heard the saying, "I am at the end of my rope." The abrupt year-long change to remote working and the blending of home and work life has frayed the bonds that connect us and the impact on our mental health is essential to explore.

A segment of my financial institution clients has seamlessly responded to the technology challenge; however, many are still struggling to understand the effect on their workforce morale. Whenever we instigate technology, process, or environmental changes, the ultimate success is determined by how well **people adapt** to the requirements of that change.



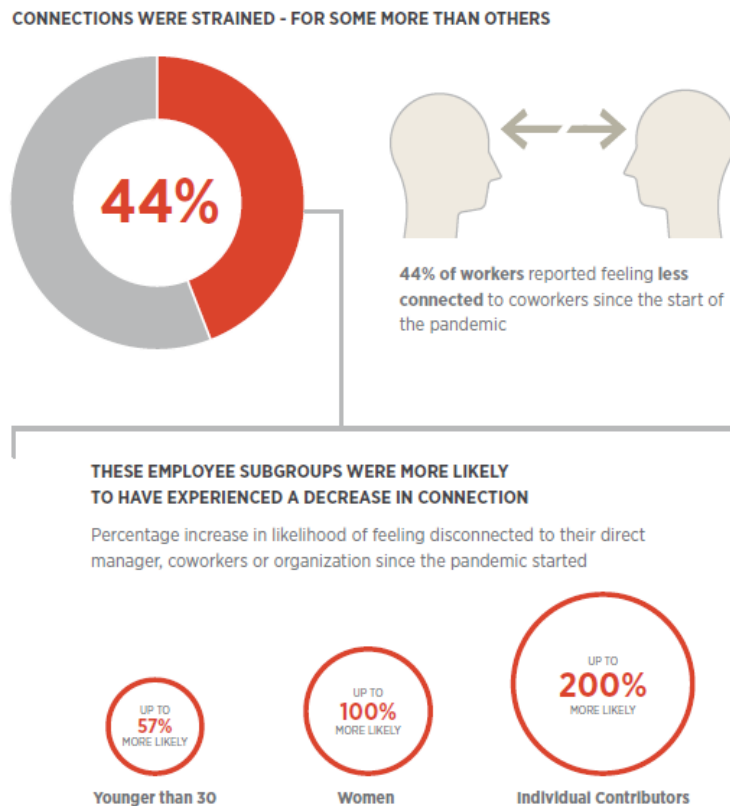
As social animals, we found ourselves isolated and segregated, for our own good and the welfare of the community we live in. In prison there is a reason why solitary confinement is considered one of the harshest punishments. For many, Covid-19 restrictions felt like that.

Amazon, recognizing the new challenges for its 950,000 US workers, added free one-on-one counseling sessions either in person, via phone, video or text. Saying "this new offering will help us remove barriers and unnecessary stigma around getting help to ensure our employees and their families feel safe and supported."¹

Two recent surveys try to decipher the feelings that people have experienced based on the lack of connection to others in the workplace. Both surveys contacted over 1,000 workers in a multitude of industries, departments and titles (entry-level to CEO).

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The HOW Institute for Society² defined connection as “worker camaraderie, collective organizational engagement and employee social capital. Ultimately, these terms relate to a feeling of common purpose and fellowship.” The closer the connection the more people are motivated and inspired. The picture below shows an extremely high level of disconnection broken into subcategories of individual contributors, women and those younger than 30 years old.



The Workhuman³ survey results echo the conclusions of the HOW survey. When participants were asked, “if the pandemic has had an impact on your mental health, specify how and select as many as apply.” The results showed 37% more anxious, 31% isolated, 28% overwhelmed, 24% less motivated. Only twenty-nine percent said that the pandemic had no impact on their mental health.

When trying to uncover the reasons for the strain, the answers showed less human connection, low morale, less flexibility, less inclusivity and a lack of culture.

To reengage employees, we need to incorporate new ways of working that increase productivity and health. There are numerous ways of accomplishing this regardless of the company culture.

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In the Workhuman survey there were 5 options to describe humanity in the workplace and “sixty percent say humanity in the workplace involves offering thanks and gratitude.” When asked how they think gratitude impacts the workplace, 31% said gratitude increases their motivation to succeed and 25% reported it increases productivity.

Strategies to increase connection and empathy could include the following:

- ◆ More frequent communication which might include quicker (less than 15 minutes) meetings, texts, and emails.
- ◆ The use of thank you and appreciation rewards
- ◆ Time set aside for non-work-related communication that simulate the unstructured discussions in the break room, so perhaps more use of video and chat rooms.
- ◆ The use of “innovation games” which we have found to be very effective to not only solve everyday work issues but also fuel new ideas and feelings of connectivity.

None of these strategies are difficult to implement, regardless of the corporate culture. Even as we move into the new normal, there will be long-term changes to how and where we work. Understanding the impact, the pandemic has wrought in the workplace, and finding tactics to reconnect will result in more motivated personnel with a shared sense of purpose.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the right.

Interested in learning more about connection strategies?
Give me a call at 203.226.2645 to start the conversation.

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1. Amazon Press Release dated May 20,2021 9am EDT, Beth Galetti, Amazon senior vice president of People eXperience and Technology
2. The HOW Institute for Society. Human Connection in the Virtual Workplace March 2021
3. Workhuman® One year into Covid, The Pandemic effect on how we work.