



Talent Trends Quarterly Q4 2020
the COVID-19 surveillance report.

lack of digital skills may slow business and economic recovery.

Having adjusted to the initial global market challenges, companies around the world now face more uncertainty. Having an agile and flexible workforce, however, will buffer them against many unforeseen market conditions.

With the global economy still reeling months after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, employers everywhere continue to be deeply affected by the crisis. Unemployment remains high, many organizations are still working to adapt to disruptions and company executives are closely monitoring their businesses to facilitate economic recovery. And even with the promise of a vaccine getting closer every day, it's clear that we are working in a new normal.

There are shining examples of [organizations that have adapted business operations to coronavirus disruptions well](#). Randstad Sourceright is proud to have responded with agility to meet client needs, while [supporting and engaging our people](#) through these challenging times. Since the global lockdown began earlier this year, the majority of mid-size and large companies have been able to operate through massive work-from-home and digital initiatives.

Through diligent planning and effective leadership from HR and other human capital executives, most have operated safely and compliantly during the lockdown. But these leaders have significant concerns that you are likely experiencing as well.

Randstad Sourceright's latest [Talent Trends](#) research surveyed nearly 200 employers around the world in Q3 of 2020. It found that most human capital leaders worry they lack the skills to fully transform to a digital-centric organization. Nearly two-thirds (64%) believe that, while they were able to accelerate their digital transformation in the beginning of the crisis, they need stronger competencies going forward to compete in today's rapidly evolving global economy. In fact, fewer than half (46%) are confident they possess the talent and resources to accelerate their digital journey over the next 12 months.

Human capital leaders are also concerned that their ability to acquire talent will be restricted as a result of the crisis. This comes at a time of broad recognition that current workforces are stressed, adjusting to a virtual work environment, and balancing home and job responsibilities at the same time. More than one-third of survey respondents (34%) believe hiring volumes will remain low into 2021, but 28% expect some recovery across all job families.

To meet 2020's new challenges, talent leaders must build agile organizations. They must ensure access to skills while simultaneously redefining how work is done, implement new processes and technologies with expedited timing, and decide which will carry over even as [work sites safely reopen](#). For example, talent leaders view work-from-home arrangements, sustained investments in technologies, and the empowerment of their workforces through upskilling and reskilling as critical to long-term recovery and growth.

What will your business encounter and how will it adapt in the months and years ahead? These are questions without easy answers for many right now. But one thing is clear: talent will be critical to rebuilding or sustaining the momentum your business achieved in recent months, and human capital leaders must continue to lead the way as their businesses navigate through murky waters.

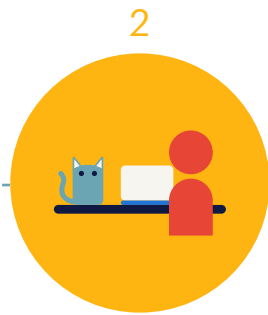
Rebecca Henderson
CEO, Randstad Global Businesses
and executive board member



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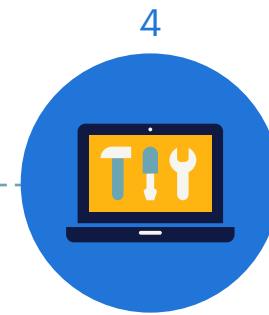
is your organizational response strong enough to drive performance?



how employers are redefining work and their employer brands.



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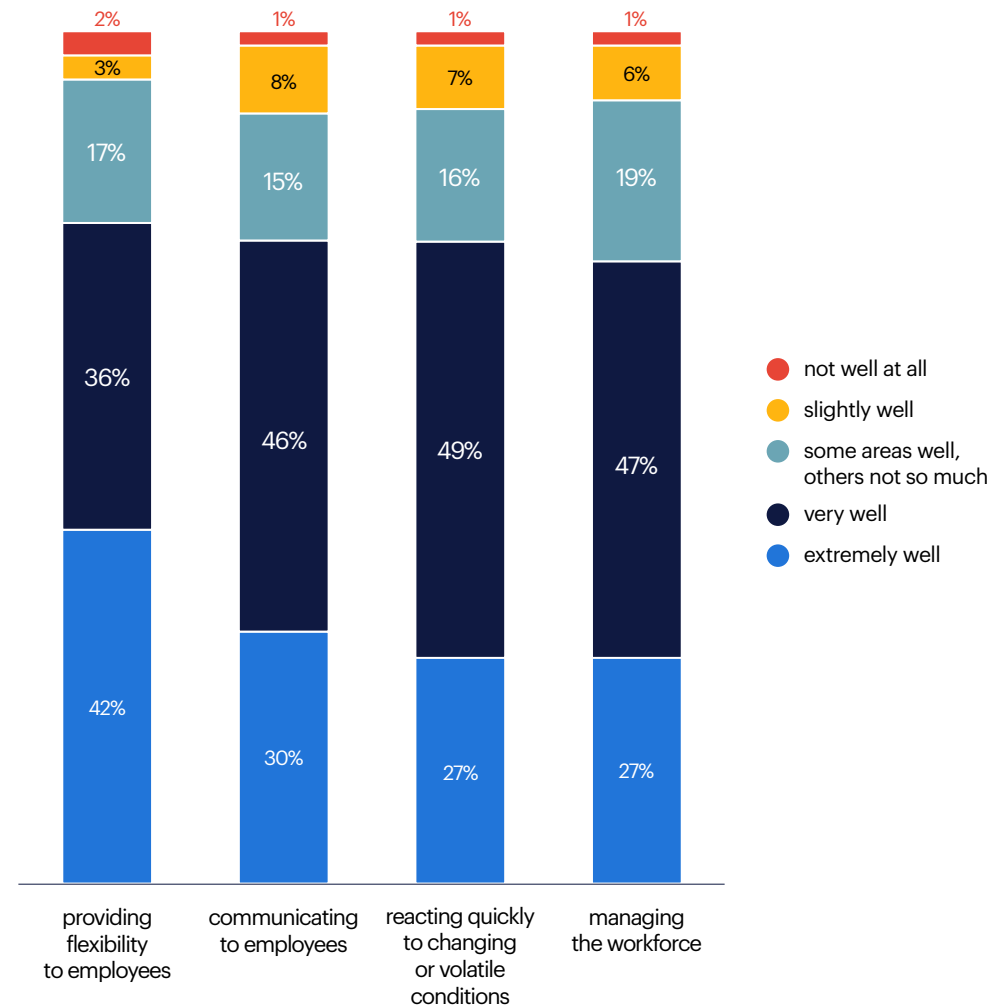
During the initial outbreak, the difference between organizations that have endured and thrived, versus those that have faltered or failed, may very well be agile execution. Operating virtually during the lockdown, delivering services and products digitally, and providing new and satisfying experiences to customers are hallmarks of successful, agile organizations.

Companies that were able to quickly adapt – shift production to making sanitizers and respirators, for example – created opportunities that their slower competitors could not. Others were able to assure customers that business would go on as usual — or as close to usual as possible.

Our Talent Trends survey finds that 70% of employers are cautiously or very optimistic about their business outlook, benefitting from the strong responses they enacted during the lockdown. Just 1% say they are at the precipice of defaulting. What many successful organizations have in common is being able to empower their workforce, even as employees were sent to work from their homes for months. Despite difficult economic conditions, half say they were able to maintain profitability.

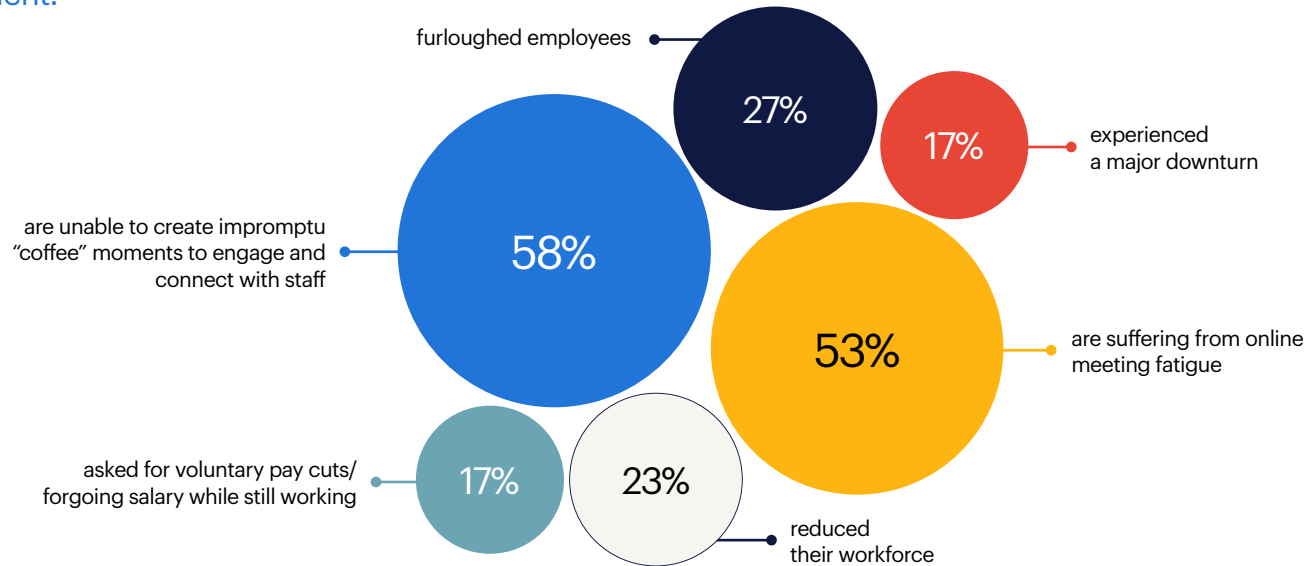


How well has your organization handled the pandemic? Top 4 specific areas of focus:



On the other hand, the pandemic had both a psychological and financial toll on talent. The negative impacts include reduction in employee compensation, furloughed workers, layoffs and permanently closed facilities.

Reported negative impacts of the pandemic on talent:

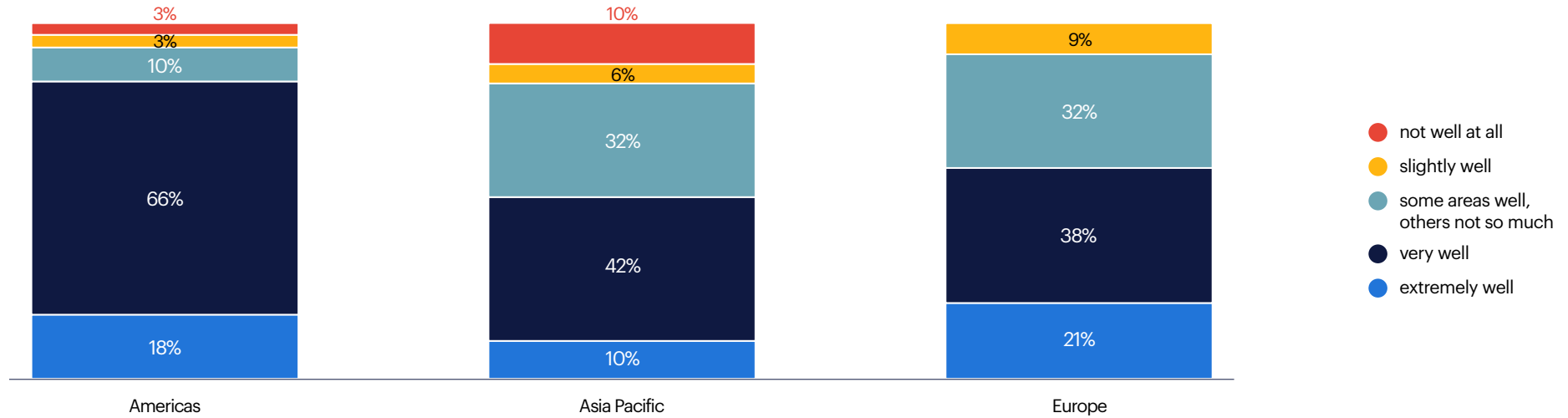


Because the pandemic has affected different regions unequally, the outlook among talent and business leaders in different areas varies significantly in some cases. For instance, companies in the Americas express greater confidence in what their organizations needed to do next as a response to the ongoing crisis.

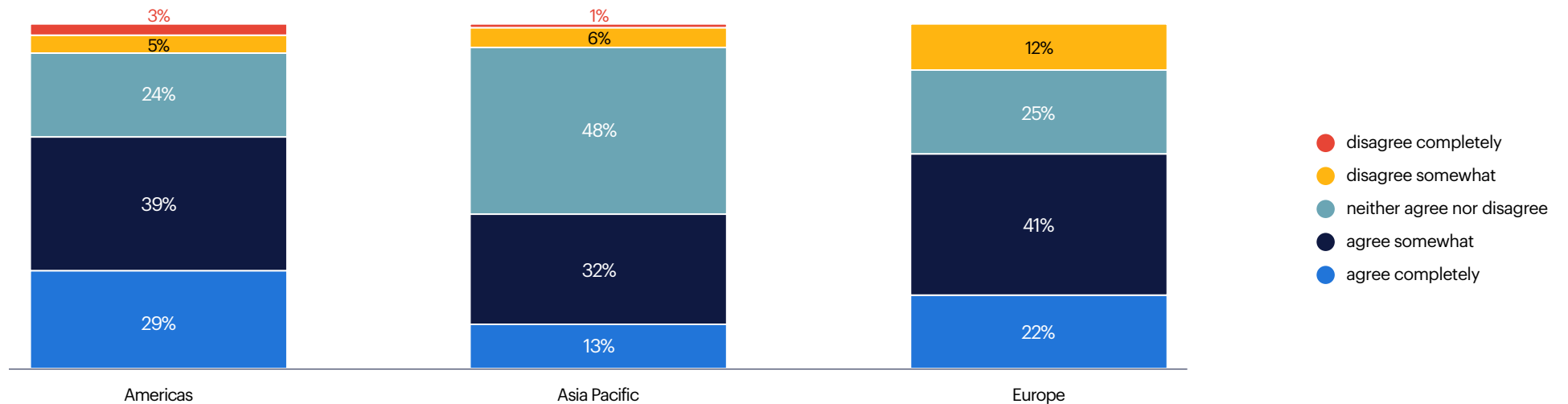
While a majority of leaders in the Asia Pacific region (APAC) are also confident on next steps, their numbers lag behind their counterparts in Europe and the Americas. This could also likely be attributed to the fact that the pandemic has impacted this region the longest. Fewer than half (45%) feel they are executing on decisions more quickly as a result of the pandemic.



How well is your organization defining clear next steps?



Is your organization executing decisions more quickly than before?



“To succeed in today’s challenging business environment, you need to balance healthy pessimism with bounded optimism. The best-in-class organizations understand perseverance is key to recovery. Prepare by reskilling and upskilling, as well as offering support to those facing a greater workload and pressure at home.”



Cindy Keaveney
chief people officer
Randstad Global Businesses



3 ways to elevate business performance through talent:

1. Don't stop looking for great talent.

Massive layoffs across the globe may seem like a significant challenge for your business, but there are opportunities as well. [As Harvard Business Review points out](#), the recession has provided an “unprecedented opportunity” to acquire new talent for your organization. Contrary to the popular notion that you should freeze hiring during economic downturns, your business may benefit significantly from the larger pool of active job candidates.

2. Focus on reskilling.

The COVID-19 crisis is exposing digital deficiencies for many organizations. Not having a robust e-commerce platform or being unprepared for remote work could cause a company to be less competitive. Workforce reskilling is one way to remedy the gap if you're facing a hiring freeze.

3. Develop current and future leaders.

Unprecedented times call for unprecedented leadership, and it's clear the COVID-19 crisis will be with us for a while. Your business must continue to invest in leadership development to ensure you have the executive talent needed to steer the organization for some time to come. [As Gallup Research shows](#), effective leaders are expected to support and inspire a weary workforce during these trying times.

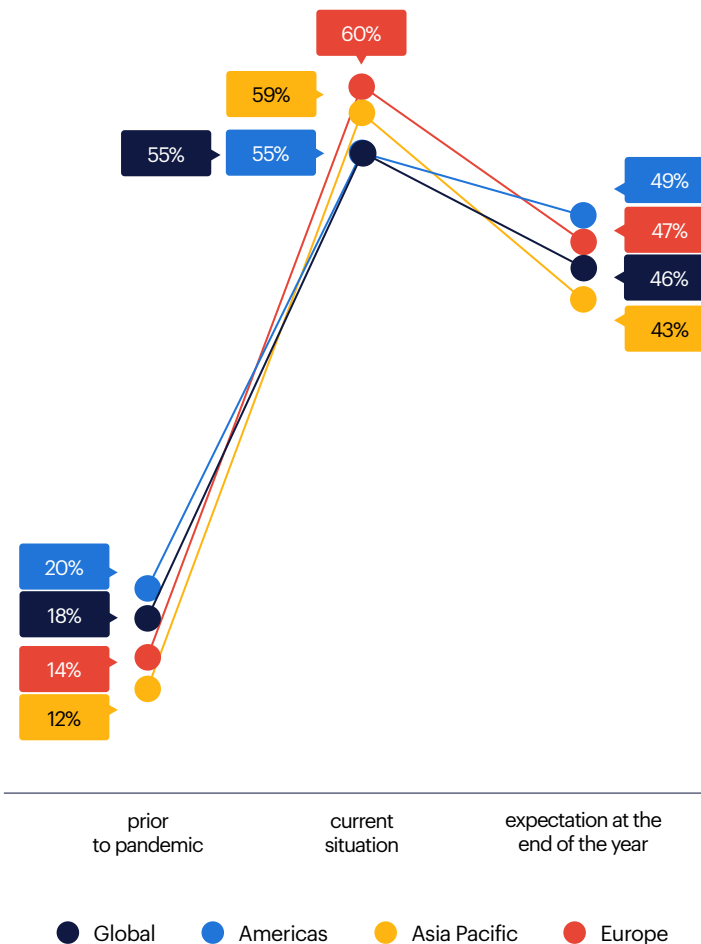
how employers are redefining work and their employer brands.

Organizations everywhere were severely affected when lockdowns went into place around the world, but our [Talent Trends](#) research indicates that working from home was hardly the disruptive force many leaders feared it would be. In fact, 46% say their people are more productive while working from home; just 15% feel productivity has dropped.

If productivity remains high, it's likely that voluntary work-from-home arrangements will continue, even after the pandemic has ended. Survey respondents indicate that prior to the crisis, just 18% of their workforce was remote. At the time of the survey, however, that percentage jumped to 55%. Employers also believe that 46% [will still be working remotely](#) through the end of 2020, despite the reopening of offices around the world. Overall, 59% say they will allow for remote work for those who don't want to be onsite.



Remote working trends across regions:



This trend is already having an impact on the talent supply chain as workers in high-cost cities and regions look to relocate to areas with a lower cost of living and more pleasant environments. This means companies will be able to recruit the best candidates from anywhere in the world without geographic limitations.

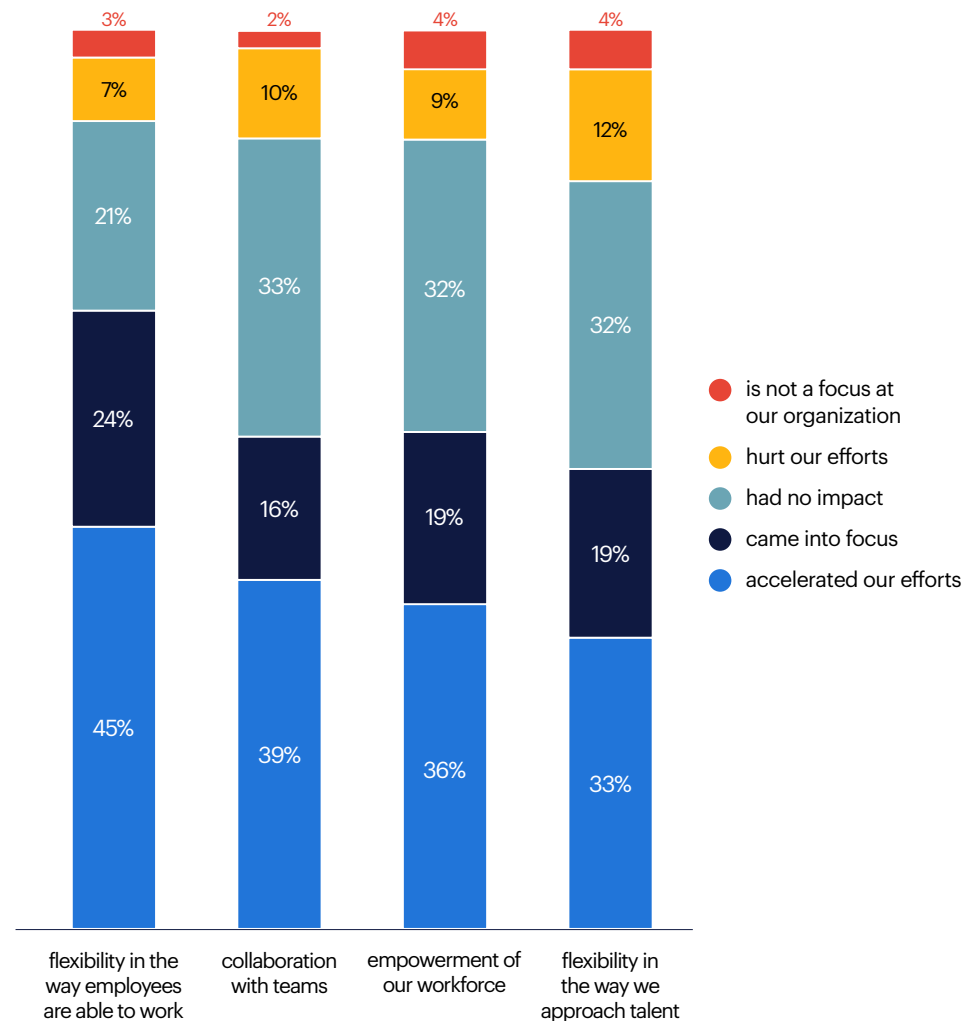
Many of those candidates will need to possess digital skills to help employers accelerate their business transformation efforts during the COVID-19 crisis. Companies such as Microsoft are already investing in large-scale initiatives to train workers to acquire more digital skills, and the majority of organizational leaders we surveyed (64%) recognize that they need more competencies in this area to support their rapid adoption of digitalization.

Reported changes in the workplace and work habits include many measures that aim to protect worker safety and empowerment. Companies are also discovering some additional advantages to operating remotely, such as offering employees the flexibility to balance work with their at-home caregiving responsibilities.

An expanded work environment is encouraging employees to find ways to collaborate more efficiently. Updated technologies, equipment and processes are key areas of focus. What's more, 71% of talent leaders expect to carry these new, efficient processes that have been implemented during the pandemic into the future.

Even though many businesses report workforce reductions, furloughs and reduced compensation, organizational leaders are also mindful to minimize the pain for those impacted. Companies believe their communication strategies and outplacement support have helped them protect, or even enhance, their employer brands. More than half (51%) say their employer brand has not changed due to the pandemic, while 42% report an improvement.

The pandemic's impact on:



Top 5 measures for ensuring worker safety:

- 66% will continue using video conferencing and remote meeting tools
- 63% providing masks and hand sanitizer to all employees
- 62% mandating quarantines for those infected or suspected to be
- 61% developing and sharing a clear plan to all employees, with continuous updates
- 61% reducing work-related travel



Support provided for displaced employees:

- 48% outplacement
- 48% exit packages that are higher than the industry average
- 43% networking with other organizations
- 24% ongoing coaching/mentoring
- 17% alumni talent pools

“In a virtual ‘new normal,’ both employees and organizations are challenged to embrace new ways of working and reduce reliance on traditional practices, such as physical team bonding sessions. We now have to help leaders learn to make full use of technology and social media tools to enhance corporate branding, as well as effectively connect with existing and potential talent pools.

With home offices blurring the lines between our personal and professional lives, employees also need to acknowledge the importance of individual wellness needs, which may vary depending on location, age and other factors.”



Urvi Jobalia
regional head of Talent Acquisition
Southeast Asia, Oceania and India
Ericsson



3 ways to enhance employer brand through your talent experience:

1. Embrace work flexibility.

The continued lockdowns across the world mean many workers still face pressures and are juggling their work-life balance. This is especially true for caregivers who are trying to provide childcare and schooling while working from home. Help your people stay engaged and productive by embracing flexible workday options that accommodate those caring for family members, even as school resumes.

2. Explore collaboration tools and techniques.

By now, most organizations have adapted to prolonged work-from-home arrangements, but can you make your current situation even better? Consider how investing in technology and processes (like [these entrepreneurs have](#)) can enhance connectivity, transparency and productivity.

3. Survey your talent to understand their needs.

Aside from providing tools and flexibility to your workforce, consider additional needs your team might have while working from home or at the office. Whether that means developing a long-term strategy for a hybrid on-site/at-home schedule, or [revamping employee benefits](#), make sure you address all of your workers’ needs to show them they are valued.

communication is key for talent leaders.

Our Talent Trends research finds that talent and business leaders around the globe feel responsible for the mental and physical health of the people at their organizations. They're finding ways to minimize workforce reductions, establishing new policies and setting new standards. Here are some of the ways they report that HR is helping during the pandemic and will continue to lead moving forward.

"General maintenance and reconditioning of facilities, restructuring spaces, creating new roles to traditional positions."

"Providing talent recruitment support, and health and safety guidelines."

"They're focusing on actions that reduce cost and flex workforce, while increasing the engagement."

"Emphasizing the importance of following government guidelines and being flexible with situations beyond employees' control."

"Keeping their teams engaged and actively creating new models for comp, talent and acquisition."

"Developing support to leaders around flexible working and agile working."

"[Implementing] more video recruitment and one-on-one meetings for final selection only."

"Help to identify workforce reduction possibilities, minimizing talent loss."

"Ensuring employee safety is first and foremost."

"Setting thresholds and staggering [the return] back to facilities."

"Open communication about their plan as some recruitment requests made prior to COVID-19 are put on hold due to the pandemic."

"Stepping up recruitment."

"They are revising policies, supporting managers and setting standards."

"We have defined a clear people plan and strategy to support our people through these challenging times and embedded a number of wellness initiatives as well."

"[Serving as a] support system [for] keeping open communication."

"They are trying to consolidate departments."

"Reskilling and relooking at HR processes."

"Supporting our furloughed team, recognizing overworked non-furloughed teams, mental health awareness."

"More communication with employees and clients."

"Actively calling employees to check on them and see what they may need to continue their work."

"Keeping communications fresh and appropriate."

HR tech drives new ways of working in the COVID-19 era.

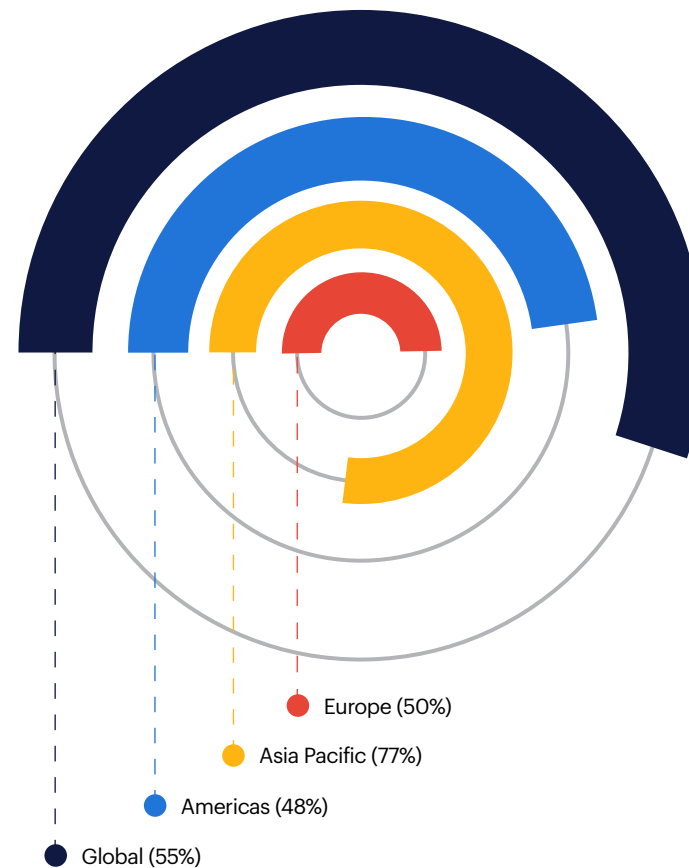
By now, it's clear that technology is playing a major role in helping businesses stay operational during the pandemic crisis. Without Webex, Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Google Suite, companies would be struggling to keep their workforces productive, cohesive and agile.

For organizations that continue to hire during this time, video and online interviewing platforms are essential to fulfilling requisitions and helping hiring managers find the right candidates for their needs. Other tools such as [GitHub](#) and [Slack](#) have spurred collaboration and are sustaining engagement among workers who are no longer going into the office.

Our [Talent Trends](#) research indicates that 55% have adopted or scaled technologies as a result of the pandemic; the trend is particularly strong in Asia Pacific (77%). On average, businesses adopted 3.9 technologies early on in the crisis.



Adopted or scaled technologies as a result of the pandemic:



Companies that embraced digitalization early on are successfully adapting to the confines of today's new ways of working. For instance, one telecommunications leader implemented a suite of tools in India to ensure hiring and onboarding would continue when in-person processes were no longer an option. Within a matter of days following virtualization of its workforce, the company conducted 450 video interviews and averaged 45 hiring manager interviews each day. By quickly implementing video and remote onboarding tools, the company ensured access to human capital during this critical period and beyond.

More than half (57%) say their technology investments have enabled their remote workforces. Hiring technologies, such as video interviewing, virtual onboarding, textbot and chatbot recruitment automation, and others are among the tools that companies have introduced or expanded during the lockdown, and will continue using after pandemic restrictions end.

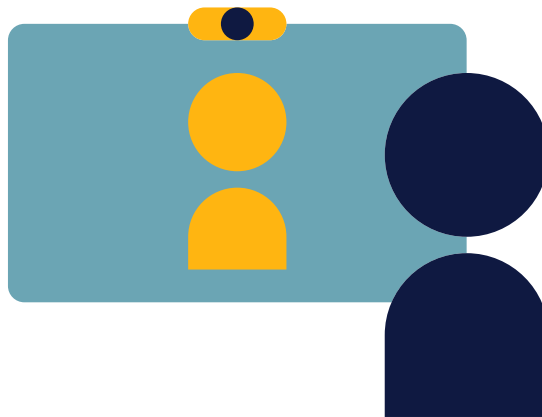
Other key areas of investment include company culture, employee feedback and engagement systems. Companies view these tools as necessary to better manage their dispersed workforces. Our research finds virtual recruitment technologies, training and development platforms, and talent analytics are among the most implemented during lockdowns.

Top 5 technologies employers will continue using post-pandemic:

- 96% onboarding systems
- 92% workplace culture, employee feedback and engagement systems
- 91% training and development platforms
- 88% workforce collaboration tools
- 83% video and online interviewing

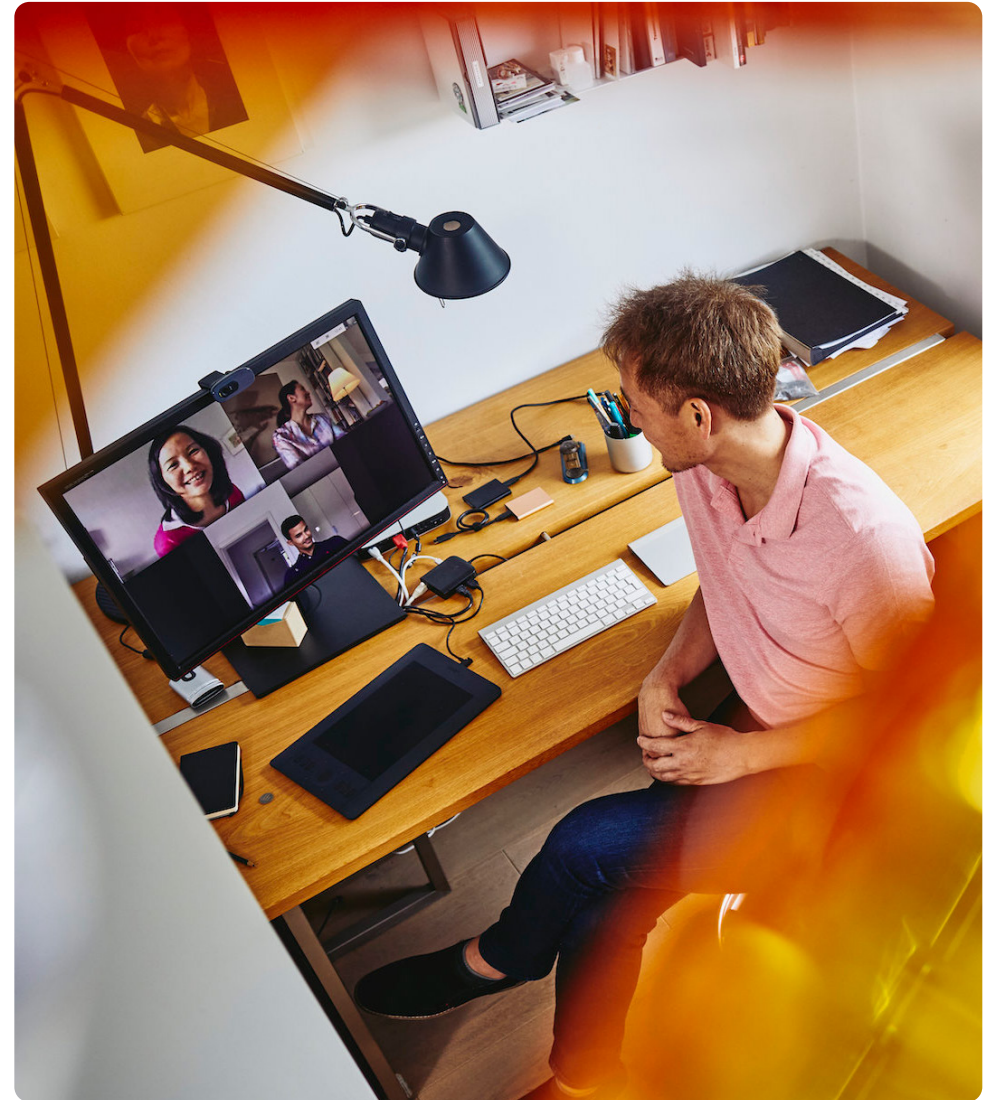
Top reasons for adopting video and online interviewing technology:

- 62% were already planning to do so
- 58% employee communication
- 54% collaboration across teams
- 51% increase visibility into our workforce
- 47% managing our remote workforce



Top 10 HR technologies implemented during the pandemic:

- 68% video and online interviewing
- 39% workforce collaboration tools
- 31% training and development platforms
- 30% workplace culture, employee feedback and engagement systems
- 29% virtual recruiting events
- 28% HR and talent analytics visualization dashboards
- 25% workforce management tools (time/attendance/scheduling)
- 20% texting and chatbot engagement
- 19% employee performance management software
- 16% recruitment marketing platforms



“Are you already thinking about how technology can advance your company’s goals and plans in the next phase of the pandemic? If you can use technology and market insights to effectively anticipate the shifts that will be coming to your workforce, you can also plan for and help mitigate the negative impact of these changes.”



Michel Stokvis
Randstad Innovation Fund



3 ways to optimize HR tech investments during the COVID-19 crisis:

1. Don't just apply in-person processes to remote work environments.

If you want to help your workforce stay at the top of its game, assess how adjustments in project management, talent acquisition, collaboration and technologies can empower your teams and accelerate results.

2. Ensure training is readily available.

Rolling out new technologies and doing it quickly has been a necessity during the COVID-19 era, but don't underestimate the importance of taking the time to provide comprehensive training so you can maximize your investments long term. Make sure to budget time to get your workforce up to speed on the tools you will be launching in the next phase of your crisis response. Here are some tips on [how to bring your team up to speed quickly](#).

3. Reassess current and future investments.

Long-term thinking around how your company spends on its technology portfolio will need to be adapted to COVID-19 realities. That means you should be agile in your decision-making around workforce tools, whether it's video interviewing technology, virtual onboarding or [AI that minimizes unconscious bias](#) when hiring. Make sure you have a good grasp of where your business is headed in the months and years ahead, and determine where to invest to optimize performance and management.

talent analytics: plan for the future and home in on well-being.

What role are talent analytics playing to help employers navigate the pandemic and move forward toward recovery? While some talent leaders say their typical use of analytics was temporarily put on hold, others are using data to understand turnover, protect their employer brands, drive employee engagement and steer the business forward. Here's what those surveyed in our [Talent Trends](#) research said about the role of talent analytics at their organizations:

"Analytics play a massive part in understanding our workforce and what they are concerned about."

"Mitigate the risks for future talent investment and development."

"For tracking of our diversity and inclusion metrics to enhance the workforce."

"Automating processes."

"Pushing our branding to make us an employer of choice."

"Helping give us an overview of what is happening in the business."

"Providing insights into employee sentiment."

"Showing where succession plans have holes."

"Getting the right people in place."

"Reporting on furloughs and attendance, costs and KPIs."

"To identify talent we want to avoid losing while workforce reductions and other cost reductions measures are in place."

"People continue their usual jobs from home and present their data with better efficiency."

"Assisting in determining the future direction."

"This role needs to be strengthened as we move forward."

"Turnover predictive tools."



next steps: better prepare for the unexpected.

The difficulties companies faced at the outset of the global pandemic will likely continue into 2021. With so much uncertainty ahead, how your organization adapts and stays ahead of prevailing market and HR trends will determine whether you emerge a winner or struggle within the pack. How will you prepare your business for what lies ahead?

Having access to critical human capital will be pivotal to how your business transforms and responds to opportunities. Even as you look to accelerate digital transformation, the skill sets needed to bring your efforts to fruition are the same ones in high demand before the pandemic – except more employers are now competing for them. You're likely looking at every element of your talent strategy and understanding how you must proceed from here: agility will be key.

Want to gain more insights on how you can prepare?
Contact us at randstadsourceright.com for a personal consultation.

contact us



Talent Trends COVID-19 surveillance methodology

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted every facet of life. To gauge how companies are adapting to the crisis, what steps they've taken to mitigate risks and facilitate growth, how well their workforce has performed during stressful times, and what HR trends are emerging, Randstad Sourceright surveyed nearly 200 human resources, human capital procurement and business leaders.

An addendum to our annual [Talent Trends](#) research, the survey took place in July and August 2020 and was conducted by a third party on behalf of Randstad Sourceright. Online surveys are conducted via external panels, are self-administered and can be taken across devices (including mobile phones, tablets, desktops and laptops).

The findings represent views from C-suite, talent and business leaders with responsibilities in 17 markets, comprising: Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Malaysia, Netherlands, Poland, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States.

about Randstad Sourceright

Randstad Sourceright is a global talent solutions leader, driving the talent acquisition and human capital management strategies for the world's most successful employers. We empower these companies by leveraging a Human Forward strategy that balances the use of innovative technology with expert insights, supporting both organizations and people in realizing their true potential.

As an operating company of Randstad N.V. — the world's leading global provider of HR services — Randstad Sourceright continuously builds and evolves talent solutions through recruitment process outsourcing (RPO), managed services programs (MSP) and total talent management strategies.

Read more at randstadsourceright.com.