

VIRTUAL CULTURE REPORT 2020



2020 will be a year we will all remember for a long time! So many unexpected things happened that no one could have predicted. Many people simply want this year to be over. But with any crisis, there is often a silver lining and lessons to learn.

At Evoloshen, we believe in the human spirit and that humanity is incredibly resilient! And adaptable. We are in a huge learning curve right now and many are taking time for some introspection on their own lives. It has been a time for looking at our priorities and evaluating how we really want to live and work.

Companies are also being forced to reevaluate where they are currently. As we have survived the spring months of 2020 and are adapting to the changes both individually and organizationally, we wanted to take a reading on how people are adapting to working more virtually or remotely. We know of companies that had a two to three-year digitalization plan in place go through this rapid transition in a matter of weeks. According to **research conducted by the Barrett Values Centre**, we experienced roughly five to seven years of transformation in about six weeks during the spring of 2020!

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We conducted our Virtual Cultural Survey in August and September of 2020 to learn more about how people were managing the changes in their workplace, particularly from the impact of the global pandemic. In addition, we have had countless conversations over these months with CEOs, managers, leaders and employees to understand how they are managing and adapting.

Lastly, we were giving multiple virtual trainings with participants from over 15 countries on building trust just as the pandemic hit. One of our clients said that our trust training couldn't have come at a better time as the fear and uncertainty of what was happening was very high while many countries shifted into high level lockdowns. Learning the neuroscience around trust and fear helped their employees manage the situation both for themselves individually but also with their teams and colleagues.

This report gives insights that can be useful in planning the future of the workplace. It also gives insights into how to best work virtually and steps moving forward. As we eventually progress beyond the global chaos, we can take the lessons we have all learned and apply them to creating an amazing company culture where employees and customers thrive!

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We had people in 22 countries participate with a higher percentage from New Zealand, Sweden and the USA.

- **AUSTRIA**
- **AUSTRALIA**
- **BELGIUM**
- **BOLIVIA**
- **BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA**
- **CANADA**
- **CROATIA**
- **GERMANY**
- **INDIA**
- **IRELAND**
- **LUXEMBOURG**
- **MALAYSIA**
- **NETHERLANDS**
- **NEW ZEALAND**
- **NIGERIA**
- **NORWAY**
- **SERBIA**
- **SOUTH AFRICA**
- **SPAIN**
- **SWEDEN**
- **UNITED KINGDOM**
- **UNITED STATES**





We had a good mix between the four levels of Entrepreneurs, Executives, Employees and Managers.

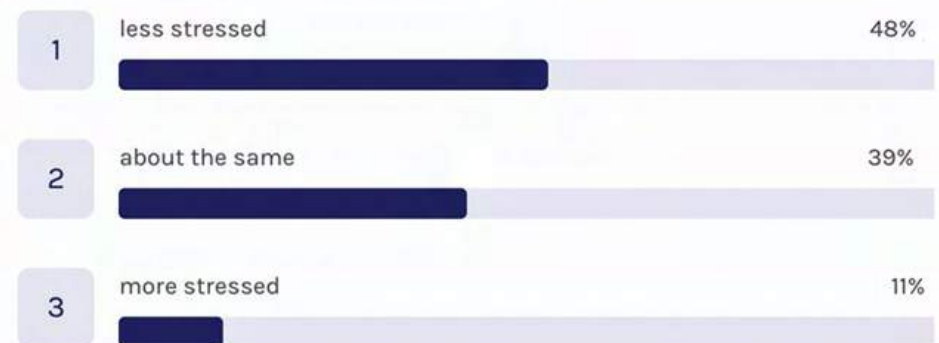
In the responses, 36% were Entrepreneurs and we know that many of these are used to working from home and didn't see a huge change in their working environment.

The majority—62% of the participants—were working in companies, with 25% in top management positions.



Overall Feeling About Working From Home

When it came to the overall feeling about working from home, 87% of the participants felt less stress or about the same stress in working remotely. We know that stress impacts well-being, so this is certainly something to consider when looking at the future of the workplace. We will see more on this topic a bit later in the report as well.



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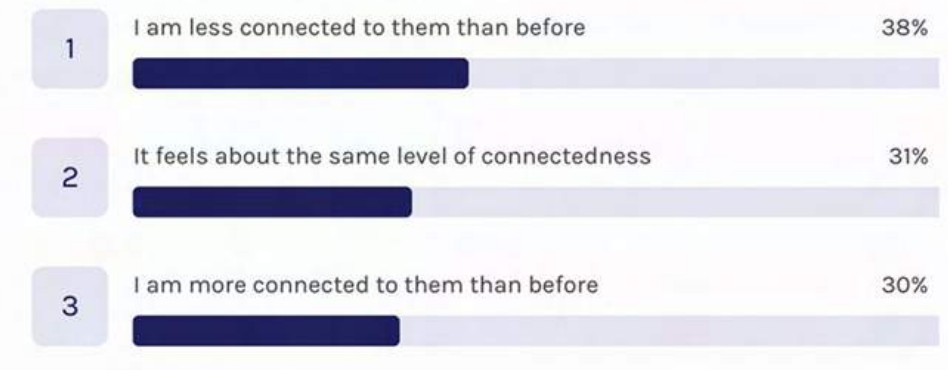
Productivity & Connection

Productivity seems to have increased during these times. That may be in part due to the nature of the pandemic and having to adapt so quickly. But overall, it seems only 15% felt their productivity decreased during this period while 48% felt they had been more productive and 35% stayed about the same.



However, people seem to feel less connected to their colleagues than prior to the pandemic by 38%. It was fairly evenly distributed with feeling the same level of connectedness at 31% and 30% feeling even more connected than before.

As one of the 5 Cultural Keys for Evoloshen’s culture model, we know that connection is a vital part of a feeling of well-being for individuals and it has a great impact on an organizational level as well. So this is an area to be aware of and think about what you can do to make your teammates and culture feel highly connected.



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Collaboration & Great Tools

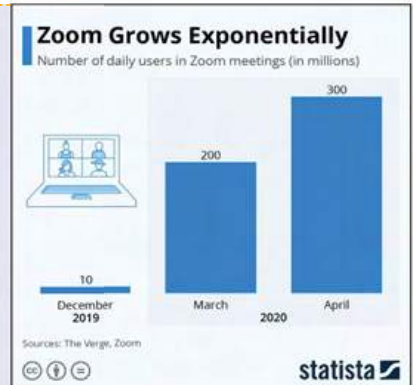
Collaboration is another vital key to a cohesive and engaged company culture. Taking teamwork to the next level where everyone understands by working together, it is for the good of the entire team or organization. Often times, companies with high collaboration describe their culture as an extended family because they genuinely care for each other.

In our survey, 43% of the participants thought collaboration had stayed about the same, while 32% thought it was harder to collaborate and 23% found it easier to collaborate.



Companies with high collaboration describe their culture as an extended family because they genuinely care for each other.

Zoom is one of the companies that has probably benefited the most with the massive lockdowns and change in working environment. They have gone from 10 million daily users in December 2019 to over 300 million daily users in April 2020.



There are many great tools that we can use in this digital age. Zoom by far was the most popular in our research with 64% using it regularly (and it reflects in their unexpected exponential growth during a few short months!). Microsoft Teams also experienced high growth and was close behind at 56%. WhatsApp, Skype and LinkedIn made it to the Top 5.



Creativity & Top Activities Maintaining Company Culture

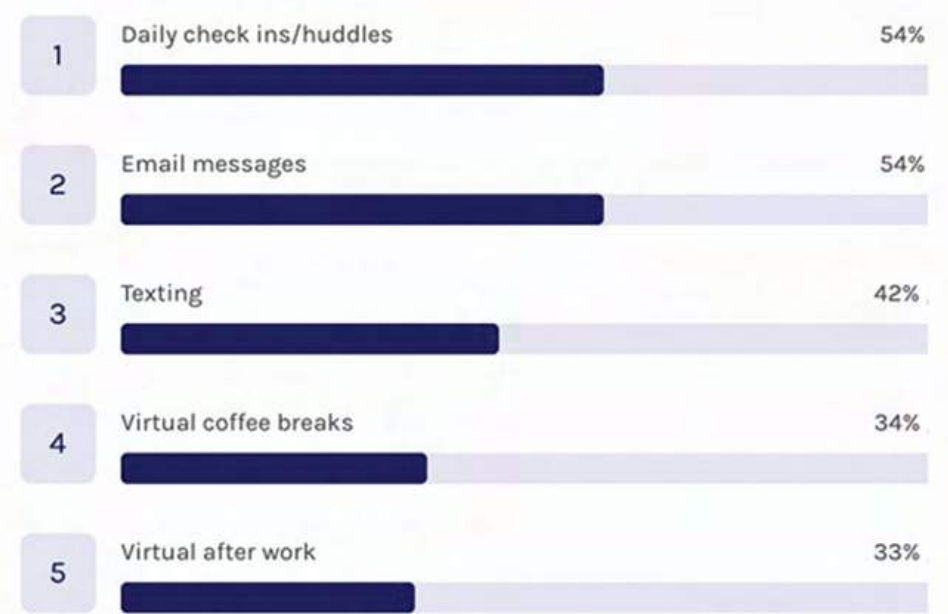
Creativity is another important key to an engaging culture and one of Evoloshen’s 5 Cultural Keys. With all the changes and adapting needed during this time, it was not surprising to see that 55% felt that their company has been more creative. 34% said creativity had stayed about the same and only 10% felt they were less creative. Clearly creativity is an important aspect of change and organizational agility.



Creativity is an important aspect of change and organizational agility.

We were very curious to see what activities people were doing to maintain their company culture. Communication is vital in any company but even more so during a crisis. A lot of companies adapted quickly to making sure managers and leaders were in regular conversations with their teams, even if they were furloughed. The companies keeping in touch with their people regularly were able to maintain the relationship and bring them back quickly when they could.

The top activities in maintaining the company culture have been the daily check-ins or huddles and also email messages at 54%. Texting got a 42% ranking and virtual coffee breaks or after works landed at 34% and 33%. For larger organizations, town hall meetings seemed to be a good way to share updates and information.





Communication is vital in any company but even more so during a crisis.

One obvious answer that we didn't include in our options but should have was using the telephone. Several participants said phone calls were a good way to maintain the company culture. In our discussions with many executives, they were encouraging their managers to have regular phone calls as well as a means to check in and stay connected. It seems everyone appreciates some sort of regular, preferably daily, contact particularly while working remotely.

Some additional input on activities to maintain the culture included:

- ▶ Stand up daily team meetings
- ▶ Meetings in cafes and restaurants
- ▶ Individual, small team, larger team & full office physical meetings in the return to the office environment
- ▶ Open access and contribution blog of learnings from lockdown
- ▶ Regular Teams meetings and Teams chat (all we had already installed at the beginning of 2020)
- ▶ IRL lunches and meetings
- ▶ Intranet
- ▶ More checks around how things are going and how people are doing health-wise

Celebration & Contribution

Celebration is another one of Evoloshen's 5 Cultural Keys to working with culture and creating an amazing company, so naturally we were also curious to see the results on this. A very important part of celebration is recognizing accomplishments, both big and small, and giving kudos to employees doing a good job as it reinforces the behaviors and shows others what is valued in a company.

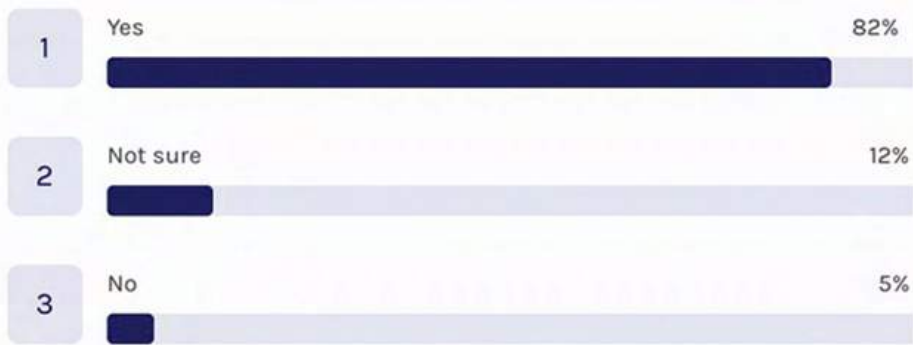
It was interesting to see that celebration and recognition stayed about the same for 51% and unfortunately 31% felt their companies were doing less of it. Only 17% said their companies had done more. In these challenging times, we think this figure should have been and should be much higher.



Giving kudos to employees doing a good job as it reinforces the behaviors and shows others what is valued in a company.

We also looked into if people felt their company contributes in some way to make the world a better place. There was a resounding yes from 82% of the participants in this survey with only 12% who were not sure and 5% who said no. This indicates just how important contribution is in today's world!

Companies that care about their employees and making the world a better place are most certainly going to thrive in the future.



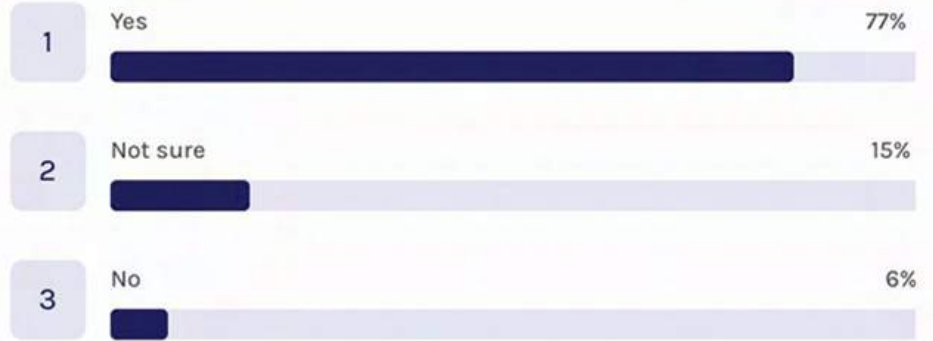
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Bigger Purpose & Well-Being

Another vital part to company culture is having a clearly stated bigger purpose as to why they do what they do. Again, a very large percentage of 77% replied that their company does indeed have a clear purpose. Only 15% were not sure and 6% said no.

Having a bigger purpose is essential for companies that will thrive in the future. The younger generations are consciously looking for those purpose-driven companies and by 2025, they will make up 75% of the global workforce. It is something to keep in mind in the near future is to make sure your company purpose is clearly defined and in place!



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We were also quite curious to see the general sense of well-being as the pandemic has certainly taken a toll overall with the fear and uncertainty. We were happy to see that the majority either rated good at 52% or great at 28%. Only 18% replied so-so and only 1% said not so good. It was nice to see that no one stated really bad.



However, that is not to take it for granted that most people are feeling well. In our conversations with individuals over these months, we have seen a difference between demographics of people.

- Many young children seem to be feeling worse and isolated by not going to school and interacting. Not attending schools or attending virtually seems to be having a negative impact on their mental health and well-being. Several doctors and psychologists have been sounding alarms about this issue. They may also not understand the situation fully and have higher levels of fear due to the uncertain circumstances.
- Teenagers seem to be doing a bit better because they are used to staying connected via social media so it has not changed as much with how they are interacting with their peers. They are also able to manage their own time without the need to have parental oversight.
- Young adults who live by themselves seem to be suffering more due to isolation and the need for human interaction. We know some companies allowed their employees to come to the office, even if it went against the guidelines at the time, just because their employees said they felt much better doing so.
- Parents of young children seem to be more stressed juggling between trying to work remotely, homeschooling, and having so many household distractions. This seemed to be one of the more stressed groups. However, we also heard that it was nice for them to have more time with the family and less time spent commuting to work
- And the toll on the elderly, who have been isolated from their families and are also in the highest risk groups, has been very high. This is probably the group that was hardest hit during the pandemic on many levels.

The last observation on the health and well-being in general is that although it has been great to stay connected using all the technology and video meetings and apps, beware of digital and screen fatigue. There must be a balance to stay in a healthy state of mind. It is important to step away from the constant exposure to technology, to get regular exercise, and to make sure you can schedule time and breaks between meetings to stay in balance.

Although the global crisis has varied somewhat from country to country, one thing is certain, we humans need human interaction. We need conversations. We need physical meetings, contact and touch.

This is certainly something to keep in mind—if there is a way to make an interaction more personal, do it! Make a phone call versus sending an email. Turn on the videos and interact with each other as much as possible on digital meetings. And when we return to meeting again in person, take the time to appreciate that connection as much as possible.



Beware of digital and screen fatigue. There must be a balance to stay in a healthy state of mind.

Change in the Future of the Workplace

Our last question was exploring what people would like to change in the future of their workplace. Some clear themes emerged...

FLEXIBILITY

By far, the biggest comments were around flexibility. Many participants seemed to like the ability to work remotely and want to continue to have that option. It seems that people want their freedom to choose and not “have to” be physically in the office.

Many CEOs are evaluating their office space and considering reducing office space to save costs and give their employees more flexibility as they understand that productivity has not decreased for many. It will be interesting to see the long-term ramifications on office space.

It is also important for people to be able to separate work from personal time which was harder for many working from home.

MEETINGS

The next category with the most comments was around meetings. People want more flexibility in times and were definitely interested in having LESS meetings in general. People seem to understand that travel for meetings is no longer necessary as a lot can be accomplished without the time and expense of traveling. People also wanted more informal meetings and different formats such as a “walk and talk” type of meeting.

Many people still want to have in-person meetings and long to return to the day when they can meet up physically. As one participant stated, “I would like more physical meetings. It promotes co-creation better than digital meetings. We would use all our senses in meeting up!” Another said, “I miss seeing my colleagues IRL.” And yet another participant stated that meeting in person “is better for co-creation and team spirit.”

People want more flexibility and LESS meetings in general.

DEVELOPMENT

Many participants added comments regarding development and virtual learning. They wanted more unique ways to grow and to get positive energy. They wanted more uplifting activities “to achieve better attitudes and happier and positive perspective on the world’s current status.” One participant stated they wanted a “change in mindset for the middle management.” And several stated they wanted to keep the best of what they have learned.

Those who learn and develop continuously will undoubtedly thrive in their workplace and careers.

If there is one thing we know, we have all learned a tremendous amount about both our individual and organizational resilience during this time. Let’s be sure to capture the learning, take the good, and keep on growing and developing going into the future. In fact, those who learn and develop continuously will undoubtedly thrive in their workplace and careers.



TRUST

Trust was another theme that emerged from the participants. When people feel trusted to do their jobs, you can allow them to deliver the results. It is important to have “bench marked systems in place to work remotely” but then to let your people do their work freely.

It's vital that leaders celebrate and appreciate their employees. Recognition, especially in front of a team, only reinforces the good traits and behaviors to have in the company.

In discussions with CEOs and top management, this was a big concern in the beginning of these uncertain times—letting people go and trusting them to do their jobs. We heard several times that many were pleasantly surprised at how their employees rallied and kept things going.

A common response was wanting to have more recognition and more trust. It's vital that leaders celebrate and appreciate their employees. Recognition, especially in front of a team, only reinforces the good traits and behaviors to have in the company.

PHYSICAL SPACE

It is important that employees have the tools and environment to thrive at work.

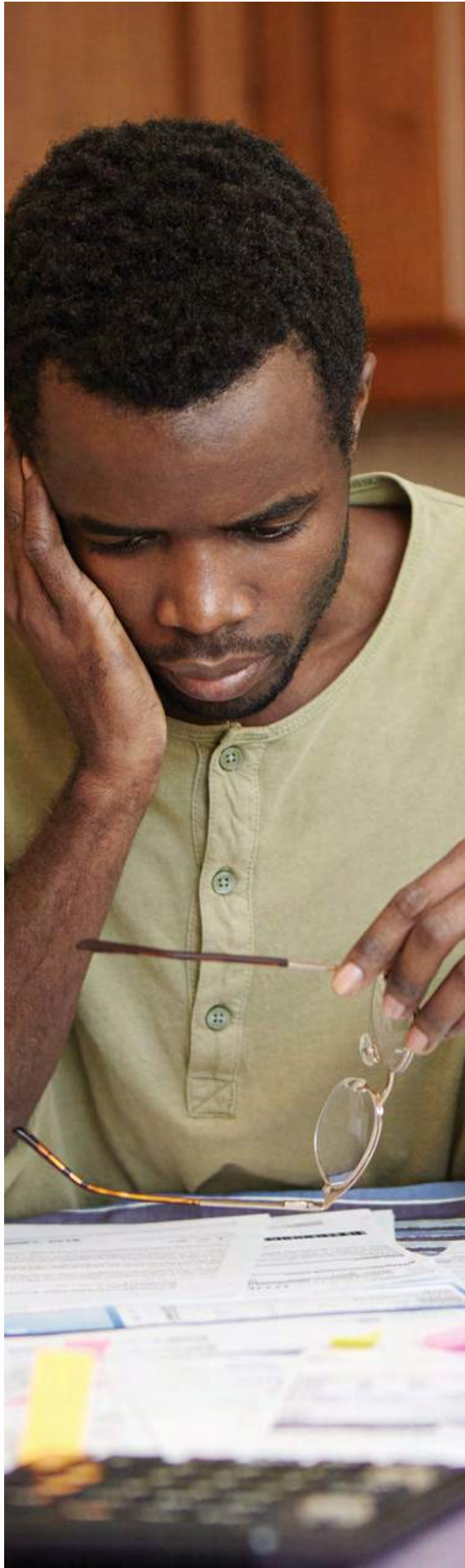
It was important that people felt they had the right working environment, even at home. Many companies who made the switch to working remotely allowed their employees to get what they needed while others were not as supportive. Those companies going the extra mile to help their employees set up home offices and the ability to work remotely seemed to fare better and created more loyalty with their staff. It is important that employees have the tools and environment to thrive at work.

COMMUNICATION

Sharing lessons learned helps people to feel connected and that they are making progress.

Communication is vital in uncertain times. No matter that the message is heard multiple times, it gives reassurance to employees when the leaders give information that informs and are also sharing a vision or direction. Participants shared how important it was that the leaders “walk the talk” and that it was also important to “share good ideas between employees and not just the management to employees.” Sharing lessons learned helps people to feel connected and that they are making progress.





CONNECTION AND COLLABORATION

Strong relationships at work strengthen the culture of a company. When a team has a good connection, they will have good results. Working remotely has its challenges in this regard. It's important to still have fun and to have a sense of belonging. As one participant stated, "building a more empathetic connected feeling" brings people together more.

For some of the participants, there was a longing to return to how things used to be. There needs to be some thought into this for managers and leaders as some things can return to the way they were before, but other things may not, so take the lessons from the challenging times and really think about how you want to create your company culture.

Participants wanted more collaboration and connection to their teams and co-workers. Collaboration was something that people wanted even more of and to do it better as well.

Take the lessons from the challenging times and really think about how you want to create your company culture.

CREATIVITY

Another of our 5 Cultural Keys is creativity. These challenging times have pushed the majority into finding good solutions and have increased the innovation, especially around the areas of digitalization and remote work. Several participants wanted more and better use of online solutions such as being able to share documents with both colleagues and clients. This is a core area that everyone can take lessons learned and apply them to keep them going, even as we begin to return to normal eventually.

CELEBRATION

As mentioned above, participants want "more positive recognition of what we have all achieved." There were comments that it was a challenge to keep positive energy up in the company and that recognition could help. It is human nature to want to be acknowledged for a job well done. This is certainly an area with lots of room to improve on and focus on for most leaders and companies.

CONTRIBUTION

High trust and empowering employees with the autonomy to make a positive difference engages the workforce.

Another of Evoloshen's 5 Cultural Key model is contribution. Even though the majority of participants felt their company had a well-defined purpose, there were still participants who took the time to comment that they felt their company should have a "better sense of purpose and contribution" and that they wanted the "ability/authority to act to make things better." High trust and empowering employees with the autonomy to make a positive difference engages the workforce.

THE 5 CULTURAL KEYS MODEL BY EOLOSHEN



1. Collaboration

Take teamwork to the next level so that everyone works for the greater good of all, build trust that empowers your people



2. Creativity

Allow for innovation and ideas to flow freely from within the organization, your people have a wealth of knowledge inside of them



3. Connection

Create a deeper emotional connection with your employees and customers through values and a bigger purpose



4. Celebration

Give plenty of recognition and appreciation by focusing on what is going well, enjoy all your wins—both big and small, have FUN!



5. Contribution

Giving back and having a positive impact in the world gives meaning and purpose to your employees—and to the company!

When there is a high level of trust, a strong vision and purpose, well defined values, as well as a conscious co-creation of a company culture, working remotely will be an empowering experience for employees.

Moving forward, it is important to evaluate the lessons of the challenges and uncertainty, to keep the innovative ideas, and to continually develop the employees.

We can help you to evaluate some of the best ways to build an amazing culture by increasing engagement, trust, productivity and profitability.

If you are ready to strategically boost your company culture, reach out to us at Support@Evoloshen.com for a complimentary Culture Strategy Session. We look forward to hearing from you!



Culture is the glue that holds the company together and even more vital when working virtually.

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