

# Transformation of HR practices in support of wellness

 By [Chris Blair](#)

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The Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the world of work, reshaping not only where and how work gets done, but also redefining the role of human resources (HR) in supporting and driving organisational success. As the global workforce has gradually transitioned into a post-pandemic era, several emerging HR trends are shaping the future of work.



Dr Chris Blair, CEO of 21st Century

In this article, we explore the top current HR trends, including organisational culture, HR technology, change management, and career management, and the interactions and effects of hybrid working and work-from-anywhere trends since the pandemic. Moreover, it explores the crucial connection between these trends and employee wellness, encompassing mental, physical, financial, and relational aspects.

## Supporting culture

The pandemic has highlighted the need for a strong and cohesive organisational culture that supports employee wellness. A culture that emphasises transparency, communication, and inclusivity is more likely to foster a sense of belonging and engagement among employees, irrespective of their physical location.

Moreover, such a culture supports mental wellness by reducing stress and anxiety associated with uncertainty and isolation. Additionally, organisations are now placing greater emphasis on values and purpose, which have been shown to be significant drivers of employee satisfaction and retention.

By aligning organisational values with individual values, organisations can support employees in finding meaning and purpose in their work, contributing positively to their mental wellness.

## Technology's increasing role

The acceleration of HR technology adoption has been integral to supporting employee wellness. Tools and platforms that

facilitate remote work, collaboration, and communication have become crucial in maintaining physical wellness by mitigating the risks associated with in-person interactions whilst enabling employees to keep relevant and meaningful relationships with each other.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning streamline HR processes, from recruitment to performance management, reducing stress and enhancing the overall employee experience.

Additionally, HR technology has played a crucial role in ensuring the health and safety of employees, with tools such as contact tracing, health monitoring, and virtual healthcare services becoming more common, further supporting physical wellness.

## Continuous learning for mental well-being

The ability to adapt and respond to change is essential for maintaining employee wellness. Change management is a key area of focus for HR professionals as they guide organisations through the complexities of a rapidly evolving work landscape.

Fostering a culture of continuous learning and development supports mental wellness by reducing anxiety associated with change and equipping employees with the necessary skills and tools to thrive. Additionally, providing support for mental health and well-being, particularly during times of significant change, is crucial.



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## Prioritising growth and development

The pandemic has prompted many individuals to reassess their careers and professional aspirations. Career management has become a top priority for HR, with a focus on providing employees with opportunities for growth, development, and advancement that support their overall wellness.

Offering flexible career paths, personalised learning and development programmes, and mentorship opportunities supports mental wellness by providing a sense of purpose and direction.

Supporting employees in achieving a healthy work-life balance is also essential, as this has been shown to be a key factor in attracting and retaining top talent, and contributes positively to physical, mental, and relational wellness.

## Redefining policies to retain connections

The shift to hybrid working and work-from-anywhere models has challenged traditional notions of work and required HR to redefine policies and practices to support employee wellness. The hybrid work model requires organisations to be flexible and adaptable, ensuring that employees have the necessary tools and resources to be productive, regardless of their location, thereby supporting physical and mental wellness.

Similarly, the work-from-anywhere trend highlights the need for organisations to be open and inclusive, embracing diversity and leveraging technology to connect and engage with a global workforce. This supports relational wellness by fostering a sense of belonging and connection among employees, irrespective of their geographical location.

## Ever-evolving

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a lasting impact on the world of work, reshaping how organisations operate and how employees experience work. The trends discussed in this article are shaping the future of work and will continue to evolve in response to the changing needs and expectations of the workforce.

As organisations navigate the post-pandemic era, HR role has become crucial in driving success and ensuring that organisations are well-positioned to thrive in the new normal, with a particular focus on supporting employee wellness in its various forms.

## ABOUT CHRIS BLAIR

Chris Blair, Chief Executive Officer of 21st Century Pay Solutions Group (Pty) Ltd, has consulted to over 500 organisations - both in Southern Africa and internationally. Chris holds a BSC Chem. Eng. and MBA in Leadership & Sustainability and is registered as a Chartered Human Resource (CHR) Practitioner with the South African Board for Personnel Practice (SABPP). He is also accredited as a Master Reward Specialist through the South African Reward Association (SARA).

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