charter

PLAYBOOK

2023

"So today, as you hold ideas, plans, mission statements, editorial ambitions, and partnership possibilities...may you also hold the intricate scaffolding of all the visible and invisible work that keeps this world moving and growing."

— Lakshmi Rengarajan

Forward

The workplace has arguably changed more in the last two years than in the last two decades. The old playbooks for building a nimble, inclusive, and visionary organization are no longer relevant. As shaping and executing the talent agenda becomes a top priority of the c-suite, CHROs and CPOs are more vital to the success of their organizations than ever before.

At this year's Charter Workplace summit, we asked: How can leaders of the talent agenda leverage this moment to create workplaces that will thrive in this new, dynamic paradigm? As conversations unfolded onstage, you

answered with your own tactics, questions, and frameworks for navigating the year ahead.

This playbook, which captures those ideas as well as the insights of our speakers, is meant to serve as a practical guide for some of this moment's thorniest challenges. We look forward to seeing how you put it to use to shape the talent agenda for 2023.

*Charter is launching a premium membership for strategic and visionary HR leaders: Charter Pro. The membership provides ongoing access to the need-to-know information, data-driven insights, and on-demand expertise to make high-value decisions in today's dynamic workplace. Interested? **Apply here** to be part of an exclusive group of Founding Members.*

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The State Of The Workplace: Where Do We Go From Here?

Before we can chart a course for 2023, we need to understand where we're starting from. During this session, moderator **Kevin Delaney**, CEO and Editor in Chief of Charter, and **Julia Hobsbawm**, consultant and author of *The Nowhere Office*, discussed how we arrived at our current moment—which Hobsbawm characterized as "reinventing, reimagining, and reworking how we do work and why we do work"—before moving on to the most important questions for forging ahead.

As workplaces consider how to optimize hybrid work while engaging multiple generations in the workforce, Hobsbawm encouraged leaders to focus on the connections between people to guide that process. "What matters is the interaction, the networks, the relationships and how people do what they do when they come into contact with each other, whether that's digitally or in person," she said. Above all, that means getting clear on the "why" behind the purpose of remote and in-person work, designing a hybrid work configuration that's suited for workers at all stages of life, and being purposeful about creating opportunities for connection.

Speaker:

Julia Hobsbawm
Author/Presenter,
The Book and Podcast
The Nowhere Office

Moderator:

Kevin Delaney
CEO and Editor in Chief
Charter

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What we've learned so far

## Workers have different needs at different life stages.

In *The Nowhere Office*, Hobsbawm grouped workers based on three generational life stages: the Learner, the Leaver, and the Leader, which she defined respectively as "those at the start of their career, those mid or late on in their working life, and those influencing the decisions and daily direction of those with and for them." At each stage, workers value flexibility and in-person work differently depending on their desire for learning and mentorship opportunities, responsibilities outside of work, and influence within the workplace.

The pandemic has changed how we think about work.

"We've seen a fundamental shift in worker perspectives that the pandemic accelerated, where people, especially the younger generations, are demanding work with meaning and purpose," attendee **Michael Braithwaite**, co-founder of Next Big Thing Consulting, wrote in our collaborative Google Doc. "Arbitrary structures and rules won't hold, nor will companies without a deeper, positive purpose be able to attract talent."

Not everything can be done well virtually.

Attendee **Cindy Taibi**, chief information officer at The New York Times, shared her own experience with the limitations of remote working. "Conflicts handled virtually too often get postponed or deflected," she wrote. "I do, however, disagree a little that collaboration done virtually is just as good as collaboration done in person. I think most people don't want to sit in front of a screen for hours on end and a working session of four hours or more definitely benefits from being in person."
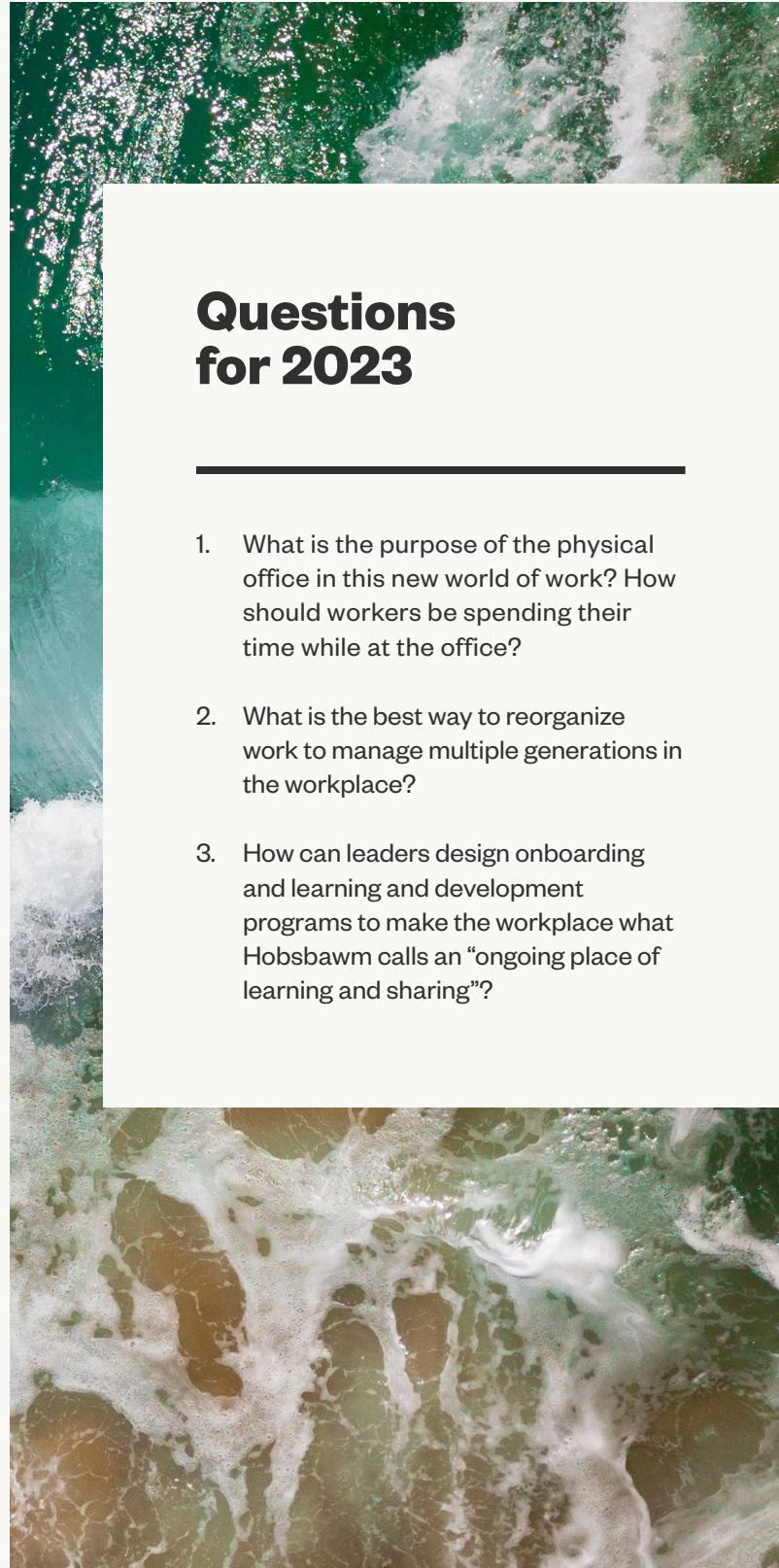
Questions for 2023

1. What is the purpose of the physical office in this new world of work? How should workers be spending their time while at the office?

2. What is the best way to reorganize work to manage multiple generations in the workplace?

3. How can leaders design onboarding and learning and development programs to make the workplace what Hobsbawm calls an "ongoing place of learning and sharing"?

Tactics and practices

Use physical offices for conflict as well as connection.

Time spent on "conflict, disagreement, the brainstorm, the row, the 'I'm sorry, we're not on the same page here'" is time best spent together with colleagues, said Hobsbawm. In-person work—whether it's in an office, coffee shop, or other location—is also important for training, mentoring, and social connections between people. "To hang out, to learn, or to argue," is what in-person work time should be for, she concluded.

Design flexible work policies around onboarding needs.

Learners, the youngest of Hobsbawm's generational cohorts, have a unique need to be in the office to learn about the organization's work and develop relationships in the workplace. Having them in the office helps them get up to speed while fostering intergenerational relationships between learners and leavers/leaders. You can consider requiring new employees to spend more time in the office for some initial period of employment.

Celebrate more with rituals.

Hobsbawm argued that leaders can increase meaning and connection by recognizing the daily work of the organization: "You ought to be celebrating what you're doing together. That shouldn't be a cheesy or inauthentic thing. It's how work should be done: with real meaning." Organizations should find occasions to "create red-letter days—the birthdays, the Thanksgivings, the Seders," she said, prompting attendee **Julia Soffa** of knowledge-management software company Guru to voice her appreciation for "workplace rituals (coming together for events that create connection) to drive purpose."

Additional reading

The Nowhere Office by Julia Hobsbawm, available on **Bookshop** and **Amazon**.

Hobsbawm's Bloomberg Work Shift column on the "flexetariat" and the work changes employees are demanding

S. Mitra Kalita's column for Time and Charter on how to treat onboarding as the first step in retention

02/

Inclusivity as a Foundation: Building a Culture of Inclusive Leadership

There is no pressing workplace challenge in this moment—from attracting talent in a tight labor market to designing a hybrid policy to navigating an economic downturn—that can be met without infusing diversity into the decision-making process. Moderator S. Mitra Kalita, columnist for Time and Charter, CEO of URL Media, and publisher at EpicenterNYC, led a conversation between Daisy Auger-Domínguez, chief people officer of Vice Media Group; Debi Yadegari, founder and CEO, of Villyge; and Michelle Yu, co-founder and CEO of Josie about how they have used their own experiences with bias to infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion into their organizations' DNA. Throughout the conversation, they shared tactical strategies for making your company and the working world a better place for women, workers of color, and other marginalized employees.

Speakers:

Daisy Auger-Domínguez
Chief People Officer
Vice Media Group

Debi Yadegari
Founder & CEO
Villyge

Michelle Yu
Co-founder and CEO
Josie

Moderator:

S. Mitra Kalita
CEO, URL Media
Publisher, Epicenter-NYC
Columnist, Time/Charter

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What we've learned so far

Employees are hungry for structural change.

Attendee **Dr. Jacqueline Kerr**, a behavioral-health scientist and expert on burnout, shared how she has seen the need for deeper change in her work on the intersection of DEI, burnout, and leadership. In her view, many companies are currently "providing services and bandaids without first addressing the inequalities in the systems. Employees are fed up of us trying to fix them and want organizations to change," she wrote.

We can no longer ignore what might be going on in the background.

The pandemic has brought issues of equity and inclusion to the fore, as workers' home lives have become more integrated into work, Yadegari pointed out. "We've seen cats running along the keyboards in front of Zoom and children running amok in the background," she observed.

Questions for 2023

1. How do you make inclusivity foundational as opposed to supplemental in your organization?

2. What skills do managers need to successfully promote inclusivity and belonging at every level of the organization?

Tactics and practices

Ask, "Whose voice is not being heard?"

To effectively embed inclusion into every aspect of the talent agenda, from hiring strategy to learning and development programs to performance reviews, Auger-Domínguez recommended "wondering whose voice is not being heard when you're making decisions." That question could apply to a group of employees, like neurodiverse workers, or a business task, like selecting diverse vendors.

Re-onboard workers.

"We've been spending all this energy on onboarding new employees in a unique and special way," said Auger-Domínguez. "We need to do the same thing for our current employees," a way of both making colleagues feel valued and encouraging them to come to the office.

Focus on up-skilling managers.

Because managers can be powerful forces for inclusion for individual employees, one of the best ways to drive belonging is "to equip people to have authentic one-on-one conversations that capture, in particular, people in moments of vulnerability and distress in their lives," argued Yu. Auger-Domínguez described her work leading the creation of an ongoing manager training program at Vice that covers the basics of company policies, leading successful one-on-ones, inclusive hiring principles, and periodic updates on how to communicate new company policies.

Invest in making the workplace accessible for a neurodiverse workforce.

For companies hoping to build more robust strategies to support neurodivergent employees, attendee **Carlos Lozano Ehlers**, managing director at BICG, provided several suggestions in the chat, including architectural interventions like quiet rooms, fabric choice, neutral-smelling materials, and natural lighting. For both neurodivergent and neurotypical employees, however, providing flexibility is just as important: "Make exceptions in the shared desk policies, limit duration of meetings, [and] allow flexibility of working hours."

Additional reading

A Better Future for Working Parents, Charter's playbook for leaders and organizations

Charter co-founder and COO Erin Grau on how to set up employee resource groups (ERGs) and run them effectively

Charter's interview with Auger-Dominguez on embracing discomfort in getting the office return right

Dr. Stephanie Pinder-Amaker and Dr. Lauren Wadsworth's column for Charter on creating diverse hiring pipelines

Charter's interview with Harry's chief people officer Katie Childers about the company's re-onboarding plan as part of its office return

Understood CEO Fred Poses' column for Time and Charter on how to include learning differences in diversity efforts

03/

The Toolkit for Navigating Economic Uncertainty

Speakers:

Francine Katsoudas

EVP and Chief People, Policy & Purpose Officer Cisco

Kieran Luke

Chief Operating Officer Lunchbox

Mai Ton

CHRO in Residence Charter

Moderator:

John Simons

Executive Editor Time

As companies reckon with difficult choices ahead—or adjust to difficult choices already made—many of the initiatives that gained popularity during the pandemic are now threatened by budget constraints, leaving employers to retain and support their employees with fewer resources. At the same time, pay freezes, layoffs, and hiring slowdowns are hurting employee morale, reducing bandwidth, and dragging down overall productivity.

Moderator **John Simons**, executive editor at Time, led a conversation with **Francine Katsoudas**, EVP and chief people, policy, and purpose officer at Cisco; **Kieran Luke**, chief operating officer at Lunchbox; and **Mai Ton**, Charter CHRO in residence about how to make it through the downturn with your agenda intact. They discussed decision-making frameworks for balancing budget cuts with continued investment in people, systems for clarifying priorities, and strategies for protecting valuable initiatives amid greater constraints.


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What we've learned so far

There's no going back.

For Katsoudas, the path forward doesn't involve resuming the old ways of doing things. "A year and a half ago, there was this belief that we would return to something. What we've learned is that there is no return to something," she said. Instead, leaders have to move forward with a more "agile and fluid way of working."

If employees don't get answers from leadership, they'll find their own.

Guru's Soffa reminded us that "human brains fill in the gaps with narratives in the absence of direct communications." That's why "transparency and sharing what you don't know on a consistent basis is essential."
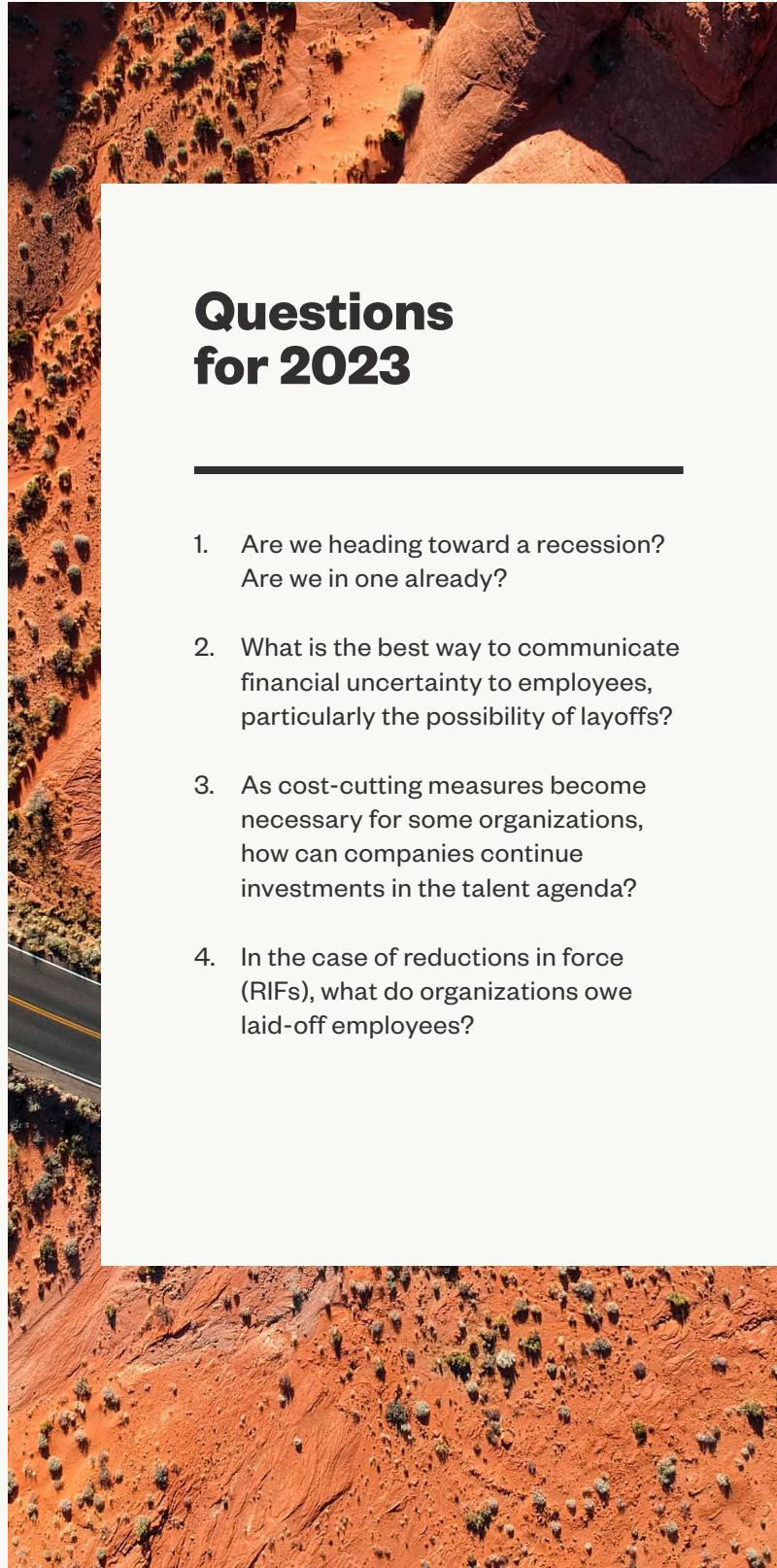
Questions for 2023

1. Are we heading toward a recession? Are we in one already?

2. What is the best way to communicate financial uncertainty to employees, particularly the possibility of layoffs?

3. As cost-cutting measures become necessary for some organizations, how can companies continue investments in the talent agenda?

4. In the case of reductions in force (RIFs), what do organizations owe laid-off employees?

Tactics and practices

Talk about what's not working.

"We owe it to our people to get really specific about where we're growing, where we're shrinking, where we think we have the most risk," said Katsoudas. "In doing so, we give our people a lot more power as well." Providing a clear-eyed look at the company's outlook is a lot more valuable to employees than painting an overly optimistic picture, argued attendee **Rob Caldera** of Future|Shift Consulting. "Treat your employees like adults and engage them in honest, open conversations about the future," he urged. "They'll appreciate it, as opposed to the positive-spin stuff that they see right through."

Realize that low- or no-cost benefits can be the most valuable to employees.

As belt-tightening becomes necessary at many organizations, remember that investing in employee benefits doesn't always require a line item in the budget. Our panelists listed policies like four-day work weeks, flexible schedules, and regular, company-wide days off as examples of low or no-cost benefits that are most popular among employees.

Assess which benefits best support your business objectives and look for savings elsewhere.

Luke cited an example from Lunchbox in which the company replaced a $75 work-from-home stipend with a fund providing employees up to $1,000 for professional development. "From the company's perspective, there will be some cost savings because not everyone will utilize it," he explained, "but those who self-select in will find a tremendous benefit that then returns back to the company in their increased skill level."

Approach layoffs with transparency and empathy.

For organizations considering a reduction in force, Ton cautioned that "the way you treat employees on the way out is actually an indication of your company and the culture that you've built." Give employees a soft landing with accelerated options, extended exercise windows, and other support. Attendee **Dominique Scott**, employee and sustainability communications lead at Vimeo, described one example from Alumneo, Vimeo's alumni network: a spreadsheet where former employees can opt into potential job leads and job search opportunities.

Additional reading

Charter's interview with *Redefining HR* author Lars Schmidt on what to do when layoffs and a recession collide with the future-of-work agenda

Charter's interview with The Segal Group's Tami Simon on how employers are approaching 2023 benefits planning

Kalita's column for Time and Charter on the right questions to ask about entering a recession

Charter's interview with Ranjay Gulati of Harvard Business School about how to emerge from a recession stronger

04 /

Understanding Employee Voice, Sentiment, and Engagement

Employers and employees are currently in the midst of negotiating a new social contract, with workers looking to be heard on social issues, remote work, benefits, and more. To understand the tools leaders can use to understand what their employees need, Delaney spoke with **Didier Elzinga,** the CEO of Culture Amp, an organization focused on employee engagement, performance management, and performance development. Together, they unpacked how to translate employee engagement information into action that makes workers feel supported and valued.

Speaker:

Didier Elzing
CEO
Culture Amp

Moderator:

Kevin Delaney
CEO and Editor in Chief
Charter

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What we've learned so far

Employees and leaders are both at a breaking point.

Attendee **Rachel Hanley-Browne**, a managing director at The Team Lab, observed that "we are now in the perfect storm of post pandemic burnout, heading straight into an economic downturn." For her, that means leaders are "having to lean in yet again" to understand what workers need in this moment.

Culture is more important than ever.

Elzinga defined culture simply, as "the way things are done around here." As distributed teams became more common during the pandemic, he observed that "people's connection to their teams have gotten stronger, but their ties to the organization have gotten weaker," making a shared set of norms and beliefs more important for organizational leaders to develop.

Questions for 2023

1. What actions are most effective for making a great culture, particularly for hybrid and remote teams?

2. How can leaders understand and respond to employee sentiment amid a period of heightened employee voice?

3. What should performance conversations look like in an organization that values flexibility and ongoing learning?

Tactics and practices

Use physical offices for conflict as well as connection.

Leaders shouldn't jump to interventions without first having good data to target those initiatives, argued Elzinga: "The heart of it is firstly asking people what experience they're having, secondly finding out where there's those gaps, and then the hard work comes from actually trying to fix it." Start by gathering feedback on employee experience, and ensure that it can be segmented along lines of privilege, like gender and race.

Audit your attention.

"The scarcest resource that we have is not money and it is not time. It is attention," said Elzinga. Organizations need to assess what they're asking their leaders, managers, and individual employees to focus attention on amid numerous priorities. "We can actually sit down and look at it and give ourselves almost a budget," he advised. "How are we going to prioritize the things we need [a company's staff] to focus on?

Additional reading

Charter's interview with Dr. Kenneth Matos, Culture Amp's director of people science, on how to approach individual job performance in tougher times

Delaney's column for Time, "The Pandemic Reset the Balance Between Workers and Employers. How Bosses Respond Will Shape the Future of Work."

Charter's newsletter briefing on effective tactics for employee recognition

How To End Productivity Paranoia With Better Prioritization— And "NO-KRs"

work priorities are nearly four times as likely to say they plan to stay at the company for at least two years.

Adopting a goal-setting framework like **Objectives and Key Results** can help individuals and teams prioritize what's important—and skip what isn't. Because just as important as OKRs? **NO-KRs**, the tasks and projects you won't do in order to get the more critical work done.

Now more than ever, it's the job of every leader to balance employee interests with the success of the organization, aligning everyone around the most impactful work. In Microsoft's latest **Work Trend Index report**, we surveyed 20,000 people in 11 countries and analyzed trillions of Microsoft 365 productivity signals, LinkedIn labor trends, and Glint People Science findings. The research uncovered an employer-employee disconnect: The majority of employees (87%) report that they are productive at work, and productivity signals across Microsoft 365, such as number of meetings, continue to climb. At the same time, 85% of leaders say that the shift to hybrid work has made it challenging to have confidence that employees are being productive.

This has led to productivity paranoia: when leaders fear that employees aren't working enough, even though all signs point to their people working beyond the point of exhaustion.

Productivity paranoia risks making hybrid work unsustainable. Leaders need to pivot from worrying about whether their people are working *enough* to helping them focus on the work that's *most important*. According to our **research**, employees who report having clarity about their

Here are more **tips** to help your people prioritize with OKRs:

Avoid top-down directives:

Think of OKRs as a way of helping people figure out what they can contribute—which not only empowers employees but unleashes innovation. Leaders should offer guidance but give managers and individuals the power to shape their goals.

You don't have to hit the goal:

Help teams design objectives to be slightly out of reach. The sweet spot is when people can achieve 70 to 80 percent of the objective.

Celebrate what is learned along the way:

Success is not about nailing the objective, but how you use that as a learning opportunity to continuously get better and better.

Share Your OKRs:

Leaders need to create the expectation that people will be held accountable to their metrics, and to model that accountability themselves.

05/

What We Know Now About Flexible Work: Looking Back, Looking Forward

After more than two years of trial and error, there are plenty of lessons organizations have learned about how to create more flexible setups—and plenty they're still figuring out. **Helen Kupp**, senior director of Slack's Future Forum, shared its latest research on worker and employer attitudes toward flexible work, followed by a conversation with Kupp, workplace strategist **Erica Keswin**, and Greenhouse chief people officer **Donald Knight**, moderated by Charter head of research **Emily Goligoski**. Throughout the conversation, they synthesized the conclusions of the past two and a half years about what works and what doesn't, unpacking proven tactics to make flexible and hybrid work more accessible, equitable, and productive for workers at all levels.

Speakers:

Helen Kupp
Senior Director
Future Forum

Erica Keswin
Author, Speaker,
Workplace Strategist

Donald Knight
Chief People Officer
Greenhouse Software

Moderator:

Emily Goligoski
Head of Research
Charter

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What we've learned so far

Adapting communication systems to a hybrid world is an ongoing priority.

Goligoski pointed to Charter's survey of 507 US business leaders, in which two-thirds said their organizations had solved for workplace-location arrangements. Fewer respondents—around half— said their workplaces had solutions or tools for colleague communication that worked.

Flexibility is now table stakes— which means trust is, too.

Future Forum research has shown that 70% of employees would consider looking for a new job if they weren't getting the desired level of flexibility. "The demand for flexibility is more than just about wanting to reduce our commute times," Kupp said. "It's about wanting to feel like our leaders trust us all to get work done." Attendee **Sabrina Baronberg** of the Veldhoen Company agreed, stressing the importance of "trusting employees that they don't need to explain why they need time off or how they are using their time."

Flexible work is about more than location.

Crucially, it's also about scheduling. Some 94% of employees want the ability to choose when they work, according to Future Forum.

Connection requires intentionality.

"Left to our own devices, we are not connecting," Keswin pointed out. Building relationships among colleagues doesn't require co-location, but co-location alone isn't enough to ensure those bonds are being formed. Attendee **JJ Yelton**, senior manager of culture and engagement at Torrent Consulting, credited *The Art of Gathering* author **Priya Parker** in explaining her team's "extremely intentional" approach to gathering: "Some experiences are purely for learning and growing together," she wrote, "while in other experiences it's intended to be all connection and fun."

Questions for 2023

1. What systems and tools can you implement to support managers of hybrid teams?

2. How do you balance the desire for schedule flexibility with the need for collaboration opportunities?

3. Similarly, how do you balance the desire for autonomy in deciding where and when to work with the need to facilitate connection?

Tactics and practices

Invest in a dedicated connection coordinator.

When the workplace experience is separated from a physical office, it becomes that much more about the people you interact with. Knight highlighted the importance of deliberately facilitating those relationships, pointing to the work of a Greenhouse employee tasked with crafting the people experience for a recent offsite: "Having her literally focus on, what do we want in that environment? What are the games that we want? What is the conversation we want? What do we want the conversation starters to be? It has really been able to accelerate the connection that we see between people."

"Leave loudly."

Keswin recalled how a professional acquaintance of hers adopted this as his mantra: "At 3pm in the afternoon, if he was going to his kid's baseball game, he screamed it from the rafters. And I think that's really important," she said. "You've got to walk the walk." The same applies for modeling flexibility more broadly, she added: "If you come in five days a week, everybody's going to think they have to come in five days a week." Knight further underscored the importance of modeling work-life balance, noting that for his own upcoming vacation, he planned to shoot a video of himself surfing and send it to his team. "People will not prioritize their wellbeing if they do not see leaders prioritizing their wellbeing," he said. "It's on us to amplify that so you create that safe space for other people to model the same behavior."

Require all meetings to pass a litmus test.

"Meetings are a really hard habit to break. But to make schedule flexibility possible, we have to make meetings matter again," Kupp said. Her organization uses the "four Ds": If the purpose of a synchronous gathering isn't to discuss, debate, decide, or develop people, it can be asynchronous work. On a regular cadence, declare "meeting bankruptcy" and remove everything from your calendar to reset and reevaluate the necessity of each meeting.

Make every meeting more asynchronous.

A gathering that needs to happen doesn't necessarily need to contain the entirety of the job to be done. For example, "instead of a 60-minute live brainstorm session, maybe **brainwrite** first, then set a 30-minute meeting to actually come together and discuss the set of ideas that were shared in advance," Kupp suggested. "You might find that not only are you more effective with that time together, you're actually getting more voices and more ideas to the table."

Ask, "What's throwing you off your game?"

The question serves an additional purpose beyond identifying blockers, Knight explained: It encourages people to show vulnerability, which in turn helps build and strengthen relationships.

Additional reading

Charter's briefing on *How the Future Works*, the book by Kupp and Future Forum co-founders Brian Elliott and Sheela Subramanian

Elliott's column for Time and Charter about how flexible work can drive belonging, connection, and creativity

Charter's interview with Priya Parker on how to return to the workplace

Charter's interview with Erica Keswin on the importance of rituals at work

Charter's interview with Christine Deputy, Pinterest's chief people officer, on the company's flexible-work program PinFlex

06/

Supporting the Next Generation of Leaders in a New Working World

Today's emerging leaders are operating in a radically different world of work than their predecessors, one in which there are different expectations of what a workplace should be and new ideas around what successful leadership looks like. Recruiting, retaining, and managing emerging leaders, and committing to meaningful career development, requires a willingness to adapt to new ways of thinking and working. Delaney moderated a fireside chat with mother-daughter team **Edith Cooper** and **Jordan Taylor**, co-founders of the small-group coaching program Medley, on how to empower people to do their best work, and how to create systems that help workers grow and thrive in their careers.

Speakers:

Edith Cooper
Co-Founder
Medley

Jordan Taylor
Co-Founder & CEO
Medley

Moderator:

Kevin Delaney
CEO and Editor in Chief
Charter

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What we've learned so far

Employees value both autonomy and inclusivity in their work—but it's hard to get the balance right.

Juggling those two values "can be pretty complicated," Cooper noted. "It means that they want to experience what it's like to be in the inner circle to contribute to the actions that drive an enterprise or their function or their day-to-day forward, but they want to do it in a way that works with other things in their life."

Older workers are learning a new approach to work from their youngest colleagues. .

"I think there's a fundamental shift away from work as a primary identity being driven by Gen Z and I love it," attendee Braithwaite wrote. Attendee **Julie Lowe**, hiring manager at Mountain Lake Lodge, agreed: "I'm a millennial, but really love how Gen Z is embracing the workplace. Making sure they set those boundaries to have work-life balance," she said.

Manager quality has a direct impact on a business's bottom line.

That cuts both ways: On the one hand, a good manager makes a significant difference in an employee's performance, Taylor noted: "You can't be responsible for business results without engaging with that." On the other hand, she added, "one of the most popular reasons people leave companies is because they're leaving their managers."
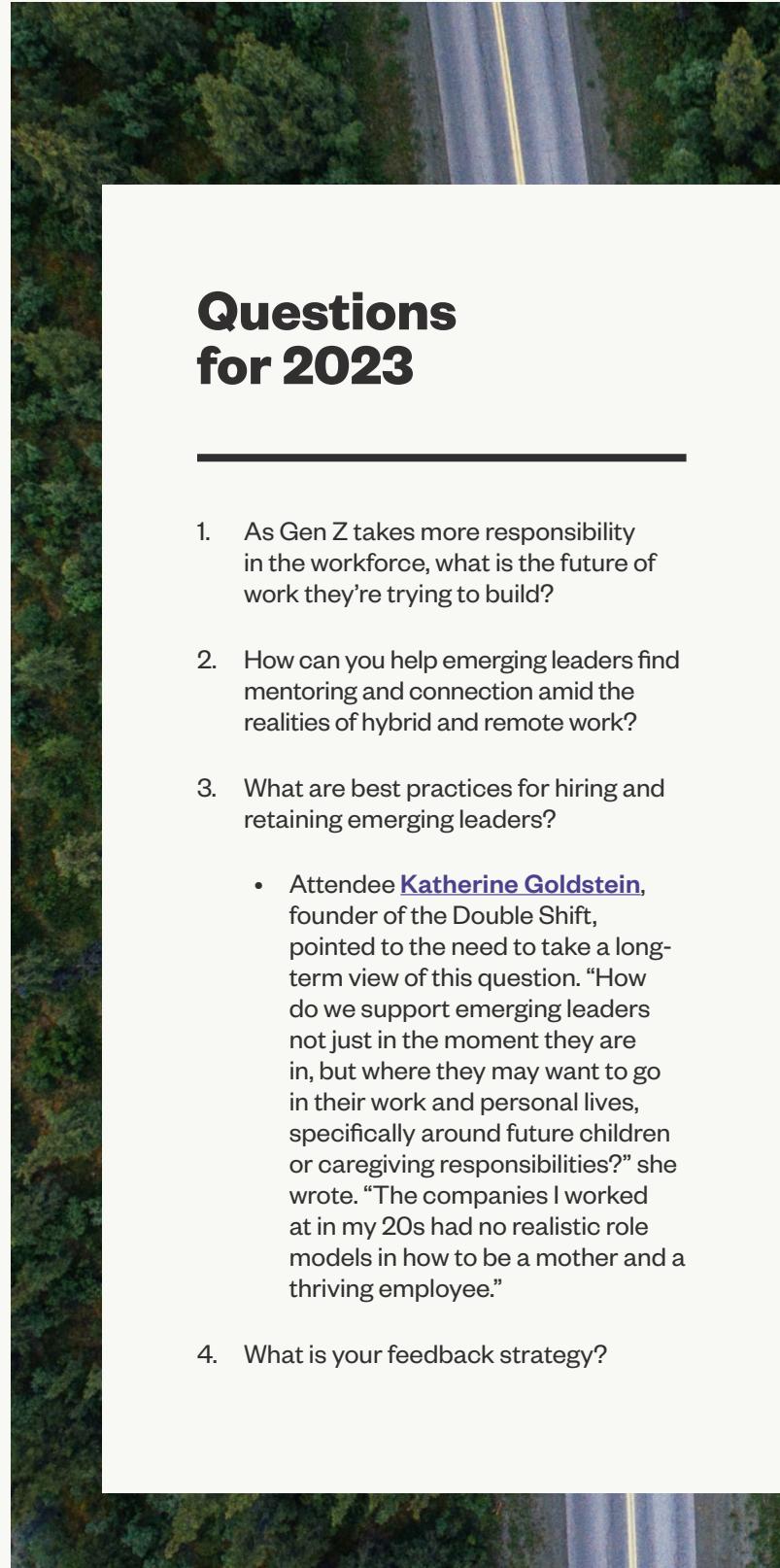
Questions for 2023

1. As Gen Z takes more responsibility in the workforce, what is the future of work they're trying to build?

2. How can you help emerging leaders find mentoring and connection amid the realities of hybrid and remote work?

3. What are best practices for hiring and retaining emerging leaders?

    -   Attendee **Katherine Goldstein**, founder of the Double Shift, pointed to the need to take a long-term view of this question. "How do we support emerging leaders not just in the moment they are in, but where they may want to go in their work and personal lives, specifically around future children or caregiving responsibilities?" she wrote. "The companies I worked at in my 20s had no realistic role models in how to be a mother and a thriving employee."

4. What is your feedback strategy?

Tactics and practices

Include real-world scenarios in manager training.

Too often, workers who assume manager responsibilities do so without an understanding of the skills needed to support their reports day to day. "We give people an opportunity to expand their role without giving them the experiences they need to practice the craft," Cooper argued. Rather than having managers and managerial candidates passively take in information, create spaces where managers (and managerial candidates) can actively practice coaching an employee or having an uncomfortable conversation.

Build personalization into your development plans.

The process of cultivating younger workers "probably won't be the same solution for every rising leader in the company," Taylor said. "A talent-development strategy needs to meet people where they are."

Make your organization's work culture public information.

"Inward-facing values and how they impact day-to-day experience is just as important as outward facing values and how they impact the business," noted Braithwaite. "Candidates should be able to get a sense of what it's like to work there and whether values align, in addition to what the work is/does."

Invest in soft-skills development for middle managers.

Leverage the importance of the manager-report relationship by focusing manager learning and development on things like self-awareness and interpersonal skills, Taylor said. "How are we making these softer skills no longer soft, making them much more tangible for people?" These efforts have a downstream effect, helping emerging leaders thrive by setting their managers up for success in engaging with them.

Additional reading

Charter's interview with Maia Ervin, CPO at the Gen Z digital-marketing agency JUV Consulting, on how Gen Z is changing the workplace

Kalita's column for Time and Charter featuring an as-told-to from a Gen Z worker on what it was like to join the workforce during the pandemic

Charter's briefing on *True North: Emerging Leader Edition* by Bill George and Zach Clayton

Charter's interview last year with Cooper and Taylor

07/

Moving Beyond Words: Showing Actionable Leadership on Societal Issues

From reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights to racial justice to family leave, the call for companies to take a firm stand on social issues has never been greater—and getting it right has never been more high-stakes. Workers increasingly expect their employers not only to make their position known, but to provide solutions that fill the void left by systemic and public-policy failures.

Moderated by Kalita, this session featured a discussion between **Shelley Alpern**, director of corporate engagement at Rhia Ventures; **Julie Binder**, senior vice president of brand and communications at Maven Clinic; and **Yrthya Dinzey-Flores**, vice president of DEI, social impact, and sustainability at Justworks. The conversation focused on how employers can back up internal and external statements with meaningful action—and how to do so in a way that strengthens engagement, culture, and organizational purpose.

Speakers:

Shelley Alpern
Director of Corporate
Engagement
Rhia Ventures

Julie Binder
Senior Vice President of
Brand & Communications
Maven Clinic

Yrthya Dinzey-Flores
Vice President, DEI,
Social Impact &
Sustainability
Justworks

Moderator:

S. MITRA KALITA
CEO, URL Media
Publisher, Epicenter-NYC
Columnist, Time/Charter

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What we've learned so far

Action can aid the talent agenda.

Beyond questions of ethics and values, Alperin noted, taking a public stand can come with practical benefits for employee engagement and retention. "There's an instinctive natural reluctance to try to solve societal problems. You have a company because you're there to make whatever your widget is. You're not social workers," Alperin said. But "It's not a matter of saving the world. It's an issue of doing the right thing by their employees... Companies have so much to gain in terms of employee loyalty."

Questions for 2023

1. What is your framework for deciding when to take a public stance on an issue? What form does that stance take?

2. How do you engage employees in the decision-making process?

3. How do you factor social issues and policy changes into benefits planning?

4. What role do employee resource groups (ERGs) play in helping your organization decide when and how to speak up?

   - Attendee **Sarah Johal**, co-founder and executive director of the Parents in Tech Alliance, wrote: "Little has shifted in how companies are ensuring ERGs have a seat at the table to shape cultural and policy decision-making, and are still depending on ERG's unpaid labor. How are business leaders envisioning the future of ERGs?"

Tactics and practices

Ask, "Could we have impact?"

Dinzey-Flores shared Justworks' framework for deciding when to speak up, which is rooted in an assessment of whether doing so will move the needle in any meaningful way. "Will lending our voice help and actually make a difference?" she said. "Or would we just be saying something for the sake of saying it?" In some cases, a donation may be more impactful than a statement. Binder highlighted a similar process at Maven for "right-sizing" responses, pointing to Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a recent case study. "Our employees were certainly talking about it," she said, but "as a women's health company, is this an issue for us? Really understanding, do we have employees based there? How much is this an issue for our clients?... We can't give the same level of response to every issue."

Involve employees in your decision-making.

Dinzey-Flores encouraged attendees to "figure out how they connect their talent agenda to social impact." Part of that is relying on the talent itself to shape the impact, using town halls and other methods to take a pulse on employee sentiment and collectively brainstorm ways to respond to an issue. Once a plan is in place, she added, "always go internal first" in communicating what that looks like before making any external statements.

Ask pointed questions about benefits.

With many of the most pressing social issues right now having a direct effect on employee benefits, it's more important than ever to make sure benefits are meeting employee needs. When it comes to benefit audits, "Many companies just do open, broad questions, like 'Are you happy or are you unhappy with your benefits?' Don't do that," Alperin said. Instead, probe deeper and ask about challenges they may have in understanding or taking

advantage of their benefits. "Have they faced specific obstacles in getting birth control or other reproductive healthcare or maternity care? Is there anything preventing them from using their insurance or other benefits? Are they worried about their privacy? Things like this that people might not volunteer, but might offer if you ask."

Donate strategically to advance equity.

A corporate donation is an opportunity to fund organizations that, in Dinzey-Flores' words, "represent a different voice in this conversation." In response to the Supreme Court's ruling against abortion rights, for instance, Justworks directed its donations to groups that advocate for reproductive justice for underrepresented groups.

Additional reading

Kalita's column for Time and Charter on why abortion access is a workplace issue

Rhia Ventures' #WhatAreYourReproBenefits database, which tracks reproductive-health benefits at organizations across the country

"Workplaces and the Overturning of Roe," Charter's newsletter briefing from June following the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson*

Charter's as-told-to on what human-resources leaders are focusing on post-Roe

Charter's interview with Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, Yale School of Management's associate dean of leadership programs, on worker movements pushing employers to take a stand on Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Charter's interview with Stephanie Creary of Wharton on what can lead businesses to take a stand on societal issues

Parents in Tech Alliance's ERG compensation database

08/

The Era of Personalization: Building for Sustainable High Performance

Between economic anxiety, caregiving responsibilities, office returns, and pandemic burnout, the pressures of work and life are currently colliding with unusual force. Employee churn is increasing, the "one size fits all" workplace is on its way out the door, and many leaders feel overwhelmed navigating it all. Moderated by Charter managing editor **Cari Nazeer**, the session featured **Colette Stallbaumer**, general manager of Microsoft 365 and future of work marketing, and **Shayla Thurlow**, vice president of people and talent acquisition at The Muse, discussing key trends and actionable strategies for high-performance workplaces, including specific tactics for leaning into "the art of alignment" and a values-first approach to talent attraction and retention.

Speakers:

Colette Stallbaumer
General Manager,
Microsoft 365 &
Future of Work
Microsoft

Shayla Thurlow
Vice President of People
and Talent Acquisition
The Muse

Moderator:

Cari Nazeer
Managing Editor
Charter

Lipofskyphoto.com

What we've learned so far

"Productivity paranoia" is harming performance.

Nearly 90% of hybrid managers currently lack confidence that their teams are productive, while roughly the same percentage of employees believe they are, according to recent Microsoft research. This disconnect can force an unhealthy reprioritization, pushing employees to focus on showing that they're working over actually getting work done.

Having mental-health benefits is not enough.

The pandemic threw into stark relief the importance of actively supporting employee mental health and wellbeing, versus simply offering benefits that were poorly understood and little used. "I've been doing this long enough to remember when we talked about mental wellness, we said, 'The company has **an EAP program**, they're going to send you a magnet,'" Thurlow joked. "But no one knew, who's the provider? What does it do?" The transition back to in-person or hybrid work arrangements is an inflection point at which that support and education may be especially valuable.

Recruitment doesn't end when a candidate joins.

"Now is a moment to think about re-recruiting your employees," Stallbaumer said. "Don't assume they're there to stay." The Great Resignation has underscored the importance of continually helping workers feel connected to organizational culture and purpose.

Questions for 2023

1. How can you help managers push past productivity paranoia to value impact?

2. What measures do you have in place to mitigate burnout, both for managers and for individual contributors?

Tactics and practices

Solicit specifics to find what candidates value.

Especially when interviews are conducted virtually, "you're losing the ability to look around and say, 'I think I could probably come here every day,'" Thurlow pointed out. While some of the intangible vibe of a workplace can be communicated with things like online videos and testimonials, they don't paint a full picture. One way to bridge the gap is to encourage pointed questions during the hiring process, proactively offering examples to help candidates feel comfortable. "I say, 'Tell me what you'd like to know about working here,'" she said. "'Do you want to know what time people normally check out, or what we do with summer Fridays?'"

Develop metrics for employee well-being as well as employee impact.

Those two measures should be evaluated as two parts of a whole rather than separately, Stallbaumer argued. "It's not just how are you doing at work, but are you thriving as a whole person?" she explained. Specifics to track include whether workers feel empowered and believe their work is meaningful, both of which are key to high performance.

Adopt "no-KRs."

Build prioritization and balance into your goal-setting process. "With setting **OKRs**, objectives and key results, we also talk about no-KRs," Stallbaumer said. "What are the things that you can be clear about and set the tone as a leader that can take off their plate?"

Additional reading

Microsoft's latest Work Trend report

Charter's interview with Sam Walker, author of *The Captain Class*, on why managers should be like sports captains

Charter's interview with Jim Harter, chief scientist of workplace management and well-being at Gallup, about how managers can engage and motivate employees

More on The Muse's approach to "the art of alignment"

VR and the Workplace

Corporate leaders are increasingly looking for ways to harness the power of technology to differentiate their businesses in the minds of both their customers and their employees. Virtual Reality holds the key.

While there has been much buzz about the oncoming "metaverse", smart companies are **already leveraging** the power of immersive experiences. Here are five ways that fast-moving companies are gaining an advantage today:

01/ Take culture further in VR:

Training and onboarding lend themselves to enhancement through virtual reality. By fully immersing employees in an experience, workers get a deeper and more memorable experience. Orienting such experiences around the culture of the business or around core soft skills that enhance an employee's success guarantee full attention and greater memory retention.

02/ Networked networking:

By bringing employees and customers together in a communal digital space, companies are able to **recreate the feeling of co-presence** that, to date, has only existed in live experiences. Doing so digital enables more touchpoints without the cost of travel.

03/ Break ground in the metaverse:

Companies are increasingly establishing **virtual headquarters** where their employees and customers work and socialize. Such digital manifestations plant a digital flag that acts as a storefront and an experience of a company's culture.

04/ Inclusive leadership:

Corporate leaders are constantly looking for ways to be more inclusive of staff with different abilities. Virtual reality offers the ability for staff to manifest as avatars that may be more relatable to how they see themselves. VR can also offer accessibility tools that level the playing field amongst employees of different abilities.

05/ Driving a green agenda:

COVID triggered a fall-off in business travel that let the earth breathe. But with the onset of vaccines, corporate travel is back. Does it need to be? Investing in distribution of VR headsets around the world is much less pollutive than the constant distribution and redistribution of staff.

Mesmerise is a full service Virtual Reality company specializing in guiding companies into the metaverse. We provide exceptional experiences - from networking to training - and take the risk out of migrating to the metaverse through an unparalleled headset distribution and white glove onboarding approach. **Our team** has decades of experience at companies like Microsoft working with the highest profile executives in the world on their highest profile technology ambitions.

Enterprise participants in Charter's Playbook can receive free demo headsets to jump into the metaverse the trusted way today!

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Intelligent
Knowledge Networks

Water coolers matter more than you think. Whether your company's "water cooler" was a break room, a roof deck or a ping pong table, the informal spaces where connections happened were critical to an organization's success. Things like mentorship, collaboration, and professional development, the output of these informal networks, will continue to form the bedrock of successful companies. But we will need to think about them differently in a hybrid/remote work environment – analogue thinking will not be enough in an increasingly digital workplace.

Intelligent technology solutions powered by AI, analytics, and data science will, ironically, be mission critical to replicating, rebuilding, and reinventing the most human elements of company culture. Technology is going to power the networks, connections, and knowledge sharing needed to find success in the new working world.

As smart companies' tech-up with intention and purpose, they will ask themselves...in a world where everything is digital, why can't water coolers be digital, too?

Find out how Enquire AI and intelligent knowledge networks can transform your organization at:

www.enquire.ai/app/product/lumina

Drive Equity And Discover Untapped Talent With Collaborative Learning Academies
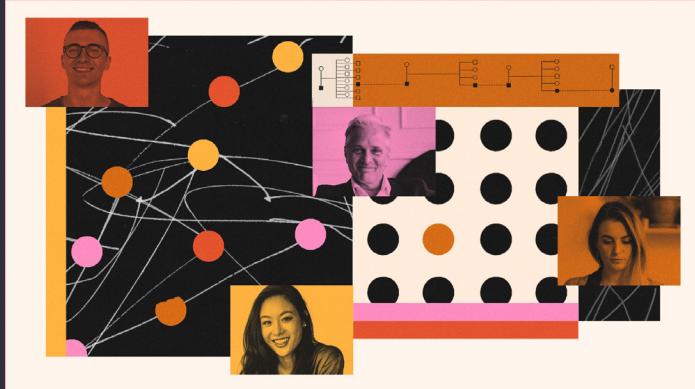
L&D should be a driver of equity, and there's no better way to do this than through collaborative learning. At Nomadic, we build digital academies that help organizations use learning to accelerate growth, drive transformation, and better serve their employees, their customers, and the world. One of our favorite comments about our digital academies is that they help draw "a wider range of ideas from a broader group of individuals." That's great DEI and great business, too.

Check out our **new case study on our cohort-based learning academy at Citi** to explore what this looks like in action. It dives into how collaborative learning can help surface new insights and identify untapped talent, particularly amongst geographically dispersed teams, non-native English speakers, and other diverse groups.

Get your free copy now.

Insights for Charter Workplace Summit 2023 Playbook

Segal is a consulting firm that helps organizations—and their people—prosper. Our mission is to provide trusted advice that improves lives. We design responsive, innovative, people-focused solutions across all areas of rewards, benefits, and HR. We're honored to work with some of the most innovative employers in the world and to help them usher in the next era of work.

You can glean more insights on Charter Workplace Summit topics from our extensive library of resources at **segalco.com** and **segalbenz.com** including:

- **The New Workplace Expectations: An Employer's Guide**

- **Diversify Leadership with These Five Strategies**

- **As Employees Return to the Office, Prepare to Address Stress**

- **Make Employee Benefits Part of Your DEI Strategy**

- **How to Create the Most Helpful Parent and Caregiver Support Experience**

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Flexibility/ Hybrid Work Best Practices

If employers want to build an inclusive future of work, it requires flexible and equitable support for working parents. **Vivvi** is reinventing child care for today's families and employers with solutions designed to meet families and employers where they are: across life and career stages, and around the globe.

Vivvi is flexible, built for today's constantly evolving workplace. But we know that flexibility means something different to every caregiving employee. That's why Vivvi's comprehensive child care and early learning platform supports families from infancy through elder care, with options for on-site care, backup care, in-home care, virtual tutoring and financial reimbursements. Whether employees are fully remote, hybrid or in-office, Vivvi has a solution to meet them where they are. This multi-channel approach gives employers choice and allows them to support their caregivers at every stage along their caregiving journey.

Contact Vivvi to find out more.

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Reimagining the Office Building

Vornado was excited to host those of you who attended the Charter Workplace Summit in person at our flagship **PENN 1** location. We hope the day gave you a sense for our master plan to revolutionize the **PENN DISTRICT** into the new epicenter of New York and a connected campus for our tenants. We are pioneering the work environment of the future, featuring lobbies with areas to sit alone or congregate with colleagues, a warm palette, welcome libraries, a town hall and conference centers, health and wellness centers, food and beverage offerings, outdoor space and gardens, and more. We made the strategically important decision to curate, design, and program this hospitality-driven environment for our tenant base. The overarching goal was to create a place where the tenant of tomorrow is an active participant in the culture of the building, create a first-of-its-kind ecosystem by orchestrating all aspects of architecture, design, and programming with the best operators in their discipline to service our district. We believe we understand the way tomorrow's talent wants to work today. Reach out to us if you have interest in exploring PENN options for your company.

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