Re-engaging and Energizing Workers in the New Work Reality
Dinner Roundtable (Room 207/208)

Themes
- Hybrid work is the norm for all workers who can do work remotely at least part of the time (excludes production, sales, health care and clinical staff).

- Some folks never worked remotely due to nature of work. Flexibility how to develop flexibility for them in the future is a big question.

- Biggest reason for coming back to the office: increased connectedness (we heard that lacking connectedness / belonging is correlated to lower satisfaction / higher attrition).

- Much discussion on creating a purpose / the WHY for being in the office. Why come in to sit in a cube and do Zoom all day? Not energizing!

- Another focus area was on how to build connections in a different way. This was discussed as a culture refresh, but transitioned to more of a culture RESET.

We realize that workers have reasons to not come back:
- Credibility Gap: It is possible to most work remotely — why do they need to come to the office
- Generational gap: Differing expectations, senior folks more likely too want to be in office than junior colleagues
- Experience/ experiential gap:
    — those hired since the pandemic (to existing or new companies) have no experience in what the company "culture" was like before, and terms like "back to the office" don't make sense
    — some workers did not have a good experience pre-COVID, why come back now, they are relieved to not have to come back and deal with micro aggressions they faced before
- In some geographies, it is a relief for the workers who had long commutes before COVID to not have to "waste time" commuting any more (large metro areas WW) and to have better work-life balance

Building purpose and connectedness requires intention from managers and senior leadership. Observations and recommendations:
- most companies who have adopted hybrid work allow workers choices such as selecting work plan options for entirely remote, hybrid, or on-site
- for hybrid work, consider requiring / recommending certain days of the week to be in office (usually some combo of T/W/Th); in some companies, workers select days by work group not at the "macro" company level
- ensure expectations / objectives are aligned and understood
- build trust that's work is getting done no will get done in any environment

- important to create culture touch points: townhall, regularly scheduled team meetings, managers walking around to meet folks
- more difficult to establish the new balance / approach in geographies where there was less flexibility pre-pandemic (societal expectations, physical constraints at home or office setting)
- invest in on-boarding and training (expectations, buddy systems, cross-culture perspectives, address "new" or "reset" culture topics)
- make the offices more pleasant, more collaborative, perhaps in different locations (go to the talent or to where commutes are not difficult)
- consider different corporate real estate choices, like WeWork sites, as options for different kind of engagement across companies
- Make it fun to be at the office

Tackling culture
What is culture: combination of behaviors, values and processes. Culture is malleable particularly in times of change; values should be firm, constant and consistent across time; knowledge transfer of work processes needs to be assured to maintain creativity and productivity. Address these to reset to a new/improved culture

Comments here MAY ADDRESS but are not assured to address elements of culture and management and individual actions must be intentional

Rather than holding onto the old, embrace what is possible, infuse new ideas, create a new culture and a new way of working that is truly more inclusive and enables more diversity. The path is ours to create.