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Post-Pandemic Work Environment Brings Need for New Best Practices

CLAREMONT, CA—The changing work environment developing as the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic is leading companies to revisit best practices, according to The Society for the Advancement of Consulting® (SAC). Leading organizations are focusing on better use of technology, trust in leadership, developing more empathetic leaders, renewing the focus on customer relationships, and strengthening the connection to each organization's purpose.

Better Use of Technology Drives Best Practices

"The most successful organizations will focus on being resilient and profitable," points out Lisa Anderson, president of Claremont, CA-based LMA Consulting Group, Inc. and manufacturing expert known for creating supply chain resiliency. "It is no longer enough to be the low-cost producer; it is far more important to stand out with exceptional, personalized service."

"The most proactive clients are focused on retaining, developing, and acquiring top talent," says Anderson. "Executives need this talent to determine which internal and external best practices will drive the best results. In addition, there is one area every organization has in common: better use of technology. This creates a superior customer experience, automates the repetitive processes, and connects systems within the end-to-end supply chain."

Trust Is Now More Important for Leaders

Leadership will pivot on trust and leaders need three things to build that trust: a plan, honesty, and empathy, according to Constance Dierickx, PhD, president of CD Consulting Group, and author of *High-Stakes Leadership: Leading through crisis with courage, judgment, and fortitude*. "The plan must be logical. There is no substitute for that. Leaders need to say what they know and admit what they don't. Honesty builds trust quickly, while insincerity and PR-talk kill it."

"The post-pandemic period is an opportunity for leaders to demonstrate empathy by celebrating extraordinary creativity and courage," notes Dierickx. "It is important to use examples of heroism, but not to overlook less obvious examples. People who have kept the trains running might have been equally innovative. But they may escape attention unless the leaders make an effort to connect, listen, and learn."

Blended Meetings Will Be Critical

Meetings should be online-first, says [Sten Vesterli](#), who advises business and IT leaders worldwide on how to get full value from their IT investments. “With some employees enthusiastically heading back to the office, and others continuing to work from home, it is imperative to include those who decide to continue to work remotely.

“Most organizations still don’t have the infrastructure to conduct blended meetings where the remote participants get seen and heard,” explains Vesterli. “All meetings should be online—with in-office employees participating from their laptops. This puts them on a par with remote employees. Or, the meeting should wait until the weekly in-office day for everyone.”

Best Practices Are a Stepping Stone, Not a Destination

“Best practices are a place to start—a stepping stone,” says Heidi Pozzo, founder of [Pozzo Consulting](#) and author of [Leading the High-Performing Company](#). “They should not be considered an end point because top-performing companies keep getting better and are often performing significantly beyond established best practices.”

“Many times what are purported to be best practices are actually average practices,” Pozzo points out. “For companies that are really looking to outperform their competition, look at what will set you apart in how you deliver your products and services.”

Establish a Sense of Belonging for Everyone

“In order for people to bring their best self to work, a sense of belonging needs to be established. Having a connection to an organization and team allows you feel you can be yourself and results in greater engagement in the workplace,” says [Dr. Maynard Brusman](#).

“Empathetic leadership is key,” he notes. “Maximize joy and connection; minimize fear. While fear can be a powerful motivator, it also encourages people to narrow their perspective—the exact opposite effect needed to create a psychologically safe workplace.”

Dr. Brusman advises his executive coaching clients, “Frame challenges through a lens of possibility. Elevate the power of collaboration, creativity, and storytelling to create greater potential for positive change.”

Look at the Nimble Practices of the Last 16 Months

“The best practices of yesterday are just that—yesterday,” says Kathleen McEntee, president of [Kathleen McEntee and Associates, Ltd. \(KMA\)](#), a full-service marketing firm that helps companies reach their target markets with the right message, through the right media, for the greatest impact.

“As we emerge post-pandemic, we have benefited from the innovation and creativity of responding to a crisis,” claims McEntee. “Take a look back at the last 14 to 16 months. Identify what has and what has not worked for your firm. You most likely adopted and created best practices as you felt your way through the minefields. You probably are continuing to do so.

“Best practices should be nimble and reflective of the current business environment,” she adds. “They are not meant to be rigid and inflexible. As organizations look to adopt best practices, it is important that they are practical and demonstrate a *best of the best* approach to delivering products and services with the customer experience in mind.”

Anticipate What Customer Needs Will Be

The systemic changes in how business will be conducted post-pandemic make it important for organizations to evolve accordingly, rather than expecting customers to act as they did in 2019, according to Linda Popky, president of Redwood Shores, CA-based strategic firm marketing firm [Leverage2Market Associates](#), and author of the book *Marketing Above the Noise: Achieve Strategic Advantage with Marketing That Matters*.

“Marketing efforts should focus on how the organization can help improve conditions for customers now and in the future,” she says. “It’s critical to help customers clearly understand that as a supplier or partner, you are not just focused on meeting their current needs but anticipating what new requirements they’ll have in the future.

“To paraphrase hockey star Wayne Gretzky, look to where the business needs will be—not where they’ve been, or even where they seem to be today,” she adds.

Be Specific and Forget the Fads

“Best practices have to be far more targeted to specific markets,” says SAC Founder Alan Weiss, PhD. “The best practices for restaurants (e.g., providing more benefits to food preparers), for retail middle management (providing more agency), and for airline personnel (providing more safety from unruly customers) will be different. Generic management fads like ‘Good to Great’ will simply fade away.”

About SAC

The Society for the Advancement of Consulting (SAC) is the premier association for independent consulting professionals who subscribe to an industry code of ethics and provide significant consulting results among their clients. Founded by Million Dollar Consulting guru Alan Weiss in 2003, SAC offers a series of in-person and online programs to help consultants share best practices and learn from industry experts and thought leaders in the business world. SAC today has members in 14 countries around the world.

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