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Online Event Series

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#### **INTRODUCTION: Unprecedented Times. Unprecedented Change**

There has never been a time in modern history when the way we work has experienced so much change so quickly. While forces including digital technology, an aging candidate pool, and economic change have impacted how we work for decades, the COVID-19 Pandemic introduced profound disruption that accelerated some workplace trends and introduced others for the first time.

#### THE FUTURE OF WORK EVENT SERIES

To help businesses adapt to these changes and prepare for the new realities of working life, BridgeTower Media initiated a new series of virtual events. In these fascinating programs, we sought expert perspectives on how work and workplaces are changing, what today's workers want from employers, and how companies can turn the new environment into a competitive advantage.

This guide provides a brief look into the perspectives shared at our event. We hope you enjoy this unique and actionable look at **The Future of Work**.





### **Expert Perspectives**

We designed The Future of Work events to foster idea sharing. We are grateful for the caliber of workplace experts from law, healthcare, technology, cybersecurity, consulting, and media who brought their unique perspectives to this project.

#### **OUR DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS**



SHARLA R. CHARPENTIER Associate Law Office of Dean Yeotis



JESSE LEVINE Special Agent in Charge of the Newark Office US FBI



RAHUL MAHNA Managing Director Eisner Amper



CARL MAZZANTI Cofounder and President eMazzanti Technologies, New York, NY



**GREG MEIHN** Partner Gordon Rees



SHELBY SCHAMBERGER Human Resources Director -Gove County Media Center



DESRAIE THOMAS Channel Development Manager Datto



JAIME RAUL ZEPEDA EVP Best Companies Group

- Our two panel discussions were moderated by Susan Bocamazo, Senior Group Publisher BridgeTower Media, and Kelly Caplan, Group Editor - Michigan Lawyers Weekly and Virginia Lawyers Weekly.
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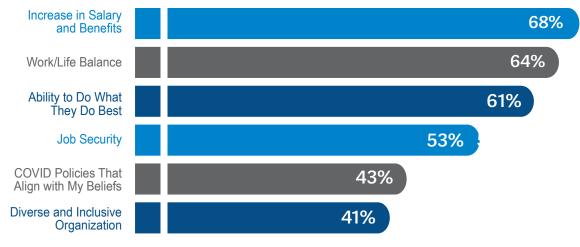
#### THE RETURN TO OFFICE: Worker Needs, Health and Safety, and Emerging Legal Issues

Many years ago, the primary concern of workers was maximizing salary. That began to evolve in the decade before COVID-19 as benefits became a significant concern as well. But in the COVID-19 era, worker concerns have evolved to include a lot of issues beyond total compensation.

#### **CHANGING NEEDS AND VALUES**

According to recent Gallup research, while salary and benefits remain at the top of the list for many workers, work-life balance, ability to do what they do best, job security, COVID-19 policies that align with their beliefs, and diversity/inclusion are all fundamental.

#### Percent of Workers Identifying This Trait as Very Important



Source: Gallup, 2022

Clearly, the uncertainties of COVID-19 have changed worker needs dramatically. Passion for these additional workplace attributes dovetails with increased recognition of the importance of mental health for an engaged and productive workforce. Said Sharla Charpentier, Associate at the Law Office of Dean Yeotis, "[E]mployers should have an open door policy about, 'Come to us if you're experiencing a mental health issue. We want to be able to help you. We want you to stay and work for us. What can we do to help?'"

#### THE RETURN TO OFFICE: Worker Needs, Health and Safety, and Emerging Legal Issues

#### THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

Younger workers are entering the workforce with other desires, including wanting to work for companies with a positive purpose. According to Gregory Meihn, Partner with leading national law firm Gordon Rees, "...what we're seeing as young people come into the workforce is that they're looking for companies they can believe in, engage in, and have a connection with. It's no longer just about the paycheck." Clear mission and values statements are essential for this vision. Shelby Schamberger, HR Director for Gove City Medical Center, spoke eloquently of how an initiative to communicate value and meaning has made a difference in her organization. "We are working on new strategic priorities, including a new mission, vision, and value statement. We have empowered our staff to be a member of the committee, empowering them to feel like they're involved and valued."





#### THE RETURN TO OFFICE: Worker Needs, Health and Safety, and Emerging Legal Issues

#### **EVOLVING WORK ENVIRONMENTS**

The number of people working from home exploded under COVID-19. While many offices have reopened, the incidence of at-home work remains very high. According to Pew

Research, about 20% of workers who say they could do all or most of their work from home actually worked from home before COVID-19. That figure rose to 71% during the height of the Pandemic(2).

Since then, many offices have reopened. But tens of millions of workers now spend all or part of their workweek at home. Like almost any workplace trend, there are

positives and negatives for businesses. Many studies have pointed to much higher productivity rates because of the relative absence of commuting time and office distractions. But lots of at-home work can also make workers feel less connected and engaged.

Gregory Meihn also pointed out that COVID-19 has exposed businesses to new worker safety and regulation risks. "... [E]mployers need to know before OSHA shows up what they're doing, why they're doing it, and why it is the safest best method in accordance with whatever requirements or protocols there are."

> The polarization of opinion on topics like masks and other protocols has also created challenges for employers as they work to accommodate the law and the deeply held employee beliefs on both sides of these issues. Clear communication helps. Issues and rules vary from state to state, and employers must take necessary steps to ensure

worker safety. According to all of our speakers, companies must make considered decisions on topics like ADA, religious, and ethical accommodations.

Said Meihn, "I can't emphasize enough that employers need to stay the course of having, now and in the future, a protocol for how they address hazards and social cleaning, distancing, isolation of anything, whether [risk comes from] another COVID-19 variant or some other virus that comes into play."

Employers need to know before OSHA shows up what they're doing, why they're doing it, and why it is the safest, best method of protecting employees.

Like any workplace

trend. working

from home has

both positives and

negatives.

#### **CYBERSECURITY:** Navigating New Risks in Our Changing Work Environments

Technology plays a significant and growing role in the success of a business. Our event focused on some key cybersecurity risks that businesses need to consider.

#### **GROWING CYBER THREATS**



The threat of cyber security breaches – and awareness of their importance – has grown markedly in the last several years. According to Rahul Mahna, Managing Director of consulting firm Eisner Amper, many companies once felt protected if they simply used an offthe-shelf anti-virus tool. But all that has changed. "There's a tremendous emphasis on preparedness, measuring your risk, the controls you should have in place, the proper vendors, and how you continuously monitor this and ensure that you have best-of-breed systems. And that those systems are working."

#### **THE CHALLENGES OF DISTRIBUTED TEAMS**

Distributed workforces that result from at-home work pose unique challenges. While protecting on-premise work environments is something companies have gotten quite experienced in, the challenges are multiplied when many employees work on home-based connections. Virtual private networks (VPNs), which dramatically reduce the risk of intercepted data, can help. But companies must also consider what individual employees and their families may be doing on the same devices used for work. Public WIFI creates even more risks than most home connections. Many coffee shops and other public hotspots offer no password protection for ease of connectivity. This potentially exposes all communications to bad actors. Additionally, fraudsters sometimes spoof connections with deceptive names like "JanesCoffeeHouse\_Public" which have no connection with the referenced business.

Talk about why you are in business. Why do you do the things that you do? What impact does that have on your customers? On your stakeholders? In your community?

#### **CYBERSECURITY:** Navigating New Risks in Our Changing Work Environments

#### POLICIES, SAFEGUARDS, AND STANDARDS

Our speakers discussed the importance of safeguards and policies to protect against damaging attacks that, for example, take over a senior leader's computer and wire out large sums of money. Having policies and checks helps mitigate some of this risk.

Carl Mazzanti, the co-founder of IT security firm eMazzanti Technologies, pointed out how industries like IT and Law have had only minimal regulation as to cybersecurity. His organization pursued and secured SOC-2 certification to ensure outstanding protections for its clients. But a lot of the IT being delivered for companies today is produced by friends, family members, or firms that don't thoroughly protect clients and data.

No business is immune from these threats, no matter what size. Desraie Thomas, Channel Development Manager - Datto, related a particularly sad story. "There was a dog rescue, this little old lady who had a little dog rescue that got hit with ransomware. And she thought, 'of course, it would never happen to me.' But it did." According to our experts, one helpful tool is the government's NIST framework. NIST is a prioritized, flexible, repeatable, performance-based, and cost-effective approach to cybersecurity. It includes information security measures and con-



trols owners and operators of critical infrastructure may voluntarily adopt.

In sum, cybersecurity is about a combination of the right hardware and software as well as employee training. There was a universal agreement that we need to train people on what to do and why it is crucial to get compliance.

A lot of the IT being delivered for companies today is produced by friends, family members, or firms that don't thoroughly protect clients and data.

#### **WORKPLACE WELLBEING:** Hiring and Retaining Top Talent

In our third session, Jaime Raul Zepeda, EVP of Best Companies Group, discussed the enormous difficulties companies are experiencing in hiring and training top talent and five trends you need to consider as you work to make sure your workplace creates competitive advantage. Using their work with assessing workplaces for more than 5,000 companies every year, Best Companies Group analyzed their data to pinpoint these five notable developments.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF PURPOSE



First was purpose - the idea that employees want their work and employers to stand for something important. COVID-19 made many people – especially young people – stop and consider the value of what they were doing at a time when we were all reminded that life has a beginning and also an end.

While "purpose" can quickly seem an overwhelming topic, there are simple steps you can take to make your team feel more connected to the business. Talk about why you are in business. Why do you do the things that you do? What impact does that have on your customers? On your stakeholders? In your community? Talk about your mission. Then connect the work of each person to those higher goals.

#### DELIVERING WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

We sometimes oversimplify this topic as 'working from home.' But this is about recognizing that employees have lives outside of work and that companies must acknowledge the need for balance. Flexible work options, including working from home, flexible hours, and the like, offer dual benefits of giving workers flexibility and showing that you trust them to meet their professional obligations.



#### WORKPLACE WELLBEING: Hiring and Retaining Top Talent

#### **PROACTIVELY MANAGING COMPANY REPUTATION**

Your company reputation affects how connected current employees feel to your business as well as the number of people who consider and apply for roles. Digital gives employees and candidates tools to learn more about your work culture.

Employer brand matters more than ever before because job candidates are incredibly savvy right now. They are going on multiple websites to get information about who you are as an

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF GREAT MANAGERS

One of the top reasons people leave their current job is issues with their managers. Often, these are caused by poor management training. HR pros worry about this all the time, Says Jaime Zepeda, "They realize that it's so hard to build a leadership bench. It's hard to build up leaders and not just make them good leaders, but make them good leaders for your organization. Because every organization has its own leadership style."

Codifying what is expected of managers goes a long way toward



leading in this area. With better managers, your attrition rate falls, and with it, massive recruiting costs and efforts to fill newly vacant roles are needed.

organization and how you operate. Information from people who may or may not have worked at your organization, from people who may or may not be customers.

That information may be accurate OR inaccurate, as anyone who has ever read the reviews on Glassdoor has discovered. By playing a proactive role in managing your company's reputation, you enhance the impression you have with everyone.



#### WORKPLACE WELLBEING: Hiring and Retaining Top Talent

#### **CULTIVATING A SENSE OF BELONGING**

The best organizations cultivate environments where people feel safe, and their contributions are valued. Listening - really listening - to the perspectives of others is critical here. Don't interpret disagreements as attacks but as an excellent opportunity to gather unique perspectives.

People also need to feel safe and valued for who they are. When a company creates an environment where people of different

backgrounds, ethnicities, orientations, and lifestyles can all feel respected, we create more successful teams.

#### PRO TIP:

If you build a company culture that treats employees with respect, gives them great managers, and makes them proud to work there, and you also spend a little bit of time telling that story inside your organization and out, you will win.



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### Five Key Takeaways - Series 1

This document summarized some – but by no means all – of the insights from the event. Let's point to some of the big ideas we shared here:

As teams return to workplaces across the country, employers face new opportunities and challenges. Companies must take a considered and strategic approach to these challenges. We must also meet the various legal and safety obligations required in the new normal and proactively prepare for the future.

In the "Great Resignation" World, we must recognize the changes in worker needs and desires from their employers. Creating a greater sense of purpose and belonging helps better connect workers to the company and its business. These concepts are also highly beneficial for recruiting efforts.

3 Cybersecurity risks and challenges are on the rise, and companies need to take a more proactive approach to ensure the safety and integrity of their systems. Working from home adds significant risks, and companies must take a layered approach encompassing hardware, software, and worker training/awareness to ensure maximum protection.

Gaining competitive advantage in today's work environment requires us to consider several key trends: purpose, workplace flexibility, managing company reputation, management training, and cultivating a universal sense of belonging. By taking a proactive approach to organizing our businesses, setting policies, and communicating with managers and workers, we can approach The Future of Work in ways that create competitive advantage. With an intelligent strategy and commitment, change can catalyze additional growth and immense satisfaction for us as leaders.





### **Expert Perspectives**

We designed The Future of Work events to foster idea sharing. We are grateful for the caliber of workplace experts from law, healthcare, technology, cybersecurity, consulting, and media who brought their unique perspectives to this project.

#### **OUR DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS**



KAREN CAVANAUGH Human Resource Consultant, Insperity

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NICOLE DEMMON Partner of the Employment and Labor Practice Group



**GREG MEIHN** Partner Gordon Rees



LORENA MOSQUERA Workflow Strategist at Paradigm Marketing and Design



**TREVOR NEWCOMB** Digital Workspace Solutions Architect, Aspire Technology Partners



**KIMBERLY SMITH** Vice President of Workplace Strategy, JLL



**CAL THOMAS** President Sandler Training



**SARAH TURNER** Co-managing Partner of the Gordon Rees Seattle



**MEG UGENTI** Corporate Director of Sales and Marketing, Focus USA

Our three panel discussions were moderated by NJBIZ Chief Editor Jeff Kanige, President at Paradigm Marketing Rachel Durkan, and Partner at GRSM Gregory Meihn

## ◆ 小 小 小 FUTURE OF WORK

## Webinar Recap: THE RETURN TO OFFICE Hybrid Work is Here to Stay

When it comes to the future workplace, it appears remote work is here to stay — at least part of the time. Many companies are leveraging the advantages of a hybrid workplace, which offers the flexibility of remote work along with the collaboration and social interaction of inperson work. Additionally, having fewer people in the office can help organizations save on real estate costs associated with leasing a space full-time. However, "going hybrid" for the sake of going hybrid isn't likely to succeed.



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### Webinar Recap: **THE RETURN TO OFFICE** Hybrid Work is Here to Stay



Even a part-time return-to-office must be done purposefully, with leadership setting clear expectations and establishing a strong workplace culture. Kimberly Smith, Vice President of Workplace Strategy at JLL, emphasized that executives must model

**Kimberly Smith** 

the behavior they want to see. This means leaders must meet the same standards they have for employees regarding coming into the office, and communicate those standards across the organization.



Karen Cavanaugh

The ideal balance of remote versus inoffice work will vary by organization and even by individual. Karen Cavanaugh, Consultant Human Resource at Insperity, encouraged leaders to survey

their teams on a regular basis to determine their ongoing needs. Offering flexibility and work-life balance leads to increased employee engagement and retention, and can also be an attractive perk for new talent.



Trevor Newcomb. Digital Workspace Solutions Architect with Aspire Technology , acknowledged there may be Partners resistance at first to holding onsite meetings. To mitigate potential pushback, companies

should ensure going to the office is a worthwhile experience. In addition to perks for attendance (such as free lunch), having the right tools and technologies in place can help smooth the transition back to the office.

In sum, navigating a hybrid workforce requires careful consideration, planning, and communication. Companies that take the time and effort to do this can reap the benefits of flexibility, collaboration, and employee engagement.



## Webinar Recap: Webinar Recap: SALES AND MARKETING: The Intersection of Technology and Human Connection

Recent advancements in technology have transformed the sales and marketing industries. Tools to support customer relationship management (CRM) can leverage data and automation to drastically boost sales and marketing efforts.

A CRM system can collect and store data from current and prospective customers, keep track of customer touchpoints and interactions, and help sales and marketing teams understand what's working and what isn't. Sources may include first-party data, which companies collect directly from their customers; second- and third-party data, gathered from indirect sources such as another company; and zero-party data, or preference and engagement data that customers share directly with an organization.



Data is a tool to help you identify who you should be talking to, how you should be talking to them. But that human connection happens once they pick up the phone ... or they have that meeting, or they get an invite to coffee. It's just the entryway; it's your toe in the door. -Meg Ugenti

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However, Meg Ugenti, Corporate Director of Sales and Marketing at Focus USA, cautioned organizations about jumping too quickly into a CRM system without understanding it. Setting up a strong infrastructure early on, starting with the data you have to determine

Meg Ugenti,

the data you want, and testing before scaling can help ensure smooth adoption.



Lorena Mosquera, Workflow Strategist at Paradigm Marketing and Design, also encouraged teams to remember that automation should not replace human connection, and to not become overly reliant on prewritten content or automated

processes. For example, an email template is an effective way to save time while including pertinent information in a sales message. However, it should only serve as a starting point, and be modified based on the human-tohuman connection made between the salesperson and the customer.



Cal Thomas

Additionally, these tools are only as good as the people behind them, noted President of Sandler Training, Cal Thomas. Developing a "practiced, disciplined, and well-trained sales and marketing team" — one that knows how to utilize technology to facilitate

an effective sales process, all while prioritizing that critical human connection — is the key to growth and success.



## Webinar Recap: WORKPLACE WELLBEING: Safety, Pay Equity, & Commercial Leases Post-pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic put a spotlight on the safety of employees as well as the environments they work in. While it seems COVID is here to stay, and employers need to continue to take precautions when it comes to like illnesses, recommendations for workplace safety include providing handwashing facilities, sanitizing surfaces, educating employees about prevention, notifying employees of exposure, reporting outbreaks, allowing voluntary mask/PPE use, and more.



OSHA has focused a lot on the healthcare industry, and if you're in the healthcare industry, that's going to be no surprise. They are looking to take their emergency temporary standards and make them in a permanent or in a modified form. In May 2023, the proposed schedule for rulemaking on infectious disease regulations for healthcare and other high-risk environments is going to be released. -Sarah Turner

#### Webinar Recap: **SALES AND MARKETING:** OFWNRK The Intersection of Technology and Human Connection



Sarah Turner, Co-managing Partner of the Gordon Rees Seattle office and Partner of the Employment and Labor Practice, discussed Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines which state

Sarah Turner

COVID is not covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) unless the employee has long COVID or has been hospitalized because of it. Though regulations vary from state to state, Turner said private employers may mandate vaccinations subject to religious and ADA accommodations, and reasonable accommodations may be required for highrisk employees and those with long COVID.



In addition to safety regulations, pay equity laws are evolving in many states, such as banning salary history inquiries or disclosing compensation and benefits in job postings. Nicole Demmon, a Partner of the Employment and Labor Practice Group

for Washington and Oregon, said Colorado is is at the forefront with their Equal Pay for Equal Work Act which states employers must announce all opportunities for

promotion and disclose compensation and benefits in job postings. Other states, including New York, California, Washington, and Rhode Island, are following suit. Employers should pay attention to these laws and consider remote workers when ensuring compliance.



Greg Meihn, a Partner in the Detroit office of Gordon Rees, highlighted the uncertainties that may arise due to the pandemic in commercial lease agreements and negotiations. He advises people to be mindful of OSHA, which is looking to

Greg Meihn

establish fiscal importance and enforce its rules. Meihn said commercial leases are uncertain as companies have been downsizing, seeking reorganization, liquidation, and subleasing post-pandemic. He advises people to include subleasing and assignment terms that give them flexibility in the agreement when renewing leases since more internet-based stores are replacing brick-andmortar stores, leading landlords to offer different terms to lessees.

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## **Five Key Takeaways - Series 2**

This document summarized some - but by no means all - of the insights from the event. Let's point to some of the big ideas we shared here:

The future workplace is likely to be a hybrid model that combines remote work with in-person collaboration. Clear communication, leadership, and planning are necessary for success. Employers should survey their teams and offer a balance of remote and in-office work that promotes work-life balance and attracts new talent.

CRM systems can boost sales and marketing efforts by collecting and storing customer data, tracking interactions, and helping teams understand what's working and what isn't. Automation should not replace human connection, and sales and marketing teams need to be well-trained in utilizing technology while prioritizing the human-to-human connection for growth and success.

Employers should continue to prioritize workplace safety 3 by providing handwashing facilities, sanitizing surfaces, and notifying employees of exposure. Private employers may mandate vaccinations with accommodations. Reasonable accommodations may be required for high-risk employees and those with long COVID.

Pay equity laws are evolving, with some states banning salary history inquiries and requiring compensation and benefits disclosure in job postings. Employers should be aware of these laws and compliance for remote workers should also be considered.

Businesses should be mindful of OSHA and 5 uncertainties in commercial leases due to downsizing, reorganization, liquidation, and subleasing postpandemic. Subleasing and assignment terms for flexibility in lease agreements should be considered.



### **OUR SINCERE THANKS**

to these outstanding companies that are committed to helping companies navigate the complexities of The Future of Work.



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- Bring your experts to our discussions of these critical topics and issues that are top-of-mind for leaders

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#### **ABOUT BRIDGETOWER MEDIA**

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BridgeTower Media empowers communities with insights and connections to ignite growth in the home furnishings, business, legal, and construction industries, through a collection of 44 authoritative media properties across more than 20 U.S. markets.

THE BRIDGETOWER MEDIA NETWORK: Local roots with regional and national reach across five industries through 40+ brands.

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hat HOME Textiles Today BUSINESS REVIEW BUSINESS NEWS

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