

Aon plc Global Media Relations

Aon Survey Highlights Steps Companies are Taking to Accelerate Workforce Agility and Resilience

Key findings include HR professionals observing a strong link between diversity and inclusion and developing agile workforces

CHICAGO, September 10, 2020 – Aon plc (NYSE: AON), a leading global professional services firm providing a broad range of risk, retirement and health solutions, has released the results of a new global pulse survey focused on how companies are rethinking their human capital strategies in response to the humanitarian and economic impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Aon conducted the study, “Accelerating Workforce Agility and Resilience,” from August 17 to August 25, 2020, and a total of 2,004 human resources leaders and professionals responded globally. Complete study results are available [here](#).

“This study demonstrates how companies are actively preparing for the future of work,” said Michael Burke, chief executive officer for Aon’s Human Capital business. “The degree to which firms are focused on improving workforce agility and making remote working effective is incredible. At the same time, companies continue to struggle with many of the acute challenges presented by the pandemic, such as assisting working parents when schools are closed or employees who are caring for elderly family members. Companies with best-in-class responses are looking at these issues holistically to serve their people from every angle.”

Workforce agility is vital to the future success of organizations, but agility gaps are widespread

Globally, 84% of survey respondents view workforce agility, defined as the ability to quickly move employees into new roles or areas of the organization to support changing business needs, as very important or extremely important to the future success of their organization following the onset of the pandemic. However, while workforce agility is widely viewed as vital to future success, on a global basis, only 39% of survey respondents currently view their workforces as very agile or extremely agile.

“This workforce agility gap—between what employees and teams can handle today versus what will be required of them in the near future—is significant and represents a major challenge for companies looking to reshape their business and human capital strategies,” said Pete Bentley, chief commercial officer for Aon’s Human Capital business. He added, “this gap is remarkably consistent across regions and industries.”

Diversity and inclusion are viewed as key to improving workforce agility

When survey respondents were asked to assess 10 key factors needed to build and maintain an agile workforce, the ability to attract and retain diverse employees and create an inclusive culture ranked near the top. Globally, 86% of respondents said this factor was very important or extremely important, ahead of factors such as identifying employees with key digital skills, introducing new career paths and developing flexible compensation programs.

Only two other factors rated higher than diversity and inclusion—technology tools and infrastructure and communications tools and infrastructure. Another top factor is the ability to assess employees for adaptability, collaboration and communications skills. Globally, 85% of survey respondents said this factor was very important or extremely important.

Making remote working better is a priority

As more companies announce plans to expand or extend remote working arrangements for employees, they are also providing new tools and programs to improve the productivity and wellbeing of their remote workforce. For example, 71% of survey respondents globally said their companies are actively investing in tools and technologies to support remote collaboration, followed by 58% of respondents who said their companies are providing employees with more wellbeing tools and programs.

Additionally, on a global basis, 42% of survey respondents said their companies have already enhanced, or are actively considering enhancing, allowances and reimbursement policies for remote employees in response to the pandemic. This includes covering cell phone, internet and home office expenses, and in most cases, these enhancements are being provided on a temporary basis.

Supporting workforce resilience is a work in progress

Helping employees address acute challenges related to the pandemic remains an ongoing and evolving challenge for companies. Globally, 59% of survey respondents say their companies have taken some action to support working parents who may not have the ability to send their children to on-site schools or other childcare facilities. However, most of these efforts are currently tied to enhancing Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and expanding networking groups for parents. The prevalence of new or temporary programs to provide direct assistance to parents to cover childcare, tutoring, or e-learning costs remains low.

On a global basis, 35% of survey respondents indicate their companies have changed, or are actively considering changing, their time-off policies in response to the pandemic. Among these companies, 32% created additional emergency paid leave policies beyond what is required by law to cover caregiving, illness or quarantining in 2020. Another 10% of companies created policies covering both 2020 and 2021, and 5% created permanent policies.

These efforts, among many others, are all designed to improve workforce resilience, which includes the physical, social, emotional, professional and financial wellbeing of employees. For additional Aon insights on how companies can support workforce resilience, please visit: aon.com/risingresilient.

Additional survey findings

For complete study results by region and industry, including additional data on performance management practices, rewards programs, workforce actions including layoffs and furloughs, the state of hiring, and adjustments to time-off policies, [click here](#).

About Aon

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