

Future of Work: Women Hold Key at Crossroad

Nan Nelson

February 2021

In last summer's [Economic Transformation Signals Team](#) report we noted that:

- Organizations with inclusive cultures are more successful in navigating today's fast-changing, disruption-filled, competitive world.
- Organizations with above-average gender diversity in their boards and management are more likely to develop inclusive cultures.

It's now becoming clear that the pandemic could threaten these transformative changes. Women have been forced to drop out of the workforce at twice the rate of men (nearly a quarter of women with young children!) and even senior women report cutting hours or switching to less-demanding roles.

Yet, some organizations are using the current fluid work situation to re-think in ways that could hasten transformation:

- 93 percent say more jobs can be done remotely and 67 percent predict a significant share will do so permanently.
- 90 percent will cut business travel moderately or significantly.
- 70 percent think remote work will increase their diversity. Why?

Remote work will allow many—mothers, caregivers, people with disabilities—to take jobs that previously required relocation, extensive travel or long commutes.

What's more, top-performing companies are making employee mental health a higher priority. With more visibility of each other's personal lives, solidarity and empathy are growing. The more employees feel they can bring their whole selves to work, the happier they are with their jobs. This visibility will allow good managers to see shared challenges and make changes that improve not only employee experience but also organizational performance.

Women managers are notably expert in this new atmosphere of communication, empathy and reduced ego, producing a virtuous cycle of positive innovation—for those prepared to embrace this future!

Sources and more reading

Gupta, Alisha Haridasani. "[Why Did Hundreds of Thousands of Women Drop Out of the Work Force?](#)" New York Times, October 13, 2020.

McKinsey & Company. [Women in the Workplace 2020: At a Crossroads.](#)

Schneider, Avie; Hsu, Andrea; Horsley, Scott. "[Multiple Demands Causing Women to Leave the Workforce,](#)" NPR. October 2, 2020.

Weber, Lauren and Fuhrmans, Vanessa. "[How the Coronavirus Threatens to Set Back Women's Careers,](#)" *Wall Street Journal*, September 30, 2020.