

Are Your Frontline Managers Prepared for the Future of Work?



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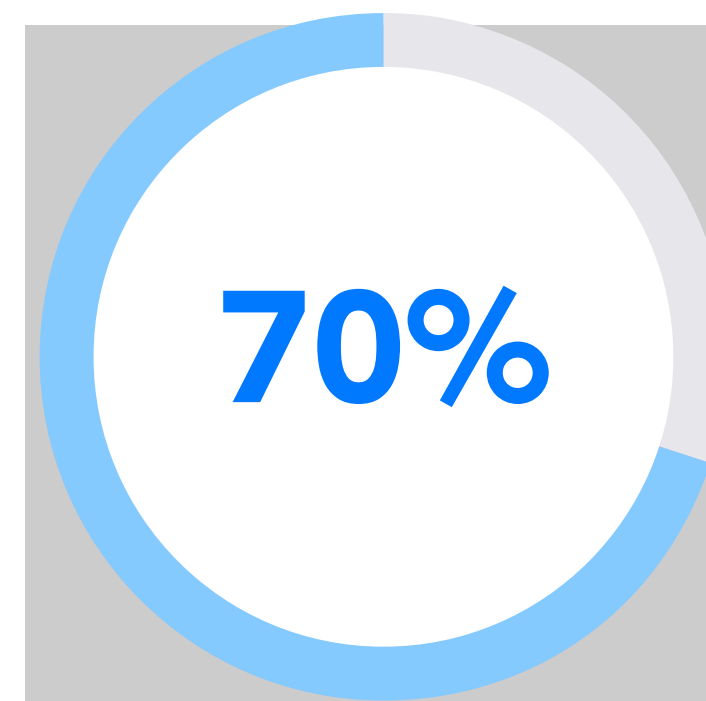


The pandemic has impacted all aspects of our lives. Companies and the media have focused much of their attention on the individual employee and the end customer. Yet a critical role in ensuring the engagement of both is the frontline manager. They are responsible for making sure the employee has the tools and skills they need to meet the ever-increasing, ever-changing needs of the customer.

So who's making sure frontline managers, whether they be in the contact center, back-office or branch, have what they need to effectively manage their teams?

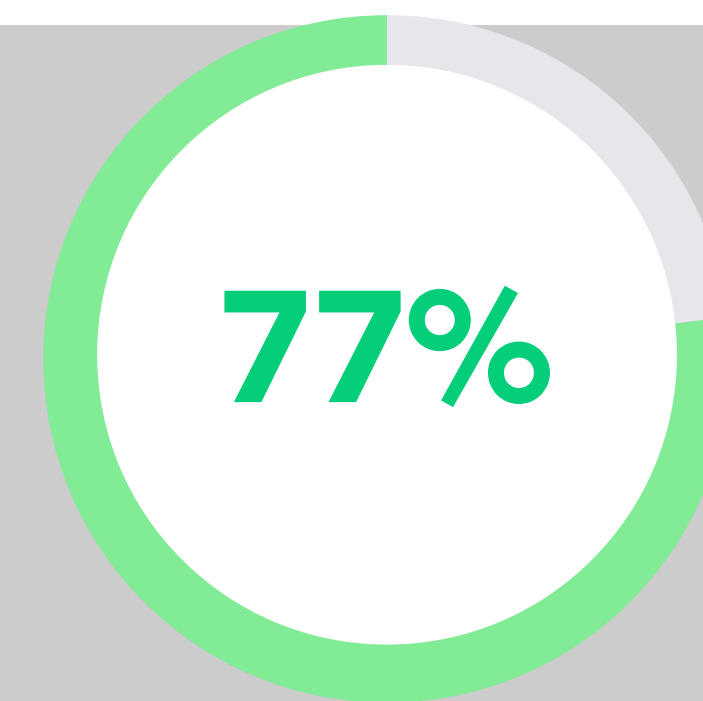
Key Future of Work trends that managers are grappling with include:

Work from Home



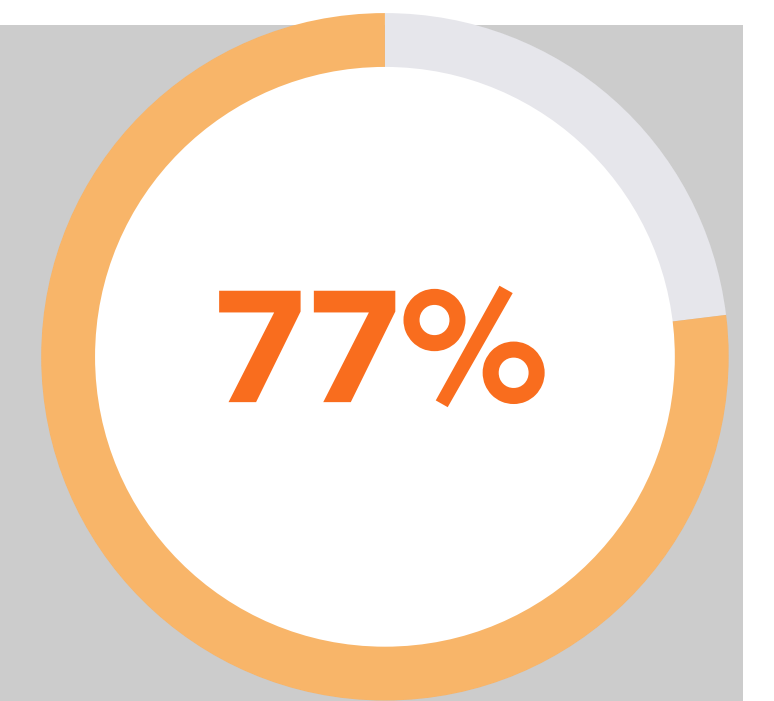
Of companies will continue some level of work from home post-pandemic¹

Flexibility



Of Millennials say that flexible work hours would make them more productive²

Digital Transformation



Of CEOs reported that the COVID-19 crisis accelerated their digital transformation plans³

Are your frontline managers able to keep employees engaged and productive during this time of change?

Managers are the life blood of your organization. Employees will be loyal to a good manager and leave a bad one. In fact, in a recent study 65% of employees would rather have a better boss than a salary increase.⁴ Gallup found that 70% of the variance in workgroup engagement is caused by managers, and roughly 2/3rds of the US workforce is disengaged. Gallup estimates that actively disengaged employees cost the U.S. economy \$483 billion to \$605 billion each year in lost productivity.⁵

Business icons agree:



"A good boss is better than a good company."

Jack Ma



"Don't pick a job. Pick a boss."

William Raduchel



"A truly great boss is hard to find, difficult to part with, and impossible to forget."

Bridgette Hyacinth

So what do frontline managers need to effectively manage the workforce of the future? Let's explore a few ways technology can help.

Managing a Remote Workforce

To effectively manage a remote workforce, frontline managers need to:

- Understand how employees are spending their time to ensure productivity goals are met
- Ensure remote employees still feel connected, valued, and engaged.

Understanding Productivity

Managers of remote employees can no longer walk the floor to see if everyone is busy, or if someone is in need of help. These managers need a means of understanding what out-of-sight employees are doing, without becoming a micromanager who's interrupting employees' days with frequent requests for updates. Not only is this unproductive, it can undermine trust between a manager and employee.





Solutions like Verint® [Application Visualizer™](#) for contact center and [Operations Visualizer™](#) for back-office operations can automatically capture application usage data from the employee desktop in real-time. Managers can see what applications employees are in, when, and for how long. Applications are grouped into simple buckets:

- Customer service/production related
- Job-related but not direct customer-service/production support
- Non-work related
- Idle time

Frontline managers can quickly assess if an employee has the right balance of time in role-specific applications. Movement between applications can also show if an employee is following the right processing paths. Insights from this data can help managers target the coaching needs of their team members to improve overall productivity.

A best practice is to only give managers access to the groupings of applications, and not the granular detail of every URL visited. Frontline managers should also be coached on how to use the information to have a positive discussion with the employee on how to help them reach their performance goals.

Creating Connections

A manager's job is to not only ensure the work gets done accurately and on time, but to also help ensure the wellbeing of their employees. Weekly team meetings or morning huddles are good for tracking progress and ensure production or service goals are met. But that's not the only purpose for meetings.

Team Relationships

Frontline managers can also take advantage of collaboration tools like Slack or Microsoft Teams or [Verint Community](#). Creating a group for your team where they can chat, post pictures, and reach out to one another for help is a great way to build a sense of community and belonging.

A best practice is to schedule meetings for the purpose of building camaraderie among team members. Perhaps it's virtual happy hour, or a Tuesday bagel breakfast. Or maybe the first 15 minutes of the weekly team call is set aside for sharing what everyone did over the weekend.





One-on-One Relationships

In addition to building connections between team members, managers also need to build their relationships with individual team members. To do so, managers of remote employees need to become better listeners. When you only talk to an employee one-on-one perhaps once a week, it's important to let the employee do the talking and share what's happening in their world.

A good manager has great listening skills, shows empathy, and is a good coach/mentor. Yet not everyone is born with the empathy gene, so organizations' Learning & Development and HR departments hopefully offer programs on developing the softer skills needed to be a great manager.

A best practice is to use video conferencing when possible. This way, frontline managers can pick up on body language clues that an employee might be stressing, overwhelmed or disengaged.

Enabling Flexibility and Work-Life Balance

Technology is a great way to remove non-essential tasks from managers' plates so they can focus on innovating and developing their team members. Automating many of these tasks also benefits and even empowers the employee. Two such automations include, real-time performance scorecards and mobile access to scheduling request management.

Real-time Performance Data

Modern performance scorecards, such as the ones in Verint [Performance Management™](#), let employees see in near real-time how they are performing against their key performance indicators (KPIs). Expectations for performance are clearly set within the role-specific scorecards, and employees can self-adjust their behaviors to meet their goals. Verint Performance Management also includes Coaching and eLearning. If an employee dips below a certain threshold on a KPI, a coaching session can automatically be scheduled, or a learning clip assigned. Frontline managers no longer need to constantly monitor various reports to identify coaching needs. The solution automatically surfaces them.



Frontline managers no longer need to rely on anecdotal evidence and observations for performance measurement.

Flexible Scheduling

A key driver of employee satisfaction, especially among Millennials, is flexible work hours. In a recent study, 77% of Millennials said that flexible work hours would make them more productive.⁶ Verint **Workforce Management™** (WFM) gives employees the power to request schedule changes, bid on shifts or trade shifts, right from their mobile device. And sophisticated algorithms automate the request management process, so frontline managers are not constantly having to review and approve schedule changes.

One healthcare insurer was overwhelmed with managing time-off requests and attendance: 15% of a manager's time was spent managing these activities. After implementing Verint WFM they dramatically decreased manager and employee time on these tasks, and also increased the accuracy of overtime reporting. A 1% error rate in overtime reporting was costing the company \$70,000. Automating the process eliminated the errors and the need for time consuming audits.

U-Haul International was able become an “employer of choice” by leveraging Verint WFM to create work schedules that offer their contact center agents the flexibility to work from one to 40 hours a week, while working from home. In the last year alone they automated 16,000 approvals for time off requests and 36,000 shift swaps—processes that would have required 30 to 40 FTE managers to handle manually.

Becoming Tech Savvy

Covid-19 has dramatically accelerated organizations' digital transformation journeys. New digital tools such as [Robotic Process Automation](#) (RPA), Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are being implemented to provide faster, better service while improving operational efficiencies. Managers are going to be expected to integrate these new technologies into their management processes and ways of working.

Take for example RPA, which has grown steadily in popularity in the last few years. Gartner expects the RPA market to continue to grow at double digit rates through 2024.⁷ While RPA is designed to improve efficiencies by removing repetitive, rules-based tasks and providing employees with real-time assistance, it may just increase the burden on your managers. Many solutions are designed for citizen developers – meaning anyone can be trained to script an RPA automation – no coding needed. So managers could be tapped to script as well as maintain their own automations.

Building an RPA script and managing RPA robots as digital workers are two different things.





Frontline managers will need an understanding of the various RPA automations in their group so when one breaks, they can do a root cause analysis to find the source of the problem. In addition, as robots take on more and more work, they will become a digital or virtual workforce that managers will need to integrate in with their employees. They'll need to understand how RPA robots will impact their capacity plans, how to assign work to the robots, and ensure work flows seamlessly between robots and employees. This will require technical as well as managerial skills.

Listen to the on-demand webinar, [Maximize the Capacity of the New, Digital Workforce](#), to learn how Verint Workforce Engagement solutions can help manage this new digital workforce.

A best practice is to establish an [RPA Center of Excellence](#) to orchestrate the deployment and maintenance of automations, and be an RPA resource for managers.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has advanced the rate of adoption of several key workforce trends: work from anywhere, the gig economy and flexible scheduling, digital transformation, the adoption of cloud and AI solutions, and more. Organizations need to help their frontline managers navigate these changes and gain the skills they need to improve and inspire their teams. Because remember, a bad boss is the number one reason employees quit their job.⁸

Above are only a few of the challenges frontline managers are facing. Learn about other key workforce trends [by visiting Verint Future of Work.](#)



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Verint Customer Engagement Solutions
at www.verint.com/engagement



¹Proper Prior Planning for the Post-Pandemic Contact Center, Saddletree Research, 2020 (70%)
²The Death of the 9-to-5: Why We'll All Work Flex Schedules Soon, themuse.com, by Alexandra Levit
³A case of acute disruption: Digital transformation through the lens of COVID-19, Deloitte, August 6, 2020
⁴A good boss is better than a good company! bridgettehyacinth.com, October 22, 2020
⁵How to Help Your Managers Build Out, Not Burn Out, By Adam Hickman, Ph.D., and Jeremy Pietrocini, Gallup, May 8, 2019
⁶The Death of the 9-to-5: Why We'll All Work Flex Schedules Soon, themuse.com, by Alexandra Levit
⁷Forecast Analysis: Robotic Process Automation, Worldwide, Gartner, September 2, 2020
⁸Top 10 Reasons Why Employees Quit Their Jobs, by Susan M. Heathfield, thebalancecareers.com, December 09, 2019

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