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**Mining's workplace
transformation
is here**

COVID-19 is fundamentally changing the workplace. In mining, the pandemic has both accelerated industry digital agendas and necessitated long-term remote-working strategies that keep workers safe and support their well-being. Chief Human Resources Officers (CHROs) must build on that progress with policies that unlock the full potential of the workplace evolution.

Workforce redesign

In 2020, mining companies went from having 5 to 10 percent of their workforce operating remotely to roughly 90 percent.¹ While many of those roles were office-based, a shift to more remote work for on-site roles was also enabled by operating longer shift cycles instead of a fly-in fly-out roster. By 2035, digitalization and automation will see 100 percent of employees working remotely, from anywhere.² To reach that goal, companies need a strategy for office and on-site roles, and CHROs are basing those strategies on three factors:

- 1. Identification of all roles** that don't need to be located on-site
- 2. Increasing advocacy for flexible working**, as leaders recognize that remote work can increase productivity
- 3. De-centralization of the workforce** achieved through a hybrid model of fewer people on-site and smaller offices becoming centers of collaboration and innovation.

A transformed mining workforce requires fundamentally different skills covering three key trends:

Analytical: Specialized mechanical roles (i.e. machine operators) and repetitive tasks (i.e. data processing) will become automated, and artificial intelligence, machine learning and process-automation experts will be required to oversee new ways of working.³

Social-emotional: Leadership and social influence is a main focus of mining companies' reskilling or upskilling programs—empathy is vital to mitigating the potential negative impact of remote working on mental health, and managers need superior communication skills to manage remote teams.

Mental and physical well-being: Remote working fatigue is hitting the workforce, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and leaving workers susceptible to mental health issues. Managers must be vigilant in checking on workers and companies must provide ongoing support as ways of working evolve.

To build this new workforce companies must:

Diversify the talent ecosystem: A flexible, sustainably focused, community-centric and transparent working culture will attract talent, from climate scientists (key to industry environmental, social and governance goals) to tech-savvy experts from adjacent industries. Proactive steps must be taken to attract women, people with families and other responsibilities to the newly flexible mining industry, as the pandemic stands to exacerbate inequality.⁴

Develop a multipronged approach to skilling:

Companies must create as many upskilling opportunities as possible, including individual-focused, continuous training (via Massive Open Online Courses etc.), strategic, large-scale digital programs, and mentoring and reverse-mentoring schemes.

Reconnect with the full individual: Companies thrive when their workforce's fundamental needs are met, leaving them Net Better Off.⁵ This means addressing everything from their financial, emotional, mental and physical well-being to their sense of belonging and quest for purpose—while helping them enhance their employability through training. The pandemic has led to vast challenges, but it has also acted as a catalyst for much-needed change. COVID-19 has reinforced the need for a full digital transformation in mining and increased opportunities to diversify the workforce to prepare the sector for cyclical skills shortages. With today's momentum to find new approaches and the clear opportunities ahead, now is the time for change.

References

- ¹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2020.pdf
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/blogs/accenture-research/how-to-reverse-the-startling-impact-of-covid-19-on-women>
- ⁵ <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/future-workforce/employee-potential-talent-management-strategy>

Authors



Gastón Carrión

Managing Director –
APAC Talent & Organization/
Human Potential Lead



Ian Peake

Director – Operations,
Talent & HR



Dr. Koteswara Ivaturi

Research Manager –
Thought Leadership,
Accenture Research

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