



Trend 4 - Anywhere, Everywhere

Chris Copeland [00:00:08] Most federal executives agree that Covid-19 was the largest and fastest behavioral change in history. The impact on the workplace and the workforce was unprecedented, and federal agencies demonstrated an incredible agility in shifting to a virtual model in responding to the pandemic. The challenge now is to identify which practices to keep and how to do so. We take a look at the path forward in Trend Four: Anywhere, Everywhere, and I'm joined by Kristen Vaughn, who leads Human Capital Consulting for Accenture Federal Services. Welcome, Kristen. Thanks for joining me today. To begin, how would you describe the federal government's workforce response to Covid-19?

Kristen Vaughn [00:00:51] Sure. Hi, Chris. You know, I'd say they acted really flexibly and dynamically. They had to put a solution in place very, very quickly within a number of days and hours. And they're able to do that and then scale appropriately. So I'd say the reaction was very spot on and catered to the needs of their employees.

Chris Copeland [00:01:09] We frame the go forward challenge as shifting to this bring your own environments mindset, which is an evolution of the bring your own device mindset. Can you describe a little bit more or maybe provide some insight on how the government is going to make changes to adopt that?

Kristen Vaughn [00:01:26] What we've learned is that the employee is really the ecosystem. So the work revolves around the employee and where they are, not necessarily the location of where they sit. So the bring your own environment revolves all around the employee, and it has to do with employee experience, collaboration, security, technical capability. So all those things need to be met and customized for each individual employee and everyone's going to look different. So someone might work from home, someone else might be going to the office a few days a week. They might be working together certain days and other days they're separated. So how do we provide those best solutions to everyone is going to be a real challenge going forward.

Chris Copeland [00:02:02] So one aspect of the federal workforce, cleared resources, couldn't easily work remotely, maybe like some of their other coworkers or colleagues or neighbors did. How does that community need to move forward in this new hybrid model?

Kristen Vaughn [00:02:18] The cleared community faced very unique challenges during Covid, right. They were mission critical and most of them had to go into the office every day or on an alternating schedule. And I think that as that community looks at and assesses jobs and looks at the type of information people are accessing and the tools and technology that they use, there's going to be a hybrid solution that's put in place. I think a lot of things that were deemed mission critical

and had to be done in the office - after looking at them, further realized that some of that could be done at home.

Chris Copeland [00:02:51] I think that's a good segue way into talking about what could be an often overlooked issue, which is maintaining culture in this new model. How does the federal government need to think about that?

Kristen Vaughan [00:03:01] Culture is really hard to put your finger on. It's something that it's there. It's seen and unseen and it has different values. I think in order to make culture work within this new workforce and the new workspace, it has to be purposeful and meaningful. So encouraging forced interactions where necessarily before you might have someone go to lunch or get coffee with a colleague and kind of have a discussion - that doesn't happen as much anymore. Right. So how do we create those intentional interactions? And we have to plan ahead, right? We have to set up things that make those interactions important and meaningful to employees.

Chris Copeland [00:03:41] The shift to this new hybrid working model, work in the office, work remote, coupled with the government's adoption of emerging tech like automation and applied intelligence and machine learning, that's creating a need to redefine job descriptions. How do federal executives need to think about that?

Kristen Vaughan [00:04:00] I think when we started talking about AI years ago, there was a big scare with the workforce, right. To say AI is going to replace my job. That's not necessarily true that we've learned. Right. A.I. is going to come in and augment the workforce. So your job may look different, but I think it's for the better. We're going to free up people, humans, right. To perform some more of those high level tasks where you're evaluating things, you're making decisions, you're applying objective reasoning and logic. And we're looking at some of the other tasks where AI can come in and augment so they can perform things quicker and faster and help those employees together. I think so, because position description, that's going to look different as well, because people are going to be interacting with AI. Some people will be training the AI, right. We have to try to do its job. Managers are going to be managing blended teams, right, of humans and machines. How do they do that? How do we evaluate someone who's managing a team of machines and then how do we all interact together and work together? So I think jobs and position descriptions will look different, but it's up to the employees and leadership to work through that AI roadmap and really understand what lends itself best to automation. How do I make this impactful for my employees and and the best use of AI and not just coming in and buying new tools for the sake of buying new tools?

Chris Copeland [00:05:15] So if we take a step back and we look at the government's commitment to growing technology, retraining and reskilling its resources, but more current, its response to Covid-19, how does that fit into its broader effort to be an employer of choice?

Kristen Vaughan [00:05:32] I think to be an employer of choice, you need to show personalization, human centeredness and a mission that is essential and exciting for people. And I think as candidates look for jobs outside of their current company or people that are coming out of school, they want someone and they want an

agency that cares about them. Right. I think that's what it comes down to. They want to do something exciting. With Gen Z, it's all about the mission. It's not about a paycheck. And I think that we've proven that over Covid where people will choose, you know, working remotely or having a flexible work environment as opposed to making more money. And I think that it's incredibly important for an employer of choice to be able to meet people where they're at. So having a flexible solution is incredibly important, where one size fits all is not going to work with the entire workforce. Not everyone will work from home. Not everyone will be in the office. Not everyone needs access to the same technologies and tools. Not everyone will take the same training. But how do we customize and cater to those people to meet their needs and help develop them as individuals? So they are deep in the knowledge they need to be and can collaborate and communicate with those around them to help the government best perform their duties and jobs and feel like their essential part of the mission and contributing to that agency.

Chris Copeland [00:06:48] Thank you, Kristen. Great perspectives on a significantly important topic.

Kristen Vaughan [00:06:54] Thank you, Chris. It was great talking to you today.