

Finding Clarity in Chaos



HR trends and the new
world of work in 2021



TALENTSOFT



As the proverb goes, “hindsight is 20/20.” The same can be said for this past year.

2020 brought about a flurry of unexpected challenges when the COVID-19 pandemic first rippled across the world. Everything we once considered to be “normal” in daily life suddenly got flipped on its head. This also forced businesses to adapt quickly to a series of ever-evolving changes. It certainly hasn’t been easy—and it’s clear that the months ahead will continue to be challenging for all.

Fortunately, there is a light at the end of this tunnel. The most challenging and chaotic times tend to fuel unparalleled innovation, spark new ways of thinking, and even bring newfound clarity to what feels like non-stop chaos.



We must continue to stay patient, flexible, and nimble in the face of massive change.

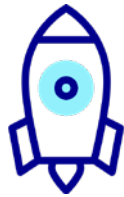
This has been true for us at Talentsoft, too. We’ve accepted and embraced all of 2020’s challenges to reimagine what the future of work will look like in the years ahead. What we know is that life post-COVID won’t be the same as we once knew it. To adapt, we must continue to stay patient, flexible, and nimble in the face of massive change.

It’s time for businesses to seize this unprecedented moment in history to identify new ways to boost organizational effectiveness while also empowering their people to drive greater impact in everything they do.

Here, we’ll take a look at four key trends that we believe will define, shape, and forever change how people work in the future.



The 4 trends:



Virtuality

The role of technology and the virtual world at work

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Humility

Facing new challenges means admitting we don't have all the answers

p. 13-19



Connection

Diversity, inclusion, and collaboration in a virtual world

p. 20-26



Authenticity

Blurring the lines between the personal and the professional

p. 27-31

No such thing as “back to normal”

Responding to COVID-19 has essentially forced organizations to accelerate the evolution of the work environment³ by

**5 – 10
years**

29 %

of employees worked remotely at least some of the time prior to the COVID-19 pandemic¹.

76 %

of employees worked remotely in April 2020, during the pandemic².

Company leader intentions regarding flexible working after COVID-19 reveals

82 %

of company leaders now say they'll let employees work remote some of the time .

1. Gartner, Remote Work Rates Before, During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic, Human Resources Research Team, 04 June 2020

2. Gartner, Remote Work Rates Before, During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic, Human Resources Research Team, 04 June 2020

3. Gartner, The Distributed Workplace of the Future Is Now, Suzanne Adnams, 17 September 2020

4. Gartner [Press Release](#), Gartner Survey Reveals 82% of Company Leaders Plan to Allow Employees to Work Remotely Some of the Time, Mary Baker, 14 July 2020,



As this pandemic rages on, many people may find themselves reminiscing about life pre-COVID. **But the writing's on the wall: the workplace of the future won't be the same as it was before.**

Accepting and embracing change is the only path forward

2021 will be no 'ordinary' year—and planning for the year ahead will be quite different than it has been in years past. It really all comes down to embracing an entirely new business mindset.

Even though change can be grueling, 2020's series of unexpected events has taught us all that businesses—and their employees—are more resilient than we could have ever imagined.



Now's the time to take constant chaos by the reins and set the groundwork for evolving our business models, talent management strategies, and corporate philosophies for whatever lies ahead.



A new V(h)UCA for finding clarity amid non-stop chaos

For years, [businesses have embraced the VUCA model](#)—an acronym standing for ‘Volatility,’ ‘Uncertainty,’ ‘Complexity,’ and ‘Ambiguity’—to navigate through the most challenging circumstances. In today’s pandemic-stricken world, these words have never been more relevant.

Everyone around the world has been trying to figure out how to survive and thrive in this ominous VUCA state. Fortunately, this has given the team at Talentsoft the time to reflect on the ups and downs of this past year. And in doing so, we’ve learned some important lessons to shape our approach to new innovations that will help us *and* our customers overcome future challenges—as we enter into the new world of work together.

This also inspired us to come up with a new take on VUCA—or rather, V(h)UCA—through the lens of HR: ‘Virtuality,’ ‘Humility,’ ‘Connection,’ and ‘Authenticity.’ We wholeheartedly believe that these will be *the* levers businesses must pull to rise out of this pandemic like a phoenix. They will also be the “drum beats” guiding our vision, philosophy, and strategy moving forward.

The years ahead will offer new opportunities to think differently, break inefficient processes, and reimagine what the future looks like. **Innovation is ripe for the taking. We just need to approach it differently.**

Read on to learn what V(h)UCA means to us!





TREND #1

Virtuality

The role of technology
and the virtual world
at work





The COVID-19 pandemic has forced a large number of workers to shift from office spaces to the virtual space. Our conversations, collaborations, and interpersonal relationships are now mediated by technology—and via screens of all shapes and sizes—more than ever before. And although modern technology has this incredible power to keep people and teams connected and productive in seamless ways, it also has an uncanny ability to make us feel far apart. This is just one take on how **virtuality** continues to impact the changing nature of work today.



“We have an important choice to make. We can either use technology to do many inefficient things more efficiently or we can harness its power to reinvent the processes and systems that enable people to work. Technology can play a transformational role in our lives, but only if we allow it to.”

ALEXANDRE PACHULSKI, CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER AT TALENTSOFT



Let's apply this same juxtaposition to Artificial Intelligence (AI).

On the one hand, AI offers the promise of automation and efficiency; on the other hand, it has unlimited potential to fuel business transformation. There are essentially two sides to this AI coin:



Transactional AI

... puts technology in a position to automate certain processes that will eventually replace the work of humans. While offering businesses enticing ways to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and increase the speed at which certain tasks are done, the threat it poses to people's jobs is, ultimately, its biggest drawback. **That is, only if we allow it to take over these processes completely.**



Transformational AI

... empowers us to rethink how we go about day-to-day processes. This can free up employees to dedicate more time and attention to more meaningful and impactful work, create new opportunities to get to know ourselves, our colleagues, and our customers better, and ignite more creativity in everything we do. Transformational AI exists to **make people and teams smarter so they can drive greater impact**, accelerate human innovation, and spark meaningful change.

The truth is, we are at AI's inflection point; it already influences us in ways we probably don't even think about. But that doesn't mean AI has to control us. Nor should it ever.



As humans, we have the power to define our relationship with AI and to apply it to how people work, communicate, collaborate, and innovate in the way we know best. For instance, in the context of performance management, Gartner notes regarding the most common use cases for AI in HCM, performance feedback “providing advice on giving better feedback, reducing bias, analyzing culture, value, and behavior, and automating training plans⁵.”

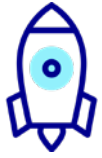


This can change the entire dynamic between managers and their employees for the better.

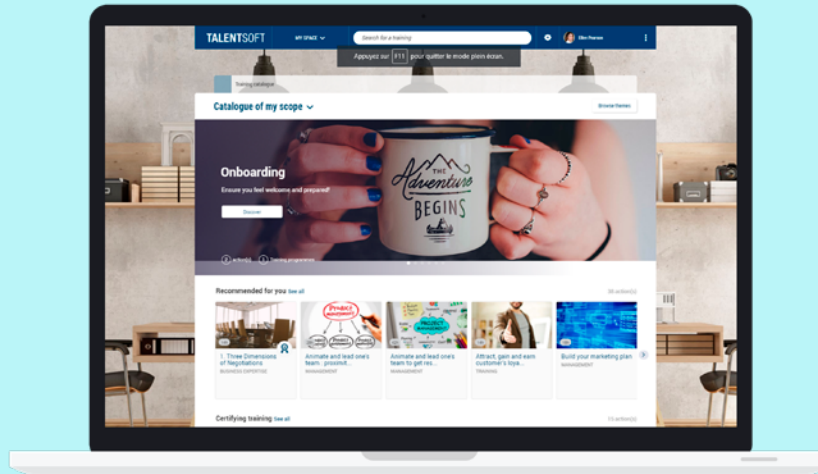
In addition, other smart technologies, like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), can help us create more immersive, multi-user learning and remote team-building experiences that break through the barriers limiting the potential and engagement of distributed teams.

For these reasons, it's clear that technology will play a central role in changing the norms around *how* people work in the future. For better or worse, the COVID-19 pandemic has established virtuality as not merely a passing fad; rather, it's a new way of being, of experiencing, of transacting, and of communicating that is very much alive and well in everything we do today. We simply must harness its power to drive even more value.

5. Gartner, AI Use Cases in Human Capital Management Technology, Helen Poitevin, Refreshed 25 August 2020, Published 4 March 2019



How Talentsoft fuels **virtuality**



“Ready to Move” Smart Assistant

This unique tool in **Hello Talent** uses AI to find candidates for open positions who are highly likely exploring new job opportunities. It also helps recruiters re-engage talent pools around new opportunities when they arise.

Talentsoft Learning

Among the many features within Talentsoft’s comprehensive learning platform, AI is used to fuel an employee’s self-guided learning experience. It knows the perfect time to recommend new learning content, to create a more personalized and relevant experience that addresses the specific learning needs of each employee with accuracy.

“We are an IT company, so we talk a lot about the disruptive world and technology. Talentsoft is really a step ahead when it comes to building a strategy for the world of tomorrow. That’s what makes them such a good partner.”

Teske Schröder, Global HR Manager at Planon



Want to learn more about our approach to **virtuality?**

We gathered a panel of HR experts from across Europe to discuss this topic.



[!\[\]\(e78f798d4ea5c530c9db49e7d26e6b95_img.jpg\) WATCH THE SHORT VIDEO](#)



TREND #2

Humility

Facing new challenges
means admitting we don't
have all the answers





This pandemic has caused many of us to shift our focus internally—and *listen*. What are managers, teams, and employees thinking and feeling? What struggles have people faced as work has gone virtual? What leads to the most communication breakdowns? What new tools and technologies do we need to build for a remote and distributed workforce? And the list goes on. But it's in listening to what's weighing on the hearts and minds of employees that we have been able to bring new solutions to the table to overcome our shared challenges.



“We are facing new challenges today that we have never faced before. No one should be expected to have all the answers. In fact, it’s ok to say, ‘I don’t know.’ Because not knowing the answer isn’t a sign of weakness; it’s an invitation to work together and build solutions for whatever new challenges lie ahead.”

SÉGOLÈNE FINET, CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER AT TALENTSOFT



In many ways, this era of endless turmoil and change has forced us to let go of tendencies towards “hero leadership” and, instead, create new opportunities for “community leadership.” Part of this meant giving ourselves more freedom to do things differently in order to move our business—and people—forward. Another part of this required *unlearning* many of our former business-as-usual habits that simply no longer applied today. This was an eye-opening reminder for us that our businesses can’t truly be successful if our people aren’t successful, too.

This is what **humility** is all about. We won’t always have all the answers. Sometimes we are better off saying, “I don’t know” than trying to wiggle our way around the unknown. But ‘not knowing’ is not the same ‘not trying.’ As businesses, we must do whatever we can to remain flexible, nimble, and agile in the face of change. We must also encourage our people to take risks together, even knowing that some of those risks may ultimately fail.





A lot of this comes down to giving people and teams the space to innovate just as much as it requires providing a means for honest, transparent, and free-flowing communication. In fact, businesses that have adopted this more human-centric approach to leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic—one that engages every employee in building solutions for the future—have seen [employee excitement around their jobs tick up by about 12%](#).

That's why it's so important for businesses to give their employees the tools and resources to thrive during challenging times. This includes:

1 Building soft skills

Just because colleagues no longer see each other face-to-face on a daily basis doesn't mean the basics of communication and collaboration go out the window. In a virtual environment, we must go the extra step to ensure that information isn't lost in translation. This is where soft skills come into play. You don't learn them once and then file them away for safekeeping. Soft skills must be learned and re-learned as either the environment around us changes or we face new obstacles.

“During disruption and uncertainty, demonstrating soft skills is no longer optional—few will be able to ignore the need to adjust their actions, attitudes, and coping mechanisms to support harmonious interactions and to overcome collective adversity.”

GARTNER, 9 PREDICTIONS FOR THE POST-COVID FUTURE OF WORK, 14 MAY 2020



2 Developing more empathetic managers

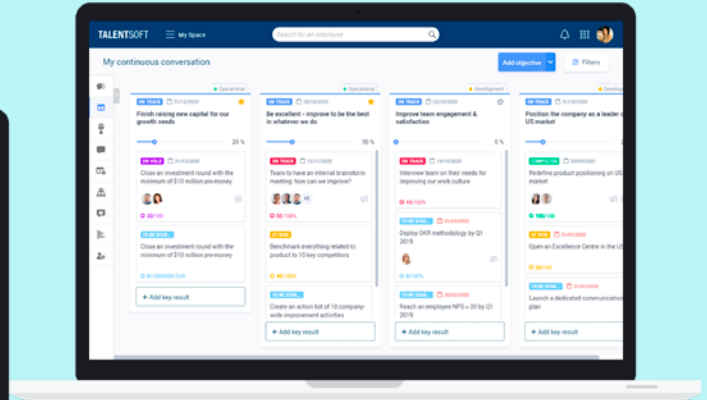
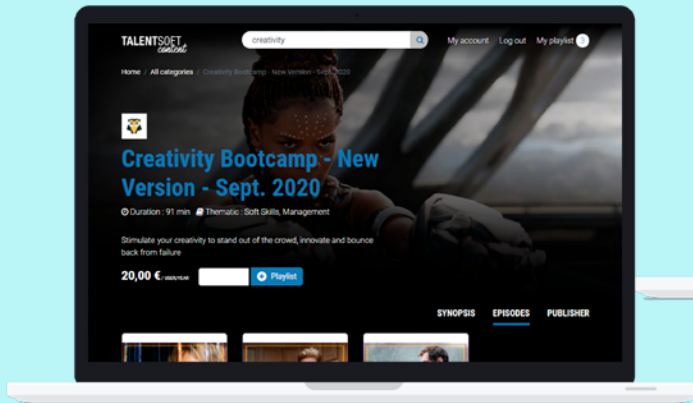
During the pandemic, many managers have faced the challenge of overseeing remote teams for the very first time. They've had to identify new ways of keeping their people happy, motivated, and productive amid uncertainty. They've also had to maintain a free flow of communication in order to spot the early 'warning signs' of when employees are struggling. Their role within organizations today is indispensable; they are the 'glue' keeping teams together. That's why we must support them in being both operationally and empathetically effective. This is the future of management in 2021 and beyond.



“The COVID-19 pandemic is escalating the need to have strong leadership skills to help team members adjust to the new work experience. This goes beyond managing processes and procedures. Leadership is focused on helping each team member cope with uncertainty, overcome challenges and perform at their best.”

GARTNER, BALANCING THE 4 DIMENSIONS OF 2020 LEADERSHIP, S. ADNAMS, M. HANCOCKS, 10 JULY 2020

How Talentsoft fuels humility



Talentsoft Content

Our bespoke and highly personalized content platform provides a scalable way to offer all employees an unlimited number of opportunities to skill up on the most important soft skills.

Continuous Conversation

This powerful performance management solution enables businesses to create a culture of ongoing feedback around goals, by empowering managers to build stronger relationships with their teams.

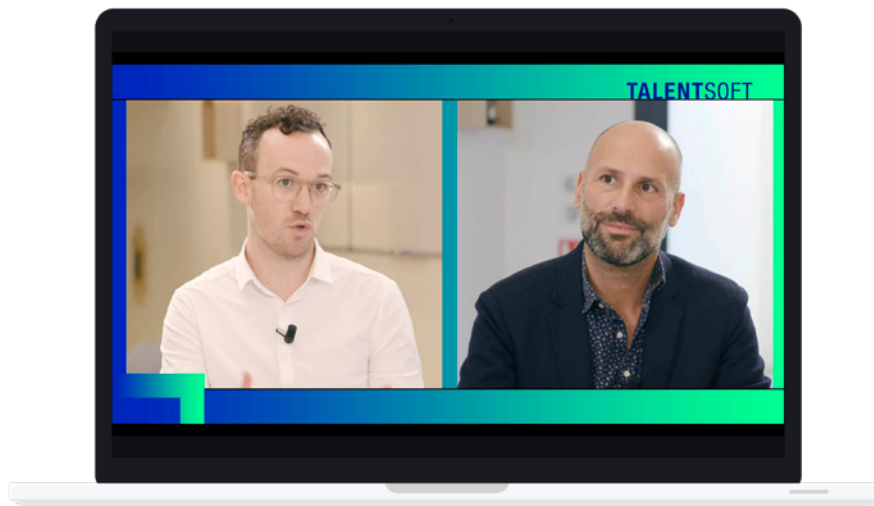
“Talentsoft enables us to establish a clear link between leadership, engagement, performance and organizational development, with a user-friendly gateway to all of these processes.”

Alexander A. Jaffe, Group Director HR & Communications at Bunker Holding



Want to learn more about our approach to **humility?**

We gathered a panel of HR experts from across Europe to discuss this topic.



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TREND #3

Connection

Diversity, inclusion,
and collaboration in
a virtual world





Humans are emotional beings by nature. We like to engage in conversations and debates. We thrive on the energy of other people. And we want to collaborate with our teams and colleagues to build a better future together.

Coincidentally, some seemingly commonplace aspects of daily life are never fully appreciated until they are suddenly taken away. This can be said about the sense of **connection** that was lost within teams and between employees at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.





Here's why this is important. Today's business problems are more complex than ever. Teams exist to accelerate a business's ability to turn big problems into meaningful solutions. But when people and teams begin to feel disconnected, either from each other or from a business's greater purpose, it becomes harder for them to know how to solve problems collaboratively.

We know that getting the right people together—each with their own unique experiences, skills, competencies, perspectives, and other qualifications—to tackle these problems is critical. However, for this to happen effectively in a distributed team environment, businesses must know who their employees are inside and out, what their goals and career aspirations are, and how best to tap into their skills and interests to drive the greatest value out of their work.



“Employees don’t come to work just to work. They come to create relationships, drive meaningful impact, and nurture their own goals and aspirations. A connected workplace simply uses technology to amplify this.”

SHANA ROY, CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER AT TALENTSOFT



Amplifying the potential of each and every employee is a big part of this equation. You must raise *all* of your people up, giving them the tools to succeed during this incredibly challenging time. It's absolutely critical for businesses to realize that every employee has an important role to play in ensuring a business's long-term success. This goes beyond simply working our way out of the COVID-19 crisis. This is about looking into the future and defining how your employees can be an active part of your business's master plan for years to come.



This is also a time to recognize the value of a diverse workforce. Hiring a mix of employees and freelancers from different ages, genders, ethnicities, religions, and academic backgrounds not only fills a company with diverse ideas and perspectives, but it also encourages respect, understanding, and tolerance. Think about it: When you pair up two people, with vastly diverse backgrounds and experiences, to tackle an important project, it's no surprise when amazing things happen. The sum is greater than its individual parts. This is the value of diversity at work.



Even though recruiting, hiring, developing, and growing a diverse workforce should be the number one priority for all businesses today, doing so for the sake of diversity alone is only half of the battle. Diversity doesn't really mean anything without inclusion.

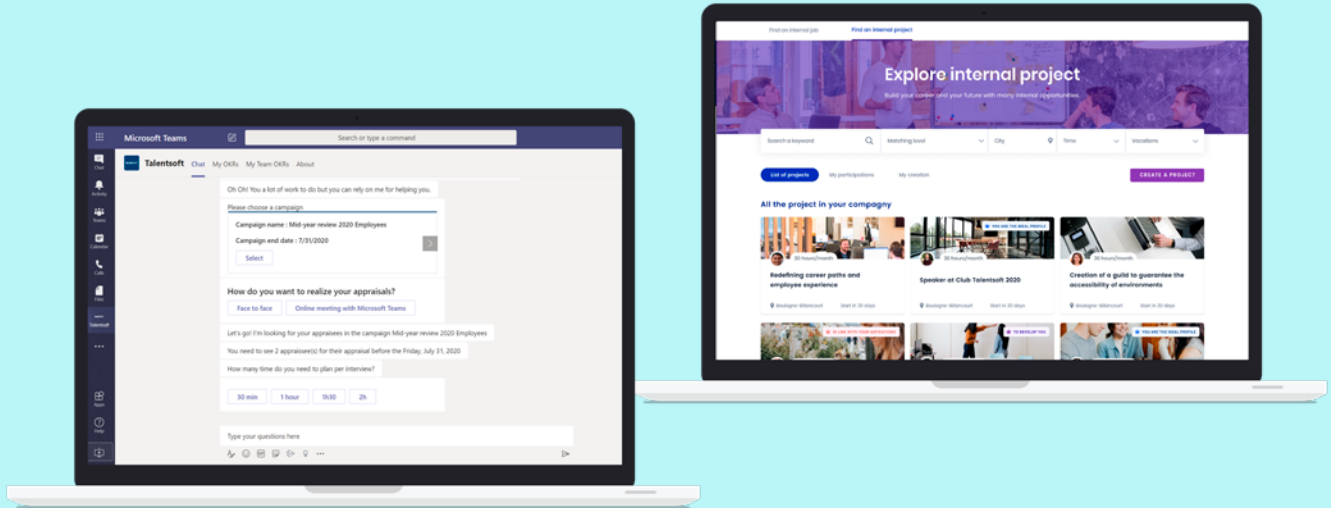
Inclusion is acceptance. It's recognition. It's about celebrating our differences, and not simply claiming "diversity by the numbers." Your employees aren't numbers. They are the most active stakeholders in your business's success. Giving them the freedom to bring 100% of themselves to work each and every day can breathe new life, energy, and innovation into your business.

Creating deeper connections across your entire business won't happen overnight. It requires thoughtful intention to become a lasting part of your company's culture, which is a solid strategy for setting your business *and* your people up for long-term success.





How Talentsoft fuels connection



Microsoft Teams Integration

We've collaborated with Microsoft to build a powerful integration allowing managers and teams to engage in the performance management process in a more collaborative, conversational, and tech-driven way.

Talentsoft Marketplace

Following our acquisition of Crafty earlier this year, we've developed a unique internal talent matching solution. It uses a range of career information within an employee's profile to pair them up with new projects, training, cross-functional opportunities, and even new job roles.

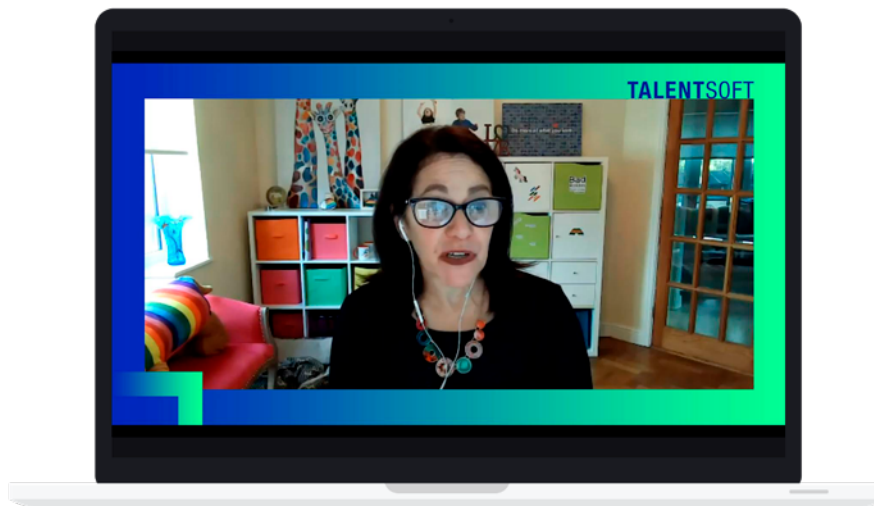
“When asked to shift our operation to produce hand sanitizer and masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, I knew I needed to rely on the diverse skills, entrepreneurial spirit, and agility of the people within our company. In just a few weeks, we were able to reinvent ourselves, to begin producing and distributing hand sanitizer and masks at a time when they were needed most.”

Sébastien Graff, Human Resources Director at InVivo



Want to learn more about our approach to **connection?**

We gathered a panel of HR experts from across Europe to discuss this topic.



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TREND #4

Authenticity

Blurring the lines
between the personal
and the professional





Employees today don't want or need pomp and circumstance from their employers. They simply want transparency and honesty—and they expect their business leaders to deliver on that. This doesn't mean that business leaders have to be “buttoned up” at all times. Quite to the contrary, they should let their hair down from time to time to let their human side shine. When they do, they set a positive example for all employees to follow, one that allows everyone in an organization to be honest and open about what they're thinking and how they're feeling.



“Today's employees expect absolute transparency. They look to business leaders for answers and want to know you have a plan. But they also want you to listen to their needs, too. Doing so is the best way to gain their trust.”

JEAN-STÉPHANE ARCIS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AT TALENTSOFT



The truth is, everyone is dealing with the pressures of this pandemic in different ways. For some, it's really impacting their ability to do their day-to-day work. Businesses need to be mindful of this, so they can catch on to any warning signs of fatigue early on.



At a time when incomplete and sometimes contradictory information is swirling around, employees now look to their business leaders—including their own managers—to help them make sense of all the noise. They want answers just as much as they want solutions. And they want a sense of purpose, too. This is even more important when the path forward is still a bit murky. To do this, you must be able to rally employees around a vision for the future that resonates with everyone, from senior leaders all the way down to the most junior employees.

That's why business leaders today now have a *moral(e)* imperative to listen and respond, not only because employees



expect it, but more practically because it's the key to boosting long-term employee engagement and retention. **Authenticity** in leadership, and in an organization's broader culture, is truly about internalizing, embracing, and projecting the voice of employees. Even Gartner predicts that, "by 2023, 80% of enterprises with 2,500+ employees will augment annual engagement surveys with pulse, focus-group-based or indirect methods to better understand worker sentiment⁶. This is the key to becoming more employee-centric.

Unfortunately, authenticity in a business context isn't always natural for many. In fact, we've been taught, in one way or another, to keep our "poker faces" on at all times and play *the* role that is expected of us. But that's not what the world needs today, nor is it what employees need from you either. **By putting your true self on display—during the ups and the downs—you demonstrate vulnerability in a positive way, which invites others to support you and collaborate with you to overcome challenges.** When approached in this way, authenticity can create a sense of openness that has the incredible power to fuel stronger team dynamics over time.

6. Gartner, Market Guide for Voice of the Employee Solutions, Ron Hanscome, Helen Poitevin, 29 May 2020





Want to learn more about our approach to authenticity?

We gathered a panel of HR experts from across Europe to discuss this topic.



[▶ WATCH THE SHORT VIDEO](#)



Are you ready to break through the chaos?



While 2020 has been a year of more downs than ups for most people, it has also been a year for learning how to be more resilient, patient, understanding, and nimble in the face of non-stop change and uncertainty. The businesses that have successfully embraced this chaos—and innovated alongside it—are those that will be better positioned to realign their people and processes for a more successful future.

As we look forward to 2021, we must begin to adapt to the new world of work. For some businesses, this will be easy. For others, this will require a good amount of change. So whether you need a nudge to get moving in the right direction or for someone to guide you every step of way, **the team at Talentsoft is here to help you assess your business through the lens of Virtuality, Humility, Connection, and Authenticity (“VhUCA”).**

**Contact us
today to
schedule your
customized
VhUCA
Readiness
Assessment.**



The world of work is rapidly evolving. Future business success will belong to those who transform the skills and talents of their workforce with agility and purpose. That's why, at Talentsoft, our mission is to unlock the potential of every single employee, transforming your organization in the process. Thousands of organizations leverage our open People@Work platform to accelerate talent transformation, in ways that fit seamlessly with their context, needs and existing tech ecosystems.

We're the European leader in Human Capital Management. From our 15 offices around the world, we empower more than 2,200 customers, from every industry, in over 130 countries.



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