



Connecting employees in remote,  
hybrid and global environments:

# **The HR Leader's Complete Guide.**

One thing is certain — we currently live in uncertain times. With recent mass layoffs across multiple sectors, a potential economic downturn on the horizon, geopolitical conflicts arising across the globe, and fears of job displacement with the rapid development of AI, the world we live — and work — in is evolving at a breakneck pace. Now with return to work mandates emerging in the wake of the waning pandemic, employees and staff across the globe are reassessing their relationships with work and the way they work.

Amid this uncertainty both company culture and workforce morale have suffered. The result of these developments is clear: a disconnected workforce. Employees are increasingly feeling siloed due to lack of connection in remote, hybrid or global settings whilst remaining employees, post layoffs, are increasingly questioning their employer's commitment to their wellbeing both in and out of the workplace. In fact, the World Economic Forum (WEF) reported that more than a third of workers are worried about losing their jobs, while nearly two-thirds wouldn't accept a job if it didn't provide security.



## A disengaged remote/hybrid workforce

Additionally, a growing sense of proximity bias, which gives in-office employees an advantage over their remote or hybrid counterparts, is exacerbating divisions and diminishing connectivity between work peers. Without the four walls of an office, some organizations have struggled to connect employees and according to HBR, their networks have shrunk by 19% since 2019.

Add to this the fact that DEI initiatives are being dropped due to budget cuts and the growing sentiment that employers aren't providing meaningful career growth and development opportunities, and you have a recipe for a highly disengaged workforce. In fact, in the U.S. employee engagement saw the first annual decline in a decade, dropping from 36% engaged employees in 2020, to 34% in 2021, to 32% in 2022 - with 18% actively disengaged. This in turn is not only resulting in diminished company culture but decreased talent mobility & retention, productivity and organizational performance as well.

“Organizations have struggled to connect employees and their networks have shrunk by 19% since 2019.”

## For HR – The pressure is on

These developments have put pressure on HR leaders across all organizations and industries. They've all been given a similar mandate; facilitate and foster a resilient workforce that is engaged, connected, and productive in the context of an ever-changing world of work.

In this ebook we'll outline how HR, DEI and L&D professionals, along with people managers, can work together to set employees up for success, keep them engaged and connected, and empower them to do their best work despite economic, social, geo-political and workplace upheavals.

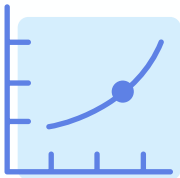
# The connected workforce: Why now.

Building a connected and engaged workforce is always beneficial to organizations. However there are several ways facilitating meaningful connections at work help companies specifically fare well in uncertain economic times. Without a sense of belonging among staff at work, companies risk further exposing themselves to employee attrition, low productivity, damaged organizational performance, lack of innovation and more — all of which can be fatal to a company during recessionary times or with a reduced workforce due to recent layoffs.



## Connectivity supercharges job satisfaction

Connected and engaged employees feel valued, motivated, and satisfied with their workplace, leading to increased morale and job satisfaction. This is especially important in uncertain times when employees may be experiencing stress or anxiety or after layoffs where the loss of their work peers can be traumatizing. In contrast, employees who reported a higher workplace sense of belonging showed 167% increase in their willingness to recommend their employer to others. Promoting workplace connectivity helps allay your workforce's anxiety, boosting morale and diminishing turnover from remaining staff.



## Connectivity bolsters productivity

Additionally, connected employees are more likely to be productive and take ownership of their work. They are more likely to be focused, committed, and enthusiastic, leading to better performance and outcomes — for them and their teams. The inverse is also true. Research by HBR shows that 40% of working people state they feel isolated at work, resulting in lower commitment to their organizations and lower engagement. As such, connection at work is highly important for employers during uncertain economic times. A productive workforce will yield higher organizational performance, which in turn helps companies weather economic storms.

**“Employees who reported a higher workplace sense of belonging showed 167% increase in their willingness to recommend their employer to others.”**



## Connectivity fosters business agility

It's also important to note that connected employees are more likely to think creatively and generate innovative ideas, partially facilitated by greater collaboration and idea exchange. Such innovative thinking is particularly important in uncertain times when businesses may need to pivot or adapt their strategies in the face of economic pressures. Remaining agile during potential recessionary times is crucial for organizations and a connected workforce is key to attaining such agility.

# Importance of connectivity in remote & hybrid work environments

Whilst remote and hybrid work came into prominence due to the pandemic, these work environments are proving to be highly popular with talent due to the flexibility they provide. Employers in turn have adopted hybrid working practices to accommodate their workforce's preferences, and many have seen an uptick in productivity and workforce morale as a result of deploying hybrid/remote work.

However, such work models must be implemented with connectivity in mind. Why? Because disconnectedness is one of the unintended consequences of the rapid shift to remote and hybrid work environments. In an audience poll, 58% of respondents said the lack of connection with colleagues was the biggest impact of this shift. In addition, recent research found that remote employees are two times less engaged than in-person employees.

"58% of respondents said the lack of connection with colleagues was the biggest impact of this shift."

Employees want genuine opportunities to make meaningful connections with colleagues and leadership that go beyond Zoom conference calls and webinars. This is particularly the case with younger employees, as over 70% want additional opportunities to build relationships with colleagues, and they are more likely to experience the pain of social isolation compared to their older peers in remote work environments.

At the same time, companies and their teams have become more siloed, diminishing workplace culture and community and the corresponding sense of workplace belonging they bring. This paired with current socioeconomic uncertainty and recent layoffs means that now is the time for HR leaders to double-down on workplace connectivity.

10KC Customer Quote:

"We wanted to build meaningful connections that superseded historic silos or proximity barriers...and 10KC allowed us to do that. The platform has helped us bring intention into conversations, which can be challenging in a remote or hybrid environment."

**Chris Dulny**

Chief Digital, Data & Innovation Officer, PwC.



# Will RTO mandates build connections at work?

In the face of siloed teams, uncertain times and a reduced workforce due to layoffs, HR leaders may think that returning to on-site work environments is the only solution to the compounding problem of a disconnected workforce. While RTO (return to office) mandates can help facilitate short term interactions and limited collaboration, simply implementing such mandates won't drive true engagement or long-term, sustainable workplace connections which fuel employee and company growth.

In fact, research shows that having the flexibility and autonomy to decide where and how they work has become a must-have for many employees. And rigid RTO mandates could have negative impacts on everything from retention to DEI goals — ultimately affecting the overall performance of the organization.

## Retention and recruitment

42% of companies that mandated office returns saw a higher level of employee turnover than expected and 29% are struggling with recruitment. (Unispace)

## Mental health and wellbeing

Employees who are required to come to the office for more time than they prefer experience significantly lower engagement and well-being and significantly higher levels of burnout. (Gallup via CNN)

## Diversity, equity and inclusion

Black, Hispanic and female job seekers are more likely to apply – and get hired – for remote jobs, compared to in-person roles. (LinkedIn)

## Performance and productivity

Flexible workers on average work 1.4 more days every month than traditional office workers. (Airtasker)



Looking for strategies to prevent employee burnout? 10KC's expert-led, science-backed burnout module provides high potential and diverse employees with actionable tips and tools for spotting and preventing burnout. [Learn more.](#)



# How to foster connectivity in remote & hybrid work environments

Building connected and engaged remote and hybrid teams requires the use of the right tech combined with impactful HR policies and programs that target the entire workforce. Here are a few key ways to encourage your staff to connect in a meaningful way:

## Communicate, communicate, communicate

Communication is key to building strong and meaningful connections between employees and leadership as uncertain times unfold. Both organizational & HR leaders should communicate regularly with employees to keep them informed of company goals, objectives, and progress — especially after widespread layoffs or during recessionary times. Remember, just because you aren't answering, doesn't mean employees don't have questions such as "will I get laid off next?", "how will the company weather an economic downturn?", "does my company truly appreciate my contributions?"



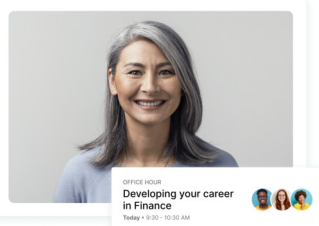
## Recreate serendipitous watercooler connections virtually

Meaningful connections that build workplace relationships and culture are often spontaneous, similar to meeting at the watercooler when working on-site. Technology can help build similar — but virtual — 1:1 connections between employees that transcend proximity, department and seniority. By ditching the org chart and connecting based on similar interests, employees can build their workplace communities naturally, even in remote or hybrid environments.



## Facilitate small group sessions between leaders & employees

Beyond fostering connections between peers, consider promoting connectivity between employees and organizational leaders. The benefits are immense, whether it's motivating staff to engage with leaders they normally would not interact with, giving employees access to subject matter experts who can help them learn new skills and grow in their careers or cultivating enthusiasm for company mission and vision.



10KC Office Hours (OH) makes it easy to open up conversations between senior leaders and employees with group sessions. OH lightens the admin load by taking care of invites, crowdsourcing questions, and collecting insights from participants. All otherwise busy leaders need to do is attend! [Learn more.](#)

# The 10KC connectivity experience

We help you create connectivity programs that build relationships, foster a sense of belonging and engage your workforce — regardless of proximity.

Our software provides connections and opportunities for employee engagement in a disconnected workforce by providing each individual with a genuine sense of mastery, purpose and autonomy. Give them an outlet for sharing, connecting and learning with 10KC and you'll unlock many positive outcomes.



## Reinforce functional connections

Connect members within the same department to build relationships and share ideas



## Break down silos

Spark innovation & collaborative problem solving by connecting members across functions



## Bolster company culture

Connect members to build relationships and culture to drive engagement



## Accelerate talent mobility

Match emerging talent with hiring managers to increase visibility and opportunities

10KC Customer Quote:

“Humans are wired to connect and a hybrid work environment shouldn't impede an employees' opportunity to connect with others. With hybrid work environments here to stay, companies and leaders need to adapt and symbiotically enable employee connections in an easy and automated way.”

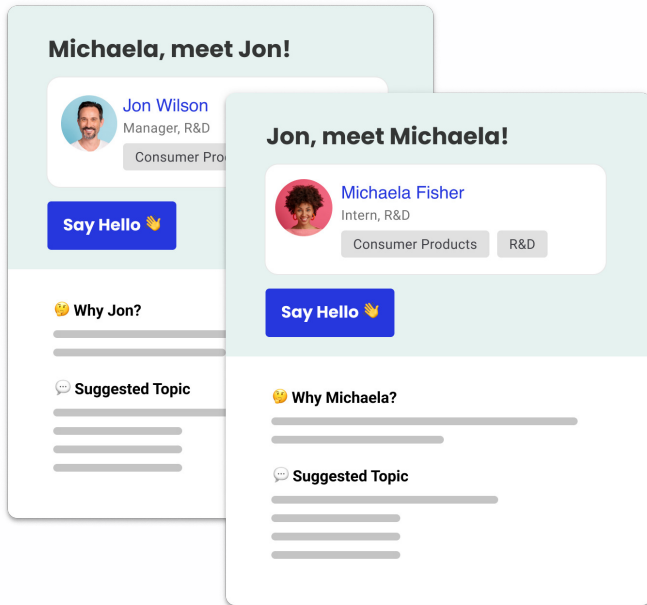
**Karissa Bussard**

Global Senior HR Partner of Digital Technology, GE



# How it works

Create an engaged community through our high impact workplace connectivity solution.



## 1. Smart match Introductions

Automatically create unbiased matches between employees based on their career goals, shared interests, or differences—regardless of proximity—so they can build the networks they need to feel connected and supported

### Outcome(s)

- ↑ Career Mobility
- ↑ Cross-Team Collaboration
- ↑ Connection to Colleagues
- ↑ Enterprise Understanding

## 2. Group matching with Office Hours

Interactive small group sessions for leaders, experts and employees to align on leadership objectives and gain learning and development opportunities.

### Outcome(s)

- ↑ Access to Senior Leaders
- ↑ Skill Development
- ↑ Sense of Belonging
- ↑ Career Development







MENTORSHIP PROGRAM TOPIC

Goal Setting

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM TOPIC

Prioritization & Time Management

### 3. Development Programs

Create guided 1:1 mentorship programs with structured curriculum and competency building resources, designed to turn causal connections into meaningful development experiences.

#### Outcome(s)

- ↑ Cross-Team Collaboration
- ↑ Skill Development
- ↑ Connection to Company
- ↑ Role Effectiveness



## Create purposeful connections that drive engagement, performance and retention with 10KC

As the way we work continues to evolve, it's clear that employee connectivity is not a nice-to-have but instead is vital to helping businesses better navigate uncertain times.

From off-the-shelf mentorship programs to interactive small groups sessions, 10KC helps organizations bridge the gaps created by remote or hybrid working arrangements, enabling employees to stay connected and engaged with each other — whether on- or off-site.

Want to learn how 10KC can help you empower your employees through mentorship and connectivity?

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

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