



SAFETY

Nebraska Building Chapter

AGC Safety Initiative E-News August 4, 2021

OUR Safety MISSION: Help each other enforce safety rules to ensure that every person on construction site goes home safe and healthy at end of the workday.

Calendar of Events – [Learn more](#)

[COVID-19 Resources Update](#) Updated information with quick references available.

3 ways the pandemic changed your brain when it comes to work

This period hasn't affected all people in the same way, but we are seeing some common trends.

The past several decades have seen huge technological changes that have fundamentally changed our access to information. Yet, it did little to transform the basic structure of our work.

When you think about it, people's career paths are also typically fairly constrained. An individual will take on many different jobs over the course of their working life, but they don't often completely switch fields. (Indeed, many people who do make substantial career switches only do so after experiencing a significant personal loss.) Furthermore, most people in the business world adopted similar work schedules, arriving at an office or job site in the morning and returning home in the evening. The pandemic has affected many aspects of our working lives—how and where we work, as well as *why*. Though this transformational period obviously hasn't affected all people in the same way, there are some important trends that reflect its influence on people's psychology:

RECONSIDERING CAREER PATHS

Lots has been written recently about the "Great Resignation." For some people, changing jobs just reflects that as employers start rehiring, it's possible to take a job similar to the one they already have, but with much better pay. For many people, though, seeing the world change and people get sick led lots of individuals to ask themselves whether they really care about the work they're doing. Being reminded that life is short provided enough energy for people to consider a bigger career switch than they might have under normal circumstances. What we don't know yet is whether this change will be short-lived. If the pandemic situation ever settles down, people may fall back into the old complacency that led them to stay in jobs they didn't love to begin with. Or, it might give people license to change paths more frequently in search of a job that they can treat as a calling.

RECALIBRATING BASIC NEEDS

A key reason why people work—and why they take on particular careers—is because they want to make a good living that will enable them to buy the things and experiences that they hope will make them happy. And people often overestimate how much joy they will get out of owning new things versus spending money to have peak experiences. The pandemic changed people's calculus around what they need. Many people who commuted to work by car now found that they barely drove anywhere when working from home and social distancing. They didn't need a lot of new clothes either. In fact, a lot of the stuff that people own didn't get used, even as people stared at the objects in their home day after day.

As a result, a lot of people have started to declutter their homes. Not only did people get rid of a lot, but they didn't replace it. As a result, many people began to think about how much they really need to own. At the same time, the pandemic also threw a lot of people out of work initially. And so, people also began to see the value of having savings. The savings rate jumped in the first year of the pandemic. Like the willingness to change careers, it will be interesting to see whether the decrease in desire to own a lot of stuff and the willingness to save money persists after the pandemic. The fear of losing a job may stick with people in a way that keeps them wanting to have a buffer to help in tough times. But it's also possible that people will feel less need to save when the pandemic subsides.

OPENING UP NEW MODES OF WORK

One permanent change, though, is that many things we didn't think were possible before have been shown to work just fine. It turns out that, for many jobs anyway, we don't all need to work in the same place. Remote work isn't always ideal, but it can be done quite successfully. Video conference tools like Zoom make it pretty easy to meet one-on-one, or with a group, from a distance.

Also, we all knew commuting was horrible, but we all thought it was necessary. Now, we know that isn't true either. For many people, there is no compelling reason to go to the office that often (if ever). And even those people who do need to go to the office all the time need not arrive between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. and leave between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. So, perhaps morning and evening rush hours aren't necessary either. This change will persist for two reasons. First, we found out through experience how well the remote working environment could function, so that is now shared knowledge. Second, because people are taking more flexibility in their work, it creates more opportunities for flexibility for everyone else. The standard workday has the most force when it is standard and everyone does it. As more people have the flexibility to choose their own work hours, there is less social pressure for anyone to conform to one particular schedule.

Safe + Sound Week, August 9-15

Safe + Sound Week is a nationwide event held each August that recognizes the successes of workplace health and safety programs and offers information and ideas on how to keep America's workers safe.

Study shows extra work and caregiving take a toll on employees

Workers who took on extra job duties or became caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced higher levels of stress and anxiety, negatively impacting their well-being and motivation, results of a recent study show.

Researchers from online stress management platform provider meQuilibrium surveyed about 7,000 workers in June 2020 before conducting a follow-up with 7,500 workers six months later – about nine months into the pandemic – to examine employee well-being as well as the mental health impacts of additional workloads and new caregiving responsibilities. A quarter of the respondents reported they had taken on new job responsibilities amid the pandemic, while 20% said the former group – essentially made up equally of men (23%) and women (25%) – reported a 4.1 times greater increase in work-related stress and a 2.3 times greater increase in burnout than the participants who didn't take on larger workloads.

Additionally, the group reported a 4.5 times greater decrease in motivation compared with that reported by their counterparts. Meanwhile, the group that took on new caregiving responsibilities – which disproportionately affected women (24%) more than men (17%) – reported a six times greater increase in health worries, a 16% increase in burnout, two times the level of work-related stress and nearly a twofold decrease in motivation than those who didn't. Thirty-seven percent of male caregivers and 47% of female caregivers said they had trouble finding time for self-care.

Other findings: • During the follow-up, respondents reported a 52% rise in burnout, a 20% increase in disrupted sleep and a 15% higher level of work-related stress. Meanwhile, positivity fell 36% while motivation dipped 30%. • Respondents with low energy showed an 82% increase in physical symptoms of stress, a 92% decrease in motivation and a 61% increase in job worries. • Those who weren't engaged had a 112% increase in burnout symptoms.

The results also show that respondents who improved their resilience skills – emotional control, energy and engagement – had small decreases or showed improvements in well-being during the second half of the study period.

Safety Initiative Goals:

As an AGC Nebraska Building Chapter member, are you participating with:

- 100% of all AGC members and other contractors on AGC jobsites enforcing OSHA standards as they apply to falls, electrical safety and possible another topic.
- 100% of all AGC members will have set their own company goals to improve safety in their firm and have a way to measure progress towards the goal.
- 100% of all AGC members will encourage and support all contractors on their jobsites to set their own company goals for improving safety.