

Navigating a New Economy

Chris Tomlinson, a staff columnist, wrote in the Sunday, June 19 edition of the San Antonio Express-News that “the global economy is undergoing fundamental changes that impact all of us.” We may have lived through the pandemic but it’s still being felt. The words inflation and recession, supply chain and staffing shortages, all have become common in our daily verbiage.

So, this month’s take on transition is about words. A recent zoom meeting attendee asked the question about the differences between “hybrid”, “in-person”, “remote” and “work from home”. These are just a few of the terms that are now in our lexicon in the workplace. Let’s start with what we know.

Working in-person has been the stalwart forever. We all show up at the appointed time and accomplish the various tasks within the confines of the workplace. We have the company’s latest equipment, ready resources and co-workers to tap when needed to accomplish the business and mission. Some businesses will require in-person, especially those with direct face-to-face interaction with the customer. We all want to see the clerk in a retail store or a housekeeper in a hotel.

The downside post-pandemic to in-person is that many employees are now proficient in zooming and working on-line. They enjoy the luxury of not dealing with commuting. There are fewer distractions like those created by workplace dramas. They feel they are more productive working from home, even when balancing things at home. How many of you washed the laundry or watched the kids while working from home? Other savings include reduced parking expenses, clothing allowances, and lunch savings.

Then there is the full-time work-from-home (sometimes called remote but we will chat about this later) employment. All of the previous points regarding working from home now become positives. It does require the employer to ensure that the technology matches the needs of the employee and the business. Policies are created to ensure any security and other logistic concerns for the business. These policies also include critical procedures for payroll accounting, etc. For the business though, facility costs are reduced with the smaller physical workspace requirements. Many companies are also finding that there is a wider base of talent as there is not a geographic limitation. Tapping into a wider pool of applicants has greater opportunity for talent needed for this ever changing world.

The biggest challenges identified are more on the social aspects of employment. Employers need to ensure that there are opportunities for inclusion for those working remotely and make sure that the successes of the employee are recognized and rewarded. The remote employee’s leadership and the employee must be diligent about staying connected so “out-of-sight” doesn’t become “out-of-mind.”

Finally, the hybrid. This is the combination that attempts to meet the needs of all. There is a balance of remote and in-person as determined by the needs of the business. The balances of the positive and the negative are overcome.

As a note, there is another term, remote, that needs clarification. This can also be used to describe the work away from the workplace but also can mean “on-the-road”. This is a point to be clarified during the hiring process as one would with the many other employment points.

As you job search during your transition, you need to clarify your needs. Determine what work environment works best for you. Search out companies that fit this profile. Understand their expectations to ensure a match. Clarify their policies, etc. to ensure that the work conditions are supportive to productivity. While these are necessary for any job search, it’s becoming more important in this

fluctuating economy. An essential key is research and conversations as you pursue a company. Then you will have the information needed to make a career decision.

Best of luck in your career search. (Note: Resources for this article and most of these are www.shrm.org.)

Kitty

Kathryn “Kitty” Meyers Lt Col USAF (Ret)
SPHR, SHRM-SCP
Chapter Transition Liaison Officer