



## THE FUTURE OF WORK

**Moderator:** Jennifer Stewart

**Panelists:**

- Beverly Young, Government & Public Sector Lead, Workforce Transformation, Deloitte
- Rachel Huckle, President & COO, Staples Canada
- Diana Palmerin-Velasco, Director, Indigenous Affairs & Diversity & Inclusion Policy, Canadian Chamber of Commerce

Our panelists discussed the big changes the pandemic brought and some they hope will still come; how our notion of “work” has changed, both as a concept and a physical space; and how to empower women in the workforce going forward.

### ON THE PACE AND SCOPE OF CHANGE

**Diana Palmerin-Velasco** saw advancements that would have taken years (if not decades) suddenly being worked out in weeks or months.

*“Things we thought were impossible suddenly became possible. We heard a lot from employees with disabilities who for a long time had been requesting flexible working arrangements and were told no, then from one day to the other, (it was) done and ... everything continues working and we adapt.”*

Within Deloitte, **Beverly Young** pointed to a renewed focus on customizing work, driven by a “team pledge” initiative.

*“At the beginning of every project, the teams get together to discuss ways of working, how they want to grow, specific skill sets they want to develop, and also how they want to receive recognition and feedback ... It’s about customizing and evaluating based on the talent, organizational, and client outcomes you seek to achieve.”*

For **Rachel Huckle**, the pandemic brought Staples’ role as a provider of expertise and a trusted problem-solver to the forefront.

*“We were at the intersection of keeping small businesses going and helping students continue to learn and engage. We had teachers coming in saying, ‘I’ve never taught virtually. How do I hook this up?’ And our amazing associates on the front line could help them ... So, we benefited from building trust. We learned that focus and agility can move mountains.”*

### ON EMPOWERING WOMEN

**Rachel** reflected on doing better by doing less.

*“It’s a cultural thing, creating conditions where it’s okay to say no. ‘Do you want me to do A or do you want me to do B?’ There’s building confidence in women that empowers them to say that, but the culture within the organization also has to be such that they won’t feel slighted or penalized for doing that.”*

**Beverly** followed this up with a thought on how organizations can support boundary-setting.

*“The flip side is making sure managers have the training to understand what the guidelines are when people say, ‘I’m achieving my outcomes; I’m at capacity.’ Telling managers that you must allow your people to do that.”*

And **Diana** added the idea that support can come from throughout the organization.

*“Organizations can also encourage male employees to adopt more of these flexible working arrangements, and the distribution of house chores and all of that should be more equal as well. Because the reality is that for many women, we immediately put our hands up, we do it all, and suddenly you realize you don’t have any more fuel.”*

### ON FLEXIBILITY AND WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

All three panelists agreed hybrid work will be a part of the foreseeable future and touched on the practical issues – technology, space, physical design – as well as the less tangible ones – visibility, communication, and culture – while offering some specific thoughts:

*“Flexibility isn’t necessarily a number of days assigned to be onsite or in the office. It needs to be also within the hours of work.” – Rachel*

*“What are those shiny points that your organization, and your organization alone, has? Is it an internal talent marketplace? Can people broaden their skill sets?” – Beverly*

*“Look at processes and practices and make sure those are not disadvantaging women and other people (those that might not be in the office as much as others). Make sure they don’t become one more barrier.” – Diana*

*“We’re looking at flexible work options, meaning a potential four-day work week for our retail associates.” – Rachel*

*“Evaluate your workforce goals as well as your organizational goals. Are there things we can give machines to do to (and) then elevate humans and women to perform those enduring capabilities?” – Beverly*





# THE FUTURE OF WOMEN & WORK

Presented by The Honest Talk

## THE HYBRID EFFECT

**Moderator:** Patricia Boal

**Panelists:**

- Shavonne Hasfal-McIntosh, Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, WealtheSimple
- Carol Leaman, President & Chief Executive Officer, Axonify
- Shannon Leininger, President, Cisco Canada

This panel featured three different panelists with three different perspectives who agreed that the hybrid model brings both challenges and successes, and that effective change can't be imposed.

### ON THE IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING TOP-DOWN DECISION-MAKING

**Shavonne Hasfal-McIntosh (Shav)** talked about the problems with Shopify's unilateral decision to permanently shut offices.

*"As leaders, it can be easy to make those decisions really quickly ... but creating some space for employees to also give their perspectives is super important. (For example) we need to acknowledge that home is not a safe space for everybody. And by removing physical office space, what does that mean for those people?"*

**Shannon Leininger** outlined four steps Cisco Canada took when establishing hybrid work norms:

1. *"Taking a people-first approach to make sure we understand how people want to work and what's best for them."*
2. *"Looking at policies to make sure they're inclusive and we've got equity built in."*
3. *"Evaluating the technology and making sure we have a consistent experience no matter where our folks are working, whether it's in a coffee shop or in the office or at home."*
4. *"Looking at the workspaces to ensure the office becomes a magnet and not a mandate."*

**Carol Leaman** articulated a similar approach at Axonify:

*"Asking people what they need, not just telling them what they have to do, what the project is, when the deadline is, but making that human connection that allows them permission if they're struggling with something to be vocal and ask for help."*

### ON THE CHALLENGES OF A HYBRID WORK MODEL

**Shav** mentioned nepotism, which can sometimes creep in between on-site workers who see each other frequently.

*"When I look at the data, it's starting to show itself. When you look at promotion rates, when you look at who's leaving organizations voluntarily, there are some trends there as it pertains to underrepresented communities."*

**Shannon** pointed out the very real, logistical challenges of having support in place to ensure consistent experiences between on- and off-site workers, as well as the awareness of the need for security, while also highlighting a leadership issue:

*"When we moved into a hybrid world environment, we assumed leaders knew what to do, and I don't think that's the case. We need to spend some time giving leaders the tools and the abilities they need to learn how to lead in this environment."*

**Diana** had similar thoughts on the leadership challenges of hybrid work.

*"Managers have to go the extra mile now. It takes effort and it's not something most people have been trained in ... (Managers) are under so much pressure to manage people in ways they never thought they would have to."*

### ... AND THE BRIGHT SPOTS

There are definitely benefits to hybrid work, as **Shav** pointed out.

*"A lot of people from underrepresented communities are finding that they don't need to code switch as much. So, a lot of people were covering certain aspects of their identity when they were going to the office to fit in and belong. They're finding they don't need to do that cognitive exercise anymore. They are just who they are at home living their best lives, which allows them to focus on the work."*

**Carol**, a self-declared former work-from-home skeptic, says her mindset has changed completely.

*"I now firmly believe that I am getting, as the employer, far more productivity out of everybody than I ever thought possible ... I have completely swung the pendulum on that. And I think for many people it's just a matter of time and evidence, being able to see the evidence that you're still accomplishing a lot."*

**Shannon**, Shannon sees the hybrid model as an opportunity to make employees want to come in, rather than feeling they *must*.

*"You have to be really intentional about creating culture ... We need to create moments that matter. In order to be a magnet, you've got to have reasons people want to come in."*


### IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS

*"Flexibility does not equal inclusion and equity. I think people assume that flexible workplace practices mean that all people will be included, but that is not true." – Shav*

*"Work is not a place that you go. Work is what you do. If the work's getting done, the work's getting done." – Shannon*

*"The pandemic caused us all to take a hard left. And the pendulum did swing way too far to one side ... The pendulum is swinging back. I still don't think we're landed at where we're going to be forever. I think there's still some forming and norming going on, but I think we're getting closer." – Carol*





# THE FUTURE OF WOMEN & WORK

Presented by The Honest Talk

## RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & PROMOTION – KEEPING WOMEN IN THE MODERN WORKFORCE

**Moderator:** Catherine Clark

**Panelists:**

- Cheryl Tjok-A-Tam, VP Strategic Initiatives & Change Management, CFO, RBC
- Kathryn Tremblay, CEO & Co-Founder, Altis Recruitment
- Mara O'Brien James, COO, Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)

These panelists shared engaging thoughts on tough conversations and the importance of change while offering some practical considerations on how to seize the opportunity to develop a progressive, supportive workplace.

### ON IMPLEMENTING MEANINGFUL CHANGE

**Mara O'Brien James** explained how the pandemic was a driver for change at the FCM.

*"(We intentionally stated) that we needed to become extremely people-centric and that we needed to become an anti-racist organization. It led us to challenge ourselves on the big questions: 'Is it important that people are hired in Ottawa? Is it important that someone has to sit at a desk?' And by framing it in those ways, we were able to say it's not. What's really important is that people are comfortable when they come to work and they can bring their best."*

**Kathryn Tremblay** acknowledged that change can be met with both fear and excitement.

*"The great debate is still out over how this is all going to play out. Are we going to be lonely at home and have no connections? Or is this great experiment of people working from home just going to create beautiful life integration and greater health? ... I think it's going to be an obsession until that younger generation starts to take over from the old guard."*

**Cheryl Tjok-A-Tam** also addressed the generational divide referenced by Kathryn.

*"There's a generation of leaders that are just behind those (older) leaders who are shifting – not being as prescriptive, more personalized, more considerate of the individual as opposed to doing math that we need to have people in X number of days."*

### ON TALKING ABOUT DIFFICULT THINGS

**Mara** shared the message of an article she read about how the current workplace came to be.

*"I thought to myself, how have I never seen that the workplace – the way we've built it – is a social construct? ... Is it built to purpose now? No. And are we going to go back to what we were if we've realized we've grown through this period of time? ... The change has to happen with authentic conversations at a very high level in the organization, and that requires an extreme amount of trust. It requires the people who have the power to understand that they hold it."*

**Kathryn** also talked about the importance of awareness and representation from power holders.

*"The decision-making at the table is fairly narrow in the scope of who's making it. So, to change something about promotion, advancement, and flexibility takes the people making the decisions to ask a different question – to ask you as an individual, what are you seeking? And if we ask women what they seek, we will design the workforce around what they're seeking, which is very clear career paths for black women, and for Indigenous women, and for people with sexual and gender diversity and to really honour each part of all of ourselves."*

**Cheryl** also offered reflections on the need to ask meaningful questions.

*"(In) conversations I'm having with other leaders within the organization, I'm encouraging them to question the shortlist of candidates. Who's on that shortlist – not just from an ethnicity perspective, but from a gender perspective, experience, age, all the demographics – so we are having an appreciation and understanding of who makes up our team and we aren't always just hiring in our likeness."*

### ON REAL STEPS TOWARD A MODERN WORKPLACE

**Cheryl** suggested technology can help provide an understanding of who is applying for various roles, but also emphasized a shift in mindset.

*"You've been given a shortlist. Does this shortlist actually meet what you were looking for? ... We need to be a lot bolder and declarative ... around reflecting what a Canadian looks like and how do we meet that?"*

**Mara** also supported taking a critical stance when recruiting and hiring.

*"It's when you're looking at the recruitment pool thinking, 'Okay, let's be really intentional about who's in this pool and let's get really tailored with our top two candidates. Let's find out what's important to those candidates ...' We weren't doing that before the pandemic."*

As expected from the leader of a recruitment firm, **Kathryn** had lots of practical tips, including:

- *"When we post an advertisement that is exclusively remote, we get about four times the number of candidates. And when we put an ad ... that is hybrid, it gets two times."*
- *"Offer flexibility, ... (excellent) compensation or a great leader. One of those three things has to be true."*
- *"If you can't offer a big raise, what else is possible? Is there time off in lieu, sabbaticals, part-time, four-day work weeks?"*

### FINAL THOUGHTS

*"We have to not try to control everything. We went through three years of working remotely where productivity was still achieved. We still got work done." – Cheryl*

*"If we just stick with what we know, we will end up with something that isn't working. So we have to keep challenging the norms we had because they're not norms anymore." – Mara*

*"I never want to go back to what was, and I want all of us to keep moving towards the highest innovation we can possibly bring to the most beautiful life we can have. Work is joy and work is play." – Kathryn*