Remote Workforce
Consulting Services & Modules

Achurch Consulting initiated our Remote Workforce Consulting services in response to seeing our current clients and others struggling with remote work. We observed teams trying to apply the same rules and practices for remote/distributed work that they did with in-person management and coming up short of the results they were hoping to see. Achurch knew that with our collective backgrounds and expertise in systems and process design, legal and operational management, and assessment and curriculum development, we could help organizations design successful remote workforces. In short, we help organizations institute effective, research-based methods to create highly engaged, productive remote teams. Through our approach, we strive to understand your -

People

In the Organization

No change can be successful if we don't understand the people who will be affected by the change

Processes

Needed to be Established, Maintained, &/or Re-Engineered

To Accomplish the Desired Outcomes

Technology

That Best Fits Your Organization's Business Transformation

Decide the people and processes first - then use your tech to connect your teams and facilitate how they can work best

Achurch Consulting believes no project can succeed without a thorough understanding of our clients' goals, objectives, and the unique attributes of your organization. The questions we ask at the beginning of every new relationship are, "What will success for this project look and feel like for you?" and "How will you measure success?" The answers to these questions serve as the foundation for our engagement and drive the project's success. For this reason, we begin each project with a discovery conversation designed to:

➢ Fully understand your "current state" including internal operations and external engagements
➢ Evaluate how your team collaborates and communicates daily
➢ Gain insight into your team's remote work environments to understand the current challenges they experience working remotely

Overview of Services and Modules

Synchronous and Asynchronous Communication Channels: Closing the Communications Gap in a Distanced Workplace

Communication, especially in a distributed workforce, can be challenging. In virtual work environments, the opportunity to communicate grows exponentially because there are more tools and channels to use for information sharing via emails, instant messages (IMs), texts, phone calls, group chats, video chats, and "meetings." To communicate effectively in such an environment, everyone must be clear on the rules and standard practices for when, where, and how to best share information and engage with one another. Organizations need to strike the right balance between communicating too much and not enough.

High-performing organizations with remote workers intentionally adopt standard communication platforms and practices to improve productivity and decrease employees' communication frustrations. Collaboration reinforces these practices from the top down, and daily communication promotes connectedness.

Strong communication, both in efficiency and clarity, is the foundation of any successful team - especially in a distributed workforce. With the average worker spending roughly 13 hours per week on email alone, it's no wonder 96 percent of employees said email regularly wastes their time.

To improve productivity and decrease your employees' frustration, we provide an assessment of your team's -

➢ Current communication practices
➢ Identify platforms and solutions for both informal and formal communication
➢ Coach teams on how to use daily connectedness to improve morale
➢ Keep your culture alive in the remote work world

Managing a Distributed Team

Empathy, clarity in communication, and trust are critical to a manager's effectiveness and the overall success of a remote team. For remote workers, their manager is the face of the organization, the heartbeats of positive company culture, and the champions of a profitable bottom line. They are responsible for communicating company information and leadership decisions, setting direction, giving feedback, and connecting them to the company's mission. In hybrid distributed workforce models, especially, managers must do the following – all without micromanaging:

➢ Be flexible to support their teams either in person or remotely
➢ Be able to develop skills to provide both tactical and emotional support

➢ Conduct successful remote meetings
➢ Foster collaborations
➢ Promote productivity

Managers are critical to reinforcing the existing or desired culture of the company. The values, tone, and norms of an organization are derived top-down from leaders and managers who define and embody them. Culture changes and evolves with decisions and actions made every day and is reinforced by celebrating certain behaviors, rewarding some, and discouraging others. Fostering a positive culture requires extra care and attention in remote work environments where employees, managers, and leaders are physically separated, and there is little to no collective "on-site" experience to share and reinforce.

In this module, we will explore ways managers can incorporate the above-mentioned practices and learn how to hold teams accountable using Performance Management Strategies and keep in touch without micromanaging, and more. Achurch can conduct the following based on your needs and goals:

➢ An in-depth assessment of current management practices and procedures
➢ Management training based on needs identified in the assessment
➢ A deeper immersion and training with leadership or selected managers to assist them in better executing tasks and goals
➢ Create and design a management training program to be conducted by your organization
➢ Create and design other management programs or processes as needed

Project Management & Progress Visibility: Managing Tasks and Deadlines

Transitioning from a conventional business model with all employees located in a physical facility(s) to one with remote employees creates the need to take a fresh look at internal operations. Everything from staff technology needs across various business functions, to onboarding and technology support, to cybersecurity protocols, to handling mail and in-person client meetings should be reviewed. *Operations in a remote environment require leaders to reimagine, not replicate, work processes and the workforce structure.*

One of the most critical components of operations in a remote workforce is knowledge management. Ideally, this means easy-to-find and accessible files and records with a standardized naming convention. The second is documented policies and protocols that are transparent and accessible.

In a remote environment, visibility and organized management are the keys to project progress and team collaboration. When employees use an online tool to manage their projects, they are twice as likely to rate their levels of efficiency, communication, and the organization as

"excellent." We will work to optimize your team's productivity during this module and ease project stress across the organization through shared best practices and work tools' integration.

One of our core tenants is that "everyone is a project manager," meaning you don't need to have your PMP or be in tech to approach your work as a project manager does. Everything you do can be organized as a project. Therefore, Achurch can conduct the following based on your needs and goals:

> ➢ Assessment of the best and assist in the selection of a project management tool
> ➢ Organization-wide training on Project Management Fundamentals – a baseline training for "non-project managers" to learn how to incorporate project management techniques into their everyday work
> ➢ A deeper immersion with leadership or selected managers to assess their current methodology for project planning - understanding all the responsibilities, tasks, stakeholders, vendors, contributors, etc., necessary for successfully executing their goals
> ➢ A group review to standardize procedures and gather consensus on best practices moving forward
> ➢ Build a process/procedure PM template(s), review the build with the program leaders, and make any necessary adjustments before deploying the template for testing
> ➢ After using the PM tool for a designated period of time, Achurch can work with leadership to make any final adjustments to any standard PM templates created in the chosen tool
> ➢ Final documentation and presentation of SOPs

Employee Wellness: Your Workday, Wellbeing, and Career Growth

The critical importance of employee engagement cannot be overstated. **Gallup** defines "engaged employees" as "those who are involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work and workplace." Engaged employees are proven to be more productive and efficient and tend to stay with their companies longer. Overall, they perform more highly than their less-engaged peers. Employee engagement and wellbeing are two related areas of importance. Surveys and data show that engaged employees are happier, healthier, and more productive than their less-engaged counterparts. In fact, according to the APA, "89% of workers at companies that support wellbeing initiatives are more likely to recommend their company as a good place to work."

However, working remotely presents unique employee engagement and wellness opportunities and challenges compared to the traditional office setting. Even in conventional offices, stress, work-life boundaries, physical health (including workspace ergonomics), financial security, feelings of appreciation, and career growth opportunities all factor into employee engagement and wellness. Each of these areas becomes harder to ensure, monitor,

and measure with remote workers because they are not physically in an office where it is easier to notice mood or behavior changes that could signal disengagement.

Thus, in a distributed workforce, direct supervisors play an even more critical role in promoting and monitoring engagement. Employers can support employees best by providing programs to help improve their wellbeing and encourage regular 1:1 meetings with their managers. If used effectively, these efforts help reduce absenteeism and burnout and promote a more positive work experience.

Employee wellbeing is about more than tracking the number of steps you take throughout your workday. In both a traditional and remote environment, stress and work-life boundaries, physical health, financial security, feeling appreciated, and seeing career growth opportunities all play into an employee's wellness. Employers should consider the question, "Does my organization aid employees in finding balanced lives, or act as an obstacle to their satisfaction and security?" Employees need to implement appropriate boundaries and healthy daily practice, and managers need to know how to support their employees in maintaining healthy practices both physically and professionally.

Achurch can create and design customized programs and trainings addressing –

➢ Best practices in setting up their workdays
➢ Maintaining their wellbeing
➢ Experiencing change

Virtual Onboarding and Employee Training: Building an Engaged Team

Exceptional onboarding can improve employee retention by 82 percent, according to research by Glassdoor. However, Gallup says 88 percent of organizations still don't prioritize onboarding or do it well, which risks having unsatisfied, poorly trained, and disengaged team members. This module will outline essential considerations, differences, and practices related to successful employee onboarding in a distributed workforce.

Best practices surrounding a remote workforce requires intentionality and planning for success. No one, especially new employees, should feel like they are alone in a workplace. Likewise, no employer should put a new employee in a position where they need to "sink or swim" due to a lack of support. Offer those employees a life raft in the form of a formalized process. You will all be grateful long term for the investment you make in the beginning.

To assist your organization in successful onboarding, Achurch can:

➢ Create processes and checklists specific to your organization that ensures new employees are equipped with the necessary hardware, software, and login credentials before their start date

➢ Create personalized processes and scripts whereby new employees are introduced to their new team members and other colleagues and/or can acquaint the new employee with the organization's values and mission
➢ Create and design an introductory training program on necessary systems, tools (which can include technology such as time tracking software), organizational policies, protocols, and norms (such as communication channel norms)
➢ Create a mentorship program and/or program to help match the employee with a "training partner" and/or scheduled for peer-shadowing opportunities via video
➢ Assess and create other onboarding programs or processes as needed

Policy and Operations Consulting Services

Transitioning an in-person team to remote work is about more than merely sending employees home with a laptop. According to a recent Gallup study, only 3 in 10 employees strongly agree that they have the materials and equipment they need to do their job right. Achurch's policy analysis and operations review services examine what policies, procedures, and protocols need to be in place to support your team and protect your organization, while also providing the legal and data protection your company and employees require.

Policy Review

All policies and protocols need a fresh look when transitioning to remote work, including governance, HR, legal, financial, and IT. Employees also need to know there is a single source of truth for answers. Distributed workforce policies are necessary for employees to understand their responsibilities and those of the employer. Achurch's policy review supports all of these needs by examining policies and protocols for content, consistency, correlation to other organizational policies, and support for remote work.

In addition, there are often policies that organizations overlook when optimizing their internal protocols and procedures. Achurch affirmatively looks for these policy gaps and will make recommendations for adding or updating organizational policies to ensure those gaps are filled.

After our review, Achurch will make recommendations for improvements and updates to your organization's policies, protocols, and procedures to ensure they are all aligned, accurate, and appropriate for the way your organization works. If desired, Achurch can also work with you to make those updates on your behalf to create the final personnel/policy manual your organization needs to meet the demands of remote work. The following depicts our phases for remote workforce policy consulting:

Phase 1: Project Kick off with Project Sponsor

Achurch will kick off a policy review by having a conversation with you to understand your current policies and areas of operational focus. We will request documentation for review and discuss any particular successes or challenges you would like to address in your policies, protocols, and procedures. This conversation will lay the groundwork for understanding your policies, processes, documentation, and organizational success factors for the overall engagement.

Phase 2: Policy Review

In Phase 2, Achurch reviews your organizational policies for their soundness, legal structure, and general applicability to a virtual office environment. Policies are analyzed across four parameters for consistency, clarity, comprehensiveness, and alignment with remote work. We look first to see if any outdated policies need to be updated with current laws and regulations. Next, we review the policies in light of readability and structure to ensure the policies' overall flow makes sense and that policies are harmonized and cohesive, not contradictory or overlapping.

Phase 3: Gap Analysis

In this phase, Achurch will identify gaps in your policies and procedures by completing a detailed comparison of your organization's existing policies and procedures with legal, regulatory, and operations requirements necessary for compliance and long-term operational success.

Phase 4: Reporting and Recommendations

In this final phase, Achurch will evaluate and synthesize all reviews and analyses. We will provide recommendations in detail for new/updated policies, procedures, and protocols to ensure compliance and usability within the organization.

In addition to the policy review and analysis services, we also provide several supportive operational, risk mitigation, training, and onboarding services to optimize your remote workforce. These optional services are designed to propel your organization forward with a solid foundation in remote work so that you can focus your energy and efforts entirely on your business.

Finalizing the Handbook/Manual

Once Achurch makes policy, procedure, and protocol recommendations, many organizations need help finalizing their new policy manual/employee handbook. Achurch is happy to help your organization create, design, and finalize its manual to ensure it meets the needs of your organization and employees.

Employee Training: Building an Engaged Team

Simply setting up a manual or writing a new policy is not enough to engrain that material within your organization. To truly implement a new policy, protocol, or procedure, your organization must inform and train your staff to understand the new policy and how it will be implemented within your company.

As an add-on service, Achurch is happy to work with your organization to develop a policy and procedures training module designed to educate and train existing employees on the new/updated policies. Training is a critical next step to ensure your employees understand any new or updated expectations for the way they work and to ensure they are compliant with the latest legal and regulatory requirements.

Position/Job Classification Reviews

In the U.S., the Department of Labor under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires employers to classify each job/position as either "exempt" or "non-exempt" for overtime pay purposes. Those rules have changed in recent years, as has the way organizations work. Especially as more organizations are going virtual, they identify new work responsibilities and/or shift responsibilities among different positions. To ensure your organization is FLSA compliant, it should review position descriptions annually, and every time a substantial change is made to work responsibilities.

As organizations consider a policy manual update, it is an excellent time to review these job classifications to ensure FLSA compliance. Achurch can help your organization become or remain FLSA compliant by reviewing your job descriptions, conducting "work discovery" interviews to ensure descriptions are in line with actual work requirements, and comparing these descriptions with FLSA requirements to ensure the correct FLSA classification.

We can also help your organization work through any required FLSA classification updates – from informing and educating staff members to recommending required organizational updates for hours-tracking and record-keeping.

Insurance Product Reviews & Recommendations

Many organizations that adopt remote work can sometimes overlook their insurance products. If the organization becomes entirely virtual, the insurance products required in-office are not the same as those for employees who are distributed and working from home. Achurch can help your organization understand these new insurance requirements and review your existing products to ensure they are meeting your current needs. If not, we can also recommend what products to consider that will help protect your organization adequately.

Virtual Onboarding and Training: Engaging New Teammates

As your organization grows, you need new staff to be compliant with legal and regulatory requirements, as well as be informed about your expectations for the way they work within your organization. Achurch offers virtual onboarding and training programs to help new employees become acclimated and comfortable with your organization.

Exceptional onboarding can improve employee retention by 82 percent, according to research by Glassdoor. However, Gallup says 88 percent of organizations still don't prioritize onboarding or do it well, which risks having unsatisfied, poorly trained, and disengaged team members. These services can include: preparing customized onboarding checklists, designing a customized onboarding process, and/or performing a virtual onboarding session on your organization's behalf to explain your essential employee policies and procedures.

Next Steps

Contact Us

If you are interested in more information regarding Achurch Consulting's services and modules, please contact our Director of Marketing and Business Development, Julie Davis, at julie@achurchconsulting.com.