

The Worker-Employer Relationship Disrupted

*A GPS reading guide for the
2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital
Trends Special Report*



GPS human capital response: a reading guide

Deloitte's research has predicted several trends that have become workplace realities. The special report is a continuation of that predictive research to highlight possibilities of workplace relationships that may exist in the future. Our Global Team followed up with business and HR leaders, as well as workers around the world to further explore the future of the worker-employer relationship beyond the core 2021 Trends. The Team determined that the relationship has no singular or linear future, but many different possibilities. The Report explores four possible futures and strategies to not only survive, but to thrive during evolving times:



Work as fashion: a reactive relationship

Employee preference is at the forefront of this trend, and employees are the drivers of change within the public sector



War between talent: an impersonal relationship

Organizations view workers as interchangeable, and workers become focused on securing a job rather than the quality of their position



Work is work: a professional relationship

Worker well-being is emphasized, with a renewed desire to separate work and personal life while emphasizing human strengths



Purpose unleashed: a communal relationship

Workers and organizations find a shared purpose, creating the foundation of their relationship and binding them together. This reality is the goal workers and employees are trying to achieve

In this reading guide, we will provide observations and themes that public sector organizations and employees can take away from the special report. The special report is written from the viewpoint that the government is an *enforcer of policy* within broader business and industry. **In this guide, we will look at government organizations as *employers* and how they impact their workers' daily activities and mission outcomes.**

Unleashing purpose for government and public services organizations

While the worker-employer relationship will be influenced by a variety of factors, Government and Public Services (GPS) organizations are uniquely suited to pursue the Purpose Unleashed future. With a clear focus on mission-drive work, public sector organizations are poised to drive innovation for the future of the worker-employer relationship.



Key conditions

The most influential factors on the future of the worker-employer relationship

Government Impact: How much impact do government policies have on employers and employees? How do government policies influence the actions of employers or employees?

Talent Supply: Is there a high or low supply of talent at the disposal of the employer?



Purpose unleashed as a goal

Purpose Unleashed is more than a potential reality, it should serve as a **goal for public sector organizations**. Regardless of the influencing conditions, public sector organizations can still strive in collaboration with workers **to find a shared purpose and achieve mission-critical work**.



The GPS differentiator

As an employer, Government and Public Services organizations can differentiate themselves if they continue to **emphasize their mission-driven work to attract the right talent**. Public sector organizations can utilize their purpose to create meaningful work, **unifying their workforce around a clear mission**.

Government and Public Services Organizations, with their focus on mission-driven work, can attract **dedicated and passionate talent and pursue purpose at the individual and organizational level**. However, public sector organizations cannot solely rely on this advantage, and must work to foster an environment where **talent will thrive as partners in their purpose**.

Purpose unleashed:

The dominant force behind the employer-worker relationship becomes purpose. The relationship is

COMMUNAL: Workers and employers find a shared purpose, creating the foundation of their relationship and binding them together. This is the aspirational future for government organizations.

Conditions

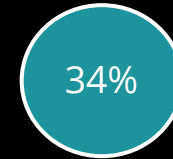
A **high talent supply** combined with **and high impact of government action on workers and employers** can create the conditions for a “purpose unleashed” future.

How does purpose unleashed apply to government & public services?

Public sector organizations are uniquely suited to thrive in the *purpose unleashed* future, one in which their mission not only dictates employees’ work, but it also drives the employer-worker relationship. Employers can select workers not just for their skills, but for their alignment with the organization’s purpose. Out of all possible future outcomes, this is the aspirational future because the mission of the organization is the driver behind all decisions and relationships. However, public sector organizations must avoid turning purpose into a surface-level concept. Employees may begin to question an organization’s sincerity and disillusion can spread if an organization’s purpose is not flexible enough to evolve with the times.

Impacts/Outcomes

In this future, an organization’s purpose becomes their North Star, serving as a benchmark against actions and decisions, which is the most ideal outcome for a public sector organization. Public sector organizations can utilize their purpose to infuse meaning into work, mobilizing their workforce around a single, meaningful cause.



**Upskilling,
Reskilling, and
Mobility**

34% of GPS respondents chose building workforce capability through **upskilling, reskilling, and mobility** as the most important action that they are taking or will take to transform work (the second highest ranked option), highlighting workers’ desires to determine their own path forward.*

How can public sector organizations thrive in a *purpose unleashed* future?

- Public sector organizations should view their workers as co-creators of purpose. It is more than asking for worker’s input, but about giving them influence and decision rights over the organization’s purpose, desired outcomes, and actions.
- Public sector organizations should encourage a “creators’ mindset”, by implementing policies and encouraging practitioner’s to be creative with how they can get their work accomplished. Organizations will find their workforce engaged and enhance employees’ ability to achieve mission-critical work.

Work as fashion:

Employers **are in constant motion** as they chase worker **sentiments, competitor actions, and marketplace dynamics**. The worker-employer relationship is **REACTIVE**: Employer s feel compelled **to respond in the moment to workers' expressed preferences** and competitor moves, without **connecting those actions to a sustainable** workforce strategy.

Conditions

A “work as fashion” future can arise from **the convergence of low talent supply and low impact of government action on workers and employers**

Work as fashion

How does *work as fashion* apply to government & public services?

In the *work as fashion* scenario, organizations are driven to appeal to both younger and older generations by reacting to workers' requests. When thinking about *work as fashion*, government organizations should look at the human experience at work through the lens of well-being and preference, unburdening workers from menial daily tasks, and allowing people to make choices regarding their careers. However, this can lead to an overcompensation by employers to try and retain top talent by responding to every workforce sentiment or competitor move; this can cause government organizations to lose sight of their mission, resulting in an unsuitable and unsustainable workforce strategy.

Impacts/Outcomes

As a result of a *work as fashion* future, employers may lose sight of their mission, and risk overreacting to employees' needs.

17%

Strongly Agree

52%

Agree

The emphasis on **employee health and well-being** continues throughout the enterprise. GPS respondents agreed that the changes their organization put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic empowered workers to more successfully integrate the demands of their personal and professional lives.*

How can public sector organizations thrive in a *work as fashion* future? - - - - -

- Employers should consider and heavily weight employee input and preference when determining return to work policy but shouldn't lose sight of mission requirements, managerial responsibilities and other factors
- Employers should always consider the mission of the organization when considering implementing new policies and actions around COVID-19
- Employers should implement well-being practices that support the individual, and lead to a healthy community of practitioners

War between talent:

An abundance of talent leads to competition between workers vying for a limited number of jobs. The worker-employer relationship becomes

IMPERSONAL:

Organizations come to **view workers as interchangeable**, and workers are more focused on simply securing a job rather than the quality of their position or relationship with their organization.

Conditions

A **high talent supply** combined with **and low impact of government action on workers and employers** can create the conditions for a “war between talent” future.

War between talent

How does *war between talent* apply to government & public services?

In the *war between talent* future, organizations are inclined to take a mechanistic view of talent, embracing efficiency and productivity at the expense of the employee experience. When this happens, organizations' artificial intelligence and automation are not utilized to enhance employees, but to replace workers. Additionally, organizations' investments in areas such as retention and reskilling decline, leaving fewer workers without the time and means to professionally grow. Public sector organizations' ability to innovate and effectively execute mission-critical work declines as workers become less engaged and motivated.

Impacts/Outcomes

Despite short term savings, the move away from a human-focused worker-employer relationship for public sector organizations risks stifling innovation, diminishing the supply of qualified candidates, and deteriorating the capacity to adequately thrive in an evolving world.

40%

Lack of readiness

39%

Too many competing priorities

GPS respondents reported that a **lack of readiness** and **too many competing priorities** are the main barriers preventing the transformation of the workforce in public sector organizations*

How can public sector organizations thrive in a *war between talent* future? -----

- Employers should consider implementing policies that show the employee they are valued, including additional reward programs and well-being opportunities
- Employers should implement training and career building opportunities to demonstrate to the employee that they are valued members of the workforce and to develop employees' skills
- Employers should create an environment with high quality roles to entice employees to grow within the organization, rather than finding employment elsewhere

Work is work:

Workers and employers **view organizational responsibility and personal and social fulfillment** as largely **separate domains**. The worker-employer relationship is **PROFESSIONAL**: Each depends on the other to **fulfill work-related needs**, but both **expect that workers will find meaning** and purpose largely outside of work.

Conditions

Low talent supply combined with **and high impact of government action on workers and employers** can lead to a “work is work” future

Work is work

How does work is work apply to government & public services?

Government work was traditionally viewed through the *work is work* framework, but in recent years the view shifted, focusing work around the employee experience. The frequent experience of working overtime to pick up the work of laid-off colleagues, or suddenly feeling “always on” because of the workplace invading the home, has given many workers a new appreciation of finding space to invest in one’s personal interests and passions outside the workspace. This separation is connected to well-being by making a clear divide to support the mental and physical health of employees. However, employers may lose top talent to work outside the workplace if the employer views employees as workers rather than humans and team members.

Impacts/Outcomes

Organizations may lose top talent to work outside government agencies, leading to talent gaps, if workers engage in work that is not fulfilling and look for fulfillment elsewhere.

74%

Agree

74% of GPS respondents agreed that **remote / virtual work** practices have had a positive impact on wellbeing, bolstering the potential that the flexibility a *work is work future* can provide may improve worker wellbeing.*

How can public sector organizations thrive in a *work is work future*? - - - - -

- Employers should motivate workers by designing work in ways that challenge and engage employees; putting less pressure on them to seek fulfillment purely from sources outside the workplace
- Employers should implement programs that incentivizes talent to stay at the organization including implementing policies and programs that build community within the organization and policies that create a hybrid workforce
- Employers should implement policies and programs that show appreciation for the employees, including programs that spark the interests of employees outside of the professional space

Charting the course: how GPS organizations can thrive in an evolving future

In the face of an evolving future, there is no one set path for the worker-employer relationship. By looking at a variety of possibilities, we are better able to set our direction and fulfil our vision of the worker-employer relationship. While many of the themes in this report may be familiar, they continue to change along with the relationship between public sector organizations and their employees. Public sector organizations that can apply purpose, potential, and perspective to any future reality have the opportunity to thrive.

Next Steps



Read the full [Global Human Capital Special Report](#)



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Contact the authors to discuss the Trends or arrange one-on-ones with the specialists

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