



LESSONS THE PANDEMIC TAUGHT US



Scan to review worksheet

Expemo code:
1CA9-359B-XHJN



1

Warm up

In pairs, discuss the following questions.

1. How did your way of working change during the pandemic?
2. What changes did your company make in reaction to the pandemic?
3. Which new ways of working did you find challenging?
4. Which new ways of working did you enjoy?
5. What do you think will happen to ways of working in your company once the pandemic is entirely over?





2

Focus on vocabulary

Part A: Add the following extracts to the gaps in the definitions.

allowed to happen **being extremely good** **hard to understand** **measuring something**
quality or accuracy **remembering the past** **the ordinary employees** **the same way**

1. dumb down (phr. verb) - to make something simpler and easier to understand by lowering its _____
2. metric (n) - a system used for _____
3. complexity (n) - a situation when something has a number of different parts and may be _____
4. excellence (n) - the quality of _____ at a particular activity
5. consistent (adj.) - when something always acts in _____
6. shop floor (n) - _____, not the managers, of a business or the place where they work
7. nostalgia (n) - the act of _____ in a happy way but with a little sadness
8. approval (n) - the official agreement that something is _____



Part B: Now complete the sentences with appropriate words from the same family as the words in Part A.

1. The _____ of our marketing campaign to appeal to more people has now led to concern that our adverts lack sophistication. (dumb down)
2. Human Resources completely _____ of his choice of clothing for the office, and he was asked to go home and change. (approval)
3. Maria really _____ at her sales job and was promoted within a year of starting with the company. (excellence)
4. Our systems for approval of new projects are far too _____, and I think they need to be simplified. (complexity)
5. I'm concerned our new products are _____ with the needs of the customers and aren't going to sell well. (consistent)
6. When the Wi-Fi is down and you can't get anything done, it's easy to feel _____ for the days before the Internet. Simpler times! (nostalgia)



Now in pairs, answer the following questions.

1. Within your job, in what situations do you need to get **approval** for something? For example, purchasing office equipment?
2. How would you **dumb down** tasks at your job if you had to explain them to someone new in the field?
3. How would you define **excellence**? How do you know when you're doing an extremely good job?
4. Do the managers at your company communicate well with those on the **shop floor**? How could their communication improve?
5. What performance **metrics** are most important at your company? Cost-effectiveness, productivity, customer satisfaction?
6. What part of your job has the most **complexity**? Why?

3 Understanding the main idea

Read these sentences from the video script of a TED Talk, in which Patty McCord argues that the ways we have started working during the pandemic have been an improvement. See if you can guess the missing words. You are given the definition in brackets.

1. I've been trying really hard to _____¹ (**encourage people to think the same way as you or to agree with you**) people that we can change the way we work.
2. "You know, I'm so inspired by what you say. It's so great, it makes so much sense. But we can't." "We can't because we're _____² ." (**controlled with specific rules, often by the government**)
3. "We can't because we're a _____³ industry." (**a business the does something valuable for a customer, rather than sell a physical product**)
4. "We can't because we're a _____⁴ ." (**a type of business that is primarily focused on doing something useful rather than making money**)
5. All that muscle around _____⁵ (**the creation of new ideas, new objects, or new ways of doing something**) and flexibility and _____⁶ (**the use of imaginative ideas and skills to make something new**) that we didn't think we had, we had all along.

Watch the first part of the video (00:00 – 01:20) to check your answers.



Now write a summary of this part of the video using no more than two sentences.



4

Comprehension

Now watch the rest of the video (01:20 - 07:35) and answer the following questions.



1. The first point that Patty McCord makes is ...
 - a. it's much easier to work when you can separate your work life and your family life.
 - b. working from home around your family has been much easier than people expected.
 - c. mixing family time with team time has brought a lot of unexpected benefits.
 - d. Zoom calls into each other's homes have helped us to see each other as more human.
2. The second point Patty McCord makes is that ...
 - a. many of us have more important things to deal with outside of work.
 - b. without being closely watched, many people's work will become unfocused. So there needs to be strong management.
 - c. we now measure progress by focusing more on the results of people's work than on if they look busy.
 - d. the smartest adults in a company aren't necessarily just those in management positions.
3. The third point Patty McCord makes is that ...
 - a. there are no companies which have been working effectively during the pandemic.
 - b. it's been important to watch what other companies are doing to improve your own ways of working during this time.
 - c. people have had to work a lot harder to deliver the right results.
 - d. we have all had to make our own definition of what success means to us during this time.
4. According to Patty McCord, it's really important to teach teams within the company ...
 - a. how to understand financial information, such as profit and loss statements.
 - b. what everyone is trying to achieve and allow them to figure out how the team can best do that.
 - c. what the challenges are which other teams in the company have to face.
 - d. how to succeed as a company, based on best practices.
5. The fourth point that Patty McCord makes is ...
 - a. there needs to be a clear line of communication from management downwards.
 - b. everyone in the company is responsible for improving their communication.
 - c. there needs to be an increase in communication from people at the lowest levels up to management.
 - d. communication needs to happen in the same way at the same time so people know when to expect it.
6. To add to her fourth point, she says that ...
 - a. communication will have to be planned for and disciplined in the future.
 - b. good workers will automatically communicate well with one another.
 - c. communication is much easier these days, so there are few excuses for not doing it.
 - d. a weekly online meeting should be scheduled so that everyone can communicate.



7. She also adds that it is important ...
 - a. that everyone contributes to the conversation when on a Zoom call.
 - b. to record the outcome of meetings in an email that everyone receives.
 - c. to reinvent the work that we do to keep up with changes.
 - d. to rethink the way in which we approach our work.
8. Patty McCord concludes by saying ...
 - a. a lot of good ways of working have been lost that we can return to after the pandemic.
 - b. a performance review is still an essential way of helping employees to change and improve.
 - c. that we should continue to move forward with the better ways of working that we have discovered during the pandemic.
 - d. a lot of how we used to do business can still make a real difference to our results in the future.

5 Collocations

Match the following words to make collocations.

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1. balancing | a. act |
| 2. in-person | b. behaviour |
| 3. adult | c. forward |
| 4. going | d. meeting |
| 5. best | e. practices |
| 6. deliver | f. results |
| 7. performance | g. review |

Now write the collocations in the correct gaps in the following sentences.

1. I need to go into the office tomorrow for an _____ with my line manager. We need to discuss my goals for the year ahead.
2. For us, the production process is a real _____ between making sure there's a high level of quality and getting products out on time.
3. I know there will be a lot to learn with the new IT systems, but I think we will see greatly increased productivity as a result _____.
4. As important as the design is, it's really essential that our products can _____ and not just look attractive.
5. I find it really hard to talk about my accomplishments during my _____. I feel like I'm boasting, and it's really uncomfortable.
6. I was shocked at the way she was shouting at everyone in the office. I didn't think it was very _____ at all.
7. Is following _____ really the best way to make sure that we are all achieving excellence?



In pairs, answer the following questions.

1. What is considered **best practices** in your job?
2. Do you think it's important to be able to have an **in-person** meeting with someone, or can you achieve the same results with a phone call or video call?
3. What is the fastest way to **deliver results** in your job?
4. Do you find your professional life and your personal life to be a **balancing act**? Or do you have enough time for both?
5. Do you find it useful to have a **performance review**? What do you enjoy/dislike about them?

6

Talking point

In pairs, discuss the following questions.

1. What ways of working that you had before the pandemic do you think you would like to go back to? Why?
2. What ways of working that you have started during the pandemic do you think you would like to continue?
3. Have the changes during the pandemic changed your way of thinking about work? Why or why not?
4. What changes in ways of working do you think there will be for companies around the world?





7 Optional exercise/homework

Read the following essay question.

With the pandemic over, it will be essential for companies to return to their old ways of working. The pandemic has caused a lot of people to lose money and their jobs. It is essential we return to business as usual as soon as possible.

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Write at least 250 words.



Transcripts

3. Understanding the main idea

Patty Mccord: I've spent the last couple of years travelling around the world giving talks to big corporations and little bitty start-ups and lots of leadership teams and women's groups, and what I've been talking to people about, I've been trying really hard to convince people that we can change the way we work.

Patty Mccord: But every time I do a talk, somebody comes backstage or follows me offstage and says, "You know, I'm so inspired by what you say. It's so great, it makes so much sense. But we can't." "We can't because we're regulated." "We can't because our CFO says we can't do it." "We can't because we're in Europe." "We can't because we're a service industry." "We can't because we're a non-profit." And then last year came the pandemic.

Patty Mccord: And the pandemic changed everything all over the world. Service people started realising that they had to suit up and wear masks and take temperatures and wash their hands. We had to start standing six feet apart in lines. We started working from home. We started working virtually. And we started learning all kinds of things because we had to. All that muscle around innovation and flexibility and creativity that we didn't think we had, we had all along. And we now have realised that we can. So, what have we learned? I mean, what did we learn right away?

Patty Mccord: First of all, we learned we're not family. The family is the toddler walking around behind you in the Zoom call with the pet. The family is somebody needing their diaper (Br.E nappy) changed. The family is making sure you're taking care of your mum. That's your family. This is your team. And we've also learned that that separation between family and work has become this balancing act. And that when we used to say, "Well, this is my work home and this is my family home, and those are two completely different things", for many of us, it's exactly the same thing.

Patty Mccord: You're no longer at home and at work. For many of us, work is at home and the home is - and it's confusing, and it's creating a whole different level of **complexity** and co-ordination so that we understand that it's easier actually to work when we can separate the work that we do as a team from the work that we do in our family.

Patty Mccord: Furthermore, in order to be able to do all that, we have to recognise that we're all adults. And here's the deal about adults. Adults have responsibilities; adults have obligations. Adults have things that they have to commit to. And do you know that every single person that works for you, from the **shop floor** to the executive suite, is a grown-up? But we have been operating as if they aren't.



- Patty Mccord:** We operate as if only the smart adults are the people who are at the C Suite. And as we move through the organisation, everybody sort of gets a little **dumbed down**, and the rules get a lot stricter, and we have to have more control. And the truth is, everybody's a grown-up, we can see it now.
- Patty Mccord:** Everybody has all of these things to figure out and coordinate. And so now we're expecting from people adult behaviour. We're now focusing on the results that matter, not the work. And the way we track it now is we don't walk by and see who's working. We pay attention to what people are doing. And I think that that's always been the best **metric**. And you know what? For the first time in my life, the concept of best practices is out the window.
- Patty Mccord:** And you know what? We don't care what Google's doing because we're not Google. We don't care what some other company is doing. Nobody's doing it best. We're all figuring it out as we go along and we're figuring it out for our organisations in our teams at this time. So, in order for people to deliver the right results, in order for people's hard work to matter, it has to be in the context of what success looks like for your organisation.
- Patty Mccord:** So, if we start to think about context, it's really important that we think about how we teach that. If we can teach everybody in the company how to read a profit and loss statement, if we can teach them what the different teams do, and what they're setting out to accomplish, then people within their own small teams, and within themselves, can figure out what **excellence** looks like for them.
- Patty Mccord:** And so then we can start operating relatively independently as a whole organisation because we're all moving in the same direction, trying to do the same thing. And there's a really critically important part of making that work, and that's communication. And everything about communication has changed. We tend to think that communication is this waterfall from the top to the bottom.
- Patty Mccord:** The executives would tell somebody and the next level would tell somebody and we'd go all the way down to the shop floor and everybody would understand what's going on. Well, it may not have worked that well then, but it certainly doesn't work that well now. So now we have to recognise it's a different heartbeat. What has it been before and what should it be now? How do we make sure that the messages are clear and **consistent**?
- Patty Mccord:** Because that's how people operate. That's how those adults who get the freedom and the responsibility to produce great results operate best is when they understand what they need to know in order to make the best decisions. So that communication, that skill around being a great communicator is something that each of us needs to get better at.



- Patty Mccord:** One of the things we have to do is think about what the right discipline is for that. If you used to communicate to your team by walking by and asking how they're doing or if they had heard something, you're going to have to schedule that now; it's going to have to have discipline. We've got to check in with the people on the shop floor to make sure they're hearing what they need to hear because it's not going to automatically happen.
- Patty Mccord:** One of the ideas I have is just jot down at the end of every day a sentence of what worked and what didn't work. And you don't have to look at it for a month. But when you look back, over a month, you want to look for, "Wow, that was surprising. I didn't really think that would be as effective as it is." Or maybe it would be, like, "We keep trying to have this in-person meeting in Zoom, and it turns out that there's 14 people on the call and only two of them are talking. Maybe it's an email."
- Patty Mccord:** So, we have to rethink all of the ways, not just the work we're doing, but the ways we're doing it. So now I'm starting to hear a lot of **nostalgia** around the way it used to be. There are things we aren't doing now that don't matter. Maybe we don't need to go back for five levels of **approval**. Maybe we don't need to go back and do that annual performance review.
- Patty Mccord:** Maybe we don't need to do a whole bunch of things that were part of the way we do business that just aren't making a difference. You know what? The way we used to do it not only is not the way of the future, but we're discovering so many wonderful things right now. Let's not lose it. We want to create a new organisation, new workforce, that's excited about taking all of the things that we've learned using that muscle, going forward.
- Patty Mccord:** One of the most important things that we can do is realise the things that we aren't doing now, the stuff that we've stopped doing, and not go back and do it again. What if we don't go back? What if we go forward and rethink the way we work? Thank you.



Key

1. Warm up

5 mins.

Tell the students you will be watching a video which looks at the effect of the pandemic on our ways of working. Ask them to think back to how they were working before the pandemic and how they are working during the pandemic. Ask them to answer the questions and compare the two.

2. Focus on vocabulary

Part A:

5 mins.

Ask students to complete the gaps in the definitions with the extracts. Ask them to do it without help the first time and then check their work with a dictionary or the Internet.

Ensure students can correctly pronounce the target vocabulary.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. quality or accuracy | 2. measuring something | 3. hard to understand | 4. being extremely good |
| 5. the same way | 6. the ordinary employees | 7. remembering the past | 8. allowed to happen |

Part B:

10 mins.

Ask students to complete the gaps with words from the same word family as the word in brackets from part A. Students are likely to need to use a dictionary or the Internet to complete this.

However, you may want them to identify the part of speech which would fit the gap beforehand.

When they have done this, ask them to discuss the questions in pairs or small groups. Circulate and help as needed.

- | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. dumbing down | 2. disapproved | 3. excelled | 4. complex |
| 5. inconsistent | 6. nostalgic | | |

3. Understanding the main idea

10 mins.

Ask students to predict the words using the definitions to help them. Ask them to do it unaided, although lower-level students may require assistance from a dictionary or the Internet. When they have completed this, ask them to watch the first section of the video to check their answers.

- | | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. convince | 2. regulated | 3. service | 4. non-profit | 5. innovation | 6. creativity |
|-------------|--------------|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|

Example summary:

I've been trying to get people to change the way they work for a long time. As a result of the pandemic, people have realised that they are much more capable of change than they thought.



4. Comprehension

10 mins.

Ask students to watch the rest of the video and answer the questions. You may want them to read the questions first and predict their answers.

1. a 2. c 3. d 4. b 5. b 6. a 7. d 8. c

5. Collocations

10 mins.

Ask students to match the collocations and fill the gaps. All of the collocations are used in the video. When they have done this, ask them to answer the questions. Circulate and help as needed.

1. a 2. d 3. b 4. c 5. e 6. f 7. g

Collocations in sentences:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. in-person meeting | 2. balancing act |
| 3. going forward | 4. deliver results |
| 5. performance review | 6. adult behaviour |
| 7. best practices | |

6. Talking point

10 mins.

Ask students to discuss the questions and circulate and help as needed.

7. Optional exercise/homework

40 mins +.

Ask the students to write a short essay on the topic. Ask them to plan their essay first and to be sure to check their spelling, grammar and punctuation.