

## Bounce Back Stronger

### Hello Sales Heroes!

For the past 16 years, our loyal audience has tuned in for the latest sales trends and advice on how to optimize the workplace and workforce. As always, this report is packed with 21 important trends to consider as you plan for the year. I want to express my deepest gratitude for all these years of your loyalty.

One of the most unpredictable, tumultuous, and horrific years of our lives couldn't have ended any sooner. In 2020 we lived through a year of non-stop turmoil that shook us all to the core and tested us in unimaginable ways. Still, with the most defining events comes reinvention. So while we might still be riding the pendulum swinging between caution and hope, we begin this new year with full optimism. Resilience can emerge from adversity!

This 2021 inside sales trend report is dedicated to re-emergence. This pandemic has prompted us to reexamine the ways we mix our work and lives together. It is time to press the giant reset button as we transition to a safer and stronger world.

- 1. The Phone Is Making a Comeback!** Don't act so surprised! Ziff Media Group conducted a survey of nearly 3,000 mobile phone users in August to see how they've been spending time with their phones and found that 40% are actually using their phones to talk with others. In fact, Verizon and AT&T have reported daily increases of as much as 78% in voice-only calls since the start of the pandemic. As people continue to realize that video can cause fatigue, they are scheduling more phone calls and having conversations that are richer, deeper, and longer.



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2. **The Learning & Development Field Is Booming!** How's Covid College treating you? The online L & D world has experienced the highest spike in history by enterprise learning. It has become a must-have tool to support employees and help organizations adapt and thrive. Even when employees return to the workplace, they will continue to receive both virtual instructor-led training and recorded, on-demand learning content as part of their online learning strategy.

3. **Virtual Is the New Normal.** The remote work experiment shows no signs of ending as we've seen two years of digital transformation compressed into a few months. This last year the entire sales model that includes outside/field/inside sales professionals has been disrupted. According to a McKinsey survey, the percentage of B2B customers who agreed that remote selling was "equally or more effective than before Covid-19" went from 54% in April to 75% in August. As in-person activities remain limited, we will continue to embrace our new virtual-normal world as an effective way to grow and connect professionally and personally.

4. **The Analog Workplace Will Become a Thing of the Past.** As business travel continues to be limited and in-person office time is indefinitely suspended, more and more employees are transitioning from temporary to permanent remote workers. The upshot? Companies will realize that paying for office space is unnecessary. And that's okay. According to a survey of remote workers conducted by Emplify, remote work has had a surprisingly positive impact on culture and work relationships. The vast majority of survey respondents reported that relationships with their managers and coworkers have either improved or stayed the same. What's more, 50% shared that their manager's trust in them has increased.

5. **Talent Values Health and Safety.** If your company hasn't created Covid-secure workspaces by now, you might be losing some important employees. Job seekers will be evaluating potential employers based on how well they adhere to national and local health and safety guidelines. Effective recruiting and retaining of talent will depend on how safe and secure they feel at work.



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6. **Wanted! Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer.** The #MeToo movement combined with the historic protests against police brutality that we saw in 2020 have mandated that the fight for racial justice and gender equality continues in offices, at conferences, and in everyday conversations. Research shows that 70% of job seekers want to work for a company that demonstrates a genuine commitment to diversity and inclusion.

7. **Upskilling and Retraining the Workforce Is Important.** Covid-19 disrupted the global economy, powered new technologies, and opened the door wide to new skills. The need to have fewer workers on the line for social distancing catalyzed job automation, making the demand for retraining is higher than ever. As businesses and economic demands shift, so do the skills required to do the new jobs that are created. Gartner reports that only 16% of new hires possess the skills needed for their current jobs and the jobs of the future. The most in-demand skills heading into 2021 will be artificial intelligence, machine learning, cloud computing, cybersecurity, disaster recovery, AR & VR, blockchain, healthcare IT, and UX design.

8. **Technology Shifts from Office-Centric to People-centric.** Leaving the physical HQ behind means leaving some things behind. The technologies that will impact our lives the most in the next year and beyond will be those that enable people to shift into a new work-life balance that offers more flexibility. According to Forrester research on the Sales Stack, CRM is the most widely adopted and many sellers supplement CRM with solutions that improve insights into customer interactions, needs, and expectations.

9. **Distraction Is the Biggest Productivity Bust.** In the past, businesses lost \$600 billion a year to workplace distractions, but working remotely has reduced that number by 50%. Nonetheless, according to Ring DNA's study "How to Solve 2021's Top Sales Enablement Challenges," when it comes to salespeople, their top challenge continues to be time management. A whopping 77% of reps struggle to find enough time to complete everything they need to do during the day.

10. **Post-Isolation Fantasies Need to Be Reined In.** As several vaccines begin their rollouts, we've also begun to visualize what post-pandemic life might be like. People are adding to – and overstuffing – their bucket lists. David Spiegel, a professor of psychiatry, suggests starting small with manageable goals. And don't forget to plan for unexpected surprises and changed plans!



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11. **FOMO Is Becoming FOGO.** In today's contactless society, we will need to feel safe and relearn how not to run away from crowds. According to psychiatrist Steven Taylor, some people in Wuhan, China, now refuse to leave their homes and have developed agoraphobia. FOMO (Fear of missing out) has morphed into FOGO. (Fear of going out).

12. **Pop-up Power Is the Answer.** Short-term pop-up shops have long served as testing grounds for brands to experiment with and tap new audiences. Then came the pandemic shutdown, the worldwide slump in sales in physical retail, and the permanent closure of thousands of stores. But agile thinking has prompted some new initiatives, such as pop-up drive-in movie theatres, pop-up outdoor performance spaces, and ghost kitchens. After dealing with so many layers of uncertainty, pop-ups may be the answer to our ability to pivot and change.

13. **Companies Will Have to Deal with the Emotional Fallout . . .** The pandemic is expected to precipitate a mental health crisis, but it also offers a chance to approach life with new clarity. Companies are expanding their mental health benefits, like offering access to therapists, and partnering with wellness technology companies in order to scale workers' ever-growing mental health needs.

14. **. . . And Cut Themselves Some Post-pandemic Slack.** Last year, the global economy endured its deepest recession in 74 years, as the COVID-19 virus pandemic upended lives and livelihoods. Millions of children have missed school, tens of millions of Americans are out of work, millions of businesses have permanently closed. Bouncing back psychologically, socially, and economically will take time.

15. **Living Spaces are Moving Places.** All this sheltering in place creates cabin fever and people want to be on the move. There is a big increase in multi-generational living, or cheaper homes that allow families to live near each other and still have independence. Some people who fled cities seeking freedom of movement and safe shelter away from crowds, and others fled the raging fires are coming back home. According to a recent Zillow survey, if you want to sell your home, including a private and camera-ready Zoom Room will make it more marketable.



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16. **Get Ready for the (Partially Virtual) Summer of Love.** Event planners, get busy! Those who postponed conferences, concerts, and celebrations due to stay-at-home restrictions will find that summer of 2021 will potentially be an uptick for large outdoor gatherings. A hybrid model of virtual and in-person may unfold.
  17. **Servant Leadership Is In.** Leaders who can inspire and reinforce the importance of adaptability during the face of uncertainty will thrive. A startling 67% of the employees we surveyed haven't received a single piece of constructive feedback from their manager in the past 30 days, and nearly half (47%) reported having fewer professional development opportunities while working from home. Not good.
  18. **GenZ's Plans Are on Pause.** For the first time since the Great Depression, a majority of young adults aged 18-29 in the US are living with their parents. Some have logistical reasons (their college shut down) or financial reasons (they lost their job). Gen Z is noted for being risk adverse, so with this much unpredictability they just want to stay in their comfort zone.
  19. **Child Care Is Essential Work.** Traditionally, America has undervalued the work of child care. Since the pandemic has required caring for children for 24/7 and doing schoolwork, both parents and nonparents have had to acknowledge the essential, necessary, and difficult work requirements of parenting. No more hiding or minimizing its value.
  20. **We May Need More Sick Days.** The number of workers who've missed days on the job has doubled during the pandemic. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, almost 1.8 million workers were absent in November 2020 because of illness, nearly matching the record 2 million set back in April. Fully 90% of professionals said that before the pandemic they'd sometimes go to work sick; but since Covid, more employees are staying home to protect themselves and others.
  21. **Our Collective Trauma Will Continue to Inform Our Worklife.** With so many of us dealing with the reality of death at the same time, either through personal loss or doomscrolling, the value we place on our life and work will continue to come into sharper focus. Many people will be asking themselves if their work is meaningful, and many companies will be refocusing their products and services to be more meaningful.



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