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How Enel Is Involving Employees in Future of Work Plans

I'll be the first to admit I love going into the office. It's how I've worked best for over 35 years. So you can imagine some of my concerns last year when we shifted the majority of our North American employees – those not required on site or in the control room – to work fully remote. I wondered if we could pull it off, did we have the right technology available, will our employees be okay during such an uncertain time for themselves and their families, will there be obstacles we didn't see coming. But the decision was clear, and the risks of not transitioning to remote work, far outweighed the challenges. The safety of our employees comes first, no matter what.

Thankfully, we made the decision early on in our region, as our global headquarters in Italy was unfortunately already responding to the seriousness of the virus. It was still though somewhat new territory for Enel – we had created hybrid work schedules before, but not at this speed or scale. However, we're no stranger to big changes, so I knew, above all else, we'd figure it out together.

Fast forward to today, and we've adopted an entirely new flexible work model at Enel – permanently. This time, not because we have to, but because we believe it's the best path forward. So what changed, from then to now?

I'll start with two major learnings from the past year and a half that led to the decision –

First, our technology infrastructure was up to the task. Globally, Enel was the first large utility company to [fully embrace the cloud model](#) in 2019. We've been investing in digitalization efforts across every aspect of the company for many years, and this gave us a flexibility advantage.

Our information and communication systems passed the stress test for those employees who moved to remote work. And at the same time, our employees in the field – who can't build and service wind turbines or solar panels from home – [deployed new digital solutions](#) to minimize human contact and continue their work safely.

Second, our employees' feedback on remote work was positive, despite challenging times. Many studies have shown how [flexibility leads to increased productivity](#). Our own research supports the same. We surveyed 43,000 Enel employees globally and found that more flexibility and autonomy was resulting in more satisfaction and productivity in their work.

I have to say, I've been so impressed. Amid the pandemic, Enel employees adapted and continued to move the business forward in inspiring fashion.

Ultimately, when designing our future working model, we put the decision in the hands of employees.

It was clear our employees had a vision of how they want to work and what best suits them. So we asked each team to decide together on the best fit to maximize their productivity and wellbeing.

Options included **fully remote, remote-first, office-first** and **onsite**. In all the responses we received in North America, only about 200 employees chose to be fully remote. The majority elected to take advantage of the office when needed for certain activities.

Pending the trajectory of the pandemic, Enel North America will make these changes when deemed safe to do so. We're checking in with employees and gathering their feedback as we go. And we plan to monitor the successes and address the challenges that come with this model, so we can continue to innovate – a core value at Enel.

Of course, a flexible work model comes with both advantages and challenges. But in my opinion, the good outweighs the bad.

When we roll out our new way of working, the hope is that our employees will not only be more productive and satisfied, but better able to arrange their personal life to work with their professional life. They'll also save time and money on commuting, which could mean the chance to make breakfast for their kids or fit in an evening workout.

From a company standpoint, cutting down on commutes also means reducing Enel's environmental impact. In line with our commitment to [reach complete decarbonization by 2050](#), we're not only responsible for decarbonizing our

production activities – we have to look at cutting emissions from employee and supply chain activities as well.

We also see this flexible model as a major asset in the increasingly competitive talent market Enel operates. Renewable energy is on an aggressive growth path, with its share of the U.S. electricity mix [projected to double by 2050](#) – likely much more, with President Biden’s plans for a net-zero power sector by 2035. Likewise, there’s a growing need for advanced energy services, as our energy systems become more decarbonized, digitalized and electrified. This is all great news for the energy transition, but even better news for job-seekers.

Offering hybrid work options helps in the recruiting process, as [recent studies have shown](#), and can improve retention. It also allows us to expand our hiring efforts to a national market, which opens doors for people across the country to access careers in clean energy.

Now, for the challenges still ahead.

We certainly haven’t perfected our future working model, but we’ve learned significant lessons over the last 18 months and will continue to learn as we go. Here’s what we’re still working through:

Making remote work sustainable. I know for a fact that Enel employees have, in part, maintained business operations and growth by putting in longer hours. We want to give employees flexibility without it eclipsing their life outside of work. To help with this, we’ve instituted initiatives like no meeting

zones, wellness hours, early closures on Fridays and soft closure weeks when employees can catch up on work or take time off altogether.

Identifying when it's beneficial to be in person. Just this week when I was in the office, I ran into a new colleague while getting my coffee. Before I knew it, we'd been talking for half an hour. These are the types of interactions that I don't want to completely go away. There will always be a time and a place for meeting and collaborating in the office such as, for onboarding or team creative sessions, but we also need to continue to find ways to enable this type of employee connection and interaction digitally as well.

Supporting employees who can't work remotely. The backbone of Enel is our engineers and onsite teams, who are at the plants and in the control rooms doing hands-on operational work every day, which requires them to be in the field. The health and safety of these workers is always a top priority, so how can we continue to build off of what we learned during the pandemic? Many increased safety measures, like the use of smart glasses to bring teams together for remote troubleshooting and maintenance, will become permanent fixtures of our business.

Many of the changes brought on by the pandemic are here to stay, so we're looking ahead at the needs of our workforce and how we'll continue to accelerate the energy transition in North America. I'm optimistic on both fronts because of the resilience and strength I've seen from our employees, who have remained committed to the pursuit of our mission to build a brighter future together.

If that sounds like a mission you believe in too, join us. Learn more about [career opportunities with Enel on our website](#).