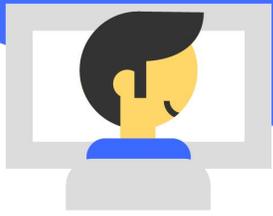# kunik

When Work Became Human

In 2020, work became human. For over a year, we've been doing work and life together. From homes that were too crowded, apartments that were too empty, and pets & babies that just wouldn't be quiet, it was impossible to hide our realities from our co-workers - so we didn't. As result, the "workplace" became more authentic.

Yet, while we we've seen more of each other's worlds, we've seen fewer people overall. Networks shrunk, teams became siloed, social capital disappeared, and serendipitous encounters vanished.

The humanization of work is a potential boon for business, but the lack of connection is a major problem. Why? Social capital is inextricably linked to business outcomes. Our networks help us be more productive, innovate, create, and perhaps most importantly, provide us with wellbeing and a sense of belonging.

67%
of employees want more in-person work or collaboration post-pandemic

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Building and fostering belonging is crucial to the employee experience, and enhancing the employee experience is how companies will win the war for talent. Employees must feel seen, valued, and heard. Finding new ways to connect your employees in a hybrid or remote setting is mission critical for the next phase of work.

Benefits of Coworker Interaction
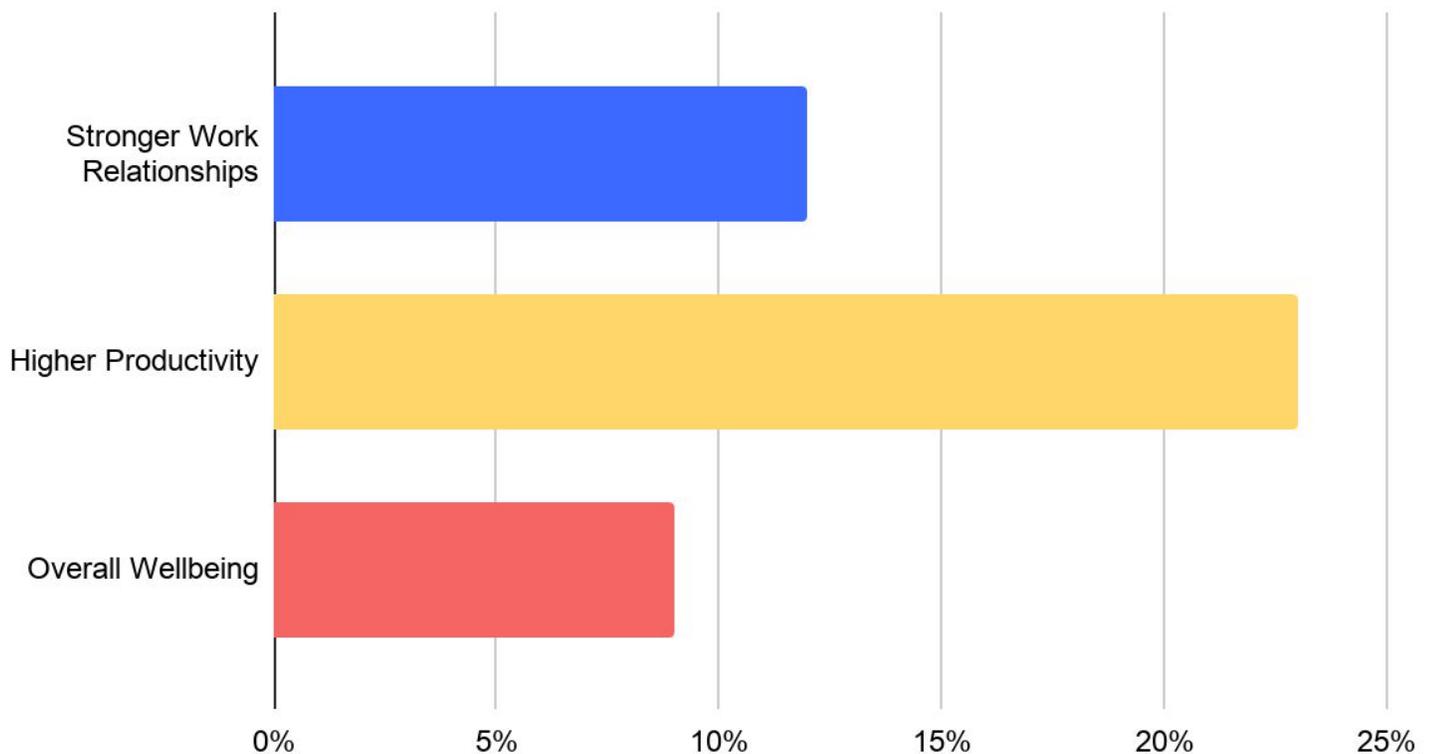
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How can you build upon the humanity we developed during the pandemic and increase employee connection in a hybrid world? Here are some key elements to consider:

- **Make it multigenerational:**
    - Guess which generation reports feeling the least engaged at work? GenZ
        - GenZ is new to work and they're having a hard time figuring out work in a remote world
    - When you consider network building, look for ways to include and involve employees from all generations, and don't forget about the new kids on the block
- **Think laterally**
    - People focus on hierarchical socializing - building connections with direct reports and those more senior
    - Lateral connections are overlooked, but are often the most valuable
    - Help your employees facilitate lateral networking to share strategies and watch innovation soar
- **Keep it casual**
    - We asked employees at 20 different companies what they miss the most from in person work. The most common answer by far was team meals followed closely by giving high-fives (go figure)
    - The take-away? It doesn't have to be complex and it definitely doesn't need to be something novel. People just want to talk with each other

- **Leave work behind**
    - What's the best part of a team meal? You're not talking about work. It's conversations about your kids, sports, travel, the news; uncovering shared experiences
    - The moments when we're not talking about work are when we truly get to know each other and build trust. From there, we spark ideas and conversation based on shared knowledge and interests. Actively encourage non-work talk
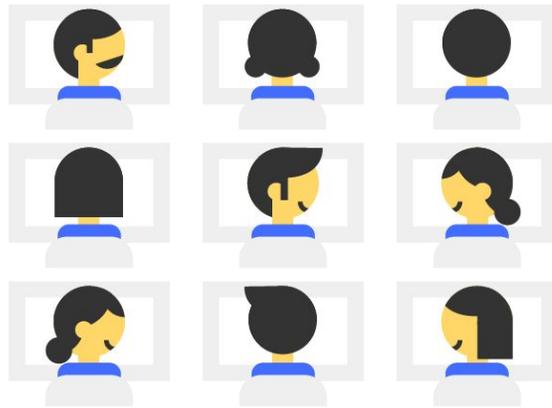
Ready to start but not sure where to begin?

In a hybrid and remote world, everything has to be intentional. Team bonding must be a proactive effort.

How do you bring in humanity? Look outside your own organization. Outsourcing lifts work off the shoulders of CPOs/CHROs and without HR leading the process, employees feel more inclined to join and share.

If we learned one thing this year, it's that you cannot replace human connection. While there are many apps that attempt this, if you really want to build meaningful connections you need to bring in a human element.

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Here's what works:

Facilitated conversations

- Bring in an expert on a topic relevant to your workforce. You can choose something broadly applicable (eg burnout) or a topic specific to just one segment of your population (eg college admissions). Build a dialogue around that topic for your team to engage, and use the expert as a facilitator and moderator

Create Space

- Try a listening circle to allow people to share their stories, thoughts or concerns openly and honestly without judgement. For instance, we've hosted circles for AAPI, Black, and female team members to check-in with each other and share experiences with allies.

Virtual Hallways

- Recreate office bump-ins by hosting casual open Zoom sessions. Choose a topic to give your hallway meaning and structure. Start with an open dialogue, split into break-out rooms for more intimate conversations, regroup and share meaningful moments from the conversation

Group learning

- Social learning is underused and highly valuable. We not only learn from each other, but about each other, and we top it off with new skills. Bring a coach or expert in for a group learning session

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So what do we know?

- The shift to remote work has narrowed connections within organizations.

- Rebuilding social capital isn't just nice, it's critical for your company.

- Broadening our networks in a hybrid world takes deliberate effort.

- Organizations must reframe team building from a passive effort to a proactive one.
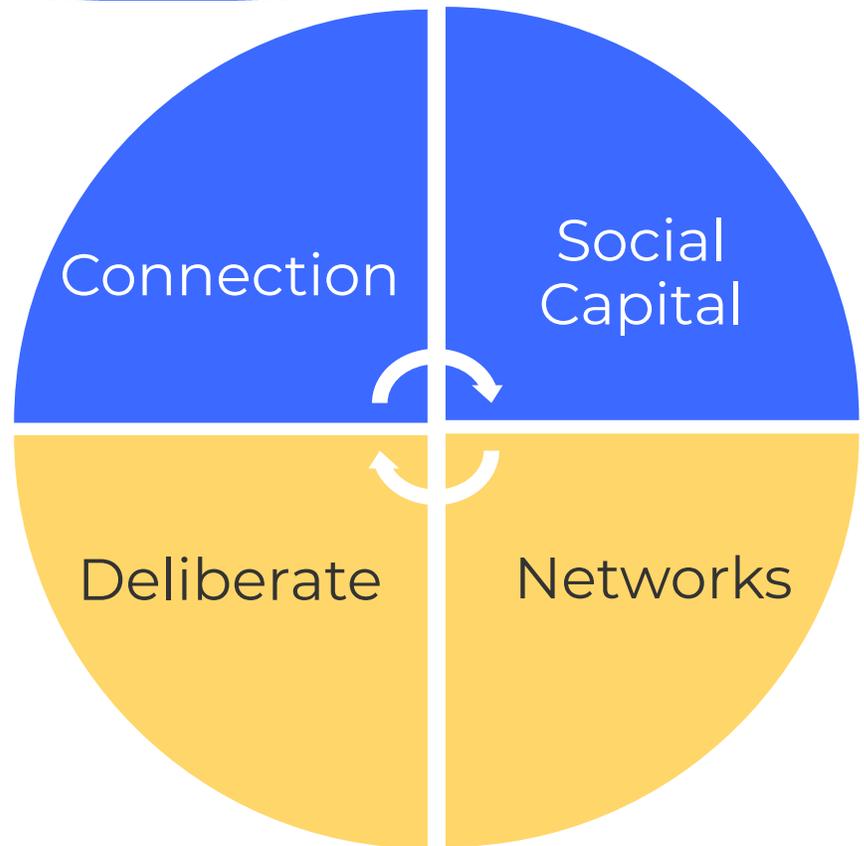
The outcomes are clear: you will build more engaged teams, organizational empathy, and an overall happier and more purposeful company.
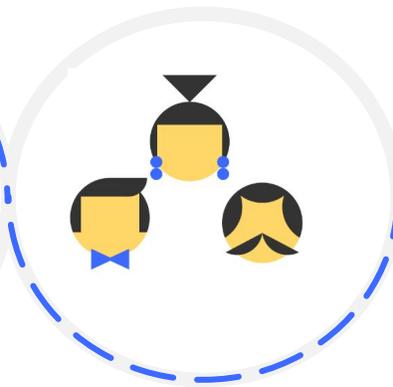
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Kunik brings community, collaboration & learning to the forefront of the employee experience by delivering support where work, family, & life meet. Through community & custom expert led conversations, we equip caregivers and organizations with the practical tools, emotional space, and expert support they need to integrate home, work, & family.

Our integrated and bespoke solutions address the largest challenges impacting your entire organization.

An Integrated Solution
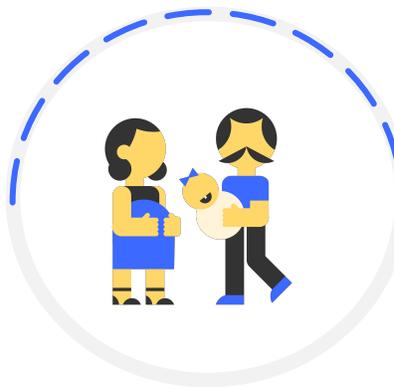
Community   *Collaboration*   *Learning*

Contact us to learn how Kunik can support your organization wherever you work

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