

Moderna Navigates Growth, Flexible Work + Innovation

How the global biotech company is managing explosive growth by harnessing its culture to evolve its approach to flexible work.

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Prior to the pandemic, Moderna was a Massachusetts-based company of fewer than 800 people. After being called upon to fight the global scourge, nearly two years later they're home to approximately 3,900 employees with operations in 17 countries. Steelcase Vice President of Workplace Insights Tracy Brower sat down with Moderna Human Resources Director Amy Virgilio to talk about the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in managing such explosive growth – and how it's all grounded in the employee experience.

Tracy Brower: Given the last two years, how have your perspectives about the work experience changed?

Amy Virgilio: I believe work expectations and experiences are still evolving after going through radical shifts over the past two (plus) years. I don't think anyone really knew before the pandemic that we could accomplish so much being remote. There were so many great learnings, but there were also a lot of things we were missing, and we're still taking the time to figure it all out. We shifted from 100% in office to remote for teams that didn't need to be on-site for their roles. Now it's about finding flexibility and adaptability and it is not a one-size-fits-all approach. For us here at Moderna, it comes down to continuing to focus on our culture, collaboration, flexibility and speed to innovation. Our focus is on relationship building, well-being and really giving people the right options to do their best work. We used to talk about work-life balance, but now we think of it as work-life integration.

TB: How have employees' expectations changed over time?

AV: First and foremost, we've been listening and learning. What we've seen is expectations vary from person to person. Some people have really enjoyed working from home. Some people have really missed the office and in-person collaboration. And other teams never left our campuses. In addition, we've done a tremendous amount of hiring over the past few years, so not only are we adapting with the return to office, but we're adapting to how that translates to our space and how we can find the right spaces and work environment to support everyone on-site. As part of the process, we're asking our employees to adapt and evolve with us and we're making sure we listen.

We want people to come back together, and we want to give them flexibility that works for them, while giving them the tools to make their day productive and make the easy things easy.

TB: Can you give us an example of some of the ways you're seeking to make their day easier?

AV: Our Total Rewards team has done an incredible job over the past two years, listening and making amazing additions to our benefit offerings. We support the different ways people commute to the office, with paid or subsidized parking and commuter expenses. We have different lunch and catering options to make it easy when you're in the office. Again – it's about understanding what works for you as an individual.

TB: How do you see the role of HR in the future?

AV: I think the focus must be on helping grow and sustain our culture. We want to make sure that we don't lose what made Moderna successful pre-pandemic when it was a smaller, pre-commercial company, and as we grow ensuring we are still fostering the mindsets to make us a high-performing, ambitious team. We don't want to lose those characteristics and that culture. HR and leadership continue to focus on keeping talent engaged and holding our talent bar high. Also, and I don't think it's a new thing for HR to be worried about, but I think more than ever in this market, we want people who are aligned to our mission but also make sure we're hiring people who are invested in coming in and building teams that focus on transforming medicine with our mRNA platform.

TB: Is there anything else that you're paying attention to as an important business driver?

AV: I want to double click on well-being because I do think that's such an important one. We do expect a lot of our employees here at Moderna – we're focused on changing the future of medicine. Our priority needs to be how we make sure our people are taken care of while they're doing this amazing work. Whether it's two years in your career or 10 years into your career, we really want to continue to build a company that supports employees while they are focused on making a tremendous impact for patients and giving our employees amazing growth and learning opportunities.

TB: Tell me about how you see HR issues connected to place?

AV: I see them as opportunities. I've been very excited to be part of the project team looking to enhance our Cambridge facilities. I hear this a lot, but I do think it's about earning the commute. We need to anticipate employee needs before they arise. Many people got settled into working from home in various environments, and we needed to help ensure we had the right digital tools for great work to continue. As we are now back in our offices, the focus is now on giving people collaborative spaces but also with a mix of heads-down, private spaces. We've also invested a lot in making sure our spaces meet people's digital needs and that we have the global [tools to help people work in a hybrid way](#). Again, it goes back to listening to our team members and wanting to give them options. Beyond that, as we look to the future office space, I can't wait for the team to be excited and feel like they've got a space that works for them. I'm excited to continue listening through the pilot work we are doing and continuing to evolve as we grow.

[Read more about the "Moderna Mindsets."](#)

Amy Virgilio joined Moderna in 2020 and is the Director, Human Resources Business Partner for the Digital and Corporate functions. Through her various roles in HR leadership and recruiting, she aims to always work to give employees an environment to bring out their best work, with a focus on culture, listening and empowering great talent.
