Summary of Session: Today's topic focuses on flexible work. Flexible work is something we've had a lot of practice in and feel comfortable doing to some extent, but at the same time, it seems like it's a nut we still can't crack as evidenced by last month's feedback about wanting to discuss more topics related to flexible and hybrid work structures and policies.

Speaker Highlights: Peter Hirst, Senior Associate Dean of Executive Education at MIT's Sloan School of Management. He leads a team of professionals who partner with clients and faculty to design, develop, and deliver innovative and impactful executive education programs for individuals and companies. Peter has over twenty years of experience in international strategy, technology consulting, and organizational leadership and development. As part of his role at the Sloan School, Peter launched a pilot program that mixed employees in two locations with others working from home during Sloan construction 5 years ago. When the pandemic arrived in 2020, Peter and his team were able to seamlessly calibrate to the needs of the time.

Presentation Highlights:

- **Our Flexible Work Journey**
  - Spring & Summer 2013
    - People were asking for flexible working and while it was available, it wasn't as it could be. When we tried to recruit and people asked if they could work flexibly, it was a turn-off for us.
    - What happened for us is that we had to move off campus. We had been reluctant to look at flexibility.
    - In planning, our research showed that when people went remote, the real driver was real estate savings. That was not our situation.
    - We then engaged the whole team in understanding how we could work flexibly (team of 40)
    - Designed a flexible work pilot and ran with that for 3-4 years and kept it when we moved back to our original office in 2017
- **Some Concerns**
  - How will we maintain our culture/relationships, loss of productivity, less innovation, fairness, disengagement, short term gain/long term pain
- **2013 Flex Work Principles**
  - Everyone needs to have access which meant changing some people's roles to make it accessible
  - People were distressed by commuting. When we talked about having a flex schedule, it wasn't just talking about people being in the office on certain days but allowing people to come in later after rush hour and leave early before rush hour.
  - For in-person meetings, it meant not scheduling before 10 am or after 3 pm
  - Making our calendars public to each other
  - All meetings have to be remote-enabled: be on the fundamental assumption that someone would be remote.
  - Flex is a 2-way street - if your team is giving you flexibility, you should give your team flexibility.
- **What We Actually Found**
  - Productivity improved. Engagement sustained and has grown. Retention has enhanced and we built a lot of trust with our employees. People are spending

less time commuting and giving our organization some of that time back
- ○ We still wanted to have 1 day a week to more or less guarantee people in the office/. So we chose Wednesday and we would buy lunch for the office. That worked really well.
- ○ BUT the physical space we were in wasn't helpful. Lots of cubes and high walls
- **2017 & Office Space**
  - ○ Everyone decided to give up their office, had open shared space
  - ○ Lots of research and measurement: exec-ed don't need assigned workspace.
  - ○ If some people don't need personal space, then none of us will. We call it "flexible space"
  - ○ Losing my office was great
  - ○ Features we ended up with:
    - ■ Focus areas, standing and seated desks, couches, booths
    - ■ Nothing was assigned, some rooms are bookable
    - ■ AV in extra spaces
- **COVID**
  - ○ Avoided scheduling meetings on friday after 12 pm
  - ○ Encouraged people to sit outside, walk during a meeting
  - ○ Relaxed childcare when working remotely

Small Group Highlights
- Some companies have eliminated assigned desks and are having employees sign up/check out chair and desk space when in the office
- Companies are having those who already are back in the office champion its benefits to help other employees feel comfortable
- Cross functional meetings and departments will choose one day a week to come into the office to meet and work
- Some groups are anxious about readjusted timeline fro CDC and Governor Baker pushing up laxed policies; many are staying committed to their fall timeline of welcoming people back to the office
- People want to continue respecting personal boundaries and a good work/life balance when going back to the office
- Leadership is still sending surveys to gauge people's comfortability of coming back and when
- One company is using the phrase "It is a magnet, not a mandate" to remind people that it is not necessary to go into the office.