

## The Drive to Co-Equal Stakeholder: The Evolving Relationship Between Employees and Their Work and Implications for Employers

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A massive shift is underway in the relationship between workers and companies. From the COVID-19 pandemic and tight job market, to transparency enabled by social media, an array of forces are combining to drive fundamental change in the employment relationship, helping propel a transformation from a straightforward economic bargain in which labor is exchanged for compensation, to one that has a surrounding social construct that, while not yet clearly defined, is nonetheless growing roots through emerging legal requirements. All of these developments are coming against the backdrop of intense pressure on companies around their environmental, social and governance (ESG) commitments and the workplace-related undertakings arising within that framework.

Akin Gump lawyers Bob Lian and James Crowley explore the legal underpinnings of the employer-employee relationship in the United States, from its origins to its modern conception today. They identify several areas where social and economic forces, technology and the law are combining in important, yet unpredictable, ways to effect significant changes to the employment relationship, and they discuss some recommendations for employers as they wrestle with these changes.

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