FUTURE OF WORK

The Leading
Employee
Engagement
Platform

Overview

ENGAGEMENT SCORE

7.7
0.3 above
True Benchmark (7.4)

No change since 6 Oct
Expand

eNPS DISTRIBUTION
51% · 25% · 24%

PARTICIPATION · Expand
91% aggregated participation rate
1% below benchmark (92%)

ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION
104 answered out of 114 employees surveyed

Aggregate score accuracy:
High

Key drivers of engagement

Trusted by hundreds of the world's best workplaces

easyJet · Nike ·)(Dorchester *Collection* · monzo · sodexo · AIG · momondo · 3

FUTURE OF WORK

CONTRIBUTORS

OLIVER BALCH
Freelance journalist,
specialising in
sustainability, business
and travel, he is the author
of travelogues on South
America, India and Wales.

PETER CRUSH
Freelance business
journalist, specialising
in human resources and
management issues, he
was deputy editor of
HR magazine.

CATH EVERETT
Freelance journalist
specialising in workplace
and employment issues,
she also writes on the
impact of technology on
society and culture.

**CHARLES
ORTON-JONES**
Award-winning journalist,
he was editor-at-large of
LondonlovesBusiness.com
and editor of *EuroBusiness*.

HEIDI VELLA
Freelance journalist
specialising in technology
and energy innovation, she
is a regular contributor to
the Institute of Engineering,
Shepherd Media, Hybrid
and Newsbase publishers.

SOPHIE CHARARA
Associate editor at *The
Ambient* and *Wareable,* she
is also a freelance writer
on technology and pop
culture, with bylines in
Stuff, WIRED and *Forbes*.

NICK EASEN
Award-winning
freelance journalist and
broadcaster, he produces
for *BBC World News*,
and writes on business,
economics, science,
technology and travel.

**VIRGINIA
MATTHEWS**
Freelance writer and editor,
she contributes regularly
to the national and
specialist press on a range
of business, education and
consumer topics.

OLIVER PICKUP
Award-winning journalist,
he specialises in
technology, business and
sport, and contributes to a
wide range of publications.

EMMA WOOLLACOTT
Specialist technology
writer, she covers legal
and regulatory issues, and
has contributed to *Forbes*
and the *New Statesman*.

**Ƭ Raconteur
reports**

🐦 @raconteur f /raconteur.net 📷 @raconteur_london

LANGUAGE

Translating AI into the language of business

While artificial intelligence is expected to dominate international business translation, people will act as translators of tone, emotion and culture

SOPHIE CHARARA

With the help of parallel text datasets such as *Wikipedia,* European Parliament proceedings and telephone transcripts from South Asia, machine-learning has now reached the point where translation tools rival their human counterparts.

According to Ofer Shoshan, chief executive of One Hour Translation, neural machine technology (NMT) translators will be capable of handling 50 per cent of the global translation market in one to three years.

NMT translators might not be mainstream yet, but the biggest companies in the world, including Google, Microsoft and Amazon, are engaged in a fascinating race to close the communication gap between their software and skilled translation workers and agencies.

Business has been a key use-case from the start as technology giants position their Skype tools, translation apps and smart speaker skills as essential to any companies looking to expand in foreign markets.

Wearable tech startups too are still able to make an impact with Waverly Labs' Pilot, Timekettle's WT2 and Mymanu's Clik+ all vying for the space left open by last year's Google Pixel Buds, which were criticised as being badly designed and too reliant on connected Android smartphones. Actions like interacting with Alexa or popping in a smart earbud can make much more sense in a client meeting than for an everyday tourist.

This has led industries, including hospitality, retail and law enforcement, to experiment with artificial intelligence (AI) translation, with usage in the medical and financial sectors also expected to grow as translation is fine tuned for these specialised areas.

"In ten to twelve years, we've progressed from no access to machine translation to today's standard of AI translators, which aren't perfect but are pretty good in most cases," says Andrew Ochoa, founder and chief executive of New York startup Waverly Labs. "It's not difficult to see that in another ten to twelve years, machine-translation technology will achieve human parity and then eventually surpass it."

A development Mr Ochoa expects to see in the next phase of AI translation engines is a shift from phrase-based speech translation to simultaneous translation, something of a Holy Grail in the industry.


Chris Yang on Unsplash

From the results of early demos of the WT2 in-ear translator, which is expected to be able to perform real-time translation face to face around the time it ships in January, it looks like there will be a trade-off between speed and accuracy, at least for 2019 and the few years following. Still, this technology moves quickly.

For virtual communication, meanwhile, real-time transcription and translation services via Skype's Meeting Broadcast, part of Skype for Business Online and Office 365, are already live in public preview. The feature is available in ten out of sixty languages offered by Microsoft Translator. Google Translate is still the most global option. It operates in more than 100 languages, with 32 in voice or conversation mode and 40-plus with visual translation.

While Pixel Buds didn't take off, in October Google made Translate compatible with any assistant-optimised headphones.

As the technology becomes more intelligent and errors decrease during the next decade, some important limitations will remain in place. That's why some experts believe people will always have a part to play when it comes to translation and language at work.

Dr Catherine Hua Xiang, programme director of Chinese language and culture for business at the London School of Economics, says there are three reasons for this: the meaning of language is always context based; language is closely related to human emotions, so the subtlety of tones and voices change the impact and meaning; and language can't be separated from culture.
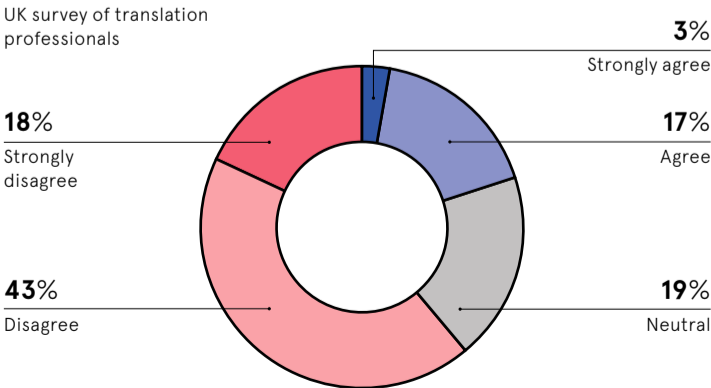
"In a guest-host relationship in a Chinese business setting, for example, it is considered polite and necessary to insist and impose on guests to accept the invitation or have more food," she says. "This is considered essential to show sincerity and hospitality. Chinese people will use the imperative form, such as 'You must come' as an invite, or 'Eat, eat, eat' or 'Eat more, you are not eating enough', during the actual business meal. Despite the fact it may sound like orders, it is absolutely not in this particular context."

Cultural transfer is a challenge for any translation work, according to Dr Xiang, who believes that many businesses are not fully aware of the influence of cultural understanding in their approach to business.

Other obstacles for AI translators are the languages themselves. European languages tend to be the best served by these types of tools, alongside Chinese and Japanese, but predictions for parity within ten years will probably only apply to parallel languages with plenty of readily available datasets. "Low resource languages, such as Haitian or Amharic," says Mr Ochoa, "are going to struggle without dedicated resources made available to include these languages in new models."

Even as AI translators are introduced into business settings, human translators can provide value not only in terms of context, emotional intelligence and culture, but also working alongside NMT to check and correct text translations in an agency workflow, for instance. Mr Ochoa also points to a potential collaboration in that human translators experience fatigue, becoming less accurate over long sessions, whereas an AI tool may start off less accurate and improve over the course of the meeting or transcription.

It seems likely that human translators will remain valuable to businesses even if NMT translators match them on accuracy and performance within the decade. "To communicate effectively with potential business partners, clients and customers, businesses need to know what to communicate and how to communicate," says Dr Xiang. "This is where cultural knowledge and awareness makes a difference. Different cultures have different approaches when it comes to communication. Building such understanding of how a particular culture communicates and its core values will help build rapport and win more business." ◆

Will developments in technology make human translators less important in the future?

UK survey of translation professionals

3% Strongly agree

17% Agree

19% Neutral

43% Disagree

18% Strongly disagree

European Commission/Chartered Institute of Linguists/Institute of Translation and Interpreting 2017

PRODUCTIVITY

Leaping barriers to raising productivity

Five thought leaders offer tips to help overcome obstacles to raising productivity

CATH EVERETT

Workplace support
Josh Krichefski, MediaCom UK

People produce their best work when they have support around them, whether that is a line manager, mentor, colleagues or mental health expert. They need to feel supported to be comfortable and happy, so knowing there is someone to turn to is important.

We live in an always-on world, so it can be difficult to take a break from work as our mobile phones mean we are always contactable. But the link between stress and mental health is clear, and if people feel under pressure, they do not necessarily perform at their best. This means putting the right structures in place to ensure they are given the best chance of success.

As a result, we offer mindfulness workshops every two months, in which inspirational speakers come and talk. We also offer flexible working as it is important to treat people like grown-ups and let them do the job in the way that best suits their lives, although one of the rules is not to email colleagues after 7pm or at weekends.

There are also mental health allies, trained to look out for people across the business, who may need someone to talk to or might benefit from professional help. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, but at the heart of it is simply listening. It is a very under-rated leadership skill.

### Ownership
Hannah Dawson, Futrli

When employees feel they have no real influence at work, their productivity suffers and it is demotivating. But if you give people ownership of what they do, if they feel their ideas are heard and they have opportunities to test them out, you will get 100 per cent from them.

This means that your team leads can either make or break your business as it is about managing both up and down. In other words, it is important to create a sense of openness so ideas and feedback can be shared in a non-fearful manner.

As a leader, you have to put your ego aside. You have to take feedback and adapt your behaviour. Sometimes you will not want to hear it, but you have to. You cannot ask people to behave in a specific way if you do not do the same. So it is about modelling behaviour and inspiring from the front, and it is not easy.

But having controlled objectives is also necessary. You need to be completely clear about what each department has to do; it must be completely measurable and each person needs to understand the part they have to play, because to get velocity and buy-in, it is about having clear outcomes and results.
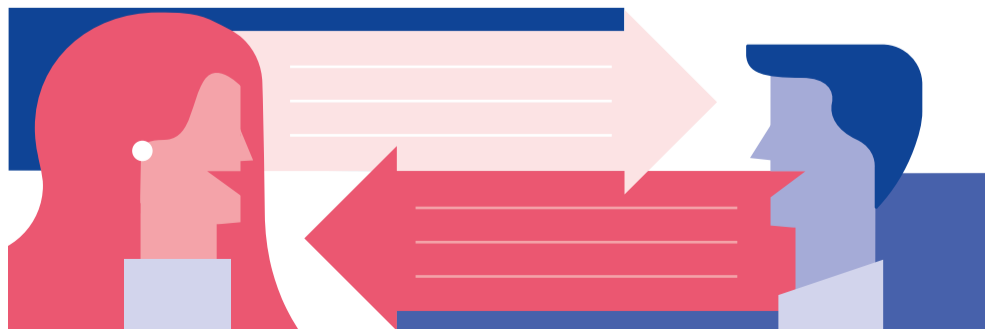
Perfectionism
Ben Roberts, Talkative

All too often people put in a lot of effort to get something 100 per cent right. The problem with trying to get to Utopia though is that everyone's idea of perfect is different. So you may spend all your time getting something spot on, but someone else may have other ideas of what it should look like.

Another issue is that perfectionism can stifle creativity. It can stop people pushing the boundaries due to a fear of failure, but it can also slow the pace of work and block the expression of the rest of the team.

So what I have done is come up with minimum standards to give people something to work from. For example, we create a lot of content, but I expect minimum standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and there are no more than two drafts of anything or it tends to get nit-picky and we produce less.

You have to work out, does the effort warrant the return, or should you try to reach a Utopia you cannot prove exists? In my view, getting something done is more important than getting nothing done, but doing it badly is worse than having nothing. So as long as everyone meets the minimum standards set, I am happy.

Work about work
Geraldine MacCarthy, Dropbox Business

All the administrative, bureaucratic things we do before starting our real work is disempowering teams and sapping their energy. According to a McKinsey study, employees now spend about 60 per cent of their time doing "work about work", which means only 40 per cent of their week goes on the meaningful activities they feel inspired and energised by.

So it is about creating the right space to enable people to focus on that meaningful work. This means ensuring there is a place for them to come together to collaborate on things, but also a place to escape the hustle and bustle when they need to.

For us, this is our Deep Focus Room, which we set up about two years ago. You do not need a huge space for it, but it can be really powerful and help to foster creativity.

Another thing I do to give people more space to work is make a point of reviewing my calendar each month. The idea is to remove recurring meetings that are no longer necessary and ensure the right people are attending, which usually frees up a couple of hours each for the leadership team. But you do need the discipline to do it regularly as meetings undoubtedly have a tendency to creep back over time.
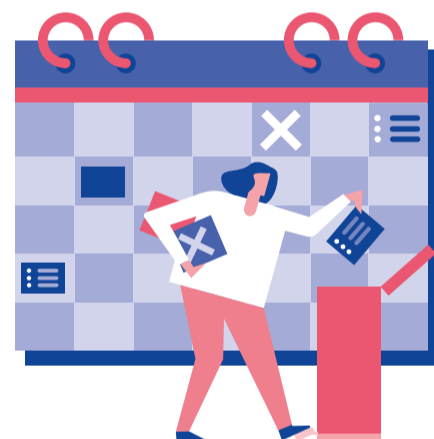
CO$_2$
Keith Chanter, Emcor UK

Human performance is conditioned by the environment in which we operate. People are receptive to physical and sensory changes in light, temperature, humidity and CO_2, which means it is important to create a workspace that is mindful of humans.

So we undertook research, together with Oxford Brookes University and King's College London, to test the impact of environmental changes on people at a customer site. It was based on the findings of a Harvard University study, which showed that CO_2 levels in the air of above 1,500 parts per million could have a negative effect on cognitive skills.

We gave controlled groups of workers maths puzzles, a reading test, which included inaccuracies, and also asked them about their mood. What we found was that if CO_2 levels were above 1,500 parts per million, productivity was damaged by around 8 per cent. Mood and motivation also appeared to be affected by poor air quality.

CO_2 levels inevitably build up due to exhalation if there are a number of people in a room, but you can monitor the situation using cheap sensors. Ventilation equipment such as air conditioning will circulate the air, but you have to be careful about overdoing it. Air quality below 1,200 parts per million makes little difference cognitively, but it will cost you more money in terms of energy consumption. ◆
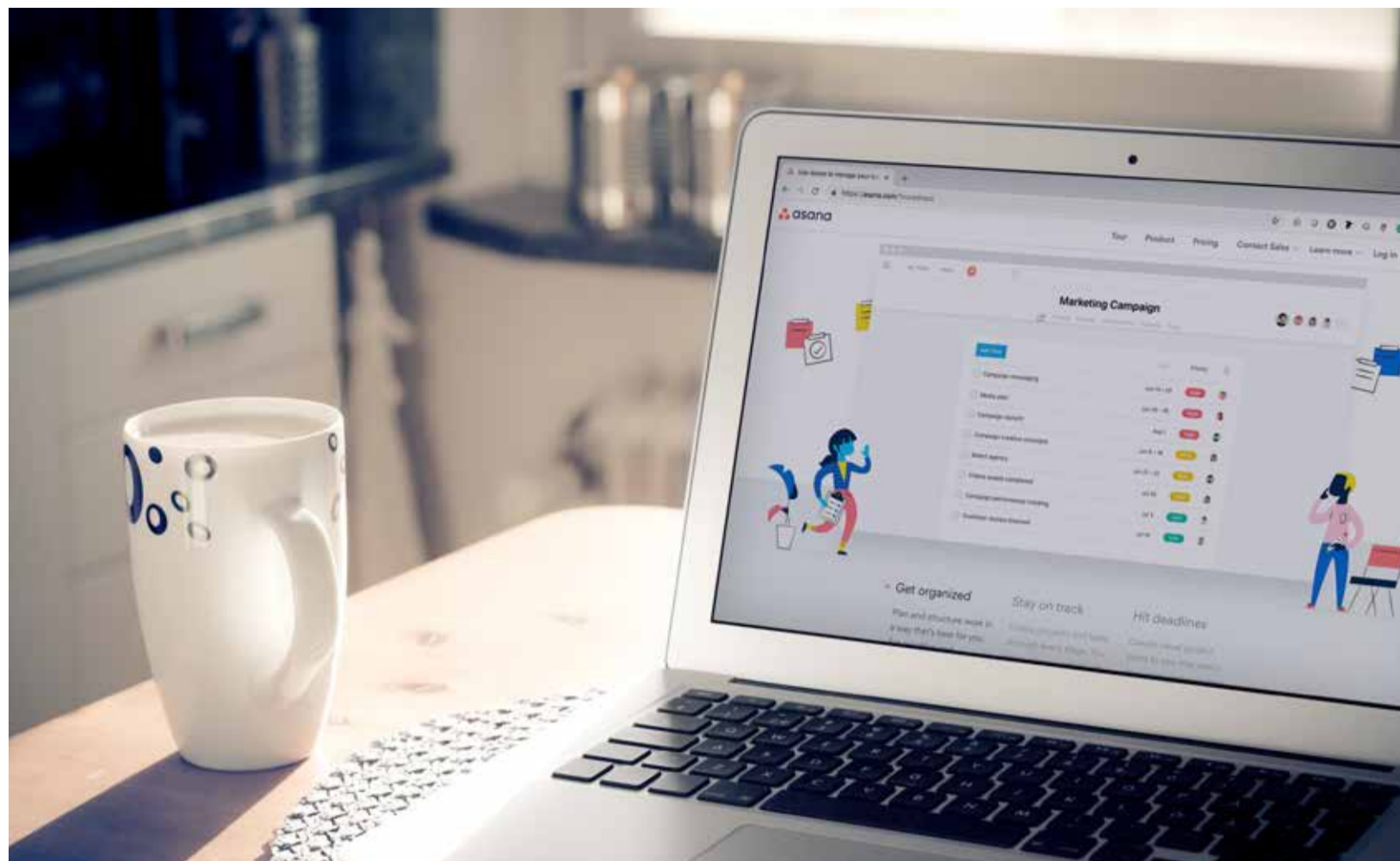
Right tech could be the saviour of global productivity

With the right work management platform, enabling individuals and teams to achieve the same mission, productivity levels will rise

Dustin Moskovitz
Co-founder, Asana

Justin Rosenstein
Co-founder, Asana

Nobel laureate Paul Krugman, a quarter of a century ago, offered up the dictum: "Productivity isn't everything, but in the long run it's almost everything." Today, productivity is a concern for businesses globally. The UK struggles to navigate a productivity puzzle of its very own, though. Productivity levels dropped in the third quarter, despite the number of working hours actually increasing.

The so-called productivity challenge has many asking if humanity is running out of ideas, and whether we're losing our ability to turn new technologies into rising incomes and economic growth. Recently, chancellor Philip Hammond, mentioned this issue six times in his UK Budget speech. A lack of investment, particularly in technology, is being touted as one of the root causes.

"Organisations are questioning productivity at a time when there is a whole paradigm shift going on in the way we do work," explains Chris Farinacci, head of business at

Asana, a leading global work management platform.

"There's been an exponential increase in human collaboration, at the same time as a proliferation in the tools and the technologies we use; combine this with a rise in the complexity of work itself. All this can stifle productivity."

When the first industrial revolution kicked in, the market for coal was cheap, yet labour was expensive. Enterprises then invented novel ways to use coal-fired, steam machines to make the most out of their workers. Fast forward to the 21st century, as the digital revolution roots itself firmly in the global economy, software firms are now trying to do exactly the same by making the most of human effort through new technologies.

"This message is now resounding well with the C-suite, including chief information officers and chief technology officers. As businesses and the worlds they operate in evolve, they must move quickly to stay competitive. Leaders are beginning to acknowledge that teams need the right technology to do this," explains Mr Farinacci, whose company now has 50,000 paying customers and

more than one million organisations that have signed up for its free product in 194 countries.

Since the 2008 global financial crisis, with depressed wages, in the UK and United States for instance, it has made sense for many corporations to rely on labour rather than pumping money into capital to boost output. This involves hiring someone to do a job rather than, say, buying a software solution or capital equipment. However, at this point in the economic cycle, with wages starting to climb, it makes more sense to invest in technology that makes workers more valuable and their office hours more productive.

According to a study by Asana, roughly two thirds of employees at UK companies (63 per cent) spend more than eight hours a week, or the equivalent of the average working day, looking for information or trying to understand the status of work they should be doing, instead of actually getting work done. "It is a huge issue that goes to the very top of every business," says Mr Farinacci whose product is used by *Sky News*, *Financial Times* and London's National Gallery, to manage everything from marketing campaigns to the goals of sales teams and product launches.

One of Asana's main objectives is to eradicate the "work about work" that many of us get sucked into on a daily basis, including endless emails and meetings, phone conferences and project updates. Mr Farinacci says: "Asana

does this by acting as the GPS for your organisation, ensuring everyone knows the plan of record and is updated as each piece comes together. We know the best teams have clarity of purpose, plan and responsibility. Work about work is what happens when these elements are absent and teams fail to achieve what they're capable of."

When the co-founders of Asana, Dustin Moskovitz and Justin Rosenstein, began developing the tool a decade ago, collaboration in the workplace was still very much in its infancy. Now it's everywhere. Teams collaborate across many platforms, many of which are siloed, and with numerous different teams and individuals. As a result, we're now grappling with more information at work than ever before. Content hubs give us places to house and organise our information, and communication tools enable teams to collaborate in real-time with ease. Yet they fail adequately to address the next step of effective collaboration: co-ordination.

"We believe Asana is the missing piece of this collaboration puzzle. It helps people spend less time co-ordinating information, so they can focus on the tasks that really matter and be more productive," says Mr Farinacci.

With increasing ways to collaborate around work, maintaining clarity is imperative. Asana's research reveals that 51 per cent of UK employees say they would be more productive if they saw how their work aligned with overall business objectives. Tools such as Asana encourage new behaviours towards transparency around work, where everyone in a business or team knows who is doing what, by when and, most importantly, why.

"By giving teams and individuals absolute clarity of purpose, plan and responsibility, in that order, employees will complete their best work. Without these considerations, it's near on impossible to get every employee in an organisation aligned," says Mr Farinacci. "When individuals and teams are working towards the same mission, productivity levels will inevitably rise."

The next frontier in managing workflows is to employ artificial intelligence and machine-learning to help humans function better. Asana is developing algorithms and software tools that will enable corporations to run optimally.

In 2019, Asana plans to launch a new product update called Workload. Drawing on intelligence around an individual's unique and variable skills, interests and schedule, Workload will enable team leads to optimise resources based on human attributes. Mr Farinacci concludes: "We envision a future where every team member is completing the work they're best suited to. The result will be happier teams and optimum levels of productivity."

We could soon see a new phase in productivity growth. Watch this space.

> " When individuals and teams are working towards the same mission, productivity levels will inevitably rise

For further information please visit
www.asana.com

John T on Un ssplash

Moving to the next level in management

Experiments in scraping command-and-control management structures have not always been a success, so is there another way of empowering staff?

PETER CRUSH

When Blinkist, the app that distills the content of academic tomes into short, 15-minute bite-sized reads, reached 20 people, chief executive and founder Holger Seim did what many self-respecting disruptors have started doing. Old-school organisational structure was thrown out and in its place came holacracy, a system of self-organisation where hierarchies are non-existent, structures are flat and management is completely decentralised.

Seen by many as the answer to so many company ills, this radical set-up gives staff what they say they want: empowerment to take their own decisions, rather than be told what to do. And it's certainly captured the spirit of the times.

Firms such as Zappos, the Amazon-owned online shoe retailer, became an early role-model business using it. And yet according to Mr Seim, it was precisely when Blinkist became flat that things started going awry.

"No one understood it. We had ten different interpretations of what holacracy meant and, worse-still, when seeking new opportunities, people were more preoccupied with how the model could accommodate it, than the actual opportunity itself. It was a distraction," he says.

Significantly, he's not the only leader to think this. Not only has he pulled back on it, even Zappos itself is reportedly binning the system, with chief of staff Jamie Naughton saying simply: "It sucks!"

But now there could be a very good reason why flat structures seemingly don't work. A surprising revelation from research by the European School of Technology and Management is that hierarchy is actually hard-wired into people's brains. While people might moan about being managed, actually they need or want it because

it gives them clarity about their role, a sense where they sit and a pathway for growth. Without hierarchy work is simply destabilising.

"People need clarity about what they're responsible for," argues John Colley, professor of practice at Warwick Business School. "While there's agreement fewer layers are better, no hierarchy is chaotic. It's a fine line to get right though; people also say they want autonomy, but they want it framed by someone too."

Professor Colley says this is as much to do with personal security as much as anything else; about employees fearing overlap of roles muddies who has responsibility. But Sankalp Chaturvedi, associate professor of organisational behaviour and leadership at Imperial College Business School, says firms are wrong to think they can parachute in any new model and assume it will work.

He says: "Flat structures were first introduced in technology companies because it suited their task of innovating. But Zappos is essentially a supply chain business, with very sequential, regimented processes. It's understandable why having no structure didn't work."

Anna Purchas, KPMG's head of people, is adamant employees need boundaries. "Staff want strong leadership and vision, and they want clear direction about their role in achieving it," she says. "This flows into performance management and staff wanting to know how they can improve.

"To move up demands that hierarchies exist. A few years ago we famously removed annual reviews, in favour of more regular chats. This year though, they've been reinstated because staff wanted this real management validation."

Even dispensing with job titles – one way of flattening structures – can be a move too far. "We tried it, allocating work around skills, not seniority, but even though we

thought we had clarity about progression, younger staff especially didn't take to it," concedes Nicola Koronka, co-founder of public relations agency Missive.

"People still want a label; they want to aspire to the 'next level'. When we first launched, we didn't want to be so cast iron about what certain roles looked like, but the irony is that our staff have almost forced us to be more tick box in nature, so they can see exactly what skills they need to progress."

But if too much hierarchy is bad and too little is disorientating,

> ## While there's agreement fewer layers are better, no hierarchy is chaotic

surely there's a halfway house? Plenty think there is. "Eighteen months ago, I decided I wouldn't make another decision again, by giving people autonomy and freedom for how to do their jobs themselves," says Mark Cuddigan, chief executive of baby food brand Ella's Kitchen. "However, it would be disingenuous to think there isn't hierarchy. When everyone's at the same level, no one's in charge."

His answer is to ensure everyone knows their part, accept that mistakes will happen, but crucially, inculcate real collective responsibility. "I'm a real sticker for language," he says. "No one says 'they' here, as in 'they do that'. It's always 'we' do this. It means everyone has ownership of their area and how they impact others."

Law firm Linklaters is also shaking things up; not by denouncing hierarchy, rather accepting it's there, but that its boundaries can be blurred. "For the last year, we've piloted reverse mentoring, where everyone in our senior team has a mentor

who's usually new and young," says Marc Harvey, partner and chairman of its people committee.

"Hierarchy exists in law because typically experience enhances advice," he says. "But in this changing world, we know seniority no longer makes someone an expert in everything. Our leaders now have to deal with things they've never seen before, but which young talent is used to."

Audrey Tang, author of the forthcoming book *A Leader's Guide to Mindfulness*, has some advice. "It's worth remembering business success is often less about the structure, but how you deal with people at an individual level," she says. "Hire someone for one job, but fail to tell them they're likely to have to do x, y and z too, and it breeds discontent because people feel they've been mislead. It's far better to recognise people as individuals and train them for change. When this happens, talent tends to flourish whatever the environment, flat or hierarchical."◆

Can workplace evolution help small businesses outcompete enterprises?

With small businesses having bigger opportunities than ever before, the future of work means smaller companies are well placed to push valuable outcomes further and faster than their larger competitors

Despite the Federation of Small Businesses' estimate that smaller companies accounted for 99.3 per cent of all private sector business in the UK at the start of 2018, they have long found themselves trailing their larger counterparts when it comes to the latest business products and solutions. However, significant advancements in technology accessibility and workplace transformation are at last putting small businesses in the driving seat.

According to KPMG's *2018 Global CEO Outlook* report, agility is the new currency of business. With this principal concern for companies, small businesses now have a competitive advantage. They are more agile by their very nature because everybody knows each other and who to go to in order to get things done quicker.

"Employees in small businesses can make decisions at a different pace and as a result larger companies are trying to mimic this," says Snorre Kjesbu, vice president and general manager, Team Collaboration Devices, at Cisco. "However, being small isn't enough; you then need tools and work methodologies to really enable that speed of innovation and agility.

"Small businesses need to create teams of co-workers, suppliers, partners and customers; not one such team, but teams of teams. And they need flexible tools that extend the close collaboration experience of a team working in the same location to team members outside the office."

This need for flexible tools is also critical in the growing war for talent. A recent *Future of Work* study by Cisco found that 23 per cent of knowledge workers already have the flexibility to work from a location they choose and another 44 per cent expect to have it in the next three years.

This choice is critical for retaining millennial talent, as well as their juniors now starting to enter the employment market: generation Z. In the Deloitte *Millennial Survey 2018*, only 17 per cent of respondents said they would be willing to stay with their employer for more than five years without the opportunity to work where they choose.

Another potential advantage for small companies is their ability to adopt new tools rapidly. Larger companies have more resources, yet their size and structure can restrict how quickly they can embrace and implement new tools. Smaller firms can be more proactive; nonetheless tools should be both enterprise ready and consumer like.

"Adoption should be easy, and the tools should be fun and simple to use as other technology in your life, but enterprise ready is important so you can take care of security, manageability and scalability," says Mr Kjesbu. "Small businesses need to think about security to protect intellectual property and basic information, and with lean resources, the easier to manage that, the better."

Workspaces can be just as important as tools and huddle spaces are playing an increasingly important role in team collaboration. Frost & Sullivan estimates there are currently about 30 million of these meeting spaces globally and their popularity continues to grow at a double-digit rate. At the same time, according to Dimensional Research, almost half of these informal locations have little or no collaboration technology. And with those that do, 78 per cent of people are frustrated with the current huddle solutions available to them.

"Millennials are used to working in Starbucks. They want their team spaces to have that same informality. But they also need their huddle spaces to be able to share content, communicate with remote participants and co-create, so they require solutions that enable those goals," says Mr Kjesbu.

Cisco's huddle portfolio is particularly suited to small business and

30m
huddle spaces globally

8/10
users are frustrated with availibility of huddle space meeting technology

62%
say users request help several times a week to get the technology to work

> ❝ Cisco now allows small businesses to subscribe to affordable solutions as a service with tools enabling them to share, communicate and co-create using the latest technology

includes the Webex Board 55 for video, digital whiteboarding and content-sharing. The recently launched Webex Room Kit Mini is also custom made for intimate areas such as huddle spaces, offering the same cameras, microphone and artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities larger enterprises enjoy with bigger meeting-room systems.

AI has typically been reserved for corporates with more resources. No longer. Cisco integrates AI across a wide range if its video end-point portfolio at an affordable price, to block out sounds, during conference calls, such as keyboard tapping and barking dogs, or by placing virtual name tags on people's chests. The embedded AI also makes it much easier for people to arrange and join meetings.

Cisco is now building products that can understand who is in a meeting and then offer relevant, useful and contextual information. Soon such tools will be able to add value to meetings by removing the more mundane, administrative tasks, such as taking actions and providing relevant content. This leaves more space for the creativity that drives forward the work of a business, whatever its size.

Small companies were previously priced out of products that incorporate such innovation. However, Cisco now allows small businesses to subscribe to affordable solutions as a service with tools enabling them to share, communicate and co-create using the latest technology, while creating an intuitive collaboration experience.

"There's no doubt that experience matters," says Mr Kjesbu. "It matters in the way you get work done, but it also matters in how you show up with partners, suppliers and customers. Cisco has developed these solutions – Webex Meetings, Webex Teams and Webex video devices – that you can use as subscriptions. The solutions are also interoperable with other players out there, whether that's Google Hangouts, Microsoft Skype for Business or Zoom. It's really about making sure you have bridges, not islands."

Snorre Kjesbu
Vice president and general manager, Team Collaboration Devices, Cisco

With high-quality video available as a service for small businesses, the script has been flipped on large enterprises. Let the disruption begin.

For more information please visit cisco.com/go/smbmeet

BUREAUCRACY

Cut the red tape before it strangles you

Stifling procedures can suffocate creativity and alienate staff, underlining the need to strip out unnecessary bureaucracy

Stephen Mallon/Getty Images

CHARLES ORTON-JONES

Here's a baffling bit of jargon: socialising the hierarchies. At one major high street bank, it's a compulsory part of any project. When a proposal is made, it must be approved by a long list of people in every department it affects. A simple thing, like signing off a story about a business loan that helped an entrepreneur expand her company, might take 30 signatures before being published.

The signatures must be obtained in the right order and that sequence must be sent to all parties, hence socialising the hierarchies.
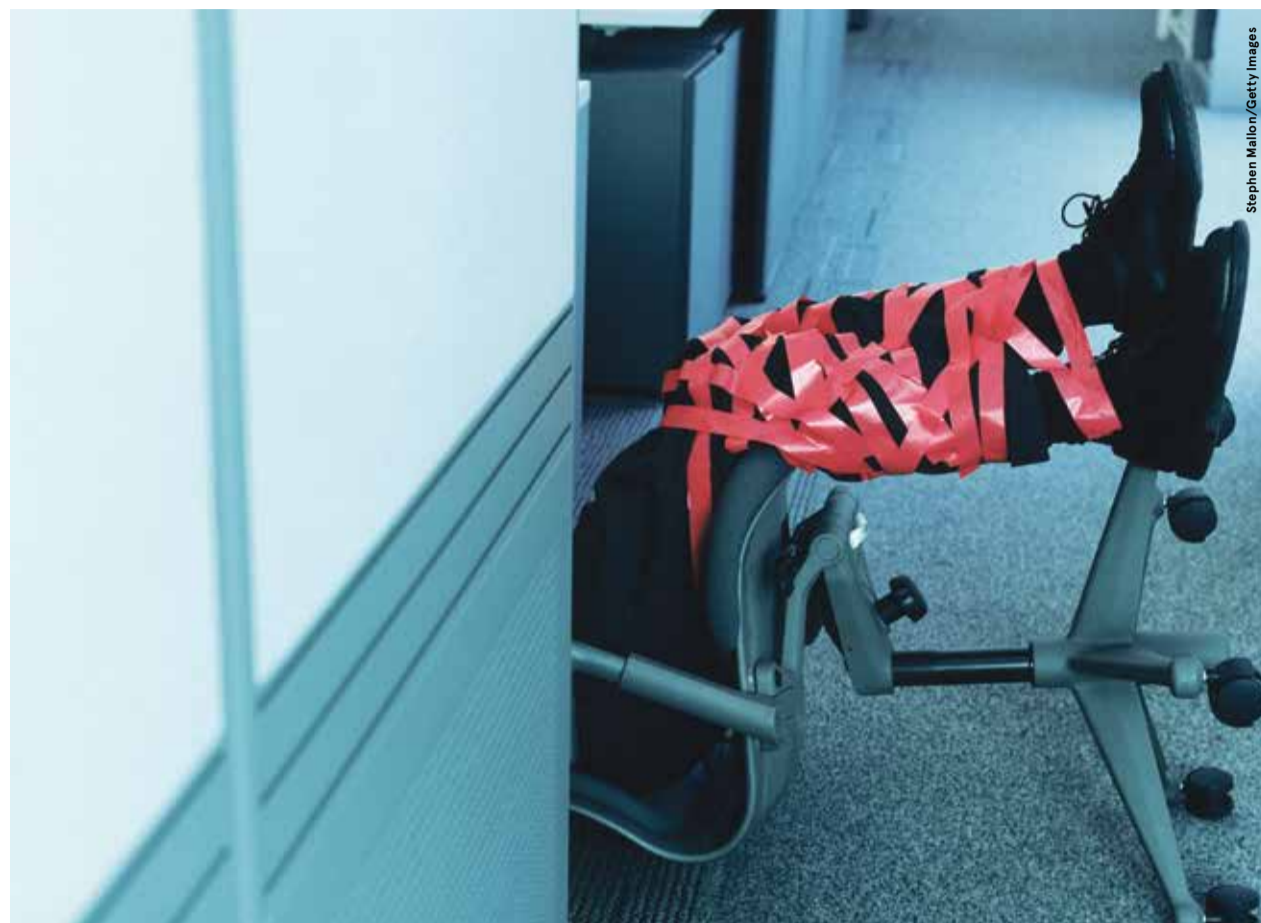
It's a hideous phrase, reflecting a bureaucratic nightmare. But this bank is hardly alone. Large organisations are often crippled by bureaucracy. *Harvard Business Review* calls it "tax on human achievement".

But can anything be done to cut bureaucracy? At boardrooms of the world's biggest companies, there's no shortage of experimentation. The rewards are so big, and the dangers of failure so perilous, that radical schemes are being embraced.

At telco Tata Communications, which handles a quarter of world internet routes, the latest breakthrough is artificial intelligence (AI).

"There are a number of ways in which innovations such as AI can help maintain uniformity and controls while making the job faster and easier," says European head Mark Weait.

"We have used it to sharpen our recruitment processes. Our hiring managers save time and effort, which was earlier being used to skim through job descriptions to shortlist candidates, by using an AI-based automated tool that auto-matches a candidate with best-in-class individuals, and the latter acting as the benchmark."

Feedback and evaluation of employees is AI assisted at Tata. Forms and responses can be filled in automatically by AI. Over time, more and more routine functions can be completed this way. Employees will only enter the missing bits of data.

Standardisation can help. Ensuring there is a single form for basic tasks can make life easier for employees.

> "You can break down bureaucracy by giving every team in the organisation a level of autonomy

But creating a standard process can help complex activities too, such innovation. At Mars, the confectioner, there is a scheme to formalise how innovation is generated.

The Launchpad, as it is known, asks senior staff to identify areas of the company in need of overhauling. If they get the green light, they establish a new unit and bring in help from small external agencies to work towards improving processes. It's like having an endless supply of disruptive startups bubbling up within Mars.

"Because Launchpad has its own funding and support structure within our business, it gives us the freedom to take risks," says Gulrez Arora, global lead of Launchpad at Mars. "There is so much change that even a company as big as Mars can't find the smartest solutions as quickly as we need them. But by working with startups, embracing collaboration, we are letting our associates benefit from the strength of our existing culture, alongside outside expertise."

Importantly, everyone in Mars knows how an innovative project can be conceived, approved and run with the minimum of interference or uncertainty.
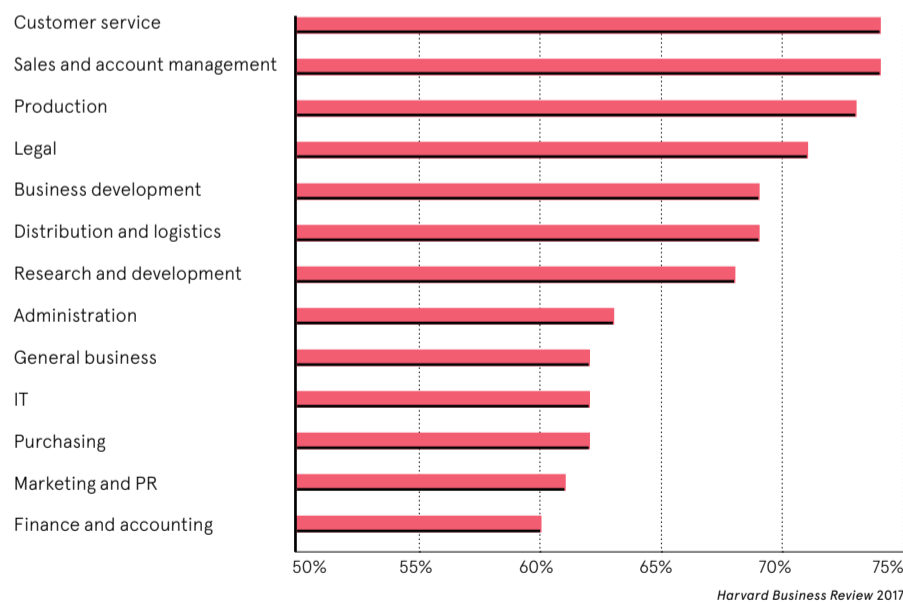
At the heart of current thinking on slim-line bureaucracy is the idea of trust. The celebrated management thinker Sir Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology and health, at Alliance Manchester Business School, sees it as the key factor. "We need to breakdown corporate bureaucracy," he says. "It's killing innovation, particularly in mid-management roles.

"Nowadays, there's a culture where people are too frightened to make decisions and this isn't helped by the amount of red tape in place. In my view, there are several ways of overcoming this.

"You must trust people. You can break down bureaucracy by giving every team in the organisation a level of autonomy. Give the manager of a team the autonomy to look after their own team members. Not only does this make them feel valued, but it also reduces stress in the workplace. The main thing that causes unhappiness at work today is not having control or autonomy to make decisions."

Most bureaucratic job functions

Percentage of *Harvard Business Review* subscribers working in the following functions who say their company has grown more bureaucratic over the past few years

Function	
Customer service	~74%
Sales and account management	~74%
Production	~73%
Legal	~71%
Business development	~69%
Distribution and logistics	~69%
Research and development	~68%
Administration	~63%
General business	~62%
IT	~62%
Purchasing	~62%
Marketing and PR	~61%
Finance and accounting	~60%

Harvard Business Review 2017
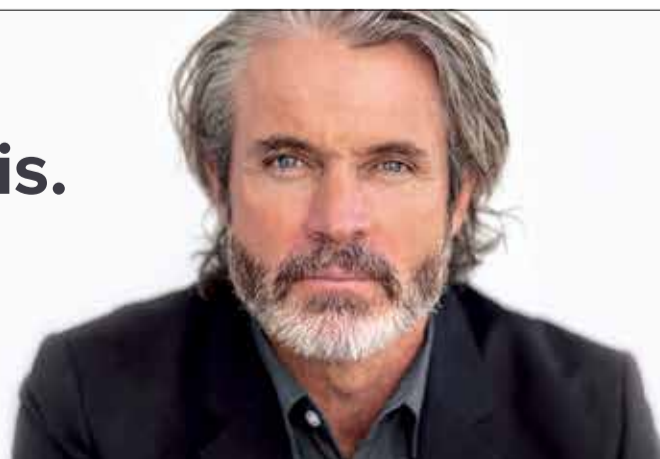
Sir Cary argues that a simple change in mindset can trigger the right responses. "To break down the layers of red tape, you shouldn't treat the organisation as a tanker heading to a port, but as a group of ships or a flotilla. While you may be heading for the same destination, business leaders need to realise there are different units and routes involved in getting there," her says.

"You have to give people permission to fail from time to time. Let them run and you'll see a more agile, engaged and innovative workforce as a result. This will help people remove the fear they associate with decision-making, too."

In the end, the threat of competition may force larger organisations to strip out the paperwork. Their fear of making mistakes will be overtaken by their fear of being overtaken by more agile rivals.

Employees will simply be given more rights to take action without oversight. Shaun Thomson, chief executive of Sadler Training UK, which helps companies improve sales and management, argues that a key sign can be whether employees can act instantly.

He recalls: "I was in a hotel lobby, waiting to check out, when the gentleman in front of me was very unhappy about his room. Not enough towels. The receptionist did not budge an inch. After a heated discussion, the guest went away with no concessions and the receptionist almost turned to the guests with an 'I won't smile'.

"In a second hotel, a guest was checking in too early. The room was not yet available. The receptionist offered him lunch with compliments of the hotel and an upgrade to be ready in 45 minutes. I told her she handled it very well.

"She told me that the management of the hotel empowered the front-desk staff to be able to authorise up to £250 spend to give outstanding customer service. She said they had to be able to stand behind their action and justify their reason for the actions they had taken. But in the five years she had worked there, she had never been challenged by her manager as to why she had done any particular action with a client. She also added, unprompted, it was a great place to work because she was valued."

AI, structured innovation and autonomous work groups are going to be the headliners in the battle on bureaucracy. But old fashioned trust still goes a long way. ◆

Case study
Futurice

John Oswald, advisory team global principal at digital innovation consultancy Futurice, explains how the company took an axe to bloated paperwork.

He says: "Bureaucracy is really a synonym for control, especially in larger companies. People are fundamentally reluctant to cede control or to show trust, for fear that things will go wrong.

"At Futurice, we've been growing steadily for a number of years, and at one stage, when the company got to about 50 people, the founders instituted tighter processes to manage the finances better. A few weeks in, the rallying cry came, 'Have people suddenly become stupid and irresponsible?'

"So, we experimented with a radically new approach to managing the team: complete trust in people, with a simple guideline, 'Do the right thing by the client, our people, the numbers, now and in the future'. We agreed on a decision-making framework known as the freedom radar, which helps people plot what is sacred to the company and what should be left to individual or team discretion at the edges. And we dropped all other processes.

"It worked. The company has gone from being a small player in Finland across two locations to being a significant European design and innovation consultancy, working with some of the top clients, not only in Finland, but across the Nordics and Germany. There's a strong emphasis on company and employee culture, which builds on those earlier decisions to abandon process in favour of trust."

The office where you log in, not walk in

Business tech should match what delights consumers about the apps they use at home, says **Alex Shootman**, president and chief executive of Workfront

We are all living a double life: inhabiting the 21st century at home and the 20th at work.

One of those lives is rich in digital opportunities to do things faster and more easily; the other traps us in analogue conventions and old-school behaviours that aren't fit for now or the future.

To get work done and *Done Right*, the title of my new book about getting stuff done in a modern work environment, we need to think differently in two key ways about business technology and management.

First, we must realise that adopting new tech has wider implications for how people get work done than just plugging in a new device or logging in to a new app. Second, we must adopt business tech that actually delights end-users.

Changing tools means changing the way work gets done
Too often, new workplace tech gets bolted on to existing ways of working rather than helping to re-imagine them.

"Digital transformation is an ongoing process of changing the way you do business," write academics Thomas H. Davenport and George Westerman. They add: "It requires mixing people, machines and business processes, with all of the messiness that entails."

This means re-imagining leadership and management structures too. Eddie Obeng, professor of entrepreneurship at Henley Business School, explains in *Done Right*: "In the old world, you could get an idea to a boss, they could make a decision and pass it down. Now information is moving at a thousand times that speed. You can never supply enough information to your top team for them to be informed, and make a sensible decision and pass it down. The hierarchy is broken. It doesn't work. We need a networked system."

We need digital technologies and management approaches that break the 20th-century structure still caging most enterprises. We need to allow insight and wisdom wherever it exists to spread up, down and across the network rapidly. We need a new operating model that combines digital technologies and operational capabilities in an integrated, well-sequenced way to overcome the digital work crisis many companies are battling.

Business tech needs to match consumer tech
According to Workfront's latest *State of Work Report*, a survey of more than 2,000 knowledge workers in the UK, 44 per cent of employees are actively requesting new digital tools.

They almost certainly want workplace apps that delight them like their personal tech does. After all, consumer apps orientated to fast actions have created a quiet revolution in our family life.

They've changed how we play, how we think about our health and how we shop. With voice commands, we change the temperature in a room or change the music we're listening to. With a single finger tap we can communicate our mood to friends and family miles away with whatever emoji fits the moment best. And we can record and benchmark almost every task we pursue.

The cornerstone of great consumer tech and apps is simplicity and swift steps towards a clear outcome, wherever the user happens to be, whenever they want.

The problem, is we leave that behind when we head to work. We commute against the clock by choosing between 20th-century, or older, modes of transport, whether by foot, two wheels, four wheels or train.

We claim our desk in an office and work within a hierarchical structure that is as least as old as the British Empire's East India Company in the 17th century, arguably with echoes of the Roman Empire. And we follow processes that often echo the era of paper-and-ink ledgers, and we battle a cacophony of disconnected and ossified technology tools that feel like they were created by a latter-day Victor Frankenstein.

Those cables at the back of your desktop computer and landline phone, they're chains holding you back from getting work done faster and more flexibly.

How will they feel?
Twenty years ago, the question guiding business investment in technology was binary: is this going to work or not?

Today and in future, the question should be: how will my team feel when they're using this? We must heed the words of neuroscientist Professor António R. Damásio: "We are not thinking machines that feel, we are feeling machines that think."

If the answer is liberated from their desks, saved from analogue processes, and able to act more quickly on what matters to both them and the business, you've arrived in the 21st century. That's when your team is logging in, not walking in.

For more information please visit workfront.com

Alex Shootman
Chief executive, Workfront

workfront

Flexing the inflexible workplace

Companies that offer flexible working are known to have increased employee retention, more motivated and engaged staff, and access to wider talent pools when recruiting

Nikolaevich/Getty Images

HEIDI VELLA

For some professions, implementing flexible working is much harder than in others. A Smarter Working Initiative study, for example, found that charity, manufacturing and professional services are the worst sectors for flexible working.

While it may seem impractical to offer agile working in certain roles, particularly those that are client facing or require specialist technology, in actuality, it is nearly always achievable, says Clair Hodgson, Europe, Middle East and Africa director at How Do You Do It?

Ms Hodgson works with professional services companies, such as Deloitte, Zurich and KPMG, to attract, retain and progress talented staff, particularly working parents.

To start integrating flexible working into any organisation, the intention must be established at the executive level, she says.

"Decision-makers should have a clear discussion and communicate its output across the business; line managers need to know what they have permission to do and not to do," Ms Hodgson explains.

Deloitte, for example, launched an initiative for parents returning to the workforce that provided active support for agile working

and clear statements around the acceptability of working from home when possible.

Companies should consider the types of flexible working that exist, including jobs shares, homeworking, part-time roles and annualised hours, and decide what is the best fit for their business. Once these key decisions are made, engagement should start at the individual level so everyone knows what their role is, Ms Hodgson says.

Though it can be challenging, especially when working directly with clients to tight deadlines, it's worth remembering that all firms face the same issues.

Even in unusually hard-to-adapt situations, there can be a solution, says Duncan Brown, head of human resources consultancy at the Institute for Employment Studies. But beware of untrained line managers being a barrier to adoption, he adds.

"Flexibility should be the default position; in other words, the manager has to argue why the employee cannot have it. It's about not having a fixed mindset," Mr Brown says.

He suggests an organisation should segment the workforce into those who want predictable pay and hours, and those who want to prioritise adaptability.
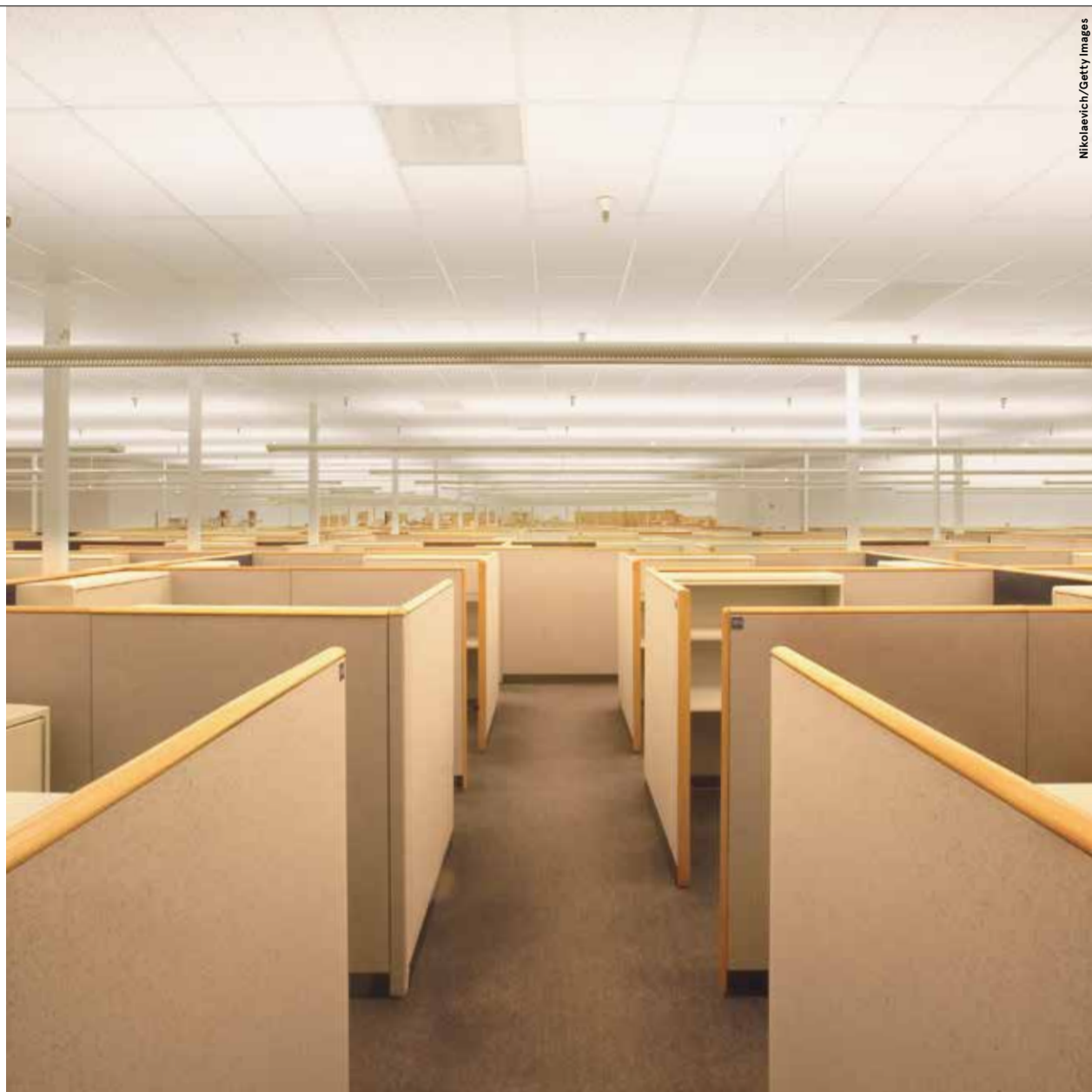
This can be advantageous to both the employer and the employee. For example, Manon DeFelice, chief executive and founder of Inkwell, a recruitment network aimed at finding flexible executive placements for parents, says offering flexibility as part of the compensation package can provide access to talent companies could not otherwise afford.

For example, Inkwell placed a chief financial officer at technology startup Padly on a four-day week. When the company matured and was sold, she went to tech unicorn Giffy, which matched her flexible package, and where she worked while the company was raising millions in investment.

"When you are compensating someone in this way, you are paying them for their performance, not just to be present all the time," says Ms DeFelice.

Conversely, however, at times recruiters can be a barrier to making roles flexible, says Katy Fridman, a former marketing director at Microsoft and founder of the Facebook Group Flexible Working for Mums Like Me (Dads Welcome).

Ms Fridman says recruiters need to start pushing their clients on flexible working and not rely on automation alone to find candidates.

"Recruiters are acting as gatekeepers to the flexible movement," she explains. "They say my clients aren't interested, but I know from experience that actually, when the issue is pushed, there are many models both can consider."

Octopus Energy, for example, has taken an entirely different approach to customer service management, abandoning the traditional call-centre model. Chief executive Greg Jackson says one of his millennial employees built a platform that enables 28 staff to work remotely, answering out-of-hours customer queries via social media and email, as well as amending back-end technical issues.

Using scheduling software, the DigiOps team arrange rotas on a weekly basis depending on people's availability and needs.
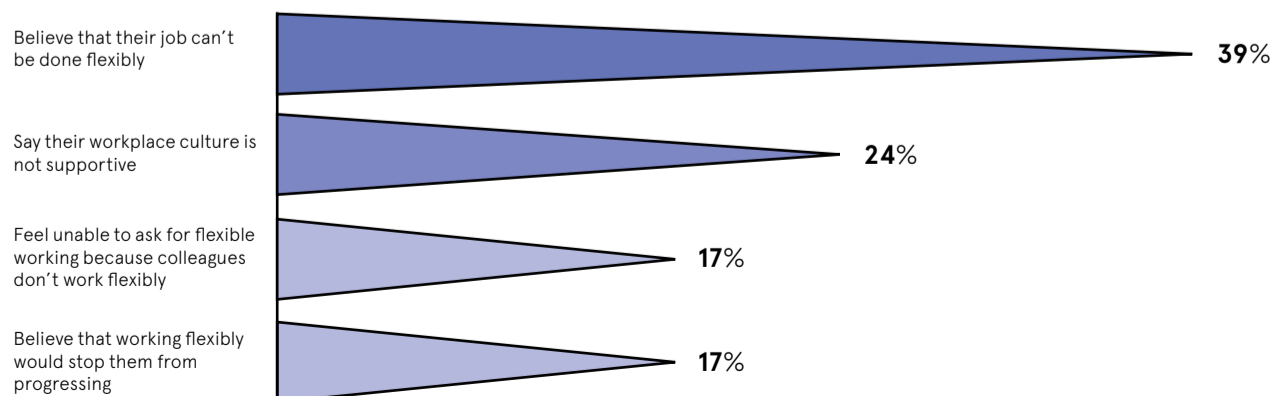
> **Offering flexibility as part of the compensation package can provide access to talent companies could not otherwise afford**

Employee productivity is automated and measured by customer satisfaction. "By doing this, we suddenly tapped into a very deep talent pool," says Mr Jackson.

Equally, changes can be small and subtle. In the manufacturing sector, which typically works to tight deadlines, Ruth Hancock, operating director for recruitment agency Michael Page, says upskilling employees, so they can pick up each other's roles if they are not on site, can "lessen the rigid 'this is my job and no one else does it' mentality and help end the clock-in-clock-out culture".

Finding ways to incorporate some adaptability into the workplace is the future of working, with the predominant millennial workforce demanding it the most. Therefore, those companies that embrace it the quickest will have access to the best talent. ◆

Views of people who don't work flexibly

Believe that their job can't be done flexibly — **39**%

Say their workplace culture is not supportive — **24**%

Feel unable to ask for flexible working because colleagues don't work flexibly — **17**%

Believe that working flexibly would stop them from progressing — **17**%

Timewise 2018

Boxing clever in the workplace

The way in which we work is changing on the back of a wave of mobile technologies and new developments, such as artificial intelligence, machine-learning and big data, which threaten to disrupt virtually every industry

Successful organisations are realising they need to move away from a traditional command-and-control model, towards one that allows individuals the freedom to be creative and innovative, so they can take advantage of new opportunities.

For many organisations, however, the way in which they work has changed relatively little over the past decade. "We've all grown up with Microsoft Office and email as the core way of collaborating and, even with the move to the cloud, most people still use these tools in the same way they have done for a decade or more, with email as the main form of collaboration," says Chris Baker, senior vice president and general manager, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA), at Box.

Now things are starting to change, as organisations seek best-of-breed platforms which enable staff to innovate and collaborate, and employees increasingly expect workplace technologies to operate in the same way as in their personal lives. "For the first time, people now have better tools at home than at work," says Julien Lesaicherre, director, EMEA, for Workplace by Facebook.

"We are living in a mobile-first world where there are more than 2.5 billion smartphones. The current generation entering the workplace will have discovered the internet through a mobile phone and this is changing the way they think about being connected."

The way people interact is also changing as a result of mobile devices, he adds, with video, pictures and emojis often used as a means of communication, and messaging replacing emails.

The world of work is starting to catch up and there are a number of technologies, which have emerged to help organisations respond to new trends. Workplace, for instance, was initially developed by Facebook six years ago as a means of enabling its own employees to collaborate internally and was rolled out to a wider audience in 2016, enabling employees to share information and collaborate in the same way they are used to in their personal lives.

"We noticed that people were starting to use Facebook groups for work rather than their company intranets," says Mr Lesaicherre. "Workplace has the best features of Facebook and Messenger, but is designed for the enterprise." Some 30,000 organisations use Workplace, he adds, including the likes of Heineken, GlaxoSmithKline, Wal-Mart and Deliveroo.

Cloud content management is also becoming an important part of the modern workplace. "The biggest problem a lot of companies have is content fragmentation, where they have different versions of documents on people's hard drives, old enterprise content management systems, shared drives in a datacentre or stored in the cloud," says Mr Baker. "It's very difficult to govern the data when it's fragmented in that way."

Technologies such as Box now mean all content can be stored in the same place, allowing it to be accessed from other applications, such as customer relationship management systems or workforce collaboration tools.

"The example I give is evidence going through the judicial supply chain with interviews and physical evidence, which needs to be shared with the Crown Prosecution Service, various agencies and appropriately shared with the defence. So it's a very complex supply chain where you absolutely must govern who can access or change it," adds Mr Baker.

London's Metropolitan Police already use the system for this purpose, but the same principles can be applied to almost any supply chain, such as surveyors working on plans for a building or insurance firms processing claims.

Importantly, this is capable of integrating with other cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) or machine-learning applications. "The big change in how people work

will be collaboration, not just with other people, but also with machines," says Mr Baker. "We're enabling customers to harness the power of the emerging machine-learning and AI engines out there, whether that's Cognitive Services from Microsoft, Watson from IBM or DeepMind from Google."

Organisations can encrypt the data stored in the cloud and retain the keys for this themselves, he adds, while Box's Zones technology also helps firms comply with data protection rules by ensuring it does not leave the jurisdiction in which it was created.

Now Box and Facebook have teamed up to ensure those operating through Workplace can also benefit from the enterprise content management capabilities of Box. "On Facebook you might discover the BBC and then jump off into that publication, and the model is very similar in the enterprise where people are collaborating in a group or project," says Anand Dass, global head of platform partnerships at Workplace by Facebook.

"People ask where the latest presentation is all the time, but with Workplace and Box this problem goes away. When the user clicks the file, it actually loads in Box, but within Workplace, so they don't leave the experience or have to switch apps."

An organisation already benefiting is the international charity Oxfam, which offered Workplace to its employees in a bid to encourage more collaboration and better communication, using secret groups rather than conventional email. The integration with Box means employees can now access documents and other items through multiple tools, ensuring all members of a project

are up to speed and can easily, and securely, access the information they require, from wherever they happen to be working, including through mobile devices. Some 71 per cent of employees use Workplace every month.

There are a number of benefits for businesses that successfully implement such collaboration and content management tools. "It can reduce the distance between the organisation and its employees because people adopt more openness and transparency, which significantly increases employee engagement and retention," says Mr Lesaicherre. "It also creates a more flexible and faster organisation when it comes to problem-solving, by giving everyone a voice."

Employees feel more comfortable at work as a result of using tools with which they are familiar from their personal lives. "If people enjoy using technology to collaborate more effectively with their peers and are more productive as a consequence, then they're going to be happier," Mr Baker concludes. "The whole work-life balance and enjoyment of work increases."

For more information on how Workplace and Box could benefit your business please visit www.box.com and www.facebook.com/workplace

> **"**
> If people enjoy using technology to collaborate more effectively with their peers and are more productive as a consequence, then they're going to be happier

Chris Baker
Senior vice president and general manager, EMEA, Box

Julien Lesaicherre
Director, EMEA, Workplace by Facebook

box

workplace
by facebook

RISE OF THE
CO-WORKERS

As the number of freelancers and remote workers rises, the shift toward co-working shows no signs of slowing down, with technology being a key enabler. Interaction with other workers has emerged as one of the most influential aspects of this trend, impacting workers' mental health and productivity
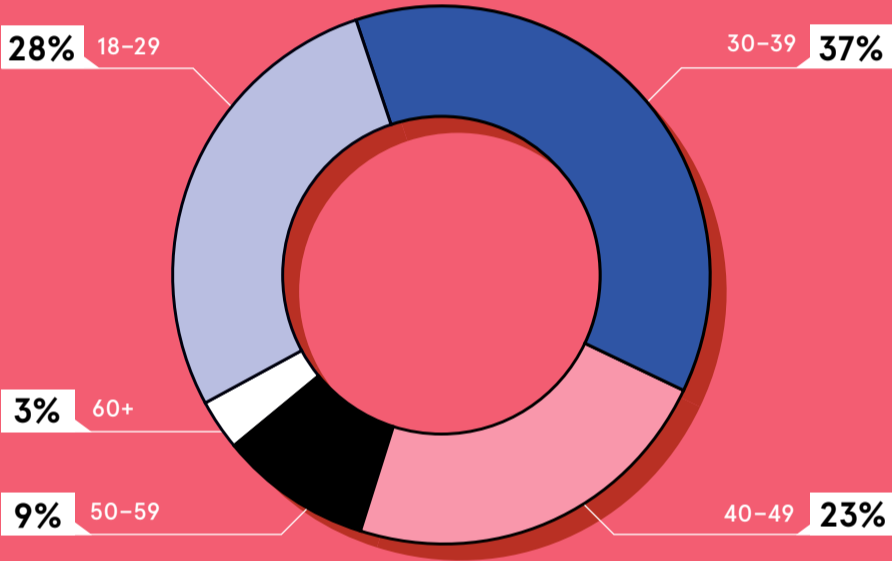
Percentage of people that report environmental stress, by workplace status

18%
Never co-worked

14%
Former co-workers

11%
Co-workers
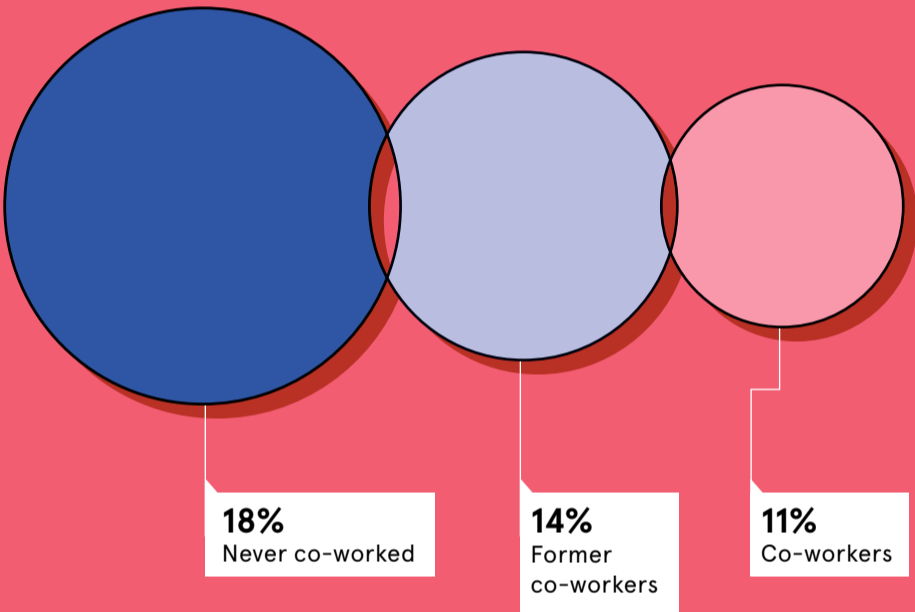
Deskmag 2017

Co-working space usage and habits vary among generations
Age demographics of co-working members

28% 18–29

37% 30–39

23% 40–49

9% 50–59

3% 60+

Deskmag 2018

Co-workers value a social and collaborative atmosphere
Top ten reasons why co-working spaces were chosen worldwide

Instant Group 2018

1. Wireless connectivity
2. Wireless security
3. Printing compatibility
4. VPN compatibility
5. Printing security
6. Audio conferencing capabilities
7. Display (monitor and screens) capabilities
8. Video conferencing capabilities
9. On-site technology support
10. Display (monitor and screens) options

100% 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10%
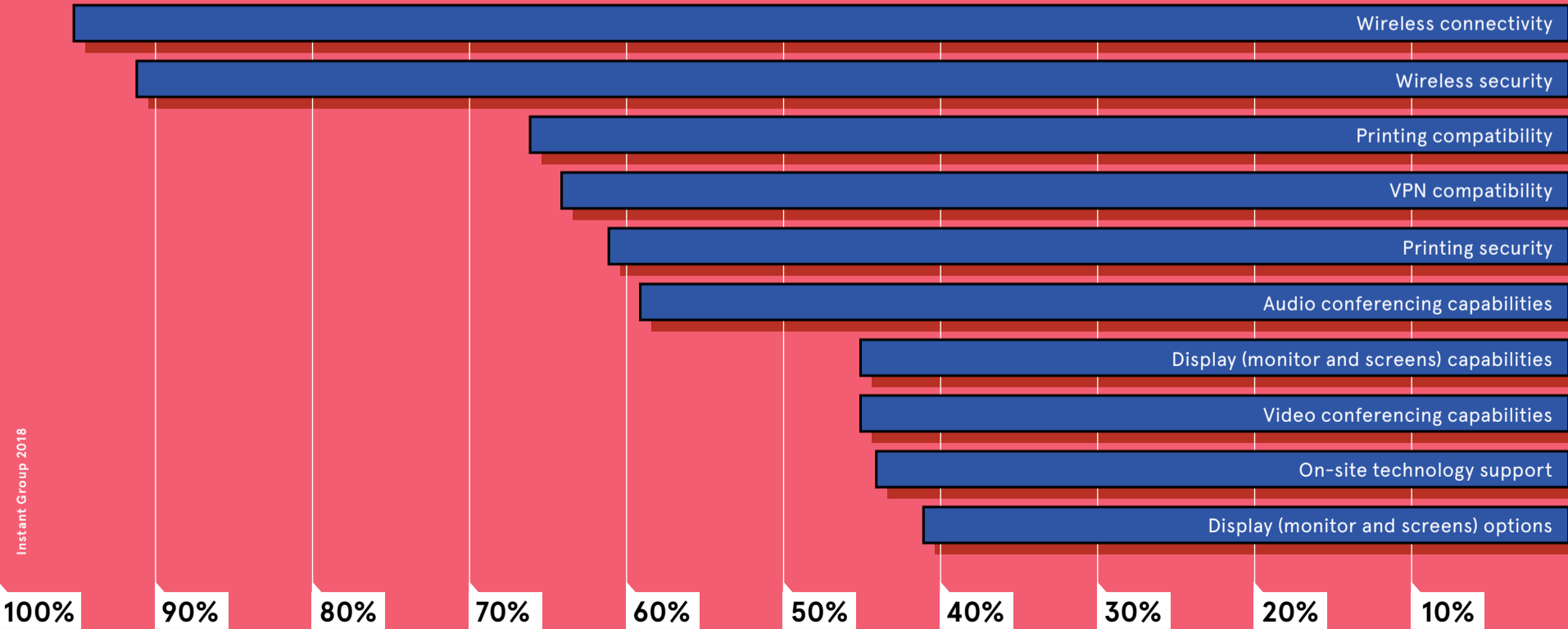
Co-working spaces look set to increase further

Expansion plans of co-working spaces in 2018

37%
Yes, we plan to open another location/other locations

33%
No plans to expand

27%
Yes, with more desks and space in our current location

8%
Yes, we plan to move to another, larger location
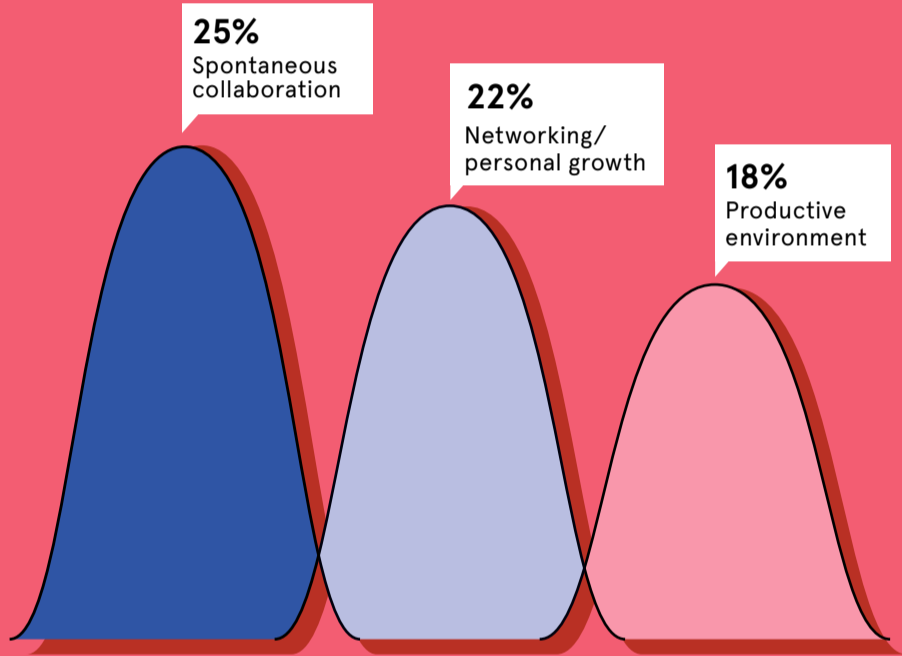
7%
Other

Deskmag 2017

10%
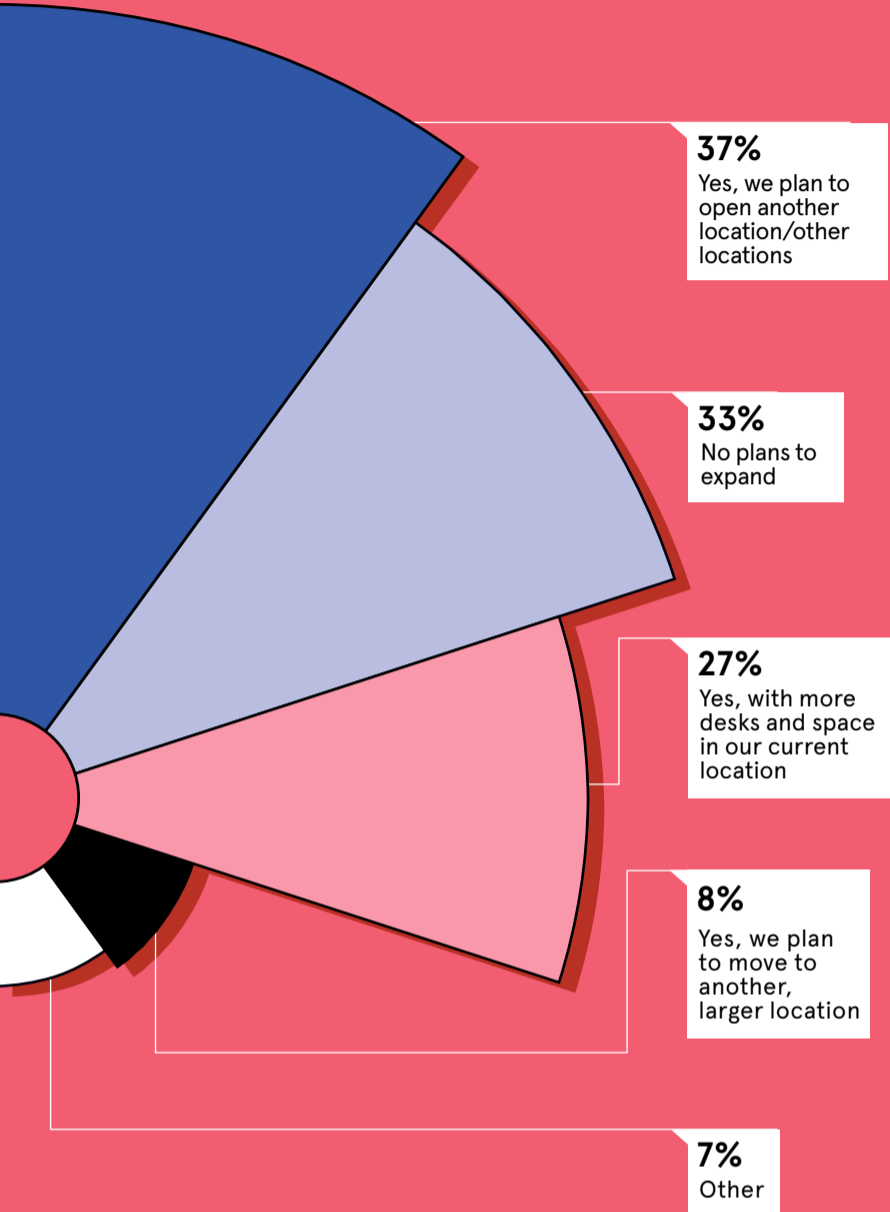
increase in flexible office centres across the UK in the last year

71%

of co-working and flex-space users report that their workspaces positively affect the ways they engage in their work
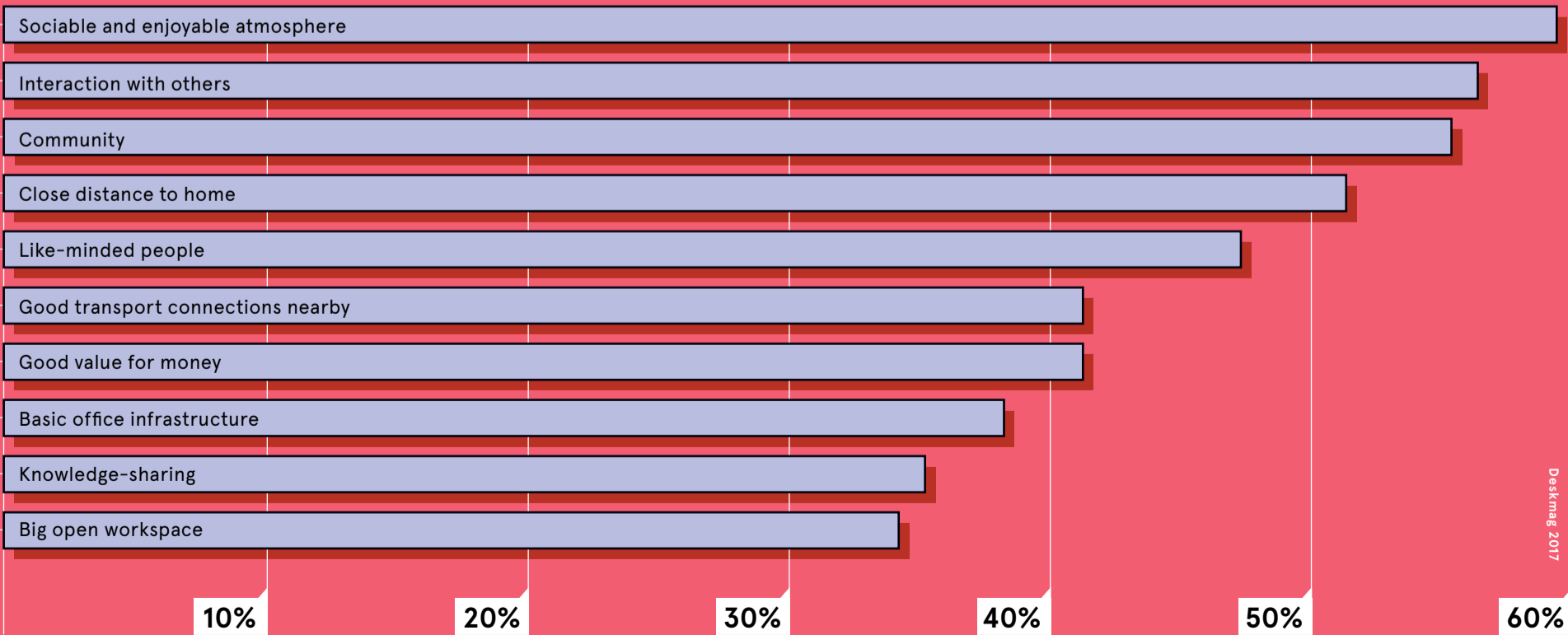
Instant Group 2018

Most valued co-working space traits

25%
Spontaneous collaboration

22%
Networking/ personal growth

18%
Productive environment

Clutch 2018

Technology is essential to co-working

Top ten most important technological features for co-working-space users

1 Sociable and enjoyable atmosphere
2 Interaction with others
3 Community
4 Close distance to home
5 Like-minded people
6 Good transport connections nearby
7 Good value for money
8 Basic office infrastructure
9 Knowledge-sharing
10 Big open workspace

10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%

Deskmag 2017

PRODUCTIVITY

Smart work can solve the puzzle

Addressing the UK's productivity puzzle is a matter of improving management by engaging, empowering and motivating employees

VIRGINIA MATTHEWS

Productivity is a word more resonant of the steam age than today's service-based economy, yet as a key driver of financial success, the measurement of output per employee continues to loom large in the business lexicon.

While there can be no doubt that the UK works harder than its competitors in terms of sheer hours, whether the country works smart enough is quite another matter.

So says Tony Danker, chief executive of Be the Business, set up by Theresa May's government at the end of 2017 to boost a historically disappointing national productivity recor

Mr Danker believes that the relationship we have with our work and therefore our willingness to go the extra mile for our employer is far more complex than mere numbers would suggest.

"Productivity is a word used by economists and outside the manufacturing arena, it really doesn't have any emotional resonance for people," he says. "The real issue behind the UK's poor productivity record is lack of engagement and once we accept that fact, a host of contributory factors can be brought into play."

Mr Danker says that when an employee complains about it being "difficult to get things done around here", whether through lack of personal autonomy or slow decision-making further up the chain, they are "simply expressing the very human desire to get more value and meaning" out of work.

"Wanting to achieve more in your job is the same thing as being more productive, even though it is expressed in a direct, very human way," he adds.

A rare but valuable insight into how employees, rather than bosses, view productivity is provided by the payroll and human resources services outsourcer ADP, which provides an annual barometer of coalface attitudes to a wide range of pressing employment issues.

The firm's *Workforce View in Europe 2018* report, involving a sample of some 10,000 staff based in key European markets, found that a fifth of respondents say they only reach maximum productivity at work "some of the time".

One in ten staff are "rarely or never" able to be at their most productive, with the UK, followed by Germany, appearing to have the biggest problems in this area.

Across all markets, the three biggest barriers to greater productivity, says the study, are bad management, named by 19 per cent of respondents, inefficient systems and processes (18 per cent), and slow, inefficient technology (15 per cent). Too many meetings and internal emails were viewed as more minor issues.

Whether it's over-management twinned with command and control or simply the proliferation of chiefs at a time when Indians may be thin on the ground, poor or incompetent leadership then has a direct link to static productivity.

For firms which may have already rooted out unsuitable managers, understanding why one employee may feel fully engaged at work and another may feel indifferent to the fate of the business requires a nuanced approach, says Jeff Phipps, ADP's managing director for the UK and Ireland.

"Good managers will innately understand their people and be aware that while person A needs additional responsibility to become more productive, person B may require a lessening of the load," he says.

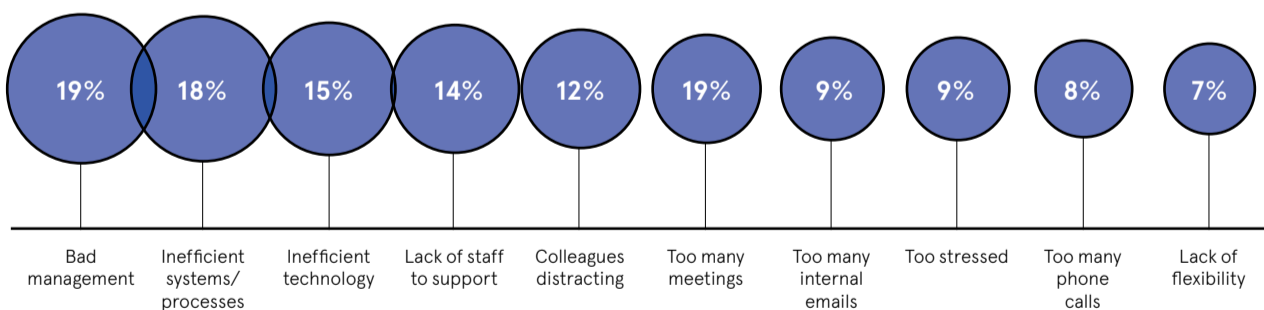"What is unhelpful is the belief by some managers that zero-growth productivity can be managed by a single, blanket tactic, even though each of us has individual desires and motivations."

With the ADP study finding that some 47 per cent of European staff are driven by pay and remuneration, can fatter wage packets alone solve the productivity puzzle?

No, says Ben Willmott, head of public policy at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. "A fair reward for what you do is important to executive and factory floor alike, but throwing money at the problem of low productivity won't

Biggest barriers to productivity
Survey of 10,000 employees across Europe

19%	18%	15%	14%	12%	19%	9%	9%	8%	7%
Bad management	Inefficient systems/ processes	Inefficient technology	Lack of staff to support	Colleagues distracting	Too many meetings	Too many internal emails	Too stressed	Too many phone calls	Lack of flexibility

ADP 2018

> **By pursuing progressive people management policies that allow staff to thrive, engagement and productivity tend to rise**

be sustainable if there are other underlying issues," he says.

"By giving people a pay rise, but also allowing them to be put under extreme amounts of stress, for example, any uplift in output will prove temporary."

Mr Willmott argues that having the right skills for the job, together with being offered ongoing professional development, can play an important role in boosting individual performance, as can flexibility when it comes to a tussle between work and caring responsibilities.

If a line manager fails to motivate their staff, or actively demotivates them via favouritism or bullying, the impact on productivity can be profound, he warns.

"All the evidence shows that by pursuing progressive people management policies that allow staff to thrive, engagement and productivity tend to rise."

For Mr Phipps, a good manager takes pains to smooth the path for the team. "While managers

shouldn't expect the term productivity ever to become a warm and fluffy concept, there are obvious things they can do to help people feel more engaged without ever using the 'p' word," he says.

"Every job has its frustrations and obstacles, and it's up to a good manager to see what they are and help overcome them, rather than pretend they aren't there or attempt to blame the workforce for them."

Naturally able managers, he believes, are determined to make the most of the team they already have, rather than assume they can do better by hiring replacements. They also take time to demonstrate their recognition that every member of staff makes a valuable contribution.

Whether it's excessive corporate pay in the face of wage freezes or oppressive micro-management, Mr Danker agrees that when it comes to poor productivity, the ultimate responsibility must rest with an organisation's leadership.

"Having visited and talked with hundreds of businesses about the steps to greater productivity, I can report that highly engaged leaders lead directly to more productive staff, but only if they recognise it's the workers, not the managers, who have the solutions to their problems," he concludes.

"By giving staff the space and time to explain which aspects of the organisation's processes and procedures most need to change, and by then acting on their suggestions without delay, you are highly likely to see a rise in both engagement and productivity." ◆

Case study
Cumbria Crystal

Lancaster-based Cumbria Crystal, the country's sole remaining handmade producer, set itself a target of increasing productivity by 1 per cent a month, backing its pledge with a targets-based staff bonus scheme. In the two years since then, turnover has doubled and gross margins have tripled.

"When I came into the business three years ago, rising fuel costs and lack of access to raw materials had almost brought it to its knees," says managing director Chris Blade. "But I knew that threats about closure would damage morale, rather than provide the productivity gains we needed."

With the firm's 22 artisan staff actively encouraged to suggest new ways to make savings, one such proposal – new doors for the glass furnaces – has saved more than £30,000 a year in energy bills.

"I've found that decisive leadership and clear communication are vital, but so too is empowering your people," Mr Blade says.

Incentivising staff to take on additional responsibilities has, he adds, already paid dividends and, although maintaining the firm's competitive advantage "requires work on many fronts", productivity increases are "more achievable than many people think".

"It's been incremental improvements, rather than giant leaps and bounds, but with workers sometimes being conservative, overcoming resistance to change is always a challenge," he concedes.

Feel comfortable with looking after staff

Klaus Vedfelt/Getty Images

The wellbeing of staff is a win-win for employees and employers as the spotlight focuses on mental health in the workplace and its impact on the bottom line

OLIVER BALCH

Wellness is suddenly everywhere in the business world. Health professionals warn about it, employers talk about it and workers worry about it.

The subject's sudden topicality is not without good cause. The costs to business of ill-health and stress, especially in terms of absenteeism and low productivity, are huge. Recent research in the international retail sector, for example, calculates that one in every ten hours of working time are lost to unplanned time off.

"For employers, it is important to raise the priority given to mental health and wellbeing to move towards a culture which proactively manages mental wellbeing," according to the professional

76%

of line managers believe employee wellbeing is their responsibility

Deloitte 2017

services firm Deloitte, in a major report on the subject.

Jump forward a decade, and cultural, demographic and technological changes are set to make wellbeing at work even more important. So what is in store for employers?

Richard Hardyment, author of *The Wellbeing Purpose: How Companies Can Make Life Better,* says the near future holds both opportunities and challenges.

He points to "incredibly exciting" prospects held out by emerging technologies. The days are fast arriving, for example, when artificial intelligence will identify workers at risk of going off sick due to stress or flu. Smarter psychological profiling also promises the possibility of matching new recruits to jobs that fit their wellness needs.

But too much knowledge of employee wellness could be a bad thing, Mr Hardyment warns. "A dystopian future is one of interfering bosses who use wellness data to disadvantage or discriminate," he says. "Management have a responsibility to ensure that both employee and employer benefit."

Changes are afoot around how we define the parameters of wellness. At present, the subject sits firmly with human resources. The logic is sound: our working environments affect our physical and mental wellbeing; HR is responsible

for framing those environments, therefore it is HR's responsibility to look after our wellness.

But what if employee wellness derives not just from what tasks we do and how we do them, but who we are and what drives us at work? With younger generations increasingly preoccupied with their individual identities and purpose, companies need to accommodate this shift, says Mr Hardyment.

"Today, everyone asks staff about job satisfaction. In the future, we could see organisations measuring life satisfaction. Making staff feel genuinely better about life requires creating jobs with meaning, flexibility and autonomy," he says.

The future won't all be about dramatic change, however. For many issues on the wellness agenda, change will occur at a more incremental pace.

Take physical health. Companies are not about to ditch their fitness programmes or healthy lifestyle initiatives. But as public health specialists advocate more joined-up, holistic care and prevention-led healthcare, then the private sector is likely to follow suit.

"We know that over 70 per cent of diseases are preventable. Today's forward-thinking companies are offering allied health solutions at onsite clinics for all types of problems, including prevention," says

> ## Management have a responsibility to ensure that both employee and employer benefit

Anne Marie Kirby, chief executive of Canada-based CoreHealth Technologies, a corporate wellness programme provider.

The same is true for flexible working. Seven in ten professionals now work outside the office at least one day a week, according to recent research by the telecommuting service provider IWG. In our increasingly digital age, fewer and fewer of us will have to trek into work each day.

With a rise in flexible working also comes a probable rise in flexible contracts. According to Ankur Shah, chief executive of Mahabis, an ecommerce footwear company, this could spell danger of burn-out culture spreading to the startup and freelance economy.

"Employers shouldn't use freelancers as an excuse to incorporate bad working practices. In fact, going forward, it's going to be as

important for them to look out for the flexible working needs of their independent contractors as those of their own employees," says Mr Shah, whose firm operates a four-day working week.

Another wellbeing issue that is set to spike in the future is the number of employees with caring responsibilities outside work. Currently, around one in seven UK citizens are juggling work with caring for a family member or friend. As the population ages, so will this phenomenon of employee-carers.

"There is simply no denying that the issue of care is going to have major implications for businesses of all sizes," says Simi Dubb, director of diversity and inclusion at energy company Centrica.

In Centrica's case, Ms Dubb anticipates as many as 60 per cent of the company's 30,000 staff becoming carers at some point in their working lives. Among the options the company currently offers its employee-carers is a chance to go part time, take a career break or work variable hours.

According to Ms Dubb, not nearly enough companies are thinking ahead. Even at today's levels of care responsibilities, UK businesses could save £4.8 billion every year by better supporting staff carers and thereby avoiding unplanned absences, she argues.
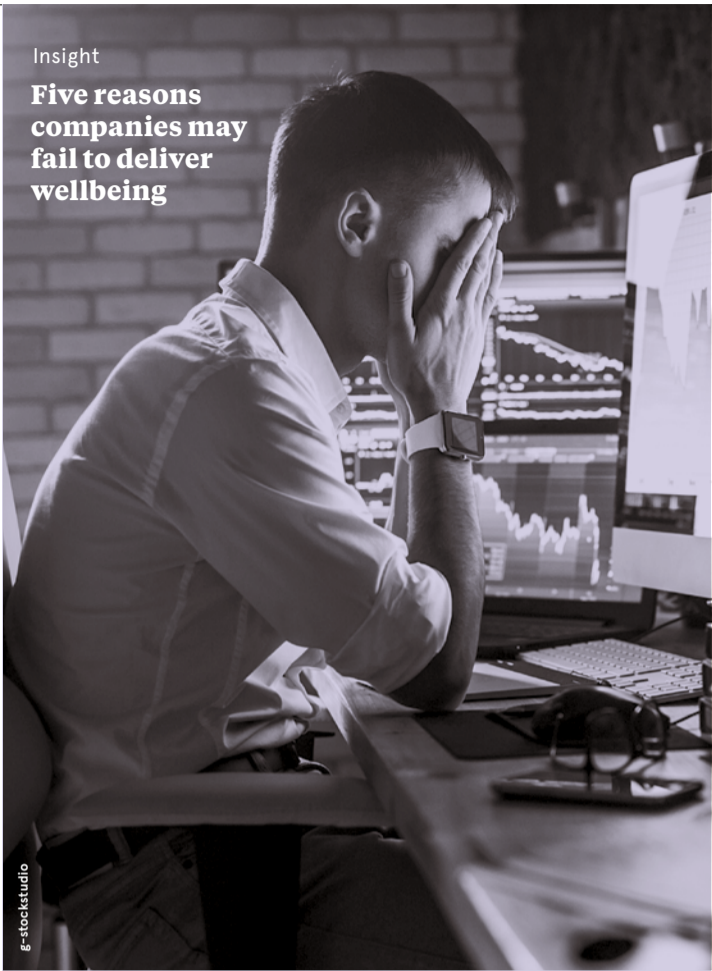
Insight

Five reasons companies may fail to deliver wellbeing

g-stockstudio

Anne Marie Kirby, chief executive of CoreHealth Technologies, warns of the most common failures

01 Employee health and wellbeing of employees are not part of corporate strategy: in the same way all manufacturing companies have a maintenance programme for their equipment, all companies should have a prevention or human-maintenance programme for their employees.

02 Leaders don't "walk the talk" on healthy living: business leaders should be the ones setting the pace. If they are not outwardly demonstrating healthy living, a wellness programme will inevitably appear to be a farce.

03 Ineffective programme communication: even when the level of communication is sufficient, the message and meaning around wellness programmes is lacking. Ideally messaging would be personalised; using psychographics is one way to achieve this.

04 Poor programme design: bad design manifests itself in many ways, from attracting the wrong people – those already living well – through to providing irrelevant or boring content. It is important to personalise wellbeing programmes so they are relevant, fun and easy to understand for the individual employee.

05 Impatience: expecting results too soon is often the nail in the coffin for many wellness programmes. No workforce is the same; it takes time to design and implement the right programme for your particular company.

"Only a third of companies currently have these sorts of policies for carers in place, despite the fact it is actually something that benefits our business enormously," she says.

Perhaps the biggest change over the next decade or so is the expectation of employees. The workers of tomorrow will increasingly look to their employers for personalised solutions to meet their physical or mental health needs, whether that means access to a life coach, a customised dietary programme or an on-site meditation centre.

Kelly Panagiotidou, wellbeing expert at Reborn, a new London-based digital consultancy, says corporate wellness programmes will no longer be seen as a benefit. She predicts: "In the future, such programmes will be viewed as an integral part of the value proposition offer to employees." ◆

Who's responsible for the skills

Rapid technological
change, with its
impact on jobs,
requires a constantly
renewed workforce
through retraining

sol/Unsplash

NICK EASEN

From switchboard operator to film projectionist, three industrial revolutions down and we've already seen many jobs wiped from the face of the Earth. Emerging technology is rapidly dispensing P45s, pink slips or termination letters to the next round of workers.

More than half the global labour force will need to reinvent how they earn a living in the next five years, according to the World Economic Forum. Millions of roles will be lost, equally many more will be created.

As the job landscape evolves, so does uncertainty over the expertise that will be needed. "It's becoming increasingly difficult to predict the skills which organisations will need in the future, so reskilling has become more important," says Lizzie Crowley, skills adviser at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

So who's responsible for the skills reboot? Government, individuals, industry and businesses all must play a part in a successful transition into new, yet to be developed, jobs. Our workplace ecosystem will also need to pull together to make employment function properly in the rapidly digitalised global economy.

"Future employment is one of the hottest topics of our time," says Thomas Frey, senior futurist and executive director of the DaVinci Institute. Here's a look at who's accountable.

WORKERS

Individuals must acknowledge the inevitable changes that are happening. In the 21st century, the responsibility is shifting to workers, more than any other group. Personal employability will be a key driver in the future.

"We are entering a new paradigm where people are now in charge of their own employability; that's a huge disruption," says Jean-Marc Tassetto, ex-head of Google France and co-founder of Coorpacademy. "We used to think employers, unions or government were in charge of reskilling. It no longer works that way."

Employment in the age of rapid automation relies heavily on continual skills development, especially as more traditional roles become augmented by new tech. "The individual has to be willing to take the first step and embrace change. If workers want to future-proof their careers, they need to evolve," says Chris Gray, brand leader at Manpower UK.

It will be less about what people already know and more about their capacity to learn, be agile and evolve, redefining their roles in the process. Jobs will be defined by what value workers offer up and produce for a company, rather than job titles and backsides on seats.

"The new skills required to embrace these rapidly emerging technologies is creating a widespread talent shortage already," says Mr Gray. This is where lifelong learning becomes crucial, so workers can easily adapt to subsequent waves of disruption.

"By 2030, the largest company on the internet, larger than Google, Apple and Facebook, will be an education-based company that we haven't heard of yet. Education remains the largest online opportunity that nobody has cracked the code for yet," says the DaVinci Institute's Mr Frey.

EMPLOYERS

Here is a dire warning for business: if you don't invest in the right environment for lifelong learning and upskilling, employees will go elsewhere. With a bottleneck in the talent pipeline, attracting and retaining the best people will be crucial.

"We are entering an unusually creative period of human history. Those who embrace this kind of change will prosper and companies that study and embrace this fluid 'jobscape' will build flourishing enterprises in the years ahead," says Mr Frey.

NESA by Makers/Unsplash

It doesn't help that each new deployment of tech, each shift in business down the digitised pathway, creates a new requirement for retraining. "The accelerated pace of innovation and diffusion of technologies will constantly require new skills," says Olga Strietska-Ilina, senior skills and employability specialist at the International Labour Organization.

Businesses will need greater foresight and to invest heavily, realising that pumping money into training today will drive a return on investment tomorrow. "Employers must prepare themselves for changes in the world of work by putting learning and development opportunities right at the heart of their organisation," says the CIPD's Ms Crowley.

It is certainly the time of the CLO, the chief learning officer, to shine in every organisation. "The key change is that training now becomes strategic. It's also about the impact training will have on the overall competitiveness of an organisation, which was not the case a few years ago," says Mr Tassetto at Coorpacademy.

reboot?

Joakim Honkasalo/Unsplash

03
GOVERNMENT

Those in power have a vital role to play in the coming years. Governments can set the tone for upskilling workforces and moving whole economies up the value chain. France, for example, supports learning through a personal training account, which works like healthcare provision. This entitlement allows people to upskill; language and IT courses have been the most popular. This scheme guarantees time away from work to reskill.

Sean Pollock/Unsplash

04
INDUSTRY

Industry bodies, along with education establishments, also have to step up to the mark when it comes to skilling the next generation of workers. "There needs to be a combined effort to provide industry-specific guidance on the skills that will be in most demand, so workers can decide on the options that are right for them," says Manpower UK's Mr Gray.

In each sector of the economy and in academia, establishments and organisations should be adjusting how they teach the future workforce, so they offer up skills that are relevant to the digitalised era. The education system needs to be fit for purpose.

This will also involve reorganising systems of study and training, so

Governments beware: it doesn't help that the fourth industrial revolution, with its focus on emerging technologies, has the potential to peripheralise low-skilled and unskilled work. This is where policies and law-making can really make a difference.

"There's little evidence of any workforce planning by the UK government for future impact. There is definitely a problem with precarious contract work, where organisations transfer the risks of employment, careers and skills development away from the core and on to workers," says Professor Adrian Madden from the University of Greenwich's Business School.

Certainly, public funding will be crucial. Reskilling and upskilling needs sizeable investment from government, including tax breaks, co-financing with private organisations, grants and incentives, as well as a functioning system of skills recognition in the digitalised era.

"Specific training measures will have to address all this, as well as disadvantaged groups. If this does not happen, the risk is there will be a new digital divide and growing inequality. Access to newly created technology-oriented jobs largely depends on access to education and reskilling opportunities," says the International Labour Organization's Ms Strietska-Ilina.

they are more receptive to learning throughout life and funded accordingly. Front-loading young people with a single lifetime qualification will no longer be effective.

"The average person entering the workforce in 2030 will have to plan to reboot their skills eight to ten times throughout their working life. Reskilling needs to become super-efficient," says Mr Frey.

"The skills that will be most in demand in the future will also be some of the hardest to train: resilience, resourcefulness and flexibility. In addition, having a solid understanding of how to better manage the encroaching demands of our online existence with skills such as distraction and tech management, relationship management, opportunity management, and just staying relevant."

There's a lot of work to be done. ◆

Freelancers add new dimension to UK economy

A London-based company is accelerating the future of work via a platform built to respond to the needs of both organisations and freelancers

Freelancers are becoming an increasingly indispensable part of the UK economy. According to the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed, this burgeoning segment made up 41 per cent of the UK's five million self-employed workers and contributed £119 billion to the economy in 2016, and the numbers are growing fast.

Previously seen as the workers that businesses would turn to as a stop-gap rather than for specialism, the internet has transformed attitudes towards freelancers. Easy accessibility to business-standard technology has driven workers to adopt this path as a vocational choice, while employers now often turn to them first.

"Companies want them for their expertise, but also their ability and experience to manage themselves in a project," says Shib Mathew, chief executive and founder of YunoJuno, a platform that connects experienced freelancers with clients. "No two projects are ever the same so choosing the most appropriate specialist based on skill, experience and organisational fit, without the operational costs of hiring permanent staff, makes much more sense.

"The internet provided such an incredible infrastructure to make a freelance career a reality, while we've also seen huge behavioural change in the workforce and acceptance of not needing to 'go permanent' to have a successful career. On the flip side, companies can rapidly scale their team very easily and choose the most appropriate skillset for each project."

While freelancing has increasingly made sense for both workers and employers, historically they have struggled to find each other. Freelancers don't have the time to develop extensive connections so find

it difficult to find new clients, while companies often lack the sourcing mechanisms for fresh talent and skills.

For a long while, the traditional process of engagement between both sides was opaque. Neither the freelancer nor the client had a strong handle over the negotiation process and there were no clear processes for managing freelancers inside an organisation. Freelancers also often dislike the more administrative side of being self-employed.

"A creative freelancer may take that vocational choice to enhance their craft and doesn't necessarily want to run a business and chase invoices," says Mr Mathew. "Also, on your own, you can feel unsupported and miss having a larger body looking out for you. It doesn't make it easier when you're under pressure to deliver work or run a business."

YunoJuno was founded in 2012 by people who had experienced these exact frustrations, both as freelancers and as companies looking to work with them. The online platform and community removes the opacity from the process and facilitates new connections directly, while enabling efficient management of a client's entire freelance workforce.

By sourcing and managing freelancers through the YunoJuno platform, clients can not only save costs and engage more closely with this community, but also gain more visibility through the real-time data insights the company provides. Meanwhile, freelancers can get on with excelling in their craft because the platform removes the headaches around the administrative aspects of running their business.

"There are no better people to solve a problem than those who encountered it themselves," says Mr Mathew.

Shib Mathew
Chief executive and founder
YunoJuno

41%

of the UK's five million self-employed workers are classified as freelancers

£119bn

freelance contribution to the UK economy in 2016

"We've responded to those problems in a very different way based on our experiences and as a result have doubled our business every year since we started. Nobody else is approaching the freelance economy like YunoJuno.

"By having all your freelancers in one place and sourced from a curated community of London's best freelancer talent, you regain control of what is often the second-largest cost centre within an organisation behind permanent staff payroll. You can save time and money and you're not having to worry about where your freelancers are coming from or if they are being supported. This direct and transparent access has changed the world of freelancing for both client and freelancer."

For more information please visit
yunojuno.com

YunoJuno

Learning to work in world of change

In an uncertain world, the only certainty is change, so young people should be taught how to adapt in a constantly changing working environment

OLIVER PICKUP

By 2030, robots, artificial intelligence, automatons, call them what you like, will have displaced up to 800 million workers or one fifth of the global workforce, according to McKinsey Global Institute. The inexorable and exponential march of technology will create new jobs, experts assure us, but what are those roles likely to be and how should we prepare?

The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2018*, estimates that by 2022 "no less than 54 per cent of all employees will require significant re and upskilling". The report adds: "Human skills, such as creativity, originality and initiative, critical thinking, persuasion and negotiation will retain or increase their value, as will attention to detail, resilience, flexibility and complex problem-solving."

How about in 2032, or 2042, and beyond? What tools should we be arming today's youngsters with so they stand a chance of surviving the world or work in one or two decades from now? "Many pedagogical experts argue that schools should switch to teaching 'the four Cs' – critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity," Yuval Noah Harari writes in his new book, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*.

In a chapter entitled *Education: Change is the only constant*, Professor Harari continues: "More broadly, schools should downplay technical skills and emphasise general-purpose life skills. Most important of all will be the ability to deal with change, to learn new things and to preserve your mental balance in unfamiliar situations."

Lord Jim Knight, chief education adviser at Tes Global, a network for educational professionals, strongly believes traditional curriculums need to be overhauled in the UK. Moreover, young people should be allowed to play for as many years as possible because they will learn and develop skills that will be essential to flourish at work and home in the coming years.

"In Scandinavia, children attend school from the age of six and in many ways I think that is the sensible thing to do," he says. "In Britain, we have a parental expectation for our children to be taught formal skills, such as reading and writing, earlier."

Lord Knight contends that many secondary schools "are stuck in formal pedagogies" and must introduce more play-based learning, through projects. He asks: "Why wouldn't we want kids to learn by building stuff, making things and being assessed by exhibiting work, rather than doing everything through formal desk-based exams?"

Insight
Learning through play

It is not just children who learn through play; adults do as well. In this period of seismic workforce transformation, wrought by technology's unstoppable progression, retraining and mastering new skills will be imperative – and not just in the future, but now.

Indeed, data literacy is fast becoming a desirable facet for members of the C-suite and business leaders of the near future. "Half of the world's data to ever exist was created in 2017 and only 0.8 per cent of it was analysed," says Amanda Clack, head of strategic consulting at real estate group CBRE. "The potential is huge. We are only limited by our imagination."

The Open Data Institute (ODI) has created an educational strategy board game to help people, old and young, better understand data and open their minds to data-driven innovation. *Datopolis* is the brainchild of ODI chief executive Jeni Tennison.

"We wanted to build a game about data and data infrastructure, and help people understand their roles in making the most of data," she says. "Players need to work together in *Datopolis* – negotiate whether to open or close data – to achieve common and individual goals. In addition to learning about data, players are encouraged to collaborate and communicate – both essential skills for the future. It's great fun, too."

Ms Tennison spent 18 months fine-tuning the game with her team, which included the ODI's ex-head of learning Simon Bullmore, before launching in 2016. Mr Bullmore has since founded a data literacy and digital marketing organisation, Mission Drive, and regularly uses *Datopolis* as a learning tool.

"Whether it's travelling to work or analysing sales performance, we rely on data to get answers to complex problems and make better decisions," he says. "To thrive in an increasingly data-driven world, leaders need to understand important concepts like data strategy and data infrastructure. But these concepts are abstract, difficult to grasp, let alone take action on.

"*Datopolis* gives people the experience of creating economic, social and environmental value with data. Participants of all ages and all levels of experience tell us it has helped them understand data concepts they had previously had difficulty grasping, for example that data infrastructure is about the data itself, not the cables and computers that connect data together."
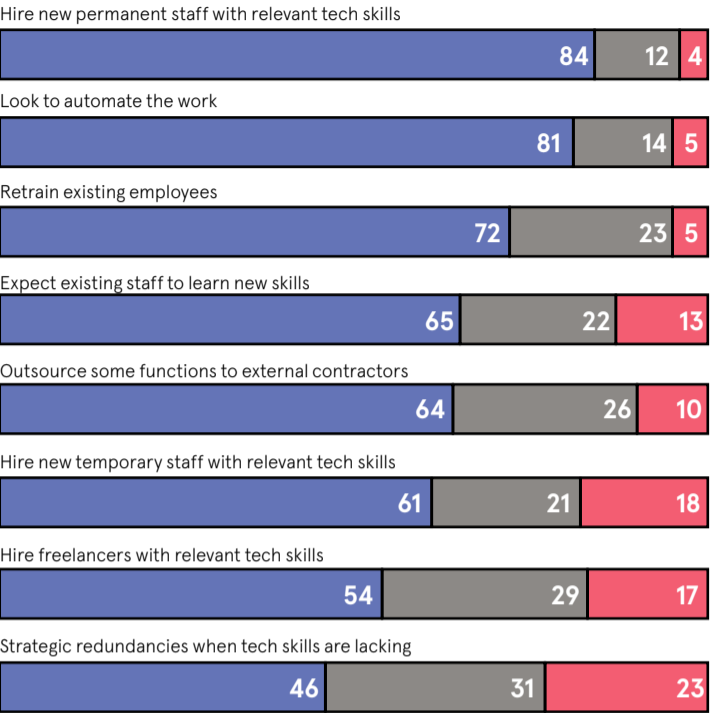
Stressing how learning through play is effective for everyone, he concludes: "Research shows that, at any age, games do a better job of activating the cognitive functions that help us learn than standard approaches to training. This gets people engaged and ready to learn, which in itself is valuable, but for data literacy it's essential, because getting value from data requires people to think and do things differently."

Expected strategies to address shifting skills needs

Likelihood of the following strategies, by proportion of companies (%)

█ Likely █ Equally likely █ Unlikely

Hire new permanent staff with relevant tech skills
| 84 | 12 | 4 |

Look to automate the work
| 81 | 14 | 5 |

Retrain existing employees
| 72 | 23 | 5 |

Expect existing staff to learn new skills
| 65 | 22 | 13 |

Outsource some functions to external contractors
| 64 | 26 | 10 |

Hire new temporary staff with relevant tech skills
| 61 | 21 | 18 |

Hire freelancers with relevant tech skills
| 54 | 29 | 17 |

Strategic redundancies when tech skills are lacking
| 46 | 31 | 23 |

World Economic Forum 2018

> **It's important to equip young people with foundational skills that will stand them in good stead regardless of what jobs they end up taking on**

Attitudes are changing, albeit slowly. Lord Knight welcomes the opening of two free schools, in Bournemouth and west London, that are the brainchild of Ian Livingstone, co-founder of Games Workshop and the inventor of *Lara Croft* of the video game franchise *Tomb Raider*. They offer "a groundbreaking curriculum relevant to the digital age," according to the Livingstone Academy's website. Elsewhere, Gever Tulley's Brightworks in San Francisco is a school that "reimagines education by taking the best practices from both early-childhood education and hands-on, project-based experiential learning".

"We can't know for sure what skills children will require for the future, but what we can be confident of is that change, and thus the need to adapt, will be an ongoing and increasingly important aspect," says Peter Twining, professor of education futures at The Open University.

"Flexibility and resilience, and learning to learn will all be critical. Therefore, play – an important element of how humans, and other mammals, learn – is vital. Digital technology can be a powerful tool to support children's learning if used appropriately, too."

The amount of device screen time youngsters should be afforded for learning is hotly debated, however.

"In Silicon Valley, there are boutique schools attended by the princes and princesses of tech giants that keep the children away from anything digital," says Sir Nigel Shadbolt, co-founder and chairman of the Open Data Institute.

Efforts have been made to gamify learning for digital natives in recent times, with varying degrees of success, but one standout triumph is Raspberry Pi Foundation, which has developed a series of small, single-board computers to promote teaching of basic computer science, as well as innovation in schools and developing countries.

Eben Upton, Raspberry Pi's Cambridge University-educated chief executive, believes introducing children to tech, ideally through play, is critical to their future success. "You don't make a concert pianist by sitting someone down at a piano at the age of 18," he argues. "It's important to reach children as early as possible, while their brains are still flexible.

"At school, the emphasis needs to be on foundational skills: numeracy, literacy and critical thinking. We advocate for computing education in part because it's a great way for students to gain those foundational skills in an enjoyable, relevant way.

"It's absolutely not about trying to guess which programming language is going to be required by employers in 20 years' time and drilling children in that; cross-training to specific technology is down to employers and employees.

"It's a truism that in the future workers will have to be prepared for roles to change radically over the course of a career. The days of a job for life, and of a single programme of education and training that fits you for that job, are gone. This is why it's important to equip young people with foundational skills that will stand them in good stead regardless of what jobs they end up taking on." ◆

GIG ECONOMY

Making a living is a changing gig
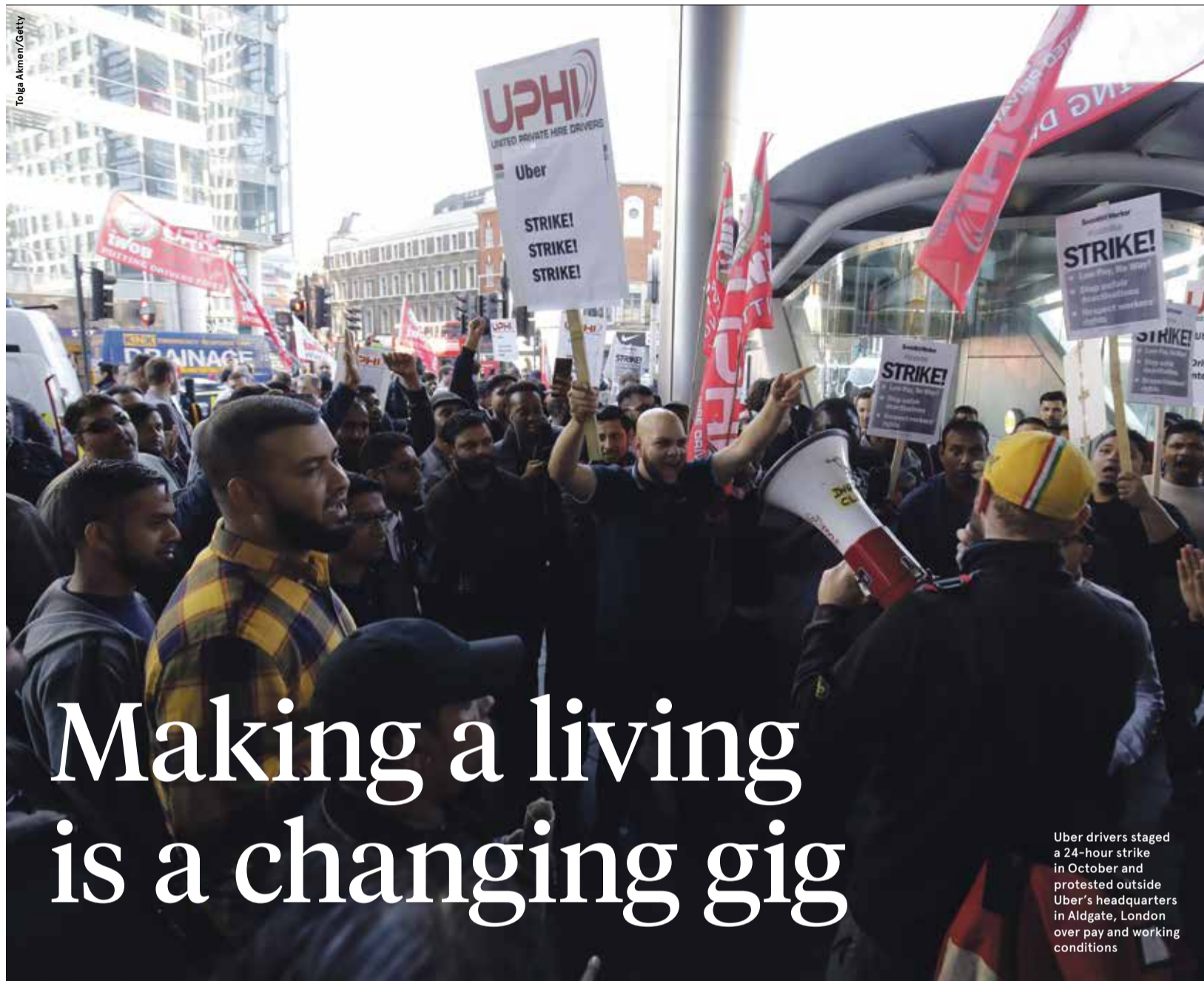
Uber drivers staged a 24-hour strike in October and protested outside Uber's headquarters in Aldgate, London over pay and working conditions

As the number of gig workers continues to rise, their employment status remains a contested area

EMMA WOOLLACOTT

As your Uber driver dodges a Hermes courier, you contact a handyman on your phone via TaskRabbit. Gig economy workers are everywhere these days.

Indeed, according to a report from the National Centre for Social Research, commissioned by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 4.4 per cent of the UK population, some 2.8 million people, have worked in the gig economy in the last 12 months. They've become an accepted part of the working world.

However, changes are afoot. In the last couple of years, there have been several test cases on whether so-called freelance gig workers should be treated as employees.

Just last month, the employment appeals tribunal upheld a ruling that minicab drivers for Addison Lee are not, as the company claimed, self-employed contractors, but workers entitled to the national minimum wage and paid holidays. Similar decisions have been made in the cases of Uber, Pimlico Plumbers and Hermes.

Meanwhile, the government is taking action on regulating the sector following the Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices, which led in 2017 to 53 specific recommendations and a seven-point plan.

Earlier this year, the government responded with a series of proposals giving gig workers a list of day-one rights, including holiday and sick pay entitlements and a new right to a payslip for all workers, including casual and zero-hour workers.

There will be a name-and-shame scheme for employers that fail to pay employment tribunal awards, and fines for employers showing "malice, spite or gross oversight" will be quadrupled up to £20,000.

All workers will also have the right to request a temporary or fixed-hours contract after 12 months, giving them more financial security.

The changes will presumably be welcomed by gig workers themselves. Earlier this year, a survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development revealed that nearly two-thirds believe the government should regulate to guarantee them basic employment rights and benefits such as holiday pay.

However, the new proposals don't go far enough, says Rebecca Long-Bailey, Labour's shadow secretary of state for business, energy and industrial strategy, who points out that workers already have the right to ask for a contract.

"The proposals are not only thin on detail, but fail to grasp the inherent problems plaguing millions of workers such as insecurity, inequality and low pay," she says.

The GMB union, which has been supporting workers in several legal cases, shares these concerns. "The exploitation of insecure workers is a deliberate and a core part of some company business models, where any loophole is exploited to pay workers less and make more profit for employers," says GMB general secretary Tim Roache.

"The recommendations in the Taylor Review show some laudable aims on the surface and of course any progress in basic employment rights is welcome, but as a whole it's a disappointing missed opportunity."

Employers are, unsurprisingly, in favour of a flexible workforce; however, the Institute of Directors (IoD) has been calling for some time for greater clarity around the status of gig workers.

> **It's crucial that, while addressing pockets of bad practice, we retain flexibility in our labour market**

"The Taylor Review marked a substantive and laudable effort to get to grips with the new challenges facing the world of employment. It was a positive move for the government to accept most of the review's recommendations. However, the IoD was disappointed that an opportunity was missed in the review process to update the picture around national insurance contributions of the self-employed," says Jamie Kerr, the IoD's head of external affairs.

"For now, the government should seek to press on with implementing key recommendations, like making more explicit the definitions of employment status for the purposes of worker rights."

There are certainly more changes on the way. Leaked documents have revealed there are plans to end a legal loophole that allows companies to pay agency workers less than full-time staff for doing the same job, the so-called Swedish derogation rule.

Meanwhile, the government is also planning to extend a scheme known as IR35 to the private sector, in another move that could affect gig workers' employment status.

Already in force in the public sector, IR35 requires companies with more than 250 employees to take responsibility for establishing whether people working through personal service companies are really independent contractors or whether they should be treated as employees. It's due to come into force in April 2020.

This move, though, is not being welcomed by workers. "Millions will now worry they will need to pay far more tax on their earnings; it could reduce their net income by up to 25 per cent. In some cases, they may need to backdate payments," says Vivek Madlani, co-founder and chief executive of freelancer financial planning service Multiply.

"Clearly, those who are trying to game the system should be called out, but it is a highly complex area and many contractors struggle to understand their IR35 status. The vast majority of legitimately self-employed people risk being stung with huge bills that they're unprepared for."

The government has not yet published its final responses to the Taylor Review, following subsequent consultations. It says it's planning to consider the impacts of these reforms on business and other groups, as well as launching another consultation on whether new laws are needed to differentiate between employees, workers and the self-employed.

"It's crucial that, while addressing pockets of bad practice, we retain flexibility in our labour market. This flexibility can be a boon for both companies and workers alike, and it provides particular benefits to new startups where revenue can prove less stable," says Mr Kerr.

"With new technology shifting the boundaries of traditional employment, it's imperative that the regulatory system itself remains adaptable to the risks and opportunities that will inevitably emerge down the road." ◆

Tolga Akmen/Getty

master
modern
work™

Rethink modern work.

Get true visibility with a modern work management platform, a single place to orchestrate
and accelerate work across your business. Learn more. **workfront.com**

workfront®