

# FUTURE OF WORK

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## FUTURE OF WORK

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## CAREERS

# Making a career change

The pandemic has prompted career soul-searching among UK workers, but what do people need to think about when considering making a change?

Diana Bentley

**A**fter an unpredictable and turbulent year, many workers will find themselves moving into uncharted territory. Research undertaken by Aviva in April found that 60 per cent of UK workers were planning to make a change to their careers, while 9 per cent intended to follow a completely different career path and around 12 per cent want to turn their hobby into a part-time or full-time career.

All represented increases over the levels revealed in its 2020 survey, indicating that the coronavirus pandemic has prompted many to reassess their careers. Widespread redundancies too have left many workers pondering what their next move should be.

For those contemplating a career change there is help available. The publicly funded National Careers Service provides free professional careers information and advice in England for all adults and young people. The [sortyourfuture.com](http://sortyourfuture.com) website helps people identify good career options. Then there are career guidance professionals, like members of the Career Development Institute (CDI), who provide bespoke advice on a private basis.

Various factors can prompt a career change from a desire for more flexible working, greater job satisfaction or an increase in salary. According to Dave Conde, president of the CDI, a lack of fulfilment at work is the biggest trigger for career change. "Once there was a pervading attitude that work wasn't supposed to be fun. We're not in that mindset now and usually people want to find something they'll really enjoy and which will support their lifestyle," he says.

Those unsure of how to approach a change in career should start by analysing their interests, values and skills. Conde advises: "Once you do that your ideal job and what will be appropriate for you will become much clearer." He urges people to do something that truly interests them. "Even if you're good at something, you may not want to make it the focus of your career," he says. "Many people also define themselves by their existing job title and underestimate what their transferable skills may be."

Time usually needs to be invested in investigating what a possible career entails and what opportunities it may offer. Professional and trade associations can provide



helpful information, including what qualifications may be needed for a particular career, but personal networking can be vital. "You may have friends or contacts involved in or with links to the career you're considering," says Conde. "Don't be afraid to ask for some of their time to help you determine if it would be a good fit for you and what the routes into this career may be." CVs must be carefully crafted before you enter the job-hunting fray, he advises.

Sparked his interest in teaching as a new career. Now Teach helped Jerrom be an observer in several schools. "That helped me see if teaching was what I really wanted, and could, do," he says. "Dealing with a class of young people is different from being with your own children and needs another mindset."

With the help of Now Teach, Jerrom found a placement at Oasis Academy Shirley Park, Croydon, as an unqualified teacher until he gained his teacher's qualification in 2017. He now heads its year 12. "You must ask yourself if you have, or can acquire, the skills required for the potential job. Maths, time management and data were skills I could transfer, but I needed to develop more empathy," he says. "I learnt, for example, that a troublesome child may have difficulties at home. Teaching is still a high-pressure job, but I'm excited by it and have more time for my family and good holidays."

Finding a new role within the industry in which you're already working may be the answer. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development reports that teachers frequently move into learning and development positions in a range of organisations. Others may want to start their own business.

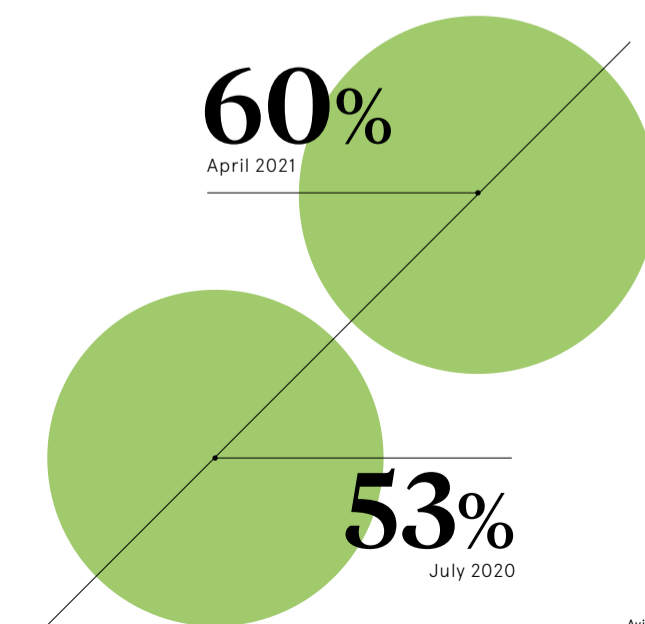
Helena Winter-Brown headed an events team for a high street bank at London's Canary Wharf, which she enjoyed but the long commute from her home in Hertfordshire left little time for her family. She wanted to run her own business and one that would help other women who wanted to work flexibly.

Spotting an afternoon tea tent at an event gave her the idea to establish Dottie About Cake in 2017. The business now delivers afternoon teas locally, supplies them for private functions like weddings, sells afternoon tea hampers and hires out vintage china.

Winter-Brown works with ten local women who bake for the business and support its events across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. She also has a tea room in Potten End, Hertfordshire. "I still work long hours, but going to work each day is pure joy," she says, urging people to find a career that is meaningful for them. "My career change wasn't just about a business idea. I had something else I wanted to do too," says Winter-Brown. Her advice to others who want to switch careers: "Just do it."

### THE NUMBER OF UK WORKERS PLANNING A CAREER CHANGE IS RISING

% of UK workers planning to make changes to their careers



Aviva, 2021



# Job crafting gets a new lease of life

Though a 20-year-old concept, job crafting has gained new meaning and relevance during the pandemic, providing huge value to disengaged employees and talent-craving employers alike

The transition to remote working since the start of the coronavirus pandemic has piled additional strain onto employees, exacerbated by isolation. While some people enjoy working permanently from home, many have struggled to stay motivated. In a study of UK employees by insurer Aviva last year, 43 per cent described their wellbeing as being less than good, while research by advisory firm Gallup found two thirds of people worldwide are not engaged at work.

With most companies now reimagining office spaces to fit into a more hybrid model of working when the pandemic ends, it's clear this is not a temporary trend. In a survey by Actus, 65 per cent of UK workers said isolation and disengagement were major hurdles to be cleared in the hybrid world of work. An employee disengagement hangover from the pandemic is likely to loom over organisations for years to come, presenting a truly business-critical challenge to overcome.

Though increasing employee engagement is a clear priority among human resources, and learning and development professionals, some employees are not willing to wait for this to happen. The turbulent jobs market caused by the COVID-19 crisis may have left some feeling stuck with their current employer for the foreseeable future, but they don't necessarily need to feel stuck in their role.

"Working remotely has been around for decades, but the circumstances of the last year have meant many organisations had to deploy policies they might not have done otherwise or indeed that their employees would have wanted," says Patrick Brigger, chief operating officer and co-founder at getAbstract, an e-learning platform with the world's largest online library of summarised content. "It can lead to feeling disconnected or demotivated, especially among those for whom teamwork and social interactions were a primary source of their job motivation."

"By taking a proactive approach to your job, you can increase how

satisfied you feel within your role. These are important skills now that many people might feel disconnected from their work.

Insecurities surrounding development or the future of your role can add to this feeling, so lots of people are seeking ways to give meaning to their jobs while stuck at home. They may not be able to change their current employer, or the fixed parameters of their current job, but they can change how they approach and relate to their daily tasks. This is where job crafting comes in."

Though not new, job crafting has gained new-found relevance during the pandemic. It is a concept based on assigning meaning and context to daily tasks. Employees take charge of their working hours. While still performing the duties laid out in their job description, they actively shape their work and reframe their job approach with the goal of enhancing their own wellbeing.

Most jobs have at least some flexibility around how much time and effort are allocated to individual tasks, which makes job crafting an opportunity for nearly anybody feeling disengaged at work. But there are no written rules. Employees may just want to put more time and effort into the tasks they enjoy or that challenge them in a positive way. It may mean expanding the scope of one task or narrowing the scope of another. It may even be performing tasks in a completely different way than originally taught, to make them more stimulating, time efficient or rewarding.

"Job crafting boils down to taking charge of your approach to work and it's a great way to address personal struggles with motivation," says Brigger. getAbstract recently released a white paper on the subject and its library of book summaries offer a wealth of further resources. "While you might not be able to shift the parameters of your role, you can choose how to approach your tasks; it's an act of self-care and a very smart career development strategy," he says.

"The skills involved in job crafting are more pertinent to career success



Take charge: summary recommendations on job crafting

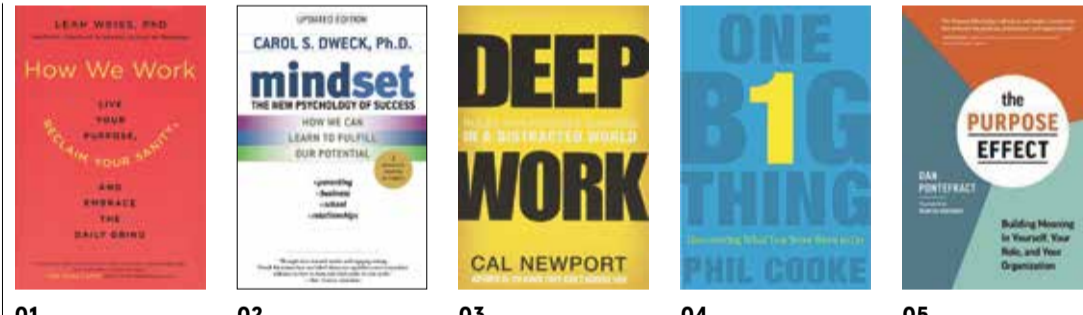
01 How We Work. Leah Weiss, getab.li/wp1212

02 Mindset. Carol Dweck, getab.li/wp1235

03 Deep Work. Cal Newport, getab.li/wp1207

04 Make It Work. Joe Frodsham and Bill Gargiulo, getab.li/wp1202

05 The Purpose Effect. Dan Pontefract, getab.li/wp1214



01 02 03 04 05

than ever before. Employees engaged in job crafting shape their work tasks, develop their work relationships and give meaning to their jobs to enhance their personal wellbeing and job satisfaction. But the responsibility doesn't lie just on the employees, leaders can do a lot to foster employee engagement and create the conditions that will allow employees to develop and thrive. Leaders need to create the conditions that allow job crafting. This is ultimately about empowering people to take charge of their development and growth."

“While you might not be able to shift the parameters of your role, you can choose how to approach your tasks; it’s an act of self-care and a very smart career development strategy

Crucially, job crafting doesn't just benefit employees, who find more meaning and engagement in their work, but also employers, who benefit enormously from increased productivity and highly relevant skills. Employees who engage in job crafting demonstrate intrinsic motivation, something that can't be taught, and a strong growth mindset. Companies gain huge value from people who approach work tasks as learning opportunities.

According to social scientist Carol Dweck, organisations embracing a "culture of genius" view talent as fixed or static, while those that support a "culture of development" treat their employees' skills as something that can grow.

In the war for talent, it's also important to note the commitment displayed by job crafters. They are not passively waiting for their employer to give them the motivation to stay with them long term, instead they seek ways to learn and make their work more engaging and rewarding. This is very pertinent to the growing number of business leaders recognising the value of internal upskilling and sideways mobility, including their benefits for agility, resilience and growth.

"Job crafting is an employee-driven process," says Brigger. "HR departments and leaders should support this process. It often not only leads to a happier, more engaged workforce, but a more successful one too. Finding talent takes less time and people who've worked at the company before become productive team members more quickly. Retention grows because people who are ready for new challenges will stay if they have new opportunities. Leaders can help develop these skills by embracing a culture of development."

For the past 20 years, we've helped organisations build cultures that prioritise learning and growth. Download our job crafting guide at getab.li/jobcrafting



REMUNERATION

# Pay transparency: answer to the gender gap?

Asking candidates what they're currently paid could be banned if a campaign to eradicate pay inequality gets its way

MaryLou Costa

Open Bionics, a Bristol-based startup making 3D-printed bionic hands, is clear about avoiding a gender pay gap across its team by putting salary brackets on its job advertisements, which it has done since 2019.

"We have a policy of zero negotiation on job offers. We will make an offer that is fair and aligned to everyone else on our team, in line with our policies around salary selection," says Samantha Payne, the company's co-founder and chief operating officer.

"It's important that everyone is paid according to their level of experience and skill, without bias. We've also begun working towards greater salary transparency internally and so far it has been well received."

Open Bionics is one of a number of UK companies that has committed to ban salary history questions from its hiring process, as part of a campaign launched in March by the East London Fawcett Society (ELFS) to help eradicate the gender pay gap.

It believes banning salary history questions, and establishing and sharing a set salary range for a particular role, is a crucial step towards breaking a perpetual cycle where someone's salary can never progress beyond a certain ceiling.

In the UK, the pay gap between women and men currently stands at 15.5 per cent, while that between white British people and those from minority ethnic communities is currently around 20 per cent. Yet half of



Oliver Wong/Getty Images



Office for National Statistics, 2020

"It's easy to not understand that old-fashioned practices like asking about salary history and not advertising a salary band are damaging to workplace equality," she says. "We hope to get to the point where advertising roles with salary bands, and not asking about a candidate's current salary, is normal."

Movement in that direction is happening. Analysis by jobs website DirectlyApply concluded around 30 per cent of online job advertisements specify the salary on offer. This is increasing at a rate of 6 per cent, fuelled in part by the online democratisation of salary data which is forcing employers to be more transparent, according to DirectlyApply co-founder Will Capper.

Elizabeth Willetts, founder of flexible working website Investing in Women, believes not only will this spur a virtuous circle of companies not wanting to be seen as less progressive than their rivals, but it will extend to greater transparency around other benefits, such as maternity and shared parental leave, which candidates often don't want to ask about.

"Employers will disclose things like gym memberships, but not the important stuff, such as maternity benefits and how long somebody has to be employed there to be eligible for those schemes, which is a huge barrier for women because they often don't like applying for jobs if they think they may miss out on maternity benefits," says Willetts.

Yet getting government backing to prompt widespread change is a "complex, protracted process", says ELFS campaigner Haridas, who argues companies that truly believe in diversity and inclusion shouldn't be waiting for legislation to move forward with salary transparency. "Companies spend billions on diversity training yet continue with a practice that actively promotes structural bias," she concludes.

employers still ask candidates for their current salary, according to the ELFS, as there is no legislation requiring otherwise, despite 19 states in America already having a version of the salary history ban in place.

"Salary history assumes a linear progression, but people switch between full time and part time, countries and also between startup and blue-chip organisations frequently. Yet companies still rely on an outdated legacy metric to determine salaries. In our salary history survey, almost 90 per cent of respondents felt past salary was an unfair way to determine salary," says ELFS campaigner Shobha Haridas, who is also head of operations for ASG Blockchain.

"Being asked for your salary history allows historical pay inequality to simply continue. Asking for salary history during candidate interviews turns salary negotiations into a zero-sum game. All the power and leverage resides with the company who can get away with making the

lowest possible offer as opposed to a fair and equitable one."

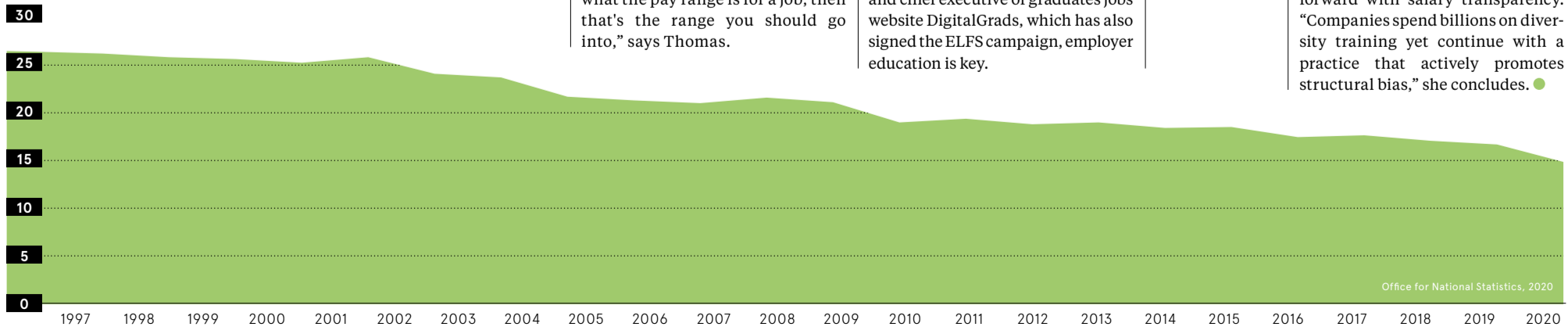
Publishing salary brackets on advertisements is already commonplace in the public sector and World Bank data shows the global gender pay gap is 10 percentage points lower among public organisations than in the private sector.

Despite this link, it will take a combination of mounting pressure from the public and formal legislation for the private sector to achieve pay fairness and transparency, according to Ruth Thomas, former human resources leader at PwC, Lloyds and Credit Suisse. She's now the co-founder of pay equity software platform Curo Compensation, which is working with companies including EY, AXA Group and Sony Music on clarifying their compensation methodologies.

"There's a whole body of research that shows women and minority groups will undervalue themselves in salary negotiations. But just because your pay has historically been lower due to the jobs you've taken, how you have been paid previously shouldn't impact your value for a role. If you can see what the pay range is for a job, then that's the range you should go into," says Thomas.

THE GENDER PAY GAP IN THE UK IS GRADUALLY FALLING

Gender pay gap, as a percentage, for median gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime)





INCLUSION

# Why the return to work is a diversity issue



Visualspace/Getty Images

As the UK moves to step three of easing lockdown restrictions, businesses are considering how work will resume and finding challenges around diversity and inclusion

Sarah Vizard

Slowly but surely the UK economy is opening back up. Cinemas have flung open their doors, restaurants are welcoming us back inside and we are no longer limited to choosing five friends to meet, outside at least.

This reopening, of course, prompts questions about work. For many, particularly office-based workers, the past 15 months have meant a switch to working from the kitchen table, the end of the bed or, for the lucky ones, a home office.

Yet as thoughts turn to a return of some kind to the office, what should this return look like? And how can it be made to work for everyone?

These are questions Bruce Daisley has been mulling over. The former Twitter vice president is now a leading thinker on the future of work having published two best-selling

books and run a chart-topping podcast, *Eat Sleep Work Repeat*, on making work better.

He is concerned, however, that not enough thought is being put into the diversity and inclusion aspect of the big return to the office.

The data suggests his concerns are not unfounded. A recent UK poll of 2,300 business leaders, managers and employees by the Chartered Management Institute found 69 per cent of women with children want to work from home at least one day a week after the pandemic. Among men with children, this figure drops to 56 per cent.

This poses a problem if most of the people making the decisions about a return to work are men. And this is likely to be the case given there were just 13 female chief executives in the FTSE 350 in 2020.

There is also data that shows male-dominated companies are more likely to insist on workers going back to the office. Data from Australia, which is ahead of the UK in terms of returning to normality, shows there is a correlation between the percentage of women employed in a company and how flexible corporate working policies are.

For example, at consulting company EY, 46.3 per cent of the workforce are female and it offers full flexibility. At the other end of the spectrum, engineering company UGL offers no remote working and just 15.2 per cent of its workforce are female.

In the UK, the most vocal voices about needing to return to the office have been the likes of Goldman Sachs, Barclays and JPMorgan Chase & Co.

"What you hear anecdotally from people in banking or engineering, these big machismo-filled businesses, is they're all back to the office on June 21 [when the UK is scheduled to move to the final stage of easing coronavirus restrictions]. This moment we are all looking forward to as a celebration, they are saying that's the day they are back at the office," says Daisley. "The data paints a very vivid picture; it suggests this is a diversity and inclusion issue."

“The businesses that do hybrid working well will have little rituals, almost family quirks; they’ll have their own work-based version

He recalls a former boss who would insist on 7.30am meetings when things were difficult, assuming that because he could make the meeting others could too.

"That is all about beating your chest and demonstrating you are the alpha. He's saying, 'I can be here at 7.30am'," Daisley explains. "What you miss in that is the pandemonium it creates if someone has shared childcare responsibilities or a longer commute. It effectively says not only are you having stress at work, you are having domestic stress as well. Hopefully we can push back a bit on those things."

The coronavirus pandemic has begun a "pincer attack" on the office,

## Making decisions on returning to the office

For those businesses considering how the world will look as the economy fully reopens, former Twitter vice president Bruce Daisley has some advice. First, he says, there needs to be as wide a representation of people in the room making the decisions as possible.

"A lot of people have felt liberated from having to keep up this pretence of being able to do everything. Not having to commute in two or three days a week has allowed some people to focus on their job more," Daisley explains.

"When we look at the evidence, the one group who have missed being in the office every day is bosses. If you allow all the bosses in your organisation to make the decision, you are unfortunately missing the fact that everyone else doesn't agree. Make sure there is a plurality of opinion."

He also cautions against making too many decisions early on before new ways of working have been tested. Having missed so much human contact over the past year, many people

are keen to get back to the office, but may find they would be happier working at home more often as this need fades, for example.

"The critical next thing is this is a time for experiments not decisions. Most of us probably feel we know what it would be like to work in a balanced hybrid environment, but we don't fully know," Daisley suggests.

"Don't jump in; it's time for experimentation and we'll learn a lot through that. There might be different modalities, different groups who want to work in different ways."

Finally, he recommends learning from other companies. Most have been so focused on getting through the pandemic they have not had time to speak to other business leaders and learn what is working, or not, elsewhere.

"I hear so many people say to me, 'I'm in back-to-back video calls', but once we start meeting up with friends again you might hear, 'Oh it's not like that at my work, we have whole days without video calls'. And people might want to change that. At the moment business has not even had the opportunity to compare what works and what doesn't. We need that," Daisley concludes.

he believes. On one side, there are workers who have found they can do their job effectively from home and now balk at the idea of spending time and money getting into the office five days a week.

On the other side are business leaders sensing an opportunity to cut costs. This was already happening, with research before the pandemic finding 43 per cent of businesses allowed staff to split their week between the office and home.

Now many are re-examining their office space and thinking about how it can work better for them and staff. Daisley recalls a company he did some work with that wanted to modernise their culture. It took lockdown and working from home to realise it was the office building holding them back.

The culture question is one that has been asked repeatedly over the past few months: how to create a sense of belonging and shared values when workers are not side by side at desks in an office every day.

Daisley doesn't think being in an office all the time is necessary to create this culture, though. He points to the limited amount of time we spend with friends, but the strong emotional connection we have with them as a reason why businesses should be prioritising quality over quantity of time together.

"We can have a vivid and emotional connection with people we spend three hours with on a Saturday evening, so it's about the strength of the connection and the degree of authenticity," he says.

"If you look at the businesses that do this well, they will get people

## MORE WOMEN THAN MEN WANT TO WORK FROM HOME POST-COVID

% of workers wanting to work from home for at least one day a week

69%

Women with children

56%

Men with children

Chartered Management Institute, 2020

together to create moments of connection, so when people are sitting on their own in their home they can feel part of something. Rather than getting people in an office silently replying to emails, they will create moments of connection."

Daisley points to the work of Casper Kuile, whose book *The Power of Ritual* explores how religions work through ritual and getting people together, and how this can be applied to other areas of life. "The businesses that do hybrid working well will have little rituals, almost family quirks; they'll have their own work-based version," he says. ●

Commercial feature



# Looking within will close the skills gap

The digital skills gap is getting wider and wider, but there is not enough available talent to fill it. To survive and thrive, organisations must urgently embrace internal digital upskilling

The emerging technologies helping companies to achieve digital transformation have radically disrupted workforce requirements. McKinsey predicts 800 million jobs will be eliminated by 2030 due to automation, which means nearly one in every four jobs on the planet will vanish. At the same time, digital transformation is creating hundreds of millions of new jobs for those with the right technical skills.

The truth is the skills of the past are dying and there are nowhere near enough skilled people in the world to fill the new jobs being created. And this paradox is colliding with a worrying lack of infrastructure to bridge the gap. According to research by Udacity, a global lifelong-learning platform for career advancement, 83 per cent of the Global 2000 report having a major skills gap and 70 per cent of those companies say the skills gap is preventing innovation.

Gartner saw in excess of 100 per cent growth in artificial intelligence (AI), data science and analytics job postings in the five years to 2020. The World Economic Forum predicts the most in-demand digital transformation jobs will grow 50 per cent a year over the coming years. These new jobs fall predominantly into the areas of data (machine learning, data science, analytics and big data), cloud computing, robotic process automation and cybersecurity.

"The digital skills gap is extremely costly for businesses, threatening their very survival," says Gabe Dalporto, chief executive of Udacity. "Every industry is experiencing significant disruption. We work with most of the largest global automotive companies and they are shell shocked right now because of Tesla. For years, they believed they

were in the hardware business; it turns out that modern car companies are really in the software business and they simply don't have the skills to deal with that transformation.

"If companies don't take aggressive action, it will be terminal for them. From a national economic perspective, countries like China are investing heavily in emerging technologies, crafting a future economy and ensuring they have the right skills. Western economies are taking a more passive view and risk being disrupted and outmanoeuvred in the global economy."

Organisations need significant numbers of highly skilled tech employees, but they can't hire their way out of the problem because the talent doesn't exist and universities produce only a small number of these highly technical graduates every year. Recruiting is an unsustainable solution; it's not even a good stopgap measure because the demand for these skills is so high.

The far more effective option is to invest in internal upskilling. Udacity offers Nanodegree programmes within seven schools: AI, autonomous

systems, business, cloud computing, cybersecurity, data science, and programming and development.

When Shell needed to deploy AI in 70 countries, Udacity worked with them to create a citizen data scientist career-scaling programme to upskill engineers and build its AI skills at scale. One of hundreds of AI projects saw data scientists applying these new skills to streaming sensor data from rigs and predicting maintenance models, so they could get replacement parts into the field to prevent outages and save millions per incident.

"Udacity's learning platform offers consumers and enterprises the fastest, most effective way to get job-ready skills," says Dalporto. "The single most important lesson is tying upskilling to business-critical transformation initiatives. If you just make an upskilling catalogue available to your employees, as an HR benefit, you're going to fail. You need to understand what you're trying to achieve, what are the skills gaps, and then work with a vendor that can help you create learning paths for internal candidates who can fill the gaps and, importantly, measure against business outcomes."

"The days of a one-and-done bachelor's degree are gone. Enterprises and individuals are going to have to take a much more proactive role in continuously evolving their skillsets."

“Enterprises and individuals are going to have to take a much more proactive role in continuously evolving their skillsets

For more information please visit [udacity.com/enterprise](https://udacity.com/enterprise)

UDACITY





# Next generation information management underpins modern work

Intelligent content services are enabling organisations to facilitate collaboration in an anywhere workforce and drive faster digital transformation

In a little over 12 months, the way we work has changed beyond all recognition. Up until early-2020, the transition to a more mobile, distributed workforce model was moving slowly but steadily with people veering towards the odd day working from home or working more irregular hours. The coronavirus pandemic, however, accelerated the move at a rate nobody could have foreseen. Suddenly, the future of both private and public sector enterprises relied on enabling employees to work productively from home.

Though people will return to offices, indeed some already have, those spaces are being reimagined as just one part of a hybrid model in which remote working will continue to feature heavily. The last 12 months have shown organisations with a robust information management strategy adapt more easily and advance faster, and that talent is now everywhere. Amid the war for digital skills, organisations can no

longer afford to be restricted to one or a few locations if they want to attract the greatest talent.

There are also challenges in this new world of work, however. "Proximity is important when you innovate," says Mark Barrenechea, chief executive and chief technology officer of OpenText. "We still want clusters where we can learn from each other and share experiences. As leaders, we must also be honest and authentic, and embed equity, diversity and inclusion in our company culture."

"Meanwhile, modern work is being met by three other forces – modern experiences, such as omnichannel and contactless payments; supply chain regionalisation, sustainability and connectivity; and cybersecurity and resilience – that are all accelerating the pace of change. We have never worked this fast and we will never work this slow again."

In this new age of modern work, everyone needs the ability to spin up

a shared workspace and collaborate on a document, whether they work in the same organisation or not. Enabling collaboration within the four walls and firewall of the enterprise is not enough though as modern work is powered by an extended, distributed workforce that needs to be able to share and retract information with customers, partners and supply chains whenever needed, and outside firewall limitations.

**“If your internal content is in a mess, you can’t provide the great service customers expect outside; you can’t successfully deliver digital transformation**

Information carries great value but also great risk, particularly when it’s so dispersed. This creates challenges for the IT department when it comes to applying governance for issues like privacy and records management. IT teams no longer have a choice; modern work is transforming rapidly and resisting the shift will only magnify the perils of shadow IT, where staff circumvent policy by emailing data home or copying to drives, ultimately creating more security issues.

With the right technology, however, organisations can still keep control over information. Just like people are moving from the office to working in the cloud, technology is doing the same. Traditional on-premise enterprise content management, or ECM, is evolving to cloud-native content services technology. Content services applications allow anybody to access the information they need wherever they are, and in a way which ensures data is secure, protected and can be audited in the appropriate ways.

"With content services, it becomes much easier to give people access to information, to roll it out and to connect before you can provide a better digital experience externally. Once you've got that foundation, digital transformation becomes much easier. And when more disruption or regulations arrive, you can respond and adapt much faster."

"Our new content services technology intelligently utilises automation so you can analyse your whole file system and identify what's important or risky. You can identify personal customer information and redact it if needed, or highlight it for deletion or further consideration. Content life cycles are

managed automatically. Most people working remotely from home aren't focused on security. They don't want to do enterprise content management. They want it to happen magically in the background. That's what we do."

Crucially, content services technology underpins wider digital transformation efforts. OpenText Content Services platforms and applications integrate with leading business applications, including SAP SuccessFactors, helping to facilitate, for instance, human resources processes such as recruitment and onboarding in a modern work environment. HR professionals reviewing CVs don't want to have to save them somewhere separately and have to manually put a six-month retention period on them so they delete after a certain time. They want that to automatically happen in the background.

With integration enabled by OpenText Content Services, the documents they need on any given day are presented seamlessly in their SuccessFactors application. If they look at an employee's file, all relevant information comes up along with what's outstanding. Are health and safety certificates up to date? Is a salary review imminent? OpenText Content Services technology is enabling this experience by working in the background to identify and aggregate relevant information. The user never has to leave SuccessFactors.

"They just log in to their system as they do every day," says Harot. "And governance is transparent and easy. Humans are rubbish at doing records. It's not their day job and with content services they never have to do it again."

Beyond the specialist HR role, a seamless experience for other employees is just as important. The ability to perform self-service by securely accessing their own information and requesting or uploading relevant documents enhances the employee experience, while also enabling the HR department to spend less time on processes that can be automated by OpenText Content Services and more time solving key business challenges.

"You've got to have optimal control of your content internally to be able to transform externally," says Harot. "If your internal content is in a mess, you can't provide the great service customers expect outside; you can't successfully deliver digital transformation."

In the modern, digital enterprise, with ever-increasing sources and volumes of data, these goals are only possible through the smart application of content services technology. You've got to get your own house in order before you can provide a better digital experience externally. Once you've got that foundation, digital transformation becomes much easier. And when more disruption or regulations arrive, you can respond and adapt much faster."

For more information please visit [opentext.com](https://www.opentext.com)

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## CULTURE

# How to find and fix toxicity in the workplace

Lack of trust, misleading management and a collective bill totalling billions. What defines a toxic workplace and how can business leaders tackle it?

Katie Byrne

A toxic workplace is responsible for almost a third of UK workers leaving their jobs, according to data from human resources tech provider Breathe. That's a sharp rise from last year's 21 per cent, with poor company culture and everything from bullying to burnout costing the economy an estimated £20 billion annually.

But how can toxicity be identified and staff retained? "A toxic organisation exhibits low levels of trust, has misaligned systems and incapable line managers who work hard to preserve their status at all costs," says Clive Lewis, author of *Toxic*.

Such line managers lack the competence required for their role and are often characterised by a "demonstrable lack of regard and compassion for

the wellbeing of team members", he says. Toxic employees, meanwhile, are prone to sow discord and division. They can be "characteristically uncivil and are likely to pursue retribution rather than offer forgiveness", Lewis adds.

Coronavirus has exacerbated deep-rooted issues in these organisations, for both remote teams and in person. Lewis suggests that toxic-free businesses have retained their status due to their culture and behaviour being "closely linked irrespective of the external environment".

A range of clues can suggest a workplace is in need of a toxicity turnaround, although executives might not spot them "if they aren't spending enough time speaking to and building relationships with

their people", warns executive coach Kelly Swingler.

That said, there are several indicators to look out for. A leadership team that fails to make quick decisions, for example, could hint at poor communication, contributing towards a "them and us" culture. Repeated mistakes is another red flag.

"In organisations where learning from errors and collaborative work to fix issues is common, mistakes rarely happen," says Swingler. "When blame and disciplinary action are the only way they're dealt with, these mistakes will continue because nobody is taking the time to get to the root of the issue."

A high staff turnover is also symptomatic, with declined exit interviews hinting at exasperated employees. "If nobody listened while they were working with you, why would they bother speaking up now?" notes Swingler.

And why does looking out for these traits matter now? "We spend the majority of our waking hours at work, so businesses have a responsibility to look after employees' psychological wellbeing," says Calvin Benton, founder of Spill, which offers mental health support to companies including Huel, Depop and Beauty Pie.

"This has become more prevalent since the start of the pandemic, when our work and home lives merged into one. An always-on mindset has seen burnout levels rise. As well as

**“We spend the majority of our waking hours at work, so businesses have a responsibility to look after employees' psychological wellbeing**

the emotional distress, the business impact is high; over 40 per cent of sick days in the UK are due to burnout, adding up to billions in lost productivity every year."

As a senior IT consultant, Sonya Barlow encountered workplace bullying that ranged from being called "stupid" to having her name repeatedly mispronounced by management.

"My accent was made fun of and I was asked to disclose personal health issues on a work call," she adds. "I saw women being shot down in meetings. Diversity and inclusion initiatives were dismissed; they didn't generate revenue and weren't deemed necessary."

These "small but distressing" incidents impacted her mental health and she complained to HR. "Nothing was done and as a result I was forced to leave."

Barlow launched the Like Minded Females (LMF) Network, a social enterprise built on trust, the five-letter antithesis of the "toxic" situation she'd previously encountered.

"I took my experiences and decided to do the opposite," she explains. "For example, toxic organisations tend to have overworked, burnt-out staff. At LMF, we work remotely and as long as the work is done, I'm happy for my team to work on the days and times best for them."

Swingler agrees with this anti-presenteeism approach, which is an antidote to the constantly accessible state remote working has created for many. "In toxic workplaces, the focus is on the time people spend at desks, sending emails, rather than on productivity," she says. "If you're not 'seen to be working', the assumption is you're lazy or underperforming."

Honesty is key, says Barlow: "We're very transparent about what we're doing: new projects, budgets, finances." And it goes both ways, with staff encouraged to return communication. "My team know

they can call me to discuss work or personal issues, with no judgment," she says.

For Michael Alexis, chief executive of Team Building, which has organised virtual events for more than 15,000 businesses, including Apple, Google and Nasa, experience has shown every employee has a role to play.

"Years ago, I joined a tech startup with a very problematic culture," he explains. "The owner would make racist and misogynistic comments, and was a caricature of a bad boss."

At the time, Alexis attributed the environment to the leadership. "But the reality is more nuanced," he says. "Everyone on the team plays a part. If you hear inappropriate comments and don't rebut them, or worse laugh it off, the toxicity may continue."

At Team Building, a range of collaborative techniques create a positive atmosphere for the 100-plus workforce, ranging from a #You-Are-Awesome Slack channel for peer-to-peer praise to Feedback First, which encourages employees to acknowledge and learn from mistakes.

And yes, team-building is also involved, creating friendships and helping to "combat toxicity by improving engagement and communication across the board", says Alexis.

So where should a chief executive begin? "The first thing any business leader can do to make change is to prioritise it," says Spill's Benton. "Ensure part of your budget is going towards mental health support and quarterly objectives include wellbeing measures."

Getting your team on board is crucial, as is patience. "Leaders who want to tackle a toxic culture should set an objective for doing so and ensure all members of the leadership team are aligned to uproot dysfunctional behaviour and systems," says Lewis.

"Measures should be put in place to track progress. There are no overnight fixes; be prepared for the long haul." ●

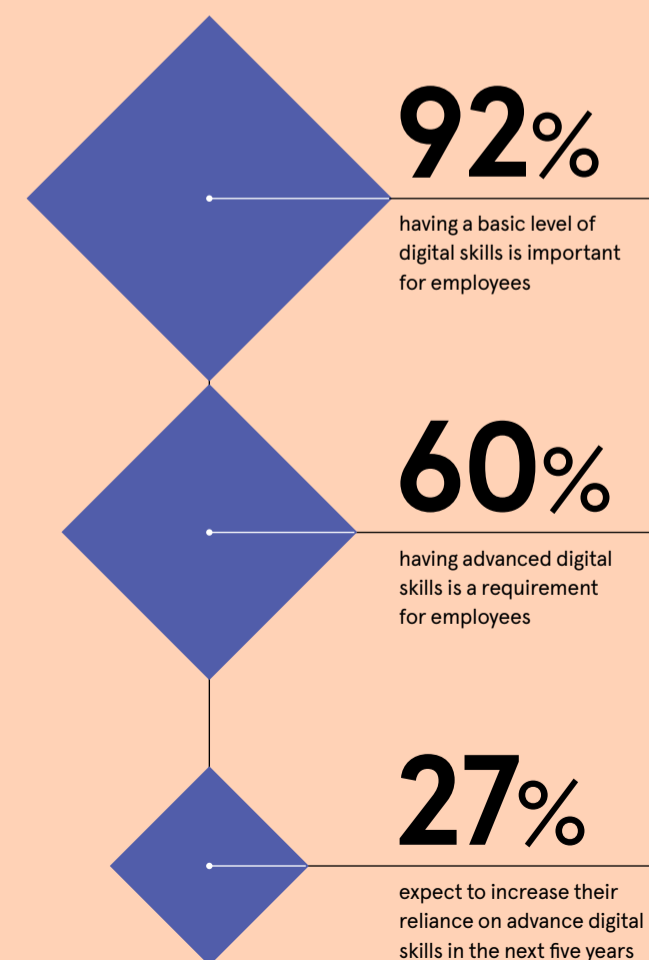


# MIND THE SKILLS GAP

The digital skills gap in the UK has been described as “catastrophic” and a “disaster”. Numbers taking IT subjects at school is falling as demand for digital skills in areas such as AI, cloud and robotics is soaring. Why, when businesses want to hire people with digital skills, are so few interested in gaining a grounding in this area?

## THERE IS STRONG DEMAND FOR DIGITAL SKILLS FROM BUSINESS

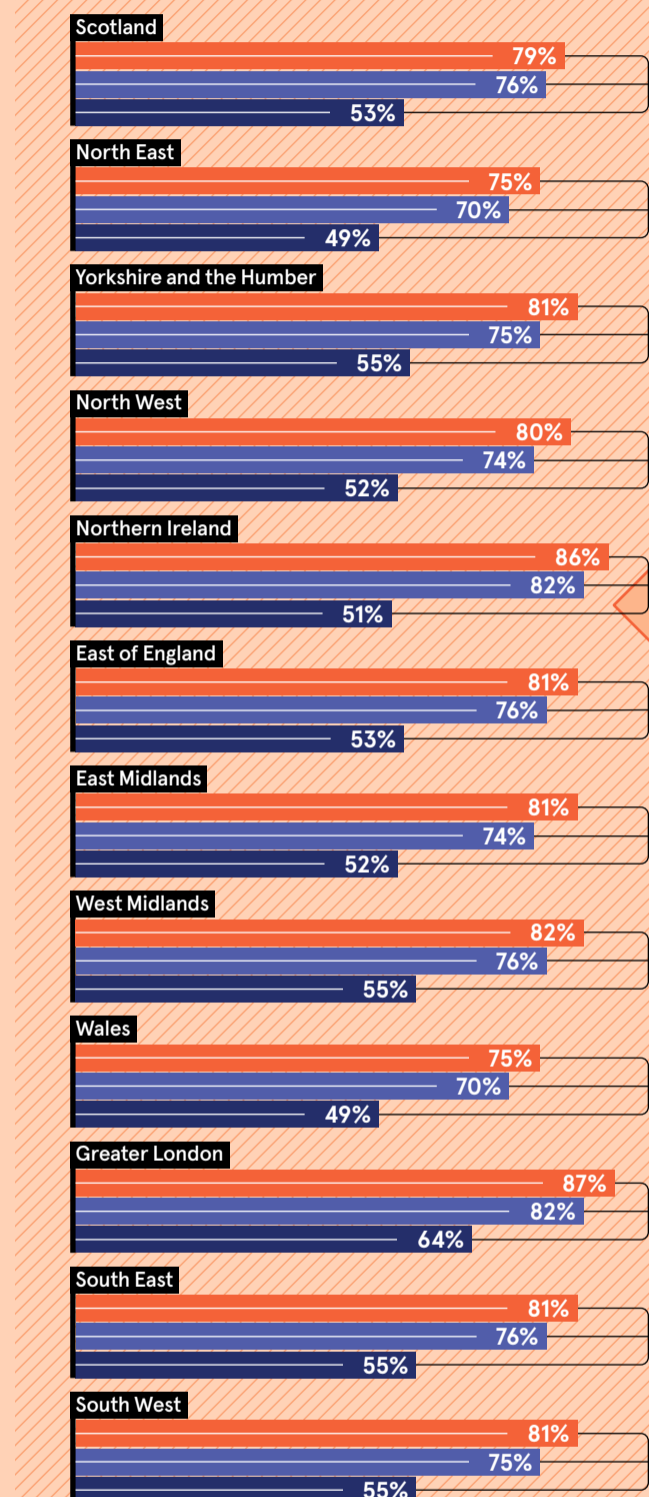
% of business Learning & Work Institute 2021



## THERE IS HUGE DEMAND FOR DIGITAL SKILLS ACROSS THE UK

% share of job adverts in digital occupations

◆ All digital ◆ Baseline digital ◆ Specific digital

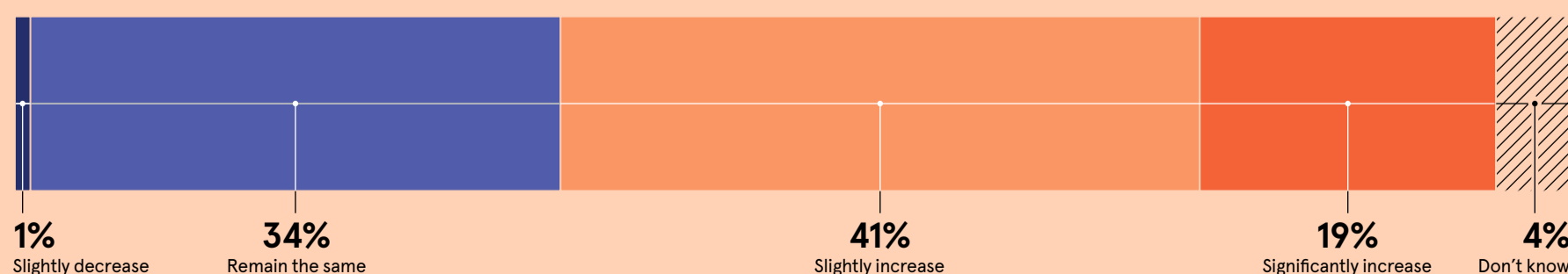


DCMS and Burning Glass 2019

## DEMAND FOR ADVANCED DIGITAL SKILLS IS GROWING

How reliance on digital skills will change in the next five years

Learning & Work Institute 2021

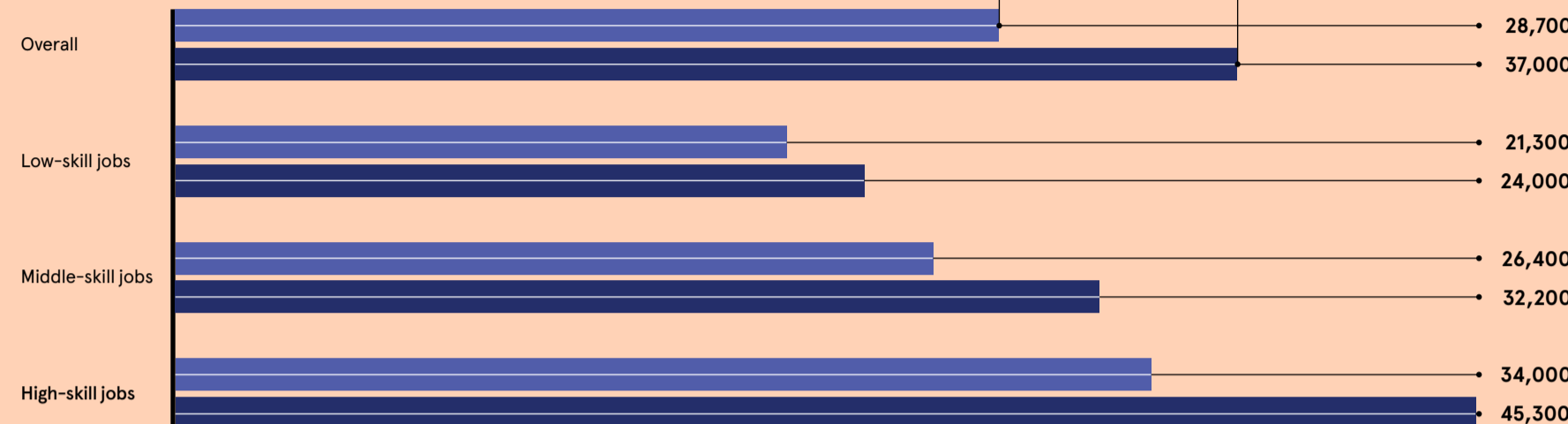


## PEOPLE WITH DIGITAL SKILLS GET PAID MORE

DCMS and Burning Glass 2019

Pay in £

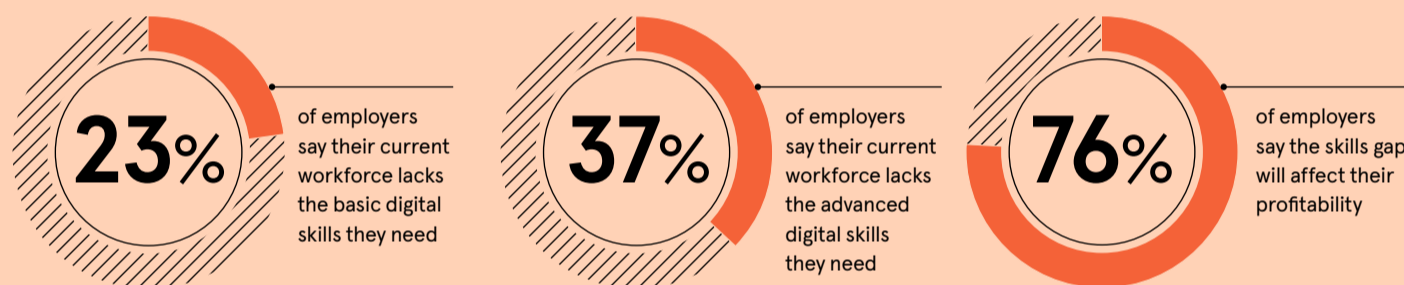
◆ Jobs not requiring digital skills ◆ Jobs requiring digital skills



## MANY BUSINESSES BELIEVE THERE IS A DIGITAL SKILLS GAP

% of employers

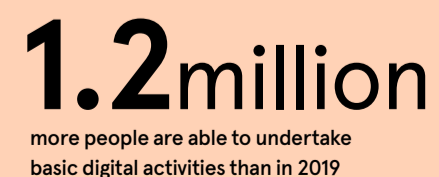
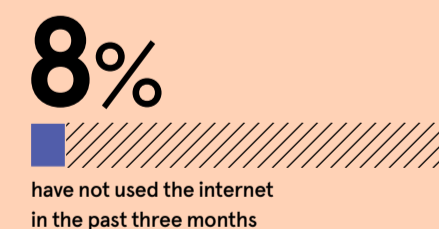
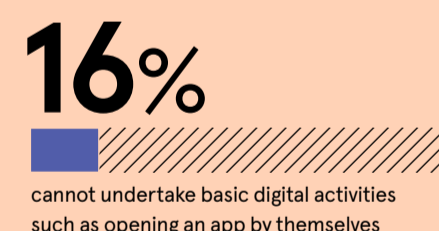
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## ACROSS THE UK MANY PEOPLE ARE LACKING BASIC DIGITAL SKILLS

% of UK population

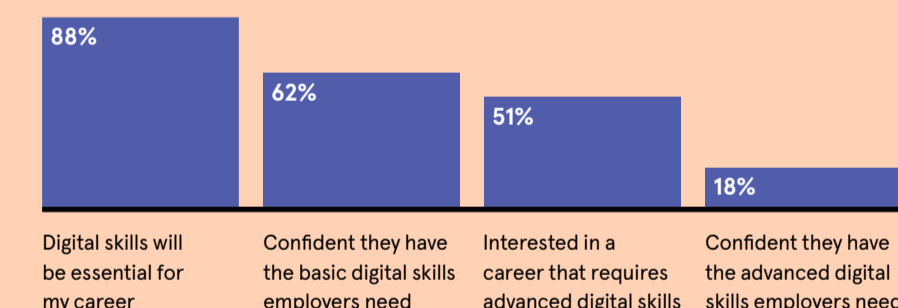
Lloyds Bank 2020



## YOUNG PEOPLE RECOGNISE THAT DIGITAL SKILLS ARE CRUCIAL

% of young people

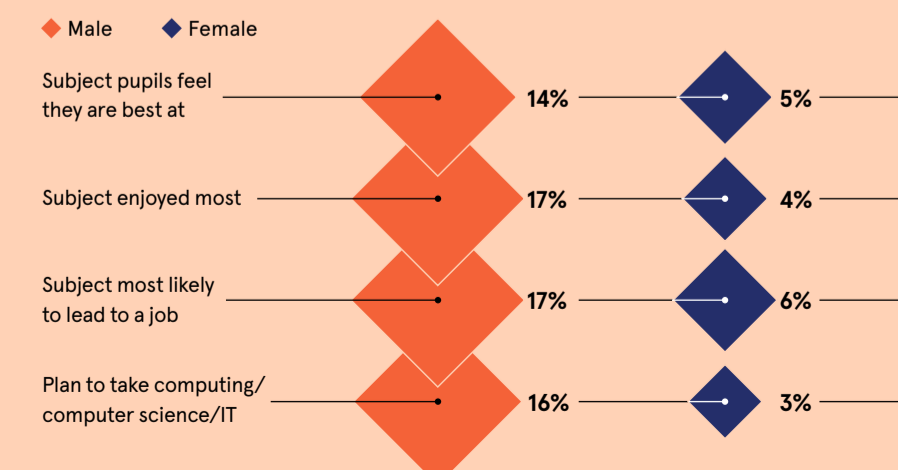
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## YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A POOR PERCEPTION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, ESPECIALLY GIRLS

% of pupils at key stage 4

Learning & Work Institute 2021





# Solving the human security problem

In the move to a hybrid work model, the pace of adopting online tools will not slow. Protecting organisations' data requires human behavioural change through a strong security culture

The coronavirus pandemic forced organisations to embrace remote working practically overnight. They may not have been ready for it, but cloud-based businesses like Zoom and Slack helped most companies adapt quickly, shifting their focus from investing in their in-person workplaces to technology that enables staff to work efficiently from home.

The longer the pandemic has gone on, the more apparent it has become that workforce models will not return to what they were before COVID-19 changed the world. Offices will, no doubt, be populated again, but they are likely to serve more of a "pull" function, rather than the traditional "push", within an overall hybrid working mix favoured by employers.

Historically, businesses "pushed" employees to travel to the office every day to use the tools provided to get their job done. It's taken a global health crisis to demonstrate, on a mass scale, that most people can do most, if not all, of their job by accessing the required tools from home. This means offices in the post-COVID world are more likely to "pull" employees in when they need to do what they can't do very well at home, such as collaborate with teams.

In a recent study by Dashlane, a leading password management solution, 72 per cent of office workers said they would like to work away from the office at least twice a week.

However, remote working creates new risks for the business and while setting people up to work remotely in the wake of the pandemic was reasonably successful, it created significant security challenges. Remote working may be here to stay, but lax security policies need to go.

"We saw a reaction to the need for people to work remotely, but I don't think we saw a big change in the way employers or employees addressed security," says J.D. Sherman, chief executive of Dashlane, whose web and mobile app simplifies password management for people and

businesses. "The challenge is security is not just a technology problem, it's a human problem.

"As humans, we generally know what the right thing is to do, but sometimes we can't bring ourselves to do it because we're looking for shortcuts. We know we should have complex passwords and change them often, for instance, but it's a headache so we tend not to do it.

"A human behaviour problem is harder to address with technology and it is amplified as people are working from home with lots of online tools, and when work and home blend together."

Dashlane's research found that many people not only have poor security habits, such as using insecure practices to create and track their passwords and other account information, but they also don't feel a significant amount of friction or frustration in doing so. This is a concern for organisations as it suggests employees may not necessarily complain about workplace security policies and procedures; they simply choose not to follow them.

Without a strong security culture or the right tools, many employees view policies as an inconvenience at best. Some 35 per cent of survey respondents said they feel overwhelmed by keeping track of all their account information and logins, and 49 per cent admitted to creating their own tricks and shortcuts for managing logins. More than half of employees said they would feel relieved if they never had to remember another password ever again.

The greater reliance on cloud-based collaboration and sharing tools over the last year has created more instances of employees reusing passwords, connecting via insecure or public wifi and using unpatched devices. This, in turn, creates a bigger attack vector.

Improving security means achieving a better blend between technology and humanity, which ultimately requires tools that align employees' beliefs about security with their online behaviours.

## KEY PREDICTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF SECURITY IN A HYBRID WORKPLACE FROM DASHLANE

### KEY PREDICTION #1: THE WORKPLACE AS WE KNOW IT WILL TRANSFORM AND EMPLOYERS WILL EMBRACE FLEXIBILITY

Only 38% of our respondents spend a significant amount of their waking hours offline

62% say fast access to online services and information is essential to their life

54% seek out ways to make their online experiences more efficient

43% use their mobile devices more than their laptops and desktop computers

64% prefer to take care of things online

### KEY PREDICTION #2: EMPLOYEES WILL SEEK MORE CONVENIENCE, AND BUSINESSES WILL NEED TO SIMPLIFY EMPLOYEES' LIVES

49% create their own tricks and shortcuts for managing logins

45% feel good when a website remembers them and they don't have to type in a password

48% say every website or app they use requires a different set of steps for logging in to their account

### KEY PREDICTION #3: BUSINESSES WILL PIVOT THEIR FOCUS TO CREATE A SECURITY-FIRST CULTURE

63% of respondents said they're proud of their ability to remember things

But

69% retrieve or reset their account passwords at least monthly

Nonetheless, only

26%

feel guilty about reusing a password for multiple accounts

78% of respondents believe it's important to be knowledgeable about online security

82% believe it's their responsibility to safeguard their personal information

81% think it's a bad idea to share passwords or logins with anyone else

27% have personally experienced fraudulent activities to be knowledgeable about online security

The Future of Security in the Hybrid Workplace, Dashlane, 2020

**“The challenge is security is not just a technology problem, it's a human problem**

"Businesses have got to start thinking about security differently," says Sherman. "If you're an IT administrator, you're spending lots of resources protecting your endpoints and infrastructure, building the walls around it to provide security. But most breaches actually happen when they come through the gate rather than the walls.

"How your employees behave and their security habits are the big challenge and that's only amplified as people are working outside the office in a connected environment.

"There are two sides to the equation. One is making employees realise their behavioural shortcuts – sharing, reusing or saving passwords – creates

a security risk. It's the cultural journey of explaining why they need to have better password health and encouraging them to do that. The other side is making it easy for them to live their lives without having to bend over backwards, which means taking the friction out of the process. That's the way businesses must think about closing the gate on their security infrastructure."

The second part of the security culture equation is served through an effective enterprise password manager such as Dashlane, which makes it much easier for employees to do the things their employers want them to do.

With Dashlane, they never have to remember a password again, for example the tool will immediately alert the employee and the administrator if a password has been compromised and then assist them in changing the password. Users can also share passwords in ways that allow colleagues to access an application without actually knowing what the password is. When the colleague leaves the organisation, they don't take those passwords with them.

"The fundamental approach we take is recognising this is a human problem

and we have to help our users along that cultural journey," says Sherman. "For Dashlane, that means being the easiest password manager to use, buy and deploy.

"A password manager for an organisation is only as valuable as the number of people who actually use it, so user experience is very important. We often hear that a customer's spouse used Dashlane at home and then told their own employer to deploy it. People become evangelists of the product.

"We understand what people are trying to do online and the behaviours they're exhibiting, and automate it in a way that's both useful and safe. But the real differentiator is the ease of use and our approach to solving the human problems."

For more information please visit [www.dashlane.com/business](http://www.dashlane.com/business)



Cavan Images/Getty Images

## PROXIMITY BIAS

# Being seen is the new challenge in hybrid working

With more employees working remotely, the negative risks of proximity bias are a rising threat

Bradley Gerrard

The concept of the office is undergoing radical transformation, but there are concerns that workplace bias might not be swept away by all the changes.

Prior to coronavirus, many workers probably experienced presenteeism, the pressure to be in the office for longer hours under the widely held, but usually mistaken, notion that presence equals productivity.

In the new world that's unfolding – a hybrid style of working that balances home-based and office-based hours – a related problem is emerging: proximity bias.

Essentially, if workers are seldom or no longer in the office, how do

they get noticed and get their contribution recognised?

And how do managers overcome their natural and unconscious bias of favouring colleagues who are either in the office with them or collaborating on a project remotely?

Humans employ a cognitive strategy known as heuristics, mental shortcuts to help solve problems and make decisions more quickly.

We use previous experiences, or biases, to assist our judgments about things and although this helps us reach conclusions more quickly, that doesn't mean we always end up with the right answer.

"You perceive your judgment to be logical, but because you're using shortcuts, it might lead you to the wrong assumption," says Ali Shalrooshan, occupational psychologist at workplace solutions provider PSI Services.

In the context of the emerging hybrid working model, Shalrooshan says proximity bias is not so much about being physically present, but about being "seen" or "not seen".

"It's not so much the concept of office/not office but seen/not seen," he says. "The proximity bias people are dealing with is 'if I do not see you out-put I do not value you'. That's the bias I see playing out."

Proximity bias in itself isn't unlawful, says Stephen Ravenscroft, head of employment at law firm Memery Crystal, but the locations people choose to work from may be connected to different types of characteristics that are protected under discrimination legislation.

For instance, people with disabilities might find it easier to work from home, and female workers might be more likely to ask for flexible and remote working as statistically they

are more involved with childcare and home duties.

Of course, proximity bias, real or imagined, can have an effect on anyone. "If someone is feeling like they aren't getting the same opportunities because they're working under a hybrid arrangement or permanently working from home, then the most sensible thing to do is to try and address that directly with their line manager to understand whether their perception is reality or whether there might be other explanations," says Ravenscroft.

If that fails to yield results, then employees could speak to their human resources department or consult the conciliation service ACAS in cases where communication between employee and employer breaks down.

Ravenscroft says while proximity bias is not a widely pervasive issue yet, he expects it to be a "rising concern" as the hybrid way of working becomes more established.

Potential changes to legislation could also have a bearing on this. "It has been proposed the [draft] Employment Bill [due to be debated] this year will make flexible working the kind of expected standard for businesses that can cater for it and the employer will have to show why it isn't appropriate in certain circumstances," Ravenscroft adds.

"That's a 180-degree turn from now, where the employee has to explain why they should be allowed it and the employer has a set of reasons under which they can refuse it."

Employers are likely to have fewer issues if they clearly communicate their plans to employees and ensure there is logic behind any new rules.

It's unlikely all employee requests can be met due to every company's need to strike a balance between profitability, efficiency and employee satisfaction, but genuine attempts to take on board input from workers is likely to lead to a more collegiate working environment.

Sally Todd, partner at flexible working consultants DuoMe, says organisations will have to develop new ways of working to help ensure all team members are "visible".

"If a manager can't rely on people being at their desk now to keep up with what's going on, it will be harder to gauge how people are progressing without systems in place to allow people to document progress, record actions, and share and retrieve work at different times," she says.

The University of Sussex Business School's Dr Emma Russell, whose co-authored book *Agile Working and Wellbeing in the Digital Age* is the first review of research related to the impact of agile working on employees, backs up the point about visibility, suggesting remote workers can feel "professionally isolated".

"In a recent study of lockdown-enforced remote workers, 64 per cent reported weaker bonds with their colleagues and 56 per cent felt less well connected to their employer," says Russell.

Todd believes planning will be critical for organisations to succeed in an emerging new hybrid world. This includes planning scheduled office time to allow colleagues to network, only requesting staff be in the

6.8%

The gap in pay between those who worked mainly at home and those who never worked from home\*

38%

The percentage less likely employees who mainly work from home were to receive a bonus than those who never worked from home\*

<50%

Employees who mainly work from home are less than half as likely to have received a promotion compared to those who mainly work away from home

50%

Employees who change to working mainly at home see their chance of promotion fall by nearly half

\*After controlling for factors such as age, occupation and industry

Office for National Statistics, 2020

office when their presence is vital, and to enable team leaders to engage with remote workers to reduce potential feelings of proximity bias.

Focusing on outcomes rather than hours at a desk, or logged in, is key and allowing employees to work when they want is pivotal for truly flexible working.

During lockdown, some experts have suggested the deluge of meetings on apps such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams means "office hours" have remained the norm, with only workers' locations being different.

In a hybrid world, you want to be reducing the burden of real-time chats or live videos, because they don't work unless everyone uses them at the same time, and as people work in a more hybrid way, they won't want to be doing the same thing at the same time," says Todd. "The notion of office and remote hours not happening at the same time is really critical."

Workplaces that can make that shift, and enable employees to record their input, have a greater chance of thriving in this emerging new world of work. ●

**“You perceive your judgment to be logical, but because you're using shortcuts, it might lead you to the wrong assumption**



TALENT

# Generation exiled: the business risks of discarding young workers

The youngest employees are bearing the brunt of pandemic redundancies, but this trend is likely to create problems for businesses in the longer term

Sam Forsdick

After she was made redundant from her role as a writer for French travel firm Voyage Privé in July, Abigail Lister, 24, found herself “firing off applications for literally any job I could find”. Despite applying for nearly 100 vacancies, she was unable to secure permanent full-time employment. “It just seemed impossible,” says Lister, who estimates she heard back from only 10 per cent of the employers she’d contacted. “So many young people with similar skills were applying for the same jobs.”

Lister has since become a successful freelance writer, but her experience during the coronavirus crisis is not unusual. The number of pay-rolled employees in the UK over the 12 months from March 2020 fell by 813,000, according to the Office for National Statistics. Of this total, 53.7 per cent were aged under 25.

The Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics surveyed just over 10,000 people aged 16 to 65 in the UK between September and October 2020 about their employment experiences during the pandemic. It found that 11.1 per cent of respondents aged 16 to 25 had recently lost their jobs, compared with only 5.3 per cent of those in the second most badly affected age group, the next youngest (26 to 35).

Dr Lee Elliot Major, an associate of the Centre for Economic

Performance and professor of social mobility at the University of Exeter, co-wrote the research report. He warns that the current high levels of youth unemployment could scar a whole generation.

“Evidence suggests that, if you lose a job early in your career, it can cause you to be in insecure employment for many years and permanently damage your lifetime earnings,” says Major.

Such findings are also a concern for Dr Emma Parry, professor of human resource management and head of the Changing World of Work Group at Cranfield University. She agrees there’s a lot of evidence that young people don’t have the same outcomes in the labour market later in life if they have become unemployed early in their careers.

**“Evidence suggests that if you lose a job early in your career it can cause you to be in insecure employment for many years**



She adds that the students who engage with Siemens get an insight of what it’s like to work in an engineering or technology organisation. “There’s a wider agglomeration of benefits to running these kinds of programmes, because they benefit the sector you’re in, as well as your own company,” she says.

As lockdown restrictions are eased, confidence seems to be returning to employers and younger people. A survey published recently by LinkedIn revealed that UK hiring activity was up 22 per cent in April, while 84 per cent of 16 to 34 year olds were feeling optimistic about their career prospects, the highest proportion of all age groups.

LinkedIn’s UK country manager Janine Chamberlin believes many employers need to change their approach to recruitment to bring young talent back in from the cold.

“Instead of looking at how many years’ experience candidates have or the universities they attended, employers should be focusing on skills,” she advises. “This can go a long way towards attracting a much more diverse pool of talent.”

But any recruiter seeking to attract younger workers will still need to demonstrate the values recruits tend to find desirable in an employer, according to Todd.

“Even though they’re having a hard time in the jobs market at the moment, young people remain discerning buyers of employment,” she stresses. “The things these candidates most often ask recruiters about are inclusion and sustainability. Woe betide you if you can’t give them a good account of what you’re doing in those spaces.”



“But, perhaps even more worryingly, an early job loss also has an impact on people’s wellbeing. At the extreme, it can lead to social withdrawal and mental health problems,” she says.

Those aged 16 to 25 are more likely than older people to have been employed in industries worst hit by lockdown restrictions: hospitality, retail and travel, for instance. Added to that, their typically lowly position in the hierarchy has been a key factor in the redundancy selection process of many firms, according to Parry.

“Quite often in organisations, it can be slightly easier to argue in favour of losing entry-level employees, either because they’re not as valued or they have yet to build up working relationships,” she says. “Redundancy decisions shouldn’t be based on any of these factors, of course, but it is something that we do see.”

There is a persuasive business case for keeping young people in

employment. Losing a generation of talent could be crippling for employers in the longer term.

Parry says: “Evidence tells us organisations that invest in their employees during economic downturns are the ones which do better coming out of them.”

Diversity of thought in an organisation has long been shown to have a positive impact on innovation and market growth. For instance, research published in the *Harvard Business Review* in 2013 found that firms with “two-dimensional diversity” – diversity across inherent factors, such as age, race and gender, as well as acquired diversity, such as language skills or cultural fluency – were 45 per cent more likely than those lacking it to have increased their annual market share.

Parry believes any organisation that loses its youngest employees risks reducing its diversity of skills and attitudes, along with the proven benefits these bring.

“There is evidence that younger people have particular characteristics in being more entrepreneurial and more motivated to learn and develop,” she says. “They also bring fresh perspectives and new ideas.”

Apprenticeship schemes offer a route into the workforce for many school-leavers. But such opportunities have decreased markedly, largely because of the COVID crisis. According to official figures, there were 36,700 fewer starts in the first half of the current academic year compared with the equivalent period in 2019-20.

“We know organisations that develop talent pipelines, rather than bringing people in at multiple levels, are often more productive,” says Parry. “They have a more loyal workforce and a more trusting relationship with their employees.”

Siemens is one firm that chose to continue investing in young talent during the pandemic. The British arm of the German manufacturing group took on 176 graduates, interns and apprentices in 2020, for instance. It plans to bring in a further 180 young people through its early careers programme this year.

Valerie Todd, HR director of Siemens UK and Ireland, explains the decision: “Downturns in the market are short lived; the value that young people bring lasts much longer. You need to apply a degree of strategic thinking to maintain your talent pipeline.”

She warns businesses that fail to do this will be left with skills gaps when their more experienced employees leave. “You’re then reliant on recruiting in the open market, where you can face heavy competition with other companies that have done the same. You’ll find

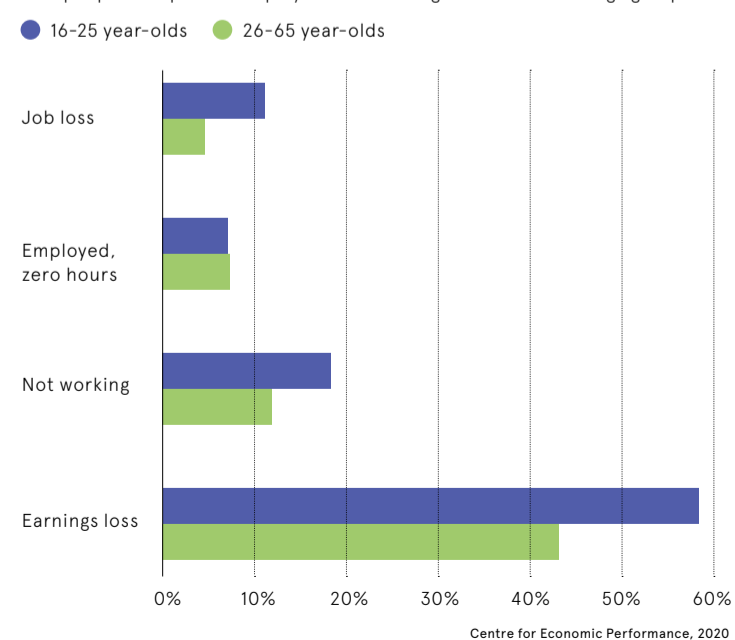
you’re paying an escalated wage bill,” says Todd.

Siemens has built relationships with numerous educational institutions, including the Teach First social enterprise charity, Newcastle University and the University of Sheffield. Its schools engagement programme also involves developing science, technology, engineering and maths resources linked to the national curriculum.

For Todd, who has served as a government adviser on employment and skills, building a strong talent pipeline entails “tapping into communities or individuals who may not previously have thought about your organisation as a potential employer”.

## YOUNG WORKERS HAVE BEEN HIT HARDEST DURING THE PANDEMIC

% of people to report an employment or earnings loss within each age group



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BENEFITS

# Have perks become too paternalistic?

Basecamp boss Jason Fried believes some perks are overstepping the mark when it comes to influencing behaviour, but has opinion on company benefits really changed?

Sam Forsdick

In a controversial intervention by Basecamp chief executive Jason Fried, the company co-founder announced an end to political discussions at work, 360-degree reviews and "paternalistic" benefits. According to Fried, the perks offered by the US software company, which included a fitness benefit, wellness allowance and farmer's market, were essentially telling employees how to lead their lives.

He claims: "By providing funds for certain things, we're getting too deep into nudging people's personal, individual choices. So we've ended these benefits." Instead, Basecamp will now offer staff the monetary value of the perks.

Workplace culture expert and former Twitter vice president Bruce Daisley understands why some people would be reluctant to allow their employers to make semi-moral or attitudinal decisions on their behalf.

Daisley says: "Giving someone a gym membership effectively means you are making a decision for them. I can see how that's a degree controlling. If your partner bought you gym membership, you'd rightfully take some offence at the suggestion being made and why you couldn't make that decision yourself."

However, Gautam Sahgal, chief executive of employee experience platform Perkbox, was surprised by



the timing of the Basecamp boss's announcement.

Perkbox conducted research into the state of employer and employee wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic and found "greater appreciation for the meaningful things money can't buy, and an even greater intolerance for businesses and brands that have failed to support their staff and customers at a time when greater empathy and humanity is needed", says Sahgal.

Although he agrees it should not be the role of an employer to "pontificate and lecture its employees on how best to live their lives", Sahgal adds: "Any employer should provide an effective and relevant engagement system that considers the interests, tastes and lifestyles of its workforce to ensure the benefits system offers something for everyone."

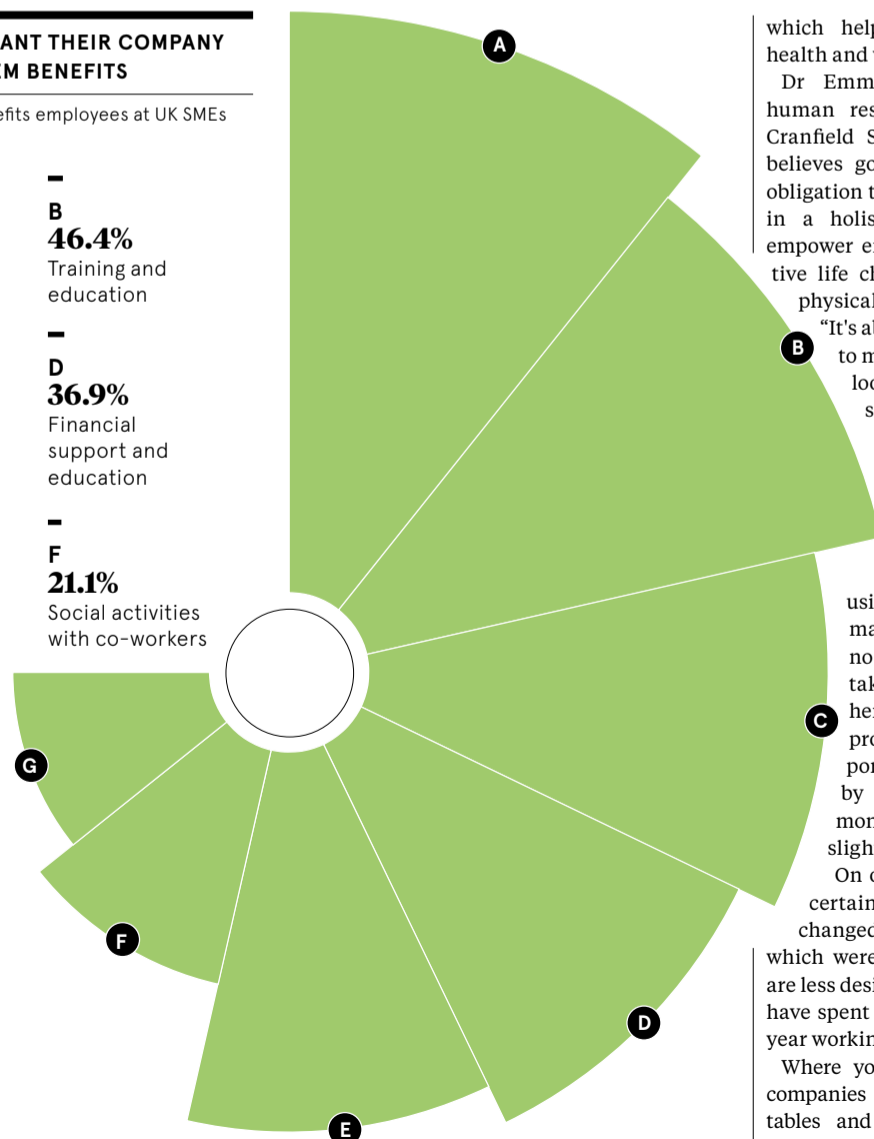
Offering an enticing array of benefits is still an important point of differentiation for employees. According to the Drewberry 2021 Employee Benefits and Workplace Satisfaction Survey, which polled 2,000 workers at UK small and medium-sized enterprises, 22.4 per cent said offering perks helped to attract them to employers when looking for a new job.

Some of the more in-demand benefits included flexible working hours and private healthcare insurance. And despite Fried's assumption that employees no longer want paternalistic perks, 51.1 per cent of employees surveyed said they'd like to see their company introduce benefits

## EMPLOYEES WANT THEIR COMPANY TO OFFER THEM BENEFITS

The types of benefits employees at UK SMEs would most like

- A 51.1%** Health and wellbeing
- B 46.4%** Training and education
- C 40.4%** Rewards, gift discounts and event tickets
- D 36.9%** Financial support and education
- E 33.4%** Insurance policies
- F 21.1%** Social activities with co-workers
- G 17.3%** Charity donations and volunteer work



Drewberry, 2021

which help them manage their health and wellbeing.

Dr Emma Parry, professor of human resource management at Cranfield School of Management, believes good employers have an obligation to look after their people in a holistic sense and should empower employees to make positive life choices on their mental, physical and financial health. "It's about empowering people to make healthy choices and look after themselves," she says. "No one is forcing people to take up a gym membership."

She adds: "If the employer is giving money alongside a conversation about using it to join a gym, then maybe that's different. But no one is forcing people to take up a gym membership here. It's like saying that providing pensions support is being paternalistic by telling people to save money for retirement; it's a slightly unusual view."

On one level, perceptions of certain types of benefits have changed. The office-based perks, which were once in high demand, are less desirable for employees who have spent the majority of the past year working from home.

Where you may have once seen companies offering free food, pool tables and on-site entertainment, employees can now choose from

unlimited annual leave, subscriptions to wellness apps and vacation funds. Research from online jobs search platform Glassdoor reveals 57 per cent of employees felt office-centric perks were less important to them now. The majority (58 per cent) would rather be offered benefits relating to physical and mental wellbeing, private healthcare and access to online therapy in the post-pandemic world.

This means offering employees a broad choice is also important, especially for those working in multi-generational teams. Janine Chamberlin, UK country manager at LinkedIn, says: "I think it's really important for companies to be mindful about the benefits they offer. Perks offered to parents may not be relevant for the younger people in your organisation."

"But equally, by taking benefits off the table completely, companies will stand out less as an employer."

Ken Charman, chief executive of uFlexReward, takes a different approach. The technology startup, which was spun out from Unilever, took the decision to stop offering benefits to maximise the financial compensation offered to its employees.

The decision was also made in an attempt to be more open and fair about pay, as Charman adds: "Most organisations do not include their benefits in pay-gap and pay-ratio calculations, which carries a risk that these perks can be used to conceal bias."

However, there are fears that when benefits are removed, employees may not see their true value reflected in their salaries. Similarly, selecting the right perk offerings can help to make staff feel more valued and develop stronger working relationships. Sahgal says: "Financial incentives and bonus schemes are nice to have and sweeten the deal, but there are a myriad of studies which show how little they help in terms of enhancing productivity or stemming attrition."



Major Tom Agency Unsplash

56%

Companies rated highly on compensation and benefits saw 56% lower attrition

48%

Percentage of talent professionals who say their company should improve compensation and benefits

LinkedIn 2020

Ultimately, Basecamp's experiment with the removal of benefits was not universally well received. Although Fried warned that "some changes take time to steep, settle in and get acquainted with", events quickly spiralled. A company-wide Zoom meeting, aimed at addressing employee concerns about the policy changes, most of which centred on the restriction of political discussions, culminated in a third of Basecamp's staff resigning.

For Sahgal, there should have been no reason for Basecamp's range of perks to be considered paternalistic, "unless it was communicated in such a way that makes staff feel like it's mandatory or judgmental". He adds: "Indeed, if that is a concern, then there are much bigger issues relating to company culture that need to be immediately addressed than the mere implementation or rescinding of a wellness benefit."

## Q&A

# Growing businesses shun old-fashioned offices for themed ecosystems

A curated, collaborative approach to work is enabling companies to thrive, says **Gabriela Hersham** and **Andrew Lynch**, co-founders of creative workspace and accelerator Huckletree



**Q How has the coronavirus pandemic transformed workplace models?**

**AL** The workspace model was already ripe for disruption. Before the pandemic, early trends were indicating the traditional office was dying, as more enterprise businesses began to look for reduced footprints and higher flexibility. COVID-19 accelerated that process. We now know we can all work remotely, but working from your kitchen table cannot be the modern answer to mobility and flexibility. Mobility means variety, working on the go and a schedule of work that is not dependent on office presentism. We're also seeing a steep rise in demand from businesses that want to be part of a wider, relevant network to their industry. Our strongly themed, curated spaces are an extension of home working, used for both productive work and collaboration.

**Q Why is it important employers adapt their workforce model for the new normal?**

**GH** Those who see either remote working or a return to offices as a blanket solution are not looking at it through the lens of productivity and pace. Working from home is fantastic when you have deep work or reflection to do, requiring a lower dial of energy. Our workspaces are about high energy, speed, impact and decisiveness; fast conversations and team connectedness. They're ideal for when you need to kickstart a project, set business targets, problem solve or check in on team progress. The faster employers recognise different environments suit different types of work, the faster they'll accelerate any internal ambiguity, and win the trust and credibility of their workforce. Work from anywhere, but work with intent.

**“ Powered by community, themed models aren't the future of work, they're the here and now ”**

**Q What are your interactions with businesses revealing about how they want to work?**

**AL** It differs by the size and geographical talent make-up of the business. Smaller teams centred in one city were among the first to return to our workspaces, with most wanting part-time access for their full teams. Smaller teams who have adopted a "global talent" policy, meanwhile, are seeing value in bringing team members based in their home city together on a weekly or bi-monthly basis, with offsites planned for strategy days. But the real surprise is in the enterprise and scale-up teams who, while initially hesitant to return to physical workspace, are now scooping up our available spaces in draconian attempts to reduce the size of their real-estate footprints, while giving employees dynamic, exciting places to work from.

**Q How valuable is it for startups to work in collaborative environments?**

**GH** We must carefully consider the random moments of enlightenment that can happen in any day inside our spaces and the meaningful conversations with people in a similar boat or maybe a different one. All businesses,

but particularly collaboration-craving startups, are gravitating to offices which enable that experience through the likes of circle spaces, stand-up zones and open-air spaces. Inside our Huckletree workspaces, we believe in building an ecosystem, not building desks. Our 200,000sq ft of workspaces in the UK and Ireland are themed and curated by sector or industry, which means our member businesses work alongside relevant companies they can partner with, learn from or hire from. Last year we made over 450 introductions across our member businesses, more than any year before.

**Q Where are your workspaces located and which sectors do they cover?**

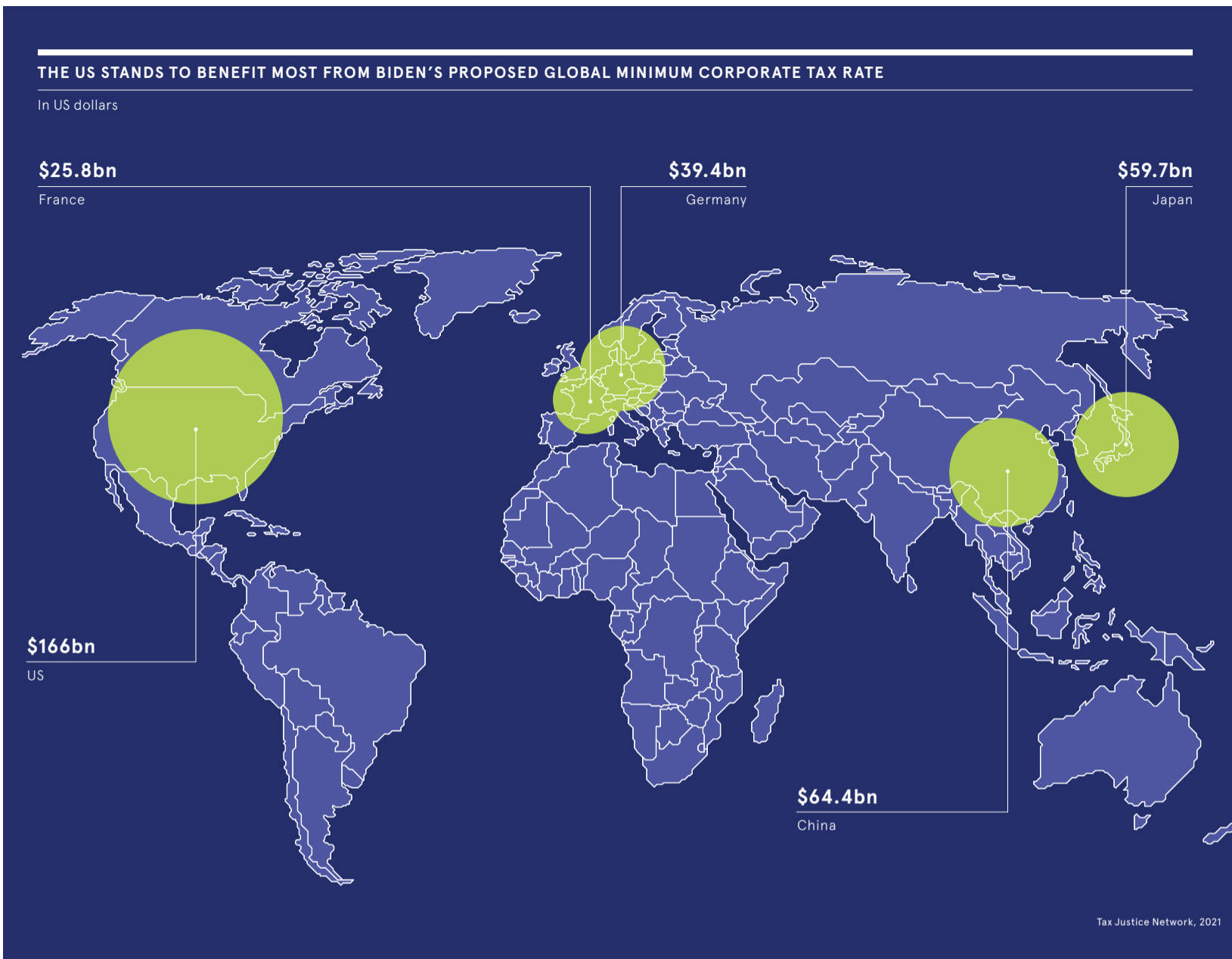
**GH** We're on a mission to build a home of innovation and impact for every industry, with themed hubs across London, Manchester and Dublin. In Soho you'll find a Venture hub for venture capital funds and investors, in Westminster's PUBLIC Hall there's a Govtech hub and our Futures hub in White City is filled with exciting brands in the direct-to-consumer space. We want to help shape the futures of our member businesses, be it through fundraising introductions to our network of more than 150 venture partners, business guidance via our 100 ambassadors from around the world or support with talent development, culture consultancy and education. Powered by community, themed models aren't the future of work, they're the here and now.

For more information please visit [huckletree.com](http://huckletree.com)



“ It's important for companies to be mindful about the benefits they offer. By taking them off the table they stand out less as an employer ”





# TAX

## Could Biden's global minimum corporate tax rate work?

As White House plans to halt profit shifting and eradicate tax havens gain traction, how effective could these be at levelling the economic playing field

Sam Forsdick

**T**he US government's proposal for a global minimum corporate tax rate is gathering momentum, with the European Commission and, more recently, Canadian finance minister Chrystia Freeland voicing their support. Outlined in April by US treasury secretary Janet Yellen, the plans would set a global minimum corporation tax rate of 21 per cent and also force giant multinationals to pay tax in the countries where they sell their goods and services, instead of in the lower-tax jurisdictions to which they have routinely shifted their profits.

Although the US treasury is likely to push for the higher rate, it has signalled that it is willing to compromise. In the latest round of discussions with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), treasury officials set out a 15 per cent global minimum tax as the minimum it would move to in negotiations.

The Biden administration claims the measures would end a race to the bottom in which nations have lured big businesses to their shores by undercutting other countries' corporation tax rates. The UK's top rate has dropped from 26 to 19 per cent over the past decade, for instance. But getting these plans

to work in practice will not be straightforward.

A massive upsurge in profit shifting in recent years has highlighted the need for global co-ordination in reforming the system. So says Alex Cobham, chief executive of the Tax Justice Network, an independent research and advocacy organisation. Pointing to research showing US multinationals went from shifting about 5 per cent of their profits in 1990 to 30 per cent by the 2010s, he says: "You're talking about trillions of dollars a year being shifted: a first-order global economic problem."

The 37 OECD nations have been discussing how to overhaul the tax rules for multinationals for more

“Even if we went to a flat tax, there are too many tentacles for that to be a simple change. If governments want to incentivise certain industries, they can provide tax breaks

than a decade, but Biden's intervention should prove pivotal, according to Cobham.

"This is a massive turning point," he says. "The narrative shift from Yellen and Biden, and their commitment to end the race to the bottom on corporate taxes, is dramatic. In ten years' time, we'll look back on their pronouncements and see it as the moment things shifted."

But much remains in the balance, as widespread co-operation will be required. There has been a commitment to reach a decision on the planned reforms by the July 9 meeting of the G20's finance ministers and central bank governors. "There's probably one shot at someone tabling a proposal that works, both politically and technically," says Cobham.

So far, signs have been positive that an agreement could be reached, with the European Commissioner for Economy Paolo Gentiloni commenting that "in principle" a deal could be reached within the next few weeks.

Ireland, an OECD member, has been one of the more vocal opponents of Biden's proposals. A 12.5 per cent corporate tax rate has helped the country to attract numerous multinational businesses, including Apple and Google. Irish finance minister Paschal Donohoe recently reiterated his desire for "acceptable tax competition" among countries to continue.

Ian Borman, a London-based partner at international law firm Winston & Strawn, sympathises with Ireland's cause. "There's no moral imperative to having a high corporate tax rate. There are just alternative systems," he argues. "All countries set their tax rates to achieve complex outcomes in the real world; these are not just dreamt up."

Irish opposition to a global tax floor may not be enough to prevent its implementation. If the world's largest economies, where the corporate giants make most of their profits, were to agree to the US proposals, that would remove the financial incentive for a multinational business to move to Ireland, as the company would have to pay tax in the countries where its economic activities actually take place.

Cobham believes Ireland should just be left with the multinationals they already have. He says: "There's still a value for them, as the country offers market access, human capital and infrastructure: the real stuff, as it were. In which case, if you're Ireland, why wouldn't you just put your rate up to 21 per cent and take the tax revenue?"

"What's slightly worrying is the Irish government appears to have done nothing to prepare for the new world that might be just around the corner. If your entire business model is about to go, you should probably be doing some planning."

Dr Marcel Olbert, assistant professor of accounting at London Business School whose research focuses on the effects of corporate taxation, says there may not be an immediate reaction from multinationals in Ireland should the Biden reforms be implemented.



"It's important to remember that taxes aren't everything," he stresses. "Dublin is a huge hub for tech companies, so a rate change probably wouldn't cause a mass exodus. But it will affect corporate decisions in the future, because research has shown businesses do react to fiscal incentives."

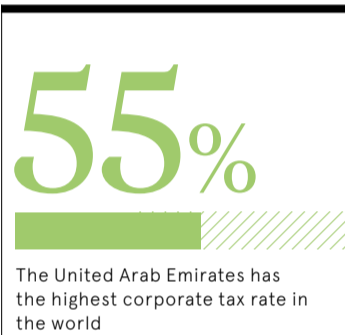
Olbert believes territories with the strongest economic activity have the most to gain from the Biden reforms. "It's logical to project that countries with large consumer markets in Europe, such as Germany, France and Italy, would benefit the most," he says. "On a more global scale, it would mean a lot of tax revenue could be allocated to India and China too."

Business leaders may even appreciate the implementation of a higher standard rate of corporation tax, argues Olbert, who explains: "Many digital companies are concerned about the introduction of digital services taxes across Europe. Having different regulations between countries increases their compliance costs, so some multinationals might actually welcome a co-ordinated approach. Investors also like certainty, so global co-ordination on tax policy is probably more valuable than a slightly lower rate to corporate decision-makers."

But James Mastracchio, partner and co-leader of Winston & Strawn's tax controversy practice in Washington, believes it would be highly unlikely that the reforms, if implemented, would produce all the outcomes desired by their proponents.

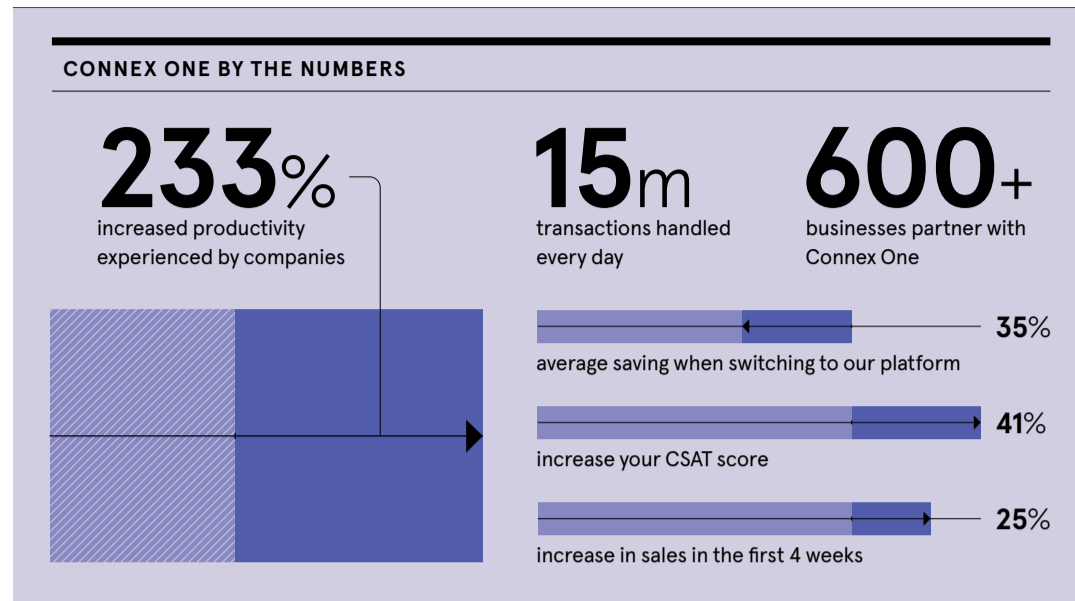
He says: "Even if we went to a flat tax, there are too many tentacles for that to be a simple change. If governments want to incentivise certain industries, they can provide tax breaks. For example, tech companies get a favourable outcome when they invest in R&D. There are lots of competing concerns, so something that may look very simple would, in fact, be enormously complicated."

Another potential stumbling block is the so-called "Amazon



issue". The tech giant's relatively low profit margins mean that it could find itself exempt under current plans which would only require the 100 "largest and most profitable" multinationals to pay taxes where its consumers are located.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak referenced this issue when stating he wanted more assurances such as US tech companies would be covered before supporting Biden's planned reform. Cobham claims that the Amazon problem may make it "politically unacceptable" for many OECD countries. "Maybe somebody can work out how to make the total 101 multinationals to ensure Amazon is included," he says. ●



## The hidden profitability of CX wellbeing

Nick Mealey, CEO and founder of cloud customer engagement platform Connex One, reveals how some companies have experienced a 233% increase in productivity

**Q** Through all the disruption to workforce models over the last year, what has defined the organisations which have thrived?

**A** Organisations that have excelled through the pandemic have been those which have adopted a cloud-based work solution that keeps customers and employees happy and engaged while ensuring both quality and security remains a high priority. Being scalable and adaptable has been incredibly important, but organisations that were not cloud-based struggled to achieve these attributes when employees started working from home during the lockdown.

The future of work will rely heavily on technology that transcends the increase in volumes of digital-based interactions and can provide a true understanding of customer intention and satisfaction, ensuring companies can adapt and thrive in an evolving market.

**Q** What will great customer engagement look like in the post-pandemic world of work?

**A** In an age of instant gratification, users demand good quality and prompt customer service, or they go elsewhere. Customer retention and nurture is the pinnacle for any organisation, particularly in a sales or support environment. Connex One innovations such as Athena Interaction & Sentiment AI Analysis provide an accurate measurement for CSAT scores, as well as providing businesses with visibility on staff politeness and opportunities to upsell through key phrase analysis and entity recognition. Most consumers want to be able to communicate across various platforms, whilst achieving a prompt resolution to their query. An omnichannel solution facilitates just that: communication over multiple channels

including email, WhatsApp, live chat, and voice. With all communication integrated into one singular place, it makes it easier for the customer service operator to pick up directly from where they last left off. What's more, by opening up different inbound channels for communication, companies are afforded insights into demographical preferences which can positively impact the success rate of future campaigns.

**Q** What role will artificial intelligence play in maintaining strong customer engagement?

**A** AI is becoming increasingly important for customer engagement strategies, especially for monitoring customer satisfaction on interactions. This enables businesses to understand why they are losing or gaining customers through detailed interaction and sentiment analysis, and ensuring agents follow mandatory process flows. AI-based skills routing also plays a key role, allowing customers to quickly and seamlessly reach agents that are best skilled and suited for their needs, saving time and frustration. Chatbots can streamline customer support, allowing for quick answers or transferring to an agent for more complicated inquiries.

**Q** How is Connex One helping companies achieve these customer and employee benefits?

**A** Connex One is a new age omnichannel platform, facilitating smooth customer journeys with clever API routing through a secure and compliant Omnichannel engine, whilst retaining that personal touch. New features mean that customer-centric organisations can balance pace with peace of mind as they can engage with multiple tickets at once in a controlled, managed, and most importantly: user friendly way.

Gamification is a breath of fresh air in terms of employee engagement. In a traditionally high-pressure world of customer service, Gamification turns the stick into a carrot and empowers individuals to become self-motivated to achieve targets. Sales and Customer Service teams facilitate high volumes of interactions which demands constant top-of-your-game performance for every single interaction. By creating fun, engaging challenges that incentivises positive behaviours, our clients see an instant increase in productivity and staff retention. Our customers have seen a 35% average saving when switching to our platform. One of our financial services clients were able to boost their productivity by 233% after adopting Gamification, driving over £1 billion of revenue.

Equally, Gamification is a strong tool for companies to ascertain their team's wellbeing, identifying when agents might be struggling and allowing managers or team members to reach out and offer support. A simple "are you ok?" can change a life, and it's important for employees to feel that they are part of a team, even if they are apart.

Through our powerful next generation technology, we can give companies the capabilities they need to revolutionise their customer engagement strategy. This ripples positivity throughout the business, impacting everything from their internal teams, to CSAT scores, to the bottom line.

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