

People Management

June 2021

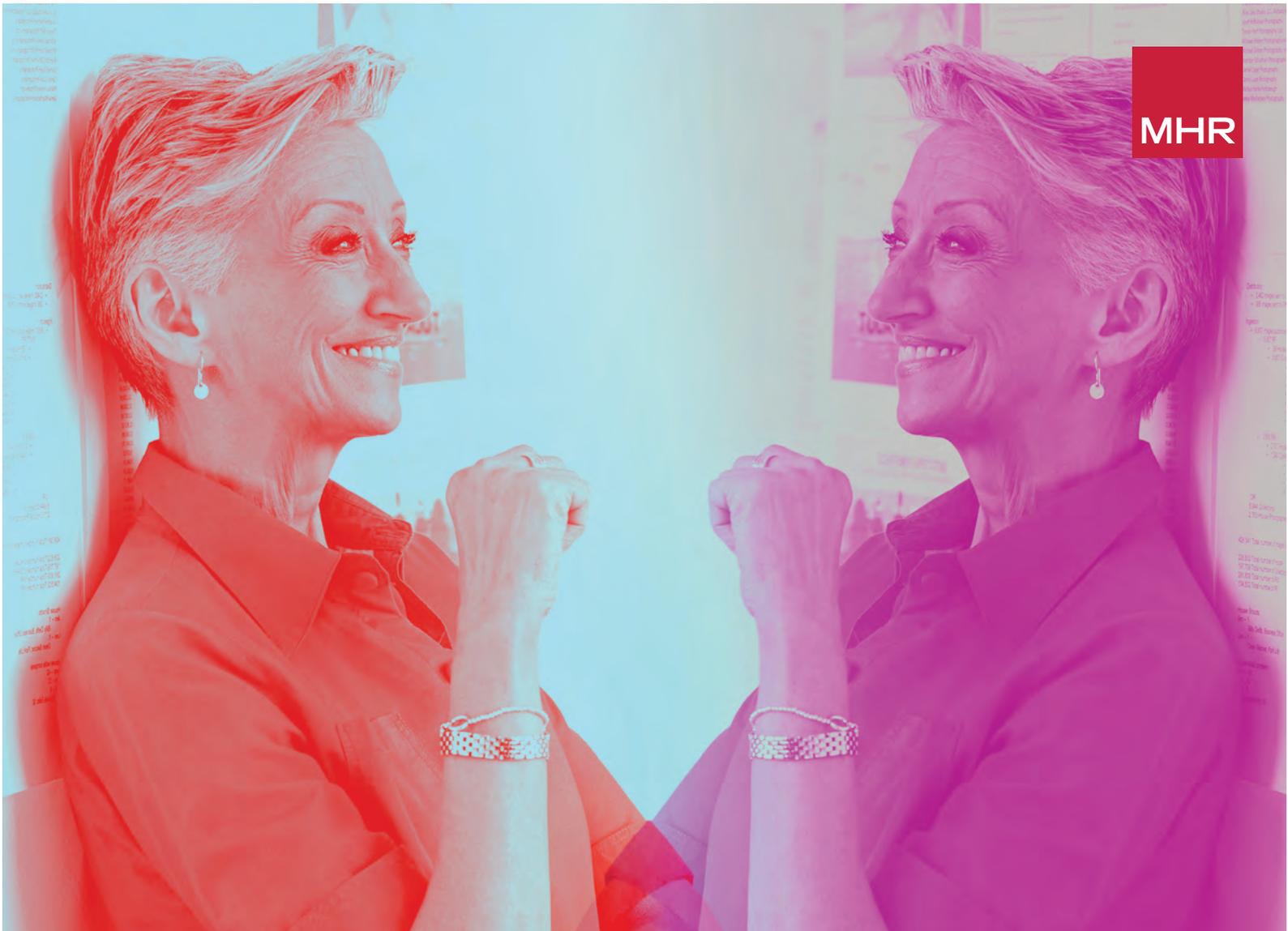


MUTANT
RATS
IN THE
OFFICE



And other pressing return-to-work problems

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Contents

June 2021

Whether it's a reluctance among staff to return or mutant rats taking over your workplace (see page 9), reopening offices on a more permanent basis over the coming months is unlikely to be without its teething problems. In this issue's return to the office special, we've honed in on several key aspects of welcoming employees back, and asked more than 500 of your HR peers about their plans for implementing flexible working, creating collaboration spaces and much more.

Eleanor Whitehouse **Acting editor**

News & analysis

Welcome from the CIPD p5

This month we've learned... p6

NEWS: Back to the office? p8

PLUS The Queen's speech; right to work checks

Legal lowdown p14

Columnist Claudine Charles p17

Case studies

Willmott Dixon p18

Kingston Hospital NHS FT p20

OnSide Youth Zones p23

Features

COVER **Going back to work – safely** p24

Why you need to put wellbeing front and centre

The end of the office as we know it? p27

Firms are shaking up how they use their physical spaces after Covid

Why hybrid still needs to be inclusive p31

A mix of home and office could disadvantage some staff

How you're dealing with reopening p34

People Management readers share their experiences

Interview: Dr Anastasia Dedyukhina p36

The digital wellbeing expert on tech and productivity

The multibillion-dollar firm with no people team p38

Why some businesses choose to forgo the function – and what HR can do about it

HR's guide to collaboration software p42

We compare a range of platforms on offer

Career path

Who I am Naomi Fergus p49

Reviews p50

The Fixer p53

People and posts p54

Research p57

CIPD Focus p58

Could HR solve...? Bridesmaids p62

p18



p27



p31



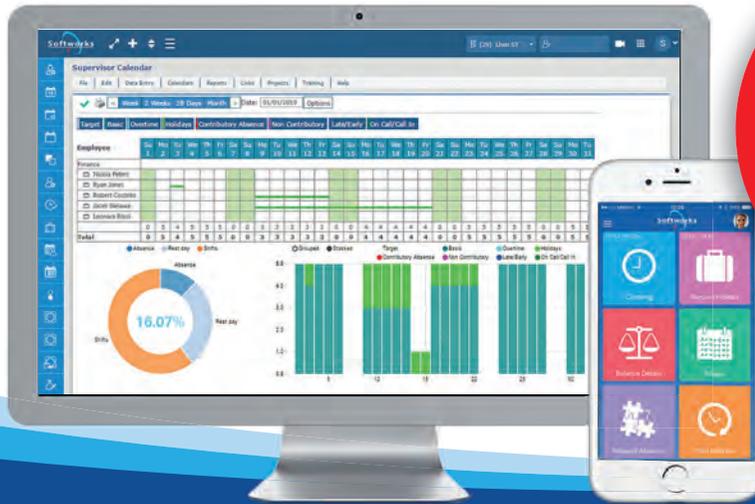
p36

p38



p49

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Welcome

from the CIPD

The uncertainties of 'what next?'



Peter Cheese
Chief executive

There is growing confidence in many countries that we are getting on top of the pandemic, so the debate now is turning to 'what next?' What next in how we can learn from it and embed more flexible working patterns? What next in the economic recovery and what that will look like? And what next for the long shadow it has created in people's wellbeing and how we may have to adapt over the longer term to contain this virus, or possibly others like it?

focus on all our people managers. They must be supported and trained in how they adapt to work with their teams, who could be working in quite different ways. Organisations haven't done enough of this in the past, but we have to embed consistency of approach and

principles, or issues of unfairness could become manifest.

These will be real factors in organisations' ability to attract and retain staff in what is expected to be a significant amount of churn in the labour market in the coming months. More flexible working opportunities can be good for people's wellbeing and for inclusion and, as we have seen, can also help people be more productive. Making these changes stick will be what determines how we use the pandemic as a catalyst for real and positive change in many of the age-old patterns and paradigms of work for the future.

We have a responsibility to learn from this crisis and use it as a stimulus for change. The people profession will again be front and centre. We recognise this responsibility at the CIPD and our role in supporting our profession, but also in helping to challenge and guide the thinking across policy and business more broadly. The CIPD's upcoming Festival of Work will focus on these issues of embracing new ways of working, in developing the workforce of the future, and in the changes driving to more responsible and sustainable businesses for the long term.



p31



In many ways, these questions are more complex and uncertain than how we had to adapt to the pandemic in the first place. Although the early guidance wasn't always clear, the decisions we had to make about social distancing and working from home if we could were unequivocal. And for those who had to continue to attend their places of work, we had to make sure we did all we could to protect them. Our health systems had to respond by prioritising their Covid response, and governments jumped in to try to save jobs and provide individual financial support, even as the economy faltered.

Now there are many more variables to consider. There is a great expectation that working patterns will change – housing markets in more rural locations are already heating up, and CIPD surveys, along with many others, indicate that people want more choice in how and where they work. How we respond in meeting individual expectations and the practicalities of hybrid working, the issues of fairness, inclusion and equity, and seeing that there is no 'one size fits all' solution, will take time to understand. Flexible working also needs to be thought of for those who have to be in places of work to do their jobs. We will have to learn and adapt as we go. There won't be manuals to explain what to do, and it's very important we don't start writing lots of rules and policies, but instead work first and foremost from principles.

Critical will be maintaining engagement and dialogue with our people throughout this journey. But we must also particularly

HANNAH J TAYLOR; TOM MERTON/GETTY IMAGES



Businesses should be considering how those who cannot work from home can still benefit from flexible working

This month we've learned...

The big lesson



Maya Forstater claims the Center for Global Development chose not to renew her contract after she expressed anti-trans opinions

{Pay & reward}

Home workers get fewer bonuses

Woody Allen once claimed 80 per cent of success is showing up. In a later interview, he conceded the actual figure was probably somewhere above 60 per cent, but that “the extra syllable in 70 ruins the rhythm of the quote”. However, recent figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggest he might have been right the first time – home working negatively affects both earnings and career progression.

The ONS found that, between 2013 and 2020, people who worked from home were on average 38 per cent less likely to have received a bonus compared to those who never worked from home. Similarly, the analysis showed that, between 2012 and 2017, people who mainly worked from home were less than half as likely to be promoted.

Sarah Loates, founder of Loates HR Consultancy, warned that the figures demonstrated an “often overlooked” downside of a hybrid working: the potential for a “two-tier system” of employment to emerge. “People who work from home more could potentially lose out on projects that could enhance their CVs and increase their chances of promotion,” she said.

{Employment law}

Protect ‘gender critical’ views

Managing controversial issues is a difficult task for employers, and they need to ensure their workplaces are safe and inclusive. But when might a controversial or unpopular opinion be protected under equality law?

This question was partly answered by the UK’s equalities watchdog when it intervened in an Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) last month, submitting evidence that the ‘gender critical’ view that trans women are men and trans men are women is a protected opinion.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) provided evidence in support of Maya Forstater, who is arguing that the Center for Global Development chose not to renew her contract because she expressed anti-trans views on social media. Among other things, Forstater said trans women were male and individuals should not be “compelled to play along with literal delusions like ‘trans women are women’”.

“Educating workers on the lived experience of trans people is key”

While the EHRC said it was not taking a position on whether the decision not to renew Forstater’s contract was unlawful, it did say Forstater’s views were a philosophical belief protected under the Equality Act, warning that a ruling against her “could leave people unprotected from discrimination and harassment” and restrict freedom of speech on debates over transgender rights.

However, the EHRC also said there was a “difference between holding a belief and how that belief is manifested” and that this did not mean anti-trans comments should be “free from consequence”.

Leanne Raven, senior employment lawyer at Stephenson Harwood, said if the EAT did find in favour of Forstater it could invite more open debate about trans issues, which businesses would need to prepare for. “A key tool is educating the workforce about the lived experience of trans people and providing quality training on gender identities and surrounding issues,” she said.

Add as Friend

Making friends at work could boost your bank balance

{Pay & reward}

Want a pay rise? Just ask your colleagues

Are you good friends with your colleagues? If not, now might be the time to start changing that – because they could be the ones deciding your next pay rise.

10Pines, a technology firm based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is allowing its 85 members of staff to set each other's salaries.

The firm, which produces software for companies including Starbucks and Burger King, holds three annual 'rates meetings' where anyone apart from

new starters on probation can put themselves forward for a pay rise. These salary decisions are then openly debated and decided. "Since there are no bosses to decide raises, we delegate power to the people," Jorge Silva, one of the firm's co-founders, told the BBC, stressing that the transparency wasn't about equality but about fairness. "We are not all equals, but we try to be fair," he said. The company also shares 50 per cent of its profits every year among staff.

{Health & wellbeing}

Jabs lifting confidence

With the vaccination rollout well under way, employees are becoming more confident about the return to work.

In a poll of more than 2,000 employed adults across the UK, conducted by Aviva at the end of March, 71 per cent said the vaccine rollout made them optimistic about returning to their workplace as normal. This was up from just 50 per cent at the end of November last year.

The majority of those polled said they would be

comfortable taking a Covid test before returning to work (75 per cent), compared to just 7 per cent who said they would feel uncomfortable, while 80 per cent said they were confident their employer would maintain standards to keep them and the general public safe in their workplace.



Andy Bell says employers must better support employee mental health; the EHRC has said Maya Forstater's views are protected under the Equality Act

{Flexible working}

Take-up of flex drops

Despite the wholesale move to remote working triggered by the pandemic, many workers are missing out on the benefits of other forms of flexible working. CIPD analysis of the ONS's *Labour Force Survey*, which polled 74,832 people from October to December 2020, showed a decline in the use of all types of flexible hours arrangements, such as part-time, flexi-time and annualised hours. Between April-June 2020 and October-December 2020, the use of part-time working fell from 28.3 per cent to 27.6 per cent,

and take-up of flexi-time dropped one percentage point to 12.6 per cent.

These figures contrasted those for home working, which increased from 7.8 per cent to 10.1 per cent during the same period, and almost doubled from 5.3 per cent to 10.1 per cent between the last quarter of 2020 and January-March 2021. The data also highlighted unmet demand for flexibility. Nearly one in 10 workers polled (9.3 per cent) said they would prefer to work shorter hours and accept the associated pay cut.

{Health & wellbeing}

One in five experienced depression this year

Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) have revealed that 19 per cent of employed adults experienced some form of depression between January and March this year, with rates of depression in adults more than double pre-pandemic levels.

The data also showed low earners were most likely to experience depressive symptoms. Of those who said they would be unable to afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £850, a third (35 per cent) said they experienced some form of depression in the first three

months of the year, compared to just 13 per cent of those who reported being able to afford this expense. Similarly, workers with incomes of less than £10,000 a year had the highest rates of depressive symptoms (37 per cent) when compared with all higher-income groups.

Andy Bell, deputy CEO of the Centre for Mental Health, said employers needed to adapt their ways of working to better support their staff's mental health: "This should include creating an open and supportive culture about mental health at work, giving people more control over how and when they return to 'normal' locations and practices, training managers in mental health literacy and adapting policies around our changed circumstances."

They'll be back (fingers crossed)

With employees set to return to offices in the summer, employers must toe the line between encouragement and coercion

WORDS FRANCIS CHURCHILL

If anyone was in doubt over when the advice to work from home would end, they now hopefully have a bit more certainty.

Assuming there are no hiccups in the current roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions – which has already seen the return of non-essential shops, indoor dining and visits to other people's houses – from 21 June the government will no longer advise people to work from home if possible.

But of course there were multiple reasons to be doubtful. In the middle of May, news broke that Sage – the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, the government's scientific advisory body – was warning against a return to the office

this summer as it could cause a third wave of the virus, and recommended workers continue to work from home for the foreseeable future. Employers were told to brace for indefinite home working, but three days later the prime minister outlined his plans to end the work from home advice.

Asked in parliament to confirm the change, Boris Johnson said: "That is certainly our intention, providing we stay on track. But I want to be sure that people will wait until we're able to say that with more clarity later on, because we must be guided by what's happening with the pandemic." What's more, the "dynamism" of cities

"Enforcing remote work could see the benefits of flexi-work lost"

like London and elsewhere "depended on people being able to have confidence to go to work", he said, before adding: "I think it will come back. I think it could come back

remarkably quickly, but it does depend on keeping the virus down."

And rules permitting, there are good reasons to start encouraging employees back to the workplace. Nearly one in five employed adults (19 per cent) experienced some form of depression between January and March this year, figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed last month,

News & analysis

with rates of depression in adults more than double pre-pandemic levels. While going back to the workplace certainly won't be a panacea for this, a return to normality – be it seeing colleagues again or simply being able to return to work – will surely help many. Tellingly, low earners and those who are financially unstable had higher rates of depression.

But employers need to walk a line – workers need to be welcomed into the office, but not pressured into going back when they don't feel safe. While many businesses are certainly thinking about how they can implement remote or hybrid working in the long term – a BBC poll of 50 of the largest UK employers, collectively employing 1.1 million people, found that 43 firms planned to use a mixture of home and remote working going forward – Clare Kelliher, professor of work and organisation at Cranfield School of Management, urges organisations not to rush to remove access to workplaces.

While it is positive that businesses are exploring ways to maintain this form of flexible working as lockdown

restrictions ease, Kelliher points out that some employees' experiences of remote working made them keener than others to return to the office. "If some remote working becomes enforced, rather than chosen by employees, it is likely that the many benefits available to employers of offering flexible working will not materialise," she says.

Ultimately, says Mike Robinson, chief executive of the British Safety Council, it's up to businesses to decide when and whether employees return to the workplace based on their operations, so long as they are compliant with government regulations. But, argues Louise Aston, wellbeing director at Business in the Community, these decisions should be made not just on what makes sense for the business, but also what is best for individual workers. "Giving employees the opportunity to individualise their jobs and participate in work interventions can support wellbeing, engagement and productivity, fuelling

both business and social benefits," says Aston.

On the whole, it appears that the workforce is becoming more confident about a return to the workplace, emboldened at least in part by the success of the vaccine programme. In an Aviva poll of 2,000 UK employees at the end of March, almost three-quarters (71 per cent) said the

vaccine rollout made them optimistic about returning to work as normal, up from just 50 per cent at the end of November last year. Business is confident too – both the most recent *Labour Market Outlook*

from the CIPD and the latest ONS figures show vacancies are up and job confidence is at a record high. But, says Ben Willmott, head of public policy at the CIPD: "There will be just as many who would rather continue to work from home or in a more flexible way for a range of reasons.

"Employers should be seeking to meet individuals' working preferences as far as possible while ensuring that the needs of the organisation are fully met."

"Allowing staff to individualise their jobs can support wellbeing"



There's a rat in the office

Lots of us got new pets to keep us company during lockdown, but a less cuddly and far less welcome critter has apparently been taking over our workplaces while we've been at home.

According to the British Pest Control Association and reported in *Wired*, rat sightings by its members hit a 78 per cent increase in October 2020, with deserted offices providing a rodent-friendly mix of warmth and silence as winter set in.

Some have even genetically mutated to become resistant to poisons used by pest controllers, making them impossible to exterminate using traditional methods. "Rats are having a whale of a time [because] they have stayed in offices and been left undisturbed," pest.co.uk director Jonathan Ratcliffe told *Wired*.



The increase in internet searches for joining the police while series six of *Line of Duty* was being televised

SOURCE: DEBUT

Returning in numbers

We asked *People Management* readers about their plans, and how their staff feel about going back

44%

say their workforce is concerned about contracting Covid on public transport

9%

are mandating office attendance and would consider legal action against those who refuse

57%

plan to introduce training on their Covid guidelines for those returning from home working

44%

say their employees are worried about returning to more structured hours

57%

say their workforce is worried about the extra time taken up by commuting

13%

say their staff are concerned about looking after a new pet when they return to the office

40%

are allowing staff to go into the office on days chosen by them after reopening



The government's focus on skills and retraining, revealed in the Queen's speech, was praised by many

Government promises to 'level up' skills

Retraining and upskilling were front and centre at the state opening of parliament – but apprenticeship levy reform was conspicuous by its absence

WORDS CALUM TRENAMAN

The government's roadmap set out in the Queen's speech last month made a big promise to workers. If you want to retrain, reskill and take a new career path, you can do so. As part of the government's 'levelling up' agenda, the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill was introduced to parliament on 18 May and promises to "support a lifetime skills guarantee". At any point in people's lives, a flexible loan for higher-level education and training – whether full time or part time, technical qualifications or academia – will be available.

Additionally, the restructured skills system will put employers at the centre of skills provision through a 'skills accelerator programme'. The government hopes this will build stronger partnerships between employers and local colleges or training providers, ensuring that local needs are met in sectors such as construction, digital, clean energy and manufacturing. The bill also allows the government to intervene in places of education or training if required standards are not being met.

The announcement was hailed by many, with the government praised for placing skills and retraining at the forefront of its plan for the pandemic recovery. Indeed, young people were among the hardest hit by the coronavirus crisis: in April this year, data from the Office for National Statistics showed that the under-25s accounted for more than half (54 per cent) of job losses in the past year. Ann Francke, chief executive of the Chartered Management Institute, said she was "delighted to

see the Queen's speech focus on skills", calling it the "right priority in a post-Brexit, post-pandemic UK".

But for many, there was an elephant in the room – the apprenticeship levy, the reform of which is on top of many employers' wishlists, was not even mentioned. "Without a fundamental rethink of the apprenticeship levy, plans to boost employer engagement with local education and training providers are likely to be fatally undermined," says Ben Willmott, head of public policy at the CIPD. "The levy is failing to deliver the right results for learners and employers. We need an effective skills system more than ever if the government's 'levelling up' agenda is to succeed."

The levy, which was introduced in 2017 to improve the provision of apprenticeships as an alternative to university, takes 0.5 per cent of the salary bill from all employers that spend more than £3m annually on wages. The government then tops this up by 10 per cent, and the fund is kept for that employer to use on apprenticeships. Funds that aren't used by the employer within two years expire and are passed back to the government.

But freedom of information requests by the CIPD have revealed that businesses missed out on nearly £2bn worth of levy funds in the last two years, as this was reclaimed by the Treasury because it was unspent. This was despite employers doubling the amount they were spending on generic management apprenticeships in an attempt to use up money they had put into the pot. All of this is at a time when official government figures show the number of apprenticeships going to young people under the

age of 19 fell by 8 per cent, and less than a quarter (24 per cent) of apprenticeship starts so far in 2020-21 have been among the under-19s.

"A more flexible training levy would enable employers to invest in other forms of accredited training and development, and would maximise opportunities for employers to work with local further education colleges and universities," says Willmott.

The government has proposed to make the apprenticeship system more flexible in some ways, but not the way that most businesses were hoping for. In April, the government unveiled a new flexible apprenticeship scheme that would allow apprentices to work across multiple projects with different employers. Under the

Department for Education's proposed flexi-job apprenticeship schemes, instead of working for 12 months or more with a single employer, apprentices would be allowed to work across a range of projects and with different employers as part of the same qualification. The proposals would enable sectors with flexible employment patterns and short-term roles, such as construction, agriculture and the creative industries, to create more opportunities for younger workers.

However, Lizzie Crowley, senior skills adviser at the CIPD, is concerned the proposals won't go far enough, saying that many sectors where project-based work is the norm struggle to host full apprenticeships, meaning young people are missing out on a "crucial pathway into the labour market". "The government needs to go further than tinkering with apprenticeship flexibility and reform the apprenticeship levy, which the evidence shows is restricting the number of apprenticeships going to young people and undermining employer investment in skills more widely," she says.

"The levy is failing to deliver for learners and employers"



An unexpected bonus

Employees of West Midlands Trains recently received an unanticipated windfall – or so they thought.

Staff clicking through from a 'thank you' email purporting to be from MD Julian Edwards offering a bonus for those who had run trains during the pandemic were instead emailed back telling them it was actually a 'phishing simulation test' and there was no bonus.

A spokesperson for the operator said: "We take cybersecurity very seriously. We run regular training and it's important to test your resilience."

"Be kind, because you are all no better than the cleaner"

A cleaner leaves a note for her 'aggressive and cruel' boss on her last day before retiring

45%

of workers are in favour of a 'dogs in the office' policy

SOURCE: POWWOWNOW

The Queen's speech at a glance

The Skills and Post-16 Education Bill was just one of the work-related announcements in the Queen's speech last month. Here's what else is on the agenda for this parliament:

- **Green jobs:** the government has brought in legislation to build on the industrial decarbonisation strategy, introduced in March, which promises to create

80,000 green jobs over the next 30 years.

- **National insurance relief for 'freeports':** the government announced the National Insurance Contributions Bill, which will provide businesses at eight previously announced freeports relief from national insurance contributions. The bill will

also provide relief to employers of veterans.

- **Diversity:** following the controversial findings of the Sewell report on racial inequality, many groups were expecting an announcement. But there was only a passing mention that "measures will be brought forward to address racial and ethnic disparities".

In-person right to work checks on hold – for now

Government extends deadline after backlash from employers and business groups

Employers worried about resuming in-person right to work checks while still operating remotely have been given a temporary reprieve. Following a backlash from employers and business groups, the Home Office announced a temporary U-turn extending the Covid rules that allow employers to use video calls and accept scans or

photographs of documents when checking whether individuals are legally allowed to work in the UK.

The return to in-person checks, which was initially billed to happen on 17 May, will now come into force on 21 June – the same day the government plans to drop its work from home guidance, as long as infection rates are still under control. The Home

Office said the change was “aligned with the easing of

lockdown restrictions and social distancing measures”.

One of the biggest concerns for employers over in-person checks is the risk of discrimination claims arising from candidates or potential employees unable to show their documents in person. This is a risk the government is aware of: official guidance urges businesses to “take extra care to ensure no one is discriminated against as a job applicant or employee because they are unable to show you their documents”.

However, the extension only kicks the problem down the road. “The way people are working now is not the same as it was before the pandemic,” says Andrew Osborne, head of immigration at Lewis Silkin. “The logistical issues for handling valuable documents where one or both parties are remote working are not going to go away by 21 June.

“The government needs to put structures in place to deal with the remote working trend,

ideally moving away from relying on physical documents and conventional workplaces,” says Osborne, adding that this would also be important for other areas of immigration compliance.

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation and the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCO) – both of which lobbied the Home Office for more time – also called for more permanent reform. “We had hoped that the Home Office would prioritise the expansion of digital

checks – a process much more suitable for the modern world of flexible work,” says Tania Bowers, legal counsel and head of public policy at APSCO, adding that returning to physical checks was not necessarily safer: “People are not as good as technology is at spotting fraudulent documents.”

But Gillian McKearney, head of UK immigration at Fieldfisher, says there are currently no signs a permanent change is on the way, and urges employers to continue their preparations for in-person checks. “It’s key to note that businesses should still press on with reimplementing procedures for the end of remote checks,” she says. “This extension has only delayed the issue of potential discrimination against prospective candidates who are unable to show employers their official documents.”

“People are not as good as tech is at spotting fraudulent documents”

Experts believe the government should move away from relying on physical documents in the remote working age



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Addison Lee refused appeal on drivers' employment status after Uber ruling

Court of Appeal decides case has no reasonable chance of success

It was only a matter of time before the ripples of February's landmark Supreme Court ruling on Uber were felt by the rest of the gig economy – it just happened to be Addison Lee that was first to feel the effects. Last month the private hire company had its appeal in a similar case thrown out by the Court of Appeal on the basis that, following the precedent set by the Uber case, it had no reasonable chance of success.

The Court of Appeal denied Addison Lee's request to appeal a 2017 employment tribunal decision that its drivers were dependent contractors. The tribunal found there was an overarching contract between the firm and its drivers, and that drivers met the statutory definition of workers because they were personally agreeing to work whenever they logged on to their device, a ruling that was upheld by the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

The Court of Appeal said the Uber ruling had "emphatically reaffirmed" that, when contracts are opposite to the realities of an employer-employee relationship, they should be disregarded in favour of legal statute. The court added that Addison Lee's case was "not innovative" and would have had a different outcome to the case put forward by Uber.

Leigh Day, the law firm representing the drivers in the case, has said it believes

thousands of Addison Lee drivers could be entitled to an average of £10,000 each in compensation as a result of the judgment. "We hope companies with similar business models to Uber and Addison Lee recognise that they cannot continue to deny people basic rights," said Liana Wood, a solicitor in the firm's employment team, adding that the decision was "yet another blow to big firms operating in the gig economy".

Derek Cribb, CEO of the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed, said the ruling was another sign that the government "urgently" needed to introduce clear rules around self-employment. "This is the true source of the confusion in the gig economy: that while there is a definition of employee and worker status in UK law, there is still no clear definition of who exactly is self-employed," said Cribb. "We cannot continue in a situation where the only way to define self-employment is through court case after court case."

An Addison Lee spokesperson said this was an historic case regarding drivers who were no longer in the company's employment, and it had since changed its working practices and the way it engages with drivers.

Addison Lee could still appeal its case to the Supreme Court.

Harassment claim after 'coloured' remark dismissed

A cleaner's claim for harassment related to race after an older colleague's use of the term 'coloured' to describe customers was dismissed after the judge ruled the term was not used with "any other negative connotations that might have disclosed prejudice".

The judge added that the outdated term was used because it was believed to be less offensive than referring to the customers as 'black', and that the language was once used by people of a "certain age" who "genuinely felt it to be a polite term".

Ryan Justin was employed by facilities management company Atlas to undertake cleaning services at PureGym in Derby from 18 December 2019 until his resignation on 8 February 2020. On 5 February 2020, Justin noticed a colleague, Markham Pell, had left a note in the company's comment book that said "three coloured guys were messing around". Justin, who described himself as a black man, intended to talk to Pell "in a spirit of educating"; however, the tribunal heard the conversation became "closer to one of confrontation".

The following day, Justin allegedly refused to be trained by Pell on a piece of equipment. Justin told Pell his earlier comment had included a racial term and, when Pell said he didn't understand the term to be "nasty or upsetting" and he was "not being racist", the tribunal heard Justin responded that he met "people like him" in prison and could "knock him to the ground right now or walk out".

Justin sent his letter of resignation to his manager with immediate effect on the same day, in which he said he refused to work with Pell.

Andrew Willis, head of legal at Croner, said the case highlighted that education on race could reduce disagreements among employees.

Gym trainer with fear of bodily fluids 'was discriminated against'

A gym trainer at Nuffield Health was discriminated against after she refused to pick up sweaty towels, an employment tribunal has ruled.

Ali Burton, who has been employed at the fitness chain since May 2018, has a generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) and phobia of coming into contact with bodily fluids. The tribunal heard that Burton disclosed her mental health condition at the interview and induction stages, and was

passed as fit to do the job with agreed modifications, including not undertaking hygiene-related tasks that could trigger her GAD.

The tribunal said Burton had to repeatedly explain her condition and required adjustments to her managers, who "exhibited a sceptical attitude". One manager likened Burton's phobia to "having a milk phobia and working in Costa".

Nuffield Health had limited understanding of her

condition, said the tribunal, which was "surprising in an organisation whose purpose is to promote wellbeing".

Burton's complaint of direct discrimination succeeded in part, as did her complaints of discrimination because of something arising in consequence of disability, of harassment and of failure to make reasonable adjustments. A remedy hearing has yet to take place.

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I'll tell you something...

CLAUDINE CHARLES

FOUNDER AND
DIRECTOR OF
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STUDIO

One year on, HR must continue to build momentum around racial equality

It's a year since we were all shocked by the appalling killing of George Floyd, and although the incident forced many to have challenging conversations at work and at home, there is still much work to do to bring about change.

This isn't the first time the world has been shocked by the sudden death of a black person in police custody: many remember the killings of Christopher Alder and Sandra Bland, and the beating of Rodney King. In the UK, there have been 1,741 black deaths in police custody since 1990, with 164 in the past 10 years.

But why should we care? How do these incidents impact ordinary, law-abiding citizens, especially us in HR? We live in a society that's rightfully horrified by these incidents but often overlooks or disregards racist incidents that impact the emotional and mental health of others in the workplace. I'm referring to the subtle microaggressions, passive aggressions, discrimination, prejudice and gaslighting – to name a few – that black and brown people experience at work. Negative behaviours that, during the course of their career, they unfortunately become accustomed to. However, with many of us working remotely online, we are more connected as a human race and organisations can hire and build partnerships with others across the globe.

Embracing inclusion and diversity, in this pandemic and beyond, is one of the keys to organisational success. Diversity within businesses creates a



competitive advantage and increases the likelihood of achieving your organisational strategy, as you'll be more likely to have a range of diverse and competent individuals at the table who add value to what you do. More importantly, it builds a richer organisational experience for your people.

Those who have worked within a truly diverse and inclusive organisation will understand what I mean, but others will read on cynically. Therefore, HR and business leaders play a pivotal role in keeping the conversations about race on the table. People practitioners should be open to having those bold conversations and being instigators of change.

Organisations are better places to work, attract the best employees and truly build a community when they are more diverse, where employees are held accountable for their negative behaviours and where discrimination is dealt with swiftly. Similarly, organisations that are inclusive to all, that are mindful of their employees' mental wellbeing, that align every

"People practitioners should be open to being instigators of change"

employee to their business strategy, and that ensure career development opportunities are accessible to all create better working environments.

HR should be at the helm of that change and should share a similar transformational vision with their leadership, if they are not there yet. But, more importantly, HR needs to ensure its EDI strategies are developed in consultation and are active, rather than just acting as a tickbox.

Many black and brown people do not expect change, and I'm one of them. We are hopeful and we share these messages to inspire those around us to change, because that's all we can do.

We are capable of so much as HR professionals. Let's be the catalyst of positive change around race in the workplace. Let's keep the fire burning and those bold conversations on the table. We all know that just because it's not discussed in the press doesn't mean it no longer exists or it's been dealt with. It constantly rumbles under the surface and then pops up when we least expect it, so we always have to be strategic and proactive. ■

In practice

Real organisations, real challenges

Willmott Dixon

“People have a universal need to feel they belong at work”

The construction firm has set its sights on the ambitious target of achieving gender parity among its workforce by 2030

Historically, the construction industry hasn't been best known for its gender diversity. Analysis of official figures in 2019 by union GMB found the sector's workforce was just 12.5 per cent female – and with this number having increased by 2.1 percentage points, equivalent to just 60,000 workers, during the preceding decade, at the same rate it would take nearly two centuries to achieve gender parity.

But some firms are doing everything they can to reach the holy grail of 50/50 gender representation far quicker than 200 years; in particular, construction and property services company Willmott Dixon plans to do so in just nine. The organisation – which has 3,000 employees as well as a regular supply chain of 7,000 – has already reached more than double the industry average, with a 27 per cent female workforce, and has ambitious plans to reach a 50/50 split. The industry has, in the past, explains chief people officer Rick Lee, “not been particularly attractive” for women, although that is set to change, with the rest of the sector slowly coming on board. “The industry has a skills gap –

but if 48 per cent of the available workforce is female, and we've only got 12.5 per cent, then we're missing a trick,” he says.

For Lee, treating the target as a piece of organisational change work has been key to reaching the company's goal. For example, defining the language used to articulate the case was important to help the workforce relate to it, so the work was presented in line with one of the company's core values of having complimentary teams.

And following making the case for the change came actually embedding it. As well as a national gender diversity steering group covering the entire firm, Willmott Dixon also created several local steering groups within its regional businesses to drive the change at a more granular level. Finding the right people to champion the change, says Lee, was “absolutely key”. He recruited people to the steering groups who ticked two boxes: they were passionate about wanting to attract more women to the industry, and influential within the company. “These people are respected within the organisation – hierarchy is irrelevant,” he explains.

Trying to market the career opportunities in construction to the

female workforce meant starting at the very beginning. Having previously found that careers advisers in schools were actively putting young girls off this path, Lee and his team implemented a plan to “influence the influencers”, and now host open days specifically for careers advisers to promote the range of options on offer in the industry. “They've told us their thinking has been transformed,” he says. “And they'll now actively encourage young girls to choose STEM [science, technology, engineering and maths] careers.”

The company is also focusing on several specific groups of the workforce to target those with the right skills but who may have previously not considered construction, including Armed Forces leavers and those returning to work after a career break, the latter of which has seen a number of women join the firm from sectors including financial services, banking and retail. “We're looking to attract women who are good leaders, good with people and good project managers,” explains Lee.

But with the industry notorious for its unsociable working hours, key to engagement for all staff, not just women,



"If 48 per cent of the workforce is female, and we only have 12.5 per cent, we're missing a trick"

was better agile and flexible working – further accelerated by the Covid pandemic. Following a successful trial at one of its sites – in which the team's working week was reduced from 52 hours to 45 by allowing flexible finish times and standardising meeting times, resulting in the project being completed seven weeks ahead of schedule – the company rolled out agile working across its entire workforce, and also introduced a home working allowance. Eighty-nine per cent of employees now say they are supported to work in an agile or flexible way.

Willmott Dixon's focus on achieving gender parity (it's the "biggest area of disparity", explains Lee) does also not mean other areas of inclusion and diversity are neglected. "There's a universal need for people to feel a sense of belonging and appreciation at work, and that's what inclusion and diversity is all about," says Lee. The firm's local businesses have got involved in nearby Pride events in recent years, and Lee says another focus is to expand the representation of ethnic minorities among the workforce. The company also ensures sites are inclusive, with outside cabins offering prayer rooms, toilets equipped with sanitary products and extra support for disabled visitors. It is also a Disability Confident accredited employer.

And the firm's work to improve gender diversity and other measures of inclusion are clearly being appreciated internally – 91 per cent of its staff agree they are working in a fully inclusive environment, and 100 per cent say they feel proud to work for Willmott Dixon. But the number of external accolades also speaks for itself. It recently made it on to *The Times* Top 50 Employers for Women list for the third year running, is the highest-placed construction firm on the *Financial Times* Diversity Leaders Index, and has been in the top five *Sunday Times* 100 Best Companies to Work For for two years. But for Lee, just being chosen isn't the end goal: "Over time, we're going to see more and more construction companies on those lists and, for us, that's the really important thing."

* Lee will be speaking at this year's online CIPD Festival of Work on 15-17 June. To view the conference programme and book your ticket, visit [festivalofwork.com](https://www.festivalofwork.com)

“Public support had dried up by the second wave”

Being on the frontline of the pandemic response forced the trust to overhaul its approaches to wellbeing, recruitment and diversity

When Covid first hit, across the NHS there was a surge in redeploying staff to the frontline, doctors coming out of retirement and even graduates coming on board to help trusts across the UK deal with the demand. But none of that could have happened as quickly as it did without each trust's HR team – and it was no different for south-west London-based Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. “It was a really challenging process for the team,” says Kelvin Cheatle, director of workforce. “We had to come up with new rotas and new working patterns almost overnight.”

Referring to the first wave of the pandemic as ‘Covid one’, Cheatle explains how, as well as launching a campaign as part of the national drive to encourage recently retired staff to rejoin the trust, a big part of this process was the need to “cut out the bureaucracy”. “We needed to fast track them in,” he explains. “So when reappointing people, we made sure their registrations were up to date, they had a current DBS check and were fit to practice. That gave us some supply relatively quickly.”

But redeployment didn't just mean getting clinicians to the frontline, Cheatle

adds: the trust also needed to “maximise” existing staff, including those in back office and corporate roles, and decide how best they could support the wards. This involved the HR team assessing people's skills and working out where they could be safely redeployed – bearing in mind not to expose them to undue risk or asking them to do things beyond their skillsets. “We erred on the side of caution,” Cheatle says. “We wouldn't ask someone to work in the ICU [intensive care unit], for example, unless they were completely up to date or could be retrained quickly.”

Cheatle, who has more than 20 years' experience in HRD roles, recalls the “great spirit” among staff during Covid one, with the trust “overwhelmed with public support”. However, this had dried up by the second wave, and “Covid exhaustion” had set in. Although staff had accepted they needed to drop what they were doing, says Cheatle, it was “clearly a very stressful process”. This was particularly apparent when there was a huge spike in cases days before Christmas, with the trust forced to cancel annual leave and redeploy people “really rapidly” to deal with the surge.

“Covid is a bit like a war. In the middle of it you realise you can do things quickly”

One year on, it's clear Covid has taken its toll on staff wellbeing – particularly those on the frontline. Before the pandemic, Cheatle explains, the trust did a lot on wellbeing, even winning an NHS England award in 2019. But Covid, he says, has made the trust “completely rethink” its approach. “During Covid one, we tried to provide wraparound care for staff – everything from mental health support to onsite parking and a pop-up supermarket,” he explains. “But we learned we weren't equipped to do some things well.”

So when the second wave began, the trust focused on increasing engagement and listening to what staff wanted through team briefings and pulse surveys. “At one end of the spectrum, we brought in a clinical psychologist to support mental wellbeing because staff were suffering because staff were suffering deep trauma,” Cheatle says. “But then night staff also told us they would value a hot meal, so we used some charitable funds to provide that. It was the HR team that served those meals.”

The pandemic has also led Cheatle and his team to re-evaluate their wellbeing strategy more broadly. Every employee



now has wellbeing conversations with their line manager to find out what support they need, and that support is tailored to four key areas: family, physical, mental and financial health.

But wellbeing is not the only area Covid has shone a light on. Cheate says it has also led the trust to rethink its I&D strategy and recruitment processes, and the Black Lives Matter movement and the pandemic's disproportionate impact on people with ethnic minority backgrounds spurred the trust on to appoint a diversity champion. More than a third of the trust's workforce has an ethnic minority background, with 57 nationalities represented. "The diversity champion will lead from the bottom up and find out what issues are facing BAME staff, those with disabilities – and our EU employees, because we regard them as a minority group too," Cheate explains. "And also to try and break the glass ceiling around career development."

The pandemic also taught Cheate about the trust's capacity for organisational agility, particularly in terms of recruitment and onboarding. "It's a bit like a war. When you're in the middle of it, you realise you can do things quickly when you have to," he says. "If we can get people in in three days during Covid, why can't we get them in more quickly generally? Some of our processes are overly bureaucratic and we want to cut through that."

One of the best things Cheate says the trust has done during Covid was partner with three other local trusts – St George's, Epsom and St Helier, and Croydon – to launch a joint recruitment hub, which acts as a 'one-stop shop' that allows them all to recruit at pace and scale, and has been vital in onboarding staff for the vaccine rollout. As part of its new recruitment strategy, the group has also introduced a digital staff passport, which has streamlined the onboarding process.

Covid has been a huge learning experience for HR teams, and they have played a vital role in supporting frontline staff. But the biggest challenge now, Cheate says, is dealing with the backlog of elective surgeries while ensuring staff are rested. "They've been at it solidly for 12 months, so need to be ready to go," he says. "But also in case we get a third wave – and no one knows if or when that will arrive."

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“It took three full days just to process payroll”

Switching from paper to a workforce management system has minimised the charity’s HR admin

The problem

Using technology to carry out basic, or sometimes not so basic, HR functions is commonplace in 2021. But OnSide Youth Zones – a charity that provides young people from disadvantaged areas with a range of activities and support – was, until recently, still using manual, paper-based processes to do payroll and other administrative tasks.

Staff would fill in paper timesheets, which would be collected and

approved by their manager at the end of each week and sent to the business administrator, who would then add up all the hours and send the information to payroll. “It was such a laborious process,” says Duncan Hall, systems implementation manager at OnSide Youth Zones. “It would take three full days to process payroll because it was so time consuming.”

Other issues Hall highlights with this process include inconsistency and unreliable recording of data and hours

worked, which was prone to mistakes and no proper audit trail.

The solution

In 2017, OnSide Youth Zones partnered with workforce management provider UKG to trial its software at four of its 14 centres. The system enabled the charity to streamline all its administrative processes, distribute workloads more evenly among management staff at the centres and effectively track things such as absence and employee availability.

Because each Youth Zone operates as an independent charity with much of its funding coming from local businesses and councils, the system enabled the group to know “exactly where we’re spending the money”, says Hall.

The software is now part of the charity’s standard model and is being rolled out across Youth Zones, including new centres.

The outcome

“It’s a game changer,” says Lisa Potter, HR and office manager at the Wigan OnSide Youth Zone, which had the new platform implemented in September 2020. “It’s given ownership back to managers and freed up my time in the back office so I’m not chasing them

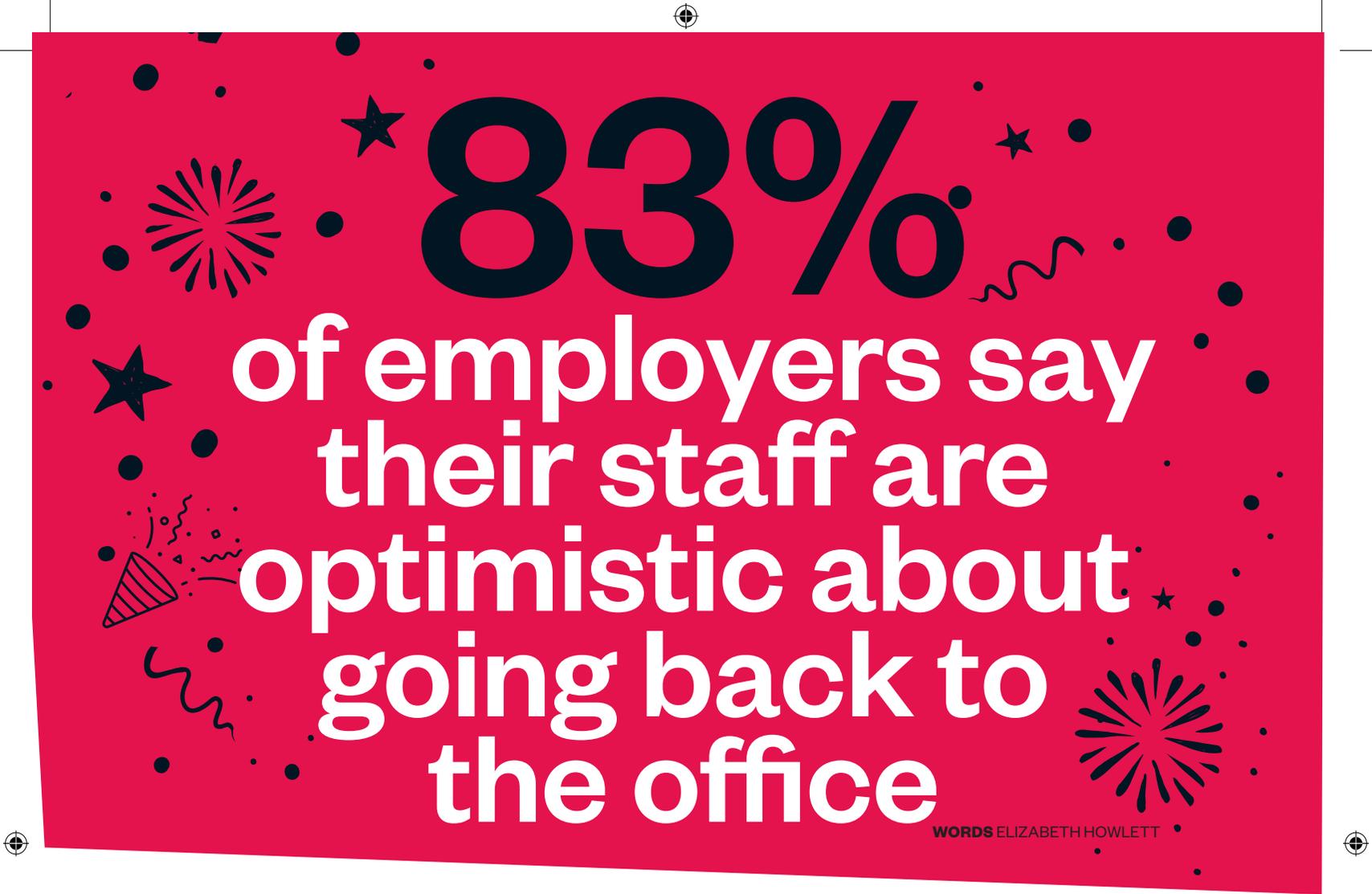
for clarity or information on timesheets. It’s finally got us into the 21st century.”

In fact, bringing in the software has reduced manager administration to just 10 minutes every other day, and the time spent on payroll tasks has been cut by more than 60 per cent.

In addition, Hall says the system has helped to increase employee engagement and accountability. “It’s given staff more control of their own time – they can book their annual leave from work or the comfort of their home, and they can view their timesheets and have visibility of what they’re being paid before they actually receive their payslip,” he explains. “All this has led to a more engaged workforce where everyone plays their part in managing time and leave.”



The new system has enabled staff to take control of their time, which has boosted engagement



83%

of employers say their staff are optimistic about going back to the office

WORDS ELIZABETH HOWLETT

Not everyone is excited about lockdown easing, so HR needs to make sure the transition back to the workplace puts wellbeing front of mind

Yet again, another huge shift in the world of work is occurring as a direct result of the pandemic. The vaccine rollout is proving successful and now many businesses are considering how to open their doors and safely welcome employees back. But depending on who you speak to, returning to work will conjure up very different emotions.

On the one hand, employees who have either been furloughed or working from home in the longer term may be eager to rejoin the working environment, while others may be wracked with anxiety. And although one in four fit notes issued by GPs in April, May and June 2020 were for a mental health-related condition, and almost one in five employed adults experienced depression between January and March this year, it seems wellbeing is still not high on some employers' lists of

priorities. For example, a poll by Mental Health First Aid England in March found that a quarter of employees have received no mental health check-ins since the start of the pandemic.

Despite the government still advocating home working where possible at the time of going to press, wellbeing is something organisations should be actively addressing now, says mental health consultant Petra Velzeboer, who is all too aware of the building anxiety around when businesses may reopen. "The main pressure points are nerves around public transport, health, adapting to a new routine and having to readjust to working life," she says. "Being out of the habit means feelings of anxiety can go through the roof, and there will be higher levels of nervousness and hypervigilance about who is around you, or what the protocols are in the workplace."

She adds that even a change in where people are sitting in the office could need an adjustment period.

And indeed, life during the pandemic has not just changed the way we work but also the way we live, which adds an extra layer of complication when it comes to employee wellbeing. Rachel Suff, senior policy adviser at the CIPD, points out that people's individual circumstances may have changed, whether that's personally, financially or mentally: "There's going to be a big range of responses, and I think they will be overlaid by the past experience of the pandemic and all of the different work-related and personal experiences. Some people may now have a different domestic setting, they may have more responsibilities or their commute may have changed."

The transition from home working or furlough back into the workplace

How are HR teams managing the return to the office?

We surveyed *People Management* readers about their plans, and how their workforces feel about going back



15%
are mandating staff go into work every working day once government advice changes



53%
say their staff are concerned about contracting Covid at work



46%
say their employees are worried about maintaining childcare provisions after returning to the office



62%
are offering more mental health support for employees returning from home working



43%
will require staff to be in the office for a minimum number of days per week after reopening



67%
are offering either slightly or significantly increased flexibility after reopening

SOURCE: SURVEY OF 566 PEOPLE MANAGEMENT READERS, MAY 2021

will need to be treated with a degree of sensitivity, but what is the best approach to take to ensure employee wellbeing is not compromised in the process? Suff suggests taking it slow and steady to give employees time to become more comfortable. “You need to allow a period of adjustment to get people used to returning to a working environment with other people so they can get confident with their organisation’s health and safety measures,” she says. “It has to be tailored towards individual wellbeing needs as much as possible, and it’s going to require a lot of discussion and effort for organisations to get that right.” She warns that if they don’t get it right, employee relations could crumble during a “very tense time”.

This is the tactic Eugenio Pirri, chief people and culture officer at Dorchester Collection, has adopted in preparing his staff for returning to one of its many luxury hotels across the UK. “The first thing we need to do with concerns about returning to work is address them,” explains Pirri, who has kept in touch with every member of staff since lockdown began, and has introduced training programmes to “re-engage” his workforce with the Covid-safe business. “We are listening intently to all concerns but not thinking we need to have an answer right away. We are just having conversations with them and walking them through the fear, which is sometimes just not knowing what to expect.” He adds that you must take your time and be respectful: “You can’t put the business first; you have to put people first at this stage, and then make the journey together towards a full return to work.”

Having open communication about health and safety measures is also an effective way to placate any nerves, says Dr Karen Michell, researcher at the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health. “Employers should listen to workers, understand where they are coming from and then provide them with the information that can allay those fears, such as the hygiene and sanitation processes, one-way systems, social distancing and perspex barriers,” she says, adding that having one conversation would not be enough. “It’s going to be a case of repeating these conversations to find out if their mental health has been affected and if they feel it is improving. Communication will be a key issue in getting these workers back to work.”

Ensuring the workplace is safe and providing clear information on how the business will keep the risk of catching Covid down is relatively straightforward, but employers cannot guarantee that public transport is safe – a challenge

Andy James Picken, workforce health and wellbeing lead at Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, took in his stride. A large proportion of Picken’s workforce travels by bus, so he partnered with Stagecoach to help staff seek assurance on safety measures directly from the operator. He also used salary sacrifice employee benefits to offer an alternative. “A lot of employees took up the cycle to work salary sacrifice scheme last year so we have since increased the value to £5,000 and introduced an e-bike discount,” he explains, adding that not only does it keep staff concerns about public transport at bay, it also helps to improve their mental wellbeing.

From a legal point of view, Richard Port, principal solicitor at Boardside, assures that as long as employers have done their duty of care to ensure staff are safe in the workplace, the rest is on the employee. “In a black letter law sense, an employee’s commute and personal thoughts on this [returning to work] are theirs to deal with,” he says. “We shouldn’t, however, be dismissive of workers who don’t want to use public transport or are concerned about the workplace, but it will soon become an anxiety that has less credence to it as more people are vaccinated.”

The return to work will potentially split the workforce into two categories of excited and nervous, but Michell says it’s the individuals who aren’t feeling comfortable that we need to pay attention to. “A lot of workers may have lost a relative, colleague or friend, and the grieving process for them during lockdown has not been normal. They will have to deal with grief and coming back to work at the same time so every case is going to have to be managed.”

BACK TO THE OFFICE



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Standing meeting at a theme park



Appraisal on a park bench



BACK TO THE OFFICE



Do we need the office?

As Covid restrictions ease, many employers are considering alternatives to the traditional workplace – some more left field than others

WORDS ROB GRAY



Team huddle in a hot air balloon



500PX, EYEM, JP KLOVSTAD/GETTY IMAGES

Once the staple of the five-days-a-week commute, the location of its own unique brand of politics and the centre of many of our working lives, the office has taken a step out of the limelight during the last 15 months thanks to mass remote working instigated by the Covid pandemic. And a concept that may a few years ago have seemed unthinkable is now being seriously considered by businesses up and down the country: whether they really need – or indeed want – an office.

A recent BBC survey of 50 of the UK's biggest employers, together employing more than 1.1 million people, found almost all do not plan to bring staff back to the office full time once lockdown restrictions are eased, with 43 of the organisations saying they would embrace a hybrid model – a mix of home and office working – where staff are encouraged to work from home two to three days a week.

And the trend isn't just prevalent among the business behemoths. Research published in April by Grant Thornton UK found just 5 per cent of 603 mid-sized businesses believe that full-time office working will be most effective for their people post pandemic. Drilling down into the data, 44 per cent of the organisations surveyed feel a shift towards more remote working, rather than office based, is the best way forward. Of these, 37 per cent believe a blended approach, with more time spent working remotely than in an

office, is best, while 7 per cent prefer full-time remote working. A further 25 per cent think an even split between office and remote working is ideal. Given the changing ways of working expected post Covid, 51 per cent of the businesses surveyed also anticipate that their office or workspace will need to be repurposed.

Clearly, there are various ways forward and many considerations for companies to weigh up. "Organisations are taking different approaches," says Rachel Suff, senior policy adviser at the CIPD. "Some are going all out for 100 per cent home working and closing their head offices. Others want to return to the more traditional, everyone onsite approach. But hopefully there will be more in between those two ends of the spectrum, where they look to combine the best of home working with a return to the office."

Below we look at some of the models being pursued and talk to senior people professionals about why their organisation is going down a particular path, and the challenges and opportunities this poses.

The remote-first business

HomeHero, a prop-tech start-up with a team of 60, decided to become a 'remote first' organisation in the early weeks of the pandemic. For some, this means working in their home offices, while for others it might be a local co-working space or hot desking facility.

Head of people Louise Matthews says there are huge advantages to working remotely, although there is a big challenge in building, and maintaining, a strong company culture. To help people bond and connect, HomeHero has implemented a programme of virtual team socials, including wine tasting, film nights, cookery classes and cocktail evenings.

While the organisation works to a remote-first model, it also has a creative 'bunker' in Shoreditch, east London, which allows the team to come together when they need to. "It's a great spot for workshops, brainstorming and team days," explains Matthews. "It's a good fit for us, and a great balance in staying connected while working remotely. We've also really leaned in to tech tools like Slack, Google Hangouts, Miro and Trello. We've had to adapt ways of working, but a year down the line we're seeing great results."

The touchdown spaces

The events of 2020 led Hertfordshire County Council to review how and where its people work and to consider how working differently could enable it to be a more modern and flexible organisation. This necessitated the development of a longer-term 'ways of working' vision that prioritises outcomes over locations.

Under this vision, greater use has been made of 'touchdown spaces' introduced a few years ago. "As a county council we have various buildings and job roles as well as the regular office bases, from fire stations and libraries to day care centres," says Caroline Butler, head of HR strategy, reward and employee relations. "Many of our employees travel around the county caring for our citizens. It made sense to open touchdown spaces in our buildings so they didn't have to drive back to a main building between clients."

Now they are also being used with Covid safety in mind. Non-frontline staff, meanwhile, have been working at home for a year now. Recent pulse

How are HR teams using their offices after Covid? We surveyed *People Management* readers about their plans

12%
are closing one or more locations



43%
are keeping locations but changing how they're used



22%
are encouraging use of co-working spaces



9%
plan to consult on future closures

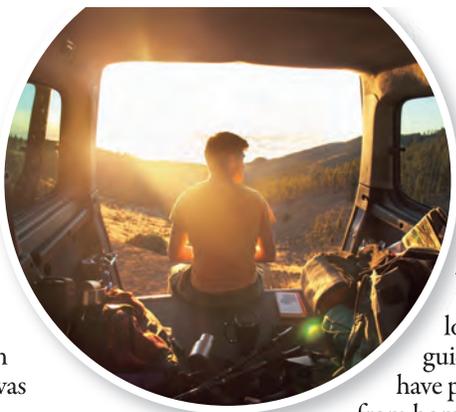


42%
aren't planning any changes



95%
say their workforces are supportive of their plans





surveys indicate that going forward most wish to work mainly remotely with some time spent in the office, rather than the pre-pandemic situation where office working was the norm.

The half-and-half arrangement

Hybrid models are being developed in various forms, each tweaked to suit an organisation's particular needs. One common answer that's evolving with the aim of striking a good balance is 'the 50/50', in which employees are allowed to work from home up to half of the time, but the office is still very much used.

Law firm Travers Smith has decided that once Covid restrictions have been permanently lifted and people feel safe to return to the office, those able to perform their role effectively on an agile basis will be free to work remotely up to 50 per cent per fortnight, with a minimum of two days in the office each week. That said, it's expected that certain populations like trainee lawyers would benefit from being in the office more frequently, because of the invaluable learning opportunities that come from working directly with others. "HR plays a critical role in ensuring that a hybrid way of working is successful," says HR director Moira Slape. "We have to ensure those who choose to work remotely for a portion of their week are given the same development opportunities as those who are in the office more regularly."

Travel technology giant Amadeus has also developed a 50/50 model, under which all employees will be eligible to work from home up to half of the time. The firm is also considering 'work from anywhere' alternatives. "Working from anywhere is being talked about a lot in the media but it is not straightforward and there are more considerations," says Sabine Hansen Peck, senior VP of people, culture, communication and brand. "Can the job itself and the tasks be done from 'anywhere'? Does the local infrastructure allow for proper tools and connections, like good broadband? And then there are also legal and tax considerations."

Amadeus has begun piloting the arrangement in France and expects to implement it across other international sites over 2021. It has launched a survey

on the topic covering employees' intentions and will take comments into account as it refines local policies and guidelines. "While we have proven that working from home is productive and

efficient, we believe having colleagues together in the same place has great value," adds Hansen Peck. "The office becomes the preferred space for face-to-face socialising, collaboration and creativity."

The collaboration campus

Online retailer The Very Group has discovered that colleagues want to retain elements of remote working. It is mindful of related wellbeing issues – for example, it introduced a 'no meeting zone' between 12.30pm and 1.30pm daily, when colleagues are encouraged to take a break. While the expectation is that there will be more hybrid working than before the pandemic, Very has invested to reconfigure its Liverpool campus – the base for around 1,800 people – to make it more suitable for collaboration and innovation. "We're planning for a gradual return to the office, recognising that it may take some time for some of our colleagues to feel truly comfortable and get used to any Covid-safe measures that remain in the short term. We won't be rushing into it," says chief people officer Sarah Willett.

"We absolutely still need our offices. We believe creativity happens best when people are together. Our office spaces will be about high-energy, high-impact creativity and collaboration," Willett adds that the plans are about productivity and offering staff true value – and getting value back in return: "By offering better balance, flexibility and interesting and inspiring work, we can widen our talent pool, and attract and retain more amazing people."

Meanwhile, fintech company Revolut found 68 per cent of its employees wanted the flexibility to work both from home and the office, while 32 per cent preferred fully remote work. Consequently, the firm is transforming its workplaces into collaboration and innovation spaces called RevLabs. "To help us select a model, we gave a lot of careful consideration to the opinions of our staff," says Jim MacDougall, VP of people. "We also researched global trends and reviewed

industry standards and best practice for workplace policies. For us, it was important to give our Revoluters some control over the way they would be working, both now and in the future."

The 'what, not where' model

As part of its culture transformation strategy, Staffordshire Police has developed a 'trust-driven policing' initiative with a focus on delivery of results as opposed to a more traditional focus on time and physical presence as an indicator of performance. The advent of Covid accelerated the work and helped people with a more traditional approach see that working in different ways could be a good thing. "We know people experience better health and wellbeing, lower absence, less stress, greater productivity and greater overall happiness when they have greater control over all parts of their lives," says Justine Kenny, director of people and resources.

"So we want people to have a choice over where, when and how they deliver on their objectives. In essence, people need to be where they need to be to deliver what they need to deliver, when it needs delivering. If you are, for example, a response officer, then you need to be available to respond to calls for service from the public on a particular shift, whereas, if you're an HR business partner who's working on policy development, you can do that any time of day from home, the park, the local café, or wherever. It's all about choice."

Engineering group Mott MacDonald, meanwhile, has adopted what group head of people Graeme Clarke describes as "a maturity-level approach to agile working" that gives people the freedom to operate within a framework. "We have taken a global perspective using company-wide principles that are open to local interpretation," he says. "This gives everyone flexibility."

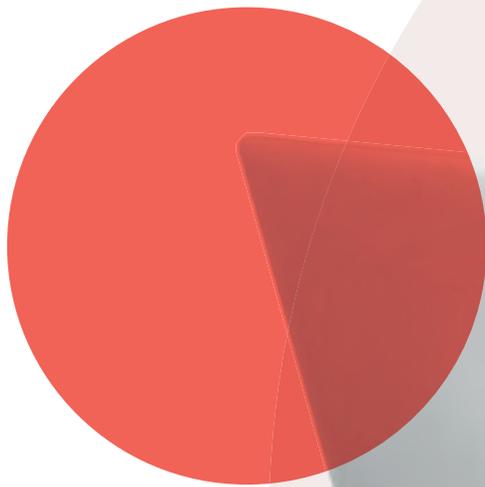
The approach was chosen because different countries are at different points in the pandemic. "Duty of care means we can't impose a 'one size fits all' approach," says Clarke. "If you try and respond in the moment from the 'centre' you end up confusing people as everything is different globally."

* Read the CIPD's *Flexible working: lessons from the pandemic* report at bit.ly/CIPDFlexiWorkReport

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BACK
TO THE
OFFICE



Without inclusion, this is what your hybrid office could look like

Many employers are assessing how a mix of home and office working could benefit them – but they risk disadvantaging certain groups of employees

TETRA IMAGES LLC/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

WORDS JO FARAGHER

As an HR professional, it's impossible to escape the words 'hybrid working' right now. Teams have spent months reviewing policies and discussing strategies for how – and, more importantly, where – the workforce might begin to return to some sort of post-pandemic normality. Every day seems to produce a new announcement from a major brand on its 'future of work' strategy, and experts appear to agree that hybrid is the way forward.

But there have been a few vocal dissenters. Last month JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon said he expected the investment bank's offices to return to how they looked pre-Covid by the autumn. "It doesn't work for those who want to hustle. It doesn't work for spontaneous idea generation. It doesn't work for culture," he said. At Goldman Sachs, meanwhile, CEO David Solomon sent staff a missive demanding that they come back to the office from June, claiming a culture of "collaboration, ▶

Inclusive hybrid working

innovation and apprenticeship” could not thrive without being together in an office. There are clear arguments in favour of a hybrid model where staff come together to collaborate but do the bulk of their everyday work at home, but could they be on to something, or is there a danger that hybrid is not as inclusive as it seems?

“The lived experience of hybrid working in a more normal context will be so different to what it is now,” says Emma Parry, professor of human resource management at Cranfield University. “There’s been a camaraderie while we’ve

all been at home but, if you’re at home and your colleagues are in the office, that dynamic is different. We know from years of research into flexible working that creating two tiers of workers can lead to discrimination against people who work from home because

they’re not seen,” she says. Indeed, a study of working patterns in April by the Office for National Statistics suggested this could already be happening. It found that employees who worked predominantly from home were less likely to receive bonuses or pay rises. A survey by management consultancy Lane4 also showed that almost three in 10 employees received no training to support their professional development while working in a hybrid environment.

Claire McCartney, senior policy adviser for resourcing and inclusion at the CIPD, says that, unless organisations build their hybrid strategies through an “inclusion and fairness lens”, there could be unintended consequences for certain groups. “There has been evidence through the pandemic that child and elder care tends to fall more on women’s shoulders, so there is a potential danger there; those with disabilities or long-term health conditions might also want to work from home more,” she explains. Managers need to be made aware of the risk of presence bias – not picking someone for a plum

project because they can see them in the office every day, for example – and must ensure their teams are all party to discussions. “There should be no side conversations going on,” she says. “Also, you could end up with ‘haves and have nots’ if there are frontline workers who are unable to work remotely, so it’s important to talk to them about different ways they can benefit from the flexibility offered to other employees.”

Emma Bartlett, partner at law firm CM Murray, adds that creating any division between home workers and those in the office – even informally – could have a longer-term impact. “Working with different people, whether that is incidentally meeting them in the workplace or undertaking projects together, helps employees learn about each other in a way that is often lost through videoconferencing, where networking is not on the agenda and work may become the sole purpose of the interaction,” she says. “In doing so, unconscious or actual bias may not change or may become more pronounced. It’s incredibly important to create diverse teams to avoid group thinking, which can also increase risk for the business as well as hinder creativity.”

She adds that, over time, there may be certain groups of individuals who are more likely to hold on to home working than others because of their protected characteristics, such as working parents and those with underlying health conditions. “They may become isolated from colleagues or miss out on work opportunities by virtue of being ‘out of sight’, or they may start to lose confidence compared to those physically working alongside their colleagues. The overall result could give rise to indirect discrimination based on their protective characteristic (for example, gender or disability).

An additional unintended consequence could therefore be a broadening of the gender pay gap,” she says.

Employees’ personal circumstances may also influence where they choose to work, so hybrid strategies need to take this into consideration, according to Lydia Moore, associate in the employment group at Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner. “Organisations will need to be aware that unless everyone has equal access

to the same spaces, equipment and opportunities, a working from home arrangement could lead to less favourable treatment and indirect discrimination claims,” she says. Moore advocates reviewing standard employment contracts to cover some of the more practical considerations of a hybrid set-up, such as place of work (if ‘normal’ place of work is home, state that the employee can be required to attend the office); whether they have core hours of work; details of expense allowances; and their data protection obligations.

Successful hybrid working is about so much more than what’s on paper, however. Rather than defaulting to policy, managers will need to consult with their teams regularly on whether arrangements work for all groups. We’re even seeing the emergence of new roles dedicated to building these frameworks, with titles such as ‘chief mental health officer’ and ‘head of remote’. “There’s a fear that, if you ask, you’ll get thousands of permutations of working arrangements, but it’s actually more likely to be three or four,” says Stuart Duff, partner and head of development at Pearn Kandola. “The best leaders of remote teams know exactly how people like to communicate, and how they like to be communicated with, rather than saying ‘this is our team and this is how we do it.’”

Amy Walters, head of research at Lane4, argues that this regular consultation can be a chance to instil a sense of belonging and inclusion. “It feeds into how you share information, the assumptions you make about your ‘team normal’. You need to find a balance between fostering a sense of belonging but individuals feeling their identity is preserved,” she says. “If people feel stressed because they are in a minority or that they need to cover something up, then change the default.”

Duff warns that even in a hybrid environment there’s a danger of employees falling into ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups, however, which could threaten team cohesion. “People fall into new patterns of working quickly – even in flexible working spaces people start putting photos on their desks and talking to the same people they see on that day – you can have the best possible set-up but people are still flawed and biased,” he adds.



Goldman Sachs CEO David Solomon has demanded that staff return to their offices from June

“There’s been a camaraderie while we’ve all been at home, but that will change now”



Before introducing its 'Work, Life, Shift' hybrid working programme, Fujitsu UK asked all employees about their working preferences, with 18 per cent opting to return to the office full time. But managers continue to have an open dialogue with teams to ensure policies are executed flexibly, says John Pink, managing director for the private sector. Fujitsu's approach is based on principles rather than rigid rules, and regular consultation has already led to an increase in engagement, in particular from female colleagues. Going forward, role modelling will be a key factor in avoiding the 'say, do' gap that destroys trust in leaders, says Pink: "There are unintended consequences in the behaviours of leaders – saying one thing but then observed to be encouraging presenteeism, and a return to pre-pandemic office culture. The opportunity for organisations that find the right balance will differentiate them in the market, and it will open up an array of opportunities for talent from all backgrounds to thrive and drive the organisation forward."

Sara Thompson, HR director at savings and retirement firm Phoenix Group, also led a consultation with employees to ensure inclusivity sits at the core of its hybrid approach. This includes ensuring that if offices are adapted this is done so with accessibility in mind, and that the technology used to support hybrid

working is inclusive of all employees, as well as thinking about the behaviours that support this new working culture. During Covid both Phoenix and Fujitsu witnessed how working from home often put undue pressure on those with caring and family responsibilities, and both have introduced five days' additional paid carers' leave. Thompson says: "Overall our approach is focused on enabling colleagues to agree on an individual basis the working arrangements that will work best for them. We will use a framework to consider the balances of a role, the activity being worked on and the individual's preferences."

"Hybrid could legitimise working remotely and lead to a shift in culture"

Often, however, employees need to feel comfortable before they can speak up if new arrangements don't fit, or need extra support. Many employees with disabilities felt frustrated by how quickly employers were able to offer adaptations at the start of the pandemic, for instance.

"These are things we have been asking for for many years, such as flexible working structures and working from home options," says Atif Choudhury, chief executive of social enterprise Diversity and Ability. "If organisations are proactive about making these changes then people don't have to have a high degree of self-advocacy to get back to work."

In the coming months, he adds, organisations should not assume

that employees with disabilities will prefer working from home even though many found remote working easier during the pandemic. An "anticipatory welcome" should be part of any inclusive hybrid strategy. "There's a risk of creating a world where non-disabled people work in the office and those with disabilities work from home because the office is not accessible," says Choudhury. "Being physically able to access the office is still important, and these spaces need to be set up in such a way that we can access that space if we so desire."

For organisations that build their approach to hybrid through this lens, this could be an opportunity to lessen some of the inequalities that have been highlighted over the past year. "The positive way to look at this is that we will begin to counter certain penalties women and other minorities have experienced as a result of being out of sight," argues Sarah Jackson, flexible working campaigner and former CEO of charity Working Families. "More women will work from home more often, but there will also be a chunk of men that choose to work from home too, and organisations are much more sensitive to losing male talent than female. They'll become more alert to things like proximity bias when that applies to all employees, which could soften career penalties and legitimise working remotely whoever you are, and lead to a shift in culture."

The challenge is that the shift to hybrid is going to be a new experience for every organisation – its impact will be hard to predict because there's no data to base it on. "The most important thing is to have a spotlight on inclusion and fairness at the heart – whether it's training, technology or communications," concludes McCartney. "We know more about our colleagues than ever before thanks to the pandemic, so we need to use that sense of connection to address inequality as soon as possible if we see it."

* Find out more about the CIPD's #FlexFrom1st campaign, calling for the right to request flexible working to be a day-one right, at cipd.co.uk/flexfrom1st

Which hybrid mode works best?

Alexia Cambon, director for research at analyst company Gartner, says one of the issues around hybrid working is that organisations tend to be vague about what it actually means. "It's not just that there is no set place of work, it's a model," she says. "Rather than thinking about it as a black-and-white policy, it's better to view it as a philosophy with core principles that are your guardrails. It should be employee driven, from the perspective of 'how can I make this way of working help me to be more productive' rather than 'one size fits all'."

Gartner has come up with four collaboration 'modes' in the hybrid environment:

- Working together, together (in the same building, synchronously)
- Working together, apart (remotely, but synchronously)

- Working alone, together (in the same building but working on different things, asynchronously)
- Working alone, apart (asynchronously from a remote location)

During the pandemic, much of the focus was on distributed synchronous work, but Cambon argues that inclusive employers will need to make all of these modes equally accessible: "Organisations tend to think that synchronous work creates innovation and have historically underinvested in asynchronous work. Different personality types will enjoy different modes – junior staff will get passive learning from the office while introverts may prefer to work alone. It's about understanding how teams collaborate and what their dynamics are, and using the modes accordingly."

How is reopening the office going for you?



We've decided to embrace flexible working and allow our employees to work where they are most comfortable

Lisa Kumar, senior HRBP at 1E

Circumstances have been different for every people professional during the pandemic. Those preparing to welcome employees back share how it's working for them

There's a real desire from many to come back to the workplace and work as they were before. Nothing can replace face-to-face interaction and collaboration – it's so important for smaller businesses like ours

Lianne Baker, head of HR at Gascoyne Estates

This is an opportunity for some employers to change the landscape of work. Flexible working will be the norm and offices will be places with a specific focus rather than a base to sit out the working day

Jane Markey, HRBP at Thorn SDS



Our workplaces have been open throughout. Clear and regular communication, reassurance and understanding individual needs has been important

Neil Morrison, group HR director at Severn Trent Water



We plan to reduce our office space, but we still want to maintain our regional hubs. Balancing cost with potential use is proving difficult

Rachel Roe, HR manager at Compleat Software





The restrictions mean we've found it really challenging to be efficient. But we've been able to carry out some planning and look at how the business could work more effectively

Sophie Metcalf, head of HR at Expect Distribution

We've focused on ensuring a smooth transition as staff return to the office. We've made all our locations Covid secure, which has really helped them feel safe

Nicole Forrester, HR adviser at Roc Search



We are encouraging personalising when and how you work. But this has to be balanced with the additional cost of IT hardware, home desks, etc, which is presenting a real challenge for a medium-sized business

Lisa Davidson, chief people officer at Connect Health



Choice is key – those who want to continue working from home should be able to. HR plays a pivotal role in ensuring a smooth transition

Kunjan Zaveri, HR manager UK at TCR2 Therapeutics

Our employees feel excited and empowered about our new agile ways of working. Our focus is on trust and choice

Sarah Dewar, chief people officer at Mental Health Concern



There are mixed feelings around returning. Most want to remain remote and some want to keep the work-life balance but also collaborate with colleagues. Workplace design has to change to allow collaborative working

Nilam Lakhani, HR director



“We’re expected to be available all the time, and that has a cost”

Digital wellbeing expert Dr Anastasia Dedyukhina explains how the merging of our home and work lives and addiction to our devices is obliterating productivity

INTERVIEW FRANCIS CHURCHILL

If our relationship with technology was under the spotlight before the pandemic, it’s nothing compared to after 15 months of remote working. The blurring of the line between our home and work lives has made us more aware of how our emails and smartphone notifications permeate every part of how we live. *People Management* spoke to digital wellbeing expert, best-selling author and founder of Consciously Digital Dr Anastasia Dedyukhina about how tech is affecting us – and what we can do about it.

What is digital wellbeing?

Technology is playing an increasingly important role, but we’re never actually taught how to treat our devices. The pandemic was a perfect example. People were told: ‘You work from home. Here’s a computer.’ Then people started feeling fatigued and weren’t able to separate work from home life.

Research shows that on average, people in the UK are spending two hours longer working, logging off at 8pm as opposed to 6pm – which may sound great for an employer. But other research has found when people don’t have proper separation from their devices, they’re more likely to feel stressed. And companies are more likely to experience longer-term

consequences, whether it’s healthcare costs, presenteeism or absenteeism, or loss of productivity.

You’ve talked about how technology can act like an attention black hole. How does this affect our work?

It’s partly about distractions. There’s very good research by Gloria Mark from the University of California, Irvine, who looked at how often knowledge workers switch tasks. Five years ago they were switching every three minutes, even pre-pandemic it was every 40 seconds.

Humans don’t multitask well. Say you’re writing a report and an email comes in. Rather than being distracted by the email and going back to the report, you check your social media, have a coffee, or something else. On average, 23 minutes passes until you go back to the first task. So if your work requires concentration, if you can only stay focused for 40 seconds it will be very difficult to accomplish one task.

We end up putting a lot of effort into working during our eight-hour work day, which creates more pressure. Our brains literally consume more energy. Sometimes we end up working longer hours, or some people work evenings or late at night so they’re not being distracted. The way software is designed

and the way culture in many companies works is that we’re expected to be available all the time, and this has a cost.

You gave up your smartphone while working in digital marketing. What did you learn about how it affected your work life?

I’m not advocating everyone give up their smartphone, but I was worried that as a small business owner I would be missing out on opportunities. But I think giving it up allowed me to be more efficient. We tell ourselves that we have to react straight away, and most jobs don’t require that. For the majority it’s enough to have one channel of communication for something urgent as long as people know what they can expect from you.

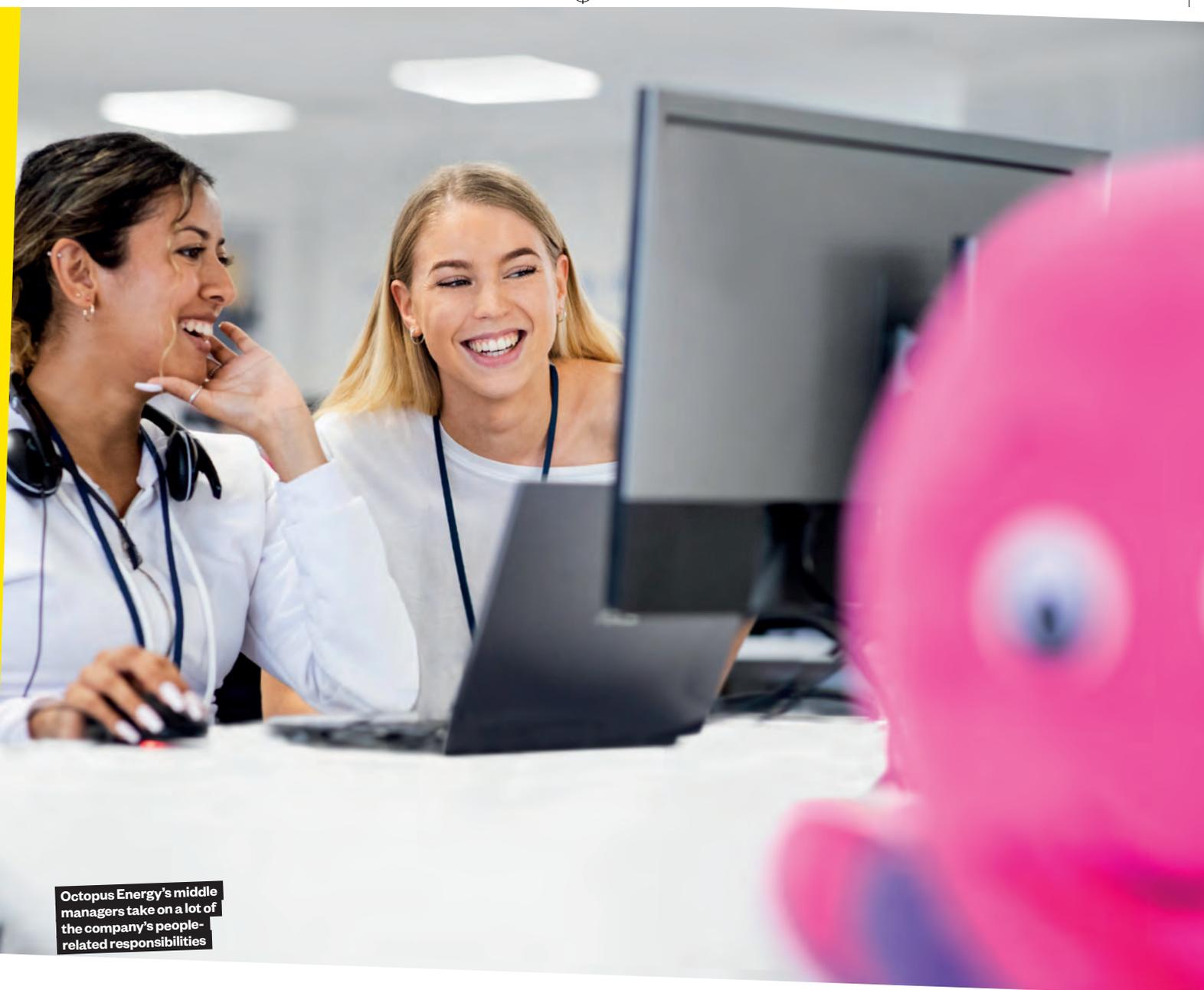
There’s no easy fix, because we’re dealing with increasing amounts of information. Humans are getting better at superficial tasks that require some multitasking skills, but it comes at the cost of deep thinking. I work in a position that requires thinking, so with my clients I make it clear that, if you want results, don’t expect me to get back to you in the next five minutes. **PM**

* Dedyukhina will be speaking at this year’s online **CIPD Festival of Work** on 15-17 June. To view the conference programme and book your ticket, visit festivalofwork.com

**Rated five stars
by its customers.
Energy supplier
of the year 2021.
Certified B Corp.
Valued at more
than £1.4bn.
Doesn't have an
HR department.**

Octopus Energy recently proclaimed its lack of a centralised people function. But why has eschewing HR become something to be lauded, and what can the profession do to prove its worth?

WORDS ELEANOR WHITEHOUSE



Octopus Energy's middle managers take on a lot of the company's people-related responsibilities

It was a revelation that got the HR community talking back in February when, as part of a BBC 'CEO Secrets' interview, Greg Jackson – boss of green energy start-up Octopus Energy – explained that he doesn't believe HR departments make employees happier or more productive, so his company doesn't have one.

It's certainly a bold claim. But while there are a number of reasons companies may not have in-house HR, such as being too small or choosing to outsource it, Octopus does still have the capability in place – instead choosing to disperse its minimal people team within the firm rather than have a centralised function. Despite having a workforce of more than 1,200, the company has fewer than 10 employees

performing people-related roles: a single HR business partner is part of finance; two recruiters work directly with managers to source candidates; and two L&D professionals sit under the sales team. Most immediate HR tasks are dealt with by managers, who are responsible for their own teams and are trained to deal with HR-related issues before being given management responsibilities. The company describes the set-up as scaling what small businesses without HR departments do.

The approach, Jackson tells *People Management*, stems from Parkinson's Law. "As soon as you have a function, it creates 'need' for itself – it sees the world through its lens and expands to meet the needs it sees," he says. "Often this not only costs companies money,

but adds organisational sclerosis and friction, as departments get busy foisting stuff on other departments."

And while it's an arrangement that will undoubtedly raise eyebrows in HR circles, Octopus isn't the first reasonably sized organisation to eschew a traditional HR structure, and is unlikely to be the last. High street stalwart Timpson is renowned for its unconventional people practices, with a very basic 'people support' team in place at a regional level. "They [HR] try to take over," CEO James Timpson told *HR magazine* in an interview in 2009. "HR is [there] to support the frontline; it is not there to tell staff what to do."

But what may seem like an untenable set-up to many has clearly been put in place with good reason. Jackson is clear ▶

that managers hold more autonomy at Octopus, are given “extensive” management experience above most of their peers, and are free to lead their teams as they see fit without the “fear” of hierarchy. “Managers shouldn’t need a department telling them how to do their jobs – they should be able to reach out and find expertise where they need it. It’s what small companies do and it works,” he explains.

While this decentralised set-up clearly works for Octopus, Jackson accepts that it may not work for other businesses. And it’s a choice that organisations have to make, explains David D’Souza, membership director at the CIPD. “Every organisation would want to be able to develop its people, hire people, pay people and support people, but there’s a decision that’s being made about whether you want a centre of excellence in these places,” he explains. “How much of that duty and those different capabilities you can devolve, versus the more traditional model of having a dedicated HR department that looks after all those things.”

But for those businesses considering a future with diminished, devolved or even dissolved people functions, a host of pitfalls potentially await. Although line managers undertake some HR tasks all the time, like recruitment and who gets promoted, one of these pitfalls is the “ever increasing” amount of legislation to conform to, says Emma Parry, professor of HR management at Cranfield School of Management: “IR35 is just one example. It’s a lot for line managers to take on and understand the intricacies of employment law.”

But aside from falling down on pieces of legislation, organisations risk lacking people with the right experience. A qualified HR person, whether in-house or external, will have the right qualification and know how to handle issues, explains Lucy Heath, people and HR consultant at law firm Charles Russell Speechlys: “Rather than what would essentially be a line manager saying ‘where do I start?’”

Many areas of HR are also very technical and require specialist knowledge, such as TUPE

regulations and shared parental leave, adds Sarah Mason, chief people officer at Foxtons: “Without that expertise, line managers could inadvertently cause problems. Other HR specialisms require specific knowledge to ensure

the task is done well, such as understanding how bias and different selection methods can affect the hiring process.”

Washika Haak-Saheem, associate professor of HR management at Henley Business School, points out that, without centralised HR, businesses risk having a “large discrepancy” between their

policies and practices. “There would be no binding in between – you have policies, but line managers employ different practices,” she says. “This could be dangerous because you’re diluting your policies, your values and your culture.”

And it’s also likely to become a problem when a business looks to develop a people strategy, adds Parry. “HR is about how you get the best out of your people in relation to delivering the strategy. I struggle to see that you can expect line managers to understand fully how to do that,” she explains.

Attributing more responsibility to line managers is potentially problematic for the managers themselves, at a time when they are becoming increasingly responsible for myriad other important areas such as mental health. “There are limits to what any individual can do with the number of hours in the day,” says Parry. “Are we asking them to do everything around managing people, and deal with all the conflicts and grievances and challenges that happen in every organisation, but that eat time? To me, that’s just not a sensible organisation design proposition.”

But as D’Souza notes, the presence of an HR function and line managers becoming more accountable shouldn’t be in conflict with each other. “Most HR professionals would like line managers to take more accountability, yet they [organisations] think [devolving HR to line managers] is the best way of solving that problem,” he says. “But what they miss out on is expertise to help them grow a business, enhance its capability to be better

“HR is about how you get the best out of your people in relation to strategy”

Octopus Energy CEO Greg Jackson is clear his approach to HR is not for everyone



Firms without HR

placed to achieve what it needs to do, and of course stay legal.”

Angela O'Connor, founder of The HR Lounge and former HR director, agrees. “More than anything, it’s potentially missing the opportunity to take steps forward in not just development, but productivity, innovation and creativity,” she explains. “Those things can be released with the right HR people in place.”

It is possible, Parry theorises, to set up an organisation without HR. “You could bring in external consultants to design the policies and frameworks, bring in people to train managers and think about how you get the best out of people. And you can outsource all the transactional stuff. And if you do get into problems, you can pay an employment relations expert to deal with that,” she explains. “But it’s a lot of hassle for the sake of not having an HR function. In theory you could do it, but I’m not convinced of the value.”

But perhaps a more pressing issue for the profession than just the disadvantages of having no HR department is why some businesses see this as a positive thing. “Particularly for smaller organisations in their first phases of growth, it can be very attractive to not have HR, especially if they associate that with some of the things HR would have been associated with in the past, which is a need for someone to police or create bureaucracy, or create policy that’s going to get in the way of them doing what they need to do,” says D’Souza.

As part of her research, Haak-Saheem spoke to young CEOs in the tech, IT and engineering industries who saw HR as something they “don’t need to look after in-house”. “Their perception is that HR is good for admin and they would like to outsource it, but that line managers should be able to look after their own people,” she explains. “I think this is driven by their perception of what HR can and can’t do.”

Parry agrees there is a “perennial problem” with the image and value of HR. “People have a perception of HR as something that’s very transactional, bureaucratic and old-fashioned, when they want their organisations to be

cutting-edge and agile,” she says. “That means they translate that into ‘let’s not have HR’. For me, that goes back to decades of HR trying to prove that it’s valuable, and move away from this image of being administrative to something more strategic.”

And O’Connor is of the belief that many organisations – especially “young, organic start-ups” – see HR as “the suits” who come in only to take over and exert control. “But that’s not the HR people I know,” she says. “They can be cheerleaders for the organisation and the people who are most progressive in bringing about change. I wonder if there’s a mismatch between what people think HR is and what we know great HR can do.”

One cause of this mismatch is likely to be people’s past experiences of HR. “Unfortunately, a lot of people have a horror story,” says Mason. “We need to tip the balance to ensure people also have plenty of examples of where HR has supported good people practices

and positive working environments, and enabled meaningful careers.”

Similarly, O’Connor assumes those who forgo a people function do so because of previous dealings. “I wonder what HR experience senior people in organisations had in the past that led

them down the path of ‘we don’t want HR,’” she says. “Maybe someone’s had a bad experience in the past, because, with some of the great HR people I’ve worked with, the managers want more because they can see how it can help the organisation to succeed.”

And, D’Souza points out, a less-than-positive past experience shouldn’t mean bosses shun the function altogether.

“No one wants a bad HR department, but that shouldn’t lead to people not wanting an HR department at all,” he says. But if HR does have an unfavourable reputation, how can it rectify that? D’Souza highlights that the best way to fix a PR problem is to make the problem go away. “So as the profession continues to have greater impact, you’ll find more CEOs championing the profession, which makes a more significant difference

than us talking about how excellent we are,” he says. But that doesn’t mean HR professionals should avoid talking about how excellent they are. “There’s a positioning piece within every organisation for HR teams to be really clear on the value they’re adding, and to make sure the work they’re doing is about enabling, not controlling, organisations,” D’Souza says.

Parry agrees that it’s HR’s job to drive change in the perception that it’s too slow or policy heavy. “I would prefer to see the Timpsons and Octopus Energies of the world working with HR and asking how they can manage HR in a way that promotes agility and empowerment,” she explains. “That must be more productive than just saying ‘getting rid of the formal function will make everything better’, because it won’t.”

The pandemic has also been a golden opportunity for HR to demonstrate its integral organisational value – a plight kicked off by a widely shared March 2020 article in *The Economist* entitled ‘The coronavirus crisis thrusts corporate HR chiefs into the spotlight’. “It’s about promoting more of the success stories,” says O’Connor. “There’s a lot we can do by talking about how we as a profession can make things great for organisations. And I’d like to see more chief execs talking about the value of great HR.”

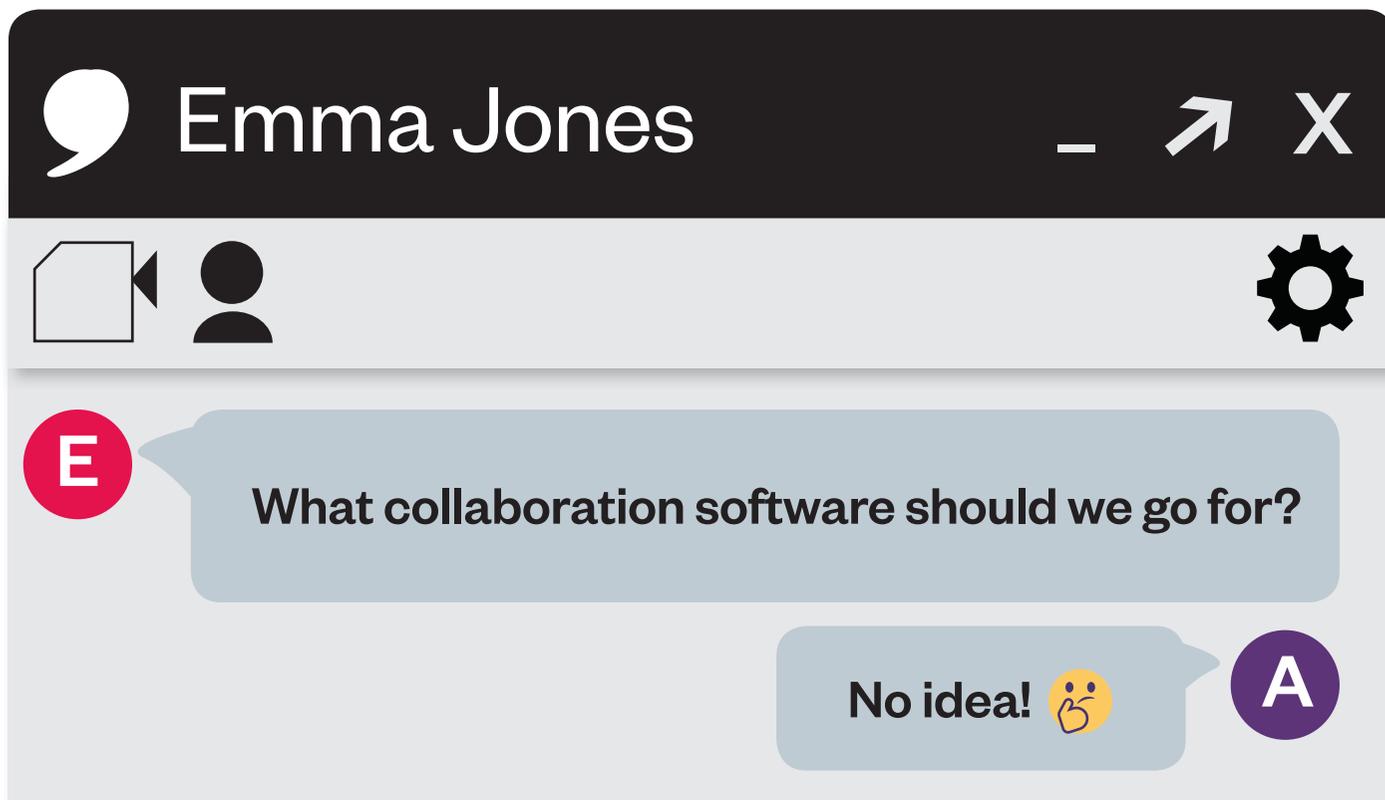
But one thing the profession should avoid doing is becoming defensive when organisations question its role. “There are different ways of configuring work – be it outsourcing or using consultants – that will work for different organisations,” says D’Souza. “But there comes a point in any organisation’s growth where you need deep expertise, and that is still undervalued until it causes them a problem.

“That’s where we need to be proactive in saying to businesses that we don’t just solve the problem when you have a legal issue, we solve the problem of how to get people flourishing.”

O’Connor agrees. “When I read the BBC interview with Octopus, I didn’t feel for a minute it was an attack on HR – I thought it was somebody saying ‘this is how we want to develop the organisation,’” she explains. “We can’t take things personally – we just need to keep moving on in the way we do.” **PM**

There's a mismatch between what people think HR is and what great HR can do"

Collaboration software



With hybrid working set to become the new normal, having the right tech in place is critical. But what should businesses consider when choosing from the abundance of options on the market?

WORDS JYOTI RAMBHAL

Whether yours went for Teams, Zoom, Meet, Slack or another platform, a huge number of organisations had to quickly implement online collaboration tools when Covid forced staff to work indefinitely from home – and said platforms have seen an exponential rise in users as a result. Zoom alone saw a 30-fold increase in use during April 2020, with sales during the last three months of 2020 up 370 per cent compared to the same period in 2019.

Now more than a year into the pandemic and with lockdown restrictions easing, businesses are reconsidering their working models and looking at how such tools fit into their future as more staff opt for a blend of home and office-based working. But for organisations that implemented solutions in a hurry, are unfamiliar

with their full functionality or are just unsure what else is available, it can be difficult to know whether their current set-up could be improved.

People Management explores what collaboration platforms can offer businesses and their workforces, and takes an in-depth look at the pros and cons of the different products available.

What is collaboration technology?

Collaboration technology is software, mostly cloud-based, designed to facilitate group work, both in the office and remotely. There are three types of collaborative tools: communication, conferencing and coordination.

As the name suggests, communication software enables teams to easily talk to each other, particularly when working from different locations. Instant messaging apps such as

Slack and G-chat are examples of communication tools.

Conferencing software such as Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams have two core functions. The first is to allow two or more people to communicate via video; and second, it enables groups to share their screens and simultaneously access apps and documents.

Coordination technology has both teamwork and taskwork functions, which allow teams to work on projects and manage schedules efficiently. Examples include Trello, Monday and Asana, as well as a range of e-calendars.

Which software is right for your business?

For those companies that brought in collaboration software in a hurry last year, Rita Trehan, former Fortune 200 CHRO and founder of transformation

Collaboration software

consultancy Dare, says now is a good time to “pause and take a look back”. “Many businesses previously had the mindset that it would take them six years to put in place a technology platform or it would take them two years to get everyone on board with the idea,” she adds. “But the pandemic has enabled them to see things differently and has shown them that, when you have a desire to do something, you can make it happen – and happen fast.”

When analysing their current platforms, Trehan says firms should avoid looking at “what hasn’t gone well”, and instead consider what they can learn from it. “The ability to pivot and change quickly tells you something about your organisation’s agility, adaptability and flexibility. It may not be 100 per cent perfect, but that’s a good thing,” she explains.

So how do you decide what type of platform is right for your company? Whether you’ve recently invested in collaboration software or been using it pre-pandemic, Natalie Swift, founder of consultancy Swift HR, says one of the first things leaders should do is identify their firm’s requirements. “When you are establishing the business needs, you’ve got to make it clear you are setting up the new systems with employees in mind. So consult with them and find out what technologies they are comfortable with as well as what the operational needs are,” she says.

“For those members of staff who are reluctant to change, involving them in the decision-making process is a good way to get them on board. And once you’ve identified the needs, you can research the technologies that fit that and decide what the right platform for the organisation is.”

But with so many platforms out there that offer similar features, how do you choose? Trehan says there is a tendency for organisations to “assume they only need to have a single platform” or a bespoke set-up, but that is “probably not the best decision if we want to truly move forward”. “We saw this with a couple of industries when the pandemic hit,” she explains. “The banking and insurance industries have always had a risk-averse approach. So when we switched to remote working, many

people in the sector could not do their day-to-day job because they did not have a cloud-based system.

“While they needed the protocols in place and structures for security reasons, it not only highlighted the need for transformation and change, but also whether the industry needs to rethink its business model.”

She adds that sometimes the best option is to look at how various softwares integrate and work with each other, to ensure that teams can communicate, coordinate and collaborate effectively.

This is exactly what digital marketing agency Best Response Media has chosen to do. The company uses G-suite from Google, which comes with Google Meet, G-chat, document and calendar sharing ability and more, and alongside that they use Slack and other project management tools. Jessica Salter, people operations specialist, says the organisation has had its collaboration tools set up for a few years as its employees regularly worked remotely before the pandemic and have

“Consult with your staff - find out what tech they’re comfortable with”

staff and clients all over the world. “We use Slack as our internal communication tool because we found it integrates really well with the various other software we use to get our work done,” she tells *People Management*.

“The project managers use Jira, a development tool, and it integrates with that, as well as with our Gmail and calendars. And we recently added PolyAI, which enables us to do polls and surveys among staff easily and efficiently through Slack.”

What are the alternatives?

Of course, not every organisation brought in collaboration software when the UK first went into lockdown, and some still haven’t. This is partly because some companies saw remote working as a short-term thing, so instead found workarounds using what Swift refers to as ‘shadow IT’. Shadow IT, Swift explains, is “unsanctioned software solutions that employees are using as an alternative” but that have not been approved by the company. This can be anything from setting up

WhatsApp groups to using personal phones and laptops.

While WhatsApp, for example, has been used to either replace desk chat or collaborate efficiently, there are several issues arising when using it for work purposes. One of these is inclusivity. Swift says WhatsApp chat groups are often not overseen by management, and as a result are creating cliques. “In wider teams, we’ve seen that sometimes only selected people have been added to the chat group,” she says. “They are collaborating really well for work purposes and the chat seems very efficient. But by not including some people, it is purposefully not being inclusive, which could then inhibit the performance of other people in the team who are not in the group.”

Furthermore, because these groups are not overseen by senior management, Swift says there has been a surge in the number of incidents on shadow IT reported in the last 12 months – mainly inappropriate comments that come across as racist or sexist. “I’ve dealt with numerous discipline cases where one person in the chat has become really uncomfortable and released screenshots of it to the employer. The employer then has to take action against a number of people,” she explains.

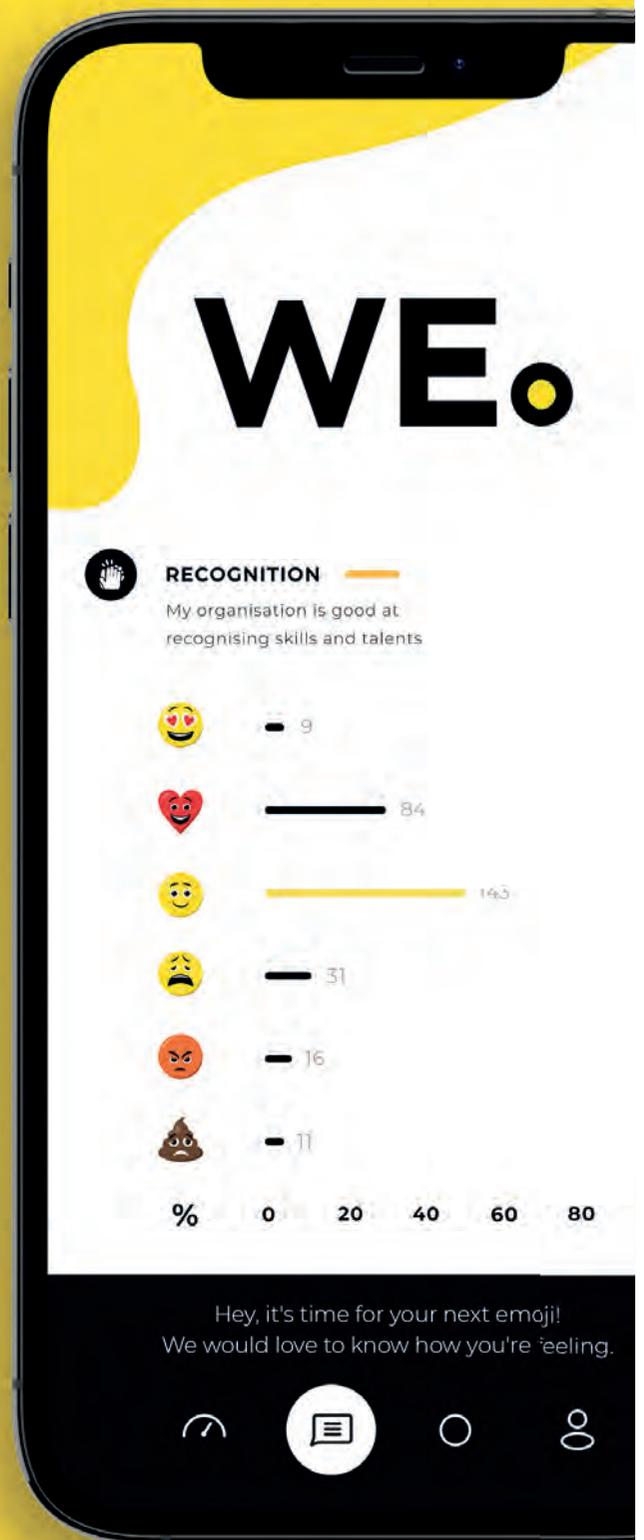
“I had one case that resulted in a couple of people being dismissed, two others given a final written warning, two more a written warning and others dealt with informally. Unfortunately, this is the nature of it being a group chat. And with these disciplinaries, it only takes one person to report it to management for this kind of avalanche of cases to occur.”

The other issue is cybersecurity. WhatsApp messages are not encrypted, including back-ups, and the data is shared with and held by Facebook. This, Swift warns, means there is a real risk of data breaches to any personal or sensitive commercial information on there. There have also been security issues with workers using their personal accounts with Google Maps. For example, if a care worker is travelling to different patients’ homes to provide care and using Google Maps on their personal mobile to get directions, Google Maps will then hold those addresses. In fact, Google Maps will

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Collaboration software

hold the home addresses of every vulnerable person in the district they had visited and, if their account was hacked, that information could be valuable to fraudsters, Swift warns, adding that businesses “need to be aware of these vulnerabilities” when not using proper collaboration tools.

Do you need collaboration tools at all?

The pandemic has accelerated the need for firms to invest in collaboration software, says Trehan, and there is now a “real need for companies not to fall

back” into the old ways of working. Therefore, moving forward is one of the key benefits of having these tools in place – it’s “recognising the new era of inclusivity and collaboration” that embraces a hybrid approach of remote and office working.

For Swift, while collaboration and coordination are the biggest benefits, particularly when using tools such as Trello and Azure for projects, she believes that, during the pandemic, it has also played a crucial role in performance management and

workforce wellbeing. “The key things for the success of any virtual team is to build trust and social cohesion, and to do that you need good collaboration and communication systems,” she explains.

“So it’s using those platforms not just for work-based purposes, but also for connection between the team, such as setting aside time to get to know new staff or find out how members of your team are doing on a personal note. This helps build relations, particularly right now.”

Which platform is right for you? People Management explores the functionality of several providers’ collaboration offerings

Coordination apps

	Trello	Asana	Monday	Podio	Wrike
Message boards/dashboards	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tasks/project lists	Y	Y – unlimited	Y	Y	Y
Assign tasks/projects	Y	Y	Y – paid subscription only	Y	–
Monitor project progress in real-time/activity log	Y – paid subscription only	Y	Y – paid subscription only	Y	Y
Timeline	Y – paid subscription only	Y – paid subscription only	Y – paid subscription only	–	Y
Schedule/e-calendar	Y – paid subscription only	Y	Y – paid subscription only	Y	Y – paid subscription only
File sharing	Y – via Dropbox	Y	Y	Y	Y
Integrate with other apps/platforms	Y – paid subscription only	Y	Y – paid subscription only	Y	Y – basic integrations with Google Drive and Microsoft 365
User limit	Unlimited	Up to 15 teammates	Up to two on free version	Up to two on free version	–
Storage	Unlimited	Unlimited	500GB on free version	Unlimited	2GB on free version
Mobile app	Y	–	Y	Y	–
Additional features	–	–	Zoom integration	–	Gantt chart
Cost	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
	Subscriptions start from \$10 per user, per month	Premium from £9.49 per user, per month	Subscriptions from £7 per user, per month	Subscriptions from \$7.20 per month	Subscriptions from \$9.80 per user, per month

Collaboration software

Communication and conferencing apps

	Slack	Google Meet/ G-chat	Microsoft Teams	Zoom	Ryver	Flock	Basecamp
Instant messaging	Y	Y	Y	–	Y	Y	Y
Video conferencing	Y	Y	Y – up to 60 minutes on free version	Y – up to 40 minutes on free version	Y	Y – only on paid for	–
Record meetings	Y – via a third party app	Y – only with G-Suite subscription	Y – only through Microsoft subscription	Y – paid subscription only	–	Y – paid subscription only	–
Audio calls	Y	Y	Y	Y – phone features on paid subscription only	Y	Y – paid subscription only	–
Screen sharing	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y – limited to five users on a call	Y – paid subscription only	–
Document sharing	Y	Y – part of G-suite	Y – part of Microsoft 365	–	Y – from Dropbox, Google Drive or Box.com	Y	Y
Create different channels/groups	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y – only on paid for version. Free version offers 10 public channels	Y
Integrate with other platforms/apps	Y – up to 10 third-party apps on free version	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y – paid subscription only	Y
Mobile app	Y	Y	Y	Y	–	–	–
Storage limit	5GB on free version. 10 GB per member on standard and 20GB per member on plus subscription	30GB per user on G-Suite starter package. 2TB, 5TB and unlimited on premium subscriptions	10GB per user on free version. 1TB per organisation, plus 10GB per licence, on paid subscription	1GB cloud recording per licence			500GB
Security	Y – paid subscriptions only	Y	Y – basic on free version	–	Y	Y	Y
Additional features	–	–	–	Social media streaming on paid packages	Task management News streaming/ RSS feed	–	Message board To-do lists Scheduling
Cost	Standard subscription: £5.25 per month Plus subscription: £9.75 per month	G-Suite starter: £4.14 per user, per month Standard: £8.28 per user, per month	Free Microsoft 365 package from £3.80 per user, per month	Free Paid subscription from £119.90 per year, per licence	From \$49 per month	Free Paid subscription from \$4.50 per user, per month	\$99 per month

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Helping you get further

Reviews: Sheree Atcheson explains how allyship can help combat inequity
p50

Masterclass

How to support domestic abuse victims

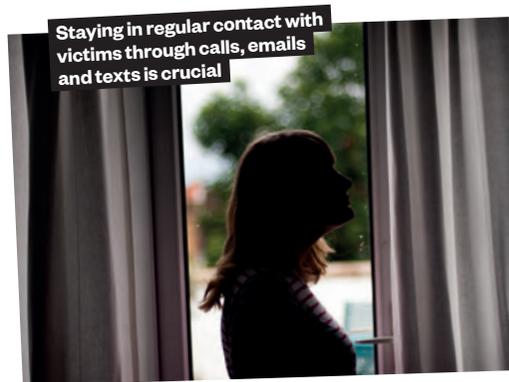


Elizabeth Filkin
Founder and chair of the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse

For the thousands of people who are victims of domestic abuse, work can be a safe place and provide respite, so with lockdown restrictions has come a rise in calls to domestic abuse helplines. With more people working from home, opportunity to leave the house has been reduced, and therefore so has the chance to get help and support.

Domestic abuse can interfere with every aspect of a victim's life, including their ability to work and overall wellbeing, because it can cause long-term mental and physical health problems. The role of businesses in tackling it is not to be underestimated, and has been emphasised during the pandemic, when the boundary between work and home life has been blurred.

There is no 'typical' victim of domestic abuse and no definitive signs of abuse, but those affected may suffer from frequent physical injuries;



display signs of stress, anxiety or depression; seem to be more nervous or jumpy than usual; or be unusually absent

“Signpost staff to support services and charities”

from work or social occasions. However, remote working has made spotting abuse harder for employers if the employee has not made a disclosure.

If you fear an employee may be facing abuse, it's essential to remember the person affected may not want to admit they are in an abusive relationship, and it's vital not to judge or make assumptions. The most important thing is to make sure

they know you are there to provide support.

Every case is different, but in the event of a disclosure of domestic abuse by an employee there are some steps every employer should take to uphold their duty of care to staff. If the employee wishes to report their abuser and makes this clear in the workplace, they should call 101, but if the situation is critical they should call 999 immediately. Some victims may wish to disclose abuse to their employer without making a report to the police, but employers can still offer support.

Keeping in touch with those facing abuse through regular calls, emails and text messages is essential, as this could be their only access to support. But if you lose contact with them, swift action should be taken to re-establish it through a home visit. You should also signpost staff to support services and charities wherever possible.

The key thing is to remember where the responsibility for abuse lies, and that is never with the victim. Don't ask them why they didn't speak up sooner, or why they haven't left.

Taking it further

➔ **Read**
Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse's guidance for employers during Covid-19
bit.ly/EIDAGuidance



➔ **Watch**
'How employers can respond to domestic abuse' webinar by Hestia Housing and Support
bit.ly/HestiaAbuse



➔ **Read**
Business in the Community's domestic abuse toolkit bit.ly/BITCAbuseToolkit

Who I am

Naomi Fergus

Medical recruitment officer at King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

I used to be a teacher, and unfortunately had a bad experience at the end of my career. I didn't have a good perception of HR before that, but the team was very helpful. A lot of people assume HR is just hiring, firing or sticking up for the organisation, but I realised there's a lot more than that. I started a new job in the NHS and started talking to people in the HR department there. I found it interesting and eventually decided to do my qualifications.

I would have gone into HR earlier if I'd known about it as a career option when I was at college or university. I used to tell my students to think outside the box. Life might not be a straight road, and you need to try different jobs to see if they're actually for you. There's not enough people in these professions going into schools and telling students what it's like.

My days usually go by quickly, mainly because I have a four-year-old daughter. I have kept to the same working hours as before lockdown because routine is key for both me and her. I get up early and do exactly what I would have done before lockdown. Our team also makes sure we're doing a daily catch-up. During the first lockdown we didn't have that, and we realised we felt disconnected. This check-in helps us feel connected and like we're supporting each other.

The past year has been a rollercoaster. At the beginning of 2020, we tried to figure out how we could continue the recruitment process, and we managed to make it remote and limit contact with people. Now, we're mostly still working from home, everything is still going ahead with recruitment and we have redeployed staff to cover absences. But it's not been too bad. The only downside to working remotely is the odd IT issue.

Before the pandemic, all our interviews were face-to-face, but now we conduct them via Microsoft Teams, which is less personal, but allows us to keep recruiting to essential roles. To counteract this, we try to improve our candidate experience by keeping in regular contact, and I think good levels of customer service compensates for some of the restrictions.

CV

Naomi Fergus began her HR career as HR interim at Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust in 2013, before being promoted in 2014. She began working as HR and finance administrator at Forest Hill School in 2018, and joined King's College Hospital NHS FT as medical recruitment officer in April 2019. She gained her CIPD Level 3 Foundation Diploma in HR Practice in 2018.

“She advocates allyship as the best strategy to adopt in stamping out inequity”

Reviews

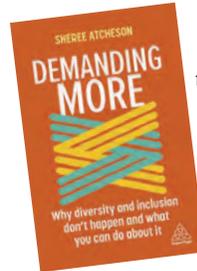
Demanding More

Sheree Atcheson, Kogan Page, £14.99/£9.72 e-book

The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis almost this time last year and the ensuing global Black Lives Matter movement shed a light on racial inequality like never before, and highlighted the need for businesses and wider society to step up and do more to tackle the historic prejudices those from ethnic minorities have faced. But for some organisations, despite having the best of intentions to better themselves and their employees’ experiences, understanding how to take

the first step towards a fairer world can be daunting.

In *Demanding More*, Atcheson – global director of diversity, equity and inclusion at Peakon, founder of Women Who Code and listed as one of *Computer Weekly’s* top 50 most influential women in tech in 2020 – draws on her experiences as a young woman of colour in an overly white, male industry to highlight



the lack of awareness around privilege and unconscious bias, and advocates allyship as the best strategy to adopt in stamping out inequity.

She goes back to basics to explain the terminology – what ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ actually mean and the difference between the two, as well as the concepts of intersectionality, privilege and unconscious bias. But perhaps most important is the sixth chapter on allyship. An ally, according

to Atcheson, is “any person who actively promotes and aspires to advance the culture of inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefit people as a whole”, and her tips for being a better ally, including actively seeking out learning on systemic inequalities and being proactive about supporting underrepresented people, are surely a must-read for all organisations.

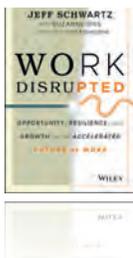
* Atcheson will be speaking at this year’s online CIPD Festival of Work on 16-17 June. To view the conference programme and book your ticket, visit festivalofwork.com

{Book}

Work Disrupted

Jeff Schwartz, Wiley, £20.02/£15.25 e-book

Thanks to Covid, the future of work hit a lot sooner than expected. But if that’s a worrying prospect, Schwartz’s guide is certainly one to add to your reading list. Written in a refreshing conversational style and peppered with humorous illustrations from *Marketeer’s* Tom Fishburne, Schwartz – a founding partner of Deloitte Consulting’s Future of Work practice – draws on interviews with leading business thinkers to offer advice on recognising opportunities and using mental models to help employees thrive.



{Book}

People Before Tech

Duena Blomstrom, Bloomsbury Business, £20/£11.70 e-book

In a world of artificial intelligence, agile working and video meetings, it’s easy to forget the human side of work. But firms are increasingly aware of psychological safety and how protecting it can bring big business benefits. In this book, psychology expert Blomstrom explains in clear terms why maintaining employees’ psychological safety during digital transformation can lead to higher productivity and better performance, drawing on a host of global case studies.

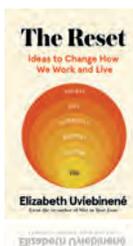


{Book}

The Reset

Elizabeth Uviebinené, Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99/£9.99 e-book

2020 saw us hit ‘refresh’ on how we live and work like never before, so Uviebinené’s latest release comes at a pertinent time. The *FT* columnist looks at how, if we want to reset how we work as individuals, we must also reset businesses, communities, cities and society. *The Reset* offers food for thought through Uviebinené’s own wisdom and interviews with the likes of flexi-work campaigner Anna Whitehouse and Channel 4 CEO Alex Mahon.

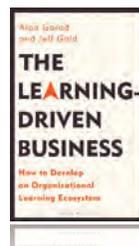


{Book}

The Learning-Driven Business

Alaa Garad & Jeff Gold, Bloomsbury, £30/£17.55 e-book

Any HR professional understands the value of learning, but taking a strategic approach and truly embedding it within the fabric of an organisation’s culture is no mean feat. Enter Garad and Gold. In *The Learning-Driven Business*, the two world-renowned academics share their decades of experience and distil why organisational learning is vital, as well as the frameworks needed to embed it, across easily digestible chapters complete with a host of case studies.



What’s new

In **Vantage Points**, CIPD Fellow and executive coach Paula Leach helps leaders consider their own unique circumstances, whether they run a business of three or 3,000, and use their own perspectives and experience to create clarity and nurture their workforce’s potential.

Meanwhile, in **Super Neuro You**, coach and former HR director Claire Walton combines fiction with neuroscience-based coaching. Protagonist Laura undertakes coaching to learn how to better harness her skills and improve her life, with readers given the chance to work through the same exercises.

Join us online and explore what it means to lead a responsible and agile business, and adapt to the new era of good work in a post-Covid, post-Brexit climate.

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Chief Executive, Business in the Community



Amanda Mackenzie

Alex Edmans
Professor of Finance; Academic Director, Centre for Corporate Governance (CCG), London Business School



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Your problems



Guest Fixer Dave A Barry tackles your queries

Dave A Barry FCIIPD is *People Management's* new guest HR Fixer. A graduate of University College Cork's postgraduate higher diploma in human resource management, Barry's career as an HR professional spans more than 20 years across sectors including biopharma, cybersecurity, travel and retail. He established consultancy Conexion.ie in 2018, is a prolific keynote speaker and lectures part time at University College Cork.

His replies are written in a personal capacity and do not reflect the views of *People Management* or the CIPD, nor are they a substitute for professional legal advice. Not all queries submitted can be answered, and personal replies are not possible. To pose an anonymous query, visit bit.ly/pmfixer

Our new director isn't from HR and doesn't understand it

I'm an HR manager in a retail business that has just undergone a restructure because of the difficulties we faced during the coronavirus pandemic. As part of this, quite a few senior high earners have been made redundant and departments have been amalgamated, and now our marketing director is also responsible for HR. They are well-liked but unfortunately know nothing about the field and it's starting to make the people team's jobs more difficult. It would have made much more sense for someone at my level to step up. How can I raise this with bosses at my company without appearing jealous?

From a strategic talent management perspective,

rotation of leadership through different functions including HR has been proven to result in more well-rounded and empathetic leaders. I have witnessed first hand the reciprocal benefits of inspiring other functional

constituted more of a necessity but, first, I would advocate raising it with your bosses in a 'what else can we do to further integrate the new director into HR?' intent, and approach it in a reciprocal coaching

"Leadership rotation has proven to result in well-rounded and empathetic leaders"

leaders bringing their particular business acumen into HR, and rotating back out with a much deeper understanding and appreciation of the profession.

From an HR development perspective, a model like this can plateau progression to director level, but I still believe the pros outweigh the cons. In your case, this has unfortunately

fashion. Scheduling team information sharing sessions would also speed up the new director's understanding. On an ongoing basis, in addition to one-to-one sharing, a performance management team objective such as continued shared learning would help ensure this practice carries on. This is truly a developmental opportunity all round.

How can we encourage the use of online L&D?

Our learning and development offering had previously all been face-to-face classroom sessions but, after the first lockdown last year, my HR team spent a huge amount of money and energy taking all our training and development online, sourcing and launching a new digital platform so staff wouldn't be disadvantaged by not being able to come in. The problem is that barely anyone is using it. We're an

office-based company so only have the bare minimum in mandatory training, but there's been nowhere near the take-up we expected. I know people are busy and workloads have increased, but I think the platform is brilliant and I'm disappointed it's not being used more.

Wharton School of Pennsylvania organisational psychologist Adam Grant

recently published an article in *The New York Times* about 'languishing': a term coined by sociologist Corey Keyes. Languishing dulls our motivation, disrupts our ability to focus and triples the odds that we will cut back at work. At a macro level, the root cause of barely anyone utilising your new platform may well rest here.

Over the last 15 months, we have all had such different experiences balancing life and work. Initially, online L&D was likely embraced as a routine that eased our sense of dread, but have we asked how

people are feeling about this right now?

Think about what type of structured approach would help bring back progress. Only your staff can provide you with insights specific to your company, and I definitely recommend checking out recent CIPD and People Management Insight webinars in which other organisations share how exactly they re-engaged their L&D. It does require additional effort now, but with a little more time I'm sure the new platform will be a big hit.

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Moves

People and posts *Who's making HR headlines?*



Grocery delivery service Beelivery has appointed **Mandy Hamerla, Chartered FCIPD (1)**, as chief people officer. Hamerla was previously director of HR consultancy Modern HR, having also spent time at companies including Argos and Pearson.

brings 16 years of recruitment, leadership and mentorship experience to the role.

TFS HealthScience has promoted **Andreia de Melo Cabral, Assoc CIPD**, to executive vice president and head of HR and talent acquisition. She joined the contract research organisation in 2018 as interim director of international HR.

Sadaf Parvaiz has joined professional services firm GHD as inclusion and diversity leader. She previously worked as director for diversity, inclusion and belonging (Americas) at EY.

Tarun Tawakley (3) has returned to Lewis Silkin as partner after four years as head of employment law and commercial litigation at Deliveroo. Tawakley started his career as a trainee at the law firm in 2007.

Charities Aid Foundation has recruited **David Jessop, Chartered FCIPD (4)**, as

executive director of people and purpose. He joins from Leonard Cheshire Disability, where he was executive director of people.

Rachel Scheel has taken on the role of senior VP of global diversity, equity and inclusion at digital advertising agency Criteo. She brings more than 20 years of HR experience to the position, having worked at companies including GE Healthcare and AMEC Group.

Employment law firm Boardside has hired **Hannah Jenkins (5)** as its first specialist commercial law solicitor. She joins from Bannatyne Fitness, and has also spent time at Aviva and Callcredit Information Group.

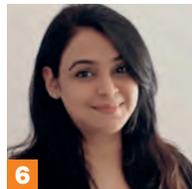
HireRight has welcomed **Smitha Rao (6)** as HR director for EMEA and Asia-Pacific. Before joining the background screening company, Rao was global senior director for talent and culture at Unbxhd.



Maxine Bonwick, Assoc CIPD, is the new HR director at Groupe Renault UK and Ireland. She was formerly HR business partner at Volkswagen Group UK, and has also worked at Ingram Micro and Nestlé.

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has appointed **Mark Preston, Chartered MCIPD (2)**, as chief people officer. He arrives from Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, where he was executive director of organisational development and people.

Travis Ousley has moved into the role of head of people at on-demand software teams start-up Distributed. Ousley



The next step *We help you to help your career*

My job title is a HR adviser but my everyday duties reflect that of an HR manager. I've also completed my CIPD Level 5, have 15 years' experience and have managed a team of three HR administrators for the past five years. There's no room for progression at my current company so I'm looking to move on and into an HR manager role. However, I'm finding it hard to get interviews at this level – the feedback I get is generally that they are looking for someone already in that role or working at that level. How can I prove I'm capable of doing the job despite my title not matching?

Job titles can mean many things or not much at all, says Ruth



Cornish (pictured), co-founder and director of HRi. So when I recruit HR professionals, I'm far more interested in what they've done and their potential. A job title is simply a description of a role or a purpose and not a true reflection of skills, abilities and experience, so don't worry.

Different organisations may recognise job titles in different ways, with the scope of an HR manager or adviser role in one organisation potentially very different to another.

That said, it might be worth asking your organisation to review and update your title to reflect your actual duties and current level of responsibility. Try and do the heavy lifting for them and demonstrate your manager

credentials with a strong piece of work. You could also share current adverts for HR managers in your sector that demonstrate the level of responsibility.

When you apply for external positions, there is also nothing wrong with putting 'HR manager' on your CV and explaining at interview that your internal title is 'HR adviser' but is being reviewed. Key things that differentiate between the two roles are management skills and leading on projects, so focus on making your CV very tight and unambiguous about what you are responsible for, your achievements and key duties. You could also consider undertaking a CIPD Level 7 qualification to further your knowledge and skills.

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Research

'Fake flex' disadvantages parents and carers

Employers must avoid measures that give the illusion of flexible working, which could see parents and carers missing out on the benefits of remote working, a new report has warned.

In a survey by Karian and Box and the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at King's College London, 90 per cent of organisations said they'd increased support for home working, and 97 per cent were looking to adopt a hybrid working model.

Despite this, the report argued that more targeted measures were needed because those who take on the bulk of caring responsibilities – mainly women – risk seeing the boundaries between work and personal life dissolve. At the same time, many carers working flexibly are



Home workers may be missing out on opportunities to progress

experiencing increased workloads as they are seen as always being available.

The poll of 254 organisations revealed that only half (52 per cent) of employers provided more

support for part-time workers and a third (36 per cent) were actively redesigning job roles.

Dubbed 'fake flex' – where employees work remotely but without measures to prevent them having to do more or work in ways that don't fit around other responsibilities

– the report warned that businesses risk creating a two-tier workforce if they did not start thinking more broadly about flexibility. It said true flexibility was about how people work, not just where they work, and can take numerous forms such as job sharing, having set hours, working compressed hours or term-time working.

With women more likely than men to work part time and to want to work from home post pandemic, a two-tier workforce could undermine progress on gender equality. To mitigate this, the report recommended employers establish routines and processes that ensure employees working from home do not miss out on opportunities to progress.

* bit.ly/FakeFlexiWork

Hand signals improve virtual meetings

Hand signals can improve the experience of video meetings and make teams feel closer, according to a study by University College London.

Researchers trained half of the 100 undergraduate students who participated to use a set of hand signals in their Zoom seminars, such as waving before they spoke and raising a hand to show empathy. Afterwards, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire evaluating their experience.

The study found students who used hand signals gave

a significantly higher rating for group affiliation, personal experience and learning outcomes. They also reported improved interaction with peers. In fact, one in five said they felt they knew the group (19 per cent) and found it easier to exchange ideas in the seminar (22 per cent).

Daniel Richardson, co-lead author, said many people find online social interactions do not replicate seeing people in person because you "can't make eye contact or pick up on subtle nods or gestures". This makes it hard to know if people are engaged, and so "we wanted to investigate a behavioural method", he added.

* bit.ly/HandSignalsVideoCalls

Investors influence SME HR practice

HR management practices are influenced by the values of financial investors in small businesses, research by Trinity Business School has found.

According to the study of seven small Irish firms in the agrifood sector, companies take an operational, strategic or transformational approach to HR depending on the type of investor and their values.

SMEs that receive financial backing from 'angel' investors – private investors who often have high net worth – tend to adopt an operational approach to HR management.

This means their focus is on improving efficiency and internal functions.

Meanwhile, companies backed by private equity firms often adopt a more strategic approach, whereby they seek to accelerate growth and return on investment in a relatively short time frame. The researchers found that government venture capital also led to firms taking this approach.

And SMEs that receive corporate venture capital – where a large company takes an equity stake in the small firm – adopt either a strategic or transformational HR practice depending on the level of investment.

* bit.ly/InvestorsHRPractice

CIPD welcomes three new board members

Appointees have a wealth of experience in L&D, OD and people development



New appointees (L-R): Valerie Hughes-D'Aeth, Siobhán Sheridan and Dr Sue Round

The CIPD is delighted to announce the election of three non-executive directors to help champion better work and working lives. Board members are responsible for the strategic direction of the CIPD and ensuring it uses resources responsibly while delivering on its charitable purpose.

Following a unanimous vote by the CIPD council, Valerie Hughes-D'Aeth joins as chair of the board, while Siobhán Sheridan and Dr Sue Round have been appointed trustees. The council also re-elected Jonathan Ferrar for a second three-year term. Together, they bring a wealth of HR and people development experience from the private, public and voluntary sectors to the CIPD's 12-strong board.

Specialising in HR and OD, Hughes-D'Aeth is a non-executive director for the Department for Work and Pensions, and runs her own business consultancy. She says: "As we hopefully move out of the pandemic, we have a unique opportunity to recalibrate traditional approaches to work, while enabling good business outcomes. The CIPD is championing this change, influencing policy and practice by convincing decision makers that, when you put people first, everyone stands to gain."

Having joined the HR profession as an L&D specialist at NatWest nearly 30 years ago, Sheridan is now chief people officer at the Financial Conduct Authority. "Supporting organisations in all sectors to think about the choices of the next few years requires deep skill

and expertise from everyone in the fields of HR, L&D and OD," she says. "The work is not always easy, and it's critical that as professionals we have a community that we can turn to for support and challenge."

Round has more than 25 years' experience in people development, and recently left a role at BP as HRVP for talent, learning, diversity and leadership to set up her own consultancy. She says: "There is going to be so much to do to reset the world of work as we emerge from the pandemic, and now is a great opportunity for the people profession. It's an honour to play a part in helping others within the profession grow."

The CIPD wishes them the best of luck in their new appointments.

* bit.ly/CIPDNewBoardMembers

WORDS KRISTIAN ADAMS AND NATALIE BAKER

EXTRA EXTRA

Hybrid working

Working in a hybrid way, where team members may be working from different locations or at different times, will require planning to succeed. The CIPD's guide offers key tips for enabling effective working.

* bit.ly/HybridWorkingGuide

* bit.ly/HybridWorkingFlowchart

Digital fatigue podcast

Is the human brain wired for a digital way of working? The CIPD's latest podcast explores the instrumental role that virtual platforms play in bridging the communications gap between home workers, and looks at how we can set healthy boundaries for digital tools so that organisations can avoid fuelling harmful working practices.

* bit.ly/DigitalFatiguePodcast

BITC Race at Work Charter

The Race at Work Charter was launched by Business in the Community in late 2018, with the aim of tackling ethnic disparities in the workplace. The CIPD's guide for employers, compiled in association with BITC, offers practical advice to organisations hoping to meet the five calls to action set out in the charter.

* bit.ly/CIPDRaceAtWorkCharter

People Profession Survey

How are you adapting to the changing world of work? The CIPD's People Profession Survey is an annual global snapshot of the HR profession, reflecting how people practitioners are feeling and what they are focused on. Share your thoughts with the CIPD so that it can best support you. The survey closes on 4 June 2021.

* bit.ly/PeopleProfessionSurvey

The CIPD's People Profession Survey provides a global snapshot of what HR and L&D practitioners are focusing on



Employers can find guidance to help them implement a flexible-focused returner strategy

Move to more sustainable membership

The CIPD is committed to becoming more environmentally conscious, and over the past few years has taken steps to reduce its impact on the environment.

In 2019, *People Management* magazine introduced fully recyclable packaging for distribution to each UK-based member. In the same year, the CIPD became one of the first membership organisations to move to a 100 per cent plastic-free membership card made from 100 per cent recyclable FCS-certified paperboard.

This year, the CIPD is halting the automatic issue of membership cards, which will save 1.5 tonnes of paper each year. It has developed more sustainable and convenient ways for members to provide proof of membership online or via their digital membership card available through the CIPD Community app. Physical membership cards will be available upon request.

But the journey doesn't stop there. The CIPD will work with the Carbon Trust to assess its carbon footprint, identifying areas for improvement and enabling the organisation to operate more sustainably in the future.

* cipd.co.uk/sustainable-membership

CIPD launches hub for parent returners

It's easy to see why returners might be keen to get back into work, but employers also stand to gain a great deal from recruiting them.

The CIPD has launched information hub ParentWorks to support parent returners back to the workplace. Research reveals that more than half a million professional women are on an extended career break for caring reasons in the UK.

The hub shares practical insights following the conclusion of the CIPD's Parent Returner Programme, which provided free mentoring to 150 parents in Yorkshire and Humber and was funded by the Government Equalities Office.

Employers can find guidance on implementing a flexible-focused returner strategy, and understanding what returners want and the support needed to help returners to succeed.

Returning parents can also find resources and advice on a return to work, including their legal rights, Q&As, case studies and expert one-to-one support through the CIPD's Steps Ahead Mentoring programme.

* bit.ly/ParentWorksHub

CIPD Community on the go

Carry the Community in your pocket and learn, debate and connect on the go through the CIPD Community app. The app is free and easy to use and provides a secure environment to quickly and easily connect with like-minded HR and L&D professionals 24/7 straight from your mobile device. This is also where CIPD members can find their digital membership card.

bit.ly/CIPDCommunities

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Rather than criticising her in front of colleagues, Annie Walker's (pictured) boss should have offered her one-to-one support

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Could HR solve...?

BRIDESMAIDS

A retail worker is humiliated by her boss when personal issues affect her at work

The problem

Jewellery sales assistant Annie Walker is finding it hard to meet targets when problems in her personal life begin to seep into her working life. After a failed sale, her boss, Don, criticises her and asks her why she can't be "more like Kahlua", a colleague he clearly favours. When Annie responds that she is trying, Don tells her to try harder. But could he have used a different approach to motivate and support Annie when she's clearly struggling?

The solution

In the space of just over a minute, Don manages to use inappropriate behaviour, humiliation, sexual harassment and bullying while dealing with what should have been a simple opportunity to provide Annie with feedback, says Ian Moore (pictured), people director at Lodge Court. "Giving feedback in an open workspace or public area should never happen," he says. "This could adversely impact the business's reputation and brand, not to mention have a negative impact on the engagement of the team."



Don obviously thought asking Kahlua to demonstrate her 'love is eternal face' to

show Annie how it's done would be helpful but, as Moore points out, this actually had the opposite effect: "In the right learning environment, observing how other colleagues handle different situations can be very powerful in helping to develop skills and confidence, but to do so in front of others is humiliating."

Moore suggests that more one-to-one support would be helpful for Annie, as well as changing the direction and tone of the conversation. "Providing feedback is a skill, not a gift," he says. "And one that needs to be developed and practised to ensure the maximum positive impact on the individual's performance and the engagement of the team."

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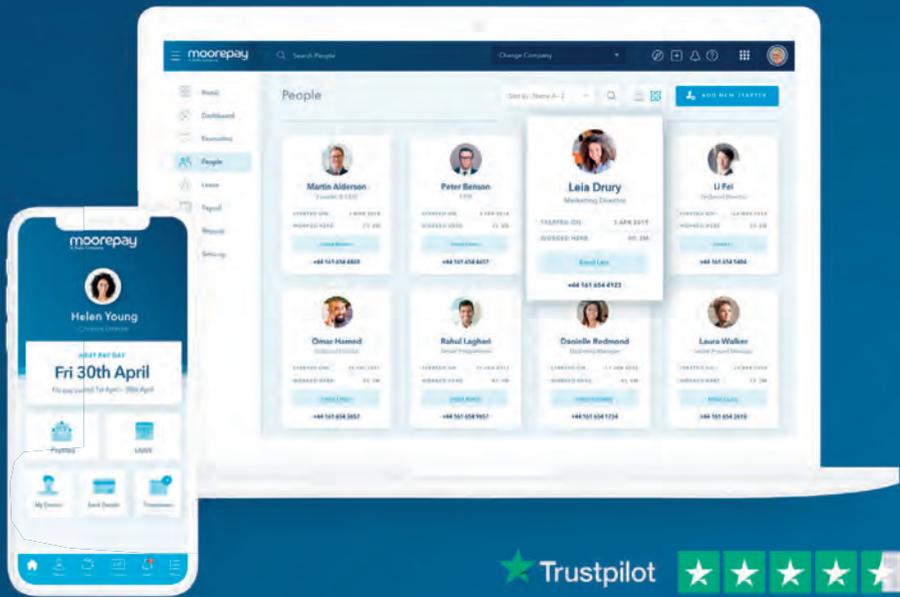
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