

On 10th May 2022, CRF members gathered to take stock of how, two years from the onset of the pandemic, new cultures of work are embedding. Building on CRF's <u>2021 research</u>, which examined the future of work and the impact of the pandemic across multiple angles, this event and <u>accompanying research</u> examined what's working, what's not, key emerging trends, and unsettled questions as we move forward.

These Post Meeting Notes summarise the discussion.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Remote working is likely here to stay. However, the precise balance between home and office days, the locations from which people work, and the degree of personal choice employees will have with respect to hours and days are still in flux. The consequences of mass remote working are not yet clear. Organisations will need to systematically assess impacts on butcomes such as productivity, nnovation, customer service, earning, wellbeing, and retention. At many organisations, HR shifted from a policy- to a guidance or principlesled approach during the pandemic. Going forward, it will be important for organisations to ensure their guidance-based approach is right for their business. Keep revisiting guidance and update 'heat of the moment' principles adopted during the pandemic if they are no longer useful.

more than hybrid work is about more than hybrid working. The forces of digitalisation and the democratisation of work are causing organisations to rethink their value proposition, the personas that comprise workforces, work and the work experience. The traditional conception of a 'job' can impede agility; work needs to be reconfigured with a new talent supply and demand equation.

The role of the leader has changed, and is continuing to change. In a fast-paced and uncertain business context, the leader drives business performance by fostering a culture of empowerment. Such a culture is created through purpose, trust and building resilience.

Managers must keep in mind that new ways of working are not all about them. Managers' role is to develop, coach, and help people learn; their behaviour sets a standard. HR might need to remind managers that their focus should be on their team. Many organisations enhanced wellbeing measures during the pandemic, and this enhanced support appears to be here to stay. The impact of new working practices on wellbeing is mixed, and many organisations are now shifting focus from physical safety to psychological safety and mental health.



In light of your experience of the last 2+ years, how do you feel now?



MANAGING THE RISKS AND Opportunities of Hybrid Working With John Whelan



JOHN WHELAN is a Director at Corporate Research Forum. Formerly UK HR Director of BAE Systems, the FTSE 100 defence, security, and aerospace company, John's experience and strengths lie in business and HR Transformation, Organisation Development and Employee Relations. Prior to joining BAE, he held a variety of HR roles in engineering, technology and manufacturing businesses across the telecommunications and semi-conductor industries including Matra-Marconi Space where he was HR Director for the UK and, latterly, Group HRD.



CRF's John Whelan kicked the day off by sharing key findings of the research. With the new world of work here, now, the research asked: What's changed for good? What's still in flux?

Where are we now?

- Hybrid and flexible working have become the norm, with 2-3 days in the office most common.
- New working practices are generally seen as positive, with communication with teams and efficiency and productivity positively impacted; however, the quality of the measurement of these impacts is a concern. The impact of new working practices on culture, performance, talent management, and performance management are not yet well understood.
- Positivity toward new working practices is greater among employees than leaders.
- There are several barriers to the implementation of new working practices. Some employees remain reluctant to return to the office, while some leaders remain reluctant to engage with hybrid working. Management capability for remote working is a concern, as are unfairness between groups, inequalities between office and remote working experiences, and the impact of hybrid working on diversity and inclusion.
- 67% of respondents to CRF's survey report that they are having difficulty encouraging people back to the office. Being clear about the purpose of the office, making the physical working environment attractive and fit for purpose, and using involvement, communication and incentives are strategies that organisations are using to attract people back.

What's still in flux? When, where, how, and why we work is still being worked out. One key question is: who decides?

- Has the 'Great Resignation' meant employers are powerless to enforce changes? One in three UK employees say they'll resign if they can no longer work from home, and 47 million resigned from their jobs in the United States in 2021. One HR leader told us that it was all about competition in the job market: "you have to go with the flow."
- While only 10% of our survey respondents said that they had often experienced new hires not joining or staff leaving over flexible working policies, anecdotally, we were told the first question at interview is "what is your flexible working policy?".



FOOD FOR THOUGHT AT Associated British Foods

Associated British Foods plc

Sue Whalley, Chief People and Performance Officer at **Associated British Foods (ABF),** shared her organisation's experiences, with a particular focus on what is still unresolved and how ABF plans to decide settled practice.

Read the full case study here.



How are you monitoring the impact of new ways of working on women's networks and what indicators will prompt you to take action?

Engagement is a key indicator. We are increasing our focus on engaging workforces and using various tools to do so. Each business decides what's right for them. We are paying huge amounts of attention to employee voice – and not just by gender, but for all groups – different nationalities, ethnicities etc. We are also looking at churn through exit interviews – are there any patterns around what's going on with our workforce? We are triangulating many different data points to get the larger picture.

• With a decentralised structure – do you get challenges from employees where there are different practices across businesses?

- (A) It's really for the individual businesses to determine the right approach for their culture and values. We do a lot of sharing across all the businesses; laws can vary by jurisdiction so we are trying to share and learn from each other, but also stay cognisant of context.
- Are you finding that workforce expectations vary across geographies?
- A The United States is proving particularly challenging, especially around attracting people to areas that are key to our business. We are learning, and sharing that learning in order to support each other.
- How do you attract people who are not willing to come back?
- A We are talking up the positives around being back together and spending more time together. We've also hosted learning events that create opportunities for people to come back together. Our approach is more carrot than stick. We're seeing an uptick in people coming back now, post-Omicron, and they seem to be enjoying the contact.
- Can you say anything about the efficacy of online versus face-to-face learning and development programmes?
- **(A)** We have been very pleased with our online programmes and how they've been adapted. And we have learned a few things. 1. In order to engage across the globe, you have to either run two sessions, one at each end of the day, or do everything at noon. 2. People's attention spans are short – two, perhaps two and half, hours is the maximum for virtual learning before you need to break it up and do something else. 3. With respect to the presentation of information, simplicity is key. Information sharing can be extremely effective in virtual environments, as long as you keep the message simple. 4. Discussion groups have an optimal number – it's about four or five people – so that everyone can contribute in a productive and meaningful way.



GUIDANCE VERSUS POLICY

During the pandemic, HR largely used guidance rather than policy, taking a principles-led approach. Uncertainty drove this need for flexibility; organisations wanted to remain flexible and adaptable as the situation changed, rather than making firm, difficult-to-reverse decisions.

Now that the pandemic is drawing to a close, our research asked: Is the shift from policy to guidance a general shift or was it just a reaction to circumstances?

For many organisations, guidance appears to be here to stay, but a guidance-led approach requires support.

- At **Fidelity International**, 'Dynamic Working' is a set of principles. Scenarios ('What do I do if my team member doesn't want to return to the office?') help managers navigate different situations they might encounter; a guide sets out possible working patterns to select from.
- **Shell** designed a Future of Work playbook for all employees and managers. It includes principles bringing to life the future of work. The company is providing managers support on how to lead a hybrid team. HR is hosting drop-in clinics for those who have questions.
- Virgin Money is taking an experiential approach through 'A Life More Virgin'. Workshops and activities have supported the roll out of the approach. There is a focus on team rhythms – determining how and when each team operates best. Practices are reviewed every six months.
- **Camelot Group** is taking a data-based approach. There are specific and regular staff surveys on the experience of hybrid working, assessing employee experience, activity, and effectiveness. Based on the data, managers then agree working patterns. Managers are supported with training/coaching.

Learn more about each of these approaches in our <u>full</u> report.

Alongside this we have seen the rise of the use of experimentation. With the situation still in a state of flux, it's important to test different scenarios or working patterns to identify those that work best before taking firm decisions that may be difficult to unwind later.

TEST AND LEARN AT THE OPEN UNIVERSITY



Karen Ward, OD Director at **The Open University (OU)**, shared how the OU is taking an experimental approach to post-pandemic ways of working.

Read the full case study here.



• Are you finding the experiment's trial period of 12 months suitable, given there were still many restrictions over the past year?

A The data is just coming in, but we are going to use that to determine whether to extend the experiment before making any finite decisions on ways of working. However, from the data already being reviewed, we are seeing very consistent themes. I suspect we may not get much diversity of opinion with respect to what colleagues want; the challenge will likely be how to operationalise that in a cost-effective way.

Personas – what are they, and how did you identify them?

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We have an Insights team on staff that had previously done lots of work on student personas, so we were able to borrow and build on that methodology. We also conducted focus groups and interviews. Because every unit was represented in the ways of working and business continuity groups, we were able to quickly synthesize patterns and send those back to colleagues for feedback. This led to iterations of the personas, until we got about 80% of there, which is good enough.



How are you using personas?

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We have used them predominantly in our readiness-for-change work. We have 10,000 staff members, with many different points of view, and those points of view are held quite strongly in an academic context such as ours. The personas were helpful for finding a language that colleagues were sufficiently comfortable with, that they could see themselves in. So the personas have been a way of helping colleagues connect to the changes they want. It's a way of segmenting the workforce, but in a way that does not feel like segmentation.

What is your methodology for experimentation? How did you do it, who was involved?

It's not one-size-fits-all. Recognising that this is a very emotional experience, we introduced design thinking, which is an empathy-based approach. We also conducted surveys including a staff barometer survey. Marketing was involved, for brand work. Essentially, we developed a series of hypotheses, and have chosen quantitative or qualitative methods depending on the outcomes we were looking to get to. Collaboration is a principle of all of our experimental work.

How did you involve employees in the design process?

We have to be careful about overloading our colleagues as we're experiencing huge growth and undergoing strategic change at the same time. So we've used a variety of methods to involve them: they can attend a workshop, participate in a focus group, come to Q&A sessions, join Yammer or Teams chats that are ongoing. We've also engaged with our employee networks. This work is underpinned by a recognition that as a unionised, public-sector organisation, some things are not within our gift to change.

Has prototyping played a part in your experimentation?

A Yes. For example, our Estates team set up three 'show homes' that colleagues could come into, in order to see how different office set-ups might work. This has provided a very visceral experience.

O How do you evaluate prototypes?

We surveyed colleagues at team level. But in addition to sentiment data, we are evaluating actual (anonymised) behaviour data. For example, our Estate team needs to know what is actually happening. We can track lanyards into and out of the building, and what this analysis is showing us is that there is quite a disconnect between intention and practise. If 50% say they will be in on Wednesday and Thursday, but only 25% show up, this can create a lot of food waste in the canteen. So there are many practical issues that need to be worked through.

• With regard to leadership behaviours, what behaviours have you encountered, worked with, or had to work around?

(A) We have an array of leaders and mangers, with an array of personal preferences and assumptions. We brought in a behavioural scientist, whose job is to understand what they mean in practice. The behavioural scientist is conducting listening exercises, which will inform our future approach to policies or guidance, and which will inform management training. This is especially important for managers not used to working in a high-trust, outcomes-based environment.

Trust really underpins the success of hybrid working, doesn't it?

Yes, and we are really seeing this in the change space. Change done badly historically has created pockets of low trust in the organisation. How do we rebuild that trust, and in a virtual environment? A positive of our organisational context is that it's an academic world, so there is high curiosity. Trust is going to be interesting. We don't yet know the consequences for longer-term working patterns. What responsibility do we have as an employer? What about societal level challenges around opportunity? So we are gathering data, taking an evidence-based approached, and ensuring we have a process for monitoring and evaluating that data.



LEADING IN A HYBRID ENVIRONMENT WITH JAMES BLAKER





to talent and organisational development leaders across Europe, North America and Asia. His role is to engage global talent leaders and leverage BTS resources to guide individual and organisational decisions across a variety of human capital areas. His clients include FTSE 100 and Fortune 500 corporates, as well as government departments. James is passionate about helping organisations close the skills and mindset gap and empowering people so they have access to the right development experiences which help organisations in accelerating their strategy execution capabilities.

JAMES BLAKER works as a thought partner



James Blaker, Vice President, Strategy Execution & Business Transformation and David Ashley, Head of European Coach Centre of Excellence, at BTS, led a session on leading in a hybrid environment. James discussed the new demands of leadership.

While many businesses have successfully transitioned to operate with a distributed workforce, this type of change is a human and social endeavour, and thus has a fundamental impact on culture. When culture is impacted, leadership comes to the fore.

What leadership attributes are proving to be critical in the new ways of working? A key lesson from BTS's research is

that in the face of rapid, disruptive change, people leaders can't be expected to have all the answers. There's an increasing urgency for leaders to create the conditions for success rather than purely be the deliverer of that success. These conditions for success include:

- **Purpose.** Many organisations are embracing purposedriven strategies and have refreshed their organisational values. This has, to a degree, been successful at connecting with people and energising employees; however, purpose and values alone are not enough.
- **Trust.** Trust in others is a key consideration in how we work together and get things done. Finland has embraced agile ways of working for decades. It's a style of work well suited to the country's deep-rooted culture of trust, equality and pragmatism; and in fact, 85% of Finns trust other Finns. Economic prosperity and perceptions of societal equality have helped instil a trusting quality which seems to connect the Finns.
- **Connection and belonging.** Lockdowns severely restricted people's ability to connect, especially in the early phases. We immediately craved connection and belonging as we faced an uncertain future it was taken away from us and not easily substituted.

In short, the leader's role is to foster a culture of empowerment to drive business success – such a culture is created through purpose, trust and building resilience (which is fostered through connection and belonging).

David shared key insights from extensive BTS research on coaching, which asked what challenges leaders face, what helps them to change, and thus what helps accelerate culture change.

- **Mindset is at the heart of behaviour change.** Mindset is defined as the worldview of an individual, and is comprised of the beliefs, assumptions and corresponding feelings and physiology that shape behaviour. For leaders, it's critical to connect mindset to organisation strategy and results.
- Across cultures, there are four areas of mindset change that occur repeatedly: Be, Relate, Inspire and Think. The pandemic accelerated and emphasised the importance of these areas. The 'Be' area involves mental health and wellbeing, especially during difficult times such as the pandemic. The 'Relate' area is about how we build connection in a virtual environment – creating team connection, and the role of leaders in ensuring that people are valued, heard, and listened to. 'Inspire' refers to how people now need to connect to a sense of meaning and purpose to ensure they do their jobs effectively, as well as how to keep inspiration and motivation during times of uncertainty. 'Think' refers to the need to innovate quickly, and to think differently about the business and how it operates in a virtual environment.

Watch the video of the session to hear case studies that bring these principles to life.





WORK WITHOUT JOBS WITH RAVIN JESUTHASAN





RAVIN JESUTHASAN is the global leader of Mercer's Transformation Services business. He is a recognised global thought leader, futurist and author on the future of work and workforce transformation. He has led multiple research efforts on the global workforce, the emerging digital economy, the rise of artificial intelligence and the transformation of work, for the World Economic Forum and is a member of the forum's Steering Committee on Work and Employment. He is the author of *Transformative HR*, *Lead The Work: Navigating a World Beyond Employment* and *Reinventing Jobs: A 4-Step Approach to Applying Automation to Work*.



Ravin Jesuthasan, Global Leader of Transformation Services Business at Mercer, shared his insights on the future of work (which is about much more than remote working).

Two forces – digitalisation and the democratisation of work – have put us on the precipice of a reset in the future of work. This Great Reset asks two pivotal guestions of us:

- How will we redesign work to enable talent to flow to it as seamlessly as possible while enabling its perpetual reinvention?
- How will we re-envision the talent experience to meet all talent where they are and on their terms? (As opposed to a 'one-size-fits-most' approach).

Consequently, organisations are beginning to radically rethink their value proposition, the personas that comprise workforces, work and the work experience.

While we have been focused on the 'where' and 'when' of work for the last year, the future of work requires us to question all its dimensions.

- Where: location and infrastructure
- When: hours and scheduling
- How: scaling, technology
- What: job content and sharing
- Who: alternative workforce, automation
- Why: mission, purpose

This thing called a 'job' is a challenge for organisations looking to be more agile, relevant, and responsive to a rapidly changing world. Thus, a shift in the 'job to work' relationship is required.

Work needs to be reconfigured with a new talent supply and demand equation. It is no longer helpful to conceptualise work as something done by an employee, with a single job, following a linear career path with experiences based on skills required by the job (demand), and technology built to support people in jobs, to work as something done by internal and external talent, accomplished through jobs, work tasks, projects, with a variety of experiences based on skills required for work (demand) and the skills and interests of the person (supply). In this equation, automation becomes a 'work partner' to substitute, augment and transform work.

Ravin argued that leaders need a new operating system for work that better supports the high degree of organisational agility required to thrive amid increasingly rapid change and disruption, and that better reflects the fluidity of modern work and working arrangements.

He introduced such a system, based on four principles:

- 1. Transcend the legacy of jobs. Start with the work (current and future tasks), not the existing jobs.
- 2. Substitute, augment, transform or create work. Achieve the optimal combination of humans and automation.



3. Internal marketplace. Consider the full array of human work engagements (employment, gig, freelance, alliances, projects, other alternative arrangements, etc.)

This table compares a traditional work operating system to a 'Work Without Jobs' operating system.

4. Increase the agility with which talent is connected to work. Allow talent to 'flow' to work versus being limited to fixed, traditional jobs.

The Seven Elements of the New Work Operating System

TRADITIONAL WORK OPERATING SYSTEM	WORK WITHOUT JOBS OPERATING SYSTEM
Work as intact and mostly stable jobs	Work as deconstructed job elements (tasks)
Work automation as replacing employees in jobs	Work automation as optimising task-level combinations of human and automated work
Full-time employees inside a fixed organisation boundary	Work arrangements including a boundaryless and democratised work ecosystem
Workers as jobholders with capability to fill 'job requirements'	Workers as a whole person with an array of deconstructed capabilities (e.g. skills)
Stable system of jobs and employment contracts	Perpetually reinvented task/project combinations and work arrangements beyond traditional employment
Management and work coordination through hierarchy, structure, and stable reporting relationships	Management and work coordination as collaborative hubs of teams and projects, aligned goals/purpose, and integrated through human/AI platforms and HR systems
Social values and policies that rely on traditional jobs and employment to achieve worker sustainability, voice, equity and inclusion	Social values and policies that enable and rely on fluid work arrangements and holistic worker capability to achieve worker sustainability, voice, equity and inclusion
Mercer	Source: Work Without Jobs, 2002

Source: Work Without Jobs, 2002

💽 What about people who can't adapt to this new

- Work operating system? Witt they be tert benind?
 This is a really good point. For example, someone might spend 20 years acquiring highly technical skills, and then overnight have to reskill. This has implications for education what is the value of spending tens or even hundreds of thousands on a degree with a shelf life of seven years? The notion of perpetual reinvention of ourselves hasn't really sunk in. Younger people get it the ability to do multiple things at the same time appears to be in younger talent's DNA But the talent
- O What do you do when skills just aren't available in your organisation, and at the same time, you are struggling to recruit those skills?
- (A) With reskilling pathways, we ask: what are the adjacencies across technical and enabling skills? Managers put such primacy on technical skills, and this sometimes leads managers to ignore the development

of internal people, because not enough attention is paid to enabling skills. So, understanding where those are; that someone who has operated in your environment and can get things done is far more important than the fact that they haven't expressed those technical skills in this particular domain. There is, I would argue, an acute and myopic focus on technical skills, and organisations would benefit from casting a wider net.

- O Thinking of employee engagement, how do you engage people in a work operating system that is task- and skill-focused rather than relationshipfocused?
- (A) Actually, I would argue that relationships are enhanced because we are not limiting the sphere of interaction by limiting people to a 'job'. They are all employees, but are continuously interacting with a pool of individuals. The variability and velocity this entails leads to higher growth rates and better development.



WELLBEING – A DIFFERENTIATOR AT VIRGIN ATLANTIC



Estelle Hollingsworth, Chief People Officer at **Virgin Atlantic**, shared the company's unique experience and the evolution of its approach to employee wellbeing.

Read the full case study here.



Managers and leaders come up often – how to keep them engaged, given their significance. What part do leaders and managers play in wellbeing at Virgin Atlantic?

They play a key part. We have three values that all our people live by day-to-day. But we hadn't articulated what it means to be a Virgin Atlantic leader. So we have now identified seven mindset qualities that were key to our survival during the pandemic, such as trust and be curious. If you don't show those qualities as a leader, you shouldn't be with Virgin Atlantic. Kindness, humanity, and care are what we are about. We are being clear with leaders that 'if you aren't genuinely that person, we don't want you'. And this is filtering into hiring. We hire for mindset: here are the qualities we are looking to have demonstrated consistently.

At my organisation, we are creating innovation bubbles within Employee Resource Groups, because have noticed that it helps to ask those groups to innovate and come up with new ideas. Does Virgin Atlantic do anything like this?

In terms of innovation, yes. For example, our makeup policy came from an employee network. We were the first airline to say 'men or women can choose to waar makeup, no one has to waar

Can choose to wear makeup, no one has to wear makeup, and if you do choose to wear makeup, you can choose from a wide pallet of colours'. This is because one of our networks raised the issue. We changed our policy on the back of that. We also have 'Passport to Change', which

is our schools programme. Community is very important to us, so we have committed to work with the local schools in the cities from which we fly. Our programming aims to bring to life what careers at Virgin Atlantic look like and how they can be achieved.

WELLBEING AS AN ESSENTIAL, Not a 'Nice-to-have'

Wellbeing measures were greatly enhanced during the pandemic, and companies appear to be retaining these new enhanced wellbeing measures and support packages, often investing higher amounts than before to maintain these services. While initial investment in wellbeing was about keeping people physically safe, it later become more about psychological safety and mental health.

- Around 50% of our survey respondents said that new working practices had had a positive impact on wellbeing. This makes sense working from home allows people to spend more time with their families, exercise, eat better, and travel less.
- But 32% felt that wellbeing had been negatively impacted. This also makes sense – for example, if you're in an abusive relationship, the last place you want to be is at home. Burnout, feelings of isolation, and even loneliness are other risks.

WELLBEING TOOLKITS AT CINETIC

QINETIQ

Nola Lenaghan, Head of Employee Relations at **QinetiQ**, described the company's whole-person approach to supporting their managers and employees.

Read the full case study here.







FURTHER READING

Bird & Bird. 2022. The Workforce of the Future: Business Protection in a Covid-impacted World. <u>https://www.</u> twobirds.com/-/media/new-website-content/insights/pdfs/ workforce-of-the-future_business-protection_v06.pdf

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PBS. 2021. Documentary: Future of Work. <u>https://www.pbs.org/show/future-work</u>

crf UPCOMING EVENTS

- IN-PERSON AND ONLINE:
 Summer Lecture: The Misuse of Data
- 🛞 9th June, 17.30 BST, Central London
- ((**o**)) 9th June, 18.00 BST, Online

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	Organisation Design for Agility		

- 🟶 29th September, 9.00 BST, Central London
- ((•)) 29th September, 10.00 BST, Online
- IN-PERSON AND ONLINE:
- The Future of Learning
- 🟶 10th November, 9.00 GMT, Central London
- ((•)) 10th November, 10.00 GMT, Online



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