

Economies of Trust

Business transformation in the post-pandemic world - online discussion series

A Future of Work Hub by Lewis Silkin and RSA collaboration

Covid-19: rethinking space, tech and workplace culture

"Some of the assumptions we have surrounding the workplace have been with us since the start of the industrial revolution – and these assumptions are being challenged. How do we learn from the current crisis to bring together the divergent needs of organisations, individuals and the planet to create a purposeful workplace?" Neil Usher, Chief Partnership Officer, GoSpaceAI

"There is now a mandate to start over and push away old ways of doing things. Those that survive are those that will be open to change and adapt to technology and embed trust. We need to create a new way of building trust. Those organisations that do will exit this period in much better shape." Neta Meidav, Co-Founder and CEO, Vault

So how will workplace culture evolve as a result of the Covid-19 crisis? In our second virtual discussion we looked at how the purpose of the physical office might change as businesses reassess the way work gets done (and where). We also discussed the impact of an increasingly remote workforce on organisational culture, and the role technology and "good work" play in both meeting shifting workforce attitudes and shaping workplace culture to build inclusive, diverse and empowered workforces for the future. Below we have drawn together some of the key trends and perspectives shared in the discussion.



As organisations and individuals look for increasingly **agile and flexible working** arrangements, how we use office space in the future and how technology interplays with space will have a significant

influence on workplace culture. Our office environments will need a new purpose, to take account of commercial and environmental realities and renewed expectations from the workforce.

"A physical workplace performs functions for certain people at certain times, but you don't need to rely on it any longer as somewhere we return to on a habitual basis. We have to start looking at the changing needs and only build sufficient workplaces for physical interaction, not just habitual attendance." Neil Usher, Chief Partnership Officer, GoSpace AI

97% of attendees think the purpose of our physical office spaces will change post Covid-19

TRUST
CULTURE
LEADERSHIP
WELLBEING
VOICE
PURPOSE
TECHNOLOGY
GOOD WORK
HUMAN-CENTRIC
INCLUSION
COMMUNICATION

It has been clear for some time that the idea of **quality work** is good for individuals, the community and the economy. A more **human-centric** approach to the relationship between technology, space and workplace culture will be essential in order to have the most diverse workplaces in the future. *"Good work is multi-faceted. With health and safety coming to the fore in the current crisis, having a voice on your exposure to risk in your workplace will be increasingly important"* Jake Jooshandeh, Researcher, RSA



Remote working has catapulted our understanding of the individual context of how we all work. The move from work-life balance to **work-life integration** can lead us to an enhancement of diversity in its most fundamental and widest sense. The homogeneous business culture is

breaking down and we need to find **individualised responses** to individual issues. The office is crucial in manifesting **values**. Inclusive and agile **leadership** will be central to reshaping workplace culture for the future. *"Culture is coming under pressure at a time of challenge. Culture is being radically reshaped by Covid-19 and by the experiences of universal remote working. It's just catapulted us to a new understanding. Challenging times are impacting the way we do things – businesses are adapting really fast and are forced to make hard choices and you can do that more effectively if your culture is strong. Challenges can be used to strengthen your culture."* Richard Miskella, Joint Managing Partner, Lewis Silkin LLP

48% of attendees think that organisations need to evolve and reshape their culture as we move towards a less location-based workforce.

Technology has an important role to play in the evolving workplace. The pandemic has meant that reliance on technology is at an all-time high and enterprises have pivoted rapidly to adapt. Reliance on technology will increase to facilitate agile working and as we look to find solutions for supervision and professional development, monitoring productivity and embedding fairness and diversity from outside a traditional workplace. Technology has become central to creating **communication** channels and building **trust** in the absence of a physical office and will play a huge role in supporting employee **voice**. *"We are seeing a big wave of employee activism, with wider societal unrest in the context of Black Lives Matter and #MeToo elevating workplace issues. Trust is important, and technology plays a huge role in creating trust and safe spaces to air concerns. We are entering the era of the "intrapreneur" – people within the business that will drive revolution forward and bring about change."* Neta Meidav, Co-Founder and CEO, Vault



Covid-19 has changed the labour market and society dramatically. Employers and communities can influence work and make it better. **Good work** will be critical in overcoming the challenging economic times ahead, and traditional ways of looking at health, safety and psychological wellbeing at work have already started to change. People have experienced the pandemic in different ways and whilst agile working for some is a possibility, it has not been for others. To ensure **inclusion**, employers will need to consider how to approach these different experiences to avoid running the risk of creating a two-tier workforce. Addressing social mobility, education and skills challenges is essential. *"There are two forces – the impact of Covid-19 on people and the economic catastrophe, alongside the emotional awakening in relation to place of work, experience of life and quality of life. I think we are only at the beginning of understanding the impact of the current crisis on good work, wellbeing and inequality."* Gail Irvine, Senior Policy and Development Officer, Carnegie UK Trust

