

BOND WILLIAMS

INSIGHTS

2021 ISSUE 11

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Hello and welcome

TO ISSUE 11 OF BOND WILLIAMS INSIGHTS!

I can hardly believe it has been 17 years since we formed Bond Williams, Happy Birthday to us! (more about that on Page 11). And 6 months since we produced our last Insights magazine and what a 6 months it has been. COVID-19 is still here albeit with new strains, Lockdown has eased, Furlough is tapering off and many of us are still working from home, looking to how the future will look from both a personal and business perspective. With that in mind in this issue we reflect on covid leadership, harnessing hybrid working, recruitment challenges and candidate shortages. If ever there was a time to reflect on what we have learnt and how we want to move forward it is now, with teams experiencing burnout, anxiety, stress, poor mental health and presenteeism our articles focussing on Leaderships skills and mental health flags are sure to help. The theme is our focus needing to be supporting our people and managers to build resilience, share our vision, inspire trust and continually check in on our people!

We also have the pleasure of introducing the newest member of the Bond Williams team, Alison Taylor, a highly professional recruiter with almost 20 years industry experience. Since 2013 Alison has specialised in the Accountancy and Finance market and has a large network of clients and candidates who choose to work with her due to her commitment, care and dedication to finding the right person for the job. We're so glad to have you on board!



We hope you enjoy the magazine.



Claire Bond
Director, Bond Williams Professional Recruitment

If you would like to be involved or contribute to the next issue of Bond Williams Insights, we'd love to hear from you.
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COVID LEADERSHIP REFLECTIONS AND THE 4 LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP

So, as we finally seem to be emerging from the Covid crisis, how has your leadership fared? Are you now a better or worse leader than those heady days pre-Lockdown? Ok, a fairly blunt and perhaps uncomfortable question, but as Jim Collins (*Good To Great*) said, we need to “confront the brutal facts” from time to time. And now seems as good a time as any.

Pat Lencioni - he of the *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, a model we know and love well at *The Colour Works*, provided an opportunity early on into Lockdown (1) to do just that. Running a Webinar to explore the leadership challenges being posed by Covid, he proposed that as leaders we would emerge stronger or weaker. Not the same. Covid would make such demands on our leadership abilities that the status quo could not prevail. Challenging stuff.

Within a few weeks of that, myself and a number of Colour Works colleagues were working with the senior team of a large UK-based organisation, using a typical combination of *Insights Discovery* profiling and 1:1 coaching. The CEO was *enjoying* (their word) the necessity for virtual communication. Whilst this was, and still is for some, a cause of discomfort, and not a personal choice they would otherwise make, it seemed to suit this CEO and their style well. They could plan their time efficiently, prioritise their day, communicate expectations and requirements simply and quickly, focusing on outcomes and

actions. In short, they could get a heck of a lot done. If it was possible to have a good Covid-crisis, this was it. But it was short-lived.

Several of the senior team began to struggle. As one of them said: “*What I need most right now is not another 30 minutes of task – debate – decision, I just want some of them*”. The status quo had shifted. To their great credit, this CEO got it. And whilst the notion of giving time to others to focus on the person not the task was not instinctive, they recognised the need for it. And on further reflection, they also recognised the need they themselves had for it. Powerful stuff. Giving someone a damn good listening to occasionally can be a wonderful gift.

And that set me thinking some more about the individual elements of leadership and what impact the Covid crisis was having on me personally. I’ve long thought that crises don’t “build character”, or at least not initially. They tend to reveal it. How we respond and learn from it is where the character-building (dreadful phrase) comes from. So how are we equipped to respond?

Notwithstanding the wonderful individuality which we all possess and nurture, as human beings we are intrinsically (think evolution) hard-wired to function in certain ways. Human hardwiring - where’s all this going? At *The Colour*

Works we strive to keep things simple, which is of course often very difficult. “*Simple can be harder than complex*”, as Steve Jobs once said: “*you have to work hard to get your thinking clean*”. To help bring some clean thinking into our leadership, we recommend having a rummage around in some pretty personal stuff. We know it as *the four levels of leadership*: the **Biological – Physiological – Neurological – Psychological**. None of which, paradoxically, are of course in anyway simple. But we can use them to help us think and reflect in a different, focussed and clean way:

Biological: I don’t subscribe to the leaders are born not made philosophy. We all generally possess the same biological makeup and, last time I checked, a leadership gene has yet to be discovered, even with all the recent Covid-led advancements in genomics. We are a product of our experiences, values, self-awareness, intent and skill. I have never reflected more on my own personal values (my core Why?) than I have in the last 12 months, challenging and ultimately reaffirming my non-negotiables. Continuous improvement and learning (whatever happened to *Kaizen*?) is stronger than ever for me, but a lack of vulnerability during some Covid-struggles has sought to hide it. And I’m increasingly wanting to *give something back*. A maturing, life-stage thing perhaps in part, but also a painful realisation that I’ve already taken too much out. Sound familiar?

Physiological: Lockdowns have impacted on our physiology in many ways and can continue to do so. Sleep times and patterns (more dreams anyone?). More or less exercise. Weight gain or loss. Food and meal times, etc.

I’ve just re-read Dr Alan Watkins’ excellent book *Coherence – The Secret Science Of Brilliant Leadership*. It reminds us to look deeper into what is happening on the inside and not just to focus on our “surface” behaviours. How the results we achieve reflect our behaviours, but how those behaviours are driven deep down by emotions – and our emotions are directly affected by our physiological state. Sleep, nutrition, controlled breathing – ask any elite sports person how they perform at their best when it matters most. Pre-lockdowns, five-six hours sleep was about as good as it ever got for me. I’m now typically 50% more than that, with a strong routine of 09.30 latest to bed. The management of personal energy, and how I use it during the day, is now a conscious, deliberate thing. I’d never really got the notion of why managing energy rather than time was more important for performance. I do now.

Neurological: A key element of our hard-wiring, and an area of significant research and clinical evaluation over

recent years. How our brain function responds to various stimuli is increasingly well-understood. The brain unendingly creates neurological pathways and forges new connections. It’s perhaps happening now, reading this! One of these stimulated-responses, the release of the hormone Oxytocin, is known to create feelings of safety, trust and cooperation. How extraordinary is that for great leadership?! And one such Oxytocin stimulus is, wait for it..... *story-telling*. How we bring things to life through our preparedness, as leaders, to share in an intensely personal and sometimes courageous way. As author Jonathan Gottschall put it: “*We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories*”. [The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human 2012].

Psychological: The World Economic Forum has described Lockdown as *The World’s Biggest Psychological Experiment* [April 2020]. Burnout, absenteeism, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, stress, the emergence of FOTO (fear of the office). If ever there was a time to periodically slow down, check in with ourselves and remind us of the good and great things we are capable of and should be grateful for, surely it is now. That positive affirmation, that showing of respect to ourselves, is a necessity not an indulgence. When did you last do that?

These four levels of leadership are of course mutually related, impacting on each other. Balancing the awareness and development of each is key. But continuous learning, personal energy, story-telling and positive affirmation are perhaps not bad places to start.

So, how have you fared these last twelve months?

The qualities of great leaders, the things our people need, want and thrive on, are of course many and varied. Our ability to communicate a vision, to inspire, to build trust, to engage at a highly individual and emotional level, are all things which Covid may well have challenged us on, and in ways we did not necessarily anticipate.

Which brings me to perhaps one of the greatest realities of leadership. *Visionary, inspiring, trust-worthy, honest, time-giving?* For those in our charge and care, these things are of course utterly discretionary. It’s not in their job description, the standards of performance or the competency framework.

How they experience us, how we truly impact on them and leave them feeling, are crucial things they, not us, will determine and judge us on. A brutal fact if ever there was one.



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This article was brought to you by The Colour Works, a team of personal, team and leadership development specialists who have been transforming performance globally for over a decade.



HARNESSING A HYBRID WORKING MODEL: IS IT RIGHT FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

As COVID-19 restrictions continue to ease, businesses should be working to pave their path towards a 'new normal'. However, nearly half of all workers state that their [employer lacks a clear vision](#) for what their new normal will look like. It's vital that leaders understand what's best for their business, and begin implementing change.

But what sort of change is required?

According to insights organisation McKinsey, 90% of businesses are considering [shifting to a hybrid working model](#) as part of their post-pandemic strategy. A big question that many leaders are asking today is 'should we be part of the hybrid movement?'

What is a Hybrid Working Model?

Before the pandemic, spending five days a week in the office was considered the norm. However, with the UK Government advising employees to work from home wherever possible under lockdown regulations, many organisations that were able to introduce remote working options did so, resulting in millions of people working from home.

Now, as the country begins to reopen to a greater extent, it's time to start heading back to the office. What a number of businesses are doing, though, is implementing new hybrid working models that introduce more flexibility for workers, enabling them to work part time in the office, and part time from a remote location.

The Growing Popularity of Hybrid

The hybrid working model is becoming popular for a number of reasons. Firstly, while many workers are now keen to return to work as the novelty of remote wears off, a hybrid model can help businesses to maintain social distancing in the office to reduce the risk of transmission. Secondly, there's been a [major shift in candidate attitudes](#) over the past year, and a hybrid policy can help to portray organisations as advocates for wellbeing, demonstrating a commitment to building healthy work/life balances.

There are benefits for businesses, too. Reports suggest that 55% of [employees are more productive](#) when offered greater flexibility. When it comes to hiring, some degree of remote working can help to extend geographical pools to access the best talent.

However, it's clear that a hybrid approach isn't for everyone. Implementing a working model such as this can be a complex task, with lots to take into consideration. The process will typically involve rolling out changes in almost all areas, including how people work, how they interact, the tools they use, the skills they need, and more.

So how do you know if a hybrid working model is right for your business?

Here are some questions to ask yourself before committing to change:

Can we offer Everyone this Level of flexibility?

The nature of your business will determine whether a hybrid working model can be rolled out on a company-wide basis, or whether there are some departments or some roles that will be required on-site on a permanent basis. While this doesn't prevent you from harnessing a hybrid working model, it's worth keeping in mind that offering some - but not others - the chance to work from home could impact workplace satisfaction.

How flexible can we be?

Some companies are allowing workers to set their own hours and workplace, as long as they are continuing to meet their deadlines and operate productively. Others are requiring employees to be in the office for a certain amount of time per week (the majority of leaders believe that three office days is vital for [maintaining company culture](#)). Consider what your workers want, and whether you can meet those expectations.

Do we have the resources we need?

Driving productivity in remote workers and

managing a dispersed workforce doesn't happen organically. It's essential that businesses have the resources they need to effectively implement a hybrid working model and maintain it. A strong HR team with the capacity to take on additional day-to-day tasks and experience supporting workers across multiple locations is instrumental to the success of hybrid operations.

Do we have the right mindset?

Interestingly, 78% of employees believe that the skills of leaders aren't what's holding back hybrid success; it's their mindset. Building the [right mindset for hybrid working](#) isn't always easy, but it is important for making a seamless transition. The risk of leaders not being fully ready to leave traditional working models behind is that there's a huge discrepancy between what employees expect, and what's actually happening.

Can we create equality?

One of the most important aspects to consider is whether a business can ensure the same worker satisfaction and the same positivity in the employee experience across on-site and off-site workers. Organisations must be able to keep everyone engaged, involved, and included - as well as promoting the same overall company culture - regardless of whether an employee is working from the office, or from their home.

Is Hybrid Right For You?

Success in the new normal depends on strong, well thought out decision making. It is clear that not every business will be able to seamlessly integrate a new hybrid working model. And that's OK. Hybrid working has largely grown out of a shift in focus to people centricity, and flexibility is undoubtedly one of the best ways to put workers' needs first. But it's not the only way. The priority going into the post-pandemic world is to support employees and create positive employee experiences, no matter where your people are physically located.

DON'T DELAY SECURING YOUR TOP TALENT!

The recruitment market has been buoyant over recent months and the war for talent is hotting up. 83% of business are now trading again with only 13% of the UK workforce currently furloughed, which again is set to change over the coming months as the furlough scheme tapers off. At Bond Williams we are seeing a huge increase in competition for vacancies and the pick of the best candidates and talent in the job market. With 607,000 jobs advertised between Jan-March 2021 as reported by the ONS and 25 applications per vacancy (albeit it not always perfectly suited for the roles, which creates its own internal administration challenges). Some candidates are finding they really have their pick of the jobs out there.

No employer wants to make a recruitment mistake, we all know the costs involved of getting it wrong (CIPD estimates a wrong hire could cost as much as £8,200 or £12,000 for senior Managers/Directors) but on balance taking too long to fill a vacancy, advertise, interview and make an offer can be just as detrimental and costly to your bottom line. (A simple equation would be (£Revenue normally generated by the open role) minus (Total remuneration for the role) divided by 365 days = The cost per day of not filling that role)! Plus you'll lose out on the best candidates!!

With Glassdoor 2020 showing the average interview time being reported at 27½ days, that's a lot of money! And if you need further evidence of why a succinct approach to candidates is compelling, below are some tips.

You risking losing good people and Top Talent

It's a fact there are more roles than candidates out there, it's a candidate driven market, not all candidates are between jobs or facing redundancy. Many will be in a position that they

feel secure in especially at the moment and lose interest very quickly when companies take too long to make decisions or don't recognise their talents. While you may desperately want them to fill your vacancy, but you risk the applicant dropping out if you fail to offer an interview or the job quickly enough. The majority of candidates won't hang around and will wait for around a week after an interview before losing interest, applicants going through a recruitment processes of 7-14 days feel it's too long so you will have definitely lost applicants by 27½ days! Applicants are most likely applying for multiple roles and will be in demand, if you recognise a really good fit for your vacancy, don't delay in issuing interview dates or job offers, you may find yourself pipped to the post or involved in a bidding war and restarting the whole process again.

Delays really do damage your brand

Recruitment delays result in a loss of talent and a poorly managed recruitment process can also cause long-term damage to your brand. Applicants left hanging could take away the impression that the company is unorganised, or disinterested in its people, which doesn't bode well for word-of-mouth reputations and the prospect of the applicant ever applying again or even becoming a customer is unlikely.

Productivity, Wellbeing and the bottom line all take a hit

Dragging out the recruitment process leaves a vacancy unfilled, work not getting done and pressure on others to cover, which could create an even bigger recruitment and mental health and wellbeing issue. Existing employees may leave due to stress, under-resourcing etc, increasing further open vacancies not to mention the impact on productivity and the bottom line.

How do you overcome a slow recruitment process?

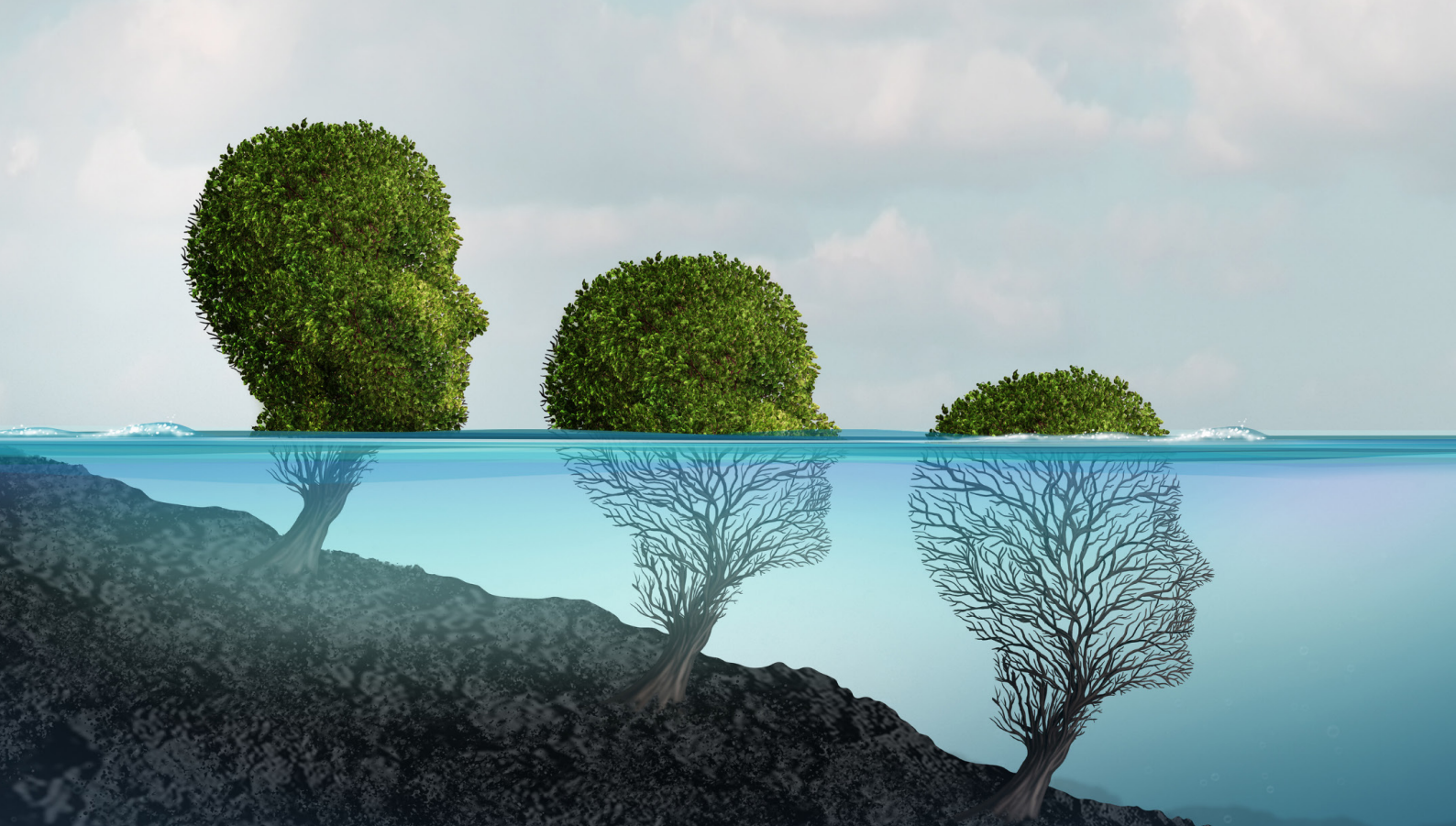
Look at where you are at now, dig into the data, measure and monitor each step of the recruitment process to identify pinch points. You can't move forward if you don't know where you are.

Metrics to consider could include:-

- Time between a resignation or signing of on a new open vacancy and placing an advert or instructing an agency
- Time between the application deadline and a shortlist of candidates
- Time between first and second round of interviews
- Time between identifying the preferred applicant and the job offer
- Time between the job offer and start date
- Overall Time to Hire
- Cost of that role unfilled daily

Once you have identified the delays and pinch points you can divert resources accordingly in order to improve the process or review the current system you have in place. With 5 specialist recruitment divisions you could also look to specialist recruitment agencies such as Bond Williams Professional Recruitment with over 260 years of recruitment experience across the team. We will already have a head start on the process and can quickly market your opportunities to a relevant candidate pool who are actively or passively looking..... or even look to headhunt for you, accurately matching and streamlining the job of short-listing and decreasing that time to hire ensuring you do secure your Top Talent.

Bond Williams, going the extra mile - valuing relationships with clients and candidates. See www.bondwilliams.co.uk to see how we can help you improve that time to hire today!



IS A MENTAL ILL-HEALTH TSUNAMI COMING TO THE SOUTH COAST?

Covid-19 has had an enormous impact on people's lives both in and out of the workplace. Job losses, furlough, social isolation and nationwide uncertainty about the future has had disastrous consequences for the UK's mental health.

What's more – what we're currently seeing could be just the tip of the iceberg.

Poor mental health costs employees and employers

Mental health issues costs UK employers £42 – 45 billion a year, compared to £33 - £42 billion in 2017 according to a 2020 Deloitte report.

Unlike physical conditions like arthritis or eczema, you can't necessarily see mental health issues with your eyes – yet anyone can be a victim.

The Office of National Statistics has found that almost half of Great Britain (49.6%) has reported high levels of anxiety in 2020¹ and 30.9% (7.4 million adults) reported their well-being had been affected through their feeling lonely in the past seven days.²

What's getting people down?

There are numerous pandemic-related factors that are currently impacting people's mental health.

An increase in remote working has led to:

- Work / life balance issues
- Social isolation
- Perceived lack of recognition and support
- Poor physical health (MSK conditions)
- Health anxiety about returning to the office

Burnout

- Increased pressure at work and at home
- Social burnout (now that social distancing measures have loosened)

A rise in addictions, especially:

- Gambling
- Drinking
- Smoking
- Poor diet

Bereavement and grief

- Losing a loved one to Covid-19
- Increase in suicide rates
- PTSD

Anxiety and depression

- Crowds / public transport
- Risk of getting ill
- Social isolation
- Children/education/schooling
- Social media
- Long Covid

Money worries

- Furlough
- Redundancy

Being unable to see a medical professional

In August 2019 average wait time to see a GP was over two weeks³ while one in six of the population could be on the NHS waiting list for treatment by April 2021.⁴

- Undiagnosed conditions, both mental and physical
- Increased anxiety
- Worsening physical and mental conditions as a result

What can the employer do about the mental health crisis?

It's clear from this long list of stressors that some kind of systemic support is in order, or employers risk vast mental health related costs down the line, including sickness absences and poor staff retention. That being said, only 24% of managers are trained to spot the signs of mental illness.⁵

Luckily, good mental health and wellbeing can be achieved through simple, practical steps. However, it's important that these changes aren't treated as tick box exercises and are instead integrated into the company culture.

Steps your business might take to improve the mental health of the workforce:

- Healthy food in the canteen or office
- Gym membership, virtual exercise classes and/or access outside
- Encourage regular breaks
- Mental resilience training
- Mental health awareness and first aid training
- Flexible working patterns where possible
- Colleague forums and networks
- Manager support and training – lead by example but also ask for help when needed
- Consistent, relevant communications

Intermediaries offer some of the most robust employee support services around, including:

- Employee assistance programmes (EAPS; via insurance products or as a standalone)
- Virtual GPs (via PMI, cash plans or standalone)
- Income protection policies
- Employee surveys
- Health risk assessments
- Employee screening programmes

If you would like to know more about how you can support employee mental health, please join me on Tuesday 5 October for my webinar: [Is workplace wellbeing in the eye of the storm?](#)

Alternatively, you can contact me directly at debra.clark@towergate.co.uk

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Sources:

- ¹ - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/coronavirusandanxietygreatbritain/3april2020to10may2020#:~:text=Between%20%20and%2030%20March,the%20last%20quarter%20of%202019>
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- ⁴ - <https://www.itv.com/news/2021-02-16/one-in-six-people-in-england-could-be-on-nhs-waiting-list-by-april>
- ⁵ - <https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/content/features/the-line-manager-s-role-in-mental-wellbeing>

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Debra is the head of specialist consulting at Towergate Health & Protection. She has been in the employee benefits industry for over 25 years now working in a number of specialist intermediaries and in all roles has been dedicated to delivering first-class service to clients - whether they are individual, large corporates or SME business clients - to ensure maximum retention and growth. She is passionate about mental health and all forms of wellbeing particularly in the workplace as she strongly believes, people are any businesses best asset and they can ensure the success of a company if they are well.



Increased skills gap within IT and Digital Occupations

Our IT Recruitment Specialists have seen an increased skills gap within IT and digital occupations during the pandemic. This has been due to a large proportion of skilled individuals, who may have otherwise naturally changed their careers or been attracted to new opportunities, remain in their current employment. This resistance has been caused by a lack of confidence in the market as individuals have been unwilling to move to new, unknown territory at another company. As the ramifications of the pandemic have proven to be somewhat volatile within a large number of organisations and industries, many have been fearful of a 'last-in-first-out' scenario if they were to accept a new job. As such, they have remained with their existing employers where they feel relatively safe in their careers, until such a time when there will be a more positive vibe in the job market without the disruption of the pandemic.

Moreover, we have seen many individuals take advantage of the comfort and financial stability of being Furloughed by their employers. Whilst a small number of these individuals have been open-minded to new employment due to feelings of insecurity about the longevity of their current jobs, the majority of individuals have preferred to stay where they are, so they retain the protection of a stable income offered by the government's scheme.

Nevertheless, we have also seen a gradual rise in new technical job opportunities. Despite some redundancies and a surplus of contractors becoming available during the pandemic, there has been a shortage of suitably skilled candidates to substantially reduce the skills gap on a national scale. This has been a compounding issue, as companies that have needed to recruit during the pandemic due to high demand

of cloud-based infrastructure and full digital transformation projects, have not been able to successfully fill their necessary, and often urgent, job vacancies. This has caused a chain of events amongst technical professionals who have continued to work tirelessly throughout the pandemic. For these employees to consistently keep up with the demands of employers and customers, and to enable business-critical staff and departments to successfully work from home, many have been required to work beyond their capacity. These employees have undoubtedly taken on additional responsibilities, extremely challenging assignments, and worked longer hours to ensure tight deadlines are met, and to ensure their technology works seamlessly with minimal disruption and downtime.

If your company is experiencing an IT and digital skills gap, here are some crucial ways in which to address these challenges :

- 1. Hire new talent** - Finding the right people may sound easier said than done. However, when you come to recruit skilled professionals with niche capabilities where the demand for similar advanced IT skills are also required by other organisations (including your competitors!), the pool of potential candidates is extremely small. Although it might seem like a costly solution from the outset, we advise employers to consider this option as a long-term investment that will reap countless future benefits. For advice and support on achieving your recruitment goals, our IT Recruitment Consultants can offer you all the tools to maximise your reach and uncover sought-after candidates, particularly when there is a shortfall of desired skills.

- 2. Upskilling** - If any of your existing staff lack the skills you require to fulfil your projects, try upskilling to bridge that gap. Not only will your employees be grateful for the opportunity to gain industry-related certificates and accreditations and greatly benefit from such training, but the return on investment for your business is huge! Upskilling will champion internal individuals that are willing to train, will reduce the strain on other members of staff, and will give you the edge over your competitors as you consistently improve and streamline your technical operations.

- 3. Outsourcing** - Hiring and upskilling are both great ways to sustain your business for the long-term, however we appreciate that this may not resolve your immediate needs. As such, to enable your projects to move ahead quickly, we recommend outsourcing your technical requirements to a specialist IT Partner or engage with a skilled IT Contractor. Whichever option you choose, you will save a lot of time and resource without recruiting and/or upskilling. No matter what your needs are, Bond Williams Professional Recruitment can introduce you to a number of interim contractors or temporary workers with a variety of technical skills who would be competent in delivering your projects. We can also introduce you to IT Partners that may be able to support you with more long-term technical support if you wish to go down this route instead.

For friendly advice and support about any of these challenges or solutions, our knowledgeable IT Recruitment Consultants would be happy to discuss these with you further.



**Bond Williams
celebrates
turning 17!**

It was July 2004 when we first opened the doors to Bond Williams, 17 years ago! It is hard to believe it was that long ago.

Over the years it has been a roller coaster of a journey, many highs both business wise and in the lives of our fabulous team – we have had record years of growth and success, toasted many births and marriages; but there have also been real lows including the losses of loved ones, a recession and of course Covid-19. We have supported one another through thick and thin, laughter and tears, both as a team and individually.

We have learnt a lot along the way as well, would we have done some things differently? Most definitely Yes! Hindsight is indeed a wonderful thing... My biggest takeaway over the past 17 years is that, when you have the right team they are often stronger, adaptable and more resilient than you think, I have been amazed at how supportive of both the business and each other everyone has and continues to be and we have grown stronger through the challenges.

Covid has really highlighted for us that being transparent and having 'cards on the table' conversations which we have been forced in to over the last 15 months or so is the way forward, gathering input and suggestions, including and empowering the team in helping make those decisions rather than hiding it and trying to protect them, we learnt that from the last recession. Great people are recruited for a reason yet are they always empowered to be the best they can be? Are they given a voice or a seat at the table to help make those key decisions? We have tried to be as inclusive and open over this difficult period as we can be.

More recently, Covid has given us time to reflect on what is important in our lives, for our teams and how we make our businesses stronger and more durable moving forward with the ability to weather more storms when and if they arise.

Our Amazing Team really are our biggest strength, we are extremely thankful after 17 years to be in the strongest position we have ever been in, the team have been extremely busy taking and filling roles for many months now which is a really great sign for the economy as well.

We would like to say a huge thank you to our amazing team (many of whom have been with us for many, many years).

A massive thank you to our clients, many of you have been with us for the duration and the many candidates that we supported over their careers.

As a team we will continue to go the extra mile, every day, for all of you. Thank you!



4 Things Every Leader Needs to Know About Trust

“TRUST IS THE MOST OVERLOOKED, MISUNDERSTOOD, UNDERUTILIZED ASSET AN ORGANISATION CAN ACCESS”- STEPHEN M.R COVEY, THE SPEED OF TRUST

We all know that trust is a positive thing. You could say trust is common sense... but it's not yet common practice. Not in the intentional, actionable, learnable way that individuals need to truly perform better, adapt faster, and feel psychologically safer. The most credible, strategic-minded leaders know this.

In his best-selling book *The Speed of Trust*, Stephen M.R Covey (the son of our co-founder and author of *FranklinCovey's* Trust solution) lays out the high cost of low trust on both morale and the bottom line. Without the integrity, credibility, humility and reciprocity of trust-based relationships, a lot of what employees do becomes laboured, stilted, resented, suspicious and unsustainable. This translates as a “tax” on not just effectiveness and productivity, but wellbeing and sense of worth. Low-trust organisations simply aren't places people want to stay.

This is a “tax” no organisation can afford. In an era when trust is hard to come by - and constantly challenged by changing and distressing circumstances- leaders at all levels need to understand four fundamental truths about trust.

1. Trust isn't soft, it is a hard economic driver

If trust is treated like an intangible buzzword instead of a critical behaviour of high performers, then high-performance is exactly what is lost. Stephen M.R Covey puts it like this: “most organisational performance issues are actually trust issues in disguise”. It feels unlikely to some, but there is decades worth of data revealing the link between trust and all key business metrics. [Great Place to Work](#) has been tracking the economic outcomes of trust for years, finding that for high-trust companies, the stock market returns two to three times greater than the market average.

Why might this be? In a low-trust culture, ideas, people and progress are slowed down by a complete lack of true collaboration. Conversely, high-trust organisations enjoy greater speed, innovation and discretionary effort from empowered employees unencumbered by low-trust “taxes”. It is no surprise that *Great Place to Work* also found that such employees are 3x more likely to report their colleagues are willing to give extra to get the job done.

Add up the little “extra” that each of your employees possess and you gain a great saving.

2. You need to consider your own credibility first

Trust is the #1 leadership competency because it has the capability to amplify or diminish all other competencies. All the value a leader adds becomes immediately diluted if they don't behave in an authentically trustworthy way. People see through surface level attempts to placate, understand and empathise. If you want to build a high-performance, high-trust team, you need to look inwards first.

Central to leaders who inspire trust is their credibility. Part of your credibility comes from your competence, your relevancy, your professional expertise, and track record of results. The rest comes from your character, do you do what you say you're going to do? Do you live by a set of values? Are you transparent with your intent? Are you always certain that your intent is above aboard? It is the consistency of your behaviour that ultimately ensures the credibility, through the way you operate and communicate on a daily basis.

The impact of such behaviour- or the lack of it- simply cannot be underestimated- a recent 2020 Gallup report shows that the five root causes of employee burnout are influenced by manager behaviour.

Thankfully, the converse is also true: Employees who trust their team leader are 14 times more likely to be fully engaged at work (ADPRI).

3. None of this will work unless trust is extended, as well as inspired

Is your team filled with trustworthy people but you're not seeing the benefits of that behaviour? That is because, in the words of Stephen M.R Covey, “almost everybody understands what it means to be trustworthy; very few understand the importance of being trusting”. Trust is reciprocal, it needs to go both ways.

There are many reasons people find it difficult to extend trust. Distance (as we've experienced this past year) is one of them. A breeding ground for our unconscious biases, distance means we fill the gaps of what we can't see with our own assumptions about what people are doing, thinking, or how hard they're working. Acknowledging any patterns in who we typically trust- and who we don't- is essential to understanding the type of trust you currently leverage most:

- False trust: Giving people responsibility, but no authority

or resources to complete a task

- Fake trust: Disguises itself as true trust until you follow-up behind people's backs and micromanage
- Smart trust: Trust shouldn't be blind, but it should be abundant in that it's an opportunity that is always on the table. Setting clear expectations and processes of accountability as conditions for earning and keeping trust is key, with the criteria differing depending on each unique situation.

What distinguishes good managers from great leaders is their ability to see and unleash the latent potential of another person—their ability to extend trust and empower ownership in others. Trust is an organisation's most enduring competitive advantage because it centres around how people do their current work. To both be trusted and able to trust in your leader is the most transformative form of human motivation.

4. It has never been more relevant

If you don't already measure trust then you must. It is the only way to know where your company stands and provide you with a starting point.

Stop and take stock of you and your organisation's behaviour over the past year. Was all change handled with transparency in mind? Notably, in a recent Gallup survey revealed that 35% of U.K. employees strongly agree that their employer has communicated a clear plan of action in response to the pandemic, and in turn only 27% strongly agree that their company cares about their overall wellbeing.

With the success of 2021 hinged on our ability to institutionalise the irreversible changes to how people think and feel about their work towards an even stronger organisational culture, the presence of trust in every day interactions will be something many leaders will want- and need- to look at.

To watch the recording of our previous webinar on Trust, click on the link: [Team Trust: The Only Way to Work](#)



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Returning your team to work: Things to consider

With many employees now being asked to return to the workplace, it's more important than ever for employers to be aware of government guidance to reduce the risk of virus transmission. Over and above the practicalities of returning people to work and maintaining precautions such as social distancing, [new research](#) suggests that UK employees are the most reluctant to return to the office, with one in four saying they would resign from their role if forced to do so. This reticence underlines that a careful consideration of a range of factors is vital to managing a smooth transition back to work.

Risk Assessments

For organisations with more than five employees, risk assessments must be conducted to identifying and resolving risk factors for returning employees. This could include a review of cleaning and sanitation practices; how clinically vulnerable staff are treated and what if any PPE is currently mandated.

Once risk assessments have taken place (ideally in consultation with relevant staff), procedures will then need to be developed and implemented to mitigate the identified risks. Such measures may include the introduction of regular lateral flow tests for all staff (these can be [obtained at no cost from Gov.uk](#)), daily cleaning of workstations, making PPE a requirement in meetings or creating a one-way traffic system around the workplace to help stem transition rates.

Failure to carry out these risk assessments and act on the information provided can lead to legal action being taken against your company. It also puts the health and wellbeing of your team at risk.

Health Data

Another area that carries legal implications for employers is health data and how that data is used.

Data pertaining to Covid-19 tests, results and vaccinations is considered 'special category data' and therefore must be carefully protected to avoid breaching the Data Protection Act 1974 legislation.

As well as keeping records on positive (or negative) Covid-19 tests, you may wish to test the temperature of your workers before allowing them to enter the premises each day. Although this is an excellent way to protect the health of your staff, this data must be stored within the current guidelines to guarantee total confidentiality for all employees.

The Information Commissioner's Office has a [wealth of information and FAQs](#) relating to how this data should be dealt with to remain compliant.

Reluctant Returners

Some employees will be thrilled at the prospect of returning to their roles, but others will naturally have their reservations. Although a little extra support and consultation may be enough to alleviate the concerns and fears of most employees, there are a few staff that either should not be returning to the workplace at the moment or will require additional support.

Collectively known as 'reluctant returners', these workers fall into the following categories as defined by the government:

1. *Employees who, for health reasons, cannot or should not return to work*
2. *Employees with caring responsibilities*
3. *Employees who may struggle to get to work for mobility/travel reasons*

If an employee who falls into one of the above categories cannot work from home, it is unreasonable for the employer to force a return to the workplace, given as the potentially detrimental impact on health and wellbeing.

In certain circumstances, those with real fears about returning to work can be placed at risk of poor mental health if pressured into coming back to work.

Hybrid and flexi work models are increasing in popularity as we transition out of the pandemic and back into the workplace. [Research from McKinsey](#) suggests around a quarter of workers will work from home between three and five days a week on average post-pandemic.

From a legal perspective, any employee has the right to request a flexible work arrangement after a continuous period of employment (this is currently 26 weeks); though the employer is not obligated to green light flexible working arrangements. If many of your team are reluctant to return, consider whether a hybrid working framework could make sense for some or all of your team, as appropriate to your business and their role.



Emotions aren't your guidance system

As a coach I often have conversations with people over how they feel. Are they feeling hopeful and positive about something, or worried and fearful. For most people this is an indication of what they should do. For someone considering a new job, does this job feel like the right thing to do? Or for someone considering following a passion, is it free from doubt and worry? Or for someone about to have a difficult conversation, when and how feels right to do it? Or for someone wanting to back themselves for a promotion, does it feel comfortable?

When you look at the research, there is significant evidence about the role our emotions play in our decision making process. They're part of our reasoning. In 2016 there was a study that showed 95% of our cognition happens in our emotional brain. A study in 2000 found that when humans had damaged the area of their brain where emotions were generated and processed, despite still being able to use logic and function completely normally, individuals void of emotion seriously struggled to make any decisions, even simple decisions like what to eat for lunch.

So it might seem reasonable to use our emotions to guide our decision making. The trouble is it is flawed. Let me explain. Our emotions are triggered when we interpret what is going on around us through our past experiences, thoughts, beliefs, values and assumptions. In Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) it's called your map of the world. So if we define something as good we may feel happy, if we define something as bad we may feel sad or upset. It's why you could have two people in the same situation but have totally different experiences about it. We've all heard of the 'glass half empty' or 'glass half full' expression relating to optimism or pessimism. It's dependent on someone's point of view. In the picture above both characters feel

elated because they believe they are being saved from their current situation. Yet in reality the person in that alternate situation is also looking to be saved. It's not based on truth, it's based on perception.

So our emotions aren't communicating the truth to us, they're merely reflecting our thinking, values, beliefs, assumptions, judgements and perceptions. Emotions aren't our guidance system, but they are a window into our unconscious mind. Through our emotions we can start to understand what is being communicated to our conscious mind and which thoughts, beliefs or assumptions are involved. What if that new job or promotion brings up feelings relating to our self worth, what if that difficult conversation threatens our need to be liked, what if that change of direction brings up uncertainty or a lack of safety? Does that make it any less true to do?

Through making the unconscious conscious we can start to understand what is going on for us underneath the surface. With awareness comes choice. Choice about whether we still subscribe to these unconscious beliefs, choice about what is truly important to us and choice about what to do next.



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A NEW NORMAL...

WHAT WILL HR PROFESSIONALS NEED TO DO TO SUPPORT A BUSINESS IN 2021?

As we get well and truly stuck into the New Year it is apparent that what was the 'norm' is now not the 'norm', so we ask the question, what is the new 'norm' when we return to what was the norm!? What is the new hybrid working?

The answer is more than likely a combination of pre COVID 'norm' and lockdown 'norm' (a hybrid of combinations). It is the responsibility of the employers and the HR professionals to now interlink these two and create working processes, policies and procedures which accommodate both and are robust enough to withstand any changes that may come our way this year.

As we start to think about coming out the other side of lockdown, employers are starting to think about integrating staff back into the workplace and what this will mean to the business. The process of returning to the workplace is challenging and a great deal of reflection, reviewing and planning needs to be completed in order to make the process as non-stressful as possible. At the same time, the same amount of resources needs to be invested into how your staff are going to feel and their thoughts on returning to the workplace.

If the last 12 months have taught us anything, it's that we have all been united by a common crisis, but we have all experienced it in many different ways.

The myth that flexible or remote working was not possible within an organisation now carries no weight so working practices and employment terms may now need to be reviewed and adjusted. Important to remember there is a difference between an employee exercising their rights and applying for flexible working and the new potential hybrid/agile working. Consideration to a shift in working patterns and allowing employees to take more responsibility in the planning of their own workload throughout the day and week will need to be considered and catered for, after all, we have all got this far, and this has been with added complications such as homeschooling and being unable to meet in person!

Whilst there may be a high percentage of staff that are desperate to return to the workplace there will also be a high percentage of staff that will feel anxious about returning to work. This is where an employee centric culture will benefit the business in terms of successfully finding a new back to normal working practice. HR professionals will need to work hard to establish clear communication channels with staff and find out how every member of staff feels about returning to work, what their individual circumstances are and how the business can accommodate and support each member of staff.

There may be a number of factors that might be worrying staff members, such as the possibility

of schools closing again, having an elderly relative at home who they wish to protect still, maybe they have lost a loved one to COVID and are not emotionally ready to return to work, the truth is there is a number of circumstances that all need to be identified and then a solution found to ensuring that the correct support is available.

There needs to be consideration given to not just staff that have been working from home, but also the needs of staff that were furloughed and contract, temporary or outsourced individuals that need to be integrated back into the workforce. Their needs will be very different, they may be suffering from isolation and more than likely will not have been kept in the communication loop for the business, so potentially some staff may feel very removed and the prospect of returning will be daunting or potentially not even what they want after all of the turmoil of the past 12 months. The business is likely to have changed and adapted to the situation, and absent staff will be at a disadvantage in terms of knowledge and training, so thought has to go into how to get them up to speed so that they are not at a disadvantage and made to feel inferior.

It is also worth considering how as a business you might like to reward your employees for their efforts over what has been such a challenging time. Whilst employers have been facing the day to day challenges of running

the business, the frontline staff have also been under immense strain to carry on their roles for your business, whilst at the same time facing their own personal challenges.

Sharing devices, Wi-Fi, taking calls in between homeschooling or the worry of redundancy has meant that employees' lives have not been easy either. Finding a way to celebrate the success of riding this storm collectively will also be paramount in the rebuilding of your workforce.

Finding ways to reward their achievements and acknowledge, their efforts will be greatly appreciated. If the business has changed direction there may be different opportunities for the staff to consider within the organisation – the potential for promotion, side stepping, retraining, or gaining new qualifications, all meaning new or amended HR procedures and policies.

There may be a requirement to support staff who have suffered with stress and consideration to the wellbeing of individuals will be vital to their personal and professional development. Out of date qualifications or employees who have missed vocational training will also need to be considered and procedures put in place to ensure that the member of staff are not penalised because of the past 12 months.

Consideration should be given to the staff who request to continue working remotely as they found it greatly improved their efficiency and work life balance. Removing the daily commute for some was a real blessing and the hours saved each day may have been put to much greater use in terms of productivity. It may also have a cost saving to your business, in which case do the staff budgets reflect this for the coming financial year?

If there are a number of staff that have found this working practice to be more beneficial is there a policy in place to accommodate this, can the business support them in terms of facilities, training, development, communication and ensuring that they still feel connected to the business?

The new 'norm' is a combination of understanding your employees' needs and catering for them. Whilst the shape of your business may change, your employees are still your most important asset and they need to be supported, encouraged and allowed the flexibility to work in the best way that suits them and your business. It is the job of HR professionals to ensure that this happens and that the business is best placed to thrive and benefit from it.

So, what should we do next?

- Sit down with your stakeholders, business owners and understand what is possible. Review the business and put a plan in place with an agreed timeline, which covers the various areas and functions that support your employee life cycle and business. With the thought process of what was possible and what the new organisation will look like going forward. The following are some of the recent Myths about hybrid work force models and where we need to support our stakeholders to think differently:
 - Our existing remote work strategy will work for a hybrid workforce
 - We need in-person contact to sustain our culture
 - Employees are less productive outside the office
 - Hybrid workforce models hurt diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategy
 - We need to monitor and measure what employees are doing
 - A hybrid workforce model duplicates our IT infrastructure
 - Our jobs just can't be done remotely!

- Plan Regular Pulse surveys. Pulsing employee groups about their work experience, and what they need from the organisation to feel connected and heard, ensures everyone has a voice, and allows you to identify new practices, from flexible work schedules to additional hardware or software for differing needs.

- Think about re-boarding your employees, remembering the importance of your organisation's values and culture and what makes you as an organisation different to others. Collaboration, agility and trust are increasingly important cultural values in resilient organisations and don't relate to physical location.

- Review your current policies & contracts – They are mainly all based on individuals working from a permanent location. Don't forget to go through the correct process where you may have contractual changes.

- Review your performance management tools, make sure you are not breaching human rights and privacy legislations. Consider success measures in two broad categories:
 - Workforce outcomes: Track employee performance in relation to business objectives, effective collaboration across teams,

behaviours that demonstrate a culture of trust and accountability, a seamless and consistent employee experience, and prioritised mental and physical well-being of all employees.

- Business outcomes: A cost-optimised workforce footprint, a strengthened employer brand and strong contributions to revenue from innovation exemplify measures of success. Track improvements such as reduced costs, increased revenue, greater process efficiency, more business opportunities from cross-site partnerships and the ability to attract diverse, high-quality candidates.
- Identify where and how to invest in the employee life cycle for the greatest returns on a hybrid workforce, including more employee engagement, expanded career options and improved well-being.
- Ensure the workforce is fully supported in a hybrid model. Examples might include adapting facilities and workspaces, providing technology support, and redesigning workflows and processes.
- Review and invest in cloud-based services. Cloud providers deliver reliable service regardless of worker location, while allowing enterprises to quickly shift capacity in response to disruption.

As per my previous articles we need to be proactive and agile, forward thinking and flexible in our thought process. Be willing to change and adapt. Utilise the skill sets you have within the organisation but also don't be afraid to look at the resources and tools available outside of the business. Organisations and businesses that we support need to think differently and as HR we can often be seen as the stumbling block to progress and change, in many cases we are the voice of reason but we also need to work with our stakeholders to find solutions that are commercially and strategically beneficial.



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