

Time to re-think

Our recent Change/Exchange debate looked at how organisations are preparing for a post-pandemic working world. Winners will be those re-thinking the future of work, designing workspace for flexibility and collaboration.

MONTFORT

As the world moves cautiously towards an end to lockdown, the most forward-looking organisations are actively thinking about the future of work. They are considering the lessons learnt during the pandemic and taking the opportunity to reimagine how work is done, how people are led and managed, how they can learn, innovate and collaborate and whether they need to be physically in an office at all.

Montfort recently hosted a virtual session reflecting these themes, clearly a hot topic as it attracted participation from organisations as diverse as Merck, The Bank of England, BUPA, The Pension Protection Fund, Handelsbanken and others. The intention was to provoke a constructive debate around the future of the office and the future of work itself.

Arguing that the office very much has a future were Clare Wyatt, Chief Communications Officer, GKN Automotive and Ruci Fixter, Senior Consultant, Montfort. Phil Askham, ex-Global head of employee communications at HSBC (and now a senior consultant at Montfort), and Caroline Ward, head of communications and culture at Slater Gordon adopted the contrary view, that the pandemic had shown that we can work from anywhere and that we no longer need to rely on the office.

The consensus on the day was that the office does indeed have a future, although the experience of the pandemic has shown how effective we can be without it. The real value of the discussion was the big and unresolved questions it raised. They included:

- How do organisations reconcile business need with the range of employee preferences for new office/remote working patterns?
- How do organisations re-set their organisational culture for a hybrid world and maintain a strong connection between employer and employee?
- How do they retain some of the unexpected benefits from the period of enforced remote working, such as more inclusive and empowering leadership and the faster pace of decision-making?

Hard questions but one thing is very clear. The capacity for organisations to learn, embrace the new and adapt is much greater than was assumed before the pandemic.



Jerome Reback
Senior Consultant

Planning for a new future

The pandemic has created the opportunity to make a permanent and significant change in the way we work. Winners will be those who think holistically about the future of work for their organisation. Re-thinking how we use our time, redesigning

Where to start? There are four areas for focus.



processes and refreshing attitudes to what can be accomplished.

Physical: real estate, office design, sustainability. How can space be configured to strengthen teamwork, promote collaboration and inspire innovation? How can its use be managed to enable hybrid working? And where is it surplus to requirements?



Technological: collaboration tools, information security, data management. What applications could be applied to foster effective collaboration in a secure way? How might they be introduced and what training is needed?



Cultural: values, ways of working. How does the prevailing culture promote or hinder more flexible ways of working? What norms need to be challenged, which behaviours promoted? How do we use the change to build a more diverse and inclusive workforce where there's enhanced focus on mental health and wellbeing?



Commercial: How are customer habits changing, how do we accommodate these. What can be done to deliver an improved

customer experience?

Involve people in the process

The phased ending of lockdown presents a springboard to explore beyond traditional constraints and to build a new mindset for a new future.

At Montfort we have a specialist group that can help you shape your organisation's thinking. We work with you to build an engaging approach in devising the next and, most likely, very different approach to working 'in the office'.

We will be sharing further perspectives on the future of work over the coming weeks, and our next event will be on Preparing for hybrid workplace on 16th March. If you would like an invite to that event, or would like to talk about any issues relating to the future of work, please email Scott McKenzie at mckenzie@montfort.london