

A GREENER BUSINESS

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BUSINESS REPORTER

THE FUTURE OF WORK • APRIL 2022

BUSINESS-REPORTER.CO.UK

Breaking the bias at work



**SPECIAL REPORT:
WOMEN AT WORK**

Why ensuring women have a fair chance at work is better for people, and better for businesses

PROMOTIONAL CONTENT



Hybrid work doesn't have to be emotionally exhausting

HYBRID WORK – working partly at the office and partly remotely – gives us a chance to radically upgrade the workplace. However, going hybrid is a complex undertaking and most companies are still figuring it out as they go.

For now, what we do know is that a successful move to hybrid requires a delicate balance between company goals and employee needs. That's why we believe that flexibility, personalisation and collaboration should be at the heart of this new work paradigm. Or in other words, we should try to blend the best of office work (collaboration) and remote work (flexibility and personalisation).

There's no universal recipe for making that happen, but we can lay a few fundamental ground rules. Some of these are already embraced by huge companies such as Amazon, while others are based on our experience as a company powering flexible work for years. On that note, here are our top three pillars for making hybrid work a success.

Encourage flexibility and personalised schedules

Hybrid work doesn't have to mean the same schedule for everyone. In fact, one of hybrid's biggest perks should be the opportunity to tailor your work

schedule to your professional and personal needs.

That's why companies such as Amazon leave important decisions about hybrid scheduling at the team level. Others, such as Salesforce and HubSpot, have even created various work options, which individuals can choose from.

Besides wellbeing, such flexible options are also crucial for

“A successful move to hybrid requires a delicate balance between company goals and employee needs”
– Evgeni Yordanov

productivity, as they let people choose how to work based on their job's requirements, rather than conform to everyone else's.

Promote in-person collaboration

Community is the biggest benefit of coming to the office. Having face-to-face contact with others is invaluable, so it's vital to encourage in-person collaboration in an organisation.

Companies can do that by letting team members decide which days to come to the office, based on when their colleagues are there. That way, everyone can collaborate in person, or work from home when they need seclusion to get their tasks

done. And again, no one has to commute every day or feel trapped by a top-down enforced schedule.

Manage app overload

By now, we all know about Zoom fatigue. However, video conferencing is only part of the bigger tech overload issue.

And if you're managing a hybrid workplace, you'll likely need a desk booking app. Of course, no one wants yet another app just to go to work.

As a company building a hybrid workplace solution, we know that from experience. That's why our product integrates with Slack, Google Calendar and the Microsoft Suite (Teams, Outlook).

As a result, companies and individuals can manage the hybrid workplace in their everyday apps. We've been powering flexible working since 2015, and our latest product – OfficeRnD Hybrid – helps teams transition to and manage hybrid work with ease.

INDUSTRY VIEW

Evgeni Yordanov is Content Marketing Manager at OfficeRnD

If you want to learn more about hybrid work or our products, visit <https://www.officernd.com> or our LinkedIn page at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/officernd>

PROMOTIONAL CONTENT

Making the workplace work for your people

IF YOU had asked senior leaders at the start of the new decade what they expected to be focusing on by 2022, it's unlikely any of them would have correctly named the challenges they are facing today with their teams. The “great resignation” is one of the largest staffing shakeups the UK has ever seen, and is essentially professionals communicating en masse that they are no longer willing to settle for “just okay” in their working lives. Leaders, it's time to get the message or risk losing your people.

The return to the office has been a major sticking point for many. People have come to value the flexibility that remote work provides, but many business leaders are reluctant to give up the productivity, culture and collaborative benefits the office facilitates. For both parties to be satisfied, it's not minds that need changing. It's the workplace.

If you are going to ask your people to return to the office, then the office needs to provide value. The best way to determine what your team needs from their workplace is to ask them. Landmark, a flexible workspace provider with centres across London and the regions, is helping their clients facilitate this using artificial intelligence. In partnership with The Curve AI, Landmark has developed a tool powered by Cognito that allows employees to provide feedback on their workplace and generates a workplace design based on these insights. This tool has not only helped Landmark clients tailor their spaces but has also provided ideas for what the future of the workplace needs to look like.

Landmark's new signature centre in King's Cross helps paint a clear picture. Now that we know just how much can be accomplished independently from home, collaboration needs to be the primary function of the new workplace. Rather than siloing staff from one another, create spaces where they can come together both formally and informally. Meeting rooms should be equipped with the right tech to bring remote staff into the conversation and provide a place for collective



focus. But not every brainstorm needs structure. Providing comfortable spaces that mimic more laid-back environments, such as lounges and hospitality settings, enables staff to connect on a more casual level.

Our hours in the office make up a large portion of our day, and therefore it should be an environment where we enjoy spending our time. Landmark King's Cross gets this right, too. The centre is designed to be homey and inviting rather than sterile, bland and overly corporate. Its design draws on the best of our after-work activities to provide balance during the working day, offering a landscaped rooftop terrace for midday outdoor escapes and a top-floor bar area for colleagues to unwind and socialise.

Just because the office has always been a certain way doesn't mean it has to stay that way. Understanding that is the first step, and doing something about it comes next.

INDUSTRY VIEW

To learn more about Landmark, visit www.landmarkspace.co.uk

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Five steps to a greener business

Going green at work doesn't have to be a hassle – and it can be good for your business as well as for the environment. **Nick Martindale** talks to businesses about their approach

EVERYONE IS aware of the pressing need to do more to help the environment and reduce our carbon emissions, as well as operating in a more sustainable manner. Small businesses also have their part to play in this but knowing where to start can be daunting.

Beyond the obvious measures, such as turning heating down when no one is in the office or recycling, there are a number of steps small firms can take to do their bit...

Rethink business operations

Louise Reed, owner of online children's store Little Nutkins, has chosen to specialise in more sustainable products, selling wooden toys and using organic cotton. "Organic cotton uses a great deal less water and doesn't use polluting chemicals in the manufacturing," she says. "Any wooden toys we sell come from sustainable suppliers who ensure forestries are maintained." The company also uses cardboard and paper for its packaging which can be recycled, and reuses bubble wrap and air pocket plastic packaging that it receives from suppliers.

Reusing envelopes and mail pouches can have an impact, says Caroline Atkinson, group managing director at Versapak, which also operates a return and recycle scheme for plastic security seals. "Reusable envelopes and mailing pouches can be used thousands of times, significantly reducing your carbon footprint," she says. "If you're using one regular-sized, single-use polythene bag every day for five years, you would be able to fill the ground of an entire football pitch with waste plastic."

Dominie Fearn, founder of sustainable food manufacturer The Wild Hare Group, has made a conscious effort to source from local suppliers to reduce carbon emissions from transport. "In the food industry, integrating British-grown produce offers endless opportunities to support an amazing network of local British farms," she says. "But the same principle can be applied to any business. Of course, with rarer materials you may be forced to look further afield, but opting for locally sourced goods offers a wealth of wider benefits, even if initial costs might be higher."

Become a B Corp

B Corp certification is awarded to companies that can demonstrate high standards across a range of areas, including social and environmental performance.

"If enough businesses strive towards B Corp certification, it will have a huge impact on both social and environmental issues" – Sarah Platt, Firehaus



Working to become certificated can help you put in place more sustainable practices and demonstrate your credentials to customers or suppliers. "It's helping both in terms of awareness of what we need to do, and accountability, in terms of having to work through the Business Impact Assessment and now our action plan to achieve B Corp certification," says Sarah Platt, co-founder and finance partner at consultancy firm Firehaus, which is currently going through the process. "If enough businesses strive towards B Corp certification, it will have a huge impact on both social and environmental issues including, but not limited to, sustainability."

Tiger Recruitment is another firm currently going through the process. "It has been a kind of corporate therapy – during the process, we discovered things about our company that we were proud of, areas where we could do better, and subjects that we hadn't even considered," says David

Morel, CEO. "I'd recommend that any business serious about sustainability takes the first-stage questionnaire. That initial step is an excellent way to hold a mirror up to your business. Even if you don't score highly enough to submit an application, it will give you helpful pointers on how to improve your business."

Embrace smart meters

Reducing energy usage is an obvious way for small firms to impact both their carbon footprint and reduce their bills. The starting point is to understand what you are using, says Kerry Maisey, head of smart metering at SSE Energy Solutions, by replacing outdated meters with smart ones.

"Once small firms have this data, they can start making energy-saving changes," she says. "For example, small business owners may see that employees need to be encouraged to turn off electrical equipment overnight, or that double glazing should be

considered. The greenest energy unit is no energy, so knowing when to turn an unused appliance off and for how long can have great benefits."

Collective carbon offsetting

For small firms which have already taken steps to reduce their environmental impact, or which are aware there are emissions or processes about which they can do relatively little, carbon offsetting – where one form of emissions is offset by environmentally-friendly measures elsewhere – might be an option.

The Million Tree Pledge, for instance, aims to bring together small firms to achieve far more than they could on their own. Currently it has signed up 35 small firms since it launched in April 2021, and has pledged to plant 35 million trees as a result. "We aim to collectively plant billions of trees around the world in the places where they are needed the most," says founding member Charli Adamson. "These trees will sequester carbon dioxide over their lifetime, as well as providing habitats for wildlife, restoring and securing the land, and purifying air and water."

Look beyond the company footprint

Carbon offsetting can also be applied to the impact employees have in all aspects of their lives; something that has paid dividends for Bridewell Consulting. "We evaluated the carbon footprint of our organisation and employees, regardless of their working location," explains Martin Riley, director of managed security services.

"We aligned with the widely used GHG Protocol reporting framework to move to renewable energy sources and apply carbon offsetting to our entire workforce. But we went that crucial step further by taking employees' personal lives into consideration, factoring in their home living, food, personal travel, hobbies and holidays. In doing so, we managed to offset the carbon footprints of our employees' families too, enabling us to achieve net-zero in little over a year."

Taking action now will not only help reduce the damage we do to the environment, but also makes good business sense. "This is not just a moral imperative but a business one too," says Riley. "People want to invest in those businesses that are proactively investing in their people to drive greater productivity and improve the bottom line. Customers expect it, and investors now expect it too – your business must act now or expect to miss out."

Breaking the bias

Why ensuring women have a fair chance at work is better for everyone

Committing to greater gender parity at work has long been paid lip service by businesses, but the actual results are patchy. **Francis Andrews** looks at how employers can make sure their female employees really are getting a fair crack of the whip

IN LATE 2017, the BBC journalist Carrie Gracie came forward with claims that she was a victim of sex-based pay discrimination. Gracie was working as the broadcaster's China editor, earning £135,000 a year; a male counterpart, she learned, was taking home a salary of upwards of £200,000, despite the two being of an equal professional status. Following an investigation, the BBC acknowledged that there was no legitimate basis for her lower salary. She was awarded back pay, and a full review of the broadcaster's salary structure followed.

The incident prompted companies across almost all sectors in the UK to review their own salary structures. Ever since, aware of the reputational damage that gender bias and discrimination carries, many organisations have set about designing ways to achieve gender parity in the workplace, and gender pay gap reporting has been introduced.

As a consequence, some progress has been made in the realm of salary, although the gender pay gap remains stark: CIPD's estimate is 17.3 per cent overall, while the ONS puts it at 7.9 per cent for full-time employees. But salary is only one factor. Boosting parity requires a multifaceted

approach, and the steps taken aside from pay haven't always been successful.

'Add women and stir'

Take one commonly used strategy: improving gender balance in the workplace. Sometimes referred to as "add women and stir", the supposed logic behind the approach is that change in women's status in the workplace will automatically follow on the heels of greater numbers of women in the workplace.

Yet recent research by *Harvard Business Review* has found that even in female-dominated professions, including law, healthcare and higher education, women still experience a range of biases. These include lack of acknowledgment of their contributions, regular interruption by men when speaking, and unequal decision-making powers. More women doesn't necessarily mean greater status. And these behaviours and barriers lead women to alter their own behaviour in the workplace: to downplay their accomplishments, to be extra mindful of the way in which they express their authority, and – continuing a problem that has long limited the professional growth and achievements of working women – to



"Research by Harvard Business Review has found that even in female-dominated professions, including law, healthcare and higher education, women still experience a range of biases"

sacrifice their careers in order to manage personal obligations, chief among which is often family.

Gender biases manifest in other ways. A landmark 2007 survey in the US found that women applying for jobs who mentioned in their application that they have children were twice as unlikely to be successful than women who didn't. Moreover, men who participated in the survey were found not only to have not been penalised for their parental status, but indeed sometimes actually benefitted from mentioning that they had children.

Then in 2018, a study by McKinsey found that women both receive less support from managers than men, and get less access to senior managers. This is made even worse for women of colour. As McKinsey made clear, these barriers have serious implications for their careers, given that both issues

– access to and support from managers – are closely tied to positive outcomes, including chances of promotion, desire to stay with a company and aspirations to leadership positions.

Better for business

The consequences of these limitations in the UK are evidenced by the fact that only one in five businesses here are run by women, despite there being some 900,000 more women than men in the total UK population. Statistics such as these prompted the launch of The Alison Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship in 2019. Its findings threw a harsh light not just on the problems for women resulting from gender imparity, but for the UK economy too: some £250 billion of new value, it wrote, "could be added to the UK economy if women started and scaled new businesses at the same rate as UK men".

Some UK companies have made moves to address gender bias in the workplace. Sky now has 39 per cent of its leadership positions filled by women thanks to its Women in Leadership programme, launched in 2018. It aims to push that figure up to 50 per cent, while the company ensures that all vacancy shortlists have a 50/50 gender balance. At Unilever, women earn £1.02 for every £1 that men earn. It has also designed shared parental and maternity leave policies so that a





fairer proportion of the work of child-care falls to women. Marks & Spencer has, meanwhile, responded to scrutiny of its gender pay gap (women earn 96p for every £1 men earn) with a programme for mentoring women and offering them one-to-one coaching to help them into senior positions.

This isn't merely window dressing, or a way to stay in line with growing societal demands for greater equality. There are material gains to be made too. Research published in the *International Journal of Finance & Economics* shows that companies in which women held more than 30 per cent of executive positions tended to outperform those where women held fewer C-suite posts.

The reasons are many, says Valerie Beaulieu-James, Chief Sales & Marketing Officer at The Adecco Group. "Research has proven that securing a more diverse workforce and leadership allows companies to make better decisions, attract more talent and eventually deliver more profit."

Mothers in particular are considered good multitaskers. A longstanding perception that they are less reliable employees because their focus and energy is taken up with childcare elides the fact that the practice of raising children often generates qualities prized in a workplace: collaboration and co-operation, prioritisation, organisation. As job

Above: Journalist Carrie Gracie (centre) and BBC employees outside Broadcasting House in London, to highlight equal pay on International Women's Day

site Indeed notes, they may also "offer new perspectives that drive innovation and help model and promote a flexible workplace culture".

The flex factor

Increasing demand among employees for flexible working also holds particular weight for women. The Adecco Group's Resetting Normal Report, published last year, found that women were disproportionately affected by the changes to working life brought about by the pandemic: 39 per cent reported experiencing burnout compared with 36 per cent of men; 34 per cent reported a decline in their mental wellbeing versus 29 per cent for men; and 46 per cent were anxious about returning to the workplace, while only 38 per cent of men were.

The upshot, says Beaulieu-James, is that "many women left the workforce during the pandemic and not enough have returned, with caregiving

"Research has proven that securing a more diverse workforce and leadership allows companies to make better decisions, attract more talent and eventually deliver more profit" – Valerie Beaulieu-James, Adecco

responsibilities as one of the biggest reasons". Flexible working, which many companies in the UK are currently experimenting with, would accommodate the pressures faced by women better than traditional models.

It is clear, however, that simply adjusting things here and there to meet changing expectations for women professionals – whether they be wage parity, styles of working, access to senior positions or otherwise – will do little more than paper over the problem. Ensuring women are on a par with their male counterparts is about more than "looking good": women can bring qualities that men don't have, and recognition of this, followed by steps taken to entrench equality in the workplace, will have measurable economic and social benefits, for companies and for the national economy. A larger attitudinal shift is therefore required, and direct action taken.

"For many years, I was against positive discrimination, because I never wanted to wonder whether I had been promoted for my capabilities or my gender," says Beaulieu-James. "But I have changed my mind because we cannot afford to wait. At the current rate of progress, we are not looking at only a generation to achieve gender equality in the economy – it's 267 years."

How to break the bias in your workplace

Gosia Bowling, national lead for emotional wellbeing at Nuffield Health, outlines some ways in which HR professionals can work out a fairer employee policy that supports greater roles for women in the workplace



Research shows

women are 24 per cent less likely to be offered advice from a senior leader than men. Unconscious bias still exists in many workplace cultures, and this lack of support contributes to holding women back in their careers.

Female employees

also often report higher stress levels in male-dominated occupations. This is usually because they feel they must work harder to prove an equal level of competence with their male peers.

These feelings are not without reason: a McKinsey and LeanIn

opportunities. Transparency around salaries can also be helpful.

Even if your HR and finance teams aren't comfortable disclosing salary details, you can still work with them to set salary ranges for different positions and levels at your company, ensuring fair pay for all demographics.

Your reputation as an inclusive employer won't go far without offering flexibility, which can be offered to varying degrees. At some companies, employees can take advantage of fully built-out "flex time" policies; other perks

"Female employees often report higher stress levels in male-dominated occupations. This is because they feel they must work harder to prove an equal level of competence with their male peers"

study found that for every 100 men getting their first promotion, just 86 women are promoted. Leaders need to be aware of equality imbalances and how to remove these barriers and biases, which prevent women from being recognised and promoted.

Provide training, support and mentoring opportunities and educate employees, at all levels, about unconscious biases. Ensure there is company-wide awareness of self-promotion

include part-time hours, shared parental leave and telecommuting roles.

Responsible businesses should introduce a menopause policy and workplace adjustments to protect their female employees from feeling discrimination.

Not only this but once a policy is introduced organisations need to follow through on it. There's no point in having a policy if no one knows it exists or where to go when they need support.

PROMOTIONAL CONTENT

HR issues top of employer agendas in a post-restriction world of work

“The post-restrictions workplace means HR teams can really make a difference”

AS ORGANISATIONS contemplate future working patterns following the lifting of restrictions, key HR issues have never seemed more important.

In the heat of the pandemic, a focus on keeping businesses afloat and employees safe, while millions were placed on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, kept attrition rates low. But now that restrictions have lifted, employers face new challenges, with businesses fighting over the best talent and some prepared to pay handsomely to attract it. Many employees have become used to significant flexibility and autonomy, reduced commuting time and better work-life balance. Talent retention and attraction are issues set to dominate HR agendas.

UK law firm Shoosmiths’s head of employment, Paul Stokey, believes changes in ways of working present further challenges for HR teams. “The post-restriction workplace means HR teams can really make a difference to some of the key people challenges that lie ahead,” he says, “but only if they adapt to changing needs and emerging risk.”

Many potential issues stem from an inevitable reduction in face-to-face time,

with hybrid work remaining a feature in some sectors. Businesses may find it harder to effectively manage performance and ensure work cultures are being maintained and promoted. “Helping businesses establish new ways of working, such as deploying policies and support networks to ensure staff are effectively managed when they aren’t physically alongside colleagues, demands a different approach,” Stokey adds. “It’s much harder to create the same dynamic over telephone or video calls.”

HR teams will need to adapt the way they monitor and manage performance and provide feedback. Establishing protocols that account for the fragmented nature of hybrid working, setting clear expectations, and ensuring managers have tools to identify and manage performance remotely, will become increasingly important.

Employee mental health has long been on HR agendas, but its presence is likely to increase when staff who have worked in semi-isolation for a while are likely to be cautious about returning to the workplace, while others may need support for work-related stress and burnout. Training and



enabling managers to identify and deal with warning signs will be key. Many businesses have established and publicised employee support schemes or helplines, alongside introducing or strengthening links with occupational health professionals to support their workforce.

Other pressing employment issues include helping businesses incentivise

employees in a buoyant job market where other employers may offer yet more flexibility or market-busting salaries. Looking beyond traditional recruitment pools and developing and upskilling current employees will be areas where HR can make a difference. Equally, being able to identify the right talent and giving managers proper tools to recruit, when candidates increasingly expect video interviews, presents recruitment challenges for many. Organisational culture will be critical in retaining talent, and HR will be key to fostering diversity and inclusion to meet any environmental, social and governance (ESG) strategies.

It’s clear HR teams have many important items on their to-do lists – the necessity of prioritising employment issues in a post-pandemic world cannot be underestimated. Forward-thinking and creative HR teams will be well placed to help their businesses survive and flourish in an employee-led post-pandemic world.

INDUSTRY VIEW

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PROMOTIONAL CONTENT

Fortune favours the brave

THE PANDEMIC has taught us that change can happen extremely quickly. Having been forced to adopt new ways of working, businesses have realised that flexible working can have a positive impact on productivity and retention, and is fundamental to attracting new talent.

The Curve Group has long offered some flexible and hybrid working practices, which have enabled it to attract and retain incredible talent. However, this is no longer a competitive advantage as so many businesses are now offering the same flexibility. We have been looking to elevate the business once again as an employer of choice in what is a candidate-led market with fierce competition for top talent. We needed to be brave.

I cannot offer a silver bullet to overcome this challenge even though I run an HR and recruitment business. However, I can tell you that to succeed you will need to embrace the fact that employees expect and deserve more than just a healthy salary and financial benefits.



Culture, a life-work balance, recognition, career progression, professional development, empowerment, ethics, commitment to meaningful causes, environmental and community reach, diversity, inclusion and equality: these are areas that are important to prospective and current employees.

The effort required to critique and evolve any of these areas in your business will really challenge leadership teams. So where do you start?

Establish the blend of skills, energy, innovation, experience, capability and capacity you need from your employees to make the business successful. Analyse your existing workforce

“Identify where you have gaps. Speak to your top talent. Ask them why they joined your business, why they’ve stayed and what is important to them in a working environment – both now and in the future”
– Jeanette Ramsden

demographic. Identify where you have gaps. Speak to your top talent. Ask them why they joined your business, why they’ve stayed and what is important to them in a working environment – both now and in the future. Then think about the changes you can make.

We have been through the same exercise and have made brave choices. The biggest challenge we identified was that we needed to improve our teams’ post-pandemic life-work balance. As a result, we are reducing everyone’s weekly working hours from

40 to 35 with no reduction in pay, and working with employees to agree their weekly working pattern. For some, the reduced hours means a four-day working week with longer days; for others, five shorter days. It is early days, but it has already had an incredible impact on our team’s morale. For some it means increased time with family and reduced child (and pet!) care costs; for others it is the ability to enjoy long weekends.

We have been delighted with the immediate transformational impact on attracting and recruiting talent which is vital for our growth. It has been a big, and some would say risky, decision. However, now is not the time for sticking plasters – take the leap to implement new strategies if you want to retain and attract your employees. Remember, fortune favours the brave.

INDUSTRY VIEW

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New kids on the clock

What will tomorrow's jobs look like, and how can we make sure today's kids are learning the right skills to do them? **David Nicholson** looks at how the next generations are preparing for a new world of work

"I think I'm learning the right things through the work I'm doing to equip me for future jobs. Not so much through school..." – Raffy Holt

TECHNOLOGY HAS made the lives of many schoolkids unrecognisable from those of the teenagers of even a decade ago.

Instead of pocket money and Saturday jobs, they trade fashionwear on sites such as Depop, buy and sell cryptocurrencies, earn money from social media sites such as TikTok and set up websites to offer professional services such as photography or to sell toys. "I did GCSE Business Studies, but all I had to do was memorise stuff like 'three attributes of a sole trader'," says Raffy Holt, 17, now studying A levels in English, Photography and Textiles.

At 14, Holt set up his first business, selling custom-painted Fidget Spinners online. Then he bought old Levi's jeans for £15 and sold them for £50 through Depop. A keen and talented footballer, his next project is to upload videos of his best shots to TikTok, where they can earn £40 a pop.

"I think I'm learning the right things through the work I'm doing to equip me for future jobs," he reckons. "Not so much through school." He credits years of playing online multiplayer shooter *Fortnite* for an understanding of strategy, teamwork and a dedicated work ethic. "My ethos is: don't stress, do what you know, and work hard."

Most of Holt's friends have a side hustle while studying for exams. One turned £400 into £3,000 in two months through cryptocurrency trading. A fellow textile student is already building a fashion brand.

What else should schools teach? "I think crypto and general investment awareness would be helpful, because you can make and lose money very quickly. Kids should be taught about online opportunities and how not to get scammed," Holt reckons.

Cyber-security – under which such lessons could appear – is among the professions most likely to thrive in the future, alongside robotics engineering and the medical professions – to cater for ageing populations and those with mental health



issues; data analysts to make sense of the ever-increasing flood of information; and all kinds of IT workers, from programmers to systems analysts.

The numbers game

So how best to equip kids for these jobs? The National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) argues that post-GCSE pupils can benefit from studying Core Maths. This gives young people "the numerical and enquiry skills to make sense of and utilise all the data that comes their way in life," says Steve McCormack at NCETM. "To give three topical examples: interpreting statistics on global warming, the cost of living and the movement of refugees in war zones."

Children often struggle to connect their schoolwork with the real world, as do

teachers. Indeed, some studies warn that the education system itself will soon be broken beyond repair.

"Within the next decade, education systems will not be up to the task of adapting to train or retrain people for the skills that will be most prized in the future," stated a report from the US-based Pew Foundation. It lists emotional intelligence, curiosity, creativity, adaptability, resilience and critical thinking as the "most highly valued" attributes and argues that online learning will become the dominant form of education, aided by augmented reality, virtual reality and artificial intelligence.

Head of people and organisation at consultancy PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Peter Brown is a convert to virtual reality. During the pandemic, with face-to-face interviews impossible, candidates were invited to a virtual coffee shop, or taken on virtual speedboat rides. "It was a phenomenal experience," says Brown. "I'd argue it was better from an inclusion point of view. It accelerated our development of virtual reality systems by a year."

A new gig

Teenage digital natives with years of collaboration and strategising on *Minecraft*, *Fortnite* or *Call Of Duty* will be unfazed by such interactions. Making sense of the nascent Metaverse should also be straightforward, in comparison with older generations.

But as Brown points out, having three or even four concurrent generations of

workers, each with differing needs, presents a challenge to employers.

PwC anticipates a dramatically shifting working environment, with far less long-term work and a fast-rising demand for new skills as technology and automation make millions of jobs obsolete. Almost 40 per cent of UK employees think their jobs will have disappeared by 2027, according to PwC's report *Workforce of the Future*.

The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (Nesta) predicts that six million UK jobs will fall victim to technological and demographic change by 2030. The gig economy will become the dominant form of employment, as individuals sell their specialist skills, or their personal traits, rather than their time. People will have to learn new skills throughout their working lives.

Is this bleak or a blessing? As Peter Brown at PwC notes: "After every revolution, there has always been a net increase in jobs." Freedom from the mundane, repetitive, low-skill work technology is replacing will allow workers to retrain and take on more creative, rewarding tasks. Or at least that is the promise. There are certainly dangers to people's security and the longevity of their careers, but the lack of an overseeing employer has a strong attraction for most kids.

As Raffy Holt says, "Everyone wants freedom. Some want to be millionaires, but most people just want enough to support themselves and their families and be generous."

Top four attributes for future work

Versatility If you can design a website, write the content, shoot some videos and put together a business plan, you're hired (for a month).

Adaptability New technologies, media platforms and apps will rise and fall with increasing speed. Successful workers will master each important emerging service, to

understand how it adds value to business or society.

Foresight Some industry sectors, including High Street retail, manned transport and coal mining, are in serious decline. Smart workers will gain qualifications and experience in areas such as flood defences and natural disaster recovery,

renewable energy, cyber-security or healthcare.

Entrepreneurship Landing and maintaining multiple concurrent jobs demands entrepreneurial skills: marketing and promotion, persuasion, communication, numeracy, forward planning, record keeping. These should be taught in schools.

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