OE Cam

Future of ~~Work~~ *LIFE*

GenAI

HYBRID COLLABORATION

CONTENTS

Future of ~~Work~~ *LIFE*

Welcome to our eBook in OE Cam's Future of Work series.

As a student back in the mid '90s when I first heard the term 'Future of Work', I pictured enormous computers replacing people to do quite basic tasks. Now, nearly 30 years on, we commonly think the future is more about *tiny* AI devices doing really *complex* tasks – not only the jobs normally performed by humans, but AI beginning to create totally new kinds of work.

OE Cam's view on the Future of Work is much broader than just the latest technological change taking place. We are supporting our clients in identifying new jobs, new markets and the need for new business models. We are assessing the potential of leaders to deliver in a very different world to the one they knew when they first started out in their career. We are developing more diverse leaders than ever before and supporting organisations who are having to embrace more societal expectations at a much faster speed than in the past in order to remain competitive, both internally and externally. You could argue that the future of work is really about the future of life!

In the myriad of topics we could write about, we have chosen to focus on a select few that we think will be important over the next few years – the employee experience; a need for skills-based hiring, embracing squiggly careers, getting curious about Gen AI and practical plans to realise your sustainability ambitions.

We hope you find this eBook interesting and, as ever, look forward to hearing what you think.

Paolo Moscuzza

Partner, OE Cam LLP

Employee Magnetism:
Defining the Moments that Matter

by LUCY COX

As humans, we spend a lot of our time thinking about the future. From predicting what we'll want to eat for dinner this week, to what the weather might do next weekend or what we'll be doing in five years' time. It's hard to think of an area of day-to-day life that doesn't involve trying to predict the future – and the world of work is no exception.

While we can't know for sure what the future of work holds, we can look at trends to predict where things are headed. In 1964, futurist Arthur C. Clarke famously predicted remote working: "It will be possible in that age, perhaps only fifty years from now, for a man to conduct his business from Tahiti or Bali just as well as he could from London" (1). With 44% of UK workers reporting home or hybrid working (2), it's remarkable just how close the timing of his prediction was.

In our previous journal, we wrote about the profound shift in power from the organisation to the individual. This is a trend that is not abating. In fact, it's accelerating – which is why many organisations are urgently reviewing their Employee Experience (EX) to put the individual employee at the heart of how they work.

As this power continues to shift, and the individual's expectations become even more influential, it's likely to have a deep impact on the way organisations are run. By embracing, instead of ignoring or rejecting, this change, businesses can seize the opportunity to prioritise what really matters to their people, and in return get the reward – top talent who will help them succeed.

But EX is a huge area – how do you figure out what's actually important to your employees, and separate the superficial perks from those critical 'moments that matter'?

What are the critical elements of the Employee Experience? (EX)

By putting the EX at the centre of all your internal operations, you can create a truly magnetic organisation; a workplace that makes people feel a sense of meaning, trust and connection. According to a recent survey by McKinsey (3), people who report a positive EX are 16 times more engaged and 8 times more likely to want to stay at a company.

EX can be defined as the result of all the interactions someone has with their employer. Jacob Morgan, whose work on EX is based on researching more than 250 global organisations, breaks it down into three core components (4):

1. The Physical
2. The Technological
3. The Cultural

He describes the physical as the working environment around you; the technological as the tools you use to do your job; and the cultural as the less tangible 'feel' of the organisation.

While all these factors are important in shaping the Employee Experience, we believe the critical aspect will be cultural. This tallies with Morgan's findings that the physical and technological together make up roughly 40% of the total impact on experience, while the cultural, which will be the focus of this article, makes up the remaining 60%.

Three predictions for the future of EX

So, what could workplace culture look like in the future, given the growing focus on EX?

Our three predictions are based on current trends around what employees increasingly value, along with the social and technological shifts we're seeing in the wider world. This includes a stronger desire for purpose and meaning at work, evolving expectations around trust and operating ethically, and the ongoing need for human connection in a digital world.

Based on this we describe the different ways in which organisations can improve the design of EX in the future.

1.Purpose

PREDICTION NO.1:

Organisations treat purpose as a must-have, not a nice-to-have

Why will purpose be a key element of the future EX?

What do you find most motivating about your work? *Why* is it you do what you do?

We're all different, and are likely to be motivated by different things. This will vary at different stages of our lives, too. And of course, extrinsic rewards (like being paid at the end of the month!) will always play a part. However, Daniel Pink (5) argues that in the modern workplace, motivation increasingly goes beyond these extrinsic rewards, and is becoming far more about intrinsic motivation – in other words, doing something because we find it inherently rewarding.

Pink famously argues that there is a unifying formula for intrinsic motivation at work: Autonomy, (work that we have control over); Mastery (work we feel we are good, or getting better, at) and Purpose (work that makes us feel part of something bigger). Supporting the importance of purpose is the fact that a lack of meaningful work was recently cited in the top five reasons for leaving among people who quit their job without another lined up, ranking even higher than inadequate compensation or lack of flexibility (6).

This brings us to our first prediction for the future of the employee experience: That purpose will move from a 'nice-to-have' to a 'must-have'. But if purpose is already a core intrinsic motivator for everyone, then why does it make this list? What could be different in the future?

If we explore what the data says about the behaviour of different generations at work, we find something interesting. A Deloitte survey of over 4,000 people found that over a quarter (29%) of 16–24-year-olds have left an organisation because it wasn't true to its purpose. The same is true of only 8% of 55-64-year-olds (7). So, it seems younger generations are more likely to say that purpose is a significant factor for them in choosing where they work. While we can't infer from this that younger generations actually feel more motivated by purpose, we can say that their behaviour seems to be different.

Why is this? It could be a number of reasons – perhaps it's about changing career expectations. Do they feel freer to act in line with an innate desire for purpose and meaning because there is less pressure to stay in one organisation? Maybe it comes from witnessing events like the 2008 recession or the Covid pandemic at a time when they were about to, or had recently, entered the workforce, and the subsequent impact on their mindset around work. Finally, it could be linked to broader societal, political, and environmental issues, like the urgency we're seeing today around climate change, and a motivation to play a part in doing good in the world. My colleague Alexandra Shoobert writes more about the changing expectations individuals have about their careers.

Whatever the reasons might be for this shift, recognising that newer members of the workforce are more and more likely to make employment decisions based on purpose and meaning is key – as is how employers choose to respond.

"But if purpose is already a core intrinsic motivator for everyone, then why does it make this list? What could be different in the future?"

Designing purpose into the EX

An organisation's purpose can be defined as its reason for existing.

A review by Kings College London researchers (8) identified three common types of purpose when it comes to organisations. Firstly, there are **competence-based purpose statements** emphasising the value of the organisation's product or service - like Netflix, whose purpose is '*to entertain the world*', and Google, who '*organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful*'. Then there are **culture-based purpose statements**, which focus on how the business operates. One example is Aldi: '*We provide value and quality to our customers by being fair and efficient in all we do*'. Finally, there are **cause-based statements**, like Patagonia's '*We're in business to save our home planet*'. These focus on explaining the organisation's social or environmental impact.

The researchers argue that all three types can be effective, so long as they are plausible and authentic. They also share some practical strategies for effectively embedding purpose throughout the organisation, a common pitfall for organisations that may invest in refining their purpose statement as a marketing tool, but fail to back it up with genuine action or integrate it fully into their EX. These include:

1. **Strategy alignment**: Align your strategic objectives with your purpose and review your products and services to decide what to stop, start or continue to integrate purpose into day-to-day work.
2. **Hiring and onboarding:** This could be through the questions you ask at interview, or by connecting new employees with the beneficiaries of your purpose.
3. **Individual alignment:** Encourage employees to reflect on what the purpose means to them as an individual and make it their own. Unilever did this through workshops for all employees, with the goal of being able to articulate their own personal purpose, as well as how it fits into the overarching purpose.
4. **Leadership alignment:** This could be discussing purpose in all management meetings; helping leaders to help their teams understand how they play a part; or recognising and rewarding people who have embodied the organisation's purpose.
5. **Measuring impact:** Aim to measure purpose-related impact with financial, social and environmental objectives. When it comes to employees, this could include how well they understand the purpose, and their perceptions on how much the organisation is really doing.

By considering purpose at every step of the employee journey – from how you attract and recruit talent to how you develop, promote and retain them – you can ensure your organisation is full of people who feel connected to, and driven by, your purpose. Not only will this help create real impact in the world, it will also help you stay competitive as an employer for talent who is increasingly rating purpose as a fundamental factor in choosing where they work.

2.Trust

PREDICTION NO.2:
Organisations have bridged the Trust Gap

Why will trust be a key element of the future EX?

Why is trust important at work? Research on over 10,000 desk workers found that 1 in 4 don't feel trusted by their employer. Despite this, of those who said they didn't feel trusted, 87% felt they were performing well. This was consistent across all ages and tenures, and spanned countries, industries and roles. (9)

So, what is causing this trust gap? And what is the impact? Since the rapid rise of remote work, managers and leaders can't rely on physically seeing their team members and building in-person relationships with them to help drive performance. This isn't (yet) a natural state of being for us and is something we need to get more used to. By putting in place tools and strategies to help build trust in other ways (which we will come to later), organisations will reduce the need to rely on presenteeism to create trust.

And of course, trust goes both ways. Trusting that your employer will operate with integrity and treat you and others well is a critical aspect of the employee experience. In fact, 76% of employees would consider looking for a new job if there was an unfair gender pay gap or no D&I policy at their organisation (10).

Rachel Botsman, trust expert, author and Oxford University Lecturer, argues that right now we are going through "*one of the greatest trust shifts of all time – from institutional to distributed trust*" (11). She observes that just as the internet and social media have enabled news and information to flow freely between individuals, rather than top-down via newspapers, radio or TV; and platforms like Airbnb and Uber mean we often place our trust in reviews and ratings from other users more than a particular brand; there is a parallel with how trust is transforming in the workplace.

If institutional trust was built on trusting authorities and experts, and by reporting upwards and communicating downwards (12), in this new world of distributed trust, the power will increasingly sit with the collective employees, not just at the top; there will be an expectation of greater transparency, and a sense of trust needing to be earned by employers, rather than given automatically.

So – what action should organisations be taking to address these shifts?

Designing trust into the EX

Neuroscientist Paul J. Zak has spent much of his career researching trust – such as which behaviours elicit trust from others, and what is going on in our brains when we trust (or don't trust) someone. To understand the role of trust in the workplace, Zak's research found that compared with low-trust organisations, people in high-trust organisations had a substantially better employee experience. They were 76% more engaged, 74% less stressed, had 106% more energy at work, were 50% more productive and 29% more satisfied with their lives (13).

So, what are the factors that make an organisation 'high trust'? He identified a set of key behaviours from managers and leaders that were common to the high trust organisations. These included:

- **Intentionally build social relationships**
- **Set difficult, but achievable work – then let people do it their own way**
- **Recognise excellence**
- **Share information broadly**
- **Show vulnerability by asking for help**

These behaviours – which reflect the themes we've discussed around the higher need for autonomy and transparency – are things that all managers and leaders can do to foster a culture of trust in their teams and organisation.

When it comes to culture, however, it's critical to look not only at behaviours, but at processes, systems and structure, too. These things are all 'silent communicators' that are doing two things when it comes to your employee experience:

- **Having a huge influence on everyone's day-to-day behaviour and decision making**
- **Acting as 'silent communicators' that tell your employees what is truly valued**

For example, if you tell your leadership team that they need to be prioritising sustainability, but their meeting agendas are dominated by short-term financial metrics, they won't have the headspace or opportunity to really act on this. In turn, their teams won't feel enabled to make decisions that drive sustainability, and there will be a mismatch between intentions and reality. For more information about delivering on your sustainability ambitions, read Gary Ashton's article.

If you tell your employees that the organisation is committed to D&I, but they don't see diversity on the Board; D&I considerations haven't been properly embedded in the recruitment process; and there are no Employee Resource Groups or diverse leadership pipelines set up; it is much harder for the right behaviours to happen, and this will be evident to everyone.

The need for trust in organisations is evolving, along with the way that we build it. By thinking about trust from two angles – the 'soft' (behaviours and capabilities) and the 'hard' (systems and processes), you can build a high-trust organisation that employees will want to join – and stay a part of.

3. Human Connection

The EX is designed for human connections through and beyond work

Why will human connection be a key element of the future EX?

We know that a desire for social connection is hard-wired into us. Living in groups meant our ancestors could hunt more successfully, stay safer from predators, and ultimately survive. Over time, we've evolved the ability to communicate, cooperate and build relationships, leading to the complex, interconnected world we live in today.

Though we might not be fighting off predators anymore, evidence shows that social connection is critical for our health and wellbeing – something that is never clearer than when we don't have it, a feeling many experienced first-hand during the Covid pandemic. Fast forward to today, though, and research published in 2023 found 1 in 10 workers feel lonely at work some or all of the time. Not only does this present a significant financial cost (£2.5bn per year for UK employers, according to a recent estimate) (14) it goes much deeper than that, with loneliness linked to a 26% increased risk of early mortality (15).

With advances in technology contributing to more digital and distributed working than ever before, we will continue to be faced with unique challenges around building social connection at work. There is a case to be made that it's easier to build relationships in person. There are ways to promote more of this, such as organising team days and putting more structure around in-office time. However, to future-proof your employee experience, we believe it's important to focus on strategies that will be effective *regardless* of whether people are physically together or not, and will enable people to build strong connections even in an increasingly digital world.

What are the benefits of more social connection at work? Data from Gallup(16) links having a best friend at work with significantly higher engagement, while another study found interpersonal relationships as the most important factor out of 12 for explaining job satisfaction levels(17). Not only does having good relationships with our colleagues contribute to a more positive employee experience, but it also makes us work together and perform better, too.(18)

It's important to caveat here that we are all different. Not everyone has a desire to build lots of social relationships at work, and by no means should people be made to feel they *have* to. What is important to think about though is how you are creating a range of opportunities for building connections that people can choose to engage in; and how these will suit a diverse range of people. While the individual is responsible too, the organisation plays a powerful role in making it much easier - or harder - for people to build good relationships and feel connected to the people around them at work.

Designing human connection into the EX

We believe it's time to re-evaluate the role work plays in fostering connection and community, which we will separate into two themes:

1. Connection *through* work
2. Connection *beyond* work
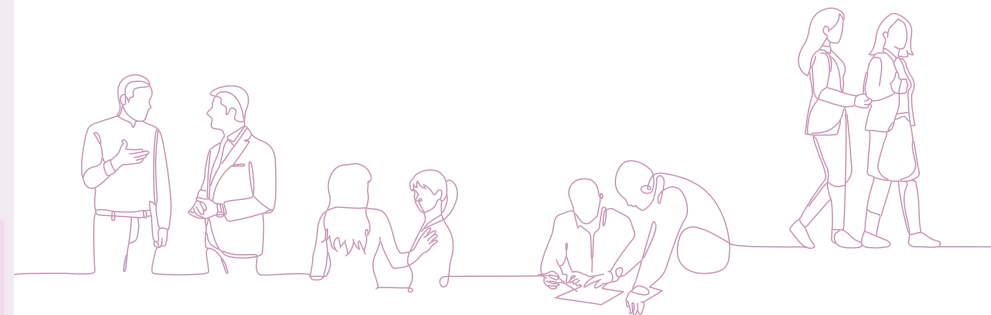
Connection *through* work

By connection through work, we mean the social interactions you have with the people you come across through your day-to-day work, and the meaningful relationships you are hopefully able to build.

To build this into your EX, we recommend looking holistically at the whole employee journey and asking yourself how you are prioritising moments where people can build connections. What are the current touchpoints, and how can these be improved? What are the missed opportunities? Is what you're doing now still effective in a hybrid or digital world – or are you relying too much on technology and losing some of the 'human' element?

Here are some top tips to think about:

- **Map out the employee journey.** How can you prioritise human connection during the key moments? This might mean going back to the basics. For example:
    - a. **Onboarding:** Set up a series of 1-1s for your new starter in their first month to meet with everyone in the team
    - b. **Retention and engagement:** Have regular, open conversations with team members about their development and aspirations
    - c. **Promotion:** For first time managers, create opportunities for them to build a network with other managers, such as a development programme (internal or external)
- **Ask your employees.** What do people want? Find out what people value in terms of current opportunities to connect with others, and what might be missing
- **Take a cross-organisational view.** It's not just HR's job to think about this. How can the organisation as a whole embed human connection into internal operations? For example, can people call or visit your IT team for help if they wish, or can they only submit a ticket online? When people hand in their notice, is it guaranteed that their manager will sit down with them (in person or virtually) to have a 1-1 conversation? When there are important organisation-wide updates, are these via email or is there a meeting people can join to ask questions too?

Connection *beyond* work

By this we mean the indirect role the organisation can play in helping employees form deeper connections with others, outside the scope of their work.

This could range from more work-related initiatives such as cross-functional projects, buddy and mentor programmes, and opportunities to join external conferences or networking events. It could also include team volunteering days, and social groups or events.

Paradoxically, however, helping employees form stronger social relationships could simply be through less time spent working.

With the major technological advances we're experiencing, such as easy access to generative AI, we are more productive than ever before. Will organisations choose to fill this time with more work, or will they use this as an opportunity to enhance the EX?

Many organisations are already moving to a 4-day week, giving employees a whole extra day to choose what to do with; while others might choose a few dates throughout the year where everyone has the day off. This is time they can reinvest in themselves and their wellbeing, as well as in their connections with their family, friends and community. Maybe they spend the day taking care of their children, meeting a friend for coffee, outside in nature, or even volunteering locally. Time is one of our most valuable resources and by enabling people to use it to focus on their wellbeing and deepen their relationships with others, the organisation is likely to get huge rewards too – including the health, happiness, engagement and productivity of their people.

Future of Work: Designing a magnetic EX

As the power dynamic shifts between the employer and employee and huge societal changes are happening in the wider world, organisations must be proactive about designing a magnetic employee experience (EX) for their people if they want to attract and retain the best talent.

In summary, we believe that the most critical aspect of EX is organisational culture and predict three ways in which organisations will have to adapt to remain attractive in the future:

1. **Put purpose at your core.** Employees are increasingly likely to decide where they work based on how true an organisation is to its purpose. To make your organisation and the EX more purpose-driven, start by defining a *plausible and authentic* purpose, and work to embed this throughout the organisation. Align your strategy, hiring, and leaders behind it; support your employees to make it their own; and focus on genuine impact in your chosen area.

2. **Bridge the trust gap.** Technological advances are contributing to more digital and distributed working than ever before, as well as a change to how we view and build trust, like more distributed power and an increased expectation for transparency. Organisations can address the gap between where we are today and where we are headed by focussing on two things to build a high-trust culture – behaviours, such as how leaders communicate and build relationships; and systems, such as building in the things you say are priorities into your processes and policies.

3. **Consciously design for human connections.** A need for strong social connection is a very human trait, and one that isn't going anywhere. We believe it's time to re-evaluate the role the organisation can play in facilitating this – both directly through day-to-day work, and indirectly through a broader sense of community and life outside work. By putting in place strategies to make it easier for people to build relationships with others, regardless of how hybrid working might evolve, organisations can create an experience that makes for much healthier and happier employees.

By continuously reviewing and re-designing these three areas in a way that truly involves your employees; identifies the moments that matter most to them; and uses a holistic, cross-functional mindset; you will end up with a future-proofed EX that is tailored to the unique qualities of your organisation and its people.

LUCY COX

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Looking Beyond the Job Description:

Embracing Roles with Fuzzy Edges

by FELICITY WOLFENDEN

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, economic shifts, and changing societal norms, businesses must adapt to new ways of operating in order to stay relevant and continue to attract top talent. With increased uncertainty and need for swift adaptation to stay leaders in their fields, do organisations need to review the 'basics' and start hiring for the new way of doing things?

An area that is receiving an increasing amount of attention is the idea of moving away from traditional job descriptions towards creating more fluid and dynamic roles (1). Will the future of work include a skills-based hiring approach that brings a renewed focus on adaptability? To answer this question, this article will explore what skills-based hiring is, and how it could be used.

Letting go of the traditional job description

For years, the conventional job description has been a staple of recruitment, neatly outlining specific roles, responsibilities, and qualifications. However, these rigid descriptions no longer capture the multifaceted nature of modern work environments and the non-linear career choices that more and more individuals are making.

Traditional nine-to-five office jobs are no longer the sole definition of a successful career. Individuals are increasingly opting for freelance, remote work or gig economy and entrepreneurship roles as viable paths to success. As my colleague Alexandra points out, this trend is driven by the desire for autonomy, work-life balance, and the opportunity to pursue passions and interests. As technology enables greater connectivity and access to global markets, non-traditional career choices offer unprecedented flexibility and the potential for diverse income streams. This evolution reflects a broader shift in how individuals define and create fulfilling careers, reshaping the traditional career trajectory and contributing to the dynamic and complex nature of the modern job market.

The pursuit of passions and interests can lead individuals to take more 'squiggly' career paths to get to a certain point. Gone are the days of individuals sitting in one organisation for 20+ years and gradually working their way up the ranks. With the boom of social media and normalisation of instant gratification, we have become more willing to walk away from an existing role if our needs aren't being met. Consequently, CVs are likely to boast a variety of short-term employment listings, reflecting the pursuit of diverse experiences and passions.

Enter 'skills-based hiring' — an approach that places skills and competencies at the forefront of the recruitment process (2). Rather than pigeonholing candidates into predefined roles, this strategy allows for a more nuanced assessment of candidates' abilities and potential contributions.

In a world where technological innovations drive change at an unprecedented pace, it's no longer feasible to rely solely on the traditional job description to identify suitable candidates. The complex challenges of today's business landscape requires a workforce that possesses both adaptable skills and the ability to collaborate effectively across diverse domains. Skills-based hiring acknowledges the dynamic nature of work and offers a solution that aligns with the needs of the modern organisation.

Skills-based hiring is not about disregarding experience or expertise. Instead, it acknowledges that skills are transferable and adaptable to various contexts. For instance, a candidate with exceptional problem-solving skills could excel in roles ranging from project management to customer service. By placing a greater emphasis on skills, organisations can tap into a broader talent pool and increase the chances of finding individuals who possess the right capabilities for the job, regardless of their previous job titles.

This approach also encourages candidates to showcase their unique strengths and potential contributions. When candidates are evaluated based on their skills rather than fitting a predetermined mould, diversity of thought and experience are naturally embraced. This not only enhances creativity and innovation, but also contributes to a more inclusive work environment that values individuality and diverse perspectives.

"Skills-based hiring is not about disregarding experience or expertise. Instead, it acknowledges that skills are transferable and adaptable to various contexts. For instance, a candidate with exceptional problem-solving skills could excel in roles ranging from project management to customer service"

The rise of fluid, fuzzy roles

An essential aspect of this approach is the willingness to redefine roles based on skill sets (3). Rather than confining employees to rigid job descriptions, organisations can create roles with fluid, fuzzy edges that allow for growth and adaptation. This flexibility encourages employees to develop new skills, explore their interests, and take on responsibilities that align with their strengths. In turn, this nurtures a culture of learning, collaboration, and innovation - key ingredients for future success.

By encouraging employees to step outside the boundaries of their defined roles, organisations foster a sense of ownership and empowerment. Employees are more likely to take initiative, propose innovative solutions, and seek out opportunities for professional development when they're not confined to a predefined box. This not only benefits individual growth but also contributes to the overall agility and resilience of the organisation.

Central to this shift is the adoption of skills-based approaches. Rather than relying solely on a predetermined job description, the emphasis shifts to understanding the core objectives and outcomes of the role. Fuzzy edged roles are created collaboratively with input from both hiring managers and prospective candidates which promotes flexibility and allows candidates to shape their contributions based on their strengths.

Furthermore, focusing on individuals' strengths encourages them to leverage their innate talents and develop new skills that complement their strengths. This approach encourages individuals to foster a growth mindset, wherein employees are empowered to embrace challenges, learn from failures, and continuously improve. As organisations recognise and harness the unique strengths of their workforce, they create a positive feedback loop of development and achievement.

The benefits of a strengths-based approach

While skills frameworks provide a foundation, it's important to leave ample space for candidates to make their own impact. A skills-based approach has the potential to significantly impact employee engagement and job satisfaction. When employees feel that their strengths are valued and utilised, they experience a greater sense of purpose and fulfilment in their roles. This, in turn, contributes to higher levels of motivation, productivity, and overall well-being.

In the age of automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI), the dynamics of work are changing rapidly. Rather than fearing displacement, organisations can leverage technology to enhance productivity and creativity. Collaborating with automation tools could allow employees to offload repetitive tasks, freeing up their time for higher-value activities that require human ingenuity. Skills-based hiring would ensure that employees possess the cognitive and emotional skills necessary to work synergistically with technology.

As organisations integrate automation and AI into their workflows, employees will increasingly be called upon to collaborate with these tools. This requires not only technical skills but also the ability to adapt to changing technologies and integrate them seamlessly into their work. Skills-based hiring, with its focus on adaptability and cognitive skills, ensures that employees are well-equipped to thrive in this evolving landscape.
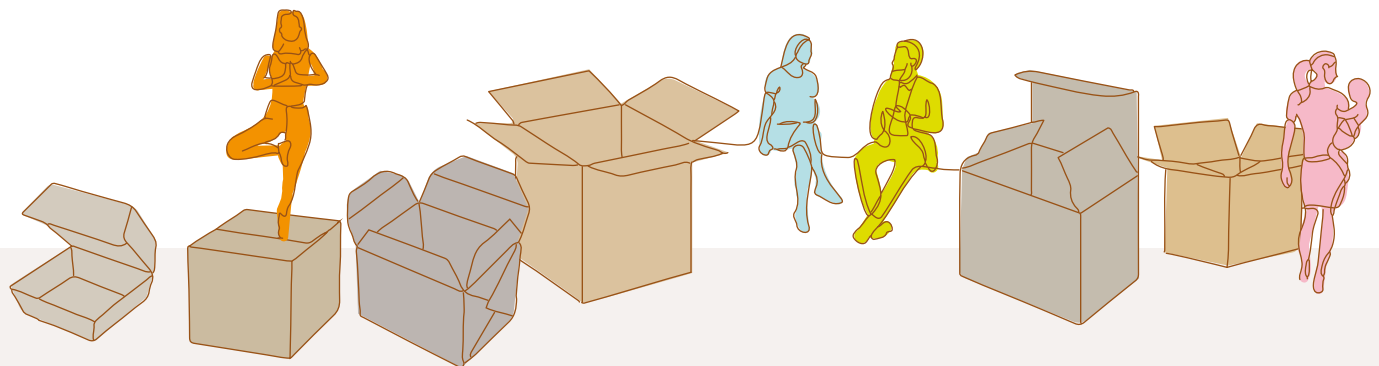
In it together

The psychological contract between employees and the organisation is built on mutual expectations and trust. In a skills-based hiring model, it's crucial to communicate clearly about the organisation's expectations, the role's objectives, and the autonomy that candidates will have to contribute in ways that align with their strengths. Transparency from the outset helps establish a strong foundation for a positive psychological contract, fostering employee engagement and commitment.

To attract candidates to roles during recruitment, organisations should emphasise the opportunity for candidates to make a meaningful impact and contribute their unique strengths. Highlighting the organisation's commitment to fostering individual growth, collaboration, and innovation will appeal to candidates who are motivated by personal development and the chance to align their strengths with the organisation's goals.
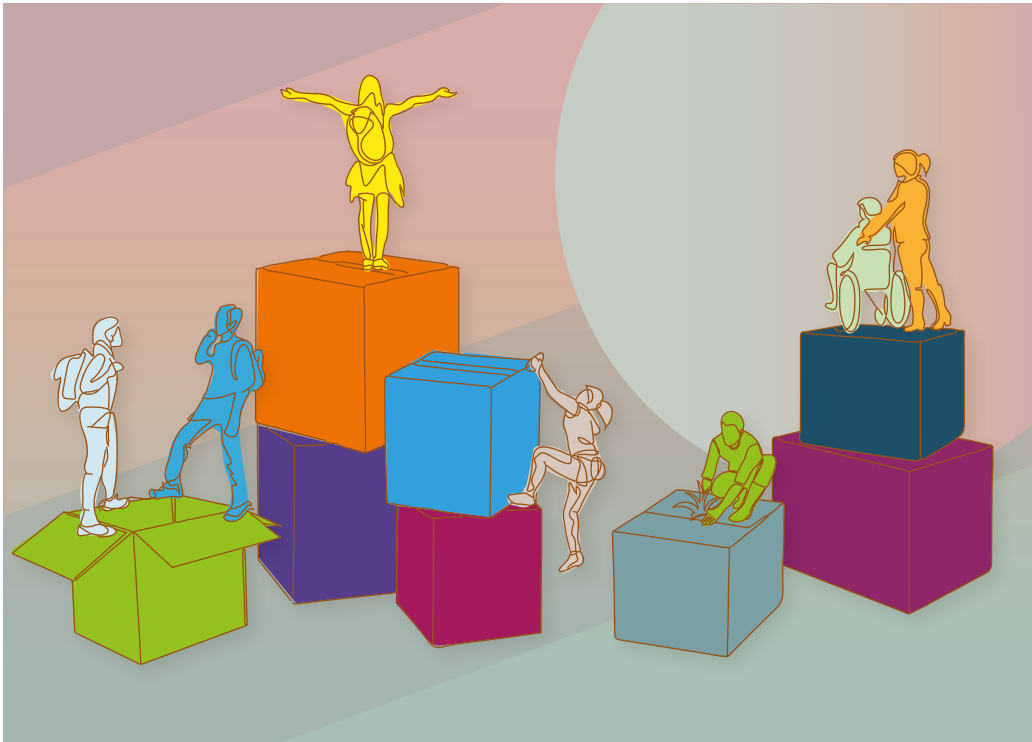
"A skills-based approach reduces bias in recruitment by focusing on skills and competencies rather than predetermined qualifications or experience. By emphasising individual strengths and diverse skill sets, organisations create opportunities for a more inclusive workforce"

A skills-based approach reduces bias in recruitment by focusing on skills and competencies rather than predetermined qualifications or experience. By emphasising individual strengths and diverse skill sets, organisations create opportunities for a more inclusive workforce. Additionally, skills assessments and interactive interviews provide candidates with the chance to showcase their capabilities first-hand, minimising biases that can arise from unconscious assumptions.

In a skills-based model, clear lines of accountability are crucial to ensure that objectives are met and responsibilities are well-defined. While candidates have the flexibility to shape their roles, it's important to establish regular check-ins, performance reviews, and ongoing feedback mechanisms. This maintains alignment with organisational goals while allowing for the fluidity needed to leverage strengths effectively.

Putting it into practice

To successfully transition to a skills-based approach, organisations need to invest in:

- **Skills Analysis**: Identify the skills needed for current and future roles within your organisation and update your skills framework accordingly. Consider the skills that enable employees to excel in a rapidly changing environment.
- **Learning and Development**: Invest in continuous learning and development programmes to upskill and reskill employees. This ensures that they remain equipped to tackle emerging challenges.
- **Talent Pipeline Development**: Create and cultivate a pipeline of talent by focusing on the development and growth of employees. This can lead to a more engaged and loyal workforce.
- **Communication and Transparency**: Clearly communicate your organisation's shift towards skill-based hiring and flexible roles. This transparency helps candidates and employees understand your forward-looking approach.
- **Feedback**: Facilitate regular check-ins with individuals, and create a feedback culture.

As the world continues to evolve, the ability to hire for skills and build-in flexibility will remain key to thriving in the years to come. This shift not only ensures the continued relevance of organisations but also empowers employees to contribute their best, adapt to change, and embrace the challenges and opportunities of the ever-changing world of work. Organisations that embrace this move towards skills-based hiring will be better equipped to navigate uncertainty, adapt to changing circumstances, and foster a culture of innovation.

FELICITY WOLFENDEN
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She specialises in individual and team development and is passionate about empowering people to leverage their unique and collective strengths. Felicity has a particular interest in coaching, skill development, personality interactions and decision-making processes. She is the Programme Director for OE Cam's Unlocking Women's Leadership Potential programme and a guest lecturer at the University of Cambridge.

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What to Expect for Your Future Career

by **ALEXANDRA SHOOBERT**

Squiggly Careers

The traditional ladder-like career is now less prevalent, with many people moving sideways to a similar industry sector or re-training to move to a different field altogether. Careers are likely to become increasingly less linear and more 'squiggly' (1) in the future.

The employment landscape will change in ways we can't yet predict and with a greater pace of change, it is more difficult to make a long-term career plan. So, what should our expectations be for our careers? And what should we be doing to prepare ourselves for the future of work?

"what should our expectations be for our careers? And what should we be doing to prepare ourselves for the future of work?"
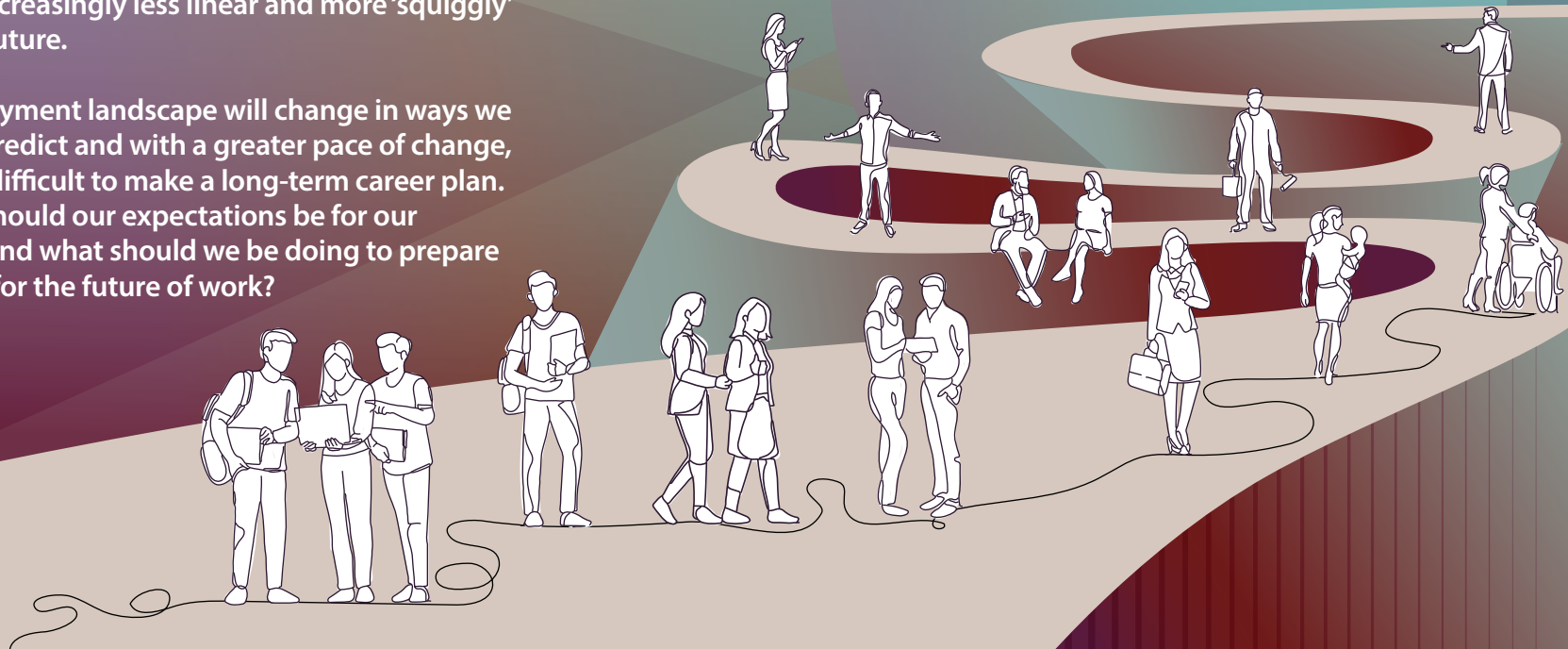
Why do our careers mean so much to us?

It's important to understand what we gain from a career. Of course, most of us require a regular income and a certain level of job security, but beyond that, we also have psychological needs to fulfil.

Below are some of the most important psychological needs we look to fulfil at work (2). Consider how you might rate these in order of their importance to you personally:

- **Meaning and purpose** – we want to feel our work is valuable and that we are contributing to something larger than ourselves
- **Achievement and recognition** - we want to feel we have accomplished something and we are appreciated for our efforts. We seek opportunities for growth and advancement
- **Autonomy and control** – we want to have a say in how we do our work and feel empowered to make decisions
- **Competence and mastery** – the opportunity to enhance our skills and expertise
- **Social connection and belonging** – humans are social and we have a need for belonging in the workplace. Positive relationships with colleagues and a supportive work environment are important
- **Work-life balance** – time for personal pursuits, family, friends and leisure activities are important
- **Fairness and equity** – we need to be treated fairly, without discrimination or bias.

Which of the needs above were the most important for you? Does your current role fulfil those needs? Meeting these needs contributes to a fulfilling career, but one job alone may not meet all of these needs sufficiently. Of course, you can also fulfil some of these needs outside of work.

A less traditional way of meeting more psychological needs is to develop a 'portfolio' career. This could include a mix of a few days a week of paid work with an employer, some self-employed work and some voluntary or NED work, in the same, or a different field. Other benefits of this approach are variety and interest and spreading the risk of relying on one employer. Portfolio careers are also potentially more flexible, allowing for a better work-life balance.
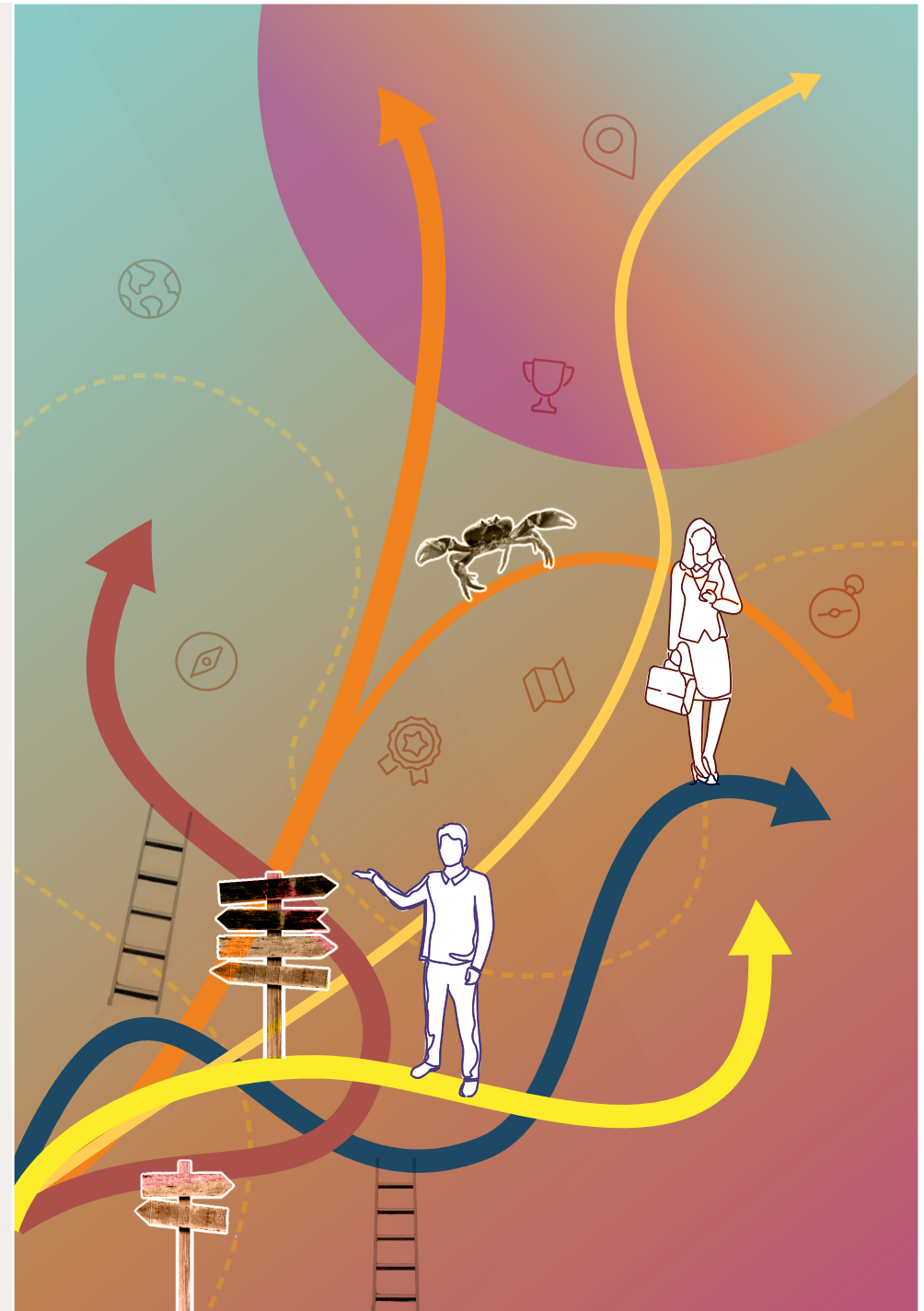
The 100 year life - what will living longer mean for work?

"*The 100-Year Life*" (3) by Lynda Gratton and Andrew J. Scott explores how we might need to restructure our lives as we are now all living longer. We will either need to work beyond the 'expected' retirement age or manage on a smaller pension when we retire. Gratton & Scott predict a multi-stage life in which we have two or three different careers. At some points we could work long hours and maximise our earnings, at other points we may balance work with raising a family.

You might consider spending more time experimenting and trying different roles before investing in qualifications. With a longer career it will be even more important to keep upskilling.

Career breaks will perhaps become more common for those who can afford to take them. Rather than working until retirement and then having all your time off at the end of your career, it might make sense to take shorter sabbaticals to travel, study or pursue other interests.

"There is no doubt that whatever age we are, we will have to stay adaptable for the rest of our working lives. Life-long learning will be key and we might study and re-train at several points in our careers"

Embracing squiggly careers

This is an exciting opportunity to adjust our idea of careers from a linear path in a specific field to something potentially more interesting.

We may need to make more sideways moves to broaden our experience or consider portfolio careers or self-employment. Our career plans will need to be flexible and require regular review and reflection. We will need to keep up to date with changes in our industry and be proactive about exploring opportunities and using our transferable skills. Changing direction does not mean that you have wasted your previous efforts to learn and progress. The skills and experience from our different roles can combine to give us a unique combination of capabilities.

There is no doubt that whatever age we are, we will have to stay adaptable for the rest of our working lives. Life-long learning will be key and we might study and re-train at several points in our careers. Careers will continue to be self-managed with the onus on the individual to be proactive and undertake training and qualifications. However, if this sounds like hard work, it will also mean a more varied and interesting working life where we have the chance to try many different things and a meet a greater range of people.

To have a successful working life in the future, self-knowledge will be crucial. Rather than deciding on a specific career when we are young, it will be more important to learn about our interests, needs, strengths and values. With this knowledge we can then explore different opportunities which could fulfil these needs and give us a feeling of purpose and progression. We also need to be honest with ourselves about what we want from a career without being swayed by other's opinions or held back by perceived expectations. A successful career does not necessarily mean you have to end up as a CEO, we all have our own definition of success. Our interests and requirements may also change at different stages in our lives.
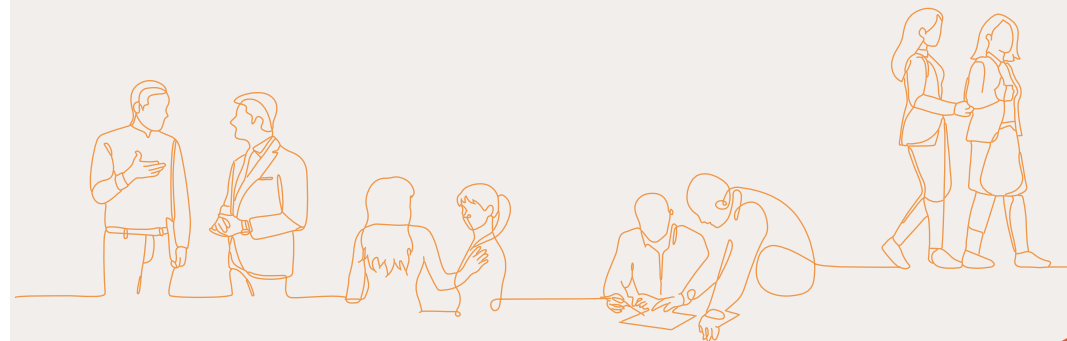
> *"We need to be honest with ourselves about what we want from a career without being swayed by other's opinions or held back by perceived expectations"*

Here are a few additional tips:

- **Be open-minded** - no job is perfect so don't wait for the 100% 'perfect' opportunity to come along
- **Don't focus on finding your 'calling' or 'true purpose'** - not everyone feels like that. But you can still find a career that you enjoy
- **Experiment** - if you try something and it's not quite right for you, it's likely you will have still learned something from the experience and it will help you know what to do next
- **Network** - make connections and keep in touch with people. You never know when you may be able to help each other
- **Build a greater understanding of your own identity** - one that doesn't focus entirely on your career
- **Don't compare yourself to others** - follow your own path!
- **Follow your interests** - if you are not sure what to do next, see where your natural interests lead you: pick up books that look intriguing, speak to people who have interesting sounding jobs and attend events that could be inspiring.

Going back to the psychological needs mentioned earlier, if you want to discuss your future career, it may be worth investing in some executive coaching. OE Cam helps individuals to progress by facilitating self-awareness and honest reflection through 1:1 coaching and psychometrics.

We also deliver workshops such as the 'Unlocking Women's leadership Potential' Programme which includes modules in discovering your authentic leadership style:
https://www.oecam.com/unlocking-womens-leadership-potential/

For a discussion about how to embrace squiggly careers, please email Alexandra at
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ALEXANDRA SHOOBERT
Alexandra brings expertise in leadership development and team dynamics. As a Business Psychologist, she has more than 20 year's experience advising and coaching. Her strength is her ability to simplify complex issues; supporting Boards and senior teams to explore challenges from different perspectives and feel more confident in making decisions to improve both individual and team effectiveness.

Prior to joining OE Cam, Alexandra worked in a variety of both in-house and consulting roles across multiple sectors. She has also lectured in business strategy at the University of Hertfordshire and was previously an Investors in People practitioner.

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AI: Get Ready to Move Fast and Not Break Things

by **JODIE HUGHES**

Throughout history, humanity has witnessed a remarkable progression of technological advancements that have shaped the world we live in today. From the discovery of fire to the development of complex artificial intelligence systems, each milestone has propelled us forward, revolutionising the way we communicate, work, and navigate our daily lives.

Let me take you on a journey through time, tracing the timeline of tech advances and human pursuit of innovation that continues to drive our society forward.
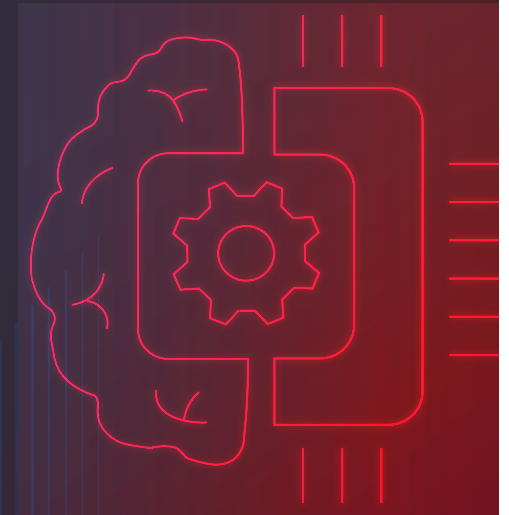
TELEPHONE

Invention of telephone revolutionised communication

But… Concerns about privacy invasion, loss of face-to-face communication & social disruption. People feared the contents of the line would 'spill out' & many refused to use a telephone out of fear of electric shock.

AUTOMOBILE REVOLUTION

Mass production and widespread adoption of cars

But… Fear of job displacement (horse-drawn carriage industry), concerns about safety & environmental impact. Also social disruption – fear of erosion of traditional communities.

ELECTRONIC CALCULATORS

Introduction of electronic calculators into schools

But… Parents & teachers believed it would diminish abilities of mental arithmetic. Maths teachers had previously protested them, out of fear of them destroying learning basic mental maths skills, they were considered a danger to learning.

INTERNET & E-COMMERCE

The internet transformed global communication, the way we shop & access to information

But… Apprehension about online privacy, death of the High Street shop, fear of misinformation & cybercrime, concerns about social isolation, digital divide – some areas lack internet connectivity so increasing societal inequality.

AUTOMATION AND AI

Advancements in automation and artificial intelligence technologies

But… Apprehension about online privacy, fear of misinformation & cybercrime, concerns about social isolation, digital divide – some areas lack internet connectivity so increasing societal inequality.
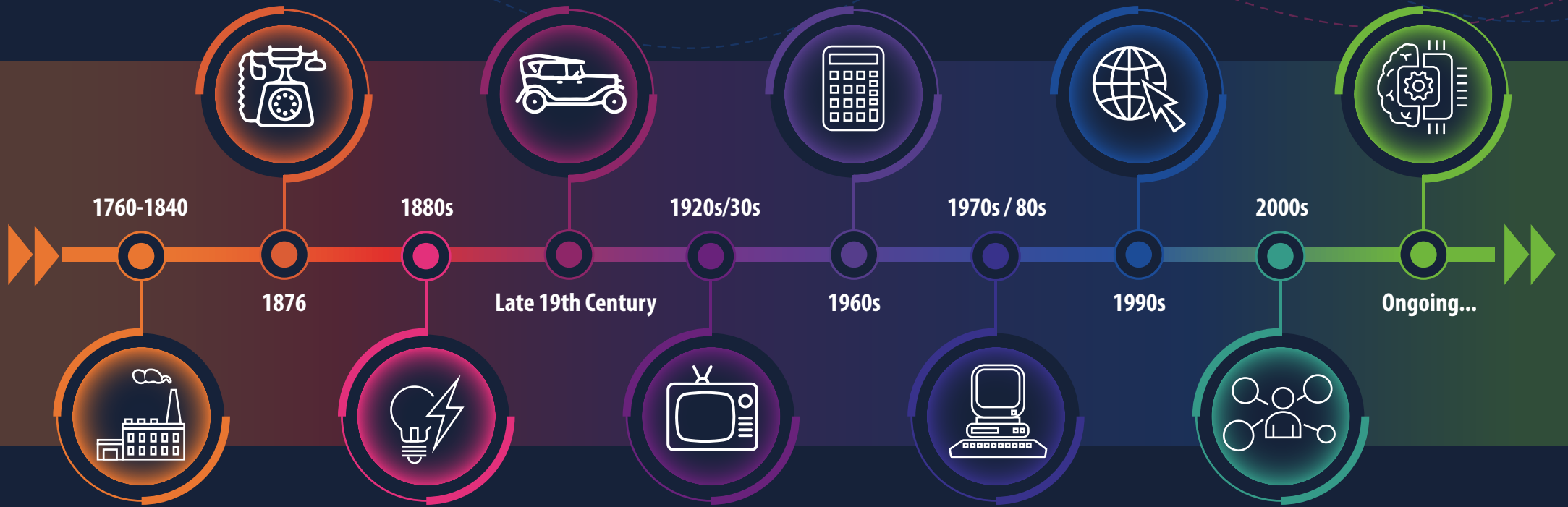
1760-1840

1876

1880s

Late 19th Century

1920s/30s

1960s

1970s / 80s

1990s

2000s

Ongoing…

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Introduction of mechanisation and factory systems

But… Fear of job displacement, exploitation of workers & social unrest. Urbanisation raised concerns around overcrowding & sanitation issues.

ELECTRICITY

Widespread adoption of electricity for lighting, communication and industrial processes

But… Uncertainty about the safety & control of electricity, health fears, resistance to change, fear around becoming dependent on it, concerns with extended work hours negatively impacting sleep.

TELEVISION

Introduction of a new form of mass communication and entertainment

But… Considered a concept of lunacy & a luxury for only the wealthy. Safety fears (damaged from the rays within the TV), societal concerns (social isolation, loss of productivity).

PERSONAL COMPUTERS

Introduction of affordable personal computers

But… Uncertainty about the impact on employment, fears of technology-dependent society, concerns over privacy & security.

RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Emergence of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

But… Issues of online harassment, data privacy concerns, spread of misinformation & fake news, addiction & mental health concerns.

Upon reflecting on the timeline of tech advances, we recognise the fears and concerns that accompanied each milestone. And if we're to believe Elon Musk's comments at the 2023 AI Safety Summit, GenAI is one of the greatest existential threats to humanity! (2).

Yet, history has shown that humanity possesses an extraordinary capacity to adapt and to overcome these fears, leveraging technology for positive change. By embracing curiosity, fostering understanding, and cultivating a mindset of adaptability, we can understand the fear and confidently navigate the ever-evolving landscape of technology. While AI could be seen as just the next technological advancement in our timeline, the unprecedented opportunities for efficiency, innovation, and competitive advantage, means that organisations need to be prepared for a far more *seismic* shift.

The UK AI market is already worth nearly £17 billion, and is expected to grow to over £800 billion by 2035 (3) and AI has gained such widespread prominence that Collins Dictionary named AI as the 2023 Word of the Year. But the change is only just beginning. According to Gartner, GenAI is at the 'peak of inflated expectations' in the emerging technologies hype cycle (4) which means we're seeing a lot of media hype but not all companies are taking action yet…

"While AI could be seen as just the next technological advancement in our timeline, the unprecedented opportunities for efficiency, innovation, and competitive advantage, means that organisations need to be prepared for a far more seismic shift"

So why not?

Organisations recognise that GenAI is much more than a mere integration of new technologies into existing business processes. Instead, it necessitates a holistic approach that will fundamentally transform the entire organisation; disrupting business models, redefining roles and responsibilities accompanied by a shift in leadership mindset and culture. AI itself has been around for a while. Indeed, back in 2018, my colleague Gary Ashton wrote about the new opportunities arising from a kind of AI called 'deep learning' for Repurposing, Augmentation & Productivity (RAP) – prompting leaders to think about the far-reaching organisational consequences. And the principles still stand today. Rather than fearing mass job losses, leaders need to explore the opportunities of repurposing and redesign; considering how AI can augment human capabilities, freeing up employee time to focus on higher-value tasks that require creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence.
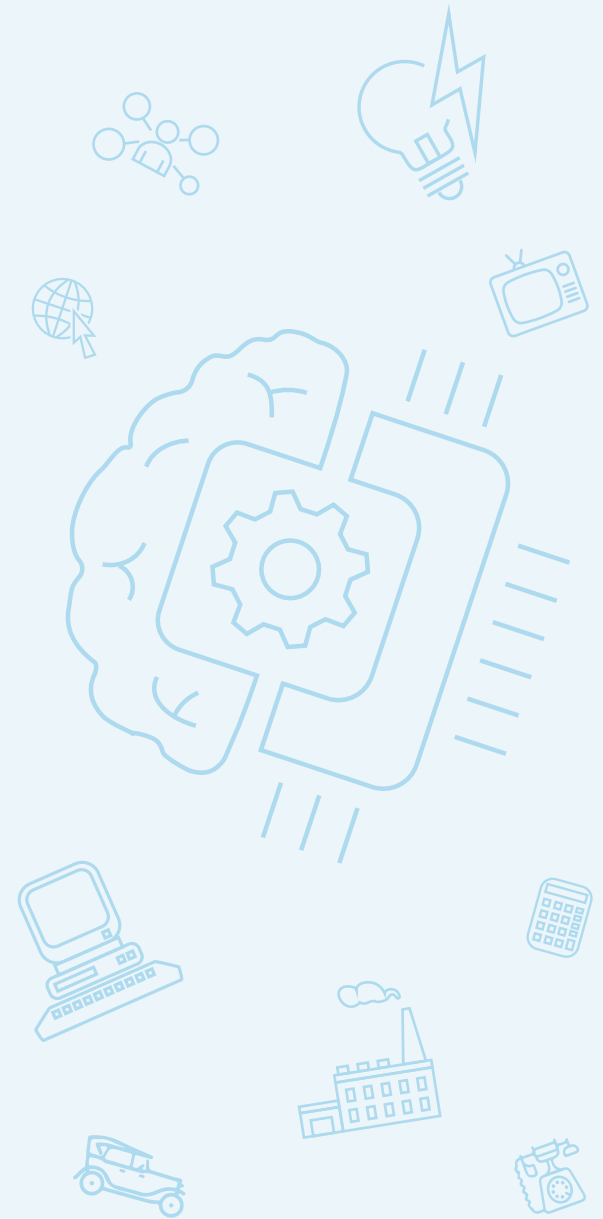
The big question now is, how can your organisation prepare for such seismic change? (when speed is important but much of the detail of the change is unknown!).

"*Move fast and break things*" was Zuckerberg's mantra to drive success in a digital age. However, given the recent establishment of an international AI Safety Summit, some of the potential risks are very real so perhaps now it's more a case of moving fast and *not* breaking things?

In our experience, a useful first step for leadership teams to navigate such transformational, ambiguous change is to '**Go on AI Safari**'. This is a workshop where we can facilitate discussions around the art of the possible and help leaders to '**see the future now**'. We explore the opportunities by leveraging our network to visit businesses or start-ups that are already working on AI, in order to accelerate your thinking and develop use cases to simulate real-life potential scenarios.

In our *next* article, we will share our emerging ideas around AI readiness – exploring key change architecture elements such as strategic planning, robust governance, stakeholder engagement, upskilling/reskilling initiatives, and organisational culture.

In the meantime, I leave you with two questions to help think about how ready your organisation is:

1. On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate yourself in terms of your knowledge and confidence using AI?
2. Now, on the same scale, can you think of anyone in your organisation who you'd rate a 7?

How big is the gap?

JODIE HUGHES
Jodie is a Business Psychologist in OE Cam's Talent Management practice. She has a keen interest in understanding the role individual differences play in the workplace; specifically how strengths, weaknesses and preferences impact the way people work individually and as part of a team. She applies a broad variety of psychometrics with her clients and is experienced in designing and facilitating leadership development to enable individuals to work more effectively.

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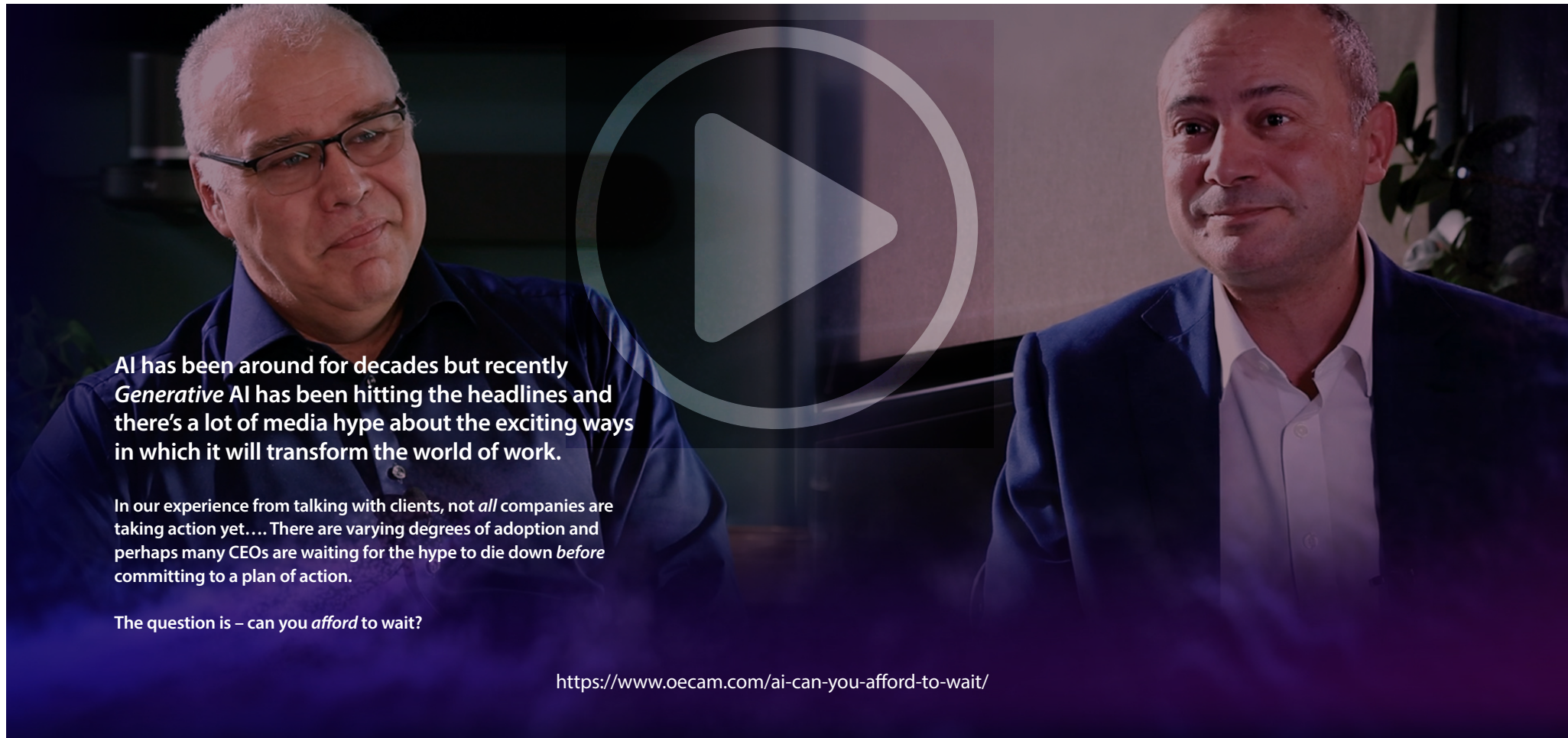
AI: Can You Afford to Wait?

PAOLO MOSCUZZA *interviews* **CLIVE WHITE**

AI has been around for decades but recently *Generative* AI has been hitting the headlines and there's a lot of media hype about the exciting ways in which it will transform the world of work.

In our experience from talking with clients, not *all* companies are taking action yet…. There are varying degrees of adoption and perhaps many CEOs are waiting for the hype to die down *before* committing to a plan of action.

The question is – can you *afford* to wait?

https://www.oecam.com/ai-can-you-afford-to-wait/

As part of our **Future of Work** series, Paolo Moscuzza met Clive White, an expert in leading strategic tech-enabled, business transformation. Paolo and Clive first worked together on one such transformation – Clive was leading on the tech aspects of the change and OE Cam was assessing and developing leadership capability. As CEO of Hyperforma, Clive has worked with many Executive teams to navigate disruptive technologies. He believes that CEOs need to take action now and 'Get Curious' about GenAI and begin a process of managed experimentation…

In this video interview, Paolo talks to Clive about Gen AI and the potential organisational implications. What new roles might be created and what does that mean for the Executive team power dynamic? What are the 'watchouts' and what should leadership teams be doing now to navigate the complex change ahead?

"Firstly, everyone needs to get a bit closer to the technology – not to become experts, but get curious about the technology, what does it mean for you… your organisation and what does it mean for your customers?"

In this video interview, Paolo talks to Clive about Gen AI and the potential organisational implications. What new roles might be created and what does that mean for the Executive team power dynamic? What are the 'watchouts' and what should leadership teams be doing now to navigate the complex change ahead?

This video is 13 minutes long – for those in a hurry, fast forward to 11mins 20 seconds where Paolo asks the final question "*Looking ahead to the next five years, what one piece of advice would you give to leadership teams facing another period of significant disruption?*"

We hope you enjoy this video. If you find it useful, please share with colleagues via social media.

For more information about how OE Cam & Hyperperforma work with Executive teams to navigate tech-driven transformation, please contact us using the form below.

Further reading – Clive references a white paper from the World Economic Forum "Jobs of Tomorrow" which explores the impact of GenAI (in particular Large Language Models) on jobs. To read the full report click here: **https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Jobs_of_Tomorrow_Generative_AI_2023.pdf**

PAOLO MOSCUZZA, PARTNER

Paolo Moscuzza is a Chartered Psychologist, Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a registered coaching Psychologist. He has over 20 years experience of assessing and developing the capability of leaders and he heads up OE Cam's Leadership Development practice. Paolo is a former winner of 'HR Management Consultant of the Year' as featured in the Sunday Times and his approach has been described as "fresh, energetic and innovative".

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CLIVE WHITE - CEO, HYPERFORMA

Clive White is an expert in leading strategic, tech-enabled business transformation. He is both a strategic thinker and practical, commercial operator with a deep understanding of technology and great skills in building high-performing leadership teams. With a 30-year track record in operating across multiple sectors at the most senior level, he is a resilient leader with huge reserves of energy to galvanise teams to deliver sustainable change.

Clive has a BSc. (Hons) in Computer Science, an MBA from Bath University and is an Executive Doctoral student (EDBA) at the Ecoles des Pont, Business School (Paris), researching leadership and digital transformation in a technology-disrupted world. Clive also holds certificated accreditation in Strategy Execution from London Business School and in Future Commerce (Crypto & Blockchain), Digital Markets and Applied Generative AI from the prestigious MIT.

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Realising your Sustainability Ambitions:
Identifying the Enablers & Blockers of Success

by **GARY ASHTON** & **MIKE THACKRAY**

It's an exciting time for the Sustainability movement.

Previously, many sustainability experts operated on the periphery, but now there's a real shift to embed sustainability across the entire business and take a more systems-wide approach to delivering sustainability targets.

Exciting times indeed … and yet there's a common underlying tension around delivering on ESG initiatives:

"We are not acting as one team"

"We have our business-as-usual jobs to do, and now we have this to deliver on as well"

"We are spending all our time on reporting, and not enough on delivering"

"ESG regulation is only increasing, and we are not setting ourselves up to be ready for this"

In our experience, the frequent themes are:

- Frustration about slow progress towards sustainability ambitions
- Anxiety about not delivering on publicly stated goals
- Feeling like the organisation hasn't yet got a grip of both delivering its short-term profits *and* at the same time delivering on the long-term sustainability goals.

The root cause to these feelings is often that the organisation hasn't yet fully defined their ESG ambition as a transformational change programme. The UK's Transition Planning Taskforce has now published its Disclosure Framework; whilst the focus to date has been on reporting metrics, the emphasis now is all about taking action – moving from 'Ambition' to 'Action' through to 'Accountability' through an iterative process.

This will require:

- The **change architecture** to ensure the ESG plan is clear and integrated, with all the resources it needs
- The **senior leaders** actively supporting the sustainability goals and visibly tackling the big trade-offs needed to make progress
- The organisation being **culturally ready** and wanting to deliver on its ambitions
- The people having the right **capabilities and capacity** to deliver all that needs to be done.

Critical to success will be **cross-functional collaboration** and an ability for leaders to think across the short, medium *and* long-term at the same time. It requires a bias for action. To be bold, to make critical trade-off decisions between sustainability and business as usual goals, thinking in agile ways and a culture that supports working with complexity, uncertainty and potentially conflicting objectives.

As plans get underway, it will be important for leaders to quickly and continuously assess the progress of key indicators towards sustainability goals across the ESG system and identify and address enablers & blockers for success.

Within that context, OE Cam has developed a **Sustainability Success Indicators Framework** (see model).

PEOPLE

- Shared responsibility towards Sustainability
- Sustainability knowledge & skills
- Attract & retain the right talent
- Performance management includes sustainability targets
- Collaboration across functions
- People development to support Sustainability

LEADERSHIP

- Champion delivery of Sustainability targets
- Trusted to do the right thing
- Have appropriate Sustainability knowledge & skills
- Thinking, Influencing, Adapting & Delivering competencies
- Demonstrate resilience in delivering the Sustainability goals

CHANGE ARCHITECTURE

- Scale of change understood
- Measurable environmental & social targets are integrated into the business plan
- Plan & capability to measure, deliver & communicate
- Compatible structures & clarity of accountability
- Aligned incentives & rewards
- Barriers identified & addressed

CULTURE

- Transparency of communication
- Colleagues can articulate the Sustainability vision
- Demonstrable signs of commitment
- Continuous recognition of Sustainability progress
- Sustainability innovation prioritised & encouraged
- A history of delivering the required level of change
- People able to balance delivering both BAU & Sustainability innovation

SUSTAINABILITY SUCCESS INDICATORS

Diagram 1: OE Cam's Sustainability Success Indicators Framework

Our framework has four pillars which cover the key areas needed to have a solid foundation for achieving sustainability goals.

We start by working with you to **establish the degree of change required** for your organisation to achieve its ESG ambition; are you embarking on a transformational change that fundamentally shifts the way in which the organisation operates, or is the plan for more *incremental* improvements?

1. **Change Architecture:** how does your organisational structure support your sustainability goals? How are your individual and team targets and rewards aligned? How do you balance short and longer-term goals? How do you make trade-offs between all your strategic goals, including ESG? Does it have the capacity for the level of change required?
2. **Leadership:** Do leaders have the right skills and attitude to support and deliver their ESG targets? Do they champion Sustainability?
3. **Culture:** To what extent are your people engaged with your sustainability goals? How do people know that sustainability is important? Is your organisation used to such levels of change?
4. **People:** Do you know what skills and knowledge are required? What development activities help support the goals? How effective are you in recruiting the new types of talent required? How will you ensure that the new talent will be accepted rather than rejected by the organisation?

We use this framework to help you understand the interconnected elements of the system and **assess the enablers and blockers in delivering your sustainability goals**. Insights from interviews and focus groups will inform recommendations that build on your strengths and address any areas for development in order to realise your sustainability ambitions.

For more information about OE Cam's services to support Sustainability ambitions, please contact:

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GARY ASHTON, PARTNER

Gary is a Partner at OE Cam and leads the Organisation Development practice. With over 25 years' experience in delivering transformational change, he facilitates senior leadership teams to think through organisational challenges with a particular focus on operating models, sustainability and power dynamics.

His area of deep expertise is understanding 'where people meets process'; balancing the hard with the soft elements of organisation development. He draws on this perspective to lead projects such as the re-design and implementation of organisation structures, organisation reviews, cultural change and improving cross-functional working to drive progress of sustainability ambitions.

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MIKE THACKRAY

Mike is an experienced Principal Consultant and engaging Occupational Psychologist. He has extensive experience in designing and delivering bespoke solutions around individual and team development, selection and assessment, organisational development and cross-functional collaboration to deliver ESG ambitions.

With more than 20 year's experience, Mike often works with senior leadership teams to develop behavioural frameworks designed to articulate and promote new ways of working, and also diagnosing existing systems and practices to ensure cultural fit.

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OE Cam
DELIVERING ORGANISATION EFFECTIVENESS

Organisation Effectiveness Cambridge (OE Cam LLP) is a specialist firm of business psychologists and organisation consultants who maximise the effectiveness of individuals, teams and organisations.

We believe that organisational effectiveness can only be improved through tackling the 'hard' with the 'soft'. We view your organisation from multiple perspectives – the behavioural, the structural, the cultural and the economic so that we get to the essence of your challenge and deliver bespoke, feasible and sustainable solutions.

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Talent Management

- Executive Assessment
- Leadership Development
- Executive Coaching
- Team Effectiveness
- Diversity & Inclusion

Organisation Development

- Board Effectiveness
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