

Your definitive guide to

Agile Working

How to create a more agile workplace



Employee Experience | Collaboration | Agility | Activity Based Working | New Ways of Working | Implementation | HR, Facilities & IT | Workspace Strategy | Productivity | Change

Overused words, underused philosophies

Introducing... Agile Working

'Agile' is one of these buzzwords that's so overused these days, you might find yourself cringing a little when you say it out loud.

Yet it's blatantly obvious that our organizations need to be more agile than ever before - in the purest sense of the word. *The ability to move quickly and easily is essential in today's fast-changing landscape.*

If we can't respond and adapt to change, we can't survive. We can't innovate. We can't compete. Darwin wasn't wrong.

The ability to move quickly and easily is the simple definition of agility. Nimbleness. An essential trait when you're faced with obstacles along your quest. Particularly when they're unexpected, or severe, like seismic shifts in culture and technology.

Lack of agility is clearly an undesirable trait. It stands to reason that big, cumbersome, slow-moving organizations are at a distinct disadvantage vs their sprightly competitors.

Typically, the people capable of innovating in inflexible organizations have their wings clipped by hierarchy. They're forced to seek approval from upper echelons before taking action, leaving them paralyzed and disempowered. Lengthy delays mount up, as plans crawl through layers of bureaucracy. It's no surprise that most strategies are out of date by the time they're approved. It's even less surprising that 90% of all strategy ends up in the bin, never executed. (Well okay, that is a bit surprising. What a waste!).

The constraints of the classic organization don't end there. For one thing, we love to build teams

based on departments. This flies in the face of our goals around improving cross-functional collaboration. Not to mention the fact that departmental heads are responsible for pieces of the puzzle that may well fail to fit together. Success in one area can hurt another team's ability to function. CEOs find themselves playing organizational Whac-A-Mole, diverting their attention away from their true mission.

Old school workplaces seldom feel like one organization. People relate to their own department, but operate in silos, seeing challenges and opportunities from a worm's eye view.

Agile organizations, on the other hand, are all about autonomy and freedom. This equates to doing things with speed and ease. Or that's the idea, anyway. In reality, few organizations can lay claim to agility. For some, it's something that happens in the IT or R&D department. It's a set of quirky software development processes. Or something just for tech startups.

In truth, all organizations can increase agility. It's a road that never ends: we can always move faster. We can always make things easier. We can always reduce friction.

The question is, how? Where do we begin?

My hope is that this guide will provide you with some food for thought and concrete ideas to get you moving in a more agile direction.



Jane Young, Smartway2

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An introduction to

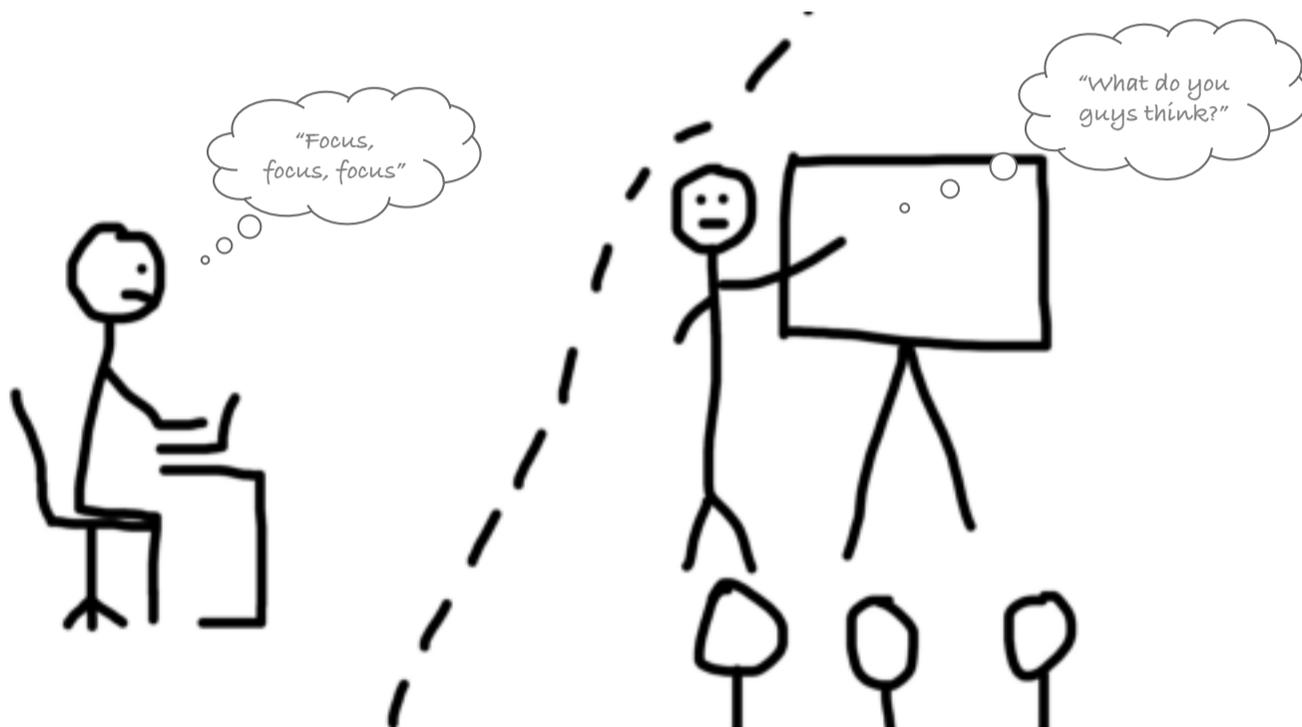
agile working



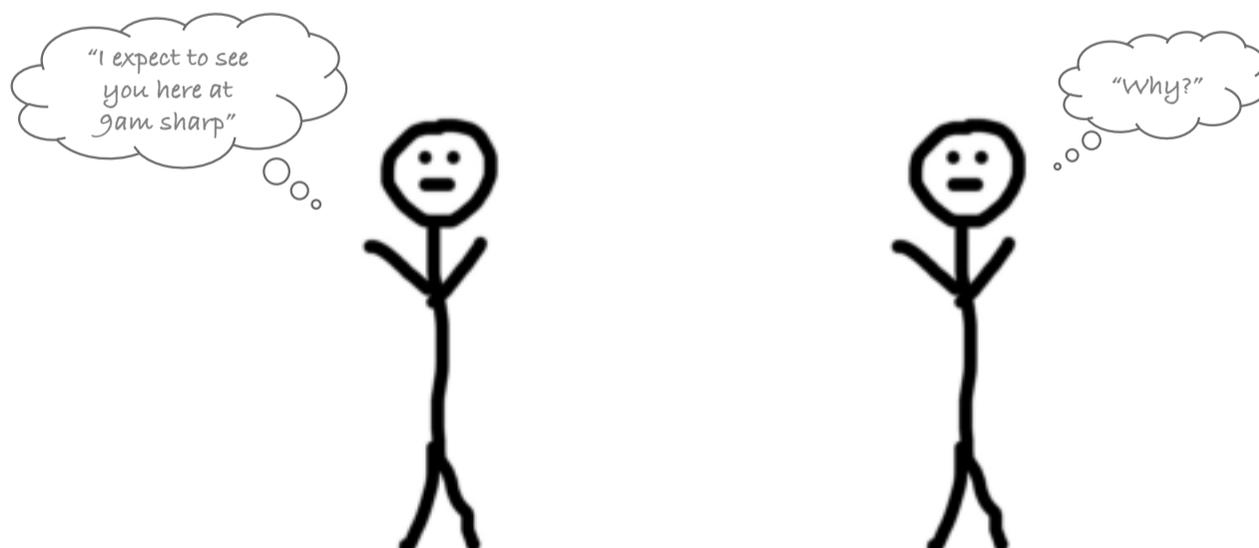
The rise of agile working

A new age of autonomy

As the stuff we're doing changes, our workplaces need to become more flexible.



And the smart people doing all this new stuff expect more autonomy than ever before.



The challenge is on for leaders to create lightweight, sustainable workplaces that adapt to fast-changing needs. Traditionally we've grown used to big office buildings set up for a fixed use, perhaps with cubicles, individual offices or an open plan layout. The workplace of the future can't be so unwieldy. The penny has well and truly dropped that we need to cater for a wider range of preferences and encourage collaboration between diverse groups of people. That means flexible spaces that mix up different layouts. In other words, Activity Based Working (AWB): workplace design that optimizes our spaces for various tasks that employees are working on.

Providing a variety of spaces and services to employees on-demand, from anywhere, is becoming the new normal. Our **people expect to be able to book meeting rooms, desks, equipment, catering and more, wherever they are, 24/7.**

Agile working extends beyond the space itself, into the realms of workplace culture. It's about giving people freedom to choose where and when they work. It's a philosophy that focuses on results and giving individuals the flexibility they need to achieve them however they see fit.

In an agile working environment you'll typically find ABW. For instance you might have a video

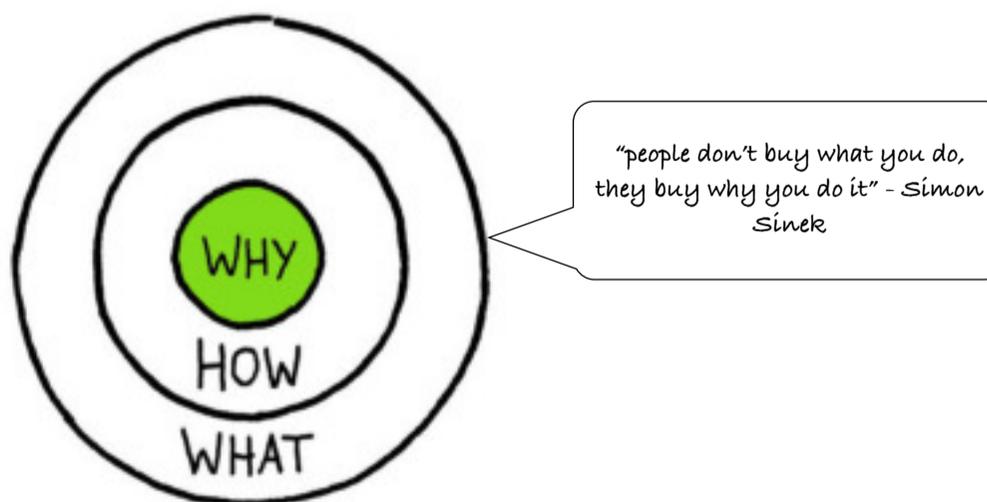
conferencing room equipped with all the latest kit, a brainstorming area with beanbags and whiteboards, a cafe for informal meetings, a boardroom for formal meetings and some private offices or booths where people can make calls in peace. You can also cater for personal preferences, like standing desks.

The agile working philosophy hinges on allowing people greater autonomy than ever before. Dan Pink famously showed us that **autonomy** is one of three things that motivates humans, more so than money. The other two are **mastery** and **purpose**. Flexible working, where employees can choose to come in late and work late, or otherwise mix up their hours, is one way to increase autonomy. Working remotely is another, whether in public cafes, members' clubs, shared office spaces, or at home.

It's no coincidence that organizations are focusing heavily on **mastery** too: up-skilling, learning-by-doing and creating learning cultures...

...and **purpose**: clarity of vision, values, beliefs, the power of 'why' that Simon Sinek describes so eloquently...

The search is on for the optimum means of motivating our people to do the best work of



their lives. All this while faced with a sharp rise in mental health problems that's costing the global economy \$1 trillion.

Autonomous, agile cultures rely on trust, so recruiting the right people and supporting them with the tools and training they need to thrive is essential.

"Great companies don't hire skilled people and motivate them, they hire already motivated people and inspire them." - Simon Sinek

Agile working is a big pull for top talent and improves retention, as smart people expect more freedom than ever before. Get it right and you can create a highly engaged workforce, while reducing real estate costs and operating more sustainably. Studies show that organizations can bring down the need for office space by up to 30% by adopting agile working practices.

To make agile working succeed, organizations need to make sure the employee experience is seamless. Wherever and whenever people choose to work, they need secure access to files and the ability to book the spaces and things they need via the cloud.

In the main, it's not a technology challenge that work is facing today. It's a human, psychology challenge. The technology exists and is relatively straightforward to implement. Humans, on the other hand, are far trickier and slower to change. This kind of culture shift isn't such a big deal for startups and SMBs, but it's a tall order for larger organizations transitioning

from a traditional set-up. Facilities, HR and IT play an important part in steering the oil tanker.

Agile working is often confused with Activity Based Working (ABW). Agile working is the practice of increasing autonomy by enabling employees to work how, where and when they choose; whereas activity based working refers to the provision of different spaces in the workplace to enable this.

In an ABW environment, people don't have a fixed desk. Rather they hot-desk, choosing a desk each morning when they arrive at work, depending on what suits them that particular day. Some prefer office hoteling, where desks, rooms and other facilities can be booked in advance.

By applying design thinking, you can work out which activity based areas employees need, then come up with creative solutions to test out, such as some spaces that encourage deep, uninterrupted focus and others than encourage planned serendipity, where ideas are sparked and relationships formed through chance meetings.

An important consideration when designing a more agile workplace is understanding which platforms people should be able to book resources from, e.g. Outlook, touch screens, desk panels, meeting room displays and mobile apps (hint: it's an omni-channel world, so the answer is 'all of them'). Then there's the question of how you'll track data like utilization and no-shows (hint: ask us!).

So let's start at the beginning, by exploring some alternative definitions of agile working; and its roots in software development.

What does it all mean?

Definitions of 'agile working'

It seems like everyone is talking about 'agile working' these days, from HR and Facilities, to IT and Corporate Real Estate.

Since the Agile Manifesto was born in 2001, software teams have slowly but surely embraced agile development methods to improve the success rate of their projects.

Before this, they were overburdened by excessive bureaucracy and documentation that slowed down the development process and demotivated product teams.

The Agile Manifesto adheres to the following principles:

- *Individuals and interactions* over processes and tools

- *Working software* over comprehensive documentation
- *Customer collaboration* over contract negotiation
- *Responding to change* over following a plan

In more recent years, agile methods have extended beyond our tech teams. These days we often talk about the need for our entire organization to be 'more agile'. One way to achieve this is by embracing agile working.

But what does agile working really mean?

There are endless definitions. Here are just a few...

"Agile working is an approach to getting work done with maximum flexibility and minimum constraints. It goes beyond just flexible working or telecommuting and focuses on eliminating the barriers to getting work done efficiently." - Unilever

"Agile working is about bringing people, processes, connectivity and technology, time and place together to find the most appropriate and effective way of working to carry out a particular task. It is working within guidelines (of the task) but without boundaries (of how to achieve it)." - Paul Allsopp, The Agile Organization.

"Agile working is a way of working in which an organization empowers its people to work where, when and how they choose - with maximum flexibility and minimum constraints - to optimize their performance and deliver 'best in class' value and customer service. It uses communications and information technology to enable." - NHS

The birth of 'agile'

Back in February 2001, seventeen software pioneers got together at a ski resort in Utah. They were sick of software projects failing. Overruns and screw-ups were becoming the norm. They were tired of what they called the 'baggage of Dilbertesque' corporations: too much emphasis on process, documentation, contracts and detailed plans.

They called themselves The Agile Alliance. What emerged from that trip was the famous Agile Manifesto:

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
Working software over comprehensive documentation
Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
Responding to change over following a plan

(That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.)

They wanted to, in their words, 'rid themselves of the Dilbert manifestations of make-work and arcane policies.' They talked about freedom from the inanities of corporate life; about the importance of collaboration, of individuals, of interactions, of embracing project changes even late on in development; because change should be a source of competitive advantage.

They believed that these agile approaches scared corporate bureaucrats, 'who are happy pushing process for process's sake', versus trying to do what's best for the customer. They said agility scares the bejeebers out of traditionalists. It leaves them with nowhere to hide.

The 12 Principles of Agile Software

1. Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software.
2. Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage.
3. Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale.
4. Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project.
5. Build projects around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done.
6. The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation.
7. Working software is the primary measure of progress.
8. Agile processes promote sustainable development. The sponsors, developers, and users should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely.
9. Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility.
10. Simplicity - the art of maximizing the amount of work not done - is essential.
11. The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organizing teams.
12. At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly.

Most definitions suggest that agile working is about enabling people to work when, where and how they like, i.e:

- You don't have to come into the office, unless you prefer to, or have a specific reason to do so.
- You are given a goal or task to accomplish, but you aren't told how to approach it. Rather you're free to get things done however and with whomever you like.
- You can choose your own working hours. There's no culture of clock-watching or presenteeism.

What's the big deal?

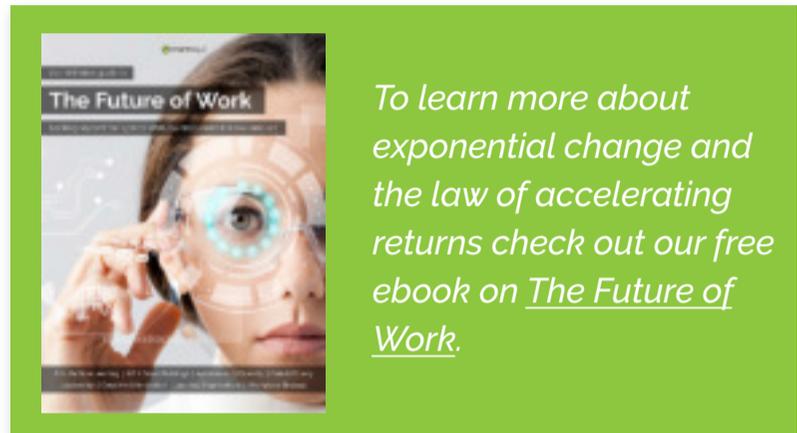
Why agile working matters

In other words, agile working is about giving people *autonomy*. The right to self-govern. Freedom from external control. Independence. Agile working isn't just important. It's inevitable.

The pace of change, spurred on by technological innovation, is accelerating exponentially, according to the law of accelerating returns. Due to the sneaky and counterintuitive nature of exponentiality, the upshot is we are seriously underestimating how drastically things will change in the remainder of our careers.



Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915)



To learn more about exponential change and the law of accelerating returns check out our free ebook on [The Future of Work](#).

This new reality demands that our organizations - and our minds - become more open and agile. Otherwise we'll be ill-equipped to thrive in a complex, fast-changing environment.

While agile working is all about increasing autonomy, the old 20th century approach to getting things done was all about reducing autonomy.

Pioneers of Scientific Management, like Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915), believed autonomy led to unpredictable results. That's why they studied and documented the ideal way of performing every single task, then handed very detailed instructions to workers.

This 'command and control' approach clearly won't fly in the vast majority of work situations today. It's slow. It's de-motivating. It's the antithesis of collaboration.

Agile working, on the other hand, enables us to move faster, stay motivated and collaborate in a way that suits us, as individuals and teams. Not least because we each take more responsibility and have greater decision-making powers in an agile culture.

Why go agile

The benefits of agile working

Working from home, or a coffee shop, clearly wasn't an option before we had mobile phones, internet access and collaboration tools.

That's why it made perfect sense to gather everyone together in a physical space between the hours of 9am and 5pm.

These days, however, there are many reasons why the 9-5 physical presence approach is no longer optimum:

The dreaded commute

- Traveling to and from the office wastes valuable time, eating into productivity
- Commuting times are worsening as cities become more congested
- High train fares and fuel costs makes the commute an expensive business
- Carbon emissions from office hours traffic damage health and the environment

Diversity: widening the talent pool

- Organizations are missing out on hiring skilled working parents who struggle to adhere to fixed working hours
- People with medical conditions that require regular working-hours appointments can struggle with a 9-5 schedule
- Organizations are restricted to hiring people who live in close proximity to their office if they aren't open to remote workers from further afield

Rising real estate costs

- As real estate costs increase, high office footfall comes at an enormous price
- Lots of people in the office means high energy usage, impacting both the bottom line and the environment

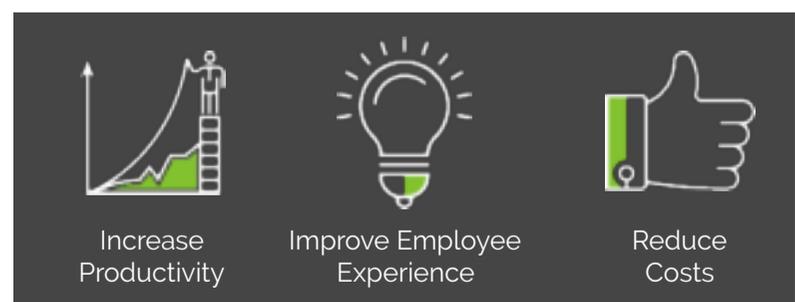
(Employer) brand positioning

- Top talent often expects autonomy and won't take a job that doesn't allow it
- Potential employees can be put off by a long commute
- Lack of flexibility makes your employer brand less compelling

Employee productivity

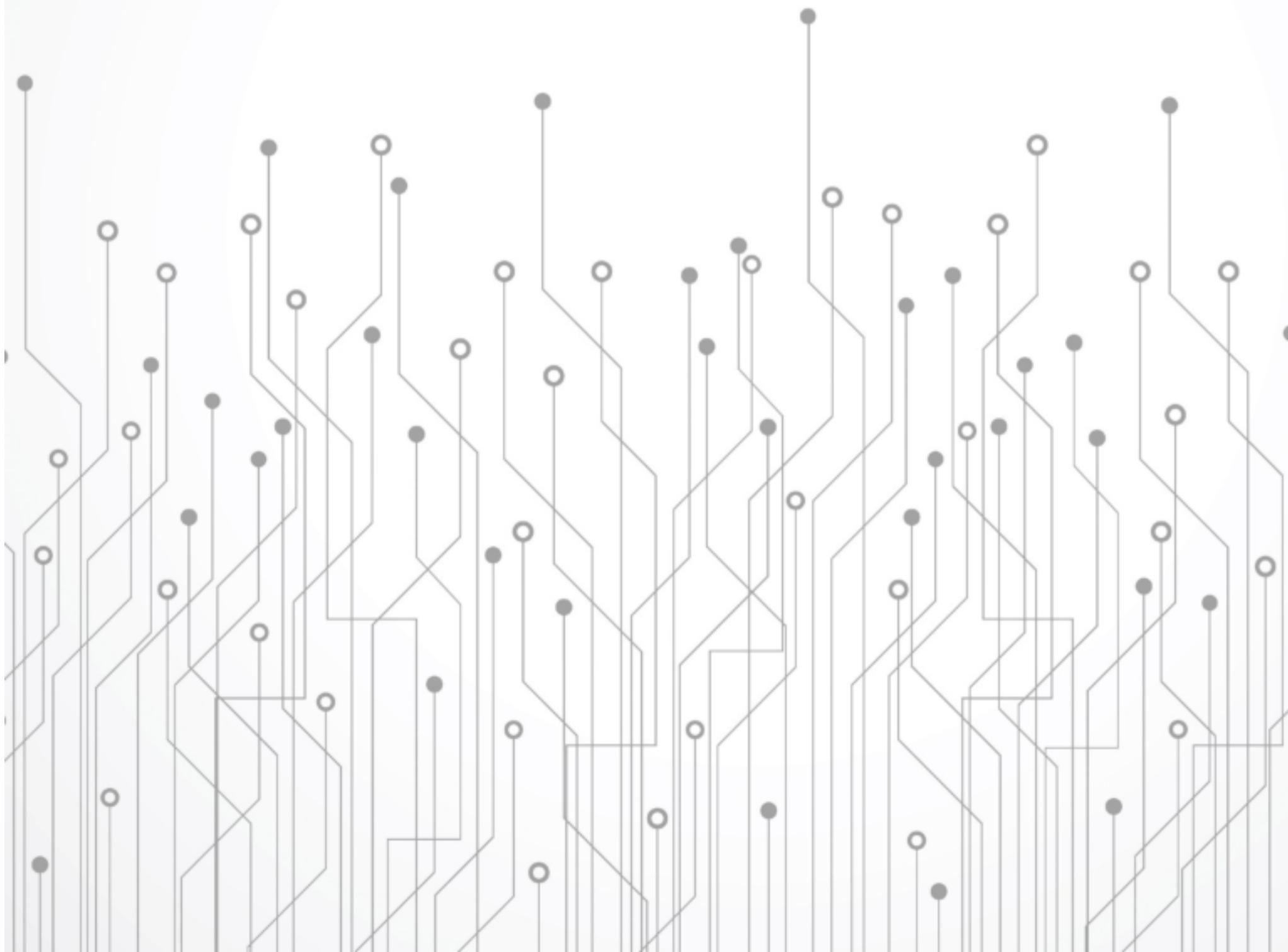
- With the rise of open plan office layouts, people can struggle to focus
- Lack of flexibility in where and when you work reduces employee wellbeing and leads to increased absenteeism

Agile working can solve these issues, enabling us to create healthier cultures that grant people the freedom they require to do their best work.



The business case

for agile working



The business case

Quantifying the potential of agile working

The Agile Future Forum (AFF) - an alliance of UK companies that includes Lloyds Banking Group, BT, Cisco, ITV, John Lewis, KPMG, Willis Towers Watson and Ford of Britain - conducted extensive research into the benefits of agile working.

Key findings include:

- Agile working saves 3-13% of workforce costs.
- There's potential to increase that by a further 3-7% with more extensive implementation.
- Black Horse Finance increased productivity by 10% and increased colleague engagement by 7% by introducing agile working practices.

Numerous studies also show that organizations can reduce office space by up to 30% by adopting agile working practices.

However, quantifying agile working ROI in full is no mean feat. Not least because agility impacts every aspect of work.

There are endless statistics that suggest people are more productive, motivated and likely to stick around when they have the freedom to choose how and where they work.

You could build a business case around employee engagement alone.

However, rather than attempting to boil the ocean, an alternative approach is to build a business case around a specific initiative or tool you'd like to implement, that will increase your organization's agility.



For example at Smartway2, we help organizations improve space utilization. This is a straightforward way to demonstrate measurable bottom-line impact.

For instance it's common that around 30% of meeting room bookings end up going to waste, because people forget to cancel their reservations.

Most of us have been guilty of wasting valuable resources at some point. Perhaps we've booked the conference room for an hour every week, but when the meeting stopped, we didn't cancel the recurring room booking.

As a result, the agility of your organization is reduced, because:

- Productivity goes down as people waste time searching for rooms
- Collaboration goes down as people can't find a meeting room when they need it
- The employee experience is damaged by frustrations and delays

By asking people to confirm their reservations in Smartway2, you eliminate this problem, releasing unused spaces and facilities back to the workforce. You can even let someone know



that the room they tried to book earlier is now free.

Quick wins like this enable you to quantify an increase in agility - in this instance by managing your workspace more efficiently, while giving employees and contractors a better experience that lends itself to collaboration and productivity.

Another angle to explore is presenteeism...

The cost of presenteeism

Presenteeism, according to Google, is 'the practice of being present at one's place of work for more hours than is required, especially as a manifestation of insecurity about one's job.'

Now let's look at some numbers:

- A year-long phone survey dubbed the 'American Productivity Audit' calculated the cost of presenteeism in the US to be over \$150 billion a year.
- Two studies in the Journal of American Medical Association found that productivity lost from workers experiencing depression

and pain on-the-job was around 3 x greater than absence-related productivity loss attributed to the same conditions.

- A Green and Black study found the cost of ill health among UK workers was over \$141 billion, with absenteeism costing \$11.8 billion and presenteeism over \$21 billion.

Given that people are typically the organization's greatest cost - perhaps 90% of your cost base - shifting these dials around productivity, presenteeism and engagement can create enormous gains.

But let's get real: if your leaders grasp the overall trends shaping our economy and global development, you really shouldn't have to present a business case for agility.

Leaders should invest in increasing organizational agility because it's common sense. Because they grasp that accelerating change, competition and the increasing complexity of work leaves us with no other choice.

However, if that sounds idealistic, you may well have to build a business case based on what matters most to your organization.

How big a stretch?

Is agile working right for you?

Whether you think predictions about the future of work are hype or a genuine paradigm shift, it's clear that in order to succeed we must:

- Move faster than ever before.
- Adapt to unpredictable, increasingly complex situations.

So how we achieve these new levels of speed and adaptability?

And how big a stretch is agile working for your organization?

We all know that some big iconic companies have famously *reduced* worker flexibility. Marissa



Marissa Meyer

Mayer is the obvious example, when she banned working-from-home at Yahoo.

In reality, this wasn't a statement against agility or flexibility. She was faced with a reality whereby the company culture had eroded. Employees were misusing the flexibility they'd been given. Too many were disengaged, working on their own projects from home on company time, or otherwise failing to be productive outside the office.

Yahoo's internal research revealed that increasing face-to-face time in the office would bring greater benefit to certain teams than allowing them the freedom to work where and when they wanted.

The important takeaway is that Mayer's position was not 'anti-agility' or a statement against allowing remote working. She was facing a far more fundamental problem around company culture.

Agility will not make disengaged, untrustworthy, free-riders into highly motivated, productive collaborators. So in order to increase agility, you need to create an environment of trust.

This involves 'fixing' your culture through a combination of:

- Excellent leadership.
- Hiring the right people.

Change: the new normal

Agility never ends

Assuming you're ready to bite the bullet with agile working, how do you make it happen?

Or perhaps there's a bigger question lurking beneath the surface: is agile working just another 'change program' that's doomed to fail?

Agile working is a never-ending pursuit. It stands to reason that we should forever be striving for greater agility, because the world will only ever become more complex, demanding more flexibility and more speed.

That's why treating agile working as a program or project can create a false state of play.

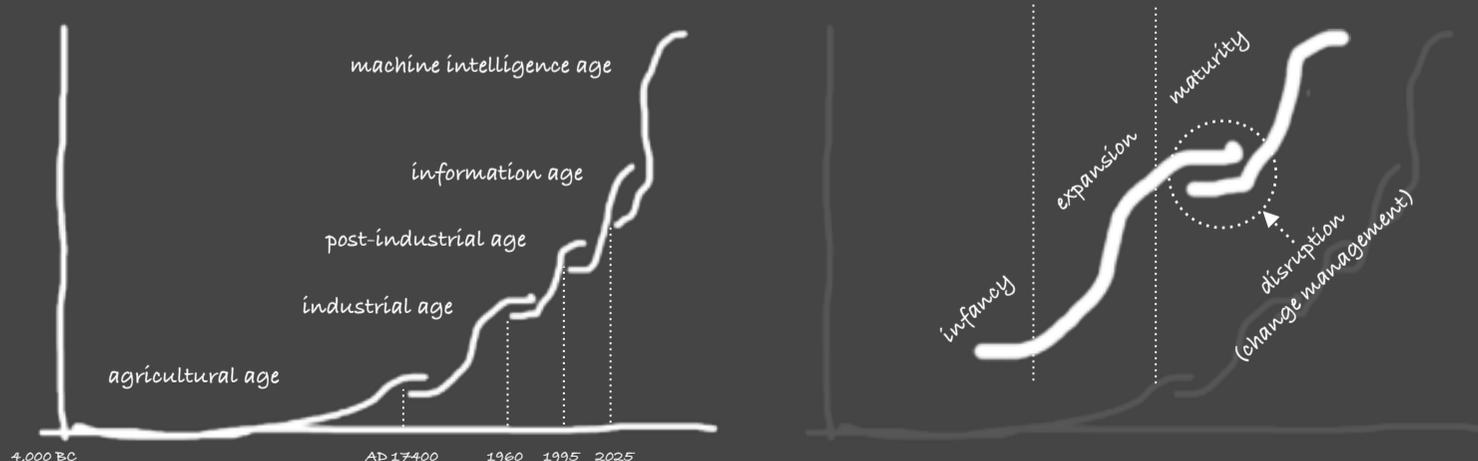
It suggests that on one hand we have 'business as usual' and on the other hand we have change... when this isn't the case.

Saying that, a workplace overhaul like the case study we explore later may well require a change project... a project that is just the beginning of a long-term commitment to increasing agility.

The shape of change

Change happens in a series of S curves that start slowly, rapidly speed up, then level off. The same pattern holds true whether it's applied to paradigm shifts in economics, new technologies, or company transformation.

You start off in the realms of status quo, quite sure of the old way. Then there's an inflection point where the old and new collide, catalysing change. A period of disruption follows, where you should closely manage the change - then you settle into the new way (which becomes the new status quo, ready to be disrupted).



Lead like a Jedi

Get fit, lose weight and be agile

Consider this in human terms.

As each of us grows and adapts to the world we live in, are we undergoing a program of change? Or is this 'normal', perpetual growth?

Yes, we can embark on a specific change program, with a start and an end date. Perhaps we decide to do a 30-day fitness course to lose weight.

But underlying your ability to complete this kind of 'program' are deeper traits: motivation and self-discipline. In order to stick to your fitness regime, you must have the will to see it through.

Then there's the fact that you wouldn't need to go on a fitness bender if you maintained a more reasonable level of motivation and discipline as the norm. If you eat healthily and exercise

regularly, your weight will probably stay in check.

The question is, whom do you think succeeds? The fad dieter and big exercise goal-setter that relies on periodic bursts of extraordinary effort to get them from A to B? Or the one who chooses to live a lifestyle that 'naturally' maintains a level of health and fitness?

Change programs are like fad diets. That's why, according to McKinsey, 70% of all transformations fail.

Some, however, can use a 'quick fix' project to kick things off; only the real, lasting benefits are reaped in long term commitment to change.

The thing is, humans are masters of good intentions. Setting goals and planning are the



easy part. Waking up every single day and taking action consistently? Not so easy.

In the moment, faced with 5am alarm heralding a 5 mile run in the dark, we hit the snooze button.

In the moment, faced with chocolate cake or an apple for dessert, we eat cake.

Organizational change is just the same. As is leadership, for that matter, if the two are even distinct.

Great leaders practice daily, healthy leadership activities that add up to an awesome leadership 'lifestyle'. Every day they don't see any difference when they look in the metaphorical mirror. But over time they can stand back and think 'wow'. Check out my abs. And my team. And my awesome company culture.

The everyday lifestyle actions of great leaders are almost exclusively around communication: the way they interact with others. Including simple things, like saying hello. Asking colleagues how they are. Really paying attention to their answers. Being aware of the pressures they create and the wellbeing of those they serve.

It's also vital that leaders fully grasp the organization's goals and priorities, in order to weave them into day-to-day dialogue. An MIT

study on 124 organizations revealed that only 28% of managers responsible for executing strategy could list 3 of their company's top strategic priorities.

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place" - George Bernard Shaw

Change programs fail because leaders lack the discipline and motivation - in other words, the mindset - to consistently, persistently do the little things that add up to the big things.

Agile working is no different.

Agile working is a mindset

Really what we're after here is agile working as a business lifestyle. Agile working as just the way we roll.

We've already established that the success ingredients are exactly the same as those for staying fit and healthy, or for great leadership: motivation and discipline.

And just like staying fit and healthy and being a great leader, motivation and discipline are not only the conditions that enable success, but the result of doing it. Get it right and you create a great big self-propagating loop of excellence.

An early case study

in agile working



New Ways of Working

An early agile working case study

So what's holding organizations back from getting motivated to create and maintain a more agile workforce? And what can we do about it?

In 2004, a Dutch insurance broker found themselves in crisis.

They'd been taken over by a publicly listed multinational at the end of the 90s. Shortly after, the Netherlands branch was in serious trouble.

The decision was taken to downsize. Shockwaves rippled through the workforce, as long-term employees were let go. Meanwhile, the insurance market had grown more dependent on client fees as opposed to commissions. Revenues plummeted.

The Dutch leaders of the subsidiary went in search of a new strategy. They had to find a way

of adapting to change. Drastic events called for drastic action.

First of all, the business model had to pivot: from a traditional insurance broker model, to a business consultancy specializing in risk management.

This transformation demanded new ways of working. Suddenly the ability to share knowledge was vital. As was the need to work from anywhere, any time.

They had no choice but to embrace a more agile way of working.

To achieve this, they chose a radical implementation of 'New Ways of Working' (NWW), an organizational design concept that had emerged in Holland through the 90s and early 2000s.

What is New Ways of Working (NWW)?

Gerards et al. (2018) define NWW as consisting of five facets:

1. **Time-and-location-independent work** - *li.e. working whenever and whenever you choose!*
2. **Management on output or performance** - *li.e. working however you choose!*
3. **Access to organizational knowledge** - *li.e. the free flow of information, experience and ideas, enabled by technology!*
4. **Flexibility in working relations** - *li.e. finding work-life balance and configuring work to suit individual preferences and circumstances!*
5. **Freely accessible open workplaces** - *li.e. refurbishing offices into spaces that stimulate encounters and collaboration!*

New Ways of Working was an early manifestation of Agile Working.

It's also worth noting that the term NWW is sometimes used interchangeably with ABW: Activity Based Working. Both involve aligning the way you work with your business strategy, culture and values, to drive successful outcomes.

They typically reduce the amount of physical space you require, increase flexibility; and use

technology to improve the employee - and ultimately the customer - experience.

Think of ABW as a sub-set of agile working: the part that focuses specifically on how physical space can be used to support and influence activities and culture. ABW, at its core, is the practice of designing your workspace to suit the type of activities being performed. For example creating separate spaces for focused and collaborative work.

Benefits of NWW/ABW

Autonomy, learning and engagement

A host of research studies have shown that NWW increases autonomy - an essential component of motivation and therefore high performance. Then there's the positive impact on informal learning.

Informal learning is essential to creating a learning organization. In turn, creating a learning organization is essential for survival amidst the accelerating pace of change brought about by technology. Not to mention future-proofing our individual skill-sets against major impending labour shifts, driven by AI and automation [\[read](#)

[more about all this stuff in our free ebook - Your Definitive Guide to The Future of Work\].](#)

That's not all, NWW has been linked to higher employee engagement, employee performance, productivity and organizational commitment.

But where do you begin, when it comes to implementation?

First of all, it's important to understand the basic pillars and components of agile working.



The fundamentals

Understanding the transition to agile

This table provides a framework for understanding how agile working is changing the way we approach work, across many different dimensions:

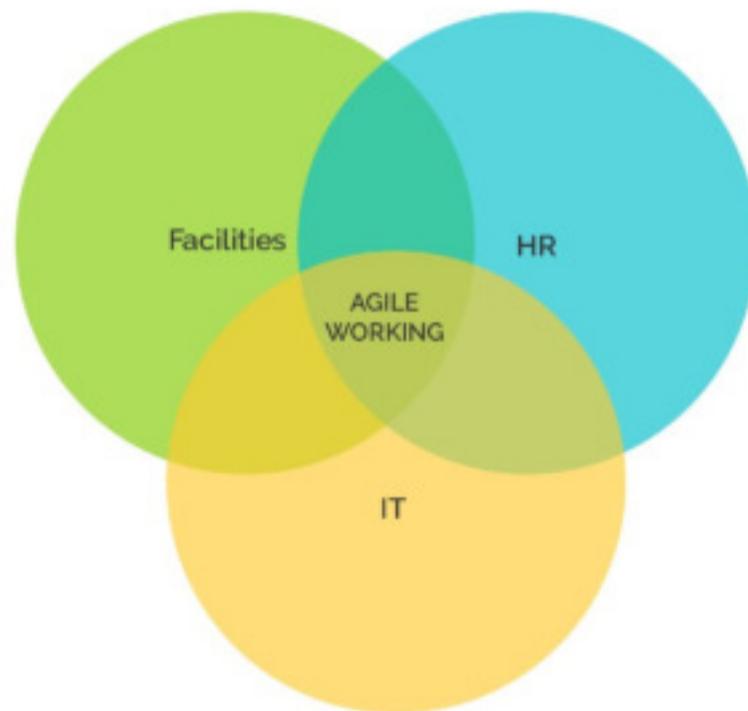
Dimension	From	To
Supervision	Control based	Trust based
Decision-making	Rules	Values
Relationships	Formal (hierarchical)	Informal (flat, equal)
Focus	Product	Process
Information storage	Paper	Digital
Information use	Bringing information (to workplace)	Retrieving information (on workplace)
Knowledge	Acquiring	Sharing
Performance	Individual	Collaborative
Interaction	Physical	Mediated
Coordination	Space	Time
Management	Content	Conditions
Power	Directives	Empowerment
Sense-making	Conventions	Collective learning
Workplace	Office based	Activity based
Reward system	Time based	Output based
Space	Closed	Open (transparent)
Boundaries	Strict	Blurred
Buildings	Passive	Active (smart)
Time	Slow (delay)	Fast (instant)
Structure	Continuity	Change
Dominance	Space-time	Technology
Everyday life	Work-segregation	Work-life balance
Implementation	Top-down	Bottom-up
Design	Functional (form follows function)	Creative (function follows form)
Basis of action	Designated desk	Hot-desking
Field of action	Organization	Network
Meaning of work	Instrumental	Expressive

source: Sytze Kingma 2018, derived from Denis 2003, Weidman 2005

Whose job is it anyway?

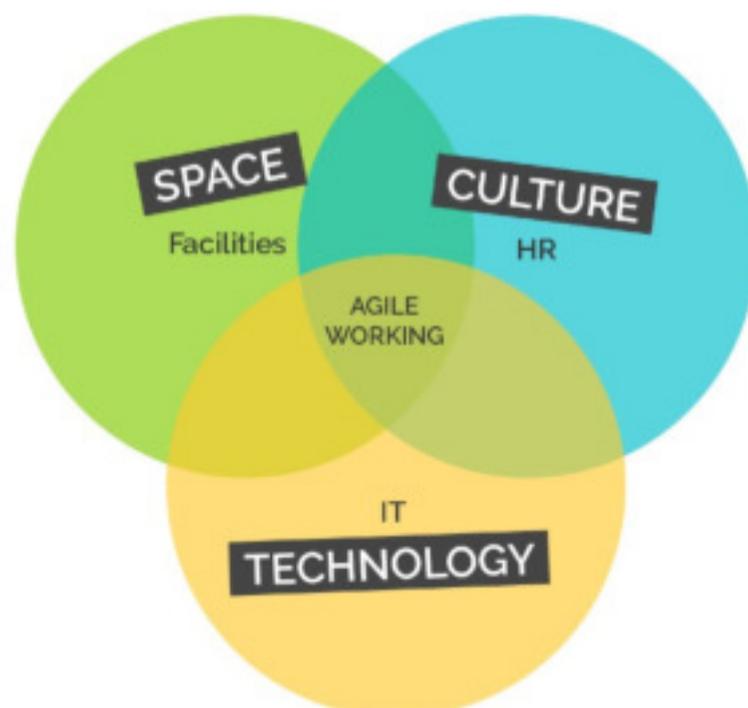
Agile working governance

Facilities Management, IT and HR all play a fundamental role in creating a more agile organization. So one of the first steps in your journey towards agile working, is to assemble a crack team of collaborators that represent each function.



The three dimensions of agile working...

When you've got the right people together, it's time to look at your shared reality through three lenses:



Workspaces can exert a powerful influence on culture, by changing the way people feel and interact. Yet our spaces and technology can't be considered separately.

People must be equipped with the technology they need to do their best work. Not just in the office, but at home and anywhere in between.

What's more, retraining needs to happen in parallel with workspace changes. If one happens without the other, productivity suffers.

By analyzing the activities in your organization, you can design physical spaces to accommodate them.

Here are some typical examples of activities and workspaces:

- **Collaboration** might require open spaces, meeting rooms, booths, enclosed and semi-enclosed rooms, project tables and creative brainstorming areas.
- **Process work** is likely to require desks, with consideration given to ergonomics, standing vs sitting desks, permanent vs hot-desks.
- **Focus work** often requires private desk and booth space, with reduced noise and fewer distractions.

That's great, but what happened to the Dutch insurance guys, I hear you ask?

Pioneering agile working

How it all began

The Dutch insurance company set about introducing new practices to increase openness and flexibility.

Taking pains to analyze all their key working processes, they examined the interactions that take place as work is executed.

They also evaluated what technology would be required to enable people to work anytime, anywhere. This involved finding ways to make it easy for everyone to access the information they need to do their job, regardless of time and location.

The emphasis had to shift from bringing information, to fetching information. This shift in itself strongly influenced the layout of their workspaces.

They made an important decision early on in the implementation of NWW: to start from the premise that customers are trustworthy (unless proven otherwise).

This meant they could pay damage claims quickly, using lean processes. They no longer required proof in advance. Instead, they'd perform checks on claims after payments had already been made.

The next part of this decision was equally impactful: they extended the same level of radical trust to employees.

All of a sudden employees could make their own decisions about where, when and how to do their work. They were trusted to make their own decisions about client claims.



The Dutch pioneers didn't stop there:

- They changed the way they rewarded employees, to a system based on output, not presence.
- They eliminated hierarchy by focusing on roles that relate to tasks and project roles, as opposed to power and position.
- They ditched controlling management practices in favour of coaching.

Then came the dramatic workspace changes:

- The restaurant was transformed from a place for grabbing lunch, to a place for meeting and working.
- Single-function areas, including corridors and lobbies, were turned into informal lounge areas and shared spaces.
- They clustered activities and used open staircases to vertically integrate work areas.

Before the change, the insurance company had designed their spaces to align with the flow of paper. The transition to NWW was a redesign of space based on work activities.

ABW in action

Designing space to support productivity and culture

Different work activities demand different combinations of individual, collaborative, physical and virtual work. By unpicking the sorts of activity going on in their company, they could integrate and cluster the work into different purpose-built spaces.

For instance they ended up with cockpits, that enabled people to make phone calls or do focused work without distractions. Others chose to do this kind of thing from home rather than use the cockpits.

Team rooms were set up for meetings with colleagues, clients and other visitors. Then came silence areas, lounges, comfort rooms, and various open plan workspaces.

They split the workspace into small club houses, creatively designed to give people a sense of shared identity. This change recognized that human beings work best when we feel that we

belong. When we feel we are reaching our potential, together.

Another goal was to design an office interior that embodied transparency, output measurement, client orientation, collaboration; and cross-departmental, cross-team communication.

The new workspace design got rid of most internal walls and all private offices. Any remaining walls were made of glass, to support their goal of transparency. Conference rooms had removable walls. They split the ground floor into orientation zones, each focusing on a particular group of clients or market niche.

People could suddenly choose where they wanted to work, depending on the task at hand. This meant they found themselves in many different spaces throughout their working week, as their activities changed.



Function and form

Bringing out the best in every employee

Great workspace design brings out the very best in each of us. The interplay between physical space; technology; and human passion, creativity and engagement is often underestimated.

When it comes to designing an agile workplace, not only does form follow function, but function also follows form. In other words, we can design workspaces around activities and behaviours; and in turn the workspace can change the way we act and behave.

The same goes for technology. Technology can support and streamline the way we work, as well as shaping the way we work.

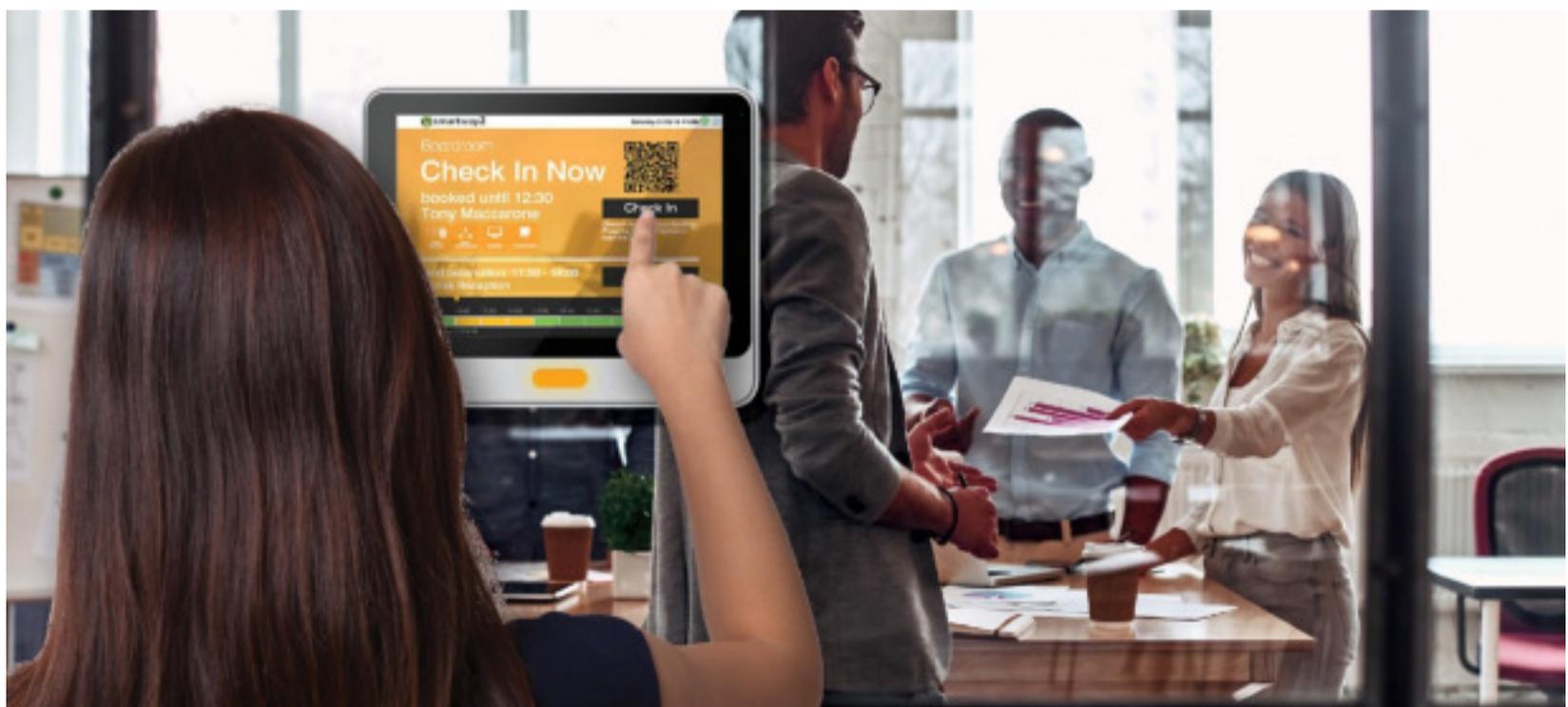
For example, at Smartway2, we help organizations define 'rules' for booking meeting spaces, services and facilities. You might, for example, set rules for a particular room. Maybe it can only be booked by certain people, or requires approval. Maybe you can only book the

AV room if you're actually using the AV equipment.

Then you could have rules around things like booking catering. Perhaps a working lunch requires at least 2 hours notice, to prevent the chaos created by last-minute requests.

Embedding these rules in the tool you use to make and manage spaces and things in your office changes behaviour. People find themselves working more efficiently, rather than creating undesirable knock-on effects.

Providing workspaces and tools that subtly inform people about what actions should and shouldn't be taken - when, where and how - reduces the need to refer to explicit rules. Explicit rules are typically policies, existing in some kind of manual, e.g. a clean desk policy. With smart workspace design, you can mitigate the need to dust off manuals and heavily handedly 'enforce' rules, because the correct behaviours simply emerge as a by-product of using well-designed systems.



Bringing people on board

Countering resistance to change

So what did the employees think of this shift in the Dutch subsidiary?

Truth be told, they weren't all on board, as is usually the case with change. There were a few resistant skeptics.

Some were concerned that time and location independence could actually lead to greater management control over the workers. Others worried that it would only increase their workload. Then there were the inevitable fears of further layoffs.

To counter this, they:

- Involved everyone in the journey
- Held user groups

- Discussed the changes at internal events
- Produced mock-ups and illustrations
- Recruited evangelists to passionately communicate the vision, goals and ideas

Three project groups were formed, each responsible for objectives around **space**, **technology** and **culture**.

In comparison to people, technology and space are relatively easy to change. Humans, on the other hand, have deeply embedded routines, habits and attitudes. That's why training was a vital component of the transition.

To facilitate flexible, virtual working, people were no longer judged on how much time they spent in the office. Instead, performance was



measured using balanced scorecards that sought to align strategy and culture.

HR was responsible for formulating rules around each area, but keeping it simple - only about a dozen in total. For example paperless working required stringent rules around information-handling, to maintain data privacy and security. Hot-desking required rules around clearing your desk if it was going to be unoccupied for more than two hours. Conference calls had a set of rules around good listening practices and keeping appointments. Then there were rules around flexible working, mobile working, collaboration, working from home, output measurement, information sharing... all in support of greater agility.

The most change-averse employees were quick to express their resistance. This manifested in various forms, including:

- Arguing that there are too few workplaces available, as a reason for refusing to clean a workplace when leaving

- Coming to the office early in order to obtain a particular workspace
- Claiming the same work spot every day
- Dragging a lot of stuff to a workplace
- Long starting and closing hours
- Searching for explanations and solutions outside one's own scope of behaviour.

[source: Sytze Kingma, 2018]

Yet despite the adjustment required, change started to happen. At first, there was a transitional period that blended the old traditional, 9-5, departmental, desk-bound approach with the new, autonomous, agile approach. Over time, managers, project group members and consultants came together to tip the balance towards full-blown agile working.

Soon after the changes kicked in, suspicions and concerns quickly evaporated. A number of deeply skeptical people, or those who didn't like the new, open environment, choose to leave. To the rest, the benefits were self-evident.

Measuring success

Surveys, occupancy rates and more

The Dutch subsidiary measured success through interviews, surveys, data and observation. Interviews helped them understand the views and experiences of those involved. Observation, on the other hand, gave them insight into the way people use spaces.

As for surveys, they revealed valuable insights. For example, prior to NWW, employees identified strongly with their own department, but less so with the organization as a whole.

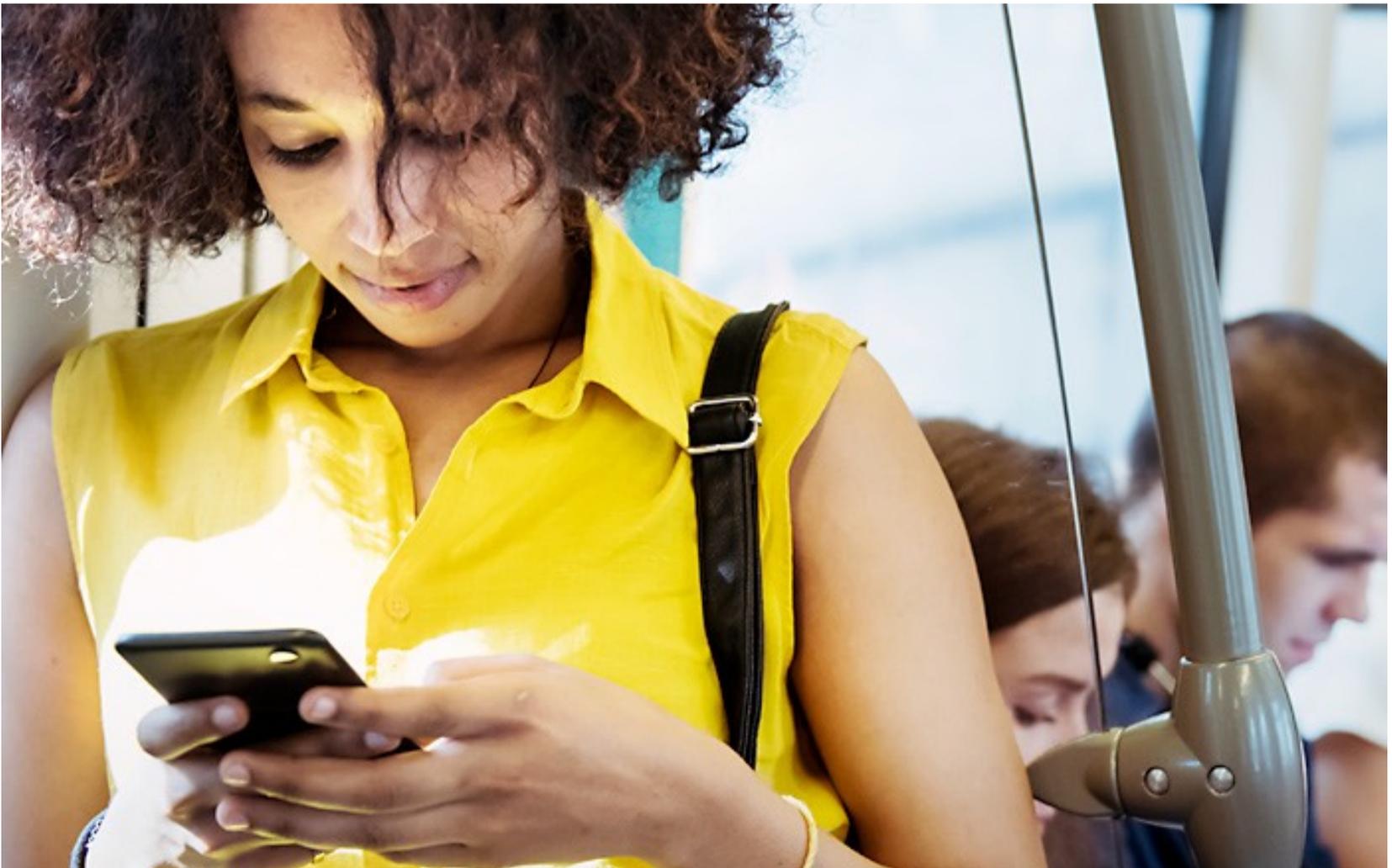
Unsurprisingly, that meant that cross-departmental communication and collaboration was virtually non-existent. Changing this was one of their major goals.

Another important component of measurement - and one that requires the least effort, while providing the most reliable data - is workspace usage analysis.

They analyzed occupancy rates and use of their office spaces. Workspace management platforms like Smartway2 enable you to achieve this without the use of sensors, via predictive analytics.

Understanding precisely how meetings rooms, desks and other facilities are being used, enables you to improve workspace utilization.

The Dutch subsidiary reduced their physical office space by 50%.



Agile working pitfalls

How to deal with unintended consequences

An organization can be thought of as an organism: a living, dynamic, complex system. In complex systems, there are often unintended consequences when a change is made. There are side-effects. And if people don't like the side effects, they made choose not to take the drug that's producing them, even if they need it to alleviate their illness.

The Dutch insurance company found a few undesirable effects cropping up when they implemented agile working.

Serial space bookers

For example, some people started booking the same desk every day.

As a result, they naturally began to take up permanent positions in the office. Many wanted to sit with the same colleagues, day in day out.

Obviously this static, 9-5, departmental behaviour flew in the face of the flexible, autonomous, collaborative culture they were trying to instil.

Using workspace management tools like Smartway2 prevents this particular agile working pitfall.

Our rules engine enables you to set desk-booking parameters, e.g. nobody can book the same desk for three days in a row.



Them and us

Another pitfall that's particularly troublesome is the re-emergence of traditional hierarchies and power divides. Hierarchy has a tendency to creep back in, in unexpected ways. For instance, in the Dutch subsidiary's freshly architected workspace, there was a sense that the first floor was superior. Some even referred to the ground floor as the 'shop floor'.

All systems have a hierarchy to some degree - even networks - but in an agile culture, this should change and flex according to the project at hand. I might take a leadership position in one project and not in another. Hierarchy according to expertise, as opposed to job title or org chart position, is acceptable in most modern workplaces striving for 'flat'. Leaders that emerge naturally - simply because people want to follow them - are also welcome to go forth and conquer.

Yet old habits die hard, so it's easy for old school 'them and us', 'management and shop floor' to rear its head, sabotaging our flat, agile efforts.

Again, using the right space-booking tools can prevent these status divides from countering your agile working strategy. Coaching also plays an important role in helping people adapt to a new dialogue. As does storytelling: shaping a narrative that helps people understand the journey and its purpose.

Inflexible time & other gripes

Another challenge faced by the subsidiary was people earmarking specific days as 'working from home' days, making themselves unavailable for meetings. Left unchecked, this led to a decrease in collaboration and agility.

Other common complaints are people breaking the rules, talking too loudly on the phone, interruptions and distractions from colleagues and unreliable technology or poor usability. [\[Check out our article that explores how poor usability leads to shockingly low uptake of enterprise mobile apps\]](#). Without corrective action, annoyances like these can lead to poor employee experience.

Always on

Likewise, working from anywhere, enabled by mobile, can lead to an expectation that people should reply to emails and answer calls, wherever they are, at any time of the day or night.

This always-on mentality can easily get out of control, eroding wellbeing and reducing ability to focus on tasks that require concentration. That's why some European countries, particularly France, have been pioneering The Right To Disconnect. Again, coaching around pitfalls like this can help people strike a balance between flexibility and over-reactive working.

Building relationships

Agile working, community and collaboration

A major concern many organizations and their employees hold around agile working practices is the erosion of community spirit in the workplace.

In 9-5 working environments, close, caring relationships are often forged. A more fragmented, transient style of work can lead to individualism.

Relationships are vital for collaboration - a major goal of agile working. That's why it's important to focus on creating time and space to foster relationships, regardless of physical location. Done right, the difference between old and new should be the difference between forging relationships with people you work physically

close to (e.g. in your particular spot in the office, in your specific department) versus forging relationships with people in a more diverse range of disciplines and geographies.

The opportunities for creativity, innovation and learning are only heightened by the diversity that collaboration across boundaries brings to bear.

As ironic as it sounds, to make agile working work - to achieve new levels of freedom and flexibility - we need to find new levels of self-discipline and self-management. As the pace of change accelerates, those who embody these traits and can work collaboratively will thrive.



What will you do?

Preparing for the new normal

So it turns out that agile working is nothing new.

In fact IT, Facilities and Organizational Design pioneers started designing mobile, paperless offices, videoconferencing and flexible workplaces in the 60s.

Yet just like AI, 3D printing and a bunch of other megatrends, we've only recently caught on. Finally, we have the technology to support the vision of an agile workplace. Not to mention the economic and cultural imperative. We must work lean in order to compete; and new generations bring heightened expectations of greater freedom and flexibility.

Flexible working is, in fact, the new normal. According to the IWG Global Workplace Survey

2019, half of business people globally reported that they work outside of their main office locations half the week or more. Meanwhile, 62% of businesses have a flexible working policy.

As we strive to increase productivity, boost collaboration and ultimately provide an outstanding employee experience... it seems today's leaders all have agility firmly where it should be: at the top of their agenda.

So how will agile working look in your organization?

To help you get started, let's move onto how you could approach the development of your workplace strategy.

Agile working wins the war for talent

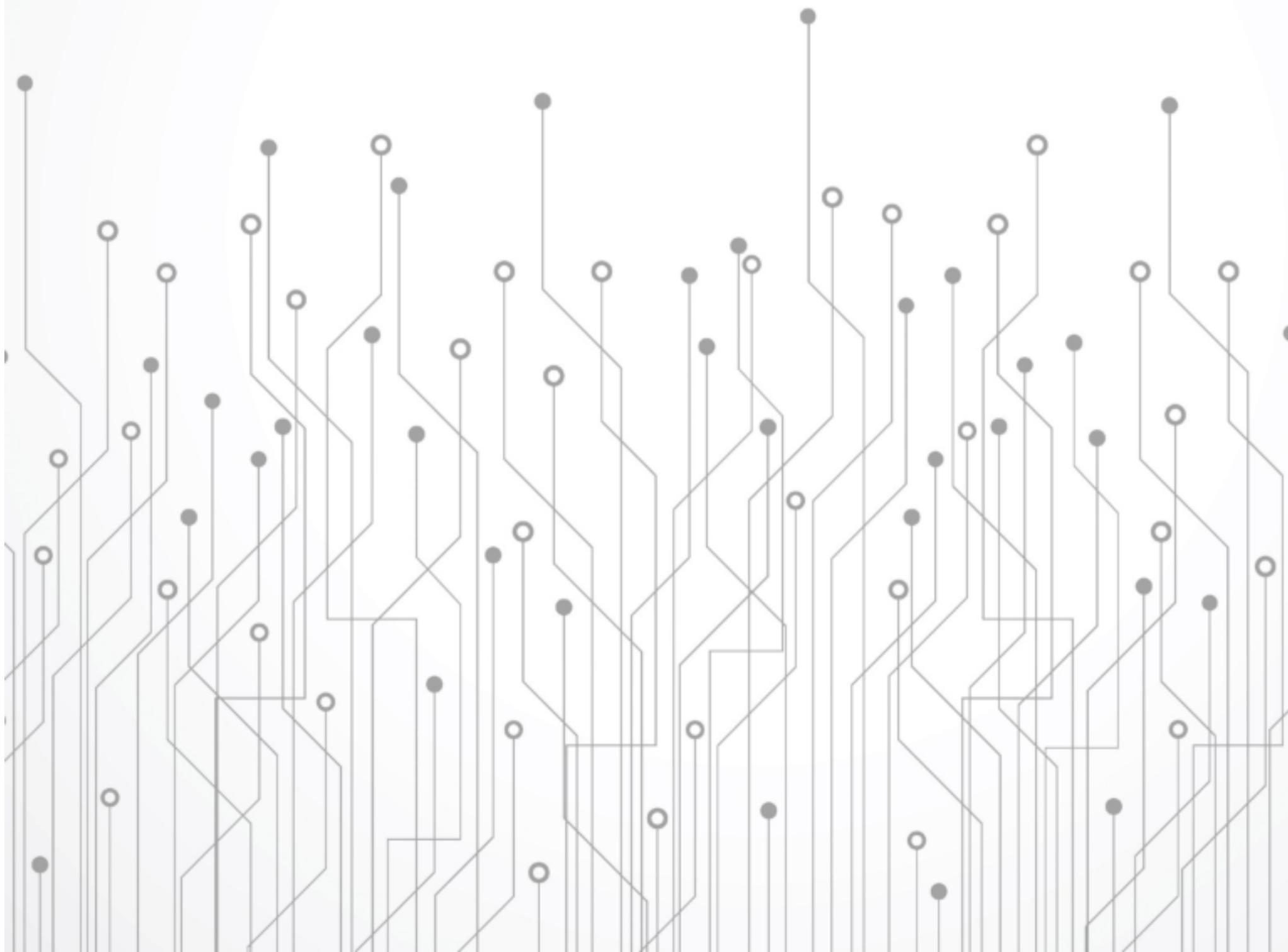
The shift towards agile working practices is often driven by the need to attract and retain the best talent. Flexibility is a key benefit sought by candidates, many of whom are perfectly willing to sacrifice a higher salary for greater autonomy.

Here are some more revealing stats from IWG's survey:

- 85% of respondents say productivity has increased as a result of greater flexibility
- 65% believe that tailoring the work environment to work function increases productivity
- Over 4/5 people say that if faced with two similar offers, they'd turn down the job that didn't offer flexible working

How to develop your

workplace strategy



Your workplace strategy

The 'why', 'what' & 'how'

In his 1943 paper, "A Theory of Human Motivation", Abraham Maslow famously described a 'hierarchy of needs'.

At any one time, each of us tends to be focused on one particular level of need. These needs dominate our behaviour.



Once our most basic needs are satisfied - food, sleep, sex, clothing, shelter, water, breathing - we can focus on the next rung of the pyramid: safety. When our safety needs are met - health and wellbeing, personal security, financial security, emotional security - we can focus on the next: love/belonging. Once our love/belonging needs are met - friends, family, intimacy - we can concern ourselves with esteem. Finally, when our esteem needs are met - recognition, respect from others, self-respect - we can concentrate on the top. At last our minds are free to pursue self-improvement and fulfil our potential.

When we're thinking about workplace strategy, it's useful to adapt Maslow's hierarchy of needs to organizational design.

If we neglect to tick off the basics, our people will never reach the top; and the top is the level we're aiming for. Anything less strips our competitive advantage, dampens performance, erodes employee engagement and creates a whole host of maladaptive behaviours.

At the top of the pyramid lies the holy grail of the future workplace: **self-actualization**. A workplace that enables people to self-actualize is a workplace where peak performance is the norm. It's a workplace where people reach their full potential, creativity flourishes and complex problems are tackled head on.

In today's fast-changing landscape, your workplace strategy plays a fundamental role in equipping your people with the resources, environment and tools they need to adapt, self-actualize and deliver results.

So here goes...

What is 'workplace strategy'?

Workplace strategy is all about understanding the needs of your people, then providing a workspace that'll help them do their best work. All this, while minimizing costs and environmental impact.

Wikipedia puts it this way: "*Workplace strategy is the dynamic alignment of an organization's work*

patterns with the work environment to enable peak performance and reduce costs."

Normally workplace strategy involves pulling together information from various business areas - IT, HR, Finance, Corporate Real Estate and Facilities - and aligning the overall strategy with your organization's vision, mission, goals and resources.

Workplace strategists understand the impact that the physical environment can have on behaviour and performance. Cubicles, open plan or private offices, team rooms, ambiance and workforce mobility all cause specific behaviours to emerge.

The benefits of having a workplace strategy

The average cost of unused space in the U.S. is \$25 per square foot or more [source: BOMA's 2015 Office Experience Exchange Report 2015]

In reality, we seldom embark on a major workplace change without being sure that there will be some financial benefit. Yet the benefits of an effective workplace strategy go far beyond cost savings. Get it right and you'll will...

- Improve output and performance
- Improve collaboration and teamwork
- Increase employee engagement
- Reduce absenteeism and presenteeism
- Increase creativity and innovation
- Attract and retain the best talent
- Increase the value of your consumer-facing and employer brand
- Reduce costs
- Reduce environmental impact and improve sustainability

The need to reduce office costs is a major driver for considering your workplace strategy, but it's not the only trigger.

Many studies show that commercial buildings account for 40% of the world's electricity consumption

Perhaps you're embarking on a culture change initiative and you've been tasked with implementing agile working practices?

Or maybe your organization is focusing on improving innovation, creativity and collaboration?

It could be that you're facing a merger, acquisition or a change in headcount?

Or your lease might be coming to an end, prompting a review of real estate needs?

Perhaps you're re-branding or you've had a change in leadership?

Major changes like these often provide the spark we need to consider whether our workspaces are really working for us.

What's driving the demand for workplace strategy?

Business leaders haven't had to worry too much about workplace strategy until recent years. There are several forces bringing workplace design to the forefront:

- We need to achieve more with less. Budgets are tight and organizations can no longer afford to waste money on excessive energy bills or real estate costs.
- Technology enables people to work from anywhere. Nowadays we need to cater for a mobile workforce, making sure they have secure access to everything they need on-

the-move; and a productive space to touch down in when they arrive at the office.

- Work is becoming more complex. As innovation and communication speeds up, spurred on by technology, we need to achieve new levels of creativity and flex our cognitive muscles. Machines are helping take some mundane, repetitive tasks off our hands, leaving we humans to focus on knowledge work. As the demand for creative problem solving increases, so does our need for collaboration, as well as time for learning and focusing.
- We're in a state of constant flux. As the pace of change continues to accelerate, it no longer makes sense to have a static workplace. Instead we need to create an agile environment that allows us to adapt spaces to our changing needs.
- Cultural expectations are shifting. These days people value meaningful work and autonomy more than ever. To attract and retain the best people - and enable them to perform at the top of their game - we need to provide spaces that are not just functional, but inspiring and remarkable. Workspaces that cater for a more diverse workforce, including the needs of Gen Z and Millennials through to over 65s.

How do you develop an effective workplace strategy?

Discovery: exploring the current reality in your workplace

1. Understand how space is currently being used. Look at occupancy data to see how, when and where people are using desks, meeting rooms and other spaces. Collect data from your room and booking software that tracks when people check in and out of desks and rooms. Ask IT for insights on when and from where people are accessing

organizational data. Build a clear picture of how many people are using what; so you can gauge the current reality. Are some spaces unused or under-used? Are some over-used and backed-up?

2. Talk to people. Ask for feedback and ideas from leaders and team members in every business area. If you run employee engagement surveys, check whether there are comments relating to the physical environment that can provide further insights on whether people feel the workplace is helping them perform at their best.
3. Examine the work modes and behaviours currently at play. For instance, some work will be collaborative, while other work will be autonomous. Some activities demand thinking and focusing, while others are more rowdy and social. What about planning and learning activities? What about filing, reading, writing and computing? Then there are meetings: some are formal, others are informal. Some work happens locally, other work happens remotely. By understanding the balance of activities, then combining this with employee and space usage insights, you'll start to build a comprehensive picture of the 'now'.
4. Look at your organization's overall strategy: the vision, values, mission, goals and objectives; as well as the way work gets done: processes, projects and tasks. Unearth any change initiatives that are already underway that could impact how space is used. Get total clarity on your strategic priorities. Is it about lowering costs, improving collaboration, or both?

Planning your workplace strategy

Armed with the information you've gathered in the discovery phase, you can form a picture of the desired outcome.

How much space do we actually need?

Do we currently have too much space, or not enough?

Are our facilities located in the right places?

What sort of spaces do we need to support our employees to do their best work?

Do we have the right mix of spaces?

How will we measure success?

Depending on whether your focus is on cost savings, collaboration, or both, you'll need to consider a range of strategies, for example:

- Adding more informal spaces, like bean bag areas or cafes
- Introducing zones for specific activities, like brainstorming areas with whiteboards, or areas for focused concentration
- Lowering or putting up partitions
- Making the workplace more visually stimulating
- Clustering workstations or spreading out
- Introduce spaces for physical activity and booster breaks
- Reducing or increasing overall footprint
- Implementing hot-desking or office hoteling
- Adding more cubicles, individual offices, or shifting to open plan
- Creating multipurpose space, with flexible furniture
- Using internet-of-things devices to automate heating, lighting and more
- Equipping people with infrastructure and tools to work from anywhere
- Using satellite offices
- Introducing more flexible work schedules or agile working practices

Consider the consequences

It's important to consider the knock-on effects and unintended consequences when you make changes in the workplace.

For instance, you might want to improve collaboration by reducing the number of private offices and opting for more open plan areas. Yet research shows that open plan layouts can increase stress and lower productivity, due to distractions and interruptions.

Meanwhile there's a correlation between distance and face-to-face contact: if you sit closer to someone, you'll interact with them more frequently.

Then there's remote working. Most research shows that enabling people to work from anywhere improves engagement and performance, yet we've seen companies like IBM opting to bring people back to the office because their research showed that face-to-face is more effective for them.

Rather than follow 'best practice' and adopt a one-size-fits all approach, carefully consider the nuances of your organization. Your workplace strategy will be most effective when you balance diverse needs, build in as much flexibility as possible and take measures to counteract any unintended consequences.

How do you get buy-in for your workplace strategy?

Build a business case

When you have a carefully considered plan in place, it's time to present that plan and get buy-in at board level and beyond.

See chapter 2 for more information on building a business case. The culture of your organization and your leaders' readiness for change may influence the type of business case you need to build.

For instance you could build a case around employee engagement; and/or develop one that takes into account the metrics that matter

to you, e.g. cost savings from real estate costs, energy bills and reducing the amount of time employees waste due to the current workplace design.

Help people visualize the impact of your workplace strategy

Develop concepts that help people visualize the outcome of the changes you propose. Graphics, CAD drawings, models and simulations can paint a thousand words.

Include some quick wins

Your workplace strategy should lay the building blocks for long-term, continuous change. But that doesn't mean you can't get a few quick wins under your belt. Consider whether you can run pilots with a limited group of people, e.g. one specific team. That way you can prove the value and learn lessons for a wider rollout.

Also remember that low cost solutions do exist. Cloud based SaaS tools, for instance, can be flexible, scalable and quick to deploy. Consider the tool kit your people need to work more flexibly, then find technology partners you can trust.

Show how you'll implement and manage the changes proposed in your workplace strategy

Put together an implementation project plan, that includes milestones, tasks and governance. Show the 'what, where, who and when'. Provide detail on what will be measured and how you'll report on it.

Will employees need to be temporarily relocated and what is the impact likely to be?

Don't forget to include a plan for managing change. Change management is ultimately about communication. You'll need to engage leaders and team members along the way. By equipping managers with the materials they need to get their people on board, you'll be able to garner support and minimize any disruptions during the transitional period.

To help get buy-in at every level in your organization, it's important to adopt an agile 'test and learn' approach. By eliciting feedback every step of the way, people feel listened to, while you avoid going down the wrong path based on false assumptions.

It's likely you'll require support from every business area, not least IT, Facilities, HR, internal comms and Corporate Real Estate.

Smartway2 is a SaaS platform that enables businesses to help their people, places and technology work better together.

The platform provides a powerful rules-based engine, combined with leading room and desk signage, to improve employees' interaction with their company facilities.

Smartway2 enables users to book desks, meeting rooms, catering, equipment and other resources on-the-move; a capability that is vital to any organization that's striving to create a more agile workplace.

e: sales@smartway2.com

SMARTWAY 2

