A NEW WORLD OF WORK

THE MCM MANIFESTO

RETURN TO HUMAN // THE RADIAL OFFICE // THE GIG COMPANY

CULTURE+DEVELOPMENT+TRUST+COMMUNITY+INNOVATION+BALANCE+THE PLANET

MCM
SKUNKWORKS
#01

MCM.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS IS THE MCM MANIFESTO

In Spring 2020 the world as we know it was altered in a way never seen before. It is estimated that 4.5 billion people went into lockdown affecting everything about the way we live. The forced isolation has given many of us the opportunity to think deeply about what is important in our lives and to adopt new behaviours to cope with the crisis.

Over the past 10 weeks, The MCM Skunkworks programme has been surveying opinion from our colleagues, clients, friends and families to try and get a broad picture of how we are all adjusting to the situation, and to learn about the hopes, fears and aspirations surrounding a post Covid future. In addition, we have observed the reactions and views of industry leaders, analysed data and have formulated our own ideas about what the future holds. Our aim here is to outline the common themes and relate them to the context of work and specifically the office, to answer the question:

Post Covid 19 - What is the purpose of the office?

The challenge was to consider the implications of this extreme global social experiment that we have all been living. The word 'purpose' was the key. This was not just a discussion about the design of the future office, but its purpose. Our findings and predictions to follow have turned out to be much wider than just purpose of the office, but three predictions on the radical changes we will see in organisational structures, values, purpose, behaviours, and locations.

THE
NEW WORLD OF WORK

A Return to Human

In the new world of work, organisational culture will evolve to unlock the many benefits that this new office concept has to offer and in turn the office will be a response to an evolved work culture.

We anticipate that this will be a culture which returns to the fundamentals of what it is to be human.

The Radial Office

The Radial Office is about giving choice and balance to people and improving their daily experience by using the opportunity presented by remote working to reimagine existing city centre office space.

It is also about businesses being able to build a more flexible office portfolio – with a higher performing and perhaps a smaller city centre hub but an increased regional presence using home or local third spaces, or shared workspace. This is an opportunity to also invigorate communities.

The Gig Company

A Gig Company puts trust in people first. It is a business built on the premise that its workforce does not have to be recruited and employed because they are within commuting distance to the office.

Once you take away commuting and promote remote working, the workforce catchment becomes global and when you embrace trust, your people will excel, wherever they are.

THE BACKGROUND

THE MAYOR'S PLAN 2016 ESTIMATED THAT IN LONDON ALONE THERE IS 300 MILLION SQUARE FEET OF OFFICE SPACE.

Based on the British Council of Offices figures that measure how densely populated modern office buildings are, we can calculate that these are filled with up to 2.5 million people, roughly equating to 26% of the London population.

This is a significant number of individuals who spend on average 90,000 hours, or a third or their lives at work in an office. This is a significant number of individuals whose "bad day at the office" can have a negative impact on them and the people around them. The Mental Health Foundation reported in 2018 that 74% of people have at some point felt so stressed that they felt overwhelmed or unable to cope, and that 38% of people reported being stressed about work. Of course, the causes of stress can be complex and subjective, but interestingly anecdotal evidence from our surveys has indicated that for many, stress levels have reduced while working from home.

Respondents also commented on how they welcomed time saved on commuting, along with greater trust from their managers and greater autonomy on how they managed their time. This led (in many cases) to better relationships at home with family and friends and feeling more engaged and productive in their work. On the flip side, people in many cases missed the social and professional face to face interactions (both chance and formal)

that being among colleagues brings. Some struggled with working conditions at home or found it difficult to switch off, and there was the whole "Ground-hog Day" syndrome.

The associated opportunities and challenges of working in an office are major contributors to the quality of life for millions. It is also a major cost to business owners, one which no doubt will be closely examined as we emerge from the crisis and businesses try to balance the books. Other than the physical space, the only greater cost to a business is it's staff.

Covid-19 has caused an unprecedented level of disruption and as with all disruption comes the opportunity for change. This is an opportunity to rethink the role and design of the office.

Can we take a step back and re-look at how the office can be of maximum benefit to people and business and the environment?

This leads us to propose the development of a new office concept which offers an even more personalised approach to work for employees. For some organisations this will be a continuation of a path already well chartered. For others it will be a radical rethink and a brave new world.

For the organisations that get this right flows many benefits including increased work/life balance, better physical and mental wellbeing, increased performance and productivity, a more diverse office portfolio with the potential to reduce costs. It also brings increased employee engagement and potentially a breakdown of geographical boundaries to appeal to a global talent pool.

This is all really exciting, however, to ensure a truly successful outcome, we require not only a physical change to where we work and the space we work in, but also the ways in which we work. Specifically business cultures and practices must evolve to support this new way of working but we believe the benefits will be far reaching for individuals, organisations and the planet.

We must also be mindful that the outcomes are measured and responsive to the benefit of all, balancing the needs of people across the range of demographics as diverse as the business is and plans to be. We have designed our research to reach a broad cross section of society and is ongoing; the conversation is developing with the crisis. This paper has been written to capture our initial findings and to offer our emerging thoughts on the future of the office, and in this instance concentrates on the knowledge worker.

Through this crisis it has been clear that although we are all in the same storm, we are in many different boats and as such, have many subjective views.

What does seem to be commonly agreed, however, is that our world has changed forever, and the ground is fertile for change, we should not let this opportunity go to waste.

PREDICTION 1 A RETURN TO HUMAN

A CARING CULTURE

In the new world of work, organisational culture will evolve to unlock many of the benefits realised during lockdown. In turn, the office will be a response to an evolved work culture. We anticipate that this will be a culture which returns to the fundamentals of what it is to be human.

Let's start at the beginning! Humans first appeared on the earth some 195,000 years ago and it took roughly 190,000 years of development to get from Palaeolithic humans to the invention of the wheel. A further 4900 years of development and we took to the sky in the first airplane and only 60 more years to fly into space. We lived in roughly the same way for hundreds of thousands of years and then in 5% of our time on earth, we have gone from a nomadic hunter gatherer to astrophysicist. The pace of our development has accelerated exponentially, however, our biology and physiology are still related to our 190,000 year old ancestors.

Harvard University Professor Daniel E. Lieberman has drawn a link between many of the ailments that modern humans suffer and a "mismatch" as he called it between the environments we evolved in and the ones we now inhabit. For instance, our flight or fight response designed to keep us from physical threat of predators or rival tribes is now being fired off to invisible pathogens, such as social media shaming and workplace and societal uncertainty.

This mismatch has led, he suggests, to a proliferation of heart disease, cancer and diabetes – which were nearly unknown to our prehistoric ancestors, as well as disabling conditions like low back pain and autoimmune problems. Lieberman advocates adjusting some of our behaviours, such as being more active and eating a less processed diet, so that we can marry the best of today's lifestyle with activities our prehistoric ancestors would recognise and that our biology is designed for.

In other research, Dan Buettner, American National Geographic Fellow and New York Times author, highlights qualities of life found in area he calls Blue Zones. These are regions in the world where people live far longer than average. Where he has identified several lifestyle characteristics the regions shared that he claims contribute to a long and healthy life. The list includes; family, moderate physical activity, plenty of social interaction, and eating a diet rich in beans and pulses.

Through his research he goes on to recommend a list of nine lessons that can contribute to improved physical and mental health: moderate, regular physical activity; have a life purpose; reduce stress; control your calorie and alcohol intake and when drinking, think about choosing wine; eat a plant-based diet; consider engagement in spirituality or religion; engage in family life and have an active social life.

Interestingly, our research has indicated that the lifestyles many respondents have adjusted to as a result of lockdown aligned with many recommendations from both sets of research.

Many have taken up regular exercise and were eating better as they were at home and able to prepare food from scratch. They engaged more in meaningful family and social interaction even though they were maintaining social distancing.

Working parents are spending time with each other and their children and, apart from some obvious challenges, all of those interviewed claimed that their relationships have improved as a result.

Removing the daily commute for many has given back hours in the day and has contributed a marked reduction in stress levels, also helped by overall feelings of wellbeing linked to being around family more.

Many have more time to take up mindfulness activities such as yoga or meditation and many employers actively encouraged staff to take part in such events as well as reaching out with social support.

Even those who are having a tougher time in lockdown found some unexpected results, one stating "I have found that I have been more patient with myself which has helped with mental wellbeing. The slowdown has forced me to look at myself more in depth which I hope will help in the long term".

For some however, the office and work culture are a major part of their social structure and the feelings of disconnection and isolation are contributing negatively to their overall wellbeing. The commute for some is a regular form of exercise which is missed during lockdown even when supplemented elsewhere. Those in urban apartments are experiencing a greater challenge than those with a more rural aspect and with large gardens. Similarly, the young and single who would most enjoy the social aspects of work and city life are more affected than young families who's sleep deprived existence rarely see them go out and for whom less time on the train and more time in bed is only a good thing.

The Return to Human concept is a response to the themes above. The goal is to help organisations create a culture that positively affects our physical and mental wellbeing. A culture that enables employees to fit their personal and work life together in a

way that is optimal for both the business and the employee, enhancing the employee experience and ultimately performance.

The 2018 paper, 'Employee Experience: Essential to Compete' by Mckinsey and Co, states that "by 2025 Millennials will represent 75 percent of the global workforce. What they seek most from their jobs is meaningful work, flexibility and autonomy, and connection and mentoring." McKinsey claim to be dedicating significant resources to the idea of the 'Employee Experience' as they believe it will be essential for companies to compete effectively.

The employee experience is defined as... "Companies and their people working together to create personalised, authentic experiences that ignite passion and tap into purpose to strengthen individual, team and company performance."

Our research very much supports this point of view. We propose that a tailored approach, which places people at the centre of policy and place will have a positive impact on employee engagement and the employee experience. This will result in a more motivated, healthier, and higher performing workforce, leading ultimately to better business results.

On that basis we have created a framework which we are referring to as the Fit for Life Charter. Some organisations, leaders, managers and individuals will already be aligned to this thinking which revolves around the following seven key principles.

THE FIT FOR LIFE CHARTER : **7 KEY PRINCIPLES**

#01
TRUST

A commitment to building trust within a business. Employees are assessed and rewarded on their performance and contribution to the success of the business and colleagues, not just on the hours that they are in the office. As we emerge from lockdown, leaders, managers and organisations as a whole should build on the trust we have collectively formed to build happier more productive companies in the future.

#02
AUTONOMY

People are enabled throughout the organisation to work in a way, place and time that suits both their natural biorhythms and their family commitments. They are trusted to balance this with the needs of their colleagues and business.

#03
COMMUNITY

The business commits to creating a community within the organisation to reinforce people's sense of belonging and to help foster meaningful relationships between co-workers.

Organisations should also find ways to engage with the wider community and where possible promote local community growth. An organisations social footprint will be considered increasingly important.

#04
GROWTH

The personal and professional development of individuals is continually supported both physically and virtually for the benefit of the individual and business. Employees will be endowed with a sense of purpose and will be given ownership of their career progression.

#05
BALANCE

The organisation will endeavour to create an environment that balances the needs of the employee with that of the company while supporting the individual's endeavours to achieve a healthy work life balance.

#06
HEALTH

Health and wellbeing will be supported and encouraged with provisions made to weave lifestyle improvements into the policies and practices of the organisation. Physical movement will be encouraged by policy and design as will the access to healthy food and beverages.

#07
ENVIRONMENT

The reduction of carbon and a lighter footprint are key objectives for the organisation. This will also extend to encouraging low carbon or preferably neutral travel to and from work where practical. Technology should be used to reduce business travel as far as possible and increased efforts must be made to reduce waste at the source with recycling employed where waste is unavoidable.

The charter is a human-centric approach that equally balances the goals of the business with the needs of the employee and is intertwined with the Radial Office concept. It can be used to set up detailed policies that will inform the culture of an organisation and in turn the design of buildings, spaces, infrastructure, products, behaviours and so on.

By adopting this charter, we can capitalise on the benefits of increased health and wellbeing and the tangible business benefits that an engaged workforce with a truly positive workplace experience can bring.

PREDICTION 2 THE RADIAL OFFICE

MULTI LOCATION WORKING WITH A COMMON CENTRE

In the 20th century, people had to go to the office because that is where the tools of their trade were: telephones, fax machines, computers. That is not true anymore. Technological advances have given us the freedom to work anywhere with an internet connection.

Technology has enabled organisations to adopt agile or activity-based working styles which encourage people to choose a work setting that suits them for the task that they are doing. True agility means you travel light and move with the task, using a variety of settings from desks, to meeting rooms, cafés to lounges, libraries to studies, where we meet, collaborate, read, write, email, Skype, focus, draw or do whatever task your line of work needs you to do. For some individuals it meant using a traditional workstation located in the same place every day, others were constantly on the move and the majority were somewhere in between. Pre-Covid, agile working was already an established way of working for many organisations and for others it was either culturally or technologically not the right fit, yet. Covid 19 has challenged a great many of the reason's agility was not the right fit for some.

The Radial Office is an evolution of this and a response to both the positive and negative reactions to the enforced remote working we are experiencing during lockdown. For many working from home is a dream. No commute and an extra three hours a day to be with your loved ones and to indulge in leisure activities. To others it's not so great. Stuck in a flat share, missing the buzz of the city and the office gossip. As our research has shown, our experience of working from home depends greatly on our personal circumstances. There is no one size fits all and an office design concept which reflects the individual needs and motivations of it's occupiers is clearly going to enable us to retain the best of the pre and post Covid-19 experience.

Coupled with the realisation by many large organisations that performance and productivity didn't completely fall off a cliff when employees were out of sight, and that significant cost savings could be possible, we have a compelling reason to carefully look at how we can re-imagine work for the benefit of all.

The Radial Office is about giving choice to the worker and improving their daily experience by using the opportunity presented by remote working to re-imagine existing city centre office space.

It is also about businesses being able to build a more flexible office portfolio – with a higher performing and perhaps a smaller city centre hub but an increased regional presence using shared workspaces and giving people the choice to work from home more if it suits them. It is a careful response especially mindful of the important role the office plays in our learning, development and social interaction and is central to the concept.

The Central Hub would be supported by home working where this is practical and preferred and local hubs, which would be co-working or wholly owned spaces for those who want elements of the office environment.

The Central Hub is a place to be collaborative and social, to learn, be mentored and to be proud of belonging to the organisation. We imagine the Central Hub will consist of a mix of spaces, geared to enrich the experience of employees and visitors. Spaces such as technology enabled meeting areas for virtual and physical interaction, designed to ensure a consistent experience whether you are in the room physically or virtually.
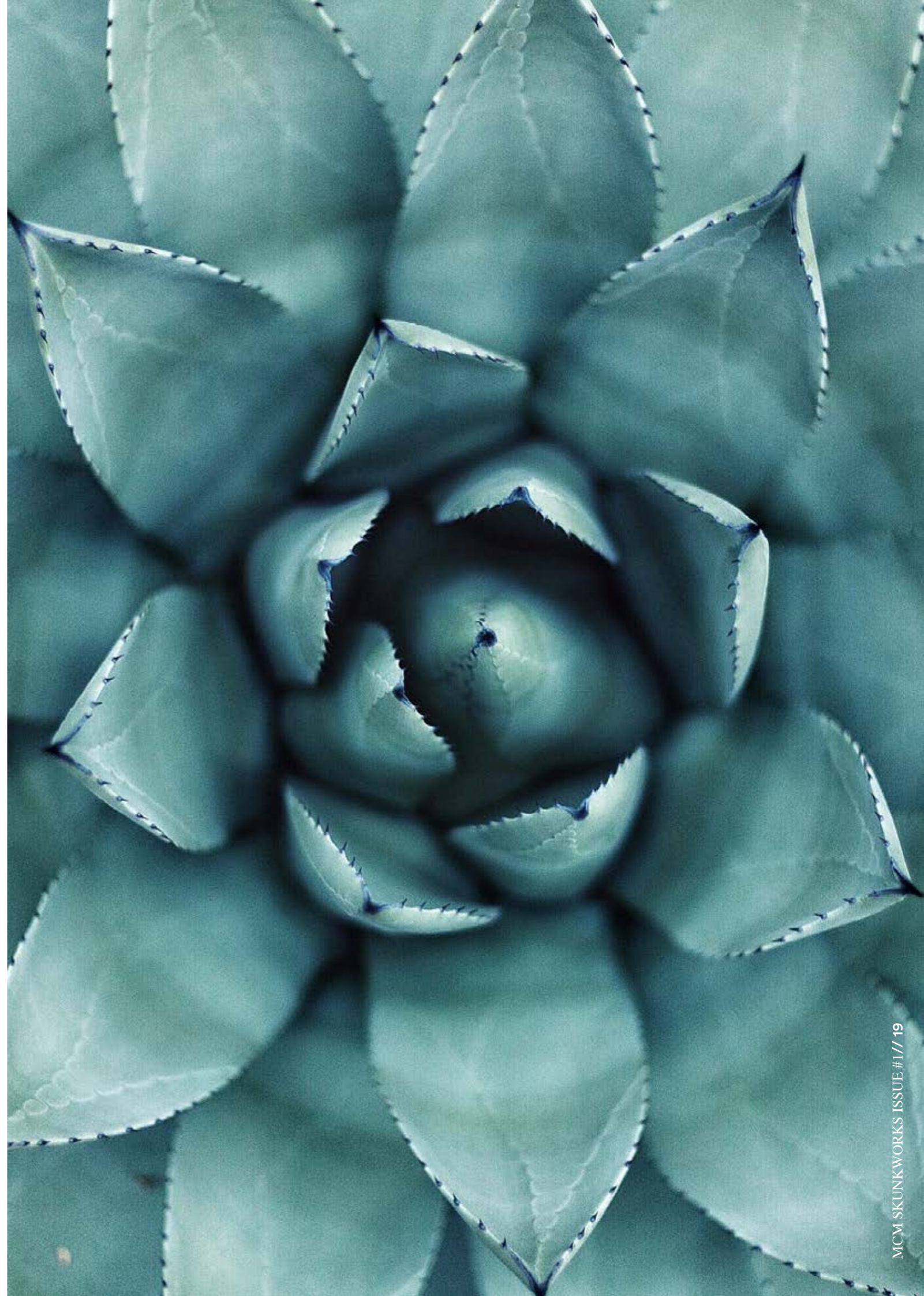
Flexible auditorium and town hall spaces for company-wide communication and learning. Library spaces for head down work. Team spaces for group work, again with tech to enable remote participation if required.

We also see a need for shared facilities that welcome friends and partners and even the general public. Cafés and restaurants, wellness facilities and even childcare facilities will create a soft transition from public realm to private working space.

Flexibility and loose fit furniture solutions will allow the Central Hub to flex with demands and be adaptable if further outbreaks lead to more social distancing in the future. Companies will need to be flexible and resilient in the new world to respond to a rapidly changing and uncertain environment.

The Central Hub will need to be equally flexible for as the recent events have shown long term sure plans can be overturned with incredible pace.

From the Central Hub the Radial Office will reach out to connect and support team members who choose to work remotely. This may well be at home for many, but we predict that there will be a demand for smaller co-working spaces in local communities to give home workers an alternative place to work and access to resources that are not available from home. Or, for those who prefer not to work from home but would like to avoid a commute into the Central Hub.

These local workplaces could operate like local members clubs with subscriptions paid by the company creating a local working community, breathing new life into high streets in residential areas around the country. They will offer a compelling alternative to a weary commute into the office or a day working at the kitchen table and will contain a mix of spaces and technology including super-fast internet. How and who would operate these local hubs is yet to be debated but they could be business opportunity in themselves owned and operated by a third party and subscribed by the business. Or if a critical mass exists, they could be part of the business property portfolio.

We believe a Radial Office that is designed to align with the business culture will bring many commercial benefits to an organisation. Operating costs could decrease with less fallow space in expensive city centre offices. Productivity could increase with increased employee engagement and autonomy. Profitability could increase with an increase of productivity and reduction in absenteeism due to increased health and wellbeing. Added to a potential overall reduction in stress levels and greater appeal to the talent pool, the Radial Office could make a lot of sense.

The Central Hub, a flexible environment that is designed to:

EMBODY THE BRAND, CULTURE AND VALUES OF THE BUSINESS.

PREDICTION 3 THE GIG COMPANY

THE EMERGENCE OF GIG COMPANIES

"A Gig Company puts people first. It is a business built on the premise that its workforce does not have to be recruited and employed because they are within commuting distance to the office. Once you take away commuting and promote remote working, the workforce catchment becomes global and when you embrace trust, your people will excel, wherever they are."

The Covid 19 virus lockdown and remote working has proven to most organisations that effective and productive work can take place virtually and remotely from the office. We are convinced the nature of working in the corporate world will change forever. Not just in the short and medium term when the virus is still around, and we are all social distancing in and out of the workplace. We believe in the long term most organisations will be restructuring and making significant changes.

The obvious changes will be:
- New policies around flexible working to allow and promote more remote working;
- Remote working reducing the amount of office space required, companies disposing of or re-purposing spare space;
- Companies will be leasing or acquiring spaces to work in local community locations, to support their workforce with a third option that is not home or the office, but a community work hub;
- Changing the purpose of the office to a place for collaboration, mentoring and learning, social and company culture connections, client engagement and access to specialist facilities or people;
- Management of staff will require a rethink and retraining so managers know how to manage a remote workforce that they may see face to face rarely.

But there also will be not so obvious changes as well. The new world of work will see the emergence of what we are calling, Gig Companies. A Gig Company is not the same thing as the Gig Economy. To be clear the Gig Economy is about the individuals that work flexibly and on temporary contracts and may have multiple jobs at the same time or during a year.

We recognise this is a great and important part of the world economy and in 2019 there were approximately 57 million gig workers in the USA and about 5 million in the UK. 40% of Millennials in the USA considered themselves Gig workers. The global Gig Economy generated $204billion last year and is expected to grow to $455 Billion by 2023 according to research by Mastercard.

But a Gig Company is something else. A Gig Company puts people first. It is a business built on the premise that its workforce does not have to be recruited and employed because they are within commuting distance to the office. Once you take away commuting and promote remote working, the workforce catchment becomes global and when you embrace trust your people will excel, wherever they are.

We recognise this evolution in company structure is comparable to the dynamic change that took place when mobile devices freed workers from their desk and gave birth to agile working and activity-based working strategies over 20 years ago.

This new world of the Gig Company is we believe much bigger in scale and will have a wider social and economic impact.

"A GIG COMPANY PUTS PEOPLE FIRST.".
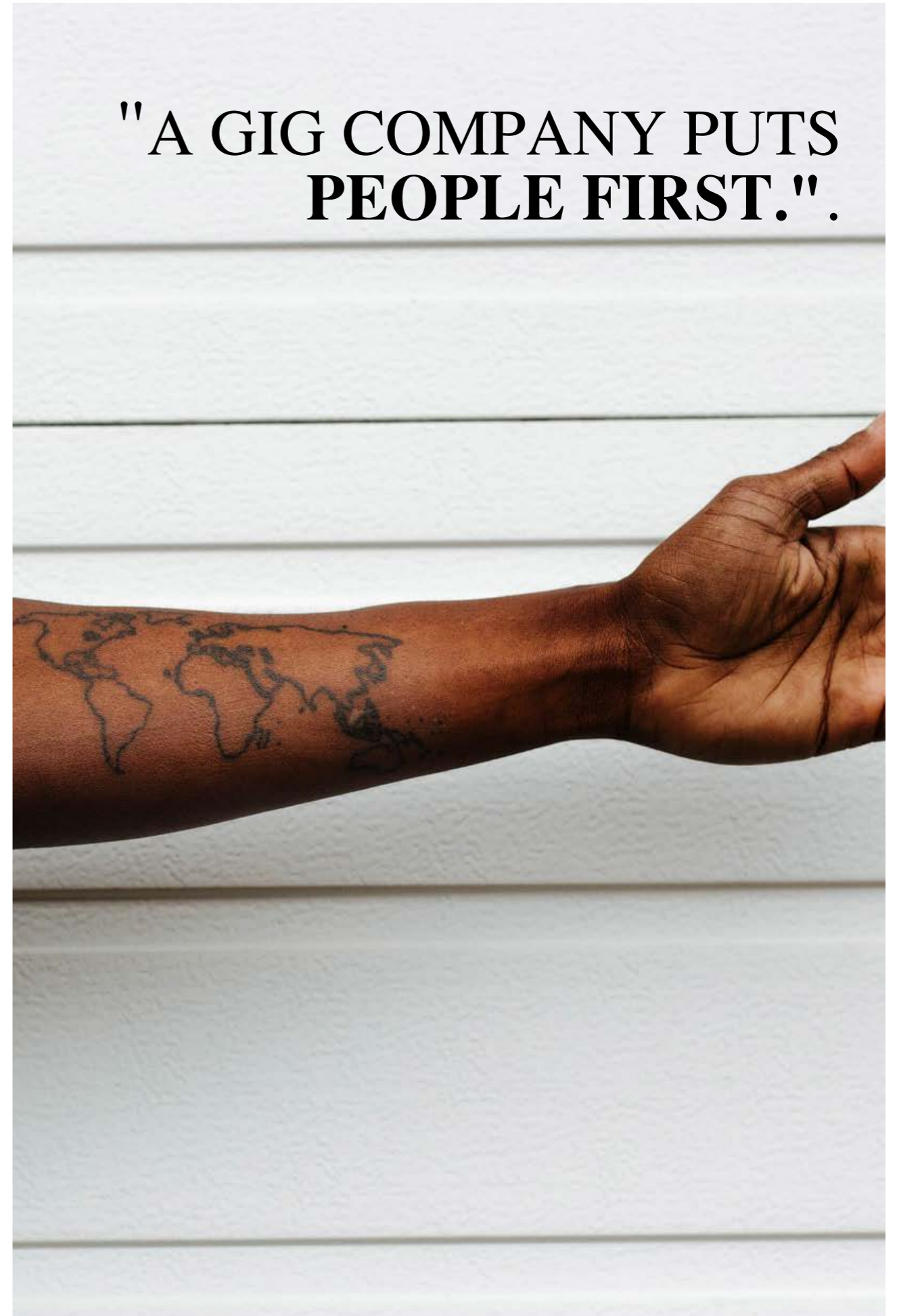
So what are the characteristics of a Gig Company?

People are at the heart of the business wherever they are.

- The talent pool is global.
- Businesses will employ fewer FTE's at the core of the business.
- Flexing staff numbers up and down via the global network of talent.
- Gig companies have a greater diverse workforce; part time, gender diverse, disabled, remote, multinational.
- Gig Companies are connected to local communities via their diverse, remote staff.
- Gig companies value collaborating with other companies, sharing-products /services/expertise.
- Offering a much wider range of products or services to their clients/customers.
- Innovating products and services faster to meet market demands at less risk and costs
- Fixed costs of real estate (offices, distribution, retail premises etc) is less and more flexible, leading to higher margins.

We predict the emergence of Gig Companies will accelerate in the months and years to come. Companies will seek to rebuild, re-imagine their route to market, seek to innovate, find, motivate, and keep their people and ensure their business has purpose in the new world.

Above all the crisis has brought the world together in unison like no other time in recent history and the spirit of cooperation, caring, shared values and doing good for each other and the earth should not be lost. Gig Companies will lead the way.

KEY THEMES FROM OUR RESEARCH

A Return to Human, The Radial Office and The Gig Company concepts have been developed following careful analysis of data gathered over eight weeks of discovery which uncovered many aspects of work, life and the hopes, aspirations and fears that have emerged while under lockdown.

Several themes emerged which we have arranged under the following titles: culture; development; trust; community; innovation; balance and the planet. The next section goes into some detail to explain why they are important and why we have arrived at the concepts for the purpose of the office.

"CULTURE EATS STRATEGY FOR BREAKFAST."

PETER DRUCKER.

Management Guru Peter Drucker famously stated that culture eats strategy for breakfast. He suggests that no matter what business strategy or strategic plan you try to implement, its success and efficacy are going to be held back by the people implementing the plan if the culture does not support it.

Culture takes time and effort to build, it defines your company's internal and external identity, it reinforces your values and purpose and sets the foundations for real tangible business growth. This is a major theme emerging from our research. Respondents felt that the office environment was important in feeling connected to the culture of the company. The office is seen by many as the epicentre of brand, values and culture and the vessel that holds the cultural DNA of an organisation safe for all to be a part of.

It is the place that can foster powerful tribal associations and pride of belonging to a group who share a common purpose. When designed to align with the company's principles, it can further amplify the social capital in an organisation and reinforce feelings of camaraderie.

Covid-19 has forced many organisations to move entirely to remote working in the short term and for now at least, it seems that there has been little negative effect on the performance of individuals. In fact, many of our respondents have reported an increase in productivity linked to

focused tasks and problem solving. There are early indications that large organisations will see this as an opportunity to shed real estate and thus save costs.

Although financially attractive, we wonder how possible it is to have a predominantly virtual office and maintain a strong brand culture. If we look to the world of tech and consumer goods, Apple springs to mind as an example of an organisation that reinforces its brand and cultural loyalty through its real estate.

Apple sells its consumer electronics and computer equipment through multiple avenues, many of which are online. Yet they have over 500 Apple Stores worldwide located in prime retail environments. The stores are an immersive brand experience that links you directly to the tribe and cement your allegiance to the brand.

If commercial office space was to contract and more of us were to work remotely for longer, the challenge would be how do you ensure the brand, culture and values of an organisation are communicated effectively. We might find that commercial office occupiers can learn from the Apple example and use their built environment even more intensely to create a brand destination and cultural experience for their customers, partners and employees.

The Radial Office concept holds culture and values central to it's definition. It is a response directly to ensuring the office as a vessel for the cultural identity of the organisation is not lost as a result of business chasing cost savings that releasing real estate could realise.

DEVELOPMENT

For many graduates, their professional education starts at work by learning from being actively engaged and learning from peers, mentors and managers. The office has typically been where this takes place.

Lawyers arrange workstations and offices in a manner that places trainees near partners so that they can learn and absorb information while conducting everyday business, and are available to answer questions or give advice as its needed.

Most other businesses will have similar requirements for professional development and with the introduction of agile or activity-based working this has been both a challenge and an opportunity. Agility gives people the option of where to work and as such teams can organise themselves to suit their requirements at that time. However, at the other end of the scale with everyone self-organising there needs to be good communication to ensure team members can self-organise collectively.

In the current extreme circumstances, respondents have indicated that their pool of contact has contracted significantly and conversations are generally only with direct team mates or friends they already know and are comfortable connecting with virtually.

The ad hoc and general overheard conversations have stopped and have been replaced by more formalised conversations via video and instant messaging and usually between established groups. The result has been a transition towards siloed conversations and cliques. This is a retrograde step which must be addressed if organisations want to continue to be innovative and inclusive while balancing the benefits of more people working remotely.

It may be that in the same way technology has enabled more remote working, it could be used to address the issues above. Some interviewed had explained junior members of project teams are now invited to virtual meetings and will listen in quietly while carrying on with work. This helped to

expose them directly to matters discussed thus helping them learn and reducing the overall debrief process as they had heard things first-hand.

Others have been experimenting with staying connected by video call for extended periods of time, recreating the experience of sitting next to each other. This has been successful in allowing people to feel connected to their colleagues where they can engage in a form of office chat and to communicate in bursts.

Research published in the journal Academy of Management Discoveries found that teams that employed a "bursty" communication style where ideas are communicated and responded to quickly led to better outcomes...

than by contrast, in environments where communication and feedback were delayed or dispersed across multiple threads. Here teams suffered, and the quality of their work suffered.

The office has by default been the key environment where professional "on the job" learning development has occurred for most knowledge workers and we anticipate that it will continue to be an important part of our professional lives. However, we have seen that the further application of technology can enhance the learning experience when used in conjunction with established methods.
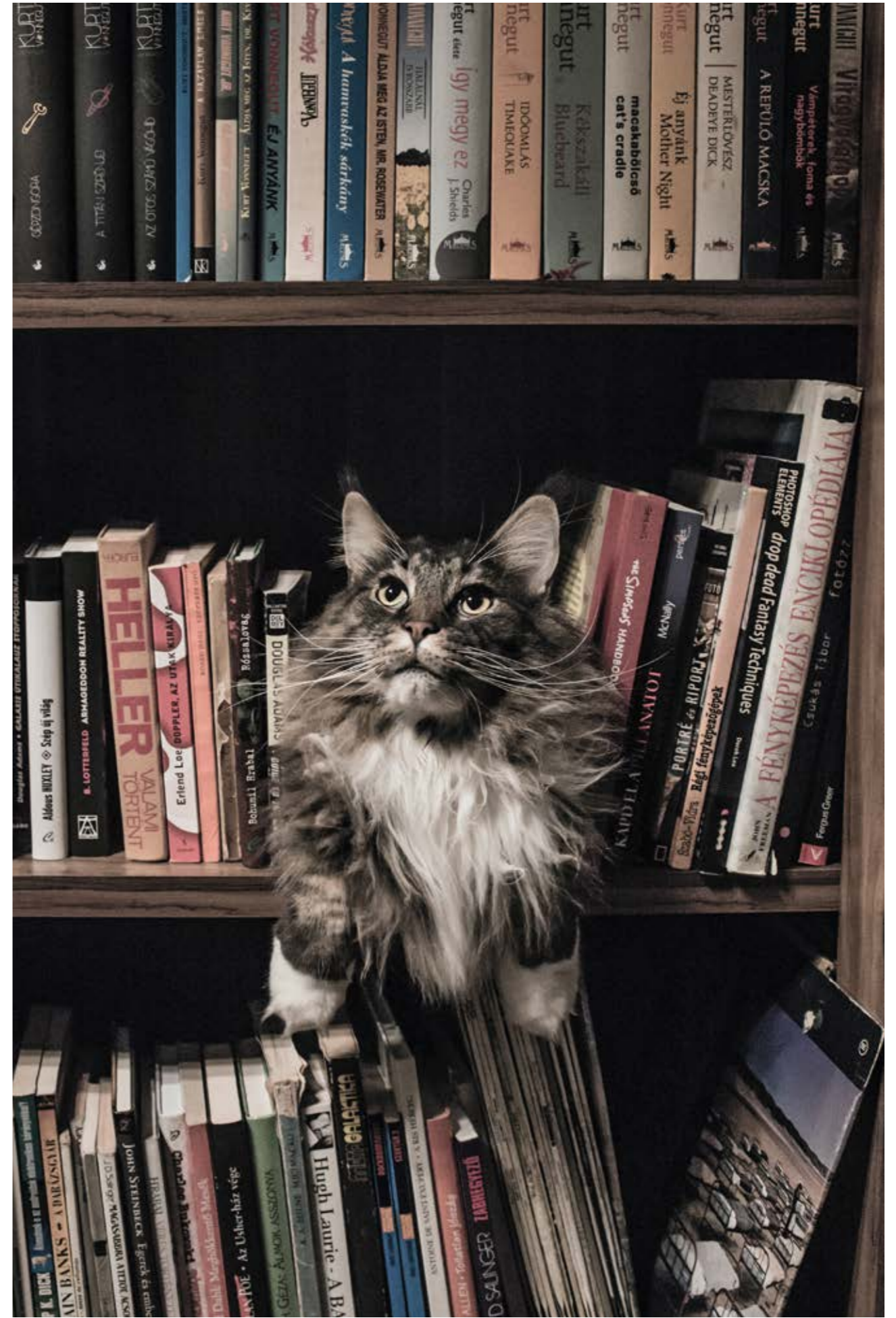
TRUST

A reoccurring theme when discussing remote working with team leaders pre-Covid was the notion of trust.

Many managers had no issues with trust and empowered their team to work where and how they performed best, trusting their judgment, and measuring their productivity by their output.

However, many also struggled with the notion and preferred a team positioned more locally where they could see them. For some it was more difficult to trust, and output was often measured by hours in the office.

The mass lockdown and move to remote working has tested the status quo and we have all been forced to trust each other, our colleagues, managers, and team members and performance can only really be measured by output.

A report in the Harvard Business Review 2017 titled the Neuroscience of Trust stated that compared with people at low-trust companies, people at high-trust companies report: 74% less stress, 100% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives and 40% less burnout.

Senior leaders understand the importance of trust with PWC reporting in 2016 that 55% of CEOs think a lack of trust is a threat to their organisation's growth.

Time will tell what challenges the mass move to a forced trusting environment will bring, but it seems that trust is widely regarded as a differentiator for success and a cornerstone for the future of work.

The Fit for Life Charter holds trust as a key principle. This is a pivotal opportunity for organisations who have been slow in the past to now empower their people with greater levels of trust, while those organisations where this has been the norm will capitalise even further on an engaged and motivated workforce.

When we opened the forum to colleagues in our studio as to why they like coming into the office, one jumped in immediately stating "I've made some of my best friends at work, I miss them and can't wait to get back so I can see them again" This was echoed by others and another retold a story of a family member who worked from home for 15 years after which he found social interaction in groups a challenge.

The theme can also extend past friendships into romance. A survey conducted by the website careerbuilder in the US stated that 38% of people have dated a colleague. Meeting a partner at work ranks in the top 5 ways couples meet, consistently higher than dating apps. In fact, Barrack and Michelle Obama met while at work (she was his mentor) and figures suggest that relationships between co-workers have a higher chance of long-term success.

Offices clearly create important communities within the building as we have seen, and they also contribute enormously to the community in which the building sits. Business districts contain a critical mass of people who support a myriad of ancillary businesses. Bars, restaurants, gyms, retail outlets, dry cleaners, shoe repairs, opticians and so on, all rely on office workers as much as office workers rely on them.

Walk through central London on a Friday evening and it is clear to see the impact offices have on the locality. The bars and restaurants in Soho are full of the media workers, in the City it's finance workers and bankers, in East London architects and designers. It's an integral part of city life and cities are richer for it. The after work drinks are a national institution, feeding into the night time economy which is estimated to be the UKs fifth largest with annual revenues of £66 billion according to the night time industries association.

It is worth considering however that the same circumstances that create vibrant business districts around working hours often result in virtual ghost towns at weekends, think of the City of London, Clerkenwell and Canary Wharf all of which are very different on the weekends.

Similarly, residential areas suffer from a "brain drain" during the week when the offices are full. New mothers often comment about the lack of diversity during the week. The local high street cafes are mainly full of other new parents or childminders.

The office has always been an integral part of our social fabric and community, however for many it sits separately from our local communities often due to location.

For many this is a good thing, being able to travel away from home to another location often in more "glamourous" (the term is subjective) areas enables a form of escapism. It can also be a great leveller, in the office you leave your upbringing behind and are judged on your merits.

It is also a place to see and be seen. We dress for the office, many people haven't worn a pair of proper shoes in weeks and miss having a reason to make an effort. There has been a move towards a more casual work wardrobe in many industries and most now have a dress down Friday, but many still will make more of an effort when in the office over working at home and enjoy doing so.

The Radial Office concept gives people the option to work more locally and by default contribute more to the local economy and community.

It would be interesting to see the difference a Radial Office concept would make for young families; how would it be for parents to meet for lunch and to have breakfast together. Many families commented on how beneficial this had been during the lockdown for people living in a couple or families.

On the theme of local, the gradual demise of the High Street has been much discussed. With more people being enabled to stay local rather than always travel into city centres or, at least be able to stagger the times in which they travel, we can imagine the current trend to shop and spend locally continuing and helping to revive the local economy. This presents a significant opportunity for businesses to contribute indirectly to local communities across the country.

INNOVATION

Being creative helps you become a better problem solver in all areas of your life and work. Instead of coming from a linear, logical approach, your creative side can approach a situation from all angles. Creativity helps you see things differently and better deal with uncertainty. Studies show that creative people are better able to live with uncertainty because they can adapt their thinking to allow for the flow of the unknown, especially important at this time.

Collaboration and creativity are terms that often go hand in hand however they are not the same thing. Collaboration is about working in a team and using collective brain power to achieve a goal. Creative collaboration to achieve innovation is the holly grail and this is achieved by using collaboration and concentrated focus work.

To explain further I'll use two teams of geoscientists as an example. Both teams needed to be highly creative in their thinking and collaborate regularly to test theories and share information. The Exploration Team put an emphasis on the creativity and intelligence of the individual. Each scientist had their own office with a door so they could use their space for deep concentrated thinking, coming out of their space and inviting others to join them when they wanted to collaborate with their team.

The Production Team had the same challenges but preferred to work in an open setting as a team bouncing ideas off each other in a more casual way and choosing to break off individually when they needed to concentrate deeply on a problem. For both teams it was the combination of collaboration and focus work that enabled the greatest chance of innovation.

Respondents to our research had found that in many cases having fewer distractions at home under lockdown had enabled them time and space to focus deeply on their work and as a result they felt they had been more creative. It was interesting that being removed from the office for the task had this effect and worth considering when designing for the post Covid world.

The emphasis is often placed on creating maximum opportunities for collaboration to enable creativity, but we have been reminded that enabling time and space for deep focus is equally important. In a post Covid world we must make sure that individual focus time is protected as much as collaboration is encouraged.

On the subject of collaboration, we have found that with the right protocols and applications we as a company have been able to hold surprisingly successful brainstorm and other collaborative sessions using online apps and video calls. Compared to face to face sessions the experience has been different, but the outcomes have been very good.

The challenge we feel will come when there is a mix of people joining remotely and being in the room. The experience for both needs to be consistent so no one feels as though they are having a second-class experience. This has always been the challenge with conference calling in the past and although technology has moved on greatly in the future we will need to ensure both spaces and behaviours reflect the need to be inclusive for those in the room and joining remotely.

MCM are regularly asked to design innovative workspaces that foster creative collaboration...
BUT WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?
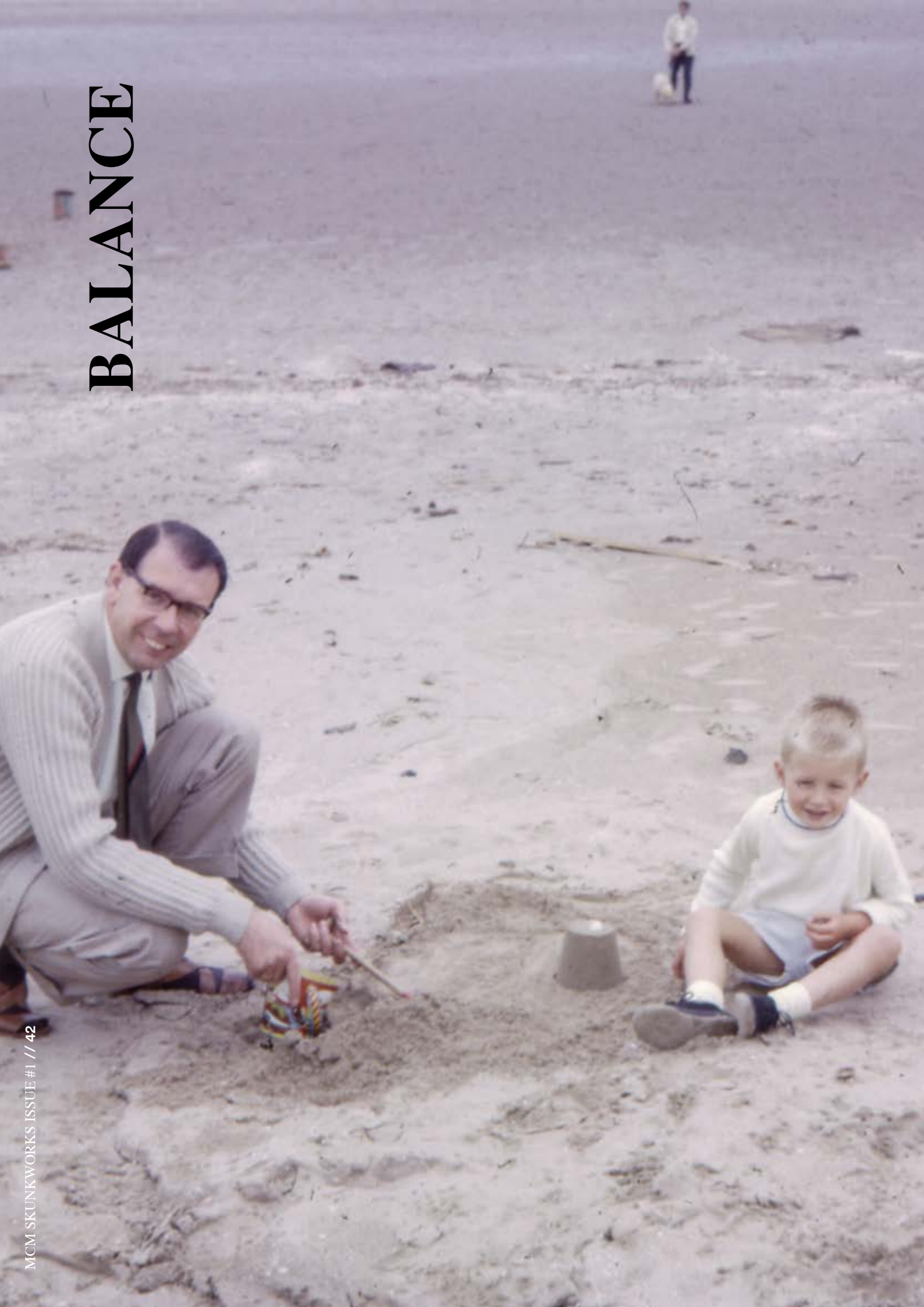
An unexpected benefit for many people interviewed during the lockdown was the re-balancing of work and life. Regaining time from the daily commute and traveling to and from meetings has been redeployed for more meaningful activities which respondents have across the board have welcomed.

The increased flexibility afforded to employees to help them cope with the situation has resulted in there being more respect for people working in ways that suit their personal circumstances, and for some families more gender balance. Mums and Dads are home to share the load and employers, clients and colleagues are becoming more accustomed to family life blending into work life.

Employers have been forced to be more respectful of individual working styles to suit lifestyle challenges and in many instances are in similar situations as their team members, as have clients and customers. This has led to collective empathy allowing us to all be a bit more human in our interaction with work.

This has had a marked impact on levels of stress for many, having more autonomy and control over the way work and personal life blends has unlocked potential for working at different times and in different ways. Many email footers now state that the sender is working flexibly at a time that suits them, with the recipient urged not to respond until it is convenient to do so.

People are also finding that work is taking place in different places as well as times. One respondent commened that they found they did some of their best thinking while exercising and now keep a note pad by the front door to jot down the ideas generated while out running. They had always seen this as recreation time away from work and felt some guilt about going for a run during working hours even if it was at lunchtime. They now think differently, and see the value this time has directly on their work and use a run to help organise thier thoughts when wrestling a difficult problem.

Our survey has indicated that many respondents value this shift in balance that the lockdown has brought and hope that the future workplace environment will enable greater balance and an opportunity to engineer a lifestyle that is more in sync with the way we individually live our lives.

A challenge in the future will be how do organisations support the flexibility of individuals while managing business outputs.

As well as designing spaces that offer choice and enabling remote working from multiple locations, businesses will need to ensure well considered policies are developed to manage the logistics of an empowered workforce.

The Fit for Life Charter has been conceived to offer a framework to assist organisations to navigate this challenge. If managed well, we are confident that the result will be an improved employee experience leading to increased motivation, better overall heath, lower absenteeism, higher talent retention and higher overall productivity. All of which have been proved to be good for business.

NINETY-SEVEN PERCENT OF CLIMATE SCIENTISTS AGREE THAT **HUMAN ACTIVITY IS DRIVING A CLIMATE CRISIS ACROSS THE EARTH.**

The United Nations refer to the climate crisis as "the defining crisis of our time…but we are far from powerless in the face of this global threat" This will require fundamental transformations in all aspects of society — how we grow food, use land, transport goods, and power our economies.

March 2020 saw the planet stop with a drastic reduction in carbon production. The impact was profound and well documented in the media, proving that with the right motivation it is possible to have a marked and immediate affect on the global climate crisis.

Of course, standing down entire countries is not sustainable for economies or livelihoods however the ground is fertile for new ideas that can help address the climate crisis. Prior to the Covid crisis Lord Norman Foster has speculated that

"future generations will be much more demanding and much more questioning in terms of what a potential employer will be doing to tackle climate change."

We believe that this is even more pertinent now.

More flexible and remote working will allow less pressure to be placed on infrastructure. One interviewee commented that he drove a 150-mile round trip to an office in Southampton to spend the day on the phone to London. He believes that this situation will alter going forward.

Many legacy behaviours of the "way we do things round here" will be challenged as we emerge from the lockdown and the impact we could have

on the environment could be incredible. The beauty is that the solutions would be multi-faceted, positively affecting, health, wellbeing, engagement innovation, productivity and profitability. They will also have far reaching impact that could extend further than work and the office but also into infrastructure, and town planning.

Having the option to work more locally will reduce the overall need and affect the style of travel. Commercial buildings will be reimagined as they take the opportunity to restructure how business use commercial space.

Local amenities will possibly flourish again as people shop and entertain more locally which could lead to an increase in more locally and seasonally sourced produce. There could well be a reduction in the amount of motorised travel with walking and cycling being used in the place of cars.

Thinking more broadly are there ways that these behaviours can make a marked difference to the environmental quality of our cities? The Mayor of London has closed several central London streets to traffic to help with social distancing. Could these remain post Covid for pedestrians and non-motorised traffic as the start of a network of green arteries, that connect the parks with major transport hubs creating a green network around the capital.

Many have had a renewed connection with nature as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and the world needed a catalyst to really start tangible change in favour of the environment to occur. Covid 19 could be exactly that and we owe it to ourselves and the future generations to do our best to enable the best possible outcome.

The world of work and everyday life that we knew just three short months ago, is now unrecognisable. Here at MCM, we believe there will be no going back to the way things were. Early in the pandemic we realised the changes taking place to work and life were not temporary emergency measures but would have fundamental and long-term impact on people, society, business, and the planet. 2020 has forced us all to think. The pain, suffering, loss of life, enforced separation and total disruption has also encouraged debate and discussion, research, discovery, and ideas to emerge. We are all talking, and change is happening.

As a response and desire to understand and predict the future, The MCM Skunkworks programme set out to tackle the question:

Post Covid 19 - What is the purpose of the office?

Our research and investigation involved engaging with clients of MCM in virtual roundtable discussions, group forums, as well as on-line surveys to staff and clients, research into public and private opinions and canvassing views of global industry leaders. And most importantly developing our own ideas and views as to what this global social experiment means for the future.

Perhaps not surprisingly, as we researched and held weekly workshops to brainstorm ideas and gather our thoughts, the ideas and themes expanded to well beyond just the purpose of the office. The themes as we describe in detail here emerged as equally important as purpose: Culture, Development, Trust, Community, Innovation, Balance, The Planet.

As a result of analysing these themes, MCM Skunkworks have boldly predicted that successful businesses in the immediate future will need to pivot themselves and model their businesses around three new business priorities and directions: A Return to Human, The Radial Office, The Gig Company.

A new world of work, supporting all humans through kindness and a caring organisational culture, that provides choice and work life balance, with a global reach that is based on trust.

Over the period that our team has been working on this, we have been humbled by our key workers and saddened by the suffering, but we are also hopeful. Hopeful that the ideas and spirt that has emerged from this series of tragic events will be able to shape a future that is kinder and more human for all of us. In our own way this is MCMs vision to positively affect our sphere of influence.

MCM.

GOOD
NEWS
IS COMING

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