

Culture in the workplace

Creating and curating a productive environment

Summary of a panel debate held on 6th June 2017 to mark the launch of Interserve's latest report in its 'Workplace experience - the science series' project.



Creating an open, collaborative and innovative workplace

In our ever-more connected world, the workplace is seeing huge changes. Modern technologies are creating new means of communicating with management, colleagues and customers - meaning that we can work more flexibly and innovatively. At the same time, new generations are entering the workforce, bringing fresh ideas but also expectations as to the way they want to work.

These changes are forcing us to reconsider the role of the physical working environment. Many organisations have been tempted to use flexible working practices as an opportunity to reduce costs; encouraging people to work remotely in order to decrease square foot floorspace requirements.

Although this approach has a clear commercial rationale, it's important to consider how such decisions can affect the culture of a workplace. Ultimately, we are a social species and for most employees the important relationships and social bonds that underpin successful businesses rely on a degree of physical proximity and interaction.

Although we like flexibility at work, there is still an important role for the physical workplace to help create and maintain those relationships. What is clear is that the working environment works hard to prove its value - ensuring that it fosters an open, collaborative and innovative working culture.

The evidence from our panel debate on this topic, which is detailed in the following pages, suggests that the organisations that meet this challenge will be rewarded for their efforts, in the form of more motivated, collaborative, innovative and productive teams.



Jeff Flanagan
Managing Director -
Commercial, Interserve



The debate - about the discussion



Little Ship Club

Senior property and workplace professionals met at the Little Ship Club in the City of London in June to share ideas and best practice on how organisations can create a productive working culture.

The group included representatives from leading organisations across the private and public sectors, including CMS Nabarro Olswang LLP, Santander, TalkTalk, the RNLI, BMA and the Cabinet Office, generating a wide-ranging and lively discussion over coffee and breakfast.

The event was the third in Interserve's breakfast debates supporting our two-year research project, with Advanced Workplace Associates (AWA), Workplace experiences - the science series, which is exploring the science behind creating effective workplaces.

The debate centred on the role that culture plays in enhancing or hindering employee performance, and the importance of the physical workplace for enabling as well as changing behaviours.

As always we are grateful to our guests for taking the time to join and inform this discussion.



Our panel



Jeff Flanagan
Managing Director -
Commercial, Interserve

Jeff heads up Interserve's facilities management and workplace solutions for professional services, legal, retail, technology and media customers based in the UK and Europe, as well as Interserve's specialist city-centric brands The Perception, Knightsbridge and Lancaster.

Jeff has been in the industry for more than 20 years and is responsible for around 30,000 people. Jeff is the driving force behind Interserve's 'Decoding the workplace experience' science series of reports and debates.



Julia Lindsay
CEO, iOpener Institute for
People and Performance

Julia believes that the best measure of business success is delivering - both numbers and objectives. And that only happens when everyone is totally engaged with their mission, their team and their tasks. In other words, when they are happy at work.

During the 15 years Julia spent working at senior and executive level in the financial services industry, she led teams in financial management and control, operations and change management.

The key to Julia's early success was realising that a strong people-focus would deliver global results and greatly impact the wider business too. The results and feedback she gets both as a consultant and coach lie not only in her talent for developing new approaches and fresh ideas - but also in ensuring that people have the capability and enthusiasm to tackle tough challenges. Through this Julia has enabled organisations to deliver their strategy and goals efficiently and effectively. Julia's professional training as an accountant means she has a strongly-commercial approach to everything she does.



Julia Lee
Head of workplace
experience, Interserve

With 17 years' experience working in employee engagement, events and marketing, Julia has come from Centrica where she led a transformational building redesign project at the company's head office in Windsor.

Having recently completed an MSc in Behavioural Science, Julia is currently working with Interserve customers to assist in the design and delivery of effective workplace environments, drawing on principles from psychology, neuroscience and cognitive science.



Sarah Hodge
Senior Associate, Advanced
Workplace Associates

Sarah has 25 years' facilities management, change and business transformation experience with a variety of prestigious organisations including Britvic, Canary Wharf Ltd, Lloyds of London, Swiss Re Insurance and NB Entrust.

Sarah is an active member of the BIFM Workplace SIG and has a unique understanding and insight into organisational relationships, people, skills, behaviours and competencies: combining these with operational processes and ways of working in the built environment that drive change and deliver measurable business results.



Andrew Mawson
Founder, Advanced
Workplace Associates

Andrew is a leading thinker and speaker on matters work and place. He has led workplace change programmes with clients including Invesco, Unicef, Willis, Direct Line Group, National Rail, Royal Bank of Scotland and Merrill Lynch. In 2014 Andrew worked with the UK Cabinet Office as an adviser, participating in a review of 13 government departments' performance in implementing agile working as part of the government's Civil Service Reform programme. Andrew directed AWA's Knowledge Worker productivity research and is exploring neuroscience as a model to explain the world of work.

Key debate topics

The debate covered a range of subjects relating to culture within the workplace experience, including the role of individuals, leadership teams and the physical work space. The following summary provides a snapshot of the main themes as well as the views of our panellists and guests.

What is workplace culture?

The way that people work individually and together has seen radical change in recent years. The advent of new technologies means that we can now work more flexibly and with greater agility, whether in the office, at home, or on the move.

People want to be successful at work; to be contributing - to get stuff done. Culture either translates that feeling into good things, or can diminish their ability to contribute.

Julia Lindsay, iOpener Institute

The reality, however, is that most of us still spend more time at work than on any other single activity. The vast majority of workers don't only do this because they have to, but because they want to contribute to the goals that the organisation has set out to achieve.

Put simply, workplace culture is the extent to which the working environment can help or hinder people to make this contribution. In the best case scenario, a dynamic, positive culture can really encourage teams - and businesses - to thrive. At worst, an organisation with a poor culture will lead to despondency in teams that can have a severe effect on performance.



Good customer care is absolutely essential for businesses, but that attention to detail is too often lost on employees in the workplace itself.

Julia Lee, Interserve

Key indicators of cultural health

As obvious as it may seem, one of the best signs of a healthy working culture is an organisation where there is strong social cohesion - where people like each other! Workplaces where people act as friends, not only as colleagues, inspire people to perform better, support each other and ultimately care more about the work they do.

Building these relationships relies on creating a working environment where people can share information and ideas. Allowing people to speak freely and - where appropriate - challenge traditional ways of doing things, makes employees feel empowered and willing to contribute.

Building trust

Establishing these relationships when team members are not always in the same location presents a series of challenges for workplace professionals looking to develop a strong sense of organisational culture.

For businesses operating in multiple locations, or even countries, investing in good communications is essential to ensure cross-organisational teams can bond, build trust and work easily together. Similarly, businesses need to consider how best to establish a shared culture and set of values for teams that work regularly out of the office - for example by making sure that there are ample opportunities for colleagues to meet in person and get to know each other better.

We need to put the human at the heart of the process and make sure that the workplace doesn't put anything else in the way.

*Andrew Mawson,
Advanced Workplace Associates*

People want friendships at work - to share ideas, trust them and to create an open as well as challenging dialogue.

Andrew Mawson, Advanced Workplace Associates

At the same time, strong leadership is critical and in the vast majority of cases an organisation's culture is set from the top. If the leadership team is generous with its time and knowledge to support colleagues, then that behaviour is likely to filter throughout the whole business.

Without due care and attention or a clear strategy for engaging them in the culture of a workplace, remote workers can very quickly feel disconnected.

Julia Lindsay, iOpener Institute



Curating the physical workplace

The physical environment plays a pivotal role in establishing as well as perpetuating good - and often bad - cultures.

Creating social spaces both inside and outdoors is important to allow team members to meet and get to know each other, often sparking chance conversations that can have a hugely beneficial effect on a business. For many organisations, the trend away from fixed work stations to hot desking has been used to engender a more flexible, dynamic working culture.

In this sense the workplace acts as a physical expression of the values that an organisation wants to instil in its employees - shaping the way that they work together.

People can often remain very tribal and the workplace often needs to work hard to discourage that.

Christine Zammit, Cabinet Office

Communicating workplace change

Businesses looking to facilitate a change in the culture of a workplace need to start by identifying what it is that they want to achieve, developing a set of objectives which will underpin the process.

In doing so, engagement and good communications with employees are essential to turn what could be a disruptive process into a hugely positive and exciting one. Although the leadership team set the tone of the working environment, it is employees that are a business' most valuable asset, so they need to feel involved and listened to.

This can be as straightforward as establishing an engagement survey to find out what employees are looking for, and to evaluate its success over time against the workplace goals.

Giving employees a voice is critical - from opportunities to feed back on designs, furniture or how they like to use their workspaces, they want to feel part of the process.

Julia Lee, Interserve

Although culture is intangible, you can feel it when you walk into somewhere - whether there is a positive and productive feeling or not.

*Sarah Hodge,
Advanced Workplace Associates*

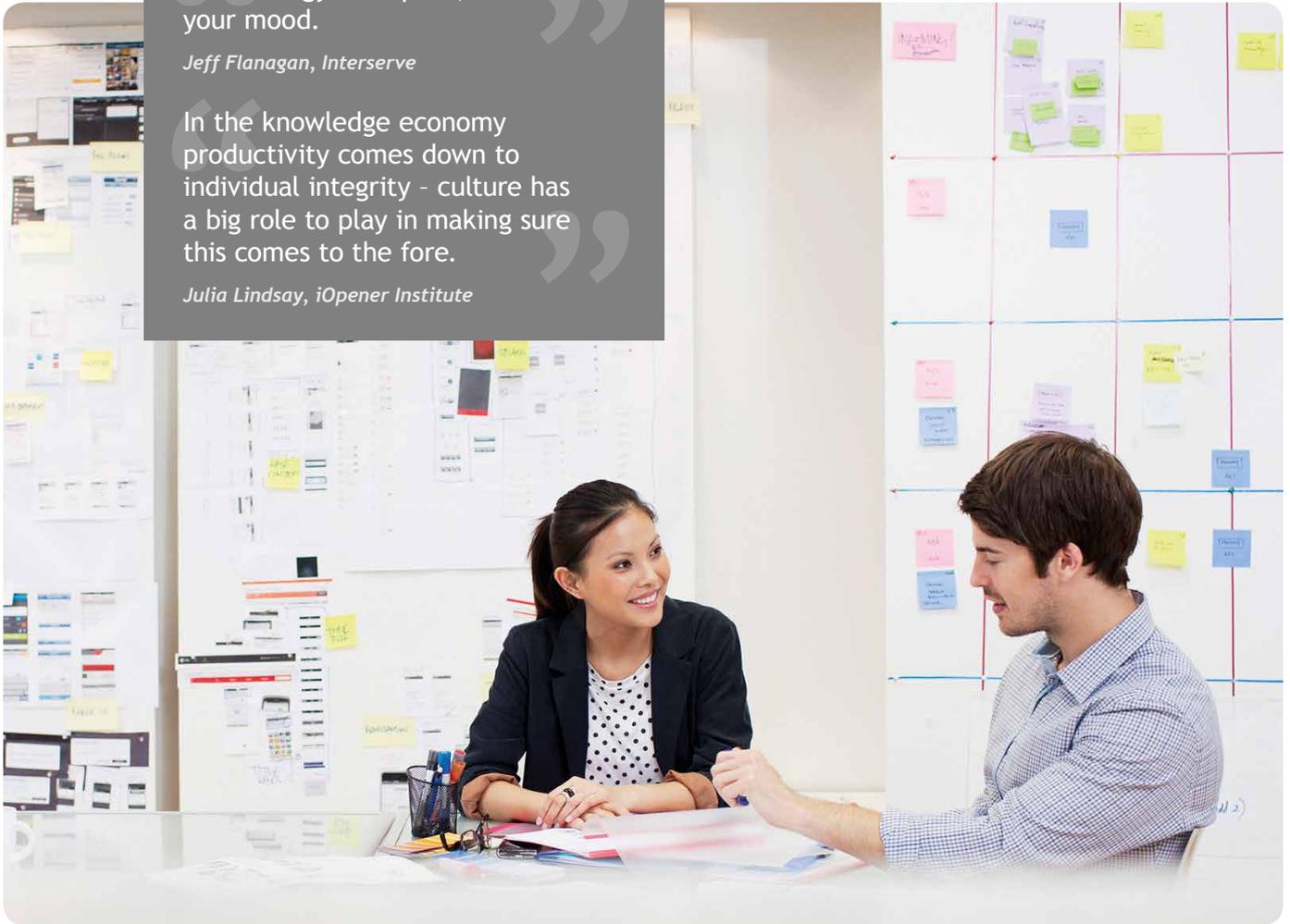


Silence is not always golden. If there is no energy in a space, that affects your mood.

Jeff Flanagan, Interserve

In the knowledge economy productivity comes down to individual integrity - culture has a big role to play in making sure this comes to the fore.

Julia Lindsay, iOpener Institute



What success looks like - a productive workplace

Shifting the culture of a workplace won't happen overnight but the evidence points to huge potential rewards for organisations that invest in change.

Research from the iOpener Institute suggests that the happiest employees within an organisation - those who feel respected and appreciated within a positive culture - say they intend to stay put for five years. By comparison, the unhappiest employees anticipate moving on within a mere eighteen months, with the ensuing recruitment costs for their employer.

Moreover, there is a huge productivity gap that can be either widened or narrowed by investing in a positive cultural environment, with the most positive employees dedicating on average 1.25 days more of their time each week compared to those who feel least engaged and happy in the workplace.

So often the results speak for themselves to justify the investment in workplace culture - don't lose sight of the importance of a happy and productive workplace when there are huge productivity rewards to be gained.

Jeff Flanagan, Interserve

Attendees

Clementine Collett

iOpener Institute for People & Performance

Philippa Davies

Head of Customer and Supporter Experience
RNLI

David Emmanuel

Managing Director
i-FM

Jeff Flanagan

Managing Director - Commercial
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Grahame Hart

Sales Director - Commercial
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Tina Hobart

Head of Customer Experience - Commercial
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Sarah Hodge

Senior Associate
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Julia Lee

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Danny Postill

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Karen Robson

Head of Third Party Cost Management & Procurement
Santander

Andrew Simmonds

Business Development Manager
Paragon

Chris Trim

Head of Contract Management
CMS Nabarro Olswang LLP

Fiona Tyler

Director of Cost Management & Procurement
Santander

Jill Tucker

Regional Facilities Manager
TalkTalk

Ian Wade

Head of UK Estates
British Medical Association

Christine Zammit

Head of Commercial and Estate Management
Cabinet Office

Want to know more?

To find out more about our research project '*Workplace Experiences - The Science Series*' including future reports and debates please contact:

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About Interserve

Interserve is one of the world's leading support services companies. Our 80,000 people operate across a range of workplaces and environments, helping to make them better for those who use them. We understand what matters to businesses, their people and their customers - but we are always looking for ways to enhance what we do; to continue to question, learn and improve. Our reports and debates support an understanding of the working environment and its importance to effective corporate performance.



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