Don’t look in front, look ahead

The following data has been sourced from the WHO Global Status Report on Road Safety 2015—180 countries out of a total of 195 WHO Member States, covering 8.6 billion people or 97% of the world’s population.

1.2 million Lives are claimed by road traffic injuries each year. 3 out of 6 road deaths are among men. 50% of the world’s road traffic deaths occur among people who are not in a car.

2030 Road traffic accidents are predicted to rise to the 5th leading cause of death by 2050

2020 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has set a goal of reducing road traffic deaths and injuries by 50% by 2020.

50% An adult pedestrian has less than a 20% chance of surviving if struck by a car under 50 mph.

Road traffic deaths rates in low and middle income countries are more than double those in high income countries.

No. 1 Road traffic accidents are the leading cause of death among those aged 15-29 year-olds.

5% Road traffic deaths and injuries in low and middle income countries are estimated to cause economic losses of up to 5% GDP.

Wearing a seat-belt reduces the risk of fatal injury by just over half of all countries have established good seat belt laws.

There is a four-fold increase in crash risk when talking on a mobile phone while driving.

Only 2.1 billion people have drive-drinking laws in place in their best practice.

Only 4.8 billion people have seat belt laws that cover both front and rear seat occupants.

Sources: World Health Organization, Global Status Report on Road Safety 2015, UN Department for Transport

An inconvenient truth: across 1,600+ corporate workplaces, almost one in two employees do not believe that the workplace support them working productively. Understand why, then transform the workplace from a liability to an asset.

For the avoidance of any doubt, Leesman has never measured employee productivity. We believe organisations themselves are best placed to do that since 2010 we have asked every Leesman Office respondent to what extent the workplace provided “enables me to work productively”.

To help understand what exactly we’re testing, try transferring yourself to the workplace productivity “with the central responsibility that employee has. So if a lawyer: “my workplace enables me to solve my client’s legal issues”. Or an info sec specialist at a bank: “my workplace enables me to protect the bank from hackers intent on bringing us down”.

Since spring 2016, Leesman has been heavily involved in supporting the Stoddart Review. This major piece of investigative work aimed to synthesize disparate industry rhetoric and present a coherent “one voice” proposition on the role of workplace in organisational performance.

The exercise was specially facilitated by the British Institute of Facilities Management who have exercised real restraint in allowing the non-partisan enquiry team to sniff out topics and turn stones wherever necessary. The Stoddart Review aimed to get the topic matter to corporate leadership boards’ radars. The pitch: your workplace impacts your P&L. So what? Every exec knows that workplace hits bottom line profitability. But our industry is stucked accused of being too close to the trees, but the space between the apex. Workplace professionals are thused to improve the “productivity of space”.

We offer new data every month at £60,752.

For more details see: http://www.lessmarindex.com

Ian Ellison and James Pinder
Ian and James assess if we know how to use the terms workplace and workspace, to benefit organisations and people.

Duncan Young
Duncan shares the learnings from an ongoing research project which uses new technology to examine employee wellbeing.

Dr Peggie Rothe
Peggie investigates the relationship between open plan settings and the overall effectiveness of the space.

Ian Ellison and James Pinder  Page 2
Duncan Young  Page 4
Dr Peggie Rothe  Page 8
There's an internet meme that does the rounds about grammar. You’ve probably seen it. It’s about the difference between knowing your -ahem- stuff, and knowing you’re... well, you get the message.

**Grammar: The difference between knowing your s–t and knowing you’re s–t.**

Words matter. They are a primary method we use to convey our thoughts and complex ideas. But we often implicitly assume that the person on the receiving end of our discourse understands things exactly as we do. So let’s take ‘workplace’. What does it mean to you? Pause for a moment here and have a ponder. If you’re in the built environment industry, your definition will most probably include some sort of physical, spatial element. But what if you’re from a HR or OD background?

All of a sudden the notion of place in built environment terms has its roots in urban planning and design. During the 1960s, urban activists like Jane Jacobs and behaviourists like William H Whyte began challenging the then growing conventional wisdom of urban design. In reaction to top down and rigid planning solutions that favoured cars and shopping centres over people, Jacobs and Whyte foregrounded placemaking, both as a process and philosophy, to collaboratively reimagine public spaces as the heart of communities. So from these foundations it becomes clear that places are fundamentally social. Turning our attention back now to workplace, we use a simple equation to capture this, and in doing so unite those different perspectives from HR and the built environment:

(work)space + culture = (work)place.

From here, we find it useful to frame conversations about work and workplace using the diagram above. It’s like an old-school graphic equaliser with two slide bars. One bar represents workspace, and the other culture. Each bar runs from traditional to progressive. So how would you position the bars to represent these two elements of your own organisation? Does one lead the other? How close are they? Have they drifted over time? Does your workspace represent your organisational culture? Now, think again. If you want to change one element, where would you move it and why?

Thinking about workplace this way is important because it shows the connectedness between the two elements. But how are they linked - with string or elastic? If you pull them too far apart, will the connected system fail? You can choose to change them independently. But many organisations make the mistake of focusing on their workplace (both physical and virtual) and either forgetting about culture, or hoping that changing their space will be a catalyst in itself.

Words in this way resonate most significantly with some of the currently popular co-working spaces. For those that have been considered beyond the superficial ‘industrial chic’ aesthetic, such as the seminal Impact Hub in Westminster, designed by the iconoclastic and RIBA award-winning studio Architecture 08, the implicitly socio-spatial
The High-Performing Workplace
A 4 Step Process

We hear lots of talk about the ‘high-performing workplace’ and it is a great buzzword but what does it actually mean in practice and what do we need to do to achieve it?

My field is negotiation and, interestingly, this has given me an insight into what practical steps we can take to turn an organisation into a high-performing one.

You see, in the office we are negotiating all the time. Not just with our clients, suppliers and other external stakeholders but, crucially, with our internal stakeholders too. With our boss, with our team below us, with the IT team to build that new software, with the finance team to release more budget – the list is endless. Almost every interaction with a colleague is a negotiation.

So I believe a high-performing organisation is an organisation which can quickly reach win-win in all of these micro-negotiations.

Does it have to be win-win? Yes. If not, there will be resentment, demotivation, dragging of heels, undermining and sabotage. Not the hallmarks of a high-performing organisation, I am sure you will agree.

Furthermore, what are those wins likely to be? Well, they are likely to be the business objectives for that individual, given where they are in the organisation. So the win-win outcome will (in theory at least) be the higher objectives for the overall organisation.

And quickly? Yes, this is important too. Because if it takes hours, days, weeks or months to reach that solution, it is a huge internal friction, a massive operational cost, slowing the organisation down. But if all staff are trained to think in terms of achieving win-win rapidly and efficiently, all this friction will be removed and the workplace will become so much more effective.

So How Do We Do It?

If it’s about quick, win-win internal negotiations, we can break this down to 4 simple steps:

1. Be Clear About Your Win:
   Be very clear about the outcome you would like, be ambitious about this outcome and focus on the bigger picture.

2. Help Them Get Their Win:
   Step into their shoes and understand their perspective. Be ambitious for them, too. Help them achieve more than they might have thought possible themselves.

3. Resolve Any Deadlocks:
   Outcomes will frequently appear mutually exclusive but if you are creative and focus on the bigger picture, this is actually rarely the case. The best negotiators use compromise as a last resort; instead, by focusing on the bigger picture, they develop solutions which create new value so all parties are better off. If you need to, use neutral, independent benchmarks or third parties to reach an outcome everyone agrees is fair.

4. Build Trust:
   The high-performing organisation is characterised by high levels of trust. Build trust by always delivering on your promises and by treating everyone fairly. Have verification procedures in place – it is these which will enable the trust and, over time, you won’t need to use them.

It sounds easy in theory and, actually, it is easier in practice than you might imagine. And if all your employees can operate by these principles, you’re a big step closer to having built a high-performing workplace.

Simon Horton is the author of The Leader’s Guide to Negotiation. He is a Visiting Lecturer at Imperial College and has taught negotiation and collaboration to the British Army, ExxonMobil, Slaughter and May and many other leading global organisations.

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The workplace – it is a great buzzword but what does it actually mean in practice and what do we need to do to achieve it?

With 16 years’ experience spanning workplace and facilities management practice and education, Ian has developed a reputation as an engaging and entertaining thought leader. Passionate about the power of workplace to enable better business outcomes, his work at 3edges helps organisations to make better workplace decisions through action-led research, consultancy and education.

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James Pinder PhD  |  Partner  |  3edges

James is an applied researcher, consultant and educator with a longstanding interest in the workplace, and the impact it has on people and organisations. He is a skilled and experienced evaluator, adept at providing organisations with new insights and communicating those insights in ways that are engaging and easy to understand.

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Ian Ellison  |  Partner  |  3edges

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Corporate Athletes
—the rise of wellbeing awareness

We spend a third of our lives at work so it’s unsurprising that what we do at work has a huge impact on our health. 82% of business costs are spent on salaries, so employers are also becoming more aware of the importance of wellbeing. After all, healthy employees are more engaged and take less sick leave. And these could be key in developing a high-performance organisation.

Our work world is changing. Advancements in technology mean that we can now work anywhere, at anytime. In an always ‘on’ world, it is becoming harder and harder to disconnect. The transition between work and home is becoming increasingly blurred, with traditional 7 or 8 hour working day no longer the norm.

There have also been changes in the physical demands of work. An increased reliance on computers has led to many being employed in sedentary jobs. Occupations which involve moderately intense physical activities have decreased from 48% in 1960 to 20% in 2008.

And our always ‘on’ world isn’t helping, with an increase in stress and mental health issues seemingly correlating. With 80% of workers in the US reporting feeling stress and mental health isn’t helping, with an increase in physical activities have decreased from 48% in 1960 to 20% in 2008.

Imagine leaving work healthier than you arrived
us thrive in both our personal and working lives. Stress, for example, which we mentioned earlier, isn’t necessarily always bad. In many situations, it can help get things done. But chronic stress will have an impact and this is where recovery is crucial in maintaining a healthy balance.

Seminal studies of elite athletes suggest that 10,000 hours of deliberate practice is required for mastery. More interesting is the fact that the top performer in this study slept 1 hour and 45 minutes longer than the average performing athlete (8hr 36 mins vs. 6hr 51 mins), proving that deliberate practice alongside rest has an impact on performance.

And it’s not just in the world of athletics that this has been proven. Desk-Time, a software company reviewed their top 10% most productive employees. The results revealed that the best performers worked for 52 minutes and then took a 17 minute break. I wonder how many of us currently work in this way?

It’s obvious that rest is important. Because rest allows recovery, and quality recovery ensures better wellbeing.

Healthy days are made up of many elements: movement, nutrition and sleep.

Recovery is different. People recover at different rates depending on age and fitness.

Learning so far:
Everyone is busy
We all lead busy lives, and according to Firstbeat data, over 50% of an average 24-hour period involves a stress reaction—an elevated activation in the body, which can be both positive or negative. Recovery is different. People recover at different rates depending on age and fitness.

Timing is everything
Exercise has a significant impact on sleep patterns. The best sleep patterns were observed in people who do physical exercise in the morning. Cardio training after 6pm can cause a reduction in sleep efficacy. But, this isn’t an excuse not to exercise if you miss a morning workout. Any exercise is better than none at all.

Alcohol ruins a good night
More than one alcoholic drink in the evening has shown to reduce recovery during sleep. Sure, you might fall asleep quicker, but the actual recovery which goes on while you are asleep is reduced.

Balance is key
Healthy days are made up of many elements: movement, nutrition and sleep.

Action today to improve tomorrow
Change doesn’t need to be an all or nothing approach. Nor does it have to include a dramatic lifestyle change. By doing one thing better tomorrow than you did today, could kick start your journey to better health. Small changes like ensuring adequate sleep, exercising for 30 minutes in the morning—when will power is still strong—or opting for a more active commute will all aid better recovery.

Health and wellbeing is step by step, day by day, but awareness alone is not sufficient for long term change.

Duncan Young | Head of Workplace Health & Wellbeing
Duncan has over 22 years’ experience working at international property company Lendlease, working with a range of clients, both locally and internationally to unlock the opportunities of wellbeing as a driver of high performance. Duncan believes that people are the key to the success of any company and that healthy, engaged workforces create healthy and successful businesses. Duncan is an evidence-based strategist, focusing on workplace health and what makes people thrive, not just at work, but in life. He is passionate about health and wellbeing and is an expert in this emerging sector.

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A study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences showed the undesirable effects of fatigue on judgement by examining the decisions made by eight parole judges in Israel. The research plotted the proportion of approved parole requests against the time since the last food break. The results showed that around 65% of requests which were presented after each food break, were approved. The rate of approval then decreased until the next food break, by which time approval rate was almost at zero. In conclusion: tired and hungry judges tend to fall back on the easier and quicker decision of denying requests for parole.

Judgment day

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Ideal day – checklist

- **Sleep 7-9 hours**
- **Eat breakfast**
- **Walk 10,000 steps**
- **Target 30 minutes exercise**

**Sleep**
The average adult needs 7-9 hours per night

**Exercise**
30 minutes light exercise

**Breakfast**
The most important meal of the day. Calories consumed will be used for mood, memory and cognitive performance

**Active commute**
Incorporate a walk, run or ride to work, or stand up on public transport

**Arrive at work**
Plan your day and select the 3 most important decisions/actions to focus your energy on

**Regular healthy snack**
Grab a bite to eat, take the stairs to visit a colleague

**Standing meeting**
Hold a standing meeting or just stand for a while. Employees sit for almost 8 hours at work – the key is to break prolonged sitting periods

**Take the stairs**
More energy than standing in a lift

**Bursts**
For best performance work in bursts of 52 minutes then take a short break

**Lunch**
Take at least 30 minutes away from your desk

**Walking meeting**
For meetings that need a creative outcome, take a walk

**Regular healthy snack**
Constant flow of glucose in the blood stream is important

**Unplug**
Stop using devices that emit Blue Light (tablets, smartphones)

**Arrive home**
Take 5 deep breaths and enjoy some social time

**Plan for tomorrow**
Spend the last 5 minutes of your day preparing for tomorrow

**Routine**
Get into a routine, go to bed at the same time every night
1.1 The design of my workplace is important to me
1.2 It contributes to a sense of community at work
1.3 It creates an enjoyable environment to work in
1.4 It enables me to work productively
1.5 It’s a place I’m proud to bring visitors to

Q.1 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your current workplace?

2.1 Individual focused work, desk based
2.2 Planned meetings
2.3 Telephone conversations
2.4 Informal, un-planned meetings
2.5 Collaborating on focused work
2.6 Relaxing/taking a break
2.7 Reading
2.8 Individual routine tasks
2.9 Thinking/creative thinking
2.10 Informal social interaction
2.11 Audio conferences
2.12 Learning from others
2.13 Business confidential discussions
2.14 Private conversations
2.15 Collaborating on creative work
2.16 Hosting visitors, clients or customers
2.17 Spreading out paper or materials
2.18 Larger group meetings or audiences
2.19 Video conferences
2.20 Individual focused work away from your desk
2.21 Using technical/specialist equipment or materials

Q.2 Which activities do you feel are important in your work?
Q.3 Which physical features do you consider to be an important part of an effective workplace?

**Physical Features**

1. Desk: 90% 72% 76%
2. Chair: 89% 67% 73%
3. Temperature control: 82% 28% 38%
4. Meeting rooms (small): 81% 52% 69%
5. Natural light: 77% 57% 73%
6. Noise levels: 76% 30% 41%
7. Personal storage: 76% 56% 58%
8. Meeting rooms (large): 73% 53% 66%
9. Air quality: 72% 38% 56%

Q.4 Which service features do you consider to be an important part of an effective workplace?

**Service Features**

1. Tea, coffee and other refreshment facilities: 85% 62% 78%
2. General cleanliness: 82% 61% 81%
3. IT Service / Help desk: 82% 58% 69%
4. Toilets / W.C.: 80% 50% 67%
5. Printing / copying / scanning equipment: 78% 70% 78%
6. Restaurant / canteen: 77% 48% 56%
7. Telephone equipment: 76% 69% 78%
8. WiFi network connectivity in the office: 73% 56% 64%
9. General tidiness: 71% 42% 83%
It seems that journalists trapped in poorly designed open plan offices act as what economist Edward Glaeser called ‘entrepreneurs of error’. As they have been known to feed the public with headlines such as ‘Does open-plan get the worst out of workers?’, ‘Open plan offices suck’, ‘10 Rules for Surviving Your Open Plan Office’ and my favourite ‘Open plan offices are designed to be failures’, the majority of respondents work in enclosed offices, individual employee Lmi scores range from 46.4 to 77.2, while the range for more open concepts is 56.8 to 81.7. And while most of the locations with an Lmi below 50 are predominantly open and have an average of 200 employees, the locations with an Lmi above 70, only 11% are predominantly enclosed offices.

So why do we keep seeing headlines that conclude that open plan workspaces are bad? One of the main challenges is sampling. Let’s test the hypothesis that open plan offices are generally flawed as a concept. I’m not until you have looked at enough different open plan offices, that you can actually make those kinds of claims. So with over 1,600 offices measured, let’s have a look at what the Leesman database says.

We looked at all of the offices in our database with over 100 respondents and plotted them on a graph (Figure 1) that compares the Lmi (the Leesman score of workplace effectiveness) against the proportion of respondents in enclosed offices. The message is clear if rather self-evident: both open environments and more enclosed office concepts can be successful, or can fail. In the workplaces where the majority of respondents work in enclosed offices, individual employee Lmi scores range from 46.4 to 77.2, while the range for more open concepts is 56.8 to 81.7. And while most of the locations with an Lmi below 50 are predominantly open and have an average of 200 employees, the locations with an Lmi above 70, only 11% are predominantly enclosed offices.

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Sensationalist, lazy or poorly researched journalism is dramatically over-simplifying the complex debate about the performance of open plan workplaces and potentially misrepresenting findings through its selective use of negative data.

What we looked at

Whether, based on a sample of 215,000 employees in 1600+ workplaces, there was any correlation between the proportion of employees working in open plan settings and the overall effectiveness of the space. We also looked at whether the proportion of employees working at non-allocated settings influenced overall effectiveness.

What the numbers say

There are no stand-out correlations to be observed. And certainly no connection between the proportion of employees working in open plan vs. cellular settings and the overall effectiveness of the workplace. Similarly, there are no clear correlations between the proportion of employees using flexible settings and the overall effectiveness of the space.

The conclusions

We can say statistically that simply observing whether employees work in open plan or not in itself does not provide a reliable indicator of whether that workplace will work effectively for that population or not. There are more high performing open plan workplaces than we have high performing cellular spaces.

Distribution of employees by work settings

Flexible setting 46%  
Other 2%  
Private office 9%  
Allocated open plan 59%  
Shared enclosed office 14%

215,243
The Rise and Rise of Activity Based Working

Across the world, businesses of all sizes are seeking to understand the potential benefits of creating agile, more flexible workplaces. For the brave, the principles and promises of Activity Based Working (ABW) are becoming increasingly appealing. But is it really working? Does it create a more effective workplace? And perhaps most importantly, does it better support individual productivity? This is what Leesman set out to test in a 12-month examination.

74,500 employees later, of which 11,300 were working in ABW environments, and we have uncovered a mixed picture where averages mask a dramatically diverse picture showing how ABW environments deliver significant performance improvements on multiple measurement lines for employees who modify behaviours to their new surroundings. But almost always, these employees are dramatically outnumbered by those who maintain distinctly traditional workstyles, putting them in conflict with their new environment.

The report showed that Activity Based Working can deliver significant operational benefits for those who use the environments provided for them. The more an employee uses multiple work locations within the workplace, the more they report that the space enables them to work more effectively. The more complex an employee’s daily work profile, the more beneficial it is for them to work in a mobile way that utilises multiple settings. And lastly that poor adoption of appropriate behaviour in activity based workplaces is a significant problem that limits widespread organisational benefits.

The report also shows that role and activity complexity appear to be the key driver for both ABW adoption and ABW benefits.

The full report is available to download at www.leesmanindex.com

Mobility profile 1
– The camper / squatter
I perform most/all of my activities at a single work setting and rarely use other locations within the office

Mobility profile 2
– The timid traveller
I perform the majority of my activities at a single work setting but also use other locations within the office

Mobility profile 3
– The intrepid explorer
I perform some of my activities at a single work setting but often use other locations within the office

Mobility profile 4
– The true transient
I use multiple work settings and rarely base myself at a single location within the office

Are some employees struggling to adopt activity based behaviours because their daily work profile is so simple that the benefits are limited, or because there are specific tasks that occupy a large proportion of their time that are simply better suited to a traditional work setting? The youngest employees are the ones least likely to adopt a more mobile behaviour: 84% of the under 25s belong to mobility profiles 1 and 2.

Productivity
agreement
85.9%

Pride
agreement
67.1%

01
Individual focus
While ABW environments perform less well from an employee satisfaction perspective for “individual focused work, desk based”, for those with higher mobility profiles that is compensated for with the gains in satisfaction in “individual focused work away from your desk”.

02
Creative thinking
Here ABW environments outperform other environments for those employees with higher mobility profiles. But those with a less mobile profile are left with a lower perceived support compared to the control group environments.

03
Informal meetings
This is an area where ABW spaces consistently excel, delivering higher employee satisfaction averages across all four mobility profiles. If this forms part of a project objective, this is an area where ABW has the potential to bring employees real benefit.

04
Collaboration
Here the performance difference between ABW and non-ABW spaces is starting to narrow. Creative collaboration performance remains higher in ABW environments across all mobility profiles, but there is no significant benefit for focused collaboration overall.
Matching benefits with objectives
Statistically the best ABW environments deliver valuable employee satisfaction gains on many key workplace activities, and significant improvements with several physical and service features. When executed well, the benefits far outweigh the minor losses, but need to be matched to organisational objectives.

01
Activity Based Working can deliver significant operational benefits for those employees who use the environments provided for them.

02
The more an employee uses multiple work locations within the workplace, the more they report that the space enables them to work more effectively.

03
The more complex an employee’s daily work profile, the more beneficial it is for them to work in a mobile way that utilises multiple settings.

04
Poor adoption of appropriate behaviour in activity based workplaces is a significant problem that limits widespread organisational benefits.

Or has the "what’s in it for me?" benefit case not been made to those employees, and is the reason for changing to ABW inadequately communicated? These employees could be seeing themselves as the victims of corporate cost or space reduction strategies.

Camper / Squateters are truly anchored to their workstation and are not finding other spaces elsewhere. Within the ABW sample workplaces, they still represent 30% of employees. While the Timid Travellers remain strongly attached to their single workstation, they are starting to experience other spaces for some of their work. Across the ABW sample workplaces, they represent the majority of employees – 41% – clearly showing ABW environments struggle with employee inertia.

Productivity agreement
Pride agreement
41.8%
54.6%

Productivity agreement
Pride agreement
54.5%
73.1%

Productivity agreement
Pride agreement
60.0%
81.4%

Productivity agreement
Pride agreement
53%
71%

On average, the ABW workplaces show lower productivity agreement compared to non-ABW workplaces. But not for all: those in Profiles 3 & 4 have significantly higher than average agreement.

On average, the ABW workplaces show higher pride agreement compared to non-ABW workplaces, with 80%+ agreement in Profiles 3 & 4.

Intrepid Explorers are well progressed in their investigation of the central concepts of ABW and have adopted a progressive and mobile approach to space use. Within the ABW sample they account for 19% of employees with above average productivity (60%) and excellent pride agreement (81%). True Transients are the most mobile, but are few in number. Even across the ABW sample workplaces they represent just 10% of respondents. However, they report the highest productivity (67%) and outstanding pride agreement (86%).

Confidentiality
Overall, the ABW spaces perform marginally lower for “business confidential discussions” than for those in other workplaces. But for employees in the highest mobility profile, once again, ABW workplaces deliver higher support.

Paper
Almost all ABW spaces record lower than average satisfaction figures for “spreading out paper and materials”. Organisations moving to ABW need to assess the importance of this activity to their employees and decide if reducing reliance on paper is appropriate or achievable.
The State of the Estate

Comment | Philip Vanhoutte

16% of employees are actively disengaged – they are miserable in the workplace and destroy what the most engaged employees build.

Regardless of your role in the workplace ecosystem, or whether you are US based or not, take my word for it, or whether you are US based

or not, take my word for it, or whether you are US based

Regardless of your role in

the leadership teams

or clients they report to.

Firstly, 60% of US employees say the ability to do what they do best in a role “very important” to them. Male and female employees and employees of all generations place the greatest importance on this aspect of a job. Gallup argues that this comes down to “matching the right person with the right role and the right culture” and that if employees are mismatched they struggle to succeed, and become bored, restless and disengaged. If we assume that most organisations recruit new candidates based on the strengths and potential they see in them, it seems obvious that this skills potential matching equation would be central to optimising an individual’s personal performance and so to overall organisational performance.

But increasingly the data Leesman is collecting points to another parallel issue: that too often, the environment and infrastructure provided for that employee to do what they do best is simply not there. 28.6% of the 215,000+ employees in the Leesman database actively disagree that their workplace enables them to work productively.

I would posit that this is key to any human capital and performance management strategy, and organisations must now review whether they are delivering on their wider commitments to their current employees.

The second stand out for me was on the subject of “stability”, with 51% rating greater stability as “very important”. Employees need to believe in the future of the organisation and be able to see themselves as part of it. “Leaders and managers are critical in creating this vision. Leaders have a duty to show employees where the organisation is headed and inspire them to see a better tomorrow.”

My experience at Plantronics has taught me that workplace has a huge role to play in this equation. Businesses change, develop, acquire new parts and dispose of others. So for many, the physical work environment is one of the few stable components that remains while all around may appear to be ever changing.

And I would suggest therefore that for an employee to see themselves as part of a business, or more specifically to see themselves as in that business, a key component in building that is long-term engagement and loyalty.

Further, the report emphasises that organisations need to clearly define their identity and effectively communicate through what it terms the employee value proposition (EVP). An EVP answers the question, “What do I get for working here?” I think we need to understand to what extent a great workplace, one that supports an employee doing what they are there to do, forms part of that proposition being fulfilled. This was a key driver for me at Plantronics when we decided to move from our highly effective (Leesman Lmi 75.7) European hub in Hoofddorp, just outside Amsterdam, to a purpose built “acoustic temple” half a kilometer away in Delta Development’s Park 20/20. Of course there were multiple business reasons for doing this, with lease events playing a major part. But the opportunity to offer our existing and prospective employees a physical, tangible manifestation of what Plantronics is about and what they get working there was key.

I have no doubt that the new Plantronics space will score highly in our forthcoming Leesman Index post-occupancy evaluation and will be case-studied somewhere in a future Leesman Review. I am also assured that within the typical constraints of time, budget and space, that from foundations up, that space was designed, configured, equipped and furnished to enable the employees it accommodates do what they do best on a daily basis. •

The Rise and Rise of Activity Based Working

In 2015, IFMA Sweden and Tenant & Partner collaborated with Leesman to embark on an investigation into one of the most talked about workplace strategies – Activity Based Working.

“We’ve just finished our global event series where we presented the full findings from this research. As we rapidly approach our 250,000 respondent milestone, we are getting ready to repeat an independent review of the data and we’ll be publishing a research insight report on the productive employee later in the year.”

www.leesmanindex.com

Worth a closer look

The Leader’s Guide to Negotiation

Simon Horton, Pearson

Negotiation is a core business skill. It is critical in everything we do from asking for a raise to deciding who gets the coffee. From achieving win-win outcomes to problem-solving and building trust, Simon Horton brings us a practical guide to getting the most out of your business interactions.

Lean In

Sheryl Sandberg, Ebury Publishing

Sheryl Sandberg, draws on her experience of working in some of the world’s most successful businesses to shine a light on gender differences. Lean In offers practical advice to help women achieve their goals and understand the small changes that can be made to impact change on a more universal scale.

Next issue

Does a thirst for innovation, newness and difference sometimes push solutions past a point of functional usability? And while the best intentions may have been to improve user satisfaction, do these initiatives result in a lower overall effectiveness?

The next issue of the Leesman Review will discuss these questions with contributions from designers, facility managers and leading human factors experts to examine whether design innovation is too often deployed at the expense of basic practicality.

Of course the idea that something is not usable seems strange, but we will seek to outline how and where some of the basic aspects of usability seem to have been missed, forgotten or just patently ignored.

We will also consider whether it is fair to expect users of a new space to understand how to use it, or whether they should be taught or coached. Should workplaces seek to do both, or is it possible to make workplaces self-sufficient?

And lastly, as workplace becomes more complex and more measured, we will be looking at how the human and digital brains at IBM Watson are attempting to help make workplaces and the management systems applied to their infrastructure, infinitely more useable.

Subscribe

As we approach our 250,000 respondent milestone, you can stay in touch with our data and the debate around it by subscribing to the Leesman Review digitally or in print at www.leesmanindex.com