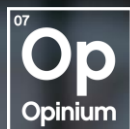


LANSON'S
LONDON NEW YORK



What people think,
feel and do

Working Life after Covid -19

Key Findings
July 2020



Contents

Introduction	3
1. A nation more connected than ever	4
2. Homeworkers reset their own rhythms	10
3. Empathetic employers win loyalty	17
4. Handling job losses with care	24
5. Flexibility for changing times	30
Conclusion	36
About the authors	39

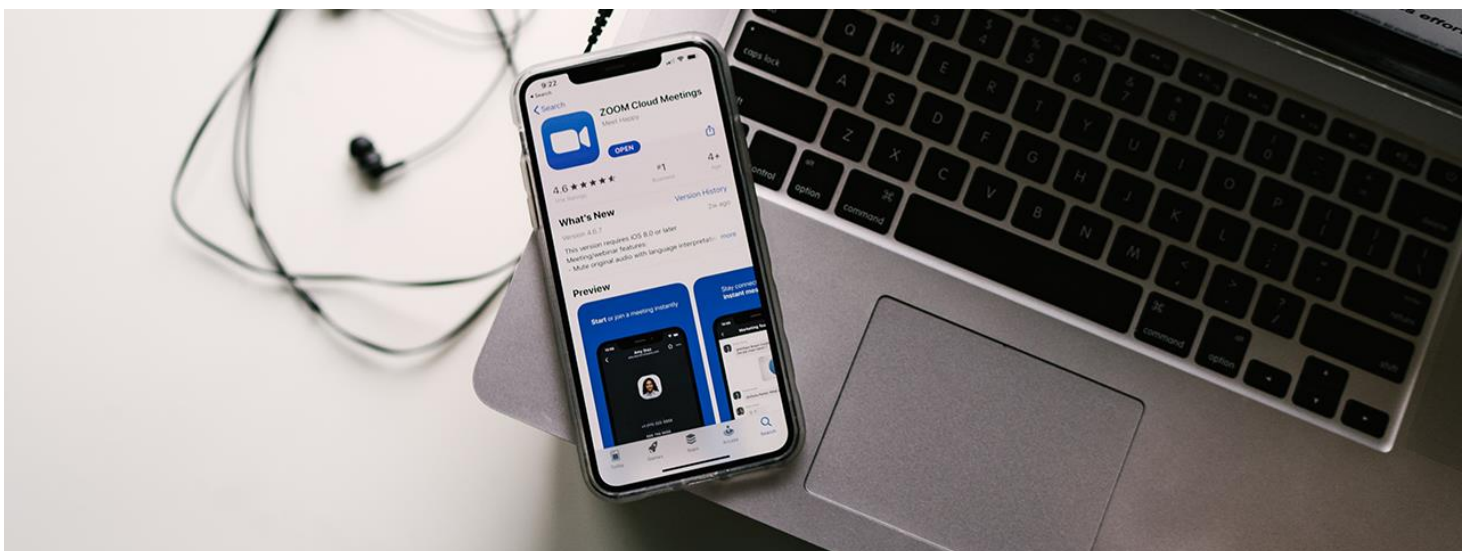
Working Life after Covid-19

Introduction

To better understand how changes in the wake of the coronavirus crisis will impact business leaders across the UK in the long term, Lansons partnered with research house Opinium for its study **Working Life after COVID-19: How the crisis changed our working lives, and what to do next.**

While there's a plan to get Britain working again, it won't quite be 'business as usual' for some time yet. And, there's many things about the day job that will change forever. We unveil five quick takeaways from the consumer survey, consisting of 1,093 workers across public and private sectors, office workers and front-line employees:

1. A nation more connected than ever
2. Homeworkers reset their own rhythms
3. Empathetic employers win loyalty
4. Handling job losses with care
5. Flexing for changing times



1. A nation more connected than ever



1. A nation more connected than ever

In lockdown, technology has been our lifeline.

The nation quickly got used to using new ways to connect, interact and be 'live' on screen. Everywhere, conversations and meetings went virtual, and they were happening frequently. We started talking more! That's not going to stop.



It's seen as a good thing and an opportunity. Not only because technology is eliminating communication barriers, but it saves on things like travel costs, time spent travelling and CO₂ emissions. Recognising the value of technology, employers will be looking to invest further as our world becomes more interconnected and mobile by the day: and that's irrespective of when or how people will return to their physical workspace.

1. A nation more connected than ever

Opinium research:

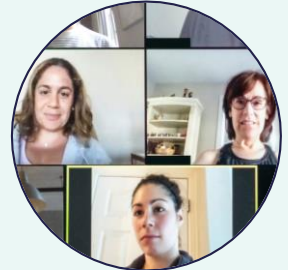
57%

of those surveyed feel connected in their working life



68%

believe having a close connection with colleagues is essential



+33%

believe that collaboration with colleagues has improved during the pandemic



+10%

white collar workers are +10% more likely to enjoy more collaboration with colleagues than blue collar workers



1. A nation more connected than ever

Opinium research:

+34%

team spirit
has also improved



+30%

as have levels
of creativity



74%

workers feel that these
changes will continue
after the crisis (Collaboration
77%, Team spirit 74% and levels
of creativity 71%)



“Moving forward **I hope that the flexible working conditions will continue** and shape the way for a better flexible working future for employers and employees”.

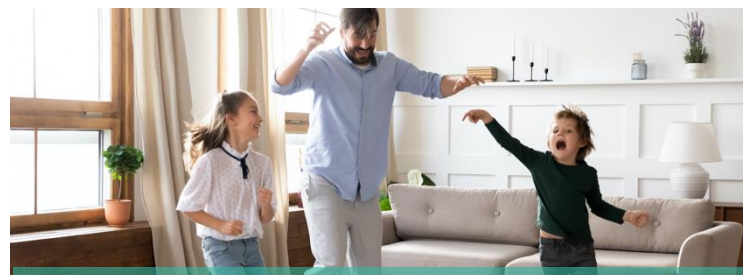
1. A nation more connected than ever

Other supporting facts/insights:

Video meeting apps like Zoom, Slack and Microsoft Teams became hugely popular. In April, Microsoft announced that its Teams service hit a daily record of **2.7 billion meeting minutes**. That marks a significant increase of 200% from 900 million in mid-March.



2.2 million households joined **Joe Wicks** for free live PE lessons, helping children and adults keep fit from home. Also known as The Body Coach, Wicks' daily classes connected the nation.



Millions of people across the UK joined “**clap for carers**” to applaud frontline NHS staff, carers and health workers – on pavements, in their gardens, leaning out of windows. This was a nation connected, physically demonstrating their support.



1. A nation more connected than ever

Expert opinion by Matt Bolton-Alarcón:



“Whether it’s Zoom, Google Meet, Skype or other platforms, people jumped onto the platforms used by their businesses to stay connected. We’ve **learnt quickly**, and we’ve got used to using them. Most of all, **we’ve lost the cringe factor of being on camera!**

But there’s a watch-out. **Technology doesn’t replace human interaction.** So, we can’t get too comfortable in this temporary period. Moving forwards, we need a **blend of both virtual and physical connections**, both of which will be different experiences to today.

The tech platforms we use will see many **new features** being added, to better replicate what we might have experienced physically in a room.

Our offices spaces are going to become places to meet, but it’ll be very deliberate. It’ll be for those moments to collide – to discuss and share thoughts or ideas. **We’ll no longer need to use the office for head-down work** as we can do that at home.

Even with lockdown, **we’ve seen blend of virtual and analogue.** The NHS clap is a great example where people need to see each other and see action that’s deliberate.”

2. Homeworkers reset their own rhythms



2. Homeworkers reset their own rhythms

Lockdown quickly forced employees to take control of their own working rhythm.

And, in a way that suited their personal circumstances; whether juggling work with parenthood, home schooling, looking after elderly/vulnerable loved ones or maintaining mental/physical wellbeing.

Working from home has meant we no longer need to work to a single schedule of 9-5.30pm, waste time commuting or sit in an open-plan office distracted by others. Homeworkers have been able to reset their own rhythms and working conditions – choosing when and where to do their heads-down, ‘deep work’, when to read/respond to emails, when to connect with colleagues, when/how to spend lunch break and so on.



Homeworkers won't want to go back to 'old ways'; but continue to set their own working rhythms. For employers, this is the ultimate in personalised and flexible working patterns, allowing people freedom to perform at their best.

2. Homeworkers reset their own rhythms

Opinium research:

#1 

a good work / life balance is the number one priority among workers



77%

believe maintaining a good work / life balance is essential in their working life



85%

this rises to 85% amongst public sector workers, boosted by those working in the healthcare sector



+44%

flexible working has increased amongst 44% of those surveyed



2. Homeworkers reset their own rhythms

Opinium research:

24%

white collar workers are 24% more likely to be experiencing flexible working than blue collar workers



+45%

+45% feel flexible working has had a positive impact on their working life



73%

73% believe flexible working will continue after the crisis with 29% believing it will become the norm



+19%

more people desire flexibility in their working life over routine



2. Homeworkers reset their own rhythms

Opinium research:



Behind job security a better work / life balance (2nd), more flexible working (4th) and working more from home are top priorities for UK workers in 2020



“Work / life balance will hopefully be promoted over heavy workloads and fast pace, hectic life as before. I really hope the realisations a lot of people have had in this time push for a reduced concentration on wealth and more on family friends and quality of life.”

2. Homeworkers reset their own rhythms

Other supporting facts/insights:

“Deep Work” by author and professor Cal Newport, describes ‘deep work’ as the ability to focus without distraction on a cognitively demanding task. Yet, most people have lost the ability to ‘go deep’ – spending their days instead in a frantic blur of e-mail and social media, not even realizing there’s a better way.



‘Great minds don’t think alike’ by Emily Gosling offers insights into the working practices of 56 of the world’s greatest creative thinkers past and present – including architects, musicians, playwrights, painters and philosophers. The study found that none of their daily routines for creativity are the same.



2. Homeworkers reset their own rhythms

Expert opinion by Matt Bolton-Alarcón:



“Now is the time to reset everything. Homeworkers can choose when to do their most challenging work at the time that most suits them. Everyone can **retrain their natural chronotype**, known as your body’s biological clock. It’s a healthy thing that’s happened!

In Matthew Walker’s book ‘Why we sleep’, people fall into three chronotypes: **40% morning larks, 30% night owls, and 30% inbetweeners** [middle day]. So, the argument for an industrial working day is only suitable for 30% of the population!

In future, **the office return will be a place for deliberate ‘social’ connections** to get camaraderie or to collide on topics, with homeworking reserved for focused work. Trying to do head-down work next to others, at set times of the day, now seems insane!”

3. Empathetic employers win loyalty



3. Empathetic employers win loyalty

We now have a heightened sense of fear.

From our and our loved one's safety to financial security of our jobs post lockdown. Employers have had to understand and address people's fears; forcing leaders to show empathy and their own vulnerability. Those who have succeeded, have won loyalty. Yes, loyalty among employees, but also customers and the public – because they've been seen to do the **'right thing'** by their people.



And even as society starts to emerge out of lockdown, uncertainty remains – not just because of Covid-19 virus, but also Brexit, recent civil rights clashes and the imminent global recession. Uncertainty breeds fear. So now, more than ever, employers must think about their people. This means keeping up with employee needs, expectations and anxieties.

Empathy is what the world needs right now; and its empathetic employers who will survive and win loyalty.

3. Empathetic employers win loyalty

Opinium research:

+35%

feel more positive
towards their
employer



-6%

thought employers
are viewed less positively
within the private
sector (-6% approval
versus public sector
workers)



62%

of those surveyed
feel informed in
their working life



59%

feel compassion
has become a more
important trait for
their employer to display



3. Empathetic employers win loyalty

Opinium research:

65%

generosity +65% and selflessness +55% are also more important traits for employers to display



fairness and honesty are the two most desirable traits from employers



57%

believe having a support network at work is essential



68%

believe having their wellbeing looked after at work is essential



3. Empathetic employers win loyalty

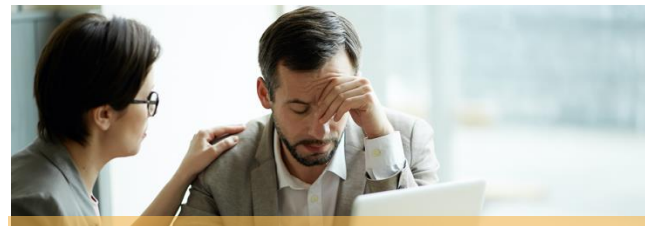
- **Unempathetic employers will be judged** “I really hope working from home will become the norm. It is beneficial to both employees and employers in so many ways. My employer is stuck in the past and wants us back ASAP, I hope the Government makes it a right to work from home wherever possible. Good for the environment, mental health, productivity.”



3. Empathetic employers win loyalty

Other supporting facts/insights:

‘Future of work’ report by Singularity University claims leaders need new ‘change-making’ skills to flourish in a society transitioning from hierarchical to flat, fast-moving networks. One of these skills is empathy.



Business books on leadership empathy have increased. Recently, Forbes cited 12 inspiring business books about empathy, including: **“Mean people suck”** by Michael Brenner; **“The empathy effect”** by Helen Riess; **“The age of empathy”** by Frans de Waal.



In June, Nuffield Health reported that around 80% of British people working from home feel lockdown has had a negative impact on their mental health, while a quarter of those (25%) said they were finding it difficult to cope with the emotional challenges of isolation.



3. Empathetic employers win loyalty

Expert opinion by Matt Bolton-Alarcón:



“People have experienced physical, financial and emotional distress so now, more than ever, employers must think about their people and be empathetic.

And, employers need to build a healthy culture for candid conversations where people can safely voice their concerns and fears, without being shut down. This is about embedding a culture of psychological safety, which is increasingly being talked about.

In the book, ‘*The Fearless Organisation*’ by Harvard Researcher Amy Edmondson, she looks at how **organisations go wrong because people fail to speak up**. Some consequences can be damaging to corporate reputations such as the scandals seen with automobile manufacturers caught gaming diesel emission tests.

Amy’s research was propelled into the spotlight by Google study, which found that the **single biggest predictor of success was psychological safety**. So, leaders who create psychological safety are those who are humble, show their vulnerability and listen to their employees.

Leaders won’t always have all the answers....**so their ability to be empathetic and not be as polished and slick is critical for future success.**”

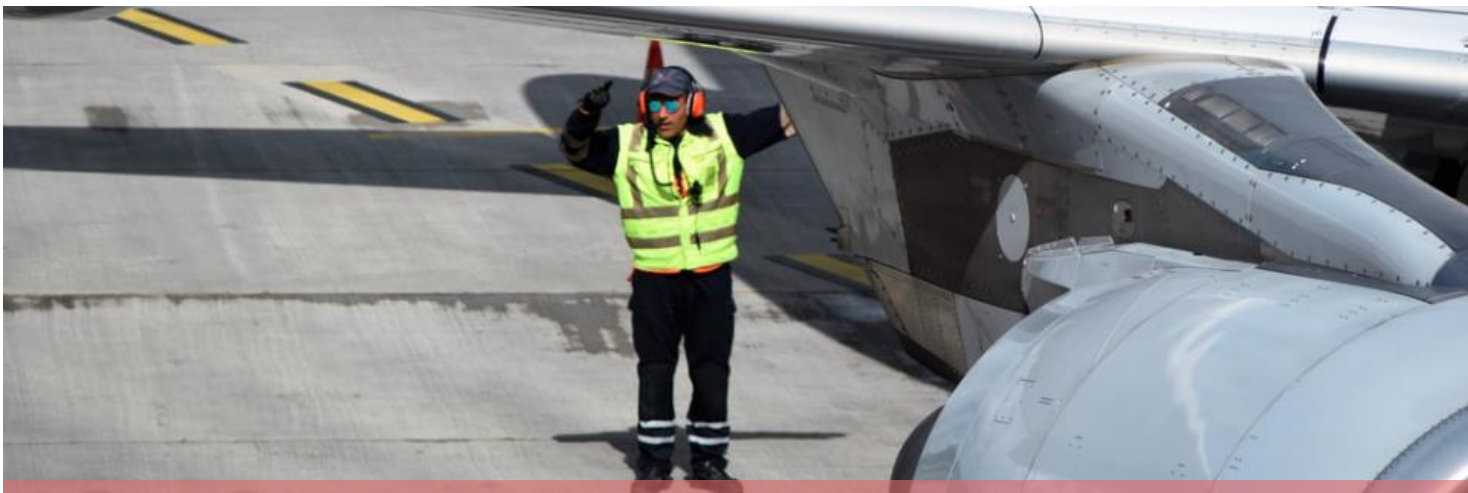
4. Handling job losses with care

A woman with dark hair, wearing a red shirt and a grey apron, is sitting in a wooden chair. She has her hand on her head and is looking upwards with a thoughtful or distressed expression. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a kitchen or a similar indoor setting. The image is overlaid with a white geometric pattern of triangles.

4. Handling job losses with care

People know an economic ‘depression’ is looming.

We’ve had government grants to help out, but it’s simply delaying the inevitable. Understandably, employees are anxious. Already, most have psychologically accepted many employer cost-cutting measures from “I’m not going to get that pay rise” to “I’ve barely got a job on furlough”. But with the furlough scheme starting to wind down in August, the nation is braced for heavy job losses as businesses shed staff before they become liable for wage costs. This is especially acute in the hospitality and aviation industries.



Threats of mass redundancy from August to October is further compounded by media warnings of a “significant recession” and “the worst economic downturn since the great depression”, causing a heightened sense of unemployment fears which, in turn, is impacting our financial and mental wellbeing.

Managing mass job losses needs to be handled with care. Employers not only need to make tough decisions, but they must also make these decisions with empathy and do so in a way that reflects the values of their organisation.

4. Handling job losses with care

Opinium research:

#1 

keeping your job
is the number one
priority among
workers



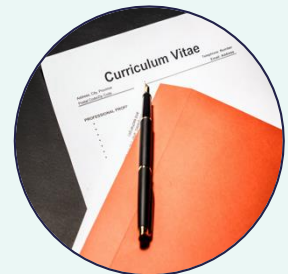
+8%

this is a particular concern
amongst blue collar
workers +8% versus
white collar workers



24%

are negative about
their career prospects



+19%

a huge difference
is clear by class with
white collar workers
+19% more positive about
their career prospects
than blue collar workers



4. Handling job losses with care

Opinium research:

20%

are less secure
in their job



18%

job security has
only become a
concern for 18%
of workers during
the pandemic



A participant from the study summarises the very real economic fear felt “We will be damaged economically, with more unemployed, higher taxation, possibly inflation, lower pensions. **We must take a hard look at our healthcare system**, including the private sector, in order to make it more capable of handling a crisis in future.”

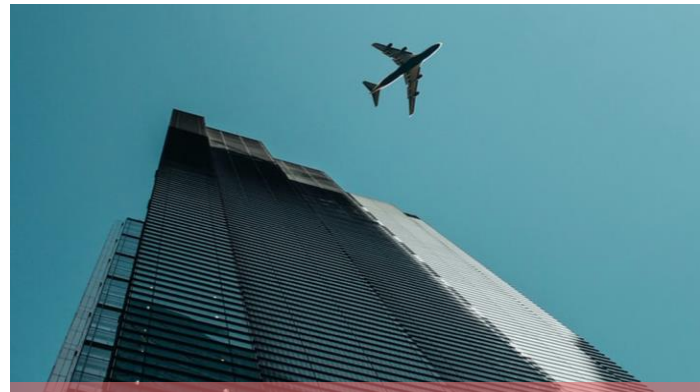
4. Handling job losses with care

Other supporting facts/insights:

Office for National Statistics figures show more than 600,000 UK workers lost their jobs between March and May 2020, with 9 million people on furlough.



The union, Unite, has reacted angrily to the prospect of mass airline redundancies e.g. Easyjet plans to cut up to 4,500 jobs, Ryanair is axing 15% of its 20,000 workforce and IAG is to cut 12,000 staff at BA. Unite, which has 1.4 million members, has questioned the principles and ethics of the airlines in their handling of the situation.



Current reports suggest that women and the under-25s will be worst hit financially by Covid-19, as they are affected most by the closure of businesses in certain sectors (such as retail, leisure and hospitality).



4. Handling job losses with care

Expert opinion by Matt Bolton-Alarcón:



“How you let go of people says a lot about you as a company.

So, those organisations who handle mass unemployment with humane and caring values, will be those whose reputations will stay intact.

We’ve seen lots of research proving how the ***highest performing organisations in the world have a higher purpose and set of values*** that they live by. They decide who gets recruited by those values. And, in difficult times, they decide who to let go by those values.

The Four Seasons Hotel has a behaviour value for all its staff of – “We seek to deal with others as we would have them deal with us.” They live and breathe their values in way they conduct any decision, big or small.

So, when it comes to difficult times the ***purpose and values have to come to the fore even more!***



5. Flexibility for changing times

5. Flexibility for changing times

Covid-19 has disrupted business routines, supply chains and operating models.

And although the pandemic crisis is still unfolding as we enter unpredictable socio-economic recovery, it's already clear that building flexibility into organisational DNA is more important than ever.

More so than ever before, we're living in a VUCA world – a term that's been used by business thinkers for many years. It's an acronym that stands for **volatile, uncertain, complex** and **ambiguous**. 2020 is the year that brings a new level of VUCA – the global health pandemic, civil-rights unrest and the biggest recession since WW2.



To survive, organisations have to become truly flexible; able to adjust and even change their business models and ways of working with extreme rapidity. Digitalisation has become a critical enabler to adapt at the necessary speed, and so is a primary driver of flexibility. And, flexible working is no longer a Covid-19 experiment, but will be necessary to formalise and figure out new kinds of contracts.

The journey to ongoing flexibility must start now.

5. Flexibility for changing times

Opinium research:

44%

flexible working has increased amongst 44% of those surveyed



+45%

feel flexible working has had a positive impact on their working life



73%

believe flexible working will continue after the crisis with 29% believing it will become the norm



#1



the number one reason flexible working will continue is the benefits it offers to both the individual and business



5. Flexibility for changing times

Opinium research:

+19%

more people desire flexibility in their working life over routine

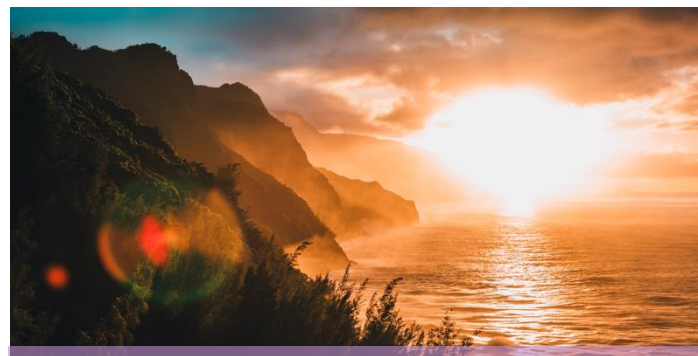


"I hope on the positive side, people will commute less, continuing to work from home more often, reducing pollution and fuel consumption, **improving the quality of life for everyone. I'd like to think the world will feel more connected,** having survived the shared challenges and show more compassion"

5. Flexibility for changing times

Other supporting facts/insights:

Accenture predicts the possibility of the '**Never Normal**' decade, a new era defined by fast-changing shifts in cultural norms, societal values and behaviours, such as increased demand for responsible business practices and renewed brand purpose.



Twitter seized on the Covid-19 disruption as a chance to experiment. After 2 months of lockdown, the co-founder and chief executive emailed his employees to say that they could stay away from the office and keep working from home, if they wanted – for ever! Facebook and Google are exploring this too.



Deloitte is predicting Covid-19 could be the '**Black Swan**' event that finally forces many companies and entire industries to rethink and transform their global supply chain models.



5. Flexibility for changing times

Expert opinion by Matt Bolton-Alarcón:



“Everyone’s world has been disrupted. It’s meant we’ve all had to quickly adapt, and we’ve proven that we can – and do so quickly!

Disruption is no longer a buzz word, but a reality. When people used to say we live in disrupted times, it would affect only small groups of people. This pandemic has meant that everyone at the same time has been disrupted.

Moving forwards, disruption will be the new norm. **We need to continue being adaptable and flexible.** Having been disrupted, we need to latch onto that mindset and make it a habit, rather than a one-off!

This means people should be able to flex how they work and think. **A flexible mindset will keep you successful.**

For employers, they can no longer reject flexible working requests. They need to get ready to embrace flexibility and be flexible in how they adapt to our changing environment.”

5. Conclusion: what to do next?

Over the course of the weeks and months to come, employers will face a myriad of new challenges. Our survey of workers, reveals five priorities for what employers can expect in a life after Covid-19, including some obvious changes, and potential outliers. **If you would like to speak to a member of the Communications for Change and Transformation team about any of these issues, do get in touch.**

1. A nation more connected than ever

Those employers who were previously sceptical of remote or flexible working, will now have a harder time explaining why employees have to be present in the workplace.

- **Invest further in remote working practices with the best technology.**
- **Keep your workforce connected to each other and your organisations' values.**
- **Technology doesn't replace human interaction. Be ready to have a blend of both; with both offering different experiences to pre Covid-19.**

2. Homeworkers reset their own rhythms

Working from home has meant we no longer need to work to a single schedule of 9.00am-5.30pm. Homeworkers have been able to reset their own rhythms and working conditions.

- **Don't go back to 'old ways'; allow workers to set their own working rhythms for personalised and flexible working patterns.**
- **Make the office a place for deliberate 'social' connections to get camaraderie, collide on topics and "see/feel" culture in action.**
- **Review and update working practices policies: remote, flexible, shared employment.**

5. Conclusion: what to do next?

3. Empathetic employers win loyalty

Empathy is what the world needs right now; and it's empathetic employers who will survive and win loyalty.

- **Leaders need new 'change-making' skills to flourish where they need to shift from technical to soft skills including empathy and vulnerability.**
- **Make mental health a priority as uncertainty continues, finding ways to support your workforce now and going forward.**
- **Build a healthy culture for candid conversations where people can safely voice their concerns and fears i.e. psychological safety.**

4. Handling job losses with care

People know an economic 'depression' is looming with mass redundancies, especially in hospitality and aviation sectors. Employers need to handle job losses with care.

- **Remind yourself of your Purpose and values, before making any decisions and reflect these in the decisions you make.**
- **For difficult conversations, spend as much time preparing how you say it as well as on what you say.**
- **Your reputation depends on how you live and breathe your Purpose and values: how you let go of people says a lot about you as an individual / company.**

5. Conclusion: what to do next?

5. Flexibility for changing times

Covid-19 has disrupted business routines, supply chains and operating models. And, we should expect more disruption in our VUCA world.

- **Avoid going back to 'old normal' and autopilot. Build adaptability into your DNA.**
- **Give people the permission to think differently and suggest ideas to challenge the status quo.**
- **Transition to a culture of learning and growth vs. standardisation and compliance.**



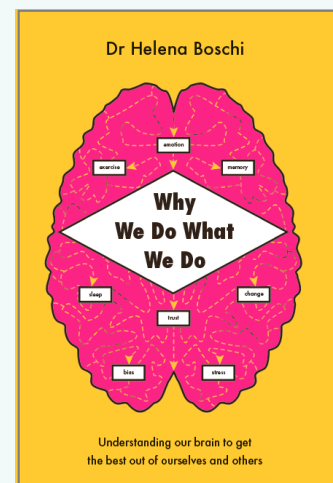
About the authors

Suzanne Ellis



Suzanne is a board director at **Lansons** and leads the “Communications for Change & Transformation” practice. Her work involves helping organisations manage change and influence behaviour change among employees, customers or stakeholders.

With more than 20 years’ consulting experience, her campaigns range from supporting major transformations such as M&As and organisational redesign to engagement of new strategies and cultural shifts. Whatever the communications challenges, Suzanne is passionate about applying the latest in psychological and sociological insights to effect real change. She launched Lansons’ **Neurocomms** service, which applies the neuroscience behind our behaviours to inform more effective communications campaigns; following the launch of her book, **Why We Do What We Do**, co-authored with Dr Helena Boschi, a psychologist.



Suzanne has won numerous awards for her work including: Sabre EMEA 2019, ‘winner for Best Brand Narrative’; 2019 Content Marketing Awards, winner for ‘Best Use of Multichannel Social Media’ and most recently was shortlisted Sabre EMEA 2020, ‘Best Experiential Event’

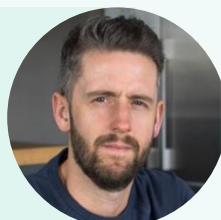
About the authors

Wez Eathorne



Wez is a research director at **Opinium** with over 20 years' experience specialising in brand and communications research. He is particularly experienced within the financial services sector, helping RBS navigate the economic downturn and contributing to Direct Line's IPA award-winning Fixer campaign submission.

Matt Bolton-Alarcon



Matt is the founder of **Special Sauce Training** and develops people globally around the skills required for creative thinking at work.

After a career in marketing media brands he realised his passion was in equipping people with the confidence and skills to think differently in an ever-changing working environment. He was then a director of learning at **What If Innovation** who were recently acquired by Accenture.

Matt and his business, Special Sauce, trains people in a wide range of organisations from Google to Ella's Kitchen and QuickBooks to L'Oreal and is fascinated with how people's working rhythms are evolving. Recently he has had to practice what he preaches and convert his in-person live training into virtual and video-based learning programmes.

About Opinium

OPINIUM is an award-winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on pulse of what people **think, feel** and **do**. Creative and inquisitive, we are passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter. We work with organisations to define and overcome strategic challenges – helping them to get to grips with the world in which their brands operate. We use the right approach and methodology to deliver robust insights, strategic counsel and targeted recommendations that generate change and positive outcomes.

www.opinium.com | research@opinium.com | 0207 566 3190

Opinium Research is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Under these rules we are required, when requested, to make information available from survey results that have entered the public domain. These include, but are not limited to, the name of commissioning client, fieldwork dates, methodology, size and composition of sample, and data tables showing the text of the questions asked, the order in which they were asked and the answers given to them.

About Lansons

Based in London and New York, Lansons is a leading independent reputation management consultancy, 100% owned by people working in the business. It has been voted agency of the year seventeen times since it was established in 1989 by its Chair, Clare Parsons and Chief Executive, Tony Langham. Lansons has over 100 people (35 of whom own the Limited Liability Partnership), has won over 90 major awards, and works for more than 100 national and international clients. Through its membership of the international networks PROI Worldwide and Global Communication Partners (GCP), Lansons delivers global expertise and strategic advice.

At the same time Lansons has been featured in the Great Places to Work 'Best Workplace' rankings for each of the past fifteen years. Lansons' consultants are experts in media, investor, political, regulatory, employee and change, crisis, digital and international communications. In 2019, Lansons announced its acquisition of Intermarket, the specialist strategic communications consultancy based in New York

www.lansons.com | consultancy@lansons.com | 020 7490 8828