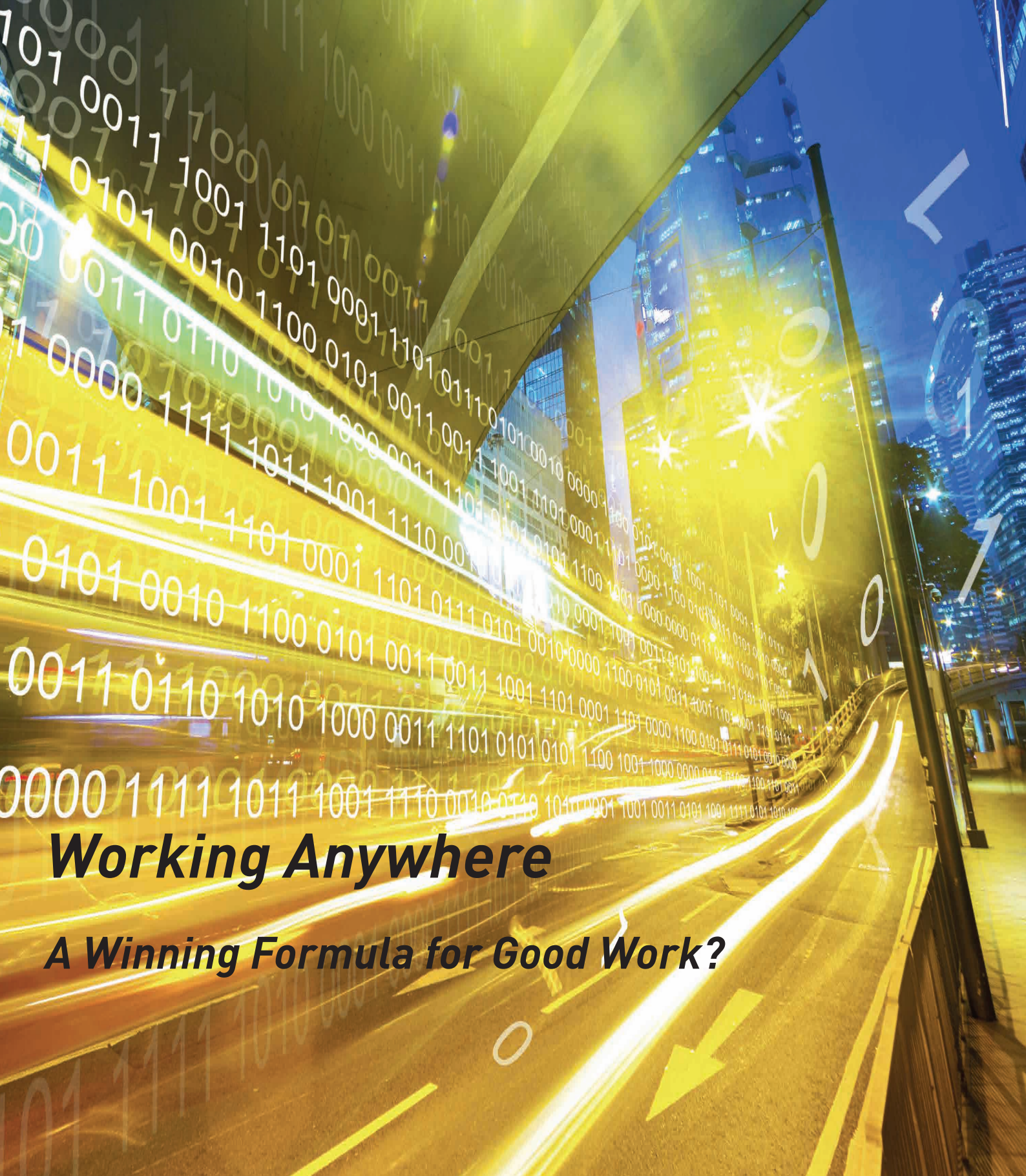




**THE WORK  
FOUNDATION**  
PART OF LANCASTER UNIVERSITY



# ***Working Anywhere***

***A Winning Formula for Good Work?***

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# Overview

## “We need to open the door of Cell Block 9 to 5.1”

*The nature of work in the UK has changed dramatically over time and yet many still adhere to the working patterns established in the factory age of the industrial revolution. Commute into any city or town and the stresses and strains on individuals and transport systems are all too visible.*

What may be less visible are the stresses and strains from adapting to a 24/7 demand culture in our service-based economy. Add to these pressures the need to work in teams across the globe (with different time zones and different cultures) while working towards a common purpose, and the problems with traditional working practices and styles mount up. Link all of these factors with additional pressures on business and organisations in times of austerity; stalling productivity, global competition and ageing workforces and there is a powerful cocktail of drivers for change in the way we work.

Our recent study on the emergence of a “work anywhere” culture shines a glimmer of light for many (but not all) on a potential safety valve to some of these pressures by working flexibly, working remotely, and working smarter. We have the technology and we have the need to change. Early adopters are already benefiting.

Those changing towards a flexible working system are seeing the benefits for the organisation and the individual employees such as increased productivity for the business alongside improved health and wellbeing for employees. Our study sets out to explore how more people can gain the benefits of flexible working while safeguarding against any potential downsides. We believe from our work here that we are almost at a **tipping point** in mobile working<sup>i</sup> and by sharing our findings we can enable a benefit-driven approach; a formula for good work while working from anywhere.

Travel anywhere and by any means today and you will see someone working on a mobile device. The nature of our work, alongside demanding and often complex family lives and caring responsibilities, means that we have to be mobile - either physically, virtually, or both.

Combine these major demands of our working lives together with the inexorable rise, power and availability of digital technology, the growing number of those “born digital” in the workforce and the level of ownership of mobile devices, and it is hardly surprising that

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(i) We define mobile working as the conduct of duties which could be carried out at a designated or contractual place of work, away from that location. For example, a visit to customer premises is not mobile working but dealing with the outcome of such visits without visiting the usual place of work would be.



we see a trend away from 9 to 5 office-based working. Individual preferences and pressures, and organisational priorities for increased productivity and cost reduction are all lining up to move our working lives into this “**Working from Anywhere**” mode.

Today in the UK, few working-age individuals don't have a smart phone or equivalent mobile device through which they connect to their friends and family wherever they are and whenever they want, or need, to communicate. Why would they not demand the same flexibility in their working lives? To understand the reasons why some individuals and some organisations are less able or less willing to embrace this flexibility in their daily work, we challenged a range of experts<sup>ii</sup> to help us understand the

complexity of decision making on this topic. We also surveyed over 500 managers across the UK<sup>iii</sup> about their experience, and why their organisations have or have not embraced the freedom for individuals to work anywhere.

- *Will this mode become the norm for all?*
- *Does this way of working deliver benefits for the organisation and the individual?*
- *What are the downsides?*
- *What are the barriers to adoption?*
- *What changes do organisations need to make to enable mobile working to deliver good work for all?*

*These are some of the questions we are tackling here.*

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(ii) Details of our panel of experts can be found at the end of this report.

(iii) 503 individuals employed at a senior level in the UK were recruited from the Censuswide online panel to complete an online questionnaire in December 2015. Questions were designed to test theories about mobile working developed in discussion with the expert panel and refined following a pilot survey of 100 individuals with organisational responsibility for decisions about mobile working, contacted via The Work Foundation's networks. A full report of the survey is available from The Work Foundation.

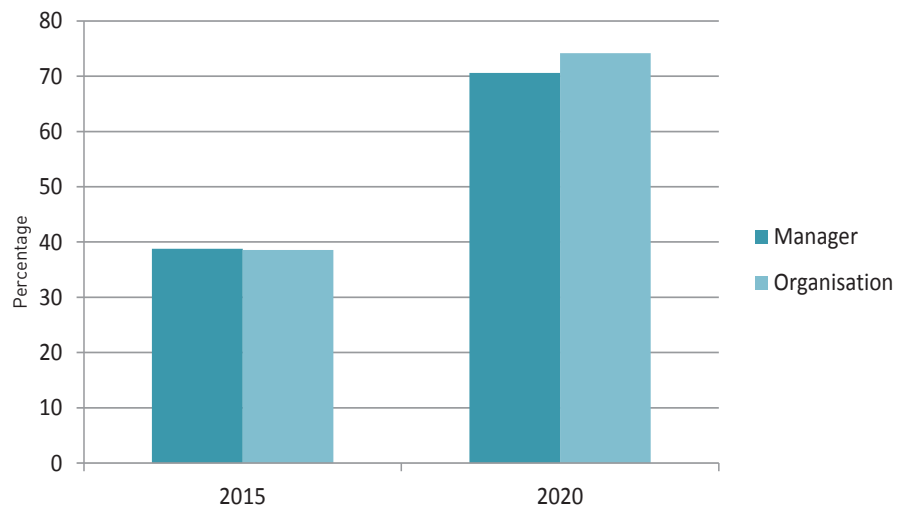
# Tipping Point

*Is mobile working already the norm or is there still a tipping point to come? We define a “tipping point” as the critical point in adoption beyond which the phenomenon becomes unstoppable.*

Trawling through a wide range of existing literature on this topic we found that establishing an accurate measure of the current level of mobile working in the UK is difficult. Surveys, studies and speculative estimates are plentiful but they are not consistent as they have applied different definitions or are based on selected groups of respondents. The most conservative (and probably the most robust) estimate from the UK Labour Force Survey shows us that at least one third of the entire labour force works remotely all or some of the time – close to 10 million people.

Given the huge variation of estimates, we undertook our own specific research for this study. Following a pilot, we surveyed over 500 managers from medium to large organisations across the UK in early December 2015. The results confirm our evidence review. Mobile working is no longer a phenomenon restricted to a small minority and the demand for mobile working by individuals is high. This finding was consistently reported in previous research; a survey by

**Adoption of Mobile Working by Managers and Organisations**



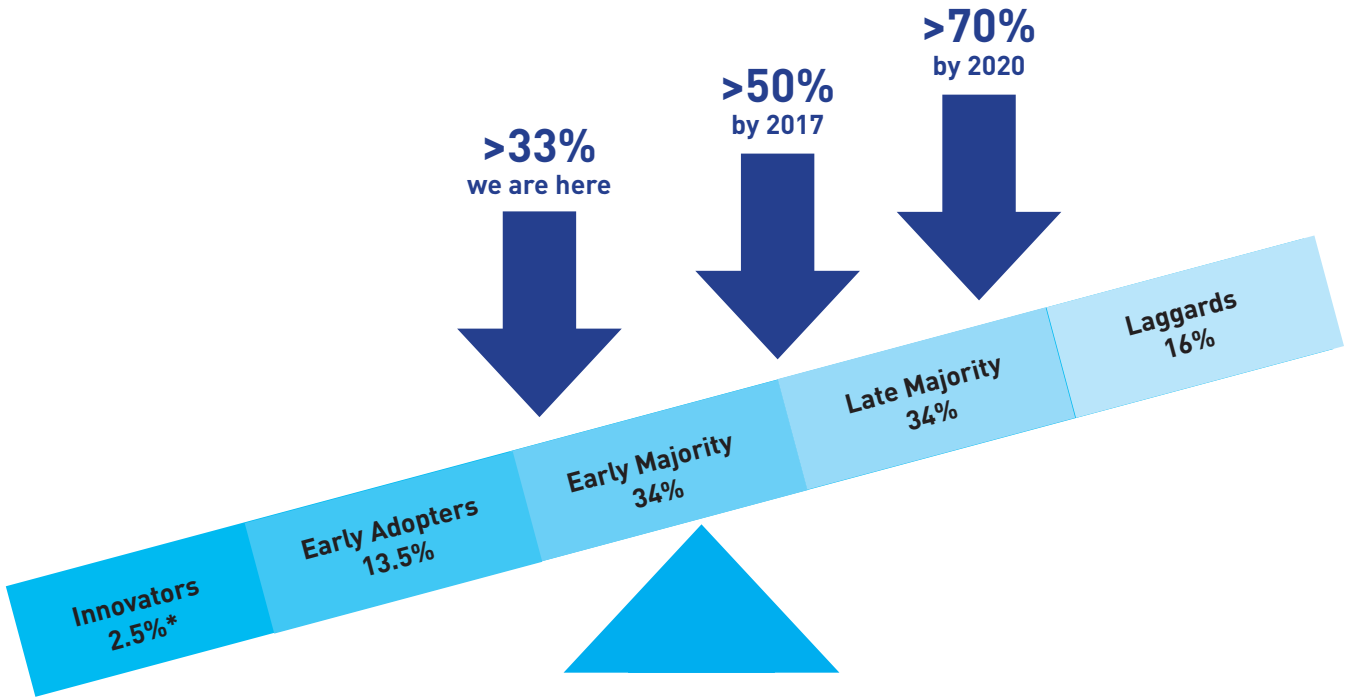
Samsung (2014) even reported that some 27 per cent of their interviewees would trade flexible working over a pay rise<sup>2</sup>.

Our survey results indicate that mobile working was the norm by 2014 for over one-third of respondents and over one-third of the organisations they worked in. Over half (managers and organisations) will have adopted this way of working by 2017. Most interesting however, was the finding that the cumulative adoption of mobile working for both managers and organisations was anticipated to reach an adoption level of over 70 per cent by 2020 (see the chart above).

Our survey of managers in medium and large firms shows that we are well beyond the definition Everett Rogers’ classic study of adoption of new behaviours<sup>3</sup> deems to be a “tipping point”.

***“adoption of mobile working for both individuals and organisations [is] anticipated to reach an adoption level of over 70 per cent by 2020”***

## We are Approaching the Tipping Point



\* These figures have been proposed by Everett Rogers to illustrate the Diffusion of Innovation Theory

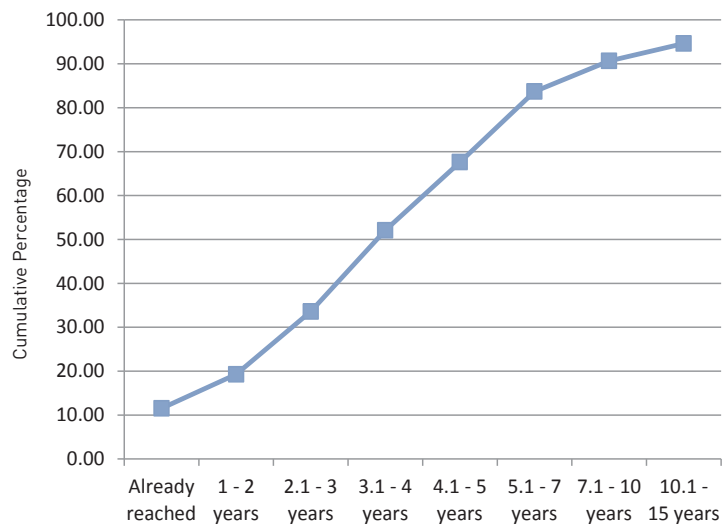
We have not as yet reached 50 per cent market penetration and have about 17 per cent of individuals and organisations to adopt before we include all in the “early majority”.

*We therefore conclude that the tipping point in terms of adoption of mobile working is imminent. In other words, there is now an established trend for adoption by organisations and also intensification of use by those who have already adopted (as can be seen below).*

Our survey results may however under-estimate penetration of this way of working across the population of all organisations, as it specifically excluded micro and small companies with under 50 employees and freelancers. Our panel’s view was that adoption was even more likely in the small and especially start-up companies as the organisations are likely to have been “born-digital”; and as one of our panel members reported,

*“...this is a natural part of the way start-up companies operate – valuing flexibility and outputs...”*

**Trend towards optimal use of Mobile Working in organisations**





This panel view is consistent with estimates drawn from our rapid evidence review and from extensive surveys in the USA.

What is important now however is to ensure that individuals and organisations that either have, or will, adopt this working practice are maximising the advantages and addressing any downsides that always occur when we innovate.

Why then have those organisations whose business allows them this flexibility, not yet taken advantage of it? Or is it a question of time and better information to allow them to follow?

Our evidence suggests that there can be a misalignment of individual and organisational preferences. Capacities and organisational cultural factors remain barriers to delivering a winning strategy for all who can benefit and all who can enable. Barriers will of course remain for some individuals, for some types of employment where face-to-face and hands-on are essential, and for areas where data security or health and safety considerations are paramount. But the major barriers lie in organisational cultures, organisational processes, and indeed management practices.

Theory and experience tells us that organisations are most successful in adopting new practices when these are adopted dynamically, to enable their technology strategies, their people strategies and their business strategies to respond and shape each other<sup>4</sup>. We have therefore looked at the adoption of a “working anywhere” approach from three distinct views:

- technology availability and adoption;
- individual attitudes and anxieties;
- organisational drivers and barriers.

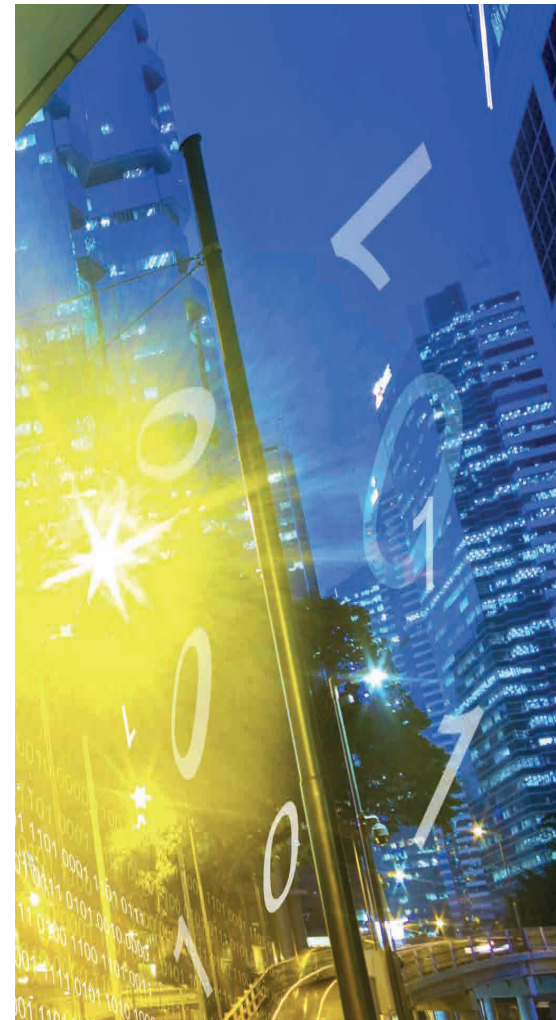
These aspects interact, but the benefits for all can be identified and implemented when these are all working in the same direction. As one of our experts commented

*“mobile or flexible working is a phenomenon with social and cultural aspects, its adoption depends not on one definable golden bullet but on a mix of influences, cultural, social, personal, technical and economic ...”*

*The technology exists but for many individuals and organisations it is not yet being used to its full potential.*

Individual technology ownership, the use of the internet, access to and use of broadband, and mobile communications do not need to be major barriers to mobile working in the UK. In general, the technological capabilities exist to enable those whose job can be done flexibly to do so. The increasingly universal penetration of network and internet services via broadband and mobile, limits only a small proportion of specialist businesses with high “up and download” demands and those in relatively isolated locations. The latest figures from Ofcom illustrate this penetration for the UK<sup>5</sup>. Their 2015 survey found 80 per cent of adults in the UK have either fixed or mobile broadband and 86 per cent of all adults, and over 96 per cent of those aged 16-44, now go online using any type of device in any location<sup>6</sup>. The use of smart phones and tablets has grown rapidly. Ninety-three per cent of adults own or use mobile

phones and 61 per cent use them to access the internet. **We are a connected nation.** Areas which are less well served than others, especially in terms of the provision of ultra-fast broadband are being addressed as a national priority.



# Technology

While there remain barriers to the use of available technologies these are predominantly individual and organisational. Haworth (2015) notes the explosion of intuitive technology has combined with the 24/7 (always-on) culture to make flexible working eminently doable, yet this will not work for everyone<sup>7</sup>. For example, an online survey of sales-force workers in the German division of a large pharmaceutical company found “differences in the perceived usefulness of mobile work” to support functions across job roles, pharmaceutical business units and length of tenure<sup>8</sup>.

In addition, it is increasingly important to allow individuals to choose their devices. It is estimated that 73 per cent of millennials<sup>iv</sup> expect to be able to modify and customize their work device and that a third of millennials would choose social media freedom and device flexibility over a higher salary<sup>9</sup>.

In our survey 61 per cent of all respondents reported their organisation did not have a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy, and 70 per cent of those respondents said their organisation was unlikely to allow BYOD in the future. This disconnect can only increase. Organisations need to be prepared to adapt to the way in



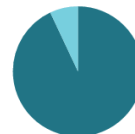
7.1m Superfast fixed Broadband lines



Average UK Broadband speed 22.8Mbit/s



61%  
use mobile to access the internet



93%  
mobile phone ownership / use



66%  
UK adults with smart phones

23.6m subscriptions to 4G

which their employees and future talent will seek to work.

of ownership and management of their working technology.

One interesting strategy illustrated by our panel was where one organisation, recognising that individuals have familiarity with certain devices through their personal use, enabled staff members to choose their operating devices and systems. This meant that although the organisation was determining the corporate use of devices, it gave individuals a sense

The availability of mobile technology is undoubtedly driving a change in working practice.

The trend towards increased mobile working is most frequently attributed to the rise of mobile devices and home-based technologies, falling costs, and increasing stability and security of those systems.

(iv) The term *Millennials* is usually considered to apply to individuals who reached adulthood around the turn of the 21st century.



# “Technology ... is not universally embedded in all business strategies nor is it viewed by all as a universal “good””

In this context a widespread shift to electronic formats in corporate communications systems is inevitable.

High speed internet, online meeting platforms, enterprise social networks for inter-office communications, instant messaging and mobility are all contributing to the rise of remote jobs and the increase in potential for flexible working arrangements.

For example, Terrelonge claimed that 2015 would be the “tipping point” for the widespread adoption of smartphones among UK businesses, signalling a potential for widespread mobile working<sup>10</sup>. The same author also reports that 51 per cent of businesses will have invested in mobile software between 2013 and the end of 2015 and over 40 per cent of the IT leaders indicated that the adoption of smartphones was delivering a net return on investment in terms of efficiencies.

*“The low prices of mobile handheld devices... and the improvements of open mobile standards have made the concept of mobile office grow by leaps and bounds”<sup>11</sup>*

*“Following the pervasive use of mobile technologies in both work and private lives, highly complex technological environments have been established around Work on the Move”<sup>12</sup>*

Forrester Research predicts that the number of mobile broadband users will exceed the number of PC broadband users by 2016<sup>13</sup>.

It is suggested that at least 70 per cent of enterprise data worldwide is held on mobile devices<sup>14</sup>. Meeker’s 2013 trend report suggested there were over 1.5 billion smartphone subscribers, and YouGov’s Media, Technology and Telecoms report predicted that half of all households would own a tablet by the end of 2014<sup>15</sup>. It is suggested that, *“cloud computing, high performance wireless and the enhancement of unified communications had to unite”* to achieve widespread mobile working. A Gartner survey found that 80 per cent of businesses surveyed in 2013 who were not in the cloud planned to make the move within twelve months<sup>16</sup>.

Technology however is not universally embedded in all business strategies nor is it viewed by all as a universal “good”. Some challenges remain on the technology front primarily reflecting appropriate adoption.

Panel members reinforced this in their proposition that training for individuals is essential as well as the provision of technology. The assumption that most people can “just do this” is refuted by the lag times noted even in leading organisations. As one panel member put it

*“... people tend to divide into two camps when faced with new technology, there are those that are concerned about using it and causing it to break and there are those that can’t wait to press the buttons to see what will happen...”*

Adoption needs to be facilitated.

We found from our survey that managers were on the one-hand positive about many of the benefits arising from mobile working, and they did not see major barriers from a technology viewpoint.

On the other hand, they tended to give a qualified response to questions regarding the suitability of technology for meetings (informal and formal) and external collaboration with around only one fifth of respondents saying that the technology was “very suitable”. This would suggest that our findings in other parts of the study are reflected in the survey, and demonstrate that face-to-face meetings remain important in terms of team working. As one panel respondent put it

*“...working remotely all the time is no way to grow a company. Personal connections cement team working...”*

The “water-cooler culture” remains valued and this suggests both that personal contact remains important and that perhaps high-quality collaboration technology is not yet either sufficiently widespread or not yet being used to best effect by organisations. Effective use of such “synchronous” technology is hostage to Metcalfe’s law<sup>17</sup>. Mobile video

technologies may however be reducing the problem of access to some extent. Our panel noted that even the most advanced technology companies can take years to absorb corporate culture change, therefore there is always a lag in terms of adoption across the company. Others noted that it was likely that some internal teams would be more ready to accept change than others. This suggests that the availability of technology may be necessary, but it is unlikely to be sufficient in terms of changes in working practice, without enabling factors at the organisation and acceptance by the individual.

Two important barriers to more widespread adoption have been reported in the fields of health and wellbeing, and information security.

In particular, there is evidence in the literature regarding the pressures which may be placed

on individuals to be “always-on” with the introduction of workplace mobile technology. This has recently been noted in relation to emails which are set on “push” mode<sup>17</sup>. When asked to reflect on the positive and negative impacts of mobile working as distilled from our Delphi consultations with the panel, 86 per cent of survey respondents who had experience of mobile working recorded at least one positive impact. This contrasted with just over one third who noted at least one potentially negative impact. Of the positives, over half the respondents (54 per cent) reported that mobile working allowed them to get more work done. This is consistent with studies that have shown increased productivity over time for organisations introducing mobile working practices.

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(v) Metcalfe’s law characterises many of the network effects of communication technologies and networks such as the Internet, social networking and the World Wide Web. The greater number of users with the service, the more valuable the service becomes to everyone for example two telephones can make only one connection, five can make 10 connections, and twelve can make 66 connections (Wikipedia.org).



# Individual

*Personal circumstances and the nature of the job will ultimately determine the potential for individuals to work flexibly and/or remotely.*

There is strong evidence from recent UK surveys that demand for mobile working is high. CEBR (2014) found that 83 per cent of respondents who did not currently have the option to work remotely would do so were they given the opportunity<sup>18</sup>.

It has been suggested that about half of the British workforce want flexibility in their jobs – either in their working hours or their location<sup>19</sup>.

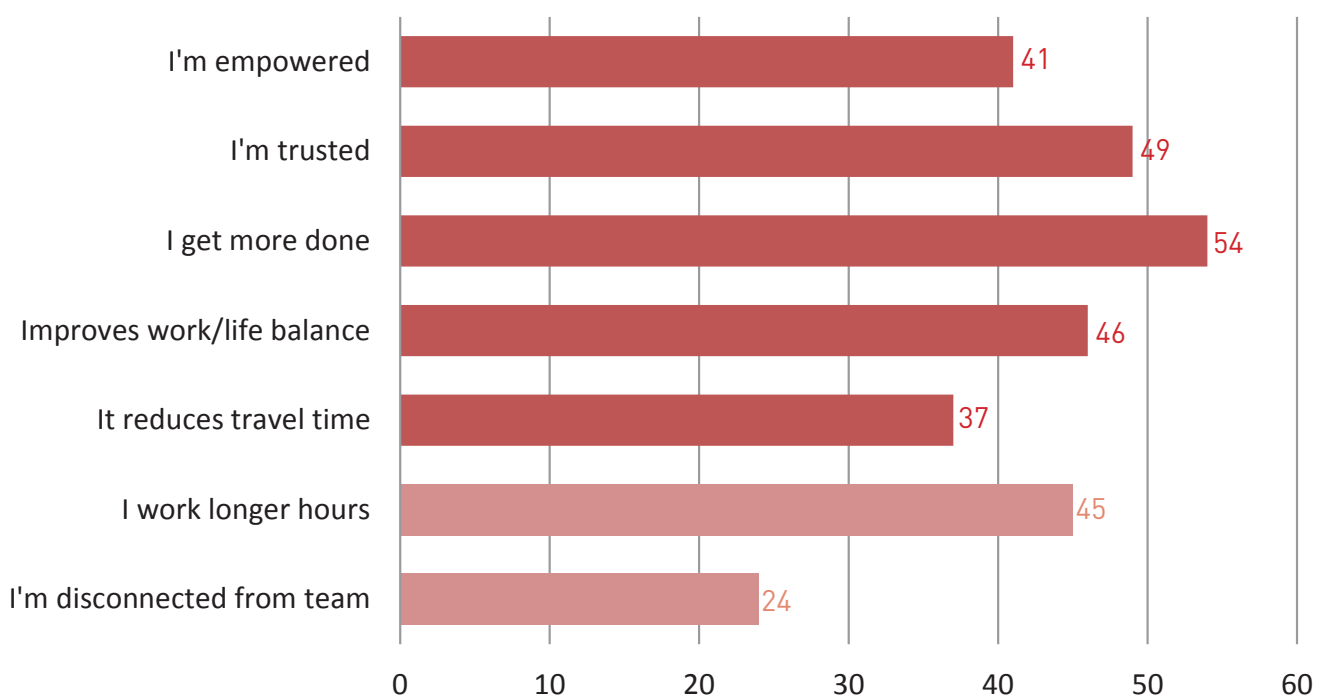
***“I love the chance to work remotely - it lessens my commute, I concentrate much better in a quiet environment at home, it has improved my relationship with my partner as I used to work very long hours and days away from home. Also, I run a very small team, just one other who I trust to work remotely and we communicate even better than before.”***  
***(Survey Respondent)***

There is strong evidence from research that individual attitudes and preferences are key determinants of the experience of mobile working and that there

are paradoxes in that two people can have diametrically opposed perceptions of the same phenomena<sup>20,21</sup>. It has been suggested that in today’s workplace environment, especially with the enablement of BYOD, the individual worker’s ability and ownership of technology are becoming central to the adoption of mobile working and will change the dynamics of many organisational strategies. Our figures regarding the preferences of millennials is one case in point.

Research in the UK demonstrates the role of technology self-sufficiency, and

## How Mobile Working makes managers feel





**“Importantly, mobile working does not need to equate to an “always-on” culture.”**

the organisational mechanisms and environmental settings that can support or inhibit individual competences<sup>22</sup>. A separate study found, “...mobile workers establish a variety of personalised boundary management practices to match their particular situations...” and that these strategies contradict accepted wisdom about the problems associated with an “always-on” culture<sup>23</sup>. While some of the concerns may be justified, it is important for individuals and for their organisations to manage this stress through policies which enable personal choice to over-rule expectations.

Importantly, mobile working does not need to equate to an “always on” culture.

**Our panel members were clear that not being accessible might indeed demonstrate a high level of trust.**

Our survey showed that managers valued mobile working, in particular the ability to get more done; making them feel more trusted; and enabling a better work-life balance.

According to a survey by Microsoft in 2012 no fewer than 38 per cent of workers felt that they were more creative when they work flexibly<sup>24</sup>. The reduction of stress and stress related illness was demonstrated in a CIPD survey which reported that 56 per cent of employers noted that absenteeism dropped after the introduction of flexible working practices<sup>25</sup>.

If individuals are empowered and enabled by their employers to manage technology stress through agreed behaviours and policies such as switching off emails in the evenings and at weekends, the balance

for an individual’s well-being is increasingly positive and easier to manage. Undoubtedly, this may be easier for senior staff, therefore it is vital for organisations to be transparent about their policies. Expectations and leadership play vital roles here.

Despite earlier research regarding the issue of “technostress”<sup>vi</sup>, more recent research is now demonstrating both the positivity of reduced commuting times and the counterfactual impact of long and persistent commuting on both psychological and physical health conditions. As the concentration of employment in our cities increases and urban sprawl extends, there are emerging signs that long commutes may have implications for health as we trade off time commuting against other activities. Commuting “time scarcity” is cited as a barrier to physical activity and maintaining nutritious diets.

**“Managing employee commuting flexibly would increase employee efficiency and moreover enable organisations to attract or retain workers. In the current context of skill shortages, employers have everything to gain from facilitating the mental health of their employees”<sup>26</sup>**

While the majority of evidence so far has come from the USA and has focused on long drives, recent research from Canada suggests that commutes as short as 20 minutes per day can take their toll. This research focuses on the issue of psychological “burnout”. It estimates that above 35 minutes all employees are at increased

(vi) Anxiety or mental pressure resulting from overexposure or involvement with technology

risk of cynicism toward their job. The researchers believe that this should lead employers to adopt flexible commuting arrangements.

Additional evidence has also shown that commuting time is linked to the major emerging health challenge of obesity. Time is a major input to health and large amounts of time consumed by long commutes may inhibit healthy behaviours. Spending an additional 60 minutes daily commuting above average is associated with a 6 per cent decrease in aggregate health-related activities and spending an additional 120 minutes is associated with a 12 per cent decrease<sup>27</sup>. The results indicate that longer commutes are associated with behavioural patterns which over time may contribute to obesity and other poor health outcomes.

One area of concern for individuals working away from the office is that they do not wish to be 100 per cent separated from their colleagues as the social network and the ability and desire to collaborate, with others as part of a team, are seen as positive factors of the workplace.

***“... no matter what age; people have a need to connect with a team to generate a sense of purpose, to nurture self-esteem, to strengthen social bonds. Research by Gallup and others show that having a “best friend” at work fosters a sense of personal safety in a complex world and also induces productivity...”.***  
**(Expert Panel)**

Modern face-to-face collaboration technologies and organisational policies which recognise the vital

role that team collaboration plays both for delivery and innovation, suggest that with forethought this is something which can be implemented and managed successfully.

What was notable in our survey was that there was little evidence of the “disconnect from the team”. As this analysis was of those for whom mobile working was already the norm, it may be that the perception of a disconnect could be more than a real one, but it is also likely that those already undertaking mobile working have developed strategies which minimise this.

A further emerging trend which was noted in our survey was the tendency of those who are mobile working to work longer hours with some 45 per cent of our respondents noting this as a feature of mobile working. This is an area to which employers should be alert as a recent meta-analysis of cohort studies published in the Lancet by University College London (UCL) showed that individuals who work 55 hours or more per week have a 33 per cent increased risk of stroke compared to those who work 35-40 hours and a 13 per cent increased risk of coronary heart disease<sup>29</sup>.

The UCL study however does not factor in the other positive counter-balancing factors of mobile working which can facilitate increased physical activity, less stressful working environments and commuting. The UCL study also shows differences for those employed in manual and non-manual occupations. The impact on health and wellbeing seems to be subject to countervailing forces of positive and negative effects and we are not aware of other studies which have successfully captured these specifically for mobile workers.

***McKinsey predicts that social media has the potential to save companies \$1.3 trillion, largely due to improvements in intra-office collaboration<sup>28</sup>***

# Employers

*Organisations hold the key to adoption of mobile working and have the incentives to make it happen.*

In sum, the critical success factors for mobile working lie in the hands of employers and in the development and implementation of their people policies; to enable organisations to make the most of the available technology and people to work in the way they wish to work today. The legislation<sup>30</sup> that was introduced in the UK at the end of June 2014 enables almost all employees with at least 26 weeks service to ask for “flexible” working. This legislation may be one of the catalysts triggering the increase in demand for non-office-based working, but from an employer’s perspective there are other factors which may be even more significant.

Johns and Gratton (2013) writing on the future of work, advise organisations to: “focus on collaboration”; “re-conceive physical workspaces”; “reconstruct workflows to tap remote talent”; “invest in intuitive technology” that reflects “individual’s personal

use of devices and software”; and “recognise idiosyncrasy by individuals.”<sup>13</sup>

The value proposition for organisations is now heavily weighted in the direction of technology-enabled mobile working practices even if there are some cautionary voices regarding the need for employers to adopt this policy in a responsible fashion.

Policy entrepreneur Wingham Rowan, says (in a TED talk) that mobile working enables employers to buy slivers of time from freelancers who in turn can factor that work into a portfolio of other activities, paid or not. From the organisation’s viewpoint these slivers of work avoid unproductive overhead costs and have an impact for the tax collection<sup>31</sup>.

Our study suggests that the most successful forms of mobile working will be achieved when the benefits to the organisation and the individual are aligned and enshrined in formal and agreed ways of working.

From our study, there are four principal reasons why organisations should take steps

to develop and implement such policies with their employees. We outline these over the next two pages.





## 1. Increased Productivity

There is evidence of increased **productivity** by employees which feeds back into the organisation's performance. A review for Cisco suggests that not only will the scale of mobile working increase but that it *"brings with it a huge potential to improve workforce productivity, improve staff motivation, flexibility and retention"*<sup>32</sup>. The evidence from our panel and our survey all point to positive returns to the organisation as mobile working enables greater individual productivity.

Three different examples demonstrate the productivity dividend from mobile working:

1. In an early implementation of mobile working, BT enabled engineers to work flexible hours and tracked their productivity compared to those remaining office-based. At first, it looked like they were performing worse but after a few months the mobile working team adapted and significantly outperformed those who were still in traditional teams. Their staff turnover was also lower<sup>13</sup>.

2. In a live experiment on productivity Nick Bloom (Professor of Economics at Stanford University and Co-Director of the Productivity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship programme at the National Bureau of Economic Research) together with one of his graduate

students enabled the staff of their travel company to work from home for nine months to save office costs. They did save office costs but more importantly, the non-office based staff consistently completed more calls than their counterparts who remained in the call centre. They found that people working from home completed 13.5 per cent more calls than the staff in the office meaning that the company got almost an extra work day a week from the team during the same working hours<sup>33</sup>. Turnover was also reduced.

3. Improved outcomes were reported by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service following the introduction of new working practices where 94 per cent of staff work remotely once a month. They noted the following improvements: 105,000 hours saved admin time; sickness rates have decreased by 55 per cent from 16.2 days per person in 2009/10 to 7.3 days per person in 2013/14, reducing the cost of absence from £3.2 million to £1.8 million; and improved service delivery timescales for cases: 29-57 weeks in 2011/12 to 18-31 weeks in 2013/14<sup>34</sup>.

Taking these types of benefits into account, CEBR (2014) estimated that some £11.5 billion could be released in the existing workforce with the right tools to enable the greater adoption of a flexible 'work anywhere' culture<sup>18</sup>.

## 2. Improved Employee Wellbeing

There is evidence of improved **wellbeing** for employees and a decrease in absenteeism as was seen in the Bloom experiment<sup>36</sup>, despite much emphasis currently on "technostress".

Our survey showed positive responses for the impact of mobile working on work/life balance and only a minority of respondents displayed concerns regarding loss of social interaction with their team. Our panel reminded us that not all employees feel equally positive regarding such flexibility. Yet members also noted that the earlier concerns about "always-on" might be fading both through improved organisational practice or self-management but also the fact that younger workers are used to mingling work and other activities 24/7.

*"...a connected society is not a source of stress for them..."*  
(Panel Member)

Given the increasing medical evidence of correlations between long commutes, long hours and serious health conditions; mobile working (enabled responsibly) could be a positive force for many as it shifts the power over when and where to work to the employee from the employer. Such empowerment is a positive force for wellbeing and valued by our survey respondents.



### 3. Talent Attraction and Retention

Evidence suggests that there can be a win-win for individuals and for organisations in the competition for **talent** attraction and retention. The war for talent means that organisations need to be increasingly aware of employee attitudes to mobile working and adapt their practices. Increasingly, as the workforce becomes more dominated by those who were “born digital”, employee preferences and demands will put pressure on organisations to adopt more flexible, technology-enabled practices. As we saw earlier from our survey, the organisations showed a disappointing level of adoption of BOYD policies which bodes ill for recruitment of a future workforce.

Some recent statistics from the USA<sup>35</sup> portend likely changes needed to satisfy the millennial generations:

- 51 per cent plan to look for a new job with workplace flexibility in the next three years.
- 69 per cent believe office attendance is unnecessary on a regular basis.
- Millennials (followed by those in Generation X) place greater value on workplace flexibility compared to the baby boomer generation.
- 77 per cent believe that flexibility to work at different hours is important when looking for a job, compared to 64 per cent of Gen X and 60 per cent of baby boomers.
- Nearly 90 per cent of HR professionals predict that over the next five years flexible work arrangements will increase.

- 89 per cent prefer to choose where and when they work over a traditional 9-5 position.

- 74 per cent ranked a collaborative work environment as the first or second most important characteristic they look for in the workplace and they prefer to collaborate in small teams.

One of our panel members noted that

***“... young workers love to wrestle with identifying a problem and then creating a solution. They don’t want to accept a command and control regime.”***

Apart from future workforce, we have already seen from our study that there is a very high demand from existing staff for mobile working and when introduced not only does absenteeism decrease but staff turnover also reduces. Timewise estimate demand for flexible working is around 46 per cent of those in employment in the UK, or some 14.1 million<sup>19</sup>. However, where they note a major gap is in terms of only 6.2 per cent of job adverts offering such options at time of recruitment.

Organisations are afraid and don’t even consider the benefits of mobile working when recruiting - they are fixed in their approach and potentially missing out on huge talent potential.

In times of talent shortages the lack of any mention of such policies would seem to be an own goal by organisations seeking to recruit. People policies are central to business strategies therefore it is incontestable that change in this arena needs to be high on the business agenda.

### 4. Reduction in Accommodation Costs

The potential to **reduce costs** of accommodation in many of our most expensive urban areas is driving organisations to adopt different office strategies. For example the drive to reduce estate costs has been cited as a driver of mobile working in the public sector. For central government, commuter hubs have been made available but are yet to be fully tested.

***The UK Ministry of Justice have developed the commuter hub concept with 200 desks available across 16 locations in London and the South East. Staff can book desks to work from, closer to where they live. Feedback from staff is overwhelmingly positive<sup>37</sup>.***

At a national level, small reductions in commuting and travelling can have dramatic, beneficial effects on the overall cost of transport and the effort involved. Vodafone suggests that the cost to British business is £5,746 per fixed desk, and that £34 billion could be saved “by freeing up desk space and working more flexibly”<sup>38</sup>.

The continued rise in traditional office rates, especially in major central cities, is driving the emergence of a “shared economy” as an alternative to traditional office provision. A recent estimate by MeetingRooms.com claims that “...on average, businesses in London could generate a return of at least £30,000 a year by making their excess space available on a shared economy marketplace”<sup>39</sup>.

# A Strategy for Smart Mobile Working?

*For greater adoption, raising awareness of the benefits both to the company and to employees could be made more prominent.*

What we have learned in our study is that externally forced change on organisations can be catalysts for a change in practice but the introduction of mobile working must be sensitive to the needs of individuals as well as organisations; it is best enabled rather than enforced.

How then do organisations best garner the benefits and avoid either the downsides or miss the opportunities presented?

***“...there is significant debate in research at present as to whether change is best enforced or incentivised or simply nudged”***  
**(Panel Member)**

We offer three keys to successful implementation, given the findings of our study.

## **First: Leadership is critical**

Chief Executives and Board Members should set an example with their own approach to mobile working and wellbeing and should routinely publicise their support and celebrate effective practice.

***“An organisation’s values and culture lie at the heart of the approach to mobile working.***

***Mobile working can be enabled but not enforced. There is limited traction in compulsion”.***  
**(Panel Member)**

Our research indicates that **organisational culture** is pivotal in addressing the barriers to mobile working, with key roles for both management and staff identified. The best route to success is to work with the grain of an organisation’s culture. Different configurations will suit different organisations and different parts of the same organisation.

It also needs to be recognised that even for cutting-edge IT organisations, cultural changes to optimise mobile working may take a very long time. It depends on **trust** so that managers and staff can agree to value output more than visibility without micro managing when and where people work.

There are potentially many organisations whose leaders and staff believe that mobile working is not for them, when instead it is quite feasible, given the will and shown the means. Role models and case studies from those who have already made the journey can be a vital resource in assisting adoption.

Peer to peer learning in business can be highly effective in terms of adoption.

Samsung (2014) describe the *“ingrained cultural attitudes for*

*‘being seen in the office’ or worries over productivity”* as a key barrier to mobile working<sup>2</sup>. A YouGov survey of UK business leaders for Vodafone found that 25 per cent *“felt that their employees remained rooted to the concept of having their own desk space”*, 23 per cent *“felt flexibility led to employees taking advantage”*, and yet 77 per cent *“measure success by results rather than time spent in the office”*<sup>38</sup>. There would seem to be a measure of disconnect here between leaders’ perceptions and their employees’ demands and indeed employee performance when mobile working is enabled. Reviewing successful (and unsuccessful) practice by senior staff will be important in enabling change.

**Trust** is the key to successful implementation of flexible working policies, but a Samsung survey of 200 UK business owners (2014) found that 28 per cent didn’t trust employees to work flexibly<sup>2</sup>. Our study here suggests that the very fact of enabling mobile working makes employees feel more trusted and in this context, leadership commitment is a vital ingredient. Effective management *“demands high levels of trust, respect for individual autonomy, and close attention to communication styles and content”* and organisational investment *“in the creation and maintenance of rich relationships”*<sup>32</sup>.



**“Peer to peer learning in business can be highly effective in terms of adoption.”**

According to our survey, Mobile Working...

...is challenging for the organisation **75.4%**

**82.3%** ...requires changes to Terms & Conditions

...requires changes in performance management **83.9%**

but... **64.8%** of line managers would be in favour

### **Second: People policies need to change**

Organisations which have recognised the demand for mobile working, and have been early adopters have both reaped the benefits but also faced the challenges of adaptation to new styles of working and new working practices. Our survey responses indicated that there would need to be changes to terms and conditions and performance management which would prove challenging for organisations; yet more than half believed that such changes would have the support of line managers (as shown above).

**Policies** should be transparent and visibly agreed with staff. In many organisations, mobile working may have been passively condoned for individual employees but such an arrangement is fraught with difficulties.

A new approach to **performance management** must be adopted that focuses on outputs and outcomes and not presenteeism and hours worked. *“Perhaps particularly in the public sector but also in other traditionally run sectors, there is evidence of an instinct to value command and control and visibility in the office more than output.”* Presenteeism may well linger indefinitely with a lot of mobile working issues not as clear cut as they may first appear. Johns and Gratton (2013) argue that difficulties measuring achievement continues to be a challenge for the wholesale

adoption of mobile working with the related consequence that employees still complain that ‘presenteeism’ makes them feel they need to show their face at the office even when they could be more productive elsewhere<sup>13</sup>.

**Integrating work, learning and family life is crucial and mobile working can play a part in reducing stresses and enable good work.**

*“Over a number of years, when childcare was a major priority (and as that reduces) I have always been keen to advocate mobile working for all staff and have actively sought ways to ensure that it is available to all and not just for those in senior roles and/or those with children. Taking this approach has caused some problems with other senior colleagues from time to time.”*

However, there are signs that trendsetters are beginning to meet the challenge of reinventing performance management. A significant number of US leading companies, including GE, Cargill, Eli Lilly, Adobe, Accenture and Google have all been reviewing their performance management approaches and moving from annual reviews to what might be termed “immediate performance development” in order to move from dictating

what employees should do at work to helping them to develop their skills as individuals<sup>40</sup>.

The annual performance review has become about as useful as the five-year plan.

In the UK in 2010 the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (a non-departmental public body) implemented a shift to measuring performance by output, rather than visibility in the office. Additionally, all staff were given technology through which they could access video-conferencing and an electronic case management system with digital case files. Ofsted in 2014 assessed the organisation as 'good with outstanding leadership' and "*highlighted the impact technology and flexibility has had on enabling a cultural shift that has supported frontline practice improvement.*"<sup>34</sup>.

These examples demonstrate that change is possible and provide inspiration for those that wish to follow.

### Third: Careful planning is essential

The introduction of new technology and new ways of working takes time, careful planning and implementation. Don't assume that new ways of working will just happen! Importantly it is critical to ensure that individuals are comfortable with their technology and recognise individual preferences. It might be worth testing and trialling rather than just blanket adoption. It will be vital to enable collaboration for teams and while this can be facilitated through technology, it is important to set specific meet-ups and "virtual coffees" which retain the "social dividends" that accrue from working in teams.

Mobile working helps with teams that are geographically dispersed. This is the key to allowing the company to work in a way that would be impossible using a conventional office.

National or other external disruptive events can offer the opportunity for adoption and provide a **catalyst** for change. Examples include train and tube strikes, events such as the Olympics, and the SARS epidemic. These types of events enabled organisations to test mobile working to avoid the pressure of crowded travel or which constrained people to work from home. Yet even small changes can prompt the achievement of a tipping point towards mobile working<sup>41</sup>.





# Conclusions

The technology exists to enable successful mobile working, but for many individuals and organisations it is not yet being used to its full potential.

From our expert panel findings and from our review of the literature and the survey we believe that we will imminently reach a tipping point in the trend towards mobile working. There are no longer major barriers among many in the workforce or in terms of the availability of enabling technology. Concerns regarding health and wellbeing can be managed through careful implementation, leadership and agreed policies - it seems that

we can be "always -on" but also in control of how this impacts on us.

Personal circumstances and the nature of the job will ultimately determine the potential for individuals to work flexibly or remotely but there is an increasing demand for this and increasing evidence that this can improve productivity and wellbeing.

Organisations hold the key to the adoption of mobile working and have the incentives to make it happen. But change will be challenging and leadership will be critical to altering organisational cultures in which trust is paramount and employees are

judged on outputs rather than on being seen.

For everyone to gain and create a true virtuous circle, we need to learn lessons from the innovators and early adopters; taking a patient and planned approach to this significant shift in the way we work.





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# The Delphi Panel Members

## **Professor Sir Cary Cooper, (Manchester Business School, 50th Anniversary Professor of Organisational Psychology & Health)**

Cary Cooper is world-renowned for his ground-breaking research and insights into health and well-being in the workplace. He is 50th Anniversary Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health at Alliance Manchester Business School and the author of over 120 books on subjects including occupational stress, women at work, and industrial and organisational psychology. In December 2015, Cary was elected as President of the CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development.

## **Stefan Czerniawski (Cabinet Office, Deputy Director, Major Events and Operations)**

Stefan Czerniawski was head of corporate strategy at the Cabinet Office from 2013 to 2015 where he oversaw an award-winning project to introduce new technology designed to support smart and mobile working. He is now leading a project to improve approaches to digital records management across government. From 2000 - 2003 he was Director of e-Government Strategy at the Cabinet Office before spending 13 years at the DWP.

## **Kath Durrant (Rolls Royce, former HR Director)**

Kath Durrant was previously HR Group Director at Rolls Royce and has held senior positions with AstraZeneca, GUS plc and GlaxoSmithKline. She started her career at the London Stock Exchange as a graduate trainee and

has a degree in History from Lancaster University, now sitting as an Advisory Board member for the University Management School.

## **Ken Eastwood (Digital Nomads, Founder)**

Ken made valuable written contributions to the study. He has 26 years local government experience, latterly as an Assistant Director and member of the leadership team at Barnsley MBC. Ken has significant expertise in transformation and technology enabled change. An author of articles on digital innovation and new ways of working and delivering services, he is a well known commentator on the digital agenda. Former Project Nomad national eGov board member and founder and national lead of Public Sector Nomads, Ken has been at the forefront of mobile & flexible working for over a decade.

## **Professor James Faulconbridge (Lancaster University, Professor of Transnational Management)**

James Faulconbridge's research focuses on the globalisation of professional services, with the topics of knowledge, learning and institutions being addressed. His research has been funded by the UK's Research Councils, the British Academy, and the US Sloan Foundation. James co-authored the books *The Globalization of Advertising* and *The Globalization of Executive Search* (both Routledge), and co-edited the books *International Business Travel in the Global Economy* (Ashgate) and *The Business of Global Cities* (Routledge).

## **Johanna Frelin (Hyper Island, former CEO)**

Johanna Frelin was the CEO of Hyper Island, a global learning institute focusing on digital media, leadership and innovation. She is now CEO of Tengbom, one of the leading architectural firms in Sweden and the Nordic region.

## **Professor David Guest (King's College London, Professor in Organizational Psychology & HRM)**

Professor David E Guest joined King's College London in 2000 and has since had a spell as Head of Department and Deputy Head of the School of Social Science and Public Policy. He has written and researched extensively in the areas of human resource management, employment relations and the psychological contract, motivation and commitment, and careers. David is currently Chair of the Examination Board for the MSc in Human Resource Management and Organisational Analysis.

## **Ian Kennedy (Cisco, Vice President, Technical Operations EMEAR Region)**

Ian Kennedy leads the Systems Engineering organisation at Cisco International Limited across Europe, Middle East, Africa and Russia (EMEAR). His organisation develops ICT solutions for business transformation across the public and private sectors with an increasing focus on the development of systems for Smart Cities and cloud-based services which lead directly to innovative solutions for collaboration, mobility, data center and the broader business environment. Ian is a member of





the Greater Manchester Business Leadership Council, bringing together private sector leaders to review key strategic issues, offering insight and constructive challenge to policy makers in relation to the region's strategic ambitions to drive economic growth. Ian is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a Chartered Engineer, Chartered IT Practitioner, Member of the IET, BCS & IEEE, and is a BCS Certified IS Consultant.

#### **Chris Litherland (Independent)**

Chris Litherland is an independent consultant, working in International Human Resources, Organisation Development, Change Management, M&A's and Executive Coaching. Focused on Strategic challenges in Talent Management & Mobility, Organisation Performance, Rewards & Recognition, and Employee Engagement within Global Organisations. He has held senior international HR roles in Honeywell, Intermec Technologies, SAS Institute, and Fujitsu ICL. He is a graduate of Sheffield University with a degree in Environmental Studies, a Chartered Fellow of the CIPD, SHRM-SCP and GPHR accredited, and former global advisory board member with SHRM. A regular Judge for International Business Awards, HR Awards, and member of Workforce Business Intelligence board. He is a frequent presenter and panelist at global conferences, panels and webinars. He's been located in Germany for the past 18 years and a long-time mobile worker.

#### **Stuart Whistance (Cloud Energy Software, Managing Director)**

Stuart Whistance is founder and Managing Director of Cloud Energy Software; a software development company to deliver solutions to the market. The company has developed four products for the

international markets, providing a cloud based, robust, secure and scale-able solutions through energy management applications that help companies reduce their energy and carbon consumption, comply with energy related legislation and integrate into existing software to add value.

#### **Chris Yapp (Independent)**

Chris Yapp is an independent consultant, working in technology and futures thinking with 30 years experience in industry working most recently at HP, Microsoft and Capgemini. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts and a Fellow of the British Computer Society for whom he blogs on future technologies and impacts on society; his most recent book is "*Personalizing Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*". He is a Senior Associate Fellow of the Institute of Governance and Public Management at Warwick University; an associate of the think Tank DEMOS; a Patron of the National Association of Able Children in Education, NACE; a Trustee of World e-citizens, part of Mirandanet, an educational charity; and a past Trustee of the School for Social Entrepreneurs. He is a member of the UNESCO UK working group on the Information Society. Chris is a Graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford and holds an honorary doctorate from Glasgow Caledonian University.

# About us

Through its rigorous research programmes targeting organisations, cities, regions and economies, now and for future trends; The Work Foundation is a leading provider of analysis, evaluation, policy advice and know-how in the UK and beyond.

The Work Foundation addresses the fundamental question of what Good Work means: this is a complex and evolving concept. Good Work for all by necessity encapsulates the importance of productivity and skills needs, the consequences of technological innovation, and of good working practices. The impact of local economic development, of potential disrupters to work from wider-economic governmental and societal pressures, as well as the business-needs of different types of organisations can all influence our understanding of what makes work good. Central to the concept of Good Work is how these and other factors impact on the well-being of the individual whether in employment or seeking to enter the workforce.

For further details, please visit [www.theworkfoundation.com](http://www.theworkfoundation.com).

## Contributions to the report

The research was conducted by a team at The Work Foundation including: Dr Cathy Garner, Peter Forbes, Helen Sheldon, David Shoesmith and Phil Ternouth with valuable input from other colleagues. It was overseen by Gemma Rowland and Martin Sparey at Hotwire for and with Simon Burberry at Citrix. The final report was designed by Stephanie Scott-Davies.

We would like to thank our panel members: Professor Sir Cary Cooper (Manchester Business School), Stefan Czerniawski (Cabinet Office), Kath Durrant (previously Rolls Royce), Ken Eastwood (Digital Nomads), Professor James Faulconbridge (Lancaster University), Johanna Frelin (previously Hyper Island), Professor David Guest (King's College London), Ian Kennedy (Cisco), Chris Litherland (previously Honeywell), Stuart Whistance (Cloud Energy Software) and Chris Yapp.

Additionally we would like to thank the 100 individuals from companies in The Work Foundation's networks who completed the pilot survey and the 503 from the Censuwide panel that completed the full survey.

This report is based on research that was funded by Citrix; however The Work Foundation have retained final editorial control over the methodology, analysis and reporting. The findings do not necessarily reflect the views of Citrix.

January 2016

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