

# The New World of Work



# The New World of Work

*Enable the workforce and the business to thrive*

Peter Cheese



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## FOREWORD

Machiavelli wrote in *The Prince*, ‘It should be borne in mind that there is nothing more difficult to arrange, more doubtful of success and more dangerous to carry through than initiating change. The innovator makes enemies of all those who prospered under the old order, and only lukewarm support is forthcoming from those who would prosper under the new.’

And nothing could be more apposite than this, as we enter a new era of work. This change will be profound, given how work itself has significantly changed during the Covid-19 pandemic, but also because of political change and economic challenges with a major recession that may follow over the coming years. All these circumstances have created a perfect storm, which will transform the lives of many individuals, companies, public sector bodies and the institutions that underpin them.

So, what lessons have we learned during this pandemic; as we move forward, which will change the workplace in the future.

First, working more flexibly is not only doable but also meets working people’s needs for greater autonomy and control over their job and life more generally. Prior to the pandemic the global research evidence was that if you could and wanted flexible working, it delivered enhanced job satisfaction, lower stress-related sickness absence and great productivity. It is now a reality that flexibility will survive the period of the pandemic, and, as research has been showing, should deliver to the bottom line as well as to the financial and mental wellbeing of working people.<sup>1</sup>

Second, we have learned how vitally important line managers are to creating purpose and value-led organizations. As we enter the hybrid era of flexible working at the same time as recession and political realignment in the post-Brexit era, how people’s fears, uncertainties and skills are managed will be significant in any recovery, as well as in employee health, wellbeing and performance.<sup>2</sup> Many HR and occupational health professionals have for many years been advocating the need to recruit and recognize different strengths in every line manager which must include high levels of emotional intelligence, empathy and social skills. This advocacy needs to be turned into reality, with leaders from shop floor to top floor being promoted and recruited on the basis of these personal traits – in effect, where there is parity

between potential leaders' technical and social skills. Vital if we are to manage the tsunami of change about to hit all organizations in all sectors in the fourth industrial revolution and next era of work.

Third, if we are to engage Generation Z and Millennials in this new era of work, we need to listen to them. They are the new generations in work who are much less willing to work in workplace cultures that don't develop, value or trust them. Their parents, on the other hand, were more accepting of intolerant attitudes and behaviours for the sake of job security. These generations want more from work. They want a strong sense of purpose, consistent and supportive values and behaviours, greater work-life integration, and challenge. These generations will lead us into this new greener world, where values count, where having a sense of purpose will drive their performance and ambition and where they will contribute to the quality of life in their personal relationships, communities and in society more generally.

This book highlights how globalization, geopolitics, technologies, demographics and economies are dramatically changing, leading to fundamental reorientation in the way we do things; in education and learning, in new forms of leadership, and in the importance of 'people' at the heart of business.

This movement toward building wellbeing cultures in our workplaces was foreseen even at the start of the Industrial Revolution by the great social reformer and thinker John Ruskin, when he wrote in 1851, 'In order that people may be happy in their work these three things are needed: they must be fit for it, they must not do too much of it and they must have a sense of success in it.' It took two major recessions and a global health crisis to get us all to understand, as the author of this book states, 'wellbeing is at the heart of productivity, of engagement and of good work itself... and we have to reverse the trends of recent years of declining wellbeing, of stress and growing concerns for mental health.'

As the author convincingly lays out in this book, the time for this change is upon us all, as we put 'people first', and business leaders as well as the HR community embrace the challenges ahead.

This book leads the way in beginning the dialogue for all of us interested in people at work, but we have to go beyond rhetoric and take the action to enable effective, humane and sustainable change. George Bernard Shaw, in his play *Mrs Warren's Profession*, summed it up nicely: 'People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them!'

*The New World of Work* lays out the challenges and circumstances which we all have to action in the coming years.

*Professor Sir Cary Cooper, CBE*  
*ALLIANCE Manchester Business School, University of Manchester*

## Endnotes

- 1 Norgate, S and Cooper, C L (2020) *Flexible Work: Designing our healthier future lives*, Routledge, London and New York
- 2 Cooper, C L (2021) *Psychological Insights for Understanding COVID-19 and Work*, Routledge, London and New York

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a book is never an easy undertaking. It takes a lot of time and commitment, perseverance and belief. And it takes a lot of help.

Having started on the book during the summer of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns we all had to endure unexpectedly gave me the time and space needed to write. With no social commitments and over the darkest period of the year, evenings and weekends became consumed with writing – somewhat to the dismay of my family, but to the delight of the publisher who must have been wondering if they would ever see the manuscript.

I have always enjoyed the process of writing, the discipline of trying to assemble thoughts and put them to paper, and to question, challenge and research further. Writing a book in some ways is a luxury and a bit of an indulgence as well. Usually, like many people, my writing is limited to articles or blogs, or perhaps the occasional foreword or chapter in someone else's book. Writing something short and concise is often harder than writing something long – whoever said I didn't have time to write something short, so I wrote something long had it spot on.

A book allows the opportunity to write something long. To bring together lots of ideas, experiences and interests in to one place, to look for evidence as much as possible, and to try to make some sense of it all.

But of course, a book of this kind needs real support from others. That support comes in so many forms, but for me in writing a book of this nature, it begins with the many people I have met over the last 20 years or more who have influenced me and helped to shape my thinking.

Over the last eight years or so as CEO at the CIPD, I have had the privilege of meeting many people, visiting many organizations and places, and talking on many forums and platforms. Similarly, in my time at Accenture, I always regarded it as a privilege that as a consultant I was able to meet so many people from all around the world, hear about their businesses and the challenges they faced, and explore the future.

Through all of this, I have been lucky to have a seat close enough to the action to be able to see many of the changes that have been happening, and to talk with people who are influencing or seeking to shape the future.

Politicians, business leaders, academics and thought leaders, and of course many leaders in the HR profession.

These experiences have always inspired me and excited my interest in what is happening and how we should think about the future of work.

So my first thanks go to all of them, many of whom I talk about or reference in this book.

In putting the book together, finding the themes and the structure, and in so much of the initial writing and research I owe a great debt of thanks to Josie Cox. Josie is an exceptionally talented journalist and broadcaster, having amongst other things been the Business Editor of *The Independent*, and now a freelance writer whose work appears regularly in top-notch media outlets. We worked together on this project from the outset and immediately hit it off in our shared perspectives of the world of work, what needs changing and what the future might hold.

Without her, this book wouldn't have happened and not only did she bring her insights of the business world, but also her journalistic talents in writing. Keep the sentences short, make it readable and understandable, never stop writing at a point where you are stuck or you will find it hard to return to it.

Throughout the book I have referenced research and content from the CIPD. That is not because I intend this book to be some kind of advert, but because the work of my colleagues is frequently exceptionally good, provides great insight and deserves to be referenced. The research and the collaborations that the CIPD has developed over the years focus on so many of the themes of this book, and these will be our themes for the future. So a big thanks goes to all of them and the organization which I have been proud to have had the opportunity to lead.

I particularly want to recognize Professor Sir Cary Cooper who has been the President of the CIPD over the last six years, but also a great colleague, friend and mentor, and also Louise Fisher who has been Chair of the CIPD over the same period. Her calm leadership and support has made my job easier as well.

Finally, and it may be a bit clichéd, but it is true, a big thanks to my family. Families see the best and the worst of all of us as it is usually the environment in which we are all at our most authentic, and raw. But if you are lucky enough to be surrounded by a supportive family as I am, then you are blessed. I am particularly blessed by being in a very female family – my wife, and three daughters, all of whom are now forging their careers and

futures in this world of work. I learn from them all, they keep me grounded, and have always helped me iron out the stresses and strains of a demanding working life.

I really do believe that work should be good for us, helping us to grow, to find our talents and interests, and hopefully for each of us to be able to make a positive contribution and difference. Now is the time to shape a better future of work for all, to focus businesses on all that they should be responsible for, and to address the issues of fairness, inclusion and wellbeing for the good of our economies and society at large.

We owe it to each other, and to the generations that follow. It is to them, in which I certainly include my own children and all the young people that I have the pleasure of spending time with, that this book is dedicated.

