

Resilience First Webinar Summary

‘Flexible Working – the hybrid office.’ In partnership with Russell-Cooke

Chair:

Simon Collins, Chair, Resilience First.

Speakers:

Kizzy Augustin, Partner, Russell-Cooke.

Natalie Smith, Associate Principal, Workplace Strategy Director, Perkins & Will.

Ian Jones, Former General Manager, Intel Corporation.

Key Opening Remarks:

- COVID-19 has brought our adaptive capacity into light.
- Flexible working has become the norm with COVID-19 having acted as a catalyst in this process. The longevity of flexible working as we have experienced it over the past 12 months is being brought into question. What the future will look like is at the forefront of our minds.

People Focussed Flexible Working:

- There are health and safety considerations that need to be accounted for in a ‘work from home’ model as well as traditional office based or future hybrid flexible working models. Along with health and safety considerations, there are legal requirements and obligations for businesses to fulfil.
- Risk assessments conducted by businesses should consider the risks to staff whether they are working in an office or at home. There is a requirement to mitigate these risks as much as is reasonably practicable.
- Employees also have an obligation to carry out their tasks safely, to look out for their own safety and that of others. Businesses should communicate this and provide employees the tools necessary to ensure their own health and safety at home.
- In response to COVID-19 and moving forward, businesses might need to be doing more than they already have. Workstation assessments (furniture, activities, equipment etc.) play a vital role in assuring employee well being, productivity and safety.
- Employee mental health and well being has been a growing issue in recent years, but it has been focussed on more than ever in the last 12 months. Working from home or remotely has had both good and bad effects. It has increased flexibility, feelings of establishing a work life balance and productivity. However, it has also raised concerns over social isolation and a lack of connection to colleagues.
- Employees should feel secure in approaching their employer if they feel their health and safety needs are not being appropriately met.
- The Healthy and Safety Executive will come down heavily on businesses not fulfilling all reasonable measures in upholding a COVID secure work environment by way of fines, enforcement and potential prosecution. Senior leaders and management need to be aware of their responsibilities to avoid making decisions that negate or neglect their health and safety obligations.

Workspaces and Offices of the Future:

- People miss the sense of belonging and community associated with office based work. While there have been increases in productivity, it really is the human side of work that people are missing out on.
- Work life balance in busy corporate lives is something that has been searched for in recent years, the increased uptake of a home based model, with increased autonomy over tasks has improved this.



- The well being aspect has come as a double-edged sword. While people feel their work life balance has improved, people are also missing the collective identity, culture, mentorship and growth opportunities associated with physical work environments.
- The role of the office is brought into question as we see the elements of office-based working that we miss when working from home. There is a need to re-think the purpose of an office to it can effectively deliver on providing its associated benefits.
- The hybrid model looks holistically at your ability to work across a variety of locations based on your location and role requirements.
- The office model will move towards a greater focus on collaborative 'we and all' spaces and away from isolated 'me' spaces. Individual 'me' work is work that could be done from home.
- As the office model progresses it needs to recognise hyper connectivity – we need to explore the variety of settings in the workspace that can effectively accommodate those working in office and remotely.
- A reduction in office space will also require a needs mapping of the types of roles which require varying levels of in office time.
- A satellite office model has been explored and will be explored further, the need for shortened commute times might see workers spending more time in their local communities in shared office spaces, where they can find connection and engagement.

Tools, Technology and Process:

- Technology and tools have been pivotal in the ability of businesses to adapt to the situations they have found themselves in.
- We have witnessed 10 years of change in one week according to a London GP with regard to tele-health advances.
- The pandemic has created a surge in the adoption of digital technologies across all sectors and has accelerated digital transformation.
- We can expect improvements in collaborative working technologies to facilitate a hybrid work model.
- We can expect increased automation and reliance on robotics in manufacturing. Intelligent building design will also evolve to optimise space and office capacity.
- Technology will also play an important role in staff training and growth opportunities. Similar monitoring and tracking technologies for the purposes of supervision are contentious, although could have a place in a future hybrid work model, provided correct scrutiny and policies are in place to avoid staff feeling undermined.
- Our increased reliance on technology also brings a higher risk level, with further opportunities presented for malicious cyber attacks.
- There is a responsibility placed on organisations and business leaders to ensure that workforces are trained and ready for a new digital era.

Discussion Points:

- Technology will impact jobs of the future, but leaders and organisations should be future focussed and equip those whose jobs may be negatively impacted with training and tools so they can be best positioned to take advantage of changes.
- Leadership and responsibility will play an important role in relieving pressures on staff to feel constantly connected to work through technology. Leaders must communicate in such a way that gives staff the confidence to disconnect and take their individual health seriously.
- Efficiency has been reported to improve throughout the COVID period. Although a gap exists for newer or younger staff to have direct mentorship, growth and training opportunities.
- Companies should see flexible and hybrid working as a competitive advantage. An either or model of 5 days at home or in the office will be less popular. A balanced approach is required.
- Moving forward the office might become a place where you can be your more genuine self.

[A full recording of the webinar can be seen here.](#)



Speakers' Biographies:

Simon Collins is the co-founder of Gold Collins, a crisis advisory business, and has a variety of chair, board and advisory roles with UK and international organisations. He was Chairman and Senior Partner of KPMG LLP until 2017, following roles leading the Transactions and Corporate Finance businesses. Prior to that he was an investment banker with SG Warburg and NatWest Markets. He qualified as a Chartered Accountant with Price Waterhouse in 1986. Simon is a non-executive director of the Royal Air Force, Chairman of the University of Manchester's Global Leadership Board, Chairman of the Catalyst Board for Cancer Research UK and Chairman of Resilience First. He is married to Simone and they have two adult children and live in North London.

Kizzy Augustin is a solicitor advocate with Higher Rights of Audience. She appears regularly as an advocate in court proceedings, employment tribunals (for appealing Improvement and Prohibition notices) and Coroners' inquests. She has significant experience in defending companies, senior directors and employees in corporate manslaughter and serious fire / health and safety prosecutions. Kizzy has a particular interest in the law relating to directors' health and safety duties and health and safety issues within the construction, care homes, environmental, manufacturing, fire, rail and retail industries. She has represented those alleged to have breached health and safety legislation in interviews under caution and in court, if proceedings are ultimately brought against them. Kizzy regularly speaks on expert panels relating to health and safety / corporate manslaughter issues and has hosted many seminars and lectures on aspects of health and safety and criminal regulatory law, often as a keynote speaker. Topics have included the effect of Brexit on health and safety compliance and the impact of the sentencing guidelines which came into force on 1 February 2016 in relation to health and safety, corporate manslaughter, food safety and hygiene offences.

Natalie Smith leads the London Workplace Consultancy team, bringing a wealth of over 12 years' experience in workplace design and consultancy roles. Having worked across Interior Design and Workplace Strategy, Natalie has the ability to link the two services, ensuring that the workplace strategy is cohesively translated throughout the project design and development. Natalie graduated from her Bachelor of Design at the University of Technology Sydney in Australia with honours in 2005 and obtained her Master's degree in Design for Development (Hons) in 2010.

Ian Jones is an experienced leader with over 35 years' experience in the technology sector. He held senior commercial and engineering roles at Intel including international assignments and he led Intel's strategic relationship with UK government and industry. He sat on the board of TechUK and was a member of the CBI International Trade Council, CBI Technology Group and CBI Public Sector Partners Council. He was a member of the Smart Cities All Party Parliamentary Group. Ian is passionate about the capability of technology to improve the lives of citizens at home, work and play. He is a strong advocate for technology and new business models which transform citizen services, enable the cities of tomorrow and accelerate market growth. He has spoken and keynoted at government and industry events on topics ranging from digital transformation to smart cities and he led innovation projects with technology clusters and mentored technology start-ups. Ian is a Visiting Fellow at Cranfield University School of Management.