



KEY INSIGHTS REPORT: REDCLIFFE & TEMPLE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) - FUTURE OF WORK EVENT APRIL 2024

Foreword

In her insightful keynote speech, Dr Nicola Millard, Principal Innovation Partner at BT, delved into the evolving landscape of the future of work, emphasising the intersection of technology and human behaviour. As she aptly noted, "Innovation often happens very rapidly due to a crisis," and indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic catalysed a swift transformation in the way we work. Here are some key points from her presentation that shape this report about the changing nature of the world of work.

Nicola's research with leading universities including London Business School, Cambridge, Lancaster, MIT and Stanford began over 15 years ago and continues to provide valuable insights into the future of work. The shift towards hybrid work, often requiring a certain number of days in the office (typically 3:2), has become the norm globally, reflecting a new balance between office and remote work.

Addressing the challenges and opportunities the debate around remote vs. in-office work often appears as a "war" in media headlines. Yet, data reveals that organisations are embracing hybrid work models, allowing flexibility while maintaining productivity. Citing badge swipe monitoring demonstrates the tension between presence and productivity, while "rational cheating," like hiring someone to swipe badges on your behalf, underscores the need for data-driven strategies. Reflecting on workplace productivity as far back as studies in 1921 by a leading American academic Charles Steinmetz who predicted, "technology would lead to a four-hour workday by 2023." While this hasn't materialised, innovative experiments like the UK's four-day work week trial (with 89% of participants still operating the policy, and 51% making the change permanent) demonstrate that productivity can thrive with reduced hours and effective prioritisation.

Sharing her insights about how we work, Nicola explored the impact of technology and innovation in the context of work. While hybrid meetings have become integral, many challenges remain. The "default is digital," yet





technology often falls short, leading to disengaged participants. To overcome this, Nicola recommended effective moderation and appropriate training, especially for leaders and managers as crucial to successful hybrid working. A brief exploration of the metaverse as "currently in the trough of disillusionment," she highlighted the potential of mixed reality for immersive collaboration and training, particularly in healthcare and education.

Addressing fears of AI replacing humans, Nicola noted that it's more about enhancement. Gary Kasparov's chess innovation, where humans play alongside AI, offers an optimistic view: "AI can raise people's abilities." Alongside a more collaborative approach in adopting AI, Microsoft's research shows AI tools like Co-pilot improve productivity, although managers must adapt to ensure meaningful human participation in meetings.

A word of caution on the carbon footprint of AI's environmental impact remains a concern. Nicola pointed out that "generative AI is not friendly for the environment," emphasising the need for energy-efficient technology.

Nicola concluded her keynote with a positive outlook, envisioning a future where technology not only enhances productivity but might eventually lead to "that four-hour workday that our brains actually need." This report builds on her vision, providing practical insights and data-driven recommendations for organisations as they navigate the future of work.

Introduction

The "Future of Work" event, the first in the Redcliffe & Temple Business Improvement District's thought leadership series, provided valuable insights into emerging trends and perspectives on the evolving nature of work. The event emphasised three key themes: Space and Place, People and Culture, and Creativity and Innovation. This report summarises the primary insights shared by the keynote speaker, panellists and participants and some practical recommendations about how we can all embrace a positive outlook about the future of work in our region.

Keynote – Productivity, People, Planet: Trends shaping the future of work

Dr Nicola Millard, Principal Innovation Partner at BT, delivered a comprehensive keynote presentation, highlighting emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities in the future of work.

"The most disruptive part of innovation is not the technology it's us" The Future of Work is not new, Nicola cited the research going back 15 years + by





several leading universities, including London Business School, Cambridge, Lancaster, MIT and Stanford and her own long history back into 1990's and the ongoing inquiry.

Topics explored by Nicola during her presentation:

1. Evolution of Work Models

- Hybrid Work Paradigm: a requirement for working a certain number of days in the office (typically three days in the office, two remotely, often referred to as the 3:2 model) is becoming the dominant approach for many companies. However, fixed models do not always fit all employees' needs, and flexibility is crucial.
- Purpose of the Office: Offices must offer value to justify the commute. They should be spaces for collaboration, creativity, and social interaction rather than routine work that can be done remotely.

2. Changing Role of Offices

- Offices are evolving into multi-functional spaces that cater to both quiet work (library-like) and lively collaboration (pub-like).
- Offices are also becoming brand beacons and cultural hubs where organisations can demonstrate their values and purpose.

3. Impact of Technology

Experts predict AI will transform the workplace by automating routine tasks, enhancing decision-making through deep data analysis, and fostering innovation by identifying non-obvious patterns and opportunities. Despite its potential, AI also poses challenges, such as job displacement and the imperative for continuous skill development, as noted by Professor Ajay Agarwal from the University of Toronto.

- AI tools like chatbots and Co-pilots enhance productivity by automating mundane tasks, allowing humans to focus on strategic and creative work.
- Generative AI, while promising, requires human oversight due to its potential inaccuracies and environmental concerns especially energy usage.
- Augmented Reality (AR) and Mixed Reality:





- AR is transforming training and collaboration, enabling real-time guidance. For example, paramedics use AR headsets to receive feedback from clinicians during emergency procedures.
- Mixed reality provides immersive environments, such as interactive classrooms and meeting spaces.
- Holographic Conferencing:
 - While currently expensive and complex, projecting life-size avatars in meetings could redefine hybrid collaboration by overcoming proximity bias.

4. Culture and Inclusion

- Wellbeing and Work-life Balances: Nicola shared the results of a study into the use of collaborative tools/apps when working from home on the wellbeing of employees in different age groups. It revealed significant improvements in employee wellbeing, with up to 66% of Millennials experiencing enhanced work-life balance. This underscores the need for flexible work arrangements that not only support productivity but also promote mental health and job satisfaction. Setting and agreeing expectations around availability for Executives was also prioritised as they felt pressure to be available all the time when working away from the office, especially high in Millennials 68% & Gen X 63%.
- Leadership and Learning Gaps:
 - Hybrid work has created challenges in mentorship and knowledge transfer. Young professionals especially face isolation and lack opportunities to learn from leaders and peers. Not being present should not be a barrier to development opportunities.
 - Organisations should prioritise developing a strong mentorship culture and inclusive policies that consider neurodiversity, ethnic minorities, and other underrepresented groups.

5. Practical Recommendations

- Flexible Policies: Move away from rigid hybrid models and provide personalised work arrangements based on employee preferences and roles.
- Data-Driven Decisions: Use data analytics to monitor office usage patterns and adjust layouts, activities, and amenities.
- Innovative Technology Adoption: Explore AI tools, AR, and immersive conferencing solutions to enhance productivity and collaboration.





- Cultural Initiatives: Foster cultural awareness through EDI moments in meetings, culture days, and inclusive events.

Keynote conclusions

Dr Nicola Millard emphasised that the future of work is a mix of technology, culture, and flexible working models. Organisations must balance these elements to create engaging, inclusive, and productive work environments that cater to the diverse needs of their workforce.

Panel Discussion - Key Themes of the Future of Work

The panel discussion followed the established thematic topics:

1. Space and Place: Placemaking and Workspaces

Key Insights

- Hybrid Work Model

The dominant model is shifting towards a hybrid pattern (typically 3-2 model), where most employees prefer three days in the office and two days remotely. As a fixed model this might not fully suit the diverse needs of employees. Nicola shared how BT applies the "3 together, 2 wherever" philosophy. However, she emphasised the importance of remaining flexible and understanding the individual needs of employees.

- Purpose of the Office
Offices need to offer tangible value beyond just being a physical workspace. Nicola highlighted that offices must become "value-for-commute," providing spaces for collaboration, creativity, and social interaction. Nicola elaborated on BT's hybrid office model, where they encourage employees to come to the office for collaborative activities and social interactions, not just routine work. The '3-2' approach, emphasising team-building events, brainstorming sessions, and workshops.
- Redefining Office Spaces
 - Flexibility and Functionality - Offices should cater to a range of activities, from quiet work (library-like) to lively collaboration (pub-like). Harriet Shortt shared research from a housing company showing employees' need for different spaces based on their tasks. Some employees enjoyed working from the car during





the school run or in quiet zones for deep focus, while others preferred bustling areas for collaboration.

- **Amenities and Experience:** Sarah-Jane cited how using data and research can provide insights into how employees use office spaces, helping to design environments that align with their preferences and their needs. Evolving office spaces to include food markets, pop-up retail, events, and accessible healthy eating options within and around offices (as seen in Temple Quay) fosters vibrant community interactions and enhances the workplace experience. A participant from Avison Young based in Temple Quay explained how Tuesday and Thursday food markets brought employees back to the office, generating a vibrant atmosphere. Finzels Reach was also cited as it has introduced pop-up markets on Wednesdays and Fridays to complement existing options.
- **Technology Integration:** Incorporating advanced technological solutions like immersive classrooms, augmented reality, and video volumetric (holographic) conferencing can help redefine office collaboration. Nicola presented how BT is experimenting with holographic conferencing for real-time collaboration and about how the University of Bristol has been working on projecting life-size avatars for immersive meetings, a potential game-changer in remote collaboration.

Recommendations

- **Data-Driven Office Planning:** Use data analytics to monitor office usage patterns and adjust office amenities, layouts, and activities accordingly.
- **Community Building:** Invest in creating social spaces, networking events, and food/retail options to attract workers and encourage interactions.
- **Engage with all stakeholders** about making the workplace and spaces around them better.

2. People and Culture: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

Key Insights

- People are at the heart of every workplace strategy. Offices should be adaptable, inclusive, and data-driven, with a culture that encourages collaboration and creativity. Ultimately, successful organisations will





understand and meet the evolving needs of their workforce through thoughtful space and technology design.

- The need for Diversity in Leadership and Teams: Sarah-Jane highlighted that involving all demographics in decision-making and mentoring is crucial for holistic growth. Drawing on the example of reverse mentoring where younger staff mentor senior leaders, it can be highly beneficial to all parties and have broader benefits.
- Isolation and Learning Gaps: Priya Mistry highlighted that young professionals often feel isolated in remote work settings, lacking mentorship opportunities and deeper knowledge exchange between colleagues at all levels. Priya explained how her earlier work in the Defence Sector often left her feeling disconnected due to limited face-to-face interactions with her team and leadership. Moving to a hybrid model at Ridge and Partners, she benefited from more direct mentorship and peer support.
- Cultural Awareness: Priya emphasised that organisations should foster cultural awareness through initiatives like EDI moments in meetings, culture days, and celebrating diverse holidays. Priya suggested organising "culture days" where each department shares its unique traditions, such as celebrating religious holidays like Diwali or Pride Month to enhance understanding and inclusivity.
- Inclusive Placemaking: Drawing on the experience of the Bristol Property Inclusion Charter demonstrates that collaboration between organisations is necessary to foster a more inclusive sector, particularly in property and construction. Karl highlighted the success of the Charter in engaging over 100 companies to promote diversity in the property sector. They developed a Property Foundation Class, giving students from local schools mock projects to design spaces in The Galleries (shopping mall), promoting creative thinking.

Recommendations

- Mentorship Programmes: Establish structured mentorship and reverse mentorship programmes to ensure knowledge transfer and professional growth.
- Proactive EDI Practices: Organise regular cultural events and educational sessions to celebrate and promote understanding of diversity within the workplace.





- Diversity in leadership: long-term policies and organisational change to enable more diversity and opportunity for individuals and minority groups.

3. Creativity and Innovation: Tech, AI, and Smart Working

- Enhancing Productivity: Nicola emphasised that AI isn't replacing humans but enhancing productivity by taking over mundane tasks. Co-pilots and chatbots streamline workflows, and humans can focus on creative and strategic work. Nicola mentioned how BT's use of Co-pilots and chatbots significantly improved customer service efficiency. For instance, automated customer query handling reduced wait times and freed up agents for more complex tasks.
- Use of Caution and Judgement in AI Usage: Generative AI has environmental and ethical concerns that need addressing. AI-generated content requires human verification for accuracy and context. Nicola pointed out how generative AI, like ChatGPT, occasionally produces inaccurate information, emphasising the importance of human oversight.
- Augmented Reality and Mixed Reality:
 - Training and Collaboration: Augmented and mixed reality can provide innovative training methods and facilitate remote collaboration. For instance, paramedics using AR headsets receive real-time feedback from clinicians. Nicola described how paramedics use AR headsets to receive live guidance from clinicians in high definition, enabling complex procedures in real time.
 - Holographic Conferencing: While still developing, holographic conferencing has the potential to revolutionise hybrid meetings by offering life-size, interactive virtual presence. University of Bristol's collaboration with BT aims to project life-size avatars in hybrid meetings. Though currently expensive and complex, the technology has the potential to eliminate proximity bias in hybrid settings.

Recommendations

- Balanced AI Adoption: Encourage adopting AI tools that complement human skills while addressing environmental and ethical implications.





- Innovative Meeting Solutions: Invest in advanced conferencing tools like immersive video, holograms, and AR to redefine remote collaboration.
- Training and collaboration: in organisations and in creating productive partnerships.

Conclusion

The "Future of Work" event underscored that adapting to the evolving work landscape requires a holistic approach. Organisations must prioritise people and culture, optimise workspaces through data and community-driven strategies, and leverage technology to boost creativity and productivity. Collaboration across sectors and embracing flexibility in work practices will help organisations thrive in the future of work. There was optimism with a hint of concern from the panel about the future, this was reinforced by the audience response on the most challenging aspect for their organisations being promoting equity, diversity and inclusion above workspace or technology needs. The audience reinforced the debate on priorities for the wider business community as overwhelmingly about people and culture; thinking about other key themes the audience chose employee experience, leaders of the future and sustainable working practices all of which support a thriving place to work, rest and play.

Actions you can take:

1. Conduct Employee Surveys: Gather feedback on hybrid working preferences, EDI initiatives, and office amenity needs.
2. Develop a Culture Calendar: Plan monthly events celebrating diverse cultures and promote inclusion through EDI moments.
3. Invest in Smart Technologies: Explore implementing AI tools, augmented reality training, and immersive conferencing solutions and train leaders how to manage hybrid meetings.
4. Collaborate on Placemaking: Partner with neighbouring organisations to improve urban amenities, such as food markets and networking events.

About the Contributors

Venue Host – EQ Bristol, Martin Harford, General Manager.

Event Host - Sarah Owen – Founder & Director of DISCsimple.





Sarah helps people to learn and use the language of DISC using a very simple approach. Over the last 20 years, Sarah has worked with thousands of business owners and executives to improve communication, teamwork and productivity. As a best-selling author, she's been embraced by thousands of professionals around the world for her in-depth knowledge of how behaviour can impact business relationships.

DISCsimple Ltd - The company helps businesses who want to improve communication, teamwork, and productivity in the workplace. DISC is a behavioural styles tool used by over one million people each year. As an Authorised Partner of Everything DiSC (a Wiley brand), it helps businesses with individual and team development. People work better together when using DISC, either on-site or virtually.

Keynote Speaker - Dr Nicola Millard, Principal Innovation Partner at BT. Nicola is an award-winning presenter, writer and academic researcher with deep expertise in psychology, innovation in customer & employee experience and thinking about the future, her work is focused on exploring the future of work and emerging customer behaviours.

Panel Speakers

Sarah-Jane Osborne - Principal & Head of Workplace UK & EMEA at Avison Young.

Sarah-Jane has over 30 years of experience in workplace strategy, interior architecture, and commercial real estate, and is a distinguished leader at Avison Young. Her recent work has been pivotal in guiding corporate, public sector, and third sector organisations through redefining work practices and environments in response to COVID-19. Sarah-Jane is renowned in the commercial real estate marketplace as a thought leader and subject matter expert, making her a sought-after speaker on the future of work and workplace innovation.

Dr Harriet Shortt - Associate Professor of Organisation Studies at UWE & Head of Visual Engagement at BIBO Studio.

Harriet is a distinguished academic, researcher, and consultant with 18 years of experience in spatial change and user experience. She specialises in qualitative research, particularly visual and arts-based methods, to explore placemaking and the material world of work. Her collaboration with organisations like the





Environment Agency and the Rugby Football Union, alongside contributions to media outlets such as BBC Radio 4 and the Evening Standard, highlight her expertise. Internationally published and recognized with awards including The Planner Magazine Woman of Influence 2024, Harriet is passionate about creating spaces that reflect cultural shifts and diverse needs.

Karl Brown - Commercial Property Partner at Clarke Willmott.

Karl, a proud Bristol native, is the inaugural chair of the ED&I Committee at Clarke Willmott and the first black President of the Bristol Junior Chamber since 2014. He also serves as a social mobility ambassador for the Law Society of England and Wales. In 2019, he founded the Bristol Property Inclusion Charter to enhance diversity in the local property sector, now supported by over 100 organisations. As chair of the Bristol Property Inclusion Commission, he leads its operations. His efforts earned him the Property Personality of the Year at the 2021 Insider Property Awards Southwest and the 2024 Malcolm Gunter Award for his significant contributions to Bristol's property market and city prosperity.

Priya Mistry – Property Manager at Ridge and Partners LLP.

An accomplished Project Manager working on complex projects within the Civil Service and Construction Sector. Having lived and grown up in Bristol, Priya is excited to get involved in shaping the future of work in the city. She is active in the Women in Construction and other groups in the Bristol region.

Facilitator

Kim Jones - Founder and Consultant of hgkc.

Kim is a strategic advisor with over 30 years of experience in enhancing board effectiveness and decision-making across various sectors. Her expertise in commercial innovation, analytical thinking, and strategic communication has consistently spurred business growth. Utilising a behaviour-based approach with DISC methodology, Kim provides practical support to leaders and directors, focusing on strategic planning and fostering an innovation-driven culture. She also specialises in exit and succession planning, helping leaders and their businesses manage transitions smoothly. Her comprehensive advisory skills ensure sustained business development and successful organisational change.





hgkc - Management consultancy working with independent business owners to realise the true value and potential of their businesses, from growth to planning an exit or leadership support. hgkc has a distinctive approach focusing on people and how to build long-term success beyond an exit.

About the BID

Redcliffe & Temple Business Improvement District (BID) is a business-led initiative which exists to manage and improve the Redcliffe and Temple areas of Bristol.

The overall aim of the BID is to improve and enhance the area for the benefit of the business community. The aspiration is for it to be known not only as a thriving commercial district but also as an outstanding community.

Our vision is to develop Redcliffe and Temple into a vibrant, thriving, sustainable, safe and welcoming place to enjoy. With the support of levy-paying businesses, our aim is to create and deliver projects for the benefit of the whole community, adding value to this historic yet evolving area, attracting investment and influencing positive change.

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