



REDCLIFFE & TEMPLE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) - FUTURE OF WORK EVENT, JANUARY 2025

Introduction

The Future is Human: A People-First Approach marked the second instalment of Redcliffe & Temple Business Improvement District's thought leadership series. Hosted in collaboration with hgkc, the event explored three essential themes shaping the future of work: employee experience, future leadership, and workplace demographics. The report summarises the themes explored by the event host, keynote speaker, and panellists.

Keynote

Dr Caroline Clark delivered an insightful presentation that focussed on her personal insights into developing leaders of the future and connecting with the younger generation.

Dr Caroline Clark is a Co-Founder and Entrepreneurship & Innovation Facilitator at the Streams Learning Hub. She is also the COO Advisor in Residence at SETSquared Bristol and a director of Zebera, an organisation that nurtures tomorrow's trailblazers by engaging young innovators and inventors to solve real world problems in the future.

Topics explored in Caroline's presentation:

1. Rediscovering Creativity and Resilience

- Nurturing creativity and resilience: We must learn to rediscover qualities that embody fearless creativity and resilience, much like the qualities of toddlers. Toddlers build and rebuild without fear of failure. As we grow older, we lose our creativity and resilience skills in the education system and working environments.





2. Human-Centred Leadership

- Leadership is a balancing act: The best leaders combine vision, ambition, and trust with unwavering support for their people. Both are essential for teams to thrive and perform at their best.
- Recognising generational differences: We must recognise and celebrate differences in work styles by meeting people where they are and leveraging their unique strengths.

3. Embracing the Chaos

- Embrace the chaos: Growth and progress aren't neat and linear - it's often unpredictable and messy. Trust the process and give people space to grow.
- Chaos is a powerful force for growth and innovation: Growth and progress are not neat and linear. Growth can often be unpredictable. We must trust the process and give people the space to grow and thrive.

4. Preparing Future Leaders

- Invest in future leaders: Our education system prioritises facts over curiosity and standardisation over individuality. To prepare young people for a rapidly changing world, we need to develop their curiosity and willingness to experiment.
- Foster individuality and innovation: Is our education system preparing the leaders of tomorrow with the right skills? Emotional intelligence, adaptability, and collaboration are all crucial skills to possess.

Keynote takeaways

- Focus on your people: At the core of every business and life itself are people. Everything else, including structures, processes, and even rules can be changed.
- Thriving leadership environments: Leadership isn't about control or perfection; it's about creating environments where people can thrive. The future is human no matter what happens





with tech, and leaders must embrace creativity, resilience, and individuality while fostering a culture of experimentation and growth.

Keynote conclusion

Dr Caroline Clark’s inspiring presentation posed thought provoking questions and demonstrated sound knowledge of the future of work and what is required to thrive. Through a better understanding, leaders and organisations know the necessary steps to take to thrive now and in meeting longer-term aspirations. Caroline successfully shared knowledge and insights on a broad range of topics, providing the audience with a better understanding of the implications of factors impacting workplaces. Caroline finished her presentation with one final reflective question: “What is one small step you can take to make your leadership more human this week?”. This reinforced the key theme of the talk, the importance of human qualities in leadership.

Panel Discussion - Key Themes of the Future of Work

The panel consisted of Professor Melissa Gregg (University of Bristol), Ric Hill (Ghyston), Lucy McKerron (Purple Fish) and Sangeetha Wynter (Babbasa).

The panel discussion consisted of the following topics:

1. Employee engagement

The panel addressed several key questions related to employee engagement during the panel discussion, asked by the host and members of the audience. Topics included strategies for encouraging the workforce to return to the office after years of remote and hybrid working. Building on this, they explored the impact of the current economic climate, discussing how rising costs can impact organisations and how businesses can ensure that their office space offers a return on investment and becomes a well-utilised space.

Adopting new technologies was another key topic discussed, with technology trends advancing rapidly over previous years and set to





continue. The panel discussed how organisations can utilise technology to enhance and preserve employee satisfaction while maintaining the element of empathy and human connection.

The topic of ‘hubris’ in leadership was also discussed, the excessive pride or over-confidence that can lead to destructive behaviour in leaders. The panel highlighted the need for leaders to ensure that their choices positively impact the day-to-day experiences of employees, especially in the rapidly evolving workplace.

2. Leaders of the Future

The panel assessed vulnerabilities of high-profile leaders and the key qualities they need to thrive in fast-changing environments. They assessed how leaders must adapt to the rise of AI and automation becoming more prevalent in the workplace and how to avoid pitfalls of overconfidence whilst still fostering innovation and taking risks.

Flexible working was another key area explored, where the panel discussed how organisations can move away from the ‘5 days a week in the office’ approach to create a positive work-life balance.

3. Workplace demographics

The panel was asked a series of questions relating to workplace demographics, including generational splits in the workplace and what this means to the functionality of businesses. With more generations than ever working together, the panel assessed how businesses can address these dynamics while navigating challenges and technological disruption.

The panel also discussed how to include underrepresented groups in decision-making processes and the importance of this, especially in relation to technology shaping the future of the workplace.

Takeaways

Dr Caroline Clark emphasises that the future of work relies heavily on embracing the qualities that make us human whilst embracing innovation in the workplace. Organisations must learn to balance these elements to create a place for success and thriving in the workplace. The panel





discussed thought provoking topics relating to the future of work and provided their expert advice and opinions.

Organisations are encouraged to undertake further reading into Dr Caroline Clark's [theory of embracing the chaos](#) and Melissa Gregg's [on-topic blog](#) into company culture and leadership styles, following the departure of Intel CEO, Pat Gelsinger.

Fireside Chat - Leaders of the Future

Sangeetha Wynter (Head of Services) and Al Qazzally Ali (Data & IT Lead) from Babbasa took part in an engaging 'fireside chat' to round off the event. This absorbing discussion focused on how we can nurture the leaders of the future and provide them with the tools required to create a more inclusive workplace. Their 'fireside chat' focussed on inclusion, employee experiences, and collaborative working, where both participants talked candidly about their views and what the words 'leaders of the future' meant to them.

Conclusion

The Future is Human event highlighted integral elements organisations must embrace to adapt to the ever changing landscape of the future of work. This event underscored the importance of embracing the qualities that make us human, including creativity, resilience, and chaos for growth, and their combined importance for success.

Redcliffe & Temple BID is passionate about providing resources for businesses and improving company culture. Organisations that are part of Redcliffe & Temple BID are encouraged to utilise their free resources for business to boost employee engagement, wellbeing, and employee morale. Redcliffe & Temple BID host a series of lunchtime events for employees of their business community to enjoy on their lunch break. Events include yoga, tai chi, gardening, behind the scenes tours of local venues, and more. Redcliffe & Temple BID has also partnered with award-winning giving platform, Neighbourly providing businesses with the opportunity to make a positive impact in Bristol through employee





volunteering. Redcliffe & Temple BID also provide a free online training platform thanks to their partnership with SeedL. This online platform provides employees with access to over 200 live virtual subjects across 14 subject areas, helping employees to learn, perform, and succeed both inside and outside the workplace.

About the contributors

Venue Host - We The Curious

Event Host - Redcliffe & Temple BID in association with hgkc

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.

Team building Facilitator - Stewart Redpath & Mark Smulian, MindHarp

MindHarp – A totally unique approach to wellbeing and team interaction. It was founded in Bristol by Stewart Redpath and Mark Smulian to enable everyone to experience the many benefits of active play with music. As an active musician and business owner, Stewart recognised the extraordinary level of 'teamwork' that musicians employ when working together. Likewise, the immediate uplift to mood and wellbeing that music brings. This led to the creation of the MindHarp app that allows people to intuitively and easily 'play' music and interact creatively with music, without ever having learnt or studied music.

The event featured an interactive activity hosted by MindHarp. This explored the power of music in relation to our connectivity and how working in unison can enhance our working relationships. Mark Smulian spoke about the symbiotic movement of animals within a herd. As humans, we have mostly lost this, but this is prevalent in musicians as part of a band who react innately off each other.





Keynote speaker - Dr Caroline Clark, Co-Founder and Entrepreneurship & Innovation Facilitator at the Streams Learning Hub, COO Advisor in Residence at SETSquared Bristol, and a director of Zebera.

Caroline is an experienced COO, social entrepreneur, and advocate for people and culture with a background in engineering and a PhD in ultrasonic signal processing.

Co-founder of KETS Quantum Security, a University of Bristol spin-out, she now leads social impact ventures Zebera and Streams Learning Hub, focusing on empowering young people through design and innovation. Caroline's expertise spans science, engineering, team building, and strategic planning, and she is dedicated to supporting entrepreneurs. Actively engaged as a mentor and advisor in the startup community, she also serves on the boards of two Bristol-based charities.

Panel speakers

Lucy McKerron - MD Purplefish PR

Lucy brings robust employee experience insights and practice built up over 15 years of working across a range of independent and large global marketing and employer brand agencies. Having supported culture projects within global corporations and independent SMEs, she brings the perspective of a creative leader, working to deliver inclusive, innovative and inspiring environments for ambitious businesses.

Professor Melissa Gregg - Bristol Digital Futures Institute, University of Bristol

Recently appointed to her role at the BDFI, Melissa is an applied anthropologist with over a decade in high tech. Melissa's research investigates the future of employment, technology design and management practice, and the climate costs involved in their convergence.





Sangeetha Wynter - Head of Services at Babbasa

Sangeetha oversees the youth empowerment team within the organisation. Her responsibilities include developing and implementing sustainable strategies, supervising projects, and collaborating with other members of the senior leadership team. With a rich background in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) consultancy and training across the private and public sectors. Sangeetha brings a wealth of expertise to her role. She has designed and delivered bespoke EDI courses and facilitated roundtables with leadership teams, guiding CEOs, board members, and managers in developing sustainable EDI strategies. Sangeetha is passionate about social mobility and is dedicated to bridging the gap between overlooked talent and opportunity, contributing to a more equitable society.

Ric Hill - Founder & CTO Ghyston

Ric is passionate about ensuring that organisations are effectively using technology to achieve their goals. His roots are as a techie and he's built systems for some big names like the BBC. Together with his wife Emily, he founded Ghyston 12 years ago and has grown it steadily to a team of over 60, delivering game-changing software for over a hundred happy clients, from small startups to big companies like BMW. Ric is an experienced CTO and technology advisor to many organisations, from start-ups to mid-corporates, and understands how businesses work and what makes them successful.

Facilitator - Jacky Leonard, DISCsimple

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.





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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