



INDUSTRY- LEADING CASE STUDIES 2026

Future Workplace Readiness
Transformation

Learning
Coaching

Leading With Purpose
Brand & Values

Uniting Teams & Organisation
Wellbeing

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Corporate Social Responsibility
Business Culture Leaders & Teams
Working Environments & Practices



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BUSINESS CULTURE CASE STUDIES 2026

CONTENTS

Overall Winner

3-4. [UST](#)

Transformation

5. [LRQA](#)

6. [Sage + ZRG Consulting](#)

Future Workplace Readiness

7. [Interlink](#)

8. [Financial Times](#)

Leading with Purpose

9. [gunnercooke](#)

Employee Value Proposition

10. [Currys + People Made](#)

Brand & Values

11. [TruRating](#)

Coaching & Mentoring

12. [Pernod Ricard UK](#)

13. [Bayer + EZRA](#)

14. [SoftServe](#)

Learning

15. [Phoenix Group + Cowry Consulting + SVCO + Mhor Collective](#)

16. [Sodexo + The Happy Consultancy Group](#)

17. [MIGSO-PCUBED](#)

18. [Mitie + Best At Digital](#)

19. [ATG Entertainment](#)

20. [Dishoom](#)

Uniting Teams & Organisations

21. [Today's Dental](#)

22. [Noble Foods](#)

23. [Harworth Group](#)

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

24. [JEDI Matters Collective](#)

International

25. [Kernel](#)

26-27. [Business Culture Awards MENA](#)

Employee Voice & Internal Communications

28. [Samsic UK](#)

29. [Goodbody](#)

30. [British Gas + Cowry Consulting](#)

31. [Bellway + ETS](#)

Corporate Social Responsibility

32. [Patron Capital](#)

Wellbeing & Belonging

33. [XPS Group](#)

34. [DFDS](#)

Working Environments & Practices

35. [TMX Trayport](#)

Business Culture Leaders & Teams

36. [AtkinsRealis](#)

37. [Fanvue](#)

38. [Hult Ashridge](#)

Organisational Development

39. [Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Mediation

40. [University of Manchester + CMP](#)

Culture Definition

41. [FutureMeds](#)

OVERALL WINNER

UST ADAPTS ITS CULTURE FOR A NEW GENERATION OF WORK SHAPED BY AI AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Background

As UST approached its 25th year, the company reflected on how its culture needed to evolve alongside its people and the world of work. What began as a technology start-up has grown into a global digital transformation organization with more than 30,000 employees across 30 countries. In 2019, UST created the Office of Values & Culture (OVC) to continue nurturing the values of humility, humanity and integrity that have guided the company since its founding. Together with its flagship Colors framework - a global model linking engagement, wellbeing, innovation, and social impact - the OVC has long been the custodian of UST's people-first ethos.

By 2024, rapid generational, technological, and structural shifts were reshaping how people experienced work. OVC identified five emerging forces - generational change, AI adoption, the rise of freelance mindset, new growth expectations, and increased interest in

volunteering - to help the organization understand how these trends were affecting employees across regions. Its mission was to reimagine culture for a workforce that was faster, younger and more fluid - turning disruption into unity and purpose.

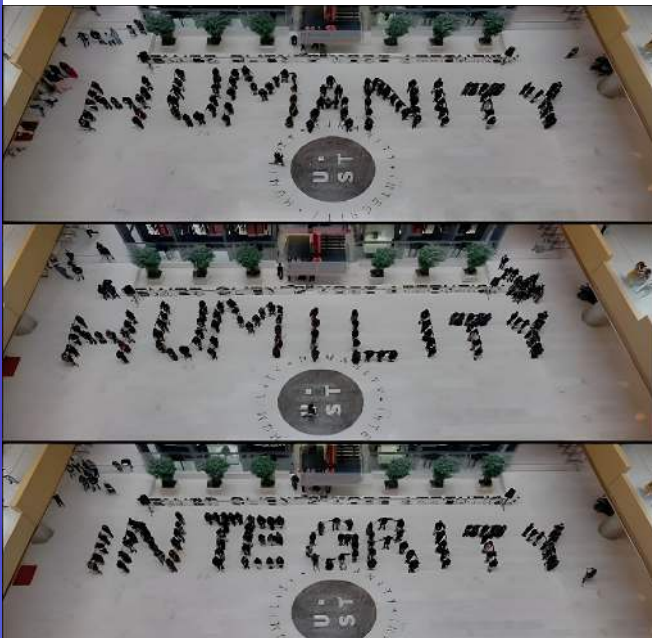
“Through the Office of Values & Culture and the evolution of Colors of UST, UST brought people together around shared purpose, innovation and inclusion across its global workforce”

Approach

OVC focused on strengthening programs that already resonated with teams. Through its three engines - Values & Culture, Colors and CSR - UST engaged employees in shaping how the company responds to these shifts.

Global initiatives such as ‘Center Head for a Day’, reverse mentoring and peer-led learning sessions created opportunities for associates at all levels to contribute, share perspectives and explore new ways of working together.

When the CEO announced UST's GenAI vision, OVC activated 200+ volunteer evangelists to run peer-to-peer sessions. More than 25,000 associates were trained within 12 months. These



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OVERALL WINNER



efforts grew through the enthusiasm of volunteers and peer communities across the company.

To retain talent amid freelance mindsets and acquisitions, OVC introduced transparent career architecture and an emerging leaders' programme. Leaders across UST continued deepening their commitment to servant leadership, reinforcing a culture where everyone can contribute.

UST created a dedicated framework for post-acquisition values integration (CO-D-SIGN) to help new teams align quickly and consistently. Alongside this, the OVC network activated employees across nine geographies, delivering more than 450 initiatives and 30,000 volunteer hours. These efforts connected our CSR work to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and strengthened belonging through visible, shared impact.

Recognising that rapid AI change was testing psychological safety, UST also redesigned its 'Color Indigo' innovation framework into an always-on ecosystem. GenAI became a co-pilot while the D3 (Dream, Design, Disrupt) hackathon engaged 16,000 participants and produced deployable client solutions.

A Psychological Safety Index and the Fail Forward Awards helped teams learn more openly, creating measurable gains in psychological safety and stronger retention among associates actively involved in innovation.

Outcome

UST's response to the disruption facing workers has made it a benchmark for scalable and renewable human culture. Key outcomes include higher retention across flexible and project-based roles, along with continued growth in internal mobility for employees driving innovation and UST ranking among India's 100 Best Companies for Women. Across 2024 alone, Color Indigo 2.0 generated 2,429 ideas, with 14 deployable innovations from hackathons, while CSR initiatives impacted 118,000 lives and reduced emissions intensity by 46%.

UST is a Top Employer in 11 countries and a Great Place to Work in five, with 89% of employees saying its values are visible daily. "BCA recognized UST's approach to navigating technological and workforce change, highlighting the company's focus on values, psychological safety, and collaborative innovation. Across UST, employees continue to shape programs, solutions and volunteer efforts that strengthen belonging and support meaningful impact in the communities where the company operates."

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TRANSFORMATION

EMBEDDING A PERFORMANCE DRIVEN CULTURE AT LRQA

Background

LRQA is the leading global risk management partner, employing more than 3,300 people across 60 countries to help clients manage risk and harness opportunity. The organisation separated from its 270-year-old parent company, transitioning from a charitable foundation to private equity ownership. This marked a pivotal moment in LRQA's history, moving to a future defined by more agility, resilience and commerciality. Understandably, colleagues had mixed feelings; some were optimistic, others were apprehensive.

To achieve its new strategic goals, LRQA needed to embed a performance driven and client centric culture across the company – made up of three distinct entities and two recently acquired businesses – all while launching an evolved strategy.

Approach

LRQA made 'Performance Driven Culture' a strategic priority, measuring cultural alignment as a core indicator of success. The business moved to a regional operating model, empowering local leaders to make faster, more accountable decisions. Leadership capability therefore became a key focus, with masterclasses in change management, inclusive leadership and commercial effectiveness.

To drive engagement, LRQA appointed a dedicated Culture Manager and established two networks: a Culture Ambassador Group of senior leaders to model change and a Culture Champion Network to represent colleague voices locally. These groups ensured that transformation was co-created rather than imposed.

Communication was critical. Town halls, podcasts, blogs, translated guidance and a mobile communications app reinforced key messages

globally. A new Values and Behaviours Framework linked culture directly to the employee lifecycle, from recruitment and performance reviews to recognition and reward.

Outcome

Cultural alignment rose by 12%, surpassing the company's target. Engagement and leadership confidence also grew: 93% of leaders reported feeling more capable of driving transformation and 93% of colleagues expressed satisfaction with leadership.



The cultural shift has translated directly into business results. New sales, EBITDA and revenue all grew, as did the Net Promoter Score. In addition, colleague recognition rose 247% while wellbeing-related absences showed a significant decline.

LRQA is shifting from a complex legacy organisation into one purpose-led, high-performing global business, proving that a culture built with people, not for them, delivers lasting commercial impact.

“LRQA proved that a co-ordinated, comprehensive and collaborative approach can deliver significant cultural change, increased employee engagement and stronger business outcomes”

TRANSFORMATION

SAGE'S CULTURE REBOOT THAT POWERED A SAAS REVOLUTION

Background

Sage Group is a global technology company providing software and solutions for small and medium-sized businesses. By 2018, however, the company was in crisis. New SaaS competitors were reshaping the accounting software market and Sage's legacy on-premise model had fallen behind. A failed cloud pivot had eroded confidence, steady decline hit the share price, raising serious concerns over the firm's future, and employee engagement dropped to -20 eNPS.

Collaboration between regions was weak, and trust in leadership had collapsed. Under a new CEO Steve Hare and Chief People Officer Amanda Cusdin, Sage recognised that technological transformation would only succeed through cultural renewal. The goal was to build a culture that supported the shift to SaaS: one that was customer-led, collaborative, innovative and accountable. The ambition was simple but bold – to become “a great SaaS business for customers and colleagues alike.”

“From steady decline to a category leader, Sage's cultural reset powered one of tech's most impressive turnarounds”

Approach

Culture and business transformation ran in parallel, jointly sponsored by the CEO and CPO, with culture led by EVP Talent & Capability Jorge Aisa Dreyfus and Senior Director of Culture Jenny Johnstone in partnership with ZRG Consulting.

The first step was defining Sage's target culture. Using ZRG's SaaS Culture Maturity Profile and insights from 3,700 employees across 25 offices, the company co-created three Culture Goals – Start with the Customer, Together We Succeed and Innovate to Win. Each was underpinned by specific behaviours, forming a blueprint for a new, unified Sage.

Activation followed through immersive leadership engagement, HRBPs were developed as culture coaches and policies and systems were aligned, from



hiring and learning to recognition and performance management. The Culture Goals became part of everyday work and decision-making, reinforced by continuous listening via pulse surveys and open feedback loops.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck the new culture was immediately tested. Leaders drew on the Culture Goals to guide decisions, maintain connection and prioritise customer and colleague wellbeing, cementing belief in the new way of working.

Outcome

Sage's cultural and business reinvention has delivered sustained success. Revenue grew 28% between 2019 and 2024, with 80% now recurring subscription income. Cloud-native product sales increased 220% to £732m and the share price has doubled since 2019.

Voluntary attrition dropped to 7% (compared with a tech sector average of 13%) and Sage earned *Great Place to Work* certification and a place on *Glassdoor's Best Places to Work* list. CEO Steve Hare was named a *Top CEO* by Glassdoor.

Sage's journey shows how aligning culture, leadership and talent can turn crisis into long-term growth and transform on-premise technology into a global SaaS success story.

FUTURE WORKPLACE READINESS

INTERLINK REDEFINES THE FUTURE OF WORK THROUGH FLEXIBILITY, AI AND A PEOPLE-FIRST CULTURE



Background

Interlink, a fast-growing B2B lead generation business, set out to challenge an industry long defined by high pressure and low trust. In the wake of the pandemic, the leadership team recognised that, to compete with enterprise rivals and attract top talent, it needed a workplace fit for the future – one built on wellbeing, flexibility and readiness for continuous change.

The ambition was to become the best lead generation company in the world, founded on integrity, trust and values, where people genuinely love to work. The challenge lay in balancing high performance and innovation with human connection, creating a culture capable of evolving with technology and scaling sustainably.

Approach

Over 12 months, Interlink reimaged every aspect of how it worked, co-designing a people-first, future-ready model with employees, founders and regional teams. The transformation focused on flexibility, connection, inclusion and learning as the foundations of future performance.

A 4-day working week with full pay and 32-hour contracts redefined productivity around outcomes rather than presenteeism. Employees now benefit from 79 days of paid leave annually, including Work from Anywhere options for up to four weeks and full hybrid flexibility.

“Interlink shows that the future of work isn’t about location but about flexibility, learning and trust”

Wellbeing became integral to the business model. Interlink trained Mental Health First Aiders, supported by mindfulness and resilience coaching. Regular ‘Passion Presentations’ allow new joiners to share their cultures and interests, while Living Our Values Awards and company-wide conferences build connection across regions.

The company’s DEI and Community Champions network, supported by board-level ambassadors, drives initiatives in sustainability, inclusion and social impact. Meanwhile, Interlink placed learning and technology at the heart of its future-readiness plan. Each employee gained access to enterprise-level AI tools to streamline work, alongside 5Mins.ai, an AI-driven learning platform offering personalised, bite-sized training. A global women’s leadership programme and senior-level coaching were also launched to strengthen resilience and leadership capability for the future.

Outcome

Voluntary turnover stands at just 5% which is incredibly low for the industry. Employee engagement has remained at 90% for two consecutive years and 15% of staff were promoted in 2024, showing strong internal mobility. Sickness absence dropped by 12%, while revenue grew from £6m to £8.2m with 90% client retention across top accounts.

Employees describe Interlink’s culture as “the most human I’ve ever experienced,” and candidates increasingly cite flexibility and wellbeing as key reasons for joining.

By combining flexibility, continuous learning and AI innovation, Interlink has created a future-ready culture grounded in humanity, empowerment and trust.

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FUTURE WORKPLACE READINESS

AI WITH INTEGRITY: HOW THE FT IS PREPARING ITS PEOPLE FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

Background

For the Financial Times (FT), a global newsroom and data-led organisation, AI represented both a technological leap and a leadership challenge: how to integrate powerful new tools without eroding trust, creativity or collaboration.

FT recognised that its long-term readiness would depend not only on deploying advanced systems but also on nurturing a culture where people felt confident, informed and included. Its goal was to ensure that every employee could explore AI safely and ethically while keeping human judgment at the heart of decision-making.



Approach

In early 2024, FT launched a company-wide AI transformation programme grounded in a people-first ethos. The initiative focused on three priorities: culture, capability building and collaboration.

A cross-departmental AI Taskforce, later elevated to a board-sponsored AI Transformation Programme, brought structure and alignment, ensuring that technology use matched business objectives. An AI Fluency Lead was appointed to embed adoption and ethical awareness across HR and operational teams, supported by regional champions who promoted engagement worldwide.

“The FT is turning AI from a tool into a shared capability, ensuring people – not algorithms – define its future”

Implementation followed quickly. In February 2024, FT introduced ChatGPT Enterprise through a phased rollout with clear governance to ensure secure, responsible use. By June, the company hosted Global AI Immersion Week, offering live sessions on innovation, ethics and inclusion.

The organisation’s new AI Fluency Framework tailors learning to different experience levels, while algorithmic equity training helps teams identify and address bias in AI. Weekly AI tips, quizzes and workshops sustain curiosity and build confidence, supported by active AI Slack channels and town halls.

Outcome

FT’s AI transformation has redefined what future readiness looks like in a complex, creative industry. Cross-functional collaboration has accelerated, duplication has fallen and innovation cycles have shortened.

The Global AI Immersion Week alone drew more than 1,200 participants, embedding a shared understanding of ethical AI use. Engagement with AI learning remains consistently high, driven by visible CEO communication and ongoing peer learning.

By balancing strong governance with freedom to experiment FT has created a culture of curiosity, confidence and inclusion that keeps people, not technology, at the centre of progress.

LEADING WITH PURPOSE

REDEFINING SUCCESS: HOW GUNNERCOOKE MADE PURPOSE THE HEART OF MODERN LAW

Background

In an industry defined by hierarchy and long hours, *gunnercooke* was founded in 2010 by Darryl Cooke and Sarah Goulbourne to reimagine what a law firm could be – combining world-class legal expertise with entrepreneurial freedom, flexibility and social purpose. Their mission – “to leave the world a better place than we found it” – underpins everything from recruitment and leadership to community impact through the *gunnercooke* foundation.

“By putting purpose at the heart of law, *gunnercooke* created a firm where freedom, inclusion and impact thrive together”

Approach

Purpose is embedded in the firm’s fee-share model, which empowers professionals to “design the life they want,” supported by *gcTrust*, a team offering coaching, business development and operational support. The model fosters autonomy, inclusion and belonging, particularly for parents, carers and neurodiverse professionals.

To strengthen wellbeing and connection *gunnercooke* invests over £100,000 annually in community engagement, including health walks, team dinners and its flagship Symposium, which has grown from 37 attendees in 2010 to 350 Partners and 75 employees in 2025. The event blends professional learning with music, art and wellness workshops, featuring leaders such as Dr Rangan Chatterjee and Mary Portas on purpose-driven leadership.

The *gunnercooke* foundation brings purpose to life beyond the firm. *Inspire** supports 170 small charities a year to build leadership, resilience and operational capacity, while *gcScholars* mentors underrepresented students, creating future access to the legal profession. *House of Books & Friends*, a Manchester social enterprise, combats loneliness through community events and pay-it-forward schemes.

Internally co-founder Goulbourne champions mentoring and equity initiatives, with 47% of Partners now women. Partners “pay forward” their



experience through networks supporting neurodiversity, menopause awareness and female leadership.

Outcome

Gunnercooke’s purpose-led model continues to deliver measurable growth and social impact. The firm has grown 20% year-on-year, with more than 600 lawyers and advisors across 15 offices in the UK, US, Germany and Austria. It has an NPS of +97, reflecting exceptional client trust and loyalty, while it reports £277,000+ in charitable benefit and 596 volunteer hours delivered through the foundation in 2023. For every £1 invested, £2.38 of benefit was delivered.

House of Books & Friends, continues to grow its impact, hosting events for Loneliness Awareness Week and welcoming the National Association of Children of Alcoholics for an event, raising the issue of work, alcohol and family, which was shared as a download across its network.

Gunnercooke proves that when purpose guides every decision it creates not only better business outcomes but a thriving, human-centred culture that leaves a lasting legacy for people and communities.

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EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION

CURRYS UNLOCKS 'AMAZING' – A PEOPLE PROMISE THAT WORKS

Background

With more than 150 years of retail heritage, Currys is the UK's last high-street retailer specialising in consumer electronics and white goods. Following a number of mergers the business faced a challenge: uniting its people under one purpose while tackling rising attrition and uncertainty about what it meant to work there.

By 2022, store colleague turnover had climbed from 21.5% to 45.8%. The existing employee value proposition (EVP) – 'Where tech lovers unite' – failed to attract diverse talent, with stores over-indexing on young men. Currys needed a transformative talent strategy to strengthen inclusion, reduce attrition and reflect its purpose: helping everyone enjoy equal access to technology. Partnering with People Made, the retailer set out to create a new EVP that would inspire pride internally, attract new audiences externally and align culture with commercial goals.

“'Welcome to Amazing' turned a fragmented retailer into one united by care, inclusion and growth, proving that when people feel amazing performance follows”

Approach

People Made began with deep listening, gathering insights from colleagues across stores, call centres, warehouses and head office. Surveys, focus groups, leadership interviews and market research uncovered the essence of life at Currys and the opportunities for change.

From this four EVP pillars emerged reflecting what mattered most to employees and candidates: caring and supportive teams built on warmth and collaboration; flexibility through hybrid and dynamic working; visible career growth supported by structured training; and a shared commitment to sustainability through recycling, repair and net zero by 2040.

The new EVP, Welcome to Amazing, became the unifying expression of these pillars – capturing both the company's vision and its renewed people promise. After a soft internal launch at the Peak Conference, it rolled out via a refreshed employer brand identity, a brand ambassador programme training colleagues to share stories on LinkedIn and TikTok, and a resource hub equipping leaders to embed the four pillars in daily practice.

Outcome

Within 12 months the transformation delivered measurable impact: attrition dropped from 17.5% to 13.5%, job offer acceptances rose from 79% to 83% and Currys' Glassdoor rating climbed from 3.2 to 3.7. Careers site traffic grew 12%, with engagement time up 38%. Female representation in regional management rose by 123%, supported by inclusive hiring training for 90% of managers, while employee engagement reached 85%, placing Currys in the top 3% globally.

The EVP also fuelled new partnerships: Currys became a founding partner of the Digital Poverty Alliance and joined Neighbourly, connecting surplus resources to local community causes. Commercially, its renewed culture and focus on inclusion contributed to a 37% year-on-year profit uplift.



BRAND & VALUES

TRURATING SCALES GLOBALLY WITHOUT LOSING ITS SOUL

Background

By late 2023, consumer ratings platform TruRating was thriving commercially but faced growing cultural strain. Rapid global expansion across the UK, US and Australia was stretching its closely knit identity, creating silos and threatening the company's sense of shared purpose. Leaders recognised that sustained performance would require more than structure. It demanded a deeply embedded cultural foundation.

The aim was to define a clear set of values that could drive consistent decision-making, attract and retain purpose-aligned talent and strengthen both transparency and performance. The result was TruValues: five principles – Startup Mindset, Tru to Ourselves, You Own Tru, Easy to Choose, Easy to Use and Spreading TruLove – co-created to act as behavioural anchors across every aspect of the business.

“By turning its values into a business operating system TruRating keeps connection and purpose alive through rapid global growth”

Approach

CEO and Founder Georgina Nelson and Global Head of People and Culture Rachel Gowers led the initiative, supported by a cross-functional leadership group spanning customer experience, operations, diversity and inclusion. The team built the values from the bottom up, capturing real employee stories to ensure authenticity and lived meaning.

Through story-sharing sessions and engagement surveys, the team surfaced common patterns of motivation and success that became the foundation of the TruValues. Once established, each value was operationalised across six pillars – onboarding, recognition, transparency, performance, inclusion and service delivery – making culture a working system rather than a statement.

Values were introduced to new hires through storytelling rituals such as TruZoo (where team members introduce themselves as “what animal they are”) and TruMoment (where a team member shares a special memory about their life with TruRating), integrated into 1-to-1s and 360° reviews and reinforced through TruAppreciation awards celebrating peer-

nominated behaviour that exemplified the values. A people platform upgrade allowed tracking of wellbeing, development goals and value alignment through a 1–9 scoring framework, mirroring the company's customer rating product.

Outcome

Within 12 months, TruValues became an operating framework embedded across the organisation. Operational efficiency rose sharply, with 90% adoption of AI tools contributing to a 22% reduction in operating costs. Engagement scores increased by 18%, supported by stronger trust and cross-regional collaboration. More than 50 peer-recognition awards were given in the first year, reflecting inclusion and connection across levels and functions.

Retention strengthened, with 66% of employees staying over three years and 21% for more than a decade. Externally, TruRating was named the UK's Happiest Female-Founded Startup and saw rising candidate interest citing culture as a key attraction. At the same time, TruRating continued to grow its revenue base and improve operational efficiency — and customers continued to give exceptional feedback, recognizing how its service-driven culture supports their own growth and success.

TruValues have become the company's cultural operating system, driving clarity, consistency and connection as the business continues to grow globally.

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COACHING

PERNOD RICARD UK MAKES COACHING
A WAY OF LIFE

Background

Pernod Ricard UK brings together three distinct businesses under one umbrella: PRUK, a fast-paced commercial arm, Chivas Brothers, steeped in manufacturing heritage, and PR GTR, a globally dispersed travel retail division. Each had its own identity and rhythm but all faced a shared challenge: how to effectively develop and connect their middle managers.

This vital population drives engagement, retention and leadership pipeline strength, yet previous leadership programmes had failed to resonate. Local initiatives felt disconnected from real business pressures and managers viewed development as irrelevant or transactional. The organisation needed a unified approach, one that would embed development into its culture, build confidence and inspire future-ready leaders.

Approach

In response Pernod Ricard UK launched INSPIRE, a coaching-led leadership development programme designed to unify and elevate leadership capability across all three businesses. Co-created with more than 30 senior leaders and three HR Directors, the initiative began with deep discovery – 60 hours of interviews, focus groups and engagement data analysis to understand managers' real challenges and aspirations.

Four core themes emerged: Values-Focused Leadership, Communication, Coaching and Feedback Culture. These became the backbone of INSPIRE. The programme was built as a modular experience combining experiential workshops, peer-to-peer coaching, facilitated support groups and real-world application. Coaching was positioned not as a skill to learn but as a mindset to live, ensuring impact would extend far beyond the classroom.

“INSPIRE transformed leadership from a course to a culture, uniting managers through coaching, purpose and shared belief”

To guarantee momentum, INSPIRE was delivered with two success drivers: a goal to reach 100% of middle managers within 18 months and a focus on advocacy measured through Net Promoter Score (NPS). HR and business leaders championed the programme, helping shift long-held perceptions that leadership development was optional or peripheral.

Outcome

INSPIRE exceeded expectations. Within 18 months 100% of middle managers completed the programme. It achieved an exceptional NPS with participants describing it as relevant, empowering and authentic. Post-programme feedback showed a 35% increase in self-reported confidence in key leadership behaviours such as coaching, feedback and communication.

Beyond numbers, INSPIRE created visible cultural change. Managers now feel more connected, supported and equipped to lead through complexity, senior leaders have become vocal advocates and peer coaching networks have broken down silos across the three businesses.

By embedding coaching as both a mindset and method, Pernod Ricard UK transformed leadership development from a training exercise into a unifying cultural movement, building connection, confidence and continuity for the future.



COACHING & TRANSFORMATION

HOW BAYER TURNED COACHING INTO THE ENGINE OF GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

Background

In late 2023, Bayer embarked on one of its most ambitious organisational transformations: the introduction of a new operating model, Dynamic Shared Ownership (DSO). Designed to flatten hierarchy from 12–13 layers to just 3–5, DSO aimed to instil greater accountability, agility and ownership across 70+ countries. This new model demanded a cultural shift – people at all levels needed to lead, adapt and thrive in a faster, more autonomous environment.

However, coaching, the critical enabler of behavioural change, was fragmented and costly, with more than 700 providers and no data on impact. To succeed, Bayer needed a unified, measurable and scalable solution that aligned people development with its VACC (Visionary, Architect, Catalyst, Coach) leadership framework. The challenge was not only to deliver coaching globally but to embed it as a core driver of transformation and cultural change.

Approach

Led by Manoela Siuffo, Global VP of Learning Experience, and Rachel Lamb, Global Performance and Development Leader, Bayer decided to partner with a single provider, EZRA, to deliver an inclusive, digital-first coaching platform accessible to all director-level employees and below. Two tailored programmes – Thriving in DSO (for all employees) and Leading in DSO (for people managers) – were designed to help individuals build resilience, communication skills, leadership capability and commercial impact in line with the VACC mindset.

Through EZRA's platform, employees could self-register, select their goals and access 1:1 virtual coaching in multiple languages. For the first time, coaching became a self-directed experience rather than a management privilege. The introduction of EZRA Measure brought transparency to impact, tracking behavioural change and performance outcomes through pre- and post-coaching assessments for both participants and their managers.

To embed coaching within Bayer's culture it was widely promoted across BayerNet while HR business partners ensured alignment with local teams. A dedicated landing hub provided clear guidance and resources for participants, ensuring consistency at scale.



Outcome

The impact was immediate and measurable. Participation increased by 484% in the first year, from 19 to 111 employees. Post-coaching results showed a +22% rise in job satisfaction, -27% drop in disengagement, +17% increase in job competence and -37% fall in intention to leave. Managers reported a +47% increase in promotion readiness, while leaders saw stronger team engagement and improved collaboration.

Financially, the unified coaching model replaced €5M of fragmented regional contracts with a flexible, pay-as-you-go structure, reducing costs while improving quality assurance.

Bayer has transformed coaching from an isolated benefit into a global cultural engine, powering shared ownership, agility and sustained performance across its business.

“Bayer proved that when everyone has access to coaching, culture shifts from hierarchy to shared ownership”

COACHING & MENTORING

SOFTSERVE'S MENTORING MOVEMENT
UNITING 16 COUNTRIES IN GROWTH

Background

SoftServe is a global digital consultancy employing more than 11,000 associates across 16 countries. Experiencing 30% annual growth, the company faced a major challenge: how to keep skills, leadership and culture evolving fast enough to match business expansion. Traditional training models could not meet the pace of change or the company's need for rapid, experience-based learning.

SoftServe recognised that mentorship, already informally embedded in its people-first culture, was its most powerful learning asset. The challenge was to formalise and scale this instinctive knowledge-sharing into a structured, global ecosystem that could accelerate leadership capability, sustain cultural cohesion and strengthen talent retention in a competitive market.

Approach

Launched in 2015 and continually refined, SoftServe's individual-oriented learning ecosystem transformed organic mentoring and coaching into a strategic pillar of business growth.

Between 2017 and 2019, the learning and development function was restructured to separate design from operations, creating clear accountability. From 2020 to 2022, a Center of Learning Excellence and embedded learning partners ensured alignment with business goals and analytics-driven decision-making. In 2022–2024, the Global Educators' Community (GEC) united mentors, trainers and job-shadowing hosts, supported by a dedicated Mentorship Office for strategic oversight and improvement.

“Mentorship became SoftServe's competitive edge, uniting 11K people in a culture of growth, connection and performance”

In 2024–2025, the automated HelpDesk system enhanced mentor-mentee matching, increasing transparency and improving overall process performance by 28%.

Mentorship formats ranged from long-term leadership development to short-term job shadowing and were guided by a seven-step structure. Mentors were chosen for expertise and leadership maturity, with contributions formally recognised. Coaching complemented mentorship through certified internal and external programmes, equipping leaders to build resilient, high-performing teams.

Outcome

By 2024, nearly 24% of all SoftServe's global employees were active educators, far exceeding the 10% KPI. The programme achieved a 93 NPS for two consecutive years and consistently ranks as the company's most impactful learning experience. GEC contributors achieved an 80% promotion rate in 2023, compared to 68% for non-contributors, and exceeded performance expectations by 10%. Mentorship participants showed 8.6% higher retention in 2024 and onboarding has accelerated.

Beyond numbers the initiative has cemented a self-sustaining learning culture where mentorship is viewed as a strategic contribution. Knowledge-sharing is now part of performance evaluation, recognition and career progression, strengthening belonging and purpose across geographies. SoftServe has turned a natural 'instinct to share' into a scalable, measurable growth engine – one that keeps its people learning, connected and future-ready.



LEARNING

PHOENIX GROUP TURNS DIGITAL EMPATHY INTO INCLUSION

Background

Phoenix Group, the UK's largest long-term savings and retirement business, recognised that digital exclusion poses a growing challenge to both society and business. Across the UK an estimated 14 million adults (27%) have low digital capability and millions cannot complete simple online tasks. For Phoenix this meant that many customers could not access digital services essential for managing their financial futures.

The organisation realised that digital inclusion must begin internally, by equipping colleagues with the understanding, empathy and confidence to support customers who are digitally excluded. The goal was to create a transformative learning programme that would change how staff think, feel and act about digital inclusion and extend that impact across sectors.

“Phoenix Group made digital inclusion personal, using empathy and evidence to transform culture from the inside out”

Approach

Phoenix partnered with behavioural science specialists Cowry Consulting and Mhor Collective & SCVO, two of Scotland's leading digital inclusion organisations, to design a blended, emotionally engaging learning journey.

The project was co-created through storyboarding workshops, empathy mapping and input from Phoenix's Digital Inclusion Champions, who shared lived experiences of exclusion to ensure authenticity. Behavioural science shaped the tone and delivery, breaking down resistance to personal and vulnerable conversations by using real stories and reflective exercises.

Accessibility was central. The e-learning was designed with inclusive language, screen reader compatibility and clear literacy standards. The course combined videos, storytelling, interactive exercises and a digital simulation game that placed learners in the shoes of someone struggling to navigate the online world.

To maintain momentum post-launch Phoenix built a digital inclusion hub on its intranet, offering



additional resources, signposted actions and follow-up learning. The entire project was delivered in just 12 weeks, using an agile, iterative approach that included continuous testing and refinement.

A white-labelled version was also created for third sector and public organisations, extending the programme's reach beyond Phoenix and helping to improve digital inclusion capability nationwide.

Outcome

The results were exceptional. Across all measures, knowledge, confidence and preparedness increased dramatically with knowledge of digital inclusion up from 30% to 90%, awareness of how to support others offline from 24% to 81% and 100% confidence in supporting customers. Every participant reported feeling more comfortable discussing exclusion.

Colleagues described the course as one of the most powerful learning experiences of their careers, consistently rating it five stars and praising its authenticity and emotional resonance.

Culturally, digital inclusion has become embedded in Phoenix's customer vulnerability strategy and everyday language. The learning model has since influenced new programmes in sustainability, vulnerability and digital transformation.

LEARNING

SODEXO DEFENCE REIGNITES PRIDE AND PURPOSE ACROSS 4,000 FRONTLINE HEROES

Background

Sodexo Defence supports the UK Armed Forces by providing essential quality-of-life services across military bases. After years of operational strain, from the pandemic to heightened global conflict, morale had dipped, retention was falling and many frontline colleagues felt disconnected from their purpose.

With a 4,000-strong workforce spread across remote, high-pressure environments, Sodexo needed a movement that reignited pride and connection. Partnering with The Happy Consultancy Group, the business set out to reawaken belief in its mission and create The Lived Experience by Sodexo, a culture where people felt seen, valued and inspired to serve.

“Sodexo Defence turned training into transformation, reigniting pride, purpose and care across its 4,000-strong workforce”

Approach

The resulting programme, It's All About You, was created through deep discovery – site visits, interviews and focus groups capturing more than 1,500 years of lived experience from colleagues across Defence sites. These authentic stories became the emotional heartbeat of the learning journey.

Using The Happy Consultancy Group's D.R.E.A.M. methodology the team built a multi-layered experience combining storytelling, film, workshops and leadership coaching. It began with immersive, three-hour emotional connection events that reconnected colleagues with the 'why' behind their work, followed by workshops introducing Sodexo's Customer Experience Hallmarks: Show You Care, Share Your Experience, Make Things Better.

Ten Master Transformation Coaches were trained as peer facilitators to cascade learning across sites, while a six-month leadership journey, F.I.T. to Lead, helped managers strengthen resilience, emotional intelligence and team culture. A vibrant creative campaign featuring teaser films, thank-you gestures and branded materials brought the initiative to life, ensuring it felt personal and heartfelt rather than corporate.

Outcome

Launched in May 2024, It's All About You has already reached 1,500 colleagues, with national rollout underway. Early results are striking: turnover has fallen by 4.25%, absence by 1.7% and customer satisfaction has risen across all sites (4.3 vs 4.1 pre-programme). Participants rate their ability to apply service hallmarks at 4.8/5, while leaders report renewed unity and belief in their teams.

Feedback has been extraordinary with colleagues calling it “the best training ever” and “a breath of fresh air.” The initiative has won the Sodexo Spirit of Progress Award (Government segment) and been shortlisted for multiple national honours, including the 2025 Cateys.



LEARNING

MIGSO-PCUBED, THE CONSULTANCY THAT
TURNED LEARNING INTO A SHARED
MISSION

Background

MIGSO-PCUBED (MP) is a global consultancy specialising in project, programme, portfolio and change management, employing 320 people in the UK. By late 2022, learning at MP was ad hoc. There was no formal L&D function, no evaluation of training ROI and limited visibility of skill development. With consultants embedded in client environments, this lack of structure constrained growth, career development and market readiness.

The challenge was to create a scalable, high-impact learning ecosystem that would anticipate emerging capability needs, balance technical and human skills and deliver measurable business value without a traditional L&D department.

Approach

MP channelled the expertise of its internal Communities of Practice (CoPs) to create a self-sustaining learning ecosystem. Each community, spanning Project Delivery, Change, Agile and Innovation, became the engine of learning in its field, designing and sharing development directly aligned with client and market needs.

The ecosystem blends certified, social and experiential learning. Eight globally recognised qualifications are now delivered internally by practising consultants, ensuring relevance and real-world application, with around 200 accreditations awarded in 2025. Alongside technical skills, sessions on emotional intelligence, resilience and consulting fundamentals strengthen the human side of consulting, while live client projects, mentoring and coaching turn learning into practice.

A bespoke training app now anchors the experience, giving every consultant a single platform to track progress, register for courses and monitor learning hours and, true to MP's collaborative spirit, employees themselves help maintain and improve the tool.

Outcome

In its first year, MP's new learning ecosystem has transformed both performance and culture. Across the business 47 course iterations and 27 programmes engaged over 550 participants, generating 6,858 learning hours and 199 accredited qualifications. Participation in training rose by 24% after the launch of the bespoke learning app and the programme achieved an NPS of 9.2, with every participant rating it at least 8 out of 10.



This investment in capability has translated directly into client value. Consultants have applied new lean and change skills to deliver measurable results, cutting transaction times by 42% for a real estate client, saving 120 person-hours per week for an automotive team and reducing quality defects by 25% for a manufacturing client.

Perhaps the most powerful outcome is cultural. Learning is no longer a function but a shared mindset. Forty-eight volunteer trainers, none from a formal L&D background, are now set to deliver 127 training days in 2025.

“By making learning everyone’s responsibility MIGSO-PCUBED built a community that drives growth, impact and continuous improvement”

LEARNING

MITIE BUILDS CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE
ACROSS UK SECURITY TEAMS

Background

Mitie, the UK's leading facilities management and professional services company, delivers security services to some of the nation's most sensitive and complex environments. In 2023 it secured a major contract to provide security officers across a high number of faith-based sites, including places of worship and schools. This brought significant responsibility: to ensure that every officer operated with respect, understanding and confidence in communities often facing discrimination and fear.

The challenge intensified in 2024 when civil unrest saw a rise in Islamophobic incidents, requiring Mitie to deploy a significant number of additional security officers at various locations across the United Kingdom. While its training infrastructure was strong it lacked the cultural specificity needed for such diverse environments. The company had to act quickly, creating a learning solution that was authentic, scalable and capable of building genuine understanding.

Approach

Mitie partnered with Best at Digital, behavioural scientists, Government Departments and the local community representatives to co-design a digital learning experience built for impact at speed. Over 12 weeks the team combined behavioural insights with consultation to understand what matters most on the ground, from mosque etiquette to gender segregation and religious observance.

The resulting training centred on a 15-minute digital module enriched with dramatised scenarios, real voices and interactive reflection. Accessible via mobile and translated into clear, inclusive language, the learning journey was structured around a "Learn, Apply, Grow" methodology, helping officers not just to understand what respectful practice looks like but why it matters. Content design intentionally targeted the 'illusion of explanatory depth', the tendency to overestimate one's understanding, prompting reflection and mindset change rather than surface-level compliance.

Live Power BI dashboards allow leaders to track completion, compliance and learning impact in real

time. Inclusive design ensures accessibility for officers with varying English proficiency, while alignment with Mitie's wider ED&I strategy makes the programme a foundation for future professional development.



“Mitie set a new industry benchmark for culturally intelligent learning, training thousands of officers to protect with empathy, confidence and respect”

Outcome

The impact was significant. Surveys across our teams of Security Officers showed a 50% increase in cultural sensitivity, 89% felt more prepared to work in faith-based settings and 75% required less support. Learner satisfaction reached an NPS of 91, with one officer noting the programme “helped me understand not just what to do, but why it matters.”

Beyond the numbers the initiative has strengthened community trust and safety, improved collaboration with local stakeholders and reduced incidents of cultural misunderstanding. It safeguarded a significant multi-year partnership and positioned Mitie as an industry leader in culturally intelligent security services. The model is now being expanded across other high-risk and community-facing contracts, creating a legacy of empathy, respect and inclusion.

LEARNING

ATG ENTERTAINMENT DEVELOPS FUTURE LEADERS THROUGH ITS RISING STARS PROGRAMME



Background

ATG Entertainment is one of the world's leading live entertainment groups, operating 72 venues across Britain, the USA, Germany, Austria and Spain. Yet a decade ago the organisation faced a pressing talent challenge. Internal candidates struggled to progress into leadership, often leaving to gain experience elsewhere.

Engagement data told a similar story: only 33% of employees saw themselves building a long-term career at ATG and just 40% believed there were meaningful opportunities for development. Loyalty to individual theatres was strong but connection to the wider organisation was weak. Without progression pathways ATG risked losing promising people and valuable knowledge.

Approach

In 2014, ATG launched Rising Stars, a leadership development programme designed to identify, nurture and retain emerging talent from across the business. Led by Head of Talent Development Paul Williamson and learning consultant Nicky Stone the initiative set out to create confident, self-aware leaders who embody ATG's values and bring the organisation closer together.

Working with the Academy of Executive Coaching (AoEC), ATG initially trained 24 managers as certified coaches, later expanding and professionalising the practice through the AoEC Practitioner Diploma. Each participant is paired with an internal coach and joins a structured two-

year journey blending workshops, group coaching and real-world projects.

The programme begins with a two-day residential induction at Aylesbury Waterside Theatre to build trust and connection. Participants then attend workshops on leadership, communication and managing change, culminating in a graduation event where they pitch business improvement projects and present their leadership journeys to colleagues and family.

Senior executives actively support applications, join interview panels and attend graduations, ensuring that Rising Stars is fully embedded in ATG's wider talent strategy.

“ATG's Rising Stars has transformed internal career development, creating a self-sustaining culture of learning where future leaders grow, stay and inspire others”

Outcome

Over 11 years, Rising Stars has become a defining part of ATG's culture. More than 400 applications have been received, with 142 participants completing the programme and over 1,000 hours of learning delivered. It has become the organisation's primary route to leadership, with half of ATG's West End theatres now led by Rising Stars alumni.

Participants show measurable growth: 80% report improved confidence, 75% greater self-awareness and 77% remain with ATG. Alumni stay 4.2 years longer, saving £1.3 million in recruitment costs.

The arts industry has taken notice too. Industry publication *The Stage* described the initiative as “unmatched elsewhere in the sector,” while senior leaders call it “invaluable.”

LEARNING

DISHOOM TURNS CHEFS INTO LEADERS AND KITCHENS INTO COMMUNITIES



Background

Dishoom serves over 11 million dishes a year across 15 cafés and 13 delivery kitchens, powered by hundreds of chefs who bring its Bombay-inspired food and culture to life. Yet in 2013, the business faced a challenge: talent was scarce locally, forcing them into costly overseas recruitment. Even then, few chefs were stepping into senior roles, and turnover remained high.

Recruiting experienced Indian cuisine chefs externally was expensive and unsustainable, with each overseas hire costing around £7,500, while turnover was 41%. Many chefs, predominantly of South Asian heritage, felt disconnected and uncertain about career opportunities, often limited by language barriers. Dishoom needed a way to grow its leaders from within while fostering belonging, engagement and long-term commitment across its kitchens.

Approach

To tackle this, Dishoom launched the Kitchen Academy, a nine-month senior chef development programme co-created by its executive and head chefs. Grounded in Dishoom's guiding philosophy of Seva (selfless service), the Academy develops technical, commercial and leadership capability while embedding pride and cultural connection.

The learning journey integrates five elements seamlessly into day-to-day work. Chefs build cultural and leadership confidence through 'Buddy-to-Babu' training, Chai Chat feedback

sessions and mentoring with head chefs. They deepen food mastery through menu immersion, supplier visits and live cooking assessments, while gaining commercial understanding through Jantri (P&L) training on stock, waste and kitchen finances.

Participants complete safety and compliance modules to UK standards and track progress through reflection journals and hands-on rotations before final assessment. Every participant receives mentoring from senior chefs and guest sessions with Dishoom's founders, creating a clear line of sight between individual growth and organisational purpose.

“Dishoom's Kitchen Academy turned chefs into leaders, proving that when learning starts with purpose, culture and performance thrive”

Outcome

Chef turnover fell from 41% to 14% and average kitchen tenure rose to four years and four months. The programme saved more than £150,000 in international recruitment in 2024 alone. Leadership pipelines now run entirely from within, with 8 of 10 head chefs and 16 of 25 sous chefs having graduated from the Academy.

Operationally, food quality scores average 95%, waste has dropped below 0.2%, and engagement in kitchen teams is the highest across the business. Beyond the metrics the initiative has opened new pathways for talent, enabling Dishoom to hire for potential rather than pedigree and increase female representation in kitchens year on year.

UNITING TEAMS & ORGANISATIONS

TODAYS DENTAL TURNS CULTURE INTO ITS GROWTH ENGINE



Background

Today's Dental has grown rapidly, expanding from a single practice to more than 30 in just three years, with plans to reach 50 within the next. Unlike traditional dental acquisitions, where productivity often dips as former owners adjust to self-employed dentists, teams lose direction and revenue drops. The founding team, including Lyn Paxman, Culture Director set out to redefine integration through culture. The goal was to create a respected, people-first brand by aligning diverse practice cultures under a shared sense of purpose, belonging and accountability. The challenge lay in balancing the needs of employed staff and self-employed clinicians, many of whom value autonomy and flexibility, while maintaining consistency in leadership and patient experience.

Approach

At its inception Today's Dental created the 4Ps framework – Purpose, People, Patients and Profit – and a strong set of Guiding Principles and built its integration strategy around them. A central Resource Hub (RH) leads the process, embedding cultural alignment as the foundation for performance. Cultural Ambassadors and operations leaders act as champions, supporting new practices through a phased, relationship-driven transition.

Recognising that the shift from owner-led to manager-led practices can unsettle teams, Today's Dental introduced Transition Managers to provide continuity and psychological support during the first months. These managers help new teams navigate change,

clarify expectations and build trust with RH leaders.

Within six months of joining, each practice takes part in a Discover Dream Day, an immersive, whole-team event where the practice closes for a day to co-create its vision and define shared goals. This builds psychological safety and ownership from the outset. Follow-up growth planning sessions and personalised Guiding Star packs translate each practice's aspirations into clear action.

To sustain alignment, cross-functional onboarding sessions bring RH staff and practice teams together for open feedback. This ensures learning flows both ways and the integration approach continually evolves.

“By putting culture before consolidation Today's Dental defied industry norms, turning post-acquisition decline into sustained growth across 30 practices”

Outcome

Three years into its plan, Today's Dental has met its ambitious target of 4% growth in the first year post-acquisition and 8% annually thereafter, defying industry norms of early decline. Across 30+ practices, stability and engagement have been achieved through shared purpose and inclusive leadership. The company reports no difficulty attracting or retaining dentists, rare in the sector, and its people-first approach has earned praise from regulators such as the CQC and from agents who now actively recommend Today's Dental as a trusted acquirer.

The group's success extends beyond dentistry, with invitations to share its cultural leadership model at international conferences in Austin, Amsterdam, New York and Marseille.

Today's Dental has proven that by aligning through purpose and inclusion diverse teams can thrive together and deliver sustained business growth.

UNITING TEAMS & ORGANISATIONS

HOW NOBLE FOODS BAKED BELONGING INTO EVERY ACQUISITION

Background

Over the past three years, Noble Foods has reshaped its culture from siloed, hierarchical operations into one defined by shared purpose, inclusion and collaboration. After winning the 2024 Business Culture Award for Leading with Purpose, the business faced a new challenge: how to align this evolving culture with a series of acquisitions while preserving each site's distinct identity. Between 2022 and 2025, Noble Foods integrated Killamarsh Feed Mill, Wot-a-Pullet, Leicester Added Value and Just Egg – each with its own history and ways of working. The goal was to connect these teams through shared purpose, not uniformity, creating a sense of belonging and cohesion across the group.



Approach

The alignment journey was grounded in inclusion, visibility and co-creation. New teams were invited to shape what the Noble culture meant for them, ensuring early ownership of the change. Leaders prioritised listening and presence by visiting sites, understanding local pride points and addressing practical needs such as transition loans, enhanced benefits and consistent uniforms to build belonging.

Culture embedding focused on Noble's TO CARE values (Together, Ownership, Courage, Action, Respect, Excellence). Each site explored how to live these values authentically in its own context, supported by cross-functional working groups tackling shared priorities such as safety and training. Colleague-led onboarding ensured new

“By uniting new acquisitions and long-standing teams under one shared purpose, Noble Foods turned cultural alignment into commercial growth”

sites could co-author the “Welcome to Noble” story, blending heritage with the group's future direction.

To strengthen connection across a dispersed workforce Noble launched My Noble, an internal communications hub. With more than 70% of colleagues non-desk-based, the platform became a vital tool for sharing stories, learning resources and onboarding materials, helping to unify teams across sites and functions.

Outcome

The approach delivered both cultural and commercial results. Colleague surveys showed rising participation and higher Leadership and Fair Deal scores across all sites. Individual sites all showed improvements. For example, the speed and level of success at which Leicester Added Value built new teams and embedded culture gave Noble Foods the confidence to purchase Just Egg.

Operationally, sites reported improved productivity, streamlined planning and greater collaboration. Wot-a-Pullet increased capacity and market share while Leicester stabilised turnover and accelerated innovation. These cultural and operational gains helped Noble Foods achieve 31% revenue growth, 70% profit growth, 45% debt reduction and a £2.4 million operating profit for the year, reversing a £6.3 million loss the year before.

Noble Foods has demonstrated that alignment is built on trust. By creating a shared culture people feel connected, valued and proud of what they achieve together.

UNITING TEAMS & ORGANISATIONS

HARWORTH GROUP BLENDS LEGACY AND
NEW ENERGY TO GROW TOGETHER

Background

Harworth Group transforms former industrial land into sustainable places where people want to live and work. Managing more than 15,000 acres across 100 sites in the North and Midlands, the company's 142 employees are central to its purpose and performance.

Following a period of rapid expansion, almost doubling its workforce in five years, Harworth faced the potential for cultural fragmentation between long-serving colleagues ("Old Harworth") and new hires. Without deliberate intervention this could have risked creating silos, disengagement and a loss of shared identity at a critical time for the business. The company's ambition to become a £1bn FTSE250 business by 2027 demanded a unified, high-performing culture capable of sustaining growth, innovation and accountability.

Harworth set out to define and embed a new cultural framework that would unite everyone behind a shared vision and values that balanced its entrepreneurial roots with stronger governance and collaboration, building a culture fit for the future.

Approach

The transformation began with a Culture Insight programme combining data analysis, interviews, surveys and focus groups to map cultural strengths, risks and opportunities. Insights were shared in executive workshops to build alignment and commitment to change.

The employee forum and group leadership committee co-created a new vision, values and behaviours framework, refined through multiple review stages and employee feedback sessions. These values now underpin every aspect of work, from recruitment to recognition.

A refreshed performance management and reward system, Enabling Excellence, introduced Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), regular feedback and transparent progression pathways.



“By blending legacy and new energy Harworth built one culture of pride, performance and shared purpose”

Supported by a digital Reward Hub, this system aligns individual performance with company goals and reinforces fairness.

Harworth also invested in leadership capability, training all people managers in high performance, wellbeing and inclusion. A company-wide immersive launch event brought the new culture to life, engaging every employee through interactive storytelling and practical examples. Continuous communication through weekly bulletins, forums and business updates ensures the culture remains visible and evolving.

Outcome

The transformation has delivered measurable cultural and business gains. Harworth achieved a +49 employee Net Promoter Score with 98% proud to work for the company and 97% recommending it as a great place to work. Voluntary turnover fell to 5.4%, 23 points below the sector average. Gender balance improved from 70:30 to 58:42 (male:female), outperforming industry benchmarks.

In 2025, Harworth achieved Investors in People Gold at first assessment, an accolade achieved by fewer than one in three organisations globally. Business performance has followed: the company joined the FTSE250 in 2024 and other financial measures have improved.

Harworth has proven that when culture evolves with purpose and people ownership it becomes the foundation for growth, innovation and pride.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

COLLABORATION OVER SCALE: HOW SMES ARE REWRITING THE RULES OF DEI PROGRESS

Background

Action on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) can feel like the preserve of large corporations, with their larger resources and employee numbers. But seven purpose-led SMEs set out to prove that meaningful DEI impact is possible at any scale.

Each of these businesses is a certified B Corp, committed to being a force for good in both people and planet. Yet, like many smaller companies, they faced a shared challenge: limited resources to drive systemic DEI change. Many traditional tools, such as employee resource groups, anonymous data analysis and large-scale training, were out of reach. The group realised that by joining forces, with the support of consultancy Plans With Purpose, they could pool expertise, share learning and create scalable change together.

Thus, in early 2024, the JEDI MATTERS Collective (Just, Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive) was born – a collaboration designed to accelerate progress across multiple independent organisations while inspiring others in the SME community to follow suit.

The Collective established a structured activity plan with tangible outcomes:

- Shared educational events tackling topics such as LGBTQIA+ inclusion, mental health awareness and gender equity.
- The JEDI Connections Programme, pairing mentors and mentees across companies for reciprocal learning, now connecting 55 individuals.
- Annual roundtables for DEI thought leadership within the SME sector.
- Shared training, started in 2025, with sessions on race & ethnicity and neurodiversity.
- A public resource hub and LinkedIn community to share best practice.

Plans With Purpose acts as the Collective's independent convener, ensuring accountability and alignment through regular governance meetings.

Outcome

The JEDI MATTERS Collective has grown to represent 300 employees across seven businesses and attracted interest from 30 other organisations keen to join. Its online community now has nearly 6,000 website visitors and 970 LinkedIn followers.

Early cultural impact is evident: one founder company saw employee survey results for 'This organisation values and celebrates diversity' rise from 71% to 87%, while its workplace recommendation score rose by 79 points among under-represented groups in one member company. The Connections Programme achieved an NPS of 8.44/10, with 9 in 10 participants planning to return.

The Collective's events have reached 352 attendees, sparking open dialogue and allyship across gender, neurodiversity and mental health.

At a time when DEI momentum risks slowing, the JEDI MATTERS Collective demonstrates that collaboration, not scale, is the key to sustaining progress. Together these SMEs are building an equitable blueprint for change across the business community.



Approach

Four founding organisations – Cawston Press, Pip & Nut, Lucky Saint and Anglepoise – began in 2023 by co-developing a shared mission and vision: to unite like-minded SMEs to build knowledge, accessible resources and a more equitable business landscape faster. In late 2024 three new members – Bold Bean Co, MOTH Drinks and Absolute Collagen – joined, expanding the group's diversity and reach.

“Seven SMEs turned shared purpose into shared progress, proving DEI isn't about size but about commitment.”

INTERNATIONAL

KERNEL SHOWS HOW CARE BUILDS STRENGTH, EVEN IN WARTIME

Background

What does inclusion look like in a time of war? For Kernel, it means care, dignity and opportunity for those who served.

Kernel is Ukraine's largest grain producer and exporter, a global leader in sunflower oil and a vital supplier of agricultural products to over 70 countries. When war reached its operating regions in 2014, and escalated in 2022, Kernel faced immense human and organisational challenges. Four of its 11 regions were partially occupied, more than 1,000 employees (10% of the workforce) joined the Ukrainian Defence Forces, 124 were injured and 63 lost their lives.

Recognising that the return to civilian life can be as difficult as military service itself, Kernel launched a comprehensive Veterans Adaptation Programme. The initiative supports veterans and their families through every stage, from mobilisation to rehabilitation and reintegration, while embedding inclusivity and respect for service across the company's culture.

The programme's goal was twofold: to ensure the long-term wellbeing and employability of veterans and to strengthen social cohesion by modelling inclusion in one of Ukraine's most important industries.

“Kernel's Veterans Adaptation Programme proves that real inclusion means standing beside people for the long term”

Approach

Kernel's programme combines practical support, psychological care and inclusive employment opportunities, guided by three principles: continuous support, adaptation and social integration.

The company provides financial aid, health services and constant communication to more users. Rehabilitation and retraining are integral: 39 veterans and 55 family members have completed rehabilitation and 25 roles have been specifically adapted for those with disabilities.

Psychological recovery is supported through diagnostics, therapy, self-regulation training and supervisor meetings. Dedicated Telegram groups for veterans and their families foster community and peer support, complemented by in-person gatherings and family events.

Kernel's partnership with SuperHumans, a leading



Ukrainian centre for prosthetics and rehabilitation, extends opportunities for training, internships and employment in agribusiness. Four veterans have featured in national campaigns promoting agriculture as a career path for returning service members.

The company also invests in education and awareness for all employees – more than 10,000 people trained in respectful communication and inclusion– using workshops, webinars and even theatre performances to promote empathy and understanding.

Outcome

To date 126 veterans have returned to work at Kernel, supported by more than 500 colleagues. Hospital visits have been made to 500 wounded veterans and 50,000 people have been reached through the programme's initiatives across 11 regions. Staff turnover among veterans is just 20%, far below the national average of 30%.

Kernel's sustained focus has strengthened trust, unity and purpose across its workforce. Veterans report improved confidence and economic stability while colleagues describe a more compassionate and inclusive culture.

Through its long-term, human-centred approach, Kernel has set a benchmark for inclusive employment in wartime and beyond, proving that true resilience is built on care, dignity and shared responsibility.

INTERNATIONAL

THE RISE OF PEOPLE-FIRST CULTURES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

How organisations are redefining leadership, talent and purpose in a region on the move

Over the past decade the Middle East has undergone a quiet revolution in how work gets done. What was once a region characterised by hierarchy, long working hours and top-down management has evolved into one of flexibility, innovation and people-first values. Five years ago culture was largely seen as an HR responsibility. Today it's a boardroom priority.

The UAE's adoption of a 4.5-day federal workweek in 2022 symbolised this shift, signalling a new era of balance, productivity and global alignment. Likewise, nationalisation efforts such as Emiratisation and Saudisation have moved from rhetoric to reality, reshaping recruitment and leadership pipelines. Inclusion, particularly gender inclusion, has accelerated: Saudi women's workforce participation has more than doubled since 2017. Organisations are realising that competitive advantage now lies in purpose, adaptability and employee engagement, not just capital.

Culture with local roots and global reach

Middle Eastern workplace culture is deeply shaped by tradition, relationships and community. Concepts such as 'wasta' – the informal network of influence – continue to shape collaboration. But progressive organisations are learning to balance this cultural glue with transparency and meritocracy. The collectivist mindset remains powerful, making belonging and shared purpose key drivers of performance.

The coexistence of nationalisation policies and a large expatriate workforce has created a uniquely dual talent dynamic.



Companies must nurture emerging national leaders while also retaining global expertise. Add to this a strong cultural emphasis on respect and hospitality and it's no surprise that employees in the region expect connection and trust as part of professional life.

From growth to greatness: The talent challenge

As Gulf economies diversify beyond oil, competition for talent has intensified. Organisations in the UAE and Saudi Arabia now lead teams spanning up to 100 nationalities. Cultural intelligence and emotional fluency have become must-have leadership traits. Hybrid work, once resisted, is now part of the landscape but maintaining cohesion across physical and digital spaces remains a challenge.

The next frontier is capability. Governments are investing heavily in AI readiness and lifelong learning. For employers that means building agile learning cultures and equipping leaders to manage both technology and trust. Inclusion and belonging are no longer optional, they're the operating system for growth.

INTERNATIONAL



Leadership in the age of transformation

Culture is now seen as a strategic enabler, not a ‘soft’ issue. From Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 to the UAE Centennial Plan 2071, national ambitions have put human capital at the centre of competitiveness. CEOs increasingly recognise that even the most sophisticated strategies fail without the right culture to execute them.

Digital transformation and AI have only reinforced this truth. Today’s leaders are expected to be cultural architects as much as strategists, designing environments where innovation, accountability and diversity thrive. Regulatory changes around labour law, hybrid work and nationalisation are turning culture into a measurable business priority, directly linked to reputation and results.

The future of culture in MENA

A truly award-winning culture in the Middle East balances purpose with performance, inclusivity with ambition and local authenticity with global standards. The best organisations turn national goals – like Emiratisation or Vision 2030 – into inspiring internal missions. They treat wellbeing and gender balance as investments, not expenses, and track cultural progress as seriously as financial KPIs.

The region’s competitive edge is increasingly human. Infrastructure and investment create opportunity but it’s culture that sustains growth. In the years ahead the organisations that win will be those that invest not just in strategy or systems but in the social fabric that makes both work.

Practical takeaways for HR and business leaders

- Embed national goals into organisational purpose to unite diverse teams.
- Invest in leadership development that builds emotional and cultural intelligence.
- Use AI adoption as a catalyst for upskilling and inclusion, not division.
- Measure cultural health with the same rigour as financial performance
- Lead with trust — it’s the foundation of innovation in hybrid and global teams.



By Premal Patel, Managing Partner



EMPLOYEE VOICE

SAMSIC, THE CLEANING FIRM WHERE
EMPLOYEES FOUND THEIR VOICE

Background

Cleaning and security services provider, Samsic UK embarked on a major cultural transformation in 2023 to become a truly people-centric organisation. The goal was clear: to connect employee satisfaction directly with client service excellence and retention in a sector often challenged by high turnover and low engagement.

Before this, transformation communication was inconsistent and largely one-way. Frontline employees – spread across six regional offices, client sites and varied shift patterns – had limited access to leaders or formal channels to share feedback. Recognition was sporadic and language barriers further limited inclusion. Samsic, which employs 4,300 people, needed to build psychological safety, ensuring that every employee felt heard, valued and confident to speak up.



Approach

The catalyst for change came through an anonymous Investor in Customers (IIC) survey in 2022, which highlighted the need for better communication and listening. This insight led to a new voice-to-action model, designed to give employees structured, transparent and ongoing opportunities to influence decisions.

Samsic reimagined its previously poorly attended company conferences as open forums for dialogue, where employees could submit questions anonymously or in person for leadership to address directly. A new Managing Director, Ian Leeding, led

“Through open dialogue and trust Samsic UK built a culture where employees don't just speak up, they shape what comes next”

by example, reinforcing the message that feedback is a gift.

The transformation extended through multiple initiatives, including the launch of a work council with nine representatives from frontline to management, trained to collect and communicate feedback constructively. Multilingual feedback channels were established with translated surveys, WhatsApp groups and newsletters to reach night-shift and non-English-speaking employees.

A podcast and poster campaign reinforced that employee input drives visible change, while the company introduced regular team meetings and recognition schemes, including long service and more than 680 outstanding service contribution awards given out in 2024.

Outcome

Staff turnover has dropped from 52% in 2022 to 30.1% in 2024, while average length of service increased from 3.5 to 4.7 years. Employee engagement scores rose from 7 to 8.27 and client satisfaction improved from 86% to 98%.

At the 2024 conference 96 employee-generated ideas were presented with 70 implemented in 2025, including greener cleaning chemicals, improved rota visibility and a new buddy system for new starters. Samsic's cultural framework has turned communication into collaboration, transforming a once top-down organisation into a bottom-up culture where employees drive improvement, innovation and pride.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

GOODBODY REIGNITES PRIDE THROUGH CONNECTION AND HERITAGE



Background

Goodbody, one of Ireland's longest-established financial services firms, embarked on a strategic internal communications transformation to re-energise its culture following a period of restructuring. With around 400 employees the challenge was to restore connection, engagement and pride across the organisation while strengthening alignment with parent company AIB and amplifying inclusion and wellbeing.

The internal communications team, just one person and part-time support, set out to reconnect employees with Goodbody's 150-year legacy while ensuring every person felt valued, informed and inspired about the future. The goal was to create a modern, transparent communications culture that celebrated the firm's heritage while embracing progress.

Approach

The 12-month strategy centred around five pillars: leadership visibility, engagement, inclusion and wellbeing, alignment with AIB and cultural revitalisation.

- **Leadership communication:** The team increased the frequency and impact of leadership touchpoints, including the CEO's Top of Mind monthly newsletter, achieving a 100% read rate, and the employee magazine Inside Goodbody, with 85% engagement. Town Halls increased from three to four per year, with attendance up 13%.
- **Engagement and celebration:** To mark the firm's 150th anniversary, the Our Shared Heritage campaign connected employees with Goodbody's

history through events, videos, articles and an artefact exhibition. Each employee also had a tree planted in their name to create a personal legacy.

- **Inclusion and wellbeing:** The Universal Inclusion Programme and charity partnerships delivered 13 inclusion events, covering neurodiversity, gender balance and Pride, alongside physical and financial wellbeing initiatives such as 5K runs, pension workshops and the launch of the Wellhub app.
- **Alignment with AIB:** Co-hosted events, including joint 'Celebrate Success' evenings, a combined summer BBQ and shared mentoring programmes helped foster a unified culture and strengthen collaboration.
- **Culture and connection:** The internal communications team reinvigorated the intranet (Goodbody Engage) into a hub of recognition and connection. Engagement soared, with 25% of users posting, eight times the industry average, and 46% of all posts now tagged to company values.

“ A renewed voice, a reconnected culture – Goodbody's internal comms strategy turned engagement into belonging ”

Outcome

The employee culture survey participation rate rose from 64% to 82%, with 76% of employees reporting positive satisfaction. Leadership scores improved across all areas, and the Gender Balance Network grew from 40 to 105 members in a year. More than 40 events were hosted, with 60% of employees attending the 150th anniversary celebrations and 95% visiting the heritage exhibition.

Goodbody's internal communications strategy has reignited pride, inclusion and connection across the firm, showing that even a small team can drive transformative cultural impact when communication sits at the heart of business strategy.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

BRITISH GAS PROVES CULTURE CHANGE REALLY IS A SCIENCE

Background

As one of the UK's best-known energy providers British Gas Energy faced a cultural challenge: how to shift its contact centre teams from a compliance-driven mindset focused on metrics to one centred on customer experience. The company's existing Quality Assurance (QA) model measured conduct, not outcomes, leading to low advocacy among frontline staff and inconsistent service.

To support the transition to its new '5 Steps to Customer Excellence' framework, developed with Cowry Consulting, British Gas needed a robust internal communications strategy that would realign employees behind a customer-first culture and empower Team Leaders to coach and embed new behaviours.

“British Gas proved that when science meets storytelling, culture change sticks – turning compliance into genuine customer care”

Approach

Cowry designed a behaviourally-informed communications strategy using the Transtheoretical Model of behaviour change, guiding employees through five stages: Pre-Contemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action and Maintenance. Each communication was purpose-built to match employees' stage in the journey, helping them understand, prepare for and adopt the new QA model.

Every element of the strategy incorporated principles of behavioural science, such as commitment devices. Senior leaders acted as visible advocates for the change, using consistent, evidence-based messaging.

Key interventions included:

- Behaviourally designed emails from executives and Team Leaders, framing benefits, timelines and checklists, tailored to specific audiences.
- Co-creation workshops and expert sessions to uncover operational pain points and anchor communications in real employee experience.
- Virtual Talk Series exploring customer-centric culture, the science of learning and how to make behavioural change stick.

- Better Coaching training for 200 Team Leaders, developing capability to embed the new model.
- Structured feedback loops through Q&A sessions and engagement metrics, ensuring transparent two-way communication.

Outcome

The integrated communications and coaching approach supported both behavioural and operational transformation. Attendance at the six-part Talk Series exceeded 100 participants per session while feedback described the content as “exactly what we needed.”

Among other operational initiatives, the communication approach contributed to the following benefits:

- 30-point increase in contact centre resolutions
- 17-point (85%) rise in NPS
- Employee engagement up from 9.0 to 9.5, a notable improvement from an already high base

The success lies not just in the numbers but in the shift in mindset. Team Leaders now coach for outcomes rather than metrics, frontline staff see their work through the customer's eyes and British Gas has embedded a model for sustaining culture change through communication, science and empathy.



EMPLOYEE VOICE

SUPPORTING BELLWAY'S EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT JOURNEY

Background

In 2020, ETS were invited to design the first ever Bellway engagement survey. The aim was to gain insights and robust data that would help Bellway to create a culture where colleagues feel psychologically safe and that their voice is heard.

A key marker of success for Bellway was advocacy; having their colleagues recommend Bellway as a great place to work was the ultimate goal. Achieving this would have many strategic benefits including retaining the best people, delivering a quality customer experience and continuing to challenge how things are done in the sector.



Approach

ETS engaged with key stakeholders to build a picture of the current internal landscape (business and people) and the latest industry context to facilitate the capture of highly relevant data.

The confidential methodology and agreed minimum reporting numbers ensured colleagues would feel safe to speak up.

Later analysis of survey results delivered insights on key topics including:

1. EDI, providing Bellway with clarity on the experiences of colleagues from diverse backgrounds
2. Performance and development, giving Bellway the baseline data highlighting the importance of quarterly performance discussions which led to their investment in an online performance management platform
3. Belonging, providing a focussed lens on new joiners, to understand their experience at Bellway and whether they were getting the support they needed.

Following the successful embedding of the annual all-colleague survey, and informed by ETS recommendations to evolve and improve it each year, Bellway has delivered several additional internal channels and forums to create a comprehensive employee voice programme.

Following the successful embedding of the annual all-colleague survey, and informed by ETS recommendations to evolve and improve it each year, Bellway has delivered several additional internal channels and forums to create a comprehensive employee voice programme.

These have included:

- 'Pathway' – A mobile app to enable colleagues to stay connected & updated
- Employee Listening Groups which meet quarterly to discuss issues and ideas around the colleague experience
- Balance Network – A colleague-led group, focussing on wellbeing and equity
- 'Bricking It' – Bellway's colleague-led podcast
- 'Mi Experience' – An online portal supporting the delivery of regular and high quality 121 conversations

Outcome

Bellway has been successful in identifying and taking actions that have had a measurable impact on things including:

- Engagement overall (93%)
- Intention to stay (94%)
- 'Recommending Bellway as a great place to work' - the ultimate goal of this programme, which increased by +4% points (91%)

Over this journey, they have also seen the proportion of female colleagues increase from 30% to 34% - a key strategic focus as part of Bellway's 'Women into Home Building' programme.

Business Impact:

- Employee turnover at 13.7% - significantly ahead of Bellway's 18% target
- 10+ years' service increased from 16% to 20% of workforce
- 94% of customers would 'recommend Bellway to a friend'

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

PATRON CAPITAL'S WOMEN IN SAFE HOMES FUND REDEFINES RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT

Background

Pan-European investor Patron Capital operates on the principle of doing social good with every business action. This philosophy inspired one of its most ambitious and pioneering projects, the Women in Safe Homes fund, created in partnership with Resonance. The fund addresses the urgent need for safe, secure accommodation for women and children escaping domestic abuse, homelessness and other complex challenges.

The scale of the problem is profound. In 2024, 1.6 million women in the UK experienced domestic abuse and 60% of homeless adults in temporary accommodation were women. Recognising that traditional property models were failing vulnerable groups, Patron set out to redefine responsible investment, deploying capital for measurable social change.

The fund aims to create 122 homes for more than 1,000 women, using a gender-lens investment strategy that aligned financial returns with life-changing outcomes.



Approach

Patron combined social purpose with rigorous business discipline. Working with housing and charity partners, it identified and refurbished properties across the UK to high environmental standards. These homes are leased to partners who provide secure tenancies and wraparound support, helping women rebuild their lives with dignity and stability.

A defining feature is its all-women advisory board – the first of its kind in an impact investment fund – bringing together experts from the women's sector and those with lived experience of homelessness to ensure decisions reflect the realities of those the fund serves.

Sustainability is built in, with properties upgraded from EPC D/E to A–C, cutting energy use and bills. An annual impact report produced with Resonance measures outcomes across five principles: recognising women's oppression, aligned investment, appropriate scaling, empowerment and inspiration. Seeded with £1m from Patron's Managing Director Keith Breslauer and £1.5m in anchor funding, the fund has now attracted over £29m from 20 investors, including Comic Relief and Barrow Cadbury Trust.

Outcome

As of November 2025, the fund has provided safe homes for more than 650 women and children. Some 96% of tenants say their home meets their needs and 96% said their home helped them access the support they need. The fund has achieved its target of 122 properties, with 94% now rated EPC C or above.

The fund's structure also strengthens its charity partners' resilience, enabling them to scale services sustainably. Ella's, for instance, has opened a third safe home in London.

Patron has proven that social purpose and financial performance can coexist. The Women in Safe Homes fund is now a model for impact investing that empowers women, builds community resilience and sets a new benchmark for responsible business.

“From capital to care, Patron turned investment into impact, creating safe, sustainable homes for women and children across the UK.”

WELLBEING & BELONGING

WHEN HAPPINESS BECAME XPS'S MOST PROFITABLE INVESTMENT

Background

What happens when a company decides happiness should be more than a survey score? For XPS Pensions Group it meant turning feedback into a movement that put belonging, wellbeing and joy at the heart of everyday work.

FTSE-250 pension consulting and administration firm XPS already had an award-winning culture but its 2023 Employee Engagement Survey highlighted three key areas that could still improve: belonging, health and wellbeing, and happiness at work. While overall engagement was positive, employees cited disconnection caused by remote work, uncertainty around wellbeing resources and a need for more opportunities to connect and celebrate success.

XPS set out to turn this feedback into action, making meaningful cultural improvements that would deepen connection, enhance wellbeing and ensure that happiness became a lived part of its culture.

Approach

In 2023, the Office Head role was revitalised to strengthen community spirit through regular communications and social events. Across 2024–25 offices were empowered to host local initiatives such as Pride celebrations, culture days and mental health activities. These events fostered inclusivity, visibility and shared purpose across locations.

Recognising that employees were unsure how to access support for wellbeing, XPS ran a communication campaign clarifying confidential

help channels and resources. New partnerships included Me and My Menopause, providing personalised guidance to employees, while a Movember campaign raised £5,000 while promoting men's mental health. The XPS Wellness Hour introduced quarterly wellbeing themes such as resilience and stress management, supported by webinars, resources and expert-led sessions.

The company doubled paid parental leave and launched coaching programmes to support employees before and after time away. Flexible working stories were shared internally to normalise different approaches to work-life balance. To celebrate success XPS hosted annual summer parties, the Values in Practice Awards, and introduced Virgin Experience Day vouchers for every colleague when the company entered the FTSE 250 in 2024.

“By putting belonging, wellbeing and happiness first XPS proved that when people thrive business follows”

Outcome

Employee satisfaction scores were already in the 60s but focusing on these areas has made a significant difference. Happiness jumped from 62% to 79%, belonging is up from 62% to 76% and 89% rate XPS as a good place to work (up from 78%). Turnover dropped to 11.7% (down 3.3 points year-on-year) and Glassdoor ratings improved across all measures, with overall satisfaction rising to 4.25 and a CEO approval rating of 99.5%.

XPS has created a culture defined by belonging, wellbeing and happiness and shown that, when people feel supported and connected, performance and loyalty follow.



WELLBEING

DFDS PROVES WELLBEING DRIVES BUSINESS SUCCESS

Background

DFDS UK & Ireland, part of the leading European transport and logistics group, employs more than 4,000 colleagues across ferry and logistics operations. Following the pandemic and a period of rapid expansion the organisation recognised an urgent need to strengthen its approach to health, safety and wellbeing.

Colleague feedback revealed a desire for greater inclusiveness, stronger support networks and a culture where people felt genuinely valued. As DFDS continued to grow, the link between wellbeing, performance and engagement became clear: creating a healthy, inclusive environment wasn't just good for people but essential for business success.

In January 2024, DFDS launched its Wellbeing, Diversity, Equality and Inclusiveness (W-DEI) strategy – a unified framework designed to promote physical, emotional, financial and social wellbeing while embedding inclusion into every aspect of company culture.

“DFDS turned wellbeing from a benefit into a business strategy, cutting absence, lifting engagement and driving £150m in new growth”

Approach

Built on the principles of awareness, listening and leading with purpose, the W-DEI strategy combines wellbeing and inclusion into a single framework, recognising that belonging and psychological safety are inseparable from health and happiness.

A year-round wellbeing calendar focuses on quarterly themes across mental, physical, financial and social wellbeing, supported by more than 50 Culture Champions who promote engagement across sites. Managers have been trained through mental health workshops to reduce stigma and lead with empathy, while the 'Boost' digital platform gives colleagues 24/7 access to counselling, financial advice and health resources.

A new occupational health partnership provides proactive, data-led support and early intervention.

Inclusive, gamified DEI workshops for all 4,500 colleagues have been described as “life-changing”, helping employees explore bias, behaviour and respect. Awareness campaigns, from Mental Health Awareness Week to World Mental Health Day, were supported by wellbeing zones and leader role-modelling to sustain visibility and momentum.

Outcome

The impact has been both cultural and commercial. Health-related absence dropped by 35% and positive drug and alcohol test results fell from 10.3% to 3.0% within a year. DFDS's Glassdoor rating climbed to 4.2/5, with 88% recommending it as a great place to work, and employee survey scores improved by 10%, with wellbeing cited as a key strength.

Wellbeing is now a proven growth driver: new business wins worth £150m have cited the framework as a differentiator while the success of the UK & Ireland model has led to global adoption across DFDS Group's 17,000 colleagues.

For DFDS wellbeing has become a cultural mindset that fuels engagement, trust and performance across the business.



WORKING ENVIRONMENTS & PRACTICES

TMX TRAYPORT TRANSFORMS AN OFFICE MOVE INTO A BLUEPRINT FOR HYBRID CONNECTION AND CULTURE

Background

TMX Trayport, an energy technology platform supporting around 80% of wholesale power and gas trading in Europe, employs more than 400 people across offices in London, Germany, Austria and Singapore. When the lease on its London headquarters was due to expire in 2025, the business seized the opportunity to redefine how its teams work, connect and collaborate.

While hybrid working had been introduced during the pandemic, only 34% of employees were consistently meeting the policy. The dated office design no longer reflected TMX Trayport's culture of innovation or its growth ambitions. Leadership set a bold vision: not just to relocate but to create a hybrid-first workplace that inspires connection, collaboration, wellbeing and performance.

Approach

Internally known as Project Tango, the initiative was led by a cross-functional team with a clear people-first strategy, balancing business needs with employee experience and ensuring that staff shaped the outcome at every stage.

A network of Office Champions represented every department, influencing decisions from monitor configurations to personal storage, while generating excitement and acting as a powerful feedback loop. Regular, open communication kept momentum high through bi-weekly leadership updates, intranet hubs, video tours and farewell celebrations that built emotional connection.

The new London office was designed around purposeful hybrid work, featuring 21% more desks, flexible zones for quiet focus, collaboration and socialising, and an 8,000 sq ft roof terrace, ideal for entertaining clients and staff, and celebrating success. This space also promotes wellbeing and connection on a daily basis, with outdoor space to relax or meet. Advanced AV systems and upgraded



meeting spaces enabled seamless collaboration across the globe. The two-week relocation was completed with zero business disruption, supported by detailed planning, remote-work coordination and personal welcome tours on arrival.

“TMX Trayport's Project Tango proved that hybrid working is about more than flexibility – it's about designing spaces and experiences that make people come together”

Outcome

Delivered on time and within budget, Project Tango transformed engagement, collaboration and culture. Hybrid policy adoption rose from 34% to 56%, and 75% of employees described the move as a positive experience. Employee engagement increased by 3.2%, and

75% would recommend TMX Trayport as a great place to work – a 6.3 percentage-point year-on-year rise.

Attendance and participation reached record levels, including 250 attendees at the first post-move employee event, while the new space enabled a 9% expansion of the London Development team within four months.

Project Tango turned an office relocation into a cultural transformation, strengthening belonging, supporting hybrid working and positioning TMX Trayport for the future.

BUSINESS CULTURE TEAMS

CULTURE IS EVERYONE'S JOB AT ATKINSRÉALIS

Background

AtkinsRéalis' Nuclear EMEA division, a team of 1,800 professionals across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, operates in one of the world's most complex and safety-critical industries. As the business expanded internationally, leaders recognised that recruiting and retaining the right individuals would require a culture where people felt valued, confident and connected across geographies.

Under the guidance of Caroline Brown, Behaviour and Culture Director, and Emily Hutchinson, Chartered Occupational Psychologist, the organisation created a long-term strategy to embed a positive, strengths-based culture that could scale with the business. To meet rising demand for strengths-based coaching and culture programmes, and to extend ownership beyond the leadership team, Caroline launched the Behaviour and Culture Facilitators (BCF) network in 2022.

Approach

The BCF team began as a pilot group of 12 diverse and committed employees, selected via applications from different regions, functions and grades. Each was trained and accredited as a practitioner in Strengths Profile by Cappfinity, enabling them to work with individuals and teams, bringing a positive psychology approach. The BCFs also facilitate workshops and act as culture ambassadors right across the business both internally and for clients.

By 2024, the programme had expanded to a 30-strong network. Together the BCFs championed initiatives that have reshaped how the Nuclear

“Leading Our Culture isn't a programme at AtkinsRéalis Nuclear EMEA, but a movement powered by 1,800 people's curiosity, care, courage, and community”

sector of AtkinsRéalis works, including strengths-based coaching where more than 480 individual debriefs and 70 workshops have helped colleagues and clients understand and apply their strengths, improving motivation, collaboration and self-awareness. A 10-month 'Leading Our Culture' blended learning journey combining six virtual and one in-person event, introduced psychological safety, positive leadership and the commercial value of culture.

Appreciative Inquiry workshops help teams define shared purpose, identify best practices and strengthen cross-boundary collaboration while BCFs partner with staff networks such as EMBRACE (Ethnic Minority Group), the Neurodiversity group, and Women in Nuclear to ensure intersectional inclusion and belonging.

Outcome

The BCF network has delivered measurable impact at every level. Retention increased to over 90% in 2024, employee engagement rose three points to 83% and collaboration, knowledge-sharing and development scores all improved. Leading Our Culture participants reported 90% intent to change behaviour, while 100% of strengths coaching participants felt able to be open and honest, with 95% gaining new insights and 91% applying their strengths more effectively.

The network's success has extended beyond the business: The BCFs are now helping even more clients address behavioural and cultural challenges, while formalising their work through a new Evolving Our Culture programme, Culture Onboarding and a Culture Book capturing best practice and legacy.



LEADERSHIP

FANVUE'S FOUNDERS REDEFINE MODERN LEADERSHIP IN THE CREATOR-AI ECONOMY

Background

Founded in 2020 during lockdown by 22-year-old entrepreneurs William Monange and Joel Morris, Fanvue set out to transform the creator economy with a platform that enables creators to monetise their work directly and sustainably. The duo faced the challenge of building a high-growth technology business while creating a culture capable of inspiring senior professionals and nurturing innovation at speed.

From its early “creator-first” stage to today’s AI-driven global platform, Fanvue’s growth has been extraordinary, expanding from 15 to 82 employee and increasing monthly turnover by 1,457% between 2023 and 2025. Yet the defining story of Fanvue is not its rapid rise but how its founders built a people-centric, purpose-led culture that fuels it.



Approach

William and Joel’s philosophy is simple: share the vision, empower brilliant people and move fast with integrity. From day one they embedded five cultural pillars that define how Fanvue thinks, acts and grows: executing with excellence, taking ownership, delivering value fast, innovating aggressively and promoting honesty and transparency. This framework shapes every decision, from hiring to performance, communication and recognition.

Both founders remain deeply involved in day-to-day culture-building, personally joining every interview and hosting fortnightly All-Hands meetings where progress and setbacks are shared candidly.

It’s unusual for a high-growth organisation to give every member of their team full visibility over

“At just 22, William Monange and Joel Morris built a culture of trust, agility and ownership that powered Fanvue from start-up to global leader in the AI creator economy”

projection and challenges at granular level, but it’s been one of the key’s to Fanvue’s success.

Fanvue regularly host standup sessions where any member of the team is free to anonymously ask questions direct to the Founders to be addressed in front of the whole company, which has also fostered a productive culture of truth and transparency. While some business Founders choose to limit difficult dialogue on a company level, Fanvue thrives on it.

Fanvue’s hyper growth has been largely attributed to a safe and supportive culture whereby employees are encouraged to take bold bets, meaning that potentially business-defining moves can be tested, iterated and implemented at speed without excessive red tape and process. If it doesn’t work, no problem - “reassess, learn and go again”, say the Founders.

Outcome

Fanvue is now the fastest-growing AI creator monetisation platform, with 8 million users worldwide. It was named a *Sunday Times* Best Place to Work (2024), scoring 92% confidence in management, 93% job empowerment and 91% employee pride.

Under William and Joel’s leadership, Fanvue has become not only a commercial success but also a model for how transparency, inclusion and empowerment can thrive in a high-growth tech environment. Their focus on purpose driven leadership continues to inspire both their team and the wider creator economy.



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What does it really mean to be a “better” leader?

A “better” leader. How often have you thought that you, or your own manager, need to be a better leader?

But what does “better” actually look like?

This is what new research from Hult Ashridge Executive Education, in association with Hult International Business School, set out to discover.

Drawing on the voices of 350 participants across industries, regions, and organizational levels, the research looks beyond abstract ideals to discover what “better” really means.



Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.

– John F. Kennedy



HULT ASHRIDGE
EXECUTIVE EDUCATION



The better leaders paradox

In the pursuit of “better”, there is no end point. The moment we arrive at one horizon, another appears. This is the paradox of “better” leaders.

Better leadership is not about perfection. It is a lifelong process of learning.

When we recognize the dynamic and evolving nature of “better”, we enable people to become more adaptive, more human, and, ultimately, more impactful leaders.

This report identifies six critical shifts that define better leadership today – and what they mean for leadership development today.

Read the full report to discover:

- The skills, mindsets, and behaviors associated with “better” leadership
- Six critical shifts for leadership
- Practical implications for organizations

Ultimately, better leadership is not a destination but a journey. Organizations committing to this journey will not only meet the challenges of the future, but also shape workplaces where both people and performance can thrive.

The Six Shifts: What “Better” Leadership Really Means

[→ Click to read the full report](#)

or scan the QR code to the right



ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

THE DATA-DRIVEN MODEL TRANSFORMING
OD ACROSS 12,000 STAFF AT MERSEY CARE

Background

Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust delivers community and mental health services, alongside specialist secure care, across 100+ sites in Cheshire and Merseyside. Following the pandemic, the Trust expanded rapidly from 7,000 to 12,000 staff through acquisitions and service redesign.

This growth brought complexity and demand for organisational development (OD) support soared. The Organisational Effectiveness (OE) Team had invested in team based working methodologies and expertise, and was trusted by senior leaders to provide high quality interventions which were risk assessed and managed on a case by case. The team needed a centralised way of understanding the needs across a complex organisation and ensure that interventions were consistent and maximised limited resources.

The challenge: to create a sustainable, transparent model to manage OD demand, embed accountability and maximise impact across a large, complex workforce.

Approach

The Trust developed a pioneering OE Triage Model, a data-driven framework to prioritise, track and evaluate OD interventions based on risk, complexity and strategic alignment. Co-designed with clinical and support service leaders, the model ensures every intervention delivers measurable value and supports the Trust's long-term goals.

Key components include a live database mapping all requests to capacity, progress and outcomes to enable

evidence-based decision-making. There is also a five-level risk scale and four-tier intervention framework to ensure consistent, proportionate responses from self-serve resources to full practitioner-led consultancy, plus weekly cross-functional meetings that allocate cases by need, risk and practitioner development goals.

The team also introduced standardised templates, evaluation tools and case conferences that ensure quality, accountability and escalation routes across services plus a buddying and CPD system that grows internal expertise and reduces reliance on external consultants.

The model aligns OD to transformation programmes while addressing immediate team risks.

“Mersey Care’s data-driven model turned complexity into clarity, empowering leaders and improving team culture across 12,000 staff”

Outcome

In its first year 166 interventions were logged, with 84% triaged and measurable improvement across leadership, engagement and cohesion. Risk scores fell by up to three levels, manager satisfaction averaged 4.8/5 and cost savings of £67,800 were achieved versus outsourcing.

Mersey Care now ranks among the NHS's top trusts for staff experience – third in England for ‘shared objectives’ and second for ‘constructive conflict resolution’. Engagement scores rose from 3.5 to 4.2 across reconfigured services, reflecting improved performance, financial outcomes and team health. The OE Triage Model has transformed OD from reactive to proactive, a unified, data-led system powering leadership, patient safety and quality improvement across the Trust.

MEDIATION

INSIDE MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY: TURNING CONFLICT INTO COLLABORATION

Background

With more than 12,000 academic and professional services staff, the University of Manchester is one of the UK's largest higher education institutions. Like many universities it faced a challenge: traditional grievance processes often prolonged conflict, focusing on blame over resolution. Cases could take months, creating stress, damaging relationships and eroding trust.

The University recognised that formal procedures alone were not building the open, inclusive culture it aspired to. The goal was to create a new approach that resolved issues earlier, restored relationships and fostered fairness and belonging across its community.

Approach

In partnership with workplace relationship specialists CMP the University launched an in-house mediation service in 2022, reframing mediation as a first resort for resolving tensions rather than a last step in disciplinary action.

Twelve mediators were recruited from across academic and professional services teams, spanning senior and junior levels, to ensure credibility, diversity and representation. They completed CMP's accredited Professional Workplace Mediator Programme, alongside tailored role-play and coaching to prepare for the unique dynamics of higher education.

The service launched in January 2024, supported by a communications campaign promoting early mediation as an 'ordinary' part of a healthy workplace culture. Line managers and HR partners

were trained to recognise early signs of conflict and to refer cases promptly.

To ensure sustainability the University built in clear governance and professional development, including a rapid response model whereby mediators respond within 48 hours of a referral, with two mediators assigned to every case for balance and mutual support. Quarterly review meetings with CMP ensure best practice and specialist training in areas such as neurodiversity deepens mediator skill.

A further 12 mediators were trained by early 2025 and now the total pool has reached 30.

“By making mediation a first resort the University of Manchester created a culture of resolution, belonging and shared responsibility”

Outcome

Between January 2024 and April 2025, 55 mediation cases were handled with an 82% success rate for informal resolution. Average case duration dropped from 125 to 39 days, saving significant time and stress.

Participants rated the experience 4.06/5 overall and 82% of those off sick due to conflict returned to work. The 2025 Staff Survey showed belonging rose to 70%, surpassing the Russell Group average, while demand for mediator training has tripled.

What began as a mediation service is evolving into a restorative justice culture focusing on repairing harm, fostering accountability and learning from conflict – a lasting shift toward openness, trust and shared responsibility.



CULTURE DEFINITION

UNIFIED PURPOSE: FROM TRIBALISM TO ONE FUTUREMEDS

Background

By 2023, FutureMeds had grown rapidly across Europe expanding to 15 clinical research sites in five countries via acquisitions and internal developments. While this growth delivered scale and reach, it introduced a significant risk: every site had its own legacy culture, local habits and informal ways of working. The organisation's people were starting to identify more with their local "tribes" than with a shared company identity. This siloed environment threatened consistency of employee experience, quality, and ultimately the company's ability to operate as a unified network delivering high-standard clinical research.

The leadership recognised that growth without cohesion could undermine performance, patient experience, and brand integrity. The company embarked on forging a shared identity and a framework for a living, breathing culture that would align 500+ employees under common values, and support long-term ambition to increase patient access to innovative treatments worldwide.

Approach

FutureMeds assembled a small, cross-functional taskforce, led by our Executive VP of Operations and including representatives from operations, brand, and marketing to align the executive team around a unified vision for what kind of culture FutureMeds should represent.

Next, they turned to their people. Between 2023 and 2024, they conducted a series of qualitative interviews, focus groups and feedback rounds across all 15 sites and every level of seniority. Team members shared their views on what worked, what didn't and what kind of values would resonate across geographies.

Using this insight, the taskforce co-designed their cultural framework that has been launched in Q2 2024. This framework articulated how the teams work

“The Progress P.A.C.T. gave 500 employees across five countries a shared promise, turning culture into connection and purpose into performance”

together, tying daily behaviours to their purpose of delivering life-changing research.

As part of the activation, each research site received a Culture Pack and elected local Culture Captains. These Captains, in partnership with site leadership, led discussions, workshops and team-building activities supported by dedicated Culture Funds.

Outcome

By early 2025, indicators showed significant and positive culture shifts:

- Employee survey results indicated a strong increase in sense of belonging; many who once identified primarily with their local site started to speak of “One FutureMeds.”
- Voluntary turnover has decreased; internal referrals have increased; and 58 employees were promoted in 2024, reflecting both retention and talent growth.
- Cross-site collaboration has doubled: teams in different countries were sharing best practices, mentoring across borders, and collaborating on projects, behaviours that were rare before the culture framework.
- Client feedback supported this shift: clients noted improved consistency in both performance and quality across sites, regardless of location. Which in turn, strengthened the company's competitive position and enabled new strategic partnerships.

Beyond people metrics, the cultural alignment work became a cornerstone to the next growth chapter of the organisation.





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