



# HIGH PERFORMANCE INSIGHTS 2021

Curated by   
**LEADING  
EDGE**

The way we work has changed forever.  
From the locker-room to the boardroom,  
organisations around the world have changed  
immensely in the wake of the global pandemic.

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# Contributor biographies

Senior leaders from across some of the most recognisable global organisations



## Tracy Layney

Tracy Layney is the Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer at Levi Strauss & Co. She leads LS&Co.'s global people strategy, overseeing recruitment, employee engagement, talent management, HR technology and HR communications. She also serves on the Board of HR People & Strategy, the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) executive network.



## Phil Church

Phil Church is the Senior Professional Game Coach Development Lead at The Football Association. He has more than 14 years of experience in professional football coaching and graduated with an MSc in Research Science, Sports and Exercise from Greenwich. Phil's background includes a three-year stint at Norwich City F.C, where he acted as Head of Coaching during a period that saw the team promoted to the Premier League.



## Fraser Longden

Fraser Longden is the Chief Operations Officer at home improvement retailer Wickes. He joined the company as HR Director in September 2014 after 14 years at rival DIY group Kingfisher. Fraser recently oversaw Wickes' demerger with its former parent company and subsequent launch on the London Stock Exchange. Wickes reported a 45.7% rise in like-for-like sales in the first five months of this year.



## Kirsty Lawrence

Kirsty Lawrence is HR Director at TUI Airline. She has two decades of experience in industrial relations and human resources, today leading the HR function across all European airline activities at the world's largest tourism firm. Kirsty specialises in organisational development, change leadership, and UK and European labour relations. Recent projects include overseeing TUI's transformation into an integrated airline operation.



## Seth Ellison

Seth Ellison is the Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer at Levi Strauss & Co. Joining in 2012 to lead the Dockers® brand, today, Seth heads up the clothing company's global commercial strategy across international markets. He has spent three decades in senior leadership roles, having grown a catalogue of top apparel brands, including Hurley, Nike, Original Penguin, Speedo, and Quicksilver.



## Warren Scarr

Warren Scarr is the Chief Operating Officer at hair and beauty supplies firm Sally Europe. Two decades of marketing and leadership experience has seen him work on a comprehensive portfolio of roles in the consumer goods sector, including directorships of customer insights. Warren also has a vast knowledge of format development, advertising and communications.

# Contributor biographies



## David Court

David Court is a Player Identification Lead at The England and Wales Cricket Board, the game's sole governing body. A former professional cricketer, David has a successful track record in developing elite sports talent, including three years at The Football Association delivering programmes to sporting directors. Today, he heads up a team of talent scouts, using rich analysis to support selections for England, England Lions and England Young Lions.



## Louise Tait

Louise Tait is Head of HR, Talent and Organisational Development at Wickes. She has more than two decades' experience supporting and heading up HR functions across retail and financial services. Louise is passionate about working with leadership at all levels, investing in multi-disciplinary HR teams and growing modern, flexible workforces.



## Ian Leman

Ian Leman is Owner and Director at Performance Edge. Ian served 12 years in the UK military, heading elite teams on intelligence operations, including defence liaison work in the Middle East and South-East Asia. He also provided training to future armed forces leaders. Today, Ian uses his expertise in unlocking high performance to advise global sports teams and FTSE 100 companies – among others – on how to develop competitive advantages.



## Chris Musgrove

Chris Musgrove is Owner and Director at Performance Edge. Over a decade-long career in the UK military, Chris conducted operations at land and sea in environments where legal and cultural circumstances are complex. Later he taught leadership and communication matters at a prestigious armed forces training academy. Today, Chris is a qualified Spotlight practitioner and provides innovative solutions for organisational challenges with human data.



## Helen Richardson-Walsh MBE

Helen Richardson-Walsh MBE is a Performance Psychologist. A former professional hockey player with almost 300 caps at international level for England and GB, she led the team to Olympic Gold with one of two decisive penalties in the 2016 Summer Olympics final. Today, Helen uses her on-pitch experience in psychology coaching. Not only does she work closely with Tottenham Hotspur Women, but Helen advises clients at Leading Edge on how to deliver strong leadership and high performance.



## Damian Guha

Damian Guha is Managing Director, UK and Ireland, at food goods company Upfield. He has over 20 years' experience in brand, marketing, sales, and strategy across major consumer enterprises. Following Upfield's 2018 split with former parent Unilever, Damian is overseeing a brand repositioning towards the plant-based and sustainable foods market, which includes a €50 million investment in R&D.

# Contributor biographies



## Elena Cortés

Elena Cortés is an EU Strategic Sourcing Director for foods giant MARS. At just 25, Elena served as the Operations Manager for a factory of 300 workers and has since accrued 19 years' experience in consumer goods company leadership. That includes 14 years in strategic sourcing, supply chain planning and purchasing. Elena's current role combines her extensive experience as a business partner with deep knowledge of pet care division operations.



## Jenny Coe

Jenny Coe is a former international basketball player and coach, currently acting as Head of Performance and Well-being at West Ham United FC Women's. She's passionate about developing elite female athletes and aiding them to deal with high-pressure scenarios. Since completing an MSc in Sports and Exercise Psychology in 2012, Jenny has worked as a sports psychologist, performance analyst and coach developer for organisations like GAA and UK Coaching.



## Di Lewis

Di Lewis is the National Talent Manager for the Women's and Girls' Pathway at the England and Wales Cricket Board. As a former Wales U21 Netball player and performance pathway manager, Di connects more than 700 cricket clubs nationwide that offer the sport to women and girls. In her role, she takes the lead on identifying and developing talented grassroots youngsters.



## Sue Sweem

Sue Sweem is the Chief People Officer at the international nutrition group Glanbia Performance Nutrition. She has over 20 years' experience in global human resources management across major industries, including healthcare, chemicals, and consumer goods manufacturing. Sue holds a PhD in organisation development with a research focus on talent management and employee engagement. She also specialises in mergers and acquisitions, having coordinated 15 of these successfully over her career.

# Foreword

## The future of high-performance

The way we work has changed forever. From the locker-room to the boardroom, organisations around the world have changed immensely in the wake of the global pandemic. In a number of cases, it acted as a catalyst by rapidly increasing the speed at which we adopted certain 'inevitable' advancements, such as flexible working. In others, it caused a fundamental break in the way we approach work altogether. 'Business as usual' is no longer business as usual.

Through the multitude of complex challenges organisations have had to struggle with over the past two-years, some haven't just survived: they've thrived. Others have simply managed to maintain a holding pattern, and are now getting ready to 'go-again' in 2022, others again have accelerated their growth, scale and performance exponentially.

These organisations were, or are now, uniquely prepared to embrace change, adapt to new ways of working, and accelerate their high performance to prosper through the pandemic.

In a bid to better understand how these high-performance organisations manage to adapt, overcome, and prosper, we researched 250+ industry leaders across accountancy, business, consulting, management, engineering, healthcare, technology, and sport.

Further, to support and underpin this work, the Leading Edge team engaged with senior leaders across some of the most recognisable global and high-performance organisations including Levi Strauss & Co, Mars, Jaguar Land Rover, Sally Beauty, West Ham United, England and Wales Cricket Board, and The FA.

Through this extensive research project, we have identified five key drivers which we believe are core contributors to high-performance success, detail why they're important, and understand how leaders can adopt them in their own organisations.

This report aims to give your whole organisation the insights to achieve high performance for 2022 and beyond.

- LEADING EDGE

# Hardwiring belonging

Supercharging your Diversity & Inclusion strategy to create sustainable success



# A huge opportunity (...you're probably missing)

## Progress is being made with Diversity & Inclusion programmes

Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) have been widely discussed in organisations over the last few years, and many have already made great strides in this area. Workplace inequalities exposed by #MeToo, BLM, and COVID-19 have, thankfully, forced organisations to address glaring issues in their practices.



# The biggest mistakes your competitors keep making

## Most organisations still aren't doing nearly enough

1 in 10 say their D&I is still a “gesture” and nearly 1 in 7 admit to being “reactive, rather than proactive” when it comes to driving change.

Driven by a desire to not fall foul of employment law, too many organisations are still facing into the D&I agenda with a ‘protection’ lens.

Our research also showed great support for organisations which aimed to “Reflect our customer group and their demands” – one of the top 5 advantages cited in our survey. But that still sits at the ‘foundational’ end of truly recognising the benefits of embracing D&I.

In fact, the number 1 barrier to developing the necessary culture change is a fundamental lack of understanding of the benefits D&I actually bring.

As a result, many organisations don't know what to do or how to do it and – in their panic to ‘do something’ – end up focusing solely on creating ‘special interest groups’ and, often, devolving responsibility for change to those groups to champion.

**1 in 10**

say D&I is still a “gesture”

**#01**

barrier is a lack of understanding of D&I's benefits

“Feeling like part of the group may sound inclusive, but if I have to conform or change to be included, this is not true inclusion.”

'Inclusion and Diversity in Work Groups: A Review and Model for Future Research' Shore et al., October 2010

# The #1 change to D&I you can make right now

## High-performance organisations adopt a different approach: Hardwiring Belonging

Our research has found that high-performance organisations not only understand the benefits that D&I afford them, but have been able to build on their success in this area, taking it even further by cultivating 'belonging' so that it becomes hardwired.

## Hardwiring Belonging

The practice of recognising, applying, and valuing the unique contribution of individuals, whilst enabling them to reach their full potential in a diverse and inclusive team environment.

# The shift from D&I to belonging

Nearly 90% of professionals we spoke to recognise there is a distinct difference between 'Diversity & Inclusion' and 'belonging' but, as we have seen already, a fundamental lack of understanding of its benefits is the main barrier to adoption.

It might also account for why nearly half (46%) of those we asked said 'belonging' is a low priority or not even on their agenda.

“Discourse around D&I rarely talks about 'belonging', and [yet] finding a way to pull everyone together is the essence of 'belonging'.”

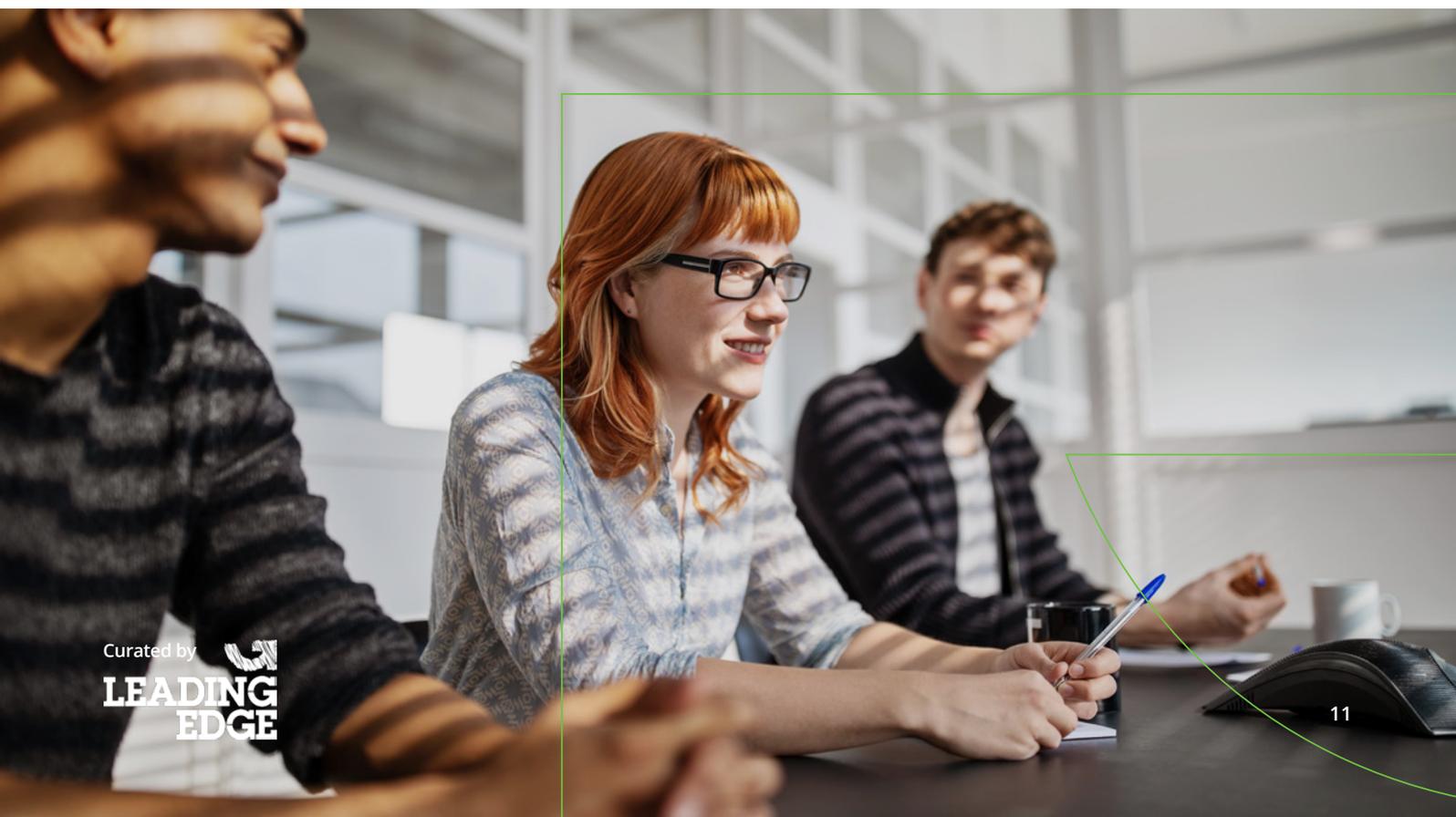
Chris Musgrove - Owner  
(Performance Edge)

## Nearly 90%

see a clear difference between 'D&I' and 'belonging'

## #01

quoted benefit by survey respondents was improving the happiness, productivity, and success of employees





# Why belonging belongs at the top of your agenda

## It goes far beyond D&I – there are huge benefits to be had

Whilst our research reports the #1 most-cited advantage of 'hardwiring belonging' was "Improving the happiness, productivity, and success of employees", the reality is it goes far beyond this to where organisations see the value and benefit of enabling every individual to contribute without the pressure of conforming.

Teams and workplaces still failing to move from the fundamentals of D&I towards the more powerful, performance-driven idea of 'belonging' are potentially missing out on huge rewards.

### A powerful new lens for your teams

'Belonging' enables organisations to build on their existing D&I programmes, and progress them from the sometimes-standardised checkbox scenarios to powerful, high-performance.

As a consequence, it helps teams unlock the much-touted benefits of D&I to help both the individual themselves, and their organisations.

“D&I is a function that should be an element of the identity of the organisation and part of building towards a collective sense of ‘belonging’. I think we can focus too much on culture, and not a lot on ‘belonging’. Culture comes from a sense of ‘belonging’ and understanding the identity of the organisation.”

Having skilled leaders and facilitators who can unpick things like:

- ↳ Where have we come from?
- ↳ What is our identity story?
- ↳ What do we stand for?
- ↳ What is our purpose?
- ↳ How do we do things around here?

David Court - ECB  
(Player Identification Lead)

# The top 5 advantages of hardwiring belonging for your organisation

**01** It improves employee connection and employee mental health

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**02** 'Belonging' provides all our employees with equal opportunities - opening up latent talent

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**03** It creates a pipeline of diverse and inclusive leadership in our business

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**04** Enables a variety of thinking – bringing creativity and innovation to our everyday challenges

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**05** Increase in 'belonging' = increase in engagement = increase in job performance of employees

“Creating an environment where people feel they belong leads to higher engagement, more creativity, and ultimately more output. When you belong, you go the extra mile and you don't really notice.”

Ian Leman – Owner & Director  
(Performance Edge)

“You cannot judge the world, on behalf of your team, based on the way you see and experience it. This, of course, means you have to listen to everyone in the team – really listen – accept what they share as true (even if you haven’t seen it or witnessed it), and then work together to develop actions to improve.”

Fraser Longden – COO  
(Wickes)



# The biggest barriers to creating a culture of belonging

01

Lack of understanding of the benefits of 'D&I'

02

Lack of understanding of advantage of 'belonging'

03

Lack of confidence from the leadership team on how to create 'belonging'

04

Lack of diversity in the current leadership team

05

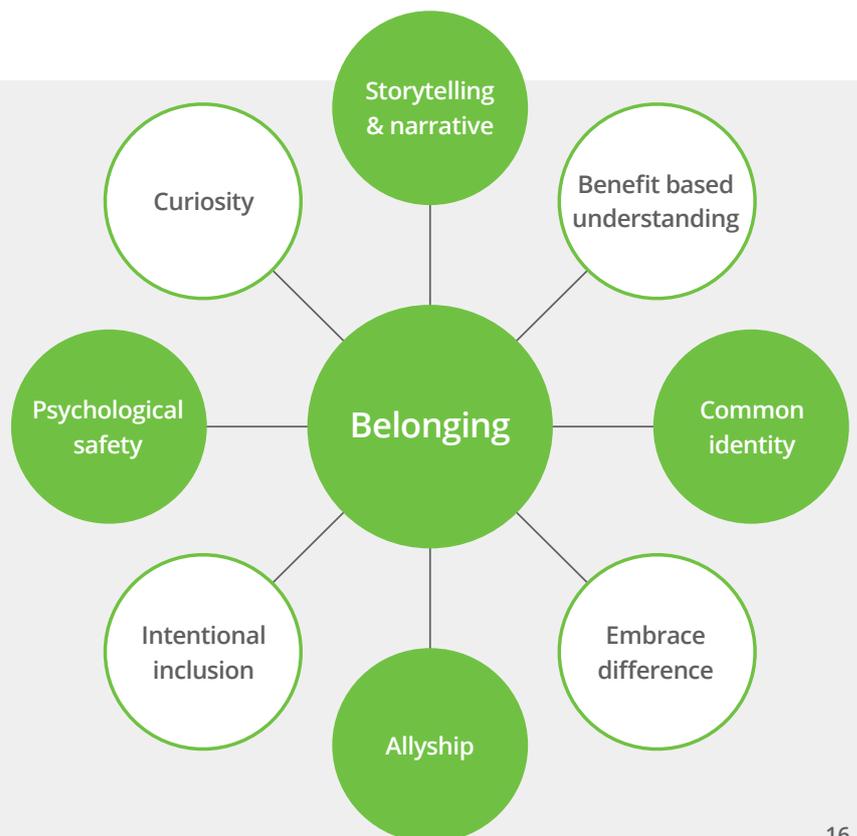
Focus on 'token' initiatives that don't actually contribute to fairness and cultural diversity

## The aspects of belonging

The 8 juggling balls to Hardwiring Belonging - not a model, but a journey

Through our research with hundreds of leading professionals and our existing work with high-performance teams, we have been able to identify and define the constituent parts of 'belonging'.

'Belonging' is not defined by a traditional step-by-step process - from point A to point B - but as a continuous need to focus and juggle the 8 component aspects.



# ...and the Leading Edge view on how to overcome them

Clearly articulate the value of D&I and 'belonging' and your strategy so everyone is clear about how they should this to life in the organisation.

Make your environment a psychologically safe place for people to feel comfortable to bring themselves and to be allies for others.

Lead by role modelling. Leaders must be curious to listen, learn, and do their research to feel confident leading and partaking in conversations around this topic.



“D&I can often feel like it’s creating silos and breaking us into groups – where ‘belonging’ brings us back together.”

Joanne Pilkington – IT Product Manager for Design (Jaguar Land Rover)

Make time and space for the sharing of every individual’s own story and journey.

Craft a common narrative that enables and encourages everyone to find ‘belonging’.

Belonging as a focus should be shared by all, not just the leadership team and definitely not just by the minority groups. Consider how to be intentional on your focus on ‘belonging’ in all areas of your organisation.

Bring an objective eye to your everyday practises, routines and traditions. Question: is this intentionally inclusive?

Focus not just on finding similarities – but really creatively embrace differences that each individual brings to your organisation.

# Act now (...or be left behind)

## Organisations need to act quickly or risk being left behind

The number of leaders treating 'belonging' as a critical priority between 2019 and 2023 is set to double. Since 2019, the number of leaders seeing 'belonging' as a high or critical priority has increased +12.5%.

With many professionals already realising the potential, organisations need to act quickly or risk being left behind altogether. The War for Talent, and the impact of hybrid working has made 'belonging' a game changer in the connection, recruitment and retention of high performance individuals.

"Top leaders need to clearly understand the benefits of Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging as the fight for talent increases – both to recruit and retain; amplified by COVID they are forcing new thinking around expanded talent pools."

Seth Ellison – EVP & CCO  
(Levi Strauss & Co)



# How Wickes built belonging into the DNA of D&I



Wickes has been supplying DIY products to the UK's home improvement market since 1972 with thousands of products available both online and in their stores. Wickes is passionate about improvement projects and aims to provide an outstanding experience for each and every customer who visits their stores or website, no matter what size of project they're undertaking.



Louise Tait – Head of HR, OD, and Talent (Wickes)

## The beginnings of 'belonging'

In 2016, a group of four strong female managers developed the 'Making Wickes Inclusive' group to begin having conversations around D&I within the company.

These conversations quickly progressed into a grassroots initiative, bringing together diverse groups from across the business, each committed to improving diversity and inclusion at Wickes.

## Grassroots to board sponsorship

Today, Wickes has five highly active, dynamic networks – covering BAME, Ability, Wellbeing, LGBTQI+, and Gender Diversity.

Working across the business; a board sponsor for each network supports these conversations at each stage, ensuring that topics remain front of mind amongst decision-makers to drive change.

## The shift from D&I to 'belonging'

To meet their ambitious growth agenda, Wickes decided to supercharge their internal development process by putting 'belonging' at the very heart of their D&I strategy.

They did this by developing an internal positioning – 'Feel at Home' – building stronger teams and better working environments by encouraging and empowering everyone to be their true selves.

## The story so far...

130 LGBTQI+

Trained over 130 LGBTQI+ allies

360+

360+ completed Disability Smart Training

233+

Trained over 233+ Mental Health First Aiders

383+

383+ took part in Race, Ethnicity and Identity Cultural Allyship Programme

Top 10

Top 10 UK retailer for D&I – FT Global Diversity Leaders 2021

“At Wickes, we have been making the shift from Diversity & Inclusion to ‘belonging’ for some time but have only recently started to position the emotional outcome of ‘belonging’ at the centre of our D&I strategy and use this to orientate and re-focus our language, activities and interventions in this way.”

Louise Tait – Head of HR, OD, and Talent  
(Wickes)

“To really break down these barriers, you have to start with accepting the concept of privilege and the simple, but essential fact that you can not judge the world, on behalf of your team, based on the way you see and experience it. This of course means you have to listen to everyone in the team, really listen, accept what they share as true (even if you haven’t seen it or witnessed it) and then work together to develop actions to improve.”

Fraser Longden – COO  
(Wickes)

# The future of belonging: three perspectives from Leading Edge

## 01

### Hardwiring Belonging

Organisations need to undertake systemic review and commit to action that ensures inclusion is considered in every decision, plan and aspect of your cultural intent.

A big part of this is assigning adequate resources and responsibility internally. Our research saw that 1 in 3 organisations pass this role on to HR, but our teams and leaders need to take the greater responsibility for this.

## 02

### Share ownership for the identity story

Leaders must enable the whole organisation to be able to play their part crafting and building the team and organisation's identity story.

This takes confidence and skill for leaders – and for every individual – to embrace a learning journey together, to feel safe to be able to lean in to a sometimes challenging conversation. Acknowledging that it's uncomfortable and that we will undoubtedly make mistakes, takes vulnerability and is an area in which we have to 'fail fast, learn quick'.

## 03

### Building 'belonging' through our similarities

Whilst the need to champion diversity and celebrate each unique contribution is crucial, we must also forge important connections around similarities to help stimulate successful environments.

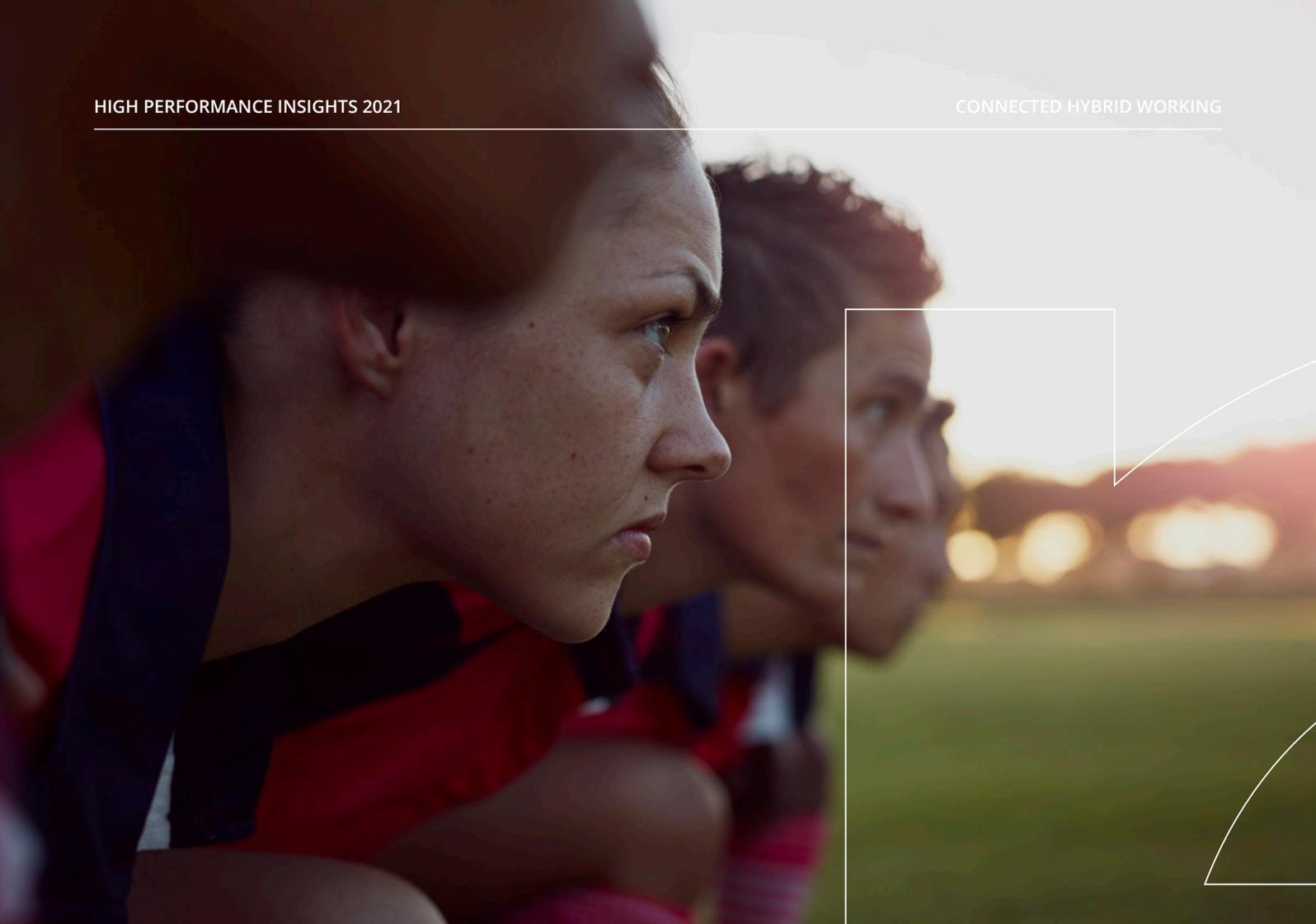
We all have a part to play in creating environments that are psychologically safe, but a part of this is acknowledging where we're different and where our commonalities can be found.



“The key is to move beyond tokenism and D&I training which is not delivering on the hoped for impact, and towards a commitment to hard wiring belonging into the organisation. This is where the idea of intentional inclusion comes from: going above and beyond to make sure all team members, at all levels, feel as they truly belong and can be themselves.”



Sarah Kelleher – Director, Client Strategy,  
(Leading Edge)



# Connected hybrid working

Moving from flexible working to  
high-performance hybrid solutions

# A whole new world (...you might be taking for granted)

**Hybrid working is now a recognised part of our day to day lives**

The concept of hybrid working – whilst now a fundamental phrase in our collective organisational language – has been evolving for some time.

Two years ago, long before the pandemic entered our lives and daily news cycle, professionals already identified hybrid working as critical to their organisations: more than half (61%) said it was of high or critical importance.

But, whilst a great number of organisations may feel they've 'mastered' the art of hybrid working during the pandemic, our research found expensive mistakes are already being made and huge opportunities are still not being seized.



# The biggest mistakes your competitors keep making

## A concerning paradox between complacency and concern

Although acknowledging its critical importance and the amount of time that's passed, we were surprised that the survey responses state that 80% still don't have a strategy for 'connected hybrid working' in place, and 1 in 10 say it isn't even on their agenda.

Our research also found some evidence of a concerning paradox between complacency and concern.

Despite the majority (53%) of organisations saying their culture is robust and secure enough to sustain changes in working patterns, more than a third (39%) have said they are still worried about the risk to their workplaces and are already seeing some of the cracks and divisions.



80%

still don't have a strategy for 'connected hybrid working' in place

1/3

More than 1/3 are worried about the risk to their workplaces

1 in 10

say hybrid working still isn't even on their agenda

“As we turn to blended working with the return to offices, we will now need to ‘test and learn’ again to see what will work. It will be important to continue to listen to our employees via survey feedback and react to their needs while also maintaining the needs of the business. In order to succeed, it will mean all groups working together to achieve the right balance.”

Sue Sweem – Chief People Officer  
(Glanbia Performance Nutrition)

# The #1 change to hybrid working you can make right now

## High performance organisations adopt a different approach: Connected Hybrid Working

High performance organisations, have developed a people centric approach to 'connected hybrid working': using a combination of new technology, organisational and role re-design, and an 'engagement through collaboration' focus to build bespoke and successful strategies that help their teams thrive.

Organisations also need to be transparent that it's simply not possible for all roles and all individuals to suddenly work remotely or differently; the need for transparency and equity in our job re-design is an important component of the hybrid conversation.

### Definition:

# Connected hybrid working

The practice of building successful strategies using a combination of new technology, optimised organisational design, role refinement, and engagement through collaboration in order to help teams thrive.

"The traditional ways of working are no longer valid and new ways of how we work must be implemented and tested [...] It is only through our people that we can accelerate growth so we need to listen to them and manage expectations appropriately."

Sue Sweem – Chief People Officer  
(Glanbia Performance Nutrition)

# Making the shift to connected hybrid working

## Remember: hybrid working is not just about the tech

Many teams and organisations are now realising that adapting to new ways of working isn't as simple as installing a few webcams or embracing the virtual breakout room.

True 'connected hybrid working' is creating an optimum working approach that's carefully tailored to your specific operation and the ability to successfully engage every team member to play their part in the organisation's success.

Technology is still, of course, a part of this combination, but it remains just one element that needs to be balanced and calibrated to ensure it works as hard as possible within the mix.

## You have to sort the 'habits' from the 'rules' (...and sometimes break those rules altogether)

Don Barrell, Head of Academies at England Rugby and Performance Advisor for Leading Edge, says that "it's really interesting to see how so many of the rules around ways of working got busted almost overnight as part of the necessary response to COVID-19. It meant organisations had to embrace new ways of managing tasks, collaborating, and communicating – and in doing that realised that many of the rules were actually just habits".

It is imperative to adopt a stance of 'test and learn', a focus on continuous learning by doing and seeking to develop, enabling the organisation to properly discern what's working and what's not.

"Companies should be thinking about college campuses: learning environments, great flexibility (students come and go), that facilitate innovative thinking. Where you formally interact with different sets of 'students' (i.e. a 'class' equals a project), where you show up when you have to.... and you can still retain intense school spirit." Seth Ellison – EVP & COO (Levi Strauss & Co).

"Ensure dialogue about the new working culture isn't just about location or working hours flexibility, but also about other workplace changes (for example: use of technology to improve the workplace experience), or improved physical locations (using some of the funds saved in office space, to improve what does remain)."

Kirsty Lawrence – HR Director (TUI)



“What should be avoided is over legislating and rule-making in the early days, while organisations are still learning, space needs to be left for that knowledge to grow. Being good at meetings has always been a forgotten and much undervalued competence!”

Warren Scarr - COO  
(Sally Beauty)

# The importance of getting connected hybrid working, working

## The benefits of 'connected hybrid working'

Connected hybrid working isn't just about flexibility – 2 days in, 3 days out, working around school hours or flexing locations of your work – it's building new ways of working for all team members that is bespoke to your individual organisation, and optimised accordingly.

Our research with 250+ professionals found that the biggest benefit for professionals are the "agile working patterns" that give them new ways to work and unlock new opportunities for their teams.

## Exciting new opportunities

Whilst two of the biggest advantages professionals cited in our research were cost-savings through both scaled-down office space and travel expenses (the 2nd and 3rd most important benefits, respectively), they also acknowledged the exciting new opportunities open to them for exploration and invention.

As Damian Guha, Managing Director UK/IRE of Upfield, says: this is an opportunity to "make the office a fabulous space to collaborate. Repurpose it. Re-design the space. Get customers, visitors over. Use it to network and drive interaction. This is exciting."

## The top 5 advantages of bringing connected hybrid working into your organisation

### 01

Ability to access the best talent, regardless of location

### 02

Effective collaboration without the need to be geographically close

### 03

Agile ways of working that maximise time and enable diverse preferences

### 04

Greater employee engagement through flexible ways of working

### 05

Focus shifts from presenteeism to being present and far more intentional connections

“Putting in place progressive, hybrid working arrangements in the context of an enlightened organisational culture could really enhance employer brand [and talent acquisition] [...] This could be the next big talent battle ground – and not just for millennials or those new in the workforce – but all of us who have had a taste of it in the past few months, and expect greater control over when and where we work.”

Kirsty Lawrence – HR Director  
(TUI)

“A big advantage of connected hybrid working is better quality, more balanced decision making. If you are making decisions based on just your experiences of the world or with others who have had similar experiences, they will by nature be sub-optimal.”

Fraser Longden – COO  
(Wickes)

# The biggest barriers to developing connected hybrid working

01

Planning to lift the current ways of working directly into the virtual world with no or limited changes required

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02

Assuming what will work – and imposing or ‘cookie cuttering’ a solution across individuals, teams, or whole segments of the organisation

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03

Micro managing tasks rather than clarifying performance objectives

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04

Believing everyone’s wants, needs and motivations are the same

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05

Fear of the unknown – and putting the challenge in the ‘too hard’ box

“A challenge we face is to calibrate and consider the appropriate levels of control needed. The culture will to some extent dictate how far you can go without changing or addressing the control, but fundamentally I see this as another example of our leadership needing to evolve the balance of control and trust, and ensuring behaviours reflect the words and the intent.”

Warren Scarr - COO  
(Sally Beauty)

“[There are] two distinct but linked pieces of work. For the roles that have remained location based during the last 18 months (e.g. Store Managers), we are working through how we can redesign the job in a way it could be completed differently (i.e. across four not five working days). For the roles that have been home-based, our focus is not on the technology or working routines necessary to make this work (we have already mastered these) but on the leadership and management practices which will make it successful.”

Fraser Longden - COO  
(Wickes)

# ...and the Leading Edge view on how to overcome them

## Leadership through the connected hybrid working lens

Our point of view on leadership defines three 'tensions of leadership', within which five aspects of mindset, behaviour, and skills differentiate great leaders from good leaders.

Viewing this framework through the 'connected hybrid working' lens shows us the additional complexities that leaders now need to embrace and be enabled to deliver.

Organisations need to both fully understand and properly calibrate three core areas of 'connected hybrid working':

- 01 New technology integration
- 02 Organisational and role re-design
- 03 An 'Engagement through Collaboration' focus

Achieving this engagement is a leadership challenge, and leaders need to learn to work differently in a 'connected hybrid working' world.



## Find ways to win

- Drive performance outputs not inputs
- Intentional in the role of Sensemaker
- Embrace technology for new ways of working

## Authentic self

- Find the balance that works for you
- Flex your trust muscle
- Embrace your vulnerability

## In service of others

- Create a safe and inclusive climate
- Consciously nurture connections - beware the visibility trap
- Dial up your curiosity to care



# How Glanbia revolutionised the way they work – forever



Glanbia is a global nutrition group, dedicated to delivering better nutrition for every step of life's journey. Their work is a response to the nutritional needs of the modern world and people's desire to live a more balanced life.

"I don't think we can predict long term what 'work' will look like, but we do know that change is constant. In the future, we will need to continually evaluate the ways of working and be open to other changes. This should be viewed as a positive opportunity to determine how to live in both in worlds."



Sue Sweem – Chief People Officer  
(Glanbia Performance Nutrition)

## The COVID catalyst

Glanbia, a world-leading global nutrition group, made 'connected hybrid working' a core priority of their organisation, making unique progress in their approach to help them succeed through the recent global pandemic.

But what was first instigated by the pandemic, has since become a fresh, exciting, and successful way for their culture to unlock continued high-performance.

## A new way of working today, that's built for tomorrow

The intent of Glanbia's Smart Working Model was to re-focus their efforts on how work was being accomplished and its outcomes, versus 'when' and 'where' it got done.

But this is far from "one size fits all". Using a combination of new technology, organisational and role re-design, alongside an intentional leadership focus, Glanbia's model was built from the ground up with employees at the very centre of every decision – based on business requirements, personal preferences, and role requirements.

## The secrets behind the success of Glanbia's 'Smart Working Model'

Adopting a test and learn approach and trying to figure out the best way to be productive and collaborative was encouraged, demonstrated, and modelled by the leadership team themselves; it was a "test" environment that allowed us to see what worked and what did not.

Sue Sweem, Chief People Officer at Glanbia Performance Nutrition, says embracing a new way of 'connected hybrid working' wasn't easy: "It took coaching and testing the new ways of working to make them stick."

## The Smart Working Pledge

Glanbia's Smart Working model was developed and implemented to give breaks and enable a work/life balance for all employees. This included a Smart Working Pledge for how to work effectively:

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 Respect time outside of work

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 Take daily breaks

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 Prevent meeting fatigue

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 Embrace flexibility

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 Maintain our rhythm

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 Be present

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"It is more change for both our leaders and employees but we want to retain our talent and be as flexible as possible. It will be important to continue to listen to our employees via survey feedback and react to their needs while also maintaining the needs of the business. In order to succeed, it will mean all groups working together to achieve the right balance."

Sue Sweem – Chief People Officer  
(Glanbia Performance Nutrition)

# The future of connected hybrid working: three perspectives from Leading Edge

## 01

### Embrace the radical opportunity

When off-the-shelf solutions are transplanted into a workplace, they can create more problems than before.

When it comes to hybrid working, there is no 'one size fits all'. Unless they are bespoke and built with your team in mind, then these bland, corporate, pre-made 'solutions' result in unremarkable and uninspiring rules, and fuel teams' disillusionment and frustration.

'Connected hybrid working' affords us as leaders a radical opportunity to reimagine the future world of work. We can be creative, to draw on the blank sheet of paper, to take bold steps to engage our current and future workforce into roles and ways of working that are fresh and engaging – we need to embrace the art of the possible.

## 02

### Collaborate for success

'Connected hybrid working' success isn't attributable solely to the leader.

The need to engage and inspire our talent to maintain connection to the organisation purpose and new ways of working is an imperative in the 'War for Talent' and made all the more challenging without the shared physical space and 'water cooler' conversations.

Leaders need to find new ways to connect, communicate, and collaborate with their teams to design together new traditions and ways of working.

## 03

### Test and learn

We can no longer have the perfect solution before we embark on the next step of our journey.

We need to embrace the ambiguous 'test and learn' opportunity to embrace connected hybrid working. 80% is good enough. Leaders and teams have to commit and deploy – and accept the changeable impact of the landscape and needs of the individuals to allow for continuous evolution.

“Now the first flush of excitement about hybrid working has died down, we are moving beyond the transactional ‘how can we manage the workload’ conversations and into the drive for high performance teams and high levels of productivity and impact, while building engagement and belonging without the mecca of the office. Being intentional about our collaborative working opportunities and ensuring value from the times we are together takes co-ordination and planning.”



Victoria Freer-Hewish – Director; Client Experience  
(Leading Edge)

# Becoming change enabled

Confronting, adapting to, and  
embracing constant change



# The opportunity of change

## Change engages, excites and transforms

Whilst it might not be new news to say that ‘change is constant’, the pace of change has accelerated exponentially in recent years.

The impact of significant external disruptors – from coronavirus to Brexit, supply chain challenges to rising operational costs – have been shown to have the potential to completely blindside any well-developed strategies we might put in place.

But change isn't always for the worst or to our detriment. Whilst some larger, external changes might feel worryingly intangible and uncontrollable, when navigated through by high performance focused leadership decision makers, these changes can be exciting, engaging, and transformative for the better.



# The biggest mistakes your competitors keep making

## Change may be constant, but how it's dealt with is patchy

Our research found that the biggest barrier to dealing with 'disruptive change' is actually the existing levels of internal disconnect within teams and organisations.

To embrace transformation, leaders need to embrace the idea of being a 'practicing futurists' in order to successfully lead their teams through change.

Whilst a third of organisations (31%) stated they are focusing on customer-led change, they don't have the capacity or capability to deal with the biggest barrier that's much closer to home: engagement of their teams to navigate change.

Not only that, but our research found that fewer than 1 in 5 leaders (19%) were confident their organisations are capable of adapting to change in any way at all.

Compounding all this, as we've already discussed, is the current lack of strategic approach to hybrid working which has the potential to exacerbate this internal disconnect even further.

**1/3**  
of organisations only focus on customer-led change

---

**1 in 5**  
Only 1 in 5 organisations feel ready to adapt to change

“We’ve recently experienced an immense collective change brought about by coronavirus and we embraced levels of agility and speed of change we thought were impossible. But have we really taken the learnings? Or have we reverted back to pre-COVID approaches and responses to change in a desire for stability and certainty?”

Michaela Weller – Director, Brand & Offer  
(Leading Edge)

# The #1 shift to being change enabled you can make right now

## High-performance organisations adopt a different approach: becoming Change Enabled

High-performance organisations, on the other hand, acknowledge the reality of constant change and, instead of trying to hold back the tide, have learned to become more resilient to change and external disruption.

### Definition:

## *Change Enabled*

The ability of every individual and the organisational infrastructure to be proactive in facing into change and the potential of future change. It's the fitness of the organisation to pre-empt, navigate through, and bounce back from disruptive change.



# The shift from being change resistant to change enabled

Organisations are already aware of the benefits being resilient to change can bring. Nearly a quarter (24%) say the biggest driver of change is an internal need “for creativity and innovation” inside their own workplace.

But being able to withstand change – in whatever form it may take – requires more than just keeping tabs on the latest trends or dusting off some old contingency planning documents.

Change changes depending on both its source and object it is impacting upon, meaning different types of change require different types of solutions at different points.

“Change is not always relevant to everyone in the organisation at the same time in the same way. This complicates matters. A better understanding of the landscape/ industry and future forecasting of potential change aligned with who and how it might impact most would be useful for organisations.”

Phil Church – Senior Game Coach Development Lead  
(The Football Association)

1/4

agree the biggest change driver is a need for creativity and innovation





# Why being change enabled is so important

75%

did not make the connection between being change enabled and helping to retain and recruit talent more easily

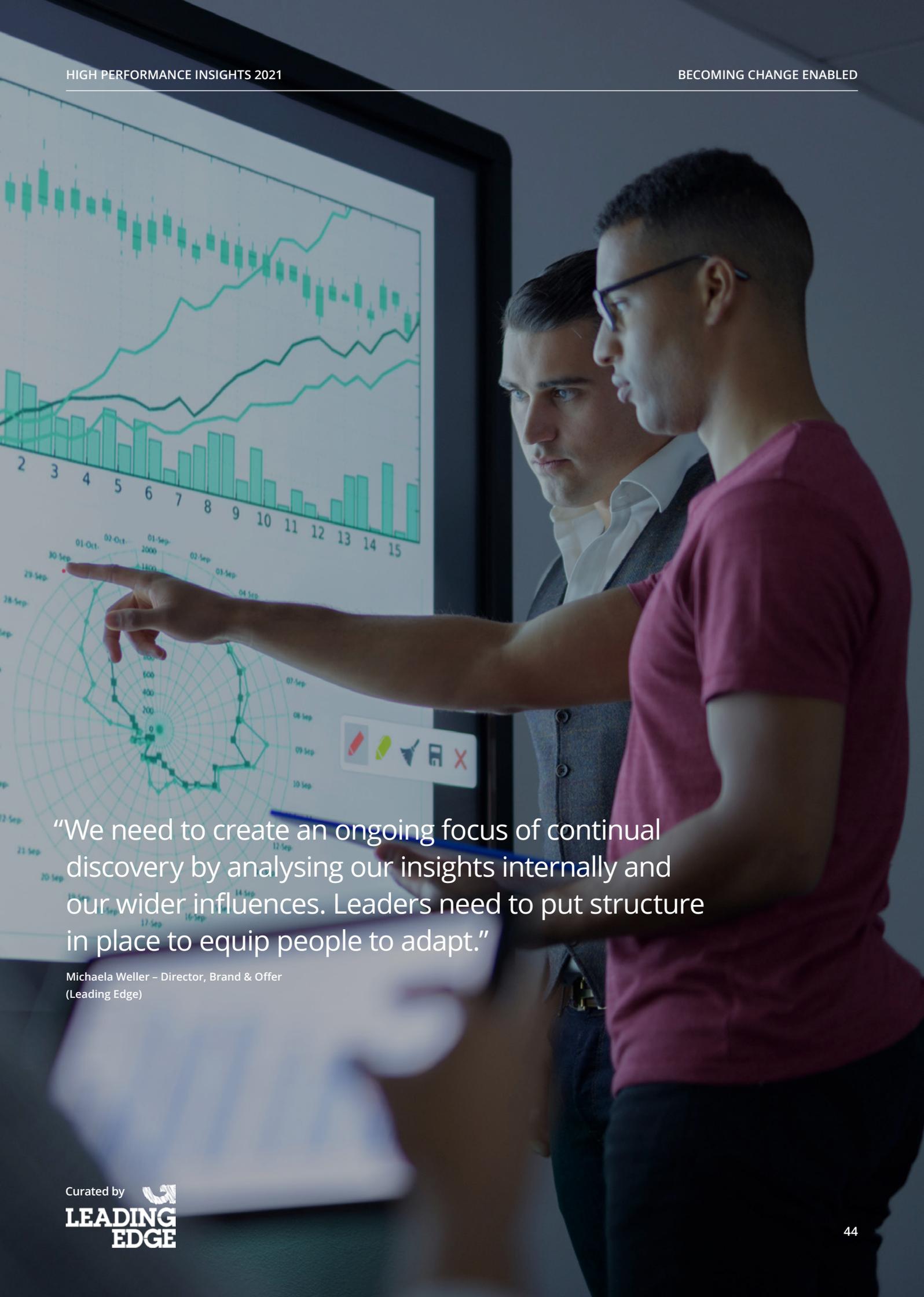
80%

don't recognise the importance of being change enabled in order to innovate faster than the competition

## The benefits of being 'Change Enabled'

Our research found that only 25% of organisations have realised that when they embrace and adapt to change, it means they are able to retain and recruit talent more easily, providing team members with a sense of personal ownership along with the tools for high performances.

Rather than accepting change as a constant, high-performance organisations who are actively 'change enabled' are also more able to capitalise on new ways of working and build new revenue streams and innovate more rapidly to keep ahead of their competition.



“We need to create an ongoing focus of continual discovery by analysing our insights internally and our wider influences. Leaders need to put structure in place to equip people to adapt.”

Michaela Weller – Director, Brand & Offer  
(Leading Edge)

# The biggest barriers to being change enabled

**01** Belief that it is too difficult to change as an organisation

**02** The struggle to turn strategy into action

**03** Lack of ability to embrace change as 'practicing futurists'

**04** Inability to engage teams to navigate the change

**05** No individual clarity of 'what's in it for me?'

"[There is a] fear of failure or getting it wrong [...] [and an] inability to measure without some level of ambiguity."

Seth Ellison - EVP & CCO  
(Levi Strauss & Co.)

"We tend to hire for people who thrive on change, ambiguity, and a level of stress [...] Ensuring there is no culture of fear is critical."

Damian Guha - Managing Director,  
UK & IRE (Upfield)

# ...and the Leading Edge view on how to overcome them

## Enable change by seeing the opportunities it affords

Whether change is led internally by a leadership team, or imposed externally from disruptive outside forces, organisations should seek to become 'change enabled' by embracing the opportunities of change.

The American entrepreneur, Derek Sivers, describes this in his viral video "Leadership Lessons from a Dancing Guy":

[Watch the video](#)



“ Leadership is over-glorified. [...] It [is] the first follower that transform[s] a 'lone nut' into a leader. There is no movement without the first follower. We're told we all need to be leaders, but that would be really ineffective. The best way to make a movement, if you really care, is to courageously follow and show others how to follow. When you find a lone nut doing something great, have the guts to be the first person to stand up and join in.”

Derek Sivers – Entrepreneur and author

Change requires brave leaders who 'go first'. Who work out the 'change dance' and role model it so others can follow.

First followers need to be encouraged and embraced as equals. These ambassadors for the change join with the original 'lone dancing guy(s)' to create a critical mass.

Now we have the start of a movement! We need to make it easy for the teams around us to understand the change, and importantly be skilled and enabled to redefine their work and ways of working to align to the new 'dance'.

And within all of this, we have to recognise and focus on the human reactions to change – using the Change Formula (inspired by Kathie Dannemiller's own 'Change Formula') to engage their head, hearts, and guts in the change.

# Embracing change with the Football Association: the 3 core goals you need to know now



The Football Association is the governing body for football in England and competitions including the Emirates FA Cup, Vitality Women's FA Cup, and the Barclays FA Women's Super League. It is responsible for overseeing the amateur and professional game and provides sanctions for competitive matches at all levels.

## Tackling new challenges: on the pitch and off the pitch

There is much room for growth within the focus of constant change. The professional game – and, particularly, the senior professional game – is constantly changing.

With many key stakeholders, increasing finances, changing business models, and the huge popularity of the sport in the UK, there is pressure from many areas and resulting changes are commonplace.

### GOAL #1: Get 'future fit' with improved forecasting

In order to keep abreast of impending changes and potential problems, organisations need to invest significant time and energy into their external perspective gathering. The landscape is never constant, so being able to recognise and react to the external and internal environment is a much needed organisational skill.



“The future for adapting to change is uncertain, varied, and complex. To better prepare for a landscape of constant change it would be useful to create an ongoing focus for continual discovery, research, and insight in the specific industry and wider influences. This ongoing information would help inform the organisation with more detail and more quickly.”



Phil Church – Senior Professional Game Coach Development Lead (The Football Association)

**GOAL #2: Pick your players and build your team mindfully**

Given the complexity of, firstly, goals and purposes specific to individual organisations and, secondly, the multitude of changes potentially impacting them at any given time, some change will not always be relevant to everyone in the organisation at the same time in the same way.

Leaders need to be mindful of who should be focusing on which elements of change at any given time to ensure that individuals are neither overwhelmed or under-engaged on the change and how it will impact them. Doing so also helps focus and galvanise team members around the specific challenges and changes.



**GOAL #3: Get your team off the bench and into the boardroom**

When it comes to being change enabled, collaboration is key. Ensure that individuals and their teams are being well-represented in the decision-making process to help shape the change before it's implemented, and make its adoption much easier and frictionless.

“ In order to help shape potential changes of the future, it is also important to ensure a seat at the table of decision making. This will necessitate a collaborative strategy with other key stakeholders. If we are able to shape the change, we will be better equipped to manage the change.”

Phil Church – Senior Professional Game Coach Development Lead (The Football Association)



“ [T]here will be an increase in performance of the team/s towards the agreed goals. This accelerates the opportunities for the organisation to develop, innovate, and grasp new ventures more quickly.”

Phil Church – Senior Professional Game Coach Development Lead (The Football Association)

# The change enabled future: three perspectives from Leading Edge

“ We shouldn’t underestimate the power of will to making or breaking a change – organisations need momentum for change, and that comes from engaging the people at every level.”



Michaela Weller – Director,  
Brand & Offer (Leading Edge)

## 01 The leadership dance

Whilst the role of the leader isn’t always to spot the change, they do need to be the first to actually lead the change; their role is to be first up and galvanise the entire organisation behind the appropriate response.

Leaders need to be the role model and create the ‘change dance’ in a way that makes it easy for their ‘first followers’ to join in and develop a movement. And it’s not an easy thing to do: this is a task which requires big handfuls of awareness, vulnerability, bravery, and agility.

## 02 Explorer discovery mindset

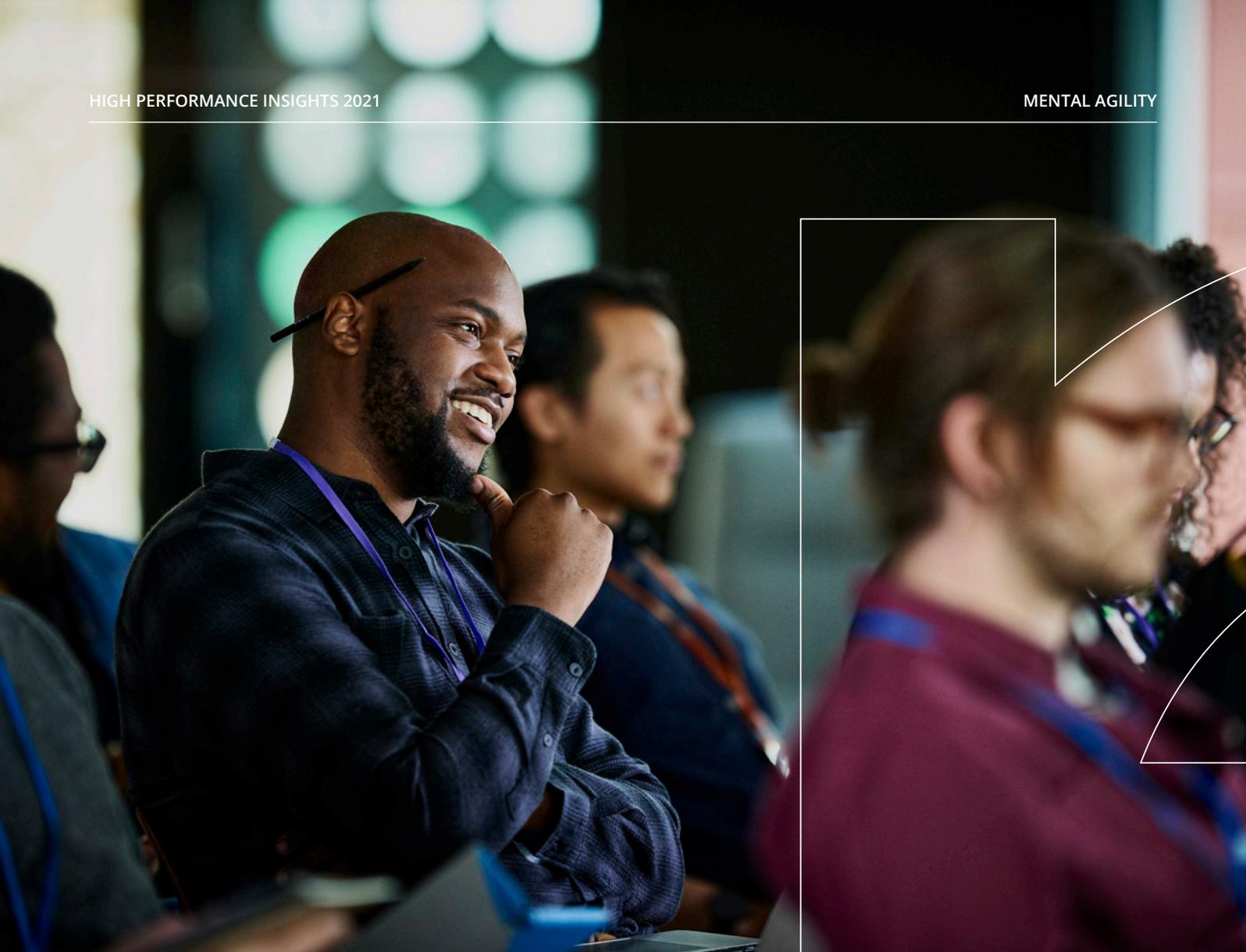
The future of change is only going to become more uncertain, varied, and complex. To better prepare for a landscape of constant change we need teams to be agile and able to quickly adapt.

And it’s not just the leadership who should be on the lookout for change: everyone needs to have their eyes on the horizon, scanning for change. It’s developing this explorer mindset that we need to encourage everyone to grow and master for their respective teams and the futureproofing of your entire organisation.

## 03 Success can be the enemy

Whilst we’ve all recently experienced an immense collective change brought about by coronavirus, we have also had to embrace levels of agility and speed we thought were impossible.

But change is never done. Even the most successful high-performance organisations are perpetually striving to identify new opportunities and to zig while others zag. The risk of success is complacency. Organisations and leaders need to embrace a constant state of ‘readiness’, and ensure we all have the capacity, tools, and mindset to pivot.



# Mental agility

Proactive wellbeing focus to reframe  
the mental health conversation

# A whole new world (...you might be taking for granted)

## **Mental agility is intentional. It's learned and part of a holistic performance wellbeing frame**

**Our research with 250+ leading professionals revealed just how deeply engrained mental health challenges have become for individuals and teams.**

Whilst COVID-related concerns were, understandably, high on the list of mental health challenges for leaders (32% noted this as a key concern), it was distressing to see the current levels of stress (29%), depression (29%), burnout (24%), and anger (20%).

In fact, over a third (35%) of all professionals note that either they or their colleagues have suffered anxiety or panic attacks at work. A staggering amount.

Maybe even more troubling, the research revealed that nearly 1 in 10 organisations say they have no mental health support whatsoever. Those that do are often in the form of 'crisis support' – phone lines, counselling or signposting to external resources.

Our research has found that high-performance teams – whilst in no way impervious to the mental health challenges we all face – had far more focus on 'mental agility' and 'performance wellbeing' as part of their routine performance metrics and support.

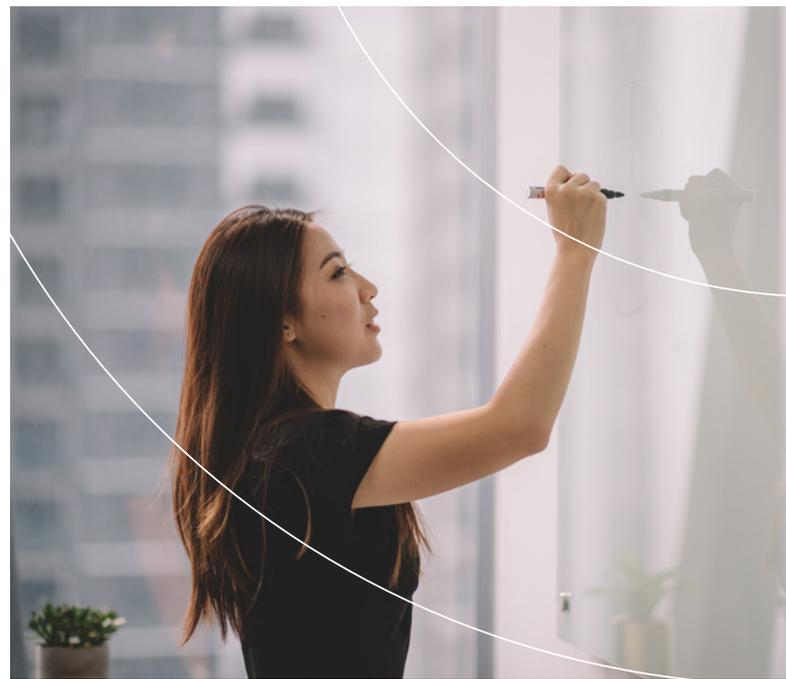


# The biggest mistakes your competitors keep making

## It's time to stop outsourcing problems to 3rd party providers

Despite the fact that nearly three-quarters (71%) of all our research respondents claim that mental health and mental skills support was a high/critical priority, it's clear from the results that many aren't doing nearly enough.

At present, nearly half (43%) of mental health support is dealt with purely through internal corporate communications, whilst a staggering 1 in 5 organisations don't deal with these challenges internally and simply outsource problems to third-party providers or even online or app-based products.



43%

of mental health support is dealt with purely through internal corporate communications

1 in 5

organisations don't deal with mental health challenges internally

35%

of all professionals note that either they or their colleagues have suffered anxiety or panic attacks at work

“The size of this problem globally is staggering. Much more pervasive than the most typical physical maladies (such as cancer, diabetes, etc.). So, we need to really grapple with corporations’ role in supporting employees.”

Tracy Layney - Senior Vice President & Chief Human Resources Officer (Levi Strauss & Co.)

# The #1 focus for mental agility you can prioritise right now

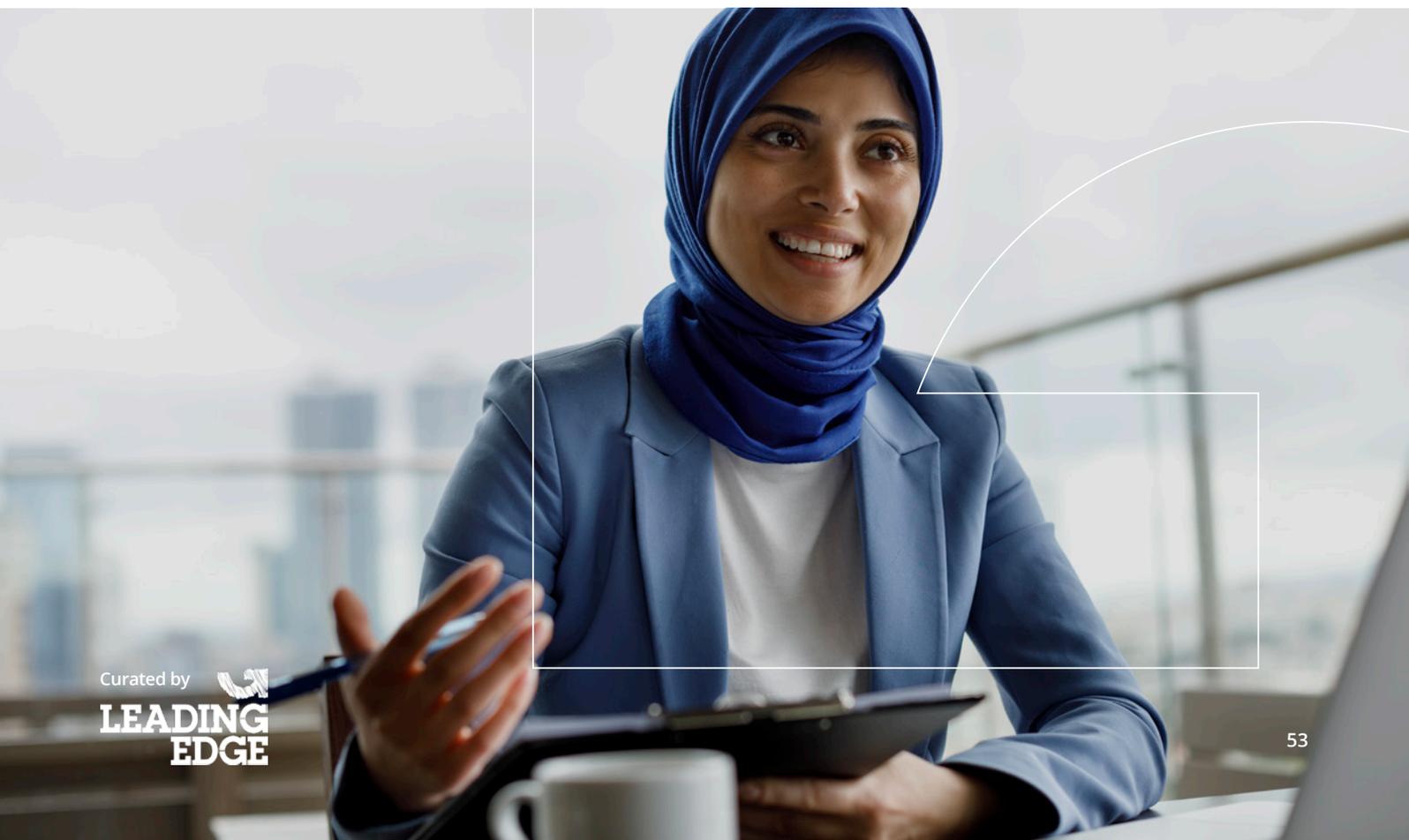
## High-performance organisations adopt a different approach: Mental Agility

Our research has found that high-performance organisations not only understand the benefits but put a proactive focus on 'performance wellbeing' – with 'mental agility' at its heart. This shifts the conversation away from the reactive and remedial mental health requirement for 'some' and into a space where the organisation and leaders need to lead the agenda for 'all'.

## Definition:

# Mental Agility

We define 'Mental Agility' as the ability to recognise our own preferences and biases in the way we learn, think, behave and respond to others, opportunities and obstacles. And to be intentional and choiceful in these.





“Being proactive in our planning when mental health warrants time away from work is an area that I believe leaders and organisations can share best practice on more effectively, both to support individuals but also to ensure that the needs of the organisation can continue to be met.”

Di Lewis – National Talent Manager for the Women’s and Girls’ Pathway  
(England and Wales Cricket Board)

# Why mental agility is so important

## The benefits and broader business boosting effects of mental agility

Our research found that senior leaders within organisations are aware of the benefits 'mental agility' can bring to their organisations. The #1 benefit they cite (28%) – improved productivity, team performance, and engagement of staff - points to a strong understanding of the far-reaching benefits 'mental agility' can bring.

### Sustain high performance and wellbeing

Nearly a quarter note that, far from just supporting individuals and their own mental wellbeing, improving 'mental agility' has tangible implications, including helping to sustain high-performance (22%), lower staff turnover and recruitment costs (20%), and even fewer cases of absenteeism through illness (19%).

## The top 5 benefits of bringing mental agility into your organisation

01

Capability to pivot when faced with a challenge

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02

Ability to personally recognise what 'hijacks' us - and take action

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03

Shifts mental health focus to being proactive

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04

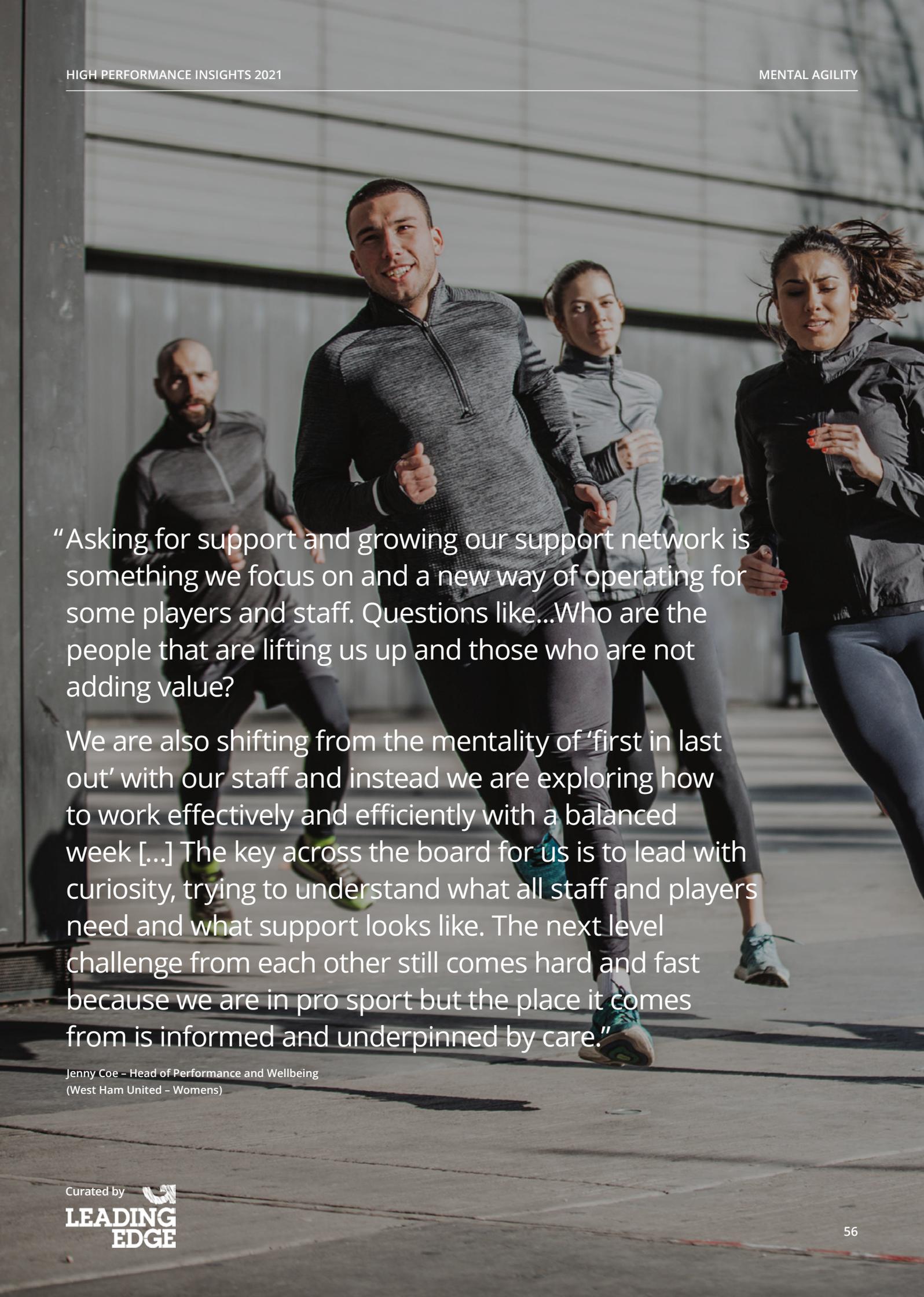
Greater levels of team resilience and support

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05

Reduced absenteeism, decrease in talent loss, and reduced recruitment costs



A group of four runners in athletic gear are captured in motion on a paved surface. The runner in the foreground is a man with a beard, wearing a grey zip-up jacket and dark leggings, smiling as he runs. Behind him are three other runners: a woman in a light grey jacket, a woman in a dark grey jacket, and a man in a dark grey jacket. The background is a blurred urban setting with a building facade.

“Asking for support and growing our support network is something we focus on and a new way of operating for some players and staff. Questions like...Who are the people that are lifting us up and those who are not adding value?”

We are also shifting from the mentality of ‘first in last out’ with our staff and instead we are exploring how to work effectively and efficiently with a balanced week [...] The key challenge the board for us is to lead with curiosity, trying to understand what all staff and players need and what support looks like. The next level challenge from each other still comes hard and fast because we are in pro sport but the place it comes from is informed and underpinned by care.”

Jenny Coe – Head of Performance and Wellbeing  
(West Ham United – Womens)

# The top 5 barriers to developing mental agility

01

Perception of weakness and risk of holding my progression back

02

Fear of the topic and having open conversations

03

It's seen as an issue for HR to 'deal with'

04

Disconnection between 'mental agility' and affect on performance

05

Lack of recognition of the magnitude of the potential impact



# And the Leading Edge view on how to overcome them

Through our work with high performance organisations we've identified 5 components of Performance Wellbeing, which supports individuals 'mental agility'.

-  **Resilient mindset** – the skill and aptitude to respond to circumstances and influences dynamically.
-  **Defined identity** – clear knowledge and awareness of self, and the restrictions and opportunities that may afford me, along with clarity of the role I perform for the organisation and what is needed of me.
-  **Energising balance** – a focus on creating a rhythm, lifestyle and range of activities that energises me.
-  **Habits for health** – the safety and psychological factors of nutrition, rest, activity, financial surety and health that create a foundation for performance success.
-  **Environment to thrive** – creating and reinventing a space in which I am empowered and enabled to perform to the best of my potential.



# Perspective from Tracy Laney, Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer at Levi Strauss & Co



Tracy Laney – Senior Vice President and Chief  
Human Resources Officer (Levi Strauss & Co.)



Levi's is fueled by their strong values, creativity and hard work. Levi's values of empathy, originality, integrity, and courage guide every decision they make and every action they take.

## The way we've been dealing with mental health so far is nowhere near good enough

I think organisations do not fully understand how to support employees in dealing with mental health issues. Even those of us who are trying – like Levi Strauss & Co. – are only scratching the surface.

Given mental health issues are pervasive, I think we all need to do more in this realm, whether it is ensuring we have full insurance coverage for mental health claims, providing enhanced EAP support/referrals, training HR professionals and even managers on how to respond to mental health issues (not as clinicians but as empathetic leaders who help secure support for employees), etc.

## And this is an issue that isn't going away any time soon

I think organisations are seriously underestimating the criticality of this problem now and in the future. There is an expectation that this will become a lower priority going forward (presumably once the pandemic is mostly behind us), but I fear that this misreads the mental health crisis that existed before the pandemic and will remain in the coming years.

[At a recent] Mental Wellness Summit, the size of this problem globally is staggering – much more pervasive than the most typical physical maladies (such as cancer, diabetes, etc.). So we need to really grapple with corporations' role in supporting employees.

# The future of mental agility: three perspectives from Leading Edge

## 01

### Performance Wellbeing NOT performance OR wellbeing

'Performance Wellbeing' is not an either-or. They are intrinsically linked as seen in sport with a shift of focus toward 'winning well' becoming ever more dominant.

Performance Wellbeing focuses on creating a space where every individual feels supported. Establishing a safe environment where people can respond dynamically to any given circumstance, and where they feel energised and empowered to perform to their best of their ability is vital in any high performing team.

## 02

### Mental agility by design

A very practical approach is to design your environment in a way that automatically nudges behaviours that support the development of mental agility and performance wellbeing. This can be done by tapping into the power of heuristics and understanding how people's behaviour is driven by mental shortcuts.

MINDSPACE, a robust behavioural change model developed by the UK Government, is a useful checklist of powerful influences on our behaviours. Captured in a simple mnemonic, with M for example standing for Messenger - we are heavily influenced by who communicates information, D for Default - we 'go with the flow' of preset options and P for Priming - our acts are often influenced by sub-conscious cues.

By using priming, defaults, commitments, and norms in how you design your environments, you can develop greater mental agility without actually having to think very hard at all about becoming more agile. You can support individuals and teams to be more agile and high performing by design.

## 03

### A leadership imperative

Our research found that mental health and wellbeing is still largely addressed from a centralised perspective (the HR team) within organisations. The performance of your team is a leadership responsibility - in fact we could argue, the number 1 leadership responsibility.

Leadership which facilitates and drives proactive conversations around mental health in an authentic manner, and leaders who are equipped to support their own mental health/agility, is both essential to creating an empowering culture. We must bring the focus for the 'performance wellbeing' and 'mental agility' of our teams front and centre on the leadership agenda.



“The difference in an outstanding player or employee is often a mental skill. It might be confidence, it might be resilience, and developing an environment where that can thrive is the key to any high-performance team. We don’t see this as a remedial activity. Mental health is like physical health, and we can always work hard at improving our mental skills. You can work with anyone on developing ‘mental agility’. We aren’t trying to create philosophers; we’re trying to create people that are great at what they do.”



Patrick Marr, Owner Director (Leading Edge)  
and Mental Skills Coach (Dragons Rugby)

# Leading with love

Reframing our relationships to  
authentic high performance



# A huge opportunity (...you're probably missing)

## Creating psychologically safe environments

If the past two years have taught us anything, it's been the importance of looking beyond the work, and into understanding each other's context and lived experiences.

From seeing colleagues children on zoom calls, to recognising the challenges of home schooling, from supporting our colleagues while they cared for loved ones, to the very real challenges of remote working; we've had insight into our colleagues and teams lives and worlds in a way that may have been unheard of before.

And we have undoubtedly benefitted with richer, less transactional relationships – and potentially built a solid foundation for collaborative success. Leaders now need to continue to consciously and authentically 'lead with love'.

Our research found that, currently, only around 18% of organisations lead with an empathetic, loving, and people-driven mindset -- less than half the amount (39%) who chose a more rational, data-driven approach.

Even though over a fifth of professionals think the idea of 'leading with love' sounds like "airy-fairy tree hugging stuff", the reality is that using empathetic engagement, fostering compassion amongst senior leadership, and building a caring culture all translates into tangible, real-world results.

"Taking care of people has been always a priority in our organisation and personally for me... but this last 2 years have proven critical. The level of uncertainty, workload, stress, pressure both personal and professionally, have never been like that. The line between personal and professional life has never been so blurry.."

Elena Cortés, EU Strategic Sourcing Director  
(MARS Petcare)

# The biggest mistakes your competitors keep making

## Leading with Love is not a balancing act

The dichotomy between how important looking out for and building caring relationships with our colleagues has never been more important due to the pandemic, and yet so few companies are actually 'leading with love'.

But it isn't a binary choice or a balancing act: choosing to Lead with Love is a hugely important constituent part of high-performance organisations.

“There is an understanding that this is important but there is a disconnect between how to actually make it happen. I think this is down to the skills and experiences of those leading the team, they know they need to 'lead with love' but what comes across isn't that. The growth comes from being more self-aware, but they need more honest feedback to start this process and an ability to listen.”

Helen Richardson-Walsh MBE, Performance Psychologist.  
Olympic Gold & Bronze Medallist. Hockey Coach and Team Coach at Leading Edge.

18%

of organisations actually lead with an empathetic, loving, and people-driven mindset

2/3

of organisations don't have wellbeing and performance of staff engrained into their company culture fully

24%

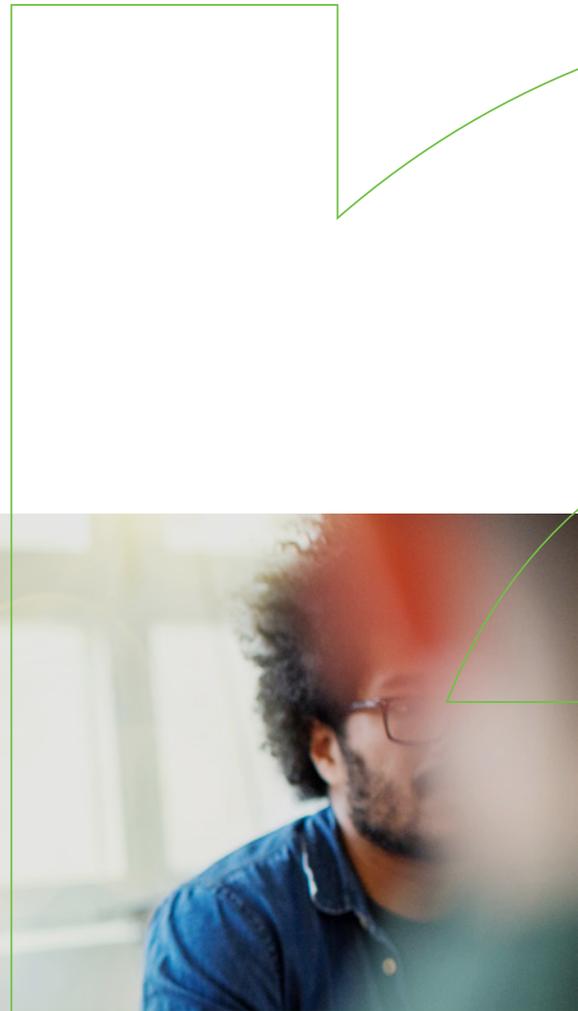
of leaders state a lack of love, care and empathy in company leadership has led to insufficient rewards and options for career progression

# The changes you can make right now to start leading with love

Definition:

## *Leading with Love*

The practice of 'leading with love' is a fundamental component of high performing teams. We define 'leading with love' through the model of TLC which is formed around Trust-centred, Leadership language and the Curiosity to care.





# Why leading with love is so important

## 'Leading with love' actively drives high-performance

More than a quarter of the 250+ professionals we asked said 'leading with love' resulted in happier employees with better physical and mental health (27%); improved team relationships with less conflict (25%); and even lower talent turnover (23%).

However, our research also showed that 'leading with love' was not widely recognised for the potential impact it could bring. Only 21%, as well as increased customer satisfaction and brand reputation (24%).

## Choosing not to lead with love impacts your bottom line

Around 1 in 5 professionals state that a lack of caring and empathy amongst their respective company's leadership leads to an increase in conflict and grievances (19%); less motivated and less productive staff (21%); an increase in staff turnover (21%); and even translates to decreased customer satisfaction and damage to brand reputation (19%).

If organisations want to survive and thrive in 2022 and beyond, they need to realise that using your head begins by leading with your heart.

"Leading with love' isn't about being soft and fluffy. If you think about the people you argue most with, the people you hold the highest standards for, who are they? 'Leading with love' is about wanting the best for them, and stretching yourself to support them, perhaps even by telling them they are wrong."

Don Barrell, Head of Performance Programmes and Pathways (England Rugby) and Performance Adviser (Leading Edge)

# The top 5 advantages of bringing leading with love into your organisation

**01** Happier employees with better physical and mental health

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**02** Trust is built and enhanced by leadership vulnerability

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**03** Unlocks greater engagement and personal achievement

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**04** Improved team relationships with less conflict

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**05** Creates a solid foundation for collaborative success

“What’s working well for us at West Ham United is how we understand the importance of holistic development and building the team up with a person first approach. The journey and ambition of these women at WHU is so important, and relationships need to be nourished. Ultimately, we are supporting and understanding the ‘what it takes to win well’ mentality, knowing that creating a thriving happy environment underpinned by care can make magic.”

Jenny Coe, Head of Performance and Well-being  
(West Ham United FC Womens)

# The top 5 biggest barriers to developing an organisation that leads with love

**01** Insufficient emotional intelligence and lack of empathy and authenticity in leaders

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**02** Overlay of a traditional, rational leadership style

---

**03** Fear of difficult conversations

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**04** Disconnection - exacerbated in a hybrid world

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**05** No line of sight between 'love' and what the organisation holds valuable

“Traditionally, people skills haven’t been a high priority when promoting or appointing leaders, and whilst it is something that can be developed with time, it needs to be taken into consideration from the get-go. Businesses need to put more consideration into their recruitment processes, not only to hire people with the appropriate people skills, but also to make sure these processes remove biases that often lead to appointments of the same kind of people.”

Helen Richardson-Walsh MBE, Performance Psychologist. Olympic Gold & Bronze Medallist. Hockey Coach and Team Coach at Leading Edge.

# ...and the Leading Edge view on how to overcome them

## The hard-working TLC Model



*Trust-Centred*



*Leadership Language*



*Curiosity to Care*

### T - Trust-Centred

The first component of 'leading with love' is being Trust-centred. This not just about building trust but also about being trusted. This means creating an environment where trust is inherent in the ways we collaborate and work together, across teams and functions.

"More trusting relationships enables more positive conflict and challenge, which is what teams need in order to be successful. When you have positive conflict, you know that you have a psychologically safe environment because people are willing to speak up and share their truth."  
Helen Richardson-Walsh MBE, Performance Psychologist. Olympic Gold & Bronze Medallist. Hockey Coach and Team Coach at Leading Edge.

### L - Leadership Language

Leadership isn't in the moments on the stage, or making the big calls, it's in the everyday moments that you interact with your team and colleagues. Your every small comment, your instruction to the team and your emails – all must be coded to ensure your teams know you 'love' them.

Ciran Stapleton, Head Teacher, St Joseph's School, Slough sums this approach to leading with love in a challenging senior school environment, "It is not enough to love them [the children], they have to know you love them".

Being caring takes different forms, it may not always be perceived as coming from a place of love, but it is critical if you are going to move performance.

We often hear people talk about teams being like a 'Family,' but stop short at thinking about the love and care that this needs to be real." Don Barrell – Head of Regional Academies (England Rugby) & Performance Advisor (Leading Edge).

### C- Curiosity to Care

The curiosity to care is actively seeking to understand, suspending judgement and bias, questioning and listening deeply, taking time to know the person behind the job role

"Growth comes from being more self-aware" says Helen Richardson-Walsh MBE, Performance Psychologist. Olympic Gold & Bronze Medallist. Hockey Coach and Team Coach at Leading Edge "[teams] need more honest feedback to start this process and an ability to listen to it". Building that self-awareness and ensuring that your needs are being met by your teammates in turn, is crucial for growth".

# How Mars prioritises leading with love (...and how you can too)



Elena Cortés – EU Strategic Sourcing Director (MARS Petcare)

## MARS

For more than a century, Mars, Incorporated has been driven by the belief that the world we want tomorrow starts with how we do business today. Mars employs 133,000 employees and produces some of the world’s best-loved brands. The Mars Five Principles of Quality, Responsibility, Mutuality, Efficiency and Freedom inspire their associates to take action every day to help create a world tomorrow in which the planet, its people and pets can thrive.

### Learnings from Leading with Love

We asked Elena for her reflections on the concept of Leading with Love and how this focus shows up in MARS.

#### 1. Prioritising taking care of people

Whilst taking care of people has been always a priority at Mars, the past 2 years have proven critical in this regard. The level of uncertainty, workload, stress, pressure – both personally and professionally – have never been so prominent.

Mars was quick to assess the potential impact of decreased engagement and higher turnover through the pandemic and put actions into place in order to deeply support each employee, prioritising their health and wellbeing at every stage.

#### 2. Creating ‘Energy for Life’

To support employees through the most difficult of times, the leaders of the organisation put special focus on the theme ‘Taking Care of Us.’ Every team meeting starts with talking and addresses wellbeing.

Mars has invested a significant amount of time and money on unique “Energy for Life” training, designed and deployed to ensure there was an increased priority to give people tools to improve both personal and team wellbeing.



### 3. Measuring wellbeing

In addition to the Mars Associate Survey, energy levels of employees are measured every quarter across 4 factors: Physical, Emotional, Mental, and Spiritual.

These metrics, along with an analytical focus on both 'Resilience' and 'Recovery', give the organisation a clear way to, firstly, track the trajectory of an employee's health and wellbeing in the long-term and, secondly, monitor employee wellbeing at a macro level to invest in broader, company-wide support.

“Our roles as leaders are critical. More than ever, I pay extra attention to my actions as a role model within my organisation. My team will not believe me when I talk about disconnecting, taking care of themselves, and recovery, if I’m working late at night and on weekends, and if I don’t take breaks, and skip meals. Leading with love starts with us, and I take that role very seriously.”

“The best organisations that take care of their people will end up being stronger and better prepared for the future. People need to feel safe, empowered, and appreciated, and leading with love is the base of it.”

Elena Cortés, EU Strategic Sourcing Director  
(MARS Petcare)

# The future of leading with love: three points of view from Leading Edge

## 01 Love infused values

Values are not words on a wall. They are lived principles which should guide our every working moment. Too many organisations out-source 'creation of their values' to PR and brand agencies, and revel in the big reveal, but don't embed those values.

Leaders in high performance organisations infuse their values with love – they co-create them, they live them every day and they evolve them in collaboration with the people they lead.

## 02 Positive conflict requires new skills

Our research found that many leaders saw the benefits of "positive conflict" when leading with love – being able to have difficult, productive conversations in a space they feel comfortable doing so.

However, this is a skill which many organisations are still sorely lacking and frequently require development to properly master. Leaders are more able to 'step into challenge' where they have established relationships by 'leading with love'.

## 03 The vulnerability paradox

Leaders need to be confident and inspire confidence, at the same time as showing empathy and building trust through vulnerability and being their authentic self. Just another paradox for leaders in 2022 to manage.

"Leading with love takes bravery. Leaders need to be willing to move beyond the transactional and traditional leadership role, and into relationships with depth. We have to have 'curiosity to care', to really understand their teams, what motivates and drives them, what matters to them – both in work and in their life beyond work. It's a very different type of leadership, but one which has huge dividends for not only the individuals and the organisation, but also for the leader themselves."



Don Barrell, Head of Performance Programmes and Pathways (England Rugby) and Performance Adviser (Leading Edge)

# Summary

## The future of high-performance

The way we work has changed forever. But, as our research and this report has shown, these changes will be for the better. The pandemic may have upset the established order, but it has provided a genuine chance for us all to reframe, renew, and revitalise the way we approach work.

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We can now take the next step from diversity and inclusion, to developing a true sense of **Belonging**.

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From flexi-time and quick tech fixes, to high-performance **Connected Hybrid Working**.

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From battling constant change, to being **Change Enabled**.

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From mental health and workplace welfare to strengthening **Mental Agility**.

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And from managing with metrics, to truly **Leading with Love**.

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As we embark on 2022, let's use this time to commit to building on the lessons of the last two-years, the progress we've made, and opportunities that lie ahead.

- LEADING EDGE

