



Working smarter in the new hybrid world of work

Five steps businesses can take today to unlock the
potential of their teams

*Insights from business leaders and employees
across the Middle East and Africa*



Across the region, businesses share a common challenge: employees don't feel they are making the most of their workday.

In fact, people feel that up to 50% of their worktime is not well utilized.





What's behind this?

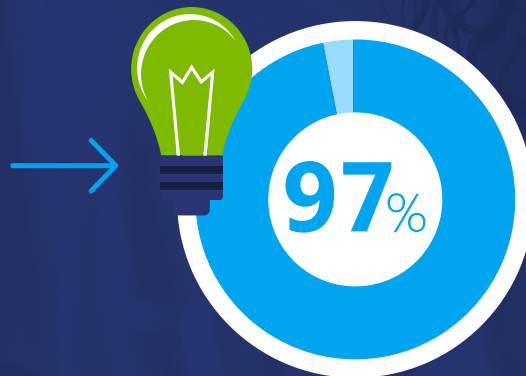
The top-five biggest culprits, according to workers:

1. Seeking approvals from managers
2. Unnecessary interruptions from colleagues
3. Tracking down team members for ideas
4. Searching for information
5. Unnecessary communications – including meetings, emails and calls

The bottom line is that businesses are sitting on a huge, untapped opportunity. This is all time that could be spent engaging with customers, improving products and services or driving operational efficiencies. Companies that help workers better maximize their workdays will unlock greater productivity, creativity and employee engagement.

It's not surprising that almost every leader (97%) cites workplace innovation and flexibility as a top transformation priority.

Read on for practical steps businesses can take *today*.



* Microsoft commissioned research across five markets in the Middle East and Africa in September 2020: Turkey, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and South Africa. The online survey was designed and conducted by KRC Research in partnership with Boston Consulting Group and supervised by Dr. Michael Parke, professor at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. KRC polled approximately 3,000 managers and employees from large (250+ staff) businesses, with an average sample size of 600 respondents per country (500 employees and 100 managers). The survey included respondents from 11 industries: basic materials, consumer goods, consumer services, financials, health care, industrials, energy, public sector, technology, telecommunications and utilities. Respondents were not informed that Microsoft commissioned the survey.

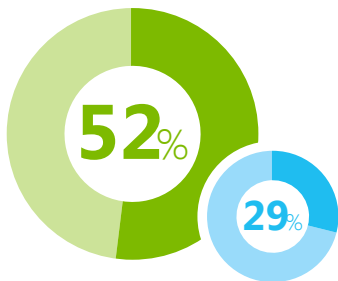




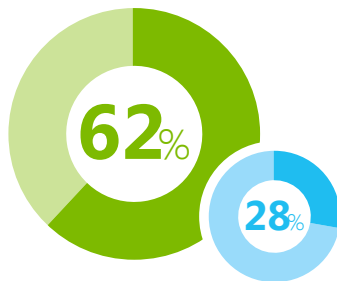
1. Empower employees – balancing autonomy with empathy

The most innovative companies* tend to share a common trait: managers empower employees to make their own decisions.

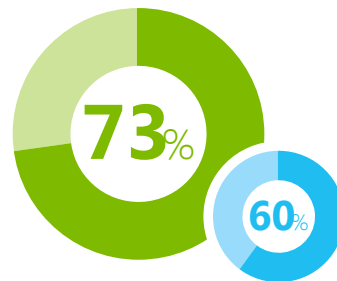
“It’s okay to make decisions without a manager”



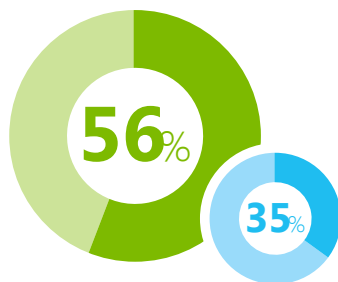
Turkey
52% vs. 29% in less innovative cultures



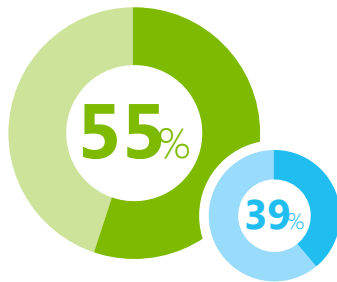
United Arab Emirates
62% vs. 28% in less innovative cultures



Qatar
73% vs. 60% in less innovative cultures



South Africa
56% vs. 35% in less innovative cultures



Saudi Arabia
55% vs. 39% in less innovative cultures

*Innovation was determined by looking at multiple variables including levels of innovation around products and services; customer experience; ways of working; and operations.



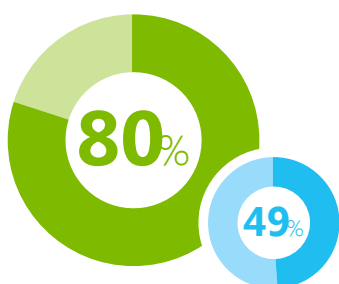
Practical guidance for business leaders

Technology tools can be an effective way to empower employees while also maintaining transparency and accountability. For example, Microsoft Planner – available as part of Microsoft Office 365 – helps organize teamwork with open, visual task management. In addition, the Tasks experience brings together Microsoft Planner and Microsoft To Do into Microsoft Teams, giving leaders one place to manage team plans and individual tasks.

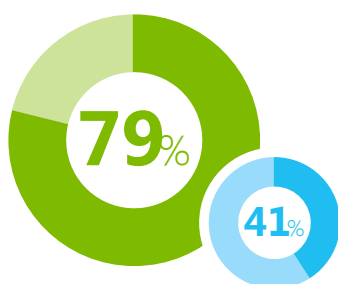
The most effective team leaders empower their people, but they also take the time to understand and appreciate each team member's unique challenges and passions – both inside and outside of work. Effective managers work with team members to help them achieve balance so they are meeting their professional and personal goals. When looking at companies that report the highest levels of innovation, there's a dramatic difference in terms of the percentage of team leaders who actively protect employees' work/life balance.



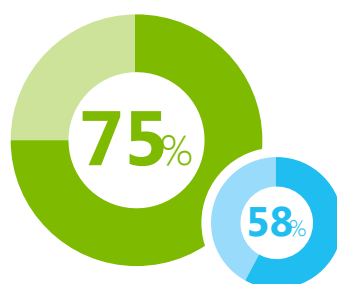
“My manager protects my work/life balance”



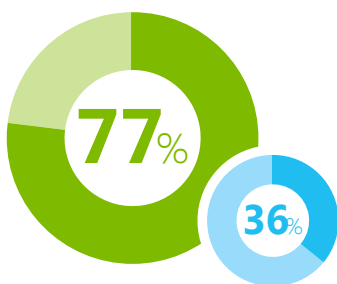
Turkey
80% vs. 49% in less innovative companies



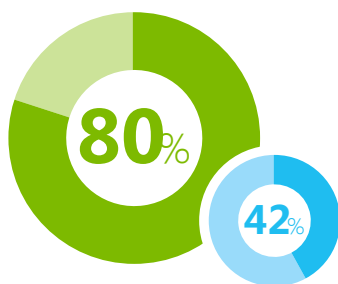
United Arab Emirates
79% vs. 41% in less innovative companies



Qatar
75% vs. 58% in less innovative companies



South Africa
77% vs. 36% in less innovative companies



Saudi Arabia
80% vs. 42% in less innovative companies

This approach to leadership helps ensure empathy becomes embedded in a company's culture. So every employee exercises empathy in how they engage with colleagues and customers, shaping a more trusting, collaborative spirit.

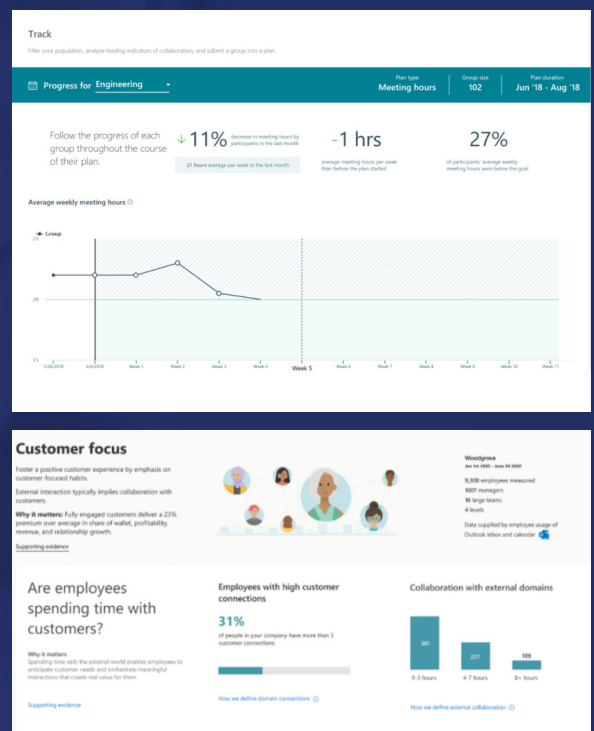


Practical guidance for business leaders

Data combined with empathy can have a synergistic effect.

Workplace Analytics leverages Office 365 collaboration data to deliver insights for enterprise productivity – helping leaders hone in on organizational practices that drive the best business outcomes; including patterns around optimal times for focused work, customer engagement and collaboration. Actionable insights help address detrimental factors such as meeting overload; as well as organization siloes where greater collaboration would better advance company objectives.

In short, these insights help empathic managers ensure their people are working smarter, not just harder – and can achieve the balance they need in their lives.



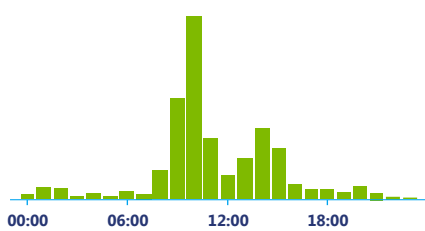


2. Protect people's ability to focus

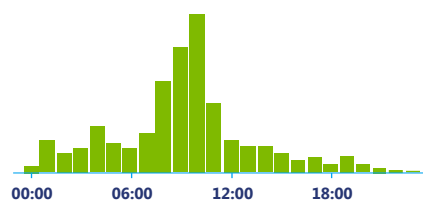
Each person has particular windows of time throughout the day when they are able to focus the best and devote their full energy to the task at hand. This is sometimes called working in a 'flow state.' For many people, this time is in the morning between 8:30 and 10:00. But, it's important to realize that everyone is different.

Regardless, in a hybrid world of work it may not be as easy as it once was for people to psychologically set aside time for this type of work. When everyone was sitting in an office, a person might duck into a conference room for some quiet time to write a proposal or draft a budget. But, in a home office it can be trickier 'switching off' emails, messages or calls.

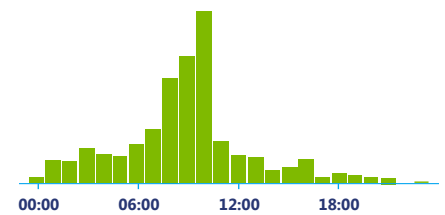
Best times for working in a flow state



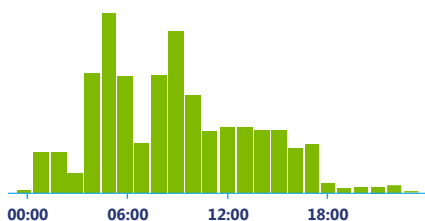
Turkey



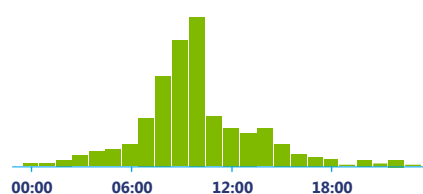
United Arab Emirates



Saudi Arabia



Qatar



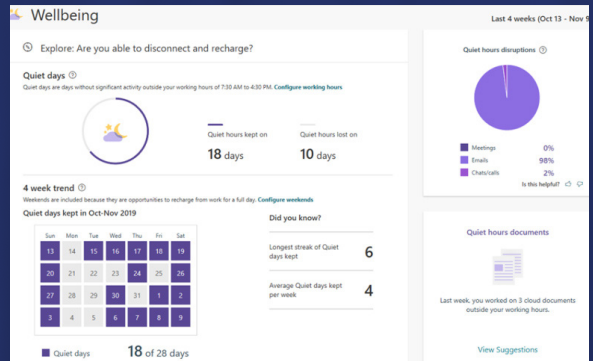
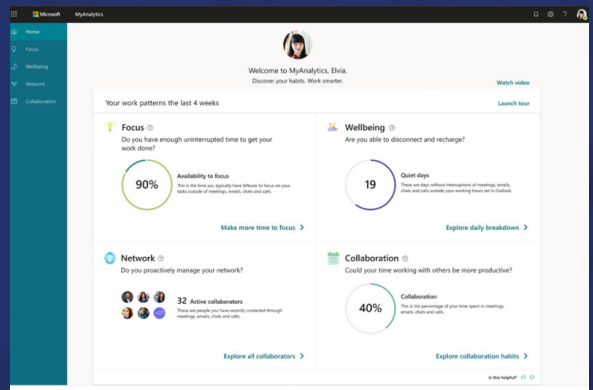
South Africa



Practical guidance for business leaders

Empowering your people with data about their work habits can be an effective way to give workers the insights they need to better take control of their day.

MyAnalytics is part of Office 365 and offers workers private, personalized insights that help people take control of their week, helping them find the best time for focused work, the ideal time for catching up on email, and the optimal times for connecting with important people. Further, it helps people holistically, helping them ensure they are taking time to unplug and restore their energy levels.





3. Unlock the power of people by unlocking the potential of your data

Data is increasingly recognized as the lifeblood of organizations. With the cloud, every company has the ability to cost-effectively store and process massive amounts of data. With AI-powered tools, businesses can extract actionable, predictive insights that can help every worker make smarter decisions.

Despite all of this potential, finding the right information and identifying the best knowledge experts is one of the biggest time-wasters according to employees. Key issues can include: knowing where to search; knowing which tools to use; and not feeling confident in the accuracy of information they find.

As business leaders tackle this issue there are three broad variables to consider:

- ✓ **Knowledge identification:** how do you best audit the information you have and organize it in a way that's discoverable?
- ✓ **Knowledge curation:** how do you make it easy and natural for your people to continually add to your institutional knowledge?
- ✓ **Knowledge discovery:** how do you make information fast and easy for your people to find?





Practical guidance for business leaders

Instilling good data management might seem like a daunting task. It does not have to be. This is an area where artificial intelligence can dramatically help and ensure organizations are leveraging the ingenuity of their people and the depth of their data.

For example, Microsoft's Project Cortex features AI-powered tools that can help with every facet of content management and discovery:

- ✓ Automatically helps identify key subject matters and organize existing content and information
- ✓ Automates data entry to help workers best capture and record new intelligence
- ✓ Makes finding the right content faster and more intuitive for workers

Please find additional information on Project Cortex (provided in English) [here](#).

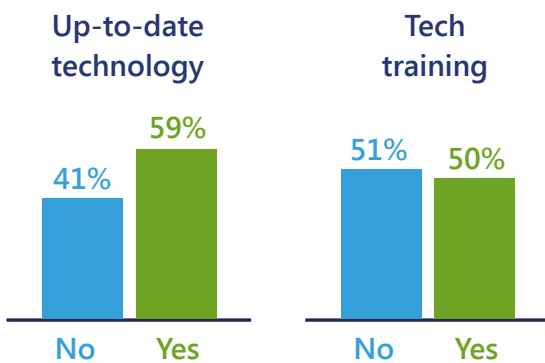




4. Revisit technology training for all employees

Drawing from the research, the majority of workers have the tech tools they need to get their jobs done. Yet, more than half say they don't have the training necessary to use those tools. There's a significant opportunity for companies to drive business value from the tools and services they already have. For example, MyAnalytics is included as part of Microsoft Office 365.

Training and tech enablement across the Middle East and Africa





Practical guidance for business leaders

Training doesn't need to be expensive or elaborate. For example, your organization might institute virtual peer-led sessions, where employees talk about success they have had on initiatives, and the tools and behaviors implemented to achieve the outcomes.

Further, there are many quality, free resources available online. For example [Microsoft Learn](#) offers free trainings for people of all backgrounds.

Lastly, it is absolutely key that managers lead by example. People can have the latest technology tools and the right skills to use those tools – but if those tools and skills aren't integrated into a team's daily workflow they won't be driving business value.





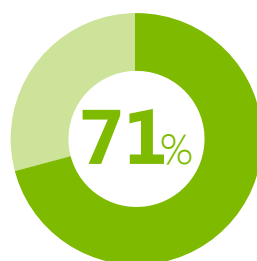
5. Revisit training for managers

For most organizations the work week was traditionally structured around a central office where employees spent the majority of their working time.

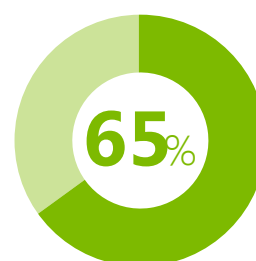
The pandemic has changed that. Time spent working from home during lockdowns and social distancing has changed people's expectations – both leaders and workers want more flexibility in their week. In fact, 93% of leaders expect hybrid ways of working to continue.

This move represents new challenges for managers who not only must ensure deadlines are met and targets are achieved, they need to make certain teams stay cohesive and engaged. In a hybrid world of work, effective managers balance giving people the space they need to get their jobs done and make their own decision while also ensuring people get regular coaching and feedback necessary to support development. Getting this balance right is no easy feat. Skilling and reskilling will be important for many organizations.

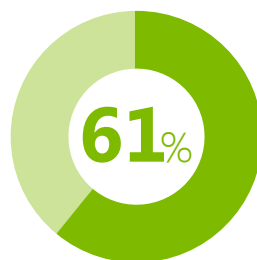
Managers: "I don't feel prepared to delegate and empower team members who are working remotely"



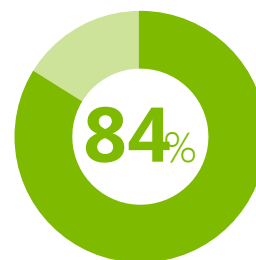
Turkey



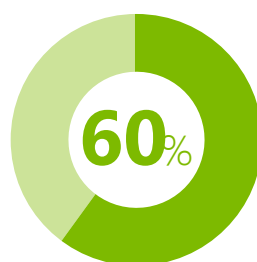
United Arab Emirates



Saudi Arabia



Qatar



South Africa



Practical guidance for business leaders

For many business, there is an opportunity to revisit or initiate coaching programs for managers. The power of coaching comes not by way of telling people what to do, but by helping people define their objectives and ensuring they continually adapt and learn. In a world where change is the only constant, embracing change and placing a high value on continuous learning helps make certain that companies stay competitive.

As Satya Nadella summarized: "The learn-it-all does better than the know-it-all."





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