

Bring your best self to work

Read on to discover why people should bring their best selves to work if they're going to do their best work.

“It’s going to have to be a really long ladder”

Many companies still offer employees a linear career path. But people don’t really see it as much of a reward these days. Their careers are no longer about a single job. They don’t always think about moving from junior manager to senior manager. In fact, some of them may not even want to be managers at all.

Instead, they look for what Helen calls a “squiggly career”.

That’s no bad thing. With a bit of luck, we’re all going to be working for a long time. So, it’s going to have to be a really long ladder if all we’re going to do is keep moving up it. In addition, when people move around horizontally they’re widening their skillset, and that can really add value to the company.

What this means is that we need a much more individual way of managing people’s careers if we’re to help them feel fulfilled at work.



“Employee engagement doesn’t have to involve progressing until you’re as senior as you could be”

Moving up the ladder may be absolutely right for some people. But not always. Employee engagement doesn’t have to involve progressing until you’re as senior as you could be. Managers need to have an honest conversation with employees to find out what they really want.

If it’s a productive conversation, managers will be clear about the vision for the team. About how the individual fits into that vision and the key skills and strengths they’ll bring to it. But it has to be a two-way discussion where the manager also talks about how the vision could help the employee.

“The more expert you consider yourself, the more closed-minded you are to new ideas and new approaches”

People today are likely to have around 40 different jobs, and that may – wrongly – colour the way we look at a CV. Instead, hiring managers should be seeing them as people who are determined to grow. It’s no longer particularly important that you’ve stayed in a job for five years. In fact, research says “The more expert you consider yourself, the more closed-minded you are to new ideas and new approaches.”

The opposite, of course, is equally true. The more people move around companies, the more new ideas and new perspectives they’ll bring into an organisation. That can help improve creativity and increase the chances of having a culture that’s about working together.

Even so, the employee must be able to justify all that moving around. If they’ve shifted from company to company and job to job, they need to be very clear on why, and on what they really stand for.



“It doesn’t really matter if you take Friday off”

When people want the freedom to do their best work, what does that really mean? They may be best in the morning. Or in the evening. Maybe they want to be at their desk, have no breaks but just have Friday off. Whichever it is, we need to respect their choice and set up the right processes if we’re to get the best out of people.

We still judge people on the hours they work. The 40-hour week is out of date. It no longer represents our lifestyles. It’s time we changed from measuring the number of hours people work, to measuring what they actually achieve. If we do, we can say to people that it doesn’t really matter if you take Friday off. What matters is having the freedom to do your best work.

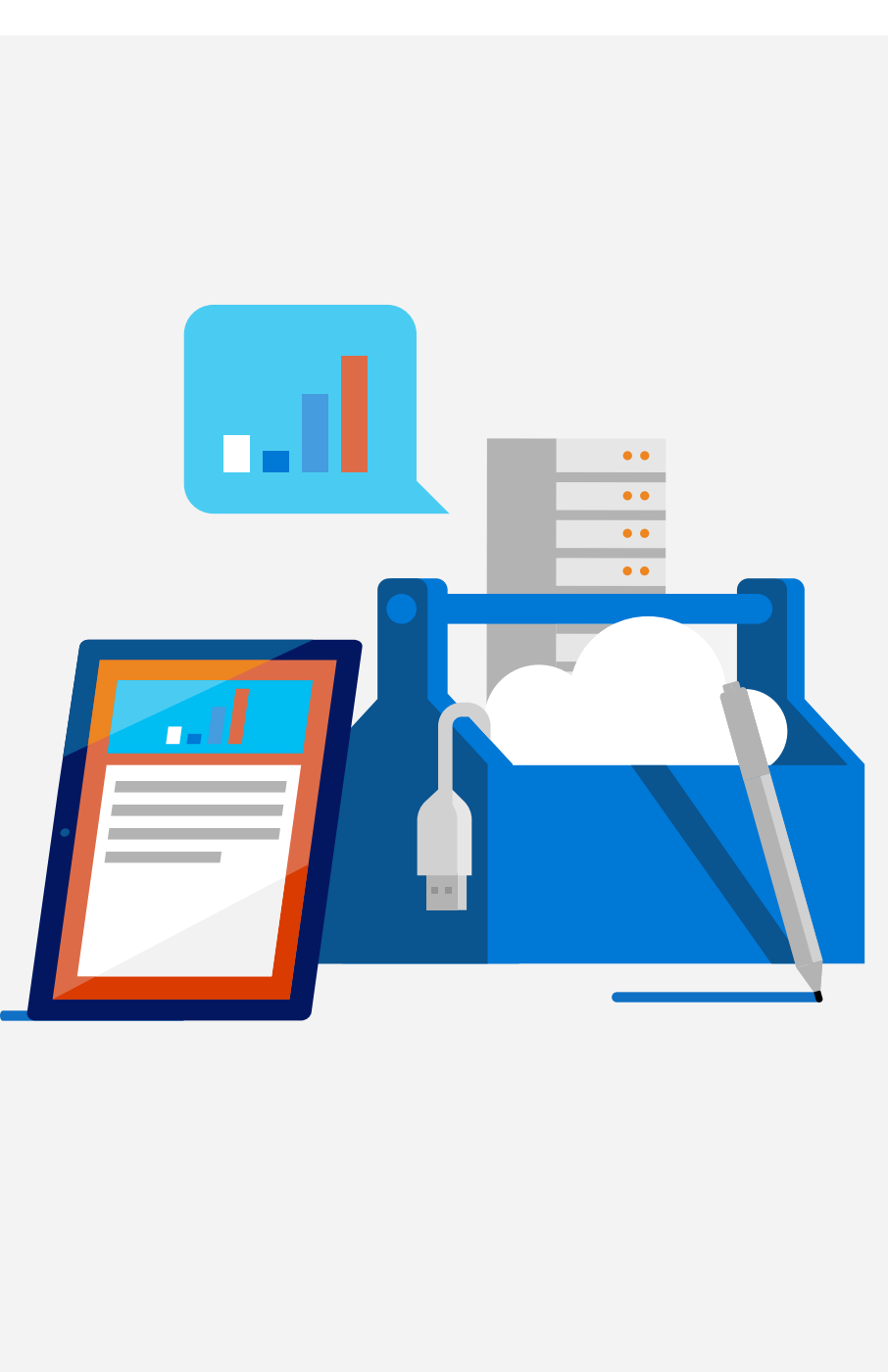
“We’d be tied to the old model”

Technology’s a massive factor in enabling us to change the way we look at careers and to work even better. Let’s be honest – if it weren’t for the fact we can work in different places and even remotely, we’d be tied to the old model. But even so, the way we work today can prove to be a massive cultural change that has to come from the top.

Some teams are entirely remote, for example, and their businesses are highly successful. Those organisations are geared to work that way. That’s the sort of change that should be led from the top.



“People can make their organisation 22% more profitable and 21% more productive”



In conclusion, the most important thing for people to do is work out how and where they add value. Whether you’re a freelancer, full time, or part time, that’s why a company pays you. If you can be really clear what your strengths are, it’s a personal win. You can start having successful conversations

about where and how you can do your best work with your employer. And if everyone can do that, there’s a win for the business as well. Gartner’s research suggests that people can make their organisation 22% more profitable and 21% more productive.

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