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HR HAS TO BE A CREATIVE EQUAL”

KIRSTIN FURBER
PEOPLE DIRECTOR
CHANNEL 4

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ARTICLE BY JENNI FIELD, FOUNDER, BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIST
& AUTHOR - REDEFINING COMMUNICATIONS

HYBRID OR HERRING?

AS WE REDEFINE WORK - NOT JUST HOW WE WORK, BUT HOW WE THINK ABOUT WORK IN SOCIETY TODAY - ALL FOCUS AND EFFORT IS BEING CHANNELLED INTO DEFINING THE HYBRID WORKFORCE. BUT IS HYBRID JUST THE LATEST BUZZWORD IN A LONG LINE OF CORPORATE JARGON, THAT ESSENTIALLY STOPS US FROM MOVING FORWARD?

Talking about hybrid working allows us to use opinion - not data - to make decisions, narrowing our focus to one aspect of change, location. Technology, a global pandemic, multiple generations in the workplace and a politically motivated society means work can no longer be in a separate bucket to life. Hybrid working is more than working in an office a few days a week, it's about changing how work fits in with the balanced lives we seek to lead in a modern society. When we talk about hybrid working, what we need to discuss is fundamentally changing how we work, based on society and technology. We need to look at organisational culture and the behaviours that align to that culture. We need to train people to have conversations that build workplace relationships, so we become more human and connected. This is the opportunity to change in a way we've never experienced before, a chance to reimagine workplace culture for everyone. We must be deliberate and think about how culture can be the key driver of growth.

This is the biggest shift in working practices for decades, if not centuries and, as always, we can learn from history. During the industrial revolution, we didn't grab the chance to reimagine factories when electricity came in. Instead, we just replaced steam with electricity, using the same production processes. Working practices remained stagnant for 25 years. It's the same today,

we adapted in the pandemic to working at home and "lifted and shifted" to create a model that allowed us to progress through. Now we need to redefine the rhythm of our organisations. What stays, what goes and importantly, what kind

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of workplace do we want to embrace? We can't focus purely on location, we must reimagine the factory. Executive teams need to think differently, challenge norms and question default thinking.

Many people say how great working from home has been for productivity. With the lack of commute, the ease of being at home, many have claimed the office is dead. But they're wrong. Research carried out during the pandemic found

we're 20 percent less productive at home. This study isn't based on opinion, but on data around how people work. The longer hours people have worked to complete the same amount of work means we're less productive. Importantly, working from home has a detrimental impact on communication, collaboration and innovation - all fundamentally key to productivity. To reimagine work, we need to listen to data, not just opinions and focus on giving people the ability to choose. Think "freedom within a framework" - our intentions and our reality are often different - we need a mix of data and conversations to help us think differently and explore new ways of working.

As we transition from the global pandemic, we must not rush to find solutions, before we delve into the detail or the root cause, that is just plastering over cracks. Those cracks can quickly turn to chaos. If we understand we are in a pandemic revolution, we can diagnose and delve underneath issues we're facing, fix things long term and step into a place of calm. A place where people feel psychologically safe is where culture is clear, behaviours are aligned to purpose and where we invest in helping people to lead with empathy.

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