

**CHALLENGE**  
**THE**  
**FUTURE**  
**OF**  
**WORK**

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FUTURE  
OF  
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# INTRO- DUCTION

Here at Bene we are always curious – about the future, and about the world in general. And most of all about the area we work in: about our customers, their employees, their fields of business. How do they work? What makes them successful? What motivates them and concerns them? What does the future look like for them? And – more importantly – what are their hopes for the future?

We don't have a crystal ball. So we like to talk to our partners, to listen to them, and keep listening. To identify the key motifs. And to pick out the finer nuances.

That is why in 2018 we published the first part, the Bene Future of Work Report. It summarises everything we learned about the future of work from a series of discussions with around 40 experts from international companies and start-ups, and with researchers and consultants from Berlin to Sydney and New York to London.

The report presents findings, forecasts and opinions on four areas that have a lasting impact on the future of work: digital transformation in different industries, management culture in large companies, how their employees work together, and the purpose of work that people associate with work today.

Our report has no conclusive answers or firm prognoses; it is a snapshot of impressions and ideas and the fascinating questions they provoke. Since the report was published, we have continued this dialogue with our customers and partners, given presentations and held round-table discussions all over the world,

advancing this essential discourse further. In our series "Talk to the Future of Work", we focus particularly on young entrepreneurs, researchers and creatives – the people who will actually experience and influence the future of work over the next few decades.

However, we wanted to understand it in even more precise detail. As precisely as possible. So using the report as a basis, we surveyed almost 1,200 people in companies all over the world. As a result, the qualitative analysis presented in the first Bene Future of Work Report can now be fleshed out with quantitative data in the second part, the Challenge the Future of Work: We scrutinise the experts' theories, exploring them in greater depth and focus.

We zoom in on the most important and fascinating questions on the future of work: What do digitalisation and artificial intelligence mean for the company and its employees? How can the inevitable changes ahead be managed for the best? How should managers interpret their role today, and what new skills do they need? What is the best way for teams of employees to work together so that they generate innovations, and what is it that motivates people to work at all today? What is the status quo of work, and what should it ideally be like in the future?



To find valid answers to these questions, we partnered with two leading research institutions: Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), which has a Chair of Innovation and Technology Management; the current chairholder, Prof. Marion Weissenberger-Eibl, is also director of the Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research (ISI). She and her team helped us to devise the set of questions and distribute it to thousands of companies.

Many of the answers confirm these proposed in the first Bene Future of Work Report. And many answers took us completely by surprise.

For us it was very worthwhile: we now have a better understanding of companies and their employees. And while we still cannot see into the future, we can approach it with more confidence that we are ready to engage with it. Because we have a clearer picture of where there is scope for shaping the future.

Do join the discussion! Here at Bene we are curious to know what you think.

# RE-SEARCH

Our survey is based on the statements of 1,186 people in 34 countries, and includes a wide range of industries, company sizes and divisions, age

groups, professions and functions within companies.

# DESIGN

- 68 per cent of those surveyed define the company they work for as dynamic. (Dynamism was measured as growth in revenue and workforce during the previous three years.)
- 56 per cent of the participants work in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- The 1,186 participants work in almost as many different companies.
- Two thirds of the companies are involved in the B2B sector.
- Around a quarter of the participants hold management and administrative/secretarial roles, 50 per cent have no management responsibilities.

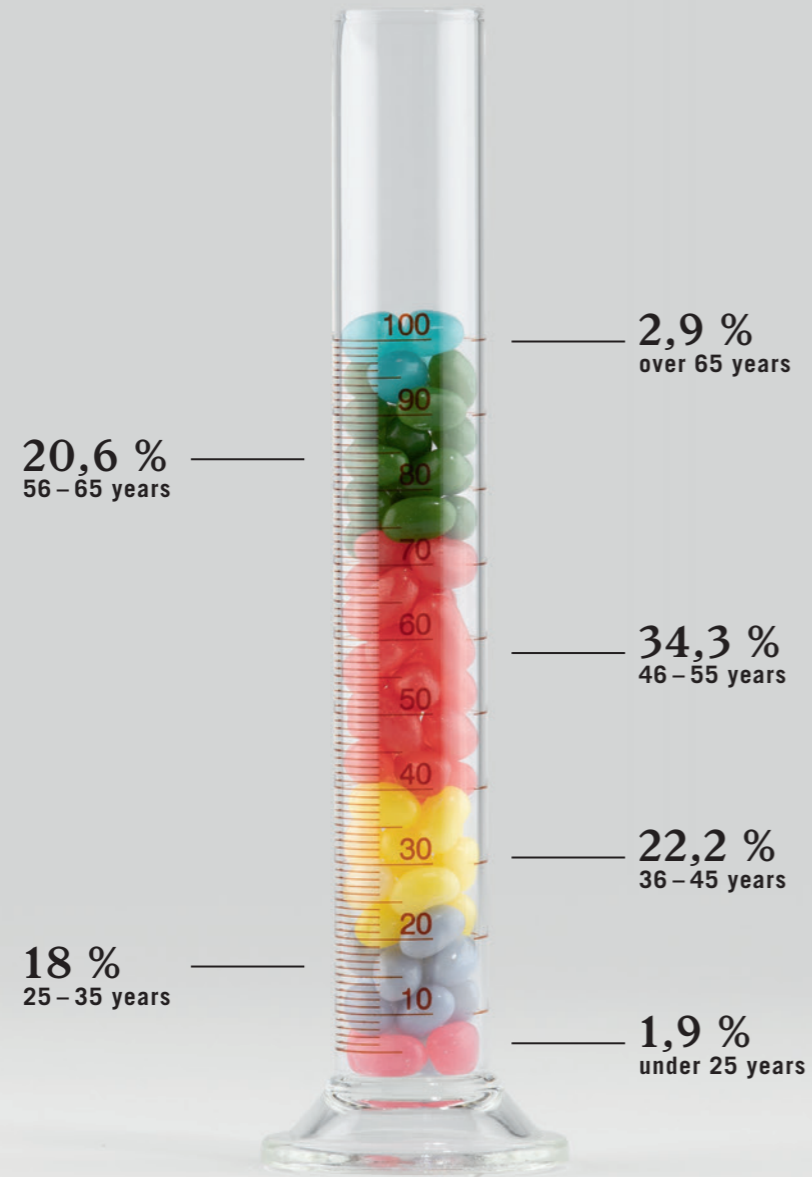
The proportions of female and male participants were almost exactly equal.



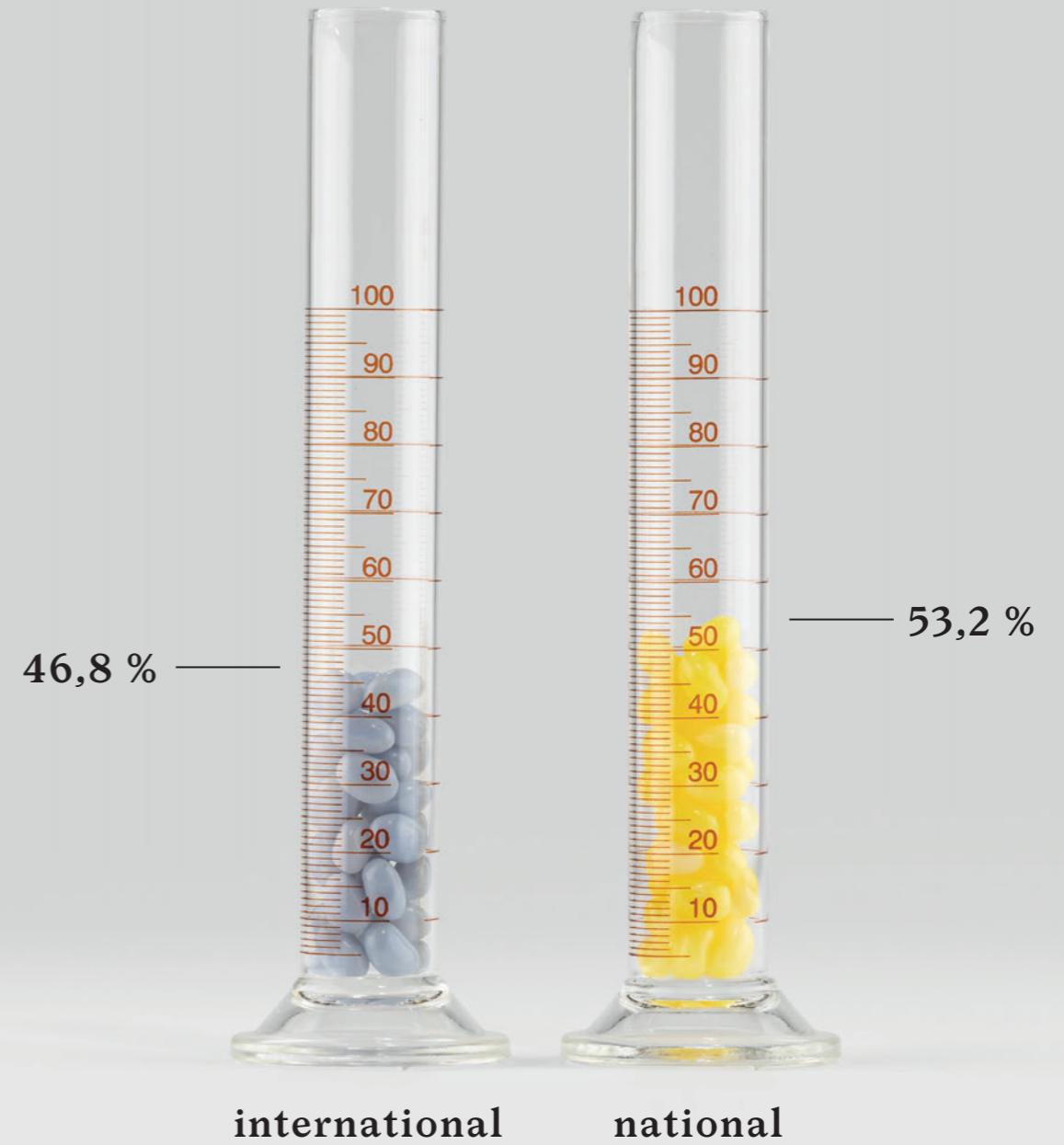
48,9 %  
female

51,1 %  
male

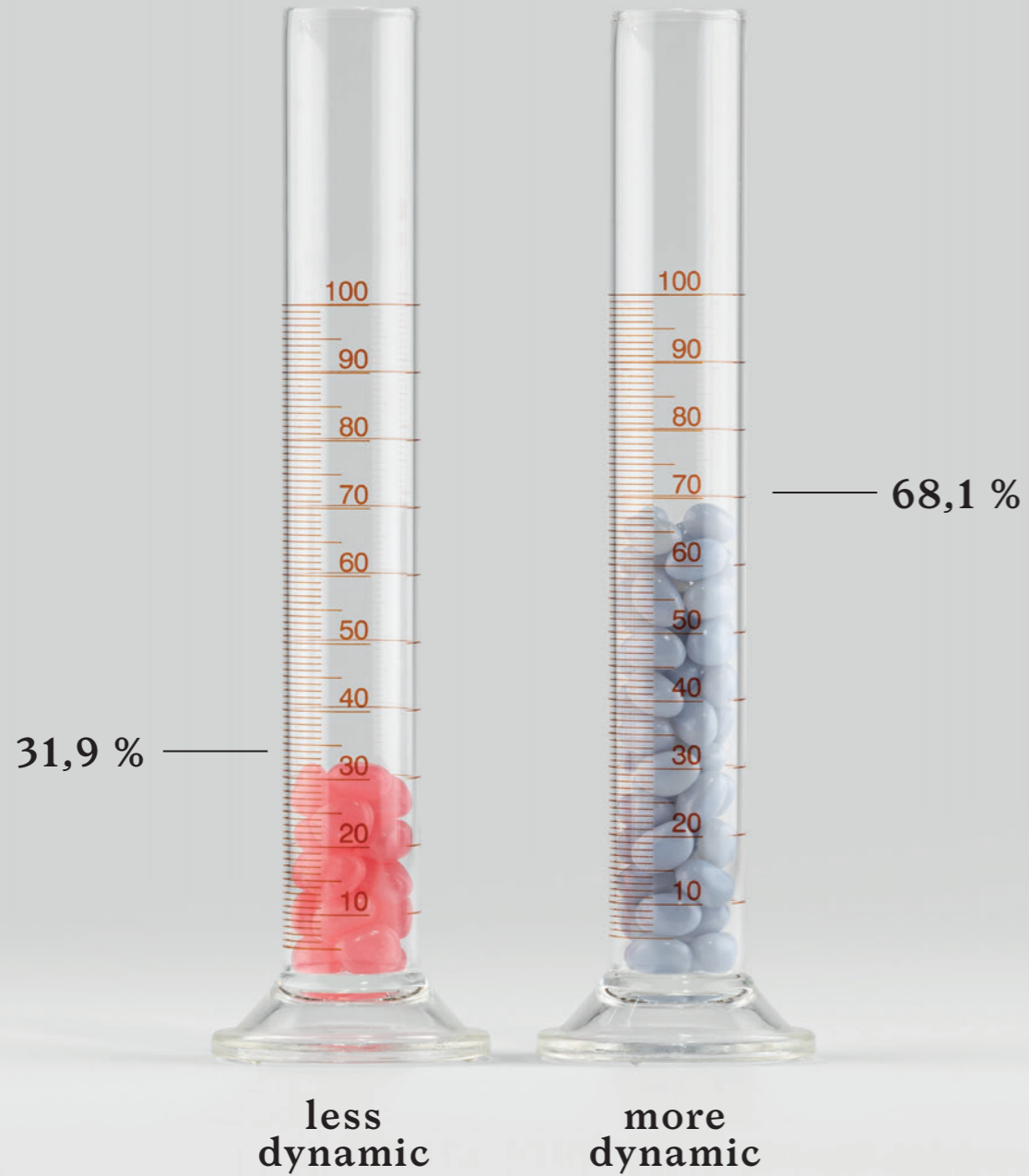
Age of the participants:



Do you work for a national or international company?



Compared to our competitors, our company is ...



How much professional experience do you have?

● 13



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○

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**DIGITAL  
TRANS-  
FOR-  
MATION**



# DIGITAL TRANS- FOR- MATION

## INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND MACHINES – A MATTER OF FORMATION

For several years now digitalisation has been the driver of profound, we might even say disruptive, change. Digitalisation has made a networked world possible to an unprecedented extent; it changed the way we communicate and behave as consumers, how we love, live, lead and do business. And now it is bringing about even more dramatic changes in manufacturing – “industry 4.0” – and office-based work. Artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly allows automation of functions that many people believed were so complex that they would be the preserve of humans for a long time yet, such as carrying out entire processes, from diagnosis to planning. This supposed certainty is diminishing and giving way to the recognition that AI and automation will have a substantial impact on our everyday working lives and will change them for ever.

For Bene this was why our survey needed to examine this aspect of the digital transformation particularly closely: How do working people perceive technological change today, and how do they feel about the anticipated developments of the future? The results of the survey unsettle some supposed certainties and are all the more striking as the impression often emerges in the media, and from other studies, that AI is frequently regarded as a threat. But is that actually the case?

The photos are classics, almost stereotypes now: one shows a little Asian girl, about five or six years old, stretching her arm happily and excitedly towards a robot arm, and the other shows a little boy, also Asian, around the same age, smiling as he reaches out with his index finger to touch the index finger of a humanoid robot figure. This is how the accounting firm Ernst & Young illustrated their report on “AI, my friend and helper” (2019), in which the interaction between people and the various manifestations of AI is

described using concepts like “guardian angel”, “little helper”, “information source”, “colleague” and “best friend”.

In Japan these kinds of positive attributes have been associated with the narrative of robots, AI, and new technologies in general for several decades already. Japanologist Isabelle Prochaska-Meyer from the University of Vienna refers to the way robots have been deeply embedded in Japanese popular culture ever since the 1950s, as comic-book (manga) characters, such as the childlike android “Astro Boy” and the robot cat “Doraemon”, a kind of Japanese goblin, – two appealing characters that have helped to shape the perspectives of recent generations. According to Prochaska-Meyer, this openness to everything technological – encouraged from the earliest stage by policymakers, universities and companies – is also evident in the high level of acceptance of “social robots” as assistants in care homes and retirement homes, or as guides at trade fairs, or for clearing up after earthquakes.

The example of the Japanese “robotopia” shows how powerfully the narrative about living with new technologies in the future is influenced by cultural, political and social traditions and mindsets – making it clear why the narratives in other countries and cultures may turn out quite differently. Certainly in western societies, positive descriptors for AI such as “helper”, “guardian angel” and “colleague” seem to be overshadowed by more threatening attributes such as “job killer” or “big brother”.

### EVERYTHING THAT CAN BE AUTOMATED, WILL ALSO BE AUTOMATED.

One of the gloomier – and much quoted – studies was published by two researchers at Oxford University, who in 2013 examined more than 700 occupations in the US and estimated that automation could potentially put 47 per cent of jobs at risk there. The study was heavily criticised, but other studies also depicted truly alarming scenarios: robotics, artificial intelligence, and also synthetic biology and 3D printing, as well as the convergence of different technologies could push global unemployment as high as 24 per cent by the year 2050, according to experts in one study conducted by the Bertelsmann Foundation in 2016, using the Delphi method (“2050: The Future of Work”). Some survey participants even predicted up to 50 per cent by the year 2050, or “almost complete unemployment”, on the grounds that “anything that can be automated, will be,” with technological advances affecting almost every single profession, including knowledge-based office jobs.



# PASCAL GEMMER

... is co-founder of Dark Horse Innovation, a leading innovation consultancy in Berlin, and editor of various publications on design thinking and digital innovation.

“What would happen if all the tasks that we can routinely do for ourselves – but don’t want to – could simply be handed over? No working out travel expenses. No e-mails to arrange appointments. No tax returns. No filing. Could we find a better way to use our time?”

Probably. The world is full of unsolved problems that can’t be tackled in routine ways. “How can we motivate ourselves to take fewer flights?” That is not the kind of problem that machines can solve for us. It is a hard nut to crack, and one that we humans must tackle in the near future, if not sooner. Creative and strategic thinking, problem solving, art, and above all, interacting with each other, will be our metier for the foreseeable future. And as the years go by we will have more time for these things.

How and if we make the most of this time is up to us. But letting go is difficult. We love routine. We are trained to think and act schematically, and to work according to guidelines. We fear that algorithms will take over what we are good at, and that we will soon be treated by them instead of by doctors. Scepticism is justified. But the opportunities are huge.”

# STEPHAN HOLZINGER

... is the CEO of RHÖN-KLINIKUM AG in Germany. In 2018 the company treated more than 850,000 patients across its five clinics.

“We use artificial intelligence for example to itemise services provided and for medical searches in patients’ records, to analyse diagnostic images, and also for labour-intensive processes such as digitalising patients’ documents.”

It is understandable that these kinds of scenarios generate scepticism; this is evident for example in the online survey carried out in 2017 by the expert journal Technology Review (TR) and the Institute for Innovation and Technology (iit) on “Artificial intelligence and the future of work”. The 3,200 participants were admittedly not representative, as they were 95 per cent male, but as high school graduates in technical professions, the majority were categorised as knowledge workers in offices. Their picture of the future working environment is to a large extent negative:

- 79 per cent are (more or less) convinced that technological development defies any attempts to design or control it, on the principle that “if it’s doable, it will be done”.
- 63 per cent think it is unlikely that, in our future working lives, there will be more scope for intervention and decision-making, or for taking responsibility.
- 69 per cent believe it is likely that technological advances will abolish more jobs by the year 2025 than they will create.

## A SOBER LOOK AT THE REALITY

But there are other, more positive figures on the “future of work”, for example from the OECD in 2019. They suggest there may be only a 14 per cent reduction in jobs as a result of automation, but that 32 per cent of jobs will be subject to “substantial changes”. A complete loss of jobs is unlikely, however, according to this organisation of 36 countries, making reference to the labour market of the past: although employment in manufacturing industries fell by 20 per cent between 1995 and 2015, during the same period the number of jobs in the service sector rose by 27 per cent.

The question of what effects new technologies, and particularly AI, could actually have on the working environment over the next few decades, is too complex for simple answers. A massive loss of jobs, however, is not something that will occur “naturally”. A more sober view of the realities is provided in a study by McKinsey, dated 2016, which concludes that the potential for automation by robots and intelligent, learning machines varies

“dramatically” from one sector and occupation to another. “While automation will eliminate very few occupations entirely in the next decade, it will affect portions of almost all jobs to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the type of work they entail.” For their analysis the authors examined not only individual occupations, but also what time budgets for certain tasks could theoretically be achieved today by established technologies. They concluded that the greatest impact would be on “predictable physical activities” (78 per cent), data processing (69 per cent) and data collection (64 per cent); the least affected activities would be planning and creative tasks (18 per cent), and management and leadership tasks (9 per cent).

## INTELLIGENT MACHINERY ON THE ADVANCE

A newer McKinsey study from 2018 (“Skill Shift: Automation and the Future of the Workforce”) confirms this finding: it shows that by the year 2030 the need for basic and advanced technological skills in the workforce will grow the fastest, by 55 per cent (measured by the time budget for these activities), followed by social and emotional skills such as team management (+24 per cent), while the demand for physical and manual skills, and for simple cognitive skills such as data input and processing will decline (-14 per cent and -15 per cent, respectively).

In practice however, this does not mean that dozens of occupations will be made redundant by intelligent machines. For one thing, most occupations include portions of time spent not only on tasks that are easy to automate, but also on tasks that cannot be automated – a nurse, for example, renews a patient’s infusion (difficult to automate) but also brings meals to patients’ rooms and communicates their data to doctors and colleagues (easier to automate). On the other hand, say the McKinsey authors, technical feasibility is only one of several factors involved in the decision about whether to automate a task. The costs of automation also play a role, and the alternative costs of having the work done by people; the availability of potential employees and their qualifications, and the anticipated advantage beyond the pure cost comparison (e.g. higher productivity because of a lower error rate, greater output, higher quality). And social acceptance plays a role too: in theory a robot can take over many tasks done by a nurse; currently the prospect that this will become commonplace is not likely to please most patients.

# JÖRG-PETER SCHULTHEIS

... is a partner, project leader and Head of Development at CESA Spring-

Park GmbH, which is developing Europe's largest innovation district, SpringPark VALLEY, in Bad Vilbel near Frankfurt.

“Digitalisation and artificial intelligence are key themes in the world of work. On the one hand, there is increasing respect for the people who work in these fields, and on the other hand anxiety about our own incompetence in these areas is also growing constantly. Acceptance of AI and digitalisation can only be achieved with constant training and development. Only lifelong learning gives us the chance to keep abreast of the constantly changing dynamics of the working environment. Managers need to take responsibility for this and ensure their employees have access to continuing education. In tomorrow's world, which will be substantially influenced by AI, as humans we will focus increasingly on tasks that demand flexibility, and on activities

that are not planned, using intuition and creativity. These are functions and skills that machines do not (yet) have. The spatial working environment must be adapted to these new developments in the world of work, because only in an ambience that promotes creativity boundaries can be crossed and new things can arise, e.g. in the VALLEY SpringPark.”

## JOANNA PONIKOWSKA

... is an office manager in Warsaw for the international corporate law firm Dentons.

“I think managers should listen to employees in their own company in order to know their needs and expectations. But they should also carefully observe the influences and trends of the outside world. Excluding either of those will put leaders in danger of missing out on essential opportunities in the constantly changing world.”

In expert circles this situation is described as the “irony of automation” and often illustrated using the example of a highly automated factory. In this kind of industry 4.0 factory, malfunctions are more difficult to recognise and rectify, so this requires operators who understand the complex interactions of intelligent machinery and how to orchestrate them; if there are not enough of these highly skilled operators available, with the right qualifications, the result may be damage that outweighs the advantages of automation.

### WORK DOESN'T RUN OUT – IT GETS BETTER

There is no doubt that many sectors in the future will need fewer employees. However, no one would dispute that new jobs are also being created, and particularly jobs that need higher qualifications. “Clever computers will not take all our jobs – only the tedious ones,” as the Vienna publicist and political commentator Eric Frey writes. If robots take on our most laborious tasks, he suggests, there will be time for more interesting, challenging and meaningful activities. Teachers will have more time to teach well, because the computer will mark tests. Doctors will have more time for personal contact and attention, because an algorithm will make the diagnosis and suggest the appropriate treatment. The same would be true for carers, when robots help them to lift elderly patients from the bed into the wheelchair. Cooks in high-tech kitchens would have more time for the creative aspects of food preparation. At all levels of qualification, Eric Frey believes, there will also still be tasks that people can do better than machines. “We won't run out of work; it will just change – and almost always for the better.”

You could also say: Automation in the workplace, the interaction between people and machines, is not a matter of destiny – it is a matter of formation.

## EXCURSUS: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – HERE TO STAY

“Strong” artificial intelligence (AI), which can not only react to situations but also think ahead on its own initiative: plan, make decision and respond flexibly, may still be just a fantasy, and seems likely to remain so for many years yet, but “weak” artificial intelligence has been with us in our everyday private and working lives for a long time (and is no longer recognised as such by many people). It helps with more clearly defined problems by using existing data and machine learning to derive models and rules for the future (knowledge). For this is it crucial that large volumes of example data are available in the form of images, documents or voice recordings, which the system uses to “train” itself: a system that learns.

AI is embedded today in voice-activated personal assistants such as Siri, Echo, Alexa and Cortana, reminding us about appointments, answering questions, or managing household equipment and sending text messages at our beck and call. Since these machines are becoming increasingly able to recognise users' emotions, they may soon be able to choose the right music to suit our current mood. AI is used to detect hate posts in social media, and in the investment advice business. AI controls the first self-driving cars and autonomous drones for logistics companies. Learning systems answer questions in call centres and analyse medical images to recognise breast cancer, heart disease, osteoporosis and the first signs of skin cancer. In industrial manufacturing, AI optimises processes, spots defects before they cause disruptions, and when utilised in robots, AI works side-by-side with humans.

AI can write simple messages and prepare legal documents. In the insurance industry it is used to assess claims, it extracts data from medical reports, evaluates them and calculates the premiums due. Retailers use AI to improve stock availability and reduce warehousing costs, fashion chains use algorithms to match items of clothing and to make size recommendations for customers, which helps to reduce the rate of returns.



# KIM THORNTON-SMITH

... is a partner at designPAPER, a design agency in Perth, Australia.

“Technology is just getting better exponentially every month! We are right on the cusp of major innovations. The ability to walk into a meeting room, be immediately welcomed by the technology and get a presentation underway without fumbling with wires is now a reality. Technology will be seamless and ubiquitous. This will free up space and furnishings. Cloud storage and retrieval now make it possible for work to occur anywhere, anytime. Voice activated technologies often mentioned may have spatial and humanistic implications for the workplace. VR and AR will be big players however the hardware is currently ergonomically clumsy, but will gain traction once it becomes anthropomorphically natural, intuitive and easy to use.”

# JOACHIM DE VOS

... is the founder and CEO of the innovation hub Living Tomorrow, in Brussels.

“In the last few decades far too often we have travelled to the office just to sit through a presentation, without any interaction taking place. New technologies make it possible for us to communicate more efficiently and intelligently. The 75 employees in our Brussels team work all over the place – in clients’ offices, in the car, at home – and they love being able to use these new technologies to stay connected. And then when they come into the office they need spaces where they can continue their interaction.”

Electronics dealers use AI in their online shops to generate product descriptions automatically, based on product data. AI-based care robots bring meals to residents in care homes and clean floors, but they can also – since they are able to speak and learn – motivate residents to exercise or entertain them with quiz games.

## HUMAN RESSOURCES 2.0

In corporate personnel departments, artificial intelligence plays an increasingly important role. Even today AI is already able to run automated telephone interviews and preselect candidates using speech analysis. Digital recruitment assistants compare applicants’ skills and aims against other vacancies in the firm and may then suggest alternatives to the position they initially applied for. Some companies already use AI-based career development assistants to give employees individual coaching and suggest training programmes and networking opportunities.

## SUCCESSFUL AI SOLUTIONS REQUIRE THE INTERPLAY WITH PEOPLE

Some caution is needed here, however, warns the Fraunhofer Institute for Open Communication Systems: “Since the AI trains itself through machine learning based on training datasets, this is a ‘black-box process’: the human user cannot see the reasoning behind the AI’s decisions.” If there is a bias in the datasets, that bias is also learned by the AI – and prejudices are replicated. For example, if the selection of potential candidates for a management position is left to AI, it is conceivable that the AI will only suggest central European men, because positions like this have in the past been filled almost exclusively from that group. Since the assessment is conducted using a black-box process, this bias is not evident, and the apparent objectivity of the process is illusory.

A study by the accounting firm Ernst & Young has also sounded warning bells: The expectations surrounding AI are driven by a strong degree of hype, the study suggests. Decision makers are often just looking for AI applications they can use in their company without reflecting critically on the underlying technology. “Anyone designing AI solutions should focus not only on their technological development but also consider the interaction between humans and AI. [...] It is vital that there is informed discussion about the implications of human-AI interactions [...]”



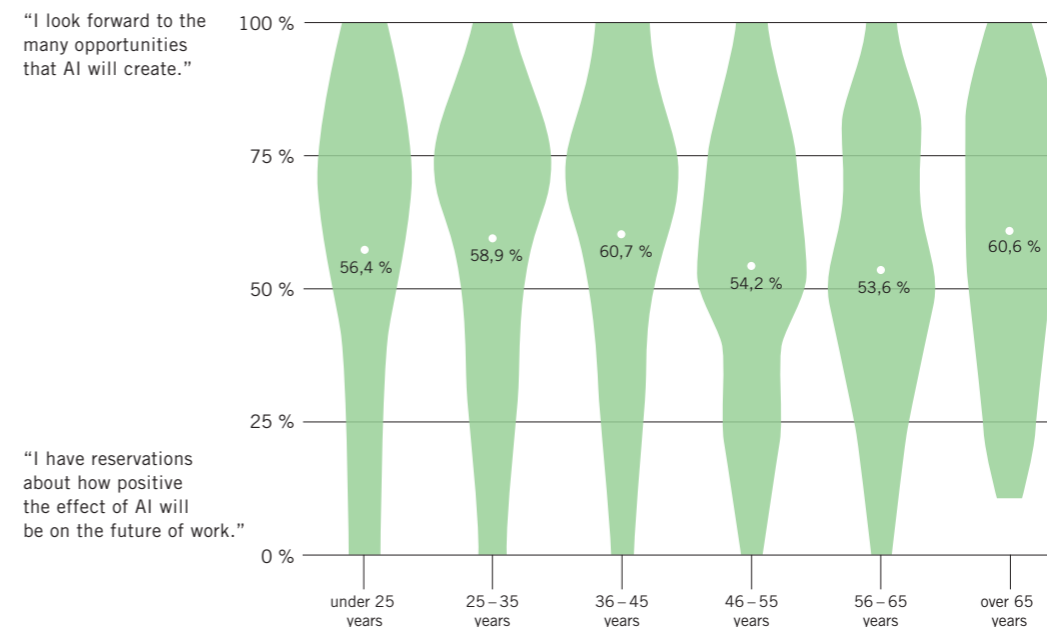
# THE MOST STRIKING FINDINGS OF THE BENE SURVEY

One of the most surprising results of our survey – which stands in contrast to the narrative often advanced in the media – is that a majority of the participants say they are “looking forward to the many opportunities resulting from artificial intelligence (AI)”.  
([graphic 1](#))

Under-45s have a particularly positive view of AI, surpassed only by over-65s. The greatest reservations about the impact of AI on the future of work – though even here it is not very pronounced – come from the 46- to 65-year-old group. Even in companies that are perceived to be less dynamic by its employees, there is an overwhelmingly positive view of AI. ([graphic 2](#))

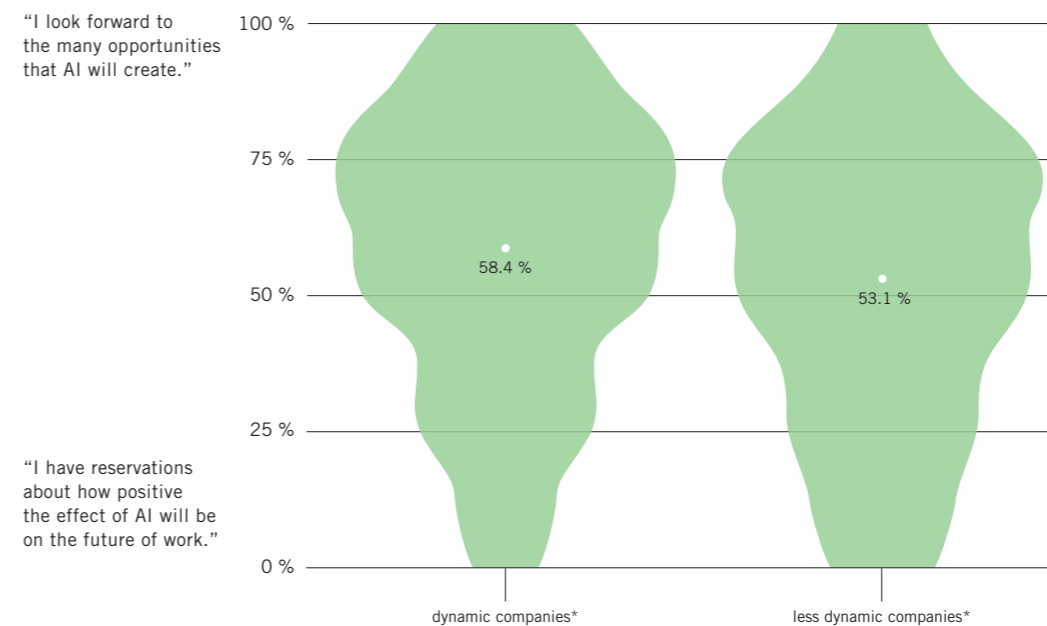
graphic 1

When I think about AI ...



graphic 2

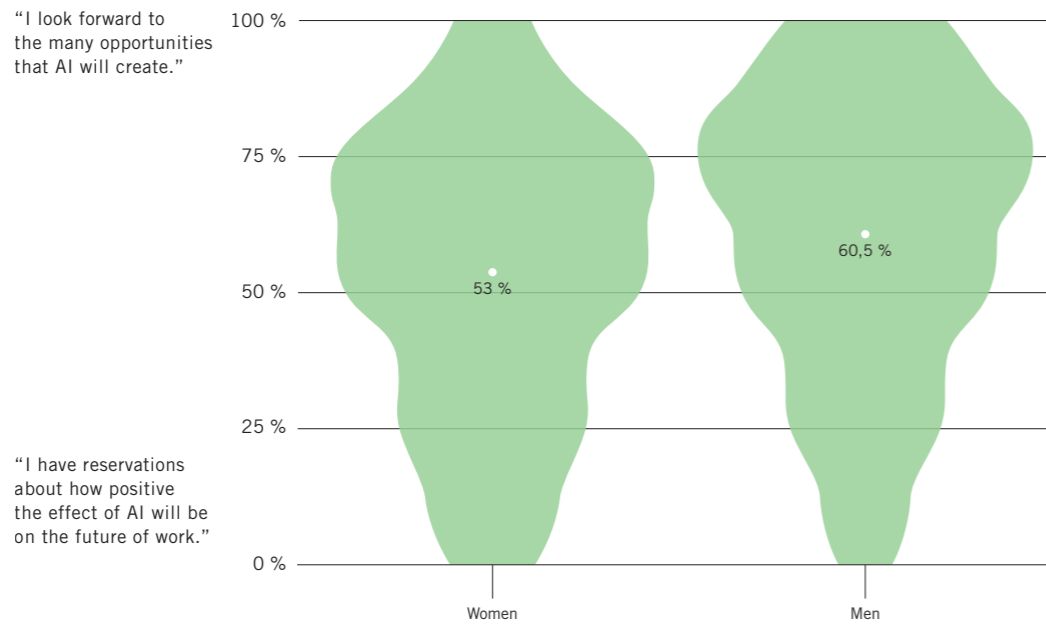
When I think about AI ...



\*dynamic of the company compared to competitors

graphic 3

When I think about AI ...



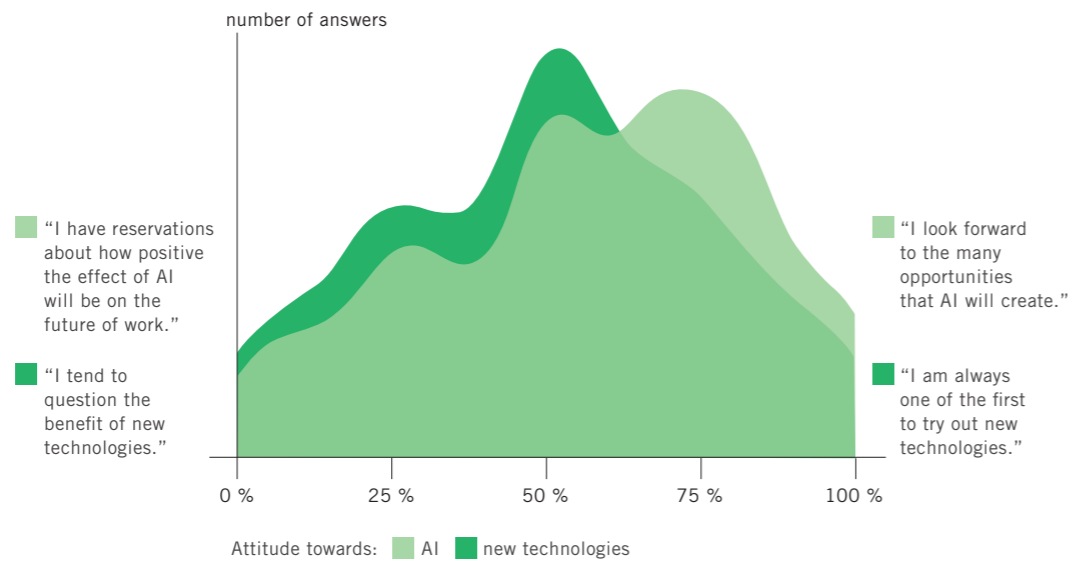
There were hardly any differences in attitudes towards AI between women and men. (graphic 3)

In contrast to the positive attitude towards AI, the majority of those surveyed believe that their company is not well prepared for the changes expected as a result of AI – and this is true in all sectors. (graphic 5)

It is striking that there is a substantially more positive attitude towards AI in comparison to new technologies in general that we defined in our survey as technologies for pure automation. AI on the other hand is defined as self-learning systems such as voice-activated assistants, smart home technology, autonomous driving and predictive maintenance. (graphic 4)

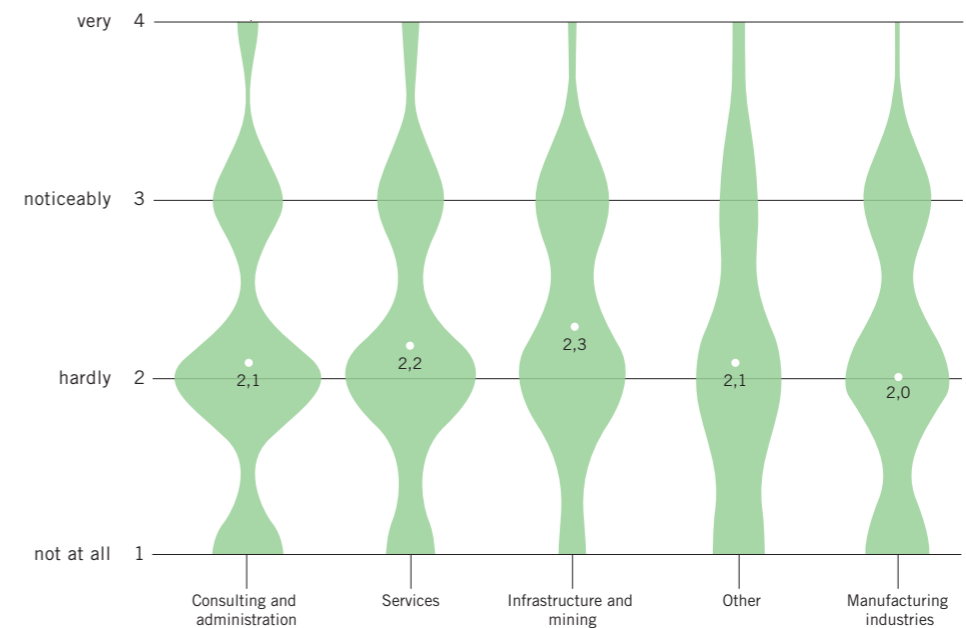
graphic 4

When I think about AI / new technologies ...



graphic 5

Our company is prepared for AI.

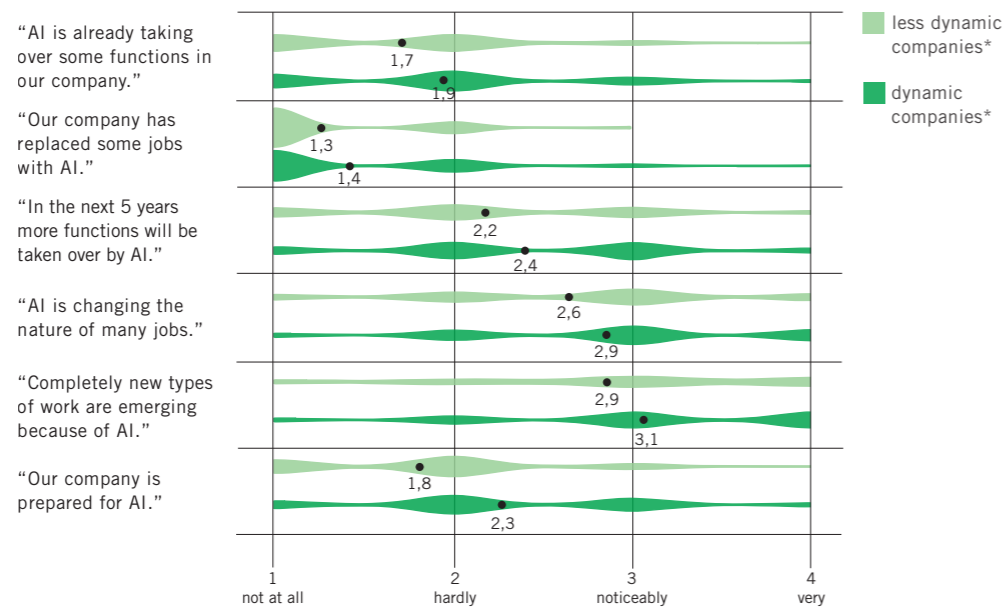


In dynamic companies, in contrast to less dynamic companies, AI is already in use and has already taken over some jobs. But at the same time, these survey participants think their companies are better prepared for the future with AI and they associate this more strongly with the expectation that completely new types of work will arise because of it. (graphic 6)

areas of IT, purchasing/logistics, and administrative/secretarial functions; the departments that they predict will be less affected are PR, human resources and marketing/sales. With the exception of those working in IT, who regard AI optimistically, those working in administrative/secretarial areas, finance/controlling and purchasing/logistics have overwhelmingly more reservations, despite anticipated changes. Interesting: Human resources staff anticipate fewer changes in their area and have a relatively positive view of the future with AI, although many experts predict this is precisely where some processes (checking CVs etc.) will be automated in the near future. (graphic 7/8)

Participants gave ambivalent answers about what sections of their company will be affected by AI. They expect AI to have the greatest impact in the

graphic 6 AI in your company: what has happened? And what will come?

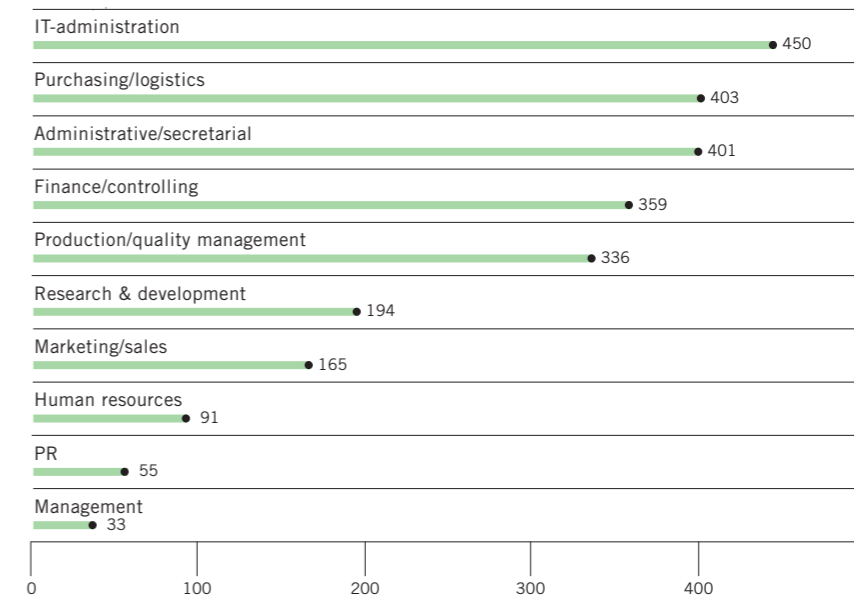


\*dynamic of the company compared to competitors

graphic 7

AI in your company: where do you expect the biggest change?

According to the frequency of the answers; Multiple answers were possible

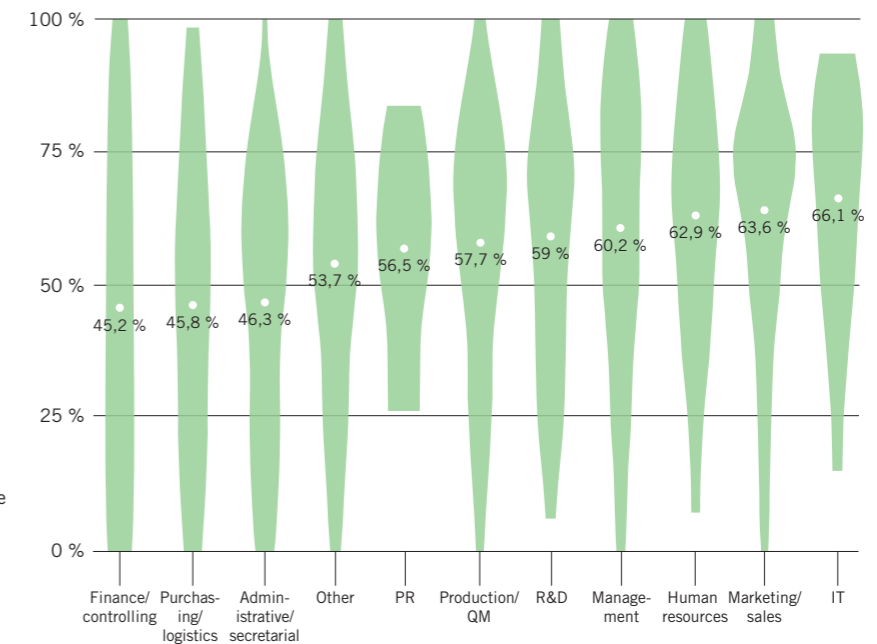


graphic 8

Our company is prepared for AI.

"I look forward to the many opportunities that AI will create."

"I have reservations about how positive the effect of AI will be on the future of work."





**LEAD-**

**ER-**



**SHIP**

# LEAD- ER- SHIP

## THE PRESSURE IS POTENT

This film is essential viewing for anyone who wants to know how change can be successful and what role managers should play in this. “The Silent Revolution” is a film about Bodo Janssen, managing partner of the East Frisian hotel group Upstalsboom, which operates 70 hotels and holiday complexes on the North Sea and Baltic coasts, with a staff of 850. In 2010 Janssen had a nasty shock: “We need a new boss,” said one employee, amongst many critical opinions voiced in a company survey. Janssen realised that the “fish was beginning to rot from the head – me – downwards”. There was a long road ahead, which included numerous visits to a monastery; Janssen explored the ideas of positive psychology and neurobiology and learned to meditate. He initiated a culture shift that affected every aspect of the company: freedom and personal development now play a central role, people work in self-organising teams, there is much less emphasis on specific positions, and much more has changed too. Company principles are expressed in mottos such as “value creation through valuing each other”, “leadership means service, not privilege”, “develop potential instead of exploiting resources”. Janssen says: “People are no longer just the means to a profitable company; it is completely the other way around: our commercial activities are the means to personal development for the people who work here.”

What the film explains so convincingly by drawing on the example of a single company, was also described by the experts quoted in the first Bene Future of Work Report: that employees want a different kind of management culture, one that values cooperation, self-organisation, and teamwork between equals; that in an increasingly complex world, the old mechanisms of directing and monitoring are no longer effective; that the well-being of employees is important to the success of a company.

## THE EMOTIONAL BOND AT WORK IS DWINDLING

In reality this is not always how it seems – otherwise a documentary film such as “The Silent Revolution” would never have made it into the cinemas. The reality, unfortunately, as described in the Gallup Engagement Index 2018 for Germany, is that only 15 per cent of employees feel a strong emotional commitment to their employer, and almost as many (14 per cent) have already quit in their own minds. The remaining majority – almost three quarters – only feel slightly committed to the company they work for. This has many negative effects, including a greater tendency to change jobs and little personal engagement or motivation: a situation that no company would want today when labour markets are strong and the commercial environment is highly dynamic, with enormous pressure for constant innovation. Similarly undesirable from the employers’ perspective is the Gallup finding that only about one in five employees (22 per cent) agrees with the statement that “the management style at my place of work motivates me to provide outstanding service”; amongst those who are not at all emotionally committed, only 3 per cent of employees agreed. Study findings like these must surely be interpreted as a pressing call for managers to rethink their roles and responsibilities.

## THE NEW WAY OF LEADING

To put it plainly, we could say: employees do not want managers who spend all their time in isolated, forbidding offices and give the unmistakable signal that they are the bosses and will only communicate by appointment. “Network economy does not work so well with traditional hierarchal structures” as we wrote in the first Bene Future of Work Report. The latest Bene survey confirms these findings. What are needed, instead are managers who delegate responsibility to interdepartmental project teams, are those who support networking, transparency and interaction, and encourage and empower employees to participate in decision-making. Managers need to recognise that their company is a fluid system in which their leadership is also fluid. “It is becoming more important for management to set conditions in which people can work – not just effectively but also creatively.” as the Bene Future of Work Report concluded. “A good manager should allow teams to organise themselves.”

In 2018 a study by the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (IAO) came to the conclusion: “A strong sense of collaboration is experienced when employees do not have a strong sense of hierarchy in the company, when there is mutual trust between employees and senior executives, when employees are involved in decision-making, and when decision-making processes in the company are transparent. There is a strong sense of collaboration when managers are role models for



# ROGER STÄMPFLI

... is Executive Creative Director and Managing Partner at the Zurich creative agency Aroma.

“It’s not the first time that people have worried about new technologies: ticket turnstiles in underground stations meant fewer staff were needed, and it was the same with forklifts in warehouses and cranes on the docks, not to mention shipping containers. The same thing is happening now in the office. Occupations such as book printer and typesetter have practically disappeared, far fewer architectural draughtsmen are needed today than in the past, and today they no longer work with ink and a ruler, but draft plans digitally instead. Digitalisation is causing great changes in many professions, but new jobs and functions are being created too. I believe that digitalisation can offer enormous benefits – if we harness it properly. Then people will have more freedom about how they work.”

# CAROLINE BENECH

... is Chief Transformation Officer at Colliers International France, one of the world’s leading service provider for commercial real estate.

“Many studies show that pressure and obligation are the worst ways to convince and make people accept changes. One of the key actions advised to leaders regarding change is to listen to employees and understand their expectations in terms of culture and habits, to better understand why they are behaving in one way and not in another. Incentives could be good, depending on the motivation and engagement of employees and again on the corporate culture. It is however very important to find quick wins in actions and behaviours to show the benefits of the changes, and also to celebrate every good effect of the new habits and behaviours whenever possible. It is sometimes useful to push very quickly some concrete changes to send a clear message of change.”

modern working practices; when company values are evident in their day-to-day working environment, together with a culture that is open to feedback; when relevant knowledge is shared, the team has shared goals and working processes function smoothly within the team.”

## THE MANAGER AS A CONDUCTOR OF THE ORCHESTRA

So there are many factors combined in what is required of managers: they not only have to communicate the company’s aims – its purpose, its *raison d’être* – and ensure their actions exemplify this, but they also have to ensure that the company’s aims are aligned as far as possible with the goals of their employees. In the digital age this is a particular challenge, as authors Andreas Buhr and Florian Feltes explain in their book “Revolution? Ja, bitte! Wenn Old-School-Führung auf New-Work-Leadership trifft” (Revolution? Yes please! What happens when old-school management meets new-work leadership). They recommend “Social leadership” – a management style that has internalised “what digitalisation is doing to people and what this means for the way we work.” They describe the digital world as characterised by tremendous freedom – anything is possible, anytime and anywhere. “Digital technologies such as video calling, intranets, wikis and e-mail open up new possibilities for communication, information, organisation, delegation and motivation. Employees have more opportunity than they used to for involvement in company decision-making. Hierarchies are becoming flatter; people treat each other with more honesty. (...) And more than ever before, productivity is linked to creativity and intellectual work. Division of labour, shift work and work structures that prioritise industriousness and punctuality are losing their significance.” Managers need to create this sense of freedom by giving their employees scope and guiding them like an orchestral conductor.

This concept is particularly applicable when working with creative teams. As the Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies prophesied back in 2004, in our increasingly automated society, routine jobs will become obsolete and most people will work in creative occupations such as design, development, research and communication. For these people in particular, the priority is not

## Leadership

the salary, but the desire for autonomous and interesting work. Opportunities for personal development and continuing education are increasingly important and satisfy employees’ curiosity and desire for self-realisation.

One challenge in creative occupations is how to quantify the output. The old-style parameters used by managers in the past to evaluate the work of their employees are more difficult to define for creative work. So management needs to function differently in this context – as coaches who recognise the different characteristics of their employees and different ways they work and who adapt to suit them. Fluid leadership is a valid concept here too: in many areas it is not the people further up the hierarchy who know more but others with expertise in the relevant areas.

The flipside of digital freedom, however, is uncertainty and indecisiveness; “digital natives”, say Buhr and Feltes, are the least likely to tie themselves down, and prefer only to make short-term commitments. “So managers need to provide security and guidance – but not in the form of instructions or commands.” They suggest managers need to serve as a compass for their employees. Leadership skills become fundamentally important, and management skills are less central.

## COMPANIES HAVE TO TELL FUTURE NARRATIVES

Researchers like Jens Beckert, director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, and the media management professor Michael Müller, describe this compass function of managers as the ability to tell stories: Senior executives need to map out an interesting and persuasive image of the company’s future, and what it would be like to work in it, creating a story that appeals more than others. For Beckert the value of a company is fundamentally dependent on whether or not it presents a credible narrative for its own future: “It is the visionary, well-told, exciting, inspiring stories that attract attention and perhaps shape the way forward. Stories that conjure up a dream of defining for ourselves how we will function as part of this future world,” says the sociologist and businessman Beckert. “Without stories of an enticing future we would just say: let’s just carry on as we were. And without these visions of the future we would lack the sense of direction we need to make decisions. Because we like being swept along. We love imagining what a different future might feel like.”

# ALESSANDRO ADAMO

... is an architect,  
director and partner  
at the Italian consultancy  
firm DEGW.

“Employees want to see their bosses and experience their passion and commitment. When I started as a young architect, my managing director and my senior architect were always visible and there was always direct contact. I learnt a lot from that. Now I am a partner myself and I have a lot of responsibility, but I haven’t changed anything about my office set up. My office is still open-plan. I like sharing a space with my architects so I can be involved in what’s being discussed, react to questions and intervene. I like the idea of a “non-territorial area” too, where everyone can sit somewhere different each day. It means we learn from one another, because we are always moving in different constellations. That’s really exciting and it reflects the fact that status now plays a less significant role than it used to. These days you can’t tell an employee’s position

from whether his or her desktop is made from laminate, glass or some other material. When the seven of us partners meet on Mondays at lunchtime, I always sit in a different place as well. It changes your ‘point of view’, your perspective, even though you’re sitting at the same table. Personally, I like change. Other people are more reluctant. But I often find that later on they cheerfully talk about the fact that they would no longer want to work any other way than in their open-plan office. The future of office work will be a mixture of spaces that connect people and spaces where they can retreat.”

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But even this future narrative cannot be defined and captured once and for all, warns Professor Michael Müller; instead it needs to adapt constantly to change. “That is why in a truly agile company the future narrative, which gives a meaningful context for their work, is constantly being developed and adapted, by and with the employees in a co-creative process. You might also say this is when – and only then – the aims of the organisation and its employees are aligned as far as possible and have a prospect of success.

These future narratives should be part of a company’s vision and mission statements and should be explicitly incorporated in the company strategy. This is an increasingly important element of leadership.

In many companies there is a clear split at this point between employees and senior management.

### **MORE LEADERSHIP, LESS MANAGEMENT**

Indeed, the Bene survey found a clear distinction between the way employees and managers perceive company strategy and the way it is communicated. In other words: what will be needed in future is more leadership and less management, because even employees who want to organise their work amongst themselves still want clear strategies and objectives.

In the first Bene Future of Work Report we had already shown that 77 per cent of managers in Germany believe there needs to be a paradigm shift in management culture. Hotelier Bodo Janssen, who runs a chain of hotels in north-western Germany, has achieved this paradigm shift and transformed his company, step by step. He has recently announced that he even intends to transfer the company to a charitable foundation; he would no longer be an owner, but simply a managing director employed by the company.

This “silent revolutionary” from the far north has certainly followed a radical path, one that cannot be taken as a standard prescription for other companies in other sectors and other contexts. To prevail in the face of rapid change in the commercial world, it is not necessary for every business owner to transform their company into a charitable foundation, and some employees are not able or prefer not to take more responsibility. However, many open-minded senior executives can learn something from the self-critical approach of Bodo Janssen, who turned his company from an ego-system into an eco-system. Janssen realised that: “The main problem was the attitude of the senior management. Communication was poor, aims and strategies were formulated without consulting the employees. Employees were not involved in decision-making processes. They were simply managed like numbers and did not feel that they were seen as people.”

This profound redevelopment of the organisation was rewarding, says Janssen – “not only from the human perspective, but also for the business”: From 2018 to 2019 turnover increased by about 50 per cent, from just over 40 million euros to 60 million; the staff grew from about 600 in 2014 up to 850; the company expanded and took over more hotels and holiday complexes; it improved the occupancy rate for vacation rentals, employee absences fell and customer satisfaction improved.



# MARION WEISSENBERGER-EIBL

“I like to compare managers to conductors – they are surrounded by people with unique skills and must coordinate them to achieve a common goal, like in an orchestra. This results in a new function and quality of management.”

... is professor at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), and director of the Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research (ISI).

# PETER SCHWEHR

“Detours enhance our knowledge of a place! In an age of efficiency and performance monitoring, the art lies in giving employees the freedom they need for creativity and lateral thinking. If you focus too heavily on quantity, you lose sight of what is relevant and become short-sighted. Leadership means encouraging employees to tread new paths, to venture out into new terrain where the outcome is unknown and to put aside their

... is the head of the Competence Center Typology and Planning in Architecture (CCTP) and research director at the Institute of Architecture (IAR) in the School of Engineering and Architecture both at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts.

haste to simply follow orders. Mistakes must be allowed in the process. At the end of the day, trial and error is a basic principle of evolution and forms the foundation for any development.”

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### EXCURSUS: MANAGEMENT CULTURE – ALIGNED, UNALIGNED

In today's technology-driven, complex working environment, one of the greatest challenges for teams and co-workers is to agree on common goals. If this can be done, companies may enjoy a competitive advantage, according to a study by the communications platform Slack and the market research company GlobalWebIndex, based on responses from 17,000 knowledge workers at all levels of company hierarchies, across ten countries, and from more than 40 industries.

The study defines “aligned workers” as those who feel very connected to the vision and strategy of the company. Equipped with this insight into the bigger picture, they approach their work with optimistic purpose and feel empowered to take action. “Aligned workers” apparently not only have a clear understanding of the company strategy, but also of their own goals, and how the two fit together. 90 per cent of them said they know what is needed to complete their work successfully. The study shows that companies can nurture this alignment through a clear strategy and by communicating their strategy clearly and regularly. “When people understand how their work fits into the larger whole, organisations can tackle even the most difficult challenges. People crave connection to their organization's strategic vision.” The study found a positive correlation between

monthly updates on the company strategy and the employees' perception of the firm as “excellent”. 75 per cent of “aligned workers” would apparently also feel confident about making strategic decisions or exploring new business ideas. Amongst “unaligned workers”, who feel disconnected from the strategic objectives of their employer, the study reports only 22 per cent feel this. Those who feel unaligned consistently rate the work ethic and employee satisfaction as lower, are more pessimistic about the company's future and feel less empowered to seize business opportunities.



# THE MOST STRIKING FINDINGS

Broadly speaking the desire for a different, new kind of management culture was confirmed by Bene's present survey of almost 1,200 people in nearly as many different companies.

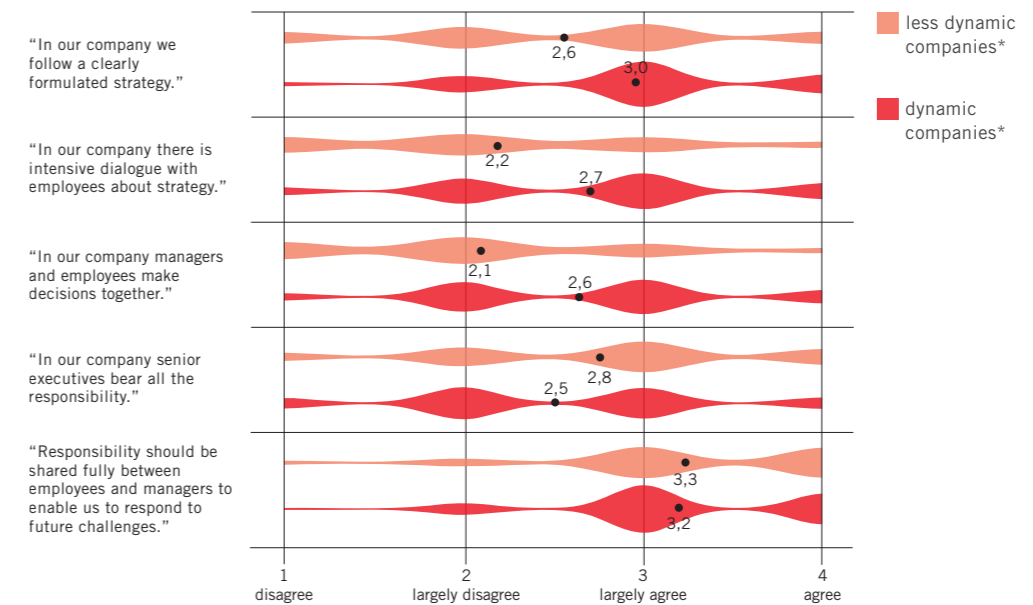
However, some key differences emerge between the two types of company, on the question of management style in these companies today. In dynamic companies, decisions are evidently more likely to be taken together by managers and employees, while in less dynamic firms, responsibility is seen as lying with senior management, in the traditional style. There is also a striking difference between the average values where corporate strategy is concerned, and the extent to which it is embodied by the staff: dynamic companies, as evaluated by their employees, are

more likely to have a "clearly formed strategy" that ensures they remain successful in changing times, and they are also more likely to allow their employees to participate in "intensive discussion" about this. In both types of company, however, survey participants agreed the most strongly with the statement that responsibility should be more widely shared – a suggestion that companies should surely not simply ignore, although they evidently often do. (graphic 9)

In answering this question, once again no significant difference could be discerned between age groups, or between employees and managers.



graphic 9 What is the management style like in your company?



\*dynamic of the company compared to the competitors.

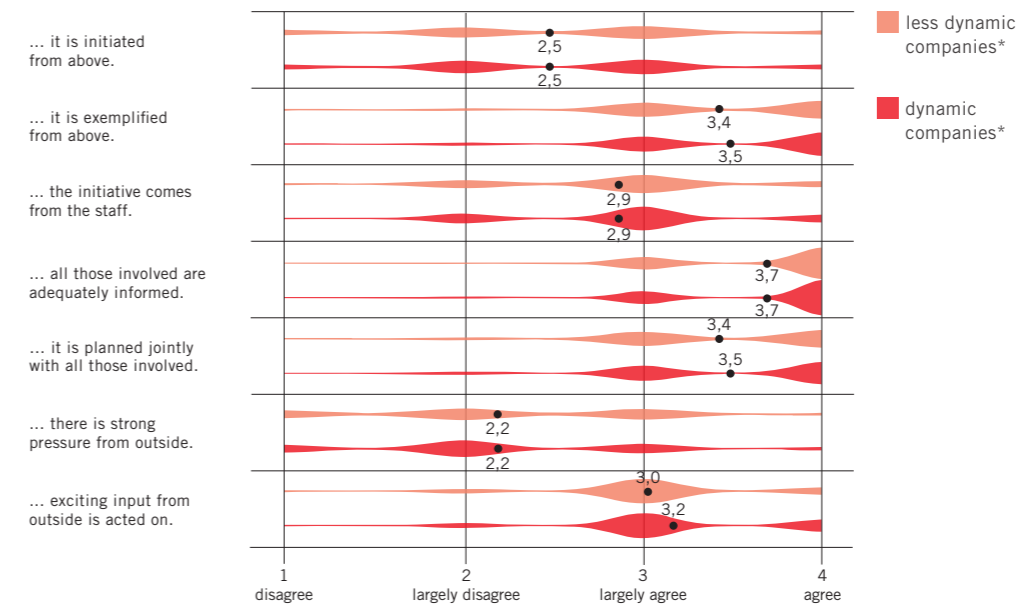
# OF THE BENE SURVEY



The question in the Bene survey that revealed the most obvious differences between dynamic and less dynamic companies concerned how companies responded to change: in dynamic companies, there is less risk that new ideas simply drop off the table without being considered. That means that innovation management is clearly significantly better, that there is a system for soliciting, communicating and evaluating suggestions. Dynamic companies are also more interested in “future trends” and are more likely to look beyond the immediate

horizon, indeed “actively look for external impetus”. Consequently, the employees in dynamic companies regard change less as a “threat” and more as a “motivator”, and they are also more likely to believe that their company is well prepared for the challenges ahead. The key message from these responses might be: Those who are more open to employees’ ideas and the “outside world” operate with more assurance and self-confidence in a volatile market. (graphic 10)

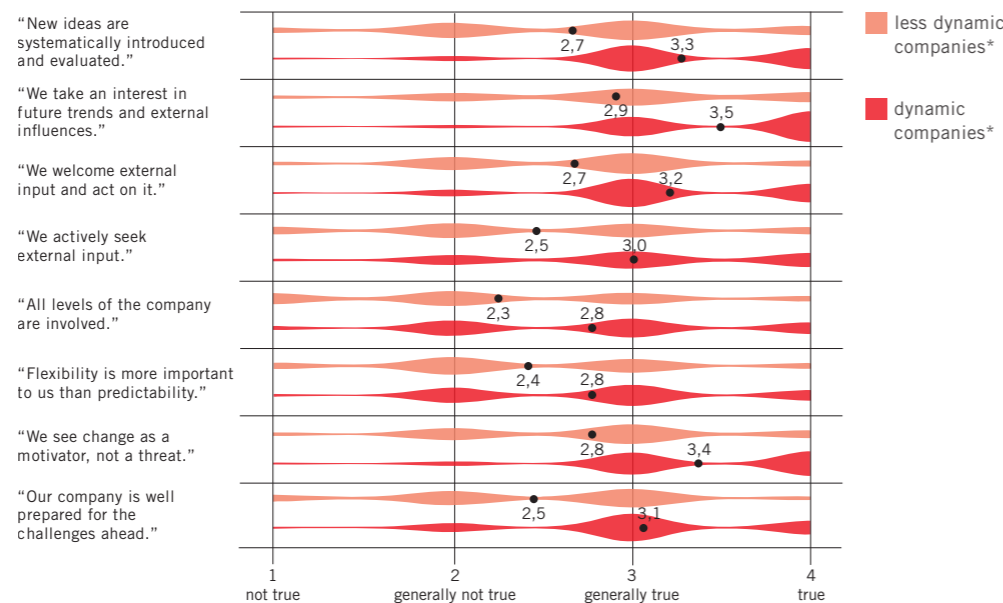
graphic 11 Change is accomplished best, whenever ...



\*dynamic of the company compared to the competitors.



graphic 10 How does your company respond to change?



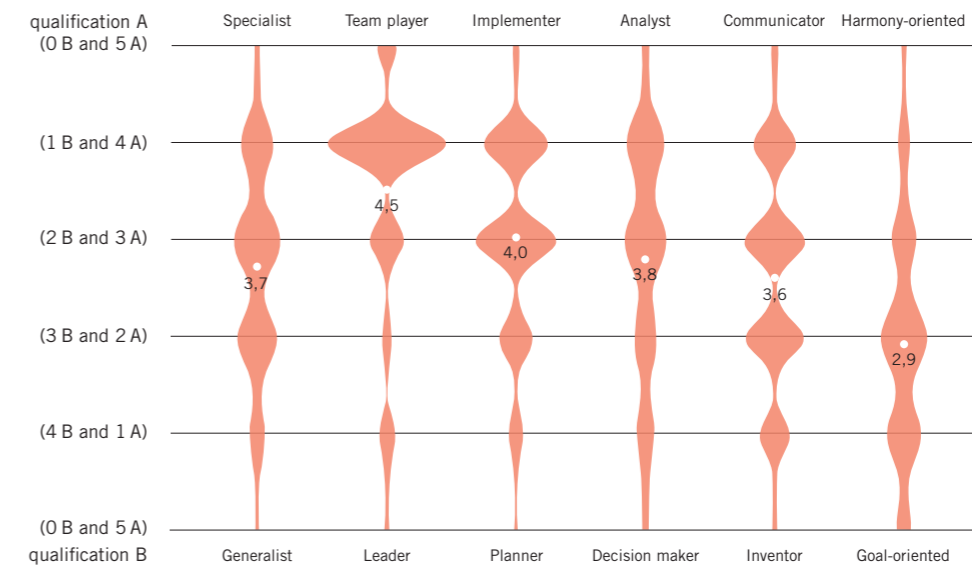
\*dynamic of the company compared to the competitors.

The findings of the survey show beyond all doubt what employees expect of their managers today – and this time with no significant difference between dynamic and less dynamic companies: Employees in all companies share the common desire for their managers to act as role models and to facilitate participation. Most striking in our survey is the desire for

“all those involved to have sufficient information,” followed by the expectation that managers “model” change and tackle it “together with all those involved”. The least agreed statements were correspondingly those suggesting that “strong pressure from outside” is helpful in managing change, and that it should be “initiated from above”. (graphic 11)



**graphic 12** You are putting together a five-person team for the future: What kind of skills should be represented, and to what extent?



So the conclusion is that managers should exemplify the company strategy and provide a good example, while also presenting clear objectives, and allow a certain amount of freedom and scope to achieve them. A significant example of this kind of strategic work is the way a team is composed.

The results of the question about the structure of a team and the skills of its members are clear: one or at most two leaders are important to the participants, the other members of the team should be team players. A need for harmony is notably less important to everyone in the team than goal-orientation.

There should be a balance of skills within the group in terms of specialists and generalists, communicators and inventors. (graphic 12)

In the responses to this question there was no evident distinction between the age groups or genders. The responses were also identical in both dynamic and less dynamic companies, and across a wide range of industry sectors.

It seems that the desire for a particular team structure and the need for certain skills and characteristics in a group can be very broadly defined and that this remains the same even when environments change.





**THE**

**PURPOSE**

**OF**

**WORK**



# THE PURPOSE OF WORK

## KNOW-HOW AND KNOW-WHY

In the early 1970s, US writer, radio presenter and Pulitzer prize winner Louis “Studs” Terkel travelled through his country asking people about their work. Terkel interviewed coal miners and newspaper deliverers, paramedics and hairdressers, salespeople, jazz musicians and industry designers, bookkeepers, paediatric nurses, and police officers. The resulting book – “Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do” – became a bestseller and generated a number of spinoffs and sequels: it was the basis for a musical, for radio and tv programmes and for a graphic novel. More recently Terkel’s work has been continued in a photo exhibition that toured the US a few years ago and a website ([www.working.org](http://www.working.org)), where dozens of people from social workers to gig economy workers and escorts to waitresses talk online about their work.

The quote from the foreword to Terkel’s book seems as timeless as the reports of all those working women and men from the 1970s right up to today are diverse. Work, it says, is the search “for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life, rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying.”

## IKIGAI – THE REASON FOR BEING

This principle is also followed by New York Times bestselling author Dan Buettner, who addresses the Japanese principle of “Ikigai”. The translation of the word is simple: “the reason for being”, but following the concept is much more complex. “Ikigai” is based on questions like “What do you love?”, “What does the world need?”, “What can you be paid for?” and “What are you good at?”.

Answering these questions should create clarity because, according to Buettner, those who embrace “Ikigai” live longer, sleep better, and are healthier and happier. The author found the evidence for his thesis on Okinawa, a Japanese island in the “blue zone”, which means it is one of the five regions in the world with the highest life expectancy and quality of life. There is no word for “retirement” there, because the principle of “Ikigai” imbues all age groups: anyone who no longer goes to work in the traditional sense uses their time to teach the younger generations, take care of the garden or pursue other meaningful activities.

## MEANINGFUL WORK

While this kind of methodology and life philosophy may not yet have taken hold in the western world, there is an ever-increasing awareness of the meaning and purpose of work. Jobs and professions, and the tools, methods, machinery and instruments they use may change radically, as may companies and industries, the nature of communication and the employee experience – but what clearly stays constant when we look at the working person is their search for a meaning to their efforts, for recognition (monetary and non-monetary) and for variety, for an answer to the simple question: why? Why this work rather than something else? And why work at all? And the faster and more radically the working environment changes due to new technologies, the more sophisticated the know-how to complete specific work tasks, the more pressing the question of know-why becomes.

“While what makes a job purposeful means different things for different people, experts agree that the idea of finding purpose in work is becoming more and more important. What employees expect from their work is becoming increasingly nuanced.” – as we wrote previously in our first Bene Future of Work Report.

# PETER SCHWEHR

“There is no Planet B! All our energy and resources will need to be invested in transforming our systems into a circular-oriented lifestyle. This challenge is a huge opportunity and is based on values. It will provide the meaningful purpose, enjoyment and appreciation we need at work, and result in a high level of identification with the institution – and also open up new areas of business. In the age of universal basic income and microjobs, community-oriented activities will continue in a kind of “volunteering 2.0” and this will be an important stage in the development of our society. Those who are involved in neighbourhood activities are also those who think about others at work.”

... is the head of the Competence Center Typology and Planning in Architecture (CCTP) and research director at the Institute of Architecture (IAR) in the School of Engineering and Architecture both at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts.

# CAROLINE BENECH

... is Chief Transformation Officer at Colliers International France, one of the world’s leading service provider for commercial real estate.

“Changes can come from different directions: from clients, the market, a new leader, the evolution of society. Depending on the openness of the company, employees can enable and drive new processes themselves. We have observed that some companies were saved by their own employees, who decided to run the company themselves when their leaders failed to do so.”

For employers this doesn’t make things simpler, in fact the opposite is true. With social cohesion already decreasing on a broad scale – in clubs, parties, churches – and (lifelong) loyalty to employers no longer as strong as it was 30 or 40 years ago, companies are facing the increasingly pressing issue of how they can score points in the competition for employees that are becoming ever scarcer. One thing is for sure – it’s not by complaining that employees these days are too demanding and self-centred. Instead, companies need to approach the employee expectations expressed in the Bene survey positively: with an astute mix of fruit baskets in the office, clothes storage space for employees who ride bikes, and annual bonuses; with a vibrant organisation that facilitates project work and teamwork on all levels; with managers that exemplify good communication and values; with ways of working that are flexible in terms of time and space, rather than excessive compulsory office hours; with the right balance of work-life integration and a clear distinction between work and personal life; with physical and virtual spaces where employees are happy to spend time on their own and with others, and where they can do good work.

## THE QUESTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF WORK

All of these are important conditions for a successful relationship between companies and their employees – but they are not enough in themselves. What really matters is what “work researcher” Louis Terkel described in his interviews many decades ago as the “daily search for meaning” – what we now talk about as “purpose”. By this we mean that more than anything else, people enjoy working when the content of the work is something they can connect with on a deep level because it reflects their own personal values. Jon Jachimowicz, professor at Harvard Business School, makes a clear distinction between this kind of motivation and impulse, which is simply having fun while working or being passionate about it, in the way that people might feel about a hobby. The concept of purpose goes deeper. According to Jachimowicz, studies have shown that employees who recognise a purpose in their work are also more successful in what they do – precisely because

they are not driven by the false expectation that they will enjoy every moment, and accept setbacks, resistance or periods of boredom as part of their task: Jachimowicz believes this makes them more resilient and consequently more successful. So his advice is: “Chase your purpose, not your passion” – instead of pursuing a fleeting enthusiasm in your work, look for the deeper sense of meaning in the things you spend so much time doing every day.

It speaks volumes that researchers in – of all things – a theology faculty explored the question of what really constitutes meaningful work. More than ever, work is perceived as a source of meaningful purpose, stability, sense of community and identity, and the significance of our professional careers to us sometimes even has religious traits, according to Frank Martela and Anne Pessi at the University of Helsinki, the authors of a study titled (“Significant Work Is About Self-Realization and Broader Purpose: Defining the Key Dimensions of Meaningful Work”). And the search for a deeper meaning in our work becomes more pressing, the more doubtful this work becomes due to the pace of digital transformation. Work that feels meaningful, according to Anne Pessi, has three characteristic dimensions: it feels intrinsically significant and worth doing, it is a means of self-realisation, and it serves a broader purpose.

Money is evidently less and less able to meet these requirements. “Meaning is the new money,” wrote the “Harvard Business Review” in 2018, referring to studies in the US that found that more than nine out of ten salaried employees would be prepared to give up part of their lifetime income in exchange for a greater sense of purpose. “Across age and salary groups, workers want meaningful work badly enough that they’re willing to pay for it.” On average they would pay 23 per cent of their lifetime income – more than Americans pay for their homes. The authors could hardly believe it: “Given that people are willing to spend more on meaningful work than on putting a roof over their heads, the 21st century list of essentials might be due for an update: food, clothing, shelter – and meaningful work.”

# SIMON WU

... is a director at IDA workplace + strategy in Shanghai, a provider of strategic solutions for workplaces, with a focus on workplace research, design and change management.

“We launched a survey related to this question within our company not long ago. There are many different elements that motivate people to go to work – income, interest, sense of achievement, etc. Interestingly, the younger generation values the element of income very much. However, it’s not because of financial needs, but more as a measurement of personal achievement and approval of their abilities. (...) I think it is true that for younger generations it is important in their work to contribute to society/sustainability. The generation Y has more and more sense of social responsibility. (...) It’s important for people to be self-motivated most of time, but it’s also necessary for the companies

to motivate employees. Finding a common ground for both the organization and the employees is critical. Once we are all acting on the same goal, everything would become easier, the difference is the organisation should not just understand employees’ work objectives, but also their personal goals, as they are in fact inseparable. Many organisations are overlooking this factor.”

## AN ENGAGEMENT CRISIS?

These assertions are confirmed by a Gallup study measuring the “engagement” of salaried employees in the US since 2000. Only 32 per cent of survey participants described themselves as “engaged”, defined by Gallup as involved, enthusiastic and engaged about the work they do, and their workplace. These findings are labelled a “worldwide employee engagement crisis”.

So how can this crisis be addressed? Gallup has identified five approaches for enhancing employee engagement and, as a result, their performance.

- Intensifying engagement within the company needs to be seen as an ongoing process, involving all levels of management, and one that is also integrated into the communications strategy.
- If employee engagement is to be enhanced, tried and tested survey methods need to be used.
- One fundamental line of questioning as part of this process is: “where am I now, where do I want to get to?” This should ideally provide the basis for a three-year strategy, including realistic action plans and milestones.
- Engagement is not an abstract emotion, but the consequence of specific measures such as development opportunities, clear expectations and the need to create a working environment that enables people to carry out their responsibilities to the best of their abilities.
- Last but not least, increasing employee engagement should not just be another item on the to-do list for management, but should be subtly assimilated into every process, as should constant adjustment of expectations in changing environments.

The company’s role as “purpose provider” becomes more and more important. This makes sense even just from a business perspective: employees who see their job as fulfilling and meaningful apparently work an hour longer every week and claim two days less leave per year – if we want to apply these traditional yardsticks. And the greater job satisfaction of employees who feel a sense of purpose correlates with higher productivity – according to the calculations of the Harvard Business Review they generate additional revenue of up to 9,000 dollars per year. Additional value accrues to companies with “purpose”, because they retain their employees for longer and so need to spend less time on recruiting and induction of new employees.

## PROVIDING PURPOSE

Companies as “purpose providers”? According to one study, only 28 per cent of employees feel committed to their employer’s purpose and its strategic goals – a correlation we examined in more detail in Chapter 2 under the heading of leadership. But that is precisely what more employees than ever want to know from their employer – what is its broader, socially relevant purpose. Companies are “to a certain extent obliged to find a purpose,” according to Leipzig management professor Timo Meynhardt; the old motto of “faster, higher, stronger” is no longer an adequate motivation for many employees. “People are more likely to choose an employer with a purpose, one that is genuinely useful to society as well [...] Companies can no longer avoid linking their profitmaking with a purpose [...] The purpose is the new narrative: a source of motivation for employees, investors and ultimately also for senior executives themselves.”

This is how the consultants at Deloitte see it too. In their study “Leading the social enterprise: Reinvent with a human focus”, published in 2019, they report on a growing number of socially oriented enterprises that have made it their mission to harmonise revenue growth and the pursuit of profit with the interests of other stakeholders. They maintain that growing pressure is forcing companies to abandon mission statements and philanthropic activities and to reinvent themselves as social organisations with people at the centre. They describe a key principle: “Giving organizations and individuals a sense of purpose at work; moving beyond profit to a focus on doing good things for individuals, customers, and society.”

# KIM THORNTON-SMITH

... is a partner at designPAPER, a design agency in Perth, Australia.

“Current generations (Millennials/Gen Y) have 3 important motivations when choosing the right employer for them. In no particular order, the first is **Autonomy**: Meaning the desire to be self-directed. Excessive management maybe right if compliance is the main driver, however if whole-hearted engagement is required, self-direction will be all important. The second is **Mastery**: meaning the drive to constantly improve and grow with every skill they develop or project we undertake. The third is **Purpose**: Meaning the determination to make a positive contribution to society. When the profit motive is untethered from the purpose motive, bad things happen, both ethically and in terms of quality and performance. Flourishing companies are those energized by the bigger purpose than the profit motive. Millennials believe the secret to high

performance and satisfaction is rooted in the deeply human need for freedom, growth and creativity. As often happens in the Corporate world, its simply not enough of a motivation to increase shareholder value without the goal of making the world a better place. Inspiring people with an authentic mindful vision will be one of the most important things leaders can do to boost engagement, connect emotionally and enrich people’s lives.”

In “Creating Meaning & Purpose at Work” Michael Steger, founder and director of the Center for Meaning an Purpose at Colorado State University, explores the concept of “meaningful work”. This fashionable expression has countless different definitions in the reference literature. For many companies it is “the next big thing” for enhancing performance and improving results. The logic is: if the employee feels good, their performance improves and so does the return on investment.

Steger describes “meaningful work” as a clearly identifiable personal contribution made by the individual employee through his or her activities. Ideally these activities are also in synergy with the individual’s fundamental sense of purpose and their personal convictions.

Meaningful work is linked with personal wellbeing, more contentment and happiness at work, strong alignment with the work, positive social participation, conscientious social behaviour, higher output and more effective teams.

Companies that aim to help their employees to find “meaningful work” then have the potential, instead of just increasing the wellbeing of employees with short-term incentives, to improve the wellbeing of all stakeholders. In a broader context, this also enhances the company’s ability to attract good workers and to reduce staff turnover. So there is a multitude of persuasive reasons for companies to be enthusiastic about the potential of meaningful value creation, and for this to apply on many levels, such as employee wellbeing, the output of organisations and the health of communities and societies.

This suggests that the art of leadership is to align companies’ potential for providing a sense of purpose with the expectations of meaningful purpose amongst the people who work in these companies. Bringing purpose and strategy into line.

## EXCURSUS: NOT MADE FOR ROUTINE

This man is not squeamish: he compares the curiously disengaged manner of many employees at work with the “learned helplessness” of dogs used in animal experimentation. Dan Cable is an American social psychologist and professor of organisational behaviour at the London Business School; in his book “Alive at work” he addresses the question of how to remedy this sense of disengagement that overcomes around three quarters of all employees. Like dogs that have been punished in experiments with shocks and eventually just lie on the floor and endure their fate, he describes employees as punished for undesirable behaviour and falling into a lethargic state that is highly unsatisfactory for all parties.

### SUCCESSFUL THANKS TO TRIAL & ERROR

The fact that workers do not give their best effort is not due to inadequate motivation, but simply to biology, according to Cable: “Humans are not made for routine and repetition.” They would much rather explore, try new things, play, learn. But companies make use of these instinctive impulses much too rarely. Cable refers to people who play – they would simply pursue their passion indefinitely, without even any monetary goal or other “reward”. The survival of organisations in a world that is changing so quickly, he says, depends increasingly on employees having the opportunity to be actively creative, and not to be always pushed into the same behaviours and responses by fear of “punishment” or triggered by “rewards”. And in making the case for employees’ self-fulfilment, Cable advises senior executives to see themselves as their employees’ humble helpers in this process: “This style of leadership does not mean demanding perfection, but on the contrary making it clear that people are never perfect and therefore need to be able to try new things, to fail, and to practise in order to learn and improve.”

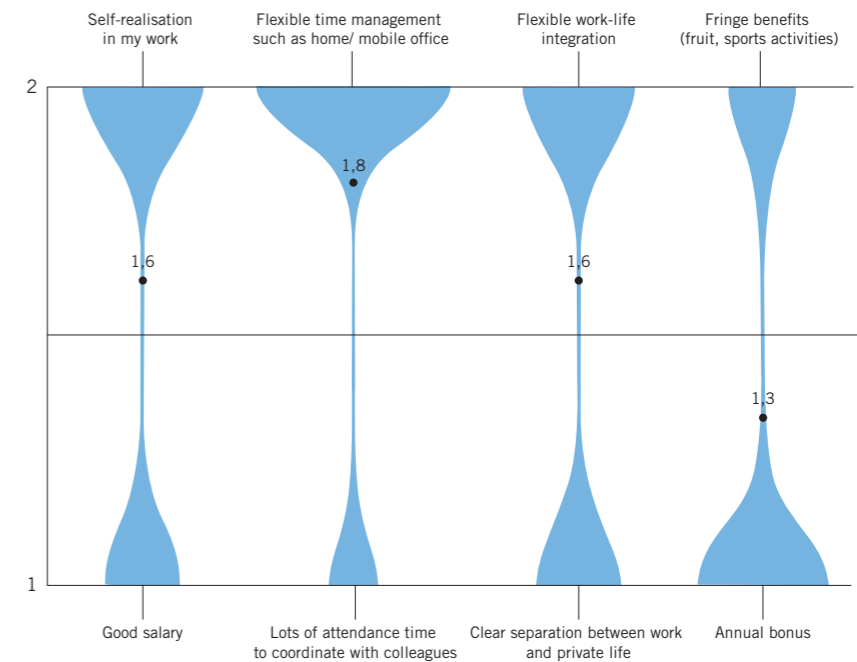


# THE MOST STRIKING FINDINGS

# OF THE BENE SURVEY

graphic 13

If you had to choose, what would be more important to you?



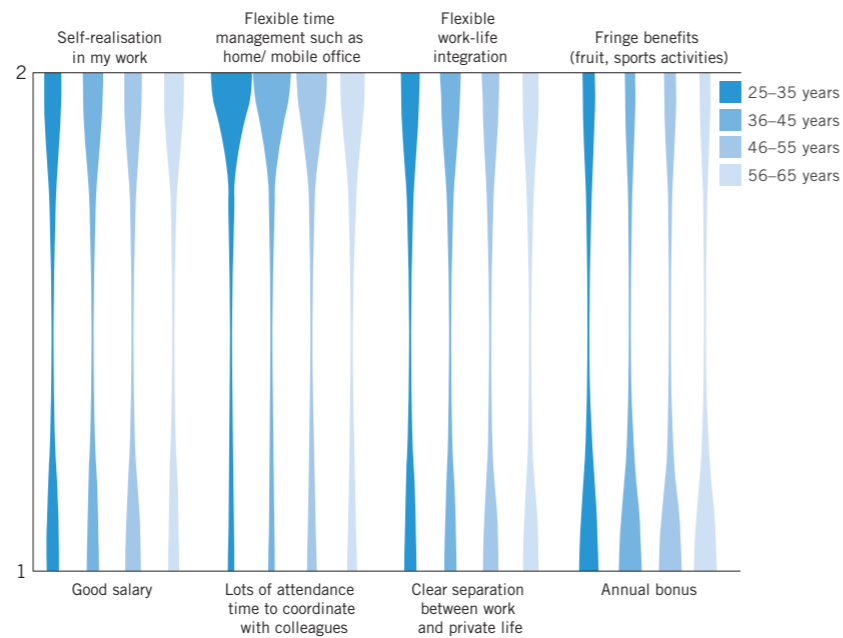
“Work is not only expected to be enjoyable, but also to serve a higher purpose.” This is what we wrote in our first Bene Future of Work Report. When we offered our survey participants just two alternatives for what motivates them at work, they sometimes chose – using Terkel’s definition –

the day-to-day purpose (“self-realisation through my work”), and sometimes their daily bread (“good salary”), with a slight preference for self-realisation (average value 1.6). (graphic 13)

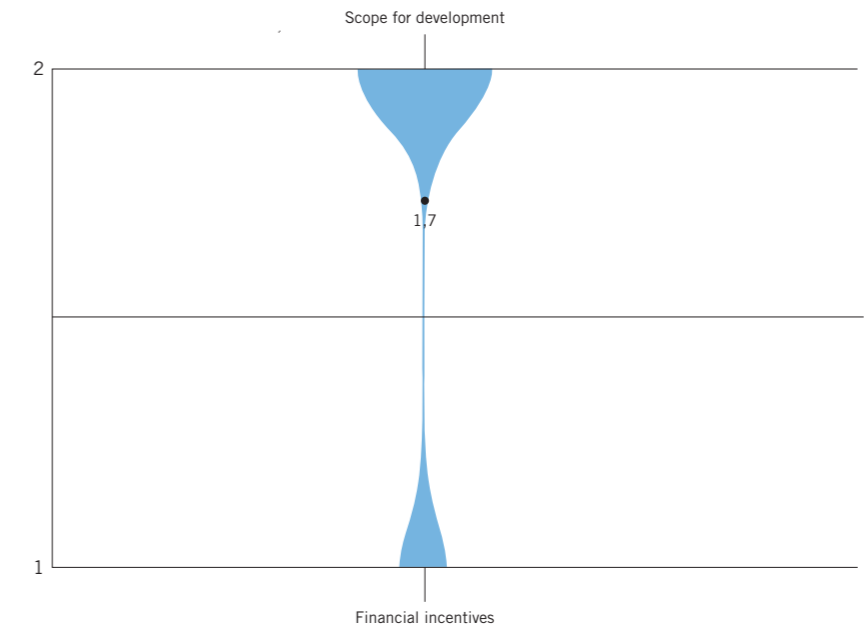
There is little difference between the responses from dynamic and less dynamic companies, except in the case of flexible working time versus a high level of required attendance time; dynamic companies favour more flexibility.

Surprisingly, there was only a slight discernible difference between age groups, with no evidence of the expected Generation Y effect. Required attendance time is the only thing that seems to be more important to older age groups. (graphic 14)

graphic 14 If you had to choose, what would be more important to you?



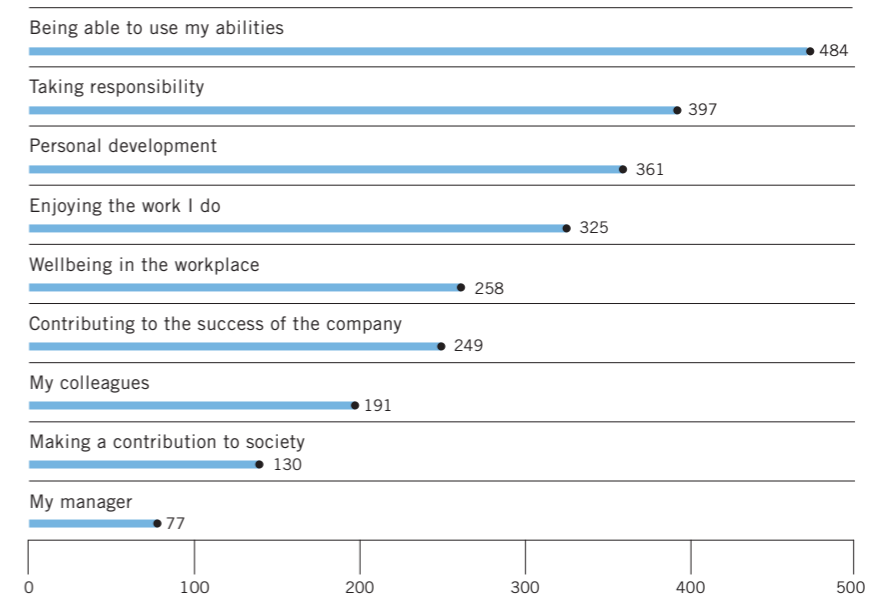
graphic 15 What approach produces the best outcomes?



When we asked what motivators produce the best results, the responses varied similarly between “financial incentives” on the one hand to the non-monetary “scope for personal development” on the other (average 1.7). (graphic 15)

**graphic 16** What motivates you most about your work?

According to the frequency of the answers; Multiple answers were possible



When participants were offered a wider range of response options, a fascinating distribution emerged: The strongest motivation for work came from the opportunity “to make the most of their own abilities”, followed by the chance “to take responsibility” and for “personal development”. Employees are evidently much less strongly motivated by the prospect of working together with colleagues and managers, and of making a contribution to the company’s success and to society. So the findings of the Bene survey show a significant prevalence of motivating factors that affect them personally – you might say that “I” is stronger than “we” at

work – that our egoistic needs are more important than the collective ones. (graphic 16)

Interestingly the responses to the “why” questions revealed no significant differences: neither between dynamic and less dynamic companies, nor between women and men, nor younger and older respondents. In the first Bene Future of Work Report we had attributed another specific role to the younger participants: we had emphasised that Generation Y (born 1981-1997) had particularly high expectations of their employers. In the light of our current survey this needs to be modified: The desire for self-fulfilment and personal development at work is evidently a consensus across all categories of workers, and a broader sign of the times.



**OPEN**

**COL-**

**LABO-**

**RATION**



# OPEN COL- LABO- RATION

## BALANCE IN THE OFFICE PLEASE!

In the previous chapter we showed the current challenges facing leaders, who are tasked with keeping the company on course, among other things by giving a coherent narrative of the overall work within the organisation. Among the important questions that they have to answer in the process – questions that Bene is getting to the bottom of in its survey – are those about the appropriate nature and intensity of collaboration: What approach produces the best outcomes? What conditions are necessary for successful work when it is increasingly performed on the move? What skills combine to make a successful team?

In his memoirs, “iWoz: How I Invented the Personal Computer and Co-Founded Apple”, silicon valley cornerstone Steve Wozniak takes an extreme position on this: “Most inventors and engineers I’ve met are like me – they’re shy and they live in their heads. They’re almost like artists (...) And artists work best alone (...), without a lot of other people (...) or other committees stepping in.” As a result, Wozniak’s advice is: “You’re going to be best able to design revolutionary products and features if you’re working on your own. Not on a committee. Not on a team.”

### A PLEA FOR MORE PRIVACY

Apple co-founder Wozniak is one of a number of world-famous and world-changing people that Susan Cain talks about in her book “The Power of Introverts”, which is well worth a read. However, the US author does not believe that introverts don’t need or appreciate the experience of socialising. In the case of lone wolf, Steve Wozniak, this experience came in the form of the legendary Homebrew Computer Club, where PC nerds, among them Steve Jobs, met in a garage. For Wozniak, the club was nothing less than the catalyst that inspired his solitary work in the sheltered retreat he chose for himself. And so Cain advocates providing introverts, who by no means are only limited to genius inventors or artists like Steven Wozniak but who actually make up around one third to half of the population, with the retreat that they sometimes, but not always, so badly

need: “Being alone is often crucial for creativity and productivity. We should provide our employees with plenty of privacy and autonomy.”

It seemed things were going in the opposite direction in 2013, when Yahoo ordered its staff to return from their home offices to the company headquarters. Other companies later followed suit, including the pioneer in working from home, IBM, which called thousands of marketing staff back to its main facilities in the USA. The media began to ask: “Has the concept of working from home failed miserably? Is the trend moving back towards open-plan offices? A retreat from the retreat of the home office?”

It was the typical media pendulum swing, underpinned by the relevant buzz words, allowing for only two possible “right” answers and thereby missing the crux of the matter: that both are needed – the open structures of a whirring, inspiring office, where new, innovative ideas are formed in the interaction with colleagues – and at the same time, the space for retreat, which enables the individual to concentrate and draw on their own creativity when necessary. This space for retreat can be the home office, but it doesn’t have to be – for example, parents of young children might get less, not more, peace and focus at their desk at home and sometimes find going to the office a relief.

In fact, it’s all about task-based working, about flexibility when answering the question of which tasks are best completed in which environment. This is in line with the opinion of the large majority of participants in the Bene survey, who gave a strong vote for both – for a “retreat within the office for focused work”, and for “regular meetings in person for the entire team” and “specific spaces for collaboration”. There is a clear lack of spaces for retreat, as shown in 2017 in a Forsa survey commissioned by the Interior Business Association. According to this survey, almost 60 per cent of office employees surveyed felt there was a lack of areas for retreat, despite the fact that four out of five of those surveyed considered the option “important” or “very important”.

# FELIX BRODBECK

... is professor of  
Economic and Organisa-  
tional Psychology at the

Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU).  
For more than twelve years he was a member of the  
steering group for the GLOBE (Global Leadership  
and Organisational Behavior Effectiveness) pro-  
gramme, a research association of 170 researchers  
from more than 60 countries.

“Many companies seem to be hellbent on achieving agile organisation so they can hold their ground in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world. I see companies degenerating into “agility mania” and losing their way culturally in the process. With the frenzy of changes there are no shared viewpoints left in the company. All of a sudden the emphasis is on agility and flexibility, and the previous values, which ensured stability and enabled the company to reach the position it is in today, are called into question. The aim must be to become agile while at the same time maintaining stability, so the company can continue to earn the money it needs and handle day-to-day business. Without stability, you can’t have agility in the long term – they are like yin and yang.”

“The fascinating thing about organisations is that they can change collective behaviours and processes relatively quickly, although established companies might not be able to do so as quickly as new digital companies. But established, traditional companies often have a cultural wisdom that ensures a certain balance between agility and stability. What really concerns me is the basic problem of globalisation and digitalisation: the fact that countries, societies and institutions still need much longer to implement changes and are no longer keeping up with businesses.”

In her book, Cain also comes to the conclusion that office staff need to be offered lots of options – it is a passionate plea for the “multispace” (see excursus on p. 73): “We must create environments in which people are free to move between a variety of interactions and to retreat to their personal work area when they want to focus or simply be alone (...) Some companies are starting to understand the value of silence and working alone, and create flexible workspaces, which offer a mix of private work areas, quiet zones, relaxed meeting points, cafés, reading spaces, computer centres and even streets, where people can chat casually without disturbing others’ workflow.” At Microsoft, most employees are given a private office with sliding doors and mobile walls, so that each individual is free to decide when they want to collaborate with others and when they need time to themselves.

Steve Wozniak enjoyed this kind of freedom decades earlier when he was still working at Hewlett-Packard (HP). Twice a day the management brought out doughnuts and coffee to bring employees together to share ideas in a more relaxed fashion. It was purely about performance at HP, writes Cain: “It didn’t matter how someone looked, there was no bonus for sociability, and nobody thrust Wozniak from his beloved design work into a management role. To him, collaboration meant the opportunity to share a doughnut and a few ideas with his laid-back, non-judgemental, casually-dressed colleagues – who didn’t care in the least when he disappeared into his cubicle to get on with his work.”

Also revealing in this respect is another outcome of the Bene survey – the clear finding that agile methods like scrum, design thinking and lean startup are never, or only occasionally, applied in many companies.

## WHAT ARE AGILE METHODS?

Agile methods are processes that originate from the IT world. When developing software, it was found that better results are achieved when the solution is no longer approached on the basis of a large masterplan that prescribes defined steps relatively clearly in a linear process (“waterfall method”). Instead agile software development is divided into relatively short, manageable phases, in which the interim results are regularly checked, discussed and tested on the end-user. Some of the main principles are that reacting to change is more important than following plans, that individuals and interactions are put before processes and tools, that functioning software is more important than comprehensive documentation and that collaboration with the customer takes priority over contract negotiations. Nowadays agile methods like scrum, design thinking and lean startup are used outside the IT sector as well.

# AMANDA STANAWAY

... is Principal at the Sydney office of international architecture firm Woods Bagot.

“As organisational change and working methodologies change and as workers and workplace planning has been released from working in hierarchical structures, the primary driver for most of our corporate clients has become the need for flexibility, agility and speed, coupled with innovation.”

“Agile is one of those buzz words that means something different to every client that we work with: from meaning ‘the ability to move about freely and respond to change’ to the complexity and project management parameters associated with agile methodologies.”

# ROBIN TALBOOM

... is the founder and CEO of the Belgian company Userfull, in Boom, an IT consulting firm with 40 employees who provide IT advice, installation and maintenance services for corporate clients.

“Our company organisation is a combination of a matrix and traditional top-down lines. Important goals are decided at the top, but the people who implement that strategy act very freely within the matrix organisation. Nobody belongs to a specific company unit – you just apply whatever job needs to be done next and whatever you have the necessary skills to do.”

## THE BALANCE BETWEEN MOBILITY AND STABILITY

As the first Bene Future of Work Report has already shown, fluid, cross-departmental project teams are the preferred way to address tasks successfully in most companies. Once again, we see media hype surrounding this topic, obscuring the crux of the matter: it's not about X or Y agile methods that can solve every problem. It's about making the company as a whole quick to react and agile, while at the same time maintaining stability in the face of increasing demands, by creating an organisation, a corporate culture and a space that makes employees feel good and want to contribute to the company's success. Michael Müller, consultant and professor at the University of Media in Stuttgart, writes that he is utterly convinced “that agile organisations are the future”. However, a company doesn't become an agile organisation simply by introducing new project management methods. It does so by developing a certain attitude and confronting its own culture and the discourses of society and the market.

“Agile methods obviously don't significantly help organisations to incorporate the necessary changes,” says Prof. Weissenberger-Eibl, director of the Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research, responding to the Bene survey. “I often hear that employees are overburdened by agile methods because their work is being scrutinised over and over again in very short cycles. Traditional project management with milestones and time schedules often seems to be the better path. Deceleration is an important part of this.”

Salzburg-based consultant Thomas Würzburger is also sceptical of the subject. In his book “Die Agilitätsfalle” [“The Agility Trap”] Würzburger writes that not all employees are inclined to work in a self-organised manner, repeatedly getting involved in new teamwork, making regular decisions and permanently developing and adapting themselves. Würzburger describes a form of self-overestimation by individuals and companies alike as a reaction to the rapid change due to digitalisation: Most of us are not agile by nature – on the contrary, most people are overburdened with the current efforts to achieve agility. We are trying to equip ourselves for the impossible by calling into question or completely doing away with everything that was once set in stone. We are trying to make ourselves as unpredictable and dynamic as the world around us. And we're trying to do the same thing with our companies: they should not include anything rigid, fixed or inflexible that could be rendered useless by unforeseen events. But the problem is, this makes it impossible to work together. What we are forgetting in the process is people.”

## THE HAPPINESS OF TEAMWORK

People work well and very successfully in teams, as demonstrated in areas reaching beyond the issue of agile methods. This pays off both for employees and for companies. This is because teamwork – as the Bene study has now clearly shown – is conducive to creativity, productivity, efficiency, commitment and communication. Working in a team can make people happier and allow them to grow in their abilities and their personality. Shared work within a team reduces stress and the risk of burnout. Teamwork can help employees take risks that they would not take as individuals, creating opportunities they might otherwise miss out on.

# JOANNA PONIKOWSKA

... is an office manager in Warsaw for the international corporate law firm Dentons.

“I think that the strength of the individual lies in the strength of the team, and the strength of the team lies in the strength of the individual. Our employees have a lot to say. That’s why we should listen to them and provide them with opportunities to discuss, cooperate, influence and support each other. By letting people do their work the way they like (e.g. remotely or any time of the day that’s convenient for them) and by providing them with the technology that allows that. But it is also important to introduce regular meetings where knowledge, experience and best practices can be shared.”

# BRIAN PILLEY

... is an architect and head of the Indian office of MMoser Associates in Bangalore.

“I’m regularly being asked what we can do to improve the acoustics within the office environment. It’s true that over the years, more of the office walls have been removed as a way to encourage collaboration. Because of this, we need to add acoustic screening, and private 1-2 person telephone rooms to offer the “quiet” / reflective spaces needed to support an open plan office. These can be used for phone calls/ private chats and a space where you can finish off a report in peace and quiet. We are increasingly confronted with the task of balancing the different demands of collaborative working as well as spaces to retreat within one area.”

The most well-known evidence for the benefits of teamwork is a study by Google in which researchers conducted interviews with more than 200 members of around 180 Google teams to examine the question of what makes teams successful. Interestingly, according to their findings, the make-up of the team doesn’t play as predominant a role as one would perhaps expect: “Who is on a team matters less than how the team members interact, structure their work, and view their contributions.” The Google researchers identified the feeling of safety within the team (“psychological safety”) as by far the most important factor for successful teamwork. Anyone who avoids asking questions that they think might be wrong, because they’re worried about their colleagues’ reaction, holds back unconventional ideas or conceals mistakes, and won’t drive their team as much as they could. Google noticed remarkable effects: Individuals who feel confident about their place in their team are less likely to leave the company in the near future and more likely to make use of the variety of ideas their team comes up with. Employees who feel completely at ease in their team also generated more turnover and were evaluated as effective by their supervisors twice as frequently as other employees. In addition, team workers stood out in terms of how reliably they completed the tasks discussed on schedule and to a high level of quality.

However, the sense of confidence that working with trusted colleagues can provide should not be misunderstood simply as a feel-good atmosphere where no one challenges anyone else. Interesting, innovative ideas often thrive in an environment with people who think and tick differently, against whom one’s personal perspective inevitably grates. This was also confirmed by the Bene survey in the question about the desired competences within a team: the need for harmony is relatively less important than target-orientation.

**PROFITABLE THANKS TO DIVERSITY**  
The study “Diversity Matters” (2015) by McKinsey shows the economic effects that diverse teams can have. With data from hundreds of organisations and thousands of managers in the United Kingdom, Canada, Latin America and the US, the corporate consultancy was able to demonstrate a statistically significant connection between the economic performance of major companies and the diversity of their management bodies. The more women and people of different ethnic backgrounds were represented on these management bodies, the more profitable the companies were. The companies in the top quartile for gender diversity were 15 per cent more likely to be above the national industry median for returns; for companies in the top quartile for diversity of ethnicity the probability was actually 35 per cent higher.

The authors emphasise that this is a correlation, not a causation, however they have no doubt about the relationship between the two factors: companies with diverse workforces are more easily able to attract top talents and do better when it comes to customer focus, employee satisfaction and decision making. It can therefore be assumed that other forms of diversity – age, experience, cultural background – give a competitive advantage as well. This won’t come as a surprise to anyone, given the simple fact that “We live in a deeply connected and global world.” Most companies have a backlog in this respect: “Given the higher returns that diversity is expected to bring, we believe it is better to invest now, since winners will pull further ahead and laggards will fall further behind.”

# SU LIM

... is Principal - Consulting at Six Ideas by Dexus in Melbourne.

“I have spent my life oscillating between Asia and Australia – living, studying and working in diverse cultures, observing the varying speeds of cultural and physical change in different locations. This experience has seeded my curiosity in how the behaviour of people is influenced by their environment and circumstance, their motivations and experience over time and through change. One of the big issues with offices where people are provided with only a single desk that they own is this: A single space doesn’t support all the activities they need to do. It’s like saying I only need one type of space in my house and I expect it to support everything I do. Even when you have a small space like a caravan you have different areas for different tasks, the same goes for a workplace: You choose the type of space that is appropriate for the kind of activity that you’re going to do.

In addition, people are more mobile than just one place - your workplace is bigger than the four walls of your building or your office, so you might include the home, the café, the library, the airport and more. When you look at mobility patterns it doesn’t always make sense for people to own space because they are only in for a short time. This translates into lots of unused space, which is a waste of resources.

Collaborative work is really important for solving problems, but concentrated work is very important as well. Knowledge work happens in both modes, so we need a balance of these space types. Unfortunately, there are many workplaces that are not really designed for people to be productive. When you think that we spend the majority of our time working, it is surprising that there are still lots of environments that just aren’t very good for humans.”

## EXCURSUS: THE MULTISPACE IS THE FUTURE

Flexible “multispace” offices – work environments where open spaces are mixed with a range of closed spaces, often combined with a non-territorial office concept – provide “a significantly higher supporting function” for company objectives. This is the central finding of a study by the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (IAO) on “Effective Office and Working Environments.”

In 2018 the researchers surveyed almost 1,100 office and work environment experts and found that a multispace working environment yields significantly better results than other office layouts. Not only do multispace offices offer significantly more opportunities for employees to retreat if they need to concentrate or take a short break – including in comparison to individual offices – they also have a positive impact on collaboration and the sense of autonomous working. Employer attractiveness also increases significantly in multispace offices because this is where the spatial layout least reflects hierarchical structures.

### THE NEW DEFINITION OF MOBILE WORK

According to the researchers, good quality spatial design is present when office structures effectively support changes in the company, are representative of the working processes and promote informal discussion, provide an adequate range of meeting spaces and take specific user needs into account in their design. However, most of those surveyed felt that the modernisation of their work organisation is not happening fast enough, and the bigger the company, the more the speed of transformation is seen as too slow. The study participants indicated that their current office and working environment only supported the achievement of company objectives to a moderate extent. Just 23 per cent are already working in multispace offices. A further 19 per cent are working in multiperson offices, 15 per cent in group or two-person offices, 14 per cent in open-plan offices and 7 per cent in individual

offices. The fact that 54 per cent of those surveyed expect the multispace to become the predominant form of office in future was summed up by the researchers in the title: “Wanted: work environment that offers choice”.

A study by the German Economic Institute looking at “Mobile Working in Germany and Europe” (2017) also places the significance of the “home office” trend in context. In contrast to what the public debate would suggest, mobile working primarily means working at a client’s premises. “The frequently conjured image of the employee who can choose to work in the office, on their balcony at home or in a café round the corner is the exception, and not the norm, when it comes to mobile working. Mobile working takes a variety of forms in Germany.”

# THE MOST STRIKING FINDINGS

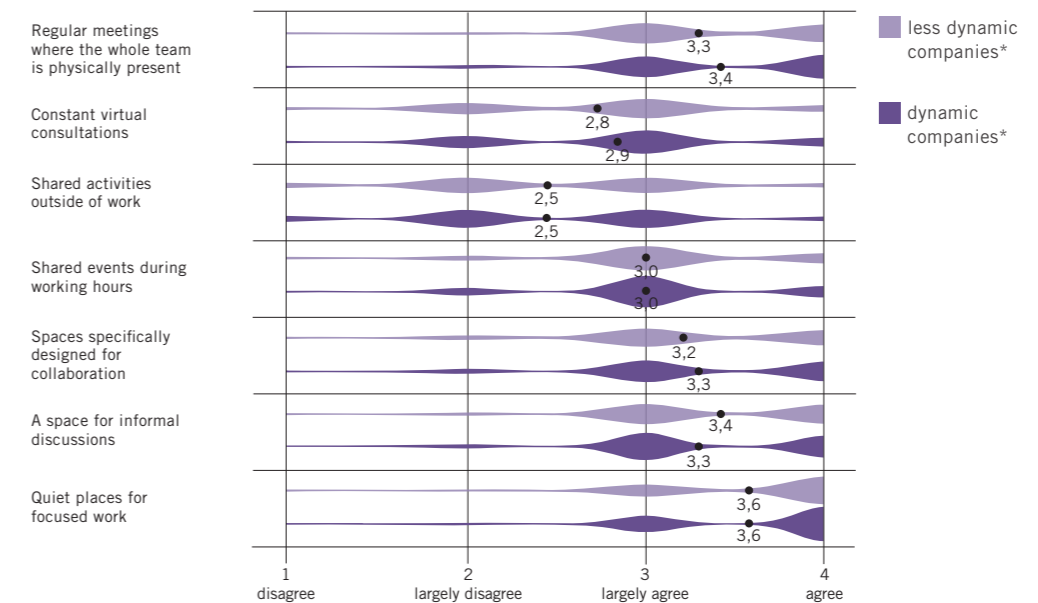
“Places to retreat for focused work” is by far the most common answer given by Bene study participants when asked what they see as important for working productively. The second most important thing is “regular meetings where the whole team is physically present”, and the third is “space for informal discussions”. “Spaces specifically designed for collaboration” and “group events during work hours” are also popular, as are shared meals. “Constant virtual consultations” and “group activities

outside work hours”, on the other hand, are less popular. There is little difference between the responses from employees in dynamic companies and those in less dynamic companies – the desire for spaces to retreat and regular meetings where colleagues are physically present is relatively pronounced in all companies. (graphic 17)

# OF THE BENE SURVEY

graphic 17

What is necessary for effective work if we increasingly work away from the office and at home?

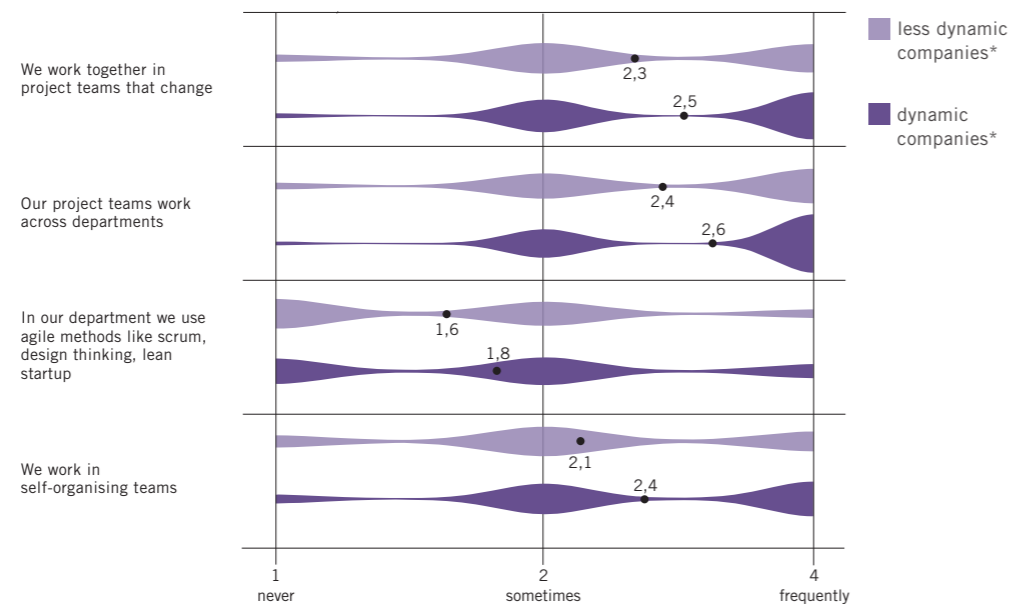


\*dynamic of the company compared to competitors

There are, however, more significant deviations between dynamic and less dynamic companies when it comes to the issue of project work. Fluid, cross-departmental, self-organising project teams are standard day-to-day practice in dynamic companies, and agile methods like scrum and design thinking are more likely to be used in the dynamic companies, albeit significantly less often than traditional project work. In many companies, agile methods are rarely or never applied. Consultation and management

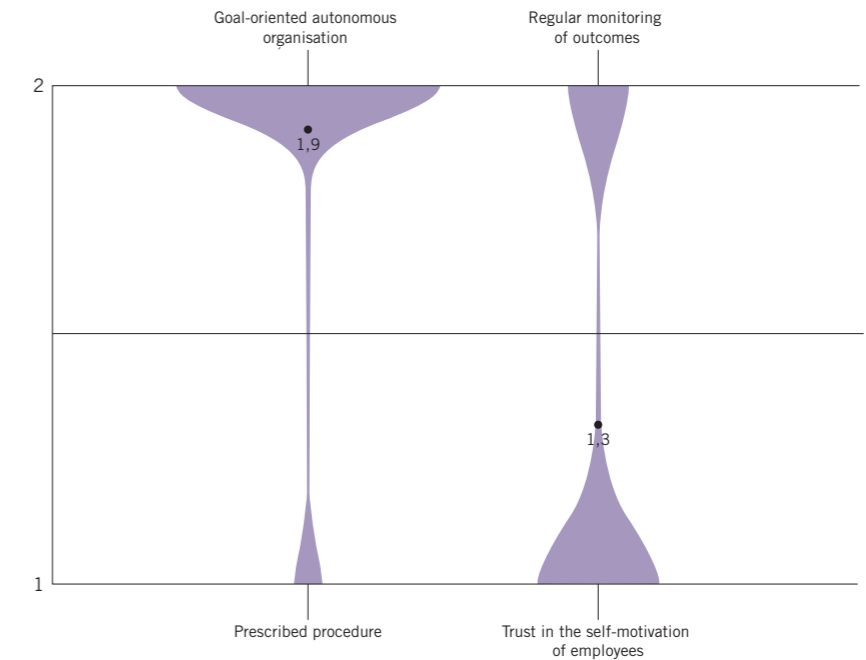
employees most frequently work in teams, and on the whole, there are only minimal differences between the industry sectors. The findings are underpinned by a study by online job platform StepStone and consultancy firm Kienbaum based on information from 10,000 experts and executives. According to this information, fewer than 10 per cent of the companies work in an agile style, despite the fact that one in three employees would like to do so and a clear majority is open to agile work methods. (graphic 18)

graphic 18 How is project work organised in your company?



\*dynamic of the company compared to competitors

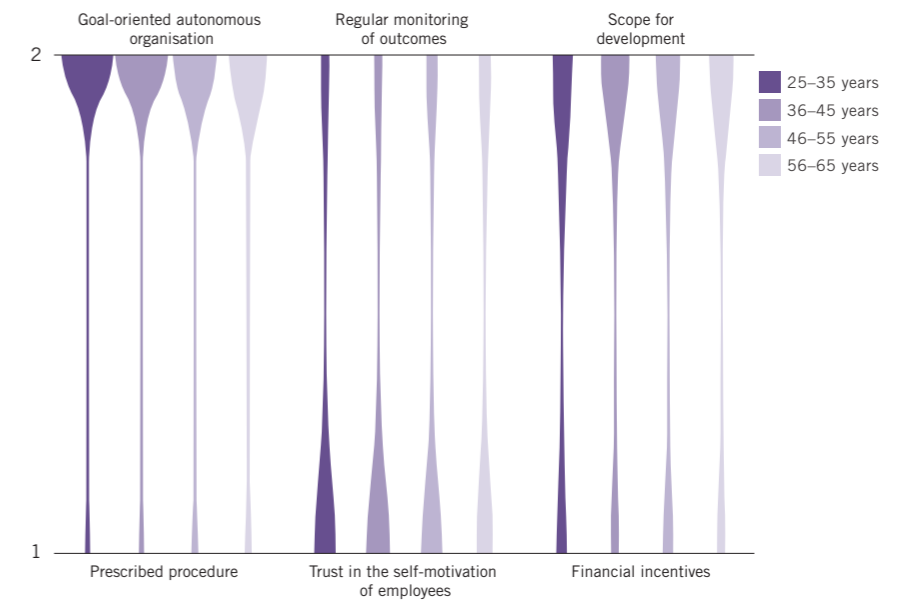
graphic 19 What approach produces the best outcomes?



The overwhelming majority of the study participants are in favour of autonomous working. In their experience the best results are achieved when managers simply specify the objective without mapping out the specific path employees should take to achieve it. In line with this, they think that checks should be limited and expect their managers to trust them instead. (graphic 19)



graphic 20 What approach produces the best outcomes?



**There was no evident distinction between women and men in the answers to this question, nor was there any significant discrepancy between the age groups. (graphic 20)**



# CON- CLUSION

“Here at Bene we are curious – about the future and about the world”. As we said in the foreword, this is why, with the help of the Karlsruhe researchers, we embarked on such an extensive survey.

Our aim was to generate new understanding.

Here at Bene we want to use the principles that guide us to interpret knowledge, to evaluate it, in a meaningful way.

It is precisely in times of upheaval, driven by developments in digitalisation and technology, that attitudes are important. Is this a storm that will sweep everything away, leaving half the world unemployed and in poverty? Or is it the way to paradise, freeing us from debilitating physical work and intellectually numbing tasks, and at last making it possible for us to enjoy creative, self-determined activities?

In Chapter 1 we collated some answers to these questions – those collected in our survey as well as studies and opinions from highly-respected experts and institutions. Yes, the digital transformation is certainly causing some concern because it is changing our private and professional lives so quickly and profoundly. But the most extreme conclusions that could be drawn from this – chaos and misery here, paradise and emancipation there – just show how wide the scope is for possible interpretations and how much scope there is between these extremes to shape what will really happen. In other words – and this corresponds with our approach: it is in our hands, we will shape the future; we are, so to speak, the custodians.

We are the ones who are involved in company decisions every day about when and for what purpose new technologies are used, whether and how they should or can be used to make work more meaningful, enjoyable, simple, efficient, interesting, creative and humane. In Chapters 2 and 4 we collected responses on how managers and employees can create this scope for development – with self-organising teams, project work and agile methods, with flat hierarchies and relationships where bosses and employees work as equals, with a company culture that prioritises cooperation and participation, encouragement and empowerment. Because in a digital world that communicates, produces, creates and innovates in ways that are different from the analogue world, the old paths no longer lead to the destination – not least because the destination itself is changing.

As we showed in Chapter 3, employees expect more than ever that the meaningful purpose and aims of the company in which they spend the majority of their time go beyond the traditional “higher, faster, stronger”. Employees today expect more compelling answers to the question “to what end?” They look for work they can be deeply committed to, which reflects their own goals and values.

This means companies that want to stay successful through the digital transformation have to become purpose providers. Their senior executives face the challenging task of combining the company aims and the aims of their increasingly digitally socialised staff in a new coherent narrative about their shared way forward. The art – you could also say “the design project” – is therefore to align as much as possible a company’s potential for providing meaning with its employees’ expectations of meaningful purpose.



## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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