

CEMS MAGAZINE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

THE FUTURE OF WORK ISSUE

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE FUTURE OF WORK

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CEMS MAGAZINE 2020

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Founded in 1988, CEMS is a global alliance of 33 business schools and universities collaborating with over 66 industry-leading multi-national corporations, 7 NGOs and over 15,000 alumni to deliver the renowned CEMS Master's in International Management.

CEMS is dedicated to educating and preparing future generations of global business leaders to enter into a multilingual, multicultural and interconnected business world.

CEMS promotes global citizenship, with a particular emphasis on these values: The pursuit of excellence with high standards of performance and ethical conduct; Understanding and drawing upon cultural diversity with respect and empathy; Professional responsibility and accountability in relation to society as a whole.

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EDITORIAL & PRODUCTION

Editorial Direction

Rebecca Rosinski

Design & Art Direction

Jebens Design

www.jebensdesign.co.uk

Feature Article

Stephen Hoare

Editorial Production

Áine Doris

Contributors

Ahmed Abdel-Meguid

Leonor Blázquez Villar

Thomas Gandeborn

Salvador Guimerá Girón

Claudia Hoffmann

Neli Ilitchewa

Rita Järventie-Thesleff

Patrick Klingler

Jana Koch

Elina Mäkelä

Veronica Melian

Tiina Pokkinen

Andra Siderache

Mirko Warschun

Laura Wendt

Photographs & illustrations

p6 American University in Cairo

p6 bottom left, Ahmed Abdel-Meguid

p8 Claudia Hofmann

p8-9 American University
in Cairo

pp10-15 Annette Etges

Photography

p18 left, Thomas Gandeborn

p24 bottom left, Laura Wendt,

Mirko Warschun

p26-29 Daimler

p32-33 Elina Mäkelä

p40-43 Rita Järventie-Thesleff

p44 Andra Siderache

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THE FUTURE OF WORK ISSUE

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Automation, robotics, artificial intelligence and other tectonic shifts in technology and customer expectations are radically re-shaping the way we work. Meanwhile, boundaries between our professional and home lives are diminishing drastically. We are also living longer than ever before – driving new models of living, learning and working. It is reasonable to believe that the early 21st century will be remembered as a moment of change as profound and significant as the first Industrial Revolution.

This emerging workforce will likely see an increase in demand for technological know-how, greater agility, resourcefulness and disruptive analytical-thinking capabilities. As hierarchies dissolve and new leadership paradigms emerge, tomorrow's decision-makers will need the skills to delegate and empower others. For us, as educators, the challenge is to understand and respond to these changing needs through individual development and tailor-made learning solutions; and to come to terms with the reality that we need to compete to attract talented students. There is a greater onus on us than ever before to focus on STEM subjects, leadership development and the effective management of people, the integration of technical competencies and micro credentials – to redouble our efforts to equip the next generation with what they need to lead the future of work.

The Covid-19 crisis has only accelerated all of this. We have all faced a huge shift to online-only communication, building virtual networks and partnership ecosystems to cope with unprecedented and exponential needs.

None of this has been easy, however, in adversity, often comes opportunity. This is a unique moment in time. We have a real chance to truly innovate how we teach and learn, to close the technology gap and create far superior learning opportunities for students. We also have

the opportunity to really embed relevance as a necessary deliverable in our teaching and our research.

It is my greatest hope that from this period of disruption that we find a way forward which enhances our collaboration and we find new ways to address inequalities and discrimination and deploy our collective intelligence to protect and sustain our planet.

This issue of the CEMS Magazine is dedicated to that future. In 2020, we highlight the amazing work of our students and faculty in preparing for the future of work in ways that are as innovative as they are sustainable, as creative as they are ambitious. I trust that you share with me a tremendous feeling of pride in the fortitude of the CEMS community, and optimism in our capacity to shape this future.

Roland Siegers
CEMS Executive Director

"We have a real chance to truly innovate how we teach and learn, to close the technology gap and create far superior learning opportunities for students."

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★ FEATURE ARTICLE

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE FUTURE OF WORK

Disruptive business models and cutting-edge technology are a sign of a booming economy. Innovations such as artificial intelligence, assembly line robotics, collaborative platforms and omni-channel marketing have created new business models that are shaping the future of work. But now disruption has come from a new and totally unexpected source, one which is affecting all countries and all economies – Covid-19



Covid-19 created a global pandemic prompting governments to close national borders, end freedom of movement and order the lockdown of their economies. Across the world, organisations large and small are having to respond to the disruption of their business models. The future of work is now centre stage as technology and innovation shape our response to the pandemic.

Last year, the OECD published a report titled *The Future of Work*. This identified four main areas that will have an impact on advanced economies – rapid technological change, globalisation, ageing populations and flexible labour markets. But right now, economies are in survival mode as stock markets fall and governments ride to the rescue with tax breaks and furlough schemes which guarantee income for workers who would otherwise be made redundant.

The impact of COVID-19 has yet to be fully felt but even at this early stage in the pandemic it is clear that aviation, tourism and hospitality industries will be badly hit. Other sectors relying heavily on face to face interaction and teamwork such as oil and gas exploration, manufacturing, traditional retailing, sales, consultancy will have to find new models that incorporate social distancing. In many cases, robotics or automation, supplementing human skills, will allow fewer people to share limited work spaces.

CEMS Academic Member schools have already introduced content to reflect changing organisational behaviour brought on by automation, artificial intelligence, online marketing, data algorithms, collaborative platforms and much more. CEMS Academic Members in collaboration with CEMS Corporate Partners reacted to the pandemic by shifting to online teaching. A seamless transition was helped by the fact that robust e-learning and collaborative platforms were widely available and in some cases were already supplementing face to face sessions.

The American University in Cairo was among the early responders, switching instantly from physical classrooms to highly interactive virtual platforms. "In a few days we went from

"The impact of COVID-19 has yet to be fully felt but even at this early stage in the pandemic it is clear that aviation, tourism and hospitality industries will be badly hit. Other sectors relying heavily on face to face interaction and teamwork such as oil and gas exploration, manufacturing, traditional retailing, sales, consultancy will have to find new models that incorporate social distancing"

teaching in the classroom to online. This required prior knowledge through training and a degree of comfort with the latest online tools," says associate professor of accounting and associate dean for undergraduate studies at AUC School of Business, Ahmed Abdel-Meguid. This was made possible by AUC's cutting-edge Center for Learning and Teaching (CLT) as well as a proactive IT department. Abdel-Meguid adds: "The silver lining of the current events is that it provided an excellent opportunity for faculty to learn a new set of skills and encouraged students to become more independent and more adaptable."

Rebalancing Economic Power

Knowledge workers will fare best in the future world of work as their skills are harder to replace with artificial intelligence or robots. Associate professor Sherwat E Ibrahim a specialist in global supply chains from the University of America in Cairo sees this trend as rebalancing economic power. "Sourcing strategies of G7 and the global North to the global South are already being revised in the light of increased transaction costs and the efficiencies resulting from job automation."

The physical presence and national affiliation of knowledge workers will be the new determinant of global value chain allocation.

What this means for all economies is an increased reliance on agile businesses, particularly the self-employed sector. Businesses with more entrepreneurial 'DNA' are more likely to survive. Innovation and adaptability could provide the best support for business continuity. As the global pandemic hit major international companies, and despite the greater vulnerability of small local firms, many of them were able to respond quickly and re-assert their importance in the supply chain. Egypt's dynamic informal sector, although being the most susceptible to shocks, still constitutes a major segment of the overall economy, affecting the livelihood of millions. However, daily workers of the informal sector may be underutilized and/or misallocated which requires corrective actions. Says Abdel-Meguid, "The government, NGOs and several companies have introduced a range of socially responsible initiatives to support those workers during this crisis making them more resilient until the economy fully recovers."

Omni-channel Marketing points the way forward

Marketing is also set for radical change. Sophisticated algorithms are speeding the analysis of sales data, enabling e-commerce websites to customise offerings with online campaigns tailored to individual tastes and buying patterns. This has enabled retail businesses with a strong online presence, food retailers and supermarkets, to respond rapidly to the COVID-19 crisis.

Professor Sherwat E Ibrahim of AUC explains that converging information systems and the escalated use of online shopping resulting from the pandemic should boost omni-channel marketing strategies in the future. "The partition between online and offline shopping will become blurred where a consumer's physical presence merges with their online presence." Consumers could be directed to a physical store where they can experience the quality of touch and feel products and make a selection available for instant delivery from a far greater stock held in warehouse miles away, yet available for instant delivery.

Rotterdam School of Management professor of marketing, Stefano Puntoni, argues that this model has cost advantages. "The future

of work is agile as the costs associated with delivering a service online are close to zero." In the short-term, marketing and e-commerce look set to take over from or supplement existing retail businesses. Any business without some form of online presence will suffer. "To survive this pandemic, small companies have been forced to use digital tools in a way they've never done before," says Puntoni.

In the long term, he explains that the COVID-19 crisis will give fresh impetus to innovation. Trends in e-commerce that might have taken ten years to bring to fruition, could now be developed in two years or less. With extended globalised supply chains under threat, advances in 3D printing could bring customized parts closer to the point of manufacture. The old model of specialised parts suppliers and small specialised workshops supplying sectors, such as aerospace or automotive industry, could be superseded by technology.

Research published last year in *Nature Human Behaviour*, by Armin Granolo and Former RSM faculty Christoph Fuchs, found that people had fewer negative feelings if their job was outsourced to a robot than if they were replaced by another person. Says Puntoni: "Paradoxically people find being replaced by a machine less threatening. As machines do more and more, either humans do less and less or they will do something else. This trend will affect us in all situations."

Remote working

Access to information will become the key to innovation and business sustainability as new online tools speed decision-making. Bocconi University has undertaken joint research into collaborative platforms with Georgia State University and MIT Sloan Management Review. Professor Massimo Magni has been engaged in a study based on interviews with a sample of a thousand managers drawn from the oil and gas, banking, consultancy, manufacturing, and retail sectors. "We found that the effectiveness of collaboration platforms can be traced back to their ability to enable team shared sensemaking, task execution and wellbeing. During this pandemic people discovered that it's possible to work effectively at a distance, and a pivotal role is played by the team leader in fostering effective distance-based work." The good news is that collaborative platforms actively support older staff by encouraging them to work



PHOTO ABOVE:
Ahmed Abdel-Meguid



collaboratively in teams, a situation in which they can share valuable knowledge.

Technology is enabling individuals with special skills to pool their knowledge and to find rapid and innovative solutions to business challenges. This approach whilst promoting agility in times of growth could also be an essential weapon in the struggle to sustain and re-build business during and after the pandemic.

A specialist in accounting at the American University in Cairo, associate professor Abdel-Meguid argues that new ways of working harnessing the power of artificial intelligence will put the accounting and auditing professions at the forefront of risk management as business continuity becomes more critical. "The importance of using AI to remotely sift through large volumes of data sift is now more pronounced given the need for social distancing. Robotics could support auditors in tasks which typically require observation or physical examination such as inventory counts. The need to visit a warehouse will quickly diminish. While technology will facilitate processes, human professional judgement will still be needed." As businesses struggle to get back on their feet, close monitoring of key performance indicators is vital for business leaders and may serve as early warning signs of potential risks.



An enhanced role for Human Resources

In a post-COVID world employers will have to be sensitive about how and where technology is employed. Human Resources, for example, could take on a new role in guiding business leaders to take into account wider social issues and be more inclusive.

Bex Hewett, human resources professor at Rotterdam School of Management believes HR is set to play a pivotal role in ethics and protecting employees. Human resources managers are being called upon to help restructure the work place to ensure social distancing guidelines are met and to lead the transition to new ways of working. Under new health and safety guidance, hot desking will no longer be permitted as it could encourage the spread of the virus, and likewise using the elevator will be discouraged and staff instead advised to climb stairs. Furthermore, stop and start times could be staggered in order to reduce pressure on peak time travel.



**CASE STUDY
BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP**

Claudia Hoffmann senior recruiter for Boston Consulting Group in Zurich has been delivering soft skills training to CEMS students at HSG, St Gallen University for the past two years. This March at short notice, her scheduled five-hour workshop on story lining (a strategic communications technique) was moved to a Webex platform in order to replicate the social interactions among the group and the seminar leaders. Says Hoffmann: "We've been using Webex as a conferencing tool internally ever since I started at BCG. But this was the first time we have used it to deliver an entire virtual workshop with external participants. It was very exciting for us."

In order to prepare fully, Hoffmann and her team of five coaches could leverage several IT trainings available within BCG to work out how to use the technology to best advantage. "We thought how can we best engage with the students?" she says. The online workshop was split into a plenary session before groups of students each supported by a coach split into five separate virtual "rooms" where participants could see and hear and participate in group tasks. Students and BCG'ers were using a WhatsApp group chat on their mobile phones, enabling them to flag up questions or simply to chat. Meanwhile, BCG facilitators used an internal communications channel using the digital tool Slack, enabling them to coordinate and feedback information from the breakout groups. The feedback from the 32 CEMS students attending the course which counts towards their masters' degree has been positive.

"Once the immediate crisis is over employers will need to rethink their business to become more sustainable"

PHOTO BELOW:
Claudia Hoffmann



This enhanced role could involve helping staff electing to work from home to set up ergonomically efficient home offices. "Because the way we work is changing, employers have the potential to exploit the workforce through a more intensive use of technology. We need to look beyond business leaders and shareholders and act as a strategic partner with a broader focus on employees and their families, the local community and global supply chain," adds Dr Hewett.

Hewett sees HR's role as one of co-creation, helping management develop more effective ways of working and to maintain a focus on sustainability. The future of work, she says is not simply about immediate business survival; it should develop within the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. She cites the example of Unilever whose code of corporate social responsibility extended

beyond its own workforce to include work, pay and conditions of companies that are part of its supply chain. "That thinking is highly influential," she says.

This has implications for Human Resources to help ease the transition. The idea of the HR department becoming central to re-imagining or co-creating a new business model makes a lot of sense. Across Europe governments are intervening to help business navigate a sudden shock to the economy by setting up furlough schemes to keep paying staff wages even when their work has temporarily dried up. Once the immediate crisis is over employers will need to rethink their business to become more sustainable. This will involve cutting costs and becoming more agile through the use of new ways of working including more flexible working through employees being invited to take



CASE STUDY AN ALUMNA'S STORY

Graduating from the University of Cologne in 2008, CEMS alumna Neli Iltchewa has been working in the investment division of Frankfurt based Commerzbank. Neli currently works in the area of market risk strategy portfolio strategy, deals with regulation and organisational restructuring.

Much has changed in the past decade. Neli explains: "In banking, people have realised that the years of very strong revenue and large profits are over. We're seeing increased digitisation across industries and a shift in relevant skills sets."

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, Neli has joined her colleagues in working from home communicating mainly via Webex. By early July she expects to be back in her office which is being redesigned to respect social distancing.

She believes the future of work will be influenced by the evolving severe economic downturn. "COVID-19 will have long lasting effects due to the high levels of debt in the population, businesses and sovereigns. The burden on the real economy is too great for the financial sector to manage alone. Getting the economy going again will require massive state support"

unpaid leave, move to part-time working or job share arrangements.

Bex Hewett has first-hand experience from when she was head of human resources at the UK telecommunications regulator, Ofcom. "In the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, we did lose a lot of people but we managed it in a way that was fair by introducing a voluntary redundancy scheme and giving people the opportunity to suggest alternative solutions to work more efficiently so save money in other ways"

The dust is yet to settle, but it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic will cause economic damage on an unprecedented scale. It is also clear that without the tools and efficiencies developed as part of the thinking around new ways of working businesses and industry would be at a much greater disadvantage. To lead recovery, the response from business and from politicians will be decisive.

BUILDING TOMORROW LAND

When DHL Consulting was asked to assess its parent company's readiness for digitisation and shifting employee expectations it was the perfect opportunity to institute a few changes in its own way of working. Changes that have helped the company weather an unprecedented storm.

The tail winds of rapid digitisation, continuous technological innovation and shifting demographics are powering a forward momentum of change in the way that we work today. And in the way that we expect to work in the future.

Organisations that want to stay ahead of this transformation would do well to ask themselves some critical questions: how will roles evolve, how will skills evolve, and how will our working modus operandi evolve over time? Perhaps the most important question leaders should be asking themselves is: are we ready for this change?

So says Jana Koch, Partner and Managing Director with DHL Consulting, the internal management consultancy for the global logistics behemoth, DHL Group and supply chain consultancy for the group's external customers. Based out of DHL HQ in Bonn, Germany, Koch leads a team of consultants, offering all of the services of an external consultancy but with the benefits of being close to and sharing the values of the parent company. In 2018, the DHL HR division approached Koch and her colleagues with a request to unpack the ways in which digitalisation was poised to impact their global workforce.

"We were asked to prepare a study to define our future needs, in terms of headcount, skills and competencies and leadership. Underpinning this was a key question: were we as an organisation ready for transformation? So we set about investigating this across the DHL Group, asking questions of both white-collar and blue-collar workforces."

A by-product of this work, says Koch was the realisation that DHL Consulting also needed to ask the same questions of itself as a consulting company in its own right.

"We started with the Group and then we looked at ourselves. Specifically we were interested in how our operational model would need to change and what kinds of technology-enabled work trends would be a good fit for us in terms of our needs and the expectations of our employees."

Koch and her team were keen to understand whether or not new paradigms such as remote working, agile project management or virtual training would work well for the company. Specifically, their goal was to determine how to leverage the best new-generation hardware and software management tools to support new ways of working. That meant mapping out the best fit between innovation and employee expectation – a process, she says, that implied looking at things from a digitisation and HR perspective.

Feedback from their HR marketing and recruiting functions revealed that new questions were appearing with regularity among potential new hires. People wanted to know whether or not they would need to relocate to Bonn for work, what kinds of contracts were on offer and what the company's policies were in terms of contracts, office-based work and holidays. The common denominator in all of this, says Koch, was the issue of flexibility. And it wasn't just an issue for Millennials.





Changing Expectations

There is an understanding that white collar employees around the world should come to an office to work a nine-to-five day, five days a week. It's a paradigm that dates back to the 1950's model of one worker, one home-builder families. As a framework, a growing body of research and opinion suggests that is actually no longer truly fit for purpose.

"People today are increasingly looking for better ways to harmonise work and private lives. There's a feeling that the traditional co-working, office-based paradigm may not be the best fit for personal lifestyles," says Koch. "There's a growing imperative to find ways to respond to our human needs to keep ourselves happy, bonded to our friends and families, fit and active and energized by whatever makes us feel complete. And people want to be able to combine this with a job they care about."

And this is not limited to new hires and Millennial workers. The incumbent workforce want it too.

"Feedback from existing and incoming staff dovetailed around a greater desire for flexibility, irrespective of demographic or generational differences. DHL Consulting employees of every hue expressed a universal interest in having the flexibility to attend to the demands of their personal lives without compromising their career or derailing their professional ambition."

So the challenge to Koch and her team was to design the right policies and actions to respond to this expectation.

Creating Tomorrow Land

Between 2019 and 2020, DHL Consulting has enacted two major initiatives that have comprehensively transformed the way that people work.

The first is what Koch calls the Remote Office Policy. When this new arrangement

was first introduced, it allowed every employee to work remotely for up to six days per month from any location that afforded them connectivity and privacy to remain fully productive. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, this policy has been updated and each employee can work an unlimited number of remote days. This policy will remain the norm even after the pandemic lockdowns are eased.

Introducing this change, the team were cautious to avoid being "overly prescriptive," says Koch.

"We stipulated that employees could work from wherever they wanted – anywhere that had good internet, and from where they could take private or confidential calls when necessary. We insisted that no one needed an excuse or specific reason to take their day because of the danger of stigmatisation. Till now, working from home has been reserved really for parents, when children are sick for instance, so we wanted to be sure that everyone felt the same benefit, regardless of their circumstances or lifestyle. For the same reason we were also keen to avoid calling it the 'Working from Home' policy. We were striving for equity and fair handedness across the workforce."

For project managers used to having team members on hand, shifting to periods of remote teamwork has meant making certain transitions in terms of management, planning – and trust.

"Giving people this degree of flexibility is all about empowering those people with a higher degree of autonomy to solve their own problems and make their own decisions. But before you get there, you have to figure out who might need more help in terms of guidance and time-planning. You might need to check in during the day with certain colleagues a bit more at first. And then you need to be able to let them go for it, and that means prioritising trust."

PHOTO BELOW:
Jana Koch



DHL CONSULTING

"There is an understanding that white collar employees around the world should come to an office to work a nine-to-five day, five days a week... a growing body of research and opinion suggests that is actually no longer truly fit for purpose"



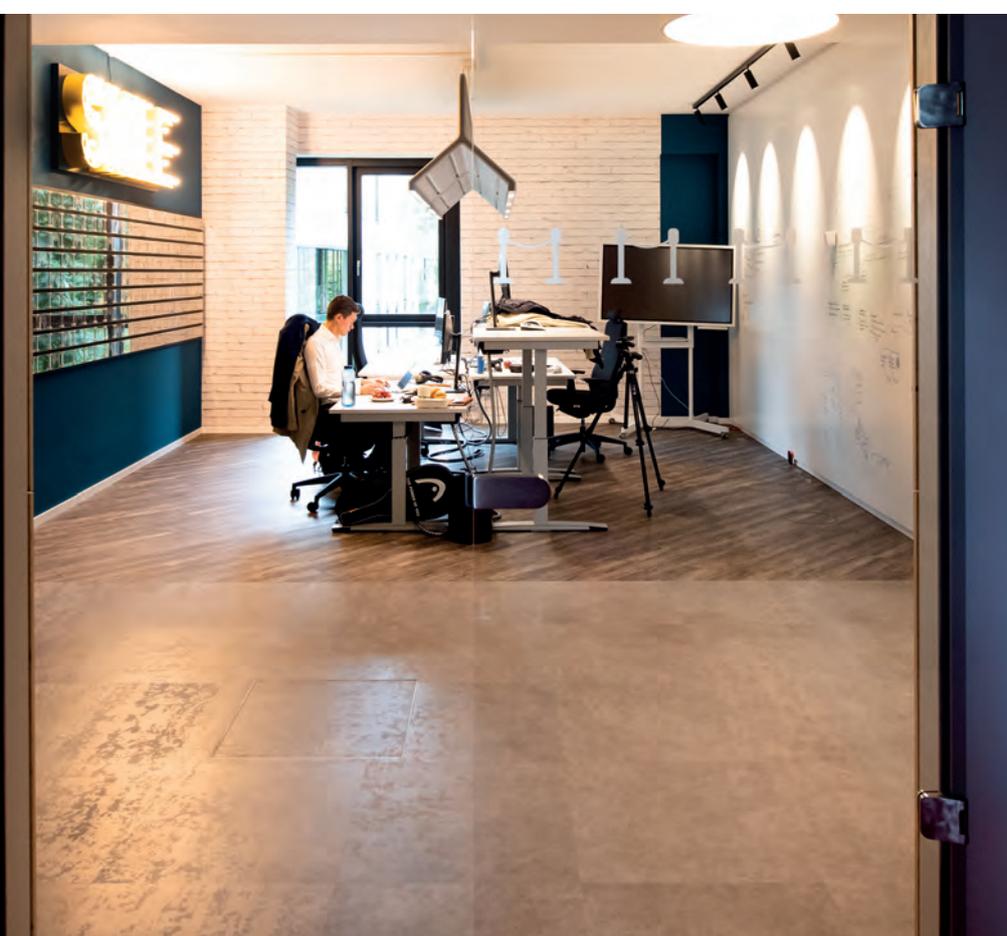
In consulting and other white collar sectors, this kind of dynamic is achievable over time because team-work tends to be deliverable-focused, she adds. Managers who communicate objectives and timelines effectively should not ultimately need to steer their team in situ; nor is there a need to constantly check if someone is working. "It's more about how you align as a team to make sure your deliverables happen when they are meant to. And that means letting people decide for themselves how they work."

The second key initiative was the remodelling of the HQ in Bonn.

DHL Consulting was keen to move to an "activity-based" working concept, with different areas and spaces mapping to different activities and working styles; different zones for meetings, project work and open collaboration. Before this work could start, however, the leadership team needed to better understand the needs and dynamics of the workforce.

"We created 'personas' looking that the different working styles and needs we have as consultants, and the different activities that have to be supported. Based on these insights, we figured out that we needed to create spaces for meetings as well as for informal collaboration; spaces for focused work and for project work. Above all we wanted to 'flexiblise' the office, meaning that people could come in and choose where they wanted or needed to work."

The new DHL Consulting office in Bonn has different zones based on different activities, each with its own etiquette in terms of taking calls or working silently. The effect has been a bringing down of walls, both literally and figuratively: a loosening of boundaries that has had the effect of dismantling hierarchy and silos while opening up new possibilities for cross-company collaboration. But it wasn't all plain sailing.



Overcoming Resistance

Inviting people to change the way they do things is a big ask, even when that change is designed to enhance their wellbeing and productivity. With change comes increased effort – at least initially as people shift from one modus operandi, rulebook or environment to another. It takes time, says Koch. At least 100 days' worth.

"You can't expect people to adapt without friction. Even though positive change is good for the collective, for the individual it implies the additional effort of learning and acclimatising to something new. Management needs to be aware of this, and to plan for this lag. For us, that translated into a novel idea: 100 days without complaint."

For 100 days the DHL Consulting team was asked to accept the changes and at the end of that period, to identify what didn't work.

"We did this," says Koch. "We changed furniture and materials that didn't work well. But we didn't change the essential concept of activity-based working and we didn't reintroduce single offices because after this period of time, people had begun to understand the purpose and the benefits of the transition."

Securing this kind of understanding early on in the process was another key learning for the management team, she adds.

"When it comes to change management, it doesn't matter how or how much you communicate. It's about what you share."

If your team doesn't understand the pain points that you are addressing by instituting change, they will find it exponentially harder to get behind that change. A key need for DHL Consulting was the need for greater space. And to leverage new space to become more digital and to work in a paperless environment. Koch acknowledges that she and her management colleagues could have done more to communicate this at the start.

"Our people saw the advantages of



"Planning for the workplace of the future... has meant that we had the agility, the experience and the confidence to respond to the crisis and to do so fast. We were ready for disruption"





paperless but were not clear about the overriding rationale. They felt they were being asked to give things up – the room or office or desk that had worked perfectly well till now. We could have done more to explain to them why this was happening."

It takes time for your people to see and feel the positives, says Koch. "So you need to stick to your decisions. If there is critical feedback at first, if you are convinced it's the right thing to do you need to weather the storm."

Weathering the Storm

Change has brought clear benefits to DHL Consulting. Mixing teams in open spaces means that consultants are less prone to working in silos and the flow of communication across the company's teams – and hierarchy – is not only more robust, but more transparent. Then there are the tribes.

"As exchange happens up, down and across the company, shared knowledge and passion are building tribes based around interest. We identify these tribes, sponsor them and identify topics that can be shared across the company. We also now have the flexibility to dismantle tribes when we have learnt enough from them and the benefits have been shared. This facilitates knowledge building across the organisation and it's worked really well."

Braced for Covid-19

When the Coronavirus pandemic hit Europe in early 2020, the team at DHL Consulting were ready. Accustomed to working paperless and remotely, staff already had the technology, the tools and the technical support to work from home when the office was locked up in mid-March.

As the situation has unfolded, Koch and other senior managers have prioritised checking in regularly – particularly with staff whose careers they have a role in developing.

"I am a personal developer with around

15 younger colleagues or mentees attached to me. During this period it's been really important to keep the communication lines open and to check that our people have everything they need in terms of hardware, WIFI and server capabilities, and the tools that they needed to work longer from home. Another really important thing was the human aspect: just asking people how they were and how they were feeling."

A good deal of the work that had gone into preparing personas to identify needs and activities has paid off well over this phase, helping DHL partners (all of whom work as personal developers) to spot issues, solve problems and continue to offer support to the workforce.

The Remote Office Policy already enacted within DHL Consulting meant that meant that the team was poised to support their parent company when the crisis hit, providing solutions and offering vital reassurance at a time of unprecedented uncertainty.

"Planning for the workplace of the future, investigating how digital tools can empower us to work remotely, trying new working paradigms, assessing their impact – all of this has meant that we had the agility, the experience and the confidence to respond to the crisis and to do so fast. We were ready for disruption. We simply had no idea that it would come in so many different forms," says Koch.

FUTURE-PROOFING A TRADITION (DESPITE THE PANDEMIC)

When a long-established wine-maker came to CEMS looking to update its sustainability strategy, no one counted on Coronavirus derailing the project. But it would take more than a pandemic to stop this team

Ensuring that a long-standing brand with a rich tradition and heritage can withstand the test of time is no mean feat.

This is the challenge that faces Leonor Blázquez Villar every day. As head of sustainability with one of Spain's foremost wine-makers, it's her job to meet key compliance, reputation and brand goals, all while ensuring the company remains fresh, relevant, competitive and braced for the future in a highly competitive market.

And it's not easy.

"As wine-makers, we have a responsibility to work towards achieving certain sustainability goals, and communicating our efforts in this space effectively to all of our shareholders – both internal and external. In a very crowded market, it can be hard to keep on track and to get an accurate sense of what others are doing in this space. You face hard questions: is your strategy the right one? Is your positioning on point? Do you need to change course – and if so, how?"

These were some of the questions that brought Blázquez Villa and her colleague, Salvador Guimerá Girón to ESADE in Barcelona in 2019. She was keen to tap into the talent, insight and diverse perspectives of CEMS students in order to review the company's sustainability plan and communication efforts. It was not the first time that the wine-maker had collaborated with CEMS, however.

"We came to CEMS at ESADE knowing that we would find the kind of calibre and expertise that we needed to reflect really critically on our present work and think about how to

improve for the future. For several years we'd worked with CEMS students in different areas of our business, from international sales to marketing. We were curious to see how this collaboration would pan out looking at sustainability in the context of the preparing for the future."

As a project, this dovetailed perfectly with the interests of Thomas Gandeborn, a CEMS exchange student at ESADE, pursuing his MIM at the Vienna University of Economics and Business.

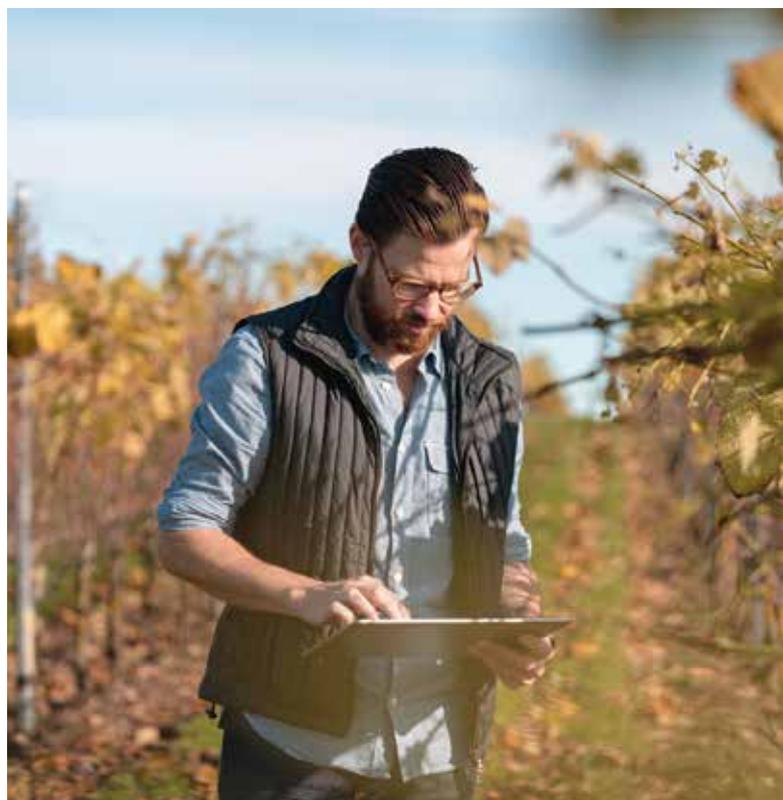
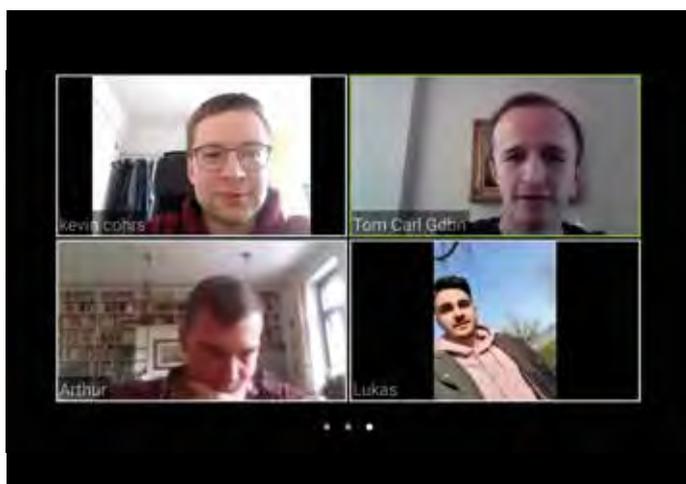
"With fellow students from my cohort we were looking for a really arresting challenge for our CEMS Business Project. Working with the wine-maker was a hugely interesting proposal because they came to us with the twin challenges of driving forward their sustainability agenda while simultaneously improving communication with internal and external stakeholders."

The match, says Blázquez Villar, was excellent.

The project, however, was about to face an enormous obstacle.







Overcoming the challenge of Covid-19

The Coronavirus Pandemic in early 2020 posed huge challenges to the team – logistic and communication hurdles that threatened to derail the collaboration before it had even begun.

Gandeborn and his fellow students were fast, however, to react.

"We got to work fast, setting up telecommuting, email contact, Zoom and Microsoft Teams meetings to understand the goals and to put together an initial sustainability benchmark for the company. We looked at what five other players were doing in the wine-making space, then went further afield to find best practices from other sectors. Then we went ahead and shared our findings with the client."

Blázquez Villar was impressed.

"It was very easy to work with this group. Their work was remarkably organized despite all the difficulties with Covid-19. We had planned for them to visit our bodega in Jerez, but had to suspend this sadly. In spite of it all, the CEMS team was extremely well coordinated across the various phases of the project, with detailed presentation at each stage."

The CEMS team were able to use the

benchmarking work to extrapolate the key communications challenges facing the wine-maker across their corporate and social media channels, looking at stakeholder needs and expectations and building a new strategy to share key messages more effectively.

"The other element of the project was more blue-sky thinking," says Gandeborn. "We expanded on the findings from the benchmarking to make proposals on new actions and interventions with stakeholder groups. Part of this entailed building a KPI dashboard which would measure mid-term implementation of our sustainability and communication plan, as well as longer-term progress for the deployment of the new strategy moving beyond the Covid-19 situation."

The power of resilience

Despite the challenges of being unable to meet face-to-face and to assess client needs on the ground, the collaboration between Blázquez Villar, her colleagues and the CEMS team has been productive and fruitful. So much so, she says, that the company will be implementing some of the measures proposed by the students in real life, going forward.

"The CEMSies have done a very complete






"For me, I think it has been fascinating to see how digital tools can empower you to work even when you are faced with something as cataclysmic as the Covid crisis"



piece of work for us. From the benchmarking both within and outside of the wine industry, through to deep understanding of the environmental, social and governance criteria, on to the methodologies used by the team for analysis – at every step of the way, everything was clear, visual and easy to understand."

Blázquez Villar and her colleagues will be deploying some new channels to communicate their efforts in sustainability as a result, she says. They will also use the KPI tracking tool devised by the students to measure impact.

For Gandeborn and his fellow CEMSies, the project has proved rewarding in terms of the specific learnings and exposure to the sector. But there have been other insights too that align with ideas and hypotheses around the future of work.

"For me, I think it has been fascinating to see how digital tools can empower you to work even when you are faced with something as cataclysmic as the Covid crisis. The pandemic meant that we were not only unable to interact with the client face-to-face, we also could not work together physically as a team."

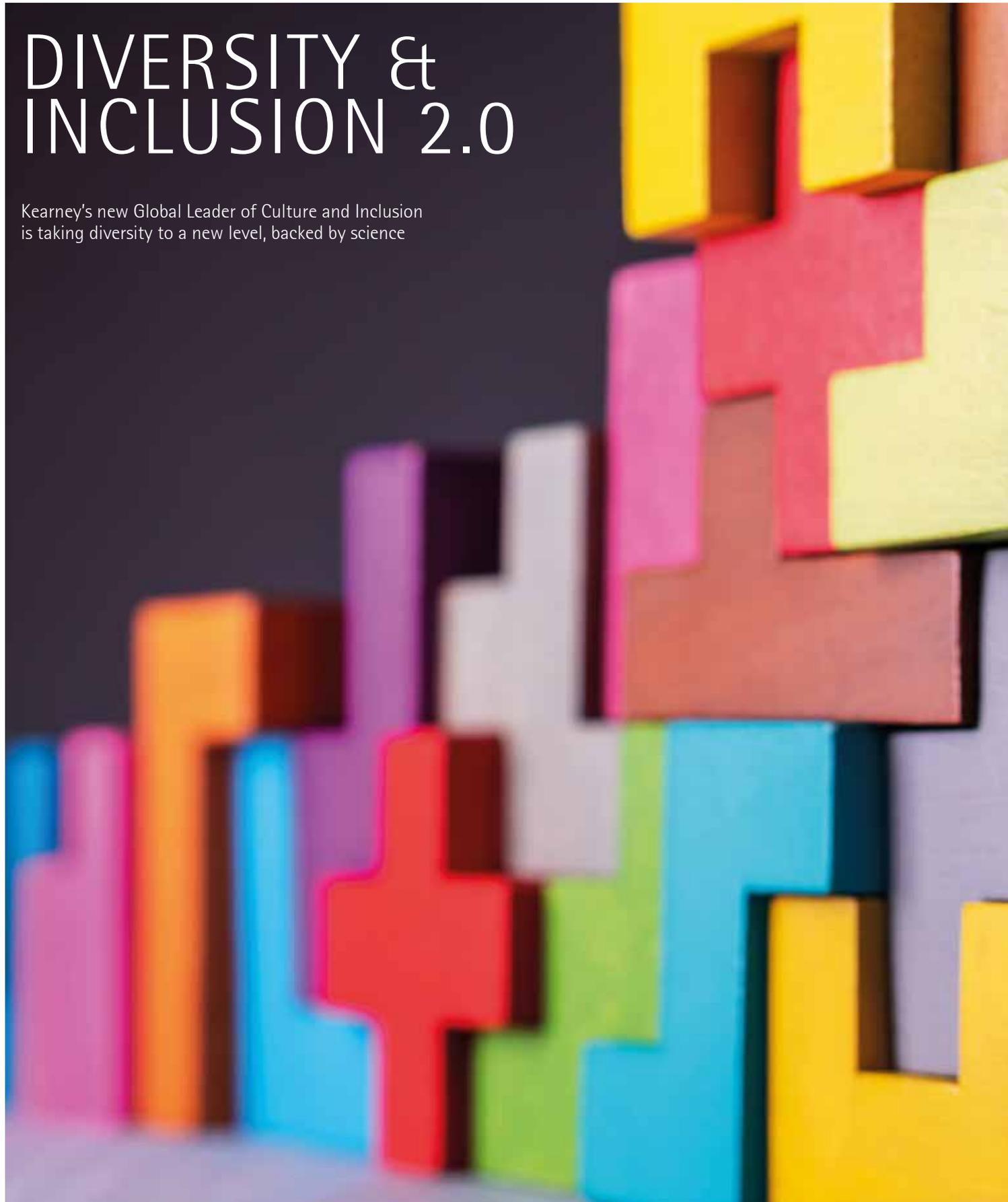
As digitalization continues to gather momentum, and efforts to rebuild economies in the wake of the pandemic take precedence, Gandeborn expects to see the future of work become increasingly virtual – empowered by technology.

"I think one of the key takeaways of the experience for me was also the importance of being resilient in the face of set-backs. We all felt a palpable decrease in motivation when the pandemic struck and it looked like we were going to be unable to proceed. But we really discovered the merit of resilience – pressing on with the project and leveraging digital tools, we were able to provide the same degree of insight and detail that we had planned to share. We accomplished what we set out to do in spite of it all."



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION 2.0

Kearney's new Global Leader of Culture and Inclusion is taking diversity to a new level, backed by science





"The science points to one conclusion, she says: A culture of inclusion in the workplace is critical for well-being – and success"

In 2009 a team of researchers from six US universities conducted an experiment.

Over the course of three weeks, they gave Tylenol (a paracetamol) to a number of volunteers and a placebo to a control group. Both groups were subjected to degrees of physical and social pain, in the form of peer rejection. All were asked to document their daily experience of pain.

Those who took Tylenol showed a reduced neuronal activity in brain regions that are associated with social and physical pain, as well as the intensity of their hurt feelings. Those who did not reported greater levels of discomfort.

Human beings are wired to belong to a tribe. And rejection from the tribe causes us pain.

"We are tribal creatures. Science has shown us that feelings of exclusion from a team or a culture hurts – it actually causes physical pain. Rejection or antagonism can activate the same areas of the brain that light up when we have a headache," says Laura Wendt. "Feeling excluded is tantamount to turning up at work with a headache every day."

Wendt is Global Leader of Culture and Inclusion at CEMS partner and international management consultancy, Kearney. She is an expert in neuropsychology, with a PhD in Medical Psychology and Behavioural Immunobiology, and she has researched and taught unconscious biases, gender inequity and the role of underrepresented minorities in the workplace for more than 10 years. Wendt's role as Global Leader of Culture and Inclusion draws deeply on data and science and tried and tested findings from field studies in global companies.

The science points to one conclusion, she says: A culture of inclusion in the workplace is critical for well-being – and success.

"Our best ideas are unlocked when we feel relaxed. At work, this happens when you feel comfortable and accepted by your team. When you are stressed, not welcome or included, you release more stress hormones which can inhibit the pre-frontal cortex, an area of your brain involved in your creative thought processes and the production of innovative ideas."

Human beings, says Wendt, are "our best products." And forward-thinking businesses would do well to promote the kind of culture that prioritises the well-being of the human beings that work within it.

"A simple fact that is often overlooked, is that people are the most precious part of any business. To frame it in a blunt neoliberalist way: for your business to flourish, you need to have best products and that means having the best human beings, capable of functioning at optimal levels. If your people are stressed and not included, you will effectively have poor products that will not produce the best outcomes."

There are clear business benefits in supporting efforts to drive diversity and inclusion. "From unlocking creativity to lower turnover, to greater stability in times of crisis such as these, the positives are well documented," she says.

And in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, she emphasises, grasping the importance of culture and inclusion is perhaps more critical than ever before.

There is a war for talent that is only set to become more acute in the post-pandemic economic downturn.

"The competition to recruit top people with skills and competencies to drive businesses through the crisis will intensify. Recruiting and retaining those people will give companies the kind of stability they are going to need in these challenging times. The new generation of Millennials and Generation Z are seeking a culture of transparency, feedback and inclusion in companies," says Wendt. "If you cannot provide this in an authentic way companies will lose out on talent because their focus has shifted."

"My job was created as part of Kearney's response to the need to boost inclusion globally and fortify the well-being of our diverse workforce by improving our culture as an organisation. We work on the system as well as within the system, looking first at the kinds of quotas and metrics we want to reach, and adopting a very scientific and data-driven approach on how to identify and roll out initiatives with impact – and how we measure our short and long-term goals against performance."

Driving a Culture of Inclusion

Wendt and her team have created a roadmap that comprises no fewer than 30 different initiatives to foster diversity, fuel inclusion and fortify well-being within the Kearney ecosystem.

These initiatives are grouped into clusters that focus on specific areas. One of these is the topic of quotas.

"Quotas are a means of ensuring you have the right spread of demographics – your gender mix and the representation of different minority groups – to unlock the benefits of diversity. Our work in this area draws deeply on science, which tells us that when you achieve 30% women in a team, their performance improves. Science also tells us that when minorities represent less than 20% of a working group, individuals belonging to that group speak up less and their performance can drop."

The presence of women and other minority groups with leadership or decision-making roles within an organisation also sends cues to potential recruits, says Wendt, making them more likely to apply, thrive and invest in their careers – a virtuous cycle of diversity and inclusion that yields further benefits.

To accelerate progress in achieving diversity and inclusion, Wendt and her team have rolled out six science-based workshops globally for all leadership teams, HR professionals, LGBTQI+ individuals, women networks, as well as all employees at Kearney, to support them not only in creating more inclusive recruitment and workplace environments, but also in terms of evaluation cycles, on interviewing methodologies and in managing promotions and bonuses.

Another cluster is events that support the creation of role models and sponsorship programmes.

"Again, studies have shown us that mentorship as a concept is great. But not many companies actually have working sponsorship programmes that involve leaders directly sponsoring someone from a minority group."

Kearney has connected a number of its leaders with individuals from minority groups, says Wendt – change-makers who "go the extra mile," supporting people through projects and assisting them in securing promotions. The results are tangible.

"People who are supported stay longer in the company. They're promoted faster. And both sponsors and those they sponsor report that they are happier. It's a win-win where everyone thrives."





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Getting Leadership Behind You

For any initiative of this nature to work, says Wendt, leadership needs to champion these from the start. She cites the example of Kearney Managing Partner and Chairman, Alex Liu, who sent a global email around the organisation voicing his support for LGBTQI+ colleagues. As a result, there was a significant upswing in people joining the Kearney LGBTQI+ Proud network and an increased feeling of confidence to be more open about their sexual orientation at work.

"If your leadership isn't behind Diversity and Inclusion, your efforts in this area will be futile," says Wendt. "At Kearney our senior partners take ownership in D&I, and lead initiatives from the top."

One such leader is Mirko Warschun, who is the Regional Lead Partner for Consumer and Retail for Europe, the Middle East and Africa. A seasoned supporter of diversity and inclusion initiatives within the company, Warschun – who holds a CEMS Master in Management – also represents Kearney within the CEMS alliance, and is a member of the CEMS Global Strategic Board.

"We know that an included and diverse workforce shows up to work with joy. They feel better, they are more comfortable and they will follow leaders who support them. They are prepared to walk that extra mile in a high performance culture, and to make that critical investment in their careers and in their organisation," says Warschun. "And while there is no doubt that all of this is great for business, there is another dimension to it, too. And that's the human dimension."

The Right and Humane Thing to Do

Above all, he stresses, supporting colleagues whose needs are greater and signalling that they are accepted within the working community regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation is simply "the right thing to do."

"Treating others like human beings is a value-based attitude. Sure, it unlocks creativity and innovation, sure it drives our client's performance. But just as importantly, it creates a culture of joy. Caring about people's well-being means that we have to touch the heart as well as the mind. We are all human beings so we need to act like human beings – with respect and understanding. It's simply the right and the humane thing to do."

"We are a global firm with diverse partners all over the world. My role in diversity and inclusion at Kearney has taken me around the different continents, talking to partners about their concerns, issues and insights. I have learned that it is as important to touch hearts and to meet people where they are as well as heads through the support of neuroscience. And while there are certainly cultural differences, the most striking thing is that we have the same basic needs. What unites us all is our human nature: we have the same hearts and the same brains. As human beings we are tribal animals with the same need to belong, to feel welcome and to have all of our voices heard and celebrated," says Wendt.

The Covid pandemic has strengthened this understanding, adds Warschun. Kearney's internal newsletter is full of personal stories, observations and "insights from the head and the heart" that have universal draw and relevance, he says.



PHOTO BELOW:
 Laura Wendt,
 Mirko Warschun





KEARNEY

Kearney has a long tradition in driving diversity and inclusion. The organisation has been active in this space for more than 10 years, Wendt stresses. And the values that drive these activities dovetail with the values and principles that also undergird the CEMS alliance and cooperation with Kearney as a corporate partner – a collaborative relationship for which Mirko Warschun feels a great measure of personal pride.

Both he and Wendt are confident that Kearney's robust focus on a culture of inclusion will equip the firm well for the future of work, as the organisation grapples with the challenges of the 2020 Coronavirus crisis in the medium-term, and in the longer term that lies ahead.

"Kearney has been doing this for more than a decade, before D&I became trendy," says Wendt. "We have had leaders supporting our women's network and African American networks and since 2011 we have had a global leader in this role. Today we have a global team working with us, supporting us and ensuring that we are in great shape as we look to the future."

"Treating others like human beings is a value-based attitude. Sure, it unlocks creativity and innovation, sure it drives our client's performance. But just as importantly, it creates a culture of joy"

EXPLORING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EQUALITY AND EQUITY

One of the workshops that Wendt leads includes a story to highlight the semantic difference between equality and equity.

Participants are told to imagine three people. One has not eaten for a week. Another has just had a sandwich. The third just finished a three-course meal.

How many sandwiches should each person get?

According to the concept of equality, all three should be given two sandwiches.

But equity tells us to give the first person several sandwiches, the second person one sandwich and the third person no sandwich at all, as they are completely satisfied.

Equality posits the idea that we are all the same, with the same needs and the same chances. But data shows us that this is not true.

"The workshop brings our understanding of this fact to life. We are not all equal, which is why we need extra support for those people who do not have the same resources, networks or access. And we discuss this in a way that is open, fun and transparent."

Laura Wendt

HOW DO YOU LEVERAGE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO DRIVE NEW SOLUTIONS? JUST ASK DAIMLER

Artificial intelligence and machine learning are emerging as frontrunner digital tools in the future transformation of work





"AI is changing the game at companies like Daimler, accelerating innovation, enhancing user experience, overcoming production challenges and driving productivity gains with unprecedented speed"

The power to process data, overcome obstacles and access solutions with a speed and efficiency that eclipse that of the human brain, AI tools are also distinguished by a capacity to learn and grow organically, integrating new systems and functions as they evolve. All of which sounds great, but what does it work in practice?

Leveraging AI – and helping demystify it in the process – is the role of Patrick Klingler, IT Innovation Manager at iconic automobile maker and CEMS partner, Daimler.

Klingler has designed a range of AI-enabled prototypes for the Stuttgart headquartered automotive behemoth. One of his designs was the prototype for *Ask Mercedes*, a virtual voice assistant (similar to Siri and others for smartphones) which answers questions about the vehicle and its functions.

"Ask Mercedes is a combination of a chatbot and Augmented Reality. The platform can grow generically, which means that further functions or vehicle models and further chatbots can be seamlessly integrated," he says. "We presented the prototype to senior management and it rapidly became a product that Daimler customers use with our vehicles. The team behind it works continually to develop and update the product to ensure that Ask Mercedes gives optimal service day after day."

AI is changing the game at companies like Daimler, accelerating innovation, enhancing user experience, overcoming production challenges and driving productivity gains with unprecedented speed. But not everyone is a digital native like Patrick Klingler. And the concept of Artificial Intelligence in the business context can be hard to understand for the less tech-savvy.



PHOTO ABOVE:
Patrick Klingler

To address this, Klingler has founded an in-house AI Community at Daimler with the goal of connecting people and driving understanding and uptake of AI across the company.

"I founded the AI Community on the Daimler Intranet a year ago. Experts and all interested parties in the company can swap ideas here to gain a stronger understanding of the essentials, spot the potential and further advance AI at Daimler. The Community now has grown to over 2,500 members in the last 12 months alone."

Klingler's mission going forward is the democratisation of AI within the organisation.

Democratising and demystifying AI

"Basically, democratising AI means scaling it. It means raising awareness of AI throughout the company, and also creating an infrastructure and a culture so that AI can gradually establish itself as a central instrument," says Klingler.

Beyond the AI Community, Klingler and others are involved in what the company calls *reverse mentoring*.

"This is a core function of our pan-organisational efforts to embrace digitalisation and accelerate towards the new world of work. I work with top managers who are grappling with AI issues. This involves highlighting opportunities on the one hand and demystifying the issue on the other."

Demystifying Artificial Intelligence is key, he stresses, in setting realistic expectations about the technology can – and cannot – do.

"It's very important to convey a realistic appraisal of AI potential to prevent uncertainties or even exaggerated expectations. So my work with senior executives is all about demonstrating what the technology can and cannot do – demonstrating where its (current) limits lie. Highlighting the necessary prerequisites, like data availability, also aids general understanding."

DAIMLER





"I founded the AI Community on the Daimler Intranet a year ago. Experts and all interested parties in the company can swap ideas here to gain a stronger understanding of the essentials, spot the potential and further advance AI at Daimler"

Far from routine

Working at the bleeding edge of emerging technology and digital transformation is rarely routine, says Klingler.

"Luckily I don't really have a day-to-day routine since I get bored quickly. I have a clear mission and task, of course, namely to get new AI technology into the company and promote AI, but every day is different."

He frequently attends IT shows and conferences, and a core part of his purview is to research and read lots of blogs and scientific publications to keep up to date in this constantly evolving space. One of the greatest perks of his job, he says, is to actively try out new technological trends or methods.

"Having a wide network is a central part of my job, so I am constantly consulting with universities, tech companies and experts."

Klingler has been with Daimler since 2014, when he joined the company's Product Strategy department as a temporary student employee. During his tenure he has had witnessed the accelerating and transformational impact of digital innovation first hand – a unique opportunity to play a part in the digitisation of the one of the world's foremost brands.

"When I joined Daimler I thought it was a traditional company that offered well-paid jobs. I saw my future career in consultancy or at a tech firm. But then I got to experience the new vehicle model initiative live. I saw future model series come into being, experienced 'digital' thinking, and felt the desire to change mobility at Daimler," he says.

"This is a place where people want to do something big."



REWRITING THE FUTURE OF WORK

One CEMS student's Master's thesis on the future of work has opened the door to an opportunity to work for her country's Permanent Mission to the UN and other international organisations in Geneva at a time when the future is being re-written





"I'm looking at how digital-enabled change is experienced at a micro level within the organisation both in terms of the work that people do, and also at how the cultural context mediates this experience"

Automatization, digital transformation, cloud technology, the move to mobile: most of us are familiar with these concepts – powerful macro-trends driven by tech innovation that are dynamically reshaping the future of work.

But how do these trends play out at the micro level? What is the real-life impact of digitalization on the individual and on the everyday lives of employees and workers?

Striving to find answers to these questions is Elina Mäkelä, who is pursuing her CEMS MSc at Aalto, Finland.

"I first got interested in the topic of the future of work and the impact of change on society as an undergraduate through the Global Shapers network which mobilises young people to become change agents via dialogue and discussion. Big questions were being asked here that were directly relevant to me and my cohort: how was work set to transform in the future and what kinds of skills would we need to develop to adapt and thrive in this changing reality."

Elina's undergraduate degree was in politics and international relations at Durham University in the UK. Coming back to her native Finland to focus on the business context at Aalto, she found an opportunity to explore these interests further – looking at these

topics from an organisational perspective while investigating the broader societal implications. The result is a Master's thesis that meshes a number of disciplines.

"I'm looking at how digital-enabled change is experienced at a micro level within the organisation both in terms of the work that people do, and also at how the cultural context mediates this experience. This touches on things like leadership paradigms and corporate culture."

Fortunately for Elina, her Master's focus dovetails with an existing research stream within Aalto. The Brave New HR research group's Future of Work research programme aims to create a world class research hub of excellence on the future of work as well as to offer a platform for ongoing discussion bringing business leaders, policy-makers, think-tanks and researchers together. Writing her thesis under the supervision of the Research Programme Director has meant that Elina has had access to a rich data set of around 30 interviews with leading white collar organisations across Finland – a "birds eye view," she says, of how HR leaders working in the current environment are witnessing and experiencing the impact of change. And some interesting findings are beginning to emerge.

"I was able to use a methodological tool borrowed from grounded theory – a more systematic methodology – to start to analyse the data which has been generating some really interesting results. In tandem, I've been able to create a conceptual model that aims to capture the way that digital change is manifesting in the workplace. Typically, when we think of levels we think of macro flowing to meso flowing to micro or vice versa. But what I'm seeing is that this change is so disruptive it's almost going from the macro directly to the micro."

In other words, digital change is happening so fast and with such impact, says Elina, that many organisations are being forced to play catch up to adjust to the new reality of their workers.

That being said, change is not necessarily a negative thing. Another finding that Elina has made is that disruption – a word that often carries a negative semantic payload – can actually have a positive effect in organisations and people's lives.

"Change can produce a lot of fear and resistance, but what's emerging from the data is that having things like AI functioning almost like a co-worker really augments and enhances your working experience. In this sense, technology is freeing people and enabling them to work on more meaningful things and things that bring them greater efficiency and flexibility. There's typically a kind of sensationalist narrative around digital disruption – the machines will take our jobs and that kind of thing. But the reality is far more nuanced and complex."

Elina is hopeful that while her Master's is undoubtedly an academic exercise, the discoveries that she is able to make will translate into actionable insights that contribute to a broader set of preparatory behaviours that business and society need to take to transition effectively into the future.

From Theory to Practice

Elina's research interests have also opened the door to a unique opportunity.

Applying for an internship position with the Permanent Mission of Finland at the UN in Geneva, she caught the eye of the Mission's labour issues and International Labour Organisation (ILO) affairs team lead, who was interested in her research into the future of work and was keen to recruit her.

"Applying for this internship with the Permanent Mission I was very excited to be approached by the ILO and labour rights representative, as I have cited many of the ILO's studies in my thesis."

Elina was also recruited to the team working with global health and World Health Organisation (WHO) affairs at the Permanent Mission, and invited to work simultaneously with both portfolios – starting out in twin roles at a moment that coincided with the global outbreak of Coronavirus in early 2020.

Being in situ, working shoulder to shoulder with important international organisations at this unprecedented time of change and uncertainty has given her a unique opportunity

to witness politics in action and to see how the private and public sectors are responding to unparalleled challenges that are set to reshape the future.

"I've had the great privilege of being able to join virtual meetings featuring health ministers of governments from all over the world, from China to the US to South Korea and Japan. It's been very intense and I have learnt an enormous amount. We have been in negotiations for the WHO's resolution on the COVID-19 response over the spring period and it's quite extraordinary to see politics playing out in front of you."

From this vantage point, she has also been able to appreciate the impact that Coronavirus has had and is likely to have on the future of work. She quotes Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft, who told the world's press in April that his organisation had seen "two years of digital transformation in two months."

"In my thesis, I talk about this disconnection of work from time and place – from the long hours or the nine-to-five, office-based paradigm. And this process had been expedited during the pandemic with people being obliged to work from home and turning to digital tools to be able to do so."

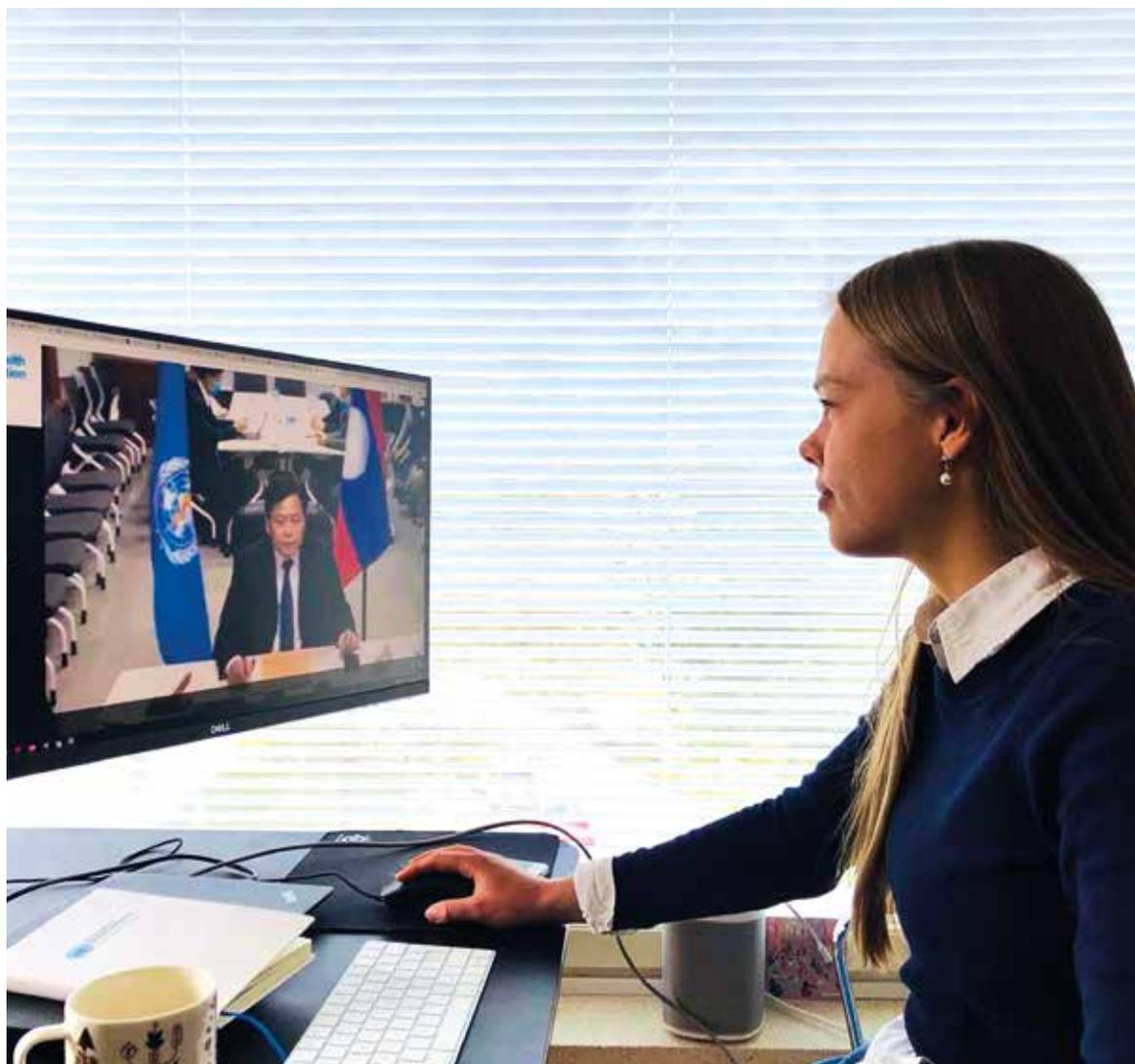
The COVID-19 crisis, says Elina, has "kick-started" a change that was slowly starting to take off. We are likely to see a significant upswing in remote working in the near future she believes: a challenge for people like her who work in diplomacy where human contact is paramount, but a tremendous gain in flexibility for knowledge workers whose work is hardware and digitally-oriented.

"The effects of the pandemic are accelerating this digitisation of work with concrete advantages for those companies that were ready and could get ahead of remote. For others, this rapid shift will cause some issues at least initially. And for blue-collar workers, the challenges are acute. Beyond that it is poised to really drive this disconnection of work from place and time, and perhaps other trends that I am investigating in my thesis such as types of employment: contracting, part-time working, the gig economy and so on."

The era of the 40-year career in one company is long over, says Elina. The future of work post-COVID is more likely to be built around micro-careers: a new life-work-learning paradigm that will recalibrate the time we



PHOTO ABOVE & RIGHT:
Elina Mäkelä



"The future of work post-COVID is more likely to be built around micro-careers: a new life-work-learning paradigm that will recalibrate the time we spend working and time we invest in re- or up-skilling"

spend working and time we invest in re- or up-skilling. On the horizon she sees big changes that could attenuate the work-life divide.

"It's hard to make a blanket statement about how the future of work will pan out. But it's a topic that fascinates me because of the extraordinary impact that change has on organisations, businesses, economic systems and people's lives. These are the big issues that I find fascinating and that are my privilege to be able to explore and research. And I believe that academic work has this key role to play – in informing our understanding and our ability to make critical decisions in times of change and uncertainty."



PEOPLE ANALYTICS AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

Deloitte ran a country-wide survey into people data in Switzerland earlier this year. CEMS sat down with Deloitte's Veronica Melian and Tiina Pokkinen to discuss what they found, and their views on a post-Covid future of work

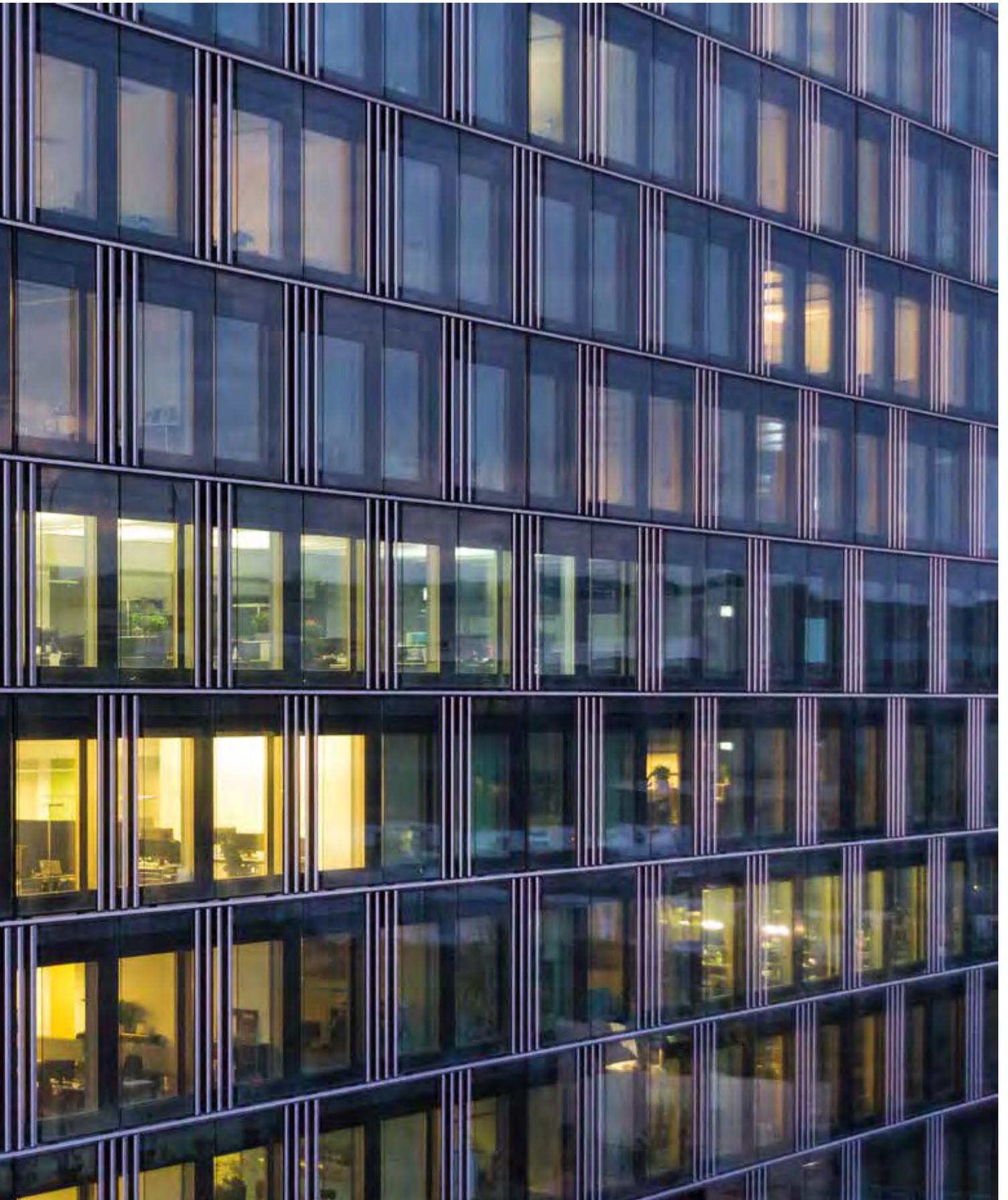
You conducted a People Analytics survey in 2020. Who did you talk to and what did you ask them?

People analytics has been a top priority for companies for many years. Yet companies still seem to be struggling to realise the potential and benefits it can offer. Organisations in the US seem to be ahead of the game. We wanted to conduct a study to gain detailed insights about the use of people data, as well as the maturity of HR reporting and people analytics specifically in the Swiss market, to understand how we can best support our clients in their challenges when it comes to their people analytics journey.

We invited HR executives, HR professionals and people analytics experts as well as business and finance representatives across all industries and sizes of organisations to participate in the survey.

Firstly, to set the scene, we asked questions around people analytics maturity and key success criteria and challenges. Secondly, we asked specific questions on workforce planning and skills management in the context of the future of work, engagement and equality analytics in the context of employee attractiveness and diversity – as well as on HR intralytics on how to leverage people data to improve HR functions impact and efficiency.





Why is people analytics becoming more important over time? And how do organisations and employees benefit?

For most organisations, employees are the most crucial part of the business and a source of competitive advantage. People-related decisions need to be 'right' and based on solid facts, rather than a gut feeling. The use of people analytics can improve problem-solving and decision making through sound measurement and systematic data analysis. With the insights of HR and business data, you can collectively design more targeted initiatives and interventions, measure the impact and refine if needed. Employees, on the other hand, benefit from these more targeted initiatives in areas such as learning and development, employee engagement and well-being.

What were your findings?

First, the study confirmed the importance of people analytics. Some 82% of the organisations that participated consider people analytics as important or very important and expect its importance to grow in the next two to five years. This reflects the way organisations are currently using people data: most organisations in Switzerland either rely on reactive operational reporting or proactive advanced reporting of workforce data. They aspire though to move towards predictive analytics in the next few years.

Almost all participating organisations expressed their ambition to use people data for business and HR decisions. Many plan to move from an operational to a more strategic and skills-based approach in workforce planning, given the increasing need to understand how the work and the required workforce will change in the coming years. Further, to become a strategic

partner to the business, many HR teams plan to engage increasingly with functions outside HR and share proactively insights from people data.

However, looking at organisations' current people analytics maturity, in reality, the journey has only just begun. Manual effort is required to collect data, and poor data quality is a considerable roadblock in the development of people analytics. The analysis can only be as good as the underlying data, which is why obtaining timely, consistent, connected and accurate people data – in line with ethical guidelines and data privacy standards – should be a priority for organisations. But this is only half of the equation: another major obstacle appears to be the lack of relevant skills in HR – data literacy and storytelling for instance – as well as the right executive support within the organisation.

What are the implications of these findings for organisations?

For many organisations, the first step in starting their people analytics journey is to realise the importance and the potential of people data. Based on our experience, a recommendable first step is finding a sponsor at the executive level and defining a use-case to demonstrate the power of people analytics. Once the key stakeholders are convinced, it is then time to invest in building solid data sources, the right expertise and data-driven culture in HR to start delivering more insights to the business and HR, and to enable databased decision-making.

The current COVID-19 crisis may accelerate the people analytics journey as it has increased the need for easy access to insightful and future-oriented people data – particularly the insights on skills of the workforce, the state of workers' physical and mental well-being and an assessment of how well the organisation's culture is faring, are being of increasing importance.



PHOTO TOP & ABOVE:

Tiina Pokkinen, Senior Manager, Human Capital Consulting, Deloitte Switzerland

Veronica Melian, Partner and Human Capital Consulting Leader, Deloitte Switzerland



What role does People and Workforce Analytics play in the context of the future of work?

At Deloitte, we split the future of work into three dimensions to make it easier to understand: Work, Workforce and Workplace. This breaks down like this:

Work: What is being done and to what extent we can leverage automation with the main question being: what work can be done by machines?

Workforce: Who can do the work and can we consider talent alternatives to the regular workforce?

Where: Where can the work take place?

People analytics can help create the right insights to better understand the potential disruption in these three dimensions, to plan and proactively take the right actions to have the right workforce in place to deliver on the business strategy and customer expectations



"Some 82% of the organisations that participated consider people analytics as important or very important and expect its importance to grow in the next two to five years. The current COVID-19 crisis may accelerate the people analytics journey as it has increased the need for easy access to insightful and future-oriented people data"

How has the Covid-19 crisis affected the way that we work? What are the challenges? And are there any opportunities?

According to the International Labor Organization, an estimated 4 out of 5 workers in the global workforce have been affected by lockdown and stay-at-home measures because of the pandemic. In this context, the priority for most organisations has been responding to the crisis, emphasising the health and safety of employees and the virtualisation of work to ensure the continuity of essential operations.

The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the development of future of work. It presents an excellent opportunity for organisations to bring humans and technology together - the changes we would have expected to take years if not decades have now happened within the span of a few weeks. In particular, we have seen a rapid shift to remote work and education enabled through technology as well as new levels of leveraging ecosystems.

The main challenges we see in particular on two dimensions. First, working remotely under these circumstances means we all have to adapt to a new environment and technologies, battling a new set of distractions as well as experiencing an unprecedented fusion of work and private life. While trying to adapt, the connection to the organisation and the team might get a little lost - so too might a sense of belonging. Second, most businesses are strongly impacted by the current crisis. Some businesses are facing a significant downturn and are trying to protect their existence by downsizing their business or reinventing themselves, while others may be experiencing acceleration. Planning and adapting the workforce in a flexible manner to the changing needs is challenging, but critical especially in the VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) world we are living in.



“Overall, we believe that organisations now have the opportunity to move from seeing technology as a substitution to humans to seeing technology as an augmentation or collaboration strategy that can significantly change the nature of work. This can allow organisations to create not only efficiencies but also value, and ultimately provide work that is more meaningful to the workforce”





How has COVID-19 affected different industries, roles and geographies?

There are obviously some differences between industries, roles and geographies in terms of the extent of the impact. However, most industries are facing similar situations: the need to accelerate the virtualisation of the work to enable remote working; resilient leadership to navigate through the uncertain times; flexibility around resourcing/workforce to respond the changes in customer demand; and more focus on well-being to ensure employees stay safe and healthy.

In the longer term, what are the trends and patterns that you can see reshaping the way that we work and the kind of work that we do?

Even before, and increasingly during the crisis, some organisations began to look at where digital technologies, automation and AI, could make work safer, faster, better and more innovative. We expect this trend to continue or even accelerate as organisations continue to rethink and redesign their work priorities and opportunities. Overall, we believe that organisations now have the opportunity to move from seeing technology as a substitution to humans to seeing technology as an augmentation or collaboration strategy that can significantly change the nature of work. This can allow organisations to create not only efficiencies but also value, and ultimately provide work that is more meaningful to the workforce.



REDEFINING LEADERSHIP FOR TOMORROW

Has the leader-centric approach had its day? Aalto and CEMS at Aalto offer an innovative and novel course to help prepare future leaders to lead through interaction and a collective understanding that emerges day over day

Education is a journey, and an invitation to continuous self-development.

This is a view strongly held by Rita Järventie-Thesleff, Professor of Practice at Aalto University School of Business, Finland.

And it's also the rationale behind a new elective course that Aalto is offering to its CEMS and Global Management students: Leadership and Self-development.

"We think of leadership typically in terms of a kind of heroic paradigm – the traditional, hierarchical framework of leading from the top. But times are changing. And so is the future of work, and leadership."

The context of work and our expectations around it are shifting, says Järventie-Thesleff. And this is happening fast.

"Increasingly, work is characterised by diversity, outsourcing, by new forms of social networking and by virtual and remote interaction – particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Employees also expect more from the organisations that they work for. Younger generations are looking for meaningfulness in the work they do and the way that they do it."

All of this begs the question of whether conventional models and approaches to leadership are still fit for purpose.

"Traditionally the leader-centred approach has focused on individual competencies. Something set in stone, in a sense – a collection of skills that can be taught and learned. But in the new context, we see leadership as something more fluid."

This new approach builds on the notion of leadership as practice; a set of interactions that emerge and unfold through day-to-day experiences. And it's this precise understanding that Järventie-Thesleff is keen to convey to the next generation of leaders.





"When we talk about the future of work, we are talking about disruption, uncertainty, transformation and challenges emerging from all kinds of unexpected sources... For organisations to survive and flourish, they need all the brain power they can muster. The collective leadership approach takes this deeply into account"

What is Leadership as Practice, in practice?

Where traditional research, understanding and teaching have viewed leadership as the activity of one individual, leadership as practice posits a more collective approach.

The collective approach is also enacted in the way the course is set up, involving several actors and specialists from the field - including an experience leadership lecturer Jari Ylitalo and a doctoral candidate, Jori Mäkkeli. Wonderful Aalto colleagues and skilled discussion generators, says Järventie-Thesleff.

"To be able to embrace the collective approach is the first learning objective of the course: it's ensuring that students have understood and really explored these new concepts. From there we focus on strengthening students' critical thinking and their capacity for continuous learning and reflecting deeply on what they learn."

And in today's context of continuous change, this is a vital skill. Future leaders need to develop and embed a capacity to question, challenge and update their own understanding. The third core learning objective of the course is to master the competencies of self-management.

"Being a leader also means learning how to manage yourself. All too often, we see leaders struggling to let go, or to find better balance between their professional lives and their personal needs. So this part of the course is really focused on empowering students to manage things like stress, to manage themselves and to know how and when to let go. And how to tap into greater energy when they really need to excel."

Unlocking creativity

Leadership as practice is based on a dialogic, collective approach that challenges hierarchy and has the power to unlock creativity, argues Järventie-Thesleff.

It's an approach that shifts from a dynamic of "do as I say" to one that is based on open communication and agreement.

She is eager to stress that while this doesn't imply a total democracy or a flat hierarchy without key decision-makers, it is nonetheless a more inclusive model that promotes initiative-taking and a culture of innovation. This in turn has huge impact for organisations facing new challenges on the horizon as the nature of work changes.

"When we talk about the future of work, we are talking about disruption, uncertainty, transformation and challenges emerging from all kinds of unexpected sources - be they newcomers or shocks like the Covid-19 crisis. For organisations to survive and flourish, they need all the brain power they can muster. The collective leadership approach takes this deeply into account."

Teaching and learning on the course is discussion-based, says Järventie-Thesleff. And the experience is enriched by a visit to a Finnish consultancy that has eschewed structural hierarchy in favour of a "tribal" culture. Students, she says, find the experience fascinating.

"Students have responded with great enthusiasm to the concepts and ideas on the course. They feel a connection to the philosophy of collective leadership and





ESADE ELECTIVE BRINGS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO LIFE

CEMS students at ESADE are responding positively to a new elective that grapples with the ways in which technological change is reshaping the future of work. Thomas Gandeborn, an exchange student from Vienna University of Economics and Business, opted to take the Digital Transformation of the World in the second trimester. His decision was fueled, he says, the need of future leaders to "build an arsenal of next-generation tools."

As his generation starts to accede to positions of influence, says Gandeborn, the onus is on everyone to become more digitally literate: "We are heading into a more digitally oriented future, and it's abundantly clear that tomorrow's decision-makers will need to really understand the risks as well as the opportunities."

Digital Transformation of the World looks at the intersection between business, technology and current international affairs. It digs deep into the ways in which digital change has impacted ways of working, the gig economy and information sharing among other things. Students emerge, says Gandeborn, with a clearer understanding of what accelerating digitalisation entails.

"From the tradeoffs between freedom of information and privacy, through to the relevance of digital in the debates around how economies will reopen after the shock of the Coronavirus, with track and trace mechanisms – this class really explores the role of technology in transforming (and erasing) some of the key elements in the way we do things."

For Gandeborn and other CEMSies, pursuing this course during lockdown has very much been a case of learning about something while living through it. Classes have been delivered remotely and interaction between peers and faculty has been virtual. While this has been problematic at times, the learnings are still palpable.

"Looking at digital transformation through the lens of your own digital interaction is a novel way of bringing your learning to life. This class has been timely in so many ways. Not least because of the immediate applicability of the ideas and knowledge shared."

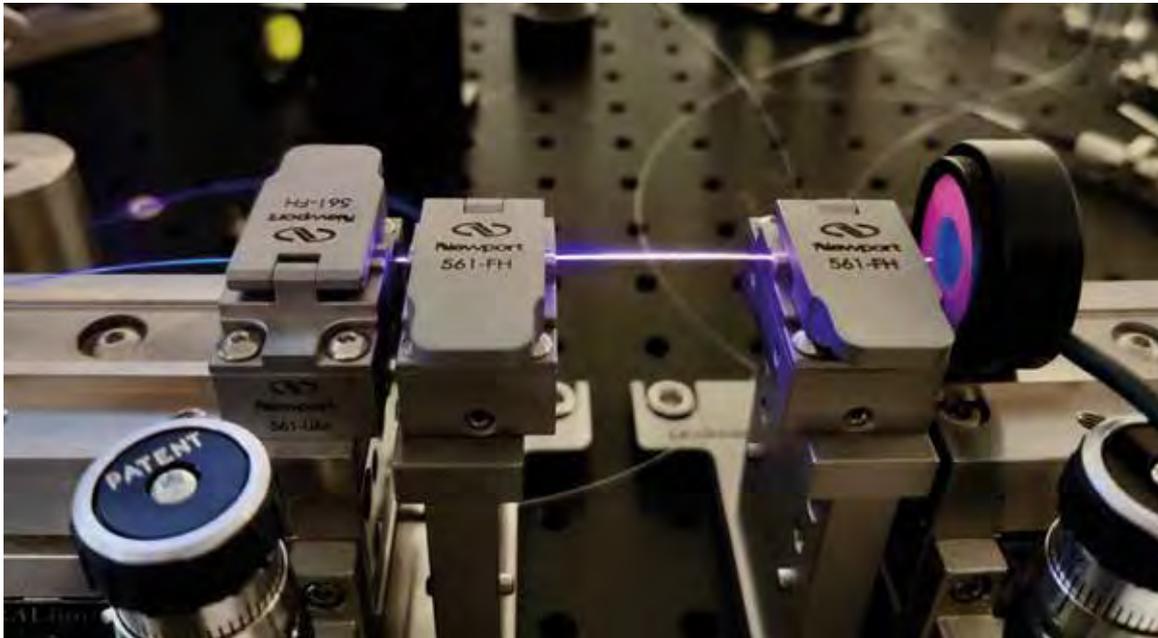


PHOTO ABOVE:
Andra Siderache

"We have experienced huge disruption everywhere during the Coronavirus pandemic. While the crisis has produced real tragedy and enormous challenges for everyone, there is also some learning that it offers"

self-management. Visiting the consultancy is also a great opportunity to see leadership as practice come to life. Here they have a real-world opportunity to see how organisations can flatten the hierarchy and work in tribes of shared objectives and interests. And it resonates really well."

Students agree: "The course was really good and provided a clear understanding of the major leadership and management theories as well as self-development methods," said one.

Järventie-Thesleff is looking forward to the course gaining further momentum going into the new academic year and beyond.

"We have experienced huge disruption everywhere during the Coronavirus pandemic. While the crisis has produced real tragedy and enormous challenges for everyone, there is also some learning that it offers."

We're seeing a real acceleration in the use of digital technology and remote working trends – and with those a growing need in tandem for agility and the very leadership approaches that the course posits, she says.

TRANSLATING LAB RESEARCH INTO A VIABLE PRODUCT AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

An enterprising CEMSie at the NUS has leveraged the school's Lean Launchpad programme to help bring an innovative product to market.

Andra Siderache got a chance to put theory into practice last semester, using lean entrepreneurial concepts and tools learnt in class to conduct a full market validation for an innovative tuneable laser developed by NUS research fellow, Henrique Guimaraes Rosa. The laser is now being considered for an Enterprise SG grant.

Learning and deploying agile entrepreneurial skills has been revelatory, says Andra. "The Lean Launchpad programme brings you so close to real-life entrepreneurship, giving me and my classmates the kinds of future-forward competencies and insights we will need to be successful. The programme has taught me the importance of conducting the market validation of a product in order to avoid investing too much and finding out later that it is not as demanded as you might initially think. It has also taught me the importance of being creative in problem solving."

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