

WORKFORCE ARCHITECTURE

VOL 3. ISSUE 1



Rules Reworked

Is a 4-day work week smart strategy?

Focus on pace to shift leadership gears

Social contracts in workplaces

Unlocking empathy using data

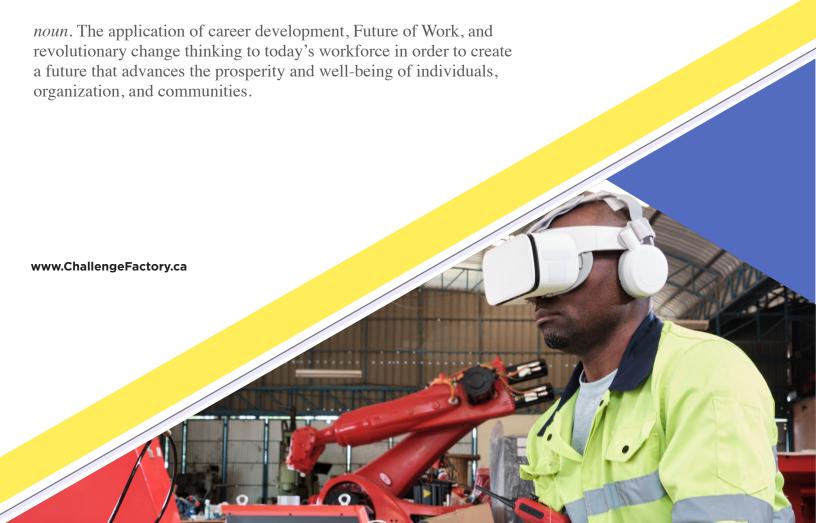
ChatGPT can make the Future of Work human

Find your career SweetSpot

We are the architects.



Work-force Arch-i-tec-ture



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Spring/Summer 2023: Rules Reworked

Personally, I love rules.

I love the boundaries and expectations that rules set. I love pushing up against them and feeling the tension press back on me; this helps me be intentional about what I break. It's crucial to be reminded that some rules should remain hard limits or immovable, while others are begging for challenge and change.

Our Spring/Summer 2023 issue focuses on the most complex and nuanced theme that *Workforce Architecture* has tackled to date: shifting social and workplace rules.

Using a wide lens, we explore how outdated social contracts impact workplace relationships. We dig into ChatGPT, the four-day work week, empathy in research, and leadership that continues to be affected by the pandemic. By the end of this issue, we narrow our focus all the way down, providing a tool for individuals to define their own Career SweetSpot as jobs, workplaces, and career patterns continue to change.

Among the most valuable lessons of this issue is the power of one. For each of us to be ready to shape, respond to, and sometimes even rebel against rules, first we have to remember what we, personally, stand for.





Social and workplace rules were never written to benefit everyone.

The game has always been rigged in favour of the house, which may have been acceptable if organizations recognized their essential obligations to workers and communities. Today, different employment, economic, and societal structures have weakened the relationships that used to hold organizations to account. We've arrived at a moment when rules are being questioned and the intentions behind them are being challenged. Expectations and possibilities are evolving right across the board, including even the most fundamental aspects of employment: where we work, what hours we work, and which benefits are provided to whom and when.

We're living through a social revolution. It's easy to get overwhelmed by all the change occurring in the world around us. Social revolutions affect values, norms, behaviour patterns, and situations. Further, change occurs in these many dimensions all at the same time. In North America, we're certainly experiencing splits and shifts in values, what we can expect from others and institutions, how people act, and the situations we find ourselves in.

Some rules are easy to change. Others create a cascade of questions that can cause leadership paralysis, as employees push ahead with waves of non-compliance and even rebellion. Instead of waiting for updated rules that govern complex systems, individuals take action and shine new light on what might be possible. For example, adapting to longevity and careers that last well into our 70s challenges organizations to rethink rules related to hiring, training, career paths, salary structures, and rewards, never mind rules about pensions and benefits that require long overdue legislative reform.



Yet despite organizations' inability to embrace older workers, today's <u>Talent Revolution</u> is being shaped by baby boomers who refuse to follow traditional rules about retirement. They are forging their own paths and resetting work-related expectations along the way. They are architects, as we all must be.

This issue's analysis of the four-day work week describes why Henry Ford played a pioneering role in establishing the five-day work week. One person, looking out for one business, helped set the standard for all business today. Likewise, the concepts of employee engagement and career paths were the brainchildren of an academic and consultant, respectively, before organizations economy-wide adopted them as critical components of their operations.

Among the most valuable lessons of this issue is the power of one. For each of us to be ready to shape, respond to, and sometimes even rebel against rules, first we have to remember what we, personally, stand for. A common call to action emerges in the final lines of many of our articles: What are you going to do about it?

This issue of *Workforce Architecture* challenges each of us to consider who we are to each other, what rules we want to follow, and how they are embedded in our core values.

In a world forever altered by the COVID-19 pandemic, topics related to loneliness and social

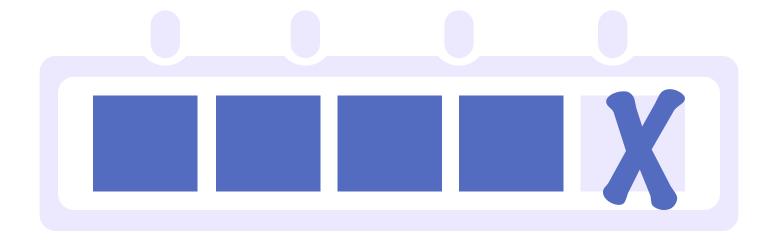
isolation continue to gain prominence. Since setting rules is itself a collective activity, the act of questioning them can also provide hints to solutions. One person alone has no need for rules. They serve to keep *groups* of people aligned and connected, while maintaining order and establishing predictable patterns. For too long, they've also created and sustained structures of systemic inequality and discrimination.

Unsurprisingly, every article in this issue includes a clear focus on the role that each of us, as individuals, can choose to play as part of the workplace communities we belong to. While we can individually react to rules as they affect us, the solution for real change will always be to work together to create new rules that are inclusive, equitable, and better than what came before.

Social and workplace rules were never written to benefit everyone. Do you feel the tensions as existing rules clash with shifting values? I do, every day. But to create new and better rules, we'll have to collectively reckon with the emotion, turmoil, and uncertainty that these tensions bring.

This is fundamentally *human* work—and I can't think of any work more important.

Lisa Taylor, President, Challenge Factory



Is a 4-day work week smart strategy? Use the Sustainable Development Goals to find out

The United Nations has set 17 ambitious goals for building a sustainable world. Organizations can also use them to make purpose-driven strategic decisions.

The rules governing how we work change all the time.

One rule we're seeing change is the length of our traditional work week. Company by company, sometimes individual by individual, we're seeing the four-day work week gain momentum.

But with that momentum comes headlines, conversations, and predictions that heighten experiences of discomfort and confusion, as well as the risk of getting swept up by a trend in ways that don't benefit you, your organization, or your workforce.

Will the four-day work week become the norm? A better question might be: What problems can a four-day work week address?

Rather than focusing on a solution without understanding the problem, the <u>United Nations</u>

<u>Sustainable Development Goals</u> (SDGs) give us a shared framework for assessing if and how large-scale change can be used to create a Future of Work where no one is left behind. They are a list of actionable agenda items that can set the stage for decisions and strategies that place people, planet, and social purpose at their core.

The rise of the 5-day work week

- The five-day work week rose to prominence in the first half of the 20th-century. A key pioneer was Henry Ford, who, at the helm of the Ford Motor Company, sought to increase productivity by reducing the work week from six days to five, giving factory workers one week's salary while only requiring them to work eight-hour shifts Monday through Friday. The change was a success, and other companies followed suit.
- The five-day, 40-hour work week was then adopted in response to social and labour movements fighting against exploitation and abuses of working time. Check out this 4-min clip about the history of the five-day work week from *The Washington Post*.
- With this background, does the thought of a four-day work week seem so radical? What conditions of 21st-century work would make changing the length of our work week economy-wide a radically different endeayour today?

Let's explore six SDGs that are relevant to four-day work week considerations. We'll draw on results from a four-day work week trial in the United Kingdom, where 61 companies and 2,900 employees participated between June and December 2022. As you read, think about what impact you might have if you took up the SDGs as an actionable framework in your work and leadership.





GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Some of the most extensive benefits of a shorter work week relate to employees' well-being.

The UK's 4-day work week pilot:

- > 39% of employees became less stressed.
- ▶ Burnout decreased for 71% of employees.
- Anxiety, fatigue, and sleep decreased.
- Mental and physical health improved.

University of South Australia:

Physical activity and sleep increase when people have a three-day weekend.







The face-time challenge:

As with remote work, a fourday work week carries the risk of diminishing opportunities for employees, especially women, to get the face-time they need from mentors and senior leaders for career growth and advancement.

GENDER EQUALITY

4-day work week considerations

Women's unequal participation in the labour force and the gendered pay gap require robust solutions. A four-day work week can help women who bear the brunt of child and elder care responsibilities.

But it also carries the risk of deepening gender inequalities across the labour force because of how and when work gets done differently across industries. Consider the differences faced by knowledge economy workers and service industry workers, for example.

The UK's 4-day work week pilot:

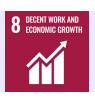
- ▶ 60% of employees found it easier to juggle paid work and care responsibilities.
- ➤ The amount of time women spent looking after children increased by 13%, and for men it increased by more than double that (27%).

RBC Economics:

Women are overrepresented in customer- facing positions and industries like accommodation, retail, and food services, as well as the professional care economy and education, which don't offer high flexibility for service delivery.

Women's Budget Group:

A shorter working week for all would lead to a more even distribution of housework and care responsibilities.





The productivity proposition:

A key measurement of success may be the outcome of the 'productivity proposition'—that a four-day work week sustainably increases employee productivity per hour worked without increasing workload stress due to compressed time availability. Trials in New Zealand, Iceland, Ireland, the U.S., and more have shown positive results, but their long-term sustainability requires more research.

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

4-day work week considerations

Leaders have to approach a four-day work week with the intention of solving a specific problem. Is the objective to increase flexibility? Reduce costs? Improve well-being? Prioritize environmental sustainability? The problem and solution must take both decent work and economic growth into account.

Decent work is closely tied to career ownership and agency and positive employment relationships. Employees are looking for choice, and workplace cultures where choice is valued. Leaders are looking for ways to build great workforces and cultures that retain talent, ensure positive and sustainable productivity, and lead to economic growth. The success of a four-day work week lies in the details, but it begins with an honest and holistic assessment of what the specific needs of your organization and workforce are.

The UK's 4-day work week pilot:

- Company revenues rose by an average of 1.4%.
- Staff turnover decreased by 57%.
- Absenteeism decreased by 65%.
- 15% of employees said no amount of money would get them to return to a five-day work week.





INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

4-day work week considerations

Goal 9 seeks to build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation. New and innovative use of work infrastructure (e.g., buildings, equipment, public transit systems, etc.) will need to be considered to avoid unsustainable costs and safety risks associated with less frequent use. This includes how buildings and critical infrastructure are occupied and maintained.





SDG 10

REDUCED INEQUALITIES

The decent pay challenge:

Inequalities across the labour market mean some workers struggle with having too few work hours to make ends meet (underemployment), while others struggle with having to work too many hours (multiple low-paid jobs). The heart of both these challenges is decent pay.

4-day work week considerations

Certain industries, job roles, and types of employment may be more conducive to a four-day work week than others. If the implementation of a four-day work week is not approached with care and consideration, existing inequalities may be deepened or new inequalities created.

The UK's 4-day work week pilot:

- ➤ To participate in this pilot study, employers were required to give employees a 'meaningful' reduction in work time while maintaining pay at 100%.
- Companies grappled with the question of what to do for their part-time workers.







CLIMATE ACTION

4-day work week considerations

A four-day work week has deep implications for our planet's climate. Think holistically and long-term about both the opportunities and pitfalls that a four-day work week might offer.

BBC Future Planet:

- When commutes decrease, so do carbon emissions.
- Less work also means decreased carbon emissions from the sending and storage of data, which is an electricity guzzler.
- When people work less, they engage in more low-carbon activities, volunteer for environmental causes more, and become better eco-friendly consumers.





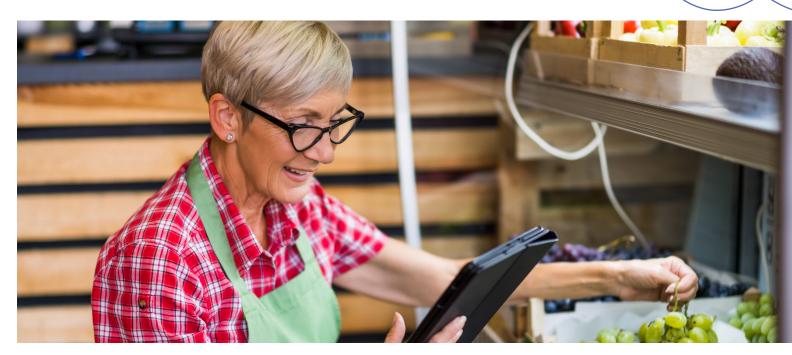
More from Workforce Architecture

To learn more about thinking through a four-day work week for your organization, check out this summary of key themes from our Coffee & Careers discussion, where we spend a virtual hour with *Workforce Architecture* subscribers in guided, casual conversation about trending work topics.

Use the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to think about the impact your work has today, and the impact you want your work to have in the future. Reflect and reset with this 2-min activity.

Shifting leadership gears: The importance of pace when moving from recovery to the next normal

Five steps to create a sustainable pace of work in your organization.



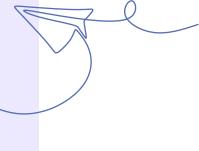
Knowing
when to go
fast and when
to go slow,
when to push
harder and
when to rest,
is a critical
leadership
value and tool.



When the pandemic began, it kicked off wave after wave of crisis management. Our relationship to the passage of time changed, becoming more fluid and fraught as we all struggled to adapt to unfamiliar working and living conditions.

For many, pandemic recovery isn't over. In fact, moving from recovery to the next normal can be incredibly difficult. Behaviours, actions, and leadership styles change during crisis in ways that can be challenging to recognize. Oftentimes, leaders struggle to relax control, resume more regular routines, and work through their own crisis-born fatigue.

Here's a secret that can help leaders move towards their next normal, and bring their organizations with them: **Focus on pace**.





THE OVERLOOKED IMPORTANCE OF PACE IN LEADERSHIP

In a leadership development program we ran a few years ago for new and emerging community leaders, we centred the curriculum on 12 leadership values and had participants explore their relationship to each one. One of the most engaging sessions focused on pace, a value that is often overlooked in leadership programs.

Knowing when to go fast and when to go slow, when to push harder and when to rest, is a critical leadership value and tool. Mastering pace is complex and requires discipline. For example, in times of crisis, everything around you screams at you to go faster, to speed up, to do more. What will serve you better, however, is going slow and imposing necessary pauses on yourself and your team.

So, let's take a step back and reflect. Think about your organization, your team, and your own work.

Are you setting new workplace and leadership patterns, or are you still working through pandemic-driven dysfunction? Perhaps more importantly, are your patterns a result of pandemic management needs, or are they indicative of your organization's culture?

If you notice the following behaviours or patterns taking place, you've made it through to the next normal.

Culture Blueprint

Leadership actions and characteristics

Pace

CAREERS STRATEGY

You look beyond the structures of formal career paths, meetings, and reviews that exist within your organization to focus on individuals. You engage in meaningful career conversations (which are not the same thing as performance discussions) and take a longer time horizon for how career moves today create opportunity in the future.

Your pace is responsive to your current situation.

PEOPLE STRATEGY

You are thinking about "why" people want to be part of your organization. You understand the overall value proposition that you offer to those who are part of your team and those who should be. Your focus is on outstanding leadership and your culture—the one that you want to foster, not the one that you read about on LinkedIn or other business networks. Your people notice and appreciate this.

Your pace is responsive to your current situation.

SPACE STRATEGY

You have identified the unique elements of your organizational culture that require in-person engagement to thrive, and those that don't. These might include creative collaboration, well-being, and the ability to mentor/shadow other people. You know who within your organization will be most advantaged and disadvantaged by in-person activities, and you set out a strategy that supports a culture where everyone thrives. You can explain how you will use physical space to your staff in a way that is clear, compelling, and true to who your organization is (or wants to be).

Your pace is controlled and stable.

If you notice the following behaviours or patterns taking place, you're still operating in recovery mode.

Culture Blueprint

Leadership actions and characteristics

Pace

CAREERS STRATEGY

You focus only on the logistics of performance-related activities, rather than also on employee reflection, experimentation, and self-determination. You prepare and conduct standard annual reviews, but react to other employee needs only as they come to you. In your own career, you may feel a need for change, but you aren't sure now is the time for big moves.

Your pace is largely reactive to day-to-day events.

PEOPLE STRATEGY

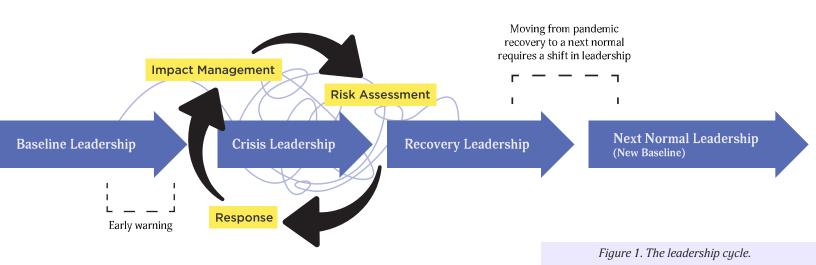
Your primary worry is how people work (such as hybrid work models). You see gaps in resources and reset priorities to accelerate hiring, which takes a short-term toll on productivity. You took on new responsibilities like tough decision-making during the crisis to help ease your staff's workloads and stress, but you've yet to return to regular delegating (including sharing in how decisions are made).

Your pace is frenetic and unpredictable.

SPACE STRATEGY

You are convinced that workforces will never return to offices and that this is the right time to start reducing your real estate footprint to save money.

Your pace reflects a desire to take immediate action on changing data.



WHEN IN DOUBT ABOUT WHAT'S NEXT, DON'T FORGET TO CONSIDER PACE

To find the normal that comes after crisis, leaders have to (re)learn how to relax control, resume more regular and sustainable behaviours and patterns, and take the time they need to work through their own fatigue. Pace is a critical leadership lever that can help with this, and its scope of impact will reach across an organization's careers, people, and space.

Now, more than ever, is the time to recognize that careers, people, and space strategies form your organization's unique <u>Culture Blueprint</u>. Big changes are afoot that affect how people relate to their work, the teams you need, and where you will work, together. One of the key indicators that you are no longer recovering and have instead reached the next normal is that your pace is controlled and responsive, rather than frenetic and reactive.

As we explain in the <u>Space Reimagined</u> issue of *Workforce Architecture*, "Mapping your Culture Blueprint with intention and honesty allows you to critically examine if your organization is on the right track with a solid foundation, if it needs repair and adjustment, or if it requires a massive overhaul to remain viable." With a Culture Blueprint in hand, you can evaluate the trade-offs of pushing for fast change versus playing the long game.

To reset your organization's pace, follow these five steps:

Step 1: Imagine you are five years past the end of the crisis and your organization has the culture, strategies, and success that you've always hoped it would.

Step 2: Write down what's different about how you lead, careers are managed, people are treated, and space is allocated in your organization compared to today.

Step 3: For each point, consider what might happen if you set a near-term deadline for change to happen. Next, consider what might happen if you slow change down over a longer period of time.

Step 4: Determine the pace you need your organization to operate at over the next six months, and how you can communicate priorities, timelines, and targets. If this is not clear, list out the following:

- What is holding you back
- Who you need to speak or connect with
- What resources (including contacts, information, permission, etc.) you are missing

Step 5: To begin setting a sustainable pace of work in your organization, while still achieving ambitious goals, make a new list of how you might secure any missing resources. ...And start taking action!

Want to learn more or explore how Challenge Factory can help you set a sustainable pace in your organization and better understand your Culture Blueprint? Contact us at Consulting@ChallengeFactory.ca.

We need to be intentional about changing social contracts in workplaces

New employment relationships can better match the values and needs of both employers and employees.



Workplaces are microcosms of the broader society in which they exist. They are made up of groups of people working together (or not) to achieve a common purpose (or not). Organizations have their own power structures, cultures, language, and routines. This is why it can feel totally different to work in one company compared with a competitor, doing exactly the same job.

Massive social shifts are taking place across our economy and society. Our values, culture, and cohesion are all being questioned. This is extremely exciting—and also nerve-wracking. To get work-related shifts right, we have to make sure we focus on the right topics.

Future of Work discussions typically focus on skills, job duties, technologies, and output. These are very important; we need people with the right skills ready for work at just the right time. Otherwise, we find ourselves with skills and labour shortages.

"Citizens have shaped the architecture of opportunity in their societies for centuries, and those choices have shaped our lives. We are at a moment in history when new choices need to be made. It is within our gift to shape a social contract that gives us, and those that come after us, a better future."

Minouche Shafik,

What We Owe Each Other

But these immediate and measurable aspects of the workforce are built on fundamental agreements, expectations, and understandings about something even more fundamental: **the relationships between people and institutions.** These relationships are governed by usually **unwritten rules**, or "**social contracts**."

To build a Future of Work where no one is left behind, where the revolutionary change taking place brings in better work and workplaces for all, we need to choose which agreements we want to protect, revise, or rewrite. To do this, we have to understand how our social contracts have changed and propose new relationships that match the values and needs of our time. One way forward for employers is to consider moving from "Robin Hood" to "piggy bank" approaches to engaging and investing in their people.

Understanding social contracts and how they are changing

Recently, we spoke with the president of a mid-sized professional services firm. With 450 employees, he expressed exhaustion and disappointment:

"When did it become my job as the head of a company to provide my employees with their complete sense of purpose and meaning? Why am I the only gateway for them to engage with their broader community? Our employee surveys





reflect that the work is interesting, but 'something is missing'. Isn't it enough to provide interesting work? How am I supposed to know how to help each and every employee find fulfilment, while still focusing on the business we're in?"

It's become popular to criticize employers for what they no longer provide employees. <u>Defined benefits</u> <u>pensions</u> have all but disappeared from the private sector. Gig work, offshoring, and outsourcing have systematically loosened ties between employers and workers. Expectations of employers have shifted. At the same time, our beliefs about workplaces and what work means to us have changed.

What's at the centre of all these tensions, expectations, and structures? **Social contracts**. (Yes, they exist in our workplaces too. Don't forget, workplaces are microcosms of broader society.)

Social contracts are agreements to cooperate for mutual benefit—in this context, between employers and employees—about which issues of work are collective responsibilities and which ones are left for individuals to take care of alone.

In What We Owe Each Other: A New Social Contract for a Better Society, economist Minouche Shafik lays out how society has changed, which rules have been bent or broken, and how different countries

see modern changes through the lens of social contract, or "what is to be provided collectively and by whom" (2021, pp. 8).

The opinion from the exhausted leader above shows that what he thinks are individual responsibilities that his workers should take care of themselves—engaging with their broader community, finding deeper fulfillment than just interesting work—is no longer shared by his workers.

The leader and his workers are approaching work through different sets of unwritten rules.

Today, many of our current work structures and systems are grounded in rules that simply no longer apply to how people live their lives. Think knowledge economy workers having to commute to an office for a nine-to-five shift five days a week, or employers expecting workers to be 'loyal' and getting surprised when they switch jobs, or career pauses being viewed as a black mark on resumes.

This discrepancy is a key source of discontent. When the unwritten rules seem to be written for someone else or, worse, to intentionally make life more difficult, people feel an instinctive drive to abandon social systems and break those rules.

So, who gets to set the rules for work—and how do they do it?

History shows us that anyone can write new rules. Groups of employees, single consulting firms, and future-focused leaders have all created new terms, relationships, and agreements that went on to become widespread and simply accepted as "the way work is done."

The real question is why some changes are adopted while others are not. Most of us believe what makes the difference is the power of the person who is proposing the change. Certainly, power plays an important role, and the way power is distributed in our society is fundamentally unequal and inequitable. Very promisingly, however, this isn't the whole story of change.

Change actually occurs when everyone—including business owners, leaders, governments, and

workers—pay attention to how our social contracts are shifting, which rules no longer serve us, and propose new relationships that better match our values and needs. At this moment in time, then, what types of change do we need?

The Robin Hood and piggy bank approaches to employment structures and expectations

When considering how the world of work has shifted, Shafik presents two ways to think about the exchange of labour for compensation and benefits. The traditional way is to take a Robin Hood approach: take from the rich and give to the poor.

A good example of this in workplaces are leadership development programs. Traditionally, these are structured for high potential employees to access experiences and thinking that will allow them to learn and grow. The employer (rich) is "giving" this to them (poor). Oftentimes, this is perceived as a

To build a Future of Work where no one is left behind, where the revolutionary change taking place brings in better work and better workplaces for all, we need to choose which agreements we want to protect, revise, or rewrite.



privilege and employees, depending on the culture, are told to either strut their stuff as proud peacocks or asked to not tell anyone as there's only space for so many people in the program.

An alternative approach to considering how we structure, recognize, reward, and compensate workforces is to think of leadership development programs as a piggy bank. Workers aren't seen as "assets" that serve a purpose for a price. Instead, they're seen as equity. Organizations invest in workers because they have both short- and long-term interests in producing quality goods and services and fostering strong ecosystems of consumers, partners, and suppliers. Investments

are made into individuals so that they can achieve these interests.

Leadership development programs don't need to be set up to foster Robin Hood environments, where some employees get while others only give. In fact, in the piggy bank approach, these programs are explicitly designed to foster future payoff for everyone. Those who take part are expected to transfer their knowledge to others (including contractors and gig workers). Participants also have to demonstrate how they've taken from the collective piggy bank and how they can add to it when they are able. This difference is subtle, but it's key.



What does work mean to us today?

On the one hand, work exists in advanced economies so that goods and services can be produced and labour can be taxed. Those taxes go off to the state in exchange for employment insurance, pensions, and other benefits to offset losses when work isn't possible (Shafik 2021, pp. 97).

On the other hand, work is part of identity, purpose, and self-worth, engaging people in challenges that are larger than themselves and bringing human activity together to solve bigger challenges. While the provision of benefits in exchange for labour has been part of the deal for at least a century, recognition of employee engagement and satisfaction is new, only being <u>coined by Professor William Kahn</u> and measured for the first time in 1990.

Since then, we've experienced a shift to more precarious work arrangements, declining long-term benefits, and new focus on employee engagement. The relationship between employers and employees is now fundamentally different than it was in the 20th-century. Yet employment structures and formal expectations remain mostly the same. Managers oversee workers. People are expected to be loyal, and companies are surprised when they aren't. Or people are treated as transitory, and companies struggle to build lasting value with a revolving door workforce.

What work means to us today is out of balance with employment structures and formal expectations.

PUTTING THE PIGGY BANK TO WORK FOR DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND CAREER OWNERSHIP

Today's hot button topics of demographic change and career ownership give us two opportunities to assess how a piggy bank approach can help us navigate shifting social contracts and rewrite the rules. Consider this:

ROBIN HOOD APPROACH

We have an ageing workforce and outdated career and talent structures. Workforce recruitment, training, and development tend to focus on young talent. One generation benefits at the expense of the other. With Robin Hood solutions, we expect governments to allocate tax revenues to social programs and income supports for older workers who end up displaced from the workforce due to ageism.

CAREER OWNERSHIP

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Employers compensate and reward certain employees to mitigate talent scarcity or other risks to the business, at the expense of everyone else who contributes into organizational success. Human resources are like any other resource, and organizations focus on reducing costs while increasing output. New models, access to different labour markets, and the ability to avoid costly benefit and pension contributions mean that employees can be treated as assets. They are acquired for the lowest price possible, their labour used as much as possible, and, at some point in time, deemed fully depreciated and written off.

PIGGY BANK APPROACH

Ageism is a prejudice against our future selves. This means if older workers are struggling within an organization, that will be the future for all workers until it's addressed. Piggy bank solutions focus on how to better engage and use older worker expertise for the betterment in both the short-term and long-term of all staff. The creation of Legacy Careers® and a focus on meaningful alumni engagement challenge traditional careers thinking and provide clues to the path forward.

Employees aren't treated as assets but, rather, as equity. Both employers and employees invest in a collective future with each other. Focus shifts from how long to keep someone on the team to how much that person can grow in the shortest amount of time and keep growing. Employee career ownership and workplace culture are investments everyone contributes into and benefits from not only for the duration of their employment, but also long after as alumni of the organization become sources of referrals, clients, and partners.

Breaking out of industrial age models

As a new wave of technology is about to revolutionize workplaces once again, we have a perfect moment to slow down and identify rules that no longer apply and need to be revised, and how new rules about work, careers, education, and workforce participation should govern the relationships we have with each other in the workplace.

What is the new social contract that will guide us to make decisions in the best interest of our communities, country, economy, and individual careers? Can all of these needs be satisfied at the same time?

We think they can.

In a recent client workshop, we asked a group of senior leaders what they think about the idea of a social contract at work. More specifically, we asked if the following question sparked any reaction: "What do we owe each other?"

For many in the room, it sparked anger. The initial and loudest opinion was that companies, employees, and the broader community don't owe anything to each other beyond what's written in legal contracts and agreements.

After a few minutes of debate and reflection, one leader presented a different idea. As the head of a transportation division, she suggested that what the company, employees, and community owe each other is safety. The company needs to uphold standards and promises that keep drivers safe. Drivers

need to ensure they conduct themselves with safety as a forefront concern, and communities need to provide infrastructure suitable for hauling freight. When something happens that threatens safety, all parties owe each other quick, honest, fact-based information with a goal to work together to ensure safety is once again established.

After that, all the leaders in the workshop were able to engage in a more meaningful discussion about what it means to have both a legal contract and a social contract in place at work.

Frameworks like the B Corp Assessment, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and the Guiding Principles of Career Development all provide avenues for leaders, employees, and communities to identify what matters most in the relationships they have with each other. All of them help us break out of industrial age models that have governed these discussions in the past. They open the discussion to one of mutual investment where the relative risks and rewards over time can be evaluated, rather than defaulting to transactions through which companies give or take and employees react.

To the leader who asked me how he had ended up being responsible for far more than just the work-related needs of his employees, I say that this shift has happened over time and now represents a mismatch of expectations. To create new balance, each organization can start by asking a basic but challenging question: "What do we want to owe each other?"

Behind the scenes: Challenge Factory discusses how to unlock empathy using data

Who are the characters in our evolving workplaces and communities? And why are they so important?



Research personas can ensure that people remain at the centre of any Future of Work we shape. They allow us to combine what we know, validate what we think we know, and identify what we want to know through the actions, reactions, and needs of representative characters.

Personas have often been used in marketing to tell brand and customer segment stories. In this 12-minute recording, learn what personas are and how they can be a powerful tool to use when researching the Future of Work.

1:23 What are research personas?

4:41 Challenge Factory's use of personas in research projects

7:14 When are personas successful?





Generative AI like ChatGPT can make the Future of Work more human

There's no need to fear an AI takeover. It's time for a skills tune-up. Here's your prompt.



By Ali Breen



The robots are coming. They're going to steal our jobs. Humans will become obsolete!

I've been hearing these fears and predictions since entering the career development, labour relations, and talent recruitment sectors more than a decade ago. In the wake of ChatGPT's rising popularity, these warning cries are only getting louder.

ChatGPT is an AI chatbot that responds to questions in a first-person narrative that mimics a human conversationalist. The plausible-sounding answers it provides feel like human expertise. With robust answers pulled from an incredible wealth of information available on the Internet, it's like a supercharged version of Ask Jeeves.

But is this robot trend actually scary? Or is it trendy to scare us?

Doom and gloom headlines about the tech-centric Future of Work distract us from the bigger, human-centric challenges we're facing. But by predicting how we will experience the change that AI brings us, we can make that change work for us. In this article, I lay out the three phases of revolutionary change and walk you through a three-step process that will help you understand the opportunities and pitfalls of using ChatGPT in the Future of Work sector.

No matter how advanced AI becomes, the ability to ask better questions in our work will always help us refocus on what matters most: humans.

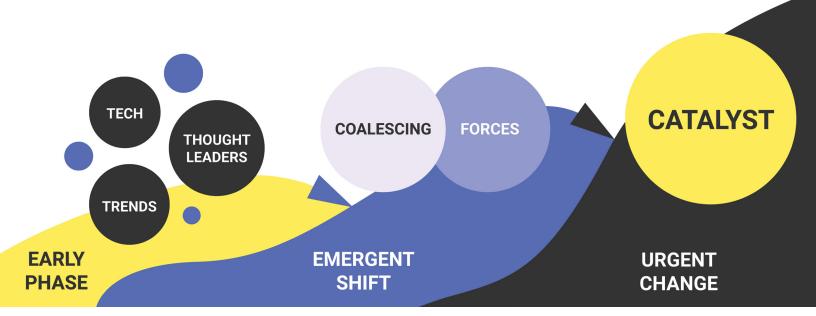
REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE DOESN'T REINVENT THE WHEEL

We're living through revolutionary times, and it's uncomfortable. When the current rules of work no longer serve us, and a new <u>social contract</u> has yet to emerge, we often begin to see the future as a frightful, alarming place.

Here's an antidote to that fear: revolutions follow patterns, and we can use these patterns to shape the future we want.

Revolutions tend to be seen as extraordinary—and uncommon. While it may seem counterintuitive, revolutions can actually be mapped out in three standard phases. This means the revolutionary change that AI brings can be predicted.

Figure 1. Revolutions follow patterns, modified from The Talent Revolution: Longevity and the Future of Work, Taylor and Lebo, p. 24.





In the early phase of revolutionary change, an abundance of energy, pioneers and radicals, and new applications burst onto the scene like popcorn over a fire. It's chaotic, and every day seems to bring new breakthroughs or thought leadership pieces. This is where we are today with the rise of AI.

The second phase will bring some order to all the chaos of different tools, approaches, experts, and applications. Activities, investments, and focus will start to coalesce, and dominant themes will emerge. In this emergent shift phase, hints of promising future practices surface. Informed bets can be placed on which investments will succeed and which will fizzle.

From horses to cars, from manual to machine, from analog to digital, past technology revolutions followed this same pattern—including the initial fears and questions about *what this means for the future*. Analyzing the patterns shows us that people gained more time and capacity to focus on

other work, on new opportunities, or on ways to do their jobs more efficiently. They also created new inequalities and power structures that continue to need solving and reconciling today. But, crucially, they didn't lead to societal collapse.

Patterns and predictions help us stay ahead of trends. Paying attention to them means we can prioritize strategic planning, investments, training, and beyond. One key prediction we have for the next revolutionary change cycle that AI tools have unleashed is this: we will move through the three phases very quickly. Reinforcing this prediction are recent reports that employers are already looking for employees who have ChatGPT literacy skills.

Within the Future of Work sector, how can we mine the value of ChatGPT while building awareness of its pitfalls? The two experiments that follow will teach you how to use ChatGPT to develop better questions that go beyond the basics using our "3-try process".



Step 1 – Starting Question

Begin by choosing a workplace or workforce challenge and formulate it into a question. It might be a question that your own organization needs to answer, or it might be a question that you know your clients, customers, or employees are asking.

Ask ChatGPT your question. Word it in straightforward, casual language.

The answer that ChatGPT generates will likely provide general information or foundational knowledge. Look for gaps in this answer. What would you add? What's missing? These gaps are your expertise, your human touch, your critical thinking at work.

Step 2 - Detailed Question

Now, ask a different question that tries to fill in a gap you uncovered. Make your question more specific or detailed. Analyze the next answer, again looking for gaps.

Step 3 – Emotional Question

Ask the question a third time, but focus on giving it an emotional twist. With ChatGPT's third answer, you'll begin to get an idea of the deeper reasoning, motivations, values, or issues at play in your workplace or workforce challenge.

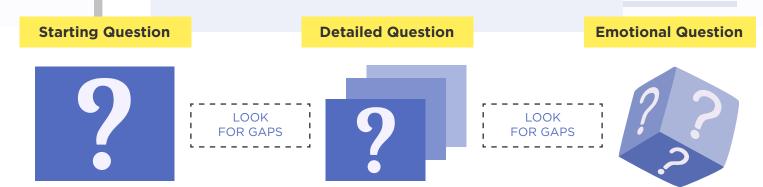
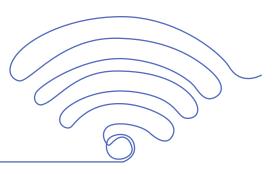


Figure 2. The 3-try process for questioning ChatGPT.



Let's see this process in action. As you explore the following two experiments that we conducted with ChatGPT, consider how the three steps lead to greater self-reflection, depth of insight, and awareness of the value of our collective work in the Future of Work sector. Then, consider where you might incorporate it into your own work (e.g., a project workflow, writing or consulting task, team brainstorming session).

AL

How can I engage my staff who are feeling isolated and burnt out working from home?



Working from home can be challenging for many employees, especially those who are feeling isolated and burnt out. Here are some ways you can engage your staff and help them feel connected and supported:

- Encourage regular check-ins: Regular check-ins with your staff can help you stay connected and show that you care about their well-being. Schedule virtual meetings or video calls to discuss work-related tasks and to also allow time for socializing.
- 2. Facilitate team-building activities: Virtual team-building activities can help employees feel connected and engaged with their colleagues. These can be as simple as playing games during team meetings or organizing virtual happy hours or coffee breaks.
- Offer flexibility: Working from home can blur the lines between work and personal time. Offering flexible schedules or adjusting workloads can help alleviate burnout and allow staff to better manage their work-life balance.
- 4. Provide training and development opportunities: Encourage your staff to improve their skills by providing them with access to training and development resources. This can help them feel more engaged and invested in their work.
- 5. Show appreciation: Recognize and appreciate your staff's hard work and accomplishments. Consider hosting virtual celebrations or sending personalized notes of appreciation to your staff to show that you value their contributions.

EXPERIMENT #1: "HOW CAN I ENGAGE MY BURNT-OUT STAFF?"

Step 1 – Starting Question

We begin by asking ChatGPT a common question we hear from employers: "How can I engage my staff who are feeling isolated and burnt out working from home?"

ChatGPT answers with five logical, straightforward points and a short explanation of each: encourage regular check-ins, facilitate team-building activities, offer flexibility, provide training and development opportunities, and show appreciation.

Our first observation is that the response didn't include anything about career development. That's a gap we uncovered, based on our human expertise.

Career development is a professional field of practice and one of three foundational, non-negotiable lenses that make up Challenge Factory's <u>Talent Revolution</u> <u>Blueprint</u>, upon which all our Future of Work consulting is based.



Figure 3. Experiment #1, starting question.

Step 2 – Detailed Question

We reword the question: "How can I engage my staff who are feeling isolated and burnt out working from home *using career development strategies?*"

ChatGPT's next answer acknowledges the power of career development and lists five recommendations with short explanations: offer virtual training and development opportunities, create development plans, encourage mentoring and coaching, provide stretch assignments, and offer career progression opportunities.

These are sensible recommendations, but they are drawn from traditional HR approaches that focus on performance and formal programming.

Another gap is revealed. First principles from career development and innovations from the HR sector are still missing. Notably, ChatGPT's answer doesn't capture the importance of career development as a lifelong learning process, and the essential role this plays in employee engagement.

Step 3 – Emotional Question

We reword the question again: "How can I help my staff who work from home *feel connected*, *engaged*, *and energetic* using lifelong career development strategies?"

Reformulating the question helps us consider the deeper reasons and emotions behind the challenge. It also provides an optimistic, productive goal to reach for.

This time, ChatGPT provides some of the same answers from the first two questions, and adds a few related to communication: provide feedback and recognition, celebrate achievements, foster collaboration, promote a culture of open communication where feedback and ideas are welcomed, set clear expectations, and encourage staff to take care of themselves with a healthy work-life balance.

With this answer, the added focus that ChatGPT's answer gives to leaders and staff as real people, and the relationships between them, begins to shine through.

To learn more about the difference between performance management and career development, check out the 'Travel Tip' on page 23 of Retain and Gain:

Career Management for the Public Sector.

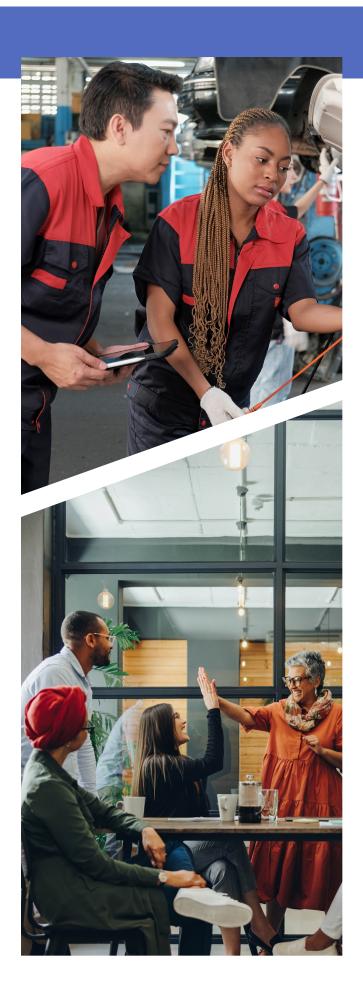
Other playbooks in the *Retain and Gain* series include career management for small business and non-profits and charities.

EXPERIMENT #1 RESULTS

In tight labour markets, employers often think that increasing salaries is their only option to find and keep staff. This experiment shows that there's more than one way to engage staff.

People are more motivated at work when they feel cared for and valued. Integrating career development strategies into the workplace has a positive effect on culture, absenteeism, productivity, retention, profits, safety, and even customer loyalty.

Using ChatGPT to ask a better question provided a better solution—one that costs less and delivers greater ROI.



EXPERIMENT #2: "WHY DOES TRUST MATTER IN LEADERSHIP?"

Step 1 – Starting Question

For our second experiment, we choose another pain point that is common to employers. First, we ask ChatGPT: "Why is trust so important to being a good leader?"

ChatGPT tells us that trust enables effective communication, fosters collaboration, promotes loyalty and commitment, increases morale and job satisfaction, and enhances the leader's credibility.

This answer is too vague. It doesn't provide concrete learning or actionable starting points for leaders. How can we fill in these missing parts? We modify the question to be more specific by drawing ChatGPT's focus to the individual leader, rather than leaders in general.

Step 2 - Detailed Question

Our next reworded question is more revealing. To get to the heart of the challenge, because it will only ever be solved in real workplaces by real leaders, we ask, "Why don't my staff trust me as a leader?"

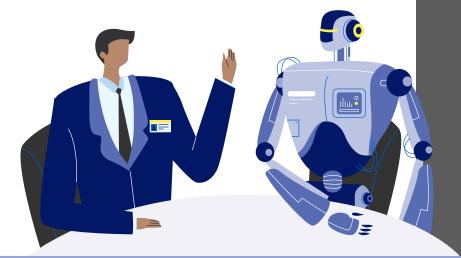
ChatGPT provides another list of reasons why trust may be waning in workplaces: lack of communication, transparency, empathy, competency, and employee recognition, as well as inconsistent behaviour and micromanagement.

This is a decent set of leadership areas to consider. Still, some connective tissue is missing. We wouldn't approach a discussion about trust with our clients using either of these two lists.

Step 3 – Emotional Question

This time we load our question with emotion. We want to dig deeper and see how ChatGPT would handle the actual *pain*, or the lived experience, of the pain point. We reword the question: "Why do I *feel* like my staff doesn't trust me?"

ChatGPT provides a list of experiences that might contribute to a leader feeling like their employees don't trust them: ineffective communication, critical feedback from staff, negative past experiences that increase sensitivity, observations of distrustful staff behaviour, and insecurity.



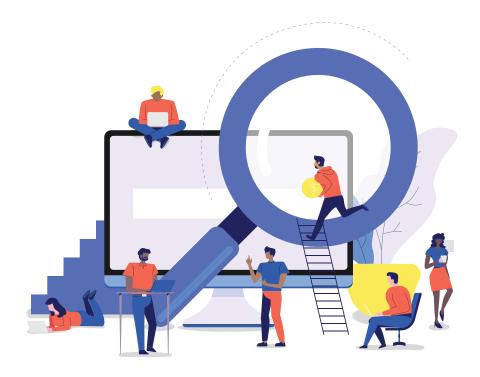
EXPERIMENT #2 RESULTS

The third answer gives us a lightbulb moment. Although the second answer (in step 2) mentions that leaders should demonstrate empathy to their employees, none of ChatGPT's answers demonstrate any empathy. This is how ChatGPT prefaced its answers to the second and third questions in this experiment:

- "As an Al language model, I cannot know the specific reasons why your staff doesn't trust you."
- "As an Al language model, I cannot know the specific reasons why you feel like your staff doesn't trust you."

The emotionally charged situation of trust in the workplace, between a leader and their employees, needs a human-to-human conversation. If someone came to us worried about trust in their leadership, we would empathize. We would focus on how the leader was *feeling*, in addition to what the data available to us reveals. The leader's experience of that empathy from another human might make all the difference.

Using ChatGPT to ask better questions spotlights when our human, relational skills are required to build connection with other people, for the type of impact that will make a difference to real people. It also validates that going through the 3-try process with ChatGPT gives us cues about when to keep digging deeper.



TAKEAWAYS FROM THE 3-TRY EXPERIMENTS

Can AI help us ask better questions? Can it fast track us into more fulfilling work that centres people? The 3-try process, our two experiments, and the following three takeaways all point to yes.

Takeaway 1: Challenge Factory's free-flying banner states that the Future of Work is human, and we focus on talent over tech in workplaces. Both lived experience and occupational currency cannot be replaced by today's AI. That being said, you can use ChatGPT effectively to formulate better questions.

Takeaway 2: Al tools are leading to the emergence of new, in-demand skills that hiring managers value. The creation of new opportunities for *human*

jobseekers, such as knowing how to successfully 'prompt' Al chatbots, is growing.

Takeaway 3: ChatGPT has limits. It's built by people living in today's social structures and systems, and therefore perpetuates dominant (often Western) culture biases. As we move towards <u>business as a force for good</u> and social justice, as we build new social contracts that replace outdated norms and rules, we adjust in our humanity. As we move towards reconciliation, we incorporate Indigenous ways of seeing and knowing into our lives. As we move towards gender parity, we incorporate feminist viewpoints into our workplaces. AI may always be a step behind us.

CHATGPT IS NOT A TERRIFYING TAKEOVER

ChatGPT is just one of a slew of AI tools that have moved from 'futuristic labs' into everyday life. The technology sector, however, has known and understood the potential that AI represents for a long time. With the mainstream release of ChatGPT, AI tools are now accessible to anyone interested in playing with them. We're all 'in the know' now.

Instead of only seeing the revolution in AI tools, we also need to see the patterns in them—and make them work for us. Remember, we're only in the early phase of AI revolutionary change.

Like the invention of the wheel or the smartphone, people will both lose and gain as things change and they adopt this new technology. At Challenge Factory, we'll continue to use the 3-try process to generate deeper, insightful questions in our consulting, research, and training. We'll use it to question ourselves, too, and our approaches.

One thing that won't change: the future is not prescribed or written for us. We can shape a Future of Work that serves us. Our actions today lead us into the future. Instead of fearing that AI will take over, let's harness the potential of AI to boost our human potential.



Buyer beware: The greatest risk of ChatGPT

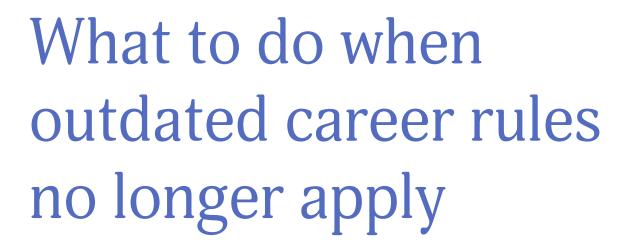
The risk of taking ChatGPT answers at face value instead of as a tool for critical thinking, subject to human intervention and editing, is high. ChatGPT struggles to think outside the box that the Internet, taken as a whole, creates for it.

At the time of writing, new features are being added to ChatGPT that expand its functionality. These upgrades, and how they are marketed, can lead us to further assume that ChatGPT answers are always up to date and correct, even though they may not be. Sometimes, its answers are completely false.

Commonly held misconceptions and stereotypes that ChatGPT is at risk of perpetuating can be useful or harmful, depending on how we integrate this AI tool into our work, lives, and learning. It's great if you already know what the misconceptions are and use it as an example to showcase bias and gaps. It can become a tool to educate others and think critically about the information being presented.

It's not useful for those who want to educate themselves but don't know where those gaps are.

In the long-term, the most dangerous risk about ChatGPT may be the tone of accessible expertise that it offers. Because ChatGPT is such an advanced chatbot that speaks to you in first-person, casual language, it's easy to believe its answers are 100 percent correct. In contrast, a Google search (or a literature review in formal research) provides different voices, authors, and sources. The hidden nature of ChatGPT's aggregation operations makes it harder to question the credibility of its information.



Finding your Career SweetSpot in uncertain times.

By Lisa Taylor

Remember, to adapt to the changing world of work, first you have to recognize and define what's shifting in your own career, and if you need to adapt as a result. In revolutionary times, if you do what you've always done, you'll no longer get what you've gotten in the past. This is true whether you're an individual navigating your own career path or you're leading an organization through massive disruption.

So, when revolution is brewing and the rules of work are changing all around you, how do you adapt?

Something else actually has to happen before you can adapt. First, you have to decide if you even need to adapt to changing conditions and new rules. To do this, you have to know what your career needs, passion, talent, and impact are. Unfortunately, knowing isn't always easy. You may need new resources to help.

It often feels like there are hard rules for how careers work, with clear "dos" and "don'ts." Sometimes, these rules deal with time: how long it should take to find a job, how long you should stay in a job before moving, how long you should wait for a promotion, pay raise, or to take your next training program. These "shoulds," which are usually



presented as best practices, are often based on individual opinions rather than objective career development and labour market research.

The truth is that despite all the changes taking place in the world of work, the fundamentals of how we align our identities, work, life, and learning have remained the same. Of course, this doesn't mean that adapting to changing conditions, new rules, or rules that no longer serve us has gotten any easier.

If you don't have the right resources, it can be extremely difficult to recognize when a work- or career-related shift is worthwhile to make, and when it's simply a passing trend or noise. The ability to recognize the difference between the two is a skill. This is good news! Skills can be learned—and this skill is especially powerful when grounded in specific, proven career development methods.

In the rest of this article, I give you instructions for an activity that will help you take an honest account of what's actually changing (or has already changed) *for you*, and what you might want to do about it. If you lead an organization, I also show you how to modify this activity for strategic planning and organizational results.

Remember, to adapt to the changing world of work, first you have to recognize and define what's shifting in your own career, and if you need to adapt as a result. From there, you can identify hypotheses that you want to test in order to bring your career back into alignment—what we call your "SweetSpot." When you focus on your SweetSpot, you cultivate the ability to recognize the difference between a passing trend and a shift that is worthwhile to make in your career.

DISCOVER YOUR CAREER SWEETSPOT

To use the interactive version of this activity, click here.

Step 1: Build your lists.

For each of the four questions below, create a separate list of as many responses to them as you can. You may need to ask others to help you, especially when identifying unique skills or what you care about and value the most.

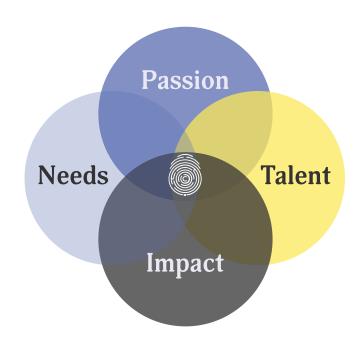
- What do you want and need from your work?
- What skills or talents do you have that others admire and wish they could emulate?
- What matters to you?
- What impact do you want your work to have (or what problem do you want to be part of solving)?

Step 2: Find the patterns.

When you've finished building your four lists, look for the patterns in and across them. What common themes, trends, or ideas seem to keep emerging? Here are examples of common themes you might see across your lists:

- Fostering safety
- Building something new
- Engaging with diverse groups
- Teaching and learning all at the same time
- Creating beauty in practical ways
- Meeting lifestyle and practical needs

Write down your themes. They are your "SweetSpot," the core criteria that you need to have satisfied as you adapt to changing environments, opportunities, and workplace conditions.



Step 3: Test your SweetSpot.

You now have a set of key themes, needs, or criteria that must be satisfied in your career. As a way to test your SweetSpot, think about your current role, job title, and work. In relation to that work, rank each of your SweetSpot criteria on a scale from 1-10, where 1 means your work does not address that criterion at all and 10 means your work addresses it in a very consistent and satisfying way.

Take a look at where your work scores high and where it scores low. Set a hypothesis about criteria where you scored low. What might be possible to change within your work to increase the score?

Step 4: Experiment.

Using the hypotheses that you identified in Step 3, set up an experiment that tests how you might make a change that increases your score, or

brings your work into better alignment with your SweetSpot. An example of an experiment might be to notice where your work scores low on SweetSpot criteria, and then have a conversation with a colleague who knows your work well to explore how you might "nudge" your score by making changes. Test your assumptions about how your manager might react to a similar conversation. Be open to any unexpected and unintended consequences and opportunities that emerge.

Step 5: Take action.

Using the results of your experiment, decide what actions you can take within three time horizons to bring your career in line with your SweetSpot:

- Immediately
- In the short-term (decide what timeframe this means for you)
- In the long-term (decide what timeframe this means for you)

Set "new rules" to govern your own work, without concern for rules that others are setting for themselves.

This 5-step process is an example of how the rules of career ownership (and workforce alignment) remain constant even in times of change. It also introduces the concept of experimentation. At Challenge Factory, we've always been a lab for new ideas, approaches, and considerations.

Contact us at <u>Consulting@ChallengeFactory.ca</u> if you'd like help completing this SweetSpot activity to make big changes in your career or organization.

Want to know your organization's SweetSpot?

Understanding what makes your organization's work unique is a strong foundation for creating your own workforce rules. Here's how to modify the Career SweetSpot activity for strategic planning or organizational results:

Step 1: Create four lists by answering the following four questions.

- ➤ What does your organization need and want from your staff? What new needs are you seeing from your staff?
- What is your organization uniquely skilled at doing?
- ► What does your organization value the most?
- What impact or problems is your organization focused on solving?

Step 2: Find the patterns by looking for themes that point to culture and competence areas. These are your organization's SweetSpot. Have at least a few members of your leadership team confirm that the themes you identify "feel important."

Step 3: Test your organization's SweetSpot by taking a current business decision or client project and scoring how well it satisfies each theme you identified in Step 2. Use a 1-10 scale.

Step 4: Experiment by brainstorming how you might make operational or project changes to increase your score across the SweetSpot themes.

Bonus! This activity can also help you determine if a new project, client, or initiative is aligned with your SweetSpot, opportunistic (but less aligned), or not worth pursuing.





Chal·lenge Fac·to·ry

noun. A trusted advisor to leaders and movements at the forefront of creating the careers and workplaces of the future.

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WORKFORCE ARCHITECTURE

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Certified



This company is committed to accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement.

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