

The Future of Working Report

How is your industry reacting?



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Welcome

Welcome to Oak Engage's 2022 Future of Working Report: The Big Rethink.

Most of us have experienced some change in our daily lives over the previous two years.

In that time we have seen unprecedented levels of remote working, a dramatic shift in the job market and a UK trial of the four-day working week. It is widely anticipated that we will never go back to what was considered normal.

But what does the new normal look like?

Across three surveys, we have gathered the thoughts of over 1500 employees and business leaders across all industries, company sizes and turnover. We asked about everything from overtime, remote working, mental health and beyond.

Our expert contributors and employee study will delve deeper into the intricacies of modern work life.

The Future of Working is here and we're here to help you make sense of it all before it's too late.



A Message from the CEO

Dear Reader,

Welcome to Oak Engage's 2022 Future of Working of Report: The Big Rethink.

We've all experienced significant changes in our daily lives over the last two years. In that time we have seen unprecedented levels of remote working, a dramatic shift in the job market and a [UK trial](#) of the four-day working week. It is widely anticipated that we will never go back to what was considered normal.

As leaders, we have had to adapt our approach at a rapid pace in order to keep our employees engaged, happy and safe in very challenging circumstances.

Companies at the forefront of this change have made good use of technology and digital workplaces: accelerating how and why we use technology in our day-to-day roles.

These changes bring new challenges and new opportunities that organisations must equip themselves to face. Power has shifted during the pandemic and employees are voting with their feet. As a result the employee experience has never been more important. The type and standard of the online experience as well as work flexibility are becoming key parts of the offering to employees.

The job market has been turned on its head, remote working and flexibility mean that global opportunities are now at the feet of more employees than ever before. This global phenomenon has contributed to what has been coined as the 'Great Resignation'.

Methods of working, modes of flexibility and work life balance have taken on new meaning. People have discovered interests and values that the daily grind used to exclude, and although the imagined barriers to remote working have truly been removed, it's not the panacea some thought it would be, leaving even the most

introverted craving an element of in-person interaction. There has been something of an awakening about what it means to work and interact with people, it's not clear what that means for the future yet, but we all know something has changed permanently.

Against this background we conducted a series of surveys to ask what the future of work really looks like.

Over three surveys, with over 1500 respondents, we delve into employee turnover, technology in the workplace, working arrangements, conditions and more.

The results of this survey are contained in this report. From this study and others we are working towards a view of the hybrid working future, we hope you will read, digest and contribute to the ongoing debate.

The Future of Working Report: The Big Rethink 2022

Will Murray



Chief Executive Officer at Oak Engage



As leaders, we have had to adapt and deliver change in order to keep our employees engaged, happy and safe in challenging circumstances.

“Over three surveys we asked questions to cover all bases. We delved into employee turnover, technology in the workplace, working arrangements, conditions and more.”

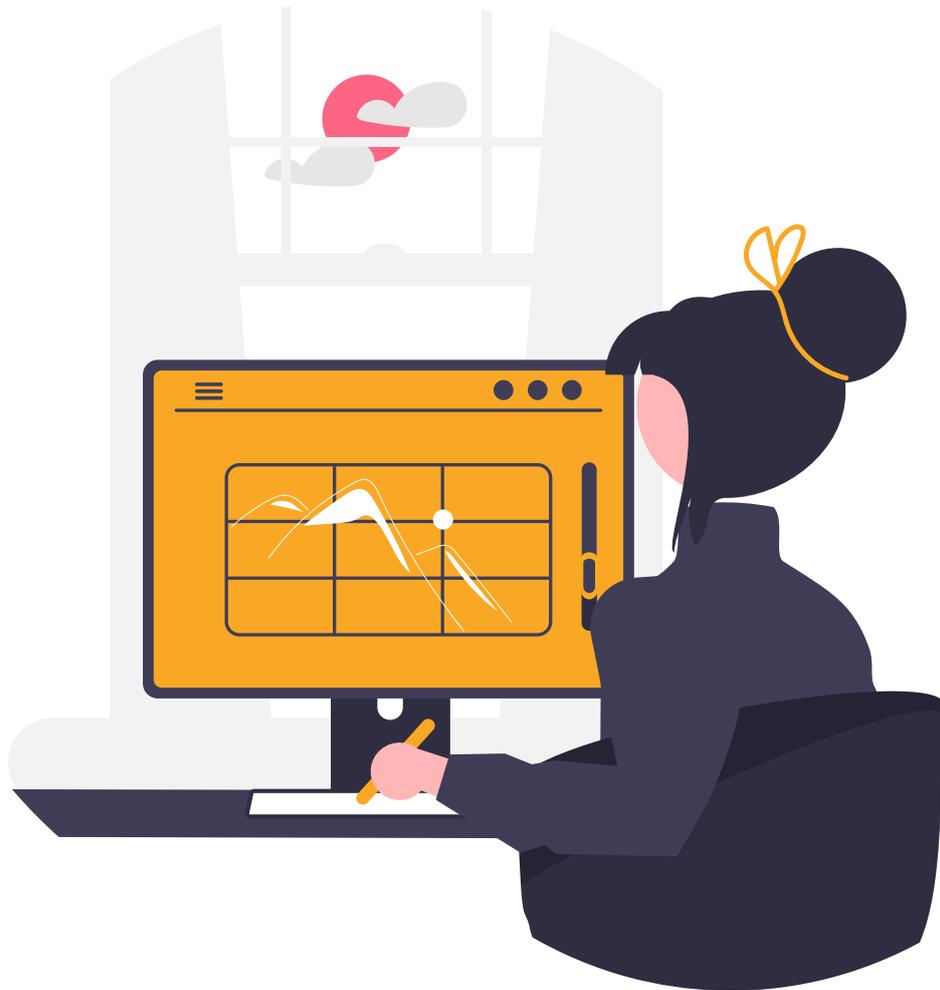
- Will Murray, Chief Executive Officer at Oak Engage

Where We Want to Work & Why

Is the physical office a thing of the past?

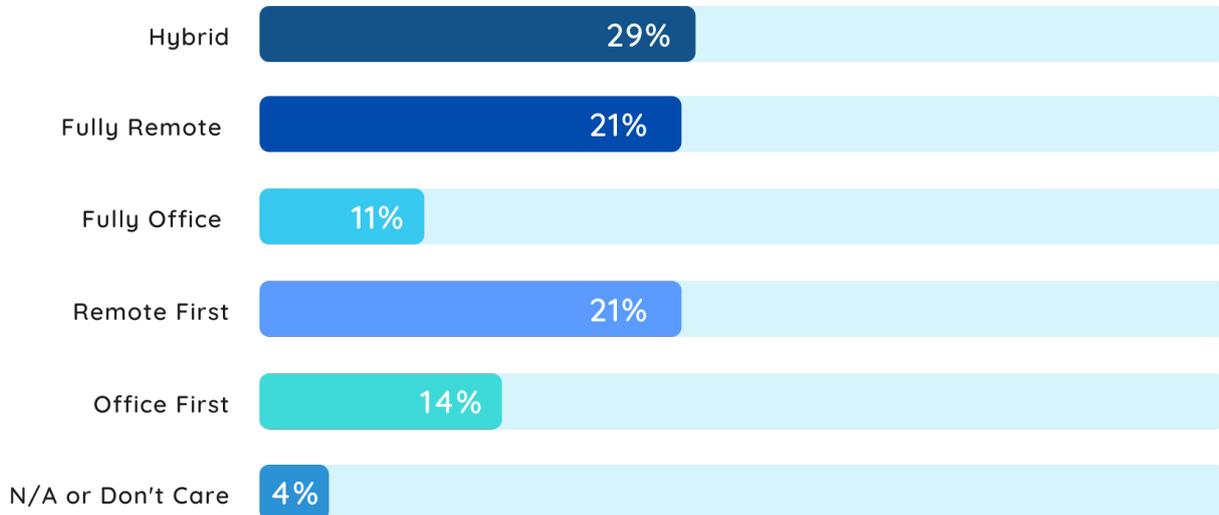
Employees have experienced some level of remote working in the previous 2 years. There is no doubt that some who have previously never worked from home now demand some level of it.

However, some have also missed the collaborative and social aspects that are synonymous with office work. With many gradually returning to the office, people are able to compare remote and in-office side by side. Where do people want to work? In this section we tackle these issues.



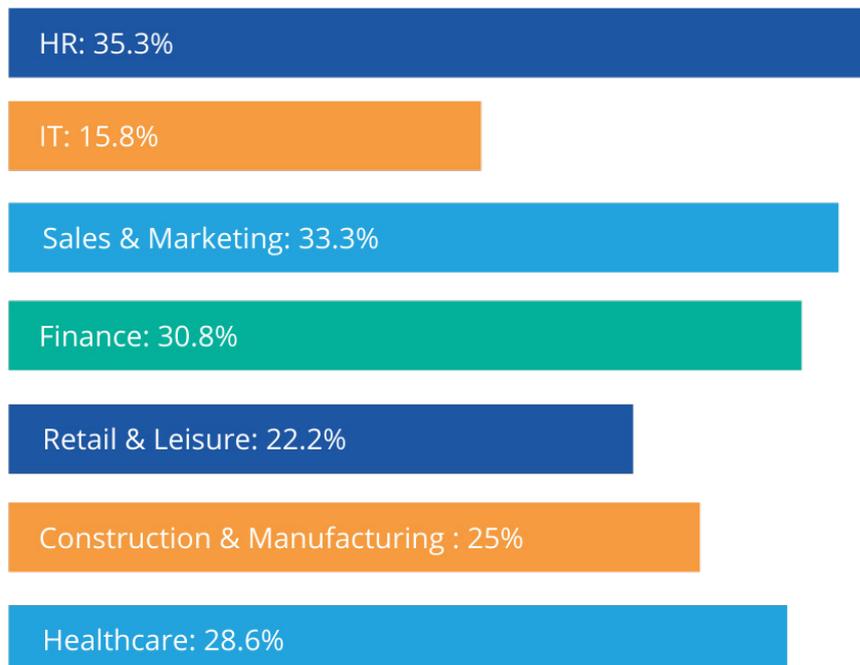
We asked employees:

'What is your preferred way of working?'

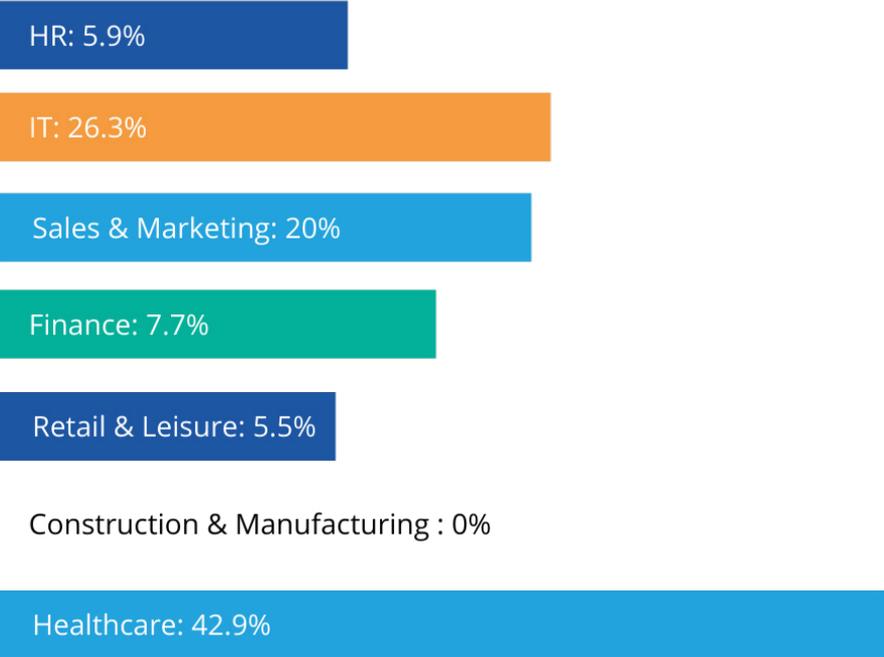


How does YOUR industry feel?

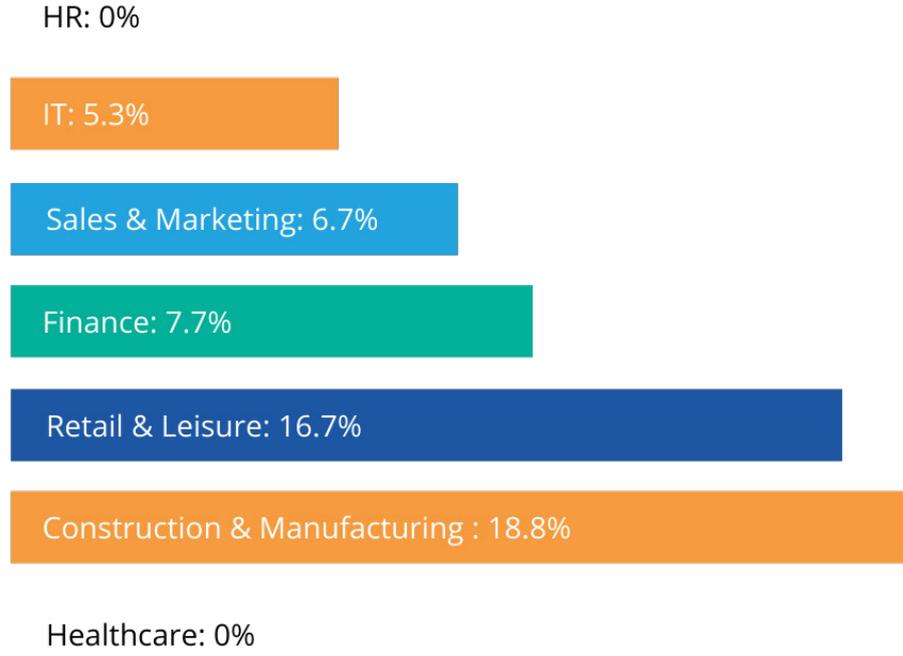
● Hybrid



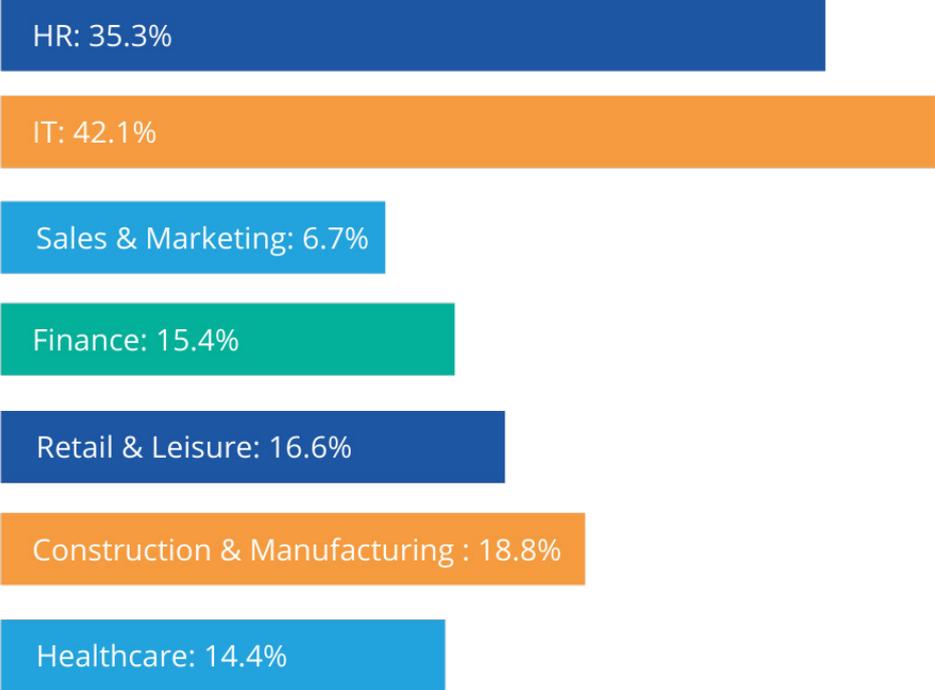
Fully Remote



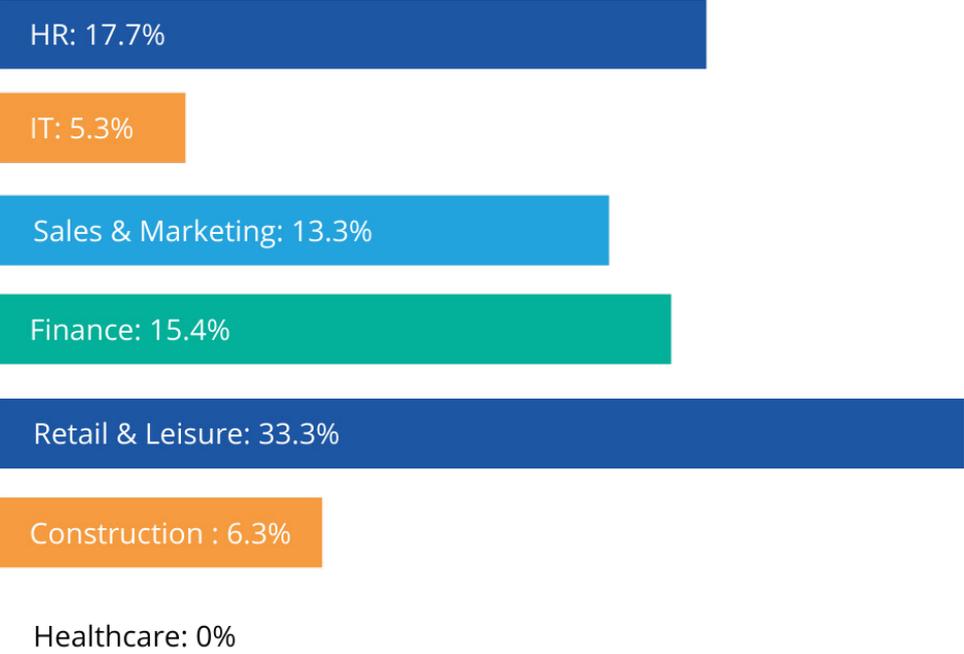
Fully Office

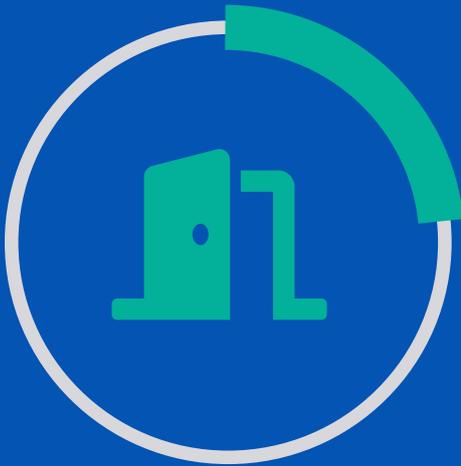


Remote First



Office First





18.3% of leaders said remote/mostly remote opportunities were a factor in employees leaving their business.

31.1% of employees said remote working was an important factor when looking for a new role.



Expert Opinion

with Lisa Seagroatt

Bio:

Lisa Seagroatt is an award winning workplace culture expert and MD of HR Fit for Purpose. She has published her book *Bandits in the Boardroom* and has used her capacity as a lecturer and public speaker to advise businesses on building a healthy culture.

During the pandemic, many employees were really happy not to be going into work as it meant they didn't have to come face to face with those individuals who made them unhappy in the workplace.

There's been lots of discussion going on in business about how productive employees were away from the physical workplace (not for everyone of course) simply because they were more engaged and had a better sense of wellbeing working from home.

Unfortunately there will always be 'issues' where you have different personalities and dynamics coming together as strangers in the workplace or anywhere for that matter.

Strong leadership and good communication are more critical to creating healthy workplace cultures in a physical and digital sense.

The key to ensuring that a lack of workplace visibility doesn't have a negative impact as a result of remote working is communication.

Anyone managing a team of people remotely needs to ensure that they 'check in' regularly with their team members no matter how 'remote' they might be.

Employee engagement is the key to building a robust and highly functioning team of people in any environment and it shouldn't really matter whether they have a physical presence in the workplace or not.

Lisa Seagroatt



Workplace Culture Expert, Lecturer & Author



There's been lots of discussion going on in business about how productive employees were away from the physical workplace.

"The key to ensuring that a lack of workplace visibility doesn't have a negative impact as a result of remote working is communication"

- Lisa Seagroatt, Workplace Culture Expert, Lecturer and Author

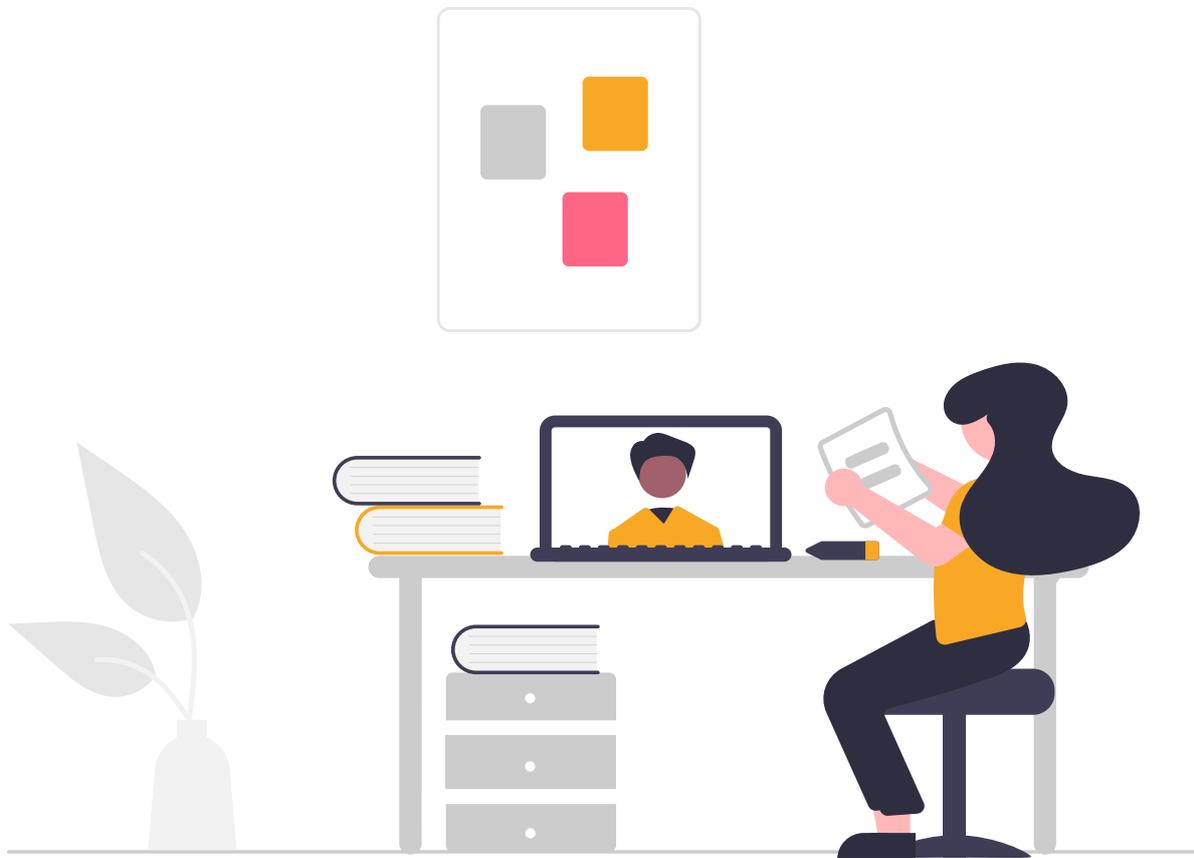
Technology & Remote Working

Is your business equipped?

We have established that there is a desire for at least some level of remote working in most industries. However, are businesses readily equipped for this in the longer term? It isn't just video meetings you need to consider, it is vital to keep employees engaged and maintain productivity to ensure that remote working isn't detrimental to workers or the organisation.

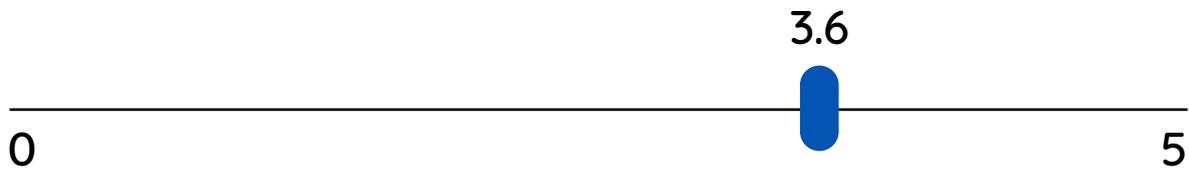
Some employees have been left frustrated with poor processes and technology in place, whilst some have been empowered by the opportunity to have their working day unspoiled by the daily commute.

In this section we take a look at how businesses and employees have fared during remote working using the technology and applications at their disposal.



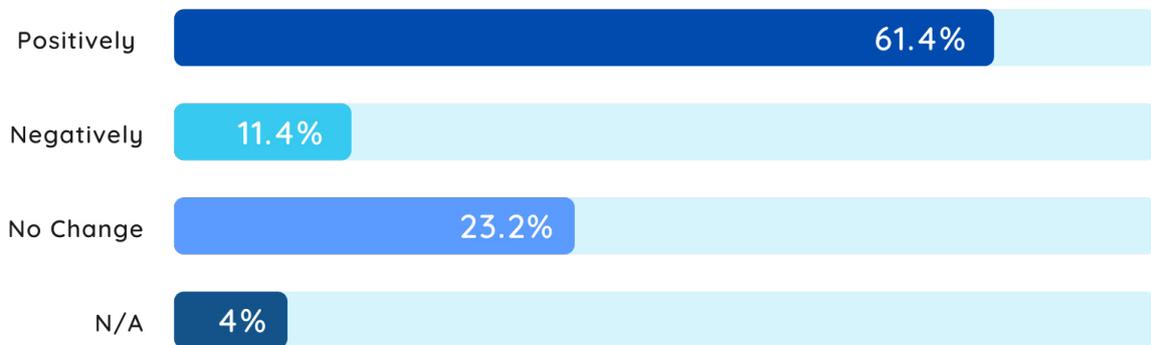
We asked employees:

'On a scale of 0-5 how would you rate the technology you use at work?'



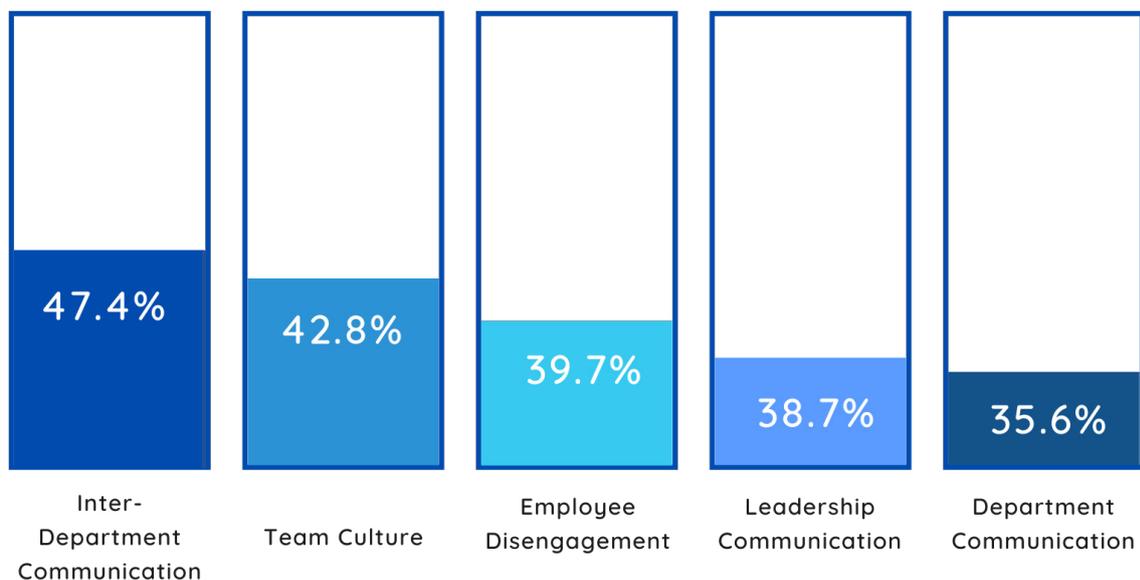
We asked leaders:

'How has remote working impacted productivity in the business?'



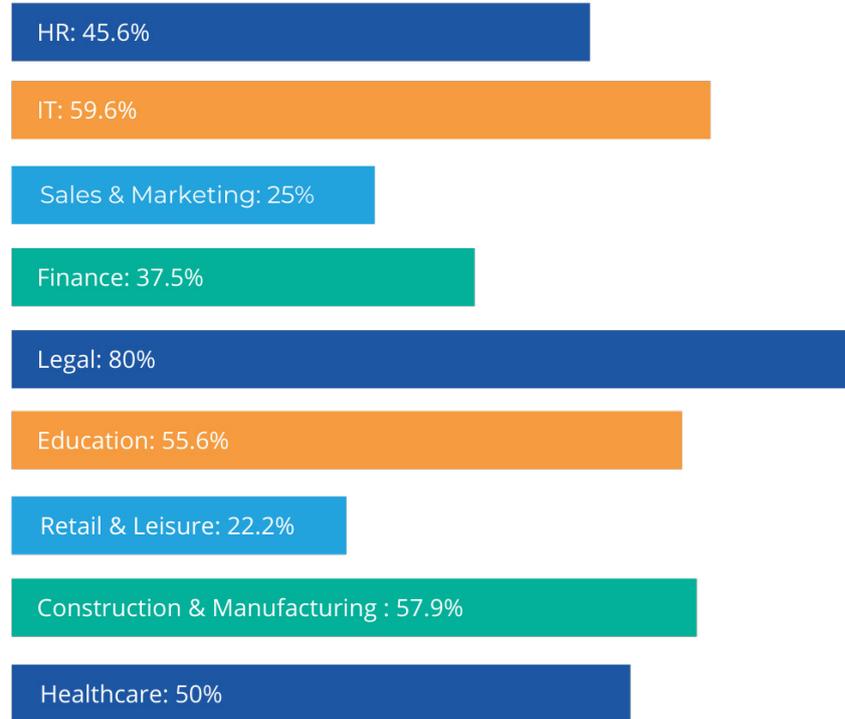
We asked leaders:

'What has been an issue during the remote working period?'

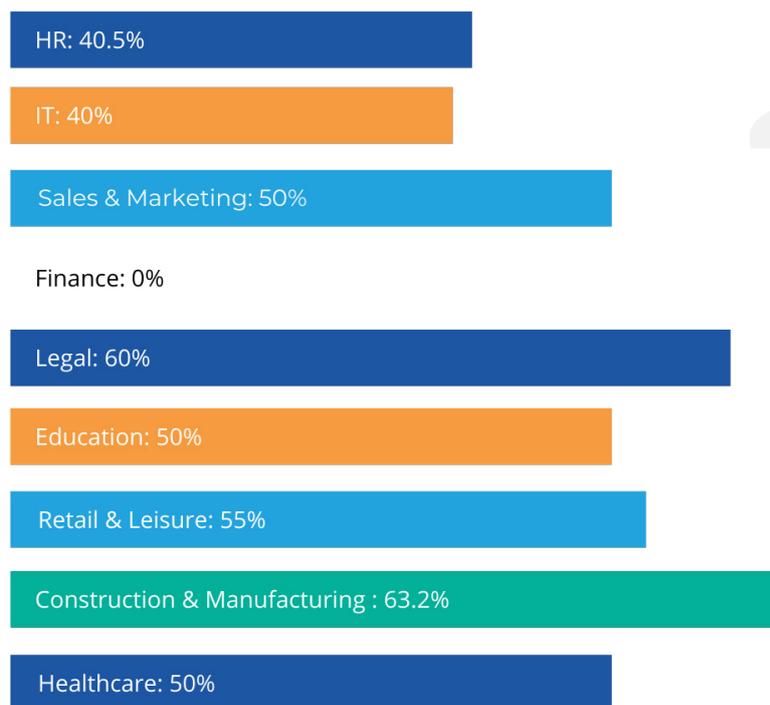


How does YOUR industry feel?

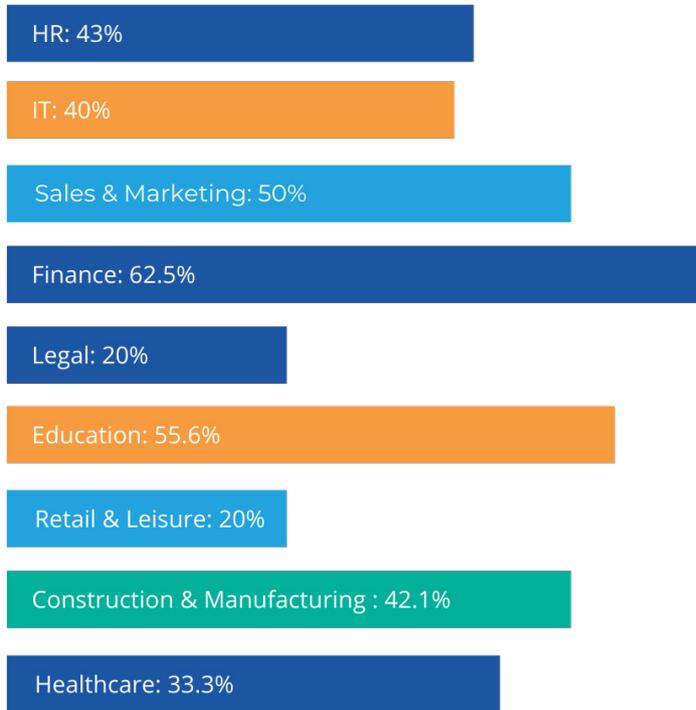
Inter-department Communication



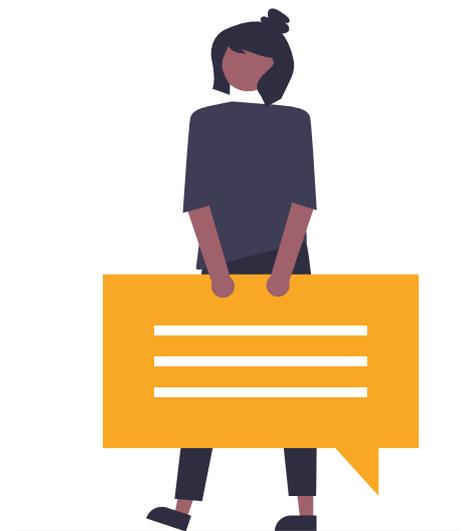
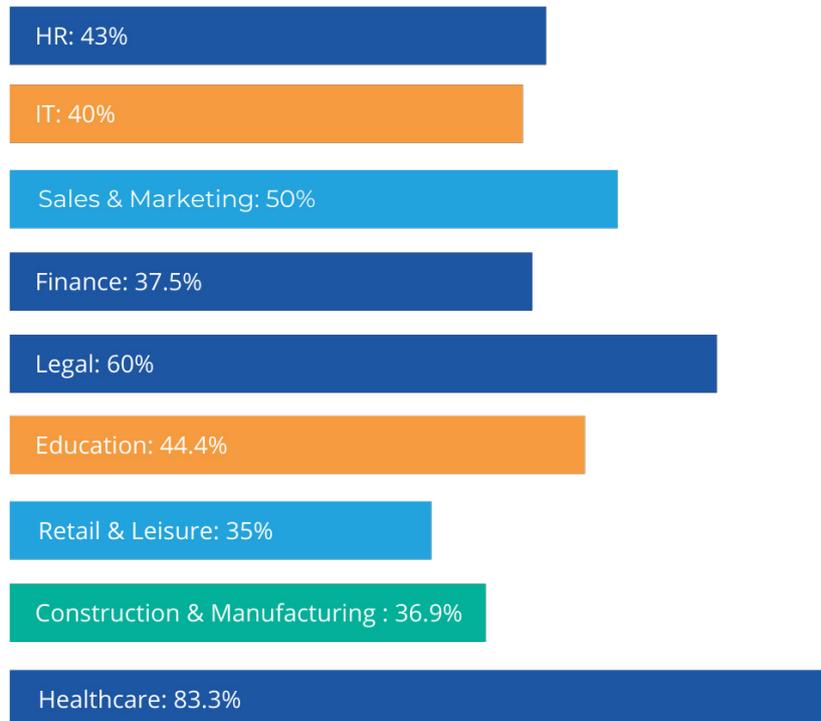
Team Culture



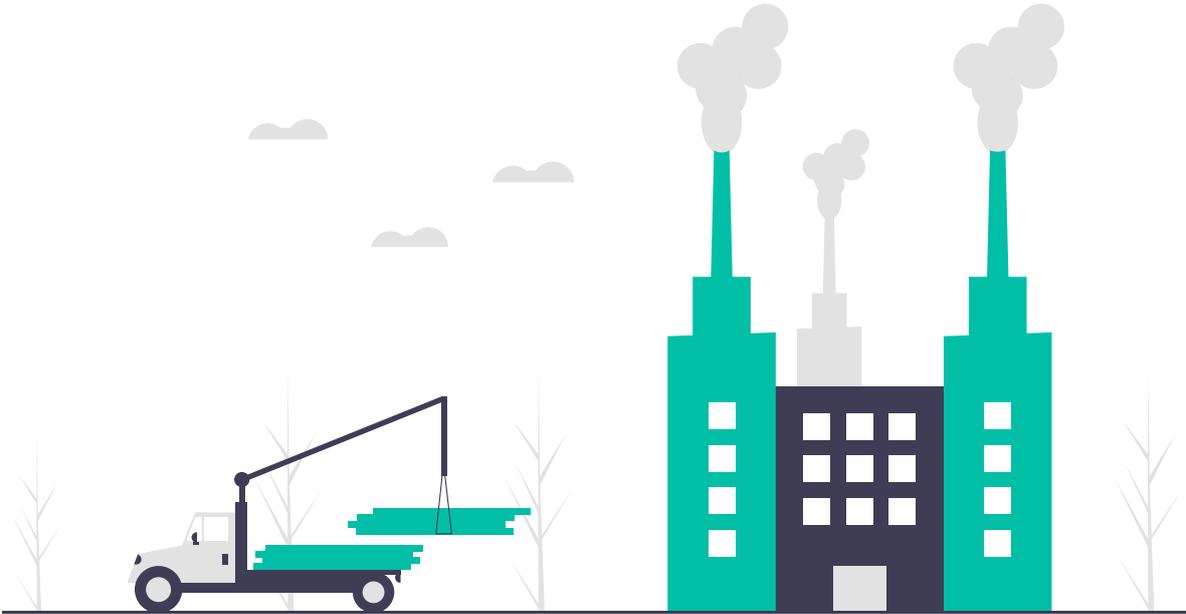
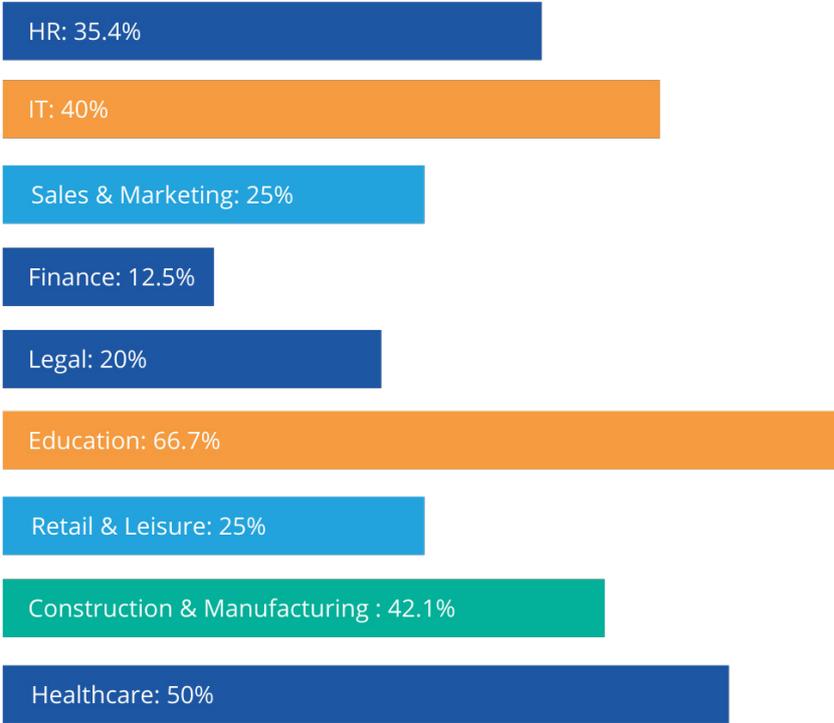
Employee Disengagement



Leadership Communication



Department Communication



Expert Opinion

with Suzanne Benoit

Bio:

Suzanne Benoit is a sociologist and HR Consultant, specialising in human behaviour in the workplace. Through Benoit Consulting she advises business leaders in developing healthy work environments.

Both managing well and spotting disengagement requires observation and communication. This was true pre-pandemic and is even more important now.

Every manager/employee interaction should include check-ins . Check-ins themselves should factor in how the employee is doing with their work, barriers, frustrations, alongside wins and feeling proud of their results.

In addition, a check-in for feelings about the company and their work is essential. Do they feel heard?

Most important for a successful communication system is for leadership to hear from and listen to employees about their concerns and needs relative to their work.

Employee communication platforms are a helpful tool to foster these conversations.

The number and design of communication applications have flourished since the pandemic began.

There is more functionality, more investment, but many have basic features as free add-ons to software already owned.

This might include newsletters, intranets, group video chats with the CEO.

There is a need for opportunities for employees to see and hear what's going on from the company out to teams, but also among teams and employees themselves.

Suzanne Benoit



Human Behaviour & Social Dynamics Expert



Both managing well and spotting disengagement requires observation and communication. This was true pre-pandemic and is even more important now.”

“There is a need for opportunities for employees to see and hear what’s going on from the company out to teams, but also among teams and employees themselves. ”

- Suzanne Benoit, Human Behaviour & Social Dynamics Expert

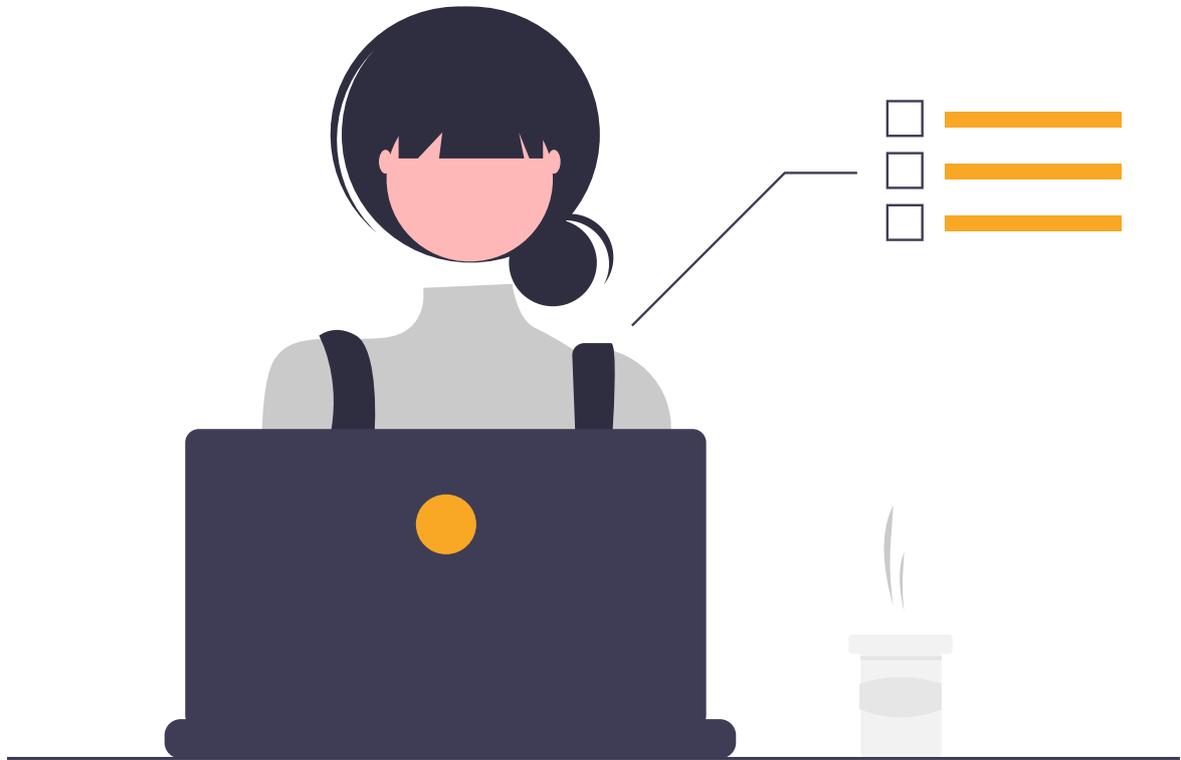
How Do We Want To Work?

Time to rethink the norm?

It's not just remote working that has become part of the agenda in the future of working. There are also debates around the conventional working week and whether it is fit for purpose in modern life. Afterall, the five-day week has been untouched for over a century.

Companies across the globe are trialling four-day weeks and shorter working days to assess the impact on productivity, work life balance among countless other aspects.

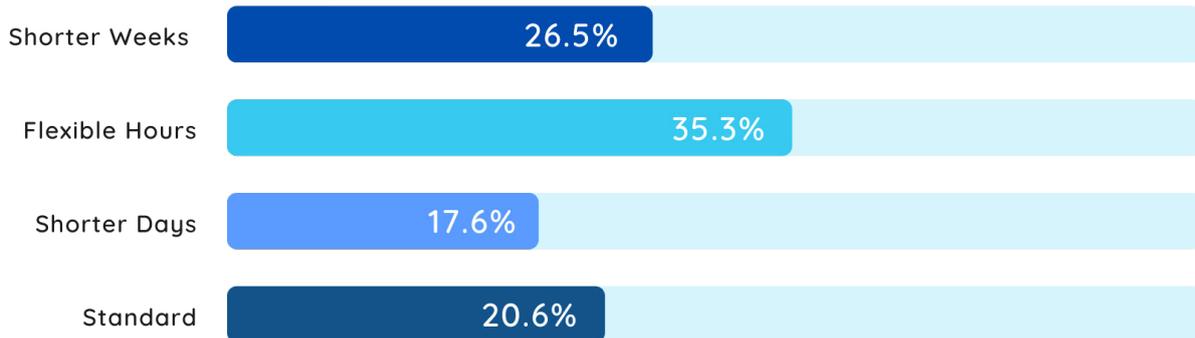
In this section we look at the views of leaders and employees on this subject and how they match up or differ. We will also assess the results of Oak Engage's experiment where employees compared three different working patterns.



We asked employees:

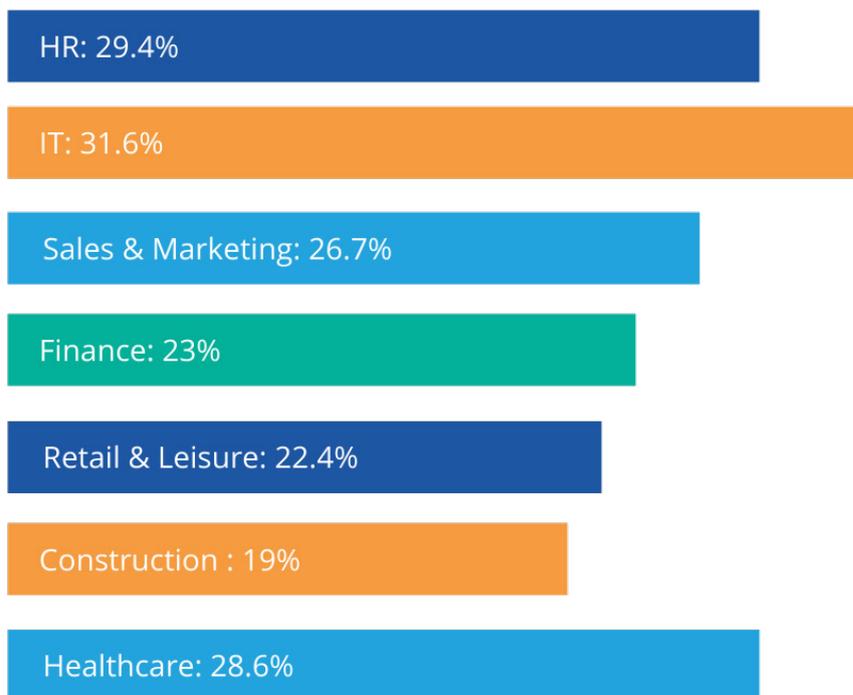
'What type of working pattern would you most like your business to adopt?'

*Flexible Hours= 35 hours per week any times
*Shorter Days= Less than 7 hours per day
*Standard= 35 hours over 5 days & set times
*Shorter Weeks= Less than 5 days a week

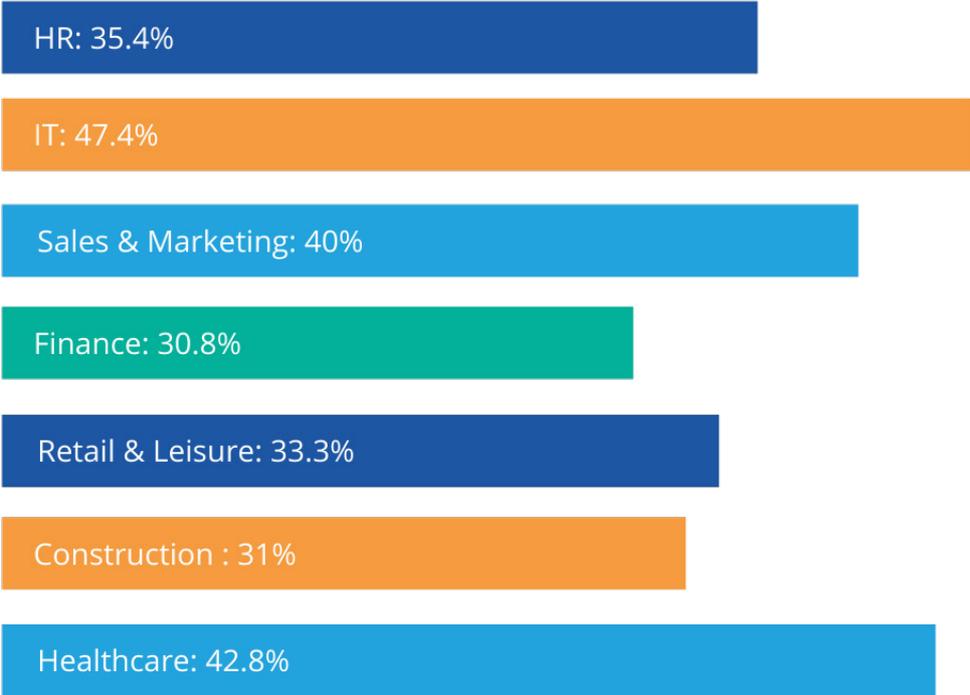


How does YOUR industry feel?

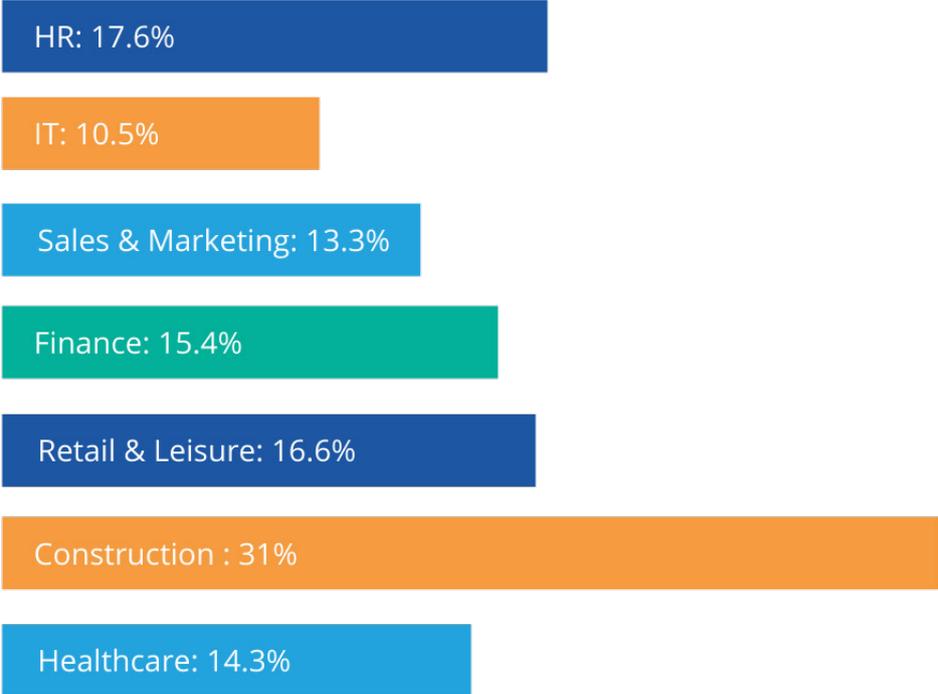
Shorter Weeks



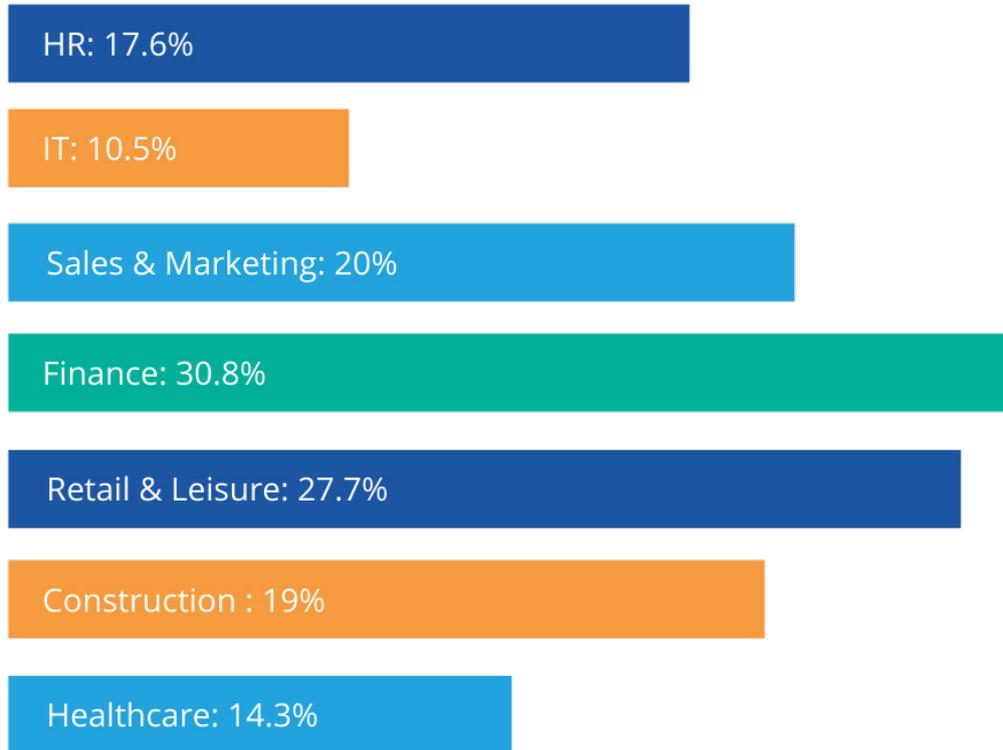
Flexible Hours



Shorter Days



● Standard



33% of employees said flexible working hours were important when looking for a new role.

Statistics by Industry



Case Study:

Oak Working Week Experiment

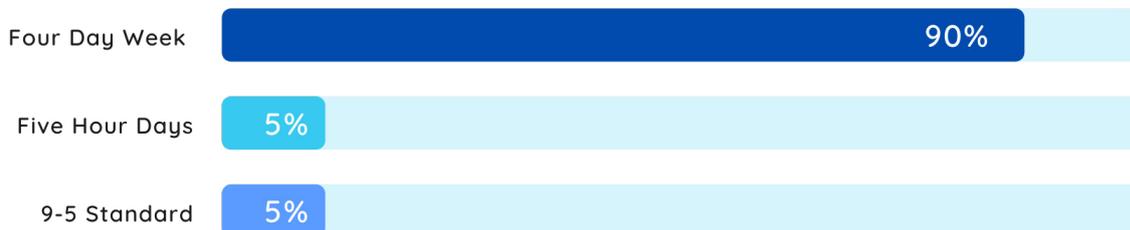
In October & November 2021, Oak's Sales & Marketing teams took part in an experiment with the aim of measuring productivity and wellbeing in a shorter working week.

The experiment was conducted during a period of remote working and tested by a small section of the company over a short period of time.

On alternative weeks each employee would work for four full days and then five six-hour days before recording a survey of the trial.

When asked their preferred working pattern in the experiment, 90% opted for the four-day week.

Preferred Working Pattern



Why?

When asked their opinion on the favoured option, this is what employees said:

- "The four-day week is the answer to relieving burnout"
- "The extra day can help revitalise, not force a choice between recharging and socialising."
- " You have to prioritise and only have meetings when absolutely necessary."
- "A two day weekend is starting to feel archaic. In the future a three day weekend will become a norm and your work/life is balanced."

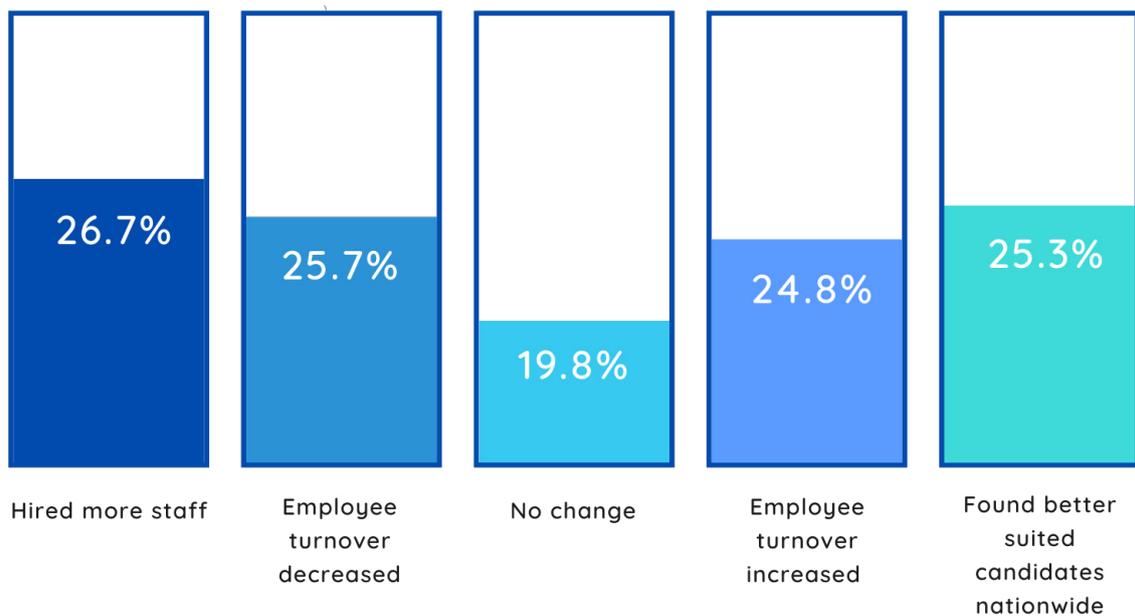
Retaining Talent in 2022

Navigating 'The Great Resignation'

'The Great Resignation'. If you haven't heard this term already, it is born from the shifting of dynamic in the job market with the increase of remote opportunities. Not bounded by geography, employees can cast their net further. They no longer feel obliged to stay in a role they aren't satisfied with when they feel they can have their wishes fulfilled in a role previously unattainable.

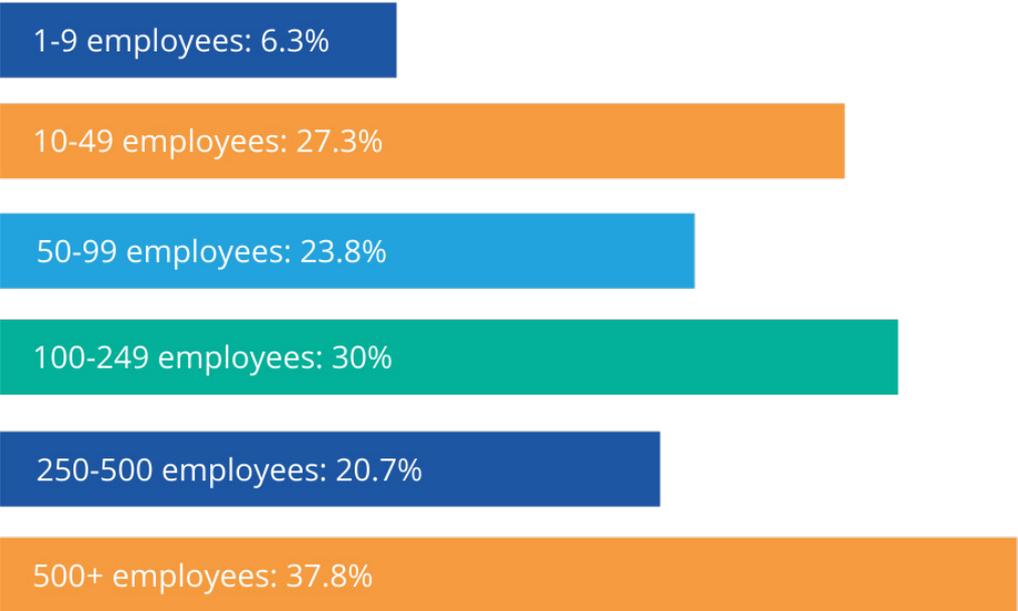
As a result of this, some businesses have struggled to retain and recruit talent, whereas others are reaping the benefits. But how has this impacted the people turnover of businesses and what are the main reasons for employees leaving at the moment? In this section we tackle both issues.

What has the impact of employee turnover had in the past 18 months?

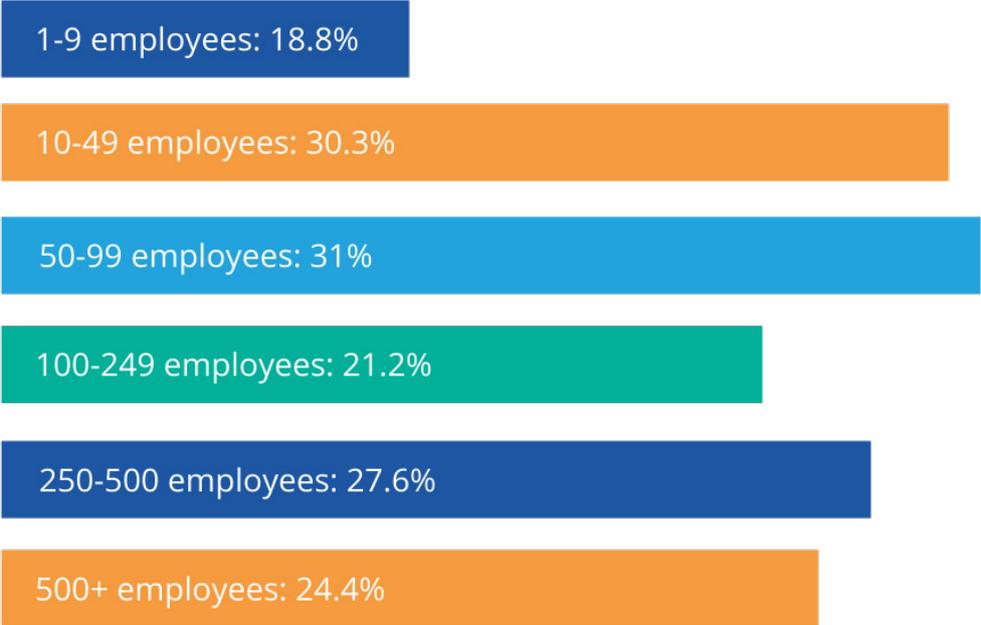


Which businesses benefited & which have suffered?

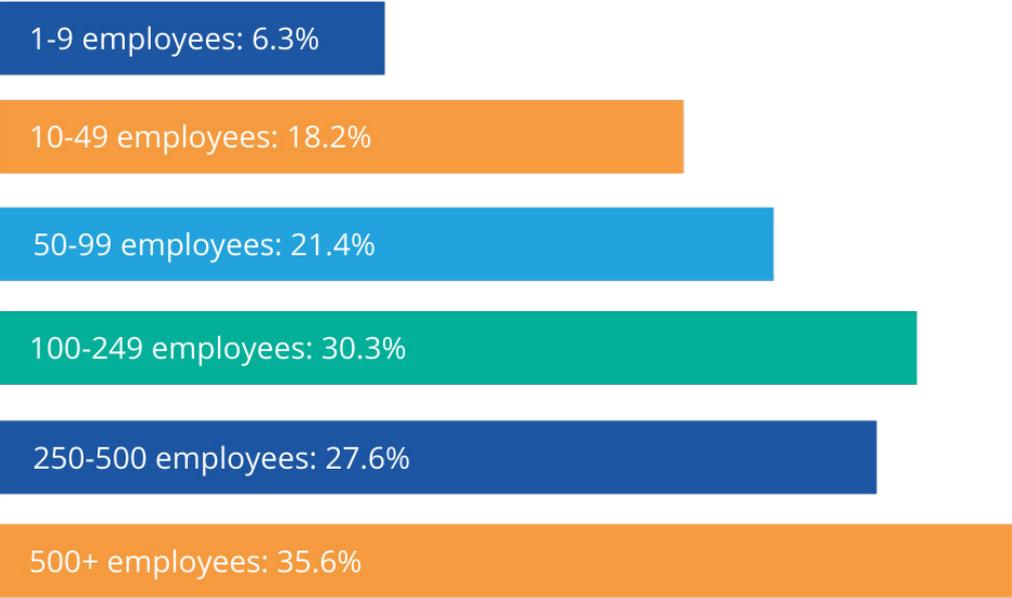
Hired more staff



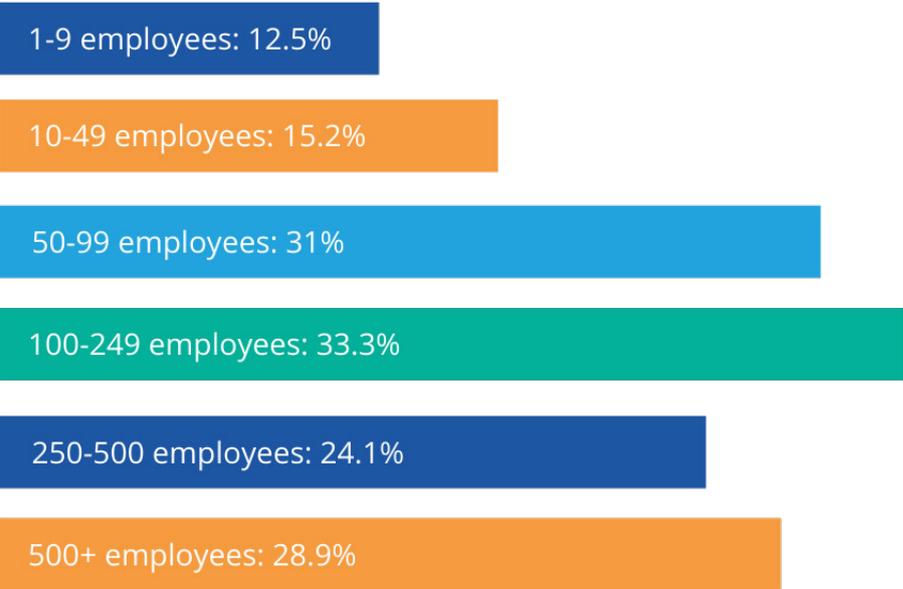
Employee turnover decreased



Employee turnover increased

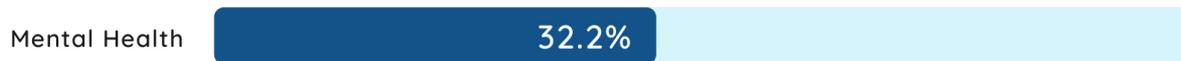


Found better suited candidates

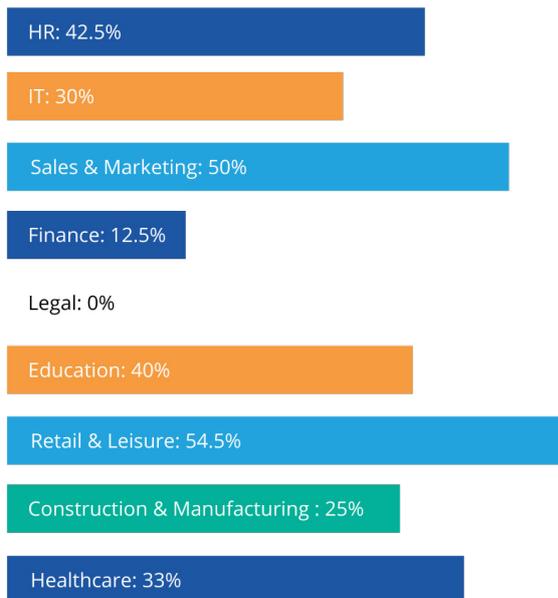


We asked leaders:

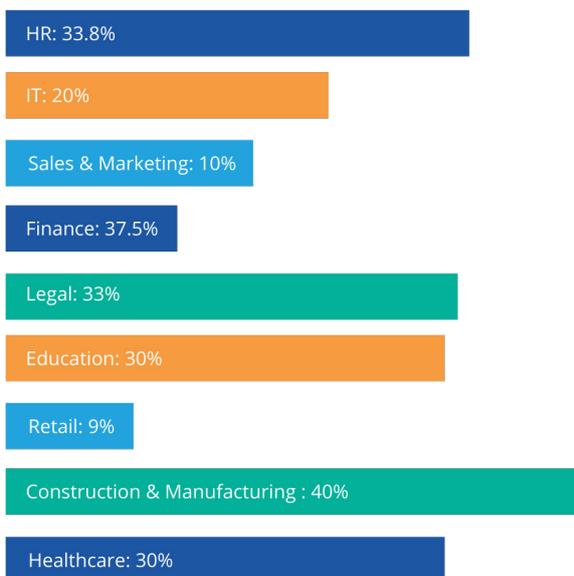
'Which of the following have contributed to people leaving the business?'

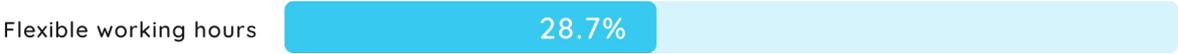


Mental Health by Industry

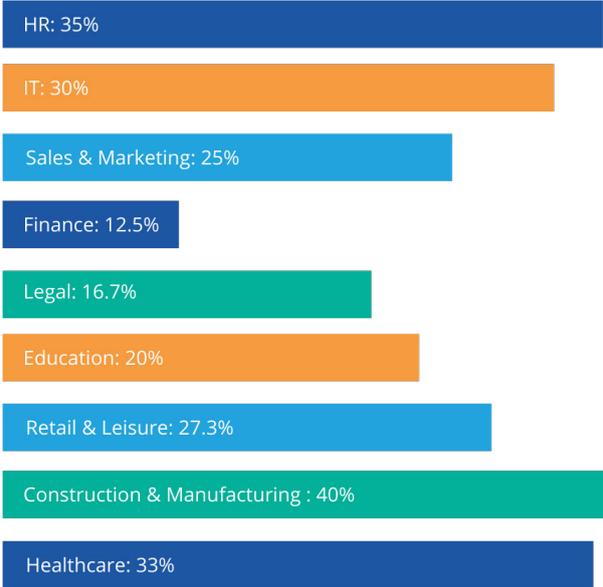


Salary by Industry

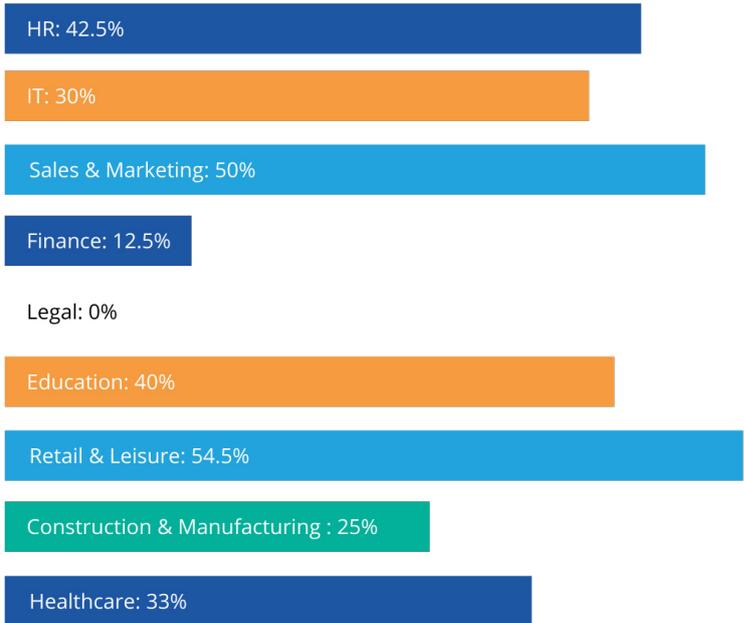




Flexible Working Hours by Industry

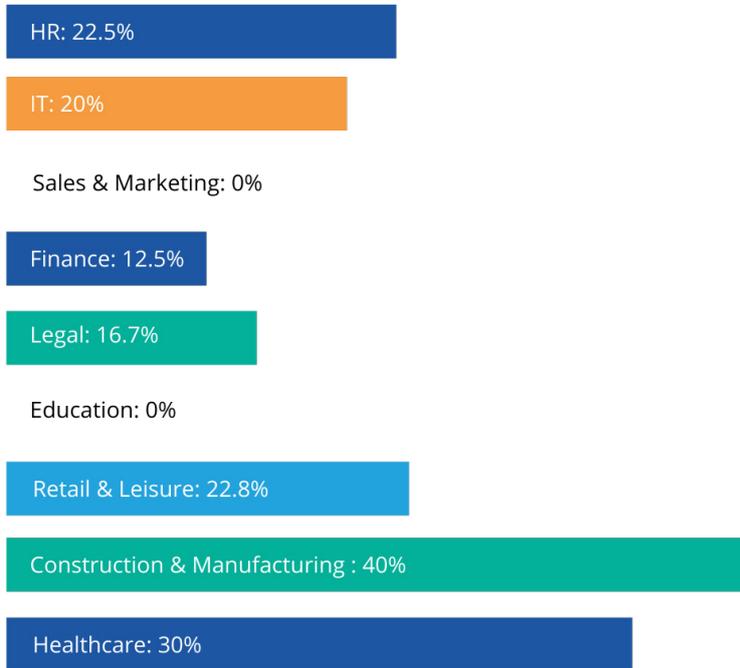


Disengagement by Industry

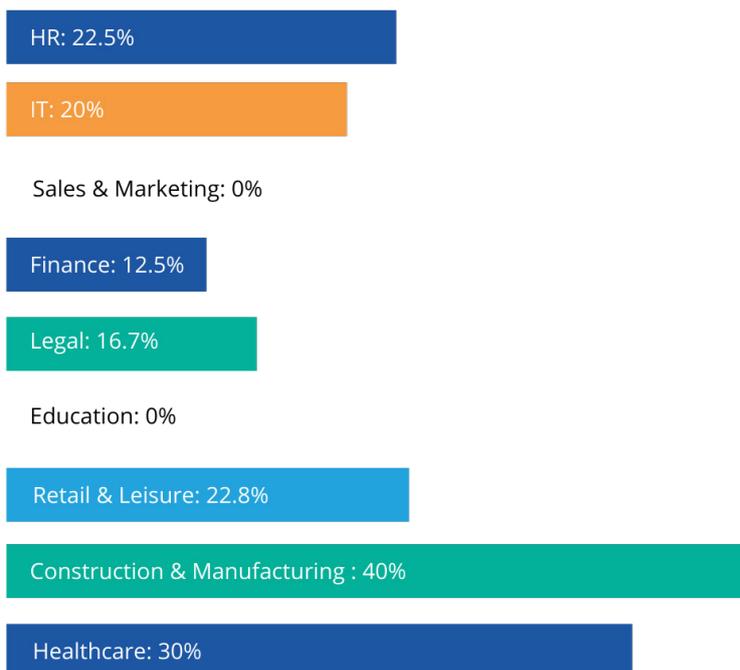




Company Culture by Industry



Remote Working by Industry



Expert Opinion

with Aoife O'Brien

Bio:

Aoife O'Brien has consulted businesses on employee wellbeing and retention for several years through her business, Happier at Work. Her podcast was runner-up in the 2021 Podcast of the Year award by Digital Women.

Retention starts with hiring. Hiring the right employees is crucial to begin with. Reiterate the values of the organisation and remind people that they belong there.

Also share and share again the purpose of the organisation. Ask yourself 'why are we here?' If you don't know the answer, it's time to do some digging!

The pandemic has given us the opportunity to review what is important in our lives, and consider how we spend our time versus how we would like to spend our time. We are asking 'is this how I want my life to be?'

People are looking to work in organisations that are doing good in the world, with a clear purpose. Employees are also seeking out a greater deal of flexibility in their work – to be able to spend more time doing the things they enjoy.

The biggest challenge has been The Great Resignation, and the fact that it has become a candidates' market. If candidates aren't finding fulfilment they are looking elsewhere. This makes retention especially difficult.

Similarly, a lot of the organisations I have worked with have found it difficult to find people during the last 12 months.

Companies that are offering some sort of remote working or hybrid working option are faring the best in this difficult situation – this will be the future of office-based work.

Aoife O'Brien



Employee Engagement, Retention Expert & Podcast Host



Companies that are offering some sort of remote working or hybrid working option are faring the best in this difficult situation - this will be the future of office-based work.”

- Aoife O'Brien, Employee Engagement & Retention Expert and Podcast Host

Mental Health at Work

Overworked, Overstressed & Isolated?

Mental health has rightly become a more prominent and frank discussion when it comes to our work life.

However, there seems to be polarised views on work/life balance and mental health in the workplace during the pandemic. Some have been able to find more time for themselves and their families with increased remote working, whilst others may feel that the separation of work and home life has become clouded. Others, like key workers, front line staff and those unable to work from home, may also feel that no progress has been made.

A recent law change in Portugal made it illegal for remote workers to be contacted after hours, which brought another debate to the fore of overworking staff, often for no extra pay.

There is also the issue of isolation and loneliness in the absence of a work social life. In this section we look at the issues relating to mental health and modern working.





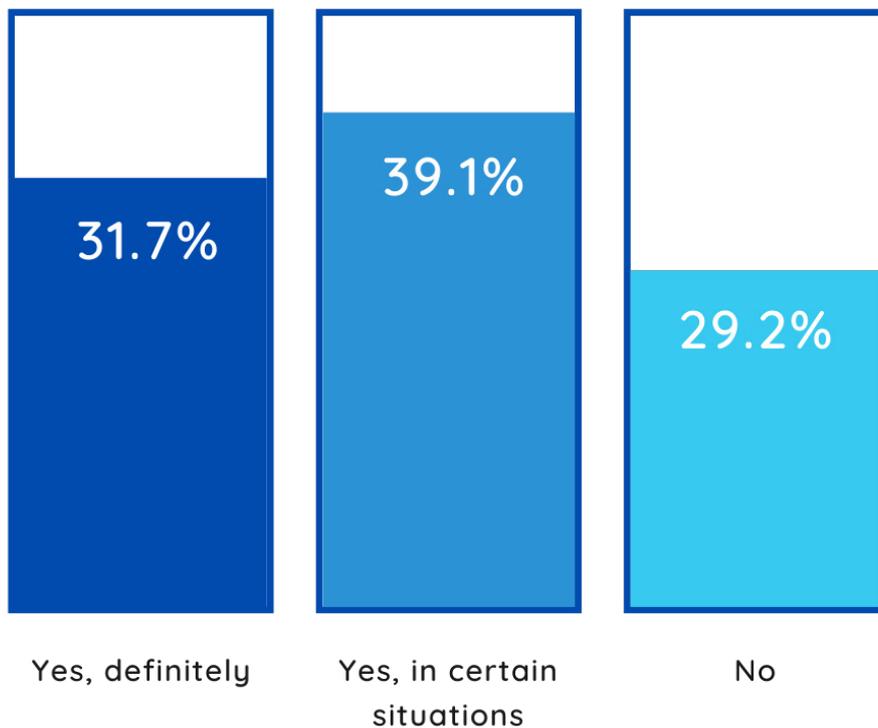
53% of workers ages 16-24 said working from home had dramatically affected their mental health.

Employees said the top 3 challenges of working from home were:

1. Work life balance (28%)
2. Loneliness (24%)
3. Isolation (24%)

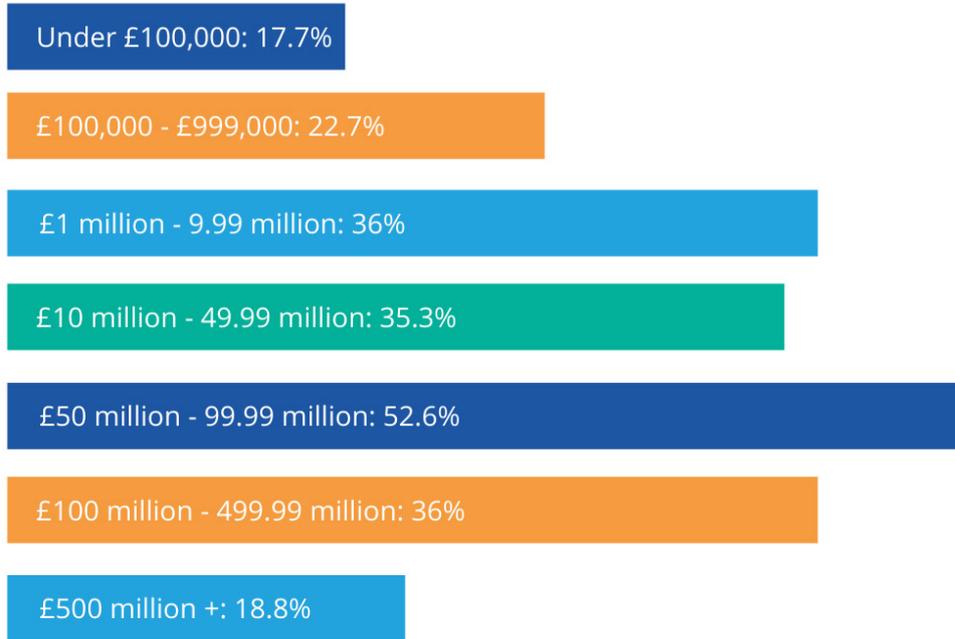
We asked leaders:

'Should remote workers be available after official hours?'

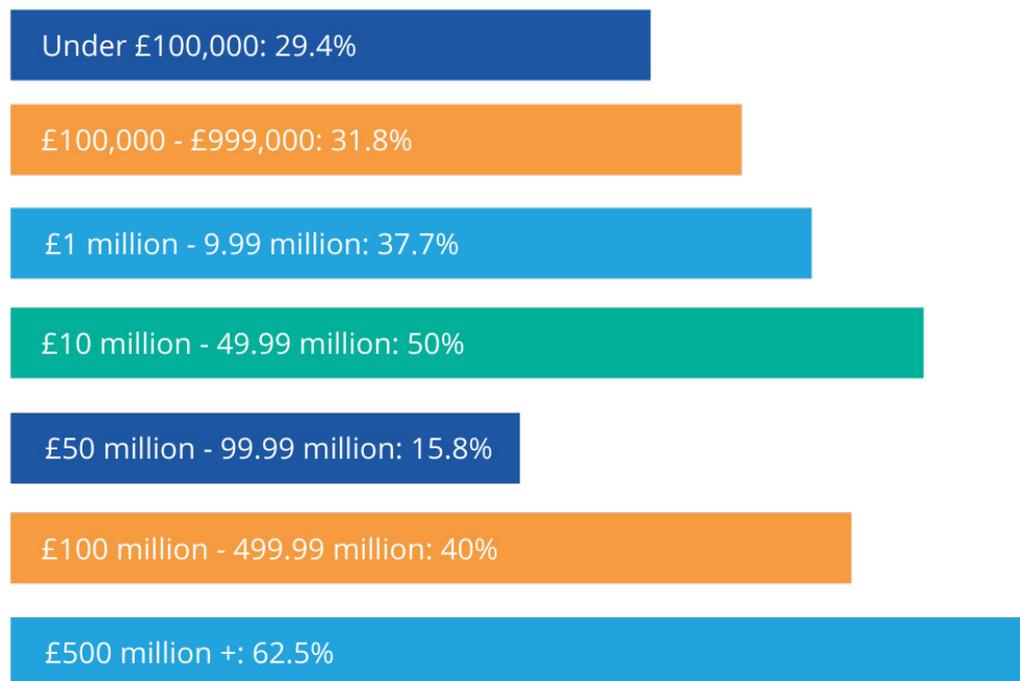


By Annual Company Turnover

● Yes, definitely

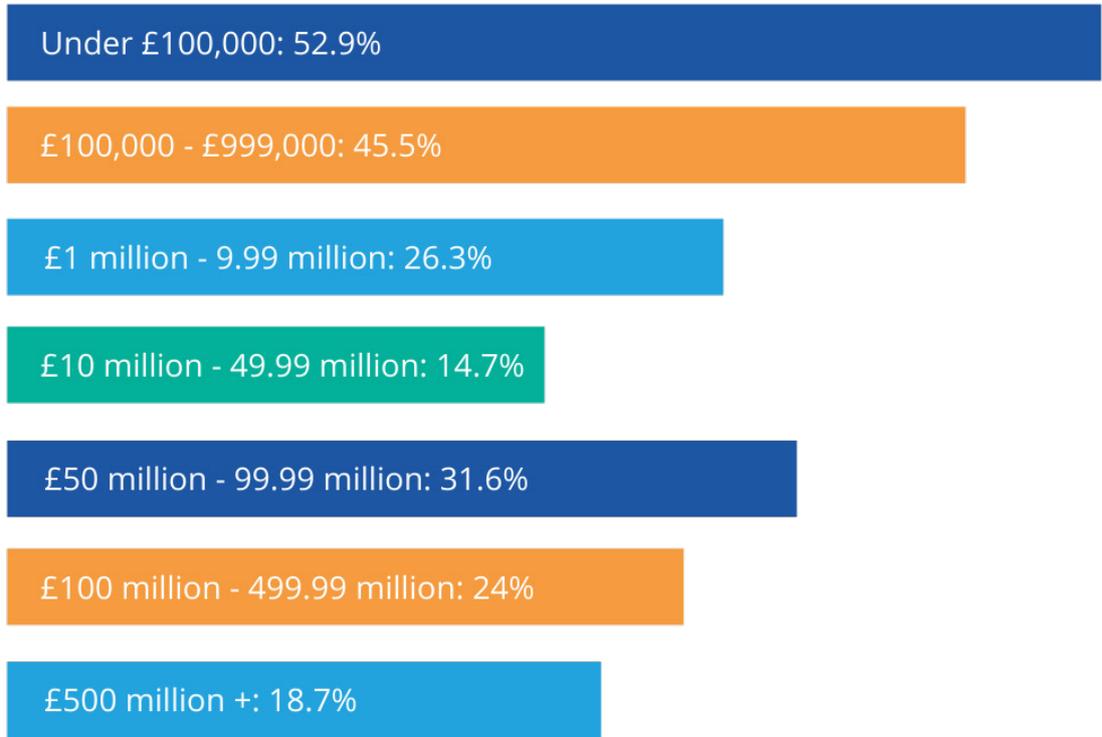


● Yes, in certain situations





No



Expert Opinion

with Mario Weick

Bio:

Mario Weick is a Professor of Quantitative Social Psychology at Durham University, specialising in social and organisational psychology. He has delivered research into employee mental health across several different industries.

I think the future of working will be more connected. Lines between the physical and the virtual world will become more blurred with new communication technology. I also think the future of work will be a place where people are more content and have a better work/life balance. In order to attract tomorrow's talents, organisations will have to make sure the work they offer is purposeful and advances the collective good.

It's difficult to separate the effects of working from home and the effects of the pandemic. The latter has of course created a lot of anxiety and distress. There is a lot of variation. In some professions such as teaching, working from home has been associated with an exponential increase in workload. People with caring responsibilities have also been hit hard. However, data that captures economic outputs suggest that the shift to working from home has been remarkably successful.

Work engagement is important. It is a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is associated with positive mental health outcomes and work satisfaction. Engaged employees are less likely to suffer from burnout, and they benefit from better relationships inside and outside work when compared to employees who are not engaged.

There is also evidence to suggest that increasing workers' choice can lead to positive mental health outcomes. However, for this to translate into higher productivity, employees also need to have the right tools that allow them to be productive when working from home.

Mario Weick



Professor of Quantitative Social Psychology



Engaged employees are less likely to suffer burnout and they benefit from better relationships inside and outside of work.”

- Mario Weick, Professor of Quantitative Social Psychology at Durham University

Recommendations - What Next?

Some of the issues highlighted in this report may knowingly be affecting you or may have caused you to take a different perspective. Maybe you're ahead of the curve on these issues! Regardless, we hope you have taken value from the Future of Working report.

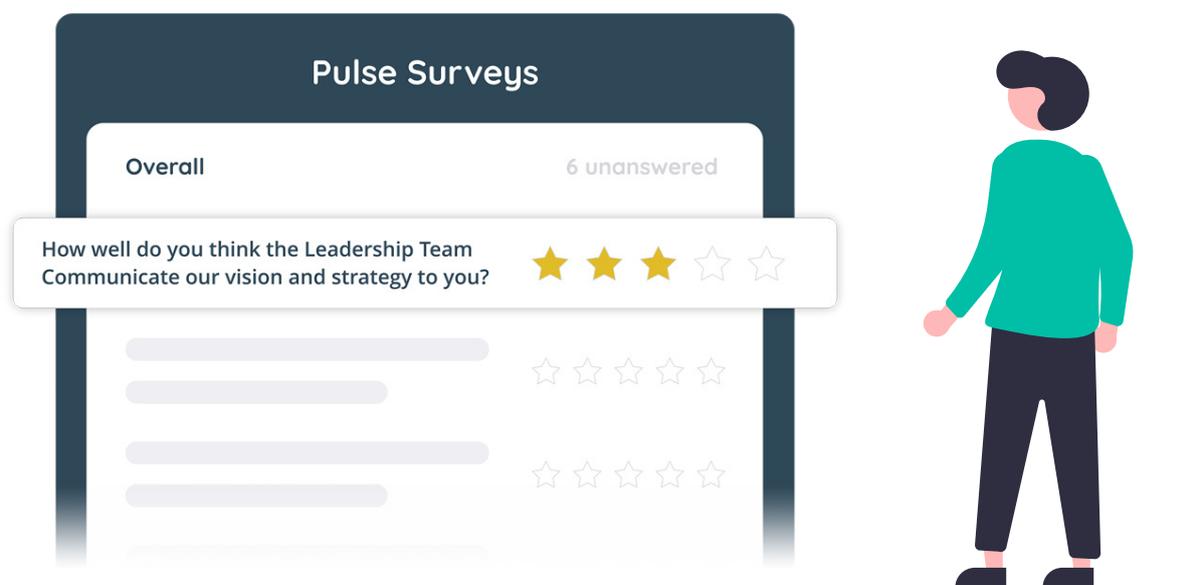
The industry experts who have contributed to this report have given sound and thoughtful advice on the topics discussed. There are additional actions you can take to improve communication and engagement with your employees, which will go some way to future-proofing your business.

In this section we will give you practical tips on how Oak can be the solution to help solve these problems.

Employee Feedback Through Pulse Surveys

This report shows the power of data and how you can make it more digestible. With Oak you can gather feedback through [Pulse Surveys and polls](#) to visualise data and take informed action on that basis.

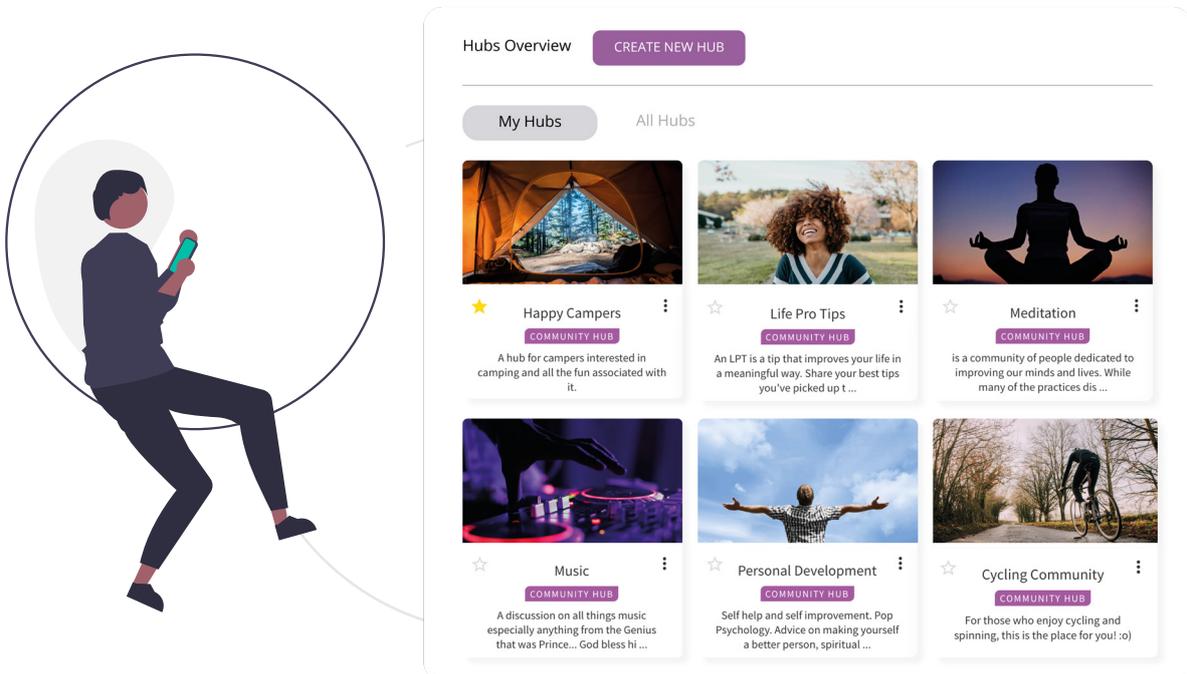
If you're asking the right people the right questions, more often than not you will make the right decisions on the back of it and understand your employees better!



Build Relationships with Community Hubs

The report found that isolation has been a real issue for remote workers. You must make spaces for employees to connect with each other, regardless of their location.

It is important to create virtual spaces where employees can connect. Through [community hubs](#) and instant messaging, Oak provides the perfect platform to bring the social aspect of work into the digital workplace.



Improve Connectivity

A lack of connectivity is an issue for everyone from deskless to remote workers.

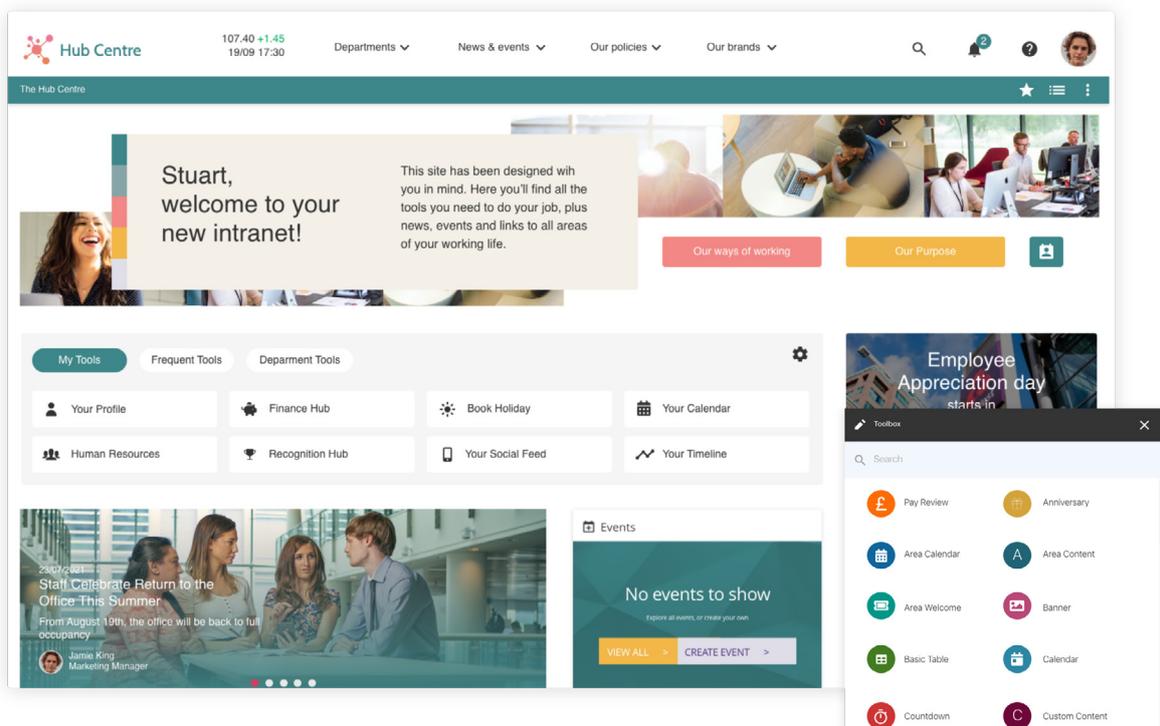
[Oak's fully-connected mobile app](#) will help you inform and connect with deskless workers and those on the go like never before. Push notifications also enable instant and targeted updates!

Oak's adaptive intelligence feature also helps employees receive only relevant content, receiving personalised communications to keep them informed and engaged.

Bespoke, Branded Intranet

With Oak, your [intranet is branded](#) to your specifications from log-in portals to homepages and social content feeds. You can create a sense of community and culture in a virtual space by showcasing your brand and values.

[The 'drag and drop'](#) feature means you can easily customise page layouts to only show the relevant applets, without the need to involve IT!



Centralise Information & Knowledge

Good communication and engagement stems from access to information. [Oak's content management platform](#) integrates seamlessly with third party applications so information is all in one place. Our federated search helps employees to source what they need instantly, through keyword searches and filters.

When employees have centralised and easy access they can view content and share information wherever they are.

About Oak Engage

Oak Engage is the all-in-one intranet software for the workforce of today. We are cloud based, designed to keep your teams engaged, connected and productive, no matter where they are.

Our team of experts draw upon years of experience within the internal communications and intranet software industries to help customers overcome engagement obstacles and achieve their business goals.

We believe that for any successful business maintaining employee communication and business connectivity is key. This is why our platform gives your people the tools to do so. With Oak, your people can stay connected and engaged at any time, from anywhere, on any device.

As a leading intranet provider, we work with some of the most successful businesses from around the world to help them increase engagement, improve collaboration and transform internal communications.

If you'd like to find out more about us, or how we can help you improve your people engagement, please [get in touch](#).

[Find out more >](#)

