

DELIVERING DESIGN AT A DISTANCE

RESILIENCE & RITUAL

RESOURCING MINDSETS FOR REMOTE WORKING



BY ALEX O'TOOLE &
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The COVID-19 pandemic didn't start out as an emotional health crisis, but it quickly morphed into one.

Behind these disturbing trends a quieter productivity crisis is gathering momentum. Businesses across the globe are facing a rise in overstretched, exhausted staff, whilst hardworking professional freelancers, well used to the relentless pace and pressure of self-employment and the working from home set up, report increasingly high stress levels with many feeling that they are unable to take any time off because of worries about future periods of little or no work due to the Coronavirus.

Historically, the weekend acted as a backstop for most of the population in work or education, but during the deep dark days of lockdown life, the weekend lost its edge. Very quickly, time seemed to slow down and life became a never-ending Monday morning, which started with the buzz of an email at 6.30am and ended with a vague realisation that you were still in your pyjamas somewhere in the early hours of the next day, just as the parents juggling home-

school, work and childcare were logging online. Now, with the reopening of schools, non-essential shops and outdoor hospitality, the UK's slow release from lockdown welcomes back the weekend and signals a return to getting fully dressed each morning and the potential of a working day which has some semblance of a beginning and an end.

Yet, with so much disruption to our working lives over the last twelve months, people's expectations around work, how they fulfil their role, and how they reconcile work and domestic responsibilities may have changed dramatically. A return to the traditional working day and working practices might not be as simple as getting back in the saddle when you're working remotely.

Without exception, all of the people we spoke to in preparing for the Delivering Design At A Distance series talked about the importance of protecting and cultivating mindsets as a key aspect of remote working. It's a moot point. As creative facilitators, often locked in a chain of Zoom calls and workshops with colleagues and clients, off record conversations between Jonathan and I often revert to dissecting what all this active listening and information consumption is doing to our brains. Both of us aggrieved that there never seems to enough time between video conference calls to process the information the from the first call before needing to download information from the next. We know so many colleagues who feel the same. In this digital age, where we're working minute to minute, 'infobesity' is a genuine concern. Business media platforms regularly report research findings that the over-consumption of information is making us unhappy, is bad

for our health, and hurts our productivity. What, then, can be done to alleviate the cognitive load and resource resilience so that people remain productive and engaged as we ease out of lockdown and enter a new hybrid landscape of work?

PRODUCTIVITY

In the early days of the pandemic, productivity and efficiency levels plummeted as we got to grips with living, working, and schooling from home. The load on everybody skyrocketed. Working days that started mid-afternoon and continued on well into the evening hours became the norm for many. Even so, in July 2020, the National Bureau of Economic Research estimated that working from home meant the average person's working day was only 48.5 minutes longer than it was before the pandemic based on their analysis of a sample of 3.1 million workers across North America, Europe and the Middle East. The researchers compared employee behaviour over two eight-week periods before and after Covid-19 lockdowns. Looking at email and meeting meta-data, the group also calculated the number of meetings increased about 13% and that people sent an average of 1.4 more emails per day to their colleagues.

These statistics feel much lower than the anecdotal reality of so many working remotely from home because under the conditions placed upon us by governments as part of their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this way of working has felt unsustainable. It *feels* unsustainable. And yet.

Twelve months in, a number of studies, including one by Mercer, a HR and workplace benefits consulting firm, are pronouncing productivity levels of remote workers are the

same or higher than they were before the pandemic. 94% of the 800 employers surveyed said productivity was the same as or higher than before the pandemic, even with their employees working remotely. Clearly the pressure to maintain performance has inspired workforces around the world to rise to the challenges brought by COVID-19, but at what cost? And is any of it bearable in the long term?

LONG TERM EFFECTS

For those new to working remotely from home, the challenge of maintaining boundaries between work and non-work, getting, and staying organized whilst working from home and managing the heightened emotions associated with such work; can be overwhelming, particularly if you are juggling with the demands of young children, or if you live alone and may also be coping with loneliness. In addition, virtual sightlines - made possible by video-conferencing and networked devices being increasingly used by organisations in an effort to keep tabs on their remote workforce - can intensify individual stress through continuous monitoring and feelings of privacy invasion. The effects of virtual working can be felt at a team level too. Whilst navigating traditional teamwork problems, such as conflict and coordination, virtual teams can find that issues escalate quickly, which researchers say is because of the lack of rich communication that is only available to face-to-face teams.

Several studies published over the last few months have highlighted how widespread home working during the coronavirus pandemic has changed the way office



workers interact with each other and schedule their day.

A recent survey of remote workers undertaken by Miro, reported that remote working had impacted positively on the majority of personal relationships and that spending more time at home appeared to have translated into new closeness with their live-in families. Yet the impact of remote working on working relationships, processes and working habits was less positive. Findings showed that disconnection from workplaces was actually challenging mental health, with over one third of respondents reporting that both their mental health and physical health had declined over the last twelve months of working from home. The survey also found that confidence levels amongst remote workers have plummeted, with over a third of respondents saying that remote work has made it difficult to share positive feedback with their teams.

Research from LinkedIn, undertaken by Glint, supports these findings, citing that businesses leaders are concerned about the long-term detrimental effect on company culture and are recognising the need to create new flexible working policies to satisfy the demands of their employees. At the start of the global pandemic, employees felt well supported working remotely, but as time has gone on, that sense of connectedness has gradually loosened, and employees now feel less invested in their colleagues and leaders. Keeping employees engaged and connected, finding new ways to nurture culture remotely, and looking after employee wellbeing is going to be crucial to building workforce resilience during this continued period of uncertainty.

ALLEVIATING THE COGNITIVE LOAD

“People are still struggling with managing and navigating this whole situation,” says Jhumkee Lyengar, a human centred design consultant based in Pune, India. “By virtue of being a small enterprise, you're always stretched. In times like this, it's a struggle, just staying alive. But we really need to think differently in this world, be more purpose driven and I wonder if it will be the larger organizations or the smaller organisations that will take on this need to equip the future workforce with what they need in order to do this, and it will be interesting to see how they will use technology to feed into that development.”

Philips Healthcare were quick to rethink their routines and to instigate changes to the way they worked and managed their workforce to help support people working remotely and in isolation in their role within distributed teams across the world.

“In order to work productively, we've had to understand the lives of colleagues across the globe in ways we didn't before,” said Richard Eisermann, Head of Design for Philips Connected Care. “People are no longer spending the time to get to work, to commute into work and before Covid they would spend that that time either catching up on emails, or maybe having a phone call or two. Now that time is now spent in meetings, before you go into a full day of more meetings, so the only time that you have left over to do your actual work is late in the afternoon or into the evenings. So, all of a sudden, meetings that started at 7:00 am became the norm. Spending your entire day, and then some, on virtual calls is exhausting, and the cognitive load that it takes to do that all

day is significant and that impacts on efficiency. So, we started looking at new ways of working and changes to working day - mornings for calls and afternoons for work - because we got to a point where it just wasn't sustainable. We've also looked at how we could adapt our meeting culture to the situation we're in and have tried to design meetings to be more effective and less onerous.

At the same time, we've really considered how we provide ample grace to people who have kids, to people who have pets, to people who have any number of interruptions that happen in their working day thanks to life. The psychological toll has been incredible. But the flip side to giving people this grace is the vulnerability of people who are receiving the grace because they are not as capable as they were before the pandemic. They are under considerably more pressure and some have been simply overwhelmed with the whole situation. So, you've got people within an organization, caring about people in a different way, because you can see their lives beyond their roles. You can also see how much it has impacted on efficiency, and that affects the decisions that you make and, in turn, the physical products and services that you're designing. But you can also see how this new perspective enhances these things too. So COVID has engendered a lot of comradery - all hands-on deck, we're in this together."

INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCES

Across the UK and beyond, the BBC is helping to set a precedent for a human-centred approach to remote working.

"Prioritizing health and wellbeing rose to the top of the agenda very quickly at the beginning of

the pandemic," [Ellie Runcie](#), Chief Design Officer, told us. "In fact, the first chapter of our long-distance creativity playbook, is not how to use Zoom, or how to use MURAL, it's how health and wellbeing is critical to long distance creativity because we're all living at work at the moment. It's been a really big thing for the BBC. Health and wellbeing, and diversity and inclusion, are integral to our priorities as an organisation, because you can't be happy, and therefore productive, in an unhealthy environment and you can't innovate if you don't have difference.

Throughout the last year it has become clear how human or social capital can be eroded if we don't invest time with people and ultimately, have face to face contact. As we reframe and redefine how we want to work as we emerge from the pandemic, it's a real moment for us to think about how we create inclusive experiences that enable everyone to thrive no matter where they are working."

Steered by an accessibility team and a network of two hundred accessibility champions, all experts in products across the BBC, work with the purpose of ensuring that from TV to radio to digital the BBC has accessibility principles baked into the user experience. As pioneers in the space of accessible design for digital content for consumers with the creation of BBC iPlayer, which was the first video on demand streaming service and the first and only accessible video on demand streaming service for a long time, the organisation has been redoubling its focus on to establishing equivalent capabilities for staff.

"Whether we are designing experiences for our customers or co-workers, there should be the same focus on ensuring that everyone is empowered and enabled to do the best work of their careers," continued Runcie. "We have ambitious targets to build on our diverse workforce, however it's the inclusivity of the environment we create in that will be fundamental to our success - which experience design is central to."

RESOURCING RESILIENCE

In the cultural sector, [Ruth Melville](#), an evaluation specialist and strategic development practitioner working with cultural organisations in Lancashire, believes more organisations need to give more consideration to how organisational resilience is resourced.

*"Lots of funders have looked at how to resource the resilience of participants of cultural and creative projects, but I don't think there's been enough done on building resilience in the organisations delivering the work. What I have seen is that the organisations that have dealt best with the challenges brought by the virus are the ones with the most shared leadership styles as opposed to a hierarchical leadership approach. Mark Robinson from *Thinking Practice* calls it a *Multiplying Leadership*, where the leader enables the leadership of the organisation to sit within the whole team so that decisions are made by the people most qualified or best placed to decide about a particular issue, rather than all decisions being made by the leader. A multiplying leader will enable good decisions to be made."*

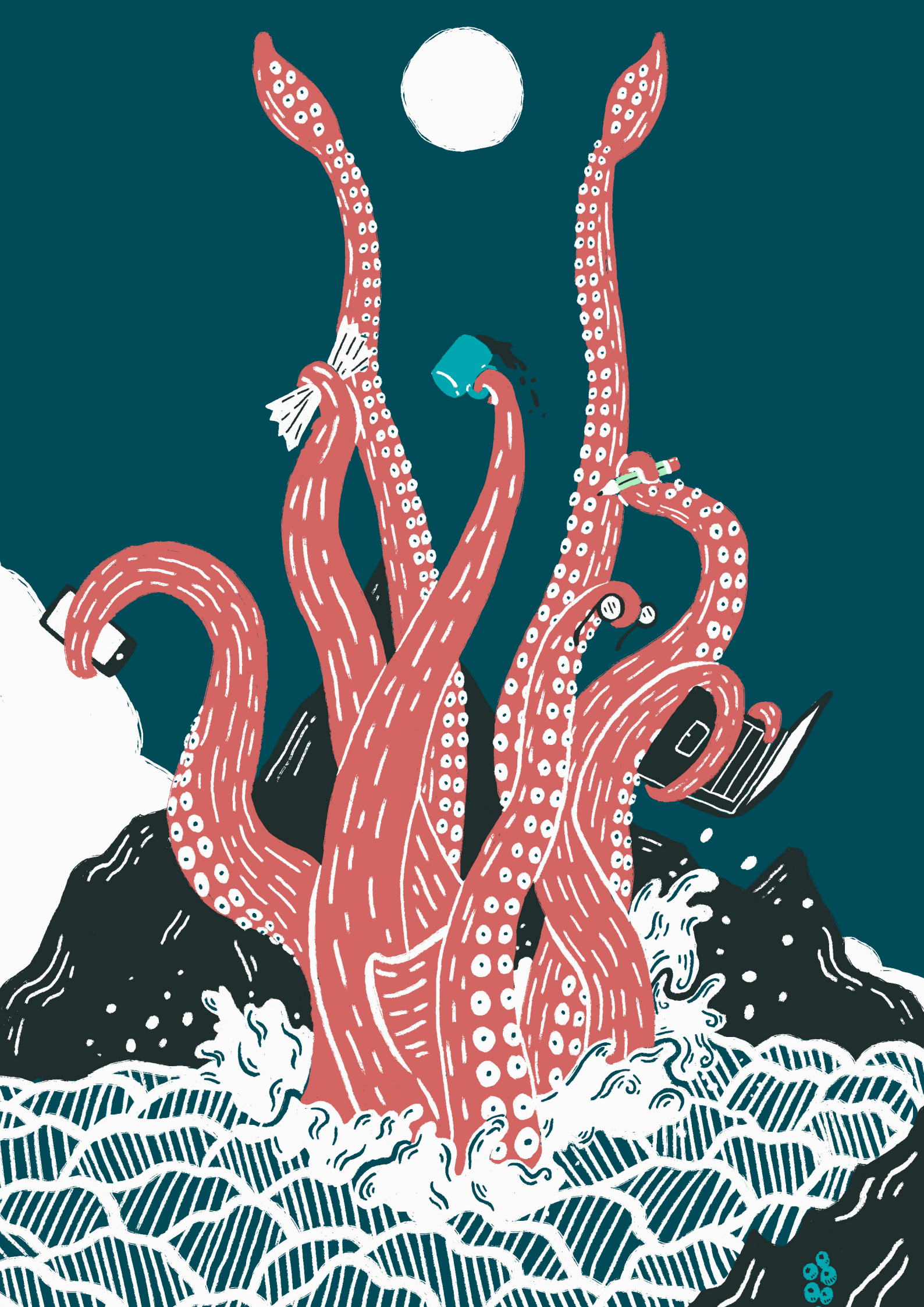
So, what does 'resourcing resilience' actually mean and how do we do it?

Practically speaking, 'resourcing resilience' means resourcing both the mindsets and skill sets of the workforce to help them adapt to the changes enforced by remote working on the structure and set up of their working day, and to cope with the increased pressure these changes place on individual and team performance, in order to maintain their effectiveness and productivity. There are a number of tools and techniques that can be put in place by organisations with remote teams, and by remote workers themselves, to support their transition from home to work mode without leaving the house and to help businesses adapt their working and cultural practices for remote delivery.

Pete Gordon, Principal Consultant at [Waracle](#), believes the [Tuckman Model](#) is key to understanding how to approach, improve and better support remote team working. Developed by American Bruce Tuckman in 1965, the Tuckman Model theory is an elegant and helpful explanation of team development and describes the progression of team behaviour in five key stages: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning.

"It's a good place to start with all of this team evolution stuff," said Gordon. "Every time you put teams together, they go through these stages. In fact, teams go through it multiple times - every time a new person or a new challenge is thrown into the mix."

When COVID-19 hit, people had to learn how to work remotely fast if they wanted to connect, collaborate, and commune with their co-workers. As the situation has continued, we have had to find ways of



connecting, collaborating, and communing with people who are new to us in order for projects to progress and our businesses to survive. The task of getting to grips with a new person, a new piece of software, or a new challenge at work and at home, has meant that those of us in teams, or involved in collaborative working arrangements, have had to reconfigure ourselves constantly. No wonder so many of us are feeling so unsettled. We're suffering from a case of too much 'storming' and not enough 'norming'. It's good to give it a name, but how do we resolve this?

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HABITS & RITUALS AS ANCHOR POINTS

Humans are intensely social beings. We need to feel connected, so retaining and revaluing the basics of human connection is essential. Instead of delivering sessions to the minute, taking time at the beginning and end of each online meeting to restore important touchpoints can impact on behaviour gaps and it's one of the easiest and most overlooked ways to create that connection, especially when staff are remote. Providing an opportunity to share a work or personal success story, finding out how they're feeling and what's going on in their lives that may affect or give context to their delivery at work, is a simple, but effective, temperature test. It's also good etiquette.

Another factor to ensuring individual and team motivation and productivity remains high is the

frequency of connection. Following the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the frequency of the BBC's all-hands meetings have become crucially important in keeping distributed team members connected to the organisation and to each other throughout the past year.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, we instigated these full team meetings weekly," said Runcie. "The purpose was to keep everyone informed on developments across the organisation as well as in our team. There was brilliant energy and drive, putting all sorts of initiatives in place to innovate our working experience. However, after several months this energy took a hit and we needed to do something different, to invest in the time to come together as a group, re-connect with our practice, share ideas and have some fun."

Teams across UX&D have all kinds of rituals to help them retain team connections and reinforce an inclusive environment. In one group we start by asking everyone how the weather is in their world. It's simply an opportunity to check in with each other and it can reinforce support if someone's day isn't going well."

Psychologists believe that rituals like those practiced by the BBC and others are powerful tools because they help create a shared sense of identity and trust. Rituals also help to prepare our brains to focus and perform. Undertaken with consistency, rituals enable us to slip into the same mental zone each time we do them. This helps us to become more mentally present and engaged, resulting in us becoming more focused and therefore more productive.

Good habits are equally important to creating team trust and alignment and to maintaining and increasing productivity. On a practical level, encouraging team members or meeting attendees not to multi – task during conference calls and limiting the use of mute whenever practical, can encourage more engagement and put the possibility of humour and shared laughter back on the table – a valuable tool for team bonding. According to a survey undertaken by MIRO, 57% of remote workers say they are more likely to multitask during virtual meetings than they were before the pandemic with 12 % admitting to being distracted by video content like YouTube, Netflix, or TikTok during virtual meetings.

Additionally, encouraging individuals to consider personal triggers for distraction and to look at what they can put in place to remove these triggers from their workspace can support better engagement and focus. Even though technology may be to blame for some of these distractions and slumps in productivity, there are a myriad of software products, plug-ins and extensions that can help us shut out distractions, be more present, and give our attention to the things that really matter.

It's also not uncommon for people to be distracted by seeing themselves on screen. A quarter of respondents to the MIRO survey said they spend between 20% and 50% of a video call looking at their own preview box rather than the people they're speaking with. Women were 64% more likely than men to say they look at themselves at least 50% of the time, which may be attributed to the differences in pressure that women may feel to appear a certain way in a professional setting — even if that setting is virtual.

There are a few quick fixes to the problem of

having to stare at yourself frequently. Guides to looking better on video calls abound. Zoom even has a “Touch Up My Appearance” feature in Video Settings, which the company says “can help smooth out the skin tone on your face, to present a more polished looking appearance.” If you want to hide yourself entirely without turning off your camera so that others can see you, but you don't have to stare at yourself - the closest you'll get to the experience of talking in person - Zoom, at least, can make that happen.

Back at Waracle, Pete Gordon believes it's about both recognising how both psychology and strategy play a part in supporting people to work effectively and efficiently from home.

“We created a team charter to help set the tone and that was really important. People are in their houses, so there's the psychology of being at work in the home, on top of the whole work-life balance thing. I have an office in my spare room and even though I'm at home in my spare room, I wear a shirt to work. That's just for my mental health to make sure I transition into work mode at the beginning of each day, and, more importantly, that I transition out of work mode at the end of each day, so that I'm not at 'work' when I'm in the rest of my house with my wife and child.”

The importance of ritual surfaces here again, but the psychological impact of dress-code goes much further than helping to delineate between mental modes. It affects productivity, performance, communication, and team relations too.

Interesting studies were done in the sixties



around the minimum it takes for people to feel that they have an assigned role within a team, which can have a real impact on individual and team performance. Individual connection to their assignment within a team is completely tied up in the psychology of what we wear and the meaning we subscribe to our chosen garments. Whilst things have moved on from the notion that when you dress down, you sit down, particularly in the UK where clothing choices are seen as an important form of self-expression, there is undeniable merit in the idea that the way you look directly affects the way you think, feel, and act.

Research supports this thinking. *“You cannot sustain a high dress code during a period of instability.”* said William McPherson, in an article for Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, whilst in an article for American magazine, Insight on the News, research psychologist, Jeffery L. Magee, said, *“continually relaxed dress leads to relaxed manners, relaxed morals and relaxed productivity” which “leads to a decrease in company loyalty and an increase in tardiness.”*

Tardiness is an old-fashioned word, from what already feels like an old-fashioned time. In reality, just over twelve months ago the majority of us regularly went out to work in a place distinct from our homes. Yet, after a prolonged period of working from home under unusual conditions, these findings, and many others like it, take on new resonance. Dressing for ‘work’ is deeply connected to an organisation’s culture. What we wear to ‘work’ acts a subtle trigger for the role and function we play within a team and how well we perform within it, even if we’re delivering or participating remotely. It’s the main reason why Jonathan puts on his shiny ‘work’

shoes before delivering a workshop over Zoom, and why I try to stay on the smart side of smart-casual during the working week, even if I’m writing and editing all day.

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RESOURCING SKILL SETS & CAPABILILITES

At Waracle, staff are not only intentional about how they dress to do business from their box rooms. They’re also making conscious use of Conway’s Law, a tech strategy that involves designing systems and processes to mirror company and team communication structures, to help them isolate and combine work streams and teams to enable them to continue to work at scale, remotely.

“You have to be willing to change and adapt to this remote way of working,” Gordon told us. “You have to be willing to learn new tools. If you’re not of that mindset, if you continue trying to work in the ways you did before then you’re going to struggle. So, I think people are scared. I think the people who were perhaps skating by before without the sort of foundational technology skills in place, are the ones who are struggling the most and who don’t understand why the technologies and platforms we’re all now using aren’t working for them. And I think it’s the responsibility of the employer to cover that gap.”

There should be driving license type courses for people to learn what they need to know to work productively and collaboratively remotely. Show them the tools they need, provide tool talks on these things. Just like some consumer tech retail companies have a help desk at the front of the store, Scottish Power have a support hub for their staff where they can talk to an expert. If you're laptop's breaking or your phone isn't working, you just walk in and they'll help you. They've got vending machines for keyboards and mice if your keyboard breaks. They'll give you a new laptop if they can't sort your laptop out right there."

Not every organisation has the resource to instigate an in-house dedicated support hub for staff or customers, but Gordon believes that other companies would do well to do follow aspects of Scottish Power's approach to support the development of technical skill sets and know-how within the workforce and those who they are interacting with.

"There's a technical toolkit as well as a mental toolkit that's needed. It's just as important to help each other as it is to empower people to help themselves. The first thing I do when I'm teaching a program is to teach people how to find the help. If somebody's struggling in an online session, have someone on your team everyone and that then enables companies to move confidently into asynchronous style of working."

At Philips Healthcare, the design team have been trying to templatize things to reduce staff anxiety created by the constant struggle to keep up and to keep innovating in environments that are different to what they're used to working in.

It helps to establish the baseline of everybody's capability because there's a familiarity with the process and the template, and it's been incredibly democratising," Richard Eisermann told us. *"Everybody's getting the same level of information. Everybody is involved in the conversation. So, you're talking with the CEO of Phillips and he's talking to you from his dining room table so there's much more inclusiveness and a flattening of hierarchies has happened as a result."*

It's true. It's amazing who you can meet as you swing Tarzan-like from Zoom to Zoom. Previously unreachable top-level executives: they're all out there now, perched on their children's gaming chair in their box rooms, or ensconced on high-backed wicker sofas in their conservatories. Perhaps it's where they've always been.

As we move into a new landscape of hybrid working, the strength of individual connections and resilience will become ever more important to the strength of organisational connections and resilience. Without a doubt, individual wellness and engagement impacts on the effectiveness and cohesion teams. And whilst no two people, or two teams, or two organisations, are alike, the solution to keeping mindsets and skill sets on track is reassuringly universal.

Whether you work alone, or you're part of something bigger, here's our top takeaways for increasing your resilience to make remote working work better:

TOP TAKEAWAYS

RESOURCING MINDSETS FOR REMOTE WORKING

BE FLEXIBLE

First and foremost, be flexible with yourself and those you work with. We're all perfecting a new type of balancing act, which looks and feels different for everyone. As far as possible create work schedules around what is practical for your constraints and communicate that to colleagues. If you're employed, and struggling to maintain traditional working hours, talk to your boss about your situation. Find out how flexible they're prepared to be. Be willing to negotiate. [Citizen's Advice](#) have great tips on how to discuss this with your employer.

RETAIN FREQUENT CONNECTIONS

Whilst technology and 8 bit office space apps, such as [Slack](#), [Asana](#) and [Flock](#) make it easy to keep up to date and in touch with colleagues and clients, there's no substitute for meaningful face to face contact. Even if working remotely, use tech thoughtfully to introduce regular video calls to help build personal relationships on a human level and develop understanding and genuine connection between you and your co-workers. Trust usurps all other cultural qualities when it comes to creating and delivering effective long-term remote services. After all, people invest in people.

REDUCE DISTRACTIONS

Cut out distractions where you can. [Keep your workspace area tidy](#). Block your access to social media apps during working hours. Turn off your TV. Keep your camera on during video conference calls. Put on a clean top each day. Brush your hair. Don't let yourself or your workspace become the biggest disruption to your work.

INSTITUTE RITUALS & TRADITIONS

Even if you work alone, institute rituals in your working day to help you fully engage with the activities of the day and the people you're working with. Whether this is starting the day by writing a task list, having a regular accountability call with a fellow freelancer, or remote working colleague, or making a daily journal/ blog entry or social media post to help you connect with yourself and your wider community. Work out what frees your mind and helps you to find your focus, then develop an individual or team practice around it.

GET DRESSED & GET OUT

Don't sit around in your pyjamas all day on your laptop or reach for yesterday's clothes before a video call. Make an effort to get dressed properly and intentionally every day. The research is undisputed: clothing makes the (wo)man and can help you win the day. Additionally, if you're dressed, you're more likely to take a break from the desk and get a walk outside, helping to improve both your mental and physical fitness.

MAKE IT EASY & ACCESSIBLE

If you're collaborating with others and you need their buy in, knowledge and skills to move forward, make it as easy and as accessible as possible for everybody to engage and input. Consider what assistance and information they might need in advance. Keep it simple. Create templates. Visualise complex processes. Lead by example. Take the hard work out of the work, people are more likely to come with you.

CREATIVE STEP

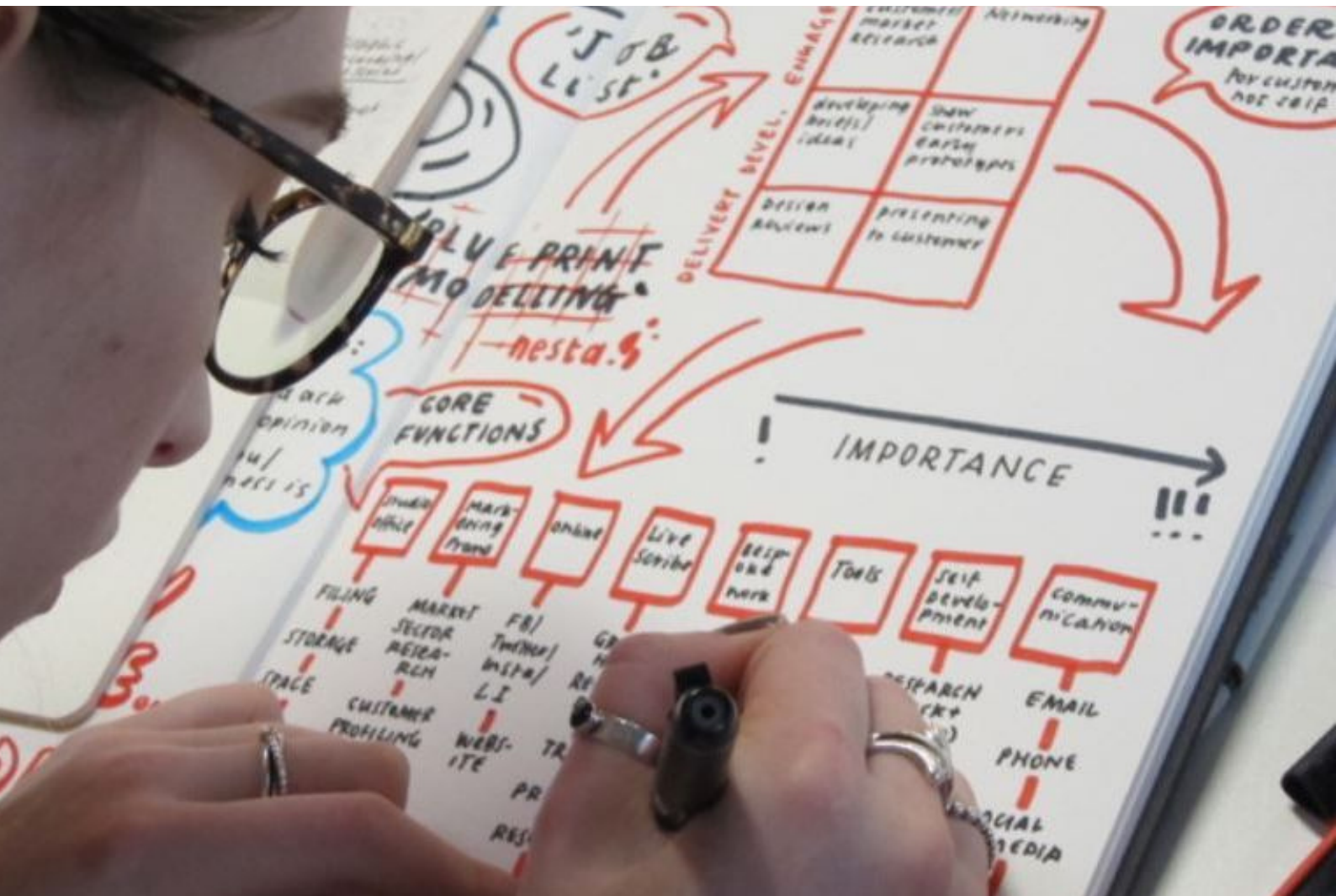
At Creative Lancashire we want to make the county's creative sector the fastest growing in the country by giving the next generation of creative businesses the tools to thrive in the future. Our aim is to build an internationally renowned creative community that is built on local talent.

Creative Step, our bespoke development programme dedicated to the specific needs of the sector and founded on the understanding that the unique qualities and requirements of creative enterprises are not currently met by mainstream business initiatives, is now recruiting across 2021.

"Having proven the programme offline in 2019, we're now fully functioning remotely using our own tools and techniques to create an equally compelling online experience.

For more information visit [Creative Lancashire online](#).

Or for an informal conversation about Creative Step, Creative Lancashire and other sector specific programmes, contact Ed Matthews Gentle at emg@creativelancashire.org



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Alex O'Toole is a Lancashire based independent, Writer, Creative Director and Producer. For twenty years, Alex has worked nationally and internationally across Europe, the US and the Middle East to develop creative concepts, produce artistic programmes, write narratives and manage design projects for the creative and cultural industries. She writes on commission for creative projects across all mediums, and about creativity, the role of the arts and the business of being an artist. Her work as a strategist and creative director for the creative and cultural industries is geared towards developing partnerships and growing audiences to maximise opportunities for long term sustainability. As an arts producer, Alex's larger scale participative projects are created through Fable Arts, a socially engaged arts organisation. She is currently the Chair of Arts Lancashire.

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Jonathan Ball is a Lancashire based independent designer who has built his career on using the practice of human-centred design to help organisations achieve new levels of innovation. After a successful career in product design, he now works independently through Designmine, in collaboration with colleagues at What Could Be and a global network of like-minded associates to deliver across a range of diverse projects, including the Creative Decision Making Playbook for BBC Digital and the Design Thinking Accelerator programme for V&A Dundee. He is a longstanding Design Associate for Design Council and was a part of the team that developed the Double Diamond and created the Design Opportunities Tool for their business support programme, Designing Demand. He is also a Certified Lead Instructor for LUMA Institute in Pittsburgh.

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Ellie Runcie has led pioneering work over the last 20 years, designing programmes that embed design capabilities at scale in the private and public sectors, contributing to both economic growth and societal benefit. She has built relationships with diverse senior stakeholders and is driven by creating inclusive experiences to meet needs in a wide range of contexts. She strives to realise improved performance and impact from the services and programmes she leads and has contributed as a thought leader across multiple platforms globally. At the BBC she is responsible for the user experience across its full digital portfolio of platforms and services, reaching audiences of over 400m worldwide, and also for embedding design thinking and methodologies across the organisation to drive transformation.

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Ruth uses research and evaluation techniques to bring together the experience and approach of the academic sector with the intrinsic knowledge and experience of creative practitioners and participants. Her work supports research design and strategic development for a range of organisations in the public and voluntary sector including Future Projects, Suffolk Artlink, Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre and she is a critical friend for the Transported programme of Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme. Since 2010, she has been the Monitoring and Research Advisor to Aarhus 2017 European Capital of Culture, leading up to the year of activities in 2017 and she was Programme Manager and Senior Research Fellow of Impacts 08, the Liverpool European Capital of Culture Research Programme, a major five-year cultural policy research programme developing measures for understanding and evaluating the economic, social and cultural impacts of culture-led regeneration, which is seen as setting a standard for cultural impact assessment in the UK.

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As Principal Consultant, User In Design, Jhumkee provides consulting services in user experience design to start-ups as well as to new and established organizations. She guides project strategy, helps refine services, evangelizes, mentors and trains to establish or enhance a practice. Her experiences of over 24 years in the US and India have covered technical, consulting, research and project leadership roles. In the US, she worked at Pitney Bowes and Philips Research Laboratories, on the designs of embedded consumer products as well as software driven user interfaces for next generation products, concepts and documentation. In India she has been consulting in strategic design projects for multi-national enterprises, offshore user experience projects and in services for the Indian market. She founded the user experience practice at Persistent Systems. Her community orientation led her to initiate a 'usability in e-Governance' program for Pune city. Jhumkee is a Certified Instructor at LUMA Institute, a MAYA company, teaching Innovation through Human-Centered Design at various global corporations.

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