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Prepared by
Future of Work
Research Consortium

Masterclass Report

The Future of High Performance



FUTURE
OF WORK

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Introduction

For ten years, the Future of Work Research Consortium (FoW) has explored the trends shaping industries, organisations and careers. Our people-centric approach inspired our research into the future of high performance, to explore how organisations can unleash the full potential of their people.

This FoW report reflects the insights of our multi-dimensional research approach, including focus groups, an in-depth literature review and the identification of case studies to provide practical examples of future-proofed practices, as well as the varied experiences and insights shared by our Research Consortium members and expert guest speakers at our Future of High Performance Masterclass, which took place in London on 12th February 2019.

Organisations are facing an urgent call to action to rethink what high performance looks like, and crucially, to re-examine what their high performers want from work and life. Companies that fall behind risk losing the very people on whom their success depends.



Key messages for organisations

As work becomes more complex, the definition of high performance will shift, requiring organisations to reconsider what success looks like in their workforce.

Work is changing: it is becoming less routine, and more ambiguous, agile, collaborative and technological. In many organisations, adding value is now less about doing the same things better, and more about co-creating innovative solutions with clients in the moment. High performers will need a renewed understanding of what success will look like in this new environment in order to provide clarity.

High performers want the ability to achieve excellence in all aspects of their lives, not just at work. High performers are not just employees; they are partners, parents, friends and hobbyists who are striving for excellence. Top performers want to achieve success not only in their careers but in their lives outside of work and being able to empathise with and support their needs will be key to retaining them.

High performance in the future will require a blend of advanced technical and uniquely human skills to deliver value. Artificial intelligence and robotics are automating routine work and augmenting human endeavour in non-routine, complex tasks. This shifts the parameters of high performance toward advanced technical skills and uniquely human skills such as adaptability, problem-solving, creativity and influence, as well as the more abstract qualities of drive, empathy and collaborative spirit.

Pay is still important, but has limited potential as a motivational tool. Once the base pay threshold is met, perpetually adding financial gains will not necessarily increase a person's motivation to go the extra mile. Our FoW members reported during focus groups and Masterclass sessions that high performers are becoming less incentivised by money and more by passion, something which differs somewhat between industries but holds true for the majority of adults in general.¹

Empathetic organisations achieve greater levels of commitment from high performers by understanding and supporting them when they stumble. Even your highest performers can suffer a performance dip from time to time. When organisations show compassion to their high performers, they are encouraged to commit more time and energy to the organisation.

Networks augment high performance in different ways – the high performers of the future will be those who have built the network type that best delivers their organisation's definition of success. For a long time, managers associated large professional networks with high performance. However, research demonstrates that different types of networks unleash different types of performance. Future high performers will be those that have the highest quality (not the highest quantity) of professional connections.

High performers flourish when they work in jobs that have been meticulously designed to enable achievement.

When employees are involved in crafting their own job descriptions, their work performance improves. Leaders can, therefore, enable high performance by engaging in adult-to-adult dialogue with their employees to discuss how they can redesign their role to promote their autonomy, dignity, belongingness and meaningfulness at work.

The high performers of the future will need to be part of a learning culture to sustain their performance over a multi-stage life.

A multi-stage life contains repeated changes of direction as people learn, work and rest at different times. As multi-stage lives become the norm, high performers who are a part of a learning culture at work will be inspired to grow and will adapt more easily to changes in their environment.

High performers join missions, not companies.

High performers are more likely than others to be attracted by a company's mission. Organisations that focus on why they do what they do will be better able to win the hearts of their employees and their clients.² When people are engaged around a purpose, they are more likely to be internally motivated to perform and to commit to their organisation.

High performers want to affect company-wide decisions and shape the workplace culture.

Giving employees an effective voice is a fundamental element of the employment relationship. Effective employee voice helps to build open and trustful relationships between employers and their people, and empowers employees to take more control over the way they work.

Redefining high performance

Redefining high performance

Work is becoming more complex, but it's not just work that's changing: the people who are going to be in these jobs are changing, too. New social and demographic trends are shaping who the high performers of the future will be and what they will want from work, while broader social movements are also shifting what organisations expect from them.

How work is evolving

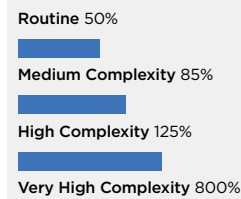
Technology is emphasising advanced technical skills and uniquely human skills...

Advancements in technology are changing how value is created in organisations and, consequently, the skills that will be required from humans. Artificial intelligence and robotics are automating routine work and augmenting human endeavour in non-routine, complex tasks. This shifts the parameters of high performance toward advanced technical skills and uniquely human skills such as adaptability, as well as the more abstract qualities of drive, empathy and collaborative spirit. Machines are generally poor at understanding a person's mood, at sensing the situation around them, and at developing trusting relationships, meaning this is where value will be found in terms of talent.³

... in line with the move from product sells (repetition of tasks) to service sells (creating new solutions in the moment) in many organisations.

The movement towards selling services has meant that people will have to switch from delivering existing, tried and tested products in a familiar way, to bringing ideas to clients and co-creating solutions with them in the moment. This creation process will mean that high performers need to be both comfortable with complexity and ambiguity and able to continually adapt to new circumstances.

Figure 1
Productivity gap between average performers and high performers by job complexity



Graph to show that the productivity gap between average performers and high performers increases in line with job complexity. Scott Keller and Mary Meaney, 'Attracting and Retaining the Right Talent', McKinsey & Company (2017).

In this new context, the R.O.I. from high performance becomes even greater.

Research from McKinsey reveals that the productivity gap between high and low performance increases with a job's complexity. In routine jobs, high performers are three times more productive than average performers. In highly complex jobs, high performers are 800% more productive (see Figure 1).⁴ Given this vast differential, focusing on top performers is likely to have the largest positive impact on an organisation's output.

...and the switch from traditional to agile management.

People will increasingly be required to focus on achieving a series of short-term goals, working in teams where each person has been selected for their specific strengths. Teams will be empowered to make decisions close to the customer, avoiding layers of bureaucracy. The shift means we need to rethink what performance means. It will principally involve more collaboration, more responsive decisions, more adaptability, and more autonomy. Leaders will need to be coaches, clearing roadblocks while they enable their people to complete work to a high quality.⁵

How the workforce is changing

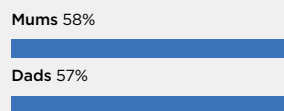
It's not just the nature of work that is changing; people are changing too. Research indicates that high performers want to be high performing in all aspects of their lives, which ultimately means that employees will want different support from their employers.

This is characterised by the emergence of:

dual-career couples

In 1960, 25% of men with university degrees married women with degrees; in 2005, this had risen to 48%.⁶ Intelligent, ambitious young people are more likely than previous generations to be committed to someone just like them – something psychologists refer to as “assortative mating”.⁷ This means that employees can be expected to change their career trajectories to enable their partner to succeed at various points in their lives as they negotiate dual roles. Predictable flexibility and adaptable career paths with multiple different tracks will be necessary to allow people to push for promotions and career movements at their own pace. A variety of role models at the top will be crucial in signalling that there are many ways of being successful within the organisation.

Figure 2
% saying parenting is extremely important to their identity



Graph to show that the percentage of survey respondents saying that parenting is “extremely important” to their identity. Pew Research Center Survey of Parents With Children Under 18, 15 September – 13 October (2015).

High performers want to be high performing in all aspects of their lives

successful working parents

The shifting social roles of mothers and fathers now mean that couples want to balance their responsibilities and be successful both in their careers and as parents. Survey data reveals that an equal percentage of men and women believe that being a parent is extremely important to their identity, and that mothers and fathers should spend equal amounts of time with their babies.⁸

These beliefs are beginning to be reflected in parents’ actions: fathers spent three times as many hours each week caring for their children in 2016 than in 1965.⁹ As parenting becomes a priority for mothers and fathers alike, organisations will need to consider how this will affect work and careers, and design policies and practices to support these varied ambitions.

hobbyists

Parenting is only one example of where high performers want to excel. Dozens of S&P CEOs pursue 'serious leisure' interests, in which they are constantly striving for their "best self."¹⁰ Serious leisure interests are hobbies and volunteering gigs that often start at a young age and that individuals continue to invest considerable time and energy throughout their lives. While competitiveness certainly emerges as a motivation, for most of these CEOs it is truly about reaching one's highest potential, a lesson they've transferred from their leisure time to leading. High performers are likely to share this drive to achieve mastery in all aspects of their lives and to value organisations that support their pursuits outside the workplace. Freedom to leave work early or to use their lunch breaks to pursue their hobbies and interests signals to high performers that the organisation values them and wants them to feel fulfilled at work.

David Solomon (a.k.a. D-Sol), the new Chairman of Goldman Sachs, is also an Electronic Dance Music (EDM) DJ. He says: "If you can't find a way to have passions and pursue those passions and mix them into your professional life and your personal life in some way, shape or form, it's just harder to have the energy to keep on doing this, and to keep moving forward professionally."¹¹ Solomon says that his experiences DJing enabled him to connect with his employees on a more personal level and that knowing more about his personality made him more approachable as a leader.

Employees should feel empowered to be their authentic selves at work. Pursuing activities outside of work helps employees to recover and recuperate energy, and will give them new, creative perspectives which they can bring to work conversations.¹²

How society's expectations are shifting

Performance is no longer viewed through the narrow lens of individual results but, instead, in a more nuanced way in terms of how those results are achieved. Today, organisations are under increased scrutiny as society has a lower tolerance for bad behaviour in the workplace. Organisations are becoming "social" enterprises, in which relationships with workers, customers, and communities, as well as impact on society at large are deemed as important as financial performance.¹³ This is a significant shift, which demonstrates the rebalancing of traditional performance metrics alongside more socially-conscious and ethical company cultures.

Headlines calling out companies for bullying and harassment are becoming commonplace, and employees at all levels of organisations are being held to account. Researchers at Harvard Business Review found that one incident of a CEO's misbehaviour is cited in over 250 news stories, on average, with some mentions occurring 4.9 years after the initial incident itself.¹⁴ Such prolific negative media coverage can have a significant and long-lasting effect on a company's reputation, as well as potentially incurring a loss of clients, investigations and lawsuits, or shareholder action.

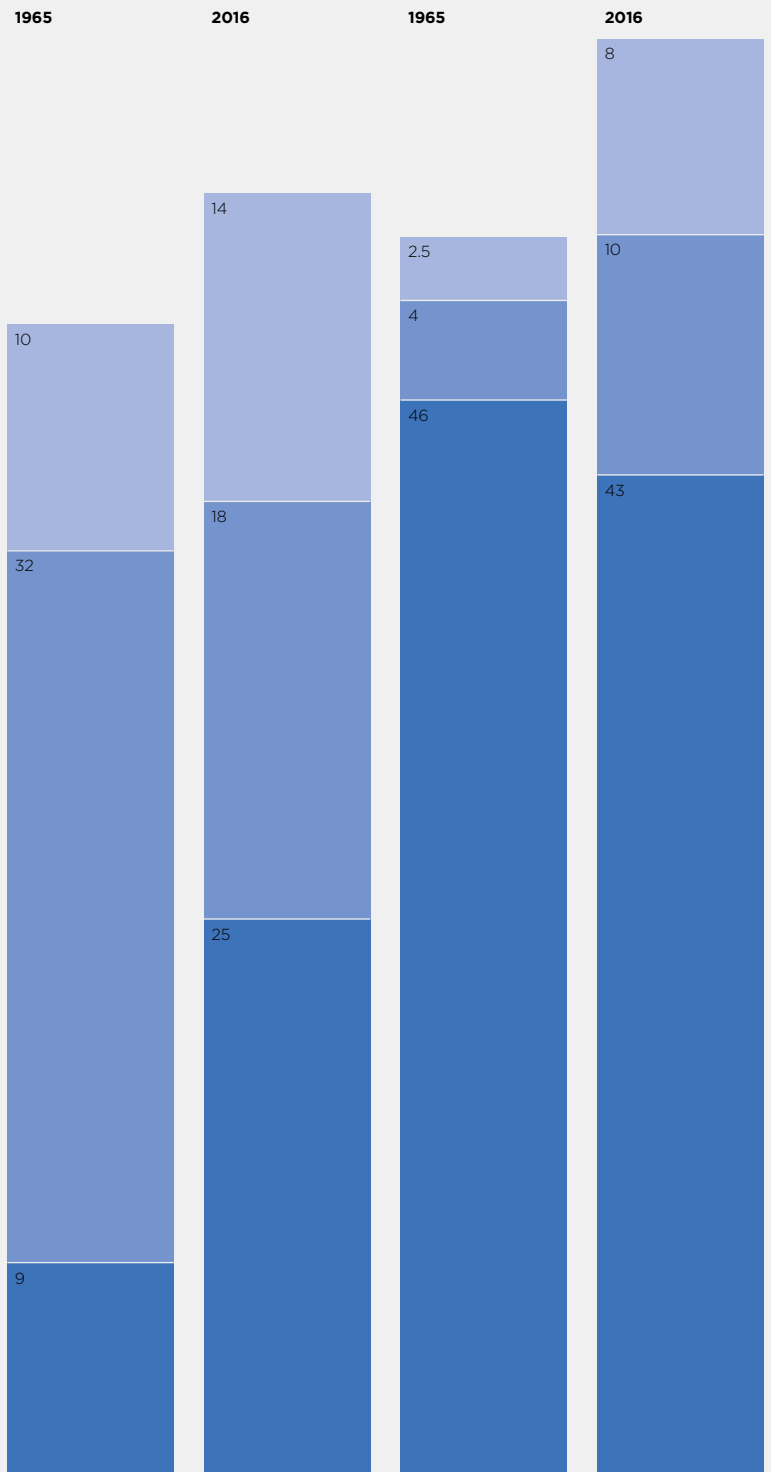
Figure 3
Average number of hours per week spent on...

Figure 3: 1965 data from table SA.1-2, Bianchi, S.M. et al., "Changing Rhythms of American Family Life" (2006). 2016 data from Pew Research Center analysis of American Time Use Survey (IPUMS).

- Childcare
- Housework
- Paid work

MUMS

DADS



Today, organisations are under increased scrutiny as society has a lower tolerance for toxic behaviour in the workplace

Retaining toxic individuals has internal consequences as well. Dysfunctional employees who demonstrate a pattern of de-energising and frustrating behaviour, alongside putting down teammates, damages the results of the entire team. The negative spillover from toxic performers reduces information sharing, trust and motivation, while increasing team conflict.¹⁵ Toxic employees are often retained by organisations because of their contribution to bottom-line results, but society no longer excuses their behaviour. Deloitte, for example, fired 20 partners over the past four years for “inappropriate behaviour”, demonstrating their zero-tolerance policy for bullying and harassment, regardless of the rank of the employee.¹⁶ As we are beginning to see today, future high performance will be redefined to include adherence to company values, positive contributions to company culture and the ability to co-operate effectively with other employees.

Given these fundamental changes, organisations will need to be transparent regarding policies and values in order for every employee to have a full understanding of what excellence at work looks like. People will need support in order to be high-performing in all aspects of their lives, to navigate the complexity of the future of work and to reach society’s new standards regarding what high performance truly means.

Identifying the high performers of the future

Identifying the high performers of the future

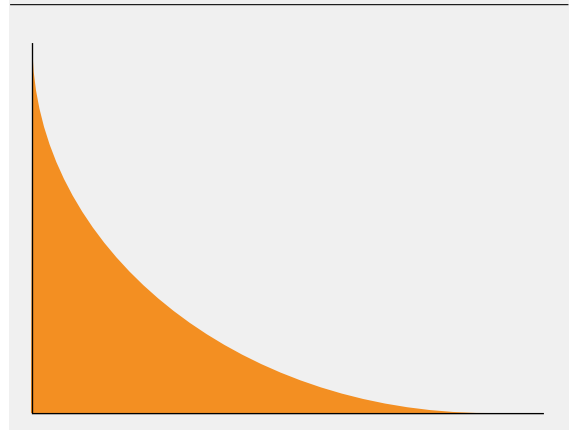
There is a long-held assumption that individual performance clusters around a mean average and then fans out into symmetrical tails – following a “normal” distribution (see Figure 4). A 2012 study instead posited that individual performance conforms to what is known as a “Paretian” distribution, which involves more variance and more extreme rates of performance (see Figure 5).¹⁷

Highest performers are therefore far more valuable than previously thought. So how can we identify these important high performers? What skills will our future high performers demonstrate, and what tools can we use to measure performance?

Figure 4
“Normal” distribution



Figure 5
“Paretian” distribution



What should organisations look for?

According to FoW focus group participants, in an age of automation, future high performers will need to be proficient in uniquely human skills such as emotional intelligence, empathy, curiosity and resilience, which will enable them to build strong relationships with their peers. Our research indicates that operational and physically intensive skills are decreasing in importance, as well as basic analysis, which are at high risk of automation. The skills which will increasingly be in high demand include creativity, complex reasoning, social intelligence and communication skills; all uniquely human skills that will enable employees to work effectively with their peers and with machines.

However, there are three main issues when seeking out individuals with strong human skills: these skills are rare, they are hard to teach and scale, and they are notoriously difficult to measure:

Human skills are rare...

The irony is that human skills can seem rare to find among humans. Companies across the US, in particular, say it is becoming increasingly difficult to find applicants who can clearly express complex ideas, take initiative, solve problems and build good relationships with colleagues. Development Economics estimates that over 535,000 UK workers across every industry will be significantly held back by soft skills deficits by 2020, an issue which spans across industries.¹⁸

...hard to teach and scale...

Today, much of the context of how people learn and perform is currently skewed toward hard, technical skills. Schools encourage rote learning and offer few opportunities to develop skills such as compassion, inventiveness and interpretation. Increasing use of technology in the home is thought by some to be eroding social skills; conversations with voice remotes, for example, have to be short, direct and instructive rather than polite and friendly, as would be the expectation in human-to-human communication.¹⁹ Further, neuroscience research reveals that stressful situations can reduce the brain's ability to learn and perform soft skills.²⁰ In her recent article for MIT Sloan, Prof. Lynda Gratton suggests that businesses should focus on exciting initiatives that promote learning and social perceptiveness, as well as designing work that minimalises distractions and stress.²¹ In such an environment, people will be more open to developing their soft skills.

Businesses should focus on exciting initiatives that promote learning and social perceptiveness

...and difficult to measure

Human skills are intangible and, being qualitative and subjective, are notoriously difficult to measure. So how can organisations begin to assess people on their capabilities in areas such as communication, collaboration and creativity? New digital tools offer new ways to do so. In digital interviews, for example, algorithms can be used to flag and interpret relevant talent signals, including facial expressions, tone of voice, emotions, language, conversation speed and focus, replacing human observations and intuitive inferences with data-driven sorting and ranking.²² IBM's Watson Analytics tool has also been making strides, looking at an employee's experiences and past projects to infer the potential skills and qualities each person might have to work in a more senior position in the organisation in the future.²³ But people analytics and heavily quantified metrics come with their own obstacles. (Overleaf: examples of the new tools available to measure uniquely human skills)

GAMIFIED ASSESSMENTS
PREDICTIVE AI
CALIBRATION
COMMITTEES
BIOMETRICS
NETWORK
MAPPING
360 REVIEWS

DATA MINING

DIGITAL

INTERVIEWS

Measuring high performance: The challenges

Challenge **#1**

Gaming the system

Psychometric tests are often presented as a holy grail, but these tests can be easy to game. Trying to assess soft skills through exams or even interviews can also be problematic because most candidates judiciously prepare for such assessments and present the answers they believe employers will want to hear.

Challenge **#2**

Inherent bias

Reviews from co-workers can help recruiters to see how people behave from a number of perspectives, across a broader time frame and in real-work situations. However, people’s opinions are subject to unconscious bias and are rarely given in total objectivity.

AI and algorithms are assumed to be able to improve objectivity, but an over-reliance on technology can cause problems. Algorithms are only as objective as their programmer, and modelling candidates on pre-existing high performers can (unintentionally or otherwise) promote a mirror-tocracy (see page 10). Algorithms don’t understand nuance or context and, as a result, can make mistakes. Humans need to know when to overrule the machine.²⁴

Challenge **#3**

Metric fixation

“Metric fixation” is the idea that it is not only possible but desirable to replace professional judgement with numerical indicators of performance, and that the best way to motivate people is to attach rewards and penalties to these numerical results.²⁵ Some of the most dramatic negative effects of metric fixation are “goal displacement” (focusing on individual goals at the expense of more important organisational goals) and “short-termism” (focusing on short-term goals at the expense of long-term considerations). By only focusing on the quantifiable things that can be measured, leaders risk losing track of what’s really important.

Case study

Bias in AI at Amazon

Amazon built a recruiting engine in 2014 that analysed applications submitted to the organisation over the preceding decade and identified patterns. The idea was it would then spot candidates in the job market who would be worth recruiting.

Unfortunately, the data were dominated by applications from men, and the AI taught itself to prefer male candidates, discriminating against CVs that referred to “women’s” clubs and setting aside graduates from certain all-women’s colleges. Once this was discovered, the initiative was scrapped.

Companies should be wary of introducing over-ambitious AI recruitment tools. Most problems with technology are not technology problems, but human problems. Since humans inevitably inherit cultural biases, it is impossible to build an entirely “unbiased AI” for hiring.

Andrew Hill

‘Amazon offers cautionary tale of Ai-assisted hiring’
Financial Times (2019).

Assessment tools are, therefore, difficult to implement effectively. Knowing their limitations will be intrinsic to their success, as will the continued existence of the human touch in all people processes. Combining assessment tools with other data sources and with human judgment may be the key to eradicating the biases and loopholes that exist in current HR systems.

...but it's not all doom and gloom

Research indicates that workplace training programmes can be effective in building employees’ human skills. Coaching can enhance motivation, wellbeing and resilience, and focused training initiatives

have also produced positive results in organisations.²⁶ One study showed videos of human suffering to participants before and after empathy and compassion training, finding that the training led to an increase of activation in the aMCC (the anterior midcingulate cortex) of the brain, even in the short term.²⁷ Tom Ravenscroft, Founder and CEO of Enabling Enterprise and guest speaker at our Masterclass, has also created frameworks to teach school age children human skills, and argues that anyone can develop their skills with the right education and training (see page 17).

You can find out more about Tom's work by visiting www.skillsbuilder.org and by following Enabling Enterprise on Twitter at [@EnablingEnt](https://twitter.com/EnablingEnt).

Flash Insight

Tom Ravenscroft

Founder and CEO Enabling Enterprise

Tom Ravenscroft spoke at the FoW Future of High Performance Masterclass about the gap between the skills students are taught in schools and universities, and the skills employers need. Currently, we place a lot of emphasis on skills such as numeracy but not on 'soft' skills like interpersonal skills or communication skills.

As part of the Skills Builder Partnership, Tom and his team have identified eight key skills which high performers need, and have developed frameworks for building each of them: listening, presenting, problem solving, creativity, staying positive, aiming high, leadership and teamwork. They have created clear and tangible steps to take in order to master these human skills.

Tom identified three major myths about human skills which need to be formally debunked. This first is that these skills are just innate and that there are some "natural" team players. The second myth is that these skills are picked up by osmosis. People argue that by participating in lots of activities the skills will simply "rub off" on people, when research actually indicates that people need to be taught how to make sense of human skills, rather than merely imitating it. The third is that these skills lie latent and that, in the "right situation", people will show these skills. These myths are untrue. People need clarity and consistency of language, practice, focus and a means of measuring their progress in order to really master human skills.

In organisations, skills frameworks such as these can be used to recruit new hires or to structure the broader skills development of the workforce as a whole. With the right education and training, anyone can build these vital skills and succeed in the future of work.

What are the pitfalls when focusing on high performers?

High performers are hugely important to organisations, and leaders should be aware that focusing on them will enable them to reap the biggest rewards in productivity and output. However, there are pitfalls that leaders must avoid when they label people as high performers. Building awareness of these individuals can help leaders to ensure the success of their performance tracks.

Beware of creating a mirror-tocracy...

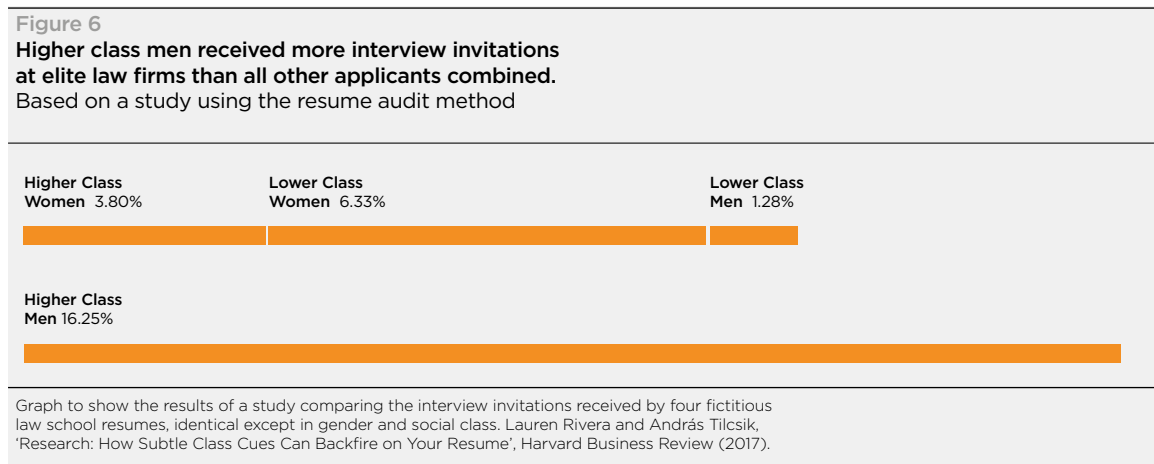
Women begin their careers equal to men in terms of jobs and pay. But, at each level, more women disappear. According to the annual Women in the Workplace study by Lean In and McKinsey, the drop-off starts with the first promotion to management: women are 18% less likely to be promoted to a managerial position than their male peers.²⁸

The evidence shows that the obstacles facing women are not simply the result of their individual choices, such as failing to

chase opportunities or prioritising work-life balance over high-powered jobs. Experts suggest that larger biases are at work.²⁹

In a recent study, researchers sent fictitious resumes to 316 offices of 147 top US law firms in 14 cities, from four candidates who were supposedly trying to land a summer internship position.³⁰ They signalled gender by varying the applicant's first name (James or Julia) and signalled social class position through the extracurricular activities on the candidates' CVs. All aspects of their applications were identical, including all educational, academic and work-related achievements. Despite this, employers overwhelmingly favoured the higher-class man, who received more invitations to interview than all other applicants in the study combined. Most strikingly, he did significantly better than the higher-class woman, whose resume was identical to his, other than the first name.

According to the attorney recruiters who received the CVs, attorneys viewed higher-class candidates of either gender



High performers should be identified as part of a meritocracy, not a mirror-tocracy

as being better fits with the culture and clientele of large law firms, while lower-class candidates were seen as misfits and rejected. Leaders should stop to think whether comparisons to their past high performers are preventing them from seeing who their future high performers really are. High performers should be identified as part of a meritocracy, not a mirror-tocracy which reflects those already in high-power positions.

...that encourages inauthenticity...

When people are labelled as high performers, they risk abandoning their authenticity to emulate the traits of leaders and conform to expectations.³¹ People who are recognised as high performers have reportedly stated that they feel pressured to always embody “leadership material” and that they cannot bring their whole selves to work.³² Talented young performers labelled as “future leaders” may take up

risk-averse approaches, stilted behaviours and homogenous thinking. Learning from superiors may not necessarily be a bad thing, but people need to ensure that they are emulating the right behaviours and are safe to explore the boundaries of their talents.

...or sets a self-fulfilling prophecy in motion

Studies with schoolchildren have shown that when teachers believe a child is a slow learner, the child will come to believe that and will learn slowly as a result, regardless of their actual ability. The child perceived as intelligent by a teacher will pick up on the expectation and rise to fulfil it. Such self-fulfilling prophecies are just as common in offices as in classrooms. If a manager is convinced that the people in their team are high performers, they will outperform a team whose manager believes the opposite, even if the innate talent of the two teams is equal.³³

As work is changing, so are the skills that high performers will need to succeed in the future. Leaders should have a combination of tools and processes in place to recognise these skills in any one of their employees to ensure they foster a truly meritocratic culture. To avoid the undesirable mirror-tocracy, leaders should be cautious when they do identify people as high performers and formally label them as such, in order to avoid conformity to pre-existing stereotypes and expectations. This is a difficult landscape to navigate but those organisations with an awareness of the pitfalls will be best placed to recognise high performance in their people.

Enabling high performance



Enabling high performance

High performers exist in a context. There are seven key practice areas that indicate how we can enable high performance at the individual, team and organisational level. What support can organisations offer, and what steps can they take to allow high performers to thrive?

1. Pay

Pay is still crucial but it has its largest impact as a demotivator, not a motivator, of performance.

High performers are deeply aware of their individual value and will be the first to leave if they feel unfairly compensated.³⁴ Underpaid employees can feel demoralised and disconnected and, as high performers are likely to have a vast array of job prospects, they may leave for “better” opportunities.

However, once that base pay threshold is met, perpetually adding financial carrots won't necessarily increase high performers' motivation to go the extra mile. According to author Dan Pink, extensive research shows that paying creative people bonuses for good performance not only demotivates them, but almost guarantees they will fail.³⁵ He suggests that when such bonus schemes exist, people are no longer actively and independently being creative but instead seeking ways to be rewarded for being creative.

An annual bonus might seem great, but it doesn't motivate you to work harder during the year

Shana Lebowitz
Business Insider (2016)

When we pay people, we can see an immediate increase in productivity, but what we don't see is we also create a long-term disassociation, where people basically say, 'Really? That's it? That's the reason I'm here?'

Dan Ariely
Professor of Psychology
and Behavioural Economics
Duke University

Organisations should not spend a great deal of time on designing and implementing elaborate reward systems to improve performance, particularly given that our FoW members have found that high performers are becoming less incentivised by money and more by passion (see page 30).³⁶ Research indicates that US adults are three times more likely to mention family than money when describing what provides them with a sense of meaning, indicating the decline in bonuses as core motivators of performance.³⁷ Survey data tell us that this feeling is likely to span generations, but different perspectives from employees within different industries may explain why pay remains a powerful enabler of high performance.³⁸

Although a complex bonus system will not be the silver bullet organisations are searching for to foster high performance, it is crucial to have an appropriate reward system installed that is considered fair and equitable by employees and reflects the value of their work in the wider employment market.

Questions for HR leaders

- Do we carefully consider the impact of financial incentives, such as bonuses, upon performance?
- Is our compensation system fair and equitable?

2. Empathy

As work becomes more collaborative and team-focused, empathy will be vital in helping high performers to build stronger connections with remote, dispersed teams.³⁹ Empathy builds trust and mutual respect, as empathetic employees understand their colleagues' perspectives and tend to make more thoughtful, deliberate decisions.

Crucially, without empathy, high performers might leave. In the long term, 9 in 10 employees would be more likely stay with their company if it empathised with their needs. Around 8 in 10 employees would also be willing to commit more time to their organisation in the short term, working longer days if they felt part of an empathetic culture.⁴⁰

When high performers stumble, they may need more sensitive management...

Even the highest performers can suffer a performance dip from time to time. Drops in performance do not necessarily indicate negative factors in an employee's life; performance can go down when people take on new challenges due to steep learning curves and associated stress or anxiety. Leaders must watch out for these dips and seek to understand the root causes as well as identify how that employee can be supported to ensure that their dip in performance is temporary and does not become a long-term problem.

Research also indicates that high performers are likely to experience more trouble with adversity. The burden of being expected to leave every situation with a victory can be challenging and high performers can feel embarrassed when they don't deliver, as their personal expectations carry considerable psychological weight.⁴¹ The weight of public image is an important consideration of which leaders and managers should be cognizant. An empathetic culture will allow leaders to more effectively spot when high performers need more support.

...instead of being "rewarded" with more work...

The stereotype is that high performers are likely to say 'yes' when offered more work, even when they're already working at capacity.⁴² Managers contribute to this risk of burnout by putting high performers on the hardest, most important projects; asking them to compensate for weaker team members by supporting or mentoring others; and requiring them to help out on small things unrelated to their work and spend time on one-off requests.⁴³ Adding

Case study

Resilience training at Fujitsu

Since 2016, Fujitsu have focused on resilience as a core competency, believing that managing change and adversity is key to sustainable wellbeing and performance. Fujitsu implemented resilience training to disseminate the message that building resilience goes hand-in-hand with building high performance.

So, how does it work? The training is a one-day course delivered by an Occupational Health professional, who explains resilience in terms of what occurs in someone's body on a physiological level when they experience stress. The facilitator approaches how

people can better understand how to be resilient on an individual level, as well as how build resilience across an entire team. They also initiate dialogue in the room to allow people to discuss the causes and consequences of stress in their working environments and consider how best to prevent burnout.

The training has led to a greater consistency of outlook within teams, a broader awareness of Fujitsu's wellbeing offerings, and a greater understanding of how people can adapt their behaviours to respond more positively to change in a professional environment.

to high performers' workload reduces the time available to them to complete more complex tasks or to develop new ideas, and also reduces the down time they need for restoration. Making efforts to understand how high performers are feeling at work will help leaders to delegate tasks more sensitively and ensure that high standards are maintained across teams.

...which leads to burnout

According to data from the Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence, nearly 1 in 5 employees are both highly engaged and highly burnt out.⁴⁴ Laura Empson argues that these individuals are likely to be "insecure overachievers", who will frequently push beyond their limits in order to prove themselves.⁴⁵ Insecure overachievers are

people who are capable and ambitious but driven by a profound sense of their own inadequacy. Managers will need to address insecure overachievers' self-doubts and monitor their workloads to ensure that they are not at risk of burnout.

13 out of 20 of our FoW groups identified empathy as one of their main challenges during our Masterclass activity (see Appendix). Increased efforts to understand who your high performers are will allow you to offer them the compassion and personalised support they need when their performance dips, helping to reduce their risk of burnout and increase their commitment to your organisation.

Questions every HR leader should ask themselves

- Do our leaders acknowledge our high performers' needs and concerns?
- Are our high performers at risk of burnout?
- How can we better support our high performers when their performance falters?

Case study

The 'keeper test' at Netflix

Netflix is famed for its culture of “radical transparency” and extreme openness. Its ‘keeper test’ is one of the more controversial aspects of this culture. The keeper test asks managers to assess whether, if an employee was considering leaving Netflix for another organisation, would they fight to keep them? If the answer is no, then those people fail the test and are “promptly and respectfully given a generous severance package”.

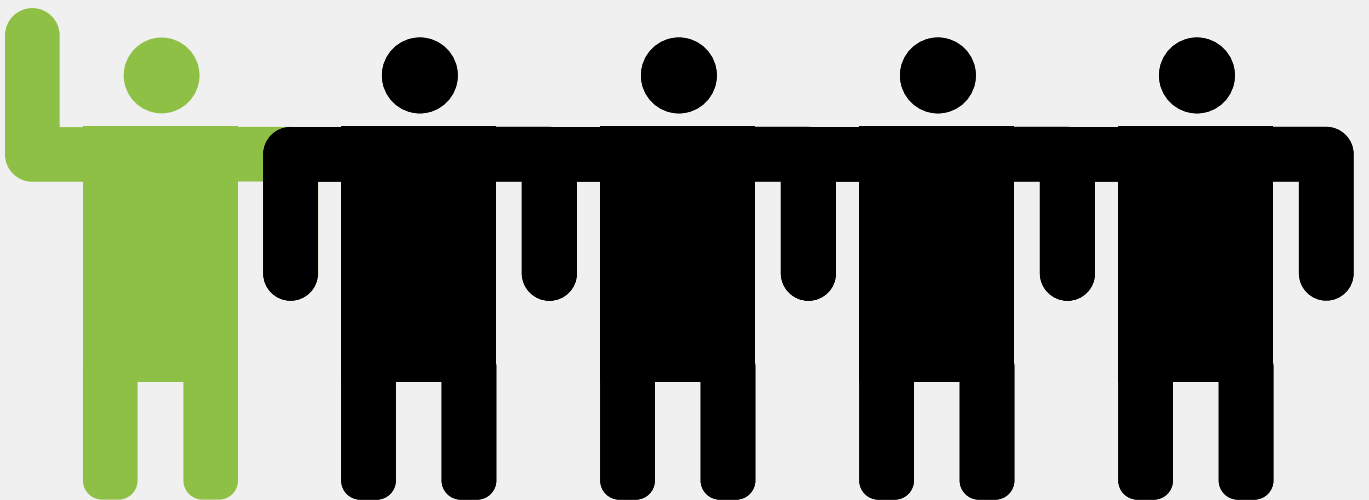
The keeper test inspires Netflix employees to feel a part of a “dream team”, where only the highest performers are retained. Netflix also claims to use the keeper test to judge an employee’s overall performance, allowing employees some leeway if their performance takes a temporary dip.

However, the keeper test has been described as “cut-throat”, as it places the idea of getting fired at the forefront of people’s minds. A further criticism is that the subjective test can act as a veil behind which office politics can play out. Netflix’s culture of honesty also means that employee dismissals are highly public, fueling gossip and disharmony. The limitations of the keeper test raise interesting questions for other organisations looking to balance candour with empathy.

Shalini Ramachandran and Joe Flint, ‘At Netflix, Radical Transparency and Blunt Firings Unsettle the Ranks’, Wall Street Journal (2018).

Netflix Culture, available at <https://jobs.netflix.com/culture>

**NEARLY 1 IN 5
EMPLOYEES
REPORTED
BOTH HIGH
ENGAGEMENT
AND HIGH
BURNOUT**



A high performer
can increase their
neighbouring
workers'
performance
by up to 15%

3. Networks

For a long time, managers associated large professional networks with high performance. However, research indicates that it is the quality, and not the quantity, of connections that demonstrate high performance.

High performers network strategically – something researchers have called “connective intelligence” – meaning that they connect with people whose knowledge, resources and expertise can benefit their own aims.⁴⁶ They also collaborate consciously and deliberately, noting when working together is an advantage and ensuring that everyone is motivated to work towards a common, universally understood goal.

Research also indicates that different types of networks harness different results in terms of performance.⁴⁷ An efficient team member is well-connected within their team and has a range of contacts to source key information (as seen in Figure 7). However, your highest performers are connected not only to individual contacts beyond their own team but also to the networks of those contacts, thus broadening their reach across the organisation. Less internal cohesion makes that team less efficient but also more prone to debate, which unleashes innovation (see Figure 8).

Figure 7
Efficiency

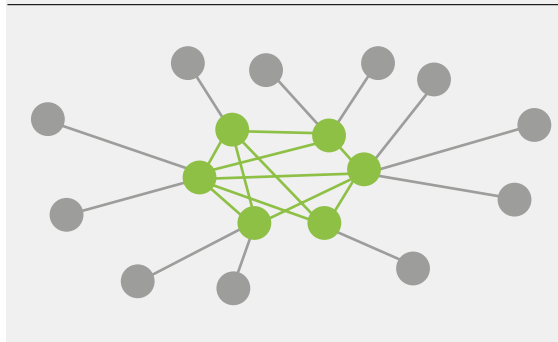
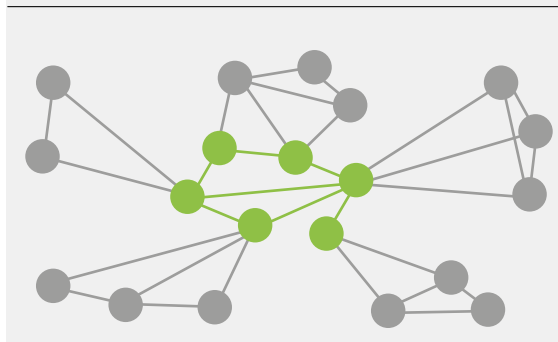


Figure 8
Innovation



High performance is contagious

Research suggests that a high performer can increase their neighbouring workers' performance by up to 15%. Academics have referred to this as "performance by proximity", noting that high performers can influence those they interact with, both in terms of their behaviours and their emotional state at work. However, boosting productivity is not quite as simple as reorganising teams and moving a few desks around the office. People can be intimidated by high performers if they feel they are being compared to them. For people to be inspired, your company culture needs to be collaborative, rather than competitive.

It's not just productivity that's contagious but wellbeing, too: when any member of a team experiences high wellbeing, the effect seems to spread. According to a 2012 Gallup research report, individual team members who reported experiencing high wellbeing were 20% more likely to have other team members who were reported to be thriving six months later.⁴⁸

But beware – burnout can also be contagious. High performers are pace setters and managers should be aware that one high performer can inadvertently cause the whole team to burnout as they rush to keep up.

At our Masterclass, 13 out of 20 of our FoW member groups identified harnessing networks as a key challenge (see Appendix). Leaders will need to promote a clear narrative that networking and collaboration are the keys to high performance. Establishing a culture that encourages people to share knowledge, resources and expertise will enable every employee to improve their performance.

Questions every HR leader should ask themselves

- What type of network will work best in our organisation to unleash high performance?
- Do we encourage our high performers to network strategically?
- Do we have a collaborative culture in place that enables people to be inspired by high performers?

A spotlight on Teams

Prof. Randall Peterson

randallspeterson.com

Prof. Randall Peterson spoke at the FoW Future of High Performance Masterclass about how to create the high performance teams of the future and why collaboration is more important now than ever.

Collaboration, says Randall, is a powerful force. This act of working with someone to produce something is extremely valuable, as everyone brings something unique to the table. However, collaboration is becoming increasingly challenging as the world of work changes. Teams now operate in more complex environments and are required to solve more complex challenges than before.

So how can leaders create high-performing teams? The three most effective actions are:

- 1) Ensure that all team members feel psychologically safe
- 2) Work to ensure that the team operates in a well-coordinated fashion with few misunderstandings
- 3) Draw attention to the diversity within the team

Diversity in high-performing teams

Failing to deal with interpersonal diversity has a number of consequences, from a decline in trust to feelings of frustration among team members. Embracing diversity is not only moral but good

You can follow Randall on Twitter at [@DrRSPeterson](#) or visit his website www.randallspeterson.com to access short articles and to learn more about his research.

for business. It plugs talent gaps and offers everyone more opportunity to learn and grow. However, diversity can cause problems when it's not managed correctly.

Diversity is a double-edged sword. It can bring new information to teams but can also lead to poor team cohesion, conflict and ineffective team processes. The more diverse the team, the more diverse the team performance. Good management is vital.

What does effective collaboration look like?

Due to the complex environment teams operate in, creating clear rules of engagement and a strong common language will be important. A shared understanding of what the problem is before discussing solutions will also help to reduce conflict.

Rewarding teams, rather than individuals, can improve co-ordination by celebrating everyone's value, not just a handful of stars.

Promoting strong feelings of psychological safety and belonging encourages knowledge-sharing and fosters trust between team members. Where there is trust there is long-term performance and strong team relationships.

Virtual teams should begin by meeting in person and continue the relationship unscripted. When working with multiple teams, focus on the sequence timing and interdependence of teams, helping people to anticipate what other teams will do.

A small group of people can change the world.

High-performance jobs enable people to make decisions, share information and offer opportunities for development, autonomy and responsibility

4. Job design

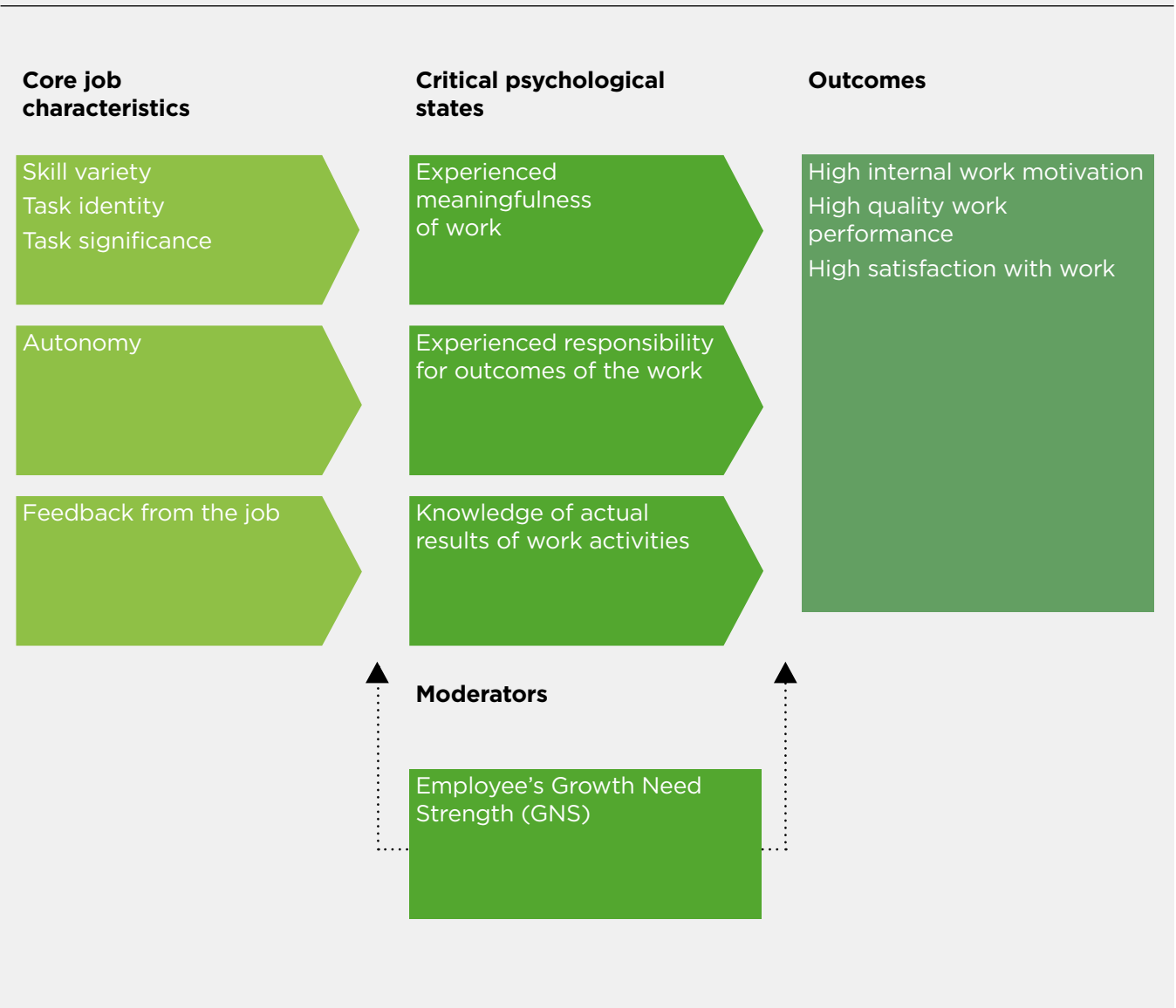
Hackman and Oldman's foundational paper on job characteristics theorised that an organisation can design a job in which a talented individual can thrive.⁴⁹ These high-performance jobs enable people to make decisions, share information and offer opportunities for development, autonomy and responsibility.

Hackman and Oldham identified five "core" job characteristics: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and job-based feedback, which together contribute to the experienced meaningfulness of work (see Figure 9).

The challenge for organisations today, is that jobs are no longer clearly defined, making this a complex task for managers and leaders. One effective approach is to co-create job descriptions with people. When employees are involved in crafting their own job descriptions, their motivation, engagement and work performance improve.⁵⁰ Leaders can, therefore, enable high performance by engaging in adult-to-adult dialogue with their employees to discuss how they can redesign their role to promote their autonomy, dignity, belongingness and sense of -meaningfulness at work.⁵¹ Effective job design involves matching tasks and assignments to an employee's psychology and behaviours, as well as aligning the employee's goals to desired organisational outcomes.

This also signals a new role for HR functions as guardians of the people experience, responsible for ensuring that changes in the nature of work within the organisation enable rather than deplete good work.

Figure 9
Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics model



Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics model, colour. J. Richard Hackman, Greg R. Oldham, 'Motivation Through the Design of Work: Test of a Theory', Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, Vol. 16, Iss. 2 (1976), pp. 250-279.

Case study

New career framework at LSEG

LSEG's rapid global growth has meant that its Divisions have had different career models and used different language to describe roles, role sizes and career stages. LSEG wanted to introduce a new, consistent career framework across the Group to provide people with greater clarity on where their role fits in the wider organisation and greater transparency on what they need to learn and achieve in order to progress and take ownership of their careers.

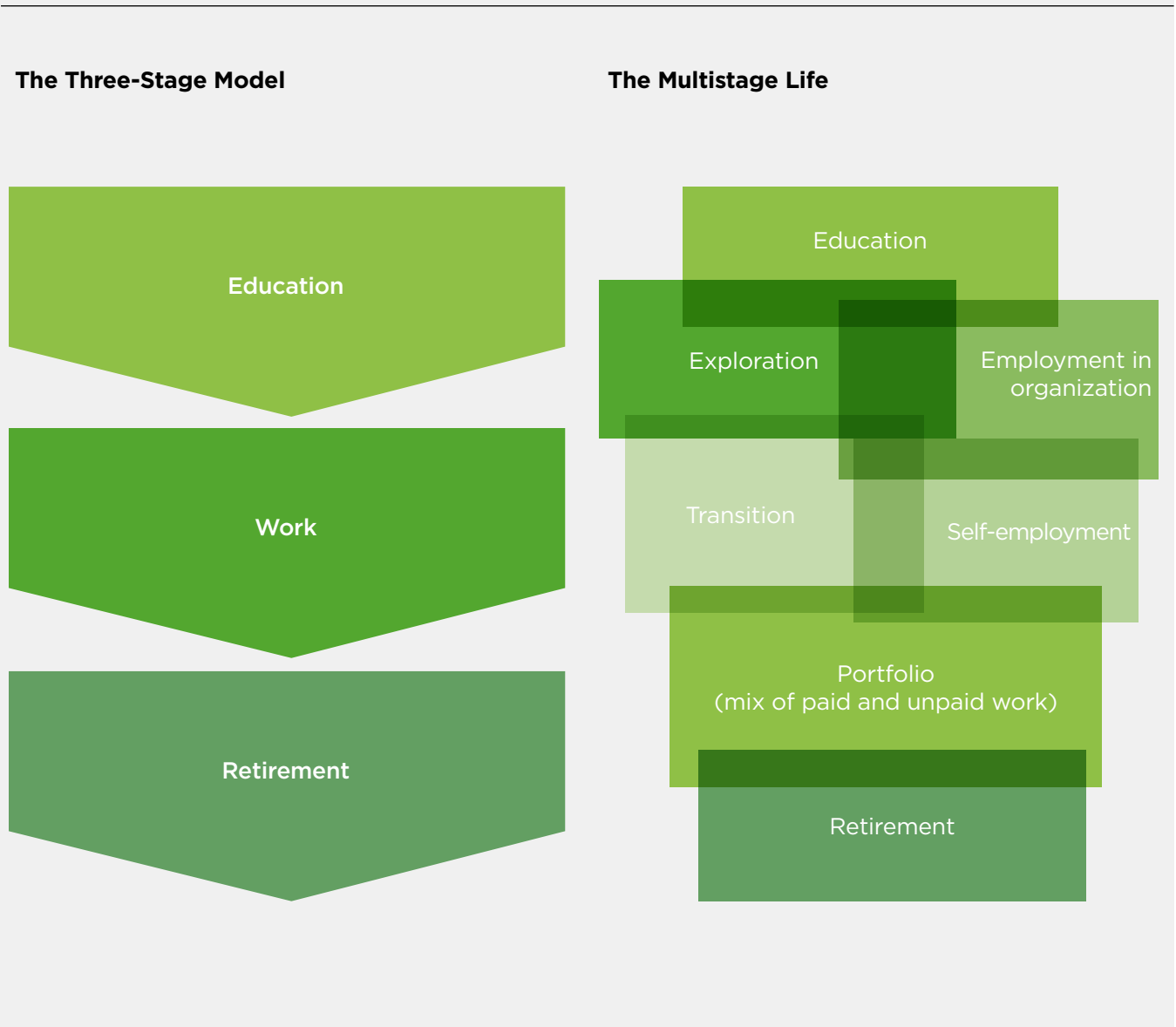
The new career framework is still being implemented and leaders have successfully navigated a number of challenges along the journey. For example, communicating where roles are mapped in the new framework, aligning business titles and changing how people are promoted to a new, vacancy-led approach.

The introduction of a group-wide framework contributes to the development of a 'one group' approach through the consistent application of LSEG Behaviours, facilitating better internal mobility. It also provides the foundation for organisational efficiency, including easier integration of future acquisitions and management of cost. Additionally, the framework has provided a clearer infrastructure for HR processes; enabling reward, performance and learning to be aligned to career stages and skills areas. Following its implementation, all learning will be accessible via Workday Learning, fully aligned to the career framework job families and career stages.

Questions every HR leader should ask themselves

- Do our jobs provide people with good work?
- Do we offer high performers opportunities to co-create their jobs?
- What are the core characteristics of our jobs?
Do these characteristics engender high performance?

Figure 10
Graphic to compare three-stage model with multi-stage life



Graphic to compare the three-stage model with the multi-stage life.
Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott, 'The Corporate Implications of Longer Lives',
MIT Sloan Management Review (2017).

5. Learning cultures

In the context of longer lives, Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott advance the idea of a multi-stage life which will contain repeated changes of direction as people learn, work and rest at different times in their lives.⁵³ Tangible and intangible assets will need upkeep, renewal or replacement and skills will need updating, augmenting or discarding. As learning becomes the norm, the high performers of the future will be those who are best able to adapt to this change and seek out learning opportunities that will advance their careers.

Development has always been a top priority for high performers. They are ambitious and they set themselves apart by continuously seeking, sharing, and applying new knowledge and skills to their work.⁵⁴ Empowering them to learn not only helps high performers advance their careers and remain challenged and engaged at work but also helps organisations to accrue vital knowledge within their workforces. However, as people and organisations prepare for rapid advancements in technology, increasing globalisation and major demographic shifts which will change the nature of work, continuous learning is increasingly relevant to the whole workforce.

A recent survey revealed that 90% of people see the need to update their skills annually, and half of these people perceive development as a continuous, year-round exercise.⁵⁵ Yet, despite this, only 47% of organisations say they have a culture of continuous learning and only 41% of employees say that their company offers them opportunities to expand their skillsets.⁵⁶

So how can organisations create a learning culture?

People learn faster with higher retention rates when they see value in the learning content and are able to use the tools that suit their preferences. When employees have choices, they can learn more about a particular topic at a time and place that suits their preferences, ensuring their engagement and tapping into their curiosity.

Learning should also be 'pulled' by employees. With the rise of on-demand and personalised learning, organisations will play a more supporting role. This means shifting from providing content (pushing modules onto employees) to providing tools that allow individuals to define their own learning goals and strategies, and to seek them out for themselves.⁵⁷

The high performers of the future will be those who seek out learning opportunities that will advance their careers

Nudging can also help employees to see learning as a key tenet of their company's culture. Leaders who ask questions and who openly discuss lessons learned from mistakes act as vital role models to employees, encouraging them to associate learning with career achievement and performance. Celebrating interesting questions asked and rewarding curiosity are small steps that can encourage employees to be more proactive in addressing knowledge gaps.⁵⁸ Leaders are important role-models in organisations with the power and influence to send a clear message of the importance of learning and upskilling to their employees.

Enabling high performers to play an active role in choosing their own development opportunities and identifying their own missing capabilities and learning needs allows them to operate with more autonomy and encourages them to engage with the learning material on a deeper level. Organisations that support people as they continuously seek, share, and apply new knowledge and skills will be more likely to see a significant upsurge in their workforce's performance as a whole.

Questions every HR leader should ask themselves

- Do we encourage curiosity?
- Do we enable our people to 'pull' learning at any stage of their career?
- How do we approach mistakes in our organisation? Are they failures or opportunities for growth?

Case study

Leadership Principles at Fidelity International

The rapid advancement of technology and its ever-increasing ability to both automate and augment work are changing the skills that finance professionals will need to succeed in the future. In response, Fidelity International were inspired to revisit the extent to which their leadership behaviours were fit for the future of the organisation.

Partnering with their sister company, Fidelity Investments, they held a leaders conference and a brainstorming session with their senior leaders and their Chairwoman, Abigail Johnson, and designed a set of key Leadership Principles to help managers gain clarity on exactly what is required of them to be high performing and what skills they will need in the future.

Now, during 360° reviews, managers are assessed against the new Principles (which include capabilities such as valuing pace over perfection, being customer-obsessed and coaching others to their full potential) and the results are discussed with a talent manager who helps them to co-create new development priorities.

Engagement with Fidelity International's Leadership Principles has heightened leaders' self-awareness, increased the organisation's focus on coaching and development, and created more clarity, consistency and visibility around what good leadership looks like at Fidelity.

Case study

Global leadership and performance development transformation at KPMG

KPMG undertook a global people survey and learnt that there was a mismatch between what people were expecting and what they were receiving in terms of performance development. They found that people were unclear on what it meant to be a high performer.

KPMG decided, therefore, to transform its global leadership and performance development processes to be more consistent, accessible and co-creational. Their new 'Everyone a Leader' framework contains nine competencies which fall under three high performance principles: 'deliver impact', 'seek growth' and 'inspire trust'. The firm also developed a new 'Open Performance Development' approach to embed these competencies in their performance assessments, recruitment and promotion decisions, and learning options.

To drive an Open Performance culture, KPMG are focusing on five key shifts: adopting a growth mindset, focusing on critical outcomes, embracing frequent feedback as the norm, building meaningful Performance Manager relationships, and clearly connecting performance to reward. To spread these five messages at the heart of the transformation, KPMG developed a training programme for managers alongside numerous online resources for employees.

KPMG are now deploying their framework to 125 countries in 12 months, with Australia, UK, Denmark and New Zealand having already implemented it in 2018.

6. Purpose

Job site Indeed found that high performers are 46% more likely than average performers to be attracted to a new job by a company's purpose.⁵⁹

When people are engaged around a purpose, they are more likely to be engaged, committed to the organisation and internally motivated to perform.⁶⁰ They find meaning in the fact that their work makes a difference and would even be willing to sacrifice pay and compensation benefits in search of a job that aligns with their core values.⁶¹

There are three types of purpose that directly affect employees' performance:

- Task purpose - knowing their work counts and is not futile
- Collective purpose - seeing how their work combines with that of others to create something that they could not achieve alone
- Social purpose - recognising that their work makes a worthwhile contribution beyond the success of their organisation⁶²

Research from Deloitte also indicates that "mission-driven" companies are 30% more innovative, have 40% higher levels of retention and are more likely to be market leaders.⁶³ Offering high performers a unique culture that they will not find anywhere else, and an opportunity to have an impact on their organisation and wider society, will encourage them to deliver work with more passion and to be brand ambassadors for their organisation.

Questions every HR leader should ask themselves

- Do our high performers have a clear understanding of our company's purpose?
- Do our leaders deliver a clear narrative on how our people can engage with our mission?

“Mission-driven” companies are 30% more innovative, have 40% higher levels of retention and are more likely to be market leaders

Case study

Employee protests at Google

High performers are attracted to companies whose purpose aligns with their own values. If the company's mission changes, leaders will discover that their high performers can walk - and that they can influence other employees.

At the beginning of 2018, employees learnt about Google's decision to provide artificial intelligence to 'Project Maven', a US military programme which intended to use Google data to improve the precision of drone strikes.

In a revolt against Google's perceived abandonment of its social purpose, in April 2018, 3100 Google employees signed an internal petition asking the company to stop working on Project Maven. In May, many Google employees resigned, marking "the first known mass resignations at Google" in protest against the company's rejection of its stated values.

Interestingly, it wasn't just the moral implications of military involvement that employees objected to but the lack of transparency around controversial business decisions, the notion that leaders were no longer listening to their employees, the idea that aligning with the US military eroded Google's global user base, and ethical concerns about the use of AI without human checks.

As a result, in October, Google pulled its bid for a \$10 billion Pentagon contract, citing uncertainty that the contract would align with Google's AI Principles.

'Google Should Not Be In Business of War, Say Employees', BBC News (2018), available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-43656378>

Hallie Detrick, 'Google Passes on a \$10 Billion Pentagon Cloud Contract, Citing Its New AI Principles', Fortune (2018).

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7. Employee voice

Giving employees an effective voice is a fundamental element of treating them as legitimate stakeholders in the employment relationship. Effective employee voice helps to build open and trustful relationships between employers and their people, and empowers employees to take more control over the way they work.

An additional benefit is that sharing views can lead to greater innovation, problem-solving and productivity.⁶⁴ Having a meaningful voice is critical to both better experience and outcomes at work, as it is hard to be either constructive or creative if you are not confident about speaking out.

Organisations may benefit from having “stay conversations” with their high performers, to shape the organisation’s culture around what will enable them to thrive.⁶⁵ Regular meetings, either formally or informally, with high performers can help organisations to monitor whether their culture strategy is on target, and identify any potential areas for improvement.

Questions every HR leader should ask themselves

- Do our leaders create opportunities to ask high performers what they value at work, what motivates them and how they want to work?
- When our employees speak out, are they heard by leaders? What more can we do to demonstrate that we listen to our employees’ views?

Organisations may benefit from having “stay conversations” with their high performers, to shape the organisation’s culture around what will enable them to thrive

Case study

HSM Collaboration Jams

The Energy team at Lloyd's Register, a provider of assurance services, was embarking on an ambitious employee-led Organisational Change Programme (OCP). The OCP involved creating new teams, departments and reporting lines to future-proof the success of the business. To achieve this, they needed to ensure that the initiatives being created to implement the new structure reflected the priorities of all people around the global business. The Jam was about asking people what would unleash performance in their context, initiating a truly adult-to-adult conversation.

The insights from the Jam revealed key concerns around the OCP, such as whether it would break down organisational silos or result in new ones, and whether it would include new opportunities for training and development. Participants also helped to shape the mission of the Energy Team at Lloyds Register, which is now 'Creating a place where the best people want to work'.

The Jam revealed such an appetite for collaboration and co-creation that Lloyds developed a new website for employees, with over 1900 members, which allowed them to have conversations on 67 specialist topics. This collaborative mindset would not have been identified and allowed to flourish if Lloyds Register leaders had not listened to their employees and responded to their passion to share knowledge and express their views.



Concluding remarks

As the world of work is changing, so is our definition of what it means to be a high performer. The jobs that will exist in the future will be complex, agile and augmented by machines, and they will require people to work in different ways and to gain advanced technical knowledge and uniquely human skills. Future high performers will no longer be expected merely to efficiently complete routine work but to experiment with complex tasks, creatively solve problems and interpret data to reach innovative outcomes. The challenge, looking ahead, will be for leaders to let go of past formulas for success and recognise potential in all corners of their organisations.

The reality of the changing world of work may seem daunting to leaders, who will need a stronger, more detailed understanding of who their high performers are to continue to provide them with good work and to offer them the support they will need to thrive in the future. Leaders will need to personalise their approaches and discover what 'high performance' means to every individual, as their unique perspectives will mean that they are motivated in myriad ways. Fortunately, leaders will not have to design hundreds of personalised jobs and policies; instead, they will need to focus on fostering an empathetic workplace environment in which people can make their needs known.

Culture will be crucial to enabling high performance. When an organisation's culture is collaborative, rather than competitive, high performers can heighten the performance and wellbeing of those around them. Cultures of learning inspire curiosity and discovery, empowering high performers to fulfil their potential and maintain their assets across a multistage life. Cultures of co-creation inspire every employee to use their voice and shape their jobs to unleash their abilities, to collaborate with others and eradicate toxicity, and to improve one another's social intelligence and empathy to form more coherent, more effective teams.

Leaders need to remember that high performance is not innate, nor is it merely an individual responsibility. Leaders can enable high performance – they simply need to create the environment in which their people can thrive.

FoW members' top ten takeaways from the Future of High Performance Masterclass:

1. Organisations should take note of the social trends that are happening right now
2. Despite technological change, critical, high level human skills will still remain
3. Senior executives should let go of high performers if they do not adhere to company values – the toxic environment they create has significant consequences
4. Empathy is important and should be encouraged
5. It's important to support truth and encourage experts to speak up
6. Machines cannot replicate creativity. Creativity is an important component of high performance
7. High performers are motivated learners and we need to give them the time and opportunities to pursue learning
8. The new world of work will be more collaborative and involve more co-creation. It is important to note how people work with each other
9. High performers are driven by purpose and it's important to engage people around your mission
10. People need to learn to be the employer of the future, not the employer of today

About FoW

Over the last ten years, the Future of Work (FoW) Research Consortium has brought together a global community of 108 of the world's most influential companies, a number which keeps growing. By combining energetic live events with cutting-edge collaborative technology, we have connected more than 500 executives, all of whom are leading their organisations in preparing for the future.

Our Consortium is widely acknowledged as one of the most innovative and collaborative forums for exchanging insights, models and concerns about the future of work. Led by Professor Lynda Gratton, we unite academic research and organisational practice to deliver a unique multidisciplinary experience. Members of the Consortium benefit from access to the very latest academic research along with practical insights and have the ability to learn and develop in a way that is customised to their needs.

For more information on any of the topics explored in this report, please contact Callandra at callandra@hotspotsmovement.com.



Callandra Horobin
Researcher

Appendix: Activity Results

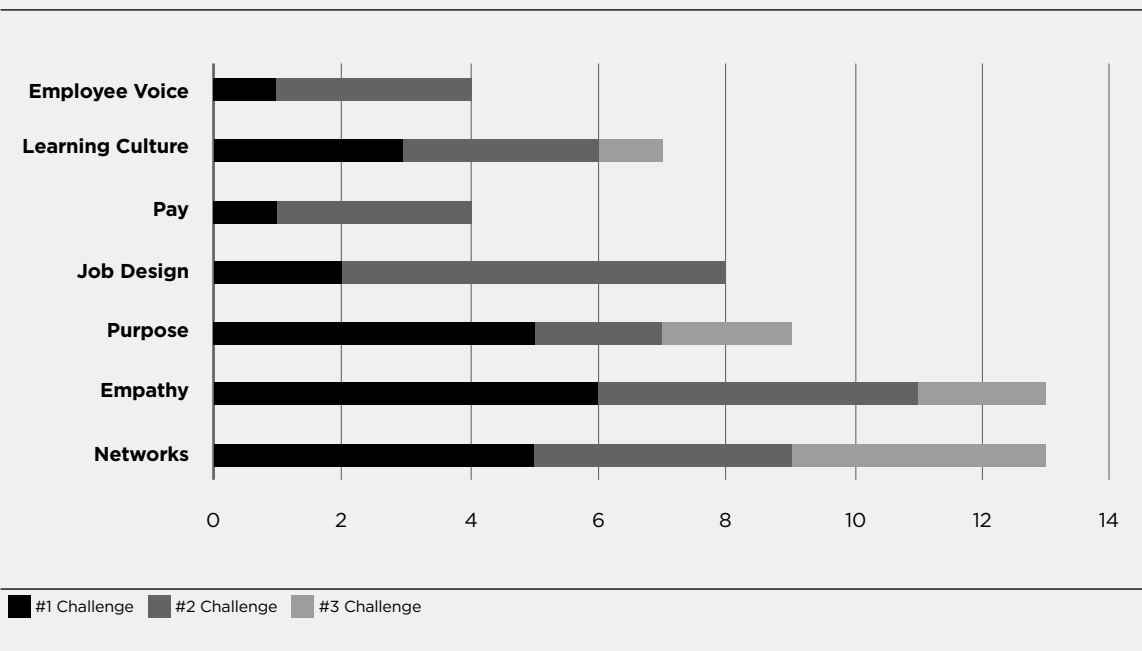
During our Future of High Performance Masterclass in London on 12th February, our FoW members completed an activity which asked them to identify the three enablers of high performance (from a list of seven) which they find most challenging.

As can be seen from the chart, Empathy and Networks were seen as the most challenging, with over three times as many mentions as the lowest scoring enablers, Pay and Employee Voice, which delegates had most faith in getting right.

Company groups were also given the opportunity to play a 'Joker Card', which allowed them to highlight their own challenge around high performance. The unique challenges they identified were:

- Flexibility
- Culture
- Organisational development
- Leadership and line manager capability
- Accountability and decision making
- Inclusion

Chart to show which enablers of high performance FoW members see as their top three challenges



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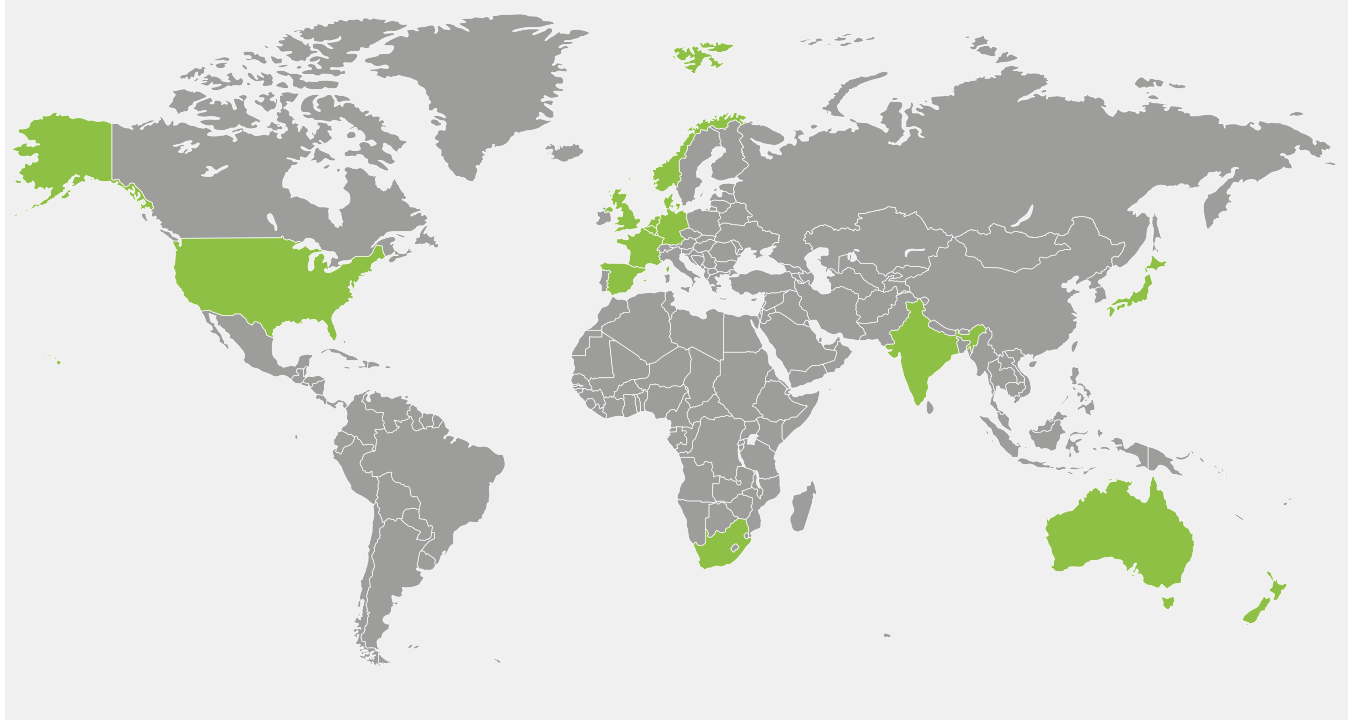
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