



**RICOH**  
imagine. change.

# The Pathway to Productive People

Step 2 of 3:

Optimism

# Foreword

Optimism is an essential component in business. Especially today when bad news dominates the headlines. Despite the fact that productivity and business performance is driven by the workforce, there are not enough Irish organisations investing in the areas of culture, workspace and technology to empower their people. Business leaders across the country need to adopt a strategy that helps their company to be not only efficient and competitive but fit for the future and innovative. This requires a positive outlook.

Last year, our Economy of People study, conducted in conjunction with Oxford Economics, found businesses that fostered an 'optimal office' could realise a positive business impact on their own organisation, which could generate a staggering **€3.4 billion** in additional GDP for Ireland.

But for businesses to achieve this, it is crucial they maintain an optimism and holistically evaluate how workplace, processes and technology are balanced with people at the forefront. At Ricoh, we call this **workstyle innovation**.

For many organisations, embracing such a necessary change can be a very daunting prospect with no clear starting point. This is why we have developed **The Pathway to Productive People**, an approach that explores the actions businesses need to take on the journey of workstyle innovation in order to realise the value of the Economy of People.

In our last paper, we embarked on the very first step of the pathway, **Bravery**. Naturally, any impactful change will prompt some very rational fears and the hardest part of any new challenge is being brave enough to catalyse the process.

But any brave step inevitably needs to be followed by a continued sense of fortitude. Which brings us to the next step on our pathway, **Optimism**. No journey of change is without its ups and downs, and it can be easy to lose faith in the process. But, the success of any journey to productivity will be defined by the degree of optimism you bring to the process and inevitably, it will result in lasting change.



**PHIL KEOGHAN**

CEO, RICOH UK AND IRELAND





# Executive Summary

People are the most important asset of any business. The way people work sits at the heart of every organisation. By focusing on people first, you can begin to evaluate what processes, technology and workplace initiatives will maximise productivity and ensure your business is fit for the future.

The evolution of technology has blurred the lines between our personal and professional lives. Our choice of profession is now a defining factor in who we are as individuals. Recent research from Ricoh shows that today's workforce is more united than ever in its demand for change and in the way we conduct business. The majority of European workers (**57 per cent**) believe that technology will bring about a four-day working week in the near future as it improves productivity and efficiency.

Regardless of age, employees across Europe are keen to make a greater commitment to work and increase their productivity through training and technology. In fact, **72 per cent** of workers say they want to contribute more to their work.

Employees can make or break new investments into processes, systems and technology, which means that getting employee buy-in first is pivotal to change. But, how to bring about lasting change is fundamentally what businesses need to know as there are many moving parts with implementing workstyle innovations.

With any journey, there is bound to be unexpected twists and turns and as we continue on The Pathway to Productive People, we will examine the importance of optimism.





# Where We Are On The Pathway to Productive People

The first step on the pathway was **Bravery**, and for good reason. Regardless of what stage, size or industry your business is in, the current political and economic climate has placed enormous pressure to remain immune to external factors and maintain profitability. In this context, bravery is crucial to facing these challenges head-on.

But the sheer act of bravery is not a ticket to success. Change is never easy, and it almost never goes to plan; but contrary to what most people think, that is not a bad thing.

Every organisation is different and there is no one clear road map to success. Every strategy on workstyle innovation needs to be a bespoke approach balancing people, processes, workplace and technology. Such an approach will result in some 'failures' or 'learnings', but a fail fast, fail often approach is necessary for bringing about lasting change.

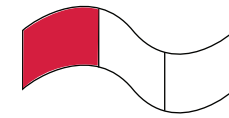
This brings us to the next step in the pathway: **Optimism**. Failure can be disheartening. It can allow you to revert to the fears experienced before step one and compel you to walk away. This is why the key to success lies in the ability to foster an environment of optimism.

Optimism is intrinsically linked to your everyday life. It's what motivates you to become more committed to your professional life. Businesses have a responsibility to cultivate and nurture this optimism, particularly in times of change.

Optimism has the power to drive success – Rome wasn't built in a day and the chances are your business won't be either.

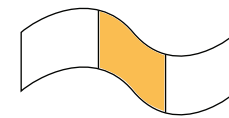


# The Pathway To Productive People



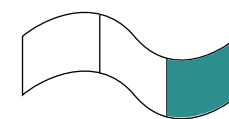
## Bravery

Arguably the hardest part of any challenge is being brave enough to catalyse the process. But the reality is that there is so much fear associated with change. In the Bravery report, we address the main barriers within a business and how best to conquer them.



## Optimism

No process of change is without its twists and turns, and it can be very easy to give up during any challenging process. The success of your productivity journey will be a testament to the optimism you project to bring about lasting change, and the successes you start to see as a business.



## Impact

As with any adoption of change, it is important to reflect on what worked and what didn't. Beyond anything, change is a learning process. For optimal productivity and wider profitability, it is vital to recognise the impact true workstyle innovation can have on your organisation.





# Optimism In Business

To define optimism in the context of business, we first need to understand that change is not immediate and that we need to be flexible in our approach. We need to realise that perceived 'overnight successes' from other companies are a product of hard work, adapting and learning from failures, fast.

**USED EFFECTIVELY AND IN THE RIGHT SITUATION, OPTIMISM PROVIDES A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE THAT CAN HELP YOU TO SCALE YOUR BUSINESS WITH LASTING IMPACT.**

## **GIVING CHANGE A CHANCE**

Change always takes time to prove successful. At Ricoh, our experience has taught us that the number one cause of any failed digital transformation is to completely retreat from the strategy because the results are not immediate. You need to understand that trusting the process and adapting to any failures will help you to remain on the pathway to success; fostering this approach will be the champion for your business as well as your technology, people and processes.

Optimism isn't biased in size or industry. Used effectively and in the right situation, optimism provides a different perspective that can help you to scale your business with lasting impact. It is about looking at situations with pathways to resolutions: being able to see the possibilities rather than the difficulties.





# Optimism in Business

## ACHIEVING THE OPTIMAL OFFICE

We have always believed that there is no set path to achieving workstyle innovation. But depending on the type and size of your business, there can be different roadblocks and opportunities that can be leveraged to develop the optimal office to unlock new found performance and productivity within your business.

### CHALLENGES

#### SME

Limited resources and change can have a significant impact (both negatively and positively)

#### MID-SIZE

Often operate a 'if it isn't broken, don't fix it' mentality, which makes it difficult to implement new ideas

#### ENTERPRISE

Takes a long time to get buy-in from senior leadership and needs to overcome legacy culture to implement positive change

#### POST-ACQUISITION

Often an unclear future and can be challenging to agree what the right path forward is

### OPPORTUNITIES

#### SME

Agile and nimble, with fewer people making it easier to implement change

#### MID-SIZE

The path to the optimal office has been created by larger business before making it easier to follow

#### ENTERPRISE

Has the resources to invest in innovative and cutting edge technology that could change the way the business operates

#### POST-ACQUISITION

In a state of uncertainty, but it does make acceptance of change easier to implement new processes and technology





# Optimism In Business



JOHN LEWIS  
& PARTNERS

## CREATING DISRUPTION AGAINST ALL ODDS

Monzo is undoubtedly the latest inspirational fintech that is marked by most organisations as a standard for success. The issue is many businesses want the same, seemingly overnight, triumph that the company is perceived to have achieved.

Monzo was not an overnight success. The company itself describes its achievements due to a perfect storm. The founders identified that the banking industry was in dire need of disruption. What traditional institutions were labelling 'too difficult' was a key point of customer demand and it wasn't going unnoticed by the technology industry.

Monzo embraced this desire for change and harnessed a people-first approach toward its operations and product offering. But this wasn't an easy process. The industry and media were quick to label it as a scrappy company when it started in 2015 as a prepaid card seller. However, Monzo has turned into an amazing growth story.

Being a disruptor in a cynical industry was met with huge resistance - a David and Goliath scenario. Having faith in the process and projecting an optimistic outlook that it had picked the right approach was vital to the organisation's success.

It has since closed a fresh round of investor funding that now values the company at €2.2 bn.

But not all businesses will have a clear vision of how to achieve success. It can often require venturing down an unknown path without knowing what the right or wrong direction is. It's in these moments that examples like Monzo can shine a light on the right approach to take to reach your own final destination.

## THE OPTIMISTIC MERGER AND REBRAND CHALLENGE

Completing a successful merger or acquisition is one of the most radical steps you can take to innovate. The injection of new talent, the cultural alignment and client or supplier management needed is a nuanced strategic challenge with variable outcomes.

Barriers such as alignment of purpose, policy, location or even technology can be firmly locked against the desire for innovation and change.

Take John Lewis as an example: an established brand with legacy provenance on the high street and a rightful place as a business who purvey only the finest goods and operate a 'never knowingly undersold' policy. The company faced a troubled market and had an opportunity to reinvent itself, and for good reason. Last year, House of Fraser entered administration with significant losses reported by other large retailers such as Debenhams.

It would have been possible to say a positive outcome in the current climate was barely possible for a high street brand.

Instead they took an alternative approach and looked outside their skillset to find a business that aligned with their optimistic perspective. By aligning, both organisations ended up stronger than before and were able to envisage a positive outcome together.





# Culture

Technology breakthroughs are making our lives easier and helping to drive business successes forward. But without the backing of the people using it, only failure can be expected. That's where workplace optimism comes in, acknowledging the characteristics of people within an organisation.

## OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK

An optimistic outlook is vital in ensuring the adoption of new technologies, processes and productivity. But "cultured" change is difficult and time-consuming. Creating a culture of optimism cannot be turned on overnight and it's not a simple instruction to your employees that the business has a new purpose and way of working.

A positive working culture is critical to success and culture is fundamental to motivation, well-being and satisfaction. Arguably, it's also culture that is the most important catalyst to generate creative ideas and therefore performance within a business.

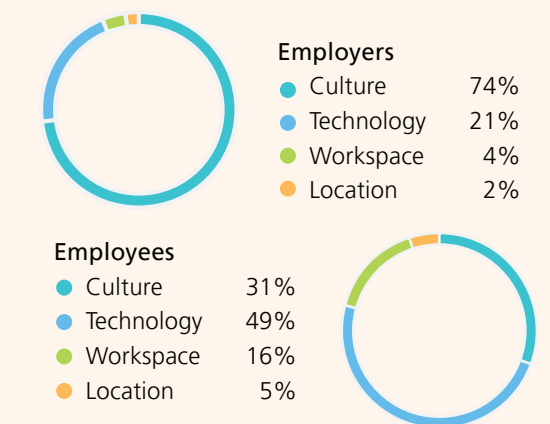
However, businesses are facing a critical shift in how their culture can drive creativity and performance.

## WHAT DO EMPLOYEES VALUE?

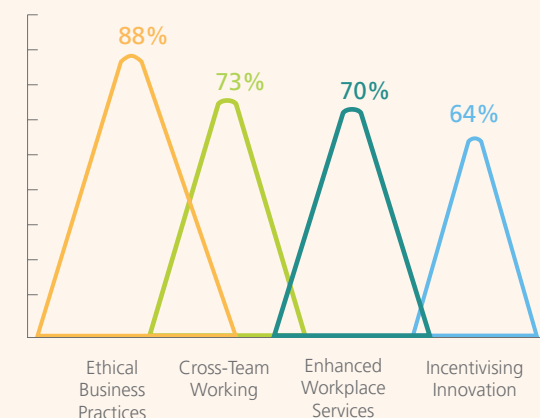
Executives ranked commitment to ethical business practices first at 88 per cent, followed by encouraging cross-team working and collaboration (73 per cent), providing enhanced workplace services (70 per cent), and incentivising innovation through the organisation (64 per cent).

Younger employees are still fairly satisfied but feel less affected by their organisation's ethics and values.

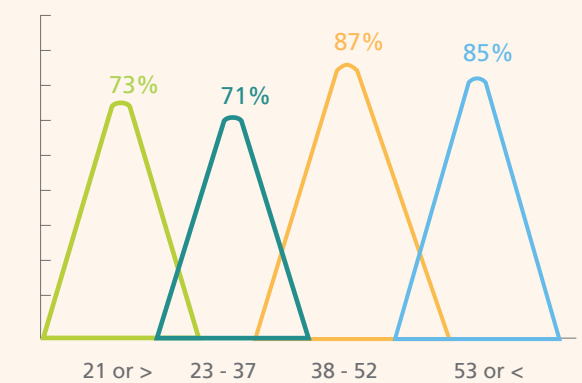
What generates creative ideas?



Executives response when asked how effective incentivising innovation in the organisation is at increasing work performance and productivity:



Employee response when asked if they agree that their organisation's ethics and values encourage them to work more productively (by age group):







# Workplace

The way people work has evolved. As a result, the environment people work in has too. Workplace change is always the most noticeable difference in a business. If you removed the desks or changed the layout of your office, it would make an instant impact.

Our recent research found 65 per cent of employers have invested in their office environment and 79 per cent of employees have stated that a better office environment has improved their productivity and culture. But changes, whether small or large, can be unsettling for your employees and can significantly impact your organisation's productivity if not implemented correctly.

## PRE-EMPTIVE RETREAT

Too often, pre-emptive retreat kicks in when embarking on an unknown journey or when you're faced with resistance. Pre-emptive retreat is the notion or idea of surrendering a strategy before it's even given the chance and falling into a negative frame of mind from the outset.

As a business, it can often be more tempting to go back to what you know when making significant changes to your physical workplace. But in our experience, time is often the key factor. Staying optimistic can make a huge difference to ensuring a lasting effect that makes a positive impact.

What's for certain is that there's a collective movement to create workplaces that are reflective of people. The majority (82 per cent) of businesses are planning to invest in their workspace over the next few years.

The first step to take in making a change to your workplace requires **Bravery**, but it requires **Optimism** to make a lasting impact that's successful in the long run.





# Technology

Technology is about connecting the 'physical workspace'. Platforms like Slack, Zoom and Skype have become modes of communication for collaborative working from a remote location. Unfortunately, without the right processes in place, employees find it challenging to get to grips with new platforms. This can make new technology a hindrance rather than an enabler.

**TECHNO-OPTIMISM IS THE VIEW THAT EXPONENTIAL TECHNOLOGICAL GROWTH WILL ALLOW YOU TO EXPAND RESOURCES AHEAD OF EXPONENTIALLY INCREASING DEMANDS.**

## TECHNO-OPTIMISM

When looking to seek greater productivity through technology, you need to ensure that you are providing a holistic, people-first approach during the implementation stage.

New processes need to be underpinned with an optimistic outlook on how a new type of technology will function within the workplace. You also need to be okay with the notion that there might be some trial and error.

Adopting a techno-optimistic mindset that new technology might not work at first, as well as understanding how you can adjust a new platform to enable people to be more productive, is what optimism in the workplace is all about.

Examples of the optimistic view suggest a range of applications. If your business is expanding its headcount but is constricted by physical workspace, technological innovation can increase productivity and aid capacity through flexible working and hot-desking.

As these examples might suggest, technological growth means technological advancement, and new techniques. These will help provide more output and mean you are no longer spending more money on legacy technology.

Exponential technological growth means continuously improving through new advancements. This is the type of optimistic mindset that businesses must adopt.



# Summary

It's bravery that leads you to take the first step into the dark, but it's optimism that will keep you moving and help steer you to reach your end destination.

Every business needs to be optimistic and build a bespoke approach that balances people, processes, workplace and technology in order to develop the optimal office. Each element requires a level of optimism in pursuing an end goal.

As you look to embrace digital transformation and generate your own optimal office, the following questions will help set the tone:

1. Are processes and procedures like flexible working monitored for use or designed with purpose and productivity in mind?
2. Is technology in the workplace a series of short-term adjustments, or the foundation of an organisation that has fundamentally changed the way people work?
3. Have you given change a chance? And how long has it been?
4. If the change you've implemented was to fail, what would the consequences be and how could it be turned into an opportunity?
5. Has the relevant training been provided to employees if processes and systems have changed?

At Ricoh, we are here to help guide you on developing your own pathway to productive people. For further advice, or to schedule a workplace consultation, please contact [info@ricoh.ie](mailto:info@ricoh.ie)



# What To Do Next?

If you are looking to kick-start workstyle innovation in your organisation you can:

- ▶ **Speak to a member of our team**
- ▶ **Book a tour in your local Ricoh Office**
- ▶ **Schedule a workplace consultation**



Pre-emptive retreat is all too common when taking on transformational change. The key to unlocking this middle stop on the journey is in understanding the reality. It won't always be quick; it won't always work the first time. But with a bit of optimism and perseverance, it will be worth it.

**- Phil Keoghan, CEO, Ricoh UK  
& Ireland**



## About Ricoh

Ricoh is empowering digital workplaces using innovative technologies and services enabling individuals to work smarter. For more than 80 years, Ricoh has been driving innovation and is a leading provider of document management solutions, IT services, commercial and industrial printing, digital cameras, and industrial systems.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh Group operates in approximately 200 countries and regions. In the financial year ended March 2019, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 2,013 billion yen (approx. 18.1 billion USD).

For further information, please visit [www.ricoh.ie](http://www.ricoh.ie)