

# PA ENTERPRISE

DeskDemon's Magazine for Executive PAs, Office Managers and Secretaries

May 2024

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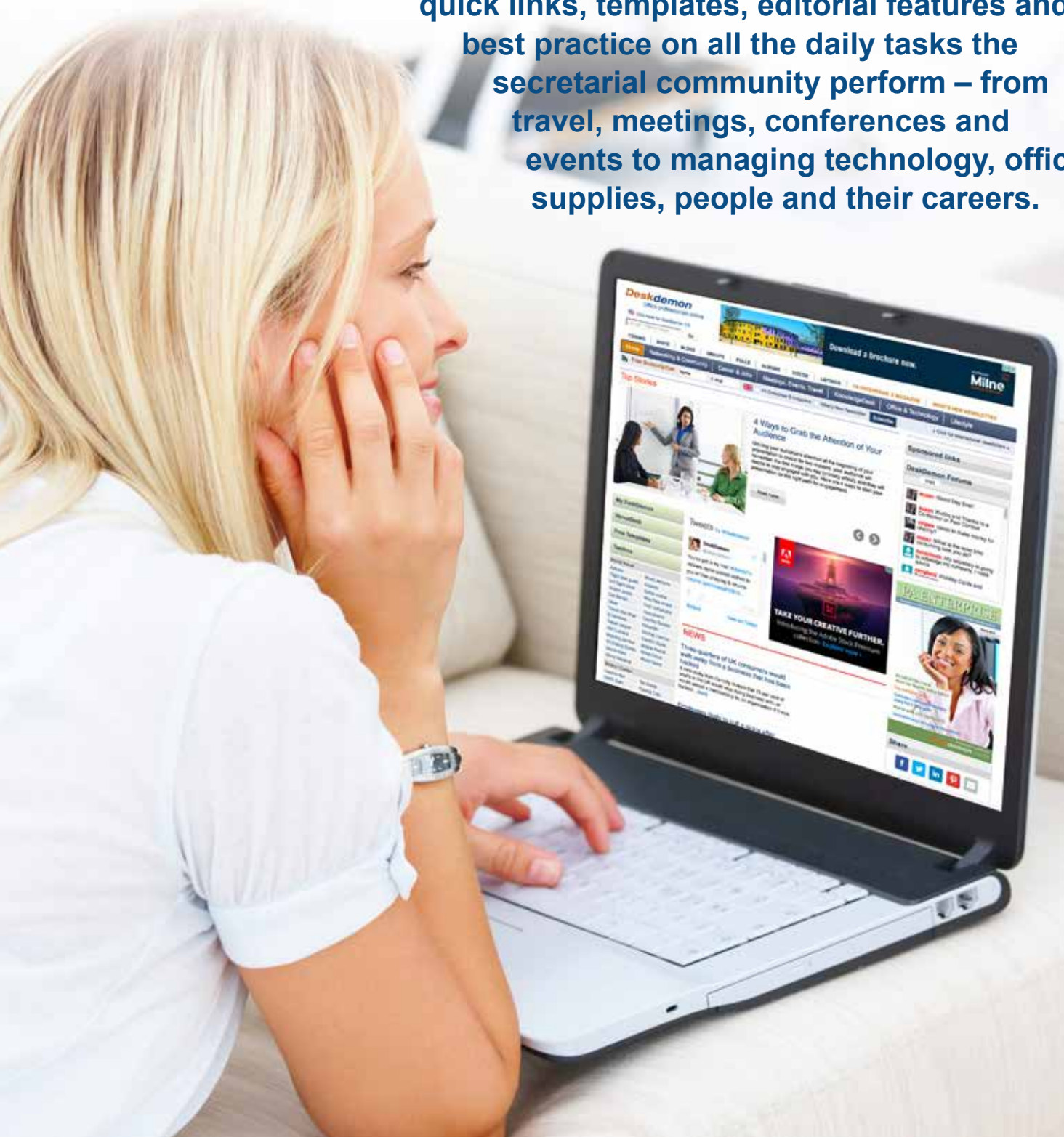
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# 10 Common Workplace Challenges and Solutions



*There are many challenges that come with working in an office. From the sometimes overwhelming feeling of being overworked to the hidden stressors such as having to be “on” all day, it’s not always easy for employees. However, there are ways to overcome these obstacles and get more out of your workday.*

In this article, we’ll explore some common workplace challenges and share ideas for how you can turn them into solutions.

## **10 Workplace Challenges and Solutions**

If you look at most challenges in the workplace, they’re not unique to any one

business. This is good news because it means there’s plenty of advice out there to help you find a solution!

### **1. Insufficient Training**

A lack of training leads to a number of workplace issues. The most obvious one is

that employees aren't able to do their jobs as well as they would like, but it goes deeper than this.

Poor training is a leadership challenge in the workplace that can also lead to increased frustration because employees don't know what it takes to improve their performance or excel in their roles. If left unchecked, this can lead to employee burnout, which can be very damaging for the employee and the business. Eventually, this may turn into the biggest challenge at work.

### **SOLUTION:**

*It's important to see training as an investment. When you make training a big part of your culture, it will come back to you in improved efficiency and productivity.*

*Make sure it's an open process by involving your employees in the conversation. Ask them what skills they think they need to work on.*

## **2. Schedule Inflexibility**

People lead complicated lives that don't always fit with the Monday to Friday, 9-5 work schedule. While some businesses need their employees to work a fixed schedule, there are many that don't.

Scheduling inflexibility can lead to higher stress levels, and affect your workers' ability to do their best work.

### **SOLUTION:**

*Flexible schedules might seem complicated, but with the right scheduling software, they're actually easy to manage. You can still keep track of your employees' time (if you feel it's necessary), and you can give your staff greater responsibility for their*

*schedules.*

*The easiest way to do this is with employee scheduling software from ZoomShift. This will allow you to effortlessly create schedules (including rotating shifts and split shifts) and track your employees' time, but most importantly, it provides flexibility.*

*Employees can easily request time off, trade shifts, and track their PTO, all of which gives them a great sense of flexibility.*

## **3. Poor Work-Life Balance**

If you have a work-life balance problem, it is the biggest challenge at work. We all know balancing work-life balance is tricky. From the CEO down to the new entry-level employee, we can all find it tricky to get this right.

As a business owner and manager, important thing to remember is that more time spent at work doesn't necessarily mean you get more work done, and it certainly doesn't guarantee quality. If you're expecting your employees to spend all their hours at work and rarely grant time off, then it's going to start to affect their health and their performance.

### **SOLUTION:**

*Work-life balance starts with culture. If you're conveying a message that the way to success is to spend as much time as possible in the office, then it's not surprising that people are going to lack a proper work-life balance (even if your scheduling is flexible).*

*Celebrate time off and the idea that rest and relaxation are essential to peak performance. Invest in employee wellbeing, and encourage people to switch off when*

*they leave the office (don't expect people to constantly reply to emails and messages outside of office hours).*

#### **4. Lack of Motivation**

Motivation isn't something you can just magic up. There will always be some days where your employees feel motivated and others where they don't.

What is a problem when there's a persistent lack of motivation across your entire workforce?

Motivation is a common workplace challenge, and thankfully there are lots of solutions to it.

#### **SOLUTION:**

*Communicate with your staff! A great place to start is by asking what factors they find most motivating. Create a list of factors such as pay, time off, goals, and bonuses, and ask them to rank them in order of importance.*

*This will help you understand what gets the most out of your employees, allowing you to implement new motivation techniques.*

#### **5. Lack of Communication**

A lack of communication is a common problem in the workplace. But without communication, it's difficult for employees to know what's expected of them. It also means that other problems go unreported, rather than getting fixed, they begin to stack up.

Poor communication will hurt productivity and lead to more errors, so it's important that businesses find ways to improve in this area.

#### **SOLUTION:**

*Encouraging open communication should be one of the main roles of a manager. It's about putting systems in place that allows messages to travel freely from top-to-bottom, and bottom to top.*

*Sometimes this can be as simple as finding the right platform to communicate on. For example, you might be doing everything through email, when instead, what you need is something more instant like Slack, that integrates well with your project management tools.*

#### **6. Trust Issues**

When it comes to workplace challenges and solutions, trust issues can be one of the most difficult to solve. This is because trust is generally eroded over a period of time, and it takes time to win it back.

If employees feel like their employers can't be trusted, or that they're not trusted to do their job, then it's a recipe for unhappiness.

#### **SOLUTION:**

*One of the easiest ways for trust to break down is through a lack of communication. People can't read minds, so when they're not getting the information they need, they start to fill in the blanks themselves, and often not in a good way.*

*Sometimes businesses have to deliver bad news, but if you're open and honest about it, it's going to help build trust.*

*One way to get people to communicate and trust each other again is to encourage team-building activities.*



**7. Little Recognition**

It's natural that people want to be recognized for the hard work they do. It's easy to get into the mindset that an employee's pay is their recognition, but often it's the small details that really matter.

When someone does great work, it's an excellent opportunity to boost morale and build trust, so don't miss out on it.

**SOLUTION:**

*Create employee rewards like employee of the month, and keep track of milestones like birthdays and work anniversaries. Demonstrate that your employees are valuable to your company, and recognition shouldn't be a problem at work.*

**8. Staff Conflict/ Bullying**

Staff conflicts happen, it's a part of life, and it's



a part of the business. People have different opinions, and that's a great thing, but it's how communication is handled that matters.

When differences of opinion spill over into outright conflict, and even bullying, it can be terrible for employee morale, performance, productivity, mood, and everything else.

#### **SOLUTION:**

*You can overcome this common workplace challenge by creating an open environment where employees can express themselves in a structured way. By promoting teamwork, encouraging feedback, addressing negative attitudes, and asking about the biggest challenges at work, you can create a more harmonious environment.*

### **9. No Potential Growth**

Everybody has goals. As much as your employees might enjoy their jobs, they also want to progress their careers and take on new challenges in the workplace. If your business doesn't appear to offer these opportunities, then it's going to be a top issue in the workplace.

#### **SOLUTION:**

*Set a career progression map that shows your employees the opportunities that are available. Discuss what criteria need to be met for raises, and help your staff plan their career trajectory.*

*The other important aspect is to follow through with what you talk about. Show that you promote from within and offer raises to high-performing employees.*

### **10. Lack of Technology**

It can be endlessly frustrating when you don't have the right tools to do your job.

Choosing the right technology can be difficult, particularly for small business owners who have limited resources. However, there's some technology that pays for itself in the long run, and without it, you just can't keep up with the competition.

#### **SOLUTION:**

*One of the best things you can do is create a technology plan. This looks at your current and future needs to decide which technology is a priority and which can wait.*

*Make sure to get feedback from your employees, as they're the ones that will be working with the technology on a daily basis. Ask them what problems have you faced during the work and what technology can help resolve that.*

*You'll find that technology like ZoomShift can save employees precious time, freeing them up to spend more time on the most important tasks.*

### **Final Thoughts**

Leadership challenges in the workplace are a part of the business. There are always going to be new workplace issues, but the important thing is that you can work through them in a logical, timely way.

These are some of the most common workplace challenges and solutions. As you can see, they're very solvable. Often, the key is communication, and with the right technology, you can normally find a simple solution.



# Jobs fall across the UK: Remote working declining as firms push for office returns

The number of UK job postings fell by 2.5% in March, with remote job roles also contracting as businesses increase return to office pressures. That's according to the latest data from leading global talent solutions provider, WilsonHCG.

The data – powered by Claro Analytics, WilsonHCG's talent intelligence and labour market analytics platform – marked the fifth consecutive month of decline. The number of job postings for remote roles also dropped, as more organisations continue to push for a return to office.

In March 2024, 4.4% of jobs in the UK were listed as fully remote, down on the 5.8% reported in January 2023. Hybrid job postings have, however, seen a gradual uptick over the last 12 months, increasing by 0.5 percentage points between March 2023 and 2024.

## AI demand remains robust

Demand for artificial intelligence (AI) specialists remains robust though, with 2,971 AI-specific job openings reported in March 2024. Data scientists were the most in demand roles in AI for the month, followed by Senior Data Scientists and Machine Learning Engineers.

Of the organisations most actively recruiting for AI specialists, JPMorgan Chase Bank

National Association is the top employer, accounting for 155 of all AI job postings last month. Harnham and International Business Machines Corporation round off the top three companies hiring AI specialists across the UK in March.

Craig Sweeney, EVP of global strategic talent solutions at WilsonHCG commented:

“The slowdown in hiring is perhaps expected given the economic climate, while the drop in remote job postings does suggest that even more employers are opting for a return to office. Given the positive impact that more flexible working practices can have on diverse recruitment and employee retention, it's encouraging to see that hybrid working options are slowly increasing.

“More broadly, the data does suggest that demand for AI specialists is continuing to rise. And it shows no signs of slowing, particularly with the latest news that Microsoft is launching an AI hub in London. The demand for AI expertise is growing across businesses of all sizes, so competition for both general and specialist AI skills is going to intensify over the coming months. Employers need to ensure they're in a position to both bring in new resources and expand and grow skillsets within the business to create a sustainable talent pool.”

# How will Artificial Intelligence affect jobs 2024-2030?



*You would have been living under a rock if you did not know how artificial intelligence is set to affect jobs in 2024-2030. AI like ChatGPT seems to be stealing all of the headlines at the moment, Google unveiled new AI software to build presentations, analyze and enter data, and write content, and there are so many more AI tools like Gamma and Numerous AI.*

## WHAT JOBS ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE AUTOMATED?

### Customer service representative

Most human customer service interactions are no longer done by phone with human employees manning the lines. Most of the time, the queries and problems of customers are repetitive. Answering these queries does not require high emotional or social intelligence. Therefore, AI can be used to provide automated responses to frequently asked questions.

### Receptionists

The majority of companies across the world are now using robots at their reception. Even the calls are being managed by AI now. For example, AimeReception can see, listen, understand, and talk with guests and customers.

### Accountants/Bookkeepers

Many companies are now using automation and ai for their bookkeeping practices. AI-powered bookkeeping services provide an efficient accounting system and flexibility and security, considering that they are available as cloud-based services. Using ai algorithms, AI will ensure the data is collected, stored, and analyzed correctly. Using an AI accounting service is significantly less costly than paying an employee's salary to do the same job.

### Salespeople

Gone are the days when corporations required salespeople for advertising and retail activities. Advertising has shifted towards web and social media landscapes. The built-in target marketing capabilities in social media allow advertisers to create custom content for different types of audiences.

### Research and analysis

The fields of data analysis and research are areas that already implement the use of artificial intelligence as a method of streamlining the process and identifying new data without human assistance. The processing power of modern computers allows for the efficient sorting, extrapolation and analysis of data. As artificial intelligence continues to improve, there may not be a need for humans to play a role in data analysis and research.

### Warehouse work

Online sales is a steadily growing industry and comes with an increasing need for processes and automated systems that efficiently get orders onto trucks for delivery. One area of focus for streamlining the process has been the use of automation. Basic automation and artificial implementation in a warehouse allow for easy access to computerized systems to locate packages and direct staff, and future AI may even perform mechanized retrieval and loading to increase shipping capacities.

### Insurance underwriting

When making assessments on the viability of insurance applicants, the most important work is often in analyzing the data available and applying it within a set of formulas or structures. Automation can easily complete these tasks and is continually adapting to perform more complicated duties, which may reduce how many underwriters a company requires.

### Retail

Self-checkout stations at stores are an example of automation in the retail sphere and





have gained prominence in grocery stores and big-box outlets. When a company makes use of self-checkout areas, it results from a cost-benefit analysis. Although allowing customers to scan their own items can increase the instances of theft, the company saves more money by reducing the need for employees working registers.

### **WHICH JOBS WILL NOT BE REPLACED BY AI?**

It is widely touted that ai will create more jobs than it replaces. Further to that, many in certain industries will breath a sigh of relief that ai will not threaten their vocation and livelihood. These are some of the jobs that will not involve repetitive tasks and be prone to disruption. This means that ai will not replace those that perform them in the open labor market.

#### **Teachers**

Teachers often represent a reference point for many of us. Often, our academic decisions are partly based on how inspiring a particular teacher has been with us in the years prior. For all these reasons, it is almost impossible that we will have a fully digital teaching experience in the Future.

#### **Lawyers and judges**

These positions have a strong component of negotiation, strategy and case analysis. A lot is based on the personal experience and knowledge of each specialist. It requires a certain set of skills to be able to navigate complex legal systems and argue in defense of a client in court. There is a human factor involved when it comes down to consider all the various aspects of a trial and take a final decision that could turn into years in prison.

#### **Directors, Managers and CEOs**

Managing teams inside an organization is a matter of Leadership and this is not a stack of behaviors that can be written down in a code and processed in a linear way. A CEO is also the person responsible for sharing the company's mission and value down to the team. It is very unlikely that investors will ever feel comfortable investing in a company managed by robots or algorithms.

#### **HR Managers**

Although ai does assist in the hiring process to make sifting through CVs so much easier and quicker, Human Resource Managers still cover a variety of very important tasks inside an organization. Hiring new professionals

is just part of their prerogatives. They also are a key position inside the organization for maintaining the staff motivated, detecting early-on signs of discontent, and manage them if possible.

### **Psychologists and Psychiatrists**

Although a lot of face recognition technology is currently being used to develop initial AI counseling care and support, given the growing demand, mental health is a very delicate topic. Human touch is essential when it comes down to supporting people to succeed in their lives.

### **Surgeons**

For sure, technology has seriously increased the accuracy with whom we are today able to diagnose and detect diseases in any medical report. Micro robotics also enhance the precision of the surgeons when it comes down to operation, enabling less invasive procedures. But being a surgeon requires the ability to connect with the patient on so many other different levels while taking a vast number of the factor under consideration at the same time. Experience, knowledge, and skills acquired throughout the years are all factors that need to be condensed in a matter of minutes during an operation.

### **Computer System Analysts**

No matter how automated we become, there will always be the need of a human presence that can run maintenance work, update, improve, correct, and set-up complex software and hardware systems that often require coordination among more than one specialist in order to properly work. Reviewing the system capabilities, controlling the workflow and schedule improvements and increase

automation is only part of a Computer System Analyst, a profession that is a great demand in the last years.

### **Artists and writers**

Writing especially is such an imaginative fine art, and being able to place a specific selection of words in the right order is definitely a challenging endeavor. So even if AI technically would have the capacity of absorbing the content of most books in the world, in probably any language and come up with a somewhat personal style of communication, the magic and thrill of creating art with words is something that is pretty much going to rest in our domain of competition in the years to come.

### **HOW MANY JOBS WILL BE LOST TO AI BY 2025?**

The World Economic Forum has estimated that artificial intelligence will replace some 85 million jobs by 2025. Freethink says that 65% of retail jobs could be automated by that year, saying that this is largely due to technological advancements, rising costs and wages, tight labor markets, and reduced consumer spending.

### **HOW MANY JOBS WILL BE LOST TO AI BY 2030?**

PwC estimates that by the mid-2030s, up to 30% of jobs could be automatable, with slightly more men being affected in the long run as autonomous vehicles and other machines replace many manual tasks where their share of employment is higher. During the first and second waves, they estimate that women could be at greater risk of automation due to their higher representation in clerical and other administrative functions .

# Make simple changes for more eco-friendly office



*In today's world, it is crucial to focus on sustainability and reducing our impact on the environment. As a result, many offices are starting to adopt eco-friendly practices to reduce waste and conserve resources. Here are ways to make your office more eco-friendly.*

**Use LED light bulbs, which consume less energy than traditional bulbs and last longer:** LED light bulbs are more energy-efficient and longer-lasting than traditional bulbs. They consume up to 80% less energy and can last up to 25 times longer than incandescent bulbs.

**Turn off lights when not in use, and use natural light when possible:** Turning off lights when not in use can save a significant amount of energy. If possible, use natural light to reduce the need for artificial lighting.

**Install motion sensors that turn off lights when a room is empty:** Motion sensors can help to reduce energy consumption by automatically turning off lights when a room is empty.

**Unplug electronics when they are not in use, as they can still consume energy even when turned off:** Many electronics continue to consume energy even when turned off, so it's important to unplug them when they are not in use.

**Use laptops instead of desktops, as they consume less energy:** Laptops consume less energy than desktop computers, so they are a more eco-friendly option.

**Print double-sided to reduce paper usage:** Printing on both sides of a sheet of paper can significantly reduce paper usage.

**Use recycled paper or paper made from sustainable sources:** Using recycled paper or paper made from sustainable sources can help to reduce the environmental impact of paper production.

**Use paperless options such as email, online collaboration tools, and cloud**

**storage:** Using paperless options can reduce the need for paper and help to conserve resources.

**Use refillable pens and pencils:** Refillable pens and pencils can reduce the amount of waste generated by disposable pens and pencils.

**Use reusable mugs, plates, and cutlery instead of disposable ones:** Using reusable mugs, plates, and cutlery can reduce the amount of waste generated by disposable products.

**Install a water dispenser to reduce plastic bottle waste:** Installing a water dispenser can reduce the need for plastic water bottles.

**Use eco-friendly cleaning products:** Using eco-friendly cleaning products can help to reduce the environmental impact of cleaning.

**Provide bike racks and encourage employees to bike to work:** Encouraging employees to bike to work can reduce the environmental impact of commuting.

**Encourage carpooling and public transportation:** Encouraging carpooling and public transportation can also reduce the environmental impact of commuting.

**Set up a composting program:** Setting up a composting program can help to reduce the amount of organic waste generated by the

**Use energy-efficient appliances:** Using energy-efficient appliances can help to reduce energy consumption.

**Use eco-friendly ink cartridges:** Using eco-friendly ink cartridges can help to reduce the environmental impact of printing.

**Choose eco-friendly office furniture made from sustainable materials:** Choosing eco-friendly office furniture can help to reduce the environmental impact of furniture production.

**Use natural cleaning products like vinegar and baking soda:** Using natural cleaning products can help to reduce the environmental impact of cleaning.

**Recycle paper, plastic, and other materials:** Recycling can help to reduce the amount of waste generated by the office.

**Encourage employees to bring in reusable containers for lunch:** Encouraging employees to bring in reusable containers can help to reduce the amount of waste generated by lunchtime.

**Offer incentives for employees who use eco-friendly transportation:** Offering incentives for eco-friendly transportation can encourage employees to choose more sustainable options.

**Purchase carbon offsets for business travel:** Purchasing carbon offsets can help to offset the environmental impact of business travel.

**Use eco-friendly packaging for shipping:** Using eco-friendly packaging can help to reduce the environmental impact of shipping.

**Use electronic billing and invoicing instead of paper:** Using electronic billing and invoicing can reduce the amount of paper used in the office.

**Use natural or organic products in the office kitchen:** Using natural or organic products in the office kitchen can reduce the environmental impact of food and beverage consumption.

**Encourage the use of reusable bags and containers for office supplies:** Encouraging the use of reusable bags and containers can reduce the amount of waste generated by office supply purchases.

**Use energy-efficient HVAC systems:** Using energy-efficient HVAC systems can help to reduce energy consumption for heating and cooling.

**Provide training on eco-friendly practices for employees:** Providing training on eco-friendly practices can help to ensure that all employees are aware of and practicing environmentally friendly behaviors.

**Encourage the use of eco-friendly transportation for business trips:** Encouraging the use of eco-friendly transportation for business trips can reduce the environmental impact of travel.

**Install solar panels or other renewable energy sources:** Installing solar panels or other renewable energy sources can help to reduce the environmental impact of energy consumption.

**Provide recycling bins in common areas and individual workspaces:** Providing recycling bins in common areas and individual workspaces can make it easy for employees to recycle.

**Use eco-friendly promotional products:** Using eco-friendly promotional products can help to reduce the environmental impact of marketing and advertising.

**Provide filtered water instead of bottled water:** Providing filtered water can reduce the need for plastic water bottles.





**Set up a car-sharing program for employees:** Setting up a car-sharing program can encourage employees to choose more sustainable transportation options.

**Participate in local environmental initiatives:** Participating in local environmental initiatives can help to promote sustainability in the community.

**Set up a green team to promote sustainability in the office:** Setting up a green team can help to promote sustainability and encourage eco-friendly behaviors among employees.

**Implement a green purchasing policy:** Implementing a green purchasing policy can

help to ensure that environmentally friendly products are being purchased for the office.

In conclusion, there are numerous ways to make your office more eco-friendly. By implementing these practices, you can reduce your environmental impact, conserve resources, and create a healthier workplace for your employees. Start with one or two changes and gradually add more until your office is fully sustainable. Remember that every little bit helps, and together, we can make a significant impact on the environment.

# How to support neurodivergent employees in the workplace



There has been a rise in the number of people diagnosed with “neurodivergence” in adulthood over the past decade. This trend has been noted both internationally and in New Zealand. But exact rates of diagnoses in this country are difficult to quantify. As many as 8% of adults globally could have some form of neurodivergence.

Neurodivergence is an umbrella term that typically includes autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and specific learning disorders (SLD) – sometimes referred to as dyslexia.

The rise in these diagnoses when people are already in the workforce presents a challenge for employers. Business owners can be left wondering how they can support neurodivergent employees without causing issues for the wider business.

### **‘Childhood’ diagnoses now part of adulthood**

Historically, diagnoses were predominantly made in children, with the view that people “grew out” of them as they developed into adults.

But research over the past decade indicates the majority of people with these conditions continue to experience symptoms throughout their adult life, albeit in different ways to childhood.

Understanding neurodivergence is underpinned by the view that ASD, ADHD, and SLD reflect differences in how a person’s brain is “wired” rather than being an underlying “disorder”.

This changing view appears to have increased awareness of neurodivergence. It has also reduced the stigma associated with it, leading

more people to seek support as adults.

A limited understanding of gender differences in the way neurodivergence is expressed, as well as limited access to psychological and psychiatric assessments in the public sector, have likely contributed to significant numbers of people missing out on childhood diagnoses. Many are now seeking assistance in adulthood.

### **Neurodivergence in the workplace**

This rising tide of adults seeking to better understand their differences – and potentially seek treatment – has presented challenges for businesses and employers.

But employers need not fear hiring those who are neurodivergent. Viewing neurodivergence as a difference rather than a disability contributes to an inclusive workplace where people’s strengths are recognised and celebrated.

Some people with ADHD, for example, work very effectively in a fast-paced environment with tight deadlines and rapidly changing content, such as journalism. People with ASD often have very specialised areas of interest that, if matched to the right work environment, can lead them to be experts in their fields.

But it would be naive to say neurodivergence doesn’t bring with it some challenges for individuals and their workplaces. A person with ADHD may appear quite disorganised to others (and to themselves), and at times “put their foot in their mouth” through impulsively saying something they haven’t fully thought through.

Those with ASD often report challenges in navigating social relationships at work, or may

have particular sensory sensitivities (finding the general hubbub of open-plan offices anxiety-provoking, for example). They may struggle to process large amounts of written or verbal information, resulting in confusion and anxiety.

### **Businesses need awareness**

Businesses and organisations looking to support neurodivergence in the workplace should initially focus on increasing awareness and understanding among leaders and managers.

Managers need to work with individual staff who have self-identified as neurodivergent to understand and implement what is needed to support them.

There may be some very practical steps that can be taken, such as having designated low-stimulus areas, providing noise-cancelling headphones, or understanding how best to communicate clearly and simply with an individual. Some staff may wish to take up psychological support via their workplace to help them develop skills in areas they find difficult.

Technically, neurodivergence is likely to fall under the Employment Relations Act, which prohibits businesses from discriminating against people with these conditions. Indeed, the legislation requires an employer to make reasonable allowances in the workplace.

Perhaps the worst thing an employer can do is overlook neurodivergence as being present in the workplace. Ignorance, whether wilful or not, will lead to inaction.

That said, it would also be a mistake for an employer to unilaterally refer a staff member for an assessment of suspected



neurodivergence. To suggest someone is neurodivergent and requires a psychological assessment may lead to personal distress and potentially breach employment law.

Employers should also be aware of the lengthy and complicated pathway to an adult diagnosis, due to factors such as lack of clear adult diagnostic criteria and shortage of trained clinicians. Employers can support staff in this process by allowing flexibility in work hours to attend specialist appointments, or even funding access to assessments in the private sector.

The rise of awareness about neurodivergence mirrors the rise in awareness of mental health conditions in the workplace generally.

Although this increased visibility can be confusing for some staff and organisations, recognition and understanding of neurodivergence can only be good for businesses in the long term.

Helping people operate to their full potential by understanding their strengths and challenges will ultimately lead to thriving and productive workplaces.

# How to get a job: six expert tips for finding work

If you're on the hunt for a job and not sure where to start, or how to pitch yourself you're not alone.

The rising cost of living has meant thousands of businesses have been laying off staff, with many people finding themselves out of work.

But about 10.8 million people are out of work, either unemployed or classed as economically inactive.

It may feel daunting to try and find a job at first so we spoke to some career experts to give you some tips.

## 1. Search beyond a 40 mile radius

There have been a lot of shifts in the workplace in recent years. Hybrid and flexible working means your job search can stretch a bit further, quite literally.

Yvonne Smyth, group head of diversity and inclusion at Hays Recruitment says "Proximity isn't as important as used to be, so if you're looking for a job, search far and wide in terms of geography.

"Also if you want to work part-time or say four days a week, don't let full-time positions put you off applying," she says.

"Businesses are more flexible than you might think and if you're the right candidate that can get the job done in fewer days it makes sense for them to adapt the role."



## 2. Use key words in your searches

Ms Smyth also says it's important to use key words when you're searching online.

"For example if there's a key skill or industry like sales or retail that you're interested in, you want the algorithms on search platforms to pick up on them.

"So daily searches on these words are important, so it identifies what you're interested in.

"Engagement as well is key and that means clicking on jobs with the job titles or a company that you're keen on so the platform yields more of the same."

### 3. Don't wait for a job to be advertised

Not all jobs are made public. It's always worth sending an email or having a chat with a manager at a business that you like the look of, as you never know when an opening might be coming up.

Many businesses want to avoid the cost of advertising a job formally and may rely on word of mouth. Miranda Kyte, a career trends expert at Glassdoor says: "Another route is to utilise your network, let friends, ex-colleagues, family know that you're looking for a new position.

"They may be able to check internal job boards for open roles at their own companies and refer you or they could know someone else who can help."

### 4. Sell your skills not years

Lots of places still ask for a CV and a covering letter when you're applying for a job.

But now you can advertise yourself rather visibly via social media sites like LinkedIn which showcase your skills and experience.

Other platforms like Twitter and Instagram can prove useful when touting yourself out to potential employers as well.

Yvonne Smyth from Hays says it's important to focus on skills.

"Lots of people look at the years required on a job description but actually it's more important that a candidate has the right skills. Try to look for parallels and make that obvious in your application."

### 5. Get learning

It can be a little disheartening if the jobs you want require specific very specific qualifications. It may be worth having a look at if there are any ways of picking up the experience or training that you need to land a job while you're on the hunt.

Miranda Kyte from Glassdoor says: "Lots of courses these days are free and you can do them online. Volunteering is also a great way of filling gaps on your CV or asking to do some work shadowing in companies you'd like to work for."

### 6. Celebrate the small wins

It's easy to get disheartened if you are knocked back after interviews time and time again, or you don't feel like you're getting through the door in the first place.

Our career experts say it's good to review how you're going about your search from time to time and try different approaches.

Career influencer, Mehar Sindhu Batra, says it's quite useful to set personal targets, like a tracker of the number of jobs to apply for in a week or a certain number of cold emails.

She's a big believer in acknowledging the little wins along the way to keep your spirits up.

"Maybe you landed an interview, received positive feedback on your resume or cover letter, or connected with a helpful contact. Celebrating these wins can boost your confidence and keep you motivated".

# Work-related stress and how to reduce it

*In a landscape where stress levels are soaring, implementing small yet impactful changes can significantly improve employee well-being.*



April marked the UK's 32nd Stress Awareness Month the theme of which was 'Little by Little' which has been devised to encourage people to understand how little and consistent effort can help with stress.

Current estimates suggest 51% of long-term sick leave in the UK is attributed to stress. 55% of workers state they feel work is getting more demanding and intense and 67% of workers say they can't switch off and feel compelled to check emails outside of work hours. When this is combined with external

factors such as the impact of the cost of living crisis, the lasting impact of the pandemic, the increased cost of childcare and a general rise in mental health conditions across the population the team, at Cream HR believes it is no surprise that more and more people claim they feel exhausted at the end of every day (61%). Anthony Sutton, Director of Cream HR, believes that there are small steps that employers can take that can help their teams manage stress.

Anthony said “with time off work due to struggles with mental health reportedly costing businesses in the UK £28 billion per year it’s worth all business leaders looking at ways they can support their staff, not only during stress awareness month but all year round. Budgets are tight for lots of people at the moment but making the work environment less stressful doesn’t have to be expensive. Whilst booking big team away days or huge Christmas parties can be great, it’s actually the smaller everyday changes that will have the biggest impact on stress levels.”

### **Lead by example**

Rates of work-related stress are high but it isn’t a problem that the employee should have to solve alone. Managers and leaders play an important role in combating work-related stress by the behaviours they model.

Change has to start at the top so it’s imperative to lead by example. Be vocal about your own stresses and how you manage them. Educate people in your business about spotting the signs of stress and how they can address them.

Where managers lead, the organisation will follow.

### **Develop a supportive workplace culture**

A workplace where people can talk openly about their struggles and stresses or other aspects of their mental health, whilst feeling safe and free of judgement can have a huge impact on managing stress within the workforce.

That’s not to say that developing this type of culture doesn’t have its challenges especially in businesses where there hasn’t been a focus on well-being before.

The first thing to do is to simply get the conversation started and begin to break down the stigma that sadly still surrounds stress and mental health.

Lots of people will be wary of discussing their mental health concerns due to fears that it will impact their career prospects. It needs to be made clear that this isn’t the case.

The starting point could be something as simple as regularly checking in on how people are doing. This is the first step to developing a supportive workplace culture.

### **Be transparent**

To give the best support to employees it’s important to be clear and open with them. This means being honest and acknowledging times of uncertainty whether that’s caused by events like the pandemic, rumours of redundancy or any difficult situation that might impact your team.

Be clear with your expectations. This can include things such as expecting employees to have clear boundaries when working from home or expecting deadlines to be met (if extensions haven’t been discussed). Something as simple as this can reduce employee stress.

Finally, be transparent when it comes to their goals – make sure they’re clear and achievable.

### **Reduce concern during times of change**

Change happens all the time and the workplace is no different. It’s important not to underestimate the effect change can have on the well-being of employees. Things that might be considered small changes can still impact morale and stress levels.





When going through periods of change make sure people are informed, motivated and feel trusted.

Let employees know about any changes that are happening, explain the reasons behind the changes, encourage questions and answer them honestly.

### **Manage workload**

One of the most common causes of work-related stress is workload. If the volume of work or deadlines is beyond what an employee can manage it can become a great source of pressure.

As an employer, it is your responsibility to ensure that people can cope and that if they can't they feel they can talk about it. You can do this by:

- **Setting demands that are achievable within the hours that they work**
- **Ensuring that an employee's skills and**

**abilities match the needs of the job**

- **Dealing with any concerns people have about the demands of the job**
- **Make sure there are regular meetings for individuals and teams where upcoming workloads can be discussed and inform them of any known busy times**
- **Let employees know about any unplanned tight deadlines or sudden need to work longer hours.**

Anthony said: "Creating a less stressful environment doesn't have to cost money or even take more time but having a team that is stress free, or at least experiencing minimal work stress and feeling happy, could save you money in terms of recruiting, absence and more. Your people are your biggest and most important investment so it is important that you look after them"

# Are menopausal women the forgotten workforce

*Despite being the fastest growing demographic in the workplace, menopausal women have become the forgotten workforce, with three-quarters (75%) facing daily challenges due to a lack of support from managers missing the vital signs, mistaking symptoms, and not providing flexibility according to a recent survey by employment law specialists Han Law.*



The new study which spoke to over 3,000 women aged between 40 and 59, to understand menopause in the workplace, found that less than a quarter of respondents (23%) felt that their employer takes menopause seriously, despite 9 out of 10 (90%) confessing to struggling with symptoms that affect their ability to work daily – highlighting that businesses need to do more to support women at this stage in their lives.

Of those surveyed, 98% of respondents admitted to suffering from perimenopausal

or menopausal symptoms, yet despite this, a shocking 85% didn't feel comfortable talking to their employers about their daily battle. With 4 in 10 (40%) feeling they had been treated less favourably than other employees because of their menopausal symptoms.

"It's no wonder that menopausal women often feel invisible, overlooked, forgotten, and unsupported. The fact that so many are misunderstood and embarrassed to talk to their managers is shocking." Says Hannah Strawbridge CEO of Han Law.

“Whilst the results of our study were eye-opening, they sadly weren’t surprising and merely confirmed what we already suspected, that employers need to do more to create supportive work environments for women going through menopause.” She concluded.

When asked about symptoms, concentration (81%), anxiety (79.82%), fatigue (77.98%), and memory loss (74.94%) were cited as the worst offenders. Proving that menopause symptoms have a significant, negative impact on women’s quality of working life and performance.

“The symptoms highlighted by those who took part in the study prove that more needs to be done to support women’s wellbeing. The addition of a fan in the office or sitting people by a window really isn’t enough.”

“Flexible working has become the norm for working parents and it’s time that menopausal women were given the same consideration to help support them. Allowing employees to start later or work from home could not only make a huge difference but it could prevent them from leaving their careers.” Continued Hannah Strawbridge

When asked about support, almost three-quarters ( 71%) of those surveyed, worked for businesses that did not have a menopause policy in place, and of those that did, a mere 1 in 8 (12.5 %) felt that it had a positive impact.

“Whilst some organisations will have already taken initial, practical steps to support their employees who are going through menopause, this is just the tip of the iceberg, and it’s not enough to simply have a policy in place. It must be brought to life, carefully implemented, and communicated to all. Employers also need to create an environment where menopause can be talked about

freely without embarrassment on either side. These conversations must be normalised, not stigmatised.” Continued Strawbridge.

“Many employers, don’t know where or how to access the right support and this is why we want to offer guidance and training on how to support the female workforce as they navigate the various stages of perimenopause and menopause.”

In response to this, Han Law has developed a Menopause Advocacy service for businesses of all sizes with training that will cover all aspects of menopause, including advice on managing menopause in the workplace. Alongside this will be the rollout of a ‘Menopause Mentor’ scheme to support individuals navigating menopause and employers supporting their workforce.

The trained advisors will act as a conduit between employer and employees and will provide impartial independent advice to support the process and ensure that those struggling have someone to talk to.

“Our research has highlighted the devastating affects and daily toll that menopause can take on those dealing with it. Empathy, understanding and support is necessary to ensure that women don’t continue to exit the workforce in their droves. More can be done and employers should be supporting women and helping them to stay at work rather than hindering their ability to not only succeed but to also thrive.”

