

PA ENTERPRISE

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

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IN THIS ISSUE

Theft in the Workplace

Reducing the cost of workplace conflict

Quiz: What's your leadership style?

Four ways to be a more successful leader

Workers lukewarm on the 'New Deal for Working People'

Need to register for Self Assessment?

Top 5 myths - debunked

The worst workplace jargon and how to avoid it

What to wear for an interview

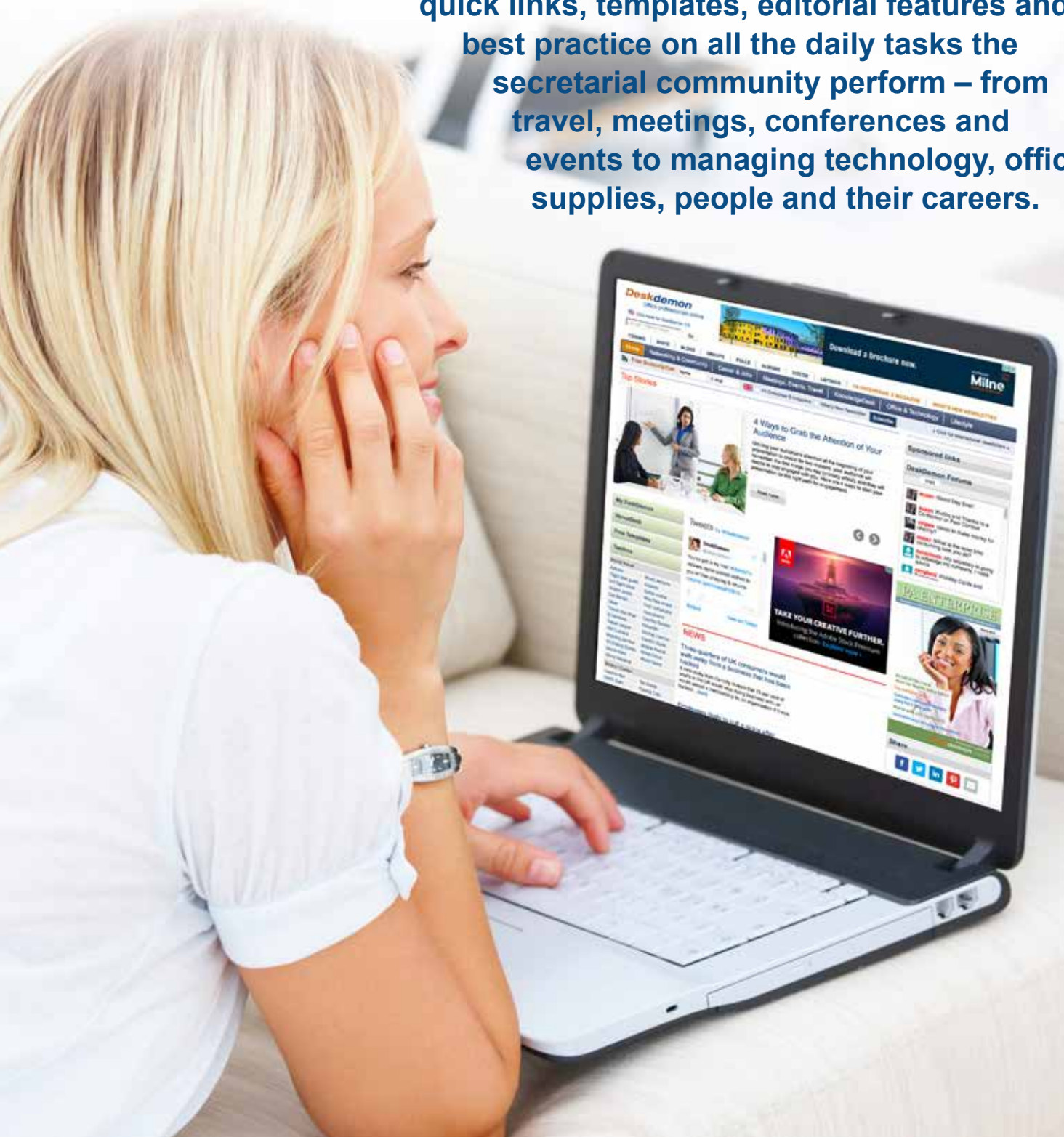
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Contents

- 4 Theft in the Workplace
- 8 Women who work remotely have greater difficulty separating work and family than men
- 10 Reducing the cost of workplace conflict
- 13 AI and automation set to make a mark on payroll: but experts need to differentiate between the two
- 14 Quiz: What's your leadership style?
- 16 Four ways to be a more successful leader
- 19 Workers lukewarm on the 'New Deal for Working People'
- 20 Need to register for Self Assessment?
Top 5 myths - debunked
- 22 The worst workplace jargon and how to avoid it
- 26 What to wear for an interview



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Theft in the Workplace

Office theft happens in every workplace, whether it's your sandwich going missing from the fridge or your stationery mysteriously vanishing overnight. It can be a problem for both employees and employers and might be more common than you think. Following a rise in demand for secure office storage, Furniture At Work asked 1,000 Brits about office theft at their workplace.



2.5 million Brits have stolen from their workplace

Over one-in-10 (10.4%) office workers admitted they have stolen something from their workplace. There are currently 24.7m people working in the UK, meaning over 2.5m are guilty of sneaking stationery, food and even money home with them.

1.6 million have stolen from their colleagues

If you work in an office, you'll be no stranger to debate over food and missing mugs. It's maybe no surprise either, as 1.6 million office workers in the UK admitted to stealing from their colleagues. This doesn't even include your colleagues that like to 'borrow' your things without telling you.

1 in 6 (17%) said they have stolen food in the office

We asked the people who admitted to stealing what they had stolen from their office. Almost one-in-five (17%) said they had taken food from the communal fridge. A further 10% said they have stolen someone else's mug.

One in 10 (10%) have stolen money

Stealing food and mugs is annoying, but one-in-10 (10%) even admitted they've stolen money from their office. A further 8% said they have taken laptops and phones that didn't belong to them.

Stationery is the most stolen item in the workplace

40% said they have stolen a pen and other stationery in the office. The most common items stolen in the workplace are listed later.

Over one in five (21%) said they steal because everyone does it

One-in-five people said their reason for stealing from their workplace or colleagues was because everyone does it. This shows that office theft might be more common than people realise.

Only 8% have reported someone for stealing

Missing food and stationery are part of office life and very rarely is something done about it. Only 8% of people in the UK have reported someone for stealing, which probably explains why.

35-44 year-olds steal more than any other age group

People aged 35-44 steal more than any other age group, with 14% saying they have stolen something from their workplace.

(% who said they have stolen something from their workplace)

- 18-25 – 5%
- 25-34 – 10%
- 35-44 – 14%
- 55-64 – 6%
- 65+ – 10%

25-34 year-olds are the most likely to steal valuables

Despite 35-44-year-olds stealing more than any other age group, it was the younger generation that were more likely to steal money, laptops, and phones. Over one-in-five



(20.6%) have stolen money from the office, 19% have stolen a laptop and 18% have stolen a phone.

Men steal from their workplace and colleagues more than women

We also found that men are more likely to steal mugs, food, and money from the office. Here is the % of men and women who said they have stolen the following items from the workplace:

Item	Women	Men
Pen	25%	52%
Stationery	38%	42%
Mugs	4%	16%
Food & Drink	11%	21%
Tea bags / Coffee	6%	18%
Money	6%	14%
Laptop	4%	12%
Phone	4%	12%
Headphones	4%	11%
Personal items	1%	7%

Women steal because they don't like their workplace, men steal because they're bored

There were also differences between men and women when it came to why they steal. The most common reason was because they needed the item, but almost one-in-five women (19%) said they stole because they didn't like their workplace, and 18% of men

said they stole just because they were bored.

25% of people working in law have stolen from their workplace

One-quarter (25%) of people who said law is their profession admitted to stealing from their workplace – more than any other industry.

(% who said they have stolen something from their workplace)

- Law - 25%
- Marketing and PR - 20%
- Leisure, sport, tourism - 17.6%
- Transport and logistics - 17.5%
- Retail - 15.7%
- Accountancy & banking - 13.8%
- Teacher training and education - 13.5%
- Information Technology - 12.3%
- Energy and utilities - 11.5%
- Engineering and manufacturing - 11.3%

22% of people working in media and internet have stolen from their colleague

If you work in media and internet, you might want to keep an eye on your colleagues. 22% said they have stolen from their colleagues before, more than any other profession. This was followed by charity and voluntary workers (15%).



your desk in a cubicle farm, you are making it easy for people to give in to the temptation to acquire a new pair of headphones without paying for them.”

Christopher Paul Jones adds:

“Taking small items from work, or from any place for that matter, is often driven by the need to feel safe and secure. It can be a way to feel in control. Particularly if someone is going through something in their personal life, where they perhaps feel out of control.

“In a way, taking these items, is not that dissimilar to when people hoard things, they

take material possessions and surround themselves with the items in order to create a sense of security, by recognising and addressing this behaviour, one can put themselves back in the driver’s seat and address the underlying emotions in order to resolve things.”

The data from our survey shows that employees stealing from their workplace and colleagues isn’t uncommon in the office. One solution to office theft is secure office storage furniture, such as lockable pedestals, cupboards, and employee lockers.

www.furniture-work.co.uk

The Psychology Behind Why People Steal in the Workplace

Psychologists Art Markman, PHD, Professor of Psychology and Marketing, and Christopher Paul Jones, Harley Street Therapist have offered an explanation as to why people might steal from their employer and colleagues:

Art Markman says:

“Human behaviour is focused on doing things that feel right in the short term rather than things that feel right in the long term. If you need to eat right now, then available food will feel good to eat, even if it is wrong to take food from someone else.

“People also tend to do what is easy for them to do in a particular environment. If you leave your new noise-cancelling headphones out on

Women who work remotely have greater difficulty separating work and family than men

Women have more difficulty separating their working lives and their family lives when they work from home, than men do, according to new research from Durham University Business School.



Remote work has often been lauded as a potential solution to gender inequality, given its flexibility, however these findings showcase that personal circumstances still have an effect on women's careers.

The research, conducted by Menghan Shen, student of MSc Information Management at the University of Sheffield, and Dr. Efpraxia Zamani, Associate Professor of Information Systems at Durham University Business School, sought to understand the experiences of both women and men who work remotely, how they set boundaries and avoided conflict between their work and personal lives.

Their findings revealed that women were much more likely to see a blurring between the boundaries of work and family life – usually in the form of regular distractions during work – often increasing the levels of stress for women and making them less productive.

Men, on the other hand, were more likely to see the opposite with work very often being totally separate from their family time.

Interestingly, the researchers also found that women were much more likely to value being there for their family, even during work time, whilst men were less likely to attend to their family's needs if these conflicted with their work schedule.

However, the researchers warn these findings do not necessarily mean that remote work is a negative experience, or inadvisable for women.

“The greater flexibility that working from home provides has empowered women to bridge much of the gender gap in the workplace.” says Dr. Zamani. “However, our findings show that there's still a need for more shared responsibilities in the family home if we are to achieve true equality in both work and family life, as women currently are taking on a similar burden in work, but a greater burden at home.”

Remote work, the researchers highlight, can have both positive and negative effects on staff depending on both their personal circumstances, and how their work is managed by their employers.

On the one hand, working fully remotely can lead to alienation, and low self-confidence, leading to an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ mentality. Whilst on the other hand, remote work can help employees enhance their wellbeing, and achieve a better work-family balance – if they also have adequate support.

To achieve this, the researchers say that remote workers should receive access to different tools and systems to manage boundaries in ways that support their performance and productivity. For example, some remote workers may prefer more integrative strategies such as enabling flexible working patterns to accommodate personal and family life and ensure work can be completed in the most effective way.

Reducing the cost of workplace conflict

A new Act comes into force in October placing duties on employers to take 'reasonable steps' to protect employees from sexual harassment

According to ACAS, workplace conflict costs UK organisations £28.5bn a year – that's an average of £1,000 per employee.

Multiply the number of employees by £1,000 and you have some idea of how much these disputes cost your organisation annually. This is sometimes nicknamed 'conflict tax'.

The headline statistics on workplace conflict are staggering. Close to 10 million people a year experience it and, of these, over half suffer stress, anxiety or depression as a result.

Just under 900,000 take time off, nearly half a million resign, and more than 300,000 are dismissed.

As well as the direct costs of lost productivity, formal grievance processes and conflict-related resignations, there's also the knock-on effect on organisational culture. A disgruntled employee can significantly impact the engagement levels of their colleagues and/or relationship with your clients.

After unfair dismissal, the most common causes of workplace conflict that make

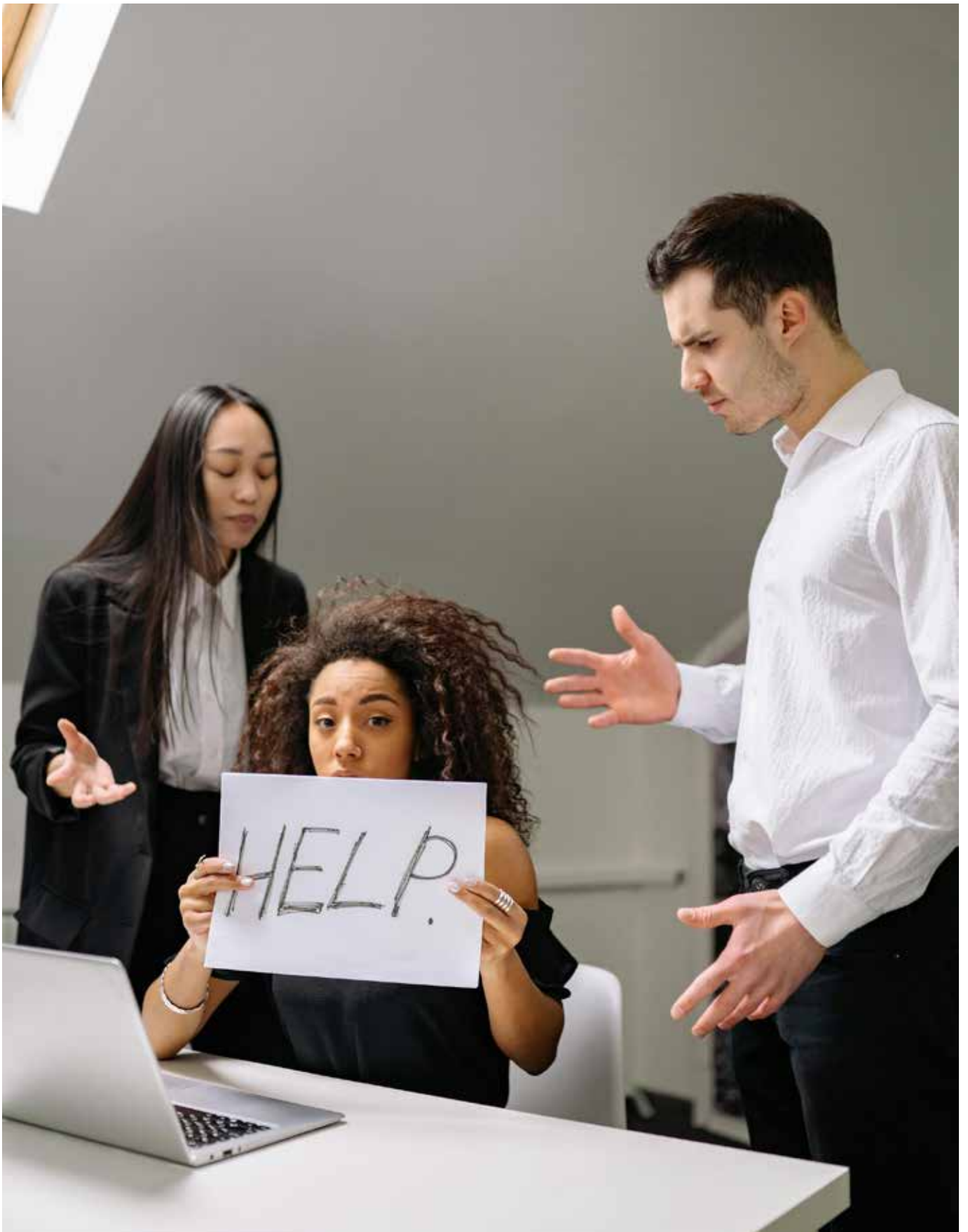
it to an employment tribunal all relate to equality issues - race, disability and sexual harassment.

While the Covid furlough scheme meant fewer people were dismissed from their jobs, the number of sexual harassment claims continued to rise during the pandemic years. This is due in part to the 'Me Too' movement empowering more people to speak out.

However, recent times have also seen the rise of 'alpha male' social media influencers like Andrew Tate, who have fuelled a rise in misogynistic behaviour which can often spill over into the workplace.

To try to reverse that long-term trend, The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 will come into force on 26 October 2024. This will place new duties on employers to take 'reasonable steps' to protect employees from sexual harassment at work. It will also give tribunals the power to increase compensation payments by up to 25% if an employer breaches this duty.





It's worrying how many employers still seem unprepared for this fast-approaching change.

Without the right planning, this new Act - which puts focus on proactive prevention of harassment, and includes the need for policies and safe channels for reporting - is likely to result in an increase in conflict tax for many organisations.

Remember, there is no cap on the amount of compensation that can be awarded for an equality claim, and the record currently stands at £4.6m.

To be ready for the change, employers should ensure they have a harassment policy which is frequently reviewed, conduct regular training sessions and ensure any harassment complaints are taken seriously. Establishing a confidential method of reporting, such as an online tool, should also be a consideration.

When I trace sexual harassment complaints back to the beginning, often it's the initial conversation with a line manager that exacerbates the problem. Managers often mishandle complaints at the first stage, either by not following the correct process or prejudging the outcome.

I've seen instances when an employee has sued the manager as well as the company, because they failed to properly investigate the complaint.

Equality-related conflict should always be taken very seriously. Sometimes a manager may instinctively try to deal with a complaint informally, but under-reacting to a situation is a much bigger problem than over-reacting.

I tend not to lay too much blame with these managers, as often they have simply not been correctly trained to handle a complaint in line with company policy or legislation. In many cases, policies to guide managers do exist, but they are not well communicated, or nobody knows where to find them.

It goes without saying that training is vital. But this cannot be boring or stale; it must be interactive and engaging to avoid being a tick-box exercise. Role play is an excellent way to practise handling sensitive situations in a safe environment.

It's also worth a reminder that the same equality law that affects huge corporations also applies to a tiny start-up as soon as they employ one person. In reality, however, tribunals are likely to apply higher standards to big businesses.

Having a proactive strategy to minimise and effectively address sexual harassment, along with other causes of employment disputes, can significantly reduce your conflict tax.

But it can have other positive outcomes too, such as creating a better workplace culture, improving morale, and enhancing your reputation as a responsible and caring employer.

By [Musab Hems](#), partner in employment law at [Anderson Strathern](#)

www.insider.co.uk 

AI and automation set to make a mark on payroll: but experts need to differentiate between the two

AI and automation will help to transform payroll technology in the future, but experts need to be able to differentiate between the two tools. That's according to leading payroll specialist, CloudPay.

In a recent survey, CloudPay found that 43% of respondents said AI and automation payroll technology excites them the most, ahead of real-time payroll processing (32%), cloud-based pay systems (14%) and advanced analytics (10%).

CloudPay's recent Payroll Efficiency Index (PEI) report found that emerging technology is having a positive impact on the sector and contributing to a reduction in error-making, as well as more issues being picked up at validation and checking stages. However, CloudPay has warned that too often, AI and automation are confused as the same tool, when in reality they are two separate entities.

John Pearce, Chief Customer Officer at CloudPay, commented on the findings.

"It's no secret that AI and automation has the potential to be a gamechanger for payroll; it's already making its mark, but the role that these forms of emerging technology will play will only expand in the coming years. Therefore, it's not a surprise to see respondents list this as the most exciting trend. However, there's still some confusion around the difference between the two. Far

too often we hear of AI-driven solutions that are, in reality, automated tools, rather than artificial intelligence.

"I believe there's real potential for AI to have a significant impact on payroll as we know it in the future, but it's still in its infancy, which is where this confusion can stem from. For now, organisations need to ensure that they are investing in data quality and control to set the best foundations to benefit from these tech-enhanced tools longer term."

"What I would add, though, is that humans are still, and will continue to be, the critical element in the pay process and in payroll as a whole for the foreseeable future. Payroll is built on accuracy and while the emerging technology is exciting, it's far too early to hand it any significant responsibility. Each business will be different and will have to identify the ways that they can leverage their technology to its full extent. They must also weigh up some of the existing ethical challenges, but on the whole, the future is exceptionally bright for payroll, and that's partly down to the rise of new forms of technology."

What's your leadership style?

Discover your leadership style by answering these quick questions. Just choose the option that best describes your typical behaviour or preference. At the end, tally your answers to find out your dominant leadership style.

1. How do you approach decision-making?

A I make decisions quickly and confidently.

B I prefer to seek input from my team before making a decision.

C I analyse all available data thoroughly before deciding.

D I aim to find a consensus among all stakeholders.

2. How do you handle conflict within your team?

A I address it directly and swiftly to keep things moving.

B I mediate the situation and help both parties find a solution.

C I look at the root cause and try to solve the underlying issue.

D I encourage open communication and collaboration to resolve it.

3. What motivates you as a leader?

A Achieving goals and driving performance.

B Building strong relationships and fostering a positive team environment.

C Developing innovative solutions and improving processes.

D Empowering others and creating a collaborative culture.

4. How do you typically communicate with your team?

A I give clear instructions and expect them to be followed.

B I have open and frequent conversations with my team members.

C I share detailed information and provide guidance as needed.

D I encourage team discussions and value everyone's input.

5. When a project deadline is approaching, how do you manage your team?

A I set clear tasks and deadlines for everyone.

B I check in with each team member to ensure they have what they need.

C I monitor progress and adjust plans based on data and feedback.

D I facilitate team meetings to ensure everyone is on the same page.



Scoring

Mostly As: You are a Directive Leader

You are decisive and action-oriented, often taking charge to drive your team towards achieving goals. You excel in fast-paced environments where clear direction is needed.

Mostly Bs: You are a Supportive Leader

You prioritise relationships and a positive team atmosphere. Your empathetic approach helps you build strong bonds with your team members, making you an approachable and motivational leader.

Mostly Cs: You are an Analytical Leader

You rely on data and thorough analysis to guide your decisions. Your attention to detail and problem-solving skills make you a reliable leader in complex or technical projects.

Mostly Ds: You are a Collaborative Leader

You believe in the power of teamwork and shared decision-making. Your inclusive style fosters a sense of ownership and cooperation within your team, leading to a harmonious and productive work environment.

Conclusion

In today's dynamic work environment, the role of a manager is more critical than ever. By honing the key qualities of visionary leadership, effective communication, empathy, adaptability, and integrity, you can position yourself as a standout candidate in the competitive job market. Embrace the challenge, seize the opportunities, and lead with excellence!

Four ways to be a more successful leader



Who do you think of when asked to name a leader today who is doing an outstanding job? You're not alone if you're struggling to find an answer – particularly if you are trying to think of leaders with major voices who are in positions of significant responsibility.

A survey of HR directors found that those from nearly three quarters of the corporations involved said their organisations do not have the leadership they need for the challenges of today. Nor do they have the depth of talent needed for tomorrow.



Yet the function of management has not changed and instability is not new; so why is there this crisis of leadership? As I argue in my book, *Antidote to the Crisis of Leadership*, it is the result of a mismatch between the reality of leadership today and a stubborn reliance on traditional practices.

Four mindset shifts are required.

1. Be adaptive

Businesses and governments operate within complex systems and always have done. However, these days more parts of the system are shifting simultaneously and at faster rates.

Leaders have to make more decisions, and make them more quickly. When there were fewer factors at play and the rate of change was slower, leaders had time to formulate forecasts.

Leaders have always been required to split their energies between working “on” the business for the future (doing things like reshaping and repositioning) and working “in” the business (that is, achieving the results required today).

These days, working “on” is an almost constant requirement that is not restricted to the annual planning cycle. That leaves leaders with less time to be working “in” the business, and the distinction between the forward-leaning leader and the operationally focused manager is growing.

Investors disproportionately reward forward-leaning leaders who instil the confidence that they will be able to overcome as-yet unknown challenges.

As leaders have to make decisions about the future without knowing what it holds, they have to be adaptive. Correcting course should not only be expected, but celebrated.

2. Form alliances

The World Economic Forum forecasts that six out ten jobs will be changed due to technology



by 2030. The labour market has increased churn, languishing engagement, reduced trust and loyalty.

In this environment, “followership” is best understood as a choice. Even when they are contracted to a team or enterprise, people make daily choices of how much effort, engagement and loyalty they exhibit.

As such, leaders need to have the mindset of forming alliances, within their team and beyond it. Individualism is increasing, and workers usually want to be embraced for who they are, not how they appear to conform.

Leaders should strive to ensure a positive experience for each person. To do this they need to genuinely care for those around them and provide flexibility without compromising the goals of the organisation.

3. **Aspire to make a positive impact**

This is a purposeful aspiration, and is bigger than any one leader. It’s impossible to keep everyone happy all the time on everything. And minor complaints can be amplified by chatbots and fake news.

In this hostile context many people in positions of leadership are failing to lead. Some may be deliberately irresponsible or self-serving, but many failures of leadership are a consequence of being intimidated by criticism, to the point of paralysis. They may delay, ignore or be less than transparent on difficult decisions when they fear attack.

Successful leaders must have the courage to expose themselves to hostility. They may gain popularity with an attractive vision, but they will not be effective in delivering on it unless

they are anchored, authentic and consistent.

A leader’s conviction to create an impact beyond themselves can motivate them, and will build resilience to criticism and setbacks.

4. **Accelerate – learn faster**

Why don’t we have enough leaders with the skills needed for modern organisations?

Firstly, organisations develop and promote people to look like the successes of the past. They use “rear-view mirror” elements like case-studies from the past, as well as mentors and role models who share historic experiences and routes to success.

Secondly, it’s common to focus on the “what” and “how” of leadership rather than on the “who”. Leaders today must find the conviction and courage to pursue their purpose and live by their values. As second world war British field marshal Viscount William Slim said: “Leadership is intensely personal ... it’s just plain you.”

The time and energy of leaders are limited – so they have to learn faster.

If you’re a manager, you can be the solution to the current crisis of leadership. You need to take ownership of your own development and also accelerate the development of others around you.

Leadership is in a crisis but there is an antidote – you. You need to aspire, ally, adapt and accelerate.

Workers lukewarm on the ‘New Deal for Working People’

- Less than half (40%) of UK workers feel the New Deal for Working People will positively impact them, while 44% believe it will have no impact
- Many (36% on average) don't understand their employers' existing position on various aspects of the deal

Employees are broadly lukewarm about the New Deal for Working People, recently published in the King's Speech as the Employment Rights Bill, but many are unaware of their current employer's stance and offering. That's according to the latest Robert Half Jobs Confidence Index (JCI) – an economic confidence tracker produced in partnership with the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr).

Limited impact expected

According to the data, less than half (40%) of the UK workforce anticipates that the New Deal for Working People will have a positive impact on their daily lives, while almost half (44%) are uncertain as to the impact of the proposals. Just 9% said it would have a negative impact on their working lives.

It should also be noted that the younger generation is more optimistic about the potential impact of the New Deal, with 51% of those aged 18-34 indicating that it will have a positive effect.

However, the data suggests that there is a lack of clarity around existing access to many of the measures. According to the data, over a third (36% on average) of UK workers

are unsure if aspects of the New Deal were already available to them. This suggests that employers could see a limited impact of the potentially costly changes unless they better communicate with staff.

Making the investment pay for all

Skills and productivity remain of significant concern for the growth of the UK economy. The study revealed that labour productivity, measured by output per hour worked, fell by 0.3% on an annual basis in Q2 of this year.

According to Robert Half, this suggests that skills are still a big problem for the UK. As a result, a thoughtful discussion with all parties – including businesses – is needed to ensure the UK aligns resources in the most effective way for all to keep pace with the global economy.

As Matt Weston, Senior Managing Director UK & Ireland, at Robert Half explained, skills create an economy that will benefit workers and businesses, boosting productivity, wages and GDP in the longer term:

“We welcome any changes that boost the wellbeing of the workforce, however it is interesting to note that such a large proportion of UK employees are largely lukewarm to the impact that the New Deal will have on their job. While we expect that younger workers are more likely to welcome change given that they will be employed for a longer period, the fact that so many are unclear as to what their employer currently offers suggests a level of mis-communication exists.”

Need to register for Self Assessment?

Top 5 myths - debunked

Anyone who needs to complete a Self Assessment tax return for the first time to cover the 2023 to 2024 tax year, should tell HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) by 5 October 2024.

There's plenty of myths about who needs to file a Self Assessment return before the 31 January 2025 deadline and HMRC today debunks some of the most common ones.

Myth 1: HMRC hasn't been in touch, so I don't need to file a tax return.

Reality: It's the individual's responsibility to determine if they need to complete a tax return for the 2023 to 2024 tax year. There are many reasons why someone might need to register for Self Assessment and file a return, including if they:

- are newly self-employed and have earned gross income over £1,000
- earned below £1,000 and wish to pay Class 2 National Insurance Contributions voluntarily to protect their entitlement to State Pension and certain benefits
- are a new partner in a business partnership
- have received any untaxed income over £2,500
- receive Child Benefit payments and need to

pay the High Income Child Benefit Charge because they or their partner earned more than £50,000

Myth 2: I have to pay the tax at the same time as filing my return.

Reality: False. Even if someone files their return today, the deadline for customers to pay any tax owed for the 2023 to 2024 tax year is 31 January 2025. Customers may also be able to set up a Budget Payment Plan to help spread the cost of their next Self Assessment tax bill, by making weekly or monthly direct debit payments towards it in advance.

Myth 3: I don't owe any tax, so I don't need to file a return.

Reality: Even if a customer doesn't owe tax, they may still need to file a Self Assessment return to claim a tax refund, claim tax relief on business expenses, charitable donations, pension contributions, or to pay voluntary Class 2 National Insurance Contributions to protect their entitlement to certain benefits and the State Pension.

Myth 4: HMRC will take me out of Self Assessment if I no longer need to file a return.

Reality: It is important customers tell us they've either stopped being self-employed or



marketplaces, they do not need to file a Self Assessment and pay Income Tax on the sales. HMRC’s guidance on selling online and paying taxes can be found on GOV.UK.

Myrtle Lloyd, HMRC’s Director General for Customer Services, said:

“We want to make sure you are clear about your tax responsibilities. These myth busters and our range of

resources on GOV.UK can help if you are unsure if Self Assessment applies to you or think you no longer need to file a tax return. Just search ‘Self Assessment’ on GOV.UK to find out more.”

HMRC has a wide range of resources to help customers register for Self Assessment, including video tutorials on YouTube and help and support guidance on GOV.UK.

HMRC urges customers to file their return early to provide peace of mind and to also allow time to consider opportunities to spread the cost of their tax bill, claim refunds earlier and avoid costly errors caused by rushing.

Customers need to keep records to fill in their tax return correctly and they may be asked for documents if HMRC checks their return. Penalties may be issued if records are not accurate, complete and readable. Self-employed workers must also keep records for their business income, outgoings and make sure they’re registered with HMRC as self-employed. More information can be found on GOV.UK.

they don’t need to fill in a return, particularly if they have received a notice to file. If they don’t, HMRC will keep writing to them to remind them to file their return and we may charge a penalty.

Customers may not need to complete a tax return if they have stopped renting out property, no longer need to pay the High Income Child Benefit Charge, or their income has dropped below the £150,000 threshold and have no other reason to complete a tax return. If customers think they no longer need to complete a tax return for the 2023 to 2024 tax year, they should tell HMRC online as soon as their circumstances change. Customers can watch HMRC’s YouTube videos on stopping Self Assessment to guide them through the process.

Myth 5: HMRC has launched a crackdown on people selling their possessions online and now I’ll have to file a Self Assessment return and pay tax on the items I sold after clearing out the attic.

Reality: Despite speculation online earlier this year, tax rules have not changed in this area. If someone has sold old clothes, books, CDs and other personal items through online

The worst workplace jargon and how to avoid it

In what should surprise no one, Gen Z and Millennial colleagues get the ‘ick’ when they hear cringe-worthy workplace jargon terms in calls and meetings, or read them in an email. We’ve all been on the other end of the dreaded “hope this email finds you well” message between synergisising with teams and circling back on low-hanging-fruit to-dos.

While corporate jargon is as old as work itself, LinkedIn’s State of Workplace Jargon Report has highlighted how younger generations of colleagues are fed up with its use: 60 per cent of Gen Z employees want to hear less or have it eliminated altogether.

For Millennials, the relationship with workplace jargon is multi-layered. While 65 per cent said they want it gone or reduced, they admit to using it the most, and 25 per cent said that they are so accustomed to it that they don’t even realise when they are saying it.

The confusion and inequities of workplace jargon

While at the surface level, the use of this type of work chat just seems annoying, a deep dive into its use suggests a loss of productivity and highlights inequalities in the “office”.

LinkedIn’s report said that 40 per cent of workers have had a misunderstanding or made a mistake because they didn’t know what the jargon meant or it was misused.

In most cases, employees are left on their own to decode jargon, which causes further inequities. Those employees for whom English is a second language, often find it challenging to understand and learn corporate jargon, leading to added stress and leaving them isolated from conversations.

Remote and hybrid employees suffer from too much jargon as well, with 71 per cent saying they feel left out of conversations compared with their on-site colleagues. And 61 per cent of professionals think those with a better understanding of jargon are more likely to get ahead in their careers with promotions and pay rises.

The most cringe-inducing workplace jargon terms

There are hundreds of corporate jargon terms, ranging from industry-specific gems such as “net-net” in finance to the classics that we’ve all grown to despise despite throwing them out in conversations from time to time.

Here’s a list of some common and cringe-



inducing workplace jargon, what it means and how to avoid using it.

Circle-back

Often used during team calls, circle-back is a convoluted way of saying “let’s talk about this later”.

Instead of saying this, give “I’ll update you” or “I will follow up” a try.

Synergy

Another word casually thrown out in inter-

departmental team meetings, synergy, and its derivatives, imply magical co-operation, often without saying how this will be achieved.

This piece of jargon in particular exemplifies the notion that those fluent with a corporate tongue like the sound of fancy words, much to the chagrin of those having to hear it.

If you find yourself using this word, try to lean on the more sensible and realistic “collaboration,” “co-operation” and “teamwork.”



Low-hanging fruit

This phrase comes from the notion that it is easier to pick an apple from the bottom of the tree rather than the top, and is often used when describing tasks or to-dos in project situations.

In reality, using this term can be perceived as rather patronising because there's an assumption that the tasks are easy to finish when in reality some colleagues could find them challenging, and you can add in the fact that those assigned these "low-hanging fruits" could think they are not as capable or skilled as colleagues assigned to the higher-up pickings.

So, instead of dropping this agricultural metaphor, try phrases such as "accessible targets" or "immediate progress".

Bandwidth

When talking technology, bandwidth makes sense because it's a measurement for the maximum amount of data transmitted over an internet connection— or, in days gone by, a radio – in a given amount of time.

But in a corporate setting, when one hears the word, it is often in the context of asking someone if they have the time to take on another task. So, if you're a line manager, consider replacing "Do you have the bandwidth?" with "Do you have time today?"

Deep-dive

This is a perfect example of taking two words, combining them with a hyphen, and voilà: another cringe-inducing piece of workplace jargon. A deep-dive is an impressive way of saying "detailed look".

The overuse of "deep-dive" has rendered the

term a classic workplace cliché, devoid of its original impact. It often comes across as pretentious and can make communication less clear and less engaging.

Consider using words such as "examine", "scrutinise" or "investigate", instead.

Paradigm shift

Paradigm overlaps with "think outside the box," another absurd way of suggesting a dramatic approach to transformation, strategy or thinking.

A proper paradigm shift signifies a drastic change in thinking, but its overuse in the workplace has led to the term's dilution. Now when heard in meetings and calls, it can be easily construed as pretentious and exaggerates the significance of change.

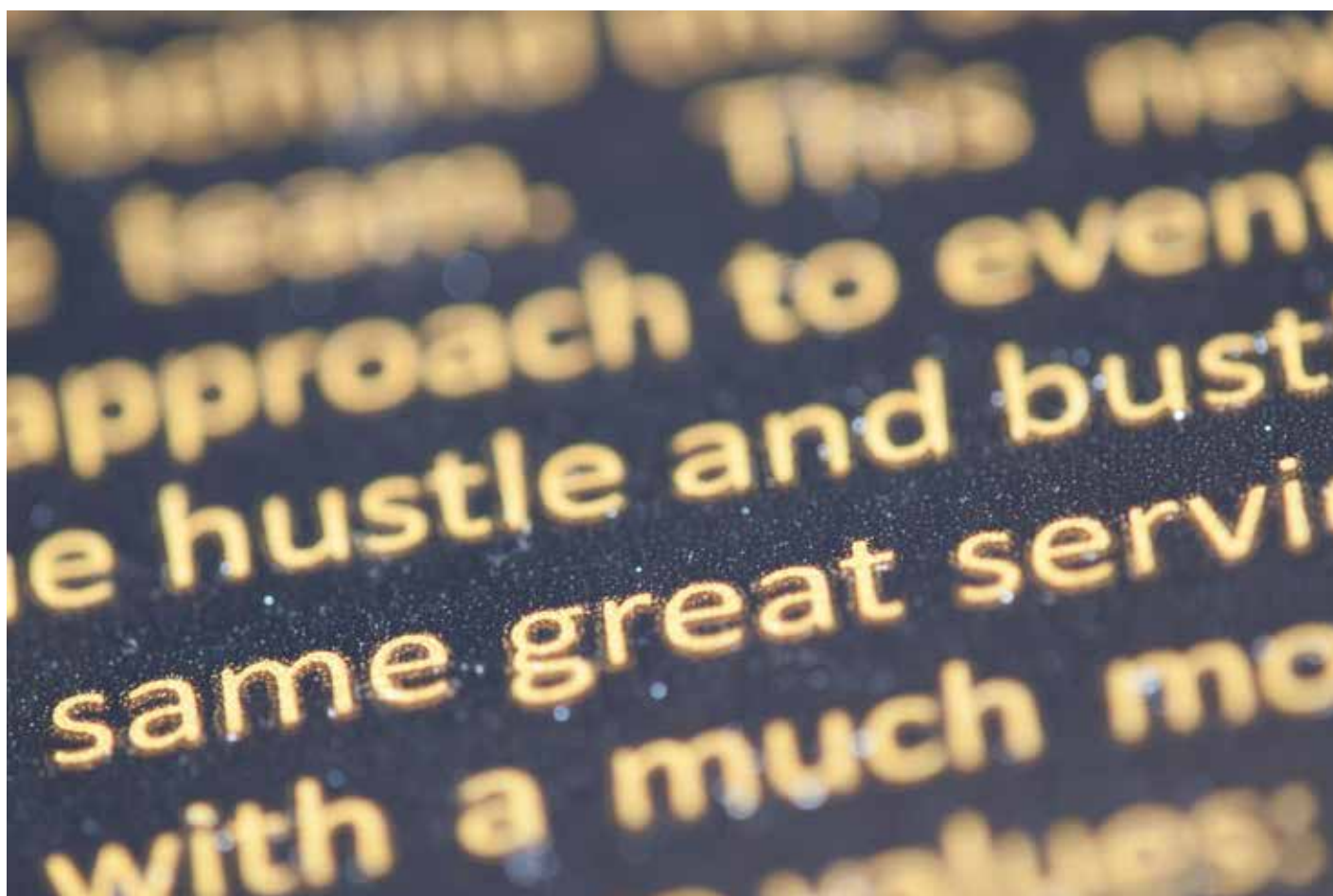
A truly "outside-the-box" way would be to focus on using more concrete language, for example: shift, change or overhaul.

Offline

Offline is a simple word with a simple meaning: not being connected to a computer or the internet. But the phrase "let's take this offline" used in the context of work creates nuance.

Depending on the situation, this could imply that the matter is urgent, used to avoid addressing a topic in front of others or entirely dismissively, suggesting that the topic isn't important or relevant to the situation. It could also be used in a neutral way, meaning continuing the conversation privately.

The best way to avoid confusing or triggering anxiety in colleagues is to be direct and tell them why the conversation needs to go "offline."



Leverage

The definition of leverage is to use something to its maximum advantage, and implies using existing resources to achieve a greater outcome.

Like the other terms on this list, its overuse leads those hearing it to become desensitised to the impact of the word. It also makes communication overly formal and far too corporate.

Instead of another word that lacks specificity, consider using “utilise”, “harness” or “optimise”, which all sound better anyway.

“I’ll give/gift you back X amount of time”

This is one of the worst phrases in the history of the corporate lexicon. If you’ve ever been

on a call that wrapped up just a few minutes ahead of the scheduled end time, and the organiser says something like “I’ll gift you back seven minutes of time”, you will certainly know that feeling.

While intended as a polite gesture, the phrase can sound condescending. It implies that the meeting leader is doing the others there a favour by ending early, rather than acknowledging that they’ve managed the meeting efficiently.

There’s really no need ever to use this phrase. Just say: “That’s everything, we can end early.”

What to wear for an interview

It only takes a few seconds for an interviewer to decide how they feel about you... Translation? No matter how strong your experience or how polished your interview technique is, you should never underestimate the importance of a sharp interview outfit. Reed.co.uk asked Shaunie Brett, who leads the styling team at Thread to share her five-step plan for success, plus two outfits that will help you nail (almost) every interview.

Step 1. Find out what your interviewers will be wearing

No matter what your personal style is, you don't want to look out of place.

If you wear a suit and everyone interviewing you wears jeans, for example, you'll probably feel uncomfortable—and it might even seem that you don't understand the company's culture.

Find out what's appropriate by looking at what employees are wearing in their LinkedIn profile photos (usually a good indication of what they consider professional) and checking out what people are wearing on the company's 'About us' page.

Step 2. Don't wear a brand-new outfit

Above all, interview clothes should make you feel confident and comfortable. Which means you shouldn't wear anything you've never worn before.

Say you haven't worn a suit since school, but you do your research and find that everyone at a company wears one. It's not a good idea

to buy a brand new suit and wear it for the first time to your interview because you won't feel like yourself.

You also won't yet know how the suit behaves on you: Does it crease? Is there an itchy label? Are your arms restricted? Is it hot?

Instead, why not try wearing chinos, a shirt and a jacket instead of a full suit (which is totally acceptable unless you've been explicitly told to wear a suit). Or, buy a suit at least a day in advance (or earlier if it might need tailoring) and wear it around the house for a day to get used to it.

If you find that people at the company wear a variety of things—or that the dress code is casual—my advice is really simple: wear something you've always felt confident and comfortable in (or one of the failsafe outfits described below).

Step 3. Keep it cohesive

Interviewers are looking for a candidate who has it together – which means you should think about how all the elements of your outfit



add up. One tip is, always avoid wearing any more than two or three different colours. This is the easiest way to make an outfit cohesive.

Secondly, remember that your bag, umbrella and socks are all part of your look. Make sure they're smart enough that they don't let the rest of your clothes down.

Step 4. Layer up

The room you're interviewing in could be boiling or freezing. To be prepared for either eventuality, wear two layers: a shirt and jacket.

If it's warm, the shirt looks good by itself ... but if the air conditioning is blasting, a blazer will look sharp and keep you warm. Look for layers made from silk (for women), and merino wool, both of which are light but insulating.

Step 5. Iron out all the details

The devil's in the details, so polish your shoes, make sure your nails are neat, iron your shirt and trousers, and keep perfume and makeup to a minimum.

In the end, it's all about showing off your skills, so you should get rid of anything that distracts (or detracts) from, well, you.

The outfit that works for (almost) every interview:

For men:

A crisp white button-down shirt; chinos; brogues or boots; and a textured blazer in case the A/C is on high or you feel too casual. Wear your smartest coat on top.

Why this works: By sticking to simple basics, you'll ensure your interviewer focuses on you, not your clothes. This outfit is classic and mature, and shows more personality than a suit.

For women:

A blouse in a block colour or a crisp white shirt; dark skinny jeans or cigarette pants; brogues or loafers; and your contingency layer of choice, like a well-tailored blazer in a boyfriend style or with a nipped-in waist (and in a different colour to your trousers).

For the shirt, choose whatever fabric makes you most comfortable. Crisp white cotton is timeless, and silk or chiffon can be more flattering if you're curvier.

Why this works: It's simple, refined, and not distracting. Combining separates shows some personality, but the tailored jacket looks professional.