

2023

# Best Workplaces™

Autumn • UK Sector Edition



## The Future of the Human Touch

Why we still need the  
power of people  
in the age of AI

**Secrets of the Sectors:** New research reveals the 3 keys to unlocking long-term business success

**Favourably Flexible:** Reimagining the 4-day workweek into a model fit for all

**Revealed:** See which top-performing firms employees say are the BEST places to work in the Tech, Financial Services & Insurance, and Consulting & Professional Services sectors

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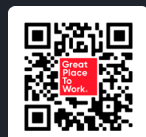
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The Future of the Human Touch

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Secrets of the Sectors

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# The Future of the Human Touch

## Why We Still Need the Power of People in the Age of AI

Within a few years, AI has made the transition from 'future of work' premise to commonplace business practice across industries globally.

In fact, the AI Index Report shows over half the world's companies actively embedding the technology in multifaceted ways, from robotic process automation to virtual agents, predictive consumer analytics, and AI-based enhancement of products.

Combine this with the recent upsurge of ChatGPT, Midjourney and other open programs being adopted by individuals both in and outside of work, and it's clear the age of AI has only just begun. Yet despite its promise of increased productivity and profitability, AI cannot answer all business problems. Research by Great Place To Work proves it's those organisations who are adept at harnessing the human potential of their employees, and deliver an engaging workplace experience for all, regardless of industry or size, who will continue to outperform their rivals, and retain talent longer than the average UK company.

### The Benefits of Being Human

Even with their immense memory and processing power, machines are (for now at least) incapable of feeling genuine empathy. Nor can they practice discernment within various cultural contexts, or perfectly pick up on subtle nuances in body language or gauge 'the energy in the room' – all of which remain critical soft skills essential to our human world of work.

**"This year, AI entered the mainstream in a way that's felt different to previous years,"**

says Dr. Eduard Berndt, Senior Analytics Manager at Great Place To Work UK. "These entities can certainly be useful money and time savers, but at the end of the day, a business is made up of people. Our data proves that companies with a happier workforce are usually the more profitable and more trusted as a brand by both their employees and customers."

Even Amazon, which remains a somewhat controversial, mega-user of AI (with founder Jeff Bezos previously referring to online gig workers as "humans-as-a-service") has shown signs of leaders realising the benefits of putting people first.

Since announcing its 10% pay rises in March, the e-commerce giant has subsequently launched new term-time contracts in an effort to "boost employee flexibility" for parents and grandparents working in Amazon warehouses.

"Whether employee wellbeing or talent attraction are the primary reasons behind these changes – or perhaps both – can only be speculated. Nevertheless, these improvements in employee experience will likely have significant positive impacts on the lives of those affected," says Mark Fowles, Head of Consulting at Great Place To Work UK.

"The more important message here is it shows no matter how extensively AI may be absorbed within a business, it will always be vital for leaders to prioritise their human resources if they want to ensure long-term success."

### Futureproofing Through People Development

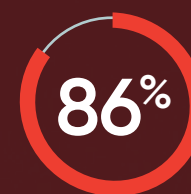
In response to the economic downturn, nearly half (49%) of organisations with a learning and development strategy in place plan to cut spending on their programmes in 2023, according to research by Cordel.

By contrast, nearly two thirds (60%) of workers were reported more likely to select a role containing a career progression plan over an identical job that offered a higher salary.

**"Creating a learning culture focused on maximising human potential and unrestricted by barriers, conjures critical thinking, creativity and innovation – all of which are vital for pulling organisations out of a crisis,"**

explains Fowles. "In our own analysis of over 190,000 employee survey responses, we've seen top-performing organisations across all sizes and sectors generally cite a continued (and sometimes increased) spend on upskilling their workforce. Today's candidates want an inclusive workplace experience that empowers individuals to thrive professionally and personally, inevitably leading to improved retention. People who feel valued and a strong sense of purpose and fulfilment at work will naturally drive better business resilience and performance – with or without the help of AI."

\*All Great Place To Work Certified™ organisations run an anonymous accredited employee survey to benchmark their company culture.



of employees at Certified\* 'great companies' say "people here quickly adapt to changes needed for our organisation's success"

vs the UK average of 62%



of employees at Certified\* 'great companies' agree the company "celebrates people who try new and better ways of doing things, regardless of the outcome"

vs the UK average of 55%



of employees at Certified\* 'great companies' say "I am offered training or development to further myself professionally"

vs the UK average of 60%



**Best Workplaces in Financial Services & Insurance 2023: Large + Super Large**

(Alphabetical order)

- Admiral Group\*
- Advantis
- Ares Management\*
- Assurant
- Aventum Group\*
- BHP LLP\*
- Broadridge Financial Solutions
- Citadel & Citadel Securities\*
- Coventry Building Society\*
- De Lage Landen Leasing Ltd
- Discover Financial Services
- Domestic & General
- Elavon
- First Central Group\*
- Fisher Investments UK
- HomeServe Membership Ltd
- Kingswood Group
- Love2Shop
- Mobilize Financial Services
- RiverStone International
- Santander UK\*
- Secure Trust Bank Group\*
- TransUnion
- Volkswagen Financial Services (UK) Ltd\*



Scan the QR Code to find out more about these Best Workplaces

**\* Top Achievers (Alphabetical order)**

**Super Large (Over 1000 employees)**

<b>Best Overall</b> Admiral Group				
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**Financial Services & Insurance Focus**

# Penny For Your Thoughts

As one of the largest sectors in the UK, financial services and insurance has widespread impacts on the overall functioning of our society.

In 2022, the House of Commons reported 3% of all UK jobs sitting within financial services – and the sector itself having contributed over £173 billion to the UK economy in the previous year (equivalent to 8.3% of total economic output).

The sector's notoriety for creating high-pressure work environments and a competitive culture stressing results (including a long-standing rivalry among the "Big Five") has sustained for decades.

In our analysis of the 2023 UK's Best Workplaces in Financial Services & Insurance™, it's clear these firms have developed cultures that tap into the thrill

of competition whilst also prioritising people's wellbeing and job satisfaction alongside business performance.

**Yearning to Learn**

According to LinkedIn's global learning study, providing sufficient learning opportunities is the number one way organisations can improve their employee retention.

Best Workplaces in Financial Services & Insurance have heeded employees' call for advancement; mapping learning to business goals and accelerating workers' skills journey with flexible L&D opportunities using a top-down approach.

Comments from employees working at the awarded organisations revealed excitement for the multitude of learning and growth opportunities available to them – with people at times even

**Large (201-1000 employees)**

				<b>Best Overall</b> Secure Trust Bank Group
--	--	--	--	--

**Medium (51-200 employees)**

<b>Best Overall</b> Banked				
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thanking management and senior leadership for providing the time and resources needed to support their professional development.

**Opportunities cited include:**

- Cross-departmental collaboration
- Bespoke training courses
- Development opportunities – including mentoring, apprenticeships and graduate schemes to support people into the organisation
- Internal mobility
- Flexible L&D budgets employees can choose to utilise for professional as well as personal development

As one respondent shared: "The learning and development opportunities that have been provided to me since joining the firm have far exceeded my expectations. The senior team members work closely with the wider team and create an environment where everyone feels valued and appreciated."

**The Way We Were, Tomorrow**

Every employee surveyed anonymously by Great Place To Work is asked to describe the one thing they believe makes their workplace truly 'great'.

**Small (10-50 employees)**

		<b>Best Overall</b> Climate X		
--	--	----------------------------------	--	--

Alongside praise for their firm's response to the cost-of-living crisis, many employees at Best Workplaces in Financial Services & Insurance reminisced the support they received during the previous Covid crisis.

"During our examination, we found this was the only industry which had numerous respondents still speaking positively in 2022 and 2023 about the way they were supported by their employer during the pandemic," says James Bufton, Organisational Trends Analyst at Great Place To Work UK.

**"It's powerful to think that, years later, people are still speaking to us about the actions their employer took in 2020. It proves to leaders that their response to a crisis is remembered and highly valued by employees."**

Managers and executives can now use this invaluable insight to align their leadership styles and behaviours to ensure they maintain the momentum and sustain the supportive, caring culture they cultivated during that unprecedented time."

**Remember Your Managers**

Bridging the gap between executives and employees means managers wear many hats and will frequently jump between the innumerable demands of both groups.

Ensuring managers are equipped with the skills and resources they need to support themselves in addition to supporting their direct reports and teams will be crucial for maintaining a strong company culture

that fuels performance.

"Our data shows that it's frontline and middle managers who are experiencing the most stress at work," Bufton continues. "They may also have the biggest impact on the majority of employees' experience, so it's vital they too are looked after by their employer."

**Key Takeaway**  
If financial and insurance firms wish to hold onto their talent, creating a supportive learning culture, which allows employees to advance in their careers quickly and flexibly, will be the most efficient starting point.

**Best Workplaces in Financial Services & Insurance 2023: Small + Medium (Alphabetical order)**

- Agria Pet Insurance
- Analyst Alpha Generation Ltd\*
- AVASK Group
- Banked\*
- Beckett Investment Management Group Ltd
- Centor Insurance and Risk Management\*
- Climate X\*
- Colmore Partners Ltd\*
- Farnell Clarke Ltd
- GPS Capital Markets Ltd\*
- Homeprotect
- HomeServe Ltd
- HURST
- iM Global Partner
- Operis
- PSGS
- Puma Capital Group
- Quorsus\*
- Ryan\*
- Seccl Technology\*
- Serve and Protect Credit Union
- SmartSearch
- Technology Holdings
- The Exeter
- Think Money Ltd
- WisdomTree\*
- Xledger
- Zodia Custody

## Best Workplaces in Tech 2023: Large + Super Large

(Alphabetical order)

Allianz Technology  
Altair  
Ansys UK Ltd  
Atos UK  
Bazaarvoice  
Booking.com\*  
Braze\*  
Bytes Software Services  
Cadence  
Capgemini UK  
Checkatrade  
Cisco\*  
ClearCourse Partnership  
Computacenter  
Confused.com  
Credera UK\*  
CrowdStrike  
Derivco Sports  
Digital Catapult  
Egress  
Epicor  
Experian Ltd  
Genesys  
GFT Financial Ltd  
HelloFresh UK  
Insight Direct (UK) Ltd  
Intuit Quickbooks  
IRIS Software Group  
Ivanti UK Ltd  
Juniper Networks Ltd  
Kerv  
Klaviyo\*  
Liberty IT  
M&S Digital & Technology  
Met Office  
Microlise Ltd  
Mimecast  
Natilik  
NHS Shared Business Services  
NVIDIA  
Phoenix Software  
Redkite  
Riskonnect  
Salesforce\*  
Shared Services Connected Ltd  
Smart Pension  
Softcat plc\*  
Sopra Steria Ltd

Student Beans  
TD SYNnex UK Ltd  
The Trade Desk  
Thoughtworks  
UST  
Verisk  
Version 1\*  
Virtusa Consulting Services Pvt Ltd  
World Wide Technology  
xDesign\*  
Xero\*  
Zscaler



Scan the QR Code to find out more about these Best Workplaces

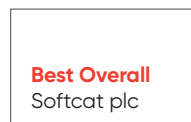


Top: Softcat plc employees enjoying a break together in the office

Bottom: Colleagues at xDesign engaging in a discussion across their desks

### \* Top Achievers (Alphabetical order)

#### Super Large (Over 1000 employees)



#### Large (201-1000 employees)



## Tech Focus

# That Team Feeling

Tech is one of the UK's busiest and fastest-growing industries, containing around 400 high-growth start-ups and a valuation of \$1 trillion (£785 billion), surpassed only by the US and China.

Latest estimates commissioned by the government predict its approach to supporting and strengthening the UK digital economy could grow the sector's annual gross value added (GVA) by an additional £41.5 billion by 2025, creating a further 678,000 jobs across the country.

While certainly exciting, this continued exponential growth (particularly in sub-sectors like Fintech) is not without its challenges. And with most tech firms boasting flexible work models and impressive perks, Talent Acquisition teams will need to work even harder to present a culture attractive enough to cut through the noise.

### "Team" Sits Top of the List

The UK's Best Workplaces in Tech™ are adept at developing dynamic, collaborative cultures that serve as a catalyst for innovation and personal growth for all. And it works!

Great Place To Work analysis shows employees at these organisations place the highest value on teamwork over and above benefits and reward – with 86% of employees at awarded companies saying "I want to work here for a long time", compared to just 67% at other non-listed tech organisations.

Often expressing their joy in the social connectivity opportunities provided by their employer, workers at Best Workplaces in Tech revere the general sense of synergy and peer support they regularly experience at work, regardless of role, and whether working remotely or in the office.

**"It is vital for the tech industry, especially start-ups, to recognise how important a 'team feeling' is to their employees,"**

says James Bufton, Organisational Trends Analyst at Great Place To Work UK.

"What we see in our awarded organisations is a strong spirit of solidarity existing in tandem with frequent opportunities for collaboration and social connection, all of which are what tech employees themselves have told us makes theirs such a fantastic place to work."

As one anonymous respondent shared in the survey:

"Collaboration here is second to none, anyone can put forward a query and they will get multiple responses from all levels of the company within minutes. It's not just a buzzword but a reality. People are invested in each other from Day 1. The quality of people at the company is very high, there are no weak links."

Another shared a similar sentiment: "Many organisations have a public-facing persona that talks about how amazing their culture is, but it's rare to find an organisation that lives up to its own social media hype and normally in reality, often falls short. [My employer] is one of those organisations, not only lives up to the hype but massively exceeds it. I am proud of being part of such an amazing place and hope things remain this way for many years to come."

### Addressing Their Concerns Through Culture

In 2023, the rising surge of artificial intelligence and its potential impacts on employment have been thrust to the forefront of many workers' minds like never before.

For now, research on AI remains conflicting. On the one hand, reports suggest probable increased risk of AI replacing jobs on a colossal scale. On the other, experts cite increased job creation as machine learning moves closer towards the mainstream.

"AI adds another layer of anxiety for many people who are already experiencing fears around the current societal and economic polycrisis we're living through," says Bufton. "To mitigate these concerns effectively, leaders in tech need to invest in a culture that ensures employees feel empowered with sufficient opportunities to collaborate with colleagues on projects that foster mutual learning, development, and fellowship."



Research from Adzuna reports UK companies increasingly hiring for entry-level tech roles – up from 6,596 in November 2022 to over 15,000 in 2023 – as employers seek to bring in a new generation of tech talent.

But together with AI, emerging fields like advanced semiconductor design and quantum computing present their own challenges for HR and TA professionals competing for high-skilled workers in these niche areas amidst a nationwide skills shortage.

“This is not an easy time for anyone in recruitment – even for some of our clients working in Best Workplaces in Tech,” says Claire Knights, Director of Growth and Recognition at Great Place To Work UK.

“The sector is incredibly competitive. But what our awarded organisations have proven time and again is that when leaders listen to their people (by granting them ample opportunity for sharing feedback and ideas), and create the style of culture that feeds into what they value most, they reap the rewards of filling roles faster and lowering staff turnover more than other companies.”

### It Starts with Feedback

Central to Best Workplace cultures across the sectors is continuously obtaining feedback from all employees. Regular pulse surveys, mental health check-ins, focus groups, or tailored events are often used as methods for monitoring progress and making informed decisions on which aspects of the culture leaders should invest in, adapt, or eliminate.

“Having the right tool to ask the right questions at regular intervals throughout every year is what gives our tech industry clients the rich data and insights they need to create a people proposition that can stand out against their rivals,” says Knights.

**“No matter how fast the industry grows or what innovations may enter the market, tech leaders who speak to their people, give them a voice, and act quickly on feedback will always be able to adapt their culture to align with their employees’ ever-changing needs and ideas of what it means to be a great place to work.”**

Top: Outdoor selfie by the team at Plotbox

Middle: Salesforce employees catch up during a yoga session

Bottom: A fun prop used for an in-person and remote colleague meeting at SquaredUp

### Key Takeaway

If tech firms wish to hold onto their talent, leaders should prioritise creating a strong team spirit with frequent opportunities for employees to collaborate on projects and grow their skills simultaneously to cultivating friendships at work.



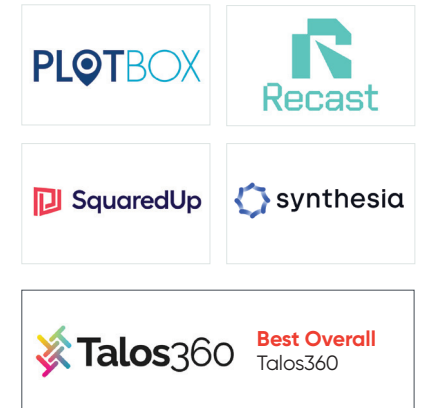
### Best Workplaces in Tech 2023: Small & Medium

(Alphabetical order)

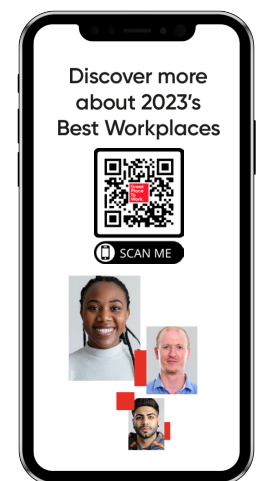
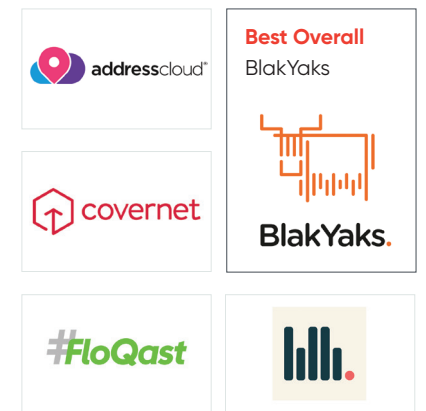
- |                        |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2i Ltd                 | Intersoft                 |
| 360insights            | ITC Secure                |
| 383 Project            | Jumar                     |
| AccessPay              | Kepler Interactive Ltd    |
| Achievers              | KnowBe4                   |
| Addresscloud Ltd*      | Leighton                  |
| Advancing Analytics    | Lilli*                    |
| Adviselnc Ltd          | Macrium Software          |
| Aer Studios            | Mason Advisory            |
| Airwalk Reply          | Mercator Digital          |
| Alliants               | Nephos Technologies       |
| Alternative Airlines   | Nomios UK&I               |
| Anywhere365 Ltd        | Person Centred Software   |
| Arctic Wolf, UK        | Peru Consulting           |
| Automation Consultants | Planful                   |
| Basis Technologies     | PlotBox*                  |
| BestOutcome            | Qualtrics                 |
| BigCommerce            | Quark Software, Inc UK    |
| BlakYaks*              | Radar Healthcare          |
| Box.Com (UK) Ltd       | Razor Ltd                 |
| Bumper                 | Recast*                   |
| CarePlanner            | Red Ant Digital Ltd       |
| Coeo                   | Retail Insight            |
| Computer Task Group UK | Rimini Street             |
| Couchbase              | Rockpool Digital Ltd      |
| Covernet*              | Samsara Networks Ltd      |
| Creative ITC           | Scandit                   |
| CSL Group              | SentinelOne               |
| Cvent Europe           | Signify Technology        |
| Cyara                  | SII Services Ltd          |
| Datasparq              | SilverRail Technologies   |
| Domo Group             | Simpson Associates        |
| eduMe                  | SquaredUp*                |
| Elucidat               | StoryStream               |
| emerchantpay           | Synthace                  |
| EnableX Ltd            | Synthesia*                |
| Essentia Analytics     | Systemagic Ltd            |
| esynergy               | Talos360*                 |
| ET Works               | Tanium                    |
| Evo Agency             | Technology Management Ltd |
| Feedr Ltd              | Tier 2 Consulting Ltd     |
| FloQast*               | Unifrog                   |
| Garrison               | Unipro Ltd                |
| Generis                | Valiantys Ltd             |
| Hexarad Group Ltd      | Wazoku                    |
| ICRTouch               | Work Tech Group Ltd       |
| Incentive Games Ltd    | Xpedition                 |
| Index                  | Yext                      |
| Infigo Software Ltd    | Zest                      |
| Infinity Group         | Zoocha                    |

### \* Top Achievers (Alphabetical order)

Medium (51-200 employees)

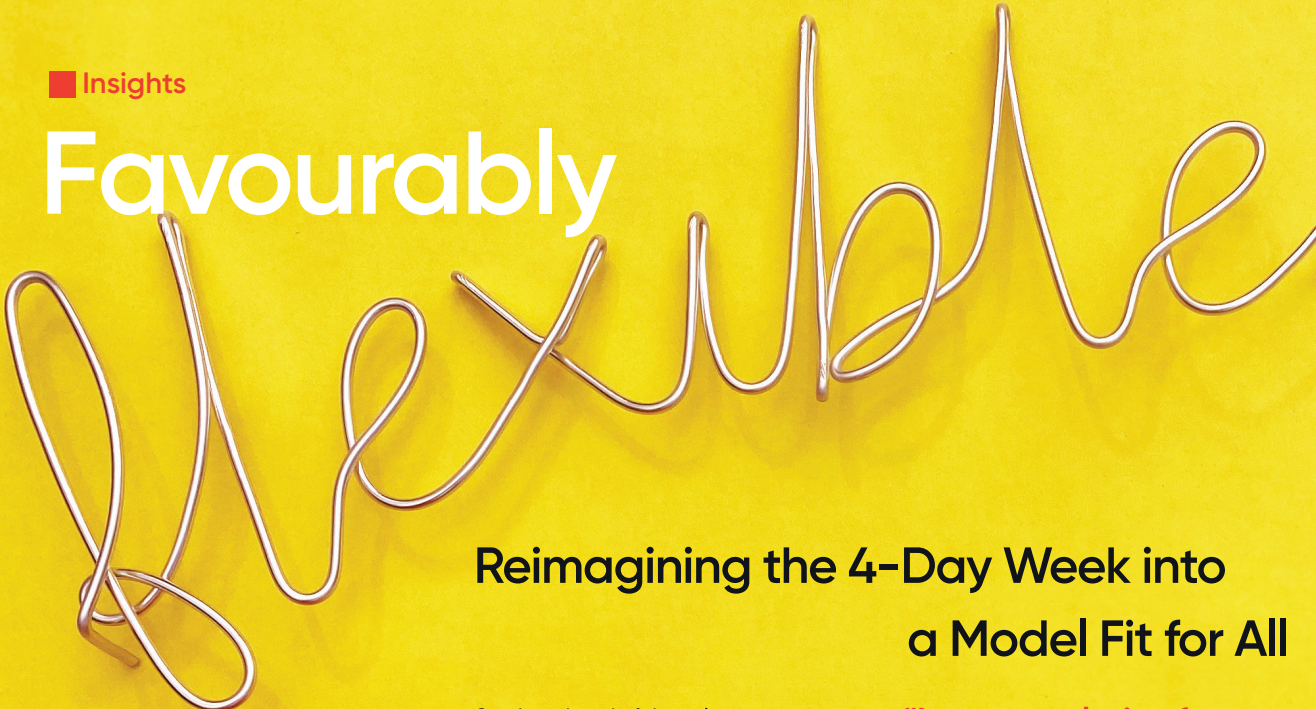


Small (10-50 employees)





# Favourably



## Reimagining the 4-Day Week into a Model Fit for All

Staying ahead of the culture curve remains a key trademark of Best Workplaces™. Many, for example, had reaped the rewards of hybrid working models, holistic wellbeing programmes, and advocating purpose over profit long before the pandemic.

Similarly, some of the award-winning firms reported experimenting with the four-day workweek, testing the concept independently of the UK trial by non-profit *4 Day Week Global*. Though not a panacea for all productivity and work-life balance issues in every sector, it has been the catalyst for new, unique approaches able to deliver better people and business outcomes for some organisations.

"Increasingly, we see that workers don't want life to fit into a good job. They want work to fit into a good life, and they will leave an employer who isn't providing this for them," says Abigail Animwa, Senior List and Organisational Trends Manager at Great Place To Work UK. She adds:

**"In our analysis of robust workplace cultures, the data reveals one secret to success of Best Workplaces is their inclined divergence from the status quo."**

"These employers are acutely aware of the value consistent feedback loops have on their people proposition; seeking people's ideas and concerns consistently throughout every year – and then taking action quickly based on those insights." Trials or projects that fail on the first attempt are often given a second chance, but with adjustments that transmute the norm or generalised approach into something bespoke.

It's a cycle which enables Best Workplaces to be culture champions who outplay competitors; fine-tuning policies and practices, and making incremental changes at key points that concurrently improve business performance and job satisfaction.

### Spreading the Flex

Cybersecurity provider Egress – awarded both Best Workplaces for Wellbeing™ and Best Workplaces in Tech™ recognition in 2023 – found the four-day week to be productivity neutral, or only slightly above, as opposed to supercharging output and profitability.

"We realised that by rather choosing to go against the grain and spread the flexibility across the week and year, colleagues would be given the time out they needed to manage home and work life, whilst also driving up performance," explains Laura Probert, Chief People Officer at Egress.

The company's distinctive eFlex model is broken down into two parts: Bite Size Flex and Supersize Flex. In the former, employees are given two 1-hour flexes to either start work late, finish the day early, or enjoy a two-hour lunch break twice a week.

"As it equates to around 13 days paid leave per year, this was a small but significant change, and one that has been hugely welcomed, with 70% of colleagues taking advantage of the programme."

Conversely, Supersize Flex offers six additional half days per year that all staff can take at short notice, no questions asked.

"The four-day week was our boldest people initiative in our 15-year history, and forced us to question everything we do. With our eFlex approach, we can attract world-class talent in the market and stand out against the tough competition, but also retain the great talent we already have without damaging our ability to perform as an organisation.

"Many of our people said they didn't always want Friday off and wanted to choose which days they took and when,

so eFlex allowed them this flexibility. By thinly spreading flex time, the impact was no longer detrimental."

"Operating in a four-day week will undoubtedly bring some value and learnings to any organisation – and for some, may be just the thing they've needed all along!" says Animwa.

"But for those cases where it cannot work (such as for many logistics or frontline workers) it's important for leaders in these sectors to keep going and recognise that flexibility comes in countless forms. Connecting with your people to gain feedback, and involving them in the change, are vital steps for developing a successful work model – whichever form this may take."

### A Matter of Hours

Results of a successful shortened workweek trial commonly cite compressed hours (e.g. four 10-hour days) as the solution to dropping one full day of working. Yet without reducing workload intensity or tackling overworking itself – a particular concern of many organisations with remote employees – the model may inadvertently replicate an unhealthy, unsustainable long hours culture it aims to eradicate.

Studies have linked longer working hours to increased risk of back injury, higher alcohol consumption, poorer mental health, burnout, and general fatigue, all of which impact performance. A focus on output rather than hours put in brings higher probability of formatting a flex system that offsets these risks. Six-hour workdays, non-standard shift patterns, or implementation of job-sharing positions (where one role is split into two part-time contracts) are some solutions adopted by UK employers.

"The pandemic proved to sceptics that working from home was possible. Post pandemic, it's the general success of the

four-day workweek trials that is shifting employers' ideas of what work can or should look like.

**"Even those employers who cannot move to a four-day week will need to acknowledge that a traditional nine-to-five may not allow them to stay competitive in hiring and retention."**

### Key Considerations for a Shortened Workweek

#### 1. Know Thyself

Effective work structures consider the full demand profile of the business (e.g. any requirements for physical people presence; peak versus off-peak periods; skills and pay requirements for additional staff or asynchronous working) as well as their workforce demographics (e.g. total number of working parents and carers, geographic considerations for employees working abroad, and opposing needs for full-time vs part-time employees).

#### 2. Is it Equitable?

Unfairness is arguably the quickest way to erode trust in the workplace. Employers who ensure there is a fair opportunity for all staff to take advantage of the shorter workweek will minimise any unintended "us and them" divide.

#### 3. Communicate Early

After employees are informed, providing advance warning to customers will also give them time to understand and discuss the change before its launch. Creating subsequent repeated opportunities for customer dialogue can further strengthen customer satisfaction and loyalty, whilst simultaneously providing invaluable insights for optimising the model.



of participants in the UK 4-Day Week trial said no amount of money would make them accept a five-day schedule at their next job

**15%**



Best Workplaces in Consulting & Professional Services 2023: Large & Super Large

(Alphabetical order)

- Accenture\*
- AlphaSights
- Association of International Certified Professional Accountants
- Baringa\*
- Bishop Fleming
- Deloitte LLP\*
- Elements Talent Consultancy\*
- FTI Consulting
- Gleeds UK
- Gowling WLG (UK) LLP\*
- Havas Lynx Group
- IMA-HOME
- Irwin Mitchell\*
- KBR
- Moneypenny
- PKF Francis Clark\*
- REL Field Marketing\*
- Robert Half Ltd\*
- Slalom\*
- Teleperformance
- Thompsons Solicitors
- UNIDAYS

\* Top Achievers: Consulting & Professional Services

(Alphabetical order)

Super Large (Over 1000 employees)

Large (201-1000 employees)

Consulting & Professional Services Focus

# Return to Form

A remarkable 93% of employees in the UK's Best Workplaces in Consulting & Professional Services™ consider their company to be 'a great place to work'.

These firms cover a diverse range of knowledge-intensive roles, from legal services to management consultancy, engineering, marketing and advertising, telecoms, real estate, recruitment, and travel management to name a few.

While the pandemic has transformed the way many people perceive work globally since 2020, the uptake of AI and other transformative technologies has this year, in particular, become a catalyst for radical changes for many service models and skills requirements of organisations across the sector.

While navigating this ever-changing landscape, the Best Workplaces in Consulting & Professional Services have galvanised their people proposition by placing employee wellbeing at the forefront of their company cultures – and enjoyed better business performance and staff retention as a result.

Great Place To Work's analysis of over 30,000 workers from the 52 awarded companies found that 91% of individuals affirm their employer "actively promotes mental and physical health" – a third more than the UK average for employees in the sector.

Furthermore, a striking 86% of individuals at awarded firms describe their workplace as "a psychologically and emotionally healthy place to work", compared to the UK average for the sector of just 60%.

But rather than enticing benefits and boundless annual leave policies taking centre stage, employees in this sector are placing more value on a caring work environment and the smaller gestures of support they receive from colleagues.

Several responses to open-ended questions in the anonymous Trust Index survey express sincere gratitude to leaders and managers for their acknowledgement of today's tough economic environment, and the impacts this has on people's personal lives (e.g. having health-related time off that is not only supported but also actively encouraged from the highest echelons of leadership in many of the Best Workplaces).

"Providing nurturing policies around health and individual support is the starting point for any firm in the sector looking to attract and retain talent," says Abigail Animwa, Senior List and Organisational Trends Manager at Great Place To Work UK.

"But leaders need to ensure they're making these policies fair, flexible and, most importantly, are standing by them when it matters – that's what employees value most."

As one worker from a consulting firm explained:

**"What makes this a great place to work is the caring culture – this is driven from the top down. You feel supported, listened to, and engaged from day one – this has been fundamental for me. I finally feel like I'm thriving at work, and this is down to the environment that they have created."**

## Optimising the office experience

Workplace environment is a key dimension within the broader umbrella of employee wellbeing, and was referred to more by respondents in consulting & professional services than those working in any other sector.

As more organisations within the sector contemplate a transition from full remote working to office-based or hybrid working, leaders will need to give careful consideration to employees' sentiments around environmental wellbeing, ensuring physical working spaces are enticing enough to ease people's reluctance to abandon home working.

"Considering that 50% of the global workforce says they'd seek alternative employment if their remote work policy changes<sup>1</sup>, creating enough incentives for a return to the office will be crucial for employers in this sector specifically," says Animwa.

Research by Unispace reveals that a substantial majority (three-quarters) of individuals above the age of 45 believe there is room for improvement in their workplace environment.

But the Best Workplaces in Consulting & Professional Services have heeded their people's calls, enhancing amenities and providing more private areas in their offices, as well as tailored resources and equipment based on individuals' needs.

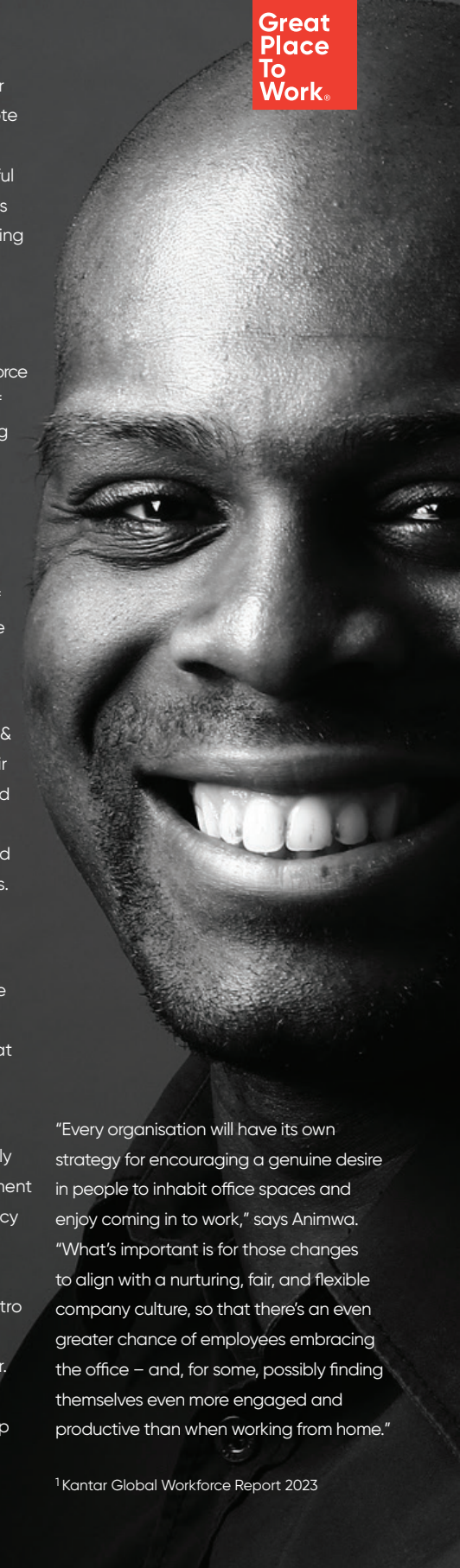
Employees feel energised in these augmented work environments, with the spaces themselves instilling a sense of security, and justification for one's commute and the associated costs that come with on-site working.

As one respondent explained:

"We have a fabulous office which I really enjoy coming in to. This office environment was created by our Building Consultancy Team who designed and delivered the internal fitout when we moved in (December 2019). We have a lovely bistro kitchen and high level views across the city and surroundings from the 6th floor. I also enjoy the company of my other colleagues. Together, these factors help me to focus and get on with my work much better."

"Every organisation will have its own strategy for encouraging a genuine desire in people to inhabit office spaces and enjoy coming in to work," says Animwa. "What's important is for those changes to align with a nurturing, fair, and flexible company culture, so that there's an even greater chance of employees embracing the office – and, for some, possibly finding themselves even more engaged and productive than when working from home."

<sup>1</sup> Kantar Global Workforce Report 2023





**Best Workplaces in Consulting & Professional Services**  
**2023: Small & Medium**  
 (Alphabetical order)

Accuracy  
 Ackerman Pierce  
 Aconveyancing  
 Aspire Scientific\*  
 Ayming UK  
 BBJ&K  
 Beyond Analysis  
 BFY Group  
 BTTC Infrastructure Ltd  
 Burnetts  
 Camino Partners  
 Channel 3 Consulting  
 Cherry  
 Chesamel  
 Circle  
 Consilium Recruit  
 Consult Search & Selection  
 Create Engage  
 CSA Environmental  
 Deltra Group  
 Digitaloft  
 Ecology by Design Ltd  
 ELSE  
 Enfuse Group Ltd  
 Engage Interactive Ltd  
 Evolved Search  
 Fintop Consulting  
 firstlight group  
 Forward Role  
 Founders Law  
 Freshminds  
 Genie Goals  
 Good Humans\*  
 Goodman Masson  
 Hatmill\*  
 Hive & Pollen Health  
 Humatica  
 i-Pharm Consulting  
 IEMA  
 Impression\*  
 In Digital  
 Interlink  
 JGA Recruitment Group  
 justteachers Ltd  
 K2 Corporate Mobility\*  
 Katté & Co  
 LACE Partners  
 Language is Everything  
 Lansons  
 Legacy Futures Group

Linq Healthcare  
 Recruitment Specialists  
 Loom Digital  
 Mayer Environmental  
 Moore Insight  
 Nautilus Consulting Ltd  
 NOVOS  
 Oakleaf Partnership  
 Oaklin  
 Oban International  
 Overdrive Digital  
 Oxford Product Design  
 PAG  
 PEN Partnership  
 Pentadel Project Management  
 Phase 3  
 Point 6 Design  
 Powerforce Field Marketing  
 and Retail Services Ltd  
 PPC Geeks  
 Practicus\*  
 Project One  
 Quantum Consumer Solutions  
 Pvt. Ltd  
 Re:signal  
 Recruit 121  
 Reinvigoration  
 ResourceIT\*  
 Richard Nelson LLP  
 Sago  
 Scientific Group  
 Sellick Partnership\*  
 Silver Cloud HR\*  
 Something Big  
 Sullivan & Stanley  
 Talent Locker Ltd  
 TEAM LEWIS  
 The Berkeley Partnership LLP  
 The Croc  
 The DPO Centre  
 The Marketing Pod  
 The Value Engineers  
 Time etc  
 Trace Recruit  
 UP3 Services Ltd\*  
 UPP B2B  
 Uptake Strategies  
 Vetro Recruitment  
 Watkins & Gunn Solicitors  
 Wavestone  
 Wharton Business Consulting  
 Wollens  
 Zifo Technology

\* Top Achievers (Alphabetical order)

Medium (51-200 employees)

**IMPRESSION** Best Overall  
 Impression

**K2**

**PRACTICUS\***

**Sellick Partnership**  
 Recruitment Specialists

**SILVER CLOUD**

Small (10-50 employees)

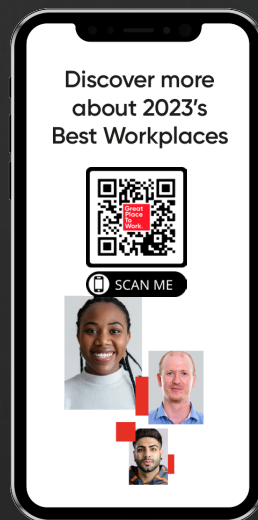
**aspire** SCIENTIFIC

**GOOD HUMANS™**

**Hatmill** Best Overall  
 Hatmill

**ResourceIT**  
 The Client-First Agency

**UP3**



■ Insights

# Secrets of the Sectors

## The Keys to Unlocking Long-Term Business Success

Every industry is a world unto itself, with idiosyncratic differences that create a tapestry of work cultures comprising unique values, expectations, and norms that shape the work dynamics and employee experience.

Key driver analysis by Great Place To Work explored the strength of the relationship between individual survey questions and levels of engagement, applying the methodology to companies with 100+ survey respondents to obtain accurate representative results.

### Culture Predicts Future Performance

The top recurring theme across all 26 sectors was the undeniable role of people in crafting a remarkable workplace experience. Great cultures, regardless of the sector, foster opportunities for meaningful connections among employees, where camaraderie and teamwork thrive.

The UK's Best Workplaces™ emerge as experts in attracting and retaining top talent while weathering the storms of social and economic upheavals. Investing in workplace culture has been a crucial factor in driving their business' profitability, as well as higher staff retention and faster innovation rates,

with employees' suffering less burnout and giving greater discretionary effort than in unlisted companies.

Listed firms maintain a resolute commitment to seeking employees' feedback regularly (through surveys, focus groups, company events, and/or 1-2-1 conversations). They study this invaluable information, formulating plans based on results, and then roll out changes quickly. Using this constant cycle of enquiring, listening, learning, and acting, leaders within these organisations have created the kind of workplace cultures coveted by workers in their industry.

In addition to short-term cost savings, research by Alex Edmans has also found investing in workers and developing great cultures leads to long-term business success, with top-performing organisations outperforming the stock market by 2%-3% per year.

Over a span of 4-5 years, the market tends to align with the intrinsic worth of employee job satisfaction, signifying that provision of a great employee experience not only associates with augmented stock returns but also foreshadows forthcoming performance. As an anonymous UK-based employee aptly put it:

**“The people! Everyone genuinely gets on – we win together, we lose together, and we have fun together. It’s an extremely supportive culture, and we have the most incredibly talented people here.”**

### Seeing Fun As More Than Fluff

Fun is no laughing matter. According to Gallup's most recent State of the Global Workplace Report, nearly 90% of UK workers are “unenthused” by their job. The UK employee engagement rate sits at a startlingly low 10%, making it one of the least engaged countries in Europe





(with France (7%) and Italy (5%) reporting the lowest numbers).

For nearly 8 in 10 companies surveyed by Great Place To Work UK, fun was among the top drivers of engagement. In the UK's Best Workplaces specifically, a striking 85% of employees agree their "is a fun place to work."

## "Much like having a sense of humour, the ability to have fun drives resilience, which is particularly important in otherwise stressful work contexts or times of adversity,"

explains Sara Silvonon, Senior Consultant and Wellbeing Lead at Great Place To Work UK.

"Going beyond occasional social events, Best Workplaces foster a holistic sense of fun throughout daily work life, and are therefore more successful in combating boredom and unfulfillment that lead to issues like 'quiet quitting' and attrition."

Whilst certain less enjoyable aspects of any job role are inevitable, listed organisations have explored multiple ways to inject fun into their workplace. These include:

- > matching individuals' daily tasks and responsibilities to their skillsets and areas of interest;
- > gamifying tasks or introducing friendly elements of competition;
- > ensuring positive feedback loops and rewards;
- > and celebrating the smallest wins as well as greater successes of individuals and teams.

For 76% of companies surveyed, fun also emerged as the number one driver of wellbeing – a factor of the employee experience which directly impacts retention.

"Studies show that UK employers are losing around £45 billion and 17 million working days due to employees' stress, depression and anxiety," says Silvonon. "Leaders who avoid seeing fun as a 'soft metric' and firmly place this on the agenda, taking simple steps to make work more enjoyable and amicable for all employees, will reap the rewards of a happier, and more loyal workforce."

### Trust In Leadership

Leaders at all levels play a pivotal role in shaping culture and the employee experience.

Over a third (36%) of UK workers no longer feel confident in their senior leaders since the start of the Covid pandemic, according to research by O.C. Tanner. Conversely, only a miniscule 1% of employees at Best Workplaces say they have 'very little' or no confidence in their Executive teams' judgement.

Employees comment on their trusted leaders making time to develop an emotional connection with the company's culture and its people; being approachable and engaging employees on a personal level – through organised activities as well as in everyday colleague interactions.

At times, this has required leaders to adapt their communication styles to suit the diverse preferences and needs of individuals. For example, shifting from directive statements (such as: "Here's what is going to happen. Any questions?") to more collaborative language (such as:

"Here's what we're thinking of doing. Before we move forward any further, we want to understand how this will affect you").

By being invited to participate in business decisions, even those employees who wish the final decision went their way are less likely to feel resentment or perceive unfairness. This trust, in turn, creates a fertile ground for employees to follow leaders confidently towards achieving business objectives.

"Being willing to adapt and grow is how we become great leaders. Awareness, new thinking, and intentional practice is how we build and sustain great leadership," says Dr Petrina Carmody, Director of Change at Great Place To Work UK.

"It takes time to shift one's thinking to make a change, to then see a change, and then believe in the change as the new normal," Dr Carmody continues.

Leaders of Best Workplace organisations are absolutely committed to mindful reflection on what they do as leaders. And their employees are more

likely to become advocates – not only in how they see their experience, but also in how they share their experience with new hires and their network."

### The For All™ Experience

With 82% of global leaders agreeing that the HR function is more critical now than it has ever been, according to LinkedIn, an effective people strategy is vital for success.

In the UK's Best Workplaces, 9 out of 10 employees believe they are treated fairly regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, gender, or position within the company.

This is central to the For All™ experience, which demands that all employees have a great workplace experience, irrespective of demographics.

Actions taken to identify and close gaps are done consistently and monitored regularly to ensure continuous improvement.

Focusing on employees who have inconsistent experiences (such as those groups who answer neither positively nor negatively to survey

statements) has allowed some listed companies to uncover which areas of their action plan leaders should revisit or prioritise.

**"Connecting desired behaviours directly to organisational values, leaders further demonstrate to employees that these are more than just words on a website, but the guideposts for positive actions and a shared code," says Dr Carmody. "This then transforms abstract ideas into tangible, measurable practices."**

Great Place To Work research also found that the highest levels of innovation occur when every employee is empowered to participate – and for companies where higher numbers of workers report innovation and inclusion, median year-on-year revenue growth is more than five times higher than firms in the bottom quartile for connecting employees to innovation.

Rather than looking solely to the C-suite for useful ideas, Best Workplaces create multiple opportunities for all employees to innovate – whether it be improving products, creating more efficient workflows, or delivering better customer service. As a result, an astonishing 98% of employees at

Best Workplaces say "management genuinely seeks and responds to people's suggestions and ideas" – 20% more than the UK average.

Creating a kind and genuinely inclusive work environment is another core focus for these organisations, who recognise the significance of treating teammates with respect, avoiding the temptation to take out stress on colleagues, and viewing unmet targets as opportunities for reflection rather than blame.

Great Place To Work research further reveals that when employees experience a strong sense of belonging in the workplace they are:

**6x more likely to look forward to coming to work**

**5x more likely to view their workplace as fun**

**3x more likely to believe people are treated fairly regardless of their race**

**5x more likely to want to stay at their company for a long time**

With only 6 in 10 employees on average in the UK feeling a real sense of belonging at work, this aspect of DEIB is worth prioritising.

Ultimately, the successes of the Best Workplaces prove that a great place to work is not a far-fetched dream. It is a competitive edge that unlocks the potential of both employees and companies alike.

By placing people first, companies can thrive even in uncertain times.



# Revealed: Europe's Best Workplaces™ 2023



Over 1 million employees across 44 countries were surveyed by Great Place To Work to uncover which employers are giving their people the best work experience in Europe in 2023.

Scan the code to see the full list of **Top 150** awarded companies – including 26 based in the UK.



SCAN ME

Special congratulations to these UK-based organisations for being ranked among the Europe's Best Workplaces™ 2023!

