

Making Change Happen - Dream or Reality?

Advanced Working Papers -
A series of thought provoking insights
into work and the workplace



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To mark the 10th anniversary of the formation of Advanced Workplace Associates (AWA), we are publishing a series of twelve Advanced Working Papers, one each month throughout 2002.

The papers, written by leading experts within AWA's senior team, discuss the changing nature of work, the workplace and workplace management. They are designed to challenge traditional thinking, stimulate new ideas and promote a debate about the future of the workplace amongst senior business professionals. The titles of the papers are:

- 1 The History of Work and Where to Next?**
- 2 The Advanced Organisation - New Models for Turbulent Times**
- 3 The Workplace and its Impact on Professional Productivity**
- 4 Alternative Business Infrastructures - Planning for *Business As Usual* in the New World**
- 5 The Advanced Workspace Portfolio**
- 6 True Global Partnering**
- 7 Making Change Happen - Dream or Reality?**
- 8 Developing Business Support Functions for the Advanced Organisation**
- 9 Offshore Transaction Support Centres**
- 10 Advanced Technologies for Advanced Organisations**
- 11 How Can Change Projects Survive Change?**
- 12 Advanced Working - Scenarios for the Next 10 years**

The papers are not an end in themselves - they are merely the beginning of an ongoing debate. To continue the debate and enable contributions from a wide range of senior business professionals, we will be running a series of events throughout 2002 linked to topics within the Advanced Working Papers.



Making Change Happen - Dream or Reality?

Adopting advanced workstyles can be both beneficial and challenging. In the preceding papers in this series we have pointed to many of the benefits that can accrue to businesses, but only if they confront and address appropriately the challenges to be faced. Arguably, the greatest of the challenges to be encountered in *making change happen*, is routed in the business's organisational culture.

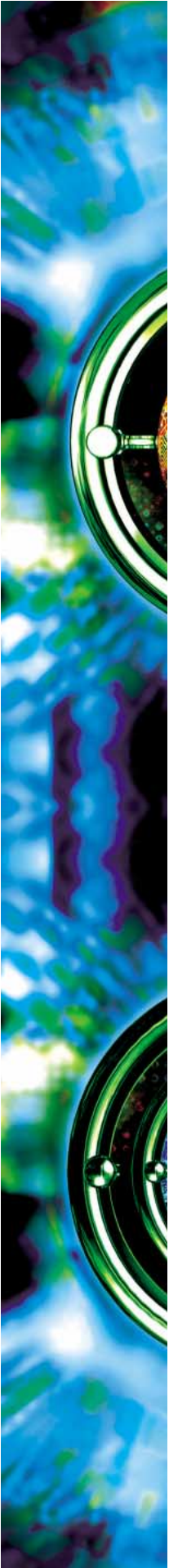
When we talk about organisational culture, we are referring to the fact that organisations are complex systems, made up of values, principles, attitudes and ways of viewing and relating to the world: they have shared meaning, shared understanding and shared sense-making. The culture of an organisation will be reflected in the behaviours and attitudes of all of its people – the things that are either clearly visible or barely hidden to everyone in the organisation and which leave an impression on the outsider. There is likely to be no one culture, but a series of sub-cultures, the mores of which are more or less in tune with each other.

Understanding the impact and influence of organisational culture on behaviour and attitudes, and vice versa, is a huge topic. One aspect that continues to frustrate, fascinate and challenge, is how to change an organisation's existing culture. This is in fact very hard to do, some would say impossible. So why should we even concern ourselves with this difficult subject when considering introducing advanced working to an organisation? Surely we already have enough to do and think about? Unfortunately, ignoring cultural factors is not an option: advanced working arrangements are made or broken by the attitudes and behaviours of those seeking to work flexibly, and as well as those of everyone else in the organisation.

This paper therefore discusses why we should consider the culture of an organisation as integral to the success or failure of advanced working and how we might go about changing culture to one that positively supports a diversity of working practices, people and lives. In so doing we raise many issues and seek to challenge the way we tackle implementing advanced working – encouraging us to think not just outside of the box, but also outside of the organisation.

What Kind of an Organisational Culture Supports Advanced Working?

Firstly, we need to appreciate what working flexibly requires of people. It requires a particular kind of personal behaviour and attitudes that embrace flexibility and innovation: relying on a person's *technical or functional* competence is not enough. Achieving flexibility may involve being willing to give up assigned personal space at work, the status of a big desk, defined office space or the family photo on the desk. People have to be willing to negotiate "my kind of flexibility with your kind of flexibility" – and be motivated and persistent in making it work. Managing and leading teams requires management of performance based on output rather than time spent.



Everyone needs to be great and consistent at communicating in innovative, different and appropriate styles and ways. We need to be motivated and organized – personally!

But these behaviours and attitudes do not exist in a vacuum: they exist within an organisational context, and more specifically, within a cultural context. No matter how committed and motivated people are in themselves to achieve flexibility, they need the support and context of a sympathetic organisational culture. But what does a sympathetic organisational culture look like?

There are a number of organisational factors that set the tone for whether or not advanced working is desirable and supported. For example, does the formal corporate vision and strategy embrace flexibility? Does it say so? Does the business mean it? Formal statements are powerful cultural emblems, even if not sufficient in isolation.

Organisations often suffer from poor communication and some do not seem to mind too much. Some have been getting away with it for years. A culture that does not tackle the need for effective and appropriate communication processes, methods and style cannot hope to champion advanced working. Worse, they are likely to find that working flexibly serves up a nasty naked lunch as the reality emerges of just how bad communication really is. Just providing more sophisticated IT and telecommunication systems of themselves will not help: people have to *want to* use them, and *want to* communicate, and be given clear cultural clues that this is essential.

Teams and leaders often worry about the impact of working flexibly on team morale and efficiency. Teams that function within an organisational culture that supports team morale, provides adequate resources and scope for teams to flourish on new ideas and innovation, have little to fear. Advanced working builds upon this kind of transformational leadership culture and, for them, *thinking outside of the box* and outside of current work practices is a healthy and productive challenge.

What does a sympathetic management culture look like? Managers certainly need to feel comfortable in a management style that allows them to trust people to be productive when they cannot see them under their nose. They need to feel confident in their skills at managing from a distance: but an organisational culture that reinforces management by visibility and control is highly unlikely to foster these skills. What an organization says overtly often masks the covert need for visibility by their managers.

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These are just some of the *cultural clues* to whether an organisation truly embraces flexibility, innovation and diversity of workstyle and lifestyle. Some organisations are closer to this ideal, but few organisations can start from scratch! So, being realistic, how can traditional approaches to culture change help to foster a culture that supports flexibility? In short, how can we get people to be more flexible?

Approaches to Changing Culture

Change Champions

Goethe said “whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it”. *Someone* has to have the inspiration vision and boldness to champion advanced working. This will not happen in a culture that does not value new and exciting opportunities, like advanced working, that have not been entirely evaluated as yet. A change champion needs to have sufficient power and influence to not only instigate and inspire change, but to carry it through and to inspire others to do so. But where are the change champions? Typically, they will be found in the HR, IT or FM/Real Estate departments - themselves interesting subcultures in their own right within the organisational culture. Each has its own motive for instigating and championing change, yet they nonetheless share common characteristics which make it difficult to *make change happen* in a sustainable way.

None of these departments is traditionally seen as having a primary influence on the business although all of them can have a major role to play given the chance and if they persist in grasping that chance. With advanced working, the IT department might have the technical know-how, but generally there is no-one to champion behavioural change towards actually using new technology to its full potential. Similarly, the HR department might understand a lot about behavioural change, but not enough about new technology. Neither department is typically or traditionally proactive and innovative - traditionally responding to the needs of the business rather than shaping the business of the future. This is where the IT, HR and FM departments *join hands*, a topic we will consider in Paper 8¹: none of them has traditionally taken on the role of proactive, blue sky thinking (outside of their own technical sphere), shying away from offering up shapers and influencers. In seeking to influence and share ideas and vision, leaders of these subcultures do not share the same language, technical skills or level of understanding of human change.

But surely advanced working is all about marrying the technical with the behavioural i.e. technological change with human and organisational change? Without greater understanding between these subcultures and potential change leaders, changing the organisational culture as a whole is unlikely. What is needed to change culture and behaviour is key people with charisma, influence, vision, leadership and an eye for innovation, to build relationships and take a more holistic viewpoint. Advanced working will almost always be a local, departmentalised initiative without a joining of complementary motives, minds, language and skills. Advanced working to save space and furniture costs will not in itself change anyone's behaviour. Producing a work-life balance policy will not in itself change behaviour. Having an organisational strategy which marries IT, FM and HR input, that also addresses cultural context, just might.

Envisioning and Formalising Change

Many a change process has been stifled by the initial absence of a clear mandate from those with positional power, followed up by an unwieldy blow or indecision once change has been instigated – a bit like trying to put the lid back on a jack-in-the box.

¹ AWA Advanced Working Paper 8 - Developing Business Support Functions for the Advanced Organisation



An organisational culture with a hierarchy that does not genuinely embrace ideas, innovation and change will fail miserably at advanced working as time passes. What is required is an organisation led by a culture of forward thinking, vision, ideas sharing and blue sky thinking. Leaders need to be organized, focused and understand why a vision is so important to harness energy and motivate.

Just having a vision is not enough: it has to be translated into clear strategic statements, policies, procedures and realistic action planning for change. Some organisations resist this formality: things happen *ad hoc*, it's "whom you know not what you know" and "everyone knows what's what anyway". This kind of culture is no use to achieving a strategic vision and practice of flexibility: it's a bit like saying 'we are an equal opportunities employer' without a clear policy, procedure and guidelines to focus practice and evaluate how its working. With advanced working, it is not enough to continue a culture of ad hoc arrangements, which *creep-up on* the organisation. This kind of approach can be highly uncomfortable, unsettling and even feel unfair to many people. Unless clear direction and value is placed on advanced working, those who adopt it regardless run the risk of feeling like *second class citizens* in their own organisation.



Supporting people throughout the process of change is essential

Culture and Manipulation

Some organisations seek to impose change on their members. This reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of advanced working: in order for it to be a success, people have to be involved in its design, choose what flexibility means for them as individuals and teams, and change attitudes and behaviours for themselves. Imposing change has never worked to change hearts and minds, attitudes and behaviours and it does not work for advanced working either. Why would it? Achieving a flexible work force and culture is not just about changing where and how we work: it is fundamentally about changing how people see themselves at work, how they behave and feel about their work and lifestyle.

Empowerment and Involvement

Involving people in change helps them to come to terms with change, to embrace the advantages there may be for individuals and to ultimately adapt by adopting new behaviours and attitudes. An organisational culture that expects its members to be empowered will see this rewarded in how advanced working is adopted: individuals that design their own work and output methodology, make their own case for how it

can work and why, and agree working protocols and practices, are the best chance an organisation has of achieving positive behaviour and attitudes toward flexibility. This can only happen in a culture that will run with, and trust, the suggestions and ideas that are created and grounded by its members within a clear business case and overall vision for flexibility.

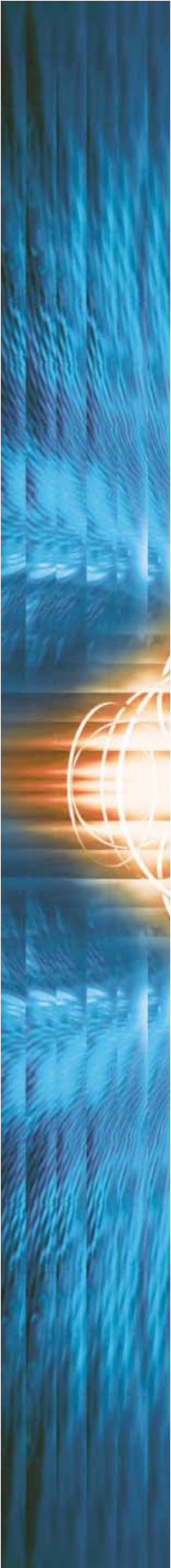
Motivating People to Change

You cannot just make change happen, you have to motivate those inside the organisation to make it happen for themselves, But what motivates people to change and, more specifically, what will motivate people to be involved in working flexibly? All sorts of factors motivate us to change and develop. Broadly speaking, they fall into two types: *intrinsic and extrinsic*. Intrinsic sources of motivation are related to personal values and self-development, personal need for achievement, recognition, independence and stimulation. Extrinsic sources relate to external goals and rewards: achieving recognition, having clear expectations about one's role, performance and workload, affiliation with and communication with others. Intrinsic motivators are the most powerful. Advanced working offers a great opportunity to fulfil intrinsic motivation needs as it encourages us to consider what is right for us in terms of our *personal* needs to work in particular ways. Flexibility can also embrace diversity and difference in how we need to work, where and why.

Some people are motivated by positive outcomes, while others are motivated by the need to avoid doing things, hence consideration also needs to be given to why people *do not* do things. In the advanced working context, where do we want our cultural emphasis to be? Involvement, empowerment, creativity that comes from seeking personal fulfillment in our workstyle and productivity, or a negative approach that says "I'll work flexibly because I can avoid the traffic on my way to work"; or "I'll manage at a distance because I do not like dealing with people for real". We need to think about how an organisational culture encourages or discourages positive motivation. Positive and uplifting behavioural change requires placing emphasis on those people who see change as an opportunity for growth and who ultimately may prove to be change agents for others' attitudes and behaviours. Few people have their spirits lifted by being presented by the opportunity to avoid bad things! Over time, being motivated by avoidance can lead to a less and less positive contribution to organisational life.

It is well known that workplace motivation is a highly complex phenomenon and needs to be seen in the organisational context it occurs. This means exploring how the existing organisational culture and management practices motivates people (or not). Taking such a *motivationally intelligent* approach involves systematically assessing who is currently motivated, by what and by whom within the organisation.

"Solid Management commitment can unleash the potential for innovation and flexibility that many organisations are crying out for"



The Undeniable Importance of Management Culture

Managers are absolutely crucial to enable an organisation and its members to embrace and sustain advanced styles of working. Solid management commitment can unleash the potential for innovation and flexibility that many organisations are crying out for in their individual employees. However, managers need to include and empower individuals to embrace and adopt diverse working practices for themselves: it does not work in the long-term (and often also in the short-term too) if they try to impose their ideas or influence in anything other than a transformational way - however well-meaning or forward thinking they may be!

This may mean encouraging adjustments in management style for some managers, through awareness, training and modelling the way forward. This may represent a fabulous opportunity to manage in a more innovative and creative fashion and to develop qualities of truly transformational leadership – which in turn will transform management culture to embrace flexibility.

How to Motivate, Involve and Empower People to Change

Businesses need people to be flexible, to have flexible behaviour and attitudes if they wish to make a success of advanced working. A strong and resilient organisational culture encompasses divergence and welcomes individual differences, contributions and needs. So to embrace this fully, the business has to consider *why* people should change and behave more flexibly: meet the *what's in it for me?* factor head on. Fortunately, some people are already motivated. Yet complacency must not creep-up on us: the key is not to de-motivate people by permitting a culture that does not support their willingness to be flexible. For others, there are strong motivators for flexibility that we now know a great deal about and some of these are discussed below.

Work-life Balance, Health and Well-being

There are personal drivers that may motivate individuals within an organisation to positively choose more flexible ways of working, which in turn enhance organisational benefits. For example:

- Reduction in personal stress (however we define this) and assisting stress management;
- Improvements to family involvement, commitments and maternity/paternity options;
- Greater autonomy and control over workstyle, work life and social life.

Many businesses rightly take seriously the well-being of individuals within them, and their productive integration into organisational life. After all, this makes sense if we truly wish to support the notion of the productive, satisfied employee. They may go so far as to provide employee assistance programmes, counseling access or may train managers in counseling and stress management skills. These types of activity undoubtedly can provide support and benefit to individuals in need.

The social anthropologist Studs Terkel once wrote: "Work is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor, in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday to Friday sort of dying." As we enter a new century, employers should reflect on where they are going and what that might mean for employees and society. In short, they should try to live up to their often espoused, but rarely implemented belief - *people are the most valuable asset.*



Improved home / work life balance can be a key benefit of advanced working

The Influence of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is all about matching challenges to abilities: we feel most happy when our abilities are matched with our current challenges. Too much ability and too few challenges and we are bored or apathetic; too many challenges and not enough ability and we feel anxious. This is a constant balancing act for us all. When working flexibly, involving our self in how output is produced and our own workstyle, we are afforded a wonderful opportunity to achieve satisfaction. We are not in satisfaction mode for long if we do not adapt to change. We need to understand and constantly reappraise our challenges and abilities; managers need to understand this too in order to motivate. A culture that does not support this developmental approach will not be able to sustain employee satisfaction and motivation.

Thinking Even Further Outside of the Box

To become a culture that supports flexibility, an organisation must truly embrace what flexibility might mean. A shift in organisational attitude which allows for individuals' workstyles to be in harmony with lifestyle, family, personality, preference and ability, is likely to support advanced working and diversity far more effectively than merely providing the business with the greatest IT and telecommunications set-up this side of Christmas! As indicated in Paper 1², getting away from a societal and historical culture that sees work as imposed toil rather than a dynamic activity that emanates from a real person with behaviours and attitudes all of their own, is the greatest starting point for organisational culture change. Now, is that a dream or reality? Well, if anyone thinks that culture change can happen without considering real people with behaviours and attitudes all of their own – dream on!

Within an organisational culture everyone, however powerful, lives out an organisational life in settings historically created by others and predecessors' ideas of appropriate workstyles, attitudes and behaviours. Often, these settings dictate an excessive hours culture, role modelled from the top. Embarking on advanced working, opening the



jack-in-the-box, provides an excellent opportunity to actively shape organisational culture. But we have to bear in mind that organisations, just like individuals, may develop dysfunctional or ineffective patterns of behaviour or lapse into inappropriate patterns of rules, etiquettes and beliefs. So not only do we need to think outside of the box, we need to think outside of the organisation and view its culture with objectivity.

The considerable business benefits that can be derived from adopting advanced workstyles, such as reduction in real estate, improved utilisation of assets, and enhanced worker productivity, will all be for naught if the required changes and flexibility are unable to be sustained. There is a further huge advantage to embracing flexibility: an advanced working initiative opens the window to organisational culture as a whole. It provides an organisation with clues to where culture can be changed for the greater good of the entire organisation – not just for those who wish to work flexibly. By assessing an organisation's cultural clues and the cultural constraints its places on advanced working, we open up the very real possibility of addressing constraints and achieving objectives for change in the wider organisation too. And that, in turn, can lead to very real behavioural change.

Founded in 1992, AWA is an independent, multi-disciplinary management consultancy that works with leading organisations to help them make the transformation to advanced approaches to work, the workplace and workplace management.

Our services include:

Strategic Workplace Planning - evaluating current workplace performance; identifying potential for improvement; recommending practical actions; researching new locations; quantifying opportunities for advanced workstyles and workplace models to provide best value against defined business scenarios.

Advanced Working Transformation - defining the prerequisites for advanced workstyles; identifying the dependencies for sustainable advanced working; facilitating the process of transformation in safety from traditional to advanced approaches to work, workplace and management.

Service Management Transformation - evaluating current performance (cost, utilisation, satisfaction and value) of workplace services, processes, procurement models and management; recommending practical arrangements to align services to business objectives to derive the most effective workplace experiences for people.

Workplace Management Transformation - evaluating current performance of internal service departments (facilities, real estate, HR and IT); identifying scope for improvement; facilitating the process of transformation from internal technical contributors, to effective service-led pre-eminent business contributors.





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