

NextTrend



By NextGen

The Future of the Workplace

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Last year, NextGen was asked the question – “What does the future of the workplace look like?”. We were transitioning back into the office, like so many other firms post the COVID-19 pandemic, and our senior leadership was interested in exploring how large-scale remote working had changed people’s perceptions of the workplace, and where they saw the future of work heading. The NextGen working group, in parallel with some Man Group executives, were invited to participate in the ‘Future of the Workplace’ project. The aim of the project was to provide our perspective on this complex and evolving topic, culminating in a presentation to Luke Ellis, CEO, and Robyn Grew, President. This was a unique opportunity for us – we got to research an interesting topic and put forward our recommendations on the future of Man Group’s workplace.

We began by assembling a group of five young professionals from our working group, aged 23-28, with guidance from a senior sponsor and talent coach. The topic of the future of work is complex and everchanging, so we divided it into three tangible sections on which to focus our research efforts: (1) the culture of the company, (2) the workplace, and (3) the workforce.

Much of our research came from published academic and industry articles, but we also conducted some proprietary research through focus groups, and internal and external surveys, in which over 100 people took part. From this research, some interesting themes emerged.

On culture, we asked respondents what was most important to them when it came to job satisfaction. Culture was ranked number one and salary number two. Interestingly, survey respondents from Man Group felt that company culture was maintained throughout lockdown, whereas external survey respondents generally felt their company culture deteriorated. For us, this reiterated the importance of nurturing a good corporate culture and encouraging interaction between employees when many people are working from home, and indeed, now in a hybrid or agile-working model. In tandem, most respondents reported they experienced high levels of remote working fatigue. Although COVID-19 did shake up the workplace, it seems people benefit from coming into the office for some part of the week.

On workplace functionality, at least half of the respondents wanted to come into the office at least 1-2 times a week and the same number of respondents said they wanted to meet with their teams at least 1-2 times per week. This suggests that people may want to use office days for meetings, and work-from-home days for independent work. From this we concluded that new working patterns may begin to emerge in the coming years, where collaboration is reserved for in-office interaction and independent work is conducted at home.

On workforce, we asked about the skills needed for the future workplace and it was interesting to hear that, in a rapidly digitising world, at least half of the respondents lacked coding experience in languages such as Python. This suggests that digital education and training is something firms might pursue more of as the workforce adapts to evolving industry trends. Man Group achieves this by leveraging the firm’s extensive quant expertise for the <develop> technology training programme, which offers courses and talks run by our experienced developers for our people, and is designed to level up the technical competency of all staff across the firm. The courses do not require prior coding experience and help participants develop competencies in Python, Data Science and Software Engineering.

On completion of our research, we realised the scale of this topic’s complexity as well as its evolving nature. It considers technology, culture, personal preference and mobility. We were really pleased that so many people around the firm were



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willing to share their thoughts and experiences on what the future of the workplace looked like for them. In the lead up to our presentation, we had significant support from our senior sponsor and talent coach to ensure we were prepared to present to a senior panel.

The feedback we received on the project was fantastic, with the CEO giving us a shoutout in his weekly update to the firm. We were extremely grateful for the opportunity to research such a multi-layered topic and have our opinions considered in a meaningful way. We look forward to unpicking more on this topic, as well as other topical themes that our industry encounters, providing the next generation's perspective.



The 'Future of the Workplace' research group outside of Man Group's London office
Left to Right: Syra Sanghera, Louis Bartram, Lewis Ridett, Amanda Cowles

Also in the research group but not in the photo: Elise Blackford