

# BETTER MANAGERS ROADMAP

# REFLECT RESKILL REBUILD

Covid-19 broke the workplace  
mould – here's how to reshape it



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



We've all been changed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The health and wellbeing anxiety, the lockdowns, the threats to livelihoods – they've all left psychological scars. It's OK not to be OK about this.

But in my experience, managers are resilient and innovative people. They learn lessons from tough times, and they step up to take on new challenges.

In 2020, during the first lockdown period, we produced our first CMI Better Managers Manual. We wanted to support our community, keep them up to speed on current management best practice, and provide some tools to help you pivot and manage in a time of astonishing change.

A year on, we've produced a follow-up: the Better Managers Roadmap. This brings together insights from the countless stories and wise advice we've heard from the CMI membership during this tumultuous period. What really has changed? What kind of managers and leaders do we need to be in the future?

Our aim in this guide is to equip managers with the skills, tools and knowledge you'll need as we move to a world of hybrid and flexible working.

There's no sugarcoating it, this next phase will be hard. The research we've done alongside this Better Managers Roadmap has uncovered some real new complexities around work and management.

We've found, for example, there's been a breakdown of trust in both employers and the government regarding workplace safety. Indeed, our latest research shows that as of June 2021, 87 per cent of managers will only share a workspace with those who have been double jabbed.

There's a real possibility, too, of an exodus if the wishes of workers are not respected. Some 45 per cent of women polled said they would quit if forced to return full-time to the office after 'Freedom Day'.

These findings will present managers with a set of new, daily, difficult challenges.

And it's at these moments that we hope managers will turn to the resources in this Better Managers Roadmap, because there is a huge amount that we can draw on from the past year. It's imperative that managers talk to their teams, build trust and respect their views on the return to the workplace. Employers, in turn, must develop flexible, inclusive and tolerant ways of working.

**Reflect. Reskill. Rebuild.**



**Now is the time for managers to focus their attention on looking at what skills are needed as we emerge from lockdown. In order to create an engaged and productive workforce post-pandemic, there's no doubt that management will have to adapt to a new way of working with their teams to create stronger organisations. Our new resource will help guide CMI members out of lockdown and ultimately build back better**

Lord Mark Price, CMI President

Ann Francke OBE, CMI CEO



# 1

# HYBRID WORKING



As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, many organisations are reorienting around new 'hybrid' models. According to [CMI research](#) conducted in April 2021, 80 per cent of managers already work partly from home/remotely and partly in their workplace; 61 per cent of managers now expect their staff to work in a blended fashion

## Pros and cons

The benefits are clear: organisations see increased productivity and often reduced costs, and (in many cases) employees enjoy greater job satisfaction and personal wellbeing.

But hybrid working also throws up complexities, and it will be the job of managers to find a path through these.

First off, there are practical challenges. For example, what's the [optimal split](#) between time in the workplace and time spent working remotely? Managers will have found interim ways to monitor performance and to allocate tasks remotely; now these will need to be embedded for the long term.

Other, more nuanced issues are emerging, too. Flexible working

can easily tip over into an always-on culture and a harmful blurring of work/life boundaries. Sixty-two percent of managers surveyed by CMI stated that the wellbeing/mental health of their team would be affected by a return to the workplace. Managers will need to keep an eye out for signs of overwork and [mental health and wellbeing](#) concerns such as burnout.

## Potential diversity pitfalls

Evidence is also emerging that hybrid working affects certain groups in different ways. Moving forward, genuine flexibility (not remote working) will benefit groups such as disabled people and women, who are more likely to have caring responsibilities alongside work. In a recent CMI survey,

61%

of managers now expect their staff to work in a blended fashion



READ: [The five main causes of conflict in distributed teams](#)



LISTEN: [Forced flexibility and the future of work](#)



LEARN: [About leadership in a digital age on our bitesize course](#)



managers said they expect that these employees will prefer to work remotely. This presents a challenge for managers committed to equality and inclusion: how do we keep those less visible employees in the loop and not become partial to more visible employees?

### It's all about trust

Most of all, for hybrid working to continue to

contribute to productivity and employee wellbeing, it must be rooted in a sense of trust between managers and teams.

As CMI's landmark 2020 'Management Transformed' study found: "Where managers trust their direct reports, they find that productivity rises. Where managers say they don't trust their direct reports... staff are less productive."

“We've had the 'old normal' with lots of presenteeism in the office; the 'new normal' with everyone working from home; and the 'new-new normal', which is going to be a mixture of the two”

Rachel Sandby-Thomas CMgr CCMI,  
Registrar at the University of Warwick



80%

of managers already work partly from home/ remotely and partly in their workplace

## 6 NEED-TO-KNOW TIPS

- 1 Listen to your workforce and give them choices on how and where they want to work. Try sending out an employee survey for primary data on [what your people want](#), and [use it to inform your decisions](#). Avoid [a one-size-fits-all approach](#)
- 2 Make sure there are role models for flexible work at a senior level – read our articles on the [changes within leadership](#) and [tips for virtual team management](#) to get started
- 3 Develop clear communication, expectations and accountability. Practically, this means equipping your employees with the right tools and using a booking system for office space or a rota that defines when/where your staff will be
- 4 Trust your team and focus on the outputs and deliverables rather than inputs or time. Read our [knowledge bank article on trust and productivity](#)
- 5 Ensure workplaces are inclusive – read our chapter on diversity and inclusion for tips
- 6 Create opportunities for development and learning for those working in a hybrid way. CMI has thousands of resources to help managers and their direct reports – check out [ManagementDirect](#) or our [Career Development Centre](#) for learning tools, or our [YouTube](#) page for recorded webinars



# EMPLOYEE WELLBEING



## The link between employee wellbeing and productivity is well established but, as we move into the post-pandemic phase, it will be harder than ever for managers to keep the two in harmony

Chances are, at least one of your team members has seen a deterioration in their mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic. And almost two-thirds (62 per cent) of managers believe the wellbeing/mental health of their team has been or would be affected by a return to the workplace, according to CMI research.

### Getting help

Of course, many managers will work in organisations that have employee assistance programmes or trained mental health first-aiders. But on a day-to-day level, it's line managers who are best placed to spot the warning signs about a

colleague's wellbeing, to be alert to changes in colleagues' behaviour and, crucially, to create an environment and **relationship** in which it's OK to talk about wellbeing issues.

### Communicate openly

Some stigma around mental health does remain, and many people will worry about being seen as a weak link. Don't think you need to provide immediate fixes; sometimes your job is just to ask the right questions, such as: "How are you? What's happening?"

### Look after yourself

Managers must also set

a good example and **look after their own wellbeing**. In the words of Lynne Green, chief clinical officer at CMI's digital mental health partner **Kooth**: "Make sure you put your own oxygen mask on first."

## MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

CMI members get access to Kooth's online mental health platform included with their membership

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



**WATCH:** [Our webinar on post-lockdown wellbeing](#)



**READ:** [Dr Lynda Shaw's expert take on why "toxic positivity" is just as damaging as being entirely doom and gloom](#)



**LEARN:** [Our ManagementDirect checklist can help you stay on top of staff welfare and wellbeing](#)



# 6

## NEED-TO-KNOW TIPS

- 1** Conduct regular and authentic **communication** with your team. These can just be quick check-ins. Show understanding and empathy. Manage expectations and be transparent about what can be done and when
- 2** When checking in with your team, don't just focus on day-to-day tasks and to-do lists. Ask how they're feeling and make adjustments to support them if needed. This is especially important now that some workplaces are reopening; how do your employees actually feel about returning? There may be tricky feelings to navigate here
- 3** **Tailor your approach** to different team members. Check that your communication style and frequency meets the needs of your direct reports
- 4** CMI members get access to **Kooth**, a mental health service provider. Kooth offers anonymous mental health and wellbeing support to those in need
- 5** If you need staff to put in more hours for a specific project, make sure it is for a set, acceptable length of time. **Show your appreciation for good work and extra effort**
- 6** **Look after your own wellbeing**. Focus on what you can control. Reach out to people if you need help. Take time for physical exercise

# 3

# CULTURE

You know a great **company culture** when you come across it. It's that commitment to a common purpose, that feeling of shared support, that sense of belonging. **Elizabeth Uviebinené** told our CEO, Ann Francke, that post-Covid organisations will be defined by the three Cs: culture, communication and community



84%

of respondents said that the overall culture of their organisation had improved or remained the same during Covid-19

## Virtual culture

Many managers and leaders will have been asking themselves: can our organisation hold on to its culture through the pandemic? Will it survive the months of enforced remote working, the wellbeing and financial anxieties, and the lack of face-to-face contact between managers and colleagues?

In CMI's '**Management Transformed**' report in 2020, 84 per cent of respondents said that the overall culture of their organisation had improved or remained the same throughout the pandemic. All those Zoom coffee mornings and quizzes had been worthwhile, it seemed. Managers and leaders were doing what was

necessary to retain their organisation's special something.

## Culture changes post-Covid

But now some new forces are having an impact. Organisations have inevitably seen redundancies and staff churn. New people are **coming on board** with new outlooks

and styles of working. And there is growing evidence that talented people will quit unless they're offered flexible and home-working options that suit them.

So, what steps can managers and leaders take to preserve – and indeed enhance – their organisation's culture in this changed environment?

“ Culture is about dignity, respect and inclusion – both on a human basis but also for the business benefits to be gained from diversity. It's about setting expectations about behaviours – what's acceptable, what's not acceptable ”

Cindy Rampersaud CMgr CCMI, Senior Vice President, BTEC and Apprenticeships, Pearson, and CMI Race advisory committee member





## 6 NEED-TO-KNOW TIPS

- 1 Organisations that have fostered a **sense of belonging** and made efforts to include employees have developed better company culture during the pandemic
- 2 Leaders must **resist the urge to restore factory settings** – your culture will have changed in order to survive the past year, so keep the best bits and fix what doesn't currently work
- 3 The world of work has changed due to **changing work patterns** – and so has workplace culture. Staff have missed socialising and networking in the office, so encouraging interaction when returning to physical workplaces is key
- 4 Organisational culture is successful when staff feel valued and **psychologically safe**. Ask your employees directly what changes they would like to see. This will not only give you diverse feedback, it will give you buy-in from employees as they're helping to make and shape the changes according to their needs
- 5 Managers need to listen to their staff and allow staff to express themselves openly about how they feel about returning to the office, to assess the different needs staff may have. A culture that prioritises two-way communication and **engagement** is important
- 6 Create a **culture of trust** so that employees can adjust to the changing work environments they find themselves in. You should communicate effectively to do this



**READ:** [How to keep your culture in a contact-free world](#)



**LISTEN:** [Ann Francke and Teddy Nyahasha discuss cultural change in a virtual world](#)



**LEARN:** [How to balance employee engagement and company culture \(pages 14-18\)](#)



# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



Good managers will know from conversations with their teams that some people have experienced racism, sexism and other **forms of discrimination** in their lives. They'll also recognise that the Covid-19 pandemic risks deepening many social, gender and racial inequalities

## It's complex – but crucial

Managers play a crucial role in ensuring zero-tolerance to discrimination in their organisations, and in **making their workplace more equitable**.

But we shouldn't underestimate the difficulties. Making workplaces more equitable involves

dealing with complexity; you see this across the official data. Working from home, for example, **can be beneficial** for those with disabilities and mental or physical health conditions. But increased remote working may also lead to **new, informal hierarchies**. Women – already the segment most heavily affected by the pandemic

due to disproportionate caring responsibilities on average – can be excluded in this situation. For example, we know from our **'Management Transformed'** research, that women with children who were working remotely received less communication from their manager than other members of staff.



**READ:** [CMI's report on racial equality in the workplace: Moving the Dial on Race](#)



**WATCH:** [Life after "BAME": Getting the diversity terminology right](#)



**LEARN:** [Gain CPD points by watching our webinar on unconscious bias](#)





### Being fluent in diversity

There's a [gap between the rhetoric of managers and leaders and the action](#) that gets taken. This needs to change. The task for managers and leaders is to [maintain positive progress on diversity and inclusion](#) by understanding the data, holding good

conversations and taking real action.

To do this, we must train ourselves in the [right terminology, become fluent in the issues](#) and accept that sometimes (as with mental health issues) we may face some uncomfortable conversations. Bravery is an integral part of effective leadership.

### Look at the data

Most of all, managers and leaders must move from seeing diversity and inclusion as challenges, to placing them at the centre of strategy, performance and organisational survival. And this is about [equipping yourself with the facts](#) and becoming a true advocate for the benefits of diversity.

“Facilitate good conversations, ensuring that everybody has a voice. Challenge people who do not believe in bias and microaggressions. Sometimes a subtle approach is all that's needed; sometimes a more direct approach – it's about flexing your style”

Aquilla Cozzella, Delivery Director and Chair of Diversity & Inclusion, Corndel, and CMI Race advisory committee member



CMI offers a [Level 5 course on this topic, available for CMI members](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)



## 6 NEED-TO-KNOW TIPS

- 1 Flex your style by recognising the different circumstances that people are in and [adjusting your management techniques accordingly](#). For example, make sure that meetings, team-building exercises, events, social occasions and other work activities are scheduled with the needs of individual team members in mind. Allow the same amount of check-in time for all individuals
- 2 Reflect on what you have learned this year from conversations with your teams by pressing diversity and inclusion issues in your organisation. Ask yourself if you have acted on these and whether your teams would say that you have
- 3 Build your confidence and fluency in holding good conversations, which also means knowing how to [challenge microaggressions](#) and acts of exclusion, and how to positively influence detractors
- 4 Understand the power of [mentoring](#) and seek out opportunities to learn from others, for example through reverse or reciprocal mentoring programmes
- 5 Champion raising awareness of – and the skills required for – [embedding diversity and inclusion](#) in your teams and organisations
- 6 [Review your progress](#) by considering the composition of your team and measuring staff satisfaction. Proactively address any issues in your recruitment processes, for example by insisting on diverse candidate lists
- 7 Stay up to date on the benefits and risks of remote and hybrid working. Build your network of managers and leaders from other organisations to share best practice. Learn from others to address challenges and understand how these can turn into opportunities for greater inclusion

# 5

# SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE...

The best managers keep their skills up to date, but the pandemic forced us all to acquire new skills, as well as dialling up and reprioritising the ones **we've already got**

In CMI's **'Management Transformed'** report in 2020, line managers and employees told us which skills they felt would be most important in the

year ahead (see table). Communication and listening ranked highest, alongside the ability to set a clear direction. These are here to stay.

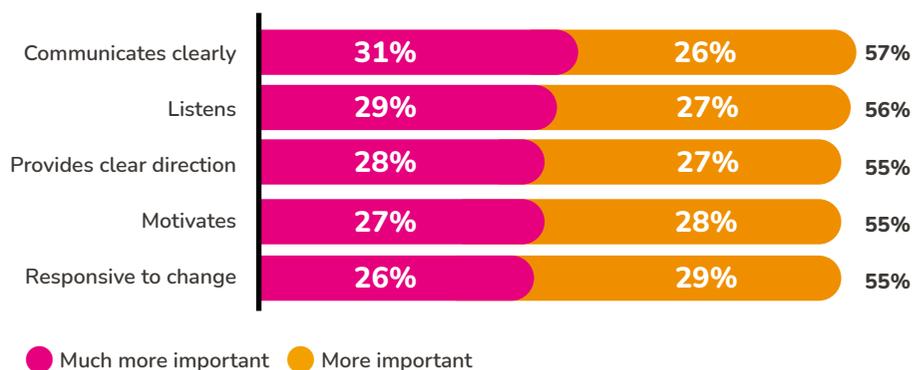
Moving into the **'new-new normal'**, we're likely to see even greater digitisation. New, 'hybrid' working patterns are being established. Mental health and wellbeing are now day-to-day agenda items for managers. These concerns will push us out of our comfort zone and force us to adapt to workplace developments such as **new language around diversity**.

The leadership mentor **Nigel Girling** CMgr CCMI believes that strength, wisdom and resilience will be crucial in this next phase as we try to recover ourselves, our work and our performance.

- **STRENGTH:** stand up for what you believe is right, show confidence – but also be vulnerable.
- **WISDOM:** remember what your people have achieved without your direct supervision.
- **RESILIENCE:** we have proved that we can withstand something as terrible as a global pandemic, but we shouldn't take this as proof that our people are superhuman.

**Here are just some of the skills that managers and leaders will need to future-proof in a high-flux world:**

## Managerial traits that will be more important in 2021



“ We’ve learned a lot about ourselves and each other in recent months. We’ve seen so many people being quietly heroic, stepping up and supporting others, working diligently without supervision or even much support, coming up with ideas and often performing way better than we feared or even anticipated. We cannot now return to any form of ‘normal’ and just pretend that none of that happened ”

Nigel Girling CMgr CCMI, Leadership mentor



**LISTEN:** Technological fluency – ‘the story of a distracted nation’



**WATCH:** Hybrid communication – ‘effective communication’



**LEARN:** Data-driven decision making – ‘CMI bitesize module’



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## 5 NEED-TO-KNOW TIPS

- 1 **Communication** remains a key skill both during the pandemic and beyond. Managers must continue to communicate effectively with their staff as they return to the office
- 2 Other important skills for managers to employ at this time include listening, setting clear direction and **responding effectively to change**
- 3 Skills that involve **emotional intelligence** are also key in order to develop a welcoming organisational culture and manage employee wellbeing in the new world of work
- 4 It is also important to identify skills gaps that may exist within the workforce as a result of workplace changes. **Conducting a skills audit** will help to do this effectively
- 5 Anticipate future business changes and then plan future skills training based on this. In this way, organisations can **future-proof** against the potential detrimental impact of these changes

## Chartered Management Institute (CMI)

The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) works with business and education to inspire people to unleash their potential and become skilled, confident and successful managers and leaders. With a wealth of practical qualifications, events and networking opportunities on offer throughout the UK and Asia-Pacific, CMI helps people boost their career prospects and connect them with other ambitious professionals in any industry and sector. In fact, CMI has more than 90,000 people training to be better managers right now. Backed by a Royal Charter, CMI is the only organisation allowed to award Chartered Manager status – the ultimate management accolade. CMI's thought leadership, research and online resources provide practical insight on critical issues for a membership community more than 160,000 strong and anyone looking to improve their skills, nurture high-performing teams and help pave the way for the next generation of managers and leaders.

For more information, please visit [www.managers.org.uk](http://www.managers.org.uk)



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