



IS SMART WORKING CONTRIBUTING TO RISING LEVELS OF EMPLOYEE UNHAPPINESS AND DISSATISFACTION?

JUNE 2019

ALISON WHITE
PLACEMAKING



PLACEmaking

IS SMART WORKING CONTRIBUTING TO RISING LEVELS OF EMPLOYEE UNHAPPINESS AND DISSATISFACTION?

According to a survey by the Personal Group, there has been a 20% drop in workplace happiness over the past three years.

The percentage of people who are happy most of the time at work has reduced year on year from 51% in 2017 to 43% in 2018, and now only 41% in 2019. Many report being so dissatisfied that they struggle to get out of bed to go to work, and 79% percent of those surveyed can't recall anything from the last month that has made them feel positive about their working life.

Meanwhile, the 2019 Deloitte Millennial Survey has revealed that young people are becoming increasingly disillusioned about work, sceptical of business motives, and pessimistic about economic and social progress

Should we be surprised? Well a traditional argument is that even before getting to work, the commute for many is often ridiculously expensive and thoroughly exhausting, while the office that awaits them at the other end is frequently a dull, characterless place reflecting the uninspiring culture of the employing organisation, and the technology solutions and support on offer are at best functional.

Yet the alarming speed at which levels of workplace happiness are dropping in fact coincides with rapid change in the way we work through growing adoption of Smart Working over the last five years. The question is, therefore, does Smart Working actively contribute to employee unhappiness and dissatisfaction?

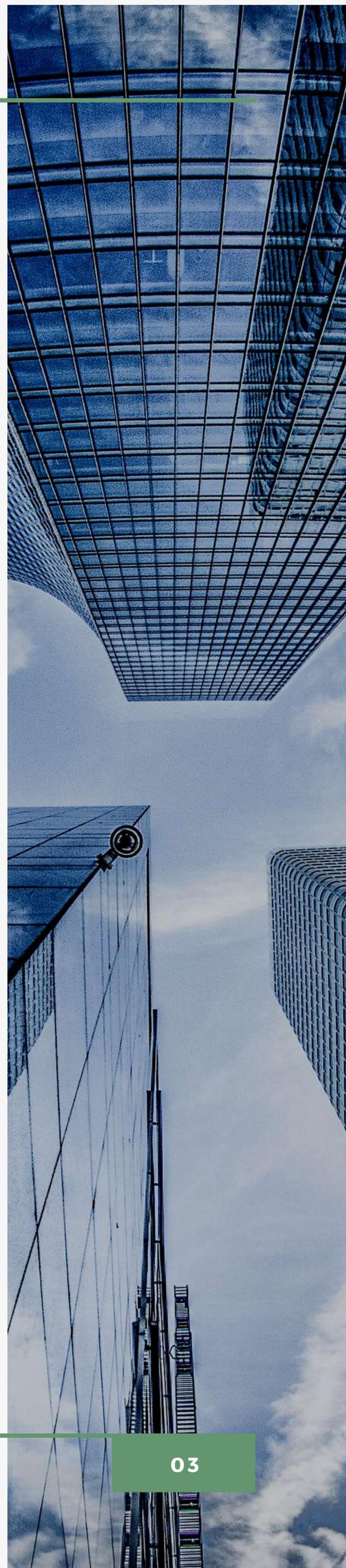
Recent fundamental changes in work styles and patterns have emerged and been enabled through the wider distribution of mobile technologies and remote access to digitally stored information. These advancements have facilitated a demand for more flexible working arrangements and adaptable contracts that reflect personal ambitions or family responsibilities.

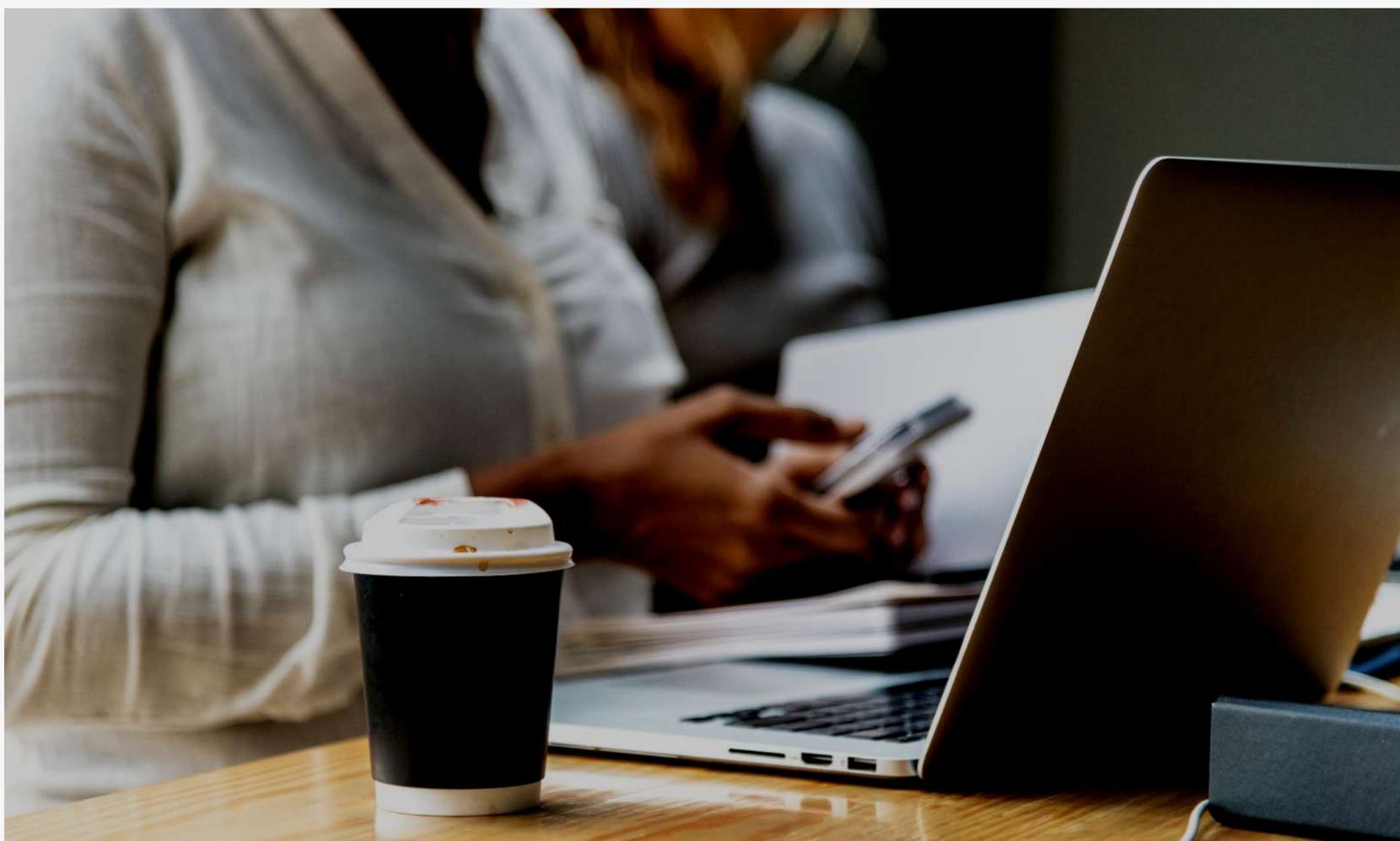
The impact of these changes on the traditional office is such that organisations of all sizes have had to recognise that demand for space has changed and its utilisation has steadily reduced. Smart business leaders have understood that they were paying for space and services despite shrinking headcounts and changing work styles - space could often be unoccupied for up to 60% of the core working week.

"SMART BUSINESS LEADERS HAVE UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY WERE PAYING FOR SPACE AND SERVICES DESPITE SHRINKING HEADCOUNTS"

As a result organisations have sought to reduce their operating costs, and property overheads have been high on their agenda - along with the introduction of Smart Working.

A key benefit of Smart Working is driving better use of space and technology - an important requirement for these aforementioned forward-thinking leaders. However, the essential driving component behind Smart Working is people. Whilst you could hire a contractor to tick the initial boxes by redesigning your office space and enhancing your technology provision, the desired performance of these changes is dependent on people who, on the whole, don't passively just do what is demanded of them.





And that is because, while it's easy to accept that the way we work is changing, the reasons for why we work are as complex as they always were. Aside from the money we need to earn for our basic survival, there are many other reasons why we go to work that are all-too-frequently ignored in the rush to implement Smart Working. Yet conversely the success of its implementation depends emphatically on people accepting change.

The messaging that accompanies Smart Working often downplays these benefits, and the simplistic language used can be rigidly imposing, implying that large amounts of time must be spent working away from the office and when back in there is the need to hunt out a desk because everyone is now desk sharing. However well-intentioned such messaging might be, it directly challenges the non-financial benefits that people want from their workplace experiences

"THE SUCCESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SMART WORKING DEPENDS EMPHATICALLY ON PEOPLE ACCEPTING CHANGE"

So should we stop Smart Working?

No. The Smart Working genie is truly out of the bottle. What we need to do is recognise that we are in a transitional period - from the traditional ways of working that were embedded in our workplace culture for many years to a new and quickly evolving way of working. We have to acknowledge that place is still hugely important, and that whilst we can no longer afford to maintain large volumes of under-utilised property, what we can afford needs to represent more than just a shrunk-down version of a traditional office.

We are social creatures at heart, and working from home only suits us for part of the time. When we want the additional benefits of stimulating company, learning from others, the use of exceptional technology and the buzz of social interaction, we need to be in a modern and adaptable workplace that is designed to facilitate these very things - not simply a superficial and generic place to do 'work'.

Find out how PLACEmaking can help you to successfully implement Smart Working in your organisation. Get in touch at placemaking.co.uk or email us at info@placemaking.co.uk.

PLACEmaking

We're here to help you implement smart working.

Our Services

- Transformational workplace change, communications and engagement
- Digital and technology advisory
- Programme and project management
- Interior architecture and design
- Strategic asset management

placemaking.co.uk

