

Emerging trends in uncertain times:

Our team offer their perspective on what they are seeing around the world – from remote work, zero emission targets, project shortages and increased workforce competition – and how organisations can respond.

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How work is evolving

The transition to remote work (as well as the hybrid between remote and on-location work) saw winners and losers, highlighting the need for adaptability and the importance of broader connection within organisations.

Anuj Arya, a Houston-based Director, believes this requires organisations and individuals to shift their mindset towards remote work: "How can you change the mind of a manager who believes that if the person is not in the office, they are not working?" he asks. "Managers need to get comfortable that their team are delivering. They need mechanisms to check progress, regular discussions to review status and maintain connections with their teams."

Done well, remote and hybrid working can also provide flexibility to your team members, often an attractive proposition to employees. "Much of our work has recently been in emphasising that change today will make organisations more attractive to current and potential employees."

Beyond this is the shadow of evolving technologies. "Over the next decade, we will see a major shift in how people engage with organisations and technology," says Helen. "Your workforce will need a different set of skills and operations will need to be reorganised accordingly."

"Building purpose and connection to an organisation has become even more important. Organisations that outperform have a clear guiding purpose, something that's meaningful to employees. That is critical to harnessing people's passion and effort."

Over the next decade, we will see a major shift in how people engage with organisations, driven by technology. Operations will be transformed, and their people will need a different set of skills – not just in new processes, but in new ways of working."

Helen Lawson-Williams, Sydney-based Partner

"We're increasingly working with leaders who recognise that the changes they make today can make their organisations more attractive to both current and future employees. Rather than "rules" for remote and hybrid work, leaders need to work out clear guardrails that allow teams to take responsibility for how they meet customers' needs, in a way that works for the team."

When thinking about effectively embedding new technologies – whether collaboration tools, automation, or an entirely new technology – Luizet Ruzow, a Johannesburg-based Partner, asks three questions:

- How will the introduction of technology impact the workforce?
- How can the organisation build team skills, so they have the capability to match the digital steps being taken?
- What is the organisation's roadmap to fully realise the promised benefits?



Anuj Arya

Director, Houston

Anuj Arya has over 20 years' experience across operations, procurement and strategy in mining



Helen Lawson-Williams

Partner, Sydney

Helen is a Partner in our Organisation Practice based in ANZ. She has over 20 years' experience in consulting and operations leadership roles.



Luizet Ruzow

Partner, Johannesburg

Luizet has more than 25 years of experience in top-tier consulting.

The pathway to zero emissions

With increasing concern about greenhouse gas emissions, organisations are acting to address the challenge of decarbonisation. With technology available, investing in decarbonisation makes economic and environmental sense.

Skipp Williamson, Managing Director advocates immediate action. "Renewables and storage are becoming cheaper, providing opportunities for organisations to green their power supply and reduce their emissions. Cheap green funding and government incentives are available to fund investment in decarbonisation."

In the project space, organisations are thinking about how to reduce their future emissions during design. "In the past, we used to take cost out of design, but the new trend is to take carbon out of design," says Mohamed Abdulahi, an Auckland-based Director.

Meanwhile, growing demand for electric vehicles is fuelling further investment. According to Sarah Heitzman, a Denver-based Partner: "Automakers are pursuing aggressive electric vehicles sales targets. This rise brings greater electricity demand, especially during peak hours." With rapidly growing demand, grid stability is a concern to both industry and individual consumers. Sarah believes "Government, utilities and car manufacturers have a crucial role to play in delivering a smooth transition and mitigate grid strain by shaping how electric vehicles are used and charged".

With many already addressing their own direct emissions, Skipp expects "Scrutiny will soon shift towards emissions in the supply chain. We are helping organisations think about what they can do with their suppliers and customers to reduce their embedded Scope 3 emissions".

Discussion often covers topics like "How can projects reduce the amount of concrete they use? Can more sustainable products be selected during design? What is needed to power sites with renewable energy?"



Skipp Williamson

Managing Director, Melbourne

Skipp Williamson is the founder and Managing Director of Partners in Performance



Mohamed Abdulahi

Director, Auckland

Mohamed Abdulahi is a Director and heads up our our Capital Practice in Australia and New Zealand.



Sarah Heitzman

Partner, Denver

Sarah is an experienced executive and advisor, partnering with a wide range of businesses to address the most pressing strategic and operational opportunities.

Unprecedented shortages impacting capital projects

"In today's capital market, interest rates are low and governments are pumping a lot of capital into the economy, says Mohamed. "Money is now cheap, and governments are using infrastructure development to drive their recovery. This has led to a vast increase in capital projects."

With decades of under-investment in infrastructure in many countries, this investment is necessary; however, against the backdrop of unprecedented restrictions on the movement of people, it has further increased demand for staff in construction and capital projects.

"For example, Australia and New Zealand formerly expected international labour to be readily available to plug gaps in the construction market," says Mohamed. "That is no longer the case and there is no end in sight to labour shortages."

"With ongoing supply chain disruptions and competition for staff, projects are delayed and costs are increasing. This has increased focus on 'getting the basics right' to make performance transparent and focus teams on the right areas to drive productivity."

Increasingly, we are also helping our clients build effective collaboration with their contractors. "Often, projects struggle to align and motivate their broader teams and contractors", adds Mohamed. "Collaborative contracting can help recognise barriers to achieving partnership and high productivity. If each party understands the risks for them and the project, an appropriate person can be assigned to manage them."

Shaping a new story for critical industries

As new clean industries and products emerge, established 'grubby' industries – think mining and heavy industry – are seeing competition for labour.

Substantial investment has been made to innovate and address environmental concerns. Yet, against a backdrop of fierce competition for talent, Anuj Arya believes these industries still have work to do on how they are perceived. "If too few people understand the importance of industry, there will be a shortage of professionals which will lead to industry-wide project delays. This typically creates a short-term solution every time: pay more and more to secure staff," he says.

"Traditional competitors need to take the risk and work together to shape a more welcome environment than before. They can assert themselves in the conversation by building awareness of how critical industry is in everyday life and leverage technology to offer more attractive career options."

Anuj Arya, Houston-based Director

Conclusion

These trends will continue to evolve, and new trends are sure to emerge. Organisations that successfully create an environment which enable teams to proactively respond and adapt quickly to change, whether in response to established trends or new, will be the ones that thrive in this increasingly competitive market.

