

Resilience



By design
not on
demand

TheTruthWorks.

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When you saw “resilience” in the title, did you assume this was about developing mental toughness? Individual grit in the face of adversity?

We’re
inviting
you to
rethink ↘

At TheTruthWorks, we believe resilience isn't about training people to "handle fires better". It's about designing workplaces that prevent the fires in the first place.



The Cracks in the System

We're living through exponential change. From restructures to AI disruption, it's relentless. And that's before factoring in life outside of work, or how resilience is felt by different roles, identities, and lived experiences. No wonder stress has been named the health epidemic of the 21st century (WHO).

We're in a state of permacrisis (PwC) that threatens to shake the foundations of our businesses. Yet we're still asking individuals to carry the load, and it's taking its toll: burnout, disengagement, turnover, and declining quality and productivity. The impact this has on performance and profitability is impossible to ignore.

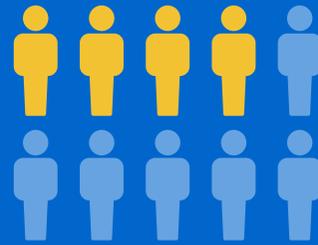
The Shift Needed

What if we flipped the script?

We need to stop thinking about resilience as an individual trait to be trained or tested. From structure and policies, to culture and daily behaviours, it must be built into organisational systems - not bolted on.

This whitepaper is the result of months of research, interviews and conversation with leaders, organisational psychologists, burnout coaches, EDI experts and employee benefits specialists. Together, we've surfaced a new perspective: resilience isn't something you call on, it's something you design.

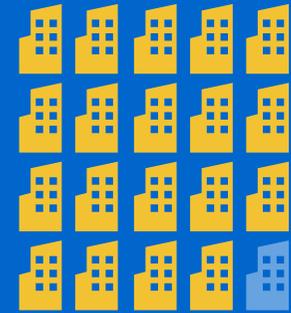
With a proactive strategy, organisations can build resilience into the everyday. **And this piece shows you how.**



40%

of employees report experiencing stress daily.

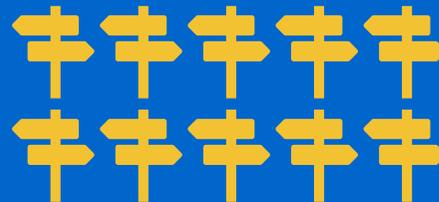
(Gallup Global State of the Workplace Report 2025)



96%

of organisations experienced disruption from 2021-23.

(PwC, 2023)



x10

The average employee is expected to experience 10 planned enterprise changes. That's 5x more than a decade ago.

How Do You Design for Resilience?

Like a tree, resilience is an ecosystem. No part can grow on its own. It needs the right foundations, structures, and conditions to take root and thrive.

Resilience Rootmap

Leaves

Individual Resilience
Self-Awareness, Clarity, Recovery.

Leaves grow and thrive when the rest of the structure supports them. If the system is weak, no amount of personal grit will fix it.

Conditions to thrive

The Resilience Multipliers
Communication, Purpose, Consistency

Sometimes no matter how strong the tree is, it doesn't have the conditions to bloom. Resilience also relies on cultural forces that support it at all levels.

Roots

Organisational Resilience
Organisational Design, Policies and Governance, Leadership.

The foundation that requires stability – else nothing above it will thrive. Nothing can compensate for weak roots.

Trunk

Team Resilience
Organisational Design, Policies and Governance, Leadership.

Weakness at the team level creates a disconnect between the roots and leaves. If the trunk is strong, it can withstand pressure.

**“If the system
is not resilient,
people can’t be
either”**

Organisational Resilience





Organisational Design

Is resilience designed into the roots of your organisation, or simply left to chance? In a world of constant transformation, resilience can't just live in training programmes. It has to be embedded in the brand's DNA and the way work is structured.

Organisations need clear decision-making processes, roles, and responsibilities, designed with change in mind. This means building workflows and processes that expect fluctuation. **If your systems are rigid, reactive, or over-engineered for productivity, they'll crack under pressure.** If they're thoughtful, flexible, and built for recovery, they'll absorb disruption and enable performance.

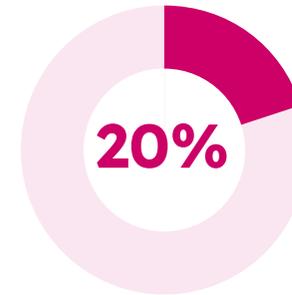
When it comes to AI, for example, we're expecting our people to navigate this huge tech leap alone – and remain resilient and proactive in the face of it. In our conversation with Fiona Passantino, AI and Future of Work Trainer, she urged organisations to:

“Build constant learning into your workflow. That means your leadership has to get serious about policy, training, and structure. And with the EU AI Act mandating that organisations take responsibility for developing the AI literacy of their workforce, the need for proactive upskilling has never been clearer.”

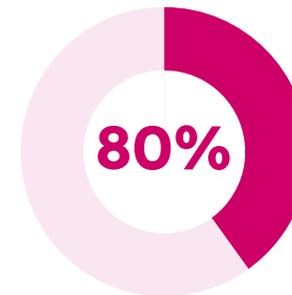
Resilient organisations design for adaptability not just efficiency.

“Resilience can't be a brand USP piece. It has to be fundamentally built in, embraced and ingrained at such a deep level. And as a decision-maker in the business, I have a responsibility to ensure every system we design supports it.”

Luke Yoell, HR Director and Senior Leader



Gartner predicts that 20% of organisations will use AI to flatten organisational structures by 2026.



While 80% of businesses still manage change from the top down (Gartner, 2019), organisations that implement open-source strategies are 14 times more likely to achieve success.

(Gartner)

What we should be asking:

01 Have we designed our organisational structure to support change, or simply to endure it?

02 Do people know what's expected of them and where decision-making power sits?

03 As AI reshapes roles and workflows, are we designing systems to support people through the shift? Or leaving them to figure it out alone?



Policies and Governance

Policies are vital in rooting resilience in our organisations. They translate organisational design into rules and guidelines to follow.

They must reinforce sustainable ways of working, otherwise resilience is just a buzzword. That means codifying it into day-to-day operations through inclusive well-being strategies and equitable access to recovery and support. Debbie Kleiner, Founder of Wellbeing in Work, told us that organisations should **“regularly assess the stress risk of their teams as part of health and safety”**.

Real resilience requires strategies rooted in a genuine understanding of your people, not tickbox tactics and quick fixes.

One-size-fits-all won't cut it



Organisations are made up of individuals, each with unique pressures and experiences. Structures must reflect this complexity and help identify what's adding pressure at work, without crossing personal boundaries.

especially because stress is felt unequally across lines of identity.

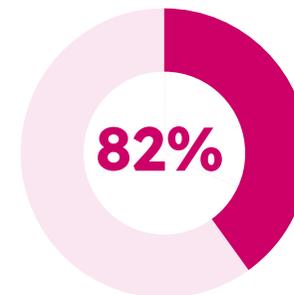


“You might be doing well in areas like parent inclusion, but missing others, like engaging second-generation, non-native speakers. It’s about ongoing reflection and seeing change as a positive. Ask: what should we start, stop, and continue, and then act on it.”

Oana Iordachescu, DEI Advisor, and Founder of Fair Cultures

9 in 10

Despite 9 in 10 organisations around the world offering forms of wellbeing programmes (Mckinsey), wellbeing scores remain low.



82% of workers say it's important for their organisation to see them as a person, not just an employee.

(Gartner)

What should we be asking:

01

Do our policies support workload balance, recovery time, and realistic performance expectations?

02

Are we regularly assessing the real sources of stress in our workplace, across all identities and roles?

03

Are our wellbeing strategies based on lived experience? Or are they one-size-fits-all solutions?



Resilient leadership isn't about projecting invincibility or glorifying overwork.



Leadership

Organisational design and policies aren't enough to carry resilience from the roots to the trunk. Leaders are key in setting the tone for the entire organisation, shaping resilience through behaviour. Their buy-in, alignment with the organisation's purpose, and commitment to a new direction is essential during ongoing change.

True resilience comes from leaders who acknowledge challenges, set realistic expectations for themselves and others, and show vulnerability to build safe, trusting environments. The most effective leaders regulate their own emotions, create boundaries, and model what resilience truly looks like through healthy behaviours.

“Leaders today need to demonstrate their values through action – not authority. They can't be authoritarian figures. They should be vulnerable, and bring people into their journey. We want to see more of the human in that person.”

Claire de Souza, Employer Brand & Recruitment Marketing at a leading UK retailer, and Co-founder of The EB Space

What we should be asking:

01

Do leaders openly discuss workload, recovery time, and psychological safety?

02

When pressure builds, do leaders set boundaries and model sustainable ways of working?

03

Are leaders rewarded for long hours, or for making sustainable decisions? Do they reward others for the same?

**“ Even the
best systems
break if the
collective
buckles”**

Team Resilience



Team Culture

Strong roots can only be connected to their leaves through a healthy trunk system. Team culture sits at the core, either amplifying or absorbing pressure. Resilient teams share the load, reflect after stress, carry the weight of each other, and support one another without blame. They celebrate wins, give feedback, and create space to learn and challenge with care.

When we spoke to Dr Skyla Herod, a Behavioural Neuroscientist specialising in resilience, she explained that “social bonds and team dynamics are everything in the way that our brain works. We are social creatures, wired to interact with other people”, and expressed her confusion that:

“Even though we spend more hours per week with our work team than our family, teams rarely reflect on how we interact on an interpersonal level with one another.”

Psychological safety should be the foundation of this interaction. It allows people to speak up, face challenges, and recover faster. Without it, resilience can't take root. Especially if an organisation doesn't act up when issues are raised. And this culture starts with managers. Beyond technical skills, they need empathy, communication, and mental health literacy to lead resilient teams.



Managers really are make or break for employee wellbeing. But they're often the least equipped.



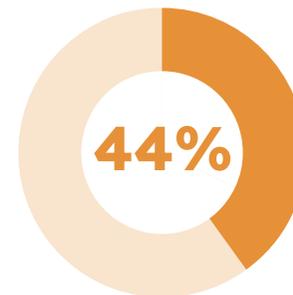
“Managers need coaching skills, the ability to listen, mental health literacy, and a whole-human first approach, or we’re only addressing half of what affects resilience.”

Debbie Kleiner, Founder of Wellbeing in Work

Psychological Safety

was the best predictor of performance differences between teams at Google

Amy Edmonson



Only 44% of managers say they have received management training

(Gallup State of the Global Workplace Report 2025)

What we should be asking:

- 01 Does our team culture actively encourage learning, challenging, and growing?
- 02 Is it psychologically safe for people to ask for help, or is resilience seen as “just coping”?
- 03 Are our managers equipped with the skills to lead resilient teams?



Workload

A great team culture must also be supported by planning, or the trunk won't stay strong for long. Resilient teams don't react to stress, they anticipate it, by balancing workloads, setting clear priorities, and managing expectations.

Not everything can be urgent, all of the time. While teams can stretch under pressure, it's not sustainable.

Systems must support fair distribution of work, especially when pressure spikes for certain individuals.

To thrive, teams also need space to think, create, and problem-solve. That means designing buffers for recovery and reflection. Without it, crisis mode becomes the norm – leading to burnout, inefficiency, and missed opportunities to improve.

“It’s an Icarus complex. We’re existing with endless capacity, flying too close to the sun, and getting burnt. That’s not being resilient. You have a building full of humans, not demi-gods. We need to guard against this godlike, deified space and just return to a bit more human-ness. We all have limitations.”

Tiffany Gordon, Clinical Psychologist and Burnout Expert

What we should be asking:

01 Are you teaching people to reprioritise at pace, without letting certain individuals do it all?

02 Do your systems enable proactive workload management, or does everything escalate to urgent by default?

03 Are there clear expectations about how work gets done? Or are managers and their teams left to navigate ambiguity on their own?

Role Clarity

To plan work effectively, clear expectations about roles and responsibilities are key. Ill-defined scope is a common thread that Tiffany Gordon, Clinical Psychologist and Burnout Expert, sees when working with patients. She explained to us that “you can’t hold boundaries if you don’t know what you’re holding them against. Clear scope matters. It’s not only about managing time, but also managing energy in versus energy out.”

The solution starts with managers who actively support prioritisation. That means helping teams focus their energy on what matters most, and clearing away what doesn’t. This clarity also reveals skill gaps, misaligned roles, and resource shortfalls – whether it’s time, tools, tech, or funding. It opens up opportunities to streamline workflows and reduce unnecessary load through smarter processes or technology.

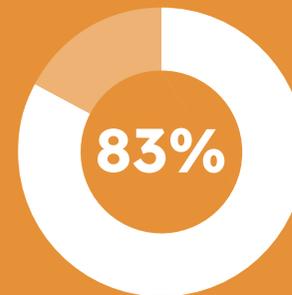
The result?

A strong team trunk empowered to solve problems independently, and individual leaves that can take ownership of their tasks and responsibilities.

Clear scope matters.



71% of employees feel overwhelmed by workplace changes.



But 83% of those experiencing change fatigue say their employer hasn’t provided enough resources to help them adapt.

“You’ve got to equip everybody with the right tools, adapted to them. That will help them to succeed in their own individual way, and do their best work.”

Claire de Souza, Employer Brand & Recruitment Marketing at large UK retailer, and Co-founder of The EB Space

What we should be asking:

- 01 Do people clearly understand their role, priorities, and decision-making boundaries?
- 02 Are we actively identifying and addressing skill gaps, misalignments, or missing resources?
- 03 Are our systems enabling teams to take ownership, or creating dependency on leadership escalation?

“People do not fail in a vacuum. They fail in unsustainable environments”

Resilience isn't built in isolation.



“Managers don’t need to become neuroscientists or psychologists. But a basic awareness of themselves and others can shift their approach. The easiest way to make these behavioural changes more sustainable is knowledge”

Dr Skyla Herod, Behavioural Neuroscientist

Self-Awareness

We’ve talked about building resilience into the roots and the trunk of an organisation. But what about the leaves?

We’re not saying that resilience is only the duty of the employer. Of course, individuals are also accountable. They play a key role in ensuring resilience in the workplace through self-awareness – **recognising their own stress signals, setting meaningful boundaries, asking for support, and understanding what drains or restores them.**

In our discussion with Oana Iordachescu, DEI Advisor, and Founder of Fair Cultures, she agreed that “Resilience is not so much about withstanding pressure or holding in there. It’s more about elasticity... which also means saying no to some things.”

But resilience isn’t built in isolation. Individuals can only do this if they have the tools, permission, and support to manage their energy, advocate for their needs, and recover well. Organisations that invest in

emotional literacy not only improve wellbeing, but strengthen team dynamics, communication, and overall performance. Helping people spot red flags early, and feel safe to speak up, is a huge lever in preventing burnout. For individuals within teams, and individuals as managers and leaders.

What we should be asking:

01

Do people have the tools and space to develop self-awareness around stress and workload?

02

Are individuals encouraged to track their energy levels and adjust their working patterns accordingly?

03

Is resilience discussed proactively, or only when burnout has already happened?

Chronic stress literally rewires the brain.

Clarity Under Pressure

Like leaves on a tree, individuals absorb stress from the rest of the structure. And without attention, will eventually wither, droop, or drop completely.

This stress actually changes the way we think long-term. Stress isn't just emotional, it's neurological, with real biological consequences. Under sustained pressure, the brain turns on itself. Threat detection ramps up. We misread tone, default to black-and-white thinking. We also become more reactive, less open, and less capable of creative or long-term thinking.

Organisations must recognise the neurological impact of permanent overload. That means reducing ambiguity, simplifying processes, and making expectations clear. It also means equipping managers to spot stress distortions early, and ease cognitive load, so that people aren't left battling burnout, decision fatigue, or the pressure to just keep pushing through.

“Chronic stress literally rewires the brain. Typically, it heightens activity in the amygdala – the fear and threat centre of our brains. This makes individuals respond more negatively. And it’s harder to rewire your brain back. Because we have a safety bias, we are five times more reactive to negative feedback than we are to positive.”

Dr Skyla Herod, Behavioural Neuroscientist

What we should be asking:

01 Are our systems designed to reduce ambiguity and cognitive overload, especially during periods of high stress?

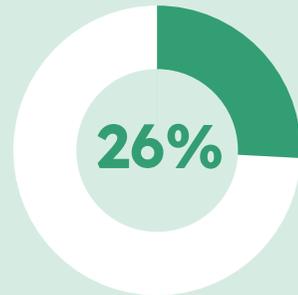
02 Do managers understand how stress affects thinking and behaviour, and know how to respond to it early?

03 Are we creating environments where clarity, calm, and focus are possible even under pressure?

Downtime isn't inefficiency or slackness. It's recovery mode.

“Downtime is time for reflection, lessons learned, and welfare checking. It should be built into resource planning for all programmes, not just when things go wrong. It takes committed leadership to make this the norm. C-suite and senior teams must model these values, even under pressure.”

Luke Yoell, HR Director and Senior Leader



Rest that is available, accessible, and appropriate contributes to a **26% increase in employee performance** and a tenfold reduction in the number of employees experiencing burnout.

(Gartner)

Recovery & Reward

Leaves can't thrive without cycles of growth and rest, and neither can people. Recovery is often treated as a personal responsibility, but true recovery is strategic. It helps people sustain high performance without sacrificing their health, by knowing when to push and when to recharge.

Teams can't operate at 110% indefinitely. Short bursts are possible, but only when paired with proper recovery, recognition, and support that reflect individual needs. People recharge differently, so organisations should encourage personal recovery strategies. Saba Haran, Executive Director Pension & Benefits

at Howden, explains that “data plays a key part” in creating “benefits that are relatable and relevant”, “by drilling down into workforce health analytics, both mental and physical, and hyper-personalising to their needs”.

That might mean time back, early finishes, and no-meeting days. It might mean simply recognising victories, rewarding success with gratitude, compensation, or tailored benefits. For others, it's access to training, mentoring, or growth opportunities that drives them. Either way, when recovery is built into the rhythm of work, people don't just “bounce back”, they can grow back stronger.

What we should be asking:

- 01 | Are people encouraged to build personal recovery strategies and flex them as needed?
- 02 | Are people given the autonomy to set limits on their workload, and is this respected? Or is it 'always on'?
- 03 | Does the organisation recognise that recovery time is essential, not optional?
- 04 | Do your benefits reflect what your people actually need to recover, recharge, and thrive?

The conditions for resilience to *thrive*



Conditions

The Multipliers

Outside of our organisational structure, there are of course other environmental forces at play that impact resilience. It can't only be built through systems – resilience is shaped, and often strained, by the culture that surrounds it.

While these conditions vary by organisation, in our Culture Scans and wider work we consistently see three main forces that affect resilience. Efforts to increase organisational resilience will only go so far if:



People don't know what's going on

Communication



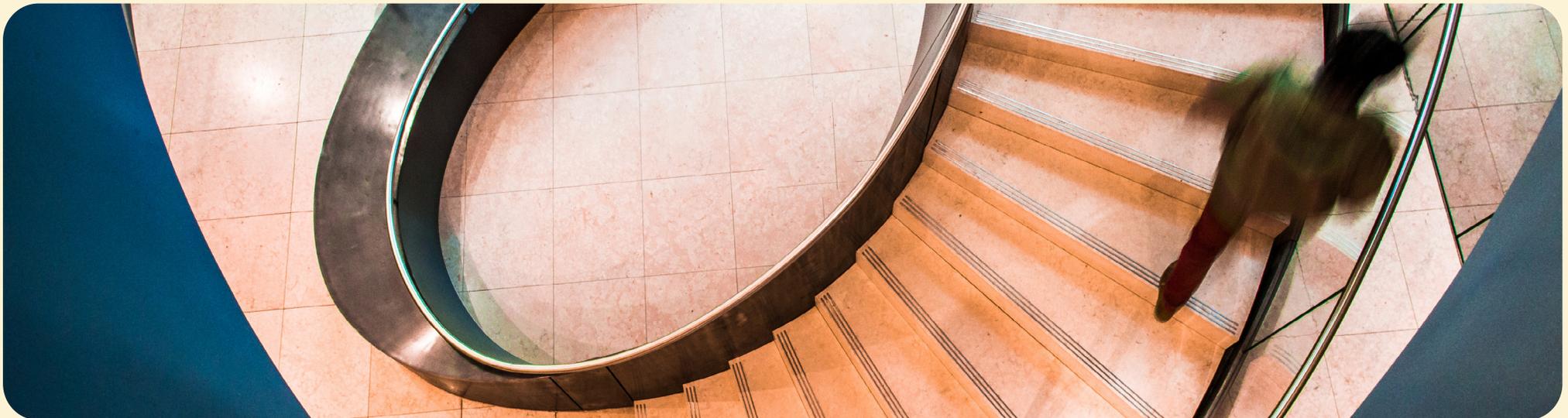
There's pressure without meaning

Purpose



The rules change often

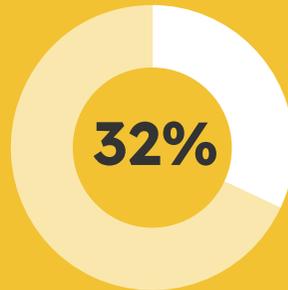
Consistency





Communication

Good communication doesn't just come from talking. Listening to how your people feel, and acting on what you've heard, is essential in building trust, creating clarity, and alignment - even in uncertain times. In teams, with leaders, across the whole organisation.



Two-way conversations increase change success by 32%.

(Gartner)

Purpose

Without meaning, resilience turns into mindless endurance. Leaders should regularly reinforce the reason to believe to help people stay engaged, fulfilled, and adaptable. Creating a shared sense of direction by explaining the why behind the work, and linking it to KPIs and broader business goals.

“People like to believe in something. Believing in a person, a company, a purpose, creates loyalty. Leaders need to create a system for their teams to believe in, aspire to, and be inspired by.”

Claire de Souza, Employer Brand & Recruitment Marketing at a leading UK retailer, and Co-founder of The EB Space

Cultural consistency

When conditions constantly shift, your employees have no chance of thriving. People need honesty in who you are as a business, from both the inside and out. Consistency doesn't mean perfection, but it does mean follow-through - holding yourself accountable to your values and promises, in behaviour and employee experience.

“For me, it's about being really transparent and clear about who you are when people come into the business. We're really supportive, celebratory, and unhierarchical - but we're very clear that you'll manage change and chaos every single day.”

Roshini Dhaliwal,
Chief People Officer at ClearBank

Are You Solving the Right Problem?

The truth is, if you want a resilient organisation, you don't just fix the leaves. You tend to the roots, trunk, and environmental conditions too.

Resilience isn't just a personal trait, it's an organisational outcome. You can't demand resilience from people navigating broken structures. True resilience is designed into entire systems that can flex, absorb, and repair.

It's time to challenge assumptions within your organisation. Start the difficult conversations. Ask yourself, your leadership, your C-suite:

- Where are the weak spots? Your roots, trunk, leaves, or multipliers?
- Are we diagnosing system issues, or managing symptoms?
- Are you really listening to your people, and then acting on it?
- Are your systems built for performance and recovery?

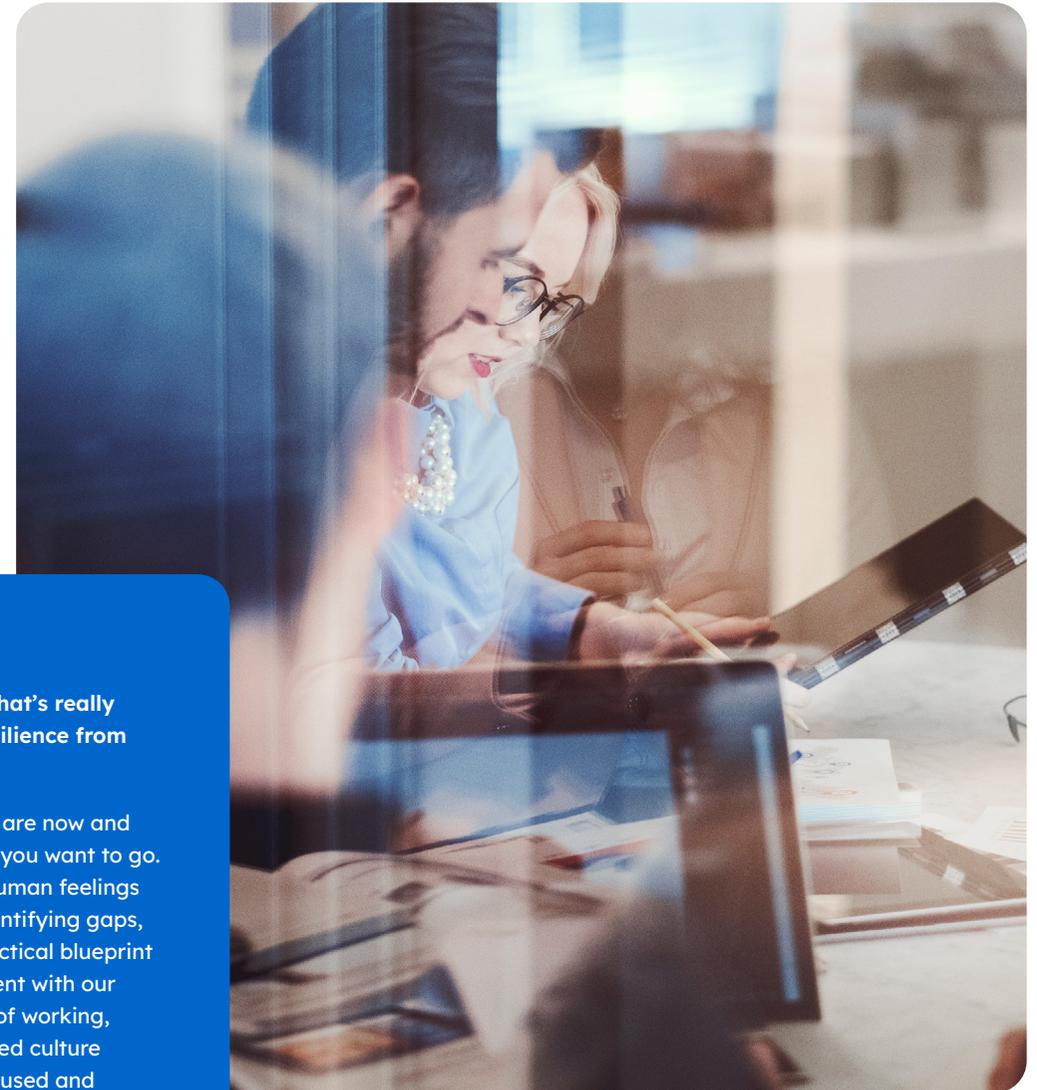
What's next?

- 01** Diagnose your organisation. Gather real insight from your people, policies, and behaviours.
- 02** Champion team-level practices and manager behaviours. Identify areas of opportunity for training, upskilling, and change in moments that matter.
- 03** Make the case for systemic change. Combine data and stories to shift mindsets at the top.

This is where we come in.

TheTruthWorks helps organisations uncover what's really going on, reframe the problem, and design resilience from the inside out. Starting with our Culture Scan.

A Culture Scan helps you understand where you are now and whether your current culture can get you where you want to go. At TheTruthWorks, we combine hard data and human feelings to get a true understanding of your culture – identifying gaps, blockers, and opportunities. Then we build a practical blueprint that you can run with independently, or implement with our support. A clear plan to action the habits, ways of working, and commitments required to embed an improved culture that allows you to become a healthy, people-focused and commercial organisation.





About TheTruthWorks.

TheTruthWorks is a female-founded organisational culture consultancy on a mission to shape workplaces we'd actually want to be a part of. That starts with honest conversations.

Recognised experts in all aspects of organisational culture, we partner with businesses ready to confront their uncomfortable truths and shape cultures that work for everyone. Our refreshingly candid approach helps organisations move from good intentions to real, lasting impact.

We don't just speak truth to power, we bring truth to life. Through creative insight, compelling narratives, and breakthrough thinking that makes the hard-to-hear impossible to ignore.

Our talented consultants are based in Europe and the UK and our global clients range from fintech start-ups to the largest football group in the world.

Founded by Rhiannon Stroud and Emily Firth, we don't just speak truth to power, we bring truth to life. Through creative insight, compelling narratives, and breakthrough thinking that makes the hard-to-hear impossible to ignore.

With huge thanks to our contributors

Claire de Souza

Employer Brand & Recruitment Marketing at a leading UK retailer, and Co-founder of The EB Space.

Claire de Souza is an employer brand leader, community builder, and creative. She leads employer branding at a leading UK retailer, shaping how the brand connects people to meaningful work. Claire is also co-founder of The EB Space and EB Uncut – initiatives championing honest conversation and practical learning in the employer brand industry. Outside of work, she’s a writer, artist, and advocate for inclusion, identity, and chronic pain awareness.

Debbie Kleiner

Founder of Wellbeing in Work
MSc Workplace Health and Wellbeing

Debbie Kleiner is a workplace wellbeing specialist, delivering resilience, stress, and mental health workshops. She supports leaders to build people-first cultures, and trains managers to feel confident supporting employee wellbeing. Her expertise lies in strategic wellbeing planning – from boardroom briefings to tailored wellbeing strategies that drive retention, engagement, and productivity. She helps businesses ensure their wellbeing investment delivers real return, without gimmicks or quick fixes.

Dr Skylia Herod

Behavioural Neuroscientist
Ph.D. Behavioural Neuroscience

Dr. Skylia Herod is a behavioural neuroscientist, Chief Science Officer at Hatch Immersive Learning Studios, Chief Scientist at Brain Matters, and consultant on Neuroscience for Business at Neurocorp Consulting. With a Ph.D. in behavioural neuroscience and a global research background in stress, neuroplasticity, and resilience, she specialises in translating the hard science of “soft” skills into practical strategies for the workplace.

Luke Yoell

HR Director and Senior Leader
at Sponge Learning

Luke Yoell is a senior People & Culture leader, driving cultural transformation and employee engagement in fast-paced environments. He specialises in building inclusive, people-first strategies that align with business goals and embed culture at the heart of organisational change. His focus is on creating workplaces where people feel valued, connected to a shared purpose, and equipped to thrive.

Oana Iordachescu

DEI Advisor, and Founder of Fair Cultures

Oana Iordachescu is a Talent and TA Executive Advisor and DEI Strategist. She is the founder of Fair Cultures and Conference Director at Fair Barcelona, helping organisations build inclusive cultures and future-focused workplaces. With a focus on sustainable DEI strategies, she empowers leaders to turn intent into action and champions initiatives that drive equity, resilience, and meaningful cultural change.

Roshini Dhaliwal

Chief People Officer at ClearBank

Roshini Dhaliwal is Chief People Officer at ClearBank, with deep expertise in transformation, strategic partnering, and colleague engagement. She previously held senior roles at Barclays, including Global HR Director for Corporate and Investment Banking, and Ford Motor Company. She’s known for navigating complex organisations and delivering people strategies that enable lasting cultural and commercial impact.

Saba Haran

Executive Director Pension & Benefits
(Scotland) at Howden

Saba Haran is Employee Benefits Director at Howden, with over 27 years’ experience in financial services, including 13 in employee benefits. She’s worked with FTSE 100 and 250 companies to develop strategies that attract, retain, and support talent. Saba is known for her deep market knowledge, practical advice, and passion for helping employers build healthy, high-performing workplaces.

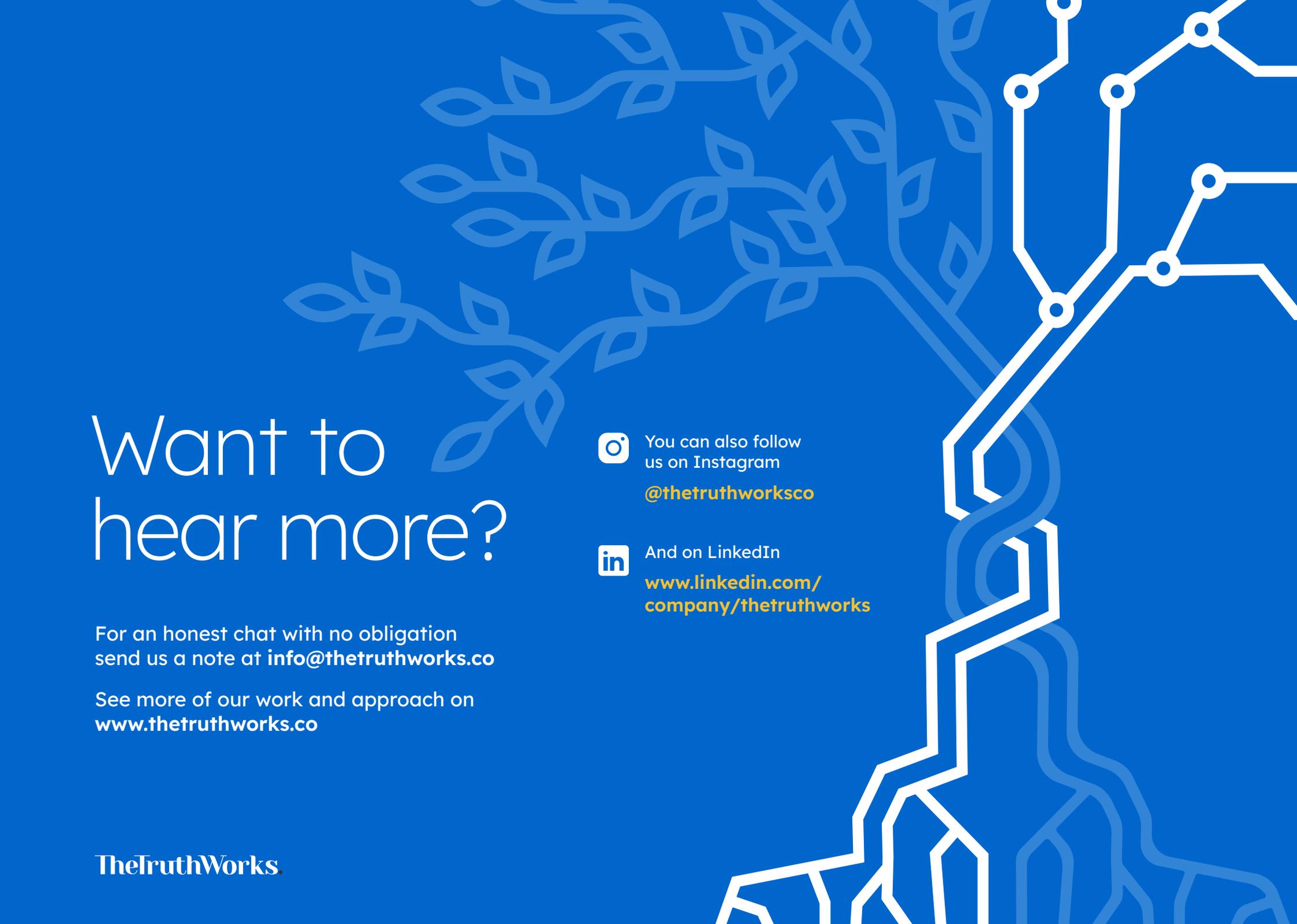
Tiffany Gordon

Clinical Psychologist & Burnout Expert
MA Clinical Psychology (WITS), Archetypal
Pattern Analyst (ASSISI INSTITUTE)

Tiffany Gordon is a Clinical Psychologist based in Amsterdam. With a global background spanning South Africa, London, Japan, and the Netherlands, her work supports individuals through transition, identity, and change. Tiffany’s integrative approach draws on psychodynamic therapy, CBT, DBT, trauma work, and Jungian theory. Grounded in curiosity and reflection, she tailors each session to the individual, believing that no single path fits all.

Design – Jenny Radcliffe

Copy – Izzy Green



Want to hear more?

For an honest chat with no obligation
send us a note at info@thetruthworks.co

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www.thetruthworks.co



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