



THE CONSCIOUS WORKPLACE




Foreword

BY PHIL KEOGHAN

One thing is certain when we look back at 2020 – it is a year that the world will never forget.

For me, the personal and professional impacts of the coronavirus outbreak are too numerous to count and sadly at the time I write this foreword, the end of the upheaval is not yet within sight.



Worry comes in many forms. Of course, we worry about the health of our friends and family, for our colleagues and our communities, but more and more, we're beginning to worry about our future. For businesses around the world, the responsibility is severe. Not only do we need to adapt our work practices, physical spaces and supply chains to ensure they are safe and effective, we also need to support staff by enabling them to be productive whenever and wherever they need to work.

The productivity puzzle itself is an older issue, one which Ricoh has committed firmly to addressing in recent years. Two years ago, we partnered with Oxford Economics to research the unrecognised value of the contribution that employees make and could be making to our success, ultimately resulting in value converted to gross-domestic product (GDP). Our research culminated in a report entitled 'The Economy of People', which revealed that the UK could stand to gain as much as £36.8 billion by investing in change.

In the past year, we have developed an active roadmap to help businesses begin their transformation, and launched the Pathway to Productive People series, which focused on the steps that every business could take to realise immediate results. This year, under the circumstances and in response to our most recent research we present, The Conscious Workplace; Making sense of the new world of work.

In the report you will find evidence of our latest findings with perspectives from managers and staff in business from multiple industries across the country, as well as insightful guidance and advice from both workplace consultants and leading psychologist, Emma Kenny.

The Conscious Workplace hinges on a simple premise: that every component of the workplace, whether it is physical or virtual, now requires conscious consideration and active decision making. We can no longer take for granted the escapism of closing the office door, traditional working hours or even the typical behaviours of our clients and colleagues. The good news for any business leaders reading this is that the report also definitively shows that the outcome of a more conscious working environment is greater productivity.



Phil Keoghan
CEO, Ricoh UK & Ireland

Executive Summary

Ricoh has researched how our evolving world of work has forced businesses to address digital transformation, look at reengineering workplaces both virtually and physically, develop new processes to support this and how all this combined has influenced and resulted in new workplace behaviours.

We surveyed 304 managers and 1001 employees of businesses that once functioned through the use of a traditional office. Our respondents included a blend of people working from home or a remote location, people working from the office and people who are doing a mix of both. Our goal was simple: to understand how changing cultural, physical and technological environments have impacted the way people work and the wider impact that this is having.

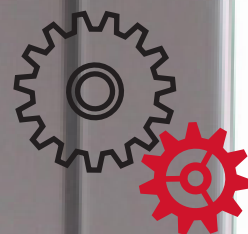
Working with leading clinical psychologist Emma Kenny, we analysed key findings from our research to form an opinion around how businesses and their employees are coping with working in a pandemic world, looking at synergies and disconnects with a view to helping businesses better make sense of the changing workplace.

What the research told us is that, whether working from home or in an office environment, both managers (39% at home and 45% in the office) and employees (31% at home and 13% in the office) are feeling unhappy and unproductive largely due to technology issues, confusion over and time spent on new processes, and because of the pressures around a changing work environment.

Managers tend to struggle with the technology demands of a work from home set-up, with 41% reporting concerns compared with just 26% who went back to the office. Employees are slightly less daunted, with 46% reporting no issues at all from home.

In a world that has seen productivity levels significantly fall, how can businesses address these concerns and work towards achieving a conscious workplace, an environment where people are happy, motivated, productive and thriving?

In this report we explore how people are coping with working in a pandemic world and how core fundamentals such as technology, processes and the working environment are starting to influence new behaviours. Only by achieving a balance, businesses can work towards economic recovery.



Introduction

Long before we began to debate the potential economic impact of the recent pandemic on businesses productivity growth, or rather the lack of it, was the burning issue of the financial crisis.

Projections of post-Brexit productivity fluctuation, employment rates and political approaches to austerity have all but been eclipsed by recent events and a quick look at the figures give us a stark reminder as to why. Recent reports from the ONS plot the recovery of GDP slowing at 9.2% of those lower than the levels seen in February. Redundancies have seen a sharp rise, with the Institute for Employment Studies projecting a potential 1m redundancies by the end of 2020 .

The chancellor recently announced an extension to the furlough scheme, which is a clear sign from the government that it does not see an end to the disruption at least in the short term. For some businesses, it's a lifeline but for others the road to recovery is now a longer and more complicated one.

On a more positive note, it's clear that there's a major commitment to growth and adaptation. In fact, the Bank of England recently predicted that the economic shock predicted would be less than initially feared. The reality is that, in most cases, businesses largely have the power to dictate the terms of their own recovery.

What if we took a more conscious attitude? What if we really considered what a blended working experience looks and feels like? How can we make smarter choices about our people's futures, the processes we use or the technology we're investing in, wherever you're working? What if we lived in a more conscious workplace?

Below, we have unpacked the mindsets, behaviours and influences that are forging a new world of work and what it could mean for your business.





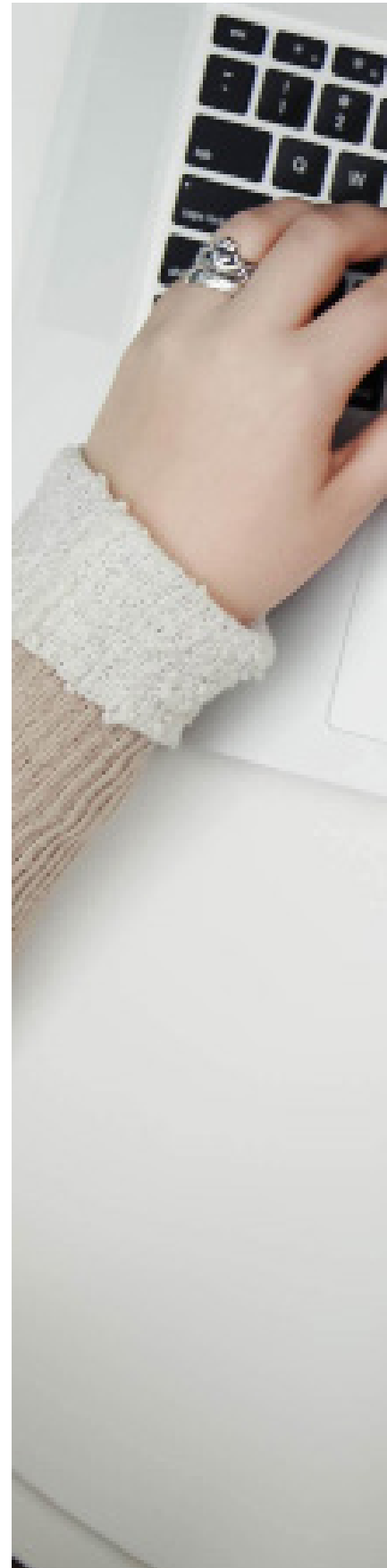
Behaviours in the Workplace

The biggest impact we have seen due to recent events is on traditional working behaviours. Regardless of whether working from home, or the office, happiness, motivation and productivity are cited as the biggest challenges for both managers (40%) and employees (30%).

For businesses that returned to the office, we found that 7/10 (70%) employees are facing challenges with the office itself, such as social distancing and that over 4/5 (87%) managers who returned are also recognising these same challenges.

That said, a work from home set up also sees staff facing difficulties: 3/4 of managers have had employee culture challenges working from home/remotely and 2/3 of remote employees have cited cultural/communication challenges within their environments.

These findings support the view that neither a work from home setup, nor a solely office-based approach, comes without impacts to productivity and people. To explore the issues in more depth, we set out to work with a behavioural psychologist, Emma Kenny, who reviewed the research and worked with us to define four emotionally driven impacts; Confidence of Control, Misplaced Validation, Unanchored Authority and the Apathetic Experience. These are explained below and are all key factors for businesses to discuss in forming a more conscious work environment for employees.







Behaviours in the Workplace

PEOPLE

CONFIDENCE OF CONTROL

For most of us communicating our actions, thoughts and feelings is a way of controlling a situation. At work, we use daily signals, language and actions that demonstrate our purpose and value. But when our environments change, so do our signals and language, this can create misunderstandings and frustrations. Faced with working in new environments with changing dynamics has meant that over 1/4 (26%) of employees and almost 2/5 (36%) of managers are finding it difficult to communicate with their colleagues and teams. The problem with such profound miscommunication is that it often results in diminished confidence of control. This loss of confidence in control can lead to any manager or employee feeling uncertain and can further enhance feelings of isolation and lead to a reduction in productivity.

MISPLACED VALIDATION

The link between productivity and validation is not a new one, but the way people seek validation at work is constantly changing. Historically, employee validation was primarily recognised financially through salary: you do a good job, you get a raise/promotion. But over time, the business world has embraced the psychological understanding that whilst money is important, a person's sense of achievement can span far beyond financial gain. In fact, understanding what people value can help people understand how they want to be validated. These small validations are known as micro-rewards and we experience them all the time – particularly in the office. In remote environments, the simple replication of micro rewards can feel clunky, misplaced and sometimes even patronising. The loss of validation is not seniority specific and can be felt at the very top of an organisation. Ultimately, a better system for introducing regular, authentic validation needs to be considered to keep the whole workforce motivated, happy and productive.



UNANCHORED AUTHORITY

Keeping staff motivated, happy and productive is the greatest challenge for managers (45%), while 15% of employees struggle with habits they formed at home and 13% feel less productive. Alongside this, very real issues of safety continue to impact the way staff and managers feel about the space around them. Almost 1/4 (23%) of employees who have returned to work don't currently feel safe and 2/5 (41%) of managers are finding that making people feel safe is a challenge. In the workplace, we are all used to having anchors: clear and distinct rules of engagement that help guide us through the working week. Anchors like start and finish times, lunch hours, health and safety guidelines and other processes that help us move through the workday purely focused on what we need to achieve. Our evolving world of work – including changed and new workspaces – has meant our anchors have shifted. Or in some cases, even fail to exist at all. During this period of adaptation, for some businesses, it's not quite clear where those anchors have settled – this will need to be addressed in any long-term productivity planning.

APATHETIC EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Employee experience is as important as customer experience, but challenging and uncertain times require businesses to readdress their focus on necessities rather than 'nice to haves'. The problem is, most businesses wrongly assume employee experience is a 'nice to have'. As it stands, our research found that nearly a third (28%) of remote managers and over one quarter (26%) of employees are finding health and well-being a challenge. This is clearly no longer a case of 'nice to have'. In fact, keeping people healthy and focusing on their wellbeing is crucial to the ability to succeed; apathy to employee experience will have a detrimental impact on employee productivity.



BEHAVIOURAL PSYCHOLOGIST EMMA KENNY, ANALYSIS

Creating happy employees is the goal of any company, however, in the recent months, we have seen a systemic shift in both the work environment and the expectations that staff have about what that environment looks and feels like.

Staff have been traumatised by a steady stream of news suggesting that familiar spaces are now potentially deadly, meaning that the relationship they had with the office environment and colleagues has been challenged on each and every level. Understandably this period has diminished confidence, whilst simultaneously offering staff a 'safer' and more 'controlled' solution through remote work from home. Staff have grown used to avoiding the daily commute, whilst solving distance problems with video calls, which offer a fast and effective shortcut to connections that historically have proven more complex to arrange from the office base. These benefits have soothed stress levels and led to staff feeling that working from home is the new normal, and a normal they ideally wish to keep.

Understandably, this type of mindset can be a mismatch where managers in particular are concerned. Motivating staff remotely has associated issues, and finding a rhythm and pace that produces happy and efficient staff is a challenge without direct overview of their work and workday. Managers additionally have to be acutely aware of the legislation that affects the workplace, meaning that they are not simply in charge of staff, they are now also in charge of keeping their staff safe and healthy, which is an additional burden to carry.

There are definite gains wellbeing wise to more flexible working options, however, a word of caution is required when remote working becomes a consistent feature within a staff member's life. Isolation and self-management can initially be a welcome change, and certainly there are many benefits time-wise and financially with this kind of working model.

Spending time at home, without the natural interjections and entertainment that relationships in the office offer can diminish overall wellbeing levels. This is why it is essential to encourage remote staff into the office when possible. Water cooler conversations and catching up with a colleague for lunch is important for wellbeing, as is the feeling of connectedness and belongingness received from being part of a team.





Places of Work in a Changing World

WORKSPACE

Legacy working environments are no longer fit for purpose. The risks posed by the virus mean that it has fallen to business leaders to make decisions on not only the safety of their employees, but the safety of their families too. Employees and managers have had a different experience of remote working, which we will explore in more depth below.

THE REMOTE WORKPLACE

The way employees and managers view remote working is different. Remote managers are highly aware of and are concerned about employee workplace environments, with nearly 80% of managers saying they have struggled to ensure that employees are in appropriate environments. Conversely, remote employees do not feel the same degree of concern but are still clearly in a process of adjustment, with 67% of them experiencing workplace concerns such as Wi-Fi issues or home set-up. Two interesting points of misconception between managers and employees are that of equipment and dedicated space. Our research found that managers cite staff not having access to the right equipment (32%) or dedicated space (28%) as being their key concern. The reality, according to our research is that only 19% of employees are struggling to access the right equipment and 20% don't feel like they have their own dedicated space. Remote working spaces are essential to the modern employee experience. For some, it is a sacred space of contemplation and concentration, for others, it is an opportunity to be more themselves, allowing them more collaborative and creative thinking processes. To fully embrace the remote workplace, we need to be adaptable and understanding. It starts with a listening exercise and ends with an assessment of the insight. When you are equipped with the perspectives of your staff, you can review your success criteria and align them both to maximise productivity.

THE NEW 'OFFICE'

For those returning to the office, the experience has been challenging for both managers and employees, who cited physical safety as being a key concern. More than 4/5 (84%) of returned managers have experienced workplace concerns and almost 3/4 (73%) of returned employees have concerns about the physical workplace. With safety high on the agenda, our research revealed that 1 in 5 returned managers believe that their office has not been compliant, despite employees being asked to return when it was safe to do so.

Similarly, 1 in 4 employees do not feel safe in their physical workplace, but are required to attend. To some degree this is to be expected; with regulations changing rapidly, clarity on the way we operate has never been more crucial. For example, what we do know is that social distancing is a tangible and accepted measure for creating a safe environment. Despite that fact, for most returned businesses, social distancing is still cited as the biggest challenge by both managers (35%) and employees (37%). With the future of work still evolving every day, the findings suggest that the workplace can no longer be defined as a physical location such as an office. But when we do come to consider what our office experience looks like; we must strive to make it better than home. It needs to be a desired destination that addresses the productive necessities of the people within it and takes into account their concerns about safety.



BEHAVIOURAL PSYCHOLOGIST EMMA KENNY, ANALYSIS

Remote spaces often include access to broadband meaning that video calls, instant messaging and emails are fast, effective and even more reliable than experienced in the office environment. This provides staff with a feeling that home offers a more competent environment than traditional workspace experience.

This bias, further strengthened by the benefits many staff feel come from working from home, means that the office now has to have 'added value' - it needs to be more than just a place of work, it needs to become a 'lifestyle choice'.

The office must present added value if staff are to feel ready to confront the fears that they have built up. Workspaces have become distorted, these once safe, familiar places now look foreign and unfriendly even. Human beings like consistency and familiarity, and in this post-COVID corporate world, the over sanitised, socially distanced workplace can feel overwhelming and affronting. This is why it is important to consider ways of making the office feel more human, safe and encouraging to those returning to it.



New Ways of Working

PROCESS

Work and communication processes have changed drastically recently. The impact has been both immediate and extensive on all staff. That said, our research uncovered discrepancies between management and employee perception, especially around remote processes relating to digitalisation and the access of information.

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

With half (50%) of in-office managers, and 1/3 (37%) of employees citing COVID processes as a key concern for them, creating a workspace which follows guidelines and addresses employee worries is critical for those wanting to return to a traditional working environment, or hybrid model. Almost 4/5 (78%) managers are dealing with process concerns in the office and more than 3/5 (61%) of employees share that concern. We explore more on the issues facing employees where it comes to process below:

BREAKDOWN OF PROCESS

This divide in employee versus management perceptions is also seen in remote teams, where 7/10 (66%) of remote managers said they are struggling with employee processes such as reporting and administration, and almost half (42%) of employees share these concerns. The reason for the increased concern on the managerial side is partly because managers tend to be the arbiters of process historically and are to some degree, less adaptable than the employee base. Managers are worried about time spent following processes in a remote environment, with 34% of managers concerned that employees find traditional processes more time consuming when working from home. Findings also show that more than a third (28%) of managers are finding it difficult to implement new business processes with teams both remote and in the office, which is also a concern reflected in new technology implementation. When looking further into these process difficulties, and those in the business that have been negatively impacted, we again see the findings suggest that the management experience is more challenging, with over half (50%) of managers struggling with employee well-being and mental health, which could be a result of additional stresses and responsibilities outside of the day-to-day role. With changing environments comes the need to reset expectations around process. This can be challenging as it is not always clear how processes should adapt as the spaces around us change. What seems clear is that it is vital that businesses adapting to change be conscious of how the environmental factors impact process.



BEHAVIOURAL PSYCHOLOGIST EMMA KENNY, ANALYSIS

Empathy must be offered to managers who are walking a tightrope whilst managing expectation versus reality. Suddenly, managers are responsible for way more than staff productivity, they have to take charge in adapting and maintaining their work environments, whilst remotely managing staff who are no longer within direct reach.

Mental health has always been a concern for employers and managers, and these concerns have undoubtedly escalated recently. Now, managers are working with traumatised employees, resistant employees, and those employees who use working from home as an excuse for less productivity. However, knowing how to motivate and manage these key staff members is going to require an evolution of processes over the coming years.

Systems and processes will need to be tried, tested and adapted to ensure that both the physical and remote workplace become successfully synergised if we are to recognise good productivity.

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Business Adaption and Transformation

TECHNOLOGY

Before the pandemic, only 30% of UK employees had ever experienced working from home. Despite this fact, it is not a new concept. For years psychologists, behavioural economists and forward-thinking business leaders have championed the practice, touting the numerous mental and physical health benefits it can bring.

For most businesses before March 2020, it wasn't that simple, especially from a technological point of view. The events of late have rapidly accelerated the need for shared workspaces in the cloud, face-to-face video calls and a raft of other work from home tools that could have enabled this style of work sooner. Despite historic concerns, office workers have transitioned to working from home and for the most part, the system didn't break. However, remote working through lockdown has resulted in a wide spectrum of experience in technology, covering both remote work and those who have been able to transition back into the office. Again, we see differing views from both managers and employees, but for good reason.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN PROGRESS

Regardless of whether people are working from home or returning to the office, a high percentage of both employees and managers are struggling with technology. Looking specifically at remote workers, almost 4/5 (78%) of managers have experienced technical concerns, whilst more than half (53%) of remote employees cite that they have had technical concerns working from home. Like much of the data captured in the survey, issues are escalated and felt more often by those at the management level. When looking at survey responses from those who moved back into the physical office, we saw similar responses with 3/4 (72%) of returned managers grappling with technical concerns. In contrast, almost half of employees (48%) have had technical concerns back in the workplace. Our findings suggest that while remote working environments are far from ideal with regards to technical support and tools available, employees are typically quicker to adapt and are more comfortable overcoming the challenges posed by it. Although the office provides the technical security and stability we're used to, there is no question that an unreliable boardroom camera will no longer suit the needs of the majority of businesses.

COMPLACENT SECURITY

The difference in employee vs manager mindsets is also reflected in the concern around network security in remote working environments, with 1/10 (10%) employees worried about cybersecurity compared to 1/5 (20%) of managers. Again, we see that this pressure and responsibility sits primarily with management level, which is a finding that is reflected time and time again in our research. As the workforce moves to a more blended approach of both remote and office-based working, there are concerns about the migration of technology from one location to the next.

The survey identified that more than 1/4 (25%) of managers are struggling to synchronise platforms when moving from one environment to another, which is a key concern for leadership teams who are considering a full move back to the office when the time is right. Technology has been a lynchpin keeping businesses together through this experience. But as we evolve through this changing world of work understanding the role of technology and having an active consideration for the way our employees use it will be vital.



BEHAVIOURAL PSYCHOLOGIST EMMA KENNY, ANALYSIS

Human beings tend to adapt quickly and many employees will have formed a bias towards working from home. After being told that the workplace is dangerous, and that their behaviour could lead to the death of loved ones, it makes sense that many employees will have consciously decided that remaining at home is a feature that they would like to experience permanently.

Technology is now at a point where remote working is possible, and keeping up with managers, employees and work output is possible. Understandably, staff are unlikely to spend too much time worrying about potential data breaches, or technology going wrong, as they don't feel a level of personal responsibility, or accountability to these systems. This is why managers and employers need to explore safe and secure systems within which they can operate.

There is definitely positivity to be drawn from the almost instant adaptability that occurred within the workspace and the remote working landscape early on in the pandemic, but now it is essential that an ongoing period of refinement, in both the physical and remote office, is carried out to grow and evolve into this new normal.

Defining the Conscious Workplace

IN CONCLUSION

It's clear from the evidence presented in the report that the brief period of eased restrictions did not result in a perfect solution for either managers or employees, but there are learnings we can take to apply to our businesses moving forward.

- 1/ Our people should always be at the heart of our choices where the workplace is concerned and adopting a more conscious approach to understanding their needs, interests and requirements is vital for optimising productivity in the new world of work.
- 2/ An on-going review of our work processes should always be in place. From understanding what new processes we need to adopt, to adapting existing processes which service our business.
- 3/ Technology can be an enabler and can help us forge alternatives for systems that were once manual, but the cost can be high. To refine working practices, make the most of operational spend and manage the exposure we need to approach it with caution. Review your existing technology to ensure it suits all the needs of your workforce and implement measures to control it, so it doesn't hinder rather than help your teams.
- 4/ The workspace is where we are. This has never been truer than today when an announcement from the government can drastically change the course of our physical presence almost overnight. We need to be ready for what lies ahead, whether that's ensuring that staff are happy, motivated and productive at home, have clear guides for physical office attendance or are welcomed back to a safe and secure building.
- 5/ We need a conscious workplace that takes into account the climate we're facing, arming us to ensure that every decision we make is thought through and proactive. The truly conscious workplace won't just be relevant now, but for the foreseeable future. Striking a true balance between technologies, processes and the workplace is what will lead to happy and productive people during and post pandemic times. The conscious workplace is a powerful outcome for businesses and one that's needed if we are to work towards economic recovery.

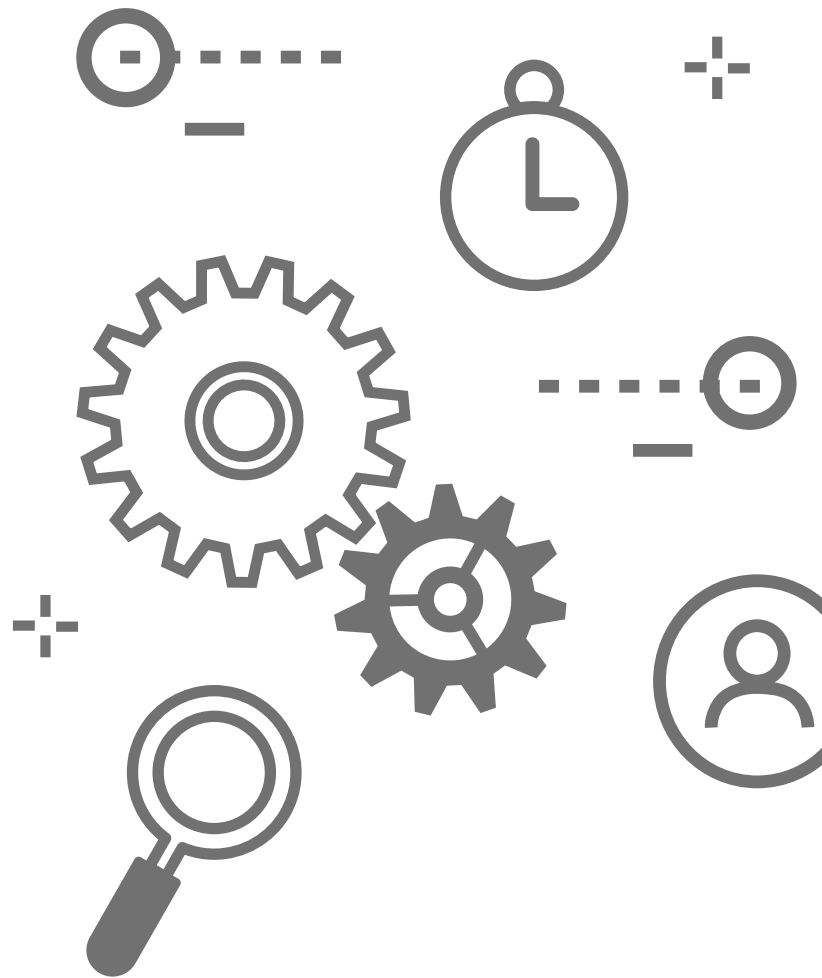


ABOUT EMMA KENNY

Emma Kenny is a psychologist, TV presenter, writer and expert media commentator, and is now recognised as one of the UK's leading TV psychological experts. She is perhaps best known for her role as resident psychologist on ITV's This Morning where, during the viewer phone-in segment of the show, she provides expert advice on a whole range of sensitive issues. Emma is radio 1's life hacks expert and presents a classical show for Scala radio. Emma always aspires to empower her clients with the skills, strategies and resilience to enable them to move forward after therapy, stronger and in control of their lives.

Having completed a Psychology BSc at The University of Central Lancashire, Emma later attained an Advanced Diploma in Counselling and an MA in Counselling at The University of Manchester. Emma is BACP and BPS registered, been a guest lecturer on the Counselling Psychology PhD at The Manchester University and has been a keynote speaker for the BPS.

With a therapeutic career spanning over 20 years and an in-depth understanding of the media world and production process, Emma also conducts psychological assessments for programme makers to help ensure they are operating in accordance with the Ofcom Broadcasting Code of Conduct with regards to their duty of care towards contributors.



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