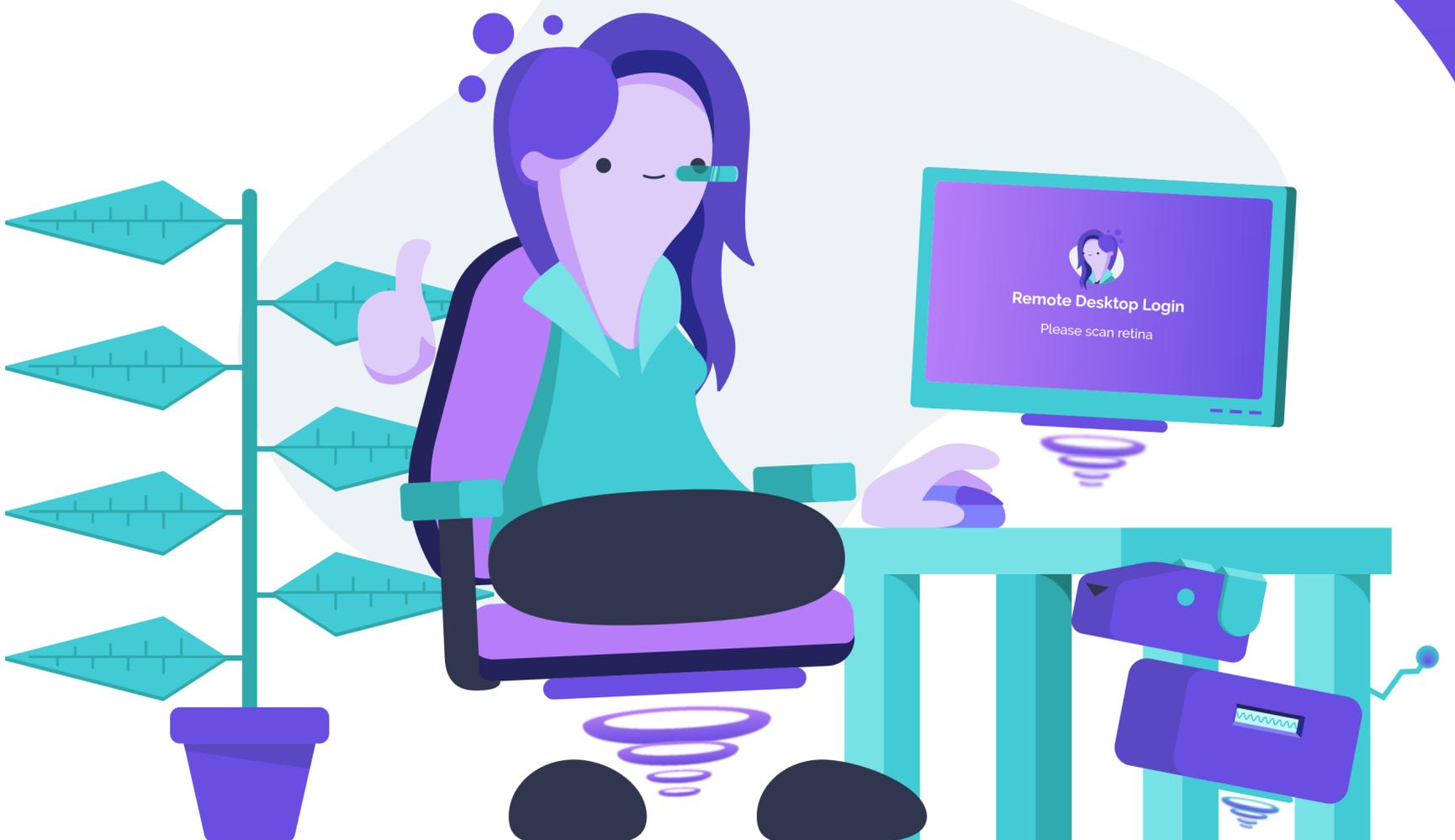




The Future of Work.

Choosing a semi-remote working model in the new normal.





Introduction.

From what you read to what you wear, how you travel or who you meet, where you go and what you see, technology continues to drive and accelerate personalisation at scale across all aspects of our lives. As we entered the 2020s, one area that remained behind the curve was the workplace. Only the most progressive of organisations were already able to offer employees a personalised experience; be that where they work from, the hours they work, or how they are compensated.

This points to the perennial challenge of organisational culture; how you build a 'one size fits all' offering for a collective of ever-evolving individuals; you build values and principles that drive cohesion, whilst valuing diversity; you need people to bring different perspectives whilst sharing a common mission. It's far harder to make sure everyone feels equal when their fundamental treatment is different, so most companies have shirked the challenge.

COVID-19 is not an equal disease and this inequality has become clear in hospitals, in the headlines and in workplaces far removed from the frontline. It has highlighted the nuances of individual situations; maybe your partner is a key worker, maybe you are shielding, struggling to work without childcare or playing zoom roulette with your housemates for a professional background. So, companies have been forced to adapt; letting individual situations trump company mandates. The unifying policy is one of personalisation; work where *you* need and this is the case I will set out to argue in this paper.

A new normal of working.

In *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey talks about paradigm shifts, moments when the generally accepted or normative perspective shifts. For too long a culture of presenteeism has placed a stronghold on productivity, motivation and happiness. As the national lockdown hit, we were forced into a paradigm shift, yet, as we edge towards the new normal, some are quick and keen to shift back to the old ways. 'To Office, or Not to Office' moves from the realm of 'we are doing this because we have to', to the realm of 'we are doing this because we want to'. I do not believe businesses should choose; rather personalisation should mean giving employees both options and letting them decide.

I understand those of us whose companies are able to choose where or how we work, or indeed to survive this pandemic at all, are the lucky ones. So I set out this vision with empathy for those for whom these avenues are not yet an option; and with the hope that those of us who have these alternative paths open to us make the most of our good fortune.

What follows below is a set of counter arguments to the common objections for this way of working. My aim is that this helps us be the leaders who seize this paradigm shift to make the future of work one of personalisation; in where and how people work, and that as the dust settles on the pandemic, this can be our new normal, and be celebrated as such.

Dispelling the 7 objections to a new way of working.





But our employees are no longer in the same place and so our culture is fading.

Paradigm shift:

“We are running an international business.”

Imagine that your business wins an exciting partnership in a new market and after a three-month trial, you realise there is real product market fit. So, it's incorporation documents and tax advisors, and before you know it, you have a second headquarters. You realise your business complexity has increased tenfold, however, this is a huge opportunity and now your employees are no longer all in the same place.

So why are global businesses recognised as a challenge, but lauded as a pillar of success? Carrying culture across markets becomes a key focus of international business, so I would argue that just as when you internationalise, in a semi-remote organisation, culture can be maintained, *if you are willing to put the work in*. And this work must be done by leaders, but also by every employee; it is up to everyone in the team to uphold a business' culture.





But our culture is the way you feel when you walk through the door...

Paradigm shift:
“Culture is your internal product.”

One of my favourite descriptions of culture is that 'culture is what you do when nobody is looking'; so isn't working remotely the ultimate cultural test?

The central pillars of a part-remote culture are no different than any truly great organisation; a clear vision and mission that solves a real problem, outstanding leadership, strong values and principles that are upheld throughout, codified execution with clear metrics for success. And yes, culture is your secret sauce, and it is that intangible feeling you get when you walk through the door, but it's also scientific, it's an equation; the sum of your constituent elements - from your values, to your hiring policy, your ways of working, to your people. It should start from *why* you exist as an organisation, come to *how* you do things, and include *what* you do or do not do. I like to think of culture as your ultimate internal product, and to apply product principles; your employees are your customer here so build, measure, learn and iterate.

What does this mean in practice? If you are looking at your benefits set for a part-remote model, first, know your market; what do your competitors do? Then know your customer; ask your employees, interview them, anonymously and not, get qualitative and quantitative feedback. Figure out how you will measure the impact of your changes; what metrics matter, where and how will you track them. Then roll out a test, call it a trial, learn from another round of qualitative and quantitative feedback, and iterate.



But our communication has broken down...

Paradigm shift:
“We are 10x-ing everything.”

All these principles work just as well in a part-remote model as they do in an office-based model, but being semi-remote also 10xes some aspects of business; not least communication, the need for clarity, transparency, proactivity and human leadership.

In a part-remote model you are losing the 93% of communication that is nonverbal. So put in practices that help mitigate this such as emphasising proactive outreach between colleagues, formatting communications with a 'why - what - how' structure, and most transformative for Judopay, using a descriptor at the end of messages, such as [tone: frustrated but REALLY just want the best for our customers] so things are not easily misconstrued. Additionally, technologies like a Meeting Owl can help those who are not in the room follow more easily.

Inclusion takes on new meaning; making sure those who are not in the office never feel like second class citizens, but also removing location bias by no longer needing workers to be in more expensive central hubs. Make space for the non-professional, the non-transactional; as leaders, show your human side and be vulnerable, as team members; get creative, make space for the small talk.





But our productivity is lower...

Paradigm shift:
“An operational paragon.”

When you or a colleague questions someone's output, the next question should be how you are quantifying this. At Judopay, all employees are measured against either key performance indicators (KPIs), or objectives and key results (OKRs), so from a developer to a creative, we know what good looks like.

These structures also negate micromanagement and empower employees to further arrange their working weeks within required timelines of delivery. The ability to take a personalised approach to how you hit your deliverables is true autonomy, which in turn is one of author Daniel Pink's three key drivers of work satisfaction, along with purpose and mastery.

As a leader, ask yourself, have I truly empowered myself and my team by codifying our business culture and putting the processes in place to remove subjectivity when discussing output? Am I really just worried about control; do I feel better being able to see what people are up to? Maybe they're pretending to work, but at least I'm not paying them to sit on the sofa in their PJs.

If you have codified your culture and put the processes in place, and still find yourself questioning an individual's productivity, it's time to question whether you have the right people on the bus. I talk about culture add, not culture fit, because that reminds me of the importance of diversity. But whichever way you cut it, your employees need to demonstrate the mutually agreed behaviours and values of your organisation. So, if you have empowered an employee with true autonomy and they are not delivering, question if they are either culture fit, or culture add, or neither.

Businesses are much better at hiring against their values than they are firing against them; so empower yourself by making it crystal clear what good looks like, by having a value set that is spelled out, then difficult conversations can be removed from the subjective realm, freeing you up to focus on what you need to, not timing people's lunch breaks.



But I care about output, be it revenue or growth, and we will do whatever it takes to get there.

Paradigm shift:
“Happiness is a key metric.”

In my previous role, I was both a COO and a Chief People Officer. Traditionally, these roles are separate and for many, are opposites; one focuses on revenue and process, one on people and the softer side of business. My philosophy is that they are in perfect symbiosis; your input is your people, and your output is your revenue; optimizing the former results in greater returns on the latter. If this sounds like 'fluff' then I'd like to politely point you in the direction of Shawn Achor, *The Happiness Advantage*, and his fellow Harvard et al. scholars who argue that economic success follows personal happiness.

I want to build a future of work where we put happiness first, and we accept that to maximise happiness at work, we are going to have to adopt a more personalised approach. Let your people's schedules work for them and their individual situations, and see if they are not happier, and more productive as a result.

It is important to build out core hours, and set expectations; at Judopay we still need people to be UK residents for tax reasons, and expect core UK hours to be worked, and in doing so, we can give employees increased control over how and where they are living their lives. You may think that this would only benefit a small minority, but 47% of our staff said they would change their living arrangements due to being able to work remotely, based off of our internal surveys. So why don't we let the 53% have a vibrant city hub and live their London dreams, and let the other 47% relocate. You are empowering people to choose if they want to be in a city or have more space, see more countryside, access better schools, be closer to family; couple this with great leadership and culture and suddenly it's not an exaggeration to say you are genuinely changing people's lives.

During the pandemic, I moved to Greece for a month. My desk looked out across the ocean, and I picked herbs from the garden for lunch. I've never felt luckier, personally or professionally; I was living my dream every day and this gratitude drove me to push harder, perform higher, and prove that this model worked. It wasn't work to be able to travel; I was really living every day, and for the first time, I felt like I'd beaten the mainstream model of have - do - become or as some put it, 'have money to do travelling to become happy.'



But I do care about employee wellness, look at this benefits program.

Paradigm shift:
“Root cause trumps the treatment of symptoms.”

It's important to stress that I feel very lucky I was to be able to make the most of this situation; a loss of freedom has been a key and crippling challenge of 2020 for so many. In parallel, discussions around mental health have increased exponentially; so, it may seem like a strange time to be talking about finding happiness. But I would argue that now is exactly the time to be making any change we can to drive this happiness.

Even before this year, the statistics are staggering. Work-related stress and mental illness accounts for over half of work absences, costing British businesses around £26bn per year. Most companies recognise this, and reel off the ways they deal with it, normally in the form of the benefits they offer. At Judopay we certainly have these benefits; take our digital therapy offering via a startup called Spill; 31% of our team have engaged in therapy (compare this to a national average in the UK of 3%).

But as good as this is, prevention is better, and root-cause cures, trump the tackling of symptoms. Too often, benefits are plasters that are used to mask deep seated issues, be it a lack of psychological safety, or an unmanageable workload. Yes, resiliency is key, but let's build that up using empowerment and autonomy; let our colleagues choose where and how to work, rather than push them to breaking point before paying to patch them back together.





But some things just cannot be digitised.

Paradigm shift:

“We are not trying to digitise everything.”

My central argument here is that as much as possible, we should be letting employees work where and how they want. Having said that, I am not arguing that there is no space left for the office at all, not least for those employees who want to work from there by default. What I am also saying is let's redefine that space for the majority. It is not a desk to do your day to day from; it's a space for collaboration, for creativity. Strategy days, team offsites, ideation; a free flow of energy and discussion is hard to replicate virtually. But can we get creative about this? Spend some of our exorbitant corporate rent on retreats? Do things that are genuinely different and exciting?

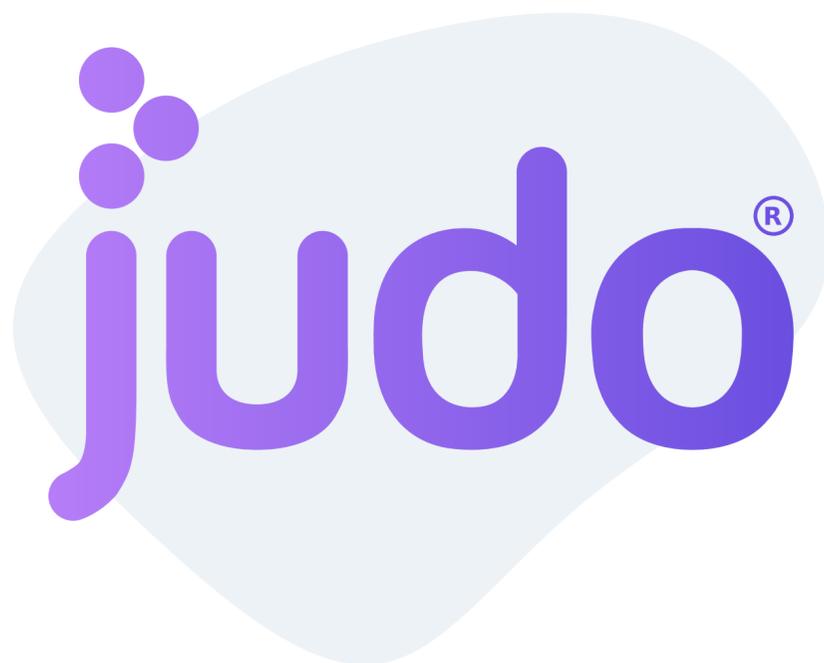
At Judopay a part-remote model is currently built around the ask (excepting COVID restrictions) that employees come together once every two months, for what's termed Judo Days; strategic days built around guest speakers, presentations and exercises designed to celebrate success and shape the future.

I'd also call out the nuance around new joiners; whilst Judopay have really successfully hired numerous top performers in an end-to-end virtual experience, I've yet to discover how to digitalise the kind of learning by osmosis that comes from being in an office, and hearing the conversations around you. Again, I am empathetic to the bigger picture here; the level of footfall employees that work in offices bring into local ecosystems and the support they provide for small, local businesses is essential for the upkeep of the economy – especially as we head into an economic downturn.

What's next?

Can our new normal be the dawn of a fifth industrial revolution? A world where the parable of living to work or working to live is no longer a dichotomy, because our work and our life goes hand in hand with the same principles and priorities? Can we commit to embracing personalisation, empowering employees to work when and how they want, and in turn to improve lives no matter what sector we play in? I certainly hope so.

To learn more about Judopay and how the company has shifted its working model, please visit: judopay.com and get in touch with the team.

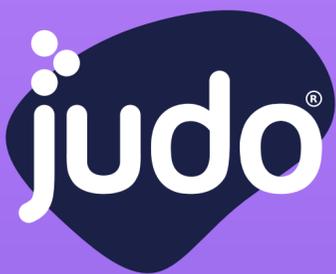




About Jess Ruben

Jess is a Chief People Officer for high growth businesses. Graduating from Oxford with two degrees, Jess began her career working with juvenile offenders before going on to work in Venture Capital, founding a Food-Tech business, and becoming the Strategy Director at Lantum, a Series B Health-Tech.

Jess regularly appears on panels and podcasts, was included on the 2019 Women in Fintech Powerlist, and helps run a network of c.300 COOs across Europe. Jess is also a classically trained musician having performed on global stages including the Shanghai Conservatoire, and is a keen Ironman athlete.



About Judopay

Judopay is the leading mobile payments platform. Born out of the frustration with friction-filled checkouts we built a flexible solution designed to drive sales and improve the customer experience. Working closely with partners such as Mastercard, Discover and Visa, Judopay is continually building ways to enhance the overall payment experience for both the merchant and their customers. Available across multiple sectors, our solution is used by KFC, Young's Pubs, Revolution Bars, Brakspears, Wahaca, Itsu and many more.

For more information, please visit:

 judopay.com

 [@judopay](https://twitter.com/judopay)