

A Manifesto for Transformative Workplace Culture

How do we create caring, collaborative
cultures that allow us all to thrive?



An introduction from our Founder

64 Million Artists is turning 10. In our first decade we have built a team of 11 people, alongside a broad team of associates and partners, catalysing creativity all across the UK, with Local Authorities, Universities, Corporates, Schools, Care Homes, Prisons, Community Groups and many many more. We run workshops, leadership programmes, workplace culture initiatives, a public programme for people catalysing creativity in their communities and workplaces, and our January Challenge in which 160,000 people take part nationally

Over that time we've earned a reputation for putting people first. We take the health of our organisation and its people seriously. We take August off, work a 4 day week and have lots of measures in place to make sure everyone's creativity and their ideas are celebrated and put to good use. We think this focus on 'how' we work is what has made us successful in the way we work

We are passionate about changing work in the 21st Century for the better. There are too many reports about burnout and poor mental health and insufficient flexibility making work a difficult place to be. We know that looking after people and building diverse teams make work better. So in this manifesto we've tried to encapsulate some of the things we feel help to make that happen.

We hope you enjoy it, and we'd love to continue and grow the conversation so please do stay in touch by emailing hello@64millionartists.com



Jo Hunter,
Founder and CEO of 64 Million Artists

1. Everyday practice of creativity.

We believe creativity is one of the greatest catalysts for change. Our data also shows that it supports wellbeing, technical skills, innovation, collaboration, connection and joy. We start all of our team meetings with a creative check in, take part in our weekly prompts together, encourage our team members to spend their annual development budget on creative courses and activities and encourage time off for creativity.

Creativity is like a muscle, in order to keep up our creativity we need to use it. A regular practice of creativity with every member of the team is at the heart of embedding a culture of innovation and collaboration. You could try taking part in our [January Challenge](#) to get you started



2.

Radical care for people.

It's the people who make a business, or a charity, or any organisation. Every system is made up of people, and often, the bigger that system gets, the further away we tend to get from what is important—the people who make up the company.

If you truly believe in a culture of care, you must address people's needs, even if you feel they conflict with a business need. When that conflict happens, you must question why you have that business need. If it is detrimental to the personal lives or well-being of your staff, you have to question why it is important and be prepared to find a new way to meet it. Only then can you truly call yourselves a people-centred organisation.

What often gets in the way of radical care is trust. To create a culture of care, you must trust that if you treat people well, they will work well in return. And you must not let that trust be diminished the first time someone breaks that trust, the second time, or the third. People will have been treated poorly elsewhere, have other things on their plates, and not know how you work. You need to keep showing up for them until they trust you. If you trust them, they will trust you, and you will have a team that can work together to create solutions.

We cannot, as organisations, meet all the needs of our employees, but we can ensure we are not getting in the way of them all being met.

At 64 Million Artists, we work a 4-day week and take August off. Not everyone can do this. But shared, embedded, guaranteed rest for everyone is vital in creating a thriving workforce.

Rest allows us to:

- Recharge ourselves physically and mentally to do good work
- Have space from our work to be able to assess better whether or not it is good work
- Have more room for creativity and new ideas. It is impossible to innovate when you are burned out

If a 4-day week or August off feels like too much to you, scheduled rest can look like this:

- Mandatory lunch hours
- Friday afternoons off in the summer
- Encouraging people to get outside within the day
- One company week off

If your staff is exhausted or struggling to maintain lives outside of work, they won't do their best work. If you want that, let them rest.

3. Rest as routine.

4. Every voice has value.



This is one of those phrases that pop up in many different strategies. But it often fails when one of those voices questions the leadership, direction, or actions of someone in power.

To create a truly inclusive workplace, you must genuinely believe that every voice is worth hearing and listening to. Even when it is uncomfortable. Even when it makes you question your actions. You will not always be able to respond to every request, but you must question why you can't. Not every decision will make everyone happy, but keep an eye on who you are making happy and why.

People who have been systematically marginalised may well not approach things in the way the system expects them to. All the more reason to listen harder, question the system and work differently. Celebrating different approaches is not just a challenge, it's an opportunity for transformative change in your work culture. Established ways of working will often favour particular groups. Paying attention to neurodiversity, different speeds of working, flexible hours that are needed will give you the opportunity to support your team to work at their best. Embrace this opportunity, even when it's not easy, because easy is not always best.

5. Share ideas.

The bigger an organisation gets, the easier it is for ideas to get stuck in one place. Building on the previous point, ensure that different people from different parts of the organisation get to feed in on ideas as they develop because fresh perspectives will not only support an idea's improvement but also allow teams to feel more connected and less siloed.

We have bi-weekly 'ideas meetings' where team members can bring an idea they're working on to discuss, but they can also just bring a subject or topic. This allows us all to flex our creative muscles by discussing ideas. Having ideas and opinions is essential to being human, and nurturing this in your staff will help them feel valued and whole.





6. Play to risk.

Encouraging a culture of creativity allows for a more practised approach to risk. When we plan and plan without trying things out, it can lead to missed opportunities, wasted money and frustrated people. Allowing people to lean into their creativity and try a new way of doing something is vital to keeping a company innovative and relevant.

Create low-cost/low-time input ways of allowing all of your employees to have a go at different things in the company. Give someone with a desk job a chance to interact with people, let a technical member of staff write some marketing copy, and give people a chance to show their problem-solving skills by letting them tackle bits of strategy as a group. The more people are allowed to try and fail and learn, the more innovative their ideas will be and the more informed by real-life experience they will become.

7. Fun for fun's sake.

It is not wasted time when people play, have fun, or socialise. You also do not need to force people to come into the office for them to socialise. Different people with different personalities will experience fun in different ways. So you don't need to dictate how they're having fun, but you should ensure they have it. Whether that's time off, away days designed by the staff, staff-led clubs or societies, or allowing your team to bring their creativity to life at work, it is not only ok to have fun for fun's sake, it's essential.

Creating a lunch hour where everyone is encouraged to get up from their desks but are allowed to do whatever they want will be more beneficial to well-being than mandating a yoga session or access to a ping-pong table.





8. Clear, inclusive, open processes.

We cannot innovate well when we don't feel safe. Unless you meet the basic needs of your staff (pay them a decent wage, agree to flexible working, and treat them like a human being), they won't be able to be fully creative. No matter your size, it is important to have well-crafted, co-created policies on leave and reporting grievances, efficient pay structures, good induction, and strong and inclusive recruitment processes (i.e., paying for interview time and using anonymised forms instead of CVs). Deal with the basic uncertainties so your team can lean into the exciting ones.



9. Walking the walk.

We define leadership broadly - we are all leaders of our own lives. But within most organisations there will be a person, or series of people who hold the power within the organisation. If you are one of these people, people will emulate your behaviour, no matter what you say. You can tell people to rest, or to be creative, or to be open and honest but if you are not doing these things yourself, no one else will feel permission to do them either. Be honest with yourself about the power and privilege you hold and act accordingly. You need to show the importance of these things by doing them yourself.

10 Dream big, start small.

Transforming your culture can feel overwhelming. Especially if you're working in a huge organisation, or don't hold all the power. But all systems are made up of individual people, and that's where change begins.

Try something small - a listening partnership with a colleague; an ideas meeting in your team; asking for feedback as a leader. Things might go wrong, and that's part of it. Learning to develop a culture of experimentation alongside a strong culture of feedback, is all part of making a healthier workplace.

You don't have to do it all at once but if you hold the intention to make work a better place for you, and those around you, you can plant a seed that may grow. And growing is all we can hope for.





Let's spark creative change together.

Want to chat about how we can bring creative change to your workplace culture?

Contact:

hello@64millionartists.com

