

Fortune favours leaders



How your organisation can become a 'digital leader', what that means and why it changes everything



Digital culture

**Digital
culture
guide**

Between 2021 and 2023,

greater technology adoption could have unlocked a massive

£111 billion for the UK economy

and created approximately

676,000 jobs.

But organisations didn't invest
enough to realise that value.



Jo Bertram



Managing Director, Business and Wholesale, Virgin Media O2

Is your organisation a digital leader? Or a digital follower?

Our research with the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr), which explores the idea of digital culture and its impact on firms across the UK, uncovered two types of organisations:

1. **Digital leaders**, who are actively increasing their use of digital technology
2. **Digital followers**, who are not actively improving their digital capabilities

88% of those we surveyed class themselves as digital leaders and believe they have a strong digital culture.

But our research uncovered a different story. Despite most digital followers claiming they have a strong digital culture, almost none of them increased or improved their use of digital technology between 2021 and 2023.

Had they done so at the same rate as digital leaders during that time, the effect on the UK economy would have been huge.

£111 billion and 676,000 new jobs, to be specific.

And digital leader organisations were more productive and grew faster than their digital follower counterparts, with higher revenue, happier employees and happier customers too.

Want to know how they did it so you can too?

In this guide you'll learn what digital culture really means, what it takes to improve your own digital culture and become a digital leader, how that will benefit your organisation and why it's so important for the wider economy and society.

Read on to find out more.



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What is

digital culture?



Digital culture refers to the mindset and practices within an organisation that enables technology to be integrated across every aspect of the organisation.

A successful digital culture considers how tech can have an impact on employees, customers and wider communities alike.

It goes beyond simply using technology – it's about fostering a proactive, adaptable environment where employees are empowered to innovate, collaborate and continuously upskill.

A strong digital culture drives operational efficiency, improves productivity, enhances customer experience and creates a lasting positive impact on both the business and society.

In our research, we identified two types of organisations with different levels of digital culture:

Digital leaders:

actively increasing their use of digital technologies

Digital followers:

not actively improving their digital capabilities

How we conducted this research

Working with the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) we surveyed 1,000 UK decision makers across the private and public sectors to understand how strong each individual considers their organisation's digital culture to be and how their organisation's usage of digital tools changed between 2021 and 2023.

We found that there was a perception gap between those who believed they had a strong digital culture and those who were actually using their technology to full effect.

We explored the differences between digital leaders and followers – their productivity, ability to attract and retain talent and their contributions to local and national communities – to understand the impact of digital culture on organisations across the UK.

We also spoke to technology decision makers from a range of organisations to understand their personal perspectives on the benefits of digital culture and the advice they'd give to organisations looking to unlock wider benefits from their technology.

[Download the full Cebr report](#)

“
Good digital culture doesn't just look to digitise what we used to do on paper. It questions everything.

”

Mark Blakeman
Director of Information Systems and Infrastructure,
NHS England





Key findings



Does your organisation have a strong digital culture?
Most think they have.



93%

of digital leaders

75%

of digital followers

Surprisingly, we found no difference in these claims between private and public sector organisations.

Between 2021 and 2023, digital leaders outperformed digital followers across every economic metric.

If digital followers had increased their use of digital technologies in 2021 at the rate as digital leaders, UK turnover would have increased by

£111 billion
in 2023

Average **turnover** growth:

12%

Digital leaders

6%

Digital followers

Average **headcount** growth:

9%

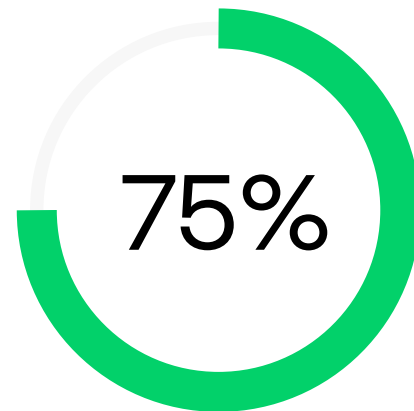
Digital leaders

3%

Digital followers



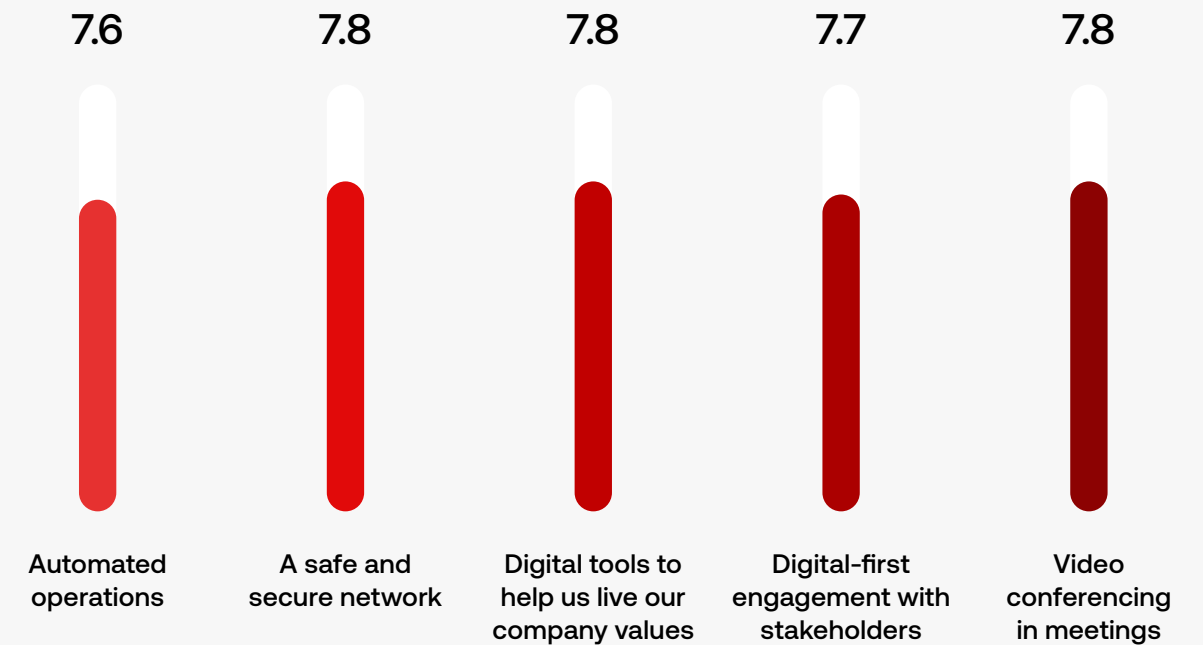
But are organisations really getting the most out of their digital culture?



of **digital followers believe** they have a strong digital culture yet none of them increased their digital usage between 2021 and 2023.

This disconnect highlights a critical gap between perception and reality.

Many clearly believe their organisation culturally understands the benefits of digital technology but they're not actually taking the necessary steps to improve their technological capabilities.



Bridging this perception gap is essential for unleashing the full potential of what a digital culture can bring.

In this guide we explore what a strong digital culture really is and how you can build your own.



Step 1: Set yourself up for collaborative success



How can a digital culture help unlock financial value and set you up for success?

Technology is no longer just a tool. It's a way of working that has impact across every aspect of your business. So start making the mindset shift to unlock the full benefits.

Decide what success looks like for your business and put measurement processes in place to ensure you can optimise your investments.

On average, digital leaders experienced over twice the productivity growth of digital followers from 2021 to 2023.

This isn't just an incremental improvement – it's a signal of untapped potential that can revolutionise your bottom line and elevate your entire organisation's capabilities.

But it doesn't just affect at the individual organisational level. If digital followers had increased their use of digital technology in 2021 at the rate of digital leaders, UK turnover would have increased by £111 billion in 2023 and approximately 676,000 new jobs could have been created.

The ripple effect of digital transformation reaches far beyond company walls. It empowers employees, uplifts local communities and boosts the national economy.

What are digital leaders doing to achieve this growth and where can your organisation find similar success?



“

In the past digital, solutions have often recreated the paper world in electronic form – we need to be looking at how we can innovate rather than replicate historical ways of working.

”

Matthew Coley
Head of IT, Ministry of Justice

We found that almost **half of digital leaders** are permanently improving their cloud computing capabilities compared to only a quarter of digital followers. This commitment to ongoing digital investment is what separates leaders from the rest.

It's important to understand the breadth of technology out there and make smart future-focused choices about how you build a connectivity infrastructure that works for you.

For example, how do your employees like to communicate with each other inside and outside the office? We offer **voice solutions** that give your people the power to call, chat, share, present and meet on any device.

Lean on your digital partners to tailor a solution that's right for you. And ensure you maintain momentum on your digital investment so you always have the latest tools to unlock maximum productivity.

77%

of digital leaders reported **improved revenue** as a result of greater investment in digital strategy.

52%

of all surveyed organisations reported **improved productivity** as a result of digital technology.

49%

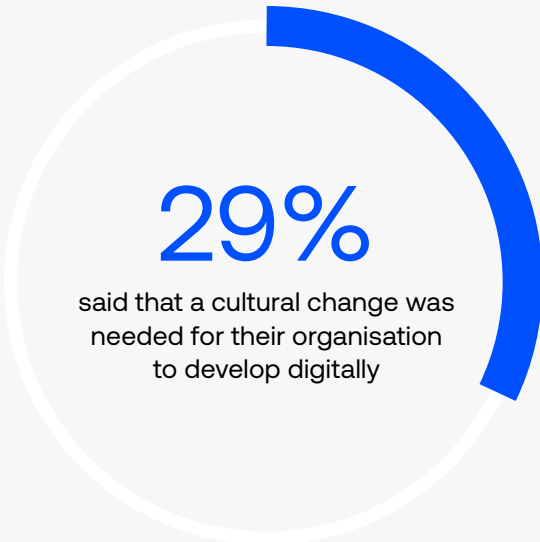
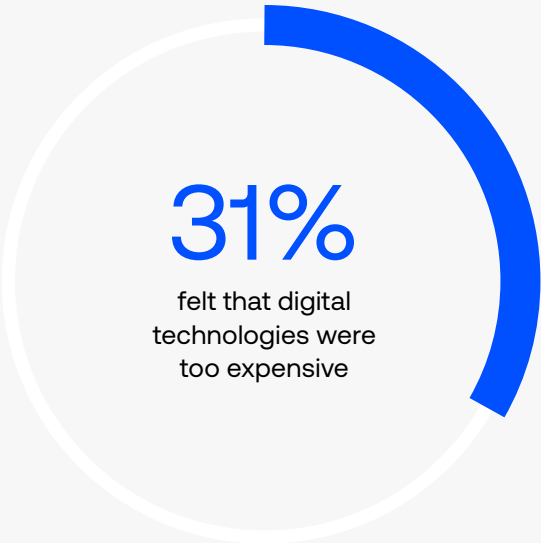
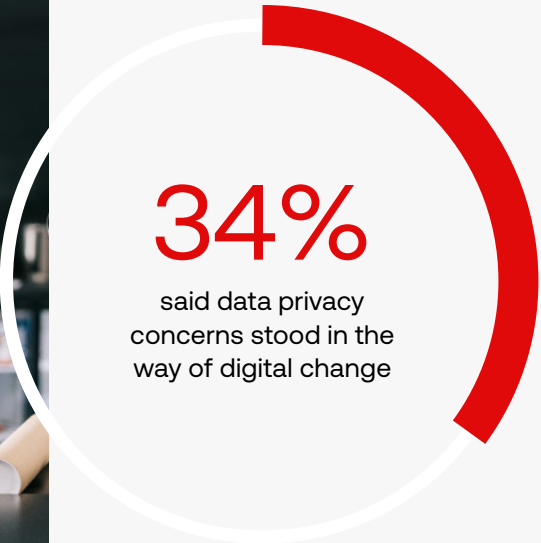
of organisations say operational **costs were reduced**.



With the benefits to digital investment so clear, what's holding organisations back from a culture of growth?

The digital leaders we spoke to agreed that the path to cultural transformation isn't necessarily smooth.

92% said there were barriers to digital transformation



To overcome some of these challenges, you need robust measurements in place. It's important to understand where tech can have an impact across your organisation and how you can optimise to make the most of your investment.

Concerned about data privacy? Challenge your digital partners to build a custom cybersecurity portfolio that fits your organisation's risk profile.

By personalising your tech stack you'll be building a digital culture aligned with your business objectives. Your digital investment will be focused on securing growth across your organisation, taking you one step closer to becoming a digital leader.



“

My advice is: get your digital partners in the room with you. They know what the technology is capable of and how it can help you, and they can help you get the best out of your employees who are using it.

”

Nicola Haywood-Cleverly
Founder and Managing Partner, AuroraPeak



Step 2: Bring your employees with you on the journey



How can a strong digital culture empower your employees?

Implement regular digital skills training and invest in the latest tools to help your employees get the best out of their tech.

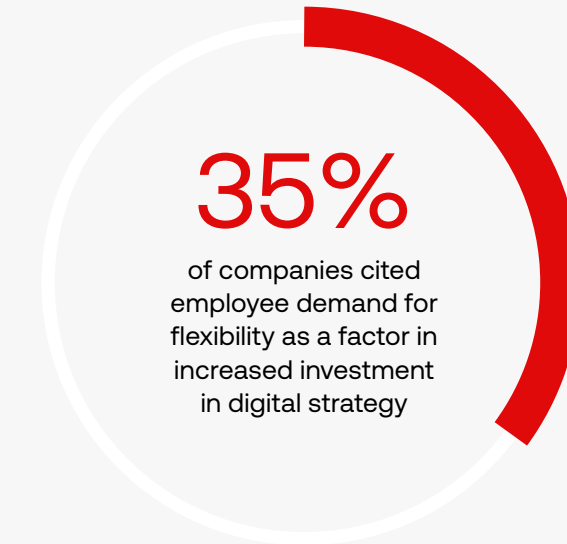
You'll boost productivity, improve employee confidence and help embed technology into your organisation's DNA. You will also empower your people to stretch the limits of what your tech can do for your business and the communities you serve.

Digital leaders report that their employee satisfaction is approximately three times higher than that of digital followers.

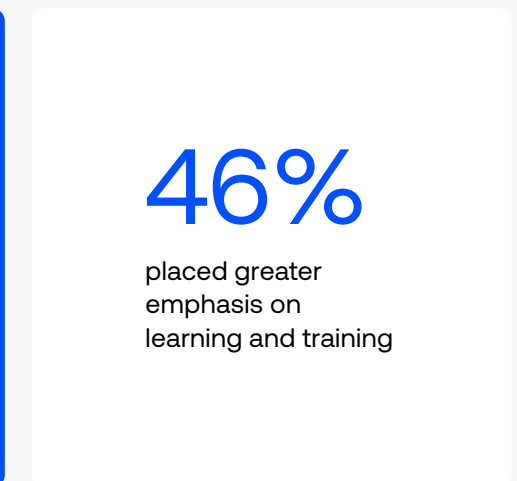
Over the last five years, the employee experience has undergone profound transformation. Employees now expect hybrid work as standard and need to be equipped with the tools to work how they want, wherever they want.

A strong digital culture can help meet these expectations.

And we found digital leaders are rising to the challenge, providing the right tools that make collaboration and data sharing more seamless.



Following investment in digital strategy:



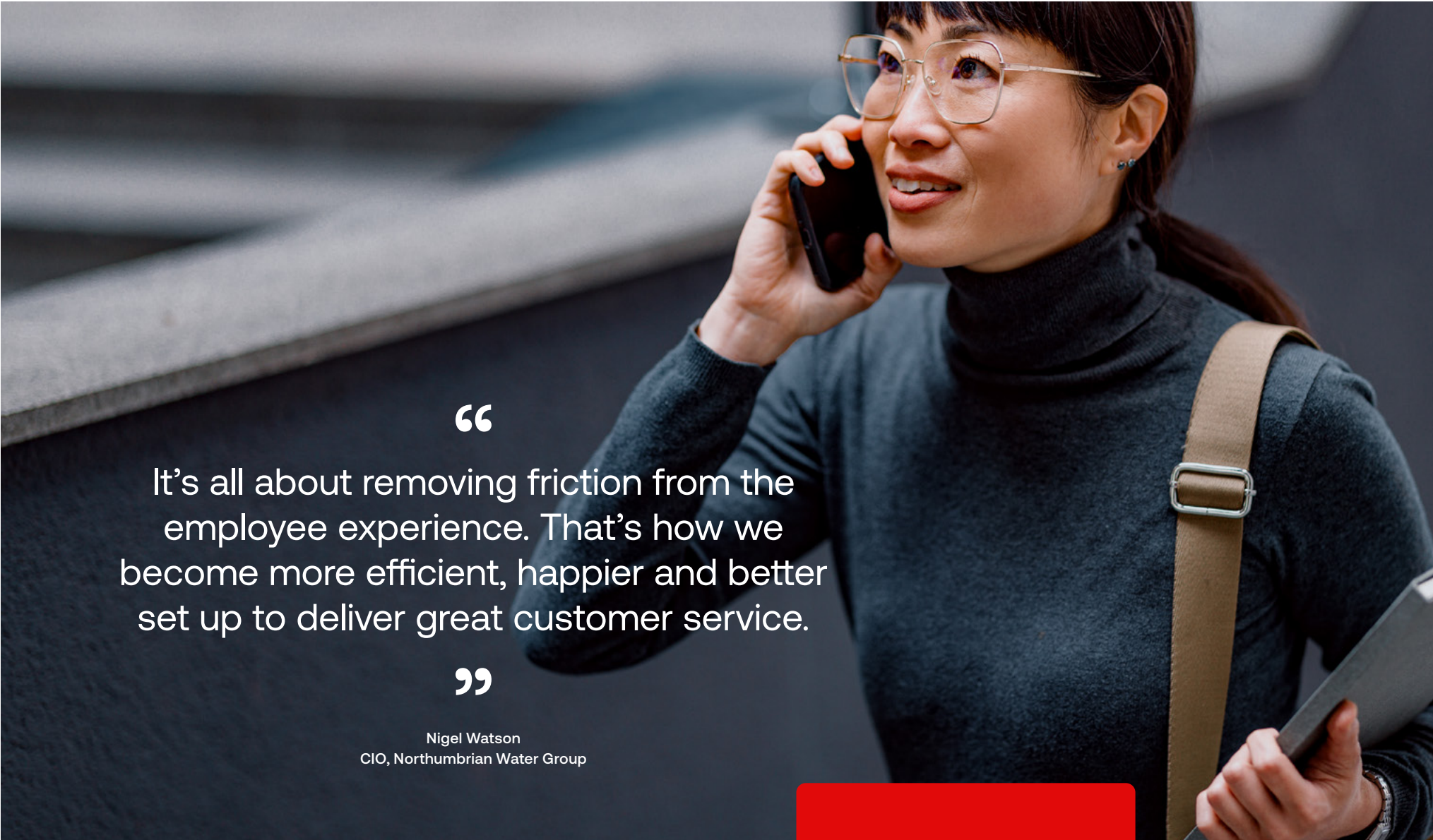
There’s a strong positive correlation between employees’ digital preparedness for the future and the strength of their organisation’s digital culture, meaning the benefit is a virtuous cycle for you and your employees.

81%
of digital leaders report
having a digitally
well-prepared workforce

Only
43%
of digital followers
report the same

There are opportunities out there to help enable this now, from mobile device rollout and cybersecurity solutions to AI-powered workflow software that can automate administrative tasks and free your employees up to do more fulfilling work.

The key is to focus on the needs of your employees and curate the right mix of tools that helps them work smarter, not harder.



Nigel Watson
CIO, Northumbrian Water Group

41%

of digital followers cite
the most frequently
faced barrier to digital
initiatives as cultural
resistance to change.

Like all change, new technology can sometimes spark resistance and uncertainty amongst employees who are used to their familiar tools.

That’s why the implementation process is so important. It’s not just about handing out new tools – you need to give employees the skills to get the most out of them and the confidence to join you on the transformation journey.



“

There's no such thing as an IT project. It's a business project with a technology component. As a decision maker you have to take accountability for the business change.

”

Simon Goodman
Group Chief Information Officer, Network Rail

Are your employees ready for the future of work?

While **93%** of digital leaders think upskilling and reskilling is an important part of their digital strategy, only **44%** of all organisations reported that regular digital skills training was offered to their staff. This gap shows a huge opportunity for growth.



Fewer than

29%

had adopted collaboration tools and platforms



Fewer than

34%

had incorporated digital skills training into employee performance reviews



Fewer than

34%

had digital skills certification and recognition programmes



Fewer than

35%

had implemented better data and cybersecurity measures



For training to be effective it must be ongoing, structured and backed by strong partnerships. Consider working with partners that can provide certifications or training programmes so that your employees have regular touchpoints to maintain their training momentum.

One way to ensure you're addressing the skills gaps in your workforce is to collect regular feedback on your employees' progress in a safe digital environment.

Anonymous surveys and suggestion tools enable employees to voice their concerns, share ideas and provide input on company policies and practices.

As our **Director of People Relations and DE&I**, Nisha Marwaha, advocates in her [Digital Culture Insider blog](#), this feedback loop empowers you to make data-driven decisions that properly address your employees' needs.

“

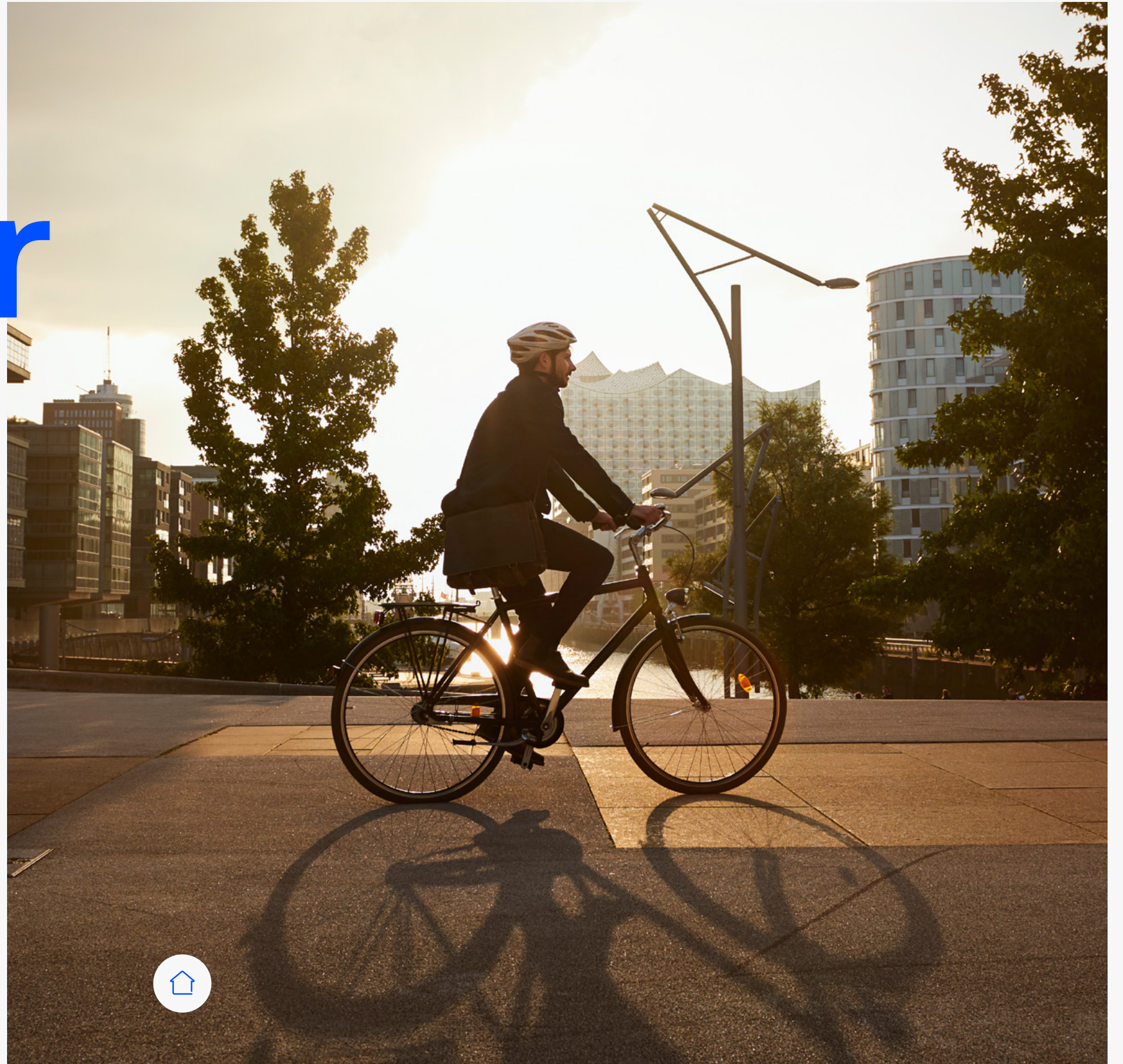
It's not just about rolling out technology across an organisation. An employer has a real civic duty to support the training and development of their workforce from a digital point of view – that's how you'll really unlock value.

”

Sean Clarkson
Head of Strategic Operations,
Health Innovation Yorkshire & Humber



Step 3: Use your tech for wider impact



How can digital culture help build better relationships with your customers and deliver more for local communities?

Smart investment in the right solutions has the power to create seamless customer journeys and deliver better service. By removing friction from customer engagement you'll build trust and can generate powerful insights into the things your users care about.

For example, addressing customer concerns about cost and sustainability can impact buying decisions, benefit your business and the wider community too.

Use your tech to understand what your customers need, solicit their feedback and make positive change that goes beyond the office.

In such a fast-paced world, customers want more and they want it faster.

How do you ensure you're offering seamless service, quick resolutions to problems and more touchpoints than ever – all at once? With technology advancing so quickly, juggling all these priorities can feel like a losing battle.

The secret is all about being dependable and delivering a service that customers can trust. Digital leaders are mastering this by harnessing the power of technology to exceed expectations.



94%

of organisations said they had seen communications and customer experience benefits as a result of digital technologies

“

The degree to which technology can help us provide great experiences to customers is a win-win. The main thing that underpins our culture is values and I'm now seeing digital integrated into every single one of those values – especially being customer focused.

”

Nigel Watson
CIO, Northumbrian Water Group

37% of digital leaders report enhanced transparency and accountability when it comes to meeting customer demand, compared to 20% of organisations with weaker digital cultures.

That's likely down to their ability to be consistent in their service, ensuring they are offering the easiest ways for customers to access them.

This looks different for different organisations and can range from in-app experiences and touchscreen devices at customer service areas to migrating your storefront into the metaverse. Our **Delivery Director, Jo Watts**, explores some of the ways you might use digital culture to level up your customer experience in her [Digital Culture Insider blog](#).

43%

said that better digital technology had led to **improved customer experience**

41%

specifically cited **improved communication** with customers as a result of better digital investment

40%

expanded their customer base as a result of **improved digital strategy**

The path to success lies in continuously refining how your customers engage with you, removing friction and making each interaction seamless. That way they keep coming back for more.



Creating social value

A true digital culture shouldn't just deliver more for your customers. The impact of technology goes beyond your bottom line and can make a real difference to the local communities you serve too.

Technology isn't just a tool for business growth. When used thoughtfully it can make a tangible difference to local communities and even contribute to the broader social good.

37% of organisations with strong digital cultures reported positive social outcomes of their digital strategies such as enhanced transparency and accountability, compared to only **20%** of those with weaker digital cultures.

One way to do this is by creating a circular economy through identifying ways to recycle and reuse your technology when it reaches the end of its lifecycle.

Reducing your waste lessens your impact on the environment and it can also help you give back to communities in need.

For example, through solutions such as [our mobile recycling scheme](#) and our [tech donation programme](#), we help organisations rehome unwanted devices both through responsible recycling and by wiping and donating devices to those who need them.



“

Consumers are much more willing to try technology than ever before. We walk around with new smartphones every year, using apps that are updated every single day – we're living in a world of perpetual beta testing and organisations need to understand that people are open to new experiences. They're ready for change.

”

Matthew Drinkwater
Head of Innovation Agency, London College of Fashion



Three steps

to building a strong digital culture and becoming a digital leader

Every leader we've spoken to agrees: a strong digital culture is an absolute must in today's increasingly digital-first society.

However, they also recognise that it's not an overnight transformation. There are real barriers – from budget constraints and skills gaps to resistance to change – that organisations need to navigate to make meaningful progress.

A strong digital culture isn't just about implementing the latest tech. It's about changing mindsets, investing in skills and aligning your tech stack with your broader business goals. It's about not standing still when ways of working are continually evolving.

It's a journey that requires long-term commitment but the benefits – from increased productivity and employee satisfaction to economic and social gains – are worth the effort.

So where do you start?

Step 1: Set yourself up for collaborative success

Decide what success looks like for your business and put measurement procedures in place to ensure you can optimise your investments.

Step 2: Bring your employees with you on the journey

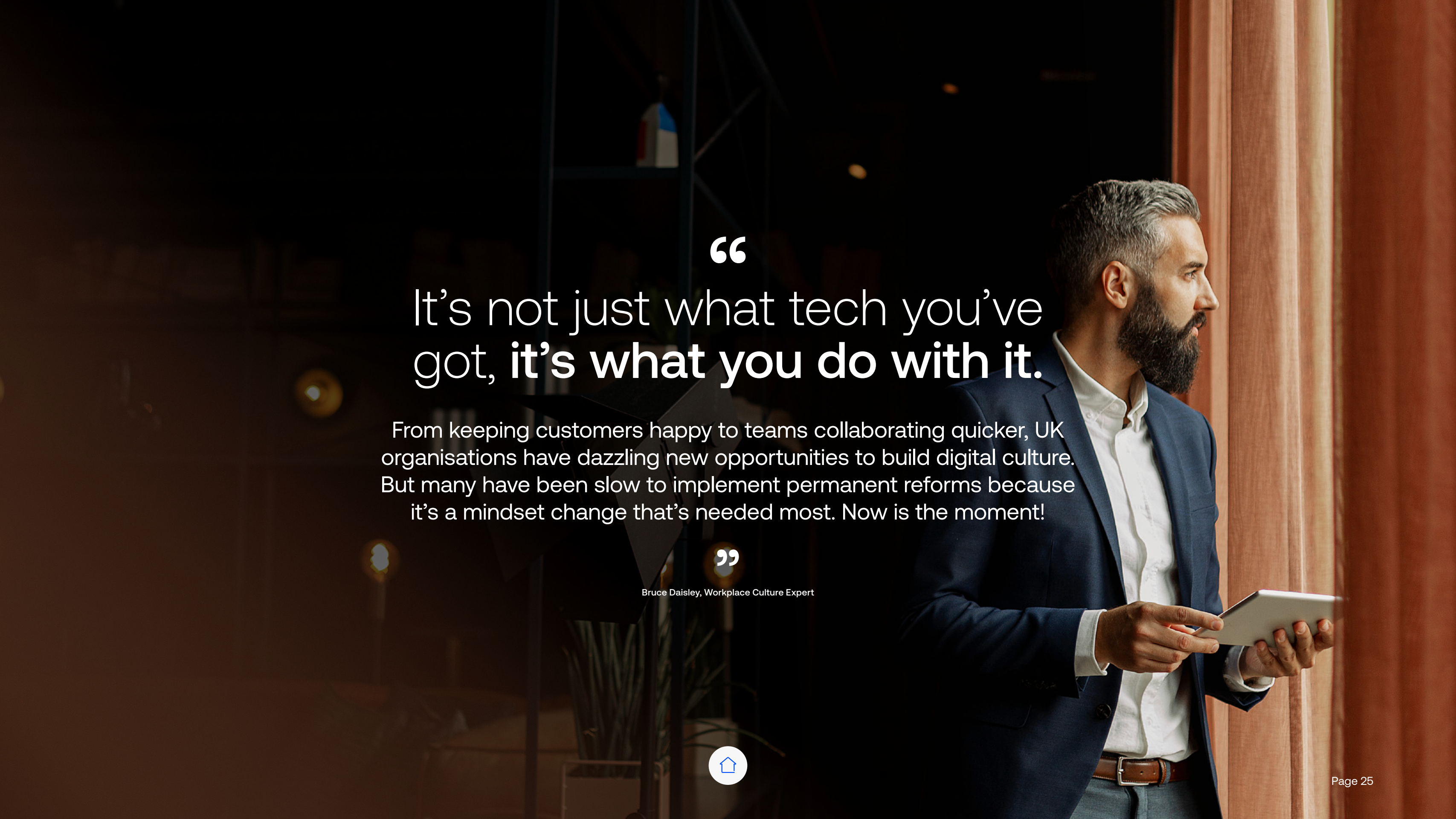
Implement regular digital skills training and invest in the latest tools to help your employees get the best out of their tech.

Step 3: Use your tech for wider impact

Explore how wider partnerships can help you establish a circular economy and give back to the communities you serve.

We have the expert advice, commercial flexibility and sustainable thinking to help you take the next step on your digital journey.





“
It's not just what tech you've
got, **it's what you do with it.**

From keeping customers happy to teams collaborating quicker, UK organisations have dazzling new opportunities to build digital culture. But many have been slow to implement permanent reforms because it's a mindset change that's needed most. Now is the moment!

”

Bruce Daisley, Workplace Culture Expert





Digital 
culture

Ready to take your digital culture to the next level?

[Contact us](#) to speak to one of our
experts or [visit our digital culture hub](#)
for more insights and opinions.

