

Navigating the New Workplace Reality

Trust and Authenticity

*A report based on a roundtable event hosted by
tml Partners & The Beautiful Truth*



In partnership with:
THE
BEAUTIFUL
TRUTH



Introduction

tml Partners recently hosted a thought-provoking conversation in partnership with The Beautiful Truth, bringing together senior business leaders to explore some of the most pressing challenges shaping the worlds of marketing, communications, people, and recruitment.

Over the course of 90 minutes, our discussion spanned a range of critical themes, including:

- **The intersection of marketing, communications, people, and recruitment**
- **Complex expectations across the generational divide**
- **Evolving perspectives on corporate purpose and its role**
- **The importance of resilience in leaders and the examples they set**

These discussions culminated in a series of insights and recommendations - both from tml Partners, The Beautiful Truth and our guests - on fostering trust and meaning within organisations.

We were delighted to be joined by leaders from *Deloitte*, *Trustpilot*, *Metro Bank*, *Brighton & Hove Albion*, and *Pension Protection Fund*, amongst others.



The Context

What's going on out there?

The pace of change in the business world has been unprecedented since the turn of the year. It's becoming increasingly difficult to keep up. Even since we put together this report, major shifts have occurred.

Companies are retreating on sustainability and DEI, with business leaders making statements that leave no room for misinterpretation - like Mark Zuckerberg's conversation with Joe Rogan. AI discussions have shifted; last year, the focus was on ethics, but now it's an open race to implement as quickly as possible.

Additionally, the ideological gap between liberal and conservative men and women has never been wider. Looking back to early January, a Financial Times article on corporate purpose hinted at where we are now, reflecting the shifting priorities in business and society.

LEADERSHIP > LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

The Rise Of The Hybrid Workforce: Humans And AI Working Together

By [Jeanne Meister](#), Contributor. © Jeanne Meister writes about trends imp...

Feb 15, 2025, 09:41am EST

Forbes

FINANCIAL TIMES

WORLD US COMPANIES TECH MARKETS CLIMATE OPINION LEX WORK & CAREERS LIFE & ARTS HTSI

Climate Capital Banks + Add to myFT

Banks downgrade top sustainability roles

Slower-than-expected climate action blamed for move to cut back dedicated teams



© FT montage/Bloomberg

Kenza Bryan YESTERDAY

30

Has corporate purpose lost its purpose?

Ambitions beyond profit are laudable, but don't always help to inspire staff

STEFAN STERN + Add to myFT



Accenture ditches diversity and inclusion goals

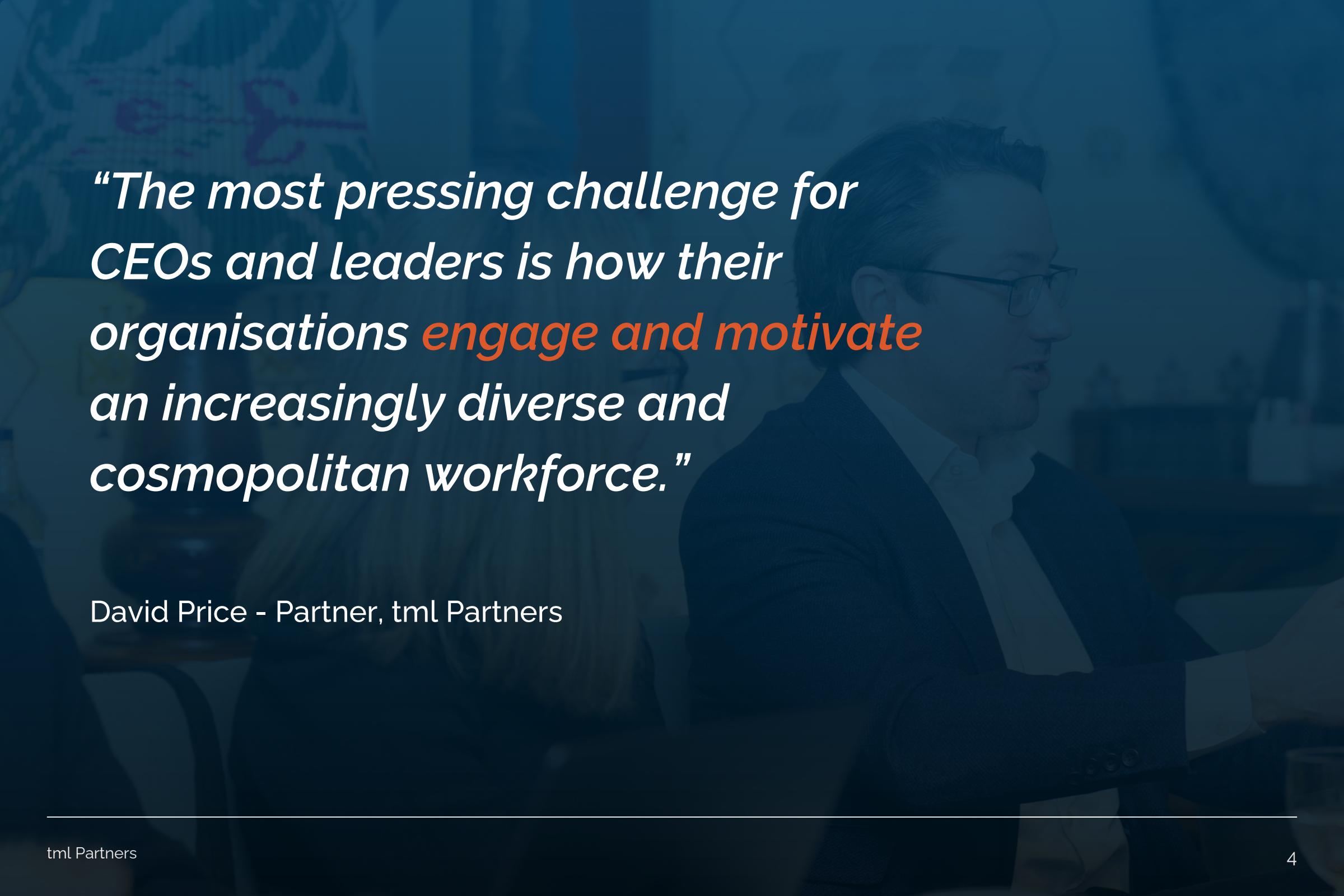
Chief executive Julie Sweet tells 799,000 staff decision was taken following 'evaluation' of US landscape



A wide ideology gap is opening up between young men and women in countries across the world

Political ideology of 18-24s (1 liberal minus % conservative), by sex



A professional portrait of a man with short, light-colored hair and glasses. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an office or conference room environment.

*“The most pressing challenge for CEOs and leaders is how their organisations **engage and motivate** an increasingly diverse and cosmopolitan workforce.”*

David Price - Partner, tml Partners

What's changed?

The workplace has always evolved alongside economic and social shifts, but today's rapid changes present unique challenges.

20th Century: Stability & Hierarchy. Rigid, hierarchical workplaces with authoritarian leadership and lifetime employment as the norm. Fewer older workers - most retired by their 50s or 60s. Psychological safety was rarely considered, as conformity was expected.

Late 20th - Early 21st Century: Rise of 'Knowledge Work' & flexibility. Growth in tech, finance, and consulting fostered collaboration and more open workplaces: HR and DEI initiatives improved workplace inclusion. Stronger pensions enabled earlier retirement, while more young people delayed work to pursue higher education.

Post-Pandemic: Remote work reshaped trust, engagement, and work-life balance. Burnout, economic uncertainty, and layoffs pushed well-being to the forefront.

Five generations now co-exist in the workforce, creating the biggest age gap in modern history.



Changing expectations

Older workers are staying longer: In 1950, only 3% of workers were over 65; today, it's 19% and rising. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Younger employees expect rapid progression: 52% of Gen Z expect a promotion every 12-18 months or they will seek new jobs. (Walters People)

Workplace trust is eroding: 59% of UK workers say their organisations lack ethics, transparency, and accountability. (Vault Platforms Trust Gap Report)

Psychological safety remains low: Only 26% of leaders create environments where employees feel safe to speak up. (McKinsey)

60% of Gen Z report that mental health resources are important in selecting an employer and 57% say they are important when deciding to stay (Whetston, 2025)



Many of the challenges business leaders face today aren't technological or strategic, they are *human*.

Lack of Trust & Alignment

We are facing an “unprecedented global decline” in employer trust.
(Edelman Trust Barometer, 2025).

Among all leadership behaviours, a lack of trust has the most significant negative impact on company profits.
(HBR, 2002)

Burnout & Disengagement

The majority of European workers report feeling disengaged and/or burnout.
(Gallup, 2024).

Companies with high levels of disengagement show 23% lower profitability than highly engaged ones.
(Gallup, 2023)

Innovation Pressures & Siloed Thinking

45% of CEOs are not confident their companies will survive more than a decade on their current path.
(PwC, 2024).

Companies lagging in innovation are 2.6 times less likely to grow at the industry average. (Forrester, 2021)

Where trust breaks down

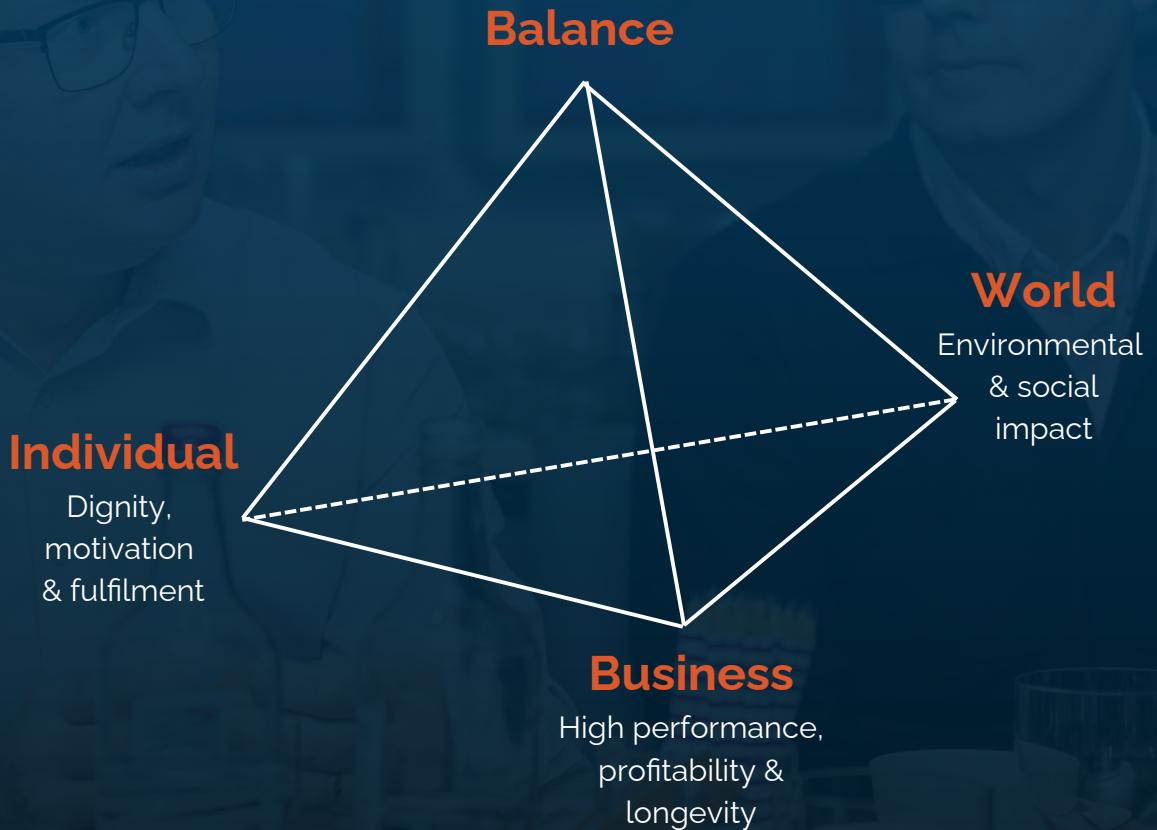
Success isn't just about the bottom line anymore - it's about trust, connection, and impact.

The role of a leader in business is more than sharing information; it's about shaping a vision that balances:

- The well-being of employees and suppliers
- The world's environmental and social needs
- Strong business performance

The challenge?

Crafting stories and strategies that show how business can thrive while supporting people, tackling global issues, and delivering results.



The 3 Dimensions of Trust

A long history of research demonstrates that trust can be broken down into three components: competence, honesty, and benevolence.

Competence

To trust someone's competence is simply to believe that the person or entity you deal with is capable of doing the job.

Honesty

Honesty - or integrity - refers to your sense that the company keeps its promises and is not telling lies or hiding things.

Benevolence

Benevolence is the belief that your company has your best interests at heart and cares about you as a stakeholder (employee, investor or community etc).

Summary of research: <https://insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu/article/cultivating-trust-is-critical-and-surprisingly-complex>

Meaning

Setting the foundations

Businesses have long turned to “purpose” to create meaning - aligning employees around a mission beyond profit to foster fulfilment.

But purpose can't be superficial; it must come from within, not as a regulatory checkbox or marketing strategy. More importantly, purpose is meaningless if fundamental needs like psychological safety, trust, and self-esteem aren't met.

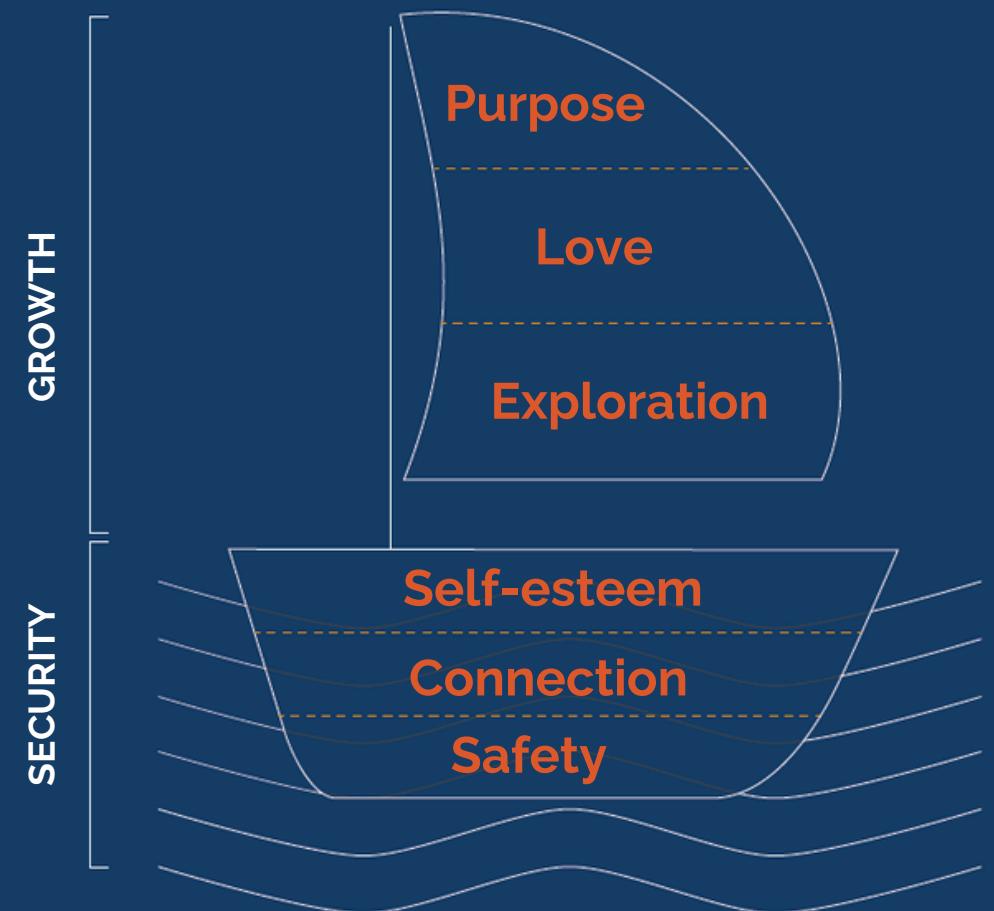
Much of today's global retrenchment stems from insecurity. When people don't feel safe, lofty ideals like growth, exploration, and purpose feel hollow. The question is: How do we first create a foundation of security before asking employees to believe in something greater?

Cognitive scientist Scott Barry Kaufman, building on Maslow's work, explains that the mind tells different stories depending on our state. If we feel threatened - whether physically depleted or psychologically unsafe - our minds reinforce that fear.

But when we feel secure and supported, our brains shift toward positivity.

Source: Scott Barry Kaufman, American Cognitive Scientist
<https://scottbarrykaufman.com/sailboat-metaphor/>

Transcendence



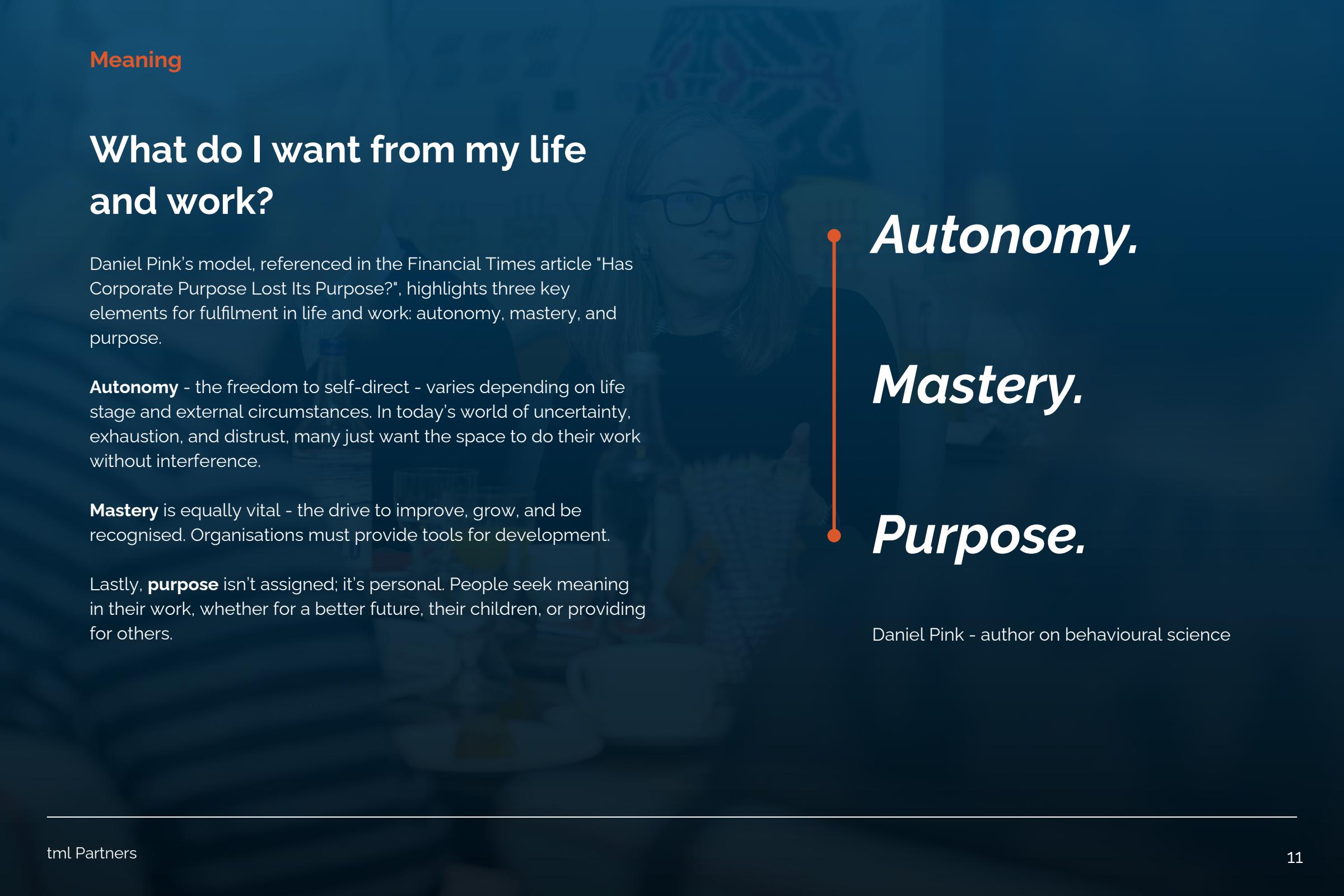
What do I want from my life and work?

Daniel Pink's model, referenced in the Financial Times article "Has Corporate Purpose Lost Its Purpose?", highlights three key elements for fulfilment in life and work: autonomy, mastery, and purpose.

Autonomy - the freedom to self-direct - varies depending on life stage and external circumstances. In today's world of uncertainty, exhaustion, and distrust, many just want the space to do their work without interference.

Mastery is equally vital - the drive to improve, grow, and be recognised. Organisations must provide tools for development.

Lastly, **purpose** isn't assigned; it's personal. People seek meaning in their work, whether for a better future, their children, or providing for others.



Autonomy.

Mastery.

Purpose.

Daniel Pink - author on behavioural science

Key Takeaways

Don't underestimate **the power of storytelling** for connecting with a business' values, its history and its future innovations.

We've been through plenty of **difficult periods** as humans - we're a **resilient** bunch - it's important we're reminded of this.

Corporate purpose is really under the microscope right now - you can't force it upon employees - **they have to discover it for themselves**.

Individuality is more important than it's ever been, and for all the change and volatility in the world, sometimes going **back to basics** is the most effective solution.

Hierarchy can stifle ideas, the imagination and thus innovation - we must **empower everyone** to feel they can contribute.

Leaders setting the right example, showing vulnerability and being 'positively human' is vital for **fostering trust**.

Further Reading

Books

- **Alex Edmans:** May Contain Lies / Grow the Pie
- **Adam Grant:** Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know
- **Alison Taylor:** Higher Ground: How Business Can Do the Right Thing in a Turbulent World
- **Emily Esfahani Smith:** The Power of Meaning: Crafting a Life that Matters
- **Jonathan Haidt:** The Righteous Mind / The Anxious Generation
- **Jean Gomes:** Leading in a Non-Linear World
- **Kim Dabbs:** You Belong Here: The Power of Being Seen, Heard, and Valued on Your Own Terms
- **Margaret Heffernan:** How to Map The Future
- **Rebecca Robins/Patrick Dunne:** Five Generations at Work: How We Win Together, For Good
- **Simon Sinek:** The Infinite Game

Articles and Interviews

- The Beautiful Truth:** The Business Case for Purpose
- The Beautiful Truth:** What is Meaningful Work?
- The Beautiful Truth:** Where is the line between the personal and the professional?
- The Beautiful Truth:** What is the Purpose Gap?
- Financial Times:** Has corporate purpose lost its purpose?
- Edelman:** 2025 Trust Barometer
- Kellogg Insight:** Cultivating Trust Is Critical—and Surprisingly Complex

About tml Partners

We specialise in sourcing
marketing and commercial
leaders for the world's
most ambitious companies.



www.tmlpartners.com
info@tmlpartners.com
UK: [+44 \(0\) 203 908 4440](tel:+44(0)2039084440)
US: [+1 202-985-3660](tel:+12029853660)

