

Masterclass summary: Building Human-Centric Workplaces

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Key Outcomes from the Bridges 5.0 Masterclass on 12th December 2025

The Bridges 5.0 Masterclass convened over 40 participants from across Europe to explore the practical and conceptual foundations of human-centric workplaces in the context of Industry 5.0. The session brought together leading thinkers, researchers, and practitioners, generating rich dialogue on the challenges and opportunities of embedding human-centricity, digital transformation, and sustainability into organisational practice.

1. The Triple Transformation Framework

Roland Sommer introduced the concept of “triple transformation,” emphasising the interconnectedness of digital, green, and social transformations within organisations. He argued that sustainable competitiveness requires companies to integrate these three domains, with social transformation – encompassing skills, organisational structures, and human-centricity – being pivotal. Key takeaways included:

- The need for new skills, especially in AI, but also the preservation of core manufacturing and domain knowledge.
- The importance of organisational adaptation, not just technological adoption, to ensure successful transformation.
- The role of diversity, inclusion, and reputation in attracting new generations to the workforce.
- The necessity for management to shift from being information providers to visionaries and motivators, supporting participative and adaptive work design.

2. Sociotechnical Job Quality Design

Peter Oeij presented the Lowlands sociotechnical job quality design approach, advocating workplaces that balance employee satisfaction with customer and organisational demands. He highlighted:

- Human-centric workplaces must fulfill core human needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) and protect workers' rights and well-being.
- Job quality should be designed to maximise both job demands and job control, fostering active, innovative, and resilient work environments.
- The importance of moving beyond individual job satisfaction surveys to systemic organisational design benefitting all employees.

3. **Practical Implementation: The Booth Welsh Case**

Martin Welsh and Aimee Doole from Booth Welsh provided a compelling case study of human-centric transformation in practice. Their journey included:

- Transitioning from family ownership to employee ownership, reinforcing a culture of trust, engagement, and shared purpose.
- Embedding the “five Ps of purpose” (people, planet, prosperity, place, partnerships) and values such as collaboration, ambition, resilience, empowerment, and stewardship.
- Actively involving employees in digital transformation, particularly in AI adoption, through cross-functional cohorts and protected time for experimentation.
- Developing new products (e.g., an energy monitoring tool) by leveraging internal innovation and aligning with sustainability goals.
- Prioritising well-being, psychological safety, and inclusive culture as foundations for sustainable performance and adaptability.

4. **Cross-Cutting Themes and Challenges**

The Masterclass addressed several recurring themes and challenges:

- **Bridging the Gap:** Despite strong evidence and case studies, most organisations lag in adopting human-centric, evidence-based practices. Participants discussed the need for accessible frameworks, compelling business cases, and leadership buy-in.
- **Culture vs. Structure:** There was robust debate on whether structural changes drive culture or vice versa, with consensus that both are deeply intertwined and must be addressed together.

- **Employee Engagement:** Practical methods for bottom-up engagement included participative design, safe environments for dialogue, and leveraging standards (e.g., ISO 9241, ISO 6385) to structure change.
- **Scaling Impact:** Suggestions included leveraging supply chain pressure, policy incentives, and large-scale education to mainstream human centricity.

5. Next Steps and Community Building

The session concluded with a call to action: participants were encouraged to continue the dialogue on the [Fresh Thinking Labs platform](#), share resources, and act as ambassadors for Industry 5.0. The ambition is to build a movement that translates research and best practice into widespread organisational change, supported by practical guides and ongoing peer learning.

Conclusion

The Bridges 5.0 Masterclass demonstrated that building human-centric workplaces is both an urgent necessity and a complex, ongoing process. Success depends on integrating digital, green, and social transformation, fostering inclusive and participative cultures, and equipping leaders and employees alike with the skills and frameworks to navigate change. The collective insights and experiences shared in this session provide a roadmap for organisations seeking to thrive in the era of Industry 5.0.

The recording and presentation are available at <https://freshthinkinglabs.com/recordings/>

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