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Adeiladwaith yw'n Gwaith

Civil Engineering Contractors Association

Wales/Cymru



CECA Wales Foundations:

Creating the best environment for young Welsh professionals to thrive

OVERVIEW REPORT

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February 2025

www.ceca.co.uk/wales/foundation-group

In the Summer of 2024 we brought together over 100 young Welsh professionals from across the Welsh construction industry to capture their views on how to ***"Create the best environment for young Welsh professionals to thrive."***

Given the recent upheavals that we've all faced over the last few years, from COVID-19 to the cost-of-living crisis, we wanted to hear from young professionals, what their aspirations are, what makes them tick and what needs to happen to create workplaces and teams that foster collaboration, creativity and wellbeing.

We recognised the challenges facing young professionals and asked them, through a range of different media, how we can create the best environment for them to thrive. It wasn't a scientific assessment, but rather an open and honest sharing of views by young professionals who are best placed to lead discussions on ***"Creating the best environment for young Welsh professionals to thrive."*** We considered three themes:

1. ***Supporting productive workplaces, working practices, and organisational culture;***
2. ***Embracing innovation, technology and creativity within the workplace and across sectors;***
3. ***Building motivated and collaborative teams within the workplace.***

And what did we learn? Read on.



Supporting productive workplaces, working practices, and organisational culture

From the rich feedback it was clear that a positive culture within the workplace is essential for fostering a sense of pride and belonging within a company.

This, in turn, benefits company performance and success. But we all have a part to play in encouraging and contributing to the positive workplace culture that we strive for.

Interestingly, with over two thirds of delegates generally satisfied with their workplace culture the overall picture is positive and, even though the majority of delegates felt their current job was "challenging" and "stressful", they felt their current organisation's culture was "supportive" and "collaborative." Maybe it's not always the organisation's culture that's causing stress amongst young professionals?







And what about strategies to convert their current culture into their 'ideal' culture? These included support from employers, communication, respect, leadership, engagement feedback, trust, diversity and inclusion, work life balance and flexibility.

"If we collaborate better together, there is no doubt we can implement creative and innovative ideas to improve performance across the board. But we need to collaborate better!"



And to implement these strategies?

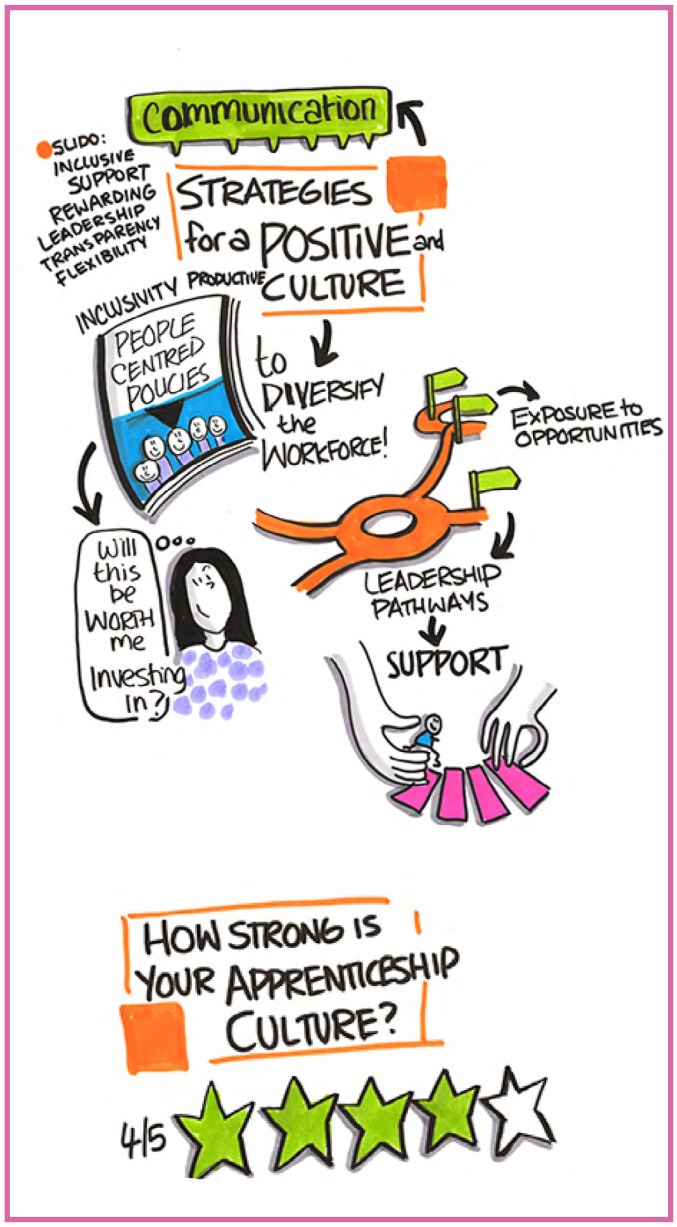
As businesses and individuals, we need to actively diversify the workforce, implement people-centred policies, invest in our employees, expose them to opportunities, and offer leadership pathways with adequate support.



And young professionals were fairly positive that their views are valued within their organisations as long as individuals truly believe in their themselves and act with conviction – and, of course, senior managers operate in listening mode!

Finally, when it came to attracting and recruiting people to the sector, the role and importance of apprenticeships was recognised with a total of 70% rating their apprenticeship culture highly and audience feedback highlighting the relationship between the apprentice and their mentor as being a key success factor.

And our 'words of wisdom' for young professionals in Wales?



"No one can read your mind. If you're in a challenging situation, or you truly believe in an approach, an idea, a solution, no matter how big or small; say it loud, say it proud and say it with conviction.

"The worst your manager can say is 'no' - don't forget that you are in charge of your future and our future so say your piece, give your reasons and remember, respect is earned."

Embracing innovation, technology and creativity within your workplace and across sectors

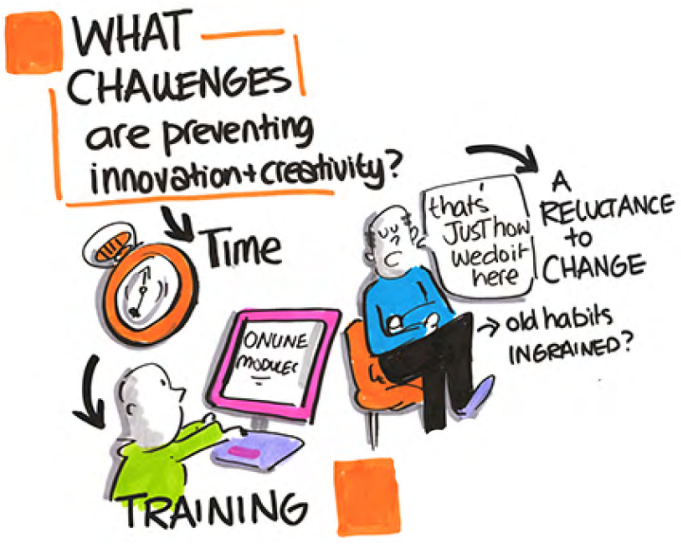
Creativity and innovation within the workplace are vital for developing a dynamic and competitive environment.

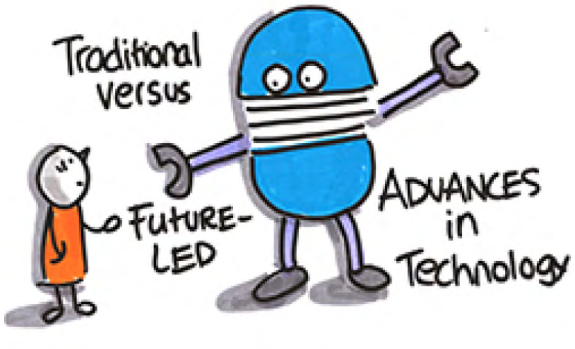


Encouraging employees to think outside the box, solve problems in novel ways, and develop unique techniques and solutions creates a culture that values diverse perspectives and continuous learning. This provides an opportunity to boost employee engagement and satisfaction whilst also allowing an organisation to adapt more readily to change and enhance productivity. All of which, propels the organisation towards sustainable growth within the sector.

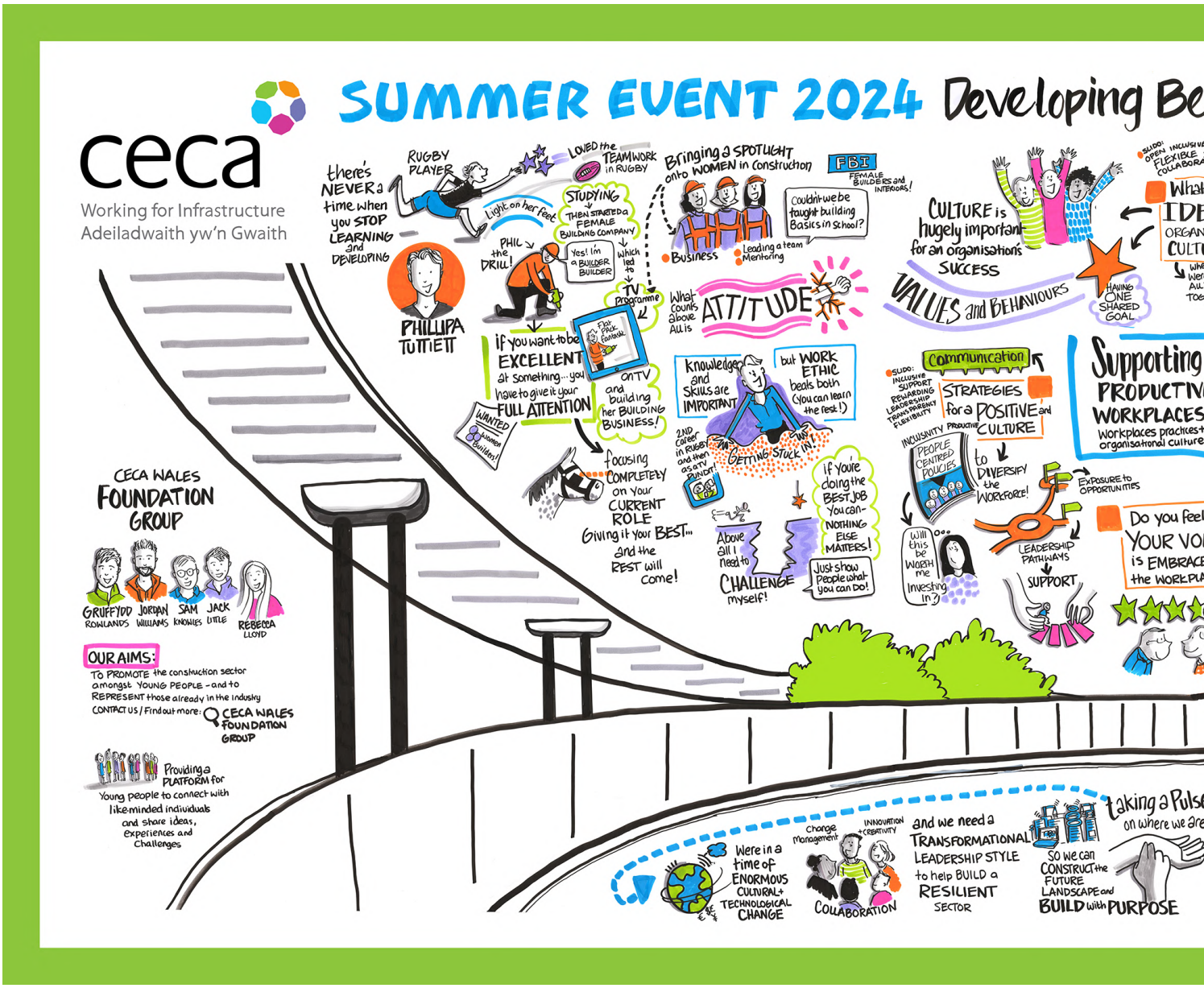
And the general consensus across the audience was that businesses were fairly responsive to innovation and creativity with many forms of **innovative techniques and software** already being utilised to optimise solutions, productivity and efficiency.

The two standout technologies were **SharePoint** and **drones** but both need to be formally integrated into a company's structure, systems and culture to be successfully implemented and beneficial to all.



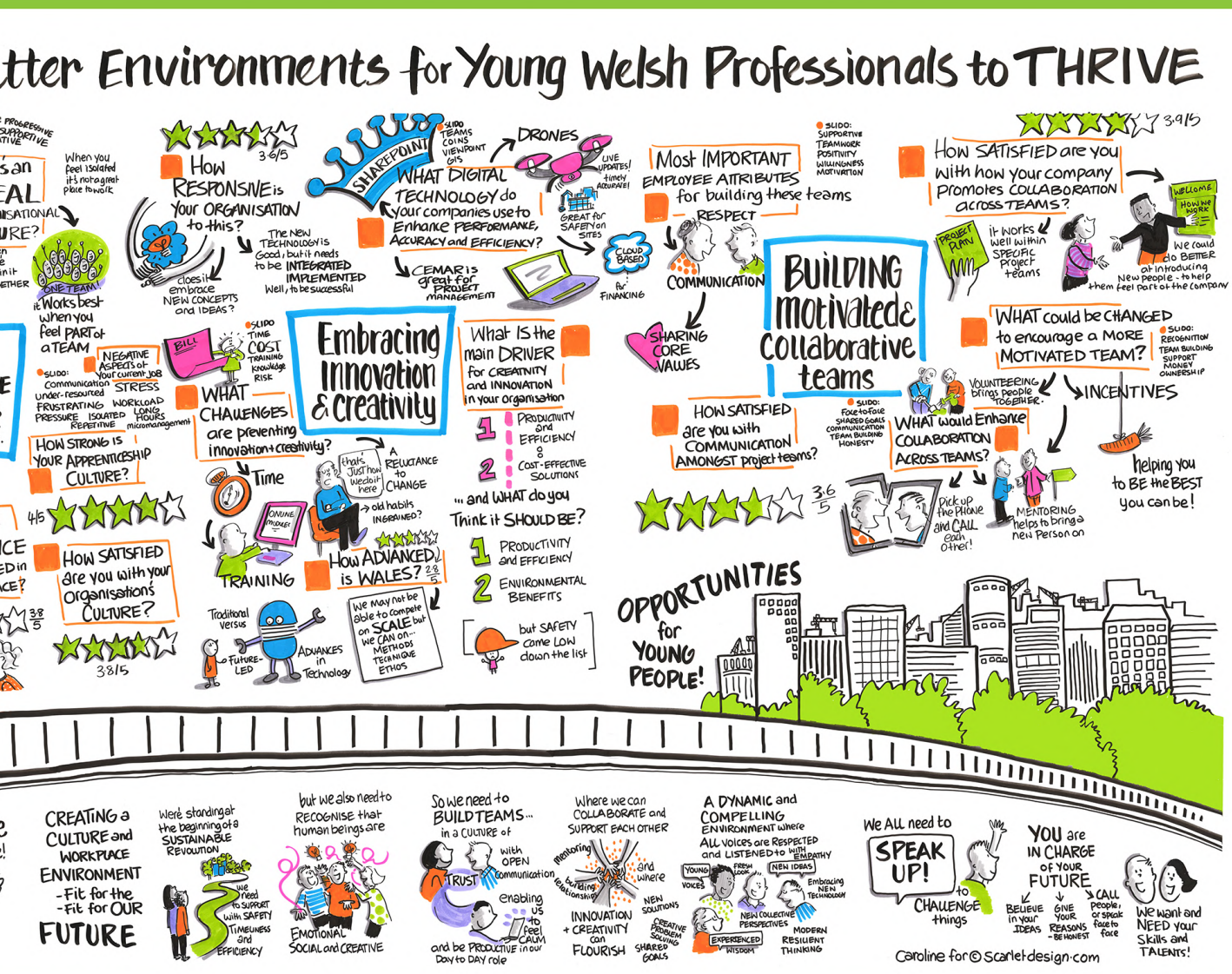


Common challenges to the implementation of innovative and creative practices throughout the sector revolve around **cost**, **time**, and **training**. However, there is a potential generational divide across the sector when it comes to new innovative technologies and methods of working, possibly as a result of the relatively sudden advancements in technology and varying levels of acceptance linked to the age of employees. To overcome this, adequate training and awareness are key to get all "up to speed" with new technologies and techniques. This, of course, only works if these technologies and techniques are seen as beneficial and applicable to the work being carried out.


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SUMMER EVENT 2024 Developing Be
there's NEVER a time when you STOP LEARNING and DEVELOPING
RUGBY PLAYER
Light on her feet
LOVED the TEAMWORK in RUGBY
STUDYING
THEN STARTED a FEMALE BUILDING COMPANY
Yes! I'm a BUILDER BUILDER
which led to
TV programme
PHIL the DRILL!
PHILLIPA TUTTIETT
Bringing a SPOTLIGHT onto WOMEN in Construction
FBI
FEMALE BUILDERS and INTERIORS!
Couldn't we be taught building Basics in School?
Business
Leading a team
Mentoring
CULTURE is hugely important for an organisations SUCCESS
VALUES and BEHAVIOURS
HAVING ONE SHARED GOAL
What counts above ALL is ATTITUDE
If you want to be EXCELLENT at something... you have to give it your FULL ATTENTION
WANTED Women Builders!
ONTV and building her BUILDING BUSINESS!
focusing COMPLETELY on your CURRENT ROLE
Giving it your BEST... and the REST will come!
Knowledge and SKILLS are IMPORTANT
but WORK ETHIC beats both (You can learn the rest!)
2ND Career in Rugby and then as a TV PUNDIT
GETTING STUCK IN!
Above all I need to CHALLENGE myself!
If you're doing the BEST JOB you can- NOTHING ELSE MATTERS!
Just show People what you can DO!
Communication
STRATEGIES for a POSITIVE and CULTURE
to DIVERSIFY the WORKFORCE!
PEOPLE CENTRED POLICIES
Will this be WORTH me Investing in?
EXPOSURE to OPPORTUNITIES
LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS
SUPPORT
Supporting PRODUCTIV WORKPLACES
Workplaces practices+ organisational culture
Do you feel YOUR VO is EMBRACE the WORKPLA
CECA WALES FOUNDATION GROUP
GRUFFYDD ROWLANDS
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OUR AIMS:
TO PROMOTE the construction sector amongst YOUNG PEOPLE - and to REPRESENT those already in the industry
CONTACT US / Find out more: CECA WALES FOUNDATION GROUP
Providing a PLATFORM for Young people to connect with like-minded individuals and share ideas, experiences and Challenges
We're in a time of ENORMOUS CULTURAL+ TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE
Change Management
INNOVATION + CREATIVITY
COLLABORATION
and we need a TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE to help BUILD a RESILIENT SECTOR
So we can CONSTRUCT the FUTURE LANDSCAPE and BUILD with PURPOSE
Taking a Pulse on where we are

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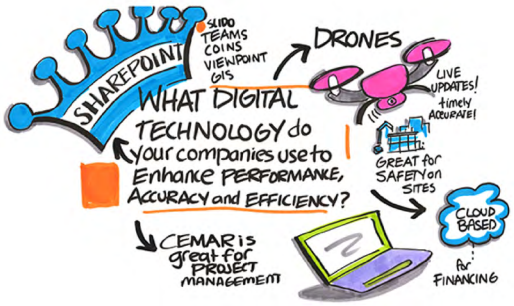
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The majority agreed that productivity and efficiency should be the main drivers of creativity and innovation. However, whilst productivity and efficiency were the main drivers on both fronts, when considering what "IS" the main driver, cost effective solutions came second with 34% and environmental benefits and carbon reduction was third with only 15%. This contrasted with what "SHOULD" be the main drivers with cost effective solutions dropping to 5% but environmental benefits and carbon reduction increasing significantly to 35%. Perhaps our current focus is not necessarily on what we think it should be?!

Another alarming statistic from the results to these questions was that safety and wellbeing was rated so low within both questions!



Delegates recognised that the implementation of new and innovative strategies comes with its own challenges such as cost, training, risk and reluctance to change. However, to reap the rewards of efficiency and productivity, it is vital for businesses to be open to adopting new strategies.



And exactly how advanced is Wales compared to the rest of the world when it comes to innovation and creativity? A relatively neutral 2.8 out of 5 was followed by round table feedback recognising that Wales couldn't compete and shouldn't be compared against other countries with regards to 'scale' of projects/sector. But it was agreed that aspects such as working methods, techniques, ethos, and attitude within the sector could certainly be competitive with other world leading countries.



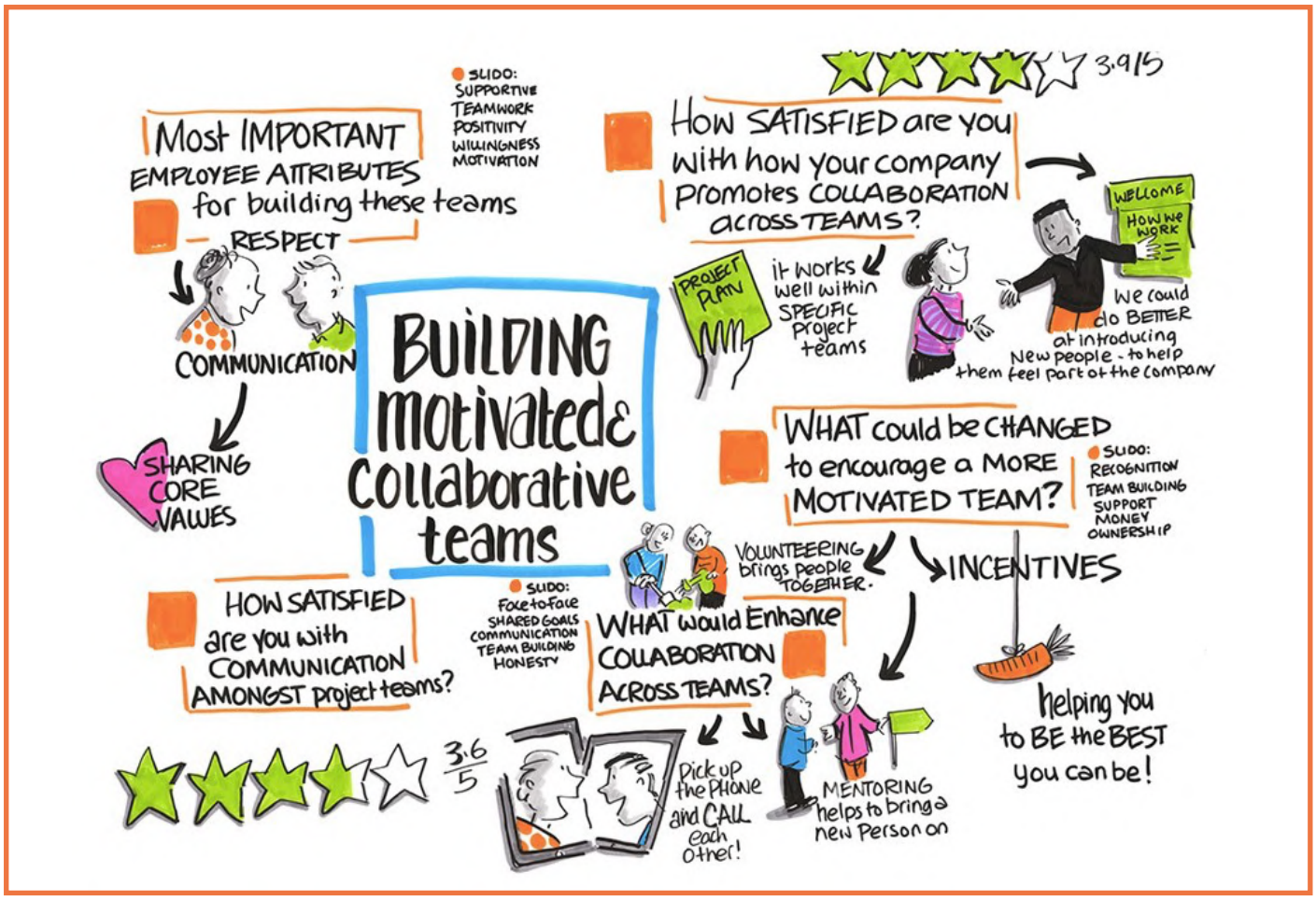
"Overall, delegates felt that the construction industry has enormous potential for effective and focused innovation because it can lead to improved living and working conditions, more affordable infrastructure, sustainable development and a globally competitive and profitable construction industry. If we collaborate better together, there is no doubt we can implement creative and innovative ideas to improve performance across the board. But we need start to collaborate better!"

Building motivated and collaborative teams within your workplace

This lies at the heart of all successful projects and is integral to enhancing productivity, improving communication, quality assurance, and employee satisfaction.



Motivated and collaborative environments help employees feel involved, valued, and kept up-to-date on all project developments as they happen. Although many of the delegates operate in a variety of job roles many of the elements discussed held significant relevance with the lessons learned becoming transferable from one role to another. The questions posed also helped the audience delve deeper into their motivation and question what the industry can do to improve motivation and collaboration across teams.



But what did we learn from the individual questions?

The most important **employee attribute** was, undoubtedly, 'respect.' This was followed by communication, teamwork and positivity - all contributing to a healthy workplace culture and motivated and collaborative teams.

And experienced employees or mentors for younger employees had critical roles to play in encouraging these positive attributes across their teams.

And then when it came to **satisfaction levels** with their business' approach to collaboration the results were positive with an average score of 3.9 out of 5 – although more could be done when introducing new people to the business and its culture.

In **improving motivation** the word 'incentives' featured highly! When the tables were questioned on the top incentives many focused on financial rewards or "bonuses" for their efforts, although social incentives such as team bonding events, recognition and rewards followed in a close second. Depending on the goal of the business these incentives can be easily implemented to encourage a more motivated team within the workplace.

Finally, **communication across the sector** was viewed reasonably positive with an average score of 3.6 out of 5. But face to face interaction between those involved in a project was seen as fundamental to this. Despite the recent advancements in technology and the growth in working from home, in-person interaction is still essential to clear communication and progressing shared goals .

"A five-minute phone call could achieve a week's worth of e-mailing back and forth between two parties, leading to better relationships and improved business outcomes for all."







Closing Comments - John Griffiths, Walters UK



The inaugural CECA Wales Foundations Young Professionals' Event was closed off by the Chair of CECA Wales, John Griffiths of Walters UK, who said:

"Today has been a fascinating and informative day - it's been great to see so many young Welsh professionals from across the infrastructure sector and beyond, in such a great setting, sharing your views on what need to happen if we are to create the right environment for young professionals in Wales to thrive. And we need you to thrive if we're going to have a vibrant and innovative industry for the future. The energy and buzz in this room has been amazing."

"A few themes have stood out for me and have provided food for thought. We're at a time of immense cultural, technological, and climactic change, and we need transformational leaders to navigate this landscape. You are the leaders of the future. Today's discussions have recognised the importance of positive and supportive workplace cultures, the need for better collaboration both within and across teams, better communication, greater diversity of thought, and inclusion to harness innovation and creativity."

"Above all it is the recognition that as human beings we crave social interaction and we thrive on it. And time and time again today we've heard about the need for regular, face-to-face communication. That's how we'll address so many of the challenges that we face. Technology has its place, but we must never forget that human and social interaction."

"So to sum up, my message to young Welsh professionals is: you're in charge of your future; speak up - make yourself heard, and challenge conventional thinking; but remember the importance of communication, socialisation, and both earning and earned respect. Our industry needs your skills and talents if we're to have a thriving industry for the future, to deliver the better economy for Wales that we all want to see."

"Diolch/Thank-you."



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