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Rewriting The Narrative: The Future of Work

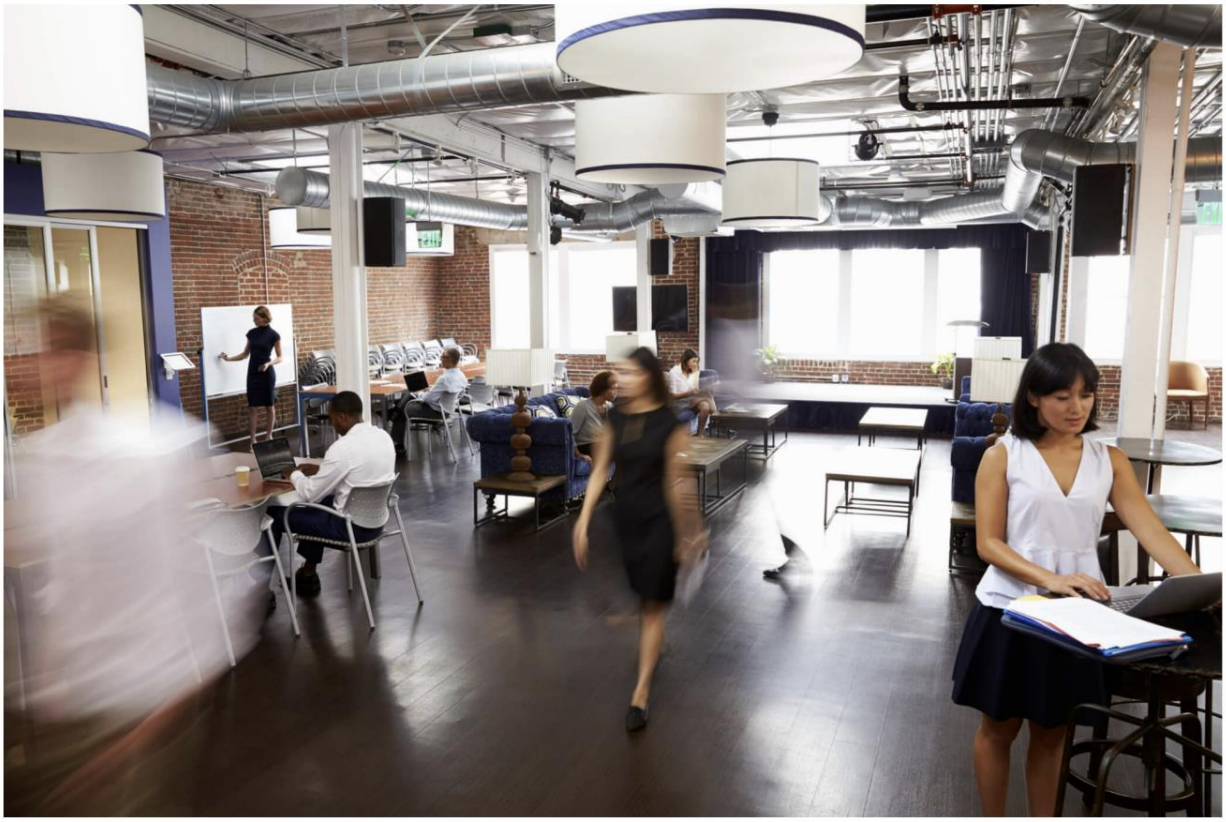
Simon Elliot and Barbara Boden of 4xi Global Consulting talk about their unique approach to the future of work.



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Rewriting The Narrative: The Future of Work



4xi's global reach debuts in a year where the work experience of the future needs assessment, navigation and a true compass like never before.

Simon Elliot, Managing Partner of 4xi, is reframing the story of the future of work. Wielding a diverse toolbox filled with a consulting purview and a storyteller's pen, Elliot's 4xi Global Consulting & Solutions is helping form the narrative of the future of work.

Founded earlier in 2020 with a team of talented and experienced executives around the world -- New York, Los Angeles, London, Tokyo, Porto, and Santiago, Chile -- 4xi's global reach is augmented via its partnership with the WORKTECH Academy, a global network made up of industry leaders and academics exploring the future of how we'll work tomorrow.

Providing services and solutions for Corporations, Service Providers, Innovators and Accelerators, 4xi's reach debuts in a year where the definition of work experience has risen to the top of the agenda.

"We're focused on helping and supporting corporations who want a better work experience for their employees, and these are even more accentuated and accelerated with regard to what the new world of work will look like moving ahead," Elliot, 4xi's Managing Partner and Co-Founder, says from his Bay Area, California base. "And at no other time has the acceleration of the future of work been more evident than it's been during COVID-19 -- and in its wake into the future."

Navigating the future of workplaces wasn't a wick lit by COVID. Rather, Eliot says, the need for expanding horizons was already a ship set sail prior to the global pandemic. A host of examples examine not only the traditional workplace cultures and experiences but also the tangible construct of such environments.

"Even prior to COVID, corporate real estate was less than 50% occupied anyway; it was already an issue," Elliot says of latent workspaces. “The commute was always a huge issue for employees, some



travelling more than two hours each day. Health, wellness, well-being, and mental health were increasing challenges. So is safety in the workplace. The list goes on.”

“The coronavirus hasn't been a catalyst for change as much as it's been an *accelerator for change* in regard to challenges that already existed,” says 4xi Co-Founder and joint Managing Partner Barbara Boden, who is based in New York. “Organizations don't know with any certainty to what extent people will go back to the workplace, but I can tell you that it won't be what it was previously."



Boden was formerly global head of amenities at JP Morgan Chase & Co and is equally passionate about how 4xi (4xiconsulting.com) will drive forward and make a difference. Consulting to the future, 4xi places an onus on the people and not just the bricks-and-mortar of where the dispersed workforce of the future may be – in an office, local hub, co-working space, or at home.

From an employee perspective, the workplace of the future involves a new navigation of employees working from home and grasping the potential of ripple effects, such as "Corporate Loneliness," which can result from being cut-off from colleagues. From the customer vantage, Elliot, Boden and 4xi work with financial services firms, life sciences, technology, and a range of corporations including oil, gas, and mining, specifically through the lens of user hospitality experiences.

"The common element is people, and if you think about customer experiences, even prior to COVID-19, you can look at it as taking a vacation," Boden says. "The on-site experience starts from the moment you arrive at the resort, to entering the property, to observing the maintence of the grounds, to the reception area and the welcome you receive, to the accommodation you're shown, the food, and amenities. It's all an experience of hospitality -- and that's the methodology we're working within."

Helping corporations and businesses create feelings and memories for customers and their employees is part of the strategic purview. Building work experiences that form a culture of community, if not a workplace sacrosanct, is a key theme in

4xi's narrative for the future.

"There is a term, 'Hotelification,' of work spaces," Elliot says, "and we believe that the hospitality-enabled workplace – encompassing an entire experience, from home to commute to work and back again – has to be heightened. People will need to be magnetized back to the workplace, organizations will need to create experiences where people choose to come to, and no longer have to."

Exampling how a half-used, 50-story building in downtown Manhattan could be reimagined, Elliot's employs a style Socratic:

"How about part of this space being converted into either apartments, or long-term stay accommodations, even hotels?" he queries. "How about part converted into retail space, restaurants, convenience, and a leisure club venue for employees, residents, and the local community? Or how about local non-profits having offices in the space? Local universities or colleges providing professional and vocational qualifications in this same building? The workplace can become its own self-contained ecosystem."

A look at additional 4xi clientele under its constituency of Innovators includes an understanding of the future impact of technology in the world of work. "It's examining how robotics can remove and reduce the menial tasks out of the work experience," says Elliot of consulting for SoftBank Robotics. "That enables people more time to focus on the more value-added work, including the customer experience."

Palo Alto-based Mashgin, specializing in Computer Vision often associated with autonomous vehicle's, A.I. point of sale solutions, is another 4xi client.

"The Mashgin technology allows for touch-less transactions in hospitality, food and beverage, allowing spaces to be open 24/7 as a result, and without the need for labor to constantly be there to ring-up transactions," Boden says.

Other solutions designed to deliver impact to the world of work include ART Health Solutions, a UK-based firm, provide scientific data to assess employee's health, well-being, and cognitive performance on the job.



Rungway, also from the UK, provides a platform to allow employees to share what they really think and feel.

"The only constant of the future with any level of certainty is the workforce, and as is now and into the future, as employees are more dispersed than ever before, helping organizations understand what makes their employees tick is ever so more crucial," Elliot says.

It's not just about corporations and innovators either: 4xi sets out a full support eco-system for all stakeholders in the world of work, including Service Providers, who as a result of COVID-19, may have shed much of the value layer that helps them differentiate.

"We have grown a team of experts globally, but also functionally and provide a comfort around such critical issues as sustainability, diversity and inclusion, around mindfulness and conscious leadership. We recently added a Chief Customer Experience Officer resource, all of which is able to support our constituents, project by project, or on an expertise-on-demand basis," Boden says.

In addition to 4xi and work experience leadership, Elliot's talents for creative solutions find compliment in working with his pen name "Willy Mitchell," having penned five



books under the *nom de plume*, with a sixth work in progress.

The skill of crossing-over fictional tools to corporate consulting is a talent both unique and effective. In his third book, *Cold Courage*, a fictionalized account of Sir Ernest Shackleton's famed Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914 upon his ship, "Endurance," proves useful metaphor and analogy in approaching solutions for modern-day challenges – a theme reinforced in 4xi's approach to business.

"It's a theme of discovery and seeking new horizons," Elliot says. "And that is an interesting way to approach the business world in that same context of exploration. There are a lot of things that come out of the Shackleton story. Courage, trust, and endurance are fundamental platforms for leadership; without these tenets, it's difficult to get through the challenges and adverse times that we face."

An ability to relate his author's skill set to 4xi's mission creates a potent pathos that can't be found in spreadsheets or a Power Point. "Storytelling can do a lot," he says. "People remember stories more than they remember statistics, just like people will remember feelings more than they'll remember just the product itself. And it's when those positive experiences are created, stimulating feelings that can potentially last a lifetime, then the true magic can begin.

"Storytelling is an essential ingredient of success today and should be incorporated in everything that we do with all our stakeholders, employees, partners, clients, and with our consumers -- not just for a sales pitch, but for communicating an all-encompassing set of experiences that drive lasting loyalty and ultimately success."

4xi's journey has just begun. As Elliot puts it, "we have built a mighty fine ship, we have assembled a world class crew, with passengers and cargo on board. We're ready to set sail and venture to new horizons and the discovery of new lands."

If business is the economic engine that drives economic advancement and prosperity, then the workforce is fundamental to that success. In this modern age with advancements in technology, it matters less and less the location of these employees, less emphasis on the bricks and mortar but all about the work experience, wherever that may be into the future.

"Smooth seas never made a good sailor," Eliot says. "4xi is re-writing the approach to supporting and advancing the world of work, working with our clients and partners, with our team of world-class consultants to help them navigate and shape the future of work." — ***By Judd Spicer, California Business Journal.***

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