

Gen-next

Attracting talent in Real Estate's digital era

REvolve

Digital Real Estate Innovation Council



Our members:

Clifford
Chance

 **Knight
Frank**

 **re:sustain**
Building physics for the future

 **YARDI**

Content partner: **mipim**

An API Initiative:  **Alpha** Property
Insight

Introduction

The real estate sector stands at a crossroads. Whilst it can be seen as a stable and financially rewarding career, the industry now faces a growing challenge: how to attract and retain the next generation of talent in an era when work expectations, roles and technology are shifting.

Today's emerging workforce is often driven by purpose, flexibility and innovation. Real estate must compete for this talent with sectors often perceived as more dynamic, technology enabled and forward-looking.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also playing a role in this shift. It is reshaping not just how buildings are designed, managed and experienced, but also what skills the industry requires, raising the stakes in the competition for digitally fluent talent.

Real estate has an extraordinary story to tell. It shapes our homes, workplaces and communities. It drives economies and holds the key to tackling some of the greatest challenges of our time, from decarbonisation to urbanisation. Yet a perception gap persists: many still see real estate as old-fashioned, hierarchical, and slow to change.

This paper explores how the sector can bridge that gap. It sets out the cultural, technological and generational challenges facing real estate and highlights the

opportunities to transform its image and the role of technology in doing so. It also outlines practical actions that can help position the industry as a career of choice for the talent it needs to thrive.

The overall graduate jobs market is at an eight-year low, with graduate roles down 12% on the previous year.

- *Hiring Lab UK Mid-Year Labour Market Update June 2025*



Section 1

Destination Real Estate



The competition for talent

The competition for talent has never been so intense. Across industries, businesses are in a race to secure the best graduates and young professionals and real estate is no exception. Yet the playing field has changed. Where once prestige, salary and stability were enough to attract bright minds, today's generation is often motivated by a more complex set of drivers.

They want careers with purpose, where they can make an impact on issues that matter. They expect employers to offer flexibility and a culture that embraces diversity and inclusion. Most are also digital natives who expect the tools of their trade to match the digital experiences they use in their daily lives.

At the same time, technology is transforming both the sector and the recruitment of talent. AI, data analytics, and PropTech platforms are changing the skills required for roles and the way value

is created. This creates a dual opportunity: not only can technology make the industry more productive and innovative, but it can also be a magnet for young talent eager to apply their digital skills to a sector with tangible, real-world impact.

In this new world, real estate must redefine how it presents itself as a career destination. Competing against the likes of technology and finance companies requires the sector to address perception challenges, actively showcase the breadth of opportunity it offers and embrace new technology and ways of working.

The question is no longer whether real estate should adapt, but how fast it can change and embrace technology to compete in the modern talent market.

Research reveals that 70% of the UK's Gen Z and millennial employees are willing to leave their jobs if they're not offered the latest technology.

- *Riverbed Global Digital Employee Experience (DEX) Survey*



Perception Challenges

One recurring theme in real estate is that the industry is “old-fashioned.” Despite progress in this area, some still view it as slow to innovate. This perception can be reinforced by rigid career structures, traditional office cultures and outdated training methods.

For young professionals deciding where to build their careers, these impressions matter. They want to work in environments that reflect modern values — diversity, flexibility, inclusivity and digital sophistication. Anecdotes of valuations still being done “with pen and paper” highlight the persistence of an old-fashioned sector. Even where technology is available, the sector is often seen as slow to adopt it at scale.

In contrast, technology firms are built around experimentation and continuous improvement — qualities that resonate with younger workers who expect the industries they join to be digitally advanced. If they find outdated systems, manual processes and limited opportunities to use new tools, they quickly disengage. Sectors that integrate AI, data analytics and digital platforms into day-to-day work often appear far more attractive.

In short, if real estate cannot project a more modern image, it risks losing talent to sectors perceived as more progressive and tech-enabled.



The Generational Divide

One pressing issue for real estate recruitment is the cultural divide between generations where differences exist in attitudes towards technology adoption and embracing digital change. This is a broad generalisation but whilst the real estate sector is not the only industry to experience this, it can feel particularly prominent due to the long-established structure and hierarchy of many property firms. Real estate tends to equate experience with expertise and, by default, the longer someone has been in the industry, the more expert they are and the more authority they hold.

In many respects this is valid — extensive market knowledge, built over years, remains invaluable. But in the digital era, being in a role for a long time does not automatically suggest more expertise over a relatively new entrant. Noone, for example, can claim decades of experience in generative AI. An individual working in real estate for forty years can only really have two years of GenAI experience and so will only be as knowledgeable in that field as someone relatively new to real estate with the same two years of AI experience.

Indeed, junior professionals are digital natives and can arrive with stronger digital skills than their senior colleagues. Unfortunately, the industry's hierarchical structure can make it difficult to value and integrate that expertise. It can feel uncomfortable for some senior leaders to admit that they lack digital skills, while younger staff may feel their tech expertise

is overlooked. For young professionals, this hierarchy can feel restrictive, with their capabilities undervalued simply because they are new to the industry.

It is important for organisations to recognise this divide and try to address it. For example, there is a strong argument that organisations should embrace two-way mentoring, where junior staff share digital insights with senior leaders, while still learning from their experience. Another approach is to ensure that employees at all levels are encouraged to use AI and other digital tools (responsibly) and that training spans the whole organisation, not just junior staff or those in technology focused roles. These kinds of approaches can not only accelerate digital adoption but also build mutual respect and collaboration across generations.

Bridging the generational divide will require real estate firms to modernise long-standing structures, value digital expertise, and foster a culture of continuous learning.



Section 2

Young talent requirements



Purpose, sustainability, and diversity

Research shows that younger generations want their careers to have purpose. They are often motivated not only by salary but by the chance to contribute to causes they care about — for example, sustainability, inclusion, or social impact.

However, purpose cannot just be words on a website. It must be demonstrated in the way companies operate, the projects they deliver and the values they uphold. Sustainability, diversity and inclusion are no longer “nice-to-haves” — they are central to whether young people see a company, or indeed an entire sector, as worth joining.

A majority of Gen Zs (89%) and Millennials (92%) consider a sense of purpose to be ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ important for their job satisfaction.

- (Deloitte 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Survey).

The real estate sector is in a strong position to compete on purpose. It is central to tackling climate change, it plays a critical role in addressing housing shortages, shaping urban infrastructure and improving community wellbeing. At a company level, many firms have stepped up their own individual efforts to actively

track energy emissions and improve the sustainability of their own buildings, measure their social impact on local communities and increase representation and inclusion of underrepresented groups in the sector.

But to many graduates, real estate can appear transactional and finance-driven, rather than purpose-led. The reality — that it shapes sustainability outcomes, provides homes and workplaces and has access to the latest technology — is often under-communicated. The sector has a real opportunity to strengthen how it markets itself to the workforce of tomorrow.

Real estate needs to better showcase its purpose, sustainability and diversity credentials to appeal to the next generation of talent.



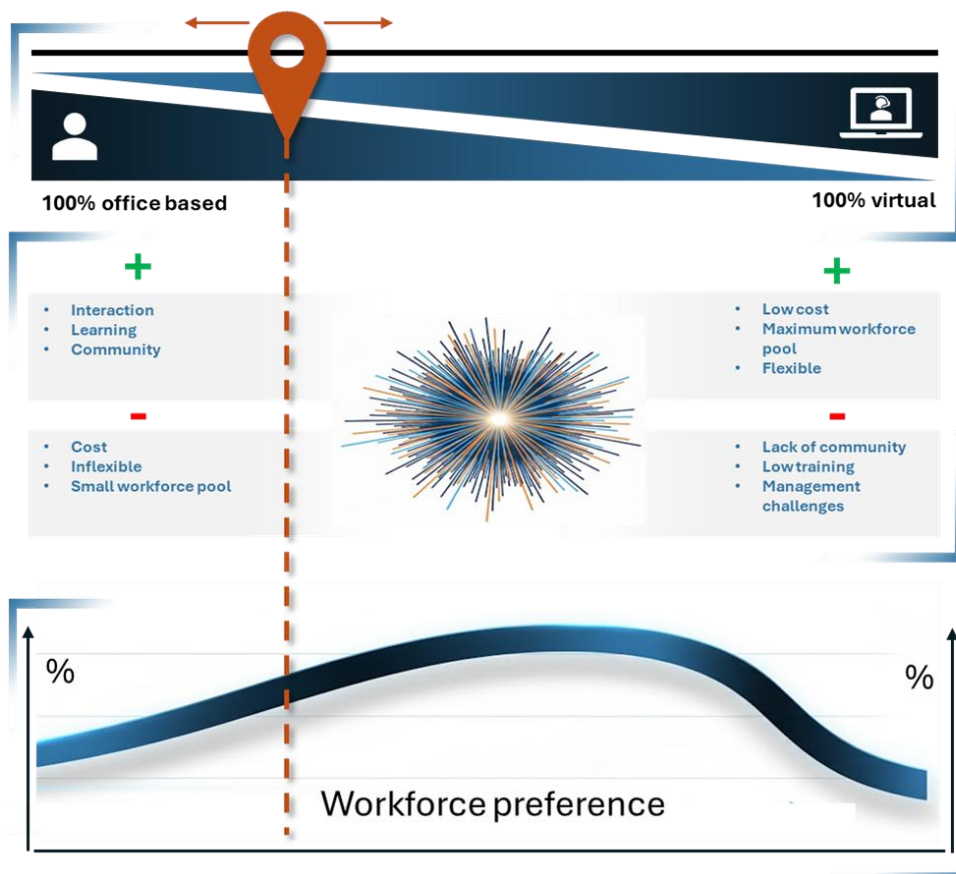
Flexible working

The post-pandemic era has adjusted workplace expectations. Many employees, not just younger people, value flexible, hybrid models with the opportunity to work virtually outside of the office. But, at the same time, there is recognition that office culture plays a critical role in professional development.

Historically, a lot of learning in real estate has happened through “osmosis” — absorbing knowledge by observing and talking to experienced colleagues. Hybrid

models can disrupt this, leaving junior staff without the exposure they need to develop quickly. This can slow down the initial upskilling of new entrants.

For many graduates and young professionals, the ability to balance office and remote time is no longer a perk but an expectation. *Hybrid working was considered as important as a competitive salary by more than half (54%) of 1,000 graduates or final-year university students surveyed by IWG, many of whom view it as equivalent to a 13% increase in salary,*



A graphic suggesting the pros and cons of being 100% office based and 100% virtual. Organisations have a choice to make which will impact their existing staff and also the number of people that they can attract. Workforce preference graph above is a visualisation of the anecdotal preference that many people prefer a blend of in office and virtual.

because of savings made on travel and housing¹.

However, for some senior leaders, the office is still seen as the cornerstone of learning, collaboration and culture and this can create friction: leadership sees culture eroding without the office, while younger staff see inflexibility as a failure to modernise.

When it comes to flexible working, there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Different employers will choose different approaches and balances with some choosing to offer 100% office working, others 100% remote working and most somewhere in between. There are pros and cons of each position on the scale which is shown in the diagram opposite. The challenge for every organisation is to find the right balance for them that will best serve the needs of both their existing and future staff.

Almost half (49%) of UK graduates said they would not apply for a job that did not offer hybrid working.

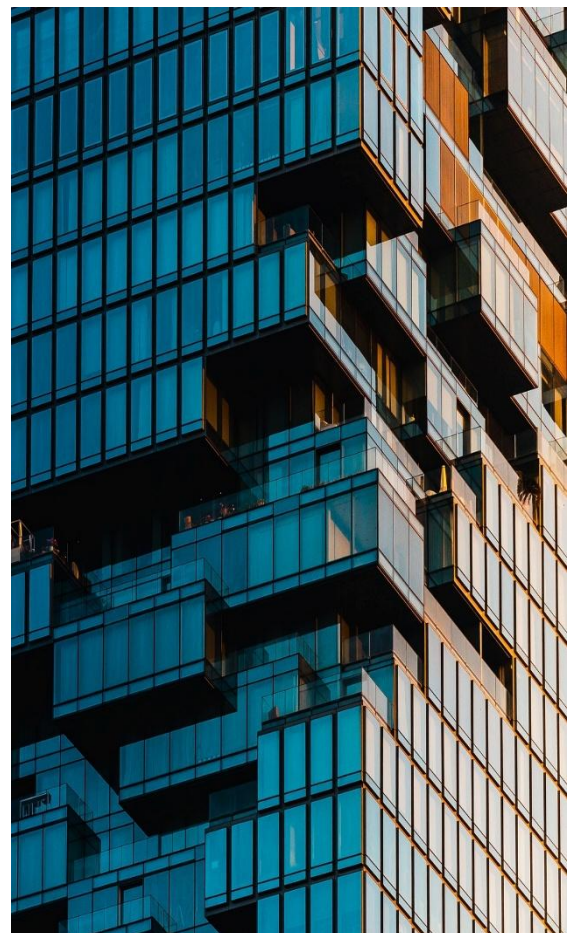
- Source: IWG, [The Guardian](#)

An organisation's approach can also dictate the number of young professionals that will be interested in working for them. Anecdotally, whilst some want to be in the office all the time and others remote all of the time, the more popular approach seems to be somewhere in the

middle, with a blend of office based and virtual working.

Ultimately, it is vital for organisations to consider flexible approaches to working as a critical factor in attracting staff and design work structures that preserve the benefits of office learning while respecting changing expectations. For example, where hybrid options are offered, employers might consider the introduction of structured development programmes, intentional in-person days and digital collaboration tools to ensure learning continues in a hybrid working environment.

Adopting flexible work structures is now seen as a critical factor by many in securing and developing young talent in real estate.



¹ IWG, [The Guardian](#)

Digital skills and training

If there is one factor that can help real estate win the battle for next-generation talent, it is technology. For today's young professionals, digital fluency is not optional, it is the foundation of how they work, learn and communicate. AI is rapidly becoming a differentiator in the workplace and changing how work is done. Whilst some firms are slow to adopt this technology, a growing number of real estate companies are trialling AI tools or embedding them in their processes, from platforms that streamline property management to tools that analyse market data.

// Replacing junior employees with AI... was one of the dumbest things I've ever heard. How is that going to work when ten years in the future no one has built up or learned anything. //

- ***Matt Garman, CEO of Amazon Web Services (AWS), [YouTube](#)***

Whilst AI creates efficiency, it also raises concerns about how junior professionals will learn the basics of their trade. There is growing evidence to suggest that AI is replacing the foundational, repetitive tasks traditionally assigned to junior staff.

78% of UK students are worried that AI will lead to job losses

- Source: Yugo, [Workplace Journal](#)



Research from Stanford University² reports a 13% relative decline in employment for early-career workers in the most AI-exposed occupations, since the widespread adoption of generative AI tools. This poses a threat to the talent pipeline if less graduates are hired but also creates a future skills gap if the first rungs of the career ladder are removed. If AI automates away the junior tasks that usually act as a training ground, such as analysing leases or data collation, there are question marks over how new entrants will acquire the depth of understanding needed to exercise professional judgement later in their careers.

One answer is to lean into the technology and use it to rethink training, for example, designing intentional programmes that blend AI-enabled work with foundational learning. In some cases, this may mean deliberately requiring junior staff to complete tasks manually before using automated tools. In others, it may involve using AI outputs as teaching tools, with juniors tasked to co-pilot, review, question and refine results.

It is essential that real estate continues to adopt technology and AI to attract graduates, but if AI has the potential to remove the bottom rungs of the career ladder, firms must adapt training and development to build the workforce needed for the future.

² [Canaries in the Coal Mine? Six Facts about the Recent Employment Effects of Artificial Intelligence](#)



Section 3

Future Action



This paper has highlighted significant challenges and huge opportunities for the sector in its fight to attract talent. Taking this all into account, there are a number of steps that can be taken to position real estate organisations as exciting and progressive employers for the modern age.



FUTURE FLEXIBILITY

Create flexible working structures to attract next generation talent



- Consider what hybrid options to offer that balance collaboration and learning with autonomy and communicate these openly in job adverts.
- Designate regular “in-office learning days” for early-career staff to shadow senior colleagues, gain hands-on project experience and build networks.
- Invest in virtual platforms, mentorship apps and collaborative technology to ensure junior staff can continue learning and connecting when working remotely.



FUTURE SKILLS

Adapt training and development for future workforce



- Design structured training programmes that blend traditional professional skills with digital literacy and AI fluency.
- Introduce “dual-track” learning which combines non-digital foundational training experiences with hands-on use of AI and data tools.
- Invest in digital skills training and ensure awareness and training spans all levels of the organisation not just younger or technology focused staff.

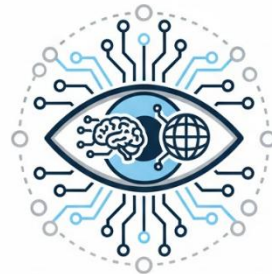


FUTURE TECHNOLOGY

Make digital curiosity a superpower



- Encourage and enable all staff to experiment with AI and other digital tools and use “safe-to-fail” spaces for testing applications and ideas.
- Consider two-way mentoring where junior staff share digital and AI expertise with senior leaders, while gaining from their strategic and market experience.
- Consider aligning rewards and incentives to value not only financial outcomes but also innovation, collaboration and digital impact.

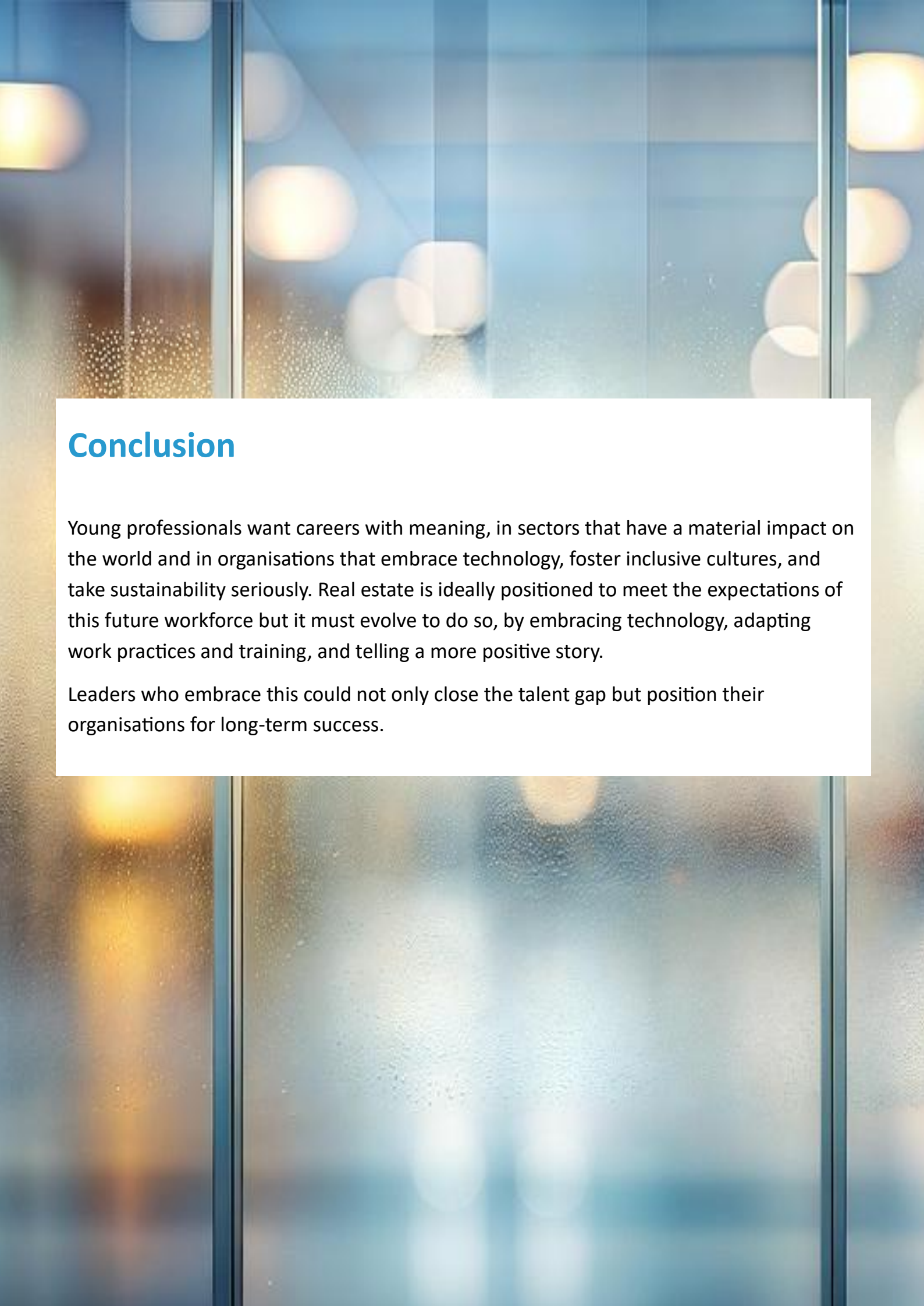


FUTURE PERCEPTION

Reframe the sector’s narrative to appeal to a younger generation of workers



- Acknowledge the role of purpose in young people’s careers and highlight positive sustainability, inclusion and social impact initiatives not as compliance exercises, but as central to business competitiveness and talent attraction.
- Promote a technology mindset shift: AI is not just a threat to jobs, but a tool to help improve performance, increase efficiency and improve career paths at all levels of an organisation.



Conclusion

Young professionals want careers with meaning, in sectors that have a material impact on the world and in organisations that embrace technology, foster inclusive cultures, and take sustainability seriously. Real estate is ideally positioned to meet the expectations of this future workforce but it must evolve to do so, by embracing technology, adapting work practices and training, and telling a more positive story.

Leaders who embrace this could not only close the talent gap but position their organisations for long-term success.

ABOUT REvolve



REvolve is an [Alpha Property Insight](#) initiative. Members of REvolve consist of leading names in the real estate sector which come together to provide unique perspectives on a particular topic. Membership of REvolve demonstrates the members' thought leadership and willingness to explore some of the most pressing challenges that the real estate sector faces in a collaborative way.

Membership does not imply agreement with or endorsement of all of the views expressed in the report.

Each paper is written by Alpha Property Insight and is based on both extensive desk research and a round table discussion with members.

REvolve MEMBERS



We're by your side – your trusted legal and strategic partner. For every critical moment, wherever you are in the world.

We combine deep legal and commercial intelligence to grow, transform, protect and defend your business across every critical moment.

We operate in the sectors and regions that matter to you. Whatever you need, we anticipate and respond as one team.

It's how we create your advantage.

To find out more, visit www.cliffordchance.com



At Knight Frank, we provide innovative property solutions for our clients that add tangible value and maximise performance, across the full range of real estate services and sectors.

To us, performance is about our people and our clients working together to deliver optimised return on the real estate they touch. We do this by identifying, protecting and augmenting value at every stage of the real asset lifecycle, while considering ESG implications from the outset.

As a partnership, our decisions are made by, and for, our people, focused on the best long-term outcomes, driven by our purpose to work responsibly to enhance people's lives and environments.



re:sustain is accelerating global real estate's decarbonisation at scale. Our Digital Twin technology remotely minimises carbon emissions and lowers energy costs, leading to substantial optimisation improvements, with reductions in consumption ranging from 22-61% over a 12-month period.

Following implementation, our Digital Twin extends its application by delivering CapEx modelling based on your specific building performance data, not generic benchmarks. This provides a real-time forecast of the measures, potential impacts, and associated costs in your journey to net zero, whilst simultaneously preserving portfolio value, meeting diverse stakeholder goals, and elevating operational performance.



Since 1984, Yardi has grown into the leading provider of high-performance software for the real estate industry. With over 10,000 professionals in more than 40 offices worldwide, Yardi combines deep industry knowledge with a commitment to innovation. Yardi's investment, asset, and property management solutions are designed to meet the diverse and evolving needs of real estate professionals across the globe.



MIPIM influences and accelerates the transformation of the built environment by crafting a unique, week-long urban festival in Cannes.

Here, face-to-face discussions, workshops and panels offer inspiration and thought-leadership, while creating opportunities to exchange experiences and drive business and professional growth.

As a reference point for the global real estate industry, MIPIM provides unique access to global capital and concrete solutions for making assets more sustainable and resilient in a rapidly changing world.

REvolve

Digital Real Estate Innovation Council



An Alpha Property Insight initiative



Our members:

Clifford
Chance

