



Assessment component 1: Individual report – HR strategy

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Table of Contents

Part 1	3
Overview of Aether Innovations and Current Challenges	3
Current Culture and Work Practices in the Technology Industry	3
Cultural and Structural Initiatives to Embed Innovation.....	5
Future of Work Model for Aether Innovations	6
Impact of the Proposed HR Strategy on Motivation and Performance.....	8
Part 2.....	9
Reflection on Learning Journey Using Gibbs Reflective Cycle	9
Staying Relevant in the AI Era and Using AI as a Support Tool	10
References.....	13

Part 1

Overview of Aether Innovations and Current Challenges

Aether Innovations is a fast-growing technology company employing approximately 300 people and operating in a highly competitive digital market. Despite its rapid growth, Aether Innovations is experiencing several strategic challenges, including stagnant growth, high employee turnover and declining customer satisfaction. These are indicators of a weak organisational culture, employee engagement, and performance management. Motivation and innovation are critical factors in the technology sector because motivated employees are more likely to generate creative ideas and remain committed to the organisation (Ghani et al., 2023; Manzoor et al. 2025). This means that Aether Innovations needs an effective human capital strategy that enhances innovation, working culture, and enabling employees to do well and facilitate long-term organisational success.

Current Culture and Work Practices in the Technology Industry

Organisational Culture in the UK Technology Sector

The organisational culture is a key factor influencing innovation and performance in the technological companies. Numerous companies operating within the UK technology industry focus on the principles of agility, collaboration, and experimentative, innovation-driven cultures that promote knowledge sharing, fast decision-making, and quick problem-solving. Recent studies point out the existence of organisational cultures where flexibility and empowerment of employees are the dominant attributes of organisational culture which are, in other words, characterized as adhocracy cultures are strongly linked with increased levels of innovation and product development performance in technology-driven organisations (Cao et al. 2025). Besides this, modern researchers also stress that innovation-based cultures encourage risk-taking, learning, and teamwork, which allows companies to adjust to technological shifts and competitive markets fast (Manzoor et al. 2025). Consequently, the majority of UK technology companies are placing greater emphasis on organisational cultures that promote creative, employee freedom and cross-team work. The same view can be elaborated using the organisational culture model created by Schein, who argues that the organisational culture is functioning at three levels, namely artefacts, espoused

values and underlying assumptions of the organisational culture that drive employee behaviour and innovation in organisations (Think Insights, 2022).

Digital Transformation and Innovation-Driven Work Practices

The other characteristic of the contemporary work practices in technology firms is the penetration of digital transformation into the routine organisational procedures. The digital platform, data analytics and electronic human resource management (e-HRM) systems are gaining popularity and are increasingly being utilized by modern firms in supporting collaboration and decision-making (Stachová et al., 2024). Empirical studies show that the implementation of digital HR solutions and data-driven technologies improves the organisational communication process and allows communication between employees of various departments (Bindel Sibassaha et al. 2025). In addition, the digital transformation projects tend to change the organisational culture as they promote transparency, flexibility, and lifelong learning among the employees. Such practices will help technology companies to be competitive and facilitate knowledge sharing and innovative behaviour among the employees.

Flexible and Hybrid Work Models

The introduction of flexible working arrangements has taken the center stage in the technology sector especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Many UK technology companies now operate hybrid working systems in which employees divide their time between remote and office environments. According to academic literature, hybrid work arrangements are said to enhance the flexibility and autonomy of employees and promote productivity and engagement when they are backed up with a robust leadership style and organisational culture (Ausare, 2024). Moreover, hybrid working has emerged as a permanent trend in the technological field because organisations are trying to strike a balance between teamwork, the welfare of employees, and the effectiveness of their operations (Lauring and Jonasson, 2024). Nevertheless, researchers also note that cooperative and innovative efforts are also problematic in the environment of hybrid working when communication and coordination across teams are not properly organized.

Altogether, the present trends in UK technology firms focus on the cultures that are innovation-oriented, digital transformation, and flexible work models as attempts to make organisations

become more agile, more engaged employees, and more competitive in the long term (Gibbs et al. 2024).

Cultural and Structural Initiatives to Embed Innovation

Innovation Sprints and Agile Experimentation

Incorporation of innovation in organisations through the use of innovation sprints, which are short and targeted cycles during which teams develop new ideas or products at very high pace and testing to refinements, is one of the initiatives. The practices are common in technology companies that follow agile innovation strategies since they promote experimentation, collaboration, and learning through failure. Studies have shown that agile innovation processes, such as sprint-based development and iterative experimentation, help organisations to be more responsive to market dynamics and can speed up products development (Umezurike et al. 2025). Also, the research on innovation management indicates that systematic innovation practices, e.g. agile and stage-gate models, can assist organisations to integrate innovation in their daily operations and strategic planning systematically (Pandey et al., 2025). Technology businesses can engage employees by introducing frequent innovation sprints which helps them to come up with innovative solutions to problems, institute novel ideas within a short period of time and keep on refining products and services.

Intrapreneurship and Entrepreneurial Culture

The other major project is coming up with intrapreneurship programmes that motivate the employees to be more entrepreneurial in the organisation. Intrapreneurship enables the employees to start new ideas, projects or business opportunities using organisational resources and capabilities. Recent studies prove that intrapreneurship is helpful in innovation and organisational renewal because it fosters proactive behaviour, creativity, and risk-taking in employees (Grebić et al. 2025). Moreover, research investigating technology start-ups shows that the entrepreneurial mindset and freedom of action supported by leadership styles can help to increase the innovative work behaviour and opportunity recognition of employees (Kiran, 2025). Thus, organisations can incorporate innovation by establishing internal entrepreneurship programmes, idea-generation platforms and innovation funding initiatives that enable employees to test new solutions.

Cross-Functional Collaboration Teams

Cross-functional teams are also structural programs that are imperative in promoting innovation in technology companies. Cross-functional teams are a group of employees that work together in teams comprising of employees that belong to various departments, including engineering, marketing, and design. Studies indicate that this type of multidisciplinary cooperation enhances the exchange of knowledge, communication, and generation of ideas, which are essential in producing innovation (Ilufeye and Giwah, 2025). Moreover, the research on innovation teams proves that the multidisciplinary teamwork allows organisations to become more agile and increase the capacity to create innovative services and products (Noorda, 2024). Technology organisations can minimise organisational silos, encourage innovation, and come up with cohesive solutions to complex business problems by setting up the cross-functional project teams.

Future of Work Model for Aether Innovations

To support innovation and organisational performance at Aether Innovations, it is recommended that the company adopts a hybrid work model that combines remote work flexibility with structured in-office collaboration. Hybrid working gives employees an opportunity to split their time between the office and distance work so that organisations get to enjoy the flexibility as well as the physical presence of each other (Lauring and Jonasson, 2024). It has been found that hybrid work practices enhance employee satisfaction, engagement and productivity since they allow greater autonomy and work-life balance, and still offer possibilities of teamwork and communication (Kusumawati, 2024).

For example, Aether Innovations could implement a “3-2 hybrid model”, where employees work three days in the office and two days remotely. In-office days will be dedicated to group work including brainstorming, innovation and team building sessions that are significant in sharing knowledge and creative problem solving. Researchers emphasize on the importance of physical contact in the process of generating ideas and engaging in group creativity, especially when solving a complicated problem is to be done (Grund et al. 2025; Tønnessen and Flåten, 2023).

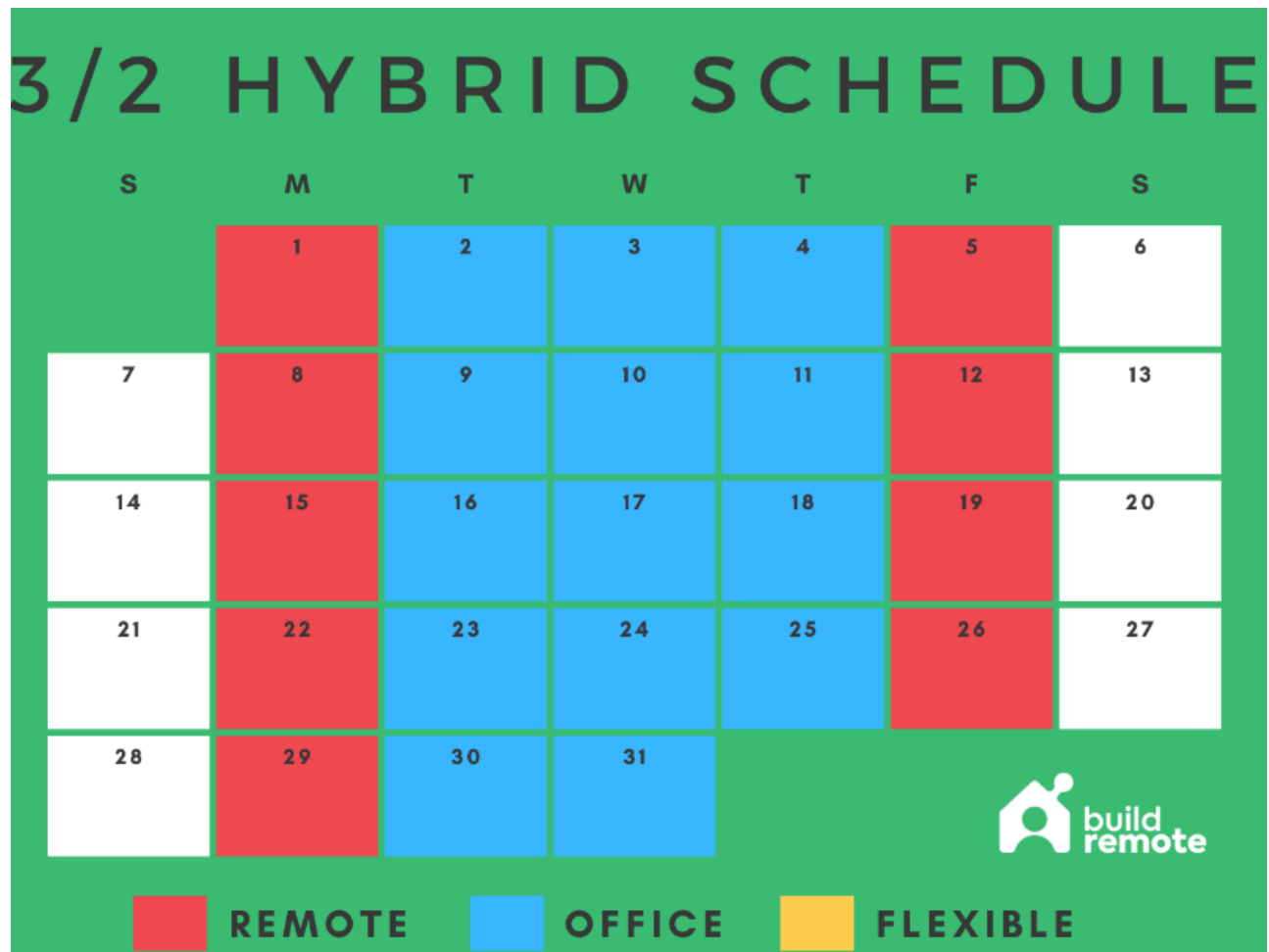


Figure 1 – Example of 3-2 hybrid model

(Source: O’Loughlin, 2023)

Figure 1 illustrates a typical 3-2 hybrid working schedule.

Meanwhile, telecommuting days can be used to make employees concentrate on specific tasks that need attention and independence. It has been shown that remote working can be more productive and engaging when organisations offer suitable digital resources, leadership assistance, and well-articulated communication frameworks (Sulaiman and Onah, 2025).

Thus, through organised team work in the offices and the ability to work remotely, Aether Innovations will be able to establish a moderated working environment that fosters innovative thinking, employee welfare, and organisational innovation in the long term.

Impact of the Proposed HR Strategy on Motivation and Performance

The proposed hybrid and innovation-focused work model is expected to significantly improve employee motivation and performance at Aether Innovations. Flexible working arrangements are capable of improving work-life balance and autonomy among employees, which are primary motivational and engaging factors in contemporary organisations. Empirical studies indicate that hybrid work models enhance employee engagement, output, and job satisfaction because they allow flexibility in terms of time and places of work without compromising on collaboration opportunities (Sari and Wening, 2025). In cases where employees feel increased autonomy and flexibility, chances are high that they will show a sense of commitment and continued performance. This may be further elaborated by the Self-Determination Theory which opines that the level of motivation among the employees grows when the following three psychological needs are fulfilled in the workplace namely, autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Moreover, the establishment of an organisation-based innovation environment is likely to promote an employee to produce new ideas and help improve the organisations. Research has shown that cultures of innovation and innovative work practices have a positive impact on employee creativity, engagement and the overall performance at work (Subramaniam, 2026). Moreover, positive leadership and team-based systems may reinforce the internal motivation of staff and creative behaviour that may deliver better individual and organisational performance (Wang et al. 2025).

These HR initiatives can also directly address the current challenges faced by Aether Innovations. Overall, the practices will make the workplace a conducive and encouraging working condition that will empower employees to work at the highest level.

Part 2

Reflection on Learning Journey Using Gibbs Reflective Cycle

Reflective learning has become a recognised method of professional growth since it enables one to reflect on the experiences and critically evaluate them to use the lessons gained in the future practice. The Reflective Cycle developed by Gibbs gives a guideline comprising of six steps including description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan, which allow one to reflect on their experiences and how they will behave and make decisions in future (Dhollande et al. 2025). The implementation of this model allows comprehending how the acquired knowledge in this Human Capital Management module can help me to create my own learning and development (L&D) strategy and develop a growth mindset.

The description stage focuses on identifying the learning experience. The module taught me different human resource management concepts including organisational culture, innovation management, employee motivation, and future of work. I have learnt about the effects of strategic HR practices on organisational performance, innovation, and employee engagement through the lectures, academic readings, and case analyses. Specifically, innovation culture and flexible work models' discussion allowed me to learn how organisations can become more creative and flexible in ever-changing business environments.

The feelings stage involves reflecting on personal reactions to the learning experience. At first the HR theories and strategic models were difficult to grasp since they involve the connection of theory with practical organisational activities. Nevertheless, towards the end of the module, I felt more confident to use these theories in the real world through the implementation of HR strategies in organisations with growth and engagement issues. The process has enabled me to have increased appreciation of strategic human capital management and how it contributes to organisational success.

The evaluation stage examines the positive and negative aspects of the learning experience. Among the most useful features of the module, one should mention the ability to solve actual organisational problems and suggest HR solutions to them. This allowed me to bridge the gap between theory and practice which is critical in a professional learning. Studies indicate that

reflective learning improves critical thinking, problem-solving and practice competence since people can process their experiences and come up with insights to improve (Ezezika and Johnston, 2023; Sheppick, 2024). Nevertheless, one of the issues that I had to face was the development of critical assessment of various HR practices instead of merely presenting them.

The analysis stage involves deeper reflection on what the learning experience means for my personal and professional development. The module identified that innovation-driven cultures, digital transformation, and flexible work arrangements are becoming essential in the success of organisations in a bid to stay competitive. The knowledge about these trends has made me realise the necessity of lifelong learning and flexibility in the contemporary workplaces. The very concept of reflective practice can also contribute to the professional development since it helps an individual learn through experiences and use the knowledge more efficiently in the future (Galli and New, 2022). This observation has made me consider learning as a process and not a single activity.

The conclusion stage summarises major lessons learnt during this learning process. Another key concept of this module is that the effective human capital strategies strongly affect innovation and organisational performance. To become productive in the contemporary organisations, an individual needs to develop a growth mindset, enhance his or her critical thinking abilities, and enroll in the lifelong professional growth.

Therefore, is the action plan stage wherein I will pay attention on the way I will use this learning in the future. To achieve the culture of innovativeness and lifelong learning in my personal growth and development, I will participate in continuous learning processes, by undertaking regular professional workshops, be part of HR-related training programmes, and go through the available literature on human resource management practices. I would also like to acquire reflective learning processes through the analysis of my work experiences and the areas of improvement. These strategies will help me to enhance my leadership skills, creativity, and strategic thinking, which will make me a useful member of innovative and dynamic organisations.

Staying Relevant in the AI Era and Using AI as a Support Tool

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) is changing the face of numerous sectors by

automating regular human duties, as well as redefining the conventional job descriptions. Nevertheless, instead of fully eliminating human labor, several researchers claim that AI will most probably complement human skills and contribute to an increased productivity provided that it is introduced in a reasonable manner (Wang and Lu, 2024; Sloan, 2025). As such, technological and human centred skills that enable people to work collaboratively with AI must be developed continuously so as to be relevant in the changing workplace.

One key strategy for remaining relevant is continuous learning and upskilling, is one of the methods of staying relevant. Research indicates that people who have a better understanding of AI and digital capabilities have higher chances of being effective in the new working environments and understand changes in technology (Portocarrero et al., 2025). Concurrently, human ability to be creative, think critically, emotionally intelligent, and communicate is also likely to be disproportionately appreciated since it is not readily imitable with AI systems (Hayes and Downie, 2025). The ability to develop such skills can help professionals to carry out such complex processes as strategic decision-making, problem solving, and leadership that are still primarily reliant on human judgement.

In my future professional practice, I intend to use AI as a support tool rather than a replacement for human expertise, AI can help with data analysis, accessing information and deriving the initial idea, which could be of great benefit in terms of efficiency and productivity. According to research, AI tools have the potential to enhance employee productivity and enable them to work on tasks with higher value that can be supported by creativity and innovation (Brynjolfsson et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, it is important to maintain human oversight and critical evaluation when using AI. Excessive use of AI can decrease independent thought and professional judgement. As such, I will incorporate AI applications with my personal analytical/creative capabilities, making the technology a complement and not a substitute of my job. Through the attitude of lifelong learning and responsible use of AI, I will be flexible and efficient in an ever more AI-centered work environment.

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