



**WORKPLACE INNOVATION MASTERCLASSES:
REVIEW OF IMPACT AND KEY LESSONS**

REPORT

FOR

SCOTTISH ENTERPRISE

BY

**Scottish Centre for Employment Research – *Innovating Works* Team
Strathclyde Business School
University of Strathclyde
199 Cathedral Street
Glasgow G4 0QU
Contact: colin.lindsay@strath.ac.uk**

30 July 2018

SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND

The Scottish Centre for Employment Research (SCER) has partnered with Scottish Enterprise during 2016-18 to design and deliver eight Workplace Innovation Masterclasses.

The aim and purpose of the Masterclasses was to bring together business innovators and academic researchers with an audience of business leaders, in order to: grow awareness of the workplace innovation agenda; share evidence on progressive workplace practices; identify lessons from cutting-edge research; and help to foster networks of stakeholders with a shared interest in workplace innovation.

The Masterclass series has brought together business leaders with academic research leaders from the UK and beyond. Extensive social media reporting has engaged with a broader audience of HR and business leaders and other key stakeholders.

The report reviews the impact of and key lessons from the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses. Specifically, the report seeks to:

- review evidence on the progress of Masterclass activities in addressing the aims outlined above;
- review levels of participation and (in person and online) network-building resulting from the Masterclasses;
- identify key 'take aways' and lessons for the broader workplace innovation agenda;
- explore need for/benefit from a dedicated online platform/alternative mechanisms for continued learning on workplace innovation;
- identify examples of improved awareness of the workplace innovation agenda among participants;
- identify examples of lessons on progressive workplace practice that have been considered and/or adopted by participating business leaders.

The methods deployed included:

- review of data on participation in Workplace Innovation Masterclasses;
- an evaluation survey of Workplace Innovation Masterclass participants;
- LinkedIn Discussion Forum inviting comment on lessons and reflections from Workplace Innovation Masterclasses;
- review of online networking and information-sharing activities;
- review of lessons/take aways from keynotes and employer-led discussions at Workplace Innovation Masterclasses;
- six in-depth interviews/engagements with business leaders participating in Workplace Innovation Masterclasses;
- reflection on discussions with Scottish Enterprise representatives.

Outputs will include:

- this report and a presentation to Scottish Enterprise;
- online blog-style report and social media awareness raising activities around messages from the research.

SECTION 2 – ABOUT THE MASTERCLASSES

2.1 Content and key take-aways

The Masterclasses aimed to engage business leaders and key stakeholders to discuss a range of dimensions of the workplace innovation agenda, and were successful in achieving this. In collaboration with Scottish Enterprise colleagues, the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses Team organised a linked series of events with distinctive themes ranging from the nexus between digital innovation and workplace innovation, to boundary spanning for innovation across organisations, to managing people for workplace innovation and beyond.

The Masterclasses were able to recruit keynote speakers from some of Scotland's **iconic and/or most innovative companies** including: Anderson Strathearn; Edrington; Michelin Dundee; MadeBrave; NCR; Standard Life Aberdeen; and The Weir Group. Recruiting senior leaders from companies of this calibre clearly added to the credibility of the Masterclasses and the quality of participants' experiences. There was also positive feedback from the inputs from **companies outwith Scotland that have a strong track record on innovation**, such as Capita and Vincit. There was a sense from feedback that very occasionally business keynotes were 'pitching' their own business too much, rather than sharing insights around workplace innovation, something that the series was successful in avoiding in most cases, and should be guarded against at such events.

The Masterclasses benefited from input from leading UK academic thought leaders, but also experts from Denmark, Hong Kong and the US. The insights of international academic speakers, like those of business leaders from outside Scotland, seemed transferable and there may be value in seeking to further **internationalise future activities** around workplace innovation targeted at Scottish business leaders. It is also worth noting that the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses Team went to some lengths to recruit world class academic keynote speakers. It was important that academics had significant expertise, a track record of engaging with business, and could 'speak human' (i.e. were able to communicate evidence from the research in an accessible and practical way). Considerable background research went into selecting **appropriate academic researchers** and to pre-event briefing so that the tone and format of inputs were a good fit.

There was a reasonable attempt at gender balance in the keynote speaker line-ups (9 men and 7 women made up the business keynotes; 5 men and 3 women made up the academic keynotes), but future activities in this area should continue to reflect on **gender balance and diversity issues**.

Most Masterclasses featured breakout sessions to provide an opportunity for audience members to network, share experiences and consider the implications of the keynotes' evidence for their organisations. These breakouts were welcomed by participants according to feedback. A lesson for similar future activities in this area might be to allow **more time for networking and/or breakout discussions**, although there is a need to balance opportunities for networking and engagement with the structured content (i.e. speakers) that participants also appear to value.

Evaluation evidence (see Section 3) suggests that the combination of business and academic leader keynotes were valued by participants, and this type of event has proved effective in engaging business leaders in networking, learning and ideas-sharing around workplace innovation.

Summary of Workplace Innovation Masterclasses content

Masterclass	Business keynotes	Academic keynotes	Other activities
(1) Workplace Innovation and Scottish Business	* John Reid, Michelin Dundee * Lindsay Macpherson, Royal Zoological Society for Scotland	* Prof Patricia Findlay, University of Strathclyde	* Breakout discussion * Introduction from Adrian Gillespie, Scottish Enterprise * Ministerial address from Paul Wheelhouse MSP
(2) Empowering Your Employees to Innovate	* Bernadette Malone, Perth and Kinross Council * Charlie Rohan, NCR	* Dr Peter Kesting, Aarhus University, Denmark	* Breakout discussion
(3) Shared Leadership for Innovation	* Stewart Bromley, Atom Bank * Marianne Heijnen, Hands On Talent, The Netherlands	* Dr Ashley Roberts, University of Warwick	* Sum up by Prof Patricia Findlay, University of Strathclyde * Breakout discussion
(4) Collaboration for Innovation	* Robert Carr, Anderson Strathern * Johanna Pystynen, Vincit, Finland	* Dr David De Geest, Hong Kong Polytechnic University	* Sum up by Prof Patricia Findlay, University of Strathclyde * Breakout discussion
(5) Workplace Innovation and Scotland's Digital Future	* Andrew Dobbie, MadeBrave * Catherine Howe, Capita	* Dr Nick Berente, University of Georgia, US	* Sum up by Prof Patricia Findlay, University of Strathclyde * Breakout discussion
(6) Managing People for Workplace Innovation	* Sandy Begbie, Standard Life Aberdeen * Prof Patricia Findlay, University of Strathclyde	* Dr Kristina Potocnik, University of Edinburgh	* Breakout discussion
(7) Breaking Through Boundaries for Workplace Innovation	* Veronika Gunn-Boesch, Edrington * Jim McHarg, The Weir Group	* Prof David Guest, King's College, London	* Panel Q and A
(8) Workplace Innovation for Shared Benefit	* David O'Byrne, Argenta * Paul Succony, Farne Salmon and Lyons Seafood	* Prof Patricia Findlay, University of Strathclyde	* Mini-presentations from panel of representatives from: Booth Welsh; Chivas Brothers; and Contagious

Attendances for the Masterclasses have been exceptionally strong. The initial tender and bid documents spoke of 120 attendees per year (i.e. across each four events) as an acceptable, while attendances have in fact far exceeded this target.

Attendees at Workplace Innovation Masterclasses

Event	Registered	Attended
Masterclass 1	55	35
Masterclass 2	83	55
Masterclass 3	92	59
Masterclass 4	83	74
Masterclass 5	85	59
Masterclass 6	65	38
Masterclass 7	100	81
Masterclass 8	73	--

* Data provided by Scottish Enterprise

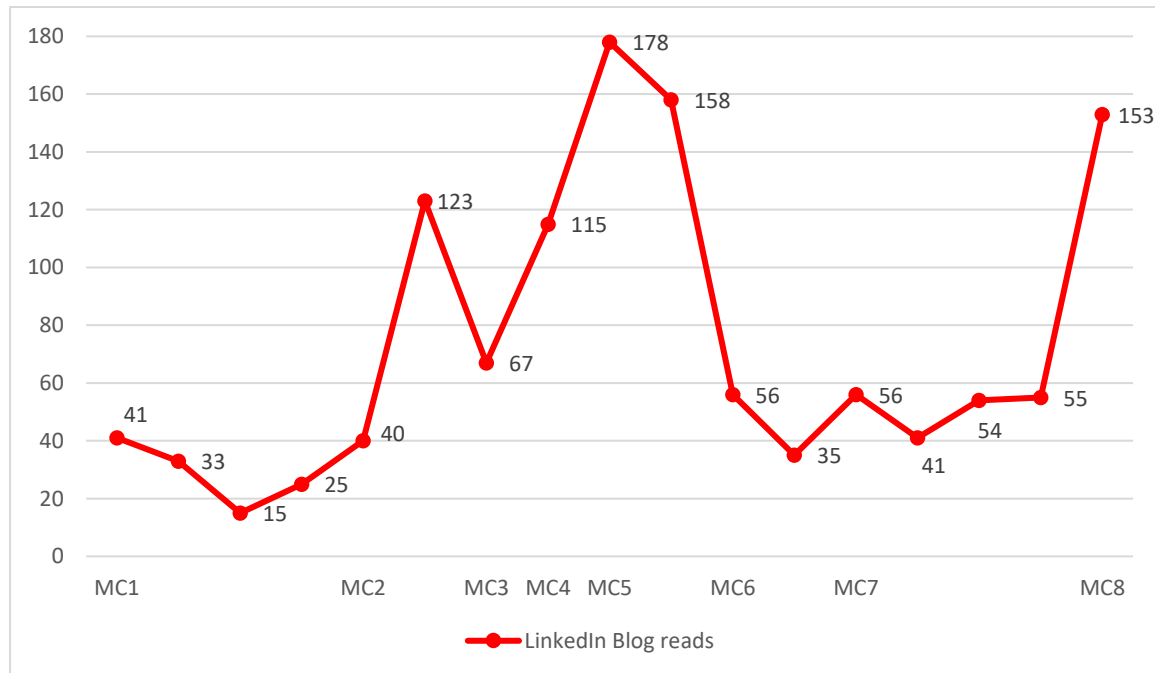
In terms of **key take-aways**, beyond the specific lessons that are identified in our [blog series](#), a recurring learning theme was the importance of integrating people and workplace-oriented approaches with strategies for innovation. Discussions consistently returned to themes of practices and structures in the workplace and how these can be used to empower people to innovate and deliver fair work. The Masterclasses also consistently engaged with the real, practical challenges faced by many business leaders in pursuing progressive workplace practices. Taken together, the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses made connections across a wide range of workplace practices that the evidence suggests can support creativity, better jobs and improved innovation performance in the workplace, including: job design and HR practices to support employee driven innovation (Masterclass 2); collaborative approaches to leading innovation (Masterclasses 3 and 6); and practices to support boundary spanning (Masterclasses 4 and 7). The Masterclasses also demonstrated the link between workplace innovation and both fair work and organisational performance – the ‘shared benefit’ at the heart of the Scottish approach to workplace innovation (Masterclasses 1 and 8). The Masterclasses also demonstrated that there is a keen interest among Scottish business leaders and managers in exploring workplace innovation, and that this sort of activity is an effective way of engaging substantial business audiences on these issues.

2.2 Online awareness raising

The Workplace Innovation Masterclasses Team committed to deploying online platforms and social media to foster engagement in the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses and broader

workplace innovation agenda. Seventeen LinkedIn blogs and notices have been written to raise awareness of the Masterclasses and discuss the evidence base. These appear to have been effective in engaging LinkedIn users on these issues. In total, notices and blogs related to the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses have gathered **1,245 ‘reads’** on LinkedIn.

Pattern in readership of LinkedIn notices and blogs on Workplace Innovation Masterclasses



The most popular blogs featured content related to Masterclass 4 on “Collaboration for Workplace Innovation” (the notice announcing the Masterclass was read 123 times; an analysis of the outcomes 115 times) and Masterclass 5 on “Workplace Innovation and Scotland’s Digital Future” (the notice announcing the Masterclass was read 178 times; an analysis of the outcomes 158 times). The blog discussing content linked to Masterclass 8 on “Workplace Innovation for Shared Benefit” also received a relatively large number of reads (153 between 4 July and 30 July 2018).

The Workplace Innovation Masterclass Team also established a LinkedIn Discussion group, which has so far seen relatively limited use. The LinkedIn Discussion group has gathered 73 members, but of the 21 posts on the site all but three have been posted by members of the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses Team. A review of the LinkedIn activity suggests that stakeholders do not have the inclination to use this element of social media as an active discussion forum, but have nonetheless **engaged positively with the content posted by the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses Team** (a view that is confirmed by the analysis of evaluation material in in Section 3, below – all survey respondents who were aware of the material on LinkedIn found the content useful and of practical value).

Finally, the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses Team used Twitter to raise awareness of the Masterclasses in the run-up to and during events. It is outwith the scope of this report to provide a detailed analysis of impact, but there appears to have been quite limited but nonetheless useful engagement. For example, on the days of and immediately around the final Workplace Innovation Masterclass, there were 33 tweets (mainly by the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses Team, but also by some participants) and 57 retweets. Many of the tweets/retweets from participants offered **positive reflections** on the content of the Masterclasses and are therefore of **reputational benefit**. Examples included:

Our MD Roger attended the excellent #WorkplaceInnovation Masterclass in Glasgow yesterday with some great keynotes and talks. Some fantastic food for thought @InnovatingWorks

Excellent presentations and speakers at today's event @scotent #WorkplaceInnovation @StrathBusiness Workplace #Innovation Masterclass With @UniStrathclyde @InnovatingWorks #collaboratetoinnovate ...

In summary, the planned activities around online awareness raising linked to the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses appear to have been effective in informing new, continuing and potential participants about the events and the issues at the centre of Scottish Enterprise's workplace innovation agenda. It may be that the level and type of business leaders and professionals targeted by the Masterclasses tend to use social media as a source of information rather than a platform for conversation, and that the Masterclasses themselves were seen as the forum for engaging in useful networking (this appears to be a positive finding from the evaluation data presented in Section 3). There may be value in further engagement with SE partners and business leaders on the most effective way to deploy social media to support awareness raising and networking around workplace innovation.

SECTION 3 – EVALUATION DATA

Scottish Enterprise gathered evaluation survey data on Masterclasses 1-7. We do not propose to repeat Scottish Enterprise's detailed analysis of these data here, but suffice to say that a review of survey responses across all of the first seven Masterclasses suggests that the vast majority of participants were positive about the quality of the speakers and the content of the Masterclasses. Comments elicited from these evaluation surveys regularly featured phrases such as "useful", "informative", "thought provoking" and "inspiring". There were also consistently positive comments about Scottish Enterprise's organisation of the event, the venue and the catering. The Scottish Enterprise survey data suggest slightly more mixed, but positive, responses around opportunities to network. As noted above, there may be scope to expand opportunities for informal networking at future workplace innovation-themed events.

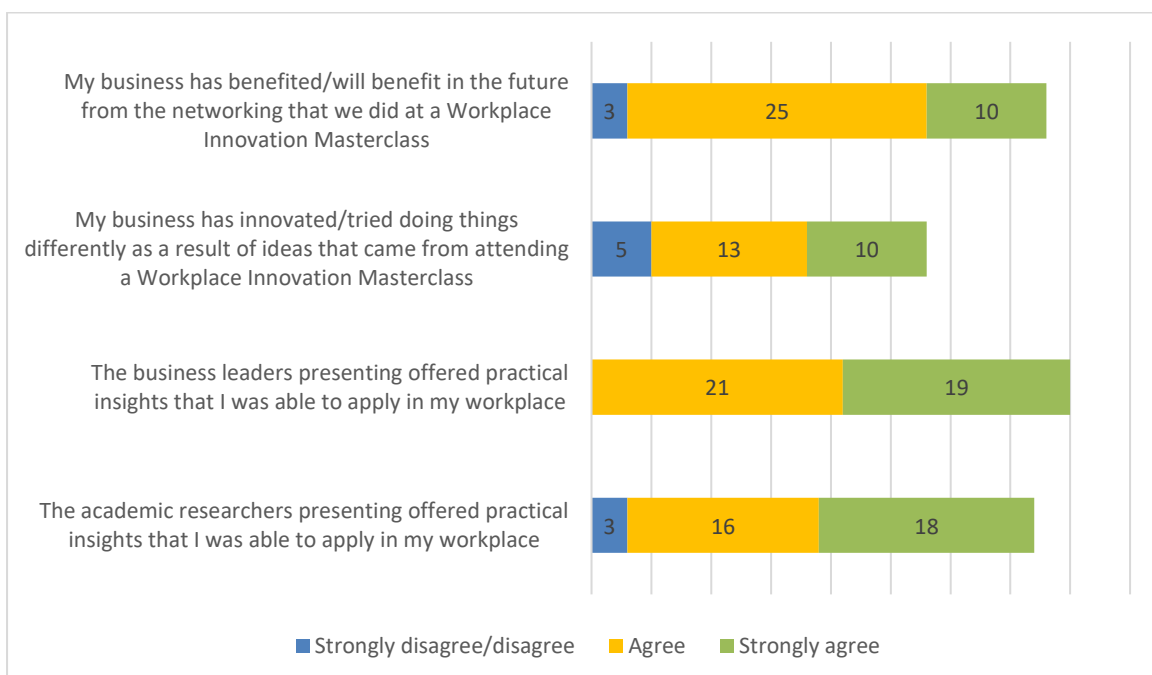
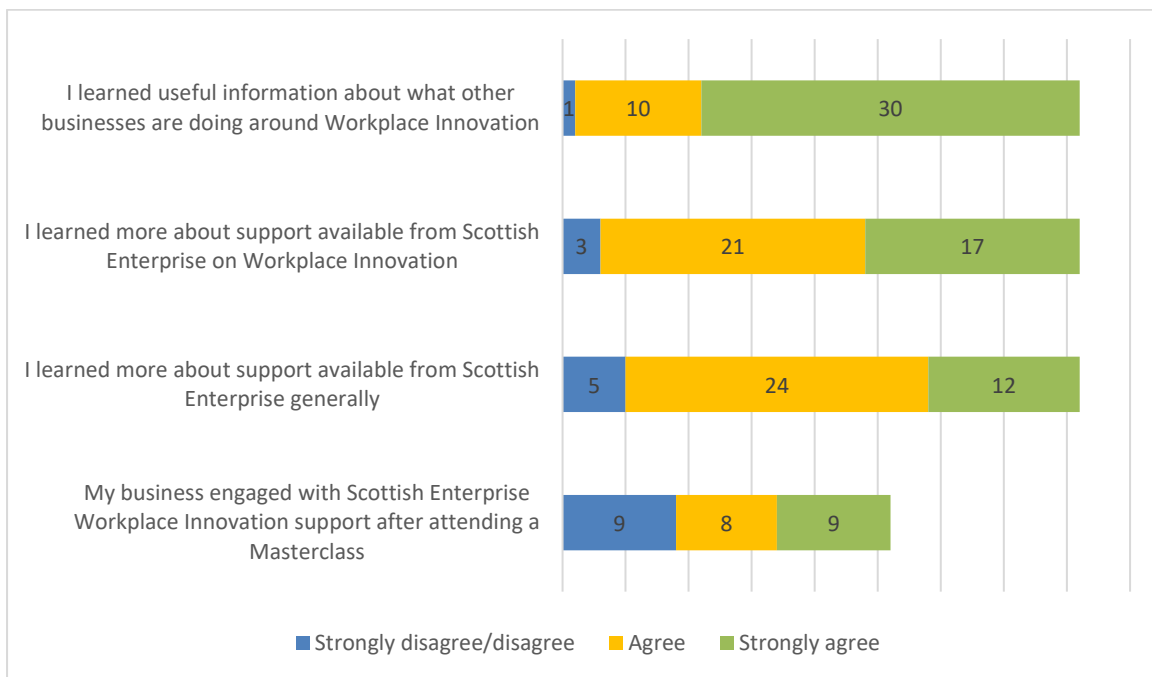
The Workplace Innovation Masterclasses Team issued a survey during the final Masterclass to gauge attendees' broader views of the value of the Masterclasses series as a whole. Survey responses were generally very positive about the learning opportunities provided by Masterclasses. The vast majority of survey respondents agreed that they were more aware of what other businesses were doing around workplace innovation. In terms of Scottish Enterprise's workplace innovation agenda, almost all survey respondents agreed that that they had learned about support available from Scottish Enterprise on workplace innovation issues and other services.

There were also very positive survey responses in relation to the content of presentations at Workplace Innovation Masterclasses. All survey respondents thought that the business leader keynote speakers offered practical insights that could be applied in the workplace. Perhaps even more encouragingly, almost all participants thought that the academic researchers presenting also provided practical insights of value in the workplace. As noted above, considerable effort went into identifying appropriate and engaging speakers from the business and academic communities, which appears to have paid off in the positive responses of Workplace Innovation Masterclasses participants.

In practical terms, the majority of survey respondents agreed that their "business has innovated/tried doing things differently as a result of ideas that came from attending a

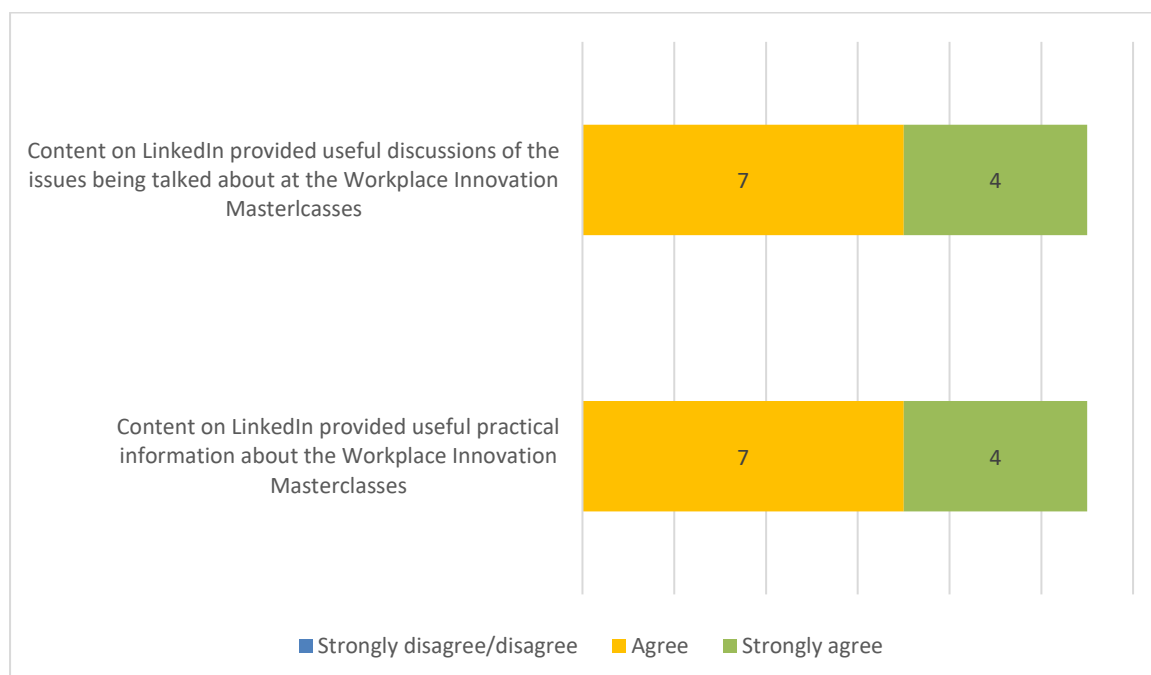
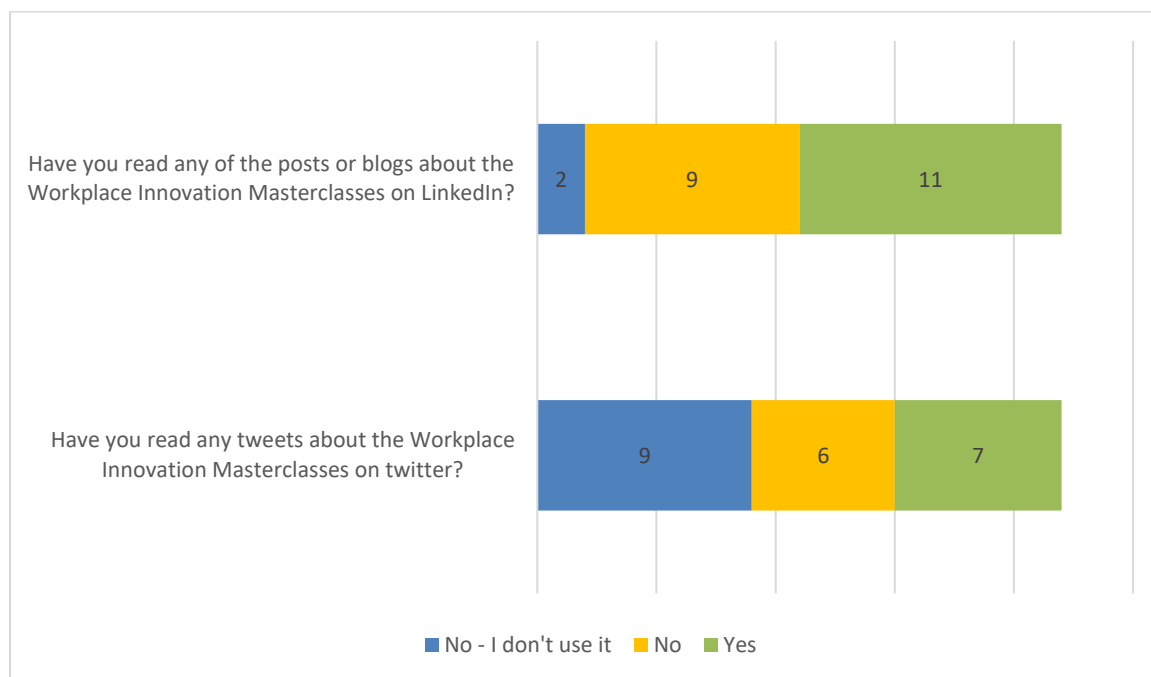
Workplace Innovation Masterclass”. In write-in boxes, some survey respondents offered specific examples of lessons learned around the importance of engaging employees, seeing HR as a service to empower staff, and considering how job design shapes opportunities to innovate. A clear recurring theme in comments was that Masterclasses empowered progressive managers by giving them examples and empirical evidence with which to challenge and engage with business leaders within their organisation on issues of workplace innovation. Finally, the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses were designed to offer opportunities for networking and ideas-sharing. Survey responses were again positive on this issue. Most respondents agreed that their business “has benefited or will benefit in the future” from the networking at a Workplace Innovation Masterclass.

Survey respondents’ views on Workplace Innovation Masterclasses



As noted above, those participants attending Masterclass 8 were also asked about their reflections on social media content related to the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses. We gathered fewer responses here, but the feedback was again broadly positive among those who had engaged with social media content. All of those responding that they were aware of the LinkedIn content thought that it offered practically useful information and a useful discussion of the issues.

Survey respondents' views on Workplace Innovation Masterclasses online content



As part of the evaluation process, **telephone interviews were conducted with six business leaders** who had attended more than one Masterclass. Interviews focused on:

what went well and/or could have been improved within Masterclasses; perceptions of the quality of content and speakers; engagement with online content; key take-aways and lessons learned; and views as to how Scottish Enterprise and partners should build on the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses series. Key findings from these interviews include:

- Interviewees thought that the general format for the Masterclasses – two business leaders plus one academic plus discussion – was appropriate and effective.
- Interviewees suggested that further discussion and networking could be supported at any similar future events, through more opportunity for facilitated discussion break-outs, or simply more time for informal networking.
- All interviewees suggested that the expertise and status of business leader keynotes, and the quality of their presentations, was a defining positive feature of the Masterclasses. Interviewees felt that practical lessons could be taken from the expert testimony of business leaders.
- Interviewees offered a number of examples of specific initiatives that had been undertaken within their businesses as a result of learning from Masterclasses: considering how to ensure that HR operated as a ‘service provider’ to staff; changing recruitment processes to emphasise creativity and innovation; training on cross-team collaboration and information-sharing; reviewing operational practices to facilitate learning across teams; and applying lessons on employer branding.
- More generally, interviewees spoke of the broader benefit of “having space to think about innovation” and “feeling energised” and “inspired” by Masterclass events.
- Interviewees gave examples of how the Masterclasses had enabled them to enlarge and diversify their business networks. The opportunity to come together with business leaders from different sectors – who nonetheless shared similar priorities and challenges – was seen as particularly positive.
- Interviewees generally thought that the input of academic speakers was engaging and positive, and commended the quality and practical focus of the presentations. As noted below, some interviewees thought that additional online materials might have helped to contextualise and add to the academic presentations.
- All interviewees agreed that the Masterclasses had improved or maintained their knowledge of services available from Scottish Enterprise, especially in the area of workplace innovation. A number of interviewees had engaged with other services supported by Scottish Enterprise, including the ‘Deeper Engagement’ and FITwork projects.
- Most interviewees thought that a positive feature of the Masterclasses was their varying locations, which increased networking opportunities and demonstrated Scottish Enterprise’s willingness to “get outside of the two cities”.
- There was an acknowledgement of the relatively low levels of engagement with online materials (even among those who had read and shared blogs and other online materials). Interviewees consistently argued that such online activity needs to be consistently resourced if it is to have more sustained impact – there needs to be consistent, regular blogging and sharing of content. Providing access to materials linked to the presentations (research papers or evidence summaries) was also seen as priority.
- A number of specific subjects were suggested for any future forums or events that Scottish Enterprise might consider holding in this area, including: supporting line managers to deliver workplace innovation; placing workplace innovation within the context of change management initiatives; further specific content on digital innovation (such as the most effective systems for tapping the digital innovation potential of a new generation of ‘information seeking’, networked employees); and linking workplace innovation to fair work/social responsibility agendas within businesses.
- Generally, there was strong support among interviewees for the continuation of networking and knowledge-sharing events on workplace innovation in this format or

other similar formats. Some interviewees suggested that follow-up content (in the format of workplace visits or online materials) could focus on 'How To' guides to applying the lessons discussed in Masterclasses.

In conclusion, the evaluation data gathered by both Scottish Enterprise and the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses Team point to a highly effective model of engaging business leaders and HR professionals on workplace innovation. Those attending Workplace Innovation Masterclasses appear to have been impressed by Scottish Enterprise's organisation of the events; they responded positively to the content and keynotes; and they valued opportunities for networking. There is evidence that participants took away learning that they were interested in applying in their businesses, and more broadly drew inspiration from the discussions and felt empowered to challenge existing practice among their colleagues. A number of comments in the write-in boxes of our evaluation survey advocated the continuation of and/or building on this type of activity in future.

SECTION 4 – CONCLUSIONS

The Scottish Enterprise Workplace Innovation Masterclasses were effective in achieving the stated aims of the programme: in assisting Scottish businesses and key stakeholders to share evidence and practice and network around the benefits and challenges of engaging with the workplace innovation agenda; and disseminating cutting edge research from UK and international business and academic thought leaders.

High levels of attendance at Masterclasses and strong engagement with online materials suggest that the programme of activities tapped in to, and fostered, increasing interest in the workplace innovation agenda. Evaluation survey responses evidence that lessons from the Masterclasses have the potential to influence workplace practice and have informed the thinking and approaches adopted by participants. Crucially, the level of engagement from business leaders, and the responses gathered from evaluation surveys, suggest that there is strong interest in sharing workplace innovation practice and evidence when presented in formats such as the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses.

Recommendations to be drawn from these findings might include that:

- Scottish Enterprise and partners should consider investments that can build upon the practice-sharing and network-building established by the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses.
- Scottish Enterprise and partners should consider other potential forums for employers to share lessons on progressive workplace practice around workplace innovation.
- Further consultation should be undertaken as to how best to use social media/web environments as a platform for information sharing and networking on workplace innovation.
- Scottish Enterprise and partners should consider how international evidence on workplace innovation can be shared so as to inform the practice and thinking of Scottish companies.
- Scottish Enterprise and partners should seek to maintain and support existing networks and relationships established through the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses.
- Scottish Enterprise and partners should share good practice around workplace innovation that has been informed by the Workplace Innovation Masterclasses and other initiatives supported by Scottish Enterprise.