Edition **Three**

uiq

Ultima

Insight Quarterly

Are you ready for the speed of technological change?

Technology has always been a driving force behind the transformation of industries, propelling us into new eras of innovation and growth. Over the past few decades, we have witnessed the rise of remarkable advancements that reshape the way we live and work and it's about to get faster.

As business leaders, I'm sure like me, you are thinking about how to take advantage of the new technology gamechanger of AI. On a daily basis, the media, social channels and the Government, are driving conversations on the power and potential of AI. At Ultima, AI in its various guises has been the foundation of our services proposition for several years.

As a result, in this issue of UiQ, we shine a light on key AI considerations and have invited leading independent provider of risk and financial solutions, Kroll to offer insights into AI and corporate risk. You'll also get a flavour for where we're heading with our new brand identity and introduce one of our newest partners, n2s, and our joint mission to achieve a more circular economy.

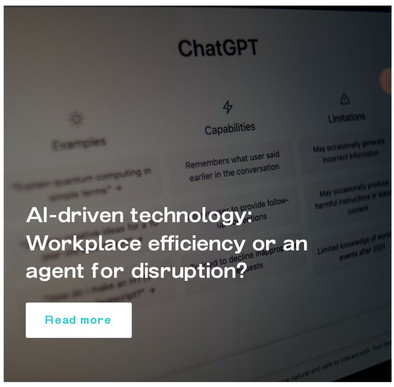
As ever, we urge you provide your feedback. What are you enjoying about UiQ and how can we improve the topics and insights we are providing to you? Both through this digital publication but also through new face to face executive roundtable or digital event engagements.

Kindest regards,

Scott

Scott Dodds,
Ultima CEO

In this **edition...**



AI-driven technology: Workplace efficiency or an agent for disruption?

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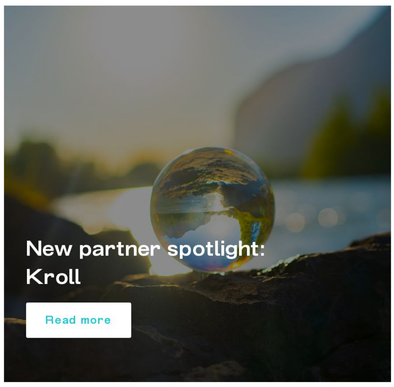

New partner spotlight: Kroll

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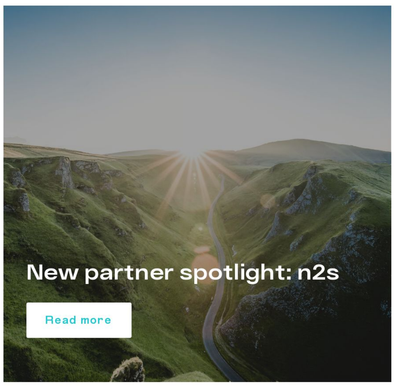

New partner spotlight: n2s

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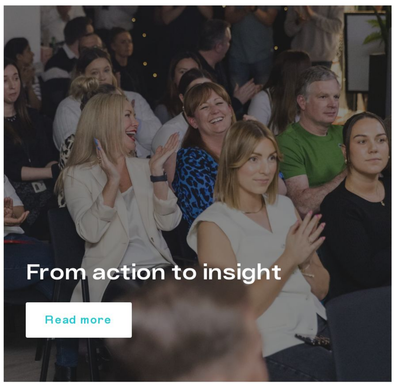

From action to insight

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Microsoft news

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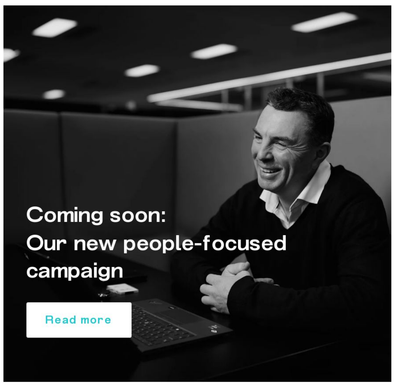

Coming soon: Our new people-focused campaign

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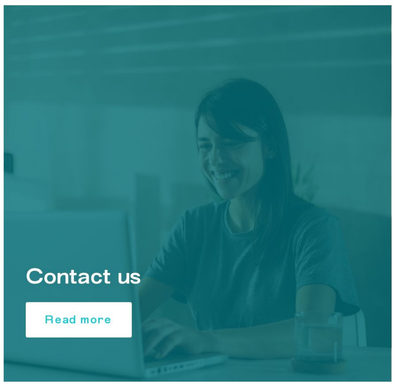

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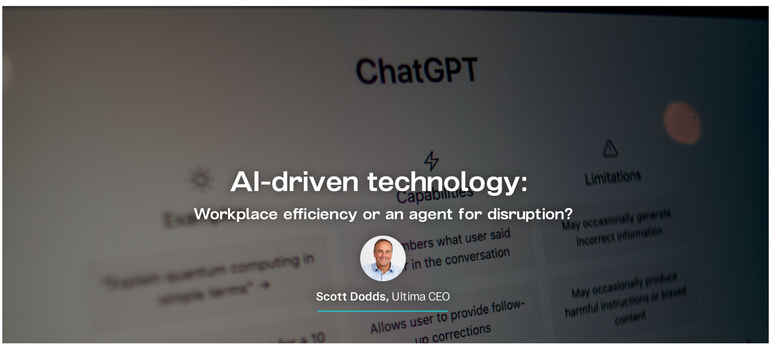


AI-driven technology:

Workplace efficiency or an agent for disruption?

Scott Dodds, Ultima CEO

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, the impact of AI-driven technology such as ChatGPT, on workplace dynamics cannot be ignored. But is it a gift or a curse to individual thought? And does it really help with productivity or at some stage, will it take over the need for human contribution, collaboration and problem solving?

As a C-level executive, it is crucial to critically evaluate the role of AI and determine whether it brings about workplace efficiency and scalability – or simply acts as an agent for disruption. Furthermore, if it is deemed to be a disruptor, how do you find ways to use it to your advantage?

Let's explore the topic and find out how to get AI onside.

The obvious advantages

→ Scalability and adaptability

Alongside efficiency, AI offers the ability to improve scalability and adaptability. From customer service chatbots to intelligent data analysis, AI empowers businesses to handle increasing volumes of data, customer enquiries, and complex tasks with ease. A good example here would be in the e-commerce industry, where AI-driven recommendation engines analyse customer preferences and behaviour to provide personalised product suggestions – scaling customer engagement and improving sales.

→ Enhanced decision-making

Another obvious advantage of AI that is perhaps most pertinent to corporate leaders is enhanced decision-making. Who would not welcome better business analytics and predictive modelling or valuable insights for informed decision-making? By analysing vast amounts of data, AI can uncover patterns, trends, and correlations that may not be readily apparent to human analysts. This empowers us to make data-driven, strategic decisions for our organisations.

→ Workplace efficiency

AI has the potential to revolutionise workplace efficiency by automating repetitive tasks and streamlining day to day processes.

→ Accuracy

By leveraging machine learning algorithms, businesses can also achieve higher levels of accuracy, speed and productivity in various operational areas. A notable example would be in the manufacturing industry, for instance, where AI-powered robots automate repetitive assembly line tasks, leading to increased production speed and accuracy.

It all sounds great doesn't it? So, what's the catch?

Demystifying the perceived problems

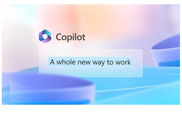
Much of the way we think about AI is shrouded with negativity – mostly related to the disruption it may cause. And of course, there's the most natural and immediate reaction, which is always: Will it replace me at work? However, I believe it's up to us to look at the situation from a positive point of view, rather than through a negative lens, so let's demystify some of the common perceived problems:

Disruption in job roles

While AI enhances workplace efficiency, it can definitely disrupt traditional job roles – but this doesn't have to be a bad thing. Yes, automation may replace certain repetitive tasks, leading to concerns about job displacement. However, I believe that business decision-makers must proactively address these challenges by reskilling employees and identifying new roles that align with the evolving technological landscape.

Let's not forget that once upon a time, in the advent of agricultural machinery, many farmers feared that their roles would become redundant. What really happened is that the machinery only made them more efficient – and enabled them to be more productive in other areas.

A modern-day example can be found in the healthcare industry, where AI-driven diagnostic tools are assisting doctors in analysing medical images, reducing the time taken for accurate diagnosis – and allowing healthcare professionals to focus on treatment planning and patient care. This kind of disruption can be good, if we work with technology, not against it.



Microsoft's use of the word 'Copilot' for their AI services is deliberate and accurate. The AI enhancements to their suite of software products are designed to support huge efficiency and optimisation for their human counterparts not to replace them.

Modern aircraft have for many years been able to handle take-off, flight paths and landings using software/AI alone, but would you feel happy flying in a plane with no human backup? I know I wouldn't be comfortable yet. There is no doubt that many roles will be disrupted or changed but this is the natural outcome of progress. How many jobs that were around when I started in the tech industry in the 80s are around today? Not many, and yet the market for technology skills continues to grow exponentially.

Ethical concerns

AI raises ethical concerns surrounding data privacy, bias and transparency. C-level executives therefore need to ensure that AI-driven technologies align with their business' ethical standards and are developed and implemented responsibly.

Building trust and transparency in AI systems is crucial for long-term success. A good example can be seen in social media platforms, which employ AI algorithms to detect and remove inappropriate content, ensuring user safety and adherence to community guidelines.

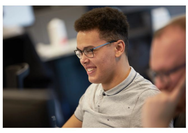
Replacing human interaction

Rather than viewing AI as a replacement for human workers, we need to see it as having the power to augment human capabilities – allowing employees to focus on complex problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking.

Take the customer service industry, for instance, where AI-powered chatbots handle routine customer enquiries, freeing up human agents to address complex customer issues, resulting in improved service quality and efficiency.

Early adopters could gain a head start in the market, improving customer experiences and decision-making capabilities.

C-level executives must carefully evaluate AI's potential impact on their industry and explore strategic implementation opportunities.



Does anything really take the place of human interaction? I don't think so: people buy from people.

But that's why business leaders must carefully evaluate AI's potential impact on their industry and explore strategic implementation opportunities. In the retail industry, AI-powered demand forecasting models do a great job of analysing historical sales data, market trends and external factors to optimise inventory management – minimising stockouts and maximising profitability.

The fear factor

Business decision-makers can play a pivotal role in addressing concerns by fostering a culture of learning, providing clear communication, and demonstrating the benefits of AI implementation in improving employee experiences and driving business growth.

In other words, it's up to us to put a positive spin on AI.

By staying updated with emerging AI trends, monitoring industry developments and fostering an agile mindset, businesses can maximise the benefits of AI-driven technology while mitigating potential disruptions. However, AI is not a product.

We learnt several years ago in the early days of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) that to get to the full benefits of automation the software is the easiest part. The difficulty is understanding your organisations processes and the way humans interact with the plethora of corporate systems.

It becomes a cultural and to some extent political challenge to manage change in any organisation at scale. This will be exactly the same for AI. Any change will be a cultural discussion from the top of the organisation down. To really understand the potential benefits and potential risks of AI is a C-level challenge, not just a CIO challenge. Everyone will have to be aware of the impact and the changes required to thrive in the AI age.

Cyber risk

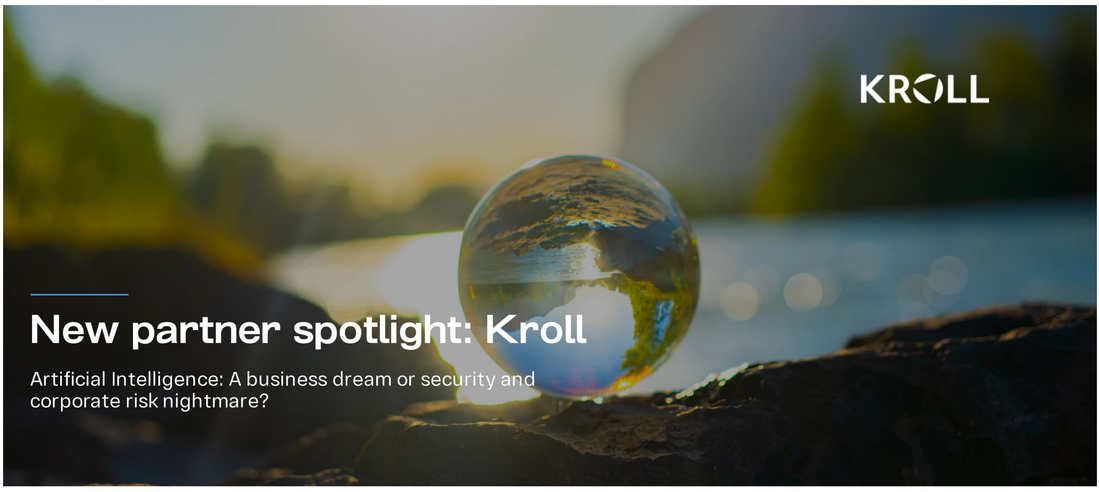
As AI Large Language Models (LLMs) excel at replicating writing styles on demand, there is a risk of criminals using LLMs to write convincing phishing emails, including emails in multiple languages. This may aid attackers with high technical capabilities but who lack linguistic skills, by helping them to create convincing phishing emails (or conduct social engineering) in the native language of their targets.

For more complex tasks, it's currently easier for an expert to create the malware from scratch, rather than having to spend time correcting what the LLM has produced. Therefore, the risks of smarter social engineering attacks will increase exponentially, which will demand that organisations are constantly alerted to the latest threats through evergreen training and awareness. At Ultima our services include social engineering risk assessments and learning systems through our AntiSocial Engineer division.

Conclusion: AI needs HI (Human Intelligence)

AI-driven technology has the potential to bring about substantial workplace efficiency and scalability but disruption in mindset, management and cultural challenges need to be considered in its implementation.

My conclusion? AI is most effective when combined with HI (Human Intelligence). Business leaders must carefully assess their organisation's needs, understand the potential benefits and risks of AI, and develop a strategic approach to effectively leverage its capabilities. At Ultima, we have the expertise to help you do all of that – and more.



New partner spotlight: Kroll

Artificial Intelligence: A business dream or security and corporate risk nightmare?

There is little doubt that AI, widely acknowledged as tech's biggest game-changer, is destined to play an important role in the public and private sector. Yet while organisations are quick to explore its advantages, they are perhaps less swift to acknowledge its potential security and corporate risks.

From utilising chatbots for developing malicious code, phishing emails, and malware to experiments in creating dark web marketplaces, threat actors are innovating with AI at a pace that is at par, or even faster, than businesses. While AI poses a generalised security threat to all organisations and consumers, the rush to develop AI systems and tools in-house has its own pitfalls.

Chatbot Social Engineering (CSE)

The use of generative AI (e.g., AI-infused chatbots) can do a great job of interacting with customers in their natural language. However, without due diligence and effective guardrails in place, it can set the scene for what we at Kroll call CSE, where carefully worded enquiries are used to draw out potentially sensitive information from an AI system. Whether that means pinpointing someone's private address or gaining access to details of a customer order and use that information to defraud the person out of money, the potential risks created using CSE are boundless.

Wider threats to consider

Beyond the immediate security threats, the use of AI as a business resource presents a wider threat to the security of companies' legal integrity and public reputation, with knock-on effects on their financial standing. Because technology does not exist in a vacuum, all systems operate under national and multinational laws, already adapting in response to the rise of AI.

Organisations that build an AI system that do not consider the laws in their jurisdiction might find themselves in an increased risk of litigation. An over-reliance on ChatGPT, for example, has led a New York lawyer to face a possible sanction over the use of AI-generated citations.

To mitigate these potential risks, ensure that your approach to AI is defined at board level.

Involve your legal advisors from day one so that planning and execution stages are monitored, giving you advice on how to avoid key pitfalls along the way. Good counsel should be able to stay in touch with the fast-moving changes in AI and keep you up to date. Also consider having a member who is fluent in cybersecurity, such as a compliance officer, to ensure that you will have all the relevant evidence documented in the event of effective defence in litigation.

Organisations must develop a robust, well-informed approach to prepare for the risks of AI, which offers incredible potential for many areas of business. Failing to do so could mean that their AI dream becomes a business nightmare.

Edward Starkie,

Associate Managing Director, Cyber Strategy and Risk Consulting, Kroll

KROLL

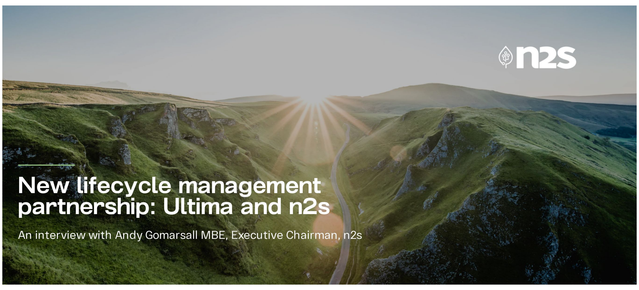
Kroll is a renowned leader in security and risk management. With a rich legacy spanning several decades, Kroll and Ultima's partnership will focus on combining cutting-edge technology, deep expertise and solutions that address diverse security challenges, ranging from cyber threats and fraud to physical security breaches and reputational risks.

Learn more

Safeguard your organisation with expert protection from Ultima

Whether you need to tackle a specific concern, or are looking to evolve your security strategy so it's fit for purpose in the digital world, this guide demonstrates how Ultima will help keep your business resilient in our unpredictable times.

Read our guide



New lifecycle management partnership: Ultima and n2s

An interview with Andy Gomarsall MBE, Executive Chairman, n2s

Andy, how will the partnership between n2s and Ultima support the ESG agenda that all businesses need to embrace?

E-waste is one of the earth's fastest-growing environmental issues. According to the UN, up to 50 million tonnes of e-waste is produced each year globally and only 20% of this is ethically recycled.

The UK are the worst offenders of hoarding technology. All organisations are exposed to regulatory compliance, have concerns about securely disposing of data and worry where their equipment will end up.

Other common ESG concerns, and pain points include sustainability goals driven by shareholders, the desire to learn more about reducing and measuring their carbon footprint to achieve net-zero targets, and the need to measure and report their scope 3 contribution to the board.

Since Covid-19 and the shift in the ways we work, some clients now have the mandate and budget from the board to refresh their large legacy tech estates and need quick, easy, secure, and cost-effective technology replacement or disposal services.

This is where we can help! n2s has over 20 years' experience managing complex and large-scale technology relocations, decommissions and disposal projects. We put sustainable practices at the forefront of our processes, by reusing, refurbishing, and remanufacturing wherever possible.

And when reuse is no longer viable, we extract as much value as possible, from every device, to contribute to the circular economy.

Above all else, a common need across all companies that we work with is the want for more information on how to securely dispose of IT equipment and data, in a sustainable way that supports their companies ESG vision. Ultima are supporting us in this journey.

What are the three things that every business customer should consider over the next 12 months?

As businesses navigate the transition toward circular economy and decarbonising technology, I see three important areas for the next year:

1. Sustainability strategy:

Businesses should develop or enhance their sustainability strategies, incorporating circular economy principles and decarbonisation goals.

2. Product lifecycle assessment:

Conducting comprehensive lifecycle assessments (LCA) is crucial. This helps businesses understand the environmental impact of their products or services throughout their entire lifecycle, from raw material extraction to disposal. By identifying hotspots and opportunities for improvement, businesses can make informed decisions to reduce their carbon footprint and optimise resource use.

3. Collaboration and partnerships:

Collaborating with stakeholders across the value chain is essential for driving circular economy and decarbonisation efforts. Businesses should actively seek partnerships with suppliers, customers, industry peers and policymakers. Collaborative initiatives can enable knowledge sharing, innovation, and the development of collective solutions to common challenges. My view is that while we offer the technology and services to communicate, we need to collaborate more with our future decision makers and bring into the fold experts across other parts of the business, for instance sustainability.

By considering these three aspects, businesses can align their operations with sustainable practices, reduce their carbon emissions, and contribute to the circular economy transition. It is important to continuously assess and adapt strategies as the field of sustainable business evolves.

What are the sustainability issues that come with technology acceleration (e.g., AI)?

The increasing amount of data generated and processed worldwide will have certain impacts on our planet. Just think about the energy consumption that's aligned to the increase in data centre demand, which leads to effects such as natural resource utilisation, water usage, e-waste and therefore increases our carbon emissions in this current linear economy.

Addressing these impacts requires a combination of sustainability strategies, such as improving energy efficiency in data centres, transitioning to renewable energy sources, implementing sustainable waste management practices, and promoting responsible and circular e-waste recycling.

Are there any industries that could see immediate returns from end-to-end recycling?

The recycling and circular economy has the potential to benefit various industries. We see it firstly in manufacturing, especially with metals. By designing products for durability and disassembly, manufacturers can reduce waste and lower production costs. This is especially true for the electronics and technology sector. After all, technology is part of our everyday lives, from our watches to our phones, to the services we rely on in the cloud. The electronics industry can adopt circular economy principles by designing products for repair, reuse and recycling.

Can you give us a success story between n2s and Ultima?

A great example of success with Ultima was winning and delivering a transformation service to Admiral insurance that was recognised and nominated in the CRN's sustainable customer project of the year.

Our services included decommissioning and logistics from 21 sites, 16,853 assets, including **7,421 monitors, 7,050 desktops** and **2,275 laptops** – totalling 84 tonnes of equipment, the weight of 7 double decker buses!

96% of all the equipment was successfully re-used and we calculated this was the equivalent of taking 2,321 cars off the road, equalling 5,052 tonnes of CO_2 avoided.

When standards are administered in the reporting of circular economy, this also had the benefit of avoiding 10,103,952 litres of water as this is what would have been used to manufacture new equipment for another client. This helps us support Ultima's UN Sustainable development goals that elevate us as a supplier into clients for ESG and sustainability.

7,421 monitors

7,050 desktops

2,275 laptops

84 tonnes

96% of equipment re-used

5,052 tonnes of CO_2 avoided

As an individual who is no stranger to working within a competitive environment, what do you believe makes n2s stand out from the crowd?

In an industry lacking innovative solutions, we believe our methods of precious and critical metal recovery are spearheading the future of metal recycling and re-manufacturing, which is helping kick-start the circular economy.

We have also helped developed bioleaching techniques that recover gold and precious metals from redundant technology parts, including circuit boards. Using low carbon bioleaching techniques, we continue to join up supply chains – we strive to contribute towards lowering the carbon footprint of products by reducing the demand for virgin materials.

A great example of this is our part in BT Groups manifesto and Innovation Martlesham's circular economy. Last year we were able to take 248 tonnes of PCBs and 277 tonnes of cable and turn this into 255 tonnes of pure copper. This would take an estimated 35,000 tonnes of copper ore to yield the same amount via traditional mining! And in 2022 alone our precious and critical metal recovery solutions avoided carbon emissions of c. 678.3 tonnes/CO_2e.

Andy, please tell us a little bit about n2s and your vision...

Our vision is to re-define the technology lifecycle to create a holistic ecosystem required to sustain the circular economy. Our game-changing approach makes n2s the only one-stop partner for organisations wanting to securely, compliantly, and sustainably prove their contribution to circularity.

Our mission is to become the most trusted partner for Information Technology Asset Disposal (ITAD) and recycling. We collaborate with large organisations to ensure sustainability, security, and compliance at every stage of the circular technology lifecycle. Our robust and auditable approach to technology lifecycle management guarantees information security, maximises material recovery, and mitigates risk.

We empower our customers to deliver metrics that support net-zero targets to regulators, key corporate stakeholders, and their clients. This is needed so they can fully defend their information security compliance and evidence their claims around e-waste, carbon footprint and contribution to the circular economy.

n2s are a highly-accredited company with over 20 years' experience in Technology Lifecycle Management (TLM) solutions. Their sustainable approach to TLM means they maximise material recovery and residual value from IT at every stage of its lifecycle.

Learn more

Microsoft news

Our new Microsoft webinars series in May and June have been rated highly by attendees for providing essential information in an easy to consume way. Feedback has also credited the session as time 'well invested'.

The series continues in July.

Register now

12th July, 10am-11am:

Navigating the world of Microsoft licensing

Gain the insights and best practices that can help you navigate the complexities of Microsoft licensing and support your Microsoft investment.

Register now

16th August, 10am-11am:

The future of Microsoft licensing: trends and predictions

Learn about the latest trends and predictions for Microsoft licensing, as well as the potential implications for your business or organisation.

Register now

From insight to action

Our commitment to improving customer value

"At the heart of every business should be a culture that drives behaviours that are genuinely curious about its customers. Everyone should listen to their customers, get to know them and create connections with them one conversation at a time. Show your human side, show them you care, and then act with integrity to make things happen."

James Hunnybourne, CRO, Ultima

This June, we're introducing Ultima's first annual "Voice of the Customer Insight" survey, an important part of our UiQ Executive Customer Engagement Programme.

At Ultima, our culture is informed by a drive to act proactively to how our customers feel about the quality of the end to end solutions and services we deliver and to constantly ask what we can do differently to improve the experience even further.

This is because we believe that by listening to our customers, getting to know them, creating valuable connections and acting in partnership and with integrity, we can make things happen with outcomes that matter.

Our 2023 Voice of the Customer survey is about gaining those opinions on what and how Ultima can support business decision makers and technology leaders to deliver maximum return on technology investment and value.

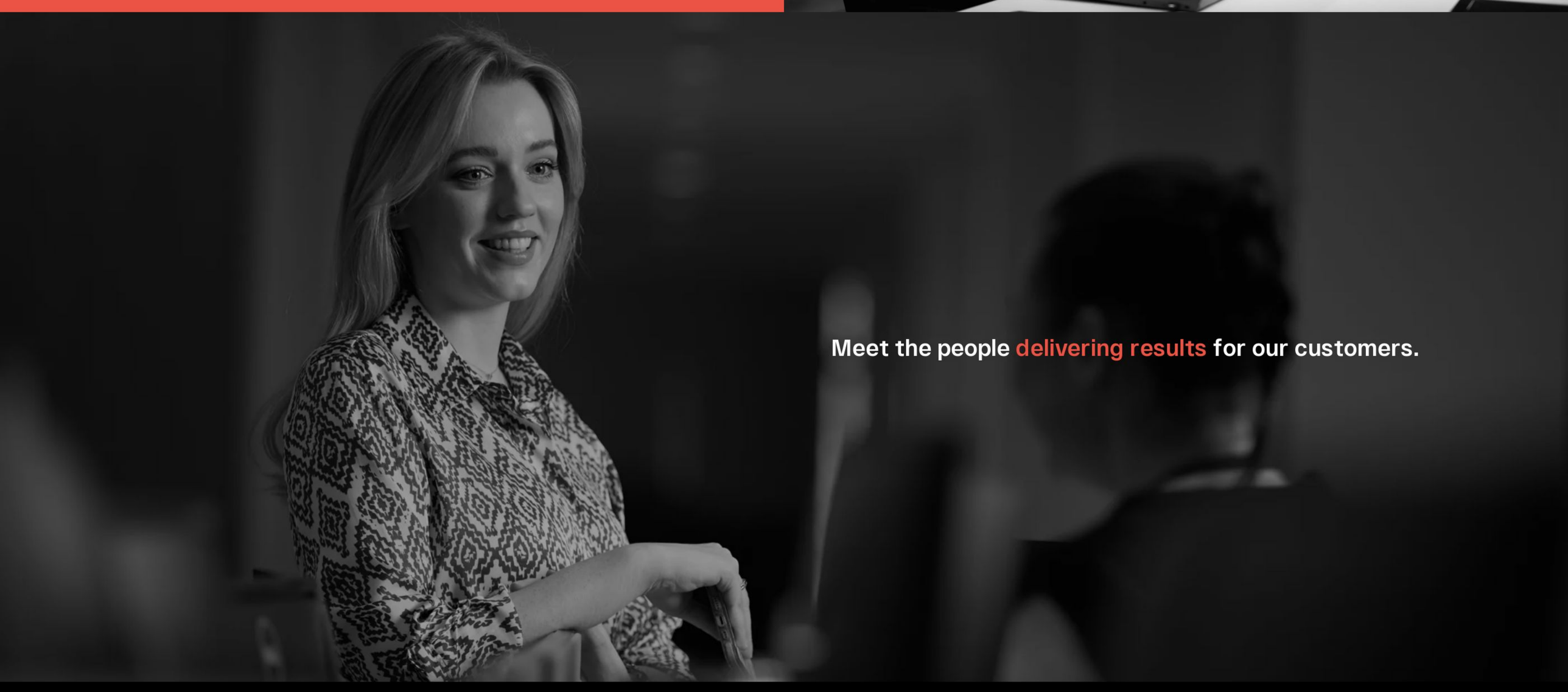
If you would like to provide your thoughts please contact your Ultima Account Manager.

Coming soon: Our new people-focused campaign

Empowered people. Powerful outcomes.

Across cloud, security and digital workspace, we empower our teams to create innovative solutions and managed services that address today's unique business challenges, enable resilience, reputational health and support sustained success in an ever-evolving digital landscape.

We are a community of people that do not just use our knowledge and dedication to deliver powerful outcomes but are a band of warriors, a team of champions and a group of customer heroes focused on putting business success first.



Meet the people delivering results for our customers.

Look out for our brand campaign, coming very soon.