

THE BITCOIN EFFECT

Will cryptocurrencies fulfil their potential?

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[Cryptocurrencies](#) such as Bitcoin provide a secure system for storing and exchanging money on the internet. Cryptocurrencies are not regulated or controlled by any bank, government or centralised financial authority, and offers users a range of advantages over traditional banking (such as anonymity, secure transactions, low transaction fees and no forgery).

Bitcoin, invented in 2009, was the first cryptocurrency but is not the only one. By the end of 2017, there were over 1,000 cryptocurrencies and [significant volatility](#) the market; largely because of continuing [speculation](#).

A number of leading retail websites [accept cryptocurrencies](#) and they are now beginning to be accepted in the [physical world](#) too. There is even a small but growing network of Bitcoin ATMs in the UK.

Running counterintuitively (perhaps) to the provenance of cryptocurrencies, the Bank of England is currently investigating the possible introduction of a [cryptocurrency linked to sterling](#). A Bank of England issued digital currency would potentially allow British citizens to keep their money in digital form with the central bank itself, dispensing with the need for a retail bank. Big ticket transactions, such as buying a house, could happen in nanoseconds.

The founders of Ethereum, a leading cryptocurrency, fund a research lab (one of two globally) at Edinburgh University that focuses on blockchain technology; other universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, are introducing courses in the technology. A news report in the San Francisco Chronicle on 5 June 2018 indicates that US universities are starting (tentatively) to invest in cryptocurrencies.

WELLBEING AT WORK

A healthy workplace attracts talent

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The [Work Colleague Of The Future](#) report published in 2019 looks at what office workers might look like in 20 years. The report is accompanied by a life-size doll, Emma, who models the future. She is hunched, has varicose veins, eczema, sallow skin, red eyes and a protruding stomach.

Emma may be an exaggerated portrayal but she is a wake-up call for employers and office workers on the long-term effects of sitting at a desk, staring at a screen, and failing to manage stress and find a healthy work-life balance.

A holistic approach to wellbeing at work is vital to ensure workers remain happy, healthy and productive. Although a supportive corporate culture is the most important aspect of wellbeing – a bullying boss is top of the list for causes of ill health in the workplace according to a number of studies – good office design, backed up by a carefully curated selection of amenities, can boost health and happiness in the workplace.

With growing competition to attract talent, firms are increasingly focusing on improving their working environment. [One survey found](#) 93% of tech workers said they would stay longer with a company offering options such as wellness rooms for yoga, meditation and healthy eating option than with those that don't.

[The World Green Building Council](#) has devised seven categories to use in promoting workplace wellness: Air – improving air quality; Water – maintaining hydration; Nourishment – providing healthy eating options; Light – boosting natural light and improving artificial light; Fitness – encouraging physical activity; Comfort – using ergonomically designed furniture and layouts, and Mind – improving mental health.

FURTHER READING

