



# Technological change with workers in mind:

A toolkit for workers, trade unions and organisations supporting hospitality workers

January 2026

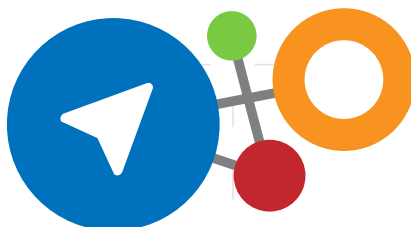
**Technology brings numerous affordances.** It can save time and simplify tasks. It can improve communication between co-workers, managers and customers. It can also help manage operations, simplify shift allocation, automate bookings and speed up payments. Hospitality workers generally appreciate the technological tools they use at work and how these support them in everyday work.

**However, technology also brings unintended negative consequences.** It can add more work, make tasks more complicated, shifts more intense and more stressful, and be used to overly monitor worker performance. Too much technology can disconnect workers from their customers (and vice versa) and alienate them. Resulting in anxiety about their jobs and feeling undervalued.

When not managed and implemented with workers in mind, new technologies can reduce the ability of workers to make independent decisions, take away their sense of autonomy, affect their well-being, confidence, job satisfaction and motivation to stay.

This document aims to help hospitality workers, worker organisations, and trade unions identify and respond to these tech-related challenges in a productive and meaningful way.

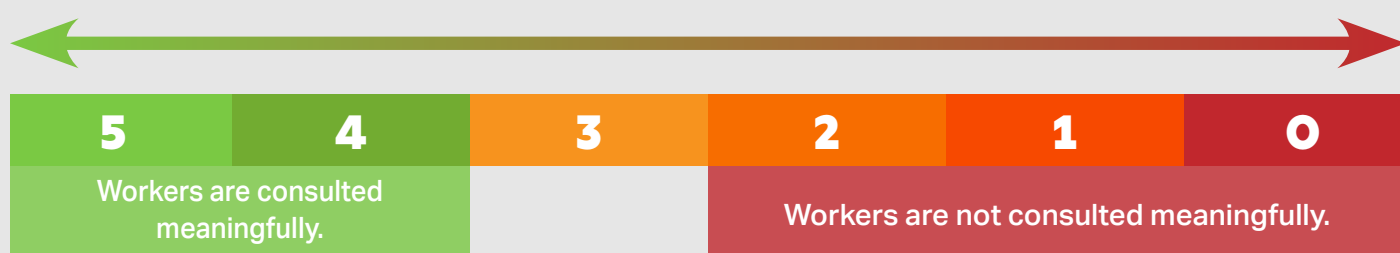
The guidance included in this document emerged from 60+ interviews carried out with hospitality workers in a wide range of roles (receptionists, reservation staff, housekeepers, front-of-house staff, chefs and fast food workers) as well as managers, employers, industry experts, technologists, professional bodies and union representatives about their experiences of and perspectives on technological changes in hospitality workplaces.



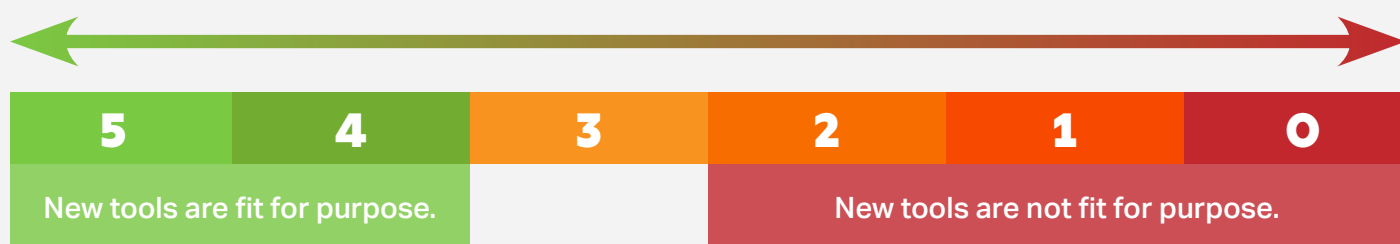
# Scale of good practices: What to watch out for when employers bring new technologies into hospitality workplaces

The ways in which employers implement new technologies can be best understood on a spectrum. The following dimensions explore the different ways in which new technologies can disrupt the workplace for both better or worse, what to watch out for as well as how to mitigate negative impacts on workers and what employers should aim for.

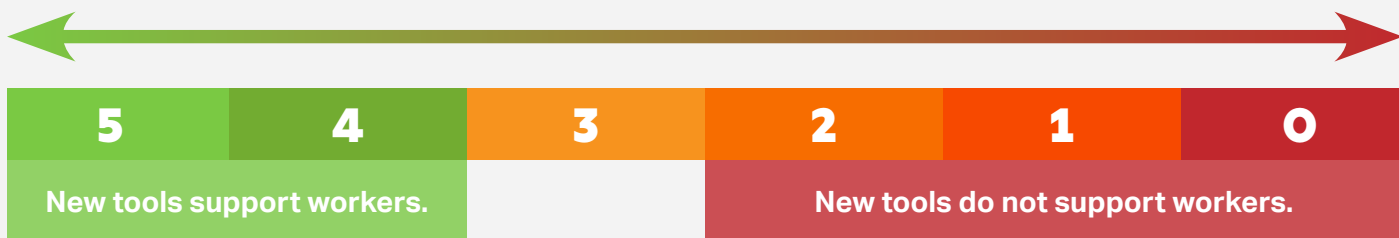
This diagnostic can be used to pulse check good practice in hospitality workplaces. Add up the score to see how an employer performs and what they need to do to improve.



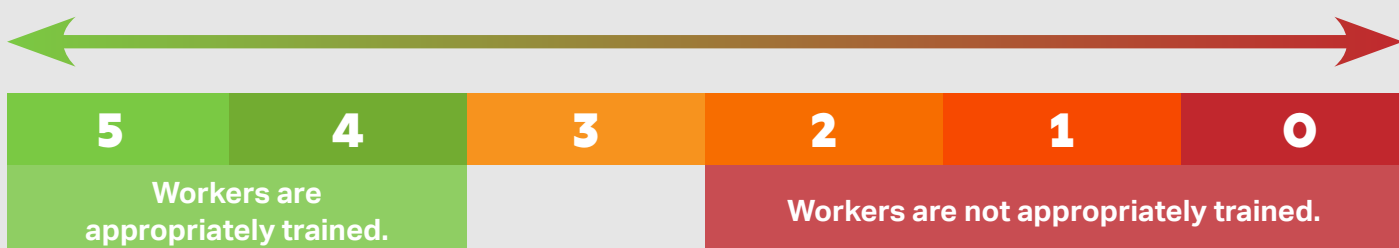
- 1. Workers should be consulted meaningfully and well in advance when new tools are being considered.** The rationale for new technologies should be explained in a transparent way. Workers should be given an opportunity to test the tools, ask questions and voice opinions. Gaining feedback from workers who will be the ones using the tools and involving them in decision-making can help anticipate issues and avoid choosing tools that might negatively affect working conditions. When workers are consulted meaningfully, unintended consequences stemming from new technology implementation can be anticipated and mitigated.



- 2. New tools should be fit for purpose, address a specific problem, and be well integrated with other existing systems in place.** A key challenge workers struggle with is tools that are not suitable and not well integrated with other systems. This can result in more manual work, time wasted and more stress. There are many products advertised to hospitality employers, but even the best products cannot meet the specific needs of all workplaces. Down the line, this can mean that money is spent on a tool that is not useful or suitable. When the tools are chosen well, workers see them as useful and having a positive impact on their work.



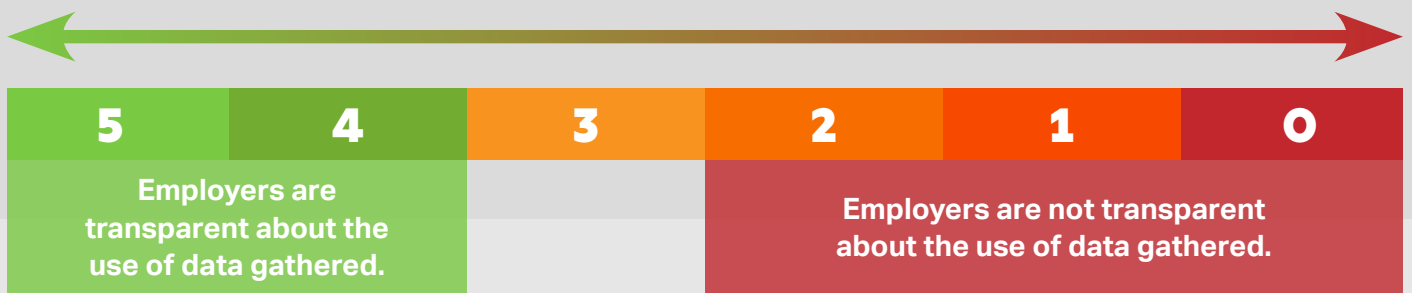
- 3. New tools should support workers and be brought in with workers in mind, rather than predominantly being oriented towards the needs of employers or customers.** New technologies need to be genuinely and not just discursively worker-friendly. This is an important but largely overlooked aspect. Often, new tools are designed with customers or managers in mind, but workers are usually the ones using these tools the most and are affected the most. Therefore, workers' usability needs should be considered and their concerns listened to. New tools should support workers without intensifying their work and negatively impacting their well-being through worsening working conditions. When the tools are implemented with workers in mind, working conditions improve, workers are happier and more committed.



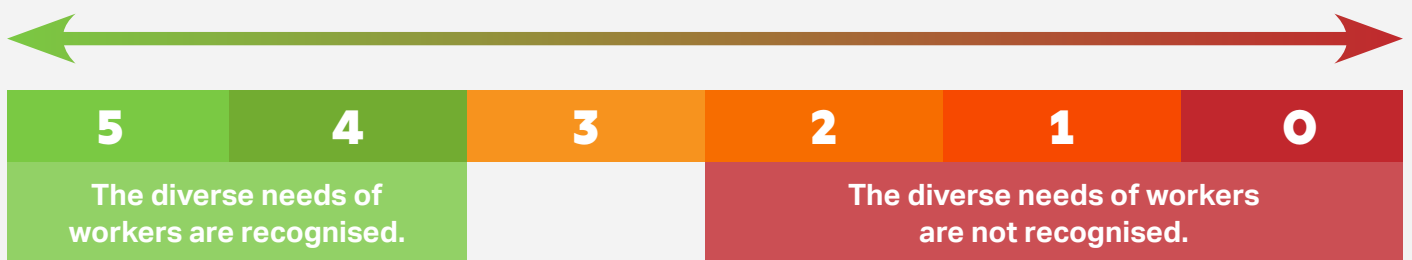
- 4. Workers should receive appropriate training to use new tools and systems.** Many workers feel they receive inadequate training and assumptions are made about how easy new tools are to use. Training should go beyond depersonalised e-learning and include sufficient in-person training. Insufficient training can lead to mistakes down the line, with more work created as well as having negative impacts on worker well-being and customer satisfaction. Often incorrect assumptions are made about workers' – especially young workers' – readiness to use technology. Workers should not be left to learn new tools on their own. Investing in meaningful training helps avoid mistakes in the future.



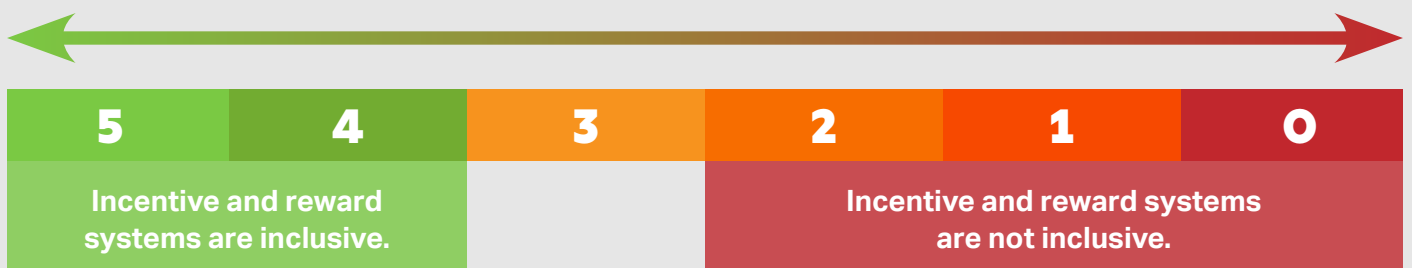
- 5. Once a new tool/system is implemented, workers should be given opportunities to provide continuous feedback on it and to report issues (including anonymously).** Despite high expectations and high expense, some tools might not fulfil expectations, might be counterproductive for staff and add additional pressure. Tools should therefore be continuously assessed for unintended negative impacts on workers, and those detrimental (not fit for purpose and disrupting work) for workers should be reassessed and potentially discarded based on staff feedback. Acting on worker feedback can help reduce staff turnover, save time and improve job satisfaction. Workers should not be afraid of reporting tech issues and should not be told to just get on with it. When impacts on workers are evaluated based on staff feedback, this leads to a healthier workplace and workplace relations. New technologies should not add more work, make work more complicated or more intense, but should support workers in doing their work.



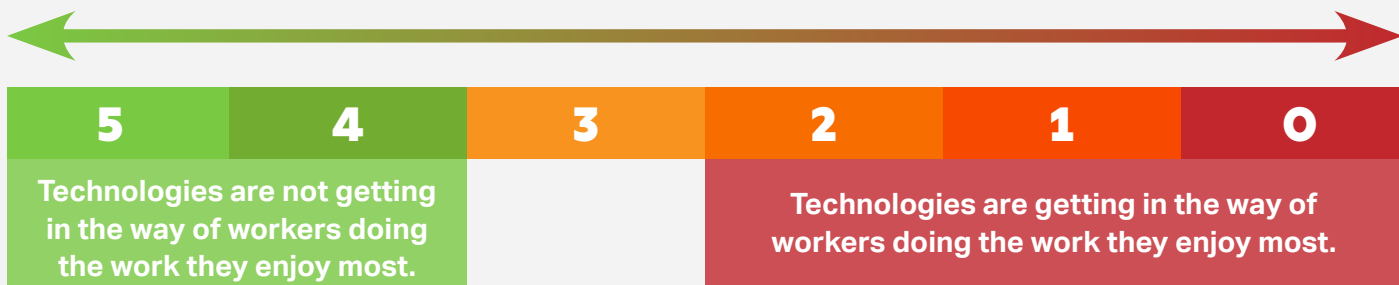
6. **Employers should be transparent about the use of data gathered through systems and the implications for work and job security.** It is crucial that workers are made aware of what data is gathered, how the data is used, and the potential for micro-monitoring of staff. Data should not be used to intimidate and pressurise workers. Any data gathered should be used carefully and in a developmental and context-specific way. Being transparent with workers helps them better understand the potential of systems, their complexity and fallibility. When employers are transparent, workers' trust increases.



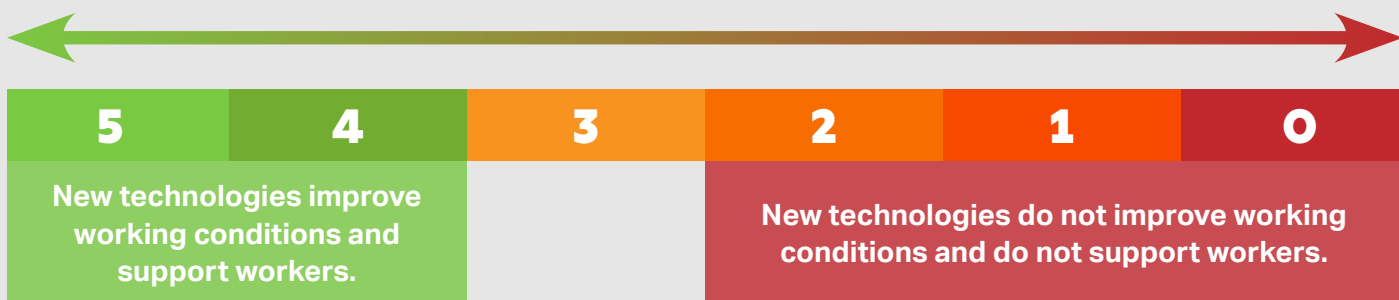
7. **The diverse needs of workers should be recognised and workers should be given sufficient time to adapt to new systems.** Different workers respond differently to new systems. It is important to give them time to adapt. Workers should not feel excluded because of technology (e.g. due to lower tech confidence). It is important to recognise the diverse needs of individual workers (whether they are international staff, young workers in first-ever-jobs, older workers, neurodiverse workers, part-time workers etc.), and offer alternatives to those who might be struggling more with change. Support needs to be provided to avoid negative impacts on their well-being. When the diverse needs of workers are recognised, they adapt better, develop new skills and gain confidence.



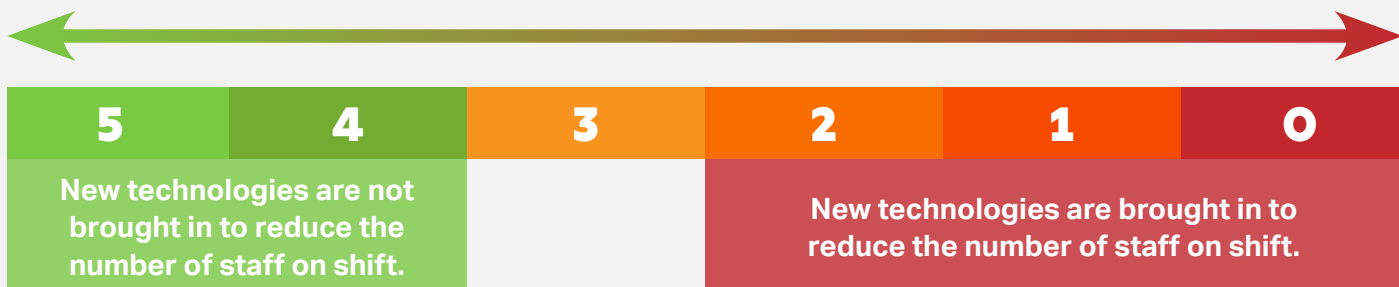
8. **Incentive and reward systems should be inclusive and not augment unhealthy competition nor intensify job insecurity.** Many hospitality workplaces now incorporate various incentives and rewards (e.g. using upselling data, customer ratings). If well managed, these are appreciated by workers and seen as an added benefit (e.g. financial rewards). However, these reward and incentive systems need to be used in a context-sensitive way. The unintended impacts of these initiatives need to be monitored (e.g. Do these increase unhealthy competition? Are these negatively affecting staff morale and collegiality? Are these counterproductive? Are some workers feeling marginalised and excluded?). Using metric-driven rankings of staff can be harmful to workers and can undermine their confidence and negatively affect their well-being, job security, leading to more stress, anxiety and pressure. Similarly, customer ratings should not be used for performance management but taken into account in a context-specific way, with worker voice considered. When the reward and incentive initiatives are inclusive, teams are stronger and collegiality improves.



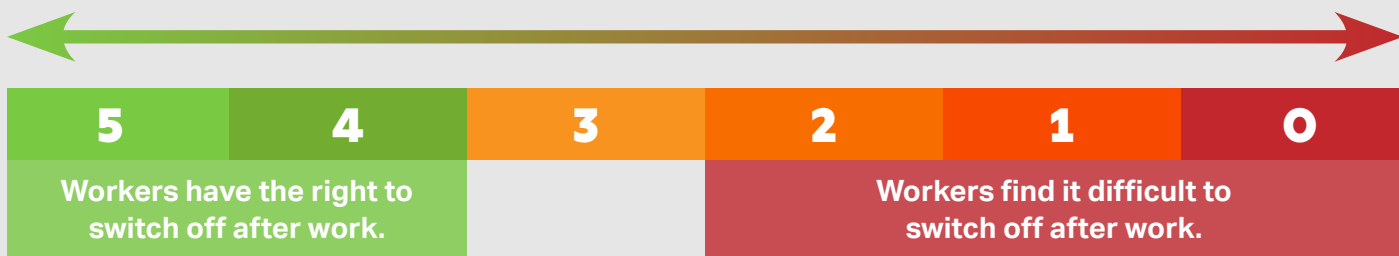
9. **Technology should not replace human interactions between co-workers, and workers and managers/employers.** For the majority of hospitality workers, the most enjoyable aspect of their work is human interaction, whether it is about contributing to the positive customer experience or having good workplace relations. Increasingly, new technologies mediate, reduce and even replace, these interactions. This can have wide-ranging impacts on teambuilding, belonging, staff retention and customer loyalty. It is important for technologies not to disrupt what workers value most, so that workers do not become alienated and disconnected. Workers appreciate the opportunity to meaningfully connect with customers, co-workers and managers, with benefits for all, and this needs to be paid attention to.



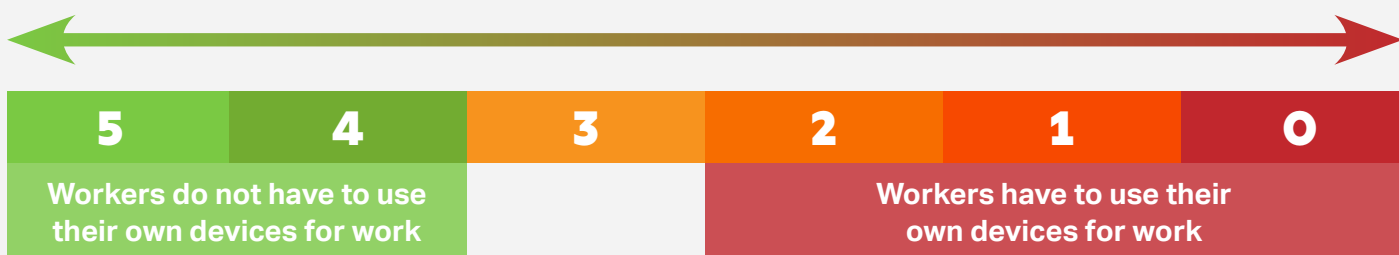
10. **New technologies should improve working conditions and support workers.** Working conditions in hospitality are not always ideal (insecure contracts, low pay, intense work, pressurised working environments). Technologies should not further deteriorate working conditions (e.g. less autonomy, monitoring, more repetitive tasks, higher intensity) but aim to improve working conditions and build fairer workplaces. When technology improves working conditions and is used to support rather than control workers, workers are happier and stay longer, and hospitality jobs become more attractive.



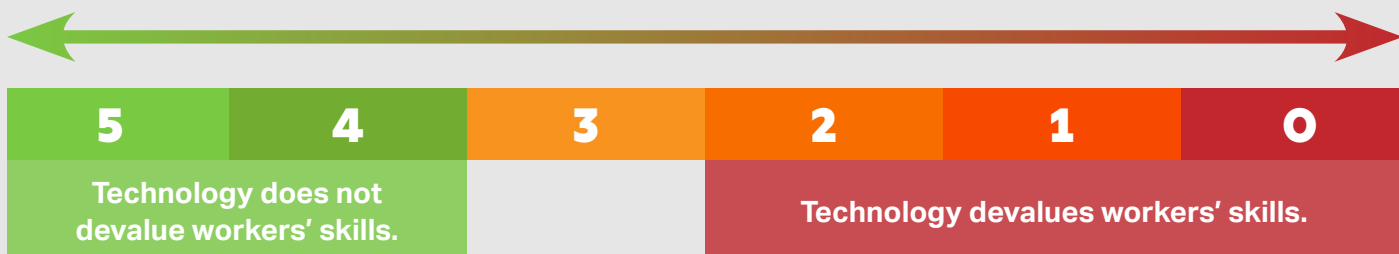
11. **New technologies should not be brought in to reduce staff, but to support staff and improve their experience.** The hospitality sector is centred on providing a high-quality experience. Replacing human workers with technology or reducing staff on shift (e.g. by encouraging customers to use self-check-in kiosks or self-ordering and payment options) can bring negative unintended results (higher staff turnover, drop in customer loyalty, negative customer feedback). Instead of bringing efficiencies, it can result in lower profit margins as well as lower staff and customer satisfaction. The rhetoric of efficiencies needs to be challenged by focusing on staff and guest experience. When new technologies are brought in, workers are often anxious about job security. Being transparent about the ways in which new tools can affect job security is crucial.



- 12. Workers should have the right to switch off after work, especially in seven-day-a-week non-9-to-5 workplaces.** Increasingly, various solutions are used for internal communication with staff (e.g. group chats, apps). If managed well, this can be useful and appreciated by staff. Internal comms tools should not, however, be used inappropriately (e.g. outside of working hours). Workers should not feel the pressure to check the work notifications outside of their working hours. Communication via internal comms channels should be used in a well-thought-through way and should not replace face-to-face communication with the team.



- 13. Workers should not have to use their own devices (e.g. mobile phones) for work.** All devices and equipment needed for work should be provided by the employer to avoid exclusion and pressure on workers to incur costs from acquiring new devices (e.g. with stronger battery or memory) or having to install surveillance applications on their personal devices.



- 14. Technology should not devalue workers' skills and deprofessionalise their roles.** New technologies should be brought in to support workers rather than replacing them or devaluing their skills. When workers stop using their skills at work (e.g. interpersonal interaction, barista skills, chef skills), they lose commitment to and enjoyment of their jobs. This can lead to them disconnecting from their work.

**The Score**

# Green

Score of 51-70 points



This employer has nailed it. In this workplace, technological change is brought in with workers in mind. Workers and their needs are being considered when choosing new tools, continuous feedback is gathered and acted upon, challenges are anticipated, managed well and mitigated. This employer has a worker-centric approach when considering new tools. This means having a critical and cautious approach (i.e. awareness

of unintended consequences), choosing new technologies thoughtfully (i.e. to support workers and not to replace them or reduce interactions) and in consultation with workers. This also means that meaningful training is provided and the diverse needs of workers are taken on board. Do let the employer and co-workers know about the result, and encourage them to share good practice with other employers.

# Amber

Score of 21-50 points



There are many things this employer does well or very well. This means that they are aware of potential issues related with technological change and that they respond well to some of the challenges, implementing changes with workers

in mind to some extent. However, at the same time, there are areas where this employer could do better. Do have a discussion with the employer about this, appreciating their good practice and identifying areas for improvement.

# Red

Score of 0-20 points



Unfortunately, workers' needs are not sufficiently considered when bringing in new technologies to this workplace, and there are numerous areas for improvement. This can mean that workers might struggle with adapting, might be overworked, stressed, inadequately trained and not listened to. They might also feel anxious and insecure in their jobs, or consider leaving. A low score might indicate that the workplace is overly digitalised and automated, with workers feeling disconnected and

alienated, with limited opportunity to meaningfully connect with customers and co-workers. Longer-term, this can have a negative impact on workplace interactions and customer experience and loyalty. Do consider discussing the results with co-workers, managers and employers to explore what can be done moving forward to ensure a better worker experience of technological change with a more collaborative and more worker-centric approach.

# About the Author

**Dr Agnieszka Rydzik** ([arydzik@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:arydzik@lincoln.ac.uk)) is an Associate Professor at the University of Lincoln. Her research focuses on technological change and the future of work; tourism and hospitality workplaces; and making workplaces more inclusive and work more meaningful. Her most recent study, funded by the British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship, explores the ways in which hospitality workplaces navigate technological change and what this means for workers and employers. This toolkit is developed based on extensive data gathered through this British Academy-funded project.

## Training opportunities and support

Agnieszka is happy to meet and provide bespoke training about the inclusive use of technologies in workplaces. If you are interested, do get in touch: [arydzik@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:arydzik@lincoln.ac.uk)



**Find out more:** [hospitalityfutures.co.uk/reboot](https://hospitalityfutures.co.uk/reboot)

**How to cite this document:** Rydzik, A. (2026) *Technological change with workers in mind: A toolkit for workers, trade unions and organisations supporting hospitality workers*, University of Lincoln.

