



Niluka Kavanagh

ADVENTURER / EXPLORER · BUSINESS LEADER · FUTURIST

Leadership systems built for one era are now managing a workforce shaped by another. Younger professionals are leaving organisations that cannot offer autonomy, purpose, or flexibility, not because they lack ambition, but because the structure no longer matches how they want to work. The retention and innovation cost of that mismatch is rising faster than most organisations are willing to acknowledge.

When workforce expectations diverge from how organisations are built, Niluka Kavanagh, co-founder of KPMG's Behavioural Science Unit and creator of The Modern CEO framework, helps leadership teams understand where that gap lies and what it means for culture, retention, and performance.

Niluka Kavanagh's 2026 Biography

Why organisations work with Niluka Kavanagh

- She co-founded KPMG's Behavioural Science Unit, giving her a practitioner's understanding of how psychological insight can be embedded in organisational design: not cited in a presentation, but built into real structures inside a global firm.
- Building and operating three businesses across fourteen countries, with a community of more than a thousand independent founders behind ImagineThat, gives her a working understanding of what trust, engagement, and team performance look like when conventional structures of co-location and hierarchy do not apply.
- She has operated inside large organisations and built three independent businesses: she can speak to the intrapreneurship and autonomy conversation from both sides of the corporate boundary.
- Through The Modern CEO, the organisational arm of her ImagineThat platform, she takes the multigenerational engagement debate out of HR theory and into the specifics of daily leadership communication, intrapreneurship, and psychological safety across teams.
- The KPMG FutureThinkers initiative she co-founded convening speakers from the BBC, HSBC, and others, gives her direct insight into how large organisations signal innovation internally, and where those signals fall short.

Biography highlights

- Co-founded KPMG's Behavioural Science Unit and the KPMG FutureThinkers initiative during nearly five years as a consultant and project lead at the firm
- Advised organisations including Mastercard, Tesco, the London Stock

AVAILABLE FOR

- Event Hosting
- Speaking

NILUKA'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Behavioural Economics
- Corporate Culture
- Entrepreneurship
- Future of Work
- Multigenerational Workplace
- Workforce Transformation

LANGUAGES: English

Exchange Group, and Lloyds Bank

- Founder of ImagineThat, a business school for independent entrepreneurs with over 1,000 members across multiple countries
- Published in The World Financial Review on the application of behavioural science to customer experience design
- Opened the 2026 Learning Technologies conference programme on the human side of the future of work, at Europe's largest workplace learning event
- Featured in a University of Oxford alumni profile on entrepreneurship and alternative career models
- Guest lecturer at Trinity College Dublin, the University of Edinburgh, and Somerville College, Oxford
- Graduate of the University of Oxford (English, Somerville College)

Biography

Most organisations still use presence as a proxy for productivity and hierarchy as a proxy for trust. Neither assumption holds for the workforce that is now entering and increasingly leaving corporate life. Niluka Kavanagh's work sits precisely at that fault line: the widening gap between how organisations are designed and what the people inside them now expect.

Her grounding in this is practical. At KPMG, she spent nearly five years consulting for organisations including Mastercard, Tesco, and the London Stock Exchange Group, co-founding both the firm's Behavioural Science Unit and its FutureThinkers initiative. Both projects were about the same thing: applying psychological and behavioural insight to how organisations lead change, design experiences, and engage the people doing the work.

After leaving KPMG, she tested the same ideas from the outside. Three businesses, fourteen countries of operating experience, and a community of more than a thousand independent founders gave her the empirical base for The Modern CEO, the organisational branch of her ImagineThat platform. It is a leadership model focused on engagement, intrapreneurship, daily communication, and psychological safety across multigenerational teams.

Her writing on behavioural science and customer experience has appeared in The World Financial Review. She is a graduate of the University of Oxford and holds a CIMA accounting qualification.

Key speaking topics

- Future of work and workforce transformation
- The Modern CEO framework for multigenerational leadership
- Behavioural science in organisational design
- Multigenerational leadership and team engagement
- Intrapreneurship and internal innovation
- Human-centric leadership and trust structures
- Leadership communication and psychological safety

Ideal for

- CHROs and people leaders managing generational shifts in workforce expectation and culture
- CEOs and senior leadership teams seeking to align organisational structure with modern ways of working
- Transformation leads and change teams working on culture,

engagement, and talent retention

- Professional services and entrepreneurial firms navigating the shift to more autonomous, distributed, or flexible operating models

Audience outcomes

- A working understanding of how generational values are reshaping expectations around autonomy, leadership, and work design, and where the organisational cost is already showing up
- The Modern CEO framework as a practical model for engagement, intrapreneurship, communication, and psychological safety across multigenerational teams
- Concrete approaches to unlocking intrapreneurial thinking in teams, drawn from real experience building innovation initiatives inside a global consultancy
- A clearer sense of how behavioural science applies to culture and leadership challenges beyond the theoretical, grounded in organisational practice
- Practical questions to apply to their own organisation's structure, communication norms, and talent strategy

Niluka Kavanagh's 2026 talks & topics

The Human Side of the Future of Work: Leadership, Behaviour, and Why People Still Matter

The future-of-work conversation is increasingly dominated by AI, automation, and learning platforms. The harder question is what meaningful, engaging work looks like for the people doing it, and how leadership, communication, and behavioural insight shape whether the technology investment translates into engagement and performance.

Key takeaways:

- Why even the most advanced learning and technology strategies fall flat without attention to the human dynamics around them
- How leadership behaviour, not title or role, shapes engagement, curiosity, and continued development at work
- The behavioural mechanics behind motivation, trust, and high-performing cultures in a workforce with shifting expectations

The Intrapreneur Within: Unlocking Hidden Talent in Your Teams

A framework for activating entrepreneurial thinking inside existing organisations, drawing on Kavanagh's direct experience co-founding the KPMG Behavioural Science Unit and running innovation initiatives within a global firm.

Key takeaways:

- How intrapreneurial thinking drives ownership, creativity, and initiative in teams

- How to identify and activate underused talent without restructuring
 - The cultural conditions that make internal innovation possible – and what blocks it
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Nomadic Mindsets: Building Resilience and Adapting to a Human-Centric Future of Work

An introduction to the “nomadic mindset” framework – a model for cultural agility, empathy, and adaptive communication in workplaces shaped by AI, hybrid working, and generational change.

Key takeaways:

- What the nomadic mindset is and how it applies to leadership and team dynamics
 - How adaptability and empathy function as practical leadership tools, not just values
 - Approaches for building cultural agility and connection across distributed or multigenerational teams
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Gen Z and Millennials at Work: What They Want and How to Lead Them

An examination of the values, expectations, and communication styles of younger generations, and what those differences require from leadership practice.

Key takeaways:

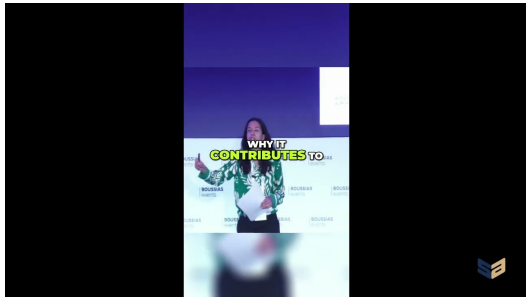
- Where conventional leadership approaches fail to engage younger employees
 - The specific expectations – around autonomy, purpose, and communication – that most leaders underestimate
 - Practical changes to leadership style and team structure that improve engagement and retention
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The Future of Leadership Is Human: Building Trust, Autonomy, and Cultures That Last

An exploration of how leadership must evolve in response to remote work, AI, and shifting generational values – with a focus on the structural conditions that make people want to stay.

Key takeaways:

- Why top-down leadership models are losing effectiveness across multiple dimensions
- The role of trust and autonomy in designing cultures that retain high performers
- How communication structures and work design shape engagement at the team level



What Niluka Kavanagh's clients say

It's rare in your professional life to come across an individual like Niluka. And over the past few years I have watched her grow from strength to strength. Niluka is brave, passionate, entrepreneurial, strategic and creative along with being an exceptional communicator. She is also very humble, down to earth and kind which are qualities I value and admire hugely. The results that Niluka achieves for her clients is matched in spades by the way she delivers them and her ability to build highly personalised relationships that she continues to nurture. Anyone who has the pleasure of working alongside Niluka is incredibly lucky!

Gill McLaughlin

Strategic Transformation Leader | Colleague Customer Commercial | , Advocate for women in technology

Niluka truly excels in both her analytical and creative thinking. She applies both simultaneously to solve client challenges with a refreshing ease and elegance that few possess. Always articulate and compelling, Niluka is a great storyteller, able to land her ideas persuasively, and as such is an excellent manager also of others. Importantly, she is also a super nice person with a great deal of integrity - if you have the chance to work with her, grab it with both hands.

Joanna Stringer

CMO, Marketing, Sales & Pricing; Managing Director & Partner, BCGMO, Marketing, Sales & Pricing, Managing Director & Partner, BCG

Niluka gave an excellent, thought-provoking and insightful presentation at the CBCC 2024 Conference, exploring the future of work and the rise of digital nomadism. She covered a variety of relevant topics, including how individuals can pursue self-employment and embrace the freedom to work from anywhere. As a speaker, she was highly engaging, holding the audience's attention with her informative yet relatable style. I was impressed by the depth of her insights and knowledge, which were grounded in both her personal experiences and current industry trends. I'm confident the audience found her equally compelling, and I look forward to hearing her speak again.

Noah Levy

CMO Gramming Advisory , CBCC Conference 2024

Niluka Kavanagh's 2026 speaking fees

Specific fees fall within the ranges shown. These are presented as a guide only and are subject to change without notice.

	EUR	GBP	USD
Home Country	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
Asia Pacific	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
Europe	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
Middle East & Africa	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
South America	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
United Kingdom	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
US East Coast	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
US West Coast	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
Virtual	Please enquire	Please enquire	Please enquire