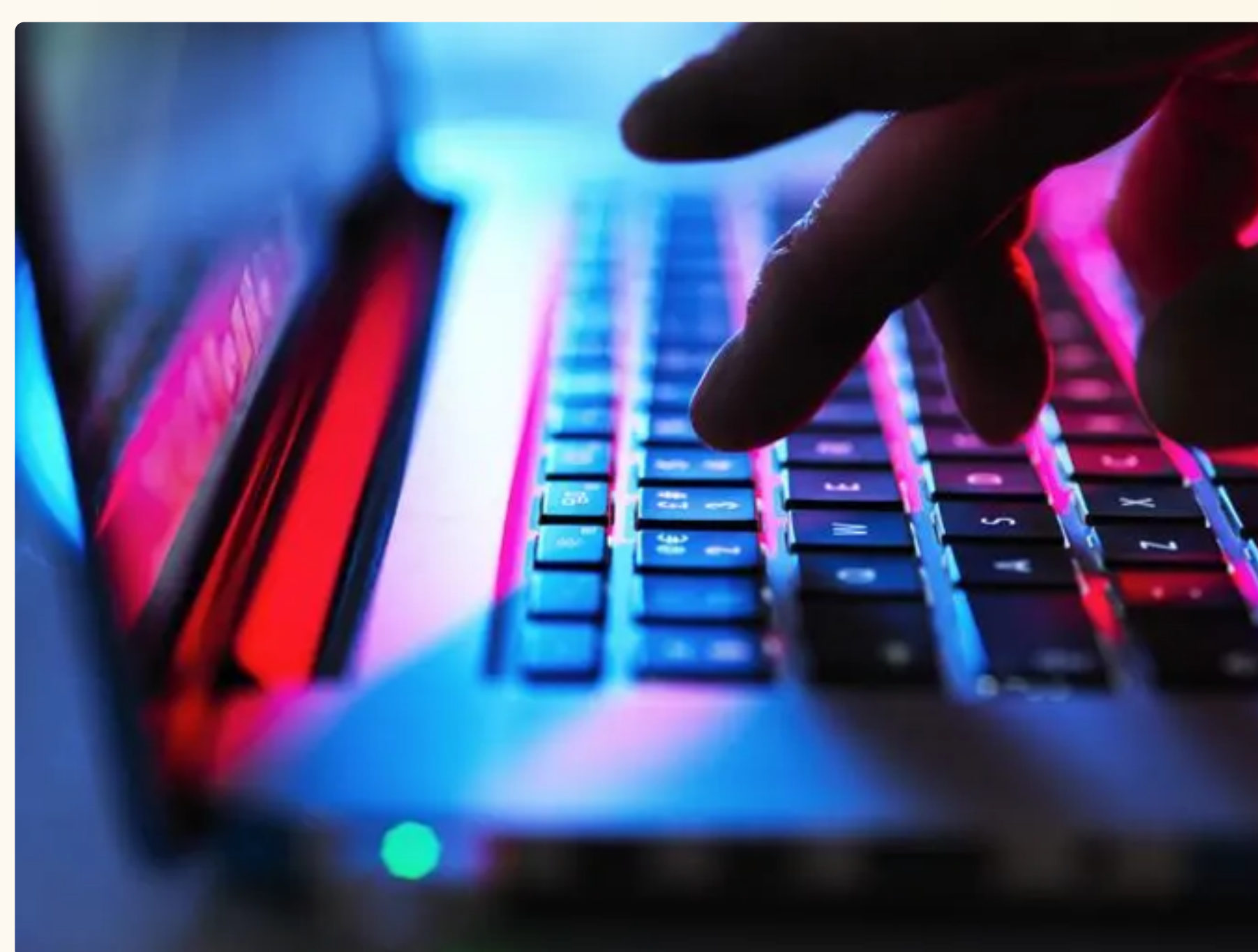


Careers and professional development, Cyberpsychology

Careers in cyberpsychology – in conversation with Carolyn Freeman

This article was written by Carolyn Freeman, a Consultant, Speaker, Researcher and Content Creator at Cybercology, and edited by Dr. John Blythe, an industry representative for the BPS Cyberpsychology Section.

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How would you describe your job to a 12-year-old?

I help adults to better manage their screen time and gadget use. They aim to get more done at work, spend more time doing fun stuff at home, and generally be less tired, anxious and stressed.

Could you describe what you do during a typical workday?

I'm self-employed and operating in a new area of Workplace Cyberpsychology, so there are very few typical days.

The main focus of all my work is to enlighten as many working adults as I can on the impact of their work-based gadget use.

I believe that if someone is informed, they can make healthier, more proactive choices about how they use their gadgets.

To accomplish this goal, there are a few projects that I am working on simultaneously:

- I do interviews with radio stations and podcasts as well as talks at networking groups and conferences on how technology in the workplace impacts the behaviour, psychology and mental wellness of workers and the communities that they operate in – at home and at work.
- I'm currently conducting qualitative research on how office workers use their technology to blur and transgress the boundaries between work and home, especially when they engage in remote or hybrid working. I'm really interested in what factors drive people to work after hours and what impact this then has on those around them – both their work colleagues and their family and friends.
- I curate content for my [Cybercology website](#) blog that focuses on the psychology of technology use in the workplace. The aim of the website is to showcase the insights that have been garnered in the world of academia and make them available and digestible for the general public, who wouldn't ordinarily be exposed to these insights.

There are a few other exciting projects and plans that I have over the next 12 months including writing, publishing, training and talks.

Can you tell us about your job role and your own career trajectory and the steps you took to get where you are today?

I started my career in corporate marketing and spent 15 years doing advertising and branding for big grocery companies.

I loved my job, but after 15 years of stress, long hours and constant deadlines I ended up burning out and decided to leave my corporate career.

So, I signed up for a part-time [Psychology \(Hons\) with the Open University](#). As the mortgage still needed to be paid, I simultaneously lectured part-time at Bournemouth University and worked with a number of small business clients on their marketing campaigns.

Not long after I finished my undergrad, I stumbled across cyberpsychology and was immediately hooked.

As it was a research Master, I decided to focus on the role of workplace technology as a catalyst for stress, anxiety and burnout among professionals.

My corporate background and knowing how much mobile technology use facilitated my workplace stress, anxiety and eventual burnout, along with my fascination with all things psychology, resulted in a perfect fit as a research topic for me.

My Master's journey started at [Buckingham University](#) a few months before the first lockdown in 2020.

My original research project quickly pivoted to how working parents used their technology and gadgets to manage and juggle their work and home lives in the same lived space.

This also included the impact this had on their stress, anxiety and potential levels of burnout.

It was during this time that I realised how little of what I was learning from academic sources was actually available in the public domain.

Because of this, I decided to set up my [Cybercology website](#) and start to write and blog about some of my learnings.

Since I graduated from Buckingham, I've continued to read and write about technology use in the workplace.

I'm not aware of anyone else who does what I do, so my remit is constantly changing and adapting to market and information needs.

I still have so much to learn, so much to build and so much to share. It can be slightly overwhelming at times, but I'm constantly motivated by the positive and enthusiastic feedback I regularly get.

I'm also motivated by the debates and discussions that escalate whenever I talk to others about what I do and some of the things I know so far.

Like anyone who is self-employed, I'm a jack-of-all-trades and trying to be master-of-one.

If I had to give myself a job title, it would be 'Chief Content Creator'. It's not a role I had planned at the beginning of my psychology journey, but one that evolved from my passion for my subject and desire to make as big a positive difference to others as I possibly can.

What are your research interests?

My primary research interest is what technology adults use and how they use it both at work and at home.

I also research what impacts this use and the impact the use has on their overall digital mental wellbeing and the mental wellbeing of those at work and home.

All my other research interests satellite around this core focus.

How do you stay current with the latest trends and developments in the field of cyberpsychology?

I read a lot of books and academic articles on my specific field of interest.

But because my focus covers areas that cross over to other disciplines - such as organisational psychology, user experience (UX), family systems therapy, cognitive psychology, and narrative psychology (to name only a few) - I tend to read a lot of books and articles that have little to do with current cyberpsychology insights trends and developments.

Part of my work is to find the connections between workplace cyberpsychology and other related areas.

What are some of the most important factors to consider when choosing a job in cyberpsychology?

Because this is a relatively new discipline (outside of academics), you may not always (but probably will in the near future) find a job in the corporate world that aligns with your specific area of cyberpsychology interest.

However, even when advising young people about marketing jobs (when they're a dime-a-dozen), I always tell them to just get a job in marketing and build some kind of experience.

You never know, you may just stumble across something that you find really interesting that you had never considered before - or you may really dislike it, but at least you then know and can find something else you do enjoy.

I'd share the same advice with anyone choosing a job in cyberpsychology.

The most important thing, when starting out, is to get just experience within your general field of interest - and go from there.

What advice would you give to someone interested in a career in cyberpsychology?

Cyberpsychology is a really new field. Those who are working at the 'coalface' of the corporate setting are making such great inroads in building awareness of the value that [cyberpsychologists](#) can add to the working world.

There's still much work to be done in spreading the word, but the opportunities for future cyberpsychologists in business are really exciting and varied.

If you want to future-proof your career, I predict that this is one of those roles that will be in greater and greater demand as the decades roll by.

Because technology, and the behavioural and psychological impact of the uses of technology, are constantly changing, cyberpsychology is one of the most dynamic and future-relevant areas of psychology to be in.

About the author

Carolyn Freeman is a Consultant, Speaker, Researcher and Content Creator at [Cybercology](#).

She specialises in the use of technology and gadgets in the workplace and the impact this has on stress, anxiety and digital wellbeing at work, life and play.

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