HRD

The only independent strategic HR publication

the**HR**DIRECTOR   FEBRUARY 2021 | ISSUE 196

SPECIAL REPORTS
WHEN PURPOSE BOILS DOWN TO JUST PROFIT, IT HAS CONSEQUENCES. PLUS, ALLYSHIP ISN'T FAVOURITISM, IT IS EQUITY

NEIL MORRISON, HR DIRECTOR - SEVERN TRENT

{ PIPELINE }

"SUPPLYING A CITY THE SIZE OF BIRMINGHAM WITH PURE CLEAN WATER IS A PRETTY AMAZING AND NOBLE ACHIEVEMENT"

WWW.THEHRDIRECTOR.COM   100% NO PAID FOR EDITORIAL

RETURNING TO WORK?

Do your team need support? How do you know?

Check in and reassure your employees using our specially designed coronavirus surveys

Practical and actionable surveys
Expert research professionals

Best-in-class reporting systems
Clear recommendations

www.surveysolutions.co.uk/coronavirus-surveys

020 8943 1445

survey solutions

THANK YOU

HRD

ON THE COVER

In this issue we interview Neil Morrison, HR Director - Severn Trent. When we clap for frontline workers that so bravely take the strain in this terrible pandemic, we should also spare a thought for others, whom have carried on with essential support and services. Like all in the utilities sector, Severn Trent has kept waste secure and clean water flowing and, without this essential service, we simply would not be able to carry on.

Neil Morrison shot exclusively for the**HR**DIRECTOR
Cover & Interview photography by Stuart Thomas

SUBSCRIPTIONS

UK annual subscription:
£175
UK 2 year subscription:
£260 (Save £90)
Overseas annual subscription:
£250
Overseas 2 year subscription:
£400 (Save £100)

Call us on 01454 292 060 or
email us at subs@thehrdirector.com
for further details

CONTENTS

EDITOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to the**HR**DIRECTOR - the only independent publication dedicated to HR Directors.

The pandemic has changed everything, tested the resolve of businesses of all shapes and sizes to destruction and torn up the time-weary contract, both physical and psychological, between employers and employees.

Those firms that were prepared, confident and acted responsibly will be best able to handle what is to come and, have importantly, built trust. What's clear is, there is no compunction to go back to normal and this crisis may well have started the next industrial revolution. But what remains intact is the human factor, as in the face of adversity, those employees that have adapted and gone the extra mile and the employers that have supported well, have developed a new dynamic to the relationship that needs to be an integral component of building back better.

The disruption caused by the pandemic reaches far beyond the virus. Employees have had to deal with the uncertainty of lockdown and the impacts on work, the threat of redundancy, the disruption to schools and of being unable to extend the support and care to elderly family members. As anxiety and frustration rachets up and more people are working out of sight, duty of care becomes even more important, but it will be increasingly challenging to meet that duty.

Pre-COVID-19, predictions had 2020 as the year of reform, where a more integrated approach enabled and supported more autonomous and empowered employees across a flat workplace framework. The onus was on the promotion of self-responsibility, where people became the managers of their own personal development - as opposed to the presubscribed career destinies of the past - with a focus on boosting the flagging performance and productivity levels that have been a vexing and frustrating conundrum.

With this in frame, EVPs had to be recalibrated and certainly, the crisis has set a credo which has definitely seen an increase in employee empowerment.

When the world was anxiously preoccupied with the emerging scale and impact of the pandemic, it did not diminish the horror and outcry of the death of George Floyd and the subsequent global phenomena that is Black Lives Matter. Equality is highly-dynamic and complex and our recent shared experiences clearly demonstrate that a new appreciation of the changing nature of diversity and inclusion is an absolute imperative. D&I is not a buzzword and HR needs to revisit organisational values, to ensure there is a true appreciation of the changing nature of diversity.

Jason Spiller

JASON SPILLER - EDITOR
EDITOR@THEHRDIRECTOR.COM

OUR SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Connect with us at
www.linkedin.com/company/thehrdirector
Follow us at
www.twitter.com/thehrdirector
Like us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/thehrdirector
Search for us on

Download on the App Store   GET IT ON Google play

recycle

Printed on GalerieArt Silk which is an environmentally friendly paper, FSC mixed credit, recyclable and biodegradable. This stock has been sustainably sourced.

Delivering **trusted insight** and innovative solutions **directly to your mobile device.** HR content on the go!

Subscribers can view all of their digital issues.

Download our FREE App today!

News, Features, Legal updates, Blogs and HRD interviews plus Senior HR Jobs

HRD
the**HR**DIRECTOR

LEGAL UPDATES

from **the**HRDIRECTOR Editorial Panellist, Makbool Javaid, partner, Simons Muirhead & Burton. They comprise employment law and diversity briefings, both of which provide the latest legal information affecting business.

1 A claim for interim relief can be made to an ET where an individual believes they have been dismissed for one of a list of specified reasons including acting as a health and safety rep, engaging in lawful trade union duties or whistleblowing. But it is not available for discriminatory dismissals. In *Steer v Stormshore Ltd*, S alleged that she was dismissed for discriminatory reasons contrary to the Equality Act 2010 (ERA 2010). An ET refused to permit her to apply for interim relief, but S argued that the right to claim interim relief must be read into the ERA 2010 by the European Convention on Human Rights ("ECHR") (applied via the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA 1998) in the UK). The EAT held that Article 14 ECHR is engaged, (which requires that all of the rights and freedoms set out must be protected and applied without discrimination), because the matter in question comes within the ambit of Article 6, as it relates to judicial remedies for the enforcement of civil rights. However, the EAT has no power to make a declaration of incompatibility under the HRA 1998 and it would be wrong to apply a conforming interpretation to the ERA 2010, in order to read in a right to apply for interim relief in discrimination claims arising from dismissals. Therefore, the appeal was dismissed but leave to appeal was granted to appeal to the Court of Appeal, so it can consider whether to grant a declaration of incompatibility for the breach of Article 14.

2 Rule 78 of the ET rules provides for ET's to make a costs order of either a specified amount not exceeding £20,000 or the whole or a specified part of the receiving party's costs, as determined by a detailed assessment by the county court or an employment judge. In Kuwait Oil Company v Al-Tarkait both parties had their applications for a cost order accepted by an ET. Where Dr Al-Tarkait was concerned, the ET noted that he had limited financial means, so it could limit any costs that he could be assessed to pay to a maximum of the compensation for his dismissal and costs awarded to him. The EAT upheld the ET's decision and so did the Court of Appeal. Rules 78(1)(b) and 84 when read together give ET's the ability to have regard to ability to pay as a reason for ordering a "specified part of the costs" to be limited to a maximum fixed sum and ordering that part of the costs so specified to be determined on detailed assessment subject to that maximum limit.

3 There is currently a considerable backlog of Employment Tribunal claims due to the pandemic so any attempt to come to a resolution using the ACAS Early Conciliation process should be taken seriously. There are some practical steps that employers can take in order to get the most out of the six-week early conciliation period, including: Note when the clock started and when it expires. Use ACAS to obtain as much information from the Claimant as possible. Consider commercial factors - what could it cost the business if we lose at Tribunal? Know your negotiation parameters and stick with them - if it is your final offer, say so. Make it clear any settlement discussions are without prejudice to avoid anything being used against the business in the event the dispute ends up in the Tribunal.

To see full updates, movers & shakers and much more, please visit our website **www.thehrdirector.com**

MOVERS & SHAKERS

This issue we report on some moving & shaking across a broad range of sectors.

ESTELLE HOLLINGSWORTH
Chief People Officer - Virgin Atlantic

Virgin Atlantic has announced that Estelle Hollingsworth will become the UK carrier's Chief People Officer. In this role Estelle will be responsible for ensuring the organisation's people thrive at work through inclusive experiences, that energise teams and drive Virgin Atlantic's vision. Estelle brings over 25 years of people experience to the role and previously served as Vice President - Cabin at VA.

TERRI JOHNSTON
Chief People Officer - Firbus

Fibrus has appointed Terri Johnston as Chief People Officer to manage its growing team. It comes in response to rapid growth, as a result of the company's appointment to deliver Project Stratum, which will see the roll out of full fibre broadband across the north (Ireland). Terri's appointment demonstrates a commitment to building a healthy workplace and investing in people.

SALLY HYNDMAN
Chief People Officer - Sovereign

Sovereign has announced the appointment of Sally Hyndham as Chief People Officer. The new role includes responsibility for people, culture, safety and facilities. Sally's initial focus will be people and culture, with the safety and compliance and the workplace management teams moving into her department over the course of the year.

NADIA RAWLINSON
Chief People Officer - Slack

Slack has announced the appointment of Nadia Rawlinson to its Executive Team as Chief People Officer. Having served most recently as the Chief Human Resources Officer for Live Nation Entertainment, Nadia oversaw global HR strategy and development for Live Nation's 35,000 employees. Prior to Live Nation, Nadia worked in Silicon Valley, leading and co-leading human resources teams for Rakuten USA and Groupon.

UK Employers

The way you hire from the EU has changed

You need to be a licensed sponsor to hire eligible employees from outside the UK. Becoming a sponsor normally takes 8 weeks and fees apply.

The new points-based immigration system has also introduced new job, salary and language requirements that apply when hiring from the EU.

This does not apply when hiring Irish citizens or those eligible for status under the EU settlement scheme.

Find out more at GOV.UK/HiringFromTheEU

PIPELINE

When we clap our appreciation for healthcare workers that have so bravely taken the strain of this terrible pandemic, we should also spare a thought to others, whom have carried on with essential support and services. Like all in the utilities sector, Severn Trent has kept waste secure and clean water flowing and, without this essential service, we simply would not be able to carry on.

NEIL MORRISON

HR DIRECTOR, SEVERN TRENT

INTERVIEWED BY JASON SPILLER & PHOTOGRAPHED BY STUART THOMAS

Neil, tell us about your early life and how you found the path to a career in HR. To be honest, I didn't do what I expected in my A-levels, but I was offered a place at Sunderland University, although I didn't think I would take it. Coming from the Isle of Wight, to me, Portsmouth was quite a trek, so this seemed like a polar expedition! As a southern softy, it was quite an eye-opener, but three years shot by. I returned home with a degree in psychology and, whilst the subject fascinated me, the idea of studying for another five years towards a PhD seemed a step too far. I really needed to make a start in work, gain some practical hands-on experience and earn some money. Back then, when you said to people that you had a psychology degree, most thought you'd analyse them, while others said, "so what are you going to do with that"? But somebody usefully suggested something called "Personnel" and so I researched and it just so happened that psychology was a useful route in. I remember applying for hundreds of jobs and eventually had an interview in Dartford. I was quite relaxed in the interview, because I didn't think I stood a chance. I left and was halfway across the carpark when my interviewer, the HR Director, Colin Moore, came running after me and said: "If we offer you the job, are you going to accept it?" "Yes, of course!" I retorted in shock and that was how I joined the world of HR, at Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust. It was to be the first privately financed, new build hospital in the UK and I was immediately swamped by some very heavy HR that I had zero experience in; TUPE work, consultation with trade unions, rewriting contracts… how I survived is a mystery! Although it sounds like I was out of my depth, in many ways, the NHS proved to be a safe place to start, because there's lots of structure. Also, you're surrounded by medical colleagues who, although stressed and overworked, showed impossible compassion and commitment day in and day out and that has stayed with me as hugely inspirational.

What happened next in your story? I became gamekeeper turned poacher, as it were, with an outsource service provision company, that was a part of Rentokil Initial. The CEO was Clive Thompson at the time, "Mr 20 Percent", an incredibly driven organisation and a darling of the FTSE 100. It was a very commercial environment and the culture was to drive performance hard. We had contracts with massive businesses and I was traveling up and down the country, carrying out the HR sweepings after the deals were signed. This was before the national minimum wage and you could see how very low-paid, often marginalised employees were really struggling; cleaners, security guards and post room employees… it really brought to light for me the plight of the many inequalities in workplaces. To me, it just wasn't right in the modern world. But outsourcing was driven by margins and cost, profits and the bottom line were the gods.

It really typifies the word "resource", but it seems that the human element was notably absent. We were constantly shaving margins, pushing down hourly rates, it wasn't anything I feel proud of, but it was important learning experiences, having previously worked in the public sector. Even today, we may have the National Minimum and Living Wage, but we still have the same challenge with inequality, with parts of society carrying out jobs that many of us would turn our noses up at. For many it's not a career of choice, or some liberal elite concept around purpose, it's because the need to put food on the table, that is the stark reality. This pandemic, however cruel and devastating, has shone more light into these inequalities. You know, COVID-19 has demonstrated that we can do without some professionals in their posts for a year, but the people at the other end of the scale are proving to be indispensable in this crisis… I really hope we learn from this time.

What happened next? For the first time in my life, I was approached about a job. It was for a field HR role at Argos. It was just as Argos was rebranding and starting to look to grow, Terry Duddy was CEO and had transformed the business. They'd gone from looking like a bookies to become family friendly, with bright colours and light stores and they wanted to hire people from different sectors, to bring in different experience sets, ideas and knowledge. After some reluctance, once in the fold, I realised this was a fantastic new reboot, bursting with enthusiasm and it absorbed nine years of my life, in which I covered many HR-related roles. The biggest insight for me was that the CEO had set it up as a real meritocracy and it was massively sensitive to customer and employee feedback and quick to put things right. We were at the cutting edge of technology in retail. When I joined, it was Ring and Reserve, then Text and Take Home, then Click and Collect, then fully integrated internet retail - clicks and mortar. There were so many super talented people working there at the time and it was a wonderful place to learn from the best. This was a fascinating time, rapid growth, full of energy and a hectic HR schedule, I was really developing as a practitioner in this part of my career. It was 2008 and I felt it was really time to move on… I realised, understandably, I wasn't going to be the next HR Director there, any time soon.

Tell us about your next move? It was another call that caught my interest and, this time, it was the publisher, Random House. I had only heard the name mentioned in a US Rom-com starring Cameron Diaz. I carried out some research and discovered that this was a massive publishing giant and suddenly, I was ridiculously excited - not that I might meet Cameron Diaz - but because this was a business that was just about to go through a massive change to digitalisation. At the time, this was pre- Kindle, pre-iPad and just before the launch of the iPhone. I thought, "well, this is going to be fascinating!" The future of this massive and traditional industry was in the balance, this was a world that I had never experienced before and I met people who behaved in a way that I'd never seen before. It was wildly dynamic and just a bit mad, but I was working with people

who were so incredibly passionate and knowledgeable. The CEO at the time was Baroness Rebuck, who was a legend within the industry. It was just brilliant… and nuts. I can't describe it any other way. For example, publishing a global sensation such as *Fifty Shades of Grey* and the whole rise of digital technology, social media channels, the quest for content and trying to understand how territorial rights worked on the internet, were just some of the new challenges, as books were being opened up, to coin a phrase, to potentially a vast audience. We needed to recruit for a whole new set of skills and Random House wasn't then first on the tech talent radar, so it was a steep learning curve. We were running at 100 mph, working across international territories as well as the UK. Different territories were at different stages of change and it was my first real international experience. Then in the summer of 2012, during the London Olympics, I was made

something new, something to refocus my energy. It was then that I was approached, by Severn Trent, a somewhat different world, which seems to be the story of my career and that felt exciting and challenging. I met with Liv Garfield, my current CEO and she is the most inspiring, enthusiastic, full-of-energy individual that you can come across and it was this sense of energy about wanting to do better and be better that really excited me. But what also attracted me to Severn Trent is that we are a community employer, a regional business that was providing jobs for 7,000 people in the West Midlands, East Midlands and areas that have social and economic challenges. After the meeting with Liv, I seemed to be interviewed by all the other 6999 employees - it was definitely the most comprehensive hiring processes I'd experienced - but the passion and pride for the work and the purpose came across in every conversation and meeting I had.

IT'S A PRETTY AMAZING AND NOBLE ACHIEVEMENT TO SUPPLY A CITY THE SIZE OF BIRMINGHAM WITH PURE CLEAN WATER AND SAFELY TREAT THEIR WASTE

aware that there were early, tentative conversations about a potential merger. What happened next was the biggest merger in publishing history, Penguin and Random House, two legendary brands. I had never experienced anything like it, bringing these two businesses together, forging a new leadership team, building a relationship with a new CEO, Tom Weldon, CEO of Penguin Whilst it wasn't the Montagues and Capulets, there was an understandable tension early on. It fascinated me that, even though both companies were steeped in the same history, the cultures were really quite different. The other really important element to the merger was, it wasn't purely based on financial assessments of assets, it was properly based on what makes businesses great, people.

Fascinating, what happened next, Neil?
Once the dust settled, there was a real sense of excitement for the future. We were determined not to make a big Penguin or a huge Random House, we were creating something different and new. Whatever we did, we looked for the best, not the easiest outcome and we were always looking to strike the right balance. But there came a moment when frankly I was worn out, we'd delivered so much, but it was time for

Explain a bit about the world of water and what the challenges facing the sector are? That is a really key question. Until I had the call about the job at Severn Trent, I was like everyone else, turn the tap and out pours this fundamental element of life, I had never contemplated the water industry, let alone considered a job within it. The big picture was that at the time of me joining, the Labour Party came out with a manifesto commitment to re-nationalisine the industry. That had quite a substantial impact on people within the sector and started a debate about ownership models and the historical performance of the industry, which obviously created uncertainty. Ultimately, there's only so much you can do to influence the politics and so my focus was on quickly gaining an understanding of the industry, the company and its people. A lot of our people don't come into the organisation from academic backgrounds, there has been a strong heritage of apprenticeships and on-the-job learning is very important. With the industry changing, jobs were also changing, so a key part of my planning was a reassessment of re-skilling and upskilling, building more agility so that people could be redeployed with the right skills, inevitably there will be increasing automation in certain parts of the industry

and so how that will impact people and their roles, not just today but in ten and even twenty years' time has to be considered and planned for. It's a case of, how do you make sure that employees are skilled and ready for change?

It seems strange to say that we hardly give a thought about water, the fundamental element of life. Agreed, water and wastewater treatment are taken for granted and I'm not sure we have a strong enough societal debate about water scarcity and the environmental issues that we manage and deal with as a matter of course. But our colleagues are all hugely passionate about that and also, it's a pretty amazing and noble achievement to supply a city the size of Birmingham with pure clean water and safely treat their waste. So, a big part of our work is radiating and promoting those messages, like every organisation, we're vying for talent and our culture is one of the things that absolutely sets us apart. But no employer should be deluded that they can take their culture and engagement as read, it has to be worked at.

There is a massive change going on in what a career represents, how people think about ambition, do you think you're set up to accommodate these new dynamics? We are a definite mix of people in terms of what matters to colleagues and while there's no doubt that we need to be mindful of the increasing speed and agility of the workforce, we mustn't overlook our loyal, long serving, hard-working colleagues too. The bottom line is, look after your workforce, support them, keep them safe and if you do those things well, that's the heart of being a good employer. Sometimes in HR, we forget that. There's no doubt in my mind that this pandemic has raised the importance of looking after people - it's not just empathy – it's about doing what is right for the long term. For example, we're investing £10 million in a state-of-the-art training academy and people will want to access that for a number of reasons; to keep up to speed with new technology or operational procedure, keep skills up to scratch, or to enable them to move up to or across to other positions. This new facility typifies our culture, that we would rather support and train people into a new role, rather than delivering the message that they are to be made redundant.

Increasingly, the messages have to be clear and what is said must be done whether the news is good or bad. Agreed, we've seen in 2020 how when the messaging is clear, it gains buy in, but that can quickly change. Part of my remit is communications, media, marketing and internal and external comms and communication. This is essential to explaining the "why" and so your

ability to connect with colleagues is key. We manage a natural resource, we take care of one of life's essentials… it is, effectively, our purpose. Helping people to draw connectivity between what they do and the impact on the environment, our communities and customers is really important. Whether you are providing clean drinking water to communities or treating

wastewater, that connectivity between the organisation, our people and our millions of customers is fundamental. It's a living partnership that is paramount to our capacity to deliver and, while maybe we haven't always celebrated that externally to any great degree, I think we should.

It wasn't long ago that people threw disposable nappies down the toilet. There is a much better understanding or our individual impacts on the environment. Yes, there is a much more positive outlook, but we still have a long way to go. In terms of our own operation, we're committed to the triple carbon pledge by 2030, with a target to be zero-net carbon, all-electric fleet and fully-renewable, in terms of energy. That requires people to do things in a massively different way. Of course, playing a big role in the environment is high profile for us and it's interesting because it also has a positive effect on our capacity to attract diversity of talent. When we see engineering graduates join, compared to other organisations, we see a very strong female representation and, anecdotally, it's that connectivity with the environment that is appealing. But it isn't just engineers, having a strong and clear social purpose is important for lots of people and positivity attracts talent into every single area of the organisation.

Tell us about your experiences and the challenges you faced as an organisation during the pandemic. We've kept on operating throughout, as we're a critical national infrastructure and an essential public service. One of the things that has been really important to us was that we kept going as normally as possible during this period, because 60 percent of our employees are key workers. Many are out in the streets fixing leaks, treating water, treating waste, or they're in contact centers speaking to customers who need assistance. In so many ways, this has been

a massive lesson on how to carry on in the face of adversity and keep on delivering. I think it has given us all a real sense of the imperative of our services and at a level of societal value, that perhaps haven't been placed on utility workers in the past, which I think is deeply unfair. Our thoughts are always with our communities and how we can support them.

> VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND THOSE ON THE MARGINS HAVE BEEN HIT THE HARDEST AND IT HAS RAISED HOW RELIANT WE ARE ON KEY WORKERS. I HOPE OUR COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES WILL INFORM US TO FORGE A BETTER FUTURE

Indeed, the crisis has hit everyone in different ways, from the many tragedies of loss of life, the ruined businesses and redundancies, the isolation of the old and disruption to the young, in terms of education. The communities that have been hit are also our customers and we're really thinking about how we can support and help. A case in point, we're taking on 500 Kickstarters as part of the Government scheme, because we're very aware of the impact of youth unemployment in our region. We've also increased the number of apprentices that we're taking on this year and really trying to provide opportunities in as many ways as we can. We've committed not to make redundancies as a result of the pandemic and we've given a three-year pay deal, to make sure that people know that their pay is going to increase - and by what amount. We've invested £2 million back into charities within the region, because I think now, more than ever, it's time for British business to step up to the plate and play a role in building a return back to normal. When we open our academy at the beginning of next year, we'll be planning in community training programmes and the way in which we can train people who aren't working for us in skills, such as plumbing, so that they can go on and create jobs and employment for others. We've also reduced our payment terms to SMEs, so that we've been able to keep the supply chain liquid during this period of time. All of these actions are aimed at utilising our capacity to be a force for positive change and improvement. The pandemic has delivered some stark lessons and we've all gone through it in our own very individual ways but it's clearly demonstrated that vulnerable people and those on the margins have been hit the hardest and it has raised how reliant we are on key workers. I hope our collective experiences will inform us to forge a better future.

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.SEVERNTRENT.COM

NORMALNESS IS PRIVILEGE

ARTICLE BY ARTICLE BY AMBER CABRAL, FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT - CABRAL CO & AUTHOR OF *ALLIES AND ADVOCATES: CREATING AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE CULTURE*

The very existence of HR leaders hinges on humans being able to connect meaningfully. Through normal transactions and transitions, allyship is certainly a core part of the job. But when you layer in the pressures of a global pandemic and the impacts and complexities therein, it is clear that advocacy extends beyond work, as real life and work collide into one another, with inevitable consequences.

The global shifts of the present time are reshaping experiences at work and HR professionals are learning to navigate new conversations that aren't clearly defined by HR policy, whilst wondering how to unpack their own discomfort in the process. Some have even expressed fear that they don't know how to support their people anymore, as they have to navigate new topics, with growing concerns that they may say or do the wrong thing. As allyship moves away from just being a workplace support and into also shaping the experiences of marginalised identities, let's consider a definition of allyship that can help us to put into perspective what role we each play. Allyship is when someone with privilege and power seeks to learn about the experiences of a marginalised group of people, develops empathy for them and identifies ways to extend their own privilege to the marginalised group. Allies are identified by their ability to apply what they have learned about a group of people, because they find ways to transfer the benefits of their privilege to those who lack it. Allyship requires taking the time to become invested in - and be emotionally connected - to marginalised people who are different from you. The part to zoom in on here is the labour part of allyship. An ally seeks to learn and so that they can connect and build empathy. To be an ally, you have work to do

and most of that work is on yourself. Ally is not a title; it is a verb.

Traditionally, in the workplace, there has been no explicit focus on "marginalised identities", but rather a blanket form of allyship, that did not necessarily consider the unique experiences of someone who is different than others, in some relevant ways. We know our identity shapes how we experience life, so purposeful consideration of identity in the workplace is a plus, but we haven't always done this well in the past. Allyship isn't favouritism or priority, it is equity. It is recognising that "the way things work here" might not make much space for some people to be included, or have a sense of belonging and we should be mindful of where we can be more equitable about extending our privileged experiences to others, when possible. But what is a "privileged experience" anyway? What if you don't think you have any privilege? The good news is, uncovering our own is pretty easy and we all have some form. Figuring out your privilege is as simple as asking ourselves one really simple question: "In what ways do other people see me as normal?" Did you have a normal upbringing? Do you seem like a pretty normal member of your work team? Do you have a normal education? Appearance? Ability? Skin tone? Body type? In your

"normal" rests your privilege. You don't have to think twice about those things, where others have to be chronically mindful. That experience points to privilege.

"How do I show up as an ally?" This is a pretty common question these days, particularly as leaders become aware of the many ways they are privileged and, as their commitment to being an ally grows, more people increasingly want to show up as an ally for others. Great news here, the work of being an ally can happen independently - you don't need permission or policy changes - all you have to do is commit to practicing and being willing to be a bit uncomfortable. So, let's discuss the six behaviours you can practice that will earn you the opportunity to be considered an ally. Equity, inclusion and diversity work is emotional. Seeking to learn about a marginalised person's experience comes with a lot of feelings, curiosity and difficult-to-digest information. It takes practice to identify for yourself the feelings that bubble up and usually, once you can identify the feelings, you will be able to move past them or ask for more information. Remind yourself that change causes discomfort and learning to be an ally and to discuss inclusion, equity and diversity topics confidently in the workplace is a change for many HR leaders. In terms of inclusion, equity and diversity, everyone is at a different starting point with how to create inclusive spaces. People are going to make mistakes - and you are going to make mistakes - it's likely that you are concerned about that, but don't be. Mistakes are going to happen; just accept it, I have been doing this work for 20 years and I still make mistakes, they are a part of learning. Making space for your imperfection and the imperfection of others allows you to have the grace necessary to continue to learn and grow as an ally. The number one thing you can do to make space for imperfection is to build meaningful and trusting relationships with people who are different from you. Not just passing acquaintances or fleeting connections, but actual relationships, with depth. When we feel a connection with people, we are more inclined to share when they

are behaving in a way that could present a potential issue. Also, when you value a connection, you grant grace for people to learn and grow and they grant you grace for the same reason. Meaningful connections create safe learning spaces. Invite and offer vulnerability to others to make space for imperfection. We are often so afraid to admit where we are challenged or what we have overcome, but seeking vulnerability as a strength helps us to be willing to share our own learnings, wins and flaws, so that others can connect to us. When you are vulnerable with someone, you invite them to come to know you a bit better and connect to your humanity. Remember, inclusion and equity are human issues, so seeing the humanity in one another - beyond just the work we deliver - is critical to being a great ally.

Allyship isn't favouritism or priority, it is equity. It is recognising that "the way things work here" might not make much space for some people to be included, or have a sense of belonging

With imperfection comes the opportunity to learn and one of the best ways to learn is to seek - and expect - feedback. We may never know what we are doing wrong or what we are doing well, if we are not intentional about seeking feedback. I know at times feedback can be tough to hear, but here is a tip, the more you train yourself to seek and expect feedback, the easier it is to hear both the good and the bad and receive it as emotionally unsettling. So, what's the best way to receive feedback?

Ask others around you for it, be open to the possibility, they may not have something to share at the moment, but your asking can invite them to share their feedback when they do have something to share in the future. Sometimes we receive some tough feedback and we realise that we need to apologise and most of us are really bad at apologies. We tend to lead with conditionals like, "I'm sorry you feel that way" and we don't always offer clarity about what we have learned from our missteps. Apologies are a critical life skill, so let's cover how to meaningfully apologise. A meaningful apology has two parts: "I apologise for..." and "moving forward I will...". For example: "I apologise for mispronouncing your name and moving forward, I will make sure to say it correctly." Remember, apologies are not about what you intended or why you did something, so don't lead with that. Once an effective apology is delivered and accepted, often the opportunity to discuss the incident in more detail will present itself. Missteps are inevitable; from name pronunciations to misgendering people, there is no way to avoid every single mistake. But HR leaders that know how to meaningfully apologise teach those they support how to handle missteps of their own.

Receiving feedback is only half of the feedback loop, true allies also speak up and give feedback to others. Most of us are better at giving feedback than we are at receiving it, that is until it's time to be brave and discuss the topics we normally avoid talking about and we become nervous, are unsure what to say and sometimes are crippled with fear of saying the wrong thing. When you are working to be an ally, speaking up and giving feedback to others is how you cultivate a culture of candor and accountability. You should view giving feedback respectfully and responsibly, as a way of ensuring that everyone is doing their best to create a culture of belonging. Speaking up and giving feedback starts when you see or hear something that is inappropriate, especially if it is in a space you engage in frequently, such as with friends, family or in the workplace. That it didn't

happen to you or wasn't aimed at you, doesn't matter, because allies speak up. Sometimes we hesitate to speak up because we want to challenge appropriately. So, below are a few tactics that HR leaders can use when they want to speak up - from the most subtle to the most direct - and be sure to turn on your curiosity with these sentiments: "Hmm... I am not sure I follow what you mean." "I know you mean well, but I think there is a more inclusive approach." "I find what you said inappropriate and offensive and I'd like to share why.

The number one thing you can do to make space for imperfection is to build meaningful and trusting relationships with people who are different from you

When is a good time for us to discuss?" For the last statement - which is the most direct - you always want to share "why", because it ensures that other leaders are able to learn from their mistakes going forward. Being an HR leader can make us think - just by virtue of the role - that we are really great listeners. The fact is that what we are really good at is listening for directives. Being a good and attentive listener means going beyond listening for what you can do, or for a solution, it means recognising the value of hearing people's stories and understanding how they feel. By being attentive listeners, HR leaders can connect to the people they are looking to understand and support. Listening is not achieved just via the ears, it's important to pay attention to verbal and nonverbal messages. People not only speak with their mouths but

also their hands, eyes and, sometimes, even their whole bodies. Humans are messaging all the time and a good listener is paying attention to all of that body language, in addition to listening to the words being said.

When you are attentively listening to those you are serving as an ally, make sure to listen, to understand and not to respond. You may have heard the Epictetus quote: "We have two ears and one mouth, so that we can listen twice as much as we speak." We learn through experience that listening is about taking action and looking for the problem we should solve and, when it comes to building connections, especially with marginalised groups, listening has to be about learning. In the current global climate, we can all probably use a little extra empathy, as it means you are aware of and are sensitive to the feelings or experiences of others. It means that you are able to put yourself in someone else's shoes or experience and relate to the emotions they are feeling. Empathy means you understand the impact that someone's experience is having on their life. Empathy is not pity, because in allyship, pity is an off-putting emotion. Marginalised people want your empathy and your ability to see and acknowledge their situation, so that it moves you to action. One way allies can exercise empathy is by checking in and reaching out to people when something is happening in their lives or communities. Checking in should be done responsibly and with careful language. Three ideal phrases to use when checking in on those you support are: "I will never pretend to know how you feel, but I am here if you want to chat." This sentiment acknowledges that you know something hard has happened, without assuming you know how someone is feeling. Another is: "I see you. I hear you. I support you." These statements work well independently or together and they are best used when someone has shared that they are having a challenging time, or when you can see by their behaviour that they are struggling with something. Finally: "Please let me know what you need from me." This statement puts you in the situation of supporter for someone who is having a hard time. Sometimes

the answer will be "I don't need anything..." and that is okay. There is no need to be pushy. As the world of work continues to evolve, HR leaders will remain on the front line of shaping the experience for employees. By prioritising inclusion and equity through allyship behaviours that can be adopted and practiced independently, HR leaders can begin shifting workplace cultures to be more inclusive of the next generation of business leaders and create a sense of belonging - across a myriad of identities - increasing their access to and retention of valuable and diverse talent. ●

Amber Cabral is the author of *Allies and Advocates: Creating an Inclusive and Equitable Culture* (published by Wiley).

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.AMBERCABRAL.COM

Receive 'ahead of the curve' monthly HR strategic content on the device of your choice.

25% donation to Send a Cow

Take out a **DIGITAL Subscription** today to our trusted Senior HR & independent resource f**or only £40 per year** and receive 56 pages of content each month.

Take a look at the Topics we're covering in the next issue as we seek solutions, insight, best practice and strategies to help you navigate through these challenging times:

- **AI continued adoption and impacts**
- **The changing relationship with work**
- **The future of the office**
- **Engagement – the impacts of the pandemic and long-term furlough**

Straight-talking editorial style, providing professional expertise on topics that are of immediate importance for Senior HR Practitioners.

- 12 ISSUES PER YEAR
- 4 KEY TOPICS COVERED INDEPTH
- OPINION PIECES, INSIGHTS & TO THE POINT
- **HR**DEBATE VERBATIM REPORT
- LEGAL UPDATES

- 56 PAGES PER MONTH
- 'NO PAID FOR EDITORIA'L STANCE
- COVER HR DIRECTOR INTERVIEW
- SPECIAL REPORTS ON THE ISSUES IMPACTING YOU
- MOVERS & SHAKERS IN HR

SUBSCRIBE FOR ONLY £40 PER ANNUM

https://www.thehrdirector.com/product/silver/

DOWNLOAD OUR FREE APP WHICH INCLUDES SENIOR HR JOBS

We are delighted to support **Send a Cow** this month. **25%** of the proceeds from any Annual Subscription (Print or Digital) or single Digital Issues will be donated.

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google play

Please note: We do not accept any paid for editorial in our flagship publication and we have never rented or sold our data.

HRD the**HR**DIRECTOR   HRD senior**HR**JOBS

THE POWER OF PURPOSE

ARTICLE BY SARAH ROZENTHULER, CEO AND FOUNDER - BRIDGEWORK CONSULTING LTD

Right now, a clear leadership priority is to guide businesses on the journey to becoming purpose-driven, clarify the meaningful reason for the firm's existence, move away from focusing solely on profit for shareholders and towards creating values that serve a whole ecosystem of beneficiaries. Purpose-led leadership is about; presence, authentic dialogue, stakeholder engagement and connecting to the wider purpose, so it becomes an agent of positive change in the world.

A conversation had opened up amongst a cohort of 40 participants at a leadership programme of a global banking organisation. Some participants had waited years to be invited and saw their attendance as a badge of honour for all their hard work and expectations ran high. It was the perfect 'pressure cooker' environment. Fintech developments were creating pressure to innovate. The CEO wanted to create a 'culture of challenge' after a period of restructuring, which had created significant upheaval and the inevitable exits of people. Many leaders had been required to step up into broader roles with more responsibility, whilst dealing with a sense of loss and 'survivor guilt.' During one of the whole group forums, where people were trying to make sense of their and others' roles in the new world, a question about the bank's purpose had arisen, provoking some strong assertions: "We need to be profitable, of course, but if that's our only purpose, it won't inspire our customers." Another stated: "It's the people around here - colleagues and customers - with rags to riches stories that motivate me, not working to maximise profit." Another said: "Well I didn't do all this work over all these years just to have someone come along and move the goalposts!" As the heated exchange continued, I found myself reflecting that it was no surprise that

the group were struggling to have a deeper dialogue about the bank's reason to exist. For some leaders, becoming more purpose-driven is threatening, as they prefer the apparent certainty of business-as-usual. For others, it is a real opportunity that will enable an organisation to stay competitive, whilst being a force for good in the world.

The question of how to light up the whole ecosystem of stakeholders - employees, customers, suppliers, communities and shareholders - is not unique to the aforementioned bank. Coming to a shared understanding about the evolving purpose of an organisation in a world of hyper change is a new frontier that many leaders will have to grapple with. Clarity of purpose is the only way to navigate the uncertainty of the current landscape. Re-inventing an organisation, through re-defining its purpose, is high on the business agenda. There are many signs our organisations, including our banks and financial institutions, need to be transformed. Although some organisations do have happy, engaged and productive employees, many don't and there is a growing recognition that overall levels of employee engagement are shockingly low, as distrust of business deepens and a climate of fear amongst employees takes hold[1].

Beyond individual organisations, there are many indications that our whole economy is not delivering. Martin Wolf, writing in the *Financial Times*, describes how 'rentier capitalism' - where privileged individuals and companies extract a disproportionate amount of 'rent' from everyone else - has created economic outcomes that benefit the few and leave society as a whole worse off. A global environment of feeble productivity growth, growing inequality and slowing innovation, has led to a call for capitalism itself to be reset[2]. "Business must make a profit, but should serve a purpose too", was the *FT* headline on 18 September 2019. The newspaper defined the 'new agenda' in three ways; to stand up for wealth creation and free enterprise as drivers of development; to promote better business by holding companies to account and to empower each other to lead the way in business, society and the wider world. They acknowledged that in our fragmented world, where many see difficulty, they see opportunity.

The journey of purpose-led leadership starts with our own whole-heartedness. As humans, we are wired to want to connect with something bigger than ourselves. Think back to the moment you heard about 9/11, where were you? We can often remember being rooted to the spot in such moments, because they connect us with a much larger story of what is unfolding on this shared planet of ours. Purpose-driven brands stand for something bigger; more meaningful than profit alone. The magic of the most successful brands in the world is the promise of change and this promise is the brand. The best brands don't appeal so much to logic or reason, they touch our hearts. Successful founders stay true to their impulse of knowing what they want to change and what they care about. As Hieatt pithily puts it, "love scales". Pioneering business leaders are forging ahead with new ways to describe leading with purpose and presence. Tony Hsieh, CEO for over 17 years of the hugely successful online retailer Zappos, is one of these trailblazers. In an interview published in the *McKinsey Quarterly* (2017, Number 4), Hsieh argues that mobilising

collaboration, both within the organisation and beyond its boundaries, are at the heart of Zappos' success[3]. Hsieh describes how each of the 1,500 employees occupies a valuable niche in the ecosystem: "To harness collective intelligence, we think of every single employee as a human sensor." In effect, each team member is deploying presence - our ability to feel, sense and intuit - as well as think. Leadership presence connects us with what matters most, because it's a whole body experience. We expand beyond being limited to the intelligence of our heads alone.

When purpose boils down simply to a meagre goal about profit or growth, rather than a company producing goods and services that benefit customers and consumers, it has real consequences

Recent research has found that having an organisational purpose can be insufficient to drive higher levels of financial performance, unless certain factors are present and unquestionably, better conversation has a crucial part to play. A study carried out by Claudine Gartenberg at NYU Stern School of Business, Andrea Prat of Columbia University and George Serafeim of Harvard Business School, drew on the responses of around 500,000 employees from 429 companies in the US. The data stretched over a six-year period, across five different levels of employee - from senior executives to frontline staff - and across a broad range of industries[4]. Overall, they found that, for their measure of purpose to relate to financial

performance, two factors are needed. Firstly, only organisations with high clarity of purpose systematically show superior financial results. Secondly, the perceptions of middle managers - rather than senior managers or frontline staff - were found to drive the relationship between financial performance and purpose. The very people for whom clarity of purpose is most important are also, however, the ones that senior management are most at risk of failing to communicate effectively with. Vibrant and visible leadership that brings purpose, clarity and engages the 'frozen middle' in the conversation, is essential to bringing purpose to life.

Returning to the global bank from earlier in the article, the conversation about purpose spanned many months and the leadership programme provided a unique opportunity for leaders from different parts of the organisation to talk with colleagues that they might otherwise never have met. It was a spirit of inquiry - not-knowing and wanting to understand more - that unlocked a deeper dialogue. People moved out of entrenched positions and into a much more expansive space. When we let go of rigid thought patterns, such as; "I'm right, you're wrong", it opens the way for new thinking to emerge. In this instance, 'being human' started to emerge as a generative image, a "dot on the wall" for the change journey that the bank needed to go on. Some leaders were receptive, others more cynical, but people stayed in the conversation. Searching questions were asked: "What does the Bank stand for? If the Bank ceased to exist tomorrow, who would care… and why"? From these conversations, where leaders discussed 'being human', the Bank defined its purpose; "driving commerce and prosperity through our unique diversity." This purpose statement reflects what differentiates the Bank, the diverse people that intimately understand the local clients and markets in which they work.

Senior leaders then engaged their people to answer the question: "If we are to bring our purpose to life in a human way, how do we do this?" They crowdsourced and analysed the responses of 70,000 people with the help of smart machine

learning and defined the behaviours they most valued. 'Never settle' connected with the 'Driving' element of their purpose. 'Do the right thing' brought 'Commerce and Prosperity' to life. 'Better together' is how the Bank harnessed 'unique diversity.' Several leaders reflected that, had it not been for a safe space in which to do some sense making, they might have exited. When leaders are able to voice their vulnerabilities, it can make the difference between a decision to stay or go. By engaging people in an authentic dialogue about the reason the Bank existed, the Bank not only clarified its purpose, but retained some of its top talent at a time of turbulence and change.

Vibrant and visible leadership that brings purpose, clarity and engages the 'frozen middle' in the conversation, is essential to bringing purpose to life

Listening to the voice of customers, as well as employees, is critical, in order to cope with new disruptions. In their book, *Thinking the Unthinkables*, Nik Gowing and Chris Langdon share the story of how Safaricom, Kenya's telecommunications giant, turned around an 'unthinkable moment', by taking stakeholder engagement to a new level and re-examining their organisational purpose. Since it began in 1997, Safaricom has been widely lauded for being an innovative market leader, having pioneered a money transfer system that enabled anyone with a mobile phone - even if they had no landline, electricity or bank account - to conduct business. The number of users rose from two million in 2008 to over 27 million in 2018. In 2016, the

unthinkable happened. Angry, young customers took issue with what they perceived as overcharging for new data bundles. They complained in their thousands. By listening to their critics, senior leaders at Safaricom realised that they had failed to understand that this generation had very different needs to their own. For millennials, the mobile phone is a lifeline to a livelihood and a better future. They saw Safaricom not as a profit generator for investors and shareholders, but as an enabler of their own creative purpose of having an impact in the world. To respond to the crisis, Safaricom quickly established a youth network, BLAZE. Created by young people for young people, it 'supports unconventional journeys to success' by providing summits, boot camps and a TV show. All executives at Safaricom are reversed mentored and spend two hours a month with a digital native. As a result, instead of a mass subscriber defection, both revenues and profits went up (by 14.1 percent and 8.8 percent respectively) for year ending March 2018. The Safaricom story shows us that ordinary people using a company's products do have a voice and, when a CEO has the humility to listen, a company cannot only survive, but thrive when the unexpected strikes.

Disruptions, which have become the new normal, require leaders to lead with a clear purpose and a moral compass. When purpose boils down simply to a meagre goal about profit or growth, rather than a company producing goods and services that benefit customers and consumers, it has real consequences. In education and health services, as people lose sight of the organisation's purpose and strive to hit performance targets, people become stressed. Burnout and high staff turnover characterise both sectors and a system that is not addressing its true purpose will turn in on itself. Many parts of the NHS are stressed and sick when its true purpose is to heal. Meanwhile, the education system has been eclipsed by an obsession with targets and league tables and teachers are in the grip of a; "culture of fear, over-regulation and lack of trust", with one fifth planning to leave within two years[5]. Likewise, given the pressures

they're under, leaders in these sectors often cannot see their purpose and/or they have lost sight of their beneficiaries. They see their targets and regulators, but have forgotten the patients, the children and their best future possibilities.

Organisations are too often over managed and under led. Senior people focus on performance against targets - management's job - while neglecting the purpose of the organisation, which is the leaders' true role. For an organisation to make a positive contribution in the world, leaders need to stop treating goal setting as a pseudo-purpose and attune their organisation to a compelling purpose instead. Crystallising a purpose is neither an intellectual exercise nor an exercise in word-smithery and leaders often find it difficult to articulate the true purpose of their organisation, as they cannot analyse their way into the future. Consequently, instead of a powerful purpose that guides action, many organisations end up with a mishmash of goals and aspirations instead. Uncovering an organisation's 'why' calls on leaders to look inside themselves and discover what is meaningful. They also need to look outside themselves and see what is happening in the world that moves them to want to create change. ●

Extract from *Powered by Purpose: Energise your people to do great work*, by Sarah Rozenthuler (published by FT publishing).

1. Keegan, S. (2015) *The Psychology of Fear in Organizations*. Kogan Page. Kindle Edition.
2. Wolf M., (18 September 2019) *Why rigged capitalism is damaging liberal democracy*, Financial Times
3. De Smet A. & Gagnon C. (2017 Number 4) *Safe enough to try: An interview with Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh*, The Quarterly McKinsey & Company
4. Gartenberg C., Prat A, George Serafeim G., (2016) *Corporate Purpose and Financial Performance, Organization Science 30, no. 1* (January–February 2019): 1–18., Harvard Business School
5. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/apr/16/fifth-of-teachers-plan-to-leave-profession-within-two-years

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.BRIDGEWORKCONSULTING.COM

The first thing your new
HR Director
is going to ask you?

When do I get my license for Stratigens?

Find out why at:
www.stratigens.com

Stratigens
EMPLOY FACTS, NOT FEELINGS

BUILDING
BACK BETTER

WASTED TIME
IS UNRECYCLABLE

Time to reflect and ask ourselves whether we intend to look back on the year 2020 and return to our old ways, brushing it all under the carpet, or do we take some lasting lessons to build back better for the future? The overarching lesson for me was that this time was actually all about people and the themes that emerged were not new, but they had perhaps been forgotten.

ARTICLE BY LUCINDA CARNEY, CEO AND FOUNDER - ACTUS SOFTWARE

A crucial element is that human relationships remain a prominent driving force for success and this has often been overlooked in the workplace. When that face-to-face contact that we had taken for granted was removed, we realised how important it was to connect to others on a human level. It was as if many of us suddenly recognised that people who genuinely feel valued are going to be more productive and that understanding people in a more holistic and less transactional way was the key to a stronger working relationship. Unfortunately, not every line manager or business realised this soon enough and there were many examples of micromanagement or behaviours that simply encouraged presenteeism. I remember shocking anecdotes of people being asked to have their webcams on all day or having to explain where they were if they didn't instantly respond to a Microsoft Teams message, making

individuals feel resentful and tied to their desks. The lesson here is that micromanagement has never equalled productivity. Rather, this approach hinders trust within an organisation with the corresponding backfire impact.

Let's face it, we all know that people management in the UK has been underinvested in for decades and we were all just muddling through. However, when the world switched to working remotely, this shone a spotlight on the way in which many managers were completely lacking the necessary people management skills and were ultimately out of their depth. This was magnified by the fact that remote working required more frequent conversations, shorter term objectives and more regular feedback. Sadly, many managers felt woefully underequipped to do this. On a more positive note, those that were able to succeed realised that trusting people made a huge difference to

productivity, performance and the overall well-being of their employees. They were forward thinking businesses who were encouraging people to look after themselves physically and emotionally even during working hours and this paid back hugely in terms of morale and, presumably, engagement and productivity. In a shift to remote working, in-person interaction has dramatically changed or been supplanted by digital engagement. In doing so, we suddenly realised that turning a video on can actually substitute face-to-face contact to quite a high degree. Businesses have also still managed to successfully recruit and induct new starters, without even meeting them in the flesh and the take up of webinars and learning opportunities has been greater than ever before. In the digital age we live, technology has allowed personal interactions to continue, meaning there's no real excuse for human connection to reduce,

just because it has temporarily been made virtual.

Although many have lamented the loss of the clichéd water cooler creativity caused by the lack of informal interactions, they are missing the whole story. Like many readers I'm sure, I have experienced and been involved in huge amounts of innovation demonstrated through the explosion in use of technologies to learn and network. Dull and boring webinars, along with e-learning, have been revitalised and replaced by people being challenged to better use the technology available to them. Individuals and businesses as a whole, have realised that learning remotely is not only possible, but brings numerous benefits in terms of time and cost efficiency. Having said that, it does also seem that Parkinson's law - the old adage that work expands to fill the time allotted - still applies. It didn't take long to fill the newly-found time with virtual meetings, to the point of unproductiveness. What happened to all this time we started out with because we were at home and how did it end up being filled with video meetings? Surely, the same rules should apply, as when we are in an office, where we valued our time and asked ourselves why we are attending this meeting and questioned whether we really need to be involved. Indeed a culture has emerged of inviting six or so people to every single meeting and I find it hard to believe that this would have occurred in the conventional world. Perhaps it is some form of compensation for the lack of informal contact or simply a widescale case of that newly-acquired buzz acronym FOMO, which refers to the fear of missing out. Regardless, it's a terrible waste of time and productivity, which in itself is a recipe for stress, especially when this energy would go to better use elsewhere. This leads me onto a question about how decisions are being made in organisations, did the pandemic highlight a lack of clear process or authority in some cases where people are herding together virtually to have safety in numbers? If your environment is very hierarchical, have people been empowered to make decisions? The bottom line is that remote working needs us to trust and empower people, but that's very difficult to achieve if your processes undermine this.

The likelihood is that many of us will want to work remotely more in the future and, in doing so, there are advantages for individuals and organisations. However, it may require us to take a long hard look at our culture, because it's all very well to say that we want to empower people to perform and an entirely different thing to provide them with the authority and systems to enable this. Take the example of a business that was desperate to achieve a culture change that would encourage people to take responsibility and to feel empowered to perform, yet any decision about expenditure, however small, had to be escalated to someone with 'Director' in their job title. It says a lot when they would avoid making a decision on their own and would potentially take it to a board meeting or wider. If we want to achieve empowerment, we have to give people the direction, permission and trust to deliver on it.

> PARKINSON'S LAW - THE OLD ADAGE THAT WORK EXPANDS TO FILL THE TIME ALLOTTED - STILL APPLIES. IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG TO FILL THE NEWLY-FOUND TIME WITH VIRTUAL MEETINGS

When we look at how we behaved in the second lockdown compared to the first, many people were concerned about the effect on wellbeing, when days were darker and shorter, but there were some brilliant examples of people using this experience positively. Without the need for a commute, many have been able to take up exercise regimes, cook and eat better and look after themselves. In fact, the overall simplicity of a lockdown life has allowed many people to focus on what is really important to them which is, in many cases, their family. Let's face it, many more of us work to live rather than live to work, yet sadly our use of time doesn't always represent that, with too many people spending far longer at their desk than they should. It's just as easy to create good habits as it is bad ones and we need to be really clear about what is important to us in order to prioritise our time. Last year has demonstrated work and life are actually tightly interwoven. To be happy, healthy and productive, we need to know what is important for us to achieve in all aspects of our life. This might be key tasks or objectives at work and making time for our fitness and family at home. This might require self-discipline and tough choices, but at least when we are 24/7 at home, we do have that choice, if we want to take it. As we look back on 2020, it's clear that it really has been all about people. We stayed at home to protect people, key workers saved people's lives and kept our homes running, jobs were subsidised to protect people's livelihoods and we learned how important human contact was when working remotely. A human-centric focus truly has reached every inch of society, keeping spirits high and driving us into the new year. For the HR profession, this has been a time like no other. Never before has the role been so critical, under so much pressure, delivered so much value or, in some cases, sadly been so undervalued. Let us hope that, as we move forward into more positive times, one of the key lessons is the vital importance of the people profession and the value it can bring. ●

@theHRDIRECTOR
TWITTER POLL

Is your organisation ready for the return to work and normality?

50% Yes

50% No

REACH OUT
TO THE SOUL
SURVIVORS

WE'RE IN A TIME OF ENHANCED AWARENESS OF HUMAN WELFARE. IN THE PAST, THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SENSE IN OUR WORLD THAT YOU GO EITHER 'ECONOMY FIRST' OR 'PEOPLE FIRST'. BUT NOW IT IS TIME THAT WE LOOK AT BOTH ECONOMY AND PEOPLE FIRST.

ARTICLE BY NICHOLAS BRICE, CEO - SOUL CORPORATIONS®

> *"As leaders, we need to be able to convey strong messages when we communicate online and not just rattle through copious 'slumbersome' slide decks"*

According to Wikipedia, the term 'build back better' first appeared as an outcome from the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. More recently, the idea of 'build back better' has been applied to the COVID crisis, to encourage us all to heed the lessons we can learn from these crises. Recently re-elected New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's ground-breaking policy decision placed wellbeing above economic performance as the real measure of the success of a nation - a brave and decisive way forward. Given that New Zealand has had a total of 2,030 cases and 25 deaths from COVID (as of Nov 25th), her approach would seem to be achieving some big benefits for both the country's people and the economy. If the UK had matched Arden's numbers with our 67 million people, we'd have 27,000 cases and just 335 deaths. Of course, we face some unique challenges in our densely populated and cosmopolitan island.

Then President-elect Joe Biden ran his successful presidential campaign on the uncharacteristically 'soft' theme of "Putting the soul back into America." Even Disney is on this train, as their Christmas movie was called, *Soul*. Deloitte's 2019 *Report on Human Capital Trends* highlighted the emergence of the 'social enterprise', claiming that such organisations are "reinventing themselves around a human focus." With key 'design principles' being applied, words such as; purpose, meaning, ethics, fairness, collaboration, transparency and passion are becoming foundations for building back better. If we're not only to recover from this disease, but truly to build back better, there are clear priorities that must be applied.

As many organisations map out a future of hybrid working, Harvard Business School Research identified a tendency for managers who can't "see" their direct reports, sometimes struggle to trust that they are working. This theme extends to our communities as well, as ex-Wickes and Focus CEO Bill Grimsey said in an article about town centre shopping areas; "local people must be empowered to redesign their own high streets and have a say on the businesses, services and amenities that occupy it." This approach may result in some innovative re-purposing of all kinds of building, to support our 'new' ways of working and living. We'll see a need to cultivate much higher levels of trust and empowerment in the way teams are managed. This could be a very good thing, as a PwC CEO Panel survey suggests, that over 80 percent of senior leaders believe a high-trust culture is critical to attracting and retaining top talent, building customer loyalty and achieving sustainable bottom-line performance.

By creating crystal-clear contracts with employees and customers, we can establish a clear 'map' for what people can expect from each other. There is less of an urge to keep micromanaging people to achieve the desired performance. People can be more transparent upfront, if something prevents them from meeting their obligations. In a hybrid working world, we need to move away from checking up on employees and learn the art of checking in with people, to communicate and delegate critical priorities. We need to create opportunities for teams to communicate in bursts, at key moments when people can be fully engaged. As leaders, we need to be able to convey strong messages when we communicate online and not just rattle through copious 'slumbersome' slide decks. Leaders and organisations who model and support optimal health behaviours can help people, not just prevent burnout, but also move into optimal performance. As change will be the constant for some time to come, we need to help each other be the best that we can possibly be.

The shift to hybrid working means that for many organisations, company brand-culture will be at risk, as it transmutes into a different form. Leaders must focus on creating inclusivity and unity to maintain the company culture and to connect with their employees' perspectives. People will need to feel heard and valued to create a sense of belonging and psychological safety. Knowing how to authentically acknowledge and validate emotions and reactions is essential, whether dealing with people online or face-to-face and so is communicating the importance of optimal personal, team and organisational wellbeing. This is so much more than just 'becoming more productive', as Jacinda Arden would whole-heartedly endorse. ●

Helping teams cope with change and uncertainty

We can help you build stronger, more resilient teams that can cope with the unexpected and thrive on new challenges.

Using the unique Team Management Systems (TMS) approach to high-energy teamworking we'll help you understand how personal energies combine to create great teams.

At the heart of the TMS approach is understanding how you and others prefer to work. Not only is difference valued but everyone sees the critical importance of multiple and complementary approaches that build a strong team who can respond to change, challenge and the unexpected.

With over 30 years' experience of working with individuals, teams and leaders we can help you develop stronger more resilient teams focused on achieving business success.

Become certified to use the TMS tools yourself, with webinar and elearning options available.

Or we can deliver a range of options from telephone coaching to virtual team events.

Start the conversation

Contact us now to find out more info@tmsdi.com, or visit our website **www.tmsdi.com** to see our full range of accreditation options.

tmsdi®
TMS Development
International Ltd

Re-imagining how we work together
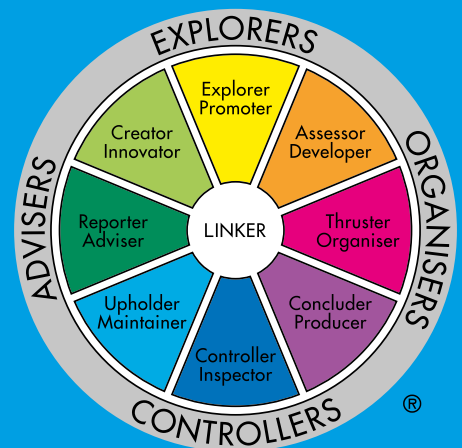
HARD RETURN

Thrust into uncertainty, businesses reacted rapidly to new ways of operating, accelerating the already blistering pace of digital change. But it wasn't all about technology, as leaders became more attuned to the sentiments of employees, raising more questions about equality, diversity and inclusion. One year on and the collective intention is to drive positive workforce and workplace change for 2021 and the determination not to slip back into old ways, is palpable.

ARTICLE BY JANINE CHAMBERLIN, SENIOR DIRECTOR, TALENT SOLUTIONS - LINKEDIN UK

Reset buttons across sectors are being pressed and the challenge now is to ensure that we capitalise on this momentum and weave new attitudes and behaviours into the fabric of organisations. It is said that the true test of character is how you behave when nobody is watching. That may be so, but how businesses have shown up during the global pandemic, when all eyes were on them - including those of their employees, customers, media and investors - is equally revealing. While there was no rulebook to help navigate this level of unprecedented change, the decisions made by leaders then and now will have a lasting impact on their business performance, brand and reputation, as well as the attraction and retention of the best talent, in the years to come. Many businesses have received plaudits for the way they quickly adapted during the pandemic, and rightly so. But delivering organisational change is challenging. Our research finds that nearly two-thirds of UK C-level executives say that leading their organisations during COVID-19 has been the toughest experience of their career, at times doubting their ability to lead due to the intensity of the situation. On the flipside though, with leaders being forced to make difficult decisions regarding the future of their business and workforce, many have considered what type of leaders they want to be and how their organisations should operate in the future. Many leaders have been looking inwards to consider their own leadership style during this period, with a raised concern about the health and wellbeing of their employees. With this in mind, it is unsurprising that this crisis has raised the importance of soft skills as the opportunity to build closer relationships with employees has presented. By being more visible and transparent, many leaders have been able to act on employee sentiment and to ensure everyone was on the journey with them.

This crisis experience has undoubtedly had a profound impact on the people management role and has highlighted that emotional intelligence is not just a desired, but essential skill. It has also raised a whole raft of workforce and workplace changes, such as giving employees greater flexibility around when and where they work, to better support working parents and those with dependents, build a more diverse workforce and drive reskilling and upskilling opportunities so that

employees can maintain their employability and the opportunity to move into different roles. These intentions have the potential to transform businesses for the better, while also giving greater opportunity to people. But intentions alone don't create change, actions do and it's critical - from a business and societal perspective - that positive change is not jettisoned, as the world starts to return to normality. There is already some urgency here as existing workplace inequalities were quickly exacerbated, due to the pandemic, with women over the age of 30 - who are most likely to be caregivers - being particularly affected. Further still, the number of women hired during lockdowns in the UK fell while the percentage of men being hired increased. This is cause for concern, because it has the potential to send businesses backwards in terms of creating a diverse workforce. The risk is that working mothers may consider reducing their hours or leaving the workforce entirely, as they juggle ever increasing work and family commitments. This could negatively impact on long-term equality and inclusion objectives and so employers must prioritise on providing the flexibility that working parents need.

"competitive", "confident" and "champion" and instead included phrases like, "we welcome people who want to learn and be team players," in order to attract female talent and further build on its reputation as a diverse workplace. Applications for a new Process Technician job advert saw the number of women applying rise to 46 percent, after these changes were made.

If employers act decisively by shifting the way they design and hire jobs and offer greater flexibility, they will have access to a breadth of diverse talent. Furthermore, companies that assess candidates on their skills and overall potential, rather than just on their previous related experience, will open the floodgates to a much wider pool of talent which can bring fresh ideas and perspective to their businesses. Given the state of the labour market and the number of people who have been adversely affected by the pandemic, this is more important than ever.

COVID-19 has also shone a light on the skill gaps within organisations and the investment needed by employers to ensure the future of their businesses. Research from McKinsey

bolster their commitment to employee digital skills development such as, Zurich Insurance, which recently invested one million pounds in a workforce retraining programme that aims to address an anticipated skills gap within the next few years. The company plans to upskill two-thirds of its workforce to improve data literacy and technology competencies, having identified 270 jobs in cybersecurity, data science and robotics that could be left unfilled by 2024, if workers are not reskilled. But while there are businesses clearly making strides to address the situation, more action is needed across every sector. In addition to developing skills, it is also crucial for employers to support their employees, in order to progress in their careers through internal mobility. This is backed up by our research findings which showed that internal hiring was up 20 percent between April and August 2020, compared to the previous year. With companies unable to hire new talent from outside their organisation at the same pace as before COVID-19, due to continued uncertainty, many have started to look inwards to find talent for new roles. More than two-thirds of talent professionals in the UK say that the pandemic has forced them to change their hiring practices and 64 percent say internal recruiting is now a top priority. Encouraging internal mobility boosts retention and improves employee engagement, but it can also help companies evolve their businesses from within and bridge any existing skills gaps. To ensure employees are set up for success and have the skills to support career transitions, reskilling and upskilling initiatives are vital and HR professionals will play a pivotal role in facilitating this.

> ## INTENTIONS ALONE DON'T CREATE CHANGE, ACTIONS DO AND IT'S CRITICAL - FROM A BUSINESS AND SOCIETAL PERSPECTIVE - THAT POSITIVE CHANGE IS NOT JETTISONED, AS THE WORLD STARTS TO RETURN TO NORMALITY

Reassuringly, there are examples of where companies are doing exactly this, such as Zurich Insurance, which saw an increase in the number of women applying for senior roles after offering flexibility and changing the language of its job adverts. By advertising all vacancies with the option of part-time, full-time, job share or flexible working, they saw a 16 percent rise in the number of women applying for jobs and a near 20 percent increase in female applications for management roles. The number of women hired for senior roles also rose by 33 percent as a direct result of the initiative. Thames Water too saw more women applying for manual roles after changing 'masculine' wording in its job adverts. The company changed words like

highlights that 94 percent of the UK workforce lack the full suite of skills they will require in 2030 to perform their jobs well. The business case for skills development is clear - the report further finds that effective reskilling can enable organisations to realise a productivity uplift of between six-to-12 percent, at a time when any positive must be capitalised upon.

That investment in digital skills will be important to the country's economic recovery following COVID-19 is stating the obvious. According to a report from Microsoft and 78 percent view a large pool of digital talent as essential to driving UK competitiveness. It's encouraging to see some companies already

COVID-19 has undoubtedly re-shaped business priorities for the better, but it is up to leaders now to enact long-term change. Companies that establish progressive workplace policies, diversify their workforce, build inclusive workplace cultures, champion learning and development and take their employees on a journey with them, will thrive in the next decade. They will also be well positioned to compete for the best talent. I am optimistic that the positive steps forward that businesses have made over the past year are here for the long haul, if we continue to hold ourselves to account. ●

FOR FURTHER INFO
LINKEDIN.COM

TURNING THE TABLES ON COVID-19

When the pandemic hit, few could have predicted the diverse challenges businesses would continue to face almost a year later. But despite all of the negativity, this difficult situation has also brought with it the opportunity to revolutionise businesses and the responsibility lies with business leaders to take what they can from this crisis and use it to bring about positive change.

ARTICLE BY DAVID MOREL, FOUNDER AND CEO - TIGER RECRUITMENT

Right from the start, businesses have proved they can adapt very quickly in both making decisions and diversifying their offering or business model which are, of course, crucial elements for survival. According to research 67 percent of firms either "developed or accelerated a new product or introduced initiatives to better connect with customers" during the pandemic. Indeed, leaders have been forced to think outside the box, often without a complete picture of the situation, which has led to a more agile way of operating and more innovation. The bottom line is, businesses have learnt that it is better to come up with an imperfect solution to address the immediate issue, rather than waiting for a perfect solution that arrives too late. Fostering this level of decisiveness is better for businesses in the long-run and means that they will be more responsive to future issues.

What will undoubtedly be recalled in history, will be how the pandemic forced many office workers to shift to working remotely and, aided by technology, enabled employees to experience a flexibility like never before. The transitioning en masse to virtual working, deserves to be highlighted as a key achievement for an HR/IT collaboration effort, but unquestionably it was the discovery of trust between employers and their workforce, which will be the headline and the signs are that a more flexible way of working is here to stay. Some organisations, such as Twitter, have offered staff the option of working from home permanently, but the most likely scenario is a hybrid model that will combine the best of both worlds. One of the most significant positives to come out of the pandemic is the global spotlight on mental health and wellbeing. This isn't surprising, when according to the Office for National Statistics, four-in-five people in the UK are worried about the effect of COVID-19 on their lives and this has likely been compounded by being isolated from friends and family. Staff are increasingly opening up about their mental health concerns to colleagues and

BUSINESSES HAVE LEARNT THAT IT IS BETTER TO COME UP WITH AN IMPERFECT SOLUTION TO ADDRESS THE IMMEDIATE ISSUE, RATHER THAN WAITING FOR A PERFECT SOLUTION THAT ARRIVES TOO LATE

employers and asking for help. Corroborating this, was the findings of a report, that eight-in ten businesses recorded; "an increase in staff requests for mental health provisions during lockdown". This new openness is healthy and will help ensure that mental wellbeing stays at the top of the people agenda - no longer a nice-to-have, but a fundamental duty of care.

This year has given leaders an unprecedented glimpse into people's homes and lives, highlighting that employees are individuals who have different responsibilities, personal circumstances and working styles. As a result, management empathy has increased dramatically. In fact, according to a *My Confidence Matters* report, 92 percent of employees reported seeing an increased level of understanding and empathy from their employers during the crisis. In order for this to continue, businesses should invest in training and support to nurture these traits and recognise and reward those leaders who exhibit caring behaviour. In turn, they will be rewarded with productive, loyal employees who feel invested in the success of the business.

In order to weather subsequent storms, businesses would do well to avoid withdrawing an excessive amount of capital from their businesses and ensure they have sufficient funds in case of future disruption. This will not only protect their livelihood, it will also result in fewer job losses, something which has devastated many organisations this year. While some businesses may attempt to return to their old pre-pandemic ways, those that adapt and apply the lessons of their COVID-19 experience will be able to transform their business into a better, stronger, more human organisation. This will not only help them to bounce back from tough economic times, it will also make them a more attractive, people-focussed employer. As we start a new year, this is the time for business and HR leaders to reflect on the challenges of 2020 and learn from them. ●

FOR FURTHER INFO WWW.TIGER-RECRUITMENT.COM

DISCOVER THE CERTIFIED
TOP EMPLOYERS UK 2021

top EMPLOYER | UNITED KINGDOM 2021
CERTIFIED EXCELLENCE IN EMPLOYEE CONDITIONS

ABB · Abbott · ADM · AkzoNobel · Alphabet · ALSTOM mobility by nature · amadeus · avanade

AVON · BENTLEY · BNP PARIBAS PERSONAL FINANCE · Boehringer Ingelheim · BOUYGUES CONSTRUCTION · BAT UNITED KINGDOM · B/S/H/ · BUREAU VERITAS

Canon · CDL creating powerful partnerships · CHEP A Brambles Company · Chiesi People and ideas for innovation in healthcare · Cognizant · DANA · DHL · DHL

DHL · DHL · dunnhumby · EMR · Electrolux · experian · faurecia · FedEx Express

FIRST PORT · Foster + Partners · groupm · Harrods

HCL · HUAWEI · IG · IMPERIAL BRANDS

Infosys · INTERNATIONAL SOS WORLDWIDE REACH. HUMAN TOUCH. · JTI · KONICA MINOLTA

KUEHNE+NAGEL · LIDL · LNER LONDON NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY · LTI A Larsen & Toubro Group Company · MSD INVENTING FOR LIFE · mitie · MOLSON COORS beverage company · NHS Professionals

NICE PAK · NOVARTIS · OAKLAND CARE · OLYMPUS · orange Business Services · PEPSICO · PERFETTI van Melle · Pfizer

PHOENIX GROUP · PHILIP MORRIS INTERNATIONAL · PUMA · Q · rb · RLB Rider Levett Bucknall · RM · Saffery Champness CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

SAINT-GOBAIN · SANDOZ A Novartis Division · SANOFI Empowering Life · Santander · SAP · ScotRail Scotland's Railway · SECURITAS · Takeda

TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES · Travis Perkins · UST · virtusa · Weightmans · Whirlpool CORPORATION · WHITBREAD · Wythenshawe

Top Employers Institute, the global authority on certifying excellence in employee conditions, is proud to announce the 84 organizations certified as UK Top Employers for 2021. Certified Top Employers are organizations of the highest calibre that have worked hard to create, implement, and progress their people strategies.

Find out how the Top Employers programme can benefit your organization at www.top-employers.com or get in touch with us at uk@top-employers.com.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

SAT NAV ON A DARK JOURNEY

Work is underway to deliver a vaccine and life will ultimately return to something vaguely resembling normality. Yet COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on another pandemic that threatens to bring society to its knees and one that the injection cannot stall, mental ill health. We're at a tipping point where one-in-four of us will suffer with a mental health issue this year and the impacts of coronavirus will, of course, compound this stark prognosis.

ARTICLE BY JOHN DEAN, COMMERCIAL ADVISOR - 87%

The fact is, corporate mental health strategies have not moved with the times and a state of unpreparedness has blunted reaction to the crisis we are facing. One major cause is the failure of the EAP, where products don't engage employees, are not affordable and accessible by all and adoption is often just two-to-three percent, which is a huge discrepancy from the stated one-in-four statistic. This all leads to the obvious and worrying conclusion that many people are not gaining access to the support they need. So, we must conclude an EAP alone simply does not work and, while many employers are doing their best to put mental wellbeing front and centre, much of it is just guesswork. Mental health initiatives such as the ubiquitous EAP facility, cultural changes and mental health first aiders, seek to resolve

problems, but how do we know if these are relevant to all? The truth is, if we really want to engage employees with mental health initiatives, we need to take a different approach and improve in a number of key areas. To begin with, assessment is a difficult subject to discuss because it requires that people let down their guard. Therefore, creating self-awareness motivates more honest self-appraisal: How do we know how we feel, I mean, *really* know? We might have strong personal relationships, but these could suffer if our work life is causing us stress. How do we differentiate between feeling a little low from time to time and needing support? Businesses can only understand how their staff are feeling by engaging employees to measure their mental health in a clinically appropriate way.

Business insight is of course key, because with proper assessment comes the data needed for businesses to gain a clearer idea about how their staff are coping. EAPs provide data on just the two-to-three percent of employees that have engaged and need support, but that is not a reflection of the whole workforce. So, in order to engage and include the broader working community, a much wider range of resources have to come on line, because mental health is different for each and every person. Not everyone needs, or indeed wants to talk to a counsellor, some may prefer to read support material, listen to a podcast or join a community chat facility. Businesses need to offer a library of support services that allow employees to access help in a way that suits them, rather than just a limited number of counselling

sessions that inevitably end. Meanwhile, fundamental to sustainability is momentum and EAPs alone don't encourage usage, so what is required is proactivity and communication, because it relies on employees, firstly realising they have a problem and wanting to do something about it and then knowing where to go for help. Once somebody has acknowledged the need for support, the next stage is of course fundamental to outcome, access. Sourcing EAP contact details should not be a hurdle and services must proactively guide staff to resources that might help. Here, smartphones come into their own and yet having 24/7 mental health support in the palm of our hands has its limitations and should not be considered a fête à complet.

There is no doubt that there is work required to reposition mental health support in a far more positive way than merely 'assistance'. Everyone has mental health, yet not everyone needs assistance and 'Employee Assistance Programme' is a dull phrase, that does nothing to motivate those who require them to access them. We need to work harder to make the whole subject matter more dynamic. The easiest metric that shows how mental health is behind the times is a comparison with its physical counterpart, which we take great care to measure and monitor. We have medical check-ups, join gyms, see personal trainers and are assessed for aerobic capacity, co-ordination, flexibility, strength and weight to understand how fit and healthy we are. When we've decided on an appropriate and tailored fitness routine, we take responsibility, we set goals and we shout from the rooftops when we achieve them. So, why don't we apply the same training principles to our minds? According to Dr Serra Pitts, Clinical Director - a member of the British Psychological Society - the reasons are two-fold: "Firstly, the line between mental health and mental ill health has become blurred, causing a stigma surrounding the latter. It is difficult to be open and honest and there can be an underlying fear that your problems aren't relevant or significant enough and you feel like you're wasting practitioners' time by seeking help. Many workers are also fearful of their employer finding out about their problems; an issue of confidentiality. Secondly, we have been missing proper assessment to truly understand what we're facing. This is the case for both employees and employers. Few people have the self-awareness to recognise the traits of mental ill health and businesses aren't doing enough to monitor the wellbeing of their staff."

We haven't been taking enough responsibility for mental health and this needs to change. A small number of businesses are taking a more proactive approach to the crisis by employing measures that can prove preventative for all employees, rather than reactive for the unfortunate few. To reiterate, proper assessment is crucial because it does three things: It informs the user of their situation in tangible terms - if they are mentally robust it, reinforces that and for people who aren't sure, it gives them an indication of where they are. In the cases where help is needed,

it gives them reason to seek it. This must then point to useful tools, which might be reading tools, listening tools, advice, exercises, fitness enhancing programmes, life coaching or coping strategies. For those in real need, it can put them on the track to recovery, with a range of professional support. For businesses, aggregated data provides deep insights into the wellbeing of staff - importantly keeping the users anonymous - and the health of the organisation. Through data, managers can see how their staff are faring, focus on the areas of greatest need and develop better long-term mental wellbeing strategies. Returning to the physical fitness analogy, very different approaches have been developed for reaching optimum fitness in different disciplines. A weightlifter will train very differently to a sprinter, who will train very differently to an ultramarathon runner. A similar approach is needed to reinforce our mental wellbeing, with different strategies implemented for those suffering from anxiety, struggling with finances, going through relationship problems or having negative thoughts. By way of example, data could show how different genders, age groups, sectors and job types have been affected differently by the pandemic.

With this level of insight comes the power to direct appropriate interventions at the right time and correlate the insight derived with other important HR metrics, such as engagement, productivity and turnover. It removes the guesswork, facilitates fact-based decisions and takes mental health from being reactive to being proactive. For clarity, I'm not calling on businesses to cancel their EAPs, having systems in place is very important. But people need to know when they're feeling low and how to get treatment. I am calling on companies to invest in proactive wellbeing strategies and properly assess the mental health of their whole workforce. With the technology available to us, there's no excuse. The costs are negligible and it doesn't take manpower or time. Staff will appreciate it and you will see tangible results. Measurement drives understanding, understanding drives improvement and knowing the problem is being able to address it. I hope this is the start of a shift in thinking towards more preventative measures to combat mental ill health, otherwise the repercussions will be considerable. ●

> MEASUREMENT DRIVES UNDERSTANDING, UNDERSTANDING DRIVES IMPROVEMENT AND KNOWING THE PROBLEM IS BEING ABLE TO ADDRESS IT

@theHRDIRECTOR
TWITTER POLL

Is your organisation able to support the mental health impacts from the pandemic?

25% Yes

75% No

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.87PERCENT.CO.UK

If you have an opinion on any of the articles featured in this section, please share it by going to this link
www.linkedin.com/company/thehrdirector

BEHIND CLOSED WEBCAMS

ON 14TH JANUARY 2021, THE BUSINESS MINISTER PUBLISHED AN OPEN LETTER AND NEW REPORT ENTITLED: "WORKPLACE SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE". IT WAS A CALL TO BUSINESSES TO "LOOK AT WHAT MORE ORGANISATIONS CAN DO TO HELP SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE".

ARTICLE BY MARIA STRAUSS, PARTNER - FARRER & CO

> *"For some victims, the place of work is the only place where they can seek vital support. Over this pandemic, it has been increasingly important for employers to develop and embed a domestic abuse strategy"*

The report found that few employers are aware of the signs of domestic abuse and an even smaller number have a clear policy in place to support survivors. The letter draws parallels with workplace mental health where, "it was once taboo to talk about mental health, but now most workplaces have well-established policies in place." With the ongoing impact of COVID-19 lockdowns on rates of domestic abuse - an 80 percent increase in calls to Refuge - the Government's report and letter recommended taking steps to address the ride in domestic abuse and as a key point of employment law and HR agenda. The letter from the Business Minister puts a powerful new onus on employers to do something about domestic abuse. However, there are other commercial reasons why domestic abuse is critical for employers.

It is taken as read that domestic abuse will only to serve as a damaging impact on employee wellbeing, resulting in lost output and reduced productivity. Without positive help and intervention, this will inevitably lead to worsening performance, absence and ultimately disciplinary proceedings, with victims being unfairly and unduly punished for matters beyond their control. But recognition of domestic abuse cases can lead to early help and the right interventions, which may help victims and save employers time and cost. Domestic abuse causes contagion too, as inevitably the impact moves on to co-workers, who are inclined to absorb and take on more work to cover for their colleague's absences and declining performance. The concern here is that this puts impacted colleagues at risk themselves.

It's pertinent here to make the point that domestic abuse is not always limited to the home. There are instances where it can enter the world of workplace, through repeated calls or visits and this often results when the victim has left the relationship and the workplace becomes the only means of being contacted by the abuser. In this instance, employers have a duty to provide a safe working environment for all staff. Conversely, employers should be very vigilant to the dangers and consequences of employing someone in the workforce who is abusive and so important questions must be asked as to whether they are using the employer's resources to harass a victim? Do they pose a risk to others? Is the abuser being investigated by the police?

Of course, the lockdowns have changed many things and for victims of abuse, being exposed to longer spells with their partner is a considerable concern, as is having less access to support. Indeed, for some victims, the place of work is the only place where they can seek vital help and support. Consequently, over this pandemic it has been increasingly important for employers to develop and embed a domestic abuse strategy, that includes; raising awareness of domestic abuse and the support that is available to staff, training managers and HR to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and how to handle disclosures; handle cases sensitively with the aim of reducing risk and supporting people; involving specialist agencies to seek advice and ensuring that the workplace Code of Conduct and disciplinary policies are clear that all forms of abuse, including domestic abuse, are prohibited. Additionally, there are

a range of ways to communicate and inform about the help and support that is available to anyone experiencing domestic abuse. The helplines of domestic abuse charities can be publicised around the business and employers could introduce a system of "nominated champions", trained staff members who can become focal points for those seeking help. Indeed, well-publicised and communicated support platform with clear policies is a beacon to victims and linking employees with specialist organisations and allowing time off to attend appointments enables people to take back some control, look for alternative places to live and new school places for their children. Additionally, short term measures such as advances on pay or loans; flexible working and counselling, are real enablers that mean victims can move on to a more safe place. This time is an opportunity to to provide practical support for employees experiencing abuse. There are a number of initiatives to help employers to support their people. The bottom line is, nobody should have to suffer abuse in silence, particularly in their own homes during this pandemic. ●

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.FARRER.CO.UK

MACMILLAN AT WORK

Helping people with cancer back to work

Each year, more than an estimated 125,000 people of working age are diagnosed with cancer in the UK.[1] That's why Macmillan Cancer Support has developed workplace training, guidance and resources to help managers and HR professionals feel confident and equipped to support employees affected by cancer. For people with cancer, staying in or returning to work can be hugely positive. But it can be difficult to know how to support someone with cancer at work.

Reasonable adjustments

Cancer is classed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. That means employers are required to make reasonable adjustments to make it easier for someone with cancer to work if their location, working arrangements or a lack of extra support puts them at a substantial disadvantage. Cancer and some cancer treatments can leave some people with long-term side effects. Fatigue, pain and depression are common ones, so reasonable adjustments such as flexible working and giving time off to attend medical appointments can make a big difference to someone affected by cancer. It's important to remember that every person may need different support. So how can employers equip HR professionals and line managers to provide the best individual support for staff they manage, while following organisational policies?

Keep the conversation going

Often one of the biggest concerns can be starting the initial conversation with someone who has been diagnosed with cancer. Starting conversations and keeping communication channels open are key steps to help managers gain an understanding of their individual needs and the support they need in the workplace. It's also important to discuss arrangements for keeping in touch with an employee before their absence, and to maintain appropriate contact with them during periods of sick leave.

Support for employers

Our support can help you understand the impact of cancer on work, your legal obligations to employees living with cancer and how to start a conversation with someone affected by cancer. It's designed to help workplaces support employees with a cancer diagnosis, or those caring for someone with cancer.

Getting back to work during or after treatment can mean so much to someone living with cancer. Find out more about how Macmillan at Work can prepare your staff to support them.

Sign up at **macmillan.org.uk/atwork**
Email us at **workandcancer@macmillan.org.uk**
Or call us on **020 7840 4725**

[1] Based on the number of newly diagnosed cases of all cancers per year (excluding non-melanoma skin cancer) in people aged 15 to 64, using the most recently available incidence data for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. England: 2017 (Office for National Statistics), Scotland: 2017 (Information Services Division Scotland), Northern Ireland: 2013-2017 (Northern Ireland Cancer Registry), Wales: 2016 (Welsh Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit.).
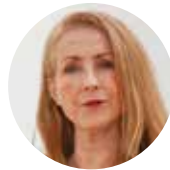
MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT
RIGHT THERE WITH YOU

CAUGHT BETWEEN A STIGMA AND A TABOO

In a 2019 survey by Time to Change, 60 percent of participants reported that discrimination and stigma are as damaging - or can be more damaging - than the symptoms of their mental health problem and 54 percent report that they are impacted most by such stigma in their place of work. Clearly, there's still a need to support a culture of openness.

ARTICLE BY GILL HASSON & DONNA BUTLER, CO-AUTHORS OF *MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES*

In September 2019, Deborah Lee, the Chief Executive of Gloucestershire NHS Foundation Trust, spoke in an NHS employers podcast about her experience of mental health and burnout. Deborah said that she recognised her candid disclosure was an important move towards leading the way in tackling stigma associated with mental illness. Her disclosure is likely to have had a positive impact on others that listened to her speak; a clear signal that if a senior figure in the organisation can talk about their mental health, so can they. If people know their managers will be open and supportive, it reduces the stigma and unnecessary shame that comes with mental health problems. Deborah encourages leaders and senior board members to develop organisational cultures that prioritise the mental wellbeing of staff and enable open discussions of mental health saying; "one of the responsibilities of leaders is not just to lead the organisation you are in, but to recognise you set the tone for leadership more generally." Indeed, mental health is one of the more general areas of leadership.

When someone is diagnosed with a condition, they might worry about whether or not to tell their employer. Equally, a manager or colleagues, may want to provide support, but worry about doing or saying the wrong thing and only make things worse. The worry is not knowing how to cope with the response to the well-meant enquiry or expression of sympathy, so best to say and do nothing. But the reality is, for the person suffering, the worst thing is knowing someone is seeing you are distressed but ignoring or avoiding you, it just makes you feel more alone and ashamed. Talking about mental ill-health can be difficult and you may find that conversations about mental health bring up your own experience of mental health difficulties. You may have experienced being stigmatised - feeling shame and disgrace - because of other people's unsympathetic, judgemental attitude or bullying approach. It could be that in the past, family or friends suffered with mental health problems - depression or anxiety or another mental illness - and that is contributing towards you avoiding approaching someone or finding it difficult to be empathic. It could, on the other hand, be that you just don't understand, because you haven't had any experience with mental health difficulties and illness. We can only enter situations with the experience we already have. We see the world thorough our own unique lenses with our own unique perspective. But the lenses we see through and the perspective we have can be widened and developed.

There is a lot to take into account when it comes to managing staff who may be experiencing mental health issues. But don't let that paralyse you, nobody is expecting you to know all the answers, or to know as much as a trained mental health professional. Having some knowledge, understanding and training in mental health will help you know when and how far you can help, when to ask for support and when to refer someone to other agencies. Organisations and businesses are recognising that valued and supported staff are far more likely to deliver the best outcomes for a business. Workplaces that genuinely promote and value wellbeing and good mental health and support people with mental health problems are more likely to reduce absenteeism, improve engagement and retention of employees, as well as increase productivity and benefit from associated economic gains. If employees experience mental health difficulties whilst at work, it is important that they are appropriately supported by their manager. Whether that person has an episode of depression, anxiety, or has become burnt out, how you, as a manager support them, can make all the difference. ●

This is an edited extract from *Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace: A Practical Guide for Employers and Employees*, by Gill Hasson and Donna Butler. Published by Capstone.

> **THE REALITY IS, FOR THE PERSON SUFFERING, THE WORST THING IS KNOWING SOMEONE IS SEEING YOU ARE DISTRESSED BUT IGNORING OR AVOIDING YOU, IT JUST MAKES YOU FEEL MORE ALONE AND ASHAMED**

FOR FURTHER INFO WWW.GILLHASSON.CO.UK

"CHAIRGATE"...
THERE CAN BE
NO WHITEWASH

THE RISE IN HOME AND REMOTE WORKING HAS RAISED MANY IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES. BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, MOST OFFICE-BASED COLLEAGUES HAD THE BENEFIT OF ERGONOMICALLY DESIGNED CHAIRS, BUT NOW SPEND MOST OF THEIR WORKING DAY PERCHED ON BREAKFAST STOOLS, EDGES OF BEDS AND EVEN FLOORS.

ARTICLE BY NICHOLA ADAMS, HEALTH ERGONOMIST AND FOUNDER - INSPIRED ERGONOMICS

> *"Lockdown and homeworking is conspiring to reduce exercise levels and while few people miss the time and stress that the commute can involve, the exercise this provided has been lost"*

The fact is, employers still have responsibilities for wellbeing at home and the prognosis of these changing circumstances, is obvious. There have been noticeable patterns in how different companies have been dealing with the complexities of looking after employees when working from home. Initially, these new conditions were deemed temporary, but they can now be categorically defined as more permanent, despite an absence of change in employees' contracts. Even the HSE, in its guidance, has changed over this period, with its advice for looking after the health & safety of home workers looking very similar to that of office working - ergo, to make reasonable adjustments in order to look after employee physical wellbeing. When the first lockdown descended, some employers sent to their people's homes; office chairs, monitors, keyboards and mice, while others just hoped for the best and left remote workers to fend for themselves, trusting - more hoping - that the situation would be temporary.

However, a survey by the Institute of Employment Studies in the first few weeks of lockdown reported a significant increase in back pain when working from home, along with stress. Employers realised, in some instances, that they needed to do more and began to give employees a budget for purchasing equipment to improve their home workstation set-up. This seemed to range upwards from £100 - with the most common budget being £150 - to the most extreme sum of £2,000. Things went quiet for a while, as the hope of a return to normal life was proffered, but even during this period, assessments of remote homeworker were

revealing that many people had developed neck, shoulder and lower back pain. Many too were suffering headaches for the first time, eye fatigue, burning eyes and experiencing difficulty sitting and problems working, in extreme cases. Worse still, as time inexorably passed, the level of severity of these symptoms increased.

In addition to the physical strains people were suffering, the mental strains where working situations were less than ideal were also clear to see. The lucky ones were those who could work on a dining table, even if they didn't have a desk and chair. Those in flat shares or living in smaller places with no room for a table, were resorting to working on beds and sofas, or even the floor. Having an external person to talk to was part of the whole assessment, providing an outlet for stress and well as the physical pains they were struggling with. Thankfully, employers' awareness of the need for wellbeing interventions has hugely increased during this time and now companies are proactively implementing a huge range of wellbeing programmes to support the body and the mind. It is so frustrating when earlier interventions would have saved time and money on; physiotherapy treatments, reduced productivity, return-to-work, reduced hours and last, but not least, the very real human cost of suffering from pain.

Sadly, often the cash given to employees was provided without guidance on the interventions that would make the biggest difference to them. But left to their own devices and with no professional guidance, the outcomes are obvious. RSI and shoulder

pain are on the rise, simply because people are not sitting at the right height at desks. A lot of RSI and shoulder pain could have been avoided from simply sitting at the right height. Meanwhile, lockdown and homeworking is conspiring to reduce exercise levels and while few people miss the time and stress that the commute can involve, the exercise this provided has been lost. So, why not 'pretend' to commute by incorporating, at least, an early morning or evening walk. Own a dog is of course a constant encouragement for those that do, but if not, make the effort to get out into the fresh. It's also very important to ensure you take a standing break at least every hour. We need to proactively build back this loss of activity in order to keep our backs and bodies healthy. ●

FOR FURTHER INFO
INSPIREDERGONOMICS.COM

BEHIND OUR MASKS

The pandemic goes far beyond the virus and key learnings must be carried forward. Making assumptions that homeworking is nothing but a win-win, could brush real problems under the corporate rug. When the dawning reality is that for some, what started as a novel way of working has become less appealing and, with months of distancing and isolation, cracks are beginning to appear.

ARTICLE BY STEPHANIE KELLY, CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER - IRIS SOFTWARE GROUP

Pressures are mounting and employee anxiety is palpable, with the threat of redundancy, disruption to schools and being separated from friends and family, it is little wonder. Wellbeing, a complex enough topic in the best of times, is a core concern and trying to apply the stalwart 'one-size-fits-all' solutions that just about coped, pre-pandemic, will fall far short now. So, what needs to be considered to support people during these volatile and changeable times ahead? Firstly, it's an acceptance that whatever may come, remote working and a new hybrid workforce framework is here to stay. The pandemic has proven to HR and business leaders that productivity and engagement can still remain high, regardless of where staff are located. Colleagues and teams have adapted well and technology has been fundamental to outcome, as new working norms have been established, but the future of workforce planning is a topic for another day. What now must underpin all this change is wellbeing and it is vitally important that HR takes the helm and proactively develops an employee health and wellbeing strategy that is contextually framed for this time. Importantly, it must fully support all workers, in an entirely equal and inclusive manner, as the working masses settle into this new phase and beyond.

A recent survey by employment platform Monster, found that 69 percent of employees are experiencing burnout while working from home and this brings new challenges for HR leaders to liaise closely with line managers, to identify team members that are struggling, made harder of course by remote working - out of sight is, all-too easily, out of mind. This is all fresh territory too for line managers, struggling to maintain calm and semblance - most will never have dealt with supporting their team's mental health at anything approaching this scale and they may well need effective and appropriate training. This isn't about making them psychotherapists, rather, it is about ensuring that they can recognise

> **WELLBEING, A COMPLEX ENOUGH TOPIC IN THE BEST OF TIMES, IS A CORE CONCERN AND TRYING TO APPLY THE STALWART 'ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL' SOLUTIONS THAT JUST ABOUT COPED, PRE-PANDEMIC, WILL FALL FAR SHORT NOW**

signs and symptoms and are empowered to put in place proactive, helpful measures, such as; diarising informal one-to-one catch-ups or wider team meetings - in person when and where allowed and of course virtually - to discuss workloads, share actions and give and share feedback in a constructive manner. Such steps will galvanise their ability to support their teams and move forward with confidence, through change and on the road towards a transition to hybrid working.

At a company-wide level, there are a number of other measures HR leaders can bring in that will help support employee health and wellbeing. Mental health first-aiders, experienced in spotting and supporting those in emotional distress, are proving to be a key resource, capable of providing additional support for colleagues, who may not want to speak directly to their line managers about their concerns. Where this has proved particularly effective is where MHFAs are mustered to complement support groups, in creating safe and confidential spaces for colleagues going through similar experiences - such as those with children or responsible for elderly care. As is the case with most initiatives during a crisis, having a fleet of options is important. Here, it's worth making the point that senior leaders and line managers are people too and they should not be overlooked and left to their own devices, however strong they appear to be on the outside. Whether in the real or virtual world the mental health of leaders and managers is fundamental to creating a semblance of stability and calm and any negativity can easily be picked up on with inevitable knock-on effects for the wider teams. While responsible for ensuring that their teams and the broader business' wellbeing is stable, they may also at times struggle with the unique challenges of remotely managing, if they've never had to do so before. ●

FOR FURTHER INFO WWW.IRIS.CO.UK

Are your team equipped?

The mental health of our workforces is being challenged right now. For many of us, our ways of working have changed, and we are facing new pressures to protect the mental health of our staff, not only their physical health.

By educating your colleagues in some of the basics of managing their own mental health, together, we can not only address some of the biggest risks and misconceptions about mental health in the workplace, but create a wellbeing culture that inspires great work wherever it may be.

Our live online training courses include:

- Mental Health in the Workplace for Managers
- Mental Health Awareness
- Mental Health Champions
- **NEW** 45–90 minute bite-sized sessions, ideal for your awareness raising events throughout the year

100% of our delegates report finding our online training useful. 98% said they use what they have learned in the workplace.

(Sample size 264, Sept 2020)

Whatever your training needs, we can help you.

Get in touch to learn more about the training and consultancy we can offer your workplace. Call **0207 840 3069** or email **training@mentalhealth-uk.org** today.

Mental Health UK

EVP - A NEW
LANDSCAPE

THE PUSH-AND-PULL
OF THE GIVE/GET

After the year we have all faced, the temptation could be to throw out your EVP and start over. While we must challenge what we previously held true when it comes to workplace satisfaction, our sharp focus should now be on what we do to deliver on that EVP in new, creative ways. This is where the radical adjustments are required to align with newly-formed mindsets and expectations of employees.

ARTICLE BY EMMA WOODHEAD WHITE, STRATEGY DIRECTOR AND CHANGE LEAD - WOLFF OLINS

A global pandemic could well be the ultimate test for any Employee Value Proposition (EVP). With thousands of people furloughed, redundant, working from home, on the frontline, under enormous financial pressure or simply feeling the weight of constant uncertainty, this time has presented HR leaders unparallelled challenges. Indeed, if an EVP centred on amazing offices and in-person perks, then it's probably safe to say, it needs a rethink. You should not, however, fall into the trap of throwing out an existing EVP in reaction to the crisis. For many companies, their EVP is probably holding true, because the fundamental needs of employees haven't changed due to the pandemic - the real test is meeting those needs in more responsive, creative and personal ways. As Francesca Krist, Head of Strategic Partnerships & Platforms at Credit Suisse, sets out: "The motivators and drivers of human behaviour haven't changed, it's

simply the environment in which we find ourselves that has shifted dramatically and the question is how to still deliver community, learning, progression and all those needs that people still have, in new ways."

The foundations of the "give/get" deal remain largely intact. Companies are looking for the same sort of excellence, commitment and contribution from their people, while leaders still need to create the right type of culture, to deliver on their strategy and goals. However, 2021 is not a year to stand still and it is undeniable that the pandemic has accelerated trends in the world of work, particularly around flexibility and remote working. In addition, the way HR teams govern, enable and empower people in this new context will need to be completely rethought - with an increasing focus on individuals rather than whole teams or departments. People's experience of work has never been more shaped

by their own individual environments, situations and perspectives. So, while the core promise of an EVP might remain true, the employee experience or what you do to deliver on that EVP, certainly needs a rethink for 2021 and beyond. For leaders like Amanda Vaughan, Group Head of Talent at AXA, it's an exciting time: "The decisions that [HR leaders] make now about how their organisations work will fundamentally change their business forever." Libby Townsend, Group People Director at OVO Energy, agrees that the fundamental needs of its people haven't changed during the pandemic, but acknowledges that for those on the frontline, certain needs have been magnified - feeling safe, feeling supported and feeling recognised. Two big focuses for OVO in 2021 will be personal learning and team connectedness: "People could look at 2020 as a bit of a plateau year in terms of career growth so we want to put

learning back on the map for 2021 to give people focus and plans for their growth," she says. "People need to feel like they are moving forward rather than treading water." The business also believes in individual choice alongside team connection and collaboration. As a long term commitment, OVO colleagues will be able to choose where and when they work, while aiming to spend at least one day per week in person with their teams. "We all need some face-to-face time. It's not in our DNA to be fully distributed, it's not what powers us," adds Townsend.

For OVO, its core EVP remains intact: "Our people strategy is all about building a leading place to work for people who will change the world. We want every single part of the people experience to resonate with [the business strategy]. We've asked our people to make individual pledges on what actions they can take in their work and in their personal lives." Personal recognition and wellbeing are two big areas of focus for OVO, too, with initiatives like 'Wellbeing Wednesdays' and 'OVO Unplugged', where people are encouraged to participate in different activities that support wellbeing and taking time out of the day to switch off from work. Creating the same level of experience for engineers out on the road and customer-facing employees is an additional consideration for businesses like OVO, even adjusting people's shifts to build in time to engage with initiatives like Wellbeing Wednesdays.

Looking at an example from another sector, with more than 45,000 employees across 50 countries, Credit Suisse is radically rethinking its people experience and using its EVP as a conscious guide. In 2020, Credit Suisse deepened its EVP promise and introduced an additional dimension, 'we are here for you', to highlight the commitments the bank is making for employees, such as unlimited parental leave to reduce the burden on carers: "We have focused on tangible actions, things that make a difference and we wanted to capture that," says Krist. It's easy to draw a direct line between EVP and the actions Credit Suisse has taken over the past year, to develop its people experience. Its newly-launched learning platform 'Degreed', helps build employee skills inside and outside of work, delivering on the EVP's promise around lifelong learning and growth, as well as bringing to life the notion of 'Team Up and Connect', business continuity teams have been set up around the globe to meet weekly and explore what else can be done to support and protect employee wellbeing. "All of the decisions we make are conscious and it speaks to the strength of the EVP as it's so much part of our DNA," Krist adds.

EVP is a hot topic at Asda too, as the UK retailer seeks to capitalise on the grocery sector's fresh appeal as a place for diverse kinds of people to find meaningful and rewarding work and move towards a more human-centered people proposition. Asda hired 23,500 new people in 2020 to meet unprecedented demand and replace the 18,000 colleagues required to shield. Many of these hires were individuals who wouldn't usually consider a job

ORGANISATIONS THAT CONTINUE TO INVEST IN BRAND, MARKETING AND INNOVATION IN TIMES OF RECESSION, OUTPERFORM THOSE WHO DON'T, POST-CRISIS. THAT EQUALLY APPLIES TO EVP, INVEST NOW AND WIN ON COMMITMENT, PERFORMANCE AND INNOVATION

in a supermarket - including ex-cabin crew, hospitality workers and small business owners. What followed was a deeper connection between Asda and colleagues, as people were galvanised by the shared purpose of reacting to COVID: "Some people joined out of necessity, but have stayed because they've really enjoyed being part of the team and having a sense of real purpose," says Hayley Tatum, Senior Vice President, People at Asda and Editorial Panellist of theHRDIRECTOR, adding that food retail has been "re-appraised by many as a great employer." Supporting and upskilling their 140,000 people to meet the ever-changing demands of the pandemic continues to be no small feat, not to mention adapting to the massive surge in online shopping: "In eight weeks, we increased the scale of our online business to a place we strategically expected to reach in eight years," says Tatum. "From a colleague perspective, you are moving individuals at high speed and changing skill sets and expectations really fast - much faster than any change management curve would tell you." These changes cut-through siloes in the business and Asda is eager to use those learnings as the business reshapes under new ownership in 2021. In the spirit of EVP being a "give/get deal", Asda continues to ramp up its efforts to give back to colleagues, at the same time it demands more of them: "We are refocusing a lot of our wellbeing and development programmes to be more remote-oriented and ensure individuals still have opportunities to progress themselves," adds Keir Macintosh, Asda's Senior Director of Talent Acquisition. "Development of the colleague is something we think can really set Asda apart from our competitors." As the often-cited 2010 *Harvard Business Review* article, *Roaring Out of Recession*, shows, organisations that continue to invest in brand, marketing and innovation in times of recession, outperform those who don't, post-crisis. That equally applies to EVP, invest now and win on commitment, performance and innovation from people and any firm, no matter the sector, will be better equipped to power out of the crisis ahead of your competition. ●

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

"GRADUALLY, THEN SUDDENLY," IS HOW AN ERNEST HEMINGWAY CHARACTER DESCRIBES THE PROCESS OF GOING BANKRUPT. THIS DESCRIPTION APPLIES EQUALLY WELL TO THE RECENT TRANSITION TO REMOTE WORK. BUT IT TOOK A GLOBAL PANDEMIC TO BRING REMOTE WORKING INTO THE MAINSTREAM, FOREVER CHANGING THE EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION.

ARTICLE BY MICHAEL COCKBURN, CO-FOUNDER - DESANA

"Businesses dealing with the ongoing impact of the pandemic are only starting to catch up to the longer-term repercussions of this cultural shift to remote work"

Initially, the conversation was all about the benefits of working from home, from more flexibility to reduced commutes. However, now working from home has been a part of our lives for almost a year, we have become all too aware of the negative consequences, including the barriers to collaboration, the impact on innovation and the isolation of employees who no longer have the social benefits of work. Despite this, many businesses dealing with the ongoing impact of the pandemic are only starting to catch up to the longer-term repercussions of this cultural shift to remote work. It is here that impacts can be achieved to, not just to offset the current problems with working from home, but to take advantage of the situation and create workplaces which are better adapted to the needs of their staff.

One of the main reasons people have valued working from home is that it has the potential to be more flexible. Depending on the employer, staff are able to set their own working hours to fit their work around their lives, as the emphasis is placed on end results, rather than number of hours in the office. Flexibility was an oft-desired value proposition for employees and now that it has become far more commonplace - if not the norm - employers that have best adapted to remote work and trusted their staff to work at hours that best suits their needs, have the clear advantage. The fact is, if office schedules can be made flexible, why not locations? We know that not everyone can work from home all the time, aside from feelings of loneliness and the difficulties of team collaboration, working from home disproportionately impacts certain groups. While decision makers are often privileged enough to work from suitable home offices, many junior professionals occupy crowded kitchen tables, rely on overwhelmed WiFi or are trapped in their bedrooms.

The obvious solution is that we need to return to the office as soon as possible, but although a centralised office will remain useful for meetings with clients or larger team collaboration, employees have also made gains over the past year that they will be reluctant to sacrifice, whether that is the near elimination of the dreaded commute or the ability to be available for domestic crises during working hours. A middle ground of "work near home" is possible, allowing staff to retain the benefits of working from home while avoiding many of the pitfalls. The growth of flexible workspace and coworking over the last decade has created many alternatives to the usual working locations of home or office. Depending on their size and needs, companies can give their employees access to satellite offices located in flexible or external workspace, coworking memberships and on-demand workspace apps. As well as improving employee value proposition, this also enables companies to reduce their fixed office space, saving money by limiting the number or size of long-term leases they are committed to.

This future promises a significant reduction in rent and rate costs for many businesses and this has the potential for freeing up and diverting funds to offer a whole roster of employee benefits, including the pre-pandemic stalwarts of gym memberships and private healthcare, as well as initiatives to offset the disruption caused by the pandemic and better support employees in the current environment.

HR will also have to consider how to return staff to offices, in a way that not only keeps them safe, but makes them feel safe too. Indeed, more than half of employees are worried about their health and safety in returning to offices and key here will be managing building access, so that space does not become overcrowded, making it impossible to practice social distancing. No doubt, occupancy management will become an important value proposition moving forward and installing a booking system will enable companies to manage the flow of staff occupancy levels. This will help ensure social distancing compliance and building worker confidence. Taken together, a forward-thinking company will ensure their employees have the option of working from home, from the office or from a flexible workspace, providing them choice of the best environment. This will have the effect of turning the difficulties associated with this shift to remote working to becoming an opportunity to rebuild working environments to suit employees and improve value. It's time to adapt to meet new expectations and fully seize the benefits. ●

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.DESANA.IO

"YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND IN EVP"*

Think about your best friend, of all the people you have met, what has kept you together? The answer usually is a tacit value proposition. Studies – like one conducted by Olorituna, Madan, Pentland and Khayal (2013) – show friendships normally begin between people who happen to cross paths regularly. They develop if people have things in common and blossom when there is shared and reciprocated personal thoughts and feelings.

ARTICLE BY
ALASTAIR ATKINSON
CONSULTANCY LEAD
SCARLETTABBOTT

That "best friend" status is almost always reserved for the person in our lives who understands and supports our sense of social or group identity. Basically, they reinforce our view of who we think we are, our place in the world. This is the value proposition of friendship. If either party ceases to feel that value, the friendship is almost certain to dwindle and fade. The principle behind the employee value proposition, or EVP, is not dissimilar to friendship, although it's normally more explicit than tacit. In its 2020 paper *Employer Brand*, the CIPD defines an EVP as describing "what an organisation stands for, requires and offers as an employer". It's important, because of its implications for talent attraction, employee engagement and retention that when someone perceives a business' EVP as a good deal, they're more likely to join, feel engaged in their work and stay. Furthermore, the proliferation of social media has meant that every employee in organisation can let thousands, maybe millions of people know when an EVP is working for them, or, ominously, when it isn't. The idea of the EVP isn't new, of course. Arguably, it's simply a modern attempt to codify the previously unspoken psychological contract between employer and employee. Denise Rousseau's work in the late 1980s, gave prominence to the notion of this psychological contract, but it's a theory that was first posited back in 1960 by Chris Argyris. It sets out that the ever-shifting mutual beliefs and informal expectations, together with the written employment contract, make up the employer-employee relationship.

The crucial difference with the modern EVP is that organisations are becoming more willing to spell out their value proposition and use it as a tool for attraction and reputation enhancement. These testing times have given every organisation pause for thought. A year ago, the roads into and out of towns and cities were groaning under the weight of commuters, making their way to whatever building they called 'work', at exactly the same times. Espresso machines in plush offices were whistling and shushing at caffeine-thirsty commuters and desk mates were chatting about last night's TV, while parents - at least, the luckier ones - were grateful that their bosses didn't mind them leaving early on Tuesdays and Thursdays to do the school run…it all feels like a lifetime ago. But the fact is, it's entirely likely that at least some of the things employees valued a year ago, don't quite hold the same appeal now. If a beautiful view over the city from a floor-to-ceiling window was part of your EVP - even a tiny, possibly unspoken, part - it's not doing you much good now. If employees always seemed to enjoy dressing down on a Friday, well, some of them might not even be wearing trousers to work these days. If the buzz of the trading floor, or the brainstorm area or the big meeting room, where client deals were sealed, was what held people in thrall, it's probably time for a rethink. In short, the employee value proposition that's served well for years, might be due an upgrade.

Payments giant, Visa, responded early to the changes brought about by the pandemic. It recognised that, with employees working from home, the value proposition needed to shift a little. For the past few months, it has offered colleagues 'wellness hours' - the opportunity to finish work in the early afternoon on Fridays - in recognition of the fatigue that can be caused by a week of back-to-back video calls. Similarly, back in March 2020, the UK arm of Spanish bank Santander set up an open-access website as an emotional connectivity hub for employees who were working from home. Unlike the company's existing intranet, the new site has been dedicated purely to fun, community and colleague interaction, totally free of business-related updates. On the surface of it, these measures could be seen simply as new perks, but there's a subtext.

The underlying message from employer to employee is; "we're listening to you, we understand your lives have changed and we're ready to adapt to help you feel good about working here." What we've seen in recent months is businesses shifting their EVPs, whether they realise it or not. It should come as no surprise then, that some are now starting to make that shift more explicit, by revisiting their EVP statements. In other words, the messaging is starting to catch up with the reality.

So, what else might employees be looking for in this brave new world? Many may want increased flexibility, to continue working from home, even when vaccines have nullified the threat of COVID-19. A recent YouGov survey found that 57 percent of workers want to carry on homeworking after the pandemic - perhaps this is no surprise - but pre-pandemic, more than two-thirds of British employees never worked from home. This might be quite a change for many businesses, but its implications for the employee value proposition reach further than we might realise. For example, expectations of work tech - the equipment we're given and how we're supported to use it and fix it - are likely to change. If we can no longer stroll to the office stationery cupboard to scan and send a document, will we expect our employers to provide equivalent kit for us to use at home? What about businesses that haven't invested in high-quality remote collaboration and conferencing platforms? The stress of not being able to work as quickly or smoothly as possible, must surely be making employees question the value proposition.

Often, though, the EVP isn't simply about tangible assets, benefits and rewards. It's about what the employer stands for and to what extent its worldview aligns with an employee's. Think back to the friendship value proposition, our best friends are those that support our sense of social identity. The most powerful EVPs are the same. Big Four professional services provider, EY, has a somewhat abstract proposition: "Whenever you join, however long you stay, the exceptional EY experience lasts a lifetime." With this EVP, EY is acknowledging that most of its employees come and go. Huge numbers join as graduates - or, increasingly, as school leavers - and many stay for the duration of their professional training, pass their exams, pick up on-the-job experience and then leave to work in industry or set up their own business. Indeed, the EY employment model relies on a degree of attrition, not every young person who joins can become a partner in the firm. The point is that, while at EY, employees will gain insights into the challenges faced by some of the world's biggest companies and will work alongside top professionals in their field. Furthermore, once you leave, you'll remain part of an EY alumni network that gives you valuable personal and business connections. Basically, you'll be part of an 'in' crowd.

If you think you might need to refresh your EVP and are wondering where to start, begin by listening. An EVP that's developed and written by a handful of senior leaders in blissful isolation, is unlikely to fly. The employee value proposition is aimed at employees, so it makes perfect to ask them what they think. What made them join your business in the first place? To what extent has the employment experience lived up to their expectations? What do they really like about working for your business and what would they like to change? By seeking the answers to these sorts of questions, you'll figure out why your people value their employer and what you could do to increase their perception of that value. Equally, it's important to be open about what your business expects of its employees. Just like friendship, the employment value proposition is a two-way street - if you promise the earth without articulating what you want in return, don't be surprised if disappointment and disillusionment lie ahead. ●

*With sincere apologies to Randy Newman

THE PRINCIPLE BEHIND THE EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION, OR EVP, IS NOT DISSIMILAR TO FRIENDSHIP, ALTHOUGH IT'S NORMALLY MORE EXPLICIT THAN TACIT

STOP THE SPIN, I WANT TO GET OUT!

Tired of wellbeing-washing, diversity-washing and superficial corporate, soapy purpose, employees are demanding a more rewarding life at work from their employers. In response, companies are developing a noticeably more responsible and human-centric approach, as we return to work. However, bringing about this positive change needs to happen, now.

ARTICLE BY ALISON ETTRIDGE, CEO & CHIEF BELIEVER - TALENT INTUITION LTD

As we emerge from the aftermath of COVID-19, it's evident that the relationship we have with work has changed forever. For health, wealth and personal reasons, employees are questioning how, where and why they work. The global pandemic has been the ultimate test of the relationship between employer and employee. Some employers will be remembered for the compassion and flexibility they showed, others will be remembered for the steps they didn't take which have damaged their employer and consumer brands well beyond COVID-19. With so much change in a matter of months it's critical that HR gets a handle on what really matters to people in the new world of work. HR has, until now, been behind the curve when it came to the adoption of tech, which means cutting straight to the right solutions now is more important than ever before. Data science holds the answers to many of HR's current questions about how to attract and retain talent, by drawing on sentiment and feedback from an external perspective.

A rewarding life at work is no longer about linear progression up the career ladder nor financial reward and the goal posts have moved. In the new ecosystem of work, the traditional rules of engagement don't work and businesses need to quickly get a grip on what's going to keep great people and attract new talent within the constraints of the operating environment. In the old world, prime office space with a swanky lobby and an onsite coffee shop were part of the proposition. But in the new world where authenticity, fairness and inclusion are more important than the bricks and mortar of an employer, what will be valued? Reputation, opportunity, experience and leadership have been brought to the fore during recent months when employers were operating in crisis mode. The shift towards employees being motivated by a company's mission and purpose has been long coming; COVID-19 has forced many to really question why they work. But ultimately the why is very much about the individual and it is not static.

We also need to be mindful of what we might have lost from our proposition during the past few months. Remote working has been enjoyed by many but not by everyone and some employers are prioritising a return to the workplace for those who want to go back for their mental wellbeing. Travel has not been

missed by many a commuter. But, for those employees who enjoyed travel and for whom it was a perk of the job, the current value proposition is considerably poorer. Similarly, if an overseas employee returned to their home country to work during COVID-19 and now wants to remain there, can employers flex their proposition to support remote working on an international basis? Employers don't want to lose great people just because they're now in another geography, but paying them in line with the market and their expectations whilst maintaining equity and fairness is a new challenge for the HR Director. Have we removed many of the elements of the value proposition that people valued? How can we replace them and enrich the proposition moving forward? The only way to find out is to constantly listen to and learn from what the internal and external workforce is telling you. During the pandemic HR has become more visible and influential and long may this

science enables decision makers to access the information that would otherwise fall between the cracks. Whether that be locations that can gain a competitive advantage due to an untapped potential talent pipeline, or the constant burble of social media for changing vibes and sentiments about competitor businesses and, most importantly, your own, external data holds many of the answers that HR is searching for. To develop your post-COVID-19 EVP it's essential to trail a lens on the outside market, not only on tangible reward such as pay, but the softer elements too such as how people rate your culture, ethics, reputation, leadership and overall employer brand. This isn't using data science purely for the hard elements but using it to source essential ingredients into your EVP. This isn't making highly visible statements about corporate purpose. This is about building innovative thought, authenticity, fairness, equality and inclusion into your EVP.

We can zoom in further on wellbeing and look at the commute which is an area where we know people are becoming more thoughtful about their travel and choices. Are you able to offer a greener commute that is more pleasant and climate conscious? Do your locations allow a safe journey to work for employees? It's important to recognise the nature of the social commute for those who do the journey every day by looking at journeys within the context of social districts. Data on both the time and way people commute can vastly improve the employee value proposition. Companies too are reconsidering the need for travel and some are actively trying to reduce their carbon footprint through reducing business travel which positively affects the perceptions of some but can remove a perk of the job for others. Gathering insight and experimenting with scenarios can help companies to plan how they will reduce their carbon footprint without compromising on skills attraction or retention. In the new world of work where internal HR analytics is just not enough, organisations need to be self-starters in sourcing external data about talent attraction and retention. Competitors are never going to open their EVP playbook, but data can show where people flow from and to, both between industries and specific companies, in different markets and at different stages in their career. Data can show how perceptions of an organisation change over time and where there are opportunities to reconfigure the value proposition around the talent you need. The desire for mindful leadership has been accelerated by the current environment and innovative thought, authenticity, fairness, equality, inclusion and the capability of leaders to challenge, support and nurture are key elements of the EVP moving forward. ●

COMPETITORS ARE NEVER GOING TO OPEN THEIR EVP PLAYBOOK, BUT DATA CAN SHOW WHERE PEOPLE FLOW FROM AND TO, BOTH BETWEEN INDUSTRIES AND SPECIFIC COMPANIES, IN DIFFERENT MARKETS AND AT DIFFERENT STAGES IN THEIR CAREER

continue. The Chief People Officer and HR have been catapulted into the limelight and many have realised too late how poor and disorganised their internal HR systems are. HR analytics have in many cases been shown to be lacking. Comparing internal and historic data, which has been shown to be inaccessible, piecemeal or just out of date, has not helped to improve business resilience in the short term and it won't help business recovery. As companies look at new operating models, such as scaling back real estate commitments and changing job composition, it's important to have credible external data to hand. An employer cannot develop a competitive EVP without wider vision of peer and competitor market insight.

Data science, made accessible through technology platforms, provides instant and real-time access to the sentiment of people inside and outside your organisation. Data

To take an example, let's look at employee wellbeing which is influenced by the working practices we create as an organisation. By giving consideration to elements like the commute, the working environment and provision of local services, we can positively influence the wellbeing of our workforce. This information can be paired with data on healthcare provision and access to healthcare in a given location. It can be overlaid with changing vibes and sentiments about your organisation's approach to the wellbeing of its employees. Together this data builds a picture of what attracts the talent you need and what you can do as an employer to deliver on your promises. We can only achieve this by listening and learning all the time. How easy is the commute? What do people in a location say about our company's approach to wellbeing? Will we be able to offer remote working in this location? How are our competitors improving employee wellbeing in this market?

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

A HIGHER STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Though discussions about race are prevalent following the death of George Floyd, the conversation must be taken to a higher level. Almost no protected characteristic - including age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy, race, religion and sexual orientation - is properly represented in the workplace. The conversation needs to be much broader than just the Black Lives Matter Movement and UK businesses should be redoubling efforts to counter unconscious bias, across all characteristics.

ARTICLE BY PETER RYDING, CEO - VIC - YOUR VIRTUAL INTERACTIVE COACH

Most large organisations have diversity and anti-racism policy statements and many are good at setting diversity targets. However, whilst policy statements and data are vital for driving greater diversity at work, they are insufficient for organisations to genuinely embrace diversity and eliminate unconscious bias. The words 'diversity' and 'inclusion' are used interchangeably, but I see them as different. Diversity is about recognising difference, acknowledging the makeup of your workforce and appreciating the range of perspectives associated with that variety. Inclusion is about valuing the differences, embracing them and creating an environment and culture that allows everyone to be fully themselves and to fully participate. Inclusion enables everyone to thrive as an individual, as a team and as an organisation.

As companies begin to focus more on diversity and inclusion, the conversation is moving in the right direction and yet boards have been found lacking. The furore caused by BLM is a wakeup call to companies, which are espousing important topics, by noting them in board minutes as a tick-box exercise. Instead, companies have to start living their corporate values and deeply embrace these values at a human, day-to-day level. It is the duty of all leaders to call out negative behaviour and this behaviour cannot be condemned in public and condoned in private. The way in which employers tackle this issue and diversity generally, plays a critical role in effecting meaningful change. The danger for HR teams exhausted by urgent workplace restructurings, in the wake of COVID-19, is that precious D&I budgets are stretched and they are losing the momentum and support to address this. In the Summer, D&I was put at the forefront of every agenda and expectations were raised. There is a danger now, as coronavirus and its impacts continue to steal the headlines, that this will be put on the back burner. Many boards still need convincing that there is a good business case for a diverse and inclusive workplace. Beyond the inherent good sense and social correctness of having a diverse workforce many research studies have shown a strong correlation between diversity and increased performance.

In essence, every individual sees the world in a different way. A project team of individuals

from a varied demographic focusing on the same goal - be it expanding the target market or improving customer service or morale around the workplace - will be agile and likely to produce a more creative and effective result than a team from the same background. One of the side effects as a result of the healthy focus on diversity and inclusion, is an increase in employee activism that is unsettling many senior leaders and their boards. Whilst some UK businesses allowed employees to take time off to attend climate change or Black Lives Matter protests, there are many cases where employee activism has caused internal problems. Take for example what happened in the case of a journalist on *The Guardian*, whose article on women's rights was accused of being transphobic. Whether you agree or not, one thing is for sure, it caused the management team of the publication much angst.

Employee activism goes hand-in-hand with tumultuous moments in history and the social and political issues that come with them. Rather than shy away from difficult conversations, employers can embrace them, forge deeper connections and be a part of the conversation. HR Directors need to ensure a culture that listens to ethical concerns from employees and letting people speak up before they spill over into the public domain. Transparency is increasingly important as seen with the recent BBC equal pay claim, organisations need to be prepared for policy and practice to be scrutinised in the open. Currently, the way that contractors, outsourcers, agents and other partners treat their people is typically led by procurement. HR Directors must become more involved in this process and diversity and inclusion has to be a permanent item on board agendas. One of the biggest mistakes many companies make is excluding their employees from the decision-making process and making decisions on their behalf. While C-suite's responsibility is to make major decisions for the business, companies who involve all their employees in this process reap a wealth of benefits. That means asking employees what they would like to see from their organisations, such as flexible or home working, which in the past may have been seen as a luxury and not as a need. Now that it has become a necessity for many employees - regardless of their gender or health conditions - policies could be adapted in a way that makes them accessible to everyone, without negative implications or undertones. When employees feel included, they're empowered and inspired to make a difference because they have a personal stake in the outcome.

Two-way communication breaks the silence and opens the conversation. We can make all sorts of assumptions and judgments about what it's like to be in somebody else's shoes. Gandhi said: "Standing in their shoes is not enough to feel their pain - so walk a mile in their shoes instead". That is what will help people empathise with their colleagues and then start to think about some practical solutions that will help make the experience of people working in the

THIS CRISIS HAS HANDED HR DIRECTORS THE BATON OF TRANSFORMING OUTDATED AND LAZY MICRO-MANAGEMENT SKILLS INTO COMPASSIONATE AND EMPATHETIC INSPIRING LEADERSHIP

company improve. Ensure behavioural expectations are made clear to all staff, that there is clarity of consequence should they not be upheld and that behaviours are part of assessment, rewards and promotion processes. There has to be a 'zero tolerance' approach to any negative behaviour or bullying from and to any employee, for whatever reason. Diversity and inclusion training (D&I) has the potential to positively address biases and prejudices that may happen within an organisation. One important step is to look at the existence of bias. Employees should take some of the free IAT (implicit association tests) on the Internet and then training and education should be centred on the results.

Companies must be seen as responsible leaders who lead the charge, by driving a programme of awareness, education and action and becoming totally intolerant of bad behaviour. In order to ensure this is a top-down strategy that is embraced by everyone, HR Directors must ask themselves the following questions and ensure these are on every board meeting agenda: What have we done since the last meeting to prove to ourselves and others that we are active champions of the cause? What new skills, insights and knowledge have we equipped our people to understand, buy into and adopt new behaviours and actions? What measures and KPIs do we have to show that improvements have been achieved. In what ways are the minorities we are passionate to help actually celebrating the change we have brought about? What more can we do to shift the needle? This crisis has handed HR Directors the baton for transforming outdated and lazy micromanagement skills into compassionate and empathetic inspiring leadership. They are now tasked with the delicate balance of managing the temporary wave of enthusiasm for corporate box ticking with broader diversity and inclusion issues. It is perhaps the biggest task the HR profession has ever faced and yet, having seen first hand the Herculean challenges overcome by so many HR Directors, during this pandemic, I know we are in very capable hands. ●

@theHRDIRECTOR
TWITTER POLL

Do you think your organisation is still committed to equality, diversity and inclusion?

64% Yes
36% No

SWEPT UNDER SOMEONE ELSE'S RUG

Commitment to diversity and inclusion means little if it isn't backed up by holding professional services that we buy from to the same standards. This is a potential blind spot and what is needed is a more holistic way of thinking about diversity, that acknowledges how service providers and their customers, can work together to address systemic access issues.

ARTICLE BY FERGUS NAVARATNAM-BLAIR, PRODUCER, THOUGHT LEADERSHIP - SOURCE GLOBAL RESEARCH

Speak to any climate scientist and they will tell you that so-called "emissions outsourcing" is the dirty open secret of modern environmental policy. The United States and the EU have, for many years now, been reporting a steady decrease in overall carbon emissions. But in reality, a large chunk of that reduction is simply the result of companies continuing to relocate portions of their supply chains to developing markets. What does all of this have to do with diversity and inclusion? The fact is, it's all too easy for well-meaning businesses to fall into a similar trap when trying to implement their D&I agendas. Employers invest considerable energy into creating diverse working environments within the four walls of the business but fail to think about the indirect ways that their companies contribute to global systems of oppression and injustice. It's not uncommon to find businesses that have made great strides when it comes to hiring from historically underrepresented groups and yet continue to buy professional services from companies overwhelmingly populated by straight white men, who went to elite business schools.

Ask C-suite buyers of professional services what features they are looking for in a service provider and most will put diversity very high on the list: "It's important that our partners share our commitment to building a more inclusive working world…" would be a typical statement. Yet, few if any of these buyers, would be able to provide a single example of a time that their company excluded a supplier from a tender process, because they were not sufficiently diverse. If businesses genuinely cared about working with diverse service providers, you would expect that concern to play a more significant role in purchasing decisions, particularly given the scale of the D&I challenges facing the professional services industry. Despite leaders within professional services firms making a great deal of noise about their commitment to diversity and inclusion, there are still

> ANY COMPANY THAT IS SERIOUS ABOUT FOLLOWING THROUGH ON ITS COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY IS EVENTUALLY GOING TO HAVE TO GRAPPLE WITH THE QUESTION OF HOW IT CAN BEST INCENTIVISE ITS SERVICE PROVIDERS TO TREAT THESE ISSUES WITH THE RESPECT THEY DESERVE

structural barriers in place that prevent those commitments from translating into real change. This is an industry where informal personal networks play an oversized role in hiring decisions. Firms, therefore, have a tendency to hire and promote people who already look and think like their existing workforce. There is little reason to expect that to change any time soon, at least not until real pressure is put on service providers from the companies that buy from them.

Any company that is serious about following through on its commitment to diversity is eventually going to have to grapple with the question of how it can best incentivise its service providers to treat these issues with the respect they deserve. A prerequisite of that will be about forging closer links between HR departments and procurement teams. In most organisations, while it is the responsibility of HR professionals to champion the D&I agenda, the task of monitoring the diversity of project teams falls to individual purchasing managers. Consequently, this monitoring task is incapable of properly holding service providers to account. Either HR managers need to involve themselves more closely in purchasing decisions, or procurement teams need to be empowered to act as diversity champions themselves. Either way, companies will need to start putting their service providers on the spot. It isn't enough just to ask service providers up-front whether they meet certain D&I standards; there has to be a mechanism in place for checking and recording how diverse the project team turns out to be. That information then needs to be factored into any decisions about repeat purchases. At their core, these questions about diversity and representation are really questions about personal and corporate responsibility. That responsibility doesn't end at some arbitrarily defined line. There is a future in which the professional services industry better represents the diversity of our societies. But reaching that point will only be possible if all parties are fully committed. ●

FOR FURTHER INFO WWW.SOURCEGLOBALRESEARCH.COM

Autism at Work

Our flagship programme for employers

- Working with organisations to create accessible employment opportunities
- Enabling professionals to embrace the diversity and skills autistic people can bring to the workplace
- Bridging the autism employment gap
- Preparing autistic individuals for work

- **Proven track record of working with employers**
- **2,000+ employers trained in 2018**
- **Designed programmes for Procter & Gamble, Ernst & Young, BT and more**

Get involved:

www.autism.org.uk/employers

enterprise.team@nas.org.uk

HARNESS THE WINDS

The pandemic reminds us how quickly the world can change and how agile we must be to respond effectively. It has also accelerated the movement towards more responsible, purpose-driven ways of doing business. Employers, motivated by a strong sense of values that drive the way they operate - for clients, staff, communities and the natural environment - strengthens decision making key to commercial success, now and in the long term.

ARTICLE BY
EMMA BARTLETT
PARTNER
CM MURRAY LLP

E mployers must be ready to demonstrate their own social responsibilities - of which diversity and inclusion are part - and that values are aligned with those of its clients, partners and employees. An important element of this is employee activism, which must be embraced and harnessed, because as the events of 2020 were highlighted in the world's media and worldwide, public demonstrations have been a core driver of change in the workplace and wider society, following exposure of shocking racial discrimination. Responsible employers have acknowledged the fact of existing unlawful bias, conducted diversity audits, harnessed the passion for diversity and inclusion within its people and responded with action plans and step changes. The death of George Floyd exposed the dire need for change and this shocking tragedy, even in the grips of a pandemic, fuelled a global movement. It was as if a veil was lifted on the issue of racism that, over hundreds of years, society had built up stereotypes and biases, that lingered in the subconscious and influenced perceptions and everyday decisions. The spark may have happened in Minneapolis, but it spread awareness and acted as a powerful reminder that racism is a problem for all and is prevalent around the globe. As always, the statistics showed in cold hard math - at all levels and in all areas of society - that, while steps forward are made, it seems that as many steps back present a frustrating counterbalance to hope.

Almost instantly, employers needed to decide what position to take - without wanting to be overtly political - many did come out with support for their black community and agreed to initiate action to do more. Employers with more developed responsible business programmes, were well placed to embrace employee activism at this time - others were less forthcoming - but in the context of the moment, not to do so would have looked out of kilter with the overwhelming direction of travel. Indeed, if some employers were reluctant to bow to the pressure to respond to the employee activism driven by these events and, in particular, Black Lives Matters, what did it say about the organisation? We all needed to assess embracing a movement to end systemic racial inequality - irrespective of how the movement was being driven globally - and draw similarities with the #MeToo movement, which caused us to look at systemic gender discrimination and harassment issues. But with such cause célèbre, some fear that it gives the impression that an organisation is "jumping on the band wagon". However, the bigger picture and the absolute necessity to be involved is fundamentally important to the drive to increase diversity and inclusion.

While it may be possible to make assumptions about what could be done to bring about step changes in diversity and inclusion and reduce unconscious bias, without knowing the extent of the problem within an organisation, adjustments taken to try to resolve it may well miss the mark. Therefore, before drawing up an action plan, the employer should first review its own data. That may already exist in recent employee engagement surveys, grievances or exit interviews, so to build a broader picture, a fresh audit/internal staff engagement survey would assist. The organisation will need to decide who can objectively interpret the data to help sense check the D&I strategy being developed. The existing owners of the D&I strategy may benefit from a dedicated group of internal strategists, who are interested in driving the racial equality agenda. The team should be representative of the business and it must include business owners, as well as a diverse group of employees. The fairest selection process, which might break the mould of how D&I responsibilities have previously been allocated, is to seek volunteers. This is a good example of harnessing employee activism, especially if the employer reacts

quickly to seek a pool of volunteers at the height of employee support for diversity matters, which is likely to be ahead of a fresh employee engagement audit.

Once the newly-formed employee/management interest team are in place, they will need to agree their objectives, which might include - in the context of supporting anti-discrimination steps - improving the inflow of BAME applicants and employees to reflect the proportion of the BAME population. Here, setting targets could be useful, as well as encouraging BAME role models to set up a forum and volunteer as BAME ambassadors and mentors internally and externally. Creating an open channel internally for BAME people to voice their views, offer advice and articulate concerns is a valuable, two-way conversation, that is informing the development of future diversity training, engagement programmes and policy. Likewise, recognising the impact of inter-sectionality on D&I programmes and fully exploiting the ability to develop initiatives that offer benefit on multiple fronts, delivers better value for money. In order to measure success, however, an organisation needs to understand whether it is able to record where it currently stands, in relation to any or all of the set objectives. In this instance, many organisations simply do not have the data to understand its current position, so the organisation may need to look at what D&I data is regularly collected and how that could be improved. In the same way that Stonewall can guide employers on improving its awareness and support for LGBTQ+ applicants and employees, there are experts who can advise on how to glean the best data to measure the success of their developing D&I strategy, as well as what steps can be taken to bring about the improvements required.

Transforming culture into one of inclusion in all parts of the business and striving towards fully responsible business, will include ensuring that procurement teams consider the potential wider benefits of engaging with minority-led suppliers. Procurement processes can be complicated and lengthy, which can deter minority businesses with limited time and manpower. This can lead to minority suppliers being put off by pre-qualification questionnaires, which require them to demonstrate several years of experience and audited accounts. Poor feedback on unsuccessful bids can also hinder minority businesses from tendering for future contracts, as they don't know how to improve. Diverse partnerships, therefore, require leadership commitment to widen external involvement and engagement from key suppliers and clients. A survey of the diversity of the existing supplier base will be necessary before determining how a more diverse supplier library can be developed. Apart from conscious decision making to introduce more minority suppliers, other steps that could be taken should be agreed as part of the newly harnessed D&I strategy team and might include; identifying BAME suppliers to be included in the supply chain; engaging key clients to support BAME suppliers commercially and hosting workshop. Additionally,

procurement policies and procedures may need amending. Incorporating supply chain diversity is a significant part of corporate D&I policy. Using data to drive solutions, together with research and best practice insights across the sector, can drive behavioural change across an organisation. Equally, harnessing the support and influence of leaders to create a culture that inspires lasting change, will empower leaders to create an environment of inclusion and equality where employees fulfil their potential.

Additionally growing awareness and implantation of responsible business strategies and actions will reposition employers in the marketplace as industry leaders and trendsetters in D&I. Where there is a strong appetite for raising awareness - driven as it is by global movements - will lead to change programmes that work. External engagement will drive longevity of the project and embed cultural changes into the firm's DNA. Having understood the composition of the organisation and laid the foundations for change, maintaining and progressing an inclusive culture and embedding this as part of the firm's responsible business, is fundamental. This means critically reviewing current policies on all aspects of the employee lifecycle from; recruitment, employment, promotion, training and retention activities and taking necessary steps. Being prepared to take step changes in these areas is critical in meeting new objectives and taking a new view on procurement and externally engaging key clients is key to the external engagement and business imperatives. In order to align the employer culture with employee values and those of clients and customers, organisations need to promote and trumpet its responsible business interests at all levels, internally and externally, at every opportunity. ●

> IT WAS AS IF A VEIL WAS LIFTED ON THE ISSUE OF RACISM WHICH, OVER HUNDREDS OF YEARS, SOCIETY HAD BUILT UP WITH STEREOTYPES AND BIASES, THAT LINGERED IN THE SUBCONSCIOUS AND INFLUENCED PERCEPTIONS AND EVERYDAY DECISIONS

WE DARE TO BE OURSELVES

Arguably, one of the most important psychological discoveries of the 20th century was how our sense of self influences our development. Self-concept is formed from two primary elements - our self-image or perspectives and our self-esteem or preferences - how we feel about that picture. Our perception is our reality and opening our minds to diversity and inclusion broadens awareness.

ARTICLE BY TONY HOLMWOOD, CULTURAL STRATEGIST & COACH - OUTPERF4M CONSULTING

Self-awareness suggests we understand how these elements influence our behaviours and how we manage them objectively. When we show up as our whole unique selves, we are more authentic and individualistic, we no longer feel the need to protect our ego, manage our esteem or conform to societal norms. This reduces the stress of feeling we do not fit in and having to live by other people's values and beliefs. When we feel safe to be ourselves, we are more likely to experiment and operate outside our comfort zone and be more spontaneous, creative, and adaptive. This explains why culture - our collective perspectives and preferences - is the most influential factor in driving adaptability and high performance in organisations. In his research article, Stuart Taylor highlights the importance of maintaining high trust cultures during the pandemic through promoting compassionate leadership, being a realistic optimist, communication and, in turn, building resilience. The key behaviours supporting trust in workplaces are honest communications - by a large margin - care from others and transparency: "In order to thrive, staff need trust, connection, steadiness, integrity and purpose to be present in their leaders."

One of today's biggest misnomers is that self-awareness is about knowing only our strengths. Playing to our strengths represents a small fraction of our potential and is more about mastering cognitive skills and self-belief. Confident, self-reflection will expose more powerful subconscious emotional capability. This period of self-discovery teaches us to be more accepting and respectful of relationships, with ourselves and others. Exploring our passion and purpose reveals life skills, those bound up with social maturity (Ei) and adult learning that support compassionate leadership, emotional wellbeing and happiness. Our unique identity is shaped by a lifetime of experiences, actions, decisions and this learning expresses our whole capability. Self-aware people think

> **WHEN WE SHOW UP AS OUR WHOLE UNIQUE SELVES, WE ARE MORE AUTHENTIC AND INDIVIDUALISTIC, WE NO LONGER FEEL THE NEED TO PROTECT OUR EGO, MANAGE OUR ESTEEM OR CONFORM TO SOCIETAL NORMS**

and feel with a depth that brings challenges as well as opportunities. They understand their thoughts and feelings, motives and fears, reactions and responses, as well as their deepest desires and aspirations. When we accept our strengths and weaknesses, this makes us human and we can manage responses appropriately. We present more positivity, with a can-do attitude and are open to opportunity. The more we are authentic and trust in who we are, the more we learn to be true to ourselves and deliver on our purpose (our why).

Authentic leaders respect that a person's self-worth is their most treasured possession and must be handled with the greatest of care. Additionally, a self-aware leader learning to accept and respect an employee unconditionally, is an important first step to understanding what motivates them. This is an extremely valuable insight when coaching an aspiring leader to be open about who they are, to appreciate their true selves and learn the attributes of authentic leadership. Coming to terms with subconscious selves and learning to be comfortable in our own skin allows us to better manage our stress, wellbeing, resilience, and happiness. Understanding how the LGBTQI+ community has confronted adversity and embraced openness and transparency provides a lesson in authentic leadership. In this rapidly evolving new world order, compassionate, authentic leaders expressing their stories with passion and purpose and are leading a new social paradigm respecting genuine diversity and inclusion. However, we are missing the point to classify inequality by gender, race and sexuality etc. Conventional attitudes and mindsets need to change. Accepting ourselves helps us to accept others on equal terms and we all need to mirror ourselves to open our minds to the substantial value in our emotionally defined authentic selves. ●

Tony Holmwood is the author of Best Behaviour

FOR FURTHER INFO WWW.OUTPERF4M.COM

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF THE FRAME

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IS AN OBSTACLE TO CREATING A MORE DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE, THAT WE HOPE TO ERADICATE. BUT ARE WE EQUALLY GUILTY OF NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE THE WOOD FOR THE TREES, WHERE HIDES IN PLAIN SIGHT, THE POTENTIAL REMEDY TO THE STEM SKILLS IDENTITY GAP.

ARTICLE BY NATALIE DESTY, FOUNDER - STEM RETURNERS

"Welcoming back mid-career professionals requires challenging the unconscious bias of the hiring community and recruitment supply chain, as well as changing internal culture to provide a more inclusive environment"

There is a hidden workforce in the UK filled with thousands of talented professionals who could potentially solve the UK's STEM Skills gap and its diversity problem - namely, the thousands of candidates looking to return after a career break. Currently, just only one-in-ten engineers are female and BAME engineers make up just seven percent of the UK's workforce, despite making up 27 percent of graduates. These statistics suggest that engineering has a mountain to climb to achieve a more diverse talent pool. Yet mid-career candidates, currently locked out of standard recruitment channels, could be the key to sourcing diverse talent. So, could thinking differently about talent attraction and removing bias and barriers be the key to changing these statistics? However, welcoming back mid-career professionals requires challenging the unconscious bias of the hiring community and recruitment supply chain, as well as changing internal culture to provide a more inclusive environment.

With the pandemic forcing us to think about how we recruit new talent, now is the perfect time to rip up the outdated rule book which fails businesses and candidates alike. Let us be honest, often when we read a CV with a career-break listed, that candidate can all too easily be placed at the bottom of the pile. Traditional recruitment methods prioritise the search for a 'unicorn' candidate and, as the name suggests, these do not exist. Instead, by hiring a "70 percent" candidate, supported by a returners programme, the gains are immense value and experience and the result is diversity. During the pandemic, a study of 350-engineer, focussing on how

STEM professionals perceived their industry's recruitment practices found that eight-out-of-ten people seeking to return to jobs in the engineering industry felt they had been the victims of a biased recruiting system and two-thirds felt the traditional recruitment process works against them. Groups facing the biggest barriers to re-entry include female engineers, those with childcare duties and those ethnic minorities, including refugees. Graduates from ethnic minorities are also facing significantly higher barriers to actually entering STEM industries. Furthermore, UK domiciled BAME engineers make up 27 percent of all engineering graduates, but only 7.8 percent of the total UK engineering workforce. Like other marginalised groups, BAME engineers find it incredibly tough to move past the initial stage of the recruitment process. It is clear to see that the sector has problems it needs to address and solve.

Without doubt, career breaks work against candidates in the CV-Screening stage and, more than likely, they don't even make it to the interview stage. This suggests that outdated recruitment methods view a career-break as a period of time where a candidate's skills have deteriorated. But the reality is, engineers often gain skills that are valuable to employers during an employment gap and the success rate of this particular cohort is emphatic, with 96 percent of all those who take part in a 12-week placement are retained in a permanent position by their host company. The programmes don't just benefit candidates, because businesses are given an opportunity to assess a candidate in a fair way, making sure they're right for a role in a way that reading

a CV won't tell you. So, by updating from traditional standardised recruitment methods which are often plagued by unconscious biases, the UK engineering sector could potentially become the example for others to follow in the search for diversity and inclusion.

Despite multinational industry leaders such a BAE Systems, Babcock and the Governments' Defence, Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) all running STEM Returners programmes, the report found that there is still a mountain to climb to make STEM representative of society. A recent report from the Royal Academy of Engineering found that fewer than one in ten engineering companies were taking any action to attract minority ethnic groups or LGBT diversity to their organisations. For companies that actively attract returners, their commitment to diversity will be shown with results. Conflicting priorities, line managers and employers searching for 'their' perception of the best candidate, creates an unequal opportunity for returners to be considered. Ensuring that returners have an equal opportunity and change a culture that still views career breaks negatively instead of a completely normal part of many people's working life. ●

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.STEMRETURNERS.COM

TO THE POINT

WILL WE TRUST AGAIN?

With the psychological pressures of the pandemic, it is hard to say what impact this time will have in the long-term. What we do know is that every experience changes us in some way.

Article by Dr Lynda Shaw, Neuroscientist, Business Psychologist & Change Specialist

A sense of relief will most likely be our initial overwhelming feeling, when we return to normality, though some may take longer to reacclimatise to the new normal than others. Many people, particularly those who have been shielding or whose lives have been affected in profound ways through loss or poor health, may struggle to get back to 'normal' life. Basic psychology shows us that we need parameters and boundaries to feel secure. Look at children as the perfect example of this. But if we differ in how we view freedoms as restrictions are lifted, then this may cause rifts in the family, socially or at work so freedom itself can be divisive. It can also be frightening.

We will always trust. It is part of our basic nature to go through life learning who and what we can trust, albeit some of us are more cynical than others. Inconsistent messaging along with consistent uncertainty of what was next in store in 2020 as COVID-19 developments twisted and turned regularly, has largely contributed to feelings associated with a lack of trust. Consistent messaging and the projection of true, factual information from strong leaders, who perhaps aren't politicians, will help to repair trust in 2021. Our current biggest act of trust is in science and scientists by crucially accepting the vaccination.

We have been living in a heightened state of fear and stress due to the uncertainty of the pandemic. Focusing on a threat is a survival tactic that is ingrained into our psychology, but long term stress can have severe effects on our mental and physical health. I think a lot of people, especially working mums, will be feeling burnt out. We need the Parasympathetic Nervous System (rest and digest) to take over from the Sympathetic Nervous System (fight or flight) to calm everything down which will in turn lower our blood pressure and slow down our respiratory and heart rates. In 2021 we need to find ways to have more down time, relax, take breaks, have personal space, exercise, sleep and slow down.

Whilst I am hoping that COVID-19 will make us kinder, more mindful and considerate than before, the fact that this pandemic may still circulate globally for some time and we will need to live through an unknown period of economic stability, may still pose a significant threat in 2021. Let's face it, it is hard to write a business plan for 2021 let alone know whether we can book a holiday. There are still a lot of 'What If's' and the human brain does not like gaps of missing information. People need to feel as though they are being heard, that they can have their say and have paid a significant contribution to this part of their history and this is something that leaders can really pay attention to.

The option to work from home, or far more flexi time, may still stand in the future as we have now witnessed that it does work. I hope that employers will be a little kinder to struggling employees because that understanding and support will often be repaid later down the line. The neuroplasticity of the brain ensures that we are very adaptable, but we are a species that needs one another, and it is highly unlikely that we will evolve away from this for some time to come, so leaders need to ensure interaction and socialisation are still part of business.

COVID-19 has been a human catastrophe and there have been a number of other recent divisive issues of global importance such as international politics. Division is often based on the illusion of truth where we make up our minds about something and defend our original thoughts even when evidence is provided to the contrary. But these turbulent times have also put life into perspective and has made millions assess what is important to them. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that family, health and happiness are the most important things in life. ●

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.DRLYNDASHAW.COM

Trusted insights and 'ahead of the curve' thought-led strategic content for Senior HR Practitioners

Subscribe today to **THE** trusted independent HR resource with a 'no paid for' editorial stance, delivered to the address of your choosing in these remote working times.

Straight-talking editorial style, providing professional expertise on topics that are of immediate importance in these challenging times. Each month we provide in-depth analysis and proven strategies along with case studies from key companies and industry professionals, providing real solutions to current issues. Informative, strategic content that is unbiased, independent and of unparalleled editorial quality. **Strictly 'no paid' for editorial.** Read the latest insights to help you navigate through the continued impacts that the pandemic is having on you and your organisation.

SUBSCRIBER OFFER

Subscribe this month for only **£125pa** (normall £175pa) and you will receive **FIVE** books absolutely **FREE** and **25%** of your fee will be donated to our chosen charity this month '**Send a Cow**'.
Subscribe here at: **www.thehrdirector.com/product/platinum**
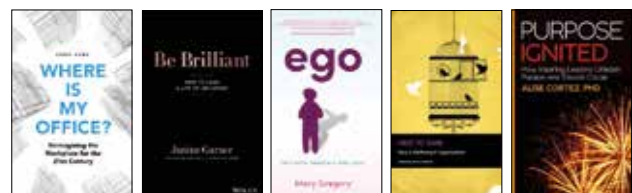
Examples of business books that we have available.

DOWNLOAD OUR FREE APP WHICH INCLUDES SENIOR HR JOBS

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google play

HRD theHRDIRECTOR

HRD seniorHRJOBS

Please note: We do not accept any paid for editorial and we have never rented or sold our data.

THE BLOG

INTRODUCING THE BLOG

WELCOME TO 'THE BLOG' FROM THEHRDIRECTOR, WHERE WE OFFER UP OPINIONS AND VIEWPOINTS FROM THE VERY BEST BLOGGERS IN HR. HERE, WE SUMMARISE THREE OF THE BEST BLOGS FROM THIS MONTH ON THE KEY ISSUES WHICH AFFECT OUR SENIOR HR READERSHIP. LET US KNOW IF YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH OUR GUEST BLOGGERS VIEWS, AS WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

ANDY ROMERO-BIRKBECK

Andy is a Health, Fitness & Wellbeing Professional with experience in both public health and corporate wellbeing. Although he specialises in health screening and physical fitness he is increasing engaged in the subjects of stress, resilience and mental health. Andy often speaks at CIPD events in his area of West & North Yorkshire.

WELLBEING STRATEGY

Wellbeing without a strategy is like coffee without the caffeine, it's just a bit pointless! As director and company, I'm in a fortunate position to get to spend time with lots of organisations and get a glimpse into their culture. Sometimes I go into an organisation and leave after a days work thinking to myself "what amazing place to work!" Equally there are also the organisations where I walk out wondering how people keep going back day after day. Ultimately the way workplace feels is down to the culture and the culture comes down to the people.

• • •

SUZANNE TREEN

Suzanne is a Director in the Employment Team at Walker Morris LLP advising a wide variety of UK based and multinational clients upon all aspects of employment law and practice including large scale reorganisations, collective changes to terms and conditions and TUPE. Suzanne has a breadth of experience in providing HR support.

THE AGE OF AGILE & FLEXIBLE WORKING

Whilst businesses will now be considering what their 'exit strategy' is in a future post-furlough world, it is worth remembering that there are some positives to come out of the very difficult challenges that employers have faced in 2020. The pandemic has meant that businesses across every industry have had to adapt in significant ways to the drastic changes to working practices. Now is a good time to consider the new ways of working that have been adopted and whether these can and should be implemented on a long-term basis.

• • •

OLIVER MUNDY

Since 2012, Oliver has worked in investigative roles for high-profile companies and organisations throughout the UK and EMEA, developing a wealth of experience in conducting complex investigations. A law graduate and qualified advanced investigator, he leads some of CMP's most complex, high-profile cases. Oliver specialises in Fitness to Practice cases.

WILL THE WORK FROM HOME REVOLUTION BE A LASTING LEGACY?

A BBC study found that 50 of the UK's biggest employers had no plans to return all staff back to offices; another survey of SMEs by the Institute of Directors has suggested 74 percent want to keep the same level of WFH for the future. That changes the nature of work - and, in the merging of work and home lives and locations, opens up a whole new front for potential grievances and conflict. Workplace investigations are thorny enough, but what happens when the focus of attention shifts to behaviours and practices at home?

• • •

WWW.THEHRDIRECTOR.COM/BLOG

Many people believe that poverty in Africa is inevitable.

We don't. ◀◀◀◀◀

SEND A COW

With Send a Cow training, families can grow enough food, earn a living and go after their dreams.

sendacow.org