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ASPIRE

"ROLE MODELLING CUTS THROUGH SOCIETAL CONVENTION AND STEREOTYPING. THE MANTRA "IF I CAN SEE IT, I CAN BE IT" IS POWERFUL"

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THE NEWS IS LITTERED WITH WRONGDOING AND MALPRACTICE, THAT SUBSEQUENT ATTEMPTS TO COVERUP INEVITABLY EXACERBATE. TRUTH AND CREDENCE ARE SUBSTITUTED FOR BLAME-SHIFTING AND PREVARICATION, WHICH ONLY SERVE TO DELAY THE INEVITABLE REVEALS AND REPUTATIONAL DAMAGE. ALL THIS IN AN ERA, WHERE EVERYTHING IS SCRUTINISED, PUBLICISED AND GLOBALISED IN SECONDS.

JASON SPILLER, EDITOR

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Where culture should be an asset, all-too often it serves only as a liability. Pledges such as: "our culture is in our DNA… it is the glue that makes us who we are", become tired clichés and watch as double helixes fade and adhesives dissolve, when lived experiences on employer rating forums are readily available and patently don't match the corporate maxims. With the future marked by change and uncertainty, businesses that succumb to shortcut and compromise to remain competitive, will fail. That values must align with purpose matters.

Frustrated by delay, inertia and skills scarcity, weary of pandemic hindrance, wary of global economic and geopolitical uncertainty and perplexed by evolving hybrid working, businesses across sectors are dichotomised. Poised, they are part cautious and braced for continued shockwaves and part pressured to explore, speculate and innovate a plan for growth. Companies must plan both locally and globally, be sustainable and efficient, digitally-driven yet humancentric and alert to continuous and recurring disruption. Behind the clichéd resilience and agility acumens, planning decisions have to be as much based on environmental values and geopolitics, as they are on commercial and financial criteria.

All of the new ingredients that make up the new "work on the beach" cocktail - infused with a frizzante of employee spring - are being vigorously shaken, poured and taste tested at the surfside tiki bar. Gone is the musty, old familiar formula with obligatory glacé cherry garniture, that served generations, replaced by a pungent concoction of exotic freedom and beau idéal. But as with all untried blends, balance is critical, as to whether the party will be a convivial soirée or a disorderly whoopla. What is essentially on trial here is a fusion that somehow meets a myriad of tastes and needs of a multifarious human resource, but essentially too, fulfils business resourcing requirements sustainably and reliably. The vox pop is so potent and loud and employers cannot pay lip service to the wants and needs that make up the future of employee experience.

What if HR, the eternal observer and giver, turned the mirror on itself? It would have to admit that the overriding necessity for the practice would be data and analytics. But still it's a sector that is dragging a legacy anchor, wedded to archaic data harvesting procedures on unwieldly, time lagged XL sheets, which represent the absolute antitheses of speed-to-change and agility. Equally, as workforce structures flatten, silos are filled in and meritocracy replaces boardroom decrees and diktats, HR is suffering an "us and them" paranoia, fearful that initiatives are widely received as implemented "for HR, by HR". All this surrounding a practice that is more pertinently positioned to role model the change imperative than any other.

Jason Spiller

THE WORLD OF EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION CONTINUES TO EVOLVE AND REACT TO THE FAST CHANGING WORLD OF WORK. HERE IS THE LATEST ROUND UP OF VERDICTS FROM THE COURT, PLUS NEW AND ADAPTED LEGISLATION.

COURT CASE REPORT

In *Mr J Holbrook v Cornerstone Chambers* an employment tribunal has thrown out a claim by an "anti-woke" barrister who was expelled from his chambers after tweeting about a "stroppy teenager of colour". Jon Holbrook, formerly of Cornerstone Chambers, made the comment in relation to a news story about a young woman who took her school to court for racial discrimination over a uniform policy that banned afro hairstyles.

Leslie Thomas QC of Garden Court Chambers wrote of his former colleague, "Jon, I can't believe you sent this tweet, what happened to you? I was once proud to have you as a colleague at Garden Court fighting for the rights of others versus rogue landlords in our younger days. This tweet is just wrong. [It] makes you unrecognisable to me now which [is] why I call it out."

Mr Holbrook submitted to the tribunal that he was discriminated against on the basis of his "social conservative" beliefs and in particular his status as a "critic of identity politics" who "believes in the importance of nation, community and family". He alleged that he was expelled by his chambers "to satiate the appetites of those who wanted revenge for [his] expression of non-woke beliefs". However, the tribunal ruled, after a preliminary hearing, that Mr Holbrook's claim was brought out of time and it was not just and equitable to extend time for it.

NEW + REVISED

EMPLOYMENT LAW
EMPLOYERS RISKING QUALIFICATION DISCRIMINATION

Employers are being advised to think strategically about their workforce requirements in a new employment policy report. The research highlights that the majority of employers (57 percent) still mainly look for degrees or post-graduate qualifications when recruiting staff. The CIPD too is warning that too often employers base hiring decisions on whether someone has a degree or not, regardless of its relevance. By doing this, employers could be missing out on key talent, exacerbating skills gaps and reducing employment opportunities for people. There are calls for employers to ensure that they are thinking carefully about whether a degree is required for roles when hiring, and to invest in a range of vocational training options to upskill existing staff. This comes at a time when the UK is facing a tight labour market and firms are struggling to find the skills they need in job candidates and in their own workforces.

WHISTLE-BLOWERS HELPED CRACKDOWN ON FURLOUGH FRAUD

Whistle blowers HMRC has received 13,775 whistle-blower reports regarding fraud against the furlough scheme, with more people reporting their employers and ex-employers to the authority. HMRC is now stepping up its enforcement activity with a view to recovery, issuing penalties and pursuing prosecution or directors' disqualifications where appropriate. Employees are increasingly using this information to make fraud reports through HMRC's digital reporting service. Directors or business owners found guilty of furlough fraud can face significant penalties, including being made personally liable to repay the overclaimed furlough funds and custodial sentences.

LEGAL DIARY

- *Q1 2023:* Government intends to introduce a Data Reform Bill in parliament next year, which will introduce wide-ranging proposals, including matters relating to AI, accountability requirements, cookies, and even the governance model of the Information Commissioners Office itself.

- *April 2023:* The Government update the compensation limits to be imposed by employment tribunals every year in April.

- *April 2023:* The Government update the Statutory Payments every year in April.

- *TBC 2023:* A private member's bill introduced to allow women to take time off work for fertility treatment whilst also protect women who seek fertility treatment.

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STEVE COLLINSON
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INTERVIEW BY JASON SPILLER
& PHOTOGRAPHY BY STUART THOMAS

OUT OF THE 216 SENIOR HR LEADERS WE HAVE INTERVIEWED, STEVE COLLINSON'S CAREER STORY IS UNIQUE. SINCE LEAVING SCHOOL AT 16, HE HAS WORKED FOR THE SAME ORGANISATION AND, FROM DEALING WITH CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS TO BECOMING HR DIRECTOR, HE HAS BEEN A PART OF THE SEISMIC CHANGES IN FINANCIAL SERVICES FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS. IT'S A REMINDER THAT STAYING WITH ONE ORGANISATION DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN CAREER INERTIA.

> "PRACTICALLY ALL JOB ROLES ARE NOW BEING IMPACTED BY AUTOMATION AND MACHINE LEARNING TO SOME DEGREE. WE'RE LOOKING AT A SIGNIFICANT REINVENTION OF THE WORLD OF WORK"

STEVE, TAKE US BACK TO YOUR EARLY LIFE AND HOW YOU FOUND THE PATH TO A CAREER IN HR. I'm a proud Mancunian, the product of a typical working-class upbringing. My dad worked in a factory and on the railways, my mum was a shop worker and everyone around me exemplified the importance of hard work. If I look back to my school education, I was probably always more about words than numbers. I was on the school council and even campaigned against the closure of my secondary school, so I always had a pretty strong sense of right and wrong. In the 1980s recession, when I was 16 and leaving school, my dad lost his job, so I decided that I needed to contribute to the household income. College or university was not an option for me and frankly, like most 16 years olds, I didn't have much in the way of skills. I always felt I was less practical than my dad and

I knew that, unlike my brother, a career in the armed forces did not appeal. So, like many people, I entered the world of work and it just so happened to be financial services and insurance. That was a long time ago now and today, I'm a proudly out gay man, a dad to two boys and recently a grandad. My partner is an NHS doctor, who never fails to provide a no-hold-barred perspective on reality.

Back to the beginning, I started work in Eagle Star - which later merged with Zurich - where I've just celebrated my 34th anniversary. I did a bit of motor underwriting and hands on frontline work, before moving into the finance team and then into credit control, banking and cashiering. I spent an awful lot of my early days handwriting cheques to policy holders and claimants, reconciling them all manually with an

adding machine. We had one computer and a phone between four of us and it was a very different world, a hectic paperchase and quite a traditional hierarchical structure that was so typical of the time. I spent a lot of time talking to customers on the phone or face-to-face, some of whom had lost everything in say a fire or flood and this really built in me a sense of empathy and understanding and the importance of how kind and encouraging words can help people in a bad spot. This early experience grounded me in the true purpose of insurance and I'm really proud, even in my current role, to understand what people in the frontline of our organisation do for our customers every day. It made me a better HR leader and along the way, I have always been fascinated by peoples' behaviour and I've carried that through my life and career.

I eventually moved away from customer-facing roles, but I've never forgotten the importance of the customer, even though it's very easy to lose sight of that in this digital world. Those early work years were great, I was working in a supportive business, I had no responsibilities, no bills or mortgage and a lot of freedom. There were certainly no leadership responsibilities at the time and I pretty much loved every day, learning on the job. Early in my career, although I was working in operational finance and still nowhere near HR, I was spending an awful lot of time alongside people creating the future vision for our business and engaging people in prospects and opportunities ahead. Looking back, this was the gateway to my eventual route into HR. I really relished being involved in change - both IT and business change - and having the opportunity to automate manual processes and build efficiencies, in a variety of project and programme management roles. Now I look back, I can see how all that experience helped shape my future career. I remember I was fascinated by how incoming technologies were revolutionising the way businesses operated and how that impacted on people. It was a catalyst era, as the workplace started to move from old-school mainframes to PCs and there were emerging elements of what we would now call automation. Looking forward, practically all job roles are now being impacted by automation and machine learning to some degree. We're looking at a significant reinvention of the world of work. I remind people that there have been three previous work revolutions and we've survived those. The fourth offers great potential for those that are willing to adapt and be agile. You cannot stop change and an important focus for me now is on reskilling, upskilling and creating a culture in which people are open to new opportunities.

STILL, THE VISION OF ROBOTS AND AI SUPERSEDING HUMANS IS A DIFFICULT ONE TO ENCAPSULATE IN A POSITIVE FUTURE VISION. I firmly believe that if you take the fear out of change, people begin to be more pragmatic. A few years ago, we carried out a trailblazing trial - working with an external AI organisation - to help us understand which roles in our company were at the most threat from automation and robotics, which led us to some interesting conclusions. It can be all too easy to be insular and it really pays dividends to collaborate with external parties in work such as this and to take their input on board. It provides a completely different perspective on your business operations. The first conclusion we drew from the collaboration, you won't be surprised to learn, was that we

"WE'RE DEALING WITH CENTURIES OF SOCIETAL PERCEPTION, CULTURE AND STEREOTYPING ACROSS A NUMBER OF DIVERSITY CHARACTERISTICS. THESE ARE INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT TO MOVE"

needed more data and automation skills. Although already on a trajectory to embrace change, like many organisations we wrestled with a multitude of legacy systems and we needed to be able to bring insight to our data in new ways and to automate legacy processes for the benefit of our customers. It was clear though that these skills were both scarce in the market and expensive to buy in. So, we decided to take a different approach, creating our own data and continuous improvement academies to upskill existing employees, many of whom were in frontline roles. In terms of continuous improvement, we've worked with people at all stages of their career from across the organisation and set them on course to be automation consultants, finding pain points and automating them away. It was nothing short of revolutionary, because we had created an internal pipeline of digital skills - so we weren't as reliant on external

resources - and crucially many of the people in these roles knew our organisation and our customers deeply. To this day, the academies - and other new ones we've added - are equipping people with impressive skills and, as a result, we are confident we have the right skills going forward. This initial AI work has spurred us on to create different academies to help our people develop skills for the future, which certainly helps our colleagues to be positive about what the future might hold for them. Yes, automation or robotics can be seen as a threat, but with the right workforce planning, it can be a huge opportunity, not only for a business and its customers, but for employees too.

WHEN IT COMES TO GENDER BALANCE - CERTAINLY IN CERTAIN SECTORS SUCH AS TECH AND ENGINEERING - THERE'S STILL A LONG WAY TO GO. THE REAL BIG ISSUES ARE SOCIETAL CONVENTION ISSUES. We're dealing with centuries of societal perception, culture and stereotyping across a number of diversity characteristics. These are incredibly difficult to move, but I think at some point you must be courageous and place diversity and inclusivity front and centre in your business. For me, there are two things that make the biggest difference: The first is visible role-modelling - the mantra "if I can see it, I can be it" really is more than words. Secondly, when you're hiring - internally or externally - you must attract applications from the most diverse population into the recruitment process. If you don't attract a diverse range of candidates in the first place, you're not going to move the dial. So going the extra mile in sourcing candidates, both inside and outside of your organisation, is worth every ounce of the effort. Let's be clear, smart sourcing isn't about positive discrimination, we should always recruit the best person for the role based on their skills and what they bring to the team. But quite simply, if you don't have a diverse range of candidates at the start of the recruitment process, then nothing will ever change by the end of the process. When it comes to diversity, as an employer, you must be

willing to use every tool at your disposal and work with organisations who can help you. A few years ago, we partnered with the Behavioural Insights Team ('BIT') who are behavioural specialists and deploy 'nudge theory' to bring about change. They approached us to help move the dial on the gender pay gap and evolved an hypothesis that lack of access to flexible working - especially part-time arrangements - was holding women back in their career and contributing to the gender pay gap. Applying incredibly smart analysis to our own data, BIT asked us to deploy a nudge - changing a handful of words in every job advertisement to show 'part-time, job share and full-time' - essentially switching the default away from the traditional full-time role. This simple nudge - which of course required buy-in right from the top of our organisation - has transformed outcomes, with more people applying to work part-time here. Now we have more women in senior leadership positions and overall more people applying for roles. It's also led to something of a culture change, where less-than-full-time working is much more accepted in our firm and where our existing part-time colleagues tell us they feel a greater sense of belonging. As for our gender pay gap, whilst still too high, has continued to improve. Metaphorically speaking, it's all about putting your head above the parapet and saying, "there's a home for everybody here" and knowing what you mean when you say, "we aspire to be a diverse organisation", because diversity is so much more than just levelling up the gender balance. It's important that we can keep talking about diversity and inclusion and continue to create slide decks and discussion papers, but it's action that brings about change.

THE FRUSTRATION IS, IT SEEMS TO BE TWO STEPS FORWARD AND ONE STEP BACK. In many ways, it comes back to role-modelling. Take the Lionesses' inspirational win at the Euros, for example, which has cut through societal divides and should prove to be a huge motivational force in levelling out gender inequality in sport. Sometimes, one event

can do more than years of chipping away could ever do. Although none of us can change the world overnight, we do have the capacity to create a great place to work and one that better reflects the society we live and work in. I have tried throughout my tenure in this role to really listen to what employees are saying and to give them a route to share their lived experiences and to use those stories as a driving force for change. With this, we can all shape a better future, but you have to grasp the nettle and sometimes have some frank conversations including those about discrimination, bias and privilege, which can be uncomfortable topics.

"ALTHOUGH NONE OF US CAN CHANGE THE WORLD OVERNIGHT, WE DO HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CREATE A GREAT PLACE TO WORK AND ONE THAT BETTER REFLECTS THE SOCIETY WE LIVE AND WORK"

POST-PANDEMIC, WE FACE A VERY DIFFERENT ERA OF WORK AND A NEW APPRECIATION AROUND THE EMPLOYER/ EMPLOYEE CONTRACT OF ENGAGEMENT. IT'S A NEW DAWN BUT NOT ONE WITHOUT HUGE CHALLENGES. I think it's fair to say that you can't put the toothpaste back in the tube now. Many people - not all of course - have become used to a different way of working, but there's a certain ambiguity about what the hybrid work model really is. It's important that organisations continue to trial, listen, adjust and find the right balance. One thing is clear, the end customer must always come first and where the customer needs us is where we have to be. Aligning that with a level of flexibility that works for the role and the organisation is then crucial. Ultimately, we all want to feel a sense of belonging to the organisation we are part of and for me there are times

when being physically together is the very best way to achieve that. Like many organisations, we're on the journey of working this out together, but we are clear that being together in the workplace, with flexibility to work from elsewhere, is a powerful and an important part of the future. Collaboration, learning and growing as individuals and as teams, sharing information, checking in with colleagues and your manager face-to-face and simply having fun together, are all as important now as they ever have been. Will there be some challenges along the way? Yes, but this doesn't mean there has to be a disconnect between leaders and employees, the answer is in open dialogue.

THERE ARE STILL NUMEROUS OFFICE TOWERS BEING BUILT IN CITY HUBS, DO THEY KNOW SOMETHING WE DON'T? There is and will continue to be a very clear place for the physical workplace in the future but, undoubtedly, we will use it differently. In fact, we're about to open a new building for our nearly 900-strong population in Swindon and we've adapted the space and how we intend to use it. The objective is to give people a fantastic new workplace, which will really encourage them to spend time together. For me, when you're thinking about big change issues like hybrid-working, or any people-related challenge, matching a business problem with an HR solution is the right way to do it. Imposing an HR solution on a business problem is always going to be a pointless exercise. We're clear on our ambition and the goals of our UK business and our purpose is simple; we want to create a brighter future for our customers, our employees and all of our stakeholders. We've set ourselves big goals and having the right skills in the right place, in order to be able to deal with what's in front of us right now. The physical workplace will be as important in the future as it always has been, but I'm sure for different reasons.

IT'S A PRETTY FIERCE JOB MARKET, RECORD LOW LEVELS OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND AN UNPRECEDENTED SKILLS SHORTAGE. It's why having a great employee proposition and having the

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basics right is so essential and that means listening to employees and building benefits that they want and value, not ones we in HR think they want and value. There is so much more we can do and not always at huge cost, especially in this current cost-of-living challenge. In the past, we've listened to our people and equalised family leave, we've taken benefits ideas on the road to understand which ones our people value, we've built a menopause policy - including support and education for colleagues and line managers - to make sure that our proposition is compelling in this competitive market. That a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't cut it, will be increasingly apparent, that's for certain. Providing a proposition that caters to the needs of every generation - from new entrants to the workplace to those who've given their skills and energy to us for many years - is essential, along with a compelling approach to doing social good. But it's fair to say that many of the leaders in businesses, me included, haven't led in this kind of economic environment before and it's going to be important for us to be alert, to look left and right for emerging trends or challenges as well as being ready for what's coming down the track - and that 'fierce job market' will keep us all on our toes.

YOU MENTION THE YOUNG COHORT COMING INTO THE BUSINESS - THE TOMORROW PEOPLE - HOW ARE THEY BEING RECEIVED INTO THE WORLD OF WORK? The popular opinion is that the next generation are looking for portfolio careers and some are less focused on long-term opportunities with the same employer. This is true for some, but plenty are looking to build a sustainable career and I see some fantastic integration between the generations and some incredible opportunities. For example, we're deploying the apprenticeship levy smartly and have well over 300 apprentices in our workforce, from new entrants to professionals who've been with us their whole career. We work hard at talent management and succession planning and I see a real hunger out there from people who want to reach the next

level of the organisation. There is plenty of ambition right across the whole demographic and what I see is people looking around them for a cause to be passionate about and asking themselves how they want to invest more of their time and energy in a role or an organisation. I think the state of limbo that COVID caused, has changed people's perception of time and work and many are valuing a different work-life blend. I spoke with a leader recently who said: "I've loved the fact that for most of the past two and a half years, I've had dinner with my kids." So, whilst there's plenty of ambition to progress, people are definitely evaluating the importance of

"CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO IS ABOUT TRIALING NEW THINGS, TWEAKING, CHANGING, ADAPTING AND NOT SETTLING FOR SECOND BEST. HR HAS HAD A BAD RAP FOR FENCE SITTING, BUT THAT'S EASY TO CHANGE"

their own time. As HR leaders, we need to think about the tools we have at our disposal to bring the next generation successfully into our business and to retain our experienced colleagues. This might mean helping the organisation to design inherent flexibility into roles, building jobs differently - so that levels of responsibility are distributed differently - and investing time and energy in making them successful, amongst many other things.

One of the most important and powerful tools that we have at our disposal right now is flexibility and the ability for people to retain some control over what, when and how they work. If I have a conversation with somebody who says:

"I'm not sure I want to take on that level of responsibility", then let's think about designing the job differently. There is that opportunity right across the workforce and that's the power of the job share, which is underutilised. Presently, there are some fantastic examples of this already working, but they are in the minority. As leaders and HR practitioners, we need to find creative solutions to allow people to advance their career, but there's a risk of a mismatch between historical jobs and organisation design, versus the workforce of the future and what people expect their work/life balance to look like. This requires agility and adaptability and I think we are just beginning to collectively understand what that means. I was talking to a leader a couple of weeks ago who was thinking about whether they could make a job share in their organisation work and I encouraged them to think of it as having access to two brains in one job, which has obvious advantages. I also think that, when it comes to future careers, it's going to be incumbent on organisations to provide something different, to cater for people's needs in a very wide sense of the word, including wellbeing and interventional support. But we should also remember that we don't have to find all the solutions ourselves. Our supply chain and network should be challenged to bring ideas and disruptive solutions to the party as well.

IF ANYTHING, POSITIVE COMES FROM THE PANDEMIC IT HAS BEEN THE REVELATION THAT EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (ED&I) IS NOT A BINARY EQUATION, THERE ARE COUNTLESS NUANCES AND DIFFERENCES. Indeed, a couple of years ago we undertook some research with our employees to understand what they needed from us to remove obstacles to building a sustainable career. As a result, we equalised parental leave across Zurich UK and implemented - alongside existing adoption leave - a carer policy, paid IVF leave, a premature baby policy, paid leave for those suffering from miscarriage or baby loss and wider family bereavement leave. Before we made the changes, it was striking that our family policies looked pretty similar to

how they had 15 years before. So, in support of the ED&I imperative we've created policies that support our ambition to make our organisation the best place to work for the widest range of people. When it comes to ED&I, the important thing is for us is not to stand still. Whenever you do something that's big, different - or perhaps a bit ahead of its time - like advertising all your roles as part-time or turning your benefits proposition on its head - it's really easy in HR to say, "well that's done, we can move on now". But we should never stand back and admire our handywork… well, maybe briefly! The reality is, challenging the status quo requires an approach based on trialing new things, tweaking, changing, adapting and not settling for second best. HR has had a bad rap for fence sitting, but that's easy to change.

LOOKING AHEAD, WHAT'S ON THE WHITEBOARD IN YOUR MIND, IN TERMS OF BUSINESS DIRECTION AND AMBITION AND THE HR PLAN TO MEET THOSE OBJECTIVES? Fundamentally, I'm focused on helping our business meet its goals by building outstanding people solutions. While our market and customer needs will continually evolve, our ongoing success is built on the skills of our workforce, so connecting business strategy with people solutions is at the core of my team's objectives. The key things on my mind are probably fourfold: Continuing to evolve the employee proposition, so that we attract and retain great people, building highly-skilled leaders who deploy creative and innovative people practices and are at the forefront of engaging their team, continuing to take diversity and inclusivity out of PowerPoint and into real-life experience to make a demonstrable change to our workforce. For me, all of this is underpinned with a really strong culture of employee listening. I remember I once said to a group of senior leaders: "If you had a few thousand pieces of customer feedback, you would immerse yourselves in it for days, weeks and probably months, trying to source that finite detail about your

customers' needs". So, when we spend time and money on something like engagement surveys, we have to do the same with the insight they bring, shaking every ounce of insight from the data and employee comments. There is no doubt in my mind that employee listening is integral to business success. It's as true as ever that the most effective HR practice keeps a commercial balance, recognising that there are competing priorities and that the biggest cost and greatest asset in any organisation is people. Ultimately, being a commercial HR leader, who is connected to the organisation's customers, is what gives you the best chance of

"EMPLOYEES ARE BEST PLACED TO TELL YOU WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WORK IN YOUR FIRM AND FOSTERING A LISTENING CULTURE, THAT ENCOURAGES THE WORKFORCE TO BE PART OF A CONVERSATION, PAYS HUGE DIVIDENDS"

landing innovative people practices and making them successful. Keeping a laser-sharp focus on our own customers and using credible data, is integral to delivering the same quality of customer experience to the people in our organisation. This means closing feedback loops and continuing to listen, even when it's things you would rather not hear. The bottom line is, customer focus doesn't end with the end customer.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO PEOPLE ON THEIR CAREER IN HR? I guess growing up and spending your career in just one organisation is pretty rare these days, but throughout my time here, the journey has been all about adapting to change, upskilling and reskilling. Going forward, this will increasingly be the case

across the world of work and the notion of learning one set of skills for life is dead and gone. So, I would encourage those starting out in their careers to embrace change as it comes as a natural part of life and not shy away from it. On a similar note, you don't have to be HR born and bred coming into the role, it's about understanding people, their motivations and their needs. I had many different roles in my early career before I came to HR and all of them gave me different knowledge and skillsets, that helped my career further down the line. If you're coming from a different role into HR, you may be able to bring unique ideas and a fresh perspective that your team may not have had otherwise. Finally, I would urge people to remember that the workforce is a company's greatest asset and that it should never be a one-way conversation. We all know the inescapable truth is that engaged employees drive better outcomes for customers, shareholders and business results. Achieving great engagement hinges on innovative and creative approaches to everything we do and it's all too easy to let that slip down your agenda, so it should be kept constantly in mind. Your employees are best placed to tell you what it's like to work in your firm and fostering a listening culture, that encourages the workforce to be part of a conversation, pays huge dividends.

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ROUNDTABLE

CHAIRED BY JASON SPILLER

22 JUNE 2022 - LONDON

THE DIGITAL DILEMMA OF CANDIDATE AND EMPLOYEE SCREENING

THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SCREENING TO INFORM RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS HAS INCREASINGLY BECOME PART AND PARCEL OF MODERN EMPLOYMENT. THE SCREENING HAS BECOME A DIVISIVE ISSUE AND LEGISLATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ARE NOT ALWAYS UP TO SPEED WITH THE FAST DIRECTION OF TRAVEL. ONE MAIN CONCERN IS THAT PEOPLE HAVE LONG HAD THE MINDSET THAT SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS ARE MEANT TO BE PLACES TO CONNECT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS, NOT TO BUILD CAREERS.

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DO YOU CURRENTLY CYBER VET AND SOCIAL SCREEN NEW JOB CANDIDATES AND EXISTING EMPLOYEES AND IF SO, WHAT IS YOUR RATIONALE FOR DOING SO?

Chris Woodward: As a member-based, political organisation, the main focus is on ensuring that core competency and D&I criteria - such as nationality and gender - are met. But we also ensure that an element of research is conducted into shortlist candidates, to ensure that any risks - against our ethical framework - can be identified.

Kerena Hunter: I'm not sure that a blanket approach is right. There is a difference between looking on LinkedIn for a professional role, but trawling through somebody's Facebook or Instagram account is something else. We already have policies around social media for employees and we need to be looking at this proportionally, which roles you screen for, how far you look into people's web histories and what would you do if you find something you don't like.

Anshoo Kapoor: We have our background checks - which are more like pre-screening - but nothing that is focused on cyber vetting or social media. We have a social media policy for existing employees, but not for candidates. We have internally debated the bias issues and how we handle data, but whether it's the right way to go for us is open to conjecture. We do a lot of blind hiring, to mitigate against biases and most recently, we've begun to mask education. So, there is something of a dichotomy where on one hand, we would be blind hiring and then scrutinising people's social media.

Ian Morrison: My initial thought was that social media screening was not something to pursue, but we use LinkedIn as a tool to find the best talent for us, so we are on the threshold of this practice. Likewise, bias is something we are actively trying to eliminate.

Katharyn White: We're all talking about background checking of candidates, but I don't think many organisations actually looks at their current workforce. In all respects, I think it's important to decide what you're actually looking for.

Carla Barnett: LinkedIn is a legitimate source in a business recruitment sense. But as for

Instagram, TikTok or Facebook which are for personal and leisure, connecting family and friends, I don't think that these are legitimate platforms. If a candidate has a particular political persuasion, whether I think it's right or wrong, making sure we've the right processes, policies and practices in place is the issue as is being crystal clear as an organisation, about the standards and values that are expected.

Ian Morrison: It is interesting to note that Facebook is now positioning itself (as is Instagram) in the jobs market, which will inevitably mean that employers will have to consider this, in terms of recruitment.

HireRight: Until recently, social media was not part of the background screening picture because it was often not well understood in the context of privacy or employment laws and privacy regulators were rightly cautious about its use for such purposes. But privacy laws are now more robust and provide better guidelines around how data can be used. Alongside this is a growing focus on a corporation's 'purpose' and values. So, attracting talent becomes a sum of two parts: Does the candidate have the right qualifications and experience and the right character to fit the corporate/team culture and further enhance the organisational purpose and reputation?

WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE, IN TERMS OF BALANCES AND CHECKS?

Adrian Woodward: Before you do any background checks, you have to understand what risk it is that you're trying to mitigate, whether that's a risk to the organisation or a risk to the other employees or your customers. What you must also be clear on is, if you do uncover something in a background check, how does that influence the decision about the individual, who makes that decision and what is the rationale behind the decision?

Nithya Gopalakrishnan: We have started by assessing our communication to new hires and existing staff, the appropriateness of the cyber vetting activities on a global scale and relevance to the role or projects being discussed. Hybrid working/remote working has

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JENNY TAYLOR
RESOURCING MANAGER -
RS COMPONENTS

PICTURED LEFT
KATHARYN WHITE
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recently uncovered new challenges, with stories about false digital identities and fake profiles on social media. We believe that establishing the risks associated with the role, clarity on the appropriateness and the level of intrusion, the contractual relationship, data collation and storage, confidentiality and the thorough communication process we wish to follow, will form the rationale that can inform our decision on cyber vetting.

Jenny Taylor: For me, rationale equals relevance. If it's a tick box exercise, is it relevant?

Adrian Wightman: It's back to understanding the risk - including if you do no background checks at all - and inadvertently employ somebody who poses a risk.

Jenny Taylor: Where does the responsibility lie in terms of indemnity and mitigation and who makes the final decisions; is it down to HR, recruitment, the hiring manager involved in that decision-making process? Too many people involved becomes too many different opinions. That's where bias absolutely can come into play.

Carla Barnett: Everybody has bias and that's why there is a need for diversity of thought, most certainly at the top table. Having decisions made by one person is never a healthy thing. You do need to be able to center check and provide balance.

Anshoo Kapoor: Agreed, there needs to be a very diverse panel making the hiring decision. We have a minimum three-to-five rounds of interview and we tend to have a hiring manager, but also a neutral individual who is not associated with the hire. Then the decision comes in as a concurrence of those individuals.

Chris Woodward: While there is a benefit in researching behavioural precedents, where role modelling is essential, there is a case for emphasising future potential over past precedent. Whilst past actions can be seen as a predictor of future behaviours, being overly strict can hinder the support of social mobility and could limit access to talent pools.

IS THERE A MORAL ISSUE TO CONSIDER IN LOOKING THROUGH PEOPLE'S SOCIAL MEDIA?

Kerena Hunter: There are so many issues to consider for example, how far back is it reasonable to go in somebody's history? Also, we should look for relevance, in context of the role. Additionally, if your organisation recruits at a devolved level, then it is vital that training and development is put in place for hirers.

HireRight: Long before an organisation may deal with negative publicity or threats of legal action, it can suffer through the many ways that toxic employees negatively impact the people around them. Whether an employee's problematic online behaviour directly impacts co-workers who follow them online or is mirrored in their workplace as bullying or intimidation, if left unchecked, it can lead to dramatic increases in employee turnover, absence and substantial losses in overall performance. A recent Cornerstone survey found that just one employee in a team of 20 (five percent) exhibiting toxic behaviours could lower productivity within that team by up to 40 percent, with 54 percent of the remaining team more likely to leave. The collateral damage of this can include lost time, increased costs and a serious impact on corporate culture and morale.

Ian Morrison: Technology is a power that can be a double-edged sword and there is an element of "Big Brother is watching". We must think our way through this and ask, how are we going to address these issues? We must also be mindful that different countries have varying rules and regulations regarding criminal records and employment.

HireRight: It is the employer's responsibility to ensure any background check ordered, including a social media search, is proportionate and relevant to the role the candidate will be undertaking. So, the first thing to do is conduct a risk assessment and categorise roles into those that carry risk and those that do not. A flexible screening programme will allow you to build different packages to address various risks allowing you to adopt a good level of granularity that is privacy compliant and should include:
- Full information about the nature of the search being conducted with an electronic acknowledgment/consent to perform the check with an audit trail.
- Assurance that all data is stored, retained, transferred and accessed in accordance with requirements and that adequate technical and security measures are in place.
- Support for candidates should they wish to exercise their rights to access, rectify or delete data, or to withdraw.

Adrian Wightman: There are occasions when an individual is upfront and volunteers that a background check will likely send alarm bells ringing and giving the opportunity for them to explain should be a part of the process.

Kerena Hunter: We have "ban the box" as part of our application process, whereby most people don't have to declare convictions - other than where absolutely required, such as social care - until after an offer is made. This prevents bias during shortlisting and interview. But as with DBS checks, we can still decide if the information concerns us.

Ian Wightman: The question then becomes, what crimes are acceptable and which are not?

Carla Barnett: It can be difficult to make such a call. The crux of the issue is, if a person has served their time for whatever crime has been committed, they need employment. The typical scenario is, people are released from prison, nobody wants to employ them and they drift back into their old life.

Ian Wightman: Indeed, who better than a burglar to be a home security advisor or locksmith?

WHAT IF IT'S NOT A CRIMINAL RECORD? WHAT IF IT'S AN EXPRESSED VIEWPOINT?

Nithya Gopalakrishnan: This is a potentially complex and contentious issue with adverse media and there's always a risk attached to being tagged in a post in which we don't necessarily want to be involved. This throws the light on intrusion into personal lives. But the reality is, checks and measures are a necessity.

WHAT IS THE ETHICAL ARGUMENT FOR SCREENING?

Anshoo Kapoor: Where the control sits is a key question, plus who would information of concern be shared with? Ethics, balance, control and governance are essential to outcome.

> "WHILST PAST ACTIONS CAN BE SEEN AS A PREDICTOR OF FUTURE BEHAVIOURS, BEING OVERLY STRICT CAN HINDER THE SUPPORT OF SOCIAL MOBILITY AND COULD LIMIT ACCESS TO TALENT POOLS"

WHAT DOES GOOD PRACTICE LOOK LIKE FOR YOUR SCREENING STRATEGY?

Katharyn White: The Law Society has particular rules and regulations. If you have a criminal record, you probably wouldn't have your practicing certificate, so you wouldn't be able to apply. If you're applying for a financial role, having a criminal record for fraud is a mitigating reason. Other than that, if somebody has a spent conviction and it doesn't impact on their role, it should not create bias.

- Filtered reporting matched to two known identifiers to ensure accuracy and job relevance.

Chris Woodward: As part of the hiring process, it is without question appropriate to research candidates on professional network sites and to explore any issues highlighted by referees. But my view is that further research into candidates should only be pursued where red flags are raised or issues identified. It's a conundrum that needs to be clarified.

Jenny Taylor: Agreed, we've discussed bias and a diverse ethics committee has to be the gold standard in making these decisions, supported by robust governance. What we all had in place even five years ago, is simply not fit for purpose.

Kerena Hunter: Every business has a set of values that should be clear enough to provide a moral compass and ethical framework in decision making.

> "TECHNOLOGY IS A POWER THAT CAN BE A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD AND THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING". WE MUST THINK OUR WAY THROUGH THIS"

HireRight: Knowing where to draw the line is important for compliance, relevance, and proportionality. If I want to make my social media posts public, I can, but equally I can restrict access and keep what I want private, and that must be respected. Requests for passwords to accounts should never be made - employers should only access public social media posts.

IS THE CURRENT LEGISLATION SUFFICIENT?

Carla Barnett: I don't think we're quite there yet in terms of legislation - which is why we're here today - there's just so many levels of complexity.

Nithya Gopalakrishnan: The question around compliance and legislation is complex when it comes to cyber vetting or digital checks. It's challenging to keep up with the pace of digital advancements and knowledge gaps will exist in knowing the threats that exist to our businesses. The level of devolved, diversified, or decentralised decisions on the compliance areas depends on the countries we operate in, the legal framework in these circumstances and the jurisdiction it falls under.

Kerena Hunter: A concern is, what is best practice in procedure and what feedback you give to candidates who have not been accepted for a role? Do you tell them why? Do you give them feedback, if it was due to their social media history?

Ian Morrison: I don't think we should be in the business of counseling candidates and the danger is, if you become too involved with them, you may end up with a grievance and litigation.

Jenny Taylor: It depends on the type of organisation you work in and if it has a very clearly defined criteria of what is and what is not acceptable for a particular role. Clarity, definition and unambiguity are essential. Importantly, from a GDPR perspective, they have the right to access that report.

Chris Woodward: When providing feedback to unsuccessful candidates we find that there's enough talent-based information that can be referenced without needing to expand into facts from researching personal information. Facts from researching personal information are considered secondary to talent-based information.

Kerena Hunter: If you are going to do social media screening, you must tell people up front about what you will be looking at. People will ask for the rationale as to why they didn't land the job and, as said, be able to obtain that information.

DO YOU COLLECT AND CURATE INFORMATION FROM SOCIAL MEDIA?

Chris Woodward: We don't routinely collate information from social media as part of our core recruitment processes, I don't think we need to. Obviously, we do store CV content and we have to be GDPR compliant. If personal information is shared on a network and an organisation sees this, then it is appropriate for this information to be considered, if there is an objective role requirement or conflict with ethical framework criteria.

Anshoo Kapoor: There is a legitimate question to be asked about the length of time that you would hold that information.

Kerena Hunter: Perhaps it should be considered along the same lines as DBS xchecks, whereby once you've seen the information and used it in your decision making, you don't keep a copy.

Katharyn White: Really, with GDPR, there should be public information films about it, because I think individuals should also be equipped to challenge their employers, to understand what they're doing with their data.

Carla Barnett: Up to a point, but technology is accelerating and soon we will be having to gain a grip on the Metaverse. The point being, no legislation can be set in stone and could quickly become inadequate to protect all parties.

Kerena Hunter: We need to be mindful that for many young people, practically all of their interactions are on social media and this could have implications later on.

WHAT MEASURES DO YOU CURRENTLY TAKE TO ENSURE THAT SOCIAL SCREENING IS NOT DISCRIMINATORY OR BIAS?

Anshoo Kapoor: Who are we to judge if a candidate is lonely, isolated, introvert or extrovert? It's whether they are a good fit for the role. Bias comes when unofficial filters are adopted and decision making is reactionary.

Jenny Taylor: I think we have to ask; "why are we doing social media checks"? Right now, opinion is split, the why cannot be answered and the policies don't underpin the process and there is some ambiguity surrounding governance and policies.

Katharyn White: There's always been evolution in how and what we check in recruitment. References used to be sacrosanct, but now they are just part of the tick box exercise. I'm sure there will be new iterations of the types of checks we do as technology continues to force change. It's about being constantly open to evolution and having an ethical perspective and conversations.

Chris Woodward: It is very hard to remove subjectivity, bias and judgmental behaviours in recruiters, regardless of the amount of training that you put in place. Personally, I am not sold on the benefits of social screening unless a specific issue is flagged first. Are we almost saying it's impossible to actually comply with this and to not discriminate?

Carla Barnett: Discriminate is quite a big word. The bias element of it is just really hard to resolve. Everyone has their views and values and some people's perspectives may not match yours, that's the reality of life.

Chris Woodward: It is important to be really clear and objective on what competencies you are hiring for in order to remove subjective bias from the process. There are cultural norms that do create bias - an example is educational background. Having a really clear top down and prioritised view on what good looks like in general, across key selection criteria, is really important.

Carla Barnett: If the point is, not the qualification - be it a Masters or PhD - but where it was obtained, then that is a bias of concern.

Kerena Hunter: We could use social media to facilitate cultural add rather than cultural fit.

Anshoo Kapoor: The world of work is so changed. Now we are all talking about the gig economy and the workforce is made up of part-time contracts, fixed-term contracts and contractors. So would social media screening be practical, let alone equitable?

WHAT DIFFERENCE IS REMOTE AND HYBRID WORKING MAKING TO SCREENING?

Carla Barnett: When you engage with new recruits remotely, there are bound to be differences between the screen persona and in the flesh, we all tend to demonstrate behaviours remotely and the relationship seems more transactional.

PICTURED RIGHT

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RESOURCING LEAD -
SEVERN TRENT

Anshoo Kapoor: In the tech market, there is so much demand and the pace is relentless and so we have grown accustomed to recruiting and onboarding at speed and people in those markets tend to be familiar with the process.

Chris Woodward: It enables you to be more targeted with outreach campaigns, having a clear EVP and enhancing the effectiveness of engagement with potential candidates throughout the hiring process is the trick to finding scarce, top talent. I'm not sure that social screening is a game-changer here.

Kerena Hunter: There is an element of people being mindful of what society is thinking about. Currently, there's fewer men in primary schools and social care and social work for example. Some of that is changing because of social media and the environment, some of that is

could potentially merge with psychometric assessment outcomes. It's not just what you put on your platforms, but how you're using those platforms that help discern levels of flexibility, agility, or wider psychometric dimensions. Data could become integrated across public sources. Maybe this could become comparable with real-time engagement data that you might have within your organisation. In the future, we'll see more instant data in that space. There is the potential to create personas for what we want as an organisation, matching to candidate profiles, but having that done in an automated way.

Kerena Hunter: One big area to consider in terms of the current climate is the candidate experience - if this is good then people will want to apply. But if the decisions are all made via AI, then we lose the human judgement element.

exhaustive search is conducted with a quick turnaround time. Specialist analysts should then review results to ensure accuracy.

Searches should be designed to identify risk-creating behaviours such as harassment, violence, intolerance and crime, to highlight content that may introduce a toxic work environment or present brand risk. For companies that are sensitive to substance abuse, searches could be tailored to include the above categories plus drug and alcohol content. Custom keywords can help tailor search criteria further, allowing you to comply with legislation by ensuring that protected characteristics are pre-filtered and do not appear in results and/or using different keywords for different role types/risks. It can even assist in creating an ongoing monitoring programme post hire that can be deployed to both manage ongoing risk or be part of your wellbeing programme by looking for behaviours that would allow teams to identify when pastoral support is needed.

> "WHO ARE WE TO JUDGE IF A CANDIDATE IS LONELY, ISOLATED, INTROVERT OR EXTROVERT? IT'S WHETHER THEY ARE A GOOD FIT FOR THE ROLE. BIAS COMES WHEN UNOFFICIAL FILTERS ARE ADOPTED AND DECISION MAKING IS REACTIONARY"

about society in itself and how it tackles professions at a young age and targets children in schools. That society element is something we have to tackle if we want to have diversity, especially in gender heavy professions.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL SCREENING IN THE MODERN CHANGING WORLD OF WORK?

Anshoo Kapoor: It needs to maintain a human element, more dialogue and conversation and removing the assumptions of social screening. Also there needs to be checks and measures, machine and AI will give you certain outcome, but you need to be able to question those outcomes, choose to concur or disagree.

Chris Woodward: In the war for talent, talent has already won so candidate experience is a key focus. With this in mind, that metadata from platform usage

Nithya Gopalakrishnan: Our organisation is considering a thorough approach to cyber-vetting and evaluation of next steps, as we audit our capacity, capability, process and procedures to handle large data sets that are highly personal and confidential. Do we have suitable protocols to protect the individual's digital identity and preventive measures to avoid wrongful use of any data within the organisation or externally if we consider using a third party. I think it is a precarious proposition to launch cyber vetting processes without carefully considering our readiness and threats that we may be exposed to as a business, if things did not go as planned.

HireRight: The best social media search products use AI-based software which can read text and images like a human, identifying thousands of job-relevant, potentially high-risk behaviours. They should offer a combination of both automated and human analysis where technology is used, to ensure a robust and

We are currently seeing an average ten percent 'hit' rate for customer-defined criteria on public social media searches and most of these hits would not be picked up in an adverse media search. So, when it comes to analysing behaviours that impact corporate culture and reputation, this shows how important the social media check can be to an organisation to verify that candidates who are "good on paper" can be "great in person" too.

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I

EVOLVING CORPORATE CULTURE

IT SEEMS THAT THE NEWS AGENDA IS
DOMINATED BY A CONTINUOUS NARRATIVE
OF WRONGDOING AND MALPRACTICE,
THAT SUBSEQUENT ATTEMPTS TO COVERUP
INEVITABLY EXACERBATE. IN THIS ERA, WHERE
ACTION AND DECISION ARE SCRUTINISED,
PUBLICISED AND GLOBALISED IN SECONDS,
NAVIGATING THROUGH CONTINUOUS TURMOIL,
UNDER THE TOUGHEST COMMERCIAL AND
ECONOMIC PRESSURES, DEMANDS UNSTINTING
ATTENTION TO SOUND AND ACCOUNTABLE
CORPORATE PRACTICE, UNDERPINNED BY
HONESTY, AND TRANSPARENCY.

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#HR #Polls | Does the corporate culture
in your organisation reflect and support
employee-centricity

Yes	25%
No	75%

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ARTICLE BY SUZIE WALKER, MD & FOUNDER - SUZIE WALKER EXECUTIVE SEARCH

EQUILIBRIUM

THERE IS A SHIFT IN MINDSET FOR LEADERS, THAT ARE NOW SEEKING MORE PURPOSE AND JOY IN THEIR LIVES. THIS IS DRIVING AN EVOLVING WORK-LIFE CULTURE THAT IS MORE ABOUT EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE THAN TECHNICAL ACUMEN AND POTENTIALLY, MORE CLOSELY ALIGNS PERSONAL AND CORPORATE VALUES. BUT THERE IS NO SINGLE GUARANTEED FORMULA FOR SUCCESS.

Unquestionably, there is a greater emphasis on the importance of soft skills in the shaping of corporate culture, along with alignment to foster a sense of belonging, supporting both performance and retention. That sense of belonging has also been supported by the improvements to diversity and inclusion at board-level and, as boards become more balanced - although there is much more to be done - formerly unyielding cultures are moving towards collaboration and engagement, where employees are given a chance to speak and to be heard. A recent study found that, 'Employees with a strong sense of belonging report a 56 percent higher level of overall job performance'. Plus, with attrition rates showing no sign of decline and a shrinking pool of talent in the market, attention to retention has never been more important. We are seeing a real shift in workplaces, from 'places to work' to hubs for community, purpose and belonging.

An example of this can be found within a FTSE 100, consumer-facing brand where the Chief Executive Officer has built a senior team that strikes a much-needed balance in terms of diversity and inclusion. This progressive team has worked together on an organisational design, reflecting an agenda that all senior leaders wholeheartedly support and commit to. They truly buy into it, embedding the vision and values into their teams, systems and processes in order to deliver it. This evolving culture is traditional, in that it is driven from the top, but its customer-centric and progressive CEO has delivered a powerful and dynamic change to improve corporate culture as a whole.

"AS BOARDS BECOME MORE BALANCED - ALTHOUGH THERE IS MUCH MORE TO BE DONE - WE FIND FORMERLY UNYIELDING CULTURES MOVING TOWARDS COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT"

Another approach was seen within a FTSE 350 retail brand, which was forced to evolve after finding the company heavily exposed to economic circumstances and increased attrition over the past few years. Interim senior leaders were brought in to transform the strategy, while the permanent and experienced senior leadership team was pragmatic, flexible and dynamic in their thinking. A significant amount of change took place in a short amount of time and, while this was initially a case of survival, they started to think about what kind of business and culture they would like to achieve when they came out of the other side. Their Chief Executive showed a level of courage that inspired and motivated their team, transforming company culture for all.

When it comes to leadership acumen, while technical skills and experience still form the basis, there is a greater emphasis on emotional intelligence. A FTSE 100 client with a traditional and steady culture - known as a solid performer in their sector - was struggling to connect with new generations of customers, that expected more than technical competency from the brand. For this reason, they embarked on a bold new vision for the future, bringing in a female senior executive, who offered a vision and influence that shaped their thinking and is moving them towards a modern and collaborative culture. Concurrently, new and diverse teams were developed, to move away from the past, change perceptions and attract new talent to take the business forward. This brave new beginning is now disrupting and inspiring others within their sector.

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ARTICLE BY PROFESSOR RANDALL S PETERSON, PROFESSOR AND ACADEMIC DIRECTOR OF THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE -
LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL AND GERRY BROWN, CHAIRMAN - NOVAQUEST CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Dr. Randall S. Peterson and Gerry Brown are co-authors of: Disaster in the
Boardroom: Six Dysfunctions Everyone Should Understand.
Published by Palgrave

WARP FACTOR

"AMBITIONS - SUCH AS IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY, REDUCING INEQUALITY

OR DISCRIMINATION - INVARIABLY TAKE A BACK SEAT WHEN THE SCANDALS

AND DYSFUNCTIONS EMERGE IN THE EXECUTIVE SUITE"

When corporate elite team culture becomes distorted, there is a strong risk that decision-making will be warped by psychologically undesirable and dysfunctional behaviours, which run counter to both the stated ambitions and actual interests of the organisation. While dysfunctional executives and cultures are each dysfunctional in their own particular way, research finds the dysfunctions have consistent themes for poorly defined cultures, where corporates and their leadership team members do not actively engage to effectively shape the culture their organisations espouse.

Research findings were not casually reached, they came from a careful study of 300 years of wrong-doing, malpractice and organisational failures, to find and codify the corporate failings, scandals and 'mis-steps'. Dysfunctions should not be taken lightly, as their impact is both significant and almost always destructive for staff and customers associated directly with the business in question, but also for investors and the wider community. The consequences can vary in terms of drama and impact. Ambitions - such as improving sustainability, reducing inequality or discrimination - invariably take a back seat when the scandals and dysfunctions emerge in the executive suite. The six dysfunctions framework

uncovered are applicable to any corporate or executive group that makes consequential decisions. Indeed, these apply to any groups that make high stakes decisions - where they feel the stress of being responsible for the outcomes of their decisions - and where there are many stakeholders with interests in what the group is doing. All such groups are highly likely to fall prey to these psychological blind spots and errors at some point. In some respects, many 'elite teams' share similar challenges. For example, reducing inequality by trying to be more representative of those they serve and represent - i.e. to try to articulate missing voices - or find themselves where culture can interfere with information sharing

within the team and thereby, distort their leadership, strategy and decision-making.

Once these corporate dysfunctions are identified - namely denial, groupthink, bystander groups, diffusion of responsibility, rule bound cultures and lack of independence - are noticed, they seem to appear everywhere in corporate executive and elite teams. Such psychological 'blind spots' hamper and distort effective decision-making, despite positive intentions and best efforts. Of course, such dysfunctions are not limited by nationality, geography, culture, sector or industry. Despite best intentions, wrongdoing, scandals and malpractice continue to happen with alarmingly regularity. They are almost no longer

notable until noticeably excessive. The six psychological dysfunctions of every/any executive team we identified can be detailed as follows: 1: *Subordination* - lack of independence. 2: *Imbalance* - missing key voices - aka lack of diversity of background, specific required knowledge, etc. affects decisions and actions. 3: *Distension* - cultural becomes exaggerated and dysfunctional or misdirected. 4: *Bystander* - diffusion of responsibility - aka key players refuse to speak up or else point to everyone regarding problems and no one takes responsibility. 5: *Bureaucratic* - rule-bound cultures ignore and sideline alternative views, content or ideas. 6: *Conformity* - groupthink and identity threat causes elite teams to go along with others and not raise legitimate concerns.

Having discovered, identified and codified these dysfunctions, we would argue that regulatory codes of conduct in most of the world have anticipated much of this and do what they can to reduce these risks. However, official rules can only take us so far in encoding and defining corporate cultures. We hold a nuanced position on compliance - particularly since the evidence suggests that the governance codes in countries where governance is taken seriously - like the UK for example - are necessary and do support effective governance. Our position here is that they are not sufficient to stop board disasters or change executive mindsets. Not because the rules are bad or insufficient, but because we are dealing with issues of behaviours and culture that cannot really be directly or properly legislated. This is mainly because beyond this often-performative regulatory environment lies the hidden social and psychological structures that underlie the cultures and political power games of executives - as both teams and individuals - as well as informing how they approach and fulfil their managerial and oversight responsibilities.

By applying focus upon the underlying psychological causes of board ineffectiveness for this analysis, we have come up with a range of recommendations. *Measure it*: There are effective measures to look at culture, such

as whether it is competitive or cooperative. *Be pre-emptive*: Think about your culture before you engage organisational change, will it help or hurt this change? Hold individual directors to account for their behaviour. As one of our interviewees suggested, use a letter of appointment that sets clear behavioural expectations. How directors work together on a board is the foundation to avoiding disaster in the boardroom as well as helping address structural inequalities. When individuals work well together in the boardroom, they can overcome structural challenges, identify and solve key problems and make good

"A KEY MESSAGES THAT COMES THROUGH LOUD AND CLEAR IS THAT BOARDROOM DISASTERS WILL STOP, ONLY WHEN EVERY DIRECTOR IS TRYING TO "DO THE RIGHT THING FOR THE RIGHT REASON"

decisions. Working well together as a board does not mean that everyone agrees, that's groupthink. Healthy culture in a boardroom involves reconciling views that on their surface appear to clash.

A key messages that comes through loud and clear is that boardroom disasters will stop, only when every director is trying to "do the right thing for the right reason". No amount of official rules and sanctions will persuade directors - beyond the usual sweet words for equality, purpose and sustainability - to make structural changes to their cultures. As a consequence, regulators, shareholders, employees and citizens all have a role to play in supporting and reaching this goal. Regulators can encourage better director education, assessors can ensure that boards measure and discuss their culture, citizens should stop normalising business

disasters or demand change. We all have a role to play in making these boardroom excesses, scandals, stifling cultures and disasters a thing of the past. Firstly, ensure culture is a core activity of the board. Boards need to actively measure, question and interrogate their own culture as well as that of the organisation to search for existing - or emerging - evidence of any of our six dysfunctions. Many boardroom scandals and disasters could be avoided by identifying, acknowledging and tackling these often psychological, but inter-related board dysfunctions. Focus should be upon being pre-emptive and anticipating - aka managing the negative sides of existing cultures - before they create disaster. Emphasis should also be laid upon planning for cultures that serve the entire organisation, rather than enabling powerful sub-groups to conflict or allow dysfunction to run unchecked.

To address "lack of independence", establish strong systems for directors - and those who aspire to the role - to be formally and independently prepared and give organisations reasons to appoint those directors. When it comes to "missing key voices" encourage boards to engage the widest possible range of stakeholders as an easy and obvious starting point. Often claimed to be hard to identify - let alone impact, when it comes to what we call cultural amplification - why not measure and monitor the boardroom and business culture systematically? This will make sure that it is what you think it is, while also keeping the culture always fit for purpose. To ameliorate "diffusion of responsibility", having a clear structure, ensuring every director has specific assigned responsibilities and also that values and goals are clear and consistently enforced better. So many cultures are proudly rules-bound, so move away from strict box-ticking, regulations and formal voting. It would be far better to instead focus executive bodies on the meaning behind the rules and living the spirit of those guidelines.

WHAT LIES BENEATH

Culture is often praised for success or blamed for failure, but culture evolves and devolves, subject to the vagaries of internal and external factors. A deeper driver can help keep culture on track and explain both successes and failures. But what causes one business to retain a strong and positive culture and another equally venerable one to devolve? If culture is "the way we do things around here," the question is "but why do you do things the way you do around here?"

"A DNA THAT ULTIMATELY COMPRISES AND SHAPES THE CULTURE -AND IMPORTANTLY, CONTINUES TO ARTICULATE AND CELEBRATE IT - TENDS TO BE NOT ONLY HIGHLY-REGARDED, BUT DEMONSTRATE SUSTAINED SUCCESS"
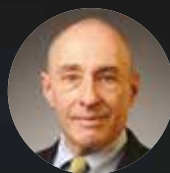
ARTICLE BY GERALD A. SCHORIN, PH.D, SENIOR PARTNER - TRAVERSE BAY STRATEGY GROUP

Culture is not an eternal verity. It can evolve and grow stronger or waver and drift, leading to losses in reputation, share value, sales, recruitment and retention and ultimately demise. No culture is perfect, of course and even the most positive corporate environment can't ensure against bad actors or damaging errors. But what research suggests is that issues ostensibly arising from culture, good or bad, often have roots elsewhere. That's true for organisations with perceptibly damaged cultures. For example and equally for those whose cultures are highly-regarded. That underlying element, even more fundamental than the beliefs and values posited by Edgar Schein, is what we call whatness or "quiddity". Quiddity is a set of principles typically first articulated by the founders or early leadership teams, which serves as an anchor to help keep the culture from drifting and devolving, while at the same time powerfully attracting and retaining employees who resonate to those principles and find meaning in being associated with the organisation. Businesses which have a quiddity - a DNA that ultimately comprises and shapes the culture -and importantly, continues to articulate and celebrate it - tends to be not only highly-regarded, but demonstrate sustained success.

A committed outdoorsman at age eight, Yvon Chouinard became a proficient mountaineer, who taught himself blacksmithing so he could produce pitons better than those commercially available. Demand for those $1.50 pitons ultimately led to him founding Patagonia, which manufactures and retails high quality clothing and gear, under a philosophy that respects staff members' personal lives and where concern for the environment was more central than the profit motive. Indeed, concern for the environment is not just a branding platform for Patagonia, but a fundamental commitment: One percent of annual sales is donated to preservation and restoration of the environment and 70 percent of its products are made from recyclable materials. Its status as a Benefit Corporation (B Corps) legally sustains its social and environmental commitment

and it operates a buy-back and refurbishment programme - Worn Wear - which reduces Patagonia's environmental footprint. It even discourages imprudent purchasing of its own products, such as the eye-catching "Don't Buy This Jacket" advert. Chouinard's own love for outdoor recreation defines the Patagonia culture, which allows employee time off for outdoor activities, a practice detailed in his book *Let My People Go Surfing*. The result of this extraordinary approach is, a $1 billion company, that remains highly successful and pre-pandemic, employee turnover was an extraordinary four percent annually.

"WHY DO WE DO THINGS THE WAY WE DO AROUND HERE?" - IT'S AN EXERCISE LEGITIMATELY PART OF AN HR EXECUTIVE'S PORTFOLIO - AND IF THE ANSWER IS MORE FULFILLING AND MORE ENGAGING THAN "TO MAKE MONEY," CONGRATULATIONS"

In 1864, Dr. William Mayo established a private practice in Rochester, Minnesota. His philosophy was, "the needs of the patient come first" - which was hardly unique in medicine - but after his two physician sons joined him, the Mayo Clinic shaped that philosophy and Mayo's founding principles into a quiddity today accounts for its leadership among all US academic medical centers. Those principles include: Team-based medicine that brings practitioners of all relevant disciplines to pool knowledge for the patient's benefit and ensures the soundest possible treatment. Patient-appropriate decisions regardless of cost (with the Clinic absorbing non-reimbursable expenses). "Boundarylessness," which allows medical staff to electronically pool knowledge for both the patient's benefit and their own professional improvement. Culture-based hiring, which goes beyond

skills and experience to determine, via self-selection, that a prospect's values are consistent with Mayo's patient-centric culture. Finally, shared governance and physician compensation in salary only, with no financial incentive for unnecessary treatment. However, this doesn't immunise the organisation from issues - nurses were upset with workload during the pandemic and there is frequent concern over CEO pay - but turnover for all staff remains very low and it retains its apex ranking. If eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, regular storytelling and celebration of an organisation's quiddity is the price of its being sustainable. When leadership teams are distracted by financial pressures, mergers or acquisitions, shareholder issues, legal and ethical challenges and other problems, it's hardly surprising that a focus on culture is lost.

While the superficial top layer of culture is what's most apparent to the public - beer bashes and 24x7 snacks for some startups or IBM's iconic white dress shirts - organisations that have thrived for decades tend to have a set of principles or values that informs their culture. For IBM, it wasn't the white shirts, but Tom Watson Jr.'s codification of his father's philosophy, encapsulated as respect for the individual, customer service and excellence. For Hewlett and Packard, it was "the HP way," - articulated by Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard - and defined before they'd ever developed a product: "We have trust and respect for individuals. We focus on a high level of achievement and contribution. We conduct our business with uncompromising integrity. We achieve our common objectives through teamwork. We encourage flexibility and innovation". We end where we began insomuch as, businesses can develop their own quiddity by simply asking "why do we do things the way we do around here?" - it's an exercise that is legitimately part of an HR executive's portfolio - and if the answer is more fulfilling and more engaging than "to make money," congratulations.

II

MANAGING
BUSINESS
GROWTH

IT'S NO GOOD COCOONING BUSINESSES IN
A SOUND PROOF BOOTH. ORGANISATIONS
NEED TO BE BRACED FOR CONTINUED
SHOCKWAVES. FRUSTRATED BY DELAY, INERTIA
AND SKILLS SCARCITY, WEARY OF PANDEMIC
HINDRANCE, WARY OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND
GEOPOLITICAL UNCERTAINTY AND PERPLEXED
BY EVOLVING HYBRID WORKING. TIME TO
EXPLORE, SPECULATE AND INNOVATE A PLAN
FOR GROWTH, COMPANIES MUST PLAN BOTH
LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY, BE SUSTAINABLE,
DIGITALLY-DRIVEN, HUMANCENTRIC AND ALERT
TO CONTINUOUS DISRUPTION.

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#HR #Polls | Do you think that your
organisation is growing sustainably?

Yes	66.7%
No	33.3%

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NICHOLAS BRICE, BUSINESS SOULMAN, THE BUSINESS SOULMAN, SOUL CORPORATIONS® - VISIONS TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT LTD

Nicholas Brice is the author of The Mindful Communicator
Published by Soul Corporations

GOLDEN GOOSE

DRIVING BUSINESS GROWTH IN A STATE OF UNCERTAINTY, WITH RECESSION BEARING DOWN AND THE ADDED COMPLEXITIES OF HYBRID WORKING, IS A SEVERE TEST OF PRAGMATISM AND GUMPTION. HISTORY SHOWS US THAT THOSE ORGANISATIONS THAT DOUBLE DOWN ON EFFORTS TO ENGAGE AND CONNECT WITH PEOPLE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE ORGANISATION, SEIZE THE DAY.

Wearing the Darwinian survival-of-the-fittest lens, we can busy ourselves, hunker down, cut prices, become super competitive and pull through. Assuming you have a willing group of employees, that is. Naturally, when people work in a great culture, they will care more about their colleagues and company, be more likely to stay loyal, tolerate more and apply themselves to the challenge more effectively. Talk of the "big reset," is not just the immediate employee/employer relationship, but the entire supply chain that needs to be our focus. There are challenging times ahead, but we have been here before and those that persevered and made the right calls on their people management, prevailed.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, I was honoured to collaborate with John Neill at Unipart, focusing in hard on the importance of shared ownership, relationships with and between employees and the need to create a great work climate. John was deeply serious about transforming the Unipart culture and his people felt it. The business was soon achieving world-class ratings and achieving superb results. At Unipart, there was also a replacement of outdated Darwinian "survival of the fittest" thinking with a much more inclusive view of their supply chain and all the relationships involved. Whereas the more exploitative cultures were bossing their suppliers to slash prices below what they could possibly afford, the launch of the Ten(d) to Zero programme was focused entirely on enabling Unipart and its

> "IT WILL BE OUR PEOPLE WHO WILL BRING US THROUGH AND DRIVE SUCCESS AS WE MOVE BEYOND IT. IT'S TIME TO LOOK AT HOW WE FEED OUR GEESE"

suppliers to work in close, win-win partnerships across the supply chain, to reduce waste and reveal benefits for all.

So, a key area for managing business growth in a recession, albeit counter-intuitive to many bottom-line managers, is to drive a people-first culture. It's all good and well to look to a single figurehead leader to drive the culture forward. But in a digital-hybrid culture, this becomes the primary job of any team leader and the best companies keep investing in this area, particularly when the going is tough. Leadership development can transform the individual leader's capacity to act mindfully and effectively in all the online and in-person interactions they manage. It needs to enable each leader to specifically deliver their part of the business strategies - while living the values and delivering the core purpose - instead of just being a luxurious curriculum of disjointed offerings from different sources. We need to invest specifically in the capacity of people to deliver better business.

Aesop's fable, *The Goose That Laid the Golden Egg*, is the story of a man and his wife who buy a baby goose. They feed it and nurture it and one day it lays a golden egg. They take the egg to town and sell it for a lot of money, but as they grow richer, they become greedy for more. They start arguing as they become frustrated at not being able to yield more out of the goose and they imagine the goose's stomach must be made of gold. So one day, they decide to cut it open, but they find there is no gold inside. It's a poignant metaphor that reminds us of our priorities, particularly in challenging times. It will be our people who will bring us through and drive success as we move beyond it. It's time to look at how we feed our geese.

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ARTICLE BY JILL JENKINSON IS CEO AND CLIENT DIRECTOR - T-THREE

GRIP

"LEAN IN TOO FAR AND YOU HAVE PEOPLE WHO FEEL OVERMANAGED, BUT LEAN OUT AND YOU RISK DISENGAGEMENT AND UNCHECKED DECISION-MAKING"

The last decade has seen an intense focus on high performance, metrics, scorecards and levelled goals. Clearly this is a crucial part of running a business in any sector, but has it become an obsession, at the expense of raising heads above parapets, innovating and experimenting? Concerningly, it seems that this 'grip' is even tighter, as we pull away from the tentacles of the pandemic and into more challenging times ahead.

We carried out a study into business growth, starting with organisations who before, during and after the pandemic, managed to achieve growth over their market trajectory. Notably, we excluded those whose growth was pandemic specific and generally time finite, such as PPE providers. We were looking in general at sustainable growth over market expectations and identifying what common characteristics contributed to this growth. In the first instance we tested the concept of 'growth over market' with a research cohort of international business leaders. For many, the definition of growth over market moved away from incremental, year-on-year growth and more described a 'leap frogging' of market and internal constraints, while outperforming competitors. They recognised the criticality of bold experimentation - including the processes and technologies that enabled this - but above all viewed it as a conscious cultural statement, underpinned by very specific behaviours. We asked the cohort to describe those positive deviations, where activity within their business had driven growth above expectation and they generally described how a seemingly impossible idea was adopted by a leader with imagination, who brought the right people together - armed them with the freedom to dream, do and decide - leading to extraordinary results.

Interestingly, it is often those events and subsequent results that are sparked by urgency, a response to a crisis or a need to try something new, having exhausted all tried and tested methods. This seems to challenge all our natural pattern-making instincts - where ordinarily, when faced with a problem, we draw from our catalogue of past experiences in the hope of solutions. When those options are exhausted, we have to do something entirely different and with greater freedom. Another notable element our cohort recognised as critical in growth over market, was the degree to which leaders in the business encouraged a mindset of growth, as opposed to a focus on day-to-day performance. This is where teams are curious and believe that change and continual improvement is not only possible, but is the only way to progress. Suddenly, the ideas and innovations flow and the challenge then is to allow them to keep flowing, as opposed to killing them with overly onerous process or rejection. What most saw as crucial to achieving growth over market, was a single unifying purpose, which allowed people to connect to it and see their part in delivering it. Interestingly, many acknowledged that vision and purpose may be used

interchangeably, but noted that they were heard and experienced very differently.

This exploration and debate has provided an invaluable frame and focus for the subsequent research it prompted, where we looked more widely for examples of companies achieving growth over market, agnostic of sector or region. The question we posed here was very simple: "What common characteristics exist in organisations that achieve growth over market and how are those characteristics evidenced in areas such as; innovation, leadership and people engagement?" The data, once collated and reviewed in depth, allowed us to identify that the crux of achieving growth over market rests on maintaining nine main tensions. *Fix the vision but flex the journey*: Creating a strong sense of purpose through clearly communicating a powerful vision that acts as the North Star, but act with agility to flex the route taken to reach the destination. *Finger on the pulse via productive paranoia*: A fierce focus on looking outside, beyond the real or imagined existing boundaries of the organisation, noticing and anticipating external changes, changing customer preferences and seeking inspiration from leftfield influences. *Strategic decision-making without bias*: Making the right calls based on the data and signals available, but with a spark of creative foresight, putting ego aside and not being stuck in current mindsets or legacies. *Create natural human connections intentionally*: Build connections with teams in order that you can create deeper, more fundamental engagement and see connections and relationships as the enablers in all collaboration and forward momentum. *Forge community*: Going beyond the data to think about each employee and customer as unique. Don't assume, go and find out - not through questioning - but sharing experience and then sharing their lives. *Lead with enlightened empathy*: Beyond listening, development and goal setting, do you know what each employee dreams of, aspires to, is fearful of and really needs to grow? To create more than the sum of your organisation's parts, you need to find

out and act on it. *Fearless experimentation*: Change before you have to and don't obsess about protecting current performance at the expense of new, even potentially threatening, growth opportunities. To leverage the first mover advantage, growth leaders take risks and experiment, make it safe to fail and learn fast from failures. *Action-orientation - go boldly but with focussed priorities*: An action-orientated approach is needed, but with the whole organisation aligned around the critical priorities. Incremental changes won't be sufficient. So go hard and persist while aligning efforts on a focused set of priorities. *Spark & space*:

"NOW IS THE "GREAT REFLECTION" WHERE ORGANISATIONS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO STOP, PAUSE AND BE CONSCIOUS ABOUT WHERE THEY ARE AND WHERE THEY WANT TO BE"

Empowering growth within and through people including empowerment and belief in potential, but that crucially hinges on the lean in balance that leaders achieve. Lean in too far and you have people who feel overmanaged, but lean out and you risk disengagement and unchecked decision-making.

The results of this approach are wide and far-reaching. When combined, these tensions appear to create an environment in which growth accelerates and evidenced in very tangible activities or behaviours. One was the flow and freedom of decision making, not funnelled through a hierarchy structure, but engineered to be as close to the action or customer as possible. There were rules and protocols to support decision making but there was also a sense of trusting judgement which really felt powerful for

the people able to make and enact those decisions. There was also a variation on agility and pace around being conscious of what needed to be delivered with speed and what needed more time and involvement. Additionally, it was also crucial to focus on what was no longer relevant or necessary. That might be a measure of performance that no longer served a purpose, but still took time to collect, or a duplication of process that needed axing. The spirit of experimentation was viewed as the norm within our research - in other words, try out lots of things - and let them develop and then take a view on whether they will work, rather than rule them out before they have taken shape and gathered any evidence of success or otherwise.

The word tension came up a lot, the constant application of tension to create change and growth, which at times could feel uncomfortable. One of the real standouts was the high value placed on 'seeking out' and curiosity, with less value placed on opinions and being right. People were galvanised by what they could imagine, not what they know, often referred to as zones of genius. This value came from a recognition of the dangers of group think and familiarly basis, drawing us to seek out people who think or believe what we do and failing to hear a different point of view. People described more truth telling and less nodding heads, a facing of the facts even if they were unpalatable and creating a space for these critical conversations. Now is the "great reflection" where organisations have an opportunity to stop, pause and be conscious about where they are and where they want to be.

MOMENTUM

IF WE NEEDED ANY CONVINCING ABOUT THE IMPACT OF TALENT SHORTAGES ON BUSINESS MOMENTUM, THE SUMMER NIGHTMARE AT AIRPORTS SHOULD BE PROOF ENOUGH. AMID FLIGHT CANCELLATIONS AND STAFFING ISSUES, THE KNOCK-ON EFFECT ACROSS THE SUPPLY CHAIN WAS A BLUNT AND SALIENT REMINDER THAT WORKPLACE REINVIGORATION IS OVERDUE, IF BUSINESSES ARE SERIOUS ABOUT CAPITALISING ON GROWTH PLANS.

ARTICLE BY SUSAN ROBINSON, FOUNDER AND CEO - TRANSFORM2OUTPERFORM

Susan Robinson is the author of Transform to
Published by Practical Inspiration Publishing

Leaders and teams must transform with seven momentum building leadership powers. First, we need to anticipate disruption and initiate transformation, whilst performance and energy are high and resources plentiful. Delaying action until the storm hits creates an emergency which consumes resources and diverts team energy into steadying the ship, instead of steering a new course. Disruptive inflection points begin with weak signals around the edges, threats seem insignificant. Busy agendas, the lure of short-term profits and the comfort of stability all-too often congeals into apathy. This is where predictive analysis, vision and planning are essential, complemented with the courage to act decisively on the unknown. To gain momentum and engagement, leaders need to channel personal power by reframing the way they engage and influence - a combination of increasing self-awareness, activating deep strengths and personality advantages - and overhauling belief systems, behaviour patterns and mental wellness. It's then a case of amplifying personal power with goal power, by creating an inspiring vision of a transformed world, using razor-sharp and dynamically tracked goals and adding the methodical, disciplined implementation of process power.

Next comes people power, a performance double helix between leader and team, where together they achieve a proficiency and performance greater than the sum of individual contributions. People power is invoked when leaders create the conditions for the team to flourish by instilling confidence, building, shaping and re-shaping the team, until the chemistry is right. They must know when and how to shuffle the deck to start a new performance curve, when to inject experience and maturity or to bring new energy, creativity and

hunger. The leader must also foster flow, the place where increasing challenge meets increasing skills to create the trance of peak performance. Flow starts with the attitude and the ability to view challenges as potential for enjoyment rather than opportunities to fail and be judged. The leader removes distractions, uses clear goals, encourages reduced self-consciousness and coaches to cultivate the attitude. It's important to pay attention to the environment, how to support the team and make sure every person is free to use their strengths, experiment, express themselves, apply their creativity. It's also crucial to create extraordinary work experiences filled with indelible moments.

An employee's sense of being noticed and understood by the boss is more critical than it has ever been. Consequently, leadership efforts to engage must be continuous and personalised. Developing empathy with each team member and recognising their most important needs is key, but so is being mindful of who is motivated by skills, status and traditional career, who desires greater meaning, independence and flexibility and who values extraordinary experience and social connection. When we have these conditions right, a symbiotic relationship occurs, a compound effect of learning from and building upon the confidence of each other which ignites emergent talent and energy. Finally, when this intense people focus is paired with rigorous accountability, customer intimacy, excellence and is sustained using smart power and staying power, we have culture power - a flywheel effect of ever-increasing performance and agility which transforms the business from disrupted to disruptor.

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III

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

ALL OF THE NEW INGREDIENTS THAT MAKE UP THE NEW "WORK ON THE BEACH" COCKTAIL - INFUSED WITH A FRIZZANTE OF EMPLOYEE SPRING - ARE BEING VIGOROUSLY SHAKEN, POURED AND TASTE TESTED AT THE SURFSIDE TIKI BAR. GONE IS THE MUSTY, OLD FAMILIAR FORMULA WITH OBLIGATORY GLACÉ CHERRY GARNITURE, THAT SERVED GENERATIONS, REPLACED BY A PUNGENT CONCOCTION OF EXOTIC FREEDOM AND BEAU IDÉAL. BUT AS WITH ALL UNTRIED BLENDS, BALANCE IS CRITICAL, AS TO WHETHER THE PARTY WILL BE A CONVIVIAL SOIRÉE OR A DISORDERLY WHOOPLA.

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theHRDIRECTOR @theHRDIRECTOR
#HR #Polls | In the evolving workforce setting with increases in remote working, do you think employee experience is improving?

Yes	50%
No	50%

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

ARTICLE BY GABY JOYNER - MANAGING DIRECTOR EUROPE HEAD OF EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE
& JOHN ROTHERA - DIRECTOR, EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE - WTW

PANDORA'S BOX

FOR SO MANY REASONS, UNDERSTANDABLY, THE VAST MAJORITY OF EMPLOYEES ARE ENJOYING NEW-FOUND FREEDOM AND CONSEQUENTLY, FLEXIBILITY IS THE KEY REASON FOR STAYING WITH ONE COMPANY OR JOINING ANOTHER. OTHERS THOUGH ARE FEELING MORE DISCONNECTED, ISOLATED AND CONCERNED ABOUT BEING FORGOTTEN AND LEADERS ARE FINDING IT HARDER TO MANAGE TEAMS.

The difficulty in striking the right balance is heightened by the myriad of individual circumstances at play, which means that what is right for one employee, does not work for another. Indeed, there is a complex mix and contrasting feelings across the demographic - where parents report greater work/life balance benefits and younger employees tend to have more concerns about career development - while employees with a poor work environment at home, are more likely to feel burned out and less engaged. The problem is the list and impacts go on. So, the burning question has to be, does it have to be flexibility at all costs? Surely not, if the price paid is negative impacts on collaboration, reduced talent development, dissolving culture and dwindling performance? Companies are understandably considering setting more prescriptive rules, but it appears to be a classic case of "you're damned if you do and damned if you don't". So, taking the time to find the right hybrid model is clearly critical to outcome. Data shows that employees who want a different work arrangement to that offered by their employer are more likely to look for another job, are less engaged and feel more burned out. Set against a backdrop of high attrition and intense competition for talent, it highlights just how important it is to take the time to find the right solution. There is certainly no one perfect hybrid model.

Regardless of the model adopted, there are a number of areas companies can focus on now to help them navigate the journey. *Listen*: Settle on an approach, listen, test and refine. It will never be perfect for everyone, but try to find the right balance for the majority.

"GIVEN THE COMPLEXITY OF FINDING BALANCE, COMPANIES ARE UNDERSTANDABLY CONSIDERING SETTING MORE PRESCRIPTIVE RULES, BUT IT APPEARS TO BE A CLASSIC CASE OF "YOU'RE DAMNED IF YOU DO AND DAMNED IF YOU DON'T""

Communicate: Open and honest communication is key. Be consistent, explain the rationale and provide people with the information they need to operate in the new model. *Equip*: The hybrid world of work has forced everyone to adapt, none more so than managers. Explore the challenges they are facing and provide them with support and training to manage their teams effectively in the new environment. *Entice*: If you want employees back in the office more, give them a reason to come! Whether that is optimising the office environment, being intentional about when teams come together or the work they focus on when they are in. *Support*: Everyone's situation and environment will be different. Think about the structure and resources that can be put in place to ensure people feel connected and supported. This could range from embedding a regular check-in and feedback process to thinking about the equipment or health and wellbeing benefits provided, to support employees working from home. *Review*: Understand the impacts that hybrid work might be having and make adjustments. Does it unintentionally impact certain groups of employees? Are those working remotely suffering in the performance management process or allocation of work? What adjustments might need to made to onboarding or learning and development? There's no silver bullet. It will take time to find the right balance and develop the processes and behaviours needed to make it work. Counter-intuitively, to work successfully in a hybrid world requires more structure and effort than the pre-pandemic office-based world. The positives are there, it just requires a working infrastructure.

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ARTICLE BY LYNDA THWAITE, GROUP DIRECTOR BRAND,
COMMUNICATIONS AND IMPACT - SIR ROBERT MCALPINE

EARTHMOVING

"OUR SECTOR IS PLAGUED BY A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS, WITH MEN IN THE UK CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY THREE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DIE BY SUICIDE THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE"

Perceptions of immutable givens in the working world have changed drastically and, whilst there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach, many individuals, businesses and communities are now benefitting from the new era of flexible working. However, there are no guarantees that new systems are going to be the panacea to all problems, the untried always comes with a level of uncertainty and not everyone has been sold on the benefits of flexible working.

We are now at the stage where we must both recognise the successes of the mandatory trial of remote working and find room for improvement, to ensure that this change remains sustainable. However, long-term widespread adoption of the practice will be difficult to muster, without first understanding its benefits. To evaluate these, we don't need to look any further than the adoption of flexible working practices in the construction industry. Why have we been so receptive to an upheaval we could have left behind in the throes of the pandemic? As an industry we are problem solvers and, quite simply, greater flexibility in our workplace allows us to tackle a plethora of issues that need to be addressed for the sake of the industry and the workforce. Our sector is plagued by a mental health crisis, with men in the UK construction industry three times more likely to die by suicide than the national average. In 2019, a study from the Chartered Institute of Building found over a quarter of industry professionals thought about taking their own lives. Whilst flexible working is no silver bullet, it has been proven to yield better employee wellbeing and efficiency. As one example, a survey from FlexJobs found that a staggering 84 percent of respondents believed flexible working would help them to better manage their mental health. It's a grave situation, so why would any business not look to use every weapon in its arsenal to address it?

Another acute challenge for construction at the moment is the skills gap, with the British Chamber of Commerce reporting that 83 percent of firms in the sector have struggled to recruit workers. Employers need to give themselves the edge in an oversaturated marketplace and flexible working offers prospective employees a way of working that suits their individual needs. A recent survey from Reed found that almost half of jobseekers named "flexible working" as a common phrase in a job advert that is likely to make them apply. As such, it is clear that employers who don't embrace flexible and inclusive working patterns will soon be left behind. When reflecting on the benefits of flexibility in this new era of business, it is important to define what we mean by the term "flexibility". Terminology can be loaded and emotive,

so it is important to be conscious of this in any internal and external communications. Whilst it sounds straightforward, we need to be clear about the meaning of the words that we use, as the same expression can mean different things to different people. For a long time - and particularly in light of the COVID-induced lockdowns - the phrase "flexible working" was almost systematically interpreted as "working from home" and only applied to those working in an office. In reality, flexible working can indeed encompass workplace, but also workload, work pattern and accommodation for big life events. When harnessing the possibilities within this definition, industries like construction or nursing, which are predicated upon site-specific work, can enjoy the value of flexible working, such as the option to self-roster or swap mutually agreed, predictable hours when needed. In fact, we are currently in the midst of a two-year programme, to explore how flex can work for front line employees, alongside Guys and St Thomas Hospitals and Wickes. Our intention is to learn from the trial and share our findings with the wider industry.

Our refocusing of where the emphasis in the idea of flexibility lies emerged out of *Flexonomics*, the 2021 report Sir Robert McAlpine and Mother Pukka - commissioned with Pragmatix Advisory - which was the first indepth study to explore the benefits of flexible working to the UK economy. There were a number of striking figures that emerged: Working fathers' requests for flexible working are rejected at almost twice the rate of mothers, but *Flexonomics* showed that refusals to accommodate flexible working is costing businesses up to £2bn a year. However, a 50 percent increase in flexible working could bring £55bn in benefits to the UK economy. Adopting flexible working requires preparation of key considerations and a shift to the right culture to enable successful delivery of new practices and policies. Simple lessons - like equipping your people with the right kit to do their job properly in their alternate environments - are easy to

overlook, but can be definitive for employee experience. No one can sit cross legged on the end of a sofa for 40 hours a week and seating arrangement can make or break a working day.

Accommodating the variation between parties in this new hybrid world can feel challenging. For example, finding a balance between those people who would prefer to be almost exclusively in the office alongside other members of the team, whose experience they can draw upon and other employees who instead would prefer to be home-based and meet only once a month, is daunting. Creating scheduled time together as a team is key here, creating enough opportunities for

"MANY INDIVIDUALS ARE TIED TO FORMER WAYS OF WORKING AND THEIR NEEDS ALSO HAVE TO BE MET BY ANY SYSTEM THAT IS PUT IN PLACE. WE CAN'T LET FLEXIBILITY JUST MEAN A NEW FORM OF RIGIDITY"

contact to create connections, alongside the space to empower autonomy and flexibility. Communication is also paramount. Many individuals are tied to former ways of working and their needs also have to be met by any system that is put in place. We can't let flexibility just mean a new form of rigidity. Hybrid events and meetings can work, but need to be carefully considered in the initial period of their adoption to ensure everyone is comfortable and, crucially, equally included. The same goes for our evolving concept of social activities. We now have a new understanding of how to make the workplace more accommodating and inclusive, but this shouldn't stop at the office. Defaulting to golf and drinking has had its day - such practices have meant that eight-out-of-ten women working in construction have felt

excluded from work socials. As with flexibility, this doesn't mean a binary jump to the opposite approach. Plans simply need to be assessed through a diversity and inclusion lens before finalisation. Unless our businesses, or whole industries, want to lose talent to other organisations that have had the foresight to adapt for these changes, this is how we must move forward.

This period of change has put a spotlight on the immense benefits that evolving our working practices can have on both people and businesses and we should do everything we can to sustain this evolution. As long as we keep moving forward, we will continue to reap the benefits of a more diverse pool of talent, including job shares, people with disabilities and working parents, to name but a few. By understanding that individuals may have unique needs, we are understanding how to bring the best out of them - and in turn how your business will achieve its best. It doesn't have to be just you and your business too. Talk to your supply chain and your clients, about how they work and what they expect and need and what this might mean for your business practices. But perhaps most importantly, communicate this to your future workforce. On top of the promise of career progression, a competitive salary and a dynamic, rewarding workplace environment, what prospective hires are now looking for is flexibility, inclusion and a focus on ESG - ultimately, a reflection of the strong values that we live by.

HOME TRUTHS

Gauging impacts and influences caused by such lived historic events as the pandemic, are complex. But in the world of work, an employee experience framework can measure the psychological shifts within the workforce and provide insights for businesses to strategically leverage. Solutions require more than intuition, what is needed is a scientific approach, with psychometric and profiling tool capability, that can explore levels of resilience and psychological safety, in order to understand motivators at individual and team levels.

"PEOPLE WHO WORKED FROM HOME BEFORE THE PANDEMIC DEMONSTRATED MORE BURNOUT, WHILE THOSE WHO DID NOT EXPERIENCE WORKING FROM HOME, PERCEIVED THEMSELVES AS BEING MORE STRESSED"

DR AMANDA POTTER, CEO - BETALENT AND JESSICA NELKIN, BUSINESS PSYCHOLOGIST - ZIRCON MANAGEMENT CONSULTING LTD

If we cast our minds back to what now looks like a very different time and place, looking at research pre-pandemic and during, provides insights into the human psychology of remote working and the disadvantages which were clearly experienced by many people during the lockdown periods. Challenges such as isolation, loss of self-belief, direction, distraction, stress and higher levels of burnout, made themselves evident. The flipside was another group of employees who thrived on working at home, an example being the loss of parental guilt and freedom to collect children from school - home schooling aside - was clearly liberating. Then if we consider different personalities, introverts found it easier to concentrate or have gained confidence to speak up in smaller Zoom calls, while extroverts missed the buzz of the office. Then there was the headline positive for most, the removal of needless hours and cost spent travelling to and from work.

There are, of course, different types of home working, such as being completely remote and working set hours, to flexible working, where the employee chooses varied times to complete their hours, workloads and responsibilities. There are also different versions of hybrid working, where the office and home both feature as a work location to varying degrees. Regardless of which method organisations choose to adopt, it is essential to consider the impact that these methods could have on productivity and turnover. Research from Hayes, Priestley, Ishmakhametov and Ray (2020), found that people who worked from home before the pandemic demonstrated more burnout, while those who did not experience working from home, perceived themselves as being more stressed with the new arrangement. This suggests that working from home can increase stress levels and when the brain is exposed to ongoing high levels of adrenaline and cortisol - the chemicals released when stressed - this can result in burnout and sometimes lasting damage. As many organisations move towards permanent working from home or hybrid working, this poses the question, how is this transition, with its known risks, best

managed? Ambitious leaders will also ask, can we create a competitive advantage from the change?

The objective of any framework is to provide a process and fundamental base, which guides the business. I have identified a correlation between three different business psychology areas, which when combined, create a new value to identify the risks and optimal style of working, using a scientific approach. I would advise organisations to take a look at psychometric and profiling tools, that can reveal the deep inner workings of an individual, their strengths, what energises people at work and even how people feel on a good day vs on a bad day, depending

> "THE OBJECTIVE OF ANY FRAMEWORK IS TO PROVIDE A PROCESS AND FUNDAMENTAL BASE, WHICH GUIDES THE BUSINESS"

on their levels of resilience. They can also explore how safe people feel within their organisation or in the current team they operate in. The last point I believe is particularly important in these changeable and challenging times, because the amount of Psychological Safety experienced directly impacts the level of connection an individual will feel with an organisation. When the results are aligned from the three profiles described, it can be very clear what adjustments can be made to allow an individual to perform at their best. Alternatively, at the other extreme, it can reveal when the working environment or team dynamics are not desirable and an immediate intervention may be required.

A programme of work for a major financial services provider, revealed significant positive correlations between the strengths and resilience profiles across the workforce. There were strong links that suggested that individuals who have the resilience strengths of; calm,

optimistic and self-assured, also tend to be energised by being attentive, networking and genuine. These individuals may be able to utilise their strengths to interact effectively with those around them - as well as being able to cope successfully - regardless of where they are working. At the other of end of the spectrum, individuals who have the strength of modest are more likely to have the resilience risks of hesitant, impatient, pessimistic and self-conscious which means these individuals might be at a higher risk for increasing levels of self-doubt and negative outlook. The combined effect may result in lower levels of productivity and eventually burnout if coping strategies are not in place. In a separate study, correlations between psychological safety and resilience suggested that environments where people are candid, honest and inclusive are often created by individuals with the resilience strengths of calm, confident, composed, optimistic, self-assured, self sufficient, fearless and carefree. Examining the relationship can be beneficial for understanding the level of engagement within an organisation and allows for recommendations to be made.

In scenarios like the above with the financial services provider, taking the time to understand resilience and psychological safety paved the way for creating an appropriately balanced environment - which is more focused on strengths - increasing levels of engagement and productivity in the long term. Understanding resilience, psychological safety and strengths is paramount for any leader wanting to forensically look at their employee experience. People can learn to increase their resilience, improve their skills and make appropriate choices to work in an environment suitable for their personal disposition. This speaks to both ends of the spectrum, from those that have flourished with the rapid evolution of at home working practices, to those that have suffered anxiety and stress from the isolation and lack of a connected employee experience.

A PARTIAL PANACEA

IT HAS BEEN HERALDED, IN SOME QUARTERS, AS THE GREAT PLAYFIELD LEVELLER, BUT THERE IS A DANGER THAT THIS 'NEW WORLD OF WORK' WILL ONLY WORK FOR A NARROW BAND OF SOCIETY. THE WHOLE FLEX MOVEMENT HAS BECOME A HUGELY-DETAILED CONTINUUM AND BUSINESSES ARE POTENTIALLY BUILDING IN LAYERS OF COMPLEXITY, WHICH WILL BE A SEVERE TEST OF RESOLVE.

ARTICLE BY JANE SPARROW, FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR - THE CULTURE BUILDERS

The 'prize' could be massive - and the gains seems patently obvious in all quarters of people management - but in my view, this epochal change has done more to highlight weak management, poor working practices and lack of trust than anything else seen to date. But none of this is new and a prime example is the Berlin-based company Blinkist, which has been working like this for years. They know that people work in different ways and have catered for this and their statement of: "Berlin first, remote friendly" has set a tone which has enabled people to build a work pattern that is best for them. It's a blend of when and where, with a large degree of personal ownership, backed up by a determined effort to make a pleasant, attractive environment in the HQ. Some time ago, their original aim was to unlock talent, but how many of us are just starting conversations about what the new world of work looks like, with that as the goal? Likely, most conversations are starting with, "how do we stop people leaving"? We end up reverse engineering organisations to fit, which is akin to the auto industry jamming electric propulsion into combustion engine cars. Only when someone picked up a pen and re-drew the car did it work. Likewise, the world of work has to be redrawn, if we are to make hybrid achievable.

Looking at the bigger picture, we are in danger of further stratifying work for blue/white collar workers and for the global majority as we go about this. The world of work is a white-collar conversation, with the majority of study, testing and data looking at office workers or similar. It's barely even registering in the manufacturing, service and construction industries, to name just a few. We've become fixated on four-day weeks, remote working and hybrid and we have not paused to acknowledge that it's not really a 'thing' for most employees. To bring this into context, one production house in the design industry, requires skillsets that stretch from joiners through to digital artists and it's a mix that neatly shows the spectrum of possibility. The joiners know full well that remote work isn't possible, but they are still feeling a 'them and us' dynamic emerging and the "it's alright for you" comments are coming thick and fast. Extrapolate this into a large grocery chain and the challenge is writ large.

In her book, *The Anti-Racist Organization*, Shereen Daniels highlighted that 45 percent of roles in three of the biggest service industries are held by black workers. Her data was US-derived, but a look at the 2022 Employment by Sector report from the UK Government tells a similar picture - such as the fact that 25.9 percent of workers from the Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic group work in the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector. It is therefore a fair statement that flex working is far less available for the global majority. Just as worrying is the emerging evidence that remote working is helping people address personal inclusion issues in the workplace - by enabling them to remove themselves from toxic, inequitable environments. It's the classic law of unintended consequences. No one is trying to create inequity with flex working, but it's a trap that will happen. It's going to take effort and a shift from the comfortable equilibrium.

FOR FURTHER INFO
THECULTUREBUILDERS.COM

IV

HR IN TRANSITION

HR, THE ETERNAL OBSERVER AND GIVER, HAS BEEN DRAGGING MARLEY'S CHAINS AND A LEGACY ANCHOR, WEDDED TO ARCHAIC DATA HARVESTING PROCEDURES ON UNWIELDLY, TIME LAGGED XL SHEETS. ALL THIS REPRESENTS THE ABSOLUTE ANTITHESES OF SPEED-TO-CHANGE AND AGILITY? AS WORKFORCE STRUCTURES FLATTEN, SILOS ARE FILLED IN AND MERITOCRACY REPLACES BOARDROOM DECREES AND DIKTATS, HR IS SUFFERING AN "US AND THEM" PARANOIA, FEARFUL THAT INITIATIVES ARE WIDELY RECEIVED AS IMPLEMENTED "FOR HR, BY HR".

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#HR #Polls | Are the HR services in your organisation capable of supporting hybrid working?

Yes	72.7%
No	27.3%

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ARTICLE BY AMRIT SANDHAR, CEO AND FOUNDER - THE ENGAGEMENT COACH LIMITED

DUTY OF CANDOUR

QUESTIONS ABOUT HR'S VALUE STILL CIRCLE AND MUST HIT A RAW NERVE AFTER THE PAST TWO YEARS' EXPERIENCE. NEVERTHELESS, HR HAS AN IMAGE PROBLEM, STILL ROOTED IN TRANSACTIONAL ISSUES AND SEEN AS MORE BUSINESS SERVING THAN PEOPLE ADVOCATE. BUT IMAGE IS ONE THING, A MATTER OF TRUST IS SOMETHING ELSE.

A recent Forbes article highlighted research from a survey of 1000 employees, of which 47 percent stated; they didn't trust HR with conflict management. Further still, 48 percent didn't trust HR to make them aware of opportunities for promotions and 45 percent didn't believe HR would act impartially. This mistrust isn't a new phenomenon. In 2018, the BBC reported on research which included responses from employees at some of the world's biggest tech organisations, highlighting 70 percent of tech employees as not trusting their HR departments. The world of work is changing, where employees are now looking to their organisations for support - not just with work issues and challenges - but for the broader life challenges we all face. It's clear that HR has a critical role to play in meeting the future needs of employees, but this will require a shift to employee-centricity than it has historically been.

Whilst many HR functions are aware of the need for change, many are struggling to make this happen and when HR is not perceived as adapting to the changing environment, it can undermine the very change that HR is trying to implement more broadly. Supporting employees as they transition through the various phases of the human life cycle, requires a greater understanding of our employees. Ask any HR professional about their strategic focus and often in the response, you will hear 'data

analytics'. The profession has been talking about data analytics for years because it knows how critical it is and without it, HR cannot provide a clear sense of direction to the organisation, instead having its strategy shaped by the

"WHEN 78 PERCENT OF HR LEADERS STATE THEY HAVE NO DEFINED STRATEGY TO BECOME MORE AGILE, IT HIGHLIGHTS THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT STILL EXIST WITHIN THE PROFESSION"

immediate business needs. But despite the need for meaningful data insights, we are still to see any tangible change that would provide organisations with the ability to focus on employees and allow organisations to become more agile in responding to the expectations of both employees and customers in areas such as societal issues, for example.

A recent Gartner survey of 253 HR leaders found that while 27 percent said they were making changes to their operating models to be more agile, according to the VP of Gartner, there was an overall uncertainty about how to apply

those principles into changing the structure within HR. The thought of overhauling the HR systems and structures to provide more data insights requires the organisation to face making substantial changes, which will provide a long-term payoff. However, it's far easier to carry on, than be the reason for such disruption across the business, thereby risking greater scrutiny of the work HR does. Improvements in people data analytics, would allow for the creation of employee profiles - including role-based skills assessments - and tailoring employee journeys to the different stages of people's lives, with the accompanying benefits that they would find most rewarding. The ability to undertake frequent culture assessments, to understand where the culture is now, what's influencing it and providing insights through the triangulation of data to leaders and managers across the organisation to drive change, would impact the organisation's ability to attract and retain talent, allowing for delivery of the strategic objectives. The need to be seen as adding value to organisations has haunted HR for years and it is this pressure which has led to many being caught in the trap of continuously delivering the status quo. No function or organisation can become agile without rich data to inform changes and provide a clear direction.

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.THEENGAGEMENTCOACH.CO.UK

ARTICLE BY DAVID LIDDLE, CEO - THE TCM GROUP

CROSSROADS

"RETRIBUTION IS THE ANTHESES OF COMPASSION, ERGO IT
IS THE ANTITHESIS OF SO MANY PURPOSE-LOVELY STATEMENTS
AND VALUES FRAMEWORKS"

HR is standing at a crossroads. The past two years witnessed the profession's profile rocket, through its endeavours in negotiating the challenges of the pandemic. But fast forward a few months and warning signs are emerging about HR's ability to sustain these hard-won advances in impact and influence. There's a danger, particularly with the pressing social and economic challenges on the horizon, that the focus will shift to short-term survival and that old assumptions and practices may creep back in.

The profession simply cannot afford to drift into inertia. In challenging times, it's not about maintaining the status quo or avoiding regressing back to old habits, the focus has to be on how HR can build on its elevated status and reputation and find new and better ways of helping organisations not just survive, but thrive in the future. The burning questions are, how well is the profession geared up to accept this challenge? What are the key issues practitioners, in partnership with the senior leaders of their organisation, need to address if they are to make the necessary transition? Before any real progress can be made, the HR function needs to address the persistent state of paradox it exists in. On one level, it's the driver of engagement and talent in the business, using increasingly sophisticated data to inform workplace strategies that

will support growth. On another level, it is the custodian of workplace policies - namely disciplinary, and grievance and performance management processes - which are damaging and divisive. These policies undermine relationships and prevent employees from being their best selves. Such retributive approaches to dealing with issues result in HR practitioners being regarded as the workplace 'police', the long arm of management.

This paradox is the basis of a threat to the very existence of HR. It means the profession exists persistently in a transactional and reactive state, spending time, resources and energy trying to resolve workplace issues, using broken and dysfunctional systems, instead of focusing on the strategic imperative of building a happy, healthy and

harmonious workplace. These being the natural antecedents of higher performance measured in terms of stakeholder value, social value and of course shareholder value. The problem is that as a profession, HR doesn't always take the time to step back, reflect and cast a critical eye over the policies, processes and systems it has relied on for so long. If the profession is to have a truly transformational impact, a recalibration is required and a shift in mindset and approach is needed.

These are the three most urgent actions: We need a radical shift in the way organisations think about justice, which is at the heart of a civilised society. But you only have to look at the increasing number of headlines about toxic workplace cultures to see that justice is regularly not being delivered in work

settings. Over the past year alone, we've seen accusations of bullying and harassment everywhere, including establishments such as the police, Government and the health service. For instance, CIPD research shows that conflict is a common occurrence at work, with over a third of survey participants experiencing some form of interpersonal conflict, either in the form of an isolated dispute or an ongoing difficult relationship, over a 12-month period. Just under half (44 percent) of those experiencing conflict said the issue had been fully or partially resolved and, meanwhile, the associated costs to ULK PLC are an eye watering £28.5bn, according to Acas. All this while organisations have been encouraging people to 'bring their true selves' - virtually and now increasingly, physically - to work and then punishing them if they speak out. We have even seen a case where a company sacked long-serving employees without notice or consultation, only to replace them with lower paid temporary workers. So how can we expect people to do their best work, against this kind of backdrop?

Retributive justice has failed, it just doesn't deliver the kind of outcomes we need in a modern workplace. Retribution is the antheses of compassion, ergo it is the antithesis of so many purpose-lovely statements and values frameworks. Taking that argument a step further, traditional HR systems are the antithesis of the principles and purposes that the very organisation in which they are operating. Retribution creates and perpetuates a punitive, reductive and destructive system which quickly becomes the cultural norm in many workplaces. It's a vicious circle. If HR intends to create a virtuous circle, it must shift away from the damaging and divisive policy frameworks which encourage right/wrong, win/lose, shame/blame mindsets, pitting people against each other in stress-inducing procedures. How much better would it be if HR embraced transformational justice instead - a new model of justice - which balances the rules of the organisation with the rights of the employees, providing a

framework for generating fair and just outcomes when things go wrong. This approach aligns natural justice, procedural justice and restorative justice in a modern, fair an inclusive system of justice. Transformational justice holds people to account in a new and exciting way and encourages adult-to-adult dialogue, curiosity, collaboration and a genuine sense of common purpose. It helps to build trust, restore relationships, create psychological safety and it allows us to reflect and learn.

"THE TITLE 'BUSINESS PARTNER' NEEDS TO BE REMOVED FROM THE CORPORATE LEXICON WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT. THIS TERM, SEEMINGLY INNOCUOUS, AUTOMATICALLY PLACES HR ON THE SIDE OF THE BUSINESS"

HR has a unique opportunity to reinvent itself as a truly independent and objective People and Culture function. The title 'Business Partner' needs to be removed from the corporate lexicon with immediate effect. This term, seemingly innocuous, automatically places HR on the side of the business, instead of positioning it as the enabler and facilitator of a compassionate, people-focused, values driven culture. People are the business. People and Culture Partners work alongside managers, union partners and others to create the climate, the culture and the conditions for their people to be the best versions of themselves. This is a moment for HR to reimagine and reposition itself as a conduit between the culture of the organisation and the climate that employees experience on the ground. Its focus should be on promoting a culture of trust, belonging, inclusion, dignity and

fairness - a transformational culture. These aren't just nice sound bites - they are the core characteristics which will attract and retain the top talent, the top investors and the top customers. Designing-in constructive, compassionate and collaborative systems and processes and designing-out retributive, punitive and blame-oriented systems and processes will place the people function amongst the most strategically important functions.

The good news is that this shift is beginning to happen. A quick scan of HR job advertisements shows the 'people and culture' phrase is beginning to creep in - and we are seeing more discussion about good culture and what that really means. But there's a significant lag between the good intentions of employers and the lived experience of employees on the ground. Part of the problem is that organisations often send the three elements of wellbeing, engagement and inclusion running down separate tracks, investing money and resources into initiatives for each, without considering how they inter-relate. Yet in virtually every other possible respect, these three elements complement each other. By bringing them together in a single unified discipline of employee experience, people professionals create the conditions for them to act in a synergistic way, with each area enhancing the other. Put simply, if people are treated well - and treat each other well - they will be motivated to do a great job and treat customers well. Developing another D&I strategy, publishing a wellbeing statement, investing in a few bean bags and a ping pong table or rolling out a programme of unconscious bias training are all laudable initiatives, but, when implemented in isolation, they will not deliver the employee experience organisations are striving for.

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ALTER EGO

Long before the pandemic, HR's role began to shift from its process-driven roots, to being at the heart of business transformation and driving the employee experience agenda. It has become central to how businesses have responded to the seismic change in ways of working and now needs to move beyond the storm to help manage a new set of risks - the talent war, cost of living, recession and the redefinition of the traditional role - which will require continued evolvement from functional to empowering.

"HR IS THE ROLE MODEL FOR CHANGE, SETTING THE TONE SO THAT MANAGERS ACROSS THE BUSINESS ARE WELL-INFORMED ABOUT HOW TO DELIVER POSITIVE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES THAT UNDERPIN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM PERFORMANCE"

ARTICLE BY YVONNE WILCOCK, MANAGING DIRECTOR - ADVISERPLUS, PART OF THE EMPOWERING PEOPLE GROUP

HR teams need time to focus on developing strategies that remove barriers to emotionally engaging with employees, support the recruitment of a resilient and adaptable workforce and harness people analytics to understand performance and development needs across the organisation. People strategies need to be business-driven, aiming to deliver high performance, while creating agility to respond to change and developing a culture of continuous improvement. They need to ensure policies are inclusive and evolve with the needs of society and the business, providing assurance that people are treated fairly and consistently. Many organisations are renaming leadership roles within HR to be more people focused, such as; Chief People Officers, Chief Talent Officers and Chief Experience Officers. My view is that the department as a whole needs a brand and a mindset that conveys the vital role it has in creating, developing and maintaining healthy organisations where people can thrive. Some organisations have already recognised this and are renaming their HR departments as People Operations or People Teams, which better aligns with their purpose. There are still many organisations suffering from a "them and us" mentality, where employees feel disconnected from the People Team. By putting the right engagement strategies in place, People Teams can change this perception and demonstrate the value it delivers to the employee experience.

Engaging people is about recognising them as individuals, providing clarity of what the business is driving towards and how they are contributing and rewarding them appropriately. Enabling this level of engagement should be the focus of People Teams. To ensure engagement strategies are successful, People Team leaders need to empower managers to self-serve more employee relations matters. As a topic it's been discussed many times, but managers need access to the tools and guidance that enable them to support their teams to deliver in their jobs and nurture the emotional commitment they feel towards the business. This gives everyone more sense of ownership and pride in their work. The benefits? Better relationships

between managers and employees, so that they can proactively deal with issues before they become problems, while People Teams have more time to focus on developing the people strategies that will underpin business success.

Data and analytics are central to revolutionising the role of HR. Focusing on facts rather than guesswork supports better discussions and pinpoints issues. For example, if absenteeism data is effectively recorded and absence management delivered consistently, People Teams and managers can begin to see trends and anomalies that may need to be addressed. If a certain department bucks a trend otherwise seen consistently across the business, what can be learned? Is there

> "THE KEY TO SUCCESS IS UNDERSTANDING WHERE THE COMPANY IS NOW AND WHERE IT WANTS TO MOVE TO ON THE HR MATURITY CURVE"

a manager who needs more support? Is there an issue with bullying or disengagement? Is training or disciplinary action required? Or is there a great role model who can help others see how to make a positive difference? Where data can be used to solve problems early and informally and to shine a spotlight on great practice, behaviour and outcomes, the perception of the value being delivered to managers and employees will shift positively. This helps demonstrate how People Teams add value and reduce risk in people matters, while driving positive change. People Teams can no longer be tied to unwieldy Excel spreadsheets and held back by siloed working. Analytics that provide visibility and insights as to the success of change are at the heart of any transformation and they're essential to benchmark the health of the organisation and enable data-driven decision making at speed. Measures such as employee engagement scores, churn by department,

the cost of absenteeism and measuring managers' confidence in dealing with employee relations matters are all useful to inform decisions.

Every business will be at a different point in their transformation journey, so the key to success is understanding where the company is now and where it wants to move to on the HR maturity curve. At the top end of the curve are business-driven People Teams, which are developing employee experience strategies that meet the needs of the employee and the business. This means creating opportunities for transparency - as well as more emotional connections - considering every interaction an employee has, from onboarding, training and benefits to day-to-day support. This requires robust and consistent communication channels that keep managers and employees well informed about policies and procedures, so managers feel empowered to self-manage people matters without involving the people function in every instance. Managers will be well versed in how to engage on a human level, above and beyond the day job. Business-driven People Teams create healthy organisations by harnessing people data to make decisions, developing inclusive policies that are communicated and applied consistently and implementing the right technology to support managers in handling employee relations matters without risk. At the other end of the curve are functional HR departments, which are more likely to rely on basic information captured on spreadsheets and siloed processes that limit the view of the 'bigger picture' and are a barrier to empowering managers. At the heart of any successful business transformation is people, which means it's vital to revolutionise the role of the team responsible for them.

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FOR FURTHER INFO
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VIS-À-VIS

HR IS A PRACTICE THAT POSITIONS ITSELF AT ANY GIVEN TIME AS A ROLE MODEL WITHIN AN ORGANISATION FOR THE CHANGE IMPERATIVE. BUT ONE OF THE ISSUES THAT HINDERS PROGRESS IS THAT THE HR PROFESSION SUFFERS AN 'US AND THEM' SEPARATION, WHICH QUICKLY BECOMES ENDEMIC WITHIN THE INDUSTRY. CONSEQUENTLY, INITIATIVES ARE WIDELY RECEIVED AS BEING IMPLEMENTED 'BY HR, *FOR* HR'.

ARTICLE BY CLIVE LEWIS OBE DL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE - GLOBIS MEDIATION GROUP
Clive Lewis is the author of Toxic: A guide to building respect and tolerance in a hostile workplace.
Published by Bloomsbury

As layers of hierarchy have been reduced, teams should be better enabled to work across boundaries and collaborate more effectively. When individuals are judged on performance according to merit, instead of being directed into positions and projects because their face fits, constructive and energetic thinking is elevated. The pressing question though is, what is going wrong and how can this be rectified? The pandemic underscored the urgency for a more dynamic talent and work model and now HR leaders must focus on the identity agility and scalability of the practice, before it can hope to bring widescale change with alacrity, consistency and confidence. To define a more modern outlook that shines with ingrained efficacy, leaders must define the direction of the practice with a vision for change, then directly contribute to strategy development. This will involve goal-setting and identifying actions required to achieve these aims. But above all, to implement a new strategy, positive action is needed.

HR is a segment of the business environment which carries distinctive capability requirements. To drive the HR teams into a more cohesive direction, will require reliable workforce planning initiatives and embracing new responsibilities. To effect meaningful change, however, leaders need to have conversations. Consultation with the workforce will help to analyse capabilities and forecast requirements. To deliver on short, medium and long-term plans will involve integration of ideas, maintaining a dashboard for reporting on outcomes. Post-pandemic, the business work model has changed dramatically. Employee wellbeing has never been so important as the number of people working from home more than doubled in 2022, according to data from the Office for National Statistics. HR teams, as with other industries, are dealing with a fragmented workforce. Some staff left their posts during lockdown and did not return, but during lockdown it was not possible to train and recruit new, fresh and bright talent. There have also been reports amongst staff of post-pandemic burnout. The landscape has changed and lifting restrictions has not led to reversing this, as was once predicted. Undoubtedly, new tools, technology and predictive analytics need to be intertwined with emerging flexibility models and these factors will dictate how a forward-thinking HR department functions.

Leaders must recognise that whilst core values and purpose will remain the focus, it is not simply about activity, impact is now part of the knowledge and behaviour equation. Job vacancies are high, but adaptation is required to fill these roles with new motivations, fulfilment and opportunities. So HR professionals need to release the old, rusty anchor and they need to steer the ship to more vigorous and precise waters, where a more enlightened approach will lead to better assessment and ultimately better decision-making. There is no substitute for people caring for people, yet weaker emotional connections now prevail. It has become harder to create collaborative relationships which leads to increasing conflicts at work arising. An organisation tearing itself apart at the seams leads to a fragmented practice with a restless, disgruntled workforce. Priority should be to stand back and ask some painful questions: Is there a recognised benchmark for standards of communication and sharing of data? What steps are in place for career progress? Can staff act with confidence and look in the HR mirror without seeing an ugly reflection? Leaders have an essential part to play, building professional credibility aligned with modern, efficient programmes of development, integrating these with the workforce talent.

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.GLOBIS.CO.UK

WHO BLINKS FIRST

THE LAST TWO AND A HALF YEARS HAVE FIRED THE SYNAPSES OF BUSINESS LEADERS IN WAYS THAT COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN PREDICTED. OBSTACLES HAVE COME HARDER AND FASTER, WITH THE PANDEMIC, A CRIPPLING HIRING CRISIS, RISING MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS AND INCOMING COST-OF-LIVING NIGHTMARE THAT WILL STRETCH DUTY OF CARE. ALL THIS AMIDST SIGNS THAT THE FLEXIBLE WORKING FAÇADE IS BEGINNING TO SLIP.

ARTICLE BY BETSY WILLIAMSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER - CORE-ASSET CONSULTING

Perhaps the biggest questionmark right now, is the one hanging over flexible working, which is fuelling an increasing desire to bring teams back to something more resembling full-time office working. Notably, the previous prime minister has done his best to reverse the homeworking trend catalysed by the pandemic's measures, even chiding that young people will fall in love with offices again because; "Mother Nature does not like working from home". Concurrently, some global business leaders are coming down hard on home-working - perhaps most famously Elon Musk - who demanded his workers return to the office. Leaked memos from Musk laid bare his methods to force his employees at SpaceX and Tesla back towards a standard working week, reportedly telling workers that they were required to "spend a minimum of 40 hours in the office per week. Those who did not do so would be fired" and stipulating that, "the more senior you are, the more visible must be your presence".

Not just international corps, smaller and more boutique businesses have struggled with the concept of remote working, given the delicate balance of limited resource versus productivity -

citing that teams are too small to be able to harness full capacity, when people are not working together. Recruitment language has subtly changed tone too, with terms and language being used, such as "the hybrid situation at present" and the intent is clear - increased representation in the office will be required over the longer term. Yet pressures exist and firms are competing for a dwindling candidate pool, with salaries in certain areas rocketing as a result, which is creating a classic Catch-22. For instance, within financial services, it is those with technological backgrounds, such as coders, cyber security experts and data analysts that are among the most prized. Therefore, offering flexible working has, in part, helped smaller firms overcome being financially muscled out of new hires, or having existing staff poached for higher salaries, compounding staff shortages.

Candidates are often not inclined to entertain full-time office returns - put off by soaring fuel and unreliable public transport amongst other things - while safe in the knowledge that they hold the cards in the current candidate-driven market. A recent Harvard Business

School survey revealed that 81 percent either don't want to come back at all or would prefer a hybrid model of work. Of those, 27 percent hope to remain working remotely full-time, while 61 percent would prefer to work from home two to three days a week. Only 18 percent want to return to in-person work full time. There is, therefore, a clear mismatch in terms of executive team expectations.

It is now a case of who blinks first in mandating full-time office returns and as to whether this will trigger a movement or cause them to be left as an outlier. So the reality has it that business have little option than to scramble appropriate and fair policies, remote working frameworks and part-time working schedules for those that wish to work in a hybrid manner - walking a fine line between trying to bring their teams on board, via engagement and collaboration days, while desperately trying not to lose engagement with full-time office-based staff members. It's a precarious balance, but how this next hurdle is navigated will almost certainly determine their long-term viability and place in the market.

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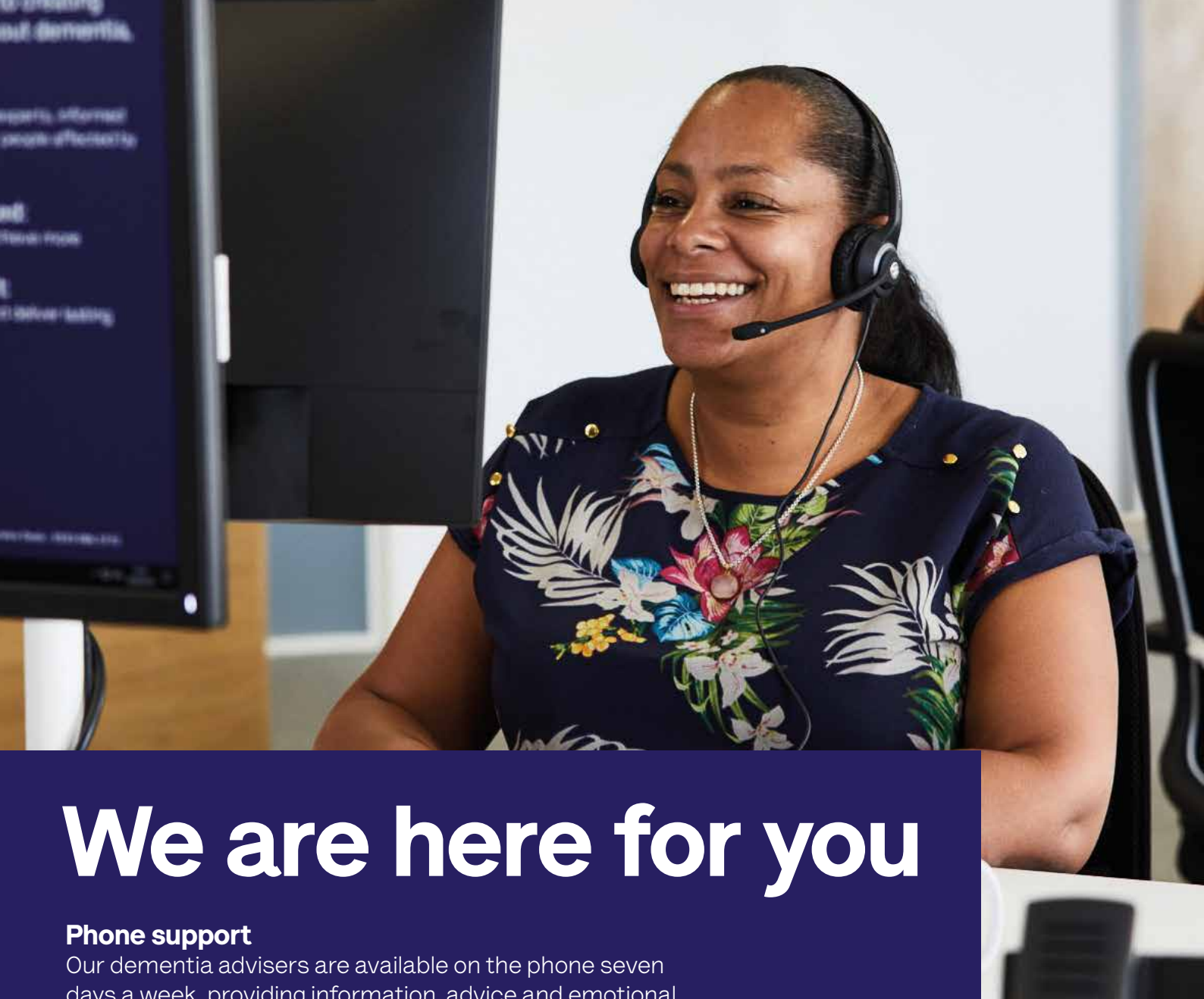
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WELCOME TO THIS ISSUE'S ROUND UP OF THE PEOPLE AT THE TOP OF THE
HR & PEOPLE MANAGEMENT PROFESSION, WHO HAVE MOVED TO NEW JOB ROLES

NEWLY APPOINTED

Terrance Collins

ROLE CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER
COMPANY ARRAY TECHNOLOGIES

Array Technologies - the utility-scale solar tracker technology company - has appointed Terrance Collins as Chief Human Resources Officer, reporting directly to CEO Kevin Hostetler.

Terrance brings broad expertise in HR, rooted in driving transformational organisational change, as Array looks towards a future of continued evolution. As a seasoned executive with more than 25 years of HR and cross-functional leadership experience, he will oversee all aspects of human resources across the business, including recruitment, succession planning, L&D, recognition, retention, diversity, inclusion and total rewards. Terrance will play a critical role globally, as Array works to create a strong, diverse and unified business culture, that will attract and retain the best workforce in the renewable energy industry.

Sue Quackenbush

ROLE CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER
COMPANY DYNATRACE

Software intelligence company Dynatrace appoints Sue Quackenbush as Chief People Officer, to drive talent strategies, workplace culture innovation, customer-centricity and inclusiveness.

Sue Quackenbush will be responsible for building on a vibrant culture, engaging employee experience and attracting the best talent in every function across the teams worldwide. Sue brings more than 25 years of human resources experience to Dynatrace and before this post, she served as Chief Human Resources Officer at cloud communications leader Vonage. Earlier in her career, she held HR leadership positions with companies including; Presidio, Inc. DMG Information & Events and BT Group and her experiences for developing people and culture maps perfectly to Dynatrace's goals and growth.

Hazel Boyle

ROLE CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER
COMPANY RANK GROUP

Leading leisure and gaming company, The Rank Group Plc, is pleased to announce that it has appointed Hazel Boyle as its new Chief People Officer.

Hazel Boyle joins Rank, having most recently served as Chief People Officer at Future plc. Prior to Future plc, she was CPO at Wunderman Thompson - part of WPP plc - and has held senior HR positions at M&G plc, ITV plc and ITN Ltd. She brings a wealth of corporate experience to the role, having worked in a series of high-profile organisations and has extensive knowledge of managing change and transformation across large groups. Her skills and expertise are seen as complementary to the executive team at Rank as it continues to recover from the pandemic and build on strong foundations.

Kerry Hill

ROLE HR DIRECTOR
COMPANY BERRY TELECOM GROUP

Berry Telecom Group has appointed a new Member of the Board, Kerry Hill - formerly Berry's HR Manager - who is now HR Director.

Kerry joined Berry in March 2019 and since her arrival has led significant positive change in the organisation specifically regarding people strategies and staff wellbeing. Kerry's appointment is in line with the company's commitment to its' people with HR now being represented at board level. In the past couple of years Berry has expanded rapidly and engagement has been central to that expansion. Kerry will be bringing in structure, process and the right tools to continue that trajectory, with a focus on talent retention, management training and leadership development. She brings to the company almost 20 years of HR experience, having previously held roles at BAE.

FOR FURTHER UPDATES

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

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NEXT MONTH

ISSUE 217

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INTERVIEW
Mark Taylor, People Director - cinch, BCA & Elmo - part of the Constellation Automotive Group.

EXCLUSIVE EXTRACTS
How the Future Works and Compassionate Leader.

WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION
The pandemic turned a stark and unremitting spotlight on the whole work convention - which had been blithely taken as read.

TALENT MANAGEMENT
The burning question is, how is hybrid working impacting talent management?

RECRUITMENT REDEFINED
Squid Game elimination processes turnoff candidates, gifted with more choice than ever before.

ORGANISATIONAL NETWORK ANALYSIS
ONA reveals quality of interactions, outcomes and results, enabling safe and fair reward.

HRD

DRIVE

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS TRAINING

BE A TACKLER NOT A DODGER

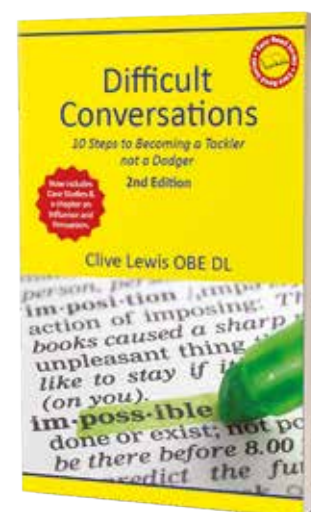Is there a difficult conversation that you have been putting off?

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