

HRD

THE ONLY INDEPENDENT STRATEGIC HR PUBLICATION

the **HRD**IRECTOR

DECEMBER 2022 | ISSUE 218

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TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY?*

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ETHOS

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THE SMALL-MINDEDNESS THAT THEY
SEE AND WE WANT THEM TO CALL OUT
WRONGDOING WHEN THEY SEE IT”

KATE PRICE
GROUP HR DIRECTOR
WILKO



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ISSN 1754 0224

THEHRDIRECTOR IS PUBLISHED BY PURE STRATEGIC MEDIA LTD
REGISTERED IN ENGLAND & WALES NO. 7878098



PRINTED ON ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PAPER. CHORUS
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December 2022 / Issue 218

THE STUDENTS NOW LEAVING EDUCATION AND BEGINNING THEIR WORKING CAREERS HAVE EXPERIENCED MORE DISRUPTION IN THEIR YOUNG LIVES THAN ANY GENERATION SINCE WORLD WAR II. HOW THAT WILL INFLUENCE THEIR PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS IS NOW BECOMING EVIDENT, AS EMPLOYERS RECRUIT AND ONBOARD THEM INTO THE EVOLVING WORLD OF WORK.



JASON SPILLER, EDITOR

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Unsurprisingly, most are looking for flexibility, control over when and where they work and career autonomy. This asks some hard questions about meeting business resourcing needs - and the fundamentals of future of workplace relationships in this new and unconventional landscape - in onboarding, L&D and the crucial role of mentoring and nurturing, in a setting where face-to-face experiences are markedly reduced. Additionally, employers need to consider the psychological impact that the disruptions of the pandemic will have caused. Many young people are anxious and wary of promises undelivered and so, in order to optimise chances of mutual outcome, a raised level of reassurance and support will be required.

Global Spend on outsourcing is estimated to have been a staggering \$245.91 billion in 2021, with forecasts of \$435.89 billion by 2028. Evidently, there's a megatrend in third-party contracts, as a response to these seismic events and subsequent change, with data and analytics now driving the market and redefining the traditional face of outsourcing services. The two main forces behind the rise in outsourcing are the widespread adoption of remote working and the acceleration of digital transformation in businesses, which combined have made outsourcing easier and more attractive for companies looking to cut costs, manage a dispersed workforce, serve customers better, improve efficiency, speed up product development, innovate and focus on core competencies.

How will L&D have to change to meet future demands? Many job roles are changing or even

facing obsolescence, meaning that employees can no longer be trained and developed for a specific role. Moreover, a diverse range of skills and the agility to move from one role to another is key to skills viability. Therefore, L&D and training is being reimagined and a culture of self-responsibility is rising, to give people the confidence to seek the training they require.

Agility is the fundamental business component for businesses trying to gain traction and momentum in the current turbulent global environment. The situation now is that the commercial optimism that marked coming out of the pandemic, has been tempered by escalating inflationary pressures and the prospect of a deep and protracted recession. But after a sustained period that rendered some sectors paralysed and many businesses putting business growth and diversification plans on ice, there is a pent-up energy and ambition to forge ahead with domestic and international opportunities. Agile will be the focus of every CEO keynote and agenda and HR must rise to the challenge, champion innovative ways to work and act on data and analytics swiftly, unambiguously, reliably and impactfully.

LEGAL UPDATES

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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 the case of *Ms K Jhuti v Royal Mail Group Ltd*, Royal Mail has been ordered to pay a recommended sum of more than £100,000 to an employee due to bullying and unfair dismissal after she blew the whistle on alleged potential fraudulent activity relating to bonuses. Kam Jhuti alleged a long-running bullying campaign by her boss, after she raised concerns that a colleague she was shadowing was not following Ofcom guidance, and was breaching the business' bonus policy. This then resulted in unfair dismissal.

The employment tribunal confirmed that Jhuti was bullied, harassed and intimidated by the superior to whom she reported her concerns. Evidence was heard that Jhuti had suffered severe depression and post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of her treatment, which included anxiety and regular panic attacks and ultimately contributed to a breakdown in her relationship with her daughter, among other issues.

The judgement stated: "The impact of the campaign of bullying, intimidation and harassment by Mr Widmer in this case has undoubtedly been profound.

While, as a rule, we try to avoid language which might be deemed intemperate, it is nonetheless true to say that the respondent's treatment of the claimant has destroyed the claimant's life." A Royal Mail spokesperson said: "Royal Mail has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment or discrimination of any kind. We value the work and commitment of all individuals who work in our business. This is a long-running case that relates to matters arising a number of years ago. We are now reviewing this decision. It would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage."

EMPLOYMENT LAW

NEW LAWS ON MONITORING EMPLOYEES

The ICO has issued draft guidance on monitoring at work, which aims to provide greater regulatory certainty and protect the data protection rights of employees and workers. Once approved, this will replace the guidance set out in the ICO's Employment Practices Code 2011. Monitoring may be carried out in relation to the quality or quantity of employees' performances, or for other reasons such as safety or security. The draft guidance seeks to highlight some considerations and requirements that employers should be aware of when implementing monitoring activities. Transparency is a key feature of the draft guidance. In a post-pandemic world, employers may consider it their right to monitor compliance with a new flexi or hybrid working policy, for example by logging how many days employees are attending

the office each week. However, if they are not carrying out such activities in a transparent way, including by providing appropriate notices, then they will likely be in breach of the UK GDPR. Within the draft guidance, the ICO acknowledges that the legitimate interests of employers is likely to be the "most flexible" lawful basis for monitoring under the UK GDPR.

CARERS TO RECEIVE NEW UNPAID LEAVE ENTITLEMENT

Around two million of those employees providing unpaid care are thought to be doing so while balancing work alongside their caring responsibilities. With no dedicated statutory leave entitlement. The Carer's Leave Bill will introduce a new and highly flexible entitlement of one week's unpaid leave per year for employees who are providing or arranging care. This will be available to eligible employees from the first day of their employment.

LEGAL DIARY

- **March 2023:** Gender pay gap reporting deadlines need to be met by those organisations with a headcount of 250 or more employees.
- **March 2023:** The Vento Bands: The Presidents of the Employment Tribunals in England & Wales and Scotland are due to conduct the annual re-evaluation of the Vento bands.
- **April 2023:** The National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage: The new rates will be announced in the Autumn Budget and will come into force on the 1st April 2023.
- **April 2023:** Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Paternity Pay, Shared Parental Pay, Adoption Pay, Maternity Allowance, and Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay.



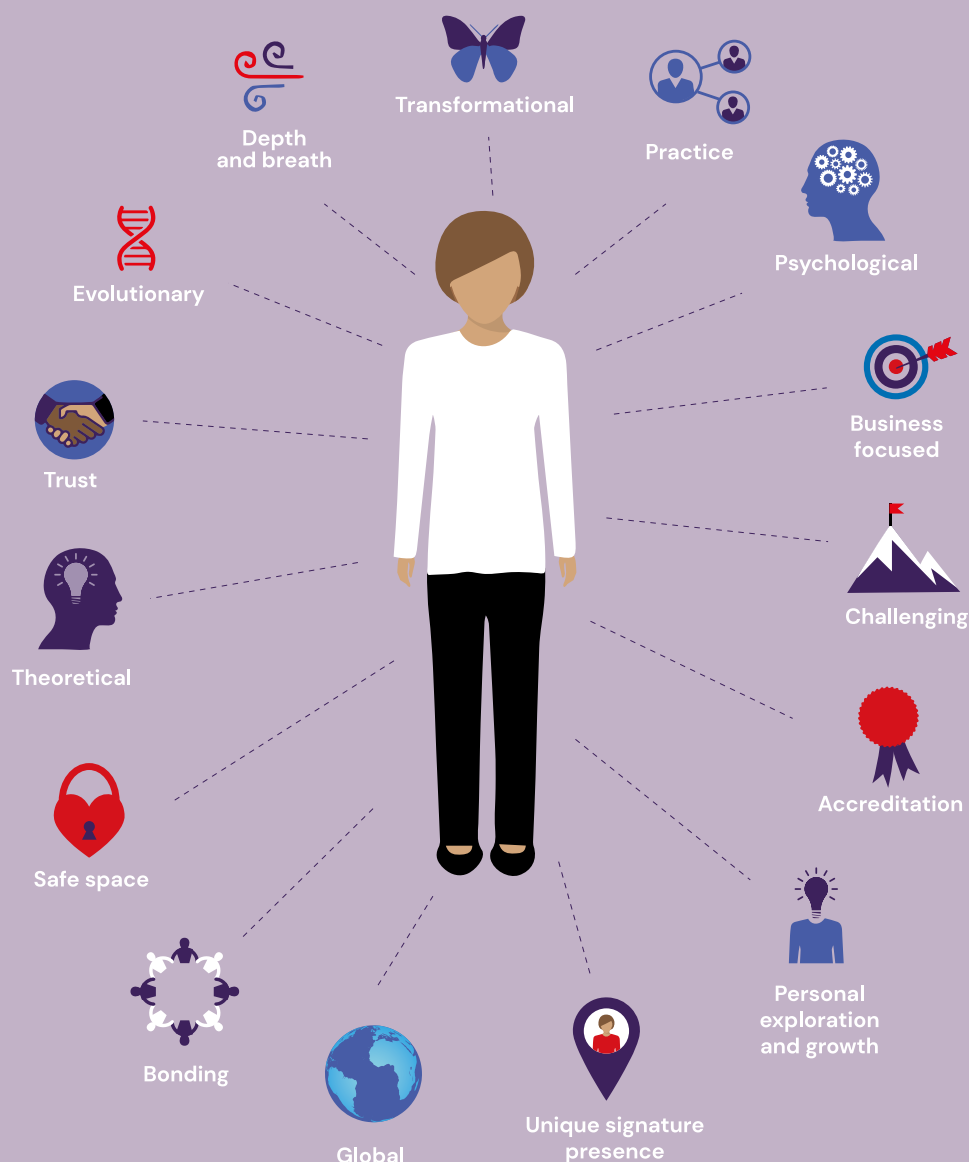
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KATE PRICE GROUP HR DIRECTOR WILKO

INTERVIEW BY JASON SPILLER
& PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADRIAN SHERRATT

AS WE GROW ACCUSTOMED TO "LIVING WITH COVID", MEMORIES OF LIVED EXPERIENCE FADE AND WE FORGET THAT PRE-VACCINE, THIS WAS A FRIGHTENINGLY SINISTER SPECTER. STREETS DESERTED, WE APPLAUDED FRONTLINE WORKERS ON OUR DOORSTEPS, BUT IT WASN'T JUST THE EMERGENCY SERVICES, EVERYDAY PEOPLE SHOWED EXTRAORDINARY COURAGE AND KEPT THE LIGHTS ON AND COMMUNITIES GOING. WILKO AND ITS STAFF TYPIFIED THAT FORTITUDE AND SPIRIT.

"A GOOD SIGN THAT AN ORGANISATION HAS A GREAT CULTURE IS THAT LEADERS AND MANAGERS INVOLVE YOU, STRETCH YOU AND GIVE YOU ENOUGH OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE MISTAKES"

KATE, TAKE US BACK TO YOUR EARLY LIFE AND HOW YOU FOUND THE PATH TO A CAREER IN HR. I was brought up in Chelmsford in Essex, attended a local catholic primary school and was lucky enough to pass the 11-plus, which took me to grammar school. I was fortunate to have a great education, with some inspirational teachers. My parents instilled in me from a young age a strong work ethic. Mum was a journalist and my Dad ran a small, family metalwork business and they really drilled into me from a very early age, that there was no substitute for hard work. So from around 14, most of my weekends were taken up either studying or working in the village tearooms. When exam time came, I managed to do well in enough to gain

a place at Downing college in Cambridge University, where I studied Geography. I was the first in my family to go to university, so it was a really proud moment. With a decent grasp of French and German languages, I had the opportunity to travel and I studied elements of the subject in more depth and was really compelled by the different identities, cultures and personalities around the globe. So, I guess that's where I began to develop a real fascination in people. When I left Cambridge, I did the milkround, but was really uncertain about which career path to join, but I definitely knew I didn't want to be a lawyer or an accountant. Unilever ran a well regarded graduate scheme and I looked into it and found out about this fascinating business,

with an impressive heritage and corporate values. I put myself forward for a post and joined the HR graduate scheme. I was based at Unilever House, a magnificent building on the Thames at Blackfriars and that's where my HR career began.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR EARLY EXPERIENCES AND STAND OUT MEMORIES. I was very fortunate to be in the same circle as some very impressive people whom, to this day, are role models who made a great impression on me. One particular HR leader was a working Mum and responsible for a massive transition to shared services at Unilever. It was a complex project, bringing together all the HR transactional work across all of the global sites, into one base just outside

London. She stood out as extraordinary because, back then, women generally had careers or families and rarely achieved both at once whilst still being happy in themselves. It said something about Unilever at this time, as well as her incredible energy and tenacity, of course. I remember at our first meeting, she shocked me when she said, "would you mentor me?" This was long before reverse mentoring was a widely-known concept and, of all the great guidance she gave, one piece of advice stands out, "don't let your career hold you back if you want to have children." A good sign that an organisation has a great culture is that leaders and managers involve you, stretch you and give you enough opportunity to make mistakes. A case in point, within a year, I was offered an opportunity in a factory in Alfreton in Derbyshire. I felt at home working in London, but I was ambitious and wanted to take on every opportunity. So, just after Christmas, I have memories of driving up the M1 in a snowstorm, to start my new assignment as HR Manager of an industrial cleaning factory. It was a slice of reality, people working with really strong chemicals, making formulating chemical cleaning products in a manufacturing environment that was heavily unionised. This became home for the next two years and a no-holds-barred induction in factory life ensued. I was very young and the majority of the employees were older men, so the environment was tough for someone championing new ways of working and, somewhat inevitably, I did face some discrimination. It took some resilience and determination, but I slowly began to turn the tide, mainly through the L&D agenda and I had a great mentor in the regional HR manager who said "Nine out of ten times Kate, when you contribute something, it will be spot on and you'll be listened to. So don't dwell on the one when you're not." I was then seconded back to HQ in Surrey, where I managed one HR shared services team of about 30 in the contact centre and it was about this time that I was headhunted for a role at Molson Coors. I had been with Unilever for five years - and could have spent the rest of my career there, as many do - but

the world of beer beckoned, the opportunity was compelling and I became HR Manager at the Burton upon Trent Brewery, the second largest beer brewery in Europe at the time.

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BEER ASIDE, WHAT WAS THE APPEAL OF MOLSON COORS, FROM A CAREER PROGRESSION PERSPECTIVE? Compared to Unilever, it was a big change in operation and business, of course. But the most obvious difference was the true passion throughout, as I had HR responsibility for the people in the brewery itself and their devotion to the quality of the product was something I had never experienced. From the technical people to the beer tasters, the combination of skills and the driving cooperation between the people that formulated the beer, on to the logistics of moving it across the UK and beyond, was driven through absolute love and tenacity that goes into bringing a great quality pint of beer to customers. I worked at Molson Coors for about six years and it was a memorable time for other reasons as well, as I also had my two daughters during this time. It was a great business and very well managed, with a fantastic culture, enabling me to combine my work responsibilities with raising a young family, without that constant guilt. It was also a great learning experience in HR business partnering across the operation, in logistics and the complete production side of beer. In fact, I had the opportunity to business partner every team and gained an incredible understanding of the end-to-end journey of the business and the people within it.

THE DRINKS INDUSTRY HAS BEEN INCREDIBLY INCESTUOUS AND DYNAMIC, SMALL BRANDS RISING AND BEING SWALLOWED UP BY BIG PLAYERS. IT MUST HAVE BEEN AN EXCITING SECTOR TO BE IN. Very much so and during my tenure, we merged to become Molson Coors - as opposed to just Coors, which was the US originated brewer. This was a major undertaking and, when the dust had settled, this very traditional brewery, also had the Canadian influence from Molson and a bigger portfolio of American and Canadian beer brands, alongside Carling which at the time was the largest beer brand in the UK. It was a very competitive time - as it obviously is now - to be in the beer industry, along with changing trends, which saw people not visiting pubs as much. Then supermarkets were selling beer as a loss leader, rather than a reputable brand with a good margin. It became a very cost-conscious sector that demanded incredible efficiencies, to ensure every pint made a profit. Like Unilever, Molson Coors led on its people proposition with great development opportunities and had a really effective talent process, which supported ambition and kept attrition manageable. Succession planning was seen as an imperative and people were supported to talk about their talent plan regularly and take ownership of their careers. That was tremendously compelling and has become part of my DNA as an HR professional. Talent mapping is so important and I brought in a career development programme for all of our junior-to-middle managers - as well as those with high potential across the organisation - and equipped them the tools to manage their own careers, develop their skills, self-awareness and fulfill their career aspirations. I look back with a sense of pride that we introduced some phenomenal leadership development in Molson Coors, unlocking the unconscious part of minds to impact relationships with colleagues. That was quite a pivotal experience and the realisation of a genuine passion for HR which, at its best, can make such a positive impact on people and fulfill their potential.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT ON YOUR CAREER JOURNEY? I was headhunted by Boots whilst I still was at Molson Coors and the timing could not have been better, as I was definitely spending too much time travelling away from my family. I was accepted for the role at Boots and headed up HR for the Boots Brands & Exclusive part of the business which, over time, ended up becoming its own division, particularly when we merged with Walgreens. It was a very exciting place to be as an HR professional, because it was all about growth, investment and bringing in FMCG brand leaders from places like; P&G, L'Oréal and Unilever to come and run the Boots brands and break into the US and other markets. A standout project for me was setting up a robust knowledge, skills and behaviour framework, so that people - no matter where they were in Global Brands - could manage their careers and be aware of what skills they required, should they wish to move on to their next role. Working for Boots at a strategic level at this momentous time was a real privilege and fuelled by a lot of backing and confidence, the pace of growth was phenomenal. From an HR perspective, Boots was way ahead of the curve in terms of developing people, buoyed by a leadership that had real faith in HR, which has subsequently stabilised and supported this much-loved brand through the subsequent retail challenges that followed.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR MOVE TO WILKO. I think the fact that I've always had a leaning towards developing others, meant that I have regularly had conversation with colleagues, about how they want to develop in their careers. Consequently, this has made me listen to myself and ask: "What do I want to do next and how can I be better?" But when I was approached by wilko, I have to be honest that initially, I wasn't sure that it was the right time. I felt I was in a comfort zone, I had really good relationships, I knew I was credible and, the notion of moving to a smaller organisation - which was in a very different market - took some processing. But when I met the owner of the business and was introduced to the people working

there, it made me realise what I had been missing at Boots and that is not to denigrate in the slightest, what was and still is, a wonderful company. But here at wilko, there was an immediacy, a direct connectivity that working in a family business brings, where the owner could call you at any moment. I was also really attracted by the customer proposition, values and culture of the organisation, which is motivated to make a difference to the everyday people that shop in wilko stores. That felt very meaningful and very direct and the fact that this people-centricity radiated around the

"WE WANT PEOPLE TO STAND UP TO THE SMALL-MINDEDNESS THAT THEY SEE IN PEOPLE. WE WANT THEM TO CALL OUT WRONGDOING WHEN THEY SEE IT"

organisation and out into the wider world, was massively compelling. From a purely HR perspective, I was really switched on to the authenticity surrounding people being the most valuable asset in the business model equation and it was clearly a very definite USP. It's a customer-facing brand located in both traditional high street environments as well as newer shopping centre and retail parks and it deals in the realities and challenges facing people and families in these tough cost-of-living times. Personally, I felt really excited by the opportunity to make a bigger difference here than at any other point in my career.

WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES YOU SAW ON JOINING AND HOW DID YOU SET ABOUT YOUR PLANS? Initially, I joined as Head of Talent, Learning and Reward, which was an area of the business that required some professionalisation. I hasten to add that it

wasn't a broken system - it was more of a case of introducing some modern approaches and bringing my learning and experience to build on what was already there. Firstly, I sought to understand the organisation and the people that made it work at all levels and departments. Then about a year in, the incumbent HR Director was set to retire and I was invited to step up to that role - which was both exciting and daunting - and, from that moment to now, it has stretched and challenged me more than at any time in my career. Prior to the pandemic, wilko had clear and well-realised commercial ambitions to expand, with a hectic schedule of store openings, growing the retail footprint of the organisation. We were also formulating our strategy to 2030, which was around developing our digital and product business. However, we were then forced to reevaluate our plans - not because our strategy was reactionary and based on not well thought through decisions - but ostensibly and obviously, because of the pandemic which, on top of tough market conditions on the high street, meant we had to consolidate and close some stores.

WHEN AMBITIONS ARE PUT ON HOLD AND PLANS ARE CHANGED, IT MUST BE HARD TO MITIGATE THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON PEOPLE. HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN CONFIDENCE AND BELIEF WITHIN THE BUSINESS, IN ORDER TO BRING AN ALTERNATE FUTURE VISION THAT PEOPLE CAN BUY INTO? There always has been ebbs and flows in business and most importantly, it's about honesty, transparency and trust. If people can see the challenges and the reasons for strategy are well communicated and plausible, they will dig in. It was important to keep our commitment to our customers central to the vision and the importance of living our values every day was undiminished. We also continued to invest in what we call our Power 2030 Strategy, in which we have taken every team member through an experience, to see what 2030 will look like for them and the business, to look at our markets now and then and the end-to-end customer experience we want to offer. It's about sharing that North Star

"PEOPLE ARE LESS
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EMPATHY"



with people, so we all know where we're heading. In the past year, we have also rolled out a new learning platform, called Be Your Best, which allows all of our team members to have access to learning at their fingertips. It's a really intuitive learning digital platform, that provides the basics, in terms of policies and procedures, but also encourages team members to be curious around their learning and, for example, deepen their understanding of our products. In my mind, if you give people the appropriate tools and the support to use them, they will want to make that difference.

COVID MUST HAVE BEEN AN INCREDIBLY TOUGH TIME IN RETAIL, BUT IT ALSO FORCED THE WORLD TO WORK AS A WHOLE, TO PAUSE AND TAKE A LOOK AT ITSELF. WHAT WERE YOUR EXPERIENCES AND WHAT CAN WE LEARN, GOING FORWARD? None of us are quite the same as a result of the pandemic. From the business perspective, back at the very start of it, there was some confusion as to whether we were an essential retailer. We gained clarification that we were the very next day, but we were worried that our team members might not turn up, because of the Prime Minister and medical colleagues gave such a grim assessment. However, all of our people turned up for work and they kept that up, day in, day out, 15,000 people across our then 420 shops. At the same time, almost overnight, our 1000 support centre team members started working from home and my HR team stepped up to keep everyone advised, motivated and productive and supported communication and collaboration to fill the void. Across the entire organisation, our people adapted really quickly and kept the business running... it was absolutely phenomenal! Looking ahead, from an agile perspective, we are bringing the best of those experiences during that incredibly challenging time, to build the foundations of our future people framework and business direction. Trust is, unquestionably, at the core of this and in terms of our approach to hybrid and flexible working, we are supporting people to use their own judgement around when they go to a wilko site and when they

work from home. For our team members in stores, for team members who are able to work remotely, there is an absolute appreciation of their everyday commitment to making sure the shops are open and the shelves are stacked with the essentials that our customers need and rely on. The pandemic forced quick decision-making and flexibility and there is no doubt that it's made us clearer and braver and, right across the organisation, people stepped up to the plate and gave a great account of themselves and showed amazing resilience.

"THE PANDEMIC FORCED QUICK DECISION MAKING AND FLEXIBILITY AND THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT IT'S MADE US CLEARER AND BRAVER"

WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN FOCUSES NOW FROM AN HR PLANNING POINT OF VIEW? Physical and mental health wellbeing has become an even more important focus and during the pandemic, we kept reminding people of the provision and support that they could access if and when they needed to. We also introduced online counseling, as well as mental health first aiders, right across the business and we're keeping up this momentum, I'm totally convinced about the positive impacts of effective wellbeing support in work. My ambition is that we end up having one per wilko site - both retail outlets and offices - incorporating physical with mental first aid. We also now have a great wellbeing forum, which is a network of people that can share experiences and support people, checking in on team members and not being afraid to ask how they really are. The other essential element is DE&I. The tragic death of George Floyd in May 2020 must act as a catalyst for change and a roadmap for direction. I am determined that at the heart of it is commitment to try even harder to be more relevant for

our employees and our customers, through increasing diversity, so that our stores are truly representative of an inclusive culture that reflects every customer that walks into our stores.

In terms of supporting our leadership, remembering my own experiences, we are launching reverse mentoring for all of our senior leaders, to be set up with a mentor, who will be someone from an ethnically diverse background from them and mostly junior. We clearly need to work on our ethnic diversity and so having our senior leaders holding up a mirror will develop self-awareness and build an inclusive leadership so that we can build better teams around us. We can now use the right data to do that, so that we can integrate across the whole business model. We clearly want to pay people well for the role that they do, but just as importantly, we want to make sure that we provide really good benefits, a really great environment where people can come and feel fulfilled and in which they can build a career, not just a job, that enables them to manage their home life too. Additionally, with the cost-of-living crisis we are in, we are supporting team members with access to good financial wellbeing support. They can access money through a salary finance scheme so that they can draw down their salary earlier, if they need to pay bills for example. We are also supporting financial wellbeing too and providing advice and education around personal finance. We also have an employee trust that our team members can apply to if they are really struggling, or if, for example, they want to help a child through university. There's also a brilliant team member discount, which makes a tangible difference when buying products in store and recently we've increased this from 20-to-30 percent for the seasonal period. I think for HR, it's about being in the moment, listening to what people need, being creative and adaptable. The headwinds are hitting us, people are struggling and things are not likely to improve for some time and so if there is support that we are able to provide and afford, as employers, we absolutely should.

AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, A RECESSION IS THE VERY LAST THING THE HIGH STREET NEEDS. IS THERE ANY SIGN OF SOME OPTIMISM, GOING FORWARD?

The situation for traditional retail outlets has been tough for more than a decade. Online shopping, of course, has impacted, but there is incredible resilience in the sector and despite the downturn, there are signs that towns are primed for regeneration, providing a whole new set of experiences for visitors and customers and retail can play an integral part in that future vision. In the meantime, our objectives remain intact, to support our customers with the best value for money across their essential purchases and continue to be a reliable support for people that are having to make do with less, due to the cost-of-living. There's no doubt in our minds that the local high street is essential to the fabric of local communities, people's sense of belonging and of course employment. We are determined that wilko will continue to be a part of that important society foundation. But the high street needs to work together - as retailers, we can't do it alone - we have to collaborate with local councils with the vision and objective to provide vibrant and safe areas for recreation, for people to come to socialise and shop, with a different range of experiences and better access. I think the British Retail Consortium is trying to positively lobby Government and make changes and I think working with consortiums, such as the BRC, as leaders of businesses, we need to be connected and cohesive in our approach and actions towards a brighter future for our towns and shopping centers. The company is a 92-year-old business and I feel very privileged to be working for such an established and well regarded business and, along with my colleagues in leadership, we're determined to make positive impacts that lay the foundations to a brighter future. We will need to continue to adapt to continuous change, be insight-led and tuned into what future generations are aspiring to. We need to develop a strong omni-channel customer proposition, bringing the virtual along with the physical retail presence, to

complement not compete against each other. Although that will be very challenging, I'm optimistic.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES AND WHAT ARE THE LONGER-TERM OPPORTUNITIES, IN SETTING FUTURE BUSINESS AMBITIONS?

I would say, without question, our biggest challenge is offering the best value that we can to our customers, whilst attracting and retaining the best talent that we can to support this. That is always guaranteed to be a tough call when there is a lot of volatility and we are having to factor in extra financial burdens being forced on the business due to increasing freight and energy costs, to name but two. This will need the most careful financial stewardship across the business, managing

"WE WANT PEOPLE TO
STAND UP TO THE SMALL-
MINDEDNESS THAT THEY
SEE. WE WANT THEM TO
CALL OUT WRONGDOING
WHEN THEY SEE IT"

the everyday realities and balancing the books, whilst predicting future changes that are coming down the line. When it comes to the labour market, the strength of our employment brand has never been so important, making sure that we are seen as a great place, where people want to come and work not just for salary, but for a career, whatever their ambitions. I think we can offer people a great work culture, underpinned by our wilko values which are integral to how we behave on a day-to-day basis, how we respect each other whilst enjoying being at work. Whether that be finding the right shift patterns, so people can manage their lives outside of work, or providing brilliant benefits to help them.

From an HR strategic perspective, the future HR vision is about calibrating the

business for change and adjustment at every step of the way and focusing and always improving the employment brand. We have to keep on working on how we are perceived by the wider world and there is no room for complacency. It's a simple vision, but I want people to come to work at wilko and really feel that they can be at their best and that they can be their true selves. Our team member promise consists of really clear diversity inclusion commitments. Our priority at the moment is being actively anti-racist. We want people to stand up to the small-mindedness that they see. We want them to call out wrongdoing when they see it and we need to make sure that we integrate some strong diversity and inclusion principles in the business, so that we really build that into team members' voices. We are collaborating with our employee forum and our recognised union and making sure that we have cohesion and understanding across the business. We are also working on building a much stronger listening culture, making sure that when there are concerns highlighted, that action is always taken and communicated back. I think people are less tolerant of hierarchy and we need to work hard as leaders, to make sure that there are no barriers and to demonstrate authentically that we will respond with empathy and understanding. This all sounds easy to say, but of course actions speak louder than words and we're committed as a leadership, to move forward with confidence and ambition and always strive to be a better organisation for people to want to join and stay.



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CHAIRER BY JASON SPILLER

6 OCTOBER 2022 - LONDON

WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR WELLBEING TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY?

EVEN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, MANY BUSINESSES WERE FAILING TO ADDRESS EMPLOYEE WELLBEING. COVID ILLUMINATED SHORTCOMINGS AND AWAKENED EMPLOYERS TO A REALITY, THAT PEOPLE DON'T ONLY IMPACT ABSENCE FIGURES, BUT SUPPLY CHAINS, PROFIT MARGINS AND - IF THEY SEE BETTER 'VALUE' ELSEWHERE - TALENT RETENTION METRICS. CRITICALLY, AS WE ENTER MORE TURBULENT TIMES, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING NEEDS TO BE KEPT AT THE TOP OF THE AGENDA.

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ARUSHA GUPTA ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT HR - LARSEN & TOUBRO INFOTECH
LANA HOOPER VENUES HEAD OF L&D AND SUPPORT HR - THE RANK GROUP

WHAT ARE THE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS THAT YOU ARE MANAGING ACROSS THE WORKFORCE, IN THE AFTERMATH OF COVID AND WHAT RISKS LIE AHEAD?

Arusha Gupta: Lack of social interaction and isolation for many, brought about the underlying conditions that were missed or ignored in the hustle and bustle of the workplace pre-pandemic. Now, reactive measures are critical to support, before the damage is irrecoverable, creating support groups and safe working environment to build resilience.

Chloe Bryant-Dunn: We have two different groups and challenges; colleagues who have been in branches during this difficult time, serving people under challenging circumstances and homeworkers, for which loneliness and disconnection was a key concern throughout. We have done a huge amount of work with Mental Health UK as our charity partner of the year to empower colleagues and customers to understand and manage their mental health. We have reached 1.5m people through the dedicated Mental Health & Money Advice website, 115k young people on their mental health resilience, through Bloom and trained 2.5k colleagues as mental health first aiders. Looking ahead, I believe that line management in businesses will be key to supporting wellbeing in the hybrid work era.

Richard Eastmond: Unlike other illnesses - where there was a work impact if people thought they were ill, symptomatic or contagious - with COVID, it was a grey area. If you're ill everyone is generally clear that you don't work. But with COVID, it blurred the lines, which still persists.

Mark Taylor: We're trying to manage COVID as just another illness - it has been normalised to an extent - but in terms of wellbeing per se, key for us is to ensure we support and educate line managers to have those wellbeing conversations and provide further support.

Anshoo Kapoor: There is fatigue and as hybrid working looks set to be the future, we need to support wellbeing breaks and give people the confidence that they don't have to fill their diaries with virtual meetings, for fear of missing out. There has to be a holistic conversation and consistent communication,

both to support people, but also to make sure they are in the picture, part of the vision and can understand how they can contribute.

Dean O'Connor: As the pandemic impacted, we had to encourage managers to regularly check in with people. But we have made great progress and the pandemic response team has moved into “business-as-usual” activities, to support the new ways of working. We now refer to ourselves as “a connected workplace”. But that is not a fête complete, that can be left to its own devices, in terms of mental and physical wellbeing, going forward.

Lana Hooper: The retail business part of Rank had always had a rather operational approach and then the COVID crisis meant we had to help our line managers with their new role in leading wellbeing for their venues. Our digital teams on the other hand, had a completely different environment to contend with. They had to suddenly think about who to furlough and how to manage high wage costs. The experience has taught us that we must consider how to communicate about wellbeing support and be clear about what we have implemented in different parts of our business and become more inclusive.

Nick Reader: Traditionally, managing wellbeing has been reactive and employee support has not been communicated well - there could be 30-to-40 wellbeing initiatives across a big company and people probably only know about around seven of them and then subsequently only use about two or three. It has been very scattergun historically, but now we're starting to move into the realms of AI and predictive analytics. Not only are we able to analyse what is happening now, but we can forward predict what is coming. This enables HR to move away from the administration side of looking after people's wellbeing, to a much clearer understanding of what current and future issues will be. We can pinpoint where there are likely to be problem areas, what is happening with employee demographics and then start predicting wellbeing issues ahead of time and forward planning for that. We're able to garner very accurate predictive modelling and analytics, which



WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR WELLBEING TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY?



PICTURED
(PREVIOUS PAGE)

NICK READER
PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT -
GOODSHAPE

PICTURED LEFT

MARK TAYLOR
PEOPLE DIRECTOR -
CONSTELLATION AUTOMOTIVE
GROUP

RICHARD EASTMOND
NED & INTERIM HR DIRECTOR -
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ARUSHA GUPTA
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CHLOE BRYANT-DUNN
HEAD OF HEALTH & SAFETY -
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can look up to three years ahead. This will be increasingly important as hybrid and remote working calls for employers to try and do things a little bit differently and come at wellbeing from more organised and proactive angles.

Mark Taylor: Organisations probably had set scripts and expectations - in terms of how various employee groups were expected to work - but COVID threw those scripts up in the air. It has become more personalised and more complicated. The current labour market and the attraction and retention challenges add to the complexity, as there is a need to be even more flexible.

Richard Eastmond: The timing isn't linked just to COVID, I would date the heightened focus on wellbeing to ten years ago. It is also worth drilling into contextual and cultural factors.

Nick Reader: There is always more that needs to be done. Absence and presenteeism is rising, staff turnover is up, as is liability, grievance and disciplinarys related to wellbeing issues. Fundamentally, all of that comes down to managers moving into that proactive space and heading things off before they become bigger problems.

Lana Hooper: Previously, mental health wasn't something that was easily spoken of, as we were led to believe that being vulnerable was detrimental to our careers. Now we have lived through an experience that has touched us all, so when a colleague says, 'I'm struggling', we can draw from our own personal experiences and respond with real empathy. The minute you make something personal, you create emotion and it's that emotion that drives change.

Nick Reader: Understanding that it's okay to have those conversations is a significant game changer, but that requires putting in frameworks to enable that to happen and being supportive of individuals across the business. Managers may be good at doing their job - they may be experts in their fields - but it doesn't necessarily mean that they are good at managing people from a wellbeing perspective.

WHAT CAN OTHER SECTORS LEARN FROM THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN HARD-IMPACTED SECTORS SUCH AS RETAIL, HEALTH CARE, THE NHS AND HOSPITALITY?

Richard Eastmond: When I was at Amnesty, we explored best practice from the NHS's use of something called Schwartz Rounds. This is where, for example, clinical groups are brought together not to talk about how the operation went and debate issues such as, "did we all do the right things?" But to focus on how the individuals felt or were impacted by an operation. It's a mental health conversation about "how we all emotionally feel about that particular case." We took that idea and devised our own version, for example, with a group of people that had been interviewing rape victims for a particular report and how this had impacted them.

"THERE COULD BE 30-TO-40 INITIATIVES ACROSS A BIG COMPANY - AND PEOPLE PROBABLY KNOW ONLY ABOUT SEVEN OF THEM AND THEN SUBSEQUENTLY ONLY USE ABOUT TWO OR THREE"

Mark Taylor: Like counsellors have supervision, it's the holistic way in which people and leaders deal with the emotion to build their ongoing resilience.

Lana Hooper: The learning is to try and spot the head winds and truly listen to team members. They will tell us what our customers think, they will tell us what the impact of the decisions we make are on them and they will tell us what they need.

Anshoo Kapoor: The data will play a crucial part, looking at it holistically and then we need to be sure that on an individual basis, we are really connecting with people.

Arusha Gupta: Agreed, for people to take ownership of their own wellbeing, we must invest time into building that culture and promote that behaviour.

Nick Reader: Also, understanding the family circumstances of employees builds understanding, supports health and wellbeing and pays dividends in productivity and loyalty. But you can

only do this by having the right data, in order to track results, make progress and find momentum.

WHERE DOES MENTAL HEALTH FIT WITHIN YOUR WELLBEING STRATEGY AND ARE BUSINESS LEADERS TAKING IT SERIOUSLY?

Lana Hooper: Our mental health activity is mostly delivered through our EDI strategy, but we are not tracking it, although employee opinion surveys show colleagues appreciate it. It's important not to become so busy building strategies that sound great on paper and forget about the little things that make a big difference.

Mark Taylor: Wellbeing is just part of our overall people approach, but it's not a specific wellbeing strategy per se. We have the standard elements around mental health awareness training for line

managers, online support and more first aiders. It's incredibly important to ensure that the human welfare aspect remains an integral part of improving individual lives and therefore business performance.

Anshoo Kapoor: Wellbeing is part of our employee value proposition and is a very important pillar. It will overlap with DEI and health & safety and we've linked it to meaning, purpose and values. Importantly, it's not paternalistic, it's a very adult-to-adult conversation and empathetic to individual circumstances and everyone is given a safe space.

Chloe Bryant-Dunn: The challenge could be that once integrated, can we show it as a strategic enabler and demonstrate the benefits and impacts? Inevitably, that leads to the importance of data which is something we are actively looking at to ensure we integrate all types of insight to inform our decisions.

DARE WE DRAW THE LINES BETWEEN WELLBEING AND ROI?

Mark Taylor: Yes, I believe that if you need to make a case and you want to influence senior leaders, you have to demonstrate the tangible business benefits of any wellbeing initiative.

Richard Eastmond: Take the education world and safeguarding, every week, there is data generated about mental health and the amount of cases dealt with by the safeguarding and student support teams. Where is the ROI on that? This is tracked and linked into the outcomes and results. Is it going to improve their chances of their degree, their GCSEs or their A-levels? Are they going to stay in education for longer?" It is a hugely rich data-based outcome, so educational institutions are taking it to a different level and I suspect commercial organisations could take a leaf out of this book.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS IN OPTIMISING EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR YOUR ORGANISATION?

Mark Taylor: If we consider causation, line managers are fundamental to managing workloads - the strategy, the planning and most importantly the prioritisation - in order to guard against work-related stress.

Arusha Gupta: I absolutely agree, but the emphasis from line managers must be to encourage and support self-responsibility, in areas such as development and career direction and wellbeing too.

Nick Reader: This has to be supported and developed and backed up by providing managers with the right information, driven from the data, in areas such as managing absenteeism, where early intervention and signposting can lead to improved outcomes. If somebody has an issue, absences can be kept to a short-term spell and you can deal with them much more quickly and effectively.

Dean O'Connor: To a degree, we're going back to people management basics, but we are also asking managers to go through and pick a solution, although there is probably a thousand different ways that you can do colours or strength finders.

HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY MEASURE WELLBEING SOLUTION EFFECTIVENESS?

Arusha Gupta: The beauty of data is it tells you multiple stories and you can build your own narrative around it. Currently, there isn't a standard benchmarking process in wellbeing space. Given multi-generational and multi-cultural workforce, providing personalised experience is becoming important, yet challenging. Training line managers to equip them to address these changing dynamics is needed.

"MANY ORGANISATION'S HAVE NO CLASSIFICATION IN ABSENCE AT ALL AND IF YOU HAVE NO CLEAR STEER ON WHAT'S GOING ON, HOW DO YOU FOCUS ANY OF YOUR WELLBEING INITIATIVES?"

Richard Eastmond: I think the two sources of data we are all likely to have is employee opinion survey data, which is likely to have a number of wellbeing type questions in there, which can be tracked. We are also likely to have sickness data. If you then link the data, you gather from this and can benchmark it against larger datasets.

DO WE THINK OF ABSENTEEISM AS BEING PART OF BENCHMARKING?

Mark Taylor: Like any measures and reporting - you have to think about what's really going to move the wellbeing dial. One of the biggest factors in moving the needle and really changing behaviour is, as always, senior leadership role modeling.

Lana Hooper: We are now moving towards mutual supportive solutions and we need to help our line managers set good boundaries, as they try to gain a grip on issues - such as the menopause and mental health - often subjects they know very little about. They need to feel that they are being supported and that making mistakes is inevitable in the course of these fast changing workplace dynamics.

Nick Reader: Absence management is the foundation of good wellbeing. Managers are not always consistent in their approach - some capture absence reasons,

some don't, they either follow policy or they won't - the consistency can vary greatly across an organisation. But if you can centralise the absence function, and you can link datasets around employee surveys, customer engagement, P&L and staff turnover, through the analysis of those different datasets, you can start to fully understand what impact each of them is having on the other. If you have a finite HR function constantly chasing managers for information that they have not collected in the first place, there's a real question mark around the quality of that data and how reliable it is to

benchmark. Link the dots together with a really solid data foundation in real-time and you can become much more productive and much more focused and have a clear picture of the wellbeing issues your people face day-to-day.

Lana Hooper: What we don't want to do is create distance in the pursuit of pure data. I believe it is that personal, caring relationship with the manager that supports lower absence numbers. This doesn't mean data has no place, it is important for us to understand which leadership teams and which general managers need support. Our HR team works in partnership with our Regional Operations Leaders, then all work to understand what is happening with a holistic mindset and approach.

Nick Reader: Agreed, you can't just rely upon data - it can be cold and calculated - but it gives context to interpretation. I think that is around the quality and the breadth of that data because that will give the manager a lot of needed context. For example, many organisations don't classify absences or have a high percentage classified only as "other"... If you have no clear steer on what's going on, how do you focus any of your wellbeing initiatives and turn them into a strategy? Data provides the power to

make decisions and react quickly, efficiently and proactively. The minute that somebody goes off, if we see any patterns emerging, you can instantly notify the manager and tell them what is going on, so that they can pick up on that quickly and signpost those individuals into the various different wellbeing services that are available.

Lana Hooper: I suppose we would expect our managers to know if there was a larger problem before they were contacted by an outsourced service. When a colleague is ill they call their manager and the manager is expected to be as clear as possible about the reasoning. On the colleagues return there has to be a wellbeing conversation with their manager, this would be irrespective of them calling into a service. This process, if done correctly, helps build the relationship and trust. The data would be more beneficial to the venues support functions giving the HR and Operations teams a window on the types of absence we have.

Nick Reader: The feedback from employees is that talking to an outsourced medical professional about their health and wellbeing breaks down the barriers with the individual and they have much more honest and meaningful conversations with them than they would necessarily with their manager. There are times when the manager is the issue also of course. To your point on traditional occupational health, I couldn't agree more - refer somebody to a doctor or nurse who then writes a note and gives the individual's employer advice - but nothing more - is inefficient and not proactive. They should be case managed through that process. We work with some very proactive organisations that are not Occupational Health - but operate in the same space - where they have links into GP networks as well as the NHS. An example being, rather than wait 12 weeks for an operation, they can see there's a cancellation next week for that type of operation in the employee's local NHS Trust and they get that person seen much more quickly. These little proactive steps can reduce long-term absence down by as much as 70 percent which saves organisations huge amounts in lost productivity.

Richard Eastmond: We need to be alive to the issue of how wellbeing is seen in different cultures. I suspect much of this debate has been through the lens of UK organisations. As soon as you try to export elements of this to other countries you will uncover issues - either the concept of wellbeing is not accepted or is seen very differently - so this challenges the idea that an organisation can provide an equity of provision globally.

Lana Hooper: Mental health is a broad term for many conditions and managers can struggle to support a colleague. I can then see how an outsourced service would be helpful at that point.

Nick Reader: It comes back to data again, understanding the snapshot of that individual, but also the bigger picture. Take for example somebody who goes off with three spells of care of dependant absence and then they subsequently go off because of stress. However, what is actually happening is that they have run out of "goodwill" from the organisation in terms of their care obligation and therefore have to give another reason to be able to continue to look after their dependant.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOUR CURRENT WELLBEING PACKAGE IMPACTS POSITIVELY?

Chloe Bryant-Dunn: From a cultural perspective, I think it does engage and retain people and Lloyds Banking Group is genuinely known as quite a friendly place to work, as can be seen on Glassdoor. We have got some good ratings and we are very good at flexible working. As to whether the wellbeing strategy has contributed to that is a good question. But certainly, the culture has enabled us to trial and implement many good initiatives that are seen as a part of the EVP.

Dean O'Connor: We traditionally attract talent from the large banks and so the wellbeing offering has to be comparable, because people expect those services and arrangements almost as standard. Where we win an advantage is around our flexibility and that is highly desired in our markets. It's interesting to analyse the boomerangs - those who have left but



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 HEAD RECRUITMENT UK&I -
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returned and often it's a case that the salary has gone up - but the quality of life is diminished.

Mark Taylor: Those that come from the traditions of 'a job for life' tend to be happier and more grateful and to accept whatever is offered by an employer, whereas the younger generations tend to be more challenging with higher expectations.

Richard Eastmond: I agree, students are immersed in a safeguarding first and healthy mental health wellbeing space. So as they emerge and into the workplace, they expect the same from society and their employer, in a way that was not the case 15 years ago.

"YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE NOW BETTER INFORMED AND THEY HAVE HIGHER EXPECTATIONS OF HOW WELL THEY SHOULD BE LOOKED AFTER. THIS IS WHAT THEY EXPERIENCED IN EDUCATION"

Chloe Bryant-Dunn: This is informing on the evolving world of work and drives us as employers to do better and thinking more around ESG.

Nick Reader: Through social media and untapped access to information, they live their entire lives discussing everything all of the time. Younger people are now better informed and they have higher expectations of how well they should be looked after. They are well looked after at University in that regard, so why would they not expect exactly the same in their working lives?

HOW ARE YOUR PROVISIONS DEVELOPING WITH YOUR PARTNERS?

Arusha Gupta: Our wellbeing agenda is part of the EVP and we are working towards personalised journeys and provide support through specialised partner systems. We developed a framework to enable managers for hybrid working and care is one of the six core pillars in it.

Anshoo Kapoor: Similar for us, we are not outsourced. If you talk about outsourcing, of course, the EAP, the virtual GP, would be sourced, but not the strategy. Our strategy and action plan are developed

inhouse by HR, Health & Safety and a cross functional Team that supports.

Dean O'Connor: I guess it is how you define outsourcing. Until recently, I don't know any organisation that would've had an in-house EAP provider and counsellor. It takes time and specialist expertise, so it makes sense to outsource this activity.

Mark Taylor: For the various tools, frameworks and support, then I think it works, because they require a level of specialism. For example, EAP, occupational health and financial wellbeing too - which requires a level of independence and carries business risk with it. But what doesn't work is trying

to outsource your organisations' responsibility for wellbeing.

Lana Hooper: We have outsourced parts of our business in the past and find that agencies are not able to really understand our company, the nature of our industry, or our culture. Where we do outsource, will be because there is a need for a specialist. This is especially true in the mental health and wellbeing space.

Nick Reader: Agreed, I don't think that blanket outsourcing is the right way to do things because organisations and the people within them know their business far better than any external source ever will. Like the overall changes we have recently experienced, the best approach is a hybrid, whereby you bring in certain specialisms, tools and ways of working which can augment your existing policies and procedures.

WHAT DOES YOUR WELLBEING STRATEGY NEED TO LOOK LIKE TO PROVIDE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE?

Dean O'Connor: I think organisations have to work very hard to dial up the other aspects of wellbeing. We need to benchmark, provide a great offering and

we have to communicate it well, that this is the wellbeing strategy and here's how you can experience and benefit from it.

Anshoo Kapoor: As employers we have to approach wellbeing in the right way. It's important that we provide psychological safety and trust and develop cultures that show that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. We need to break the traditional sense of hierarchy whereby yes, top-down is great, but let's also look at bottom-up, in terms of sharing stories. Encourage people to be part of networks, contribute and bring meaning and purpose.

Lana Hooper: We are building wellbeing into our employee value proposition, so that it is part of our DNA. I agree with everyone that it has to be more holistic than just mental health. It is fundamentally core to the sustainability of our business as we look to keep our customers safe and cared for as they enjoy our environments.

Arusha Gupta: Personalising individual experience is the key as each person is in a stage in life with different needs and expectations. Painting it with one stroke won't serve the purpose. Indeed, we need to provide choice and let them decide what works for them and take ownership of the decisions.

Nick Reader: It is around engaging people through clear communication and then it's about measuring impact and understanding what is working and what isn't. It's about being fleet-of-foot with adaptive and proactive wellbeing initiatives. Traditional initiatives tend to be put in place for a year or two and just left there. But people's needs now are going to be different in six months, so that adaptability, going forward, will be essential to promoting positive wellbeing outcomes and being able to react very quickly to emerging problems. That can only be achieved, as has been said many times today, by having reliable, accurate and real-time data that is gathered consistently across entire organisations.

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HRDEBATE (IN PERSON): COULD THE LINK BETWEEN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH BE THE KEY TO PRODUCTIVITY?

19 JANUARY 2023 - LONDON

Clarges Suite, Flemings Hotel, 7-12 Half Moon Street, Mayfair, London W1J 7BH

(Complimentary refreshments throughout, hot buffet sit down lunch and post event drinks)

Join **theHRDIRECTOR** roundtable debate where we will explore the link between mental and physical health and if it could be the key to improved productivity and business growth? Partnered with **HealthHero** – the debate will centre around the benefits and challenges of adopting a whole health approach to wellbeing. We'll be sharing experiences, tips and advice on how to encompass both physical and mental health as a critical component of strategy. We'll explore the barriers and benefits of streamlining the health and wellbeing offering, delving into proactive mental and physical support and how we can enable employees to manage their whole health. We will also discuss how data on wellbeing, engagement and usage trends can help shape strategy and provision.

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I

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

NOW, ABOVE ALL ELSE, OPENING UP TALENT PIPELINES AS THE SKILLS DROUGHT HAUNTS, IS THE IMPERATIVE. EMPLOYEES EXPECT FLEXIBILITY AND CHOICE, OPPORTUNITIES TO PROGRESS AND CONTROL OVER THEIR CAREERS. IN THESE FAST-CHANGING TIMES, BUSINESSES NEED TO IDENTIFY, PROMOTE AND SUPPORT THE CAPACITY TO RE- CROSS- AND UPSKILL A WORKFORCE, WHICH WILL BE REQUIRED TO ADAPT TO FAST CHANGE. PEOPLE ARE ACUTELY AWARE THAT WITHOUT UP-TO-DATE SKILLS, THEY ARE VULNERABLE AND THEY WILL NOT ACCEPT BEING PIGEONHOLED AND LEFT TO STAGNATE. HERE IS THE POTENTIAL WIN-WIN - L&D THE ULTIMATE ENGAGEMENT TOOL.

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#HR #Polls | Do you believe your organisation is coping with L&D in a hybrid environment?

Yes

60%

No

40%



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ARTICLE BY MATTHEW RAVENHILL, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE LEARNING, EMEA - D2L

THE STATE OF INDEPENDENCE

AS IF TO CONFIRM THE IRREFUTABLE DIRECTION OF TRAVEL, RECENT RESEARCH* SHOWS YOUNGER EMPLOYEES PREFER WORKING REMOTELY, AS DO THEIR OLDER PEERS, PREFERRING WFH TO FIT AROUND CHILDCARE COMMITMENTS, IMPROVED WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND REDUCED COMMUTING. THIS POSES A CRUCIAL QUESTION, HOW CAN EMPLOYERS CONNECT PEOPLE IN CONSISTENT, SUSTAINABLE AND RELEVANT LEARNING AND DEVELOPING?

For many new joiners, first experiences in work were disrupted, virtual and “a new normal”. It was a taste of things to come. Across the demographic, employees are vocally staking their claim for a slice of flexibility in all that this means and this poses a series of challenges, to satisfy the needs of workers across all generations and age groups, as well as the skills and capabilities required to run a competitive business. One way to address this is by revising the onboarding process and offering an informative programme that caters to learning from home or the office. Naturally, these courses will need to account for technical skills demanded by some job roles that require a different approach and more ‘face-time’. A route to flexible onboarding is through introducing micro-credentials - shorter courses, delivered ‘on demand’ in targeted areas - that can be delivered face-to-face, online or a blend of both. Ideally, new recruits should be able complete these courses with the rest of their cohort, so that they feel included as part of a team. That way, organisations can foster communities within the workplace and remote working settings.

Considering the current ‘quiet-quitting’ trend, recruiters and HR should be mindful of employee burnout and ensure that all employees, both new and long-standing, feel valued and their

skillsets invested in. If leaders hope to keep employees engaged, they need to provide regular upskilling, retraining and perhaps even the opportunity to pursue a new job role within the organisation,

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if that is what employees are looking for. Again, these training programmes should be designed with employee needs in mind, ensuring that all workers can learn, retrain or upskill around their busy schedules. Most importantly, employees who prefer remote working must be provided with the same opportunities as those in the office, through initiatives such as video-based group work. Not only will this increase employee participation, but it will also mitigate feelings of isolation that may come with remote working. Furthermore, using

video to capture group work gives a valuable opportunity for learners to practice and demonstrate their progress individually, while concurrently assessing and giving feedback to peers and gauging the progress and readiness of individual learners.

As organisations look to build their talent pipeline, they should identify ways to utilise the whole workforce and wealth of knowledge they already have. While new recruits can bring a certain skillset to an organisation - whether these are digital skills or those gained in academia - older generations often have invaluable experience and knowledge of the business, that can refine the raw talent of younger employees. To capitalise on multi-generational workforces, HR and L&D teams should make sure that current employees are involved in the training and onboarding process. By creating mentoring schemes, businesses may establish bridges across the mutigenerational workforce, allowing younger employees workers to benefit from the knowledge of more experienced workers and nurture a more sustainable talent pipeline. Investing in talent now will pay off for the business in a future that looks set to be challenging.

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ARTICLE BY DAVID JAMES, CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER - 360LEARNING

FOLLOW THE EVIDENCE

"EMPLOYEES VOTE WITH THEIR ATTENTION SPANS AND THIS IS WHY
LEARNING TECH HAS NOTORIOUSLY LOW ENGAGEMENT. IT IS BROUGHT
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When people ask about the future of Learning & Development, they often expect an answer that explores new and novel ways of delivering content. The vision is AR/VR and learning being delivered in the metaverse. But when we look back at the recent history of L&D, we can see it is littered with the tech du jour gone by - from interactive videos to serious games or microlearning - that never seemed to live up to their promise of transforming the sector.

Above all else, the one single problem that technology has set out to solve is engagement. The formula followed a similar pattern, if employees are not engaged in an organisation's online learning then buy in more engaging content. Another typical problem has been hectic schedules and insurmountable workloads, making people time poor and unable to justify time for learning. The solution in this instance has been to offer them something shorter. So that has been the logic all along, but the blunt reality is coming into sharp relief, that neither AR/VR nor metaverse-hosted solutions alone will sustain the engagement of employees, let alone predictably and reliably affect

the way the work is done or the desired outcomes of the work. You see, L&D has been trying to solve problems with learning tech for decades - how to deliver training at scale - and provide all the content employees may need now and in the future. But ultimately, it all comes down to one problem, people not engaging with online learning. So, what is the answer? Well actually, it's much more simpler than it would appear, it's about knowing what employees are trying to accomplish independently and what they are and not able to do easily or effectively.

In the book *Traction: How Any Startup Can Achieve Explosive Customer Growth*, Gabriel Weinberg and Justin Mares set the scene that most startups fail

because they cannot gain traction. Too many good ideas fail to become good businesses, because they don't do one really important thing, help people to do what they are trying to do, but better. We see this in L&D - where it capitalises on genuine employee concern - and instead, tries to generate concern. All of those platforms, filled with generic, off-the-shelf content, neither understand the unfamiliar situations and challenges posed as people transition into new roles, teams and organisations, nor the periods of enforced adaptation due to changes inside the organisation. How can these possibly help? Well, employees vote with their attention spans and this is why learning tech has notoriously low

engagement. It is brought in to solve L&D problems without considering those who are expected to use it. According to a recent survey, three-quarters of employees engage with L&D because they want to do their job better. So how does L&D help them achieve this? The answer is not by prescribing assumed learning content without input, which is almost guaranteed to disengage. Other issues flagged in this survey were that people don't have time to learn and want learning integrated into their work. Yet one of the biggest barriers for them is that learning content is too generic and doesn't relate to their work.

The only way to jump off this hamster wheel of failing silver bullets - to mix metaphors - is data and evidence-based practice, because only when we know what the actual problems are can we solve them and move forward with more targeted solutions. As described by Sebastian Tindall, Director of L&D at Vitality - which has a highly refined approach to data and evidence before developing solutions - the production quality of his team's solutions is going down, because the aesthetic is nowhere near as valued as efficiently provided guidance and support, when and where it is needed. When this happens, it's time for data and evidence-based practice to fill the blanks. So, what is data and evidence-based practice and how does it apply to L&D? Data is the quantitative representation and understanding of a critical point of failure in any given operation within an organisation. It is often the consequence of a problem that stakeholders will seek training to address. For example, stakeholders may ask for first-line manager training and they may wish certain topics are included to make first-line managers better and more consistent. This is why assumption can lead to solutions falling wide of the mark. What is required is data to validate - as well as good old research and conversation - asking simple and to the point questions to uncover what the critical points of failure are, such as, "what is the consequence of them not being better or consistent in their role?"

The reality is, first-line managers without experience or refined skills are likely to frustrate, annoy or disempower their teams, which can lead to good people being disenfranchised and not performing and top performers leaving. By digging into the consequences of a presented problem, we move towards something that those we seek to influence already know and care about. But telling a manager who has been doing the job for years, that they need to be more like a coach - without actually knowing what their job really entails - will likely lead to frustration and disengagement and failure to achieve change and improvement.

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Without understanding the experiences of all stakeholder and the consequences of having ill-equipped managers, it is impossible to make progress to improvement.

Data is the objective measure of outcomes and a ground zero against which to measure improvement. But real life evidence is just as important, in understanding a critical point of failure and establishing a partnership with those responsible for the work and results to affect performance and results. Data enables engagement and conversation between all stakeholders. This is not a hypothetical conversation - and it's not based on best practice - this is a conversation about why all concerned

think the data is as it is and agreeing a course of action. In essence, it's a KPI of performance, but not all of what comes out of such interaction will be a capability or skills issue. But what is important is that what is discussed is everything impacting the ability to perform and achieve desired outcomes. It's one thing to sit alongside a stakeholder and ask them to pick up elements around communication, access to resources, processes, systems and staffing. It also requires exploration with the representative group, about what aspects require more skill and what just requires will on their behalf.

Anything that L&D practitioners take away to develop is likely to return much more targeted and aimed directly at affecting performance. It could be as simple as a suite of resources developed internally with the aid of subject matter experts, tested for effectiveness and iterated to address the issues. These could be coupled with workshop conversations about the learners' experience. Evaluation then will be based on to what extent performance has changed and results achieved and this can all be done in a matter of days. This is not a hypothetical approach to L&D, it is one grounded in practical reality, that is being experienced by L&D leaders in many businesses across sectors, for whom building credible reputations is based on sustainably and reliably helping their organisations and employees to make improvements in skills and capability. Having a data and evidence-based approach will mean that actual critical points of failure are explored, understood and addressed in partnership with those responsible for the work. Stakeholders become more aware of both the root cause of their problems and the contracting with those responsible for the work, leading to more skilled and confident 'doing' rather than hopeful 'learning'.

H I V E

The workplace is no longer the hive of activity in terms of physical presence. Increased hybrid working opportunities - one of lockdown's unintended legacies - and increased globalisation of teams, have allowed businesses to recruit from a wider pool of talent, which offers benefits in terms of diversity, but can be more challenging for managers. The irony of this move to remote working is that it has the potential to disengage. Consequently, there has never been a more important moment to channel learning & development into engaging an increasingly remote and disparate workforce.

"BY OFFERING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES IN LEADERSHIP SKILLS TO EMPLOYEES, COMPANIES ARE SENDING A CLEAR MESSAGE THAT INVESTING IN PEOPLE IS STILL A PRIORITY, DESPITE THE ECONOMY"



ARTICLE BY JILL WHITTAKER OBE, MANAGING DIRECTOR - HIT TRAINING LTD

The pandemic, as we well know, has changed the weekly working calendar irreversibly for the majority of the working world. From an HR position, it has been increasingly difficult to accurately and regularly gauge employee satisfaction among hybrid teams and there is only so much genuine data that can be gathered from digital surveys. As a result, it's essential that teams - remote or not - are united in their commitment and engagement with associated L&D. According to recent research from Microsoft, more than half of managers told researchers that productivity of their teams had dropped off since the shift to remote working. Furthermore, the pressure to find and retain key skills and talent are well documented and the current cost-of-living crisis is an added influence on rising attrition, as people look for better paid opportunities. All this leaves under pressure employers with little alternative than to provide appealing benefits, in order to remain competitive and along clear career progression opportunities, L&D must run through the veins of the organisation and pulse through every career at every stage.

Of course, we are talking upskilling, re-skilling, multi-skilling and focus upon skills that are agile, adaptable and transportable. With this in mind, lest we forget, apprenticeships offer an ideal training pathway for individuals, regardless of seniority, as the various courses can often flex around the operational demands of the business and schedule of the individual employee. For example, apprenticeship delivery models can allow employers to front-load training, so that employees can hit the ground running with the latest skills and knowledge when, for example, starting a new role. Recent research* has revealed that currently, only 40 percent of businesses offer this type of training - including apprenticeships - that are geared towards senior management and 46.3 percent offer apprenticeships to individuals at all career levels. Yet in the same survey, 83.3 percent of businesses believe it is important for senior level employees to undertake continued training and development courses, set

against a trend which sees 81.9 percent of employees saying that they experience less emphasis on L&D, as they progress through their careers.

The reality is that the values in upskilling, reskilling and multiskilling throughout a career cannot be realised when there is a patent absence of learning opportunities. Furthermore, with only a quarter of employees considering apprenticeships a viable training option for anyone at any stage of their career, this represents a vital missed opportunity for those at a more senior level. Clearly, it's time to rethink apprenticeships as an excellent framework to integrate learning and development into the bones of an organisation and provide people of all ages and levels of experience, the opportunity to diversify their skills.

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It is time that employers across the country abandon these outdated preconceptions of apprenticeships, which are holding their business back from accessing invaluable learning and development opportunities for people within their organisations. Not only do these training pathways improve knowledge on a practical level, but their benefits can be felt through recruitment cost-savings, as employees often feel higher levels of job satisfaction due to such engagement. In fact, 77 percent of people surveyed said that if they were offered a job with the prospect of doing an apprenticeship to develop their skills, they would take it. Though the hot topic of the cost-of-living crisis has already been touched on, it's worth noting that there's another added benefit to offering

learning and development opportunities to employees via apprenticeships and that's the socio-economic barriers many people face to learning - even those in executive roles - who may have previously not considered their professional development a luxury to invest in personally. Indeed, research shows that more than a third of employees, 35.1 percent, have always been interested in training, but have not had the money, support or resources available to undertake it outside of work.

What is clear is that the desire for career advancement has always been there, but the resources to execute it have not. By offering training opportunities in leadership skills to employees, companies are sending a clear message that investing in people is still a priority at every level of their careers, despite the economy. Indeed, the gesture of offering apprenticeship courses and providing access to skills will speak volumes to people about business confidence and job security, turning the tables on attrition and building loyalty. By ensuring entire teams can take on their job roles armed with the latest knowledge of leadership methodology. Though this culture requires roots in management, it needs to blossom from the very beginning of an individual journey within a company. The way in which candidates have been shortlisted for potential job prospects has so far mainly been judged on essential and desirable skills and experience. But this approach completely overlooks potential ambition and the ability and willingness to learn, but whom have never before had access to the opportunities. Leadership skills can be acquired and technical capability learnt, but attributes such as empathy and adaptability, which will be essential components of future competitiveness and should be considered as important as any technical capability, particularly in this fast-moving environment.

**Research from EDN*

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II

STUDENT JOINERS

THE STUDENTS NOW LEAVING EDUCATION AND BEGINNING THEIR WORKING CAREERS HAVE EXPERIENCED MORE DISRUPTION IN THEIR YOUNG LIVES THAN ANY GENERATION SINCE WORLD WAR II. EMPLOYERS NEED TO CONSIDER THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT THAT THE DISRUPTIONS OF THE PANDEMIC WILL HAVE CAUSED. HOW THAT WILL INFLUENCE THEIR PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS IS NOW BECOMING EVIDENT. MANY ARE ANXIOUS AND WARY OF PROMISES UNDELIVERED AND, IN ORDER TO OPTIMISE CHANCES OF MUTUAL OUTCOME, A RAISED LEVEL OF REASSURANCE AND SUPPORT WILL BE REQUIRED.

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#HR #Polls | Do you think your organisation is doing enough to support students into the workplace?

Yes

100%

No

0%



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ARTICLE BY HELEN BEEDHAM, DIRECTOR - HELEN BEEDHAM CONSULTING LTD

Helen Beedham is the author of 'The Future of Time'
Published by Practical Inspiration Publishing

THE TOMORROW PEOPLE

YOUNGER EMPLOYEES AREN'T PROTESTING FROM THEIR SOFAS AGAINST THE PRINCIPLE OF THE DAILY GRIND, THEY'RE PURSUING JOBS AND CAREERS THAT MEET THEIR VERY SPECIFIC NEEDS - EXPECTATIONS SHAPED BY RECENT GLOBAL AND ECONOMIC EVENTS. EMPLOYERS NEED TO ENSURE THEIR OFFERING DOESN'T JUST TICK THE FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY BOX, BUT MEETS FOUR DISTINCTIVE CRITERIA.

A policy that requires employees to be in the office say, three days per week, still has a whiff of staid presenteeism about it, that doesn't fool today's market-savvy, digital natives. They're impressed by employers that focus more on what workers need to deliver, rather than prescribing working hours and location and support greater remote-working and expect less synchronous logging on and off and certainly no e-surveillance. Younger employees also say they will stay longer if given the freedom to pursue projects or part-time businesses outside of their day job, according to Microsoft's research. Furthermore, with additional rocketing living and energy costs, younger workers are placing higher value on job security and are also twice as likely to be affected by financial stress than older colleagues.

Employers with a history of firing at the first sign of a downturn and ruthlessly prune graduates, will not be perceived worth the elbow-slicing competition required to make it through the door. With the recent jobs market boom and record vacancies, new joiners have seen healthy pay offers as salary wars have seeped from mid-senior levels into early career pay bands. But candidates aren't naïve, they know they will likely be expected to put in long working hours in return and put home and social lives in a distant second place. Alongside negotiating for the best pay packet, they

value cost-of-living adjustments and time-related benefits such as generous extended leave offers, firebreak weekends - meeting-free Fridays and Mondays - as well as additional company days off and work-

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related social time and imaginative office spaces that combine the informality of working from home with wow-factor décor and boast-worthy perks.

Younger employees are keener than ever to benefit from learning and development, not just through structured programmes and formal training but through informal routes too. On-the-job observation and shadowing, access to mentors and sponsors, networking and relationship-building opportunities are enormously valued and offer lasting impact to early careerists. McKinsey research shows that skills derived through

experience account for 60-to-80 percent of lifetime earnings for upwardly mobile workers and employees will increasingly switch employers to find the growth they are seeking. Consequently, internal career paths must be enhanced with, profile-raising opportunities, stretch assignments, career guidance and coaching provision.

This may sound like a one-way flow of benefits, but leaders are highly aware that their business success relies on their ability to hire and retain talent, develop skills needed for the future and help employees reach their potential by offering a meaningful, enjoyable work experience. In a 2022 survey by PwC, 77 percent of C-suite executives said the ability to hire and retain talent is most critical to achieving growth. In reviewing your offer to younger employees, assess how competitive your package is on all of the criteria described above. If you tick most of those boxes, you will be waving your hand-picked new joiners smugly through the door. But there is one other crucial factor that will determine the equally important question of how long they will stay - a positive work culture that demonstrably values wellbeing, sustainable workloads and a sociable, supportive environment. Without that, flexibility cannot cut it alone.

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.HELENBEEDHAM.COM



ARTICLE BY NICKY GARCEA, CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER
& LINDSEY POLLAK, CAREER AND WORKPLACE EXPERT - CAPPPINITY

GREATER EXPECTATIONS

"THE PARAMETERS BY WHICH TALENT IS ASSESSED ALSO NEED TO CHANGE, WITH LESS FAITH PLACED IN GRADES AND INSTITUTIONS, FOLLOWING TWO YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL TURMOIL FOR EXAMS AND TEACHING"

The early career talent market has changed exponentially over the past few years, with as many as 1000 graduate and school leaver vacancies left unfilled at the start of 2022, according to data from Universities UK. Whilst the number of job vacancies in the UK between June and August 2022 decreased slightly, competition to find and attract the right talent remains high and employers have had to swiftly transform their attraction and recruitment strategies, to appeal to the drivers of this cohort.

Research suggests that part of the problem lies with the recruitment process itself and that many employers fall short of the expectations of young job seekers. In 2021, our own research found that amongst the frustrations of candidates, was the length of the interviewing and hiring process, a lack of respect for candidates' time and schedule and poor responsiveness following initial screening. Early talent has more options than ever and the balance of power has almost certainly shifted from that of the employer to the candidate. Therefore, they are less willing to wait out a lengthy recruitment process and are more likely to seek other opportunities, particularly if they deem them a better cultural and value-driven fit. The recruitment process

should not only assess candidates quicker, whilst maintaining the same levels of quality, but also provide them with insight into the organisation. Many future-thinking employers have pushed for digital approaches to recruitment that include the use of video and virtual reality, to give candidates an opportunity to hear from current graduate recruits and complete realistic in-tray exercises to give a flavour of the work the company does. This helps to create an immersive experience for the candidate to place themselves in the position of a current employee, to experience the culture of the organisation and see values in action.

Providing real-world opportunities to experience culture and fit prior to accepting an offer can reduce attrition

rates, because early career talent will have genuine insight into the organisation before they join and a far better understanding of what is expected of them in their role, reducing the risk of unpleasant surprises. Bringing in real-world experiences via technology also helps to plug the work experience gap, with graduates and school leavers having fewer chances, or in some cases, no chance to engage in work experience whilst studying. For cohorts just leaving school, there is still time for employers to create opportunities for work experience, but this is trickier for graduates about to enter the workforce. Therefore, recruitment processes that provide an opportunity for graduates to experience and understand more about, not just the

role they are applying for, but the organisation's culture, will create a deeper sense of engagement for early career talent from the start.

The parameters by which talent is assessed also need to change, with less faith placed in grades and institutions, following two years of educational turmoil for exams and teaching. Employers are therefore seeking accurate predictors of potential based on strengths. Strengths are the things that an individual is naturally good at and enjoys. Strengths-based approaches to hiring are a real win for the employer and the employee because the employee is doing work they love to do, whilst the employer benefits from a job well done. A 2022 survey* of employers ranked more than 60 strengths and behaviours as key attributes they hire early talent for. The good news is that under 25s have oodles of the strengths employers want, including greater levels of competitiveness, unconditionality, humour, adherence, listening and drive than that of the general population. Therefore, employers who can showcase opportunities to use these strengths in role will have a key advantage in the competition for early talent, showing appreciation of individuality and the value younger talent brings to the workforce. Strengths-based approaches to recruitment enable employers to be authentic, be clear in their expectations, be experimental in how they deliver recruitment and be sustainable. For early talent, value authenticity, culture and social purpose are essential too attract and recruit them. Organisations must invest in opportunities to see social purpose in action. Talking about aspirations to better social purpose at interview is not enough. Early talent can research an organisation years in advance of making an application, so the candidate journey begins early. For an organisation to be authentic they will need to ensure that evidence of values in action are visible at every touch point.

Be clear about the recruitment process by communicating timelines, what's expected of candidates and what candidates can expect of the organisation. Deloitte report that 87 percent of

candidates say that a great recruitment experience can change their mind about a company they once doubted, so being clear has the potential to provide a positive impact for early careers recruitment. Review the clarity of current processes by writing down any unwritten expectations of candidates, create examples of these expectations and clarify the 'why' of elements in the assessment and interview process. Be experimental to attract early talent by thinking about new opportunities to create engagement. This doesn't have to be reserved for only the assessment, but other touchpoints too, such as virtual work experience, micro-

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internships and careers fairs to strengthen the employer brand amongst graduates and school leavers. The use of newer social media platforms, like TikTok, that are popular with graduates and school leavers will ensure you are reaching this group. Rather than taking a corporate account approach, try encouraging existing early career talent to share their experience of the organisation for authentic insight.

Perhaps most importantly, be sustainable, this is key for staff retention to ensure early talent are happy in their roles. Think long-term about the recruitment process by considering the talent pipeline today and how this may need to evolve in the future. More and more organisations are investing in tech, yet tech-talent is scarce. When employers look to fill tech-roles, they are generally

more interested in a candidate's potential to learn to code or consult. For tech roles, building block strengths and behaviours might include curiosity, critical thinking, learning agility and collaboration, so ensure assessments are looking for these behaviours to build the future talent pipeline. Today's graduates and school leavers are also more entrepreneurial than previous generations, seeking flexibility to build their skills outside of the typical nine-to-five. Additional employment was once taboo, however enabling talent to build their own business outside of their day job, presents another opportunity to develop behaviours and showcase strengths. Allowing early talent this flexibility is also a win for encouraging positive mental health, because when talent feels supported to use their strengths and pursue their dreams without fear of reprisal from their employer, they are happier. A focus on mental health is crucial for meeting the expectations of graduates and school leavers. A 2020/21 report from Cibyl, the largest provider of market research for student and graduate career thinking, found that 35 percent of students are experiencing a mental health challenge. Consequently, for employers to win early career talent, they will need to present a strong focus on the importance of mental health. Meeting the changing expectations of school leavers and graduates is clearly a multi-layered experience and responding to the drivers of early talent is a long-term commitment. Employers who want to win this talent must see it as an ongoing commitment, where every touch point is considered in detail and where opportunities to share culture in new and exciting ways are grabbed with both hands. Early talent is not looking for anything that cannot be delivered, they value authenticity, clear communication and the chance to be recognised for the individuality and value they can bring to any organisation.

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III

DEVELOPING AGILITY

AGILE WILL BE THE FOCUS OF EVERY CEO KEYNOTE AND FLEXIBILITY ACROSS THE ORGANISATION IS PARAMOUNT. BUT AGILE CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT RESILIENCE AND STAYING POWER AND THAT CAN ONLY RESULT FROM DRIVING ENGAGEMENT AND ALIGNMENT ACROSS THE ORGANISATION. CONSEQUENTLY, HR MUST RISE TO THE CHALLENGE, CHAMPION INNOVATIVE WAYS TO WORK AND ACT ON DATA AND ANALYTICS SWIFTLY, UNAMBIGUOUSLY, RELIABLY AND IMPACTFULLY, IN ORDER TO BUILD CONFIDENCE, MOMENTUM AND TRUST IN A STRONG, RESILIENT AND AGILE WORKFORCE.

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#HR #Polls | Do you think your organisation is more agile post-pandemic?

Yes

72.7%

No

27.3%



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Adrian Pyne is the author of 'Agile Beyond IT'
Published by Practical Inspiration Publishing

FULL METTLE JACKET

THE PANDEMIC WAS A RIGOROUS TEST OF METTLE AND ASKED THE HARDEST QUESTIONS IMAGINABLE OF BUSINESS RESILIENCE. AN EXTREME EVENT FOR SURE, WHICH FORCED US TO CONFRONT ESCALATING CHALLENGE TO AN INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY BUSINESS-AS-USUAL IDYLL AND THE NECESSITY TO CAPITALISE ON OPPORTUNITIES, HOWEVER SEEMINGLY OBTUSE. RESILIENCE IS NO LONGER JUST ABOUT MANAGING CORPORATE RISK OR DEFENCE AGAINST CHALLENGE, IT'S SURVIVAL.

For established businesses, competitive edge has been evolutionary, but the rise of sector disruptors is revolutionary. Like the impact Amazon is having on the retail sector, or Tesla for the automotive industry, disruptors have agility running through them like words in a stick of rock. The evidence is clear that agile organisations are more profitable. Agility is not just how sector disruptors work, it provides a model for building organisation culture and new operations. Culture is not just people, but the totality of how an organisation works, both visible and iceberg-like, beneath the surface. I see it as an integration of People - organisation, roles, behaviours, Process - policies, standards, procedures and how we do things here - and Technology - tools to support process and behaviours.

While there are many models, I like the coherence of McKinsey's six dimensions of resilience: Workforce, Social & environmental, Operational, Commercial, Financial and Future resilience. To provide a taster of this model, here is a case study focusing on the software company Wrangu. Here is a business that continued to grow steadily during the pandemic - due mainly to its organisation culture - which has agility and hybrid working at its core. The Wrangu Family adapted agility principles,

which can be boiled down to flexibility and just-enough. Across its operation - from product development to sales - remote working was key from the outset, hugely reducing costs for employees and

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the company and lowering the carbon footprint. It also allowed recruitment from anywhere and the team is spread around the UK and Europe. Hybrid working was a recruitment differentiator, attracting great people to Wrangu for its work-life balance. Then came COVID-19 and the company was well-placed to respond, moving all of its operations remotely as the capability was already in place.

Tools are used to support process and how the people work and enable everyone to see progress. While people are trusted to work at home, their performance is remotely and visibly managed, non-

intrusively. Then during lockdowns, collaboration tools enabled both client sales and implementations to continue. Although some clients adapted more slowly than others, both technically and in trusting full remote working. The CEO, Lee Grant summed it up when he said: "People are more important than process". The Wrangu Family hybrid mixes home and office, with personal interactions - such as key design and sales meetings - often critical. Social gatherings, although difficult during lockdowns, turned into regular virtual chats and quizzes. Wrangu is deliberately a flat organisation in which senior people are available to others, for coaching, consultation or just a shout for help, which is not seen as a weakness. Even the firm's three-week, highly structured onboarding process, is designed to bring new people into the family and up to speed quickly. There are many myths and mistakes to trap the unwary and misinformed. But agility provides a tremendous opportunity, although it carries its own risks, if misunderstood or mis-applied. This is because agility is as much behavioural as it is procedural. However, the advantages are considerable.

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ARTICLE BY DR LYNDA FOLAN, MANAGING DIRECTOR - INSPIRED DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS

*Dr Lynda Folan is the author of Leader Resilience,
The New Frontier of Leadership (2021)
Published by Vivid Publishing*

SO THIS IS VUCA

"ARTICULATING AN ORGANISATIONAL DEFINITION OF RESILIENCE
HAS ALLOWED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EVOLVE THE DISCUSSIONS ON
DETERMINANTS, MEASUREMENT AND DEVELOPMENT"

Life and the business context will not become any easier or less uncertain. The VUCA world is now a reality and we are living in truly unprecedented times. To deliver sustainable organisational outcomes in this context requires that businesses, their leaders and their people have the agility and adaptability to find new and unique ways to navigate volatility. The research is unequivocal, to thrive and maintain agility in a volatile context requires resilience at the individual, team and organisation levels.

We must develop the capacity to thrive and flourish in this new world. Research has consistently shown that individuals with high levels of resilience have an enhanced ability to bounce back from adversity and an increased capacity to thrive in turbulent times (Lipsitt & Demick, 2011 and Wagnild & Young, 1993). From a leadership perspective, this new world is demanding a shift. We know that a transformational leadership style is essential for maintaining engagement and organisational commitment in the context of ongoing change and destabilisation (Gilley, McMillan & Gilley, 2005; Lawler & Worley, 2010). Recent research has shown that without resilience, leaders can't deliver a transformational style in a volatile context (Folan, 2019).

The volatile context has resulted in a global escalation in mental health issues.

Projections from the NHS (*The Guardian*, 2022) indicate that ten million people will need new or additional support for mental health over the next three-to-five years. Research has shown a strong positive correlation between high resilience levels and enhanced wellbeing (Farber & Rosendahl, 2018). Organisations must develop strategies to effectively manage mental health in today's business context. Investing in wellbeing and mental health is not only key to supporting individuals, but is also essential for delivering sustainable organisational outcomes. While there is extensive research in clinical psychology, it is a relatively new and evolving area in organisational psychology. So, let's define what we mean by resilience in an organisational context. Resilience is "the internal capacity of the individual

which enables them to bounce back from adversity and flourish in the face of challenges while maintaining healthy levels of psychological, emotional and cognitive wellbeing." (Folan, 2019). Articulating an organisational definition of resilience has allowed the opportunity to evolve the discussions on determinants, measurement and development. A contemporary research-based model of individual resilience in an organisational context defines three determinants of resilience (Folan, 2019).

Self-concept wellbeing: Individuals with a clear and stable sense of self with healthy psychological functioning and adjustment can maintain their emotional stability and wellbeing in any context. *Internal locus of control:* individuals with the capacity to assess that their decisions, actions and outcomes are within their

control will take action in any context. They understand that their choices and actions impact their outcomes, allowing them to take action to bounce back in any context. *Constructive thinking:* individuals who have the ability to constructively assess external and internal stimuli and to utilise well-reasoned and balanced judgements in their decision-making are able to maintain their mental and emotional stability in any context. This model conceptualises resilience as a malleable, dispositional attribute that can be changed with effective developmental strategies. The dimensions are interrelated and work together to enhance the individual's ability to cope with the volatility and challenges in the VUCA world. They support individuals in maintaining wellbeing and flourishing through challenge and adversity. Research also shows that individual resilience can be developed and a range of strategies can be implemented to enhance resilience (Griffith & West, 2013). Therefore, there is no excuse for organisations not to invest in supporting their people to improve resilience levels. Human Resources and Organisational Development professionals provide critical support to their organisations by implementing a range of developmental strategies that enhance resilience. However, it is unacceptable for organisations to invest in supporting their people to develop resilience and abdicate their responsibility in this arena.

It is essential to ensure that all aspects of the business operation systems, practices and ways of working support resilience. Resilient organisational cultures and resilient leadership are intricately intertwined. Resilient leaders build cultures that allow their people to flourish and resilient organisations provide the context for leaders and their people to thrive. For organisations to succeed in 2022 and beyond, leaders must consistently focus on building a resilient culture. The culture will support the wellbeing of everyone involved and enhance the ability to bounce back. Organisations that maintain a positive, resilient culture ensure that the

workplace is psychologically safe for everyone and a place where people can thrive and flourish. So, what are the critical aspects that support a resilient organisational culture? Research evidence indicates some critical aspects of organisational functioning that separate resilient organisations from the rest of the pack. Here are the Seven habits of highly resilient organisations (Folan, 2021).

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A culture with a clear vision and strong values: If an organisation is going to develop a resilient culture, there must be a collaboratively defined vision that clearly defines where the organisation is heading. Alongside the vision, the business must have a simple, straightforward strategy that supports the delivery of the vision. Additionally, the organisation must maintain a relevant set of values that support the organisation in delivering the vision and strategy. The values must be lived and demonstrated by leaders and embedded in all aspects of organisational life. *Environmental responsiveness:* Resilient organisational cultures must keep a watchful eye on the external and internal environments to realign their strategy and maintain responsiveness. Charles Handy (1995) suggests that the best time to make changes is not after you have reached the peak of success, but before you reach it. If organisations are not systematically assessing their environment and aligning with the changing requirements, they will eventually decline or become irrelevant to their clients, customers, consumers or community. *Boundary management:* The

single most neglected aspect of a resilient culture is effective boundary management. This requires the systemic and disciplined management of acceptable and unacceptable attitudes, behaviours and actions. On the one hand, it requires a regular and consistent celebration of attitudes and behaviours that align with values and culture. *Organisational and workforce flexibility:* Traditionally, organisations have focused on the consistency and longevity of people in their roles. In today's world, this has changed. Now businesses must focus on flexibility, enabling regular shifts, to build individual and team agility. To maintain a resilient culture in today's world, organisations must build flexibility into all aspects of the organisational framework and ways of working.

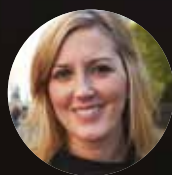
A strong and transparent internal and external communication network: Communication needs to be enhanced with well-developed strategies and systems to maintain the flow of dialogue both internally and externally. Leaders must constantly assess, develop and improve the flow of information. *Demarcated innovation and experimentation activities:* Innovation is one of the buzzwords that few organisations fully understand and most organisations make feeble attempts at delivering. For an organisation to maintain a resilient culture, demarcated time must be allocated to the process of innovation and creative thinking. *Individuals developing their resilience and organisation values:* Well-designed development strategies are crucial to unlocking individual, team and organisational resilience. A range of techniques must be implemented to enhance personal resilience levels and build a corporate culture that supports resilience throughout the organisation. So, the VUCA world requires that organisations build and maintain resilience at the individual team and organisational level.

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C O N N E C T

The space between us is as much a challenge as it is an opportunity. An agile mindset remains critical to finding balance that can sustain businesses through a recession that will put pressure on individuals facing spiralling inflation, interest rates and a crippling cost of living crisis. Whether enough is being done to bring people along the journey is the question, as challenges around talent, culture and performance change exponentially. But above all, organisational agility is the fundamental element and will be integral to engaging and connecting people through the challenges ahead.

"THE 'GREAT RESIGNATION' HAS DEFINITELY COME TO PASS AND THE NEW TREND FOR 'QUIET QUITTING' IS NOW TAKING ITS TOLL ON PRODUCTIVITY, AT A TIME WHEN BUSINESSES NEED OPTIMISED EFFORT"



ARTICLE BY JAMIE WILSON, MANAGING DIRECTOR, GROUP SERVICES - CRITICALEYE

With the HR function's traditional focus on process-driven rules and procedures, organisational design now sits squarely within the HR remit and is considered a top priority for the year ahead, across sectors. Other essentials include sustainability, hybrid working and diversity & inclusion, all of which anchor to the structure and design of the business. As former HR Director for the Co-operative Bank, Julie Harding commented: "On one hand, HR Directors are leading organisational agility as part of an ExCo, which needs to ensure it has the right resilience to weather future challenges. But HR leaders and the function more generally, also need to be mindful of the implications of this for the workforce. While some individuals will thrive when it comes to working in a more fluid environment, others will need support."

Support from the C-suite has to be taken as read when undertaking organisational change or transformation towards greater agility and act as a sounding board to new ideas, so it's important to forge good working relationship with NED and, in particular, the Chair. With this in mind, it is concerning to see that almost half (49 percent) of HR leaders cite limited exposure to their Boards as a barrier to them having the right influence to achieve the change required to move the dial to greater agility. This is at odds with the consensus across the ExCo and from Chairs and NEDs, that retaining key talent and developing skills is the top priority for organisations in the year ahead. So, is the C-suite failing to see the need for agility in the same frame as attracting and retaining talent? If the answer is yes, frustration is the only guaranteed outcome and so an open and honest conversation must be had, in order to demonstrate the correlation between talent management and agility. Former Chief HR Officer for Europe and Global Head of Labour Relations for IBM, Gary Kildare concurs: "Retaining talent will be fundamental in maintaining a resilient culture and as new generations of talent come in, they expect your organisation to have purpose. HR Directors and Chief People Officers will

have to ensure they have better discussions with the Board around the importance of connecting organisational strategy and the people strategy. Purpose and talent will be at the top of that agenda." With clear objectives agreed with leader peers, attention turns to the people agenda and how that fits into the business strategy as a whole. Aligning a clear and robust people strategy, capable of adapting to the stresses, will be critical to balancing productivity with agility.

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Returning to talent, retention and attraction of the most desired, is the number one priority in the year ahead and so building in resilience will be all about finding sustainable balance. Many businesses have seen higher employee turnover over the last few years - the now clichéd prophecy, the 'Great Resignation' has definitely come to pass and the new trend for 'Quiet Quitting' is now taking its toll on productivity, at a time when businesses need optimised effort. Here is the crux of the matter because, the difficulty of implementing new and more agile ways of working - at the same time as dealing with frequent changes of staff and the need for training this brings - creates pressure. Furthermore, no business can afford to assume that a cost-of-living crisis will hold people fast, because employees will still consider moving to a different job, if they feel their organisation does not provide the right support. Another problem HR leaders face is that with all the focus on business survival, that the people agenda will be

left to its own devices. Indeed, research concurs that a lack of time spent on strategy is the primary reason for failure in the top team. Furthermore, 94 percent of HR leaders believe their management teams are too inward-looking - operational rather than strategic - and focused on day-to-day tasks rather than the bigger picture. It is vital that the senior leadership team makes time for strategic discussion and looks at best practice outside of their own business, if they are to build agility and resilience into the business model.

It goes without saying that trust and honesty are key to these discussions around the boardroom table and executives need to be honest about the obstacles they may face in the shift to an agile working environment. Similarly, more conversations need to be had with the Board so that the right resources are allocated and to ensure the top team is making the right decisions and linking the business and people strategy effectively. In championing support for their colleagues and teams across the business, it is easy to neglect the support they need themselves as leaders. With such a key role to place in the drive to greater agility and resilience for their businesses, HR leaders need access to the right support networks and crucially, the opportunity to benchmark and stress-test some of their thinking around the strategy, outside of the business. Self-preservation is important, because the risk of burnout is very real in the current climate and with so much coming towards us all, the imperative to protect mental health in the challenging journey ahead, must not be forgotten.

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CRITICALEYE.COM

THE SHAPE OF WATER

SOMEWHERE, IN MOST KEYNOTES, THE WORD 'AGILE' CROPS UP AND THE AUDIENCE NODS SAGELY. BUT DO WE REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT AGILE MEANS IN PRACTICE AND, MORE PERTINENTLY, WHAT IT TAKES TO LEAD IN AN AGILE ENVIRONMENT? WE NEED TO FIND A BALANCE FROM THE QUICK DECISION-MAKING IN A CRISIS, TO A SUSTAINABLE LONG-TERM MODEL THAT GIVES ORGANISATIONS PACE WITHOUT THE PANIC.

ARTICLE BY JENNI FIELD, FOUNDER, BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIST
& AUTHOR - REDEFINING COMMUNICATIONS

The McKinsey *Agile Tribe* identified five trademarks of agile organisations. In an agile organisation, the North Star is embodied across the organisation, supported by a network of empowered teams. There are rapid decision and learning cycles and a people model that ignites passion. All this is supported by enabling technology*. A key aspect of being agile is the ability to make quick decisions and pivot, but operating in an agile environment is not easy. The ability to adapt and change quickly is at the centre of this - and people don't like change that much - so it is important to look at how we can avoid ending up in ambiguous situations that eventually impacts on people's resilience. Humans are designed to dislike ambiguity, it makes us uncomfortable because we can't predict what is going to happen. We don't feel safe and we move into a threat response. This is all linked to our brains and how we work as human beings so being able to cope well with ambiguity takes resilience.

There are three key leadership traits that are essential to being agile and they centre around resilience. The first is adaptability - leaders need to be more like water in a stream - the water will flow around a rock, it won't just stop. The water moves seamlessly around the obstruction and this is the key. It's not about being chaotic, it is about being structured, but fluid enough to shift. There is always a way forward and there is always a solution, it's just about discovering it and having the right people in the room to assist. Humour is also essential - that doesn't mean we don't take things seriously, but it's a good coping strategy when it comes to change. Being able to bring the right amount of light-heartedness in is essential to building cohesive teams. As a leadership team, as you work together, having a few laughs along the way is important.

The final trait is having a sense of hopeful equanimity. This is about the need to balance hope, optimism and realism. Attaching hope to external circumstances you cannot control will end in disappointment.

Being agile is all about holding the tension between creating a clear overarching vision, while implementing a strategy that allows for flexibility. Any leadership team needs to have a clear, strategic narrative to align people to - this needs to come first - as engagement cannot be achieved without it. This alignment to the strategy must exist, in order to lead effectively in an agile environment. It could be argued that being agile is to be in a constant state of change, but in reality, organisations should be evolving constantly. We just need to remember that being human means we don't naturally like it. Research tells us that there are six things that concern people when it comes to change and to take people on the journey, we must address information, personal, implementation, impact, collaboration and refinement concerns and make sure they are all addressed throughout any significant shift. Every organisation has a rhythm that supports agility and pace of movement. Often people say, "we work at pace around here", while operating in an organisation riddled with inefficiency. Without elements like infrastructure - in terms of meetings, having the right people in the room, or the right success measures - it's going to be difficult to make it work.

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FOR FURTHER INFO
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IV

OUTSOURCING - A NEW ERA

THE IMPACTS AND INFLUENCES OF THE PANDEMIC ARE NOW LIVED EXPERIENCE. THIS IS CERTAINLY EVIDENT IN OUTSOURCING WHERE, ALONG WITH ONGOING VOLATILITY AND A SKILLS CRISIS, A MARKED ESCALATION OF RELIANCE ON OUTSOURCING IS PLAYING ACROSS SECTORS, WHICH LOOKS SET TO DOMINATE HOW FIRMS NAVIGATE THE DYNAMIC AND UNCERTAIN TIMES AHEAD. EVIDENTLY, THERE'S A MEGATREND IN THIRD-PARTY CONTRACTS, AS A RESPONSE TO THESE SEISMIC EVENTS AND SUBSEQUENT CHANGE, WITH DATA AND ANALYTICS NOW DRIVING THE MARKET AND REDEFINING THE TRADITIONAL FACE OF OUTSOURCING SERVICES.

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#HR #Polls | Do you think your organisation is doing enough to support students into the workplace?

Yes

33.3%

No

66.7%



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ARTICLE BY PAOLA MARTINEZ, VICE PRESIDENT OF PEOPLE OPERATIONS - JOBSITY

REMOTE POSSIBILITY

FROM INCREASES IN REMOTE WORK TO COMPANIES REDUCING COSTS, THINGS ARE NOT AND WILL NOT BE THE SAME AS THEY WERE PRIOR TO 2020. ALONG WITH ONGOING MARKET VOLATILITY AND THE SKILLS CRISES, THE PANDEMIC'S EFFECTS HAVE LED TO INCREASED OUTSOURCING. THIS ESCALATION IS BEING SEEN ACROSS DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES AND IT LOOKS SET TO DOMINATE HOW COMPANIES NAVIGATE THE UNCERTAIN TIMES AHEAD.

There is a megatrend of contracting third-party companies as a response to these seismic changes to the business landscape. The two main forces driving the widespread adoption of outsourcing is the upsurge of remote work and digital transformation. According to a 2022 study: High paying remote job opportunities rose from four percent prior to the pandemic to nine percent at the end of 2020 and 18 percent in 2021. Notably, in North America, 25 percent of high paying jobs will be remote by the end of 2022. One of the notable upsides for businesses, access to the global talent pool. Indeed, expanding recruitment options beyond geographic boundaries has many obvious advantages.

Looking at global circumstances and challenges ahead, let us consider the opportunities and benefits of outsourcing in these times. The first and most pressing issue is reducing costs, closely followed by access to a diverse workforce, efficiency, the freedom to focus on core competencies and better customer experience as a result. For many companies, the most important consideration when scaling a team is the bottom line and outsourcing has the benefit of offering competitive rates. The recruitment fees and overhead costs that come with hiring a traditional employee

are reduced and businesses can focus on just paying a base salary for outsourced staff. This often results in cost savings, especially when many outsourced contractors offer rates that are reasonable compared to the company's territory.

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When a business partners with an outsourcing firm that recruits talent worldwide, this creates ample opportunities for the firm to develop a more diverse workforce. While each staff member has a set of technical skills that they bring to the table, everyone contributes their different perspectives. A diverse team leads to innovation, rather than stagnation. Good outsourced specialists have well-established processes for screening candidates and their timelines will likely be shorter than

a typical, inhouse recruitment process. Instead of your company having to take a chance on a new hire, the outsourcing firm should have solid candidates that align well with your unique needs. The firm can focus on finding great staff, allowing key personnel within the business to focus on running the core parts of the business. Indeed, outsourcing mitigates the concerns of having all expertise in-house. This leaves companies the time and energy to focus on the core aspects of staying competitive.

Ultimately, outsourcing may be an inevitable part of the future of business operations. But in the modern world, we have the luxury of being able to outsource in new, innovative ways. For example, significant advances in technology are allowing for increased digital automation. Additionally, rather than traditional outsourcing - when you contract an offshore, external team to complete an entire project - staff augmentation is becoming an attractive alternative. This involves contractors being integrated with the inhouse team, so managers can directly supervise the workflow of the outsourced team members, which leads to more collaboration and efficiency.

FOR FURTHER INFO
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ARTICLE BY WADE BURGESS, CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER - VELOCITY GLOBAL

OUTSOURCING 2.0

"THERE ARE ONE MILLION PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN THE U.S.
IN THE CYBERSECURITY INDUSTRY, BUT THERE ARE OVER 700,000
ADDITIONAL UNFILLED POSITIONS. THAT EQUATES TO OVER 30
PERCENT OF ROLES UNFILLED"

For as long as humans have been organising in groups, we've been outsourcing to some degree. When working in family groups was the norm, outsourcing was about teaming up with other families to create larger communities or tribes. As these communities expanded so did their outsourcing reach, teaming up with people further away. Outsourcing from greater distances increased in step with advancements in technology and transportation. In each case, people found they could gain much more together than on their own.

Of course, the term “outsourcing” and all of the connotations assigned to it, is often tied to foreign contracting or offshoring of jobs, from the country of origin. Back in the past, outsourcing took the form of hiring in less expensive labour markets, purely for a cost benefits. It was simply labour arbitrage. Of course, this still happens in many industries and geographic markets - perhaps most frequently in manufacturing, administration and customer support services. But the pandemic and subsequent societal acceptance of remote work, at least to a certain level, have ushered in a new wave and, dare I say, a new type of outsourcing altogether. This new outsourcing is less about cost and more

about solving talent gaps. Similar to our earlier days of working within family-group communities, our need for talent exceeds what is available within our local communities. So remote working is enabling talent sourcing beyond a 30-mile radius of the office and the potential for hiring top talent on a truly global scale.

If we consider the cybersecurity sector as just one example, according to CyberSeek, there are just over one million people employed in the U.S. in the country's cybersecurity industry, but there are over 700,000 additional unfilled positions. That equates to over 30 percent of roles unfilled. If we broaden the picture - at this juncture in our economy and even in recession-era economics - there are

simply more unfilled roles than available local talent. Consequently, if we are to continue connecting talent with opportunity at the massive scale that is needed, we must look globally. The potential is obvious, where in the past we had been limited by our access to other groups, with the advancements in technology - and the evolution of how we now work - the aperture from which we recruit talent continues to expand, from the original family unit, all the way into our global community. In short, talent doesn't have a postcode. But despite access to a greater talent pool than ever before, the stigma around outsourcing lingers. In the past, concerns around the ethics of working in lower-cost countries, delivering

lower-quality products, managing disparate time zones and sending jobs overseas, produced negative energy around utilising global talent. Many of these concerns are understandable, but if outsourcing is approached with the right intentions and a strong commitment to accountability, these issues can be managed and can result in positives that far outweigh the challenges.

At present, I think the main barrier for companies to engage the global workforce is the idea that those who are working outside of the office are less productive. There is a sentiment that if you can't physically see someone, they are somehow less accountable and more likely to take advantage of the company's "generosity" in allowing remote work. Though the data on productivity while working from home is mixed, the fact is that those who are unproductive away from the office are likely the same people who are unproductive in the office. Looking more broadly, if the team as a whole isn't performing as well as expected, there are of course ways and means to manage and incentivise them, regardless of location. We all imagine tech firms to be on the leading curve of this new era of work, but ironically it is one of the most-guilty industries of conventional resource thinking, particularly in the United States. In Silicon Valley, there has been this general belief that someone had to live within a few zip codes in the Bay Area to be an effective software engineer, which has led to a shrinking local talent pool, an extreme increase in the cost of labour - and associated cost of living - and, you guessed it, the need to outsource. Of course, we know talent isn't confined to Silicon Valley - skilled people live everywhere - so, for an organisation wanting to hire the best people to accomplish work, the world is literally their oyster.

But of course, not all outsourcing is created equal and at present, there are three main options for engaging international talent. *Project-based outsourcing*: This first option is outsourcing a project of limited scope or duration, to a contractor or company.

This is a fairly common solution for creative projects such as; marketing assets, website building or services such as payroll or customer support. There are many benefits to this method, particularly around compliance and gaining a skill set that the organisation may not otherwise possess. But the strong downside is a lack of quality control, because the outsourced person is not being managed directly, decisions about who is hired or indeed fired are decisions usually made extraneously, by the third-party outsourcing party. This can be frustrating on the discovery that an outsourced person in place may not always be the

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best fit and a real risk in this arrangement is not being able to take quick action. The second option is for a businesses to create their own international entity, as this method maintains full control over hiring and managing an international team. In many cases, this makes the most sense when setting up in a new location where a business intends to remain and operate from in the long-term. On the other hand, committing to a specific region, country, headcount and more permanent management of an additional location takes significant planning, strategy, capital and, above all, time.

Added to the initial setup, the ongoing management of international

employees requires adherence to a new set of regulations, compliance requirements and reporting structures, that may be entirely different from the country in which the headquarters are located. Of course, all of these tasks take up a significant amount of managerial time for non-growth-related activity. Turning to the third option, this is to partner with a global employer of record or EoR for short. This option enables rapid scale with very little managerial or financial overhead. This setup utilises local experts on the ground, which is often the most risk-averse way of directly engaging the employees required, while maintaining brand and quality. This option means the process of engaging with international talent looks and feels just like hiring talent in a home country, without the legal, HR and compliance-related issues. Meanwhile, the benefits of hiring and managing employees virtually has no downsides. So, what is the future of outsourcing? It has of course evolved and will only continue to do so. With this advancement, the existing barriers to outsourcing and any remaining stigma associated with it will lessen and, with fewer barriers, the future affords us more opportunities. With this new version of global collaboration, solutions are guided by the need to enable employers to hire great talent wherever they may reside, with minimal operational friction. Whether employers outsource projects to use another company's skill set, employ contractors short-term, hire full-time employees through EoR services, or establish their own entities, it is clear global talent is part of our future talent solutions. This is Outsourcing 2.0, empowering organisations and liberating the global workforce.

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T H E R E M A Y B E T U R B U L E N C E

As we continue to navigate through turbulent times, firms face uncertain times ahead and new pressures in managing disparate workforces. Increasingly, as dynamics and constant change force businesses to adopt new ways of operating, there will be an increasing need to outsource elements of the business that were traditionally carried out internally and that includes HR. Indeed, an increasingly viable option for HR leaders is to outsource elements of their team's tasks, to allow them to focus on more business-critical issues.

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SEEN AS A NICE TO HAVE, BUT AN ESSENTIAL OFFERING"



ARTICLE BY ALISON KING, MANAGING
DIRECTOR - BESPOKE HR

As the nature of work changes, so undoubtedly have the priorities for HR leaders this year and the sector's outsourcing market is poised to grow by \$10.90bn from now until 2026, all driven by the need to improve the HR value chain in challenging times. Not surprisingly, agility is unquestionably business critical and outsourcing is predicted to accelerate in HR as leaders learn to collaborate in an environment where flexibility, speed and cost is now more crucial than physical location. We have all witnessed this in the hiring and onboarding processes of the past few years, along with managing hybrid workers and electronic documentation. Meanwhile, employee expectation is also contributing to the changing nature of work. Pre-pandemic the typical outsourced support would likely focus on ER, documentation and protecting the business. Indeed, back in 2019, YouGov found that 70 percent of B2B decision-makers, handed off key services to third-parties as a common response to key challenges.

Fast-forward three years and there has been a definite step-change in key concerns and requirements - managing disparate workforces and the issues that come with that, stepping in to cover vacant roles and running payroll - in which outsourcing is proving to be a cost-effective solution, allowing HR leaders to focus on the task in hand. It's worth noting too, that leaders across organisation have gained a heightened understanding and appreciation of the importance of HR strategy, to support business growth and they are recognising the value in outsourcing elements of the HR function. This means services are in higher demand. Undoubtedly, there has been a seismic - and some may argue much-needed - shift towards the wellbeing and welfare of staff and supporting employee mental health and wellbeing is the biggest challenge and agenda issue. With this comes new challenges in building organisational culture and values and appropriately managing performance as a response to these changes, against a statistic which shows that 55 percent of workers would

seek a new job, if their mental health was not being supported by their employer. What is more, a quarter of women with serious menopause symptoms have left their jobs and so a wellbeing platform is now clearly no longer seen as a nice to have, but an essential offering. Meanwhile, driven by the desire to reduce overheads, freelance workers are seeing an increase in demand for their services and the nature of the agreement is providing flexibility to work remotely, reduce office overheads, no tax or NI from an employer perspective and, with the likely abolition of IR35, this option is becoming more appealing.

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The role of providers has changed to reflect these shifts too. Notably, outsource provider consultants are increasingly on an interim basis - as a cost-effective alternative to hiring a maternity cover, for example - which typifies the fluidity of resourcing now. Of course, there are other factors at play too, the so-called 'Great Resignation', has put pressure on employers not only to recruit, but retain staff. There has been an increase in staff engagement projects, gaining a true understanding of staff needs and motivations. Additionally, in response to the 'Great Resignation', employing from overseas is increasingly becoming more appealing. However, in recent years there has been an increase in legislation which has increased the overall length and complexity of the VISA process in the UK. Outsourcing HR also enables organisations to ensure they are legally compliant when managing the VISA

process, as well as seek advice and guidance from those well versed with the updated process and who are alert to recent changes. The cost-of-living crisis too is forcing leaders to look at overheads. Deloitte found that up to 70 percent of businesses chose to partner with an outsourcing company for cost reduction. This in turn is having an impact on where people work and their efforts to conserve resources in travelling to and from the workplace. It has also led many to question whether remote work is better for the environment. Whilst emissions are now almost back at pre-pandemic levels, employees aren't. With physical location no longer a barrier for workers, a survey of over 1,000 hybrid workers by IWG found that 88 percent plan to work from anywhere in the next 12 months. With reports that Spotify told its 6,500-strong workforce they can work from anywhere, in whatever region, managing employees across borders is clearly the future.

With driving change and dealing with a complex set of transitional elements towards the new era of work, it is likely HR consultancy is expected to boom over the coming 12 months. In fact, a first of its kind survey of independent HR firms found nine-out-of-ten expect to grow their business in the next twelve months. A survey carried out by HRI - a UK body for independent HR and people professionals - found that half had gained more clients during the pandemic and two-thirds felt that HR had become more credible in the face of COVID. So the nature of HR consultancy is likely to continue to change in the coming years as the world adapts to this 'new normal'. However, it is unlikely we will see a complete reversal in the advances that have been made in the field in recent years. More likely, HR consultancies and organisations will work together to navigate these turbulent times ahead, to discover ways to best serve both the employer and employee.

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.BESPOKEHR.COM

PAY HEED

THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT BUSINESS OPERATIONS ARE INCREASINGLY CHALLENGING AROUND PEOPLE - COST PRESSURES, DIGITISATION, COMPLIANCE AND RISK, AUTO-ENROLMENT, CHANGING TAX AND EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION, THE ADMIN BURDEN AND COST-OF-LIVING - THE LIST GOES ON. ADD HEIGHTENED EMPLOYEE EXPECTATION AND FLEXIBLE WORKING PATTERN COMPLEXITY AND PAYROLL IS CLEARLY AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF BOTH GOOD EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY.

ARTICLE BY DAVID MCCORMACK, CEO - HIVE360

Traditional outsourced payroll models involve only the processing. But new and progressive models build in risk and responsibility-sharing that focuses on commercial impacts and addresses the increasing pressure on costs and factors-in a richer and beneficial employee experience. So what are the key criteria in selecting an outsourced payroll provider? Firstly, they must be HMRC and GLAA compliant and provide and demonstrate transparent PAYE payroll support. They should guarantee delivery of accurate, on time and compliant worker pay as a basic provision and have a future-proof solution that meets IR35 and the Good Work Plan. They must include auto enrolment pension administration and a high performing workplace pension provision. It is worth warning here that there are unscrupulous activities in the market to watch out for. There have been several tax avoidance and unscrupulous models of payroll that have left temporary workers financially penalised and open to illegal activity that threatens the business and the workers.

New guidelines evidence the Government's drive to encourage businesses to examine the supply chain with comprehensive, regular due diligence, to ensure they work with only fully compliant and ethical payroll providers. There have also been examples of so-called Mini Umbrella Companies (MUC), that put businesses at risk, but there are red flags to watch out for, if a company is a MUC including: A MUC model of payroll payments is via randomly named companies - that frequently change - with no transparency of pay deductions provided. There are few or no employers' NI paid on workers' pay, which HMRC classifies as tax fraud. Workers paid through multiple limited companies with unusual names because the MUC model needs payroll companies to have limited payroll payments that allow the use of employers' NI allowance and very little else. They often operate

from serviced offices, bulk mailboxes or offshore locations and the individual business type registered with Companies House frequently does not match the trading group name. Also, the Directors/ Shareholders are non-UK nationals, non-resident in the UK and non-tax resident. They may utilise flat rate VAT accounting, which gains them additional income without the need for accounting records. Indeed, MUCs are structured to achieve multiple employment allowance opportunities, because they use multiple limited companies.

Payroll has to be run on time, accurately and compliantly, or it's catastrophic and handing payroll over to another organisation is terrifying, but essential for busy businesses. Working with a legitimate, reputable provider improves efficiency, saves money, gives peace of mind and frees-up time and headspace to focus on the business. But there are loads of payroll providers out there and investing in comprehensive due diligence up front is vital. Ask for references, evidence of HMRC compliance and the latest audit. Talk to other businesses about who they use for payroll, check-out online reviews and ask for proof the provider understands your sector and relevant legislation. Meet their team to establish the business is reliable, has robust systems and processes, the knowledge and resource to act and respond and that payroll is in the right format for you. If payroll is run in-house, there's always the nagging doubt that something could be missed or a mistake made. Trust comes over time, but before selecting a payroll provider, obtain evidence that they have excellent communication tools, secure technology, satisfied customers and value openness and transparency. Employee support is now so important and if this is part of the outsourced payroll provider's solution, it's one to embrace.

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TO THE POINT

TIME TRIAL

UK COMPANIES TOOK PART IN THE WORLD'S BIGGEST TRIAL OF A FOUR-DAY WORKING WEEK. THE SIX-MONTH PROJECT - RUN BY 4 DAY WEEK GLOBAL - FEATURED MORE THAN 3,300 EMPLOYEES AT 70 COMPANIES, WORKING WITH NO LOSS OF PAY. IN RETURN, EMPLOYEES PLEDGED TO MAINTAIN 100 PERCENT PRODUCTIVITY. BUT CAN SIMPLY SHORTENING THE TRADITIONAL WORKING WEEK POSSIBLY BE THE PANACEA?



ARTICLE BY EUGENE FARRELL, CHAIR - EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION, EAPA (UK)

The pilot has involved a variety of employers, ranging from a seaside fish and chip shop to finance, construction, education and IT businesses. Researchers have been tracking the progress of participants in terms of their wellbeing - stress and burnout, productivity, changes in environmental footprint, travel and energy use - as well as issues like what happens to gender equality. The principle of the four-day week is gaining a great deal of interest from governments internationally, with pilots going ahead in; Ireland, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Iceland previously ran a scheme where working hours were cut to 35-36 each week for 2,500 workers. An analysis of the outcomes showed how there had been rises in both productivity and wellbeing. Now Scotland plans to offer the four-day arrangement to its public sector workers - although, this will be as compensation for lower wages.

The COVID-19 experience in itself was a huge experiment in the impact of home working and more time for friends and family. What was clear from that was how differently people reacted. For some, more free time was a golden opportunity,

whereas for others it only heightened their sense of isolation. The four-day week will certainly improve satisfaction levels for a proportion of the workforce and provide more of a release valve for pressures. But more time off is not going to be the simple answer to the UK's challenges around stress and mental ill-health. It's very clear in the trial that employers expect to maintain - and believe they can raise - levels of productivity. In other words, many staff will find they're under more pressure to deliver outputs and results in the four days. As we all know, holidays can be a welcome relief, but they don't mean anything has changed when we go back to our routines. There is often only more stress and the need to catch-up for lost time. A healthy balance for employees happens when organisations understand the pressures, are willing to listen to individual concerns and be flexible in everyday ways, when there's a culture of trust and support.

HR and employers need to be clear about what offering shorter hours actually means in practice. Encouraging good mental health isn't so simple as offering

more flexibility and less formality in how we work. On the surface, WFH means flexibility, more time for family and friends, but it also means no divide between home and work, a greater sense of pressure, isolation and more people working longer without noticing. What about when extra time at home only intensifies worries around relationships or finances? Four-day weeks may well be a significant part of the future of work for many, but in terms of wellbeing, it will just be one factor in a complicated picture, where listening and understanding individual situations and how they are changing, will continue to be critical to supporting employees during these changeable and challenging times.

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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



Helen Cook

ROLE CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER
COMPANY FINASTRA

Finastra has announced the appointment of Helen Cook as Chief People Officer, with global responsibility for people management.

Helen Cook is particularly passionate about building a curious and well-tooled workforce, as well as supporting employees to develop skills that keep them relevant, engaged and growing. This is in line with Finastra's aspiration to be the most inclusive and diverse employer in the Fintech industry. Helen joins from Natwest Group, where she was a member of the executive team and held the position of Chief Human Resources Officer. She has an incredible wealth of expertise including extensive global exposure in all aspects of people strategy. Her career spans more than 25 years in financial services, having gained experience at Deutsche Bank and Morgan Stanley.

Luis Herrera Tejedor

ROLE HR DIRECTOR
COMPANY THE HOLY SEE

Pope Francis has appointed the Vatican's first-ever HR Director,

Luis Herrera Tejedor is to head the Holy See's newly-created Human Resources Department.

As the first HR Director at the Vatican, Luis Herrera Tejedor will be heading the Holy See's Human Resources Department, which will be located in the Secretariat for the Economy, in the heart of the Vatican with a long career in HR across a number of sectors, previously, Tejedor served as HR Director of the Spanish subsidiary of Yves Saint Laurent, as well as the Logista Distribution Group and, most recently, he served as Staff Director at the Spanish bank Inversis. After leaving the financial institute, he has been a coach to startups and SMEs and is now taking charge of more than 3,000 employees at the Vatican.

Lindsay Beresford

ROLE HR DIRECTOR
COMPANY LEEDS BRADFORD AIRPORT

Leeds Bradford Airport (LBA) has appointed a new HR Director in Lindsay Beresford, who moves from her previous role at Royal Mail.

At LBA, Lindsay Beresford will lead the development of a people strategy over the coming months, which will involve resourcing, learning and development and employee experience projects. At Royal Mail, she held a number of roles over the space of 20 years, including her most recent position as HR Director for the North Region, in which she provided support to over 50,000 people

across 700 sites. Lindsay's role at LBA will include developing a dynamic people strategy, that is clear on how important employee experience is in creating great passenger experience.

Julie Davies

ROLE HR BUSINESS PARTNER
COMPANY NICHOLAS ASSOCIATES GROUP

Talent solutions provider Nicholas Associates Group has announced the appointment of Julie Davies as their new HR Business Partner.

In her new role, Julie will be responsible for ensuring a smooth and efficient HR service across the organisation. Her focus will be on helping to create an environment and culture that will attract, develop, and retain talent by offering a great Employee Value Proposition and place to work. Julie has an HR career spanning over 20 years and worked for 12 years at Parker Hannifin Corporation. Prior to this she was a Regional HR Specialist and Compensation & Benefits Specialist, EMEA for Panduit Europe Limited.

FOR FURTHER UPDATES

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



NEXT MONTH ISSUE 219

If you have an opinion on any of the articles featured in this magazine, please share it by going to this link
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INTERVIEW

Jenna Baker, Chief People Officer - GB Bank

ROUNDTABLE

Building more inclusive leadership

TRENDS FOR 2023

Will the challenges ahead obstruct momentum towards essential improvements to the social fabric of work and wider society?

HR'S CHANGING INFLUENCE

HR needs to be the reliable bell

weather, the seismograph of disruption and purveyor of reliable and integrated data

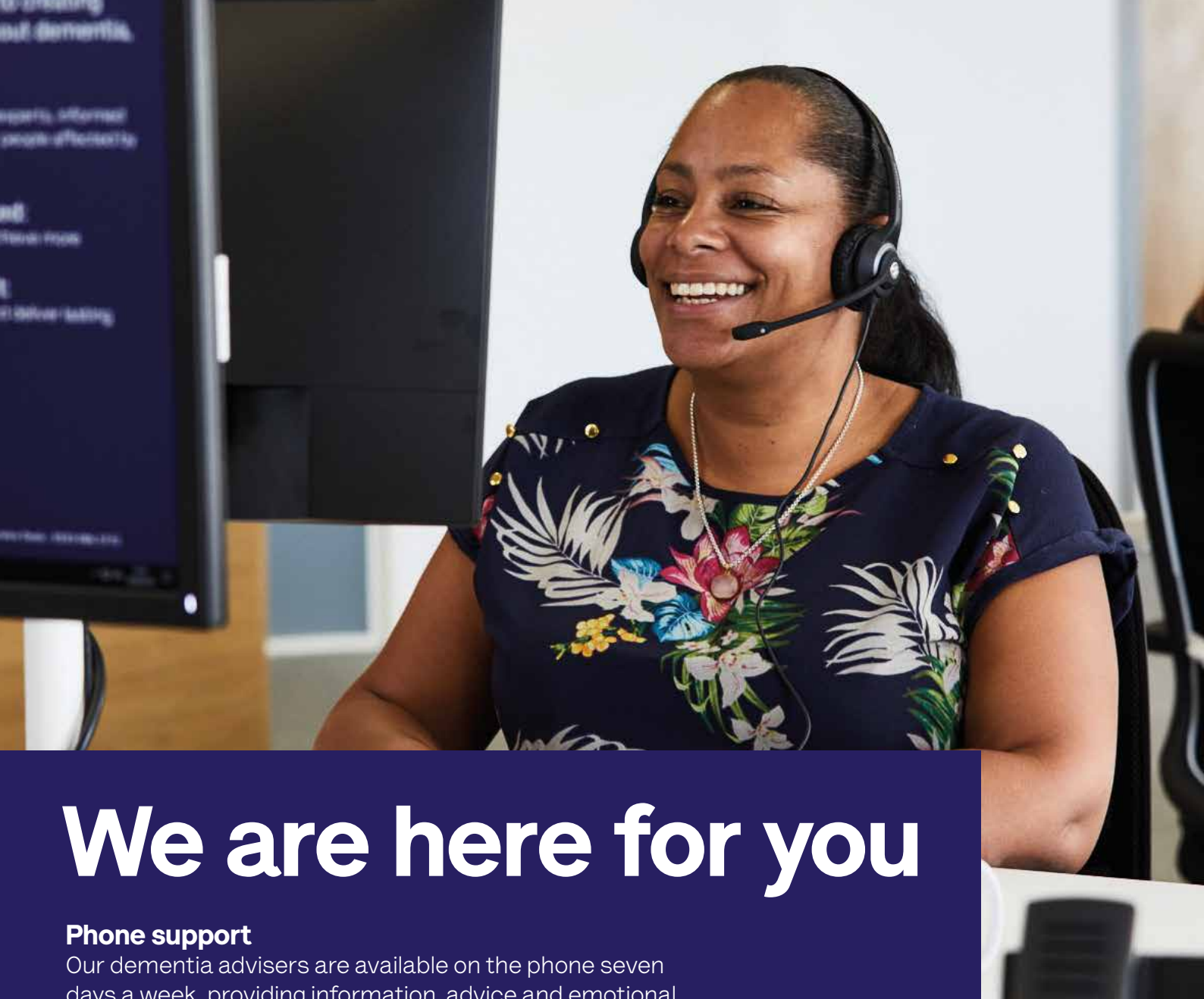
RESILIENCE

Resilience is imperative, to meet adversity and mitigate against the mental pressures associated with uncertainty.

MAINTAINING HUMAN CONNECTIVITY

There is a return to key elements of human interaction that cannot be left to muscle memory.





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Person living with dementia





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