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RELOCATION OPERATIONS
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Elf and safety certificate preferred.

People Management

December 2021/January 2022

rn: December

REINDEER ARE TEAM LEADER

include feeding,
king out, hoof
ing, grooming,
r maintenance
nose shining.

animal care
ication desired.

LEIGH ITENANCE GINEER

ied engineering
sional sought to
vehicle usability,
rt and safe flying.

One month per year
rt: Immediately

WRAPPING CHNICIAN

d be comfortable
g with non-standard
xperience with bows
ribbons essential.

rovide own scissors

WANTED

NORTH POLE ENTERPRISES PLC



TOY DISTRIBUTION OPERATIONS MANAGER

Full, clean sleigh licence
Good with animals
Able to work in confined spaces
Own beard preferred

Perks include company vehicle and
excellent holiday allowance

No one is immune to the talent crisis.

Here's how to solve it

production facility and large team.
lification desired.

Duties include ensuring hi
standard of toy producti
and cross-referencing
recipients with naughty a
nice lists.

Excellent attention to
detail essential.

EXECUTIVE BAK REQUIRED

To join team catering t
meals per day for lar
workforce of elves

Qualifications in mi
pies and candy
canes preferred

TOY BUILDERS

Maximum height 4'7
Immediate start

POSTAL COMMUNICA EXECUTIV

Flexible three-week
available.

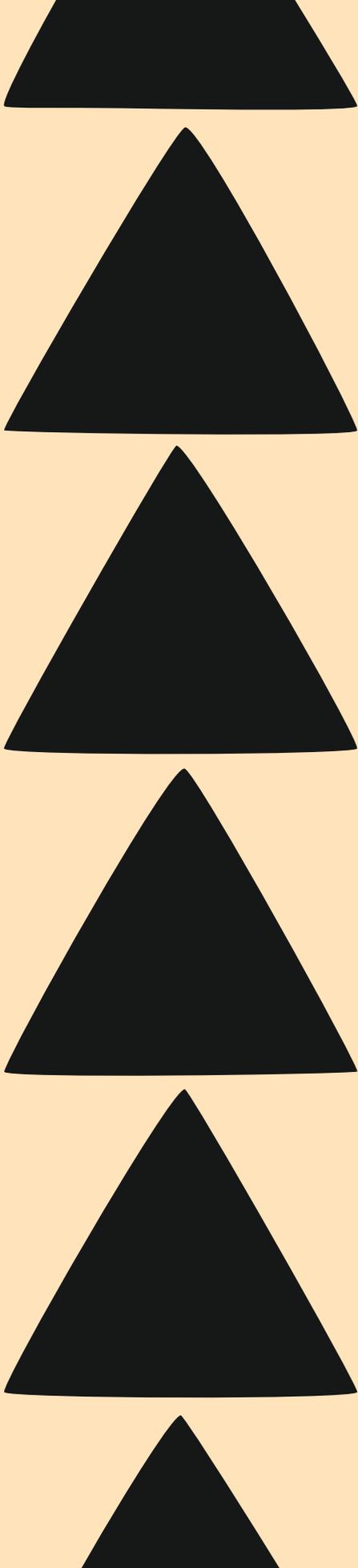
CIPD satio
language skills es



Healthy companies outperform.

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CEOs are talking about.

The employee wellbeing
and performance experts
goodshape.com



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December 2021/January 2022

Despite December being upon us, things feel decidedly unfestive in some corners of the labour market, with staff shortages and recruitment struggles marring the season of good will. But, as we delve into the crisis as part of this special talent issue, there are ways HR can help alleviate the problems, from offering flexible working to supercharging employer brand. Fingers crossed for a more positive outlook in 2022, and in the meantime, have a very merry Christmas.

Eleanor Whitehouse **Acting editor**

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Welcome
from the CIPD

Another uncertain year ahead



Peter Cheese
Chief executive



p24



As we look ahead to the start of a new year, there is a lot on our collective agendas. The pandemic continues to rear its head with new variants and further restrictions for many, just as we had been enjoying more opening up in society. Meanwhile, we continue to take forward the lessons learned from the lockdowns, such as the drive for more flexibility in how we work and the importance of responsible business.

COP26 gave us all a big reminder of the crisis of our climate and the environment, as well as ongoing geopolitical tensions. Businesses everywhere are being called on to act responsibly and to show their true green credentials: to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. As people professionals we need to be an active part of this, supporting the shift in behaviours, cultures and working practices that make the difference.

In the face of ongoing challenges, our economies are still jumpy and uncertain. There are now workforce pressures and supply chain issues that are driving up inflation, which is likely to be a big theme in the coming year. Adaptability, sustainability, resilience and confidence will be attributes we will all need in response.

Significant concerns are showing up around hard-to-fill job vacancies, which are at a scale not seen for many years. In sectors such as hospitality, agriculture, construction, logistics, health and social care, the recruitment challenges are so significant that the inability to meet demand is holding back the recovery.

We are also seeing many people reconsider their occupations and the organisations they have been working for – part of what has been termed the ‘Great Resignation’, and the latest employment data is showing some uptick in people moving on from their jobs. Younger workers have always tended to be more mobile, but older workers also appear to be reconsidering their options. The pandemic has led to changes in the labour market and a time of considerable reflection

for many people about what’s most important to them. ‘The Great Rethink’ is perhaps a more fitting term.

In turn, these recruitment shortfalls – together with ongoing absences from workplaces due to Covid – are leading to shortages through many supply chains. They also create additional pressure and workload for employees, and we continue to see signs of

stress and fatigue across many workforces.

If we are to meet the challenges of attracting and retaining talent, we must do more to create positive and supportive cultures, great places to work that are truly inclusive, and support growth and progression for our people. The UK government is putting in place more funding for older workers to retrain or take new qualifications, but we should also focus on the core and transferable skills that underpin almost every job. As job skill needs evolve, learning and development must also adapt and become more agile: we can’t expect to be able to recruit every skill we need.

Our role as people professionals is therefore becoming ever more central. The pressure is on us to step up, to help deal with the challenges and be able to look ahead, to think and operate strategically. We all need to invest more in ourselves and our role at the CIPD is to help support you, and to share learning and knowledge. We’re pleased to have now launched our new online Learning Hub to members, to help us all learn and connect more. With our ongoing guidance, networks and communities, we know that together we can be a stronger profession and make a real difference in creating a positive future.

IAN FORSYTH/GETTY IMAGES; HANNAH J TAYLOR

This month we've learned...

The big lesson



The HGV driver shortage that has caused supply problems in UK shops shows little sign of improvement

{Employee engagement}

Loyalty lower than expected

The last 18 months have left their mark on employee relations: research released last month found that while the majority of employers believe staff loyalty increased following the pandemic, only half of employees felt the same way.

The poll of 491 senior managers and 1,061 employees, carried out by Sapio for WorkNest HR, found 64 per cent of senior leaders believed staff became more loyal because of their company's response to the pandemic. However, the same poll found just 45 per cent of employees felt their firms handled the coronavirus crisis well and were more loyal as a result. In fact, the research found a quarter (23 per cent) of employees said they felt less loyal as a consequence of their employer's response to the pandemic, while 32 per cent said there was no change.

Donna Gibb, head of client services at WorkNest HR, warned firms they could see a drain of talent if employees felt they were being treated unfairly – warning that this could be a particular problem for remote workers. “Employers that not only embrace flexibility but put measures in place to ensure employees feel just as included wherever they work stand to have an advantage,” she said.

{Recruitment}

Hard-to-fill vacancies will increase

There are very few businesses that haven't been affected by the labour squeeze as the economy starts to pick up following the pandemic, and firms are not optimistic things will improve soon. A CIPD poll of 1,000 employers found nearly half (47 per cent) had vacancies they were struggling to fill, up from 39 per cent the previous quarter. Similarly, more than a quarter (27 per cent) said they expected the number of these 'hard to fill' vacancies to increase over the next six months.

A separate poll by the Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) painted a similar picture; the record growth in job adverts is showing no signs of slowing in the run-up to Christmas, with key worker roles increasing at the start of November. Official figures from the Office for National Statistics also put job vacancies at another record high in the last quarter, rising by 388,000 to 1.17 million from August to October. At the same time, the number of people on payroll

“Employers should focus on improving how they develop their existing staff”

increased by 160,000, while the unemployment rate fell by 0.6 percentage points to 4.3 per cent – nearly pre-pandemic levels.

In response, Gerwyn Davies, senior labour market adviser at the CIPD, urged employers to focus on retaining their existing workforce. “The figures show a surge in job-to-job moves driven by employees taking advantage

of the tight ‘jobseeker-friendly’ labour market, and people rethinking their career priorities after the pandemic,” he said.

“Employers should focus on improving how they develop and retain their existing workforce to prevent or reduce skill and labour shortages,” Davies added.

The CIPD's research found that nearly half (47 per cent) of businesses had raised wages over the last six months to help offset hard-to-fill vacancies. On top of this, 44 per cent of businesses polled were upskilling existing staff; 27 per cent were hiring more apprentices; and one in five (20 per cent) said they were taking steps to improve job quality.



{Pay & reward}

Fare's fair?

Japan's precise, clockwork-like rail service is a point of national pride.

However, a train driver who was fined 85 yen – the equivalent of 60p – because the train he was driving was slightly delayed is now suing the rail company JR West for thousands in damages.

The Japanese news website SoraNews24 reported that the driver, who was returning an empty train to the depot, initially went to the wrong platform on the way to the start of his shift, resulting in a two-minute delay, of

which he managed to recoup one minute en route.

JR West reduced the driver's pay under its 'no work, no pay' principle, and subsequently dropped the fine to 56 yen (around 37p) after the driver took the case to the Okayama Labour Standards Inspection Office.

However, the driver is refusing to accept the fine on the basis that the delay did not cause any passenger disruption and is seeking 2.2 million yen (just over £14,600) in damages from Okayama District Court.

{Pay & reward}

Higher fines for NMW misuse

Employers should be subjected to substantially higher financial penalties for breaking minimum wage law, a think tank has said, arguing that the current policy of 'naming and shaming' firms is not enough to deter underpayment.

A report by the Resolution Foundation calculated that firms that break minimum wage rules needed to be fined seven times the arrears owed in order to counteract the savings made by underpaying –

more than three times the current maximum fine. "Fines are currently too low so there is little economic incentive," said Hannah Slaughter, economist at the Resolution Foundation.

The report also called for the naming and shaming policy to be strengthened with wider and more tactical publicity, arguing that this was unlikely to do firms long-term damage or cause significant financial losses.

The think tank is also calling for more rigorous enforcement to increase detection of minimum wage breaches. "Naming dodgy firms only works when they are caught in the first place, so more widespread enforcement is needed," said Slaughter.

{Flexible working}

Childcare duties hit productivity

The combination of school closures and working from home has forced many parents to think about how they balance work and childcare. For some, this conflict risks creating a crisis of identity, a study has warned.

Research by Durham Business School found that, when faced with conflicting responsibilities, parents who already had lower levels of emotional stability were more likely to feel their identity as a parent was under threat. Because of the shame this

caused, these parents were more likely to compensate by putting more of their efforts into childcare at the expense of work.

"Working parents not only experience pressure to exemplify an 'ideal' worker role, but are also expected to engage in intensive parenting practices," explained Dr Yingli Deng, assistant professor at Durham University Business School. "Many find achieving this balance challenging."

But, says Deng, providing parents with flexibility and increased time away from work is an effective way of supporting employees to achieve this balance.

viewed their qualifications as necessary to securing a job, just 41 per cent said their qualifications were needed to do their job effectively. And nearly a third (29 per cent) of all young people surveyed said they were overqualified.

Stephen Isherwood, CEO of the Institute of Student Employers, said the figures showed careers education needs to be improved. "Students have a wide range of routes through education and into work, yet too often they don't get to understand their options," he said. "This means students don't make the most of their potential

and employers don't always get the talent they need."

{Skills}

No support for budding apprentices

More than half (52 per cent) of university graduates in the UK would have considered an apprenticeship had they been given the opportunity. However, the CIPD poll of 2,000 18- to 30-year-olds found that, of those who received careers support from their school or college, just 1 per cent said they received the support they needed to choose an apprenticeship. In comparison, almost three in five (59 per cent) said their school had helped them with their university applications.

The CIPD's *Youth Employment* report also found that while two-thirds of recent graduates (66 per cent)



Stephen Isherwood criticised the quality of careers education; while Hannah Slaughter called for higher fines for firms that don't pay minimum wage



As workplace decision making increasingly involves artificial intelligence, staff and employers are demanding protection

The robots aren't coming

Parliamentary proposals promise to better regulate the use of AI in the workplace – but what might the changes mean for businesses?

WORDS CAITLIN POWELL

Picture it. A workplace where rotas are organised by computer – agonising over annual leave a thing of the past. A programme that filters job applications in minutes as opposed to hiring managers spending hours staring at a screen. While for some employers this might seem an idyllic future, for others this is the reality that algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI) have already created. And it might not be as utopian as first impressions suggest.

Since it first arrived on the scene, campaigners and policy makers have been questioning the impact AI is having on the quality of work – whether it be algorithms that decide the workloads app-based couriers receive, or automated performance monitoring pushing warehouse staff to forego toilet breaks in order to meet stringent targets to pack hundreds of boxes an hour. The TUC warned in March that workers could be “hired and fired by algorithm”, while a recent Harvard Business School study revealed that the majority (88 per cent) of employers believe qualified applicants are inadvertently filtered out by the screening software.

The issue was summarised by a recent report from the Institute for the Future of Work, which said: “It is not the replacement of humans by machines but the treatment of humans as machines that defined the current era of work.” In response to this report, a group of MPs last month decried the “growing body of evidence” pointing to a “significant negative impact on the conditions and quality of work across the country” caused by the use of algorithms in the workplace.

In a report, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on the Future of Work argued that the monitoring of workers and setting performance targets through algorithms was damaging employees’ mental health. The lack of confidence over how data is used and how AI makes decisions about performance created an “absence of agency”, it said.

“All employers and all employees are affected by AI,” says Dr Neil McBride, reader in IT management and researcher at the Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility at De Montfort University Leicester. But it’s still humans that have the final say over how these tools are used; AI depends on humans to provide rules and data, McBride says, and humans are accountable for the decisions made following an AI’s prediction.

“Decisions from algorithms should not be accepted blindly, but used as one factor in humans applying wisdom to decision making,” he says.

In practice, this means if an algorithm predicts an employee is planning to leave the company or trying to get pregnant, for example, and this information is used to make decisions on training or promotions, it could lead to claims of discrimination.

Alan Lewis, partner at Constantine Law, adds that the effects on mental health of some algorithms that have “real-time, micro-management and automated assessment” could lead to staff having grounds for disability status under the Equality Act. “The use of algorithms is a ‘provision, criteria or practice’ [PCP] under the Equality Act and the employer is under a duty to take reasonable steps so that the PCP does not put the disabled employee at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled employees,” he explains.

To address the imbalance it says AI tools can create, the APPG has proposed legislation to improve “clarity and fairness” around their use. Two key aspects of this proposal include a requirement for employers to provide staff with a “full explanation” of how any algorithm they use works, and a requirement for firms to create algorithmic impact assessments to identify risks – for example, restricting access to work for some groups – that such technology might have. Under the new rules, workers would also be able to give feedback on how these tools should be used in the future.

But how might employers go about putting these changes into practice? As a general rule, Hayfa Mohdzaini, senior research adviser at the CIPD, says sharing how AI makes decisions at a high level is “good practice”, particularly when it is consequential to recruitment and promotions. But, she warns, sharing algorithms with employees was not without risk. “Employers [might] accidentally divulge confidential information or employees... could misinterpret it,” she says. Therefore, employers need to make sure HR teams are involved from the start, she explains.

Lewis advises that employers that are nervous about maintaining confidentiality would need to rely on non-disclosure agreements and confidentiality clauses. He also warns that such a rule could trigger more whistleblowing claims by workers if they feel there have been breaches by the organisation and there is a public interest to be protected.



The APPG on the Future of Work, chaired by David Davis MP, is calling for regulation of AI at work

“Decisions by algorithms should not be accepted blindly”

The heaven and hell of AI

Heaven

IBM’s Watson Career Coach uses CV data to learn an employee’s preferences and suggest appropriate development resources and vacancies within the organisation.



Hell

Having installed cameras from AI-tech startup Netradynne in its delivery vans, Amazon uses data provided to evaluate drivers’ performance and determine whether they get a bonus. But several drivers have reported being unfairly punished for ‘unsafe driving’ whenever cars move too close to their vans in traffic.



Limbo

McDonald’s, JP Morgan, PwC, and Kraft Heinz all use AI recruitment software Pymetrics, which uses interviewees’ responses to analyse their personality and intelligence, as well as risk tolerance and how quickly they react to various situations.





Mistletoe or lateral flow? The conundrum of the 2021 Christmas party

WORDS JASMINE URQUHART

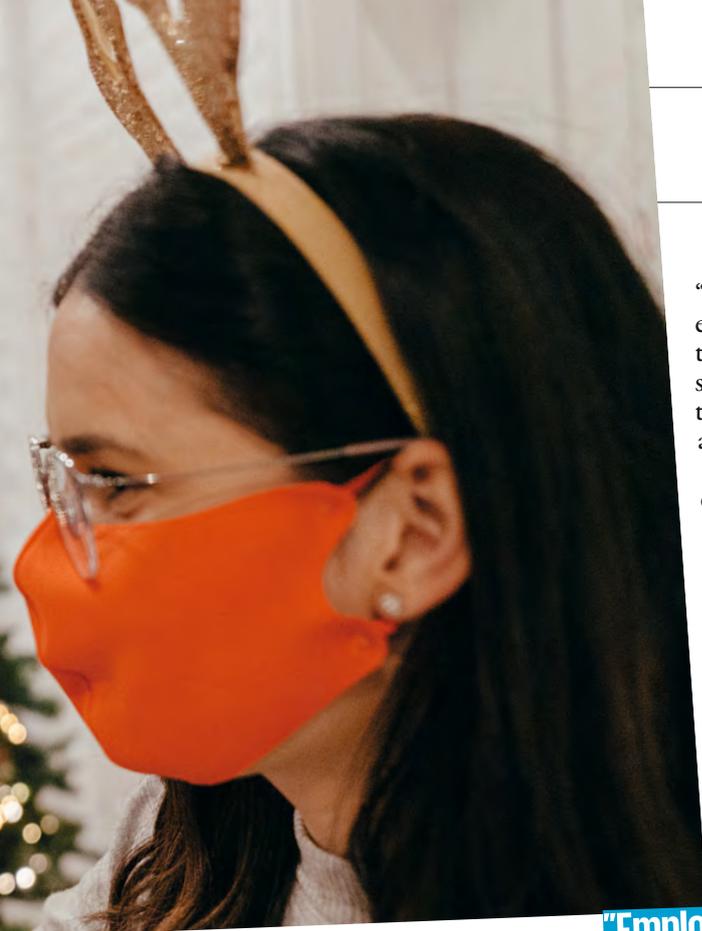
After last year's festive flop, companies are keener than ever to have a proper get-together. But what are the health, safety and legal risks of doing so?

As this year's party season rolls around, many employers will be keen to reward their staff with a proper Christmas bash. But with infection rates creeping back up, a new variant threatening to cause havoc and the government toying with the idea of introducing plan B restrictions in England, companies are divided on whether or not to go ahead with their much-anticipated Christmas plans. Google, Accenture, Facebook and EY are among the firms to have already ruled out an in-person party: disappointing news for those hoping for a 'normal' Christmas.

Thankfully, health and safety expert Ryan Exley, from the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), can assuage concerns. Companies committed to hosting in-person celebrations can take measures to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission, he says, including hosting their party outdoors. "Outside space is known to be safer since it isn't a contained area, whereas there's a higher chance of contracting Covid inside," he says.

But what if the weather outside is frightful? Outside events won't be to everyone's taste during the winter months, and realistically many firms are likely to go ahead with an indoor event anyway. In this case, Exley recommends firms "increase ventilation, complete testing prior to the event, social distance, use face coverings and try to keep the numbers to a minimum". However, he says, a virtual gathering is the only way to have a party "completely free of Covid risk", and employers must do a risk

"A virtual gathering is the only way to have a party that is risk free"



Covid-safe alternatives



“Employers should, however, bear in mind that employees may overindulge even more than usual this year, after nearly two years of social distancing,” she says, recommending employers remind staff that a party is still an extension of the workplace, and of the importance of general good conduct.

Perhaps most importantly, says Michelle Last, employment law partner at Keystone Law: “Knowing that the risk of catching Covid-19 is lowered should also make for a more enjoyable Christmas party for those attending.”

So the post-Covid Christmas party might happen after all – but that doesn't mean the winter months are all wrapped up. Employers need to take a vigilant approach to health and safety at work throughout the colder months, says Exley. “Employers should seek to follow a prevention-first approach and implement control strategies that enable safe and healthy workplaces and activities,” he says. But whether this means employers encourage the uptake of booster jabs depends on many factors; employers must “ensure any medical concerns are advised on by competent people,” Exley says. “If an employee does refuse the vaccine, the risk assessment must be reviewed to determine whether further control measures are required.”

De Castro says that under the Health and Safety Act 1974, employers have a legal duty to do “whatever is reasonably practicable” to provide a safe and healthy place of work. Under current government guidance, this might mean temperature checks at the door, encouraging the use of masks and providing antibacterial disinfectant where possible. But if the government's plan B were to go ahead in England – which would bring the country more in line with the current, more stringent rules in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland – stricter measures such as indoor mask-wearing would become compulsory. It would also see a return to enforced social distancing, regular hand washing and, for many employers, asking employees to work from home where possible. In anticipation of this, companies need to regularly review their risk assessments and inform employees of any potential changes in good time, Last and de Castro say.

As the prospect of yet another bleak winter looms, the appetite for a pre-Christmas celebration has never been bigger. But organisations do need to tread carefully: health and safety always comes first.

“Employers should seek to follow a prevention-first approach”

assessment whatever route they choose to see whether it is safe enough to go ahead.

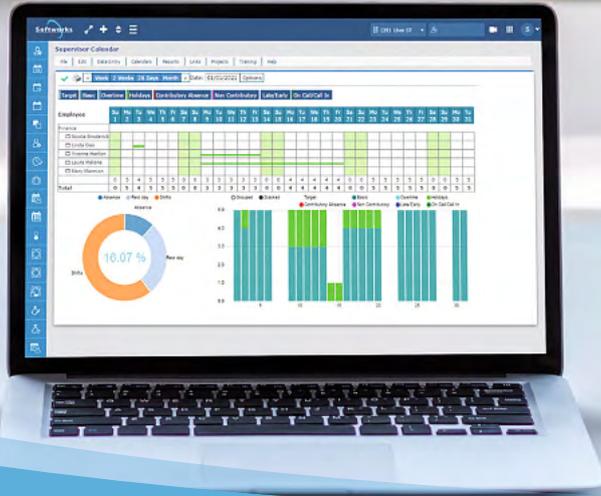
At least from a legal point of view, the risks of an in-person Christmas party can be low if managed properly. Manuela de Castro, an employment solicitor at Keystone Law, says firms that take the necessary steps to keep staff safe and communicate their policies well may avoid being subject to claims from employees in the event of an outbreak. “In any event, it would be very difficult for an employee to prove that they caught Covid-19 at the Christmas party itself,” she said.

Lateral flow testing can be made mandatory for employees attending an in-person event, and a number of recent tribunal decisions – including *Rodgers v Leeds Laser Cutting* (2021) and *Accattatis v Fortuna Group* (2021) among others – suggest employers have “considerable discretion” over implementation of Covid-19 safety measures, which might extend to a requirement to be double-jabbed – although lawyers warn that employees can potentially object to getting the jab on religious grounds or because of a philosophical belief, so employers need to tread carefully.

As for enforced social distancing, this is harder to implement; while employers can “set the framework for a Covid-safe event by reminding employees about the need to social distance”, they do not have the power to enforce such measures between adults who know the risk, says de Castro.

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Are you being two-timed by your staff?

Working from home en masse amid Covid lockdowns has led to a jump in so-called 'overemployment' – and experts advise businesses to protect themselves against it

Portfolio careers and side hustles have always been a thing – a way for savvy individuals to boost their earnings. But the combination of remote working and skyrocketing vacancies has led to some employees going a step further. A growing number of 'overemployed' people are taking on second full-time jobs and running them parallel to their day job, earning two full-time salaries in the process.

"I decided to stay on at my old job while starting my new job, overlapping two jobs as a hedge against uncertainty during the pandemic," writes one such overemployed worker, Isaac, who founded the blog-cum-support group overemployed.com. "I told myself I'd only do it until the end of the month, but as time went on I began to wonder – why not stick around?"

The legality of this is a grey area, and people practising overemployment know it. On overemployed.com, serial employees can access useful advice on how to minimise their chances of getting caught. Accidental discovery through

mutual acquaintances appears to be the main danger, but the site suggests a whole range of techniques from passively hiding your online presence to actively misdirecting colleagues.

Businesses have every reason to be concerned if a worker is overemployed, says Mark Owen, a solicitor at Irwell Law. Beyond the obvious – that an individual working two full-time jobs is unlikely to be giving their all to either – overemployment creates the potential for conflicts of interest and introduces the risk that company knowledge or confidential information gets shared: a particular danger if the jobs in question are in the same sector.

There are also implications for staff retention; an overemployed employee might encourage other staff to take up a second job, or might jump ship entirely and take colleagues with them. "Working for someone else gives them a taste of 'greener grass on the other side,'" says Owen. "It is hard enough keeping staff these days when they are working for just one employer," he says.

There are steps employers can take if they suspect an employee is holding down multiple jobs – the tell-tale signs of which include missing deadlines and periodic but persistent unavailability – but these depend on what contracts a firm has in place. If a contract states the number of hours an employee is required to work, then someone who is overemployed may well be in breach of this, says Owen.

Contracts also often include clauses requiring that staff "devote their working time, attention and skill" in order to carry out their duties. But, Owen says, an employee could well argue they are not breaching this by working for a second employer; it's much better to have specific clauses stating that an employee should not undertake work for another employer. Owen also suggests businesses introduce workforce policies prohibiting overemployment from a set date. This would give all employees "notice that overemployment is against the company's ethos and culture," he says, providing guilty employees "an amnesty to get their house in order".

NHS people report sets vision for next decade

CIPD contributes to groundbreaking new plan for healthcare HR during upcoming 10 years, including ambitious goals for wellbeing, inclusion, flexibility and technology

Following the publication of the NHS People Plan – the workforce strategy that forms part of the NHS Long Term Plan – in July last year, a new report, *The future of NHS human resources and organisational development*, was released at the end of November by NHS England and NHS Improvement to provide a vision of how the people profession will help embed the NHS People Promise and transform the NHS to help it achieve its ambition to have more people working in an inclusive and compassionate culture by 2030.

The CIPD, along with other organisations including Lancaster University Management School, EY and Clever Together, has been significantly involved in the creation of the report, which draws on the input and experiences of those most impacted by NHS people services: NHS staff and leaders, as well as people professionals themselves.

The report sets out the vision for HR in the people profession during the next decade via eight themes (see box).

The future of NHS HR & OD

- Prioritising the health and wellbeing of all our people
- Creating a great employee experience
- Ensuring inclusion and belonging for all
- Supporting and developing the people profession
- Harnessing the talents of all our people
- Leading improvement, change and innovation
- Embedding digitally enabled solutions
- Enabling new ways of working and planning for the future



Recent years have tested NHS staff like never before – the new framework will provide ongoing occupational support

Setting these visions into motion are more than 30 individual calls to action across every level of the organisation, covering everything from developing professional standards and being representative of the communities it serves, to designing job roles centred around good work and establishing board-level accountability for employee experience.

“This exciting vision for the people profession sets a clear direction for HR, OD and workforce capabilities,” said Peter Cheese, chief executive of the CIPD. “It lays out the organisational and leadership imperatives to support the people and culture across the whole of the NHS. This will drive positive and critical outcomes for the future.”

Danny Mortimer, chief executive of NHS Employers, added: “There is important recognition of the role that

NHS people professionals play in the transformation of services to improve population health. NHS Employers looks forward to working with the NHS England chief people officer and her team to support the delivery of the report’s actions.”

And Dean Royles, president of the Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA), said: “Covid has proved the value of the people profession to the delivery of high-quality care; no greater test of the profession has happened anywhere before.”

He added: “We can confidently, look forward to building on the lessons learned with this new national framework and the commitment to ongoing investment in our profession’s development. The HPMA is delighted to play its part.”

* Download the full report at bit.ly/NHSHRreport



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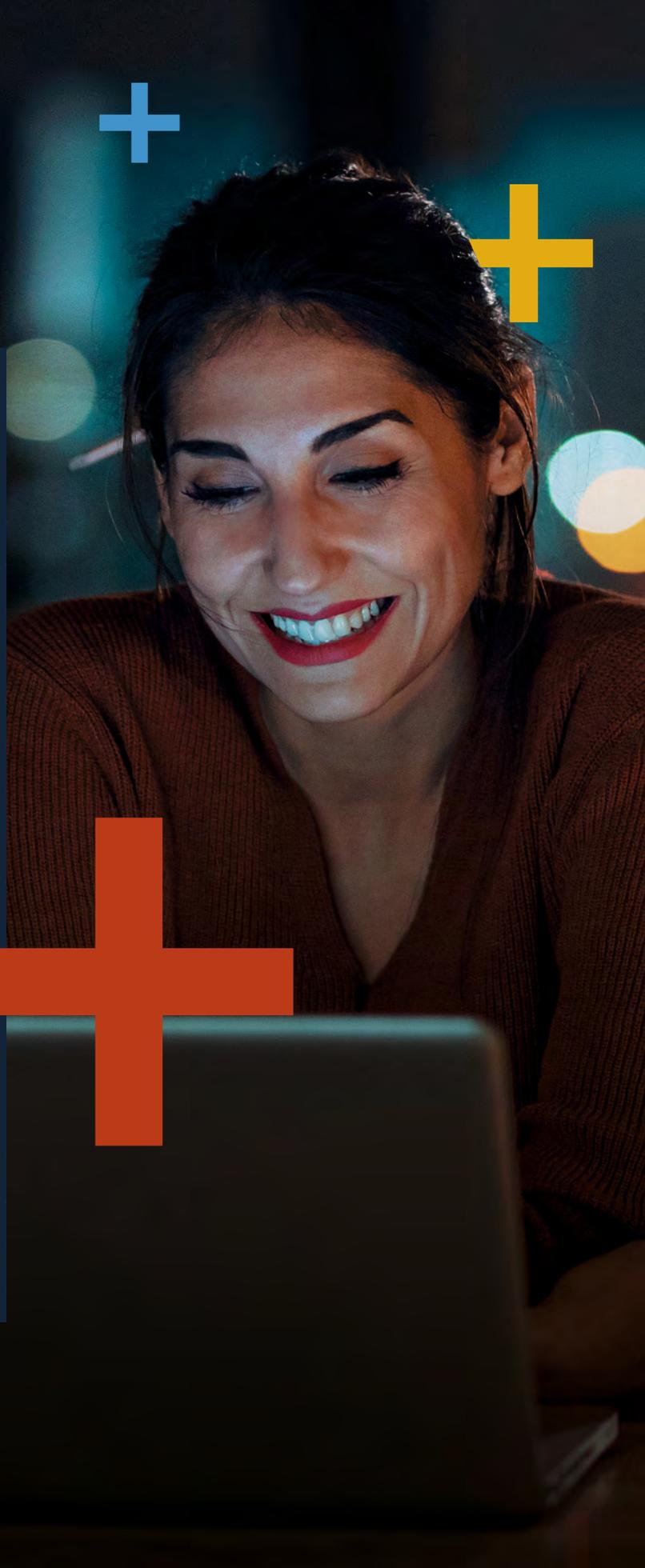
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Applied Research Conference

26-27 January 2022
Manchester | Online

Talent Management and Workforce Planning Conference

3 February 2022
London | Online

Employee Engagement and Performance Management Conference

22-23 February 2022
London | Online

Northern Annual Conference

2 March 2022
Manchester

Scotland Annual Conference

17 March 2022
Edinburgh

HR Business Partnering Conference

23-24 March 2022
London | Online

Managing Hybrid Working Conference

5 April 2022
London | Online

Organisation Development Conference

21-22 April 2022
London | Online

Reward and Benefits Conference

27 April 2022
London | Online

Employer Brand and Recruitment Conference

10-11 May 2022
London | Online

Northern Ireland Annual Conference

12 May 2022
Belfast | Online

Festival of Work 2022

15-16 June 2021
London | Online

People Management Forum

May 2022

Wales Annual Conference

30 June 2022
Online

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14-year-old waitress sacked because of her age was discriminated against

Tribunal disagreed that claimant was unable to cope with her job

A 14-year-old schoolgirl was the victim of direct discrimination when her employer fired her for being “too young”, a tribunal has ruled, making her one of the youngest people in the UK to win an employment tribunal.

Miss H Cassidy worked only two days of her Saturday job at the Daimler Foundation equestrian centre’s cafe before being sacked.

The tribunal ruled she was discriminated against when her employer tried to argue that she was unable to cope with the job, when in reality, the judge said, her employer was “not enamoured” with taking on younger members of staff.

Cassidy interviewed for the position when she was 14 years old in November 2019, and provided her age when applying for the role online, and again on a starters’ form after being told she had been successful.

Her first day was on 7 December 2019, during which front of house manager Mr Easy showed her how to use the till, and she waited on and cleaned tables, worked the till and loaded the dishwasher. After her shift, Easy said something to the effect that he was “pleased with her work”. Cassidy’s understanding was that she passed the trial period and would work Saturdays between 10am and 2pm, with the potential to take on extra shifts when required.

Easy told the tribunal that he had “not initially known” Cassidy’s age. However, the tribunal did not find this credible, stating it was obvious that Cassidy was “a young girl”.

Cassidy worked one more shift. However the tribunal heard that on 20 December she received a call from Easy who told her he had enjoyed working with her but that she could not continue to work at the cafe.

Easy said that the accountant informed him Cassidy “was too young [to work there] for health and safety reasons”. He also assured Cassidy she hadn’t “done anything wrong”.

Easy denied this happened and told the tribunal he said the role was “too severe, and too stressful, and that she was not able to cope with the severity of the job”.

However, the tribunal did not accept his evidence that she had become “unduly stressed”, because it found Cassidy’s manner when she gave evidence to be “calm, measured and entirely appropriate” without any hint of her being stressed, even during cross examination.

The tribunal concluded that Cassidy had established a prima facie case, meaning that on first impression age was “at least a factor” in the decision to end her employment. She was awarded £2,500 for injury to feeling and direct discrimination with an additional interest of £300.

Covid vaccines to become mandatory for frontline NHS staff in England

Employers outside the health and social care sector have been warned to tread carefully if they plan to introduce vaccine mandates, following the news that the job is to become compulsory for frontline NHS workers in England.

Health secretary Sajid Javid told MPs last month he expected all unvaccinated NHS workers to get both jabs by 1 April 2022. While 90 per cent of NHS staff are already fully vaccinated, estimates suggest this leaves more than 103,000 unvaccinated NHS staff who need to have the jabs or risk losing their jobs when the grace period ends. (Exemptions will be given to those who do not have face-to-face contact with patients, as well as those who have medical reasons.)

As well as concerns that a vaccine mandate could cause some workers to leave their jobs, exacerbating existing healthcare staffing issues, there have also been concerns that enforcing such policies could create legal risk for employers both in the NHS and elsewhere. It is “vital for HR bodies within the NHS to follow proper procedure as they implement mandatory vaccine policies, not only to protect staff and patients, but to keep the NHS safe from potential legal fallout in the months to come,” said Julian Cox, employment law specialist and partner at BLM.

Joanne Moseley, a senior associate in the employment team at Irwin Mitchell, said she doesn’t envisage compulsory vaccinations extending to other sectors. But, she added, health and safety is still the employer’s responsibility. “The onus is on the employer to take steps to minimise the risk of catching and transmitting the virus by making changes to the way in which they operate,” she said.

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Factory worker was unfairly dismissed following ‘diabetic rage’

A factory worker with unmanaged type-1 diabetes was discriminated against and unfairly dismissed after he went into a “diabetic rage” and threatened a colleague, the employment tribunal found.

Mr P Dytkowski worked at Brand FB’s biscuit factory from 2009 until 11 January 2019. On 4 December 2018, Dytkowski took offence at a colleague’s comment after his late arrival to a meeting and either grabbed the

colleague’s clothes or pushed him, the court heard. The incident was reported to a manager, who started a disciplinary process and suspended Dytkowski.

Following the investigation, occupational health sent a report explaining that Dytkowski had been “struggling” to deal with his diabetes, which had been diagnosed earlier that year. But the firm’s production manager said that he didn’t think this had

had an influence on the incident and dismissed Dytkowski.

The tribunal ruled that there was “no focus” on whether any risk of recurrence could be reduced, nor was there any consideration of the effect dismissal would have.

However, the tribunal reduced his compensation by 30 per cent to account for his behaviour. A further claim of failure to make reasonable adjustments was not upheld.

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I'll tell you something...

PETER WATKINS

EMEA DIRECTOR OF
UNIVERSITY RELATIONS AT
CFA INSTITUTE

To attract and retain Gen Z talent, HR needs to better understand it

To recruit the best talent from the next generation, firms need a fully rounded understanding of what graduates need and want. But are we keeping up? Forget *The Wolf of Wall Street* – Greta Thunberg's generation is now hitting the job market.

At CFA Institute, we recently conducted a global survey on the career outlook of more than 15,000 current university students and new graduates. The results show a desire for flexibility, fulfilment and positive environmental impact.

Understandably, given the pandemic, graduates were concerned about job prospects. But their fears also revealed motivations about self-fulfilment, with as many fearing having to work in a sector that does not interest them as those worried about low wages or lack of jobs.

Consistent with this, a stand-out characteristic of the Generation Z zeitgeist is a desire for careers with positive impact. A striking 92 per cent of UK respondents saw positive environmental and societal contribution as important in their career choice. For some employers, this may mean dialling up messaging about positive-impact careers.

Flexible hours and the ability to work abroad also came high on the list of



"Consistent with the Gen Z zeitgeist is a desire for careers with positive impact"

things they look for, second only to a 'good salary'. I wasn't surprised to note this generation values flexibility. However, it would be wrong to assume they are sold on a 'Zoom and pyjamas' lifestyle; more than twice as many

would prefer a job that is fully office-based than fully remote. Perhaps lockdown and campus closures have revealed to this generation, more than any other, what is lost without direct and regular contact with classmates and co-workers.

We need to embrace hybrid working, certainly, but also

reassure career entrants that working remotely doesn't mean losing out on career opportunities.

UK respondents also shared concerns about personal work-readiness and a respect for professional skills, and what would give them an edge in the job market upon graduation. They valued 'skills acquired' well ahead

of, for example, internships or the reputation of degree programmes; 93 per cent consider upskilling and professional or postgraduate qualifications important in the current job market. Graduates will be attracted to employers offering the reassurance of professional skills training, and providing competitive

development opportunities.

Professional credential programmes have seen significant growth among graduates seeking to consolidate academic achievement with a practice-based qualification – for example, CFA Institute's University Affiliation Program has seen significant growth in the last five years, and there is a similar pattern in accounting, law and many other professional degrees.

To attract the best talent out of university, employers need to foster a holistic appeal, understanding the needs of graduates in the round. Recruits may lack confidence in their work-readiness and seek support to upskill and augment their degrees with postgraduate qualifications. Clearly, training and development is much prized. Salaries will always matter, but the next generation of professionals is also looking for flexibility, progressive values demonstrated in the workplace and a chance to make a positive impact on the world. **PM**

“Bespoke training has earned us bragging rights”

The bike courier company designed its own rider qualification from scratch

They were once a rare site on the UK’s roads and used mainly for the school run by environmentally-conscious families. But, thanks to a greater awareness of the climate crisis, cargo bikes have seen a boom in recent months. They’re also being used more by businesses – with total UK sales for 2021 expected to eclipse last year’s 4,000 by more than 60 per cent, there is now roughly a 50/50 split between their personal and commercial use, according to the Bicycle Association of Great Britain.

With the government also offering grants of up to 40 per cent of the cost of electric cargo bikes to support greener transport, all kinds of organisations are now taking to two wheels.

One business that was ahead of the curve is Pedal Me, a London-based courier company that uses electric cargo bikes to transport goods and passengers across the city, and whose bright-pink livery is a frequent sight on the streets of the capital.

Founded in 2017 by Ben Knowles and Chris Dixon, who previously delivered cycle training for a local authority, the company crowdfunded a round of investment in 2018, hitting its target of £150k before the campaign’s launch party had even happened, and is now close to employing 100 people.

But with such rapid growth comes a whole host of people issues. General manager Piab Flowers, who previously worked as a rider and dispatcher back when the company had just 16 employees, and is now responsible for most of its HR, explains that punctuality and sickness absence were the firm’s two biggest people problems when he took up his role earlier in 2021. The organisation recently enlisted an HR consultancy to teach Flowers and his team the fundamentals, which deduced there was not enough focus on performance management.

“We were too busy to keep an eye on [sickness and punctuality], but we also couldn’t afford to lose anyone,” Flowers says. “But now we have policies and proper tracking, so we can start with a welfare meeting if we notice any worrying patterns.”

And with riders out and about across the city alone for hours at a time with only a two-way radio connecting them to their colleagues, it can be easy for wellbeing issues like mental health to go unnoticed, says Flowers. Uncommonly for the industry, Pedal Me’s staff are all fully employed and receive benefits including sick pay (“from the very start, we wanted to make sure people were looked after,” he

explains). The company has also made sure there are “multiple avenues” available for anyone experiencing difficulties, as well as appointing a dedicated rider rep and organising regular in-person social events.

“Managing people is hard, and always will be, but we want to make sure we’re offering as much support as possible,” says Flowers. “It would be horrendous if we ever had to let someone go because of their mental health.”

And although staff retention has always been “tricky”, because of the nature of the work and the fact that some people “just can’t hack it”, explains senior strategic operations officer Elouise Kjellstad, until Covid hit, the company never needed to undertake any formal

recruitment drives. “It was always just through word of mouth and our riders acting as adverts,” they explain.

However, an increase in demand for its services during the lockdowns led to Pedal Me needing to up its hiring ante, and it has also noticed a drop in applications in recent months. Kjellstad has plans to tap into more diverse talent pools, including people granted asylum and ex-offenders and, adds Flowers, the company also hopes to be able to improve remuneration and

“Punctuality and sickness absence were our two biggest people problems”

offer the London Living Wage as base pay; currently, staff are paid national minimum wage plus commission, which the company tops up to the London Living Wage if their weekly total is below that rate. Introducing regular check-ins during new riders' first few months has also helped to curtail the drop-off in fresh recruits leaving.

One difficulty, explains Kjellstad, is getting new starters into roles fast enough – all applicants have to pass Pedal Me's rigorous training programme, which can take more than 10 hours to complete. The programme – which leads to a City & Guilds-recognised qualification – is the first of its kind and bespoke to the organisation, with the company's founders having designed it from scratch when they found there was no existing training specifically for cargo bikes.

Riders are trained in bike handling away from roads before taking to the streets and having their navigation skills tested, as well as being assessed riding a bike loaded with bulky boxes or heavy sandbags. Once complete, they can progress to undertake additional training in transporting up to 150kg of passengers, and using a trailer that takes the bikes' maximum cargo capacity from 150kg to 300kg. The company now sells its rider training programme to other organisations that are looking to accredit cargo bike riders.

"Our training is what sets us apart from other cargo bike companies – we won't put a rider on the road unless they're 100 per cent," explains Flowers, adding that it gives Pedal Me "bragging rights" with customers, as well as encouraging similar organisations to also invest in training their staff. To try to offset the drop in applications it saw, the firm is now also offering a completion bonus of London Living Wage for all hours spent undertaking the course for those who pass.

"Knowing our riders are City & Guilds-trained means passengers feel safer, and companies feel more confident in letting us carry high-value items," he says. "If your riders are trained well, they're less likely to get injured or damage goods: as to why we'd do it, it's a no-brainer."



Elouise Kjellstad (left) and Piab Flowers (right) have introduced a range of initiatives to improve staff retention and wellbeing at Pedal Me

“We can’t pay as much – so this is how we stay competitive”

A move to a flexible culture focused on wellbeing is helping the charity take on its public and private sector rivals

As people return to some form of post-pandemic normality, many organisations have moved towards a more hybrid working model, investing in technology and staff to create an environment that promotes flexibility.

While the general trend among workers seems to swing in favour of more flexibility, many smaller businesses and third sector organisations lack the HR resource and funds to be able to adapt swiftly. However, Jessica Badley, head of HR and OD at charity Blood Cancer UK, says it is still possible to create an agile working environment without a big budget.

“We know most of our staff prefer much more flexibility,” she explains. “So we’ve told them that we trust them to make their decisions on where and how they work based on our mission and our values.”

When she joined the charity back in November 2019, Badley says there was already a “vision to move towards a real flexible way of working”, but that the pandemic simply accelerated that.

“We already had the building blocks in place – we knew that for us, agile

working meant being focused on people meeting objectives and outputs, and not where they worked or what hours they did – which really helped us when we all had to work from home,” she says.

Prior to the pandemic, the charity had worked to a very traditional pattern, Badley explains. Everybody went into the office from 9am until 5pm all week, with some people “occasionally” working from home on Fridays. “So we had to shift the culture and people’s mindset,” she says.

“We’ve told staff we trust them to decide where and how they work based on our values”

In order to address this, Badley held meetings with different teams and asked their thoughts about flexible working, as well as what they needed to make it work. Their responses, she says, included, “we can’t do it because we need to sit together to get the job done”, or, “I’d get really distracted and just watch TV”.

For others, it was as simple as IT equipment, and some managers also raised concerns about managing performance “if they couldn’t see their team”. This led to the charity changing its performance management system entirely – moving from traditional

annual appraisals to setting and reviewing objectives every one to four months – and developing internal training programmes.

These training programmes include one for line managers, which explores any unconscious beliefs they may have, explains Badley. “For example, when addressing concerns around not knowing if someone was actually working, we would say, ‘you don’t know what someone’s doing even when you do see them at a computer – they could be on Facebook all day’ – so that’s not a true assumption.”

In fact, the organisation ended up having the opposite problem – staff were working too many hours, “so we had to tell them not to”, says Badley. Instead, she and her team linked the charity’s flexible working policy with wellbeing and, to avoid reaching the “burnout stage”, encouraged people to adjust their hours accordingly if they did extra time the week before in order to meet a deadline.

Since introducing its flexible working policy, Blood Cancer UK has noticed a significant improvement in its retention rate; in November 2018, the 12-month rolling average rate was 70 per cent, whereas the most recent



Jessica Badley says both wellbeing and staff retention rates have improved since the charity adopted a more flexible way of working

figure from September 2021 is 94 per cent. Additionally, a quarterly pulse survey also revealed a huge increase in employees recommending the charity as a place to work, jumping from 41 per cent in December 2018 to 93 per cent in September 2021.

Badley puts this positive feedback down to not just the charity's approach to flexible working, but also its new wellbeing provisions, which were developed alongside its agile working policy and have seen sickness absence drop to an average of just 1.3 days per employee. "We wanted to be a world-class wellbeing organisation," she said. "And that means people thriving at work, not just managing."

Other strands of the charity's work on wellbeing focus on employees' mental, physical and financial health, including a specific initiative on menstruation and the menopause. "We know some people really struggle with their periods – for example, if it makes you really tired or unwell, we're saying that's okay, just start your day later or even do fewer hours that week," explains Badley.

The move has, she says, come as a welcome surprise to many staff. "But there's no point struggling through if you don't feel well – the cause doesn't matter, it's still impacting you," she adds. "We would rather people were well because then they'll work better. Bringing this in has been quite a culture change."

But importantly, implementing these significant changes to the organisation's culture is not just a one-time thing, Badley points out. The agile principles are a "practical framework" which is reviewed every six months, and all staff are included in those discussions.

"It's about continuous improvement," she explains, adding that the organisation has also recently undertaken a benefits review, and is looking at ways to improve its internal communication in a bid to keep attracting and retaining talent.

"As a charity, our pay rates are not as high as the private and public sector," Badley says. "So if we want to diversify our workforce, be more inclusive and keep our retention levels high, this is our best chance to try and be competitive."



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WORDS JO FARAGHER

The labour market is less buoyant and more 'bah, humbug' approaching the festive season – but HR can play a key role in ensuring the talent shortages of 2021 don't come back to haunt us

nursing engineering elopers developing ivers of HGVs



When it came to tackling the toughest recruitment and retention crisis she's experienced, home care business founder Camille Leavold decided to steal an idea from the world of customer service. "We got the idea from Sky," she laughs. "If you call them up telling them

you're going to leave, they won't let you. So if our staff are unhappy, we try to find out what the problem is, and tell them what we can offer. Perhaps they don't like their rota or they feel like they're doing a bad job because they're having to travel all over the place. These things can be easily resolved." Her company Abbots Care, which employs around 550 home carers,

now has a dedicated team whose sole job is to look after the care workers' welfare. "This team talks to the care workers, ensures they have the right PPE, and makes sure they're OK," she says. On top of this, a wellbeing app helps staff to let the company know if they're feeling overwhelmed and includes a function where managers can offer rewards ▶

Labour market crisis

such as vouchers and share positive feedback. Retention has improved, says Leavold, but she still needs a six-strong team of recruiters to meet the 2,000 target hours a month they have agreed with clients. Workers who switched to care roles during pandemic lockdowns left once things opened up this summer, leaving Abbots with a hole in its recruitment pipeline. Her response has been multi-faceted: “We recruit based on values, take people and train them up on a full salary and offer as many types of contracts as people might want. We only take contracts where we know we can pay carers the same as NHS employees at the same level. But recruitment is the most difficult in the 26 years I’ve known it.”

Leavold is not alone in finding it tough. In September, the Office for National Statistics reported there were 1.2 million job vacancies in the UK, while the average unemployment rate fell to 4.5 per cent, meaning the UK faces its tightest labour market in decades. The latest *Labour Market Outlook* from the CIPD shows

“Recruitment is the most difficult in the 26 years I’ve known it”

that one in four organisations expect the number of ‘hard to fill’ vacancies to increase over the next six months. On top of this, more than 200,000 EU citizens left the UK during 2020, prompted by new Brexit immigration rules or the pandemic, leaving sectors such as hospitality and social care struggling to fill the gaps.

Thousands of workers placed on furlough at the height of the virus also switched sectors and never returned. Speaking at the CIPD’s annual conference in November, chief executive Peter Cheese said the crisis was prompting HR professionals to think more strategically about how they build skills and talent for the future. “Do we buy, build, borrow or ‘bot’? Do we reinvent learning? How do we shape jobs in the best way?” he asked.

Because the causes of the current labour shortages are so layered, it’s impossible to give a simple answer to any of those questions. Tony Wilson, director of the Institute for Employment Studies, warns against oversimplifying the situation, attributing the “missing million” workers to a combination of lower population, migration, and increased levels of economic inactivity.

“Yes, this

has been driven by Brexit and migration, but around a quarter of the decline is down to participation,” he explains. “We’ve seen people withdrawing from the labour market altogether – young people going into education and older people withdrawing altogether, especially women.” The government’s response has been to bill this as a skills issue, with policies focused on ‘building back better’ and more money pumped into vocational education and training incentives. “We need to see more measures around increasing participation, especially for older people,” he adds. “People might be out of work due to long-term health issues or looking after families, but at the moment our public employment service focuses on the claimant unemployed. We need to reform occupational health services so people who are out of work can access good quality support, stay close to their employers and get back in.”

A recent survey from insurance company Legal & General with the Centre for Economics and Business Research echoes his point; among the 177,000 over-50s who have been made redundant in the past five years, 20,000 are estimated to have left the workforce altogether. The Road Haulage Association, which represents HGV drivers, found that in almost 60 per cent of cases of workers leaving the industry, this was down to retirement. And these demographic trends are happening at both ends of the labour market, according to recruiter Paul Farrer, founder of Aspire. “In 2020 we saw fewer trainees and graduates taken on because employers were reluctant to induct people virtually, so we’ve lost a year’s worth of people,” he says. “We’re now facing this ‘leaky bucket’ scenario where candidates are moving so we can fill some roles, but they’re also leaving. And there’s a layer of people who aren’t there to move up into those second jobs.”

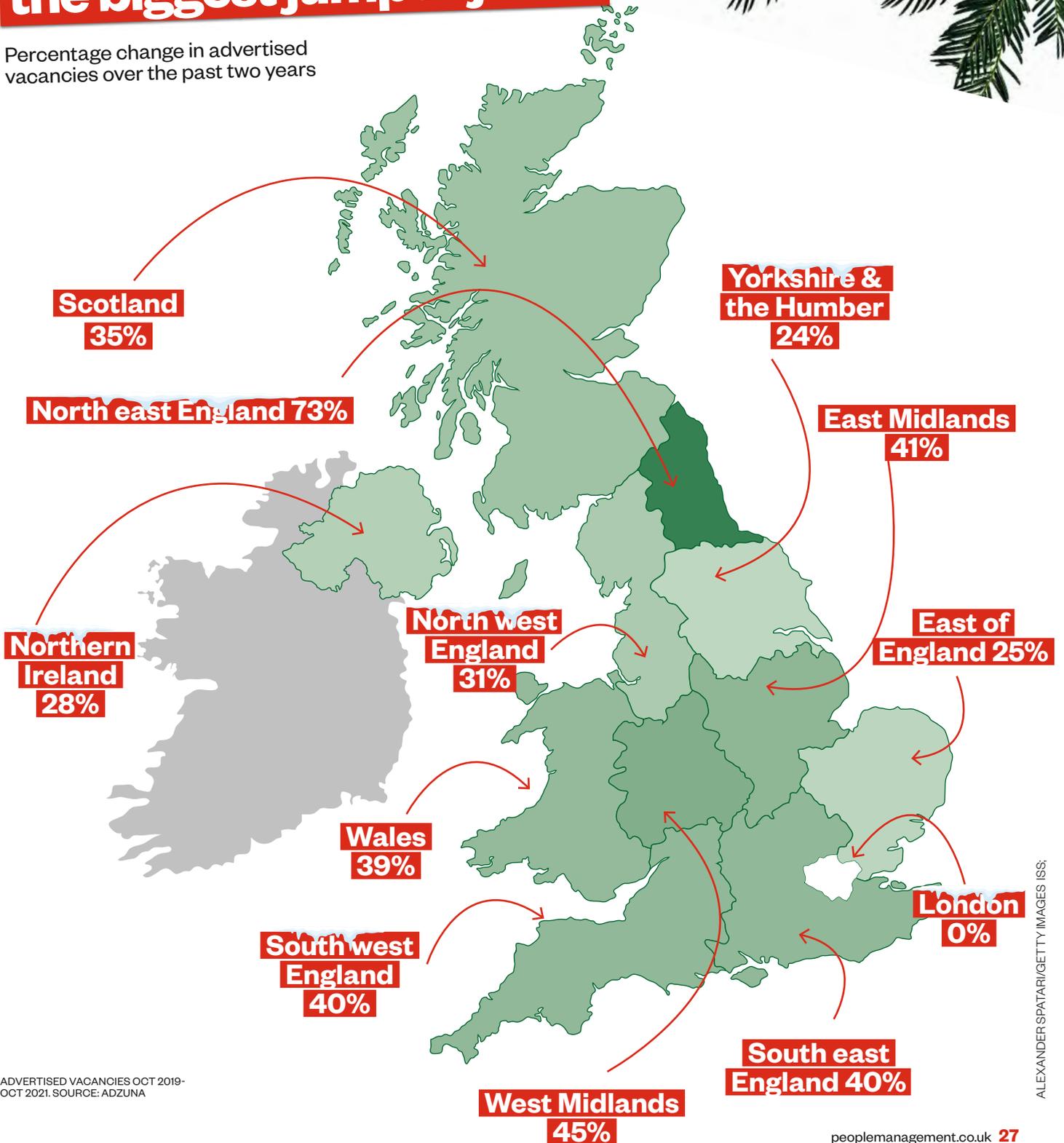
Wellbeing sits at the heart of some of these demographic issues, argues Anthony Rafferty, managing director of the Work and Equalities Institute at Alliance Manchester Business School. “This will be a central issue in our recovery, and it’s not just about supporting people with children. What about bringing people back into the labour market who are on the edge of retirement through better work-life balance options?” he says. “We’ll also see

Staff shortages in key sectors could mean stock gaps in the run-up to Christmas



Which regions saw the biggest jump in jobs?

Percentage change in advertised vacancies over the past two years



ADVERTISED VACANCIES OCT 2019-
OCT 2021. SOURCE: ADZUNA

ALEXANDER SPATAR/GETTY IMAGES ISS;

Where are the hiring hotspots?

Scotland

Logistics & warehouse **7,894**
 IT **6,666**
 Hospitality & catering **4,510**
 Engineering **4,128**
 Healthcare & nursing **3,766**

North east England

Logistics & warehouse **3,317**
 IT **2,666**
 Teaching **2,222**
 Engineering **2,141**
 Sales **1,933**

Yorkshire & the Humber

Logistics & warehouse **8,790**
 Engineering **6,634**
 IT **5,660**
 Sales **5,000**
 Accounting & finance **4,914**

East Midlands

Logistics & warehouse **14,741**
 Engineering **6,513**
 Trade & construction **4,874**
 Healthcare & nursing **4,836**
 IT **4,604**

East of England

Logistics & warehouse **16,211**
 IT **9,974**
 Engineering **9,694**
 Trade & construction **9,024**
 Sales **8,298**

London

IT **55,596**
 Accounting & finance **23,664**
 Teaching **20,293**
 Hospitality & catering **19,493**
 Sales **17,992**

South east England

IT **28,838**, Logistics & warehouse **20,439**
 Sales **17,652**, Accounting & finance **17,270**
 Trade & construction **17,077**

South west England

Logistics & warehouse **12,622**
 IT **10,159**
 Hospitality & catering **9,262**
 Engineering **9,121**
 Healthcare & nursing **8,523**

West Midlands

Logistics & warehouse **15,628**
 IT **9,519**
 Engineering **9,114**
 Trade & construction **7,145**
 Sales **6,611**

North west England

IT **12,510**
 Logistics & warehouse **11,805**
 Teaching **9,422**
 Sales **8,958**
 Engineering **8,394**

Northern Ireland

IT **1,555**
 Accounting & finance **1,306**
 Logistics & warehouse **859**
 Sales **724**
 Admin **693**

Wales

Logistics & warehouse **4,279**
 Healthcare & nursing **2,849**
 Teaching **2,848**
 IT **2,507**

Which sectors saw the biggest increases?

Highest growth in job vacancies over the last two years, by sector



PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN ADVERTISED VACANCIES BY SECTOR, OCT 2019 - OCT 2021. SOURCE: ADZUNA



Fire and security firm TIS has taken on 20 apprentices to bolster its talent pipeline

the potential for work intensification as wages go up, and employers want to do more with fewer people. This could lead to issues of wellbeing at work.”

There is also no ‘one size fits all’ response to recruitment challenges because they are hitting different sectors in a variety of ways. For tech companies, it’s the compound effect of the pandemic on already growing skills gaps (three-quarters of IT decision-makers worldwide cannot keep up with skills demand, according to Skillsoft); in others, spiking sickness rates might be exacerbating an existing shortage (logistics employers saw a 139 per cent rise in sickness absence compared to the global average this summer, according to absence management company eDays).

Even Christmas celebrations are at risk: ‘urgent’ advertisements for Father Christmases and elves are showing hourly rates three times the usual wage for these roles, according to job site Indeed.

“It’s not even just about industries, it’s about specific roles within them,” adds Rafferty. “People who were in customer-facing roles during Covid may have found alternative work for the same company doing warehousing or delivery. In logistics there’s a skills entry barrier to becoming an HGV driver because you have to have a commercial driving licence, but drivers who deliver to your door don’t.”

External factors such as consumer

behaviour, particularly during Covid, have also driven shifts in the labour market, according to Andrew Hunter, co-founder of job search engine Adzuna. Veterinary nurses are in high demand after families rushed to adopt dogs while working from home, for example. “After a year of sitting tight and saving, the last few months have seen a surge in the UK public spending on consumer goods, meals out, and home improvements. Companies haven’t been able to keep pace by hiring enough workers,” he says. “In some cases, it may take several years to train new workers.”

Donna Catley, chief people officer at catering giant Compass Group, had been working on long-term workforce planning before the pandemic. Something she hopes will protect the company from the worst effects of skills shortages is the launch of an industry academy to reskill existing staff and train up new entrants to the sector.

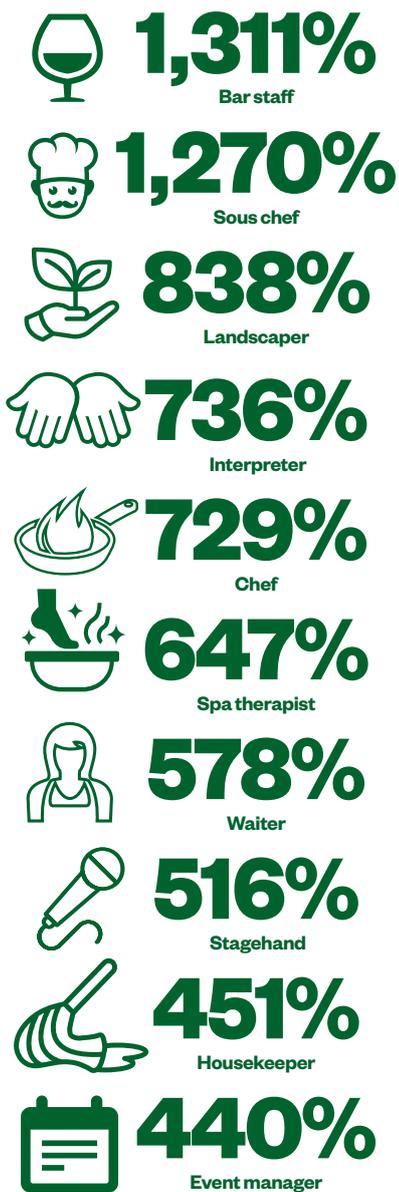
But she also hopes to reach out to potential new sources of talent: the West Midlands location of the academy was deliberately chosen because it’s in one of the government-identified social mobility ‘cold spots’, and a fifth of the academy’s activities will be dedicated to supporting employment and educational opportunities for the community.

“Because of our size, we’re uniquely positioned to offer opportunities and

“Ads for Father Christmases and elves are showing rates three times the usual wage”

The job roles most in demand

The top 10 positions for which there has been the highest increase in demand this year



PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN ADVERTISED VACANCIES SINCE JANUARY 2021. SOURCE: ADZUNA



effect change – we reach into all corners of the country, not just the affluent pockets,” she says. A key part of Compass Group’s approach to its talent pipeline is to offer a “first rung” – a precious first role that could lead to something else. “There are no dead end jobs in this business; we’ve done a lot of work on career paths so you can start as a barista, for example, move on to become a chef and then a manager. We’ve mapped the skills you’d need onto these paths and the academy will play a role in providing them,” she adds.

Similarly, Emma Rose, chief HR officer at Travis Perkins, is using the apprenticeship funding to grow digital skills that will be in demand in years to come as well as through the current hiring boom. The builders’ merchants recently launched a data apprenticeship available to staff across all functions to build their skills in interpreting and using data for decision making. But it has also innovated in its approach to attracting people into the business, ensuring it is not reliant on a narrow set of channels. In summer 2021, it used social media platform TikTok

to target students for flexible contracts during the university holidays. The result was around 10,000 applicants, 18 per cent from ethnic minority backgrounds and 40 per cent female, in an industry traditionally dominated by men. “Some of those summer workers have become permanent employees, or prolonged their contract into the winter season working in other branches near where they study,” says Rose. If nothing else, thousands of young people have built their awareness of the sector and a potential career there, she adds.

Moving into 2022, one of the factors HR teams will be unable to ignore is pay. Almost half (47 per cent) of respondents to the CIPD’s Labour Market Outlook said they had increased salaries over the past six months to lure people into hard-to-fill roles. Next year, the combination of the National Insurance and minimum wage rises in April will put further pressure on wage budgets. But is simply raising pay sustainable?

“We were already in a situation before the pandemic where salaries could not keep up with the cost of living,” says

There are no dead end jobs here... we've done a lot of work on career paths"



Bar staff are in particularly short supply with a more than 1,300 per cent increase in adverts during the last year

Steve Herbert, head of benefits strategy at Howden Employee Benefits and Wellbeing. “Employers are stuck in a hole where employees expect more, the government is forcing up costs, yet productivity is lower than it was 18 months ago.” That productivity issue will be a particular pain point in the coming months, predicts Xiaowei Xu, senior research economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies. “Everything comes down to this,” she says. “We have to have an increase in productivity, so that increase in wages does not translate into an increase in prices.”

Where businesses are unable or unwilling to incentivise candidates with higher pay rates, many are using training and career development as an attraction tool. Figures from ManpowerGroup show that 44 per cent are offering training, skills development or mentoring in a bid to attract staff, compared with 29 per cent who are hiking salaries. Gerwyn Davies, senior labour market adviser at the CIPD, says better support from the government on making apprenticeships and other training schemes more flexible would help. “A quick win would be to extend the apprenticeship levy so those sectors hit by shortages could use it as a training levy,”

he says. “You could earmark the budget to cover driving qualification or an NVQ for a care worker. Small businesses especially don’t have the resources to manage apprenticeships, so we’re playing catch-up at a time when we’re experiencing skills shortages.” This could also make the difference in terms of retention, he adds. “Younger workers are happy to tolerate a period of low pay if there are progression opportunities and training.”

TIS, a company that integrates fire and security systems for retirement homes, has taken this ‘training for retention’ approach to create a pipeline of highly specialist engineers. Managing director James Twigg has partnered with apprenticeship provider Skills for Security to offer a three-year apprenticeship programme to around 20 people.

“Because we want multi-systems experience, it can take a long time once you’ve recruited someone to train them,” he explains. “We’ve had private equity investment and around three-quarters of our revenue comes from just eight customers, so it’s crucial we nurture our own engineers to our standards.”

Twigg wants to move away from using apprentices as “a second pair of hands” and the apprenticeship has been structured so they apply their classroom work on site and experience rewarding work. He adds: “The more we invest in employees, they know we care about them and this resonates with customers. They can see career progression here and that’s great for retention.”

Herbert says for this approach to succeed, businesses need to support managers to nurture employees better. “If an employer is cash-strapped, bigger salaries are not an option, so make the case to managers that we need people to stay; that if this person leaves, recruitment will take months and we’ll end up with a productivity gap,” he advises. However, it’s important to tailor your retention strategy. A study for the *Human Resource Management Journal* by academics Xiangmin Liu and Sumita Raghuram earlier this year found that “generic employee retention programmes that focus on common turnover predictors are inadequate and costly” because

“If an employer is cash-strapped, bigger salaries are not an option. We need people to stay”

employees have different reasons for leaving. They recommend building profiles of workforce groups on a spectrum between ‘enthusiastic leavers’ (who will just leave because they want to) and ‘enthusiastic stayers’. Organisations can then tailor their retention practices to the needs of the largest profile of the workforce: so reluctant stayers might value progression or mentoring opportunities, for example.

In the longer term, dealing with such a volatile labour market will require sharper strategic workforce planning skills, argues Sally Hunter, managing director for EMEA for recruitment process outsourcing company Cielo. “There has been a talent gap for five or 10 years and we’ve been struggling for a mature and strategic way to forecast demand,” she says. “We might talk to finance about the

budget or look at historical attrition, but not consider new product launches, so how do we get ahead?” The pandemic has caused many employees to consider whether they’re happy pursuing their current career, while remote working has opened up access to candidates for headhunters and vice versa (no more taking sneaky calls

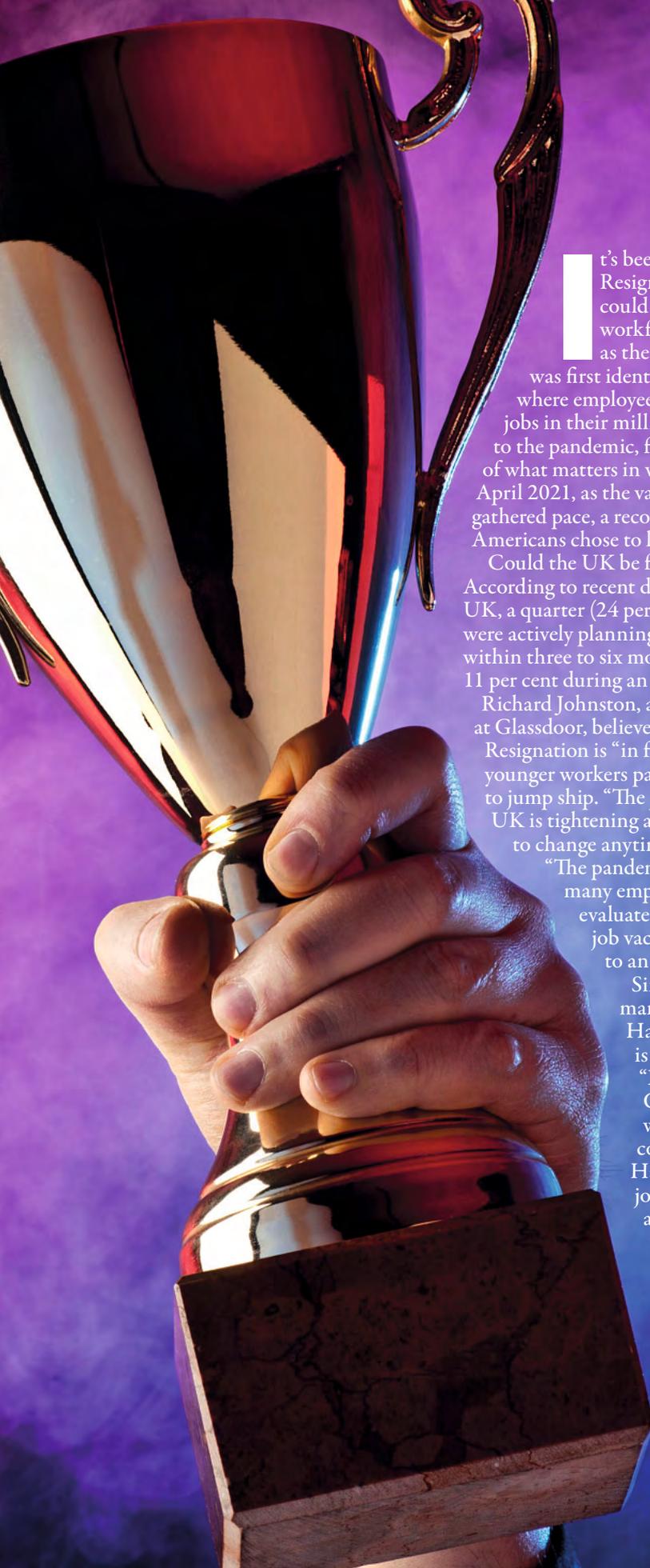
in a side office). “This is driving people into roles for which they’re not entirely qualified, access to jobs they might not have seen in a less buoyant market,” she adds. In response, organisations are trying to become more strengths- or values-based in their hiring practices, looking to teach technical skills once they have the right attitudes through the door.

But moving forward, workforce planning has to become far more of a central business issue than an HR issue, Hunter insists. “It’s about making sure that HR business partners and resourcing teams have in-depth conversations about where the business expects to be, and building your workforce plan around that. It may be a longer game if you need to rely on early talent, or you may need to redesign roles or make learning more compact to get to market quicker. Make everyone co-own the workforce plan and how that translates into performance,” she says. With labour market experts predicting that hiring surges are likely to persist well into 2022, sharing the burden with colleagues across the business will be music to HR’s ears. **PM**

How to be an employer of choice

Amid a turbulent, candidate-driven market, keeping hold of top talent is just as important as attracting it

WORDS KATIE JACOBS



It's been coined the Great Resignation – and it could be coming for your workforce. Also known as the Big Quit, the trend was first identified in the US, where employees have been leaving jobs in their millions in response to the pandemic, forcing a rethink of what matters in work and life. In April 2021, as the vaccine programme gathered pace, a record four million Americans chose to leave their jobs.

Could the UK be following suit? According to recent data from Randstad UK, a quarter (24 per cent) of workers were actively planning to change roles within three to six months, compared to 11 per cent during an average year.

Richard Johnston, associate economist at Glassdoor, believes the Great Resignation is “in full swing”, with younger workers particularly likely to jump ship. “The job market in the UK is tightening and this isn't going to change anytime soon,” he says.

“The pandemic encouraged many employees to re-evaluate their priorities and job vacancies have jumped to an all-time high.”

Simon Winfield, managing director at Hays UK and Ireland, is more circumspect: “Despite talk of the Great Resignation, we haven't seen it come to fruition.”

Hays' data finds jobseeking intentions are lower than usual, but Winfield adds that the demand for talent is the highest it has been for several years, with 80 per cent of employers planning to recruit over the next year.

This is leading to a talent crunch, compounded by a resurgence in the economy, existing skills shortages, Brexit, and the fact many EU workers chose to return home at the height of the pandemic. “Most, if not all, sectors are facing skills shortages,” says Winfield. “Demand is high in areas such as tech, construction, marketing, engineering and life sciences.”

People teams are certainly feeling the pinch. “The recruitment market is really challenging at the moment. Now, more than ever, it feels like a candidate's market,” says Melanie Hayes, chief people officer at Harvey Nash Group. “Volumes of vacancies are high, and employers are competing for the same talent while navigating how they want to operate in the new normal.”

Cathy Donnelly, senior director, talent at Liberty IT, has also noticed a shift in employee attitudes: “For the first six months of Covid, there was a sense of appreciation for having a job and job security. Then the pendulum swung and we saw people wanting more from the organisation than security and stability.”

In this competitive and demanding landscape, there will be winners and losers. So, set yourself up for success with *People Management's* guide to becoming an employer of choice in the era of Covid.

Embrace genuine flexibility

We all know the pandemic has radically shifted attitudes towards working from home, but to be an employer of choice, organisations need to offer flexibility beyond place. “The pandemic has shown us new ways to be agile and flexible in how we work,” says Claire McCartney, senior recruitment and inclusion adviser at the CIPD. “Employees now expect greater flexibility and autonomy, beyond the traditional nine-to-five or rigid shift patterns. Employers that offer greater flexibility will be hugely attractive to a diverse pool of candidates, and will retain talent as well.”

Malcolm Higgs, professor of human resource management and organisational behaviour at the University of Hull and ▶

Attraction and retention

emeritus professor at the University of Southampton, says flexibility is about “an increasing desire to have more control over your working life. We’re seeing organisations responding in terms of place, so where you’re working, but not as much how or when you’re working.”

“Priorities have shifted for many people so offering the flexibility and choice on working hours and patterns has become more important than ever,” agrees Claire Logan, HR director at Microsoft UK, which is ranked the second-best place to work in the UK by Glassdoor users.

While many organisations are implementing hybrid working strategies, embracing and enabling asynchronous working is as critical as ‘allowing’ people choice over their work location. This is vital, given that Johnston points out “work-life balance is more important than pay when it comes to workplace satisfaction” in 2021, and that burnout is becoming a more common discussion area among Glassdoor users.

Go big on purpose

“As a society, we spend so much of our time working – and thinking about work – that we want our work to have meaning. We’re seeing an even greater need for people to feel a sense of purpose in their careers,” says Logan. ‘Purpose’ is one of Microsoft’s ‘Five Ps of employee fulfilment’ (coined by CHRO Kathleen Hogan, the others are ‘pay’, ‘perks’, ‘people’ and ‘pride’).

The pandemic gave many of us the opportunity, impetus or both to reflect on what we want from work and life. “As we come out of the pandemic, people are increasingly being motivated to work for businesses that prioritise social responsibility, doing good and have a clear purpose instead of more traditional motivators,” confirms Winfield. “Instead of competing on salary, employers need to compete on what they can offer talent in the long run.” According to Hays’ data, 62 per cent of professionals would be willing to take a pay cut for a job with more purpose.

“Offering the flexibility and choice on working hours and patterns is important”

“Money is important, but it’s about having that compelling purpose and vision,” says Donnelly. “We need to help people understand the difference they can make.”

For her organisation, that includes talking about how, as a mutual, Liberty IT reinvests all profits and thinking about how the insurance provided by its parent company is so important to people in their moment of need, “and the difference it can make when the technology experience is seamless and frictionless – that’s down to the work Liberty IT employees do”.

Higgs adds that while purpose means doing something meaningful and working for a cause you believe in, it’s also intrinsically linked to job quality. “As well as purpose beyond profit, one of the things that makes an employer of choice is purposeful work. A ‘good job’ is one with a degree of autonomy and decision-making ability.”



The Sovini Group also scooped the CIPD People Management Award for flexible working at this year’s ceremony



Employers should remember the social aspect of work is important when it comes to attracting and retaining staff

“People have reflected and now want to focus on their personal growth”

Match reputation and reality

In a tough, candidate-driven market, employer brand can make all the difference. “It’s important that the investment in employer brand is not forgotten as

the pressures to hire build,” cautions Hayes. “Leaders need to understand that employer branding activities don’t always easily provide an immediate return. A consistent approach to messaging, content and employee advocacy will help to build the external profile.”

However, there’s no point making that investment if it doesn’t match up to the experience of the organisation. As Hayes says: “It is so damaging if an organisation sells a culture that upon joining is entirely different to the reality.”

That’s part of the reason why Donnelly meets every new hire Liberty IT makes

(and they’ve onboarded more than 200 people since the pandemic began) after 90 days. Her motto: “Recruit with reputation; retain with reality.” Is the firm living up to the “dream” it sold its fresh recruits? Luckily, the answer is usually yes.

Property management firm The Sovini Group was named the best large employer in the 2021 Great Places to Work list. Group people and learning director Kerry Beirne believes the close working relationship between her team and marketing and comms is part of that success. “We ensure that everything is aligned,” she says. “We have worked particularly hard on this over the last couple of years as we felt there was a slight disconnect with our employer brand and our culture. We wanted people to be able to feel our culture from the outside and know what we were all about before they even spoke to us.”

Microsoft has focused on employee stories, helping to show prospective talent what it’s really like to work there. “Simply

posting a job description won’t attract our target talent, instead we need to activate our whole employee base to be talent magnets,” says Logan.

Higgs adds that while employer brand remains important, people professionals need to think bigger. “It’s more about what makes a good reputation, which is wider than caring for employees. It’s less about employer brand than the broader reputation of the organisation.” This could include your green credentials (not greenwashing) or your executive compensation programme.

Offer room to grow

According to data from Right Management, 60 per cent of employees say they would be more loyal if their developmental needs were being fulfilled by their employer. Matt Phelan, co-founder and co-CEO of the Happiness Index, has noticed a similar trend with his customers’ data. “People have reflected during the pandemic and now want to focus on their personal growth,” he

Attraction and retention

THE RULES OF ATTRACTION

In a bid to fill roles, businesses are offering both financial and non-financial incentives, including:



Offering training, skills development or mentoring



Offering more flexible work schedules



Offering more flexible working locations



Increasing wages



Offering more non-financial benefits, eg. holidays



Offering incentives such as joining bonuses



Lowering job skills or experience requirements

SOURCE: MANPOWER

says. “We are seeing a demand from employees for L&D opportunities linked to career progression. If organisations can’t show people they have specific opportunities to grow, then expect them to look elsewhere.”

This demand for L&D chimes with Hayes’ experience. “Career pathways are one of the most in-demand things we are working on, aligned with development,” she says. “The focus on individualised strategies that help to get the best out of people means that the [people] function is moving faster than ever before and the demand is higher.”

At Liberty IT, which consistently ranks on the Great Places to Work list, development is a key plank of the EVP. This year, 27 per cent of the workforce have been promoted, thanks in part to the company’s innovative self-nomination promotion process. “When you think you’re ready for promotion, you find a sponsor and put together a portfolio,”

explains Donnelly. Success rates run at about 95 per cent.

Microsoft has explicitly stated a desire to move from a “‘know it all’ culture to a ‘learn it all’ culture”, says Logan. This is a culture “where

continued learning and a growth mindset is promoted, and employees can try new things in an inclusive space”.

Don’t forget the social side of work

With various lockdowns forcibly removing in-person interaction and many staff working at home for the best part of two years, the value of relationships at work has perhaps never been higher.

‘People’ is one of Microsoft’s Five Ps, focusing on the importance of colleagues and defined as: “The people with whom you work, the teams that achieve great innovation, the colleagues who become close friends combined with a culture that encourages you to grow and be your authentic self provides a lot of joy and inspiration every day.” In a hybrid world, being more deliberate about every interaction has become critical, says Logan: “Where relationships perhaps grew in a more organic way before, now

people need to consciously think about building space and opportunity to nurture those relationships.”

Social interaction, whether in person or virtual, is part of wellbeing. The Sovini Group offers plenty of opportunities for colleagues to have fun together, including The Sovini Games, now in its sixth year, which involves a series of games and challenges, and a Sovini Safari Quiz, with teams being quizzed on their animal knowledge while being driven around Knowsley Safari Park. “We recognise the importance of making the workplace fun,” says Beirne, adding that doing events virtually has enabled the company to involve colleagues’ families.

Tune in to employee voice

Most organisations amped up their communications during the pandemic, with a focus on authentic and two-way messaging. To be an employer of choice means not letting that slip as things return to some semblance of normality. “In the post-pandemic world, employers of choice will give their employees a voice, listening to what they say instead of shutting down conversations,” believes Nic Marks, founder of feedback tool FridayPulse, adding that the best employers will be those organisations that feel “vibrant and happy”.

“Since the pandemic, communication has become more important than ever,” agrees Beirne. At The Sovini Group, the employee app (OurSpace) has been particularly valuable, with engagement rates increasing by more than 50 per cent during the pandemic. “Engagement levels are monitored weekly, and directors are sent a report so they can see how employees are engaging in their area of the business. This allows us to review content and start the conversation if levels of engagement are lower.”

Marks adds that careful listening means tuning into the emotions of your people, rather than “brushing off emotions as unprofessional”. “The best employers embrace the fact that emotions are data and offer key insight into the wellbeing of their people,” he says. Logan concludes that authenticity has come to the fore over the past 18 months: “It’s HR’s role to understand the humanness of employees and make sure we are meeting them where they are.” **PM**



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7. THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY - KATY PERRY
8. DON'T DREAM IT'S OVER - ROWDED HOUSE

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS DIFFICULT

Employees choosing to move on might seem disastrous – but firms that invest in offboarding stand to reap the benefits

WORDS ELIZABETH HOWLETT

Your employees might be leaving you for someone else. It's not an easy thing to accept, but it is inevitable. So says Angela O'Connor, former HRD and chief executive of The HR Lounge: "You can't hang on to people forever," she warns, adding that it's "ridiculous" for employers to assume they can. And if the data is to be believed, more people than ever are considering breaking up with their employer as we exit the pandemic. Dubbed the Great Resignation, plenty of studies have found a substantial increase in workers handing in their notice in recent months – for

example, a survey of more than 6,000 adults by recruiter Randstad UK found that seven in 10 (69 per cent) say they feel confident to move to a new job by January 2022. The pandemic has also altered people's attitudes towards their work-life balance and priorities, meaning many are seeking new careers or opportunities; Jill Cotton, PR and marketing manager EMEA at Glassdoor, points out that Covid has "forced many people to reevaluate what they want from work, and people are taking time out to retrain and look at other options".

So with an apparent uptick in people reconsidering their career options, it's

more vital than ever that employers work hard to maintain relationships with their staff – and though this is of course true for current employees, it's also the case once an employee decides to leave. And those organisations that get 'offboarding' right stand to reap a range of benefits further down the line. David Collings, professor of human resource management at Dublin City University, says a shift in attitude towards leavers has been a long time coming. "For too long, firms have had a fixed view of what happens at the end of someone's time at an organisation," he explains. Instead of forcing an employee to stagnate in a role when no suitable



Exit interviews should form an integral part of any good offboarding process

Scan with a smartphone camera to listen to the extended leavers' playlist on Spotify



THE LEGAL SIDE

There are employment law considerations to bear in mind, says **Mark Owen**, a solicitor at Irwell Law, part of Peninsula Group.

Check personnel files

When an employee leaves the business it's critical the employer has the up-to-date suite of contract documentation. Check the employee contract, the deductions from pay agreement and restricted covenants, because if the employee hasn't signed some of those documents then that might cause a problem on departure. You should iron out any potential for conflict so the employee will be more likely to return.

Check commission or bonuses

The small print in the commission scheme or the bonus structure might say the employee is not entitled to receive these if it falls when they are serving notice. The employee may be expecting a hefty pay cheque when they leave because of their commission or bonus, so you want to anticipate any issues at an early stage so there are no nasty surprises.

Restrictive covenant agreements

These ensure that when an employee jumps ship they don't make too much of a splash, but you may find they have an old version that only stops them contacting clients for three months and they missed out on signing an updated version. If you ask them to sign an updated version of the agreement and they sign it, it will be unenforceable.

internal promotions are available, Collings says organisations should instead work with them to find a suitable external opportunity, then keep the channel of communication open, "so when a role does become available, they can reach out".

Both rehires and 'boomerang' employees – workers who leave an organisation and return after a short period of time – Collings notes, have become "more pronounced" as a result of the pandemic. "There have been lots of organisations forced to downsize through furlough and 'fire and rehire' so there's a larger pool of people who are potential boomerangs," he says. The potential for so-called 'boomerang' hires has become so great during Covid that some organisations have begun factoring it into their recruitment planning and strategies, explains Jon Sleightholme, recruitment business partner at The Curve Group. "We're increasingly seeing employers looking at having a boomerang attraction strategy. It's more popular with bigger companies, but smaller businesses should think about it too," he advises. "If someone leaves and they've done well, there's a lot of potential – you want to be able to attract them back because they are trusted assets."

But what is the best way of implementing a good offboarding

process and making sure the employment relationship ends on good terms in order to potentially tempt leavers back in future? First and foremost, employers that want to make sure the split is amicable need to hide the inconvenience of losing talent, says O'Connor. "Separate your feelings, because it's human to think 'what am I going to do?'," she explains. "You have to put that in the other box and celebrate their success. Talk to them about their new job... and find out how you can help them before they leave."

Employer brand and reputation is also a key consideration, particularly because of the ongoing talent crisis, says O'Connor – it's not just about tempting people back, but also attracting new people. "There are loads of jobs available and people are moving around, so an employer's reputation is

critical in terms of what people might say about the organisation on websites or to friends." She also points out that the offboarding experience starts with good leadership: "Managers are so important, because if employees don't like their manager, they'll be out of the door, but if they're amazing and care about their career, it's likely the leaver will return," she says.

HR, O'Connor adds, can also put its skills to good use in these scenarios to

"If someone leaves and they've done well, you want to be able to attract them back"

build the right culture and ethos that will tempt talent back. “[HR] can work with leaders and develop them – that’s where their skills will have the most impact in the workplace – but it’s important to celebrate when people go, making it easy for them to leave feeling good about the organisation and finding ways of staying in touch... They could also recommend the organisation and bring other people in.”

Sleightholme agrees that company culture plays an important role in ensuring former staff still have their previous employer in mind when looking for new opportunities. “Because of the pandemic, people are going to be choosy about the type of employer they want to work for and company culture is going to be important,” he explains. “Businesses that don’t embrace things like a good offboarding process and learn and improve their environment for employees are taking a huge risk. But offboarding should be done well regardless of what’s going on.

“It should be a given that companies are doing proper exit interviews and understanding some of the data that is coming out of that to change processes, and use that feedback to provide a better employee experience.”

While Cotton confirms that Glassdoor data reflects the importance of culture, she also points out that keeping in touch with leavers plays into the overall employee experience. “It’s a good thing to do because they know you and your organisation, and they could bring new skills they have gained elsewhere back in.” There are, she adds, “very casual” ways to keep in touch with former employees, such as connecting on LinkedIn – especially because the majority of employees who changed jobs stay within the same sector. “They are potentially great advocates for your company,” she says.

Another way to solidify connections with leavers and reinforce company culture is through alumni groups, says Collings. “We are seeing more alumni associations within organisations, and they don’t have to be elaborate,” he explains. “It’s about creating a place where people can stay connected, through a LinkedIn group, social media or events.” Some organisations, Collings adds, have benefits and discounts dedicated to alumni.

“Managers are so important. If employees don’t like their manager, they’ll be out the door”

However, O’Connor warns that HR should keep things simple and avoid turning such groups into “massive processes”. “You don’t want to create alumni groups that are a big bureaucratic muddle,” she says, adding that people professionals must utilise their skills to keep talent connected to the organisation through positive experiences and culture. Indeed, PwC UK has successfully rehired former employees through its alumni network of more than 70,000 members since its inception in 1993 through a mix of connection and a connected company culture. Emma Charlesworth, head of the PwC UK alumni network, notes that the world of work is shifting and there is now more acknowledgement that workers no longer join a firm for life. “We are at a really strong point with our network, and have seen a marked increase in people wanting to join it,” she explains.

“Whenever we speak to our alumni, there’s a strong sense of pride in being associated with PwC, and that’s one of the reasons they want to engage with us and stay connected.”

The network is promoted to a leaver at the point of their resignation, and is an integral part of the company’s offboarding process, Charlesworth explains. It offers a quarterly newsletter, LinkedIn page and community platform to keep alumni abreast of the latest news and job opportunities, as well as an annual live event. “A number of alumni are our advocates in the market, and I can think of one person who has left PwC and returned at least four times, each time from a different part of the sector.

“We also have people who stay connected to the alumni network and then return when they have new skills or see new opportunities at the company. For the people who left 10 years ago, we are a completely different firm now, and there are so many different opportunities – that’s part of the appeal to stay involved with the network and find out what’s happening in the firm.”

According to Collings, who recently published research in the *Academy of Management Journal* on boomerang hires outperforming new hires, there are upsides to people going to work in another

organisation and returning at a later date. “They are likely to be doing different work but in the same context,” he explains. When they come back they will have additional skills, so there’s a significant benefit. Research suggests people perform better when they come back to a former employer, and compared to an external hire they are likely to perform to a higher level and get promoted quicker.

“This is because they have an established network in the organisation, know their way around and how to get things done because they have those relationships. This is all in addition to the augmented skills they bring from their time away.”

The effectiveness of businesses’ offboarding processes also hinges on whether they have the necessary skills to conduct a thorough exit interview. Research from BrightHR suggests that less than a third of HR directors consistently conduct exit interviews, despite the majority (95 per cent) saying they find them beneficial. Alan Price, chief executive of BrightHR, notes that a positive offboarding process makes it easier to stay connected “and leaves the door open for re-employment”, adding that given the current recruitment difficulties, employers would be “wise to look at ways to retain staff, and exit interviews have a big part to play in this”.

Sleightholme reports that many of his clients avoid the exercise because they worry it might be a “moan fest” where outgoing employees vent their spleens, which he maintains is often not the case. “You should be using the same skills as you would use in a job interview to probe and extract information,” he explains. “This requires a certain skill and I have worked with clients to help them develop this and alleviate their nerves that employees will just whinge. But some of the information will be useful and constructive regardless.”

A good offboarding process is undoubtedly beneficial in both attracting, retaining and reattracting old employees. However, Cotton questions whether hiring a former employee is potentially opening a can of worms. “You need to question if it wasn’t right when the employee left, and your organisation’s core values weren’t a good fit for them, is it going to be a good fit in a year’s time when they boomerang? Even if they have different, better skills I would question that before rehiring.” **PM**

HOW DOES L&D NEED TO ADAPT AFTER COVID?

Following almost two years of upheaval, People Management asked a handful of practitioners about the challenges – and opportunities – the pandemic brought to workplace learning

INTERVIEWS JYOTI RAMBHAI & ELEANOR WHITEHOUSE

It's no secret that since March 2020, the people profession has been turned upside down. But with the switch to remote working for many also came a huge shift for L&D, with face-to-face training becoming impossible almost overnight, and teams needing to overhaul their offerings in a matter of days. Indeed, the CIPD and Accenture's 2021 *Learning and Skills at Work* report found 70 per cent of the 1,200 organisations polled had increased their use of digital solutions in the previous 12 months, and more than a third (36 per cent) said their investment in learning technology had increased in the previous year. Almost seven in 10 (69 per cent) also reported that they were innovating in their use of learning technology.

But the silver lining to the cloud of strategic changes was perhaps an increased appreciation of L&D: less than a third (31 per cent) of survey respondents said they had seen learning budgets cut in the preceding 12 months, and a similar number (32 per cent) saw L&D headcounts reduced.

With learning at every organisation having fared differently, *People Management* spoke to eight L&D practitioners about the challenges Covid brought, and how the profession needs to adapt in 2022 and beyond.

“We need to dispel the myth about what L&D is”

Karen Fox, leadership and talent consultant at RSA insurance

What's been your experience of L&D during the pandemic?

'Pivoting' is the phrase that comes to mind. Particularly around delivering training virtually – we had done a little before the pandemic, but suddenly it was our only option. We had to redesign a lot of our training and create content based on the queries we were getting, like managing remote teams. At the same time, we had to equip people with the skills to deliver virtual learning.

What have been the biggest positives for L&D from Covid?

People have had to adapt to challenges like



being airlifted into other teams. We've seen some real bonding – people that had never met working together. And we tried to support this through guidance and targeted workshops.

What will be the biggest challenge for L&D in 2022?

Making time for personal development.

Covid has seen people's roles expanded or changed, and it will look different for each company. But alongside new hybrid ways of working, it's an easy thing to neglect, so how do we encourage people to find time? Many people think development is a means to an end, but we all need to develop ourselves to keep our skills relevant. None of us is a finished article and there's always something to improve, so we have to help dispel the myth of what learning and development is.

“Requests for hybrid are a big challenge”

Sukhvinder Pabial, senior learning strategist at Challenging Frontiers and former global talent development partner

What’s the biggest challenge for L&D at the moment?

The many requests for hybrid learning – I don’t even know how to define that. Does it mean you have some people in a room and some virtual? Does it mean you have different forms of learning available in different ways? I don’t know how you build a hybrid learning programme if you can’t agree on what it looks like.

How will the focus on remote change L&D in the long term?

Before Covid, I think we got lost in the rhetoric around things like bite-size

learning, ‘Netflix for learning’ or rapid learning. In some cases, those will be relevant, but long-form programmes for upskilling are also important. Lots of people think long-form learning and remote learning can never cross over, but they can – you just have to do it in the right way. We’ve never given virtual learning a chance – most organisations are still asking for either bite-size learning or an event.



How can L&D work better with organisations?

L&D has to step up and say “this is what good looks like” and “if you want to retain your staff, this is how we can provide great learning opportunities”.

“Covid made some aspects of training almost impossible”

Lieutenant Alexandra Head, training manager at HMS Excellent, the Royal Navy’s Portsmouth headquarters

The pandemic made things very complicated for everybody across the entire maritime industry, because firstly, there was no travel going on and different countries had different restrictions, so trying to get trainees out to do real-life training on board ships that were deployed all around the world was almost impossible at times.

Secondly, a lot of the ships we would normally use for our at-sea training became ring-fenced as high-priority vessels, meaning the government required them to be available, so we had to expand and use platforms we had never used before – and for the at-sea training, we went from using the capital ships, frigates and destroyers to our patrol vessels. This not only meant we had to adapt our training documentation, but officers who had never trained anyone before found themselves managing trainees.

But our biggest challenge was conducting lived experience training. All military recruits undertake an initial package where they live together in close proximity, which allows them to bond with their teams – key when service personnel are sent to the frontline – and is an effective way of training and building trust because they have to share resources and work closely together. It’s essential for anyone going into a military environment, but when you add social distancing, it makes it hard to bond.

Covid restrictions also meant the new trainees missed out on down time like going to the pub. That’s why it’s important to track mental wellbeing, because they are being sent from one highly pressured environment to another with limited respite.

But, Covid aside, the Navy is looking at bringing in simulators and AI to help with the at-sea part of its training. It’s looking at using synthetic training and simulators on vessels and shoreside that can allow our sailors to get real, up-to-date information when training, no matter where they are.



“It’s made me a far better trainer”

Chris Watt, joint head of organisational learning at the London School of Economics (LSE) and founder of Free Your Inner Alice

At LSE, we had around 100 days of training courses ready to go before the pandemic hit, which we then had to unpick in mid-March 2020. The initial response was panic, but we managed to replace and relaunch everything in just four weeks. But we didn’t just replace them, we rewrote them in the context of the remote environment. An interesting

learning was refocusing on the outcomes and what we were trying to achieve; it stripped us back to basic



principles, which we sometimes lose because we’re so busy.

An initial mistake was to try to replicate face-to-face delivery with remote – we naively believed they were the same thing. Length is one consideration – people’s concentration on the camera doesn’t last as long and there are more distractions, so you either deliver the same material in less time, or you refine your material to key points.

If you had told me that I was going to learn entirely new skills in delivering training, which I’ve been doing for 30 years, I’d have laughed. But I’ve learned serious amounts in the last year – possibly more than in those 30 years. And now I’m better at delivering face-to-face training than I was before the pandemic.

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“The pandemic has created a burning platform for learning”



Andrew Jacobs, founder of L&D consultancy Llarn Learning Services

We're at the end of the beginning in terms of the way learning and development has changed. And I say that as we still don't know what work will look like, because only around 15 per cent of the UK population has had Covid-19. It suggests that more people could get it and so we probably have to respond accordingly.

But having said that, learning strategy – the way we design it and the way we deliver it – has already changed significantly. It's no longer just face to face; we have a more blended approach now with online courses.

The pandemic has created a burning platform for learning; it has forced people

and organisations to fundamentally think about what they do for learning. And that's partly down to the fact that people who were just going through the motions before have now been found out.

For example, people are asking why they have to do a six-hour face-to-face conference or online event when it can be spread throughout the day. So it's completely thrown the idea of what is and isn't valid when it comes to learning up in the air

At the same time, the new ways of working and being flexible have also posed some challenges. One of these is around how we evaluate learning now. Previously, if you were looking at engagement in a room, and people are yawning or falling asleep, that can tell you something. Whereas now, somebody can turn their camera off, put themselves on mute, and have a doze if they wanted to without you even knowing.

This is one area that's really impacting us now, but because we're in such a state of flux, it's difficult to know what we'll be doing in six months' time, let alone a year. Therefore, the most important thing right now for L&D professionals is to be responsive and move quickly and adapt to however the world of work changes.

“We can afford to be more adventurous”

Rachel Burnham, L&D consultant and chair of the CIPD's Manchester branch

How do you think the move to virtual learning will benefit L&D and learners?

Live online lends itself to much shorter sessions, so you can make much more use of spaced practice, opportunities for participants to embed the learning, and link it with other material to make it a truly blended approach. You can also get people to do much more reflection on what they've used. So there are all sorts of exciting possibilities. A lot of people in L&D hadn't really embraced the digital approach before and had to catch up, but there's potentially a lot of good out of that



because you can come up with a really effective approach to supporting learning and impacting on performance.

Do you think the approach to live online learning needs to change?

I think we can afford to be more adventurous in the way we use it. You don't have to be constrained to slides, polls, chat and breakout rooms, although all of those are good. Actually, you can be quite hands-on, and that's one of the things I've discovered. We need to avoid rushing back to face-to-face in an unthinking way – yes, let's keep it in the mix, but think very carefully about when it's the right option.

What will L&D's biggest challenges be in 2022?

One will be helping and supporting line managers to develop skills to manage in a hybrid context. That's not necessarily about us teaching, as if we've got all the answers, but instead bringing people together to reflect on what they've been doing that's worked.

“Very quickly, our programmes were no longer fit for purpose”

Adnan Bajwa, head of learning and organisational development at London South Bank University (LSBU)

I remember lockdown seemed to happen very suddenly, and there was no time to really prepare. Most of our L&D programmes were face to face, and there was a sudden shift in the methodology from face to face to digital that requires a whole different skill set. Very quickly, our programmes didn't feel fit for purpose anymore. It wasn't that the landscape had slightly changed, it had massively changed.

Our whole environment was geared towards face-to-face, and that was reflected in our learning offer. As well as looking at whether we had the technology to adapt our learning offer, we also had to ask if people had the technology to access it – some were fortunate to have



laptops, but the majority still had desktops, which brought in issues around inclusion and digital poverty.

We used to run a staff survey once a year, but we've probably run 10 or more in the last two years, just with the most relevant questions that will tell us whether we need to adapt our learning offer, as well as other things like if we need to do more on wellbeing.

I think the biggest danger now is reverting back to how things were in 2019. But another consequence of the pandemic for many organisations, including mine, is the financial hit, so there's a dual pressure to adapt the learning offer when resources are limited. So we need to look at greater utilisation of internal talent to deliver learning programmes; in the past, we would've just got someone in to do it for us, but we can't do that anymore.

“How work and learning go together needs urgently reconsidering”

Valerie Anderson, professor of human resource development and education at the University of Portsmouth

What has been the biggest challenge and opportunity of Covid for L&D?

The pivot to digital learning was a huge challenge, but the L&D profession did show it can respond remarkably quickly. To some extent it was an opportunity, because for far too long many organisations have seen L&D as a bit of a luxury where nobody is quite sure of the value of the investment they're making. The challenge now is not to be left in reactive mode and look at what learning should look like in their respective organisations in 5-10 years, and the values and principles that will enable it

to function in a sustainable way. It's a hard conversation to have, but it's important that L&D is part of that conversation, and not left to just implement others' good ideas.

How can L&D make sure the move to digital is sustainable in the long term?

Most organisations have achieved in a matter of months what would have taken four or five years – and it was crucial. But the practice of how work and learning go together urgently needs reconsideration. You can't achieve as much learning online as you can informally or through on-the-job experience, so when you just decant it, that is problematic – you're probably only dealing with 30 per cent of the problem and not the underpinning skills development

process. It's going to be the thing that must be addressed in 2022 and beyond, so the advances in digital can continue to be leveraged.

How can organisations better enable and support good L&D in 2022?

The only way it will happen is if those at the top commit to a system-wide process of valuing and managing L&D in an effective way. So that means there need to be mechanisms by which priority learning needs are identified at individual and team levels, and at the organisational level, people are clear that they all have roles and responsibilities relating to L&D – it's not just the job of an L&D function.



Building a multi- generational workforce: A free recruitment guide

Three quarters of employers in England agree that older workers' experience is crucial to organisational success. And yet, the current recruitment environment is not as age inclusive as it could be. More than a third of 50-70 year olds feel at a disadvantage applying for jobs due to their age.

We have launched a guide with the CIPD and Recruitment and Employment Confederation to help employers make their hiring processes fair for all ages and ensure they can make the most of older workers' skills and experience.

This resource is designed for professionals working within Human Resources and recruitment.

There are five key actions your organisation can take to make your recruitment age-inclusive, from making age a clear part of your diversity agenda to looking at the language in your job ads.



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Career path

Helping you get further

Research: pay gaps between employees and executives affect company performance
p57

Masterclass

How to measure LGBT+ inclusivity



Ashley Williams
Business psychologist at Pearn Kandola

When designing policies and strategies, a lack of data can lead organisations to rely on assumptions about the actions required to tackle organisational issues. This is also true for interventions aiming to enhance LGBT+ inclusivity in the workplace. By not collecting data about the key challenges faced by LGBT+ employees, it is difficult to know how effective your actions will be. So how can you collect this data?

Many businesses have existing measures of inclusion. However, they may not be asking questions about sexual orientation and/or gender identity within their surveys. Including these questions will help organisations understand the challenges faced by this community, and provide a starting point for developing the most effective interventions.

For organisations that do not already have a process in place to measure inclusion but are looking to understand LGBT+



employees' experiences, a good place to start is by speaking to LGBT+ staff directly.

Running focus groups may

“It’s important to allow employees to self-report”

start to highlight some of the biggest challenges. Once you have this insight, surveys can then provide regular data points about what is happening and how effective existing interventions are.

When collecting this data, it’s important to give employees the option to self-report their identity, and not to confine them to pre-determined labels. You should also acknowledge that not

everyone will want to disclose their identity, so surveys should also include this option. In fact, monitoring this response alone can be helpful, as we know that employees are more likely to disclose their identity in supportive work environments. A high proportion of respondents choosing not to disclose could be indicative of an exclusive workplace culture.

When collecting data, organisations can yield more honest feedback and increase response rates by implementing two important processes. Firstly, ensure that the data is truly anonymous and confidential. Be aware of threats to anonymity, including a small sample size, and plan for this. Secondly, create transparency by sharing with respondents where the data will be used and why.

The experiences of individuals within the LGBT+ community differ significantly, so ensure your data analysis allows for this. By exploring the feedback in the context of different aspects of identity – rather than collating the data – the interventions you use are more likely to be effective.

Taking it further

Watch
How to create LGBT+ inclusive work environments webinar by ESCP Business School
bit.ly/InclusiveEnvironments



Listen
Special episodes in a series of podcasts by the CIPD focusing on LGBT+ issues at work
bit.ly/CIPDPodcastsLGBT



Read
How to measure LGBT+ inclusivity in the workplace by Pearn Kandola
bit.ly/MeasureInclusivity

Who I am

Edward Obi

Director of HR Hub Plus

I previously worked in finance but stumbled into HR when a friend's role was terminated and I supported him through the process. He went to a tribunal and won but I thought: "Isn't HR supposed to stop this from happening?" It was then that I decided to go into human resources. I did a postgraduate course at the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen and worked in various organisations before setting up HR Hub Plus four years ago.

Working in a consultancy means being more engaged in the business community. We work with small- to medium-sized businesses that don't have in-house HR support, which means they're more open to unnecessary employment tribunal claims because they don't have day-to-day advice. They rely on us for support and, since the company's inception, we haven't seen any clients taken to a tribunal.

My proudest achievement has been starting from scratch to become an award-winning consultancy – the company was a finalist in the local business category of the New Day Awards 2020. HR Hub Plus grew quickly, and we have been recognised within the profession as well as the local business community. We've supported local businesses from our base in Aberdeen to the best of our ability and we now have clients all over the UK.

The pandemic made HR more resilient and exposed firms to unexpected scenarios.

Before coronavirus, the profession was comfortable, but Covid shook everything up and we had to embrace the learning curve. We need to make sure we are not found wanting if it happens again. Everybody in HR thought they had seen it all until Covid, but we adapted quickly because the knowledge was there and we did our best.

My HR New Year's resolution would be to create an environment of trust everywhere people work, because there's a perception that HR is more employer-focused than employee-focused. The issues that are consistently raised – menopause and mental health, for example – need to be supported by HR. We can do this with an environment where those issues can be discussed accordingly without any stigma.

Some colleagues had not heard of furlough before the pandemic, but I had come across it during my research. When the scheme was introduced, we set up a Facebook group providing free support to local businesses because we knew they would struggle. It wasn't about money for us – it was about trying to give back to the community because they didn't allow us to fail when we first started.

CV

Edward Obi MCIPD began his HR career as a human resources coordinator at the University of Aberdeen, before working in the profession across a range of other organisations. He started as director of both HR Hub Plus in 2018 and Peridot Recruit in 2019. He has a postgraduate diploma in HR management and a postgraduate certificate in mediation and conflict resolution, both from Robert Gordon University.

“Line managers are touted as the solution to many problems and yet lack the time and training”

Reviews

The Healthy Workforce

Stephen Bevan & Cary Cooper, Emerald Publishing, £16.71/£15.87 e-book

The pandemic has – quite rightly – shone a spotlight on employee wellbeing and put it firmly on organisations’ radars like never before, as they wake up to the fact that in order to have a workforce that is engaged, productive and motivated, they must better support employees’ mental, physical, financial and social wellbeing. So it came as little surprise that a survey carried out by YouGov on behalf of Acas in September found that more than a third (36 per cent) of UK employers said the mental health support they

offered their staff had improved since the beginning of the pandemic.

Tying in with this and looking back at how HR managed when working-age health was forced into the limelight, as well as what the profession can learn from the crisis, Bevan and Cooper’s catch-all encyclopaedia of post-pandemic workplace health explores the relationship between wellbeing and productivity, “deliberately”, as the authors

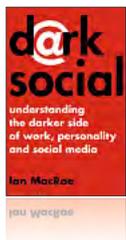


explain, moving beyond more traditional measures to also incorporate more macroeconomic definitions. It also looks – in great detail – at the employee health-related challenges and how organisations responded to the pandemic, as well as lessons learned, including around the difficulties of long-term working from home, burnout, long Covid and work-life balance.

And ever touted as the solution to many business issues and yet frequently

lacking the time and training to do so, no book on employee wellbeing would be complete without a chapter dedicated to line managers – in particular, the authors offer helpful advice in initiating wellbeing conversations and identifying risk factors among teams.

Drawing on a raft of research and divided into manageable sections that can be dipped in and out of at will, *The Healthy Workforce* should be the first stop for any HR professional looking to improve their employees’ health in 2022.

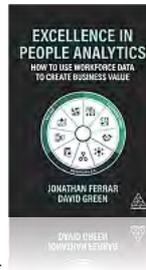


{Book}

Dark Social

Ian MacRae, Bloomsbury Business, £24.52/£22.50 e-book

For many of us, social media is part of everyday life – whether it’s your primary source of news or just somewhere to watch cat videos. But with all of us able to filter what we share online (in more ways than one), it’s difficult to know what – and who – we can trust. MacRae has bravely tackled the lesser-explored but important ‘dark’ side of social media, including the psychological principles behind online behaviour and how that translates into the digital workplace.

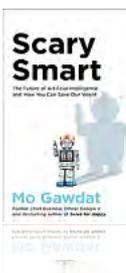


{Book}

Excellence in People Analytics

Jonathan Ferrar & David Green, Kogan Page, £26.85/£25.60 e-book

Those yet to dive, or even stick a toe, into the waters of HR analytics are likely to feel rather outpaced at the prospect, yet getting to grips with people data can help turn a good HR team into an outstanding HR team – and forms one of the CIPD’s professional values: being evidence based. Ferrar and Green’s guide is crammed full of practical advice and case studies that will set even the most hesitant people professional on the path to analytics greatness.



{Book}

Scary Smart

Mo Gawdat, Pan Macmillan, £12.99/£8.99 e-book

The problem with artificial intelligence, explains former Google X chief business officer Gawdat, is humans. We create algorithms, which in turn reflect our imperfect world and contain biases and errors. Though on a terrifying trajectory as AI continues to advance (it’ll apparently be a billion times more intelligent than humans by 2049), we can, he says, still stop the rise of the machines and save our species. It’s by no means a light-hearted read, but it’s an important one nonetheless.



{Book}

How to Get Ahead in HR

Kay Maddox-Daines, London Publishing Partnership, £14.99/£8.29 e-book

If ever there were an HR book that did exactly what it says on the tin, to quote the infamous Ronseal advert, this is it. Maddox-Daines takes her readers on a practical whistlestop tour of all things people profession, from first choosing it as a career to considering qualifications and membership of professional bodies, through to progression and the future of HR itself. Choc full of handy advice and examples, it will no doubt serve well any people practitioner looking to progress.

What’s new

In **Amplifying Voices, Mending Divides**, 14 employees of, and people with connections to, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust share their lived experiences of racism, as well as creative non-fiction and poetry as part of this powerful and eye-opening anthology created by Trust staff in response to the killing of George Floyd.

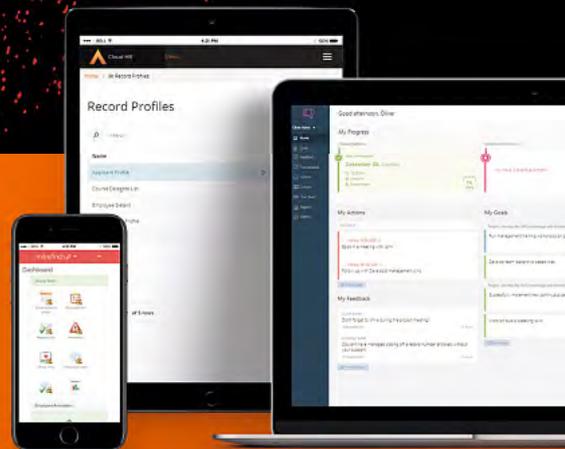
Meanwhile, in **Never Going Back**, former HRD and Future Work Forum director Peter Thomson and marketing consultant Mark Thomas explore Covid’s impact on the world of work in painstaking detail, as well as where firms should go next.

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Your problems



Guest Fixers Rob & Nicci Birley tackle your queries

Husband and wife team Rob and Nicci Birley have run their own full service HR consultancy, Cornerstone Resources, since late 2017, partnering with small businesses and charities throughout the UK. Prior to this, they both spent more than 20 years each working in a range of specialist and generalist HR roles across a range of sectors.

Nicci specialises in management coaching, mentoring, recruitment, change management and improving organisational performance. Rob specialises in complex employee issues and salaries, pensions and benefits.

Their replies are written in a personal capacity and do not reflect the views of *People Management* or the CIPD, nor are they a substitute for professional legal advice. Not all queries submitted can be answered, and personal replies are not possible. To pose an anonymous query, visit bit.ly/pmfixer

Can we force jabbed staff to sit near unvaccinated colleagues?

After working from home throughout the pandemic, we recently brought our workforce of 200 back to the office, which people generally seem to be happy to do. However, we all sit in an open-plan space with not much extra capacity, and some staff who are double vaccinated against Covid have complained about sitting close to unvaccinated colleagues. Is there anything we can do to alleviate their concerns? We obviously don't want to start segregating everyone depending on their vaccination status, but I can understand their worries.

Throughout the pandemic, we've advised our clients to complete a Covid risk assessment and, if you have not already done so, we would suggest starting by doing the same here. On the risk

assessment, list out the risks and the potential mitigations that you could put in place. By going through this process and communicating it to those who have raised this as an issue, hopefully you will be able to address some of those concerns.

"Some open-plan offices operate rotas, and this could help with the capacity issue"

It's not clear whether you've agreed to a hybrid working approach, or if something like that is feasible for your organisation, but some open-plan offices are doing team rotas, so some teams come in on certain days and others on other days. This could help with the capacity issue that you mentioned and help to create more space.

If this is not an option, you could consider putting extra partitions in place across the

whole office and/or increasing ventilation. It's always helpful to share some general awareness information about vaccinations, testing, etc. with the whole team, so everyone feels informed and reassured.

Ultimately, unless you are in an occupation where the

government has mandated vaccinations, it would be risky to implement a 'no job, no job' policy or to isolate those who have chosen not to get vaccinated. You have already said that you don't want to segregate people, nor would we advocate that as an effective solution. This is a polarising issue and one that we never thought we'd have to address as HR professionals but it is also one that will hopefully not last forever.

Manager's sickness is cause for concern

I joined a new company a couple of months ago as an HR manager. Everything is going well, except that I've recently discovered one of the organisation's senior managers is off sick frequently, usually for several days a month. The Bradford Factor score for their absence is more than 900, indicating that it's sufficient grounds for dismissal, yet the issue hasn't been addressed by either my HR predecessor or

the individual's line manager. As someone new to the company and also factoring in this person's seniority, how can I tackle the problem?

It isn't easy coming into a new business and changing practice. The first thing we'd suggest is a bit of research. Can you see from company files you've been left whether the policy has ever been implemented? If so, are you proposing a course of action that is in line with previous practice?

If the answer is 'yes' and the policy has been implemented consistently before, speak to the manager and explore why they have not taken any action. During that conversation, find out the reason for the absence and what support the business has given the employee. Also check what communication has happened with the individual to date; it could be that the absence was disability related and the line manager felt unskilled to deal with the issue. They may need coaching on how to deal with difficult conversations.

If the policy hasn't been followed previously, try to work

out why not. It could be that the policy had never really been bought into by the business. In that case you'll need to ascertain whether it's still fit for purpose; having a policy that isn't used is worse than having no policy at all.

Depending on the answers you get, you may want to consult with the business and revise the policy. Then you should ensure it is communicated before considering taking any formal action against anyone. Finally, make sure the agreed policy is implemented consistently so this doesn't happen again.

People and posts *Who's making HR headlines?*



1



2

Real estate services company JLL has recently appointed **Blessing Baraimoh (1)** as head of diversity and inclusion, workforce advisory EMEA. Baraimoh joins from Business in the Community, where she headed up the organisation's diversity and inclusion.

Andrew Cunningham, Chartered FCIPD is leaving VisitScotland and starting as international head of learning and development with Interstate Hotel Group.

first chief people officer. Gillard brings a wealth of HR experience, having previously worked at Moonpig and Skype, among others.



3



4

Imagination has announced the appointment of **Philomena Gray, Chartered FCIPD** as chief people officer. She joins from Photobox, where she was human resources director for international operations.

Gemma Alicia Long, Chartered MCIPD (3) has been appointed HR manager for Xbox game studio Rare.

Nick Williams (5) has joined logistics company Gist as group HR director. Williams will be responsible for all HR matters across the UK, ROI, Europe and US. He brings experience across food retail and food logistics in the UK and internationally.



5



6

Paul Boustead, Chartered CCIPD will leave Lancaster University in February 2022 after eight years to join the University of Leeds as its inaugural director of people and culture.

Independent financial adviser deVere Group has appointed **Beverley Yeomans** as its inaugural chief diversity officer (CDO) as well as keeping her role as the company's COO.

Law firm Baker McKenzie has announced the appointment of **Jay Connolly** as its new chief people officer.

Mira Magecha has joined on-demand grocery delivery company Getir as chief people officer. Magecha joins the business from JustEat, where she spent five years as CPO.

Motorway services operator Roadchef has announced that **Laura Bunn, Chartered MCIPD** has been promoted to HR director.

Colin Campbell-Austin, Chartered FCIPD (2) has been appointed to the new role of head of inclusion and employee experience at PRS for Music.

GoCardless has appointed **Lena Tailor (4)** as director of diversity and inclusion. Tailor joins from innocent drinks, where she spent nine years.

Sharon Barton, Chartered MCIPD (6) has moved to HR consultancy ourHRpeople. Barton most recently held a senior HR role in the NHS and brings more than 20 years of HR experience.

The next step *We help you to help your career*

As an HR director I have achieved a lot in my career, and until recently the next rung on my ladder has always been clear to me. But now I find myself unsure of where to go next, and how to continue to progress when there is no obvious upward step. I know what I don't want to do, but I am finding it difficult to articulate what I do want to do and to get clarity on options for progression, especially at the moment while everything remains uncertain. How can I gain some lucidity about what I could move on to do?

Start thinking about lateral moves into different types of business, because you'll find that you'll use other parts of your skill set, says Debra Gardner, head of HR at LSL Property Services (pictured).



There are lots of opportunities to develop and, in my experience as an HRD, the role varies from business to business. If you're an HRD in a small organisation or private equity firm at the moment, that role would transfer into a different business like a PLC and be a new experience.

When I moved to different types of businesses, I found that I began to use my skills in different ways. As a board advisor for a tech charity in the north-east, I found I used my HR skills but I was also pushed to think commercially.

Exploring options through mentors will also help you, such as through Steps Ahead mentoring with the CIPD, which helps you hone your skills if you want to move laterally and expand your network.

The other thing is to talk to people

in your business who aren't in HR – spend time with your finance or sales director – and learn a bit about their jobs too. You can also find someone that you respect to act as your mentor. For example, an HRD in a much bigger business, or one that you might be interested in, will help you learn about what they do, and the things they'll do at their board meetings might be different to what you're doing.

The final thing is don't forget to pay it forward. You've probably had some help along the way in becoming an HRD, whether that's through great line managers or mentors, so the people below you will see you as a role model.

You've worked really hard to get to your HRD role so remember to enjoy it for a while and don't put too much pressure on yourself to think about the next move.

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Yvonne Hoggarth, Senior Leader Apprenticeship Scheme Director

*via Apprenticeship Levy

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Research

Pay gaps directly affect business performance

Significant pay gaps between employees and executives can be detrimental to firms' performance, a study by Durham University Business School has found – but can also be beneficial.

Academics collected data from 29 tourism firms listed in Thailand and analysed their performance from 2002 to 2018, and compared it with executive remuneration at the companies – both short-term, such as salaries and bonuses, and long-term, such as pensions.

They found that the gap between employee wages and executive pay packets can have an impact on company performance, both positive and negative. The correlation between the two, the team found, forms a reverse-U shape, showing that a gap of a certain



Having large disparities between exec and employee pay can mean company performance is far from excellent

size can ensure executives work hard to boost the firm's performance, but also that employees' low morale can hinder performance.

Dr Guanming He, associate professor in accounting at Durham Business School and one of the report's authors,

said: "Compensation is an essential issue... as it influences the performance and growth of a firm. However, offering executives the right level of compensation is a tricky balancing act."

"On one hand, it acts as an incentive for talented

executives to further contribute to firm performance, but on the other, it can negatively affect the employees' morale, dedication and creativity and thereby lower the productivity and performance of a firm."

Professor Laurence Ferry, head of accounting at Durham Business School and another of the report's authors, added: "Ensuring all employees have appropriate salaries will help a firm to build a harmonious organisational culture, which is more likely to ensure the company performs effectively."

The researchers advised that although difficult, businesses need to constantly monitor their workforces' wages, morale and motivation to make sure they are making the right decisions to successfully boost performance.

* bit.ly/DUBSPayResearch

Family-owned firms better at looking after staff

Companies owned by a family are better at looking after their staff but not the environment, a Spanish study has found.

Researchers looked at data from 423 European listed companies in 21 countries from 2008 to 2017.

Firms that are partially or wholly owned by a family scored better on corporate social responsibility (CSR) measures as family-owned companies are more likely to prioritise the needs of internal stakeholders, including staff.

However, the study also measured environmental

responsibility and found that family-owned firms were no more likely than non-family owned companies to score well on external CSR measures, which include environmental and community policies.

María del Pilar Rivera Franco, PhD researcher at the University of Salamanca, and one of the authors of the study, said: "The results confirm the better corporate social responsibility performance of family firms at an aggregate level... The more responsible behaviour... can be partly attributed to the higher exposure of the family identity. The visibility of the family name becomes a strong incentive to avoid CSR-related problems."

Office air quality hinders staff performance

A study by the University of Harvard has found that office air quality could negatively impact workplace productivity and cognitive function.

Researchers studied 302 office workers in buildings located in six countries between May 2018 and March 2020 among companies with more than 10 employees, part of the global COGfx studies.

The companies' offices were installed with sensors that measured concentrations of the particulate PM_{2.5} and CO₂. Each participant was asked to complete tests and surveys on

an app that assessed accuracy and response times.

Researchers found that higher indoor concentrations of the particulate PM_{2.5} were associated with slower response times and reduced accuracy in the cognitive tests. Higher levels of CO₂ were also linked to decreased performance in all tests.

Joseph Allen, associate professor at Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health, said: "Our research consistently finds that the value proposition of these strategies extends to cognitive function and productivity... making healthy buildings foundational to public health and business strategy."

* bit.ly/HarvardAirStudy

Stronger together: CIPD Annual Report 2020-21

Good work and responsible business lead the agenda as the CIPD supports members to positively impact working lives

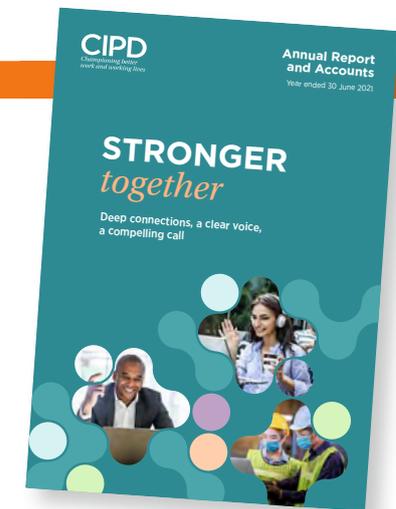
In championing better work and working lives, the CIPD is proud of its commitment to offer advice and support to people professionals across the world. In the past year, the Covid-19 pandemic continued to have a global impact, while many organisations in the UK and Europe also had to navigate their way through choppy Brexit waters.

By innovating at pace and scale, the CIPD managed to grow its membership to a landmark 160,000 members. Initiatives included broadening wellbeing advice to members beyond the UK through a new app, as well as embracing virtual delivery to offer over 1,000 branch events. The CIPD also helped more than 8,000 professionals with their membership fees to ensure those severely impacted by Covid-19 didn't lose the support they needed.

Content on the CIPD coronavirus hub remained popular with nearly two million visits, as well as more than 60 new reports and guides published, monthly podcasts and regular webinars to keep members prepared to tackle the challenges ahead.

While the groundwork was laid early in the pandemic (developing rapid-response learning and guidance for employers), the CIPD has also worked with members, experts and partners to connect in new ways, raise the profile of the profession and lead the call for good work.

In February 2021, the CIPD launched its #FlexFrom1st campaign, stating that requesting flexible working should be a right from day one. In the same month, CIPD chief executive Peter Cheese continued his role as co-chair of the government's Flexible Working Task Force, with the aim of developing



practices that will help employers adapt to new ways of working.

Yet the professional body couldn't embark on its mission without a team of 4,500 dedicated volunteers who offered their expertise on numerous social impact and innovation programmes. In response, the CIPD introduced the Outstanding Contribution Awards to recognise 30 branch volunteers for the work they've done to support the community.

Ultimately, the opportunity to bring about better work for all is in our hands. Employees, customers and investors are looking to employers to demonstrate responsible business as a core value. And, together, we are in a stronger position than ever to help organisations meet this expectation.

* bit.ly/CIPDAR2021

EXTRA
EXTRA

Sustaining workforce energy

The pandemic has been a testing time for everyone – mentally, physically and emotionally. When a spark is needed to revitalise the workforce, what can people professionals do to recharge themselves and their people? Listen to this CIPD podcast.

* bit.ly/MotivationPodcast

Addressing financial wellbeing

In the run-up to the festive period and the New Year sales, are you actively signposting money and debt services to staff? As well as affecting individuals' health and wellbeing, money and debt worries can impact people's performance at work. Learn more in the CIPD's latest financial wellbeing report.

* bit.ly/FinancialWellbeingReport

Running virtual classrooms

The pandemic has accelerated the transition towards digital learning. But what are the success factors that contribute to effective virtual classrooms? The CIPD's evidence review examines what approaches work and details practice recommendations including the importance of setting clear goals and objectives.

* bit.ly/CIPDVirtuallClassrooms

Leading a responsible business

How can we create and maintain responsible working practices during Covid-19 and beyond? To ensure work is a force for good for everyone, a shift in business practice is needed. The CIPD's new report offers unique insights from more than 80 senior leaders and HR directors on becoming a responsible business.

* bit.ly/CIPDResponsibleBusiness

Listen to the latest CIPD podcast to learn how you can recharge yourself and your workforce



"Users can build bespoke learning plans, allowing learners to acquire the very latest knowledge"

Manchester branch supports ACE People Library

The transition to hybrid was not the only innovation at this year's CIPD Annual Conference and Exhibition (ACE). The launch of the People Library on the exhibition floor, supported by Manchester branch chair Rachel Burnham, brought to life tales of the people profession.

Branch committee members were able to identify storytellers, who shared the challenges they'd faced to provide an opportunity for others to learn from their experiences.

Among the catalogue of 'human books' were Manchester branch committee members Marta Davenport, Samantha Lubanzu, Emma Clayton and Emma Brookes, sharing stories from their working lives. These included how to achieve a healthy work-life balance while operating in a hybrid working environment, changing career and country during the pandemic, and tips for parents returning to work.

CIPD community lead Alexandra Carr said: "Sharing stories like this... brings to life the career journeys and experiences of people professionals. ACE was the perfect platform for this and it was great to see people queue up to listen."

* bit.ly/CIPDManchesterBranch

Career help from the CIPD Learning Hub

The CIPD has launched a new professional development and learning portal which will make it easier than ever for members to acquire the knowledge they need to achieve their career goals.

The CIPD Learning Hub will offer an ever-changing portfolio of online programmes and courses to address the challenges facing the profession, as well as interactive tools to put individuals in control of their own learning journey.

The self-assessment tool allows users to compare their capabilities against the standards of the CIPD Profession Map, identifying any skills gaps and providing tailored learning recommendations.

Users can build bespoke learning plans – from shorter bite-sized courses to comprehensive self-directed online programmes – allowing learners to acquire the latest knowledge to help them thrive in a changing world of work and deliver real business impact.

Access to the Hub and core learning content is free for members and can be accessed anytime and anywhere via desktop or mobile.

* bit.ly/CIPDLearningHub

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Haven't got your copy of *People Management* to hand? As a CIPD member you can access the award-winning industry magazine online via the CIPD website with the interactive page turner. And, if you can't wait for the next issue of *People Management*, keep up to date with the latest news, opinions and insights for the HR and L&D world on the website.

* bit.ly/CIPDMagazines
* peoplemanagement.co.uk

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Pompous concierge Mr Hector has leadership issues, as well as causing trouble for the film's young hero, Kevin McCallister

Could HR solve...?

HOME ALONE 2

Both staff and customers suffer due to a manager's lack of Christmas spirit

The problem

High-end hotel concierge Mr Hector is constantly rebuking his bellboy, Cedric, for failing to uphold the high etiquette standards of New York's luxury Plaza Hotel – such as by counting tips in public. However, as soon as Hector's back is turned, Cedric ignores his manager's feedback and continues his unprofessional behaviour. Is Hector's negative attitude creating a toxic, resentful working relationship within his team?

The solution

Hector's behaviour is not a true representation of the business, as hotels are a people-focused industry, explains Jon Dawson, group director of people development at Lore Group (pictured below).

Dawson says most managers in hospitality don't adopt Hector's outdated leadership style because this type of behaviour "would not be tolerated" by well-run organisations. He adds that many hotels have people management tools in place such as an open-door policy and employee engagement surveys to support a people-focused culture.



If managers are belittling employees

like Cedric who are still making the same faux pas, Dawson suggests a different approach is required. "You can keep up strong service etiquette by focusing on your hotel culture and delivering service in a kind, polite manner. This is translated through your leaders by appropriate hiring, training and performance development activities."

Instead of putting his team members down, Hector should conduct daily briefings to give praise and feedback. This, according to Dawson, is a key tool for leaders to "help the team recognise what 'good' looks like". Putting strong communication structures in place also benefits both the workforce and its employers, he says.



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