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ALCHEMY

“CULTURE DESIGN IS PART ART, PART SCIENCE. THERE ARE STRUCTURED ASPECTS AND THERE IS CREATIVITY, INTERPRETATION AND INTUITION”

JENNA BAKER
CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER
GB BANK

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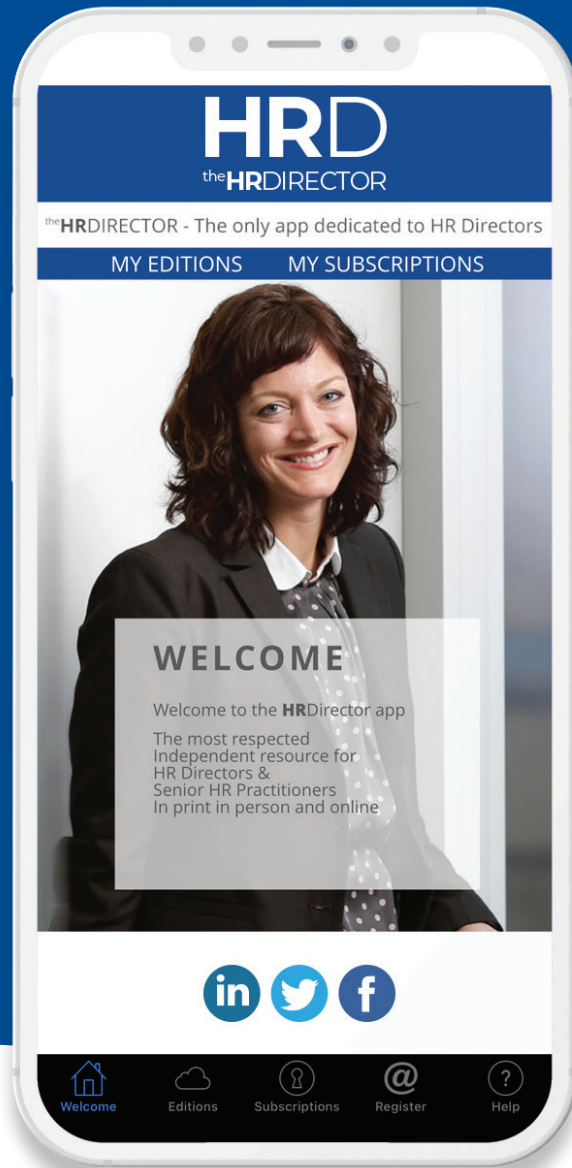
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THE COMING YEAR LOOKS SET TO BE EVERY BIT AS CHALLENGING AND CHANGEABLE AS THE PREVIOUS TWO. SET AGAINST A TOUGH ECONOMIC BACKDROP, COMMERCIAL DISRUPTION AND GEOPOLITICAL CONCERNS, EMPLOYERS ARE HAVING TO ADAPT FASTER, RECALIBRATE WORKFORCE MODELS AND FIND WORKABLE, SUSTAINABLE BALANCE IN THE VAGARIES OF WHAT HYBRID REPRESENTS.



JASON SPILLER, EDITOR

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As we look ahead to 2023, we consider the driving trends and incoming challenges that are emerging in the new work dawn. There are plenty of statistics that point to HR struggling with the realities of remote working. A case in point, the *Tivian Report* points to 85 percent of HR professionals believing their feedback is improving the employee experience, whereas in the same report, only 14 percent of people believe their employer uses feedback effectively to drive change. Clearly there is a dichotomy of opinion in the perception of HR impacts and, in these demanding times, there is no room for such ambiguity. So, as we look ahead, what are the key trends? The burning question is, will the challenges ahead obstruct momentum towards essential improvements to the social fabric of work and the wider society?

Faced with ongoing challenge, HR has to maintain its hard-won credentials as an essential ally in meeting commercial ambition with skills and capabilities and a prepared human resource. Unquestionably, the integration of business and manpower in uncertain and disrupted times, can no longer rely on five-year plans. HR has to change its stance from reactor to predictor and influencer of the business strategy, by drawing attention to ways in which people could be developed and deployed more effectively, to enhance the achievement of business goals. It must be laser-focused to ensure that the people required will not only be ready and capable, but agile and adaptable.

In the reboot of work, it's not just the changes in the working framework, there is a return to key

elements of human interaction that cannot be left to muscle memory. Importantly too, here is an unexpected opportunity to make meaningful improvements around respect, empathy and understanding. Inevitably, there will be some awkwardness surrounding social skills, requiring some retuning, but it is HR's core role to ensure that people are comfortable and confident - trust and feel trusted - and are seen, listened to and valued. We only have to look at Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*, that states that, besides food, water and safety, love and belonging are the most important needs we must fulfil. With many rethinking their lives and work, this is an important consideration.

It is often said that, in times of crisis, we emerge stronger and as we move forward, it is resilience that we will need to meet the continuing challenges along with the confidence to capitalise on the opportunities of a dynamically changing world. Resilience is not just personal, it is essential across teams and team leaders with high levels durability have teams that are more agile and higher performing, compared to those teams with low resilience leaders. This needs to be at all levels of an organisation in order to meet adversity and mitigate against the mental pressures associated with uncertainty.

LEGAL UPDATES

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

COURT CASE REPORT

In *XA v Ministry of Defence*, a gay Royal Navy officer has won a £47,000 pay out after a dispute over housing ended with him being outed to his team. The anonymous serviceman had to come out to his senior officers, only for an email saying he's gay to be circulated across the team. The Navy, he told a Bristol employment tribunal, breached the Equality Act by offering single men only one housing type while married couples had two. After being assigned to the

Ministry of Defence (MOD) site at Abbey Wood, the officer applied for accommodation near Bristol in July 2017. But the place offered 'failed to take proper account of his circumstances', the court heard. The panel heard he was told: 'It shows you can suffer, so you have potential for leadership.' Left with no other choice, XA had to make the 'difficult' decision to come out to his bosses. But he was outed to the rest of the team when an email flagging the accommodation issue was circulated. This made XA 'deeply anxious'. The

serviceman said: 'It makes me feel that somehow, I am sub-human and not worthy of the consideration that others would receive.' The MOD 'failed to follow [its own] sound policies' because of a 'serious gap' between the rules and 'the level understanding' from staff, the tribunal said and found the policy would have 'a disproportionate effect on the group of Service Personnel who identify as gay', as members of the LGBT+ community are 'less likely to be married or in a civil partnership than heterosexual service personnel'.

EMPLOYMENT LAW

MPS SUPPORT THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS (FLEXIBLE WORKING BILL)

Currently, under Part VIIIA of the Employment Rights Act 1996, employees with at least 26 weeks' continuous service have the right to request a change to their working hours, times or location and have that request considered by their employer in line with a statutory Code of Practice. Employers are currently obliged to respond to such flexible working requests within three months. After making such an application, employees are currently prevented from making another one for the following 12 months. Employees are also currently obliged in their application to explain what effect their request might have on the employer and how to deal with that. The Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Bill, Bill 22 of the 2022-23 session, was introduced by Labour MP

Yasmin Qureshi as a Private Member's Bill, presented to Parliament through the ballot procedure.

The Bill would amend the Employment Rights Act 1996 to change the current right to request flexible working in the following ways: Removing the requirement for employees to explain in their applications what effect they think it will have on the employer, allowing employees to make two flexible working requests per 12 months instead of the one currently allowed, requiring employers to consult with the employee before being allowed to refuse an application and reducing the deadline for an employer decision on flexible working requests from three months to two months. Due to the pandemic and the challenges posed in many people's lives (e.g. caring requirements, finances, etc.), having flexibility in work is extremely important to many workers.

LEGAL DIARY

- *April 2023*: Government to update dates of NLW and NML
- *April 2023*: Government update on the Statutory Payments
- *TBA 2023*: Government set to consider extending the time limits of workplace sexual harassment claims from three to six months.
- *TBA 2023*: New guidance regarding time off for fertility treatment to be announced. Also time off for bereavement leave and pay following miscarriage and stillborn birth.
- *TBA 2023*: The Government intends to introduce a Data Reform Bill in parliament next year (2023), which will introduce wide-ranging proposals
- *April 2023*: The Government update the compensation limits to be imposed by employment tribunals every year in April.



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JENNA BAKER CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER GB BANK

INTERVIEW BY JASON SPILLER
& PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOM BANKS

AS PLANS GO, STARTING UP A BANK IN A PANDEMIC AND A PROTRACTED RECESSION, SOUNDS CHALLENGING. ADD THE RATIONALE, TO SUPPORT ECONOMICALLY CHALLENGED PARTS OF THE UK'S NORTH AND MIDLANDS - DRIVEN BY A CULTURE OF CUSTOMER CONNECTIVITY AND TRUST - AND CLEARLY THE PEOPLE BEHIND GB BANK ARE UNUSUAL, IN A SECTOR THAT NOTORIOUSLY WORSHIPS PROFIT. THE HR STORY IS JUST AS INSPIRING, AS THIS COURAGEOUS STARTUP OPENS FOR BUSINESS.

"TO ME, WORK IS A HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND IT'S ABOUT CONNECTING PEOPLE'S HEARTS AND MINDS AROUND A COMMON PURPOSE"

JENNA, TAKE US BACK TO YOUR EARLY LIFE AND HOW YOU FOUND THE PATH TO A CAREER IN HR? My formative years were spent moving around a good deal, because of my father's job and so consequently, I often felt like an outsider. This was particularly acute as a teenager and it has made me extra sensitive to other people and making sure that they never feel excluded. If you've been in that situation, you realise how painful exclusion can be and how important acts of kindness and understanding are, however small. Those early experiences have contributed to my choice of career - that and what can only be described as a restless curiosity about human behaviour - what we do and why people make certain choices. All those early experiences kind of led me to University, where I decided that my future lay in

psychology. I was excited about the prospect of exploring human behaviour on a deeper level, but I began to wonder how I was going to turn the theory and science of the subject into a viable career. So, about midpoint through my degree, I decided to make a shift to Human Resources, because I could see a closer correlation between practical application in a real-world setting. I knew that what I wanted to do was help people realise their full potential and set my sights on a career in HR.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST ROLE AFTER COMPLETING YOUR STUDIES.

In my first proper role in HR, I realised my expectations of a purpose-led field were probably not quite in tune with where the profession was at that point. I found myself in a very traditional HR

team, carrying out very transactional work, in a world of compliance and very policy driven - it gave me a good grounding, but it became obvious the 'human' element of 'human resources' was sorely lacking. After that initial disappointment yet still with a desire to break the mold, I then went on to several different roles across a myriad of sectors - non-profit, private and public and I was beginning to become a bit disillusioned and began to question whether I really belonged in this profession. This was a bit of a turning point for me and I decided that I needed to look for a company that was truly purpose-driven, because, amongst other things, genuine purpose and entrepreneurial thinking seemed to be missing in all my prior role experiences. Finally, I was lucky enough to be introduced to a new role in a very early

stage FinTech company, Nucleus Financial and I knew that this was what I had been looking for. I had an immediate affinity with the vision of the CEO David Ferguson, the people I met and the ethos. They wanted someone to set up a people team to match the dynamics of the business and the great foundations they had in place already. The CEO was authentically people-focused and, from that perspective, light years ahead of any business leader I had met to that date. I felt that what he wanted to build was something quite remarkable and I felt fortunate to be able to play a part in supporting his vision.

WERE YOU NOT DAUNTED THAT THIS WAS A COMPANY THAT WAS LOOKING TO YOU TO SET OUT ITS PEOPLE CREDENTIALS, AT A VERY EARLY STAGE IN TERMS OF YOUR EXPERIENCE? I think I was relatively naïve about what the challenges would be, but I instinctively knew that this was an almost unique opportunity and I was ready for the learning curve. I didn't assume to have all the answers, but I was willing to experiment and find out. I remember my intentions were to do the right thing, to create a people strategy that enabled the business to progress and achieve its ambitions. As we grew, my role evolved and I became the Head of People Experience and I was fortunate to work alongside an inspirational CPO Kirsty Lynagh and her coaching approach helped tune in to my strengths. Kirsty challenged preconceptions and brought new models into the business, in areas such as coaching and leadership development. Being in a startup really played to my mindset and strengths - and I was building on my experience sets, dealing with the interesting challenges and navigating the growing pains and dynamics of a new, fast-growing business. However, there are some commonalities with more established firms such as, how to attract and retain people and how having the right culture and shared values is fundamental to keeping a fast-moving business focused and stable. One common misconception is that culture is something to be protected and maintained, the trick is to recognise that it's constantly evolving.

It's important to take the time to ask yourself if this a cultural ritual - something we want to keep and brings our values to life - or a cultural relic, something that worked for us when we were 50 people, but less so now that we're at 150. One key aspect related to this is communication - remembering to communicate as though you are a team of 50, rather than 150 - goes a long way to creating a trusting environment.

"PEOPLE NOW SEE THAT WORK ISN'T JUST SOMETHING THAT WE SHOULD BE SINGULARLY COMPENSATED FOR. IT IS, FOR MOST, A SOURCE OF CONNECTION, PURPOSE AND HUMANITY"

There's a staggering statistic that points to 70 percent of startups failing for reasons related to their culture. For the remainder of my time, we grew the business right through to an IPO - with the inevitable highs and lows along the way - and I decided that my focus would be to help startups from the grassroots create those strong cultural foundations from the get-go and make their purpose a key source of competitive advantage. So, I decided to step away from Nucleus Financial and become a startup specialist - and I launched The Good Work Project - building inclusive cultures and compassionate leadership. Fundamental to this is building the culture with people, not for them, which is a hugely important principle for me. I've since found a home at GB Bank where we're doing just that, creating a culture to be proud of.

HOW DID YOU PREPARE FOR THIS NEW CHAPTER IN YOUR CAREER? I decided to learn more about human-centered design principles through studying UX design and design thinking. Taking the time to do this and becoming a coach helped me to develop my understanding on a deeper

level and learn new tools and techniques to bring to life this way of thinking into people teams. For example, if we view the people within a team through the lens of being a customer, as opposed to an 'employee' - and that what we're providing is a set of products people are subscribing to - then it significantly shifts the mindset of what we are here to do. It becomes about continual, iterative improvement, learning and tweaking as you go. A shift for me was evolving my thinking beyond designing a 'minimum viable product' and instead considering a 'minimum lovable product', as the standard to be attained. This way, you're considering not only the most basic elements required to solve the problem, but considering what could be included to delight the customer or team member from the outset. I had previously seen valuable time and budget used to design a fabulous looking suite of rewards that fell short in terms of meeting the needs of the team. The whole mission for the *Good Work Project* was to make work better, one experience at a time. I really do see the process as a series of steppingstones - such as the journey from the first time that person sees a job advert for a company, to the last interaction - each of those touchpoints should seamlessly connect. To me, work is a human experience and it's about connecting people's hearts and minds around a common purpose. That is very much my focus as CPO of GB Bank now.

WHAT DO YOU THINK HR GAINED FROM THE TRIALS OF MANAGING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC? I think it taught us that, fundamentally, focusing on the people experience is without question, non-negotiable. It really wasn't a bolt out of the blue that the old way of working was broken, but it forced a reassessment and, whereas before there was reticence or even fear about thinking outside the box on work frameworks, now there was a unique opportunity to make the argument for real and meaningful change. This direction of travel was always inevitable, yet moving at a snail's pace, what with future generations and the evolution of technology, but it's become a reality quicker than anyone expected and that must be embraced,

although hybrid working is still a work-in-progress for most. There's much talk about "The Great Resignation", but I agree with the sentiment of it feeling for most as a time to pause and re-evaluate. Likewise, there has been endless coverage of 'quiet quitting' which imagines people idling away in their PJs. But if you look beyond the headlines, it doesn't mean people are giving up their responsibilities in droves and losing interest in their careers - it's more of a response to the burnout we've seen when people's lives and work blurred into a haze of being 'always on' during the pandemic. People now see that work isn't just something that we should be singularly compensated for. It is, for most, a source of connection, purpose and humanity.

TELL US ABOUT GB BANK AND THE PROJECTS AND PLANS THAT YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN. The concept around GB Bank came about five or six years ago, by brother and sister Stephen and Emma, along with Stephen Lancaster, who is now our CEO. Stephen and Emma Black had grown up in the Northeast and they saw that the access to property development funding just wasn't there. And many areas which had been impacted by loss of local employment and opportunity, was not receiving the regeneration that they needed and the focus was very much on the Southeast. So, they wanted to do something about this and that's the basis on which GB Bank went from plan to reality, with the focus being on providing much needed funding to property developers and investors, that were having difficulty gaining backing from the existing high street banks. Since then and during my time there, we have gone through the whole regulatory process to gain a banking license, which has made us the first regional bank in the UK for quite some time. So, we are the UK's newest bank, which is a huge milestone for us, after a long journey, strewn with hurdles along the way. But the focus of building better futures for the communities that need it most has kept us going and while the focus is the northern and midlands regions initially, we very much want to drive support to other regions in the UK,

that need support and access to investment. We're all about being a force for good and that applies to our approach to people too.

HOW BAD IS IT IN BRITAIN? WE HAVE POLITICAL TURMOIL, BREXIT FALLOUT, AN ENERGY CRISIS, THE ECONOMY HAS TANKED AND PEOPLE ARE VULNERABLE - TWO-OUT-OF-THREE PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRY ARE ONE PAYCHECK AWAY FROM POVERTY. No question, there are a lot of people that need support and areas that need regeneration, not just in the Northeast, but across the country. That's what really drew me to GB Bank, because

"CULTURE DESIGN IS PART ART, PART SCIENCE. THERE ARE THE STRUCTURED ASPECTS OF IT AND THERE IS CREATIVITY, INTERPRETATION AND INTUITION"

the business model is based on doing something about it. Government has long espoused a leveling up agenda, but is slow to see a tangible outcome and, when you walk around towns, the evidence is patently obvious, with boarded up shops in the high street and general decline. But we have a driving commitment to help breathe life back into communities again and help them to thrive, bringing services to locals and providing employment. We're about changing people's lives for the better and it's about connection, support and sustainability. But the bottom-line reality is, it needs financial backing and that's where GB Bank is positioned.

EXPLAIN HOW YOUR HR PLANS AND ACTIVITIES ARE SUPPORTING THIS AMBITIOUS UNDERTAKING? Nobody will be surprised that, starting up a bank from scratch is hard going and from a talent perspective it's no different. We've always known from the start that the goal wasn't

just to build a bank, but to build a bank with a culture to be proud of. As we progress, the rigours and pressures will intensify, particularly as the economy is stressed. So, we have to keep challenging ourselves to think about how we can build sustainability, be better at what we do and to keep evolving, trialing and, above all, listening. We must also challenge the status quo as well as traditions and legacies. Take recruitment, in the past it was very much a case of attracting "our type of people", focusing on culture fit, which is probably one of the reasons the financial sector ended up in trouble. But to achieve diversity of thought and background represents new opportunities and challenges and we need to embrace and celebrate 'values fit' instead and thinking about the best person for the team, rather than simply the best person for the role. You can tick as many boxes as you like, but unless DEI is a genuine and authentic objective, based on shared values, it will always be a case of one step forward, two step back. If you don't have an inclusive culture, then it's quite meaningless. We know that we still have work to do, particularly on gender diversity and we intend to correct our gender pay gap, ahead of being required to report on it. Then, looking ahead, my vision is that DEI must inform our decision-making and direction, as we run our bank and start to scale.

AS YOU EXPAND AS A BUSINESS AND WITH SO MUCH EMPHASIS ON MARKET GROWTH, HOW DO YOU GUARD AGAINST LOSING SIGHT OF THE VALUES AND PURPOSE THAT FORMED THE NUCLEUS OF THE BUSINESS? I don't think it is ever a destination - a fixed culture is where companies can go wrong - believing they must 'protect' their culture. Instead, they must evolve and inform the behaviours and day-to-day experience of everyone within the company, as the business goes forward. Keeping your purpose and values at the heart of what you do and how you do it, is key. Culture design is part art, part science. There are the structured aspects of it and there is creativity, interpretation and intuition. Vision is important, but it must be tangible and,

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most importantly, the tone has to be set at the top. Today, more than ever, this requires a heightened commitment to people-first principles - it's a balance between creating the conditions for high performance and a compassionate and empathetic leadership style. It's less about command and control and more about trusting and inspiring. It's about realising the shadow you cast as a leader and considering why people would opt to follow you - establishing those relationships, genuinely caring and taking time to build trust and psychological safety to forge deeper connections.

Likewise, when we consider purpose, if you're set on the creation of values being a top-down endeavor it's pretty much dead on arrival. Understanding the value in bringing to life GB Bank's strong societal purpose we set about creating a unifying message for the whole team. We listened to the team and involved everyone in the refreshing of our purpose, vision, mission and values. This has been invaluable in making sure these are authentic to who we are. We formed a group of 'Culture Activists' who represent their teams and take a lead role in shaping the direction of our culture and people strategy. A practical suggestion to find out how people are really feeling is to complete 'stay interviews' with your team. This is the equivalent of a reverse exit interview, instead of waiting until people leave to find out what had been bothering them, taking the time to listen, learn and understand their perspectives in a one-to-one can be an invaluable source of insights about the opportunities you have to make their experience better. Your culture can look and feel fantastic on the surface, but taking the time to really ask helps you to find out what's lurking beneath the surface - and take action.

WHAT MAKES DEI SO HARD TO MOVE THE DIAL ON, IS THAT SOCIETY PRINCIPALS AND TRADITIONS ARE SO INGRAINED. Agreed and it will take time, pragmatism and focus to move the equality and inclusion dial in the right direction, to break down stigmas and that begins with the first books that children read, the toys

they play with and the family, friends, teachers and peers that they learn and develop with. I believe as both a parent and a leader in HR, that I have a responsibility to challenge that status quo and push boundaries, to help encourage kindness and empathy. What makes a difference is whether you have a human-centric culture or you just say you have a human-centric culture. I recall there was one American tech company that effectively banned freedom of speech in their internal comms networks, referring to the Black Lives Matter movement. As a cultural signal, that was very damaging, because that was taking away the right to discuss, to speak out and, in

"ABOVE ALL ELSE, IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE A CULTURE, NOT A CULT, WHICH IS A DANGER IF YOU BRING ON BOARD PEOPLE WHO ARE JUST LIKE YOU"

that instance, it did prompt an exodus of some of the more senior members of the team from that business. If you do want to create connections with your team you have to make space for people to embrace the more negative emotions we all feel, rather than wear a mask of optimism when they come to work. You have to give the space for diversity-of-thought and give people the confidence to speak out. Unless we take a hard look in the mirror and ask; "are we really diverse and do we represent our customer base and the community at large? It's incredibly important to be very clear about what you stand for, as well as what you stand against. It's about having that North Star to navigate towards and have the anchor of values to help make those difficult decisions. Above all else, it's important to have a culture, not a cult, which is a danger if you bring on board people who are just like you.

ARE YOU CONFIDENT THAT WE ARE MAKING POSITIVE CHANGE AND LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD IN SOCIETY? Sometimes, it can seem like that the important yards won can easily be lost. But you only have to look at women's football to see that progress can and is being made. The way the Lionesses captivated hearts and minds in the Euro 2022 was incredible and yet clearly long overdue. There is no doubt that the role modelling in the England team will inspire girls to join football teams and for schools to treat children equally and, in the fullness of time, those lived experiences and values will travel and change societal norms and the world of work. It's about capitalising on success, role modelling, trailblazing and having the confidence to champion change. I also believe that the media has a responsibility in the way that it reports on news. A case in point - and staying with sport - the way that Emma Raducanu was heralded for winning the US Open and then vilified for withdrawing from Wimbledon was pretty appalling. She is a teenager and I think it is this sort of treatment that doesn't help women in any line of work.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE THE BIGGEST BUSINESS AND HR CHALLENGES AHEAD FOR YOU AT GB BANK? As we move forward with our recruitment plans, like all businesses, we are trying to attract and retain brilliant people and there is no doubt that top talent will dictate what the world of work is going to look like in the future. It is encouraging that companies are taking the stance that people are important and making steps towards enabling people to have choice. A move to a four-day week would have been considered impossible in the past and this is changing boundaries about where we work and when and the work/life blend in our lives. One thing is clear, the expectations of work are much higher, in the sense of feeling empowered to take control, rather than being dictated to. The future is about being able to work when you work best, rather than work within a designated set of hours. I think if any company doesn't meet those expectations, the companies that do will

win the day when it comes to talent. The competition for people is ever-greater, but I just think that expectations, in terms of being treated like an individual, having the space to speak up about something and being in an environment that is safe and inclusive, is much more important than it ever has been. These are significant shifts that we are witnessing and we need to be able to meet expectations.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM IS HYBRID AND REMOTE WORKING. IN A WAY IT IS DIVISIVE, A SUCCESS STORY FOR SOME, BUT NOT THE PANACEA TO WORKLIFE BALANCE THAT WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE. It's also clearly a topic that comes from a point of privilege as it applies to knowledge workers, whereas a significant proportion of people simply don't have the option to log-on from home to fulfil their roles. However, for those it does apply to it is not without challenges for organisations, big or small. We must be careful not to confuse equity of experience with the equality of experience, that is, in my opinion where there can be a misconception. The terms are often used interchangeably but they mean different things. Equality is about giving everyone fair treatment and equal rights to pursue opportunities, but it alone cannot be enough. It doesn't cover the fact that all workers do not come from the same starting position. By treating everyone the same, equality can fall short of addressing the specific needs of every person and doesn't help address issues related to unconscious bias. Equity on the other hand refers to fairness in outcomes, rather than providing everyone with exactly the same resources. That means the goal for equity is for all members of the team to feel they are able to do their best work.

Everyone has a different set of circumstances, differing sources of motivation and rhythm to their lives. A one-size-fits-all solution does not take account of that. For example, with GB Bank, we don't have fixed daily hours, it's very much, about being self-aware and accountable for 'owning the way you work', being trusted to do a fantastic job and feeling empowered to make choices

that enable that. Personally, being able to walk my son to school every morning is so valuable to me - I never did that before the pandemic - I always rushed to drop him off before 8:00am to make it to the office on time. Now, I can't tell you how much I appreciate that time with him and I wouldn't give it up for anything. I think that's the line in the sand now, people have made certain choices that they don't want to have to compromise on, because only by living through the past few years have they perhaps realised what they had taken for granted and that life is fragile. But it must not descend into a sort of tug-of-war over a territory

"WE MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO CONFUSE EQUITY OF EXPERIENCE WITH THE EQUALITY OF EXPERIENCE, THAT IS, IN MY OPINION WHERE THERE CAN BE A MISCONCEPTION"

between employees and employers, about where this is going to settle and what is right and wrong. It's about individualism and synchronisation, but it's not quite as easy as that. There are certain things that companies have tried and trialed, while others have refused to budge and we're now in a position where we can call on some qualitative data from research studies that can inform us. But all of that is pointless, unless you have that cultural core of trust. If you're trying to gild the lily or follow a trend, it's not going to work. You have to really think deeply about, what is the operating model that is going to deliver the best outcomes for your customers and our people and work back from there. I think we should have the mindset of 'why not', to not accept the status quo and be very open-minded about how we find solutions and ways forward, rather than seeing everything as a problem. There will always be obstacles in the way of progress, but we have to

remember that what we had in the past was not working, so this is a chance to start again and build the place you've always wanted to work. All of those rigid structures and draconian practices that we all used to hate about work can change, we don't need to inherit working practices from previous generations. So, my call is, let's take the positives from these testing times and create a new era of work with people at its centre. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity we have now - not just for us, but for future generations - to come to re-shape what the working world entails.

WHAT IS ON YOUR WHITEBOARD PLANNER RIGHT NOW? A little bit of everything! We have big ambitions at GB Bank and our people strategy is no different. We're a very small team of two in HR, so are working closely with our culture activists and leadership team to achieve a great deal. We want to really land our objectives on DEI, create a compelling reward strategy, make sure of our approach to flexible working are meeting the needs of the business and our team. We always take the time to understand what really matters to people, acknowledging the direction they want to go in and creating a roadmap, making sure everyone is part of the navigation process of that journey. We're also looking at performance and we've just completed a piece of work to define what performance means for us in this human-centric culture, which is obviously more progressive, development-focused and coaching-focused. We have just refreshed our values, so we'll be activating these throughout the people experience journey. We'll be raising awareness about our purpose externally and making sure we have that group of people who know what we stand for and want to join us. There is always so much to do in a startup dynamic and almost every conceivable HR consideration is in play, as we work towards creating those foundations as our launch pad. We're really going for it and that makes it a very exciting place to be.

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CHAIRIED BY JASON SPILLER

11 OCTOBER 2022 - LONDON

BUILDING MORE INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT LEADS PEOPLE TO FEEL INCLUDED ALLOWS ORGANISATIONS TO LEVERAGE DIVERSITY OF CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS. HOWEVER, INITIATIVES TARGETING PROTECTED GROUPS OFTEN FAIL TO DELIVER THIS DESIRED OUTCOME. MOREOVER, THEY CAN EVEN INTRODUCE UNINTENDED AND COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES. THIS MAY BE BECAUSE THESE INITIATIVES FAIL TO FOCUS ON 'DEEP' LEVELS OF DIVERSITY, WHICH ARE UNIVERSALLY RELATABLE AND AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR EVERYONE.

PARTNERED WITH



DELEGATES

CHARMAIN BUCHO SENIOR MANAGER RACIAL EQUALITY LEAD - CITY AND GUILDS
THOM DENNIS CEO - SERENITY IN LEADERSHIP
EMMA CASHMORE DIVERSITY, EQUITY INCLUSION DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL - META
POOJA BHATNAGAR DIRECTOR STRATEGIC PROJECTS AND CHIEF OF STAFF - FINASTRA
JEREMY SUTTON CEO - 3 MINUTE MILE
MARJORIE JAMES GROUP DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND CULTURE - YMCA ST PAULS GROUP
ANDREA HAUG GROUP PEOPLE EXPERIENCE DIRECTOR - SKY
HEATHER SWAIN GLOBAL HEAD OF TALENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING - ERM
ZEIN MESSINA HEAD OF BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS - HUMN
PAUL NEVILLE POSITIVE CHANGE PROVOCATEUR / NED - ABSOLUTELY PERHAPS

WHAT LAGGING METRICS DO YOU SEE THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED TO MOVE DEI ON AND WHAT LEADING PREDICTORS SHOULD BE PURSUED TO REALISE THE FULL BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH LEVERAGING DIVERSITY?

Andrea Haug: We take an evidence-based approach and it's helpful to have a framework to think about how people are different and a baseline about how diverse your organisation is and to understand how that diversity changes at different levels within the business.

Pooja Bhatnagar: There can be several lag indicators, but from a lead point of view, I would go one level up - rather than just think about the lag indicators - I would almost go right to the top of what the cultural mindset is and what does that mean for the behaviours and what does that mean down the line for each and every individual irrespective of where they sit in the hierarchy.

Marjorie James: It's about seeing what information you have on your HRIS and looking at your equality data to gain a picture of what people are happy to reveal about themselves. Then look behind the data and have conversations about what it lacks.

Emma Cashmore: You have to look at the data and cut it in different ways - whether it's just about representation or experiences - let that tell the story and keep going back with rigour, looking at what that tells you, the trends and the why.

Paul Neville: Mindset, behaviours, and values, set the intention very clearly in terms of expectation and an environment where everyone can contribute their talent, across the whole diverse workforce and promote sustainable performance improvement.

Pooja Bhatnagar: It's about being realistic that bias exists, being mindful of what that looks like and supporting leaders to understand and role model a more inclusive and unbiased mindset and culture.

Paul Neville: How many organisations genuinely do 360 feedback on their leadership and management around values in action? If we're serious about making a shift, we need to have the integrity and the candour to enable that.

Jeremy Sutton: Each of us carries a unique set of inherent biases that, left unchallenged, tend to always operate. Executive coaching and development work begins with the goal of elevating strategic self-awareness. Psychometrics involving personality-related preferences, flawed assumptions/limiting beliefs and motivational attributes can offer great insight into the origins of unconscious biases. I believe that these individual differences are some of the deepest indicators of diversity. They not only predict a leader's likelihood to behave in ways which create psychologically safe environments (i.e., of 'inclusion'), they can also predict an individual's tendency to self-inhibit, depriving others of their unique perspectives, insights and potential contributions in misguided efforts to conform.

We can examine personality and motivations from two different, often inconsistent perspectives: Identity and reputation. To help explain this phenomenon to leaders, I encourage them to consider themselves at three distinct layers. Our identity looks from the inside - out; our reputation looks from the outside - in. Fundamentally, we all have a core, or true self. Wrapped around this core, an adapted self develops over the early stages of our lives. Each adapted self has evolved - in accordance with genetic predispositions and environmental triggers - like an adaptive software programme. These programmes help us navigate our day-to-day lives. Most of us are familiar with what we would call our 'true/core self'. However, many leaders are unaware of how their adapted self affects their reputation. Behaviours driven by the adapted self may lead to environments which foster psychological safety, openness, and inclusion; or they can seriously hinder the benefits of diversity by creating environments where individual differences are discouraged, perhaps even punished.

Heather Swain: It is human nature to recruit in your own image. It is all too common to hear, "he or she was great, let's hire them," coming out of an interview as opposed to the collective outcome. Having diversity-of-thought





and challenging our thinking around our gut reactions is a better approach to recruitment. In terms of metrics, how you measure for diversity of thought or other diversity dimensions is difficult.

Thom Dennis: The moment you try and measure something, then you are categorising it and therefore you are being divisive... it's a paradox. There are a lot of initiatives in recruitment, but once people are in a business there's little done to help, for instance, the bias that's brought to the way people are appraised.

Zein Messina: We have to consider perspectives, motivations and agendas. I've witnessed people hired for 'diversity' reasons and then are excluded because "they don't think like the group". We need to really understand the make-up of teams, educate on what each person brings, signpost or set expectations. The mantra "fail and fail fast" doesn't work in practice because everyone is afraid to fail.

Paul Neville: I've seen blind recruiting work - and appreciate it is not a solution in itself - however, the benefit of it does signal intent on inclusion. But it has to be blind on more than gender and name, it needs to include qualifications and where people went to school.

Charmain Bucho: We risk pushing things onto leaders and managers, without really understanding what they don't know. They need to have their awareness raised in order to be able to take action. A lot of this is around that whole culture piece and self-awareness.

Emma Cashmore: Through taking intentional actions you start to understand and remove barriers. For example, focusing on ethnicity inclusion in a sponsorship programme, discussions with participants about barriers to progress become more apparent for people and they become advocates for change.

Paul Neville: Reverse mentoring for senior level, gives exposure to some of the groups that they would not normally come in touch with and historically make assumptions around. We really do need to raise the line of sight.

PICTURED
(PREVIOUS PAGE)
EMMA CASHMORE DIVERSITY,
EQUITY INCLUSION DIRECTOR,
INTERNATIONAL - META

PICTURED LEFT
JEREMY SUTTON
CEO - 3 MINUTE MILE
PAUL NEVILLE
POSITIVE CHANGE
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PROJECTS AND CHIEF OF
STAFF - FINASTRA

WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF WHAT APPEARS TO BE ENDEMIC BIAS, WHICH EXISTS ACROSS SOCIETY AND IN THE WORKPLACE?

Jeremy Sutton: The factors in bias do not have to be related to any superficial or observable differences. The development of our societies and organisational cultures have allowed bias to become embedded. Maybe there is something about a fear of accountability behind the emergence of bias? But is this just a mechanism to allow scapegoating? We have probably all experienced disingenuous leaders who are more than happy to celebrate differences in appetite for risk or approach, when they lead to success, while punishing those same differences when they are associated with sub-optimal results. Even within the traditional demographics found at the top levels of an organisation, leaders can feel immense pressure to conform for fears of being misinterpreted or labelled as something that they are not. Many may sit uncomfortably in silence, knowing that the opinions they hold, or the rhetoric they are repeating, is not their own.

Zein Messina: A lot of performance management systems are measuring for neurotypical competency framework and then putting people in a nine-box around their potential. But it's a case of, potential for what?

"WE HAVE TO CONSIDER PERSPECTIVES, MOTIVATIONS AND AGENDAS. I'VE WITNESSED PEOPLE HIRED FOR 'DIVERSITY' REASONS AND THEN ARE EXCLUDED BECAUSE "THEY DON'T THINK LIKE THE GROUP"

Marjorie James: What are we measuring, task achievement and results? We need to measure performance that include behavioural competencies, which reflect values and those should reflect inclusivity.

Pooja Bhatnagar: There's a very old saying, "what is measured is delivered". So, to make sure we drive diversity, inclusion and equity, it has to be embedded and it has to be measured. This has to top-down with the measurement criteria clearly defined - not just in terms of their numbers and the revenues - but also how they are achieving them.

Marjorie James: A good competency framework gives you that language, to describe what good and not so good looks like. It's objective and it's helpful in providing an understanding of what they should be doing and the way they should be behaving.

Jeremy Sutton: Where we're still measuring tasks, results, execution and 'quick wins', in this paradigm, team leaders are likely to think, "inclusion may be 'nice-to-have', but it takes time and it's just not efficient. How can it help me do what I need to do faster or better"? The question is, what are we prepared to give up or indeed, prepared to sacrifice? We must listen to the language we use. By framing the opportunity this way, we were seriously limiting its success. So, how can you switch this mentality amongst organisational leaders?

Paul Neville: Leaders and managers need to understand that their task is to manage the system condition within which people can perform effectively. You have to vary things to address a point of diversity or someone's life experiences changing, that's the role of the leader and manager.

Jeremy Sutton: This touches on systemic and institutional aspects of inclusion. Not only are you facing a personal loss but on

top of that, there's ribbing at work, which adds insult to injury. Who's responsible for that? People who hold power and authority must be accountable. The question is, who will hold them accountable and how?

DOES "THE SYSTEM", THE CULTURE AND THE WAY LEADERS LEAD HAVE TO CHANGE?

Pooja Bhatnagar: Can we change "the system"? It depends on how big the elephant is and how much it can be manoeuvred.

Zein Messina: Looking at culture, maybe we need to re-frame that quote, "your culture is what you hold accountable", to "your culture is how you react in micro moments".

EMPLOYERS GROUP PEOPLE INTO DEMOGRAPHICS. ARE YOU CONCERNED THIS APPROACH REINFORCES PRE-EXISTING STEREOTYPES AND PIGEONHOLES PEOPLE?

Andrea Haug: There are many categories and as many intersections and so it is complex. The reality is, categories are necessary, in terms of understanding difference. What we must avoid is concluding everyone within that category expect and want the same things.

Paul Neville: Agreed, intersectionality plays out more in real-time, with individuals in conversations with line managers and/or HR. With groupings sits the danger of stereotyping. We need to truly honour individual and group difference and celebrating them - not just binary gender - but LGBTQ+ and faith.

Marjorie James: Having groups recognises that there are certain people that are at a disadvantage and we needed to address that. The reason why blind recruitment is important is because people of black, minority ethnic backgrounds are still being discriminated, based on their heritage, which is often revealed through their name.

Pooja Bhatnagar: I'm not a huge fan of grouping at all, but experientially, I've seen data reveal insight from between categories, which has driven action.

Charmain Bucho: With intersections and grouping, we have to highlight the differences and individual real experience.

Emma Cashmore: What we're talking about here is nuanced needs, within the same communities. For example, black women often report that they feel like they are "in survival mode", having to prove themselves over and over again. Meanwhile, white women are in "thriving mode" and having career conversations.

We talk about women's experience at work in general and assume that things are improving for all women.

Jeremy Sutton: I recall reviewing an onboarding module for women about to go on a leadership programme. The programme focused on teaching women the tactics that men commonly use, to take up space in a room and gain the attention of a group. My feeling is, that is the opposite of what we're trying to achieve with diversity.

Paul Neville: Look across all of the disruptors in any sector - often they have not materially created something - they've created choice and personalisation on demand and made access easier.

"MAYBE WE NEED TO RE-FRAME THAT QUOTE, 'YOUR CULTURE IS WHAT YOU HOLD ACCOUNTABLE', TO 'YOUR CULTURE IS HOW YOU REACT IN MICRO MOMENTS'"

Zein Messina: If you are rewarding and measuring in a certain way and the leaders have been indoctrinated in that way. It's that thinking we need to shift.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS OF THE AI INITIATIVES AND FOCUS ON MARGINALISED GROUPS?

Emma Cashmore: Can we design a better world which is more fair and inclusive in an increasingly tech-oriented environment? There's opportunity to improve how we design through systems and there's some very smart thinking around responsible AI, where inclusive design is being used.

Jeremy Sutton: Robert Hogan talks about charisma versus humility and did some research into the number of jobs that feature the word "charismatic" in leadership job postings. If we consider frequency of mention as a proxy for the desirability of a specific characteristic, 'Charisma' beats 'Humility' hands down. However, despite this apparent preference for 'Charisma', empirical research suggests that the CEOs of companies which show

steady and sustained increases in performance, are better characterised by humility. There is a real shift, which is instructive. If you are demonstrating humility, you're much more likely to welcome diversity.

Emma Cashmore: There is this issue around status and leadership. There are teams where the leader has a mirror image of their own leadership style and they haven't thought about the bigger, wider world. We have to champion for the learning and listening moments.

Thom Dennis: There's a very common difficulty that occurs in many organisations when they speak and act from assumption and it comes across as

arrogant. "I'm the norm, therefore you are different, therefore you must know what that means."

Marjorie James: It's about a move to compassion-focused leadership. I work for a Christian-focused organisation - but I'm not a practicing Christian - and I'm judged by my ability to embrace and reflect our values. If you have compassion and you're listening, you're developing insight that can improve decision-making.

Jeremy Sutton: The fallacy sits with anyone who says that "they are the norm". The norm of what? The norm of you? The reality is, there is nobody exactly like you.

Marjorie James: One of the reasons I like the strengths-based approach is because it honours uniqueness, but fundamentally, it's how we leverage that.

Emma Cashmore: Development programmes used to be centered around helping groups of people. Now it's around creating the right content for the right community and building practice.

Charmain Bucho: Is this about everybody feeling included or is it a group of people that do not feel included? We're seeing a shift in our ES data - it goes up and down - when we focus our attention on one group, the other group feels less included.

Jeremy Sutton: For the person-centric approach, there is no blanket of certainty associated with generalisation. We speak of being privilege blind and, until you have lived in someone's else's shoes, you cannot be sure how you would respond in their circumstances. All of us have to understand that, just because somebody is a member of a protected group, does not mean that they have lived through the hardships that others have in this group.

Paul Neville: Agreed and paternalistic management - of not treating people as adults - is under the spotlight - and we need to help hierarchies and decision-makers out of the parent/child dynamic in the future world of work.

Thom Dennis: This is about listening and giving people space. It's why dialogue is so powerful, giving people the space and safety and, the first ground rule is, you can't say anything unless you can repeat back what the last person said first.

Heather Swain: These are laudable traits that we aspire to - being a compassionate, humble leader, having empathy and listening. My question is, are they human traits? The reality is, we have an in-built evolutionary programme to identify difference as part of a survival instinct, to spot friend or foe.

WHAT IS THE SINGLE GREATEST OBSTACLE TO OVERCOME WITH RESPECT TO ACHIEVING EQUAL REPRESENTATION?

Zein Messina: We need to ask ourselves, are we matching the leader to the challenge and level of complexity required? Are we matching teams in terms of their ability to handle complexity and systems thinking within design processes?

Thom Dennis: It's the sense that we're in the majority and therefore, somehow we're right. Everybody else has to

conform and we have to make all sorts of efforts to help them be acceptable to us. From a power dynamic point of view, the majority holds the power. If we're in the majority, how could we be humble open and compassionate and listen?

Paul Neville: I recall the Home Office was reluctant about launching an e-learning programme for staff around understanding the impact of Empire on non-whites. The reality is, this is all related to education and we need to have the establishment, politicians and policymakers understand that we need to fundamentally relook at the narrative.

Zein Messina: A primary obstacle is, people with privilege don't want to lose that privilege, or think of themselves as being villains. We have a growing gap and increasing numbers of working people in poverty, because not enough of the profits are being shared with them. Yet the main focus is on immigrants and their strain on public spending.

Emma Cashmore: There's a following on TikTok, where young women are looking for husbands and want a traditional lifestyle because they think that it's unsustainable to continue to expect families and careers.

Jeremy Sutton: Conversely, there is Jordan Peterson who talks about this false evolutionary argument about how women 'trade-up' in relationships. Where is this all going? If something doesn't stop, there is a very real risk to our ability to act with unity. People lose the ability to differentiate good from bad and right from wrong, because of these illusory normative pressures.

Emma Cashmore: It starts with the education of children, opening up mindsets through awareness and greater education of history and the world we live in. I think the biggest obstacle is this need to feel you're right, and of course fear. We can only move to a better place when we have the ability to listen.

Zein Messina: The more afraid we are, the more we need that certainty. I think fear absolutely drives that.



PICTURED RIGHT

HEATHER SWAIN
GLOBAL HEAD OF
TALENT, LEADERSHIP AND
LEARNING - ERM

ZEIN MESSINA
HEAD OF BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS - HUMN

MARJORIE JAMES
GROUP DIRECTOR OF
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YMCA ST PAULS GROUP

THOM DENNIS
CEO -
SERENITY IN LEADERSHIP

CHARMAIN BUCHO
SENIOR MANAGER RACIAL
EQUALITY LEAD - CITY AND GUILDS

Paul Neville: Navigating through life requires emotional intelligence - being comfortable with emotional discomfort - holding our counsel and about self-regulation. Who is taught that at school?

Thom Dennis: Everything comes back to education. It's so fundamental and yet if you educate kids and they go home and it doesn't fit the parents' paradigm, then you're fighting an uphill battle.

THE WORD "TOLERANCE" IS LOADED WITH ALL SORTS OF PROBLEMS AND THE USE OF PRONOUNS HAS SPLIT OPINION, IS CAUSING CONFUSION FOR SOME AND DERISION FROM OTHERS.

Marjorie James: Tolerance is an awful word because it means that you're ignoring it and, as a result, nothing changes. Black Lives Matters came about because black people have been tolerating the injustices against them for so long.

Paul Neville: I'm a gay man, but I had difficulty in the early days around pronouns. My position has moved on through enlightenment and self-reflection and if we don't challenge people in that, nothing changes.

psychological safety and the basic thought, "am I going to be treated fairly"?

Zein Messina: I think that people can deal with the tradeoffs when it comes to tangible things, like being disorganised, but find it much more difficult to deal with the emotional dysregulation.

Jeremy Sutton: We want everyone to feel welcome at work and we want everyone to have the opportunity to contribute their best. If this is the aim of these initiatives, then it has to be a person-centric approach.

Marjorie James: If that role requires a huge amount of social interaction in a certain way, then maybe that's not the best role for them. It's possible to adjust the role so that you find tasks that work to their strengths.

Thom Dennis: It's the "normal people" who fear difference and this elemental need that we have to belong and, if someone doesn't fit, they will be shunned.

Zein Messina: It's a vicious circle, because we are trained by our brains to pick up difference and so that fear is innate.

EVERY BIT OF PROGRESS IN DEI IS HARD YARDS. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE NEW ERA OF WILL LOOK LIKE?

Emma Cashmore: It's when you've achieved access to opportunity for everyone and where different people are around a table making decisions. Will it happen through dialogue and creating empathy to gain behaviour change? I would like to think so. I feel it may require quotas to move to that position.

Zein Messina: Sometimes you have to install quotas to move the dial, although you run the risk of giving oxygen to the 'merit' argument. But it's this level of ignorance that needs to change.

IS IT ALWAYS HR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO DRIVES THE DEI AGENDA?

Andrea Haug: Agreed, DEI cannot only be inward looking, it's also outward looking in terms of brand, customer, products and services. In terms of metrics that's where the sweet spot resides.

Marjorie James: My team provides the support and resources for DEI but it's everyone's responsibility and that's made very clear in our policy.

Jeremy Sutton: Success for me would be to see our leaders role model the capacity (and willingness) replace our innate fear of difference (i.e., the unknown) - with genuine curiosity and appreciative inquiry. Don't pull back from what you do not understand. Move towards these opportunities to learn, with interest and humility. We need a shift in paradigm. By shunning of our identification, and need to conform with particular sub-groups - humanity, nationality, ethnicity, gender and sexual/gender identity, etc., we can identify as fellow members of humanity. As a human being, you belong here, full stop. You are different from everyone else and can offer something that no one else can. We all understand this and want to learn what only you are able to teach. That's what success would look like for me.

"THERE'S A NEAT PHRASE WHICH SUMS THIS UP: 'EQUALITY IS GIVING EVERYBODY THE SAME PAIR OF SHOES AND EQUITY IS GIVING PEOPLE SHOES THAT ACTUALLY FIT'"

Emma Cashmore: We have to be exposed to the lives of others and in the workplace mentoring/reverse mentoring is great and sponsorship has to be the way forward.

HOW DO THE ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH NEURODIVERSITY AND NEUROPLASTICITY COMPLICATE OUR ABILITY TO CREATE INCLUSION?

Charmain Bucho: Disclosure data tends to be quite low - particularly for colleagues with a disability - you have to promote the benefits of disclosing, otherwise you're not going to gain anything from it.

Emma Cashmore: There are barriers to inclusion, which we're all aware of. Some of it is stigma, but it is about trust,

Charmain Bucho: The benefits of coaching cannot be underestimated to give agency and ownership and to enable them to ask for reasonable adjustment. When somebody joins an organisation, there's so much that is new and there is so much change. What might be right for certain individuals might not be right for others, so this requires adaptability. There's a neat phrase which sums this up: "Equality is giving everybody the same pair of shoes and equity is giving people shoes that actually fit".

Paul Neville: I would advocate a strength-based approach, to actually look at people on the basis of the individual difference that they bring to the table and helping leaders and managers know how to navigate that and use it effectively.

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I

BUILDING RESILIENCE

FIGHTING THROUGH HEADWINDS, THERE MAY BE TURBULANCE. AS TECHNOLOGY SPINS THE BLADES OF THE WORKFORCE ENGINE, AI AND MACHINES IS SUPERSEDING HUMAN INTERACTION. EMPLOYEES NEED CONTINUOUS TALENT ASSESSMENT, TO ENSURE THEY ARE NOT OVERWHELMED AND LEFT WITH BACKWARD-LOOKING AND IRRELEVANT SKILLS. AS MAYA ANGELOU ONCE SAID, "I CAN BE CHANGED BY WHAT HAPPENS TO ME. BUT I REFUSE TO BE REDUCED BY IT." WHEN COMPARING WHAT VALUES BRING PEOPLE THROUGH, RESILIENCE INVARIABLY TOPS THE LIST, TO MEET THE CONTINUING CHALLENGES.

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ARTICLE BY SAMREEN MCGREGOR FOUNDER, EXECUTIVE COACH AND ADVISOR - TURMERIC GROUP

*Samreen McGregor is the author of [Leader Awakened](#)
Published by Rethink Publishing*

PARADOX

LIFE DEMANDS A RELENTLESS WORK ETHIC, AND THIS CREATES A MINDSET THAT DRIVES THE NEED TO MAKE CONSTANT PROGRESS. THERE IS A NEED TO SLOW DOWN AND LEARN FROM FAILURES, WIELD PERSONAL AGENCY IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES AND LET GO OF WHAT IS OUT OF CONTROL.

Countless people are caught in this dynamic with little or no ability to slow down, see the bigger picture or realise the consequences to their life and health. The relentless task focus of organisations pushes people toward action at any cost. Often, 'tangible outputs' are expected from team meetings, to justify the time invested away from measurable day-to-day tasks. However, success at work should also be reflected in outcomes of high-quality conversations, deeper constructive thinking and collaboration with colleagues. These lead to innovations and breakthroughs far more relevant today.

To help individuals and teams driven by productivity, leaders must facilitate them moving past this mindset. This might include questioning the purpose, impact and relevance of what people do or adjusting the policies dictating working norms so that an organisation can adapt to changes and explicitly demonstrate compassion for evolving employee needs. A shift from prioritising tasks to connection also means eradicating the stark divide between professional and personal identities. Encouraging people to connect as humans rather than as functional employees enables them to enjoy the more primitive social bonds that lead to affection, trust and affinity.

C-suite executives are experiencing the most prominent global shift this century - rising inflation, continued

economic volatility and ongoing war - all whilst under the pressure for businesses to stay agile. The conditions organisations face rapidly present competing fiscal, political, sociological, health and

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ecological consequences. The humanistic experience of these macro-level dynamics is more immediate, profound and raw due to increased access to information and sometimes inflated by narratives on social media. Combatting this means consciously setting boundaries to take time out. Chilling in front of the television with a laptop or phone at hand is not going to do the trick. True rest requires a fundamental change in activity, focus and experience, something like hiking, or open water swimming. Mindfulness and meditation are also powerful disruptors.

The efforts to satisfy contradictory expectations of others can be both

exhausting and bleed pressure from work into personal life. Employees are expected to meet conflicting demands; to be driven achievers but compassionate to others, have the courage to be accountable but also embrace the vulnerabilities posed by risks, to be inclusive and 'fit in' and at the same time, stand out. These conflicting forces make striking a careful balance between pushing for personal progression and supporting the primal human need to maintain harmony tricky. Eventually, the expectations imposed by others and the self can be difficult to discern between and may accumulate in feelings of anxiety, stress and overwhelm. These forces stem from a combination of today's ambiguous working and living conditions and the socio-political-economic backdrop. To help explore the paradoxes, consider what tensions you recognise, how do they impact you and what could you gain from taking time to disrupt these rhythms? Could you reframe how you look at them? As a leader, what competing forces do you and your people face? What are the consequences and demands they create? How can you transform current patterns with a more empowering frame for yourself and your people? Clearly, finding balance in a world with so many conflicting forces will define this time of disruption and change.

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ARTICLE BY OLLIE OLLERTON, FOUNDER - BREAKPOINT,
STAR OF SAS: WHO DARES WINS AND FORMER SPECIAL FORCES SOLDIER

DARE

"I HAD TO FLEE TO AUSTRALIA, WHERE I FOUND MYSELF WITH NOTHING BUT A SELF-DESTRUCT BUTTON. THIS WAS MY ROCK BOTTOM, THE LOWEST PERIOD OF MY LIFE, BUT IT MADE ME LOOK AT MY FAILURES"

The Special Forces need people with basic human skills, such as resilience, intuition and the ability to make snap decisions under intense pressure. Showing weakness, vulnerability - or any kind of negative emotion - simply isn't allowed and you must be able to bounce back and be on point immediately. This is an innate trait, going back to our primal days when we lived in warring tribes. Wallowing in grief wasn't an option when you were under attack and fighting to survive.

There is a misconception that SAS operatives are impervious to difficult situations when, in actual fact, we're not superhuman and we're certainly not bulletproof. What we are is impeccably trained, therefore able to deal with whatever is thrown at us. This is a major part of the resilience mentality which, with the right strategy and programming, can be developed and grown over time. Let's rewind a little. For me, resilience comes from failure and the ability to overcome it. In my career I've faced many failures and what I call 'break points'. My first meeting with failure was during my first attempt at passing the Special Forces Selection. My team was caught on the final exercise making contact with civilians, meaning we

failed. I was one of the seven that got RTUed (Return to Unit) and my life-long dream of being in the military - as a young boy, all I cared about was becoming a soldier - came crashing down in front of me. The break point, though, was not giving up on the dream. At the second attempt, out of 250 soldiers who began selection, I was one of only seven who made it to the end. I was 23 years old and a member of the illustrious Special Boat Service.

I experienced another low point after being involved with an organisation called The Grey Man, which was set up to prevent child prostitution and slavery in Southeast Asia. On one child rescue mission, we found 22 kids in a Thai village who were due to be trafficked and

we evacuated them to the Burmese border. The high from that feeling of helping others was life changing and later became the catalyst of finding my purpose in life. However, the Thai government and media discredited the organisation and I had to flee to Australia, where I found myself with nothing but a self-destruct button. This was my rock bottom, the lowest period of my life, but it made me look at my failures. It wasn't a comfortable experience, but I was able to take responsibility for where I was in life and look inwards rather than outwards, for the answers. Starting from scratch, I began to build a picture of the person I wanted to become, visualising the process and end goal.

All of my failures have led me to be the person I am today. My mindset is the greatest it's ever been. I have clarity and belief to tackle anything that presents itself. I am mentally strong, resilient and have infinite potential - the same as every other person on this planet. But this wouldn't have happened if I let my failures take me over. As humans, we're genetically programmed to focus on failures. That's our survival instinct, but this trait isn't fit for the modern day, so we have to learn to not let them bring us down and instead learn from them. As bleak as it sounds, it's entirely possible that more things will go wrong in your life than go right, so you might as well take them in your stride. Building inner resilience is a life-long mission that everybody should be on. It's about taking control, creating new positive habits, identifying your purpose and setting meaningful goals. It's deliberately changing your life for the better, picking yourself up and recovering when things go wrong and squaring away anything that weighs you down - be it insecurities or negative self-beliefs - so that you have the mental bandwidth to start realising your goals. I'm sure you're thinking, "he's a Special Forces soldier, this is easy for him to say." Yes, the armed forces need people with resilience, but it doesn't come overnight. Inner resilience comes from hard work and grafting, but the good news is that we can all train our resilience if we're willing to step into discomfort.

Resilience in a business context is a similar kettle of fish. For a resilient business, its leader and its people need to be resilient themselves. This can be hard, particularly when you're emotionally invested in the thing you've created, but it's about being able to look at things objectively and work out why things have gone wrong. We can all be great leaders in good times, the real test is when the pressure is on. It's in this way that I think military and business processes aren't all that different, so I don't understand why people in the corporate world don't run debriefs. This is where things are reflected on, evaluated and lessons are learnt to do better the next time. As a leader, the last

thing you can afford to do is just keep on keeping on when you know things aren't working, you should be constantly reassessing and resetting. It's the leaders who are able to recognise the opportunities in failures that give themselves a strong template for how to move forward, building resilience on the way - win-win.

My idea for building inner resilience, in order to build business resilience, came when I was at rock-bottom in Australia. I had a vision of an organisation that could help people change their limiting beliefs. I imagined corporate sector professionals doing a selection-style

"WITHOUT ONE CHOSEN GOAL, WE CAN SUCCUMB TO THIS MASS OF IDEAS SWIRLING AROUND OUR BRAINS, CAUSING US TO FOCUS ON THINGS THAT WE DON'T WANT. IF YOU HAVE A STRONG ENOUGH 'WHY', THEN THE 'HOW' WILL BECOME CLEAR"

course that would help them reach their business goals. Veterans suffering from PTSD would find their feet again working as instructors and teaching mental fitness techniques to people who wanted to stretch themselves. But my mental struggles threatened to derail everything I sought to achieve. It wasn't until I overcame my own battle and exposed my weaknesses that I overcame this break point and so my company was born.

For beleaguered victims of the corporate world, mired by procrastination, momentum and persistence are the conduits of success. Leaders should be encouraging that potential, through independent and

resilient thinking and by empowering their staff with responsibility. That in turn builds resilience, as it means staff are prepared to take responsibility for their bad choices and decisions. That said, here are my top tips for building resilience: "Do you have goals?" Yes, we all do. Our subconscious mind is a goal-striving machine which will stop at nothing until it achieves what our dominant thoughts desire. So, let us play this to our advantage. Without one chosen goal, we can succumb to this mass of ideas swirling around our brains, causing us to focus on things that we don't want. If you have a strong enough 'why', then the 'how' will become clear, even if there are obstacles in the way. Nothing in life is permanent, so the real test of people's resilience lies in their ability to embrace change and adapt to new environments. Learn to embrace short-term discomfort for long term gain. Understand who you are and how you are wired. If we can step into the unknown, pivot, adapt and keep moving, we become stronger. When faced with difficulties, we panic, moan and complain. We say: "Why is this happening to me?" But this negativity doesn't allow for learning and growth. We need to shift our mindset to see struggles or difficulties as opportunities to learn and gain something from. The next time you have to take on a task you don't want to do, instead of saying, "I have to do X", say, "I get to do X". You'll be surprised at how your mind sees it differently.

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THE GREAT CONNECT

History highlights that challenge and change is the entry price for living, but there is something very specific about the challenge and change we are now trying to overcome. Level of uncertainty, speed of change - our digital interconnectedness combined with our physical distance - have all created a unique set of circumstances, exacerbating issues such as high stress and lower performance. 'The great resignation' and 'quiet quitting' all tap into some sense of broader malaise, the 'great disconnection'.

0243 M

"IF YOU JUST KEEP PUSHING FORWARD WITHOUT EVER TAKING TIME TO RENEW, YOU'RE NOT BEING RESILIENT, YOU ARE JUST SURVIVING"



M

ARTICLE BY ALI SHALFROOSHAN,
HEAD OF INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT R&D - TALOGY

0227 M

Ask employees what the fundamental issues are, topics such as organisational culture, lower engagement, a lower sense of belonging, ineffective leadership and high workload are all being raised as the potential problems. However, the most commonly cited issue is employees feeling burned out. Often, it is the most dedicated leaders and employees who are the most susceptible to burnout, because their ongoing hard work and emotional investment can leave them depleted. Simply understanding the problem is not enough. What is required is a dual pronged strategy - to create an environment that addresses the basic needs of the employee - fulfilling their financial needs and providing work they can draw a sense of meaning from and not being overworked. But when dealing with complicated issues, such as overcoming challenge, change and adversity, there isn't an easy answer.

Fundamentally, resilience is about experiencing challenges and converting them into learning, insights and resources, which we can deploy and utilise the next time we are presented with a setback, obstacle or change. Developing resilience requires a holistic understanding of not only who you are and how you are resilient, but other resources that help navigate and manage difficulties. In addition to understanding ourselves, we also need to understand the foundations that enable us to develop our resilience. To develop these foundations, we need to start with the understanding that becoming resilient isn't a location, it is a practice that is driven by self-awareness and habits. The emphasis on it being a resilience practice is to highlight that it is a day-to-day journey that requires consistent effort and action. Let us look at the foundations of developing resilience, physiological resources and renewal.

Strategy 1. Develop your psychological resources: Our experiences influence, impact and shape us. However, the lens through which we interpret and understand these experiences is determined by our psychological resources. These traits, resources and strategies support us to overcome

challenge and change and are at the core of the way we think, feel and behave. Our psychological resources can help us reframe our experiences, persevere through challenges, be agile in the face of change and enable us to relate to ourselves and others. This is why psychological resources are the heart of the model, as they also influence the decisions made about the other two foundations of resilience - how you optimise your physiological resources and finding time to renew. To understand how to develop resilience, you need to know your strengths and motivations. If you can understand yourself, psychological resources and how you are resilient, you can create the best roadmap. Understanding personal resilience will help uncover the techniques and strategies that will have the biggest impact on development.

"WE MAY NOT BE ABLE
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OVERCOME IT"

Strategy 2. Developing your physiological resources: Our consciousness and experiences are filtered through the amazing and sophisticated mechanisms of our mind and body. Understanding our nervous system and how it interacts with the rest of our physiology gives us greater insight about the origins of our emotions and how we regulate them and our bodies. The knowledge and understanding of our bodies - how they work and how they can be optimised - is constantly growing. Overwhelming evidence shows how important sleep, light, exercise, breathing and nutrition are when it comes to our physical wellbeing. By learning about our physiology and the connection between mind and body, we can better understand how we experience the world as biological entities and the mechanisms that enhance our subjective experience.

Strategy 3. Making time for renewal: If you just keep pushing forward without ever taking time to renew, you're not being resilient, you are just surviving. Using a sailing analogy, your psychological and physiological resources are the wind in your sails pushing you forward. Renewal is about dealing with the cracks when the water needs to be emptied out and the holes need to be repaired to avoid sinking.

Even when you think you do not have the time to do it, make the time, as renewal is essential for both survival and growth. Renewal is needed to help us rebuild both our psychological and physiological resources and put us back on track. It's important to recognise how you are feeling and find ways to help you renew. This can be as simple as taking breaks, going for walks, or listening to music. Also, connecting with friends or family, nourishing our personal relationships are all ways we can renew. The key element is that you need to actively pursue renewal to bring yourself some form of balance. None of us can keep going without renewal. Make sure you do this before you burn out. Creating a resilience practice: As can be seen in the descriptions above, an individual's resilience does not happen passively. You need to work on each of these three foundations to build resilience and overcome burnout. To create a resilience practice for each of these areas requires knowledge, building self-awareness and creating habits. Knowledge is about understanding why these resilience resources are important, the science around it and the actions that can be taken to enhance or optimise it. Self-awareness is understanding current levels are and what you are motivated to change. Habits are the regular and focused behaviours that you are committed to using and applying over time. By developing this resilience practice and supporting others to do so, we can hopefully overcome the challenges that are here now and on the horizon. We may not be able to control the world around us, but we can control how we try to overcome it.

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II

HR'S CHANGING CORPORATE INFLUENCE

DURING THE DARKEST OF TIMES, HR STOOD TALL AND PROVIDED WARMTH AND LIGHT, BUT IT NEEDS TO CHANGE ITS STANCE FROM REACTOR TO PREDICTOR AND INFLUENCER OF THE BUSINESS STRATEGY. FACED WITH ONGOING CHALLENGE, HR HAS TO MAINTAIN IT'S HARD-WON CREDENTIALS AS AN ESSENTIAL ALLY IN MEETING COMMERCIAL AMBITION WITH SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES AND A PREPARED HUMAN RESOURCE. THE INTEGRATION OF BUSINESS AND MANPOWER IN UNCERTAIN AND DISRUPTED TIMES, CAN NO LONGER RELY ON FIVE-YEAR PLANS.

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ARTICLE BY PETER HOWARTH, JOINT MD - ARMSTRONG CRAVEN

CALCULATED RISK

TIME HAS SEEN THE DEMISE OF MANY KEY BUSINESSES THAT DIDN'T ADAPT TO THE TIMES - KODAK, BLOCKBUSTER AND BLACKBERRY - ALL STARK REMINDERS FROM THE PAST THAT DEMONSTRATE WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO BUSINESSES THAT DON'T LOOK AHEAD EFFECTIVELY AND CONSIDER THE STATUS QUO AS A NAVIGATIONAL NORTH STAR.

In an era of rapid and constant change, it is easy to see how any business in any sector could suddenly be faced with existential threat. As an example, here is a real case-study. There was a CHRO, who needed to resolve a significant, revenue-impacting issue. A major product line was out of licence and replacement products were not available for about two years, creating a significant loss in earnings. There was no immediate way around it, but it was a sharp learning curve and rightsizing with the best leadership team was essential, to ensure the business was protected in the future. Rather than looking at the current team, however, the CHRO took a different tack, looking both to the future and externally, to understand the talent best suited for future needs. This outward-looking future lens seems to be uncommon, CHROs have a good grip on internal succession plans for their leadership teams and they understand high potentials and the people who have reached a limit. But what is rare is comparing internal talent to external potentials and, rarer still, how the current leadership team will impact the organisation's ability to deliver its strategy in five years' time.

It's easy to see why this is uncommon, because it requires investment and gaining C-Suite support has complications, not least because it may be their role in question. However, the route to protect the business long-term is important.

Helpfully, far more CEOs with a collaborative style of leadership are starting to understand that the make-up of a leadership team is essential - and is under scrutiny for the impact it might

"ACCOUNTANTS ARE WELL-ARMED WITH DATA TO CREATE VALIDATED BUSINESS CASES, CHROS, BY NATURE OF THE GAME, OFTEN STRUGGLE TO FIND 'HARD' EVIDENCE"

have in five years' time. With this in mind, CHRO's can look to the strategic actions of a Chief Financial Officer for guidance. Armed with a data-led three-to-five year financial plan, a CFO and CEO often rule the boardroom. The plan needs to consider the senior roles most critical to deliver future strategy and those that will have the greatest influence on business value. It needs to also have the best people structure to deliver business change, understanding gaps in organisational structure and where there are people, but not capabilities. A robust, credible argument with costed investments, like a CFO provides, will contain the evidence

to make effective, game-changing decisions. However, where accountants are well-armed with data to create validated business cases, CHROs, by nature of the game, often struggle to find 'hard' evidence. Simply explaining there is a lack of skills for future roles, without data, is likely to gain a response, from an uninitiated C-Suite, to 'train people'. But the chances of the right skills magically appearing internally are slim when many roles are new or not discovered yet.

Organisations need to be in a position of having the best, most capable people in roles that are strategically most important to the organisation. With this in mind, HR teams need to arm themselves with credible data that supports the business strategy - the new needs of senior management, new roles, new skills, diverse mindsets, where these people will come from and how to engage with them ahead of need. Along with talent acquisition costs, the plan should include retention strategies for people, attrition, likely new roles, L&D - as well as the competitive talent landscape - so it can meet the business' three-to-five year strategy. After the complexities of the last few years, it's wholly understandable that most organisations are highly reactive to current situations. What is critical is to make the change before change takes control.

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ARTICLE BY MARÍA BALBÁS, PRESIDENT - ELEV8

ECONOMIES OF EVOLUTION

"PUTTING HUMAN CAPITAL UNDER A MICROSCOPE, BEFORE CONSIDERING NEW TRAINING PROGRAMMES, WILL SET UP THE MOST RESOURCE-EFFICIENT INVESTMENT IN INTERNAL CAPABILITIES"

Microsoft is a prime example of a businesses that has learnt to evolve. When Satya Nadella joined Microsoft as CEO in 2014, he stripped back the business strategy to the fundamental notion that “we build tools, so that others can build more technology”, diversifying the business in the name of progression. Reframing and broadening Microsoft’s place in the market in this way, paved a path to the intelligent cloud system that is now the company’s biggest source of income.

In the current landscape of disruption and digitisation, regardless of sector, investing in technology is a pre-requisite for business growth - but so is investing in the right accompanying talent - which places HR leaders at the forefront of the drive for growth. Recent research (Public First) showed that 62 percent of surveyed businesses said a lack of digital skills had slowed their business’ growth. This data shows the tangible risks of not tackling a skills gap head on. With a dearth of skilled tech professionals and fierce competition for those that are available, businesses can no longer count on being able to enrich their talent pool through external hiring. A reliable alternative is a robust internal talent

pipeline, where employees are the beneficiaries of ongoing training and development. This will allow companies to adopt - as well as deploy new technologies - futureproofing the business from constant and relentless movement.

Ongoing training creates an agile workforce, underpinning organisational resilience. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, however, with each company needing a tailored approach based both on upskilling, which deepens an employee’s capability and reskilling, which broadens it. The resultant highly skilled workforce will also be better equipped to identify and pivot to the changing needs of the market. In terms of roll-out, top-down actions to implement

skilling efforts have also been proven successful. So, it's taken as read that HR leaders can be instrumental in building a culture of learning that opens doors for further upskilling when necessary. A company where learning is a habit has a truly agile workforce, with a strong existing skillset along with a willingness and ability to learn more, ensuring their business is equipped to thrive through market turbulence.

The recent ‘Great Resignation’, reiterated that talent loss is a genuine threat to businesses, with worrying consequences. A company that can rely on the ever-growing skills of its existing workforce is not held back by its dependence on the job market and the

availability of talent, which are typically turbulent and less reliable.

“A lack of career advancement and the absence of meaningful work” was amongst the top motivators for employees looking to leave their jobs in 2022, according to research by McKinsey. This interest in personal growth suggests that varied upskilling and reskilling programmes channelled towards what employees want to learn - be it hard skills, like coding or power skills such as leadership, in context with the changing demands of the market - will make the most headway towards business goals, all the while limiting staff attrition. Way back in 2012, Proctor and Gamble poured funds into its products and people, aspiring to become the world's most digital company. Its stock value soon fell and its CEO was eventually forced to leave. Lacking nuance and direction, this digitisation attempt was ill-fated from the start.

To underpin business growth, strategically building a long-term talent pipeline must begin with a clear understanding of the starting point, desired outcomes and market landscape. P&G's broad and poorly targeted strategy was weakened further by economic instability. Had it been executed with more precision and clearer direction, the investment may have helped them weather the economic downturn. However, a lack of effective planning led to the opposite. HR teams can be pivotal in guiding business strategy during times of market turbulence, providing careful insight into existing and needed talent resources, allowing laser-focused talent enrichment programmes and implementation planning that balances the immediate and future needs of the company. With goals and deadlines set and a budgeted map to a reskilled and upskilled workforce laid out, businesses can be confident in their growth forecasts, regardless of the wider economic landscape.

When searching for capability gaps, it can be helpful to view your team in a 'skills matrix' that compares the skills the business needs with those that individuals

already have. This will provide a helicopter view of skills at the business' disposal, highlight gaps and allow misaligned talent to be redeployed. Using this information, HR teams can then identify where upskilling should be provided, which personnel could benefit from this to progress to more senior roles and where reskilling could be offered to those who would be better positioned in a new role. Putting human capital under a microscope, before considering new training programmes, will set up the most resource-efficient investment in internal capabilities. Once existing and absent skills are identified, the workforce can

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be repositioned and enhanced, with measurable results for staff capabilities and business output. Due to the rapid pace of change within the fourth industrial revolution, there's no time for businesses to coast. Periods of calm and wider business slowdown should be viewed as indicators that training should be prioritised, in order to meet the future demands. Pre-emptive action from HR leaders to create a culture of learning and development, serves to ensure that skills acquisition and development will keep up with the ever-accelerating pace of emerging technology. Concurrently, ongoing investment in learning experience demonstrates that individual development and organisation-level commercial ambition are two sides of the same coin, which encourages long-term employee buy-in. Training programmes

that teach interaction-focused power skills will reap further rewards. Human skills will strengthen the platform for a strong company culture in which employees are motivated to learn and are invested in the progress of both themselves and their team.

In the wake of a digital skills crisis and set against the unstoppable rise of the digital economies, the adage “by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail” is more pertinent than ever. When market disruption is continuous, preparation must follow suit. Firms who recognise the ongoing need to evolve will ensure they have robust employee development pathways, guaranteeing broad, deep and dynamic organisational skillsets and a committed workforce that is equipped to respond to changing market demands. Investing in your workforce is not a luxury, but an essential in order to ensure business strategy remains future-proof. Skilling with focus and foresight will ensure businesses are agile, resilient and in the face of change, set to excel.

M.O.

STRATEGY - OR MORE ACCURATELY, HOW ORGANISATIONS APPROACH STRATEGY - IS CHANGING. THE PAST THREE YEARS HAVE SHOWN HOW THE 'TRADITIONAL' APPROACH TO STRATEGIC PLANNING IS NO LONGER FIT FOR PURPOSE. THE UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT THE FUTURE AND REALISING JUST HOW QUICKLY AND RADICALLY THINGS CAN CHANGE HAVE SHAKEN ORGANISATIONS' FAITH IN RELYING ON THREE-TO-FIVE YEAR PLANS TO MAP OUT THEIR FUTURE.

ARTICLE BY DAVID BOOTH, STRATEGIST, AUTHOR & FELLOW OF
THE STRATEGIC PLANNING SOCIETY - STRATEGY JOURNEY

*David Booth is the author of Strategy Journeys, a Guide to Effective Strategic Planning
Published by Taylor & Francis Ltd*

Organisations need a more dynamic approach to strategy, it is an ongoing journey, not a one-off project. They need a different way of thinking about the future and to develop the adaptability and agility to be able to respond quickly as challenges and opportunities develop. They also need the capacity to navigate around obstacles and setbacks and the confidence to be prepared to consider alternative futures openly and objectively and to work through what these mean now. At its heart, strategy is how people make sense of where it's going and how. This is about people, conversations, questions and the journey and future direction. It is important to demystify strategic planning and to focus on strengthening the strategic skills, processes and culture to enable sensemaking and 'rich conversations' to happen.

This dynamic approach to strategy requires new capabilities and this is where HR can lead and influence. People need to be able to think and talk, strategically and have the confidence and opportunity to do so, because strengthening the 'strategic thinking' capabilities across the business is fundamental. Firms also need to develop the skills to think about the future. This is more than just identifying trends and forecasting developments, future thinking requires creatively developing and considering possible scenarios - both desirable and undesirable - and then thinking through implications and being able to deal with the consequent uncertainties. Effective strategic management is another critical capability and the need for processes to engage people in the discussion of strategy and consequent decision-making and implementation and the ability to facilitate and manage these. Encouraging strategy conversations and establishing effective processes for these as an ongoing part of how the organisation functions, is the basis of good strategic

management. Therefore, engaging people throughout in this is key to achieving understanding and ownership. It is an area where many firms struggle and yet it is vital in achieving a dynamic approach to strategy.

Developing culture to support and encourage such an approach to strategy is another area where HR Directors can play a leading role. Strategy conversations are too often dominated by the strong opinions of key senior executives, curtailing the challenges and exploration of other perspectives that are an essential aspect of effective strategic planning. There needs to be openness and trust and the encouragement to contribute - plus the opportunities to do so. The ability to learn is vital - both from the process of making sense of strategy and also from what is encountered on the journey to implement this. Such learning strengthens strategic capabilities for the future.

Developing a more dynamic approach to strategy requires strategic leadership and HR Directors can have a defining influence to achieve this. A first step is to assess the current situation, what is the approach to strategy and how might this need to change. Which of these 'building blocks' elements needs to be developed, how does it need to strengthen each of these strategic capabilities and how might it go about doing so? Is the culture sufficiently supportive and engaging to enable such a more dynamic approach to strategy and is the organisation willing to embark on its strategy journey with an openness to learn? There's no doubt, HR has a valuable role to play in starting such conversations and leading the development of a dynamic, adaptable and agile approach to strategy, that will strengthen the ability to deal with the future in increasingly uncertain times.

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

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STRICTLY FOR SENIOR HR & PEOPLE PRACTITIONERS

III

TRENDS FOR 2023

THE REALITY IS, WE HAVE TO GO FURTHER AND FASTER TO FIND THE ANSWERS. SET AGAINST A TOUGH ECONOMIC BACKDROP, CONTINUED COMMERCIAL DISRUPTIONS AND COMPLEXITIES AND GEOPOLITICAL CONCERNS, EMPLOYERS ARE HAVING TO ADAPT AT A FASTER PACE, RECALIBRATE THE WORKFORCE MODEL AND FIND WORKABLE, SUSTAINABLE BALANCE IN THE VAGARIES OF WHAT HYBRID REPRESENTS. THE BURNING QUESTION IS, WILL THE CHALLENGES AHEAD OBSTRUCT MOMENTUM TOWARDS ESSENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SOCIAL FABRIC OF WORK AND THE WIDER SOCIETY? WE LOOK TOWARDS THE NEW DAWN.

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ARTICLE BY KATHY ABERNETHY, CNO & DIRECTOR OF MENOPAUSE SERVICES - PEPPY

AGENDA

THE MIXED MAKE-UP OF ANY ORGANISATION SHOULD BE ENOUGH FOR HR TEAMS TO ENSURE THAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR BOTH MEN'S AND WOMEN'S HEALTH CONCERNS. A WORRYING NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS ADMIT TO NOT EVEN HAVING GENDER SPECIFIC HEALTHCARE 'ON THEIR RADAR' IN THE WORKPLACE.

It's a situation that will have to change if businesses are serious about the recruitment and retention of senior women, especially and staff in general. With more than half (55 percent) of UK employers seeing demand for menopause support increase in the past two years, firms run the risk of employees voting with their feet if those demands aren't met. The research*, carried out ahead of World Menopause Day on 18 October, found that organisations are witnessing an increased demand for menopause support from their staff and it's not a trend that's likely to slow down anytime soon.

But over a third of bosses feel that they are behind the curve, when it comes to offering menopause support. Conversely, those organisations that have led from the front in healthcare support and provision are already reaping the rewards. Indeed, many early adopters offered menopause support, having recognised the impact of not doing so. Others are now quickly following suit as they can't afford to be an outlier in their industry. Of those employers who do offer menopause support, almost all expect the organisation to be more attractive to staff of menopause age are much more likely to retain them.

Failure to prioritise these health matters and focus on offering support for gender-specific issues such as the menopause can cost companies dearly with staff leaving employment due to

menopause symptoms. In addition, two-thirds of companies have experienced staff taking time off sick because of menopause-related symptoms and a third have had employees in their organisation take sick leave because of menopause

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AND NEARLY A THIRD OF
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symptoms 'quite a few times'. Businesses are directly affected when staff take absence or leave the business altogether because of menopause-related issues. But individuals benefit when they're supported and it's also in the interest of the company to look after this important demographic, to reduce absence and keep people at work. Of course, this support must address the needs of male employees too. It's not just women, offering men's health support is important in reducing staff churn and enabling firms to retain employees. With men reporting that they feel routinely under-served by the health service, organisations offering individual

employees health benefits tailored to their specific needs.

What is clear here is that there are significant benefits to organisations when it comes to gender-specific support in the workplace, along with very real, damaging ramifications in not doing so. In the case of menopause support for example, it needs to be treated in the same way as any other specialist support within the workplace - especially if employers are serious about recruiting, retaining and promoting this demographic. Many organisations are taking steps to offer a range of menopause support to staff, but there is a vast array of general menopause support now available, so employers must ensure that what they offer makes a real difference and gives employees the dedicated support they need. Simply offering information, or general support isn't enough, it has to be personalised and targeted. Menopause support is not a fad that will disappear next year. There are over 15 million women in employment and nearly a third of those are over 50. Recognising their needs is paramount.

REFERENCES

* Research conducted by Opinium on behalf of Peppy among 504 HR decision makers from 5-14 September 2022

FOR FURTHER INFO
PEPPY.HEALTH



ARTICLE BY TONY LATTER, CO-FOUNDER & CHIEF PLATFORM OFFICER -
THE HAPPINESS INDEX

ROMANCING THE ROBOT

"SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN CULTURAL ZEITGEIST AND THE
ONUS ON DIVERSITY MEANS ENSURING THAT NEW HIRES ADD
TO THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE, NOT JUST CONFORM TO
WHAT'S ALREADY THERE"

Heading into 2023 with challenges ahead and three years of disruption behind, in the grip of a cost-of-living crisis, ongoing war, energy price increases and political turmoil, the impacts on businesses and their people are inevitable. At the fulcrum is HR, struggling to balance the needs of people and the organisations they represent, in highly-dynamic and challenging areas - DEI, mental health, wellbeing and financial pressures - and the spectres of redundancy and failing businesses-lurk in wait for the unprepared.

As Chief Platform Officer at an SaaS organisation, you would assume I'm biased in favour of tech - and that might well be true - but I believe that 2023 is going to be the year of increased reliance and innovation in the relationship between HR professionals and technology. Tech can't fix the urgent problems the industry faces, but it can be leveraged to uncover solutions. I believe this will occur in five main ways. *Increased reliance on tech to give HR more space to do the "human" work:* In other words, the emotional labour and creative thinking. AI can sound scary to people, but as a tech professional, I'm excited about how AI can actually help us do more of the

stuff that only people can do. HR teams are statistically the most burnt out and least happy in the workplace. This is because they spend a lot of time doing work they are not enjoying and don't have time for the things that really matter to them and bring them joy - most of them prefer people to spreadsheets. In the next year, I expect HR will use increasingly more technology, automation and reporting dashboards, to take some of the grunt work out of manual tasks. Things like data entry, data analytics, managing large volumes of CVs or other personal data and so on, take up a lot of time for HR teams. Automating this, using AI and machine learning technology, will free

them up to think about the areas they specialise in - wellbeing, diversity and people-first business solutions.

The looming recession will force HR to think more holistically about benefits: For too long, the focus has been on salary, but for many people, increased salary is not as much of a draw as more harmony in their work/life balance. This will be important against the backdrop of increasing financial pressure from organisations. Of course, pay and benefits will continue to be important, but HR will need to consider further support to make their offering more attractive to a workforce feeling increasingly oppressed by the rising costs of living, while future-

proofing the bottom line. Here, tech can support - both as a platform for understanding what people want and need - but also as part of the solution, for example, wellbeing apps. No two people in your organisation are going to have the same wants and needs and this means listening to your team, in order to understand how to support them, but also offer a range of solutions, as there is, as the cliché often explains no “one-size-fits-all” solution.

Hiring will move from cultural fit to cultural add: There have been substantial changes in cultural zeitgeist and the onus on diversity means ensuring that new hires add to the organisational culture, not just conform to what’s already there. Technology is invaluable in mitigating bias. We know that recruitment tech has had a bad rap when it comes to bias, but it’s important to remember that tech is built by people and people have biases. Despite this, there are clever and innovative ways HR can use platforms and algorithms to alleviate the impact of cognitive and implicit biases. It’s well known that, as humans, we have a personality similarity bias. This means that we’re more likely to hire people who are like us. Using AI can help us alleviate this bias, hiring a more diverse team. Consequently, technology that captures so-called “blind” CVs which have names and identifying features removed, will be an increasing trend in recruitment.

This year will see a more equal relationship between employee and employer: There have been a lot of power swings between the pandemic standstill and the great resignation, followed by more uncertainty caused by economic instability. Despite these changes, employees are increasingly used to having a voice, which means that, although people may feel like they can’t move on - given the financial and political climate - they will still want to be heard and their feedback acted on. This can be seen in the wave of industrial action seen at the tail end of last year, which looks set to continue. Organisations need to show and provide stability at an unstable time and this means listening and really

understanding what your people are going through and supporting them throughout. Employers are uniquely positioned to do this, as research shows that they are the organisation employees most trust. Tech can help to provide channels for genuine two-way conversation and facilitate all-important compromise.

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Employees will continue to demand a genuine move to work/life balance: The last few years have seen a seismic change in the way we view where and when work is done. Whether organisations move into the office full-time, continue remotely or find a hybrid alternative, will be down to individual circumstances. We all know that not all jobs are best done remotely or even possible to do outside of specific locations. However, one thing is for certain, many workers have become used to something closer to true work/life balance. Maintaining this will support not only physical and mental health, but also organisational performance. This means offering flexibility wherever possible, in terms of location, hours or schedule. Tech will play a key role in ensuring staffing levels remain appropriate and building trust between employees and their managers. Where possible I see it also lending a hand in creating a work environment that prioritises output over hours worked. As we consider the challenges that lay ahead, it’s clear that HR functionalities are going to be more important than ever. Having an accurate understanding of people

throughout the business - their wants and needs and how they can be best supported - be key to weathering the storms that lie ahead. As an advocate of technology, the caring, human-centric values of HR can meet efficiency with empathy and on the dark and unpredictable road ahead, thoughtful and authentic interventions will make a significant difference to the lives of people under pressure employees they interact with. That HR teams gain the recognition, budgets and wider organisational support they need, is an operational imperative.

Looking further ahead, although it’s certainly going to be challenging, I see great opportunities ahead for HR and a notable trend for 2023 will be the continuing increase in how organisations and employees see even more value in the people function. Concurrently, investing more in technology will be extremely important in supporting HR teams and empowering leaders to shape the vision and strategy of organisations around the world through the people, skill and talent lens. HR was a light in the dark during the darkest COVID times and the function thoroughly deserves its rising kudos. In addition to the internal value of people functions rising, there is also increasing external scrutiny of people strategies from investors, customers, suppliers and potential employees under ESG agendas. Consequently, HR tech is becoming a critical component in evaluating how well organisations are meeting the people element of their ESG strategy and communicating this journey. There is no doubt that the increasing capability of tech and people-centricity could be a compelling combination on the road ahead.

FOR FURTHER INFO
THEHAPPINESSINDEX.COM

THE GLOBE THEATRE

The stage is set and the spotlight is on the global talent pool. Remote working, technological innovation and a post-pandemic shift in attitudes, are pushing boundaries, impacting how, where and with whom we work. Unquestionably, a driving trend for 2023, will see businesses looking beyond the limitations of location, in pursuit of the world's best talent and this marks the beginning of a radical new era in business operations, marked by the 'Globalisation of Teams'.

"GROWING TRUST IS SEEING TEAMS COLLABORATE GLOBALLY,
SETTING THE SCENE FOR THIS NEW ERA OF BUSINESS, WIDENING
THE OPPORTUNITY POOL FOR TALENTED WORKERS AND FINDING
FREEDOM AWAY FROM TRADITIONAL CONSTRAINTS"



ARTICLE BY MATTHEW WILSON, CO-CEO & CO-FOUNDER - OMNIPRESENT

Teams collaborating globally, setting the scene for this new era of business, widening the opportunity pool for talented workers and finding freedom away from traditional constraints. But going global inevitably presents challenges and HR leaders need to be mindful of workplace impacts as they plan ahead. Once the practicalities of hiring the right people are underway, successful global teams need to operate with a new model that overcomes potential cultural and psychological challenges, while reducing barriers to teamwork. Indeed, of all potential concerns, preserving team culture is considered the highest among leaders. Ensuring compliance with local regulations and tax is essential when hiring across international borders. Just four percent of leaders responding stated this was a concern for them, however there's a great deal of complexity and not doing it right risks serious fines and reputational damage. Companies must also take care to use the correct local pay rate - a challenge in itself - as there is no global benchmark and there are obvious risks with underpaying and overpaying.

A global team culture will be diverse by design and opens up opportunities for marginalised groups and people who live in low-income countries. However, there is ample opportunity for asymmetries of power. Likely scenarios include; fluent English speakers dominating conversations, as English is the global language for business. Team members based in the head office working closely together, as well as fragmentation into national, linguistic or location siloes. To help counter this, it's essential to put everyone on as equal footing as possible, keep teams small, maximise relationships and communicate opportunities. As for office space, it depends on circumstances - some start-ups may want to keep an office or offer opportunities to meet in person. Others may want to go fully remote, but provide opportunities to meet and larger companies will have regional offices, so aiming to reduce regional cliques is important.

We will need to prepare for asynchronous working, due to differences in time zones

and individual work patterns, team working hours will overlap only occasionally and, even when they do, individuals can still be working remotely, physically isolated from each other. Additionally, while video conferencing allows people to read each other's facial

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cues, it is still a controlled and scheduled interaction. HR leadership can help create a framework, by planning company-wide meetings to fit in with different time zones, plus providing employees with instant messaging tools and encouraging their use for personal relationship building, alongside work conversations. Facilitating virtual downtime and social occasions, such as coffee breaks or community time also help connect far flung employees. Boundaries must also be established around working hours, to allow for effective communication across time zones and asynchronous project delivery should be standard at all levels. To find the sweet spot of collaborative working and community, actively encouraging colleagues to use working hours to build relationships, as well as hit targets.

Globalising an existing office-based team needs a different approach than a start-up building from scratch. HR leaders should interrogate the needs of team and review progress, to ensure that the right model is in place. Many companies within knowledge-based sectors have adopted a hybrid work strategy following the pandemic. For employers, this offers the best of both worlds - the flexibility and

time-saving opportunities available with remote working and the time for interpersonal relationships to build when teams are in the office. However, there is no single approach that works for every organisation. Depending on sector constraints, for example, some will benefit from more time together in a physical location than others. Younger companies might choose to take a global-first approach giving the freedom to tap the entire global talent market in order to find the most impressive team with the right skills at the right price. By hiring only remote workers, many of the complexities of a hybrid approach are negated immediately. This approach allows a company to dispense with the physical office and create a digital HQ. It has the additional commercial benefit of establishing a global presence from the outset, enabling business to be conducted around the world, rather than a traditional approach of starting locally then growing globally. Integrating remote employees into a team that has been office-based for years can be challenging, particularly if time zones and different countries are in the mix too.

There are many options for companies like this to go global. It could be to choose to recruit lower-cost team members to work on specific assigned tasks for the in-office team, such as reports or data collation. Options exist for recruiting high-value new recruits remotely and setting up regular opportunities for the offline and online colleagues to meet and socialise. Other approaches include outsourcing entire functions to a more cost-effective time zone or location. This is the same approach as the largely successful shift towards offshore manufacturing that we've seen over the last ten years. One thing is for sure, by allowing even greater international collaboration, the Globalisation of Teams will accelerate innovation at a time of multiple threats ranging from climate change to pandemic management into 2023 and beyond.

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All statistics are from a survey conducted by Omnipresent and YouGov

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.OMNIPRESENT.COM

4 D W W

WHAT WITH PERSISTENT LABOUR SHORTAGE - ALONG WITH WAGE HIKES AND FLEXIBLE BENEFITS - WORK FROM HOME HAS BECOME A KEY BARGAINING CHIP. THE HIRING MARKET CONTINUES TO EVOLVE AND NOW THE FOUR-DAY WORKING WEEK IS BEING CONSIDERED AND TRIALED AS AN OFFERING TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN QUALITY TALENT, GOING INTO 2023.

ARTICLE BY NOURA DADZIE, SENIOR VP SALES - TALENT.COM

The main issue of contention surrounding an abbreviated work week regards the issue of lost productivity. However, according to a six-month pilot programme, to test the 4DWW, involving over 70 companies, 95 percent of firms reported productivity was maintained or improved and they plan to continue at the conclusion of the trial. People have become accustomed to doing more with less and this proves it. The US, Canada, Scotland and Spain have already begun conducting their own 4DWW pilot programmes in the last year. Workers in Scotland and Spain have had their hours reduced by 20 percent, without cutting their pay, by compensating those employees with government funds to reduce the burden on employers. California has recently introduced legislation to consider a 32-hour work week as the new standard as well but faces, opposition as the burden falls on employers to pay overtime. The alternative would involve cutting hours, which would be unpopular with employees and would mean hiring more people for the same job, which is not ideal for employers either during a labor shortage. An independent survey, found that 35 percent of respondents would want to work 30-to-32 hours for a 4DWW. While a 4DWW is obviously popular with employees, 37 percent of surveyed employees are unwilling to take even a five percent pay cut, concerns that will need to be addressed, to ensure the success of the 4DWW.

Even though Belgium's plan for a 4DWW explores alternative measures - like making up the hours of the lost day across the other four days, possibly resulting in ten-hour days - it still reduces commute time. It also gives people an extra day of rest with family, where they are able to make appointments and decrease the use of sick days. Additionally, reducing the commute is not only a convenient benefit to offer employees, but will also

cut carbon emissions. A UK study has shown that implementing a 4DWW by 2025 would reduce Britain's emissions by over 20 percent. Another major factor has been the significant number of people who left the workforce and are no longer actively seeking employment so they are not counted as unemployed. Women have been the largest group to leave the workforce as the burden of childcare predominantly fell to them during the pandemic when remote schooling made it impossible for both parents to return to work outside of the home. In order to regain the pre-pandemic workforce, it will involve targeting the 1,000,000 women who left the workforce for good. One of the ways to do that is to institute the 4DWW.

According to a survey last year from the *Harvard Business Review*, an overwhelming 89 percent of respondents reported the deterioration of work/life balance. This lack of work/life balance is not only responsible for falling birth rates - especially in high-income countries - but is the reason why 43 percent of workers want to quit their jobs. This must be addressed by companies who wish to retain their workers and save on turnover costs going into the new year. For so many, the work/life balance is crucial. In fact, 82 percent of workers say that 4DWW represents a better work/life balance. Given the shifting nuclear family design, the 40-hour work week simply needs to be re-examined. The 4DWW is not just a matter of increasing business productivity, but improving worker health outcomes by decreasing stress, reducing emissions and challenging gender inequality. Ultimately, these early pilot programmes indicate the potential success of the 4DWW which can expect to pick up momentum in 2023, based on its growing global reach and success.

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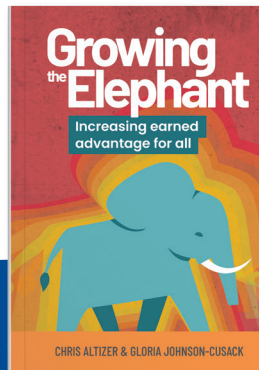
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IV

MAINTAINING THE HUMAN CONNECTION

THE REBOOT OF WORK HAS BEEN PREDICTABLY DIFFICULT, BUT THERE ARE SOME IMPORTANT LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM OUR COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES - HAVING TO ADAPT TO ENFORCED REMOTE WORKING - WHICH MUST INFORM ON A HUMAN LEVEL, THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE HYBRID FRAMEWORK. IT'S NOT JUST THE CHANGES IN THE WORKING FRAMEWORK, THERE IS A RETURN TO KEY ELEMENTS OF HUMAN INTERACTION THAT CANNOT BE LEFT TO MUSCLE MEMORY. IMPORTANTLY TOO, HERE IS AN UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY.

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ARTICLE BY DANA JAMES-EDWARDS, HEAD OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION - KING'S FUND

F R A N K

HAVING MORE POLICIES AROUND DISCRIMINATION DOESN'T MEAN IT IS ANY EASIER FOR EMPLOYEES TO TALK ABOUT DEI ISSUES AFFECTING THEM. CONVERSATIONS CAN BE EMOTIVE, DIFFICULT TO NAVIGATE AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS CAN ALL TOO EASILY LEAD TO MISSED OPPORTUNITIES AND AN EXCUSE FOR A LACK OF ACTION AND SLOW PROGRESS TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT.

After generations of experience, being together in the workplace, we have still not mastered the art of having 'good conversations', the open and trusting kind. Subsequently, a migration to remote working and digital connectivity has impacted on the essential sense of human rapport and understanding, creating fault lines. Conversations can become tough and personal about any of those areas relating to what makes us different as individuals and how we can have different experiences of being in the workplace. Across our own organisation, five Employee Network Groups have emerged organically: For Black staff, staff with disabilities and long-term health conditions, LGBTQ+ staff, women and working parents. The Network Groups are a means of bringing together employees with common interests and experiences and giving them a voice. For people who might usually feel they are part of a minority group at work, they are a safe place to express themselves and take an active role in changing working lives for the better. In turn, it's a way of generating a stronger sense of affinity, representation and belonging within the organisation.

Activity led by the Employee Network Groups has already led to cultural change, whereby our LGBTQ+ staff feel more able to be out and proud and meanwhile, for working parents, there are focused campaigns such as the 'five things you don't know about what it's like to be a

working parent', which has encouraged managers to be more receptive to requests for flexible work arrangements. Each Network Group is chaired by at least one member of staff, who volunteers to take

"REMOTE WORKING AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY HAS IMPACTED ON THE ESSENTIAL SENSE OF HUMAN RAPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING, CREATING FAULT LINES"

on the role, in addition to their day job. The majority are from more junior levels of the organisation, with less experience of chairing meetings and managing upwards. In practice, being 'chair' also means taking on board a range of strong views from people who feel like they're fighting to be heard. There can be a mix of competing opinions, some grievances and some conversations have the potential to become fractious. Chairs are expected to report those views to their network sponsor - a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) - making a case for particular changes or activities in response. It's a role that can be intimidating and nerve-wracking.

Passion for a cause and the determination to accurately represent people's concerns were affecting the way messages were communicated upwards and so it was decided that the Employee Network Group Chairs needed support - to avoid tensions in the way diversity issues were presented and discussed - both within their networks and with the SMT. With support, conversations would be less awkward, there would be more understanding and greater potential for constructive action as a result. The Chairs have benefited in particular from learning how best to frame their approach, thinking more in terms of how things are said, rather than just the 'what'. They have also become tuned into the importance of 'situational awareness' and the need to be alert to the needs of their listeners and the value of shaping their message. Simply being together, seeing how they were all facing similar challenges and identifying themselves as a group, rather than individual islands, has also been useful for them. Since the programme, the Employee Network Groups have run with a smooth flow of listening, representation and understanding and there has been progress on appreciating the needs and aims of decision-makers, created closer team-working on diversity issues.

FOR FURTHER INFO
WWW.KINGSFUND.ORG.UK



ARTICLE BY JAMES APPLEBY, GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR - DG INTERNATIONAL

GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

"LABELLING THOSE WHO CHAMPION A RETURN TO THE OFFICE AS 'BADDIES',
WHILST PRESENTING HYBRID WORKING AS THE BEST OPTION FOR ALL, WE
OVERSIMPLIFY WHAT AN INCREDIBLY NUANCED SITUATION IT IS"

For too long, the debate around home working centred on productivity, when the focus should have been on the wellbeing and social benefits employees can gain from a healthy workplace culture.

The great resignation, the quiet quitting - and the quiet firing - have become buzz phrases surrounding the modern workplace and typify the current climate of conflict. All this considered - along with the cost-of-living crisis piling on more pressure - trying to address this "us vs them" stalemate is complex.

Any business leader who has had to grapple with the practicalities of the post-pandemic workplace will know that these divisions become particularly apparent when discussing the intricacies of hybrid working. As a global logistics company, our employees were given key worker status early on in the pandemic and we found that 75 percent of our workforce wanted to return to the office and, of course, we supported the remaining 25 percent that wanted to stay at home. For some organisations however, coaxing office workers back into traditional workspaces has been a much more significant challenge. The discussion around where employees should spend their working days has become toxic and it's hardly surprising, given the number of

business leaders and politicians who have made headlines for their less-than-complimentary views on homeworkers. Indeed, the loudest arguments for in-person work can feel utilitarian and polarising. But there are so many positives to in-person work that have nothing to do with productivity. How many friendships, relationships and marriages started in the workplace? How many incredible ideas started with an informal chat across a desk? Without these connectivity hubs, we're missing out on many excellent opportunities to collaborate and form bonds.

Away from the click-bait commentary, studies around home workers and their productivity have been split. Some suggest that employers are

finding increased productivity benefits from their remote workforce and others point to studies that show we're still less productive at home. In our operation, we have technology which enables us to see when our home workers are logging in and out of their computers. This tells us that home workers clock up the same hours as office workers - they just do them at different times. This preoccupation with productivity distracts us from a far more critical question when we mainly work from home, as to whether our social and wellbeing needs are being met. Labelling those who champion a return to the office as 'baddies', whilst presenting hybrid working as the best option for all, we oversimplify what an incredibly nuanced

situation it is. Hybrid working can be a lifeline for parents trying to balance family and work, but I also know of parents with babies and toddlers, who have found working from home incredibly stressful. Home working can be ideal for middle managers and team leaders, who are more likely to be in comfortable houses with spare offices. But what about the young recruit who has just joined the team? Do they have a designated, warm place in their home where they can work, or are they working in cramped conditions and opting to go without heating to try and cope with increasing energy bills?

The problem is that, while hybrid working might meet the practical needs of a particular group of workers, it's unlikely to meet the social needs of the majority. In *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, humanity's need for love and belonging sits just above our need for food, water, and safety. But with hybrid workers spending less time in the office, those who venture in for a couple of days a week often find that they're working in spaces which lack any authentic atmosphere. In a hybrid framework, it can be challenging for recruits to make friends in the workplace and learn from more experienced team members. Crucially, it's harder to assess team wellbeing across the board. It all comes down to one very simple truth, individuals who are happy, content and feeling positive, outperform those who are experiencing negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and loneliness. I call this being 'above or below the line' and on a scale of one-to ten, if you feel that your emotional wellbeing is below a five, you are below the line. Employees who are below the line are less likely to be enjoying work and less likely to feel connected to their colleagues. This simple measure is a crucial part of our company culture and we're always aiming for team members to feel their wellbeing is at least between a seven-to-nine.

As a leader, it's crucial to focus on the self-esteem of your line reports and to pay attention to each individual's state of mind. Is a typically chatty employee

suddenly withdrawn or snappy? Is their body language telling you something they haven't expressed in words? As humans, we have peaks and troughs of emotion throughout the day and we need to spend consistent periods of time with people, to see how they're coping with their workload and how they are genuinely feeling. There are so many indicators which make it evident whether a colleague is above or below the line and these hints are far harder to spot when you are only meeting online or chatting through an instant messaging service. Once a manager spots an employee experiencing more negative than positive

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emotions at work, they need to quickly and efficiently help that employee address how they are feeling. That requires a lot of specialist training, but all the training in the world will not help if people are isolated from their teams, because of too much home working or ineffective hybrid working. It's hardly a surprise that the number of 'quiet quitters' is purportedly on the up and that just nine percent of UK workers feel engaged or enthusiastic about their work. There's little doubt that, in a pre-pandemic work environment, supporting employees experiencing negative thoughts and feelings was easier, before they reached a breaking point.

When most work is conducted online, it's unrealistic for senior executives

to nurture their teams, that's why we need meaningful in-person time. People learn by experiencing the behaviour of others, replicating that in their style to develop their skills and relationships. Senior executives who spend quality time with their teams are far more likely to be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their team members to offer them personalised support. In this new world of hybrid work, HR leaders should be thinking about how we can make in-office days as valuable as possible. Can you organise days when specific teams, or your entire team, come in, for example? Can team leaders avoid packing their office days full of meetings so that they are more available for their immediate line reports? Then there's the big one, organised fun. It has a bad rap for jingoism, but connecting personally with colleagues can make a huge impact. I've seen teams struggling to connect completely, turn a corner, just through playing a round of crazy golf together. Love it or hate it, planning when workers can let their hair down and connect can help bring joy back into workplaces. Social interactions at work are vital as they help us feel more engaged and passionate about our jobs. But we're out of practice and we need our HR teams to find ways to cut through the inevitable awkwardness that some of us may feel being thrown back into 'the real world'. Beyond gimmicks and one-off reward schemes, businesses need to make employees feel trusted and valued as individuals. The role of responsible HR leaders is not to impose one-size-fits-nobody policies. It is to understand the emotional needs of the workforce and cultivate a culture which reflects and enhances 'above the line' behaviours. By doing this, they can increase engagement and support their workforces to transition successfully and happily into a new working era, where there is the potential to experience considerable benefits for all.

FOR FURTHER INFO
WEAREDG.COM

3 D

Culture experts explain what it means to be human, anthropologists stress the importance of the social and relational dimensions of work. Work is social and interpersonal - work isn't just what, where, when or how we produce something - it's vital to think about who we work for and who we work with. Thinking about work through the lens of a social experience acknowledges our nature as social beings, who interact with each other.

None of us exist in a vacuum.

"CONFLICT WITH A MANAGER CAN DERAIL NOT ONLY YOUR DAY, BUT YOUR WHOLE WEEK. MEANINGFUL PRAISE FROM A LEADER CAN PUT YOU ON CLOUD NINE, BOOST CONFIDENCE AND TOP UP MOTIVATION"



ARTICLE BY DR ALEX GAPUD, CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGIST - SCARLETTABBOTT

The relational side of work - a focus on the 'who' - is a missing piece in most conversations on hybrid and the return to office. Increased attention on flexibility and hybrid have helped us explore the 'where' and 'when' of work and digitalization has enabled us to re-imagine the conventional 'how' of work for those based in offices. Recent years have rightly seen increased attention on diversity and inclusion which touch on the 'who' of work in terms of workforce composition. But we still need to address how people interact and build meaningful relationships with one another - including their peers, their managers and leaders and their clients and customers - in a digital-first world. These relationships and interactions are at the heart of our experience at work. Contrary to what we want to believe, human beings are famously irrational. Our mood and emotions affect our decision-making, confidence and performance, yet they're often captive to our relationships. Our memories of an experience are often affected by the people we share it with. A conflict with a manager can derail not only your day, but your whole week. Meaningful praise from a leader can put you on cloud nine, boost confidence and top up motivation.

We need to think about the sense of connection, meaningful relationships and belonging that drive engagement and retention. Digitalisation and hybrid have created great opportunities - especially around inclusive hiring, but they also stretch and strain our experience of connection. We need to reset how we think about work through a social, relational lens that puts people and their relationships in focus - especially in the new, digitised era of hybrid work. Reports of the death of organisational culture in a hybrid environment have been greatly exaggerated. Our cultures have been stretched and transformed by hybrid, but they've hardly gone away. Connection in a digital world isn't just the ability to interact with others across an organisation in the way that social media platforms 'connect' us with strangers across the globe. While digital enables opportunities to connect, what's more important is the

quality of those connections and relationships. The question of connection in the workplace isn't whether I can send someone a message on Teams or Slack, it's about whether or not we have a meaningful relationship, regardless of the medium we use.

One of the limitations of our digital interactions with colleagues is that they're often point-to-point and transactional. We ask a quick question or share information by pinging a message or jumping on a call and then hang up once we get what we need from each other. But by and large, these short digital interactions aren't conducive to developing wider relationships.

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Relationships may be essential for teams working together, but they can also feel instrumental, where we simply interact to gain something from one another. One of the challenges is that this transaction is very superficial and it can leave us feeling empty, hollow and disconnected, even if we do good work together. Although 2D relationships are functional, they're not enough. As social beings, we need and crave deeper, fuller 3D relationships. The standard surface-level interactions in a digital space miss the deeper human dimension beyond the work itself that's vital to creating rapport, connection, loyalty, trust and belonging. Not coincidentally, those elements are hallmarks of cultures where both people and companies thrive. That's not to say that we need to mandate Friday beers and bring everyone back in the office. Nor does everyone have to participate in social events if they don't want to. Those mandates alone won't create 3D

relationships - you can't force them - they need to be cultivated over time. Social gatherings and time together in the office are valuable precisely because they create the time and space for those deeper relationships to form. These 3D relationships help people build the trust and psychological safety necessary for healthy conflict and disagreements.

The challenge is that meaningful connections don't come naturally to the fast-paced, highly transactional, back-to-back 2D digital environment. Our workloads are often overflowing and the rhythm of our days is so full on and non-stop that we struggle to find time to eat, breathe or think - let alone take the time to know a new team member to help them feel welcome and included. In a hybrid and digital world, the time and space to connect with each other and have the repeated, casual, informal conversations that create weak ties and build trust over time easily get suffocated before they ever grow and bloom. Rather than physical space, it's our time pressures of overflowing workloads and a mentality to maximise productivity and squeeze every minute that creates this pressure.

That's not to say 3D relationships can't grow in this context, but many of the organic touchpoints and factors that facilitate depth in an in-person environment need to be intentionally cultivated in a 2D world. The rhythm and cadence of our days in-person - of taking time to chat or going somewhere for lunch, or a few minutes to shuffle between meeting rooms - gives us time for interaction that the digital back-to-back Zoom world doesn't. When we're busy and stressed, the 'nice-to-haves' like a friendly culture and team camaraderie give way to the bustling of productivity and point-to-point, transactional interactions because we often think that's where the 'real work' is. But that line of thinking treats people more like machines than human beings and down that path lie disengagement, attrition and burnout.

FOR FURTHER INFO
[SCARLETTABBOTT.CO.UK](https://www.scarlettabbott.co.uk)

TRIPARTITE

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF WORK LOOK LIKE AND IS IT REALLY ABOUT WHERE YOU WORK OR HOW YOU WORK? WITH 85 PERCENT OF EMPLOYEES WANTING A 'HYBRID' APPROACH, A BLANKET RETURN POLICY FEELS LIKE TOO MUCH OF A SWING IN THE OTHER DIRECTION, WITH ORGANISATIONS FOCUSING SOLELY ON THEIR OWN AGENDAS. SO, HERE'S AN OPPORTUNITY TO FIND BALANCE FOR THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE, TEAMS AND BUSINESSES.

ARTICLE BY DAN MEEK, CEO - LIW

Now is a great opportunity to start a progressive conversation that feels much more positive and motivating than a discussion focused on a solution and where people work. It's a consideration of what needs to be achieved and why, through having open and honest conversation about the team's goals, where your team is now and how those goals align with those of the organisation. The many benefits that hybrid working can bring, when implemented and supported properly, have of course been well documented and discussed at all levels and quarters - a better work-life balance, greater ability to work with better focus, more time for family and friends due to reduced commuting time, savings on travel costs and increased motivation. But hybrid working can also bring greater focus on tasks, fewer distractions and an increased understanding of the value of teamwork. But of course, there are downsides too; inconsistent communications, weakened relationships and distractions while in virtual meetings.

We've all heard the adage 'culture eats strategy for breakfast', so having the culture right at the organisation and team level, is critical. It also needs to start with a clear purpose that can engage employees in a shared vision and a feeling of ownership of the business goals. It pays to have a pragmatic approach that hybrid working is here to stay so embrace it and be clear on what you are trying to achieve and why. Consider the big picture and the direction you're heading in. Be clear about the 'why?'. It's worth taking your time here to ensure everyone understands the 'why' because it'll give context and clarity to the discussion you have. It's an excellent opportunity to start a progressive team conversation that feels much more positive

and motivating than a discussion focused on a solution for deciding when and where people work.

There are three key stakeholders in the equation - self, team and system: First, consider yourself, a leader's own assumptions and beliefs can affect their behaviours and actions. Be considerate of this before you make any decisions. Secondly, consider the team, what will help them reach the desired goals in the short and long term? Thirdly, systems, understand the processes and whether they align with the team goals. Understanding how individuals and teams work within the organisation context can clarify the hybrid model which will work best for all three parties.

To gain the most out of teams, you need to build a culture of trust and psychological safety and this requires organisations to be transparent, honest and willing to listen. Teams are the link between employees and the organisation - they open the opportunity for the right conversations that will link organisation objectives with the right balance of hybrid that enables each team to complete the job. Each team can then set the conditions that support the success of all stakeholders. The direction of travel is clear, with 63 percent of high-growth businesses adopting hybrid working. To become one of them, requires a radical change from the conventions of work and a future-looking mindset.

FOR FURTHER INFO
[LIW3.COM](https://www.liw3.com)

Glow night walk



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CHANGING FEAR-BASED BELIEFS

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT INSPIRING OTHERS TO MAKE A VISION BECOME REALITY AND A COMPANY CAN NEVER IMPROVE UNLESS ITS LEADERS FIRST IMPROVE THEMSELVES. THEREFORE, IN ORDER TO MAKE IT SAFE FOR OTHERS TO SPEAK AND ENABLE IDEA GENERATION TO SHAPE AND FORM, CHANGE MUST START FROM THE TOP - CHANGE THAT IS COUPLED WITH INTENTION, COMMITMENT AND THEN ACTION.



ARTICLE BY SHEREEN DANIELS, CHAIR - AFRICAN DIASPORA ECONOMIC INCLUSION FOUNDATION,
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF HR REWIRED AND SENIOR ADVISOR FOR REPUTATION AND ESG - LANSONS

*Shereen Daniels is the author of *The Anti-Racist Organization: Dismantling Systemic Racism in the Workplace*
Published by Wiley*

Dismantling systemic racism and advancing racial equity in the workplace starts with you. How? Be willing to disrupt dominant power structures that inhibit change. Whilst it isn't all on you, sometimes it's necessary to go out and on a limb and be the first. Denying your power is untrue and coming up with a list of things that you can't do and why, is still rooted in fear. If you are a white leader, whether you like it or not, you reflect and reinforce the dominant culture. It shapes how you view normal, good, bad, effective, comfortable, convenient or risky. Confronting fear-based beliefs is just a painful beginning, yet it's a practice that requires ongoing attention to reinforce personal values and commitment to corporate leadership.

To move beyond recognition to changing fear-based beliefs requires leaders to sit comfortably with discomfort. Acknowledging that you don't have to have all the answers, fear of saying or doing the wrong thing, a question of what

is appropriate and the fear of taking things 'too far' shouldn't stop you from trying to dismantle racism within your company, should it? When considering the type of introspection that will form the basis of your words and actions to tackle racism within your organisation, begin by thinking about racism from your organisation's perspective.

Where is the pressure to change coming from? The influencing factors? Is it financially driven through growth into new markets? Is it coming from investors or colleagues? Or indeed has the organisation been too quiet for too long and now wants to catch up? The deeper you can take this, pushing past your discomfort to unearth the truth, the greater sustainable future change will be. Do you understand the current state of play, as it relates to the people most impacted by racism and those who promote, preserve and uphold the conditions that hold your Black colleagues back? What are your belief systems? The values that you need to question?

If you are going to lead others to be introspective, then you have to do the work yourself. If your company is to have real conversations and create physical and psychologically safe spaces to hear truths from your Black colleagues, then honesty is required. What authentic reflections have you shared? Whose voices are you paying the most attention to? What stories do your wider workforce tell about the way their Black colleagues have been treated? Do you know? Or is that information blocked from you? If not, would you care enough to do something about it? Encourage introspection on both an individual and team level. Hold frequent space for these conversations, not just when something happens. Invest the time in having these honest conversations with yourself and at board level. Increasing leadership self-awareness and the ability to hold space for challenging conversations is a skill that is worth its weight in gold.

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



April Jones

ROLE HR DIRECTOR
COMPANY DOMINO PRINTING

Domino Printing has announced April Jones as the company's new HR Director for Europe, Middle East & Africa.

April's remit will be to work in partnership with regional HR teams and also support the company's Digital Printing operation across the world. She joined Domino in 2019 as Senior HR Business Partner - following roles in various global businesses - where she focused on such areas as generalist HR, organisational change and supporting and coaching senior leadership teams. Now April will be responsible for driving key initiatives integral to making Domino a great place to work, building inclusion, engagement, talent development and delivering strong leadership to the HR team across territories.

David Miller

ROLE DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE
COMPANY NHS FIFE

David Miller is to become the Director of Workforce at NHS Fife, having worked for NHS Scotland for over twenty years in human resources.

David began with the NHS as recruitment assistant in Lothian and has worked across a variety of territorial and national health boards, prior to his current post as Chief People Officer for NHS Scotland with the Scottish Government at the Health and Social Care Directorate. He is renowned for providing credible, compassionate and values-based human resources for all staff, leading with engagement, empowerment and wellbeing. He joins NHS Fife to build upon its reputation for providing excellent standards of care - as well as being a great place to work - operating with collaboration, partnership working, commitment to accountability, good governance, probity, openness and equality of opportunity.

Vicky Ryan & Fiona Biddle

ROLE JOINT HR DIRECTORS
COMPANY BNP PARIBAS REAL ESTATE

BNP Paribas Real Estate has announced that Vicky Ryan and Fiona Biddle will job share the role of UK HR Director.

Both Vicky and Fiona will become UK HR Directors, with full responsibility and accountability for the company's HR department. They will work three days a week, splitting the responsibilities of the role equally and both will become full members of the Executive Committee. This flexible approach, has achieved a real win for the business - retaining the skills and experience that Fiona has brought to the organisation during the last year - whilst welcoming Vicky back from

maternity leave, with the same responsibility and strategic weight, enabling her to achieve a work/life balance with her young family.

Sarah Jane Crabtree

ROLE CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER
COMPANY ARQIVA

UK communications infrastructure and media services company, Arqiva, has announced the appointment of Sarah Jane Crabtree as Chief People Officer.

Sarah Jane is appointed to the executive committee, reporting to CEO Shuja Khan, to lead on the company's people and culture agenda within its Vision 2031 strategic focus. Sarah joins Arqiva following 17 years at BT - most recently as HR Director BT Organisation Effectiveness - where she was responsible for setting the BT Group people strategy and policy. Before BT, she began her HR career in the Civil Service as HR consultant for the Cabinet Office and 10 Downing Street. Arqiva is a British telecommunications company which provides infrastructure, broadcast transmission and smart meter facilities in the United Kingdom.

FOR FURTHER UPDATES

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

NEWLY APPOINTED



NEXT MONTH

ISSUE 220

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

INTERVIEW

Tunde Toth, Group HR Director - Met Group.

ROUNDTABLE

What is the key to employee retention in shift-based, deskless workplace framework?

IMPACTFUL HR IN CRISIS

Newly-acquired kudos, the challenges ahead sees HR Pivoting, adapting, developing creative approaches, collaborating and partnering.

HYBRID/FLEX PROS & CONS

Muscle memory keeps inflexing and exposing old traits - presenteeism and burnout

THE GREAT WORK TRANSITION

Time to empower people to bridge the physical and digital worlds, and combat stress and exhaustion.

TACKLING ATTRITION

What is going wrong with this transition, that is failing to connect with employees?





DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS TRAINING

BE A TACKLER NOT A DODGER

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

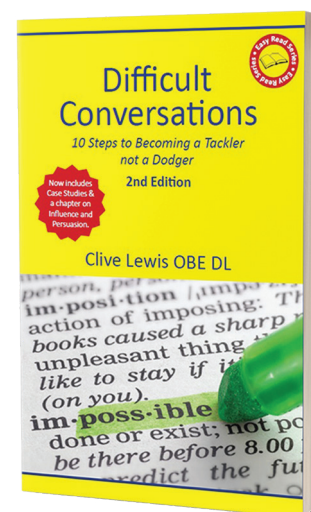
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