Making People Count: a workforce bulletin

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Compiled by John Gale JET Library – Mid-Cheshire NHS Foundation Trust
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Apprenticeship
Are apprentices dressing for success?
Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: The Institute of Student Employers has been asking employers how they’ve found apprentices, graduates and postgraduates. Employers were four times more likely to worry about how their apprentices dressed for work than they were about the sartorial choices of graduates. Employers were also twice as likely to report that apprentices lacked presentation, analysis, IT, writing, problem-solving and interpersonal skills. However more than 56% of employers are now developing apprenticeship roles where they would previously have hired graduates, finding that there is little difference in the two groups when it comes to resilience, leadership and dealing with conflict.

You can read the whole of this article here.

Should work experience be made compulsory?
Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Our attitudes to children are hopelessly confused. On the one hand they are delicate flowers who need to be shielded from the evils of alcohol, tobacco and people with no clothes on while on the other they should be allowed to vote as soon as they become 16. Tending towards the latter point of view is the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) which would like to see work-experience being made compulsory for all 14-16 year-olds. The FSB argues that the current policy of non-compulsion makes it harder for students to get their first taste of working and for small firms to engage with schools and communities. More than 40% of small firms already offer work experience either as part of the recruitment process or through their community outreach and smaller firms are more likely to hire people from ‘harder to reach,’ backgrounds.

You can read the whole of this article here.

Continuing Professional Development
Two nations – the young and the old?
Source: Personnel Today
In a nutshell: The young and the old haven’t always seen eye to eye. The former regard the latter as dodderly old reactionaries standing in the way of progress while the latter regard the former as soap-dodging lunatics leading the world to hell in a handcart and playing some pretty dreadful music while they do so. Attempting to bridge the gap is the House of Lords Committee on Intergenerational Fairness and Provision who have published a report addressing generational issues. Among other things the report argues that the Government needs to rethink its approach to lifelong learning and ensure that it educates younger people for longer working lives. Tackling Intergenerational Unfairness argues that too many young people do not acquire the right skills to start with and then are not able to access the training they need to stay employable in a changing workplace. The report also claims that the apprenticeship system is ‘confused,’ and does not adequately serve either young people or apprentices choosing to retrain in later life. The report says the National Retraining Scheme, announced as part of its industrial strategy is inadequate and should be extended and scaled up to prepare for the challenges of an ageing workforce and technological development. The report also notes how insecure employment conditions such as zero-hours contracts or ‘atypical employment status,’ tend to be concentrated disproportionately at the younger end of the employment spectrum.

You can read the whole of this article here.

Learning and Development

Artificial intelligence – the revolution won’t be happening today

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Artificial intelligence (AI) in learning and development (L&D) covers everything from C3PO delivering fire-safety training to those emails you get reminding you it’s time for your annual life-affirming dose of information governance. However, according to new research by Knowledgepool the effects of AI haven’t really been felt that much yet. They found that only 20% of “learning leaders,” had experienced the expected return on investment from the new technology. This lack of impact was caused by a shortfall of skills among learners and HR departments and cultural resistance to change among learners and L&D professionals. However 78% of organisations expected to use AI to create customised learning programmes in the next two years and 75% planned to use AI to provide personal learning recommendations. 55% of learners said they would prefer their learning to consist mostly of human contact. 44% felt that workers could suffer from learning fatigue because of the excessive use of technology in learning and 36% felt that it could distract employees from their work.

You can read the whole of this article here.
People Management

Can we talk?

Source: slate.com

In a nutshell: ‘We need to have a talk,’ are words guaranteed to send a chill down any husband or employee’s spine. For a husband they might portend at best DIY at worse a decree nisi while for employees they signify at best a shellacking and at worse a P45. In this article Alison Green discusses the fear that a cosy chat with a manager entails. People instantly assume they must be in trouble – surprising given that regular interaction between a manager and employee is designed to be a normal feature of working life. However, this is less surprising when one thinks how many terrible managers there are; ones who only meet people when something goes wrong and who are relentlessly negative. Much of the time it can stem from people’s previous experiences at work. Managers can get round this by specifying what it is they want to talk about when they invite people for a cosy chat and – perhaps more importantly – set up regular one-to-ones so that a discussion is seen as a normal part of office life. When this isn’t possible managers should broach the topic of the discussion as early as possible so that people don’t sit their fearing the worst. From an employee’s point of view it makes sense to think about how your boss has behaved previously; if they haven’t sprung a dressing-down on you before it’s unlikely they’ll be waiting behind the door for you with a bottle of scotch and a P45 now.

You can read the whole of this article here.

How Morecambe Bay turned things round

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Morecambe Bay NHS Trust hit the headlines for the wrong reasons in 2013 following a number of tragic deaths in its maternity unit. An investigation uncovered a “lethal mix,” of failings in its maternity unit, resulting in the deaths of 16 babies and three mothers over the course of a decade. The Care Quality Commission identified a “shared helplessness,” among staff, a lack of team-working and an absence of effective management and trust in leadership. The NHS staff survey found the Trust was in the bottom 20% nationally in areas including staff motivation, the ability of staff to contribute to changes at work and the percentage of staff reporting good
communication between senior managers and frontline workers. In 2013 a new leadership team was recruited and asked to improve staff engagement and culture. The Trust used a Listening into Action framework to enable staff themselves to tackle the issues they knew would make a difference to their colleagues and patients. A behavioural-standards framework – developed by staff, for staff and in their own words – was displayed prominently across the Trust’s hospitals and community-care centres to remind employees about the kinds of behaviour they should and should not demonstrate at work and the Trust also began to use social media to promote the messages it wanted to get across to staff. And the Trust also promoted the importance of taking breaks, mindfulness, physical exercise, hydration and nutrition through its Flourish at Work scheme. The Trust’s CQC rating has improved to Good and has had an “above average,” rating in most of the measures in the latest NHS staff survey.

You can read the whole of this article here.

Closing the skills gap
Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: The skills gap is the difference between the skills an organisation actually needs and those available to it. Consultant Korn Ferry have been surveying 70 companies to find out how they are addressing the skills gap and they’ve published the results in A New Deal for the Future of Work. Fluid work practices, flexibility and agile reward schemes are among the approaches adopted. The study identified three key areas in which the businesses were developing a ‘new deal,’ that worked for both them and their workers. Digital transformation was tackled by using technology to create “more varied and meaningful work,” creating specific teams to tackle particular issues then disbanding them afterwards giving employees greater flexibility in the way they work. The second theme was firms’ responses to the dwindling numbers of skilled workers. This had led to businesses moving from permanent workforce structures to more fluid models which allowed them to access specific skills and resources on demand. And finally the study revealed how organisations were modernising their employee offering, redefining base pay and incentives and personalising how they were linked to performance management. Benefits were being made more portable, so they aligned with the growing fluidity of today’s ‘career journeys.’

You can read the whole of this article here.
Could working less improve productivity?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Leaving early or taking a longer lunch break are now regarded as irredeemable backsliding despite the fact that most people ostensibly busy in front of their PCs are actually watching dogs roller skate into swimming pools on YouTube or calling one another Nazis or Stalinists as they debate the finer point of Brexit on Twitter. But could working fewer hours actually be good for productivity? British people work on average two-and-a-half weeks longer than their EU counterparts over the course of a year but the UK’s productivity lags a long way behind many European countries. UK full-time workers work an average of 42 hours a week but the Danes, who work an average of 38 hours are 23.5% more productive and the Irish (who work 39 and a bit hours) are 62.7% more productive. The New Economics Foundation and the TUC have both been campaigning for shorter working weeks – apart from the concerns about stress and burnout this also makes many more jobs ‘doable,’ by those with caring and/or parental responsibilities. Companies that have moved to a shorter working week or day report staff feel less stressed and more energised and focus more on their work while they are there cutting down on procrastination and social-media usage among other things.

You can read the whole of this article [here](#).

Could I have your attention please?

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** In *The Circle* by Dave Eggers the main character – who works in a Google-style company – has five separate computer screens so she can keep up with everything she is supposed to be on top of. Many people find there are lots of calls on their attention at work – not all of them necessarily linked to their job. So how can people avoid becoming distracted? In this article Scott McArthur – a speaker and consultant on transformation, mindfulness and the digital age – offers a few tips. Businesses should educate people about their own self-awareness and ability to concentrate and great leaders should be able to say to themselves ‘what am I going to focus on?’ and then do it. Managers and workers should consider whether what they are doing is ‘time well spent,’ and organisations should follow Marie Kondo’s lead and start to de-clutter themselves.

You can read the whole of this thought-provoking article [here](#).
The Sound of Silence
Source: change-effect.com

In a nutshell: It often seems that the capacity to not tire easily of the sound of one's own voice is a necessary – perhaps even sufficient – precondition for advancement. In this post Neil Thompson argues that many leaders spend far too much time talking. In most meetings it's the most senior person who does most of the talking but to give employees power and build sustainable, resilient teams one of the first steps is to hold back the amount leaders needlessly contribute and give other people a chance to get a word in edgeways. Neil Thompson argues that leaders should ask themselves:

Has someone specifically asked for my view?
Do I have information that I know will help people move forward?
Do I have experience that I know no-one else in the room has?
Would something dangerous/illegal/costly happen if I didn't speak?
Am I offering something that I don't mind being ignored?

If the answer isn't yes to one of these questions it might be a good idea to keep shtum and let other people have their voices heard.

You can read the whole of this article here.

Artificial intelligence – what does it mean for flesh-and-blood workers?
Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: ‘Man is a spirit/This the poor flesh knows/Yet serves him well for host/When the wind blows/Why should this guest go/Wrinkling up his nose?’ wrote Stevie Smith about man’s flesh-and-blood nature. Those of us of an organic disposition sometimes worry about what will happen when robots arrive in the workplace but what’s the real state of play? The CIPD and PA Consulting have been trying to find out and have just published a report People and Machines: from hype to reality. The report found that just under a third of UK organisations had already invested in artificial intelligence (AI) and automation over the last five years. However, more employers had seen jobs created (35%) than destroyed (25%) in the process. In a smaller case study of two employers 28% of employees felt that AI helped them to do their job better but 54% said it hadn't; in these two companies 43% of workers felt they were learning new things and 33% said they were doing more interesting tasks. The numbers of employees in the two companies who felt the mental demands of
their job had increased or decreased were roughly similar (28% vs 25%) and the numbers saying their workload had increased or decreased were also roughly in balance (24% vs 23%). 45% said it had made their work faster while 6% said it had actually slowed things down.

You can read the whole of this article here.

Recruitment

Attracting good people in a sellers’ market

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Despite gloomy predictions in some quarters that 2019 would see everyone hitting each other with pickaxes in a desperate attempt to secure the last tin of mushy peas in the country Britain’s job market – for the moment at least – remains buoyant. Getting hold of the right people can be a struggle and in this article Matt Weston – the managing director of Robert Half UK – gives a few tips. Robert Half’s research showed that 38% of UK organisations consider ‘digitalisation,’ to be the main ‘evolving force,’ in the workplace today. However 53% of chief executives were worried that the workforce didn’t have the skills needed to cope. One obvious way of attracting new talent is to pay people more but this isn’t always an option for every organisation, particularly in the public sector. Employers need to sell themselves just as much as candidates do so it’s important that they articulate what sets their business and job offering apart. Career progression, flexibility, training and development, and non-financial benefits all play a bigger role than ever before in candidate’s decisions to accept a job offer. Employees feel most valued when they have an opportunity for professional growth and are provided with tailored training opportunities, which are aligned with their roles and career goals. While external training courses can develop technical skills alternatives such as a mentorship scheme, role rotation or simply allowing people to work on a project they’re passionate about can all have a positive impact on people’s development.

You can read the whole of this article here.

More disabled people enter the workplace

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: There are 7.6 million people of working age with a disability in the UK. Not all of them are capable of working but there are 930,000 more of them in work today than in 2013 – meaning since then an average of 500 people with a disability
have found work every day. The employment rate for people with disabilities increased by 7.4% over the same period, up from 44% to 51%. From April this year disabled people can receive nearly £60,000 a year through the Access to Work scheme to help pay for workplace adjustments – an increase of 40% in just two years. And 11,000 employers have signed up for the Disability Confident scheme which aims to create more job opportunities for disabled people and gives employers expert advice about how to recruit them.

You can read the whole of this story here.

Wellbeing
More evidence on dangers of shift work

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Working shifts has long been linked to worse health and a new study by researchers from the Huazhong University of Science and Technology had found that it can raise people’s chances of developing coronary artery disease. Shift workers were found to be at a 13% greater risk of developing coronary artery disease with the risk increasing by 0.9% with every year spent working shifts. Shift workers were also more likely to smoke, eat a poor diet and take less exercise. The researchers analysed 21 studies involving 302,000 people, of whom 19,782 had coronary artery disease.

You can read the whole of this article here.

A tenth of women experience ‘unmanageable,’ stress

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Feminism is great, particularly if you can get a good nanny. Not everyone is in this fortunate position though and when health benefits provider Cigna carried out a survey of how women were getting on balancing work and home they found many of them were feeling the strain. 79% of women said they felt stressed both at home and work, compared to 66% of men. Heavy workloads triggered stress for 17% of working women in the UK, followed by personal health (13%) and financial concerns (13%). Three-quarters of working women did not feel positive about their finances and 46% did not consider their salary to be satisfactory. Only 27% of women said they ate a balanced diet and only 28% said they exercised regularly. 80% of women said they did not get enough sleep, compared to 65% of men.
You can read the whole of this article here.

**Stressed women more at risk of diabetes**
**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** ‘Nobody ever died from hard work, but why take the chance?’ goes the old joke, attributed to the late President Reagan, among others. However, new French research suggests that hard work can, at the very least, be bad for your health. Researchers from the Centre for Research in Epidemiology and Population Health at Inserm followed 73,517 women, mainly teachers, for 22 years at the end of which 4,187 of them had been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. Those women who described their work as ‘very mentally tiring,’ were 21% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes and there was also a correlation between mentally-tiring work and body-mass index. A separate study following people over fourteen years found that men with diabetes, heart disease, or who had previously suffered a stroke were 68% more likely to die over the course of the study if they had a demanding job.

You can read the whole of this article here.

**Bullying rife among doctors**
**Source:** BBC

**In a nutshell:** Two female doctors and the GMC have spoken out about the culture of bullying and sexism in certain parts of the medical profession. Dr Zoe Norris, and Dr Katie Bramall-Stainer described how women doctors had been belittled and sexually harassed at British Medical Association events and the GMC has found evidence of bullying and rudeness among senior NHS doctors. An independent review is being held into NHS Highland after senior doctors raised concerns about a ‘long-standing bullying culture,’ while an investigation by the Care Quality Commission found that feuding surgeons at the cardiac unit at St George’s Hospital worked in a culture of hostility, tribalism and mistrust. The GMC is now rolling out a training programme to raise awareness of the problem and encourage better behaviour.

You can read the whole of this story here.
The workers getting burnt by hot-desking  
**Source:** Personnel Today  

**In a nutshell:** Most people like to make their space their own at work with photos of their children, postcards from friends' holidays and cartoons or motivational quotes. Those who hot desk are afforded no such 'luxuries,' though and end up either having to arrive at four in the morning to secure their preferred place or working on a laptop in the store cupboard surrounded by miniature milk cartons and toilet paper. **Brickendon** consulting asked 1,001 people about their experience of hot-desking and found that 80% of them said it was having a negative effect on their mental wellbeing. 22% said it made getting to know colleagues difficult and a quarter of women said it created problems in forming relationships with their team. 44% said that having to set up their computer every day was a waste of time, while 31% said they wasted time trying to find an available desk. 92% of workers said they had issues with hot-desking but just over half (52%) said they were open to it.  

You can read the whole of this article [here](#).  

Baby Boomers least likely to open up  
**Source:** Personnel Today  

**In a nutshell:** Despite at least some of them letting it all hang out at Woodstock and the Isle of Wight (or in my mother and father’s case going to teacher-training college and running a church youth club) Baby Boomers are reluctant to talk about, or seek help for, their mental-health problems. A study of 2,100 adults by Bupa UK found that despite two-thirds of over-55s experiencing symptoms of mental ill-health workers waited an average of 54 days before seeking advice – longer than any other age group. A fifth of them felt it was inappropriate to discuss mental-health concerns at work and only one in 10 confided in a colleague or manager about their symptoms. Less than one in three felt they had the knowledge to confidently recognise conditions like depression and anxiety while a quarter of older workers felt symptoms like low mood and helplessness didn’t indicate anything serious.  

You can read the whole of this article [here](#).  

... and doctors aren’t much better  
**Source:** British Medical Journal  

**In a nutshell:** The doctors’ trade union – the British Medical Association – has found that 80% of doctors are at a high, or very high, risk of burnout with junior doctors
being most at risk. At the same time researchers from Swansea University have been speaking to 10 doctors in training from a range of specialties about whether being a doctor had affected how they accessed support for their mental-health problems. The researchers found that the view that “mental illness is equal to weakness,” was still common among doctors and that some continued to work even when their illness affected their ability to do their job. The researchers made a number of suggestions including:

- NHS employers including information about the prevalence of illness among doctors at induction sessions
- Board members and senior managers creating cultures that encourage doctors to seek help
- Managers learning how to support junior colleagues who may be experiencing mental illness

If you have access to the British Medical Journal you can read this article here.

Mental-health support still coming up short

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Despite great strides being made recently there is still a long way to go in terms of supporting employees with their mental-health problems, even if they are prepared to admit to them (see above). The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health and Management Today have been asking 400 employees and managers all about it. They found that six in 10 managers thought they were not being given enough help from their organisation to support the mental wellbeing of their staff. Only 31% thought that they had been sufficiently trained to recognise the signs of mental ill health and 57% said that their organisation offered no mental health and wellbeing training or support for managers. 80% of employees feared colleagues’ negative perceptions or being seen as incapable in their role if they drew attention to mental-health worries and 30% worried that speaking out would lead to them being treated differently.

You can read the whole of this article here.

What’s the state of play in wellbeing?

Source: Personnel Today
**In a nutshell:** Simplyhealth [sic] and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) have been asking over a thousand organisations in the UK, which between them employ 3.2 million people, what’s going on in wellbeing in their organisation. Two-fifths had a stand-alone wellbeing strategy in place, half agreed that line managers had bought into the importance of wellbeing and 61% agreed that employee wellbeing was on senior leaders’ agendas. However, one in six organisations were still not doing anything to improve employee wellbeing. Incidences of mental-health problems were on the rise with three-fifths of organisations reporting increases in the number of conditions like depression and anxiety and two-fifths of organisations reporting an increase in stress-related absences. 86% of organisations were doing something to manage mental health – one in 10 had a stand-alone policy whilst a third incorporated mental health into another policy. Specific initiatives included: increasing awareness in the organisation; providing access to an employee assistance programme or a counselling service and training for managers. The average level of absence was at its lowest since recording started at 5.9 days per employee per year, down from 6.6 days in 2018. Absence in the public sector was higher at 8.4 days but this was still down on the previous year. However, 83% of organisations had observed presenteeism over the last year and a quarter said that this had increased. Three-quarters of organisations reported seeing benefits from their health and wellbeing activity over the last year; 52% had seen better employee morale and engagement and 40% had seen a healthier and more inclusive culture.

You can read the whole of this article [here](#) and download the Simplyhealth/CIPD report [here](#).

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**No touch please, we're British**

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** *Bien pensants* like to sneer at the C19th for its prudery despite themselves displaying levels of priggishness and sanctimony – albeit about different things - that would make the average Victorian spinster look like one of the more raddled inhabitants of Amsterdam’s red-light district on a massive bender. Market research company Opinium, on behalf of Totaljobs [sic], have been asking 2,002 workers aged between 18 and 65 their views on physical contact in the workplace. They found that three-quarters of people wanted the amount of physical contact they experienced in the workplace reduced. 27% wanted to put a stop to workplace kisses, while 15% wished hugs were a thing of the past. 45% of workers in their 40s and 50s preferred handshakes, but 41% of those in their 20s favoured no physical contact at all.
when greeting colleagues and clients. A quarter of respondents said they had avoided a colleague or client due to their choice of greeting and one in three said that they experienced an awkward greeting at work at least once a month. And half of women preferred no physical interaction when it comes to greeting colleagues of either sex. Two-thirds of those surveyed thought workplaces should have clear guidelines on what is considered an appropriate greeting at work to avoid causing offence.

You can read the whole of this article here