Making People Count: a workforce bulletin

May 2019

Compiled by John Gale JET Library – Mid-Cheshire NHS Foundation Trust

Commissioned by Health Education England
Contents

Making People Count: a workforce bulletin ................................................................. 1
Apprenticeship .............................................................................................................. 3
  Public Accounts Committee puts the boot in ........................................................... 3
People Management .................................................................................................. 3
  Helping managers be more evidence-based .............................................................. 3
  Performance appraisal – another nail in the coffin? ................................................ 4
  Power, motivation and control .................................................................................. 4
  Motivation and the public sector .............................................................................. 5
  Job crafting – making square pegs for square holes .................................................. 5
  What keeps black sheep plugging away? ................................................................. 5
  Has talent passed its sell-buy date? .......................................................................... 6
  Why being interested in work is not always a good idea ........................................... 6
  ... and how to spot people who aren’t .................................................................... 7
  Crystal balls in Boston .............................................................................................. 7
  When it’s not just your boss who motivates you ...................................................... 8
  Is the gene genie out of the bottle for HR? ............................................................. 8
  Insecurity and motivation ....................................................................................... 9
Recruitment .................................................................................................................. 9
  Where do we get our nurses from? ......................................................................... 9
  Job market still tight ............................................................................................... 10
  Job descriptions: click on, plough through and drop off ......................................... 10
  Older workers confident of ploughing on ............................................................... 11
Wellbeing ..................................................................................................................... 12
  How employers can care for carers ....................................................................... 12
  Supporting mothers’ mental health ......................................................................... 12
  The darker side of AI ............................................................................................. 13
  People still reluctant to talk about mental health ..................................................... 14
  ... and managers lack the tools to support them .................................................... 14
  When bullseyes become bullying .......................................................................... 14
Apprenticeship
Public Accounts Committee puts the boot in
Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: The Government’s apprenticeship policy is a bit like Jeremy Kyle or Piers Morgan; those wanting to give it a good kicking need to form an orderly queue with no biting, gouging or kicking. Next in line is the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee who have produced a report on the apprenticeship programme. The report is strongly critical claiming that the programme’s focus on higher-level placements and levy-paying employers means that small employers and disadvantaged areas miss out on its potential benefits. The Committee also noted that some employers were using apprenticeships funds to pay for professional training or management courses they would otherwise have paid for themselves. The MPs made several recommendations including:

- The Department of Education should publish the level of improvement in the skills index that it is aiming to achieve in the short and long term
- The Department should assess whether there are enough level 2 standards to allow school leavers or those with fewer skills to easily access apprenticeships
- The Department should set out how it will ensure that smaller employers can benefit fully from the programme

You can read the whole of this article here.

People Management
Helping managers be more evidence-based
Source: BMC Health Services Research

In a nutshell: Managers in health and social care are supposed – in theory, at any rate – to base their decisions on evidence rather than gut instinct or what they’re doing at the hospital down the road. Not all of them have had training in how to do this though and in this article Rebecca Mosson, from the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, led a team of researchers investigating the effect of a Building Implementation Capacity (BIC) intervention that targets teams of professionals, including their managers. The intervention was delivered in five workshops, using a systematic implementation method with exercises and practical working materials. Practical experiences were combined with theoretical knowledge, social interactions, reflections, and peer support. Overall, the people who took part in the study were satisfied with the programme and all groups increased their self-related implementation knowledge.
Most participants applied what they had learned by “enacting new implementation behaviours.” However, they only partially applied the implementation method, as they did not use the planned systematic approach. “A few changes in organisational results occurred.”

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

**Performance appraisal – another nail in the coffin?**

**Source:** Public Personnel Management

**In a nutshell:** Performance appraisals have had a lot of bad press lately – rather like Theresa May we know they’ll (probably) go eventually but they seem to be resistant to being scrapped completely. In this study Lin Yu-Chun and Edward J. Kellough, both from the University of Georgia in the US, used data from the Merit Systems Protection Board’s Merit Principles Survey which contained a section asking supervisors to evaluate nine potential problems associated with performance appraisal. The supervisors’ responses indicated that inflated ratings, flawed standards, and a lack of support were the most problematic parts of the appraisal process. Organisations’ use of performance-based rewards, a supervisor’s belief that his or her own performance is assessed objectively and supervisor age were all consistent predictors of supervisors’ perceptions.

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

**Power, motivation and control**

**Source:** Journal of Managerial Psychology

**In a nutshell:** Giving people power and control over their working lives can – according to one’s views of human nature – mean liberated workers coming up with all sorts of new and creative ideas or everyone hanging their coats up at ten, then disappearing for brunch followed by a long pub lunch. Yi Li, from Shanghai University, led a team of researchers looking into this conundrum in a study of 209 people working in research and development (R&D). The researchers found that psychological empowerment was positively related to R&D employees’ task, contextual and innovation performance. The relationship between psychological empowerment and contextual and innovation performance was moderated by locus of control (whether people felt they had control of things themselves or whether they felt themselves subject to external forces). People’s own work motivation partially mediated the relationship between psychological empowerment and work performance.
You can read the abstract of this article here.

**Motivation and the public sector**  
**Source:** Public Administration Review  

**In a nutshell:** Getting the public sector to innovate can be a bit like getting rhinoceroses to run. You can do it but there’s a lot of prodding, fear and unpredictability involved. In this study Qing Miao, from Zhejiang University in China, led a team of researchers investigating the links between leadership, public-service motivation and innovative behaviour. The researchers studied 281 Chinese civil servants and 59 of their departmental heads. The researchers found that entrepreneurial leadership positively influenced subordinates’ entrepreneurial behaviour by enhancing two dimensions of psychological empowerment – meaning and impact. Public-service motivation was also found to influence subordinates’ behaviour by enhancing meaning and competence among workers.

You can read the abstract of this article here.

**Job crafting – making square pegs for square holes**  
**Source:** Group & Organization Management  

**In a nutshell:** Many times in life employees find themselves being square pegs in round holes. The traditional management approach to this has been to keep bashing away at them until they’re wedged in, however much work the bashing takes and however much damage is done to the peg, and the hole, in the process. Job crafting takes a different approach and allows managers and workers to modify jobs to fit more snugly with the talents and preferences of employees. In this study Luu Trong Tuan, from Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, looked into HR flexibility and job crafting. Luu Trong Tuan found that there were positive links between HR flexibility and individual, as well as collective, job crafting through the mediating mechanism of knowledge sharing. HR flexibility also demonstrated the interaction effect with public-service motivation in predicting knowledge sharing among public employees.

You can read the whole of this article here.

**What keeps black sheep plugging away?**  
**Source:** The Journal of Social Psychology
In a nutshell: Whether it’s personal hygiene, political views or an unfortunate incident at the office party three years ago many workplaces have a black sheep. These people still have mortgages to pay and bills to settle so what keeps them going in the face of being ostracised? In this study Robert Steinbauer, from Brock University in Canada, led a team of researchers examining this issue. They found that ostracised employees who were more intrinsically motivated used self-leadership strategies to a greater degree to improve their job performance than their counterparts who were not intrinsically motivated.

You can read the abstract of this article here.

Has talent passed its sell-buy date?
Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Talent management is the idea that organisations can identify their most able people and develop their abilities for the future. In this article Harriet Heneghan asks whether this is the right way forward. Obviously some people are still better at some things than others but should businesses really focus on the top 10-20% at the expense of everyone else? Today’s workplaces are changing all the time so the qualities organisations look for today might not be relevant in the future. ‘Talent,’ can become too rigid and formulaic a concept as it can be many different things to many different people depending on their sector, their maturity and their individual ethos. At the same time people are tending to spend shorter lengths of time in each workplace so the idea that the same cohort of people can be groomed from their first day in the office to the CEO’s desk doesn’t always work out in practice. Looking at the core qualities of IQ, adaptability and conscientiousness can be just as useful as elaborate talent models and by concentrating on high achievers organisations can miss out on the opportunity to help everyone else do the best job they can.

You can read the whole of this article here.

Why being interested in work is not always a good idea
Source: Academy of Management Journal

In a nutshell: Different jobs have different elements some of which can be more interesting than others. Most people consider being interested in at least part of one’s work a good idea but is there a risk that, having done something fascinating, everything else suffers by comparison? In this study Jihae Shin, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, led a team of researchers investigating this issue. The researchers studied workers in a Korean department
store and found that those with the highest intrinsic motivation in one task had lower average and minimum performance across their other tasks as well as more variable performance. In a laboratory experiment in the US working on a highly-motivating initial task led participants to perform worse in a subsequent task if it was uninteresting but not if it was as interesting as the initial one. This effect was mediated by boredom, but not by a range of other psychological processes.

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

... and how to spot people who aren’t

**Source:** thebenefitsguide.com

**In a nutshell:** Employers spend a lot of time making sure that their workforce is sufficiently engaged but in this article Suzanne Lucas argues that it’s just as important to be able to recognise and tackle disengaged employees. Tell-tale signs include: low productivity, irresponsible behaviour such as forgetting deadlines or sloppy work; or a change in temperament, when a previously happy and productive employee becomes sullen and isolated. Causes of disengagement can include having too heavy a workload and feeling burnt out. Conversely work being too easy can also lead to employees becoming disengaged as they become bored, feel the need for a challenge and want more growth and development; this can be tackled by spicing up their job and giving them some new projects and responsibilities. Employees might also be having problems outside work such as illnesses and/or family problems. You can put them in touch with employee assistance programmes; rather than losing someone you might find, when their problems are solved you get a good employee back. And employees can also feel they are in a psychologically-unsafe working environment where they are being bullied or harassed. If this is the case managers need to identify and end the behaviour that is making the disengaged employee feel this way.

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

**Crystal balls in Boston**

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** If there’s one industry new technology has created jobs in it’s management consultants rubbing at their crystal balls, so to speak, and attempting to forecast the future of work. The latest ones to have a go are Harvard Business School and Boston Consulting who have been surveying 11,000 workers in 11 countries. More than half (52%) were happy with their current work situation. Workers in Sweden were happiest with 66% saying they were satisfied with their work, followed by those
in the US at 64%. In the UK almost a quarter of workers felt ‘very happy,’ with their current situation and 37% were ‘happy.’ 46% of workers said they felt a personal responsibility for adapting to changes in the workplace although only 23% of French workers did so. Workers in the UK did not feel urgency about getting ready for the future (only the Japanese were more apathetic/laid back) and – relative to other countries did not feel confident in doing so. And 45% of workers felt that changes in the workplace would result in higher wages.

You can read the whole of this article here.

When it’s not just your boss who motivates you  
**Source:** Applied Psychology

**In a nutshell:** Bosses have a number of different tools for motivating people ranging from inspiring enthusiasm to inflicting terror and much has been written about the best ways of doing so. Rather less has been published about how colleagues motivate one another and in this article Tomas Jungert, from Lund University in Sweden, led a team of researchers looking into an intervention designed to help people at the same level in an organisation do just that. The training was aimed at helping people support each other’s basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness so they could increase each other’s need satisfaction and autonomous motivation. 146 people in 26 teams took part in the study which found that the training led to an increase in need satisfaction and autonomous motivation.

You can read the whole of this article here.

Is the gene genie out of the bottle for HR?  
**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Human ingenuity is alive and well in the 21st century with no opportunity spurned to make life more appalling. Next in line to turn the world into a bad science-fiction film are the Chinese government and a company called BrainCompass. Last year China’s Ministry of Science and Technology revealed that athletes aiming to represent the country at the 2022 Winter Olympics would undergo genetic testing as part of the official selection process. And elsewhere a number of companies – including BrainCompass – are offering to assess employee’s DNA (with their consent) in an attempt to give employers an idea of what talents (or lack thereof) are at their disposal. BrainCompass also runs tests for attachment styles, personality
assessment and professional mindset. However legal and assessment experts have raised concerns about the reliability of DNA to predict someone’s potential, consent and privacy issues around gathering data, and the ethical issues if an employer decides to use these insights to make decisions about someone’s career progression, future role or salary. Providers emphasise that the tools should only be used by a consenting employee for their personal-development purposes and are not about hiring or selection. But could a DNA swab replace ‘tell me about a time when you embodied nurturing values?’ as part of the selection process?

You can read the whole of this article here.

Insecurity and motivation
Source: International journal of environmental research and public health

In a nutshell: There are two schools of thought about job insecurity. One is that fear of losing one’s job can be a powerful motivating factor the other is that no one is going to work hard for an organisation which might fire them the day after. Yuhyung Shin, from Hanyang University in Korea, looked into this conundrum in a study of 152 research-and-development professionals employed in a South Korean manufacturing company. The researchers found that job insecurity led to a reduction in internal motivation which, in turn, undermined job performance, organisational citizenship and “change-oriented organisational citizenship behaviour.”

You can read the abstract of this article here.

Recruitment
Where do we get our nurses from?
Source: BBC

In a nutshell: As fears grow that the UK will soon be surrounded by a moat filled with crocodiles with razor wire on the white cliffs of Dover and anyone who can’t sing the National Anthem shot on sight people are becoming worried about staff shortages in the NHS. One estimate claims that the NHS will need 5,000 extra nurses every year, three times the current figure it recruits annually. More than 12% of the NHS’s workforce is from overseas with people from the EU making up 5.6% of the workforce. However, the number of new staff coming from the EU is falling. In 2015-16 19% of the nurses who joined the NHS were from the EU whereas in 2017-2018 this had fallen to 7.9%. The biggest group of doctors from outside Europe come from India with smaller
numbers coming from Pakistan, Egypt and Nigeria. The biggest group of nurses from overseas comes from the Philippines and India, with smaller numbers coming from EU countries such as Ireland, Spain and Portugal. In March 2018, 2,720 non-EU nationals registered as nurses, this had risen to 6,157 by March 2019.

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

**Job market still tight**

*Source: Personnel Today*

**In a nutshell:** Despite dire warnings of mass unemployment following the Brexit vote/robot takeover/warmer weather there still seem to be more than enough jobs to go around even if quite a lot of them are unpleasant and don’t pay very well. This can create problems for employers and 43% of them are training their own staff to plug hard-to-fill vacancies rather than recruiting from outside their organisation. 41% say it has become more difficult to recruit in the past year. However, the lack of staff has failed to translate into significant wage growth with the latest *Market Outlook* from the CIPD/Adecco Group expecting median pay to grow by just 2% in the year to March 2020. The net employment balance – the percentage of firms expecting to take on staff minus the percentage expecting to lose them – rose to +22 with firms in business services (+39), construction (+36) and healthcare (+31) being most confident. 61% said that at least some of their vacancies were proving hard to fill while a third said it had become harder to keep staff in the last year. 53% had increased starting salaries for at least a minority of vacancies while 28% had thought about improving the pay and benefits package for most vacant positions to encourage applicants.

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

**Job descriptions: click on, plough through and drop off**

*Source: fistfuloftalent.com*

**In a nutshell:** Many organisations now have jazzy web sites designed to attract people to come and work for them. Yet when potential candidates get as far as actually reading a job description they often lose interest. In this post Rachel Bitte argues that job descriptions have failed to keep pace with changes elsewhere in recruitment and now stick out like a pork pie at a bar mitzvah. Most job advertisements are still dry, boring and lack any semblance of life or soul. They stack bullet point upon bullet point alongside frankly unrealistic visions of how much work experience people
should possess. Less than half of American workers believe that job descriptions reflect actual job responsibilities and bad adverts can often drive good candidates away. Instead job descriptions should be a fun, engaging place where candidates can evaluate your organisation and get excited about a potential career there. Employers need to hone job descriptions down to the real essentials and focus on why an organisation is a good place to work and how the role might be intriguing for them. Video job descriptions can be consumed faster, enjoyed more on the go and spared on social media. Interactive elements can also help, if only by putting off unsuitable candidates. But the most important thing is to say what you need to say and remain authentic and transparent. Workers who leave a job in the first 90 days are most likely to say they did so because the day-to-day role was not what they expected so employers need to be honest, without being boring or verbose.

You can read the whole of this article here.

Older workers confident of ploughing on

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: For some retirement conjures up blissful vistas of endless glasses of wine in the garden, days in the pub watching the Test match and reading the collected works of Dickens, Shakespeare and PG Wodehouse. Some people like work though and – according to a survey by Opinium – more of them are confident they’ll be able to keep at it for longer. Opinium surveyed 3,000 workers and found almost a third of them (31%) expected to continue working into their seventies, while one in 14 hoped they would be fit to work into their eighties. Men were confident they could work until 69 while women believed they would retire at 67. Confidence increased as employees got older with those over 55 expecting to work until they were 73, compared to those under 35 who thought they would work until they were 66. Workers in Northern Ireland were the most masochistic/dedicated expecting, on average, to work until they were 70 while staff in the South West expected to be enjoying Devon and Cornwall’s excellent beaches and lovely tea-shops by the time they were 66.

You can read the whole of this article here.
Wellbeing
How employers can care for carers
Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Many people combine paid work with looking after somebody as a carer – a disabled child, an ill spouse or a parent with dementia for example. Energy company Centrica have offered carers who work for them 10 days’ paid leave, followed by another 10 days that can be taken if matched with annual leave. Iain Conn, Centrica’s Chief Executive has written to more than 100 businesses asking them to enhance their carers’ leave policies to help retain the increasing number of ‘informal,’ carers who have to stop working to look after ill, disabled, or elderly workers. Centrica – along with Carers UK – have also called on the Government to introduced 5-10 days of mandatory paid leave, which it believes would help save employers £4.8bn a year in unplanned absence costs and a further £3.4bn in costs associated with replacing staff who are no longer able to work. Helen Walker, the Chief Executive of Carers UK added “more than 600 people give up work every day to care for a loved one, often taking with them skills and years of experience.”

You can read the whole of this article here.

Supporting mothers’ mental health
Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Returning to work after a spell looking after small children can re-introduce a number of pleasures into one’s life: drinking tea and coffee while they’re still hot; having uninterrupted conversations with an adult and being able to leave pens, scissors and documents lying around without people trying to draw on or eat them. However, coming back to work after maternity leave can be stressful for mothers and it’s important that employers are equipped to safeguard their mental health. A successful transition back to work should include:

Training. Employees should be offered training or coaching to support their return. This can include “keeping in touch,” days; updates to equipment or software or other changes to the business.

Communication. Make sure that employees are included in informal office communications. News and updates can reassure people that they are still a valued part of the team and help mitigate the shock factor of the first day back. However, employers should take their lead from the employee as to how much information they
wish to receive and whether they are happy to catch up on an informal basis while on maternity leave.

**Flexible working.** Employers should deal with such requests reasonably and in accordance with statutory flexible-working procedure.

Employers should also keep lines of communication open, challenge cultures that may be hostile to working mothers and give consideration as to whether the timing of meetings and training is sensitive to flexible working patterns and childcare commitments.

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

---

**The darker side of AI**  
**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** People’s views on AI differ according to their temperament. The optimistic have us all sitting around in our back gardens while robots do all the work, the pessimists think we’ll all be enslaved by machines that have come to regard us as inferior and the cynical remember two people shouting ‘I can see you but I can’t hear you,’ as they try and Skype each other from neighbouring offices. ACAS and IPA have been looking into the future themselves and have published their conclusions in a new report *New technology and the world of work: the winners and the losers*. They concluded that technology can increase stress through work intensification and social isolation. Some people are natural ‘integrators,’ and see the blurring of work and home life as a positive thing while others are ‘segmenters,’ who feel anxious without a clear line between the two. Much of the working population will become stressed by smartphone fatigue, working too many hours and never getting to the bottom of their email inbox. Nurses in the organisations’ research were given iPads to allow them to receive their daily schedules and complete patient documentation. The nurses welcomed the reduced paperwork and more time with patients, but were worried they’d have less time with colleagues for information sharing and peer support, and that their work and home life would become indistinguishable. There can also be issues with employer monitoring and surveillance of their staff. And enough time needs to be set aside for consultation and supporting people to retrain and reskill.

You can read the whole of this article [here](#).
People still reluctant to talk about mental health

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Mental Health Awareness Week took place in May and a number of reports were released, or at least dug out of filing cabinets, to mark the occasion. Mental Health First Aid England (MHFA) and the Bauer Media Group surveyed 2,000 workers as part of their *Where’s your head at?* mental-health awareness campaign. Only 14% of those polled said they felt comfortable discussing their mental-health worries at work, compared to 42% of workers who felt able to talk about physical health problems. Only around a tenth of staff said they would feel comfortable having a conversation about serious mental-health conditions such as psychosis, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or self-harm compared to 40% who said they would feel comfortable talking about cancer. MHFA and the Bauer Media Group are urging people to sign up to a [workplace manifesto](#) which asks organisations to treat mental and physical health equally.

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

... and managers lack the tools to support them

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Also asking people about mental health were the Institution of Safety and Health (IOSH) who surveyed 400 employees. They found that six in 10 line managers thought they did not get enough help from their organisation to support the mental wellbeing of their staff. 80% of workers said they would not discuss mental ill-health with their manager, because they were worried they would be judged as incapable whilst less than a third (31%) of managers had been sufficiently trained to recognise the signs of mental ill health in their staff. 22% said they rarely discussed mental health with their direct employees, while 11% said they never discussed their staff’s mental health. A quarter of workers said they would rather discuss their mental wellbeing with a colleague than a manager.

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

When bullseyes become bullying

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** Setting Lionel Messi a target of getting 30 goals for Barcelona a season might be considered reasonable enough whereas setting Anne Widdicombe the same...
objective might be thought a little on the over-optimistic side. But when does setting someone unrealistic targets turn into bullying? The setting of unreasonable and unrealistic targets can also be construed as bullying and harassment as it is not the intention of the manager but the deed itself and the impact this behaviour has on the employee which constitutes bullying or harassment. Employees who feel pressurised can later claim constructive unfair dismissal while if an organisation sacks someone for failing to achieve targets they can also be sued for unfair dismissal. Unrealistic workloads can also lead employees to sue employers for damages if they suffer psychological distress trying to meet them and it’s estimated that bullying cost employers more than £2bn a year in sick pay, staff turnover and lower productivity. Targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and flexible.

You can read the whole of this article here.