Making People Count : a workforce bulletin

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Apprenticeships
Why a degree-level apprenticeship could pay off
Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: After the controversies over the Government’s apprenticeship levy there is finally some good news for apprentices. Incomes Data Research have just published it Graduate and Apprentice Pay report for 2019 and the average starting wage for degree apprenticeships has increased by 12% over the past year, from £16,000 to £17,875. Meanwhile the average starting salary for a graduate increased by only 1.25%, from £27,654 to £28,000. Some employers are starting to hire degree-level apprentices instead of traditional university graduates; three-quarters of employers had increase their intake of degree-level apprentices, while only a third had taken on more graduates. First-year apprentices, working at an intermediate or advanced level earn around £6.65 an hour, compared to the minimum wage for this kind of work of £3.90. Higher-level apprentices earn an average of £8.44 an hour while degree-level apprentices earn £9.14.

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

People Management
When saying thank you can be a minefield
Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Buying people a drink, a box of chocolates or, in exceptional circumstances, a watch used to be considered a good way of rewarding good performance or conduct. Things have moved on a bit since then though and many companies now have tipping apps. Workers are given budgets to spend on treats for their colleagues and can use them to buy goodies for those who they consider have done a great job. However, optimistic thoughts of workers skipping off into the sunset with a warm glow and a family-sized packet of Maltesers have run into the buffers of human nature, as so many schemes like this do and in this article Marc Long examines some of the pitfalls. While most staff can operate the scheme quite happily for some it risks turning into a popularity contest where certain people nominate their friends rather than people who have actually done their job well. This can create resentment and a build-up of resentment among staff. People can feel pressurised into ingratiating themselves with ‘in groups,’ rather than risk missing out on rewards. And if reward schemes do not reflect the achievements of people with disabilities, those from ethnic
minorities or women then companies risk having employment-tribunal claims brought against them.

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

**Trust, engagement and psychological safety**

**Source:** The Journal of Psychology

**In a nutshell:** Trust in one’s boss can range along the spectrum from feeling able to tell them about the time you accidentally put your grandmother’s Chihuahua in the tumble drier to never wanting to sit with your back to, or be alone in a room with, them. In this study Ameer A. Basit, from the Information Technology University in Lahore, examined the links between trust in one’s supervisor, psychological safety and job engagement in a study of 337 nurses working in a public hospital. The study found that trust in their supervisor made the nurses feel psychologically safe to employ and express themselves in their jobs. This was seen by the nurses as an important socio-emotional benefit that, in turn, led to them feeling obligated to pay back to their organisation through an “enhanced level of job engagement.”

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

**Calling and strategy – the keys to successful talent management**

**Source:** Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources

**In a nutshell:** Some people – one thinks of priests and doctors – have a calling for a particular kind of work whilst others feel the sofa and a large gin and tonic calling to them while they are engaged in their labours. Discerning one group from the other can be quite important from an employer’s perspective and in this study Shu-Yuan Chen, from the National United University in Taiwan, led a team of researchers examining the use of a strategic talent management system (STMS), how it affected employees’ behaviour and how this relationship was influenced by employees’ sense of calling. The researchers studied 234 people in 45 firms across Taiwan. They found that an STMS could craft employees’ job interpretations in terms of employee calling which in turn developed positive employee behaviours, including those of entrepreneurship and voice. The researchers concluded that “employee calling is a key mediator for developing employees’ work behaviours.”

You can read the abstract of this article [here](#).
Change management – is communication the missing link?

Source: fistfuloftalent.com

In a nutshell: Some people propel change, others embrace it whilst others have change thrust upon them whether they like it or not. Some of us would still be complaining about steam engines if given a chance whilst others persist in re-shuffling the deckchairs on even the most doomed of passenger liners. In this article Kylie Quetell argues that certainty is one of the six shared psychological human needs and that Maslow’s hierarchy of needs lists safety – protection, order and stability – as one of the key things people look out for in life. So being scared of change is quite normal and change needs to be managed in order to be successful. Four of the biggest obstacles to organisational change are:

- Ineffective change management sponsorship from senior leaders
- Resistance to change from employees
- Middle-management resistance
- Poor communication

But clear communication from the top can alleviate some of these. The keys to building consensus are respectful dialogue, common goals, commitment to reaching consensus, and active participation. And while unsuccessful leaders tend to focus on the ‘what,’ of the change more successful ones concentrate on the ‘why.’

You can read the whole of this article here.

Expectations, boredom and motivation

Source: Employee Relations

In a nutshell: People often launch themselves into new jobs with great gusto only for disillusion to set in when they realise it’s not that different from their old job after all. In this study Panagiotis Gkorezis and Aikaterini Kastritsi, both from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, studied the links between newcomers’ expectations about their job and intrinsic motivation and how this might be affected by work-related boredom. They found that “unmet expectations enhance work-related boredom which in turn affects intrinsic motivation.”

You can read the abstract of this article here.

Talent management – what does it feel like to be on the receiving end?

Source: Employee Relations
In a nutshell: In talent management companies identify those they believe to be destined for great things and train them in accordance. In this study Violetta Khoreva, from Hanken School of Economics in Finland, led a team of researchers studying 439 high-potential employees from 11 countries. They found that the more high-potential employees perceived talent-management practices to be effective, the more they were committed to developing their own competence as leaders. The association between talent-management effectiveness and commitment to becoming good leaders operated by means of “psychological contract fulfilment.” Women who thought talent-management practices were effective demonstrated higher levels of commitment to becoming good leaders than men.

You can read the abstract of this article here.

Wellbeing
Emotions and stress
Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Management theory often approaches people as if they are logical beings pursuing consistent goals in a well thought-out manner. More than five minutes’ acquaintance with most people should be enough to rule this out as a theory and in this article occupational psychologist Kyle Davies looks into the links between our emotions, our environment and work-related stress. Depression, anxiety and stress now account for the majority of days lost due to ill-health each year. 300,000 people with mental-health problems will leave their jobs each year, costing the UK economy around £99bn a year. Behavioural indicators of stress can include lateness, a drop in performance, incomplete tasks or duties, apathy and diminished motivation and mood swing while physically there can be an increase in coughs, colds and other viral symptoms as well as groggy fatigue, muscular tension, heart palpitations, stomach upsets, headaches, insomnia and back or chest pain. Many of these symptoms can be difficult to identify but presenteeism – where employees are present at work but underperforming – can be the precursor of absenteeism for many. Emotional stress can remain undetected, out of balance and blocked for long periods of time and working in difficult circumstances, managing clients’ expectations and emotions, and performing at the highest level can all create an emotional response in the body. Research suggests that organisational culture, work overload and poor management skills are the main causes of workplace stress. However, emotions are not triggered by external events, they are created inside people. Emotions arise as a result of our interaction with the environment, the meaning placed upon the environment, and the deeper values and beliefs we hold about ourselves. Switching our attention from
outside to inside enables the practice of processing and regulating emotions to begin so people can “flow with life rather than trying to control it... embracing this new inside-out perspective on stress and emotion is the path to health, wellness and high performance.”

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

**Stress – when the alarm bells ring take action**

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** A life without stress would be unbearably dull – imagine, for instance, never asking somebody out on a date, never talking to a stranger and never visiting London. Too much can be bad for you though and in this article Judith Twycross outlines how employers can encourage their workers to monitor their stress levels and make sure they are neither too high or too low. Common symptoms of stress can include feeling tearful or aggressive, struggling to fall asleep or waking up early, loss of appetite or eating too much. Physical clues include lack of eye contact, nail-biting, eye-twitching and leg jerking while mental clues include people feeling like everything is against them and nobody is on their side. People can also become more forgetful and error-prone and don’t want to be around other people. Once they start to feel overwhelmed by stress employees will enter into a fight, flight or freeze mode and can lose their ability to think creatively and solve problems. In the immediate term managers should reduce the level of pressure employees are under and on a more long-term basis they should increase their workers’ ability to cope. Six personal “energy batteries,” that need to be charged to stay healthy under pressure are:

1. **Social.** Regular opportunities for social interaction with others
2. **Emotional.** Doing things that give you a sense of joy or achievement
3. **Physical.** Nurturing your body by eating well and getting enough sleep
4. **Mental.** Stretching yourself and seeing “failure,” as an opportunity to learn
5. **Mindful.** Setting aside time and worries to mindfully enjoy the moment
6. **Meaning.** Living by the personal values that matter most to you.

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

**Can exercise tackle burnout?**

**Source:** Workplace Health and Safety
In a nutshell: These days common sense is not enough – it has to be backed by research, although randomised controlled trials into the benefits of not banging your head against a brick wall are surprisingly hard to come by. Working very much in this vein were a team of researchers led by Isoard-Gautheur Sandrine, from Université Grenoble Alpes, who looked into the links between stress, burnout and exercise. 369 university staff (70% of them women) took part in the study which found that stress was associated with higher levels of job burnout. For people who were stressed taking exercise in their spare time was associated with reduced “cognitive weariness,” a relationship which was stronger when people were intrinsically motivated to do physical exercise.

You can read the abstract of this article here.

Brewery gives leave to organise piss-ups

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Working for a brewery is – one suspects – one of those jobs that sounds rather better in theory than in practice. Health and safety, one imagines, precludes sampling too much of the merchandise and the surroundings probably differ somewhat from a nice timber-framed pub on the South Downs with a beer garden and a sea view. Nevertheless Molson Coors – makers of the excellent Doom Bar, among other beverages* - are offering their staff up to two weeks’ extra paid leave to be used for significant life events, such as moving house, or preparing for a wedding. The leave will be offered to all staff in the UK and Ireland to improve work-life balance and comes on top of the standard allocation of 31 days annual leave. Centrica offers staff with caring responsibilities 10 days paid leave followed by another 10 days that can be matched with annual leave, on top of staff’s annual-leave entitlement while Vodafone employees who suffer from domestic abuse are given 10 extra days leave for court appearances, counselling and finding a new home. Meanwhile accountants EY offer staff in Australia six to 12 weeks of ‘life leave,’ to travel, work part-time or relax although staff have to fund this themselves. But where the ruthless capitalist exploiters lead will the public sector follow? Watch this space!

*I received nothing from Molson Coors in return for this endorsement but I’m open to offers.

You can read the whole of this article here.
Why the British aren't looking forward to their clock

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** ‘You spend your whole working life counting down the hours until home time and what do they give you when you retire? A f-ing clock!’ was one of Dave Allen’s more memorable jokes. However, not everyone yearns for their retirement and, according to a survey of 16,000 people across 15 countries by pensions and investment firm Aegon, nearly half (48%) of UK workers want to delay retirement beyond the age of 65. Only 28% want to give up work completely when they reach state pension age – the lowest proportion in Europe. 40% were worried about their health in old age but only 46% thought about the effect their lifestyle choices would have on their long-term health. 55% felt working longer would keep them active and their brain alert, while 37% said they enjoyed their work. Declining physical health was the biggest retirement concern among workers (48%), followed by Alzheimer’s disease or dementia (41%) and running out of money (40%).

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

Paid leave proposed for parents of premature babies

**Source:** Personnel Today

**In a nutshell:** In between washing out her mug, changing the sheets and arranging the removal van Theresa May has also found time to launch a wide-ranging consultation into parental leave saying that it is ‘not fair and not right,’ that some parents have to return to work before their child even leaves hospital. Currently the two-week statutory period means that fathers often have to return to work while a premature baby is still in hospital. Neonatal charity Bliss has found that 36% of fathers and partners end up taking sick leave while their baby was in neonatal care. The consultation will also look at re-balancing parental leave between men and women. The UK is below the OECD average in terms of length of paternity leave offered but has the highest length of maternity leave.

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

Building psychological safety to tackle bullying

**Source:** European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology
In a nutshell: Psychological safety is – broadly speaking – the ability to speak up and be yourself at work without fear of bullying or harassment. Workplaces can put procedures in place to create a climate of psychological safety (PSC) and in this study Maureen F. Dollard, from the University of South Australia, led a team of researchers seeing if doing so would have an effect on levels of bullying. The researchers studied 1,062 Australian employees and found that a psychologically-safe climate at the start of the study predicted enhanced psychological safety and reduced bullying four years later. Psychological safety at the start of the study led to reduced psychological ill health at the end. The researchers concluded that “procedures (to reduce psychosocial hazards) that emerge in a high-PSC context are more comprehensive than those triggered by bullying (reactive procedures), and can therefore be more effective in reducing worker mistreatment.”

You can read the abstract of this article here.