

Making People Count

Bulletin November 2020



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Compiled by John Gale, JET Library (Mid-Cheshire NHS Foundation Trust). Commissioned by Health Education England.

Contents

Apprenticeship	3
Pandemic cuts a swathe through apprenticeships	3
Learning and Development	3
What’s on offer for the career changers?.....	3
People Management	4
Avoiding the pitfalls of remote working.....	4
Psychological safety and creativity	5
How top managers can bring talent on	5
Fun and psychological safety.....	5
Fun and creativity	6
Keeping remote workers engaged.....	6
How working for a good company leads to better customer service	6
Does performance appraisal make a difference?.....	7
Wellbeing	7
Locking down in the dark.....	7
A hot flush Zooming in the box room	8
Staff feel pressure to come in	8
How to make your organisation “life-friendly.”	9
Home workers feeling the strain.....	9
How to spot signs of mental-health problems in the workplace	10



Apprenticeship

Pandemic cuts a swathe through apprenticeships

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Quite rightly much attention has been given to the struggles of students who are socially isolated, away from home for the first time and stuck indoors annoying one another 24 hours a day when they could be at home annoying their parents. Less attention has been paid to the plight of apprentices whose training and education has – in many cases – been just as disrupted. The number of apprenticeships ending in redundancy has risen from 615 in 2019 to 1,033 in 2020. It's thought that the real figure is actually higher because the numbers don't include people who go on to complete their apprenticeships with a new employer, or at a college. There are around 740,000 apprentices training in England and in October 12% of them had been made redundant. Another 8% were on furlough, 35% had been furloughed but were now back at work and 15% had remained at work but see their off-the-job learning suspended. Apprentices are included in the furlough scheme and from August to January employers will get a £2,000 grant for each apprentice under 25 they hire and £1,500 for older apprentices. In September the Government introduced a Redundancy Support Service for apprentices who were three-quarters of the way through a longer apprenticeship and gave them funding to finish. The pandemic has also led to a big fall in the number of apprenticeships down from 107,750 between March and July last year to 58,160 this.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/sharp-rise-in-apprenticeships-ending-in-redundancy/>

Learning and Development

What's on offer for the career changers?

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Changing careers is a bit like changing modes of transport. Some people seize the opportunity to exchange trains for boat, planes and automobiles with great alacrity while others greet it with the levels of enthusiasm involved in a rail-replacement service from Nuneaton to Inverness. Like rail replacement services career changes can often be forced upon us and in this article Vikki Bradney Spencer, from IBM, outlines some of the ways this particular corporation is helping. IBM has launched a Skills Build Reignite platform with partners including the Open University, the Institute of Directors, Jones Day, Social Enterprise UK and MSDUK. The platform gives job hunters and entrepreneurs access to free online coursework and mentoring support, designed to help them develop the technical and professional skills needed to reinvent their careers and businesses. They can now tap in to more than 400 learning activities with industry-relevant content on topics including artificial intelligence, the cloud, data analytics and security while courses for small business owners include financial management, business strategy, digital strategy and legal support.

You can find Skills Build Reignite at

<https://skillsbuild.org/reignite>



And read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/collaboration-is-key-for-post-covid-skills-challenge/>

People Management

Avoiding the pitfalls of remote working

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: If you want to see a cross yuppie with a bicycle in the background (and who could resist, frankly) head over to Personnel Today where Paida Dube – an employment-law solicitor from DavidsonMorris [sic] – discusses the legal pitfalls of managing people working from home (see link below). For some managers remote management can be uncharted territory and more traditional management styles, when used with a remote workforce, are becoming a growing source of employee complaints about bullying and harassment. Examples of not-so-good management styles include:

Excessive monitoring: there is a fine line between keeping in touch with employees and ensuring they are supported and working efficiently, and micro-managing them through multiple check-in calls or excessive remote monitoring. An overly-attentive management style can have a negative impact on those being managed, leaving employees feeling stifled, to the detriment of performance and morale

Unrealistic expectations: any gain from people not having to commute can probably be offset against child-care and domestic responsibilities. This can lead to workers checking e-mails etc outside of normal working hours having a negative effect on their health, morale and work-life balance

Lack of trust: reluctance on the part of employers to adopt home working can often stem from mistrust of certain workers to perform their role as required when working remotely. This then results in employees feeling that the constant emails for updates and scheduling of video meetings to “touch base” are distractions and take time away from doing their actual work. Adopting a management style that is based on mistrust is likely to build employee anxiety and disgruntlement

Ignoring psychology: for some workers adjusting to remote working can be challenging, particularly if they live alone and their former working environment provided a level of social interaction. Active listening should be adopted by line managers where workers appear to be struggling with pressures within the home setting

Failing to make reasonable adjustments: It is important for managers to be aware that reasonable adjustments will be extended to periods of working from home. This may require further assessments and the provision of specialist equipment such as a bespoke chair or a standing desk

Focusing on outputs not outcomes: “it is for employers to reimagine their approach to measuring work while fostering positive employee relations and optimising performance.”

You can read the whole of this article – and see a cross yuppie with a bicycle in the background at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/remote-management-styles/>



Psychological safety and creativity

Source: Social Behavior and Personality

In a nutshell: Psychological safety is the ability to be completely yourself in any given situation – unless (quite rightly too, of course) “yourself,” happens to be Tommy Robinson or Harvey Weinstein. For most people content to stay within the usual bounds of human decency it’s been linked to all sorts of benefits in terms of higher productivity, improved safety and increased creativity. In this study Kebin Liu, from the School of Marxism (Stalin T-shirt compulsory one imagines) and Yuanqin Ge, from the Panyapiwat Institute of Management in Thailand, investigated the links between psychological safety and employee creativity in a study of 231 workers from four banking companies. The study showed that psychological safety “was a significant antecedent of employee creativity and that work engagement fully mediated the influence of psychological safety on employee creativity.” In other words the more psychologically safe employees felt the more they were engaged with work and the more creative they were.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2224/sbp.9211>

How top managers can bring talent on

Source: Journal of Career Development

In a nutshell: For every Marcus Rashford or Harry Kane nurtured into success by coaches and managers there’s someone equally talented who finds themselves delivering parcels by day and playing five-a-side at the weekends. How top managers nurture talent is a complicated topic, one explored by a team of researchers led by Kim Eun-Jee, from Seoul Women’s University, in a study of 484 workers in South Korea. The researchers found that top-management support for talent was linked to a good organisational culture. A good organisational culture also led to improved job satisfaction and greater commitment to the organisation among those contemplating a change of career.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0894845318820967>

Fun and psychological safety

Source: Social Behavior [sic] and Personality

In a nutshell: “When I hear the word culture, I reach for my gun,” said Nazi playwright Hanns Johst. Many of us feel the same way about fun but in this article Guodong Yang from Dalian Maritime University and Liyin Wang, from the Oriental Institute of Psychology (both in China) studied the effect of fun on psychological safety and voice behaviour. 223 students took part in the study which found that workplace fun had a direct, significantly positive relationship with employee voice behaviour and that there was also an indirect effect through the mediator of psychological safety. The researchers concluded that “managers of organisations should consider ways to create a work environment that is fun to promote employees’ psychological safety and voice behaviour.”



You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2224/sbp.9609>

[Fun and creativity](#)

Source: Social Behavior [sic] and Personality

In a nutshell: Who knows what the Chinese is for “you don’t have to be mad to work here but it helps,” but it seems a good bet that Guodong Yang has probably got a mug with it on. In this study Guodong Yang looks at the influence of fun on employee creativity, this time in a sample of 269 hotel workers where – perhaps on pain of death – things are presumably conducted more along the lines of The Grand Budapest Hotel than the Fawlty Towers approach favoured by middle-aged Englishmen. Yang found that workplace fun had a direct, significantly positive effect on employee creativity, “as well as an indirect relationship through the mediator of psychological safety.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2224/sbp.9510>

[Keeping remote workers engaged](#)

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: The trouble with remote working – at least from an employer’s point of view – is that refereeing disputes between children, loading the dishwasher and dealing with the Tesco’s delivery can all seem more important than one’s paid work. In this article Mark Seemann, the CEO of [StaffCircle](#) outlines the ways in which digital platforms can help to reach a range of workers, from those in the office, to those on furlough or self-isolating. Geographical isolation, a lack of face-to-face encounters with co-workers and difficulties co-ordinating work on projects can all have a huge impact on employee engagement and productivity. Pitacs – who make heating products and electric cables - has a third of its workforce out and about rather than in an office. They opened up their digital platform to everyone, not just office staff, and saw their engagement go up from 63% to 83% almost immediately. Warehouse staff got access to the same digital tools as workers in the central office and Pitacs used the digital platform to share mental-health and employee wellbeing tips. They also introduced a company news feed which brought more transparency to remote workers so they could clearly understand urgent priorities. Digital platforms can provided an array of well-structured and consistent staff touchpoints with regular one-to-ones, check-ins and feedback mechanisms such as employee surveys.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/how-to-localise-engagement-during-lockdown/>

[How working for a good company leads to better customer service](#)

Source: Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management

In a nutshell: Emotional labour occurs when someone says “sorry to bother you...” and you reply “how can I help you,” rather than (as you’d really like to) “well don’t then, shove off.” In this study Inyong Shin, from Pukyong National University and Won-Moo Hur, from Inha University, both in Korea, looked at how service employees’



perceptions of their organisation's social responsibility affected their need to engage in emotional labour. They found that the employees' perceptions of their organisation's social-responsibility activities encouraged them to become "prosocially motivated," leading them to engage in more deep acting (genuinely wanting to help people) rather than surface acting (smiling and grinding their teeth simultaneously). This, in turn, led to "superior service performance."

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/csr.2008>

Does performance appraisal make a difference?

Source: Information Resources Management Journal

In a nutshell: Feedback has different effects on different people. Some – like casks of whisky – absorb whatever is added and produce excellent results later whilst for others changing behaviour can be like trying to get an aircraft carrier to change course using chewing gum and tissue paper. In this study Bhawna Chahar, from Manipal University in Jaipur, studied the effect of a performance-appraisal system on 393 employees of an Indian service organisation. The results showed that the performance-appraisal system had a direct effect on workers' performance and that this effect was moderated by the employee's motivation.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4018/IRMJ.2020100102>

Wellbeing

Locking down in the dark

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: The first nationwide lockdown was set against a backdrop of one of the most glorious Springs in recent memory affording anyone able and willing to venture outside the consolations of fresh air, nature and lambs gambolling before their posthumous introduction to roast potatoes and mint sauce. The second lockdown – well the least said about November the better. Employee-engagement firm [Impulse](#) have been asking people how they are feeling. 38% have been struggling with their physical health, while 42% were worried about their resilience. Of particular concern is the health and wellbeing of younger people living in shared houses with limited space to work and unwind in; figures from the Department of Work and Pensions show that more than a quarter of private single renters are still sharing accommodation by the age of 35. Matt Stephens, the CEO of Impulse, called for employers to educate their workers about the importance of physical activity, facilitate opportunities by, for instance, setting up exercise challenges for staff, virtual yoga classes, or local walks. And regular pulse surveys can help employers evaluate how their workforce is feeling and see where physical and emotional health interventions can best be targeted.



You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/firms-must-encourage-physical-and-emotional-resilience-during-lockdown/>

A hot flush Zooming in the box room

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: In the UK it is estimated that there are nine million women aged between 40 and 60 who may be experiencing the many symptoms of the menopause; a quarter of menopausal women will experience debilitating symptoms from heavy bleeding to increased anxiety, and, for some, it forces them out of the workforce completely. Research from Bupa Health Clinics has found that almost a million women have left a job because of symptoms of menopause. In this article Alaana [sic] Woods – commercial director of Bupa Health Services – outlines five ways businesses can support women going through the menopause while they are working remotely.

- 1) **Break the taboo.** The symptoms of menopause can be embarrassing, and many women don't feel comfortable talking about them. Make sure everyone feels educated and comfortable talking about it
- 2) **Consider the mental-health implications.** Lockdown might have made the psychological effects of the menopause even worse so make sure people have access to Employee Assistance Programmes and Mental Health First Aiders
- 3) **Create conversations.** World Menopause Day is in October. Online webinars can encourage people to share stories or raise awareness
- 4) **Be flexible.** Night sweats can keep people awake all night so make sure people are given the option to work hours which suit them and be flexible if they need to change meetings
- 5) **Continue to provide access to services** – even if you have to do it remotely

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/supporting-employees-going-through-the-menopause-when-working-remotely/>

Staff feel pressure to come in

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: For many people work and home fell into a comforting rhythm in the days before Covid. You'd just got fed up of your spouse and kids by the time you were ready to go back and see your wonderful colleagues on Monday morning. And you'd just got fed up of the annoying people you worked with by Friday afternoon when you started looking forward to seeing your lovely family for the weekend. For better or worse Covid, and working from home, has changed this situation. The ADP Research Institute has been looking into this new state of affairs and found that 54% of people across the world felt pressurised by their employer to be physically present in the office, contrary to advice from local officials that non-essential workers should stay at home. In Britain this figure was 16%.

Presenteeism was highest among young people with 62% of 18-24 year-olds feeling expected to go to work, compared to only 25% of over 55s. At the same time the Resolution Foundation found that 35% of staff who were back in the workplace in September were worried about Covid-19 transmission.

You can read the whole of this article at



How to make your organisation “life-friendly.”

Source: digitalhrtech.com

In a nutshell: Single and childless people are – in my experience at least – remarkably sympathetic to people leaving early or arriving late so they can look after their children. However, unlike the kind that comes from cows, one shouldn’t presume on an infinite supply of the milk of human kindness. In this article US HR guru Suzanne Lucas lists five ways in which employers can become more “life-friendly,” not just “family-friendly.”

1. **Change as you go.** A big organisation or department will have to cater for a wide spectrum of people but smaller units should be aware that the team’s circumstances can change over the years. Children can grow up and leave home or an office initially full of bright young things can find themselves with small children and bags under the eyes spending their nights gibbering in front of repeats of *Midsomer Murders* ten years later – so you might need to change your policies accordingly
2. **The child-free don’t have to do all the weekend and night work.** Don’t automatically assume that those without children should do all the antisocial shifts. If nobody volunteers you should share them out equally or, if possible, try and move to a model without these shifts in the first place.
3. **Flexibility is for any reason.** It can be just as important for someone to be able to get to a choir practice, rugby training or night class as it is for someone to be able to take their child to ballet lessons. Everyone has had to be flexible over Covid so it should be possible to make both work
4. **The little perks don’t matter as much as you think.** Google might have gyms, ping-pong table and canteens open all hours but these can become ways of trapping people at work not giving them flexibility. Keeping a canteen open in the evening so that people can get a hot meal on a night shift can actually help a lot more
5. **Happy employees, good profits.** Engaged employees have a higher productivity level and happy employees are more likely to be engaged ones.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.digitalhrtech.com/life-friendly-organization/>

Home workers feeling the strain

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: This author’s sole experience of opinion polls was giving his sage views on yogurt and Formula 1 over the phone while being unemployed in Liverpool. Other people get to answer more interesting questions though and researchers from the University of Exeter Business School and the University of Leicester Business School have been asking 835 workers about their experiences of working from home. 38% said they felt anxious most or all of the time and 8% said they felt depressed. 17% said they felt lonely and 25.9% said the competing demands of work and domestic duties – including childcare – had taken their toll on their wellbeing. 15% said they found it hard to make many decisions on their own and 21% could not decide how best to complete their work.



You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/covid-19-worries-not-only-factor-affecting-remote-workers-wellbeing-finds-study/>

How to spot signs of mental-health problems in the workplace

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: The coronavirus outbreak has brought the issue of people’s mental health – whether in or out of work – into sharp focus and in this article the people behind [Kooth](#) – one of the UK’s leading digital mental-health services – outline some of the main issues and how colleagues and managers can spot them.

Relationship breakdowns. With many couple and families now spending much of the day in close quarters juggling school runs, Zoom meetings, and meal planning, tensions can run high. Signs can include people talking about friction with their families, becoming prone to sudden outbursts or often being short-tempered.

Low self-worth. From relationship breakdowns to loss of a regular exercise regime or engagement in activities that promote feelings of happiness and positivity there are many factors at play influencing how we feel about ourselves. Signs to watch out for include: seeming uninterested in setting goals for the future due to a lack of confidence; becoming defensive or withdrawn; talking down to themselves and/or being self-defeating

Suicidal thoughts. The emotional, financial and social impact of COVID-19 is unprecedented. Specific behavioural changes include: being distracted; anger; low mood; weight loss or gain; disinterest in personal appearance or hygiene. “Early intervention is imperative to helping to prevent presenting issues such as low mood or anxiety from escalating into suicidal thoughts or even self-harm.”

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/how-to-spot-the-signs-of-three-major-mental-health-issues-in-the-workplace/>

