

Making People Count

Bulletin February 2021



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

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People Management

What makes a good workplace?

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: From the medieval peasant, through the Victorian navy to the contemporary Amazon warehouse worker for most people, through most of history, the idea that work could, indeed should, be something enjoyable and satisfying would seem deeply risible. Rightly or wrongly the 21st century is more ambitious though and in this article Jo Faragher mulls over the ways to assess employers in the aftermath of the coronavirus outbreak. The Top Employers List looks at over 600 HR practices, over a spread of 10 topics and many organisations value a high ranking on this, and similar ranking schemes. Many of the perks employers used to pride themselves on such as free food, games machines, coffee percolators and on-site gyms are now seen as plague-spreading mechanisms by those twitchy about viruses and workers are now more likely to want mindfulness and fitness apps, wellbeing allowances, private healthcare, and access to online therapy. Organisations that work hard on corporate social responsibility tend to have more engaged employees and having a “living, breathing, systemic approach to inclusion,” is also seen as important.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/how-do-we-benchmark-employers-in-the-covid-era/>

How much harm do cat videos really do?

Source: Psychological Research

In a nutshell: Few things encapsulate the realities of working life like the video of the raccoon attempting to wash a sugar lump in the water only to [scrabble round frantically](#) as it dissolves. But are watching videos like this at work a needless distraction leading to lower productivity or a necessary break, from which people return, refreshed, to the fray? In this study a team of researchers, led by Ralph Brandon, from the University of Waterloo in Canada, investigated this issue. They found that when people were motivated by a reward to finish a task they were less likely to watch an amusing video; however, they also found that being allowed to watch a fun video increased people’s levels of motivation when there were no other rewards on offer.

You can read the abstract of this article before you amuse yourself by watching workmen drop a grand piano down a flight of stairs at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s00426-019-01246-7>

[Whose careers might suffer from working at home?](#)

Source: Personnel Today



In a nutshell: Society can be divided broadly into two groups. Those unable to think without speaking (extroverts) and those unable to think *while* speaking (introverts). In many ways home working suits the latter group who can crack on without constant interruptions and small talk about *I'm a Celebrity* and what was consumed for dinner last night. However, in this article Adam McCulloch argues that digital introverts' careers can suffer under home working just as much as in the office. People can struggle with – or be uncomfortable contributing in – digital meetings and instant-messaging platforms because they are more “reserved, more work-driven, or because they lack digital skills.” The move to working from home has also damaged women's careers as they take on more childcare responsibilities and those of junior employees and apprentices who are being held back by a “lack of in-person collaboration and training with senior staff.”

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/businesses-need-awareness-of-remote-working-dangers/>

Two types of stress and why they make a difference

Source: American Journal of Health Behavior

In a nutshell: Keen ornithologists can distinguish between any number of different birds, unlike Edwardian Prime Minister Arthur Balfour who remarking on a bird having landed on his desk that morning was asked what type and replied sunnily “a brown one.” Psychologists distinguish between different types of stress and in this study Jianwei Deng, from the Beijing Institute of Technology, led a team of researchers examining the links between challenge stress (climbing Mount Everest); hindrance stress (adding a billiard table and a stuffed rhinoceros into proceedings); public-service motivation and health-care quality. 2,066 workers from 68 different hospitals took part in the study which found that challenge stress increased public-service motivation and health-care quality whereas hindrance stress reduced both. Public-service motivation was directly linked to improved health-care quality and “indirectly mediated the relationship of hindrance stress with health-care quality.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5993/AJHB.43.4.5>

Personality and safety at the chemical plant

Source: Cogent Business and Management

In a nutshell: From The Sweeney, through Inspector Morse and Luther to the protagonists of Killing Eve mavericks are eternally popular in TV drama – speaking, perhaps, to the universal human desire to tell your boss to stuff their paperwork where even the most dedicated proctologist is unlikely to find it, go about things your own way, and prove triumphant in the end. It all depends on context though and – alongside dentists and air-traffic controllers - a maverick chemical-plant worker is probably not ideal. In this study Anasuya K. Lingappa, from the Manipal Academy of Higher Education in India, led a team of researchers investigating the effects of personality on safety behaviour in



a study of 226 Indian chemical-company workers. Conscientiousness and locus of control (the feeling that one is in control of what happens in one's life) led to better transfer of safety practices from training to the workplace by improving employees' motivation to learn whereas a propensity to take risks had the opposite effect. Extraversion and neuroticism had no real effects on safety behaviour.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1835335>

[What motivates temps?](#)

Source: International Journal of Organizational Analysis

In a nutshell: One suspects temps fall into two categories: those furtively using the office's MSWord package to write their 2,000 page novel or "resting," between acting jobs and those who turn up dressed like candidates from *The Apprentice*, treble productivity, and end up as Head of Department after six weeks. In this study Silvia Lopes, from the University of Lisbon, analysed the links between perceptions of support (POS), motivation and wellbeing in a sample of 3,983 temporary agency workers. POS from the agency contributed to both autonomous and controlled motivation whereas POS from the client only contributed to autonomous motivation. Autonomous motivation – the desire to do the job well for its own sake – was linked to an increased sense of wellbeing among the temps.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-08-2018-1502>

[Being the good guys really does pay off](#)

Source: International Journal of Organizational Analysis

In a nutshell: A comparison of the managerial careers of Sir Alex Ferguson and Jose Mourinho might suggest that while you certainly shouldn't be a soft touch creating a climate of fear and disrespect only ever gets you short-term gains. In this study Beverly Colaco and Natasha M. Loi, from the University of New England (which like a Russian doll of cartographic confusion is in New South Wales, Australia) studied the links between workers' perceptions of how ethical their organisation was and their motivation. They studied 330 workers and found that "higher motivation was associated with a higher perception of an organisation's ethical culture." Factors relating to "congruency of peers, clarity and feasibility," were the best predictors of motivation.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-08-2018-1511>



[Wellbeing](#)

[MIND launches workplace mental-health guidance for NHS leaders](#)

Source: British Medical Journal

In a nutshell: Mental-health charity MIND has launched a guide for NHS leaders aimed at creating a workplace culture where mental health and well-being are prioritised and talked about openly. The guidance aims to help leaders deal with the stigma related to mental-health problems among healthcare workers. The guidance aims to move people away from the “hero,” narrative which can make people feel good about themselves in the short term but leave them working to the point of exhaustion and unwilling to admit their vulnerabilities. In addition to the guidance Mind has collaborated with Samaritans, Shout 85258 and Hospice UK to launch Our Frontline, a support platform that aims to raise awareness of the pandemic’s effects on the mental health of NHS staff.

You can download a copy of *Supporting the Mental Health of NHS Staff* [here](#).

Visit the Our Frontline web site [here](#).

And you can read the whole of this BMJ article at <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n337>

[Eight out of 10 employees feel supported](#)

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: The Wellbeing section of this bulletin is usually composed of gloomy surveys of the nation’s mental health so it makes a nice change to report something a bit more upbeat for a change. Employee benefits firm [Edenred](#) have been asking people about their experiences working during the pandemic and found that eight out of 10 said their employer had done a good job supporting them over the last year. A quarter did want help with their mental wellbeing though and 17% said they would need help adjusting to a return to the office. Nearly two-thirds (64%) had worked at home in the last year and 61% said they had worked outside their normal hours. On the whole employees were happy with the support given for managing work-life balance (73%); collaborative working (72%); and physical wellbeing (71%). 29% said they felt more positive about their organisation as a result of actions they took in the past year and 24% said they were more likely to go the extra mile.

[Still a long way to go on flexible working](#)

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: The word tantalise comes from Greek mythology in which Tantalus was doomed to constant thirst as he contemplated drops of water just out of reach. Those who advocate flexible working must often feel they are in a similar situation with the progress towards the goal of flexible working for everyone moving at a speed that makes the average glacier look like Usain Bolt. The Chartered Institute of Professional Development recently asked 2,133



employers about this issue and found that only 30% of them were planning to increase it over the next six to 12 months. Flexible working was not an option at all for 46% of workers and a fifth said their employers did not offer it at all.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/flexible-working-unavailable-for-nearly-half-of-staff/>

What Fudgy Sue can teach us about dealing with mental health

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Our family often goes for walks in woods near some Fujitsu offices; something my five-year-old son refers to as Fudgy Sue woods. Fujitsu are one of three companies picked out by Acas on Time to Talk Day for their good work in supporting employees' mental health, along with Amnesty International and Defence Intelligence (an arm of the Ministry of Defence). Recent surveys have pointed to rising levels of loneliness and depression and an increase in the use of poor coping strategies. Groups who were doing badly beforehand – women, ethnic minorities, the young and those with caring responsibilities – have done particularly badly during the coronavirus outbreak. 63% of NHS staff say they think they will face burnout this winter, with 58% of social carers saying the same. Fujitsu, Amnesty International and Defence Intelligence's responses fall into three broad categories viz:

Quick interventions aimed at individuals. Fujitsu has introduced a global employee assistance programme covering 14,000 employees, while Defence Intelligence has launched a mindfulness initiative with 15% of its workforce now meditating regularly.

Training for managers. Amnesty has developed special guidelines – “Lockdown Lives,” – to help manage staff remotely. Fujitsu has created a new section on the intranet for their managers, with “talking tips,” on what questions to ask staff, and how, as well as a charter which sets out expectations about the pastoral care managers should provide to their teams.

Seeing the bigger picture. Amnesty's mental health strategy is broken down into three parts of a pyramid – with reactive measures like equal access to support at the top; training managers and identifying the causes of stress in the middle; and “preventative systemic factors,” at the bottom. Defence Intelligence has created a dashboard to measure broad drivers of wellbeing like relationships, job purpose and feelings of job security.

You can read the Acas report *The Road to Enlightenment* [here](#). And you can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/acas-mental-health-enlightenment-a-pandemic-silver-lining/>



Inclusive leadership and psychological distress

Source: International Journal of Nursing Studies

In a nutshell: Being included by one's leader can be a mixed blessing. Fine if it's a lifeboat on the Titanic, not so much during the Charge of the Light Brigade. Generally speaking inclusive leadership is held to be a good thing though and in this article Fuqiang Zhao, from Wuhan University of Technology, led a team of researchers examining how inclusive leadership had affected 451 nurses during the worst part of the Covid-19 outbreak. The researchers found that the more inclusive managers' leadership was the less psychological distress nurses suffered. This relationship was mediated by psychological safety which explained 28.6% of the variance.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2020.103725>

What do nurses feel about Covid?

Source: Nursing Ethics

In a nutshell: Using military metaphors to talk about Covid can be something of a hostage to fortune. For every Waterloo-type triumph with the vaccines coming over the hill like Blucher's cavalry there are incompetent generals sending troops into the front line without adequate preparation; fifth columnists; spivs and interfering busybodies handing out white feathers and asking "is your journey really necessary?" There's no doubt nurses have been among the real heroes on the front line though and in this study Daniel Sperling, from the University of Haifa, in Israel, asked 231 nurses what they felt about it. 68.8% of them had received some form of training about Covid-19 and most thought they were at high risk of coming down with it. A third feared going to work in case they caught it and because they felt inadequately protected. Two fifths (40.9%) were scared to care for Covid-19 patients, yet three quarters (74.7%) did not believe they had the right to refuse to treat certain patients. When they were asked about defining an age limit for rationing treatment the average age the nurses thought rationing should kick in was 84, but four-fifths (81.4%) said that every patient had the right to receive the best-possible treatment, regardless of their age and medical background.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0969733020956376>

