

Making People Count



May 2021

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Apprenticeships

UCAS to make it easier to apply for apprenticeships

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Despite many of the most-impressive people one comes across in life being apprentices apprenticeships are still something of a Cinderella figure when it comes to vocational options. The Government's apprenticeship levy has resulted in a fall in the number of young people between 16 and 24 starting an apprenticeship from 265,000 to 171,600 in 2019-2020 and those behind it must be thanking their lucky stars that Messrs Cummings and Johnson are distracting people from its lack of success. Universities admissions service Ucas are going to make it easier for teenagers to apply for apprenticeships and about half of sixth-formers considering their options after school are thinking of applying for one. However, a third of pupils at school and half of those in colleges said they were not told about apprenticeships – a state of affairs that is actually against the law. In the budget the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced new [flexi-job apprenticeships](#) enabling apprentices to gain experience across a range of employers in their chosen field and proposed new cash incentives for employers to take on apprentices.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/ucas-will-promote-apprenticeships-to-overcome-stigma/>

Learning and Development

Government unveils programme to boost skills

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: As well as feigning an interest in total strangers and showing dictators the way to the downstairs toilet one of the Queen's other duties is to read out the Queen's speech setting out what her Government intends to do over the next session of Parliament. This year's proposals include a "lifetime skills guarantee," allowing all adults to get a "flexible loan," from the government for part- or full-time education and/or training at a university or college, which can be used at "any point in their lives." It can be used for the equivalent of four years' study in academic and technical education, for modules, or for full qualifications. Employers will have a statutory role in planning publicly-funded training programmes with education providers, through a "Skills Accelerator," programme. They will be urged to work together to meet local skills needs, particularly in areas including construction, digital, clean energy and manufacturing and the Education Secretary will be given more powers to intervene in colleges that fail to meet local needs, and to direct structural changes to ensure improvements are made.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/queens-speech-flexible-loans-for-skills-development-to-be-launched/>

Digital learning booms during the pandemic

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Sometimes it seems as though bosses spend half their time exhorting their staff to take a break away from their screens and get to know their colleagues while spending the other half clamping down on lunch-time trips to the pub and encouraging us to sign up for online courses. Research by the Chartered Institute for Personnel



Development (CIPD) and Accenture has found that seven in 10 organisations have increased their use of digital and online solutions for training over the last year, and 36% of organisations have increased their investment in learning technology. 77% of organisations say they are successfully using learning technology and 69% say they are innovating in their use of it. However, a third of learning professionals had witnessed significant reductions in headcount (32%) and a similar proportion had seen their budgets decrease.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/digital-learning-has-surged-during-pandemic/>

Government links up with Google to boost skills training

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: For those of us over 50 trying to get to grips with the skills required in the modern workplace can feel a little like being a stagecoach driver trying to fly a jumbo jet. The Government is offering help with this though – and not just to the over 50s – and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is working with Google to provide 9,000 jobseekers with technology and IT scholarships covering topics such as IT support, data analysis, project management and user experience. Meanwhile 100,000 job seekers across Great Britain have started on the Job Entry Training Support (JETS) Scheme, aimed at helping those that have lost their jobs in the pandemic with their work search. And the DWP has hired an extra 13,500 new work coaches who can combine tech scholarships with tailored support through the Government’s Plan for Jobs.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/government-partners-with-google-to-raise-jobseekers-digital-skills/>

People Management

When nobody likes a goody two-shoes

Source: Journal of Applied Psychology

In a nutshell: Christopher Plummer once described working with Julie Andrews on *The Sound of Music* as like being hit over the head with a Hallmark greetings card every day. Some of us sometimes feel the same about the office ray of sunshine who is always cheerful, helpful and positive; wondering whether they’re on drugs and, if they are, whether we can have some too. In this study Jiaqing Sun, from the University of Illinois, led a team of researchers investigating this phenomenon in a study of 1,069 employees from 223 groups. They found that “proactive personality,” was negatively and indirectly related to received help from co-workers, via relative leader-member exchange and relative job performance and then via being envied by co-workers.” In other words being proactive meant becoming the boss’s favourite and doing better at work, which meant other workers became envious and less inclined to help. Other workers were also more inclined to undermine proactive personalities. However, this sad state of affairs only pertained when workers’ “prosocial motivation was low.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/apl0000494>



[Transformational leadership and performance](#)

Source: Social Behaviour and Personality

In a nutshell: Managers used to be able to just run things; now they're expected to transform them. Whether this in the style of Merlin or Tommy Cooper is a moot point in many cases. In this study Hsueh-Feng Wang, from Da-Yeh University in Taiwan, led a team of researchers investigating the effect of transformational leadership on teams' performance. The researchers studied 73 nurse-managers and 719 nurses in six hospitals. They found that there was a positive correlation between transformational leadership and job performance. At the same time transformational leadership led to an increase in psychological safety, which, in turn, also improved job performance.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2224/sbp.9712>

[Transformational leadership and knowledge-sharing](#)

Source: Journal of Knowledge Management

In a nutshell: Also investigating transformational leadership was a team of researchers led by Jieli Yin, from Beijing Information Science and Technology University in China who studied 400 employees from "knowledge-based," companies. They found that psychological safety fully mediated the impact of intellectual stimulation on knowledge sharing, and that team efficacy fully mediated the impact of inspirational motivation on knowledge sharing.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JKM-12-2018-0776>

[How leaders can cope with the "hokey cokey," office](#)

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Managers and workers have much the same attitudes towards seeing one another as lions and antelopes, with joy being inspired in one party and fear in the other. For managers coping with a "hokey cokey," office in which staff pop in and out of rooms like characters in Fawlty Towers this can create problems, and in this article a number of managers and HR experts discuss how to cope with them. Some companies like JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs have ordered their staff back into the office but a recent BBC poll found that 80% of companies expect to move to hybrid working once the lockdown is over. Many leaders are "Zoomed-out," and two-fifths of them are worried about lack of oversight, compared to only 7% of employees*. Experts argue that leaders need to place a new emphasis on looking after themselves and examine how to replace the work inputs that arise from accidental meetings and conversations with "deliberate and purposeful actions." Leaders need to be more purposeful and thoughtful about daily routines and establishing a clear purpose and "why," behind work will become more important. At the same time managers need to look beyond the people who are either more extrovert and/or in the office at any given time so that women trying to combine home-working with looking after children, and those more reluctant to, or less adept at, thrusting themselves forward don't get overlooked.



You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/wellbeing-is-for-leaders-too-hr-and-the-hokey-cokey-office/>

*Do 7% of voles worry about not seeing an owl for a while I wonder?

The pitfalls of flexible working

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Trying to become more flexible can be a delicate balancing act. Go too far and you're liable to pull a muscle, do it half-heartedly and you may as well not bother. Flexible working follows the same trajectory and in this article Jo Faragher outlines some of the pitfalls for organisations that get it wrong. Research and advisory company [Gartner](#) have been looking into this and they found that 42% of employees felt drained from working remotely, with women being 39% more likely to feel drained. Employees who were being tracked by their employer were more likely to display "presenteeism," behaviour, with 62% saying there had been an increase in the length of their working day since operating remotely. And only about half (46%) of employees working remotely said that their manager took their views into account when making decision. Gartner's chief of HR research, Brian Kropp, recommends "be clear with employees what needs to be done at home, what needs to be done at the office, what with other people, what can be done alone."

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/failure-to-manage-hybrid-working-could-backfire-says-analyst-group/>

Should nurses set their own homework?

Source: Journal of Nursing Management

In a nutshell: Getting performance appraisal right can be a delicate balancing act. Set too hard targets with unrealistic deadlines and you risk alienating staff, restrict your ambitions to turning up on time and not setting fire to the office and people start to wonder what the point of it all is. In this study a team of researchers, led by Faribah Sepahvand, from the Iranian Social Security Organization, asked nurses what was wrong with their existing performance-appraisal system and used their responses to develop a new one. Three themes emerged from interviews with the nurses which were: inappropriate performance-appraisal systems; inefficient instruments; and unskilled evaluators. The new performance-appraisal system, developed in consultation with the nurses, led to increased organizational commitment and job satisfaction with the performance-appraisal process.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jonm.12961>



[Performance appraisal and the generation game](#)

Source: International Journal of Hospitality Management

In a nutshell: People usually sign a contract when they start work but as well as the pen-and-paper one they also enter into a psychological contract with their employers in which they expect their labour to be recognised by money, support and gratitude. In this study Khalid Eyoum, from Hashemite University in Jordan, led a team of researchers investigating the links between performance appraisal and hotel employees' psychological contracts with their employers. They found that an administrative performance appraisal, done to tick boxes and monitor performance, only had an effect on the psychological contract of younger, Generation Y employees, whereas a developmental performance appraisal system, designed to identify areas for growth and development, affected the psychological contract of all ages of workers.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102449>

[Fatigue, motivation, and new nurses](#)

Source: Journal of Nursing Management

In a nutshell: As anyone who's struggled bleary-eyed out of bed on a Friday morning can testify fatigue can affect one's motivation for work. In this study Stéphanie Austin, from the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières in Canada, led a study of 630 French-speaking new nurses. She found that fatigue at the beginning of the study was related to controlled (working under internal or external pressure) motivation a year later, and that controlled motivation was linked to increased sickness absence. Autonomous motivation (working because an activity is seen as worthwhile and/or inherently interesting) had a beneficial effect on all the outcomes the researchers measured a year later and the researchers concluded that "organisational efforts to strengthen autonomous over controlled motivation constitute a promising strategy to improve new nurses' wellbeing and retention in the occupation."

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jonm.12962>

[Flexible working and the focus group](#)

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Discussing life, the universe, and everything with people hanging on your every word is an attractive proposition for many of us. Throw in free coffee and biscuits and you're well on the way to a focus group. In this article Sarah Jackson discusses a focus group held with workers in Scotland to discuss flexible working arising from the coronavirus pandemic. The workers spoke about balance and control and the benefits to employers of being an employer of choice, having improved retention, increased wellbeing and performance, reduced absenteeism, and savings in travel and office space. They were realistic about their own roles, and what was possible in them; those who were working from home because of the pandemic generally hoped to be able to keep a couple of days a week at home, both for the extra time it gave for family life, and the reduced costs of travel. They added that for flexibility



to work there had to be trust between managers and workers and within teams, fairness, and a two-way responsibility.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/trust-and-common-sense-are-key-to-flexible-working/>

What makes a good organizational citizen?

Source: Employee Relations

In a nutshell: Seeing a stack of photocopying paper unattended in a corridor some people will try and work out who it was meant for and get in touch with them, others will idly muse “I wonder how that got there,” before carrying on to their destination and others will grab a ream or two to take home for the kids’ homework. This kind of thing is known as “organizational citizenship,” and in this study Rafael Morales-Sánchez and Susana Pasamar, from Pablo de Olavide University in Seville, investigated it in a study of Spanish finance- and hotel-workers. The researchers looked into people’s ability, opportunity, and motivation to help and found that ability and motivation significantly influenced the level of organizational-citizenship behaviour (OCB). Perceived organizational support also had a notable “direct effect on OCB, as well as moderating ... the relationship between opportunity and OCB.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/ER-04-2019-0169>

Defensive decision-making and psychological safety

Source: Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology

In a nutshell: What’s the difference between a tattooist and a manager? A tattooist covers other people’s backs. In this study Stefanie Marx-Fleck, from Goethe University in Frankfurt, led a team of researchers studying defensive decision-making, which “occurs when the decision-maker does not choose the option that is in the best interest of an organization or client but instead chooses a less-effective but lower-risk alternative that protects him or her in case something goes wrong.” They found that an environment characterized by higher psychological safety can reduce resource depletion and diminish defensive decision-making whereas job insecurity “can result in a threat to personal resources, which increases the likelihood that employees choose defensive decisions.”

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/joop.12353>

Wellbeing

What lies beneath sickness statistics

Source: Personnel Today



In a nutshell: Most people are content to let trouble come looking for them, without going looking for trouble. The rest – Guardian readers, health-and-safety bods, medical journalists – are like holiday makers who can't visit a beach without lifting the pebbles up to check for oil slicks, hypodermic needles and used prophylactics. Charles Alberts, head of wellbeing solutions at Aon is definitely in this camp and in this article he tries to find the cloud behind the silver lining that sickness absence rates fell to 1.8% in 2020 – the lowest since reporting began in 1995. People working from home took, on average, only two sick days off last year, compared to non-homeworkers who took an average of 4.3 days. However, cautions Mr Alberts, this could be down to home workers “potentially masking ill-health and continuing to log in while sick,” and the fact that “working virtually reduces the ability of employers to detect sickness and support employees with some health conditions.” Alberts cautions that many absences can go undetected when people work from home and that the reasons for sick leave can go unreported creating problems for employers as they try to tackle health-and-wellbeing problems. Presenteeism can also be a problem. This can lead to a fall in productivity which can cost two-to-three times more than the cost of sickness absence, reduce team morale and affect customer service. One answer says Alberts “is for employers to monitor employee moods in the moment, knowing how they feel on a given day and understand that there are triggers, negative and positive, which can affect them.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/look-beyond-absence-rates-to-understand-true-state-of-staff-health/>

Long hours, short sleep

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: One suspects that the world would be a quieter, calmer, happier place if – just like small children – its leaders were tucked up in bed at a sensible time instead of writing Tweets under the bedcovers or staying up for the political equivalent of midnight feasts, summit meetings. People lower down the hierarchy aren't immune from this though and a recent study from Blinds Direct has found that nearly a fifth (19.9%) of workers put in up to seven-and-a-half hours of overtime a week. This rose to nearly a quarter in central London where workers were most likely to experience sleep disruption due to longer working hours. The least-overworked city was Newcastle, where 14% of workers said they worked beyond their contracted hours.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/study-suggests-a-fifth-at-sleep-deprivation-risk-because-of-long-hours/>

GPs and hospital medics feel the strain

Source: British Medical Journal

In a nutshell: It's easy to assume that – as you listen to the third movement of Vivaldi's Four Seasons for the 17th time – that GPs are all sat around drinking coffee, playing Scrabble and catching up with their paperwork. In fact they're busier than ever and in March 2021 they delivered almost five million more appointments than the month



before and almost three million more than in March 2019. Hardly surprisingly such a workload puts doctors under strain and the British Medical Association's latest survey of GPs and hospital doctors found that thousands were thinking about leaving the NHS because of exhaustion, stress, and burnout. Half said they planned to work fewer hours in the next year, a quarter said they were more likely to take a career break and 21% said they were considering leaving the NHS for another career with a third thinking about early retirement.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1139>

[Helping employees get back to the office](#)

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: It's fair to say that most people will have mixed feelings about going back to the office. For every person glad to get out of the house and catch up with their colleagues, there will be another two either worried about catching Covid, resenting having to wear a mask or – regardless of levels of biohazard – finding the close proximity of other human beings troublesome. In this article Vanessa Rose offers a few tips including:

1. Well-researched policies.
2. Stress reduction. Devising safe ways for employees to have fun, cope with anxiety, and reconnect with their colleagues
3. Conflict resolution – including appropriate training
4. Mental-health support
5. Managing Covid-19 fears and related conflict
6. Communicate clear policies
7. Encourage self-care

Mental-health problems to watch out for include:

- Increased stress
- Health anxiety
- Change anxiety
- Pre-existing mental-health diagnoses
- Social anxiety

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/addressing-tensions-in-the-workplace-as-covid-transitions-roll-out/>



Women struggle during Covid pandemic

Source: British Medical Journal

In a nutshell: “Sometimes it’s hard to be a woman,” sang Tammy Wynette, something confirmed by a new poll from the NHS Confederation’s Health and Care Women Leaders’ Network. They surveyed around 1,200 NHS staff and found that 80% of women said that their job had had a greater than usual negative effect on their emotional wellbeing as a result of the pandemic, with nearly two-thirds (65%) saying that it had had a negative effect on their physical health. Women had taken on more hours of unpaid caring, particularly those home-schooling children. Women with long-term health conditions reported a greater negative effect on their physical health and also said they felt less safe sharing worries with their managers. Women did have some positive experiences though: including more opportunities for flexible working, improved teamwork, and better access to technology.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1157>

Doctors at the end of their tether

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: In its ongoing campaign for a perfect world for everyone *The Guardian* recently reported that Gwynneth Paltrow had hit rock bottom during lockdown and – hankies at the ready – eaten bread. Doctors are rather less inclined to be solipsistic than Ms Paltrow but even they have been having a tough time during the coronavirus pandemic. The Royal College of Physicians have been asking doctors in Wales* how they’re coping and the results aren’t cheerful reading. 38% regularly have trouble sleeping, 23% don’t feel healthy and 26% feel they no longer have any control over their lives. 19% felt a sense of frustration and 36% a sense of annoyance. A wider poll of Welsh doctors carried out in April found that more than two-thirds (69%) felt exhausted and 31% demoralised. Only half (57%) said they were getting enough sleep.

If you’re not too busy weeping over gluten you can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/doctors-exhausted-demoralised-and-frustrated-warns-royal-college/>

*And they’ve got beautiful scenery, lovely accents and the best national anthem in the world to cheer them up.

Skills for Health, tools for resilience

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Surveys are a bit like London buses – if you miss one there’ll always be another one along in a minute. Some are more useful than others though and NHS and social-care workers are being encouraged to take part in a national biennial research project asking them how they have been affected by the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic over the past year, and what more can be done to protect staff resilience and wellbeing. The survey has been run every two years since 2010 and is normally used to assess the skills and competency needs of both



employers and employees across the sector. This year, however, it is being used to assess how staff are being supported, and can be better supported in the future, so as to reduce the risk of burnout.

You can find out more about the Developing a Resilient Workforce Survey at

<https://skillsforhealth.org.uk/integrated-solutions/research-evaluation/developing-a-resilient-workforce-research/>

Can mindfulness make you happier at work?

Source: Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology

In a nutshell: Views on mindfulness vary. Some think it's a bonus being here and now in the present moment but then they've never had to sit in a hotel conference room listening to a Powerpoint on costing frameworks. Sadly no one seems keen to fund research on the benefits of daydreaming but the evidence for the benefits of mindfulness keeps stacking up. In this study Alexandra Michel, from Heidelberg University in Germany, led a team of researchers investigating the benefits of a "three-week self-instructed online intervention which combines positive activities and mindfulness." The study showed that the intervention – which "could be easily integrated into the daily working routine" – was effective in increasing work engagement, hope and sleep quality as well as in reducing fatigue.

You can read the abstract of this article at

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/joop.12345>

Most organisations boost parental perks

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Although the vast majority of children are delightful, babies are dreadful creatures, only pausing from defecating, urinating and vomiting to wail and then nod off. Having a baby is an "all hands to the pump," situation and most countries provide some maternity (and even paternity) pay to help parents cope. This is a floor, not a ceiling, though and XpertHR has found that almost two-thirds of organisations offer enhanced maternity pay, and almost the same proportion offer paternity pay that is more generous than the statutory requirements. XpertHR surveyed 375 organisations, which, collectively, employed almost a million staff. 63.5% offered maternity pay above the legal minimum and 60.3% did the same for paternity pay. The most-common maternity pay enhancement, provided by 42.4% of employers, was full pay for more than six weeks, followed by the standard, statutory maternity pay rate. Three in 10 organisations offered full pay for three months, and two in 10 offered it for half a year. However, not such good news comes with a [report](#) from single-parent charity Gingerbread, which found that single parents were more likely to have been furloughed and/or to work in sectors more affected by the pandemic than those with partners.

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/majority-offer-enhanced-maternity-and-paternity-pay/>



What should Chief People Officers do after the pandemic?

Source: Personnel Today

In a nutshell: Despite the recent travails of the police an increasing number of people seem to have “officer,” in their job title. Perhaps this is a recognition of a hitherto unsuspected yearning to wear a snazzy uniform and/or write in marker pen on a glass board. In this article Catherine McDermott, from digital health company [Reframe](#) offers some advice to Chief People Officers as they tackle staff wellbeing after the pandemic. According to the Office for National Statistics in 2020 25.9% of the population – 8.4 million people – moved to working from home, with 46.4% of people in London doing so. And a recent survey by the University of Strathclyde found that 78% of people would prefer to work in the office for two days or less, and that 31% would prefer never to darken its doors again. Another survey by Reframe found that whereas 80% of HR decision-makers said they were satisfied their employee-benefits scheme was highly-relevant, only 28% of employees agreed. Catherine McDermott argues that a strong benefits scheme should address the five pillars of wellbeing:

- Physical – having the physical strength and endurance to thrive in life
- Social – feeling valued, seen, and understood
- Financial – feeling secure and having the ability to plan and cope with financial pressures
- Emotional – having mental strength, a positive attitude, and a sense of purpose
- Professional – being able to communicate, contribute, and grow as an individual

You can read the whole of this article at

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/how-chief-people-officers-can-lead-change-post-pandemic/>

