



Editorial

Welcome to the February edition of "Internal Communication". The CIPD has launched a new conflict management guide for line managers to help organisations avoid the 350 days a year of management time typically spent dealing with formal disciplinary and grievance cases and employment tribunal applications.

The Managing Conflict Guide for Line Managers is designed to help equip line managers with the skills and confidence to intervene at an early stage to prevent disputes from escalating to the point where the formal disciplinary or grievance procedures has to be used or an employment tribunal application lodged.

It was produced in response to a CIPD survey into managing conflict that showed organisations are increasingly relying on HR departments and external legal advice to manage the rising number of formal disciplinary and grievance cases.

Ben Willmott, CIPD Employee Relations Adviser, said that too often managers shy away from tackling conflict in case they do or say something that might be held against them during any formal proceedings.

The guide is based on new joint research by the CIPD and the HSE involving interviews with 369 managers and employees in the healthcare, finance, education, local and central government sectors. It highlights the management behaviours that were identified by the research as being most important to help line managers to prevent and manage conflict in the workplace. These behaviours are underpinned by six broad headings: Dealing with issues; Use of official processes; Participative approach; Monitoring team relationships; Role modelling behaviour; Integrity

Ben Willmott states: "Our research shows that only 38% of employers train their line managers in conflict resolution skills, despite the huge impact that disputes at work have on organisations."

"It is not just management time wasted and financial costs that employers must take account of but also the personal cost of individuals under stress, employee absence, dysfunctional teams and damage to morale and productivity. In

many cases employees will simply vote with their feet and leave organisations if conflict is not managed effectively."

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Organising your next internal event? Try getting into the minds of your delegates to increase your chance of success

A new Report, *Inside the Mind of the Delegate*, from Crystal Interactive provides HR departments charged with managing internal events, with a minds eye view of delegates for the first time.

To develop the Report, Crystal Interactive has used its expertise to draw together and analyse the feedback of almost 5,000 delegates who collectively have attended 51 events in the past 18 months.

The feedback is based on open-ended questions – what delegates liked and what they would do differently. This created thousands of text based comments and feedback, which the group has analysed to identify common issues and event problems.

Chris Elmitt, author of the Report, explains why the feedback is so powerful: “The open ended nature of our approach meant that we weren’t channelling the comments into well-worn event survey areas such as the quality of the venue, speakers or food. As a result we unearthed event areas that repeatedly dissatisfied delegates, and which typical event research never explores.”

These key areas are content, organisation and interactivity. The Report examines each

of these areas in turn, with the lessons including:

Content-cramming – almost 24% of the organisational criticisms centre on timing issues. The main fault appears to be that organisers are trying to pack too much in. Content-cramming puts a squeeze on networking which is far more important to the delegates questioned than organisers appreciate.

Workshops not working – workshops are a practical way for attendees to mix with others in informal groups yet 28% of criticisms centre on them. The main problem is that workshops often lack focus, aren’t given enough time or seem to produce meaningless output.

Cut some slack – delegates want more slack time built into agendas so that important issues unearthed at a conference can be further discussed. Further discussion can be captured/facilitated during coffee breaks mid-event. If this is not possible improve the follow up, which many feel is negligible, so that the discussion can continue after the event.

Travel bug – don’t go all out for a smart venue, as unnecessary travel impresses no one.

Focus & depth – don’t try to have something for everyone and become shallow as a result. Allow content to be focused and deep – this works far better than broad agendas.

Real time content shaping – 42% of content criticisms are because attendees have preferred topics they wanted the event to cover. Many event planners may carry out broad research exploring areas potential delegates are interested in, but this is too blunt an approach. To remedy this, organisers should gather delegate views at the event and allow this to inform and shape the speaker slots in real time. This kind of event modification takes courage and speaker dexterity but delivers a far better event experience.

Involvement – 25% of delegates spontaneously said they want an active not passive role in events. 10% said they also want far more debating and Q&A time.

Delegates are saying loud and clear that they want the agenda space and opportunity to really get value out of an event. What’s fundamentally required is a real act of faith by event organisers, to see delegates as a group to be engaged with and listened to rather than seeing them as passive.

2008 looks be the ‘worst year for jobs in a decade’ forecasts the Chartered Institute of Personal and Development

In its annual end of year barometer report on the state of the workplace and the outlook for employment, the Chartered Institute of Personal and Development issues its gloomiest forecast for the UK labour market in a decade.

The report’s author, John Philpott, Chief Economist at the CIPD said: “We forecast a net rise in total UK employment of 75,000 (0.25%) in the year to December 2008, only a third of the rise recorded in both 2006 and 2007, resulting from a combination of much reduced net hiring in the private sector and net job reductions in the public sector.

This would be the worst year for jobs this decade and easily the worst since the Labour Government came to power in 1997.

“In the early part of the decade periods of slower growth in private sector employment were masked by relatively rapid growth in public sector jobs. A downward trend in public sector employment in the past two years has in

turn been more than offset by rising numbers of private sector jobs. But 2008 will be the first year for a decade that the engine of job creation will be spluttering right across the economy.

“With higher fuel costs and food prices set to raise the cost of living in the first half of the year the squeeze on real incomes experienced by many workers in 2007 will continue to bite in 2008.”

“With jobs also harder to come by this could reinforce the impact of the economic slowdown, possibly necessitating bigger cuts in interest rates than currently anticipated to head off the threat of recession and a worrying prolongation of the slowdown into 2009.”

“For seasoned HR professionals 2008 may evoke memories of tougher times – those whose experience doesn’t stretch back to before the economic stability of the past decade will have their first taste of seriously choppy business water.

“Despite a considerable amount of organisational restructuring in the past decade large scale redundancies have been running at historically low levels. This is likely to change in 2008 with more HR professionals having to deal with the particularly tricky task of handling compulsory redundancies. This will present a challenge to those HR professionals that have not had to walk the tightrope of laying-off large numbers of people while ensuring that people who keep their jobs remain committed and motivated.

“Many HR professionals will be dusting off redundancy manuals in the coming months to re-discover best practice on trimming staffing levels. But unlike previous bouts of large scale job shedding in the early 1980s and early 1990s, which tended to fall relatively heavily on older staff, redundancy practice in 2008 will have to take care not to fall foul of recently introduced age discrimination legislation.”



UK and EU anti-discrimination laws need careful consideration

Campaign group Stonewall's workplace equality index published recently shows that even the most traditional of organisations are now promoting diversity.

Take the police, for example. Whereas a few years ago the force had a bad reputation for 'gay-friendliness', now Hampshire and Staffordshire police forces have come third in Stonewall's annual index which scores organisations on their efforts to ensure gay employees thrive at work.

While this is a welcome development, employers promoting diversity risk breaching anti-discrimination laws.

The more imaginative organisations are in trying to enhance diversity in their workplace the more likely they are to breach anti-discrimination law, according to a new report by law firm Nabarro.

The report reveals that contradictions between what employers are doing to promote diversity and the requirements of UK and EU anti-discrimination law are becoming increasingly stark. The more energetic employers are in promoting diversity, the more they risk falling foul of the main prohibitions

on discrimination.

For example, diversity strategies often include 'positive action' measures designed to make workplaces more representative, yet the scope for such measures in much of UK and EU anti-discrimination law is very narrow. Aspirational targets are lawful, but quotas are not and are considered positive discrimination, which is unlawful in the UK.

Sue Ashtiany comments: "Employers must avoid the ill-considered and superficial adoption of fashionable elements of diversity. Woolly plans run the risk of resulting in negative publicity and expensive litigation. The encouragement that diversity thinking gives to organisations to define diversity for themselves can lead to a perception that they are safe as long as they stick to their home-grown diversity strategy."

Examples of unlawful behaviour include:

- Targeting shortlists at women or ethnic minority candidates
- Recruiting specifically from areas with high ethnic minority concentration
- Pooling only women or ethnic minority employees for promotion

Evaluation critical yet practical solutions considered too complex

Measuring the return on learning investments is a critical issue for HR and learning & development practitioners, yet practical solutions are largely considered too complex and expensive to implement.

Angela Hatton, senior Faculty member with The Chartered Institute of Marketing, has worked closely with leading publishing house IPC Media on developing and implementing an evaluation strategy to quantify return-on-investment and increase effectiveness.

True evaluation is about measuring the whole 'development pie' rather than individual pieces or learning interventions, from identifying employee's needs, to the impact of learning interventions themselves, the critical role of line management and the impact on individual, team and business performance.

"Many learning and development teams are still struggling with the concept of an evaluation strategy," said Thomas Brown, Company Connect manager at The Chartered Institute of Marketing.

"The learning and development profession largely find themselves detached from that which enables an impact on performance and therefore a return-on-investment - the processes and management actions that support behaviour change and the transfer of learning.

"Marketing went through the same challenge a decade or so ago. Return-on-investment became a hot topic but many practitioners struggled to assess a return from pieces of the 'marketing pie', such as advertising.

"Successful marketing measurement strategies involve looking at marketing activity in an integrated way, in much the same way that learning and development evaluation now requires."

"As a marketing learning and development organisation, these parallels give us a unique insight and experience that can help learning professionals through this process," added Brown.

DIARY

28 February 2008

Making the Most of Your Internal Communication Channels. An intensely practical one-day workshop to give you ideas and inspiration for re-engorgising your internal Comms.

Venue: Rubens Hotel, London

E-mail: incompany@hawksmere.co.uk

17 March

Engaging Internal Communications Conference. Bringing together heads of communication and internal communicators the event will explore among other issues: Employee Engagement; New And Traditional Media Channels: Evaluation And Measurement; CSR Communications; Coordinating External And Internal PR. Venue: The Grange City Hotel, London
E-mail: conferences@haymarket.com

12 March

Change Communication Conference
In business, the one thing you can count on is change. Change is a fact of life. It's a natural organisational response to competition and to shifts in the socio-economic environment. But what exactly are the tools and techniques to engage your workforce and drive change as best as possible? Which channels will work best for your organisation? And how do you minimise resistance to change and deliver a sustained change communication programme?

Venue: Chelsea Football Club

E-mail: events@melcram.com

7-9 April

Communication Directors' Forum 2008
The Communication Directors' Forum offers an innovative programme of conference options, each designed to address a key concern facing communications professionals today. The programme is pitched at a high level and we endeavour to present new case studies and new thinkers each year.

Venue: Oriana Cruise Ship, Southampton

E-mail: kmacmillan@richmondevents.com

4-5 June

International Employee Communications Summit

Hear about the latest tools and trends in the internal communications field at this event, including practical advice on global communications, research, employee engagement, intranets and social media
Venue: Hilton London Kensington
Tel: +44 (0) 1494 562088

You're foreign! "Then I'll shall shout more loudly", say British executives

British business executives are struggling to keep abreast of the complexities of business culture overseas, even though they are travelling abroad for business more often than ever before, according to research by executive communications consultancy, The Aziz Corporation.

According to the research, 88 per cent believe that people make more foreign business trips than ever before. Of the survey respondents, 82 per cent state that they often do business with people from other cultures, with 66 per cent regularly travelling abroad on business.

The survey found that almost all executives (97 per cent) consider that Britons should make an effort to learn about business etiquette in other countries when travelling abroad for work. 96 per cent believe that knowledge of culture in other countries can make a business meeting much more successful.

Despite this, 68 per cent admit that they sometimes feel embarrassed by their ignorance of other cultures, while 23 per cent have personally slipped-up or had a bad experience in business etiquette when doing business abroad or with people from overseas.

While most businessmen would be

confident in visiting Western Europe or the United States, over half admit they would be daunted by the prospect of visiting countries with a perceived difference in business cultures, such as Japan, Asia or the Middle East.

Before embarking on a business trip, 74 per cent seek advice on rules or etiquette with which they may not be familiar. Despite this, 52 per cent admit they find themselves 'playing it by ear' and taking the lead from those they are meeting or travelling with. 14 per cent claim they have no time or resources to undertake any preparation. Only 13 per cent of British companies offer training to help bridge the cultural gap.

In addition to cultural hurdles, language remains a major sticking-point for the British. Of those executives who regularly travel overseas on business, 96 per cent rely on the fact that most people in business can speak English. Only 21 per cent claim that they can often use the first language of those they are meeting with when abroad, rather than English. 93 per cent believe that British people underestimate the importance of learning about other cultures because the use of English is so prevalent worldwide.

Despite their cultural ignorance, the survey

finds that most Britons are keen to provide a welcoming and tolerant atmosphere for overseas visitors. Indeed, the British place more value on the comfort of foreign visitors than they do their own. 79 per cent of respondents believe people from other cultures visiting Britain should have the right to feel comfortable dressing as they would at home, whilst 70 per cent feel that the British should receive the same treatment when abroad themselves.

The vast majority of business people would feel entirely comfortable doing business with people in a wide range of dress or wearing religious symbols, including a crucifix, headscarf, skull-cap or turban. Only in the case of someone wearing a burqa, covering the face as well as the body, do a clear majority (85 per cent) believe that they would find it difficult to form a business relationship.

The British consider themselves to be so welcoming that 57 per cent feel we tend to treat people from overseas with more tolerance than we expect to receive in return. We are also relaxed about multiculturalism on our own shores, with 93 per cent believing that Britain's economy has benefited from the influx of skilled workers from overseas in recent years.

Employer brands damaged by online ignorance

The Internet is the first port of call for jobseekers, yet employers are still damaging their employer brand when it comes to dealing with online applications.

According to the latest Total Forum report – a study that polled 1198 candidates between April and May 2007 – 80 per cent of jobseekers look online before anywhere else, compared to 66 per cent in 2005. Regional newspapers follow, with 52 per cent using this source.

The volume of online applications is also rising. More than half of those polled (56 per cent) had applied for a job online, whilst 36 per cent had applied for 1 – 5 jobs within the last month (a 4 per cent increase from 32 per cent in 2005). Yet despite this high level of online activity, it appears that the majority of recruiters are damaging their employer brand by failing to have the courtesy to respond to applicants. A staggering 73 per cent of those polled did not receive a response or acknowledgement from employers after

applying for a job.

John Salt, website director for totaljobs.com comments: "Five years ago business was ahead of consumers in terms of internet sophistication, but now the tables have turned. Employers understand the value of online applications, but the majority haven't transferred Customer Relationship Management principles to the online recruitment cycle. The Internet provides much more than a cost effective way to gather CVs – it represents a rich multimedia communication platform which we believe is the future of recruitment."

The Total Forum report also gives insights into exactly who is using the Internet to find work in 2007, revealing an increasing trend towards more experienced and professional jobseekers using the Internet. Forty per cent of online jobseekers are now at managerial level or above, an increase of 5 per cent since the last report. More than a third (37 per cent) have a

degree or postgraduate qualification.

The report also shows that for the first time ever, women have overtaken men as the primary users of online job hunting – 52 per cent are female, compared with 48 per cent in 2005.

However, the key roles that women search for remain more traditional with the retail, secretarial/PA and healthcare sectors being the most popular. The hottest sectors for male jobseekers are IT, engineering and manufacturing, and transport and logistics.

It seems that the online jobseeking community is now as diverse as the modern workforce itself.

The challenge for employers going forward is therefore not simply one of letting people know they have vacancies – it's also about engaging jobseekers in a dialogue and speaking to people in a relevant way that makes their company the most attractive organisation to work for.



High levels of organisational commitment are found in the 'happiest' countries

The level of commitment from employees to their employers (organisational commitment) across the globe varies between nations and cultures, and is closely linked to the overall happiness of a population, new research from Cass Business School, City of London, shows.

Dr Garry Gelade studied national differences in organisational commitment in a sample of 49 countries, and looked at whether the economy, national personality, or cultural values had the most impact.

Dr Gelade found that Brazil, Israel and Cyprus were ranked as the countries with the most committed employees, and at the other end of the scale, Russia, Japan and Hong Kong had the lowest.

The UK was ranked 34th, preceded by Estonia and followed by the province of Taiwan. Australia, the Netherlands and

Switzerland were ranked as the happiest, while Latvia, Bulgaria and the Russian Federation were the least happy.

Dr Gelade found that commitment is high in countries where the population is 'extravert', and low in countries where the population is 'neurotic', that is, more prone to negative tendencies, such as anxiety.

As a result, commitment is also high in countries where the population are ranked as being happy.

Socio-economic conditions have a marginal influence on commitment, which is slightly higher in countries with lower unemployment and economically robust, but is unrelated to per capita national income.

Few studies have attempted to account for national differences in commitment levels. At the organisational level, a highly committed workforce is associated with high company

performance.

At a national level, however, this is not the case; countries with the highest levels of commitment are not necessarily the most economically successful.

Dr Gelade comments: "With an increase in corporate employment in many parts of the world, many corporations operate cross-nationally and employ an international workforce, especially in London. This study will have practical implications for organisations seeking to maximise commitment levels among an eclectic workforce."

Dr Garry Gelade's research paper, 'National Differences in Organisational Commitment: Effect of Economy, Product of Personality, or Consequence of Culture?', was recently published in the Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology.

Advertising is failing to attract top graduate talent

Relationship building is the only way forward as advertising is failing to attract the best graduate talent to job positions, according to graduate recruitment expert, Simon Reichwald.

Fifteen years ago media such as The Times, The Guardian and Prospects Today were the main advertising tools available to graduate recruiters.

This changed with the introduction of online recruitment sites which soon, with the growing size and spread of the graduate market, became the fastest way (and most cost effective) to communicate with as many graduate jobseekers as possible.

Although online recruitment advertising is still popular with many graduates, it is an increasingly less cost effective way of recruiting, and Simon Reichwald, Managing Director of Bright Futures and Graduate Success says it is no longer the best method for finding the very top applicants.

"Most of the best graduates know who they want to apply to before they start applying. They know this not because they have searched for all companies offering, for example consultancy or marketing roles, but because they are aware of the 'best' companies

out there."

"This awareness has been achieved as the 'best' companies have created a powerful profile well in advance of the time students start actively job hunting. We are seeing much more focused activity online i.e. organisations using fewer job boards. Even the big generalist careers fairs aren't as popular as they used to be, companies are doing more activity with fewer universities such as focused career fairs, employer presentations, relationships with Academics and Faculties and internships."

Simon Reichwald explains why this is important: "The key to real success with this on campus activity is to see it as more than just 'nice to do' branding. Organisations must leverage the full value from these activities to get firmly and consistently onto the radar of the best undergraduate talent."

Advertising needs to be examined to see whether it is delivering recruitment success in the same way it did ten years ago. It's likely that businesses will discover that the effectiveness of advertising is dying and it's time to get back to old-fashioned relationship building with students to ensure they attract the top talent before they graduate.

Monday morning blues

Have you found it hard to get out of bed on a Monday morning? You're not alone with more than 70% of people saying they finding it hard to get motivated on a Monday and most not doing any work until at least 10am

Work-shy Brits are costing businesses £361 billion a year because it takes them so long to get into the swing of things on a Monday morning, according to a new poll by video recruitment website www.jobs2view.com

John Glas, managing director of jobs2view said: "Everyone hates that Monday morning feeling but it's worrying to think that simply taking your time to get into the swing of things is costing businesses so much."

The poll of 2,000 employees also revealed that 1 in 10 admit going through the whole morning before doing any work. Two thirds also do admin jobs so they can ease themselves in gently. A cheeky but healthy 43% have phoned in sick on a Monday. Almost a third have been intentionally late, but blame traffic or public transport in order to get more time in bed. A lucky 72% said their boss didn't do anything about it and 17% only had a few words of warning. Three quarters of Brits have been late to work before, half saying it is more likely to be on a Monday.

Corporate espionage – separating the fact from fiction

There's a widespread misconception that corporate espionage is a high-tech crime committed by slick James Bond types with mini cameras or genius computer hackers, and there is no doubt this level of espionage does occur, but generally nothing could be further from the truth.

Leading U.K private investigation and security consultants, Investigator Limited, has found that just about all corporate penetration is accomplished with decidedly simple, but preventable methods.

The firm's founder and director, Barry Schofield says: "Corporate spies are perfectly happy to get information from the easiest, sometimes most overlooked sources, such as waste bins or unattended computers.

"These sources are in fact preferable as they involve less risk. More often than not, the offender is a disgruntled employee, or someone at director level trying to either set up in competition or giving a company's intellectual rights away to a competitor for either reward or revenge."

"Enlisting the help of a professional consultant may be a difficult decision to make, but a responsible security firm will work with you in effectively overseeing all of your security needs. Security is sometimes a necessity, but should always work in harmony with the business it is designed to protect".

Internal company correspondence can contain an incredible amount of information. Companies produce their own newsletters,

policy-meeting minutes, and so on, filled with project data, details about people, company-status updates, and other information, but Barry says, "It's important to realise that although information on a computer can be extremely important, the same piece of information written on a napkin is just as valuable".

Most corporations and company owners don't believe their company will be targeted. If a company is not in the defence industry or the company is relatively small, the thinking goes, they aren't at risk.

This common attitude is a spy's best weapon.

In fact, small companies tend to be targeted more than large corporations, simply because they have more competitors. But a £1000 loss to a small company can be more damaging to a small company than £100,000 is to a large corporation.

It is recommended to hire a leading professional investigation company, who subscribe to the following professional codes and regulatory bodies. I.F.I.G (Insurance Fraud Investigators Group) WAPI (World Association of Professional Investigators), IAATI International Institute of Auto Theft Investigators, and EPIC (Ex-Police in Industry and Commerce).

Make sure any company is also UKAS ISO 9001 certified and is registered under the Data Protection Act, and has full Professional Indemnity cover.

A rigid approach to flexible working?

Employers who side step the issue of flexible working may be costing their organisations, say HR consultants The Urquhart Partnership.

Introducing part time, job sharing and tailored working patterns to meet individuals' needs may be a headache for employers but it could be in their interest to think pragmatically and earn the loyalty and respect of staff.

Harriet Harman's call for employers to allow fathers more flexible working options to spend time with their families has highlighted the fact employers should be moving with the cultural shift towards more 'at home' fathers.

Stephen Seymour, from Manchester based The Urquhart Partnership, said: "Companies fear flexible working will be a logistical

nightmare and will affect client continuity but, if thought through properly, it can improve performance and ensure greater loyalty and staff retention.

"Organisations need to be careful they treat employees equally and don't set a precedent that can't be fulfilled. If a policy is put in place and a trial period established then it can be a win win situation and demonstrates the employer has gone the extra mile to suit people's individual needs."

While historically some sectors, are more rigid than others in their approach to flexible working, cultural changes and the evolving family model proves that employers need to adapt their approaches to move with the times.

Work life balance can reduce stress

In response to the demands of UK workers for a better deal on work life balance, help with reducing stress and the ability to take control of their careers and lives, Coventry based RDI (Resource Development International Ltd - <http://www.rdi.co.uk>) is launching a comprehensive training programme, 'Life Lines', to help businesses respond to these demands.

Life Lines is a self-development programme where employees work through various learning activities and exercises under the guidance of a buddy or mentor. The activities focus on, amongst other things, stress reduction, diet, relationships and personal improvement in areas such as family and career.

The recent Quality of Working Life survey, published by the Chartered Management Institute and Simplyhealth, highlighted the increasing pressures the UK workforce is under, and how being ill is seen as a sign of weakness. For example, only 4% of those suffering from stress took time off work, despite one in three claiming to suffer from symptoms. RDI believes this attitude to stress and other illnesses is having a detrimental effect on performance and enthusiasm for work, and is increasing the suspicion between managers and the workforce.

Group managing director, Dr Philip Hallam, says: "Our clients asked us to develop a programme that addresses the broad issues of workplace welfare, with a practical approach to improving employee wellbeing and productivity. After months of research and development, the answer lies in our Life Lines programme. In its design, we faced many challenges, including cost constraints within organisations and the need to minimise time away from the workplace. We overcame these challenges by developing a self development programme that focuses on practical learning and exercises that can be done anywhere, at any time."

David Mack, MD at Trinity CPD Training Ltd, has assessed the programme and comments: "Life Lines is an excellent resource for businesses and is similar to an executive coaching programme but comes at a fraction of the price."

The programme can be delivered standalone, or can be added on to existing corporate staff development programmes. For more information visit www.rdi.co.uk



UK

Companies to be allowed to offer nationally recognised qualifications

Companies will be able to offer their own nationally recognised qualifications under a shake-up of welfare and training announced by the UK government.

So far, burger chain McDonald's, budget airline Flybe, and infrastructure firm Network Rail, have been approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to award certificates through their company training programmes.

McDonald's for instance will train staff for a certificate in basic shift management, which includes modules on human resources, finance and hygiene. In some cases these qualifications will be equivalent to GSCE or "A" level examinations.

John Denham, the Skills Secretary, said: "It is right that we recognise and accredit employers that have shown a commitment to training and developing their staff. This is an important step towards ending the old divisions between company training schemes and national qualifications, something that will benefit

employees, employers and the country as a whole."

The initiative has been welcomed by the CBI as a positive move towards an awards system that can deliver the skills employers need.

John Cridland, CBI Deputy Director-General said: "Today marks a significant milestone on the road to reforming qualifications so that they better reflect the skills and competencies employers and employees need.

"Companies currently invest £33 billion every year in training their staff, but only one-third of employer training leads to qualifications because not enough official courses offer the competencies that employers require. Firms have instead run their own bespoke training programmes and formally recognising more employer training will lead to more relevant qualifications and give a greater recognition to business and employee investment in skills."

UK

Govt right to restrict unskilled migrants

An announcement by the Government that unskilled workers from outside the EU will not be allowed to work in the UK when the new points based immigration system is introduced is fully justified, according to John Philpott, Chief Economist at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

Dr Philpott said: "The acid test of any policy for managing migration is that it meets reasonable and legitimate employer need without detriment to the common good. The detail of the forthcoming points based system, as outlined by ministers, strikes a sensible balance even though it may frustrate some employers.

"The UK economy is now fully stocked with Eastern European migrants capable of performing unskilled jobs. Blocking entry of unskilled people from outside the EU may sound harsh but will be good news for disadvantaged jobseekers and many in existing ethnic minority communities in the UK."

UK

Companies to be hit with hefty fines for not disclosing corporate details

A failure to comply with the latest Government disclosure requirements for websites, emails and documents could see companies facing hefty fines.

The Companies (Registrar Languages and Trading Disclosures) Regulations 2006 introduced changed on January 1, 2007 but many UK companies are still failing to comply.

The changes call for inclusion of corporate name and other details on a range of documents, from letters and emails to order forms.

Phil Hitchen, corporate solicitor at law firm Ralli, believes many companies and officers could be caught out because they are not aware of their obligations and said the time to take advice and action is now. "The Act is a huge statute to familiarise yourself with and has to be read along with a great deal of related legislation, some of which is still in draft.

"The changes are being brought into force piecemeal which means many people are not actually aware they are not complying," he added.

Conviction for a disclosure offence has fines of up to £1,000 per person.

The Act states the company's name must appear in full on all business letters, order forms and websites and any documents of that type in hard copy, electronic or any other form. It creates offences for companies and personal liability for officers.

The place of registration, company number, registered office and other disclosure details must also be set out on all company forms, websites emails and stationery used for letters.

Hitchen said confusion about company law changes could lead to a flood of enquiries:

"Many business people do not know about

the disclosure changes and inadvertently do not comply. A quick Internet search shows lots of companies have not updated their websites or documents accessible on them

"You are obligated to have the same details you would have on letterheads and other documents and a lot of companies have not done that. An email or electronic document must also carry the same details."

The civil aspect remains the biggest shock. For example, if you're an officer and either send me or authorise another to send me an order for certain goods, and I notice the order form does not have your correct company name in full, I can sue you personally if the company defaults.

"Not complying is also a statutory offence by the company and officer."

Visit www.dti.gov.uk to find out more about the Act and related legislation.



“Hacking the human,” the next big challenge for IT and computer security

Hackers who want to breach corporate IT security systems are turning to “hacking the human,” a security expert claims in the new edition of *Engineering & Technology Magazine*, published by the IET (Institution of Engineering and Technology).

The battlefield between hackers and IT security teams is switching from penetrating firewalls to using social engineering skills to befriend employees and draw valuable security information out of them. According to Ian Mann, a senior systems consultant and an advisor with GCHQ holding security clearance.

Mann adds that the business of information security is dominated by IT security hardware and software vendors but the greatest weakness in the corporate security chain is the employees.

He warns that hackers do not need to find technical vulnerabilities, as hacking the human can be sufficient

He adds that while companies know which members of staff have responsibility for

securing IT systems and who is responsible for the physical security of buildings, many have not thought about who is responsible for securing their staff from “hack attacks.”

The feature in *Engineering & Technology* includes a hit-list of the five most vulnerable areas which malevolent social engineers exploit:

- 1) Following instructions: People are conditioned to follow instructions
- 2) Ignorance: People are more likely to comply with an instruction if they are unsure about the situation they are in and the person speaking to them is an expert. Dealing with IT systems make the majority of users feel this way
- 3) Desire to be liked. Hack attack victims describe the “attacker” as being nice: A few contacts from a nice person and the target feels they have made a new friend
- 4) Being helpful: IT helpdesks can be targeted to exploit their role of helping staff and ability to change passwords.
- 5) Gullibility: Hackers present gains to induce victims knowing that people respond to the

gains which are on offer

Mann warns that staff training is not the answer as IT staff do not see it as their role while those involved in training believe it is an IT issue.

He says that companies must adopt a systemic change to information security and combine training and awareness with developing systems that make it more difficult for a user to give away information which could lead to a breach.

Dickon Ross, editor in chief of *Engineering and Technology* said: “This demonstrates the increasing challenges which those working in engineering and technology face. IT systems are vital to the running of businesses and enable people to communicate information easily”

“However, the ease of access for individuals can present one of the great challenges to security professionals. The interface between engineers and other disciplines in the workplace are increasingly important and our magazine is at the forefront of these issues.”

Is getting a new job a New Year’s resolution for your young managers?

That is the question being asked of employers throughout the UK this month following a report which found that over half of young managers are dissatisfied with their jobs and are considering change.

This is leading to a mass haemorrhaging of young talent who are either actively searching for, or thinking about, a new job. Worryingly, employers are failing to respond to this unhappiness and frustration.

These are the findings of a new survey by leadership development organisation Common Purpose, who wanted to discover if there are career traps and barriers limiting junior managers and keeping them from fulfilling their potential as leaders of tomorrow.

The report, “Time for a change?” revealed widespread certainty that continuing professional development could make their roles more fulfilling, but while nearly all had received training, only a third found that training rewarding in terms of job fulfilment.

The training was perceived to enhance career prospects, but fell short in addressing

wider aspirations and life goals.

Asked what type of training they thought would help them develop their careers and enable them to feel fulfilled in their job, there was a strong belief that peer-to-peer learning and external experiences would help them, with over half of young managers wanting increased access to diverse experiences and new people outside their own sector.

However, with such a clear understanding of the type of training needed to enrich their jobs, there was a striking lack of awareness of how to access it.

While three quarters of junior managers have considered ways to make their jobs more fulfilling, nearly one in three said they don’t know where to go for training and development opportunities that will help them do this.

There was also a stark lack of support for them in seeking this training, with 84% saying that their employer hasn’t helped them. It is increasingly being seen as a major issue for those responsible for communication within organisations, to gauge the feelings and relative

satisfaction of employees in order to inform decision makers regarding potential areas of unease.

“These findings may not have proved a huge concern to employers even just a few years ago,” says Julia Middleton, Founder and Chief Executive of Common Purpose.

“But in today’s world, organisations either create an environment in which young managers are truly free to manage and make change, or they must face the consequences. It’s abundantly clear from the findings that ‘ticking the box’ with training and development programmes simply isn’t enough. It is not rocket science, if they don’t help their talent to flourish, someone else will,” says Julia.

The “Time for a change?” survey was conducted online in September 2007 amongst 200 junior, middle and senior managers aged over 25 from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors by an independent professional market researcher

The Time for a Change? report can be downloaded from: www.commonpurpose.org.uk/home/resources/research.aspx

It ain't what you say

Are poor writing standards damaging business? In this article Anthony Landale looks at the problems caused by inaccurate grammar and highlights a fast training solution

If you want to know just how embarrassing and damaging it can be to make high profile gaffes with English then look no further than George Bush.

As most of us know, a whole industry has sprung up to pour scorn and ridicule on the President's head because of his frequent linguistic blunders. But George isn't alone in his poor command of language – this is a problem that is endemic in the UK and is particularly pressing for organisations, which rely on professional written communication.

It is easy enough to see why this has become a core concern. We only have to consider the so-called e-generation, those who have never known a world without email and texting, to recognise the sudden change in focus in communication.

Today's youth are writing to one another more than ever, but formal writing and accurate sentence construction is a skill rarely practiced. And even older e-mailers are catching the bug – paying less attention to their grammar when typing out a message than they would ever have dreamed of doing in the past.

Verbal gobbledegook

"Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we." George Bush
Washington, D.C., Aug. 5, 2004

However, while many of us might be happy enough to cut corners when we are writing to colleagues and friends we have different standards when it comes to being the recipients of business communication.

Indeed, when we are on the receiving end of sloppy writing the tables turn and the potential costs of getting it wrong become apparent. For example, a recent CBI report has suggested that the texting generation is "unable to function in the workplace" because people simply cannot write well enough. And according to Richard Lambert, Director General of the CBI: "Basic literacy and numeracy problems are a nightmare for businesses and individuals."

It isn't only the CBI which is concerned. In 2005 a Royal Mail survey of companies discovered that poor grammar and atrocious spelling could be costing UK businesses a staggering £41 billion in lost sales.

And commenting on this finding Julia Strong, Deputy Director of the National Literacy Trust, pointed not only to the significant impact that staff with inadequate literacy skills could have on their organisation's competitiveness but also highlighted the crying need for business to provide skills training to rectify such literacy problems.

Most companies know this of course. They know that their customers are likely to be driven away by error strewn communication. They may not know, however, that overcharging is seen by more customers as a lesser offence than companies that don't have a grip on their grammar. When it comes to writing standards it appears that customers have a low tolerance threshold.



AUTHOR NOTES

Anthony Landale and Clive Lewis are from Illumine. Illumine training specialises in delivering management and personal development training to enable individuals and their organisations to effectively manage information overload and develop creative thinking, problem solving and communication skills. Contact Illumine on 01753 866633 for more details

“We know that language and grammar is changing faster than ever. Imported media, new technology, a much faster world ... all impact on the language we use and how we use it. There is nothing wrong with that”

Identifying the rocks

So what do organisations have to do to meet this challenge? First it's surely important to recognise that there is a balance to be struck. We know that language and grammar is changing faster than ever. Imported media, new technology, a much faster world ... all impact on the language we use and how we use it. There is nothing wrong with that.

However, when it comes to communicating, engaging and influencing people in the workplace a different imperative comes into focus. The reason for this is that when the rules that underpin language are so eroded that people no longer talk in a unified voice then a barrier springs up between the communicator and the recipient.

And this is exactly why grammar is so important. It helps with meaning, understanding and relationships – and this suggests it's an issue that needs proper attention.

So is there an easy remedy for the situation? According to Clive Lewis, MD of illumine there is. “We don't want to train people to be linguists or scholars but we do want to help people get to grips with the essentials of grammar. There are several practical refresher courses available for people who know they sometimes slip up with their grammar and want to ensure their written communication won't embarrass them again.”

For example, the illumine programme is called ‘Grammar on the Rocks’ and it doesn't try to bombard participants with too much information. What it does instead is divide grammar into three bite-sized chunks as follows:

- Major Rocks including the use of apostrophes, plurals, subject-verb agreements and bad verbal grammar
- Minor Rocks which cover the use of colons, semicolons, punctuation of lists, using the right words in a sentence and hyphen usage
- Submerged Rocks which are those less commonly known obstacles such as where to add prepositions and when, if ever, to use split infinitives.

The promise for those who start to pay attention to their grammar rocks is that they can be confident of avoiding the sort of public humiliation that had Fife Council cited by the Plain English Campaign for this prime example of grammatical mish-mash.

‘It has been brought to our attention that due to changes made to your grey household wastes bin collection dates within your new calendar. Your bin will be emptied week beginning the 20th March 2006, then next collection would not be until the week beginning

the 10th April 2006. Thus having to wait 3 weeks for collection. Therefore we are to provide a normal collection on your normal collection day, week starting the 3rd April and again on your new collection date, week starting the 10th April then there after every 2 weeks.’

The challenge with the above is that it takes at least two or three readings to get to grips with what the writer is trying to communicate. The problem for Fife Council is that it damages its reputation and leaves the organisation open to ridicule.

I didn't know it wasn't wrong

The ramifications of poor grammar should have ambitious executives thinking hard. Why? Because this is a matter that also impacts on personal career success.

In short, managers who want to ‘get on’ need good written skills. This starts for most of us with our own CVs. Yet you only have to ask any recruitment consultant how many CVs they jettison without reading past the first paragraph to see that the majority of candidates fall far short of what is considered acceptable.

For example, according to a survey conducted by Hertfordshire University last year over three-quarters of employers are put off a job candidate by poor spelling or grammar. Interestingly this figure was more than twice the 34% who were annoyed by CV exaggerations.

As one personnel officer commented “I work in a personnel department and see so many spelling errors on application forms. I can't believe what some people send in – people can't even spell the job title they are applying for. It doesn't surprise me that employers are put off by bad spelling, it not only shows a lack of basic skills but also a lack of attention to detail and self awareness”.

And it isn't only in the recruitment process where the problem shows up. Just think of the presentations, proposals and reports that aspiring executives will have to submit to clients, colleagues and senior managers during their careers. Misuse of apostrophes, poor punctuation, poor spelling ... all such gaffes will have senior managers questioning an executive's suitability for promotion.

Must know vs nice to know

So let me now look at some of the specific areas that need to be addressed.

As I have been intimating in this article while purists have a particular view of grammar rooted in the centuries long evolution of the English language there is a much more pragmatic view than this. It doesn't make

Curriculum what?

According to a survey of recruitment professionals carried out by the Recruitment & Employment Confederation, 47% said that out of all the CVs they received, over half (50%) contained grammatical errors, with the worst offenders in the 21-25 year old age group. Men are much worse than women, with seven out of 10 recruiters surveyed saying that a CV from a man is more likely to contain errors. The online survey took place in December 06 and overall, was answered by 266 recruitment professionals. Other key findings include the fact that the misspelling of 'Curriculum Vitae' is one of the most common mistakes.

sense to expect emailers and texters to change their habits. Indeed that would be a Canute-like folly. If we follow the 'Grammar on the Rocks' principles it is altogether more prudent to suggest that we need to adapt our style both to the medium being used and to the expectations of the audience. In other words if we are tasked with writing a formal document then we had better brush up on our ability to write in a more formal style.

In this context here are some simple rules to follow as best practice:

1. Must knows.

The must know aspects of grammar include:

- understanding when and how to use apostrophes. In particular it's important to know how i) an apostrophe is used to stand in for a letter that is missing (e.g. don't), ii) how it is used in a singular possessive sense (e.g. IBM's market) and iii) how it is used after a plural noun (e.g. our managers' challenges)
- knowing how to make words plural. In essence the rule is to add an 's' to form a plural and only to use apostrophes to eliminate confusion e.g. 6's and 7's
- ensuring subject-verb agreement. This is an area that often trips people up but the principle is clear - we instinctively know that a singular subject connects to a singular verb e.g. 'the dog jumps'. The difficulty comes for some people when they treat a collective noun (e.g. team, company, staff) as a plural subject when, in fact, it is a singular unit
- eliminating bad verbal grammar. The classic example here is when sportsmen say when being interviewed "we did good" rather than "we did well".

2. Nice to knows.

The nice to know aspects of grammar include:

- understanding and being able to use words that are


spelled nearly the same, but possess different meanings.

The classic example here is 'to affect' which means to influence and 'to effect' which means to cause a result.

There are a many such words which people confuse including practice/practise and enquiry/inquiry

- knowing when to use hyphens. The general rule around hyphens is that they guide the reader on words that should be read together. So, for example, long-term and self-made are classic examples where a hyphen should be used
- recognising that it is okay to use 'and' or 'but' at the beginning of a sentence. Many people remember being told at school that such use of language is incorrect but the King James' Bible and many of Shakespeare's works are full of such beginnings. So don't feel too constrained.
- knowing when to use the word 'myself', when to use 'me' and when to use 'I'. For example "This report was produced by Sarah and me". To say "by Sarah and myself" would be wrong.

Taking action

If this is all too reminiscent of long unproductive hours spent in the schoolroom then be too downhearted. The promise that Clive Lewis at illumine makes is that you can pick these essentials in just half a day. And for UK bosses it is also worth reminding you that you are not alone. In corporate America it is reported the Fortune 500 companies are spending more than \$3billion a year retraining employees in basic English. On both sides of the Atlantic we can blame the blackberry and the instant messaging culture for this problem but that won't help to solve it. It is up to training and HR departments and individual staff to take action, get to grips with their grammar, and glean the rewards that will come through increased personal confidence, improved professional standards and better customer relationships. 

“It is up to training and HR departments and individual staff to take action, get to grips with their grammar, and glean the rewards that will come through increased personal confidence, improved professional standards and better customer relationships”

The strengths approach to communicating success

How can you build on people's strengths? How can you build super teams? How can you communicate people's success stories to generate engagement in an organisation? Mike Pegg explore three ways to make this happen



AUTHOR NOTES

Mike has spent the past 40 years using the strengths approach. He has written many books on the subject. He now focuses on mentoring, writing and helping people to build 'super teams'. His clients include Sony, Microsoft, Experian, Eurostar, British Gas, Waterstone's and many others. His website, www.thestrengthsway.com, provides many 'strengths' building tools that people can download and use.

1) You can build on people's strengths.

There are many different approaches to growth – but people often come from one of two traditions. They adopt the strengths approach or the shortcomings approach. Sometimes they may also use a combination of both. People who use the strengths approach focus on your assets. Because they are so encouraging, however, they can also give tough messages in a way which people can accept. They look at person in action and ask:

“What are the activities in which they deliver ‘As’, rather than ‘Bs’ or ‘Cs’? What are their natural talents? When are they in their element – at ease at yet also excelling? When do they quickly see the destination – the picture of perfection? When do you go ‘A, B ... then jump to ...Z’? Where do they quickly see patterns? When do they flow, focus and finish? What is their successful working style? How can we help them to build on their ‘As’ and manage the consequences of their ‘Bs’ and ‘Cs’? How can they make their best contribution to the business?”

People who use the shortcomings approach start by looking at weaknesses. They focus on who the person is not – their deficits – rather than their assets. They say things like:

“This is where you deliver ‘Cs’ and ‘Bs’. Let's analyse these in depth and explore why you fail. We will also consider all the barriers that prevent you performing. Then, when everything is sorted out, we can move onto where you may deliver ‘As’.”

Peak performers frequently take the strengths approach – but it is not a soft option. Organisations that take this route adopt a different ‘psychological contract’. They provide an encouraging environment – but they expect people to show enterprise and deliver

excellence. People take responsibility, set specific goals and use their talents to help organisation to achieve success. Does it work? Roy White, the VP of HR for Sony Europe, believes so, advising:

“I've seen plenty of evidence. If you want statistics, one sales team here at Sony Europe increased sales by 42%, profit by 50% and staff engagement by 10% following this approach.”

2) You can build strengths-based super teams

This team followed the “super teams” approach. Super teams are special. They have a compelling purpose and translate this into a clear picture of perfection. People choose to opt-into the team and make their best contribution towards achieving the goals. Super teams are made up of volunteers, not victims. They do professional work, solve problems and deliver peak performance. People then do everything possible to achieve the picture of perfection.

The super teams approach comes with three health warnings. First, it works. Second, it looks simple on paper, but that does not mean it is easy. Third, it calls for taking tough decisions, especially about people. There are normally seven steps towards building such a team – see illustration – but we can break these down into three main stages.

So how can you build such a team?

You can clarify the purpose, picture of perfection and principles. Start by creating a compelling purpose. This is the team's reason for being – the ‘What’. Translate the purpose into a clear picture of perfection. Pick a date in the future. Describe the actual things that will be happening then that will show the team has reached its



goal. If possible, produce an inspiring 'one-liner' that sums up your aim. Draw a road map towards achieving the target. Start from your destination and work backwards. Describe the milestones – the specific things the team must achieve at each stage of the journey. Describe the 'actual words' you want to hear different groups of people saying along the way. Later, during the story telling phase you will hear them.

After clarifying the 'What', revisit the 'Why'. Clarify the benefits of reaching the goals –

for the organisation, the customers and the team members. Move onto the 'How'. Clarify the key principles – the key strategies – the team can follow to give it the greatest chance of success. You are now ready to communicate the purpose, picture of perfection and principles – but then comes the crucial step.

You can get the right people.

Get the right people with the right spirit – because otherwise you are sunk. Great teams are built on 'similarity of spirit and diversity of strengths'. Diversity of spirit is a recipe for disaster. Get the right balance between 'soul players' and 'star players'. Soul players embody the spirit of the team. They are consistent players who do the right things every day. Star players also embody the spirit, but they also add 'little bit extra'. There is no place for 'semi-detached' players who are waiting to be motivated. One negative person can dilute the energy of many people in the team.

Clear contracting is crucial and is the hallmark of

People follow the 'strengths' or 'shortcomings' approaches to growth

• *The strengths model*



• *The shortcomings model*

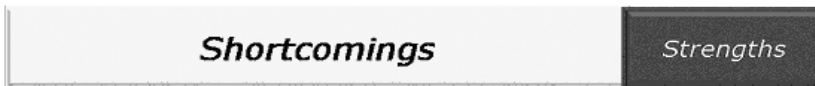


Figure 1

healthy cultures. There are three things you can do to make this happen. First, communicate the picture of perfection. Second, invite people to proactively get back to you to show how they want to contribute to achieving the picture of perfection. Third, bearing in mind each person's strengths, make clear contracts about their part in reaching the goals.

You can enable people to be professional, solve problems and achieve peak performance.

Great teams develop good habits. They keep doing the right things in the right way every day. Invite each person – or, in larger groups, each team – to describe the specific things they will do to deliver the goods. Ask them to proactively keep you informed about the actions they are taking to tackle the issues that are in the 'Green, Amber & Red' zones. Great teams contain resilient people who overcome setbacks. Educate them to stay calm during crises, solve problems and deliver the goods when it

Super teams

They focus on the following steps towards achieving peak performance

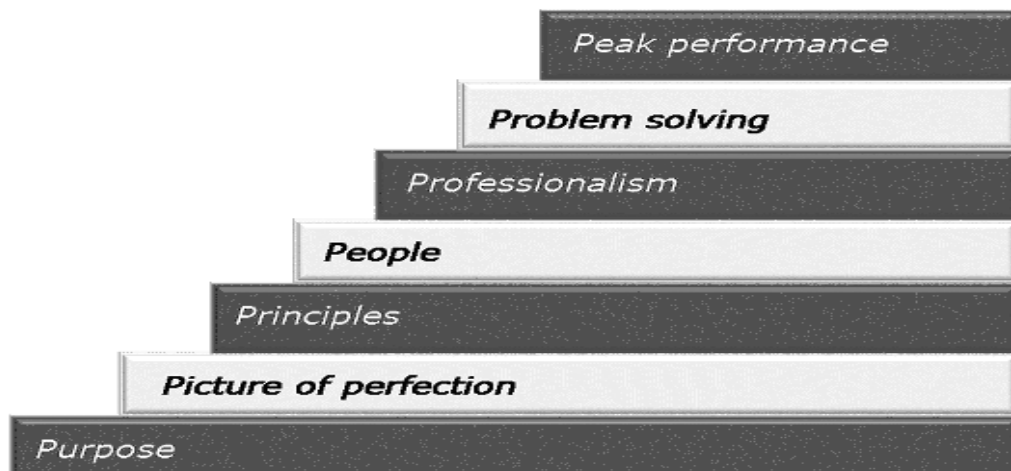


Figure 2

matters. Encourage people to keep working hard and achieve the picture of perfection.

One ending is a new beginning. Some teams disband after reaching the goal. Other teams refocus on the purpose and translate it into a new picture of perfection. Pacesetter teams, for example, have a special kind of psychology. They aim to take the lead, maintain the lead and extend the lead. Staying ahead of everybody else, they make the new rules for the game. Guiding your team to success, you may then want to repeat the process. As they say in sport: "First build a team, then a club, then a dynasty." This calls for making even tougher decisions on the road towards building a second-generation super team.

3) You can communicate success stories to generate engagement in an organisation.

"I agree with building on strengths and developing high performing teams," somebody may say. "Who wouldn't? The challenge is spreading these principles in a way that people can accept. They are fed-up with 'initiatives' that urge them to change their behaviour. Have you any suggestions?"

Imagine you have been invited to lead a business. Your brief is to improve the results by shifting the company culture. You have several options for making this happen. These include: a) You can urge everybody to 'change' and put them through a conventional 'change programme'; b) You can fire everybody and start again with a blank piece of paper; c) You can create the 'future culture' by building successful prototypes and share the successes. People can

then choose whether or not they want to join this culture.

Savvy leaders often go for option (c). Why? They understand systems theory. Systems follow the law of homeostasis: they keep returning back to their present state. So don't try to change the system - create a new system with new rules. You can do this by building successful prototypes that highlight the future way of 'doing things around here'. Success provides its own arguments. Publicise the stories in your own way - through newsletters, articles, internal television, DVD's or whatever. People can then be encouraged to follow the successful principles and contribute to shaping the future culture.

Stratus Technologies is one organisation that followed this approach in their EMEA region. Paul Thomalla, VP of Stratus EMEA championed the cause, reiterating the picture of perfection and telling related strengths stories at road shows and on pod-casts on their intranet. They also contracted an independent writer who understood the strengths philosophy and their picture of perfection to harvest and tell several "hidden hero" stories on their intranet each month.

"It is one of the easiest story telling projects I've ever worked on," advised the writer, Nicki Hayes.

"Because all of Stratus EMEA's employees have bought into a strengths approach and the 'super teams' programme they are well aware of each others' strengths and reiterating their own versions of the corporate picture of perfection is second nature.

"It seems to me that everyone in that organisation is making their greatest contribution and everyone can tell me a story about heroic ways in which their colleagues are so doing - from the cleaners to the management team."

Haitham Himoud, Stratus EMEA's head of marketing has seen evidence that the story telling approach is working: "Click through rates to these stories are 30 - 45% against an industry average of 3-5%. People love them. They can't wait to find out who it will be about next month and strive to create the day when the story will be their's," he commented.

Paul Thomalla is happy too: "I am in no doubt that the strengths programme and story telling we have implemented here have led to the increases we have seen in engagement. They have certainly contributed to team EMEA hitting its targets before any other Stratus team this year and being the only team to over-deliver when it came to year end - a very compelling story," he added.

The strengths approach is one way of developing organisations. People can build on their 'As' and manage the consequences of their 'Bs' and 'Cs'. They can follow their passion, translate it into a clear purpose and achieve peak performance. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, however, so it is vital to share success stories. People are then more likely to build on their strengths, contribute to super teams and ensure the organisation delivers success.

<i>The picture of perfection</i>		
<i>The goal is:</i> To _____		
<i>The date is:</i>	<i>The specific things we will have achieved by then will be:</i>	<i>The words we want to hear people saying then will be:</i>
* _____	* _____ * _____ * _____	* _____ * _____ * _____
* _____	* _____ * _____ * _____	* _____ * _____ * _____
* _____	* _____ * _____ * _____	* _____ * _____ * _____

Figure 3

Society anxiety - struggling with modern life

Every day life events are causing anxiety for people, according to life assistance consultancy CPP Group

Modern life is causing major stress and anxiety for Brits with over half (56%) admitting to sleepless nights over issues such as terrorist threats, health risks and identity theft.

However, it seems that the older generation are taking modern society in their stride compared to the younger generation, with 15% of 18-34 year olds compared to 9% of 54+ year olds admitting to being deeply concerned about a wide range of social and global problems – from climate change to rising crime levels.

Commissioned by CPP, a life assistance company and conducted by Dr. David Lewis, a cognitive neuropsychologist, the study looked at what negative and positive life events cause people anxiety and how people react to these. The recent upsurge of identity theft has caused the most sleepless nights for the nation as it hits the number one spot with 48%.

Global warming, another hot topic, is also having a negative effect on society with climate change in the number 3 spot for causing the most anxiety.

Unsurprisingly, rising house prices and climbing onto the property ladder tops the list as the biggest worry for 18-35 years olds, whereas the older generation worry most about their health - with NHS cutbacks and superbugs topping the list of 54+ year old societal anxiety.

Threat of terrorist attacks affect 18-34 years old more than the over 54 years olds, with 44% (ranking in 3rd place) compared to 33% admitting to being concerned about such attacks (ranking in 8th place). However, all age groups agree on one thing, that rise in anxiety over terrorism is down to growing religious extremism and intolerance 36%.

And it seems that its not only negative life events which cause anxiety, positive events can also be a strain. Strangely, the younger generation are more worried about retirement than 54+ year olds with 47% of 18-34 years olds admitting they worry about retirement

compared to 64% of 54+ year olds who say they are looking forward to it.

Marriage is also a stressful time for 18-34 year olds with 28% admitting it causes/caused anxiety compared to 8% of 54+ year olds.

Men are seen as “Risk Takers” as a healthy 42% of those surveyed said they rarely lose sleep worrying about potential life threats compared to women (22%). However, the women surveyed were much more pragmatic and “Realists” in their approach with nearly two out of three (64%) saying that although they feel anxious about certain aspects of modern society they take precautions to safeguard against loss, compared to 49% of men. And overall, one in eight surveyed are counted as “Reclusives” admitting that many aspects of modern life caused anxiety and left them with a feeling of helplessness.

Swansea leads the way as the most nervous city for “Reclusives”, with one in three admitting they are deeply concerned about a wide range of social and global problems.

On the other end of the scale, Stoke-on-Trent is the bravest city, taking on a “Who dares win” attitude or “Risk Takers” attitude, with over half saying they seldom feel anxious or lose sleep over potential social and global problems, whilst, Lancaster residents are more

practical in their approach or “Realists”, with four out of five accepting that there are aspects of modern society that cause concern but by taking sensible precautions you can minimise risk.

Dr David Lewis, a cognitive neuropsychologist, who studied the results of the survey, said “The results of this survey, confirm that high levels of anxiety are prevalent in modern society due to a number of reasons including terrorist attacks, growing recognition of the damaging consequences of modern lifestyles on the environment and mankind etc. In both cases we feel these events to be beyond our ability to control and this sense of helplessness in the face of danger is the third factor that serves to intensify our other concerns. Societal anxieties have risen sharply in the last 5 years and the trend looks set to continue.”

Nick Jones, Communication manager of CPP said, “Modern life is a complicated business. Consumers have never had so many opportunities to choose from, so many difficult decisions to make and so little time to spare. At CPP we are working hard to simplify the complexities of everyday living whether these affect personal finance, home, travel, personal data or future plans.”



Society's Anxiety	Overall Rankings	18-34 year old rankings	35-54 year olds rankings	54+ year old rankings
Identity theft	1 (48%)	2 (45%)	1 (51%)	3 (48%)
Rising prices/mortgages	2 (43%)	1 (48%)	2 (44%)	7 (36%)
Climate change/poll.	= 3 (39%)	5 (38%)	3 (41%)	= 5 (37%)
NHS cutbacks	= 3 (39%)	12 (27%)	6 (37%)	= 1 (53%)
Super bugs	= 5 (38%)	= 6 (30%)	7 (33%)	= 1 (53%)
Terrorist attack	= 5 (38%)	3 (44%)	5 (39%)	= 8 (33%)
Vandalism/street crime	7 (36%)	8 (29%)	4 (38%)	4 (42%)
Iraq war	8 (31%)	= 9 (27%)	= 8 (31%)	= 5 (37%)
Immigration	9 (30%)	= 9 (27%)	11 (29%)	= 8 (33%)
Personal debt	10 (29%)	4 (43%)	10 (30%)	12 (15%)
Failing schools	11 (28%)	= 9 (27%)	= 8 (31%)	10 (27%)
Redundancy/Unemployment	= 12 (19%)	= 6 (30%)	12 (21%)	13 (5%)
Bird flu	= 12 (19%)	13 (19%)	13 (18%)	11 (20%)

Boost your business value with succession planning

The time inevitably arrives when it becomes expedient for the owner managers or drivers of a successful business to hand over responsibility to a new management. It is a critical time, says Stephen Seymour from leading HR consultancy The Urquhart Partnership



AUTHOR NOTES

Stephen Seymour runs the Manchester branch of HR consultancy The Urquhart Partnership. Stephen specialises in the development and implementation of HR strategy, policies and procedures, as well as strategies for better employee relations.

Careful succession planning can minimise the risk of damage during the change and enhance the value of the business.

Over time, all enterprises evolve and grow around the vision, skill and enthusiasm of the people who lead and manage them. The business gradually becomes an embodiment of their judgement, values and decisions. If they retire or exit for other reasons, the ethos and dynamics of the business will inevitably change. If the value of the business is to be maintained or enhanced, it is imperative these changes are carefully controlled.

The first step is to formally decide precisely what difference their departure will make. If the retiring directors/managers were responsible for sales dynamism, strict financial control, key account customer loyalty or engineering innovation, for example, these are the critical skill gaps which will need to be seamlessly filled.

Looking inward for future success

The assumption is companies will need to recruit externally to fill operational gaps arising as they undergo change. This is not necessarily the case. External HR professionals can be brought in to work as change managers. They can identify current or anticipated gaps in managers' range of skills and employees' competencies and then develop the most cost efficient ways to fill these gaps.

But there is more to succession planning. Rather than just being a way of averting the dangers of a

foreseeable motivational and management vacuum, it can be an opportunity to refresh, revitalise or reposition a staid enterprise in a rapidly changing world.

I strongly believe businesses can move forward by optimising the contribution of their existing management, staff and workforce. It is highly likely existing personnel will have undiscovered capabilities and talents.

The fact these attributes have not become apparent in their existing roles is probably more to do with habit and complacency than a failure to invest in employee development.

It might be the case they have simply not been invited to extend themselves in an unfamiliar direction or take on wider responsibilities. It is definitely the case that uncovering unsung talent in existing staff is less costly than recruiting and introducing new personnel. Job rotations can sometimes reveal these hidden reservoirs of ability.

Perhaps someone on your sales force has the potential to become an outstanding marketeer; perhaps someone from your shop floor or office has the potential to be an outstanding sales generator. An operative might have innate interpersonal skills which earmark him or her for development into line management.

How to boost existing employees' skills

In some instances, the skills shortfalls can be filled by job rotation. Skills shortfalls in one department can be

overcome by importing them from another where a competent individual's ability is being under-utilised. There are huge savings to be made by offering coaching, mentoring or further job training to existing staff.

As an alternative to launching into a recruitment drive, taking Positive and structured training action can expand the skills set of employees and identify and improve areas which require development.

My definition of coaching is not merely structured learning. It is more to do with supporting individuals and teams on their developmental journey - helping them to become the people they want to be and achieve the success they aspire to. It's a question of focusing on their true future potential and how it can be realised.

Similarly, I see mentoring as the passing on of knowledge by a more experienced person to a less experienced one. Again, it's not so much about structured learning; more about enabling through providing guidance, support and understanding.

External or interim HR consultants can provide mentoring and coaching on a stand-alone basis, either to supplement a training course or as part of a larger-scale training and development programme.

The benefits of investing in existing employees

Investing in existing employees and working to improve their skills can prove hugely beneficial to an organisation. Apart from the obvious time and money savings there are numerous other aspects which can impact on the corporate ethos and performance.

Employees' perceptions of their career progression prospects change. They will obviously be prepared to make a deeper commitment to an enterprise which demonstrably invests in them and their route to achieving their personal ambitions, perhaps through promotion. It also inculcates the wider perception that, as others advance, the gaps they leave will create promotion opportunities for their immediate delegates rather than outside recruits. This creates a sense of career scope and momentum among the whole workforce.

This should be an ongoing process. Trainers, coaches and mentors need to do far more than recite prescribed catch-all programmes. They should take time to get to really know their client's business and absorb its culture as a prerequisite of cultivating teamwork and enhancing productivity.

It is about identifying people who have the capability to fulfil key roles both now and in the future; knowing who could step in immediately, who could be an asset to the company in a couple of years time and who is likely to be leading the company forward in the longer term.

Background, qualifications and experience only paint part of the picture. The qualities which make people exceptional managers, leaders, drivers and

visionaries are somewhat more elusive. You don't get certificates in perseverance, determination, emotional intelligence and resourcefulness. Years of service which may be attributed to the individual's lack of enterprise and ambition might actually be due to unwavering loyalty or the lack of real opportunity to develop.

Assessment

Internal recruitment for senior or critical positions is vital to the future of the organisation and needs to start some considerable time before the expected succession occurs so the transfer of responsibility can be a gradual process rather than a sudden dramatic event.

After finding out what competencies a particular company needs to achieve its goals, HR advisors can devise exercises to identify and develop strengths, and remedial programmes to overcome shortcomings where there is need for improvement.

A precise psychometric assessment of an individual's range of skills and capabilities will define their suitability for bridging the gaps which they will be required to fill. The objective is to get the closest possible 'fit' between the under-utilised potential and operational shortfall.

If it eventually transpires existing employees do not have the skills or potential to fill a role, it may be necessary to seek guidance in recruiting candidates who match the exact requirements of a particular role and culture of the company.

Failing to prepare is preparing to fail

The key to future success lies in assessing and understanding the value of the human resources you have at present and what resources you are likely to need in the coming years. The future performance of any company is reliant on the thoroughness and vigour of today's succession planning. Those with an interest in acquiring or merging with an existing business must put a finite value on it.

Any investor will agree running a slide rule over the fixed assets. Past performance and future profit expectations of a target company is comparatively straightforward. What really interests them is the quality of the next generation of management and its preparedness to propel the enterprise to new heights.

Every management hopes it will be able to bring about a smooth transfer of control after an acquisition, merger or other transaction. Having competent and consistent management and an able workforce in place from day one will be a decisive factor in negotiations. It will influence the viability banks and equity houses place on the entire deal and the fiscal value placed on the business. Careful planning also means your workforce will be less unsettled and disrupted.

In short, if you want to boost the value and saleability of your business for the future, start planning for and building the next generation of human resources right now.



Team building with a difference

Corporate team building and professional development courses need not be tedious and repetitive, as the the following case studies demonstrate

Team building events don't have to be about staid corporate conferences or involve outdoor pursuits – far from it. There are several UK companies taking a highly innovative and creative approach to employee development and team building such as GE Healthcare and Carlsberg UK.

GE Healthcare is a leading medical technology and services company and a \$17 billion unit of General Electric Company that is headquartered in the UK. Its broad offering enables healthcare providers to better diagnose and treat cancer, heart disease, neurological diseases and other conditions.

Worldwide, the company employs more than 46,000 people committed to serving healthcare professionals and their patients in more than 100 countries. Every year, GE Healthcare holds a sales conference for its Life Sciences business to bring together employees from Europe and North America to learn about the company's goals for the year. It is a training opportunity and a chance for employees to learn new skills.

For the past seven years, the company has engaged the support of Spring Partnerships, a business consultancy based in the UK which specialises in creative business conferences that focus on employee development and help deliver business growth.

For this year GE Healthcare presented an additional challenge, having recently acquired a new business and the conference would be the first opportunity for employees from this company to meet with colleagues from GE Healthcare. The emphasis therefore needed to focus on integration and team bonding. The conference goal was to bring together the sales operations from both sides of the Atlantic and encourage everyone to work together and to share the company's business goals and vision for the future.

Rikke Rytter, a head of global marketing comments, "The sales conference is a really important strategic event for us and this year, more than ever. It would be the first opportunity for managers to communicate GE Healthcare's goals to all our sales teams old and new and the first chance for many to meet new colleagues face to

face – it was critical that the conference was a success and would have a real impact on our staff."

The company approached Stephen Archer, director of Spring Partnerships with the challenge of coming up with a conference idea that would not only focus on employee development but motivate all the sales teams so they would then apply their enthusiasm to the business. The conference was to be held in Montreal, Canada.

Stephen Archer designed the conference programme, developed the content and engaged a circus skills company to add a new dimension to the conference. The idea was for the circus to perform in the conference at times to create excitement and inspiration. But in addition everyone was given the chance to learn some circus skills for themselves. The idea was to expand everyone's horizons and to completely surprise them about their capabilities of learning new things as well as creating a bonding experience for everyone and provide a healthy break from the more business-focused sessions.

Stephen said, "Although it might seem unrelated to the corporate world at first glance, the circus training worked on a number of levels. Firstly, it put everyone in the same boat – 650 people – from the most junior members of staff to senior management were all complete novices at the start of the course. With a whole new team from another company present, I thought it was crucial to push everyone equally out of their comfort zones and onto a level playing field. No one was an expert in any area and this meant that everyone had to lose their inhibitions and start from scratch."

The unique nature of the situation also meant that senior management were reminded of how hard it is to learn new things, which helped created empathy with more junior staff. Everyone also had the chance to try out different skills – from juggling to riding Unicycles through to trapeze and forming human pyramids. The delegates were amazed at how far they had developed, how much they had learnt and the new skills they had mastered in such a short time

Rikke Rytter said, "The circus training worked brilliantly because it really pushed people into new



territories and made even the most sceptical open up to new ideas and become more flexible. They realised that there wasn't one set way of doing things and were forced to expand their horizons."

"They also had to work together and ask for help where needed, and this is something that we of course expect in our company culture. We don't expect our people to be the perfect 'finished articles' – we believe in continuous learning and employee development, and that means asking for help. It also made it clear that the help could come from colleagues anywhere," she added.

Stephen concluded, "The conference really engaged everyone which was the ultimate goal and learning these new strange skills helped break down any social and cultural barriers that might have existed. We understand it has had a really positive impact on GE Healthcare's business – our only dilemma is what to do next year."

Like GE Healthcare, when Carlsberg wanted to undertake an employee development programme, it wanted to do something completely different in order to fully engage its staff.

In October 2006, the company's management team – which ranges from national account managers through to the directors undertook a week long leadership training programme run by UK business consultancy, Spring Partnerships. The course was unlike anything the company had invested in previously. It was highly innovative and creative and although some days were spent in the classroom, the practical element took place at a stable and horse training ground as the managers learnt to horse whisper. The experience proved challenging and gave each manager a real insight into the strengths and weaknesses of their own management style and ability.

Gareth Chick, director at Spring Partnerships who led the course explained the rationale behind the course, "Whilst horse whispering might at first not appear to be linked to leadership and team building, mastering the techniques of horse whispering are completely akin to mastering leadership skills. Horses do not respond to verbal communication; getting a horse to obey a series of commands requires strong and consistent direction and this needs to be communicated non verbally, solely through the use of body language."

"Any loss of concentration or inconsistency is picked up by the horse; they will quickly lose interest causing the horse whisperer to fail their task. The purpose of the training was to demonstrate that all forms of leadership require good communication, consistency and clear direction. Anything less simply doesn't work, whether you are in the training ground or the business environment," he added.

The management team at Carlsberg was taken to a horse training ground and after a brief classroom introduction by Lisa Brice, leading horse whisperer and the director of Horses for Courses™ they were thrown in the deep end and given a series of commands to carry out with the horses.

Lisa is an experienced Horse Whisperer who learnt

her trade on a ranch in Ontario in Canada. She specialises in communicating in the horse's language – using non-verbal communication and body language. Lisa explains, "93% of the language we use every day is non verbal and therefore by learning how to communicate with horses, where we have to rely completely on non verbal communication, is excellent training for the business world. By taking away words, we are forced to really think about the way we act and the impact this has on others. For some people, it can be a real eye opener and quite a shock."

Jayne Wade, Sales Director at Carlsberg, "When we started the course we were naturally a little apprehensive. We were out of our comfort zone completely, but equally we were all in the same boat which resulted in a warm and friendly atmosphere which brought the team together. No one had any experience of working with horses and clearly the major challenge we all faced was that horses simply didn't understand us."

When confronted with the series of tasks, each manager used their own style and tactics to engage with and lead the horses. The more assertive managers for example, approached their tasks whip in hand whilst the meeker personalities tried a more gentle tact. However, as the day progressed, it slowly dawned on the group that the only thing that worked with the horses was setting down clear objectives, clarifying expectations and sticking to the plan. All other tactics failed miserably.

Jayne continued, "It was an amazing experience and a hard hitting realisation of the importance of being empathetic. Learning to talk in a completely different language was a huge challenge but it really brought home the importance of delivering really simple and clear instructions to team members. Horse whispering only works if there is mutual respect between the horses and the horse whisperer – of course this should be mirrored in the workplace. Perhaps this was the clearest lesson of all to take home."

Jayne and all the other managers at Carlsberg have applied what they learnt and are continuing to practice their new found coaching and leadership skills on a daily basis. Jayne says, "I carry around my coaching notes wherever I go so I am continually reminding myself to use the techniques I have learnt and put them into practice. I reinforce my skills at every opportunity and because we have all been through the same course, there is a huge amount of support amongst the management throughout Carlsberg to use the techniques shown to us by Gareth and Lisa."

"The leadership excellence course was a huge investment for Carlsberg, but one that is clearly paying off; we are currently out performing the market and doing really well. Whilst I can't directly say it was a result of the course, everyone is focused and hugely motivated to attain our targets and stay ahead of the competition. What's more, I have changed the way I speak to the sales team. I am no longer frightened to say what I think and thank them – it's the opposite, I tell them that I am proud of them at every opportunity," she concluded. **IC**

Safeguarding the lone worker

The issue of lone worker safety has never been more urgent for employers to address as cases of abuse and violence are continuing to rise, while legislation compels employers to take steps to protect their staff.

Workers are increasingly vulnerable whenever they met the public alone, and the trend seems to only be getting worse.

In the healthcare sector, the problems seem to be particularly acute, with health and community workers vulnerable to increasing levels of abuse, creating anxiety, stress and stress related health problems, low staff morale and high staff turnover. A recent survey shows that 52% of nurses believe the risk of abuse has risen in the past two years and that, shockingly, one third have been assaulted in that time.

For the employer the threat is three-fold. First the effect of staff leaving or taking increasing time off for stress, injury or illness. Second the effect of litigation, both by statutory bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive and by increasingly litigious employees. Third, the effect on corporate image, both internally and externally, (think of Jarvis, Balfour Beatty and Railtrack).

Research conducted by AXA reveals that a quarter of employers surveyed have been involved in a litigation case. Of those companies, during 2004 over half were involved in one case and a further 20% were involved in between two and four cases.

Health and Safety legislation puts a legal duty on employers to ensure, so far as it is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Employers must consider the risks to employees (including the risk of reasonably foreseeable violence); decide how significant these risks are; decide what to do to prevent or control the risks; and develop a clear management plan to achieve this. While this is often difficult enough for employees working in their employer's premises, it is far more so for those working away from those premises and thus from their line managers' direct supervision and support.

Although crime statistics overall have fallen in recent years, a close look at the figures shows that serious crime against the person has increased. A recent survey for the Suzy Lamplugh Trust shows that, startlingly, one in 10 of all lone workers in the health, local government and

housing sectors have experienced some kind of physical violence ranging from punching and kicking through to pushing.

In the housing sector, some 11% reported that sometime in their careers they had been held against their will, while in local government 9% said they had been threatened with a weapon.

Just within the NHS as many as 100,000 staff work alone everyday. In 2005, then health secretary John Reid claimed: "I am determined to do everything within my power to stop NHS staff suffering from violence and abuse. They dedicate their lives to caring for the sick and in return they deserve respect. Anybody who attacks our staff will face tough action and the possibility of jail."

Current Health Secretary Alan Johnson has admitted that morale in the NHS is virtually at rock bottom, and with plans on his agenda on "making care more accessible and convenient", this could point to a greater need for care givers to tighten their safety guidelines and procedures.

Care workers, constantly visiting the public are particularly at risk. Angry, stressed patients and their families find it difficult to keep their calm when being told bad news or letting off steam at the unfairness of their situations. It is vital that care workers, being exposed to this kind of risk have the right tools for their job - safety training and safety backup in the form of a personal alarm or other technology.

In 2004, one city council was forced to pay £200,000 to a lone worker who was assaulted while working unaccompanied. Many others, some involving claims into 7 figures, have been settled out of court without the accompanying bad publicity.

The publicity surrounding cases that do make it to court reverberates long after the case is over. The impact of negative news coverage on external audiences and on staff themselves is enormous.

The AXA report also commented that; "Despite the risk of litigation, almost a quarter of SME's admit that they are not aware of the extent of their liabilities as an employer. Our research shows that too many companies are unnecessarily exposing themselves to the threat of being sued for compensation. The cost of bringing or defending a legal action can put serious financial pressure on a business, whether it eventually wins the case or not."



So management should be under no illusion that they need to take steps to protect themselves against compensation and corporate negligence claims and take their responsibilities towards their staff seriously. How can employers best deal with these issues efficiently and cost-effectively?

Training and information is important in the first instance. Risk assessments of the tasks of the lone worker are essential while personal safety training can help the employee learn how to judge a situation, be aware of surroundings and learn conflict resolving or defusing techniques.

Sharing of information between employees, and with external organisations and professional bodies, such as the police is also vital. This includes letting staff know where lone workers are, sharing experiences and concerns and using an early warning system to identify potentially violent clients, problem areas or difficult situations.

But no amount of preparation can substitute for good communication on the ground so that lone workers have a quick, easy, convenient and effective way of summoning help when needed.

Technology has advanced rapidly in recent years so

that mobile phones are no longer the best solution. Personal alarms are growing in popularity as they make staff feel more confident about their personal safety, and new high-tech types of alarm provide a flexible and effective answer.

The most sophisticated devices now available are multi-functional: they can pinpoint the user's location, open up a two-way communication with an emergency response centre and allow an operator to summon help on the user's behalf. Skyguard is an example of an agency that has taken this concept one stage further by providing a backup response service of nearly 800 security personnel stationed around the country. Skyguard is the only lone worker safety service to provide this independent response team as a back-up to the emergency services.

The number of people working alone is increasing, but better training, improved management, sharing of information and the increasing use of personal safety alarms means that employers now have the tools to offer their employees reassurance, peace of mind and the confidence to go about their daily job of work. In an unsafe world, exercising this duty of care towards employees is not just advisable – it's essential. **IC**

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