

ies

HR insight

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Business Solutions

Imagine a medium-size company that is growing quite rapidly by acquisition. Typically the companies acquired are owner-managed, have relatively small, long-serving workforces who strongly identified with their employer. How can such an organisation build a new employer brand identity that the acquired companies and staff can readily sign up to?

Through Business Solutions, IES helps medium-size organisations face issues like this on a regular basis. We provide a flexible package comprising diagnosis and consultancy days, further CPD training and access to IES HR Network website resources.

For further information, contact Martyn Smith at IES.

HR transformation

PETER REILLY

Following on from the work that went in the book *Strategic HR: Building the Capability to Deliver*, IES has undertaken a number of projects recently on the HR function. We have just completed research for CIPD on the evolution and current state of the function. Based on a literature review, discussions with leading practitioners and academics, in-depth case studies and an organisational survey, the project has provided practical guidance to organisations on how best to structure and staff the function to achieve future success. The focus was on the impact of HR transformation on the structure, processes and staffing of organisations. The initial findings were presented in a CIPD report: *The Changing HR Function: The Key Questions* and the final report will be published in November by CIPD as *The Changing HR Function: Transforming HR*.

In parallel we have done work for the National Health Service Improvement and Innovation Agency, evaluating research on the functional contribution of HR/OD and associated professionals to organisational performance, as well as the impact of more general people management practices. This learning was then considered in a health care context. The opportunities that improved people management offers for sustainable service improvement in health care were set out.

Our own research on *the Customer View of HR* is soon to be published. This work has provided the backdrop to two projects we are doing that help companies gather the views of their managers on HR performance. In both cases, the HR leadership wants to get a handle on how the function is viewed at the start of new ways of organising itself. This is always helpful – to describe a baseline in terms of customer experience so that changes in performance can be seen against that backdrop.

Another way of constructing the baseline is to do an activity analysis. IES has been assisting NHS trusts in Cheshire to do this. This has involved categorising work into discrete activities and then staff booking their time against these headings. The analysis allows the Trust to see how work is divided between, say, recruitment and employee relations, but also whether it is at an administrative, operational or strategic level (by grade, job type, Trust, etc.).

Three trusts (an acute and two Primary Care Trusts, both the provider and commissioner arms) are coming together in HR terms. The emergent structure is of a shared service, to handle common administrative activities, business partnering teams working with the individual Trusts, and a group of common specialist services, including



Peter Reilly addresses international delegates in Cape Town

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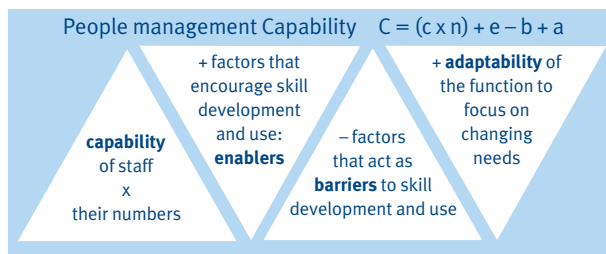
learning and development. IES facilitated discussions in the HR senior management team as to the best design for the HR structure and, in an iterative process, discussed the emerging ideas with the different HR groups.

We hope to contribute to the evaluation of the model next year.

IES has been working on an audit tool, shown below, which is designed to help organisations look at the capability of the HR function, though it can be adapted to look at people management

capability (ie including line managers) more widely.

The logic of the model is that functional capability is affected by a combination of the individual skills and capabilities of the HR team and their resources, that can be enhanced by development enablers, offset by barriers that prevent individuals and the function reaching its full potential (such as imperfect processes or systems). The adaptability of the function to change can be a positive contribution or negative,



depending upon how aware the function is of the changing internal and external environment.

For more details on IES's work on the HR function, contact Peter Reilly at IES, and for the audit tool, contact Alison Carter.

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IDEA succession planning

IES is supporting the IDeA (the Improvement and Development Agency) in a consortium approach to improving the practical application of succession planning in local authorities. Wendy Hirsh of IES is working with two county councils and two, much smaller, district councils in developing their own approaches to succession and talent management. Service managers as well as HR Managers are fully involved in the learning set meetings and the development of succession planning in their own authorities.

For further information contact Wendy Hirsh at IES or Kathryn Kelly at the IDeA (Kathryn.Kelly@idea.gov.uk).

NICE management of long-term sickness

IES is supporting the work of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in the development of guidance on the management of long-term sickness and incapacity for employers and primary care services. A systematic review will be conducted to identify the best available evidence of effectiveness, and will include cost effectiveness. IES is working in partnership with the Institute of Work Psychology (IWP) and the School of Health and Related Research (SchARR) at the University of Sheffield.

For further information contact Sue Hayday at IES.

Talent management – getting beyond the clichés

WENDY HIRSH

'Talent management' is high on corporate agendas, which is good news. It is also under considerable debate within the HR profession, hopefully further stimulated by the new CIPD research report: Talent: Strategy, Management and Measurement. IES is much engaged in this area and it is the theme for this year's IES Annual HR Conference for our members on 6th November.

At IES we do believe that something positive and important is going on here in terms of organisations starting to think again about their future supply of people in a more strategic way.

For over thirty-five years IES has been helping leading employers to adapt the way they plan their workforces in the light of continuing business and social change. In recent work with a global bank and with local authorities (in partnership with the IDeA) we have been using simple workforce planning and succession planning concepts and data, to help them focus their talent management approaches on workforce groups where lack of future supply presents real business risks. Our recent Effective succession planning: with 10 practical tips distils our practical learning in this tricky area.

Effective talent management is a fine balance between meeting business needs and helping individual employees achieve their own career goals. So it cannot be separated from individual career development. Few organisations really talk to their best employees about their career aspirations and the kind of next steps that will benefit both the business and their own development. Such discussions do not just lead to better development of talent, they help to retain and motivate. IES has worked with organisations such as BP, Rolls-Royce and MOD to train line managers in holding more effective discussions with individuals.

So the IES cornerstones for talent management are: a clear, business-relevant focus for talent management activity; better quality dialogues with individual employees; and sustained and collective follow-up on the delivery of career development as well as skill development.

The biggest challenge of all, perhaps, for HR is in embedding and sustaining talent management activities. In-coming HR Directors often scrap previous approaches to succession planning, career management and leadership development and then re-launch slightly different versions of the previous processes again. Nothing is more distressing to managers and the workforce. HR needs to give managers and employees simpler and better integrated tools with a much longer and more evolutionary shelf-life. Then more effort can go into the quality of interaction between managers and individuals and also into the collective management of talent. Only then will talent management move from being a merry-go-round of process design to the real development of people to meet future business needs.

We are looking to establish a consortium of companies interested in tracking and getting regular feedback from people in mid-career high potential pools. If interested (or if you would like more information about how IES can help with talent management), please contact Wendy Hirsh.

Performing flexibly: output, not hours

MARY MERCER

Organisations take flexible working seriously and appreciate the business case, many going beyond the legal requirement by offering forms of flexibility to all their employees. But is it still all about 'working mums'? Who else feels free to ask? Unsurprisingly, in the majority of cases, requests to work flexibly come from mothers who want to work. Dads are still seen as the major breadwinner in many families, and with financial considerations also an issue for those without children, many men cannot afford to look at flexibility that reduces their hours. But there is also a fear that employers might see a request for flexibility as a loss of commitment.

Over years of working with people to set up flexible working, we have heard talk of flexible working as 'career suicide': a sign that you are less committed to the organisation and therefore less worthy of promotion, even though evidence suggests that the output of flexible workers is actually proportionally higher.

For us, output really is the key. Some organisations still struggle with applying their performance management systems and, in the absence of being confident in setting, monitoring and measuring performance through output based objectives, fall back on the 'long hours equals commitment' view of good performance. These are the organisations where to take up flexible working really would equate to 'career suicide'.

To those organisations who are struggling to achieve the culture of flexibility we say look at the application of your performance management system. It may not be as easy, but managers with the skill and confidence to focus on outputs, rather than inputs, will repay their organisations with happier, flexible, productive – and committed – workers.

For more advice on flexible working, contact Mary Mercer at IES.

IES at the heart of coaching

PAUL FAIRHURST

Our strong flow of work in coaching, coach training, and evaluation of coaching continues and Alison Carter has been continuing her work in support of the Foundation for Coaching.

In terms of project work, we are working with the HR leadership team of a London local authority to improve their effectiveness and impact in the organisation. We are running a six month development programme that combines team development sessions with one-to-one coaching and the use of a strengths-focused psychometric tool.

A London NHS trust reorganising its HR function to provide a more effective service to its customers and helping line managers become better equipped to deal with people issues. As part of this a number of HR managers are taking on roles involving coaching the line managers in how to deal with difficult situations. IES provided the coaching skills training for these HR managers.

We have recently been commissioned by the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement to evaluate the effectiveness of coaching in the NHS. Using the IES coaching evaluation

framework developed as part of our three year research into coaching evaluation, we are interviewing coaching trios (coach, client and sponsor) to get a rounded perspective of the effectiveness of the coaching process, with a particular focus on the organisational impact that the coaching has had, as well as the behavioural development and changes in thinking for the individual.



Alison has continued to support the work of the newly formed Foundation of Coaching (www.thefoundationofcoaching.org). Back in July, international members from The Foundation of Coaching Research Advisory Panel met in New York City for their second annual meeting. The four members, pictured above are Dr James Hunt (Babson University), Dr Dianne Stober (Fielding Graduate University), Dr Alison Carter

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Natural strengths at HSBC

IES developed content for HSBC's people development knowledge centre. This was particularly focused on helping people and their managers identify, develop and utilise their natural strengths.

For further information contact Paul Fairhurst at IES.

Recruitment of Ethnic Minorities to the Civil Service

This research seeks to explore the job search behaviour of senior potential candidates from an ethnic minority, or who are female or with a disability to understand if this differs from white/male/able bodied senior managers. There is clearly also an issue of whether there are any differences in the attractiveness of senior roles in the civil service for different populations which we would add to the aims for the project. Multiple methods will be used for this project, including the exploration of census data, analysis of the National Online Recruitment Audience Survey (NORAS) and a survey of the Chartered Management Institute's database.

For further information contact Hülya Hooker at IES.

(IES), and Dr Michael Cavanagh (University of Sydney). They met with The Foundation's Director of Research, Dr Mary Wayne Bush to discuss The Foundation's research strategy, to review grant applications and make recommendations about funding, and identify a global research agenda for 2008.

The Research Advisors were especially pleased to meet with The Foundation's first grant award winner, Esra Ozkan pictured front right, a Turkish anthropologist who is using The Foundation's support to complete PhD research study on Coaching as an Emerging Profession.

For more information about coaching contact Paul Fairhurst or Alison Carter at IES.

Managing police absence

SUE HAYDAY

Home Office Minister for Crime and Policing, Tony McNulty, launched the IES report *Managing Absence in the Police Service: A Review of Current Practices* at the ACPO Excellence in Policing conference in September. The report was commissioned to inform the joint HSE and Home Office initiative to reduce the number of working days lost to ill health and injury in the police forces of England and Wales, which has been an area of concern since the late 1990s. The project's aims were to explore how absence data was used to manage absence, to understand how the processes were viewed by all those involved, and to identify barriers to implementing the policies and procedures and how these were addressed.

We undertook in-depth case studies of seven representative police forces in which IES researchers worked with chief officers, those with major responsibilities for absence, police officers, police staff and trade unions, to understand the impact of absence and its management within each force. In addition, the key features of the forces' absence policies and absence data management were assessed against commonly-accepted good practice. The study revealed that the approaches of forces' policies varied from the very punitive to those which stressed the duty of care to staff. The most effective policies were those that accepted that ill health is unavoidable, and that had measures in place to encourage and support return to work. It was also found to be vital that the importance of individuals feeling personally valued was recognised, and that their contribution mattered.

This major review of absence management will be used to develop measures to improve current practice in the police service and to increase public sector efficiency.

Managing Sickness Absence in the Police Service: A Review of Current Practices. S Hayday, A Broughton, C Tyers. HSE Research Report RR582, September 2007

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New staff

Annette Cox has joined IES as an Associate Director. In her previous role at Manchester Business School, she conducted research for the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Health, and the European Social Fund, and ran a Postgraduate Diploma in HR management for PriceWaterhouseCooper. Annette's research interests include employee involvement, reward systems and skills/training policies. At IES Annette leads the workplace relations team, developing our work on employee relations and involvement, well-being at work and employer skills policies.

Valerie Garrow has also joined IES as an Associate Director, coming from Roffey Park Institute where she was Principal Researcher. Her research interests include the people aspects of mergers, acquisitions and partnerships and the impact of organisational change on the psychological contract. She also has experience in developing leadership frameworks and talent management. At IES she leads the HR research and consultancy team.

CPD for HR: Open Courses

Having run an in-house CPD programme for IES HR Network organisations for two years, we have responded to requests to extend availability of courses to scheduled open events. Open to Members and non-Members alike, these courses will focus on the provision of learning experiences for HR professionals.

Venues are normally central London for up to one-day courses, and outside London for longer, where overnight accommodation is better value. Top quality management centres and country house hotels will offer an environment and overall experience essential to effective learning. Courses are below commercial rates, and Network Members receive a discount.

The programme with all details and online booking are available on our website: www.employment-studies.co.uk/cpd/

For further information, contact Vic Hartley on 01444 456473.

Working for public policy

IES undertakes research and evaluation for public policy bodies and government departments in addition to its consultancy work. Understanding both sides of employment is an important and unique aspect of IES. Recent published policy studies include:

- Organisations' Responses to the Disability Discrimination Act
- The Impact of the National Minimum Wage: Pay Differentials and Workplace Change
- Impact of Care to Learn: Tracking the Destinations of Young Parents Funded in 2004/05

plus a new series of working papers.

For all titles, go to www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs/

News on the Net

Find out more about IES consultancy services on the web:

www.ieshr.co.uk

IES, a not-for-profit organisation, is the UK's leading independent centre of research and consultancy in employment policy and HR practice. We contribute to corporate strategy and performance, through research and evidence-based consultancy commissioned by individual employers. IES is also commissioned by government departments, agencies and other bodies to research and advise on the effectiveness and development of public employment policy. Our expertise is available to all organisations through research, consultancy, publications and the Internet.

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