

INSIGHTS

HUMAN RESOURCES

APRIL 2019 ISSUE 6

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: GROUP HR DIRECTOR MCCARTHY & STONE

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WHY SUPER STAR JOB
TITLES DON'T WORK IN
RECRUITMENT

EMPLOYER SURVEY
REVEALS MOST
POPULAR APPROACH TO
RECRUITMENT

RECOGNISING BURNOUT
AND MANAGING STRESS

MENTORING MAKES
SENSE



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Hello and welcome TO ISSUE 6 OF HR INSIGHTS!

We hope you all enjoyed the lovely weather over the Easter period and feel fully recuperated heading into May.

In the second issue of the year, we are thrilled to bring you our first Group HR Director interview with Paula Jordan of McCarthy & Stone. We're also delighted to welcome some new guest contributors who share their expertise and advice on a range of topics from employee engagement and tax consequences of benefits to managing stress, Mental Health First Aid and the menopause.

Our regular Employment Law Update from Frettons is of course included, and we've covered business mentoring, supporting mothers in the workplace and insights into how candidates assess the whole package when considering job offers.

Following the success of our own research at the end of last year, we decided to conduct another survey among local businesses on the methods and tools they use when recruiting and if, when and how they use recruitment agencies. The findings make for an interesting read!

Internally at Bond Williams, we've expanded yet again! Two new Senior Recruitment Consultants have joined us - Michelle Brennan adds 15 years' recruitment experience to the HR team in Bournemouth and Ben Markwell makes the third member of the specialist Engineering, Science and Space division based in Oxford.

I hope you'll join me in welcoming them!

In the meantime, enjoy the read and don't forget to let us know if there's anything in particular you would like covered next time!

Claire

Claire Bond
Director, Bond Williams Professional Recruitment



If you would like to be involved or contribute to the next issue of HR Insights, we'd love to hear from you.

Please email: marketing@bondwilliams.co.uk

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EMPLOYER SURVEY REVEALS MOST POPULAR APPROACH TO STAFF RECRUITMENT

Dorset and Hampshire businesses have shared their preferred recruitment approaches in a recent survey carried out by Bond Williams Professional Recruitment, head quarters in Bournemouth.

Over 200 local employers were asked a series of questions around the methods and tools they use when recruiting and if, when and why they use recruitment agencies.

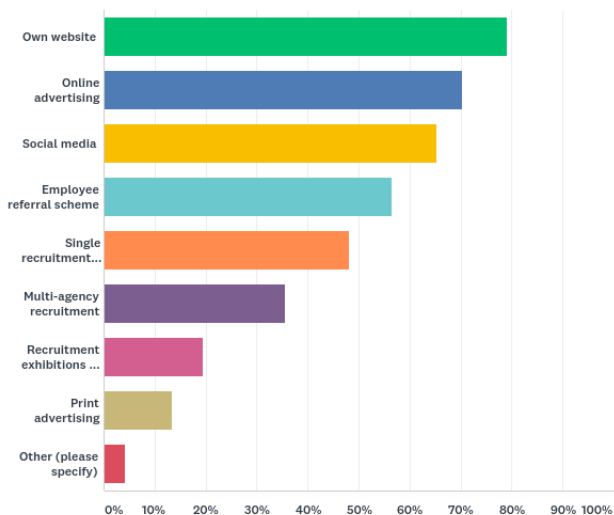
Most businesses use their own website to recruit new employees

Almost four fifths (79%) of employers utilise their own company websites when actively recruiting. This was followed by online advertising (70%), social media (65%) and employee referral schemes (56%).

Just under half (48%) of the businesses surveyed use the services of a single recruitment agency or preferred supplier, while over a third (36%) take a multi-agency approach to recruitment.

Diminishing in popularity are recruitment exhibitions and events and print advertising, which were selected by just 19% and 13% of respondents respectively.

When recruiting, which of these approaches would you take?



Two in five employers use single recruitment agency or preferred supplier

When engaging with recruitment agencies to fill vacancies, two in five (40%) employers say they usually work with a single recruitment agency or preferred supplier. The most common reasons for working with one supplier is due to receiving a better service (37%) and it being easier and less time-consuming (22%). A further 11% also said it was more cost-effective as you could agree preferential rates.

Over a third (35%) take a combined approach to recruitment, using both single and multiple agencies depending on the type of role, where it is based and whether the agency has specialist industry knowledge (55%).

Of the one fifth of businesses who choose to work with multiple agencies, 59% of them believe that this will enable them to reach more candidates, while a further 21% also say it depends on the role.

Industry experience is most important when choosing recruiter

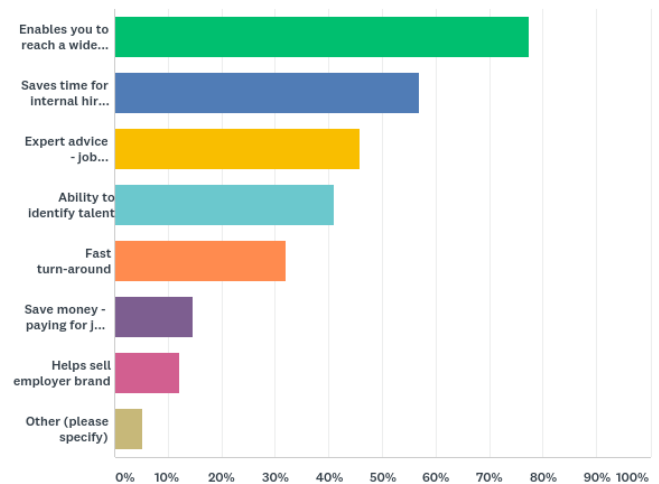
When assessing a recruitment agency's ability to find and secure the right candidates for a role, 56% of employers want a company who are specialists in their industry or sector. The fee amount and structure come in a close second at 53%, followed by whether the recruiter has experience and a proven-track record recruiting for the same or similar roles (29%). However, this was only marginally more important than word of mouth reputation (28%).

Of less importance was online reviews (4%), agency accreditations and memberships (3%), look and feel of company website (2%) and the size of the recruitment business (1%).

Advantages of engaging a recruitment agency

More than three quarters (77%) of businesses across Dorset and Hampshire think the main advantage of engaging a recruitment agency is the ability to reach a wider candidate base. Over half (57%) enjoy the time-saving aspect it provides internal hiring managers, while 46% value the expert advice on elements such as job specification, local market knowledge and how to attract the right candidates.

What do you think are the advantages of engaging a recruitment agency?



Rob Bond, Director at Bond Williams, provided this specialist commentary on the findings

"Businesses are quite rightly taking advantage of advances in technology, with most adopting a good online strategy utilising their own websites, the internet and social media profiles.

"However, a combined 84% of respondents still use the services of a recruitment agency in some capacity because they can reach a wider audience, save time and value the expert advice on offer. What is somewhat surprising, however, is that while it's great news that fewer employers opt for the multi-agency approach, the majority who do think they are reaching more candidates and saving more time.

"This is rarely the case, as most active job seekers will be registered on as many job boards as possible, increasing the chances that the same candidate CV will be sent to you multiple times, thus increasing your admin and workload. Exclusive agreements can ensure you receive a better service and preferential rates, as almost half of respondents correctly recognise.

"The survey also revealed an increasing need for specialist industry and sector experience, which certainly supports what we are seeing internally. With five specialist divisions, we are used to building long-term relationships with employers who prefer to work with recruiters who speak their language.

"What does remain clear, however, is there is no winning strategy that works for all businesses and all types of vacancies. Companies need to blend a variety of recruitment methods to suit their own requirements (and budget) - and this probably hasn't changed since the mid-90s!"

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

If you want to achieve and maintain high levels of employee engagement, you must adopt a holistic approach as this CIPD pyramid shows. In this article, I share some of the things that I have learned about employee engagement over the past few years.

Happy and engaged are not always the same thing

Some employees can be very happy in their role, but that does not mean they are engaged or even interested in the big picture. When employees are happy but lack engagement, they may unconsciously resist change, as they don't want to lose the very conditions that are making them happy.

Engaged employees recognise where change is needed and have the appetite and resilience to see it through for the greater good of the organisation. So, although you may think you want more of the people in the 'happy and low maintenance' box, they are not always the ones who will move your organisation forward. People that ask difficult questions, challenge the norms and disagree with others may be the most engaged if they understand your ambitions and want to help you get there. Make sure you allow them a voice.

Accidental managers

One of the greatest impacts on our wellbeing and our levels of engagement is workplace culture and how work makes us feel. ACAS believes that engagement is likely to be higher if you focus on the four main drivers identified by the Macleod Review in 2009.

- Leaders with a vision who value how individuals contribute
- Line managers who empower rather than control their staff
- Values that are lived and not just spoken, leading to a sense of trust and integrity
- Employees who have the chance to voice their views and concerns

The original Macleod Review argued that managers need to provide their teams with focus, coaching and scope to develop. Rather than adopting a one size fits all approach, managers need to treat and reward people as individuals matching their motivations.

However, many managers are accidental having been promoted based on their technical abilities, not for their people management skills - an area where they may have little aptitude or experience. Setting aside the proper resources to train and develop the traditional



soft skills in your managers is key to gaining good levels of employee engagement.

Employee surveys

Once the graphs are done and you have added a bit of narrative, it is easy to discuss the annual survey at senior level and decide it's *'pretty much what we thought'* and leave it until next year. To get the most from your survey you need to approach it with the attitude: "How can the results help us improve engagement?"

If some of the survey results are disappointing or negative, don't be tempted to bury them or lose them in a clever summary piece. You now know things could be improved. People being honest and telling you what they think is a good thing, so embrace and learn from it rather than take it personally.

"Hurrah another survey," said no employee ever. Failing to give feedback, failing to explore areas for improvement and ignoring the message will only ensure lower participation next time, less honesty and less engagement.

Values

Identifying behaviours linked to your values gives you an extremely powerful performance management tool, something you cannot get from a catchy poster with Integrity, Innovation and Fun written on it. Everyone has a different viewpoint and interpretation of how they should live the organisations values based on their own experiences, background and beliefs, so it is important to make sure that employees have a shared understanding of what the values mean in the workplace.

If you expect your managers to live those values, you need to agree the behaviours you expect and build them into the competencies and attributes you need from your people leaders.

Employee engagement is not a dark art, it needs to be approached holistically with the aim of providing a workplace that allows people to be the best they can be, in a way that works in your organisation.

Author: Debbie Donnelly, HR Consultant and Investors in People Practitioner

<https://peoplepanacea.weebly.com> | peoplepanacea@mail.com

Debbie Donnelly works with SMEs across the south giving commercial HR advice and providing a range of services from documentation to strategy. Debbie is also an assessor for Investors in People and works as a cross-cultural coach.

INTERVIEW:

PAULA JORDAN

GROUP HR DIRECTOR - MCCARTHY & STONE



With more than 25 years' experience in human resources behind her, Paula Jordan shares her journey to Group HR Director for McCarthy & Stone and advice for those considering a career in the sector.

How did you first get into HR?

Like many people, my first career thoughts were not about HR. I did a languages degree (French, German and Spanish) and had ambitions to pursue a career as a conference interpreter for the United Nations or UNESCO (something about how my brain is wired!). While I was preparing to do a Masters, I decided to earn some money rather than continue to rely on the 'bank of Mum and Dad'. I accepted a role working as an Executive Assistant for the MD of a small Swiss private bank in the City of London, where I could use my languages. I fully intended to do the job for just one year but was quickly hooked because the person I worked for gave me projects to run and more and more responsibility, which included HR (or 'Personnel' as it was probably known back then).

I found HR so varied and intellectually challenging that I decided to make it my long-term career. With hindsight I would probably not have enjoyed interpreting because I would have been operating in a sterile environment. For me, it's all about the interaction with people.

How has your career progressed?

For many years, I worked in London in financial services, investment banking and asset management. Initially, I always ensured that I could use my languages alongside working in HR. For example, I worked for a French investment bank where I spoke more French than English (and got to travel the world)! However, as I became more senior, I realised that I was limiting my opportunities by insisting on using my languages, so I focused more on global organisations and broadening my HR skills.

My first HR Director role was at the Barclays Group, where I was HR Director for the Global Capital Markets Division, working closely with Bob Diamond. I then became HR Director of Barclays Private Banking, another global role. My final role with Barclays was in the resourcing and talent division, where I worked with the Board and Executive Committee on creating greater diversity at Senior Executive level, which tended to be dominated by 'establishment' candidates. During this time we had followed my husband's job to various locations within easy commuting distance to London. After yet another move (to Winchester) and with, now, two young children, I decided to work closer to home. I joined the telecoms company, Cable & Wireless, as HR Director to build the newly created Mid-Market Division, splitting my time between Bracknell and London. It

was a very exciting time, during which I worked for another inspirational boss, with whom I recruited some fantastic people. The business was very successful and won a number of major contracts. Sadly, the role only lasted 18 months because the parent company was struggling financially and decided to close a number of divisions, including Mid-Markets. I look back with great fondness on my time at Cable & Wireless and still keep in touch with a number of my colleagues from that time.

After managing the closure, I joined Portman Building Society, which brought my career down to Bournemouth. Portman was a great organisation to work for as it combined all the agility and drive of a small organisation with the professionalism and structure of a large organisation. The values-led, mutual approach, where the customers are also the owners of the business, was also interesting to experience. At the time I joined, Portman was contemplating a merger with a near-equal and my role was to run HR on a day-to-day basis while the Group HR Director concentrated on the merger. Portman later merged with Nationwide and I did not want to go back into mainstream financial services.

I was approached by the person who was Interim HRD at McCarthy & Stone through a mutual contact to take on the role permanently at the end of his contract, and the rest is history!

Describe your role with McCarthy & Stone

It's been a fascinating journey. I've worked with four CEOs, three CFOs and several ownership structures, from being privately owned, equity capital owned and to publicly quoted. When I first joined the business, it was with a view to expanding the business. However, the 2008 recession intervened, and like most construction companies, we entered a phase of downsizing, reducing the size of the organisation by circa 50%. That was a very sad time but there is a satisfaction in managing a major downsizing well, so that people's dignity and wellbeing is respected and they are supported through a tough process.

Since then, the fortunes of the business have been much better. We have developed new products and services and expanded geographically. We employ more than 1,000 people across our seven UK offices and a further 1,500 in our Management Services division. We employ a diverse range of people, from Managing Directors to care workers. What unites us is putting the customer first at the heart of everything we do, whether



that is the design of an apartment or the care services we offer.

As Group HR Director, I am responsible for the people strategy and HR operation across the whole business and serve as a member of the Executive Committee. In September last year, we launched an exciting new strategy to change from a 'simple housebuilder' to becoming more of a lifestyle provider by offering greater flexibility choice and affordability to our customers.

No one day is ever the same and that is something that I thrive upon. I particularly enjoy working with the senior team, providing expert guidance and coaching across a wide range of strategic and operational topics that go far beyond a 'standard' HR remit.

What do you enjoy most about working in HR?

Over the years, I have worked in a number of generalist and specialist disciplines, but I would say that my twin passions are reward (intellectually stimulating) and talent management. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than finding the right people at the right time with the right skills and cultural fit and seeing them develop through the whole employee life cycle.

It's a hugely varied and exciting role, but also challenging. The McCarthy & Stone brand, and what we do, is very special. I love the fact that the role is so interesting, but that there is a real social purpose too, because we do genuinely 'enrich peoples' lives' as our strapline says.

What has been the highlight of your career so far?

Well, it sounds a bit boastful but I was delighted to be recognised as one of the most influential HR Directors in the

construction industry by HR Magazine for the past four years. Tucked away in Bournemouth and a long way from London, that is quite something!

However, my real proudest moments are really when I see people succeed and achieve greatness – for example someone who I may have been involved in recruiting at a junior level, going all the way to the top.

What are the challenges being faced by the HR sector at the moment?

The biggest challenge for HR professionals is to keep up with all the various changes. It's a very fast-paced environment to work in both economically and politically (I won't mention the 'B' word)!

It is always a challenge to find and retain great people, because there is still a 'war for talent'. Going forward, people will need to be much more agile and be able to reinvent themselves as AI changes the way we work. A key role of HR will be to help people change and respond if they can, and to support them in an appropriate manner if they cannot. There is also a growing tsunami of regulation and legislation which all HR professionals are wrestling with. The root of all the new reporting and corporate governance requirements is sensible and necessary, but puts a lot of pressure on senior teams.

In your opinion, what are the key characteristics of a great HR professional?

I personally don't have a formal CIPD qualification and this has never proved to be an impediment to my progression. However, it's different now and I would definitely encourage anyone pursuing a career in HR to do their CIPD. I would also encourage them then to join a large organisation where they can get a good technical grounding in all areas of HR before deciding in which area to specialise.

From a skills point of view, you have to be very flexible, agile and open-minded because you can never predict what is going to happen on any given day. A high degree of resilience and good sense of humour are also indispensable, as people matters don't always go according to plan!

For me, the distinguishing factor is having the right attitude – someone who goes the extra mile, who is intellectually curious and full of energy, wants to be the best version of themselves and help others, will always be a winner.

Finally, make sure you really relate to your employer's product and brand. It makes me proud every day that McCarthy & Stone enriches its customers' and their families' lives. To know you are making a difference to others makes everything worthwhile.



SUPPORTING RETURNING MOTHERS IN THE WORKPLACE

According to a recent survey by HR training providers DPG, an overwhelming 9 in 10 mothers (87%) faced issues when returning to work after maternity leave.

Over half (54%) struggle to balance time between childcare and work and one-third (33%) struggle financially with the cost of childcare.

Despite the introduction of shared parental leave as a legal requirement in April 2015, women are still bearing most of the responsibility for childcare. In comparison to men, one in five of whom (22%) took no time off at all, women take an average of 12.5 months off work which equates to 24 times more leave.

Lack of support from employers

Findings also revealed that on returning to work, 17% feel marginalised or excluded by colleagues and over one in ten (14%) miss out on promotions because of maternity leave. One in five (19%) even find it necessary to leave their position altogether.

While half (51%) of those mothers surveyed were satisfied with the support they received from their employer, they did indicate what companies could be doing to help the transition back to work easier:

- Almost half (46%) want more flexible working hours
- Nearly one-third (30%) want more paid maternity leave
- Over one-quarter (26%) would like to work from home
- One in five (21%) want their employer to provide an onsite crèche
- 17% want more childcare vouchers

What can businesses do?

In addition to those that leave work altogether, currently two-thirds of women (68%) are unable to return to work full time after maternity leave. Other research has revealed that 54,000 women a year [lose their jobs in the UK](#) as a direct result of pregnancy or maternity and that [record numbers](#) are turning to self-employment.

This represents a huge loss of knowledgeable and experienced employees across many industries and sectors. Taking the feedback from this survey on board, businesses should consider making improvements where possible, which will enhance staff retention and productivity in the long-term.

Incorporating shared parental leave into company culture

Government [reports](#) suggest the uptake of shared parental leave is low and this could be because the majority of fathers and parents do not feel comfortable with taking it. More should be done to create an open and accepting culture within businesses, where fathers taking time off when a child is sick, for example, is not 'frowned upon'.

Paying more maternity pay

The majority of UK businesses pay only Statutory maternity pay, which is just £148.48 per week after the first six weeks – [almost 70% less than the average UK salary for women](#) in 2018 according to Monster.

As one-third of women struggle financially after having children, better maternity pay can alleviate money-related stress and

enable women to focus on returning to work for the right reasons – because they want to rather than because they have to.

Offer flexible hours and remote working

Letting employees work around other commitments can ensure a job is still well done. Whether you provide fixed flexible hours, or allow a parent to make up time if they have to suddenly leave work, you can engender loyalty among your staff who appreciate your understanding.

Likewise, allowing a parent to work from home, either regularly or to finish off their day after the school run, can be extremely convenient for everyone. And, research has shown that people who work from home are more [productive](#).

Help with childcare

An onsite crèche will certainly appeal to many working parents, who can cut out travelling to and from a nursery in addition to their place of work every day. Plus, they may not feel as guilty if their child is close by. However, it's not feasible for all businesses and according to CIPD, only 5% of UK workplaces have such facilities.

Instead, offering childcare voucher schemes can provide parents with significant savings on nursery and childminder costs every year. There are tax and National Insurance savings for the employer too.

In a nutshell, companies that don't do more to support mothers (and fathers) returning to work risk losing substantial portions of their workforce.

TAX REFORM

Understanding tax consequences of rewarding staff

Employees are your most valuable asset and it is important that they feel appreciated for all they do. However, celebratory gifts and parties for employees can have tax consequences, and the employer's good intentions can be destroyed by an unexpected tax bill. Therefore, it can be helpful to structure staff welfare around the various exemptions available to employers.

Exemptions available

Annual parties - An employer can spend up to £150 per head on annual functions without a taxable benefit arising, providing all employees (or all those at one location) are invited to attend. This limit must cover all costs including travel and VAT. It can be split across multiple events, but if one event costs more than £150, the whole cost will be taxable.

Free meals - Free but modest meals available to everyone on an employer's premises, outside a salary sacrifice scheme, fall within an exemption. It is important to recognise that internal working lunches provided to only select employees will be taxable.

Trivial benefits – There is an exemption for trivial benefits provided to employees where certain conditions are met:

- The VAT inclusive cost does not exceed £50.
- The benefit is not cash or cash voucher (high street vouchers are acceptable).
- There is no contractual entitlement.
- The benefit is not provided in recognition of their duties.

This exemption applies where employers mark events such as birthdays, Christmas, births, deaths and sickness. "Thank you" gifts will not be exempt, as these would be in recognition of duties performed.

Long service awards – Benefits provided to employees to recognise long service are exempt where they meet the following conditions:

- It marks a period of at least twenty years' service.
- There must not have been a similar award in the previous ten years (even if previously taxed).
- It must not take the form of cash, cash vouchers or shares (unless in the employing company). High street vouchers will qualify for the exemption.

- The taxable value of the award must not exceed £50 per year of service.

Benefits falling outside exemptions

Employers are not precluded from providing benefits falling outside an exemption, but the employer is required to report it to HMRC. In many circumstances, P11D reporting can be avoided by entering into a PAYE Settlement Agreement (PSA) with HMRC by 6 July 2019 for benefits provided in 2018/19 tax year. This allows the employer to settle the tax directly with HMRC, bypassing the employee.

It should be noted that a PSA results in the employer paying tax on a grossed-up basis, to recognise the employer is discharging the employee's personal tax liability. It means that, for an employee paying tax at 40%, a benefit costing £100 will cost a settlement with HMRC of just under £90. Whilst this seems high, it may be a small price to pay to ensure good staff morale. Combining the use of the PSA with the available exemptions seems like the best compromise to mitigate the tax bill, whilst not skimping on staff welfare.



Author: Deborah Parks-Green, Employment Tax Director, RSM
www.rsmuk.com | deborah.parks-green@rsmuk.com

Deborah is an Employment Tax Director at RSM, previously working for HM Revenue and Customs. She conducts risk analysis and advises business on reducing risk, correcting errors and mitigating settlements with HMRC, as well as maximising efficiencies in remuneration and staff incentive planning.





WHAT'S YOUR BUSINESS STORY?

Hiring staff is now a two-way street where the power is no longer solely in the hands of the employer. Candidates are putting more onus on whether they can see themselves working – and enjoying working – for a company in the long-term before making the leap from their current role.

In addition to assessing the salary and benefits on offer, more and more job seekers are turning to employee reviews and brand reputation. Sites like Glassdoor are increasing in popularity and if you're not effectively getting a sense of your company culture across in your job adverts, then application numbers could be poor in the first place.

It's been proven that those who are happy in their jobs are more productive and stay longer in their roles. A survey by Deloitte, an employer who openly lists top 10 reasons to join the firm on their career site, also revealed recently that 88% of employees believe a distinct workplace culture is important to business success.

By providing job applicants with an honest picture of how your company operates, your values and culture right from the outset, you can improve both your recruitment and retention rates.

So what's your business story and how can you use it to attract a loyal and motivated team?

Start at the beginning

Whether your business is a global multinational or one-office start-up, it's always good for prospective employees to know how you started and the stage your business is at now. There are just as many candidates excited by the opportunity to be part of a growing company as those who are more suited to a more established business.

Sell your service or product as you would to a customer

In far too many job adverts, the service, product or even industry is omitted, leaving

job seekers confused about whether they have the relevant subject matter experience for such a job. In some instances, this is down to the company being seemingly boring and unexciting. But the fact is, you have a successful business and people pay for your product or service, so sell to the candidate what's so great about what you do and how they'll play a role.

Talk about the workspace

Paint a picture of the working environment and what candidates can expect from your facilities. Is it open-plan and colourful, or sectioned offices with muted colours? Are there meeting rooms and breakout areas or communal and outside spaces? Is the dress code formal or relaxed? And where is your premises – on a trading estate, town centre or in secluded countryside for example?

If the role is not based in one location, talk about the variety on offer of being 'on the road' or able to work from several sites.

Different businesses call for different workspaces, and it's important to be transparent. Don't say you offer modern workspaces and dress-down Fridays if that's not what your company offers. Some workspaces need to remain corporate and employees suited and booted at all times and that's OK. The likelihood is that your workspace will be tailored to the type of work you do, and that will be expected.

Don't avoid the 'day job'

In company descriptions, the nuts and bolts of the job itself can be easily forgotten, but they are just as important as the 'fluffy' stuff. Explain what is expected in terms of working hours and telecommuting, the tasks they will be responsible for, what important targets

and deadlines must be met and how they are expected to work – alone with complete autonomy, as part of a team, reporting directly to a line manager or a combination of all?

If it can be a fast-paced and stressful environment at times, say so. But couple this with the rewards they get as a result – bonus, extra holiday, job satisfaction and career progression.

Candidates will also want to know how they are going to be managed and if there are professional development opportunities.

Describe the 'extra' good stuff


Tell candidates what benefits you offer and the initiatives you encourage. This could range from the more standard pension, healthcare and cycle to work schemes to free breakfasts, subsidised social events and charity work.

Be specific and give examples of what you've done in your company in the past and the perks you provide and why – what do you believe in? Working hard and playing hard?

Be true to who you are

Whatever your business story, be open and transparent. Few legal secretaries will expect to turn up in trainers and a t-shirt and even fewer back-end web developers will be used to working within the strict hours of 9am to 5pm.

However, getting your company culture and business story across at the earliest opportunity will ensure your roles are being applied for by the most motivated candidates.



EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATE

Paul Burton is an employment solicitor and Associate at Frettens Solicitors, working in partnership with Bond Williams.

Here he brings us a brief overview of the government's proposed changes to Confidentiality Clauses and Non-Disclosure Agreements.

Government Consultation

In March, the government issued a consultation document seeking views on new measures to prevent the misuse of non-disclosure agreements in situations of workplace harassment or discrimination.

The consultation document is announced on the back of several high-profile stories in recent months involving wealthy business people and so-called 'hush payments'.

This consultation will examine:

- Whether there should be more limitations on confidentiality clauses in the employment context, to make it easier for workers and their advisers to understand when they are permitted in law to make a disclosure to the police or other people despite the existence of a confidentiality clause.
- How to ensure workers are clear about the rights they maintain when they sign a confidentiality clause or start work for a new employer.
- How to enforce any new regulations on confidentiality clauses

Confidentiality Clauses and Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs)

Confidentiality clauses serve a useful purpose in the employment context. They are used in two main ways:

1. As part of employment contracts (i.e. to protect trade secrets).

2. As part of settlement agreements, for example to allow both sides of an employment dispute to move on with a clean break.

There are some limits on their use: mainly that confidentiality clauses are void if they purport to prevent someone making a protected disclosure, or taking a case to a tribunal (unless within a COT3 or settlement agreement).

Preventing Harassment and Discrimination

In the executive summary of the consultation paper, the Government wrote:

"As part of our commitment to this upgrade, we are now consulting to ensure that harassment or discrimination of any sort cannot be tolerated in the workplace. The purpose of this consultation is to seek evidence and views of the use of confidentiality clauses in the employment context, and to propose further regulation to tackle their misuse."

Paul Says:

"The perceived misuse of NDAs and confidentiality clauses has hit the front pages in recent months.

Used for the right reasons, they can be valuable and important tools for both employers and employees, however we have seen the damage they can cause.

If you would like to discuss NDAs or confidentiality clauses, our Employment Team are experienced, knowledgeable and more than happy to help."



Author: Paul Burton, Associate, Frettens Solicitors
www.frettens.co.uk | pburton@frettens.co.uk

Paul Burton is an employment solicitor and Associate at Frettens Solicitors. He has recently been shortlisted Lawyer of the Year Award at The Dorset Legal Awards.





HOW BUSINESSES CAN ATTRACT CANDIDATES WITH THE WHOLE PACKAGE

At Bond Williams, our recruitment consultants speak to hundreds of job seekers each week and as a result, have their finger on the pulse when it comes to candidate expectations.

In a job market that is likely to remain candidate-driven for at least the next year, it's important that businesses take notice of what their prospective employees want from their next role. We take a look at the findings from recent surveys and studies and provide our opinion based on the feedback we've received directly from candidates.

Salary isn't top of the list

A recent study by job board, Indeed, found that only 12% of British workers consider pay the most important factor in their jobs. In addition, more than half of workers (55%) would turn down a large pay rise if it meant working with people or in an environment they didn't like.

55% would turn down a pay rise due to work environment or colleagues

This is certainly a trend we are seeing at Bond Williams too.

Hannah Darby, Principal Recruitment Consultant, Office & Commercial, commented:

"Salary is of course important, and more experienced candidates who are actively looking for a new role are usually clear about their absolute minimum. We work with our clients to ensure they offer the most competitive salary possible, but also help them market the other benefits of working for their company. It is rarely the case that when candidates have more than one offer on the table, they make the decision based purely on pay."

Work-life balance and flexibility a growing trend

Three-quarters of employees favour jobs offering flexible working, according to Powwownow. Different research from TotalJobs also revealed that 24% of candidates are attracted to roles that give them the opportunity to have a healthier work life balance.

24% are attracted to roles that offer work life balance

Commute times, which now stand at an average of 58.4 minutes per day, are often behind requests for flexible working.

However, the TUC says employers not offering flexible and home working is one of three reasons why commutes to work are getting longer.

Charmaine Padfield, Managing Consultant, IT & Software Solutions, said:

"Many people calculate the time it takes for them to get to their normal place of work into their overall hours. If the option to start or leave earlier or later is not an option, then it can put many suitable candidates off who have hobbies or childcare considerations, for example."

"In the IT & Software division in particular, a large number of developers and technical specialists want to be able to work from home and telecommute due to the nature of the role. It's not always possible for businesses to accommodate such requests, but it's certainly something they should consider offering."

Development opportunities wanted

In its 2018 Learning and Development Trend Report, e-learning provider, GoodHabitz, revealed that **81%** of workers think it's important or very important for employers to invest in their development. According to another 2018 report from LinkedIn, a huge **93%** of employees also said they would stay at a company longer if it invested in their careers.

Our consultants have found that this requirement differs between sector and role level, however.

Louise Woodward, Associate Director, Accounting & Finance, commented:

"In some industries, there is a clear development path which employers expect to provide and candidates expect to be offered. Take the Accounting & Finance sector, for example. Generally speaking, however, at a junior level, a lot of candidates like to know there are career progression opportunities, especially if they aren't following a specific career path following study.

"Likewise, middle-management and upwards are certainly interested in learning new soft skills, like leadership and communication, as well as hard skills as technology develops. In all cases, it's an added bonus if companies allow learning and development time during working hours."

Benefits package is integral

Nearly nine in 10 (89%) UK workers claim benefit provision is integral to their decision-making process when it comes to getting a new job. Research from Willis Towers Watson has revealed that pensions schemes are most valued for 62%, followed by health insurance (43%), life insurance (40%), critical illness cover (35%) and health cash plans (32%).

Peter Knibbs, Recruitment Manager, Engineering, Science & Space, said:

"Almost all candidates I have come across will assess the whole package before making a decision. There's a lot to be said for cash plans and also anything that encourages a healthy lifestyle.

"Having said that, it's not always about the added extras either, but simple benefits like flexibility, free parking, holiday allowance, sick pay and location. This means that smaller employers with smaller budgets can compete if they are willing to be creative."

Speedy recruitment process

The research from Indeed, referred to above, also highlighted how a company's hiring process can impact how potential new recruits perceive a business. Prospective employees value efficient and fast communication, with 65% stating that speed of response from the employer was the most important factor in establishing trust.

65% say that speed of response from an employer is most important

This point is also backed up by the fact that 43% of jobseekers would feel undermined if a potential employer took longer than a week to respond to them.

Claire Bond, Director, said:

"It is increasingly the case that businesses are taking too long to make a formal offer when they do eventually find a suitable candidate. Either they are too busy and this falls to the bottom of the 'to-do' list, or they want to wait for similarly suitable candidates to come along so they can make a true comparison. Unfortunately, when there are more jobs than candidates, employers risk missing out on their ideal employee if they don't act fast."

Your overall company culture and environment

All of the above helps to paint a picture of your employee-facing brand and what it would be like to work for your company. Culture is becoming increasingly important to candidates, who want to enjoy going to work as much as being paid well, valued and looked after.

Suzanne Sherriff, Associate Director, Office & Commercial, concluded:

"Whether you're looking to fill a permanent or temporary role, candidates will always want to know the name of the company so they can do their own research. If you have a bad employer reputation, this can negatively impact your ability to attract the right talent, so breeding a positive culture should be a focus for every business."

In summary...

✓ Only 12% of British workers consider pay the most important factor

✓ Three quarters of employees favour jobs offering flexible working

✓ 93% of employees would stay longer if their company invested in development

✓ 9 in 10 say benefit provision is integral to decision-making process

✓ 65% of candidates judge prospective employers on response times



ACCOUNTING & FINANCE



IT & SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS



OFFICE & COMMERCIAL



HUMAN RESOURCES



ENGINEERING, SCIENCE & SPACE

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?



WHEN WE THINK ABOUT FIRST AID, MOST PEOPLE PICTURE ACCIDENTS OR PHYSICAL EMERGENCIES, BUT INCREASINGLY, ORGANISATIONS ARE TRAINING MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS (MHFAIDERS) TO OFFER HELP AND SUPPORT TO THOSE WITH POOR MENTAL HEALTH.

MHFA England was established in 2009 with a mission to increase mental health awareness literacy and reduce the stigma. Today, there are over 380,000 people in England trained in MHFA skills and over 3 million people worldwide. The internationally-recognised course is grounded in research and tested by people with who have experienced mental health issues and is delivered by licensed instructors.

There is not currently any legislation in place for mental health first aid, however, a cross-party group of MPs overwhelmingly backed a motion to put it on an equal footing with physical first aid regulations when it was debated in Parliament in January 2019.

Guidance from the Health and Safety Executive stated: "You should consider ways to manage mental ill health in your workplace which are appropriate for your business, such as providing information or training for managers and employees, employing occupational health professionals, appointing mental health trained first aiders and implementing employee support programmes."

So, while there is no legal requirement to have MHFAiders, there is certainly a strong business case. The Centre for Mental Health estimates that poor mental health costs UK employers an estimated £34.9 billion each year, but improving the management of mental health in the workplace will allow employers to save 30% or more of these costs.

What are the benefits of mental health training?

Practical mental health training gives people a better understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and support each other. It can also help to:

- Build an employee's confidence to have open conversations around mental health and break the stigma.
- Encourage people to access support early for a faster recovery.
- Empower people with a long-term mental health issue or disability to thrive in work.
- Promote a healthy environment, stopping preventable issues and allowing people to thrive and become more productive.
- Embed a long-term positive culture across the whole organisation, where employees recognise their mental and physical health are supported equally.

What is the role of an MHFAider?

An MHFAider is not a counsellor or a therapist and will not provide a diagnosis. Their role is to:

- Understand the important factors affecting mental ill health.
- Identify the signs and symptoms for a range of mental health conditions.
- Use a five-step action plan to provide MHFA to someone experiencing a mental health issue or crisis.
- Listen non-judgementally and hold

supportive conversations using the MHFA action plan.

- Signpost people to professional help.

MHFAiders are not experts in mental health in the same way that a physical first aider is not expected to have the expertise of a doctor. Instead, they are trained to respond in a crisis, be a point of contact, reassure people and point them in the right direction.

You can qualify as an MHFAider by attending an [Adult MHFA Two Day course](#) delivered by an accredited MHFA England instructor.

Become an accredited Mental Health First Aider with Bond Williams and receive £25 discount per person.

We have teamed up with Marion to deliver the MHFA England Adult two-day course at our Head Office in Bournemouth on the 12th and 20th June 2019.

Just £275 instead of £300 per person if you quote 'HR Insights April 2019'.

For any queries, please email laura.webb@bondwilliams.co.uk or to reserve your place, please email marion@marionhewitt.uk. Spaces are limited to ensure you get the best from the training. The cost includes manual, workbook and certificate to show you are accredited.



MHFA England

14 HR INSIGHTS

Author: Marion Hewitt, Coach and Trainer
www.marionhewitt.uk | marion@marionhewitt.uk

Marion has extensive experience within HR in a range of organisations and is a Fellow of the CIPD. She draws on her experience in the work she now does as a coach and trainer, including delivering MHFA training as an accredited instructor.



HOW TO RECOGNISE BURNOUT AND MANAGE STRESS

As Stress Awareness Month comes to a close, most of us are acutely familiar with the statistic that almost half of the UK population experience the pain of stress-related mental health concerns in their daily lives.

At the forefront of the wellbeing revolution is Business and Behavioural Psychologist and People Matter R&D Director, Amy King, who found time to explore the subjects of stress, burnout and mental wellbeing.

How can individuals look for signs of burnout?

Burnout occurs when stress becomes excessive and prolonged, leading to emotional, mental and physical exhaustion. People who experience burnout tend to find themselves feeling overwhelmed, drained and unable to meet the constant demands or pressures in their daily life.

Researchers have found that there are three core signs of burnout:

- Exhaustion
- Cynicism
- Ineffectiveness

Burnout symptoms

Ask yourself:

- Have you become negative, cynical or critical at work?
- Do you dread starting the day?
- Have you become irritable or impatient?
- Do you lack the energy to be consistently productive?
- Do you find it hard to concentrate and find yourself easily distracted?
- Do you lack satisfaction from your achievements?
- Do you feel withdrawn and emotionally isolated from others?
- Do you feel disillusioned and/or empty?
- Are you using food, drugs or alcohol to feel better?
- Have your sleep habits changed?
- Are you troubled by unexplained aches or other physical complaints?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you might be experiencing job burnout. Consider talking to a doctor or a mental health provider to seek support and advice.

Tips for noticing and then managing stress-related burnout:

Evaluate your working dynamics - The best place to start is by being mindful of your day-to-day energy and noticing patterns in your working life that impact your overall energy and stress levels. Social support, reward and recognition, autonomy, meaning and positive working relationships help prevent symptoms of burnout and boost engagement.

Identify your options - Once you understand what is helping or hindering you, it is important to take the first steps to take action. Take time to speak to your manager, a friend or a professional therapist to support you in putting these things in to action.

Seek support - If you are starting to feel overwhelmed, exhausted and burnt out, sometimes the best thing you can do is to stop and raise your hand for help!

Value your needs - People who burnout or are at risk of burnout tend to neglect their own needs. Take time to give yourself a personal MOT and work out what you need, whether it be sleep, exercise, reading a book, seeing friends or getting outside and active - whatever it is that gets you back to feeling 'you'. Make time for yourself!

Practice mindfulness - Taking time to get perspective will help you spot signs of burnout. Meditation and mindfulness activities are proving to be effective ways to reduce stress and to support wellbeing.

What could employers do to improve things for working society?

- If we are to create healthier and happier workplaces, organisations must focus on building trust, empathy and understanding with their people.
- Breaking down stigma and building greater awareness is a key component. But this must be followed through with action.
- If positive change is to be achieved, it is critical to equip both employees and organisations with ways to measure and understand how the working environment and demands are impacting wellbeing.



- For organisations, this really comes down to nurturing a healthier and more supportive day-to-day culture for people to thrive in, and providing robust mental health resources is essential, including employee assistant programmes (EAPs), mental health first aid training and wellness initiatives.
- Organisations should aim to provide easy and fast access to high quality mental healthcare & support to address depressive symptoms and the potential for suicide.

Increasingly, additional products are now being developed to offer more proactive support to not only 'react' to mental health needs but to promote positive health.

The People Matter technology and associated App uses Smart behavioural AI technology with bespoke machine learning algorithms which define human behaviours and track patterns, learning how to read signs of approaching or occurring burnout, and signs of stress. The benefits of using the tool are that it focuses on flow and how to maintain a positive state of wellbeing!

The app works to provide guidance and solutions, triggering notifications and nudging certain behaviours to adapt. Okina has been created with the workplace and employee environment in mind.

The company was selected as one of the ten winning Rising Stars of UK Tech from over 300 applicants at this year's Tech Nation Rising Stars Award for its Okina App, which aims to make the world a healthier, happier place.

Anyone interested in becoming beta testers for the wellness technology should visit www.peoplematter.tech.



Author: Amy King, Co-Founder and R&D Director, People Matter
www.peoplematter.tech | amy@peoplematter.tech

R&D Director and Co-Founder of Bournemouth based Tech Startup "People Matter" Amy King is an award-winning Business and Behavioural Psychologist. Her ethos is to create positive change, challenge and disruption to the way in which organisations work, bringing together her experience and passion for psychology, people and technology.

THE M WORD - WHY MENOPAUSE MATTERS



I have thought long and hard about the ‘appropriateness’ of writing about what has, until very recently, been a taboo subject. However, when I read last month that the CIPD had produced the People Professional’s Guide to the Menopause at Work, I decided that I would – after all, if no one writes about taboo subjects, nothing will change.

Why is it so important to me?

As a 55-year-old woman, part of the answer to that question is obvious – it’s a very personal subject. I also have four children, three of whom are girls and the other one of whom will probably find himself ‘on the receiving end’ at some point in his life. I’m also advising employers about people issues every day and can see the impact of the menopause in the workplace on a regular basis.

My own ‘journey’ started in 2010, when I was 46, with erratic periods, ever-increasing and more frequent PMS type symptoms that made me grumpy, short tempered and tearful. That was ‘fun’ for me and everyone around me!

I was expecting the typical symptoms – loss of libido, weight gain and hot flushes, but nobody had prepared me for the crippling anxiety and panic attacks that struck so hard in the summer of 2015 that we had to come home half way through a family holiday to Majorca. My (male) GP wanted to put me on anti-depressants, but I knew I wasn’t depressed and refused the medication. I was kind to myself and scaled back on my work and slowly, gradually started to come out the other side of what had felt like a living nightmare.

Then the hot flushes started – no sweating, just a feeling of intense heat that comes from nowhere. In my case, in the middle of the night, roughly every hour, up to five or six times, constantly interrupting sleep. You can imagine how that makes you feel when it goes on day after day, week after week – exhausted, drained, unable to think clearly, struggling to function.

Getting menopause on the equality agenda

The CIPD Guide highlights how outdated the stigma surrounding this natural process is and aims to equip employers with the knowledge and tools to tackle it. Gender equality and the gender pay gap are high on the agenda but the menopause – clearly part of a broader gender and age equality issue - hasn’t been on the agenda at all.

Supporting female employees through the menopause should be part of an organisation’s approach to developing an inclusive workplace that encourages women’s progression. Research has previously

shown that, by taking the menopause seriously, organisations can help mitigate the potentially negative impact of symptoms on the individual and the business, including higher sickness absence levels and an increased desire to leave work altogether.

I’ve learned that symptoms vary considerably from person to person and from time to time. There is no single menopause journey, although it will typically hit a woman any time between the ages of 45 and 55. For many, it is a long-term, fluctuating condition that requires the same level of support and understanding as any other long-term health condition.

I’ve been enormously grateful for the support and understanding of the people around me and the love of my family - especially my husband, who has pretty much accepted everything I’ve thrown at him (not literally, I might add!). I am my own boss, so I have been able to flex how much I’ve worked when times have been tough and, as far as I am aware, until now, no one has noticed – I’ve just extended the deadlines if I’ve needed to.

My business has continued to grow steadily and I’m very fortunate to be doing a job that I love. I chose not to take HRT. By changing my diet and cutting right down on alcohol, I’ve lost weight and, as a result of weekly personal training and Pilates, I’m much fitter now than I’ve ever been. I’ve also appeared on national television, talking about the menopause and recently appeared in a national women’s magazine – a great boost to my self-esteem.

Create an inclusive environment

Change happens when people stop and think and creating an inclusive environment where women don’t feel ashamed or embarrassed about what they are going through is fundamental to that change.

There are 4.4 million women aged over 50 in the workplace. My hope is that employers will embrace the CIPD Guide and find ways to offer more support and understanding to those women. One thing is certain, every woman will go through it at some point and the vast majority will do so during their working

Author: Rosemary Darby-Jenkins, Director, Signpost HR Solutions

www.signposthrsolutions.co.uk | info@signposthrsolutions.co.uk

Rosemary has over 30 years’ experience in HR for the private and public sector and now runs her own Dorset-based consultancy. She and her team specialise in employee relations, change management, HR strategy, organisational development and reward and job evaluation.





Mentoring makes sense – for businesses and employees

Mentoring in the workplace can be invaluable and rewarding for everyone involved. It's been found nearly 30 per cent of people in the UK want a mentor, yet a significant number have no idea where to find one. In most cases, companies and employees can meet this demand by looking no further than their own workforce and colleagues.

What is mentoring?

If you're struggling with the concept of mentoring, let's make it totally relatable. In the last series of *The Apprentice* on BBC1, the winner had the honour of being mentored by Lord Sugar instead of a cash prize.

Mentoring in the workplace is the nurture and support of an employee or colleague – usually by someone at least one level higher and who is not their direct line manager – on both a short- and long-term basis. A mentor is there to help someone develop, introduce new skills and impart wisdom they have gained from working within the company. In return, the mentee should be able to use their mentor as a sounding board for ideas and consult with them for careers advice.

A trio of benefits

You may think mentees are the clear winners and although they will professionally develop with a mentoring programme, there are benefits for mentors and the company itself.

Mentors report feeling more valued, recognised and satisfied within their job, with the added ability to hone their personal leadership skills and pick up fresh approaches to business from new or junior staff. Perks for companies include better recruitment and staff retention, financial savings on training and improved output, with 67% of businesses reporting an increase in productivity due to mentoring.

Starting an in-house mentoring programme

Your HR department is a good place to start or if you don't have one, bring it up with a line manager or in a Board Meeting. It can be as straightforward as pairing a manager with a junior on a one-to-one

basis, starting a buddy system where two employees help each other out, or even instigating 'speed mentoring' events, where different departments and staff chat informally on a regular basis.

Getting contributors to provide mentoring

Pairing up with mentors from other industries brings fresh perspectives and problem solving skills, and can be beneficial to even the highest of flyers. Richard Branson is a prominent mentor advocate and he introduced 'Mentor Mondays' at the Virgin Group. Every week a different business heavyweight shares their entrepreneurial insights with staff via a vlog that's published online for anyone to view – not just Virgin staff. Inviting contributors to mentor or speak is a model any business can follow and employees should look outside of their sector and office for inspiration.

External mentoring

For mentoring to be a success, you'll need a formal framework and clear business objectives, whether that's to get new joiners up-to-speed or to develop future leaders. SMEs whose resources don't stretch to a structured in-house mentoring programme may benefit from external help.

Phone, Skype, email and even virtual mentoring already exist, as does a full outsourced mentoring industry, which offers solutions on a face-to-face basis. The Government-endorsed website mentorsme.co.uk gives businesses free access to quality-assured mentoring organisations across Britain, while The Mentoring Foundation is dedicated to mentoring women so they reach the very top of large companies – one of a number of mentoring groups with a dedicated cause or sector.



WHY SUPERSTAR JOB TITLES DON'T WORK IN RECRUITMENT

Let's start with a quiz. Can you identify these conventional roles from their modern, reinvented job descriptions: wet leisure assistant, waste management and disposal technician, and paranoid in chief?

A gold star if you recognised the wackier titles for a lifeguard, a rubbish collector and an information security officer. We often equate creative descriptions with more creative industries but the position of Accounting Ninja has been advertised and even the recruitment industry itself isn't immune – Vibe Manager anyone?

While it may be tempting to dream up a leftfield title for a traditional role – perhaps in the hope it will make something mundane sound more interesting or to attract vibrant talent – it may prove to be a 'shoot yourself in the foot' recruitment strategy.

Keep it relevant

Playing it straight will always attract the most relevant candidates, yet the BBC estimates more than 100,000 businesses in the UK are using job titles that fail to say what an applicant is supposed to be doing. A further study by Digital Media Stream also discovered the majority of British adults were unable to tell whether a job title was real or made up – a fact that may lead candidates to question whether the job advertised actually exists.

A job title should describe the role you're recruiting for, ideally in two or three words. It is expected that the department or sector the job is in and the seniority of the role is included in the title – Sales Manager or Senior Java Developer, for example. Anything ambiguous will either invite a flurry of unsuitable CVs or deter people from applying altogether.

In addition, advertising a creatively-described job will immediately put you on the back foot when it comes to prospective applicants searching online. While you may commend yourself for jazzing up your Finance Director position by renaming it Chief Figures Guru, it's not a job title people will ever enter in to the Google search bar.

Keywords are key

Likewise, candidates using job sites are invited to search by title and these are still along standard lines. Think about the key words job seekers and recruitment specialists use and make sure the job title in your advert reflects this, no matter how creative you may be feeling.

Don't forget, your choice of job title can also alter a person's perception of your business. Occupational psychology expert, Professor Sir Cary Cooper, says: "We're now into the era of esoteric job titles designed to reflect as much about the company, its 'culture' and values as they are about the post holder,". If candidates apply expecting beanbags and beer pong but you can only deliver the bog-standard basics, your recruitment drive could be unfulfilling. There's also the risk that flowery job titles put off serious contenders, especially if they feel they're not the right cultural fit for your workplace.

If your heart is set on appointing a Galactic Viceroy of HR, you can always take a leaf out of Google's book by advertising using traditional job titles then bestowing something a little crazier once candidates have started.



HOW TO HANDLE LOVE IN THE WORKPLACE

With the majority of us spending most of our waking hours at work or with colleagues, it's easy to see why 22% of people meet their romantic partners at work.

After [sleeping](#) for more than 25% of the week, this leaves 124 waking hours, of which we spend over a third of it working – the [longest hours](#) in Europe, in fact. According to a study from Barclays, a [third of our socialising](#) is done with colleagues or at work get-togethers too.

It's not uncommon for many businesses to be family-run or have married (or not) couples at the helm. But, when it comes to the rules – written or unwritten – how should intimate relationships be handled at work in the early days?

If you're in the workplace relationship

There is no law against office romances so don't instantly assume you're going to get fired just because you've fallen for someone at work. Instead, ensure you have read any company policies, code of conduct documents and employee handbooks, if they exist. They'll soon shed light on whether there are any bans (unlikely) and if there's a recommended way to handle the situation.

What can lead to you losing your job, however, is poor performance, gross misconduct and anything that could be seen as unfair treatment or that brings the business's reputation into disrepute. Any of these can obviously occur outside of scenarios where a personal relationship is involved, but the risk potentially increases.

Avoid getting caught in any compromising situations in the photocopier room; having a domestic by the coffee machine; or constantly gazing at each other longingly instead of

working. Likewise, don't turn business talk into pillow talk. Not only is it probably rather boring, but you should not be sharing any sensitive and potentially confidential information with your other half.

Whether you tell your colleagues, or more specifically, your line manager, is really up to you. It depends on how serious the relationship is, how closely you work together and whether it is likely to impact your work.

If you work for a huge organisation in completely different department and on the opposite side of the building to each other, will anyone really notice? On the other hand, if you are on the same team or one of you is more senior or directly managing the other, then you should tell your line manager.

You do not want either party being accused of favouritism or abusing their power, and you might have to consider changing roles or moving departments, if that is an option. Although it's unlikely your company can force you to do that.

If you manage people in the workplace relationship

All employees have the right to privacy and a family life. Equally, you have a duty to protect the interests of the company and ensure nothing jeopardises service levels or operations. Having said that, employees in a relationship should not be treated differently or discriminated against – this can lead to legal disputes.

At the end of the day, two or more people spending far too much time talking about

personal matters happens every day and you can't single out a couple because their romantic relationship has gone public.

As a manager, it is not your job to moralise or condemn the relationship. It is your job to ensure productivity doesn't suffer and that everyone continues to act fairly and professionally. This includes not allowing intimate or personal relationships to influence any decision-making.

Where this becomes more difficult is under circumstances where there is a senior-junior professional relationship, as mentioned above. Each case is best reviewed on an individual basis and in line with any company policies, but you shouldn't rush to enforce a 'love contract' – widely adopted in America to avoid any lawsuits or sexual harassment claims in the event that things turn sour!

If you haven't been told directly by those involved, should you bring it up in the first place? Again, that depends on how closely the pair work, likelihood that it will negatively affect their work or make people around them gossip or feel uncomfortable, and if you're going to need to do anything about it. Trust your instinct, and if you'd rather get it out in the open, let them know that you know.

Match made in office heaven?

You will be pleased to know, though, that romances formed at work are more likely to end in [marriage](#) and often, one half ends up moving jobs eventually anyway!

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Bournemouth
01202 233 777

Southampton
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