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SPECIAL REPORTS

WHY DO LEADERS PAY LIP SERVICE TO BUILDING THE EXECUTIVE TEAM? PLUS, DEMAND FOR EQUALITY HAS LED TO A PERVERSE AND ILLOGICAL CUL-DE-SAC

AMANDA CUSDIN, CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER - SAGE PLC

{ HERBAL REMEDY }

“THERE'S A SENSE DIGITAL'S A MAD DASH TOWARDS CRASH AND BURN, BUT TECH/PEOPLE HARMONY IS PERFECTLY PLAUSIBLE”

ALSO FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP

Ambiguity and fluidity's on the increase and there's an expectation of equality of voice and input

MERGER & ACQUISITION

Without empathy and understanding, M&A is a dangerous game of assumption: with potentially fatal consequences

OUTSOURCING

If we close our eyes to the friction, then we define the partnership by what we avoid rather than what we can create

APPRENTICESHIPS & GRADUATES

Grads arrive more polished, but employers are increasingly less sure they outperform apprentices



LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST*

The workplace is increasingly fractious and the root causes of the rising tide of conflict and incivility must be addressed. But is it the fear of constant change and the threat to livelihoods that the likes of AI and robots pose? Or is there a more obvious reason for the discord and disengagement, namely a simple lack of communication, mutual understanding and respect?

ARTICLE BY DAVID LIDDLE, CEO - THE TCM GROUP

What is patently clear is, there is very little attention being paid to the impact the turbulence of change is having on the dynamics of the employer/employee relationship. Employees are, quite understandably, frightened about the prospect of automation and what is increasingly looking like an unpredictable and insecure future jobs market. At a recent conference, keynote speaker the TUC's Deputy General Secretary, Paul Nowak, pointed out that new working practices are already transforming whole sectors, sometimes for good - in terms of driving productivity gains - sometimes for bad - leading to an upsurge in exploitative forms of employment. In the meantime, flatter, less hierarchical structures, which promised to transform working lives and empower employees, have actually done the opposite - leaving people with ever more distant relationships with their bosses, unsure about what their goals and priorities are and where they fit into the bigger picture. Not surprisingly, we are seeing unprecedented levels of conflict in the workplace and the CIPD's latest research shows that just over a third of employees have experienced some form of interpersonal conflict at work over the past year, either in the form of an isolated dispute or an ongoing difficult relationship. Added to a volatile mix, the protracted incivility in public and political life must be a contributing factor in why workplaces are becoming increasingly toxic. We are in the vortex of what can only be described as an age of rage. The sudden rise in union membership, coupled with the emergence of new-style unions designed to improved worker voice in an age of AI, is a graphic illustration of how employees are increasingly feeling they lack influence over their futures and are being treated as little more than human 'resources'.

Organisations need to take urgent action to tackle these fractured environments - not just because it's the morally right thing to do - but because it is having a real impact on morale, engagement, performance and even



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reputation. People who are sick to the stomach at the thought of having to go into work and deal with confrontational colleagues or an unsympathetic or (in their eyes) bullying boss, are never going to be able to do their best work. The statistics speak for themselves with engagement levels at an all-time low.

The problem is that organisations have not woken up to the fact that, as the workplace is changing, they also need to make a radical shift in the way they manage their people and support them through the chaos and volatility. A shift towards 'fair and just' cultures, where people are treated as human beings rather than numbers on a spreadsheet, is long overdue. This calls for organisations to put values at the heart of everything they do and those values must be the golden thread that runs through the business and underpins every activity, process and procedure it engages in. The values should guide the way managers lead their teams and the way they communicate with their people about decisions that directly affect them. The values should also influence the way organisations deal and communicate with their clients and the wider supply chain, with the aim of ensuring the employee and customer experience is aligned. Often, this means reframing the competencies and behaviours that are required of managers - and supporting them in developing the skills they need to manage their people in a confident, constructive and compassionate way. Crucially, shifting to a people-centred, values-driven culture also means completely rethinking the way conflict of all kinds is managed in the business. Organisations need to move away from damaging and divisive formal procedures that cause irreparable damage to working relationships and shift the focus towards resolution frameworks which have dialogue, collaboration and restorative justice at their heart. ●

*Love's Labour's Lost, a comedy by William Shakespeare (circ.1595).

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