

## Good People Management Practices Is Missing X Factor

Improving the awareness and implementation of good people management practices is the missing x factor in improving the UK's productivity performance according to John Philpott, Chief Economist at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Philpott's comments come ahead of Michael Porter's government sponsored assessment of UK competitiveness and productivity levels, which is due to be made public on Wednesday, 22 January 2003.

Philpott says, "A CIPD survey Voices from the Boardroom 2002, shows that only 13 of 48 board members interviewed about their views on HR are aware of the evidence that links people management practices with improved bottom line performance or that people management practices have a bigger impact on the bottom line than R&D."

From its own analyses and research, CIPD highlights four types of implementation problem that bedevil attempts to improve the performance of UK organisations:

**Ignorance** - despite the best efforts of management gurus and econo-

mists, too many senior UK managers remain oblivious of research and best practice initiatives demonstrating the links between good management practice and organisational success;

*The time has come for a 'do tank' rather than a 'think tank' approach to UK management.*

**Inertia** - even where the need for change is recognised, management is often reluctant, for both cultural and financial reasons, to make necessary organisational changes;

**Inadequacy** - where change is pursued, the change process is too often poorly implemented, with human resource initiatives not properly integrated with line management;

**Integration** - the change process often fails to recognise the need for stepwise change throughout organi-

sations encompassing improvement in the use of technology, corporate structures, financial arrangements, and the management of people. Acting on one of these aspects of an organisation without corresponding change on all can hinder rather than help the shift toward high performance.

Philpott continues, "Michael Porter's timely contribution should help raise the quality of public debate on the organisational and practice dimension of the UK's productivity problem. But beyond this the time has come for a 'do tank' rather than 'think tank' approach to UK management.

"Fewer than 1 in 5 UK organisations implement the kind of high performance work practices such as flat structures or autonomous team-working that have enabled the US to surge well ahead in the productivity stakes since the mid-1990s. This is despite constant rhetoric from within both

business and government on the need to raise the UK's productivity game.

"Alongside much needed improvement in capital investment and skills training, far greater effort must be made to improve the way in which UK organisations are structured and, in particular, the way in which they manage and develop people.



"If Pro-

**Too many UK managers remain oblivious to best practice for staff**

essor Porter can demonstrate how this change process can be implemented, as well as highlighting how much it is needed, his efforts will themselves prove highly effective".

## Workaholic Britons Forced To Run Personal Lives From The Office

The pressure of long working hours and short lunch breaks means employees across the UK are increasingly being forced to run their personal lives from the office, according to figures released today by Yell.com, the online classified directory service.

Eighty seven per cent of employees using the Internet at work admitted to accessing it for personal reasons. But employers can take heart from the fact that less than one employee in ten uses the Internet primarily for entertainment. The most frequent reason for logging on from the office was for essential



personal administration, including checking bank details and finding services such as hairdressers or plumbers.

In addition, 76 per cent of those accessing the web from their desks ensure that it does not affect their work time, by doing so out of normal office hours.

The findings also show that today's workforce enjoys an average lunch break of just 35 minutes, while seven per cent of employees surveyed are too busy to take a break at all.

## Recruitment Upturn

Over 1,400 organisations across the UK were asked about their recruitment plans for the next quarter. Around 37 % of firms in the UK plan to increase staffing levels in the first quarter of 2003, a five percentage point increase on the first quarter of 2002.

The report shows signs of cautious encouragement in the job market: the total percentage of organisations planning to recruit in the coming quarter is 89 per cent (up five points on last year) and those planning to make redundancies has fallen from 10 per cent at the start of last year to eight per cent in the first quarter of 2003.

### Sector Variations

Across the sectors that were surveyed the organisations that are planning to expand the most are in construction and finance. 43 per cent of firms in these sectors are planning to recruit to grow staff levels over the coming quarter, an increase of eight points for finance but a decrease of three points

for construction over 2002 levels. Redundancies are predicted to be highest in the manufacturing field, with 16 per cent of businesses in this industry planning to downsize.

Interestingly, finance also has a larger than average percentage of companies predicting redundancies, at 10 per cent. James Reed, chief executive of the organisation behind the report, comments:

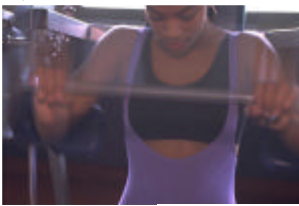
"2002 was a difficult year for many UK businesses and the job market. It is encouraging to see an improvement, with more organisations now planning to recruit in the coming year, but overall demand still remains below pre-September 11 levels.

"It would be wrong to say the slump in some parts of the employment market has reached an end, but – to borrow Churchill's memorable phrase – we may now be reaching the end of the beginning."

## More People Want Flexible Hours Than Cash, Company Car Or Gym

Flexible working hours are more important than money for nearly a third of people looking for a new job according to a new survey. The online poll, carried out by a leading recruitment website with the Department of Trade and Industry's Work-Life Balance campaign, surveyed over 4,000 jobseekers. Almost half of the respondents (46%) chose flexible working as the benefit they would most look for in their next job, with only 1 in 14 (7%) choosing gym membership and 1 in 10 (10%) opting for a company car; A third of them would prefer the opportunity to work flexible hours rather than receive £1,000 more

pay per year; 7 in 10 (68%) jobseekers would like the chance to work more flexibly when necessary; 8 in 10 (77%) parents with children under 6 said



that work-life balance is an important factor in deciding whether to apply for a new job; and six out of ten workers view work-life balance as an important factor in assessing a potential new job. The poll comes on the eve of a New Year publicity campaign to raise awareness about the new family friendly employment rights, which

start on 6 April 2003. The new rights – introduced by the government – mean more pay and leave for new mothers, fathers and adoptive parents. Employers will also have to seriously consider requests from parents with young or disabled children to work more flexibly. Trade and Industry Secretary, Patricia Hewitt, also launched an enhanced ACAS help-line service specially geared to give help and guidance about the new rights and other employment matters to both employers and parents. The new national number is 08457 47 47 47. Ms Hewitt said:

**Gymnasiums are just one of the traditional perks losing value...**

businesses are already switched on to this and are using flexible working policies to attract and retain the people they need in the war for talent. "This poll shows that getting a bet-

"New Year is when many people start shopping for their next job, but increasingly people want more from work than the usual package. The best

ter work-life balance is becoming much more important for all employees – men as much as women – and the competitive advantages business gains from offering flexible working are now well established. "The new employment rights will be a major step forward in helping businesses hold onto good staff and help millions of working parents balance work and childcare. I urge both employers and employees to call the help-line to find out how they can make these changes work for business."

Other key findings in the poll were: Only 18% of jobseekers would happily work much longer hours for more money, 4 in 10 (43%) men chose flexible working as the benefit they would most look for in a new job, compared with just 13% who would look for company car and only 7% who would look for gym membership 45% of undergraduates or recent graduates would prefer flexibility in hours to a company car (14%) or gym membership (4%) Nearly a quarter (24%) of managers/ directors said that work-life

balance was an extremely important factor in deciding whether to apply for a new job 4 in 10 (37%) women chose flexible working over £1000 more pay per year, compared to 3 in 10 (27%) men

James Reed, managing director of the website, who carried out the study, commented: "This research is a real wake-up call for employers. Clearly many jobseekers think flexibility is the most important benefit of all. Yet surprisingly, out of over a hundred thousand permanent and temporary jobs on the site less than 60 offer flexitime as



**Flexible hours are the new must have work benefit**

a benefit, compared to the thousands who offer company cars or gym membership. "Too many organizations seem to be missing out on one of the most effective ways to attract top talent. However this is easily remedied. It seems that employers who highlight opportunities to achieve a better work-life balance will simply be better placed to recruit and retain the people they need."

## Is Your Boss Monitoring Your Emails?

With email and the Internet currently one of the largest causes of disciplinary problems in the workplace and with many companies routinely monitoring its use—the latest news from the UK's privacy watchdog, the Information Commissioner, is that they are producing stringent codes of practice governing how much scrutiny companies can carry out on private communications. We all know employers are monitoring the actions of employees to eradicate spam, viruses and to control customer service levels, but of 525 job-hunters sur-



veyed a staggering 87% stated that their employer had failed to ask consent to monitor emails and 42% had failed to be informed of their employer's email and Internet policy. Unsurprisingly 54% of these job-hunters also admitted to using work accounts for personal messages and 64% admitted to using non work related sites during work hours. The message coming out of this is that companies can do far more to make employees aware of both their monitoring activity and their company policy on email and Internet use.

## A Lighter Moment...

Our thanks go to Maggie Waters of Area 51 for the following quotes from application letters:

*"I am bi-lingual, I can speak both English and French fluently at once."  
"Should seek a career in the ballet—would suit her Prima Donna tendencies."*

Top marks this month for dizziness go to the Government agency in Scunthorpe who updated their email system to use a filter which filtered out any emails containing profanity or obscene language of any kind. All was fine, 'til they realised that no-one whatsoever had got ANY emails during the whole week since they installed the software. They checked through everything and couldn't find a problem...until one bright spark pointed out that all their email addresses, username@scunthorpe.gov.uk contained a certain word...

And finally a few gems courtesy of 'The Office' ...

If work was so good, the rich would have kept more of it for themselves. Know your limitations and be content with them. Too much ambition

## Temp Of The Month - March 2003

This month we are delighted to present our Temporary Worker of the Month award to Sylvia Miller. Sylvia has worked for us in a variety of positions for over ten months now, currently working in the HR department at CPM. She has proved to be highly reliable, efficient and flexible in all her assignments and, as a thank you for all her hard work, we are delighted to be able to present her with this month's award.



Sylvia receiving her temp of the month award at the CPM offices in Thame.

results in promotion to a job you can't do. Statistics are like a lamp-post to a drunken man - more for leaning on than illumination. I thought I could see the light at the end of the tunnel, but it was just some b\*\*\*\*\*d with a torch, bringing me more work. Avoid employing unlucky people - throw half of the pile of CVs in the bin. without reading them.

## Recruitment News

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