Be happy!

Why smart employers are investing in workplace wellbeing
Upcoming masterclasses

A weekend history degree with King’s College London’s leading academics

Whether you miss your university days or you never got the chance to go, this unique weekend will provide you with unprecedented access to lectures at King’s College London’s prestigious history department. Listen to eight history masterclasses over two days, delivered by leading academics in the beautiful Grade II-listed Bush House on the university’s central Strand campus.

King’s College London, WC2B 4BG  Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 March, 10am-4pm

24-25 February
Your best years yet: Plan your post-50 life in a weekend

24-25 February
Free your creativity and get started on your book

26 February
How to develop your idea for a documentary

Dr Barbara Mariposa

26 February
How to get hired: A masterclass with career coach Corinne Mills

28 February
Stuffocation: How to declutter your life and experience more

5 March
History: The story of England

Adrian & Judy

6 March
How to create a successful podcast

6 March
Kickstart your business: A masterclass for entrepreneurs

10 March
Living with presence: Using the art and science of mindfulness in everyday life

Charly Lester

Book now at gu.com/masterclasses or call 0800 839101

(Lines open 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 6pm Saturday and Sunday)

All courses held at the Guardian, London unless otherwise stated
Introduction

The modern UK workplace is changing as it matches up to constantly developing technology, artificial intelligence and raised employee expectations. In this supplement we look at how businesses are keeping their employees happy, healthy and productive, by introducing flexible working practices, improving diversity and striking a balance between “pleasure and purpose”.

As one senior policy adviser in employee relations says, HR departments have to pay attention to every factor that touches the employee experience, “including good management, dignity, inclusion, relationships and people’s health”. We hear how employers are addressing the issue of mental health. “We wouldn’t ignore a broken leg so we shouldn’t be ignoring mental wellbeing either,” says one head of HR. We also explore HR’s role in social mobility, and how employers are trying to improve progression and ensure equal pay across social divides. Sarah Jewell
Work with me

What’s on the minds of UK employees?

And what are companies doing to help staff enjoy their roles? Tina Nielsen takes a look at the working landscape

Overview

So much more than a job

What makes our working hours a pleasure? It’s all about flexibility and recognition, says Tina Nielsen.

The modern workplace is in a state of flux. Changing demographics, longer life expectancies, shifting life priorities and global uncertainty brought on by events such as Brexit mean that employers are having to be agile to accommodate workforces with a broad range of needs. To attract the best staff, companies need to make the move, where and how we work negotiable. In today’s recruitment environment, flexible working practices and healthcare are not nice-to-have benefits - they are a core part of workers’ expectations.

A workplace that reflects the diversity of the market the company serves is also important, says Chris Wilcock, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) talent acquisition manager at Canon Europe. “A good workplace is one where people know what is expected of them, understand how they can contribute to our business goals and, most importantly, know they are valued and trusted to deliver our outcomes,” he explains.

Chris Bruney, EMEA talent acquisition team lead at social media management platform Hootsuite, believes the needs of staff have become more comprehensive over time, and that millennials have brought a different perspective to working life. “I’d say factors like culture and work-life balance are now at least as important as the financial package,” he explains.

“Companies need to be aware of this and are increasingly having to incorporate flexibility into their employment offering, to appeal to a wider network of talent,” says Niall Ryan-Jones, head of HR at management platform Hootsuite. “A workplace that reflects the diversity of the market the company serves is also important, says Chris Wilcock, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) talent acquisition manager at Canon Europe. “A good workplace is one where people know what is expected of them, understand how they can contribute to our business goals and, most importantly, know they are valued and trusted to deliver our outcomes,” he explains.

What else do employees look for in their employer? “Career development and learning opportunities are important to our teams,” says Ryan-Jones at Harrods. The retailer has an extensive learning programme, with initiatives such as a school-leaver programmes and management development programmes.

“We pride ourselves on all being teachers and learners,” says Bruney from Hootsuite. “We have extensive learning programmes and a global stretch program, on which people can assume new roles of their choice, part-time, to gain valuable exposure to other areas of the business and develop new skills.”

Changes are linked to the recession. “Out of the ashes has come a culture that says: ‘You work hard for us and we’ll give back to you,’” he says.

So what does a good workplace look like in 2018? “It is one where there is clarity of purpose, authentic leadership and an effective two-way dialogue,” says Niall Ryan-Jones, head of employee experience at Harrods. “Employees are valued and that is shown through compensation, reward, recognition and communication.”

A workplace that reflects the diversity of the market the company serves is also important, says Chris Wilcock, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) talent acquisition manager at Canon Europe. “A good workplace is where people know what is expected of them, understand how they can contribute to our business goals and, most importantly, know they are valued and trusted to deliver our outcomes,” he explains.

What also do employees look for in their employer? “Career development and learning opportunities are important to our teams,” saysRyan-Jones at Harrods. The retailer has an extensive learning programme, with initiatives such as a school-leaver programmes and management development programmes.

“We pride ourselves on all being teachers and learners,” says Bruney from Hootsuite. “We have extensive learning programmes and a global stretch program, on which people can assume new roles of their choice, part-time, to gain valuable exposure to other areas of the business and develop new skills.”

Culture and work-life balance are now at least as important as the financial package

Work-life balance is now the top priority for 48% of employees

Combining responsibility with freedom, says Cary Cooper, visiting professor at Lancaster University, says the recent

Changes are linked to the recession. “Out of the ashes has come a culture that says: You work hard for us and we’ll give back to you,” he says. So what does a good workplace look like in 2018? “It is one where there is clarity of purpose, authentic leadership and an effective two-way dialogue,” says Niall Ryan-Jones, head of employee experience at Harrods. “Employees are valued and that is shown through compensation, reward, recognition and communication.”

A workplace that reflects the diversity of the market the company serves is also important, says Chris Wilcock, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) talent acquisition manager at Canon Europe. “A good workplace is where people know what is expected of them, understand how they can contribute to our business goals and, most importantly, know they are valued and trusted to deliver our outcomes,” he explains.

What also do employees look for in their employer? “Career development and learning opportunities are important to our teams,” says Ryan-Jones at Harrods. The retailer has an extensive learning programme, with initiatives such as a school-leaver programmes and management development programmes.

“We pride ourselves on all being teachers and learners,” says Bruney from Hootsuite. “We have extensive learning programmes and a global stretch program, on which people can assume new roles of their choice, part-time, to gain valuable exposure to other areas of the business and develop new skills.”
Diverse workplaces are becoming the norm - but how far up the chain of command can people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds hope to ascend? By Seb Murray

15% The number of children receiving free meals at school - an indication of poverty - that went on to enter higher education in 2014

7% The percentage of the UK population that went to an independent school, fewer than 1% went to Oxbridge

71% of barristers went to a private school, and 78% went to university at either Oxford or Cambridge

43% of people in Britain experience upward social mobility

29% of people in Britain experience downward social mobility

From ground floor to glass ceiling

To improve social mobility in the workplace, HR teams are trying to widen access to those from all socioeconomic backgrounds - regardless of educational attainment, financial security and social status - by removing hiring practices that discriminate against them.

Accountant Scott Rogers, 20, is a tax associate at Grant Thornton and enjoyed it, so I applied to join the accounting firm’s School Leaver Programme. But, due to estimating circumstances at home, I had to take time out of sixth form - and, as a result, I didn’t get the grades I had hoped for. I assumed I definitely wouldn’t get a job. But by that point, the firm had removed the grade barrier, giving me a way in.

I joined Grant Thornton as a tax assistant, rather than through the school-leaver route, in September 2016 and spent a year doing basic tax work. I learned from a dedicated people manager who mentored me. The role prepared me to become a tax associate in August 2017.

Day-to-day, I help our clients deal with insolvency and bankruptcy tax issues. The most enjoyable part of the job is that I’m constantly learning. At Grant Thornton, you can approach any partner with a problem and they will help you. The biggest challenge is balancing work with study - the firm provides training - but having worked alongside older peers who have gone through it, I know it is doable. I aspire to reach partner in the firm, and I’m confident I will get there.

Case study

Partner material

Scott Rogers, 20, is a tax associate at Grant Thornton

I joined Chelsea Academy sixth form in London in 2014 to study for A-levels in economics, maths and geography. It was at school that I first heard about Access Accountancy - an industry-wide social mobility initiative providing a week of work experience for young people from all backgrounds. My parents didn’t attend university, and I received free school meals. I was interested in the accountancy profession, as I thought there was a lot in there that people my age don’t know about - when I got my first pay slip, I had no idea what any of the information meant.

I took part in the Access Accountancy scheme at Grant Thornton and enjoyed it, so I applied to join the accountancy firm’s School Leaver Programme. But, due to estimating circumstances at home, I had to take time out of sixth form - and, as a result, I didn’t get the grades I had hoped for. I assumed I definitely wouldn’t get a job. But by that point, the firm had removed the grade barrier, giving me a way in.

I joined Grant Thornton as a tax assistant, rather than through the school-leaver route, in September 2016 and spent a year doing basic tax work. I learned from a dedicated people manager who mentored me. The role prepared me to become a tax associate in August 2017.

Day-to-day, I help our clients deal with insolvency and bankruptcy tax issues. The most enjoyable part of the job is that I’m constantly learning. At Grant Thornton, you can approach any partner with a problem and they will help you. The biggest challenge is balancing work with study - the firm provides training - but having worked alongside older peers who have gone through it, I know it is doable. I aspire to reach partner in the firm, and I’m confident I will get there.

Interview by Seb Murray

There are cultural and behavioural hurdles once people have got a job

Rachael Miller, head of work and skills policy for the Social Mobility Commission, “but there are cultural and behavioural hurdles that prevent people from getting on even once they get in.”

The commission’s research found a pay divide of nearly £7,000, an average earnings gap between people from poorer backgrounds and their privileged peers, with the gap highest in finance, at £13,713. At the BBC, for instance, 45% of the highest-paid staff went to an independent school.

The commission says those from working-class backgrounds “may be less likely to ask for pay rises”, and may lack access to the networks that can help them gain promotion.

So some employers are deploying strategies to improve progression and erase the pay gap. Grant Thornton assigns the 420 trainee recruits that join its entry-level trainee schemes. KPMG was the first UK employer to publish detailed figures on the socioeconomic background of its staff.

“We don’t stop at whether employees attended a private or state school, we look at whether they received free school meals, where their parents went to university and which professions they worked in,” says Melanie Richards, vice-chair of KPMG UK.

74% of those who responded to KPMG’s workforce survey come from a state school. As more employers recognise this building a more meritocratic workplace is not only the right thing to do, but can provide numerous benefits, such as addressing skills shortages, the social mobility gap may continue to close. “There’s no question: having people from a diverse range of backgrounds can produce better business results,” says Richards.

“Resources are available, and we need to ensure that everybody uses them, not just those from fee-paying schools who know how to make the system work for themselves,” says Malcolm Campsall, diversity and inclusion lead at the firm.

Collecting data to measure the impact of recruitment and retention policy is critical to improving social mobility in companies. KPMG was the first UK employer to publish detailed figures on the socioeconomic background of its staff.

“Collecting data to measure Social Mobility is difficult to do,” says Gillian Martin, head of social mobility at BP.

Scott Rogers, 20, is a tax associate at Grant Thornton

I joined Chelsea Academy sixth form in London in 2014 to study for A-levels in economics, maths and geography. It was at school that I first heard about Access Accountancy - an industry-wide social mobility initiative providing a week of work experience for young people from all backgrounds. My parents didn’t attend university, and I received free school meals. I was interested in the accountancy profession, as I thought there was a lot in there that people my age don’t know about - when I got my first pay slip, I had no idea what any of the information meant.

I took part in the Access Accountancy scheme at Grant Thornton and enjoyed it, so I applied to join the accountancy firm’s School Leaver Programme. But, due to estimating circumstances at home, I had to take time out of sixth form - and, as a result, I didn’t get the grades I had hoped for. I assumed I definitely wouldn’t get a job. But by that point, the firm had removed the grade barrier, giving me a way in.

I joined Grant Thornton as a tax assistant, rather than through the school-leaver route, in September 2016 and spent a year doing basic tax work. I learned from a dedicated people manager who mentored me. The role prepared me to become a tax associate in August 2017.

Day-to-day, I help our clients deal with insolvency and bankruptcy tax issues. The most enjoyable part of the job is that I’m constantly learning. At Grant Thornton, you can approach any partner with a problem and they will help you. The biggest challenge is balancing work with study - the firm provides training - but having worked alongside older peers who have gone through it, I know it is doable. I aspire to reach partner in the firm, and I’m confident I will get there.

Interview by Seb Murray
Giving back: the best way forward

Far from being a nice bit of PR for well-hyped companies, corporate social responsibility is essential for luring in the best staff. By Seb Murray

Companies leading the way on sustainable practices can and do perform well financially

For one, it can help you attract and retain talent. Research by marketing agency Cone Communications found that nearly two-thirds of young people won’t take a job at a company with poor CSR practices. The survey of 1,000 people found 75% of millennials would take a pay cut to work for a responsible company, and 85% would be more loyal to a business that enables them to contribute to solving social and environmental problems. “To attract and retain talent, you need to show you are doing all you can to give back to the communities you operate in,” says Richard Donovan, head of corporate responsibility for the UK and Ireland at Experian.

The credit agency’s UK employees volunteered nearly 22,000 hours in 2016/17 to support community and financial education programmes, and its social innovation programme has helped more than 3 million people globally since 2014 - by supporting people to pay off unmanageable debts in Brazil, for example. But CSR is not just recruitment PR; it can also have a tangible impact on a company’s bottom line. Companies that integrate climate-change management into strategic planning, for example, see an 18% higher return on equity than those that don’t, according to a study by CDP, a non-profit that helps companies with environmental disclosure.

While there are many reasons why a company might achieve good results, it’s clear that companies leading the way on sustainability can do perform well financially,” says Paul Simpson, chief executive. Enterprise software company SAP’s 1,800 UK employees can take part in Africa Code Weeks in 35 countries, helping youngsters develop technical skills and promote economic development. “I do not believe CSR undermines our financial results,” says Tom Leoffert, HR director for the UK. “By providing the opportunity for employees to do meaningful work, we have seen higher levels of engagement and productivity, CSR can also help us win new deals and, ultimately, grow our business.”

Giving back: the greater good - six CSR drives

Google’s Project Loon

Forming a network of floating satellites near space, Loon will provide internet access to some of the 4.1 billion people across the globe who do not have it.

TOMS shoes

For every pair of shoes sold by the company, a pair is donated to someone who needs them. TOMS has shipped 750 million pairs, which has contributed to protecting more than 2 million children from hookworm, an intestinal parasite typically acquired by walking barefoot on contaminated soil.

Anad’s wonky veg box

To tackle food waste, the UK supermarket group last year began selling imperfect vegetables via a “wonky veg box” priced at £3.50, 30% cheaper than standard lines. Farmers may benefit by getting money for produce such as misshapen carrots, which are often chucked away. Some £13bn worth of food was wasted in the UK in 2015 - that’s approximately 7.3m tonnes, or £470 per household per year.

Nu Skin’s Nourish the Children

Employees and customers can purchase and donate a nutrient-rich food to people suffering from malnutrition and famine. Since 2002, the company has donated more than 550m meals to malnourished children across the globe.

Ikea’s Brighter Lives for Refugees campaign

Last year, Ikea funded a solar farm to bring renewable energy to the 20,000 Syrian refugees living in the Azraq camp in Jordan. Each family can now power their homes, but the solar farm will save $1.5m and reduce CO2 emissions by more than 2,000 tonnes per year.

Heineken’s responsible consumption

Heineken wants to brew a better world. The beer maker invests 10% of its media budget in some countries on advertising to encourage responsible alcohol consumption. It also committed to invest €200m over five years on a campaign to combat drink-driving.
A company that’s right for us.

We are delighted to announce that once again Lookers has achieved Top Employer status by the Top Employers Institute and published in the Guardian.

At Lookers we put our people first, always striving to support and empower.

As a modern motor retailer we:

- are proud to be recognised as a Top Employer
- understand 9 to 5 isn’t for everyone so we support flexible working
- offer a full 1 year salary for maternity pay
- provide 2 years critical illness cover
- support our communities and have recently worked with the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, 353 and Children in Need
- value a diverse team whatever your background
- develop our people to put the customer at the heart of everything we do, through our Customer Experience workshops
- support over 210,000 customers a year with new and used cars
- share our successes with our people through our Share Save Scheme
- value our people and the important contributions they make with holidays that increase with length of service
- are an award winning Executive leadership team
- offer exciting rewards and incentive schemes
- are creating our future with over 700 apprenticeships in our business

lookers.co.uk
Artificial intelligence

The rise of the robo-recruiters

Al is easing the recruitment process, in the shape of Mya the robot and a job-matching tool, writes Seb Murray

Artificial intelligence (AI) is creeping into every aspect of daily life. Computer algorithms keep our inboxes free of email spam, suggest which TV programmes we should watch and even drive some of our cars. Now, smart machines may play a role in deciding whether or not you get your next job. An increasing number of employers are using robot recruiters that can assess CVs, screen candidates and pair them with the right roles.

The search for efficiency in the recruitment process has fuelled interest in AI. Finding employees with the correct mixture of skills, personality and motivation is difficult — even when the pool of candidates is large. “The benefits are huge,” says Eyal Grayevsky, CEO of Mya Systems, which has created an AI recruiter called Mya. “Companies have large databases of candidates they have acquired over the years, and they are receiving more CVs than ever before, now that the internet has made it easier to apply for jobs. Previously, recruiters were drowning in manual work, assessing applications. With AI, they can automate the repetitive tasks that slow them down.”

One large retailer that used Mya to hire warehouse staff reported a 79% reduction in the time it took to fill each position, and a 144% increase in productivity per recruiter who used the technology. Job candidates, meanwhile, benefit by receiving a guaranteed response from Mya. “It’s a very human-like interaction,” Grayevsky says.

Frida Polli, CEO of Pymetrics, which uses AI to pair people with suitable jobs, says robo-recruiters can also help employers become more diverse by removing some of the unconscious bias in the hiring process. “It can be more objective than a human — but if untested, AI will amplify whatever bias already exists because it is trained to find patterns and replicate them.”

Some worry that the rise of the robots will displace the human recruiter, but Anna Seely, principal of talent strategy at Mercer, says: “The role of HR is evolving as a result of digital disruption. Rather than replacing humans, AI gives us access to much richer data to drive better decision making.”

With fears growing that automation could eliminate some low-skilled jobs, hiring managers need to think about how to prepare employees to work alongside machines in the near future. “Skills such as purchasing and managing technology, analysing data and designing new products and services will be essential. HR will be a more powerful function going forward,” Seely says.

How Mya works

- The AI interviewer
  When a candidate applies for a job online, Mya introduces herself and initiates a dynamic, written conversation – similar to a text message format.

- Real-time answers
  The robot asks the candidate a series of interview questions, such as: “What’s your pay range?”, “Can you handle the physical requirements of the job?”, “What is your shift availability?”. Mya can also answer questions about the job in real time.

- Language assessment
  The AI uses natural language processing to pick up on conversational details. Based on the candidate’s answers, Mya assesses whether they are a good fit. The bot sends a scorecard and transcript to the employer. Cloud-based, Mya is designed to integrate into existing HR software.

- The next stage
  If the candidate is a match, Mya will schedule an interview with a human hiring manager. If they are not, she will suggest other jobs that may be relevant to them.
If you can help someone back on their feet, while you stay on your toes, then we’ve got the role for you.
Opening up to mental health

Helplines, apps and strong support networks have given employees under strain an outlet — but will certain company cultures always make people susceptible to poor mental health? By Suzanne Bearne

When Doug King experienced acute depression six years ago, his productivity took a nosedive, as did the quality of his work. “I had limited ability to multi-task and was unable to deal with any amount of stress or pressure,” says King, a director of audit and assurance at Deloitte. When he visited his doctor, King was put on sick leave and given medication. Within a few days he was in touch with a counsellor organised through his employer.

“As soon as I made Deloitte aware of the problems I was experiencing, they were fantastic,” he says. “A colleague quickly understood my workload and distributed it to other members of the team. A couple of our partners stayed in touch with me to see how I was - I felt like I was under no pressure to return to work and it was made clear to me that I should only come back at the time that was right for me.”

He says the level of support from his employer helped his recovery. “It really took the pressure off, so I could focus on getting better.”

With poor mental health costing the economy up to £99bn annually — of which is borne by employers, according to the government’s Throwing at Work report, published earlier this year – it’s little wonder that a growing number of companies are investing more in supporting the mental wellbeing of their staff.

Virgin Trains runs a number of initiatives across the business to help raise awareness of mental health and encourage staff to discuss it. These include access to complementary therapies and a 24-hour assistance line, as well as teams dedicated to improving the mental and physical wellbeing of employees. “We want to make sure our employees are not only equipped to look after their physical wellbeing but also their mental health, and how to get support if they need it,” says Megan Taylor, head of health and wellbeing for Virgin Trains on the east coast. The company has also signed the Time to Change employer pledge, which encourages workplaces to create a safe working environment for staff with mental health issues. Technology also plays a role in the company’s efforts to tackle mental health in the workplace. Staff have access to a cognitive behavioural therapy app that hands out advice on how people can manage their moods.

However, despite a strong commitment by a number of progressive companies, others are lagging behind, warns Emma Mamo, head of workplace wellbeing at Mind. “We believe every employer has a responsibility to support employees with mental health problems and promote the mental wellbeing of their entire workforce,” she says. To start with, businesses should offer flexible working hours, regular catchups with managers, buddy systems, sufficient annual leave and subsidised gym membership, she says. Mamo also recommends businesses prioritise tackling the work-related causes of stress and mental health problems – such as long working hours, excessive workload, unrealistic targets, and poor relationships with managers and other colleagues. With rising levels of mental ill-health, it’s an area that can’t be ignored.

Putting theory into practice

The employee Renae Jackson, head of HR at Search Laboratory

Talking about both mental and physical wellbeing at work is extremely important. We wouldn't ignore a broken leg, so we shouldn't be ignoring mental wellbeing either.

As well as the mental business case, there's the financial one as well. If we don't create a culture where staff can talk openly, there could be huge volumes of absence and pressure on recruitment and on teams. A few years ago we've offered private face-to-face counselling sessions for staff.

The employee Alex Lane, senior manager at Accenture

Last year I started experiencing a racing heart, feeling quite panicky and having very cloudy thoughts. I spent a lot of time covering up the symptoms but they became more intense. I confided in a couple of trusted colleagues and they suggested I call our Rupa Healthy Minds helpline at work. That was a turning point for me; the call was the beginning of a journey of trying to look after myself, mentally and physically. I was really worried about calling the helpline, but these people deal with similar situations on a daily basis. We had a long conversation, which involved an assessment, and the councillor recommended that I urgently make an appointment to see a doctor and take a course of therapy. Weeks later, after one particularly bad night, my wife ended up making an emergency doctor's appointment for me. That's when I found out I was actually experiencing a nervous breakdown, I was prescribed anti-depressants and signed off work for four months.

Accenture were brilliant about it. My doctor's appointment was paid for, and signed off work for four months. I was prescribed anti-depressants and signed off work for four months. When I returned to work, I wasn't thrown back in it; I was welcomed back, and only worked two or three days a week initially. It was up to me to build my confidence back up to where it needed to be, which I did. Today I'm grateful to be back at work, and find it more pleasant knowing I have someone to talk to when things go wrong.

'Eventually, I went to the doctor. That's when I found out I was having a nervous breakdown!'
companies have decided to abolish performance reviews altogether, instead introducing more regular catch-ups. Software company Adobe Systems used to hold annual reviews for staff, collecting 360-degree evaluations for each team member. In 2012, a decision was made to switch to a “check-in” process where managers meet with staff at least once a quarter and discuss expectations, feedback, and growth and development. Adobe has since seen a 35% decrease in the number of employees quitting – and recovered the thousands of hours and money previously lost through staff turnover.

Importantly, they also take up a lot of time – when Deloitte Sir Cary Cooper, visiting professor of organisational psychology and health at Lancaster University, says performance appraisals are useless. “If you have socially and interpersonally skilled managers from shop floor to top floor they should give people positive and negative feedback every day, not once a year.”

Chris Bruney, talent acquisition team lead for EMEA at Hootsuite, says regular contact between employees and managers is important. “We advocate regular employee/manager one-to-one time and we check in with staff regularly throughout the year to hear their views on everything from company leadership to how they feel about the culture of the business,” he says.

Regular feedback ensures staff can work on it, explains Cooper: “I might be a person who is quite abrasive in management meetings – rather than waiting until July the following year to tell me that, a really good manager would be straight on it, saying: ‘Be a bit more open, don’t put people down. I noticed you do that. ’ That is the way to give examples – regularly. And the same applies to praise, when people do a good job.”

How to follow your leader

It’s not easy to evaluate top brass – so how do you know if your is worth your loyalty? By Alison Coleman

Leaders are often defined by qualities such as empathy, inspiration, and strategic judgement. The key trait of a great leader is self awareness: the ability to understand their own reactions to a situation, the appropriate response, and to put it into practice under pressure, even when it is not their naturally preferred behaviour.

In a recent survey by Top Employers, which polled more than 200 HR directors, leadership was ranked the number-one top driver in terms of its importance to their business. However, measuring leadership with the use of HR metrics and assessment tools, such as Harrison Assessment and 360-degree feedback – trailed it by some distance, in 10th place.

Mark Whybrow, founder of leadership development consultancy Emerge Technique, believes that measuring an individual leader’s intellectual understanding of leadership attributes won’t reveal exactly how good they are making a difference when it matters. In his view, the most effective way of assessing leadership is to look at and measure the benchstrength of the team.

“Leadership is about altering the natural course of events and taking people with you, the best way to assess leadership capability must be to look at the team capability and assess their clarity of focus, collaborative behaviour, sense of ambition, sense of purpose, and also their own sense of leadership and accountability.”

Strong leadership that delivers strong results is the goal of every organisation – and to develop the next generation of strong leaders, some companies, such as PepsiCo, have introduced its high-performance culture.

“PepsiCo has partnered with some of Europe’s best business schools to design learning programmes that embrace virtual technology and the latest thinking,” says Jesper Petersen, vice-president, human resources, PepsiCo UK & Ireland. “Progress has also been made in improving the assessment of the leadership development programmes, using bespoke compass tools that consolidate feedback from direct, peers, line managers and stakeholders, together with self-assessment and team assessment data.”

This has led to enhanced clarity on strengths and development areas, and ultimately, a heightened level of that key leadership trait, self-awareness.

“Nurture through developing and maintaining an exceptional talent base will see our business and deliver superior long-term performance,” says Petersen.

The best way to assess leadership must be to look at the team ... their clarity and sense of purpose

Five great business leaders

Tim Cook

The former Thomas Cook CEO, now an IBM executive, has transferred her leadership skills across industry sectors. Known as a turnaround specialist, she is admired for her clear communication skills and her ability to keep the message simple, both internally and externally.

Richard Branson

He also held GE’s leaders and managers formally accountable for both performance and values.

Jack Welch

The former GE’s CEO was also an advocate of delegation believing that making decisions develops leadership skills and builds confidence, as well as strengthening the business.

Jacqueline Gold

The Ann Summers boss transformed the lingerie company into a hugely successful and more female-friendly business, but endured many boardroom battles to see her ideas become lucrative reality. She is also a champion of workplace equality.

Harriet Green

The former Thomas Cook CEO, now an IBM executive, has transferred her leadership skills across industry sectors. Known as a turnaround specialist, she is admired for her clear communication skills and her ability to keep the message simple, both internally and externally.

Richard Branson

The Virgin founder is a keen advocate of delegation, believing that making decisions develops leadership skills and builds confidence, as well as strengthening the business.

Jack Welch

As CEO of General Electric, Welch introduced its high-performance culture.
**Safety first will bring rewards**

Good health and safety practices don’t just protect employees; they also benefit the bottom line, writes Alison Coleman.

**The main regulations around health and safety at work**

- **The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999** Employers must carry out risk assessments concerning staff health and safety and provide employees with information and training on occupational health and safety; they must also have a written health and safety policy.
- **The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992** These regulations require employers to provide adequate lighting, heating, ventilation and workspace, staff facilities, and safe passageways.
- **The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992** This applies to employees who use a computer as a significant part of their normal work. Employers need to carry out workstations, ensure that staff take adequate breaks, and provide regular eyesight tests.
- **The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995** Employers are required to report work-related accidents and diseases to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), or to the nearest local authority environmental health department.

Safety is everyone’s business and everyone’s responsibility. The steering wheel in its safety logo symbolises every staff member’s ability to make personal decisions about safety, which is also reflected in the company’s safety strapline: It’s Personal, Own It. “Each of us owes it to ourselves and our co-workers to ensure we get home safe and sound at the end of the day,” says a company spokesperson.

HR can play a role in health and safety compliance at work, by ensuring that every employee attends their induction prior to starting in their role, says Abigail Morakinyo, nurse and founder of Health at Work UK, and a provider of health and wellness programmes. “They also need to reinforce attendance of both mandatory and relevant training,” she says. “Some workers may have personal or health-related problems that deter them from attending training courses such as manual handling, which is pertinent to preventing injuries. Therefore, HR personnel should be approachable and accessible to employees. Just as nurses are seen as a patient’s advocate, so employees are the advocates of their colleagues.”

Having good health and safety working practices in place delivers many business benefits, as Paul Jackson, safety adviser at Howarths People and Safety Management, explains: “In reducing your staff absence due to having effective control measures in place regarding illness or accidents at work, the business will benefit by saving time and costs associated with recruiting and training a new member of staff. But the benefits to the individual are probably more pertinent for staff. "With good health and safety measures, your staff can do their work more easily and safely, which also boosts morale, increases productivity and reduces costs," says Jackson.

“Good health and safety performance will help the business to build a positive reputation with your clients and staff and their friends and associates. This can help to increase sales and generate more leads,” he adds.
Not just here for the beer

A certified Top Employer for 5 years, we offer roles nationwide and around the globe, flexibility and investment in you and your career...plus the chance to work with loved beer and cider brands every single day.

Want a career in beer?

Go to www.molsoncoors.com/careers
Happiness

Get that mojo working

Losing employees is expensive – as is paying salaries to unhappy, unproductive workers. Stephania Sparrow finds out how savvy businesses are keeping their staff engaged

Work makes us happy. That’s according to the authors of the United Nations World Happiness Report 2017, although the statement carries a caveat - our employment must be well-managed, and feel secure.

Employment experts agree. Rachel Suff, senior policy adviser, employment relations, at the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, says HR departments have to be “aware of their wider responsibilities and strong moral reasons for managing the subjective wellbeing of their employees”.

She believes the HR department’s remit is broad: “They have to pay attention to every factor that touches the employment experience, including good management, dignity, inclusion, relationships and peoples’ health, as well as managing risk factors, such as stress.”

And there are no short cuts to creating a happy workplace. “Attempts to encourage fun at work often backfire,” says Paul Dolan, professor of psychological and behavioural science at the London School of Economics and author of Happiness by Design. He recommends simple strategies, such as “giving employees timely and salient feedback”, explaining that feelings of happiness come from the right balance between pleasure and purpose.

“Many of our experiences at work feel purposeful,” he says, “but many feel like a waste of time. This not only affects productivity, but also our likelihood of quitting.”

Employers know that workers’ empathy with their job or corporate objectives keeps them loyal and more likely to give their best. According to Top Employers UK (TEUK), employees’ “engagement” with the business is one of the top three drivers of business success; and it is measured regularly by 71% of accredited employers in its list (see page 14). The average cost of replacing one employee stands at £30,614, according to a report by Oxford Economics and Unum, so the business case for keeping staff happy is strong.

Engaging work in a supportive culture is now recognised as crucial to the corporate brand, says Kevin Green, chief executive of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation.

“Companies have to be aware not just of their brand profile to customers, but their brand as an employer too,” he says, explaining that job candidates look at the emotional experience of a new work environment “where people feel inspired to do their best”.

At Firmdale Hotels, they’re encouraging employees to feel happy and valued by replacing split shifts with fixed hours. This makes it easier for staff to manage work and home commitments.

“Our employer brand is ‘Love what you do’, says director of people and development Julia Murrell, “and we aim for all 1,300 employees in our eight London hotels to experience this.” Employee feedback, which is gathered online and through quarterly breakfast clubs, is positive. “About 95% say they are proud to work for Firmdale Hotels and more than 29% of staff were promoted over 2016-17,” she says, “and revenue has increased by 5.25%.”
This is the job you’re looking for

Some companies just have the knack of creating a vibe everyone wants to be a part of. Suzanne Bearne finds out how they do it.

A seat at the table: Everyone wants to be a part of the company culture, where employee happiness is just as important as increasing profits.

A strong company culture can be vital to a diverse and engaged workforce. Beyond a good salary and job satisfaction, today’s jobseekers look for a strong company culture, where employee happiness is just as important as increasing profits.

“A strong company culture can be important in helping productivity and creating a happy workforce. With a table football and ping-pong room to hang out in, Alphabet’s office in Farnborough, Hampshire, has two of the staple ingredients seen in trendy millennials-employing offices the world over (about a third of Alphabet’s employees are under 30). But it’s not just the fun stuff that draws people in. The mobility and freedom to chill out with others in our meeting rooms.

“At Aisle Eight’s office in east London, they’ve gone to great lengths away days, exploring cities such as Barcelona and Amsterdam. “We put a lot of time and energy into meeting the personal and professional requirements of our 400-plus UK employees,” says Adam Lupton, HR director at Alphabet. “Highly engaged employees are more effective, more dedicated and more passionate – exactly the sort of people our customers want to deal with. Our ultimate goal is to have happy, healthy and motivated employees – it’s a win for the business and a win for staff.” Lydia Fairman, an HR and resourcing specialist, at feedback platform TruRating, management focus on creating a culture of openness and equality. “I don’t think there is anyone who would be afraid to speak up if they thought something could be done better,” says product manager David Atkinson. “We all have share options too, which creates a very real sense of ownership.”

Creating a strong company culture takes time and effort, but it’s worth the effort. Happy staff have been found to be 12% more productive than unhappy employees, so there’s an incentive aplenty to create attractive working contracts and an enviable company culture – with or without the ping-pong table.

A strong company culture can be important in helping productivity and creating a happy workforce. With a table football and ping-pong room to hang out in, Alphabet’s office in Farnborough, Hampshire, has two of the staple ingredients seen in trendy millennials-employing offices the world over (about a third of Alphabet’s employees are under 30). But it’s not just the fun stuff that draws people in. The mobility and freedom to chill out with others in our meeting rooms.

“At Aisle Eight’s office in east London, they’ve gone to great lengths away days, exploring cities such as Barcelona and Amsterdam. “We put a lot of time and energy into meeting the personal and professional requirements of our 400-plus UK employees,” says Adam Lupton, HR director at Alphabet. “Highly engaged employees are more effective, more dedicated and more passionate – exactly the sort of people our customers want to deal with. Our ultimate goal is to have happy, healthy and motivated employees – it’s a win for the business and a win for staff.” Lydia Fairman, an HR and resourcing specialist, at feedback platform TruRating, management focus on creating a culture of openness and equality. “I don’t think there is anyone who would be afraid to speak up if they thought something could be done better,” says product manager David Atkinson. “We all have share options too, which creates a very real sense of ownership.”

Creating a strong company culture takes time and effort, but it’s worth the effort. Happy staff have been found to be 12% more productive than unhappy employees, so there’s an incentive aplenty to create attractive working contracts and an enviable company culture – with or without the ping-pong table.

A strong company culture can be important in helping productivity and creating a happy workforce. With a table football and ping-pong room to hang out in, Alphabet’s office in Farnborough, Hampshire, has two of the staple ingredients seen in trendy millennials-employing offices the world over (about a third of Alphabet’s employees are under 30). But it’s not just the fun stuff that draws people in. The mobility and freedom to chill out with others in our meeting rooms.

“At Aisle Eight’s office in east London, they’ve gone to great lengths away days, exploring cities such as Barcelona and Amsterdam. “We put a lot of time and energy into meeting the personal and professional requirements of our 400-plus UK employees,” says Adam Lupton, HR director at Alphabet. “Highly engaged employees are more effective, more dedicated and more passionate – exactly the sort of people our customers want to deal with. Our ultimate goal is to have happy, healthy and motivated employees – it’s a win for the business and a win for staff.” Lydia Fairman, an HR and resourcing specialist, at feedback platform TruRating, management focus on creating a culture of openness and equality. “I don’t think there is anyone who would be afraid to speak up if they thought something could be done better,” says product manager David Atkinson. “We all have share options too, which creates a very real sense of ownership.”

Creating a strong company culture takes time and effort, but it’s worth the effort. Happy staff have been found to be 12% more productive than unhappy employees, so there’s an incentive aplenty to create attractive working contracts and an enviable company culture – with or without the ping-pong table.

A strong company culture can be important in helping productivity and creating a happy workforce. With a table football and ping-pong room to hang out in, Alphabet’s office in Farnborough, Hampshire, has two of the staple ingredients seen in trendy millennials-employing offices the world over (about a third of Alphabet’s employees are under 30). But it’s not just the fun stuff that draws people in. The mobility and freedom to chill out with others in our meeting rooms.

“At Aisle Eight’s office in east London, they’ve gone to great lengths away days, exploring cities such as Barcelona and Amsterdam. “We put a lot of time and energy into meeting the personal and professional requirements of our 400-plus UK employees,” says Adam Lupton, HR director at Alphabet. “Highly engaged employees are more effective, more dedicated and more passionate – exactly the sort of people our customers want to deal with. Our ultimate goal is to have happy, healthy and motivated employees – it’s a win for the business and a win for staff.” Lydia Fairman, an HR and resourcing specialist, at feedback platform TruRating, management focus on creating a culture of openness and equality. “I don’t think there is anyone who would be afraid to speak up if they thought something could be done better,” says product manager David Atkinson. “We all have share options too, which creates a very real sense of ownership.”

Creating a strong company culture takes time and effort, but it’s worth the effort. Happy staff have been found to be 12% more productive than unhappy employees, so there’s an incentive aplenty to create attractive working contracts and an enviable company culture – with or without the ping-pong table.
HR strategies

Your happiness is our business

It falls to HR to ensure people enjoy being at work – but how do different companies fulfil this crucial brief? Interviews by Stephanie Sparrow

Josie Elson
Assistant HR director
Manchester Metropolitan University

Staff surveys show that we score 5% higher than other universities for personal growth and development. Our 3,600 employees appreciate our open and responsive approach. Our world-cafe-style feedback events have been well received, and we are considering the suggestions about reward and recognition that were raised there. We encourage managers to think creatively about flexible working and work-life balance.

We design vibrant staff development sessions: training courses are kept short and snappy; and we have coaching, mentoring and buddy-up initiatives.

Andy Rogers
HR director
Sodexo UK and Ireland

We make sure our 36,000 staff have purposeful work and the opportunity to progress their careers. Staff turnover, at 22%, is low for this sector. We are a values-based organisation that prioritises people being their authentic selves – which is why our Spirit of Inclusion diversity training is mandatory. The employee assistance programme extends to friends and family, and our CSR initiative, which releases staff for three days a year to work alleviating food poverty, keeps us connected with the world we’re in.

Hilary Richardson
HR partner
Rider Levett Bucknall

To “invest in our people and value their contribution” is one of our company values, and it’s embedded in everything we do for our 500 employees. For example, our RLB Academy champions lifelong learning, while young leaders can join our Futures Board alongside senior mentors. Weekly communications and regular directors’ forums update staff on strategy.

We promote wellbeing and work-life balance, and more than 90% of staff surveyed would recommend us as an employer.

Liz Greenfield
HR director
Pfizer

We employ about 3,000 people in the UK, across three main sites and with a significant number of national field-based employees.

Lynne Williams
Head of people development and talent management
Bentley Motors

A core company value is inspiring our colleagues to “be the best they can be” – and we help them achieve this with expertise, passion and pride.

We respond by advancing the skills of our 4,000 colleagues through coaching, sponsored programmes, project opportunities and global moves. Development plans, objectives and regular feedback ensure staff are clear on how they contribute to the business. Communication is key – Bentley Motors’ news is shared on newly formed apprentice councils and at company briefings, providing the opportunity for discussion. And we promote active lifestyles: a fitness suite, sports clubs and health clinics are part of a wellbeing programme taken up by over 2,000 colleagues.

'We encourage employees to own their career'

Our employee offerings are continually enhanced - in 2017 we revised our learning and development programmes under the umbrella of “Leadership at Every Level” to further drive culture and performance.

We coach managers to have the skills to develop and engage our employees. Employees are encouraged to own their career, use the extensive internal resources available to them, gain valuable experience and seek and provide feedback.
GroupM certified as a top employer (again)

We are pleased, once again, to have been certified as a Top Employer.

We continue to invest in our employees at GroupM to ensure they have the best possible benefits, training and working environment, something we are constantly reviewing and evolving. From onboarding, to online appraisals, health and wellbeing initiatives and career development – we work tirelessly to ensure our employees feel valued and motivated.

We want everyone across the company to thrive in their career – whether it’s personal development and learning new skills through GroupM University, to enabling opportunities to move across the wider group, expand experience and encourage collaboration.

We take diversity very seriously at GroupM, and for over three years we have actively grown and driven diversity and inclusion through our employee lead initiative ‘All Means All’, and regular unconscious bias sessions. We run frequent events, panel discussions, lunchtime sessions and plan to evolve this activity throughout 2018.

Our benefits package ranges from the usual holiday, pension and health care, to additional holiday on your birthday and work anniversary, shopping discounts and flexible working. There is a vast range of wellbeing events and perks, including half price gym membership, in-house doctor, masseuse, beauty room, Yoga, Pilates and meditation sessions to ensure our people keep a healthy body and mind.

We recognise excellence through our peer-to-peer ‘RewardMe’ scheme, which highlights great work delivered against our company values and goals.

It’s not only fun and games though – we do some serious work too…

Our clients are at the heart of everything we do at GroupM – and everyone across the group keeps them top of mind to ensure we consistently deliver excellence. We also constantly explore new ideas and innovation to ensure we continue to deliver world-class market-leading results for our clients.

Offering a range of gold-standard media investment services from highly skilled experts, GroupM is the leading global media investment management company for WPP’s media agencies including Mindshare, MediaCom, Wavemaker, Essence and m/SIX, and the outcomes-driven programmatic audience company, Xaxis.

Responsible for UK billings of £8.1bn, approximately 43% of all UK media spend (RECMAd) GroupM UK supports its agencies and clients across trading expertise, data, technology, and an array of specialty services including addressable TV, content, and sports.

Fancy joining our team?

We are looking for a range of talented, skilled and driven marketing professionals across a variety of roles - from media planners and buyers for renowned brands, to digital experts, data experts and creative types.

We really do work with a spectrum of talented folk – so your skills could be exactly what we’re looking for…

If you think it’s a match made in heaven - then we want to meet you - so please do get in touch!

Find current vacancies and more information at: www.groupm.com
Top Employers stand out from the crowd

Only companies offering exemplary HR and employee conditions achieve Top Employer Certification. Find out what makes a Top Employer at www.top-employers.com/uk2018