

# HRD

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*IN THIS ISSUE:*

**ROUNDTABLE:**

*WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR WELLBEING  
TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY?*

**LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT**

**STUDENT JOINERS**

**DEVELOPING AGILITY**

**OUTSOURCING - A NEW ERA**

# ETHOS

“WE WANT PEOPLE TO STAND UP TO  
THE SMALL-MINDEDNESS THAT THEY  
SEE AND WE WANT THEM TO CALL OUT  
WRONGDOING WHEN THEY SEE IT”

KATE PRICE  
GROUP HR DIRECTOR  
WILKO





CHAIRIED BY JASON SPILLER

6 OCTOBER 2022 - LONDON

# WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR WELLBEING TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY?

EVEN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, MANY BUSINESSES WERE FAILING TO ADDRESS EMPLOYEE WELLBEING. COVID ILLUMINATED SHORTCOMINGS AND AWAKENED EMPLOYERS TO A REALITY, THAT PEOPLE DON'T ONLY IMPACT ABSENCE FIGURES, BUT SUPPLY CHAINS, PROFIT MARGINS AND - IF THEY SEE BETTER 'VALUE' ELSEWHERE - TALENT RETENTION METRICS. CRITICALLY, AS WE ENTER MORE TURBULENT TIMES, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING NEEDS TO BE KEPT AT THE TOP OF THE AGENDA.

PARTNERED WITH



DELEGATES

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WHAT ARE THE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS THAT YOU ARE MANAGING ACROSS THE WORKFORCE, IN THE AFTERMATH OF COVID AND WHAT RISKS LIE AHEAD?

*Arusha Gupta:* Lack of social interaction and isolation for many, brought about the underlying conditions that were missed or ignored in the hustle and bustle of the workplace pre-pandemic. Now, reactive measures are critical to support, before the damage is irrecoverable, creating support groups and safe working environment to build resilience.

*Chloe Bryant-Dunn:* We have two different groups and challenges; colleagues who have been in branches during this difficult time, serving people under challenging circumstances and homeworkers, for which loneliness and disconnection was a key concern throughout. We have done a huge amount of work with Mental Health UK as our charity partner of the year to empower colleagues and customers to understand and manage their mental health. We have reached 1.5m people through the dedicated Mental Health & Money Advice website, 115k young people on their mental health resilience, through Bloom and trained 2.5k colleagues as mental health first aiders. Looking ahead, I believe that line management in businesses will be key to supporting wellbeing in the hybrid work era.

*Richard Eastmond:* Unlike other illnesses - where there was a work impact if people thought they were ill, symptomatic or contagious - with COVID, it was a grey area. If you're ill everyone is generally clear that you don't work. But with COVID, it blurred the lines, which still persists.

*Mark Taylor:* We're trying to manage COVID as just another illness - it has been normalised to an extent - but in terms of wellbeing per se, key for us is to ensure we support and educate line managers to have those wellbeing conversations and provide further support.

*Anshoo Kapoor:* There is fatigue and as hybrid working looks set to be the future, we need to support wellbeing breaks and give people the confidence that they don't have to fill their diaries with virtual meetings, for fear of missing out. There has to be a holistic conversation and consistent communication,



both to support people, but also to make sure they are in the picture, part of the vision and can understand how they can contribute.

*Dean O'Connor:* As the pandemic impacted, we had to encourage managers to regularly check in with people. But we have made great progress and the pandemic response team has moved into “business-as-usual” activities, to support the new ways of working. We now refer to ourselves as “a connected workplace”. But that is not a fête complete, that can be left to its own devices, in terms of mental and physical wellbeing, going forward.

*Lana Hooper:* The retail business part of Rank had always had a rather operational approach and then the COVID crisis meant we had to help our line managers with their new role in leading wellbeing for their venues. Our digital teams on the other hand, had a completely different environment to contend with. They had to suddenly think about who to furlough and how to manage high wage costs. The experience has taught us that we must consider how to communicate about wellbeing support and be clear about what we have implemented in different parts of our business and become more inclusive.

*Nick Reader:* Traditionally, managing wellbeing has been reactive and employee support has not been communicated well - there could be 30-to-40 wellbeing initiatives across a big company and people probably only know about around seven of them and then subsequently only use about two or three. It has been very scattergun historically, but now we're starting to move into the realms of AI and predictive analytics. Not only are we able to analyse what is happening now, but we can forward predict what is coming. This enables HR to move away from the administration side of looking after people's wellbeing, to a much clearer understanding of what current and future issues will be. We can pinpoint where there are likely to be problem areas, what is happening with employee demographics and then start predicting wellbeing issues ahead of time and forward planning for that. We're able to garner very accurate predictive modelling and analytics, which





WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR WELLBEING TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY?



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(PREVIOUS PAGE)

NICK READER  
PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT -  
GOODSHAPE

PICTURED LEFT

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RICHARD EASTMOND  
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can look up to three years ahead. This will be increasingly important as hybrid and remote working calls for employers to try and do things a little bit differently and come at wellbeing from more organised and proactive angles.

*Mark Taylor:* Organisations probably had set scripts and expectations - in terms of how various employee groups were expected to work - but COVID threw those scripts up in the air. It has become more personalised and more complicated. The current labour market and the attraction and retention challenges add to the complexity, as there is a need to be even more flexible.

*Richard Eastmond:* The timing isn't linked just to COVID, I would date the heightened focus on wellbeing to ten years ago. It is also worth drilling into contextual and cultural factors.

*Nick Reader:* There is always more that needs to be done. Absence and presenteeism is rising, staff turnover is up, as is liability, grievance and disciplinarys related to wellbeing issues. Fundamentally, all of that comes down to managers moving into that proactive space and heading things off before they become bigger problems.

*Lana Hooper:* Previously, mental health wasn't something that was easily spoken of, as we were led to believe that being vulnerable was detrimental to our careers. Now we have lived through an experience that has touched us all, so when a colleague says, "I'm struggling", we can draw from our own personal experiences and respond with real empathy. The minute you make something personal, you create emotion and it's that emotion that drives change.

*Nick Reader:* Understanding that it's okay to have those conversations is a significant game changer, but that requires putting in frameworks to enable that to happen and being supportive of individuals across the business. Managers may be good at doing their job - they may be experts in their fields - but it doesn't necessarily mean that they are good at managing people from a wellbeing perspective.

WHAT CAN OTHER SECTORS LEARN FROM THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN HARD-IMPACTED SECTORS SUCH AS RETAIL, HEALTH CARE, THE NHS AND HOSPITALITY?

*Richard Eastmond:* When I was at Amnesty, we explored best practice from the NHS's use of something called Schwartz Rounds. This is where, for example, clinical groups are brought together not to talk about how the operation went and debate issues such as, "did we all do the right things?" But to focus on how the individuals felt or were impacted by an operation. It's a mental health conversation about "how we all emotionally feel about that particular case." We took that idea and devised our own version, for example, with a group of people that had been interviewing rape victims for a particular report and how this had impacted them.

"THERE COULD BE 30-TO-40 INITIATIVES ACROSS A BIG COMPANY - AND PEOPLE PROBABLY KNOW ONLY ABOUT SEVEN OF THEM AND THEN SUBSEQUENTLY ONLY USE ABOUT TWO OR THREE"

*Mark Taylor:* Like counsellors have supervision, it's the holistic way in which people and leaders deal with the emotion to build their ongoing resilience.

*Lana Hooper:* The learning is to try and spot the head winds and truly listen to team members. They will tell us what our customers think, they will tell us what the impact of the decisions we make are on them and they will tell us what they need.

*Anshoo Kapoor:* The data will play a crucial part, looking at it holistically and then we need to be sure that on an individual basis, we are really connecting with people.

*Arusha Gupta:* Agreed, for people to take ownership of their own wellbeing, we must invest time into building that culture and promote that behaviour.

*Nick Reader:* Also, understanding the family circumstances of employees builds understanding, supports health and wellbeing and pays dividends in productivity and loyalty. But you can

only do this by having the right data, in order to track results, make progress and find momentum.

WHERE DOES MENTAL HEALTH FIT WITHIN YOUR WELLBEING STRATEGY AND ARE BUSINESS LEADERS TAKING IT SERIOUSLY?

*Lana Hooper:* Our mental health activity is mostly delivered through our EDI strategy, but we are not tracking it, although employee opinion surveys show colleagues appreciate it. It's important not to become so busy building strategies that sound great on paper and forget about the little things that make a big difference.

*Mark Taylor:* Wellbeing is just part of our overall people approach, but it's not a specific wellbeing strategy per se. We have the standard elements around mental health awareness training for line

managers, online support and more first aiders. It's incredibly important to ensure that the human welfare aspect remains an integral part of improving individual lives and therefore business performance.

*Anshoo Kapoor:* Wellbeing is part of our employee value proposition and is a very important pillar. It will overlap with DEI and health & safety and we've linked it to meaning, purpose and values. Importantly, it's not paternalistic, it's a very adult-to-adult conversation and empathetic to individual circumstances and everyone is given a safe space.

*Chloe Bryant-Dunn:* The challenge could be that once integrated, can we show it as a strategic enabler and demonstrate the benefits and impacts? Inevitably, that leads to the importance of data which is something we are actively looking at to ensure we integrate all types of insight to inform our decisions.

DARE WE DRAW THE LINES BETWEEN WELLBEING AND ROI?

*Mark Taylor:* Yes, I believe that if you need to make a case and you want to influence senior leaders, you have to demonstrate the tangible business benefits of any wellbeing initiative.

*Richard Eastmond:* Take the education world and safeguarding, every week, there is data generated about mental health and the amount of cases dealt with by the safeguarding and student support teams. Where is the ROI on that? This is tracked and linked into the outcomes and results. Is it going to improve their chances of their degree, their GCSEs or their A-levels? Are they going to stay in education for longer?" It is a hugely rich data-based outcome, so educational institutions are taking it to a different level and I suspect commercial organisations could take a leaf out of this book.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LINE MANAGERS IN OPTIMISING EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR YOUR ORGANISATION?

*Mark Taylor:* If we consider causation, line managers are fundamental to managing workloads - the strategy, the planning and most importantly the prioritisation - in order to guard against work-related stress.

*Arusha Gupta:* I absolutely agree, but the emphasis from line managers must be to encourage and support self-responsibility, in areas such as development and career direction and wellbeing too.

*Nick Reader:* This has to be supported and developed and backed up by providing managers with the right information, driven from the data, in areas such as managing absenteeism, where early intervention and signposting can lead to improved outcomes. If somebody has an issue, absences can be kept to a short-term spell and you can deal with them much more quickly and effectively.

*Dean O'Connor:* To a degree, we're going back to people management basics, but we are also asking managers to go through and pick a solution, although there is probably a thousand different ways that you can do colours or strength finders.



## HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY MEASURE WELLBEING SOLUTION EFFECTIVENESS?

*Arusha Gupta:* The beauty of data is it tells you multiple stories and you can build your own narrative around it. Currently, there isn't a standard benchmarking process in wellbeing space. Given multi-generational and multi-cultural workforce, providing personalised experience is becoming important, yet challenging. Training line managers to equip them to address these changing dynamics is needed.

"MANY ORGANISATION'S HAVE NO CLASSIFICATION IN ABSENCE AT ALL AND IF YOU HAVE NO CLEAR STEER ON WHAT'S GOING ON, HOW DO YOU FOCUS ANY OF YOUR WELLBEING INITIATIVES?"

*Richard Eastmond:* I think the two sources of data we are all likely to have is employee opinion survey data, which is likely to have a number of wellbeing type questions in there, which can be tracked. We are also likely to have sickness data. If you then link the data, you gather from this and can benchmark it against larger datasets.

## DO WE THINK OF ABSENTEEISM AS BEING PART OF BENCHMARKING?

*Mark Taylor:* Like any measures and reporting - you have to think about what's really going to move the wellbeing dial. One of the biggest factors in moving the needle and really changing behaviour is, as always, senior leadership role modeling.

*Lana Hooper:* We are now moving towards mutual supportive solutions and we need to help our line managers set good boundaries, as they try to gain a grip on issues - such as the menopause and mental health - often subjects they know very little about. They need to feel that they are being supported and that making mistakes is inevitable in the course of these fast changing workplace dynamics.

*Nick Reader:* Absence management is the foundation of good wellbeing. Managers are not always consistent in their approach - some capture absence reasons,

some don't, they either follow policy or they won't - the consistency can vary greatly across an organisation. But if you can centralise the absence function, and you can link datasets around employee surveys, customer engagement, P&L and staff turnover, through the analysis of those different datasets, you can start to fully understand what impact each of them is having on the other. If you have a finite HR function constantly chasing managers for information that they have not collected in the first place, there's a real question mark around the quality of that data and how reliable it is to

benchmark. Link the dots together with a really solid data foundation in real-time and you can become much more productive and much more focused and have a clear picture of the wellbeing issues your people face day-to-day.

*Lana Hooper:* What we don't want to do is create distance in the pursuit of pure data. I believe it is that personal, caring relationship with the manager that supports lower absence numbers. This doesn't mean data has no place, it is important for us to understand which leadership teams and which general managers need support. Our HR team works in partnership with our Regional Operations Leaders, then all work to understand what is happening with a holistic mindset and approach.

*Nick Reader:* Agreed, you can't just rely upon data - it can be cold and calculated - but it gives context to interpretation. I think that is around the quality and the breadth of that data because that will give the manager a lot of needed context. For example, many organisations don't classify absences or have a high percentage classified only as "other"... If you have no clear steer on what's going on, how do you focus any of your wellbeing initiatives and turn them into a strategy? Data provides the power to

make decisions and react quickly, efficiently and proactively. The minute that somebody goes off, if we see any patterns emerging, you can instantly notify the manager and tell them what is going on, so that they can pick up on that quickly and signpost those individuals into the various different wellbeing services that are available.

*Lana Hooper:* I suppose we would expect our managers to know if there was a larger problem before they were contacted by an outsourced service. When a colleague is ill they call their manager and the manager is expected to be as clear as possible about the reasoning. On the colleagues return there has to be a wellbeing conversation with their manager, this would be irrespective of them calling into a service. This process, if done correctly, helps build the relationship and trust. The data would be more beneficial to the venues support functions giving the HR and Operations teams a window on the types of absence we have.

*Nick Reader:* The feedback from employees is that talking to an outsourced medical professional about their health and wellbeing breaks down the barriers with the individual and they have much more honest and meaningful conversations with them than they would necessarily with their manager. There are times when the manager is the issue also of course. To your point on traditional occupational health, I couldn't agree more - refer somebody to a doctor or nurse who then writes a note and gives the individual's employer advice - but nothing more - is inefficient and not proactive. They should be case managed through that process. We work with some very proactive organisations that are not Occupational Health - but operate in the same space - where they have links into GP networks as well as the NHS. An example being, rather than wait 12 weeks for an operation, they can see there's a cancellation next week for that type of operation in the employee's local NHS Trust and they get that person seen much more quickly. These little proactive steps can reduce long-term absence down by as much as 70 percent which saves organisations huge amounts in lost productivity.

*Richard Eastmond:* We need to be alive to the issue of how wellbeing is seen in different cultures. I suspect much of this debate has been through the lens of UK organisations. As soon as you try to export elements of this to other countries you will uncover issues - either the concept of wellbeing is not accepted or is seen very differently - so this challenges the idea that an organisation can provide an equity of provision globally.

*Lana Hooper:* Mental health is a broad term for many conditions and managers can struggle to support a colleague. I can then see how an outsourced service would be helpful at that point.

*Nick Reader:* It comes back to data again, understanding the snapshot of that individual, but also the bigger picture. Take for example somebody who goes off with three spells of care of dependant absence and then they subsequently go off because of stress. However, what is actually happening is that they have run out of "goodwill" from the organisation in terms of their care obligation and therefore have to give another reason to be able to continue to look after their dependant.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOUR CURRENT WELLBEING PACKAGE IMPACTS POSITIVELY?

*Chloe Bryant-Dunn:* From a cultural perspective, I think it does engage and retain people and Lloyds Banking Group is genuinely known as quite a friendly place to work, as can be seen on Glassdoor. We have got some good ratings and we are very good at flexible working. As to whether the wellbeing strategy has contributed to that is a good question. But certainly, the culture has enabled us to trial and implement many good initiatives that are seen as a part of the EVP.

*Dean O'Connor:* We traditionally attract talent from the large banks and so the wellbeing offering has to be comparable, because people expect those services and arrangements almost as standard. Where we win an advantage is around our flexibility and that is highly desired in our markets. It's interesting to analyse the boomerangs - those who have left but



PICTURED RIGHT  
 ANSHOO KAPOOR  
 HEAD RECRUITMENT UK&I -  
 TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES  
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 L&D AND SUPPORT HR -  
 THE RANK GROUP  
 DEAN O'CONNOR  
 HEAD OF TOTAL REWARD EMEA -  
 SILICON VALLEY BANK



returned and often it's a case that the salary has gone up - but the quality of life is diminished.

*Mark Taylor:* Those that come from the traditions of 'a job for life' tend to be happier and more grateful and to accept whatever is offered by an employer, whereas the younger generations tend to be more challenging with higher expectations.

*Richard Eastmond:* I agree, students are immersed in a safeguarding first and healthy mental health wellbeing space. So as they emerge and into the workplace, they expect the same from society and their employer, in a way that was not the case 15 years ago.

"YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE NOW BETTER INFORMED AND THEY HAVE HIGHER EXPECTATIONS OF HOW WELL THEY SHOULD BE LOOKED AFTER. THIS IS WHAT THEY EXPERIENCED IN EDUCATION"

*Chloe Bryant-Dunn:* This is informing on the evolving world of work and drives us as employers to do better and thinking more around ESG.

*Nick Reader:* Through social media and untapped access to information, they live their entire lives discussing everything all of the time. Younger people are now better informed and they have higher expectations of how well they should be looked after. They are well looked after at University in that regard, so why would they not expect exactly the same in their working lives?

HOW ARE YOUR PROVISIONS DEVELOPING WITH YOUR PARTNERS?

*Arusha Gupta:* Our wellbeing agenda is part of the EVP and we are working towards personalised journeys and provide support through specialised partner systems. We developed a framework to enable managers for hybrid working and care is one of the six core pillars in it.

*Anshoo Kapoor:* Similar for us, we are not outsourced. If you talk about outsourcing, of course, the EAP, the virtual GP, would be sourced, but not the strategy. Our strategy and action plan are developed

inhouse by HR, Health & Safety and a cross functional Team that supports.

*Dean O'Connor:* I guess it is how you define outsourcing. Until recently, I don't know any organisation that would've had an in-house EAP provider and counsellor. It takes time and specialist expertise, so it makes sense to outsource this activity.

*Mark Taylor:* For the various tools, frameworks and support, then I think it works, because they require a level of specialism. For example, EAP, occupational health and financial wellbeing too - which requires a level of independence and carries business risk with it. But what doesn't work is trying

to outsource your organisations' responsibility for wellbeing.

*Lana Hooper:* We have outsourced parts of our business in the past and find that agencies are not able to really understand our company, the nature of our industry, or our culture. Where we do outsource, will be because there is a need for a specialist. This is especially true in the mental health and wellbeing space.

*Nick Reader:* Agreed, I don't think that blanket outsourcing is the right way to do things because organisations and the people within them know their business far better than any external source ever will. Like the overall changes we have recently experienced, the best approach is a hybrid, whereby you bring in certain specialisms, tools and ways of working which can augment your existing policies and procedures.

WHAT DOES YOUR WELLBEING STRATEGY NEED TO LOOK LIKE TO PROVIDE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE?

*Dean O'Connor:* I think organisations have to work very hard to dial up the other aspects of wellbeing. We need to benchmark, provide a great offering and

we have to communicate it well, that this is the wellbeing strategy and here's how you can experience and benefit from it.

*Anshoo Kapoor:* As employers we have to approach wellbeing in the right way. It's important that we provide psychological safety and trust and develop cultures that show that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. We need to break the traditional sense of hierarchy whereby yes, top-down is great, but let's also look at bottom-up, in terms of sharing stories. Encourage people to be part of networks, contribute and bring meaning and purpose.

*Lana Hooper:* We are building wellbeing into our employee value proposition, so that it is part of our DNA. I agree with everyone that it has to be more holistic than just mental health. It is fundamentally core to the sustainability of our business as we look to keep our customers safe and cared for as they enjoy our environments.

*Arusha Gupta:* Personalising individual experience is the key as each person is in a stage in life with different needs and expectations. Painting it with one stroke won't serve the purpose. Indeed, we need to provide choice and let them decide what works for them and take ownership of the decisions.

*Nick Reader:* It is around engaging people through clear communication and then it's about measuring impact and understanding what is working and what isn't. It's about being fleet-of-foot with adaptive and proactive wellbeing initiatives. Traditional initiatives tend to be put in place for a year or two and just left there. But people's needs now are going to be different in six months, so that adaptability, going forward, will be essential to promoting positive wellbeing outcomes and being able to react very quickly to emerging problems. That can only be achieved, as has been said many times today, by having reliable, accurate and real-time data that is gathered consistently across entire organisations.