

HR HEALTH THE STRESS TABOO

How mental health is still the elephant in the room in many workplaces



New statistics from Mind suggest that stressed workers are suffering in silence and employers aren't doing enough to tackle mental health.

Nearly half (45%) of workers polled by the charity said that staff are expected to cope without mentioning stress at work. A third (31%) added that they would not be able to talk openly to their line manager if they felt stressed.

Mind has also found a huge difference in the perceptions of managers and other staff about how mental health is addressed in the workplace.

Only 22% of workers felt that their boss takes active steps to help them manage stress. Paradoxically, many managers seem to think that they are doing enough to help staff with over two thirds (68%) saying that they would find ways to support staff who were stressed or experiencing a mental health problem.

Other key findings from Mind's survey of over 2,000 workers include 36% who believe that looking after staff mental wellbeing is an organisational priority. However, 42% claimed that stress is regarded as a sign of weakness or that you can't cope at work.

Only a third (32%) think time off for stress is treated as seriously as time off for physical illness, and nearly half (42%) believe it is often seen as an 'excuse' for something else

Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind, said:

"These figures show that stress remains the elephant in the room in many workplaces. It also highlights the worrying disparity between how managers and other members of staff view their organisation's approach to mental wellbeing.

"There is a real danger that companies are neglecting workplace mental health, with huge implications for staff wellbeing, not to mention productivity, motivation and sickness absence."

HR BENEFITS REASONS TO SMILE



Increasing numbers of employers are offering flexible benefits plans to improve overall levels of employee engagement. This is according to the latest Benefits Administration Survey from Aon Hewitt, the global talent, retirement and health solutions business.

Commenting on the results, Andrew Woolnough at Aon Hewitt said:

"The use of flex plans is becoming ever more widespread, with 70% of organisations surveyed offering them - up from 62% in 2012. This is increasing as employers also seek to enhance employee engagement as well as attracting and retaining the best staff.

"Flex is a growing part of the employee benefits 'menu', offering a real answer to organisations' problems by further allowing the shaping of benefits, the work environment, and the options they present to their employees to enable

them to take control of their health, retirement, financial security and careers."

The survey also revealed that employers are committing increasing resources, with one third saying they spend more than 20% of payroll on benefits.

Andrew Woolnough added: "Employers increasingly need to know what returns - both financial and otherwise - they are targeting and receiving.

"Unfortunately, many employers fail to measure accurately against their key objectives and so cannot track the true value of the benefits packages they are offering.

"It is not just a matter of increased measurement but also of enhancing perceptions. Effective employee communication is key to this process and is becoming more important than ever as the benefits agenda extends into engagement."

Flexible benefits on the rise to improve employee engagement

HR TECH



TESTING 1, 2, 3

Voice and video capture has suddenly gone to another level. Maybe it's time for HR to pick up the mic.

With the rise of mobile technology has come a rise in the use of voice recognition. Products like Siri and Google Now are bringing voice recognition to the masses. So, how can this new tech trend be useful to HR?

Voice recognition could be especially useful in situations where entering text is not easy or desirable. HR on the go, if you like.

Various work tasks are now taking on board the possibilities presented by voice recognition. For example, doctors have started to use voice recognition software to create a digital copy of notes made during patient consultations. Notes can be uploaded quickly meaning doctors can get on with the actual task of seeing patients.

Many more employees are using their own phones for work activities, allowing people to work more easily on the move. Phones today are like mobile offices in which you can access emails, update company records and, through social media, interact with customers while out on the job.

HR departments have taken notice of this and are making much more of their online functionality available on mobile devices, allowing people to update records and interact with HR while they are not in the office.

This is starting to extend to surveys delivered to mobile devices as well. This is a great way to canvas staff remotely but there is the limitation in how much they are willing to type on their phone or tablet.

There is some evidence that people are more willing to give longer and more truthful responses to questions if they do not have to type/write the responses themselves. This is where voice recognition comes in, allowing a simple procedure for people to give long responses that they would not have time to write. The benefit of this is a better data set with more accurate insights.

More and more, technology is also extending to the use of video. There are now a myriad of ways to interact with colleagues on video chat services like Skype and Google hangout. So, how can video be used as a way of allowing people to interact with HR?

Certain companies have already started conducting video interviews. A live video interview through Skype is easy to picture but some companies are also using it slightly differently.

At the first interview stage, candidates pre-record their responses to a set of standard questions then save and send. At a time to suit you, you can then watch each candidate and decide who you would like to invite in for a follow-up face to face interview.

Taking this one step further it could also be possible to have an interview analysed automatically. Once an interviewee has recorded a video response, voice recognition is used to create a transcript that is fed into text analysis software. Combine this with facial recognition software to get at sentiment and emotional response, and a new approach emerges to automate the whole interview process.

Is this all starting to sound a bit sci-fi? It's true that the current generation of technology couldn't be relied on this way, and the "robot interviewer" feels rather Orwellian. But, in the future, technology could have a role to play as part of an early stage selection process for some jobs.

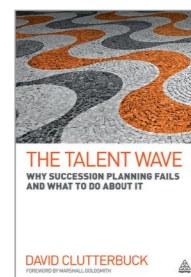
It remains to be seen if voice and video capture will be genuine innovations in HR or just a fad. But they do present some interesting alternatives for the profession to develop a new way of communicating.



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HR BOOK CLUB



The Talent Wave

David Clutterbuck (Kogan Page)

In a climate of growing skills shortages and lack of confidence in leadership potential, David Clutterbuck offers a new process of dialogue between an organisation and its employees. The Talent Wave presents a dynamic, flexible approach to succession planning and talent management with practical solutions to align employee ambitions and business priorities.



Resourcing and Talent Management

Stephen Taylor (CIPD)

This book is for students following the new CIPD postgraduate module on Resourcing and Talent Management, but it is also ideal for people studying People Resourcing modules on non-CIPD programmes. Stephen Taylor, one of the CIPD's Chief Examiners, focuses on areas such as succession planning and talent management, employee turnover, retirement, redundancy and many more. New 6th Edition coming this February 2014.



Luxury Talent Management

Gilles Auguste and Michel Gutsatz (Palgrave Macmillan)

Luxury Talent Management introduces us to the specific challenges faced by those working in the luxury industry and what it takes to succeed. The book also explores what luxury brands must do to ensure they are retaining and recruiting the right people who will go on to shape their companies in the future. A fascinating read on the intricacies of the luxury industry and how to manage people within it.

WHAT'S ON IN HR?

To save you time leafing through the conference schedules, we've done it for you. For more information visit the conference websites below. So, get out there and network to find new ideas and develop your skills!

SOCIAL MEDIA IN HR CONFERENCE

4 December 2013, Cavendish Conference Centre, London

The one-day conference provides practical advice on embedding social media in your organisation. Get tips on social learning, connecting with employees, and creating communities more from organisations including BSKyB, Crossrail, Penguin Random House, Boots, Jobsite UK and more. cipd.co.uk

HR DIRECTORS BUSINESS SUMMIT

4-5 February 2014, The ICC, Birmingham

This year's event will focus on developing people-focused business strategies and driving business performance through the effective alignment of leadership, talent and organisational development. Now in its 12th year, the HR Directors Business Summit will lead with presentations from directors at Facebook, Time Warner International, and Sky. hvent.com

MANAGING MATERNITY, PATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE CONFERENCE

11 March 2014, London, venue tbc

This conference is designed to update you with the latest changes to family leave rights, including maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave and will ensure that you are able to manage leave request efficiently. The event will also look at best practice in flexible working aimed to minimise disruption to your organisation. symposium-events.co.uk

HR & TALENT MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

13 March 2014, The Brewery, Moorgate, London

EG2014 HR Strikes Back: This one-day HR & Talent Management Conference is like no other you have ever been to. With over 400 HR Delegates learning and sharing together across three fabulous sessions, including insights and information about Talent Acquisition, Talent Management and how HR is striking back. hrgrapevine.com

EMERGING MARKETS HR SUMMIT

1-4 April 2014, West End Luxury Hotel / The Waldorf Hilton, London

The Summit is aimed at global HR leaders from mature, as well as emerging economies. It will focus on the new trends in emerging markets, human resources, unconventional ways of managing a diverse workforce, and recent developments in the continually evolving role of a global HR. boc-uk.com