

Think GLOBAL PEOPLE

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP
SUPPLEMENT

**Turbocharging
Performance**

People-powered leadership
to maximize talent



TALENT & PERFORMANCE

Talent and performance are at the heart of great leadership. In this special supplement of interviews, entrepreneurs, CEOs, HR and academics share how to support people – and drive high performance – through positive performance management, new technology, and cultures that prioritise wellbeing, inclusion and fair pay, to align with employees' diverse needs.

TURBOCHARGING PERFORMANCE: CREATING SPACES TO THRIVE

The pace of working life and speed of change makes it hard to focus on our most intractable challenges and build the skills and insights to address them. Yet investing time to refresh your perspective could make all the difference to your team, career and business. **Ruth Holmes** reports.



Dr Phil Renshaw



Dr Jenny Robinson



Amira Kohler



The upcoming two-day Turbocharging Performance: people-powered leadership to maximise talent masterclass at the world-renowned Henley Business School on 18-19 April 2024 will provide the space to do exactly this.

Led by faculty Dr Phil Renshaw and Dr Jenny Robinson of Coaching on the Go and CIPD fellow and HR transformation expert, Amira Kohler, of People Stuff, the event is designed to be a “hothouse sizzling with new ideas.” The masterclass will welcome participants from large global corporations, as well as start-ups, scale-ups and established SMEs, to experience transformative learning and gain insights for enhanced business performance. Participants will register from early evening on 17th April for an eye-opening keynote speech on the future of work and the promise of AI.

This immersive residential event, which takes place just outside of London, centres on today’s critical workplace issues of talent, performance and leadership – areas we know are core to our Relocate Global and Think Global People communities. We are proud to be the Media Partner for this event.

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO REAL-WORLD PROBLEMS

Among the many takeaways will be a practical framework for action that will optimise an organisation’s leadership, talent and performance capabilities – and that will support the inclusion and empowerment of an organisation’s people.

Speakers representing a wealth of backgrounds – from cutting-edge subject experts on leadership, wellbeing,



Above: Amira Kohler & Dr Jenny Robinson at our Think Global Women event in March

reward and talent management, to entrepreneurs, CEOs and directors of successful multinational companies – combined with expert facilitation in the inspiring setting of one of the UK’s leading business schools, will create a unique ecosystem for reflection and a safe space to unpack pressing challenges.

“It’s going to be an innovative, but practical, forum where ideas are pushed to the limit in a way that you wouldn’t get anywhere else,” says Dr Jenny Robinson, leadership scholar and pracademic.

“There are going to be people in the room who understand the challenges, and how these radical and provocative ideas around leadership, reward and talent management can be translated into practice.

“It’s an absolute must-attend event if you are interested in the future and interested in looking for practical solutions to workplace problems.”

WHY NOW IS THE TIME TO FOCUS ON PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCE

The relevance and impact of the Turbocharging Performance masterclass is clear. It is taking place at a time when two-thirds of HR leaders say current performance management is ineffective and 77% of companies globally report talent shortages.

Part of the problem is that in many organisations, the prevailing approach to leadership, people and performance management was designed for an era when outputs were more easily quantifiable.

The shift to today’s global, more networked and knowledge-based work where people, teams and leadership are at the heart of competitive advantage has changed what performance management looks like.

Gone are bureaucratic annual appraisals and

12-month targets. In their place is continuous performance management and goals that flex and operate on shorter time scales.

This approach by necessity is more organic and adaptive to managing complexity. It lives in and through an organisation’s culture such that “talent management is performance management,” says Dr Jenny Robinson.

DEVELOPING SKILLS TO MANAGE COMPLEXITY

Balancing this need for adaptive approaches to complexity – prompted by common challenges including fundamental regulatory changes, entering new markets, meeting shareholder imperatives and the adoption of new technology – with the still very necessary evidence-based management, is all about people and relationships, says Dr Jenny Robinson.

This is leading to the evolving practices and the redefinition of language we use around talent, performance and leadership to reflect this new reality, which will be explored in the Masterclass, as well as participants’ own live issues, with feedback from peers and subject-matter experts.

“All of these challenges have an underlying people response,” continues Dr Jenny Robinson. “All businesses achieve their goals through relationships, and through the systems and processes of people. In this Masterclass, the systems we’re looking at are performance management, talent management and leadership.

“There are other things in the system, culture and policies around diversity and inclusion for example. Yet we chose these three aspects first because in these two days, they offer something we can get inside of create something with.”

REDEFINING LEADERSHIP AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Alongside the impactful roster of speakers and expertise, the faculty will be introducing its practical diagnostic tool to Masterclass attendees. By switching between the lenses of complex adaptive systems (CAS) and evidence-based management (EBM) in the three areas of talent management, performance management and leadership, participants will get a new perspective on familiar challenges and the skills to address them.

From a leadership as well as performance management angle, this includes thinking about leadership as a collective rather than individual endeavour, and in a way that supports engagement and motivation. This as coach, consultant, academic and author, Dr Phil Renshaw, who also has a deep business background with board-level experience in global organisations that enabled him to recognise first-hand how people drive successful businesses, explains.

“The modern way of looking at leadership, which is still overlooked and missed by many people, is about acknowledging that leadership is an outcome of how everybody works together. It’s not a consequence of the most senior individual’s actions. This means that the most inexperienced individual in the team or organisation is influencing leadership by what they do well or choose not to do as well. Everyone across the organisation can get a lot out of this by joining us on this event.”

Leadership also involves a coaching aspect, a field Dr Phil Renshaw and Dr Jenny Robinson are experts in, having published a bestselling book, *Coaching on the Go*, based on their research and work with clients around the world. Research shows that leaders who coach improve the performance of others by resolving conflict, engaging

with teams to find ways to balance competing priorities optimally.

“What is evolving in more progressive organisations is a much more rounded approach,” says Amira Kohler, one that balances data insights with human relationships and good judgement.

“Performance management meetings are constantly evolving. They have become adult-to-adult conversations between a manager and employee. Their whole purpose is to help the employee extrapolate for themselves what motivates them, and where they can develop themselves in the way they are part of the team and meet customer and stakeholder needs.

“Ultimately, we know that talent and performance lie at the heart of leadership. Let’s explore this in conversation, with great industry data and insights to-hand. It’s going to be unlike anything else on offer.”

“There are going to be people in the room who understand the challenges, and how these radical and provocative ideas around leadership, reward and talent management can be translated into practice.”

REGISTER NOW

Learn more from leading experts and peers in an international masterclass. ‘**Turbocharging Performance: People-powered leadership to maximise talent**’ focuses on applying new strategies and techniques to turbocharge performance and optimise valuable talent.

Venue: Henley Business School on **Thursday 18 and Friday 19 April 2024**. (Registration, keynote speaker and dinner from 5pm, Wednesday 17 April.)

HARNESSING AI FOR BEST-IN-CLASS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Entrepreneur and HR expert **Stuart Hearn** built a successful business from scratch by focusing on continuous employee feedback and putting people first. He explains to **Marianne Curphey** how harnessing the enthusiasm of your staff can lead to stand-out performance and a highly creative workplace.



Stuart Hearn

What will the future of work look like? HR tech entrepreneur, board advisor and startup mentor Stuart Hearn believes that technology and AI will have a significant impact on organisations and human performance.

Stuart founded Clear Review, a performance management company that enables more meaningful and continuous employee feedback. He is a performance management specialist with 20 years' HR experience, both as an HR director and consultant. He highlights the need to adapt to rapid changes and shift towards valuing skills over qualifications.

"AI is going to make huge changes in the future of work, for good or bad," he says. "As organisations and employees, we need to be able to get to grips with what that means. A key implication will be that skills will become more important than qualifications. The idea of going to university and studying one subject that sets you up for life will be less relevant."

He points to the generation of workers who have now retired and who may have had one or two careers. Yet today's school leavers are forecast to have 18 different jobs and six different careers. "That is a fundamental shift. So how do we continually deal with reskilling people and understanding what people's skills are?"

Another key change will be the impact on wellbeing and mental overload. As information grows at a faster and faster rate, how do we deal with that? How can we stay healthy when many of us have an "always on" mentality?

HOW CAN AI POSITIVELY IMPACT OUR WORKING LIVES?

Stuart acknowledges the transformative potential of AI in shaping the future of work. What is important, he says, is asking fundamental questions about why and how AI is used, advocating for ethical considerations and being careful about how we measure its effects.

"If we are going to measure the impact, positive or negative, of AI then we need to go and ask some fundamental questions. What is the 'why' behind it; why do we want it; and what do we expect that to achieve?" he says. "At the moment, there is a danger that not enough people are asking those questions. Are we asking why we want it? Is it effective? Is it making our lives better?"

"That is a really important question that people need to bear in mind. As human resources leaders, we need to have that in mind when we make decisions for the future. From an ethical point of view, do we want to reduce workload so we can get rid of people's jobs? Or do we want to get AI to do the things that we actually find impossible or very difficult or too tedious to do so that we can focus on the more creative things?"

Stuart believes AI can be leveraged positively if we can use it to enhance organisational processes while being mindful of the ethical implications it presents.

"As humans, we are going to have to be stronger about demanding what we do and don't want AI to do. We are in charge of AI. When you listen to AI leaders, they talk about it being inevitable as though we have to just accept that this is going to happen. I don't



“Technology is not replacing us as human beings. It is enabling us to be more effective and have better human interactions.”

actually agree with that. I think we need regulation and thankfully regulation is starting to happen.”

He argues that as buyers and consumers of AI, we need to be clear to the vendors and product creators about what we expect from their products, including the ethical use of AI and putting up guardrails to limit the damage it might do.

“AI does have the ability to do some fantastic things that we as human beings simply can’t do,” he says. “Or to do things that we find too overwhelming to do. For example, we have so much information and data and there is some really exciting new technology in the HR space coming through that utilises AI. I’m lucky enough to be involved with a venture capital fund that invests specifically in technologies in the future of work, so I get to see some of these things very early on.”

One such technology is designed to help senior leaders cut through the noise and truly understand what is going on in their organisation. It enables them to make more informed decisions around strategy and planning. “Where that gets really interesting is if we take that beyond senior leaders and open up the technology to everyone,” he

says. “That way, AI could decipher and summarise the meeting notes, read all the emails, analyse the chat and succinctly tell us what is going on and what we really need to focus our time and energy on.”

“In other words, technology is not replacing us as human beings. It is enabling us to be more effective and have better human interactions. We spend less time reading meeting notes and more time actually talking to people, making decisions, adding ideas and coming up with strategies.”

BETTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT METRICS

When it comes to performance management, Stuart advocates for continuous and open feedback, highlighting its importance in driving improvement and employee engagement. “I created Clear Review based around managing performance in a way that actually improves people’s performance, rather than just getting data to work out what we should pay people. It focuses on objectives that are shorter term, rather than 12-month objectives, which go out of date by the time we get to the end of them.”

Stuart argues that the model where employees meet with a manager to discuss their progress once or twice a year is outdated and ineffectual, leaving the employee without a sense of direction or focus.

“Now I think continuous feedback is becoming the de facto way of managing performance, which is good. It is nice to know that we had an influence in actually changing organisations. Everybody needs to know how they are doing. If you do not know how to improve, or if you are told how you could improve several months later, then that is a wasted opportunity.

“Whereas if you are getting feedback as you go along, you can actually do something about it. Generally, people perform well, but if feedback is saved up for a meeting once or twice a year, that meeting tends to focus just on the things that could be improved. If I’m getting regular feedback, eight out of ten of those pieces of feedback are probably quite good. I’m much more likely to take negative feedback on board and take it less personally because I’ve had lots of good feedback in-between.”

CREATING A SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE-CENTRIC ORGANISATION

Stuart emphasises the need for organisations to regularly assess their processes and align them with core values to foster innovation and success.

“As things speed up, what works one day won’t necessarily work two years later, or as the business changes,” he says. “One of the things that we applied really well at Clear Review was making sure we were values focused. So, the things that never changed were our values. We set those up quite early on and were clear about what we were going to live by.

“The result is a truly values-based organisation. Over the five to six years before we were acquired almost nobody left. We had a huge number of people who wanted to come and work for us because of how we treated people and the way we lived those values was so different and refreshing to people coming into the workplace, especially the younger people coming in.”

He says that it was a kind of experiment to see if you create a people-first organisation, which genuinely values people, does it make you more successful?

“The answer is yes, it does,” he explains. “We grew incredibly quickly, and we were acquired very successfully at the end of it, so it felt like we proved our thesis around what it is like to run a company in that way.

“A lot of organisations think it’s going to be too expensive or that it is too tricky, but we proved this approach to business leads to higher performance and people end up being a lot happier. We describe it as a ‘call to action organisation’ because everyone was so passionate about the work that we did. Our staff told us they had never worked in a company like it where everyone is super engaged in what they do.”

Overall, Stuart paints a picture of the dynamic nature of work in the face of technological advancements and the importance of ethical considerations, continuous learning and adaptability in performance management in order to create a positive workplace culture. Putting people first yields results and businesses can benefit from harnessing their enthusiasm. ◉



CULTIVATING A MINDSET OF WELLBEING & OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE

Helping managers consider what contributes to their mental wellbeing supports both their individual performance and that of the organisation. Ahead of April’s Turbocharging Performance masterclass, **Marianne Curphey** spoke to workplace wellness consultant **LaBarron Burwell** to find out how we can create more positive and empathetic workplace cultures.



LaBarron Burwell



“Mental hygiene puts power into people’s hands and it builds self-efficacy. It gives people the understanding that they can positively influence their life through small iterative steps.”

Leaders face great pressure and responsibility to manage teams, make key decisions and steer an organisation through difficult times or periods of high growth. Yet they are often under-trained in managing their own wellbeing, particularly their mental wellbeing.

Guiding managers to think more about cultivating small, but regular, practices that contribute to their mental resilience can have a beneficial effect. It can help them to perform at an optimal level, inform the conversations and interactions they have with their staff and team members, and ultimately feed into a more positive and empathetic workplace culture.

That’s the message from LaBarron Burwell, a consultant who specialises in advising businesses on how to integrate wellness initiatives to drive performance and growth. He argues that daily practices to bolster our mental health, which he describes as “mental hygiene”, can lead to greater personal resilience. Within leadership roles it can also lead to better employee engagement, productivity and overall organisational culture.

His background includes work with both large public sector entities, such as NASA HQ, and private sector tech start-ups such as CodeLock Inc. He provides insights and solutions that drive performance and growth for clients and that promote a culture of wellbeing in the workplace.

MENTAL HYGIENE & ITS IMPORTANCE

LaBarron says mental hygiene is crucial for maintaining overall mental wellbeing. Simple practices to help cultivate mental equanimity include: learning to breathe deeply, taking time to go outside and take a break from work, scheduling calls with friends and physical exercises like push-ups.

“Mental hygiene is definitely something now that is more important because these days we are connecting with people through screens,” he says. “We are conducting all our personal and professional activities on our mobile phones and we all put a lot of pressure on ourselves.

“Constant screen time, unrealistic comparisons and social pressure can negatively impact mental wellbeing and taking that pause can help realign those thoughts. Mental hygiene is a simple entry point to mental health.”

Taking regular breaks to pause and reflect can help individuals and leaders regain clarity and perspective. Practising being present and mindful helps to promote good mental health, he says. Like brushing your teeth for oral hygiene, you can establish daily practices for mental hygiene. This can include activities like deep breathing, yoga, or taking short breaks to refresh your mind and come back to a calmer mental state.

LEADERS SETTING THE BEST EXAMPLE

“If you are a leader in an organisation and you’re not having a good day and you are distant – maybe you are angry, grouchy and not enthusiastic – then this has a trickle-down effect to your team and your employees,” he says.

“I think everyone struggles to be present at work. In leadership roles and positions where you are responsible for other people and for performance, then you face pressure and need to be the best you can for your staff. Yet people in leadership roles are severely under-trained. When they are promoted into a management role they learn the function of their job, but they are not always trained in managing and getting the best out of people.”

HOW ORGANISATIONS CAN BENEFIT TOO

Implementing mental hygiene practices within organisations can lead to a positive shift in culture. This might involve creating employee-centric programmes, which add real value to staff, like offering mental health resources and fostering open communication and empathy within leadership.

“You can offer all these employee perks, for example you can have a gym at work, but if staff feel they can’t really use them because they only have 45 minutes for lunch, then it has no value,” he explains.

Employers that implement effective benefits are often persuaded to do so because it affects their bottom line and improves productivity. LaBarron says organisations could enhance their offering by giving staff mental health days or extra time off to spend with their family and introducing more training programmes for mental health and resilience.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY AND ENHANCING COMMUNICATION

LaBarron’s work involves speaking one-to-one to people from different organisations. He has noticed a number of common themes that surface regularly in conversation.

Many individuals struggle with feeling isolated or unsupported in both personal and professional settings. Building a sense of community and improving communication channels within organisations can address these issues and improve overall wellbeing.

“Mental hygiene is not a new phenomenon,” he says. “It is about the everyday things and daily practices we can

do to improve our mental strength, clarity and cognition.

“We have seen anxiety and depression skyrocket after the pandemic and yet there is still a stigma on mental health, especially in the black and brown community, and for men. Mental hygiene is a great entry point for mindfulness and for better mental health and talking therapies and medication if needed.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

LaBarron emphasises the importance of emotional resilience, which he describes as “being able to feel emotions, but not let them dominate your day or your life”.

“Just because you are sad, it doesn’t mean you’re not going to do other things that help and that are going to benefit you and your life,” he says. “Just because you are angry at somebody doesn’t mean you’re going to do things to damage your life or the lives of others around you.”

At the Turbocharging Performance masterclass, LaBarron will be explaining to attendees how to assemble a mental hygiene toolkit with the skills and practices unique to you, which will help you better navigate your personal and professional life.

“Mental hygiene is an entry point for mental health,” he says. “Mental hygiene puts power into people’s hands and it builds self-efficacy. It gives people the understanding that they can positively influence their life through small iterative steps. It shows the small, regular, but powerful actions and initiatives you can do, say and act on, on a daily basis, to take a person towards better mental wellbeing and greater emotional resilience.”

REGISTER NOW

Learn more from LaBarron Burwell and other leading experts and peers in an international masterclass. **‘Turbocharging Performance: People-powered leadership to maximise talent’** focuses on applying new strategies and techniques to turbocharge performance and optimise valuable talent.

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Turbocharging Performance
 People-powered leadership to maximize talent
 Thursday 18th and Friday 19th April, 2024
 At Henley Business School

Organized and led by: **people stuff** **Coaching on the Go**
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Think GLOBAL PEOPLE

Combining leadership skills with business acumen

Emma Loisel, Board Director, business owner and Investor in high growth ventures, explains to Marianne Curphey why talent management needs to show tangible business results and how HR teams need to learn to speak the language of investors.



Emma Loisel

Emma is Co-Founder and Chair of Volcano Coffee Works, an independent speciality coffee roastery providing freshly roasted coffee to cafes and restaurants. She has worked at KPMG, been on the board of NZ Growth Capital Partners, and served as COO of The Exchange Lab.

HOW TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF INVESTORS

HR and investment can often be seen as separate silos with little dialogue between the two. However, Emma believes that the two functions need to work together in order to quantify results and get the best out of a business.

“The challenge with businesses is that performance is often measured by the top line profit and the bottom line,” she explains. “That is how investors measure performance and the rate of growth. The challenge for businesses is that the only things that deliver those two metrics are people and product, particularly people.”

For example, when making your case to increase staffing levels or headcount, investors will want to know how you are going to measure the output of additional staff members in terms of revenue generated. She argues that unless you have methodologies and processes in place to demonstrate how the team have added value, that is going to be difficult to achieve.

“It comes down to some basic processes around clear role descriptions, KPIs and objectives,” she says. “This needs to be succinct and measurable so that you can demonstrate to the board what is driving the revenue, profitability and the return on investment they can expect to see.”

“There is often a disconnect within business where HR is seen to be about people, and performance is seen as a top line financial target,” she says.

In fact, where you get performance really working in a business is when you marry those two together, she suggests, and the key is to collect the right type of data and use it effectively.

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS IN TERMS OF PEOPLE AND INVESTMENT

She says that a common but not particularly useful form of data use is to track revenue and present your findings to staff on a regular basis.

“I’ve seen businesses track revenue and profit, and then every quarter they tell their people the results around revenue and profits. Every quarter, the people either happy or depressed because they have either hit the target or not, but they don’t know what to do in between.”

Instead, business leaders should have key objectives which will act as levers for growth, she says.

“Objectives and key results (OKRs) are really powerful because as a business leader you can know

if you meet them, you will generate the profit that the investors. In addition, your staff can see the actual outputs they need to do in order to be successful. You measure their success on the output of those objectives which will drive the revenue.”

She says that in business it is necessary to have “a constant blend of people and numbers” in order to be successful, and that when HR is hived off from the rest of the business it loses its ability to help drive corporate performance.

BUILDING TEAMS & DEVELOPING TALENT

Emma emphasises the importance of building effective teams and developing employees within organisations, while making a business case to investors.

“Investors don’t buy the people you employ, but rather they have to see the output of their performance,” she explains. “The investors do a mathematical calculation based on return on investment (ROI) which is based on profit, growth and revenue. You need to demonstrate to them that you have a highly efficient, highly effective team. You do that through getting the numbers right and using the HR function to develop and support the people.”

She argues for integrating HR practices with broader business goals and financial metrics, so that HR is fully aligned with the company’s performance objectives. In this way, HR can demonstrate the value of investing in people to executives and investors via figures that show return on investment, performance metrics, and quantifying success.

“There is a real mismatch in the sense that talent management is about managing the future of the talent. When investors invest they do so on historic data, although they will also take into account future data,” she says. “For investors, the talent is irrelevant. For the business, we need to develop talent for succession

“THERE IS OFTEN A DISCONNECT WITHIN BUSINESS WHERE HR IS SEEN TO BE ABOUT PEOPLE, AND PERFORMANCE IS SEEN AS A TOP LINE FINANCIAL TARGET. IN FACT, WHERE YOU GET PERFORMANCE REALLY WORKING IN A BUSINESS IS WHEN YOU MARRY THOSE TWO TOGETHER.”



planning and creating the managers of the future. So it is about how to bring those two worlds together and demonstrate to investors in a very financially astute way the tangible benefits of managing and developing your existing and future talent.”

BLENDING THE BENEFITS OF INVESTMENT AND PEOPLE

When demonstrating value and ROI to investors, it is important to show that you have a strategy for managing talent effectively in order to drive business success. The focus of the leadership team should not just be on making the workplace a pleasant place to work because a great work environment will not deliver results unless staff understand what is expected of them and how to hit their targets.

“The interesting thing is that I have seen loads of companies throw so much money at wellbeing. They think that this will make the business a lovely, flexible place to work. Yet even with gyms and perks and free meals people are still miserable. That is because the people don’t have clear roles, they cannot visualise themselves progressing and they can’t see where their future is going to be. Maybe they have a boss who doesn’t listen and doesn’t give constructive feedback. If you do not have these defined roles and structures then no amount of wellness benefits will make them happy.”

CHALLENGES IN TALENT MANAGEMENT

In this context, identifying rising stars and ensuring their growth within the organisation, as well as addressing personal and situational barriers to career advancement, are crucial.

Emma highlights the importance of flexible HR policies tailored to individual needs, including examples of accommodating parental leave and personal circumstances to retain talent.

“That to me is where HR should be adding value,” she says. “HR should focus on providing structure and support for managers to handle HR functions effectively within their teams. In Volcano Coffee Works Emma is pioneering the use of technology with a new “cultural calculator” which will be used for assessing and improving organisational culture.

THE PROS AND CONS OF FLEXIBLE WORKING

Emma has encouraged staff to work flexibly but believes that the business as a whole and the people who work there benefit from time in the office together.

“There is a process at the moment going on where Gen Zs think they want something more than they really do. I think there’s this real push on flexibility that is a hangover from COVID, but actually when you give people too much time alone at home they are actually not happy. I had a situation when I came back from New Zealand everyone was working from home and they were not thriving. So I just cancelled all home working for a time and encouraged them to get back to the office.

“Now they do generally work from home a day a week, but it not the same day each week and it needs to be of benefit to the company (they can focus on a specific output) or for personal reasons (they are home for a delivery). As they grow in their careers, I realised that actually being together is really important for their growth.”

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF HR IN BUSINESS SUCCESS

Emma says having great teams and recruiting the right people is central to growing and sustaining a business.

“Building really, really resilient and robust teams is really key to the success of a corporation,” she says. “People think it’s about product, but you can have a great product and a business that doesn’t work. I would much rather invest in the company that has an ordinary product and great people, than a great product and ordinary people any day.”

Combining HR with business acumen can yield great results, she says.

“HR is so integral to an organisation that it is wrong to see it as a separate department. It is absolutely integral to what drives a business forward and contributes to its success.” ♦

ABOUT EMMA LOISEL

Emma began her career as a Criminologist before moving to the City of London as the Business Manager of KPMG Consulting UK, followed by Chief Operations Officer of Metrius, a Creative Consulting agency start-up under the KPMG umbrella. In 2003 Emma became the Chief Operations Officer of two internet based businesses, Atlas Europe and Mediabrokers. As Managing Director, she managed the businesses through a two year earn-out, achieving maximum value at exit. Emma then spent five years focussed on Angel Investing, providing Board and advisory services to her investment businesses and others. She returned to an executive role at The Exchangelab, a business she sold with her founders to WPP in 2015. She set up Volcano Coffee Works in 2010.



EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES



Global HR expert **Angus MacGregor** shares insights with **Marianne Curphey** into effective leadership practices, talent management strategies, and the challenges leaders face in nurturing talent and fostering diversity within large organisations and corporates.

In his wide-ranging career, first as a lawyer and then in top Legal and HR executive roles, Angus MacGregor has experienced many different cultures, geographies, and leadership styles. This wealth of experience has demonstrated to him the importance of leading with humility and empathy, particularly in the post-COVID era where employee well-being and individual focus are paramount.

“I work with the leadership of MUFG in Japan; I am on the board in Europe, and I have worked with a lot of CEOs, bankers, lawyers and supporting services and I have seen a lot of different leadership styles,” he says.

“One size doesn’t fit all

when it comes to heading up an organisation. I have seen brilliant leadership which is leading with humility and empathy. That used to be thought of as “new school”, but post COVID it is really the only approach.”

He says there has been a shift towards the employee becoming even more important within an organisation, having more choice and rights.

“As a consequence, a leader needs to be quite individual in their focus when dealing with their team,” he says. “People have become more demanding of their leaders.”

He sees leadership as a two-way relationship: making a personal connection with your team and understanding how they wish to

be led.

“Finding out what leadership looks like for a set of people that you are leading is important,” he says. “Having a conversation and being inviting feedback about what the team expects from a leader is not a weakness. It is about treating your employees like a customer and client. That is not weak leadership- it is supportive, builds followship and empowers your team.”

Delegating appropriately to the right people and building great teams is important, he says, but always remember that as a leader you are accountable and responsible. This requires you to really understand the market and the culture, but also to make some tough decisions.



“THE PERFECT TEAM IS AN ECLECTIC, INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE TEAM. LEADERS MUST VALUE INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY, AND IN ITS BROADEST SENSE, DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT.”

“Your job is to make decisions. You can’t please everybody all the time. You take all the inputs; you listen very carefully asking good questions about people’s thoughts and feelings. This might feel as though you are breaking some boundaries, so you must be careful, but if you don’t have some form of personal connection, I think you don’t lead as well.

“It’s a fine line and your judgement must be good, so as a leader you must work on your judgement skills. You don’t get always get it right, and in the end, you have got to make decisions and stick with it. People want consistency, and they want decisive leadership.”

HOW TO BUILD EFFECTIVE TEAMS

In terms of talent management, he emphasises the importance of picking and developing the right teams and for leaders to create teams which are diverse and inclusive.

“The perfect team is an eclectic, inclusive and diverse team,” he says. “Leaders must value inclusivity and diversity, and in its broadest sense, diversity of thought. To get that you need different demographics and that is a challenge to recruit right across all the spheres of diversity. It is also about getting the balance right between long tenure members of staff and new people with different experiences.

“Leaders need to have to have relationships with groups of people who are much younger,” he says. “The voice of the youth is very different from what it was 25 years ago.”

If you are a recruiting for a global key position, the cultural fit and values must chime with the vision of the organisation.

“If you were to hire someone who is very capable, can make a lot of money but doesn’t have the right fit with the firm then that can become very toxic. Other staff members might feel resentful and undervalued and that can be disruptive to the coherence of the team.”

Diversity of thought in leadership teams leads to better results and creativity and ultimately is beneficial to the bottom line in an organisation, he says.

“It’s been proven that diverse leadership teams are more productive, more capable, and more creative. If I have teams work for me then I will try to pick as diverse a group as possible. I just like the interaction and the different thinking.

“I try to value everybody’s contribution and get everybody to speak up. That way you get more ideas on the table, and it gives a leader more options. Instead of a binary decision, a leader might garner six or seven good options through this process.”

WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE IN ORGANISATIONS?

People still want to be paid well and fairly for their efforts at work, but they also look to organisations to provide more. A key priority is career path development, the ability to build skills, an attractive workplace community and a digitally advanced culture.

Also, near the top of people’s requirements is for an organisation to be clear about its Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) goals, he says.

“When I first started my working life, the contract with employees was much simpler: come in, work long hours, and fulfil your role. It is now very much more demanding to meet the needs of talent because people have options, and the best people can and do leave. There is a skills shortage and aside from pay, it is about trying to create an environment of psychological safety. You are looking to provide care for your employee in terms of their wellbeing, career, finances, and health.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Angus advocates for continuous performance management, focusing on past performance, future goals, and individual development plans, using coaching skills to provide feedback effectively.

“It is about continuously monitoring and providing feedback, so that when you do have a more formal meeting you can divide your time between past performance, personal development, and future plans.

“The “old school” approach was to have a performance management meeting annually and spend 90% of it on past performance, neglecting development and career progression.”

Instead, he argues for real-time feedback which helps employees understand what is required of them and how they can improve.

“You have got to give some feedback and you have got to do it pretty quickly,” he says. “It is

important to establish a culture where you can give feedback regularly and it is not taken badly. Feedback is the breakfast of champions, but it takes a while to build up the relationship and the trust needed to give and receive that feedback.

“Sometimes you recruit talented junior people who have come out of good universities and have never received negative feedback or failed an essay. It can be hard for them to be told that they didn’t perform well on a task.”

To do this as a leader, he advocates learning coaching skills and developing your ability to listen, so that you can create personal relationships of trust with your team.

He identifies two key skills which can make a real and tangible difference to your leadership:

FOCUS: As a leader, when you are talking to someone ensure that your focus is entirely on them.

“The ability to switch off from other problems and distractions and turn on active listening is a valuable skill. This way, the team member really feels heard, and as a leader you can get to the heart of what the problem is and come up with an appropriate and meaningful solution.

“That is incredible in a leadership situation because I have had a lot of experiences with leaders where I’ve tried to come to them with something that’s urgent and they’re too busy, and you get fobbed off. To be able to give somebody that focussed attention is quite rare and remarkable,” he says.

It is about getting your team to work with you to find an appropriate solution. In other words, the role of a leader is to listen and help people think, rather than give orders without consultation.

DECISIVENESS: If you have something on your “to do” list, make sure you action it if it is important or urgent.

“Don’t delay making a decision because it is difficult or the consequences are uncomfortable,” he says. “The best leaders recognise the importance of making decisions and getting things done.”

IN SUMMARY: TIPS FOR LEADERS

- Build inclusive teams
- Have ongoing conversations on performance and development
- Focus on the individual with active listening skills and help them think through solutions
- Be decisive once you have all the inputs and face up and action the difficult decisions that come with a leadership role

“IT’S BEEN PROVEN THAT DIVERSE LEADERSHIP TEAMS ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE, MORE CAPABLE, AND MORE CREATIVE.”

ABOUT ANGUS MACGREGOR

Angus is Head of Global HR at MUFG Bank, International Head of HR MUFG Securities and was Interim CHRO in APAC, based in Tokyo, Japan. His previous roles at MUFG were Deputy General Manager Human Resources GHR and International Head of HR for Securities business. He worked on accelerating the global integration of the MUFG businesses with HR, business, and support function leaders.

He was Group HR Director at Eversheds Sutherland in London and Global Head of Legal HR at Deutsche Bank. He held senior roles at Barclays Bank, including group head of HR legal, HR director for the group centre and HR director for Barclays Global Commercial Bank. As chief of staff to Barclays Group HR director, with group responsibility for employee relations and health and safety, he had a leading role in several major group-wide projects. He is also a qualified lawyer.

PAY & REWARDS

A high-performance approach

Employers are responding to the cost-of-living crisis, pay inequalities, low economic growth and severe skills shortages with new solutions for talent, reward and performance management. Independent pay and rewards expert **Dr Duncan Brown** explains how – and why it is important. **Ruth Holmes** reports.



Dr Duncan Brown is a leading commentator on reward issues and one of the UK's top ten most influential HR thinkers. Co-author of the best-selling 'A Handbook of Reward Management,' he is currently a visiting professor at the University of Greenwich and

principal associate at IES.

In his three decades as a pay expert, consultant and academic, Dr Brown has seen first-hand the impact of technology, demographic change, economic shocks and the shift in value creation from manufacturing to services, technology, knowledge and skills.

He has advised employers, HR, government and teaches students on how to calibrate pay and rewards for high employer performance and employee engagement. This includes addressing the increasing divide between the wealthiest and poorest – and therefore wellbeing and social cohesion – the ongoing impact of developments since the 2008 financial crisis on real wages, and the current hot topics of pay equity and transparency.

"I think Covid had a massive impact," says Dr Brown on the question of why now is the time to talk about fit-for-purpose approaches to performance management and reward. "The pandemic made employers rediscover that looking after people and giving them security is pretty important. It might be at the bottom of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, but everything depends on it. If your employees are worried about putting food on the table after sustained cuts to real incomes, then they can't perform. This is major. Doing a standard pay and benefits review, or looking at what our competitors do, is not going to address it."

"For me, we are at a key decision point," says Dr Brown. "I'm really pleased and proud that two-thirds of employers did something different through Covid and in the cost-of-living crisis. Having argued inflation is nothing to do with us, we only worry about maximising profits and returns to our shareholders and minimising wage costs; and that financial wellbeing is for banks and employees to deal with, HR leaders and boards.

"The question now is are we going to go back to the 2010s approach of maximum employee flexibility and minimum cost, or are we going to say we are going to invest in people and achieve higher returns and value added from growing a higher skilled, better rewarded and more engaged workforce?"

"The employment market is staying very tight and that is forcing these investments. If you can't recruit people however much you are paying, then you have no alternative but to 'grow your own'. These are the

real choices employers are facing: recruit or develop in-house, cut employee costs or invest for future higher value-added?

"Are you going to take the high road to high performance, or try the cost-focused short-cut that gave us throughout the 2010s stagnant productivity, growing in-work poverty and widening inequality and some of the lowest levels of employee engagement in Europe?"

THE HIGH ROAD TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

The role of HR and reward expertise remains vital in answering the central question he will be discussing with peers at the upcoming Turbocharging Performance masterclass at Henley Business School in April. This is the question of "how do we leverage high performance in an economy that is stuck in a low-productivity, high-inflation bubble and now recession?"

"We are HR and we decide this stuff, even if it is the results of lots of micro decisions," he says. "We are the ones who decide what to pay and what contracts we offer. We are the ones who decide on risks around what terms and conditions. We implement those zero-hours contracts and non-disclosure agreements and ironically named and ineffective supposedly performance-related pay systems.

"What I want to do is challenge people with some of the assumptions around thinking that lowering pay costs under the guise of flexibility is a good thing. Do you publish pay ranges with job ads; are you banning salary history discussions during recruitment; are you using zero-hours contracts?"

"The answers to these questions help to really understand why companies are doing what they do, and whether that's in the long-term interest of their company's performance. I want to challenge people and present what I believe the high-performance model really is; it's not high executive supposedly-performance-related pay and a minimum wage workforce."

"The employment market is staying very tight and that is forcing these investments. If you can't recruit people however much you are paying, then you have no alternative but to 'grow your own'."



“It’s a really interesting time right now for reward and performance management for high performance, especially as voluntary attrition remains high. Most employees can secure higher pay increases by moving employers rather than staying and performing for their existing one.”

LEVERAGING REWARDS IN HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURES

Managing HR budgets, forecasting and workforce planning are fundamentally important issues in a world where people and skills are the source of competitive advantage. New technologies – and how we introduce and embed them – offer scope for more informed decision-making in the quest for high performance and how we can best balance people and performance.

These are all highly relevant issues for public and private sector employers, particularly those grappling with the question of how to create a fair and productive workplace where a range of contracts have been introduced for flexibility as well as cost containment. Skills shortages are endemic and while government has a key role here, employers recognise that they are not investing enough in upskilling and reskilling their workforce for the future.

“The employment model that a lot of employers have been using since 2010 has really damaged the performance of the economy and a lot of companies,” says Dr Brown. “Now is an interesting time to look at this because Covid showed that things like cutting your sick pay policy is a pretty dumb idea, for example. But lots of companies did it in the 2010s. Or worse, having your executives sitting at home during Covid nice and safe with private medical policies while your frontline key workers are at risk of dying from Covid but have no medical benefits or cover.”

Fairness has always been a central consideration in the pay and rewards arena, albeit one tempered by prevailing attitudes to competition for talent. Market-focused pay and incentivisation has contributed to record pay gaps

between top executives and the wider workforce, as well as unconscious bias playing into gender, race and disability pay gaps and therefore lifetime earnings and life chances. How does Dr Brown see the link between talent and reward today and in future?

“A lot of HR leaders are focusing more on internal talent pipelines because they have no choice,” he says. “Employers can pay what they like, but if there aren’t workers out there, then you have to grow and train them yourself. Performance management not surprisingly is now pivoting back towards what it was when I started in HR, which was about growing your people, developing their strengths rather than punishing their failings in pay. Performance appraisals used to be held six months away from your pay review precisely to avoid a focus on pay and focus more on growing people.”

A JOINED-UP APPROACH TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

A core aspect of the high-performance approach is recognising the importance of talent retention. This includes creating the conditions for people at all life stages to engage and perform through good management, continuous feedback and supportive workplace cultures.

It is an approach in this cost-conscious era that makes the most sense, says Dr Brown. “Around 20% of women leave employment within five years of having a child. Yet most sectors and employers have skills shortages, even though there are still almost a million vacancies while the economy is flatlining.”

The obvious danger of such a narrow – and short-term – focus on the salary budgets is that it overlooks and underestimates the actual cost of employee turnover, both in financial terms and long-term performance and productivity. “We just don’t join this up at the moment,” says Dr Brown. This includes making sure pay, benefits and total rewards are relevant, offer value for employees as well as employers, and are communicated effectively.

“What HR does is survey and look at what other employers are doing. It’s potentially expensive to get an outside provider in, so companies often wait for government or their competitors to act so then they have no choice but to do the same. Yet the actual cost of losing 20% of people isn’t counted and when it is, it is massively underestimated.” But attitudes have shifted since the pandemic, with the major progress on menopause policies and benefits for example showing that many employers see the importance of better supporting their female workforce.

Looking to the future, Dr Brown sees the pendulum swinging back to more skills-based pay as organisations grow their own talent, especially around the introduction of AI. There is also much more awareness around pay equity – a priority for HR directors – and transparency.

“It’s a really interesting time right now for reward and performance management for high performance, especially as voluntary attrition remains high,” says Dr Brown. “Most employees can secure higher pay increases by moving employers rather than staying and performing for their existing one.” Creating the conditions for people to stay, flourish and perform is therefore a cost-effective and long-term investment. It pays off economically, socially and personally. ●

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