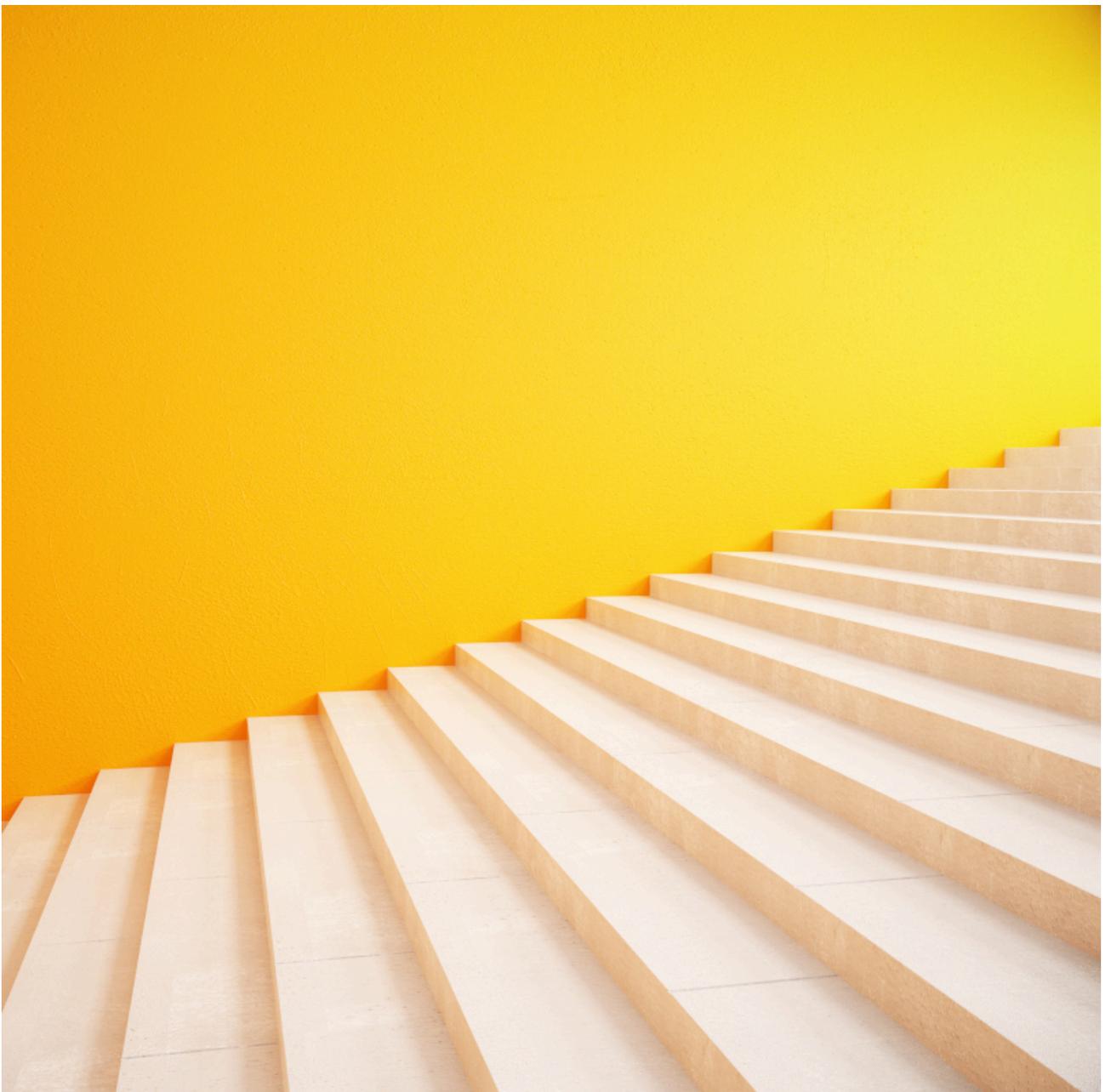


Does your brand recruit for you?



According to recent figures from the Office for National Statistics, the total number of people in work in the UK has now reached a record high of 32.5m - of which 24m are in full time jobs. Subsequently, vacancies are also at an all-time high of 853,000.

Given that a recent survey by PWC claims that 61% of UK business leaders expect to increase headcount in 2019, irrespective of Brexit uncertainties, at a time when the UK workforce is shrinking, how are business leaders tackling these challenges?

We asked our guests at our latest CEO lunch to share their thoughts on how they attract high calibre talent to their businesses and how they have evolved to retain talent in today's business world, when the expectations and loyalty of the new generation of employees are so different to those before.

We asked our audience "How challenging are you finding it to hire high calibre people in the current market?" And secondly:

"What is your organisation doing to ensure it becomes or remains an employer of choice in such a competitive market?"

Michael Lewis, CEO – Eon UK opened the discussion with a positive challenge to all businesses to make good use of the apprenticeship levy. "As an organisation EON is using all levers available to ensure the levy is used in the business. In a business which has a wide range of employees, from call centre staff to engineers, we use the levy creatively to fill our skills gap". He went on to explain that in some areas EON collaborated with Nottingham University to deploy the levy. He also emphasised that when it came to attracting graduates, they played to their strengths as an energy company through leveraging their activity as a renewable energy generator, which resonated more positively with graduates, than those organisations that generate electricity from fossil fuels.

“It is important to the next generation that you are accessible leaders”.

Jeremy Long from MTR Corporation Ltd humorously injected "Finding train drivers was never an issue due to the pay and rations – however we do struggle with gender balance". As a result he has encouraged creative solutions when acquiring talent. MTR now utilises websites such as mumsnet.com to attract female drivers. Like Energy, Rail also suffers from the perception it is a traditional work place. To compete for bright graduates, MTR works hard to emphasise the complex and interesting technology challenges which exist in their many businesses to dispel the old fashioned reputation of the rail industry.

Unipart Group CEO - John Neill disagreed on the point of the apprenticeship levy and simply saw it as another corporate tax. Changing the topic to labour, he openly shared the following "If we end up with a no deal Brexit, unemployment will rise and labour shortages won't be our biggest problem. As a logistics supplier with significant peaks and troughs, Unipart are putting effort into automation to manage the consequences of Brexit".

Changing the topic to retention and culture, Jenny Ashmore a plural NED highlighted the risk with regards to expectations of the younger workforce. "They do not expect a job for life but want the

opportunity to build multiple and diverse experiences within the same company or several companies". As a result, tenure in a role is getting shorter which led her to question "where is the solid backbone of an organisation?". It is this solid back bone of expertise and corporate knowledge which enables businesses to adapt and follow business cycles. How do businesses manage to provide both core expertise and development for the rising ranks?

“Living the values is more important than ever - what are we here for and what am I part of”.

Agreeing with Jenny, **Peter Flavel, Coutts & Co** commented that "younger generations want different challenges. They view staying a long time in one role differently to previous generations. They need to be challenged regularly with something new to maintain interest. Historically private bankers tended to hire from other private banks". Now Coutts only recruit via their own 24hr contact centre - in other words "if you want a career with Coutts you must come through and work in this part of our business". He pointed out that clients of Coutts are now very diverse, hence contact centre staff need to mirror this. Within Coutts they had found that graduates are very happy to spend 18 months on the phone as long as they can see the benefits and a career path after this period. Furthermore, having graduate trainees in a pattern of shift work enables the business to plan training more easily and the graduates have a much deeper understanding of the diverse range of clients they will deal with whilst at Coutts.

Iain Hunter, CEO, Wyelands Bank – felt that "training has not been at the forefront of the FS Industry for a long time". He has had first-hand experience of growing the bank from 3 to 43 people in two years. From this experience he felt there was a big gap between middle and senior level positions. They still found it easy to hire good people at junior level, however because a lack of training, he felt the broader FS middle management layer could not step up into more prominent roles. He had also found that younger people respond to softer incentives such as working from home and recognition, as opposed to hard cash. "Younger people do 'cultural audits' of the businesses they want to work for". He stressed that "CEOs and employers of today have to educate themselves on what motivates younger generations".

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Tom Woolgrove, CEO, Premium Credit – commented that "people management needs to be much more strategic. Businesses need real granularity of the employee value proposition, a deeper purpose, and to communicate that effectively, requires an understanding of the expectations of millennials".

Offering a different perspective, **Duncan Everett, CEO, Kerry Foods UK** – outlined that Kerry Foods have worked hard on defining what they stand for and what they are about. “The Industry sector is challenging at the moment, margin pressure is intense. We employ over 6,000 people and 25% of them have a tenure of over 15 years. However, it is getting harder to engage our people with the current margin pressure and giving people a clear view of their future and the vision for the business is critical.”

Where they do win is with Kerry’s values –“Living the values is more important than ever - what are we here for, what am I part of and why do we matter”. Given this reliance on the local community Kerry are very proactive with their local employer brand and support the local community. They run volunteer programmes and encourage and support real diversity in their people; these things are really important factors in engagement.

“People and their talents are not dead at 45 or over - organisations should take care not to be biased nor overlook this rich pool of talent”.

Marnie Millard, CEO, Nichols plc – “Our Vimto brand is 110 years old –yet the sector is still a young vibrant sector. You have to work on width of career not just upward momentum. Sideways moves can be very important as you get more senior. Talent needs to work across the business and it is important to get the employees to see this as a promotion. Even though the level of role may not technically change much, their skills will. Highlight the pride in where people progress to externally, as that is also a positive and it creates advocacy for the Vimto brand.

By the same token, any speech you make as CEO you should assume is now public. People will look you up as CEO and make a judgement on your business based on what you say and how you come across. It is important to the next generation that you are accessible leaders”

Following Marnie’s insights with a comment on multiskilling and lateral moves, **Eric Coutts, CEO, Edmond De Rothschild** – stated that he used to work at Goldman Sachs. “Goldman’s are very good at making people do lateral moves to multi skill their workforce and create corporate agility. This ensures there are multiple people to take over each area as necessary, thereby responding quickly to market opportunities, changes or re-organisation”.

“CEOs and employers of today have to educate themselves on what motivates younger generations”.

Helen Webster, CEO, Aberdeen Life – drew on another consideration regarding agile working –“Within our business we have trialled lots of flexible working and they found it impacted positively in a range of situations, not just working mums and dads with young families and people caring for others”. They found that in today’s world of open-plan offices, one day a week working from home can be useful for deep thinking as busy offices are not always conducive to proper thinking and being free of interruptions. From this they had seen higher levels of productivity and the employees love it!

Whilst there is much emphasis on the change in behaviour of the next generation in the workplace, **Karen Wilson, CEO, Hoggett Bowers**, prompted a final thought for the session “People and their talents are not dead at 45 or over, there should be no age discrimination in the work place. Organisations should take care not to be biased nor overlook this rich pool of talent”. Returning to the topic of younger generations, she recounted that she had been asked to advise a client’s granddaughter on her career and this granddaughter did not know who Unilever was!

A word of caution to any employer brand to never assume your brand talks for you. Ensure your brand resonates with the next generation of employees.

With such a variety of leaders from businesses of significant heritage and tradition represented on the day, it is encouraging to hear how leaders of today are listening to the expectations of the next generation and playing to their strengths for mutual benefit.

Ensuring your employer brand resonates with your future leaders is vital to compete for talent. Be sure to retain the backbone of experience and vital core knowledge, with this in place, you can enable the corporate agility and the breadth of experience the next generation clearly craves.

Hoggett Bowers

Hoggett Bowers is all about making a real difference to our Clients and their businesses. We are passionate about recruitment and we are proud to represent those Clients we partner with.

Working in specialist practices, we are in a league of our own – large enough to have the knowledge, resources and wide-ranging expertise to operate globally but not so large we have lost the flexibility and the individual care our Candidates and Clients warrant in order to help shape their futures.

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