

People Management

THE CIPD MAGAZINE FOR ASIA

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Breathe in, breathe out...

*The quest for mindfulness – and the power
of investing in wellbeing at work*

PLUS

All change

The science of making new ideas stick with staff

Cybercrime

What HR needs to know about virtual vulnerability

CIPD

THE KNOWLEDGE

Your quarterly run-through of essential skills, with expert commentary

1 Make your office move a success

The average office move ticks all the boxes required to induce panic in employees. There's the unfamiliarity of new surroundings, the potential for your place in the pecking order to be threatened and the sheer uncertainty about what's going to happen next. Throw in the fact that many office moves aren't just about a change of venue – they're likely to be aligned to changes in processes or IT systems too – and it's vital to consider how you deal with the human factors involved.

The first and most common mistake with relocations is not involving HR from the outset. If a move is led by the facilities team or IT, it's unlikely you will be considering some of the most important aspects early on – the impact of the move on wellbeing, the ability to optimise performance



Christine Bruckner: HR must communicate with staff from the outset

and opportunities for collaboration, for example. It's also unlikely enough thought will be given to communication: telling people what's happening, when and why makes all the difference, as does actively listening to their concerns and suggestions.

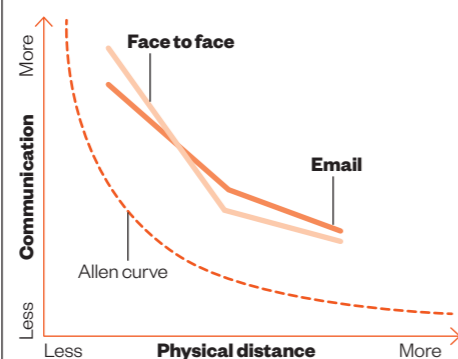
Dr Christine Bruckner, Hong Kong-based director of global design and

architecture firm M Moser Associates, says HR has to communicate with employees from the outset. She advises identifying 'champions' within the business who can help deliver key messages and garner feedback from employees, as well as setting up a task force to run the project and taking note of issues such as staff concerns, practical coordination and scheduling as part of a broader risk assessment.

"It is always prudent to be prepared for more resistance to change than you initially imagined," says Bruckner.

Why proximity matters

Harvard University research found that engineers who shared a physical office were 20 per cent more likely to stay in touch with each other digitally, which led to projects being completed 32 per cent quicker



SOURCE: HARVARD UNIVERSITY



HR should be involved in every aspect of a move

"Above all, the best advice, which we give ourselves as well, is to listen actively and respond effectively. It's essential that the office is treated as an important business tool and that it is understood that investment in the office, if done correctly, has just as much impact as the right computer paired with the right software."

This runs counter to the trend seen among many larger businesses for 'showpiece' offices that contain play areas, juice bars and even slides. While

there might be value in incorporating elements of fun at work, and making employees feel more welcomed, comfortable and creative, there's also considerable evidence that many 'gimmick' elements of office design are significantly underused. And, of course, installing a futsal table is very little help if employees are stressed because of the working conditions, or feel they aren't being listened to.

"People first, buildings second," stresses Bruckner. "The focus of interior architectural workplace design is ultimately creating the right work environment in which people can reach and exceed their own potential, work optimally, experience overall health, comfort and wellbeing, and ensure the continued and future success of the business."

"It's prudent to prepare for more resistance to change than you initially imagined"

123RF/GETTY

2 Reduce your time-to-hire

Finding the right balance between the need to fill a job vacancy quickly and ensuring all the boxes have been ticked in the search to find the right person is a recurring conundrum for recruiters. The problem is particularly acute when hiring a specialist, or where the war for talent is especially fierce.

The cost of a bad hire is, of course, also a significant reason for taking your time, and surveys from various sectors have shown businesses are pickier than ever before. Google was at one point averaging 20 interviews for each engineering candidate it recruited, though it now admits this was excessive. But Grant Torrens, business director at Hays in Singapore, says: "Companies have their reasons for

putting candidates through an extended interview process. It tests their desire to work for the company."

One easy way to streamline the process, he suggests, is to coordinate the diaries of interviewers more effectively: "Many interviews are one on one, and spaced two to three weeks apart. However, if you can get two or three interviewers to block out their diaries on the same day in consecutive hours, you are able to complete the first few stages of the interview process in one day."



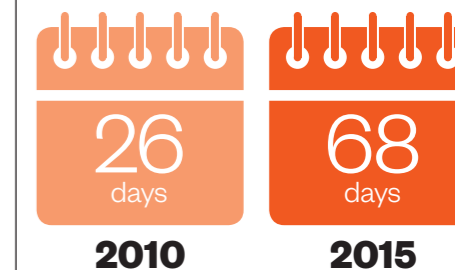
Grant Torrens: you can't always hold out for the perfect fit

You might also consider moving part of the process online – if assessments are required, these could be hosted on an online platform and could take place before interviews. And pre-planning interviews to ensure feedback is shared effectively between interviewers can also avoid duplication of effort.

Perhaps the most effective way to reduce your time to hire, however, is to back away from the need to find the 'perfect fit' for each role. If skills are scarce or your employer brand

Risk-averse recruiters

Average time taken to fill a position



SOURCE: CEB GLOBAL SURVEY OF 900 RECRUITERS AND 6,000 HIRING MANAGERS

is lacking, it may be more sensible to hire someone with the right attributes and attitudes to develop into the role, even if they lack the exact experience or qualifications you were hoping for. "If there are a lot of candidates actively searching for a new position, you can afford to be more specific in your requirements," says Torrens. "But holding out for a 100 per cent perfect fit in a tight candidate market could mean

you will never fill the position.

"If there is a candidate shortage in a skill or competency that can be trained or nurtured in a short period of time, it may make commercial sense to hire that person rather than wait until the perfect match arrives." Consider, too, that in the rush to find the right candidate in the market, you could easily overlook your existing employees: could one of them be retrained or given a new opportunity, even if it doesn't seem like an immediately obvious option?



Foxconn chief Terry Gou hired 20,000 people in a month when his company was rushing to complete iPhone 6 orders

3 Cut down on email overload

Many HR professionals start the day with a familiar groan when they sign into their email account and see how many messages they have to deal with. It's a common problem, says Cyrille Jégu, the Shanghai-based managing director of consultancy ThrivinAsia, not least because the number of emails being sent continues to increase even as other technologies such as instant messaging become popular among business users.

"Often, we're not focused," says Jégu. "We move from one email to the next without making a decision about what to do." If that sounds familiar, take heart: there are several simple steps you can take to clear out your inbox and keep it under control.

The first step is to decide that you will handle each email only once. "Decide what to do straight away," says Jégu. And remember that the delete button is your friend, he adds.

If the email needs immediate action that you can complete in less than two minutes, either send a quick reply or forward it to someone else for action. If it's not as urgent, either delete it, file it for reference and later reading, or file for later action (perhaps in a 'reply' folder or in your calendar, if a specific

"It's a big relief - the pressure goes down immediately when email is under control"

deadline is involved). For HR professionals, these deadlines could be linked to project goals, such as 'new positions

filled' or 'probation completed'. Many people set themselves targets of getting down to zero emails once a day, or at least once a week. But for those with serious backlogs of more

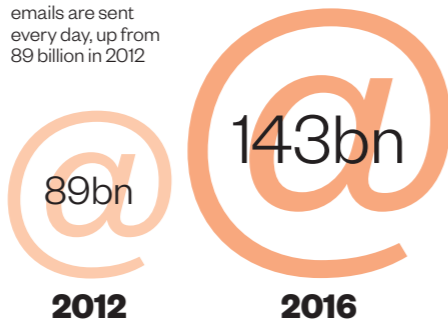


than 1,000 messages, Jégu suggests putting everything that has arrived after a certain date - for example, three months ago or more - into an archive folder. You may never do anything with these emails, but they will be out of your inbox and you will still have access to them in case of need. Then go through the remaining emails one by one, starting with the most recent, and make an immediate decision about what to do with each one.

The growth of email

Almost half of all email users are in the Asia-Pacific region; Europe (22 per cent) and North America (14 per cent) lag far behind

143 billion business emails are sent every day, up from 89 billion in 2012



Jégu has helped many people empty their mailboxes and says it is a huge stress-buster when they see it is possible to do. "You cannot imagine the relief they feel," he says. "The pressure goes down immediately when email is under control."

To help keep your mailbox under permanent control, it's worth unsubscribing from mailing lists where possible, setting filters to organise incoming mail by sender or company to help prioritise responses, or creating rules to send certain emails direct to a particular folder automatically so that they don't clutter your inbox.

There are also cultural changes you can introduce into your routine that will help: walking over to speak to a colleague about a problem can avoid getting drawn into a long email chain with them, while switching to instant messaging technology for those you communicate with most frequently can also encourage more efficient conversations.



Cyrille Jégu: don't forget the delete button is your friend

ZACH GIBSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX/EYEVINE, SUPERSTOCK

4 Explain the value of HR to your CEO

Enlightened businesses are acutely aware of the difference an empowered HR department can make to the bottom line - by ensuring employees are engaged and optimised, corporate values are realistic and understood, recruitment and workforce planning needs are attended to and the organisation has a strong strategic view on where it is going and the people who will get it there.

But if HR doesn't have regular access to the very top of the organisation, it's possible that the CEO may not understand what the function is

"If you can tell a CEO why these people are leaving, they will take notice of HR's value"

delivering, or what it is capable of. Charles Caldwell, HR director at the English Schools Foundation in Hong Kong and

a consultant and futurist who has worked with a range of businesses, suggests there are three key ways to address this imbalance. And they all start with having a strong grip on data.

First, make your CEO aware of external trends in your sector. "One trend might be rising attrition or changing demographics within an industry that could be signalling a potential future shortage of available talent," says Caldwell. "Another could be the shifting technology landscape for talent acquisition."

Next, demonstrate in-depth knowledge of employee trends your leaders may be unaware of. "There are many traditional people metrics that companies measure, but HR professionals need to be creative

about looking at deeper metrics," says Caldwell. "For example, a traditional metric is attrition, but you could look deeper and break down the attrition into years of tenure, or even revenue generated. A statistic such as '10 per cent of the sales people we lost in the last year generated 40 per cent of the company's revenue from the previous year' could be material. If the statistic is significant, and you can tell a CEO why these people are leaving, they are likely to sit up and take notice not only of the statistic, but of HR's value."



By studying deeper metrics, HR professionals can help companies curb high levels of attrition

Many businesses today are listening not just to staff surveys but also to internal social networks, says Caldwell. They are building complex pictures of the real 'influencers' within organisations who solve problems, generate revenue or reduce attrition. By feeding into such information, HR departments can revolutionise the way they think about succession planning and broader talent management.

Finally, HR professionals need deep insights into how business strategy and results connect to people, as well as a granular knowledge of how the business operates.

Caldwell cites his past experience with a company that had increasing sales quotas but severe attrition, with most new sales staff leaving after less than 18 months: "It was obvious there was a problem and it was even more obvious where the problem sat. But no one wanted to confront it."

After intense study of attrition and tenure data, Caldwell predicted that 93 sales people would leave the following year. He spent the next nine months interviewing staff to find out why they were leaving, then showed the management team the year-to-date attrition. He was almost exactly right: 92 individuals had left.

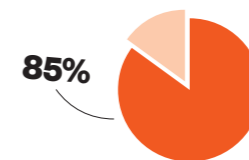
"Fortunately, this was a show stopper for the executive team," he says. "Huge efforts were made to arrest attrition and within 6 to 12 months it had dropped dramatically.

However, none of this would have been possible without data analytics and creating a compelling, believable story out of the data."

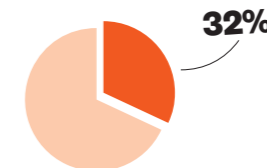


Charles Caldwell: HR can transform the way firms manage talent

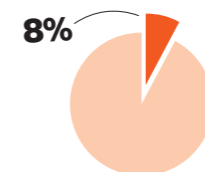
Grappling with data



Proportion of southeast Asian businesses that believe people analytics are 'important' or 'very important' - the highest rate in the world



Global companies that feel they have the technical capability to handle people analytics



Global businesses that say they are capable of creating predictive models relating to their employees

SOURCE: DELOITTE