

# The roaring 20s – a consequential decade?

This next decade is set to further challenge the resilience of the institutions that we all rely on. **Karen Grave** looks to 'Tomorrow's World'

Our first supplement of the year is also the first supplement of the new decade. The start of a new decade always offers a different perspective than just a yearly review as looking back over a ten-year period gives us room to draw informed conclusions about longer term trends that you rarely get when you are reviewing 12 months.

There are of course several trends that have stood the test of the '10s'. Artificial intelligence, a focus on climate change, dissatisfaction with our politics and institutions, financial austerity, the need for public service reform – all still capture our attention and they are likely to remain at the heart of public policy concerns for years to come.

The biggest change as we start the decade is of course the 'B' word. Whatever your politics, finally our withdrawal from the European Union is law. While there will undoubtedly be trials and tribulations during trade negotiations this year, the Bill's passage was strangely much less contentious.

Elections have consequences and especially ones that deliver a majority. We are already starting to see a focus on domestic policy issues that have so desperately needed attention – and of course funding. The shift in focus is very welcome.

While not wanting to wish the years away, I'm hazarding a guess that our review of the 20s to the end of 2029 will be profound. We will



be assessing the impact of a decade which will see the UK leave the EU and set out a new future. That new future is likely to see the EU and other global institutions change too.

This new future will likely have fundamental consequences for our democratic institutions, global and national trade policy, the make-up of the UK, our place in the world and the way in which we collaborate with new and current partners.

We will be assessing whether our efforts to address the impact of climate change have been successful; we will likely be using technology in ways that even our most informed brain power now can barely conceive. We will undoubtedly have had to meaningfully address issues of privacy on social media, governance and transparency.

My own view is that some of the most important topics we will have had to tackle are as follows:

- Inequality – of resources and opportunity
- Countering the isolationism of ideology
- Democratic deficits and the scourge of ideological purity
- Reconciling facts and fake news.

Our workforces will be as vital in meeting the challenges this decade as they have always been in other decades

For public servants these issues have profound consequences for our role in delivering services to all of our citizens, however much each of us might need services.

There is no question though that our main priority are those who have complex needs and a much higher demand for services. Our role in

tackling and alleviating poverty for example is profound, consequential and ongoing.

Our workforces will be as vital in meeting these challenges this decade as they have always been in other decades. But we're starting at a point where our underlying challenges are more acute. These next 10 years will require that HR and OD professionals are at the heart of ensuring our organisations are resilient enough to thrive and flourish in the face of existing and new challenges. And that our organisations are respected.

Of all the workforce topics that I could choose you might ask why I have chosen resilience and respect? Well local government organisations in particular have for far too long been operating at the very edge of what we feel comfortable with. The siren calls signalling real concerns in delivering statutory services

and services that impact our most vulnerable citizens are becoming ever louder.

Enabling our workforces to respond to pressures that are more often than not overwhelming, while maintaining the capacity and capability to harness innovation and creativity has always been a competitive advantage. So, resilience – both individual and organisational – is key.

However, the last three years of the Brexit debate has also amplified the concerns with how much institutions are respected. While it is right we advocate passionately for the sector – on issues such as sufficient funding for example – we also cannot deny that we are still struggling to deal with issues such as child sexual exploitation at the same time.

We allow the respect for our institutions to be worn down at our peril. The wonderful people at democratic-erosion.com remind us that chipping away at institutions increases the democratic deficit. And none of us should be comfortable with that.

A loss of respect essentially is a loss of trust. The Edelman Trust Barometer for 2020 reported that three in five Britons say 'they are losing faith in democracy as an effective form of government' and sadly 'institutions are seen by Britons as less competent and more unethical compared to the global average'.

That is profoundly salutary. So, it's very timely then that the theme of our Annual Conference 2020 is 'Tomorrow's World: Purposeful work and Lives. You can read elsewhere in the supplement about why this is so important for us. And of course, you can find out much more about our work and conference at [www.ppma.org.uk](http://www.ppma.org.uk).

**Karen Grave is PPMA President**



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# Inspiring others to embrace the journey

**Leatham Green** looks at ways you can improve the way people engage with you, creating positive relationships at work in the process; and *(below)* gives a three-step guide to enhancing your physical and mental health and wellbeing within the workplace

If you were to look back on your life experiences, I am sure, despite the thousands of people you have come across, there will be a handful of people that have made a significant difference to your life, and or your career. This is certainly true for me. The things which these influential people had in common is that they were very skilful in how they created and maintained strong and meaningful professional relationships. For example, they all gave generously of their time and had a strong sense of belief in me and inspired me to dream big.

Of all the teachers and lecturers that I have come across in my education (which spans 50 years) one teacher stands out above all others – Mrs Short – a no nonsense English teacher who taught me at secondary school. At the end of my first year, when I was issued with my (not brilliant) school report, Mrs Short spoke with me and said ‘Leatham, never lose your individuality, or settle for mediocrity, set your sights high and you will go far.’

Mrs Short was tireless in the time she gave to me, always went out of her way to find out what I was up to and how I was progressing, and regularly let me know when she felt I was ‘settling for mediocrity’. She shared with me her love of the theatre, Shakespeare, and art – things that I would never otherwise have had the opportunity to discover. She inspired me, encouraged me to dream big, and was tirelessly positive in her belief of what I could achieve. The positive intent she shared with me, and the strong relationship we developed has stayed with me for more than 40 years.

Having spent my career working in large political organisations, where leaders are generally perceived as distant, faceless, detached figures, coaching colleagues to open up and show some emotion and personality, and sharing something of themselves was a constant challenge. Stepping out from their comfort zone and habitat into the space of others seemed an almost impossible task, but yet the same questions always surfaced each year – why are we perceived as distant and out of touch with the rest of the business? – but the truthful answer was rarely listened to. Go

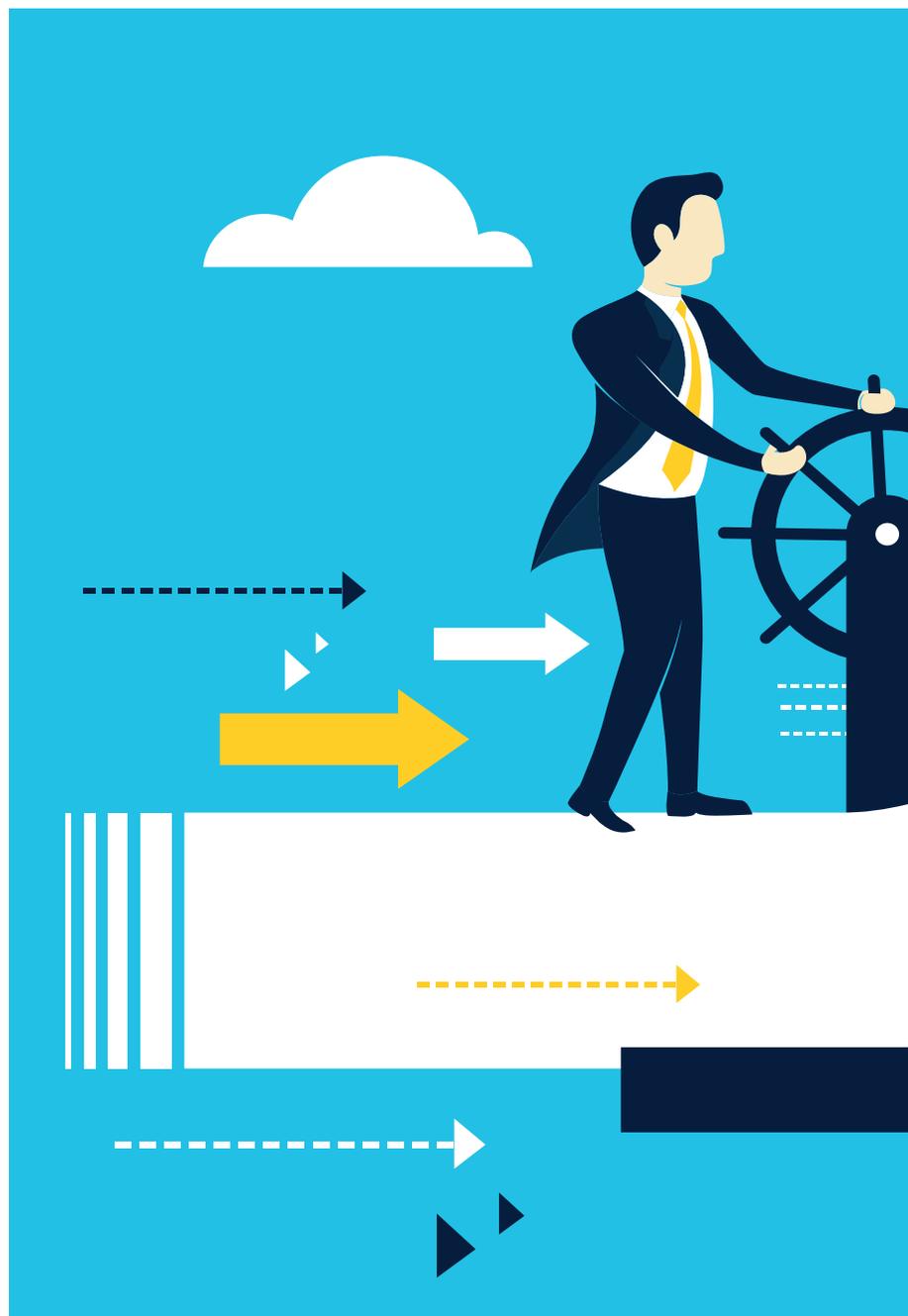
forth and develop some connection with people – show people you are human and that you are interested in them. They may well be interested in you. It’s not rocket science and yet so many leaders and people generally just fail to ‘get it’ yet alone commit time to working at building and maintaining positive relationships.

People like to know about people, we are instinctively social beings. We are tribal, inherently curious, as well as complex and emotional, responding differently to change and challenges. Like it or not, we bring all of these traits into the workplace. The happy truth however, is that even those people who say ‘we are not at work to make friends’ are mistaken. Without positive relationships at work you will fail to achieve your full potential and as a consequence, your team will suffer and your organisation will also lose out.

In a world where partnering, collaboration, sharing of resources is ever more prevalent, it is relationships in those situations that will determine their survival or failure rather than a lack of resources. For partnerships of any nature to succeed, you require trust among the players, and for trust to exist, you need to have established a positive relationship with those involved. If you are to operate in an open and honest way, you need to have established some degree of trust in your relationship otherwise those frank exchanges that are needed in business to develop will never happen: as a consequence, success will be at best limited.

It is a fact that some people are better at developing positive relationships in the workplace than others, however, the good news is that we can all improve our skills in this area. It costs nothing other than time, and a positive intent to make things happen. There is a plethora of fantastic academic research that highlights why relationships in the workplace are important, not least, when we have a network of positive relationships at work it feels good – they make us feel involved and connected and without question they enhance our feeling of wellbeing and being valued.

I very much endorse the research of Kim Cameron and colleagues that was carried



out in 2014. This research identified some straightforward and mindful practices that have proven business benefits:

- Being genuinely interested in your colleagues, what they do, and what they are interested in both inside and outside of work
- Treating everyone with respect and compassion
- Emphasising the meaningfulness of work
- Providing support for one another.

These mindful practices will lead to the development of:

- Personal resilience
  - Mutual trust and respect
  - Creativity and the ability to think innovatively
  - Improved loyalty and an increase in discretionary effort.
- The bottom line impact sees an increase in:
- Financial performance
  - Customer satisfaction
  - Productivity.

Do you believe you could improve your approach to creating positive relationships at

## The power of letting go

This month I have had the privilege of working with some of the top talent across the UK in public sector HR/OD in PPMA's Rising Star and One to Watch talent programmes. Three themes emerged that appeared to be getting in the way and stopping them from getting on with 'important' stuff such as their own development and the people they lead:

1. Needing more time (never fails to appear on most people's lists)
2. Wanting to be more connected (both with people and experiences)
3. Negative inner 'chit-chat'.

I have been pondering on these 'inhibitors' and found myself reflecting on the concept of 'letting go' which sounds so simple and yet is such a tricky thing to accomplish.

Cultivating an approach to 'letting go of the unimportant stuff' can lead to a sense of positive physical and mental health and wellbeing by recognising that you do have control over how you use the precious gift of life, time and relationships.

What follows is what I believe could be an effective antidote to the above three 'inhibitors' to a more productive life experience and enhanced physical and mental health and wellbeing, and helping you to get on with the 'important stuff'.

### 1. Be 'unbusy'

I have written a few times about this old chestnut – the sense we can all experience being overloaded, bombarded with data and 24/7 news and communication etc.

To enable more space in your life each of these simple and effective techniques involves committing to less, something we all can do and is within your control. Start small, for example, taking five minutes off each meeting you have in a day. That can soon mount up. Or just commit to one less meeting.

Cultivating an approach to 'letting go of the unimportant stuff' can lead to a sense of positive physical and mental health and wellbeing

Also, ask yourself what is the one thing you can let go of in your week ahead? If you could only do one thing today what would that be and what does that say about the importance of everything else?

You start to get the idea? The quest is to begin to simplify your life. You make it complicated, so you can also start the reverse – it is all about choice and strangely enough you will find that by doing less, you will achieve more. It's true.

### 2. Connect to what is important

As we move at pace towards the Christmas-style frenzy of wanting and over extending in all areas, try an alternative strategy. Rather than believing that the latest big gift – shoes, handbags, jewellery – will bring everlasting happiness, take a moment to reflect.

What if you started from the position that you have 'enough' – how much stuff do you actually need to function positively and happily? Rather than acquiring more 'stuff' think about giving more time, love, compassion – in a meaningful and purposeful way. These are the gifts that create the magic of connecting with people.

### 3. Cultivate positive inner chit-chat



work? Improve how people engage with you? Perhaps you could try being a little more open about your aspirations and your dreams with your colleagues?

By adopting the above principles into my everyday life over many years, I feel as though I have much more to contribute to those around me, and at the same time, comfortable with the reality that not everyone will 'get' me – and that is fine with me. They probably would never 'get me' no matter how I behaved.

Our inner voice is often our biggest critic and barrier from achieving success.

Rather than dwelling on thoughts such as 'I am not good enough', 'I am boring' or 'saying that will make me sound silly', try replacing such criticism with positive reinforcement. Take the two week – two minute challenge. It is easy. For the next two weeks you will take two minutes each day and repeat to yourself (ideally out loud): 'I am loved, I am loveable, I am loved.'

When your negative chit-chat appears just allow, without force, the thoughts to disappear and replace it with the above phrase for a moment or two. See the power of this simple technique unfold – and keep with it for the two weeks!

**Leatham Green is Executive Director at the PPMA and founder of The Mindful HR Centre**



Tomorrow's World - Purposeful Work & Lives

#PPMAHR20

# Preparing for the world of tomorrow



At this time of year, everything is gearing up to our Annual Conference. And this year we're really excited with our theme and our venue.

The Midland Hotel in Manchester (*above*) is a fabulous location. Our theme this year is challenging us to think about our future. Service transformation is something that never goes away of course, but we want to pull together a number of strands of practice.

In our 'Don't Worry, Be Happy' conference last year we looked at the role of leadership, employee wellbeing, engagement and productivity. Those issues haven't gone away for us. Indeed, they are still at the heart of how we as a professional community can support our chief executives, leaders, managers and colleagues to be at our most effective.

We talk a lot about future workforces/workforce of the future and of course that can mean many different things. At the conference we will be looking through a number of lenses – those that are purely HR and OD but also those that are broader policy issues, such as climate change.

Fundamentally we will be looking at future workforce in the context of multigenerational workforces and recognising that how we think about our work is very much influenced by how we want

our societies to be. If we are honest, we've not made the best use of our experienced colleagues – so much attention has been on millennials. That's not wrong necessarily but it is profoundly short-sighted if we don't spend as much time on the rest of our workforce.

We have more fabulous keynote speakers this year. We will be looking at the impact of technology again with Clive Swan from Oracle; the importance of speaking truth to power with Megan Reitz, compassionate leadership with Professor Michael West, retirement with Victoria Tomlinson, and we'll also be looking at how we start to prepare for the future 'Now' with the fabulous Max McKeown..

In our fringe sessions we will be looking at the concept of love in the workplace with Helena Clayton, what it means to be transgender in the workplace, and the human to hybrid conundrum – among many other topics. And of course, this year Brexit will be on the agenda.

Since 2018 we've used day one of the conference to work with the broader community. This year is no different. We are so excited to announce that we will be holding a community hackathon with representatives from local schools, colleges and other service users.

We've already used a Hackathon approach with colleagues in Northern Ireland examining the Brexit issue. We know it works for us and we're delighted to be sharing it with colleagues and community members alike. Greater Manchester has a fabulous track record in working across public services so we have no doubt that this will be a brilliant event.

Together, we're going to examine the following question: *'Building a vibrant public service is important in helping us build a society that trusts its institutions, represents and cares about all its communities. Thinking about this, what for you, is important in designing public service jobs that will attract our younger generations but also make best use of older, wiser and much more experienced people who are already employed either in public services, or those who volunteer their time?'*

We'll be capturing this work and publishing it post-conference. We know it will significantly contribute to our work in the PPMA.

There's still plenty of time to book tickets, but you need to do so as quickly as you can. Places are booking up really quickly and we don't want you to miss out on what will be a fantastic event.

See you in Manchester!

Book tickets at [www.ppma.org.uk](http://www.ppma.org.uk)



## Fabulous February is our time to shine a spotlight on our remarkable young talent



After a hugely successful Apprentice of the Year programme in January, February saw us shine a spotlight on our One to Watch and Rising Star programmes.

This year we welcomed entrants from local and central government. The breadth of our entrants reflects the PPMA's membership across the public sector, as well as our commitment to ensuring that we build strong networks across the public service HR & OD community. There is a lot of amazing work and talent in public services and these networks will help us share and learn from each other.

We are grateful to Solace for their sponsorship of our programme this year; Julie Biggs, our SW chair and regular programme coach, and our judges. This year these included Steven Berry from Manchester City Council (our One to Watch 2019), Suzanne Hudson, Local Government Association Workforce, and Naomi Amor, Deputy Director of Capability Civil Service and Private Secretary to Rupert McNeil, Chief People Officer Civil Service.

In addition to Julie, we welcomed Emily Nice from Southwark and Diane Lomas from Tower Hamlets as coaches. Both of these wonderful professionals are members of our current Peer into the Future programme cohort and they are already giving their time to support the development of our future professionals.

We will hear more from Aaron Hawthorne, our Apprentice of the Year 2020 in our next supplement. But for now, we are very proud to introduce Neisha Porter and Mae Wilson. They have written about their experiences in Rising Star and One to Watch 2020.

We hope you enjoy their stories as much as we enjoyed working with them through the programme. They are incredible adverts for HR & OD and there is no doubt they will be future leaders in the making. Their stories are truly inspiring.

# Stars in their

**Neisha Porter** reveals her thoughts after being named the latest PPMA Rising Star after two days of coaching and competition at Warwick Business School in early February

When I received the news that I had been shortlisted I was waiting to board a flight back from Dominica. With limited wifi access, during the trip I was checking my mail and hoping for a positive outcome. I was delighted and eagerly awaiting the two days of development.

I anticipated presentations from leaders within the HR profession and lots of knowledge-sharing about HR practice. When I realised it was about my own personal development, I was filled with excitement and nervousness because it was about me. While I'm always keen to promote my team's successes, I'm not always as good at doing that for myself. The energy in the room helped to put me and other participants at ease and I loved the first exercise of getting to know each other.

The first day we were thrown in at the deep end, and by the conclusion of it I felt that I'd been on a roller coaster ride of emotions. Leatham Green (PPMA Executive Director) reassured all of us that our professional competence was a given, and that meant that we could focus on 'us' as an individual and as a human being. For the first time I was thinking about my personal brand, the image that I project and working through the exercises I could see how I engage with others

on a practical level with immediate feedback from coaches. At the end of day one, I went to bed really reflecting, and hardly slept with thoughts of what day two might bring.

I went into day two expecting to present my 'legacy story' when in fact we were thrown the task of responding to a series of challenging questions within two minutes. I felt my heart beating and my fingers shaking in a way that I've never experienced when I've done this at work. At the end of this – when I felt that I'd let myself down by not demonstrating the key learning points because I'd let my nerves get the better of me – the coach helped me with support in a way that meant that I could successfully give my presentation.

The turning point of my life was joining a local authority in customer service and how that made me realise my love for working with people

The final element of the award day was a presentation. I delivered this with openness and honesty in a way that I haven't shared in a public forum before. I shared my journey of spending parts of my childhood in foster care

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**Clive Swan**

Senior Vice President, Applications Development for Oracle Corporations



**Victoria Tomlinson**

CEO of Next-Up and Northern Lights



**Professor Michael A. West**

Senior Fellow at the King's Fund, London & Professor of Organizational Psychology at Lancaster University



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# eyes

due to my mother's mental health, becoming a mother at a young age, and my son giving me the drive to aspire to more. The turning point of my life was joining a local authority in customer service and how that made me realise my love for working with people.

I'm working at Southwark LBC where we work towards 'fairness for all'. I'm proud to lead on amazing apprenticeship and internship programmes that supports and enables people to transform their lives in the way that mine has. My work towards our IIP accreditation and helping to embed our staff networks promotes an open and inclusive culture.

My legacy is that I will create an environment where everyone can flourish regardless of their starting point.

As I was waiting for the award announcement, one of the judges summarised why they had made their decision. As it was being read out, I didn't want to believe that it could be me. When it was announced, I was filled with a sense of joy, confirmation of how far I have come and the responsibility to fulfil my legacy.

I promise the PPMA and the wider HR community that I will do this.

**Neisha Porter is Organisation Development Partner, Modernise, at Southwark LBC**



# It's Mae-Watch!

**Mae Wilson** gives her perspective on the two-day programme that ultimately saw her crowned this year's PPMA One to Watch

Is two days long enough to change your life?

Because I feel that is all it took to begin to transform mine.

At the beginning of February, I had the honour of being shortlisted for the PPMAs One to Watch programme.

Over two days, I and a group of frankly incredible candidates, were taken on a physically, psychologically and emotionally taxing journey. One in which I would argue we couldn't have got through if not for the support and kindness of each other. I know that I have made life-long friends and forged a network with people who will be there for me both professionally and personally from now on.

As a HR and OD practitioner, I feel we are a professionally curious breed. I can say with extreme confidence that I have discovered more about myself, and learnt more about others, in a way I never imagined possible.

The contents of the assessment centre were challenging, but I want to make it clear how supported I felt. Coaching and guidance was provided at every stage, and for me it was especially touching to receive feedback from senior HR professionals, as a peer, not as a teacher or as a manager. I was consistently empowered to find my path and celebrate my development, and I can't tell you how much I feel I have professionally grown as a result.

This event and process was all about identifying and showcasing the tremendous breadth and depth of emerging talent that we have in the public sector, and I truly had the chance during the assessment centre to cut my



teeth with other HR and OD professionals of an outstanding calibre.

I honestly came out of the process with more than I could have ever imagined. And this now includes the title of One to Watch.

My initial reaction when it was announced was one of bewilderment and disbelief, and I'm delighted to say that every moment since has gone by in a blur.

I am, and have always felt passionate about local government, ever since my week's work experience in my mother's council aged 15. I however would be lying if I say I had envisaged then how impactful and rich my career could

be. Back then I also would have never dreamed of showing and sharing myself so authentically with a room full of strangers, and have them all react with nothing but love and support for me and my story. I therefore promise to continue to have the confidence to do this at every opportunity I get.

Additionally, I think I have a new motto in light of all that I have learnt and how I feel, inspired by the wonderful Harvey Fierstein – I am what I am, and what I am needs no excuses.

I will be forever grateful for what I received, the guidance I have been given, and the support

so many wonderful people have shown for me and my abilities, and I am delighted to be part of such esteemed alumni.

Over this next year (and for the future) I hope to do this title, everyone's confidence in me and ultimately the PPMA, local government and the wider public sector proud.

**Mae Wilson is Senior HR & OD Officer at Doncaster Council**



# PPMA Awards: The shortlist

PPMA Focus can exclusively reveal the confirmed shortlist for the PPMA Excellence in People Management Awards 2020

## Best Social Media Recruitment Campaign

### SHORTLISTED

- British Transport Police
- DSTL and Penna

## Best Creative Concept Recruitment Campaign

### SHORTLISTED

- Bracknell Forest
- DSTL and Penna
- Government of Jersey with TMP Worldwide UK
- National Crime Agency with TMP Worldwide UK
- Northumberland County Council

## Best Front-Line Recruitment Campaign

### SHORTLISTED

- Government of Jersey with TMP Worldwide UK
- London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- Somerset County Council

## Best Apprenticeship Programme

### SHORTLISTED

- Doncaster Council
- HM Land Registry
- Sandwell Council
- Somerset County Council
- Southwark Council
- Tendring District Council

## Best Inclusion and Diversity Programme/ Initiative

### SHORTLISTED

- Bank of England via Penna
- Diversity Solutions via Penna
- Financial Ombudsman Service
- Leeds City Council

## Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative (including mental health, general health and Safety)

### SHORTLISTED

- Derry City and Strabane District Council
- Leicestershire County Council

- Sandwell Council
- Tendring District Council
- The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)
- Thurrock Council

## Best Change Management / Organisation Development Initiative

### SHORTLISTED

- Government of Jersey via Penna
- HM Land Registry
- London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- London Borough of Hounslow
- Wigan Council
- Salford City Council

## Best Learning and Development Initiative

### SHORTLISTED

- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
- Cornwall Council
- Doncaster Council
- Intellectual Property Office

- Kent County Council
- London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- Salford City Council

**Best Supplier Partnership**

**SHORTLISTED**

- Bedford Borough Council in partnership with Guidant Global
- Lincolnshire County Council HR Services Team and Assurance Lincolnshire
- Powys Teaching Health Board and Powys County Council

**Best Employer and TU Partnership**

**SHORTLISTED**

- Manchester City Council
- Northumberland County Council
- Powys Teaching Health Board
- South Norfolk / Broadland Councils
- Tendring District Council

**Public Sector Team of the Year**  
**SHORTLISTED**

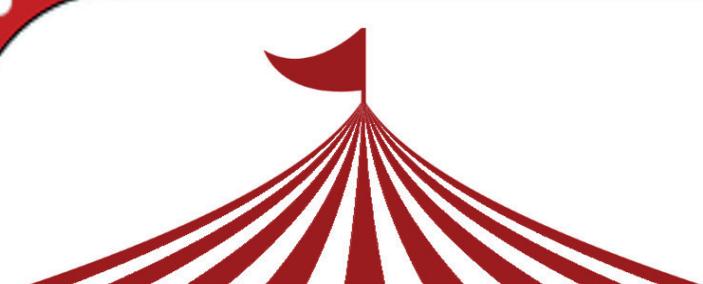
- Buckinghamshire Councils HR and OD Unitary
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Financial Ombudsman Service
- Intellectual Property Office
- Leicestershire County Council
- Northumberland County Council

**Public Sector HRD of the Year**  
**SHORTLISTED**

- Sam Betts, Assistant Director Human Resources & Organisational Development at Salford City Council
- Gail Clark, Head of Workforce Change at London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation at Thurrock Council



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# What drives the Future of Work?

An interview with Mark Williams, Senior Vice President Product at MHR International

**When did you start to get involved with People-focused solutions?**

Originally I was into art and design and studied for a degree in fine art. That developed into web design but when I started working for MHR I became interested in the sociological and research side of it all: the intersection where people and technology meet, and the metrics we use to measure success.

While researching future of work trends and developing MHR's AI-based solutions, it became increasingly apparent that there was a need for radical change in the workplace. Engagement and productivity are both at rock bottom, technology has created an environment fraught with noise and distractions, and despite changing attitudes and expectations, we still adhere to work practices rooted in the twentieth century. I decided we needed a new approach.

**What problems were you looking to solve?**

Perhaps the two biggest issues facing work today are employee engagement and productivity. Engagement is a human issue and productivity is a business one, but the two are inextricably linked. Our aim is to bring about a new way of working – one that empowers people to spend more time doing their best work. You could describe this as a change in ethos with technology acting as the catalyst.

**What are your thoughts on automation and it's impact on jobs?**

It is possible that automation will result in the wide-scale displacement of jobs, but perhaps not for several decades. This gives business leaders and policy makers plenty of time to plan for a future where human work is scarce. This scenario would force governments and people to rethink entrenched ideas about how society and the economy are organised, as well as the connection between work and money.

For the foreseeable future, automation will augment most jobs rather than destroy them. Some jobs will disappear completely, with unskilled, manual labour most at risk, but this is nothing new – machines have been replacing humans in the workplace since the dawn of the industrial revolution. It is likely that the lost jobs will be offset by the creation of new jobs, but the highly technical nature of



these new jobs could easily lead to a growing skills gap.

The nature of work will change and the augmentation of tasks, rather than of whole jobs, will certainly change the nature of work. The tasks that will be automated will be the ones that require limited or no thinking – the boring, repetitive aspects of work that most of us dislike. This will leave us with more time to spend on work that requires our human abilities, such as critical thinking, empathy, decision-making, and creativity. This way, technology has the potential to make our work lives better, more fulfilling and more productive.

In addition to these human 'soft' skills, the future of work will increasingly require expertise in the areas of artificial intelligence, robotics, app/software development and analytics.

**What mistakes do employers make with managing, training, recruiting and retaining staff?**

Management is a big one. In the past, managers were there to keep

people in line, delegate work, and discipline underperformance, but today we expect something different. Instead of being a traditional 'boss', the modern manager must double up as a mentor and coach. In many cases, people are still promoted to managerial positions because they are successful in their current job, or because they exhibit traits such as self-confidence or assertiveness. The result is that many managers don't have the skills needed to manage people, which can cause all sorts of issues.

In general, there needs to be more training focusing on the human aspect of work. We receive all the information we need about policies, procedures and software, but not about people management or mental health. This has to change.

Recruitment and retention largely come down to the organisations culture. If an organisation offers meaningful work, continuous learning and development, and an environment that is welcoming and inclusive, chances are people will want to sign up and stick around. Employees now approach work opportunities the way they approach other consumer decisions – if they aren't satisfied, they'll look elsewhere.

**What are your thoughts on mental wellness in the workplace?**

As previously mentioned, managers and employees simply don't know enough about mental health issues to be able to offer effective support. Mental health training is a must for every organisation.

There is still plenty of work to do to shift the stigma around mental health in the workplace. People are still afraid of opening up for fear of negative consequences. We all have a responsibility here to create an environment where openness, honesty and empathy are practiced, but managers have a particularly important role. It is important that managers get to know their team members on a human level, and check in regularly with them to discuss not only performance and progress, but also happiness and well-being.

As employers start to see the connection between the happiness of their staff and the success of their organisation, there will be more focus on providing a work experience that energises and engages employees.



## How AI is transforming businesses

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If there are processes in your organisation that need simplifying, improving, or rethinking altogether, why not get in touch to find out how bots could transform your workplace.

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