Welcome to the latest edition of the HR Bulletin from Portsmouth Business School which brings you the latest thinking in research and practice in the field of human resource management.

This is the tenth year of the bulletin and I am proud to take over the editorial of what is a valuable resource to our CIPD network, alumni and colleagues, both locally and across the globe.

In this edition, we travel the world to bring you insights from India and the Cayman Islands as well as thought-provoking articles exploring meaning at work and the lack of women in advertising.

I would like to add special thanks to the editorial team, especially Fiona Wingett, for her invaluable contribution and in developing a new look for the journal.

If you would like to contribute to the next issue of the HR Bulletin, whether it’s some interesting innovative work practices, an opinion piece or research findings, please contact me and we can discuss your idea.

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This article describes the contemporary revival of Meaning at Work and reflects on its new home in Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS). The author questions the lack of attention Meaning at Work has attracted in the practitioner community and suggests that implementation is undermined in the UK as we seem to find virtues hard to develop and sustain at the corporate level. Research into motivation spans the whole of management literature, yet academic contribution applied to the workplace remains elusive. In 2010, a watershed paper, Meaning At Work (Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski), proposed a revival of an exciting approach to motivation.

This paper will examine what has become of this promising idea, and suggest reasons for the non-implementation of ‘meaning’ initiatives in the UK. First, the fundamentals of meaning at work will be described together with the potential power of this approach. The reasons for lack of take-up will then be postulated and foci for change suggested.

Meaning at Work

Meaning at work has been discussed by many scholars. Hackman and Oldham’s (1976, p.559) model showed meaningfulness of work as essential for internal work motivation and “the degree to which an individual experiences positive internal feelings when performing effectively on the job”. It is the dominant construct in empowerment (Spreitzer, 1996) and crucial to achieving fulfilment (Kahn, 2007). It is now a central pillar within the new domain of Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) currently receiving considerable attention (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012).

In this article, meaning at work is taken as the modern construct anchored in the 2010 article by Rosso et al. Their seminal piece comprised a review of motivation theory and other approaches to meaning which exposed substantial flaws in the field. The literature review extracted two lists to be taken forward. One concerned what might be the sources of meaning at work which included: an individual’s values and beliefs about themselves and the function of work; leaders, co-workers and aspects of the organisation such as its mission and values; family and non-work beneficiaries of work; the work itself; and calling/spiritual satisfaction. The second list postulated on the mechanisms for meaning that have, in part, a parallel with Deci and Ryan’s Self Determination Theory (2000) of belonging, self-efficacy and autonomy and, in addition, purpose and the process of transcendence that is reflected in personal growth and development, which are deeply rewarding for an individual.

The final section of the Rosso et al. article (2010) proposed a 2x2 diagram showing four quadrants each of which represented a pathway to meaningful work. One axis had a drive to differentiate, separate, master and create and was juxtaposed with the drive to contact, attach, connect and unite. The bisecting axis examined whether the perceptions of meaning at work are associated with individuals (self) or others (ibid). The authors emphasise that these pathways are not mutually exclusive, nor could they find any logical hierarchy in either the sources or mechanisms of meaning. Any individual might use any or all of the pathways, sources of meaning at work or mechanisms of meaning at work. In addition, Rosso et al. postulated the elements would have different thresholds for different people and hold different salience at different points in our lives. For example, those with two children under four might see meaning at work differently than the young apprentice or someone over 50, simply because of their stage in life.
to that personality and other demographics and the individual permutations are endless.

That meaning at work is a complex construct is undeniable and represents a real challenge. It takes little reflection to see that if one attempts to reduce the complexity (as positivists will try to), one is in danger of losing the essence that is meaning at work. No doubt we need to embrace this complexity as we take our discussion further.

Most recently, meaning at work has found a new home inside Positive Organizational Scholarship which sits alongside positive psychology. The new Oxford Handbook of POS (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012) has over 1000 pages and 79 chapters written by a glittering array of America’s top business school professors from a range of humanistic fields. The introduction that includes, but is not restricted to, meaning at work proclaims that POS is “typically described by words such as excellence, thriving, flourishing, abundance, resilience or virtuousness” which will be familiar to followers of positive psychology (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012).

The Allure of Meaning at Work

Frederick Taylor arguably established management as a valid academic pursuit, with the man-as-machine thread being updated through “McDonaldization” (Ritzer, 1993) and now as the impact of robotics on the role of employees (Hutton, 2015). This ‘hard’ approach has the counterpoint of ‘soft’ human relations arguments at least as far back as the early writings of Abraham Maslow in the 1940s. While we know Maslow best for his Hierarchy of Needs, his work was largely focused on the self-actualization element of the hierarchy. His publications (1932-1971) developed out of positivism into methodologies which would be associated today with Pragmatism, and were criticised as unscientific at the time. A founding father of Humanistic Psychology, Maslow also labelled his work “Positive Psychology” – a term adopted in later years by Seligman. Maslow studied peak-experiences at work, the types of people who sought such high-level self-actualization and the quality of their experiences (e.g. 1964). Maslow paralleled these peak-experiences at work with religious transcendence, finding positive values to be pivotal in both. Readers are probably starting to glimpse the strong parallels between the early humanistic psychology scholars and the modern POS and meaning at work academics and practitioners.

One allure, therefore, of meaning at work is that it is very ‘human’ at a time when practitioners are being criticised for a legalistic, mechanistic or ‘hard’ approach to HR. Well-being, now firmly on the agenda since links to lower absenteeism and, thus, costs were established, is a small impact item when one grasps the magnitude of the meaning at work movement. Meaning at work is concerned with exponentially bigger impact items such as flourishing, extraordinary and transcending performance, joy and happiness. Mechanistic thinking does not use these words or incorporate such constructs. If they could be replicated, our working world would be very different.

Another allure is the potential outcomes for getting meaning at work right. Cameron and Spreitzer conclude their 2012 Oxford Handbook by cherry-picking from their 78 other chapters on the outcomes of Positive Organising i.e. getting meaning at work right at the organisational level and delivering it to employees. As well as individual flourishing and fulfilment (engagement and health being mere by-products of same), they stress exemplary performance at both the individual and, they claim, more commonly, at the team, level. Meaning at work is inextricably linked to being furiously industrious and, since Maslow, it always has been. If the performance leaps could be replicated, the lament of poor productivity in the UK could vanish.

Creating meaning at work is cheap; this is not “my bonus is bigger than your bonus” territory. Imagine going home from work every day tired, but thrilled with what you have achieved, smiling with fulfilment, and exciting plans for tomorrow. Imagine doing that five days a week. Beyond a threshold, salary and bonuses can become secondary to that glorious experience of going to work. Of course, effort is needed to create this: intelligent management, good mutual support and teamwork, and a host of other, context-
dependent, facets that need investment. However, it would be likely to be achieved at a far lower above-the-line cost base. If that could be replicated, then any country could be transformed. I know of not a single study or project concerned with meaning at work in the UK. So what are the problems connected to this apparent no-brainer?

How do you solve a problem like Maria?

The Sound of Music anthem’s second line is ‘How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?’ and as an observer it seems that bringing meaning into UK workplaces is perhaps as problematic as Maria’s moonbeam. If one wants workplaces to be alive with meaning at work and, if the benefits to individuals, teams and organisations are as substantial as claimed, then why are we not working on the topic? This section examines some of the possible reasons.

It has already been pointed out that meaning at work is complicated and does not reduce. This will not be a 5-minute-manager solution. Complexity is not easily researched through positivism, and the need to include emotions as constructs will mean that validity will have to be fought for. There may be hope as Cameron and Spreitzer persuaded 78 chapters out of significant academics and the theme of the 2016 Academy of Management Meeting is meaning at work. However, more likely we need a new research operating system, similar to the one Dan Pink (2009) suggests is needed at work in order to achieve meaning at work.

Underpinning meaning at work is a set of positive values where trust and safety can thrive. Consistent data from UK employees shows their lack of trust in the values of, or belief in, the authenticity of proclaimed organisational purpose and integrity. The CIPD studied organisational purpose in 2010 with poor results generally and, especially, in the private sector and, more recently, in the SME sector (see www.cipd.co.uk) where smaller organisations (under 10 employees) were better connected to the organisational values and purpose than slightly larger ones. The articulation and embodiment of values is perhaps central to beginning the agenda. Van Dijke, van Engen and Paauwe (2012) analysed the lack of progress in problems of ethical concern in HR and suggested the lack of advancement was the failure to acknowledge the base of ethical decision-making. Their suggestion was a move away from deontology and utilitarianism towards virtue ethics. Interestingly, virtue ethics is the dominant source of direction in meaning at work.

Meaning at work seeks to explore our individual strengths as well as tap into broader shared values. In the USA, Job Crafting has been shown to be a vehicle for achieving meaning at work where tasks are assigned according to individual preferences. Recently, a wave of European research has been published (e.g. Timms, Derk & Bakker, 2016) using diaries and other qualitative techniques which confirm the very positive predictions from meaning at work. The flexibility in UK job roles may be insufficient to achieve the job role changes needed to enable meaning at work. Highly stratified job roles where boundaries between pay grades exist could stultify attempts at job crafting in the UK. To summarise: there may be methodological limitations constraining academic study, in being able to deliver corporate values, and the constraints of job design which inhibit meaning at work implementation.

Conclusion

Meaning at Work is one of the most alluring yet challenging topics that has emerged in this decade. Its focus on emotions and what makes us essentially human can be difficult for traditional academics. The celebration of human ‘spikes’ of employee talent and outstanding performance seems an antithesis to HR systems as well as research methods. However, if the evidence confirms the efficacy of this very different approach to HR and the high performance outcomes continue to build, we may start to observe a revolution in workplaces and research methods alike.
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The lack of women in senior roles in advertising and the gender imbalance which exists in some departments in advertising agencies has been highlighted in a recent survey conducted by Campaign, the leading industry journal, and the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA, 2016). The results of the survey identify that although women make up 56.1% of junior roles within agencies, they account for only 39.2% of those in positions of Head of Department and only 30.5% of those in leadership positions (IPA, 2016).

One department where women are significantly under-represented at all levels is the creative department. The IPA report indicates that women account for only 24.6% of the total of employees in creative roles (IPA, 2016), which means there are fewer female role models for future female creative leaders and a lack of a critical mass of women in creative departments. The IPA President, Tom Knox, highlights this issue: “It remains an uncomfortable truth that men dominate creative departments and this cannot be good for creativity and our ability to solve our clients’ business problems. Finding ways to encourage more women into creative departments and keep them there is an urgent necessity and, I suspect, will require a sea change in culture and ways of working” (Magee, 2016, p.27).

This paper reviews research and industry reports which identify the challenges faced by women creatives and highlights the gendered nature of creative departments. Managerial implications of the findings are discussed and recommendations are made for increasing women’s participation in senior management in agencies.

Does a gendered culture exist in creative departments?

It has long been recognised that the culture of the creative departments represents a “‘boys’ club culture’ with a subculture of sexism” leading to a masculine paradigm within the departments (Windels & Lee, 2012; Gregory, 2009; Mallia, 2009). Women, in many applied creative fields such as advertising, are often under-represented across the globe (Gregory, 2009; Grow, Roca & Broyles, 2012). The masculine norms which prevail within creative departments have made it difficult for women to attain success (Windels & Lee, 2012).

During the 1990s the advertising industry was relatively progressive in providing opportunities for women, but many other industries have since caught up and advertising no longer leads the way (IPA, 2000). The ever-present problem of women’s extreme under-representation within the creative department remains. This is despite the fact that women make up more than half the students undertaking courses such as Fine Arts, Design, Media Studies and Communications (IPA, 2000, p.4). There is no doubt that a qualified pool of female talent exists.

Many creative departments are considered as “male fraternities, housed in agencies that have men’s names on the door” (Broyles & Grow, 2008). ‘Laddish’ behaviour and overtly sexist talk which objectifies women is an overwhelming part of the culture in these departments, where women have to “put up or shut up” (IPA, 2000, p.29). The tendency to seat the creative team together in order to encourage camaraderie and the flow of ideas serves to heighten this character in the atmosphere. For the sake of their ‘art’, the creative team is generally indulged and protected and members are, to some extent, absolved of responsibility for their conduct (IPA, 2016).

In general, having children is considered the primary reason behind the under-representation of women in the field of advertising. For women in creative fields, having children is also perceived as a lack of commitment to their careers (Grow & Royles, 2011; Mallia, 2009). However, in their
review, which examined the reasons behind women’s opting out of the advertising field, Broyles and Grow (2008) found that women often leave creative jobs for reasons that go beyond having children. For example, it was evident in Broyles and Grow’s review (2008) that female creatives find it difficult to get recognition from their peers, and are excluded from certain accounts as women are seen as inappropriate to handle masculine accounts. A survey commissioned by the IPA in 2000 to look at women’s issues in the advertising industry found that many male and female respondents viewed male characteristics as being more suited to a career in creative advertising. Single-minded determination, tenacity, self-belief, arrogance, the ability to cope with rejection, assertiveness, competitiveness and being ‘unreasonable in the pursuit of art’ were seen to be male traits required of the Art or Creative Director. Women are held back as they are perceived by some to be inherently less competitive, calmer, to tend to talk things through too much and not good at comedy. However, most respondents in the study disagreed that only men are suited to the single-minded pursuit of creative excellence, some citing other national advertising industry contexts and non-advertising artistic contexts where women are just as successful as men (IPA, 2000).

Homophily, or the human tendency to interact with people who are similar to themselves, has also contributed to the exclusion of women in the advertising field (Broyles & Grow, 2008) where creative directors continue to recruit in their own image. Compounding the issue, although there are certainly more female clients at all levels than ever before, most senior clients are men.

In the 2000 IPA study, most Creative Directors claimed they would hire more women if they could, but complained that a low proportion of women apply for the jobs (IPA, 2000). This is hardly surprising given the gendered nature of the environment and the punishing placement system for would-be creatives, which is a struggle for women (IPA, 2000). Anecdotally, the UK has the worst pay and conditions for placements, which hopefuls are expected to endure for two years whilst developing their creative ‘book’ (IPA, 2000).

In her study, Wrigley (2002) identified five factors that contribute to the glass ceiling and which hinder women from progressing in their careers. These included: (1) denial of such issues in their working environment; (2) socialization of gender roles; (3) historical precedence, where prominence is always given to men; (4) lack of support for women by other women who are at the higher managerial positions; (5) the corporate culture. Windels and Lee (2012) also found that women in creative departments encounter a role conflict due to pre-established norms for approaches for gaining status and success within creative departments, as these norms are heavily influenced by masculine values. On the other hand, most female creatives indicated that male homosociability and masculine values within departments have led to a male essentialism view within departments, impeding the prospects for women to achieve growth, status and identity (Windels & Lee, 2012). Also, the status hierarchies within advertising creative departments favoured male voices to those of females. Hence, women were naturally forced to consider the appropriate ways to think and behave and were subjected to paternalism and sexism (Windels & Lee, 2012). Consequently, to cope with the masculine dominant culture which impedes the success of women and to be competent with male peers, the women in the advertising creative departments had to invest a great deal of mental resources and cognitive capabilities, while being good at an extremely difficult job as an advertising creative (Windels & Lee, 2012).

Overall, the aforementioned findings suggest women in advertising creative departments are devalued and have a limited ability to influence male gatekeepers with status and power. Hence, it is extremely important for marketers and advertising agencies to utilise effectively the inputs of women and make appropriate arrangements for women to achieve success within creative departments.
Implications for HR: Changing cultures, raising visibility.

There is no simple solution that will change the gendered culture within advertising agencies, although there are measures that can be adopted which will encourage women’s participation in senior management:

Women’s Leadership Development Programmes: As case studies from other sectors have shown, these can be an effective way of increasing women’s confidence and developing their leadership skills (Turnbull, Howe-Walsh & Shute, 2014). This could include the appointment of role models across the industry to help facilitate female leadership development events. This needs to be led as an industry initiative and supported by industry bodies, such as the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising.

Mentoring: An important aspect of career development is mentoring. Mentors are able to provide career guidance and support. Ensuring that all females within the agency are allocated a mentor would be valuable. Mentoring can greatly assist individuals navigate their careers and this is especially important if more women are to be encouraged to senior level positions.

Networking: As networking is an important aspect of the advertising industry, female networking events should be organised. This could be driven by the larger agency groups or industry associations. Networking across agencies would empower females within the industry and provide greater access to mentoring advice.

Gender awareness training: Agency HR Departments need to ensure that all staff undertake gender awareness training. This can be undertaken online and should ensure that all staff are aware of gendered practices and the need to avoid unconscious bias.

Recruitment: Agencies need to ensure that all interview panels have at least one woman represented.

Sponsorship: Increased visibility of women at the top table is needed to build critical mass. Agencies need to develop sponsorship programmes to allow women to be seen at the top table and experience senior management roles.

Pitch Pledge: Ensure there is a women from the agency engaged in every pitch. This will allow more women the opportunity to experience pitching for new business and raise their visibility among senior management.

A consistent approach is required by HR to audit the organisation in terms of equality and diversity within the creative industry. Such an audit should include a deeper understanding of the time employees have spent in the current job role within the organisation. Additionally, tracking promotion prospects and development opportunities requires further, ongoing analysis for HR to determine what interventions might assist redressing any imbalance.

References


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Do we really get the leaders we deserve?

James McCalman and Fiona Wingett

There is growing clamour for evidence of more ethical behaviour amongst leaders in both the public and private arenas. This will in turn lead to a growing demand for organisations to overtly display greater levels of responsibility, governance and promotion of ethics to illustrate that things have changed (Mayer et al., 2009). The move towards authentic and ethical leadership may have begun well before the economic crash of 2008 but, nevertheless, there does appear to be a need to seek solace in what is positive about leaders and leadership in general.

Leadership comes from within and Good Leadership, if it is anything, is Leadership for Good. Leaders need to surpass themselves and their organisations and see the ethical and societal responsibility they hold – leaders need something to stand for, something others can believe in. Similarly, the best leaders are mentors; they understand their nurturing and development role. So, although leaders can be part of the solution, it is not until we demand more from them that we will truly get the leaders we deserve.

We would like to address how authenticity is confused with ethicality in leadership, how leadership development programmes fail to translate into ethical leaders, and how to open the debate onto a wider, and more socially engaging, plain.

The social construction of leadership

There are very few case studies, in leadership terms, of the cause of the economic recession. One exception is Kerr and Robinson’s (2011) assessment of the Scottish financial sector’s ‘tartan mafia’ that “traditionally shared a class habitus and shared social and cultural capital inculcated through education, military service and sports, pastimes and membership of clubs.” It would therefore make sense to look for changes or movement towards ethical leadership in habitus and leader-leader interactions. Are we seeing leader behaviour that is more ethical? Probably not.

Former Henley Business School Dean Christopher Bones describes the legacy of a leadership generation which dominated business, politics and the media in the 1980s. In The Cult of the Leader: A Manifesto for More Authentic Business (2011) Bones provides five compelling arguments:

1. The current leadership crop is a generation whose values were driven by a desire to be seen as successful. They embraced the trappings of success as self-promotion. They are the “L’Oreal generation” - importance, self-esteem and salary were all advanced because ‘they were worth it’.

2. They were worth it because of the idea of leadership perfection and the shortage of leadership talent. Bones argues that the concept comes from the Mary Poppins School of Business, in which you can create leaders who are practically perfect in every way.

3. McKinsey’s 1990’s ‘war for talent’ argues that talent is limited and organisations compete for it by recruiting the best and paying them accordingly. This is apparent in banking and financial services, but the public sector fell into this trap. The trap is the narcissism it breeds.

4. Leaders have used these arguments to push for a greater share of profits as the power of the real owners of capital in businesses declined. Bones argues that remuneration reporting and approval be compulsory and earnings ratios across businesses be reported, revealing the inequality of reward between the few and the many.

5. Most managers are not rewarded excessively: they are industrious and...
conscientious. He argues in favour of a silent majori-
ty who believe that leaders should stop looking after
themselves and start looking after their customers, their
shareholders and their communities.

Who serves whom?
Managers have staff, whilst leaders have follow-
ers. Managers expect staff to serve their interests and
human resources are deployed in the pursuit of the
objectives of the organisation which are legitimised by
organisational norms. In contrast, leaders exist to serve
their constituents. If we accept the proposition that a
leader requires followers and that followers appoint and
dispose of leaders, then the choice of leader will be
contingent on the needs of followers whose needs will vary
(Alvesson, 2002). Leaders are required to ‘serve’ their
followers and they are granted authority to lead on the
basis that they actively apply their leadership authority,
rights and privileges in the interests of their followers
(Gramsci, 1971). However, the notion of servant leadership
(Greenleaf, 1977) is not unproblematic when we consider
that in most cases cultural change will be driven by senior
management and will be motivated by exclusive manage-
ment interests.

How might we nurture more ethical behaviour?
Eisenbeiss (2012) argues that, “current research on
ethical leadership focuses on an emp-irical-descriptive
Western perspective. The widely shared de-
finite of ethical leadership... appears to be rather vague
as it does not specify any particular norms ethical
leaders can refer to.” This seems to be at the
heart of some of the complexity and
confusion. The research to date directly tries
to associate elements of an authentic leader
with their ethical/moral behaviour. Indeed, a
leader’s moral and/or ethical codes are more
or less explicitly seen as elements in
leadership theories (Eisenbeiss, 2012; Avolio &
Gardner, 2005). Authentic leaders are
assumed to consider the ethical conse-
quences of their decisions, although it could be argued
that these assumptions remain untested.

We need to move away from authen-
ticity and towards ethicality as the subject of study.
The authentic leader behaving unethically
doesn’t appear to compute, neither does the
question of whose ethics we are propounding,
although Ford and Harding (2011) do criticise
this weakness. Eisenbeiss (2012) also argues
that, “in the financial crisis, there were banks
or investment institutions in which...norm
prescribed short-term generation of profit
even at the expense of sustainability issues or
fair treatment of customers. Obviously
...ethical leadership would mean breaking
these norms rather than upholding them”.
Shamir and Eilam’s (2005) argument that the
construction of a life-story is a major element
in the development of authentic leaders also
hints at how self-concept can aid clarity and
enhance ethical leader development.

One of the practical problems is that
leadership development programmes are out
of sync with notions of ethics and
responsibility. Blakeley (2016) defined
responsible leadership as engaging with
business-relevant issues in four broad areas of
stakeholder activity: environmental
sustainability, social justice and human rights,
democratic governance structures, and
individual and societal well-being. They take
action by committing to an explicit, ethically-
driven goal or purpose (Maak & Pless, 2009)
which involves them engaging others in
change across complex global systems and
cultural boundaries, and entails working
towards greater empowerment and
democracy in organisations and institutions
(Pearce et al., 2014). However, although
responsible leadership has emerged from
leader development programmes failing to address
the issue.
The answer seems to lie in resolving the
dilemma between leader development and
alignment with individual and corporate goals.

Currie et al. (2010), in their study of a NHS management development programme, argue that success is partly a result of “ensuring coherence with and between inner and outer contexts of the organisation as perceived by the participants on the programme (2010)”. Edwards et al. (2013) stress that strategic leadership development must be driven by the CEO from the top, be core to the business strategy, and must support and be supported by the culture of the organisation. Gitsham’s case studies of responsible leadership development programmes (RLDPs) at HSBC and IBM stress participants being, “supported, encouraged, recognised and rewarded...for efforts they took to act on their learning from the experience (2012)”. Whilst RLDPs are capable of inducing profound transformational learning the problem lies in transferring this learning and there is currently no research to guide practitioners or scholars regarding how this can be implemented.

Where to from here?
The ‘big’ questions of leadership are deliberately ignored by ‘small’ research. We have failed to investigate seriously what were the leadership causes of the economic crash (Kerr & Robinson, 2011; Tourish, 2015).

However, work by the Swinburne Leadership Survey, at Swinburne University of Technology in Australia, addresses how significant aspects of leadership could be more effectively explored. They advocate a greater engagement with leaders across government, the private sector and civil society. The aim is to bring a clarity and richness to the term ‘leadership for the greater good’ and to promote public dialogue on the important issues of ethics and the public interest in the actions of leaders.


Our most challenging social and environmental problems are really wicked problems (Grint, 2010) which need to be addressed by persuading others to take responsibility for such collective problems.

Our current tendency to discount the validity of shared interests and collective purpose (Bauman, 2000; Giddens, 1991), combined with framing problems as crises that warrant command (Grint, 2010), undermines attempts to adequately address these wicked problems. Crucially, to do so means an engagement with ordinary citizens and a rediscovery that individual well-being is contingent on the well-being of the whole. Building on the work of Grint (2010) and Kerr and Robinson (2011), there would appear to be a strong case for examining whether ethical leadership behaviours by, and among, elites are displayed and in what forms these take.

Implications For Practice
First, if Leadership matters, professionalise it. If it is suitable for the medical and legal professions surely it applies to leaders - continuing professional development should be compulsory.

Second, make our leaders seriously mentor others and work often with ordinary people.

Third, make executive coaching compulsory, tighten up on who can be an executive coach and provide leaders with the resources they desperately need.

Fourth, make power time-related. Leaders should not be allowed to perpetuate ad infinitum. How many stayed too long and lost credibility accordingly?

Finally, inculcate stewardship. A leader is a person in a role: understanding the role’s significance, the responsibilities associated with it and the fact that they steer organisations towards the future would go a very long way indeed in removing narcissism and engender a more values-based future for leaders.

References


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This article reveals the importance of clear understandings between employers and employees of mutual expectations in an employment relationship. Research conducted at a law practice in the Cayman Islands investigated a loss of staff talent away from the public sector. The in-depth investigation explored employees and their perceptions of implicit organisational promises in exchange for superior job performance. This study advances thinking about the pivotal role of HR professionals in fostering better communication of workplace expectations and cultivating stronger working relations between managers and employees.

An issue of talent retention
A clear understanding between an employer and employee of shared goals supports the alignment of an organisation’s performance and the HR strategy. Ideally, this working relationship is based on reciprocal trust and fairness, so that individual perceptions of the employment contract match the collective efforts of the organisation. The psychological contract is considered a pillar of employee relations and can usefully illuminate employees’ beliefs about the workplace exchange relationship (Rousseau, 2004). One definition of the psychological contract is the “beliefs in mutual obligations between that person and another party such as an employer” (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998, p.679), a definition which draws attention to employee perceptions. For example, an individual can see an employer’s obligation is to deliver on ‘promises’, such as training, career development or even promotion. The matching of expectations can be fraught where individuals regard job satisfaction and career support as a managerial priority rather than commitment to business performance. Consequently, the notion of mutual obligation in an employment relationship, which critically underpins HR practice, is often ambiguous and complex. This complexity is exacerbated in the landscape of the Cayman Islands where the nature of local policies to protect Caymanian nationals can trigger worker experiences of inequity that lead to a talent flight from the public to private sector. This study of employee understanding of their psychological contract aimed to clarify specific expectations and strengthen the relational impact of the HR role. This research advances thinking about the role of HR professionals in improving a climate of trust and open communication by coaching line managers in the effective management of human capital. The case study, although grounded in the Cayman Islands, serves as a basis for reflection on HR in practice and offers wider international implications for invigorating the role of human resources in influencing practice and policy. In doing so, HR adds value by ensuring the connectedness of individual employees to the collective direction of the organisation.

The Cayman Islands context
In the Cayman Islands the labour force is largely comprised of self-initiated expatriates on fixed, two-year, term contracts. Legislation allows expatriates to exercise an option to renew their contract only if there are no suitably qualified Caymanians. This is done to protect Caymanian nationals from unfair treatment and ensure no suitably qualified Caymanian is disenfranchised. This feature of the labour environment has implications for workplace fairness and trust which are key dimensions of the psychological contract (Guest & Conway, 2002). Another characteristic of the Caymanian context is the scant employee representation, or employee voice, which has implications for HR policy implementation. Moreover, a public sector legal organisation intensifies a focus on contractual ties and such perceptions add a rich layer to the
workplace context. Practices and policies in HR have a key role to play in shaping a positive psychological contract that supports everyday working ties with employees (Lee & Taylor, 2014). Arguably, effective employment relationships bring together the multiple dimensions of people management (Armstrong, 2012). A constructive framework for HR management complements workforce-wide benefits such as job satisfaction, commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours (Cuyper & Witte, 2006).

The research questions explored are:
- What are employee perceptions of promises, or obligations, under a psychological contract?
- How have these been experienced in the workplace?
- What is the impact of these views on the employment relationship?

HR practices play a pivotal role in shaping the psychological contract (Conway & Briner, 2005) and the HR professional can influence a constructive employment framework of realistic job reviews, equitable training provision, reward, talent management and succession planning. If an organisation needs to downsize this is likely to negatively affect employees’ perceptions of an organisational promise of job security. Conversely, an employee supported through professional education may view organisational sponsorship positively. The psychological contract is therefore fluid and includes diverse expectations of training opportunities, job security, challenging tasks, confidentiality, flexible working hours and overtime (Van der Smissen, Schalk & Freese, 2013).

A psychological contract exists in the mind; it is a subjective view of implicit fairness or injustice in organisational decision-making. However, a manager’s decision as to how the resources and rewards are distributed may not correspond to an employee’s view of the experience.

The research approach and findings
The study used purposive sampling and a qualitative approach to investigate employee understandings of implicit obligations within the work contract. The researcher conducted eight in-depth interviews with professional and administrative staff using a series of structured questions. The sample was equally representative with four Caymanian nationals and four expatriates interviewed.

Employees discussed their expectations of opportunities for promotion, pay according to performance, support for personal growth and an environment of continuous learning. Interviewees emphasized high expectations of organisational support and career development but, interestingly, interviewees gave scant attention to what an employee can offer the employer in return.

This article reports on two central themes in the study findings: first, the management style and, second, the HR policies in practice.

Management style
Most employees, 75% of interviewees, regarded the relationship with management as lacking in trust, as evidenced by these comments: “There really doesn’t seem to be anyone at a higher level within the organisation who will have your back” and management “lacks respect for dissenting opinions”. This suggests a lack of open communication and a potential climate of mistrust that can affect employee commitment and worker intention to stay with the organisation. Overall, a trend in the data reveals a call for fair treatment particularly in the equitable and fair implementation of HR policies within the organisation. Fewer employees, 25%, believed that their psychological contract was fulfilled. This fulfilment was linked to meaningful work and role benefits such as task challenges, opportunities for growth in competence and professional development. One commented: “I can still learn something new every day” and another noted “…the work satisfaction I derive from doing work that I enjoy; and I do it in an environment of harmony and civility”.

Human resources policies
Most respondents felt that the HR policies met their contemporary needs with a favourable framework for work-life balance, training and
development. A pragmatic interpretation of promotion prospects was evident with a notable difference between expatriate and Caymanian workers. The following comments reflect this view: “...just being an expatriate means you should have little expectation” and: “I am not Caymanian, I am a transitory worker”.

Nonetheless, a significant majority, 75% of respondents, perceived a breach or violation of employer promises in how managers implemented HR policies across the organisation. This perception is illustrated in the comments:

“I believe that on this farm some animals are more equal than others."

“HR policies are not dispensed fairly and evenly because this depends on whether you are considered friend or foe and, often time, that classification is arrived at based upon whether you challenge the status quo, or not.”

This finding is troubling for constructive employment relationships in the organisation as the research literature affirms how such employee observations erode trust, damage workforce morale and increase subsequent turnover (Johnson & O' Leary-Kelly, 2003). Moreover, employee perceptions of psychological contract breach can ripple negatively across job performance and harm organisational citizenship behaviours (Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Significantly for HR practitioners, the study revealed employees’ attitudes, mindset, and perspectives of the employment contract framework.

**HR learning and practice implications**

This study illustrates the multiple dimensions of the employment relationship and the importance of mutual understanding of an interdependent work exchange. Great minds may not always think alike. But managerial understanding of the critical need for consistent application of HR policy in practice can transform the engagement, performance and retention of talented staff. By increasing understanding of employer and employee perceptions of the employment contract, the HR professional strengthens the relational force of collaborative working behaviour for talent development.

The study’s recommendations include management training in HR policy implementation that can cultivate positive employee attitudes and lead to strong job performance. The challenge for the HR professional is to ensure that HR practices are implemented fairly and soundly through line managers. HR can advise, but managers with staff responsibilities execute policies in practice. Evidently, managers may resist HR’s guidance and coaching and see a targeted initiative to upskill line management as a threat to managerial prerogative. Still, the research confirms that poor and inconsistent line management behaviour increases staff perceptions of inequity which justifies dynamic HR intervention.

A change in HR systems alone will not improve organisational performance but, rather, a change in how managers deal with their employees every day. Managers are charged with “bringing HR policies to life” (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007, p.17) and the HR practitioner has to ensure the consistent implementation of policy in context (Paauwe, 2009). Consequently, the role of HR in coaching, mentoring, and influencing managers requires more than delivering a series of training sessions but, rather, continual dialogue, expert advice and support.

This insight has wider application for HR professionals internationally in fostering an environment of greater reciprocal understandings between employees and managers. The work of HR requires robust professionals who can invigorate better working relations, realistic expectations and enhance the connections between individual talents and a collective organisational direction.

**References**


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Rapid developments in the Indian economy after its liberalisation in 1991, have prompted the World Bank to forecast India will become the world’s fourth largest economy by 2020. A country of more than one billion people, comprising many cultures, languages, religions, and festivals, India is set in 2016 to surpass China as the fastest growing economy, impacting on business operations and HR practice.

The richness of India’s natural resources and plentiful labour force has led many western firms to internationalise in an attempt to capture the country’s rising numbers of middle class consumers. The burgeoning economy has enabled the establishment of new business sectors, such as technology and telecommunications, as a result of foreign direct investment (FDI) strategies. These contemporary industries are providing opportunities for urban working women to benefit from international firms offering paid employment. A second reward is the benefit they receive from these organisations’ international HR practices implemented to manage the local workforce (Budhwar et al., 2012). A healthy Indian workforce is crucial if the country is to benefit from its demographic advantage and sustain its economic prosperity.

India has larger economic value at stake from advancing gender equality than other emerging economies. The McKinsey Global Institute report (Woetzel et al., 2015) identified that advancing Indian women’s equality, by employing more women in the workforce, would add an additional $2.9 trillion to India’s annual GDP by 2025.

Historically, the welfare of Indian female employees has received little consideration from employers. However, modern-day India’s booming economy has led to some improvement in the economic position of women. A sizeable increase in regular salaried female workers is largely accounted for by the rapidly expanding numbers of women in education who have progressed to paid employment in pursuit of a career and economic independence (Mazumdar & Neetha, 2011).

Therefore, the status of women is closely related to their economic position, which depends upon activities such as paid employment in the new business sectors. Growing numbers of urban females employed in multinational organisations will also have access to resources via their employer’s HR facility providing them with information on a range of areas, including equality, personal development and health. Budhwar (2000) suggests India has realized the importance of the HR function as a competitive advantage, a line of thought echoed by Mishra and Suar (2010) who suggest responsible practices towards staff can be beneficial to Indian firms.

The HR strategy of the newly internationalised firm should be to consider adopting responsible practices to benefit the health and welfare of its employees. Implementing an Employee Well-Being (EWB) programme for the local workforce would be beneficial to all stakeholders. India has an obligation under domestic and international law to respect, protect and fulfil an individual’s right to health (Grover & Citro, 2011). Since India gained Independence in 1947, universal healthcare has been central to governmental ambitions. Therefore, an EWB programme initiated by the firm would not only align with government health policy goals, but could also contribute to improving the status of their female employees.

Benefits of employee well-being programmes in India

Examples of EWB initiatives provided are counselling, smoking cessation, stress management and healthy options in staff canteens. An Occupational Health Officer and
return to work policy following illness are also commonplace in organisations which place EWB within its welfare strategy. EWB policies have become embedded in western organisations, not only in HR practice but also in wider management initiatives and policy work at government level.

The principle EWB driver is that healthy staff are more productive, which impacts on company performance and cost to the employer (Mills, 2005). Staff absences through illness are minimised and output is sustained. Moreover, the firm that invests in EWB strategies can achieve competitive advantage and attract talent from rival firms because of its reputation for employee care.

There are multiple opportunities for UK firms, which have relocated call centres and other business functions from its domestic marketplace, to devise EWB strategies that would differentiate it from rivals. Furthermore, the reward for organisations that invest in EWB services is evident through staff retention rates, because employees who are cared for via a EWB programme respond with loyalty to the employer. Indeed, globally, companies with the most effective EWB programmes have identified employees to be more productive and generate 34 per cent higher revenue per employee (TowersWatson, 2014).

Impact of culture on employer-employee relationship

Indian society is hierarchical and organisations are no exception. Employees expect to be directed clearly as to their functions and what is expected of them. Employees are dependent on the manager or the power holder for direction. Indeed, management directives and rewards give reason or meaning to employees’ work lives in exchange for loyalty.

Understanding the employer-employee relationship is crucial if an EWB programme is to be constructed. There are unique cultural norms in India which are distinct from practices in Western, developed countries which would need consideration for HR purposes. These include respect for seniority, top-down communications and responsibility to the community (Cappelli et al., 2010), which could feed into an EWB initiative. However, the same understanding of cultural norms is relevant to any EWB package regardless of where in the world it is being constructed.

Budhwar’s (2012) contemporary enquiry highlights the role played by the HR function based on interview and survey data from senior HR specialists in 74 foreign firms operating in India. He concluded the HR function possesses power and a high level of autonomy to develop and fashion employment policies. In India, work is the primary concern of an individual. The employer-employee relationship is one of loyalty by the employee and almost familial protection by the employer. Responsible practices towards female staff could fulfil employees’ expectations whilst a healthy, loyal workforce is a beneficial outcome for the employer. Responsibility, not just in fair remuneration and working conditions, but in extending a duty of care to the health and well-being of the female employee, will also identify the firm as a good employer.

From a strategic perspective, the concept of EWB is now being implemented through training and development of staff, not only to achieve a competitive advantage, but to attract and maintain the rising numbers of elite professional women often headhunted by rival firms. Well-being events are increasingly popular with organisations that prefer an integrated approach to well-being, such as organising health fairs and providing activities such as Yoga, enabling organisations and their employees to feel the benefit of well-being programmes.

Rise of breast cancer in urban Indian female workers

A particular EWB focus for any firm looking to internationalise in India should include breast cancer awareness. Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in urban Indian women. Research shows that in 2012, 70,218 Indian women died of breast cancer and the average age of incidence has shifted to the younger age group of 30-50 years from 60 years of age (Bawa, 2012; Murthy et al., 2007). By 2020, breast cancer is set to overtake cervical cancer as the most common type of cancer among Indian women (Shetty, 2012).
The blame seems to lie with India’s economic development and rapid urbanisation, during which Indian women have adopted a more Western lifestyle, and a lack of high-quality infrastructure for early diagnosis (Agarwal et al., 2009). Essentially, this means that urban working Indian women become sexually active later in life, have fewer children, and fewer urban women breastfeed their offspring compared to their rural counterparts, all factors which increase the risk of developing the cancer (Shetty, 2012). These women also tend to have a more western diet, leading to obesity which increases the risk of breast cancer (Hansa et al., 2012).

Rath and Gandhi’s 2014 study shows women seek health care extremely late because they have poor awareness about self-examination and limited access to information. The single largest impact on breast cancer in India will come from raising breast cancer awareness and educating women about self-examination, which could be incorporated into an EWB programme (Shetty, 2012).

Employer focus on EWB is growing in India and is the highest in the Asia Pacific region (TowersWatson, 2014). Ninety-six per cent of companies in India feel that EWB policies played a moderate to essential role in their organisation’s health strategy and 75% of Indian employers expect the focus to grow in the next two years. Almost half (44%) of Indian companies plan to put in place a health and well-being strategy within the next couple of years, while 48% already have one.

It is extremely encouraging to find firms internationalising to India placing greater focus on health and wellness issues. Indeed, for any organisation operating at home or overseas, an EWB policy should identify effective programmes specific to their employees’ needs, rather than copying popular actions. Therefore, it could be argued, a necessary addition to any EWB strategy should include breast cancer awareness initiatives.

**Intra-organisational EWB activities**

Employers, regardless of their geographical location, could use a wide range of tactics to engage employees in breast cancer health care, including social media and mobile applications. However, social network approaches have been found to be central to research on organisational phenomena.

HR could play a part in the advancement of breast health awareness for female employees via internal communications designed to enable access to relevant information. For example, an employee’s immediate working group could form support groups with one member responsible for the dissemination of breast advice information. In addition, health messages could be circulated via printed or electronic newsletters.

Organising a health fair signals a strong EWB mind-set by the organisation. Such an activity involves buy-in from senior management because of the level of investment in resourcing an event. However, it would provide an engaging experience between employee and health professionals. These events could offer individuals a day of relevant breast health services to working women who may not otherwise be able to access such service providers. Health fairs can be used to promote:

- Health risk assessments to provide employees with an indication of the illnesses for which they are at risk, based on their answers to a short lifestyle questionnaire.
- Key health messages to encourage positive breast health behaviour and could include self-care practices such as self-examination, exercise advice and smoking cessation support.
- A nutritious diet is pivotal to health. These sessions could incorporate food selection, preparation, cooking advice and demonstrations.

**Implications for Practice**

Health and well-being strategies within Indian organisations could contribute to the overall health and outlook of the workforce, with the concomitant benefits of increased loyalty and productivity and the positive impact this should have on organisational performance.

For Indian women the improvement in their status is highly connected to their economic activity. Better health, through company HR initiatives, would enhance the empowerment of female workers and help to move India up the gender-
equity rankings, adding to India’s GDP and the benefit this could have for the population.

Within an Indian setting, particular attention should be given to breast cancer awareness because of the increase in breast cancer rates among increasingly urbanised working women. The contribution of HR to implementing an EWB programme via the firm’s intra-organisational network, with information and activities aligned to raise awareness about breast cancer could have far-reaching effects and could also be considered by UK HR strategists who currently do not provide this EWB initiative for their employees.

References


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