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Motivational employers

Ellie Mackenzie rounds up employers' latest motivation schemes designed to energise staff and recognise exceptional performance



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Value-added motivators

One of the best ways to engage a workforce is to make them feel they are being listened to and valued as individuals, says **Dilys Robinson**

Some aspects of work require vigilant attention because they are consistently found to be motivators. If people believe their organisation values their contribution and wants to involve them in important things, they are much more likely to feel motivated. This usually means seeking, listening to and responding to employees' views and suggestions, and including them in decision-making. Organisations can be good at communicating top-down to their employees, but less proficient at encouraging and dealing with upward communication.

Another facet of feeling valued is a belief that the organisation cares about staff wellbeing: so when it talks about health and safety, equal opportunities or work-life balance, it has strategies to ensure the policies are translated into action.

Different people, different motivators

The 'big three', feeling valued and involved, good jobs, and having engaging line managers and leaders, are always important. However, organisations should be wary of a one-size-fits-all approach. People are individuals, so it is important for line managers to get to know their staff in order to motivate them in different ways: one might need a lot of reassurance, another would prefer to be given a challenge and left alone to tackle it, while another likes public recognition for good performance. Assumptions about what will motivate staff can be dangerous, so talk to employees, and ask.

An employee's role is also likely to impact on what motivates them. An expert will be motivated by opportunities to demonstrate their expertise, and to teach and develop others. For example, customer-facing staff will be motivated by giving a good service, which might mean being able to use their initiative in dealing with customer queries rather than following a script. Support staff will feel more motivated if they can see the point of what they do. This might involve occasional days out of the back-room environment, to see what happens on the front line.

Usually, the level of pay and benefits is less important than perceptions of fairness in comparison with colleagues or external jobs. Many organisations work hard to communicate the value of their overall package, and feel frustrated when their efforts do not seem to be appreciated. Pay has long been considered a hygiene factor: get it wrong and people will be upset, but if you get it right, you will not be thanked.

However, there are some occasions when pay and benefits are a motivator. First, pay matters to low-paid staff with little disposable income, who might easily move for what seems like a trivial pay rise. Also, the recession has meant more people are staying put rather than risking a change. Those who do move calculate the benefits, so a clear demonstration of the overall package's value could be worthwhile.

Do not forget the demotivators

Even highly engaged people can become demotivated if something goes wrong. Highest on the list is a broken promise, for example not delivering on an expected promotion, an exciting project or a secondment. Even with honesty and sensitive handling, the damage might be irreparable.

Another demotivator is the belief that an organisation does not care about staff and their views. This is common when change is imposed without consulting staff, or organising phoney 'consultation' sessions in which views are ignored.

Having a bad line manager can be highly demotivating. The worst types of managerial behaviour include: bullying, micro-managing, blaming staff instead of taking responsibility, being muddled and confused when giving directions, taking personal glory for the team's work, and being gloomy and pessimistic. Being managed badly typically leads to risk-averse behaviour among staff, which stifles creativity and innovation and may cause the employee to leave ■

Dilys Robinson is principal research fellow at the Institute for Employment Studies



Organisations can be good at communicating top-down, but less proficient at dealing with upward communication

Age difference

Multiple generations need multiple approaches, says **Nick Martindale**

If the various social commentators are to be believed, today's organisations already have four generations to keep motivated in the workplace, and are about to have a fifth, in the form of generation Z, to contend with too; each with different priorities and expectations of what they want from employers.

According to the *Hays UK salary and recruiting trends 2015 guide*, published in November 2014, career development is the most important factor for those in generation Y, who were born between 1980 and the mid-1990s, also known as millennials, when it comes to choosing a role (see box). But they are also attracted by the idea of public recognition, says Sue Honore, associate research consultant at Ashridge Business School. "They like to know their ideas will be listened to and acted upon, and to be part of wider communities where they have a visible influence," she says.

From a benefits perspective, this group tends to be more motivated by lifestyle products such as gym membership or discount shopping schemes, says Ed Smithson, head of flex, shareplan and communications at Buck Consultants at Xerox. "It's very much here and now and they're enjoying living," he says. "When employees are straight out of school and have no dependents, they think they'll live forever and never get ill so benefits such as life assurance are neither here nor there."

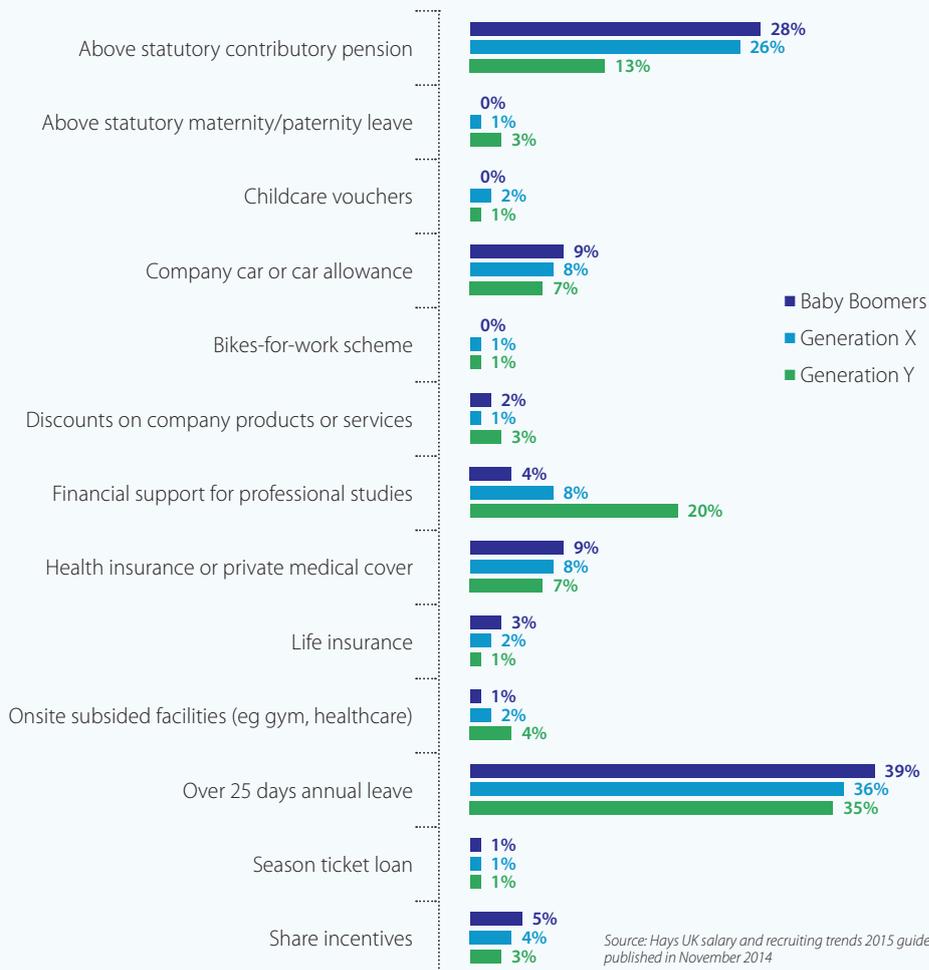
Health considerations

But this doesn't mean health is not important to this group. James Freeston, marketing director at Axa PPP Healthcare, says nearly three-quarters expect their employer to encourage them to be physically and mentally active, compared with just over half of baby

IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE, READ THIS ...

- Different generations value, and are motivated by, different benefits, at least in the non-core benefits space.
- There is a risk of over-generalising if employees are pigeon-holed into generational groups.
- Personalised reward and flexible benefits schemes can help accommodate different needs.

Most important benefits when considering a new role





boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964. "In a similar vein, 53% of millennials expect their employer to offer health and wellbeing support free of charge, compared with just a third of baby boomers," he says.

Financial motivation

For those in generation X, born between 1965 and 1980, more traditional financial benefits are of greater importance, says Smithson. As employees go through the mid-life stage where children are at home, they perhaps want more life assurance and protections around their employment. "But then children leave home and [their] focus on protection tails off a bit and it all becomes about making sure [they've] saved enough into [their] pension," he adds.

Those in the baby boomer generation, meanwhile, tend to place a higher emphasis on work-life balance, with 74% of over-55s saying this is a key priority, according to *Managing the expectations and keeping motivation amongst the diverse workforce*, published in April 2015 by NGA Human Resources. Annual leave and job security

are also important, according to the aforementioned Hays research.

One approach for all generations

Yet while there may be certain characteristics of particular age groups, that does not mean employers should look to totally segment their motivation approach and benefits offerings. Martha How, reward partner at Aon Employee Benefits, is currently looking into this very issue, through a combination of research surveys and focus groups. "There's a lot of hype about segmenting workforces and offering different things to

different segments with reference to their generation, and in our opinion that's a bit crude and not necessarily helpful for employers," she says.

Her studies suggest core employer-funded benefits such as life assurance, pensions and private medical insurance are valued equally highly by all ages, with differentiation more

"Millennials like to know their ideas will be listened to and acted upon"

Sue Honore, Ashridge Business School

likely to be among voluntary benefits. Gym membership, for instance, is more popular with younger staff. "Employers shouldn't formulate conclusions about the rest of the world; they need to understand how their own demographic works," she adds.

Employers should also avoid assuming younger employees are not interested in financial products. Roger Sanders, managing director of independent financial advisor Lighthouse Group, says: "We have seen workers in their early 20s becoming

Viewpoint



Professor Nick Kemsley is co-director of the Centre for HR Excellence, Henley Business School

Multi-generational motivation needs

I have worked a number of times on the engagement needs of a diverse workforce, and in each case the answer is the same: different people are motivated by different things, and a one-size-fits-all offer will score in some aspects while missing in others.

So what are the things to avoid when dealing with a multi-generational workforce? Well, the more rigid the employment offer, the less likely it is that employers will be able to meet the needs of different groups. In fact, they risk negatively impacting one group to engage another. Talent approaches that are underpinned by assumptions rooted in historical career models will have less and less traction as employers try to reconcile different career expectations. But in accommodating difference, they must try to avoid creating silos between generations.

Employers must also beware of focusing too much on what some generations need, and less on what they can give. For example, how they can offer older employees more diversity of contribution rather than just leaving them in the role until retirement.

First, HR must apply segmentation approaches to identify what motivates different generations and what they can contribute at any stage in their careers.

Second, HR must develop a flexible and joined-up suite of employee offers that go way beyond the financial. There is a balance to be achieved here between personalisation and simple practicality and cost-effectiveness.

Lastly, line managers must act as the broker between this employee value proposition and the individual needs of its employees. Those organisations that are able to see every employee as an asset, understand what motivates them and execute the employer deal well will be better placed to get the best from a multi-generational workforce.

increasingly interested in long-term planning, regardless of their current situations. Most employees, irrespective of age, value benefits that protect their financial situation and that of their family, such as life insurance and critical illness cover."

It is similar with health screening. Peter Blencowe, managing director of Bluecrest Wellness, says the emphasis should be on tailoring any service rather than restricting it. "For younger age groups, the most relevant tests are those that help highlight risks of developing conditions in the future rather than their existence now," he says.

This can include cancer and heart disease.

Personalised reward

Personalised reward schemes can help motivate individual employees without having to generalise about generations. Iain McMath, chief executive officer of Sodexo Benefits and Rewards Services, says: "Simple and cost-effective incentive schemes should appeal to an entire workforce, regardless of age and demographics. For a scheme to have a positive effect, it is essential that staff are given the option to tailor their reward to their personal goals and interests."

This kind of scheme will only become more important as older generations stay working for longer and younger ones start entering the workplace. Derek Irvine, vice president of client strategy and consulting at Globoforce, explains: "In most cases, it is no longer offering purely financial rewards for a job well done but rather including other

CASE STUDY

Gibbs S3 gets personal with reward strategy

With a broad age range of employees across different job roles, IT recruitment firm Gibbs S3 takes a personalised approach to rewarding those who outperform expectations.

Ameera Mohammed, director of resourcing and operations, says: "We want to make sure that it's inclusive of everyone but we're very mindful of the different generations."

In practice, this means giving individuals a choice as to how they want to be rewarded. "One of our younger guys who did exceptionally well for us was an avid football supporter so we offered him tickets to his favourite team and an overnight stay in a hotel," she says. "But



our compliance team, which is very different in age, wouldn't necessarily want that, so we'd look at what would suit them. [For example,] we had one person who was a bit older who wanted an overnight spa stay."

But while looking to cater for individual tastes, the business is

reluctant to put in place a more formal policy based around the ages of employees. "What motivates one person of a certain age might still interest someone who is younger or older," explains Mohammed. "What we don't want to do is to be ageist."

forms of reward and recognition that will motivate and energise.

"When it is made explicitly clear to the next generation of employees how they are adding value to their organisation, and they are rewarded in a way that they appreciate, they have a much greater reason to be engaged with their work and strive for greater achievements." ■



Nick Martindale
is a freelance journalist

Read also *Revamping a motivation strategy for the year ahead* at: bit.ly/1TTLWRL

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Hygiene factors and a productive workforce

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Employers that enable their workforce to self-govern working environments and working hours will have a better engagement and productivity rate, says **Bill Alexander**

Productivity in the UK is low. In fact, it is so low the UK stands nearly at 20% below the average for G7 countries. The government has put a Fixing the Foundations plan in place to help tackle the problem. Many organisations have also started to consider what they can do to alleviate the issue.

The Employee productivity: the hygiene factors affecting the UK workforce report, by Red Letter Days for Business, looks at the working week of an engaged and disengaged employee to discover what factors get in the way of them generating good work.

The working week

Monday is the day engaged employees feel most driven at work; however, disengaged employees said they feel more productive on a Friday. Nearly all employees said the morning slot from 8am until 10:30am each day was when they got the most amount of work done,

KEY POINTS

- Engaged employees feel more productive on a Monday compared to disengaged employees who produce more on a Friday.
- A large percentage of engaged staff are allowed to work from home, compared to just a third of disengaged employees.
- Employees who have flexibility and freedom with their working hours and environments are likely to have a higher engagement rate than those who do not.
- Trust is the key to engagement, which in turn has a positive impact on productivity.

yet a majority of staff confirmed themselves to be least efficient on a Thursday.

Working environments

A large percentage surveyed (57%) said they are allowed to work at home. More than a third (39%) of this group said they are more productive at home compared to working in the office, and only 15% said they were more productive in the office.

Engaged employees are given more freedom when it comes to choosing their working environment because 66% said they are allowed to work at home, compared to just over a third of disengaged employees. Interestingly, just 2% of these disengaged employees said they get distracted by things in the house to stop them working.

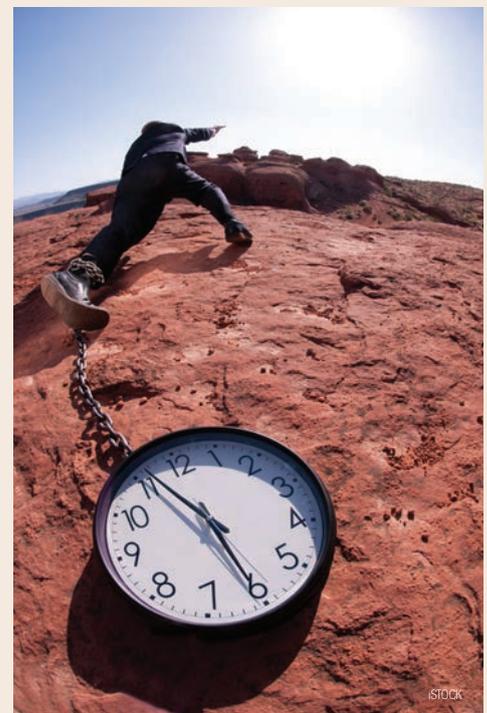
Time-wasting tasks

Staff said they feel they waste too much time on meetings, administration, emails, people management to curb misbehaving colleagues, and a micro-managing boss.

When it comes to personal admin, such as checking social media accounts, engaged employees actually spend more time doing these jobs. A third of staff with high engagement (that do check their social media accounts) admitted to spending two hours every day at work doing so, compared to just 11% of disengaged employees.

How to engage employees

It is surprising to see that engaged employees are not sat at their desk with their heads down for every hour of the working day. When asked why they perform personal tasks in the office, such as spending time on social media, engaged employees said they do so because they believe



taking short breaks is a good thing.

There are many interesting factors when it comes to getting the most out of a workforce. However, the message is clear: trust.

If we threw away the rule book and give staff more autonomy to self-govern whether they work from home, come into work late and leave early to fit around their lifestyle, take part in personal tasks in the office, and allow more of a flexi-time approach to working hours, the engagement and productivity impact on the economy could be huge.



Bill Alexander is chief executive officer of Red Letter Days for Business



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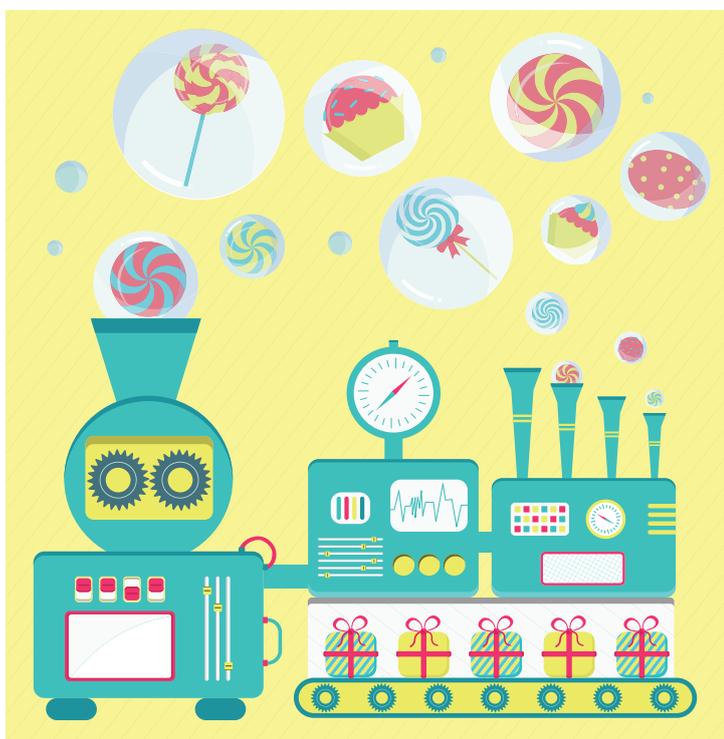
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Get what you give

Determining the ROI of motivation schemes can help employers enhance their impact, says **Marianne Calnan**



calculations in three key stages. "Measure perceptions before the motivation begins, three months after, and six months after to see its effect," he says.

The questions staff are asked in engagement studies are also significant. Open-ended questions are ineffective and counterproductive, but asking staff to rate their experience of a motivational benefit is vital, says Cooper.

Bill Alexander, chief executive officer at experience day and gift provider Red Letter Days for Business, adds:

"Employers should leave at least one blank space on a survey for staff comments. This gives organisations a call to action and makes

With British Airways offering staff allotment plots to improve wellbeing, LateRooms.com launching long-service awards and LinkedIn giving its Sydney, Australia, office a motivation-boosting makeover, it is clear many employers are offering staff motivational benefits to engage and retain them. But how can firms calculate their return on investment (ROI) on these initiatives?

Employee engagement surveys can help businesses understand what makes their staff tick. But employers must bear in mind that calculating ROI needs to be a continuous process, not just an annual event.

Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology and health at Manchester Business School, believes employers should carry out

IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE, READ THIS . . .

- Employee engagement surveys can help employers determine what truly motivates their staff.
- If employers measure staff turnover and retention rates, they could calculate whether the motivational benefits they offer are effective.
- Working out the potential return on investment before implementing motivational benefits can save time, money and effort.

Viewpoint



Sarah Purnell is senior compensation manager at Lucozade Ribena Suntory

Employers must consider the type of return they want

Returns can be created through income generation or cost avoidance, but in different businesses at different times, one of these might be more important than another. All employers should consider this when presenting the overall return on investment (ROI). For example, an employee engagement project might improve customer service (income) and reduce absenteeism (cost avoidance).

Many benefits and projects will have elements that are more or less certain, so although assumptions will have to be used for some of the numbers, employers should try to stick to values that can be easily measured and supported.

Depending on whether a project will be considered on its own merits or be compared to others, the ROI may be considered differently in the decision process. Employers should also consider timescales: a high ROI that delivers returns in the future may not be as appealing as a lower ROI with returns in a year.

Different elements could be highlighted depending on who makes the final decision about the motivational benefits. If the financial director has final sign-off, it might be more helpful to highlight the financial and commercial elements than to present an HR argument.

employee engagement improve faster. “Employers need to benchmark their engagement levels and find out where they currently are.

“There are a few questions that employers can ask their staff to gauge their engagement, such as: Does your opinion in your place of work matter?; Have you recently had a conversation about development in your workplace?; and Have you received praise or recognition lately?. They can then figure out what they are trying to change and do another survey to see the progress.”

However, William Smith, group reward and performance manager at Britvic Soft Drinks, says such surveys can be unreliable. “You cannot base employees’ genuine feelings about the place that they work on one particular day,” he explains.

Ian Dowd, marketing director at NGA Human Resources, adds: “There’s always a difference between what people say motivates them and what actually does.”

Staff retention and turnover

To better understand whether their motivation strategies are effective, employers could measure levels of employee retention and turnover. It may also be useful to calculate the

CASE STUDY

Kantar Worldpanel nurtures employee motivation

Kantar Worldpanel motivates its 1,134 staff with various benefits, including a free lunch.

For example, on 4 September, staff enjoyed a traditional English roast, followed by the rest of the afternoon off. The business is planning similar lunches with Indian and Italian themes.

The market research firm spends around £10,000 a month on these team lunches, giving staff a chance to get together in a relaxed environment. Tim Kidd, managing director for the UK, Ireland and US, tracks the cost. “The time cost is pretty much nothing as employees seem to

get their duties done by the time the lunch comes around, and they really feed into motivation and engagement,” he says.

Kantar also measures staff turnover, which is currently 20%, using its holiday trading scheme, which it added to its flexible benefits plan in July 2015. “Only staff who are with us for at least the medium to long term will use the holiday buy and sell benefit,” says Kidd. “They are



not going to book holiday if they think they won’t be there in a couple of months.”

This year, the firm spent £500,000 on refurbishing its offices. The space now has a more communal, agile feel with shared desks, hammocks, beanbags and tables.

costs involved with losing a member of staff. Alexander says: “Work out recruitment costs and [employers can] see how much a disengaged employee could cost. Employers need to bear absenteeism in mind because it reflects who is engaged

with their place of work and who isn’t.”

Employers could make sure that the motivational benefits are worthwhile before implementation, for example through staff engagement measurements.

Manchester Business School’s Cooper explains: “Employers need to ask themselves: ‘What are the outcomes I’d like to see?’ and ‘Why am I doing this motivation?’”

Worth the effort

So if employers do want to understand the ROI on motivation strategies, they should utilise a combination of employee engagement surveys, staff turnover, absenteeism figures, and cautious planning to calculate it as accurately as possible.

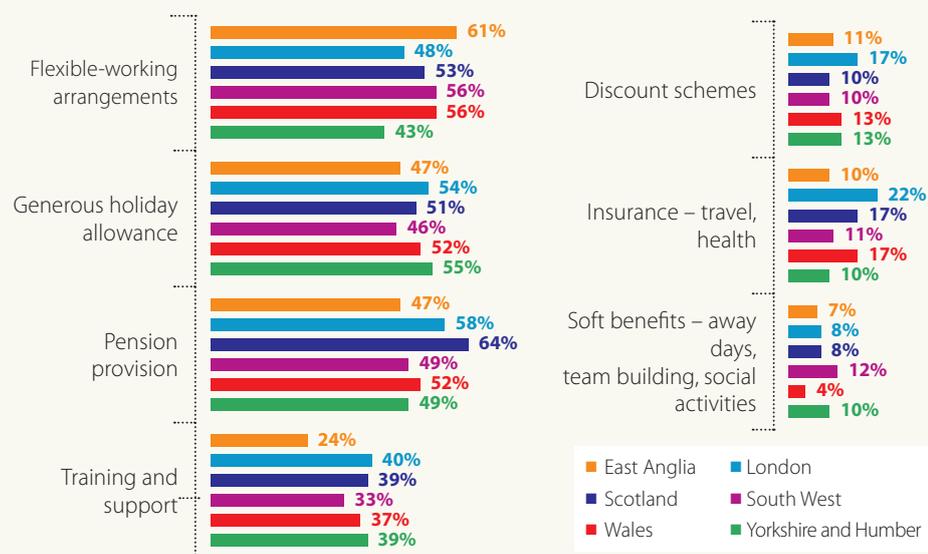
As Alexander says: “It is very difficult to work out return on investment, so many employers simply do not want to do it.” ■



Marianne Calnan
is a reporter
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Read also *McDonald’s puts motivation and reward at heart of business strategy* at: bit.ly/1Nrlz2p

Regional differences in what benefits employees want



Source: NGA Human Resources report, *Managing the expectations and keeping motivation amongst the diverse workforce*, April 2015

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Viewpoint



Sir Cary Cooper is professor of organisational psychology and health at Manchester Business School, University of Manchester

The natural way to inspire and stimulate

In the current economic climate, every employer wants to motivate its workforce, boost productivity, inspire creativity and, ultimately, improve its bottom line.

Interestingly, there is a business case for the benefits of incorporating natural elements into office design, known academically as biophilia. For organisations that take this approach, the gains, in terms of employee motivation and productivity, can be huge.

The impact of biophilic design on workers is well documented. The study carried out by Interface and Robertson Cooper in the Human Spaces report, *The global impact of biophilic design in the workplace*, published in March 2015, found that incorporating natural elements into office design increased workers' wellbeing by 15%, productivity by 6% and creativity by 15%.

Large organisations, such as Google and Apple, are already setting the global standard for workplace design. Not only do their flagship offices embody their external brands, they also provide their employees with a motivational space to work. A big part of this is the incorporation of natural elements.

Geoff Dutaillis, group head of sustainability at Lend Lease, summed up the importance of the building environment to employees in the World Green Building Council report, *Health, Wellbeing and Productivity in Offices: The Next Chapter for Green Building*, released in September 2014, saying: "Whatever business you are in, you are in the business of people. How a building 'works for people' should be the priority question."

To stay ahead of competitors, organisations must prioritise employee wellbeing, ensuring all aspects of the brand appeal to their happiness, creativity and productivity.

Team efforts

A well-designed workspace can be conducive to higher employee wellbeing and productivity, says **Sam Barrett**

Designing workspaces used to be simple, with the fire and workplace regulations dictating just how many employees an employer could squeeze in. But with employers beginning to see a link between environment and the success of the organisation, a lot more thought is going into workplace design.

For Helen Nichol, director of strategy and business transformation at creative consultancy SoVibrant, the key to creating the optimum workspace is to understand how employees will use it. "Open plan used to be all the rage, but this often had absolutely no bearing on what employees did, so people hated it," she explains. "Making the working environment somewhere that supports what employees need to do, and makes them feel cared for, will make them happier and more productive."

Gaining this understanding has led to much more creative workspaces. For example, when Nichol worked with York Council to bring together its employees within one office, staff consultations demonstrated the need for appropriate spaces to accommodate everything from part-time clerical duties through to making confidential calls about child welfare. "Employees now have a variety of workspaces to choose from to suit the work they're doing," adds Nichol. "These include private spaces as well as more relaxed areas if they need to take a break or read a report."

Make a statement

Workspace design can be used in other ways too. Elina Grigoriou, managing director of Grigoriou Interiors, explains: "[An organisation] can market itself through the way its workspace ►

is designed; a technology organisation may want to look fun and creative, while an accountancy firm will look to be more professional. This can help attract the right staff but will also reinforce the [organisation's] values."

This approach can also be used to create moods in different areas or rooms. For example, using bright colours could encourage creativity, while softer blues and purples can create a calmer environment that might be appropriate for more serious meetings.

The features within a workspace can also influence employee wellbeing. While there is an obvious link with gyms and exercise rooms, some employers are incorporating services such as nail bars, dry cleaners and hairdressers into the workspace. This can be really successful, says Hazel Carter-Showell, managing director and business psychologist at Carter Corson. "Getting your nails or the dry cleaning done can eat into an employee's weekend, so they really appreciate having these services onsite. This blending of work and life also suits many employees, especially the millennials."

There are also plenty of examples of more quirky features. Google is famous for its wacky office design at its US headquarters in California, which includes a 1960s caravan for a meeting room, hammocks and a ball pit for employees. Closer to home, Sheffield's Electric Works hit the news when it unveiled its 80ft-long transparent helter skelter, allowing employees to whizz from the third floor to reception in seven seconds.

Carter says these more off-the-wall features can be great for employers that want to encourage creativity. "These types of fun things

CASE STUDY

K&L Gates mixes disciplines

Before moving into its offices in London's One New Change in 2011, legal firm K&L Gates' 250 London employees were based in an 11-storey building on Cannon Street, with each floor housing a different department.

Tony Griffiths, administrative partner at K&L Gates, explains: "The way the office was set out meant there was limited mixing and interaction between departments. So when we were given the opportunity to move to One New Change, we decided to overhaul this more rigid departmental-based structure by mixing up the different disciplines."

Although there was resistance to the idea initially, the way the new offices were designed made it easier to implement this



approach. Working with architects Lehman Smith McLeish, the firm transformed its new 10,000m² office into a workspace, incorporating views over St Paul's Cathedral with practical features such as meeting rooms and a 180-seat conference suite.

With most of the office space on one of the two floors, the plan to mix up all the different departments was put into action. Although there was still some resistance, it only took a few weeks to win the cynics over.

"One month after we moved in, we won the biggest real estate mandate of the year," says Griffiths. "This was down to the new working arrangements. By enabling our people to work alongside one another, they have a better understanding of the areas we cover and therefore are much better equipped to communicate this to our clients. As a result, we've since won many more cross-disciplinary mandates, and have achieved a 60% increase in revenue and a 62% increase in productivity."

can get employees into a mindset where they can play and come up with ideas," she says. "They do have to be appropriate, though: no one wants to have a one-to-one with their boss wearing a sombrero [sitting] on a space hopper."

Design basics

While businesses are constantly pushing the boundaries when it comes to design, there are some features that are considered necessities. For example, when the British Council for Offices (BCO) conducts research into what matters most in the workplace, the top three answers are adequate lighting, space and temperature control. Richard Kauntze, BCO chief executive, says: "These are surprisingly conventional, but it demonstrates that getting the basics right must be at the heart of any office development, renovation or ongoing management."

Light is a great example of this. Seasonal affective disorder is a form of depression that can affect people during the darker winter

months, so exposure to daylight, even simulated daylight, can be a major bonus. As a result, the BCO's guidelines stipulate that an office should provide sufficient daylight for between 55% and 80% of the typical 9am-5pm day.

But whether employers are planning to change the colour scheme in the workplace, embrace hot-desking or install a helter skelter, it is essential to talk and listen to employees first, says Kauntze. "Putting office occupiers at the heart of workplace decisions gives businesses the strongest opportunity to create an environment where the workforce is happy and productive." ■



Sam Barrett
is a freelance journalist

Read also *How to motivate staff through the January blues* at bit.ly/1i7OuR0

IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE, READ THIS . . .

- A well-designed workplace can support employee wellbeing, enhance productivity, and help to attract and retain key personnel.
- Adequate lighting, space and temperature control are employees' must-haves in a workplace.
- Involve employees: by understanding what matters to them and what they need, changes are more likely to be successful.



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Active engagement

Team-building events can work well when tailored to a workforce, says **Marianne Calnan**

Team-building exercises can range from quirky activities to regular social events. But what is most important is ensuring that what employers offer is suitable for their employees.

Kuljit Kaur, head of business development at motivation and employee benefits services agency PM&M, says employers need to carefully consider the make-up of their workforce when selecting team-building exercises.

"Before [employers] think about the end result, they need to think about why they're doing it," she says. "They must also look at their workforce demographic carefully, because there's such a wide range of team activities on offer."

Classic or quirky?

Once employers have considered the best way to both motivate staff and encourage them to interact, they will need to decide whether to opt for traditional team-building exercises such as parties, or something a little more unusual.

For instance, United Biscuits attempted to break the world record for 'Most books toppled in a domino fashion' in February with Guinness World Records. Although the main aim of the task was to refocus the workforce for the year ahead and encourage staff interaction, the 150 employees involved also broke the record by toppling 5,381 books.

All attendees rated the event excellent, 94% said that it helped them work more effectively with colleagues, and 97% said they were more motivated in their work, which reflects just how effective unusual exercises can be.

Farrella Ryan-Coker, head of human resources at Guinness World Records, says: "The key to an effective team-building event is planning. Whoever is overseeing the project should identify a list of outcomes they want to achieve because it's vital that team-building activities have a lasting benefit rather than just being fun."

However, there is scope for both classic and



contemporary team-building, says Kaur. "Something trendy like a Segway session pushes staff out of their comfort zones, but going out for meals or to the cinema are always popular."

From sports to food

Team-building activities can range from nights out to team sports or meals. Gemma McNeilis, head of brand at Chiswick Park-Enjoy Work, says: "[Employers] have to offer a breadth of activities because different people want different things.

"Interest groups like chess or book clubs let

people engage with each other on their own. We also have a cycling club where people tend to go for a drink together afterwards, and in our running club people chat along the way."

Highlighting the event

A lack of effective communication around the activities can ultimately limit their value.

Kaur says: "If employers emphasise how effective the activity was on social media, in a meeting, or on the intranet, more employees will feel the motivational effects of it. Effective team-building can have a vast, ongoing, positive effect if done well, particularly if employers and staff emphasise how enjoyable it was."

This can also ensure that such events are worth the time, effort and cash to implement.

But when introducing team-building exercises, employers do not necessarily need to be overly involved. McNeilis says: "Employees don't tend to enjoy something when it's enforced; some even steer away from it. So labelling something as a 'team-building activity' can put people off because it feels too corporate."

Investing time and effort in getting the right approach can pay off for both employers and staff. According to the NGA Human Resources report *Managing the expectations and keeping motivation amongst the diverse workforce*, published in April 2015, around a third (32%) of workers are most motivated by non-monetary benefits, which reflects how important team days out, meals and sports can be for productive, loyal and engaged workforces ■

IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE, READ THIS . . .

- Employers need to think about why they offer team-building exercises.
- If staff are involved with the decision-making process, it can make the activities more effective.
- Team-building activities require good communication to be successful.



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