

BUSINESS FIRST

ISSUE
44

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HARNESS AI'S
POTENTIAL

BALANCE ETHICS
AND EFFICIENCY

TURBOCHARGE
YOUR MARKETING

DRIVE YOUR DIGITAL FUTURE

IN THIS ISSUE • Mitigo Cybersecurity • Creating the supportive workplace • Sustainable buildings
• Putting flexibility to work • Legally compliant HR • ESG get with the programme • Digital contracts

From **big** decisions to **little** details

The background features several overlapping financial documents. At the top, there's a bar chart with months from Jan to Jul on the x-axis and values up to 50,000 on the y-axis. Below it is a larger bar chart with months from Apr to Jul and values up to 350,000. A magnifying glass is positioned over a document with a stacked area chart showing months from Apr to Oct and values up to 350,000. To the right, another bar chart shows months from 01 to 08 with values up to 8,000. At the bottom, there are more bar charts, one for 'Bookkeeping' and another for 'Marketing', both with months from Aug to Dec and values up to 300,000.

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Facing down cyber risk

Senior leaders must step up to counter a growing threat

Cyber risk management is a critical senior leadership responsibility – due to the escalating cyber threat landscape and the profound impact of cyber incidents on business operations, reputation and financial stability. A ransomware attack can bring a business to an abrupt halt and, in some instances, even close it down.

It's no surprise that so many business victims feel forced into paying the ransom demand when so much is at stake. Obvious high-risk sectors include professional services such as law firms, accountants and financial services businesses – in fact any firm handling confidential data and transactional work. The reality, though, is that the healthcare sector, factories, car dealerships, retailers and so many others are at operational risk too.

All senior business leaders have a responsibility to manage their cyber risk to safeguard sensitive information, maintain operational continuity and protect stakeholder interests. However, leaving cyber risk management to their IT support simply does not cut it. Proper cyber risk management is a sophisticated standalone discipline that covers so much more than just technology. It requires a comprehensive programme that includes formal risk assessments, policies and procedures, and staff training.

Good cyber governance should include obtaining independent assurance from a cybersecurity specialist. They will assess and provide visibility of your cyber risks, determine the measures appropriate to control those risks – and give you ongoing assurance that the controls you have in place continue to be effective.

THERE ARE TWO KEY ASPECTS TO ENSURING SUCCESS:

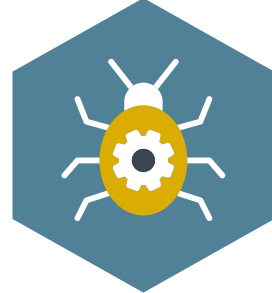
Independence

Having IT mark their own homework is a nonstarter when it comes to good risk management.

Expertise

Cybersecurity is complex and ever-changing – so you need a specialist who understands your business structure and the current methods of attack, as well as your legal and any regulatory obligations.

Assigning cybersecurity responsibility to someone at senior level is the best way to co-ordinate preparation for and possible response to a threat that, unfortunately, lurks around almost every virtual corner.



Lindsay Hill
Chief Executive Officer
Mitigo Group LLP

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EDITORIAL

LET'S PUT TECH TO WORK

Memories of seaside holidays, the oh-so-nearly Women's World Cup and an unusually sizzling start to September have now given way to the cool of autumn. So, there's no better time to pause, take stock and rethink new ways of working.

In this edition of *Business First*, we put digital networking under the spotlight in articles on how to make social media connections generally and make the most of LinkedIn specifically. And as well as checking out your AI preparedness, we also look at how to use AI to power up your marketing campaigns – and be ready for its impact on employment law and workers' rights. Pieces on digital contracts and data privacy will bring you even further up to speed in the digital age.

Elsewhere, we turn our attention to sustainability with articles on reducing carbon impact in commercial property, how one law firm is tackling its ESG responsibilities, and why community engagement brings businesses multiple benefits.

Follow the money in pieces on making empty office desks pay and when to best time your next acquisition. And hone your people skills as we unpack the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act and the ever-evolving world of equality, diversity and inclusion.

With very best wishes
Tim Trout – Editor



CREATING A SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE

7 Ways To Encourage Positive Mental Health



More and more people are suffering poor mental health as a result of their work. Last year's Workplace Wellbeing Index put the figure at 70% – a staggering but perhaps not surprising number. **Lucy Penfold** looks at what employers can do to relieve the pressure.

Understand the causes

We all shoulder stress for many reasons, with work a common one. And recent increases in the cost of living may be adding a new layer of strain. Employees may feel pressured to stay in their job for financial reasons. But what if that employee is unhappy? What can employers do to create a more supportive workplace?

How employers can help

There are many ways business leaders can foster positive mental health in their organisation:

- 1 Engage a mental health champion – a dedicated employee with the necessary training to challenge stigma and promote a positive atmosphere.
- 2 Offer external, confidential counselling services.
- 3 Offer mental health sick leave with clear return-to-work procedures.



4 Make sure everyone has a manageable workload, the tools and training they need, and fair compensation for their efforts.

5 Show employees you value them. Give constructive feedback on performance and remind them that their role is important.

6 Enable progression that sees people gain new skills and take on new challenges.

7 Organise social events to forge better staff relationships and improve open communication with co-workers/management.

“ Show employees you value them. Give constructive feedback on performance and remind them that their role is important.”

The business benefit

The latest Workplace Wellbeing Index also showed that valued, supported employees are more productive, stay in their jobs longer and deliver better outcomes.

Ultimately, organisations perform better when their staff are healthy, motivated and focused. Offering mental health support will help retain valuable staff members and sends a clear message about your values.

For more information and guidance visit www.mind.org.uk or www.mentalhealth.org.uk.



Martin Cornforth looks at two important aspects of employment law in today's work environment.

58% of workers think the government should regulate the use of generative AI in workplaces.

Is your HR function legally compliant?

Navigating the complexity of employment law can be challenging for organisations of all shapes and sizes. There are three core compliance areas all businesses must meet when making decisions that impact staff.

1. Company policies

To further meet their legal duties, most employers will issue key policies to staff. Common policies often cover:

- Disciplinary procedures
- Grievances
- Sickness absences
- Equality and diversity
- Redundancy
- Data protection
- Health and safety

It's important that contracts of employment and policies are drafted by employment law experts to ensure that they cover the relevant legal considerations.

2. Contract of employment

In theory, a contract simply reflects the agreement between the parties. However, numerous legal principles mandate that certain matters must be covered in a contract of employment.

For example, courts have recognised the importance of the relationship between employer and employee, establishing that a term of mutual trust and confidence is implied in every contract of employment. If an employer seriously breaches trust and confidence by treating the employee unreasonably, the employee may be entitled to resign and claim constructive unfair dismissal.

The Employment Rights Act 1996 establishes that key details of employment must be sent to the

employee in writing from the outset of employment. In practice, this information would usually be included in the contract of employment. The key information includes details of remuneration, hours of work, holiday entitlement, sick leave, in addition to many other categories.

3. Redundancies

A recent survey conducted by ACAS has found that 30% of employers intend to consider redundancies in the next 10 months. If a redundancy situation cannot be avoided, employment law requires consultation with staff and a fair selection procedure. Employers must also consider any opportunities for redeployment as an alternative to redundancy.

As with contracts and policies, it's important to seek professional advice to identify optimal solutions when considering redundancies, so that your business is protected.

How AI may disrupt employment law

As artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace becomes more widespread, regulation is increasingly on the minds of unions and businesses. Here we examine the early responses in motion to protect workers' rights.

The trade union Prospect recently conducted a survey of more than 1000 people which found that 58% of workers think the government should regulate the use of generative AI in workplaces. In contrast, only 12% opposed government interference, because the benefits of AI are likely to outweigh any costs.

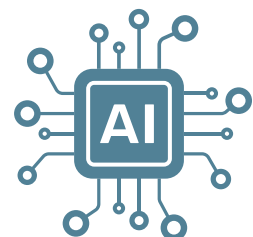
This survey followed the introduction of the Artificial Intelligence (Regulation and Workers' Rights) Private Members' Bill (PMB) by Labour MP Mick Whitley in

May 2023. The PMB aims to protect the rights of individuals working alongside AI in shops, offices, factories and services.

Although the PMB is unlikely to become law, it opens up the conversation about employment rights in the context of AI. If enacted, the PMB would:

- Establish a universal and comprehensive right to human review of high-risk decisions made by AI, as well as a right to human contact when high-risk decisions are being made
- Introduce a statutory duty for employers to meaningfully consult with employees and trade unions before introducing AI into the workplace
- Target any AI use deemed to be high risk for further regulation, drawing on recommendations from the TUC manifesto 'Dignity at Work and the AI Revolution'
- Prevent discrimination by algorithm by making it unlawful to process discriminatory data, making equality-impact audits a mandatory part of data protection impact assessments, and requiring employers to publish these assessments
- Create a statutory right that workers should not be subject to detrimental treatment as a result of the processing of inaccurate data
- Establish a right for workers to disconnect from work (likely to be included in Labour Party manifesto).

These points provide some early clarity as to the direction the law may take in respect of workers' rights, and act as food for thought for employers and businesses as they adopt AI.





BLOG

Making the connection through digital networking



Starting your career or navigating ways to progress in your work can be more effective with digital networking. Here, **Jessica Jayne Bower** shares four top tips for making a success of both.

“It’s important to acknowledge that technology isn’t going to go away – and that its improvement may exceed your expectations. The reality is that if you stand still with digital networking, you’ll get left behind.”

CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

Hesitancy is your greatest enemy when it comes to getting your profile set up and your digital networking experience off the ground. It's important to acknowledge that technology isn't going to go away – and that its improvement may exceed your expectations.

The reality is that if you stand still, you'll get left behind. In a world where digital connections are possible, there's so much to be excited and grateful for. Instead of diarising a face-to-face to meet someone who might be a useful connection, you can simply drop them a message or email to introduce yourself.

Of if your calendar is looking full, why not schedule a virtual coffee meeting via Zoom or Teams. With time more precious than ever, digital networking allows us to make more immediate connections – while at the same time extending our reach.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Whenever I encourage young professionals or colleagues who are new to and nervous about digital networking, the same response always comes up. "I don't want to connect with just anyone". Certainly, quality connections are important. But so is diversity when it comes to whom you allow into your circle. Think outside the box by connecting with people through pages that provide details on industry events and developments, as well as hobbies you enjoy. We're about more than just our careers.



CREATE THOUGHTFUL CONTENT OR ENGAGE WITH IT

If you're struggling to connect with others in the digital space, share your business expertise by creating insightful blogs, posts, articles or videos. Demonstrating what you know through varied content is the best way to make connections, build credibility and foster conversations within your network.

LinkedIn provides a wealth of information and insight ready to be liked, commented on or reposted. Actively searching, reading and engaging with topics that are relevant to you and your career go a long way to building your digital presence and growing confidence. Soon, you'll become aware of fellow commentators and creators who feel the same about the topics you care about – or share a new interesting perspective on them. Whatever the angle, engaging with fellow enthusiasts is a good start to sifting through the connections you want to make.

Online forums, discussion boards, webinars, and virtual events are just some of the ways that enable you to learn, interact with fellow professionals and establish your presence in the digital community.

MAKE GENUINE CONNECTIONS

In a world of digital development, there's often the fear of diluted interaction – that potential and promising connections may fade into neglected chats. If you're aiming to create a strong network, success will come based on the effort you make to grow it over time. Digital networking is about establishing genuine relationships and, in turn, providing value to others in your field. A consistent digital presence combined with authenticity are core ingredients for building strong online business relationships that will take you further.



IN SHORT

Digital networking is a powerful tool both for getting into a job and developing it

Diving in to test the water is the best way to get started – taking advantage of the many easy ways digital enables you to connect including online forums, discussion boards, webinars and virtual events

Think outside the box about the routes you take – you might surprise yourself

Successful digital networking comes from the effort you make both to engage with valuable content – and create it yourself.



DIGITAL CONTRACTS

How going digital boosts contract security



Digital contracts are agreements or e-contracts created and executed using digital methods. Parties no longer need to print, manually sign, scan and email (or post) various sections or counterparts. It's a development that offers better security and authenticity than traditional 'wet ink' methods, says **Patrick Simpson**.

Is there actually any need to sign a contract?

A contract does not need to take any particular form, and case law confirms that electronic documents are generally capable of satisfying a statutory requirement for contracts to be in writing.

Parties can make most contracts informally and the law does not require a contract to be signed (either electronically or otherwise) for it to be valid. A signature merely indicates the signer's intention to authenticate the document. So, most contracts may be validly concluded with an electronic signature (e-Signature).

What constitutes an e-Signature?

An e-Signature is data in electronic form which the signatory uses to sign a document. This may include:

- Typing a name or initials at the bottom of an email
- Clicking or tapping 'I accept' on a website
- Using a stylus or finger to sign an electronic document via a touchscreen
- Using a digital signature.



What is a digital signature?

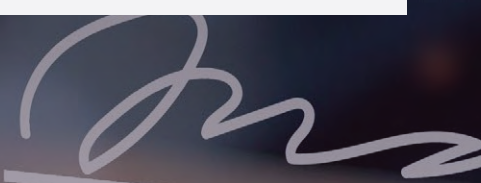
A digital signature is a technologically advanced and secure type of e-Signature – there are two categories:

1. Qualified electronic signature (QES)
2. Advanced electronic signature (AdES)

A **QES** provides the highest level of admissibility in UK and EU courts and has the equivalent legal effect of a handwritten signature. QES requires identity authentication before a digital certificate is issued. It offers the highest level of trust through face-to-face ID verification. DocuSign offers multiple QES with ID verification options.

E-signing platforms, such as DocuSign, typically utilise **AdES** which creates an audit trail as part of the digital signing process. This trail records:

- Who signed the document
- Their email and IP address
- Any additional steps taken to authenticate the signatory, such as a passcode sent to the signatory's mobile phone
- A time stamp.



What about legal challenge and admissibility?

The value of the contract or transaction and any jurisdictional considerations will help determine what lengths you should go to ensure the authenticity of a digital contract.

You should consider how trustworthy, secure and reliable the technology used to create the signature is. For example, a typed name at the end of a document is much easier to forge than a digital signature created by Adobe Sign.

For digital contracts, the best practice is to use an e-signing platform wherever possible. It's also advisable to have a suitably drafted e-signing policy for your business so that all staff entering contracts do so correctly and in a way that reduces the scope for any future legal challenges.

Does an e-Signature satisfy a statutory requirement for a contract to be made in writing or signed?

The Law Commission's 2019 report: Electronic Execution of Documents states that an e-Signature is capable in law of being used validly to execute a document (including a deed) subject to two important caveats. The person signing the document must have intended to authenticate it (that is, they plan to sign and be bound by it) and any formalities relating to the execution of that document must be satisfied.

If you sign a contract or deed with an e-Signature, but there is a contractual or statutory requirement for you to handwrite it (as in the case of wills), you will not execute the document validly.

“ A qualified electronic signature (QES) provides the highest level of admissibility in UK and EU courts and has the equivalent legal effect of a handwritten signature.”



On the rise

Sustainable buildings are here to stay –
– here's the big picture for landlords and tenants



With apocalyptic warnings of the Gulf Stream collapse, which recent headlines indicate could be as early as 2025 (without carbon reductions), it may seem impossible to stem the tide. Further reading puts this somewhere between 2025 and 2075! Even previous climate change naysayers have now agreed that yes, climate change is happening, says **Tamzin Mandelli.**

Notwithstanding the Government's weakened ambitions on net zero targets, everyone still needs to do their bit to reduce carbon. Be that from considering the sustainability of our food sources to how we heat our homes.

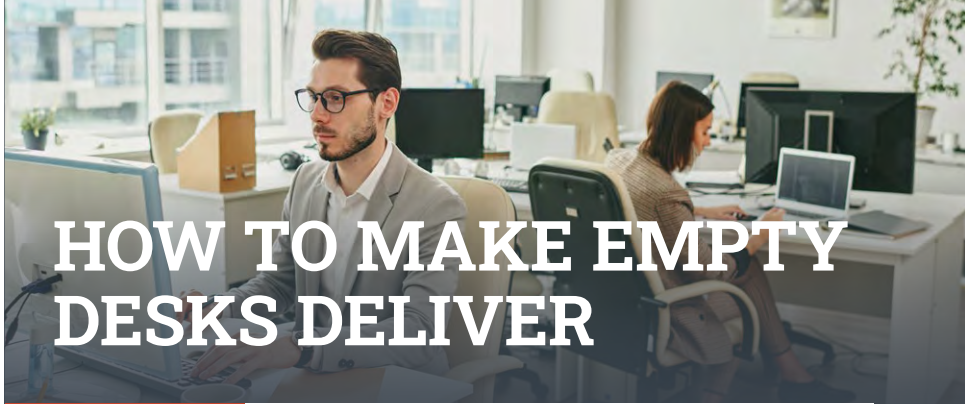
The property industry has a huge part to play in this too. Planning applications, for both residential and commercial use are on the rise and provide an opportunity to ensure that new buildings are built as sustainably as possible both in terms of the construction and the longevity of the building.

EXISTING BUILDINGS

Existing buildings need to comply with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards. The Government's softened stance may mean that this will not necessarily have to be at least a B rating by 2030. The rating is only E at the moment and it is estimated that 85% of commercial buildings could be affected.

WHERE DO OWNERS STAND?

Improvements will need to be done sympathetically so as not to adversely affect the character of the building. The owner of commercial property who is committed to reducing their environmental impact is able to carry out whatever improvement works they



HOW TO MAKE EMPTY DESKS DELIVER

require to their property and indeed a state of the art building is likely to command higher rents. This all comes at a cost and owners should carefully check the wording of their leases (where their buildings are tenanted) to establish whether they can recoup any of the cost from the tenant.

In the case of major works the lease should also be checked to establish whether these can be carried out (e.g. does the landlord have a right to erect scaffolding, if needed and appropriate access rights).

WHAT CAN TENANTS DO?

A tenant, unless they have a lease of a whole building, is unlikely to be able to do anything to the main structure. They will only have responsibility for their part of the building.

Generally speaking most works will require the landlord to consent. Usually consent cannot be withheld or delayed to non-structural works – this does, of course, depend upon the wording of the lease.

This also has an impact on costs – the tenant will generally have to pay both their own and the landlord’s legal and surveyor’s costs for this consent and any monitoring and sign off by a surveyor that the landlord may require.

LONG TERM BENEFITS

Making buildings more sustainable will generally have other benefits, beyond simply reducing carbon footprints. Making them nicer places to work could reduce sickness, both physical and mental, increase productivity and improve employee retention.

Perhaps, from a Landlord’s point of view, more importantly, Grade A offices that are net zero command higher rents and are more easily lettable.

It’s a win, win!



There are two main routes to effective co-working. One is where a business downsizes its premises, adopts hybrid working policies and reduces overheads. A second – explored here by **John Guthrie** – is where a business opens up its premises to independent occupiers.

Here are eight top tips for success

1 Check that the necessary consents are in place for co-working

For example, would it breach planning consent, any restrictions on the title or raise objections from the mortgagee or insurers?

2 Don’t skimp on paperwork and have a proper licence agreement

The agreement should provide for sharing space rather than exclusive occupation. Always make sure the occupier does not establish themselves in a particular space and obtain exclusive possession by default. Moving them around avoids this.

3 Make sure occupiers have paid up front before letting them – ideally at premium rates

Short-term occupiers should be paying more per hour than for the longer term – and always in advance.

4 Structure prices carefully

That’s because a shifting population of occupiers can be disruptive – and all utilities need to be covered with a satisfactory margin.

5 Make sure occupiers don’t gain any security of tenure

While many simply disappear, others may stay longer. Protect against tenure issues by frequently moving them around – also ensuring payment up front.

6 Think security

Protect your own IT systems from cyber fraud and don’t leave any loose, vulnerable items where they can go missing.

7 Pick your occupiers carefully

Depending on your own business sector there may be clear advantages to having occupiers in the same industry who could refer work to you.

8 Lastly, keep a close eye on the numbers

Co-working may seem like a good way to use space. However, if the occupiers keep disappearing without having paid you, it may not be worthwhile.



Putting flexibility



In response to the evolving needs and demands of the modern workforce, the UK has taken a significant step with The Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023. Here, **James Twine** unpacks legislation that's now passed through Parliament and awaits Royal Assent.

Get to grips with The Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023

The Act aims to promote a culture of workplace flexibility to create a more adaptable, productive and harmonious working environment. The big news for employers is that the right to request flexible working will not (yet) be from day one. Despite being suggested at consultation, this right has not been included in the Act. Had it been, it may have impacted how employers could advertise a role (in terms of hours) and affected good business planning from an employee's first day.

KEY ACT PROVISIONS

Right to request flexible working

Under the Act, every employee who has been with their employer for at least 26 weeks has the right to make a formal request for flexible working. Employees will be able to make two requests in any 12-month period, compared to only one currently.

Employer's obligations

Employers must consider all flexible working requests in a fair and reasonable manner, responding to the request within two months. There are only eight legitimate grounds for rejection:

- The burden of additional costs
- Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff
- Inability to recruit additional staff
- Detrimental impact on quality and performance

- Insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work
- Planned structural changes.

Appeals process

The Act does not require an appeals process, which conflicts with the advice in the ACAS Code. It's therefore advisable to include some form of appeals process within your policy.

Promoting open dialogue

The Act encourages open communication between employers and employees, and employers are obliged to consult with the employee before making a decision. However, there's no minimum standard of consultation or set period in which to consult. Furthermore, there's no longer a requirement for employees to state if they perceive any likely effect of the request on their colleagues. Employers should hold at least one meeting with any employee making a request, satisfying the obligation, as well as fostering good staff relationships.

to work



“ Think outside the box – encouraging flexible working where it works, but not being afraid to reject a request if it’s not going to be suitable for your business.”

BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYEES

The Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 brings employees:

Improved work-life balance

Flexible working arrangements enable employees to better manage personal and family commitments, improving overall wellbeing and reducing stress.

Increased productivity and engagement

When employees can work in ways that suit their preferences and life circumstances, they’re more likely to be motivated, engaged and productive.

Enhanced retention and attraction

The Act enhances the attractiveness of employers who embrace workplace flexibility, contributing to higher employee retention rates and increased appeal to potential talents.

BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS

The Act and flexible working generally offer several advantages for employers:

Talent attraction and retention

Businesses that offer flexible working arrangements are likely to attract and retain a diverse pool of talent, contributing to a more dynamic and innovative workforce.

Boost in productivity

A workforce that enjoys a better work-life balance is likely to be more productive and focused during working hours.

Positive employer branding

Employers who actively support flexible working are seen as progressive and employee-centric, leading to a positive employer brand image in the market.

THE FUTURE OF WORK: EMBRACING FLEXIBILITY

As the workplace continues to evolve, employers are being forced to accommodate new ways of working – no bad thing necessarily. There are advantages for employers, who can also turn down a request for one of eight reasons. Think outside the box – encouraging flexible working where it works, but not being afraid to reject a request if it’s not going to be suitable for your business.

Given that the right to request flexible working from day one of employment featured throughout the consultation, there’s a chance it could re-emerge in the future.

WHAT SHOULD EMPLOYERS DO NEXT?

It will be necessary for all employers to amend their Flexible Working Policy once the Act becomes law. You should start this process now, to be ready in good time. Failing to have an up-to-date policy will lead to confusion for both employees and managers handling requests. It also increases the risk of successful claims from employees who are not satisfied with their employer’s response to a request.



NOW OR NEVER?



When's the right time for an acquisition?

Acquisitions can be a vital strategy for business growth. They can increase outreach and value by adding depth and scale to both your people and operations. However, if poorly handled, an acquisition can cause disruption, unsettle the workforce, and decrease the business' overall value.

Evangelos Kyveris

outlines five things you should consider before acquiring a business.



YOUR BUSINESS GROWTH STRATEGY

Your business should have a robust business plan that sets out your growth strategy with specific objectives and timelines. An acquisition can seem attractive for many reasons, but it will only be a success if it serves your original objectives and falls within your timescales – particularly if it's part of a larger growth strategy.

FINANCES

Your business must be able to financially support an acquisition without it causing disruption down the line. You should assess if you have the funding facilities in place to meet the acquisition's capital investment requirements, as well as its ongoing costs. If you can't do this comfortably, it may be better to avoid taking the risk, as this drain on resources could cause your organisation financial instability.

LOGISTICS

All aspects of a business need to be adequately equipped to facilitate a successful acquisition. From HR to IT to accounting, your entire organisation must have appropriate systems and processes in place to support the smooth integration of a new business, including its employees, clients and other assets.

YOUR TARGET

Give yourself enough time to engage with quality targets properly. Any target should be relevant to your business. Ideally it will meet your needs, satisfy your objectives and help generate value. You should investigate the target carefully – preparation is vital to every successful acquisition.

PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE

It can be challenging to navigate the legal requirements of negotiating and completing a successful acquisition. You must ensure your business fully understands any proposed acquisition's legal, financial and tax implications.

It's usually necessary to seek professional advice and support from an experienced corporate legal team.

“Your business must be able to financially support an acquisition.”



AI

Why partnering with AI makes marketing sense



Who would have thought that a two-letter abbreviation would have brought with it so much fear, anticipation and dread? What Artificial Intelligence (AI) holds for creative careers such as marketing has brought concern, as well as curiosity, says **Jessica Jayne Bower**

Certainly the 'hallucinating tendencies of AI' – when it generates inaccuracies – are sure to keep some in the marketing world up at night.

However, sitting idly by while artificial intelligence grows would be a naive choice for anyone working in the creative field.

The question, for now, should not be whether AI will replace our marketing teams – but how we can work alongside it. Here are two quality sets that enable marketers to work in harmony with artificial intelligence.

Human expertise and personalisation

While AI is great when it comes to solutions, it lacks emotional intelligence. AI-driven personalisation tools can customise marketing messages and content to individual preferences and behaviours.

Marketers are skilled in determining customer segments and what's worked in the past. So putting AI and these creative minds together can result in hyper-personalised experiences that resonate with customers – and contribute to healthy public relations.

Astute decision-making and data collection

Marketers may love data but AI will undoubtedly win when it comes to the rate at which it can collect and analyse it. Once that's done, the ultimate decision-making

needs to be made via effective human communication in natural language, taking into account information that complies with ethical considerations and draws on the full expertise of the marketer.

Focusing on audience

Running any successful campaign will rely on a critical understanding of the target audience. The combination of a marketer's professional understanding of it with AI's insights presents the marketing industry with a unique opportunity. Creativity is the heart of marketing and that's why the skill of understanding precise 'prompting' will be paramount for marketers: AI is only as good as the way you brief it.

There will always be those that trust technology and those that don't. Whether one is the consumer, the creator or a reluctant witness to AI, it's here to stay. As for the future of AI and its impact on marketing careers: stand still and get left behind or embrace and lead the change.

Since the launch of Chat GPT in November last year, confidence in launching apps and tools that use AI has proliferated. However, the successful use of AI will depend on how wisely, ethically and responsibly we work alongside it.

IN SHORT

AI is a reality that the creative sector – including marketing – can ill-afford to ignore

However, it's not a panacea for success on its own: AI is at its most useful when combined with human expertise and personalisation, and astute decision-making and data collection

Human marketing intelligence offers a unique understanding of target audience that is best leveraged in parallel with smart prompting at the AI interface

Our best way forward is to understand AI and embrace it.



“ Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to trust user-generated content than brand-created content.”

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

The power of social media marketing



The post-pandemic world has seen a surge in new social media platforms, trends and consumer behaviours. As a result, businesses need to rethink their social media strategies. **Ilaria Giurini** dives into why brands should embrace influencer marketing to stay ahead of the curve.



HOW TO HARNESS THE POWER OF INFLUENCER MARKETING

When done correctly, influencers can be a very effective way to grow your business. Here are a few tips to make this marketing approach work for you:

Choose the right influencers

Do your homework on their reach and reputation.

Reflect your audience

Stay relevant by collaborating with influencers who reflect the diversity of your customer base.

Be transparent

Make sure your audience knows the content is sponsored. Use appropriate hashtags like #ad #gift and #sponsored.

Make it official

Always sign a contract with influencers you collaborate with so you both know exactly what your arrangement is.

Measure your results

Track engagement and sales to see how influencer marketing is performing for your business.

Better safe than sorry

Have a crisis management plan in place to mitigate potential damage to your brand or company.

The influencer industry is booming, with a projected market worth of \$21.1 billion for 2023. Influencers are the new rock stars of commerce. They amplify brands and captivate audiences like never before, strumming the chords of diversity, authenticity and relatability. If you want a piece of this influencer-powered symphony, you need to get familiar with where, how and why it works.

The new search engine

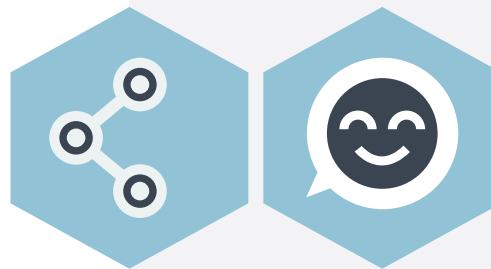
TikTok has quickly become one of the most popular social media platforms in the world. And many major influencers live and breathe TikTok. It's especially popular with Gen Z, who spend an average of 90 minutes per day on the platform. TikTok's short-form video format is perfect for capturing the attention of this generation, and its algorithm is highly effective at recommending relevant content. This makes TikTok a powerful tool for businesses that want to reach a younger audience.

Reels are stealing the show

Instagram Reels is another short-form video format that's gaining in popularity. In fact, Reels now account for more than 20% of all Instagram content. Like TikTok, influencers abound on Instagram, and the addition of video was another string to their bow.

LinkedIn is shifting

LinkedIn has traditionally been seen as a professional networking platform. However, in recent years, the platform has made a shift towards more personal content. LinkedIn users now share content about their personal



lives, such as their hobbies, health and relationships. This makes LinkedIn a more relatable platform for businesses that want to connect with professionals on a more personal level.

User-generated content

Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to trust user-generated content than brand-created content. This is because they value authenticity and relatability. When people post content about a product or service they have actually used, it creates more engagement than simply reading a brand's description of the same product or service.

Trust is key

Influencer marketing is, at heart, about trust. Influencers build a relationship with their followers, then when they recommend a product or service, their followers are more likely to take notice and follow their lead. This community of endorsement is what makes influencer marketing a powerful tool for businesses and brands.

IN SHORT

Influencer marketing poses a major opportunity for brands and businesses to connect with their audience

User-generated content engenders more trust than typical branded content

Choosing the right influencer is vital. Find someone who aligns to your brand values and reflects your audience.



BOSS THE SOCIAL CATWALK

THE GOLDEN RULES OF PERSONAL BRANDING



In our digital age, where online presence matters more than ever, LinkedIn has surged ahead as a game-changing platform. Once seen as a place for CVs, it's now a thriving space for networking, sharing ideas and polishing your personal brand. **Kristian Tangen-Sorgendal** explores how this shift has transformed the way CEOs operate.



Unlike other social media platforms where our personal lives take centre stage, LinkedIn is a digital boardroom where professionals, executives and thought leaders connect professionally to share insights and collaborate on a global level. And increasingly, it's a place where CEOs go to grow their influence beyond their business circle.

What's new is the realisation that CEOs are no longer just company heads – they're part of the company's story. In this age of transparency and authenticity, people want to connect with the decision-makers behind the organisations they're involved with. That's why a CEO's online image is now so closely tied to their brand.

Traditionally, CEOs were known for their strategic thinking and business smarts. But today they're also expected to be influencers and thought leaders. CEOs who share their ideas, join discussions and give valuable insights online position themselves as approachable experts. This earns them respect not just from peers, but also from employees, investors and customers.

NO FAKERS

When building your personal brand on LinkedIn, authenticity is crucial. People can spot the difference between valuable thought leadership and fake self-promotion. CEOs who openly talk about their experiences, challenges and what they've learned come across as relatable. This kind of genuine sharing leads to real connections, often resulting in valuable collaborations.

A well-crafted personal brand can positively impact how a company's values and vision are seen. When CEOs talk about their passion for innovation, commitment to diversity or focus on sustainability, these values become tied to the company's identity. This makes stakeholders more likely to trust and invest in a brand that aligns with their beliefs.

BE CONSISTENT

Along with authenticity, consistency is equally important. An erratic online presence can harm your credibility. CEOs must create a clear story that resonates with their audience while staying true to their company's values. This takes time, effort and a good understanding of how the platform works.

Here are some strategic tips:

Optimise your profile

Your LinkedIn profile is your digital business card. Ensure it's complete with a professional photo, a catchy headline explaining your role and a well-written summary that showcases your expertise and passion.

Engage regularly

Share insightful posts, industry news and on-trend articles. Respond to comments to show you value your audience's input and foster a sense of community.

Create original content

Write long-form articles or short posts on topics relevant to your industry. Sharing your inside knowledge can establish you as an industry expert.

Use video

Video gets more engagement and can help you establish a personal connection with your audience. Use video to share updates, tips or behind-the-scenes glimpses of your work.

Focus on thought leadership

Share your unique perspective on industry trends, challenges and opportunities. Say something new, make it thought-provoking.

Network strategically

Connect with professionals who align with your industry or interests. Engage with their content, comment genuinely and foster meaningful connections.

Share success stories

Highlight your company's achievements, milestones and success stories. This not only showcases your leadership but also promotes your company's brand.

Make it personal

Share personal anecdotes, lessons learned and challenges faced in your journey. Authenticity will resonate with your audience and humanise your profile.

Work the algorithm

Post consistently to maintain a visible presence in your followers' feeds. Regular activity ensures you stay on their radar.

Building a strong personal presence on LinkedIn takes time and consistent effort – but it comes with rewards. By implementing these strategies, CEOs can elevate their influence, connect with their audience and establish themselves as prominent voices in their industry.

IN SHORT

LinkedIn is the ideal platform for CEOs to showcase their personal brand

Engaging in thought leadership online can lead to positive outcomes for the business you represent

Authenticity is valued by LinkedIn's audience – try to be honest, real and true to who you are.

We're moving towards a future where businesses are being held accountable for the impact they have on the environment, their staff, customers and the communities they work within. That's why it makes good business sense to start thinking about what you can do to improve the Environmental, Social and Governance aspects of your operations now.

TAKING ON THE ESG CHALLENGE

When we took steps to improve our ESG policies, one of the most challenging aspects was we didn't have a dedicated inhouse resource for it. So we decided that I would lead the way and staff were empowered to do whatever they could do to contribute. Everything we do now is looked at through an ESG lens.

Cost was also a challenge. Our paper costs more – but it's from sustainable or recycled sources. Our energy tariff is higher – but it comes from offshore wind generation only. Doing the right thing is not always the most cost-effective choice, and you need to be comfortable with that.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANGLE

In 2020, I had a plan to reduce staff travel by using video conferencing more. While Covid moved my ambitions forward very quickly, we remain committed to reducing travel emissions post-pandemic. We encourage car sharing, have a partnership with Lex Autolease to make leasing an electric vehicle more affordable and offer the Cycle 2 Work Scheme.

Power usage is another big challenge. While several of our offices are in listed buildings – which makes things more difficult – we've been able to fit LEDs, sensor lights and also install more efficient boilers. We can't fit solar panels due to listed building constraints. However, we've recently had planning permission to change metal windows to UPVC in one of our locations.

In the office, we've introduced initiatives to reduce waste including replacing waste bins with recycling bins and using glasses instead of plastic cups at the water

fountain. Paper use is low hanging fruit too. We mostly use electronic documents now and any necessary printing must be both double-sided and black and white. We also use Vice digital business cards which allow an employee's contact details to be shared quickly and securely to a customer's smart phone. No more printing.

THE SOCIAL SIDE

Our ESG efforts have focused on how we develop our existing CSR activities. In the past, we've raised money for a small number of charities. Instead, we've now switched to a pot of money for local charities and good causes nominated by staff. This helps drive employee engagement. We've also made it easier for staff to get involved through the trundl app, which converts steps into pounds for charities.

GETTING ON TOP OF GOVERNANCE

Most businesses already have some level of corporate governance as standard practice. What we've learned through the ESG process is that we can push to do more. For example, by upgrading our Cyber Essentials accreditation – that only requires a self-audit – to Cyber Essentials Plus which is externally audited. We're also looking at ISO 270001 accreditation as the next step in our ISO journey, pushing beyond what's comfortable or expected.

When you're changing behaviours, your ESG policies need to be front and centre as new ways of operating become the norm. This helps to embed lasting behavioural change which benefits the business, the planet, your customers and your community.

“ Most businesses already have some level of corporate governance as standard practice. What we've learned through the ESG process is that we can push to do more.”

IN SHORT

While ESG is ultimately all about the longer term, there's no time like now to make an improvement plan

Empowering staff to act – with a project leader in place to shape strategy – gets more done

Accept that some aspects of good ESG practice may cost more in the short term

Presenting ESP policies as whole new ways of operating is the best route to embedding the behavioural change your organisation needs to succeed.



Lock into the locality

ENGAGING WITH YOUR IMMEDIATE COMMUNITY
MAKES SOUND BUSINESS SENSE



In an era marked by dynamic market landscapes and evolving consumer preferences, businesses are constantly seeking innovative ways to stand out and thrive. One powerful strategy that's gained prominence is community engagement. Here, **James Bowles** explores why this is not only good but essential for business success – and ways to get started.

Building trust and credibility

Community engagement fosters trust and credibility – two cornerstones of any successful business. By actively participating in local events, initiatives and charitable activities, businesses demonstrate their commitment to societal well-being.

Such actions establish a positive image, resonate with customers and create a strong sense of trust among stakeholders. Trust, once established, enhances brand loyalty, leading to increased customer retention and advocacy.

Enhancing brand visibility and awareness

Engaging with the community provides businesses with opportunities for heightened visibility and brand awareness. Participation in local events, sponsorships or partnerships exposes the brand to a wider audience, helping it gain recognition beyond its core consumer base.

The more a business engages, the more its name becomes synonymous with positive change and community support.

Understanding customer needs

Involvement in community activities enables businesses to gain insights into the needs, preferences and pain points of their target audience.

Through direct interactions and feedback, businesses can tailor their products or services to better suit the community's requirements. This proactive approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also keeps the business ahead of market trends.



Fostering innovation

Community engagement can act as a breeding ground for innovation. Collaborating with diverse individuals and groups exposes businesses to fresh perspectives, ideas and solutions. The synergy created by different minds can spark innovation in product development, service offerings and business processes, giving the company a competitive edge.

Recruitment and employee morale

A business that actively engages with its community becomes an attractive employer. Potential employees are more likely to join a company that demonstrates a commitment to social responsibility and community welfare. Moreover, existing employees feel a sense of pride working for an organisation that positively impacts the community. This boosts employee morale, engagement and, ultimately, productivity.

Strengthening relationships

Community engagement is not limited to customers and employees, it also extends to suppliers, partners and other stakeholders. By nurturing relationships beyond transactional interactions, businesses can cultivate a network of supporters who are invested in the company's success. This network can open up valuable resources, advice and collaboration opportunities.

“ Partner with local non-profits or charities that share your values. Collaborative efforts can amplify your impact and expand your reach.”

Positive public relations

Community engagement generates positive public relations that can be leveraged during times of crisis. A business with a history of active involvement in the community is more likely to receive support and understanding from the public when facing challenges. The goodwill built through community engagement can serve as a buffer against negative publicity.

Here are some steps your business can take to increase its community involvement:

Identify relevant causes: Choose causes or initiatives that align with your business values and expertise. Consider issues that resonate with your target audience and community.

Engage employees: Encourage employees to volunteer their time or skills for community projects. Offer paid volunteer hours or organise team-building activities that contribute to local causes.

Local sponsorships: Sponsor local events, festivals, sports teams or cultural activities. This not only provides financial support but also increases your business's visibility.

Collaborate with non-profits: Partner with local non-profits or charities that share your values. Collaborative efforts can amplify your impact and expand your reach.

Host workshops and seminars: Share your business expertise by hosting workshops, seminars or training sessions that benefit the community. This can position your business as a resource for knowledge and growth.



Support education: Collaborate with schools and other educational establishments for mentorship programmes, career talks or scholarship opportunities. Investing in education benefits both students and your business's future workforce.

Local supplier engagement: Prioritise local suppliers and vendors to support the local economy and foster community relationships.

Environmental initiatives: Participate in local sustainability efforts such as clean-up drives, tree planting or waste reduction campaigns.

I asked Julie Frost the Business Improvement District (BID) Director for the Romford BID for her comments on how a business can become more involved in their local community and how can community engagement benefit the business' goals. She had this to say:

“When properly coordinated, businesses can act as a powerful voice for change in their area. Using vehicles like business forums, chambers of commerce, professional associations and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), the collective influence of businesses can be hard to ignore. By taking an active role in the community, businesses can help to shape an environment in which to aid the delivery of their own individual business goals.”

Julie Frost is not alone in seeing the proven benefits. Through genuine and meaningful community engagement, businesses can position themselves as responsible corporate citizens while reaping the rewards of improved reputation, customer loyalty and long-term profitability.



ARE YOU AI READY?

The world of work is changing



The use of artificial intelligence is likely to have a significant impact on the workplace, and consequently cause an increase in our leisure time. **Jane Crosby** explores why we may have to get used to a world where part-time working is the norm and unemployment rates are high.



“ It’s concerning that tech leaders like Elon Musk and senior figures in Google are worried about the impact of AI.”

It’s important to understand what artificial intelligence (AI) is. AI is usually seen as technologies working together to enable machines to act with human-like levels of intelligence. Recent improvements in the technology mean it now has the potential to replace a number of job functions previously thought to be unfillable by AI. If a recent report by Goldmans Sachs is to be believed, 300 million jobs could be lost or downgraded in America and Europe thanks to AI.

PANDORA’S BOX OR THE BOOST WE’VE BEEN LOOKING FOR?

If this scenario plays out, our ability to earn money will be seriously impacted, with some sectors more affected than others. Sectors like healthcare are already benefitting from AI, as it’s proving itself to be an efficient diagnostic tool, and also cuts administration. Any tool that can diagnose cancer earlier is to be welcomed, however these are highly skilled jobs, and not easily replaced.

It’s concerning that tech leaders like Elon Musk and senior figures in Google are worried about the impact of AI, and calling for its regulation. As our current jobs are replaced by AI, others will probably appear. But how many? Governments will need to put in place an enhanced benefit system to cope with the level of people out of work.

A MORAL MINEFIELD

As businesses introduce more and more AI technologies to automate tasks and make decisions, they’ll face new legal and moral questions regarding the rights of employees and their responsibilities as employers.

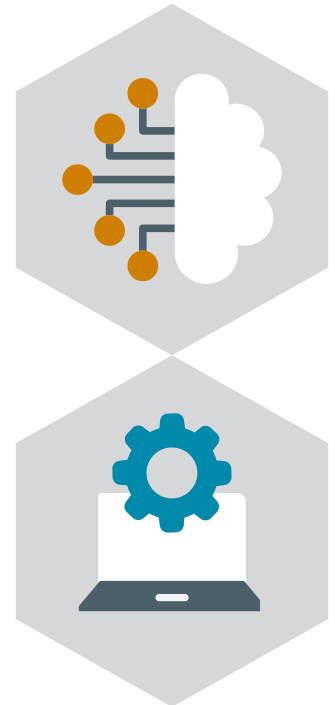
The hiring process itself is a good example. AI has the potential to improve the efficiency of HR processes, but it also presents new challenges for protecting the rights and interests of employees, such as privacy and fairness. For example, AI can be used to sift applications by using keywords to select candidates to interview. This removes subjective human decision making, and speeds up the process significantly. The danger is, to what degree is AI capable of assessing a candidate’s suitability? Psychometric testing overseen by AI could mean a candidate may not come into contact with a human until they’re selected for interview.

Privacy is also at risk. AI could be used to scan the internet for employees’ social media accounts to build a profile of them without their consent. It’s also used to track home working, with some companies remotely monitoring key-strokes and mouse movements, and even recording videos of their employees.

HOW AI CAN HELP BUSINESSES

On the other hand, automation and AI can also benefit employees. It can be used to track performance and suggest training where employees need it. This can help remove constraints and assist employees on a personal, tailored level – which is good for them, and for the business. What’s more, if AI can reduce stressful and laborious tasks in the workplace, it could be a boost to employees’ mental health.

Right now we’re in a world of change for employment, and businesses need to make sure that if they embrace AI, it means a change for the better, rather than an instrument to restrict employee freedoms.



IN SHORT

AI is being adopted worldwide, and more jobs than ever are at threat

Business must strike a balance between efficiency and ethics when integrating AI tools

Employees can both benefit and suffer at the hands of AI – use it wisely.



Handle with Care

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR EMPLOYEES' DATA



In today's digital age, the collection, storage and protection of data have become major concerns for individuals and organisations alike.

Noella Gooden examines data protection in the workplace, and why, when it comes to employee data, ensuring its security is not only a legal obligation but also a matter of ethical responsibility.



WHAT DATA ARE YOU COLLECTING?

Workplaces gather an array of personal information from employees, ranging from basic details like names and addresses to more sensitive data such as National Insurance numbers, bank account details and health information. This data is often needed for tasks like payroll, benefits administration and employee performance assessments. The collection of such data should always be proportionate, transparent, and conducted with the utmost care to prevent any potential loss or misuse.

Many employers will collect data from current employees, but also from potential job candidates and referees. Candidates who are unsuccessful in their application may wonder what becomes of the data they shared during the recruitment process. Employers may be tempted to hold onto this data 'just in case' it's useful at some point in the future. However, as per UK Data Protection legislation, data shouldn't be held for any longer than necessary, and certainly not retained indefinitely. 'Just in case' collection would likely fall into this category.

HOW TO SAFEGUARD DATA

To safeguard employee data effectively, organisations must establish comprehensive data protection policies. These should sit alongside an Employee Privacy notice that's available to all employees. This suite of policies and notices should cover the types of data collected, how it's used, and whether data will be shared with any other third-party service provider. Employees should also be made aware of their rights – including the right to correct or access their data. Finally, a data retention policy should be in place. An employer must adhere to its policies and review them at regular intervals to ensure they remain fit for purpose and compliant with relevant legislation.



CREATING A ROBUST POLICY

A robust data retention policy should set out how long different types of data will be retained. As mentioned above, employers should keep in mind time limitations for storing personal data. Keeping storage to a minimum ensures legal compliance, but is also better for data management – which can cost a business money.

When data is no longer needed, it must be securely destroyed. If different types of data require different destruction dates, this should be documented in the retention policy.

The collection of such data should always be proportionate, transparent, and conducted with the utmost care to prevent any potential loss or misuse.

ENFORCING YOUR POLICY

Employers can adopt several strategies to ensure compliance with their data policy:

AUTOMATED DATA DELETION

Implement automated systems that trigger data deletion once it reaches the end of its retention period. This minimises the risk of human error and ensures timely removal.

REGULAR AUDITING

Conduct regular audits of stored data to identify information that has exceeded its retention period. This proactive approach helps prevent the accumulation of unnecessary data.

SECURE DESTRUCTION

For physical documents, ensure secure destruction processes are in place to render the information irretrievable. Digital data should also be irreversibly deleted using industry-standard methods.

EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Train employees on data retention and destruction policies to promote a culture of compliance. Employees should understand the significance of adhering to these policies and their role in maintaining data security.

THIRD-PARTIES

If data is shared with third-party service providers, ensure they adhere to the same rigorous data protection and retention standards.

The collection and handling of employee data shouldn't be overlooked within your business processes. With robust data protection policies in place, you can not only meet regulatory requirements, but also demonstrate your commitment to respecting the privacy of your workforce. In an era where data breaches can have severe consequences, prioritising data protection is a fundamental step.



IN SHORT

The amount of employee data you hold can quickly stack up – make sure you know exactly what data you're collecting

To safeguard employee data properly, you should create comprehensive data protection policies for your organisation

Regular auditing can help maintain good data practices, and ensure data is held for no longer than necessary.



EDI ESSENTIALS

Keep pace with equality, diversity and inclusion



From pay gap reporting to discrimination laws, there's a constant stream of developments surrounding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies and initiatives.

Katie Ash breaks down the essentials for owners and decision makers.



WHAT IS EDI? AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Most companies work hard to create a safe and productive workplace for their employees. But how can businesses stay up to date with ever-changing policy and initiative changes, while mitigating the associated risks? It starts with a good understanding of EDI.

EDI is underpinned by the Equality Act 2010 providing legal protection for employees based on nine 'protected characteristics.'

Employers have a legal duty not to discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.



In practical terms, having a strong EDI policy in place goes far beyond an employer's legal obligation. It's also about creating a workplace where everyone feels respected and valued – and can reach their full potential.



“ Having a strong EDI policy in place goes far beyond the legal obligation of an employer. It’s also about creating a workplace where everyone feels respected and valued and can reach their full potential.”

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE

In the case of many small businesses, EDI compliance issues will only come to light if a complaint or claim is made following an incident. If, further to any claim, an employment tribunal finds that an employer has breached the Equality Act, the consequences can be extremely costly.

For larger businesses, there are specific reporting regulations that make their commitment to equality public. An example of this would be the gender pay gap – namely the difference in average pay between the men and women in your workforce.

This differs from equal pay, which means you must pay men and women the same for equal or similar work. Employers in the private or voluntary sectors with 250 or more employees must publish their gender pay gap data every year. This also applies to specified public-sector employers in England (and a limited number of non-devolved bodies).

It’s also worth remembering that research shows that people want to work for employers with good employment practices. So, the consequences of not nailing down the right policies and procedures could also result in a negative impact on staff retention.

GETTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN PLACE

With the law constantly evolving, it can be difficult for business owners and decision makers to stay abreast of all changes. As a result, it’s important to arrange a regular review of your policies and contracts by an employment lawyer. This demonstrates to staff that you’re taking your responsibilities seriously and can then be invaluable if a complaint or claim arises further down the line.

In a recent case, our client had an EDI policy in place. However, it was found to be outdated and may have been insufficient for demonstrating that they had taken steps to prevent discrimination in the workplace. In this instance, the employer was able to resolve the issue amicably with their employee. Had the matter progressed to a tribunal claim, they may, though, have found themselves in hot water. The business would have had to explain why its policy was inadequate and why it should not be liable for any alleged discrimination.

It’s far easier (and more cost effective) to put appropriate plans in place to protect your employees and business – rather than having to deal with a grievance or claim.

IN SHORT

Requirements around equality, diversity and inclusion are constantly evolving

To adhere to the Equality Act (and meet employees’ expectations), employers need to ensure they’re keeping pace

It’s best to be proactive when it comes to EDI – don’t wait until a claim or grievance is raised

Schedule a regular review of your EDI policies and contracts by an employment lawyer.



“Following implementation, the key to navigating EDI is to stay on top of it.”

Embrace EDI for a fairer workplace



Equality, diversity & inclusion (EDI) is a topic that lots of companies tend to tiptoe around, ticking boxes to meet legal requirements but living in fear of failure. **Kristen Drummond** shares a four-step process to instead start trailblazing when it comes to creating an open and inclusive workplace.



1 DIVE INTO DIVERSITY

EDI is a vast topic with real life implications, which is why the first step must be to understand it, starting with what it covers. Sit down with your leadership team, your HR team – or even the whole company – and look at the basics: the nine protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The act also sets out the minimum legal requirements you need to meet as an organisation to protect your employees. But what can you do to go beyond the minimum?

2 BRING IN THE EXPERTS

To successfully develop and implement organisational policies around EDI is a big responsibility. One option is to outsource the task – find your ‘hero supplier’. Bring in experts in the field who can support your business ambition to lead the way in your industry.

There are organisations and campaign groups up and down the country with a special interest in each characteristic. Many will gladly offer advice and training to businesses seeking to better support those they represent. For example, a workplace can become ‘Disability Confident’ accredited following a process to identify areas for improvement, then developing a business-wide solution to address them. Seeking external advice is a fast and efficient way to embed valuable knowledge into your business.

3 TAKE ACTION

With the advice and guidance of your chosen expert partners, HR and leadership teams, next comes implementation. Often this comes in the form of writing and sharing new policies. The goal is to feel informed and clear enough to confidently say to your employees: *“This is our policy, and we have a process in place if this is a position you find yourself in, and we will support you through it.”*

While your new policy may only impact a fraction of your team over the years, it creates a culture of openness, inclusivity and security that should translate into retention of talent.

4 KEEP ON TOP OF IT

Following implementation, the key to navigating EDI is to stay on top of it. Some businesses may consider creating an internal EDI committee. Their role would be to discuss any knowledge gaps they’ve identified, share observations, and keep in touch with your expert partners to stay up to date on any new advice or guidance that emerges.

Follow these steps to embrace EDI in your workplace. It’s an ever-evolving and exciting topic, full of opportunities to learn, create and then implement transformational change for the benefit of employees and your business.

IN SHORT

EDI has real-life ramifications, so all business should be on board with it

First sit down with anyone within your company who has an interest, then reach out for expert advice

Creating clear written policies to share company-wide will make your workplace more transparent and inclusive.



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Is your HR function legally complaint?

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EDI for a fairer workplace

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