

Welcome to the latest edition of the microskills™ network for participants of microskills™ training around the world.

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The financial crisis of the past two or three years has seen some dramatic changes in working practices in the UK and other developed countries

## **Working hours**

Despite the European Working Time directive restricting the maximum number of hours worked to 48 per week, in the past two years, staff working hours have increased, with two thirds starting early, working through lunch and leaving late. A report by officebroker.com shows 45% regularly took work home, 14% worked more than 50 hours and 4% worked on seven days a week.

better able to handle sensitive issues at work. These issues include bereavement, serious illnesses, stress and family worries.

If companies expect so much from their staff, they had better look after their well being.

Working such long hours is potentially unsafe if mistakes are being made.

## **Harder but fairer**

A recent survey by the UK Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) reports that 49.5% of organisations have increased the number of disciplinary cases taken against staff in the past two years. (Only 8.6% showed a decrease.) This has been matched by a rise of 47.7% of companies reporting more use of grievance procedures. (10.3% returned fewer.)

We are certainly experiencing a greater interest in training managers how to conduct 'serious conversations' with their staff.

On a more positive side, though, we are also meeting clients who are concerned that their managers are

## **The Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 has just come into law in Britain and has replaced the Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act.

The new Act covers the same groups that were protected by existing equality legislation – age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. These are now called 'protected characteristics'. The Act extends some protections to characteristics that were not previously covered and also strengthens particular aspects of equality law. As a result, companies may need to review and change some of their policies and practices

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and their managers might need updating.

## **The demise of the middle manager**

One of our favourite futurists, Professor Lynda Gratton of London Business School, caused a stir recently when she predicted that middle management was dead. "The classic job of the middle manager will soon disappear", she claimed.

"This is because technology can play the role of manager, monitoring performance, providing instant feedback and creating reports. Skilled team managers are increasingly self-managed, while Gen Y sees no value in reporting to someone who simply keeps track of what they do. Finally, with increased globalisation, managers need specialist skills to lead people across boundaries."

We like people who think the same way as us!

The role should be about managing relationships, not just managing the tasks.

## **A fifth of salary spent on driving to work**

The current rise in petrol prices means that some British staff are now spending one fifth of their annual salary in simply driving to and from work.

Surely, this reinforces the case for flexible working and occasional working away from the office.

## **Demographics**

Our consultancy is always fascinated by demographic data and we were recently excited by material put out by Bernard Salt of KPMG in Australia. In 2008, more people migrated into Singapore (222,731) than into the UK (211,945) or Australia (207,134).

In the same year, the fertility rates of Singapore (1.3) and Australia (2.0) were overshadowed by Niger (7.1) and Afghanistan (6.6).

The median age of the population of Yemen is 17.9 years (ie 50% of the country is below that age). In Japan, 22% are older than 65 years. In the Emirates, it is 1%.

## **Experiences, comments and questions**

We always like to hear from readers with views and experiences they have either for publication or for reply off-line.

microskills™, problem ownership™ and Supportive Manager™ are part of a stable of methods used by the Tim Russell Group for consultancy and training of staff around the world in organisational change and interpersonal skills. User organisations come from finance, travel, hospitality, retail, manufacturing, government, education, health services and telecoms. Applications range from customer service to management development, team-building to support skills, negotiations to managing meetings, interviewing to selling.

## **For more information**

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