

Setting the good-work agenda

It's vital all in public office think ethics-first when it comes to organisational decision-making, says **Karen Grave**

So it's another case of *deja vu* as I start a PPMA supplement by saying 'I can't believe how quickly time has gone'. But, honestly, I really can't believe the year is almost over already.

This supplement will be published as Solace Summit is underway in Birmingham. I'm delighted to be supporting that in a discussion on ethics. Given where we are in our political discourse and climate, it feels right to remind ourselves that ethics is a really topical subject. Brexit has tested our politics – and the media's capacity for balanced journalism – to a degree we were clearly not prepared for.

While we've had periods of real social challenge before, and no doubt we will have them again, the worrywarts (or perhaps the middle aged) among us may question our future capacity to create an environment where we can robustly argue and debate, but still maintain a respect for one another.

It seems to me, the seven Nolan Principles go hand-in-hand with the good work agenda

The red lights are clearly flashing across government. Sir Jonathan Evans, Chairman of the Committee for Standards in Public Life, published an open letter to all public office holders on 20th September reminding us all about the importance of how we behave. In reflecting on the political climate around Brexit, he notes that while our institutions are undertaking their roles in providing constitutional checks and balances, 'behaviour matters as much as formal structures'.

Those of us in HR and OD will be rolling our eyes – hopefully, at this point, at the blindingly obvious nature of this observation, and the one that came next: 'Leadership of standards needs to come from the top: from Government and from Parliament'.

This leadership issue is all-encompassing for our organisations. Standards, values and behaviour are the bedrock of our organisational

cultures. How we tend to, nurture and maintain our foundations doesn't just affect us now, it impacts our collective and individual futures.

Sir Jonathan ended this letter with the following: 'These long-established principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership are a personal responsibility and set the tone for leadership across the whole of public service. They are what the public expect of us'.

I set out in the last supplement that we'd be looking at Future Workforce in this one and the principles of 'good work'. As a reminder, good work is:

- fairly rewarded;
- gives people the means to securely make a living;
- gives opportunities to develop skills and a career and ideally gives a sense of fulfilment;
- provides a supportive environment with constructive relationships;
- allows for work-life balance;
- is physically and mentally healthy;
- gives employees the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives;
- accessible to all.

Arguably, we should all be delivering good work now. But we know we aren't. How do we know that? In 2017, KPMG estimated that 5.5 million UK workers are paid below the foundation living wage. Poor absence rates, instances of bullying, patchy employee engagement and poor representation of minority groups in leadership roles are indicators we cannot ignore.

It seems to me, the seven Nolan principles go hand-in-hand with the good work agenda. You can make a relatively easy case that the characteristics of high-performing cultures align with them, and the role of leaders becomes even more important.

If leadership is so important – and I would always argue that it is – why have we chosen to focus on Future Workforce. There are a few reasons for me: internal and external drivers for change aren't slowing down – technology is exerting ever more pressure with the increasing use of



AI in processes and software; our ageing workforce is demanding that we think evermore creatively about attracting and retaining older workers; Brexit will present a clear and present opportunity for us to genuinely face and address an uncertain landscape, and so on.

We talk increasingly about local, places-based services needing to focus on those with complex multiple needs. But we don't hear that language being used in the context of how public service organisations reflect and adapt so that they can shape and respond to the future.

It's probably a conversation we should be having more for a number of reasons. I've been encouraged by amazing leaders who are proactively pushing what I call the values agenda. Talking to chief executives about Brené Brown, vulnerability, compassion, etc, no longer gets you filthy looks, which is a positive. But, ironically, it does feel as though, for

all the available work around good and effective leadership, the brilliant and visible leaders we automatically think about almost attract an alchemical/mystical aura.

The argument about nature and nurture is a long-standing one and I wrote many essays on this at Uni. Even if you took the view that good leaders are born, the reality is we can't afford to accept that – we just won't have enough of them. Being really clear about relationships between leadership, good work, the Nolan principles and our capacity to create, shape, guide, develop, nurture, and encourage future workforces that aspire, thrive and flourish is critical.

In this edition, you will be reading about PPMA member organisations who are looking to address aspects of the good work agenda. What characterises these organisations is they are clear on their relationships with their communities, they

understand that the now affects the future, they're not waiting for the future to happen to them and they know our organisations have complex, multiple needs.

It's an important agenda. And I'm delighted to say we will be further exploring this at the Annual Conference in March/April 2020. I'm also delighted to introduce Max McKeown to the community. Max will be a keynote speaker at Conference 2020. He has written for us on another important topic – crisis and how we can harness that to innovate.

We'll be announcing PPMAHR20's theme on Tuesday 29th October. It's hugely exciting, so please keep an eye out on www.ppma.org.uk for more details.

Karen Grave
is PPMA
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A future leader for a future workforce

With the growing list of attributes and skills expected of our leaders, **Jan Cox** says now is the time to be bold

'People will forget what you said and what you did but they will always remember how you made them feel' – Brené Brown

Such an overwhelming responsibility for a leader. Such an imperative to behave responsibly with this level of influence and power over the people making up our future workforce.

Brené Brown challenges us to do better and her definition of what it means to be a true leader (*see inset below*) should make anyone with a responsibility for people stop and think. For those who know they are not doing the best for their people, this should make them consider their actions and behaviours:

In her book *Dare to Lead* she advocates for brave leaders and describes a desperate need for more leaders who are committed to courageous, wholehearted leadership and who are self-aware enough to lead from their hearts, rather than unevolved leaders who lead from fear and hurt.

How will you behave today? How do you want to be remembered by your teams and what do you want to be your legacy for our future workforce?

We have read so much in this supplement about our future workforce, how they will expect to be treated and what they will need from their employer. To thrive as an organisation and be sought after as the place that people want to work in, this future world of work will only be possible through our leaders being authentic, engaging their people with honesty, integrity and consistency.

Our leaders today must refine their skills in order to engage with this workforce of the future – they must reflect on their practice and be honest about their own skills, beliefs, prejudices, favourites and bias. Our leaders must offer a safe environment for our future workforce to grow and learn.

If you are truly reflecting and being honest with yourself, these leadership challenges bring a new opportunity to also grow as a leader, to truly have honest relationships and conversations with your people and those around you – your people will thank you for listening and will always remember how you made them feel.

We have an obligation to make the world of work exciting and safe for our future workforce

Consider the qualities needed for inclusive leadership – this is about ensuring your people feel that they belong, safe in their knowledge they will be supported, treated fairly and respectfully – there is no place here for a blame or bullying culture.

When faced with negative environments we know the future workforce, who will expect to be treated properly, will also vote with their feet and not be afraid to give their feedback!

Writer Deepa Agarwal has identified six key qualities for inclusive leadership:

- Courage
- Empower
- Compassion
- Belongingness
- Collaboration
- Authenticity

There is a whole range of thinking around each of these qualities if you want to learn more and develop your skills – at its core, it is about the courage to lead from the heart, being honest and authentic with your people.

We have an obligation to make the world of work exciting and

safe for our future workforce. Professor Beverly Alimo-Metcalf challenges us to be the 'engaging leader' and through her work over many years has real evidence of how listening to and talking with your teams can inspire them, along with having a tangible impact on their health and wellbeing. This, in turn, has positive impact on your business. It makes complete business sense to engage with your workforce!

There is an ever growing list of attributes and behaviours that we expect of our leaders today and I don't underestimate the challenges in striving to become the engaging leader for the future, developing your skills and staying curious – you have to do what is right for you and if you are not being authentic your people will know that you are acting.

But just picture the scene if you successfully lead from your heart, with honesty, supporting your people at every step and ensuring they learn and grow – your people and your business will thrive. I'm going to leave you with a quote from the lovely Brené again as it is so relevant: 'Feel the fear and do it anyway! See you in the arena!'

Jan Cox is Deputy HR Director Competition and Markets Authority and PPMA Strategic Theme Lead for Leadership

leader noun | lead·er | \ˈlē-dər\

Anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes and has the courage to develop that potential.

Leadership is not about titles or the corner office. It's about the willingness to step up, put yourself out there, and lean into courage. The world is desperate for braver leaders. It's time for all of us to step up.

Get your hands dirty!

Every crisis is an opportunity, says **Dr Max McKeown** the trick is knowing how to transform necessity into curiosity

Although it may feel like it, crisis is rarely the same as a disaster (although a disaster may prompt a crisis). A crisis is a decisive turning point that forces a choice between inertia and innovation.

A crisis is a wake-up call. Smart leaders of the most successful organisations learn that waiting for the full force of a real crisis may not allow you enough time to save the day, situation, company or planet. The answer for them is the gospel of perpetual crisis.

People need reasons to make tough choices. Organisations find it even harder to make progress. They usually wait until a real crisis comes before getting on with the hard stuff.

To plug into the power of perpetual crisis, there's no need to fake it. Instead, look into the past, present and future to find your sense of urgency. What do you need to do? What needs to be done?

Take external pressure from crisis and transform it into motivational pressure to do something worthwhile. Instead of being depressed by forces outside of your control, use those same forces to drive you forward towards something you want to achieve: move from bad energy to good energy.

Get Your People Curious. The true parents of innovation are necessity and

curiosity. Necessity can be a force that starts from things out of your control, but one that can be cleverly redirected. You become an innovator when you combine necessity, what needs to be done, with curiosity, the drive to discover, explore and understand.

Get Your Hands Dirty. This is about getting outside: of your office, your head and your schedule. Making time to walk about, ask questions, and learn. The work of an innovator involves making a mess. Taking things apart and putting them back together again. Finding out how things work so you can make them work better.

The first Apple computer was built by hand from wood and parts in a garage. The first Google search engine was coded by the founders in a lab. The founder of Toyota learned how to build his first car by dismantling and reassembling a Chevrolet. The first organ transplants involved blood, guts and deaths before they finally started to save lives. Messing up other people's clean.

Get Your Game On. This is about turning fear into focus. And focus into the fun of creating something new and improved. The best way of dealing with a crisis is to innovate your way out of it. Continuing as though nothing has changed is a missed

opportunity and may encourage complacency rather than imaginative, bold solutions.

At such times, there is often a temporary willingness to consider better ways of doing things. You will waste them if the message spreads that there is no need for change or creativity. Innovators lose their moment and innovation loses its momentum.

Get Idea Hungry. This is about a culture where people seek out new ideas. People want to understand how to make the world better. They want to make a difference. They are driven by curiosity to question assumptions. People view their expertise as a starting point.

They want to contribute to new knowledge rather than using what they know as a defence mechanism. Individuals and their networks challenge boundaries. They see impossible as motivational, and value even unwelcome change as an opportunity to try new ideas.

Get Culture Karma. People want to know where they are going and whether the destination is worth the pain of the moment. The leader sets the tone. The leader can make the future seem desirable and a path to that future seem possible. Every little thing you do sends a message about what you



The Innovator's Book: Rules for Rebels and Rule-Shapers by Dr Max McKeown is published by LID Publishing (£9.99 at amazon.co.uk)

want, what you care about and whether supporting you is worthwhile.

If you talk about the future, people will prepare for the future. If you're in the market for great new ideas, creative people will bring you their best work. If you have a track record and reputation for nurturing new ideas, everyone will bring you the best of themselves – because you care. Even

in a crisis, leaders tend to get the innovation they deserve to create the future they want.

Dr Max McKeown is a strategist, psychologist and author of several award winning books.

As an innovator, be ready to mess up the clean, tidy, situations you want to improve.

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The workforce of the future and the future of work!

The modern workplace seems like a different world compared to decades ago. And your business model needs to adapt, as **Paul Friday** explains

What will work look like in the near-future?

Have you heard the rumours? The world of work is changing. What's your job? An HRD, a service director? Do you mean... project manager, mathematician, marketing expert and specialist in conflict resolution? Basically, our jobs are increasing in complexity every year.

Thirty years ago, knowing how to use a computer made you an IT expert, today it makes you human. The world has changed. And it's about to change faster.

It is suggested we won't have a job title, we'll have a set of skills, which will be applied to various jobs. And this is now. So, let's consider what other changes we have seen recently.

What's your gig?

We all know about the gig economy. Despite the flexibility provided, these jobs are often criticised, but in future we'll all work 'gigs' based on skills.

So, looking ahead, we'll need to develop a well-rounded set of skills to compete for jobs – many of these will be short-term contract work, too.

We're already competing in an unstable jobs market, with jobs being

created and disappearing every year, so it's time to level up. Public sector employers are struggling to recruit and retain the key jobs they need to fill, eg, directors of HR, directors of finance and service directors.

Where do you work?

It's not just jobs that are changing, it's workplaces, too. Mobile working is on the increase, so employees can work from anywhere (in certain roles), and easily work for multiple companies in a day or for an allocated time, using current technology.

This makes interim and short-term work more likely. Social media is awash with references to side hustles (a second source of income that can be very lucrative), so we'll all be entrepreneurs soon, with some people working at several roles in place of traditional careers.

Of course, there will be specialists working with complex contracts who work in full-time roles (although they may still do private jobs), but for the wider workforce there will be no jobs for life (remember those?) – so there needs to be continuous learning to keep up with technological change.

An office in the palm of your hand

Elon Musk has said we're essentially 'cyborgs', such is our symbiotic relationship with technology, viewing half the world through our eyes and half through a 'black mirror'.

With 3D contact lenses and holographic conference calls just around the corner, technology is really empowering us now, particularly with AI 'BOTS' (such as MHR's Peoplefirst and Talksuite), putting your organisation in your hands, 24/7, or on a social level with Amazon's Alexa.

A child born today, will have unimaginable tech expertise when they start work and will have better access to information and education than anyone in history.

What is the influence of research?

The future of work is being studied in detail right now, so we'll have a better workplace in the future. It's a given that technology will change the nature of work, but how fast can this happen with an ageing workforce and the continuous problems for employers with recruitment and retention?

Automation will change jobs and in some instances remove them, so

we need better design of jobs and a different attitude and skills with flexibility of operations.

When will we work?

As well as changing our approach to business, we've got rid of workers, work (technically), the office, and jobs...so, what's left?

Since 2014, employees with 26 weeks' service have had a legal right to request to work flexibly. Employers must consider such requests and have a sound business case for refusing.

We could therefore get rid of our schedule and days at work. You might be wondering if I've completely lost the plot at this point? Well I haven't and here's what I'm referring to.

Four-day week

Following a successful trial of the four-day week in New Zealand, people are questioning what full time should mean.

Dr Daniel King of Nottingham Business School has said the four-day week could end presenteeism and that 'British workers value work-life balance over any other aspect of a job', so if that's the case, one could argue that the traditional

working model isn't working for many people.

Flexitime

Four-day weeks mean more time for errands and family, but this model doesn't suit all businesses. The answer may simply be flexibility. Stressed workers perform worse, so allowing workers to start and finish at their discretion means they have a better work-life balance, are happier and so achieve more, with increased quality.

So, what does this all mean?

The modern workforce needs to be mobile, technically competent and can get more done in less time. But despite the best tech, the answer lies in leading your business strategically, by reviewing your business model, supporting your employees and making sure everyone gets the training they need. Use of big data analytics will bring together the insights you need to future-proof your business.

Paul Friday is Head of Strategic Relationships at MHR



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