



The TALENT CHANNEL

Tune in to the latest news from Davidson & Partners

"Let's make recruitment interesting again!"
– read Hamish's thoughts overleaf...



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Welcome!

Welcome to the first edition of *The Talent Channel*, a new newsletter from Davidson & Partners – the new force in executive recruitment.

In this edition, interim executive Stuart Notholt makes the business case for better employee engagement, Sean McKenzie looks at how we might manage stress in the workplace, and Davidson & Partners founder Hamish Davidson says we need to make recruitment exciting again.

So please read on and tune in to the very best in executive talent!

Anna Bishell *Consultant, Interim*

Putting flexibility centre stage

Anna Bishell looks at how interim managers can help deliver business change.

The future models of work will be multi-faceted, with an integrated mix of direct, indirect, full time and part time staff. In this environment, interim executives offers great flexibility to bring in skills and expertise quickly as and when needed.

Interim managers are independent senior executives hired by organisations to work on a specific project, to solve specific problems, or to fill a temporary gap in a management team. New talent is constantly becoming available, and interims can be deployed very quickly – it is not uncommon for us to have someone in post within days of discussing an assignment with a client.

The interim market is changing. Flexibility is key and interims thrive on portfolio management, allowing greater capacity to work with a range of clients – bringing their transferable skills to bear in creating solutions to clients' needs. It is increasingly common for interims with a strong private sector background to find they are particularly sought after by public sector employers. Similarly, the use of interim managers in charities and NGOs has always been a significant part of the interim sector. Charities like the flexibility and the 'expertise on demand' aspect of hiring an experienced interim who will bring heavyweight skills from other sectors.

Networking plays a significant role in the interim management market. In delivering a significant number of senior level interim assignments across the public sector, I have come to appreciate the value of building close working relationships with clients and candidates by taking the time to meet and understand them. This



enables me to fully understand their skills sets in order to meet client requirements.

Interims are flexible, self-starting individuals who thrive on change and so cut rapidly to the chase in the client organisations they work for. Another interesting feature of the interim sector is the high percentage of women interims. Recent research has shown that around a third of interims on assignment are women – a higher figure than in most boardrooms. This may be due to an interim career choice giving women the means and opportunity to offer their skills in a more flexible manner than in the traditional workplace structure. It certainly suggests that the interim sector is ahead of the game in delivering diversity into the senior management skills set.

If your organisation would benefit from the flexibility and creativity that hiring a senior interim manager can deliver, give me a ring!

Anna Bishell
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Interim Spotlight

The Special Forces of the business world

Interim executive Stuart Notholt likens the work of the interim manager to flying a helicopter. "Like a consultant," he says, "the interim is expected to rapidly gain an overview of the situation on the ground and to make strategic recommendations. But we're also expected to land the helicopter, get out, and deal with whatever issues have been identified. So interim executives are like the Special Forces of the business world."

Notholt specialises in delivering business change through effective stakeholder communications, generally working with large organisations by supporting their senior management teams. He has a particular interest in the role of employee engagement in achieving business outcomes. "There is ample evidence that employee satisfaction has a positive impact on the bottom line. And one of the best ways to improve employee happiness is through good internal communications; by keeping staff well informed and motivated."

Staff satisfaction, argues Notholt, is not only an effective tool for guiding internal change but can have a significant positive impact on an organisation's external relationships with government, partners and the general public. "The old adage that staff are the best ambassadors for an organisation has long been true, and is even more relevant today when stakeholders, and the public at large, are increasingly cynical about the messages coming from big corporations and organisations.

"Interestingly, one of the ways the public measure whether an organisation is 'good' or not is how well they are seen to be treating their staff. So addressing employee engagement issues has a double benefit – it makes for a more productive workforce and helps the external perception of the organisation."

Stuart Notholt
www.notholt.net



De-stressing the NHS workplace

Using stress management engagement sessions can be an effective tool for uncovering underlying issues in the NHS, says interim executive Sean McKenzie.

There is no such thing as the “perfect organisation”. Every organisation has its problems and challenges. The NHS challenges the most astute manager and demands the very best when it comes to following process, protocol and professionalism. Complexity emerges with managing diversity, compliance with strategic vision, funding and engagement with those who work in medical capacities as well as those who work in a myriad of functions in a non-medical capacity.



Having worked at all levels within the NHS, my experience is that staff who work in the lower banded areas generally feel less engaged with management and the NHS as a whole and generally mention that they feel undervalued and do not feel “connected” to the overall vision of the organisation.

A recent piece of work involving stress management focus groups of 500 staff, carried out in a higher education organisation, similarly revealed that staff, including managers, felt disengaged with the organisation and with senior management. Ninety-four per cent indicated (via a short stress audit) that they were severely stressed; this having a knock-on effect with their work performance and personal lives. They felt senior management had little or no interest in them as individuals and only appeared to be interested in box-ticking to ensure that prescribed targets were met. Results from this work indicated that staff were disengaged, required more regular performance management meetings (not just annual appraisals), more frequent 1-1s and better management training.

These results will be familiar to anyone who has done equivalent work in the NHS, and any recommended actions will also be applicable to NHS organisations. In this example, these involved using short bite-sized stress management sessions to extend insight into the organisation and its people. The benefits were twofold. The first is that staff felt liberated and valued given that their thoughts and experiences are asked for as well as the fact that they will be given sound advice on managing stress and secondly, senior management gained in-depth insight into where some of their problems exist.

Clearly, once having identified common issues a comprehensive plan can be implemented to help overcome them. The goal must be a better trained, and more aware, management equipped with the skills to help them to motivate, encourage, inspire and successfully lead their staff.

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Let's talk!



If we have sparked some curiosity, then call us:

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Time to make recruitment interesting again

Hamish Davidson argues that better recruitment strategies can create real diversity in the workplace.

Much has been said and written in recent times about the value of diversity in organisations. At Davidson Partners we firmly believe that talent comes in all shapes and guises, that diverse teams make more informed decisions, and that the best of talent in any one sector is as good as the best of talent in any other sector. For leaders to recognise and develop the varied potential talents of their staff is not just ethically right but makes good business sense for their organisations and their customers.

The fact remains that there are still too many barriers to genuine diversity in the workplace. One is the view, too often expressed, that “it will be very tough for anyone from outside of my sector to successfully move into my sector”. That’s nonsense. Properly coached, mentored and supported, all talent is transferable across all sector boundaries. And, frankly, we are not so blessed in this country that we can afford to have a narrow perspective. In the US, it is much easier to switch sectors. Here, we like to compartmentalise people. Traditional recruiters are often complicit in this. They will typically take a tight, narrow brief because it makes their work easier. But always recruiting the same people, with the same mentality, does not in the end make for a fully competitive, innovative or dynamic culture. I think it’s a grave error.

Resourcing strategies typically focus too much on box ticking against skills, competencies and experience - and too little on values and behaviours. So we need to introduce resourcing strategies that allow for more flexibility in the selection and deployment of talent, and which also recognise that the appointment of the candidate is the start of the process, not the end. It is ironic that if, say, four people are interviewed for a role, the three unsuccessful applicants will usually get feedback - but the person who is expected to actually do the job may get no guidance as to where there are any development needs or skills gaps. At Davidson Partners we aim to help candidates to be successful in their new roles, offering coaching and mentoring where it would be useful.

Above all, we are striving to make recruitment interesting again. Successful recruitment requires a real insight into organisations and the dynamics of the people who work there. It allows you to do things around reputation, team building, culture, of looking at an organisation in a slightly more holistic way - and that’s when things start to get interesting!

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