



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, John Tizard argues for improved staff motivation and growth, 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



Value, respect, motivate and reward staff

Organisations that fail their people will fail their citizens and customers, says **John Tizard**, independent strategic advisor and commentator on public policy and services

The successful local authority – like any other successful organisation – will strongly value, respect, motivate and reward their staff, and the staff of their partners and suppliers.

This is particularly the case during periods of austerity, cuts, job losses and change.

Political leaders and senior executives must never take staff for granted, take advantage of them or abuse them. They have to expect the best from their staff. This requires investing in development programmes – collective and individual – and recruiting and retaining good people. It also requires effective staff and union engagement, excellent employment practices and good rewards, as well as exemplary performance management.

However, these alone will not be enough.

It is critical that local authorities and the wider public sector adopt and practice talent strategies that ensure that they have always the right people to meet their challenges and to secure positive outcomes. This requires an authority to have clear objectives and defined ways of achieving these; understanding what staffing is required to secure these objectives and what will be required over a three to five year period; and systematically developing and implementing programmes to grow internal talent and recruit external talent to ensure that the objectives can be realised.

Local authorities and the wider public sector will require a range of professional skills, but increasingly strategic leadership, commercial,

project management and collaborative skills will be important as will specific technical expertise. It will be important to recognise that many outcomes will be delivered through, and in partnership with, a range of public sector, business, social enterprises, and the voluntary and community sectors. People who understand these sectors will be essential as will those who can negotiate, persuade, contract and collaborate to secure outcomes.

The public sector has to be ready and willing to look across to other sectors to recruit and to encourage its people to aspire to be promoted into other sectors. Natural career progression should be sector neutral.

Local authorities should expect, encourage, incentivise and require their suppliers and partners to adopt similar approaches to talent and people management.

We know that the next five years or more are going to be extremely challenging. Local government and the whole of the public sector and other public service providers cannot afford to get their talent and people strategies wrong. They have every opportunity and incentive to get them right.

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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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