



Alan Thorburn

07771 943580 | alan@thorburnhr.com | <https://thorburnhr.com> | Bedford

A dynamic, solutions-focused HR Consultant and Interim HR Director with proven ability to identify strategic problems, develop solutions, influence leaders and lead teams to deliver change in complex and fast changing international Media and Manufacturing businesses. Expert in Employee relations and an experienced Business Partner to CEOs and MDs with the expertise to fix what is broken, build what is missing and deliver the solutions you need, in a very practical, sustainable way.

SPECIALITIES

- Board level skills and expertise across the full range of HR issues, with particular focus on business change programmes, restructures, transformation, M&A and TUPE, and Employee Relations.
- Equally adept from the strategy inception to the practical hands-on delivery
- Extensive Employee Relations expertise, including collective bargaining internationally, large scale restructures, consultation machinery and disputes resolution
- Extensive experience dealing with complex and high risk individual ER and legal cases
- Expert in delivering change programmes, restructures, M&A and integrations.
- Developing HR and ER strategies to complement business strategies, building organisational and technical solutions, and delivering practical business outcomes
- Building, Leading and Developing full spectrum, multi-site, international HR teams
- Resourcing, developing and engaging colleagues and leaders from shop floor through to Board
- Divisional boards and Group-wide Functional Head roles in matrix Blue Chip organisations
- Reward management to senior level including pay structures, bonus and LTI schemes, job evaluation and grading structures, benefits, pensions and benefits

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Thorburn HR Consulting Ltd - Interim HR Director and Consultant

July 2023 to date

Bournemouth University

April 2024 to January 2025

- Interim ER assignment working with Exec Team and Trade Unions to reset relationships and work through a complex change agenda in a challenging sector.
- Consultancy and design work on HR team transformation with new service delivery model and People Hub

Oxford University Press

October 2018 to June 2023

Oxford University Press is the largest university press in the world, with more than 5,000 people publishing in 70 languages and 190 countries.

Director of HR Business Partnering / Interim Group HR Director

September 2019 to June 2023

- Moved in house as HRD for Academic and ELT Divisions, ensuring that the people and talent needs are aligned to the divisional business strategies. Led Business Partnering teams based in UK, Spain, Turkey, LATAM, United States and South Africa through a significant period of restructuring and change management to deliver a new Operating Model for the Press and support digital transformation.
- Since mid 2020, for extended periods throughout and since the Pandemic, formally or informally acted as Interim Group HR Director whilst leading the Press' global HR response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Working in a very effective cross functional Covid response team, problem solved rapidly and effectively in an unprecedented global business environment, and provided thought leadership, strategy and practical guidance to leaders and colleagues alike to help the Press transition to, and learn to perform in, a remote working environment, in the midst of a global health crisis.
- Subsequently led the transition beyond the pandemic and defined the Press' approach to Hybrid working, advising CEO and ExCo and define what Hybrid means across our diverse markets, delivering excellent change management and bedding Hybrid in as BAU.
- Led the HR Senior Leadership Team to develop our global People Strategy and moved the focus to a longer-term strategic view of how HR enables the business to succeed in a digital transition.
- Delivered 18% reduction global HR cost.

- Managed complex ER matters internationally, including significant restructuring on a global scale and leading New York Union contract negotiations for the first time.

HR Consultant (As JMT HR)

October 2018 to September 2019

- Analysis, solution design and implementation of project to reset UK Redundancy terms and delivering £2m+ restructuring cost savings. Delivered via colleague consultation and contract variation programme with 100% signature rate. Established Employee Engagement Forum in UK (and subsequently US) to enable.
- Designed and implemented restructure of Global HR function into One-HR model, establishing CoEs and Business Partnering structure and driving standardisation and process efficiency.
- ER Strategy and TUPE consultation for outsourcing of Kettering Logistics operations.

JMT HR Consulting Ltd – Interim HR Director and Consultant

Sep 2015 to Sept 2019

Interim and consulting assignments across strategy, business change, restructures, M&A and TUPE, Employee Relations, Reward and complex or senior individual cases.

J2 Global Inc

September 2018

- Post Acquisition Restructure of Tech Company

ITN Ltd

March 2017 –February 2018

“Diagnose, Design and Deliver” Consultancy assignment modernising working time business processes

- Clean-sheet developed a flexible, fit for purpose solution for a global 24/7 news environment.
- Led Stakeholder Board through complex strategy issues to a consensus position satisfying the diverse needs of the operating businesses
- Delivered the detail level policy and business process design work
- Consulted with staff and negotiated with the trades unions to agree new policy
- Led supplier selection process for supporting SAAS time management application

High Speed 2 Ltd

February 2017

Confidential investigation on high profile / high risk individual case

Hybrid Air Vehicles Ltd

Various work packages - September 2015 – September 2018

Strategic HR Consultancy and ongoing ad hoc HR support for a high-profile UK-based Aerospace tech start-up, home of the amazing Airlander 10, the largest aircraft in the world. Various work packages including:

- Phased people strategy to support the business through prototype build, flight testing and then high-growth production ramp up
- Redesign of HR functional support and recruitment of key HR staff
- Case management of complex or senior individual cases

BBC News

October 2015 – July 2016

Interim assignment providing ER consultancy, dispute resolution and supporting significant employee consultation and change programme across 3,150 employee News operation.

Phase 1 (Oct-April) delivered hands on IR problem-solving and managing complex union relationships

- managing and resolving multiple IR issues including industrial action and complex individual cases
- refocussing and landing a long term restructure programme

Phase 2 (April-July) reward and IR strategy project work

- partnering with PwC and specialist staff to design and deliver business case and implementation plan for a corporation-wide terms and conditions change programme.

The Printing Charity

Various - December 2015 September 2018

Ongoing ad hoc support and consultancy to transform a 250 year-old, £31m Charity into a modern, relevant, future focussed force in the industry

- Managed Senior Leadership issues including replacing the CEO
- Designed and supported implementation of staff restructure to reflect changed strategic and operational vision for the Charity.

Reach Plc**13 Years to 2015**

Reach is the largest publisher of National and Regional newspapers in the UK with 200+ titles including the Daily and Sunday Mirrors, Scottish Daily Record, Liverpool Echo, Birmingham Mail and Newcastle Chronicle. The group at the time I left had 4,500 employees and 2013 revenues of £664m.

HR Director, Manufacturing and Group Functions**December 2011 to June 2015**

The most senior HR role in the Plc, reporting to the Company Secretary and latterly the CEO. Accountable for all group-wide HR matters as well as Corporate, Manufacturing and Digital Divisions.

- Advised Company Secretary and CEO on group HR matters and presented regular updates to the Plc Board.
- Led group Reward and worked with Company Secretary to deliver RemCo processes.
- Outsourced IT function over 18 months with multi-partner TUPE and restructures, delivering £5m saving
- Designed Shadow LTIP scheme for key exec talent and a value-creation based bonus for digital start-up.
- Led and restructured Group HR function around Business Partnering and CoE's. and new group wide HRIS & Payroll system. Delivered substantial service improvements and 24% cost reduction.

HR Director, TMP & Group Employee Relations & Reward**Dec 2007 to December 2011**

In addition to TMP HRD role, took on Plc-wide responsibility for Employee Relations and Reward.

- HR lead on significant Plc level M&A activities, including due diligences and integrations.
- Redesigned group wide Management Bonus and All Employees Bonus Schemes.
- HR lead on closing Defined Benefit pension schemes to future accrual and move to DC provision. Managed the consultation with UNITE nationally and achieved change without dispute.
- Re-structured a loss making regional business reducing headcount by 50%, and moving to break even.

HR Director, Trinity Mirror Printing Ltd**Sept 2001 to Dec 2011**

TMP is the largest newspaper contract printer in the UK, with 8 facilities producing TM and external titles including The Independent, the Daily Mail, Metro and the Racing Post.

- HR lead on the formation of the TMP business, with 9 print sites, 1750 employees and £150m revenues.
- Partnered the MD to recruit the Director roles and shape the strategy and culture of the new business.
- Led negotiations with UNITE Union at National Officer level across 9 bargaining units on pay deals, restructures, redundancies, working practices, shift patterns, outsourcing and pay rate reductions as we consistently improved unit cost levels through leading consolidation of a declining market.
- Headcount reductions of c.650 employees in a £250m investment programme to deliver new technology, full colour press facilities.
- HR lead on large volume, long term contract printing deals, managing the TUPE issues as we grew external revenues from 9% to over 50% of divisional turnover
- Designed and implemented new leadership model with Management Competencies, PDR and Development Programme, Reward and Bonus Structures across 200+ Managers in 18 months.

GKN Westland Aerospace Ltd**4 Years to 2001**

First tier aerospace component businesses in the UK, Germany and US, 4,500 employees. Research, Design and build of high value aircraft components and systems using world leading technology solutions.

Employee Relations Manager, Westland Aerospace Ltd.**Feb 2000 to Sept 2001****Human Resources Manager, Aerospace Composite Technologies Ltd.****Mar 1998 to 2001****General Motors - IBC Vehicles Limited****5 Years to 1998**

GM/Isuzu JV car manufacturing plant, pioneering Lean manufacturing within GM Europe. Product and Manufacturing Engineering, Supply chain and Manufacturing activities with workforce of around 2000.

Graduate Trainee, HR Advisor, and HR Manager roles

Education and Governance

Leicester University	Post Graduate Diploma in Law & Employment Relations	1996 - 1998
University of Stirling	BA Hons (first class) Human Resources Management, MCIPD	1988 - 1992
Trustee Board Member	MGN Pension Trustees Ltd	2005 - 2008
Council Member (Trustee)	The Printing Charity	2011 - 2018