

CIH/BPC Session #1

Tomorrows skills matter today

15/07/22

Long term skills planning is crucial in a challenging post-Brexit & Covid world

Hosted by Ria Bailes - MD of BPC

Speakers

Lisa Taylor - Founder-Director of Coherent Cities

Tracey Downie - CEO of Womens Pioneer Housing

Lisa Collen - Director of People at Flagship



BPC

Bailes Partners Consulting

Session notes

Ria Bailes introduced the session which was the first in a series of webinars looking at skills for the sector. We covered the importance of taking a long-term approach to skills and why this is essential for our organisations. Aligning long term skills needs and developing talent pipelines builds resilience within our organisations. It also goes some way to mitigate against labour market shocks and provides us with the skills that we will need for the future within an increasingly uncertain operating environment. This is not tomorrow's problem; developing skills is a long-term investment and needs to be tackled now. It is crucial that organisations understand clearly their existing skills and are able to identify what they need for the future - not just over the next year but along the timeframes of their business plans. Dealing with de-carbonisation, broader environmental pressures, advances in technology and improving customer service levels all require strategic skills planning in addition to financing and structural changes.

Having made similar observations across the sector in relation to skills, the CIH and BPC have got together to put on this series of webinars. Bailes Partners Consulting operates across four key themes;

Leadership effectiveness – helping leaders to perform at their best so their teams can excel. Modern leadership is characterised by the ability to foster connection between people and organisations. BPC helps leaders build an environment where their people can thrive.

Change transformation - fast paced change is a characteristic of the modern world. Whether it is technological change, an organisation's response to societal changes or structural change, people are at the centre of every organisation and BPC helps to deliver people-focused change.

Business growth - we recognise leaders' responsibility to identify challenges to forward progress and navigate challenging operating environment. We help leaders devise a coherent approach to growing their business.

HR Consultancy - our range of general HR services complement the rest of our offer.

Through the work that BPC does across the housing sector, it recognised that sophisticated long term skills planning is not taking place in the majority of organisations and is not being debated at a strategic level within Executive and Board meetings. CIH received similar feedback from members and that skills are a problem.

We invited speakers to join in the debate on skills. Here are the three key areas of discussion -

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Key things related to skills that we should be thinking about:

- People want more from work. Post Covid, people expect more. Work itself is changing and people question what's on offer for them and what skills they can develop. This includes thinking about automation. The Department for Education, Skills and Employment is suggesting between 40-47% of jobs relating to our sector (construction, health and care) will be automated by 2030.
- The formal education system cannot keep up and we can't wait for it. So as a housing sector and more broadly, in terms of leadership, we need to be developing the skills we need. We're having to do our own thing in terms of creativity and looking for ideas to plug skills gaps.
- The Gallup World Survey found that 60% of employees worldwide are emotionally disengaged from their work. There's often a lot going on at home and hours are long. People have often had enough and the recruitment market is hot. You are going to lose people for whatever reason. If you're bringing someone in who's talented or promising and you teach them skills, don't expect to hang on to them for more than about 18 months, especially if they're from a younger generation who are looking for fast progression. If your core values, employee offer and operations are solid, then your organisation is more resilient and movement of skills can be dealt with.
- If you've onboarded during COVID you may not be getting that bonding with people that you need. We aren't sitting together overhearing and learning from conversations. It's harder work to assimilate information now. You can get great people coming in, but if the onboarding is a bit formulaic they are likely to fall into a rut. So onboarding is critical. We are also likely to stay in a hybrid working world and this is a risk for skills and motivation as well. Leaders should make sure they remain connected to people who conduct their roles away from home.
- Demand more from your supply chain. Get them to help you in developing skills and transferring knowledge into your organisation.
- Lastly, it's green, green, green. We need to be thinking harder about green skills. There is a great imbalance between the supply and demand for green skills. We also need to be thinking about the demand from younger generations who are heavily focused on this.

Why it's vital that we develop the right skills for our organisations

- We are operating in a VUCA society - volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. We had to respond very quickly with new skills when covid struck. What it showed us was that we need to think more about what's coming towards us and make sure that we are preparing. This is even more important in an environment where we are being scrutinised for our performance, whether that's the Housing Ombudsman, ITV News or other channels - they're making our officers and the frontline really accountable and really responsible for everything that they do.
- Leaders need to be making sure that those teams that are delivering our services at the front and being made accountable for those services are really knowledgeable. This applies not only on the bit that they do, but on a wide range of things to be able to serve the customer. This isn't just about policy and the procedures, but also the sentiment of the policy and procedures.

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- Our residents are saying that we need to ensure our staff are knowledgeable. We need to think about how we can deliver a positive experience for our residents with each interaction, as well as providing our employees with the skills and tools to make their job easier and less stressful. Providing a clear vision of what the strategy entails, how we will deliver and what skills are needed to do that helps to reduce the uncertainty and ambiguity in this VUCA environment.
- We've got to consider the opportunities and disadvantages that are given to some and not others through skills acquisition. Taking a systemic view of inequity in our workplaces and the communities in which we work, how can we support greater equity and better outcomes for people through the work we do on skills.
- Finally, in this post-covid lockdown world we've got experienced staff leaving when we need great skills more than ever. How ever we develop peoples' learning, not so much through overhearing others or in a classroom anymore but through whatever channel – we have to create the environment for people to grow skills. We should be thinking about developing people for the future, not just their role now.

Our world of work:

- There is a very simple equation - happy people equals happy customers, which equals a happy business. \$1 trillion a year is spent worldwide on plotting the customer journey. That's the wrong place to start. We have to go a step before that to plot the employee journey which is where we really could make a difference. Once our employees feel that they're being developed, feel that they've got choice in the workplace, feel that they can make decisions, that they're empowered to do what's right for the people that they're doing it for - the people living in our homes for us -then they're more likely to stay and their skills will strengthen through their commitment to your organisation.
- Once peoples skills strengthen then they're going to be able to deliver a better service. There's more consistency for your customers and they're able to be more expert at what they do because they're staying with you for longer. It therefore follows that the customer experience, by default, becomes even better because you've got engaged, empowered people who are skilled, who are retained, who are being developed, who are enabled to do the right things. Therefore, your customer journey will be so much better. Then, if your customers are happy, the very easy equation is that your business is happy, your performance results are happy and your financial results are happy.
- Our current climate reflects the great resignation, the great inflation and the great migration. You could sit anywhere in the world and work in London right now or anywhere else in the world. But we're also seeing signs of the great regret. People are moving, changing jobs because they think something is better.
- During the pandemic we were in survival mode. We stayed contained within our own communities. What then happens in society, due to human nature, as you come out of that kind of crisis, we generally move into "I want more. I want something better. I want to grow". So we go from survival into growth. The crack in the window which I put up with whilst we were in the pandemic is no longer acceptable to me. I don't want to live with that car sitting in the drive anymore, its not good enough. I want something better. So we're starting to see that increase in car sales, house moves, people are buying more, divorce rates increasing. We are a society demanding growth. So as HR professionals and businesses we're trying to keep our good people and operate within that demand for growth.

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- When we look at the history of the world of work, we can see that we have moved through a number of phases. We used to have the work of hands - it was very transactional with a lot of manual labour. Then we moved into the world of work of the head -we were looking for more cognitive labour. Now we are moving more into the work of the heart - that's looking for skills around good judgment, resolving conflicts, ability to delight the customer and understand what the customer wants. As we move forward into that growth state and people are making different choices about what they want from work, we can see that some of the routine activities are no longer attractive – we can use robotics for day in day out processing for example. It's a way of augmenting both the work of the hand and the work of the head. But the future of work is still human. We won't all be replaced by machines and technology. You will still need really great people who are able to do the heart. So that means that you'll need people who are able to understand complex issues or interpret the sentiment behind something. AI. can crack on with the boring routine activities, but we still need people who want to delight the customer who are actually working with the people who really matter to your business.
- We need to be more aware of different strengths that people can bring. We know people with dyspraxia are often more creative. People with autism have a great eye for detail. People with ADHD have got super strength - they're often hyperfocused with hyper speed. We can open up the marketplace for having great people and talented people working for you by looking beyond traditional skills in the job description. However, if you don't create the right workplace for them, then you will lose those people and the skills they bring.
- We are living in this era of the greatest workplace experience experiment in history, so let's make sure we are part of that experiment. Let's start defining what the outcome of that experiment could look like.

A big thank you to our speakers. We have more sessions coming up - dates are below. If you would like to be involved then please contact Ria Bailes by email ria@bailespartners.co.uk

Session #2 - Identifying skills gaps and building resilience	8th September 2022 10 – 11.15am
Session #3 - Finding the skills we need	6th October 2022 10 – 11.15am
Session #4 - Building talent pipelines	3rd November 2022 10 – 11.15am
Session #5 – Strategic skills planning tools	28th November 2022 10 – 11.15am