

CIH/BPC Session #5

Strategic skills planning

28/11/22

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

Hosted by Ria Bailes - BPC

Speakers

Sukh Pabial - Head of L&D at M&S

Annemarie Roberts - COO at Golding Homes

Sarak Dunkerley - Director of Professional Standards at CIH



BPC

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Session notes

Ria Bailes introduced the session which was the last in the skills masterclass series. We covered practical examples and tips on how to develop the skills needed for your organisation. 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.

HRConsultancy - our range of general HRservices 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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Long term skills development

- We are still needing to focus on leadership and management skills. Even after more than 30 years of focus, it is still a skills need. Expectations on leaders and leadership styles have significantly changed over this time. Leaders and managers also require sets of skills that need to be continually worked upon and grown.
- We are seeing creativity and innovation as key skills being sought and developed as well as skills in areas such as coding and technology. Many organisations are in a state of digitalisation in some form, whether public, charity or private sectors. Our society is in a digital age and needing to get used to it.
- Align your OD initiatives to the customer journey. Look at the interactions, what is happening and where skills are needed to solve problems, achieve efficiency and deliver a better customer experience. We need skills and talent to thrive and not get stuck in a bottle neck of organisational hierarchy. Colleague need encouraging to use the skills and judgement they have rather than escalating too quickly. Organisations commonly struggle with keeping solutions to challenges low and local.
- We recognised that we still don't use the apprenticeship levy to full extent. It has been made too complex to use easily but where it is being used well is in organisations who have a better view of strategic use of skills and talent. It is important to select the right provider and have a dedicated resource to manage apprenticeships. There is an opportunity to collaborate with local HAs to share this resource and specific skills around contract/apprenticeship management. If you are interested in exploring this further please email hello@bailespartners.co.uk and we can explore partnerships within our network with you.
- We concluded with asking the question how we upskill our workforce and provide a great retention package so we don't lose our investment and the skills we need to deliver our objectives. The turn in the labour market has shown us that we need to work hard on not letting people go. Instead of relying on financial packages, we need to consider career pathways which can involve mentoring, coaching and involvement in projects for example. Leadership style, inclusive environments and the relationship with the manager have become much more important to focus on in order to motivate, engage and retain skills. We can see very clearly that recruitment, development and retention of talent all goes hand in hand. We need to ensure that our structures and employee experience journey lends itself to this business.

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Building skilled teams

- "Skills-planning is not an HR thing - it's a leadership thing". We started by looking at this statement about how important skills planning is to the operations and success of the business. In this environment when finding and retaining skills is so challenging, it should be a topic of discussion around the executive and board tables.
- Instead of looking to the labour market for skills that you need, we encourage you to look internally first and don't make assumptions about the skills you think you do or don't have in your workforce. If you do go to the labour market then don't look for a unicorn. The perfect person is not out there - instead, look for potential and take a long-term view on what skills and knowledge you need in your team. Be prepared to grow this and invest in people that demonstrate good behaviours, attitude and values for our sector.
- Often progress is not vertical within the structures we have designed for our organisations. We have talked in previous sessions about creating a culture of celebration and reward for horizontal and diagonal movements to encourage learning and growth within your workforce rather than linear progression based on titles and remuneration.
- The role of leadership has changed and we need leaders to adopt a coaching and growth based approach to developing their workforce. We need people to be with us longer and to develop with us so that as the business grows and reacts to its environment, we have the skills to support it. A culture of learning and continuous improvement is important. To fully achieve this, it is reliant on high degrees of psychological safety and being open to learning from mistakes.
- Business planning plays an important role in skills planning and creating a learning culture. Leaders have a responsibility to make time for the strategic vision and giving clarity to people as far as they can. Having clear goals and priorities allows people to see direction so they can work and grow towards that. It also helps in being able to achieve success and celebrate this to embed it into your organisations culture.
- Lastly, in this section we talked about technical competence and professionalism being built on top of the behaviours and attitude you have recruited for. We can often miss opportunities for learning by overlooking simple initiatives such as knowledge sharing amongst departments and bite-sized lunch and learn sessions.

Chartered Institute of Housing Professional Standards

- The CIH professional standards build on seven characteristics to enable people working in housing to think about their professional development needs and how they can contribute to the professionalism of their organisation and the wider sector.

"Professional is not a label you give yourself, it's a description you hope others will apply to you".

- We had a presentation from the CIH on the standards framework, how these can be built into your own value statements and career development programmes.
- Feedback from residents will often lead us to professionalism and this was embedded in the Social Housing White Paper -

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“When residents interact with landlords, they should expect and receive a professional service from competent and empathetic staff.”

“We have heard positive experiences of landlord staff who treated residents with care and respect. But we also heard that this is not always the case, and there were incidences where people felt talked down to or ignored by staff and contractors. We want all landlord staff to act professionally, listen to their residents and, at all times, treat them with courtesy and respect.”

- The standards apply to everyone across the profession whatever the role or specialism. They are relevant for the environment we live and work in now and in the future.
- The CIH offer a self-assessment tool to allow people to reflect honestly on their professional journey and think about development needs.
- Integrity - A housing professional has a clear understanding of their values and acts in accordance with them – they will do the right thing, for the right reasons, based on the best evidence and without partiality.
- Inclusive - A housing professional acts transparently and fairly; builds good relationships; and works collaboratively with partners, customers and communities to achieve better outcomes.
- Ethical - A housing professional acts fairly and makes choices and decisions by applying principles and values consistently. They understand the impact that poor decisions can have both on people’s lives and the reputation of their organisation and they challenge unethical practice in a fair and considered way.
- Knowledgeable - A housing professional has relevant and up-to-date practical and specialist knowledge as required by their job role, understands the bigger picture and has a passion for continuous learning.
- Skilled - A housing professional equips themselves with the relevant skills to deliver effective services to tenants, customers, colleagues, and partners.
- Advocate - A housing professional acts as an ambassador for the wider housing sector and an advocate for the housing profession.
- Leadership - Housing professionals at all levels should demonstrate leadership, be forward thinking and create opportunities. They find solutions to improve outcomes for their organisation, tenants and communities and demonstrate their ability to adapt to the latest ideas, situations, and change.

<https://www.cih.org/professional-standards>

We hope you have found the webinars useful with lots of insights and tips to take away to your own organisations. If you would like to get in touch to talk more about skills or any aspect discussed in the five webinars, don't hesitate to get in touch with one of the team - Ria, Julie and Marc on hello@bailespartners.co.uk

A big thank you to all of our speakers.
