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PUBLIC SECTOR PEOPLE
MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION

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JULY 2017

A time of opportunity



Caroline Nugent, new PPMA President, reveals her to-do list during a period of challenging times for the sector

Firstly on behalf of the PPMA my thoughts go out to all those impacted by the recent Manchester and London terrorist activities, and separately, the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire. There is certainly no place in society for the former and the public services yet again excelled themselves defending and treating those affected. They also showed a tremendous response to the latter. Simply put, we have great public servants.

As I began writing this we were also in the final stages of the General Election campaign and we were all intently waiting to know who will be leading the country during these challenging times. Of course, we all now know how events played out for Theresa May and the Conservative Party, but this is still a big chance to work with

those in the public sector to ensure that we have the resources and people to deal with so many issues – especially those in social care.

After our really successful national PPMA conference in April, I will also be looking at how we can better work with the new apprenticeship levy

As part of my year as PPMA President, we will be working with colleagues in our sister organisation for HR professionals in the health services, the HPMA, to look at synergies and similar issues which we can work together on. Recruitment issues are recruitment issues, leadership issues are leadership issues, and so on.

We need to share best practice

and I have meetings set up to look at how we work together as two professional bodies. I have also been asked to speak at the HPMA conference which gives us a good opportunity to look at how local government interacts on the ground.

After our really successful national PPMA conference in April, I will also be looking at how we can better work with the new apprenticeship levy. There are still lots of unanswered questions and practicalities to sort out, including potential nightmare procurement exercises, even though companies have been successful to end up on the skills register to administer apprentice programmes.

We need to find a better way, so we can work out where are big requirements for skills lies in order to link it to longer-term workforce planning and priorities. I will be

trying to get those in power to listen to the professional views we are raising. We all want apprenticeships to be successful and we need to find easier ways to do this. Enhanced partnership working again might be needed to ensure we are minimising administrative burdens.

Another priority for my year of presidency links to the introduction of the gender pay gap reporting. We know through all the research that women are still treated differently in certain organisations. Although the public sector has a really good record for employing women and flexible working practices encouraging women to remain or return to work (the national Back to Social Worker campaign is a great example of supporting returners to work whether female or male) we still have to recognise that for women to want to take on more

responsible roles we have to look at working practices.

Only recently I had someone tell me how they had faced really inappropriate comments because she was a young woman. This is 2017! I want to look at how we can empower women to want to become senior managers, especially with the increasing elderly parent issues we face as well as childcare issues.

So, I have a busy year ahead but hope to end it with at least good inroads into these issues.

You can contact me on president@ppma.org.uk – please keep in touch; I'm always keen to hear from you.

**Caroline Nugent is
PPMA President
and Director of
HR and OD at
OneSource**



Moving into the 21st Century

Karen Grave reflects on the collaborative 21st Century Public Servant and 21st Century Councillor projects, and looks at the findings so far

At our annual PPMA conference in Bristol, delegates had the opportunity to attend workshop sessions on the 21st Century Public Servant and the 21st Century Councillor.

These fascinating topics are really exciting for us. We already have a number of members who are working with outputs of the book we launched last year, *Walk Tall – Being a 21st Century Public Servant*. *Walk Tall* defines 10 key characteristics of a public servant and these apply across all public servant organisations and are not mutually exclusive.

This work is based on the original University of Birmingham (UoB) research which developed the 21st Century Public Servant concept.

The 21st Century Public Servant:

- Is loyal to their locality
- Works with citizens as equals
- Has a public service ethos as well as commercial awareness
- Has generic as well as professional skills
- Builds a career across sectors and services
- Reflects on practice and learns from others
- Thinks creatively about ongoing austerity
- Takes the initiative, acts as a

- municipal entrepreneur
- Embraces distributed and collaborative leadership
- Needs flexible, supportive organisations.

PPMA colleagues are starting to use this work to survey their current leadership behaviours, develop management development programmes and 360 appraisals.

Together with the Local Government Association (LGA); the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), and the UoB, the PPMA is currently working on helping to accelerate and embed 21st Century practice across all our public-sector organisations through a range of tools, programmes, events and consultancy support that will really make a difference.

We've also started to share this great work with colleagues in health. So, for example, Sarah Messenger (LGA) has shared work with NHS Employers and I have been talking to our Healthcare People Management Association colleagues in the Midlands since June.

The sister work undertaken by the UoB around the 21st Century Councillor was also really well received at our conference. Member development can be a sensitive topic for senior officers and HR/OD professionals. Nevertheless, it's critical for our organisations to work collaboratively for the good of our citizens. We'll continue our partnership with LGA, SOLACE and UoB on this too.

I look forward to providing a further update in our next supplement.

Karen Grave is Vice President of the PPMA



Tell us your views

If you have any views about the contents of this *PPMA Focus* or ideas for future articles – or would like to contribute – please email Ashleigh Richards at ashleigh.richards@bristol.gov.uk

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Leading from the front



Public sector leaders have many challenges and opportunities to grapple with, but here are six key attributes that mark out the best:

1. Moving beyond professional competence

It is not just extraordinary levels of professional and technical competence that makes great leaders. It is assumed that if people work hard, and get incrementally better at what they do that is enough. But it's not.

As professionals, we are clear about our role. When you step up to leadership you are leader first with a particular technical and professional competence. It's the added value you bring to the organisation through your leadership that counts.

2. Innovation

There's recognition that public sector challenges require completely different approaches. This means being comfortable with ambiguity and having the ability to create the ethos for innovative thinking.

Innovation means that we don't always get it right first time, pushing the boundaries will inevitably mean that mistakes are made. It's rare that people wake up in the morning with the perfect idea. Rather we enter an iterative process, trying and failing and improving and trying a failing and improving again.

So how do leaders and organisations juggle the need to be innovative, the need to allow for well-intentioned mistakes and the requirement to both understand and mitigate risks so as to be able to safeguard the reputation of the organisation?

Many organisations talk about not having a blame culture then look

for someone to pin things on when things go wrong. As leaders, we have to move beyond eradicating all risks and asking on occasion for forgiveness rather than permission.

It's complicated: no organisation wants to end up on the front pages but if we are to encourage and inspire different ways of thinking and working we will have to confront and enter into discussion about these challenges.

3. Resilience

Leaders report that it's hard to constantly juggle their work, have a life and decide what not to do. As technology allows for 24/7 contact we have to become the guardians of the way we want to spend our lives. Organisations have a responsibility to employees and each person has a responsibility to themselves to maintain and develop their own resilience.

The best leaders manage their time proactively which includes time to maintain their physical, emotional and spiritual health. They understand that they can't do everything but they know exactly what must be done by them alone. Maintaining a balanced and healthy lifestyle, doing the things you enjoy, loving your work and spending time with people you care about is essential.

Resilience is also an organisational concept. You can see organisations pull together and have honest and open discussions when times are tough and when times are good. Resilience is a muscle that requires work.

4. Influence and personal impact

The way that we work now is rarely command and control. Sectoral boundaries are reducing and the success of your ambitions will be

realised through your connections with partners. The traditional hierarchies are not relevant when working with partners from other sectors. Personal influence and impact becomes critically important. The understanding of your own preferences, ways of working and how you impact on others comes to the fore.

We have all worked with people who may have been technically competent but who were unaware of how they impacted on others and how this ultimately got in the way of the achievement of outcomes. Seeking feedback can be valuable as can development which identifies how to improve communication and connection with others.

5. Credibility and integrity

Working in the public sector means that our customers don't often have

a choice of provider, they get what we give them. As we are often monopoly suppliers we have a professional and moral responsibility to provide the best possible services in a way that works for customers within the resources that we have.

Our governance models are becoming more complex. Our roles are becoming more nebulous and we have to deliver in an increasingly visible world where we are judged and inspected at every turn.

Our credibility and our personal reputation rests on what we do and how we do it. Reputations take years to build and moments to destroy.

As leaders, we understand that these are complex issues.

It's vitally important to have the opportunity to work with colleagues, to build teams and peer groups where we can be honest with each other as well as talk truth to power and be listened to.

6. Curiosity and a desire to learn

It's important that we remain curious, that we push the boundaries of our knowledge and experience. That we take every opportunity to learn.

We can do this in so many different ways, we can get curious about what others are doing and arrange organisational raids, we can set up networks where none exist.

Busy people find ways to create opportunities to learn because without learning there will be no more progress for them.

It is critical that as organisations invest in individuals, they also choose to invest in themselves.

Angela O'Connor is the founder and CEO of The HR Lounge



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The search for equality continues

Anj Popat reflects on the results of a recent 'Women in Interim' session and says there is still room for improvement in getting more women into leadership positions, particularly when balanced against population statistics

With the suffragettes playing a key role in the 19th and 20th centuries, gender equality is deeply rooted in history. The Local Government Act 1894 confirmed and extended the right to vote to the majority of the female population in this country, paving the way for the rise of women in positions of power or leadership. But how far have we really progressed in this battle for equality? When considering the proportion of women in positions of power within the UK, has there been any change?

At Penna's 'Women in Interim' recent networking session, Sophie Walker, leader of the Women's Equality Party, provided an interesting insight as the speaker.

The 'shock' of Donald Trump taking over the reins of one of the most powerful countries in the world in the recent US election (despite increasingly coming across less than favourably towards women) was the starting point of a very passionate and thought-provoking debate. One of the biggest questions that arose was what would be the significance of this for women in the US? Does this mean that the battle for equality, as difficult as it is; has an additional obstacle to overcome?

How do we compare as a nation? And, does having a woman in one of the most influential positions in the country actually make a difference?

In a government-backed report in 2015, Lord Mervyn Davies stated that at least a third of board level positions should be occupied by women. This specifies that 33% of all board level positions should be occupied by a group of people who reflect just over 50% of the country's population according to the 2011 census.

Research shows that we are falling far behind, not only in relation to our own targets but also in contrast to other European countries

Is it possible to take account of the diversity that can be found in the female population within a percentage that doesn't reflect the scale of the overall country's population? A consequence of this limited representation is the creation of TWO hurdles to overcome for women of ethnic minorities.

Putting aside representation of the population of the country,

did we actually achieve this percentage quota in 2016? The research conducted by European Women on Boards shows that we are falling far behind, not only in relation to our own targets but also in contrast to other European countries, at just 23.2% board representation in 2015. Comparatively, Norway, Finland, France and Sweden all hit above 30% representation.

This under-representation in positions of power results in the creation of an unheard voice and a group of people whose needs are not being met by institutions in the public and private sectors. Equality is, and should be, one of the cornerstones of modern day society and yet this arbitrary figure does nothing to uphold or strengthen it.

While some would argue that Norway's success is due to the fact that there is a legislative requirement, this is not the case in Sweden or Finland. So what are the Nordic countries doing differently? Admittedly, the legislative prescription has added some fuel to the fire, nevertheless a major shift in the political landscape and proportion of women in professional roles has played a significant part.

In the UK, just below 30% of the

House of Commons and 26% of the House of Lords are female. Breaking this down a little further, in the 2015 elections, there were 1033 female candidates, and of these only 191 were elected (just under 18.5%). Comparatively, most Nordic countries have a significantly higher proportion. Sweden has the highest representation at 44.7%. This representation allows women's rights to be heard and subsequently enshrined and protected in legislation. This can be seen in policy where maternity leave was replaced by equal parental leave which is mandatory for both parents.

This research made me think about how we work at Penna and also compare with the national averages. As an organisation, we are proud to have one of the highest proportions of senior female leaders in our industry. Our search and interim teams work closely with our clients to source executives across both the public and private sectors. Thirty per cent of our working interims in the last year are female and in 2015, 44% of the senior executives we appointed into the public sector were female. While this is only a microcosm when looking at the whole of the country, these statistics show that when

monitoring diversity it is possible to be more representative.

Our approach focuses on working closely with our clients to ensure that we are able to maximise diversity throughout the recruitment process. We will never recommend a single-sex longlist and will provide training, coaching and advice for recruitment panels and selection committees to understand and balance the impact of unconscious bias throughout the recruitment process. With some of our clients and their recruitment campaigns, we have redesigned processes which would have inadvertently put off candidates from non-traditional backgrounds and developed advertising that appeals to a wider range of potential applicants.

While we have come a long way in terms of representation in leadership positions, there is still significant room to improve. The general consensus at our event was that more needs to be done to enable women to achieve levels of equality that reflect the make-up of the country's population.

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Conference reflections

Karen Grave looks back at the PPMA's annual conference and gives her highlights of the event

It's a couple of months since we held our Annual Conference in Bristol. These events are always a tonic for weary HR and OD practitioners. It's our opportunity to meet, network, share the challenges of our day to day jobs and just as importantly it's our main event for thinking about and debating the issues to come.

There was plenty of all of that and more. We know how to work hard but also play hard. The 'play' was a well-earned gala dinner and our opportunity to celebrate the Winners and Highly Commended in the PPMA Excellence in People Management Awards. This year we had a more overt emphasis on evidencing the longer-term benefit of our work. It was inspiring to see how well each and every one of our entrants did that. But of course, our winners demonstrated that magic extra ingredient. PPMA is very proud of them and we hope their organisations are just as proud too.

The conference itself this year was a fascinating combination of public sector themes [Day 1] and HR & OD professional themes [Day 2]. We were thrilled this year to have so many senior leaders participating on Day 1. We had several chief executives, directors of adults and children's services and other senior leaders – we also had Joe Owens from the Institute for Government sharing his views on Brexit.

In addition to Brexit we looked at operating models and the small issue of health and social care Integration! Our guests' perspective on what they need and expect from us was so encouraging – we must be at the heart of all workforce debates. It was a timely reminder to hear how many senior leaders just expect us to make sure we are there – don't wait to be invited.

Day 2 was a great mixture of conversations about evidencing our work, thinking about how neuroscience can help us, reflecting



on leadership in complex times and considering the public-sector HR/OD professional of the future. There was certainly food for thought in all those discussions.

It's unfair really to pick out the 'best' or the 'favourite' – all our speakers were great. But for me I will never forget Shokat Lal's session on leadership. Shokat spoke with enormous honesty, humility and grace about the tragic circumstances that occurred in Rotherham and the after effects in trying to rebuild that organisation and rebuild trust within the community.

Many years ago I worked for the DFES on a programme at Haringey Council. That was post the tragic death of Victoria Climbié and pre-Baby Peter. I know first-hand how everyone in an organisation is affected by traumatic events like this. It is a deeply held burden. In my view it should be – and it should drive us to do our damndest to ensure events like this never happen again.

My final take away is a comment Peter Cheese made in his conference opener. He said: 'Public service is about public good'. I suspect that sentiment is a part

of our DNA – it is mine. On that note, the PPMA Annual Conference should be the place to be for all HR and OD practitioners and chief executives, senior leaders and other key influencers.

It's tempting in financially stretched times to question the value of this event. Reflecting on Bristol, I'm more certain than ever that coming to the conference and being a member isn't a 'nice to have'. It's a strategic imperative for all our organisations.

Karen Grave is Vice President of the PPMA



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Building learning mindsets in public services ✨

As technology continues to transform the world of work, **Nick Heckscher** looks at the role of PPMA HR Stars in ensuring the public service workforce is ready for what lies ahead

Rarely a day goes by without news of digitisation, artificial intelligence and virtual reality impacting the workforce. Plenty of predictions have been made about the impact this will have on the future world of work: more jobs, different jobs, less jobs, even no jobs. However, no one knows for sure what the future holds.

Nonetheless, one thing is clear: businesses and workforces will be transformed in the years to come. New skills will grow in demand; while others will become extinct.

As a result, individuals may find that their skills don't hold the same value in five or 10 years' time. Many skills now have an expiry date. Consequently, the defining challenge of our time is enabling people to upskill and adapt to this rapidly changing world of work. After all, while we cannot slow the rate of technological advances, we can invest in employees' skills to increase the resilience of people and organisations.

With this in mind, there's now a growing awareness that individuals who seek learning opportunities will be more employable in the long-term. At ManpowerGroup, we call this 'learnability' – the desire and ability to continue to learn, so that you can remain employable throughout your career.

Learnability is less about what you already know, and more about your capacity to learn in the future. It's about recognising that you'll face new challenges throughout your working life, so you'll need to grow your skill set and adapt to new circumstances along the way. In short, it's a way for workers to 'future proof' themselves – no matter who their employer may be and what their future work life holds.

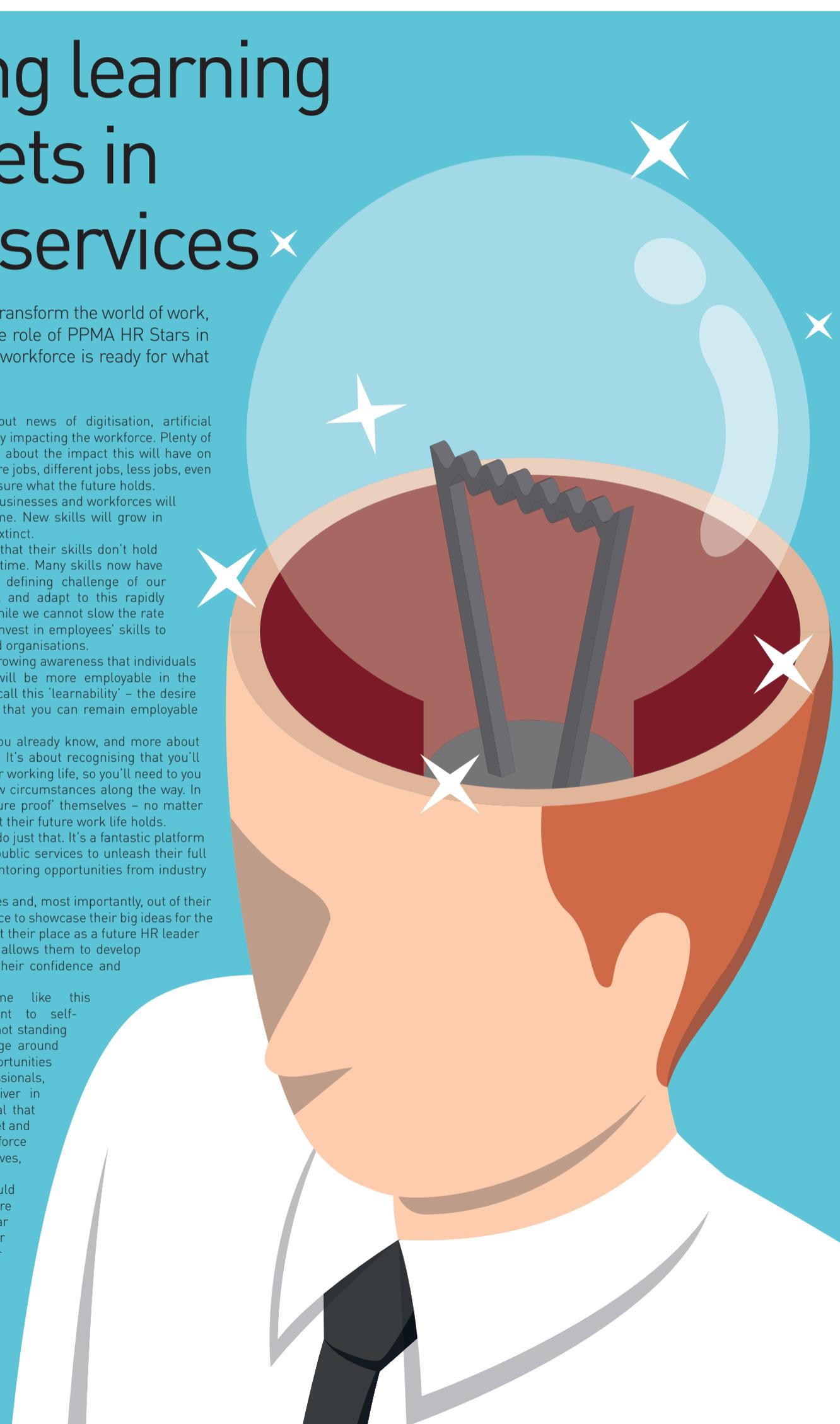
PPMA HR Stars allows people to do just that. It's a fantastic platform that allows emerging HR talent in public services to unleash their full potential, through coaching and mentoring opportunities from industry leaders.

It takes them out of their daily roles and, most importantly, out of their comfort zone. It gives them the chance to showcase their big ideas for the future of public services, and cement their place as a future HR leader in public services. And, critically, it allows them to develop their skills and abilities, boosting their confidence and self-awareness at the same time.

Participating in a programme like this demonstrates a real commitment to self-improvement. Our participants are not standing still, waiting for the world to change around them – they're harnessing opportunities to grow and develop as HR professionals, so they're better equipped to deliver in the future world of work. It's critical that business leaders support this mindset and nurture the learnability of their workforce – for the benefit of workers themselves, and the public sector as a whole.

If you know someone who would benefit from the opportunity to nurture their learnability, we'd love to hear from them. HR Star 2018 will open for entries soon. In the meantime, for more information on the importance of nurturing workforce learnability, please visit manpowergroup.co.uk/learnability.

Nick Heckscher is Operations Director at Manpower





A fresh chance to bridge the disability gap

Matthew Wallis says we should all be looking for new ways of promoting apprenticeships for the disabled

In response to some interesting feedback I received from my last PPMA article, 'Ready, willing and able', I wanted to talk a bit more about my vision for the future of accessible apprenticeships for people with disabilities.

At the moment, 3.4 million disabled people are out of work and I strongly believe that apprenticeships could be the key to helping bridge this gap. With this many people out of work, public sector organisations are potentially missing out on the chance to employ talented members of our community.

Empathy, problem solving and innovation are some key skills that many disabled apprentices would bring to your workforce due to the challenges faced in their daily lives. It's important to remember that it is never too late to start an apprenticeship, therefore disabled people who are looking to get back into work can use apprenticeships as a great way of upskilling themselves.

As public sector organisations, we have the perfect opportunity to help promote apprenticeships for disabled people, as many of our service users will have some form of disability. Whether you work in a local authority, the NHS or another public-sector body, it is likely that our staff will be helping disabled people make crucial life choices. Therefore to help support, we need to make sure our staff understand what apprenticeships are, the benefits they bring and how people with disabilities can access extra support.

In the future, I also believe that HR should be collaborating with different services to help promote the apprenticeships they have on offer. For example, many local authorities have a duty to help support disabled people

gain employment, however I fear as HR departments we are not making this positive link as of yet.

By working alongside these services, we could be using the opportunity to help build our workforce while helping to ensure our disabled population are not unemployed and have the right skills to work. Therefore, if you are committed to making apprenticeships accessible, start by identifying what different services you offer that support disabled people gain employment and find out what information they are likely to receive from that service. If they aren't being directed towards the apprenticeships that you offer as a public-sector organisation, you may need to discover why this is the case.

In the future, an accessible apprenticeship will be open to anyone regardless of whether you have a disability. There are many obstacles to overcome to reach this vision though. In order to achieve this, we need to change the mind-sets of employers and the apprentices themselves. According to a recent survey conducted by the Multiple Sclerosis Society, only 34% of people who work in the private sector think their workplace welcomes disabled people, compared to more than 55% of those in the public sector. This is good news for the public sector however there is still much more we can do in order to entice disabled people to undertake apprenticeships.

As part of a future piece of work, I am looking to create a range of case studies of disabled apprentices across the public sector. These case studies will help showcase the benefits of apprenticeships and how they can

help disabled people achieve great things. I am always eager to promote apprenticeships for disabled people and would challenge you to check that your apprenticeships are as accessible as possible.

If you do have any suggestions, ideas or comments, feel free to contact me at matthew.

wallis@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Matthew Wallis is HR Project Support Officer at Central Bedfordshire Council and PPMA Apprentice of the Year 2016



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The world is moving at pace and change is now the constant and the inevitable. In order to avoid standing still organisations in the public sector need to be 'on their game' when it comes to hiring talent with digital and tech skills. This is equally true for the private sector but the ability to adapt and take action appears much more advanced here.

Generally the public sector finds it hard to attract this talent – but why? Here are some reasons:

1. A reliance on too many 'generalists' to carry out specialist roles
2. Not using data and collective knowledge to pool resources, workforce plan and recruitment forecast, analyse and use data to help drive programmes/initiatives and innovation
3. Recruitment processes are often out of date and clunky which turning candidates off before they are engaged
4. Rigid pay bandings and inflexibility around work location
5. Not creating the right targeted Employer Value Proposition (EVP) or one at all
6. Not looking at multi-channel recruitment methodologies
7. Sticking to traditional roles in the organisation chart, ie IT director or head of IT

There is good news though! The public sector (central government, local government, health, not-for-profit and wider) is putting on some



Plugging into the Digital Age

Charles Wilson says that embracing technology-led, customer-centric services is vital to the public sector's progression

really interesting and large scale technology-led programmes. The need for transformation is paramount to creating more fit for purpose, technology led, customer centric services for the end user.

A few local authorities are already working in partnership with local constabularies and the health service to use data and analytics to have a 'single view' of a person in their community. This is no easy task and having people with the right skill set is a priority to making this work. The Government Digital Service (GDS) have been implementing one

of the largest digital transformation programmes in Europe. These require suitable investment, not just in the technology but in the right people to build it and run it successfully.

So what are some of the options and actions the public sector could take:

1. **One way of recruiting and managing talent doesn't always work.**

For example, McDonalds has been launching new digital products over the past 12-18 months. They decided to hire and build their own

digital team. However, they needed to change their mindset around recruitment, location and retention. The candidate wouldn't respond to a traditional advert so they looked to social media, forums and events to get a targeted message out. They set up a new location in Shoreditch to attract candidates from other tech organisations in the area and they had to come to terms with the idea that these candidates once hired might not stick around for more than two to five years.

2. **The use of a flexible workforce.** Some of the work will be project

based or time limited so hire contractors and interim managers rather than always thinking permanent recruitment.

3. **Use internal, cross organisation and supplier data to hone the recruitment methodologies to learn and innovate.**

4. **If something is exciting shout about it.**

Create a special EVP for that project or recruitment campaign that will excite its audience so they want to know more.

5. **Have the right people in the right roles.**

This includes those with the experience and skill set to lead digital and technology change – ie, chief technology officer, chief digital officer, developers, programmers, app developers etc.

6. **Use social media, forums and events to attract relevant candidates.**

7. **It's ok to ask for help.**

Seek advice, use specialist partners to ensure a greater chance of success.

Public sector recruitment needs to keep pace with and utilise for the benefit of its residents the technology that's available now and in the future.

Charles Wilson is Practice Director for Executive Recruitment, Private Sector at Penna. www.penna.com



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