

# TRAINING & CAREERS

- Effective employee retention
- Sourcing talent
- Employee well-being
- Exploring the FHRD HR Quality Mark

**FHRD**

*all about people*

# Staying ahead in an era of accelerating change

There are skills we need to have to help current employees remain relevant and to succeed in future careers, whatever those might be, says **Matthew Naudi**.

It is becoming evident that we all feel a little bit overwhelmed by the seemingly endless possibilities the future holds. Change is occurring instantaneously, accelerating quickly, and creating so many complexities, disruptiveness and uncertainty that even the most confident are not sure whether they're prepared for the "revolution" which is actually already happening.

Technological progress such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning; the sharing and knowledge economy; Demographic, social and environmental changes; Globalisation; and labour flexibility are among the main causes of this revolution.

The workplace has definitely been subjected to some great transformation and over the past three years has had to change more rapidly than it did in the past 30 years or so – with a pace that is still accelerating.

This is having a direct impact on the present and future skills required by organisations and their respective workforce in order to remain competitive and relevant.

According to the World Economic Forum's 2023 Future of Jobs Report, 44 per cent of worker skills will be disrupted over the next five years with what are called the 21st century skills in great demand.

The report also forecasts that six out of every 10 employees will require reskilling and upskilling, but, even more worrying is that many will lack access to the resources they need. This is probably why it is estimated that by 2030 some 85 million jobs will go unfilled due to a lack of skills.

Currently students are studying subjects that could be irrelevant in 10 years' time and it's highly likely that they will be employed in jobs that don't even exist yet. It is difficult to prepare for a future job that's impossible to predict.

However, there are skills that we need to have to help current employees to remain relevant and prospective employees to



What employers are really looking out for are people with a versatile skills set. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM. Right: Matthew Naudi

succeed in future careers, whatever those might be.



**HR need to deviate their people and recruitment strategies from a job-focused mindset to one where employees and potential employees are valued for their skills**

That's what the future really holds. New scenarios that need critical thinking, that need creativity, that need flexibility that need all the 21st century skills to overcome these challenges.

Let's face it, knowledge today is available at the click of a button and the tap on a screen and no one can ever claim to be able to outsmart machines and devices.

What we do need to know, however, is how to transfer that available knowledge and how to use that knowledge in new and developing circumstances.

This is where the 21st century skills come into play. In fact, today's job market demands these 21st century skills, and a growth mindset that embraces continuous learning. What employers are really looking out for are people with a versatile skills set; skills such as adaptability, strong communication skills, collaboration and teamwork, digital literacy, curiosity, innovation and critical thinking, and above all creativity.

Creative thinking allows you to innovate in leaps and bounds rather than making small improvements on pre-existing ideas.

Local HR professionals seem to be very much aware of this

with 80 per cent saying that their respective organisations are committed to developing and rewarding these skills and 89 per cent believe that it is important to focus on these skills, according to an FHRD-PWC pulse survey carried out among HR professionals working in Malta, which will be launched at the up-and-coming FHRD annual conference next week.

This looks very promising since the HR teams within their respective organisations need to be the catalysts of change and need to lead the way to create a skills-based organisation, moving away from the traditional, knowledge-based models we are accustomed to.

Skills-based organisations are the best prepared to navigate the reality in which artificial intelligence increases its ability to enhance and form an integral part of the workforce.

And although pessimists might say that AI will take millions of jobs and put people out into the street, those ready to embrace the change say that AI has the ability to create more



new jobs than it replaces, if the skills are available.

Skills-based organisations break down traditional roles and instead define work by describing the tasks and activities that need to be performed.

This means that HR need to deviate their people and recruitment strategies from a job-focused mindset to one where employees and potential employees are valued for their skills, contributions and long-term relevance rather than for their educational history, the job roles they held and the level of seniority they achieved.

The new expectations among the Gen Z digital native generation and soon with the Gen Alpha, the first generation to grow up in an entirely digital world, and the development and adoption of transformative new technologies have changed the types of positions organisations need to fill, as well as the skills needed to perform them.

The truth is that ignoring this rapid transformation of the future of workers, the future of working and the future of work itself could be catastrophic. We have to move away from what we see as normal today and create a new sense of normal which enhances and complements, rather than resists and confronts, the doubts and uncertainties we have, which will all make more sense as time goes by.

Matthew Naudi is president of the FHRD.



# FHRD 2023 Annual HR Conference

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4

Keynotes

10

Workshops

20

Speakers

1

Masterclass

27

Exhibitors

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The event is accredited by the Malta Institute of Accountants as per the Accountancy Board's CPE Scheme.

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## TALENT

# Sourcing talent from a global marketplace

Diversity can lead to innovative solutions, fresh perspectives, and enhanced competitiveness, says **Victoria Meli**.

In today's interconnected world, the hunt for talent has surpassed geographical boundaries. While Malta may be a small island nation in the Mediterranean, its businesses are increasingly looking beyond its shores to source the right talent. The globalisation of the workforce has opened up exciting opportunities for local companies to tap into the global marketplace for talent acquisition.

Sourcing talent from a global marketplace is reshaping the employment landscape in Malta which, with its flourishing tech, finance, and gaming sectors, has positioned itself as a European hub for innovation and business growth. However, the limited local talent pool has made it essential for businesses to cast a wider net when searching for skilled professionals. This is where the concept of sourcing talent from a global marketplace comes into play.

## GLOBALISATION AND TALENT ACQUISITION

The globalisation of talent acquisition has been facilitated by several key factors. The first is technology, which has enabled remote work and international collaboration. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this trend, forcing companies worldwide to adopt remote work practices. This newfound flexibility opened the doors to a vast global talent pool.

Secondly, the rise of online job platforms and freelance marketplaces has made it easier for Maltese businesses to connect with talent from around the world. Platforms like LinkedIn have become invaluable tools for finding the right talent, regardless of location.

## DIVERSE SKILL SETS AND EXPERTISE

One of the primary benefits of sourcing talent globally is the access to diverse skill sets and expertise. Local businesses in Malta are now able to tap into a rich and varied pool of professionals with experience in various industries and markets. This diversity can lead to innovative solutions, fresh perspectives, and enhanced competitiveness.

For instance, a Maltese tech startup looking to develop cutting-edge software might find the perfect software engineer in Eastern Europe with a track record of developing similar products for global clients.

## MITIGATING SKILL SHORTAGES

Malta, like many other countries, faces skill shortages in certain sectors. Sourcing talent globally can help bridge these gaps. In fields where local expertise is limited, such as artificial intelligence or blockchain technology, businesses in Malta can look to countries where these industries are thriving. By hiring experts from external regions, local companies can access the knowledge and skills needed to stay competitive.

## LANGUAGE ADVANTAGE

Malta's strategic location in the Mediterranean has given it a unique advantage – multilingualism. Many Maltese citizens are proficient in English, Maltese, and at least one other language. This linguistic versatility opens doors to talent from across Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. Companies can find employees



By hiring experts from external regions, local companies can access the knowledge and skills needed to stay competitive. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

who can communicate with clients and partners in their native languages, enhancing business relationships and expanding market reach.

## CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

While sourcing talent from a global marketplace offers many advantages, it also presents challenges that Maltese businesses must address. Cultural differences, time zone disparity, and legal complexities can complicate the hiring process. It's crucial for companies to have a solid strategy in place, including clear communication channels and compliance with international employment laws.

One significant challenge has been integrating international talent into the local workforce and society. Language barriers, cultural differences, and work permit regulations have presented hurdles that both employers and employees have had to overcome. To address these issues, one may invest in language training programs and cultural integration initiatives. These efforts not only help newcomers feel more at

home but also promote a sense of unity among the local and international workforce.

Additionally, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion among globally sourced talent is essential. Companies should make efforts to integrate remote employees into their organizational culture and provide opportunities for them to connect with their local counterparts, even if only virtually.

## THE FUTURE OF TALENT ACQUISITION IN MALTA

As we move further into the 21st century, the trend of sourcing talent globally is expected to continue evolving. The use of artificial intelligence and data analytics in talent acquisition will become more prevalent, helping companies in Malta identify the most suitable candidates efficiently.

Furthermore, the rise of remote work and flexible employment arrangements will reshape the workforce. Maltese companies may increasingly opt for a hybrid model, allowing



Victoria Meli

employees to work both on-site and remotely, giving them access to the best talent, regardless of their location.

Sourcing talent from a global marketplace is no longer a luxury but a necessity for businesses in Malta. Embracing this trend enables local companies to access diverse skill sets, mitigate skill shortages, and tap into linguistic advantages. While challenges exist, with careful planning and a commitment to inclusion, Malta can harness the power of global talent to fuel its economic growth and innovation in the years to come. The world is our talent pool, and the possibilities are boundless.

Victoria Meli is VP of Global HR Operations & Compensation at Finaro and vice president of the FHRD.



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## TECHNOLOGY

# AI: Threat or opportunity for HR?

While AI in the world of HR has opened up numerous opportunities and efficiencies, there are obstacles and a new set of challenges ahead, says **Claudine Attard**.

In today's rapidly changing business environment, we are experiencing a revolution driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI). Although AI has been around for many years and implemented in organisational tools, it has now become more readily available. Reflecting on the challenges of recent years, including the impact of the pandemic, inflationary pressures and geopolitical events, it is evident that organisations must identify innovative solutions to ensure efficiency and competitiveness. Organisations are investing in automated efficiency, driven by the need to streamline operations and remain agile in these uncertain times. This noteworthy trend emerges in this year's HR Pulse Survey which will be published at the FHRD conference on October 20. As we delve deeper into the topic of AI and its implications for the human resource function, it becomes clear that this is not just a temporary interest, but a significant shift.

It seems clear that the future is closely linked to the continued integration of AI in human resources. But what will this future look like? We see a horizon in which big data, cloud computing and AI become central to the modus operandi of human resources. Organisations are not just relying on AI for operational efficiency, but envisioning a workspace where AI contributes to improving the employee experience, fostering a culture of continuous learning and even rethinking talent acquisition. Furthermore, PwC's 26th annual Global CEO Survey provides another perspective. The importance of technology investments, particularly in automation, professional development and AI, reflects a broader idea: the effort to balance the needs of the present with the urgencies of the future. As CEOs juggle this balancing act, AI emerges as both an ally and a challenge. In the coming years, HR will be entrusted with a big responsibility: harnessing AI while ensuring that the core values, ethics and human essence of HR remain intact. It is not just about embracing technology, but shaping a future in which AI and human skills come together to redefine the very ethos of HR.

As revealed in this year's HR Pulse Survey, a significant 71 per cent of organisations are embracing automation, marking a significant shift in their operational strategies. It is important to ensure that the workforce is not only surrounded by innovative tools, but are upskilled to be able to effectively harness their power. Similarly, HR functions, like other departments, are actively exploring ways to embrace automation and AI. An encouraging 49 per cent of the survey respondents believe that their HR



While organisations and employees seem enthusiastic and optimistic about the AI-driven future, there is a deep need for transparency, ethics and continuous human contact. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

teams have a thorough understanding of such technology. However, a prevalent theme remains: there is a knowledge gap that cannot be ignored. As organisations increasingly implement AI, the role of HR is not just about determining their own HR technology requirements, and using it. It is about having an active role in navigating their organisation's digital transformation, understanding the potential of AI and ensuring that as the workplace evolves, their employees are upskilled to have the required skills and are not left behind.

From the initial stages of recruitment to employee engagement and performance management, AI is already being used to redefine how core and specialised HR activities are being carried out. Algorithms, once the language of technology enthusiasts, now play a key role in refining the recruitment process. These tools are being used to scan through large volumes of data, ensuring that HR processes are not only efficient but also extremely accurate and value adding. Delving further into the results of the HR Pulse Survey, while a significant 52 per cent of organisations have started to leverage technology for training and development, a striking 83 per cent of organisations recognise the need to merge advanced technology into their L&D strategy. In essence, AI applications are not just a tool, but fast becoming a core HR capability, fostering informed decision-making.

While AI in the world of HR has opened up numerous opportunities and efficiencies, there are obstacles and a new set of challenges ahead. According to the HR Pulse Survey, while a promising 43 per cent of organisations

are exploring the potential of AI in re-defining roles, there is a significant 28 per cent who are proceeding with caution. This divergence of opinion is not just hesitation, but a reminder of the complex interaction between the vast potential of AI and the concerns surrounding its integration. Transparency, the pillar of trust in any organisation, emerges as a major concern. The data reveals that only 29 per cent of respondents believe their organisations are transparent about the future of work, particularly in the context of AI and automation. This underlines the need for HR leaders to ensure that firstly AI's adoption is a collaborative process, in which the HR team is involved in defining the vision for the future, determining requirements and supporting with any business process reengineering required. Secondly, a robust change management and communications plan should be put in place to minimise potential resistance or uncertainty from employees who would be making use of such tools, ensuring that they are not left in the dark or overwhelmed by the change. Moreover, as with any transformative technology, ethical concerns arise. The idea of AI in HR, where algorithms could for example potentially influence career decisions, requires a careful balance. Ensuring that AI tools are unbiased, safeguarding employee data, and ensuring that the human element in HR is not overshadowed by automation, are challenges that organisations will face as they embark on the AI-driven future.

As part of the debate on the threat or opportunity of AI for HR, the World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2023 provides significant insights.



Claudine Attard

According to research conducted by LinkedIn in relation to that report, HR and Talent Acquisition roles occupy the second place among the 100 fastest growing jobs. In addition, the report also looks at job creation and displacement projections between 2023 and 2027. Although Recruiters and HR Specialists are expected to result in a slight decline in jobs, Organisational Development Specialists and Training and Development Specialists, on the other hand, show slight growth. Indeed, although the HR landscape will undergo changes due to AI and other factors, this does not necessarily mean a loss of jobs. On the contrary, these changes will require HR employees to be reskilled and repositioned to more value adding HR roles. As the sector adapts, new HR-specific roles and opportunities are expected to emerge. For example, we may see the rise of AI training specialists, who will ensure that the AI used is aligned with the organisation's values and culture. HR data analysts will become crucial, analysing employee data to improve well-being and productivity. These examples illustrate how the evolving demands and capabilities brought by AI may create new paths in HR.

While organisations and employees seem enthusiastic and optimistic about the AI-driven future, there is a deep need for transparency, ethics and continuous human contact. As we move forward, HR will need to shift away from the traditional role and become more involved in guiding their organisations through the complexities of AI, ensuring a future in which not only their organisations thrive, but also, and more importantly, that employees are not left behind as technology advances.

Claudine Attard is Director, Management Consulting, PwC Malta and a Board member of the FHRD.



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## EVENT



Malta's Annual  
HR Conference

20 October 2023  
Hilton Conference Centre

## CONFERENCE AGENDA

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 08.15 hrs         | <b>Registration and Welcome Coffee</b>   |
| 09.15 hrs         | <b>Opening address: Conference Launch</b><br>Matthew Naudi - President FHRD  |
| 09.30 hrs         | <b>Keynote 1: The Power of Experiences in the Future of Work</b><br>Speaker: Steve Usher, Co-Founder - Wonder   Employee Experience   Human-Centred Designer   Facilitator   Podcaster                                     |
| 09.55 hrs         | <b>Keynote 2: Using Data &amp; Advanced Analytics to Drive Employee and Business Success - Sharing Learnings from Nokia</b><br>Speaker: David Shontz, Global HR Leader - Nokia   Analytics Enthusiast                      |
| 10.35 hrs         | <b>HR Quality Mark Presentation of Certificates and Mementos</b>   |
| <b>10.50 hrs</b>  | <b>Mid-Morning Coffee Break</b>  |
| 11.20 hrs         | <b>WORKSHOPS (to choose 1)</b>   |
| 11.20 - 12.00 hrs | <b>W/S 1: The AI Advantage: Redefining HR Practices through Technology and Innovation</b><br>Speaker: Dr Gege Gatt, CEO EBO.AI   |
|                   | <b>W/S 2: Be Seen as an Authentic Human Leader - How to become a more engaging, authentic, and adaptive leader</b><br>Speaker: Karl Grech - Performance Coach and Trainer  |
|                   | <b>W/S 3: From Buzzwords to Outcomes: Getting Real about Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace</b><br>Speaker: Maria Loumpourdi, Global Head of Talent Development   Diversity & Inclusion Professional - Betsson Group |
|                   | AND  |
| 12.00 - 12.40 hrs | <b>WORKSHOPS (to choose 1)</b>   |
|                   | <b>W/S 4: HR Pulse Survey 2023 - Data-driven Insights on the Future of Work</b><br>Speakers: Claudine Attard - Director PwC Malta Management Consultancy and Mark Grech - Manager PwC Malta Advisory                       |
|                   | <b>W/S 5: Human experience at the workplace: your best strategy to boost employee engagement</b><br>Speaker: Olivia Bilocca, HR Consultant   Life Coach   Business Trainer   Trainee Psychotherapist                       |
|                   | <b>W/S 6: Why is ESG so relevant to HR Professionals?</b><br>Speaker: Nathan Farrugia, Managing Director - Vistage   Managing Director - Up Your Level   Chairperson of the Academy of Givers                              |

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 12.40 hrs  | <b>Networking Lunch</b>  |  |  |  |
| 13.40 hrs  | <b>Conference Energizer</b>  |  |  |  |
| 14.00 hrs  | <b>Keynote 3: HR Hybrid Solutions for the New Future of Work - Sharing Learnings from HP</b><br>Speaker: Mara Lucini, EMEA Talent Acquisition Director - HP  |  |  |  |
| 14.35 hrs  | <b>Keynote 4: How to Avoid HR Burnout?</b><br>Speaker: Mikela Fenech Pace, HR Consultant   Executive Coach   Team Coach  |  |  |  |
| 15.10 hrs  | <b>Mid-Afternoon Coffee Break</b>  |  |  |  |
| 15.40 hrs  | <b>HR Masterclass - Trending Talent and Succession Insights</b>  |  |  |  |
|  | <table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>Francesca Buhagiar</b><br/>Senior Manager -<br/>VC (VacancyCentre)<br/>☞ Talent Sourcing</td> <td><b>Dr Dieter Veldsman</b><br/>HR and Organisational<br/>Design Thought Leader -<br/>AIHR<br/>☞ Succession Planning<br/>☞ Talent Retention<br/>☞ Onboarding</td> <td><b>Ray Bonnici</b><br/>Chief People Officer -<br/>APS Bank plc<br/>☞ Training</td> </tr> </table> <p>OR</p> | <b>Francesca Buhagiar</b><br>Senior Manager -<br>VC (VacancyCentre)<br>☞ Talent Sourcing | <b>Dr Dieter Veldsman</b><br>HR and Organisational<br>Design Thought Leader -<br>AIHR<br>☞ Succession Planning<br>☞ Talent Retention<br>☞ Onboarding | <b>Ray Bonnici</b><br>Chief People Officer -<br>APS Bank plc<br>☞ Training |
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| 15.40 - 16.20 hrs  | <b>WORKSHOPS (to choose 1)</b>   |  |  |  |
|  | <b>W/S 7: Connecting the Power of Your People - The Evolution of Talent Acquisition</b><br>Speaker: Ross Pitman, Director of Business & Communications - GRS Recruitment (Cyprus Office)   |  |  |  |
|  | <b>W/S 8: Elevating Employee Experience through Technology</b><br>Speaker: Shirley Borg, Head of Human Resources - EnergyCasino  |  |  |  |
|  | AND  |  |  |  |
| 16.20- 17.00 hrs   | <b>WORKSHOPS (to choose 1)</b>   |  |  |  |
|  | <b>W/S 9: Creating mentally healthy workplaces: Dealing with mental health issues and striving for work-life balance</b><br>Speaker: Charlene Camilleri Duca, Clinical Psychologist & Gestalt Psychotherapist - Paths Clinic   |  |  |  |
|  | <b>W/S 10: The GIG Economy: Opportunities and Challenges for People Professionals</b><br>Speaker: Lutfur Ali Chartered FCIPD, Senior Policy Advisor - CIPD   |  |  |  |
| 17.00 hrs  | <b>Conference End</b>  |  |  |  |

## Conference Partners



## MANAGEMENT/NEWS

# What makes an effective leader?

Answering the question of what makes an effective leader is a big challenge. It's a challenge because so much has been written and researched on leadership. It is also a challenge to understand what we mean by a leader – in what context and environment, and how one measures effectiveness in leadership.

I will draw from research, discussions, views and experience on what makes an effective leader. In doing this, I would like you to reflect on your experiences. Although I will focus on organisational leadership, think of any individual you believe is, or was, an effective leader. Reflect on their backgrounds, their qualities, skills, and styles – you will quickly come to realise that no two leaders are the same.

## BORN OR MADE LEADERS?

A debate surrounding the concept of leadership is whether leaders are born or made. We often speak of born leaders. As the word implies, a leader gives an individual the ability to lead others. Strong and effective leadership is a learning process requiring an array of skills to get the best out of people. Being an effective leader is gained through hard work, experience, determination, and passion.

Leadership requires interlinked abilities, such as negotiation, compromise, communication and

problem-solving. We can relate to the development of these abilities as early as our childhood, discovering how best to play together and what we want from our peers. Children use trial and error to develop what eventually cultivate leadership skills. They learn how to harness their own power as a leader; take risks and learn from failure.

## LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

In his book *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*, Stephen Covey speaks about the leaders of the future. Future leaders inspire others, they need to find their voice and inspire others to find theirs. Covey speaks of moving from effectiveness to greatness, requiring four leadership characteristics – Vision, Passion, Discipline and Conscience.

A leader requires a vision and strategy which establishes a direction for employees. A leader needs to set an example by executing ideas in a disciplined fashion. Leaders need to be passionate about what they do so that through their enthusiasm, a shared organisational culture is established. Finally, leaders need to manage and maintain structures inside their organisation. Leaders are in a prime position to achieve this, by instilling trust, communicating effectively, and relinquishing

some control, they benefit the entire organisation.

## PEOPLE FIRST

I recently came across a podcast delivered by business guru Tom Peters, an impressive writer on business management spanning six decades. Peters was asked what makes an effective leader. His answer is very clear – putting people really first, being people-centred, caring for people, businesses should be about “people serving people; it's leaders serving their frontline employees who in turn serve their customers.”

Peters speaks about leaders, in any type or size of organisation, being remembered for what they did to take care of and support their people and communities. He shares his insights on having more women as leaders and the effects this has on improvement in sales, leadership, and negotiations. He speaks on the importance of always trying to innovate and develop a new or better way to do something, even on a small scale.

Professor Linda A. Hill, from Harvard Business School explains that leadership has become harder, stakeholder expectations have increased, execution has become more complex, digital transformation imperative, and innovation ever more critical for sustained success. Today, leadership is not only about setting direction, vision and getting people to follow you



A leader requires a vision and strategy which establishes a direction for employees. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM. Right: Peter Gatt



to the future, but about getting people to co-create that vision and future, being able to innovate with scale and speed. She speaks about great leaders being architects, bridgers and catalysts.

An architect who facilitates co-creation and builds up a company's culture and capabilities for individuals to collaborate, innovate, and unleash the diverse talents and differences of people to experiment and learn together. A bridger who forges partnerships between diverse stakeholders both within and outside their organisation to acquire the right talent and tools. A catalyst who sparks and sustains the energy and passion required to drive innovation forward. No leader is an island, they need to work together with other people, organisations and their different capabilities.

In the Spider-Man movies, Ben Parker tells his nephew Peter while dying that: “With great power comes great responsibility”. Simon Sinek, in his book, *Leaders Eat Last*, states that great

leaders sacrifice their own comfort, even their own survival, for the good of those in their care. He shares a key message about effective leadership, that of prioritising the well-being of team members, creating a sense of purpose and belonging, and practising servant leadership. When people feel sure they will be safe, they will work tirelessly to see their leaders' visions come to life and proudly call themselves their followers. It is by following these principles, new leaders can become effective and respected!

Have you thought of an individual who you truly believe is, or was, an effective leader?

Peter Gatt is Senior Employer Branding Manager at APS Bank plc and a Board member of the FHRD.

## Boost your team's morale and productivity with HSF health plans

As an HR professional in Malta, you know that your employees are your most important asset. That's why prioritising employee well-being is integral to achieving a thriving workplace.

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HSF Health Plans are easy to set up and manage, and we offer streamlined

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- Reduced absenteeism
- Improved employee morale and satisfaction
- Increased employee productivity and engagement



- Attract and retain the right talent with competitive benefits

Our health plans make a difference in your life and your community. All profits from HSF Health Plan are passed on to the charity, The Hospital Saturday Fund for charitable grants to medically associated charities and medical electives.

HSF Health Plans are a great way for employers in Malta to invest in their employ-

ees' health and well-being. They offer a wide range of benefits to both employees and employers, and they're easy to set up and manage.

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NEWS

# Studioseven Audiovisual Academy announces partnership and participation at FHRD Conference 2023

The Studioseven Audiovisual Academy, a new project within Studio 7 Co Ltd, has announced it is one of the main partners of the event and it will also be participating in the upcoming Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD) conference. With over 45 years of experience in the audiovisual industry, Studioseven is proud to contribute to the FHRD conference's mission of promoting excellence in human resources development.

Studioseven is renowned for its flexibility, innovation, and unwavering reliability in the audiovisual sector. Leveraging its longstanding reputation, the Studio seven Audiovisual Academy was established with a commitment to elevating the industry by providing specialized technical training for speakers and presenters, for AV technicians and personnel, and for media content creators.

At the heart of Studioseven Audiovisual Academy's approach is

a hands-on, project-driven methodology, designed to immerse learners of all age groups in an experiential learning environment. This approach ensures that learners are exposed to the latest equipment, industry standards, and best practices, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in the dynamic audiovisual landscape.

The Academy operates on a set of core values that shape its educational philosophy:

1. Holistic experience: Studioseven Audiovisual Academy goes beyond traditional subjects, focusing on comprehensive personal growth. Learners can expect an educational journey that not only shapes their careers but enriches their entire lives.

2. Respectful environment: Valuing every learner as a unique individual with distinct aspirations, the Academy fosters an inclusive community that encourages mutual support and

creates a positive and empowering atmosphere.

3. Growth-oriented: The Academy's primary objective is to facilitate holistic growth. Educators at the Academy serve as mentors, guiding individuals on the path to becoming the best versions of themselves. The Academy's success is intricately linked to the success of its learners, making their growth a shared mission.

Studioseven Audiovisual Academy is committed to creating an educational journey that transcends traditional learning, empowering learners with knowledge, essential skills, and personal growth that will enable them to excel in their chosen field.

"We are excited to be part of the FHRD conference, where we can showcase our commitment to excellence in human resources development," Studioseven Audiovisual Academy said. "Through our innovative approach to education and our



During the 2023 summer programme, empowered students take the lead: mastering cameras, video mixing, floor management, and more as they conduct an exclusive interview with Keith Demicoli in the Studioseven Audiovisual Academy TV studio.

unwavering dedication to our core values, we aim to shape the future of the audiovisual industry and empower presenters, technicians, event organisers, and content creators to reach their full potential."

The FHRD conference provides an ideal platform for Studioseven

Audiovisual Academy to share its expertise, network with industry leaders, and contribute to the development of human resources in Malta.

For more information about Studioseven Audiovisual Academy and ongoing courses e-mail [academy@studioseven.com.mt](mailto:academy@studioseven.com.mt).



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## WELL-BEING/FHRD

# How employee well-being contributes

Employee well-being is a crucial factor in shaping a healthy and prosperous organisation. When employees are physically, emotionally, and mentally well, they perform better, engage more and contribute positively to the workplace. Here's an overview of how employee well-being contributes to organisational health:

## Improved productivity and performance

Employees who are physically and mentally well can perform their tasks more efficiently. They are less likely to be absent or presenteeism (being at work but not fully productive) due to health issues, resulting in increased productivity.

**What can be done:** Well-being initiatives such as stress management programs, fitness programs, and mental health support can help employees manage their workload together with their day-to-day responsibilities more effectively. Cultivate a culture of trust, respect, and collaboration within the organisation.

## Enhanced engagement and morale

Well-being initiatives demonstrate care for the employees, fostering a positive work environment. Employees feel valued, leading to higher job satisfaction, increased engagement, and improved morale.

**What can be done:** Encourage transparent and open communication between management and employees. Create channels for employees to express their thoughts and ideas and ensure that feedback is acknowledged and acted upon. Offer career development opportunities and help your employees grow professionally.

## Reduced absenteeism and presenteeism

Employees with good well-being are less likely to take sick days or come to work when not feeling well. This reduces absenteeism and presenteeism, ensuring that employees are available and productive when needed.

**What can be done:** Keep a watchful eye and monitor your absenteeism rate

and see whether there is a particular pattern or a particular department in which absenteeism is becoming an issue so that the company can take proactive measures to address absenteeism. Several payroll systems provide absenteeism report so make sure that you review these reports at least on a quarterly basis but most importantly act.

## Lower employee turnover

A focus on employee well-being signals to employees that the organisation is investing in their health and happiness. This can lead to increased employee retention rates, saving the company time and money associated with recruiting and training new employees.

**What can be done:** Empower employees by delegating authority and demonstrate trust in their capabilities. Make sure that employees feel valued and respected, and motivated to contribute their best efforts.

## Enhanced creativity and innovation

A healthy work-life balance, allows employees to recharge and rejuvenate. This contributes to a more creative and innovative workforce, as employees have the mental and emotional capacity to think critically and generate new ideas.

**What can be done:** Clearly define individual and team goals that align with the overall organisational objectives. Communicate expectations but provide the necessary freedom so that everyone will be able to express their talent and foster a sense of ownership.

## Better interpersonal relationships

Employees with good well-being are likely to have better relationships with colleagues and clients. They are more approachable, communicate effectively, and collaborate well with others, fostering a positive and cooperative workplace culture.

**What can be done:** An open-door policy is easy to introduce (but needs time

## Exploring the FHRD HR Quality Mark

The Malta Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD) was set up in 1990 to spearhead the evolution of people management and development practices as well as the human resources profession in Malta. FHRD works in partnership with its corporate members, the professional conglomerate of HR practitioners and service providers, leaders of the industry, and other key local players in the field of human resources management and development.

In 2019, FHRD introduced the HR Quality Mark. This is a standard, developed by the FHRD, that recognises organisations for their effective HR practices in terms of HR competence and professionalism. There is an increasingly greater need for measuring, monitoring, tracking, and understanding how well people are being managed and developed. This is part of FHRD's mission to set the national standards for the development of human resources in Malta.

As of now, there are a total of 42 local companies that have obtained this national certification in human resources.

The HR Quality Mark will give organisations the following benefits:

- Internal recognition,
- External recognition,
- Enhance employer brand,
- More attractive to new talent
- HR content areas evaluation
- HR Quality Mark event to promote the certified organisations
  - Sense of achievement for the internal HR team
  - Motivates the HR team to strive for excellence, and



Karen Muscat Baldacchino

• A report identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

The assessment model was utilised for four years, however, FHRD felt the need to update the core content areas to reflect the demands of today. Throughout the first quarter of 2023, FHRD worked on a new model that better addresses the evolving local HR scenario.

The HR Quality Mark aims to recognise organisations that place HR at the centre of their business through the implementation of various policies and strategies. The six core areas are:

1. **Strategy:** HR strategy refers to an organisation's overall plan for managing its human capital to align it with its activities, promote the company's vision, mission, values, and objectives as well as ensure inclusion in all aspects within the organisation, through people-centric solutions. It enables an organisation to visualise and capitalise upon the current strengths and anticipate future challenges within the organisation. In essence, it is a long-term plan that dictates HR practices throughout the organisation.

2. **Talent:** Talent refers to a natural aptitude or acquired ability, which when managed properly can lead to success. Within an organisation, talent needs to be managed to encompass all the HR processes required to attract, identify, develop, and retain employees who are valuable to the organisation.



*The Quality Mark is not a competition between organisations but encourages all organisations, irrelevant of size and sector, to assess their HR practices*

3. **Engagement:** Engagement refers to an employee's state of mind, whereby one exhibits effort, enthusiasm, dedication, pride, and concentration. There are a variety of initiatives that organisations may implement to promote a high level of engagement among their employees.

4. **Career:** Career refers to the methods in place that facilitate the development and progression of an employee within an organisation. It is in the interest of the organisation to ensure that career journeys and career ladders are communicated and to have sys-

tems in place that equip the employees with the necessary skills to guarantee a lifetime of employability.

5. **Efficiency:** Within an organisation, efficiency refers to the ability in which an organisation can measure how effective the HR actions and activities are to the overall organisation. An effective HR team can measure and analyse all data and translate it into metrics that have a bearing on the bottom line of the organisation.

6. **Relations:** This core area refers to the organisation's efforts to create and maintain a positive relationship with the employees. This is managed through HR policies and procedures that address among other things workplace conflicts, workplace safety, compensation, and rewards.

The Quality Mark is not a competition between organisations but encourages all organisations, irrelevant of size and sector; to assess their HR practices. This means that there are no restrictions or rankings on how many organisations can achieve this award, as long as the HR criteria set by FHRD are reached. The Quality Mark serves as a process to guide organisations on how to improve their HR practices.

The HR Quality Mark process consists of five steps as detailed below:

### 1. Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for the HR Quality Mark, organisations must have at least 10 full-time employees registered with Jobsplus. Applicants must be fully compliant with all statutory obligations. The organisation and its people must

The Quality Mark serves as a process to guide organisations on how to improve their HR practices. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



show they follow ethical standards in their line of business.

### 2. Application

To apply for the HR Quality Mark, interested organisations are to complete an online application form, as well as pay the HRQM application fee and the respective FHRD Membership fee for the current year.

### 3. Vetting of application

FHRD will acknowledge applications received and then verify each application for eligibility.

### 4. Review process

FHRD will appoint two evaluators for each application. These evaluators will visit the organisation and subsequently compile a technical report and submit it to FHRD. The report will include recommendations for improvement.

### 5. Success

Successful organisations will be awarded the HR Quality Mark Certification based on a marking system tied to a set of questions relating to the seven content areas, with a pass mark of 75 per cent in each content area. An HR Quality Mark award ceremony will take place after every intake to

# to a healthy organisation

and time cost money!) and as long as there is active listening it will be very effective. It provides that quality time for the employee to express themselves and in return they are more likely to build mutual trust and respect towards their managers and the company. I would also encourage leaders and managers to model positive interpersonal behaviour, demonstrating respect and empathy.

## Promote work-life balance

By investing in employee well-being programs and promoting a healthy lifestyle, organisations can potentially reduce healthcare costs associated with absenteeism due to health issues.

**What can be done:** Offer flexible work arrangements and remote working opportunities plus verify that relevant policies are in place to support a healthy work-life balance. Discourage excessive overtime and ensure employees have time for their personal lives and well-being.

## Positive Employer branding and reputation

Organisations that prioritise employee well-being build a positive reputation in the job market. This attracts top talent and customers who value socially responsible and employee-centric companies.

**What can be done:** Align well-being with corporate social responsibility initiatives, to demonstrate a commitment to ethical and responsible business practices. In return such companies will be more appealing to prospective candidates seeking a healthy, ethical work environment. Add to that, media outlets are inclined to feature companies that prioritise employee welfare.

## Long-term organisational sustainability

A focus on employee well-being contributes to the long-term sustainability of the organisation. Healthy, engaged employees are more likely to contribute positively to the organisation's growth and success over the long run.

**What can be done:** Regularly measure and analyse employee engagement through surveys and feedback mechanisms to identify areas of improvement and act on them promptly to identify and most importantly retain your valuable talent.

## Positive organisational culture

A culture that promotes well-being fosters a sense of belonging and community among employees. It can lead to increased morale, cooperation, and a more positive overall work environment.

**What can be done:** Cultivate a positive, inclusive, and supportive work environment where diversity and different perspectives are valued and respected. Encourage collaboration and camaraderie among employees. Instead of conducting 'Exit Interviews' consider introducing 'Stay Interviews' with your employees!

In conclusion, employee well-being is a not just a nice-to-have aspect of organisational culture. Several of the above-mentioned initiatives where introduced at my



Mark Bugeja

workplace in a strategic manner and they have significantly improved how our organisation is perceived by both current and potential employees. A healthy and happy workforce not only benefits individuals but also contributes significantly to the overall success and sustainability of the organisation.

Mark Bugeja is Head of Human Resources at Nectar and a Board member of the FHRD.



on their HR practices in the six core areas mentioned above. Each application was assigned two evaluators who carried out a rigorous onsite audit and presented a final report, which was the basis on which the Quality Mark was awarded or not. In every case a post-evaluation report was prepared and sent to the respective applicants with the outcome of the assessment, highlighting their strengths and the areas for improvement.

Organisations that achieved the HR Quality Mark during previous intakes are Credorax Bank Ltd (formerly Finaro), Ecopure Ltd, Farsons Beverage Import Company plc, Hero Gaming Ltd, Quintano Foods Ltd, Shireburn, Simonds Farsons Cisk, Malta Archdiocese, Baxter, Calamatta Cuschieri, De La Rue Security & Print Services Ltd, Jobsplus, Hilton Malta, St. John's Co Cathedral, Probe Investments, EUPA Air X Charter Limited, Alberta Fire & Security Equipment Ltd, AMSM, Arkadia Marketing Limited, Fenech & Fenech Advocates, Fenlex Corporate Services Limited, Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools (FTS), GasanZammit Motors Limited, Institute for Education, MAPFRE Middlesea, MAPFRE MSV Life, Malta Digital Innovation Authority, Mekanika Limited, RS2 Software plc, and Teva.

Successful organisations can use the HR Quality Mark logo for three years on all outgoing correspondence, recruitment advertising, press releases, social media channels, and corporate website.

All successful organisations are listed on the FHRD website. For more information, contact us at [qm@fhrd.org](mailto:qm@fhrd.org) or visit our website <https://fhrd.org/hr-quality-mark/>

Karen Muscat Baldacchino is Chief Executive Officer, FHRD.

celebrate those successful organisations deserving of this award. A memento for the HR Quality Mark will be given to each successful organisation during the award ceremony.

During this year's annual HR Conference and Expo, entitled HR Transform: The Future of Work, FHRD will be organising the presentation of the HR Quality Mark certificates and mementos for the eleven successful organisations that participated in the fifth and sixth intakes. The sixth intake was a recertification process for successful organisations during the first intake.

The organisations that obtained the FHRD Quality Mark during the fifth intake are Agenzija Zghazagh, Apex Group Malta, Indis Malta Limited, Nectar, The Concept Stadium, and The Westin Dragonara Resort.

The organisations that obtained the FHRD Quality Mark during the sixth intake are GO plc, ICT Solutions, The Inspire Foundation, The Malta Business Registry, and Melita Ltd.

The Quality Mark is awarded following a meticulous evaluation carried out by competent evaluators who assess applicant organisations






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## PEOPLE/NEWS

# Investing in people analytics

More companies are significantly investing in people analytics for workforce planning, talent management and performance optimisation, says **Noel Debono**.

Ask HR leaders to define performance within their work context and you'll get a different answer from most respondents. Nonetheless, many will mention the same aspects that are hindering organisations from assisting their employees in reaching their optimum performance level: processes that are not strategically aligned with the vision of the business, fragmented and inflexible performance reporting processes and the lack of valuable metrics to effectively measure performance. In this context, more and more organisations are turning to people analytics as a tool to optimise their performance levels.

As work becomes increasingly digitised, most organisations are starting to realise how the unprecedented volume of work and workforce data being collected on their employees can effectively measure performance and help in making talent decisions. Indeed, people analytics is no longer (just) about company demographics, learning needs or employee engagement surveys. Data is now being used to understand every part of the business operation with the help of analytical tools embedded into engagement and retention processes.

Driven by the rise in popularity of cloud HR systems, the availability of company owned devices and tools that enable remote working, more companies are significantly investing in people analytics for workforce planning, talent management and perfor-



More organisations are turning to people analytics as a tool to optimise their performance levels. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

mance optimisation, among other things. Fuelling this revolution is the increasing interaction between people and machines that is leaving an ever-expanding digital trail of work data that can be mined to create value. Collected data is then analysed by tools and algorithms that have the power to indicate and potentially judge an individual's performance. With the right context, people analytics converts data into organisational insights thus supporting the quest for performance optimisation and the discovery of growth opportunities.

Here we need to pause and tackle consent and transparency issues that could undermine any attempt to boost productivity through employee analytics. I can never emphasise enough the importance of obtaining the employee's consent to allow the organisation use such data. This is

where companies need to bring together their legal and human resources teams before implementing such initiatives across the workforce to ensure adequate compliance with applicable regulations. It is indeed an underlying point that any type of employee data collection and analysis is done with the consent of the employee.

Equally important is the why and how such analytical tools are being deployed. If the introduction of people analytics is being perceived as a 'productivity monitoring' opportunity, any such initiative is likely to backfire and encourage workers to look busier than they actually are. Stories of employees that look 'available' even if they aren't working are on the increase in organisations that have strict monitoring mechanisms within a remote or hybrid environment. By communicating



Noel Debono

the why and how of people analytics, leaders can navigate through these potential pitfalls and help both their employees and the organisation understand the benefits of linking people analytics with performance.

Bringing about employee analytics into performance management significantly improves the way organisations measure individual performance and develop employees in ways that enhances their skills while creating value for the organisation. This is possible because people analytics identifies, underpins and amplifies value at each level of the organisation: be it individual, team or corporate level. Since people analytics offer a more objective and less biased way of measuring performance, it is supportive towards the individual's emotional well-being while offering clearer and engaging paths for skills and career development. These are aspects that are not only valuable to the employee, but key in ensuring team and organisational success.

Thanks to people analytics, team leaders' efforts to understand individual employees can be automated and streamlined to identify avenues of collaboration throughout the organisation. With the availability of data on work and the workforce, organisations can determine and improve key performance outcomes such as agility, quality of work or customer satisfaction. Such data can help leaders organise and optimise their resources based on the individuals' skills and preferred communication styles to build a more flexible, inclusive and better aligned team. Combined with other data sources, people analytics can help business leaders adopt a data driven approach to realign the organisational setup against the business core strategies, optimise the workplace and build a strong people culture.

With the responsible use of people analytics and a clear understanding of what should be measured, organisation leaders can build a holistic view of their employees and use insights gained to identify areas of growth. Done properly, people analytics can not only drive performance, but holds the potential to build trust amongst the workforce while improving the organisation's overall operational performance and reputation.

Noel Debono is a Manager at Deloitte's Human Capital Consulting arm and a Board member of the FHRD.

## S.A.F.E. programme

# #Be SAFE. Invest in the well-being of your employees

JOSIANNE AZZOPARDI

The S.A.F.E. programme is an award-winning preventive programme that has been implemented within Maltese and Gozitan workplaces. During these past 27 years, S.A.F.E. has reached over 34,000 participants.

In these past two years, entities from various sectors have been reached; delivering a total of 322 S.A.F.E. sessions and reaching 5,263 participants. These included: governmental departments and entities; health and social care services; educational institutions; disciplined forces; finance and insurance companies; hospitality and leisure sector; precision production companies; retail and manu-

facture industry; gaming companies; law firms, and employers associations.

Recently, a record number of 50 entities were awarded a certificate and token of appreciation during the S.A.F.E. Award Ceremony after implementing this programme within these last two years.

The S.A.F.E. programme offers a number of workshops to employers, managers, supervisors and employees circling around well-being of the employees. Topics covered include: alcohol and its effects; drugs and their effects; gambling; wise use of technology; stress management; bullying at the workplace; skills for the parent employee, and approaching the employee with addiction difficulties.

Apart from preventive sessions, the S.A.F.E. programme also promotes the introduction or review of the company's



'Substance Abuse and Gambling Policy'. The programme further provides a referral system to the care services for employees who might be experiencing difficulties related to addictions; difficulties that might impact on the place of work.

With the aim to increase the well-being of employees, during the 2023 summer period, the S.A.F.E. programme has embarked on a project, the Well-being Project. This pilot project offered the following sessions: stress management; bullying at the workplace, and work-life balance. A total number of 61 sessions were delivered, with 19 entities participat-

ing between the period of July and September.

The S.A.F.E. programme team is always aiming at offering an excellent and professional service to the entities with whom it comes into contact. This effort has been awarded during the National Supporting Business Awards 2023 organized by the Commerce Department, winning the category Investing in Entrepreneurial Skills.

For the years to come, the S.A.F.E. programme will continue to work wholeheartedly to promote the idea to Maltese workplaces to: Be SAFE. Invest in the well-being of your employees.

NEWS

# FIAU an employer of choice

The FIAU (Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit) is a government entity set up to combat money laundering and terrorist financing activities through its various functions.

Like all businesses and entities, the FIAU competes for human resources therefore, investing in employee training has become a keystone to its success. The Unit believes that workplace training serves as a bridge between theory and practice, and it equips employees with the skills and knowledge needed to perform their tasks effectively and efficiently.

Annually various bespoke internal and external training opportunities are provided to keep the workforce abreast with new trends, technologies, and recommendations. Employees participate in seminars, conferences and training, both locally and abroad, not only to enhance their knowledge and skills but to provide networking opportunities. Training is provided by entities like ACAMS and ICA ensuring top quality training.

In 2023, short and effective self-paced bespoke training was also offered and was well received. Different learning styles were catered for through the use of different training methods to accommodate as far as possible the needs of the employees, making it more likely for them to grasp and retain and apply the learning effectively.

This year, Mental Health First Aid training was introduced, to protect the overall well-being of employees, and to enhance a culture of safety and support at work. This kind of culture enhances both job performance and boosts confidence and job satisfaction.

Continuous learning is imperative, and to support this further, apart from regular training during office hours, the FIAU offers sponsorships so employees may further their studies in fields related to their line of work, even after office hours. In 2023, 13 employees applied for sponsorship in various areas including, AML/CFT Compliance, Cryptoset Asset Anti-Financial Crime, Manage-



Continuous learning is imperative.

ment and Leadership, HR Governance, Employment Law & GDPR and Global Sanctions.

The FIAU's culture of continuous training and development is a strategic investment and can be a gamechanger in

attracting and retaining the right people. It enhances employee performance, job satisfaction, and adaptability in an ever-changing landscape, whilst also positioning the FIAU as an employer of choice.



## Empower employees to take healthcare into their own hands.

Promote wellbeing in the workplace with HSF Health Plan.

HSF Health Plan (Malta) Ltd, with company registration number C 93406 and registered office address at No. 4, Triq Sant' Andrija, Valletta VLT 1341, Malta, is the trading company of The Hospital Saturday Fund, a Registered Charity in the UK No 1123351 and in Ireland Registered Charity No 20104528. HSF Health Plan (Malta) Limited is authorised under the Insurance Business Act (Chapter 403 of the Laws of Malta) and regulated by the Malta Financial Services Authority to carry on business of insurance in Malta.

## HR/NEWS

# Strategies for effective employee retention

What can a company do to retain employees and build a workforce that is loyal, motivated and successful, asks **Stephanie Cacopardo**.

Employee retention is a crucial aspect for any organisation to thrive successfully. In today's volatile market, employee attrition is not a viable choice. High turnover rates have a detrimental impact on employee's morale, productivity and employer branding. Companies need to invest in strategies that keep employees continuously satisfied and engaged. So what can a company do to retain employees and build a workforce that is loyal, motivated and successful?

It is vital to point out that there is no one size fits all magical solution. For any strategy to be effective, management needs to tailor make their strategy according to their organisation, structure and most importantly – their employees.

The following are some effective strategies to help you kick start your retention strategy.

## Hire the right people

Make sure that you have a recruitment policy in place which is shared with all hiring managers. This will outline key important points that are relevant to the business. Hiring managers should also be trained in interviewing skills – remember this is the first impression on potential future employees. Do not hire someone just to close a position; ensuring company cultural fit as well as adherence to skills and knowledge required is of utmost importance. There is nothing more demotivating than for a team member to have to work with someone who is not suited to do the job. This will also prove counterproductive as well as turn out more expensive due to re-training and re-hiring.

## Invest in employees and provide career development opportunities

Hiring suitably qualified individuals does not mean that an organisation can skimp

on training. An organisation should invest in a good orientation programme so that the employees will familiarise themselves with the company's policies, procedures as well as provide on the job training to learn how the department operates.

Development should be a continuous exercise wherein a gap analysis and training needs analysis is performed to see what development employees require. Develop clear career paths and encourage employees to pursue career opportunities even with other departments within the company. It is imperative that employees are equipped with the resources, mentoring and support needed to achieve these goals. If it is feasible for your organisation, offering course sponsorship and study leave is another incentive that could be offered. When employees see potential growth within an organisation, they will be more likely to stay and see it through.

## Competitive compensation and benefits

Make sure that employees feel that they are fairly compensated. It is imperative that a salary benchmarking exercise is conducted on a yearly basis and salaries reviewed accordingly. When employees feel that they are fairly compensated, they are more likely to stay with your organisation. Additionally, consider offering a comprehensive benefits package, including health insurance, performance-based bonuses, gym memberships, communication expenses allowance and other perks that would be considered a plus by your employees. A well-rounded compensation package demonstrates your commitment to your employees' financial well-being as well as gives you an advantage over competitors.

## Employee recognition and appreciation

Do not underestimate the effect of simple gestures such as recognising and appreci-



Companies need to invest in strategies that keep employees continuously satisfied and engaged. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM. Inset: Stephanie Cacopardo.

ating employees for their hard work and contributions. It is a powerful retention tool that requires minimal effort and cost. Small gestures such as thank-you notes, team celebrations, allowing an employee to leave early when going over and above, employee of the month awards, gift vouchers etc all go a long way in putting a smile on a colleague's face and giving them an extra boost of motivation.

## Flexible work arrangements, a healthy work life balance and overall health

Flexible work arrangement opportunities has become one of the factors that a prospective employee looks out for when changing jobs. Offering flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options, flexible hours and reduced hours provides employees with a better balance between their work and personal commitments, resulting in increased satisfaction & loyalty. Offering a healthy work-life balance is not just having a policy in place, it needs to be engrained in the organisation's culture and promoted throughout. Having mental health policies in place as well as offering free mental health sessions, extra days of mental health leave for employees and having trained mental health first aiders are all good practices which help employees feel part of an organisation that truly cares.

## Fostering a positive, safe and all-inclusive work environment

A positive work environment is essential for retaining employees. Make employees feel part of the organisation and not just a number. This can be done by cultivating a

culture of respect, inclusivity, and open communication. Encourage teamwork, collaboration, and socialisation among employees.

## Regular feedback, communication and exit interviews

Employees need to be given regular and constructive feedback on their work. Create an environment where employees feel encouraged to voice their opinions & concerns. Having an open and honest relationship between employees and managers can help in addressing issues before they escalate. If a team member decides to move on, it is important to conduct an exit interview so as to understand the reason behind the move and see if anything could be improved for future hires.

In summary, effective employee retention is an ongoing commitment which needs to be tailor-made to suit the organisation and its employees. It is imperative to tailor make retention efforts to the specific needs of your employees – remember different employees have different needs. By prioritising your employees' well-being, professional growth, and job satisfaction, you can build a dedicated team that contributes to your organisation's long-term success. Employee retention is not only a sound business strategy but also a reflection of your commitment to your most valuable asset—your people.

Stephanie Cacopardo is Senior HR Manager at Melita Limited and a Board member of the FHRD.

# Upskilling and reskilling: The path to employability

In a modern society, everyone can benefit from learning new skills to enhance their career prospects. Whether unemployed, inactive, or employed, attending courses can empower individuals and equip them with the right knowledge, skills and competences to take on a new role. Businesses can also benefit from enrolling their team members in courses to help them develop new skills that they can apply to their role in the company. Jobsplus offers a diverse range of free courses to address

needs belonging to different societal groups. These courses include employability skills, specific skills, and soft skills.

Employability skills courses focus on empowering unemployed and inactive individuals who are seeking employment opportunities. The specific skills courses are aimed at individuals looking to further their skills in a specific industry, and include accounting, business skills, care work, clerical work, health, safety and security, hospitality

and customer service, ICT, language and numeracy, and technical and trade courses. Soft skills courses are suitable for all individuals, as they include a range of different training courses such as interpersonal skills.

## Financial support for employers and individuals

For enhanced flexibility, Jobsplus offers courses both online and in-person. Employers can also arrange to have specific courses tailor-made based on

the unique needs and objectives of their organisation, and deliver the training programme to their team at their place of work. All courses offered by Jobsplus are free of charge.

Employers can benefit from the Investing in Skills scheme, which was relaunched on September 18, 2023, to gain financial support to train their employees. Furthermore, employed and self-employed individuals earning up to €300 basic pay per week can benefit from the Average Wage Earn-

ers Scheme, which offers a financial allowance for average earners who successfully complete any Jobsplus course.

As a Further Educational Institute licensed by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority, many of the courses offered by Jobsplus are accredited and pegged up to MQF level 4.

To register for a Jobsplus course, call on 2220 1610, e-mail training.jobsplus@gov.mt or apply directly through the website jobsplus.gov.mt.