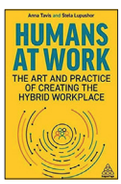
Best of HR books

Beat Stress at Work

Author: ***Mark Simmonds***
Publisher: ***Welbeck Publishing Group***
Price: £12.99

Beat Stress at Work strikes at the heart of many of our shared anxieties of the past two years. Since 2020, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) reported a 30% increase in new workplace-related stress cases, affecting an estimated 451,000 people nationwide. In this book, Simmonds provides tools and advice to help alleviate this pressure, touching on issue of mental resilience.



Humans at Work

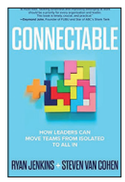
Authors: ***Anna Tavis and Stela Lupushor***
Publisher: ***Kogan Page***
Price: £24.99

Scheduled for publication in March 2022, Tavis and Lupushor aim to give businesses guidance on the art and practice on creating a hybrid workforce. It looks at four aspects of the 'new normal': the digitisation of work, distributed workplaces, organisational redesign and changing workforce, giving case studies from start-ups and established companies.

How to Talk to Your Boss about Race

Author: ***Y-Vonne Hutchinson***
Publisher: ***Portfolio Penguin***
Price: £17.21

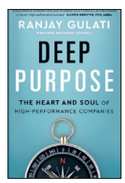
From D&I strategist Y-Vonne Hutchinson, *How to Talk to Your Boss about Race* is written as a toolkit for helping employees encourage anti-racist action from leadership. Described as a "crucial handbook to moving beyond fear," Hutchinson advocates that anyone, no matter their level in an organisation, or what power they have, can create change.



Connectable

Authors: ***Ryan Jenkins and Steven Van Cohen***
Publisher: ***McGraw Hill***
Price: £21.99

Is hybrid working making us lonelier? Steven Van Cohen and Ryan Jenkins tackle the issue of worker isolation in *Connectable*, revealing their method for identifying loneliness, how inclusion affects it, and steps that can be taken to increase belonging, engagement, and performance. The authors have included a practical four-step framework that readers can adopt to help others and themselves.



Deep Purpose

Author: ***Ranjay Gulati***
Publisher: ***Penguin Business***
Price: £20.00

Harvard Business School professor Ranjay Gulati argues that purpose is now a business 'must-have' rather than a 'nice-to-have'. Too often businesses conflate it with mission, vision or values. Learning from successful, purpose-oriented businesses such as Etsy, Lego and Microsoft, Gulati reveals the fatal mistakes leaders make when attempting to instil purpose, and explains how to embed it at a much deeper level.

Building in

This column is a space for HR professionals to air challenging D&I questions anonymously. Our resident expert HUMA QAZI will be tackling a different question each issue. Send yours to jo.gallacher@markallengroup.com

Q. A lot of businesses want to hire more diverse candidates, but how can you better define and position socio-economic status to improve social mobility in organisations?

Wanting to improve the diversity of hires with a socio-economic lens requires clarity on the approach as well as desired outcomes. The first step is to build awareness on what we mean by socio-economic status and how we achieve social mobility. Socio-economic status refers to a combination of education, income and occupation. Simply put, social mobility is the shifting or movement of social status from one status to another, over time. It can refer to moving up and down the hierarchy of social status, though predominantly when referred to, we are speaking about upward mobility and the progression of socio-economic status.

Socio-economic status and social class are not interchangeable and it's important to recognise this when talking about social mobility. Social class is a much broader concept, as it is made up of different types of 'capital' listed below. Together these elements confer social positioning, which creates different levels of access, advantage and lived experience:

- **Economic** – is the money you earn, household income, your assets, what you acquire or inherit
- **Social** – the family you come from, what social group you are part of, your networks and connections
- **Cultural** – includes your world references, knowledge base, cultural interests and activities
- **Symbolic** – external representation, job title, name, mannerisms, appearance i.e. how symbolism confer status and influences perceptions

Having made the distinction between socio-economic status and social class, let's come back to the question on how we can improve social mobility in organisations. The answer lies in levelling the playing field, consciously driving equity, addressing institutional or systemic bias, and removing barriers. Here are some steps to get started on this journey, or advance the great work you're already doing:

- Comments such as 'not the right fit' or lacking 'polish', when assessing capability or potential, are examples

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social mobility

of classism and limit representation in hiring as well as promotions. It is important to seek clarification on what is meant by those terms. This should be addressed in the moment, otherwise it risks becoming a creeping normality. Furthermore, a common myth is that meritocracy is a linear concept. You work hard, you succeed. This naively ignores social class privilege, however invisible, implied or nuanced. Educate others when meritocracy is discussed, and flag that it is not without its associated socio-privileges.

- Be aware of the things that we do at work to create a sense of belonging. Possibly around social groups, networks, etc. Ask yourself, are we inadvertently creating any rules or criteria around 'membership' of such groups that cannot be equitably applied. Being able to support people to move fluidly between such groups and networks, broadens circles of trust and generates greater social capital with building better relationship and this is a massively underrated lever in improving social mobility.
- For social mobility to succeed, you need to address institutional class bias and root out systemic barriers. For instance, take a closer look at how job descriptions are written, desired qualification or education, how interviews are conducted, how decisions are made on people's futures and their potential assessed for more senior roles with wider exposure.

A final point is to pause and have the conversation, openly and without judgement in your organisation. Be clear on what socio-economic status means and get comfortable with the discomfort of talking about social class. Ask yourselves: How many of our policies, processes, frameworks, guidelines have classist language, rules and conditions that mimic gatekeeping and can disproportionately hamper social status progression and social mobility? Invite others into the conversation for a more diverse and varied point of view to objectively discuss desired outcomes.

Huma Qazi is a diversity and leadership consultant and founder of The Privilege Project

HR future leader of the *month*

Name: Aimee Maltby

Job title: HR & administration manager

Organisation: Access2Funding

I began an apprenticeship working in exhibitions and events for a clinical nutrition company. At this point I had no thoughts of pursuing a career in HR. When in a more customer facing role, I was given the opportunity of having a HR mentor for six months. I spent any spare time I had learning the bread and butter of HR.

Post-pandemic, my main concerns include employee wellbeing and ensuring everyone has a healthy work/life balance. Working from home can take its toll and we have a duty of care to prevent burnout and encourage time out. Recruitment and retention are two other areas, as an increase in job vacancies has led to a more competitive market.

Over the next five years, HR will increasingly focus on regaining a sense of normality as we potentially move back into an office environment. Following a lengthy period of employees working from home, offering the option of flexible working will be important to keep some of the benefits of remote work.

HR will inevitably become more digital, so implementing innovative digital initiatives in the workplace will be important, from software that allows real-time reporting to disclose any issues to mobile apps that track time and attendance.

I envisage physical contact being even less in 40 years' time, overridden by cutting-edge technology and video. This could lead to a less personable approach to HR, and, worryingly, an adverse effect on our employees' wellbeing. HR professionals will need to create new employee engagement strategies for this fully digital world.

Change management will continue to be a challenge as there is still a generation of people that don't embrace or adapt as well as others. Senior management will need to cascade the right amount of information to line managers to inform employees of change and provide adequate ways for staff to provide feedback and thoughts and engage with management. Staff want and need to be heard for an organisation to have a thriving workplace culture.

Continuing to support female employees and retain them is a key priority, following introducing a workplace menopause policy in 2020. I want to end the stigma for women and create a considerate, informed and supportive environment. Educating all staff no matter what gender is vital, as is listening. HR

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