THE FELLOWSHIP OF RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

Output from the future of work exploration sessions September 2023

This first session covered
- Which roles will change, why and why not?
- Evaluating the reason for possible change
- Engaging with different stakeholders and employees
- Assessing reality from optimistic predictions
- Identifying good outcomes for everyone

Conversation summary

Drivers for change
- War on talent/candidate driven market – have to differentiate on wider EVP factors, e.g. CSR, wellbeing …
- Technology change/enablement (e.g. cloud), has meant that new working paradigms are now not just feasible but practical (e.g. home working)
- Environment/sustainability – both businesses and employees are looking at/encouraged to adopt new working practices that lower their carbon footprint
- AI is eliminating some roles, transforming others and making many others more productive
- Cost of living crisis is fuelling a change necessity

As a consequence, we are seeing
- Changes in the role landscape (which is only likely to accelerate as AI solutions become mainstream)
- Changes to EVP (e.g. remote/hybrid working, 4dw, greater emphasis on intrinsic factors….)
- Changes in company culture. Noting that some saw this in a negative context (using words such as "losing their cultural identity"), rather than understanding what this new world looks like and embracing new/change in companies' culture.

Understanding productivity at a holistic level is key
- It's about the organisation's productivity, not that of any individual (i.e. the optimum productivity for the whole organisation may mean that it is slightly sub-optimal for any individual)
- Adopting working practices that help attract/retain talent, will have a positive impact on productivity levels overall (even if the working practices themselves might be sub-optimal)

What balances are required to ensure employer needs and employee needs are optimised?
- Factors involved in designing new propositions
- Accessing cross industry best/new practises
- Testing theories and predicted outcomes
- Are traditional decision-making processes fit for purpose?

Conversation summary

Competing for attention
- Post pandemic why do people want/ not want to come to the office
- Social interaction
- Learn / create with colleagues
- Does the future of office work include integration with personal/work social media?
- If the FOW requires people to adapt, how do we gain attention to learning?

Ownership
- Employees feeling they are owned by the company has almost entirely disappeared.
- The candidate led market has changed this dynamic for most employees who are choosing to work
- In other cases a more transactional relationship is appropriate
- The FOW could benefit from a partnership style relationship, ie employees working for different companies as needs change
- Employees are becoming empowered to say they "just don't want to"

Employee needs
- Difficult or impossible to keep pace with changing needs, the ability to adapt is key to success
- A culture focused on values and adult relationships facilitates adaptability
- Success or failure in the FOW will test the true strength of company values
- The assumption is that needs will evolve but core values will remain
- Sustained productivity, presenteeism and reduced churn are measure of success

Business needs
- HR needs to decentralise to allow leaders/managers to adapt to specific needs
- Technology including AI should facilitate this in the future
- Should companies have a package to adapt to different needs (such as deafness) or flex to suit circumstances? We see both being deployed
- Ultimately productivity is the true indicator of needs being correctly identified and completed

Responses to remote working dilemma
- Mandated attendance varies from five days a week to minimum two, to max 16 days in the office
- Some employees are paid extra to attend the office
- The reality of remote working productivity (outcome rather than time spent) is driving four day week propositions

Implementing the changes

- Natural evolution or positive actions?
- Addressing the legalities
- How do we reward change, or is change the reward?
- Assessing the impact on leaders and leadership