

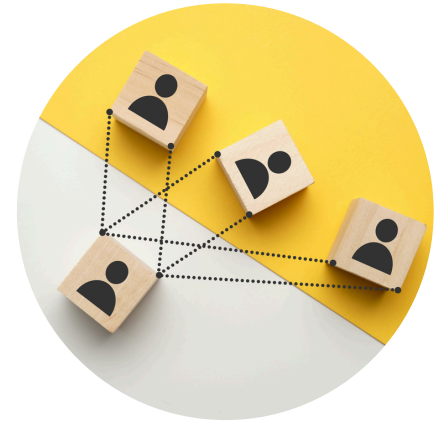


HR Business Consultants

NEWSLETTER

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The Managing People Edition



Welcome from Jane



Welcome to the latest edition of our HR newsletter Managing People. As the world of work continues to evolve, so does the way we lead, support, and empower those around us. In this edition, we're focusing on the everyday realities of people management, with practical insights to help navigate the human side of the workplace.

Here's what's inside:

- Managing Remote Teams
- Banter or Boundary?
- Understanding Sick Days
- Mental Health at Work

Whether you manage a team or simply want to understand the dynamics of a healthy workplace, we hope this edition offers thoughtful, actionable content to support your role.

Do you have remote or hybrid workers?



How much work do you really think they're doing when they're at home? Do you have a way of monitoring it? These may have been concerns for business owners and managers a couple of years ago, but now that we're settled into a new routine of home working, is it still a consideration you need to make?

We've all seen the statistics. The increased flexibility and relaxed approach to work has been a great boost to productivity for most businesses. So why are we still concerned that employees aren't doing what they should be when they're out of sight?

The use of remote surveillance has increased since 2020, perhaps unsurprisingly.

Whether that's bosses monitoring how much time employees are spending in front of their screens, or actual surveillance via webcams, how do you feel about this? Is it something you'd implement for your business?

To us, it feels like we've spent the last decade trying to move away from micromanagement and towards a more self-driven way of working. And it's been a good thing. We'd suggest that before making any emotionally-led decisions on having a team working from the office, look at your figures. See how performance has really been and make a choice based on that.

Of course, it may mean that you need to develop a slightly different skill-set if you're to manage a remote team, but in the long-term it may work out better for the business.

Banter in the Workplace



Having fun at work is important.

It makes the days go quicker, helps us to build good relationships with our colleagues, and can make us more motivated, productive and happy in our jobs.

But what happens if that workplace banter goes too far?

A report by the Financial Times found that tribunal claims related to banter in the workplace increased by a massive 44% between 2020 and 2021 - that's impressive considering how many of us were working from home during this period.

The issue occurs when what one person feels is light-hearted and jovial is interpreted by someone else as insulting or upsetting. And if two people don't share the same views on what passes as fun, it can lead to problems.

Also, it seems to be the case that 'banter' is used as an excuse by a lot of employers when in reality the behaviour has erred on the side of bullying, harassment, or discrimination. It's really important that employers have a clear and solid policy on what is and isn't expected from behaviour between colleagues and between managers and employees. If a line is crossed, it could end up costing a business a lot of money in claims - the cap on unfair dismissal claims is £93,878 and there is no cap on claims of discrimination or harassment. If combined with a claim of injury to feelings, you could be looking at a very high pay out indeed.

One very good way of making sure banter doesn't get out of hand is by giving your people equality and diversity training. This can be carried out online or in person, and a third party (like your friendly outsourced HR experts!) can run this kind of training for you. Don't forget that your social media policies should cover this subject too. Many of your employees will be connected on social media platforms, and their interactions there could still affect how a grievance or disciplinary plays out in the workplace.



Are there any members of your team that you feel take too many sick days?

Are there any members of your team that you feel take too many sick days? It's a more common problem than you might think. And of course, it's a tricky one to deal with.

Reports have shown that the current sickness absence figures are at the highest rate they've been for more than a decade now. It's at an average of 7.3 days a year per employee. That averages at a cost of around £781 per employee. It's a lot.

So, what can you do if you feel an employee is taking too much sick leave?

The first thing you need to do is implement good absence management. That will stop other employees becoming overwhelmed with picking up the slack when others take time off.

An absence management policy will also leave your people with a clear understanding of what will happen if and when they take any time off. This might include a return-to-work interview, monitoring the number of days off someone

takes each year, and looking out for trends of people taking unplanned time off.

You may also look out for signs of exhaustion, a bad atmosphere, and low energy levels, which can all contribute to people calling in sick.

If you notice a trend with individuals taking routine or excessive time off, talk it out with them. Explain to them that you've noticed a trend and ask what you can do to help. Remember not to jump to conclusions - there may be a legitimate reason for the absence and you want your employees to feel comfortable to tell you.

If none of the above works though, it might be time to make it formal. Call a disciplinary meeting with your employee to bring your evidence to them and give them an opportunity to explain themselves and improve the behaviour.

If it gets to this point, please take professional HR advice before you make any decisions - the last thing you want is to end up at an employment tribunal!



Protecting employee mental health

Do you have employees that work by themselves a lot?

Think drivers, or night shift workers. I want to take a moment to talk about the importance of protecting their mental health.

While it's important to support all our employees' mental health, it's more of a challenge to help those we see face to face less often.

For our remote warriors, here are some ideas to keep that mental health in check:

- Reach out to your drivers and nightshift workers, even if it's just to say hello and see how they're doing. Simple gestures like this can make a huge difference to their wellbeing.
- Acknowledge the hard work your remote workers do. Little tokens of appreciation can really boost their morale and let them know that their efforts are valued.
- Make sure any perks or 'treats' are available to all workers, regardless of how, when and where they work.
- Provide your employees with accessible information, resources, and helplines they can turn to if they need support. Empower them to seek help and let them know it's okay to ask for it.

Kindness and empathy go a long way, both in-person and online. Let's build a community that uplifts and cares for one another.

Can we help?

You know just how important it is to get proactive, responsive HR support. That's what we do and we're taking on new clients.

WWW.HRBUSCONS.CO.UK | TELLMEMORE@HRBUSCONS.CO.UK