

HR ABERDEEN NETWORKING FORUM

14 October 2011 - Minutes

Agency workers

An employment lawyer said that a number of companies were sitting back and letting agencies make the running on this issue. Agency workers will initially go to the agency for redress but if the agency has been proactive and asked the end user for the relevant information and has not received it then liability will go up the chain.

A consultant said that her client had received two requests from agencies that week which were quite bullish, very detailed and said they were increasing their rates.

Another HR Manager, heavily involved in the merger of two companies, said that the agency workers issue had been addressed as part of the merger. She did not think the Regulations would bring about a massive change. Her company would not want to pay one rate for 12 weeks and then increase it because they had to. The manager was bringing her agencies in to discuss how this would be managed the following week.

One company said they were taking a holistic view and would decide the value of various benefits, ensuring the package was compliant; everything will be rolled up in the day rate and agency workers will be told to challenge the employer if they do not believe the rate is compliant.

The lawyer pointed out that the UK government had changed the Directive to say the comparison should be term by term.

Migration

A consultant said that her client has a recruitment wish list. There are a lot of non EU applicants but the company has to say that unless they have their work permit already they can't be considered. Someone pointed out that all of the occupations the industry had requested be included on the Shortage Occupation List which had just been reviewed by the Migration Advisory Committee had indeed been included. An HR Manager said that her organisation had been using specialist legal firms to deal with migration cases and the costs had been worth it. There was a discussion regarding initiatives to attract people into the industry which included a successful conversion course for people from other industries being run by one company.

Someone mentioned the KPMG programme which enabled people to work while getting a degree and it was thought it might be a good example to the oil and gas industry.

Retention

It was agreed that it was important to find the right retention strategy for an organisation, taking into account development opportunities, overseas placements, compensation and benefits. One organisation said that they were focusing on developing their own people after they made three offers to fill a key role last year and all three candidates accepted a

counter offer. The company was trying to educate their management in the importance of good appraisals and succession planning processes.

One manager said that employees felt the organisation had changed after its merger with another company and it had lost its small company feel.

Mike Cripps said that they had done studies of what makes employees stay with an organisation. Self esteem, technical career development and challenging work were key issues. It was agreed that often managers say that money is the answer because it is the easiest thing to say.

Managing Costs

A manager commented that the mobility of labour comes with costs, and HR needs to help manage them. All that is happening when labour keeps moving is increasing the cost base as a result of wage spirals.

It was thought that contractors were good at paying end of project bonuses which makes people feel they have been recognised and rewarded for what they have done and part of a team, as opposed to reward which is linked to share price which they can't influence.

An attendee who had spent time in KPMG said that younger people had really appreciated benefits like flexitime and career breaks.

Social Media

An employment lawyer present told the attendees that his firm was getting a lot of social media cases through relating to dismissals. It was noted that Linked in is a big recruitment tool. Social media was a new area and it was hard to know how it will play out. There was a discussion as to whether employers should access the information that generation Y people were putting out there and whether it was a valid recruitment tool.

CIPD Qualification

A new consultant said that she had been asked if she had the qualification and queried whether it was worth doing. An HR Director said that they would not use qualification as a deciding factor. Another manager agreed that if it was a senior person with extensive experience then it probably wasn't essential but the CIPD qualification if the individual is unknown or less experienced was important. It was thought that a professional qualification is important to the HR function because it indicates how far the function has come.