

# HRD

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## SPECIAL REPORT

AUTOMATED FOR THE PEOPLE: WITH AI, BEYOND THE RUDIMENTS OF TAKING GRUNT WORK OUT OF REPETITIOUS TASKS, IS REVOLUTION

COLLEEN MCKNIGHT, VICE PRESIDENT HR UK&I - SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC

## { ELECTRIC DREAMS }

“THIS NEW MANTRA, “LISTEN TO YOUR EMPLOYEES” IS MIND-BOGGLING... AS IF THIS IS A NEW THING”

### ALSO FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

**APPRENTICES & GRADUATES** It's not a 'skills' gap, it's a 'value' gap. We're churning out leavers who are often too one-dimensional

**DIGITALISATION OF HR** The “forgetting curve” causes frustration and an influx of support tickets, things you were trying to avoid

**BUSINESS ETHICS** Culture is what people do when no one is looking. What has been revealed in pin-sharp relief is why it matters

**REMOTE WORKING REDEFINED** It's a one-off chance to build the new way and solve the problems from when the office was king



# TOO MUCH INFORMATION...

*It could be argued that the more information HR has about its people, the better it can support them. But how much is too much? Data won't solve human problems, but it can help set strategies, enable leaders to know their employees, recognise the signs, talk to them and be there to offer support and trust. That is the true strength.*

ARTICLE BY JAMES MALIA, DIRECTOR - MYEVA (WEALTH WIZARDS)

Technology is so compelling, providing us with simplicity, ownership, knowledge and now, more than ever, connectivity and it moves the world at such incredible pace. I'm still in my forties and it doesn't seem that long ago that I was issued with a phone card as a company 'perk' so I could call my manager. My kids whinge about 'glitching' in a game because there was a microsecond break, that I can't even see, whereas when I was their age, my favourite game, Chuckie Egg, would take an hour to load... and often didn't! While all this is happening, we're also becoming more open about our emotions and feelings, ironically, often prompted by wellbeing technology to allow it to happen. But don't for a minute think that we've sold our soul to technology, it's still the personal approach that trumps all. I work in Fintech and specifically in financial wellbeing and, by definition, we connect with thousands of users each year on devices and use AI to understand their personal situation and offer guidance and advice. However, for both the user and the employer all of that data can only achieve so much. For example, when we talk about goals and aspirations, the tech often needs support, so the 'action' bit becomes more personal. For instance, speaking to a real-life adviser for more guidance or expertise or, as an employer, delivering support, webinars or tutorials with real people, gives it the personal touch.

We've all made a purchase or decision based on liking someone or a gut feeling and not just what the tech is telling us. Data will never 'understand', it won't know that, when an employee says "I'm fine" that they don't always mean it. It won't realise that "not bad" isn't necessarily good, it's just "not bad." I know that we need data and I know that, for any organisation, it's a vital ingredient in employee engagement, wellbeing and satisfaction. However, it's still just that, an ingredient, it's what you do with it that matters. Give the same ingredients to three people and you will have three



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different meals and it's the same with data. If used poorly, or not at all - and yes, that does happen - then it's worthless. I once insisted our MI reports were discussed in person, by my account managers with their clients. MI is a chance to celebrate what's being done well, but also a chance to highlight where we need more human interaction, or a training need, an education session for different demographics or even a shift in culture.

As leaders, managers and co-workers, we all need to connect with people. We need to read our people and we need to watch out for them. I know it's easier when we are face-to-face, so you can see body language, catch up over a coffee or read the room. However, even on Zoom or Teams you can read people - the one whose smile normally lights up the Zoom, with not even a grin today, or the quiet one looking distracted or leaving the camera off. One-to-one chats, just for the sake of it, can make all the difference - not formulaic, but more impromptu - and if you ask how someone is, mean it, listen and discuss. Letting someone know they are valued and appreciated is human and how it makes them feel most certainly is and, right now, we all need a bit of that. It's not rocket science; it could even be as simple as the difference between sending an email or a handwritten letter. It's not for the routine, everyday stuff but receiving a letter that you know someone has taken the time to think about, write and post is fabulous. Even when I used to send round bonus letters to my teams - a positive moment for all - I personalised each of them and thanked them for something specific they had achieved. It took a day, but I hope it made it personal and certainly wasn't just results and data driven. So yes, data and technology are huge as they provide us with information to allow us to act, with human, measured and considered action. But make sure the tech is simple, relevant and fabulous, as well as detailed, insightful and actionable. But please don't tell me that all you need is the data. ●

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