



THE Talent

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING THE BEST PEOPLE

ISSUE

Understanding your issues

At Penna, we have 40 years' experience of helping the public sector recruit and retain the best people.

Gary Browning reports.

People make the world go round – they certainly make organisations go round – or as we say at Penna “People Change Performance”. Throughout our 40 years (yes we have a 40th birthday to celebrate this year) we have truly enjoyed supporting the public sector and I believe that is because we share a similar approach and philosophy:

Pride in the work we do. People at Penna have pride in the work we do – something commonly found in the public sector. When we supported 2000 LOCOG employees find new work and careers at the end of the Olympics we took immense pride in being part of an amazing event and it was very rewarding to see that this support led to retention rates that were almost twice as high as in any previous Games.

Values-based cultures. At Penna our culture starts with our behaviours – being Accountable, Supportive, Collaborative and Inspiring. Behaviours are more tangible than values – you can observe them, recruit against them, reward them and manage performance on them. A great



example of this aligning with our clients' philosophy was demonstrated when Nick Walkley, the chief executive, asked us to support his visionary transformation project at Haringey. Nick talks about pride in working for Haringey – people coming to work standing-up straight and behaviour-led change where people have ambition for their work, their self and their community.

Reputations, as the saying goes, arrive on foot and leave in a Ferrari. In our case it has arrived over 40 years and a day does not go by without me sense-checking with a client, employee or other interested parties to see how we are doing. Building our own reputation also helps us help clients look at their reputation as an employer, something we did at Barking and Dagenham, taking a top-down focus to build the employer brand.

Supporting society. At Penna we genuinely want to give something back. Our primary cause is to support Career

Academies UK, a remarkable charity which supports 17-19 year olds from under-privileged backgrounds continue in further education.

Working on the people agenda with our public sector clients creates the meaningful work our people come here to be involved in. We believe that you can only do this if you also live and breathe the same principles, something we have been developing for 40 years and will continue for the next 40.



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Our survey said...

We asked local government CEOs what their major talent challenges were.

Our latest research follows hot on the heels of our spring survey that revealed that local government Chief Executives were still passionate about their role and that to be successful they needed to be resilient, have energy, enthusiasm and vision along with political acumen

and strong leadership skills.

No surprises there perhaps. But they also talked of their challenges and how working with central government was one of the more frustrating elements of their role; and how the negative reputation of local government and the cuts could

potentially hinder their ability to attract and retain talent.

Our latest research has followed the issue of talent up in more detail and gives a good insight into how CEOs in local government are feeling about their recruitment and retention challenges. We

explore the difficulties attracting talent, the new USPs of working in local government, leadership capabilities and engaging current talent.

The full results will be published exclusively in the MJ so please check the findings out.



A special offer

The good news is that you have a brand already. The bad news is that it may not be the one that you want, says Penna's Nicholas Browne.

As the founder of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, said, "a brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room".

The greatest capital that any organisation has when promoting its opportunities is its employer brand. But legacy challenges plague many local authorities as they position themselves as centres for high-performing and high calibre talent. "Grey and faceless administrators" is how one HR Director of a London Borough described current perceptions of the public sector.

From our extensive work with local authorities, we can testify that the sector is anything but "grey and faceless" – the industry is constantly evolving and acquiring adaptive solutions to real-world problems. Indeed, for people looking to be stretched and intellectually challenged, there can be few better career destinations than a public sector employer. And local authorities are among the best.

Effectively communicating this message is often the biggest challenge. People need to see and hear for themselves

exactly what it feels like to work for the public sector.

"Successful branding requires consistency at every stage of the employment experience."

At its most basic level, employer brand development and management is about ensuring corporate guidelines exist and are applied across all creative executions

and communications. But all too often, companies fail to think beyond the visual interpretation of logo and brand.

Penna is very vigilant in this area. For us, employer branding is not a project, but a long-term commitment to managing our clients' reputations. Branding needs constant care and attention to keep it real and alive. So what are people saying when you are not in the room?

Successful branding requires consistency at every stage of the employment experience. It's how an organisation is seen by potential and current employees, clients, partners and stakeholders. It's about creating an image – in words as well as pictures – that will inspire your target audience and make people feel good about what is on offer.

Branding within an organisation is critical; staff are an organisation's biggest advocates. Internal messaging and a realistic employer value proposition are as important as external touch-points.

If your staff are saying: "Ok, everything's pretty much as the company implied

Keeping the best talent

With tight budgets and recruitment challenges, how can local government plug their skills gap?

With totaljobs.com 'Recruiting for Today's Public Sector' report finding that more than half (62%) of public sector workers think their organisation lacks the skills it needs to deliver its set objectives, there is clearly a need for initiatives which can plug vital skills gaps. However, with tight budgets and recruitment challenges within the sector, how can these skills gaps be filled?

New research from Penna finds that implementing mentoring programmes could go some way to meeting demand and alleviating such pressures. The research, conducted amongst 2000 employees, found that a fifth (20%) are not currently acting as a mentor or being mentored but would like to be. The research also found that 40% of employees have never been given the opportunity to get involved in mentoring schemes before – yet individuals are clearly hungry for opportunities to learn and develop, which could go some way to plug skills gaps in the sector.

Mentoring can act as a highly effective tool which serves to engage employees and improve their skills, by learning through others. At a time when the public sector is under immense pressure to run large-scale change management programmes and continues to drive down costs, learning from mentors who have experience in delivering such

assignments can be extremely valuable to mentees who might have struggled to learn without guidance otherwise.

With 'doing more for less' so critical to the public sector, it should come as good news that mentoring schemes are cost effective too. 64% of mentees agreed that an external mentor would be the least favourable option – meaning that schemes can be implemented cost effectively in-house. Where training budgets are under pressure, mentoring can provide real opportunities for employees to continue learning which we know fuels engagement and retention.

As Penna's Career Development research found, the main reason to leave an organisation in the past twelve months was due to 'lack of opportunity'. Combined with our mentoring research, which found that the primary reason to seek a mentor is to acquire new skills (59%), the public sector can be implementing programmes to help keep employees on a steep learning curve whilst retaining talent.

But it is important to launch and embed mentoring programmes robustly in order for it to be successful. Mentoring programmes can fall at the first hurdle if skills, individuals, buy-in and desired outcomes aren't aligned, so it's important to get your ducks in a row.

"Implementing mentoring programmes could go some way to meeting demand and alleviating pressures"

It may sound obvious, but check with individuals if they want to be mentors in the first place – Penna's research found that almost a quarter (24%) of mentors weren't given any choice in taking on the role, saying it was 'expected' of them by their employers. It's important that characteristics, expertise, capability and chemistry are considered – as it's not necessarily for everyone. Train your mentors too; just because someone is in a senior role, it does not mean they understand the mentoring role and how it is different to managing and advising.

And whilst the most impactful mentoring relationships come about when the mentor takes the mentee outside of their comfort zone, it's important there is chemistry

and mutual respect between both parties. Feedback from mentees is that the most desirable characteristics for mentors to possess are: expertise (65%), strong rapport (62%) and being challenging (59%).

Setting clear benchmarks for success, with short and long term objectives is key. Having regular check-in points with line management, to report on progress, is beneficial too – ensuring that the mentee, mentor and organisation are all benefitting from the arrangement. This helps to prevent derailment of mentoring schemes (30% said the relationship with their mentor failed due to the process having lost momentum), keep learning active and tackle any challenges along the way.



If done well, public sector organisations can really benefit from running mentoring programmes – as it serves to engage employees and help them to learn new skills, whilst retaining talent. And it's also very rewarding for the mentor to watch a person develop thanks to their support and input.



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it would be," then you have a direct route to engagement, retention, optimum performance and brand advocacy. But if they're saying: "This isn't a bit like they said it would be! What's going on?" it could be the edge of a slippery slope to premature departures, sky-high replacement costs and serious brand/reputation sabotage.

For this reason, "interpreting and articulating a clear vision and building a commitment to achieve this" was listed by Penna during a session at last year's PPMA conference as a core competency required for those leading change. This neatly sums up what is required of the public sector in order to turn around negative perceptions.

The message is: look beyond border styles and logos. Ensure you are communicating the employment experience in a way that makes it distinctive and attracts the right people.

Make sure you don't mind if you're not in the room when people talk about you. 🍷



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The difficult climate of the last six years has meant that even those staff that survived the cuts being made are experiencing a lower sense of engagement as they haven't had the development or opportunity to progress they might have expected. Now that the economic recovery is moving from green shoots to showing substantial roots, job opportunities are on the increase and companies that don't invest in their staff risk losing their key talent.

With our new career development offering, BeMore, Penna can provide organisations with a revolutionary solution which shows their people they value them and want them to have a fulfilling career, while helping with talent mapping and succession planning for the business.

"Companies that don't invest in their staff risk losing their key talent."

BeMore comprises both online and in-person elements, and it is in the online portal that we genuinely brought a first to the market. Using the latest theory and technology, we have made the process of managing your career more engaging than ever before. The flat, boring questionnaires and articles about career development are out; games,



Give your people control

Penna launches BeMore, their online career development portal



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graphics and interactive tools and exercises are in, making managing your career easier and more fun to do than ever before while providing you with real information on which to make your career decisions.

Being fully mobile-compatible means you can use it at work, on the commute or at home. BeMore puts the responsibility of managing your career on to the individual and does it in a way which people will want to engage with, but it's not just about the online portal. We have also developed a range of workshop and career coaching programmes that can be used to complement the online tool, or used just as successfully in isolation.

In BeMore, we combine 40 years of expertise with the very latest theory and technology in careers to offer our clients a solution like no other. 🍷

Learning the lessons from public service integration

For those local government and public bodies involved, the 2012 Olympic Games demonstrated something that perhaps has not got the plaudits it deserves – genuine public sector integration.

The success of Olympic delivery was entirely dependent on unprecedented levels of collaboration across the public and private sectors. And we don't need to look far from the main Olympic sites to see the economic benefits of effective public sector integration either. In 2012, Westminster City Council, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the London Borough of Hammersmith of Fulham, went live with their plans for uniquely shared services – libraries, adult social care and children's services. Others are to follow. They are on track to have made a total of £43 million in savings by 2015-16.

Similarly, the Torquay Care Trust has increasingly integrated health and social care to support more older people at home, reducing the use of hospital and residential nursing homes. Recent NHS reforms have since split commissioning from the delivery of integrated care, which is now delivered by the Torquay and South Devon Health and Care NHS Trust. We also have the pooling of £3.8 billion of health and social care funding in the Better Care Fund.

Challenges remain, however, as Dame Julie Mellor pointed out in Public Finance when she spoke of the risks "in a multiple delivery environment...of people falling between stools."

Through our work with local authorities and their partners, we believe that the key areas to success in public sector integration are:

- Expert leadership from all involved and based on mutual trust
- Effective communication – "The aggregation of purchasing demand" only means something to very few people
- Cultural respect (for others), rather than alignment
- Drive and resilience – As integration matures the need for sustaining the initial gust of enthusiasm is even more important
- Pragmatism and flexibility – The ability to recognise when a better idea really has emerged
- Innovation and entrepreneurship – Much of public sector integration is marked by ambiguity and complexity. Really skilled leaders can see how to take advantage of this. 🍷



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Examples of our work

Penna has a record of successfully helping local councils on a range of talent issues.



Redefining Haringey Council

Challenge

Haringey Council needed to redefine itself in the wake of the Baby P scandal in 2007. The Council set themselves four clear priorities and a challenging ambition – ‘by the age of twenty, a child born in the borough today will have a quality of life and access to the same level of opportunity that is at least equal to the best in London.’

In order to achieve this they embarked on an all-encompassing cultural transformation to develop current and attract new talent.

Solution

New leadership qualities and behaviours were identified and developed to establish what good looked like for managers in Haringey.

Over 120 managers experienced a development centre which assessed them against the new qualities, and

provided then with a clear insight into their performance and potential and a development plan for the future.

In parallel, a recruitment programme was launched to attract new talent to existing vacancies and newly created roles. This included producing:

- A new employer value proposition and communication tools
- A bespoke microsite (www.haringeyambition.co.uk)
- An online Situation Judgement Test
- Online application and supportive candidate management process.
- A selection assessment centre designed to mirror ‘A Day in the Life of a Haringey Manager’.

Outcome

Haringey are now clear on the talent and potential talent they have in their current management cohort and have a tailored development and recruitment

and selection programme that gives a clear picture of what it’s like to work in Haringey and accurately assesses the leadership qualities of future hires.

New recruits alongside high performing managers are already making the difference in terms of delivering on the Council’s priorities and making the cultural change needed.

To date, the Council has:

- Improved time to hire by 48 days
- Identified potential talent and has a strategy for succession planning
- Got a clear design strategy for their future management development needs
- Raised consciousness and activity in the managers to the new qualities and triggered self-motivated development actions
- Hired to nearly all of the roles in the new structure
- Delivered a new suite of EVP communications tools
- Embedded online application and candidate management systems.



Life after nuclear



Challenge

By 2029 all ten nuclear power stations managed by Magnox, the company appointed by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority to oversee the defueling and decommissioning of eight stations, will see its workforce reduce from 3,300 to zero. The project itself is significant and complex and will have a physical impact on the landscape of the areas these power stations are located in, and also affect the roles of those who work there.

Solution

Understanding that this is not a straightforward downsizing exercise, Magnox, in close partnership with the trade unions and Penna, designed a Workforce Restructuring Programme that outlined everything from how employees should be treated through to the staffing levels required as the sites enter each phase.

Magnox has taken a consultative and transparent approach with employees around the future of each of the sites and what it means for employees, including the support available to them. Unlike many downsizing projects that often happen within a short timeframe, Magnox employees have been provided with support early and over an extended period of time. In some instances people

have been able to access their support 12-18 months in advance of their final leaving date, helping them to develop individual transition plans and prepare for their future whilst remaining engaged and focused on their current roles.

Outcome

To date we have supported over 270 employees across eight sites. This has involved a mixture of onsite resource centres where employees meet with coaches to discuss career options, attend specialist workshops and receive support around CVs, job search, interviews or explore alternative options such as retraining, self-employment or retirement.

For many, and in particular those in remote locations or with specialist skills,

this has involved helping them to look beyond what they have always known to find new opportunities in other sectors. To support Magnox with the retention of key skills we are also supporting some employees to explore and prepare for potential redeployment opportunities within Magnox or with organisations that have similar skills requirements to Magnox.

Although still in its early stages, feedback from employees, trade unions and the leadership team has been very positive as they are able to demonstrate delivery of their key people objectives: that all employees are treated fairly, with dignity and are supported whilst ensuring that the overall decommissioning project is delivered successfully.

Upcoming events

What makes a successful senior management team? Date: Wednesday 24 September 2014 | Location: 5 Fleet Place, London EC4M 7RD | Time: 9.30am-1.30pm

What makes a good COO? Date: Thursday 25 September 2014 | Location: 5 Fleet Place, London EC4M 7RD | Time: 4-6pm

How to inspire, reward and motivate your workforce (PPMA/Penna) Date: Wednesday 1 October 2014 | Location: Trafford Town Hall | Time: 5.30-8.00pm

To find out more about any of these events, contact events@penna.com



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