

**COI LIVE EVENTS AND BROADCAST FACILITIES**  
**TRANSCRIPT OF GOOD JOBS, GOOD HEALTH CONFERENCE**  
**HELD AT THE INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS**  
**IN LONDON**  
**ON TUESDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2006**

FACILITATOR

I will try to be brief because I am keeping you from your desert, but we do want to try to get back on time, which is why we are going to be doing this now.

HUGH ROBERTSON

I was in the workshop which basically was looking at what makes up a good job, and we actually dealt with that in about 5 minutes, to be quite honest. Basically the key components: we want to be safe, we want people to have control over it, we also want people to work so they can actually have a life rather than live to work. And you know we had a whole range of key components that we thought were very important. But what we also did is we went beyond that, we looked at some of the roles and responsibilities in actually creating this sort of ideal job if you like, who was responsible – the employee, the employer, the state? And I think it is fair to say there were varied views on this, but I think there was a recognition that as far as occupational health was concerned, and safety, it is not an even balance, that employees don't have control over their work environment, it is the employer that does and that has to be reflected.

We found lots of examples of very good practice that is out there, and I won't go into any detail about that, but there is more than just BT and Royal Mail, there are other ones that are actually doing some excellent work out there, and what we wanted to emphasise to you here is please tell people about it, tell people when you actually get things right, but also tell people perhaps when you try things and they don't work, was the other thing that we need to know about.

What is clear is that actually getting good jobs isn't rocket science. We know what works, we have known for decades what works, and it is important that we do publicise it and also evaluate it.

We also looked at the barriers, you know ... values between the role of the individual, the employer and the state today, and there I think we spent a lot of time discussing, probably more time discussing that than what we should have been discussing, but I think it was because it is the one area where we are not sure, there is a lot of divergent views, but we did feel that there has to be a fluidity in terms of where each individual role is, and also who should be dealing with it. But the criteria should be what is going to be most effective and who is best at it, so it is not the HSE trying to do everything on occupational health and safety and public health and everything, it is them concentrating on what they are doing, the Department of Health concentrating on what it is good at it, the Department of Work and Pensions concentrating on what it is good at, but making sure they are actually joined up is more important. And we found the issue wasn't actually between safety and health, it was actually between occupational health and public health was where the real barriers that we were discussing.

So overall I think it was a very useful discussion, very wide ranging, but I think it showed that we have gone a long way, but there is a long way still to go.

FACILITATOR

Thanks Hugh. Can I now ask Danny to come and do his bit?

## DANNY CARRIGAN

Hi. Danny Carrigan, one of the trade union commissioners on the Health and Safety Commission. Our workshop covered the question, are good health and safety arrangements consistent with high productivity and performance? And we had three key questions to answer: what are the key features of a productive high performance workplace, what are the key features of good health and safety arrangements in an organisation, and is there a relationship between the two or not?

And the answer to the third question was yes, very much so. The answer to one and two was a wee bit philosophical in parts, but I think we identified some key themes which ran through the three questions in fact.

I think what we would say is that the key feature, or features, of a high performance and productive workplace are a workplace that knows what it is about, it is fit for purpose, it is sustainable, it has clarity of direction, it has a good environment and culture, it really makes sure that the employees and employers, whether they are line managers or directors, or on the assembly line or on the shopfloor or in the office place, buy in to what they are trying to achieve in the workplace. So everyone is tied into the mission, everyone shares the goals and the values, the aspirations and the objectives of the company.

Secondly, I think we were saying that everyone in a leadership position should demonstrate good practice. I think we said at the outset that a good employer would have good policies, and one of the contributors in the workshop said that good policies doesn't go far enough, what we have to ensure is that we have good practice as well as good policies, so you have to practise what you preach, and I think that is an important point that we wish to make.

Again on the question of health and safety, there has to be effective risk assessment of course, we have to follow the codes of practice, there has to be active support at all levels, and again there was a question of proportionality. We have to make sure that you know we are not spending endless days and hours and resources on form filling, or accountability, or report backs, but we have those done in a proportionate way, and if there are shared values and shared goals that will reinforce what everyone is trying to do.

The question of is there a relationship between a productive high performance workplace and good health and safety arrangements – yes there is a relationship. I think a number of us would say, and this perhaps wasn't spelled out in capital letters, is that good employers should be doing good things in the workplace anyway, and I may say that as a trade union commissioner, but certainly my experience is that people want to work with good employers rather than work with bad employers. And as Hugh Robertson said earlier, there is a hierarchy of needs, I am sure you have all heard about this, income supported, but so also is value and esteem in the workplace.

So it is our view that a good employer will get high productivity from people who actually value the employer, value the company, value what they are doing, take satisfaction out of their workload, are happy with what they are trying to achieve and in fact gain value through all the processes. So we are convinced, and there may be

debates, and some of the research documents that I read are somewhat contradictory on this, there may be debates about actual examples and proof about do good health and safety arrangements lead to high productivity and high performance, but I think everyone in our workshop was convinced that whilst there is not any firm evidence, and we had one or two examples, in fact John Spanswick gave us a very good example from his own company, but we believe there is enough anecdotal evidence out there to justify this phrase and this statement, and we also believe intuitively that it is a good thing and that people would be happier working for a good employer than working for a bad employer, they would be happier to be more productive and have a higher output working for a good employer with shared practices, shared objectives, than otherwise.

So in essence I think what we are saying is that philosophically people should be happy at work, if they are happy at work their output will be higher and you are better with carrots than stick any day.

Thank you.

FACILITATOR

Thanks Danny. Can I now call Sayed.

SAYEED

I want to know what a duo of chocolate boxes is. Is it a pudding?

Our group looked at how will change in society and economy influence what we regard as a good job. The problem with having the great and the good and the influential, is that that ends up being a suggested question that doesn't actually get answered and we ask other questions.

We had a very useful debate and we did get round to tackling the three sort of sub-questions which came under that. The first one was: how do the interests of employers, employees and the state coincide with respect to what a job should achieve, and how do their interests conflict? The bottom line to that one was we needed to answer the question: what is in it for me, whether you are an employer, and employee or government, what is in it for me? And where there was common ground or interest in all three areas was where are you are most likely to succeed, and one example that we came up with was the corporate social responsibility agenda. Everybody benefited from that sort of area. What needs to be done within HSE, within the stakeholders, is to look at other areas where there might be common ground.

In terms of the second element, what are the social and economic influences that shape our perception of a good job, we decided that some of the bigger issues like globalisation and the influx of migrant workers and the influence it had on the local community was important. Some no-brainers like the overall strength of the economy is going to play a much bigger part, but you can't control some of that. In terms of areas that you can control and areas that we could look at, things like the psychological contract in terms of employer/employee, and the work that is done, the goodwill, that is one area that it would be useful to develop further.

Another area is that society has changed, and the idea of a job for life has gone, and I think, we thought many people actually accept that, but that there was a greater expectation within employees about flexibility of working, so that you could change careers, you could have career breaks, things like that. Within all of this society and economic influences, it was something that was touched on this morning, was the rights and responsibilities of all parties, not just rights, not just responsibilities, but that needed to be teased out and linked in with boundaries that we were talking about earlier.

The last bit that we looked at was how far could and should the Commission and the Executive attempt to influence ideas with respect to a good job. That was actually relatively clear. The group very much pointed towards the HSE and HSC influencing other government departments, influencing other stakeholders, particularly Treasury and DTI, it is part of the sell, part of the marketing. There was widespread agreement that regulation wasn't the way to go but guidance, good guidance, and by that what we were saying was guidance about what a reasonable employer should do. I was quite interested to note that we didn't have the words best practice used in the group at all. Isn't that interesting? We are moving away from best practice to good practice, maybe people are more likely to do good practice, but good practice and a reasonable employer, and the example that was given was that this summer's temperature problems, because there isn't any legislation about high temperatures, there is low, but there was some guidance that came out saying what a reasonable employer might do.

But that sort of guidance was something that we could do with within the Executive and Commission, and linking in with this area of things that HSE could do was we were in a position to look at what other people in other countries did as well. And we finished off with this area talking about what other stakeholders, yourselves, were going to do, because like we have said before, this isn't just about what HSE and C can do, it is about what everybody else in this room could do. OK?

Thank you very much.

#### FACILITATOR

Thank you Sayeed, and indeed to Danny and Hugh for that, and I hope that people did find the workshops a useful part of the day and you did have some opportunity to make your contribution. For those that didn't, you now have another opportunity. We are going to be able to squeeze in, we hope, four or five questions and I hope there are unsuspecting people that will answer the questions, but can I ask anybody that wants a question, not necessarily to do with the workshops but about the theme for the day. Don't be shy.

#### QUESTION (Tim Briggs, Senior Lecturer Leeds Met University)

One of the things that I have specifically missed picking up on today, although it has been implied, is the effect of involving young people and education to provide a progressive and better society for the future.

#### FACILITATOR

Thank you Tim for getting the ball rolling. Can I ask Bill.

#### MR CALLAGHAN

Well I am sure, yes we will have to look at issues such as the make-up of the workforce and I would suspect that means looking in this agenda both about new entrants to the workforce, but also we have to think about changing demographics that the workforce as a whole is also getting older. And I think we have to look at both ends of the spectrum in a way, and I think each have got their own distinctive health problems to address, but it is quite clear that we are looking at participation in the labour force now from people from effectively 18 to 65 plus, and that has got its own issues. Obviously there is a role for the education system in terms of preparing people for the world of work and we want to make sure that people understand some basic key risk concepts. But I do think all of us who engage in the world of work, our perceptions of what is going on I think will change as the workforce changes. So I think unfortunately, and I speak personally, we are getting older.

#### FACILITATOR

You are old as you feel Bill. Who could ever say this was stage managed? Our colleague here.

#### TOM COX

If I could just follow on from what Bill said. Mainstreaming occupational safety and health education has been an issue for both the European Commission and the Agency for a number of years and it is not just a matter of putting sort of basic principles and behaviour of safe and healthy working into the educational syllabus for people about to join work or in work. But a more imaginative question about how far you can push that back down the educational chain, maybe even into the first level of primary education, obviously you are not going to take a primary school child and say this is a picture of a guy with no shoes on, up a metal ladder in a swimming pool, you know spot the deliberate mistake. But there has been a feeling, at least at the European level, that part of your civil education has to involve some very fundamental elements of safety and health which you can then build on up to the point where the person joins the workforce, with the hope that if you do that you can then actually revolutionise people's behaviour when they are in work. So that I think is a very interesting and important question for the future, but it is being addressed, if not here, elsewhere.

#### QUESTION (Neil Budworth, Institution of Occupational Safety and Health)

When we talk about health and wellbeing at work you are talking about a huge spectrum of activities, right from basic surveillance through early referrals right up to proactive health management and health promotion. Just a question – where do we expect the average organisation to come on that spectrum? And then a supplementary – how do we make it interesting for them?

#### FACILITATOR

Geoffrey, do you want to come in on that one? I don't want to steal your thunder for later on.

#### GEOFFREY

Well as you may have noticed from the fact I am summing up this discussion, when it gets really difficult they ask me. And I think the honest truth is that it is very nice for people like us to believe that everyone is going to be up to everything, but life just isn't like that and I think we have to accept that. But I think most of us can actually pretty clearly in our minds actually think of what is an acceptable standard, and I

think that is actually where we expect people to be. You are always going to get people who happily will go higher than that, and human progress depends on actually those people pulling the rest along. Some of us, not least in HSE and HSC have a responsibility to sort out the ones that don't even get to the median standard. But I think we have to be realistic. Not everyone is going to do everything we want, but there are real good incentives for most people to get to the absolute standard, and I do hold that view very strongly and I think it has come very clearly out of the conference today that actually it isn't simply the drivers which do matter about people being responsible for their workforce, it is also the economic drivers which all point in one direction, and I think that actually is the point we just have to keep making for people.

QUESTION (Roger Billings, Rosburgh)

I just wanted to support what Tom Cox said about the importance of safety and risk education from an early age, but also to point out the massive opportunity there is for a transfer of safety and health life skills work, as pointed out in the workshop, that about 20% of lost time in some organisations is to do with accidents people have outside work, and Rosburgh is developing a national debate about what we call 24/7 safety. But I think that we were also taught when we were sociology students that the three centres for socialisation were home, school and work. We do tend to forget what a powerful influence work has, you only have to think about all these computer shops and PC World and so on, it is people learning about IT at work that has made that burgeon, and I think if we have some of that insight we can see how it is possible through the workplace and through good health and safety practice to use the workplace as a way of influencing people's health and their safety, safety and health part of the same health agenda, to influence that much more widely.

FACILITATOR

I have now been asked to allow 5 minutes for pudding, which I think is a great proposition. So we will have our pudding and then we welcome Will Hutton in five minutes. Thank you very much for those contributions.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)