

Horizon Scanning: health and safety in the changing workplace

Breakout
Groups

Tough Choices health and safety in the changing workplace

Leading article – **The Economist** –
1 December 2017

We're calling it: the recession is now a slump. Asset price deflation has spilled over into a general deflation, which low interest rates cannot correct. Chunks of our cities decay as organisations outsource and migrate. We've watched public agencies, NGOs, and big business cut costs and re-trench. The health infrastructure is creaking, pensioners are job-hunting with the vigour of school leavers and in some cities, gangs clash over turf. Climate change has lost out to battling international organised crime as the new global challenge.

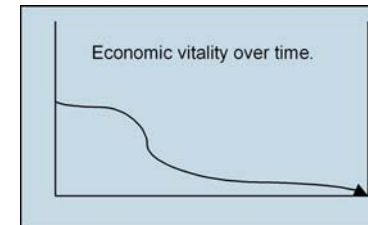
The world of work has changed. Competition for the best jobs is hot, and disappointed candidates with great CVs are looking elsewhere in the world. Elsewhere, people are elbowing each other aside for jobs with long-term health and pension benefits. Yet even with high unemployment, some seasonal and labour intensive jobs go begging.

In the workplace itself, the picture has changed. With shrinking revenues, 'shabbily genteel' now describes too many British workplaces. Reports show that old machinery, worn flooring, improvised wiring and over-taxed ventilation and exhaust systems are common. Advanced automation and intelligent systems installed just five years ago aren't getting the updates they need.

It's no surprise that accident rates are up – as are insurance claims.

Yet in many ways, Britain's employers and workers have proved remarkably adaptable. Short term contracts, part time working and creative shift patterns have kept many a business afloat; and the older worker – who may have skills, both technical and inter-personal, that many employers now consider lost – is valued more highly than ever before. Over 1 million workers are aged 65 or over. The challenge is to enable them to continue to keep working.

Britain is not a country in collapse. Flexible employers, adaptable employees and continued business endeavours, even in these troubled times, provide hope. But we face at present a landscape littered with tough choices and a future of tougher challenges. It's time for action.



KEY FEATURES OF THIS WORLD

DECREASED EU COMPETITIVENESS
ECONOMIC STAGNATION
BLAME CULTURE
FRAGMENTING SOCIETY
REDUCED CONSUMPTION
SUSTAINABILITY BY COPING
PERVASIVE COMPUTING A LUXURY
WORKPLACES CHEAP AND SHABBY



Horizon Scanning: health and safety in the changing workplace

Breakout
Groups

Tough Choices health and safety in the changing workplace

VALUES

- First loyalties to self;
- Value security;
- Wish for the luxury of choice regarding work/life balance;

HEADLINES

Monetary Policy Committee stands firm – lower interest rates must wait.
Fourth anniversary of the great crash.
When will the bear market end?
Prices fell another 3% last year
“Where’s the aid we were promised?” say bankers.
Infections in warehouse linked to tag-chip implants
Crime levels reach 10-year high

QUOTES AND METAPHORS

“Tough choices require tough resolve.”

Factory Worker SUE: “I’ve just started my third job this year, I don’t know how long it will last. The pay’s not great, but I’ll get a pound extra an hour if I agree to wear a productivity tag.”

Business Owner NEILL: “Health and what? It’s a luxury I can’t afford!”

Employee representative TED: “I’m flat out. And companies switch management so often it’s hard to keep track of who you’re dealing with...”

Local authority representative RAHEEMA: “I sometimes feel like I’m fighting a losing battle. People don’t seem to listen the way they used to...”

Health and safety representative STEVE: “I’m banging my head against a brick wall. How can I improve health and safety when I barely know what people are doing or where they work?”

ADMIRED PEOPLE

Arthur Daley
Private Walker

EXAMPLE COMPANY

A medium-sized corporation working within the UK and EU, producing small electrical appliances and struggling to remain competitive.



* These scenarios are intended to stimulate thought. They are in no way predictions of the future and do not represent HSE views on how the future may develop.

Horizon Scanning: health and safety in the changing workplace

Breakout
Groups

Tough Choices health and safety in the changing workplace

Blame Culture

- Resistance to new technology;
- Rejection of risk;
- Shattered by impacts of conflict/war;
- Fragility in face of economic/ social/other shocks.

Fragmenting Society

- As pressures on government increase, government programmes are increasingly undependable;
- Europe moving towards the wings of the global stage – seen as a fertile field for organised crime activities;
- Worried about personal and economic security, people draw a close line around near relatives - the new nuclear family.

Unfavourable Demographics

- Ageing UK/European societies;
- Widespread obesity;
- Skilled labour out-migrating if possible.

Computing Only For The Rich

- Seamless, immersive telecoms and computing networks are a luxury for the wealthy;
- Increased technological monitoring of people using RFID tags;
- Everybody else gets by with cell phones.

Economic Stagnation

- Decreased UK competitiveness;
- Globalised capital and BRIC economic strength;
- Labour competing hard for one good job;
- Companies tempted to use moonlight labour;
- Few business initiatives;
- Belt-tightening, retrenchment, cost-cutting.

Reduced Consumption

- Consumption at lowest ebb in thirty years;
- Consumers buy cheap goods, knock-offs, most affordable in all categories;
- Drop in expensive imported foods, speciality foods, organic foods;
- Conserve resource use to lower bills;
- Travel curtailed -- leisure at home;
- DIY health and wellness.

Sustainability by Coping

- No available capital to invest in retro fitting or entrepreneurial initiatives;
- Technology: can't afford the R&D – or ameliorating any negative impacts;
- Resource degradation increases, but with straitened resources, there's not much we can do.

Workplaces Cheap and Shabby

- Outmoded high technology, no renovation of infrastructure;
- Medium-sized enterprises operating mainly in Europe;
- Workplace increasingly shabby, worn, and a hazard;

Health and Safety Circumvented

- Workplace stressors/risks: worn office and infrastructure;
- Home stressors/risks: unwarranted goods, lack of home repair, stress from juggling conflicting priorities;
- Leisure stressors/risks: limited; hazards of worn-out infrastructure;
- Attitude to H&S: problems are other people's fault;
- H&S infrastructure: individual responsibility, with some limited government advice;
- Extent of regulatory structure: **Who cares? Circumvention.**