

Horizon Scanning: health and safety in the changing workplace

Breakout
Groups

A Virtue of Necessity health and safety in the changing workplace

Leading article – **Sustainability Times:**

Local edition – 1 December 2017

WiMax immersive edition – 1 December 2017

The latest figures are in: going green and staying local have fertilised a dormant economy. Britain is becoming a beacon for high tech sustainability in our technically astonishing world. But it is also a nation with huge demands on its public services, particularly health provision and elderly care. The have/have not gap has widened. Yet the march of change continues.

Take the world of work. In some ways, it's similar to that of ten years ago. Manufacturing still exists. There are still large corporations – mostly with overseas owners and notwithstanding those that relocated overseas, taking many skilled workers with them. And the health and care sector remains by far the largest employer. Yet in other ways the world of work is very different.

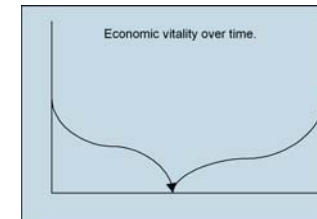
Society has re-trenched. More people have shifted from consumerism to self-sufficiency – it is a warmer world, after all. It's been a gain for sustainability – and, it seems, for revived competitiveness, as people re-create businesses from a unique local and green perspective.

More and more of us work for small companies – in a workplace as likely to be a 'flat pack' office in your boss's back garden as it is an office block. More and more small businesses are sharing office space, production machinery and support staff – using software to allocate

resources dynamically among several businesses, lowering costs and reducing waste. Given our concerns about climate change, this office 'co-op' may well be just a cycle ride away. And new industries are emerging that recycle, repair and 'make do'. The 'We Can Fix It' franchise is flourishing.

Of course, declining birth rates and a slowdown in immigration mean it's more important than ever to keep workers safe and healthy – particularly those 1 million workers aged over 65. This is achievable - technological progress has been blamed for increasingly complex health and safety issues but at least we have the ability to track workers' health and stress indicators throughout the day. Or at least we do if your employer can afford the RFID monitor tag systems. It's often those workers who need them most that can't have them – those in care professions, for example, or people working shifts and juggling child (and parent) care responsibilities.

So how do we keep our workers safe and well as the world of work changes? No one pretends it's easy. But it's essential. Our economy – and the future care needs of all of us – may depend on it...



KEY FEATURES OF THIS WORLD

REVIVING UK COMPETITIVENESS

THE ECONOMICS OF RECOVERY

CULTURE OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

CLOSE-KNIT SOCIETY

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

“SHABBY GREEN” SUSTAINABILITY

PERVASIVE COMPUTING

GREENING OF WORKPLACES

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VALUES

- First loyalties to family and local community;
- Value balance and wellness;
- Focus on life over work.

HEADLINES

- DIY Nation: “Can you fix it?”...”Yes we can!!”
- Carbon taxes to go up again
- “Get off our backs!” say workers and management
- Golden Oldies aim to create the Good Life
- Oranges and Lemons, from Brighton...and Melons!
- Torquay beats Torremolinos! Record visitors to seaside town...
- Public backs Governments 4Rs campaign: ‘Remember Reduce Re-use Recycle’
- Community spirit echoes post-World War II attitude

QUOTES AND METAPHORS

- “Shabby Green” is the new black;
- A Nation of Tinkerers and Eco-Friendly Gardeners

PEOPLE

Worker SUE: “It’s tough holding down 3 jobs, but at least I can check on my Gran round the corner on my mobile videophone and webcam ...it’s 5 years old now but it still works OK.”

Businessman NEILL (Local Biofuel Producer): “I’ve had a low sugar beet harvest this year so prices are high but sales are still holding up.”

Employee representative TED: “Membership’s stable, but people seem to rely on local social networks for support.”

Local authority employee RAHEEMA: “I’m worked off my feet trying to keep tags on all the local businesses springing up.”

Health and safety representative STEVE: “I spend most of my time dealing with bad backs, what with all the local food producers.”

ADMIRED PEOPLE

Trevor Bayliss
Charlie Dimmock

A THRIVING COMPANY

An SME focused on local markets, specialising in organic botanicals for nearby B&Bs and spas.



* 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.

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Personal Responsibility

- Pro-active adoption of technology, management of risk;
- Ability to absorb impacts of conflict / war;
- Resilience in face of economic / social / other shocks.

Close-Knit Society

- People use social networking to form tightly knit special interest groups and enclaves;
- Families closer knit, but sometimes far-flung – children out-migrated for jobs;
- Government focuses on elderly, health detection and prevention; role of coach.

Unfavourable Demographics

- Ageing UK / European societies;
- Widespread obesity, but not increasing;
- Skilled labour out-migrating if possible.

Pervasive Computing

- Seamless, immersive telecoms and computing networks; Wifi / RFID;
- Used to link family and local community, for environmental and health monitoring and problem detection; eases home care and enables telemedicine for elderly.

The Economics of Recovery

- Decreased UK competitiveness;
- Dawn of the Pacific Era;
- Globalised capital and BRIC economic strength;
- UK economy is recovering, but resources are still limited;
- Working in small local businesses and caring for parents, family;
- Business initiatives are typically local, unique, ecological, experiential.

Sustainable Consumption

- Consumption low but rebounding;
- Consumers buy durable, efficient goods, easy to repair, modular, re-usable;
- Purchasing more locally grown food, doing without imports – and eating less;
- Travel and leisure local and community-based;
- Focus on fitness, some use of HPE (Human Performance Enhancement).

“Shabby Green” Sustainability

- Forced by economic limitations – don't have much so you don't use much – innovations help;
- Assess health and environmental impacts of technology before adopting.

Greening of Workplaces

- High tech for green health;
- Enclaves, mini-networks;
- Increased workspace diversity (more small local businesses, fewer large corporate offices, more home working);
- Less industry, more organic and speciality agriculture, destination / experience / wellness businesses;
- Increased personal responsibility and green values; BUT
- Increased pressures for cost reduction can lead to increased regulatory avoidance.

Health and Safety in Moderation

- Workplace stressors / risks: more manual jobs; increase in 'traditional' injuries;
- Home stressors / risks: too much responsibility for family;
- Leisure stressors/risks: minimal;
- Attitude to H&S: individual responsibility;
- H&S infrastructure: government as coach; self-organised support networks;
- Extent of regulatory structure: MODERATE.