



Virtual Interactive Roundtable

How HR Leaders Can do More with Less to Connect, Recognise and Support their People?

Robert Hicks | Group HR Director | Reward Gateway

"The conversation this week focused on post-COVID support for employees. It is now clear employers are focusing their attention to longer-term plans like recognising their people for what they have done this year, and strategies to boost morale and support the wellbeing of their people into 2021. I was inspired by the stories shared and the commitment of the HRD community to help their organisations overcome their unique challenges and achieve their goals through their power of their people."

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Mental health and wellbeing of employees is a major challenge going forward

The pandemic has been a testing time for HR leaders and for their people. As many organisations are out of the initial crisis period, the challenge going forward is to protect the mental health and wellbeing of employees. There are increasing levels of anxiety related to a wide range of issues from job security to health and safety while travelling into work. [Preventing employee burnout](#) is very prevalent, with the work from home dynamics exacerbating the expectations to always be 'on'. How can [HR put employee wellbeing first](#) and prevent employee burnout?

Although this is a global issue impacting us all, everyone is experiencing it differently, so organisations need to be flexible to meet the needs of individuals. Many HR leaders have recognised the need to invest in new measures to help with mental health. We heard examples of wellbeing warriors (mental health champions to create a forum and engage communities across the business) and mental health first aiders. We also heard cases of investment into development, such as the introduction of a book benefit which gives employees an allowance to buy any book of their choosing.

There's a need for connection more than ever

Every cloud has a silver lining and there have been some aspects of organisational culture that have improved following the crisis. We heard how connection and communication have helped people feel more closer to each other and the wider business. The creative and great work that companies have done to keep their employees connected, such as eCards, video newsletters, daily blog updates, and virtual happy hours, has served as a lifeline to employees helping them through the chaos and uncertainty.

As businesses continue to navigate the crises, digital tools, like an [internal communications platform](#), can help cut through the noise and deliver tailored content – via desktop or phone – to reach employees with the most relevant information.

Small steps show recognition and gratitude go a long way

During such a difficult period, it is the small steps taken that have had the most impact. For example, being more open in communicating the good and the bad which is helping to establish trust. Small investments can go far in making employees feel valued, such as giving the day off on Christmas or sending out hand-written postcards and treat boxes. These things don't cost a significant amount but make a big impact on engagement. As does recognising contribution and saying thank you for the hard work that employees have put in to collectively help the organisation through a hard time.

Recognising contribution, progress, and impact not only boosts morale, but it can also help create a culture of gratitude and growth. Reward Gateway's [employee recognition and reward programme](#) provides everyday opportunities to connect and communicate, and empower employees to celebrate and be recognised with both monetary and non-monetary moments of appreciation.

We should take what we've learned from 2020 and repeat for 2021 rather than revert to the default

As we progress into 2021, the focus for many organisations will be on taking the learnings from this year and using them as an opportunity to do better, rather than reverting to the way things were before. HR leaders will be addressing areas such as driving engagement in a digital world, implementing new plans around ways of working (returning to the workplace, continuing remotely or a hybrid model), and keeping the momentum going with the conversation around D&I to make the workforce more diverse and dynamic.

Going into the uncertain territory of 2021, it will be crucial to maintain focus on key goals and do what you can with what you have to put your people first.