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PSD

The PSD newsletter for  
Human Resource Professionals

# HR in Focus



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Welcome to the Spring 2006 edition of HR in Focus which is compiled and published by the PSD Group.

This edition features articles on diversity and eLearning. We take a look at two very different organisations, The Royal Mail Group and Leicester City Football Club, and the diversity challenges that they are facing. In our third feature, we consider the impact that eLearning is having on the way in which we deliver training programmes and questions the effectiveness of this approach.

I would like to thank each of our contributors for the time and effort which they have devoted to writing for this edition and for sharing their thoughts and ideas with you. We hope you find the topics interesting and relevant.

**Diversity: steps on the recruitment 'journey'**  
Ninian Le Blanc,  
Director of Diversity & Inclusion  
Royal Mail Group

**Becoming better providers and consumers of eLearning**  
Julian Wakeley,  
Managing Director  
Healthworks Europe

**Sporting Chance – or sporting certainty?**  
Richard Purser,  
Managing Director  
Diversity Dimension

PSD is an international recruitment services organisation operating at the Middle to Senior Executive level.

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## Becoming better providers and consumers of eLearning

The following article tackles the subject of the learning experience in the work place and how this is impacted by the method of delivery.

A cursory 'google' of the term eLearning currently yields over 13.6 million hits. Delve, or type, a little deeper and you find nearly a million hits for "eLearning iPod" – does this imply that iPods are a potential device for eLearning? It marks what could be a worrying trend that the craft of developing excellent learning content is being marginalised, replaced by trends and fads where the content is less important than the device itself.

### Experiencing learning

Cast your mind back to the last piece of learning you would rate as being excellent. Was it delivered on an iPod? No, probably not. Perhaps it was a free Spanish CD that came with your Sunday paper. Hmm, maybe wrong again. It may even have been a piece of distance learning, an online course from Harvard, or an internet course from your own company. Did it enable you to get a task done more professionally, efficiently or safely, or did it address a deeper need?

### Mind the Gap

Alan Kay, former Apple fellow, Hewlett-Packard and Disney imagineer declared, "Technology is everything that was not around when you were born". Certainly in the early days of computing, we were not used to interacting with technology, systems were different, using forced analogies that were inconsistent with that person's view of the World. Now, most of these have disappeared, except for the teenage and youth games market where, in fact, the more inconsistent the interface, the more 'challenging' the game-play appears to be.

The axiom, 'just because you can doesn't mean you should' could be easily applied to the use of technology in learning. This quandary regarding the use of new technology for learning is not new. It has been around really since the Burrhus Frederick Skinner reinforcement based learning machines of the mid-60s. Back then however, the brake was applied relatively quickly because the technologies in question – interactive laser disks for instance, were expensive to develop and distribute, and using them required cumbersome equipment and training of users just to work the equipment itself. In other words, the means to the end got in the way.

The advice is therefore to never confuse content with the means of delivery. The iPod is a great delivery device for certain aspects of learning content. For instance, Duke University, North Carolina USA give them to their students so they can download the seminars after the event. The iPod has become a low cost delivery device, no interactivity, just an enabler. It does not improve

the breed, merely making it easier to skip through content faster. The distinctions are almost McLuhan'esque; which comes first, the medium or the message?

### Learning or Training?

This is a distinction that is not merely a question of semantics. Whilst the genre used to be called Computer Based Training in most implementations, it became known as eLearning, and never eTraining. Actually, eLearning is probably more "Training" in many cases.

However, eLearning can fall down in a number of areas, typically related issues of Content, Craft, or Context.

### Content

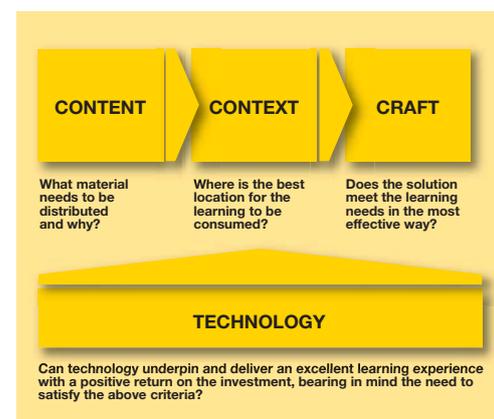
In the past, the length of any form of eLearning was determined by the physical distribution mechanism of removable disks, laser disks, CD ROMs, DVDs. But these limitations are now mainly removed as eLearning is delivered via internal servers to the internet where capacity has no such boundaries. This has three implications:

Firstly, that there is a desire to just load any amount of reference material into the programme, and call it 'background'. All research points to the ability of someone to recall material read off a computer screen being between 20 to 40 percent of the same content on paper. Secondly, and this goes to the next issue of context, how will someone chunk up their learning, and have an opportunity to review it, reflect on it, and then put it into practice. After all, they have a job to do too.

Finally, eLearning has always proclaimed its ability to provide multi-layered material to handle students at differing rates of ability and learning speeds – 'learning at your own pace'. Well, what happens if the explanation given does not work for the student? In many cases, the answer is one remedial loop around the topic, and then it all gets a bit repetitive. This would not happen with a knowledgeable (human) tutor. Of course, any level of depth to the material can be built into the eLearning content, but this can have an exponential effect on the development time and cost of the programme.

### Context

This is the tough issue of appropriateness of the topic being delivered on a computer screen, or for some unaccountable reason, a mobile phone, or an iPod etc... The context of how someone is going to use the material needs to be considered,



as well as whether the content actually works on the device in question. Key to this is:

- (i) how will someone use the material,
- (ii) when it will be used,
- (iii) where

Depending on the answers to these questions, you will discover if the requirement is not eLearning, but purely reference material, a job-aid, or conceptual introductions to the topic. But in several instances, it isn't eLearning, nor is it Training.

### Craft

This is about being a better consumer of learning, as well as a better purchaser. When you review various eLearning packages, the graphics can be stunning, the programme load quickly, sound has depth and the video works without any judder. But below the surface of the iceberg that is an eLearning programme, the discipline of structure, learning philosophy, pace, accommodating the learner preferences, logic may not be there.

It is common for some people to see eLearning as multimedia entertainment, requiring instant gratification and nano-learning components to cope with limited attention spans and grasshopper lives. Well, the author would contend that if a programme is structured well, is viewed in the right context and environment (i.e. not on the kitchen table as the kids fight to watch Dick and Dom on a Saturday) then the need to sensationalise, or worse still, trivialise the learning will not be necessary.

### Summary

In many organisations, the implementation of eLearning no longer requires pilot trials and ROI assessments. It's just available, as ubiquitous as the Flip chart. But with one crucial difference. The flip chart is a blank canvas, waiting for user or tutor input. eLearning is, despite its relative appearance of ease of use and implementation, a somewhat more complex media, and it requires some thought being given to the what, how and where questions before the leap into the eLearning light. It might not be the end of the tunnel, but it will certainly be the beginning of the train.

### About the author

Julian Wakeley is currently the Managing Director of Healthworks Europe, a provider of Direct Marketing and eLearning services to the Pharmaceutical industry. He was previously on the group operating board of WWAV Rapp Collins, and was Head of Distance Learning in Unilever and Abbey National. He holds an MBA from Duke University, North Carolina.

“We’re interested in businesses understanding that if they’re good at diversity, then they’ll make more money.”

Allan Leighton, Chairman, Royal Mail Group (speaking in August 2005)



## Diversity: steps on the recruitment ‘journey’

Given the lead represented by the above, you would expect to find that diversity is central to the Royal Mail Group’s corporate agenda. Our efforts are underpinned by two key drivers – to make the Group a commercial success, and to create ‘a great place to work’.

As one of the nation’s largest single employers – more than 160,000 people – we are highly visible. And through our three main UK brands – Royal Mail Letters, ParcelForce Worldwide, and Post Office® – we literally reach the entire nation on a daily basis.

So, diversity defines our marketplace; our corporate task is to ensure it becomes a recognisable element of our ‘DNA’, and a continued driver of our commercial success. At a time when each of our businesses face challenging market conditions, it has never been more important for us to attract and retain high-quality people. A focus on diversity is entirely consistent with this.

What follows is a snapshot of what we’re doing in a recruitment context, from the perspective of gender, disability, and ethnicity, to provide a flavour of the approach developing across the Group. Over time, our aim is to integrate these into ‘business as usual’, becoming part of everyday practice.

### Gender

Royal Mail has historically been the largest single employer of men in the UK. In an age when women make up an increasing proportion of the labour force, however, it makes sense for us to look critically at how we attract more women into our workforce. The image of the ‘postman’ is one of the most recognisable in our society; our challenge is to ensure that it does not become a barrier to women who are interested in the role, or to ourselves in trying to reach a group who might not historically have pictured themselves in such a role.

Our approach in the short-term has been to use targeted advertising, allied to measures to expand the scope for flexible working. There has been some success, and recent campaigns have resulted in shortlists that are numerically balanced between men and women.

By contrast, the idea of balanced shortlists is being taken forward within our Post Office business in a different context. Overall, women have traditionally formed the majority of the workforce. Our challenge has been at the most senior levels of management, where women remain under-represented.

A strategy to address this has been agreed, which includes the time-limited requirement that all shortlists for senior roles must be balanced in gender terms. This has required extensive consultation internally as well as with our external recruitment partners (including consultancies), starting from the premise that for most roles, a pool of suitably qualified women exists in the labour force as a whole.

Our task is to find them and attract them, rather than wonder whether they are out there in the first place – a subtle but important shift in emphasis. We are very interested to see how effective this approach proves in practice.

### Disability

In this area, the dominant theme has been partnership.

We undertook an exercise to help us choose between a range of agencies who had expressed an interest in working with us. This process resulted in the development of partnership arrangements with two agencies with expertise in the disability field – Remploy Interwork, and MENCAP/Enable. Both partnerships are in their formative stages, but have delivered early successes in terms of recruits.

Again, issues of job design and workplace climate have to go hand-in-hand with sourcing suitable candidates, and a critical element of the early successes has been line manager involvement. This has undoubtedly paid off in terms of the positive reception our new recruits have had from line managers, and it is important that we use them as internal advocates for change to encourage others to explore the scope for a disability-inclusive approach to recruitment.

### Ethnicity

A Cabinet Office report estimates that people from minority ethnic backgrounds will form the fastest-growing segment of the UK labour force over the next decade. The impact of this will be felt beyond the large urban conurbations in and around Greater London and the West Midlands, and will be witnessed as a truly national phenomenon.

As a Group, we approach this from a relatively strong position in overall terms, with the proportion of employees from minority backgrounds in the low double figures – higher than the representation in the population as a whole. Our primary task is to maintain this overall position, and we have locally-based initiatives in progress in a number of areas around the country to help ensure that the supply lines remain open.

Our challenge in this area is similar to that facing us from a gender standpoint – ensuring representation at senior levels. A Staff Network Group is in existence, populated by managers from minority backgrounds. This group has become an important forum for generating understanding of the specific factors that hinder career progress.

This has, for example, influenced the piloting of a mentoring scheme for minority managers, to help gain the necessary exposure in readiness for promotion. Similarly, within our Post Office® business, active consideration is being given to the adoption of recruitment targets for a limited time-period to address minority under-representation.

### Inclusion – the way ahead

Our desired destination is an inclusive organisation that respects diversity. This means that recognition of differences (whether gender, disability, ethnicity, or any other) is a necessary strategy in the short-term, if only to account for the absence of a level playing field in society. We have introduced a ‘valuing difference’ workshop for all trained assessors to help embed this perspective into everyday selection practice.

Inclusion means creating a business where to speak of ‘we’ really does mean everybody in the business, and where differences no longer represent barriers to entry, progression, and effective contribution. We believe it’s a prize worth striving for – a necessary component of a great business which is great to work for.

**Ninian Le Blanc**  
Director, Diversity & Inclusion,  
Royal Mail Group



# Sporting chance – or sporting certainty?

Diversity Dimension are working with Tim Davies, Chief Executive Officer of Leicester City Football Club, to develop a successful and recognisable brand and a business with an integral component of it's strategy based upon inclusivity. Leicester already has a very diverse population, the Office for National Statistics data from the 2001 census gave an ethnic population above 100,000, and the city already has an ethnic majority of under 16 year olds, a fact which will impact the club in many ways as a business.



## The Leicester City experience

Human Resources magazine has recently reported that research by Roffey Park with managers outside of HR found more than 80% believed the function to be of no business value. Yet HR maintains the responsibility for diversity in most organisations, and the opportunity to influence business performance by developing an inclusive strategy, as opposed to a traditional equal opportunities or compliance led approach. Through Diversity initiatives, HR can support the achievement of a virtuous circle of benefits which provide a positive contribution across the business – delivering much more than a tick box exercise!

## The changing population

Demographic change in the UK will provide challenges to organisations in attracting and retaining a workforce with a completely different profile, who will also be consumers. The Statistics Pocket Handbook produced by Race for Opportunity (RfO) highlighted a report from the Office for National Statistics 2001/2 Annual Local Labour Force Survey which claimed that half of the growth in the working age population, up to the next census in 2011, would be of ethnic origin – the date at which The Times reported six years ago that Leicester would become the first city in the U.K. to have an ethnic majority.

So how does a Leicester based organisation ensure that it is at the centre of the community, and able to engage with communities to build future success. It could be argued that football clubs have the greatest customer loyalty and brand awareness, so with these demographic forecasts how have Football League Championship club

Leicester City developed their goal to be at the centre of the whole community?

## The business... more than 90 minutes on a Saturday afternoon

In August 2002 Leicester City moved to the purpose built 32,500 capacity Walkers Stadium, which has a wide range of facilities including exhibition halls, conference suites, meeting rooms, restaurants, and an LEA managed Study Support Centre, delivering the potential for around the year usage. The club had been at the forefront of the many successful anti-racism campaigns within football in recent years, but wanted to develop an inclusive ethos that engaged communities and provided wider opportunities.

Diversity Dimension are developing this strategy with Chief Executive Officer Tim Davies, and benefits beyond the initial purpose of establishing community relationships are beginning to show just a few months into the programme. The deliverables are multi-faceted, and began with the decision to develop a submission for the Preliminary level of the Racial Equality Standard for Professional Football Clubs – only the second Football League club to do so. Preparing the submission required engagement across the administrative and football sides of the business, and helped to effect change and to generate awareness for key line managers. Standard organisers 'Kick It Out' recognised the levels of activity going well beyond the Preliminary level requirements, and an awards ceremony which will facilitate media interest is scheduled for early 2006.

A range of activities were already in place, with the Football in the Community (FITC) team having

supported over forty coaches from local ethnic clubs to achieve the initial Football Association coaching badge, along with twenty police officers who use these skills to help the club to facilitate good community relations, and the interaction between these coaches has improved social and practical skills and the health awareness for the growing number of participating youngsters. Police feedback on a 30% crime reduction during a community soccer league provided further proof of the Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR) benefits, and it is hoped the charitable status of FITC will generate wider sponsorship to allow community schemes to be further developed.

## A family affair

Brand loyalty has been mentioned, but that doesn't mean that initial competition isn't fierce, and the Premiership giants along with Rugby Union's equivalent, the Leicester Tigers, challenge for the favour of younger supporters. The development of a free entry scheme for under eights, the 'Grass Roots' discounted ticket programme for schools and other local organisations, and a Junior Foxes Supporters Club with added benefits including free admission to many county attractions, has been of great interest to families and is changing the supporter profile. Previous work with other local partners through





The new stadium has opened up a range of possibilities for additional income streams, with ‘Young Muslims’ and ‘Asians can play football’ conferences already held. The facilities are also seen as a leading venue for weddings, and specialist providers for the Asian wedding scene represent over half of the club brochure promoting this service.

consultancy Diversity Dimension and advertising agency McConnells, had generated campaign responses more than 550% above historic levels. Promotion of club activity through the local ethnic media once again proved successful and enabled the club to reach all stakeholders.

The new stadium has opened up a range of possibilities for additional income streams, with ‘Young Muslims’ and ‘Asians can play football’ conferences already held. The facilities are also seen as a leading venue for weddings, and specialist providers for the Asian wedding scene represent over half of the club brochure promoting this service. An analysis of bookings identified that there was potential to provide wider customer choice, and the club position as a founder of the Supplier Diversity East Midlands network has assisted with the identification of suitable business partners.

### Employer of Choice & ROI

An awareness of the local communities and their beliefs was considered of great importance, in terms of expanding knowledge and building relationships with key influential stakeholders. Existing contacts were supportive in arranging reciprocal visits to places of worship for the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faiths, with contact extended by the club to supporting recruitment fairs in community centres with representation by existing staff. Their feedback proved the staff development opportunities, and

vacant positions were filled with a resultant 90% cost per hire saving on a media campaign, alongside the increase in representation and the noted skills and attributes of the recruits. The strong community reaction adds considerable benefits including sales growth achieved where a workforce representative of local demographics is in place – RfO report that Lloyds TSB achieved a 30% increase in sales performance at key locations.

It can be seen that the initial results of a community relationships and awareness strategy has allowed Leicester City Football Club to evolve from a club with a successful anti-racism approach to one holding a fully inclusive status at the centre of their community, but with strategies that have also delivered financial, resource and participation benefits as the virtuous circle develops. The benefits seen in the community have similar breadth, with the development of wider cohesion, health through participation in sport, crime reduction and greater awareness of the impact of drugs abuse and racism. The next stages will include the development of further activity with specific ethnic media and within football – visits have been hosted from a range of national bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality wanting to hear of the programme.

The support of other parts of the business such as Marketing – another function often called upon to justify its existence – for bespoke cost effective contact strategies builds the circle and delivers to the

bottom line. Those in the know provide some stunning results, and RfO provides further evidence with their report citing the West Bromwich Building Society as achieving 10% of income generated within a short lead time – with the diversity marketing strategy developed by this writer.

### The Diversity Dimension Key Success Factors

Success doesn't demand a parallel structure devoted to diversity, and is certainly not about huge budget increases at a time when cost control is critical. Any additional or diverted expenditure should be seen as an investment which will be returned quickly in most organisations, with significant headway made towards Corporate and Social Responsibility demands as an additional achievement. An evaluation of organisational success has resulted in Diversity Dimension identifying ten top tips for working with clients.

- Who has responsibility – an Executive level Champion is essential
- Get advice – it's worth speaking to the experts to avoid making basic, potentially damaging mistakes
- Remember it's a growing market – by the next census, some cities will have majority ethnic populations
- Family focus is important – there's enormous respect for elders within ethnic communities, and their opinions matter

- Be aware of cultural differences, the wide range of backgrounds and needs, and differences within and between communities
- In many ways, the needs of the ethnic communities are the same as those of the rest of the population – it's just the method of generating interest that may need to be different
- Benchmark against others and get their views
- Spending power can be huge – early adopters are often from Asian communities, and can be very brand and status conscious
- Don't underestimate the importance of face-to-face contact
- Those who've received good service are quick to recommend – Member Get Member schemes can be very successful

For Diversity Dimension, the early successes for Leicester City have been evidence that strategies can be adopted across a range of different business types, with previous public and private sector achievements in developing inclusivity.

Richard Purser is Managing Director of Diversity Dimension who have helped develop award winning strategies including National Diversity Award, “Most Innovative Strategy” (Institute of Financial Services) and a top 3 performance in the Race for Opportunity benchmarking for a previous client.

# PSD and Investors in People

January 2006



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

We are pleased to report that PSD has completed its three yearly assessment for the UK Investors in People standard and that we continue to meet, and in many areas exceed, its requirements.

Since our last assessment in May 2002, the Investors in People standard has been revised and is now more demanding and prescriptive.

The revised standard focuses on a range of people management issues including employee participation, reward and recognition. The capability of leaders and managers is measured more carefully now and the setting and communicating of objectives and plans is looked at much more closely. The assessment process also looks at how organisations measure the impact of learning and development upon performance, so detailed evaluation is essential.

We found the revised standard more challenging and exacting than it had been previously but felt that we benefited greatly from this. In particular, it encouraged us to rethink what effective management means at PSD and to ensure that both managers and their staff are clear about what we expect from our management.

The report submitted by the assessor states that PSD has;

“A very clear purpose and vision supported by a well developed strategy for improving performance”. The report also notes that “strong leadership, a values based culture and a firm belief that people are a key factor ....” have all contributed to our success.

The assessor goes on to say that “there is a fairly unanimous feeling that managers are competent in the way they lead, manage and develop their teams and people feel that PSD is genuinely committed to supporting and developing them”.

We are obviously very encouraged by this feedback but remain conscious of the need to challenge ourselves, benchmark our business against other organisations and ensure that the we are all striving for continued performance improvement.

We are always willing to share our ideas and experiences in people management and development. If you would like to discuss these topics and/or feel that we may be of help, please contact Francesca Robinson, Chief Executive Officer on 020 7970 9700 or francesca.robinson@psdgroup.com

# The PSD HR Team

2006 has started where 2005 finished with PSD HR completing on several key assignments for leading organisations within financial services, media and business services. PSD are continuing to develop and build key partnerships within leisure/travel, retail and FMCG.

Early 2006 has witnessed an increased demand for professionals within the specialist functions, especially Reward and Learning & Development.

## Recent key appointments include:

**Director of Integrated Learning Professional Services Organisation**

**HR Director Professional Services Organisation**

**HR Director Global Interactive Agency**

**Reward Manager Retail Bank**

**Senior HR Manager Retail Bank**

**HR Director Financial Services Organisation**

**Recruitment Manager Government Consultancy**

**HR Manager IT Consultancy**

**Reward Manager Leading Retailer**

**Learning & Development Manager Accountancy Practice**

**Recruitment Manager Insurance & Asset Management Organisation**

**Compensation & Benefits Manager FMCG**

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