

HRD

The only independent strategic HR publication

the **HRDIRECTOR** DECEMBER 2015 | ISSUE 134

SPECIAL REPORT

SOCIAL MOBILITY -
A QUALITATIVE EVALUATION
OF NON-EDUCATIONAL
BARRIERS TO THE ELITE
PROFESSIONS

ANNETTE ANDREWS, DIRECTOR OF HR - LLOYD'S OF LONDON

{ RINGING THE CHANGES }

“I'M A GENERALIST, IT'S DIFFICULT TO PIGEONHOLE ME,
AND THAT HAS DEFINITELY BEEN AN ADVANTAGE”

ALSO FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

REWARD & RECOGNITION Obsession with differences across the multi-generational workforce is proving to be pointless and misleading

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT Pushing conflict issues to one side is a sure-fire way they will come back bigger and uglier than before

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT As both a science and a practice, organisations are trying to hold on to old models, flows and principles?

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY WFM tools can cause paranoia - if staff are wasting time on social media, try better leadership not more analytics



TO TWEET OR NOT TO TWEET?

The trouble with social media is, it's a tinderbox - one spark can lead to a raging fire.

From his personal Twitter, Tim Roberts, an employee of Andrew Lloyd Webber's company, Really Useful Theatres (RUT), became embroiled in a row with actor Benedict Cumberbatch's fans when he tweeted about Cumberbatch's role as Hamlet. That proved to be a bad idea.

ARTICLE BY NICK ROWE, PARTNER AND HEAD OF EMPLOYMENT - LODDERS SOLICITORS

The relatively bland Tweet sparked a Twitter backlash from Cumberbatch's female fans. Roberts responded with various offensive tweets that were sexist, racist and used extreme bad language, which were forwarded to his employer by the women he was attacking on Twitter. In response, the employer proposed to take Roberts to a disciplinary hearing, but Roberts resigned before action could be taken. Roberts argued that his tweets were his own, from his personal account and in his own time and that he could therefore say what he liked. His employer argued that he had brought their brand into disrepute - an argument commonly used by employers when taking action against employees for comments on social media. In this case, Roberts was talking in the context of the industry he worked in and the women he insulted on Twitter were potential theatregoers.

Bristol stockbroker Rayhan Qadar made the national news when he tweeted on his way to work that he had hit a cyclist, adding: 'But I'm late for work so had to drive off lol.' He hadn't hit anyone, but this didn't stop his comment from creating a widespread, bad Twitter storm, and the police began an investigation. His employer swiftly fired him the same day - it was a matter of company policy that any misconduct on social media of this sort would result in dismissal, which highlights why employers are right to put strict policies in place. Finally, consider the fallout from one reckless Tweet by former PR executive Justine Sacco who posted what she thought was a joke before hopping on a plane to Africa: 'Going to Africa. Hope I don't get AIDS! Just kidding. I'm white!' Not only was there a chaotic backlash, the hashtag #HasJustineLandedYet trended worldwide as Sacco was airborne, blissfully unaware of the reaction her tweet had gained and the furore she was to face when she touched-down in Africa.

First and foremost, don't ignore social media - simply blocking them in the workplace is futile, and would not solve the problem of 'out-of-office' activities. It is also likely to be



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unpopular and create a whole range of issues, and potentially lead to the loss of commercial opportunities presented by social media. Don't hamper employees, but educate them, ensuring they are aware of the commercial risks to your organisation - their employer - of everything they say on all social media platforms. Set some parameters on when and how long employees can access social media during work in order to minimise any potential reduction in productivity. Create a modus operandi for company and corporate social media platforms and their use. Ensure staff know who has responsibility and the processes around content, and reinforce that anything they post is on a public forum and impacts on the business. Don't hamper them or tackle this half-heartedly. Lead from the top and enable staff with efficient sign-offs on content, support those using social media to connect with existing and potential customers in a positive, professional, purposeful way that will enhance overall service channels. And give the back-up they need if it should go wrong, make sure they know who to turn to if a problem should arise, and respond efficiently.

It is a shrewd and professional employer that has a clear and robust social media policy in place, which it proactively shares with and communicates to employees, and that trains managers in the monitoring and consistent implementation of that policy. A policy will help deal with any issues arising, and can result in the reward, or risk, of social media use being managed effectively. It should clearly set out standards of behaviour and types of posts and communications which are unacceptable, and make clear this applies to personal postings, regardless of whether the communication is made during work hours or not. Make clear the consequences of the policy being ignored, and insist on 'disclaimers and caveats' on employees' personal accounts. ●

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