

insidehr

Organisational politics the primary cause of workplace stress

Organisational politics has completed its ascent from peripheral issue 10 years ago to today being the principal cause of workplace stress, according to a survey of 490 managers conducted by UK research firm Roffey Park. It also found that conflict in the workplace has increased and 44 per cent of companies believe organisational politics to be a main cause. The research also highlighted that underperforming organisations are more likely to report an increase in political behaviour and to see such behaviour as a source of conflict.

Businesses use iPods for new recruits

The iPod has become the latest workplace tool, with employers using the gadget to train new recruits, according to Anil Sabharwal, general manager of knowledge solutions for Talent2. iPods were usually given to employees several weeks before their first day, according to Sabharwal, and contained downloads on everything from who's who in the office, safety procedures, to the best places to eat lunch and where to enjoy a post-work drink. The purpose of handing out iPods was to help employees combat first-day jitters and to improve staff retention rates, he said.

Skills shortage continues to grow

The enduring skills shortage is likely to continue into 2007 and beyond, with demand for candidates remaining high and salaries up across all sectors in New South Wales, according to a recent Robert Walters survey. In accounting and finance, salaries increased across the board by up to 30 per cent during 2006, while a further rise of 5 to 10 per cent is predicted in accounting and finance salaries for 2007. Engineering salaries are expected to continue to rise by an average of 8 per cent as the skills set continues to migrate from Sydney towards Queensland and Western Australia.

Human instincts at work

MANY OF the common obstacles HR professionals face in dealing with people, such as organisational silos, uncooperative executives and gaining traction for new initiatives, can be put down to instinctive behaviour that is naturally hardwired into the human species.

"Homo sapiens emerged on the plains of Africa around 200,000 years ago. It's only 250 years ago that we have left our tribes and villages to come to work in offices and factories," said Andrew O'Keeffe, of management consultancy Hardwired Humans.

"Human behaviour that enabled us to survive on the plains of Africa is alive and well in today's organisations."

The key is to understand human behaviour and then use that knowledge to design effective people strategies that will operate naturally for humans, and not fight against our natural instincts, O'Keeffe said.

An example of this is hot-desking, which goes against the natural human instinct. "Our species finds hot-desking isolating. The point is that if HR and line executives convince themselves that hot-desking is to be introduced, then be prepared that it will be resisted by people or have negative consequences; so manage it accordingly," O'Keeffe said.



Andrew O'Keeffe, Hardwired Humans

Based on research conducted by academics and animal researchers such as Jane Goodall, O'Keeffe said there are 10 instincts that humans don't have to learn.

"One of them is the instinct to gossip. Gossiping is the sharing of information, particularly to find out what's going on in the world around you," he said.

"As a survival technique 200,000 years ago, this skill was very useful. Your chances of survival and your chances of passing on your genes was enhanced if you had the ability to gain information. It also helped with living in social groups to work out who you could trust and who owed you a favour."

If HR designs and implement practices that are consistent with human instincts, then those initiatives will operate naturally, according to O'Keeffe.

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