Mentor

August 2015

EMPLOYMENT LAW & HR + HEALTH & SAFETY + ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT + TAX

KNOW *your* PLAICE

If you're right, stand your ground, says Lorraine Turner, of restaurant group Deep Blue

New age issues
21st century in the workplace

People power
Target your talent

On a roll
Transport sector on the move

Right to Work

How well do you know your workers?

Royal Bank of Scotland

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Mentor

EDITOR *Cairin Coltham, The Royal Bank of Scotland Mentor*

Email: **magazine@mentor.uk.com**

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OUR AGENDA

Where is the law?

New challenges are creeping into the workplace and the law is simply lagging behind. Employers wonder how they can protect the interests of their organisation and their employees.

This issue, *Mentor* examines some of the more unusual 21st-century issues, from selfie-stick-mania to the proliferation of beards, and how employers can overcome a lack of legislative guidance to proactively manage these things.

We also hear from Chilstone's Steve Clark that a well-communicated code of conduct and targeted training could protect your company's reputation if your employees' roles take them out and about.

Lorraine Turner, of restaurant group Deep Blue, tells us about how the business's decision to stand up to its own advisers on an issue with industry-wide implications led to the right outcome.

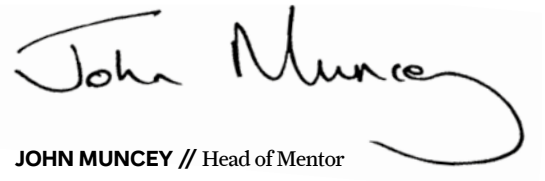
Transport is a challenging sector, but we hear in the words of our customers how Mentor has been able to help keep them on the move.

This issue also features expert comment on the importance of knowing your employees' skill sets – and gaps. Training is the answer, says Mentor's Lindsey Claydon, as it can improve skills and build strong relationships at all levels of your business.

And when the time comes to grow your senior team, according to Mentor's Lucy Coombs, there are benefits to bringing on your own talent and recruiting externally.

We recently asked many of you what it is about running your business that keeps you up at night. We've explored your answers about your key concerns, and how Mentor could help, in our very own game of snakes and ladders on page 10.

Whatever challenges your business is facing, a good starting point is to get in touch with us and talk them through with our expert advisers – we look forward to hearing from you.



JOHN MUNCEY // Head of Mentor

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News & views

EMPLOYMENT LAW & HR + HEALTH & SAFETY + ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT + TAX

INDUSTRY GUIDE

Fresh standards

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recently published a revised edition of health & safety standards for the food and drink, and manufacturing sectors.

Titled 'A recipe for safety', the guidance is aimed at people at every level in the industry, ranging from directors and senior managers to health & safety professionals and skilled workers.

To find out how this guidance could help you improve occupational health standards, contact the Mentor Advice Service.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH

Workplace cancer screening

A recent survey published by early-detection service Check4cancer has highlighted that almost two-thirds of employers are intending to introduce cancer awareness programmes and screening in their organisations.

Cancer charity Macmillan has reported that of the 113 UK HR directors and managers surveyed, 95% of them supported the call for employees to have access to regular and free cancer checks.

When asked about the impact of cancer on the business, respondents said staff planning would be most affected, with productivity and staff morale also reduced.

Source: www.check4cancer.com, 2015

REGULATION CHANGE

Health & safety *rebuild*

New regulations for managing health & safety in construction came into force in April, and a new guide by HSE aims to make it easier for businesses to understand the legal requirements.

The document covers 39 regulations, from planning and design stages through to the safe operation of a busy construction site.*

To find out how these regulations will impact on your health & safety procedures, contact the Mentor's Advice Service.

*Source: www.hse.gov.uk, 2015

PARENT UPDATE

High childcare costs

A fifth of parents have considered reducing their working hours or quitting their jobs altogether as a result of the rising cost of childcare, according to a recent report by the CIPD.*

However, the Government has announced plans to double the amount of free childcare places for three and four-year-old children – now 30 hours, up from 15 hours.

To find out more about how this may help employees with children to balance their childcare and work responsibilities, contact the Mentor Advice Service.

*Source: www.cipd.co.uk, 2015

BUSINESS ACT

Less *red tape*

The Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015, which received Royal Assent in March, aims to cut red tape and save businesses £10 billion each year.

Other provisions in the Act are an upgraded business rates system and the creation of a new body to resolve business-to-business disputes.

Source: services.parliament.uk/bills, 2015

BUDGET NEWS

Productivity *is key*

The July Budget replaced the existing National Minimum Wage with a new National Living Wage, but while this may benefit the over-25s its success relies on the performance of low-pay sectors, according to Mark Beatson, Chief Economist for the CIPD. "The Office for Budget Responsibility says it will have little net effect on employment, but its forecasts rely on assumptions about future productivity growth that have proved wrong to date," he explains.

"This policy will only deliver higher pay without significant job losses if it is accompanied by a drive to increase productivity in low-pay sectors…and that will need more than delivery of apprenticeship numbers or employment subsidies via the National Insurance Contributions system."

Share the load

Benchmarking your business's energy use, paying employees on time or checking whether your new staff members have the right to work in the UK are all vital business processes, but SMEs sometimes lack the in-house expertise to handle them well.

IT'S simply not practical for SMEs to hire in-house specialists in HR, health & safety, accounting or environmental management, so finding an external partner consultancy provides a flexible and cost-efficient answer.

The support of a consultancy service means you can make sure your policies and procedures are up to date, that you have the correct accreditations in place and, should the worst happen, you have the support you need to achieve the best outcome.

Mentor has continued to expand its coverage to other areas of specialist business practice, including a new payroll service offered in partnership with Moorepay.

ON A ROLL

Making sure staff get paid is central to a business's operations. An out-of-date or under-resourced accounting system can mean, at best, a waste of staff time and, at worst, penalties from HMRC.

Mentor's Payroll Service is cloud-based and could make systems and processes more efficient and accurate, so a business remains compliant, produces accurate reports and pays its employees on time.

SAVE TIME AND MONEY

PAYROLL SERVICE

- Cloud-based
- HMRC-compliant reporting
- Simple staff payments

ENERGY AUDIT

- Reduced energy usage
- Lower bills
- Action plan

CHECK YOUR PEOPLE

- Online checks
- Quick and easy process
- The right workforce

CREDIBLY GREEN

Companies are under pressure to be environmentally responsible yet cope with fluctuating energy prices. And green credentials are everything when it comes to winning new contracts.

As part of its Environmental Management Service, Mentor offers an Energy Audit which could help your business to improve its energy efficiency and save money.

Following the audit, the business receives an in-depth report and action plan to help it achieve its environmental goals. This can often start with changing light bulbs, but could also include medium and large-spend recommendations, such as renewables.

KNOW YOUR WORKERS

Recruitment is time-consuming, expensive and risky. Businesses need to protect themselves from candidates who provide false information as this puts them at risk and could damage their reputation.

Mentor's PeopleChecking Service helps a company to efficiently check that the experience and qualifications of both new and existing candidates match their claims.

HOW WE COULD HELP

To find out more about how Mentor services could help your business thrive, contact us on **0800 970 9814** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**

AT A GLANCE

- BE FLEXIBLE
- SEEK ADVICE
- ROBUST POLICIES

MAD *bad* FADS

Staying one step ahead of new fads entering the workplace and understanding the impact they may have on your staff and customers is a constant challenge for employers.

AS AN employer, staying compliant and keeping your staff and visitors happy and safe is a top priority. Being aware of the modern risks that are creeping into the workplace is the first step to their successful management. A proactive approach is important as this kind of change is nothing new. After all, technologies such as social media and email were once considered new trends.

WHY THE STICK?

So why has there been so much furore around the use of selfie sticks? Two major venues provide an insight: **O2 Arena** "The O2 does not allow selfie sticks into the arena due to safety considerations. We welcome selfies, but please leave the stick at home." **Wembley Arena** (right) "Don't bring them – stick with the tried and tested use of an arm."

HIRSUTE HYSTERIA

Beards have become this decade's male fashion must-have, but it comes with a range of challenges for employers.

Some people wear beards for religious reasons and employers must take care not to discriminate. There's also evidence that a beard harbours a much higher level of bacteria.

Beards may not fit with the business's policy on staff appearance and if an employee wears respiratory protective equipment or breathing apparatus that will not function correctly when worn over a beard, it's up to the employer to provide an alternative way of working. Bob Christie, Mentor Employment Law Consultant, explains that employers should seek expert advice to get the balance right.

"A policy is important to provide employees with guidance. While employers must respect the rights of employees who wear a beard for religious reasons, it's important they achieve a balance between their rights and the needs of the business."

CONSULTANT CORNER

"CONTACT US TO CHAT THROUGH NEW OR UNUSUAL ISSUES SO WE CAN HELP YOU DEVELOP ROBUST POLICIES."

BOB CHRISTIE Mentor Employment Law & HR Consultant

"The use of mobile phones in general can be prohibited in the workplace, particularly in education and social care environments.

A recent example is a nursery where staff innocently filmed a birthday celebration, breaching a number of regulations. It shows why it's important that workplace policies are actively enforced.

Beards are also a new challenge. Making sure employees are fully aware of any dress codes or health & safety issues can resolve problems before they surface. Contact us to chat through these new or unusual issues so we can help you to develop robust policies and communicate them consistently throughout your organisation.

Identifying trends in society also helps with embedding a positive HR culture. Understanding Gen X and Y can assist an employer during the entire employee journey from recruitment to performance management."

CONSULTANT CORNER

"WITH A PHONE ATTACHED, A SELFIE STICK COULD BE EASILY LIKENED TO A MEDIEVAL MACE."

JERRY HILL
Mentor Head of Consultancy Support

"Some selfie stick users have ridiculed their ban by certain venues, claiming that the sticks were merely plastic, and what damage or injury could be done?

People don't remember that, with a phone attached, a selfie stick could be easily likened to a medieval mace, a weapon used with devastating effect during the Middle Ages. Risk assessment is key."

SELFIE-CONSCIOUS

With the rise in popularity of the self-explanatory 'selfie stick' has come a backlash. It may not appear to be a high-risk item, but public institutions and attractions worldwide, from the National Gallery in London to Disneyland, have banned its use.

Officially, the principal issue is that people are distracted, and can injure themselves and passers-by or damage priceless artwork. It's more likely that, because it annoys other visitors, businesses want to avoid potential damage to their brand.[1]

[1]www.rbsmentor.co.uk, 2015

BE SELF-AWARE

To find out more about how Mentor services could help your business thrive, contact us on **0800 970 9814** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**

AT A GLANCE

- EXPERT SUPPORT
- INDEPENDENT RESEARCH
- DOCUMENT UPDATES

Having an expert on side helped one restaurant group to challenge its own insurance company's advice to settle a claim with industry-wide implications.

The PERFECT CATCH

DEEP BLUE has been serving up fish and chips from outlets around the UK for more than a decade and is understandably proud of its safety record in what is a challenging work environment.

Since joining Mentor in 2009, for support in health & safety and employment law & HR, the group has worked to remain compliant in an ever-changing legislative landscape.

THE BEST RESULT

When the business faced a difficult £100,000 civil claim for damages three

> *"If the case hadn't been challenged, there would have been implications not only for Deep Blue, but for the industry as a whole."*
>
> **DARREN HEATHER, Mentor Health & Safety Consultant**

Deep Blue employees (left) receive regular health & safety training; Lorraine Turner (centre), Head of HR at Deep Blue, also relies on Mentor during health & safety inspections.

PHOTOGRAPHY | CHARLIE BEST

years ago, it was Mentor Health & Safety Consultant Darren Heather's expert support that gave Deep Blue the confidence to challenge the advice of its insurer, and emerge with its reputation intact.

"If we hadn't taken this approach, there would have been implications not only for Deep Blue, but for the industry as a whole," Darren explains.

The 2012 case centred around an employee's claim that their health had been affected by a food preservative used industry-wide.

As Lorraine Turner, Deep Blue's Head of HR, explains: "Mentor has supported us with everyday things like improving our management team's awareness of health & safety and HR issues. However, the help we received to manage the legal – and financial and emotional – impact of a long-running civil claim has been invaluable.

"Darren was fully supportive of us in our belief that we were not at fault and should fight the claim: if the claim had been successful, the effects would have been felt much further than with Deep Blue. This product is used across the industry and could have changed the way our product is prepared.

"He helped us to implement our own independent research to counter the claims and it was the depth of this work that meant that in January 2015 the case was dropped."

There were unexpected consequences of fighting the claim, Lorraine adds. "We discovered that a £100,000 reserve was placed on our policy by our business insurer, which in turn increased the policy premiums for the three years it took to resolve the issue."

EVERYDAY HELP

Mentor is not only there for the big challenges, but for the everyday ones. "The 24/7 Advice Line is great for simpler queries, and we get regular fire risk assessments," Lorraine explains. "We've also employed Mentor consultants as impartial experts to manage site visits from health & safety inspectors."

There is also a range of training options available through Mentor *Learn*, often delivered in-house, on topics such as fire safety and manual handling.

"We have a young workforce, and this training allows our managers to educate – and protect – our people," Lorraine says.

Deep Blue also relies on Mentor for employment law & HR support, from keeping employment documentation up to date to handling disputes with staff – including the dismissal of an underperforming employee and a dispute with a senior manager.

"Mentor consultants are independent and have the experience and expertise to achieve the best outcome for our business and to protect our reputation," Lorraine concludes.

CONSULTANT CORNER

"MENTOR HAS HELPED DEEP BLUE TO DEVELOP A STRONG HEALTH & SAFETY CULTURE AT ALL ITS SITES."

DARREN HEATHER Mentor Health & Safety Consultant

"I've worked with fish-and-chip-shop group Deep Blue since 2009, when it was looking to update all its managers on health & safety compliance.

We have since helped it to develop a strong health & safety culture at all its sites and, where there were disparities, we have provided training and helped managers to improve processes.

There's a trust between us that has been instrumental during the recent civil claim – they trusted my advice that they should not just accept their insurance company's advice to settle, which I felt was wrong.

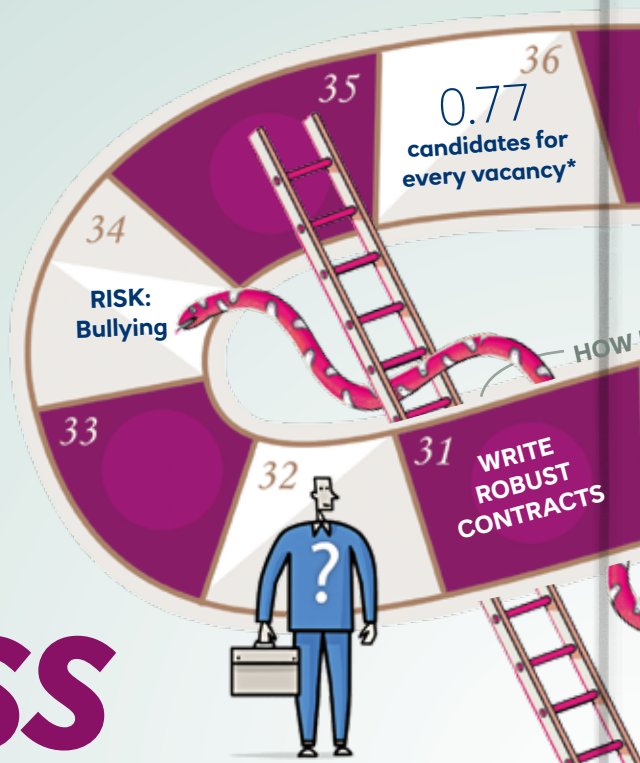
I was able to give the Deep Blue management team the confidence to challenge this advice and see the case through to the right conclusion.

No matter the challenge, whether it is an employee claim or an over-enthusiastic health & safety official, we're there to help them protect their interests."

THE RIGHT ADVICE

To find out how you can protect your business, contact us on **0800 970 9814** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**

The ladder to success



Running a business should not be left to luck. Being successful means staying compliant with regulations and keeping your people safe and happy.

Most businesses in the UK are smaller and medium-sized enterprises that are facing a growing burden of responsibility.

But they often don't have the resources to hire an in-house specialist to manage areas of the business such as HR, health & safety or environmental management.

Our recent customer research shows that there are four key areas that keep you awake at night:

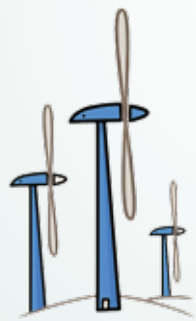
- **48% Recruitment**
- **42% Risk assessment**
- **29% Managing performance**
- **27% HR paperwork***

That's why we know how important it is to have an independent expert on hand to provide the advice and support you need, when you need it.

Begin your journey and see how Mentor could help you avoid key risks, manage your responsibilities and ultimately reach your business goals.

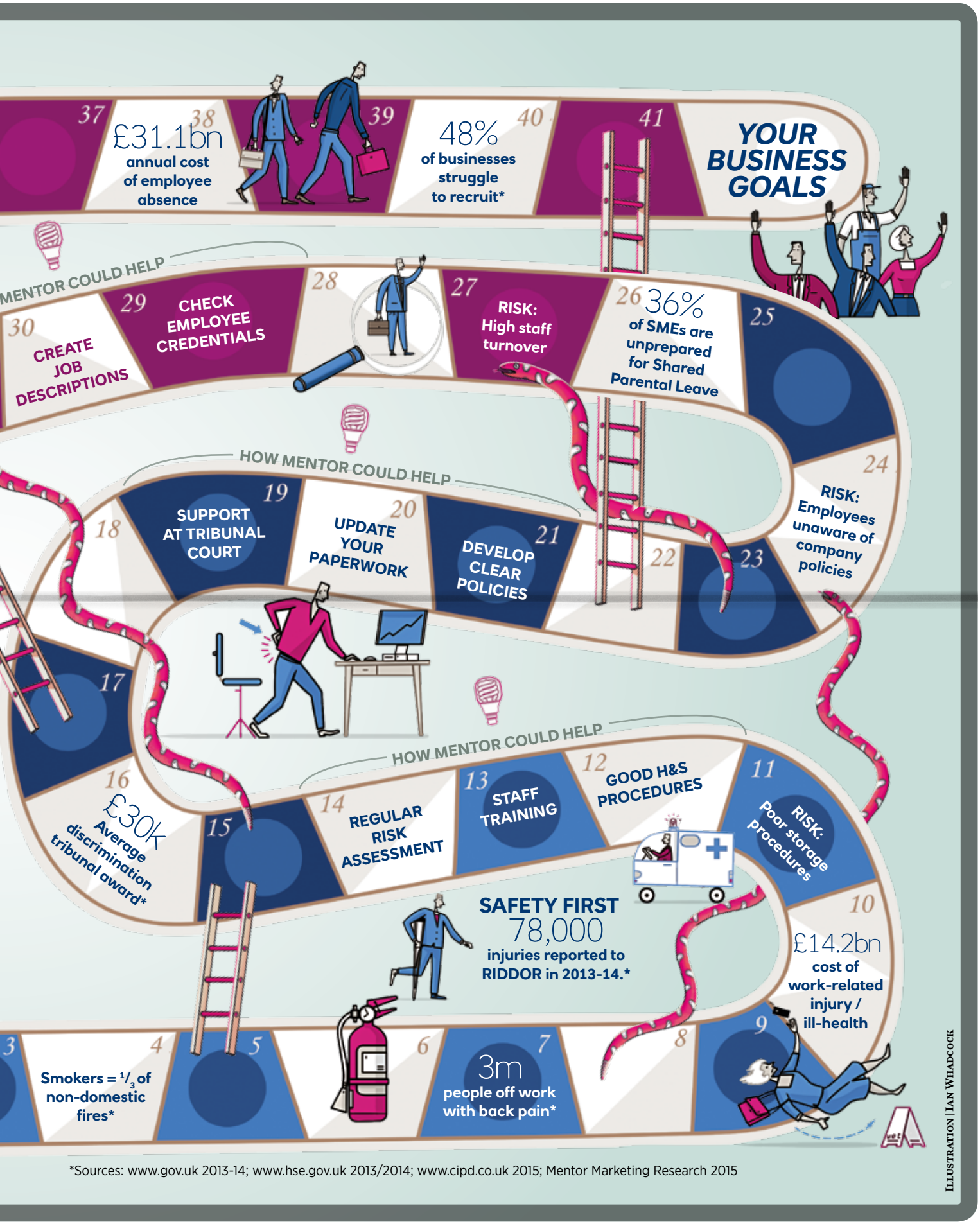
STEP BY STEP

To find out how you can achieve your business goals, contact us on **0800 970 9814** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**



ENERGY AUDIT

Mentor could help your business be more energy efficient and save money.



*Sources: www.gov.uk 2013-14; www.hse.gov.uk 2013/2014; www.cipd.co.uk 2015; Mentor Marketing Research 2015

Illustration | Ian Whadcock

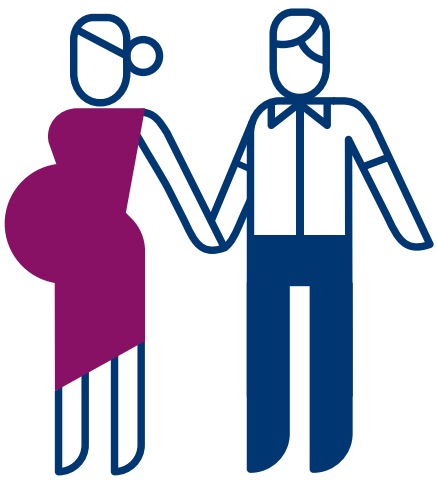
THAT 3AM MOMENT

No matter what workplace issue keeps you awake at 3am, Mentor can help you find a solution to your most pressing business worries.

Q One of my employees is pregnant and has asked me for a **day off** to attend an **antenatal** class. Another employee's partner is pregnant and he wants to attend an antenatal class with his partner. What should I do?

A Employers must allow pregnant employees to attend antenatal classes: not necessarily for the whole day, but sufficient time to attend the class and travel time.

An employee with a pregnant partner is also entitled to accompany their partner to such appointments, but this time off is unpaid and limited to no more than two occasions, each no more than six and half hours. No length of service is required for this entitlement.



Q My employee's just **resigned** with one month's notice. They have **annual leave accrued** but refuse to use it. What can I do so they don't have to work the full month?

A Working Time Regulations allow employers to give notice and instruct employees to take annual leave on specific dates. You have to give notice that is twice the period you want them to take, so one day's annual leave would need two days' prior notice.

A clause can be included in an employee's contract of employment waiving the requirement to give notice to take annual leave. In this case, the employer would be able to make the employee take their accrued annual leave without further notice.

Q I've **banned** smoking in my workplace, but **e-cigarettes** are okay, aren't they?

A The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) doesn't enforce legislation or standards for e-cigarettes. There is no bespoke regulatory system for e-cigarettes but they do have to meet general product safety regulatory requirements.

HSE doesn't advise a ban on their use, but suggests employers consider e-cigarettes in the wider context of risk within the workplace.

If you do decide to prohibit the use of e-cigarettes, allow for 'vaping' breaks or provide areas where employees can use the devices, and make sure other people using the area aren't subjected to second-hand tobacco smoke.

For further information, visit the Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) website www.ash.org.uk

ILLUSTRATIONS | Edward McGowan

Q Am I allowed to let my **staff work alone** in the workplace?

A Working environments for lone workers may present different challenges. You must deal with any health & safety risks before allowing your employee to work alone.

Key questions include assessing potential risk from violence and manual handling; what's the employee's medical suitability for working alone? Are there any risks in their workplace? Also, what are the training requirements? How experienced is the employee and what is the best way to monitor and supervise them?

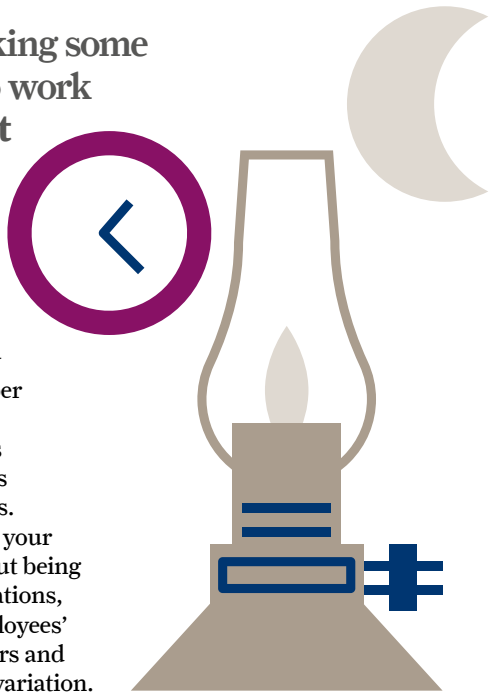
Employers must make sure that appropriate systems are in place so they are kept informed.

For further information, download the HSE leaflet on lone working http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.htm

Q Do I have to **pay** for my employees' **personal protective equipment** (PPE)?

A Employers must provide suitable personal protective equipment to employees who may be exposed to a health & safety risk at work, unless such risks have been adequately controlled by other equally or more effective means. Section 9 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, means workers shouldn't be charged for PPE used only at work. Contact the Mentor Advice Service to find out your obligations about PPE.

Q I'm considering asking some of my employees to work three 13-hour **night shifts**, but I've heard the number of hours someone can work at night is **limited** to eight.



A Working Time Regulations allow an employer to average the number of hours worked over a six-day week. Therefore three 13-hour shifts equates to 39 hours over the week, or 6.5 hours per day, which is well within the limits.

So, in principle, you are able to ask your employees to work this pattern without being in breach of the Working Time Regulations, but you will need to consider the employees' existing terms of their contracted hours and whether this change is too much of a variation.

Let us know what your 3am questions are; call us on **0800 634 7000** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**

AT A GLANCE

- GOOD COMMUNICATION
- PERFORMANCE REVIEWS
- TRAINING MODULES

Performance on the line

A common mistake in business planning is to omit a fundamental part of the organisation – its people.

AN ORGANISATION can thrive or dive based on the quality of its workforce, and an owner-manager needs to understand the scope of talent they have in-house to accurately predict where their business is heading.

He or she should also ask whether their employees need additional training to take the business forward.

Finally, if the business has multiple sites, do employees need to be relocated to meet its evolving needs?

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Communication is at the heart of a healthy business culture, according to Lindsey Claydon, Mentor Employment Law & HR Consultant.

"A positive relationship means both manager and employee have the confidence to raise issues and identify opportunities," she explains.

A recent report by the CIPD, titled 'Employee outlook: focus on managers', highlighted that, while eight in 10 managers believe they discuss training and development opportunities with their employees, only 36% of employees agree.

This suggests that managers and employees see their relationship differently.

ARE PERFORMANCE REVIEWS UNDER-PERFORMING?

"Most corporate organisations have sophisticated performance review and appraisal processes in place. But smaller businesses will not have the resources to implement and manage such programmes," notes Lindsey.

"But it's important to recognise the benefits that performance review feedback provides. These reviews are not just for the employee – they are a valuable tool for businesses too.

"Reviews help employees to gain an understanding of their performance. Managers, on the other hand, discover more opportunities thanks to identifying what's working within their employee's existing skill set or looking into what an employee requires for further development and training." And, as Lindsey adds, managers can also see a reflection of their own performance, where their talents lie – and where there may be gaps.

"Managers can build on their own skill sets through our new 'soft skills' training modules," she says.

"Mentor now offers 90-minute modules in areas such as motivating people; influencing people; and developing people skills. These have proved popular as they help managers get the most out of the relationships with their employees."

Source: www.cipd.co.uk, 2015

TARGET TALENT

To review your HR performance, contact us on **0800 970 9814** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**

CONSULTANT CORNER

"MANAGERS NEED TO ASK THEMSELVES HOW BUSINESS PLANS CAN BE SERVICED THROUGH THEIR EMPLOYEES."

LINDSEY CLAYDON
Mentor Employment Law & HR Consultant

"Many companies have business plans to guide their future growth, but they shouldn't stop there. Managers need to ask themselves how this plan can be serviced through their employees.

Having an understanding of the skills, attitudes and performance of their workforce is essential to this, but is often overlooked, especially in SMEs.

Performance reviews are a great way to access this information on a regular basis. They give the opportunity for both managers and employees to give feedback and share opportunities for development.

Smaller businesses often struggle to find the time or the resources to develop these processes: this is where Mentor could help, by developing systems and processes which are easy to implement."

Should you bring on your own people or look externally for 'ready-made' employees? Businesses are wrestling with the talent conundrum as they focus on growth for 2015.

TO EXPAND, businesses need the right people, with skills and experience in place. But is it better to invest in the training needed to bring on people within your organisation or to look for external recruits?

A recent CBI/Accenture Employment Trends Survey report revealed that more than 50% of businesses surveyed expect workforce expansion in 2015.

But these same businesses feel under threat, with their competitiveness undermined both by employees having inadequate skill sets (63%) and the burden of employment regulation (61%).[1]

This is exacerbated by the fact that HR strategies are evolving, with 64% of employers finding people with the skills they need, when they need them, on a more temporary basis, by using agency workers, for example.[2]

This short-term approach has its risks, however. "No matter what sector your business operates in, the ideal, highly skilled candidate is always hard to find," says Lucy Coombs, Mentor Employment Law & HR Consultant.

"It's not just about finding someone with the right skills and experience, you also need to find someone with the right culture, who will be a good fit with your business.

"The smaller the business, the more apparent this immediately becomes when you get it wrong, as a disgruntled employee has a much bigger impact. In larger organisations, it is about stopping the negative culture from spreading."

So developing existing staff members who are already well embedded in the business is a great option, Lucy notes.

"While you can upgrade someone's skills and experience, you can't change their attitude. By investing in your existing workforce, you also build that collective memory of the business."

Unfortunately, businesses do need to retain a level of flexibility to ensure they are not lumbered with an oversized workforce.

"It's wise to grow a core workforce, supplemented by a strategic use of outsourcing – especially in areas such as IT and HR, where specialist expertise is needed. There has to be a good balance of the two elements."

CONSULTANT CORNER

"IT CAN BECOME MORE ABOUT FINDING PEOPLE QUICKLY WHO HAVE THE RIGHT SKILLS RATHER THAN THE RIGHT CULTURE."

LUCY COOMBS
Mentor Employment Law & HR Consultant

"A short-term approach to recruitment may offer your business flexibility, but there are drawbacks.

It can become more about finding people quickly who have the right skills rather than the right culture. The danger of this approach is the potential for high staff turnover. Short contracts also mean employees may lack loyalty and adequate experience of your sector or business.

I have a customer within the professionals and offices sector and they are a great example of how to do this well – they are perceived as paying higher salaries and offering good benefits, even though in reality other similar businesses in the industry offer similar terms.

They achieved this good reputation because they focused on getting the business culture right – they became an employer of choice, and employees are proud to be seen out and about in their branded uniforms and cars.

They maintain this culture by focusing on more than simply making a profit – employees feel that their work matters and are motivated to do their job well.

It reminds me of the famous quote from the NASA cleaner who, when asked what their job was, said 'helping put man on the moon'."

"It reminds me of the famous quote from the NASA cleaner who, when asked what their job was, said 'helping put man on the moon'."

LUCY COOMBS, Mentor Employment Law & HR Consultant

BALANCED APPROACH

To find the right people for your business, contact us on **0800 970 9814** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**

[1] news.cbi.org.uk, 2015; [2] www.cipd.co.uk, 2015

The transport & storage sector employs 5% of the UK workforce and is a vital part of the economy, but it faces some unique challenges.

THE ROAD AHEAD

MOSTLY REPRESENTED by SMEs, the sector's businesses must remain compliant with ever-shifting legislation on employment law, be vigilant about safety and strive to improve its environmental impact – all while operating on low profit margins.

Mentor's services can provide consultancy support and advice as and when needed, along with the latest legal updates and protection for when you face more serious incidents.

This leaves your management team free to focus on the day-to-day business of running your transport or logistics enterprise. Transport and storage is a challenging sector for businesses – Mentor is there to offer the expertise you need to keep your customers and staff safe and happy.

Transport & storage in numbers

6% OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

45.2% SME EMPLOYMENT

5% OF UK WORKFORCE

60% OF DRIVERS ARE OVER 45

2% ARE UNDER 25

Sources: www.gov.uk, 2013; www.prospects.ac.uk, 2014; theloadstar.co.uk, 2015

In the news

From April 2015, the speed limit for HGVs travelling on single and dual carriageways in England and Wales was increased. The speed:

- Increased from 40mph to 50mph nationally for HGVs over 7.5 tonnes travelling on a single carriageway
- Rose from 50mph to 60mp for HGVs over 7.5 tonnes travelling on dual carriageways
- Stayed the same in Scotland. European speed limiter requirements also remain unchanged and must be set at 56mph or lower.

Here's what our customers have to say:

Lanz Group

As one of only two companies in the UK to hold a Royal Warrant for waste management, Lanz Group needed its ISO 14001 Environmental Standard.

"Mentor helped us get everyone in the business onboard and understand what achieving ISO 14001 is all about."

TOM FRANCE, ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVE, LANZ FARM

Staplehurst Transits

A major refurbishment was an opportunity for fruit and vegetable transporter Staplehurst Transits to gain a fresh perspective on health & safety.

"Mentor has helped us to stay one step ahead and we have seen staff attitudes to heath & safety improve."

PAUL WICKS, STAPLEHURST TRANSITS HEALTH & SAFETY MANAGER

CONSULTANT CORNER

"A 24-HOUR FLOW OF DIGITAL INFORMATION HELPS TO MANAGE KEY RISKS – TO THE DRIVER, THE PUBLIC AND THE BUSINESS."

GORDON SNEDDEN
Mentor Safety, Health and Environment Consultant

"This is a sector that has seen a lot of change over the past decade, particularly in the technology it utilises.

Today, a transport manager receives a 24-hour flow of digital information about their vehicles, helping them to manage key risks – to the driver, the public and the business.

If there is an accident, for instance, there is clear digital evidence such as speed, GPS location and even video footage.

These advancements cost money to implement, but the number of fatalities has halved since 2005/6,[1] and insurance companies have been keen to encourage upgrades by lowering premiums, or sometimes even providing the equipment.

And we are seeing drivers become professionals as they must now achieve qualifications to show they have the skills they need to manage risk in and out of the cab."

[1]www.hse.gov.uk, 2013/4

AT A GLANCE

- REGULATION COMPLIANCE
- UPDATING POLICIES
- TRAINING COURSES

Left: Chilstone General Manager Steve Clark says Mentor has always exceeded his expectations.

Solid *as a* ROCK

When employees visit people's homes as part of their role, training is especially important to make sure their behaviour reflects positively on your business.

CHILSTONE HAS been a leading manufacturer of garden ornaments and architectural stonework in the UK for over 60 years.

In 2013, the company joined Mentor after recognising its need to improve compliance with employment regulations.

"From the outset, we had a great relationship with our Mentor Employment Law & HR Consultant Michelle Dixon. She quickly identified where we were doing well, and where we could improve," Steve Clark, Chilstone General Manager, explains.

"With Michelle's help, we were able to update our policies, improve communications with staff and significantly improve productivity."

The true value of Mentor's support was made evident when the business was faced with a difficult disciplinary incident, however.

"A lot of time was being taken up with the case, but Michelle gave us the advice and confidence to deal with the situation correctly. This resulted in a positive outcome for both parties," Steve says.

Another challenge for Chilstone is managing employees' behaviour while they work in public locations and at private residences. "They have to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner and Mentor has been able to help us develop a code of conduct so all of our employees know what's expected of them," he adds.

Training is also valuable for the management team and Steve and a senior colleague attended Mentor's Managing Workplace Conflicts training course.

"It helped me understand that most companies deal with very similar issues to ours. It boosted my confidence and I felt empowered to deal with any problems," he reflects.

Day-to-day, Chilstone makes use of Mentor's online management system Mentor*Live* to access templates for documents, including contracts of employment and employee handbooks.

"The 24/7 Advice Line is also a great help. No matter what the issue, Mentor is there to help," Steve notes.

"Mentor was recommended to me, so I had high expectations. It's safe to say that these have been exceeded."

> ***"We were able to update our policies, improve communications with staff and significantly improve productivity."***
>
> STEVE CLARK, Chilstone General Manager

PHOTOGRAPHY | UNP

CONSULTANT CORNER

"I WAS ABLE TO HIGHLIGHT WHERE THEY WERE DOING WELL AND WHERE MENTOR COULD HELP THEM IMPROVE."

MICHELLE DIXON
Mentor Employment Law & HR Consultant

"Chilstone came to us in 2013 looking for expertise to help keep the company up to date with its employment law & HR requirements.

As a growing company, the business knew it had to make sure its policies, employee handbooks and contracts were all up to date. I was able to highlight where they were doing well and where Mentor could help them improve.

The company faced one particularly difficult case – a disciplinary incident involving a staff member – and I advised them on the correct procedures, which resulted in an outcome both the employer and employee were happy with.

Mentor's Managing Workplace Conflicts training course also gave the managers the right knowledge to maintain a positive workplace culture.

Chilstone is always looking at better ways of doing things and how it can improve – and it's great that Mentor has been involved in that."

TRAINING FIRST

To find out how you could empower your people through training, contact us on **0800 970 9814** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**

It appears that 21st-century issues in the workplace still come with a healthy dose of mythology; but employers must tackle challenges like selfie sticks with a practical mindset.

#21stcenturyproblems?

IT'S TELLING that the Oxford Dictionary named 'selfie' as its word of the year in 2013 and the obviously-titled selfie stick was top of the Christmas present list last year.

John Muncey, Head of Mentor

Taking photos on a mobile phone attached to the end of a plastic stick is a fad that has shown no signs of fading. In fact, we see stories about organisations banning their use every week, from the National Gallery to football grounds.

So what's the issue here? These venues have all cited health & safety as a reason for banning their use. It's important to account for new technologies such as selfie sticks when assessing risk in the working environment, but it's just as important to adopt a common sense approach.

Does the selfie stick really pose a danger to visitors or precious artworks on display? Or are there other reasons for businesses banning their use?

It's likely that some organisations see selfie sticks as potentially damaging to their brand. Selfie sticks are spoiling the attraction's visitor experience for others. And this is a valid reason.

I, for one, would be glad to be able to attend a football match without the distraction of someone waving a stick in my face.

There's certainly no reason why employees or visitors to your business have a right to use this device if you've decided to ban it.

HERE'S TO THE HIRSUTE

Body hair has made it onto the list of contemporary HR concerns. The beard is this year's must-have fashion item, but it also brings a growing list of concerns for employers.

Our suggested approach is to tackle this hairy issue on a case-by-case basis and ask the right questions: Is the beard worn for religious reasons? Does it pose a risk when operating machinery?

DISPEL THE MYTHS

The first step any employer should take is to bring their questions to us at Mentor, as we can talk through your situation and help you to assess and qualify your policy wording.

We'll help you to update your employment and health & safety information in documentation such as your employee handbook, so it clearly lays out your policies to everyone in the business. We'll also help you to update any employee contracts and establish site rules for visitors.

The law has not caught up with the challenges presented by many of these modern issues, but Mentor understands the need to address any issues that could potentially affect your workplace. For the moment we advise that your best defence is to make sure your policies are clearly laid out and communicated, so everyone knows what is expected of them.

BE PROACTIVE

Stay one step ahead of new workplace challenges. Contact us on **0800 970 9814** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**

AT A GLANCE

- RESTRUCTURE ADVICE
- HIDDEN CONSEQUENCES
- DOCUMENT TEMPLATES

RESTRUCTURE RISK

A growing risk management company knew it needed expert guidance to make sure a business restructure remained fair and transparent.

ACOURA IS a risk management specialist operating in one of the UK's most challenging sectors – food and drink.

As a company that understands the benefit of reducing risk, offering compliance solutions and protecting brands, Acoura's management team knows the value of the Mentor Employment Law & HR Service, whether it is resolving day-to-day issues or larger, one-off incidents.

The team recently looked to grow the business through acquisition and, though this didn't proceed, they did come across a new business structure that they thought would take their own business forward.

With the help of Mentor Employment Law & HR Consultant Rob Keddie, the business was able to make sure the restructuring process remained fair and open. Rob's support also allowed Acoura to handle a more high-risk and complex challenge involving a senior member of staff.

Steve Belton, Acoura's Group Special Projects Director, says Mentor's involvement brought an important change in direction for the case: "We had already offered the person another position within the company or the option of a redundancy package.

"But Rob helped us to identify risks that we would have been exposed to had we continued on our intended path, and as a result we were able to achieve a positive outcome for both parties.

"When you're dealing with HR issues, there is always that small part of you that thinks you've done something wrong. Rob has always been able to help us put things into context and put us in the right frame of mind."

Steve also highlights how useful the 24/7 Advice Line has been for helping with day-to-day enquiries, often relating to employee contracts and new retirement legislation.

"Mentor*Live* is also a great online tool," he adds. "It gives us access to a wide range of documents and contract templates, so we know our correspondence contains the correct wording.

"It's reassuring to know that Mentor is always there for us. Although we don't currently have a HR team within the business, the service we receive from Mentor makes us feels as though we have our own in-house team always watching over us."

CONSULTANT CORNER

"MENTOR PROVIDES THE RIGHT LEVEL OF SUPPORT, SO YOU CAN PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS AND EMPLOYEES."

ROB KEDDIE
Mentor Employment Law & HR Consultant

"Acoura has been a customer of Mentor for about two and a half years. When it joined us, it needed legally sound advice on the restructure of the company.

We looked at its current business structure and its key objectives, and discussed steps to achieve these while being fair, open and legally compliant.

Mentor has a great working relationship with the team, but this became especially apparent when we helped with one of their more difficult challenges. I was able to gather the extra information that was key to reducing the risk to Acoura and providing a good outcome for both the employer and the employee.

Many smaller businesses don't have the resources to have a dedicated HR team.

Mentor can provide as much or as little support as is needed to help your business protect itself and its employees."

PHOTOGRAPHY | UNP

MINIMISE RISK

To find out how we could help protect your business's interests, contact us on **0800 970 9814** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**

AT A GLANCE

- MAINTAIN RECORDS
- UNDERSTAND OTHER PAYMENTS
- THINK LONG-TERM

Now is the time

You may have filed your Tax Return on time, but are you at risk of a tax enquiry?

"IT'S IMPORTANT to think like HMRC and how it reviews your business accounts," warns Mentor Tax Consultant Guy Smith.

While the starting point is to keep good business and personal records, you should also keep in mind that HMRC will also look at whether:

- All business income has been declared
- All business expenditure has been incurred 'wholly and exclusively' in the pursuit of the trade or profession
- The dual-purpose expenditure has been split accurately between business and private use.

"Business income should not just include cash, cheque, debit and credit card payments, but any tips received, ancillary income and contra payments," Guy says.

"Ancillary income, classed as money generated from something connected to the main business, must be included in business turnover. It could come from a fruit machine on your shop premises, for instance."

FLAT RATE

HMRC will frequently challenge amounts claimed as dual-purpose expenditure, such as those incurred in the home office or in the car.

"If you conduct your business in a family room, the claim can be difficult to quantify and open to challenge by HMRC," Guy adds. "It may be easier to use the flat-rate deduction allowed by HMRC based on the number of hours spent on the business activity in the home. This is £10 a month for 25–50 hours, £18 a month for 51–100 hours and £26 a month for 101 or more hours."

For motoring costs, businesses may use a fixed-rate 'per business mile' as an alternative to retaining petrol receipts. The fixed-rate deduction covers the acquisition of the business vehicle, in addition to the running costs.

HMRC WILL ALLOW:

- 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles
- 25p per mile after 10,000 miles.

Once a business has adopted the mileage-rate basis for a vehicle, it must be applied consistently year after year for as long as the vehicle remains in the business.

PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS

If you are an existing Mentor Tax customer, call the Advice Line on **0800 634 7000**.

CONSULTANT CORNER

"ONCE YOU SIGN YOUR TAX RETURN, YOU ARE ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FIGURES IT CONTAINS AND HMRC WILL HOLD YOU TO ACCOUNT IF ANYTHING IS WRONG."

GUY SMITH Mentor Tax Consultant

"HMRC is under increasing pressure to deliver more money from tax enquiries, so take a little extra care to make sure your tax return is correct and to discuss any issues with your accountant well before the filing date. Remember that once you sign your tax return, you are accepting responsibility for the figures it contains and HMRC will hold you to account if anything is wrong.

HMRC publishes a Business Profits Toolkit which contains a checklist and explanation of risks, which is a useful guide and can be found on its website, www.gov.uk.

You can advise HMRC about any factors affecting the business by entering an explanation in the Any Other Information box usually found on page 7 of the Tax Return."

Please note, this service is only available to existing Mentor Tax customers.

AT A GLANCE

- IMPROVE EFFICIENCIES
- BE GREENER
- WIN NEW CLIENTS

Raising standards

Being green means being environmentally responsible – but it also brings opportunities to win new clients and save money.

BUSINESSES are feeling an increased burden to play their part to protect the environment – and to prove it.

In fact, companies who subcontract, particularly in the public sector, are increasingly finding that having an environmental management system (EMS) certified to ISO 14001 is a set requirement in pre-tender questionnaires, as it is the internationally recognised standard for environmental management systems.

"I've seen achieving ISO 14001 certification contribute to successful contract tenders worth hundreds of thousands of pounds," explains Mentor Senior Environmental Consultant Thomas Ridgley.

"It shows that you've gone a step further, have been assessed by independent experts and are continuously working to the best of your ability."

REAP THE REWARDS

There are other benefits. Having an EMS introduces effective management and monitoring practices and procedures. This leads to everyone in the business having a better appreciation for energy, waste and water usage and, in turn, awareness of how to reduce these costs.

You can also manage risk better, from major environmental incidents to inspection penalties for non-compliance with regulations. And in turn you will protect one of your most valuable assets – your reputation.

> *"ISO 14001 certification has contributed to successful contract tenders worth hundreds of thousands of pounds."*
>
> THOMAS RIDGLEY, Mentor Energy & Environmental Consultant

THE RIGHT SUPPORT

And, as Thomas says, most companies don't have the resources to focus on this area of compliance.

"Our EMS toolkit is a helpful starting point and, from there, we can support you as you drive engagement through the business and make continuous improvement," he concludes.

DID YOU KNOW?

An updated version of the ISO 14001 standard is being released later this year. To find out more, contact us on **0800 970 9814** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**

CONSULTANT CORNER

"MENTOR COULD HIGHLIGHT WHAT YOU'RE DOING WELL AND IF ANYTHING IS NOT UP TO STANDARD – AND PROVIDE A SOLUTION."

THOMAS RIDGLEY Mentor Energy & Environmental Consultant

"If a business wants to achieve ISO 14001 certification of its EMS, it should involve a specialist like Mentor as early as possible, especially as the ISO 14001 standard is being updated this year.

This is especially important for SMEs. Mentor could highlight what you're doing well and if anything is not up to standard – and provide a solution.

By helping clients to identify and rectify legislative issues, for instance, we protect them from financial and legal penalties.

Training to ensure you have competent individuals within your business is also important, no matter what role you hold in your organisation.

For instance, our IEMA-accredited, one-day training module gives staff with limited involvement a good grounding in environmental management, while the Mentor IEMA-certified three-day foundation certificate course is aimed at individuals for whom environmental management is an integral part of their role."

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

AT A GLANCE

- ACHIEVE ACCREDITATION
- ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS
- ENERGY AUDIT

For one Surrey-based company operating in a sector known for its pollutants, providing proof of its environmental awareness has been an important part of winning loyal new customers.

Clean bill *of* health

PHOTOGRAPHY | UNP

PROCHEM EUROPE has been selling industrial cleaning products across the continent for the past 40 years.

It decided to join Mentor in 2004 when looking for support around the key management areas of the business, including HR, health & safety and environmental management.

Rose Herridge, Prochem's Compliance Manager, says she has worked with a number of similar consultancy services in the past and the level of communication, expertise and confidence offered by Mentor is unrivalled. "That's why our relationship has lasted for so long," she says.

"Having a Mentor Consultant come on site and do an environmental management analysis, including an energy audit, was a great way to get a fresh perspective on the way we operate as a business.

"We were already taking a rigorous approach to our energy usage, but Mentor has been able to suggest ways we could improve even further. We're looking at the lighting throughout the company and will be upgrading to LED lighting in our offices; we're also evaluating opportunities for this in the warehouse.

"By showcasing our comprehensive recycling processes and by taking on-board the recommendations from the energy audit and environmental management analysis, we successfully gained ISO 14001 status in March 2015.

"Any worries I had were alleviated by our Mentor Energy Consultant Ray McCabe.

He talked me through every step and guided us to a successful outcome."

Gaining ISO 14001 accreditation has been a particular achievement for the business.

"We're very environmentally conscious and this proves it to our customers," she explains.

Another useful service is Mentor*Live*, which Rose also uses to access document templates and guidance for employment processes.

"Training has also been provided to ensure staff members were up to date with manual handling and I have completed a three-day environmental management certificate with Mentor," she adds.

"It is great having one company to provide all of these services for us. With the relationships we have built, it feels as though Mentor is an extension of our company."

CONSULTANT CORNER

"WE HAVE BUILT A STRONG RELATIONSHIP AND THEY KNOW, NO MATTER WHAT THE PROBLEM IS, MENTOR IS THERE TO HELP."

RAY McCABE
Mentor Health, Safety & Environmental Management Consultant

"I've worked with the team at Prochem for a number of years and have helped them with various environmental management issues.

The company recognised that its operations had a potentially high impact on the environment and was already working to reduce this. Achieving ISO 14001 was a key step and that is where I was able to help.

After an initial visit, I could see where they were doing well and what could be improved – I then developed a personalised environmental management system (EMS).

I helped to prepare them for the ISO 14001, and the accreditors highlighted how impressed they were with the EMS. Prochem subsequently achieved the accreditation with no non-conformances – something that was a first for me.

We have built a strong relationship between us and they know, no matter what the problem is, Mentor is always there to help."

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To find out more about improving your environmental credentials, contact us on **0800 970 9814** Minicom **0800 634 7008** or visit us at **rbsmentor.co.uk**

Corporate & Commercial

The Royal Bank of Scotland Payroll services powered by Moorepay

I haven't got time for a complicated payroll system

We'll take the payroll headache away and let you get on with what you do best – running your business.

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payroll.rbs.co.uk

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Please note that Mentor's services incur a cost.

Royal Bank of Scotland

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