

Final reflections on Harrogate

The CIPD conference always provides a great input of knowledge. But it is an equally useful social forum as well, enabling participants to catch up with old friends, meet new people, and discuss ideas and issues with other delegates. As became clear from the sessions I attended, the social side of business, supported by the use of social media, is becoming increasingly important too.

This change arises from several different factors including psychology, demographics and changes in the way that organisations work. David Rock examined findings of neuroscience which show how our brains are wired for social connections. So when idling, four out of five activities in the brain are to do with relationships between people. And because of this, our level of social connectedness is the key factor in determining our happiness. Lisbeth Claus pointed to the need to adjust to the younger generation, or Millennials, who are used to working through social networks aided by Web 2.0 technologies. And Lynda Gratton explained that hot spots could be formed when organisations bring together groups of people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. She posited that these diverse teams might be easier to manage on the web than face-to-face.

Responding to these changes, Anne Lise Kjaer explained her belief that social awareness and caring attitudes will increasingly define and shape businesses in the future. Emmanuel Gobillot developed on this idea stating that engagement now comes from a process of involvement and co-creation with employees working in communities of value. These communities are focused on individuals and are based upon give and take relationships. Julian Birkinshaw provided IBM as an example. Their 'Values Jam' enabled employees across the world to participate in an online, no-holds-bared discussion about the company's values which succeeded in creating a more persuasive and widely accepted output than anything a committee could have developed. Kevan Hall completed the analysis by explaining that managing these social communities requires organisations to build relationships, social contacts and a shared culture.

Perhaps next year, the conference will make use of social media to engage even more people in the conference?