

Speaker Q&A

Speakers at this year's Talent Summit talk about leadership and enhancing performance in the ever-changing world of work

Niamh O'Beirne, partner, People Advisory Services Group, EY
Q. With the rise of AI and machine learning, what can HR leaders do to drive competitive advantage through an augmented workforce?

A. Uniquely human skills such as creativity and empathy will be even more of a necessity in the workforce of the future, but how to best leverage new technology while enabling a high-performing workforce will not happen by chance. Key areas to consider include:

Automate to make work more fulfilling: positively embracing new technologies and removing mundane tasks to increase job satisfaction, allowing your people to work in more interesting and fulfilling roles.

Think in tasks, not roles: understanding the individual tasks carried out across your organisation will enable you to identify those that can be performed by machines and help you to ensure human labour is put to its highest and most efficient use.

Pilot and fail quickly: the pace of disruption demands rapid innovation. The key to success, therefore, may lie in a reiterative pilot approach, yielding additional learning with each new iteration.

Johnny Campbell, chief executive, Social Talent

Q. How should HR leaders craft "always-on" learning strategies to allow for their employees to learn as quickly as technology is changing?

A. Learning content needs to be short, focused and available on demand, fulfilling both macro learning and micro-learning needs. Modern learners expect the learning to come to them – they are too busy and distracted to go find the content they need, therefore learning strategies should be built around personalised learning recommendations served in real time. And finally, the learning experience should be fun, incorporating the proven principles of peer-recognition, fast feedback loops and social interactivity.

The topics and content will change fast so develop a strategy that is built to be agile and able to plug and play different tools, methods and content providers in as your team need them.

David Barrett, chief operations officer, cut-e
Q. How can we leverage analytics best to increase engagement and drive discretionary effort?

A. Analytics can help employers to assess and hire job candidates who are likely to be engaged by the role and the organisation. A new research study by Aon and cut-e, which is part of Aon Assessment Solutions, reveals that certain individuals are 'wired for engagement' more than others and these levels of 'engageability' can be assessed using a personality questionnaire during the selection process.

Disengaged employees can spread cynicism and negativity that can affect everyone around them, but recruiters can now reduce the likelihood of this occurring by identifying three specific personality traits: positivity, cooperativeness and drive. Each of us has these traits, we just have them at different levels. Those who score below average on all three of these traits should be screened out of your applicant pool.

By leveraging the traits, strengths and skills of employees, analytics can help employers ensure that engagement thrives in their organisation.

Dave Hazlehurst, partner, Ph.Creative
Q. As the talent attraction process is becoming increasingly automated, what are the critical points that require human influence?

A. As recruitment marketers, we have to stay ahead of the curve. Big data and technology is helping us with the science, but they can't tell us everything. What about that feeling and subconscious know-how that we spend years training as we develop and gain experience?

More than ever before, we should be investing in understanding what makes people tick. That 'human algorithm'

Right (Clockwise from top-left): Niamh O'Beirne, partner, People Advisory Services Group, EY; Johnny Campbell, chief executive, Social Talent; Dave Hazlehurst, partner, PhCreative; Professor Amanda Shantz, associate professor of Human Resources and Organisational Behaviour, Trinity Business School; Joe Creegan, head of Corporate Life & Pensions, Zurich; David Barrett, chief operations officer, cut-e

provides marginal gains and will give you a competitive advantage in business and talent attraction.

Look at the journey you ask candidates to take from the moment they first touch the brand – online or offline. Gain insight into what they are feeling and thinking as they go through this process. Consider at each stage of communication – how easy was this process for them? What would they remember about you? Would they be compelled to shout from the rooftops about their experience – good or bad?

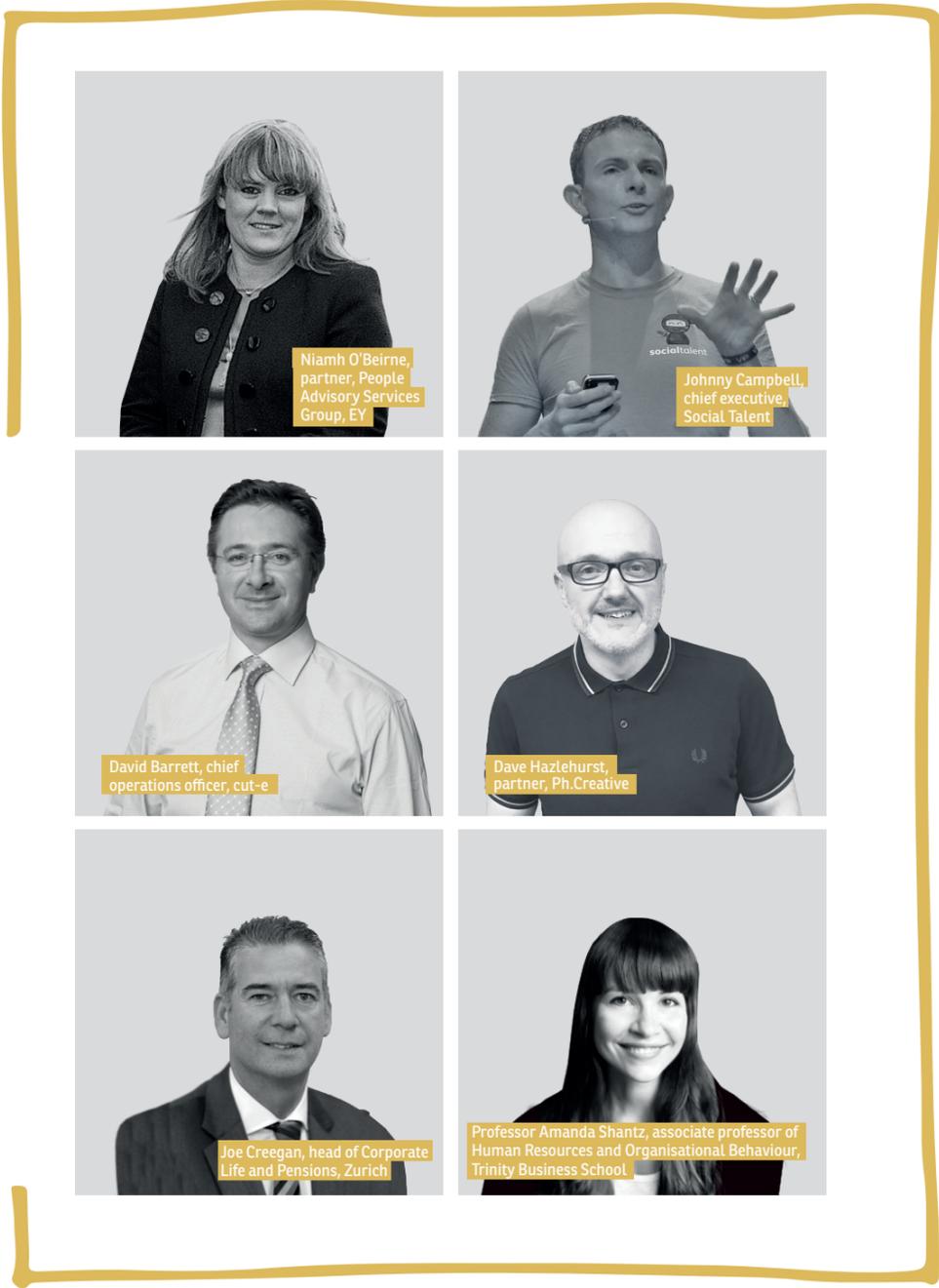
Put passion into all you do in your quest to create world-class experiences for your candidates. And then recruit those who share your passion for the customer and you will organically grow a culture with your customer at its heart. Because in a world where there's always more tech and we become immersed in more things digital, the one thing that we will always remain is human.

Joe Creegan, head of Corporate Life & Pensions, Zurich

Q. What can HR leaders do differently to reward sustainable performance?

A. The challenge facing the current workplace is short-termism, from all stakeholders – shareholders, management and employees. Whilst this is the current reality, there is an opportunity to reward employees for taking a longer-term perspective in terms of their careers. In the short term, rewards for meeting a company's annual objectives, such as bonuses, have a role to play.

However, employee rewards should look beyond the short term so that employees feel that their loyalty, commitment and performance are rewarded over the longer term. The most important of these rewards is the provision of retirement savings, especially given the favourable tax treatment. At Zurich, we believe that there is a huge opportunity for HR leaders to engage with the retirement savings industry to deliver more innovative and flexible pension schemes to reward long-term sustainable performance.



Professor Amanda Shantz, associate professor of Human Resources and Organisational Behaviour, Trinity Business School
Q. How should we reimagine leadership in the new world of work to enhance performance?

A. In the new world of work, leaders must have a clear purpose. Purpose alone, however, is ineffectual. Purpose needs to be consistent with strategy and woven into the fabric of organisations, so that throughout the employee lifecycle (from on-boarding to exit interviews), all organisational members share a

common answer to the question, 'what are we doing here?' so as to provide a sense of meaningfulness and direction to members' day-to-day activities. Purpose needs to be championed by leadership at all levels and connected to a greater societal good to have lasting impact. To truly enhance performance, the focus of organisational members' attention, ironically, should shift away from performance itself, and instead toward the purpose of work. Doing so will inevitably lead to heightened work engagement and sustained organisational performance. ■

'IT'S TIME TO FIND YOUR GROOVE'

Dr Peter Lovatt, dance psychologist, University of Hertfordshire

Q. What can we learn from dance/ the performing arts to show that leadership is uniquely human?

A. Machines might be good at chess, but they've got no groove. Leadership is an interpersonal dance – it's rhythmic, cognitive, emotional and social. Research on dance tells us a great deal about leadership. With regards to rhythm, evolutionary scientists have argued that humans and animals which are better at adapting to their internal and external rhythmic environments show an evolutionary advantage – those that adapt to the rhythms around them survive. With regards to cognition, researchers have shown that the way we move our body changes the way we think, helping us to break away from stale patterns of thought. With regards to emotion, increases in positive mood are related to improvements in strategic problem-solving – a positive mood-state can help us find better solutions. With regards to our social self, research has shown that moving together in synchrony increases pro-social behaviour, a fundamental of team-working and effective leadership. It's time to find your groove.

