

BLUE SKY

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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NEWSLETTER

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New things to learn, new ways to learn them



We are pleased to announce the introduction of two new initiatives to enhance our portfolio of training programmes: CIPD Learning and Development and Mixed Mode.

In May 2017 we gained CIPD approval for the new **Learning and Development Certificate** at level 3. The standards closely reflect the training cycle with aspects of learning needs analysis, design and delivery of training as well as evaluation. It is ideal, therefore, as a 'train the trainer' qualification for L&D professionals and other employees who have responsibility for training staff. For our team, this has meant returning to a much-loved topic, although writing and gaining approval for our own materials has been a first for us.

This new qualification also gave us a chance to review our mode of delivery, and although our mix of group workshops and self study is still popular we can also now offer our more experienced L&D and HR students, at levels 3 and 5, the option of a **Mixed Mode** programme. This method incorporates a combination of competency assessment and blended learning to suit the needs of the individual. The choice of method for each unit will be determined following an initial discussion and assessment. Students can be assessed by a portfolio of evidence, professional discussion and/or observations in the workplace with ongoing tutorial support and for units where the student has less experience and needs more input, the workbook can be studied and/or attend workshops. The next new initiative for Blue Sky is the exploration of the new **HR Trailblazer Apprenticeships**. See inside for more details of the new HR Apprenticeships.

Happy Birthday to us.
We are 5!

Blue Sky will reach the 5 year milestone at the end of March and it seems like a good time to reflect back on what we've achieved -



209
students



7 courses
approved



177 qualifications
achieved



5 graduation
ceremonies



2 new
venues



A.I. & Robots, the changing workplace and the future of HR

by Stella Day, HR Consultant for Blue Star HR and Blue Sky tutor

Do you use Siri or Alexa? If you do then AI is already part of your life and you are embracing the next revolution that will hit our workplaces. Your mobile phone is already learning from you to anticipate your needs based on patterns of behaviour!

The CIPD's Para Mullan argues that "Whilst machines will become better at helping people perform difficult mental tasks, what needs to be challenged is the idea that machines can replace man" and perhaps he has a point. We as humans are complex creatures responding to emotions and a range of sensory cues. Yet evidence suggests that robots will be able not only to act as Sales Assistants (already happening in Japan) but also to replace classroom teachers who are absent. In February the FT featured an article describing a robot called Steve who interacts with children who have autism "With no facial expressions or tone in its voice, many of the severely autistic children are able to interact with the robot more easily than a human teacher."

Supporting learning through technology is now commonplace both in schools and the workplace. However, it's people who identify the solution and design, make decisions about its use and monitor its outcomes.

My teenagers are growing up in a very different world and they will work in a very different world too. Many large organisations now use automated, video-based selection processes for university students to apply for placement roles and graduate schemes - with technology completing the initial assessment process based on set criteria. This approach may work for high volume recruitment where there are limited roles available - but is there a chance that you might miss talent?

Ultimately the selection decisions are still reliant on human input including the quality of the person spec created and the design of the process. Would you want an entirely automated selection process?

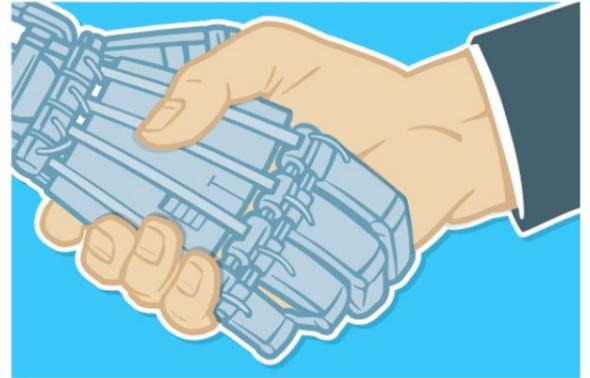
What is this experience like for the candidate and how does it affect their ability to choose you as an employer?

The key therefore to robots is humans and the ability of humans, or otherwise, to create innovative solutions that use technology to solve work-based problems.

For HR this might mean that where skills shortages are identified a technology solution may be the answer. Self-service options offered are delivering this already.

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If you need to cut costs of labour over time, then technology has already demonstrated its ability to deliver. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has conducted research suggesting that further increases in minimum wage will lead to automation of lower skilled jobs. However, their research also indicates that: "The use of technology to replace some jobs can create new jobs that are complementary to that technology, [such as] people to service machinery." The workplace may become more automated, but the core skills of relationship building, team work, communication supported by empathy and intuition feel uniquely human. Whilst I can imagine a classroom where some activities are delivered by a robot, I'd like to think that the teacher will still be there to differentiate and interpret the needs of individual children. Selection processes can benefit from automation but at some point in the process won't both parties want to meet face to face? As with Siri and Alexa there are limits to what can be learnt by AI which emphasises the role that humans will play in developing, designing and fixing.



Whilst the workplace may be different we will still need people in it and with them come: Employee Relations, Reward, Change Management etc. The jobs of the future might include Robot Trainer, but I have a feeling that HR will still be there too...



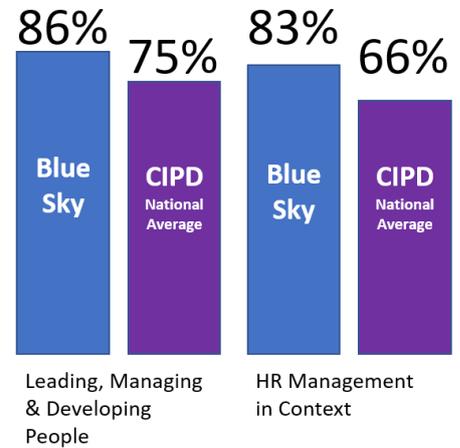
New HR Trailblazers

The CIPD, a cross sector group of employers and some training providers worked together to develop the new HR trailblazer apprenticeship standards, launching them in September 2017. These enable those that pay the apprenticeship levy, as well as smaller organisations, to access government funded training for their current HR team- HR Support level 3 and HR Consultant/Partner level 5, or to recruit specifically for an apprentice.

The apprentice is required to spend 20% of their working week in training -on or off the job, and pass an end point assessment, which in this case is a work based project. Interestingly the CIPD Level 5 Intermediate qualifications are mandatory for the HR Consultant/Partner standards but the HR Support standards only recommend a CIPD level 3 Foundation qualification. Blue Sky is currently working with a number of apprenticeship providers to see if we can jointly offer these new apprenticeships from April onwards. Watch this space for further developments or contact us if you can't wait until then!

CIPD Level 7 Exam Results

Sweaty palms and panic cramming may be your memory of exams but this is a present reality (minus a cold sports hall) for our 2nd year Advanced level 7 students. They sit two three hour handwritten exams. These are tough exams but traditionally Blue Sky students have done very well, regularly exceeding the national average pass rate, including last years (2017) - Well done to both students and tutors for these fantastic results.



Expert Talks Continue...

The latest in our guest speaker sessions have been very thought provoking. In July we had Rebecca Cotterill from Mills and Reeve Solicitors updating us on Gender Pay Reporting. This was a new topic and we were all interested to find out what reporting entailed and how it was calculated. Some of us struggled with the maths but Rebecca helped explain the details. She also brought along some of the reports from companies who had already completed this activity, although at that stage there were only a handful available. This topic has moved on from then with 714 companies now published, and we have followed it with fascination with organisations giving varying reasons for inequalities and some individuals going as far as to volunteer for pay cuts.

The second expert talk was in November from Alison Mackway from Wrightway Health based in Norwich but with clients all over the UK. Alison explained what occupational health was and how it can help organisations deal with and even prevent some of the issues facing HR today. In addition to all the facts and figures, 'the average cost of sickness absence for a company with 100 employees is £70,000'. What brings these talks to life is the anecdotes and examples that someone like Alison can bring to a subject.



We are always planning the next expert talk so keep an eye out for your invitation. Free to attend, refreshments provided, networking opportunities and, above all, expert information.

Programme Portfolio

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

Foundation Level 3 Award, Certificate and Diploma in Human Resource Practice

Foundation Level 3 Award and Certificate in Learning and Development

Intermediate Level 5 Award, Certificate and Diploma in Human Resource Management

Advanced Level 7 Award, Certificate and Diploma in Human Resource Management

Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM)

Level 3 Award, Certificate and Diploma in Leadership and Management

Level 4 Award, Certificate and Diploma in Leadership and Management

Level 5 Award, Certificate and Diploma in Leadership and Management

Bespoke Training

We design and deliver bespoke training packages for HR, Managers and employees that can also be linked to nationally recognized qualifications on subjects such as

- Leadership
- Coaching & Mentoring
- Recruitment
- Developing staff
- Delegation
- Motivation



The Henderson Business Centre

51 Ivy Road

Norwich

NR5 8BF

Phone: 01603 251558

E-mail: office@blueskypd.co.uk

www.blueskypd.co.uk