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It's work, but not as we all know it

What will the workplace of the future look like? How, where and when we work is changing and that will affect who will make up the workforce, according to a conference in London tomorrow. By **Niki Chesworth**

THE way we work today is based on an old fashioned model of having to turn up to the office for so many hours a day," says Denise Keating, CEO of the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (enei).

"However, as we harness technology to work more smartly it will affect where, when and how we work and, as a result, who is part of the workforce.

"With technology, workers can access the office from anywhere in the world and can work in ways to suit their lives. And in a future where more of us are paid for our output or productivity rather than to work from nine to five, we won't have to be based in an office.

"As a result, the world of work will be opened up to a more diverse workforce. Whoever you are and whatever your gender or age or even disability, you will be able to be part of this new way of work."

This change in how, where and when we work will be discussed at the Tomorrow's Workplaces conference being held tomorrow in London by the enei.

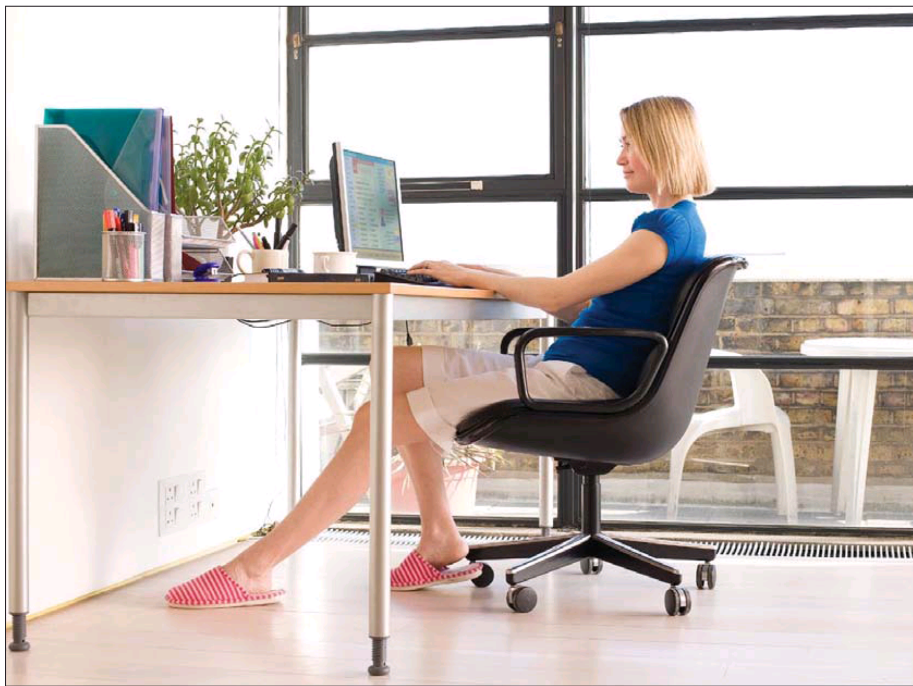
The enei, launched in October last year, incorporates the Employers Forum on Age (EFA) and the Employers Forum on Belief (EFB), with its 200 members including McDonald's, BT and NHS Employers making up 16 per cent of the UK workforce.

HR directors and managers, diversity officers, employee engagement professionals, talent management and learning & development managers will hear from a panel of experts including Peter Thomson, author of Future Work, on the need for diversity and inclusion.

"Our research shows that 66 per cent of managers agree that there is a revolution in working practices coming in the next decade," says Thomson. "They can see technology accelerating this change and recognise that younger generations want to work differently and that more of us want control over our lives.

"We still have management practices left over from a Victorian era and that has to change. "Flexible working does not just open up opportunities to working parents and the disabled, but anyone with a life – whether you have a career or are an athlete training for the Olympics.

"In the past, we had to fit the rest of our lives round something rigid like work – now we increasingly have the opportunity to fit work round our lives. Leading employers are realising that



New approach: Denise Keating, CEO of the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion, says technology helps workers access the office from anywhere in the world, including their home

ALL CHANGE ON THE WORK FRONT

- 68% of companies say productivity has increased as a result of flexible working practices
- 66% of managers agree that there is a revolution in working practices coming in the next decade
- 7 in 10 managers think the 9-to-5 workday is disappearing in favour of more flexible ways of working
- 36% of working population will be aged over 50 by 2020, forcing workplaces to adapt to their needs
- 14% of the workforce is now self-employed and 4% are contract or temp workers – taking control of where, when and the way they work

this is not just an employee benefit, it has business benefits too as staff are more productive, more loyal, there is less absenteeism and employees are more positive.

"Flexibility should not be seen as anti-business. The reality is the reverse."

GENERATION Y WANTS CHANGE

"The Generation Y group in particular don't want to work the way their parents worked," adds Thomson. "So this will help drive change."

Keating agrees: "We have to let go of the past way of working which was all about structure, control and processes. Younger employees want to work in a different way. Networking is no longer done on the golf course, but online on social networking sites.

"They also no longer see work as a commitment for life. Younger workers want to be entrepreneurial and self-employed. Making them conform to

old ways of working will stifle the recovery."

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Getting rid of the same-old approach to work also means changing who we have in the workforce, says Keating.

"From recruitment to line management and performance management, there is unconscious bias about who we hire and who we promote," she says. "It is to do with how we are brought up, where we went to school and how our brains are wired.

"We simply feel more comfortable with some people than others. That is why the bottom rungs of the workforce are more diverse but at the top, management tends to be made up of white, middle-aged men.

"When the way we work changes, it will matter less if someone is black, female, gay, disabled or over a certain age because workers will be judged more on what they produce and less on whether or not they network in the pub after work."

WE WANT MORE CONTROL

Many employees cannot wait for this new way of working – and are taking temporary and contract work to give them greater control.

Nearly half of all permanent workers plan to consider temporary roles when they next change jobs, according to a survey published yesterday by recruitment firm Randstad.

The research, which was carried out among 3,000 UK organisations and employees, also found that 63 per cent of temporary workers surveyed have actively chosen not to pursue permanent opportunities.

Mark Bull, CEO of Randstad UK, says:

"Clearly, many people are turning to this work style because there are less permanent opportunities, but the lack of job security during this slow recovery is also encouraging people to think seriously about temping for the first time.

"The UK has the greatest penetration of temporary and contract workers in the EU, at about four per cent of the total workforce, and our expectation is that over time, the economy will see a gradual development of interest in the benefits of temping and contracting by both job seekers and organisations."

In addition, record numbers are becoming self-employed in order to find work and achieve better job security

Temping choice: Mark Bull, CEO of Randstad UK, says many workers are considering temporary roles when they next change jobs



and satisfaction, according to Freelancer.co.uk.

A record 4.1 million, or 14.2 per cent, of all employed people are now self-employed, according to the Office for National Statistics, and although two-thirds are men, this trend is changing. Six in 10 of those who have become self-employed since 2008 are women, who once again are often looking for a better work-life balance.

According to Freelancer.co.uk, figures show more than a third of those registering on its site will set up their own business and start employing other people to work for them.

AGE IS NO BARRIER

Demographic changes will also have a major impact on who will make up the workforce. Because of the decline in the workforce in the 40 to 50 age group, employers will not only need to keep those in their thirties happy – by offering new ways of work – they will also have to change their approach to older workers.

With an estimated 13.5 million job vacancies set to come up in the UK in the next 10 years, but only around seven million young people due to leave education in the period, employers will need to retain older workers, according to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

By 2020, 36 per cent of the working population will be aged over 50, and as such employers will need to adapt to accommodate their needs too.

BUSINESSES SEE BENEFITS

The Olympics are likely to give more London workers a taste of what it is like to work flexibly – and for businesses to see the benefits.

One recent survey by Regus found that 68 per cent of UK companies reported an increase in productivity as a result of flexible working practices and 63 per cent linked increasing revenues directly to flexi-working.

When the Anywhere Working Consortium was launched last November, to help organisations drive greater productivity and efficiency, several major employers were keen to back the initiative.

"It's no longer viable for businesses to stick to rigid, inefficient ways of working if they want to compete successfully in the market," said Gordon Frazer, managing director at Microsoft UK.

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