

**“It’s the  
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EDITORIAL : Philippa Reed

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**“One person prepared to tackle such issues can give courage to others to do the same.”**

There is no doubt that cold winds are biting along with the recession – and depending on what industry you are in, you may be experiencing much tougher times and wondering when those tentative signs of recovery are truly going to kick in and have an impact on your business. At this stage we don't know whether Influenza H1N1 will end up doing more than give an already hammered travel industry more of a battering, but winter, recession and stress look likely to take more of a toll overall.

But even a winter in recession does not have to mean a winter of discontent. In this issue, we feature a number of organisations where people are taking an active and long-term approach to truly valuing and looking after the people who work with them – and tackling some of those really difficult issues as they do so. As one HR manager said at a recent meeting of EEO Trust member organisations, it's the so-called “soft” issues that are often the really hard ones.

One of those topics that we have been asked to help address in the past few months is how best

to deal with challenging mental health issues at work. Our core expertise is in EEO/diversity – we don't pretend to be experts in mental health, but we do know people who are. We are grateful to the Working Well team from the Mental Health Foundation for the presentations and advice they have given in discussions with some of

in 2004 – and has seen a significant shift in people's readiness to acknowledge this as an issue or a potential issue over the past five years. Rather like “health and safety”, “mental health” sits at the “less sexy” end of the wellness continuum and is often a less acceptable topic to raise. Openly confronting such topics is a first step

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our member organisations. They have worked together with some of the companies we feature here, including Vero Insurance.

Glenys Barker, who is Health and Safety Manager at Vero, started tackling the issue of mental health

in providing support for people at work who might be experiencing these personal challenges themselves or in their families.

One person prepared to tackle such issues can give courage to others to do the same. Courage spreads too.



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And we can use the viral effect to good effect as well as bad.

Under serious budgetary constraints, it may not be a good time to look at new initiatives, but are you, and your staff and colleagues, getting the best from what you already offer?

One of our stories in this issue features Anderson Lloyd Lawyers and their new Wellness Programme, which they have talked about at EEO Trust meetings in the South Island. I say “new”, but actually they took a fresh look at what they were already offering staff in the way of health benefits, and noted that the uptake wasn’t as high as they thought it might be. So after

a few conversations checking that what they were offering was what people wanted (choices like an eye-check, \$150 healthy activity allowance towards items such as a new pair of running shoes, a Pilates class or a session with a personal trainer can have wide appeal), they set about refreshing the image of their offering and communicating this to people with panache.

They dusted off the existing policies from the shelf and a talented team member with a creative eye designed a set of posters modelled on the famous (or infamous, depending on your point of view) Tui “Yeah Right” posters.

The HR team plans to survey

staff later in the year to determine the impact of their campaign on the uptake of initiatives. In the meantime it has had an immediate and uplifting effect on morale – it’s fun just reading the posters in the lift in the morning, or in the staff tearoom, and it got the competitive juices flowing by offering a reward for people who come up with new phrases for the campaign.

It didn’t take a design team. It just took some creativity, time, fresh thinking – and managers who had the courage to support their staff to do something a bit differently and give them the autonomy to run with a good idea.

## Working well

### Employers can help staff members remain mentally resilient in tough times.

The Vero name is associated with best practice – the New Zealand Business Excellence Foundation last year awarded the general insurer its prestigious gold award for the company’s attention to excellence and continuous improvement. And that same attention to detail is evident in the way the company supports its employees’ mental resilience.

Vero Health and Safety Manager Glenys Barker started a campaign in mid-2004 to normalise discussion of mental wellbeing in the workplace, and she says that staff were initially a bit reticent. Now, Glenys says, no one raises an eyebrow when she writes articles in the company’s fortnightly internal newsletter *The Voice* about, say, psychological issues for mums returning to work from maternity leave, or men and depression. Aware that the snowball effects of the faltering economy could be hitting employees, Glenys has stepped up the awareness-raising in *The Voice* this year.

“Every one of us has mental health,” says Glenys, a registered nurse with a post-graduate diploma in occupational health and safety. “We all have days of good mental health and days of not-so-good mental health.” The World Mental

Health Federation has a good definition, she says: good mental health is “the capacity to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face”.

“And in workplaces, we have a great opportunity to make a difference,” she adds. “I’m trying to get people to understand that when people are well, they work well. When they are unwell, we need to support them.”

At induction, it’s emphasised that Vero takes a holistic approach to physical and mental health, and that employees should not be afraid to raise issues.

Staff members have come through her door seeking advice on issues ranging from stress and depression through to acute anxiety and home worries, which in Glenys’ experience have included domestic violence and concern about family members. Occasionally, she gently opens up discussion with staff members who are clearly struggling with something.

Vero’s 920 staff, who are mostly desk-bound, can use the Vero People Framework Tool to identify where they might need help with managing stress and psychological issues. The intranet links to online

programmes, books and courses, encouraging employees to take charge of their individual learning and their wellbeing. Glenys also refers staff to an array of services, among them Vero’s employee assistance programme, community alcohol and drug services, maternal mental health services and occupational therapists.

Statistics suggest that one in five women and one in 10 men in New Zealand will experience depression at some point in their lives, and the country has a high prevalence of anxiety, mood and substance abuse disorders compared to other developed countries. The challenge for businesses, says Glenys, is recognising that “a large proportion of your staff will probably experience a mental health issue at some time in their lives. Acknowledge it, talk about it, and be prepared to assist”.

She points out that a diagnosis of mental illness says nothing about a person’s personality or future capabilities. “The vast majority of people recover and get on with life.”

Glenys, who has been at Vero for six years, started her awareness-raising by bringing in experts from Working Well,

“We all have days of good mental health  
and days of not-so-good mental health.”

PICTURED :

Eliseo Dolon, Vero Software Engineer and First Aid/  
Health and Safety Officer (left) with Glenys Barker,  
Vero Health and Safety Manager, in the foyer of the  
Vero Centre, Auckland.





mental  
health  
everybody's

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## **Working Well's Senior Consultant Anna McNaughton backs the Vero approach: "We need to promote mental health, not just prevent harm."**

the Mental Health Foundation unit that advises businesses on creating and maintaining mentally healthy workplaces. Vero managers attended a workshop which taught them how to best respond to employees suffering from stress and/or emotional distress. Employees were also able to attend a workshop aimed at helping them create work-life balance.

Working Well's Senior Consultant Anna McNaughton backs the Vero approach: "We need to promote mental health, not just prevent harm." Environments where employees enjoy mental wellness tend to show four key traits, she adds: they account for the way people feel; employees communicate effectively as individuals and teams; employees

enjoy satisfying workplace relationships; and differences are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Such organisations generally have wellness policies which support good mental health, such as flexibility; good practice in areas such as recruitment; staff development opportunities, and a commitment to furthering managers' skills.

Good sleep, food, and exercise are the physical foundations of good mental wellness, Anna says, and good communication skills and resilience – the ability to bounce back from difficulties or disappointments – are the emotional base. These can be taught, and bring benefits to the workplace as well as to the individual.

David Ferrand is the Programmes Manager of Synergy Health, which helps organisations



PICTURED :

Anna McNaughton,  
Working Well's Senior Consultant.

develop wellness projects. The company helped health insurer Southern Cross devise its Switch2well programme, which won an EEO Trust Work & Life Award in 2007.

David points out that while employers have a legal obligation to minimise the sort of workplace stress that can lead to impaired mental health, they have moral obligations and a vested interest too, especially as the recession bites.

"Employees are going to experience the pressures of potential redundancy and insecure futures as well as financial issues and family pressure," he says. "If these pressures are undetected and unsupported, they can have a detrimental impact on employee health, and that contributes to lost productivity and an increase in absenteeism."

He adds: "You can't necessarily give employees any more money, but you can give them education and support to manage their health. As a consequence, they are more likely to feel better about an environment which is caring for them."

But what if someone is clearly having a meltdown? For most of us, the thought of discussing our mental and emotional health can be uncomfortable. Anna says that employers commonly worry that

specific actions you have noticed, in a non-accusing way, and then ask if there's some way you could help."

Early intervention is important, says Anna, but be aware that even if you have created an opening, some people may not want to talk. Make sure that people know what resources are available, and ensure these resources, such as an employee assistance programme or budget advice, are easily accessible.

Managers also need to take

**"Employees are going to experience the pressures of potential redundancy and insecure futures as well as financial issues and family pressure."**

they would be prying, or that they might "set somebody off". Or they may think someone's mental state is nothing to do with work, or go to the other extreme and think (mistakenly) they have to solve the person's problem for them.

But there are safe ways to open the subject. If things are getting rough at work, Anna suggests asking if everything is OK. "Mention some

the lead. "Staff need to see that managers are taking care of themselves, and being proactive rather than reactive to stressors." She adds: "This is the time to work as a community, not an island. Talk to other people, see what they are doing, and share ideas, both from an individual and an organisational perspective. Some people really find it hard to say they are in difficulty."

## Training an eye on the future

**Businesses are being very careful about how they spend money, but staff training is still a priority for many employers.**

Progressive Enterprises is among the large employers maintaining their commitment to learning and development at operational and strategic levels.

General Manager of Human Resources Catherine Flynn says that in challenging times it is especially important to have people with the right skills in the right roles. “Our development programmes are more of a focus than ever.”

**“With around 19,000 employees, Progressive needs to be continuously developing its talent.”**

Catherine says that a focus on career development and staff engagement has helped improve staff retention in recent years. This means people are moving upwards and sideways through the organisation while they develop their skills.

“With around 19,000 employees, Progressive needs to be continuously developing its

talent,” she says. “We currently have 248 people doing a variety of management trainee programmes to prepare them for the next level of management. In addition, we’re expanding our operational training so that all new staff can complete a Level 2 National Certificate in Retail.”

The programme is being trialled in eight supermarkets and involves skills such as teamwork, customer service, merchandising

and loss prevention.

“It’s on-the-job training supported with a handbook to guide the team and help with the theoretical concepts,” Catherine says. “People who complete it will have a really good understanding of the fundamentals of retail.”

The training programme was developed in conjunction with the Retail Institute, bearing in mind

the diverse needs of employees. “We’re running a pilot partly to ensure that it’s accessible to people with a wide range of literacy skills,” says Catherine. “In some areas of our business, we have pockets of people with literacy needs and we’re providing specific training for them.”

In assessing its training programmes, Progressive has come up with a new model for keeping training venue and travel costs in check. Regional teams have a trainer who can take the training to people in their workplaces, thereby creating a learning environment in-store and saving money.

With a richly diverse team, Catherine says that embracing diversity is a business imperative. Progressive is raising awareness amongst its managers of how to provide an environment which enables people with different needs and backgrounds to be successful.

Fonterra’s Tip Top Brands is another employer continuing to focus on training. Caroline Jackson, GM Human Resources, says the business is investing heavily in standardising its operating procedures. Comprehensive training manuals are a critical part of this, she says.



## PICTURED :

Catherine Flynn is General Manager of Human Resources at Progressive Enterprises.

“They will include information on why we do things in certain ways as part of a move from a ‘telling’ style of management to a contextualised way of working with and engaging staff.”

Like Progressive, Tip Top is reviewing how its staff development dollars are spent; focussing more on lower-cost but effective initiatives such as mentoring, coaching and project work, and less on classroom-based courses or training from external providers.

Tip Top is also providing staff with broader knowledge. Last year it partnered with the Retirement Commission to develop material

around planning for retirement. Tip Top also has training underway in conjunction with Move @ Work to proactively support staff who do manual lifting as part of their roles.

“In times of economic pressure, supporting employee wellbeing is particularly important, so we also have a number of initiatives under way, including the recent Walk for Life in which 40 per cent of our staff participated over a 10 week period,” says Caroline.

For Wellington-based recruitment company GBL Personnel, the current market has created an opportunity to “step up” existing training levels.

Director Mary-Jane Baxter says GBL has always had a commitment to training and developing its team. Over the years, all staff have undertaken industry qualifications provided by the RCSA (Recruitment & Consulting Services Association), as well as training from other HR industry bodies. GBL also supports and subsidises staff with HR and other related extramural studies.

GBL’s workforce is stable, with an average tenure of five years. This is unique in the recruitment industry, says Mary-Jane, and helps the company provide the consistent, professional service

demanding by its public sector and corporate clients.

Mary-Jane says that despite the downturn in the market, GBL is committed to maintaining its current staffing levels. “We want to keep our high-quality staff, so that means looking after our people

changes in the demand for its programmes. CEO John Christie says the Chamber is adjusting its courses to reflect the economic environment. “While we still offer courses related to strategic and business planning, many members now have more pressing needs like

**“Employers have opened their minds to new ways of thinking about who can add value to their business.”**

and weathering the effects of the downturn as a team.”

Auckland Chamber of Commerce CEO Michael Barnett reports an increased focus on good business practice and a surge of interest in networking opportunities. “The next big thing is to get people to look at an economy in recovery,” Michael says.

“Many businesses are reviewing their business purpose and the products and services they provide. The next step is to look at the opportunities the recovery will create.”

The Otago Chamber of Commerce also reports significant

cash-flow management. We’re also running a bundle of workshops around managing stress, as well as training for not-for-profits with a particular focus on fundraising.”

John says members have become more engaged in the Chamber’s programmes now they are faced with shrinking business. “Eighteen months ago they were time-starved and constrained by a labour shortage. Now, they’ve got more time and the biggest issue is where the next order is going to come from.

“They’re very involved with our programmes, particularly our networking events.”



John is optimistic that employers’ appreciation of a diverse workforce, developed during a skills shortage, will not evaporate in the current environment. “Employers have opened their minds to new ways of thinking about who can add value to their business. They haven’t been able to be choosy and there’s now much greater acceptance and appreciation of diversity across the board.”

PICTURED :

John Christie is the CEO of the Otago Chamber of Commerce.

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## Rewarding staff when the money's tight

There might be less in the kitty for pay rises, but there is still plenty you can do to make employees feel valued.

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In the South Island, things are “ticking over” for Anderson Lloyd Lawyers, says Kelly Pankhurst, HR Manager: “It’s business as usual.” But the 150-strong company, with offices in Christchurch,

transactions and a \$150 “healthy activity” payment – were pulled together and branded in an internal poster campaign that owed much of its spirit to a well-known billboard ad.

available to our staff,” she adds. “We hope this will help with staff morale during our salary review process so our staff focus on all the benefits of working at Anderson Lloyd, rather than just the salary. The campaign has been received really positively.”

**“The company decided to take a fun and creative approach to encouraging employees to make better use of existing benefits and opportunities.”**

And the exercise cost no more than \$300, she adds, because the firm used its in-house HR and IT teams to get it under way. The internal branding continues, with prizes going to staff members who contribute ideas.

Queenstown and Dunedin, is among the many New Zealand organisations that are considering their options over pay rises this year.

So, in March, the company decided to take a fun and creative approach to encouraging employees to make better use of existing benefits and opportunities. All the company’s ad-hoc annual benefits – such as eye tests, help with legal

Posters presented a tongue-in-cheek view of the firm’s existing benefits package, which Kelly says has raised awareness and, in turn, has helped lift engagement during difficult economic times. The firm’s intranet was also “hijacked”, says Kelly, so that a poster would pop up every time someone logged into it.

“Our aim is to raise the awareness of the total package

Anderson Lloyd Lawyers is also aware that stresses affecting employees’ home lives can impact on their work, and since January has been running monthly information sessions on issues such as raising teenagers and care of elderly parents. These have not been expensive to run, says Kelly, and some events, such as a session on how best to set up a home computer system, have been run by the company’s own experts.



PICTURED :  
Millennium Hotel Queenstown  
front of house staff member Aya  
Matsumoto (right) with Regional  
HR Manager Terri Fynch.

Also continuing is the company's "meal buddy" system, with volunteers providing a cooked meal for staff or staff members' families who might appreciate some support. The two-year-old initiative evolved out of colleagues' own personal efforts, says Kelly, who herself is a meal buddy. "We're trying to take the hassle out of getting a family meal on the table, and just having one less thing to have to worry about."

Hotels all over the country are feeling the squeeze as reduced occupancy – normal in winter but exacerbated by the recession – leads to reduced hours. But the Millennium Hotel chain, which runs the Millennium, Copthorne

and Kingsgate hotels, is supporting its 1200 staff nationwide by linking up with the Government's Working for Families (WFF) programme to ensure employees get their top-up entitlements.

can meet with WFF managers and sign up on the spot.

"A lot of new staff members don't realise that they qualify," says Jean Garlick, Regional HR Manager for Auckland and the

## **"Staff coming in for their meal would giggle in the lift at seeing each other out of uniform."**

Since the last week of May, Millennium managers across the country have set aside time, space and an internet connection in each of the company's 18 hotels so staff

Bay of Islands. "It's a chance to see they get a bit of a top-up." Many hotel employees are part-time and often young; their hours fluctuate alongside occupancy. To avoid

employees having to call WINZ every time their income changes, the hotel sends pay details of

with meals while on duty. But to give a boost to the 240 Queenstown staff members in May, a low season,

social interaction, says Regional HR Manager Terri Fynch. “Staff coming in for their meal would giggle in the lift at seeing each other out of uniform.”

On average, the hotel served eight to 10 free meals daily at no great extra cost to the business, and Terri expects the benefits to show up in reduced staff turnover. The risk for hotels in the low season is that employees leave for longer hours of work elsewhere.

## The move saved money for employees, many of them migrants, and helped build social interaction, says Regional HR Manager Terri Fynch.

registered staff through weekly or fortnightly so WINZ can make up the payments straight away, rather than in arrears.

Hotel employees are provided

the hotel invited them to come in on their days off and enjoy a free meal on the house. The move saved money for employees, many of them migrants, and helped build

To find out more about Working for Families partnerships, contact Tony Hailwood, Senior Advisor Service Development, Work and Income. Phone 04 916 3098 or email [tony.hailwood01@msd.govt.nz](mailto:tony.hailwood01@msd.govt.nz)

## A little thank-you can be worth a lot: some ideas

Delivering a thank-you to a staff member in front of their team is a powerful way to show someone they are appreciated, says Anna McNaughton, Senior Consultant for Working Well, a division of the Mental Health Foundation. She suggests that text-savvy younger staff might enjoy receiving a thank-you text. And letting staff go home an hour early, or bringing in a cake to share, are popular options.

Vero Health and Safety Manager Glenys Barker says that although the insurer has a formal on-line recognition system that offers shopping vouchers to people whose behaviour reflects Vero’s ideals, smaller gestures can be just as valuable. “I think a little card serves

a really good purpose. Just going above and beyond a little verbal thank-you is really meaningful.”

Anna also suggests that employers can help employees undertake personal study and training – perhaps assisting by negotiating favourable rates with local training providers.

The Open Polytechnic, for example, offers EEO Employers Group members a 25 per cent discount on tuition fees. And in response to the recession, the polytechnic is offering courses free to people who have been made redundant or who work for businesses which have reduced working hours.

Kelly Pankhurst, HR

Manager of South Island law firm Anderson Lloyd Lawyers, suggests recognising long service between the obvious milestones – it can be a long time until employees meet the marks at which formal recognition kicks in. Kelly suggests that at significant anniversaries – say, five years – staff members are congratulated in a team meeting or morning tea is provided. “It’s good to acknowledge that person’s contribution.”

She also suggests rewarding work above and beyond the call of duty with a meal. Anderson Lloyd occasionally recognises spectacular commitment in this way, with the staff member being reimbursed \$100 for a meal out.

## Professions face demographic crunch

Gender and age skews in key workforces pose planning challenges.

If you get the feeling that lawyers, accountants and doctors these days are predominantly female and getting younger, you'd be right. A new EEO Trust analysis of the age and gender profiles of more than 30 occupations confirms the skew, and shows how particular imbalances could pose problems for New Zealand's economy in the future.

The analysis of 1991-2006 Census data shows that professions currently dominated by older men and younger women – such as law, medicine, planning and veterinary medicine – are likely to experience a double blow over the next decade as large numbers of older workers retire and, at the same time, younger women exit to have families.

“Our analysis shows that a number of professions, such as law and medicine, have workforces dominated by older men and younger women,” says EEO Trust Chief Executive Philippa Reed.

“The figures also show that younger women tend to leave these professions in their early 30s. Employers who also have an ageing workforce are facing the likelihood of large numbers of older people and young women retiring or resigning at the same time.”

Today's lawyers are generally younger than they were in 1991,

and there are proportionally more women. In 1991, 24% of lawyers were women; by 2006 they totalled 42%. In 1991, male lawyers tended to be in their early 40s, but by 2006 the largest proportion of male lawyers was aged over 50.

“This indicates an ageing group of male lawyers and more young women than men joining the profession,” says Dr Reed. “The data suggests that many women join the law profession and work as lawyers for a number of years before leaving, presumably to raise families. Some, but not all, return to the profession in their 30s or 40s.”

Women are also much more likely to become doctors than they were 15 years ago. In 1991, only 27% of New Zealand's doctors were women, rising to 40% in 2006. Like women lawyers, women doctors tend to leave the profession in their late 20s and early 30s, beginning to return in their late 30s and early 40s. However, unlike law, medicine is an ageing profession overall.

In accountancy, men dominate among the over-50s and women in the younger age groups. “It's interesting to find that women don't leave accountancy as they get older,” says Dr Reed. “Rather, women of all ages are joining the profession.”

Businesses employing a

combination of ageing men and young women face the challenge of retaining women when they have children, says Dr Reed. “This might be through flexible working options such as working from home, part-time work and flexible start and finishing times.”

She adds: “These types of options are not just for women. They support anyone with caring responsibilities, including the increasing numbers of fathers who want to be more involved in childcare. These options also support older people as they move towards retirement, and may help keep older people in the workforce for longer.”

The report, titled *Workplace Age and Gender: Trends and Implications*, aims to assist organisations with workforce planning, and focuses on occupations relevant to EEO Trust members and/or those jobs on the Department of Labour's skill shortage lists.

The full list of fields covered are: law, accountancy, management, human resources, IT, engineering, planning, policy, social science, education, health (including dentistry, dietetics, microbiology and pharmacy), social work, veterinary medicine, the police, office staff, media (including



web design and journalism), travel, banking, call centres, hospitality (including chefs and restaurant managers), trades, and transport (including pilots, air traffic controllers, bus drivers and lift-truck operators).

In general, most occupational groups are ageing, with particularly mature workforces in engineering, management, transport and trades. “These are fields where companies should be particularly aware of succession planning and skill-loss issues with potential mass

retirement in years to come,” says Dr Reed.

The report also finds that younger people predominate in IT, media, banking, call centres, policy analysis, science and catering – which poses its own problems for the future. “Those who traditionally tend to employ younger people are facing a declining number of young people entering the workforce,” says Dr Reed. “They may need to try to attract older people or else compete more strongly for the relatively scarce younger workers.”

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Snapshots from the report show that:

- A total of 63% of bus drivers were aged 50 years or more in 2006, and 80% were men.
- The age profile of HR professionals is younger than that of the total workforce and has become intensely female – in 1981, 28% of HR professionals were female, but by 2006 that had risen to 69%.
- Relatively few women work in engineering, ranging from 2% in industrial and mechanical to 8% in civil, 15% in electronic and communications and 36% in chemical.
- A third of the dentistry and social work professions were aged 50+ in 2006.
- In the police force, women tallied 9% of the workforce in 1991 and 22% in 2006.
- One in three firefighters was aged over 50 in 2006. Overall, 95% of firefighters are male.
- The peak age for labourers has been falling, and was 15-19 in 2006.

*Workplace Age and Gender: Trends and Implications* is at ([www.eeotrust.org.nz/research](http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/research)) or hard copies can be ordered from Valerie Bocarro at [vbocarro@eeotrust.org.nz](mailto:vbocarro@eeotrust.org.nz).



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The EEO Trust provides information and tools on EEO and raises awareness of diversity issues in the workplace. We assist employers to introduce and manage proven EEO thinking and practices which can make a real difference to business success in difficult economic times. We

also build understanding of the business benefits of versatile and inclusive workplaces. EEO strategies and sound HR practices enable employers to recruit, retain and motivate the very best people; people with skill, commitment and intelligence who can help businesses thrive.

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