



Medical Council: HR isn't the big, bad wolf!

One of the issues we've heard again and again from HR professionals is how hard it is to deal with medical certificates that just say 'X must be off work for two weeks'.

The reason these vague certificates are in issue for many HR people is that they don't give enough information to know if there is something the employer can do to help the employee e.g. reduced duties.

They also don't indicate whether the employee is likely to be able to return or may need further time off which makes it hard for workforce planning.

HR want to make sure there are no workplace issues that could impact of employees. Without further information again this is very hard to do.

This is not about needing to know personal information about the employee or their illness but to know if there is anything the employer can do to help.

The Association has raised this with the Medical Council and asked whether GP's could be provided with more education on what HR, managers and businesses would find useful rather than these certificates – namely information about the following:

- What parts of the employees job are they not able to do?
- Are there any light duties or other duties that could be completed?
- Are there other factors which the employer could explore fixing (e.g. if the employee has raised excessive workload, or a personality clash)?
- What type of issue the employee is claiming this is (because if they are claiming they are suffering from stress, this is a hazard under the H&S at Work Act and the employee has a duty to raise this with their employer first).
- Whether there could be a partial return to work.
- How the employer will know they are safe to return after this time.

After raising this approach with the Medical Council, they have advised that they do not feel any further education of GP's is needed and that HR people will need to have a complaint put through when doctors don't provide more information.

So the Association has developed a form for Professional Associates to use for this purpose. If you do receive a Medical Certificate for the '2 weeks off' then please do use the form to complain to the Medical Council, and perhaps they will then look at educating GP's. Because HR isn't the big bad wolf. HR actually wants to fix any issues making the workplace unsafe and do what's needed to help the employee return to work.

What have APP been up to?

In the last few months the team at APP have been working on your behalf on the following:

- Launched a new look website which includes all 4 People Professions and sets out the value of becoming a Professional Associate
- Appointed our Payroll Advisory Panel and will shortly be launching the process to apply to be a Professional Associate, Payroll
- Running think tanks in Wellington and Auckland to define the standards for Learning Professional Associates and what the different roles within learning are responsible for.
- Launched our Accredited Professional Associate level for HR people. To have a look at the criteria or to apply please visit the HR page of www.appnz.org.nz
- Launched the beginning of the free resources for Professional Associates. You can check these out at the Resources Page on the APP website.
- Progressed with developing the Chartering process to be the best in the world.
- Written a submission for MBIE on the restructure of Mediation Services, representing HR's thoughts on this.



Breaking news

Gordon MacDonald, CEO of WorkSafe has resigned, so the search is on for his replacement. The next set of APP HR Downloads around the country will discuss health & safety and we'll cover the results in the next edition.

The 4 people professions

The Association of People Professions started with HR, Payroll and Learning however after feedback we are now representing Talent/Recruitment professionals, who are also about people.



Participate in your industry.

Apply today at www.appnz.org.nz

HR Advisory Panel Profile: Meredith Blackler

To make sure that APP is closely aligned with its key stakeholders and industry, it has separate Advisory Panels for each discipline.

Panel members come from a diverse range of backgrounds and have all generously donated their time as volunteers to help build and create APP to lead and promote the people professions.

The Industry Advisory Panel exists to ensure that APP “keeps it real” and the panel provides input into the development of APP including reviewing Professional Associate applications, input into tertiary and industry training initiatives, input in the development of the chartering process, and input into creating the Compulsory Professional Development programme.

In this issue we meet HR Advisory Panel member Meredith Blackler, currently the Senior Manager - People & Capability at Horowhenua District Council.

Meredith is an experienced HR practitioner, with more than 13 years in the sector ranging from tutoring and researching HRM at Massey University to practicing HR in local government.

Meredith feels fortunate to have earned the opportunities and breadth of knowledge she’s gained in both teaching and practicing HR. With experience in all aspects of generalist HR, Meredith is particularly passionate about strategic HRM, organisational culture and change management.

Meredith does not believe that an HR department needs a large budget to add value and that HR practitioners should rely less on ‘off the shelf’ programmes and offer ‘fit for purpose’ tailored solutions to meet organisational strategic needs.

With a Bachelor of Arts in Business Psychology and a Masters Degree in Management (endorsed in HRM) Meredith enjoys transferring her HR knowledge into a variety of contexts.

Believing that HR should add value directly into the community, Meredith and her team provide HR services to local businesses and organisations as an opportunity to directly contribute to the economic development of provincial New Zealand, for which Horowhenua District Council was the winner of the 2015 HR Game Changer Award exhibiting Meredith’s dedication to walking the talk.

A great believer in HR also having an external focus (“look up!”); Meredith sees no reason that HR departments should not be able to directly impact customers and stakeholders alike”.

We recently chatted to Meredith to find out why she is involved in the Association and her view on HR.

People Planet: Why are you on the Human Resources Advisory Panel?

Meredith: I often think about the video of the ‘lone nut and first follower’ - I know how important it is to support those who are taking a chance and leading us to positive change and the evolution of the HR profession. APP was founded for those of us who were looking for something more and takes HR as a profession very seriously.

As an HR practitioner in local government, I felt it was important to be on the Advisory Panel representing the public sector. I want my public sector colleagues to realise we can still be transformational and inspirational HR leaders, taking HR to the next level as a profession across New Zealand, not just within our own sector.

People Planet: You are a Professional Associate, why did you apply?

Meredith: I applied because I’m a proud HR practitioner who knows that not all HR practitioners are created equal. By achieving professional associate status, it recognises that you are a capable HR practitioner who has achieved a certain level of proficiency in HR. Committing to regular professional development gives our clients and employers assurance that we are growing and changing alongside the rest of the world. We’ve been talking and writing about “HR as a profession” for decades now, so let’s just get on with it!

People Planet: Why are you in HR and what do you love about your job?

Meredith: What’s not to love about HR? We have the ability to make real differences in people’s lives, including their families and the wider community. As influencers in an organisation, we are instrumental in transforming an organisation’s culture and performance.

We are the difference of an organisation still being here in five years. My first degree was in Psychology as I had full intentions on becoming a clinical psychologist, but after doing HR as an elective paper, I fell in love with it and realised it was more suited to my personality and strengths, so I changed it to organisational psychology.

The beauty of HR is that you still are dealing with psychology of people in the work-place. Engagement, for example, is all about the psychological contract between an employer and employee. No two days are the same, because people are so varied. Creating HR solutions that align to organisational strategic direction, culture, and employee value proposition is heavily entwined with psychology.

People Planet: What do you see as the biggest challenge in transforming HR? What can we do about this?

Meredith: I think the biggest challenge in transforming HR is ourselves. We are only limited by our own imaginations and fear of failure. HR practitioners can be risk adverse and fearful of making mistakes; but if we look at the most influential business leaders and entrepreneurs, they all took chances and failed... but they got back up and tried again.

Take Richard Branson for example, or inspirational NZ business woman, Sue Foley. Be brave. If we’re truly agile thinkers, then start taking action today, and if your HR solution needs a change in direction or isn’t quite right for your organisation, have the guts to either pull it, or readjust it to make sure it’s the right fit. I’m not a fan of best practice; I believe in “right practice” for your organisation and its needs at that point in time and context. Organisations are changing at such a fast pace that HR professionals should not be wedded to the HR solutions they’ve created and put in place; they should have a continuous improvement mind-set and keep up with those changes.



People Planet: What one thing do you think HR Professionals could do right now to transform HR in their organisations?

Meredith: Stop talking and start doing. Actively look for opportunities to add value across the entire organisation and take risks in your recommendations to bring about change. Make sure you understand your external stakeholders too, because that’s why the business exists. If you get a chance to work on something that’s not strictly HR, do it – you’ll get a fresh perspective on the business and your colleagues and you’ll also grow some great new skills.

And finally, if you’re in an organisation that doesn’t allow you to be the best HR practitioner you can or want to be, then leave. It concerns me when HR bag their CEO and organisation; it’s not a good look. If you don’t love your organisation and believe in what your CEO is trying to achieve, then it’s probably best you move on.



Contact the People Planet

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To contact the Editor email peopleplanet@appnz.org.nz

For subscriptions email info@appnz.org.nz

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Be the change you wish to see

*Posted on 'Up the Down Escalator' on 8/3/2016
by Richard Westney*

HR Download Events

In late 2015 the Association ran our first two very successful Download events in both Auckland and Wellington.

These events have been a chance for like-minded colleagues to get together and discuss HR topics, including performance reviews, health and safety, diversity and engagement surveys, over a drink and some nibbles. It's a chance to share ideas, practical tips and also have a bit of fun!

The downloads are a little different from the normal networking event. The events are around 2 hours, with the first 15 – 30 minutes set aside for arriving, getting a drink and saying hello to your fellow attendees.

We then move into small groups and discuss the topic in question. Someone in each group jots down a few notes and then one of the APP team takes those and shares all the great ideas back with the group through the APP blog.

Even if you don't attend you get to hear what has been discussed.

The feedback has been really positive from attendees and we're pleased to let everyone know that this is an initiative we will be continuing in 2016.

For more information visit appnz.org.nz and visit the Events Page.

To have a read of some of the discussions from the Wellington and Auckland HR Downloads, just visit the APP blog (linked from the APP website at www.appnz.org.nz)

The next HR Download event is in Tauranga on 21 April.



Back in 2014 there was something of a mind shift going on as we started to explore what changing the HR game might look like in New Zealand. And thanks to things like NZLEAD and the HR Game Changer conferences, like-minded people started to find each other and a community started to grow. When I say "like-minded" I mean people committed to change, wanting to explore new ideas and raise the bar in HR.

Frustrations with the state of the HR profession in New Zealand led to the establishment of the Association of People Professionals, or APP for short. We took our inspiration from NZLEAD, technology, social networks, collaborative practices, Reinventing Organisations and Simon Sinek. Not from Ulrich, hierarchies and long dead management theorists.

We wanted to be different. That's why APP is an association rather than an institute. It is a collection of forward thinking people professionals (HR, talent, payroll, learning) who want to make a difference in their professions.

If you've been expecting a big hiss and a roar then forget it. We are all volunteers and so have been working quietly away over the last year or so to put in place what we think we need from an association of this type. We are a collective of people who want to make a difference in our profession and in the organisations we work in.

Our starting point was to have chartered status for HR professionals in New Zealand. Why? Because we badly need to raise the level of performance, thinking and delivery in our profession.

Of course, HRINZ have also recently consulted their members on a chartering proposal but their draft framework doesn't go far enough in my view and I question whether it is going to raise standards.

At APP we believe that being called a Chartered People Professional has to be earned.

It has to come with credibility, excellence and a commitment to put back into the profession and business world. It has to mean something special which is why our members are determining what the framework will look like and the bar is going to be high. We have to demand more of each other.

I often wonder whether today's professional industry bodies and associated qualification frameworks are on borrowed time? I think perhaps they are unless they re-think their purpose. What industry bodies traditionally provide – newsletters, a magazine perhaps, networking events, some professional development opportunities – all of these things are being rapidly superseded by technology and innovation. They need to re-think the services they are providing their members and how they add value to their industry/profession or they will simply die.

That's why APP has to be different and why it will be. If it is something you think you might be interested in, check us out at appnz.org.nz. It's not much yet but it's a start. With your help it could be so much more. And the beauty of it is, it's a very simple model. It will be run by people professionals for people professionals very collaboratively. There will not be committees, bureaucracy, boards. All those things that represent traditional and outdated work structures.

Over the last few years one phrase comes to my mind time and again – **be the change you wish to see**. That's why I write a blog, mentor young people, run a meet up group, look for new ways of doing things and generally question whether what we do is making enough of a difference.

In my last post I talked about purpose. If you want a sense of purpose, a vision or whatever, that's it right there – be the change you wish to see. That's why it is important APP exists and leads by example.

Can we make it work? I really don't know but we'll give it a go. And if you are a people professional in New Zealand, be aware you now have a choice.

So talking of purpose, how good was it that NZLEAD won the NZ HR award for innovation last week? A community built from nothing but people's passion and desire to come together to create change, but which has inspired and connected so many using social media as it's platform. It just goes to show what a few like-minded people can achieve when they get together and collaborate.

So if you want to be better at what you do and make a difference, it's time to step up and be that change.

To read the comments made about Richard's blog just [click here](#).

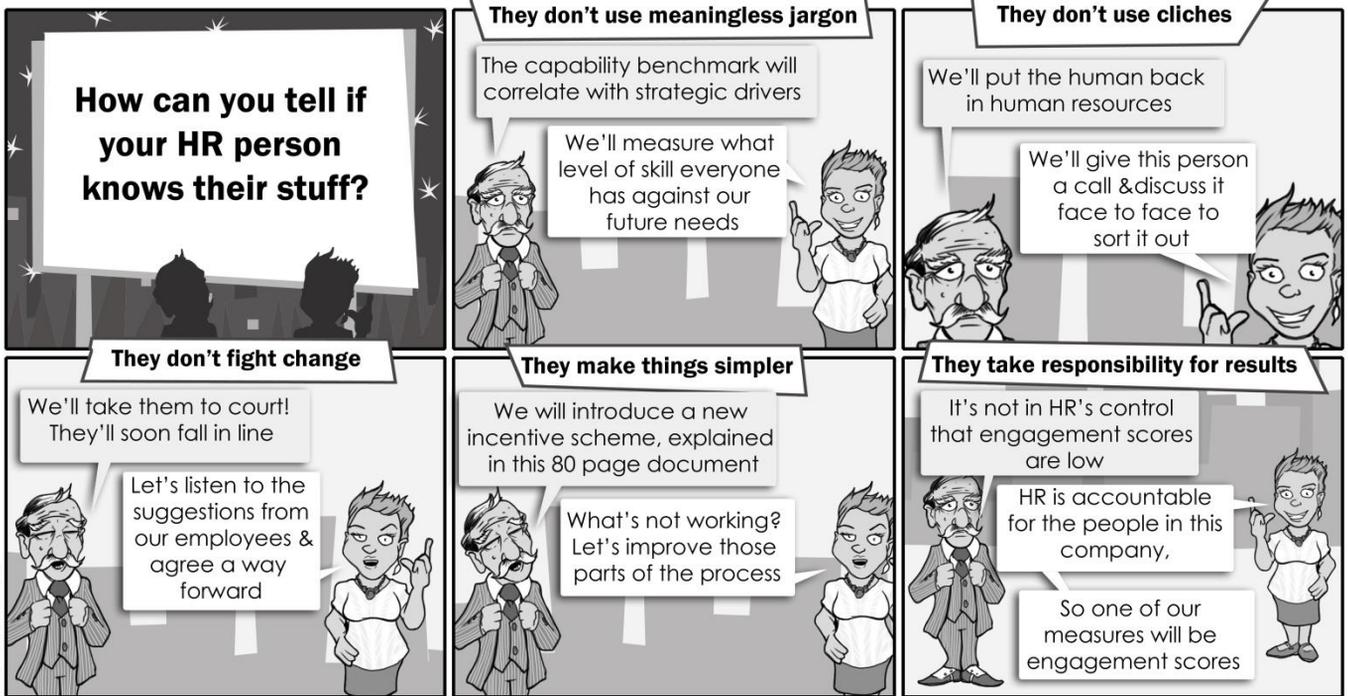
Uncensored

Join the APP LinkedIn group to discuss issues.

We promise there will be no removing posts in this group if you disagree or question things! APP is about challenging each other and taking our industry forward and so the censorship that has happened in other HR groups will not happen with us.

To join the group just search for 'Association of People Professionals' on LinkedIn and apply to join the group.





Legislation Changes

You'll be aware that some new employment legislation came in on 1 April. Here's a quick summary of the 1 April changes:

Minimum Wage going up:

The minimum wage will increase by 50 cents to \$15.25 an hour. The starting-out and training hourly minimum wage rates will increase by 40 cents to \$12.20 an hour.

Parental Leave:

Maternity leave is now going up to 18 weeks. If you have any employees who apply for maternity leave and they are eligible, you'll have to hold their role open for the 18 weeks. They may also receive the paid Government Scheme.

Entitlements have also been extended to cover employees who have primary responsibility for the care, development, and upbringing of child under 6 years, including adoption, Home for Life parents, whāngai, grand-parents etc and there will now be paid 'keeping in touch' days if you need the employee to come back in for a day for training or meetings while they are on parental leave.

Employment Standards:

The Employment Standards Bill also came in on 1 April. If you have any employees on zero hour agreements (different to casual employees), you'll now need to make sure they are provided with both some guaranteed hours and specify how many extra hours they may have to be available for (e.g. 15 hours guaranteed, 10 hours extra availability). This needs to be a reasonable balance.

You have to have a reason for them to be available for further hours and must offer them compensation for this availability (a little like a call out allowance).

You'll only be able to cancel someone's shift if you have a clause that provides for a reasonable notice period and if you can't give this notice, then you must pay them compensation for the cancellation.

Interns: What are they?

Fraser Atkins was part of a panel discussing the ERA changes one year on, at the MPOWER event on 9 March at Massey University.

He was joined by Helen white solicitor and Jeff Sissons, General Counsel from NZCTU.

One of the side issues that was discussed was the status of interns in New Zealand.

Interns as a category doesn't exist in New Zealand law. They are not quite volunteers, they are not casual employees because there is no definition around them some employers are taking on interns as free labour this is not acceptable from.

Internships should be part of a recognised qualification (e.g. Massey or AUT) where the intern is given guidance and support by the Tertiary

Institute and the internship is designed to give them the core skills and experience and learning (rather than getting cups of coffee photocopying or filling in an actual job).

So one of the areas a APP has started work on is to develop some guidelines around interning - so we don't get situations like a company wanting a Social Media Manager and using an intern to do it - rather than the intern learning from the Social Media Manager!

APP would also like to develop internships for those newer to the people professions and will be consulting with the HR industry around how to do this. If you're interested in participating, then make sure you get your Professional Associate application in to be part of it!

Share the Planet....



Once you've read your copy, why not share it with other's in your team, or give it to another people professional that you know!

It's good for HR and good for the environment and that's got to be good for everyone.



Payroll & HR: Where is the love?

There has been much debate in the payroll world whether payroll should be in finance or HR.

At APP we think there is one answer. If Payroll are just about numbers then they should sit in finance, but if they are actually about people and they should set a nature.

All our payroll advisory panel members believe payroll is about people.

So you think HR in a row would be best friends. Instead we heard of the following happen again and again.

- Payroll people tell us that HR renegotiate a Collective Agreement, or run a rem review, or agree to a settlement payment – and they give Payroll the details at the last moment and ask them to put it through straight away. They then get angry when Payroll tell them it can't be done that quickly. But it can't be done that quickly!
- Payroll also get blamed when a new employee doesn't get paid, but often the paperwork is sitting on HR or the managers desk and Payroll didn't even know someone new had started because no-one had told them and they aren't involved in the offer or induction process.
- HR on the other hand tell us how inflexible Payroll is when HR negotiate special terms with payments or tax benefits that need to be paid straight away, otherwise the settlement is negated. Why can't Payroll just push the magic button and get it done straight away?

So how do we create some love between payroll and HR and get around these issues happening again and again?



The APP Payroll and HR Advisory Panels will be discussing ideas on how to link together.

In the interim, if you're an HR professional:

- Involve payroll in your CA negotiations.
- Tell them if you're going to be negotiating a settlement and likely to need a quick payment.
- Advise of possible restructuring so they can proactively complete calculations if people ask.
- When changing pay dates or employment agreements, or during a remuneration review schedule time with payroll to update them on the dates.
- Invite payroll to HR team meetings.

If you're in Payroll:

- Ask HR if there are likely to be any pay changes coming up.
- Attend HR team meeting so you know what's going on.
- However frustrating last minute changes are talk to HR and explain the issues and see if you can find a resolution working together not fighting each other.

Let's see if we can create a bit of love rather than war - because blaming each other just makes all of us look incompetent and unprofessional to the managers and employees that we support!

APP Advisory Panel blog: There's nothing like living it

Posted by Sarah Mannion, 4 January 2016

Well starting as I mean to go on one of my goals is to try blogging. I have been encouraged by many great bloggers and have procrastinated for ages.

My worry is, what if people don't agree or don't want to read it. I realise I should just give it a go and people can make a choice from there. So here goes - bear with me while I dabble in this journey.

Last year saw me having a crash course trying to understand mental illness. It was all around me with a family member, friend and a number of people at work being affected.

Whilst my first instinct when someone wasn't turning up for work and wasn't getting in touch was a tough response, I could see the other side with family and friends. If you are feeling so unwell that you cannot get out of bed as you are suffering from severe insomnia it makes sense work will be a struggle. I read John Kirwin's book and researched the many organisations NZ has to support this illness. I have then tried to educate our leaders at work as there is so much we all have to learn.

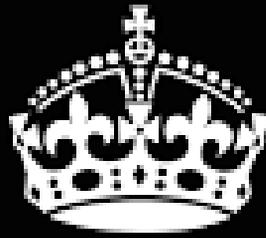
We had a wonderful presentation from the Mental Health foundation talk to our leaders to help educate us all.

People can't "get over" this. They can't leave their illness at home just like they couldn't if they had cancer or some other illness. If you have a broken leg or arm or have hair loss due to cancer you can see this. With mental illness you cannot so is often a silent and unspoken about illness.

It is often hard to detect, as with the people I know often seemed to be the most confident, outgoing centre of attention people so was such a shock when I found out. It sure is hard to understand as it can change to be the tiniest things which can upset someone with this illness. Something they could have easily dealt with in the past.

This year I continue my quest to understand more and make sure I am the best leader, friend and family support person I can be to respond in the most effective way. The balance at work is a hard one as understanding how far to go to support someone when it is affecting their ability to do their job is a real dilemma. As with any health concern though if people are taking steps to improve their health themselves then we should support them also. I am making sure we build it into our Wellbeing programme at work as with this illness effecting 1 in 4 New Zealanders this is fast becoming the top risk for our people at work. In Australia many organisations have a "Mindful Employer" charter. We can learn from this and this is my goal for 2016 to ensure our leadership team endorse this approach and our people know it is Ok to talk about this and that it is Ok to ask for help.

My biggest learning on this journey is I have needed to educate myself fast. You cannot assume you know when you haven't experienced this illness as our minds all work so differently and you can get this so wrong if you respond in an unhelpful way. Thank goodness for the wonderful writers and volunteers who share their stories to help us understand this journey.



**KEEP
CALM
AND
APPLY**

**Professionals.
It is your duty to apply.
Do it today.**

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