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process that was applied to everyone. If the definition of talent later changes then be honest, say that the requirements are different, this is how it might impact on you."

According to research by Dr Eddie Blass, Director, Leadership Hub, Humanities, Law and Education Department, University of Hertfordshire, some people might actually benefit from being off the list. Delivering a keynote speech at HDA's Roundtable talent meeting in June, she explained that although your talent needs to know it is wanted, these conversations need to make clear a career path for the individual, "without making them arrogant or stressed." In fact, they need to be valued equally to conversations telling those that aren't 'talent' that they needn't feel pressurised to perform outside reasonable expectations. Without this worry, she says, some workers actually perform better, adding: "Everyone knows who the really good people are in the team. People only become alienated if they go around boasting that they are talent – in which case they probably aren't, and you made a mistake."

Whether overall levels of communication do improve in business, as Albon says, it is likely that criticism will remain. Does the fact that so many struggle point to a broader shift in the way that society communicates in general – a shift that will have to be accounted for in future HR strategy? Certainly, developments in new media have allowed a level of feedback that individuals never possessed before. Calverley certainly thinks so. "I think there is a societal change happening. People are used to having more control over information, on demand, from multiple sources," he says. "You can input to The Times and the BBC. The relationship between employer and employee has shifted from a job-for-life career model to one with a portfolio. There is more of an equitable relationship now." Certainly changes do appear to be occurring in the way we communicate in general. If that is the case, then what it will ultimately mean for internal communication, and for talent managers, is uncertain. In the meantime, keep treating people like adults, we'll let you know when more information becomes available.

Use Mediation to Retain Talent

People don't like conflict in the workplace. People want to work where, should they have a problem, there's a process in place to reach a speedy resolution. They want to work in an organisation which supports them should difficulties occur. So, when you're looking at how best to retain your talent – and not just your top talent – look to embed a system to deal with conflict effectively as and when it arises.

As one of the UK's leading providers of conflict resolution and mediation services, Consensio has seen a marked increase in the demand for mediation services – whether facilitated in-house or by external independent mediators.

Alex Efthymiades, Director of Consensio, comments: "Mediation and conflict resolution processes are becoming an essential part of an organisation's people infrastructure. Whilst the initial driving force for our clients may be to empower employees to resolve issues themselves rather than through formal processes, the cost savings and the positive impact mediation has on making the workplace more attractive, becomes clear."

NHS East Lancashire is one such organisation. Its mediation scheme not only demonstrates the organisation's commitment to its staff, but, since the creation of the mediation scheme, there has been a 60% reduction in formal process and staggering cost savings of over £200k to the organisation. Importantly, the mediation scheme has resulted in a culture shift within the organisation.



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