

# the **HR DIRECTOR**

The only magazine dedicated to HR directors

Issue 14

## **FORUM: TRAINING**

**Planning your training route to success**

## **EXECUTIVE PAY & REMUNERATION**

**Across-the-board survey results on UK trends**

## **MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS - HR'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE BOTTOM LINE**

**Did you help or hinder your company's balance sheet today?**

## **AUTHENTIC BUSINESS**

**Black or red: what is the effect of authentic policies on the balance sheet?**

## **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE & DIRECTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

**More change on the horizon?**

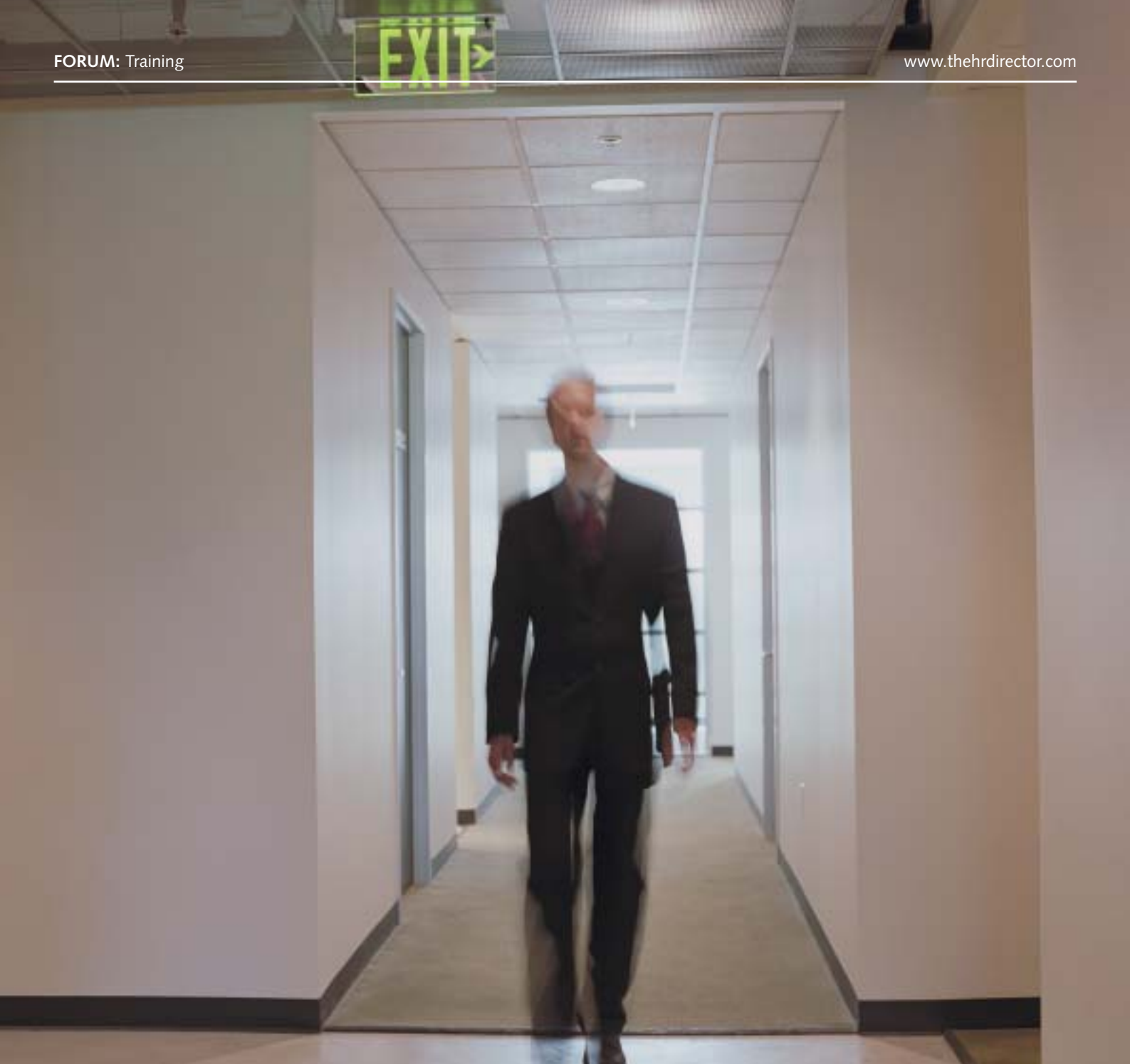
## **PLUS**

**See this month's In Brief**

**Read our Viewpoint from BNFL**

**DON'T MISS NEXT MONTH'S SPECIAL ISSUE WHERE WE FOCUS ON DIVERSITY: AGE • GENDER  
• DISABILITY • RACE, CULTURE AND RELIGION • STRATEGY... AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!**





## BEATING THE SILENT EPIDEMIC - STRESS AT WORK

THERE CAN BE FEW HR DIRECTORS' DESKS IN THIS COUNTRY THAT HAVE NOT FELT THE GROWING WEIGHT OF PROBLEMS DESCRIBED AS STRESS-RELATED. THE IMPACT OF STRESS AND WHAT IS BECOMING KNOWN AS THE SILENT EPIDEMIC IS NOT SIMPLY CONFINED TO THE HR FUNCTION EITHER: BY ADVERSELY AFFECTING PERFORMANCE AT ALL LEVELS, FROM SHOPFLOOR TO MAIN BOARD DIRECTOR, IT ULTIMATELY HITS THE BOTTOM-LINE.

The author of a recent report on the British addiction to long working hours and the effects of stress argued that the result was not greater output: instead it was ill health, lower morale and decreased productivity.

A dream solution that enables managers and staff alike to get to grips with their stress and, at the same time, improve performance as well as rebalancing work with other parts of life, may seem, to say the least, improbable.

Now though, a training package known as 'Superworking' is starting to have a profound and beneficial effect on a growing number of people,

many of them senior managers. The brainchild of a management academic, Susanne Rix, it is a radical blend of behavioural psychology, positive thinking, nutrition, exercise, creativity, belief systems and more besides. Already well established in Australia, it is just beginning to make its mark here.

**"making the most of cognitive talents"**

*"One of the programme's key themes is mental awareness," says Rix. "While we readily seek advice on our technical skills, our management*



options or maybe our golf swings, we never seek advice on making the most of our 'cognitive talents' - how we handle the vast array of technical and commercial information that is the lifeblood of the business world today."

An understanding of how the brain handles information provides, it is claimed, a new level of confidence in decision making as well as effective management. It can also open the mind and allow the individual to achieve peak performance without stress - high performance people are evidently made, not born that way.

The training consists of workshops that deal with everything from self-perception and whole-brain thinking, to relaxation techniques and mental rehearsal. The four days are spread across a month to allow learning to be implemented back at the desk and reviewed at the next session. The results are exceptional.

Alumni include a wide variety of impartial and independent-minded people, from senior directors to HR leaders and managers, whose findings and personal takes on the training are remarkably supportive.

Tim Kiy, marketing director at Barclaycard, was one of the early users in this country. "This training really hits the nail on the head," he says. "The balance of logical explanation and real experience is so powerful. There have been few - if any - training events I've experienced that have had such profound effect.

"Highlights were the practical benefits which had almost instant payback in the workplace. Some of the exercises demonstrate measurable increase in performance and efficiency. I've certainly been able to get through higher workloads since attending, and others on the course who, through stress, had suffered insomnia for years were suddenly able to enjoy a full night's sleep. The relaxation techniques result in high energy levels."



Julie Spence, deputy chief constable at Cambridgeshire Constabulary added: "The sessions were always interesting, and took me down avenues I had intellectualised before but did not have the skills or tools to unlock in order to maximise the benefits to me personally - a liberating experience."

### "the winning edge"

'Superworking' relies on no single source of thinking. Rix draws upon the results of the latest international research, supporting practical advice with well-grounded theory from experts in their field. The mix, she says, appeals to the heart as well as the head.

"Whether in the boardroom or in the office, it is not marks in an MBA exam that give top achievers the winning edge. It is that elusive quality that communicates with influence, inspires a sense of direction, produces the most innovative solution, predicts future scenarios and is able to sustain mental agility in all conditions. It is the ability to use the mind and creative skills together most effectively.

"Consider those moments when you have a flash of insight or genius, when you were functioning at your peak. Moments such as when a great idea emerged, or the speech went brilliantly, or negotiations were successful beyond your dreams. Just as athletes train in mind and body techniques, so the mental athlete needs mind and body training to overcome the effects of

stress and enable their peak performance. In sports psychology it is called 'the zone' - and that is what is regularly achievable in the work environment as well as in everyday life. The programme focuses on developing that latent ability - and it works."

Lesley-Anne Cull, the Open University's dean of the Faculty of Health and Social Welfare, says of the training: "I cannot speak too highly of it and I would certainly like to be able to offer my senior management colleagues an opportunity to go on the programme. It has been extremely helpful in managing workload and maintaining a sensible balance with life outside the university."

Only the passage of time will prove whether warm reactions like these mark the beginnings of a lasting antidote to the silent epidemic.

For further information:

[www.barclays.co.uk](http://www.barclays.co.uk)  
[www.cambs.police.uk](http://www.cambs.police.uk)



[www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)

the *Springboard* consultancy ltd

[www.springboardconsultancy.com](http://www.springboardconsultancy.com)