

# What's happening?

A round-up of the latest wonderful (and weird) things in the world of management services.

## Training awards for NI Housing Exec



Following the successful completion of POST training by delegates from Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) (December 2005 Management Services), an invitation was issued to David Cole, course trainer and managing director of Beeston Productivity Services to attend the Executive's annual training award ceremony. The Efficiency Services unit's eight delegates undertook POST training and were very successful in the examinations for that qualification. The picture shows six of the eight successful candidates flanked by David (left) and Brian Rowntree, NIHE Chairman.

## Can you increase productivity by actually doing less?

An industrial psychologist, Dr Guy Beaudin, has just caught on to a concept known by the rest of the working population since they were rocking in their cradles, that productivity is all about working smarter, not harder.

In the States, Beaudin claims that executives are hiring personal 'productivity coaches'. For those who cannot afford such a luxury, Dr Beaudin has some practical advice: Step off the treadmill long enough to catch your breath and reorder priorities, because something's got to give.

Following this highly original declaration, he went on to say "It is counterproductive for organisations to keep piling on more work," he said, arguing that a more realistic approach is for both companies and their employees to drop some activities and concentrate on those that are most critical to the organisation's success.

Choosing what to cut back on is not easy, he conceded. "People are not very good at this, at deciding what not to do. People need help to decide what are the things they should either stop doing or pass on to someone else. What are the things I do that most significantly contribute to the bottom line and what are the things I have been doing for a long time out of habit, but really aren't critical?"

## Too little work means low job satisfaction

Again, this will surprise no one, but it should probably be said: employees who have too little work are less satisfied with their jobs than those who are burdened with too much.

This life-changing statement comes from Sirota Consulting, specialists in attitude research, who go on to reach the amazing conclusion that the most satisfied employees are those who say they have just the right amount of work. They rated their overall satisfaction with their jobs at a 73 on a 100-point scale. Those with the second highest satisfaction were those who have 'too much work'. The 'too littles' only rated working life as a 32.

## PMS 'costs employers millions'

Yes, it's time for one of those meaningless academic studies that prove absolutely nothing. And this one adds insult to injury by offending 50 per cent of the population.

Lost productivity and missed work time mean premenstrual syndrome (PMS) can greatly increase costs for employers, claims Dr Jeff Borenstein of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.

The doctor, now sleeping on the sofa downstairs at home, assessed PMS symptoms in 374 working women, aged 18 to 45. For

two months, the women recorded any PMS symptoms, along with PMS-related missed work time and lost productivity. Based on the diaries, the researchers concluded that 30 percent of the women had PMS. They had an average 14 per cent reduction in expected work hours per week and a 15 per cent reduction in work productivity, compared to women without PMS. Overall, total indirect employer costs for women with PMS were about £2500 more per year than for women without, the study found.

## 'Overwork culture' damaging business?

UK workers have been sucked into a 'long hours culture' that is bad for them and bad for business.

That's the warning from a 'working time' expert who is urging companies to rethink the way they treat staff working hours.

Kevin White, of Manchester-based Working Time Solutions, believes manufacturers must ditch traditional work patterns and switch to a system of hours worked out over the whole year, called annualised hours.

"People in the UK work the longest hours

in the European Union, but our long-hours culture doesn't make us more efficient and can seriously damage productivity.

Annualisation allows shift patterns to fit production and service requirements, cutting down on costly overtime and labour wastage, but giving employees more acceptable leisure time. Although annualised hours isn't a new concept, it is now coming of age and, as a country, we need to radically rethink the way we work to become more efficient," Kevin said.