

# Hangovers could be real headache for UK productivity



As the new editor of MS Journal, I welcome you to the Winter edition and hope that you find the editorial content stimulating and worthwhile.

As the Journal goes to press this month, 24 hour drinking in licenced establishments all over the UK has become a reality, and the possible effects of binge drinking, loss of productivity due to hungover workers and a possible rise in violent crime are on many people's minds at the moment.

Recruitment specialist Reed has published survey figures on its website that support the view that longer drinking hours will affect UK productivity in the long term. Around 8,500 people were surveyed and most believe that the opportunity to spend longer hours drinking will adversely affect performance in the workplace.

Ten million working days annually are lost through alcohol, costing the British economy around £960 million in lost revenue. In addition, hungover employees who turn up for work waste a further 72 million working days a year (on average workers turn up to work two and a half days a year when hungover). Employees estimate this causes a 27% loss in productivity, and, according to the survey, this equates to a total loss of 19 million working days annually, an extra cost to UK business of £1.8 billion lost working hours. And all this before the start of 24 hour pub and club licences!

Gloomy predictions indeed and worrying for business, especially since the UK's productivity level is already around 8% below the EU average as it is, amounting to some £80 billion of lost output to the economy. However, there is some hope on the horizon - Skills for Business (the network of employer-led sector skills councils) has sought international expertise to assist in halting this worrying decline. Leading experts from around the world are using their experience and knowledge of government policy in other countries, to see what more the UK can do to raise the skill level of the British workforce to improve economic performance.

Two thirds of employers admit they have problems recruiting new employees with the skills they need and most of the general public seems to agree that the gap between the skills that we need and the skills that we have in the workforce is growing.

John Morgan of Catalyst Consulting and Six Sigma expert (see page 32) suggests that to successfully achieve ultimate productivity and excellence companies must 'walk the talk' and not simply say the words. The most successful companies in the world all have genuine leadership and management commitment as the most common features of their businesses. Companies can't afford to be complacent.

On a different subject, the newly redesigned IMS website is now 'live'. Please visit the site and let us have your opinions and general feedback ([www.ims-productivity.com](http://www.ims-productivity.com)). And whether it's to agree or disagree with me I am always pleased to receive comments and contributions from members for the Journal, including letters, news items, editorial ideas, technical articles and features.

In conclusion I would like to wish all IMS members a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year and I look forward to talking to you again in the Spring.

Melanie Armstrong

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