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GUIDANCE . . . Zoe Sinclair

HOW TO SUPPORT GRIEVING STAFF

IT is Dying Matters Week, which offers an opportunity to consider how we approach bereavement and other personal loss while also trying to hold down a job.

While many employers are making efforts to address this sensitive issue, it is not talked about enough in most workplaces.

Three in four employees admit a bereavement has, at some point, affected their performance at work.

Wellbeing expert ZOE SINCLAIR, from mental-health consultancy This Can Happen, says: "Grief is not just about death. It can be a state of mind when one is going through a divorce or any kind of loss."

Here Zoe shares her advice for employers:

1 SHARE BEREAVEMENT POLICY: Ensure all employees are familiar with it, by communicating it at least every six months.

2 LEADERSHIP VISIBILITY: Encourage senior managers to openly discuss grief support and raise awareness.

3 TRAIN MANAGERS AND OTHER STAFF: This can help them build confidence in handling conversations about grief. Consider developing a toolkit to guide discussions at key points, including upon initial notification, during leave and when an employee returns to work.

4 EMPATHETIC LINE MANAGER: Support can include offering verbal condolences, sending a card or flowers, asking how to help, allowing flexibility or granting additional leave.

5 PLAN THOUGHTFULLY FOR A RETURN TO WORK: Address timeline adjustments or role modifications as needed to ease reintegration.

6 ACKNOWLEDGE LONG-TERM EFFECTS: Grief can impact performance over time. Ongoing check-ins can help managers stay attuned to evolving needs.

7 SIGNPOST AVAILABLE RESOURCES: Make employees aware of support and repeat details regularly.

8 FACILITATE PEER SUPPORT: Consider setting up internal drop-in grief circles to provide safe space for shared experiences.

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BUILDING giant TAYLOR WIMPEY has new roles on offer for scaffolders, estimators, cleaners and site managers. See jobs.taylorwimpey.co.uk.

Sunemployment

Edited by Jane Hamilton



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HAPPY RETURNS

NINE in ten people who have taken a career break say they found it hard to get back into the workforce.

To help, the UK's first Career Returners Week will run from May 12 to 16 offering help and support for jobseekers.

Events will take place online and in-person in Dublin, Edinburgh, Leeds, London and Newcastle, with advice from top

firms including the Bank Of England, Sage, the FDM Group and JPMorganChase.

Julianne Miles, co-founder of specialist recruitment platform Career Returners, said: "The involvement of leading employers sends an important message."

For more information, see careerreturners.com/events-and-webinars/community-week-the-big-meetup.

APPLY YOURSELF

EMPLOYERS are warning candidates that using AI in job applications could be seen as "misrepresenting" their skills.

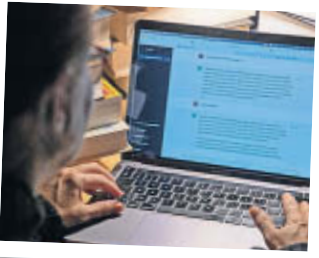
Half of bosses believe young people are "overselling themselves" by using tools such as ChatGPT, the Institute of Student Employers found.

The problem is worst with college leavers, with 52 per cent of employers claiming AI

masked their real skills, but 48 per cent also felt the tech gave a false impression of graduates.

More than 1.2million students applied for under 17,000 graduate vacancies last year, a 59 per cent year-on-year increase that is partly attributed to use of AI.

Stephen Isherwood, joint CEO of ISE, said: "It's important that students are genuine about their capabilities."



JOB SEARCH . . . avoid using AI

YOU'RE WELCOME . . . a receptionist is the human face of a company

LEARN MORE ABOUT KEY EMPLOYMENT SECTOR

HERE'S how to open the door to success as a receptionist.

ENJOY MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY: If you love making someone's day better, you'll thrive in this work.

LET YOUR PERSONALITY COME THROUGH: Great receptionists have something special about them. Bring your authentic self to the job.

STICK AT IT: Don't expect to jump to the top immediately. Build your experience, and gain credibility.

BE CURIOUS: Take the time to learn how everything works – the business, the building, the team. Ask questions and get involved.

UNDERSTAND THE INDUSTRY: Know the language, expectations, and service standards. That awareness helps you stand out for the right reasons.

SAY YES TO OPPORTUNITIES: Whether it's shadowing a colleague, supporting a new project, or stepping out of your comfort zone, just say yes.

Reception class

THEY are the first people you see at any company and they can shape the perception of the entire firm – so why don't receptionists get more respect?

Almost a quarter of a million people work in this role across the country, but there is still a belief it is a junior position you can do without experience.

While it is possible to train as a receptionist for your first job, it is also a specialist position that requires people skills plus outstanding organisation and time-keeping abilities to be successful.

May 14 is National Receptionists' Day, which aims to highlight how vital the job is to the economy and to showcase it as both a career in its own right and as a springboard to more senior jobs.

With the move to hybrid working, the traditional receptionist role

is evolving fast. And there is a rise in demand for the role to become part of a wider "guest services experience" as offices become more like luxury hotels to tempt staff back into the building.

Modern receptionists have to be multifunctional front-of-house professionals who can handle everything from meet-and-greets to tech support and event co-ordination.

Salaries are evolving too, ranging from £18,000 for first jobs to more than £45,000 for senior reception managers at highly prestigious firms.

Hanna Barrett began her career on an airline check-in desk before becoming a receptionist in 2006.

Now, at 44, she is Director of Operations for front-of-house firm Portico.

She says: "Receptionists are small teams with a

big impact. They're often the first point of contact for a business, helping shape reputation, customer satisfaction and client retention."

Hanna, from Chelmsford, Essex, adds: "I left school with very few qualifications, but attitude is everything in this industry."

"You need to be open, kind, emotionally intelligent and resilient. "A good receptionist is someone who genuinely wants to help, who listens well and who can stay calm under pressure."

"You also need to be able to multitask, adapt quickly and show initiative – often while making it all look effortless."

"Once you're in the role, there are so many opportunities to learn, develop and progress, if you're willing to put the effort in." Starting as

a receptionist can also lead to a number of step-up jobs.

These include community managers, who promote workplace culture and keep staff connected in hybrid offices, floor hosts, who provide support and a reassuring presence across office floors, and experience hosts, who create tailored welcomes that reflect a brand's identity.

Transferable skills

But like any role that involves people, it can be challenging. Receptionists are expected to be calm, presentable and professional at all times, even on the most difficult days.

But whether you want to stay on reception or move up the career ladder, you will still learn a wide variety of skills – including communication, problem-solving, customer insight and professionalism under pressure – which are transferable to any sector.

IMPACT . . . Hanna

