



Insight

SMOKING Q & A

Everyone knows that England went smoke-free on 1 July, which means that smoking is banned in most enclosed public places, including workplaces. The ban also extends to public transport and most company vehicles. But what does this mean in practice for employers?

How do I break the news to my staff who smoke?

Many offices are already smoke-free. But if smoking has previously been allowed in the office or workplace, whether this is everywhere or just in a smoking room, staff should be told that this will have to change, even if it may appear perfectly obvious. Their reaction to the change is likely to depend on what arrangements the employer plans to put into place to help them manage their habit, or even help them give it up.

Do I have to provide a smoking shelter?

To discourage staff from congregating in doorways to smoke, some employers are considering installing smoking shelters. Like the bike sheds traditionally used for illicit smoking, these shelters can have a roof, but need to have three sides open to the elements to comply with the regulations. While it may help employee relations, there is no obligation to install these shelters, and the local authority should be consulted before starting work.

What about smoking breaks?

At least to begin with, staff may struggle to get through the working day without a

few smoking breaks. This issue is best addressed in a smoking policy over which all staff should be consulted. There is no obligation to allow staff extra breaks to smoke, but employers who do not give smokers some flexibility to help them adapt to the new regime could be regarded as acting unreasonably, and in extreme case this could give rise to unfair dismissal claims.

What about smoking in private cars used for business purposes?

There is an exemption for private cars if they are used "primarily for private purposes". The scope of this exemption is not clear, but it is possible that an individual's private car could be caught if the business mileage exceeds the mileage done while it is being used for private purposes.

Who is responsible for putting up all these signs?

The obligation to make sure that the right signs are displayed falls on the person managing the smoke-free premises. In most cases this is likely to be the employer. The same applies to company vehicles, which believe it or not, must all display an international no smoking symbol of the prescribed size, unless they are open-topped, or exclusively used by the same individual, who never carries passengers.

What about the rest of the UK?

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

introduced their smoking bans earlier. The basic rules are the same, but there are a few minor differences. For example treatment of company cars appears to be more lax in Scotland, and the sizes of the non-smoking symbol stipulated in Wales is slightly bigger. For that reason is advisable to check the local requirements if your staff are likely to travel outside England in company vehicles.

Conclusion

It is likely that most organisations will want to implement a smoking policy to cope with these issues and other problems that the smoke-free regime is likely to throw up. In an ideal world, this will have been done before 1 July, but it is not too late to start now. All staff likely to be affected by the policy should be consulted before it is finalised. Employers will also need to check their other policies, particularly the disciplinary procedure, to make sure they now reflect a smoke-free Britain.



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PSYCHOMETRIC TESTING: THE SCIENTIFIC INTERVIEWER.

One of the greatest challenges in the recruitment process is knowing whether the person sat across the desk from you is really all that they appear to be. How often have you hired someone that you thought would be a star only to find that three months down the line they just aren't performing?

To make an informed decision about a candidate's suitability you need to be able to judge their past, their present and their future. Their CV will give you the details of their past (albeit potentially a rose tinted view of it) and the interview will give you a feel for where they are now. But how do you predict their future with you?

This is where psychometric testing can help you.

A good psychometric test will give you a detailed picture of key areas such as the candidates thinking style and ability, behavioural traits and, with some tests, also their occupational interests. By looking at all three you can quickly see:

- **Have they got the mental abilities to do the job?**
- **Have they got the right behaviours to succeed at it?**
- **Will they enjoy doing it?**

Do not underestimate this third area. They may be a great fit for what you want them to do, but if they aren't enjoying it they will soon leave to pursue other avenues leaving you back where you started.

To make the most of Psychometric testing it is wise to take a look not just at the candidate, but also at your own staff as well. By testing your staff that are already succeeding (or struggling) you can create a benchmark by which to judge the candidate, a process known as job matching. Statistically, candidates who are hired by using a job matching process are 26% more likely to be in the role after 14 months, so it can have a big impact on reducing your employee turnover and associated costs.

If you have established core competencies as a way of measuring your people then these can also be factored in and reflected in the tests. A number of the tests will allow you to map the behaviours that the test measures onto your core competencies as a further way of checking that the candidate meets all of your needs.

The world of psychometric testing has moved on from the days of written tests and the need for certified experts to translate the results for you. For example, our web based tools offer a detailed and dispassionate view of your candidates that arrives in your inbox fifteen seconds after the candidate completes the test!

Ultimately, it is better to find out that people are wrong for you, and the role you have available, before you spend the money and hire them than once they have started with you!

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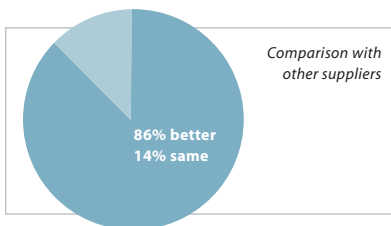


WHAT DID OUR CUSTOMERS SAY ABOUT US IN 2006/07?

To improve our reputation for high quality recruitment services, we measure our performance by way of a client and candidate customer satisfaction survey whenever we place someone in either an interim, permanent or temporary assignment. We recognise the importance of continually reviewing our performance to maintain our market leading position, now that we have been running the system for 3 years, we would like to share some of the feedback with you.

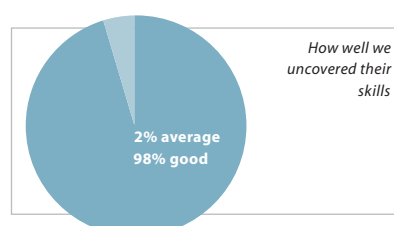
What our clients said about us

86% of our candidates were excellent



What our candidates said about us

99% indicated we provided the best service they had received



Thank you for your feedback, it is valued highly by us and a major factor in helping us improve our service.

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of Insight, our intention is to provide thought provoking comment and information on topical matters related to people in business. The content is copyright of the contributors and the views and opinions expressed are theirs and not necessarily those of Whitehill Pelham Group. If you would like to contribute or receive additional copies of this newsletter, if you would like us to send a copy to a colleague, if you would like to update your details or be removed from the circulation please contact the newsletter co ordinator at newsletter@whitehillpelham.co.uk

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