

BOARD WITH THE WAGES?

A common reward myth states that staff at the top are only motivated by money, but perks also have a key role to play, says **Nick Golding**

When it comes to incentivising high earners, the normal rules of motivation may not always apply. While there is rarely ever one perk that will motivate staff into displaying greater loyalty and commitment to their employer, those at the higher end of the pay scale are less likely to respond to the bonuses and incentive schemes that are effective among staff further down in an organisation.

This is especially true of employees such as city traders, bankers and executives who are not only sitting on large salaries, but also look forward to huge annual bonuses.

There is a line of thought among some employers that high earners are only driven by money. Although this may seem like a reasonable assumption when their hours and salaries are taken into consideration, it may not always be the case.

Recognition schemes

Mark Mercer, learning and development consultant at Mast International, explains: "These people may perform well for money, but it is not this that keeps them motivated and satisfied in a role. If you want loyalty and [for] staff to go the extra mile, other things are important in the long term."

With this in mind, organisations are advised to avoid making the assumption that

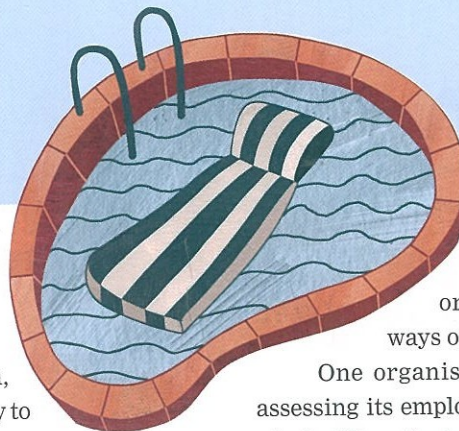
high earners are only motivated by substantial sums of money.

Professor Cary Cooper, occupational psychologist at Lancaster University Management School, agrees: "Funnily enough, cash is not a big motivator for these guys. They are generally competitive types,

they like to be recognised at work and they love a challenge."

Although recognition for high earners can often be overlooked, this is vital for motivating staff at this level. Rik Burrage, managing director at Grass Roots, says: "Recognition applies to high earners as much ➤





TIPS FOR MOTIVATING HIGH EARNERS:

- Employers shouldn't assume all high earners are primarily motivated by money.
- These employees are typically cash rich and time poor, so a concierge service provided by the organisation may be appreciated if it helps staff to organise their lives and make the most of their free time.
- Working long hours means employees with families may need some help with childcare so perks such as on-site nurseries and emergency childcare provisions may help to ease the pressure.
- Don't ignore recognition schemes. These can be a huge motivator for high earners as they are often competitive types who want to be valued within their organisation and respected by their peers.

as anyone else. They want to be seen as successful and they don't just want to be wealthy, [but] there is an automatic assumption that it is all done by cash."

He adds that some employers are now beginning to appreciate the role that recognition schemes can play, and predicts that the next few years will see this type of programme being used in large finance firms where cash is currently king.

"There has been a growing interest in forms of recognition outside of cash, and the recognition schemes which have proven popular elsewhere, are beginning to find a

foothold in large international banks," says Burrage.

Taking away the cash, employers should also try to understand that high-earning employees are often competitive, success-hungry individuals who crave the limelight. This may help firms to keep them motivated by offering some form of career progression, either by moving them between roles or giving them more responsibility.

"Sometimes the change in role may not actually earn them more money, but it [will] give them a type of status within the work community that acts as a motivator," explains Cooper.

To ensure senior employees are recognised and motivated in the correct fashion, employers need to pay particular attention to each individual and find out what it is they

"Motivation is an individual construct and individuals are intrinsically [spurred on] by particular types of roles or tasks, and particular ways of working"

actually value. Failing to do so could result in these high flyers becoming demotivated, warns Cooper.

"These people get bored with just one form of motivation, and they begin to think that all their employer is interested in is raking in the cash for the firm. The employee will become discontent," he explains.

It may be that employees who work long hours are craving a corporate trip abroad to a conference, a team trip, or perhaps a review of their own commission system.

Employers, therefore, need to take an individualistic approach to motivating high earners, as employees will respond differently to various changes and challenges in their working practice.

Ali Gill, business psychologist at talent management consultancy Getfeedback, says: "Motivation is an individual construct and [employees] are intrinsically [spurred on] by

particular types of roles or tasks, and particular ways of working."

One organisation that spends time assessing its employees and understanding what will motivate them from the moment they join the firm is Kleinwort Benson Private Bank. Although it offers annual cash bonuses to employees, many of the bankers are not driven by money. Instead, some prefer a clear career path, and knowing that the company values them.

However, others may want more responsibility in a current role or on a specific project, so it is essential that employees are placed in roles that are suited to them, and which will help to motivate them.

Diane King, director of HR, explains: "Many of these individuals are technical specialists and are not suited to line management. For instance, they don't want

to be managing people, they want to be out there on their own and using their expertise."

Organisations need to maintain a strong level of contact with high earners, because their needs and the factors motivating them will change as their careers progress. Yearly appraisals are good opportunities for management to re-assess what drives high earners.

"Ask them what they want in an appraisal every year. That doesn't mean just going through the motions and ticking the boxes, which is unfortunately what generally goes on in the City," says Cooper.

Employers must also bear in mind the age profile of their high-earning employees as this can have an impact on how they wish to be motivated.

When staff are first appointed to a well-remunerated position, cash is likely to be their primary motivator. After a few years, however, this focus is likely to change for ➤

employees who are cash-rich but time-poor, particularly if they have a family.

"When people first go into the City it is for more money, and it is probably okay to assume that it is the big bucks that motivate for three-to-five years. After that the company should be worrying," says Cooper.

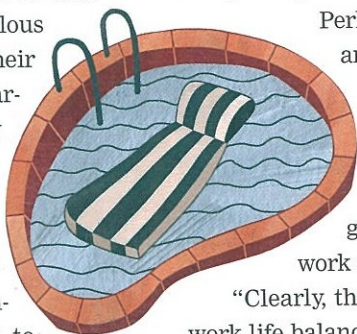
Work-life balance

The growing importance of flexible working arrangements and helping employees to achieve a good work-life balance, therefore, should not be underestimated by organisations employing high earners, particularly those who are no longer in their twenties.

Although this group of employees will have clocked up proven track records during their careers, many will also have families and so will value the opportunity to spend time outside of the office.

"What employers will find is that people in their 20s work ridiculous hours, but when they come to their 30s, they are starting to get married and have children [so] they begin to need some flexibility at work," explains Burrage.

When family commitments begin to take greater priority for these employees, other benefits besides cash may help to motivate and retain them. Childcare benefits that offer employees the chance to see more of their children and that allow staff



to balance being a parent while holding down a high-earning, demanding role will remain popular and relevant to the cash rich, time poor.

Perks such as on-site nurseries and emergency childcare provision, for example, offer employees who spend the majority of their day chained to their desk a greater opportunity to balance work and family.

"Clearly, these [staff] want to get their work-life balance right, and they do tend to work horrendous hours so the married ones are very attracted to this [type of] product," explains Burrage.

CASE STUDY

Driving worker desires

Kleinwort Benson Private Bank tends to motivate staff on an individual basis, by assessing each new employee in order to identify what drives them at work.



This insight is used to develop a clear career progression path within the firm for the bankers, which, combined with bonuses, helps keep them well motivated.

Diane King, director of HR, says: "I think when employees are at the younger end of their career they are motivated by seeing successful staff ahead of them."

Although the bank believes that offering some sort of work-life balance to its high-earning employees is important, King admits that there are some restrictions to this when working in the City. "We are concerned about work-life balance but there needs to be some commitment to the client to do what needs to be done," she says.

Those earning a high income who have little time to spend their hard-earned cash may value help with sourcing goods and services. Concierge schemes, therefore, may be valued when it comes to helping them run their lives, for example, by sourcing goods and services. "The concierge service is a good motivator for these [employees]. They are attracted to spending money effectively, so if the company helps them get the ticket for that show, or that football game, the employee is happy," adds Burrage.

For most employees on an average salary, a concierge service would be considered a luxury. For high-earning staff, however, it can help them to make the most of the limited time they have available ●