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# **A GUIDE TO HELP PREPARE FOR TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY**

**from the  
Open For Business In A Wider World  
Thought and Action Group**



# FOCUS

## OPEN FOR BUSINESS IN A WIDER WORLD

This Thought and Action Group's (TAG) focus is looking at the present and future of engaging a multicultural and global workforce in a changing environment. Uncertainty and changes within external environments can have a massive impact in the workplace – for example, the current wait to know the terms under which the UK leaves the European Union and how that may affect the organisations we work for and the people in them.

The AIM is to shine a light on best practice in organisations that are leading the way with engaging their staff.



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# SCOPE

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TOPICS for the preliminary research included:

- Change Management
- Talent Management
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Legislation



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As we started exploring and scope out our research, we realised this could go in many directions. With Brexit being one of the many current external changes, we decided to start off with a stage of preliminary research and held a Panel Discussion.

Here is a link to the video of our discussion:

<https://dreamingfish-2.wistia.com/medias/kb8k7sjjde>

# SCOPE & AUDIENCE

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We are using our Panel Discussion as a starting point by distilling out the key topics which were discussed and issues that were raised and compiling these in an initial guide.

These topics could form the basis for a more detailed discussion in 1:1 interviews with a cross-section of organisations.

Organisations involved included:

### WHITBREAD



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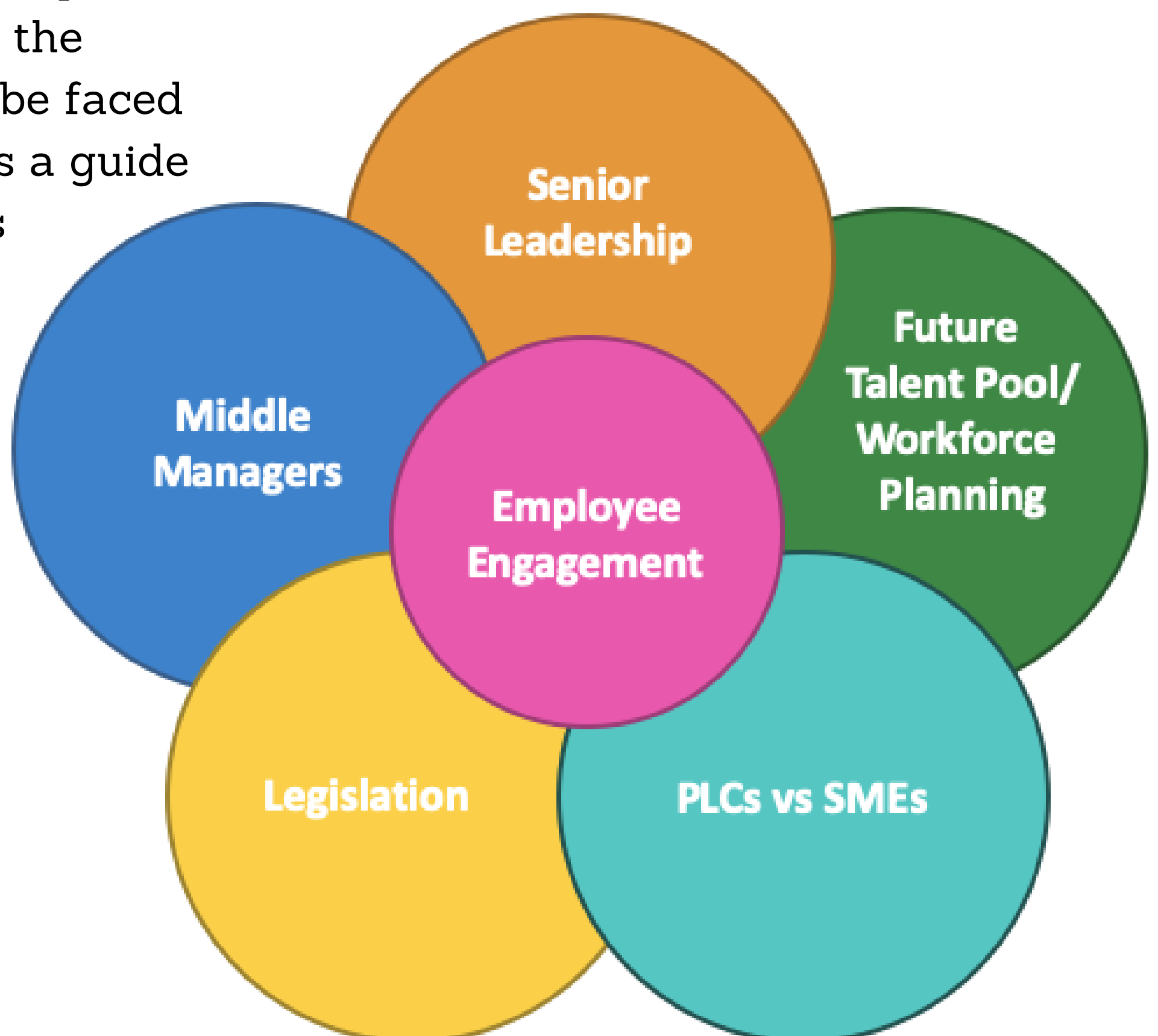


# KEY OUTCOMES

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The panel discussed and highlighted many challenges which it felt needed addressing. The topics below provide a summary and guidance around how organisations can approach and plan for uncertainty and the changes it may be faced with. It serves as a guide to ask questions of leaders, managers and people to help with developing and implementing a solid change strategy.

The **KEY OUTCOMES** and areas of focus centered around the following topics.



# MIDDLE MANAGERS

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How can senior leaders help their middle managers deal with the stress, pressure and expectations caused by uncertainty?



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Senior leaders to provide support to Middle Managers:

- to mentor them and help them through uncertainty
- to enable them to support their team
- to avoid burn-out
- to minimise risk of losing them

Train and enable Middle Managers:

- to delegate effectively
- to understand what employee engagement means
- to build trust
- to communicate effectively
- to understand concerns
- to demonstrate empathy

# SENIOR LEADERS

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How can senior leaders better engage their people to enable them deal with the impact of uncertainty?



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Educate, inform and raise awareness of benefits of employee engagement amongst all Senior leaders:

- to enable leaders to take ownership of employee engagement as a strategic initiative
- to convince Financial leaders of impact on bottom line
- to enable COO to adopt employee engagement in operational objectives

Adopt K.I.S.S. principle:

- to mentor, coach and enable Leaders to build a culture of trust and engagement
- don't overcomplicate things, but rather keep it simple by
  - 'doing what you've said'
  - 'doing more of it'
  - 'telling people about it'

# TALENT POOL

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How can you prepare for potential loss of talent who cannot easily be replaced?



Support Chief Talent Officers with focus on future workforce planning:

- to prepare for long, tedious, costly immigration laws for non-EU citizens
- to face the fierce 'war of talents' due to talent shortage
- to deal with shorter tenure
- to face increasing cost of recruitment
- to deal with labour shortage filled by EU talent
- to engage an ageing population and workforce
- to shape what future talent 'looks like' and what it means for work and personal engagement

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# WORKFORCE PLANNING

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How can senior leaders better plan their future workforce in the digital age?

Support Chief Talent Officers with planning for robotics and AI in the workplace:

- to prepare and retrain large groups of people with low-skilled, repetitive jobs
- to support potentially long-term unemployed
- to plan for more intellectual, innovative and creative jobs in the future



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# PLC'S VS. SME'S

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Is there a difference in how large organisations deal with uncertainty vs. how SME's are affected by it? At which size does it become a challenge?



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Project vs. 'DNA'?

- recognise that PLC's may approach it as a project vs SME's who may be better, quicker and more agile at dealing with it due to lack of 'red tape' and boundaries
- SME's can have conversations, onboard and engage people quicker
- PLC's most likely will have a project owner, structure and a budget

Same impact is achieved:

- if internal measurement and benchmarks are set
- if impact on productivity is measured
- if linked to company objectives

# LEGISLATION

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How do you solve employee engagement with additional challenge of uncertainties and shrinking talent pool?



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Adapt education/university:

- to offer shorter courses as knowledge gained is only valid for 5-7 years

Set baseline for 'ethical' employment:

- to solve 'no way out' situation when only 20% of tech workforce is engaged vs 80% disengaged but tech jobs are the only option
- to address 'unfair' employment deals when percentage of self-employed is increasing but is challenged with low pay and no employee benefits

# SUMMARY

## OPEN FOR BUSINESS IN A WIDER WORLD

This guide is intended to support and direct strategies in times of uncertainty. It can help with situational analysis as part of an audit and to recognise current status and requirements. Insights may be taken forward for planning training, support and operational goals and our advice is to keep it simple: Create a culture of trust by having open, honest conversations.

For further information, to get involved or have a more detailed conversation, please contact one of the co-chairs:

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Guide produced by:  ClearVoice  
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