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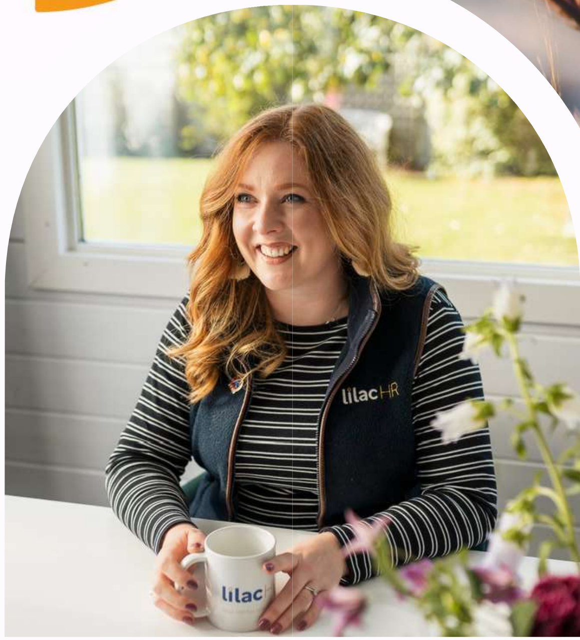
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS SPECIALISTS FOR RURAL BUSINESSES ACROSS THE UK

How Do You Make Employing Staff Genuinely Worth It?



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About Us

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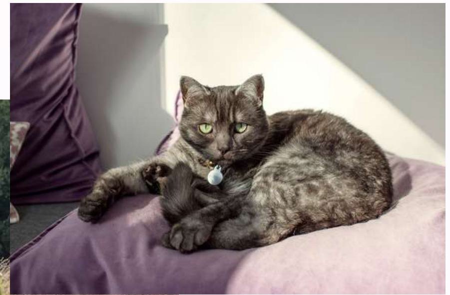
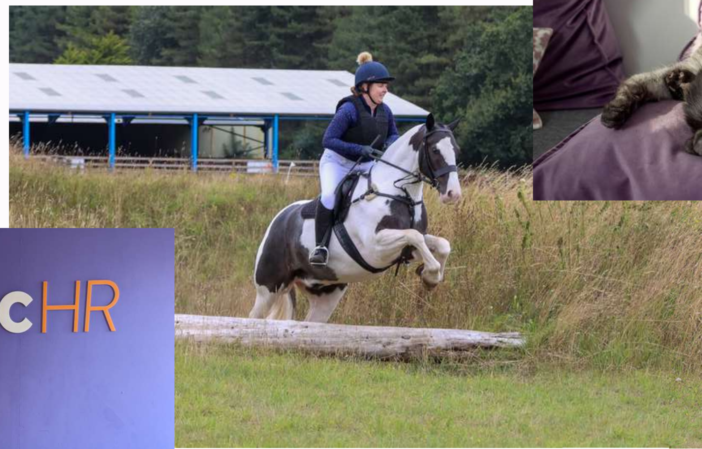
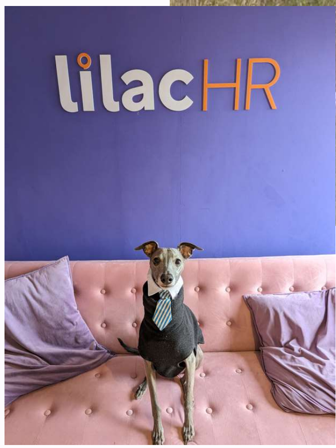
- Boutique HR Consultancy
- Based on the Norfolk/Cambs/Lincs border
- Team of 3 - we all love animals and a glass of wine
- Clients are all small, rural businesses including farms, equestrian centres, plumbers, marketing agencies, bespoke manufacturers, farm shops and restaurants.
- I live at home with my cat, Joey, my whippet, Gunner and my turbo cob, Storm







Introduction

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What We'll Cover

How to get the best ROI for your staff by utilising HR practices

Why It's Important

Costs of employment are going up year on year and it's becoming harder for employers to sustain under perfoming staff.

What You'll Come Away With

A better understanding of how you can make your workforce deliver more value to your business without spending more money to avoid having to reduce your headcount.

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Reality Check

Tight margins, long hours and seasonal pressures can lead to reactive decision making.

The Autumn Budget

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- **Wages**
  - Higher minimum and NLW rates from April & upward pressure on pay across all roles
    - 21+ £12.71
    - 18-20 £10.85
    - 16-17 £8
    - Apprentice £8.00
- **National Insurance**
  - Increased employer National Insurance costs
  - Applies to every employee, not just higher earners
- **Pensions & Statutory payments**
  - Pension contributions go up with wages
  - Statutory costs increase in line with pay (SSP etc)

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“We Need Fewer Staff”

More Freelancers

PROS: no statutory payments and you can stop using them if work slows
CONS: often more expensive, less reliable and IR35 risks associated with them

Zero Hours Contracts

PROS: increased flexibility and ability to reduce wage bill when things are quiet
CONS: Statutory payments still apply, generally get reduced commitment from zero hours workers

Redundancy

PROS: Reduce overall headcount and therefore long term costs
CONS: High costs up front, impacts ability to recruit for 3 months & recudes morale of surviving staff

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Redundancy Should Not be the First Move

- The true cost of redundancy - cash, time, knowledge, morale
- The impact on client experience
- Increased workload for remaining staff & risk of burnout
- Long term damage to your impact to grow or even operate smoothly

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How Do We Get More Value From the Team We Have?

- Shift your mindset from cost cutting to value creation
- ROI in people: what it actually looks like in practice
- Focus on small improvements that make a big difference

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Performance Mangement

Performance Management Should Not:

- Be Paperwork-heavy
- Be Confrontational

Performance Management Should

- Set clear expectations
- Involve regular conversations
- Promote accountability and support

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Using Performance to Increase ROI

- Setting clear standards for roles (sales, production, admin, finance)
- Matching people to the right tasks
- Addressing underperformance early (before it becomes costly)
- Developing staff so fewer problems land on the owner/manager

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The Cost of NOT Managing Performance

- Paying more for the same (or less) output
- Mistakes, inefficiency, and rework
- Owner exhaustion and constant firefighting
- Reputational damage from poor client experience

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Reward Strategies

- Pay rises alone don’t solve performance/engagement issues
- Link reward to contribution - not just length of service
- Assess Cost vs Value for rewards
- Align rewards with what the business needs
- Financial reward (used intentionally)
- Non Financial Rewards
  - Time off
  - Flexibility
  - Responsibility & trust
  - Progression & recognition

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Summary

- Budget pressures are real and aren’t going anywhere - but redundancy is not your only option.
- Better management = better return on staff costs
- Strong performance + smart reward = resilience

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What To Do Next

1. **Get clear on what each role is really there to deliver**
    a. Write a simple “this is what good looks like” list for each role
    b. Focus on outcomes, not just tasks e.g. 5 star customer reviews, minimal returns, organised admin
2. **Have one proper performance conversation with each team member**
    a. What’s going well?
    b. What’s getting in the way?
    c. What would make their job easier and more productive?
3. **Fix one thing that regularly wastes time, money, or energy**
    a. Shop routine
    b. Rota planning
    c. Communication
    d. Ordering / supplies

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One Mindset Shift to Take Away

Stop seeing staff as a fixed cost.
Start seeing them as an investment that needs managing.

Small changes in how you manage people create big changes in cost, performance, and stress.

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Real HR for real people

Questions

Let’s use this time to answer your HR questions or help you with some people drama in your business - others might be able to learn from it!

Shona

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