WM People announces winners of Top Employer Awards 2022

Submitted by: WM People Ltd
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WM People (https://www.wmpeople.co.uk) has announced the winners of its 2022 Top Employer Awards (https://www.wmpeople.co.uk/events/top-employer-awards/), celebrating how employers have continued to respond to the huge challenge and changes of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Awards, now in their 12th year, were presented at an online ceremony on 25th January which was followed by a Q & A on the work life cycle: tackling the career pinch points in a working life, sponsored by Roche and chaired by Jennifer Liston-Smith from Bright Horizons UK. The speakers were David Allison, Co-founder and CEO of Get My First Job; Rob Baker, Founder & Chief Positive Deviant of the award-winning HR consultancy Tailored Thinking and author of job crafting book Personalisation at work; Bridget Workman, CEO of The Changing Work Company; Siran Cao and Mel Faxon, co-founders of Mirza; and Nebel Crowhurst, People & Culture Director at Roche.

The categories in this year's fiercely contested Awards, sponsored by NHS Professionals, reflect the main priorities of many HR managers over the last year. There were eight categories: Best for Mental Health, Best for Returners, Best for Career Progression for Women, Best for Flexible Working, Best for Family Support, Best for SMEs, Best for Older Workers and Best for Diversity and Inclusion.

Winner of the Overall Top Employer Award, based on the winners of all the other categories, was McDonald's Restaurants Ltd for the second year running. The judges felt that, in another year when hospitality has been so badly hit, McDonald's has shown they have not taken their foot off the pedal and truly live their values from the CEO down. Its approach is very intersectional and inclusive. The judges felt there is a sense that McDonald's has done everything it can to promote a good work culture.

McDonald's Restaurants Ltd also won the Best for Career Progression for Women, sponsored by Chartered Management Institute. The award celebrates employers who demonstrate initiatives aimed at developing women's leadership potential. The judges were really impressed by McDonald's comprehensive approach and the evidence of joined up thinking. It is making good progress on women's career progression in senior roles with its initiatives fully backed by the CEO and has a zero gender pay gap. It has strong case studies and covers career progression from different starting points, with strong evidence of an intersectional approach.

Other winners included:

Best for Mental Health, sponsored by Kearney: Aggregate Industries.

This award is for employers who demonstrate initiatives aimed at supporting and equipping line managers to deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

The judges were really impressed by Aggregate Industries' extensive offering in a challenging sector for its focus on engagement with all employees, financial wellbeing and early intervention. It has trained a sizable number of mental health first aiders and offers comprehensive support. Its emphasis on

addressing male suicide in the construction industry is important and it has very powerful case studies.

Sunbelt Rentals was highly commended for showing a genuine level of care for its employees beyond the confines of the workplace, for extending mental health training from top down and providing good financial support. The judges felt it has clearly put in a lot of thought on how to reach people with strong mental health messages.

Best for Returners, sponsored by Resource Solutions: Tech Returners

This award is for employers who demonstrate stand-out programmes or initiatives aimed at returners – those who have taken a career break and are looking to get back into the workplace.

The judges liked the fact that Tech Returners' programme is very accessible, being free and location agnostic, and that it leads to genuine employment possibilities, provides quality support and helps employers fill tech shortages. They also commended attempts to remove bias in the hiring process through promoting profiles over cvs. They felt there is a real sense of passion driving Tech Returners' mission.

Best for Flexible Working, sponsored by McDonald's Restaurants Ltd: Roche

This award is for employers who show how they promote and manage flexible working and encourage a flexible culture in their organisation.

The judges were impressed by Roche's How We Roll programme and how its emphasis on flexibility and autonomy mean employees are empowered to do whatever works best for them and don't need permission to do it. Rolled out to 2.5K staff over the pandemic, it is based on principles of wellbeing, transparency, productivity and choice and moves away from time and place and towards how people deliver their role best.

Best for Family Support: John Lewis

This award is for employers who demonstrate how their policies and practice support working families and carers.

The judges really liked John Lewis' sense of purpose, the equal parental leave - a first in retail, its part-time advisory group, its comprehensive offering, including on pregnancy loss and its proactive parents network. Its flexible first approach is industry-leading and the commitment to family support comes from the top.

Best for Diversity & Inclusion, sponsored by the Chartered Management Institute: Financial Services Compensation Scheme

This award is for organisations who demonstrate actions taken to ensure equality of opportunity for all.

The judges were very impressed by the evidence of the effort FSCS has put into inclusion, particularly

with regard to women and race, the way it is promoted from the CEO downwards and the clear engagement of the CEO as well as evidence of proactive outreach to women, its policy on dependents leave and its high level of positive feedback from employees.

Highly commended as one to watch was Inmarsat who the judges said is in the early stages of its D & I journey, but has clearly put in a lot of effort in many different areas. They highlighted in particular its work with RADA for women's career progression, its mentoring and schools outreach and its zero tolerance of discrimination.

Best for Older Workers, sponsored by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme: QA

This award is for employers who are leading the way on best practice for older workers and can demonstrate the impact of that work.

The judges really liked how QA is doing a lot to give older workers recruitment opportunities and to help them get their confidence back if they have taken time out. It provides menopause support, has extended its support for older workers outside its own boundaries and supports older workers through learning provision, an important issue given older workers are often overlooked when it comes to training.

Best for SMEs: Tech Returners

This award is for SMEs who demonstrate a real commitment to work life balance practices.

The judges really liked Tech Returners' focus on training, hybrid working, including their flexible working manifesto and their use of asynchronous communications. There is a strong sense that it treats its people like adults and does not micro manage them.

The Award judges were: Gillian Nissim, founder of WM People*; Andy Lake, editor of Flexibility.co.uk; Jennifer Liston-Smith, Head of Thought Leadership at Bright Horizons Work + Family Solutions; Bukola Adisa, Founder/CEO of Career Masterclass, which helps women and BAME professionals progress in the workplace; Patrick Thomson, Policy Institute Director at the Shaw Trust; Dave Dunbar, Head of Digital Workspace at the Department for Work and Pensions; and Clare Kelliher, Professor of Work and Organisation at Cranfield School of Management. They spoke after the ceremony about their personal highlights among the entries and about what they see as the major issues for 2022.

Gillian Nissim, Founder of WM People*, said: "It has been another very challenging year for employers, with huge swings from lockdown and concerns about mental health and safety to worries about staff shortages. We think it is important that we take time to look back on all that has been achieved and celebrate all that hard work. The quality of entries to this year's Awards has been very high, with employers showing they have gone the extra mile to put people at the centre of their business model. Many employers have demonstrated a deep commitment to embedding diversity and inclusion, to ensuring the well being of their people and to building resilient organisations and have been able to demonstrate the mutual benefits of doing so. We hope this will continue to drive innovation and progress so that everyone is able to fulfill their potential at work."

*WM People brings together workingmums.co.uk (https://www.workingmums.co.uk/), workingdads.co.uk (https://www.workingdads.co.uk) and workingwise.co.uk (https://www.workingwise.co.uk). A copy of the Best Practice Report based on last year's Top Employer Awards is available here. The next Best Practice Report will be out in late Spring 2021.

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