

# the source

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## howling at the moon

A t-shirt with a picture of three wolves howling at the moon became a bestseller at Amazon last month [May]. It doesn't seem like the most natural thing to appear on the online store, but as Wendy Mansell, HR Director for UK and Ireland put it, "we're not just an online books retailer".

Speaking at ResourceBank's 14th HR Directors' Forum in May, Wendy described the sheer growth of the fifteen-year-old company as phenomenal. Amazon now sells \$20bn (£13bn) worth of goods a year ranging from fridges to diamonds, with new possibilities being explored all the time.

### reportage from HR forum in May

"The organisation works at a fast pace. I have redefined the word 'fast'," Wendy said, who joined the company 18 months ago. During last year's Christmas peak period, Amazon employed 20,700 workers, including temps, and on the peak day shipped 5.6m parcels worldwide – Wendy and her team even ended up on the production line wrapping presents!

ResourceBank



Wendy Mansell, HR Director – UK & Ireland, Amazon.co.uk

## delegate quotes

**“The speech was very interesting and the event has been great networking. Wendy outlined that HR is there to adapt and change to what the business needs.”**

Katharine Jakeman, Head of Reward and HR Shared Services at clothes retailer Monsoon Accessorize

**“There were some touching moments in Wendy’s speech: employee recognition can actually be a simple badge on an employee’s phone. We have recognition schemes with mystery shoppers, using bespoke reward systems to drive performance, but actually, could we be more cost-effective?”**

Louisa Hogarty, UK Head of Operational HR at food travel firm SSP

**“The event has proved that recruitment is still a burgeoning business. But because we have this wealth of talent and lots of candidates for jobs, we have got to become better at recognising talent.”**

Brian Fyfe, former Head of HR at military and maritime training provider VT Flagship

Yet she was quick to remind more than 60 delegates at the event, hosted at the Institute of Directors, about Amazon’s humble beginnings: Chief Executive Jeff Bezos began packing and selling books in his own garage.

And she strives to keep her 15-strong HR team ground to the business.

“It’s crucial that HR sticks to the basics. As organisations continue to evolve, HR continues to focus on recruitment, but as we grow up, it’s more about engagement and talent,” Wendy told the Source.

But Amazon, like any other business, is not without its challenges. Staff are constantly being approached by rival firms, so it was crucial HR kept its eye on the ball in keeping staff engaged and committed to the job.

“Our people are headhunted constantly. Now that we’ve got talent, how do we retain that talent? We need to constantly invest in how people can stay in the organisation.”

Over the last two years, the firm has put a lot of effort into making sure people had clear development plans. It introduced a reward and recognition scheme, which included cost-effective

incentives such as desk phone icons that people got for a doing a good job.

“We spent time working out what detail was right for our organisation, but the outcome [of engaged staff] is the same.”

However, recruitment still accounts for a large chunk of HR’s day job, Wendy said. Amazon prides itself on being extremely hard to get into: candidates are put through a tough interview process with anything up to 15 interviewers from across the business, putting hopefuls to the test.

However, Wendy insisted the high hiring bar was a good thing although she does admit it can provide challenges for recruitment partners, including ResourceBank.

▼ *Jane Watkinson, Head of HR, Home Retail Group & Brian Fyfe, former Head of HR, VT Flagship*



# should you outsource now?



▲ Delegates at May's HR Forum

“Our challenge is getting the right people in the first place. Once we have sold the Amazon story to candidates we then tend not to lose people.”

Amazon, which is still recruiting during the recession, is now focused on preparing for the eventual upturn in the economy. “We’ve not had to change our HR strategy due to the economic climate. We’ve focused even more on retaining talent – we need to ensure when the economy improves and the upturn comes, people still want to stay with us – our high hiring bar is part of that.”

## Probably not, you are too late!

**Read on...** Businesses that have already outsourced recruiting functions are now seeing some unforeseen benefits of working with a partner that shares their pain. These are not untypical conundrums – ‘we need to continue to recruit but face commercial pressure to reduce activity and cost’ ‘we need to scale down recruitment but want to maintain the function for the upturn’. A true partner will react and reflect prevailing market conditions and I like to think RBR have done this with little fuss and immediate impact.

RBR has not been unaffected by the current conditions but has been fortunate to work with partners that can see further than the next six

months. There is still a lot of recruitment taking place but skills and experience have been transferred across teams, resourcing experience has been reversed to assist with outplacement and assessment centres transformed into development centres.

## Would traditional resourcing functions have coped?

Maybe, but we are now working with some companies that desperately need to outsource their resourcing function but face the painful reality of reducing team size or quickly retraining team members to cope with the new resourcing world. Where would you rather be?

**Richard Pearson**, *Managing Director*

## news...

### Applications reach record levels!

It's a sign of the times when you advertise a warehouse position for only 48 hours and receive nearly 500 applications!

This is one of the new challenges now faced by some of our Resourcing Centres as competition for roles increases at an unprecedented pace.

**Michelle Rowlands**, *Account Development Manager for the Magnet*

Group and Aga Resourcing Centres based in Telford, has seen the volume of applications steadily increase since the end of last year.

Michelle reports “Our careers website analysis tools and own database clearly demonstrate the shift in the candidate market. During April the number of people visiting one of our careers websites was over 500 per day – a 50% increase on last year's figure.”

# elementsofexcellence!

Our Employee Award is launched!



The Employee Award reinforces our company values as outlined in the ResourceBank 'Elements' and enables us to acknowledge the actions of colleagues who have demonstrated exceptional

qualities in effort or achievement.

This in turn provides great contribution to the continuous development of our high performing teams.

The award will be presented on a quarterly basis and colleagues are encouraged to nominate each other.



The first recipient of this prestigious award was Hermione Peach, Project Manager – World Duty Free RC – well done Hermione!

## clientnews



Following the successful integration into new owners Autogrill,

World Duty Free (WDF) was launched as the brand for the airport retail arm of the business operating from all terminals at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool to name but a few.

ResourceBank is delighted to be extending the recruitment service to cover all of these locations for WDF plus their new head office based at Bedfont Lakes.

The introduction of the behavioural skills questionnaire has helped make the process slicker and smarter so that the average interview to offer timescale is 1 in every 2.4 candidates within a three week period.



Royal Liver Assurance

Royal Liver Assurance

represents a financial services business successfully bucking the trend in this arena. As they continue to grow their market position they are implementing a strategy to outsource management of IT systems to deliver long term value and efficiency. To support this ResourceBank's team of three are conducting a project to recruit nine IT professionals over a period of eight weeks.

Of 1,000 applications so far 98 candidates have received a telephone interview, 33 making the shortlist and 12 receiving a face to face interview with Royal Liver.

## ResourceBank

outsourced recruitment solutions



ResourceBank are proud to be working with Kerry Foods in the UK undertaking a review of existing recruitment practice and helping build their employer brand in the recruitment marketplace.

Sue Camm, HR Controller – Kerry Foods quotes "Although our project is still in its infancy, we have already explored a number of ways of improving both the quality and consistency of our recruitment. Our main aim is to ensure candidates, despite interview outcomes, are left with a positive view of our business – the ResourceBank team share our philosophy.

ResourceBank have, without fail, been a pleasure to work with; always professional and keen to develop a good understanding of our business and people."