

## NEWS BRIEFS



### How crucial is mentorship in the #MeToo era?

Executive leaders may be “moving in the wrong direction” when it comes to empowering women in the #MeToo era. Three in five male managers on average, or 60%, are ‘uncomfortable’ with mentoring women, according to the latest workplace survey by Lean In and Survey Monkey. That number is up from 46% last year. This hesitation to include women in professional activities, such as one-on-one meetings and social functions, may potentially lead to more women being excluded from growth opportunities. “Whether this is driven by sexism or because men (perhaps unconsciously) gravitate toward helping other men, the result is that women miss out,” the analysts said.



### Employer launches ‘Australian-first’ VR training

St John Ambulance Victoria has launched the new virtual reality CPR training, ‘SJx’. The new training course is an “Australian-first”. Victorian students going through the real-life 360-degree video scenarios and completing an integrated questionnaire will be accredited with the Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation certificate. The technology showcases two real-life scenarios for students to respond to using 360 virtual reality; one scenario takes place in a car park, while the other is at a childcare centre. Research has shown that students who are trained through virtual reality answer questions correctly 82% of the time, which is 8% higher than the average respondent.



### Inside CBA's innovative new work environment

Commonwealth Bank of Australia’s 10,000 workers have recently moved into a brand-new building, Axle, at Sydney’s new technology and innovation hub, South Eveleigh. Global architecture firm Woods Bagot

designed the tenancy fit-out with the goal of providing employees with the best tools, techniques and spaces for a mindset of innovation, to bring ideas to life. “We realised that the bank’s need for flexibility and its ‘ABW’ portfolio could be achieved with simplicity,” said Woods Bagot’s global workplace design leader, Amanda Stanaway.



### Aussie workers prioritise learning new skills

Unnecessary meetings and office politics are the main offenders preventing Australian employees from getting their work done. Indeed, achieving workplace happiness is driven by the ability to learn something new (38%), the desire for more challenging work (31%), and having the ability to actively engage more with colleagues (20%), according to Australian workers. The research carried out by Tourette Syndrome Association of Australia revealed the most desired aspects of taking part in team-building exercises: workers put a high importance on engaging with colleagues (49%), educational activities (32%) and active movement (25%).



### Women perform better in warmer offices

Women reportedly perform better on cognitive tasks when they work in warmer offices, according to new research published in the journal *PLOS One*. In contrast, men are said to perform better when the office temperature is cooler. Agne Kajackaite and her research team in Berlin asked nearly 550 female and male participants to complete verbal and mathematical tasks at varying room temperatures. The results showed women were more focused and productive when the temperature was set higher. They answered 1.75% more math questions and 1% more verbal questions correctly for every one-degree Celsius warmer the room became.

# Should HR encourage exercise at work?

Karen Gately, founder of Corporate Dojo, tells *HRD* that a healthy body enables employees to perform at their best

The link between the strength of our mind and the standard of our performance is irrefutable, according to Karen Gately, founder of Corporate Dojo.

Gately adds that prioritising consistent exercise in order to have a healthy body and mind is essential for peak work performance.

“When people are mentally strong, they are entirely more likely to be engaged and perform at their best,” she says.

Indeed, co-authors Robert J. Anderson and William A. Adams surveyed more than one million leaders worldwide for the research in their book, *Scaling Leadership: Building Organizational Capability and Capacity to Create Outcomes that Matter Most*.

They found that exceptional leaders exercised on a regular basis, and commented afterwards on how important this was to helping them in their leadership role.

In particular, they found that the days they did not exercise were the days they were less effective. They also learnt that the days they found tough at work were the days they should increase their exercise.

The daily exercise was not just about being fit and healthy; it was about improving mood and cognitive ability as it accentuated their ability to think.

According to Gately, in an ideal world people should prioritise their own physical and mental health.

Ideally, they should make time for exercise in their day. However, the reality is that a lot of people struggle to find balance in their lives,

especially if they are in demanding jobs that involve long hours.

“Most of us understand the struggles of maintaining an exercise regime, despite the endless benefits for our mind, body, spirit and success,” says Gately.

“Creating the opportunity for people to exercise in the workplace, or on work time, can go a long way towards helping them find the motivation and discipline they need to incorporate exercise into their lives.

“As an HR professional, the most important role you can play is to encourage managers to see why investing in the physical and mental

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health of their team benefits not only the individual but also the organisation.”

According to Gately, exercise is energising and helps people choose a better attitude.

“Reflect on the benefits you have felt from going out for a walk, run or gym class during work hours,” she says.

“Just getting outside for a short burst of exercise can make a big difference to our ability to clear our mind, release tension and re-energise our spirit.

“An exercise session in the workplace might be just what people need to recharge and get back to working at a productive level. Thanks to the release of endorphins, exercise provides a natural boost to our mood and a more energised outlook.”



**Alex Hattingh**  
Chief people officer  
**EMPLOYMENT HERO**

#### Fast fact

In 2019, 73% of companies expect significant disruption, and 99% are taking action to prepare for the future of work, according to Mercer's *Global Talent Trends* study.

## Q&A

# How to develop toxic employees

### ● When one's best talent/highest performer is a toxic employee, how does an employer make a call on what to do in this situation?

If you hold your values and purpose high as an organisation, retaining the highest performer never outweighs living your values. A toxic employee is just that. They will ruin your culture, and in a short space of time too. People and teams will also notice that you are allowing toxic behaviour to go on for the 'high performer', and this will make people ask why, as managers, you are not being consistent with your values.

You need to be brave, take the risk and move on the toxic person: first make them self-aware of their behaviour as they may not realise the impact they are having and could correct it, but if they are intentionally being toxic, you need to move them on from your organisation.

### ● Do you think employees can become toxic because they are not suited to a particular work environment? What are some ways employers can help prevent this and stop toxic work environments from flourishing?

Definitely. Every manager and leader needs to be observant when it comes to negative gossip or a toxic employee. Make it part of your weekly leadership discussions at every level: are there any red flags? This topic should highlight anyone who might be acting in a toxic way.

You also need to establish a safe environment for employees to talk about a toxic employee who is impacting them personally. This can be as simple as asking in a weekly one-to-one, “Are there any red flags in the team that you think I don't know about?”

Be observant as a manager. If someone is not themselves, ask them if there is anything going on that you can help with. This can help draw out if one of your team members is being drawn into toxic conversations.

Also, make sure you are covering your values and behaviours during orientation/induction/onboarding, to set expectations.

Be mindful of an employee's fit within your culture during probation so that you observe any behaviour that may be the result of the 'misalignment' of an individual.

The onus is also on you as a manager to ask during the first few months how a new employee is feeling about their role and the organisation. This way employees will feel supported if they are struggling to navigate their way around – they know they can ask questions, and this will hopefully negate any negativity around the culture of your organisation.

