

The human touch



Welcome to the fifth edition of the CIMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) Excellence in Leadership portfolio. This series aims to inspire and enlighten you by drawing on the expertise of leading business figures and highlighting some of the key issues affecting the global corporate community. In this issue, we focus on the subject of human capital. This is a big topic to cover but we hope that we've raised some salient points and located some interesting solutions to consider.

A company is nothing without its people. The importance of recruiting and retaining talent to drive a business's strategic vision is perhaps more critical now than ever before. A tight labour market, persistent skills shortages and changing demographics mean that organisations are having to become increasingly innovative in their approach to talent management. Competition for highly skilled professionals is as intense in the finance function as anywhere else and, with no sign of the war for talent abating, business leaders ignore this issue at their peril.

These are challenging times, but there are a lot of good ideas out there. One of CIMA's most prominent members, Hanif Lalani, argues that companies should be broadening their outlook when it comes to recruitment (Build with the best, p10). The group finance director of BT says communications technology is now making it possible for businesses to tap the global talent pool and create a worldwide network of finance professionals via the web.

The qualities required of up-and-coming finance professionals are also changing. These days, companies like Barclays value skills in communication and leadership just as much as analytical talents. Jill Robinson, Barclays' head of finance business management, discusses how the organisation is recruiting with this in mind as well as tailoring its training programmes accordingly (The talent trap, p14). With a graduate drop-out rate of just 2%, this strategy is evidently hitting the mark.

Of course, recruitment is only half the challenge. Keeping hold of your best brains is just as important. Four leading firms: Ford, T-Mobile, eBay and Amba Research share some of their retention secrets (Next in line, p44) while Emma Parry and Shaun Tyson from the Cranfield School of Management's Human Resource Research Centre discuss how talent management can be structured to improve a company's return on investment (Power to the worker, p22).

This issue also delves into other hot topics currently being discussed in the world's boardrooms. We look to the east and the growing global market for Islamic finance. Demand for Shari'ah-compliant services is currently growing at around 20% a year and CIMA recently became the first professional chartered accountancy body to offer a global qualification in Islamic finance. Dr Mohd Daud Bakar, CEO of the International Institute for Islamic Finance, speculates on how this sector might develop in the future and what role London might play (The future of finance, p66).

Finally we look to the future. Among a number of pressing issues, we discuss why companies must build sustainability into their strategic planning if they are to combat climate change effectively and we find out how BSkyB became the world's first carbon neutral media company (Take the plunge, p62). Another high profile CIMA member, HSBC's group finance director Douglas Flint, looks at what the future holds for pension schemes together with the pros and cons of disposal (Hedge your bets, p48). Also looking at the future of pensions, CIMA is soon to release its new report 'Apocalyptic demography? Putting longevity risk in perspective.'

I sincerely hope you enjoy the subjects discussed in this issue and that we have given you enough food for thought until our next issue in June.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Tilley". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Charles Tilley
Chief Executive
CIMA

Your feedback is important. If you have any thoughts about the articles covered in this issue or suggestions for features that we could address in future editions of the publication, please do not hesitate to contact the editor: michaeljones@spgmedia.com