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**SARA Success**

Back in Spring 2008 Lynne helped Saltburn Animal Rescue Association to employ their first member of staff, their Animal Sanctuary Manager.

Since then, the charity has grown from strength to strength, to such an extent that at the start of this year Lynne was helping them again, this time to employ an Assistant Sanctuary Manager.

The process was the same as last time, helping them develop the job description, person specification and interview questions as well as acting as a critical friend during the interview process.

The new Assistant Sanctuary Manager started at the beginning of March and we wish him, and the rest of the charity, all the best.

**The Skills Bill**

Within the 13 Bills launched in the Queen’s Speech last year there were a range of measures mentioned to strengthen learning skills, including the new Children, Skills and Learning Bill.

The aim of the Bill is by 2013 to provide an apprenticeship for every young person who wants one and who has achieved a basic level of numeracy and literacy.

The responsibility for managing 16-19 education will lie with Local Authorities and they will have to ensure that by 2015 all 17 and 18 year olds not in work are either training or in full time education.

Within the bill any employer who takes on a 16 or 17 year old for more than 20hrs a week must check that they are learning before they begin employment. They need to agree reasonable hours for youngsters to train elsewhere if they do not run accredited courses themselves.

A new Skills Funding Agency will replace the Learning and Skills Council next year responsible for adult skills provision. All adults in England will have the legal right to funding for basic skills courses and their first Level 2 vocational qualification from August 2009. 19 to 25 year olds will also be entitled to funding for their first Level 3 qualification.

Employees will also have the right to request time off for training to improve skills which are relevant to their jobs, even if this does not lead to an accredited qualification. These requests must be seriously considered by the employer.

During an economic downturn when cuts are having to be made, it is easy to view training as something you can do without in the short term. However, it is crucial to invest in training at this time. Organisations who up-skill their workforce will come out stronger and more competitive when the recession is over.

New funding streams are coming on-line, accessed through Business & Enterprise North East (BE-NE), which will help support bespoke, non-accredited training.

**Pet&r** is NEESPR registered and ring-fenced for this new funding within the North East and can therefore work on these types of project with you. So, if you feel you could benefit from this, look at our courses to see if we can help, and then contact BE-NE to see if you can get funding to help cover the costs.

[www.businesslinknortheast.co.uk](http://www.businesslinknortheast.co.uk)

**Lynne and the FSB**

Both Lynne and Peter have been members of the Federation of Small Business (FSB) for over 3 years. Two years ago Lynne decided she wanted to become more involved and last November she became Vice-chair of the Teesside Branch and is attending the Annual Conference in Wales as the branch voting delegate.

She has also been asked to join the Procurement Sub-committee, to look at helping small and medium sized businesses understand and access Local Authority procurement opportunities.

**Pet&r** has worked extensively with Local Authorities and PCT’s and has filled in and evaluated numerous Pre-Qualification Questionnaires (PQQ’s) and Invitation To Tender Documents (ITT’s). Though they share many common features, each authority seems to have slightly different forms and approaches, so negotiating them can be daunting.

To help businesses deal with these issues, **Pet&r** has written the Practical Simplicity Guide to PQQ’s and Tender Documentation which is available as a pdf download from the Resources section of our website.

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## Case Study – A4U

A4U is a charitable organisation based in Shropshire who's aim is to provide support and guidance to people with any form of disability to enable them to make decisions about their own lives. The organisation had been through a number of substantial changes over the last few years and they needed to re-focus and identify where they wanted to go as an organisation.

**Pet&r** were asked by A4U to help the board of trustees reflect on their role and involvement with the charity and help them develop more effective team behaviours.

We organised a one day participative workshop help at an accessible local venue where the board could clarify their common purpose, their contribution in the future, explore good governance, assess current performance, identify funding providers and individual talents and team roles.

A pre-course questionnaire was completed by the participants which identified team roles and in particular which key roles were missing and therefore needed to be filled to enable the team to work more effectively.

During the day participants carried out **Pet&r's** Dark Skies analysis to answer specific questions such as 'what were you most frustrated by?' 'what are you most proud of?' and 'what would you like to see happen?' They also looked at the skills they have and identified additional skills they needed, which agencies and stakeholders mattered to the charity and how the trustees think they view A4U.

Finally they identified a number of priority actions, with timescales, to enable them to meet the objectives they had set.

The day was very intense but a number of good things came out of it and all participants thought it was an extremely useful exercise. They found having both partners from **Pet&r** present, with their combined knowledge and experience of trustee boards and teams, particularly useful.

## CSR is.....

..... Corporate Social Responsibility.

The basis of CSR is that organisations should recognise that their activities have a wider impact on the society in which they operate and that society has an impact on them.

The emphasis on encouraging practices that are over and above any statutory obligations relating to business activities. The aim is to improve the quality of life for society at large through the activities of the organisation.

Because CSR involves all business activities, any company strategy relating to CSR must be fully integrated into all the activities of your business, and take a balanced approach in relation to the economic, social and environmental factors involved in your business.

It is therefore vital that you involve the whole business and encourage input from all employees, partners and stakeholders to ensure whole organisation buy-in.

Within any CSR Policy you should look at employment and welfare practices, environmental practices including the activities of your supply chain and production methods, as well as any voluntary or community work you do or could do.

You might wonder, why bother, but there are distinct advantages to CSR. Better employee conditions leads to improved recruitment and retention levels, improved practices can lead to financial savings and increasingly CSR is seen as added value within Public Procurement exercises.

**Pet&r** can look at your current activities and help you develop Environmental and CSR policies that are practical and relevant to your organisation. If you would like to know more about CSR and how we can help contact Lynne or see the website for our Practical Simplicity Guide to CSR.

## New Legislation

The statutory holiday entitlement for employees will change on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 to 5.6 weeks per year. The holiday entitlement can include bank holidays.

From 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009 there will be a new law for handling discipline, grievance and dismissals. The existing 3 step procedure will be repealed and in their place will be a newly-revised Acas Code of Practice.

The approach to dispute handling will be streamlined and based on the principles of flexible and timely resolution with tribunals making decisions on the basis of what is 'fair and reasonable'.

For more information on these issues go to [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) and [www.berr.gov.uk](http://www.berr.gov.uk).

## Courses and Services offered

HR Consultancy, Research, Advice & Guidance; Recruitment and Selection Testing; Policy & Strategy Development; Management Coaching & Mentoring; IIP Support & Corporate Action Planning.

Leadership, Management, & Supervisory Development; Customer Care & Interpersonal Skills; Equality & Diversity Training; Conflict Resolution, Harassment & Bullying.

Work Team Health Checks and Repair Clinics, Recruitment Training, Interviewing and Selection Testing, Mental Toughness Assessment.

Public Consultation, Social Research, & Event Management. Sustainable Development and Sustainable Lifestyle Training, Volunteer Development.

***For a practical, focused and cost effective approach to a wide range of HR issues leading to real and sustainable change in workplace culture.***

***If you would like to know more about our work, please visit the web-site or contact us.***