

WINNING WORKERS

Workers aspire to live lives they have reason to value, says a researcher from Victoria University.

Dr Jane Bryson says her research study showed workers want to be capable humans – not just skill sets for the workplace. “Human contributions to society are not solely through work, and organisational contributions to society are not solely economic,” she says.

Bryson’s team ran a five-year research project exploring the conditions that are required to get the best out of people in the workplace. Employers need a focus on human capability to ensure their workers are happy and their organisation is productive long term, the university research found.

She says that other than legal compliance, there is currently no accepted set of principles guiding employers. “Management and human resource management practices are largely buffeted along on the tide of ‘best practice’, personal beliefs, or meeting the demands of a business strategy, where the needs of business survival and shareholder prosperity often outweigh other considerations. Hence, good managers and supervisors sometimes find themselves in the situation of being ‘custodians of bad practice.’”

One part of the study, which involved more than 200 interviews carried out across 30 organisations, asked participants about the drivers and barriers to being able to develop capability in the workforce. Results showed it was better to be in a permanent job, which offered



more stability and greater willingness by employers to invest in development opportunities. It was also better for organisations to take a long-term view rather than prioritising short-term gain.

“One of the interesting things we found going into factories was that those that had, say, invested in literacy and numeracy training for their staff

were actually getting much more loyalty and productivity from their staff. Even though on the face of it these staff are easily replaceable, it still makes sense to invest in their development.”

Bryson’s research suggests allowing workers to take part in decision-making and creating a workplace environment which encourages development. **M**

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professionals across the country to get together, share experiences and keep up to date with current trends.

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