



Ashley Kate
HR & Finance

HR Director Boardroom Summary

August 2024



Chaired by

EVERSHEDS
SUTHERLAND

Speakers:



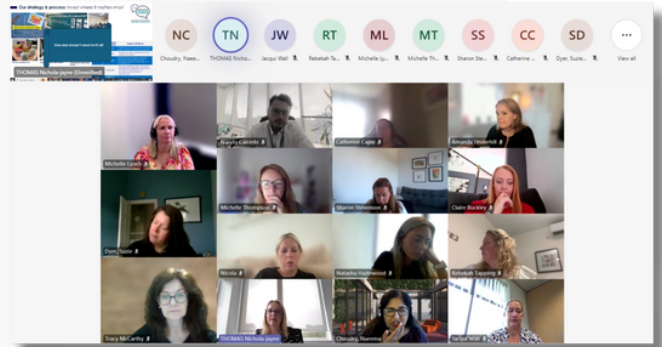
Naeema Choudry
Partner
Eversheds Sutherland



Nichola-Jayne Thomas
HR Director
Elis

Discussing the topic:
*'From Pessimism to
Participation: Cultivating a
Culture of Involvement'*

The session, led by Nichola-Jayne Thomas, was centred on the theme of cultivating a culture of involvement within Elis UK, particularly in relation to Human Resources Development (HRD). Elis UK, which has a rich background in talent management and employee development, has been instrumental in fostering a culture of continuous improvement and involvement among its workforce. The discussion was chaired by Naeema Choudry, who provided insights into various aspects of employee engagement which had gained more importance in the modern working world particularising given the use of social media. She also emphasised the importance of understanding and respecting cultural differences when communicating with a diverse workforce.



Elis UK, formerly Berendsen, was acquired by the international Elis group in 2017 as part of an expansion strategy. The company operates in 30 countries, employing 55,000 people globally, with 5,200 employees across 32 sites in the UK. The company provides laundry and hygiene services, primarily in the hospitality and healthcare sectors. It has a business model focused on renting products to customers, who return them for cleaning and reuse.

Elis UK's workforce includes both weekly-paid and monthly-paid employees, with a significant portion of the weekly-paid workforce consisting of drivers and shop floor workers. When Nichola-Jayne joined Elis UK in 2021, the company faced the challenge of recruiting 1,000 employees following the COVID-19 pandemic. The company believed it had supported employees during the pandemic. However, a key realisation during this period was the lack of a formal mechanism to measure employee satisfaction.

To address this, the Group initiated its first employee engagement survey including the UK. The UK set two primary goals: achieving a high response rate to ensure statistically significant feedback and making sure the survey was not a one-time effort but a sustained initiative. Given the workforce's diversity, with 72 nationalities represented, the survey was translated into 26 languages to ensure clarity and inclusivity. This step was crucial in making employees feel valued and understood; a sentiment echoed by Naeema, who highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity in communication.

Our strategy & process: Transparent feedback

- Cascade approach:**
 - Business responsible for dissemination
 - Followed up by Regional HRBPs
- Logo creation:**
 - Connecting actions
 - A symbol for 'listening'
- Universal actions:**
 - Employee Voice Committees
 - Corporate Social Responsibility
 - Social Calendar
 - We said, We did boards
 - Utilise Chevron
 - Annual appraisal, regular 1:1's

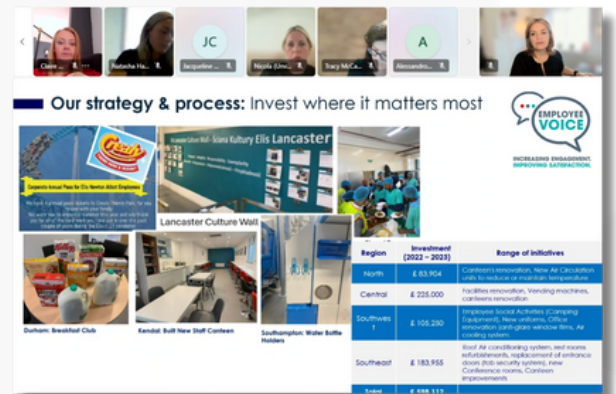
INCREASING ENGAGEMENT IMPROVING SATISFACTION

nationalities represented, the survey was translated into 26 languages to ensure clarity and inclusivity. This step was crucial in making employees feel valued and understood; a sentiment echoed by Naeema, who highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity in communication.

To bridge the gap between management and the workforce, each Elis UK location has an employee Chevron. This is a representative who embodies the company's values and

attends meetings on various topics, including health and safety. This role is pivotal in fostering trust and communication within the sites. Additionally, iPads and QR codes were introduced to facilitate survey participation. This ensured employees could provide feedback anonymously and without fear of repercussions.

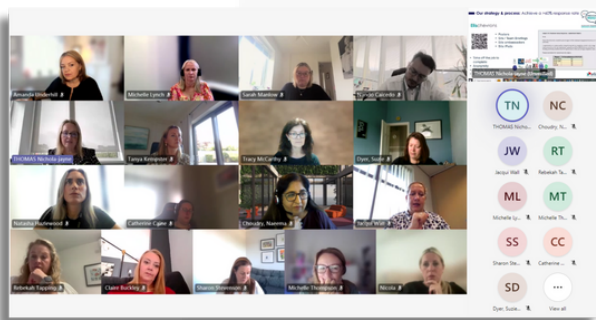
To incentivise survey participation, the company offered £1 to charity for each completed survey. They also fostered a sense of competition among sites by publishing a leaderboard of completion rates. This multi-faceted approach resulted in a 74% response rate, which was considered a significant achievement. After collecting the survey results, the company shared the findings with all employees. This ensured that feedback was followed up with visible actions. This led to the creation of an employee voice committee (EVC) at each site, providing a formal structure for employee dialogue.



The EVCs, initially chaired by General Managers, became a critical forum for discussing work-life balance, relationships on site, and broader organisational concerns like ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) awareness. The company also expanded its performance feedback mechanisms, extending appraisal processes to include all employees, not just line managers. By transferring responsibility for action plans to local management teams and ensuring continuous engagement, the company fostered a culture where even the most pessimistic employees became engaged.

In 2022, to showcase sites that were making significant progress and subtly expose those sites where further progress was required, Elis UK held an online showcase. This approach not only highlighted best practices, but it also created healthy competition among sites, encouraging continuous improvement. Initiatives ranged from low-cost gestures, like providing free breakfast, to more significant investments, such as site renovations. Importantly, the company allowed each site to control its budget, ensuring actions were tailored to local needs and fostering a sense of ownership among employees.

Maintaining the momentum of these initiatives has been a priority for Elis UK. The EVCs have become self-sustaining, with discussions evolving from site-specific concerns to broader business improvements. The company has seen tangible benefits from these efforts, including reduced absenteeism and a significant reduction in employee turnover. Additionally, at an operational level, improvements in quality and productivity were noted as direct outcomes of better engagement, lower turnover and training.



Looking ahead, Elis UK faces the challenge of maintaining and building upon these successes as they prepare for the 2025 survey. While they saw a 20% improvement in the 2023 survey compared to 2021, the incremental gains are expected to be smaller moving forward. The discussion concluded with a reflection on the value of employee engagement. It also reflected

on the role of leadership in driving these initiatives, and the importance of a collective voice in shaping organisational culture. The need for clear communication of mission and vision, as well as the necessity for both senior leadership and employees to be equally committed to the process, were highlighted as key factors in sustaining a culture of involvement at Elis UK.



Ashley Kate HR & Finance

Part of Nicholas Associates Group

Contact us

If you're looking for a new recruitment opportunity or want to find out more about what our Group can offer, please get in touch.

ashleykatehr.com



Apprentice
Employment
Agency



Graduate
Career
Solutions



Staffforce



Cra-Cro
Site Services



Nicholas
Associates



Ashley Kate
HR & Finance



Nicholas
Associates
Software

olano

Sedex Member

stronger
together

2024
Proudly
Partners



IASME
GDPR



REC
Member



disability
confident
EMPLOYER

QAPSCo
United Kingdom