

Carers call for greater flexibility at work

Options outlined to business leaders at seminar in Glasgow



Brendan Dick with Margaret Smith, policy & service development officer, Carers Scotland

Business leaders are being urged to improve flexible work options for the country's army of carers.

There are more than 250,000 carers in the Scottish workforce and many are lost from the employment market at the peak of their careers due to their caring responsibilities.

BT and Carers Scotland have been working in partnership to raise the role of flexible working in recruiting and retaining skilled carers in the workforce.

They staged the *Flexible Working: Make it Work for You* conference in Glasgow to set out the options and demonstrate the

benefits for both employees and employers.

Delegates heard that a combination of flexible working tools, including flexible time and technology to allow home working, can support employees who juggle caring with a career.

It means valuable workers are not lost from the market and essential skills are retained. Increased flexible working also has wider benefits such as improved productivity and reduced traffic congestion, which helps the environment.

Flexible working has enabled Jack Blaik, who works in social services with The City of Edinburgh Council, to remain in full time employment. Jack's son Daniel, 29, has profound disabilities and brain damage and two years ago his wife Nancy lost her sight.

He said: "I have adjusted my working pattern to Daniel's life and Daniel's life has adjusted to my working pattern. I can call of a range of options if necessary – special leave, carers leave, but above all flexible time and working. My family is a major focus but there are other things in life and my job is one of the ways I can hang on to other important values."



Brendan Dick, director of BT Scotland, stressed that, while the human impact is important, there is also a very clear business case to be made: "All our research on flexible and home working points to increased productivity, averaging 20 per cent, reduced overheads and enhanced recruitment and retention. People want to work for you and they want to stay."

"We must not forget the environmental aspect. Latest statistics show a three per cent annual increase in traffic volume to the highest level ever, which can also be tackled as part of flexible working."

Patrick Begley, director of Carers Scotland, said: "People are most likely to take on a caring role in their 40s and 50s at the peak of their career and experience. Many are forced out of employment."

"Flexible work patterns can bring about an inclusive, more productive workforce. All the evidence demonstrates that flexible working is an opportunity rather than a threat and that simple changes can be extremely effective – not least on the bottom line."

Businesses attending the seminar received a copy of a joint report from BT and Carers Scotland, a *National Framework for Carers and Employment*, and a USB memory stick containing a toolkit to help them develop and implement flexible working practices.

The event was supported by the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI).

In our latest podcast, Margaret Smith, policy and service development officer for Carers Scotland, looks at the impact of flexible working on the 1 in 8 of Scotland's working population who juggle employment with caring responsibilities.

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THE PODCAST](#)

Paper-free billing sows seeds of success

BT joins forces with Woodland Trust to promote e-billing

Half a million saplings have been planted across the UK in an initiative between BT and The Woodland Trust to show the environmental benefits of e-billing.

For every customer that requests a paperless bill via the scheme, BT buys a native sapling to be planted at Trust sites including Foulshiels and North Wood in West Lothian, Geordie's Wood in Clackmannanshire and Glen Finglas near Callander.

Across the UK more than 450 acres of saplings have already been planted, covering an area bigger than Hyde Park.

Brendan Dick, BT Scotland director, said: "Many companies have started to conduct their customer communications via the internet, including their billing, but the dramatic success of BT's e-billing scheme has been boosted by the support we've had from the Woodland Trust.

"Our customers not only get the convenience of managing their account online, but they also contribute in protecting the environment through reduced paper and the planting of a native broad leaf sapling."

In total, more than a million BT customers have signed up for paperless billing.



The New Age skills for Scotland

In the wake of one of the wettest summers since records began, Bob Downes, director of Openreach in Scotland, reflects on the value of Scotland's engineering ingenuity.

When James Doohan was cast as Star Trek's chief engineer, he reportedly stated: "If you're going to have an engineer, you'd better make him Scottish – all the world's best engineers have been Scottish."

Given that Scottish engineers designed and built a large part of the modern world, you would think we might really value engineering. Yet where is the 21st century Scotty in today's entertainment schedules? Despite their contribution to society, engineers rarely step into the spotlight.

All entertainment sits on top of a great infrastructure of communications technology. Our hugely successful entertainment industry would be nowhere without it and the engineers who design, build and maintain it. But we value one so much more than the other.

If you want 'reality' go join a bunch of engineers after a lightning storm repairing communications cables or power lines in torrential rain and howling wind. Day in, day out, huge ingenuity is displayed by skilled engineers throughout Scotland to ensure the entertainment business and all other industries and public services succeed.

But do we value our engineers? Do we want our kids to become engineers? Do we shout it from the rooftops that no modern, successful economy is going anywhere without engineers? The Chinese do. The Indians do. Given where they are going with their economic growth rates and their productivity gains, we might want to reflect on who does get 'reality'; TV or otherwise.

Engineering is a dynamic and powerful thread that runs through every single industry whether retail, tourism, food or entertainment. In many ways engineering invention also invents the future of these other great industries, and provides huge potential to drive productivity improvements.

The role of the engineer is evolving. The Scottish Skills strategy from Scottish Enterprise includes some really important insights. It recognises the need to mix broader skill development with technical skills, as many engineers are now intimately involved with customer services – hence oral communication, customer handling and problem solving are intrinsic in the life of the successful engineer.

The pace of change in communications technology has been relentless and continues to accelerate. Who would have thought five years ago that engineering inventiveness and operational excellence would take broadband to nearly 100 per cent of the Scottish population? Two years ago, who would have thought the TV would be running over those little copper wires that joined our telephones to the world outside? This last quarter has seen a 40 per cent rise in UK households taking TV over their broadband service.

The story of broadband in Scotland is one of 21st century engineering excellence. It is about extraordinary endeavour to turn a pair of copper wires from a talk-only medium into the all-singing, all-dancing platform for all we now have. The same can, and will, be said about energy whether renewable, nuclear, hydro or carbon.

To make those great opportunities work for us in Scotland we need to invest in the people who service these massive engineering platforms. Scottish engineering is not only about manufacturing, important though that is – it is a hugely significant part of our economy that extends way beyond the production of goods.



Bob Downes forecasts a skills mix

The City of Edinburgh Council's smart move with BT and Microsoft

Solution-led ICT project increases efficiency and benefits council tax payers

The potential of technology in delivering financial savings for local authorities has been demonstrated by an exciting collaboration between BT, Microsoft and the City of Edinburgh Council.

An overhaul of the Council's dated IT infrastructure has moved a mix of legacy equipment and applications to one standardised platform. Implemented in just two years, the massive programme involved the transformation of 6,500 computers, 200 sites, more than 200 servers, 11 domains, 26 directories and 4,500 business applications used by more than 8,000 users.

The programme, which forms part of the Council's Smart City Vision, will enable improvement of frontline services to 480,000 citizens, businesses and organisations in the city. Using Microsoft technology and managed and operated by BT, the new, resilient infrastructure will also accommodate future developments.

The Council has already achieved a net benefit of £5 million in direct IT costs alone with total savings over five years estimated at £6.4 million. A return on investment was realised in just 14 months and the Council is on track to meet a target of £25 million in ITC savings by 2011. And savings are being passed on to council tax payers.

Andrew Unsworth, the Council's head of E-Government, said: "Working in partnership, BT and Microsoft have created a proven blueprint for technology transformation that can be used at other customer sites too.

"We are now well positioned to provide the higher levels of common business services to our citizens. Our staff now enjoy a significantly improved IT experience through the stability and speed the new platform provides. They are benefiting from new ways of collaborating, all of which is resulting in a marked improvement in productivity."

He added: "The programme has been such a success that it helped set Council Tax increases below RPI in 2007/8 equivalent to a £9 reduction in council tax for every resident of the city, through reduced ICT support costs."

The Council has seen a dramatic increase in reliability, with around 60 per cent of faults raised by staff fixed immediately, and a substantial reduction in hardware faults. The platform also enables calendar sharing for collaboration, and supports e-procurement, electronic document management, self-service HR and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) applications, which all offer cost efficiencies.

The Council could identify further savings by exploring the potential of shared services with other organisations, such as the police and NHS Scotland.

Bob McDowell, Microsoft's Washington-based vice-president, told The Scotsman newspaper that the project was one of the biggest examples of its kind of a local government migrating its existing IT infrastructure onto one platform. "We view this as a great example of best practice," he said.

Hayden Edwards, programme manager for BT, concluded: "Microsoft brought significant thought leadership to the table in helping to design the programme, BT demonstrated its strength in project and technical management and the Council showed unwavering commitment to openness and trust. The results speak for themselves."

Director urges public sector to lead the way in flexible working

The director of BT Scotland has urged the country's employers to bring about workplace transformation to help counter climate change.

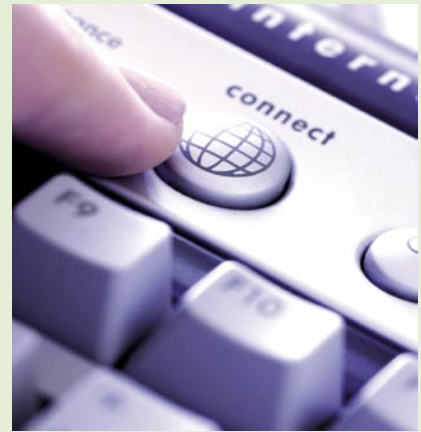
Speaking at The Climate Change Agenda for Scotland: Policy, Practice, Perspectives conference in Edinburgh, Brendan Dick said the public sector had a golden opportunity to take the lead as flexible working moved up Scotland's political agenda.

He said: "We have to move thinking away from the notion that work is where you do, to the idea that work is what you do. Success should be based on results people achieve and not the number of hours they spend at their desks.

"Reducing rush hour traffic has a direct impact on emissions and not only makes good environmental sense, but also good economic sense."

Broadband more popular than televisions

Scotland leads the way in broadband uptake



Broadband has become the fastest growing consumer product in recent years, outpacing the growth in televisions, CD players, and mobile phones. Britain is leading Europe in online shopping and commerce. And according to latest BT figures, the top five places for use of ADSL broadband technology are all in Scotland.

At the top of the league table are Aberdeenshire and Shetland, where more than 50 per cent of households have broadband installed, the first time this has been achieved in the UK. Stirling Aberdeen and Moray complete the top five. The Scottish national average for broadband uptake is also higher than the rest of the country, 33.5 per cent compared to a UK average of 30.8 per cent.

Brendan Dick, BT Scotland director, said: "Aberdeenshire, Shetland, Stirling, Aberdeen and Moray are in a league of their own when it comes to broadband take-up. These areas have consistently been among the leaders in the UK for broadband adoption, which emphasises the innovative nature of their people and businesses.

"It says a great deal for Scotland and its people that it boasts the top five switched-on local authority areas in the UK. Fast internet access is making a huge contribution to the economic success of Scotland, as businesses find new markets and work more efficiently, and households capitalise on the almost limitless abilities of the internet for education, entertainment and shopping."

BT in the Community



BT's strong anti-bullying message from a gentle giant

BT has recruited world renowned strongman, Big Dave Gauder, to drive home the message that bullying is not acceptable.

Big Dave teamed up with BT and the City of Edinburgh Council Children and Families Department in a pilot project to equip school children with the communication skills they need to deal with bullying. Big Dave led sessions in six Edinburgh schools, kicking off with a show of strength to grab attention before explaining that it is strength of mind, not muscle, that matters.

His presentations were followed by workshops in each school led by BT volunteers. These 179 Scottish employees, working out of volunteer clubs across the country, are the backbone of the company's education programme.

Alan Bonas, head of communications for BT Scotland, said: "BT has a long history of working with schools on the power of communication in helping prevent bullying. Big Dave has a track record in working with police forces, local authorities and other to establish a positive rapport with young people. He proved a big hit with the Edinburgh pupils."

BT bridges the generation gap

As part of BT's commitment to ensuring that older generations make the best use of technology, a special Silver Surfers Information day was held in Edinburgh this month by BT's Age and Disability Action Team and Age Concern Edinburgh. Silver surfers were on hand to demonstrate the benefits of using the internet to older people.

BT age and disability action adviser Kenny Arthur said: "Access to technology improves people's lives but many older people may not have the opportunity or skills to get started. By working in partnership with others we can help overcome these factors and hopefully offer many people a new lease of life online."

BT is also searching for candidates for this year's Internet Rangers awards programme. BT Internet Rangers are young people who share their internet skills with older people. Winners will be announced later this month.

Openreach the ticket to Lady Boys show

Openreach engineer John Brand and his team had just two days to make sure the famous Edinburgh Festival Fringe show, the Lady Boys of Bangkok, was able to go ahead. They faced the tight timescales when trees around the cabaret's venue in The Meadows had to be removed, affecting communication lines for the on-site ticket office. In 48 hours, John (pictured right) and his team planned a new route from the local exchange and restrung 900 metres of new wiring through The Meadows conservation area, looping wire carefully around high branches to avoid any damage to the remaining trees. And then they did it all again when heavy plant brought down the new cables on the eve of the first performance. Thanks to Openreach, the show went on!

