



# UNITE IN HSBC

## your voice in key business areas

Unite Jointly Accredited Office Representatives regularly meet with the Bank's Business Heads from all parts of the business including Direct Banking, Service Delivery and the Network. These meetings are two-way discussions. Union reps take forward issues after feedback from you, the members. The Bank informs the reps of developments due in that particular business area and invites their opinion based on their members' experience.

### THE REPS ARE YOUR VOICE...MAKE SURE YOU HAVE YOUR SAY !!!

#### DIRECT BANKING

- Your local reps had a fantastic success for the Customer Solutions teams. Based on member feedback, they put-together a petition across most of the major sites about unreasonable objectives and presented it to the Bank. The objectives have now been changed and a communication sent out by the Bank giving credit to the Unite reps.
- Engagement and being the Best Place To Work continues to be high on the Bank's agenda. This year's GPS (Global People Survey) is due soon and, like all business areas Heads, the Head of Direct Banking is reminding people that participation in the survey is voluntary and it should be used as an opportunity to provide honest feedback. Any pressure on staff to either complete the survey or to complete it in a particular way should be flagged up to your local Unite rep

#### NETWORK

- The issue of unpaid overtime, and Time Off In Lieu (TOIL) is constantly brought up to Unite as a problem for branch staff. The Bank are now gathering information on how much TOIL has built up, and if staff are able to take it. It was reiterated by the Bank that staff should be paid for necessary and approved overtime and rosters should be used properly so that unpaid overtime does not occur on a regular basis. Our advice is, don't work overtime unless it's approved.
- The Bank's stance on requiring those staff who apply for roles in Saturday branches to change contracts, and therefore lose or

reduce their existing Terms and Conditions such as paid sick leave, overtime payments and holidays, is now being referred to the Union's lawyers. If you are on an old contract, whether or not you have signed a side letter, or converted to a J contract which means you will work flexibly, CHECK BEFORE YOU MOVE!!!

#### SERVICE DELIVERY

- A number of appraisal related grievances have been upheld for staff, supported by their local union reps, against end of year ratings which came as a complete surprise. The Head of Service Delivery reiterated the bank's policy that there should be no surprises.....those staff rated 4 or 5 at year end should be fully aware that this was going to happen.
- We have also recently raised examples of league tables which effectively name and shame on whiteboards in some areas. This is contrary to the agreement that Unite has with the bank that outlaws such practises and allows staff the right to request that their names are removed. The Bank agreed to ensure that whiteboards would only be used to celebrate individual's successes.
- Further meetings will be taking place in the next few weeks. If you want to have your say, or have local problems which need resolving, contact your local union rep, but remember...

#### UNITE REPS ARE ONLY ABLE TO ASSIST MEMBERS

*For details of how to join the Union, or to get contact details for your local office rep, please call the Unite HSBC helpline number on 0845 6045527.*

# Unite speaks for you at the bank's AGM

Patrick Hosking | Financial Editor | The Times

## Bank where 10 per cent of staff are bound to fail HSBC has been accused of basing its appraisal system on "an outdated ideology"

It's been likened to going to the dentist. The annual staff appraisal is met with groans by employees and managers, who fear that the ritual can bring higher pay and promotion for those who get it right but reprimands and even the sack for those deemed below par.

But there is an element to the appraisal in some big companies that makes the process even more anxiety-inducing according to its critics — quotas. Some companies decree that a pre-determined proportion of their employees will automatically fail, regardless of their performance.

Anger over the process spilt into the open last week when an employee representative at HSBC, Britain's secondbiggest company, used the annual shareholders' meeting to vent his frustration. HSBC has a self-imposed target of automatically awarding "underperformer" grades to 10 per cent of its employees — a system that means 29,600 staff worldwide are so labelled each year, including 6,000 in Britain.

David Uren, an HSBC employee and Unite representative, accused Stuart Gulliver, the bank's new chief executive, of basing the appraisal system on "an outdated ideology" and urged the board to reform the process.

"This is an area where [HSBC] is getting things wrong," he told the entire board assembled in London's Barbican Centre. Suggesting that the approach was hitting morale, he pointed out how the bank's own score for employee engagement worsened from 71 per cent in 2009 to 68 per cent last year.

Staff deemed to be underperforming miss out on pay rises and bonuses worth thousands of pounds even for modestly paid branch and call-centre workers. They are also more likely to be targeted for redundancy — a particular concern for HSBC employees after the bank announced a \$2.5 billion to \$3.5 billion (£1.5 billion to £1.8 billion) cost-cutting programme last month.

Most British banks have similar systems and 8 per cent of all employers use quotas of some sort to appraise staff, according to a 2005 study by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Among manufacturers the proportion was 12 per cent.

At the heart of the dispute is the so-called "forced distribution" technique, whereby HSBC instructs managers to put a certain proportion of employees in each grade. One in ten must be deemed to be failing.

Forced distribution has its adherents because it obliges managers to distinguish between different employees and cuts out a tendency of line managers to be over-lenient to poor performers.

"It stops managers seeing all their ducks as swans," said Mike Emmott, an adviser at the CIPD. But it can also lead to staff being crowbarred into the wrong category and to employees feeling unfairly treated. For an employee on average pay of £22,000, the difference between being scored three and being scored four can be the forfeiture of a bonus worth £3,300 or more. Staff call the bottom grade "carparking" — a joke that describes how unwanted employees are tapped on the shoulder in the company car park and advised not to bother returning to work the next day. At the annual meeting, Mr Gulliver acknowledged that the system wasn't perfect. "We have to look at whether there's a different way of doing this," he said.

But he added: "It's very difficult in a large population to come up with a system that's going to be better. It may be the least worst system."

That view is challenged by Unite, which represents 130,000 staff in the banking industry. According to its national officer Dave Fleming, the 10 per cent failure rate doesn't make sense. "I refuse to accept that with sophisticated recruitment techniques you have that level of failure," he said.

**JOIN US NOW**

If you are not yet a member, play your part in building a better future for workers in HSBC by joining on line at [www.unitetheunion.org](http://www.unitetheunion.org)