



MOTIVATION OR



HUMILIATION?

The use by HSBC management of whiteboards in branches and centres has been a recurrent source of unhappiness amongst Amicus members over the years. It has also been a subject of much debate at national level between the union and the bank.

Unlike other major banks where the naming of individuals and comparison of their achievement to targets or objectives is not permitted, HSBC has been reluctant to let go of the misguided belief that these boards can motivate better performance. Senior managers have repeatedly told the union that staff like to see their names on the board when they are doing well.

In contrast, feedback to the union suggests, that even when they are doing well, members are concerned that colleagues resent seeing their good performance on the board. They also complain that the data can be used to work out the bonus they will receive. There is a clear consensus that names on whiteboards discourage teamwork, de-motivate and are counter-productive.

As to those who are not doing so well, feedback consistently suggests members see their names on the whiteboard as public humiliation – a practice specifically outlawed by the bank in its bullying policy. On occasion, seeing their names on the board against comparatively poor achievement has been “the straw that breaks the camels back” and triggered anxiety or depression.

Hitherto the bank has said that it is up to individuals to complain if they are upset by how a manager has used the boards.

Amicus maintains that it is for the bank to clearly state that individual names should never appear on a whiteboard.

Anything short of that is liable to misuse and provides a potential opportunity for bullying.

Motivation to perform can be achieved by using whiteboards to show team objectives and how the branch, department or unit at any level is doing.

Amicus was pleased when management in CTS gave a commitment to stop the practice of identifying poor performing individuals on whiteboards. Sadly, the guidelines the bank subsequently produced for CTS do not, in our view, implement the spirit of this commitment. In the branch network, management remains committed to allowing individuals who so wish to have their names and achievements written up on the boards. However, having listened to our concerns, they have agreed to allow staff who do not wish to have their names and achievement to objectives on whiteboards to opt out.

Given the feedback we have received and our concerns re dignity at work and privacy, the union strongly recommends that members exercise their right to opt out and do so without delay. You do not have to explain or give any kind of reason for this choice. Nor should you be highlighted by your manager or colleagues for having done so. Indeed, the bank would see it as a breach of core standards if this were to happen. The more people who opt out the less of an issue it will become. The right to opt out does not just apply to whiteboards but to any general communication on performance that refers to individual achievement.

It is our view that in the long run the simplest and most sustainable way to ensure that whiteboards are used correctly is to limit them to team achievement. However, the opt out is a valuable step in the right direction.

This is a bumper edition of @work which we have decided to send to members at your home addresses. This is because the bank was reluctant to distribute the piece on whiteboards headed "Motivation or Humiliation" and to allow the union to express its deep concern re the handling of job losses in Change Management in particular.

Home address mailings are expensive and slow. Amicus, both generally and in HSBC, is building up a database of e-mail addresses of our members so that we can communicate quickly and with relative freedom. For this reason we are asking you to go online to www.amicustheunion.org to sign up to the ground-breaking new Amicus e-bulletin @ctivist. Coming out every month, @ctivist will bring all the news, views and events straight to your inbox completely free to Amicus reps and activists! It is our intention later on to do Amicus HSBC mailings using this central e-mail database. Until this is up and running, you can keep in touch with us by mailing your details – full name, date of birth, membership number and personal (if possible) e-mail address to hsbc@amicustheunion.org and check out our website for the latest newsletters and updates from the negotiating team. We are currently updating the text but you can get the latest news by going to www.amicustheunion.org and follow the links to Sectors, Finance and Business Services, Amicus in your organisation, Amicus at HSBC, HSBC Newsletters.

Want to help?

The union is its members.

We are looking for people like you to become reps. Helping your colleagues at work, helping your union grow and helping yourself to real development.

So if you want to extend yourself, learn new skills and help to make a difference – become a rep.

Interested?

Contact us on 020 7253 9642 for further details. Full training and support will be provided.



FINANCE SECTOR WEEK

Look out for a visit during May from an Amicus Officer.



Hundreds of bank branches will be targeted for a visit during a week of activity by Amicus aimed at raising the awareness of both the union and the very real issues facing branch staff. Issues covering, amongst others, staffing levels, unpaid overtime, targets and flexible working.

If your office is selected for a visit, make a point of talking with your union and ensuring non-members are encouraged to find out the benefits of union membership.

It is as much in your interest, as theirs, that they join the largest finance sector union in the UK and make your voice in HSBC even louder.



HSBC EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETS IN MALTA

The HSBC European Council met in Malta on March 28th and 29th. The Council is a joint body made up of representatives of all the EU member states where the bank has a presence.

The staff representatives are principally from recognised unions or works councils and some are directly elected. Management is represented mostly by HR from the UK and the host member state as well as specialists in the subjects under discussion.

The first day of the meeting was of the staff side only. Apart from a review of the last meeting and outstanding issues, representatives discussed how best to make use of resources provided by their national unions and the international union federation UNI. This was followed by preparation for the debate anticipated the next day with management.

The full meeting on the 29th included a summary of innovations by the bank in Malta, a presentation on the group's results and an update on the bank's international business across Europe.

From the union's perspective, the Council still has a long way to go for it to function as a European Works Council should. Despite constant pressure from staff representatives, led by the Designated Employee Representative Steph Evison, who is also the Joint Vice Chair of the Amicus National Committee, representatives are frustrated that the concerns they really want to debate are not covered or are only covered superficially. Many issues of prime importance to our members like global resourcing, HR strategy or changes in ownership are either considered not to be "pan-European" or are deemed to be subject to confidentiality rules.

Following the full meeting, the staff side drew up an action plan. Our aim was to strengthen the council and make it work more effectively for the staff we represent. We would do this by:

- making renewed contact with their national unions and works councils,
- formulating proposals for next year's review of the European Council agreement,
- training of participants including by Amicus,
- pursuing the agenda items we want,
- working together to raise our issues and reach successful outcomes,
- improving communication with those we represent,
- further work on how to improve co-ordination amongst employee representatives between meetings.

Members with issues they would like to raise with their European Council representative should contact the union in the first instance at hsbc@amicustheunion.org

STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS!

Whatever happened to.... the new Staff Handbook??

When the revised Staff Handbook was issued in February, Amicus was inundated with questions on the various changes - particularly in respect of the pensions clauses. We have taken legal advice over certain sections of the handbook and our discussions with HSBC management are ongoing. Our advice in the interim is "don't sign" - management have confirmed that they won't be pressuring or coercing any employees to accept the new terms, and that staff who choose to remain on their existing terms can do so. We hope to conclude our discussions with management in the next few weeks - so look out for a follow-up Amicus newsletter. If you need further information, please contact your local JAOR or ring the Seconded Reps helpline.

STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS!

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Job losses in HSBC in 2006

At the start of the year the bank commenced consultation with the union on the changes to staffing numbers it intends to make in 2006. Though the total number is projected at 33,168 for December 06 (down from 33,466 in December 05), this masks the 1750 cuts caused by sending work to the global centres and several hundred further jobs due to restructuring planned after the annual operating plan was compiled.

CLOSURES

The most drastic cuts in 2006 had already been announced in 2004 and relate to the closures of Frimley, Bristol and Leeds DSCs. Notification of these closures was under the terms of the global resourcing agreement between the bank and the union which states, 'the bank will set out its current plans for global resourcing at a national staffing review committee no later than October annually for the following two calendar years.'

Staff from these centres were shocked to hear last summer that the bank had decided to bring forward their closure and/or termination of contract dates. This was an opportunistic move by the bank and one which we can only hope they will come to regret. Following long and bitter arguments with the bank at local and national level, Amicus has come to the conclusion that the closure/termination dates were brought forward as a cynical move to save money. They did it because they could. Staff lost out on pay and the time they had been led by senior management to believe they had to resolve their future employment and deal with the trauma of job loss. In our view, this decision by the bank is simply shameful.

MORE BAD NEWS

Regrettably, in the early part of this year, it appears that "bad has turned to worse" with the announcement of several major job loss programmes. In particular, we are very concerned about the huge impact of the closure of the Birmingham SPC at the end of 2007, with the loss of over 150 jobs, and the massive job loss programme at the Sheffield MSC, which will result in over 200 job losses during 2006 and 2007.

It will clearly be a huge task to redeploy all of the affected staff into suitable alternative roles in Birmingham and Sheffield in the allotted timeframe. We believe that this situation has been made even more difficult by HSBC's refusal to seek employee preferences with regard to redeployment and redundancy – they are so confident that they can successfully redeploy all the staff affected by these job cuts that they are refusing to even consider Voluntary Redundancy at this stage. Our concern is that, as the clock starts ticking on these major job loss programmes, the refusal to consider VR at the outset could lead some managers to pressure staff into jobs which are either unsuitable or undesirable for the individual employee – just to ensure that everybody is redeployed, regardless of their suitability for the role in question.

More bad news followed in February, when, having given

Amicus and the NCM just 1 week's notice, the bank announced another 170 job losses, this time in the Change Management (CM) department of CSD. Once again, the majority of the job losses are in Sheffield, although there is also a sizeable CM population in London, Southampton and throughout the regions. Matters were made worse when, having refused to consider VR at the outset, the bank cherry-picked the top 60% of performers, according to their selection matrix, for the remaining roles in CM or similar roles in other departments. Only then were the staff who were "left over" allowed to express their preference for VR or redeployment. In a further twist, management have announced that they are "highly unlikely" to agree to any VR applications from staff in London, Southampton or the On the Road teams.

The end result is that many employees who would have been happy to leave the organisation voluntarily in order to work elsewhere in the finance sector – or even change careers – have been denied the opportunity to take VR, whilst many colleagues who wanted to stay in their original jobs have been forced to look for roles elsewhere in HSBC. Members of the On the Road (OTR) team, in particular, have expressed concern that they may be expected to take up roles in the retail network which many of them feel are unsuitable because of the strong selling focus of so many branch roles. Many OTR staff started out in the branch network and feel that they have developed a whole range of training and supervisory skills in their current roles - they don't want to take what, for many of them, feels like a "backwards step" in their chosen career.

As always, Amicus will continue to advise our members via our team of locally-based Jointly Accredited Office Reps and our Seconded Reps helpline – you can find out about your local JAOR or contact a Seconded Rep by calling 020 7253 9642 or 020 7336 8253. And if we believe that existing Amicus members are being treated unfairly in a redundancy situation, we will have no hesitation in providing support and representation under the SEA Appeals process, or via the HSBC grievance procedure.

SHEFFIELD

One major concern Amicus has with these changes is that the bank might be withdrawing from Sheffield. The number of job losses in the city this year will undoubtedly impact on redeployment opportunities. Just how significant is this withdrawal? The bank has said that the losses are purely coincidental and implied that it has some premises planning concerns. Amicus has invited the bank to renew its

commitment to provide ongoing employment in Sheffield as a sign of its corporate social responsibility agenda.

SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT

In February the union put a proposal to the bank on sustainable employment. Its main features were: making each workplace a learning environment so that employees have the skills to adapt to change; an independent review of the case for or against global resourcing; meaningful consultation with Amicus, especially when a work location is under threat; a right to 2 hours' training during each working week; fair employment for workers in global centres. We await their response.

SECURITY OF EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT (SEA)

There follows a guide to the key features of this agreement (SEA) in Q & A form.

It focuses on the kind of questions members most frequently ask of the unions representatives or when they call our helpline on 020 7253 9642. We have not repeated the full text of the agreement. This can be found by following this route on the HSBC intranet.

On the bottom of the Home page there is a listing for 'HR Procedures A-Z'. This will take you to another page where you can log into the HR BPMs. From there, members can look under 'S' for the agreement (Intranet Home-HR Procedures A-Z-HR BPMs- click on S for SEA listing)

Both the SEA and these FAQs apply to all employees up to M95. This Q & A will be posted on the union's website. Go to www.amicustheunion.org and follow the links to Sectors, Finance and Business Services, Amicus in your organisation, Amicus at HSBC, HSBC Newsletters.

Q & A

CONSULTATION WITH AMICUS AND THE NCM,

1) What does consultation mean?

Under the SEA, the bank has to consult with Amicus and the NCM on the best way of minimising the number of staff who are likely to be made redundant and mitigating the circumstances. Although our aim is to reach agreement at the end of the consultation period, there are many occasions when this doesn't happen - but the bank will generally still inform staff that "Amicus and the NCM have been consulted". If you want to know which points haven't been agreed within a particular business case, please contact your local JAOR or call the Seconded Reps Helpline on 020 7253 9642.

SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT,

2) What is suitable alternative employment?

Suitable alternative employment should be at the same grade - or possibly a higher grade - as the job which is currently being done. In attempting to find a suitable alternative position, the bank should consider:

- performance of the employee in their existing job
- knowledge and skills required in other jobs
- current training or other training needs
- personal and domestic circumstances.

3) What happens if the bank can't find me suitable alternative employment?

If the bank is unable to offer suitable alternative employment, they will attempt to find you an unsuitable alternative role. If the bank can only offer you an unsuitable alternative role, they must also offer you redundancy, as there is no compulsion on an individual to accept a role which has been classified as unsuitable.

UNSUITABLE ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT,

4) What is unsuitable alternative employment?

A job may be classed as unsuitable if it necessitates significant training or is at a lower grade. Other criteria which may make a job unsuitable include a change in hours or location.

5) Do I have to take a job which is classed as unsuitable alternative employment?

No, if a job is classified as unsuitable, you have the option to choose to be made redundant instead. If you do take an unsuitable alternative role, you have the right to a trial period of at least 4 weeks, in order to decide if the job is right for you. If you do decide within the trial period that the job is not right for you, you will retain your right to take redundancy instead.

VR,

6) Do I have a right to VR?

The bank may, at its discretion, issue preference forms asking whether a group of employees wish to be considered for Voluntary Redundancy (VR). Because VR is not an absolute legal right, the bank generally has the discretion to turn down some or all VR applications. Although one or more VR applications from amongst a group of staff may have been accepted, the bank retains the legal right to turn down others in order to ensure that the organisation's overall resourcing requirements are met.

NOTICE OF REDUNDANCY,

7) How much notice will I get if I am made redundant?

All employees are entitled to a minimum of four months' notice of redundancy. Some employees are entitled to a longer period - this depends on the individual contract. Although employees are normally expected to work their notice period, the bank retains the right to request that any or all of the notice period should be taken as "garden leave" or worked in an alternative role.

APPEALS,

8) What are the grounds of appeal if I don't think the Bank have treated me fairly?

Please refer to section 4.8 of the Security of Employment Agreement (SEA).

REDUNDANCY PAYMENTS,

9) How much money will I get if I am made redundant?

This will vary from individual to individual, and will depend on criteria such as age and length of service. You can check your redundancy figures by referring to the Appendices of the Security of Employment Agreement (SEA) on the HSBC intranet.

Bonus reductions for absence – Amicus success

The union has had a positive outcome in its first grievance on this issue.

The facts of the case were as follows. The Amicus member was rated 3 for overall performance and 3 for the purposes of bonus.

According to the matrix for the annual scheme, the member would have expected to receive a bonus of £1050. However, due to absence, this bonus rating was reduced to 4(i) and the payment to £350.

The bank and the union had both calculated that the member's absence was 27% of her normal working year. In contrast, the reduction in bonus was a massive 67%.

The member's grievance was that the reduction was out of all proportion.

In deciding in the member's favour, the bank made an award of £416.50. (£1050 - 27%/ £283.50 = £766.50. £766.50 – the £350 she had received = £416.50)

We await the outcome of a further case in progress and expect a similar decision. Amicus JAORs have been advised that this decision should provide a basis for other successful cases on this issue and members with similar concerns should contact them. In fact, your rep may advise you that, prior to raising a formal grievance, you should speak to your Line Manager or Countersigning manager, citing this article, and suggesting they speak to HR Connect on 72418170.

Through this route, it may be possible for the bank to make a corrective payment without the need for a formal grievance.

Are you in the right band?

Amicus is preparing for a review of pay bands as part of our dialogue with the bank for next year's pay round.

The union anticipates that there are members in the network who believe they are not on the correct band. There could be many reasons for this; for example, rising prosperity, a tighter labour market and rising costs in your area or the perception that it is unfair that you are on a lower pay band than a nearby workplace. We are also aware of discontent in some areas with new recruits being brought in on higher salaries than existing staff who then have to train them up.

Last year we were successful in arguing for an increase in banding from A to B for staff in Swansea Customer Credit Services (CCS). The bank accepted our case (which had been made in 2004 and was based in the unfairness of staff in the same location being on different bands) because they were having difficulty filling a large number of vacancies.

If you feel you can make the case for an increase in banding in your workplace then please get in touch with Bernadette Fisher, Amicus, 33-37 Moreland Street, London EC1V 8HA or fax to 0207 780 4142 or email hsbc@amicustheunion.org

First Direct Dignity at Work Campaign

The last edition of @work highlighted the Amicus Dignity At Work campaign. Particular focus was given to the campaign held in First Direct.

As promised we have now compiled the results of the questionnaire.

The following figures were compiled from responses received from both the Leeds and Hamilton sites;

- 67% of staff surveyed said they were aware of the First Direct policy on Dignity at Work
- 25% of staff surveyed said that they had experienced bullying at work*
- Of those that had experienced bullying at work, 44% said they did not do anything about it, 29% said they phoned the union for help, 5% said they phoned a work helpline and 22% said they did 'other'.



* It should be noted that this figure does not necessarily mean that the employee experienced bullying at First Direct. The question asked was a general question of whether one had ever experienced bullying at work.

First Direct pay

Amicus has secured a good pay rise for all members working in fd. Following challenging but constructive negotiations, we were able to reach an agreement that achieves the pay objectives our members identified as this year's top priorities:

- A pay rise for all employees that exceeds the rate of inflation.
- Addressing the lack of pay parity at certain role levels between Leeds and Hamilton.

The Agreement – an 11 month pay deal which gives all employees a minimum increase of 3.5% and some role levels a 5% increase to address pay parity between the Leeds and Hamilton sites.

Additionally

- fd and Amicus will continue to further develop the Equal Reward Audit in 2006.

Plus Fund Values will increase by 2.5% on 1st July.



Seconded Reps on the move

Its all change at the Seconded Reps office with a move east to Amicus 33-37 Moreland Street, London EC1V 8HA. The Amicus HSBC help line telephone number has changed so if you need to contact one of our dedicated team of seconded reps call 020 7253 9642.

Claire Parker in Cardiff joined the seconded rep team in January 2006 and has been with HSBC for eleven years.

Chris Lewis has been a seconded rep since January 2005 and is based in Prestwich.

- Terry Clements returns to the bank and the newly appointed seconded rep is Paul Aburn who is moving down from Scotland and will be based in the Moreland Street office. Paul has been with HSBC for almost 8 years and active within the union for 5½ years.

KEEP

IN TOUCH

Amicus is looking to further develop email links with members. Go online to www.amicustheunion.org to sign up to the ground-breaking new Amicus e-bulletin @ctivist. Coming out every month, @ctivist will bring all the news, views and events straight to your inbox - completely FREE to Amicus reps and activists!

The HSBC section would also like to build a database of email addresses. Send us your full name, date of birth, membership number and email address to hsbc@amicustheunion.org

**Not a member?
Join on line at www.amicustheunion.org**