



MASS EMAIL DISCIPLINARIES

Dozens of HFC staff have been investigated over misuse of company email accounts.

Unite understands that 40 employees have thus far been disciplined. Penalties have included warnings, final written warnings, demotions, salary reductions and removal from the bonus scheme.

From the Bank's perspective, it is frustrated that despite numerous warnings to staff about the email and internet policy, some staff to continue to carry on regardless.

Unite does not accept that any of its members have wilfully stored or forwarded "pornographic" email content. However the Bank has pointed out that the so called "joke" emails could be interpreted as "pornographic" or offensive, and therefore constitutes a breach of company policy. Unite fully agrees that there is no place for pornography in the workplace.

The lessons of the recent disciplinary cases ought to be clear to all:

HFC believes it has been very lenient over the recent cases. Many of the staff could have been dismissed, but all cases Unite are aware of resulted in action short of dismissal. We think it is reasonable to assume that the Bank will not continue to be so lenient in the future.

The policy does allow for a reasonable amount of personal emails to be used. However, this is not clearly defined, and Unite advises staff wherever possible not to use HFC email addresses for personal use.

Overall, Unite is pleased and relieved that HFC has been sensible and not over-reacted to the findings of the investigations.

Being dismissed by a Bank has serious repercussions for the worker concerned, particularly in terms of references and future employability, and HFC is to be congratulated on largely getting it right and refraining from the ultimate sanction.

We do however have some concerns about the fact that HFC withdrew the bonus from staff as part of a disciplinary warning. For some staff – particularly top performers in some departments – the bonus is a major part of remuneration and is as much as 50% of take home pay. The withdrawal of bonus is therefore a tool that hits some of the Bank's best people particularly hard and we feel can be inappropriate as a sanction in stage 1/ minor misconduct matters.

Why do staff send "joke" emails to one another?

"When I have a laugh with a colleague, a manager will start looking at me almost immediately and I feel I have to get back to work"

"I like my job generally, it is interesting, but it can also be tedious and repetitive at times. I guess sometimes I'm bored, and a giggle at an email cheers me up, that's all".

These were comments made to Unite by HFC members facing action.

Unite is keen to ascertain whether other staff more generally tend to agree with these comments.

We'd love to hear from you.

Could your job be re-organised to make it more interesting?

Are jobs interesting enough ?

Rick Coyle, Regional Officer
Tel. 0121 569 8900

GREED THREATENS HOUSING MARKET

Boardroom pay at the UK's top companies soared 37% last year.

The surge in pay, which takes the average total pay for a chief executive to £2,875,000, is more than 11 times the increase in average earnings and nearly 20 times the rate of inflation as measured by the consumer prices index.

The ratio between Plc bosses' rewards and employees' pay has risen to 98:1, up from 93:1 a year ago — meaning that the work of a chief executive is valued almost 100 times more highly than that of their employees.

The figures are revealed in the Guardian's annual survey of executive pay at FTSE100 companies, conducted in association with the pay consultancy Reward Technology Forum. The pay rise for the 2006-07 financial year is the biggest in recent years. The previous year directors' pay climbed 28%, following rises of 16% and 13%.

For the first time last year the rewards handed over to the directors of FTSE 100 companies topped £1 billion. The news comes after the Guardian revealed that city bonuses went up 30% last year.

Huge rewards are being paid at a time when increasing numbers of homeowners are facing the threat of repossession and household debt is at

record levels. UNITE believes that boardroom greed is plunging Britain into unprecedented moral decline.

Topping the league of FTSE 100 directors' pay is Bob Diamond, who heads the investment banking arm of Barclays Bank and earned £23 million last year. Diamond, who is not chief executive of the bank, earns a basic salary of only £250,000, but his package was magnified nearly 100-fold as a result of a performance bonus of £10 million and about £12 million in share awards.

Three other top earners received eight-figure salaries. They include Bart Becht, chief executive of Reckitt Benckiser, the company behind household brands such as Cillit Bang and Mr Sheen, and Giles Thorley, the boss of the Punch Taverns pubs group.

Their pay last year was £22 million and £11.2 million respectively. Thorley also emerges as the boss whose salary is most out of line with his employees; his remuneration package is equal to 1,147 of his employees, mostly pub workers.

Lord Browne, the former chief executive of BP, received £10.6 million. He was forced to step down earlier this year after it was revealed he had lied in court.

Part-time chairmen of top companies –

who generally work no more than two days a week – now earn an average of £311,000, up 15% on a year ago.

The highest paid woman – with a pay package of £2.1 million – was once again Dame Marjorie Scardino, the chief executive of Pearson, publisher of the Financial Times. She and Dorothy Thompson of the Drax power station company were the only two female chief executives in the survey period and their salaries lagged behind their peers by 25% and 75% respectively. There were only 16 female full-time executive directors of FTSE 100 companies, out of a total 527 such posts.

The Equal Opportunities Commission described that statistic as "shocking".

Does anybody really believe that directors have become massively more productive than everyone else in recent years?

Not only do increasing numbers of ordinary people find the growing gap morally offensive, but the pay bonanza is directly feeding house price inflation, threatening both economic stability and social cohesion.

**Find out more about Unite at
www.unitetheunion.com**

JOIN UNITE - YOUR FRIEND AT WORK

Join on line www.unitetheunion.com
or call 0800 587 1222