

# People

STAFF RETENTION • NEWS

## Start singing in harmony

Keeping staff on board and motivated is about more than just salary. An enjoyable atmosphere, flexible working and pensions are all part of the equation. And, finds **John Sanders**, this may be a good time to review the bonus culture

**A**dmiral Group is the most profitable company in Wales – but it's also one of the most tuneful. The group is one of the few big employers in the land of song to employ music teachers to set up an in-house choir.

The Inspire Choir is not just a soft alternative to a macho teambuilding exercise in the Brecon Beacons, according to director Georgina Jones. Singing hits by Queen, Duffy and Ray Charles is just as effective for bonding.

show people that my company can save them money.”

And in the highly competitive call centre market, where she used to work, Jones knows that offering something innovative can make all the difference to staff turnover. “If you're better at your job, you're going to like it more, so you're going to stay,” she says.

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of incentives to appeal to employees of all ages.

For baby boomers – those born between 1946 and 1960 – the biggest attractions are pensions and working for a company with a sound track record. Workers in their sixties, who are valued for their experience and willingness to see a job through, want a pleasant working environment above all else.

For Generation Y (born since 1980), pensions hold no interest since they are far too young to worry about retirement. They want to live for now and that means flexibility, including the opportunity to bank and trade time and buy holidays. And to appeal to staff in this age group, employers need to brush up their green credentials, too.

Twenty-somethings have little time for prescriptive practices and uniforms. They believe they are already skilled, will want to get into the job, make mistakes and learn as they go. That's fine in many environments, but difficult where quality and accuracy are essential first time round, says Du-Feu.

Managing these sometimes conflicting expectations is a skill in itself and one for



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The choir gives staff a feeling of owning something in their workplace, while singing is also good for health and motivation.

Happier workers result in happier customers, better service and higher profits, says Jones. “I'm a musician, but I'm also a businesswoman. I want to make a difference to the bottom line. I want to

people's working day more enjoyable.”

But Admiral is unusual, according to Viv Du-Feu, partner at Capital Law. He says companies in Wales are rarely at the forefront of thinking when it comes to staff retention and motivation. He also points out that a successful retention and motivation strategy must offer a range



**AYE AYE CAPTAIN** The Admiral Group's Inspire Choir at their Cardiff headquarters