

## Exploration of some of the 7 concepts identified as constituting a “circular” HRM

### Business Case : Experience@Work (Belgium)

Contrary to popular belief, not all 55+ workers aspire for a smooth road to retirement. Some are still hungry for real challenges and have the will to keep learning. They also have a wealth of experience and skills to share. The Experience@Work programme is an innovative initiative built by organisations for organisations. It allows senior talents to remain in the labour market for as long as, and as usefully as, possible. Experience@Work creates a useful link between organisations with abundant talent, organisations with a need for experience, and senior employees who want to continue to bring value with their competences and experience.

### Interview : Sophie Van der Beken, Managing Director of Experience@Work

Date of interview : 6 july 2020

### Context:

The Experience@Work programme was developed in Belgium by KBC, Proximus, AXA and the HazelHeartwood consultancy, with the support of SD Worx. It started in 2015. Today, no less than eighteen large companies are involved - including IBM, Solvay, the National Bank of Belgium, Bekaert, bpost, CBC and Sabena Aerospace. The concept is simple.

### Concept 7

**Supporting the transition of worker into the external job market where a worker is no longer meeting the requirements of their current contractual obligations or when the needs of the company are changing**

"Many large organisations have an excess of experienced employees - meaning 55+ - without necessarily having the possibility to allow them to capitalise on their experience and expertise, explains Sophie Van der Beken. On the other hand, other organisations - especially in the non-profit sector - cannot find highly-experienced employees at a cost they can afford. This programme aims to bridge the gap between the two, by offering new career opportunities to people who want to take on a new challenge, but without the risk of losing the security and benefits they have gained, at the end of their career."

Both parties can benefit. The 'outlanding' company can offer its senior staff an alternative career path and optimise its wage costs, giving way to windows of opportunity for younger people in the organisation. The senior employee can enhance his or her talents, share experience, capitalise on strengths and expertise in another environment, and regain motivation by taking on a new challenge and developing other skills. Finally, the 'inlanding' organisation can find profiles that are difficult to attract within their budget.

The relationship is tripartite and takes the form of a service contract. The employee remains employed by their home company and retains their remuneration and acquired rights. The 'inlanding' company defines a budget for the position to be filled, which is invoiced by the original employer. Part of the salary cost is therefore still sponsored by the latter. "The recipient organisation can thus hire an employee with 25 to 30 years' experience for the price of a profile with 10 years' experience, explains Sophie Van der Beken. And the original employer continues to carry out the assessment, record leave or absences, etc., even though the employee no longer works for them in practice. »

Each of the 18 'outlanding' companies freely determine which employees are eligible for the programme. Some offer this opportunity only to 55+ profiles who are affected by a reorganisation, some to employees affected by a reorganisation regardless of their age, and others to all 55+, but sometimes with the exception of certain job types such as IT. "One of the common threads is that these are long-term assignments, ideally lasting until the person retires. This can mean a commitment of eight to twelve years. Shorter assignments are possible, but the pool of interested employees may be reduced. For the employees of all these companies, participation in Experience@Work is of course voluntary."

As of today, more than 100 employees from the 18 participating companies have started an 'Experience@Work' mission. "They enjoy working for a smaller organisation, and getting more responsibilities because, in a small company, you have to be more polyvalent, to do more things at the same time but also you can use your skills, your strengths and be appreciated for them."

Large companies need to be aware that their (55+) human resources are valuable and that they can still do something meaningful, adds Sophie Van der Beken. "But it is also a step that the employee needs to take. The employee has to be willing to invest in re-skilling or up-skilling because stepping into a new environment is also learning something new. It takes some time and effort. Experience@work is a way of ensuring that 55+ employees can continue to work meaningfully all the way until the end of their career. For this reason, I would say that it is definitely part of the circular economy. Because we want to offer people the opportunity to remain employable. And we are building further on the experience that someone already has, by allowing them to share it and put it to work for another organisation that can benefit from that experience."