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Gloomy one minute, happy the next

If the three years since 23 June 2016 have introduced mounting uncertainty to businesses up and down the country, then the second half of 2019 will see those levels of doubt reach a crescendo.

A new Prime Minister, just as handicapped in Parliament as his predecessor, a looming October Brexit deadline (although let's not discount another delay – like buses, we wait ages for one then three will come along at once), a possible general election and/or referendum – it's not the most stable of investment climates is it? Especially when one adds the impending comprehensive spending review in autumn.

At precisely the time the country has needed clear direction, it's endured an ineffective and out-of-touch Government and an equally ineffective and out-of-touch Opposition.

Matters within our sector are also increasingly at the mercy of poor Government performance. The big infrastructure push has promised much and delivered little, housing policy remains ambiguous and fragmented, and commercial building activity is falling back due to the uncertainty. A fall in ready-mixed concrete sales for Q1 (4% down quarter-on-quarter according to the Mineral Products Association) does not bode well for the remainder of the year.

Part of the role of Government is to provide the policy and financial framework to allow a successful investment and business climate. It is some small hope that the second half of the year should provide such clarity and opportunity.

Happiness

But let's not get mired in 'doom and gloom'. There is much cause for optimism and happiness. Says who? Well, the 'Workplace Happiness League Table' from a workplace consultant, Peldon Rose.

An on-line survey of more than 1800 office employees was undertaken in February, with respondents from a variety of industries. Taking such polls with a pinch of salt (as comedian Vic Reeves once put it, tongue-in-cheek, "88.2% of all statistics are made up on the spot"), the results do provide a glimpse of the sort of things that keep us happy at work.

The survey reveals that appreciation is key to the happiness of the nation's employees, with 80% saying that feeling appreciated is important to their happiness at work – ahead of salary (58%) and feeling trusted (55%). Training and development (80%), tools and technology to do the job efficiently (79%) are among the important factors in making people feel appreciated at work.

You're also working in the happiest sector in the country – 78% of construction and manufacturing employees say they are happy at work.

According to a study from the University of Warwick, a happy employee is 12% more productive than an unhappy employee. So there is sound business sense in keeping people happy, as well as being important to the mental health of employees.

And if that doesn't make you happy enough, well as it's the summer holiday season, grab the sun hat, turn off the news and relax.

Enjoy the issue!

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