

The University of Kent presents  
**The Kent HR Conference 2020:  
 Employee Engagement and Productivity**

Sponsored by HR GO

Friday 20th November 2020



9:30	<b>Welcome and Introduction</b> Carole Barron, <i>Director of Knowledge Exchange and Innovation, The University of Kent</i> John Parkinson, <i>Chief Information Officer at HR GO</i>
9:45	<b>HR practices, Job Satisfaction and Firm Performance</b> Professor George Saridakis, <i>Professor of Entrepreneurship and Small Business at the University of Kent</i>
10:20	<b>The perils and pitfalls of organisational group decision-making and overcoming them: a route-map for productive and effective decision-making</b> Dr Dawn Nicholson, <i>Lecturer in Business and Organisational Psychology at the University of Kent</i>
10:55	<b>Refreshment Break</b>
11:10	<b>Applying Artificial Intelligence to Talent Acquisition</b> John Parkinson, <i>Chief Information Officer at HR GO</i> and Dr Anna Jordanous, <i>Senior Lecturer in Computer Science at the University of Kent</i>
11:45	<b>Employee Engagement: Is it really working?</b> Amrit Sandhar, <i>Founder of the Engagement Coach</i>
12:20	<b>Lunch</b>
13:20	<b>World Class Engagement</b> Wayne Clarke, <i>Co-Founder of the Global Growth Institute</i>
14:00	<b>Breakout Sessions</b> 1. <b>Stories, Wellbeing, and HR: Help Employees Find Meaning in COVID-19 Disruption</b> , Dr Dieter Declercq, <i>Lecturer in the School of Arts at the University of Kent</i>



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	<p><b>2. HR GO's Surgery on Recruitment Issues During COVID-19</b></p> <p>Tony Adams, <i>Operations Director at HR GO</i>, supported by branch managers</p> <p><b>3. Employee Engagement – Beware of the Dark Side</b></p> <p>Dr Samantha Evans, <i>Lecturer in Employee Relations and Human Resource Management at the University of Kent</i></p>
14:40	<p><b>Machine Learning, Employee Engagement and Talent Acquisition: Have you made the connection?</b></p> <p>Kenneth Cox, <i>Founder of Snapwire &amp; Co-Founder and CTO of Shona HR</i> and Eroll Chimanga, <i>co-founder and CEO of Shona HR</i>.</p>
15:15	<b>Refreshment Break</b>
15:30	<p><b>The Role of Digital Technologies on the Response of SMEs Owners During the Covid-19</b></p> <p>Dr Maria Balta, <i>Senior Lecturer in HR Management and Organisational Behaviour at the University of Kent</i></p>
16:05	<p><b>Covid-19 and Employee Engagement: What We've Learnt so Far</b></p> <p>Scott Maynard, <i>Group People Director at The Go-Ahead Group and HR Director of Southeastern</i></p>
16:40	<p><b>Closing Statement</b></p> <p>Professor Shane Weller, <i>Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research &amp; Innovation at the University of Kent</i></p>
16:45	<b>Finish</b>



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## Speaker Profiles

### Professor George Saridakis

*Professor of Entrepreneurship and Small Business at the University of Kent*

George Saridakis joined Kent Business School (KBS) in December 2017 as a Professor of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. He received his PhD in Economics from the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex in 2006. Prof. Saridakis is interested in the area of small firms and entrepreneurship, with a further interest in the social media, illicit behaviour and supply chain linked to business performance and economic growth. His research typically uses cross-sectional, time-series and panel data approaches. He has published more than 55 journal articles. Most of his articles have appeared in top-rated journals listed as world-leading or internationally excellent/recognised, according to the Association of Business School (ABS) journal ranking list (e.g. Human Resource Management, Journal of Business Venturing, British Journal of Management, British Journal of Industrial Relation, International Journal of Human Resource Management, Human Resource Management Review, International Business Review, Technovation). He is also the author of several edited books (e.g. 'How can HR drive growth?'), book chapters and official reports.



### Dr Dawn Nicholson

*Lecturer in Business and Organisational Psychology at the University of Kent*

Dr Dawn H. Nicholson worked for almost 28 years in internal Human Resources (HR) roles and as an advisor to HR, in professional and financial services in the City of London. Most recently, she spent 3 years as a Partner in PwC's HR Consulting business, working with clients on their people-related issues and leading PwC's client diversity offering.

Prior to PwC, Dawn was Managing Director, Deputy Head of Human Resources for Europe, The Middle East and Africa, for the global investment bank, Morgan Stanley, where she worked for 16 years. Dawn was responsible for areas including reward, benefits, diversity, employee engagement, learning and development and recruiting. During that time, she also worked closely with internal employee diversity networks and



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was the senior sponsor of the “Cultural Awareness” network and the LGBT+ network.

Before joining Morgan Stanley, Dawn spent 9 years at Arthur Andersen advising clients on people related tax and HR issues.

Dawn retired from PwC in June 2013 and returned to academia to pursue her primary passion - understanding and improving group decision-making processes. She was awarded her PhD in group decision-making in the School of Psychology here at Kent in 2019.

## John Parkinson

*Chief Information Officer at HR GO*

John is responsible for the digital transformation of all the operations within HR GO plc and setting the group digital strategy. He aims to make the business more efficient and to bring customers closer through applying technology in a sensitive way to client-facing and back-office systems, infrastructure, and business intelligence.

He is the grandson of HR GO's founder, Betty Parkinson, and continues the tradition of HR GO as a family business.




## Anna Jordanous

*Senior Lecturer at the University of Kent*

Dr. Anna Jordanous is a lecturer in the School of Computing, at the Medway campus of the University of Kent. She is a member of the Computational Intelligence and Data Science research groups. Her research areas include computational creativity and its evaluation, music informatics, digital humanities, knowledge modelling, Semantic Web, and natural language processing. Primarily she works with computational creativity - the modelling, simulation or replication of creative activities and behaviour using computational means - with a focus on the question of how to evaluate claims of computer software being creative. As well as writing creative software to improvise music, Dr Jordanous has contributed a highly-cited standardised procedure for evaluating creative systems. She



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also uses music information retrieval and natural language processing in her work.

Anna has collaborated with HR GO plc to explore how Machine Learning could be used in the recruitment process.

## Amrit Sandhar

*Founder of the Engagement Coach*

The Engagement Coach was founded by Amrit Sandhar, who has worked with a number of well-known brands across the UK, to improve employee engagement/ experience, ultimately to improve organisational productivity. With a particular passion for neuroscience and psychology to drive behavioural change, combined with his experience in employee engagement, he uses a data-driven approach to identify the issues organisations are struggling with, and to work with them to create solutions leading to drive sustainable change, thereby improving productivity. Amrit has a passion for developing people, as he believes highly engaged leaders drive better business performance by getting the best out of their colleagues.



Amrit originally started a career in healthcare as a qualified Pharmacist, and after spending a number of years in Operations, he went on to oversee half of the UK's Pharmacy and Optical units for Walmart's UK business, Asda. Having successfully worked in the healthcare sector, Amrit went on to head up Employee Engagement for Asda, before taking up a role with the prestigious Best Companies (the name behind The Sunday Times Best Companies list), working at boardroom level, helping organisations improve their employee engagement. Amrit is a qualified executive coach, a Walmart accredited change trainer, and has a CIPD Advanced Diploma (Level 7) in HRM/HRD.

Amrit was a Finalist in the 2019 NatWest Great British Entrepreneur Awards for 'Entrepreneur of the Year' (Service Industries - Midlands), and The Engagement Coach were Finalists in the CIPD People Management Awards 2020, for the 'Best Learning & Development Initiative in the Private Sector'.



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## Wayne Clarke

*Founding Partner of the Global Growth Institute*

Wayne is the founder partner of the Global Growth Institute, based out of the UK and the Netherlands. From 2007 until 2012 he was the managing partner of the advisory arm of Best Companies, who produce the Sunday Times Top 100 Companies lists.

He began his career at Arthur Anderson and went on to lead employee engagement for BDO, the fifth largest accounting network, who achieved a top 20 ranking in the Sunday Times Best Companies lists. Wayne is an economics graduate and has spent over 20 years helping to improve the performance of organisations through improved people engagement.

He works throughout the world designing and delivering strategic growth focused programmes within the private and public sector. To date he has worked with more than 700 CEOs/boards and thousands of managers in over 30 countries. Wayne is an international keynote speaker and has been recognised for 4 years by HR Magazine as one of the top 25 “Most Influential Thinkers” in the world. Wayne is a visiting lecturer on the MBA and International Business Masters programme at Cass Business School in London and Dubai.

In 2012 at the New York JCI/UN Partnership Summit, he was formally recognised as a JCI Ambassador for his work in promoting the principles of JCI and the United Nations Foundation; previous recipients of this ambassadorship include former UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki Moon.



## Dieter Declercq

*Lecturer in Film and Media Studies at the University of Kent*

Dr Dieter Declercq is Lecturer in Film and Media Studies at the University of Kent. He’s interested in our relationship with popular media and how we can harness the stories we consume in our professional and personal lives. He is the author of *Satire, Comedy and Mental Health: Coping with the Limits of Critique* (forthcoming, Emerald) and has published in journals including *The Journal for Aesthetic and Art Criticism* and *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*.



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## Tony Adams

*Operations Director for HR GO*

Tony joined HR GO in 2017 as a Regional Manager and has since moved on to become their Operations Director, responsible for the branch network nationally. Tony has over twenty years' experience in the recruitment sector, previously holding strategic positions for national organisations such as *Blue Arrow, Manpower* and *Recruit*.




## Dr Samantha Evans

*Lecturer in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations at the University of Kent*

Samantha is a lecturer in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations at Kent Business School, University of Kent. She joined the University of Kent in 2003 and prior to this worked at the University of Greenwich, from where she was awarded her PhD. Samantha is also a Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and sits on the Chartered Association of Business School's Diversity Committee. Samantha has worked on research examining inequality in the workplace, line managers and human resource management, retail trade unions, and employee well-being. Her research has been published in *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, Management Learning, Employee Relations* and *Personnel Review*. Samantha's current research project is investigating social class differences in the workplace, looking at the impact of social class on individual experiences of work and well-being, with a focus on work-life balance.



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## Kenneth Cox

*Founder of Snapwire & Co-Founder and CTO of Shona HR*  
Since graduating from the University of Kent, Kenneth Cox has clocked up 20 years working at the forefront of bespoke web and software development. Having consulted for Blue Chip companies in financial services, Kenneth went on to found Snapwire Software 10 years ago developing systems, services and products for clients in over 14 different industries. Snapwire is now a trusted technology partner for a range of large and established digitally-driven corporations and market-disrupting funded start-ups. Snapwire applies new technology to improve and integrate systems as well as building new solutions from scratch to enable clients to gain competitive advantage and accelerated business growth. Kenneth is also a co-founder and CTO of Shona HR, utilising his vast technical and project management experience. He now balances his time managing a development team, and acting as a technology adviser to clients with public speaking and writing a book on Agile Project Management. When he's not busy working he likes football, triathlons and dabbling in Crypto.



## Eroll Chimanga

*Co-founder and CEO of Shona HR.*  
Eroll Chimanga is a co-founder and CEO of Shona HR, having partnered with Kenneth Cox. Eroll has been a product professional with under 10 years experience, having worked for a variety of companies in multiple industries. He has undertaken product marketing, product management and product owner roles, managing the end-to-end delivery of various digital products from mobile apps, ecommerce platforms, web applications and more.



Eroll has always been fascinated by technology and its ability to facilitate. The opportunity of utilising evolving technology was the basis of Shona, with the view of helping people. Eroll is an agile scrum advocate and enjoys football and running in his free time, when he's not with his family.



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## Dr Maria Balta

*Senior Lecturer in HR Management and Organisational Behaviour at the University of Kent*

Dr Maria Elisavet Balta is currently a Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management in Kent Business School. Prior to joining the University of Kent, she was a Lecturer in Strategy at Brunel Business School, where she holds a PhD in Management Studies and MSc in Human Resources and Employment Relations. Maria is currently working on a project which explores occupational health delivery through technology and has contributed to Cambridge University Press for their International Human Resource Management textbook. Recently, Maria has co-authored the article, *The use of Digital Technologies by Small and Medium Enterprises during COVID-19: implications for theory and practice*.




## Scott Maynard

*Group People Director of the Go-Ahead Group and HR Director of Southeastern*

Scott Maynard is Group People Director of the Go-Ahead Group and HR Director of Southeastern Trains. Prior to his current role Scott has held HR leadership positions in private equity, financial services, utilities, and retail. Scott is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and an accredited mediator.



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