

It is not certain that everything is “uncertain”



Earlier this week, I attended an interesting debate at The House of Commons hosted by the British/Irish Chamber of Commerce. The spectre of Brexit was of course the main topic of debate along with the potential bright horizons of the future. The word “uncertainty” however played a major part in all discussions and viewpoints, and not spoken in relation to the bright horizon we were seeking.

As a business leader I am becoming more comfortable with probability and uncertainty because it’s something I can rely on to be part of my daily work. Many ideas were tabled during the event; tariffs were a major elephant in the room (along with, of course, uncertainty), and even the idea that UK and Ireland could "run off together" away from the EU and perhaps go on to define its own show on the world platform of trade and industry.

When the pigs fell off the ceiling, so to speak (judging by the look of shock on most people's faces at that suggestion), one of the main topic “footballs” kicked around was the continual question about “skilled workers”. So, here is where discussion became even trickier as we pondered the question "where do we get our UK workforce from when we can no longer ransack the EU”.

Well...I hate to be controversial, but we could do something bizarre and develop our own?

In a world of such strong unpredictability, Brexit, Trump, Le Penn and now a UK General Election, perhaps a radical measure such as creating a skilled workforce in the UK, can assist us in our woes and in our future. Whilst we are jarred by this uncertainty perhaps creating something assured should be a starting point.

It is a well-trodden and tested pathway that companies will invest where there is a highly skilled and talented work force. Sound too simple? Well, who invests in a country that doesn't have a skilled work force? JNJ based their global services in Prague, because it had a resource of well trained and talented workers. AZ in a drive to cut costs and gain talent moved roles to Poland, Costa Rica and Malaysia. In an uncertain world, we must train and develop the right skills, and have a well-developed industrial strategy around life sciences. Yes, it takes years to develop a workforce with the essential skills, so stop kicking the talent crisis football around and bring a solution. If the UK in the shadow of Brexit must attract FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) and continue to grow as a nation, we must have that workforce to remove an element of uncertainty.

In the last 18 months, The Clinical Professionals Group has funded, trained and found work for sixty life science graduates, **yes sixty**. I think we may have funded, trained and therefore created more supply of highly skilled labour to the life sciences industry than any major pharma business in the UK or Europe. Justifiably we are proud of this achievement but also urge the life science industry to play their part and start offering more careers to these great graduates.

Companies consistently request skilled, experienced staff. But out of interest, where do they think these skills come from?

Fear comes from uncertainty. When we are certain, whether of our worth or worthlessness, we are impervious to fear. If company executives are flying off across Europe to identify highly skilled worker “clusters” perhaps it’s time we accelerated our workforce skills. We can’t remove all fear but we can recognise our self-worth.

Clinical Professionals has just completed its second 2017 training program for some of this country’s brightest talent; they are now looking to start their career, be part of removing that uncertainty and be at the forefront of developing those opportunities.