

## **ProShare & GEO's UK Chapter join forces for UK Roadshow**

Narrative and context were the two threads deftly woven through the topics presented at last week's well-attended joint GEO & ProShare regional events in Birmingham and Edinburgh. How are these relevant to the share plans of today?

Narrative, or story-telling, is key to engaging your audience for employee share plans communications. Emma Dawson, Charlotte Cooper and Amy Brimble of Stitch Communications presented masterclasses on the expert use of storytelling as a tool for helping employees to make the right decisions for themselves. When it comes to share plans take-up, optimal – rather than maximum – take up is now the sweet spot that plan issuer companies want to hit.

When it comes to benchmarking SAYE and SIP take-up, ProShare's annual market report is a key tool and Gabbi Stopp presented a recap of the latest findings. Share plans don't operate in a vacuum and there are many external factors shaping their take-up and employee contribution rates – context is the key to understanding what's driving the statistics reported. Take-up for SAYE increased from 35 to 43% in 2017, and this is mainly driven by the adoption of more innovative and effective communication practices as espoused by Stitch and other specialist employee engagement communications consultants. For several years now, the Most Effective Communication category at ProShare's Annual Awards has attracted the toughest competition and the highest number of entries. All of this adds up to higher take-up across the industry, helping ever increasing numbers of employees along the road to financial security.

Similar trends in take-up and adoption of purchase plans were picked up in GEO's latest Global Equity Insights survey, and Danyle Anderson gave roadshow attendees an exclusive view of the survey's most recent highlights. Technology is now firmly an enabler for global LTI and equity plan adoption – implementation is the 'bogeyman' issue that companies have to grapple with. This year's survey is still open for participation by global plan issuer companies (and participants receive exclusive access to the results) so head over to the website to participate: <https://www.equity-insights.org/>

LTIPs of course remain firmly in the spotlight when it comes to the executive pay debate in the UK and Julie Swann of Deloitte's incentives practice gave Birmingham delegates a masterful overview of the activity currently going on in the executive remuneration and incentives space.

Corporate Governance and upcoming CEO pay ratio disclosures were expertly covered by Lynette Jacobs and Fleur Benns of Pinsent Masons at the Edinburgh leg of the roadshow. Based on a show of hands, a large majority of the plan issuers present had already conducted a dry-run of their CEO pay ratio calculations so it looks like early compliance with this new requirement may well be the order of the day.

The direction of travel has been very firmly set – Gender Pay Gap reporting in 2018, CEO pay ratio legislation in place for 2019 financial years, and perhaps mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting for 2020 following the recent conclusion of the Government's consultation.

Both ProShare and the GEO UK Chapter look forward to further events in this vein in the future and wish to thank everyone who attended and who supported this inaugural roadshow.