



# Hobbies

Here's something you didn't know about me...

**Name:** Bruce Hicks  
**Position:** Head Greenkeeper  
**Club:** Boston Golf Club  
**Hobby:** Musical Theatre

## How and when did you get into musical theatre?

"As with most things in my life I just "stumbled" into it when my wife became the Secretary of the local Operatic Society. While attending the society's summer BBQ I fell into conversation with the then Chairman who asked me "do you sing at all?" As a boy I spent eight years as a Chorister so my answer was yes but "not for many years". Anyway to cut a long story short several burnt sausages and cans of Stella later I found myself agreeing to audition for their next production (HMS Pinafore) as they were short of men for the roles."



end is also quite nice. It is rather a strange hobby to pursue but the level of detachment from my day job is huge as I can honestly say that never once have I stood in the wings waiting for my cue and been thinking about my golf course, which is probably another good reason for me pursuing it. Although it is only considered amateur theatre, the standards are extremely high and my own vocal range and skill has been improved after attending hundreds of rehearsals and working with many different professional musical directors."

## What have been your most memorable performances?

"Yeomen of the Guard with Nene Opera which was performed at the International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival in Buxton Opera House to an audience of about 1000. Also South Pacific where I played the character "Stewpot" and sang "There ain't nothing like a Dame" one night to a front row that consisted of my then Lady Captain and many members of her Section! But probably one of the best was Fiddler on the Roof (alas not Tevye but Avram the bookseller) which I did with my wife and two children in the cast, a real family experience and an award winner in the eyes of the National Operatic & Dramatic Association."

## What is it about the theatre that appeals to you?

"It is not easy to put into words, but for me it is probably the test of your memory, commitment, confidence, vocal skill and quick wittedness for when it starts to go wrong. Oh and I nearly forgot the applause at the

## HUMAN RESOURCES

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## CHANGES IN DISCIPLINARY RULES

As some of you may know, the Employment Act 2004 introduced certain changes to the conduct of disciplinary and grievance procedures in the workplace. From October 2004, it became mandatory for employers to follow certain procedures prior to the dismissal of an employee.

These included: Writing a letter to the employee setting out the allegations against him/her and advising the employee that they are required to attend a disciplinary hearing. Setting out the complaint in writing and giving the employee the opportunity to be accompanied at any subsequent disciplinary hearing. Thereafter, any decision to dismiss was required to be confirmed in writing and a right of appeal offered.

This procedure was prescriptive - any failure to follow it resulted in a dismissal being automatically unfair. It meant the employer could offer no defence to the dismissal being unfair. Similarly, if the employee wished to raise a grievance against the employer, for example in respect of discrimination or failure to pay holiday pay or appropriate wages etc. they, in turn, also required to follow a similar procedure by: Putting the grievance in writing. Waiting at least 28 days before raising the matter at an employment tribunal.

The object of ensuring employers, and employees alike, followed these mandatory procedures, was the fallacious belief that by introducing such measures it would reduce the spiraling number of claims that were being brought before employment tribunals. Unfortunately, the reverse proved to be the case and both employers and employees became more intent on ensuring they followed the procedures and therefore getting

beyond first base rather than using the time for resolution of the dispute which had been the intention behind the legislation.

The Government subjected these rules to review and they will now be abolished with effect from April 2009. In their place, the Government has introduced a new strengthened ACAS Code of Practice. If an employer fails to follow the new Code and an employee is unfairly dismissed, an employment tribunal will have the discretion to increase any award by up to 25% for that failure. Similarly, if the employee fails to appeal against his/her dismissal, an employment tribunal will be able to correspondingly reduce any award by up to 25%.

Employees will not now be required to raise grievances prior to bringing complaints for non-dismissal matters but, again, a tribunal will be able to take this factor into account when assessing an amount of compensation should the employee be successful in their claim.

Neither of these changes, however, diminishes the fact that both employers and employees are still being encouraged to resolve any differences in the workplace informally between themselves rather than resorting to litigation which automatically raises the temperature in any potential dispute and, accordingly, reduces the possibility of the two parties maintaining a successful working relationship in the future.

The lesson must be informal resolution of disputes is always better than the formal route and we at Xact would certainly recommend if you have a dispute, of any description, with your employer you should attempt to discuss this informally prior to embarking on costly litigation which may not achieve the desired result.