

Staff at North East gaming studio Double Eleven get £2,500 pay boost amid rising cost of living

A fast growing games design business has surprised its staff with a permanent £2,500 pay rise saying it felt the need to "step in" and support team members facing the rising cost of living.

Middlesbrough's Double Eleven, which has worked on high profile games such as Minecraft and Lego Harry Potter, said it has had an amazing response from its staff, and the move has instigated conversation about financial wellbeing. The raise has been applied as a flat rate so as not to disadvantage lower earners and is payable to all from entry level roles to heads of department.

The firm's commercial and finance director Kimberley Turner said the idea had been introduced to help Double Eleven staff be more resilient in "uncertain economic times". She told Business Live: "At one level, we need to attract and retain the best people so we've always done our best to be competitive in the marketplace on compensation along with a host of benefits. That's ultimately great for the company's longevity, however a long time ago when we didn't have the resources to do these things, it was about just doing right by our people.

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"When we had nothing extra to give, it was honesty – where we're going, how secure we are, along with the understanding that we would be an antidote to the chaos of what was

considered acceptable working conditions in the games industry at the time. While we certainly don't always get it right, we've just kept building on that notion for more than a decade.

"Today, I feel unfortunately that a competitive package no longer covers the cost of eating, having a roof over your head and driving to work. This time the chaos is coming from outside our industry so we needed to step in and make an adjustment across the company's UK operations."

Since launching 13 years ago, the Middlesbrough video games developer and publisher has worked on some of the world's biggest games and with global tech giants such as Microsoft. Earlier this year, the £45m turnover business, which employs about 300 people in the UK, was named one of the country's fastest growing by The Sunday Times.

Staff have been reassured that the increase does not affect any potential annual performance reviews or its annual bonus offering. The firm said it was clear pay had become increasingly important and that is why it felt compelled to act now.

Ms Turner added: "The response from the team has been amazing and most importantly it's opened up an honest conversation about financial wellbeing. Alongside the increase we have also chosen to backdate this to April 2022 to offset the cost of living so far.

"We chose to do this to ensure our people are a little more resilient towards the uncertain economic times we are in. We know there are other things we can do, and will continue listening to everyone's feedback on more ways we can help everyone navigate further cost of living rises. The thanks we have received has been very humbling and we are all proud and thankful we have such a grateful team that recognise us going the extra mile for them where we can."

Double Eleven is among a host of businesses offering staff pay enhancements to meet the rising cost of living. Virgin Money, Co-op Bank and Barclays are among others to have recently announced measures for staff.

Asked if more companies should follow suit, Ms Turner said the ability to do so was different for every business. She said: “We can only know what is right for us, for our team and also what our business can manage. While it’s hard to talk about this publicly and not feel proud of what we are doing I appreciate that we are fortunate enough to be able to offer and then sustain it going forward.

“If Double Eleven wasn’t a games company but was part of another industry, market forces, costs, competition and ultimately margins may well make it impossible to do. Having said that, I don’t want us to come across as an outlier either, as ultimately this is how we choose to invest our earnings, so it is possible.”

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