

# Fostering inclusion at work

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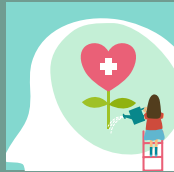
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# Upcoming Events

## Free Webinars

Thursday,  
July 21st  
2022



### Mental Health Wellness: How Employers Should Evolve with Employee Expectations

Join us for this free webinar to learn how to evolve alongside your employees and provide the support this evolving environment requires

sponsored by  Accolade ..... learn more [🔗](#)

Friday,  
July 22nd  
2022



### Reduce Worker Turnover

Tying Employee Feedback to Positive Outcomes

sponsored by **WORKSTEP** ..... learn more [🔗](#)

Tuesday,  
July 26th  
2022



### Using the Company Intranet to Engage and Retain Employees

Register today and explore how to create engaging intranet processes that your employees will not only use but also value

sponsored by **simpplr.** ..... learn more [🔗](#)

Wednesday,  
July 27th  
2022



### Essential Metrics for Great HR Leaders

How to Apply the Top HR Metrics to Your Organization

sponsored by **sage** | People ..... learn more [🔗](#)

# News Briefs

## HR Stories You Might Have Missed

### **Overturing *Roe v. Wade*: How it could impact benefits at your company**

May 12, 2022

DEI isn't just a buzzword in the HR community. It's a must have way of operating businesses. For some companies, this could even mean changing the healthcare services and benefits they offer employees – even for abortions.

No matter where you stand on the issue and how you treat controversial issues being discussed in the workplace, there's no way you can avoid this topic right now if you're a Benefits pro. The Supreme Court decision to reverse *Roe v. Wade* has seen to that. Regardless of the decisions you make when it comes to benefits, there are many variables to consider.

[Read more](#) 

### **New ruling shows limits of religious accommodation duty**

May 31, 2022

A new decision from a federal appeals court demonstrates the limits on the duty of employers to extend religious accommodation to employees under Title VII.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit ruled that the postal service was not required to excuse an employee from working on Sundays because doing so would have caused an undue hardship.

[Read more](#) 

### **Pride Month: How HR can support LGBTQIA+ employees**

June 2, 2022

Workplaces that support LGBTQIA+ employees and foster inclusiveness become better. The numbers don't lie.

When employees can show up as their authentic selves, companies gain workers who are 150% more creative, 150% more empowered, and feel two times as safe in their workplace.

[Read more](#) 

### **Did these manager comments prove unlawful age bias?**

June 2, 2022

When are a manager's comments direct evidence of unlawful age bias? The line separating damning statements from so-called "stray remarks" can be tough to draw. In a new ruling, a federal appeals court thought long and hard before deciding that a combination of manager comments were not direct evidence of unlawful discrimination.

Terrell Smith began working as a customer service representative (CSR) for AT&T's predecessor in 1999.

[Read more](#) 

### **Can pay transparency laws fix the wage gap? New York might take the bet**

June 12, 2022

Governor Kathy Hochul has been asked the question: Is New York for – or against – pay transparency laws?

This week, Hochul is considering whether to sign off on Senate bill S9427A, which would require employers with four or more employees to provide pay transparency for jobs being done "in full or in part" within the State of New York. Penalties of the bill give it some sharp teeth with fines up to \$3000 per violation and up to \$250,000 in civil penalties.

[Read more](#) 

## 'Clean Slate' laws are taking hold: Colorado joins list

June 14, 2022

Colorado has joined a growing list of states that have passed what are known as "Clean Slate" laws, lending momentum to a trend that is likely to see additional states follow suit — perhaps in the near future.

Gov. Jared Polis signed Colorado's Clean Slate Act into law at the end of May. According to the Clean Slate Initiative, Colorado is the seventh state to enact such a law. The growing trend began relatively recently: Starting with Pennsylvania, all seven states have enacted their Clean Slate laws since 2018.

[Read more](#) 

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## Boss who endangered children stays fired: Courts won't buy FMLA excuse

June 16, 2022

When considering an FMLA claim and some other kinds of claims, one way courts determine whether A caused B is timing.

Say an employee exercises a legal right by doing something an employer may not like — such as requesting a leave — and then gets fired almost immediately.

[Read more](#) 

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## Happy Juneteenth from HRMorning

June 17, 2022

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, is our nation's second Independence Day of June 19, 1865. Juneteenth represents how far we've come, yet how far we still have to go. Under-recognized and under-celebrated for 155 years, it was finally made a federal holiday in 2021. As it falls on a Sunday this year, government employees will have Monday June 20th off of work.

The HRMorning crew would like to share their favorite guidance with you for Juneteenth 2022. We hope this helps HR allies who would like to support efforts to honor this holiday and celebrate the courage and perseverance of the Black community. Please enjoy!

[Read more](#) 

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## Emerging trend: Bereavement leave covers reproductive losses

June 22, 2022

A new twist on bereavement leave has been gaining steam — and companies in Illinois will soon be required to provide it under state law.

Gov. J.B. Pritzker recently signed the Family Bereavement Leave Act, which expands the definition of a "covered family member" under the Child Bereavement Leave Act.

[Read more](#) 

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## Employee opposes rainbow flag, gets fired: Was it discrimination?

June 23, 2022

An employee sued for religious discrimination after he was fired for posting a comment on the company's intranet about its rainbow flag display in observance of Pride Month. Here's what happened:

The longtime employee, Daniel Snyder, was filling out the company's first engagement survey seeking feedback about ways the company could improve. Snyder was told that the survey answers were anonymous.

[Read more](#) 

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# Employee let go, didn't comply with injury required paperwork



"Hi Betty," said Ron Peters, an employee. "What can I do for you this time?"

"Hi Ron," said Benefits Manager Betty Murphy, ignoring his little snarky tone. "Just calling to see how your leg is doing."

"It's a slow healing process," said Ron. "A ruptured Achilles tendon doesn't heal overnight you know. I still have months of rehab left."

"Oh, I know Ron," said Betty. "We're not rushing you at all. Take all the time you need to recover. I was just wondering if you asked your doctor to send the medical information we requested so we could evaluate your return to work when it's time."

"I did," said Ron. "I even followed up with the doctor and his office said they sent you what you requested."

"Well, I'll check my inbox again," said Betty. "But I haven't seen anything yet."

"The office is a bit old school," said Ron. "Maybe check the fax machine instead."

"I have and I still haven't gotten anything," said Betty.

"OK," said Ron. "I'll call my doc again and ask them to send you everything. But I gotta go right now. My wife is patiently waiting to take me to my physical therapy appointment."

"Thank. I appreciate that, Ron. And good luck with therapy," said Betty.

## Medical records received?

A few months later Betty finally receive some of the paperwork she requested from the doctor. But they were scant.

There was a two-sentence note from his doctor clearing him to return to work with no restrictions; the results of a months-old functional capacity evaluation; and one-page notes verifying that Ron had prescriptions for Adderall and Tylenol #3.

Betty's company wasn't satisfied with the response because it did not adequately answer its questions.

She told Ron he would be subjected to a disciplinary hearing. Ron provided about 400 pages of medical records for the hearing, but the company said they still didn't answer all its questions. It then terminated Ron's employment.

Ron sued saying the company violated the ADA by discriminating against him based on his disability, and by making improper medical requests and terminating his employment for not complying with those requests.

Who won?

***See decision on next page***

## You Be The Judge

# Employee let go, didn't comply with injury required paperwork (Continued)



## The Decision

A lower court granted summary judgment in the company's favor, ruling that it reasonably believed that Ron couldn't perform his job

safely. And it said that the requests were consistent with business necessity, as the ADA requires, because federal safety regulations

require the railway to ask their employees about their use of controlled substances.

## Appeals court affirms

Ron appealed, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit affirmed the lower court's ruling.

Stressing the safety-sensitive nature of Ron's job, the appeals court agreed that the company's requests were required by Federal Railway Administration regulations.

The company's requests were consistent with the ADA because they were job-related and consistent with business necessity, the court said.

It rejected Ron's argument that the volume of records requested was not necessary. But the records were job-related and federally required.

## Analysis: Safety can't be overlooked

No one wants to let a good employee go. But when you repeatedly ask for paperwork that is required by law or by the company for safety purposes, you can't let it go.

It's for the employee's safety and their co-workers' safety.

Give people the benefit of the doubt in the beginning, but after a certain period of time, if it becomes obvious they're not

going to comply, you must take whatever actions are legally required to protect your company and everyone else involved. The key is documenting all communications from the very start.

*Coffey v. Norfolk Southern Railway Co.*, No. 21-1248, 2022 WL 128487 (4th Cir. 1/14/22).

[Read more You Be the Judge in your Membership Dashboard](#) 

# LGBTQ+ IN THE WORKPLACE



## LEADERSHIP

# Pride Month: The catalyst to foster more inclusive behavior



by Michele McGovern

**P**ride Month is just a beginning for companies to foster more inclusive behavior at work.

June is dedicated to the observance and celebration of the LGBTQ+ community. But most companies can use their Pride Month efforts to improve inclusive behavior throughout the year.

"It's so huge to challenge people's thinking and assumptions, and open up a psychologically safe workplace for all communities," says Maggie Smith, VP of Human Resources at Traliant. "Everyone is responsible for a safe culture."

It's important for the LGBTQ+ community, which is underrepresented in the workplace across industries and professional levels. According to research from

McKinsey, 5.1% of women and 3.9% of men in the U.S. identify as LGBTQ+. Yet, just 1.6% of managers are women and 2.8% of are men who identify as LGBTQ+.

The percentage of representation decreases substantially as we go up the corporate ladder. That can lead to further isolation in a population that might feel it doesn't belong.

## Consequences for exclusion

Workplaces face consequences when any underrepresented population feels slighted – and it's especially true for the LGBTQ+ community. About 20% of LGBTQ+ employees have avoided their job or flat-out quit because they didn't feel welcomed and accepted, according to research from The Human Rights

Campaign. Those are often great employees walking out the door because the environment wasn't kind.

What's more, about 45% of LGBTQ+ employees have experienced unfair treatment at work, according to research from UCLA's School of Law Williams Institute. One in ten faced discrimination in their careers.

"In a diverse world, we need to treat others as they would like to be treated. In order to do this, we need to know more about who they are and the background from which they come. We need to listen and understand. We need to make the unfamiliar familiar," says Nichelle Grant, Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Siemens USA, which uses its Courageous Conversations program as a catalyst for creating a more inclusive workplace.

Here are four ways to foster more inclusive behavior during Pride Month and beyond.

## **Create opportunities to connect**

If you don't have a formal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) program, consider implementing one that includes time and space devoted to Pride Month and the LGBTQ+ community. Still, you don't need a formal program to start conversations.

Invite employees to informal, voluntary training and/or conversations that can boost understanding and inclusion.

For instance, at Traliant, employees have the opportunity to join in the LGBTQ+ Inclusion Course. In that, they explain terminology that might not be well-known to all employees and how to use it properly. The acronym LGBTQ+ represents a broad spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities. And using proper terms, including preferred pronouns, shows respect and helps people communicate effectively.

They also give a history of how Pride Month started and include information on Juneteenth, the June 19th federal holiday to commemorate the emancipation of enslaved people in the U.S.

And if you wonder if employees will want to participate, Siemens USA is an example of the power behind creating the opportunities: Four

months after they launched the Courageous Conversations program – as a way to engage employees and teams on diverse topics – more than 1,200 employees at all levels of the organization joined in more than 100 conversations, Grant reports. And it's still growing.

## **Create psychologically safe spaces**

"While real progress has been made over the years, for many LGBTQ+ employees, workplace issues and challenges remain – such as fear of coming out at work and hearing anti-gay jokes, comments or slurs," Smith says.

And that's why it's critical for employers to create and foster psychologically safe spaces. LGBTQ+ employees need to be able to bring their authentic selves to the workplace so they can do their best work.

In many cases, that can mean training. Employees don't always know how they can make the workplace inclusive and welcoming to LGBTQ+ colleagues. Smith suggests town hall meetings where leaders can talk about what it means to be an ally.

To further that, you might include an anonymous Q&A feature, where employees submit questions ahead of time. It's helpful because when one person actually submits a question, it's likely another dozen also wondered the same.

If Smith sees several similar questions come in on Traliant's anonymous, digital question box, she and other leaders know to address it companywide quickly. (This goes for recurring questions across the gamut of HR issues.)

## **Ask, don't assume**

Leaders don't want to make all the decisions on making the workplace more inclusive and helping employees feel like they belong. Reason: What you see as an issue may not be one. And you might have a blind eye to important issues.

Ask employees in all underrepresented groups, "What are your thoughts on ... ?" You can address anything from situations you think are issues to benefits to initiatives you want to implement. A good place to start: Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). If groups of people with similar interests and personal insights are talking or concerned about a topic, it's likely something you want to react to.

## **Accept missteps**

Fostering a more inclusive workplace is important, but that doesn't mean it will come easily. The best intentions to improve belonging won't always work out.

"Acknowledge that things are going to go wrong sometimes and be

vulnerable to learn,” Smith says. “But don’t be afraid to take some action.”

The key might be to start small. Offer all employees opportunities talk about or train on understanding and using inclusive language. Plan an event focused on LGBTQ+ education. Have a Pride party (nearly everyone likes a reason to celebrate).

From there, you can build a stronger program that’s active

all year with DEI initiatives and learning opportunities.

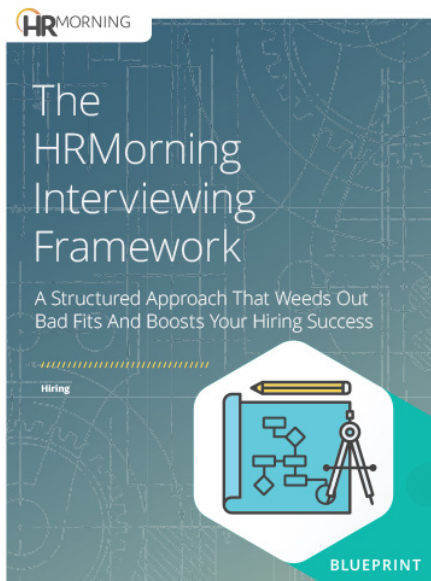
“Then, make sure your website reflects what your company represents,” Smith suggests.

You might include information about your inclusive Employee Assistance Programs, active E ERGs and photos of the DEI events you’ve held throughout the year. Job candidates, customers and

potential investors are increasingly interested in knowing how inclusive companies are.

Bottom line, according to Grant, “The importance of inclusion quickly connects to the actions and ideas expressed to see change happen.”

[Read this article online](#) 



## **The HRMorning Interviewing Framework**

### **A Structured Approach That Weeds Out Bad Fits And Boosts Your Hiring Success**

This systematic, repeatable interview process – when properly applied – is designed to help you develop a structure that provides you a better-than-average success rate for bringing outstanding new employees on board.

After reading this blueprint we’ll take you from an unstructured interview approach where you “trust your gut” to guide your decision-making, to a clear-cut, structured, research-backed process proven to improve your hiring success – combined with company-specific assessments and tools for interviewers to follow in a consistent way – without fail.

[get the guide](#) 

## RECRUITING

# Will labor shortage last all your days in HR? Experts say, 'Possibly'!



by Michele McGovern

## 6 STRATEGIES TO RETAIN AND RECRUIT



**W**e don't want to scare our HR pros too much, but you should know: The labor shortage you feel now will most likely be a pain point for a long time.

The better news: We have expert- and research-driven strategies to retain great employees and recruit more of the kinds of candidates you want.

### The labor shortage facts

But first, let's look at the labor shortage, what it stems from, and why it continues.

When COVID-19 started its spread and workplaces shut down, millions of people stopped working, voluntarily and involuntarily. Most went back in the past two years, but about 10% might not ever walk into work again.

So there are about 3.5 million workforce dropouts. That's the difference between the number of workers in March and how many there would be if the labor force stayed on its pre-pandemic growth rate, according to a group of researchers from Stanford University, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México and the University of Chicago.

Generally, this group doesn't plan to return to most pre-COVID activities, including work, shopping and dining. More specifically, the dropouts tend to be women, lack

a college education and worked in low-paying positions.

The phenomenon is dubbed “long social distancing” and “this drag on labor force participation shows no sign of abating over the past year, suggesting it could depress labor force size for a long time,” the researchers say.

But, the long social distancers aren't the only population dropping out (although they're likely the only one to stay out as long as you're in HR). Many made the decision to stay out because they wanted or have to care for dependents. Others decided to retire early. Some chose to pursue passions over careers.

Whatever the reasons, to HR pros, it's simply a shortage of talent for available positions. That leaves double-duty for HR: Retain great employees and hire ideal candidates.

Here are three retention and three hiring strategies:

### **Retain: Fix the culture**

MIT researchers are adamant: The Great Resignation has been mostly fueled by toxic workplace cultures. They found corporate culture is 10 times more likely to contribute to employee quits than a company's compensation.

- Toxic corporate culture
- Job insecurity and reorganization
- High levels of innovation

- Failure to recognize employee performance, and
- Poor response to COVID-19.

“Our analysis found that the leading elements contributing to toxic cultures include failure to promote diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI); workers feeling disrespected; and unethical behavior,” the researchers say.

HR leaders can't fix culture overnight. They can't fix it alone, either. But knowing the major contributors – and owning up to allowing those to exist in the workplace – can help leaders ignite change.

Start with targeted surveys. Ask employees to assess the current conditions of DEI, respect and ethics in your workplace.

### **Retain: Create more lateral moves**

If bad culture kills employee loyalty, inhouse career opportunities secures it. The MIT researchers found offering lateral career moves is two-and-a-half times more predictive of retention than compensation.

Sure, career movement may come with some compensation adjustment, but researchers say the opportunity alone to expand skills, knowledge and authority are enticing enough to retain employees.

This is especially important to HR leaders and front line managers

because you likely have untapped opportunities to make happy those employees who aren't interested in climbing the corporate ladder.

So promote job openings directly to employees first and with gusto. Many workers simply want a change of pace or the chance to try something new. Those moves are even more enticing when they comes with the stability of staying with their employer.

### **Retain: Make work predictable**

We aren't going to address the proverbial elephant in the room called “remote work” beyond this: If you can offer it to white collar workers, do it. It has a huge impact on employee loyalty.

Beyond that, for anyone who can't work remotely, create predictable work schedules. Having a predictable schedule is six times more powerful in predicting employee retention among blue collar workers, MIT researchers found.

When people know what to expect for work, they can plan and enjoy their personal time better. And that makes their workplace more appealing.

### **Recruit: Lower bar, widen net**

We know: You have job descriptions, role definitions,

goal expectations and beyond. You and your hiring managers can't just lower the standards.

*Or can you?* To get the right candidates, you might want to lower the bar to widen your recruiting net.

Here's why that approach can help. Nearly a third of candidates are frustrated because they can't find job openings they're qualified for, according to research from Job-Hunt.

Imagine if more job seekers who have adaptable skills, aptitude to learn and desire to succeed saw themselves filling your less constrictive role.

So to recruit better, you might lower education experience in favor of practical experience. Or you can list skills required, rather than years in the industry. Another swap-out: Focus on outcomes expected for the role and less on the degrees, certifications or tenured knowledge.

## Recruit: Tighten up the process

More than 60% of candidates quit the application process because it's too lengthy or complicated, according to research from CareerBuilder.

And while some employers think they're weeding out lazy or unqualified applicants by creating a deeper process, they're not. Instead, employers are also eliminating good candidates who just might be short on time or are so efficient they don't want to go to work for a company that doesn't have an efficient processes.

Instead:

- **Eliminate redundancy.** Either have candidates upload résumé or ask for manual input – not both.
- **Get the link.** If you want to see their body of work, request URLs rather than have candidates submit more documents, and
- **Speak the questions.** Save long, detailed questions and answers for in-person interviews.

## Recruit: Communicate

In some cases, HR is the problem behind a company's recruiting woes. Half of candidates in the Job-Hunt survey said the No. 1 frustration with trying to find a job is not hearing back from employers.

They feel ghosted. And that's no way to treat anyone willing to work.

Consider this, too: Two-thirds of candidates will wait two weeks to hear back from a company before they move on to another opportunity, the CareerBuilder researchers found. Surely, you wouldn't wait two weeks to respond to an employee inquiry. So you don't want to do that to a potential employee either.

Two critical points here:

1. **Automate responses** to emails to keep candidates in the loop. Almost every recruiting software and job app makes this possible. The key is that you (or your vendor) ensure the messages reach candidates. Create notifications for when messages arrive and alerts for when they don't.
2. **Update status.** Keep applicants updated (weekly, at least) on their status, even if they've been removed from consideration. You might want to reconfirm their contact information so you can keep them in your talent pipeline of qualified candidates (assuming they're OK with that, too).

[Read this article online](#) 

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## Case Study



# Reminding workers we are on their side is key

As our employees transitioned back to the workplace, we knew things weren't going to return to normal right away. These are unprecedented times, so even the most skilled workers were bound to be affected.

On top of that, pandemic-related guidelines and policies were changing every week. While it was simple enough to constantly check relevant news outlets for updates, disseminating that information was a whole different monster.

Our department also had to be mindful to not overwhelm anyone with all the changes, especially when they were already dealing with a difficult transition.

To keep everyone compliant while preserving their wellness, we established multiple streams of communication within the company.

### A 2-way street

Anytime there was an update, we'd quickly publicize it in three ways: a mass company email, posters in frequently visited spots, and staff

meetings.

I made sure to include a note with any correspondence saying that I'm available to talk through any concerns, along with my cell number.

Giving workers direct access to the manager instead of making them go through an assistant showed them that we care. It's easy for people to forget we're on their side during difficult times. It's part of our job to constantly remind them.

*(Tracy Berringer, HR Manager, Lakeland Surgical Diagnostic Center, Lakeland, FL)*

# Boosted wellness with fertility, elder care perks

When the pandemic hit, we realized started thinking about benefits from a more holistic perspective. It's not just about giving employees good medical insurance. It's about looking at all of the different factors that might impact their lives.

Talking to employees, we'd hear things that were really creating stressors and we tried to think about if, as a firm, we could help in any way.

Employees were concerned about family planning. At the same time, we noticed that some were overwhelmed by an aging loved

one's needs, especially when caregiving while working a full-time job.

We expanded our wellness-focused benefits by offering our almost 300 employees help with family planning and caregiver support. We provide access to a network of fertility experts through Nubundle, plus care management and personal assistance services to help aging loved ones thrive at home through Homethrive.

### Being Well initiative

These additional benefits are part of our Being Well initiative, which was launched last year

and includes a host of other wellness offerings.

Staff are given resources, activities and training workshops on topics ranging from substance abuse and stress management to meditation and sleep programs.

Several members of our staff have expressed how these services opened them up to a world of support resources they didn't know existed.

*(Sonia Menon, Chief Operating Officer, Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP, Chicago)*

[Read more Case Studies in your Membership Dashboard](#)

# Improve company culture with an intentional, actionable approach



by Mykaela Doane, HR Expert Contributor

## Make OKRs A Part Of The Plan



**W**e're finally getting to the bottom of what's causing the Great Resignation. And, despite popular opinion, it's not just burnout or salary. It might be more about company culture.

Being overworked and underpaid certainly contributes to the mass resignations we've seen across the globe. But it turns out corporate culture plays a bigger role in attrition. In fact, culture was the single biggest predictor of which companies lost employees during the first six months of the Great

Resignation, according to the MIT Sloan Management Review/ Glassdoor Culture 500.

With the war for talent intensifying, companies can't overlook the importance of company culture.

But as corporate culture has become increasingly more important to employees, it's also become harder for corporations to establish and maintain. After all, culture is hard to shape – even when employees sit in one central office.

Sharing and fortifying culture is one of the reasons why Google,

Spotify, Airbnb and Deloitte focus on objectives and key results (OKRs), a management methodology for setting goals and measuring results. It often creates a common language for entire organizations to discuss what's valuable.

I'm the Head of People and Talent for a fast-scaling technology company with five offices across the world and employees in eleven time zones. Our employees aren't just located in different places. They bring diverse perspectives and differing cultural values to their work every day. Despite the diverse

and decentralized nature of our company, we've developed a strategy for using technology to solidify a unified, clear company culture.

Here's how:

## Uncover and enable values

The most effective corporate values are held with conviction. Otherwise, they feel flimsy and hollow and won't have staying power.

In the quest to find your culture, examine the company's genuine core values. What do people do when no one is watching? What are the operating rhythms that you hold dear? Once you answer these and other fundamental questions, own your company's authentic culture and give employees the tools to actualize it.

My organization puts less weight behind company rituals and special occasions and more emphasis behind how people work. The business believes in accountability, focus and transparency at all costs.

To reinforce that, our OKR program focuses on:

- **Accountability:** Aspirational objectives and measurable results keep employees and teams honest. Managers collaborate with employees to set OKRs, and we track each employee's and team's progress toward achieving them in a platform everyone can see. As a result, everyone knows what success looks like and if they hit the mark.

- **Focus:** Too often, employees get distracted by "shiny object syndrome," and big initiatives — cultural initiatives included — are never realized. We regularly broadcast strategic priorities across the organization, so the entire workforce can concentrate on what's important, make better decisions and execute efficiently.
- **Transparency:** Many organizations expect their workforces to work cross-functionally but don't provide the transparency to do so. We make each set of OKRs available to everyone in the organization. Because our employees know what's happening around them, they can adjust their objectives while supporting the goals and work of others.

## Make your culture actionable

In the race for market leadership, companies often grow quickly and sacrifice the culture that made them successful in the first place. Culture gets lost because it feels nebulous. Or, organizations set it and forget it, missing out on opportunities to align, refine and celebrate those core tenets of what makes the company unique.

Try to incorporate corporate values into each employee's everyday life by making them actionable. We create action from values and measure progress. By setting OKRs at an individual, team and organizational level, and then making them visible

across the enterprise through technology, we articulate which culture-driven actions we're all working toward.

The explicit goals and measurable outcomes are critical as it shows (rather than tells) teams the actions we're taking and progress we're making. We also use OKRs to bridge the communication gap and ensure our whole workforce is on the same page — no matter the time zone, department or office they sit in.

## Words of caution

Of course, our culture and approach isn't a fit at every company — it isn't one size fits all. Every company needs to uncover the culture that fits their own true ideals and find a way to unlock that culture for everyone across the organization.

But companies will want to establish and empower culture early. Many companies don't spend the time defining cultural clarity and enabling it until it's too late. And once a company has scaled, it's challenging to work backward to map out an intentional culture.

In that case, culture can develop organically, and sometimes it's not in the right direction. Instead of a company intentionally shaping its culture, the culture can shape the company. And it could end up with unintended cultural mainstays or even face toxic culture issues.

[Read this article online](#) 

# Employee engagement : 3 ways wellness ups your game



by Reneé Cocchi



**G**allup defines employee engagement as the involvement and enthusiasm of employees in their work and workplace. It helps employers measure and manage employees' perspectives on the crucial elements of workplace culture.

But employee engagement also drives performance and retention. When employees are engaged, they stay with the company, give their best to help achieve the company goals and are also willing to recommend and refer others to the organization. So, typically, there's a

link between employee engagement and well-being.

## Well-being & employee engagement

Research from Gallup has shown that engagement and well-being are reciprocal. "They each influence the future state of the other," said Steve Boese, Co-founder of H3 HR Advisors, Co-chair of Human Resource Executive Magazine's HR Technology Conference and Co-host of At Work in America podcast. "Each makes a unique but complementary contribution to the thoughts,

feelings, behavior and performance outcomes of employees. So, when they work together, they can be a real supercharger for a thriving, more productive kind of workplace."

Naturally, when employees are engaged and are thriving at work, burnout decreases and productivity improves.

"The research is fairly clear that companies that adopt employee well-being programs, as part of a broader business strategy, realize other more measurable and substantial ROI," said Boese. "For example, turnover can cost U.S. employers over 1 trillion dollars a year, and it's generally accepted that replacing a lost employee can cost anywhere between 33% to 150% of their annual salary depending on their skill set and seniority. It impacts your operations, hurts morale, makes companies less competitive as they lose more experienced workers and there's also a link between employee well-being and low turnover."

A 2017 Mercer survey found that employers who created cultures of health had a turnover rate that was 11 percentage points lower than employers who did little to prioritize employee well-being.

## Well-being & culture

Employee wellness also contributes to better company

culture. In fact, research by McKinsey & Company shows that employees need to fill a purpose through their work and organization for that sense of fulfillment. And while upper management and executives may feel a sense of purpose, front-line managers and individual contributors are often less aligned to it.

Engagement is key for a flourishing organization. "But the reality is that engagement initiatives without human levels, like psychological safety, just leads to more burnout," said Tanner Bergman, MS, LPC, NCC, in the Paycom webinar Wellness in the Workplace: A Chat with Steve Boese. "We have to establish this as the foundation and the inflection point begins where executives and leaders come into the equation."

When leaders cultivate healthy environments, people will always do the best they can. That doesn't mean there are never problems, but it shifts the view to a holistic one. Creating psychologically safe cultures and environments allows employees to feel empowered to think deeper and ask deeper

questions. "This leads to increased meaning and purpose in their work, so they can do their best and meet their potential naturally not with an organization or leader trying to control them into meeting their potential," said Bergman. "So, leaders modeling and cultivating psychological safety is absolutely paramount."

### Well-being & productivity

A 2020 Bank of America study found that 57% of employees connect well-being to productivity.

"The financial burden of lost productivity among workers with major depression alone is estimated at \$51 billion annually," said Boese. "It's pretty clear that unaddressed mental health challenges will just lead to lost productivity. And I also think it's obvious that inadequate mental healthcare support leads to lost productivity and drives presenteeism and absenteeism."

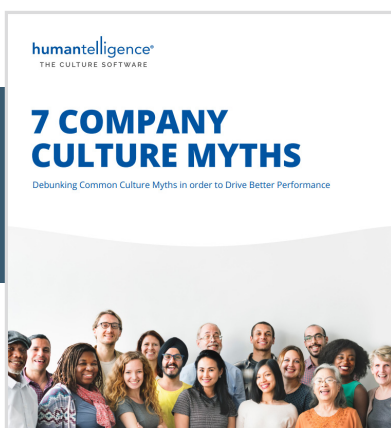
A study from the National Institutes of Health found that people with depressive symptoms were seven

times as likely to experience decreased effectiveness at work than their peers without depression.

"When we persist with this idea of work-life balance, we keep [the two sides] separate and that pits the two against each other and invalidates the human that's in the middle connecting both worlds. One of them is going to require more of us at various points, and we're going to need the capacity to devote what we need, where we need it, when we need it," said Bergman.

Employees need to feel their best, physically and mentally, so they can be fully engaging with their work. Organizations that focus on helping employees take care of themselves holistically allow them to stop stressing about their so-called work/life balance and just exist peacefully devoting themselves to their work when needed and to themselves outside of work. It's important to remind everyone at your organization that happy workers are productive workers, and that's a goal all companies should strive for.

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# Psychological safety for a post-pandemic workforce



by Reneé Cocchi

## 4 WAYS TO INSTILL PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN YOUR CULTURE



**P** psychological safety is the core of a successful business, especially considering current events. Employees who don't feel safe and cared for can't concentrate, and their hearts just aren't in their work. On the other hand, when workers are in a culture of psychological safety, they are 50% more productive and the company enhances revenue growth by 5% to 10%. It's not easy to do, but it makes good business sense.

So how can HR create a culture of psychological safety?

### 1. Get clear on the definition

Start with making sure that management is clear on the core

principles of the idea. In the 1990s, Dr. Amy Edmondson of Harvard University coined the term **"a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking."**

When business gurus got hold of psychological safety a few decades later, the definition evolved to an easier-to-remember "Freedom to fail," encouraging teams to "fail fast, fail often, and fail forward." Or, as the Scrum master crowd popularized it; "Fail fast, learn faster."

Having the freedom to fail is a deceptively simple concept – saying "you won't get in trouble" isn't enough. The culture must meet the team's needs to feel physically safe, emotionally safe, and a sense of belonging before psychological safety can begin. Understanding psychological safety, and its foundation, is core to its practice.

### 2. Talk the Talk

In her Out of Office podcast, Dr. Edmondson shared insight on how to effectively build a work culture around it. The Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management at the Harvard Business School and author of the book *The Fearless Organization* listed three ways that leaders can foster:

- **Set the stage.** Frame the situation in ways that make it crystal clear that leaders and management genuinely want to hear from people, they honestly welcome ideas and they embrace the bad news, the crazy ideas and tough questions. "They recognize that collectively we are more at risk for not hearing from each other and for not engaging in conversations," explained Edmondson.
- **Perpetually ask good questions.** To her the essence of a good question is one a) you don't know the answer to, and b) focuses on something that matters (a project or a situation) and gives people room to respond. "So, it's not a yes-no question," she said. "It's kind of a 'What are your thoughts about ...' question."
- **Respond in productive ways.** That doesn't mean you agree with everything or applaud everything. "It does mean showing a basic human sense of appreciation for the effort it takes for people to come

forward with their thoughts and observations,” she emphasized.

### **3. Walk the Walk**

Dr. John Maxwell said a leader “... shows the way, and goes the way.” Building a culture of psychological safety means showing it’s OK to be transparent, authentic... and wrong. Walking the walk sends a strong message you trust your team, making it far easier for the team to trust you back. One of the most powerful ways to show that it’s OK to fail is three little words: “I don’t know.”

“I can think of very few things that are more important for leaders to do than admit when they don’t know something,” said Edmondson. “Many leaders are afraid to say ‘I don’t know’ because they’re afraid it’s going to make them look weak. It makes them look strong because it makes them look confident about the things they do know and the expertise they do have which is likely considerable or they wouldn’t be in a leadership role.”

In a world that changes as fast as this one, leaders who are confident enough to admit their gaps gain a business advantage: it means cracks can get filled in faster. The national transition of moving back

to the workplace or embracing a hybrid workforce is an excellent case study on how important it is to let employees know you don’t have all the answers.

“We’re boldly going where no one has gone before,” chuckled Edmondson. “And we’re going to make mistakes along the way. But we’re committed, and we’ll pivot and figure things out. So, in a way you’re naming the problem, you’re admitting it’ll be a challenge, and you’re inviting employees to give their input saying specifically at the outset that this is going to be a learning process.”

### **4. Meet Foundational Needs**

As mentioned earlier, psychological safety can only build when other needs are met: physical and emotional safety comes first. In a post-COVID-19 world, this is more complex than paying living wages, preventing lunch thefts, or completing OSHA training. “To reach the highest possible levels of physical safety as we go back to work in the midst of or at the end of the pandemic means nurturing psychological safety,” said Edmondson.

Creating a culture where people feel safe in the face of an ambiguous, lingering threat isn’t impossible – but it does require person-to-person connection. Employees must know their leaders genuinely want their input and are curious about their ideas. An explicit invitation to bring employees to the table is important, and when employees see their own input in the plan, they are more comfortable.

“Change activates the same areas of the brain as threats do, so it reads danger or pain – especially if the change is unwanted and it affects health, home or heart. But if people have control and want the change, the brain sees it as a thrill, not a threat,” said Dr. Kelly Makino, organizational psychologist and Editor-in-Chief of HR Morning. “When employees participate in decisions, are kept informed, and are given a chance to buy in on a plan, it lowers the threat level. The key is to treat them like partners and respect their truth – in turn they will respect yours back. This trust is the foundation for psychological safety. With that achieved, everything gets easier.”

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## The Cost of NonCompliance



**\$125K**

### Fired employee gets \$125K to resolve ADA claims

A company in Idaho will pay \$125,000 to settle ADA discrimination and retaliation claims filed by the EEOC on behalf of a former employee.

**What happened:** Jivaro Professional Headhunters, LLC is a recruiting agency in Idaho that employs about 25 workers. The company fired employee Felicia Bauer after she was hospitalized due to her disability. Bauer filed a complaint with the EEOC. Afterward, the company retaliated against her by providing “negative and misleading job references to potential employers,” according to Bauer. The EEOC sued on her behalf, alleging discrimination and retaliation in violation of the ADA.

**Result:** Under the settlement agreement, the company will pay \$125,000 to Bauer. It must also hire a consultant to help create and implement policies that comply with the ADA. The company also has to provide ADA training that focuses on employers’ legal obligations regarding reasonable accommodations for employees and applicants. Finally, the company will also undergo EEOC monitoring for five years.

**Info:** Boise Recruiter to Pay \$125,000 to Settle EEOC Disability Discrimination and Retaliation Lawsuit

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[Read more The Cost Of NonCompliance in your Membership Dashboard](#) 

# Can HR really prevent turnover? Yes – and here's how



by Michele McGovern



**T**urnover has always been an issue. But this new wave isn't like any we've ever faced. So how can HR prevent turnover now?

It's complicated because employees don't leave just because they find a similar, but seemingly better, job with a bigger paycheck.

That's something HR can fix.

Now, in the wake of the pandemic and its unsettling effects on life and work, employees leave for completely different roles. Or they leave the workforce entirely. They often choose "life" over work when they can't balance the two.

And that's not something you can just fix with better compensation and benefits.

Nearly half of employees who've left jobs recently have little or no interest in going back to the kinds of jobs

they've traditionally held, according to a McKinsey survey.

But you can prevent turnover, working with leadership to create a workplace culture no one wants to leave.

"There's a great sense of opportunity," says Taylor Smith, CEO and Co-founder of Blueboard. "What's changed is the focal point. Companies need to think about what employees want now. Not just about what companies need."

To keep employees happy – and ultimately prevent the turnover that leads to many other issues such as lower morale, productivity and engagement – HR and other leaders want to take steps now.

Here are four expert-driven, research-proven ways to prevent turnover in the post-COVID workplace:

## Listen first

You won't likely keep employees if you don't understand them and their expectations. Unfortunately, many organizations and their leaders don't understand what their employees want and need to stay engaged (and employed).

In a separate McKinsey study, executives said the top reasons their people quit were: compensation, work/life balance, and poor physical and emotional health. But, here's what employees cited as their top reasons for quitting. They didn't feel:

- valued by their organization (54%)
- valued by their managers (52%), and
- a sense of belonging at work (51%).

That's the clear disconnect that leads to turnover.

"There's always room for the voice of the employee," says Tim Rowley, COO & CTO at PeopleCaddie. "Great leaders are empathetic. They're in tune with what employees need."

To prevent turnover, HR will want to increase opportunities and channels to capture the voice of employees. Consider:

- **Regular roundtable sessions**, and mix up the the participants
- **"Ask Me Anything" meetings with executives** (employee questions will reveal their changing wants and needs), and
- **Skip-level reviews**, when employees can share insight and concerns with someone beyond their boss.

## Make 'sticky moves'

When you have a better understanding of what employees want, you're more equipped to make some "sticky moves," say the McKinsey researchers.

Every workplace and its employees are different, so your sticky moves will depend on the feedback you get. If you don't get much feedback – or you need trend insight – here are the top three sticky moves based on employee feedback in the McKinsey study:

- **Professional development.** Employees will stay at companies where they can get career coaching, appropriate training and development and opportunities to pursue better roles and compensation
- **Flexibility.** This isn't just about wanting – or even demanding – work schedules that wrap around their lives. Employees want more flexibility with how they manage their work. For instance, some companies let people assemble their own teams for projects rather than work in the same old silos. Others let job candidates and employees interested in changing positions test out those roles before committing, and
- **Meaningful work.** Half of employee still say they'd leave their job for another that gives them a greater sense of meaning. One way many organizations build meaning into work is with testimonials: Customers talk with employees about how the product or service they help create has had a positive impact on their lives.

## Squash toxicity

Employees stay where they're happy. They walk away quickly from places that make them miserable.

Proof: Almost two-thirds of employees who quit say a toxic work environment was part – if not all – of the reason they left, a FlexJobs survey found.

Even if you and other leaders don't think you have a workplace that's on the toxic scale, your employees might feel differently.

For instance, leadership might think if employees aren't in constant conflict, don't complain and show up every day, they have harmony in the workplace. Meanwhile, employees feel slighted because they don't get meaningful feedback from and dialogue with their oblivious leaders. Then employees fill the holes with assumptions and gossip, fueling underlying toxicity.

The best way to squash toxicity: **transparency.**

Employees almost always understand their workplace – from assignments to company financials – won't always be ideal. They'd rather hear hard truths about everything than be in the dark about anything.

So it's not only important to communicate with transparency. You want to create a communication plan so employees know when and how they'll be updated on information that affects them (which is almost everything). Include time, tools and opportunities for them to give feedback and get reactions to it.

## Leverage ERGs

Connect people at work and they'll stay in the workplace. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are growing in popularity across companies of all sizes and industries, and regardless of whether employees work full-time on-site, remotely or in hybrid situations.

ERGs can help employees build professional – and more importantly personal – connections. That's where they meet people with

similar interests, characteristics, life experiences and/or passions. Then the ERGs often become a force for good and grounds for healthier workplaces.

At PTC, leaders believed employee engagement never dropped throughout the pandemic because of their robust ERG program. Here are some highlights of their best-in-class ERG program:

- The ERG plan's mission is to ensure employees' voices, perspectives and impact are seen and valued
- Employees from entry-level positions to the C-suite can and choose to participate
- The CEO rotates through each ERG to get a feel for employees' needs and expectations, and get feedback on how to improve the company culture, and
- Employees help find and fuel the groups. Some of the most popular are:
  - **AE@PTC** empowers and provides members with the tools and resources to further their careers while showcasing different cultural aspects of the Asian culture to all employees
  - **BE@PTC** promotes individual and collective growth through various resources for Black employees
  - **HOLA** is for Latino and Hispanic employees to embrace and promote professional growth, raise diversity awareness and augment its business impact and contribution
  - **PRISM** creates an inclusive culture of acceptance and understanding for employees of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and
  - **Virtual@PTC** enhances company performance and culture by augmenting the virtual work experience for all employees.

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**Reneé Cocchi**

Reneé Cocchi has a passion for learning and helping other professionals do their jobs more effectively and efficiently. She earned her Master's Degree from Drexel University, and she's spent the past few decades working as a writer and editor in the publishing industry. Her experience covers a wide variety of fields from benefits and compensation in HR, to medical, to safety, to business management. Her experience covers trade publications, newsmagazines, and B2B newsletters and websites. When she's not working, she spends her free time just chilling with her family and volunteering at a local dog shelter. Her goal in life is to help all shelter dogs get happy, loving homes!



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Tom D'Agostino is an attorney and legal editor who has more than 30 years of experience writing about employment law, disability law and education law trends. He earned his B.A. degree from Ramapo College of New Jersey and his J.D. from the Duquesne University School of Law. D'Agostino, who is a member of the Pennsylvania bar, is a past member of the American Bar Association's Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities and the Pennsylvania Bar Association's Legal Services to Persons with Disabilities Committee. He has provided technical assistance in the production of segments for television's ABC World News and 20/20, and he has been quoted in periodicals including USA Today. He is also a past contributing author of Legal Rights of Persons with Disabilities: An Analysis of Federal Law, which is a comprehensive two-volume treatise addressing the legal rights of people with disabilities. Tom is passionate about baseball and authentic Italian food. When not writing, he enjoys spending time with family.



**Michele McGovern**

Michele McGovern writes. A lot. These days, she covers HR, digging deep into company culture, DEI, leadership, management and the everchanging world of work. In the years between getting a BA in journalism from a state school and writing about HR, she wrote about big-city crime for a wire service and small-town life for local newspapers. She's a mediocre mom, decent wife, wannabe athlete and consummate pursuer of fun - on land, snow and water. Follow her on Twitter @sheknowswork. Find her on LinkedIn @michele-mcgovern-writer



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Carol Warner has been a writer and editor since 2008, covering the latest trends in employment law, education law, safety and security, human resources, employee training, and emergency response plans. She attended East Carolina University and earned a Bachelor's degree from New York Institute of Technology. When she's not writing, she spends most of her free time listening to audiobooks, playing Scrabble, and solving crossword puzzles.



**Alison Roller**

Alison Roller is passionate about engaging and informative storytelling through writing and social media. She has been writing since 2018 on a range of topics: politics, higher education, leadership, workplace culture, and diversity, equity, & inclusion. A graduate of West Chester University in Journalism, she is currently pursuing her M.S. in Communications from Syracuse University. When she's not working, you can find her hanging out with her cat, knitting, and scrolling TikTok.

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