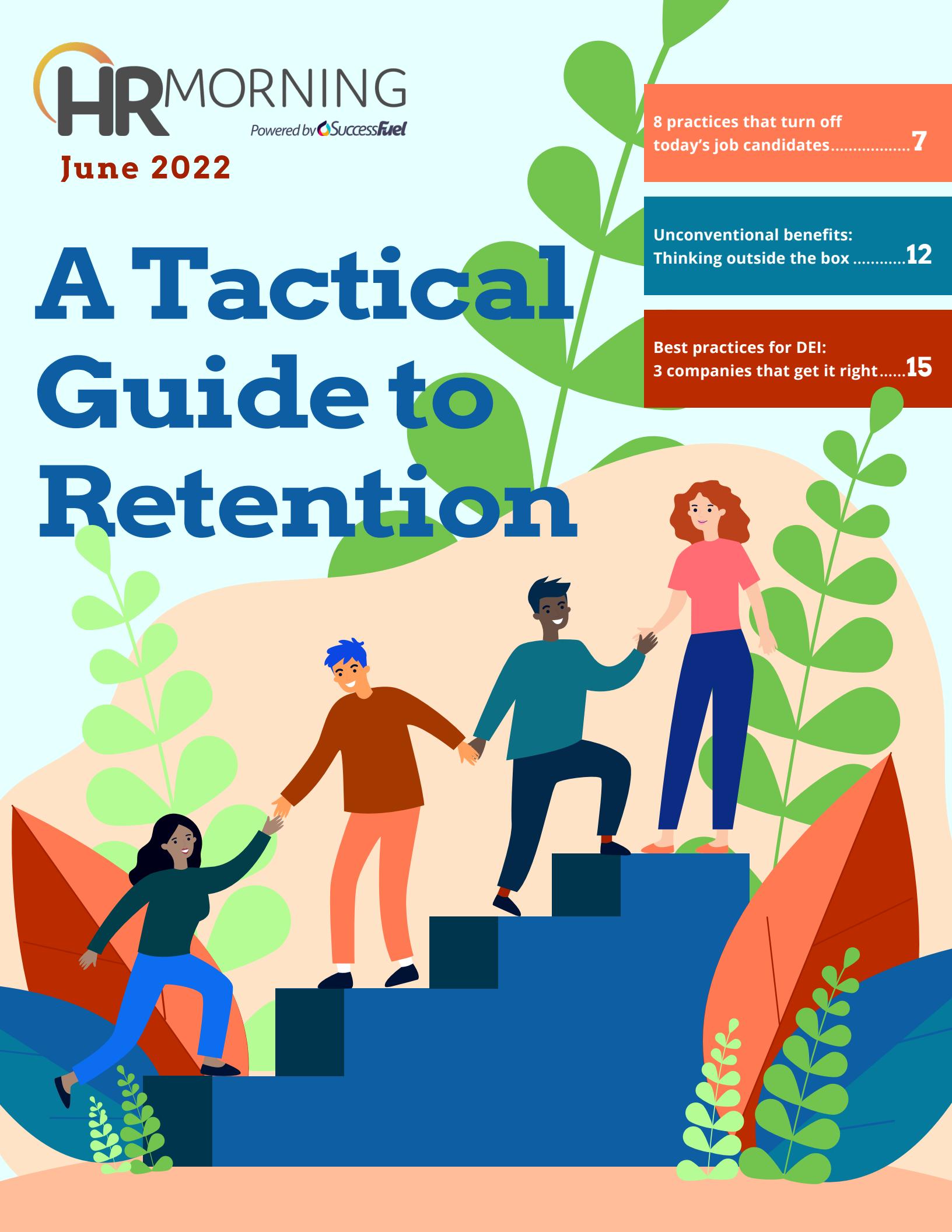


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Free Webinars

Wednesday,
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The Hidden Costs of 'Status Quo'

The price of delaying your decision to find a new HCM solution

sponsored by  learn more [🔗](#)

Thursday,
June 21st
2022



Unity by Design: Creating an Inclusive Workplace

How to create a culture of belonging and the benefits of implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives

sponsored by  learn more [🔗](#)

Thursday,
June 23rd
2022



Can Your Processes REALLY Support Your Hybrid Workers?

The importance of permanent flexibility in the New Normal

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Thursday,
June 23rd
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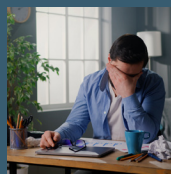


Employees Working in New States – Are You Up to The Task?

Find out exactly what you need to start hiring employees in new states

sponsored by  learn more [🔗](#)

Thursday,
June 30th
2022



How To Address Excessive Workloads in Your Teams

Learn how to address excessive workloads, reduce burnout, and decrease turnover

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

News Briefs

HR Stories You Might Have Missed

Employers' top priority over next two years is ...

April 26, 2022

Do you know what most employers say their top priority is over the next two years?

We'll give you a hint. If you're a Benefits pro, it's in your wheelhouse.

[Read more](#) 

4 key trends for hybrid work in 2022 and beyond

April 18, 2022

We aren't the same workforce we were a few years ago. Our eyes have been opened to the world of remote/hybrid work. And one thing is certain, there's no going back. Employees have tasted the freedom and enjoy making themselves a priority. Now, employers are challenged with meeting and trying to exceed employees' desires, to come out on top in the battle for talent.

One way to do this is by keeping up with what employees expect from you.

[Read more](#) 

Not-so-happy birthday: Employer pays \$450K after surprise party mishap

April 18, 2022

A recent court decision teaches employers a strange (but important) lesson: Don't throw an employee a birthday party if they don't want one.

One company did this — and ended up paying the employee \$450,000.

Here's what happened.

[Read more](#) 

Study: Two benefits will keep, attract employees

April 20, 2022

Fifty-three percent of employees say they're actively looking for new opportunities or at risk of leaving, according to a new study. And if you want to keep them it's going to take boosting two benefits.

The two key benefits to attract and keep employees: health and retirement benefits, according to a study by WTW, a global advisory, broking and solutions company. The study surveyed more than 9,600 U.S. employees.

[Read more](#) 

Suit: Employer fired worker for complaining about porn at work

April 28, 2022

How much porn is OK to watch at work? We hope your policy is zero.

And as the following suit shows, the reasons for taking that policy seriously don't just include cutting down on distractions and keeping the focus on work. They also include protecting your agency from a lawsuit.

[Read more](#) 

Can employer that suspects FMLA abuse hire a P.I.? Court says yes

May 2, 2022

Many employers have been in the unfortunate position of suspecting an employee of FMLA abuse.

This is always a tricky situation. You don't want to accuse an employee of FMLA abuse when they're using the leave legitimately, but there are also a few bad apples out there who take advantage of the system.

[Read more](#) 

Un-retiring: 20% of retirees looking to return to work due to inflation

May 6, 2022

Nearly everyone in the country is feeling the impact of high inflation right now, and retirees are no exception.

According to a survey done by Resume Builder, one in five retirees said they will likely return to the workforce this year. The reason? The rapidly rising cost of living.

[Read more](#) 

Great Resignation continues: 40% of employees able to quit with no job lined up

May 12, 2022

While the Great Resignation is still going strong, employers need to be on the lookout for another type of quitting employee: the ones who resign without even having a new job lined up.

According to a recent survey done by BambooHR, 43% of U.S. workers have considered looking for a new job in the past six months. But the study found another surprising result. Over 40% of employees say they could be unemployed for six to eight months and remain financially stable.

[Read more](#) 

Bringing on summer interns? Reminders from an employment lawyer

May 17, 2022

With warm weather rapidly approaching comes the return of summer interns to many workplaces.

There are a lot of benefits to using interns. Doing so can help develop new talent and get future employees interested in your field. Internship programs also allow students to get that hands-on experience many of them need to earn their degrees.

[Read more](#) 

Case Study



Our return-to-work plan got even the most stubborn employees on board

It was obviously great news when COVID-19 numbers started going down, and things were looking safe to open up again.

We'd been monitoring cases closely the entire pandemic, and we didn't want to ask employees to come back to the office before it was safe. In fact, we had originally planned on reopening back in September 2021, but after several COVID-19 surges, decided to push it off.

But by March 2022, we felt confident the time was finally right. And while we were excited to regain a sense of normalcy, we knew a lot of employees might not be happy about remote work coming to an end.

Our people had gotten used to working completely from home. We knew bringing people back into the office would ultimately be the best thing for our culture and employee development, but it was going to be an adjustment.

We had to come up with a plan to get everyone on board.

Flexible workplace program

First, we decided on a hybrid model, because we didn't want to take the benefits of remote work away from our staff completely. We knew it'd be better to ease them into this change.

We called it our Flexible Workplace Program, which required all employees to be in the office on Mondays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. There's also flexibility for managers to ask employees to come in for important meetings on other days.

We also decided to give our employees the option of taking two completely remote weeks this year, which gives them the flexibility to travel while still being available.

Communication was key

While we were confident most of our people would like the plan we came up with, we knew we had to deliver it in the right way.

Since the pandemic began, we'd been maintaining consistent, open communication with our employees, which really set us up for success here. We didn't spring return-to-work on them. We allowed them to ask questions and express their opinions. We had to be sure our employees felt heard and were updated every step of the way.

Written communications and monthly webcasts allowed us to keep all employees in the loop and answer questions in a timely manner.

In the weeks leading up to our official return to the office, I shared a 'Guide to Returning to Veritiv Offices' with our employees, which was a document we created to provide resources about our COVID-19 protocols, office

etiquette and technology. Knowing any transition period can be stressful, I wanted to be extremely communicative with our employees and allow them the opportunity to share any questions or concerns with our guidelines.

Exciting environment

And we didn't stop our efforts once employees set foot into our offices again. We wanted to create a welcoming environment that got everyone excited to be back.

To create this festive environment on the day they returned, we decorated our offices with balloons and 'Welcome Back' banners, and our senior leaders were circulating around to greet employees as they stepped off the elevator. We also provided a catered breakfast or lunch, and we placed a gift bag at every employee's desk that contained Veritiv-branded office and health supplies, including a stress ball, hand sanitizer, a notebook and more.

We're continuing to keep an eye on employee satisfaction, but so far, it seems like the transition has been very successful. The energy at our office has been contagious – you can tell when you walk through the halls that people are excited and invigorated to be back in person with their colleagues again.

(Dean Adelman, chief HR officer, Veritiv, Atlanta)

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

RECRUITING

8 practices that turn off today's job candidates



by Michele McGovern

HOW TO KEEP JOB SEEKERS ENGAGED



Many HR professionals struggle to find ideal job candidates these days. So when you find them, the last thing you want to do is turn them off.

Instead, HR pros want to keep job candidates engaged and interested in your organization, the role and a future with you.

But we get it – that's tough, considering there are about 10 million job openings and about 5 million fewer people to fill them since the pandemic started, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

With more jobs and fewer people – and even fewer qualified people – to fill roles, HR pros must keep candidates enthralled with the hiring process.

To make that happen, you'll want to avoid the eight practices that make candidates turn away and take their talent elsewhere.

Prolong the process

Many HR professionals and hiring managers say the time to fill positions had increased since the onset of the pandemic. Makes sense, too. With fewer candidates, you might be tempted to hold out, hoping someone a little better comes along.

But that turns off job candidates, according to research from FlexJobs. If weeks – or even months – pass between the time you have contact with candidates, they will likely think twice about your organization and the role they were initially interested in.

8 practices that turn off today's job candidates

Future employees might see the delayed reaction as a sign they won't get support and feedback in any role from the potential employer.

Better: Stay in touch at least weekly until you or the candidate decide it's not a right fit.

Unclear description, expectations

Candidates need to understand you just as much as you understand them before accepting a job. So many candidates will walk away when they don't have a clear picture of the job and how they fit into it.

That happens when hiring managers and HR pros don't pull together a current job description, plus duties and expectations. Instead, they pull up and post something that was created before COVID. Yet, the role has changed dramatically.

For instance, you might have a position described as marketing, but in reality, duties span across sales, social media and PR. If you don't make the multi-faceted role obvious in your job posting, you might miss out on great candidates. And when candidates who aren't the right fit start the interview process, they'll see the discrepancies and self-eliminate.

Review and revamp every role with hiring managers before posting. Be sure to:

- clearly define the duties and expectations
- emphasize expected outcomes beyond the actual duties, and
- explain how the role interacts with other functions.

Too many tests

Job candidates for almost any position expect some sort of test. But too many tests is a huge turnoff.

If you ask candidates to spend hours in front of a screen, testing job skills, soft skills and personality traits, they'll resent it. They might start to feel like they're applying for a job with a computer, not a company filled with people. That's no way to start a relationship.

Even if you still require several tests for a role, try to spread them out over the hiring journey. That way, neither you nor candidates get overwhelmed with testing – and analyzing results. Only the people who move forward in the hiring process will take all the tests that are spread out.

Lax professionalism

We're all busy, but it's no excuse to let anything slip through the cracks when taking candidates through your hiring process.

Job candidates are doing their best to impress you, and if your organization does any less, they won't continue the journey.

The biggest issue often comes with hiring managers. They aren't as schooled in the hiring process, and don't know the details that need attention as well as HR and talent acquisition pros know. So help them.

You'll likely be able to keep job candidates engaged with a regular cadence of communication. To keep hiring managers engaged, too, loop them in on all communication. Then take steps to ensure they're on time for meetings, look and act professionally, and show interest

in each candidate. You might even equip them with questions to ask.

A negative image

A few things can turn off job candidates *before* they decide to apply to your job postings, making it even more difficult to fill roles.

For one, applicants may pull back if your job posting comes up over and over. To them, that's an indication you have turnover issues and an existing issue with filling roles. Who wants to apply to a place where people don't want to work?!

Social media and job sites can make the bad situation worse. Potential employees look at your reviews on sites such as Glassdoor and Reddit. If former or current employees leave negative reviews, job candidates will lose interest.

Of course, the best way to avoid a negative image is to create a positive culture. But you'll likely never avoid having a disgruntled employee on a smear campaign. Two tips:

- Monitor and manage your reputation. When appropriate, respond to negative posts to show you want to make things right.
- Be sure to off-board. Employees who are off-boarded are two times as likely to leave positive reviews of their former employer, according to research from Capitalize. Some topics to include: how to handle their 401k, initiating a knowledge transfer, feedback on the employee experience and health insurance.

Awkward interviews

Actual interviews – in person or on Zoom – should be a natural

8 practices that turn off today's job candidates

conversation and exchange of information. Yet, many are scripted, stilted conversations that turn off candidates.

Yes, you have to avoid the legal minefield interviews can present. But knowing and asking safe questions doesn't mean you must communicate like robots.

So make interviews online or in-person as comfortable and natural as possible. Let the job candidates ask as many questions, if not more, than you. If possible, when on-site, chat in a relaxed environment, such as a picnic bench or break room, rather than a formal conference room. Set up Zoom calls

at times that are convenient for candidates so they're most relaxed.

Bad-mouthing

Perhaps one of the quickest ways to turn off candidates is to bad-mouth colleagues, potential supervisors, the company or its processes. HR pros will likely never do it. But some hiring managers might let cynicism or criticism sneak into interviews.

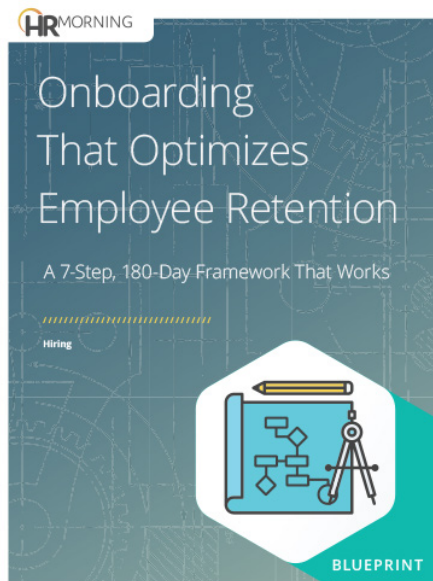
Remind anyone involved in interviews to avoid negative talk and badmouthing. And that's not just about your organization. Remind them that it's in bad taste to talk negatively about competitors and other employers.

Ambiguity

Potential employees can often see through ambiguity. If you aren't fully transparent about the job, your organization and everything surrounding those, they'll see a red flag. Remember, candidates can dig up details – true or not – online, anytime.

One way to prove you're transparent: Once you offer candidates a position, give them your company handbook so they can see policies, practices and values in writing. Also keep your written offers aligned exactly with the verbal offer.

[Read this article online](#) 



Onboarding That Optimizes Retention

A 7-Step, 180-Day Framework That Works

Onboarding is more than simply signing legal papers and receiving training.

It's a vital step that introduces employees to new surroundings, new co-workers, new company goals and traditions, and new work tasks. When it's done well, you and your company will reap the rewards of retaining successful, talented, contributing employees.

Fumble it, and you miss tapping into your employee's full potential.

[get the guide](#) 

Was employee included in layoff because she had diabetes?



Benefits Manager Betty Murphy looked up when Mable Ellison, an employee, knocked on her door.

"You wanted to see me?" asked Mable.

"Yes. Come in," said Betty. "How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine. Why?" asked Mable.

"No reason in particular," said Betty. "I asked you to stop by to tell you your doctor cleared you for work."

"That's great," said Mable, who had to get confirmation from her primary care provider that she was physically able to work because her clearance exam by her employer's

nurse practitioner revealed she had elevated blood glucose levels. Until she got the clearance, she was performing light-duty jobs.

"I told you I was fine," said Mable.

"I know," said Betty. "But we had to make sure you could do the heavy lifting. We knew you had diabetes, so when your tests came back that you had elevated glucose levels, we just wanted to make sure you were physically and medically able to perform the job we hired you for."

"Well, if y'all are satisfied now, can I finally do the job you hired me to do instead of all this little stuff?" asked Mable.

"Yes. You're being sent out on a job today that'll last for six months. Here are the details of the job location," said Betty, handing her a slip of paper. "The job site supervisor will fill you in on the details when you get there."

"Awesome. I'll go get my stuff," said Mable.

Two weeks later

"Mabel, are you OK?" asked George Tatter, the job site supervisor. "You don't look so good."

Mabel looked at him with a dazed look on her face.

"I'm feeling a little shaky," said Mabel. "I probably just need to eat something."

"I'd feel better if you went to the medical tent and let them decide what you need," said George. "I'll walk you over there myself."

"It's really not necessary," said Mabel.

"I insist," he said.

George later found out Mabel had a diabetic attack and sent her home for the rest of the day.

She again got medical clearance to return to work, but that same day her entire team was sent home due to the lack of work available. Then two days later – which was a week after the diabetic attack – Mabel's company laid off 12 people,

including Mabel.

Mabel said two other employees told her the company laid her off because she visited the medical tent.

She sued the company, accusing it of violating the ADA by including her in the layoff because she has diabetes.

Did she win?

The Decision

No, she didn't win initially. A lower court granted summary judgment in favor of the company. It found that she didn't establish a preliminary case of unlawful bias because she offered no evidence of a causal link

between her diabetic attack and her employment termination other than the temporal proximity between the two events. That was not enough, it said.

It further said that the temporal relationship deserved less weight because Mabel was expected to work for only six months anyway.

In addition, it disregarded Mabel's

Was employee included in layoff because she had diabetes? (continued)



recollection of the statements she said the other employees made regarding her layoff. It did so because those other employees weren't involved in the layoff decision.

There wasn't enough evidence to support an inference of unlawful

disability discrimination, it held.

Moreover, it found that the company provided an un rebutted and legitimate reason for Mabel's layoff: a reduction in force.

Mabel filed an appeal.

She argued that a fact question existed as to the real reason for her layoff because the company provided different explanations regarding how it chose employees for layoff.

What about the other employees?

She also said the company retained a similarly situated employee.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit reversed the lower court's decision and remanded the matter for additional proceedings.

It noted that Mabel's burden of establishing a preliminary case of unlawful bias wasn't onerous.

It further noted that in retaliation cases, temporal proximity between the protected activity and adverse

action may be enough to show causation at the preliminary stage, while noting that the protected act and adverse action must be "very close" in time to one another.

In this case, the court explained, the company terminated Mabel just six days after an event that was entirely related to her ADA-protected disability of diabetes.

The proximity between the diabetic attack and the termination was

enough to meet Mabel's burden of establishing a preliminary case of unlawful bias, the appeals court said.

The appeals court further rejected the lower court's determination that Mabel didn't do enough to create a fact question on the issue of whether the company's proffered reason for laying her off was in fact a false pretext for unlawful disability discrimination.

Fact issue exists

Mabel essentially argued that the company "was unable to express coherent, consistent criteria that it used in reducing the force."

Its inability to do so casts doubt on its asserted reason for the layoffs and discredits its stated position that no discrimination was involved in the

layoff decisions, Mabel said.

The company's witnesses gave different rationales for including people in the layoffs, the court said. Also, there was no evidence that it used fixed criteria when selecting which employees to include, it said.

That was enough for Mabel to meet her burden to show that a fact issue is present as to whether the company's stated reason for laying her off is pretextual, the court said.

The case was remanded.

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

EMPLOYEES ARE LOOKING FOR ORGANIZATIONS THAT OFFER **MORE THAN THE TRADITIONAL BENEFITS**



BENEFITS

Unconventional benefits: Thinking outside the box



by Renee Cocchi

In today's Great Resignation job market, employers need to leverage every competitive advantage they can, especially unconventional benefits. Traditional benefits like health insurance and 401K matching aren't enough to attract and secure top tier talent. But by leveraging unconventional benefits your organization can improve retention and attract the next generation of talent.

In a recent Paycom webinar, "Unconventional benefits: What does your workforce really want?" Sharlyn Lauby, President of ITM Group and Will Cornelius, Workforce Marketing Partner at Paycom, dove into the topic of unconventional benefits to get a sense of what's possible and the value they bring to both the employee and the employer.

First, employees must know about the benefits you offer. Sending out

an email once isn't going to cut it. People are busy and they need to be reminded on an ongoing basis. Why offer these benefits if no one is going to take advantage of them?

Here are a few unconventional benefits that might pay off for you:

Unconventional benefit #1: Charitable involvement

Benefits don't always pertain to personal needs, and corporate philanthropy is not a new concept. However, employees want to join companies that give back.

And charitable contributions don't have to be defined by just monetary giving. They can include things like volunteer events such as helping to beautify a public park or serving

meals at a local homeless shelter. These are things employees can partake in because they care.

And while the message that goes around from statistics being spouted throughout all industries is that it's the younger generations of employees who truly desire to work for companies who are involved in charities, it's a topic that's important to everyone. You'd be hard pressed to find an employee who doesn't have a charity they give to or volunteer for.

"Regardless of age we are seeing an increasing number of people say that organizations should give back to the communities that support them," said Lauby. "And there are many different ways organizations can do that. They just need to find the way that works best for them, and creates ease of access for employees. A lot of candidates and employees might make

the decision to go work for an organization that supports charitable organizations. So, it's important that companies show they're giving back to the community."

For HR pros who feel they can't coordinate another thing, Lauby suggests they don't have to. "There are opportunities to still give back to the community and let employees know you care." One way to do that: Give employees a day to go support the organization that makes the most sense for them.

Cornelius recommends using technology to HR's advantage. "Make it easy for employees to select an amount to donate to a charity from their paycheck," he said. "The key is finding what works best for your business."

Unconventional benefit #2: Professional development

It may speak to the state of the current labor market that employees are seeking out companies that offer professional development as a benefit.

While most employees do want to get better at their jobs, not all employers do a fantastic job of promoting their professional development opportunities, noted Lauby.

"I know for me personally, I've negotiated professional development in offers, like I want to go to this conference or I want to get this certification," she said. "Not only is it great because you know you

have an employee who's looking to advance their career and willing to work hard to get that certification or go to that class, but it also tells the employee that the company is going to support them in their career."

And professional development benefits don't have to be internal. You can offer an internal management or leadership program, but you can also create a strategic partnership with a local university. "Also, allowing employees to come to you and tell you what programs they're interested in or pitch ideas ... can also be a valuable way to promote professional development," said Lauby. "So, there are lots of different ways organizations can talk about career development and help employees gain more knowledge and skills."

And professional development happens at all different levels of an organization, not just the younger generations. There's upskilling or reskilling for veteran employees.

"Many employees see professional development as a must have in order to commit to a company," said Cornelius. "Without new and engaging forms of professional development, employers could lose top performers and lose out on those top tier candidates they're trying to recruit as well."

Unconventional benefit #3: Midday exercises

Health related offerings are at the core of traditional benefits packages. But it includes more than just health, dental and vision. To really attract

qualified employees in the labor market, many organizations are expanding their well-being offerings to give employees easy access to healthier lifestyle choices. In return, businesses get healthier, more engaged employees.

There are the traditional options like offering gym memberships, but companies are also doing things like holding walking meetings, or Paycom has a desk yoga program. "It's a free 30-minute zoom class, and an instructor leads employees through different poses you can do from your desk," said Cornelius. "It's nice because it adds an accessibility element, because you don't have to get out of your chair or go anywhere. It's voluntary, and a great way to recenter and refocus if you've had a busy day or a stressful meeting."

Lauby noted that she has an under desk elliptical that she uses if she's watching a webinar or reading. "I can sit and pedal, and get some exercise at the same times."

Sitting is the new smoking so any opportunities employers can take to give employees some activity in their day is a win for all. And employees are looking for employers that help them make their lives easier and healthier.

Offering more than just your basic benefits options really helps keep your top performers in house! "It also sets your organization up to secure the next generation of talent, as well as enhance your employee experience overall," said Cornelius

[Read this article online](#) 



Shift in rewards, recognition proves successful

Before the pandemic, we celebrated employee contributions with lots of recognition and rewards on-site. And fortunately, employees responded well to it. The real-time, public recognition and rewards compelled them to work toward goals.

But the pandemic changed everything – rewards and recognition included.

Before the pandemic people had their work self and their personal self. But that barrier disappeared and our whole selves were thrown into work. There were babies in on Zoom calls and cats walking around in the background, so we got a peek into employees' personal lives.

That's when we started to realize that our employees were so much more than what was shown in the office. And we wanted to support them and encourage them to bring their whole selves to work.

Quality of life outside work counts

So when people started working differently, we figured we had to reward and recognize them differently. With the work/life balance off, we recognized that people started to care even more about their quality of life outside the office.

And we also started looking at our rewards program through the lens of: Is this increasing the well-being of our employees?

We switched to more individualized rewards and lots of direct, peer-to-peer and boss-to-employee recognition. We used an app to manage it all.

Who knows better what they need to recharge than the employee themselves. Now, employees can choose from 20 to 30 different options of what they need or want to be recognized.

Speak to the whole self

The idea now is speaking to the notion of the whole self and not catering to just the worker side of a person because there are

so many different facets to an employee. They may be a spouse, a parent, a son or a daughter, and they have hobbies outside of work. And it's the concept of employee well-being – taking care of their whole self.

So, now Dave in Finance can get tickets to the zoo. And Mary in Sales can cash in on a couples massage for herself and her husband. And Nate in Maintenance can get the guitar lessons he's always wanted.

Rewards that improve their quality of life have improved their work experience, too.

Employees see that we appreciate what they do now more than ever, by taking their desires into consideration with the rewards and recognition we offer them. That increases their loyalty and desire to do their jobs to the best of their abilities.

(Taylor Smith, CEO and Co-founder, Blueboard, San Francisco)

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Best practices for DEI: 3 companies that get it right



by Michele McGovern

IMPROVE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION



Most HR leaders' put this high on their priorities: Recruit and retain for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

And a few HR leaders have done extremely well with the effort. So other companies aiming to improve DEI can learn from what they've accomplished.

Guidance and best practices couldn't come at a better time because most executives say DEI is a top talent management priority, according to a Gartner survey. But – and this is a big BUT – 80% of organizations admit they're ineffective at developing a DEI program.

DEI is top of mind for employees, too. In fact, nearly three-quarters of employees say DEI is somewhat or very important to them in their workplaces, according to Workhuman's report *Two Years Into*

COVID: The Great Resignation Isn't Over, as Many Employees Are Still Considering Leaving.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic data shows the disparity in workplaces: The entire U.S. workforce is 77% white. White employees are also significantly more likely to be in managerial positions than Black and Hispanic employees.

"Doubling down on connection, community, and belonging makes the most sense financially, in terms of mitigating turnover, and it's also what employees expect," says Chris French, EVP of Customer Strategy at Workhuman. "Regardless of where your company is at on its DEI journey, make sure you communicate your values and the steps you're taking to make progress."

Some best-in-class organizations and leaders are successfully making DEI efforts work, and here are five practical, transferable ideas:

Take a serious leap

At Discover, leaders took a big leap three years ago, saying DEI wouldn't just be a trendy sentiment. Instead, they said they were "committed to creating and supporting a workforce that reflects our communities, our customers, and a just society. We've established and are evolving measurable North Star Goals in four areas." Those are:

- **Diversity.** Increase the representation of women and people of color at all management levels to 50% and 40%, respectively, by 2025. Increase representation of Black and Latinx at all management levels to 15% by 2025.
- **Equity.** Establish equity measures to identify and address potential biases so we can improve recruiting, retention and internal mobility.
- **Inclusion.** Achieve equally strong employee inclusion across all identity groups by 2024.
- **External impact.** Use our full platform of jobs, supplier spend, charitable contributions, products and more to advance equity and motivate others to effect change.

Invest where it matters

For Discover, one of the biggest pushes for DEI was investing in an underserved and underrepresented Chicago neighborhood.

They transformed a 100,000-square-foot vacant store into a customer care center so they could attract local talent and strengthen the community with needed jobs. They're on track to fill 1,000 positions with employees who live within five miles of the building.

"We hope our commitment to Chicago's South Side will serve as a springboard for further economic development and a call to action for other companies to use their own means to drive lasting change," says Juatise Gathings, Director of Operations Center and Community Outreach at the Chatham Customer Care Center.

Foster connections

Many DEI initiatives include the B - belonging. It's an important element at Workhuman.

"We go back to those three magic words: thank, talk, celebrate - the

great thing about that is that it can be done in a virtual way so you're connecting and sharing values," says Niamh Graham, SVP of Global Human Experience at Workhuman. "Our company's core values are imagination, determination, innovation, and respect. And respect is respect for colleagues, respect for customers, respect for urgency, respect for teamwork."

Fostering overall respect within the organization encourages inclusion. When employees have good relationships, respectful conversations and team accomplishments to celebrate, they feel they belong.

On top of encouraging diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, Workhuman uses technology for peer-to-peer recognition and rewards. Those can be shared across time zones, continents or departments.

"If you have a unified group of values and behaviors that everybody is aligned to and everybody believes in, if you feel that through a program that includes recognition, conversations and celebration, you're going to feel more connected to an organization like that versus an

organization where you don't have any of that," Graham says.

Hold people accountable

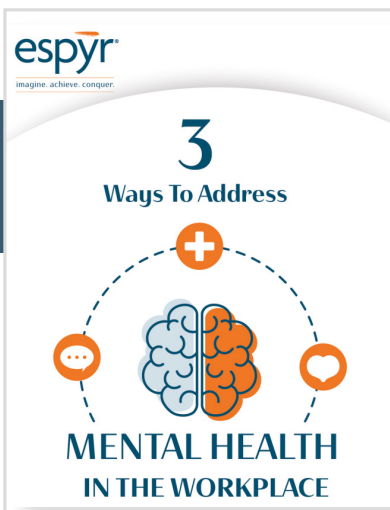
Despite corporate and leadership efforts, making workplaces more diverse, equitable and inclusive still depends on people's desire and ability to make it happen.

So if employees who work one-on-one or on small teams don't know how to foster safe workplaces, and manage toxicity, DEI initiatives will fail.

"70% of employees tolerate toxic behavior," says Edward Beltran, Chief Executive Officer of Fierce Inc. "We need to give people the tools to hold toxic employees accountable."

For Fierce, the initial tool is a Feedback Conversation. They train employees to have and accept healthy conversations where one person can "objectively call out observed behaviors" - such as exact instances of shouting, using negative language or belittling - instead of generalizations such as, "You're miserable."

If that doesn't resolve situations that break down inclusion efforts, then



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someone might move to a Confront Conversation – “when they change the variable and bring up what’s at stake,” says Beltran. For instance, an employee might say to a colleague, “I held up my part of the bargain and here’s what’s at stake now. If you don’t change the behavior we discussed, I won’t be able to work with you to meet our goal.”

“If you’re dealing with a toxic person and your blood boils and you walk away and tell other people, it just amplifies the toxicity,” says Beltran. “But having the conversation enriches the relationship.”

It also helps maintain DEI efforts.

Make it someone’s mission

Discover didn’t want to make DEI a passing initiative. So, to make it a core part of the organization, they created the position of Chief Diversity Officer.

Jonita Wilson leads the DEI evolution, transforming established systems to build greater equity across the organization. Some examples:

- **Shine Bright** pairs Black and Latinx directors and managers with a director or officer. That gives them greater exposure and networking opportunities so they have more advocates across the company.
- **Rise** offers Black and Latinx employees self-paced training sessions, workshops and experiential learning opportunities. That helps them develop their leadership skills for future roles.
- **Empower people with disabilities** through new partnerships with Rangam and Disability:IN to deepen this commitment.
- **Empower veterans** with the Honoring Military & Veterans (HMOV) Employee Resource Group and a partnership with Blue Star Families.

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ADA violation? Disabled employee didn't get transfer he requested



HR manager Lynn Rondo had just booked a beachfront hotel room for Memorial Day weekend when company attorney Eric Bressler knocked on her door.

"Hey, Lynn, can we talk?" he asked.

upcoming vacation."

us for disability discrimination. He says we violated the ADA when we didn't accommodate his depression."

"Come on in," she replied. "I'm just daydreaming about my

"Well, this'll snap you out of it," Eric said. "Charlie Lastra is suing

Depression worsened

Lynn sighed. "We wanted to accommodate Charlie. We really did. But what he was asking for just wasn't possible."

Eric frowned. "That's quite the drive."

of those jobs when he wasn't in danger of losing his."

"Let's run through it again," Eric said.

Lynn nodded. "Charlie liked the position better, but the commute made his depression bad again."

"I think you did the right thing there," Eric said. "However, Charlie has additional proof of discrimination. Apparently there are some email exchanges where some managers called him 'nuts' and 'a head case.' It just doesn't look good for us – but I agree with you. I don't think we failed to accommodate him."

"A few years back, Charlie started struggling with his position. He has depression, and the job he had at the time was making it worse," Lynn said. "He asked for a transfer to a less stressful position. The only option we had was to send him to our office 80 miles away."

"So he asked to be transferred back to his original office?" Eric asked.

When Charlie sued for disability discrimination, the company fought to get the case dismissed. Did it win?

"Yes. He wanted a less stressful supervising position, but we were holding onto those positions for employees being impacted by our other facility closure," Lynn said. "We couldn't just give him one

The Decision

No. The company lost when a court permitted Charlie's case to move forward to trial.

onto the company, it does have to participate in the interactive process. When Charlie explained his job at the faraway facility was making his depression worse, it was up to the employer to find a way to fix it, the court said. Instead, it denied his

transfer request, and did nothing further.

While an employer isn't required to give an accommodation that would bring an undue hardship

Additionally, the emails calling Charlie 'nuts' further supported a possibility of disability discrimination. The case can move forward, the court said.

Analysis: Must participate in interactive process

The case shows the importance of working hard to find a reasonable accommodation that works for both the employer and employee. Sometimes, no reasonable

accommodation exists – but the company has the duty to try, instead of just dropping it.

Another lesson can be learned from this case as well: Be careful

what you write about employees in emails. If there are comments alluding to their disability, that can be proof of discrimination.

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

Employees are stressed: What HR needs to know and do



by Michele McGovern



The pandemic has changed nearly everything, but one workplace issue remains the same: Employees are stressed.

And it's important that HR and other company leaders address the stress and help employees manage their mental health.

Here's why: More than 40% of employees think the best solution to their workplace stress is to quit! That's according to the Employee Stress Check 2021 Report from Talkspace for Business and Harris Poll, which also found two thirds of employees who consider quitting feel their employers didn't follow through on promises to focus on mental health.

With the tight labor market, HR pros and managers don't want to lose good employees to bad stress.

"The workforce returning to the office is not the same one that left in 2020," says Talkspace therapist Dr. Rachel O'Neill, Ph.D., LPCC-S. "Employers need to normalize mental health conversations within the company culture and elevate mental health to a key company value."

Employees might need more help to manage and potentially overcome stress – even if some of the stress isn't a direct result of work.

Here are tips to help employees so your company continues to retain a healthy workforce.

Know the breaking point

Some employees are more likely to quit because of their stress level. When the Talkspace researchers asked employees who admitted they would likely quit in the next six

months, they shared these issues:

- 80% said they were burned out
- 43% had a hard time sleeping
- 39% were short tempered, and
- 39% said their physical health has suffered.

You'll want front-line managers to look for these signs their employees are near a breaking point. In some cases, managers can see it – short tempers and disengagement from their work. But they might want to listen closer for clues, too – perhaps complaints about poor sleep or physical health.

Equip front-line managers with resources to help employees who are stressed. Then managers can direct employees to those resources – online tools to relax, virtual counseling or on-demand courses on how to handle major stressors like

personal finances and childcare management.

“Employers who adequately support employee well-being in all forms are more likely to see positive impacts on productivity, time management, and other key factors that lead to better workplace outcomes and employee retention,” says O’Neill.

Know the pressing stressor

Returning to the office has been – or will be – a jarring event for many employees. Even a few of those who want to get back to business have some anxiety about what the future of work holds for everyone.

“It is important to remember that individuals will experience reopening and return to normality at their own pace,” says O’Neill.

She suggests managers practice:

- **Patience:** Remind everyone to be patient and gracious, being mindful that it might take time to readjust to social and professional settings.
- **Empathy:** Researchers see increased rates of depression, anxiety, grief and loss in the wake of COVID-19. Practice empathy and continue to spread the word on employer-sponsored wellness and mental health benefits.
- **Flexibility:** Try to find opportunities to give employees choices. Meet with employees to help them structure their work day with agreeable flexibility.

Focus on what’s going well

Fortunately, there are bright spots in employees’ outlooks. Most employees aren’t stressed over work – and/or life – all the time.

In fact, most people feel many aspects of work and life are better now than they were before the pandemic, a Qualtrics study found. Specifically, when asked to compare five critical elements to well-being, employees said:

- **Work-life balance:** 43% are better off vs. 18% worse off
- **Job satisfaction:** 39% are better off vs. 20% worse off
- **Career progress:** 36% are better off vs. 17% worse off
- **Finances:** 38% are better off vs. 27% worse off, and
- **Overall happiness:** 41% are better off vs. 24% worse off.

“It’s time for us to take stock of what we’ve learned so we can be intentional about what changes from the pandemic are worth keeping and which should be discarded,” says Benjamin Granger, Ph.D., head of employee experience advisory services at Qualtrics. “It’s critical that leaders don’t forget how flexibility and new ways of working have made life better for employees.”

HR can help employees improve the elements of work and life that are already better than they were before the pandemic. A tip for each here:

- **Work-life balance:** Managers will want to meet at least quarterly with direct reports to monitor workloads and be sure demand doesn’t sneak into personal space.
- **Job satisfaction:** Employees’ relationships with their boss has the single biggest impact on job satisfaction. Look for ways to train managers on Emotional Intelligence and other soft skills to build better relationships.
- **Career progress:** Hold semi-annual career conversations to help employees identify goals, emerging areas of interest

and ways to stay engaged or get ahead.

- **Finances.** Offer financial well-being resources as part of your overall well-being benefits.

Give employees practical tips

Finally, here are three practical, stress-reducing tips to pass along from therapists at Talkspace:

- **Focus on better inputs for better outputs.** That might be a change to healthier snacks and meals, taking walking breaks or five-minute desk meditations. The more positive things you do for your physical and mental health, the more likely you’ll be able to successfully manage stress and overall well-being.
- **Spend time reflecting on what matters more.** Wrap up the day recognizing and listing your accomplishments rather than mulling over an incomplete to-do list. When you focus on how productive you were, you set the stage for a more relaxing evening and successful next day.
- **Call in backups.** People tend to make poorer decisions when they’re stressed and burned out. If you feel overwhelmed at work – and are contemplating big decisions such as career changes or anything that affects colleagues or customers – talk to a trusted circle. That might include a manager, the HR director, a counselor or therapist. Do extra research and get more support.

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