

October 2022

HR's Critical Role in Communication, Connection and Conversation

5 overlooked ways to improve the employee experience this fall **8**

4 conversations that will inspire employees **13**

5 ways to lead unique teams filled with experts & newbies, superstars & misfits **22**









HRMORNING

October 2022





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Upcoming Events

Free Webinars

Wednesday,
October 26th
2022



Drafting Employment Agreements and Policies for a Remote Workforce

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Wednesday,
October 26th
2022

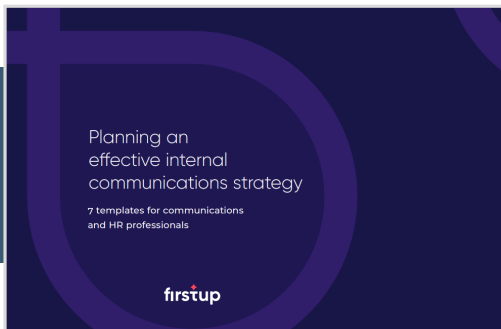


The New Strategic HR: Building a Talent-Focused Strategy for the Future

sponsored by  [learn more](#) 

FREE REPORT FROM





Planning an effective internal communications strategy

7 templates for communications and HR professionals

Do you know your company's strategic goals and objectives? Aligning your internal communication goals to your company's is critical to success and engaged employees.

This document explores more about...

- Impactful internal communications require strategic planning
- Establishment of your goals and KPIs
- Assess your audience and more

Download this document for an easy-to-use template to guide your goal-setting process.

[get the report](#) 

News Briefs

HR Stories You Might Have Missed

Benefits & Wellness

2023 wellness program: Trends for healthier, happier employees

August 30, 2022

Remember when offering a wellness program entailed providing some healthy snacks in the office and offering yoga or weight loss classes?

Well, those days are gone.

Today, workplace wellness means prioritizing employees' mental and physical health, and making it easily accessible to everyone no matter where they work – onsite, remote or a hybrid of both.

[Read more](#) 

3 effective ways to engage new hires

September 1, 2022

Employee engagement is integral to employee retention and can help cultivate a positive work culture. Unfortunately, it appears that people are less and less engaged, no matter where they work – in-office, remote or hybrid – according to research from Gallup. In fact, the study found that 85% of people aren't engaged at work.

Engaging new hires is a specific section of employee engagement that can help with retention – but in a virtual-first world, you may be struggling with this.

[Read more](#) 

3 ways to improve mental health literacy at your organization

September 6, 2022

We all know how important good mental health is to our workforce, especially after a pandemic. We also know we have to offer all levels of mental health services to meet the needs of our entire workforce. But what exactly is mental health literacy, and why is it so important?

"It's an organization that has a shared understanding of what it means to feel and function well within the organization, or simply put, it's a company culture that prioritizes mental health," according to Sarah Tobin, head of talent development at Calm, in the webinar Building Mental Health Literacy at Your Organization.

[Read more](#) 

5 ways to reevaluate health benefits design for open enrollment season

September 19, 2022

Millions of employees are seeking new career opportunities and making moves to organizations that demonstrate they put their employees front and center. One of the best ways employers can show this is to reevaluate health benefits and offer a design that doesn't restrict employees' choices and allows them to access the treatments they need.

As the cost of healthcare continues to rise and the fall open enrollment season approaches, reevaluate employee health plans to ensure that a greater share of treatment costs is not being shifted onto employees.

[Read more](#) 

Inclusion

SHRM fires back at an explosive allegation

September 2, 2022

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has asked a federal district court in Colorado to dismiss a former employee's bias suit alleging race/color discrimination and retaliation. SHRM's response to the suit, which was filed in June, says that the plaintiff's allegations of discrimination are unsupported and that the employee's termination was justified by poor job performance. Read on for a summary of the suit and SHRM's response, as well as legal and HR takeaways.

[Read more](#) 

5 ADA Supreme Court rulings you need to know

September 8, 2022

It's been a long and winding road for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) since the law was passed in 1990. From the start, the statute's text was filled with malleable terms and sometimes equivocal language that was in dire need of clarification and interpretation. Thankfully, in the three-plus decades since the law became effective, thousands of court rulings, including rulings from the U.S. Supreme Court, have offered critical guidance concerning the statute's employment provisions.

[Read more](#) 

Cultural resistance can kill a DEI program: 4 ways to avoid it

September 12, 2022

Race in American culture and politics is one of the most sensitive issues we talk about today. We hope conversations about race are always authentic attempts at open discussion – in the best case, we come closer to understanding each other and being able to work better together in the workplace.

But we've all seen the ways those conversations can detour into defensiveness, avoidance and misunderstanding. This leads to cultural resistance to change of any kind, whether you're trying to change your workplace culture or society at large.

[Read more](#) 

Hispanic Heritage Month 2022: Why it's important & how to celebrate

September 20, 2022

Happy Hispanic Heritage Month! The month-long celebration, aimed at recognizing the influences of Hispanic American people and their contributions to the United States, began on Sept. 15 and will go through Oct. 15.

With a focus on diversity and inclusion this month, it's vital for HR to celebrate this holiday in the right way and help Hispanic employees feel valued and supported.

[Read more](#) 

Is remote work a reasonable accommodation? 3 best practices

September 21, 2022

This case shows just how tricky things can get when the ADA and FMLA overlap. Here, an employee exhausted her FMLA leave and then sought an accommodation: remote work.

When the company — a law firm — denied her request to work from home, the employee didn't return to the office. Instead, she sued, alleging violations of the ADA and FMLA.

[Read more](#) 

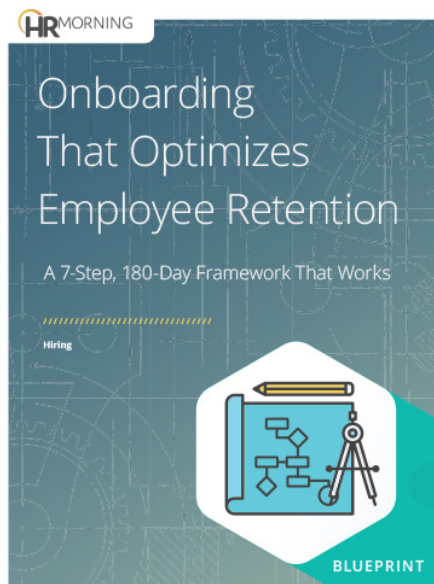
Quiet Firing: 4 ways to avoid being a boss who makes employees quit

September 23, 2022

Quiet Firing could be the worst thing an employer ever does. Don't be that company. Don't let your leaders be that boss.

This might seem like harsh, line-in-the-sand words coming from *HRMorning*. But Quiet Firing – *when management intentionally distances employees from opportunities to grow and succeed* – is the exact opposite of anything HR professionals and leadership teams want to do.

[Read more](#) 



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.

IN THIS BLUEPRINT YOU'LL DISCOVER HOW TO:

- Fully integrate your new employees into their new work environment
- Give your new employees the tools they need to succeed and adjust to their position
- Convey your company's brand, values and culture
- Establish intuitional goals and performance expectations
- Build your new employees' loyalty through your onboarding process

[get the guide](#) 

Case Study

Helped employees pay down their student debt and save for retirement



Many of our employees have invested in themselves by furthering their education. But the burden of that student loan debt has prevented them from participating in our 401(k) program.

Younger employees don't always see the importance of participating in a 401(k) program, because for them retirement is decades away. But it's still important, and we wanted to help everyone who was carrying around student debt.

That's when we expanded our benefits package to include student loan repayment. It's rooted in both the feedback from our employees and our desire to set them up for success all the way through retirement.

We teamed up with Tuition.io to offer our 300 employees a student loan repayment benefit. The program is set up so employees can pay down their loans while still saving for retirement.

To be eligible, employees must be participating in our 401(k) program, which we match up to 4%. Once they contribute to their 401(k), the company matches it and also pays \$50 toward their student debt each month.

Unique approach

This unique approach encourages employees to save for retirement and eliminate one of their biggest financial burdens, providing much-needed debt and stress relief.

More than 10% of our employees have registered for receipt of the monthly benefit.

We believe benefits should take care of the whole person. By offering benefits that help our employees be successful, we're cultivating a culture of care that both our employees and our healthcare clients benefit from.

(Jason Anderson, CEO, VRI, Franklin, OH)

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

BUILD ON EXISTING COMPANY CULTURE



5 overlooked ways to improve the employee experience this fall



by Michele McGovern

HR pros always want ways to improve the employee experience. And sometimes the best ideas are already right under your nose.

That's right: You don't have to come up with a flashy, new employee experience plan to boost retention.

Here are five ways to capitalize on the good things that already exist – but are sometimes overlooked – to improve the employee experience in your organization.

Give employees more time

"Time" has been a focus in talks about the employee experience since the pandemic – flexible time, separation time, balanced time. This year, try to give employees more "face time" (in person or on video) to improve the experience.

Managers will want to plan regular one-on-one meetings to listen to their experiences.

"Allow them to guide the conversation and ask questions that give them the space to freely speak their mind," says Laura Andress, Chief People Officer at Arvest Bank, which touts an average employee tenure of 10-plus years, more than double the national average.

Move beyond "gripe sessions" and ask flat-out what they enjoy, what can make their work experience more valuable and what they'd like to be part of.

"Your gift of time spent truly listening to them, and then taking actionable steps based on your conversation is much more valuable to them than a \$5 gift card any day," says Andress.

Lean in to your values

Boy, it's been a tumultuous year. It seems social, political and

environmental issues erupt every week. And employees care about those issues. Still, they all don't want it to spill over into the workplace.

In fact, about half don't want their company leaders to speak out on societal issues, according to a Qualtrics study. Specifically, only about 4% want to hear from leaders on reproductive issues, constitutional rights and politics. But nearly 40% want to hear from their employers on **work issues** such as well-being, wages and worker safety.

So, you'll want to lean into your "people" values when it comes to societal issues as a way to improve the employee experience. Try to offer unbiased support through the complexity.

"When it comes to divisive policy issues and debates, a shared set of meaningful values can be a good place to find some common ground," says Qualtrics Chief People Officer Julia Anas. "This is an opportunity

5 overlooked ways to improve the employee experience this fall

for all leaders to lead with heart, and show respect and empathy by creating space for all perspectives. Every leader, employee and workplace is different, but if we can all rally around the basics – integrity, respect, safety and wellness – it's going to enhance the employee experience and strengthen the organizational culture, even when we don't agree about every issue."

Focus on connection

People crave connection again. And a lack of connection has messed with many employees' mojo. Nearly 60% of employees in a Workhuman survey said part of the reason they're burned out is they don't connect with colleagues enough.

For the most part, people know how to connect when they're together. They might start talking about a work-related, common topic, but the real bonding happens when they talk about their lives, families, passions, accomplishments and hopes.

"Before the pandemic, company culture was often associated with coffee and free swag – the perks a company provided. Now that employees have gone some years working from home many of those office perks disguised as culture are being put to the test," says Niamh Graham, SVP of Global Human Experience at Workhuman, "Sustaining culture in a hybrid or fully remote environment is vital, and leaders have to be much more deliberate in communicating how each employee contributes to the overarching mission."

So find new – or re-establish – ways to help people connect more often to improve the employee experience. Open common areas again. Promote existing Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Even better, start an initiative

to recruit employees to create new, far-reaching ERGs.

Pursue purpose

What's the purpose? It's a question often asked before a meeting or about a project. And if it's asked – and more importantly, answered – more frequently *about employees' work*, it can help them have a more positive experience at work.

We can take that advice on authority from one of the most purpose-driven organizations: St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which treats the toughest childhood cancers and pediatric diseases, usually at no cost to the family through its fundraising and awareness organization ALSAC.

But your organization doesn't have to change course and become a non-profit to improve the employee experience. Instead, spend more time focusing on your purpose and helping employees connect what they do with positive effects on the company, customers and community.

"Every organization has its own culture that emerges from its values and what it believes in – that's what makes it unique. That is how employers across industries can create working environments with purpose that encourage engagement – by empowering employees to share their ideas, embracing their unique perspectives and encouraging continuous growth," says Annette Green, Chief People Officer at ALSAC/St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Try to host a "Purpose Summit" once or twice a year, when you review organizational values and purpose. Give details on positive work that helped the organization stay in line with those – and

hopefully achieve more. Then lay out plans for staying on the purposeful path and ways employees can give feedback about the journey.

Communicate care and concern

You likely have great benefits and resources ... that employees don't access. And, if they knew more about those benefits and used them, they'd have better employee experiences.

"Direct your employees back to the resources you already have and offer an explanation as to why you have those resources and how they can benefit employees," says Andress.

For example, if you notice an employee is struggling with burnout – or she admits it – remind her how to access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to get support to cope with the feelings. Then, go the extra step, and encourage her to take a long weekend and disconnect completely from work.

Also, regularly train managers on your EAP benefits so they can recognize when an employee might need to access those and are comfortable directing employees to what's available

[Read this article online](#) 

Don't meet more often: Meet more effectively



by Michele McGovern



8 TIPS TO MEET MORE EFFECTIVELY

Should you have more meetings? That question usually garners a resounding, **"No!"**

Ask anyone if you should meet more effectively, and that would likely get a resounding, **"Yes!"**

Before you join the chorus of either side, consider what researchers in separate studies have found about workplace get-togethers:

- Firefighters who plan, prepare and cook meals together perform better on the job (as in, they save more lives and prevent more damage!) than crews that don't, a Cornell University study found
- Scientists who work side-by-side, as opposed to in separate lab areas, get more work published and have a bigger impact on their area of science, author Keith Sawyer found in his research, and
- Flight crews that are familiar with each other and fatigued still perform better than well-rested flight crews who never worked together, according to research in *Science Direct*.

So meetings make sense. In fact, they matter.

"Meeting with people makes a difference," said Erica Keswin, a workplace strategist and author of *Rituals Roadmap*, when she spoke at a Workhuman event. "People need to be with each other to connect."

Don't meet more often: Meet more effectively

You don't have to meet more often – whether it's in-person or on video. What's important is that you meet *more effectively*. Here's how:

Take a '3P' approach

Keswin suggests leaders use the three "3P" approach to schedule and manage meetings.

For that, you'll want to consider:

- **Priorities.** The best leaders make connecting with other people – their employees, colleagues and bosses – the priority. That means they don't try to accomplish anything of professional importance through email, text or chat. Instead, they book their calendars with phone calls, video conferencing and physical meetings. Yes, it sounds like more meetings, but what happens is they accomplish more and build better relationships in shorter, more intimate meetings.
- **Position.** Leaders want to make the purpose of any meeting absolutely clear to everyone – whether it's a one-on-one or an entire group. To meet more effectively, there should be some communication outside of the actual event. For instance, you might meet if there's a decision to be made, a customer needs special attention or to share extraordinarily good or bad news. But share enough information ahead of time to give context to the actual event.
- **Protocols.** You'll want to create guidelines for meeting and non-meeting communication. Examples: *If we're all in the same*

building, we meet in person. We send email between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m., and don't expect responses outside of regular business hours. We meet face-to-face with clients once a quarter.

As an HR leader, offer front-line managers a tip sheet or electronic guide for the 3P approach to meeting management.

6 tips to be productive, effective

When you decide to get together, these six tips will help you meet more effectively – whether it's in-person or virtually:

- **Start with the end in mind.** While meetings are an opportunity to connect with people, they aren't an excuse to just socialize. Set one, clear, tangible goal before you meet. Let everyone know it so you're less likely to lose focus.
- **Ban the banter.** When Workhuman's Chief Human Resource Officer Steve Pemberton was the Chief Diversity Officer at Walgreens, he all but banned clichés and superfluous language from his meetings. He'd hit a bell and someone else was welcome to start speaking if a colleague said things such as, "To build on that ..." "Let's think outside the box," or "To his point ..."
- **Demand data.** Most meetings involve making decisions. Require anyone who plans to propose an idea to bring data to back it up.

With data – not just opinions – you can make decisions and be productive faster.

- **Assign roles.** Whether you meet in-person or virtually, you can be more efficient if these five roles are covered: Leader, facilitator, time-keeper, note-taker and tech host. The difference between leader and facilitator is the former arranges, leads and closes the meeting. The latter keeps the discussion and decision-making on track. Your tech host makes sure everyone can see and hear in virtual meetings. And time-keeper and note-taker are self-explanatory.
- **Pick a devil's advocate.** To avoid unnecessary meetings, ask a person close to the topic to determine if it's necessary to hold it.
- **Set the ending time.** Meetings are important to help people connect and accomplish common goals. But they're seldom important enough to go longer than 45 minutes. If you can't cover everything in that time, you're covering too much.

[Read this article online](#) 

The Cost of NonCompliance



\$60K

ADA violation: Company pays \$60K to recovering opioid addict who was allegedly 'forced out'

Who was involved: Rover's Place, a dog kennel company in the Chicago suburbs, and a former employee.

What happened: The employee worked at Rover's Place without incident until a company owner learned about his past drug use and confronted him. The owner allegedly demanded info about the employee's history of addiction and the treatment he had received, even though he wasn't using drugs at the time and didn't have any work problems caused by his former drug use.

The EEOC filed an ADA lawsuit, alleging the company subjected the employee to a hostile work environment, inquired into his medical history and forced him to quit his job because of his opioid addiction disability.

The ADA protects individuals with drug addictions if they are not currently using drugs.

Result: The company agreed to pay \$60,000 to settle the lawsuit.

Info: [Rover's Place to Pay \\$60,000 to Settle EEOC Disability Case](#)



\$2.3M

Unequal pay: Tech company shells out \$2.3M to female engineers

Who was involved: Esri, a digital mapping and analytics company, and 176 female employees who worked as software development engineers and quality assurance engineers at the company's headquarters in Redlands, CA.

What happened: As part of a federal compliance evaluation, the DOL's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs alleged the company paid the women less than their male counterparts in 2017.

The preliminary findings determined the company "systemically discriminated" against the women. As an FYI, Executive Order 11246 prohibits pay discrimination by federal contractors. The company accepted an Early Resolution Agreement, which allows contractors to willingly enter directly into a "conciliation agreement" to expedite the settlement process.

Result: The company agreed to pay \$2.3 million in back wages and interest to the affected employees. In addition to the financial payout, Esri also agreed to:

- Review and revise its overall compensation system.
- Provide additional training to its managers to ensure future compliance.
- Conduct annual reviews of its compensation policies.

Info: [DOL, Esri agree to resolve alleged pay discrimination at California headquarters; Company to pay \\$2.3 million to 176 female workers](#)

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

4 conversations that will inspire employees



by Michele McGovern

How to engage and inspire employees



You talk to your people every day. But how often do you have meaningful conversations that will inspire employees?

For many HR leaders, it's probably not as much as you'd like to.

After all, you have a lot of other conversations – the “Do you have a minute?” one that is never just a minute. There's the “We have an emergency and need your help” conversation. And there's this one, too: “How can we get this done by tomorrow?!”

That can eat up as much as 44% of your work day, according to research from Rice University Jones Graduate School of Business.

While there's a lot of talking at work, “it doesn't move behavior and certainly doesn't make us want to get up and do a great job every day,” says Kristi Hedges, author of *The Inspiration Code*.

That's mostly transactional communication. To engage employees, leaders want to practice more relational communication, which can lower burnout and turnover, according to research from Gallup.

Some planned conversation – when you can delve deeper – work to inspire employees and keep them engaged. Here are four from Hedges that you'll want to routinely schedule with employees – and

guide front-line managers to have with their employees.

1 Open Conversations

Most of the professional conversations leaders have with employees contain an agenda – what to do next, how to do something or a review of what was done.

In an Open Conversation, you want to take time to hatch ideas, gain insights and broaden viewpoints. You don't need an agenda or even a clearcut takeaway, but you do want to go into it with a desire to learn more about employees, their ideas and plans.

Tip: Give the conversation time and room to breathe. Ask open-ended questions and stop talking so you avoid directing where the conversation goes. Say, *What do you think about ...? How would you approach ...? What has you most interested in your work lately?*

2 Potential Conversations

One of the most powerful messages leaders can send is: *I recognize your potential and I believe in it.*

Yet often, a Potential Conversation is just an addendum to an annual performance review.

Instead, you want to talk about employees' strengths more often, perhaps quarterly. Cover the strengths you recognize, and they may not, plus those employees know and use well. Plan ways for them to use those strengths to be better and get ahead in their careers.

Tip: Tell employees, *I see this in you ... or You're at your best when you ...* Then talk about how they can work on those talents and maximize possibilities.

3 Energy Conversations

This seldom-heard conversation can have major effects on performance.

The Energy Conversation is truly about employees' energy levels. Employees (and leaders) need to feel energized to do their best and most amount of work.

So you want to gauge employees' energy levels, noting when they're

low and acknowledging when they're high.

Tip: Energy Conversations might be part of other performance-related chats. You'll want to talk about what you notice and ask about how they feel. For instance, *I notice you're on top of your game first thing in the morning. What gives you that energy? Or When do you feel your least effective, and why do you think you bottom out?* Then you can talk about things to try to rebuild or maintain higher energy levels.

4 Purpose Conversations

Purpose Conversations help bring people together for a common cause or a higher value. But your goal is to help employees link their work to what's meaningful in their lives and careers.

The conversation is less about the business mission and more about how employees can make the most of their roles.

Tip: Ask, *What do you enjoy doing? What makes you feel most useful? What do you NOT enjoy doing? How do you prefer to work in relationship to others?* Then consider ways to make the most of those preferences.

Make time for chit-chat

With all the ideas for more formal conversations, don't overlook the value of idle office chit-chat – between you and colleagues, and amongst employees.

Small talk – polite, light-hearted, superficial exchanges that aren't work-related – boost employee morale and sense of well-being by the end of the work day, according

to a study from Rutgers and University of Exeter Business school.

So it's not a horrible thing to linger around the real or virtual water cooler – just don't let it happen too long: Too much chit-chat can disrupt people's ability to focus on work and make them less likely go out of their way to help others.

[Read this article online](#) 

LEVERAGE SURVEY FEEDBACK **TO DRIVE** **ENGAGEMENT,** **LOYALTY**



What to do after you get employee survey results back



by Renee Cocchi

Employee surveys have become a popular way for employers to demonstrate their interest in their employees' concerns. But if no action is taken as a result of what you learn from them, your survey efforts will have little benefit and could even have negative consequences. So how can your organization leverage employee survey feedback to drive engagement and loyalty?

Congratulations! You've done an employee survey and got your results back. Now, what do you do?

One thing you shouldn't do is jump straight in and start making changes.

Study hard

The first thing you should do is sit down and study your results. Put just as much time into understanding your results as you did into creating the survey, advises Zach D'Amato, culture coach and list manager at Great Place to Work. Share them with your executives and look for areas of inconsistency.

For example, a healthcare company's employees claimed they didn't feel heard on the survey. HR's initial reaction was to invite more employees to decision committees. But as HR dug deeper to find out what employees needed to be invited to, they found out the issue was totally different. To the employees, "not feeling heard" meant they missed their CEO! You see, he used to do rounds in the health centers, but had gotten busy over the last few months and had stopped swinging by with coffee and donuts. They felt the company was

What to do after you get employee survey results back

listening just fine . . . they really just wanted him to start swinging by for coffee again.

So, once you have a clear picture of what the results are telling you, it's time to move on to the next step.

Share with employees, managers

Show employees that not only are you listening to them, but you're a good listener. That means don't just tell them about the positive feedback from the survey. Share negative and constructive feedback, too. It shows them you've truly heard them and you're taking to heart what they said, according to INTOO, a career development and workforce transition flagship for Gi Group.

You can share the results through newsletters, small group meetings and companywide meetings. Just make sure you do it within 30 days of getting the surveys back. If you don't, employees might think you forgot it or – even worse – you don't care.

Keep employees informed at every step. And thank employees for their participation and honesty. That will help the company get better and stronger.

Choose actions

Meet with the powers that be and decide which changes will have the most significant impact. Sometimes one change can affect several other issues. For example, if one issue found was employees feel they don't have opportunities to grow professionally within the company, starting a career development program would help solve that problem. And it'll impact your turnover rate because now employees have opportunities to grow. But INTOO points out it would also diversify employees' skills and improve the company's agility when it comes to adapting to change within. In addition, it would help grow new leaders from within the organization. Once the issues are pinpointed, decide who will enact these changes and the budget required to do it.

Remember, these responses require a long-term commitment. If you can't commit to a three-year corporate launch, then try a pilot program – but be clear with everyone that it's an experiment so you don't break promises accidentally.

Evaluate progress

Create strategic goals and action items based on the survey. Use the action items as goals on managers' performance reviews. Then once the changes are up and running, do another employee survey to measure their effectiveness. This will let you know if you are on target for meeting employees' needs or if you have to make tweaks to the changes.

Finally, be public – and celebratory – about the progress being made so employees know you're listening to them and taking their suggestions to heart.

[Read this article online](#) 



FREE OVERVIEW FROM  Gallagher

Voluntary Benefits Benchmarking

A quick look at the state of voluntary benefits

This short overview gives you insight into the state of voluntary benefits among U.S. employers based on a Gallagher survey of over 4,000 employers. Find out where you stand relative to your peers – including if and where you need to make up ground – along with the key voluntary benefits trends shaping the future.

DOWNLOAD YOUR COMPLIMENTARY OVERVIEW

[get the overview](#) 

Corporate wellness center prioritizes employee health, attracts top talent



The health and well-being of our team members are a top priority. That's why we decided to invest in top-notch initiatives to create a healthier, happier workforce.

Not to mention that building an agile workplace with unique benefits will help attract and retain top talent. It's a win-win.

Stepping up wellness to support employee goals

We've always been on the cutting edge of wellness benefits. Our wellness program offers many resources for what our team needs beyond overall health like mindset, nutrition and financial security.

With a consistently healthy workforce, we saw the benefits that it provides for the company. Healthier employees are happier, more productive and have improved morale.

So we decided to grow our wellness program and focus on a holistic, whole-employee approach.

The simple idea: Cut through the noise to offer something unique

Despite many wellness initiatives, we wanted to step it up and provide our employees with a unique benefit

that can help support their personal and professional goals.

It started with a tour of 52 corporate campuses to look at what other corporations offered in terms of wellness and professional development initiatives.

The ideas found from other campuses plus some forward-thinking initiatives all culminated into The Shoen Family Conference and Fitness Center.

The creation of the Shoen Center

It's a 54,208 sq. ft. center designed to help employees achieve their health and wellness goals, available to all team members at no cost.

We included a range of services to address all aspects of an employee's health, like:

- Physical and mental health: our wellness team, a medical clinic offering physical therapy as well as primary and acute care, and an on-site mobile dental office
- Fitness: exercise classes, an expansive workout area, an indoor track, a golf simulator and a full-size basketball court, and
- Professional development: our recruiting department

and conference rooms with state-of-the-art technology.

For employees not located at our headquarters, we began to offer remote classes.

Big benefits for employee health and business goals

Our new Shoen Center has taken our wellness efforts to the next level.

It's had a huge impact on employee health. Since its opening, employees have made strides in achieving health goals. Team members have lost weight and reduced the need for blood pressure medication due to improved physical fitness. Team members also increased preventive care with our on-site medical clinic, with some seeing the doctor for the first time in years.

Beyond employee benefits, it doesn't hurt recruiting efforts, either. Our new wellness efforts differentiated our company and helped us stand out among the competition for talent by showing potential applicants that we do more than talk a big game – we really can “walk the walk.”

(Jessica Lopez, U-Haul, Chief of Staff, Phoenix, AZ)

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Did these 2 comments create a hostile work environment?



"Look, Diego, I'm sure your supervisor was just joking around when he said that," said Betty Murphy, HR/benefits manager. "He's not the kind of guy who would make a racial slur."

"What do you call this then?" asked Diego Morales. "When he found out my wife and I were planning to buy a house he said, and I quote, 'It must be hard for a Spic to have to get FHA loans.'"

"No," said Betty. "Are you sure that's what he said? He's worked here for years, and I've never had a complaint about him. In fact, his people love working for him."

"Oh really?" questioned Diego. "Well, a month before that we were all in the lunchroom and he was sitting at the table behind me. He was telling his buddies about the commercial he was helping film for the company in our department and said that the actress that was auditioning for the role 'would have worked great if she didn't look so Spicky.'"

Betty looked taken aback. "You must have misheard," she said. "He's always been a well-respected employee. He started on the front line and worked his way up to supervisor."

"I promise I'll look into this and get to the bottom of it," said Betty, standing up. "Thank you for feeling you can come and talk to me about this."

A woman of her word, Betty called in Diego's supervisor the next day and asked him about the incidents.

The supervisor denied making either statement.

When Betty followed up with Diego, he said that she was being dismissive of his complaints.

PIP follows complaint to HR

A few weeks after Diego went to HR, his supervisor placed him on a performance improvement plan.

Soon after that, Diego was fired purportedly for poor job performance.

Diego sued, alleging a hostile work environment under state law.

Who won?

See decision on next page

You Be The Judge

Did these 2 comments create a hostile work environment? (Continued)

The Decision

A lower court ruled against Diego, finding that the alleged slurs weren't severe or pervasive enough to state a hostile work environment claim that could go to a jury.

Diego filed an appeal.

The state's highest court reversed the lower court's decision and remanded the case for further proceedings.

Noting that the law under which the claim was brought is to be construed liberally, the court said the alleged remarks were highly offensive and demeaning from the perspective of an objectively reasonable Hispanic person.

The court also said that an offensive remark is made worse when it is uttered by a supervisor. Such comments "could taint every interaction that followed between an employee and a direct supervisor," the court added.

In addition, it was important that the worker said that nothing happened when he reported the alleged misconduct.

Under the circumstances, the worker is entitled to take his case to a jury, the court ruled.

Investigate, take action

It's important for all HR professionals to take all complaints seriously no matter who it's about. Even long-time employees can slip up and make improper statements to their co-workers.

Even in jest, racial slurs should never be used in the workplace because they are never funny.

Any complaint should be documented and action should be taken. HR needs to document their actions every step of the way.

Rios v. Meda Pharmaceutical Inc., 247 N.J. 1 (N.J. 2021).

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

Guess who's over-stressed and quitting the most? It's you, HR! Here's help



by Michele McGovern

What's caused HR pros to be over-stressed



OK, HR professionals: It's time to think about yourselves more. Turns out, you're over-stressed and quitting more than the general employee population.

HR has the highest turnover of all job functions – a quit rate of 15% in the past year, according to LinkedIn research. And it's not Quiet Quitting or even Loud Quitting. It's more like an extension of The Great Resignation – finally, HR pros are responding to being over-stressed and overwhelmed.

If it wasn't so painfully true, it borders on comical, considering HR pros are usually charged with engaging employees and improving their experiences. Meanwhile, in many situations, HR professionals

are the employees suffering the most.

"It's silent, everyday stress that gradually and then suddenly leads to a state of being overwhelmed," says Dr. Gabriel De La Rosa, Chief Behavioral Science Officer at Fierce Conversations. "And HR professionals deal with high levels of daily stressors. Indeed, when interpersonal issues arise, poor performance or low morale are present, HR professionals are called in. Constantly dealing with these types of issues can leave people drained."

So the people called in to help need the help this time. From remote work, to layoffs, to talent shortages, to getting people back in the office, you've probably faced it – and

probably took the brunt of employee complaints throughout it all.

So we've gathered ideas on better self-care and stress management – the things you might just pass on to your employees rather than take into consideration for yourself.

Here are five stress management and self-care tips:

Be aware of being over-stressed

If you've read this far, and are still skeptical about whether you're near a breaking point, understand this: Because you've read this far, you are: You saw yourself in what you read.

"You must be surgical in the way you approach stress, and the first

step for any HR professional is to work on your self-awareness," De La Rosa says.

To check on your well-being, ask yourself:

- Do I know what stressors are distinct to me as an individual?
- Can I name or do I understand what events or people within the workplace stress me out?
- What type of stress management works for me? Do I understand which management tools work for which stressors?

"If you can't answer these questions, it's a great place to start," De La Rosa says. "Generic stress management is not the answer for building resilience and getting out of burnout."

Discover your major stressors, and you can easier find the ways to step away or rebound from them.

Balance yourself

You know that a healthy work/life balance is critical to curb stress and avoid turnover. But do you listen to what you know and probably preach to employees?

This is how important the balance is to most working people: Almost 65% say they'd choose a better work/life balance over better pay, according to FlexJobs' 2022 Career Pulse Survey.

"Healthy work/life balance can be instrumental to the success and longevity of an organization," says Sara Sutton, Founder and CEO of FlexJobs. And HR is at the forefront of that.

So it's critical to make the decision to set clear boundaries and stick to a regular schedule, regardless of how you work – on-site, remote or hybrid. Designate a hard start and stop time every day. If necessary, add it to your correspondence so

people don't try to contact you outside of the norms.

"When work hours have a beginning and an end, it's easier to set boundaries with family members, coworkers and managers," says Toni Frana, FlexJobs' Career Services Manager.

Get water and air

Regardless of where you work, you need water and air to alleviate stress.

The watercooler – real, virtual or the conceptual meeting spot – serves a purpose: a mental, menial break from the work cycle. Plan for at least 10 minutes (but no more than 30) to chat with co-workers about non-work stuff such as what you're streaming. Or do double-duty and plan to swap and talk about healthy, quick meal recipes.

"The social support and connection can help remote workers decompress and build stronger relationships," says Frana.

On top of that, get fresh air every day. Walk around your block or building to kick off a lunch break. Step outside to breathe deeply without your phone. This isn't just good for your lungs and physical health. A study in *The Business Journals* shows that breathing fresh air helps us make better decisions, score higher on tests and process information more efficiently.

Skill up in communication

HR professionals should be the ultimate communicators. After all, doesn't nearly everyone in the organization want to communicate the good, bad and ugly with you? And don't you have to communicate policy and procedure with them all the time?

Still, poor communication is at the root of stress, anxiety and quitting, according to a Harvard Business School study.

Tap your internal learning systems, download podcasts and attend webinars or a TED Talk on strengthening communication skills.

"Having a strong competency in how to receive feedback, offer feedback, confront colleagues, share honest opinions and speak with figures of authority with confidence is key," De La Rosa says. "Mastery comes when you can also coach others with tools and resources, and begin to build a workforce who first tries to solve their own interpersonal challenges before coming to HR."

And wouldn't that be the ideal – employees and colleagues containing issues before they escalate to you?

Schedule time for self-care

Pick your potion. But whatever you do, schedule time weekly – even better, daily – for a favorite form of self-care. You know the drill. Put exercise, yoga, golf, book club, a movie, vacation, opera, family or friend visit, coffee break, etc., into your calendar. Most importantly, stick to it.

At work, don't just help guide your people to Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Get involved in those that matter to you. Beyond that, you might consider getting more active in professional HR organizations where you can be with others who face the same struggles.

Remember: Things will always come up. The key is to resist the urge to let work matters spill into personal commitments to your well-being.

[Read this article online](#) 

5 ways to lead unique teams filled with experts & newbies, superstars & misfits



by Michele McGovern

FRONT-LINE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES



Whether you've been a leader for a hot minute or cool decades, you likely have many unique teams – from office veterans and newbies to superstars and misfits. The only thing each team has in common is the challenge it presents to its leader!

It's important that managers lead with their team's unique qualities in mind because the level of engagement matters. When employees are engaged with their leaders, teammates and the work, they help organizations become more productive, boost profitability, and reduce turnover and absenteeism, according to research from Gallup.

Whether it's your HR team – or you need to help front-line managers lead their unique teams – you want an approach that's as unique as the group.

Here are five types of unique groups, plus what makes them dynamic and how you can lead them to success:

The experts

Veteran, expert employees might have experience leaders like you can rely on, but their “seen- and done-it-all” attitude presents a problem.

For instance, they might be quick to kill an idea because they know it failed a long time ago. Or they believe that the way it's always been done is the only way it should be done.

The good news: Tenured employees can stay engaged. Like most new employees, they start off strong. Interest and engagement wanes between the second and eighth year, but ticks up considerably after that, according to research from Quantam Workplace.

Success tip: Business researchers have found veteran employees stay engaged and perform best when managers understand what they do best – and allow them to do that kind of work most often. In unique teams or when they work individually toward the team goal, assign long-term employees the work they love. When possible, let them take the lead or give the autonomy when that kind of work is involved.

The superstars

The best talent is more productive and performs better than the rest. Having five, 10 or more work together sounds like a dream team.

But it isn't always like that. A unique team of superstars is often full of egos and infighting.

Success tip: Your all-star team is highly capable of meeting – and probably smashing – the goal. So leaders want to focus more on removing obstacles and managing egos. Harvard Business School researchers suggest you:

- Create team-based goals and rewards. That way, members should work together rather than try to outdo each other in pursuit of rank or reward, and

- Make team success essential for individual success. Build all-star teams with people whose talents complement, not compete with, each other.

The siblings

This group is like a bunch of brothers and sisters. They're so tight-knit that some days they accomplish everything and beyond. Other days, one wrong word or crooked look can spark irritation and animosity.

That's a unique team to be reckoned with!

Success tip: Leaders practically want to handle this team like parents do with their sibling children. Recognize that some situations are worth intervention and others are not. If an issue stunts productivity or harms morale, it's time to sit down and talk it through. If they're bickering but staying on task, step back.

The newbies

They're new to your organization, department or task. They're inexperienced and often overwhelmed. But they bring a fresh perspective on the task or project.

Success tip: Leaders might feel like they have to do way too much hand-holding with these unique teams. But if you give them the right amount of guidance and autonomy, they can breathe new life into the job at hand. So ask for their input in areas that can be changed. Avoid

micromanaging (so they can build skills and you can maintain your sanity), and require progress reports a few times a week.

The misfits

Sometimes it's difficult to put a tag on a work team. Their personalities, skills and experience vary. They co-exist and function, but might struggle to excel ... so far.

Success tip: Bring a group of misfits together and lead them to success with clear expectations from the get-go. Give them three priorities, how you expect they'll meet them and how their success will be measured. Misfits can form unique teams that become aligned when their work flows from the established goals.

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Meet Our Editors

Our editors read and vet hundreds of sources and hand-select the most relevant, practical content. Then we add our seasoned perspective and deliver actionable insights to help you understand what today's trends mean for your business.



Renee Cocchi

Renee 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!



Tom D'Agostino

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



Carol Warner

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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