THE RESOURCE

Labor & Industrial INSIGHTS® Magazine

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WORKFORCE TALENT AND THE EVOLVING MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

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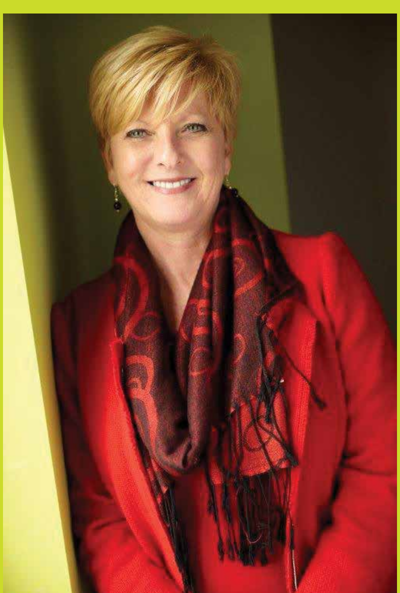
From The CEO

THE RESOURCE

At The Resource we are passionate about our story and the stories of evolution our clients have to tell.



Best Regards,

Kathy Hartung

Kathy Hartung, CEO

We like to say we are revolutionizing the way companies handle their greatest assets, their people. In practically every company in the US, the 80/20 rule still stands. You can *easily* identify your key employees, the cream of the crop. So often though, employees outside the top performing 20 percent get looked at as underperforming, when *really* it's just that they are in the wrong position.

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From the CEO to the leadership team to the entry level position, a person doing what they are naturally designed to do has the power to rewrite the story; the story of your company, the story of your life.

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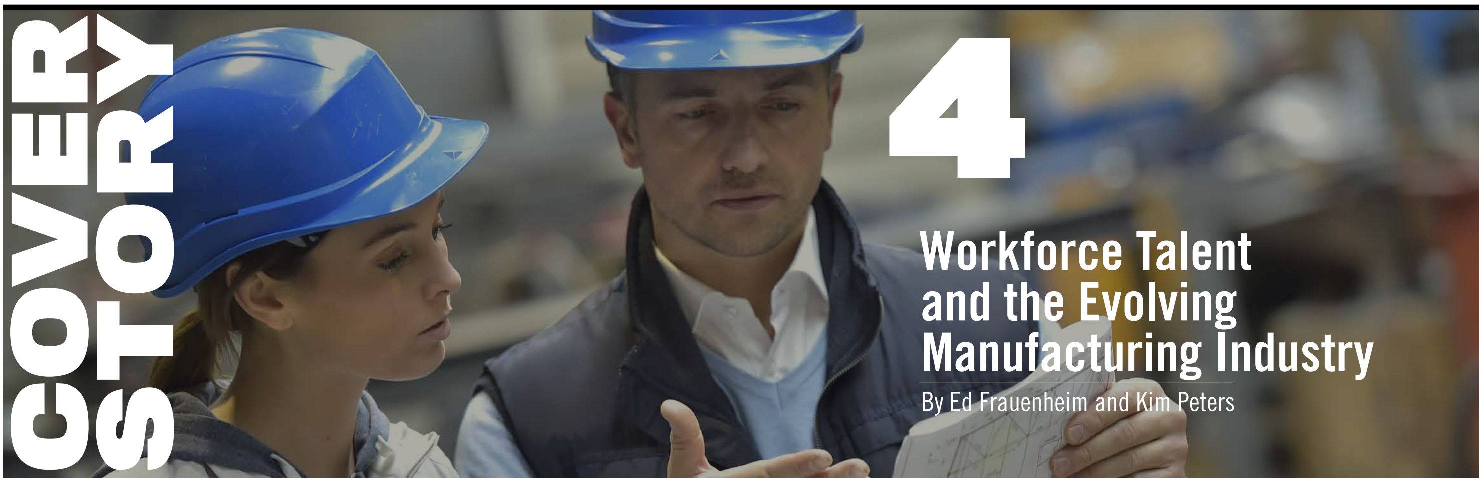

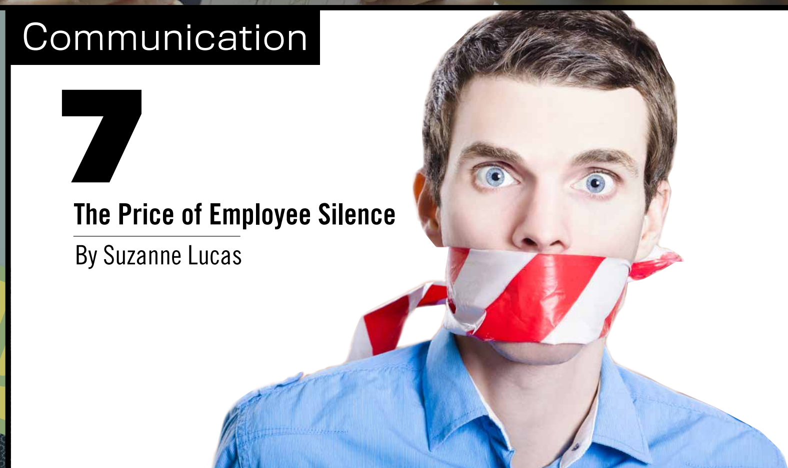

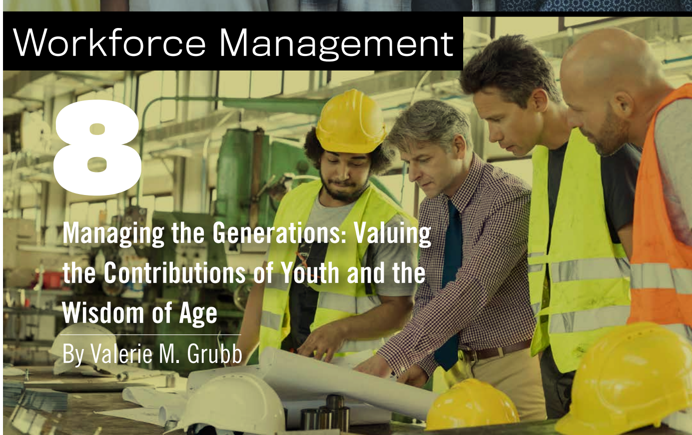

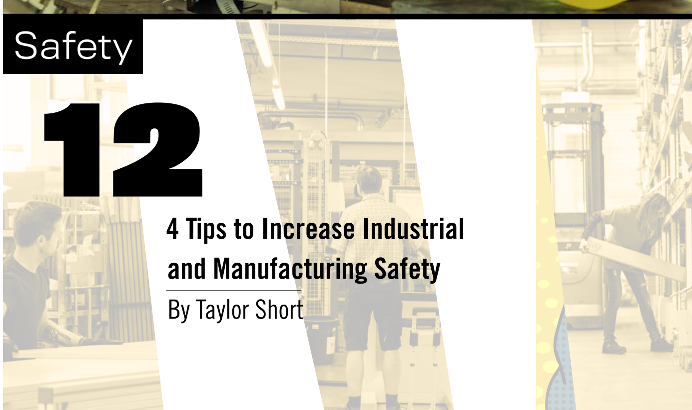

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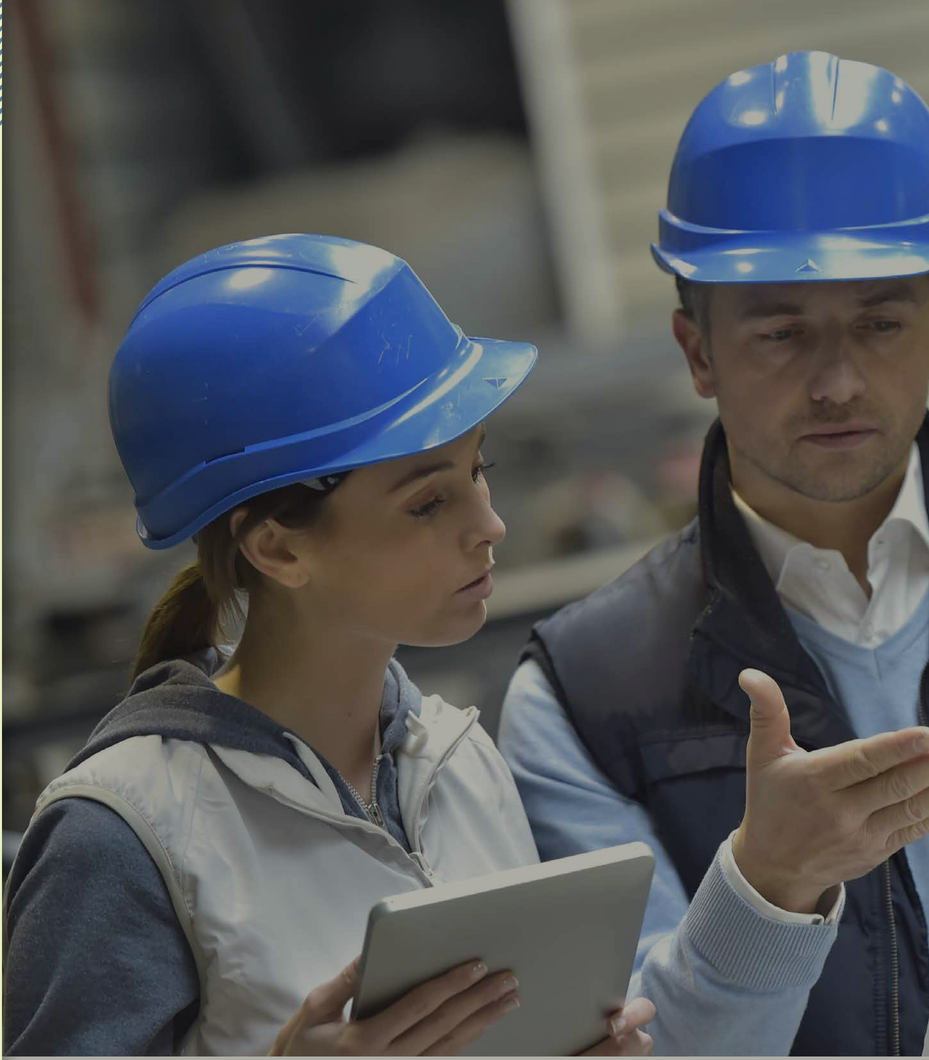

Manufacturing has experienced a tremendous transformation in the past few decades. The shop floor of today's American industrial facility would be unrecognizable to someone who had worked in that sector only a generation ago. For example, the operator of a typical CNC mill—the modern equivalent of a lathe that chisels parts from hunks of metal—has studied a 200-page instruction manual and spent one to two years in training to learn how to use that machine, and earns wages comparable to those of teachers or people in many other areas that require bachelor's degrees. Numerous other manufacturing jobs have undergone similarly dramatic changes, thus pushing companies to retool their relationships with employees as they compete for a shrinking pool of skilled workers.

"Manufacturing companies clearly understand now that, in order to be exceptional and successful, it's not just about hiring hands. It's about hiring and engaging heads and hearts," says Anil Saxena, a partner at Great Place to Work and an expert on workplace culture. That certainly holds true for the companies recognized in 2016 by *Fortune* and Great Place to Work as Best Workplaces in

WORKFORCE TALENT AND THE EVOLVING MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

BY ED FRAUENHEIM AND KIM PETERS

Manufacturing and Production. The organizations on this list stand out not only for the level of trust their employees express (in anonymous surveys), but also for their defiance of outdated perceptions about working in these industries.

Take job security: 92% of employees at companies on the list say their leaders would lay people off only as a last resort—a more positive outlook than that held by people at companies on the *Fortune* 100 Best Companies to Work For list, which contains organizations in a variety of fields (including some, such as healthcare and technology, that are experiencing much faster growth). People at the companies on the Best Workplaces in Manufacturing and Production list also feel they get a fair shake during positive economic cycles, with 82% of them saying they receive an equitable share of profits. (For example, Hilcorp has an innovative compensation program that lets employees invest in—and collect returns from—specific company projects.) The survey question about profit sharing reveals another surprising area in which companies on the manufacturing list collectively outperform their peers among the broader *Fortune* 100 Best Companies to Work For.

TALENT RETENTION

Organizations aren't driven to create happy workforces solely out of generosity. They have a very pragmatic motivation as well: the need to retain talent. The current (and growing) shortage of people with the job skills crucial to a 21st-century manufacturing environment gives the people who possess them leverage to expect more from employers.

Among the leading manufacturing employers, the share of team members categorized as production workers punching a clock for hourly pay has decreased by more than 20 percentage points since 2006 to just 26% of the workforce. At the same time, salaried professional and technical positions now make up the largest share (34%) of the positions in companies on the Best Workplaces in Manufacturing and Production list in 2016.

Some of this change might be explained by the breadth of these companies' business interests, particularly at organizations with diverse divisions (such as J.M. Family Enterprises, which distributes auto parts, runs a Lexus dealership, and offers finance and insurance products for the automotive industry). Regardless, the highly skilled workforce that forms the backbone of today's industrial sector brings a different set of expectations than the archetypal factory worker of days past. "The whole notion of 'the whistle blows and I'm out of here' and 'the job is just a place I where spend eight hours'—that's just not accurate anymore." says Saxena.

HIGH ENGAGEMENT, LOW TURNOVER

In fact, pride and a sense of purpose represent further areas in which the best manufacturing and production employers outshine their peers, with 93% of employees within the companies on the list proud of what they accomplish on the job and 94% of them feeling good about the ways in which their companies contribute to their communities. Field Fastener, for example, engages its people through a program that helps employees at any level of the organization suggest improvements (which have saved the company more than $1 million in just two years). Likewise, the medical device company Stryker connects team members to the organization's mission through a program that helps them interact with the patients and clinicians who are using the organization's products. Stryker also takes steps to help employees develop what it describes as "best friends at work" to enhance the social and professional ties that create a trust-filled workplace. As a result of this employee-focused approach, companies on the Best Workplaces in Manufacturing and Production list have an average turnover rate of just 7.2%, much lower than the national industry average of 13% reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

SKILLS SHORTAGE

Keeping that turnover low will offer a real advantage to these companies in the years ahead. As the president of the National Association of Manufacturers recently pointed out, the sector is expected to create 3.5 million new jobs in the next decade, but the industry is likely to fall short by 2 million skilled workers when filling those positions.[1] On top of the skills deficit, the industry also faces the challenges of an aging U.S. workforce and rising labor costs in Asia that make it easier to bring back to the USA many of the jobs that had gone overseas in decades past. In this context, the companies identified as Best Workplaces in Manufacturing and Production are exceptional not only for their HR policies. They're also leading the way for an entire industry that will need to create high-trust work environments in order to stay competitive in the years ahead.

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1. Jane M. Von Bergen. 2016. "The State of Manufacturing: How to Build for the Future." Philly.com, February 3, www.philly.com/philly/business/20160203_The_state_of_manufacturing__How_to_build_for_the_future.html.

How to Increase Your Job-Offer Acceptance Rate

BY JESSICA MILLER-MERRELL

BY IMPLEMENTING A TOTAL REWARDS PROGRAM, a company can build a reputation as a great place to work and therefore attract the best talent. Nonmonetary benefits and perks can, when combined with competitive salaries, form a well-rounded compensation strategy that helps an organization attract candidates, increase offer acceptance rates, and improve retention. Over the last three years, it's become more and more common for candidates to receive multiple job offers at one time—and, consequently, for companies to increase salaries to attract them. Salary isn't necessarily the most important factor candidates consider, though, and the best way for companies to increase offer acceptance (especially in multiple-offer scenarios) is to make improvements in the nonmonetary incentives they provide.

EMPLOYEE PERKS

The perks that an organization offers can make the difference between whether it hires a strong candidate—or whether it loses him or her to a competitor. Candidates respond especially well to perks that positively affect their work/life balance. These include services that enable employees to take care of personal tasks during work hours (such as dry cleaning dropoff and pickup at the office), that make working parents' lives less stressful (such as breastmilk-delivery services and onsite childcare), and that help recent graduates transition to the workforce (such as student loan payoff programs).

NONMONETARY COMPENSATION

Nonmonetary compensation (such as merchandise, travel, and gift certificates) can sometimes be more even effective than perks when it comes to motivating employees. Cash should always top the list of incentives, of course. But multiple studies by the Incentive Research Foundation have found that a total rewards program that includes nonmonetary rewards appeals more to employees and candidates than traditional forms of compensation alone.

PROGRAMS FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Although most employees appreciate free dry cleaning and flexible scheduling, many of them also want opportunities to increase and develop their skills. (This is particularly true for—though not limited to—high-productivity workers who have already demonstrated a drive to excel.) Therefore companies should consider setting up career-advancement programs that are open to all employees (not just the high-potential ones). Such a program could include stipends for online subscription-based training services (such as Lynda and Udemy), participation in established corporate training programs, and opportunities to attend (and present at) professional conferences, for example.

THE BIG PICTURE

Candidates who are reviewing job offers look at more than just salary figures. They also pay attention to other incentives, such as nonmonetary compensation and perks. Companies that offer total rewards programs that incorporate all of these elements usually see their job-offer–acceptance rates rise.

When implementing a total rewards program at your company, start by examining what your competitors offer. Most companies detail their compensation strategies online in order to attract strong candidates, so be sure to match (at minimum) or exceed their offerings. Pay attention, too, to what has already been effective at your organization: if your employees have loved a particular perk in the past, improve upon it even more and make it a "must have" feature of your workplace.

Above all, don't make assumptions about what your employees want. Survey them routinely to find out what incentives they truly value. With a thorough understanding of their interests, you'll be able to craft a total rewards program that attracts—and retains—the best employees.

Jessica Miller-Merrell is a workplace change agent focused on human resources and talent acquisition. Named to Haydn Shaughnessy's 2013 list of top 50 social media power influencers, she's the founder of Workology (formerly Blogging-4Jobs). She can be contacted on Twitter at @jmillermerrell.

The Price of Employee Silence

BY SUZANNE LUCAS

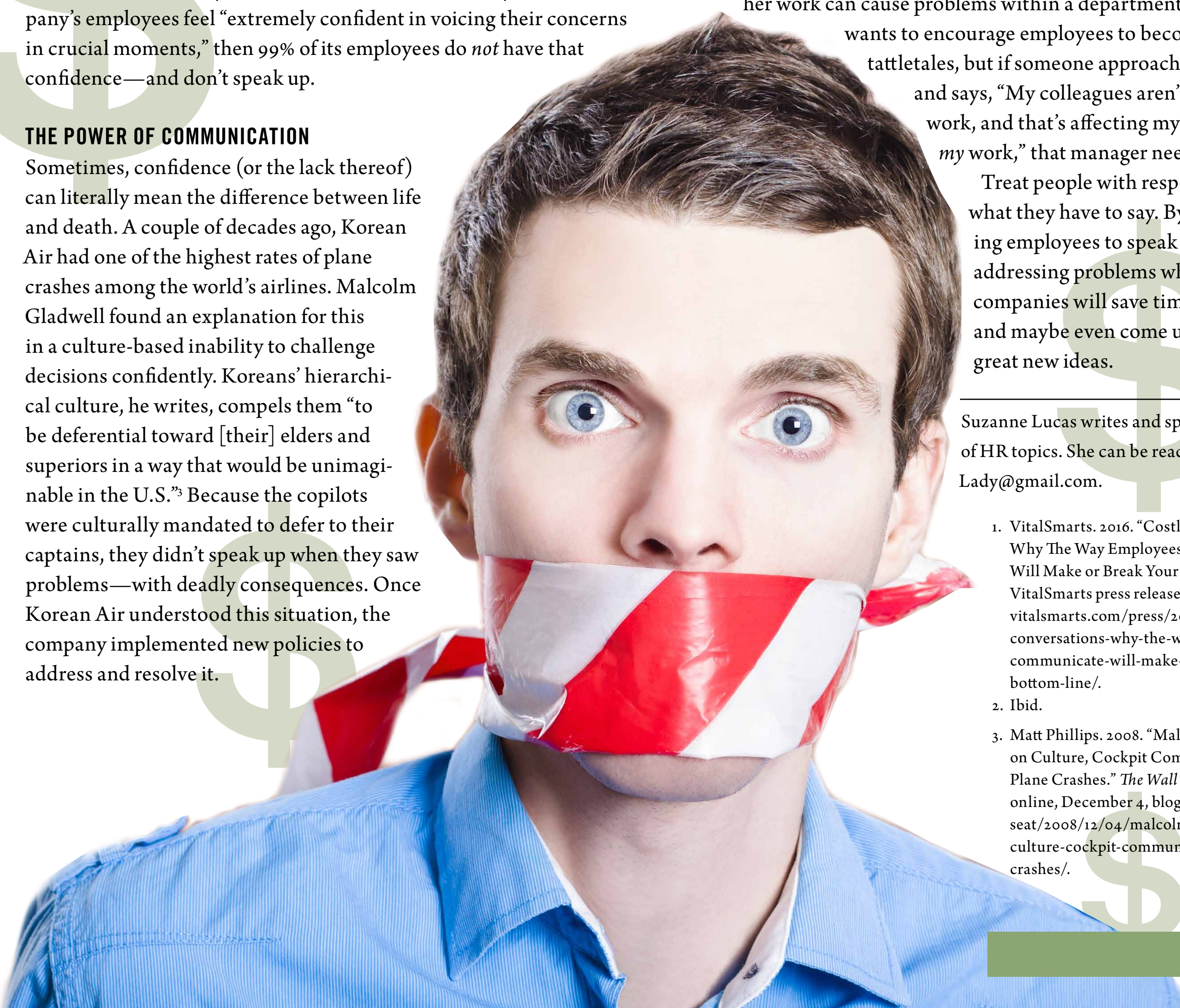
Open-door policies are pretty ubiquitous, but simply having the policy doesn't mean people will actually speak their minds. Employees aren't telling their bosses everything they should, a silence that carries a significant cost to companies. New research by Joseph Grenny and David Maxfield, the authors of *Crucial Conversations*, reveals that "every conversation failure costs an organization an average of $7,500 and more than seven work days."[1] Here's why the lack of open communication is so expensive:

> [Of the survey respondents,] 40% estimate they waste two weeks or more ruminating about the problem. . . . [O]ne in three [says] their culture does not promote or support holding crucial conversations. And only 1% report feeling extremely confident in voicing their concerns in crucial moments.[2]

Here's another way to look at those numbers: if only 1% of a company's employees feel "extremely confident in voicing their concerns in crucial moments," then 99% of its employees do *not* have that confidence—and don't speak up.

THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION

Sometimes, confidence (or the lack thereof) can literally mean the difference between life and death. A couple of decades ago, Korean Air had one of the highest rates of plane crashes among the world's airlines. Malcolm Gladwell found an explanation for this in a culture-based inability to challenge decisions confidently. Koreans' hierarchical culture, he writes, compels them "to be deferential toward [their] elders and superiors in a way that would be unimaginable in the U.S."[3] Because the copilots were culturally mandated to defer to their captains, they didn't speak up when they saw problems—with deadly consequences. Once Korean Air understood this situation, the company implemented new policies to address and resolve it.



Does this same problem exist in your company? What happens when someone challenges senior management? Is he or she immediately shut down and pushed to the side? Is questioning the vice president a career death sentence?

The next time you're in a meeting with several layers of staff, pay attention. If you see that the junior people are just nodding along and taking notes while the senior people do all the talking, you've got a problem. And if you see that when a junior person speaks up, his or her ideas are quickly dismissed, then you've got an even bigger problem. Yes, it's true that the newbies straight out of grad school often think they know what they're talking about when they don't, but companies that get into the habit of immediately shutting down junior staff miss out on some potentially great ideas—and train everyone to keep quiet.

WELCOME IDEAS FROM EVERYONE

The last thing any business needs is to dismiss ideas that could help it grow and develop. A company *needs* ideas, so it's important to keep the doors open to all possibilities. If an idea doesn't look promising after a closer look, it can be ditched—but give it a chance up front.

Additionally, communication is stifled when people don't treat each other respectfully. This lack of respect can sometimes escalate to bullying, but it doesn't have to reach that level to cause havoc in a company. For example, something as simple as someone not doing his or her work can cause problems within a department. No manager wants to encourage employees to become a bunch of tattletales, but if someone approaches a manager and says, "My colleagues aren't doing their work, and that's affecting my ability to do *my* work," that manager needs to listen.

Treat people with respect. Listen to what they have to say. By encouraging employees to speak up and by addressing problems when they arise, companies will save time, save money, and maybe even come up with some great new ideas.

Suzanne Lucas writes and speaks on a variety of HR topics. She can be reached at EvilHRLady@gmail.com.

1. VitalSmarts. 2016. "Costly Conversations: Why The Way Employees Communicate Will Make or Break Your Bottom Line." VitalSmarts press release, December 6, www.vitalsmarts.com/press/2016/12/costly-conversations-why-the-way-employees-communicate-will-make-or-break-your-bottom-line/.
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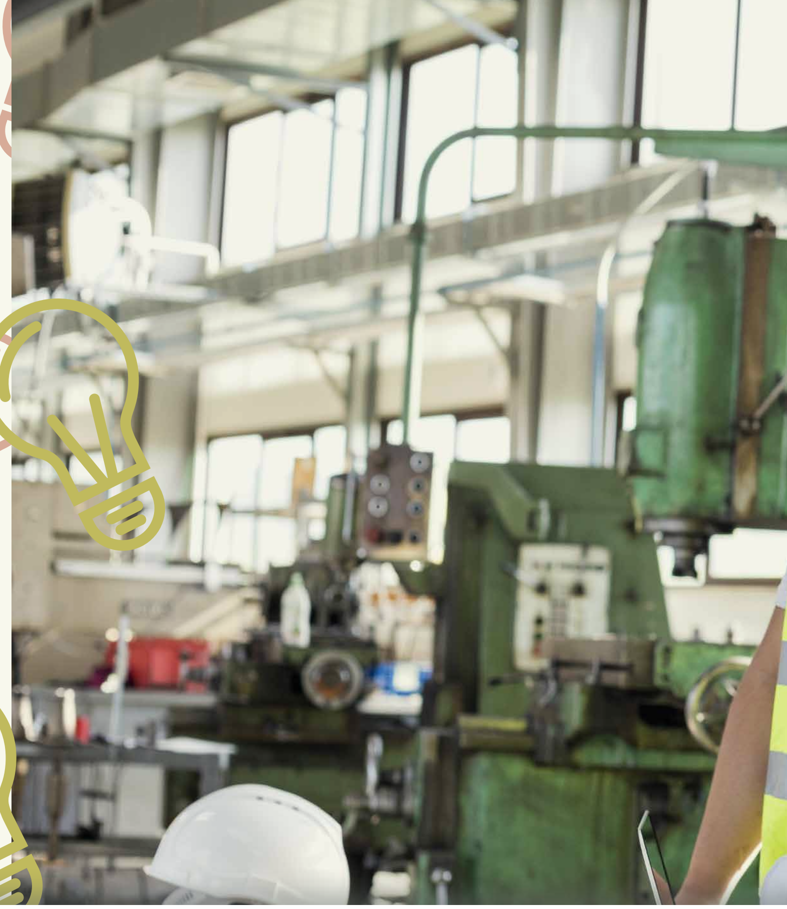


Managing the Generations: Valuing the Contributions of Youth and the Wisdom of Age

BY VALERIE M. GRUBB

DURING A RECENT TRAINING CLASS I conducted, a Millennial employee vented to me that what she heard most often from older workers was "No, we can't do it." She was frustrated by their apparent lack of openness to new ideas, particularly in one situation in which her proposed solution to an existing problem was initially shot down in this manner but was later adopted after further discussion within the department. This is an all-too-common scenario in which the initial "no" from older workers is not so much a rejection of an idea but a rejection of how a younger worker has presented it. Such conflict arises not only from differences in age but from differences in tenure, too: a recent hire might enter a workplace ready to turn the system around, only to have his or her ideas shot down by long-term employees who've been at the company for years.

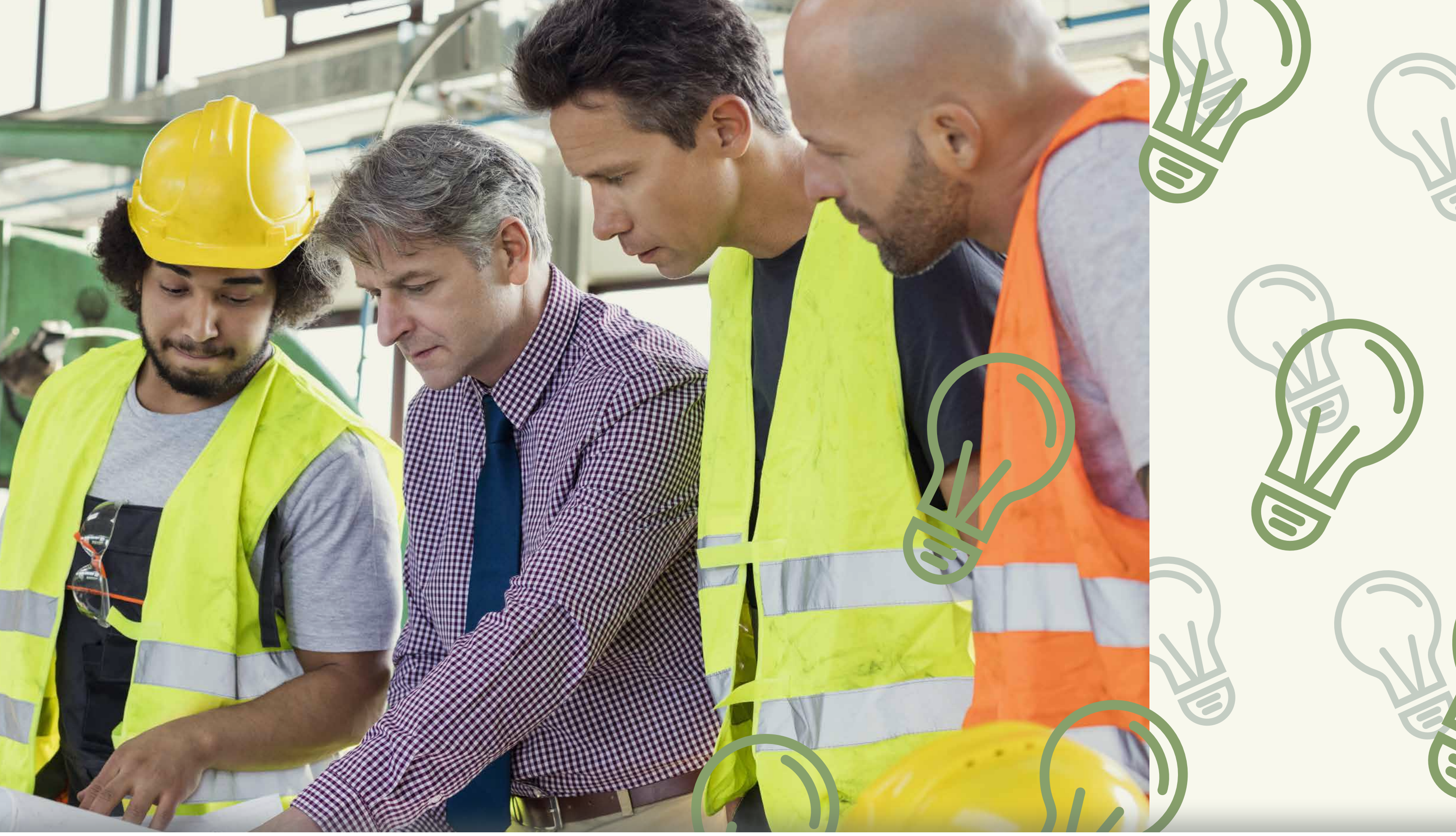
Seasoned employees need to be more open to ideas and appreciate the enthusiasm that young employees and new hires bring to the table instead of outright rejecting their suggestions (even if those ideas have been tried before). Because they're new to the workforce, everything is still exciting to them. Remember feeling fresh and being eager to contribute when you first joined the workforce or your organization? Chances are you often came up with lots of great new ideas—just as Millennials do today.

Sometimes all that's needed to reveal a solution to an existing problem is a new perspective and some perseverance. Just because an idea has already been explored doesn't mean all possible approaches have been exhausted. Consider the example of Thomas Edison, who famously quipped, "Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up" just a few years before he finally succeeded (after several hundred—or, by some accounts, several thousand—failed attempts) in creating a long-lasting lightbulb.

When a younger worker expresses an idea that has already been explored, instead of dismissing the proposal with a "Been there, done that" response, the more seasoned employee should instead try to analyze it in light of past approaches. Discussing prior efforts, sharing documentation of them (such as reports and e-mail), and pointing the younger employee to those who've worked on the problem before can yield fresh perspectives that might enable the office's new blood to see a way around obstacles that stymied others in the past. After all, if an idea was great when it was first brought it up, why not help someone else finally figure out a way to achieve that goal? The worst that can happen is the idea fails again. But in the best-case scenario, everyone involved—both the new employee and the veteran—comes out smelling like roses.

By not killing ideas immediately and instead providing support for them, you can encourage younger workers to keep coming up with those new ideas—and even mistakes can often lead to completely new solutions. For example, Post-its were developed when a 3M chemist's attempts to create a super-strong adhesive resulted instead in the weaker yet reusable glue that eventually allowed those little yellow rectangles to become ubiquitous in the office. Remember the big picture, in which the company's success is the end goal. Fostering new ideas and new strategies for achieving that goal will help ensure the organization's longevity for years to come.

If you hear your workers respond, "That can't be done" right off the bat when hearing a new employee's ideas, step in and encourage an open dialogue that transforms "That can't be done" into "That might be possible—but be prepared to encounter the following roadblocks with this approach." You'll not only better equip everyone for success but also come across as an approachable, sensible leader who inspires employees. Of course, not every idea can be pursued (for lack of resources, financing, or staffing, among other reasons). But when



you must reject a younger employee's proposal, be sure to explain clearly the reasoning behind the decision so that person can be better prepared the next time he or she presents an idea.

Just as more seasoned workers need to embrace the enthusiasm and new ideas of new recruits, younger employees also need to learn how to see things from the perspectives of their more seasoned colleagues. In some cases, for example, a workplace veteran might take a suggestion as a personal affront by the younger coworker: the older worker thinks that the younger one assumes that no one has thought of that idea before. This often happens when younger workers enthusiastically present their great solutions for problems without taking into consideration the older employees' experience (and the fact that they may have also tried to tackle those problems themselves).

Should older workers be less sensitive? Of course. (In fact, it would be great if everyone stopped taking things so personally!) But look at the situation from their point of view: they (like everyone else) want to be valued for their experience and what they bring to the table. Taking the approach of enlisting help from all team members (regardless of age) means welcoming all input—and finding value even in the negative stuff. After all, knowing what's been tried without success before may cut down on the time spent to find a winning solution on the next go-around. Encourage employees to treat a no as an opportunity to understand their colleagues' objections and therefore make their pitch even stronger the next time.

If you're the Millennial who's pitching new ideas, don't get offended when someone (of any age) tells you no. Instead, ask for more information about why something can't be done. If an older employee responds, "We already tried it," push for more information about past efforts. Treat the experience as an opportunity to learn about how the problem was approached in the past so that you don't waste your time repeating a failed methodology and end up with the same result.

As you pitch ideas for improving operations, keep in mind that someone who's currently in your company (or even your group) may be the person who implemented the practices you're trying to change. Criticizing an idea while suggesting an alternative that you think is better may incense him or her to the point of being unable to listen to new ideas. That actually happened to me early in my career, when I made some derogatory comments about the system my department used to track customers—only to find out that my boss was the one who had originally rolled it out. He was so irritated by my comments that he immediately rejected my suggestion to switch to a better system, and there was tension on both sides.

Fortunately, my boss was an outstanding mentor: rather than deride my actions during that meeting, he taught me to leave personal judgments out of my professional presentations and instead to focus on how my new ideas can help the company achieve its goals. That's a lesson of value to employees and managers of all ages. Everyone needs to learn how to avoid emotional reactions during business discussions and keep the conversation centered on problem solving—an approach that will yield great results.

Valerie M. Grubb of Val Grubb & Associates Ltd. (www.valgrubbandassociates.com) is an innovative and visionary operations leader with an exceptional ability to zero in on the systems, processes, and personnel issues that can hamper a company's growth. Grubb regularly consults for mid-range companies wishing to expand and larger companies seeking efficiencies in back-office operations. She can be reached at vgrubb@valgrubbandassociates.com.

Using First Impressions Wisely in Recruiting

BY WILLIAM CLARKE

Every day, first impressions shape how people interact with each other and how they feel about those interactions. They influence how people engage with all aspects of the world around them—including recruiting. Given how much of recruiting comes down to understanding and evaluating people in a limited amount of time, one could argue that much of a recruiter's job comes down to how well he or she has mastered the ability to get an accurate first impression.

WHAT IS A FIRST IMPRESSION?

A first impression is an assessment of another person's social value. Impressions of other people are defined as much by beliefs and interests as they are by actions and statements. One common misconception is that first impressions are conscious evaluations, but they actually occur all the time—not just when someone is actively thinking about something or someone in particular.

Because human brains are constantly taking in information and assigning values to objects, people, and situations, people have the ability to subconsciously identify patterns and draw conclusions based on tiny slivers of experience (a phenomenon psychologists call "thin slicing"). These subconscious evaluations can take place in incredibly short periods of time. For instance, within one-tenth of a second after meeting someone for the first time, most people decide whether he or she is trustworthy.[1] It takes only three seconds for people to know whether they want to do business with another person—and only a few moments to know whether they want to be someone's friend.

INHERENT RISKS

Even though people use them every day, first impressions aren't infallible. The accuracy of thin-slice observations is strongly task-dependent, which means they vary based on what the activity is. Accurate judgements are also highly contingent on experience and expertise. For example, a professional basketball player who receives a pass knows instantly what to do with it, whereas a little kid just starting out in a local community league might accidentally hand the ball over to an opponent.

First impressions are especially susceptible to confirmation bias, in which people subconsciously favor certain information because it confirms their existing opinions and feelings. That's one reason why it can be difficult to persuade someone who holds an opposing political viewpoint and get his or her news only from certain media outlets. Confirmation bias also contributes to the perpetuation of stereotypes. For example, a manager might think that people who speak loudly and with confidence are most likely to be strong leaders—and could therefore completely overlook the leadership potential in more soft-spoken employees.

Because making hiring decisions based on assumptions and unconscious bias leads to bad hires, it's essential to create safeguards throughout the hiring process that ensure that those decisions are based on objective information—and not on subjective criteria. First impressions matter, but they should be balanced by a standardized system that gives everyone the same hiring experience and utilizes objective, confirmable data. Remember, a friendly, funny, and well-dressed candidate who likes the same sports team as the hiring manager might make a great first impression, but a candidate who doesn't have the skills required for the position isn't going to get much work done.

HOW TO LEVERAGE FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Use training, feedback, and preparation to turn first impressions into assets (instead of liabilities) by teaching hiring teams to use them effectively without allowing them to dominate the hiring process. Make sure that interviewers jot down their first impressions, which can yield valuable data. But to reduce the chance that positive (or negative) first impressions will color the rest of the interview, standardize the process by ensuring that all candidates for a particular role are always asked the same set of questions, no matter who is interviewing them.

USE THEM WISELY

Because first impressions play an essential role in helping people evaluate others, they are a crucial tool in every recruiter's arsenal. Yet given how susceptible everyone is to bias, it's important to create hiring processes that utilize first impressions without letting them dominate decision making. At the end of the day, understanding the value and risk of first impressions will allow hiring teams to judge talent more effectively—and therefore make better hires.

William Clarke is a writer for Entelo, a new and better way to recruit. The Entelo platform combines machine learning, predictive analytics, behavioral listening, and social signals to help recruiting organizations identify, qualify, and engage with talent. To learn how leading companies such as Facebook, Schneider Electric, and Tesla are building their teams using Entelo, visit www.entelo.com.

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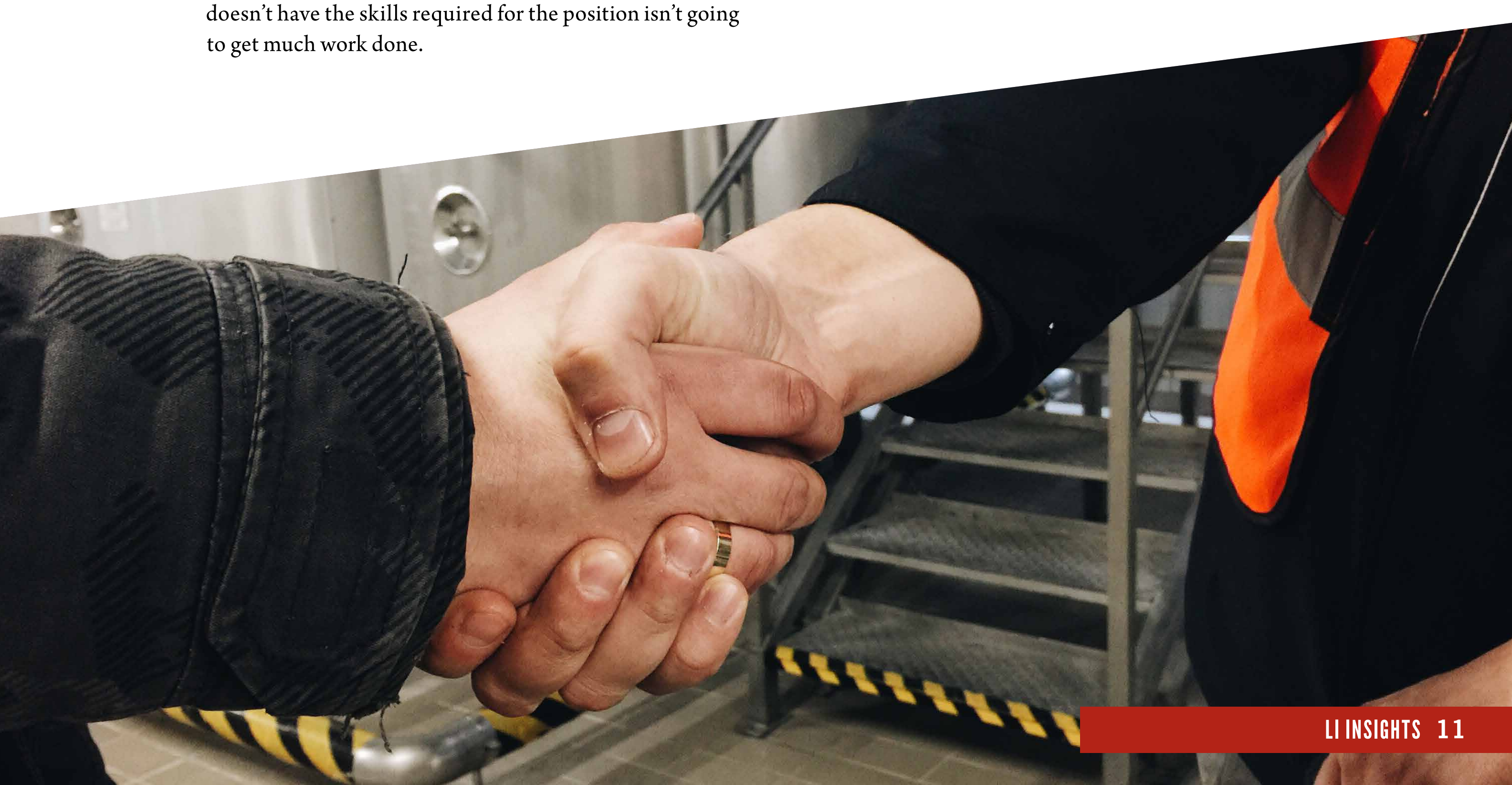


4 Ways to Increase Industrial and Manufacturing Safety

BY TAYLOR SHORT

In asset-intensive organizations, the machines play a critical role in keeping business moving. But when the people who operate and repair them are out because of injuries, those machines aren't of much use. Now that the average cost of a work-related injury now hovers at $42,000, it's important for companies to prioritize safety in construction, utilities, and manufacturing.[1] With that in mind, companies should consider investing in the development of comprehensive safety programs. Such programs can help organizations identify potential hazards and problems, and develop solutions for them. Doug Schumann, an advisor with Safety Management Group, identifies four key steps toward building a good safety program.

1 CREATE CHECKLISTS OF ALL SAFETY ASPECTS

Before it can plan safety protocols around its assets, equipment, and facilities, a company must identify everything that could lead to a hazard. The following list of questions is a good starting point for this process:

- What exact service or product does the company provide?
- What types of machinery are employees exposed to and operating?
- Are hazardous chemicals present in the work environment?
- Are fall risks present?

It's important to identify *every* possible hazard to which employees might be exposed. The resulting list can be incredibly detailed and may include many types of hazards, such as fire, electrical, chemical, and ergonomic ones. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) website provides information on some of the topics that should be covered as well as OSHA-certified guidelines to follow.[2]

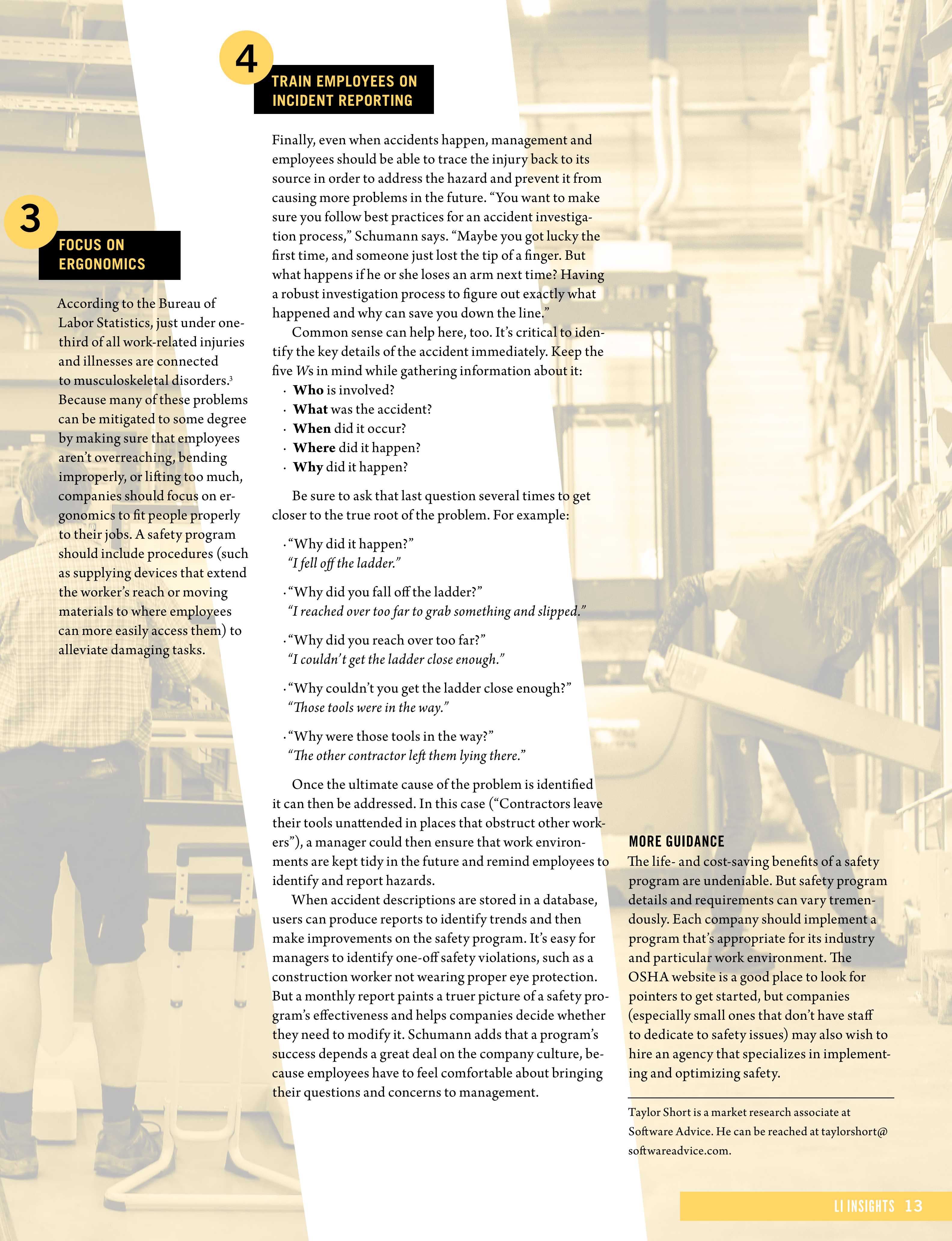
2 PROVIDE SAFETY TRAINING FOR ANY EMPLOYEE EXPOSED TO HAZARDS

Such training can reduce company costs by preventing many incidents from occurring. Make sure the training addresses these three areas:

- **Make employees and managers aware of the program and its goals**. Workers at all levels should be fully aware of the safety program and the reason it is in place. Most importantly, they should also know that they are all expected to contribute to a safe work environment.
- **Train employees on their specific roles in the program**. Workers should know how to safely operate any machinery they might work with, using manufacturer's resources (such as user manuals) as well as industry best practices. Additionally, they should be trained on how to keep their particular work environment (such as walkways or confined spaces) safe for themselves and others.
- **Train employees to identify hazards and their consequences**. For example, a worker who sees an uncovered access hole in the floor of the manufacturing plant should answer the following questions to describe the hazard scenario:
  - *What is the potential risk?* (Falling hazard.)
  - *What are the consequences of this hazard?* (Worker injury from falling through the hole.)
  - *What contributed to this hazard?* (Lack of training to close or mark the open hole.)

The lack of proper training is a common problem in workplaces, Schumann says. As an example, he describes a fatality that occurred when a worker entered a confined space to clean a piece of equipment. "He wasn't following the proper procedures to lock out a machine while you work on it," Schumann explains. "And that's a training issue."

1. National Safety Council. 2015. *Injury Facts: 2015 Edition*. National Safety Council: Itasca, Illinois.
2. See www.osha.gov.
3. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2016. "Nonfatal Occupational Injuries and Illnesses Requiring Days Away From Work, 2015." Bureau of Labor Statistics press release, November 10, www.bls.gov/news.release/osh2.nro.htm.



3 FOCUS ON ERGONOMICS

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, just under one-third of all work-related injuries and illnesses are connected to musculoskeletal disorders.[3] Because many of these problems can be mitigated to some degree by making sure that employees aren't overreaching, bending improperly, or lifting too much, companies should focus on ergonomics to fit people properly to their jobs. A safety program should include procedures (such as supplying devices that extend the worker's reach or moving materials to where employees can more easily access them) to alleviate damaging tasks.

4 TRAIN EMPLOYEES ON INCIDENT REPORTING

Finally, even when accidents happen, management and employees should be able to trace the injury back to its source in order to address the hazard and prevent it from causing more problems in the future. "You want to make sure you follow best practices for an accident investigation process," Schumann says. "Maybe you got lucky the first time, and someone just lost the tip of a finger. But what happens if he or she loses an arm next time? Having a robust investigation process to figure out exactly what happened and why can save you down the line."

Common sense can help here, too. It's critical to identify the key details of the accident immediately. Keep the five *Ws* in mind while gathering information about it:

- **Who** is involved?
- **What** was the accident?
- **When** did it occur?
- **Where** did it happen?
- **Why** did it happen?

Be sure to ask that last question several times to get closer to the true root of the problem. For example:

- "Why did it happen?"
  "I fell off the ladder."
- "Why did you fall off the ladder?"
  "I reached over too far to grab something and slipped."
- "Why did you reach over too far?"
  "I couldn't get the ladder close enough."
- "Why couldn't you get the ladder close enough?"
  "Those tools were in the way."
- "Why were those tools in the way?"
  "The other contractor left them lying there."

Once the ultimate cause of the problem is identified it can then be addressed. In this case ("Contractors leave their tools unattended in places that obstruct other workers"), a manager could then ensure that work environments are kept tidy in the future and remind employees to identify and report hazards.

When accident descriptions are stored in a database, users can produce reports to identify trends and then make improvements on the safety program. It's easy for managers to identify one-off safety violations, such as a construction worker not wearing proper eye protection. But a monthly report paints a truer picture of a safety program's effectiveness and helps companies decide whether they need to modify it. Schumann adds that a program's success depends a great deal on the company culture, because employees have to feel comfortable about bringing their questions and concerns to management.

MORE GUIDANCE

The life- and cost-saving benefits of a safety program are undeniable. But safety program details and requirements can vary tremendously. Each company should implement a program that's appropriate for its industry and particular work environment. The OSHA website is a good place to look for pointers to get started, but companies (especially small ones that don't have staff to dedicate to safety issues) may also wish to hire an agency that specializes in implementing and optimizing safety.

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The Trouble with Tacit Approval

BY SHARLYN LAUBY

I used to work for a boss who issued the same memo every year about tacit approval in order to remind everyone of his or her responsibilities as a manager and leader as well as of the basic principles of business. Over a decade later, I still have that memo—and still find it useful. Not only does it apply to work roles, but it applies to volunteer and civic roles, too.

The word *tacit* means "expressed or carried on without words or speech," and tacit approval is consent that is given silently.[1] In workplaces, tacit approval is given whenever a manager fails to speak out about existing conditions. Tacit approval leads everyone to assume that existing conditions are acceptable and will be allowed to continue. Not only does tacit approval work against improving performance, but it also decreases the likelihood that standards will be met.

Consider the example of a supervisor who says nothing when an employee comes to work wearing something more suitable for a nightclub than for an office. If the supervisor does nothing, what will motivate the employee to wear the proper attire in the future? The supervisor's silence implies that it's okay to wear unprofessional clothing. Other employees observe this, and before long the office looks like the scene of a rock concert. At this point, trying to reinstitute the dress-code policy requires a major retraining effort (not to mention an internal public relations campaign). To avoid this situation, the supervisor should be vocal (but not in an overbearing, sarcastic, or caustic way) when the employee first violates the dress code. A timely comment can raise general awareness and serves to remind everyone of the policy.

Another example of tacit approval in the workplace is passing the buck. Imagine a situation in which a manager sees that an employee in another department has an inappropriate computer screen saver. Because the employee belongs to a different department, the manager figures it isn't his or her responsibility to address the issue (even though the screen saver could offend a coworker or even a customer) and assumes, incorrectly, that someone else will handle it. Meanwhile, the employee has the silent approval of a member of the leadership team.

Tacit approval takes many forms and arises for a variety of reasons. It can often result from fear of conflict or rejection, lethargy, or misguided intentions. To eliminate it, managers need to recognize—and resist—the temptations to overlook situations that they know require attention. Leaders must become comfortable speaking up in every case that warrants it, despite their apprehensions about doing so. Before long, the reasons for remaining silent will cease to exist, and concerns about speaking up to correct something that's wrong will diminish in importance.

Sharlyn Lauby is the author of HR Bartender (www.hrbartender.com), a friendly place to discuss workplace issues. When not tending bar, she is president of ITM Group, Inc., which specializes in training solutions to help clients retain and engage talent. She can be contacted on Twitter at @HRBartender.

1. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition.

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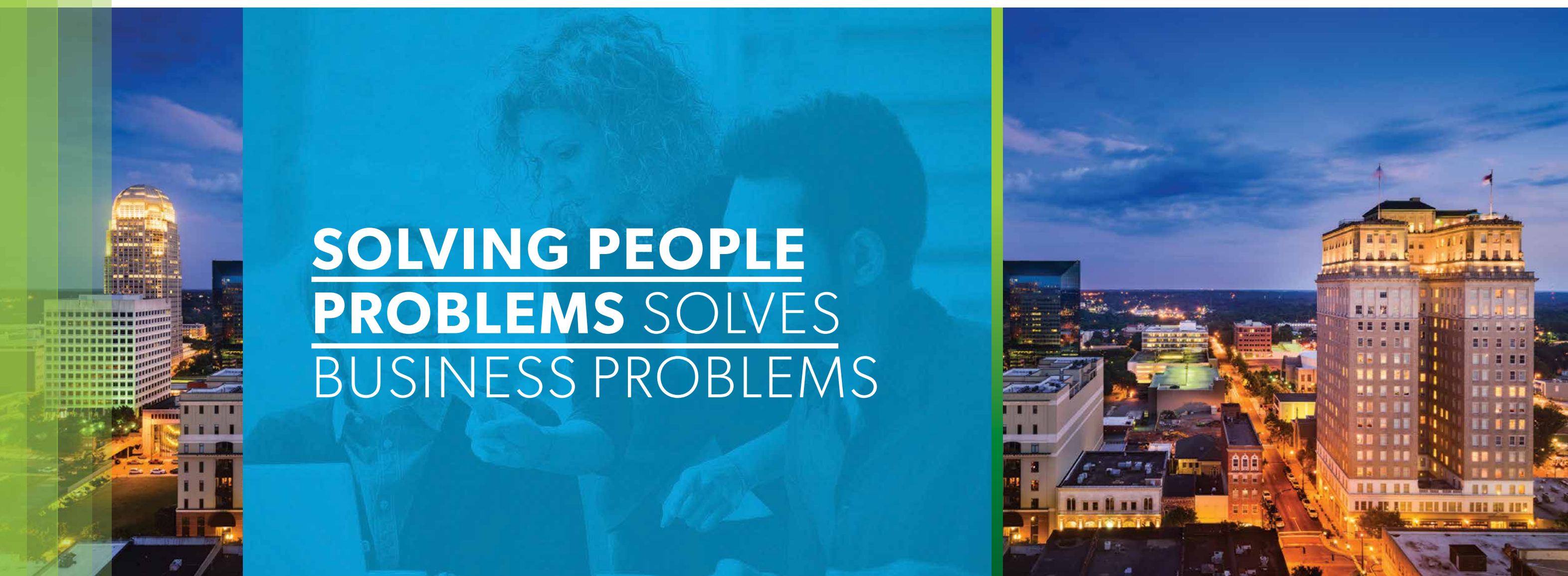

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