

HR INSIGHTS

Magazine

from the eyes of industry leaders

MANAGING THE GENERATIONS:

VALUING THE
WISDOM OF AGE

AND THE
**CONTRIBUTIONS
OF YOUTH**

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8 Communication Tips for
HR Leaders

Innovation through
Diversity

How to Increase Your Job-
Offer Acceptance Rate

Don't Lower Your Standards
to Negotiate the Skills Gap

From The CEO

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



Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Hartung". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Kathy Hartung, CEO

THE RESOURCE

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.

The hiring landscape is continually changing, as CEO, I felt that in my own company. Companies needed a hiring system that is a standalone predictor of future performance.

The Core Hiring System reveals the kind of position a person is designed for based on their core unchanging nature, and then matches them to a position within a company where they *will be* a top performer. By optimizing the talent you have, and positioning you to only hire the right people, we are showing companies the effect of having a top performer in every seat.

We dig in with our clients to understand each position based on specific revenue generating tasks to create a Job Blueprint. Then we use The Core assessment to go beyond a person's skill, experience or even attitude and look at how they are hardwired to perform the tasks the position requires. We work alongside you to ensure that you only consider future top performers.

Our mission is a top performer in every seat, in every company.

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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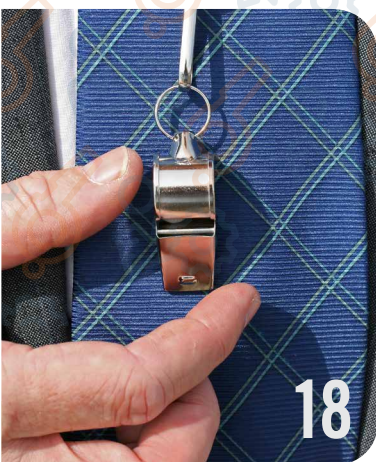
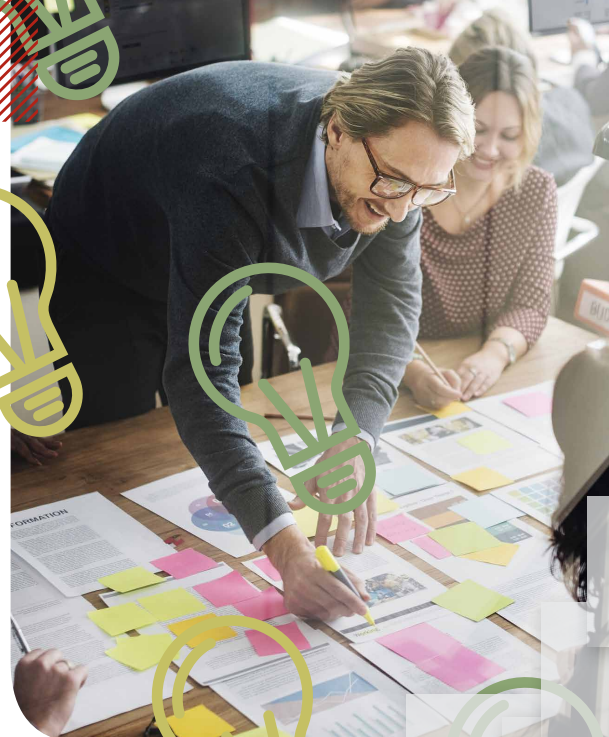
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HR INSIGHTS

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MANAGING THE VALUING THE WISDOM OF AGE



GENERATIONS:

AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF YOUTH



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.

BY VALERIE M. GRUBB



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 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 experienced 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 case 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.

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INNOVATION THROUGH DIVERSITY

BY KIM PETERS

Imagine that a group of engineers and executives is examining the prototype for a new product. But while assessing its features and market potential, they all stand together in front of it. Because they're scrutinizing only one side of the prototype, they don't get a complete picture of it and may be unable to see some of its negatives (and positives).



An overly narrow approach can similarly limit companies that fail to include diverse employee perspectives in their decision-making processes. Recent studies have indicated a strong relationship between workplace inclusivity and innovation. One survey conducted by Great Place to Work found that tech organizations in which fewer employees report fair treatment in regard to ethnicity or gender tend to score lower on measures of innovation. At the same time, it found that women and employees of color who said they were treated fairly regardless of gender or ethnicity were five times more likely to report workplace characteristics linked to innovation.

The study also revealed substantive links between fair treatment and inspiration, and shed light on how fair treatment could affect employees' willingness to put in extra effort when needed and whether they look forward to coming to work. The most effective employers make a conscious effort to ensure that team members of all backgrounds feel connected to the organization and comfortable being themselves at work.

Companies can adopt a number of strategies to help build a diverse workplace that fosters innovation:

- Adobe increased the diversity of its interview panels, hosted a San Francisco hackathon explicitly to recruit diverse candidates, and is actively working to mitigate bias in job descriptions and in the hiring process.
- Senior leaders at VMware formed an inclusion council that set a goal of including at least one woman on every interview panel. They also established an executive-job-shadowing program and similar initiatives originating from leadership outside HR.
- Salesforce partners with organizations that work to increase career readiness and interest in the tech industry among girls and at-risk youth. Salesforce managers mentor these young people and build the company's talent pipeline; at the same time, the company benefits by gaining fresh perspectives on the future of technology.

Even with the right programs in place, it takes effort and patience to create an environment that's conducive to innovation. Increasing workplace diversity is one important step in that direction. The investment is well worth it, though, when leaders realize the potential for bigger, better ideas with so many different perspectives at the table.

Kim Peters leads the Great Place to Work certification program, which offers companies the opportunity to measure and build a high-trust workplace culture, get certified and reviewed as a great workplace, and be eligible for all of the Great Place to Work Best Workplaces lists. She can be reached at kpeters@greatplacetowork.com.

Predictive Analytics in HR

BY IRA S. WOLFE

Engaging in talent acquisition without data and analytics is like trading stocks without up-to-date quotes. Both scenarios involve using inadequate information when going up against competitors who have high-speed computers that can process more data than any human—and do it faster, too. And both scenarios are impossible to win.

Accustomed to operating in a familiar old paradigm, many entrenched human resources professionals and hiring managers are doubling down on the status quo instead of revamping the way they work. Even when new understandings and practices about talent acquisition demands are staring them in the face, they are not yet making changes because they are too comfortable with what they already know. Unfortunately, the marketplace and labor markets don't have a pause button that puts change on hold until HR is ready to deal with it.

Thanks to their inability to “get with the times,” many recruiting and hiring systems are treading water. Time to fill is increasing. Hiring costs are skyrocketing. The quality of hires is falling. Companies are paying more all the time for less-than-optimal results. Fortunately, there is a strategy that every company can implement to help it adapt to the current talent acquisition market: predictive analytics.

Predictive analytics transforms the function of HR from retrospective and reactive administration to strategically integrated modeling that can predict the behaviors and

attitudes that drive outcomes. Although predicting everything about the future remains impossible, it is possible to use past data to forecast performance with a high accuracy rate. These predictive practices can help identify which people are most likely to succeed, when they might leave, where to find other talent like them, and how they can move between roles and assume more responsibility.

There is no perfect way to measure the quality of an employee. But when combined with the right approach, predictive analytics can be a valuable tool for effective talent acquisition.

- As with all good plans, it is critical to begin with the end in mind. In hiring, start by identifying the factors that converge to produce consistent peak performance.
- Have an open mind. Take the position that conventional wisdom about recruiting and hiring is just a bunch of baloney. Find the best predictors about future performance by looking outward (toward new ideas) rather than inward (toward “the way things have always been done”).

- Start keeping track of all the information currently collected about candidates and new hires. Don't get hung up on what is important or not; just gather *all* of the data. The power of predictive analytics comes not from the software but from the diversity of inputs, and before everything is analyzed it's impossible to know which factor might have a positive—or negative—influence.

The use of predictive analytics is an evolving and continuous process that requires multiple iterations to find the right combination of variables to produce the best profile, which must then be monitored and adjusted as the environment and people change. Organizations that embrace this new paradigm of predictive analytics will be more prepared for the challenges of living in the Age of the Algorithm. With this new approach to talent acquisition, they'll have the agility and transformative power they need to grow and succeed in the business environment of today—and tomorrow.

Ira S. Wolfe is a nationally recognized thought leader in talent management and an expert in pre-employment assessment testing, workforce trends, and social media. Wolfe is president of Success Performance Solutions (www.successperformancesolutions.com), a pre-employment and leadership testing firm he founded in 1996. He is the author of several books, including *Geeks, Geezers, and Googlization*; *The Perfect Labor Storm 2.0*; and *Understanding Business Values and Motivators*. He can be reached at iwolfe@super-solutions.com.

Unlimited Vacation: 6 Considerations

BY SHARLYN LAUBY



There's a lot of talk these days about unlimited vacation time, but not a lot of clarity about what it is and how to implement it. Unlimited vacation (or unlimited PTO) doesn't give employees a license to shirk their responsibilities; after all, whether a company offers unlimited PTO or a more traditional, fixed vacation benefit, the work still must get done. Unlimited vacation is based on trust, transparency, and employee engagement. Today's employees want flexibility, and unlimited vacation gives them the opportunity to pursue personal interests while also achieving their professional goals.

It's also important to note that unlimited vacation isn't a cost-cutting measure. Although moving to unlimited vacation eliminates big vacation accruals, smart companies are shifting those funds toward other benefits, such as wellness programs, student loan repayment programs, and parental leave (to name just a few.) With the increased challenges to finding qualified candidates, offering unlimited vacation could create a win-win scenario for both companies and employees.

When implementing an unlimited vacation policy, companies should take the following measures:

- **Train managers on how to evaluate operational coverage.** The successful implementation of an unlimited vacation policy depends on making sure managers understand how much coverage they need to run their departments. (Any vacation—whether unlimited or traditional—must require a manager's approval.)
- **Determine what will happen to existing vacation accruals.** Employees who have vacation days in the bank will want to know what's going to happen to that time. Be prepared to answer the question up front.
- **Get the buy-in of employees with seniority.** Some employees might view earning vacation time as a rite of passage for new hires and may push back on policies that equalize vacation for all employees, regardless of how long they've been with the organization. Explain the reasons for implementing a new policy and how it benefits everyone.
- **Consider having focus groups after the policy is announced.** Soliciting employee feedback on any policy change is always a good practice. No matter how much companies try to please everyone and avoid missteps, there is always room for improvement. So give employees a forum in which to vent their frustration—and share their constructive ideas, too.

- **Train managers on how to discuss vacation requests with employees.**

Having an unlimited vacation policy doesn't mean that every vacation request is automatically approved, so managers need to be comfortable telling employees when and why they can't take vacation time.

- **Monitor actual time-off requests.**

Implementing an unlimited vacation policy doesn't eliminate the need for an organization to keep track of employees' time off. Employees still need to take vacations, so managers must make sure that employees do so.

Putting an unlimited vacation policy in place won't automatically lead to employees taking more time off. With the right planning, training, and communication, such policies can offer great benefits to both organizations and employees.

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.

How to Increase Your Job-Offer Acceptance Rate

BY JESSICA MILLER-MERRELL

By implementing a total reward 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 by making 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 non-monetary 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 reward programs that incorporate all of these elements usually see their job-offer-acceptance rates rise.

When implementing a total reward 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 Blogging4Jobs). She can be contacted on Twitter at @jmillmerrell.



Hire Good Collaborators to Build a Creative, Scalable Organization

BY WILLIAM CLARKE

In one oft-cited report published in 2006, McKinsey researchers identified three key trends driving the need for better collaboration: “falling communications costs, globalization, and the increasing specialization of knowledge-based work.”¹ Over the ensuing decade, those trends have not only persisted but accelerated, making online collaboration tools such as Salesforce, Slack, and Google Docs essential solutions for millions of businesses. But true collaboration goes beyond the technologies that facilitate it. The value of collaboration ultimately lies in the performance that results directly from shared expertise, analyses, and experience.

By creating more effective work processes, organizations reduce inefficiencies, increase the adoption of best practices, ensure knowledge sharing, and improve the customer and client experience. Every organization stands to benefit from such improvements, but it takes time, effort, and buy-in. And building a collaboration-oriented organization begins with recruitment and hiring.

THE VALUE OF COLLABORATION

When collaboration is done well, it yields widespread benefits, stokes creativity, and drives strategic problem solving. But collaboration involves far more than just telling people to work together and holding a few meetings. True collaboration is the result of aligning strategic goals across teams and generating the commitment necessary from those teams and individuals to create collaborative processes.

By breaking down invisible barriers between teams and employees and creating an environment in which collaborative problem solving is the norm, organizations can replicate high-value activities and practices, reduce low-value activities and practices, and respond to strategic challenges with aplomb. Companies can better prepare themselves for those situations by bringing in talent who exhibit behaviors that promote collaboration.

BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

A 2015 Nielsen study found that teams that consist of a diverse mix of people from different departments are more likely to create successful consumer packaged good (CPG) products, yet “despite the benefits of involving more collaborators, most new CPG product ideas are developed by fewer than two people.”² At many organizations, establishing actual collaboration requires a wholesale change in the day-to-day functions of the business. The Nielsen study identifies four main obstacles to collaboration:

- Not having enough time to invite feedback from others
- The practical difficulty of having too many ideas to manage
- Greater risk of conflict amongst stakeholders
- A fear of losing control of the project’s direction³

Nielsen offers two main solutions: implementing collaboration technologies that best meet an organization’s needs, and “[enabling] cross-functional collaboration by setting a certain expectation and making the necessary organizational changes.”⁴ Finding the right software is a relatively straightforward task. Establishing clear expectations about collaboration, on the other hand, is a bit more complex and is a process that should start in the early stages of recruitment and hiring.

CREATING A PRO-COLLABORATION BRAND

By signaling the high value it places on collaboration, an organization can build an employer brand that attracts collaboration-minded talent and help its recruiters and sourcers better identify candidates who are willing to share credit, cede control, and deliver and receive feedback. Start by emphasizing the value of teamwork across all recruiting collateral (e.g., careers webpage, recruitment marketing). Work with hiring managers to define the scope of each role and how it should work across teams by maintaining open lines of communication, contributing expertise to diverse projects, and maintaining a flexible, agile approach. Then figure out what candidate attributes (skills, traits, experience, etc.) best correlate to those activities and aptitudes.

FINDING COLLABORATION-MINDED CANDIDATES

One key result of better collaboration is a focus on outcomes. True collaboration bypasses the fiefdoms, power struggles, and egos that can be so detrimental to organizations. Focusing on results during the screening and interview stages can shed light on candidates’ motivations, approaches to teamwork, and capacities to make contributions under varying circumstances.

Asking candidates about their experiences working within teams is an absolute must. Effective collaboration relies on self-starters who are capable of working alone yet are also comfortable working with teammates. Candidates focused on outcomes rather than on internal politics or other distractions will be driven to collaborate regardless of who their colleagues are or who is heading up the project, making them the ideal teammates for a collaborative environment.

Ideally, every hire is equally comfortable taking the lead *and* taking a back seat to his or her teammates. But such talent is rare, and companies that search only for “perfect” employees will be disappointed. Instead, they should look for people who have an occasional starring moment but mostly work hard outside the limelight to keep their teammates happy and motivated. That means finding determined, selfless, open-minded people who are focused on achieving goals for the good of the team, not just for their own benefit.

During the hiring process, ask candidates to describe a time when they “took one for the team” and what they learned from the experience. Ask them if they ever let someone else get credit for their work or helped out a teammate just because the colleague needed the support. True team players demonstrate a commitment to collaboration for the greater good, whereas pretenders collaborate only for their personal benefit.

LOOKING AHEAD

The ability to collaborate seamlessly both within offices and across time zones has changed the very nature of work, and experience in effectively managing and nurturing relationships is at a premium. Aided by advances in communication technologies, the paradigm shift toward collaboration is reshaping the business environment. By hiring people who are ready and willing to work as part of flexible teams and equipping them with tools they need to succeed, organizations will reach their goals.

William Clarke is a writer for Entelo. Entelo is 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 like Facebook, Schneider Electric, and Tesla are building their teams using Entelo, visit www.entelo.com.

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8 Communication Tips for HR Leaders

BY O.C. TANNER

Effective communication is critical to any organization—and of paramount importance for HR leaders. When assignments aren't communicated efficiently and clearly, productivity suffers. Although developing good business communication skills takes some effort, being adept at getting a point across well can pay huge dividends. Here are eight steps HR leaders can take to improve their communication skills in the workplace.

SET THE STAGE

Anyone who works in HR already knows the importance of planning. Making intentions very clear before starting a conversation lets people know what they are getting into and mitigates any frustration that may arise. Remember, too, that people (especially those in executive roles) are generally very busy and often don't have time for trivial conversations. Communication expert John Lund lists three critical questions that people want answered before beginning a work-related conversation:

1. Is what you want to talk about going to be painful?
2. How long is it going to take?
3. When you are done talking, what do you want from me?

REMEMBER: COMMUNICATION IS MORE THAN WORDS

Effective business communication goes well beyond the words that come out of someone's mouth. In fact, some communication experts argue that words may actually be the *least* important part of a message. People often rely more on facial expression and tone of voice, for example, when interpreting what's being communicated to them. Therefore it's important for HR leaders to take the time to perfect *all* forms of their communication.

CUT TO THE CHASE

It doesn't matter whether someone sounds smart when using a lot of technical jargon if he or she can't get a simple point across. Clear and concise communication avoids the need for multiple explanations. When less time is spent revisiting previous communication, more time can be spent producing work—and a company is only as effective as the work it produces.

FOCUS ON THE 7 Cs OF COMMUNICATION

Effective business communication has the following characteristics (as described by the team at Mind Tools):²

- **Clear.** (Every word is understood.)
- **Concise.** (It gets to the point quickly.)
- **Concrete.** ("Your message is solid.")
- **Correct.** (It contains no errors.)
- **Coherent.** (It stays on topic.)
- **Complete.** (It provides all the necessary information.)
- **Courteous.** (It is "friendly, open, and honest.")

USE E-MAIL EFFECTIVELY

E-mail is one of the greatest business communication tools out there, but it's only as effective as the clarity and accuracy of the messages it conveys. E-mail should be detailed enough to present the necessary information but use as few words as necessary so the reader doesn't get confused, bored, or frustrated.

DON'T UNDERVALUE FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION

E-mail has become so convenient and prevalent that in many cases it has replaced face-to-face communication. HR leaders specialize in connecting with *humans*, though, and should never underestimate the effectiveness of a short, clear, in-person conversation. Such face-to-face interactions not only reduce the time spent typing, staring at screens, and waiting for responses, but also build camaraderie among colleagues.

LISTEN BEFORE SPEAKING

Listening isn't just a polite gesture that makes the other party feel good: it actually helps build credibility and trust. The more trust people have, the more willing they are to listen to, accept, and implement suggestions. Listening also makes it possible to understand and address employees' needs, and then tailor messaging to meet those needs.

BE POSITIVE

Regardless of the situation, it never hurts to be positive—and it rarely helps to be negative. The most successful HR leaders think positively and look for solutions. Although tearing others down and criticizing their work might help someone vent his or her frustration, it never improves productivity. Constructive criticism is necessary, but it doesn't need to be negative and full of anger. People respond best to positivity, so always aim to inspire confidence and offer kind correction and direction when necessary.

Even with the best effort and intentions, it's impossible to make business communication 100% effective. How HR deals with communication plays a large role in shaping a company's success, so HR leaders should be prepared to handle the communication problems that inevitably arise. The list of suggestions presented here is by no means comprehensive but can serve as a launching point for finding new ways to enhance communication in the workplace. As communication within a company becomes more effective and efficient, the quality and accuracy of the organization's work will increase, and both employees and the company will enjoy more success.

O.C. Tanner (www.octanner.com) helps companies appreciate people who do great work. Because celebrating great work inspires people to invent, to create, to discover. And when people are inspired, companies grow.

This article was originally published on O.C. Tanner's blog, '*a*' Magazine (blog.octanner.com).

1. Amy Rees Anderson. 2013. "Successful Business Communication: It Starts at the Beginning." *Forbes* website, May 28, www.forbes.com/sites/amyanderson/2013/05/28/successful-business-communication-it-starts-at-the-beginning/#5cb7cc613280.
2. Mind Tools Editorial Team. 2014. "The 7 Cs of Communication: A Checklist for Clear Communication." Mind Tools website, www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCS_85.htm.

How to Turn Managers into Coaches

BY CHARLES COY



Organizations are increasingly moving away from employing traditional training methods and toward building coaching cultures. Rather than follow the customary process in which management delegates assignments and solves problems as they arise, coaching empowers employees to work through challenges by guiding them to solutions. It encourages and prepares them to solve problems creatively, assume responsibility for their actions, and feel more connected to the company culture. Strong coaching cultures can lead to improvements in employee engagement, productivity, team function, and revenue growth.

I spoke with Magda Mook, the CEO and executive director of the International Coach Federation (ICF), about the impact of coaching and how organizations can integrate it into their own leadership programs.

HOW DOES COACHING DIFFER FROM TRADITIONAL TRAINING METHODS?

ICF defines coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their

personal and professional potential. The individual or team being coached sets objectives, and the coach provides guidance on the process. Training, on the other hand, is based on objectives set by the trainer or instructor. It follows a linear process and adheres to a distinct curriculum. In other words, coaching is about the learner, not about the teacher.

WHAT BENEFITS CAN COMPANIES GAIN FROM IMPLEMENTING A COACHING CULTURE?

ICF's research with the Human Capital Institute has shown that organizations with strong coaching cultures consistently report higher employee engagement and revenue than peer organizations without strong coaching cultures. Therefore, it's definitely worth investing in anything that will yield significant and long-lasting improvements in engagement.

WHAT CHALLENGES COME WITH CREATING A COACHING CULTURE, AND HOW CAN ORGANIZATIONS OVERCOME THESE OBSTACLES?

The greatest obstacle reported by organizations is lack of time. It's absolutely true that building a coaching culture requires a significant investment of time on multiple fronts: sourcing external coaches, scheduling internal training, and planning coaching engagements. Organizations with strong coaching cultures can overcome this obstacle in two ways. First and foremost, they need to ensure the buy-in of senior leadership, because when the uppermost echelons of an organization are vocal champions of coaching, they can prioritize building a coaching culture and promote it throughout the organization. Second, organizations must integrate coaching into existing

offerings and not treat it as an add-on to current training and development programs.

HOW CAN ORGANIZATIONS INTEGRATE COACHING INTO THEIR OWN LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS?

First, be clear with employees and senior leaders about what coaching is and what it isn't, and take care not to confuse coaching with other practices (such as mentoring and consulting). Second, invest in a combination of external coach practitioners, internal coach practitioners, and internal managers or leaders with coaching skills, keeping in mind that not all styles are appropriate for all situations (for example, someone in the C-suite might feel more comfortable working with someone outside the organization). Finally, set the bar high from day one: invest in external coach practitioners who meet high professional and ethical standards, and utilize accredited training providers to help your internal coach practitioners meet the same high benchmarks.

WHAT'S AN EXAMPLE OF HOW COACHING HAS HELPED A PARTICULAR ORGANIZATION?

Every year, the ICF Prism Award program recognizes organizations that use coaching to yield discernible and measurable positive impacts, fulfill rigorous professional standards, address key strategic goals, and shape organizational culture in sustainable ways. The 2016 winner, GlaxoSmithKline, incorporated coaching across its global enterprise as an integral part to its Accelerating Difference (AD) initiative, which aims to get more women into senior leadership roles within the organization. The benefits of this coaching-driven program are evident: when compared to their non-AD colleagues, AD participants were much more likely to be promoted, stay with the organization, and improve as managers.¹

Even if an organization's current training and development offerings are working well, coaching can take them to the next level by enabling participants to personalize what they're learning in the classroom and to think about immediate applications for that knowledge. Giving employees such opportunities to create positive and productive work environments can help them unite around common goals and core values, thus strengthening the company culture that lies at the heart of every successful organization.

Charles Coy is the senior director of analyst and community relations at Cornerstone. Responsible for evangelizing about Cornerstone's innovation in talent management technology solutions, he is interested in the ways that technology can affect how organizations evaluate, motivate, and value their employees. He can be reached via Twitter at @oleskoo.

1. International Coach Federation. 2016. "Creating a Coaching Culture for Better Talent." International Coach Federation website, www.coachfederation.org/files/FileDownloads/CaseStudy_GSK.pdf?_ga=1.109608705.501898497.1481750334.

What a Flubbed Interview Question Can Teach about HR Strategy

BY BEN EUBANKS

I was thrilled (and nervous!) when I received a request to interview for a big HR role with a manufacturing operation that produced rubber molds and other rubber pieces. By the time the interview came around, I was feeling a little more confident, and everything was going well until the president of the company threw me a curveball.

He asked, "Why do you think our capital costs have risen so much in the last few years?"

I thought about his question for a minute. Then I responded, "Well, it's not like rubber grows on trees."

He gave me a strange look and proceeded to tell me that yes, rubber *does* grow on trees.

When I heard that story from an acquaintance a while back, I had to laugh. In spite of this gaffe, she did end up getting the job. Realizing that she had gaps in her knowledge of the company, she proceeded to learn what she could about the organization and about strategy and business in general—a blend of learning that put her in the driver's seat when it came time to create a forward-looking HR strategy. This experience also taught her an important lesson: the key to understanding how to create HR strategy is to understand the business and how it operates.

For some reason, strategic HR is one of those areas of expertise that are well-incorporated into some organizations and a complete mystery to others. This lack of consistency probably explains why most companies have no HR strategy in place. Interestingly, though, in recent years the annual SHRM conference has featured dozens of sessions with the word "strategy" in their titles or descriptions. So clearly there are plenty of people out there who are interested in exploring this topic!

Ben Eubanks is the principal analyst at Lighthouse Research & Advisory, where he oversees the development of research, assets, and insights to support HR, learning, and talent vendors across the globe. He can be reached on Twitter at @beneubanks.





When Times Are Tough, Invest in Your Team

BY BRIAN FORMATO

Most struggling organizations try to figure out how to turn their fortunes around. They look at various metrics and investigate cutting costs, increasing production, expanding their offerings, and a whole host of other options. Team building, though, rarely tops their lists, with many HR managers thinking of it as an investment to consider only when their organizations' financial results improve.

But what's the thinking behind that position? If a business isn't performing well and goes into cost-cutting mode, then what is it doing to improve performance? Budget cuts and poor performance cause employees to disengage, which usually only worsens the company's predicament. Improving performance is key to improving an organization as a whole—and that starts with motivating employees to work together as an effective team.

A tough business climate is something all companies face at one time or another. An organization's long-term survival depends on its leadership's ability to handle both the good times and the tough times. In all situations, leaders must consider not only the intent of their actions but also their impact. In the case of cost-cutting initiatives, those policies may be implemented with the intention of

improving the bottom line, but their impact on a company's culture and morale can be disastrous.

With profits down and a need to please stakeholders and shareholders, what should leadership do to improve performance? Cutting costs, cutting programs, and cutting head count are all defensive tactics that have residual negative impacts on morale and can cause an even more rapid downward spiral. As the old saying goes, "If all you play is defense, the best result you can hope for is a tie at zero." To improve performance, companies need to go on the offense by being proactive—and that means investing in their teams.

In fact, the best time to work on a team is when things are not going well. For example, the sports team practice of calling a timeout in order to figure out how to deal with a challenging situation may offer a good model for companies to follow. Calling a "team timeout" to evaluate the situation and come up with a plan for team building to strengthen the team and its actions is an opportunity for a company to recharge and get back on the winning track. A team timeout is a small investment in terms of time and money that can pay huge dividends when a turnaround is required and can serve as a catalyst for improved performance.

Brian Formato is the CEO of Groove Management, a human-capital consulting firm focused on helping individuals and organizations maximize their strengths in order to achieve superior performance. He is also the founder of LeaderSurf, an experiential leadership-development program that combines leadership development, humanitarian aid, and surfing lessons. He can be reached at bformato@groovemanagement.com.

OSHA'S NEW RECORDKEEPING RULE & ELECTRONIC VERSUS PAPER I-9

BY STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES INC.

Q. What is OSHA's new electronic recordkeeping rule?

A. OSHA's new recordkeeping rule, which went into effect on January 1, 2017, requires certain employers not only to continue maintaining the logs they have kept in the past but also to now submit their injury and illness data electronically to OSHA. The amount of data an employer is required to submit depends on the company's size and type of industry. For many employers the new rule means that the OSHA summary (Form 300A) for 2016 will need to be posted by February 1, 2017, but must also be submitted electronically by July 1, 2017. For example, employers with 250 or more employees must submit the information from their 2016 Form 300A by July 1, 2017. The 2017 forms will be due by July 1, 2018, but from 2019 onward the information will be due by March 2 of that year.

David Michaels, assistant secretary of labor for occupational safety and health, explains why the new rule was enacted: "Our new rule will 'nudge' employers to prevent work injuries to show investors, job seekers, customers, and the public they operate safe and well-managed facilities. Access to injury data will also help OSHA better target compliance assistance and enforcement resources, and enable 'big data' researchers to apply their skills to making workplaces safer."¹

1. U.S. Department of Labor. 2016. "OSHA's Final Rule to 'Nudge' Employers to Prevent Workplace Injuries, Illnesses." OSHA website, May 11, www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=NEWS_RELEASES&p_id=31860.
2. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. 2016. "Storing Form I-9." USCIS website, November 14, www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/retain-store-form-i-9/storing-form-i-9.

Q. Can I maintain my I-9 forms solely in electronic format, or do I need to keep paper copies of them?

- A. The documents can be stored either way, according to the employer's preference. However, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) does have basic requirements for the electronic storage of document and has listed the following guidelines on its website:
- Include controls to ensure the integrity, accuracy, and reliability of the electronic generation storage system.
 - Include controls to detect and prevent the unauthorized or accidental creation of, addition to, alteration of, deletion of, or deterioration of an electronically completed stored Form I-9, including the electronic signature, if used.
 - Include controls to ensure an audit trail so that *any* alteration or change to the form since its creation is electronically stored and can be accessed by an appropriate government agency inspecting the forms.
 - Include an inspection and quality assurance program that regularly evaluates the electronic generation or storage system, and includes periodic checks of electronically stored Form I-9, including the electronic signature, if used.
 - Include a detailed index of all data so that any particular record can be accessed immediately.
 - Produce a high degree of legibility and readability when displayed on a video display terminal or reproduced on paper.³

The record retention requirements for storage remain the same regardless of how the documents are stored.

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DON'T LOWER YOUR STANDARDS TO NEGOTIATE THE SKILLS GAP

BY MIKE MCKERNS

IN MY COLUMN in the previous issue of *HR Insights*, I offered suggestions for new ways to bridge the skills gap.¹ If you read that, you may have already begun planning for how to address the issues that have challenged your recruiting efforts over the past several years. (And if you haven't read it, now is a good time to ask for a back issue!) Estimates about the size of the gap vary widely, but most experts agree that it will only widen in the near future. The time to act is *now*.

As the gap continues to grow, keep pushing forward in your efforts to eliminate it. You may have to try a few different things before landing on a solution that works for your organization. Reevaluating the requirements for a particular position is one option to consider. For example, you may find that what you've been treating as "must haves" for a candidate are really just "nice to haves," and that adjusting your expectations—without compromising your values—will help you find the talent you need.

But no matter how frustrated you get—and how desperate you are to fill your open positions—*don't lower your standards and hire candidates who aren't qualified!* That course of action might provide a short-term solution, but it will very quickly damage your company's reputation and overall financial health. Instead of taking actions that lead to the decline of your organization, figure out ways to improve it. Do what you can to make your company *the* preferred employer in your market. Then you'll have top-notch candidates knocking at your door—and the skills gap will disappear.

To gain an edge in the competition for an ever-shrinking pool of candidates, start by raising the bar on the perks and benefits that your organization offers. Take a close look at your company culture, too, and identify ways in which it can be improved to appeal to your target candidates. Salary is one thing, but many employees value the nonmonetary aspects of their compensation just as much or even more. (For example, think about how much buzz you've heard about "work-life balance" in recent years.)

And don't stop there! Rather than join the masses of people who are wringing their hands in anxiety over the skills gap, think outside the box to figure out what you can do at your organization to mitigate it. Once you start exploring new ways to bridge the skills gap, you'll see possibilities everywhere. ■

Mike McKerns, SPHR, is the editor in chief of *HR Insights* and cofounder of Mamu Media LLC. He can be reached at editor@mamumediaallc.com.

1. Mike McKerns. 2017. "Closing the Skills Gap." *HR Insights*, March/April 2017.

STEP UP YOUR HOLLANDAISE GAME!

The arrival of spring means that many early-season vegetables are now in their prime. Sure, it's possible to find spinach, kale, peas, chard, asparagus, and other cold-loving crops year-round in the grocery story. But vegetables that are grown far away and shipped across the country (or even across the globe) can't compare to freshly harvested local produce.

Produce at its peak really shines with the right accompaniments, and the classic combination of asparagus and Hollandaise sauce of one well-loved pairing. Steamed asparagus is a cinch to prepare, but many people believe that Hollandaise sauce is too complicated to make from scratch. If you're one of those people, get ready to throw out your packets of mix. Once you learn how easy it is to make real Hollandaise sauce, you'll never go back to the powdered stuff!

CLASSIC HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

YIELD: 1 cup (2 servings)

TIME: about 15 minutes

NUTRITIONAL INFO PER SERVING:

Calories:	513 cal
Fat:	54 g
Dietary fiber:	0 g
Sugars:	0 g
Protein:	6.5 g

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 2 large egg yolks
- 1 Tb cold water
- 1 Tb fresh lemon juice
- Pinch of salt
- 8 Tb (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a saucepan, heat two inches of water until simmering. Place a metal mixing bowl on top of the pan.
2. Whisk the egg yolks, water, lemon juice, and salt together in the bowl. (*Whisk constantly!*)
3. When the egg mixture is warm, slowly drizzle in half of the melted butter. (*Whisk constantly!*)
4. When the butter is well incorporated, add the second half of the butter. (*Whisk constantly!*)
5. Keep whisking until the sauce has thickened. ■



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Teamwork • Customer Focus • Innovation • Love What You Do

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KATHY HARTUNG
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