THE RESOURCE

MAY/JUNE 2017

# HR INSIGHTS

Magazine

*from the eyes of industry leaders*

# HOW TO CREATE POSITIVE CANDIDATE AND EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES

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# From The CEO

**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

# 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.

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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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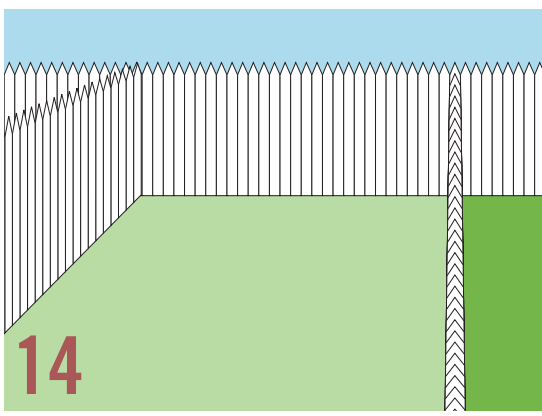


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# HR INSIGHTS

*from the eyes of industry leaders*

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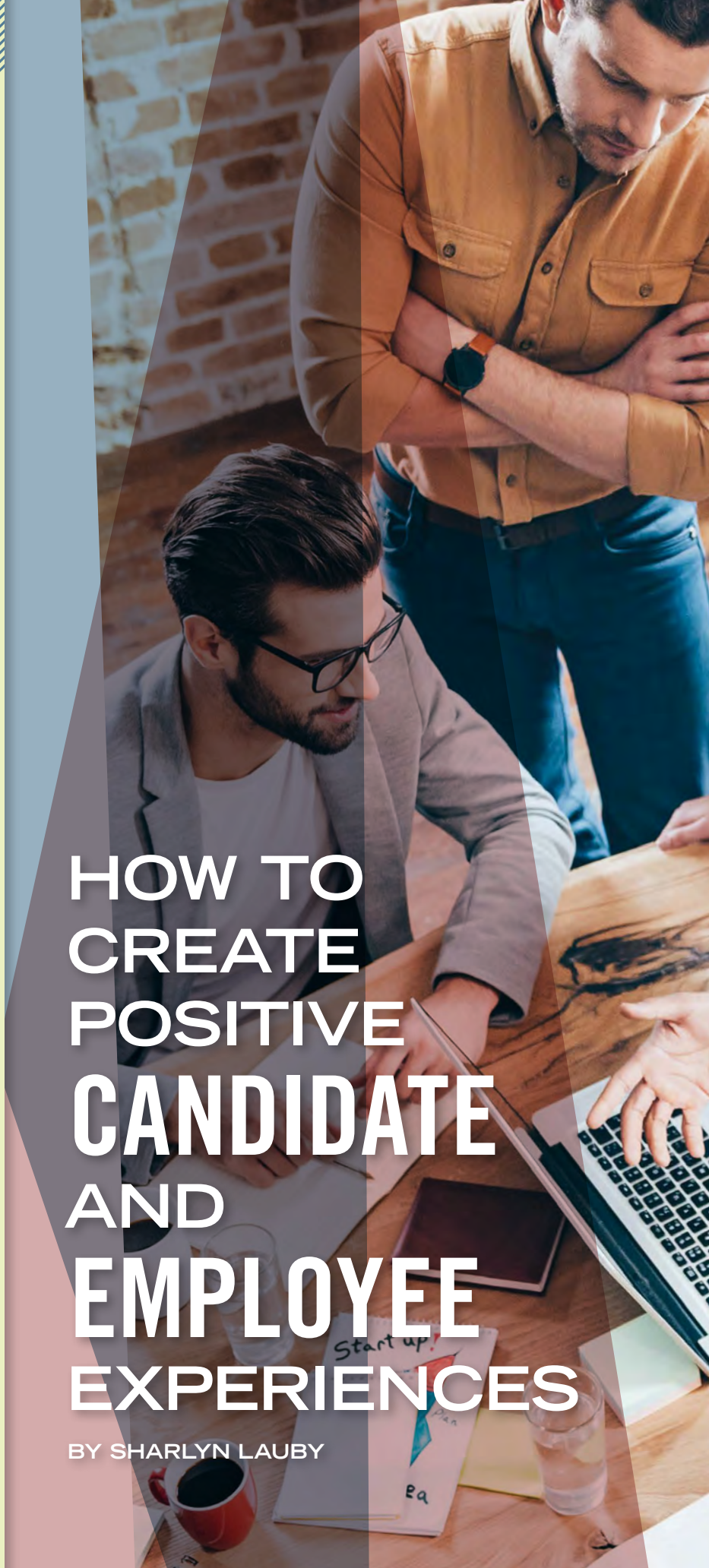

# HOW TO CREATE POSITIVE CANDIDATE AND EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES

BY SHARLYN LAUBY

The phrase "the war for talent" may seem overworked to some, but it's in heavy rotation these days for good reason: there really *is* a talent shortage. ManpowerGroup's global 2016–2017 Talent Shortage Survey found that "of the more than 42,000 employers surveyed, 40% are experiencing difficulties filling roles."[1] Some organizations are turning to artificial intelligence–based solutions to find the talent they need. But those recruiting processes are achieving mixed results at best, because when it comes right down to it, people want to be hired by actual people.[2]

What really helps organizations attract and retain the best talent? For many companies, that goal is achieved by providing an exceptional candidate and employee experience.[3] A closer look at how one company, Kronos, accomplishes this can yield some general insights that can benefit other organizations as well.

At Kronos, the mutual promise between employees and the company is called "WorkInspired." David Almeda, the chief people officer at Kronos, explains the company's philosophy:

> Kronites [Kronos employees] bring their passion, ideas, talent, and customer-first mentality to work every day. In return, the company is committed to providing an engaging, transparent, collaborative, and high-trust employee experience. Being a great place to work is quite literally one of a small number of high-priority imperatives that are communicated to all employees each year as part of the company's overall business strategy. In other words, being a great place to work is every bit as important as our traditional business priorities as a global software provider, such as application development and migrating customers to the cloud.

Even before people become Kronos employees, though, they are introduced to WorkInspired through the hiring process. "We consider those early recruiting days with a prospective Kronite to be the beginning of an extended, very intentionally created employee experience," says Almeda. "Our hiring process is meant to emulate the same WorkInspired experience and attributes that current employees enjoy." Through a variety of initiatives, Kronos interacts with both candidates and employees in ways that increase the company's ability to attract and retain top talent.

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### 3 WAYS TO IMPROVE THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

1. **Make it easy for job seekers to find and apply for jobs.** A company that can't attract applicants can't hire employees. Organizations need to be where candidates are, and in today's world candidates are using mobile devices to access social media. The Pew Research Center reports that "the vast majority of Americans—95%—now own a cellphone of some kind" and "roughly half now own tablet computers."[4] When those numbers are paired with the fact that "today 69% of the public uses some type of social media," it's easy to see the importance of having a recruiting strategy that works well with mobile access and social media.[5]
2. **Create a robust internship experience.** The Kronos talent acquisition team's commitment to go above and beyond for candidates to help them find the next best career move (whether that's with Kronos or elsewhere) is especially evident in the organization's internship program. Participation in events that focus on networking, leadership, and fun (such as the "Intern Olympics" competition among technology companies in the Boston area) provides a formative experience that interns will remember for a long time—particularly when looking for career opportunities.
3. **Give candidates a realistic job preview.** At Kronos, candidates are exposed to as many potential colleagues as possible so they can better understand the company culture, the work environment, their anticipated roles, and expectations about their performance. Recruiters routinely share their expertise with candidates to demystify the job search process and help candidates present themselves in the most genuine and positive manner. Hiring managers make each candidate touchpoint special by sharing e-mail, articles, photos, and more to convey what it would be like to work at Kronos (and with a certain team and specific manager).

## 3 WAYS TO IMPROVE THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

1. **Develop a meaningful feedback process for the employee experience**. Kronos employees are asked to rate their managers twice a year, focusing on four key areas in which the strongest and most effective people managers shine. Managers then share the feedback results with their teams and present their plans for developing areas of opportunity. Managers are also encouraged to share these results with candidates as part of the interviewing process, thus providing even more insight into what working at Kronos would be like for them. Additionally, managers are provided with target development goals and at the same time are held accountable for continuously improving their results.

2. **Offer employees competitive pay and benefits**. It's impossible for a company to implement a one-size-fits-all benefits and perks program that works equally well for everyone involved. But organizations can take the time to learn about what employees value and, as much as possible, incorporate those preferences into plans that meet those needs. Almeda describes how Kronos tries to achieve this goal:

   > Kronites have a number of different interests and priorities driven by factors such as age, location, parental status, and many, many others. So we work hard to research what matters most to our people. We examine the data provided by our biannual global engagement surveys, run focus groups, and partner with third parties to develop a well-rounded package of benefits that is competitive, affordable, and appealing to Kronites. . . . The benefits are meant to maximize work-life [balance] for employees, with a stress on the fact that our families are the number-one priority—not work.

3. **Create a productive office environment**. In 2016 Kronos announced the relocation (to be completed by mid-2017) of its headquarters from Chelmsford, Massachusetts, to the nearby city of Lowell. The company used the opportunity to solicit employee input on the design and function of the new workplace. "Our very first action was to assemble a core team of advocates . . . to act as a conduit between the Kronos design team and their individual departments: providing information and office updates downstream to their colleagues while bringing new ideas and feedback upstream to the core design team," Almeda explains. "The company's internal collaboration platform was used to post move updates, share plans and photos, poll employees about what they wanted to see in their new space, and gather data about specific design decisions."

## EVERYONE DESERVES A GREAT MANAGER

Recruiting and retaining the best talent requires great management skills. But it isn't easy to be a great manager: "It takes work. It takes coaching. It takes guidance. Above all, it takes courage," says Almeda. The results manifest in the attitudes and actions of employees. At Kronos, managers' effectiveness is measured in part by "how closely connected their direct reports feel to [the organization's] overall corporate strategy and, more importantly, [whether employees] can see clearly how they directly contribute to [Kronos's] success." By creating candidate and employee experiences that are welcoming and inclusive, then inspiring employees to drive the innovative ideas that move the business forward, companies can become places that attract—and keep—top talent.

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Sharlyn Lauby is the author of HR Bartender (www.hrbartender.com), a friendly place to discuss workplace issues. She can be reached on Twitter at @HRBartender.

This article was reprinted with permission from Kronos (www.kronos.com), a leading provider of cloud solutions for workforce management and human capital management. Kronos can be reached on Twitter at @KronosInc.

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# Technology and the Future of HR

BY TERRI GALLAGHER

The end of the last century saw the beginning of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, marked by the technology-based fusion of biological, digital, and physical worlds that is not changing the way people work but is in fact driven by the way people work. In recent decades, the business landscape has undergone tremendous change. People rarely stay in one job for decades, for example. Changes in social behavior and demographic shifts (notably, the arrival of Millennials, who gravitate toward flexible and entrepreneurial careers) have altered the shape of the workforce. In the wake of the Great Recession, the gig economy has arisen to help workers achieve independent "job security," personal marketability, and better work-life balance (the standard "9 to 5" schedule is on its way out). And digitally connected work environments are displacing traditional brick-and-mortar office space.

Against this backdrop, companies are waging a very real war for talent and struggling to find the employees they need. One CareerBuilder survey found that "more than half (54%) of employers currently have open positions for which they can't find qualified candidates" and "60% of employers are concerned about the costs associated with delays in filling open positions."[1] Skills shortages are causing hiring delays and lost revenue. Clearly this is a problem that needs to be solved: people are the lifeblood of any company, and a company that wants to stay relevant and capture market share today must be employee-centric.

Enter the innovative and strategic HR player. Today's HR leader is being asked to step away from dealing with risk management and collecting yearly performance reviews (two more business traditions that are on their way out). Corporate human resources teams now need to navigate new technologies, manage employee expectations, and ensure that their organizations have productive and happy workforces. The modern human resources department favors specialization over a generalized, one-size-fits-all approach to workforce management and talent strategy.

How does a modern HR leader navigate the dizzying array of available technologies? Human resource information systems (HRIS), training and retention platforms, workforce analytics, gig workforce digital online platforms—the choices are vast (and growing in number each day). Throwing artificial intelligence (AI) into the mix can complicate things even further (though it's unlikely that AI will replace humans, who are better than AI at strategic thinking, building relationships, and solving critical problems). By covering some of the more tactical tasks and enabling HR leaders to deliver on increasingly diverse deliverables within the organization, technology is not replacing HR and its supporting staffing partners but elevating their roles.

During this new industrial revolution, talent strategy is beginning to engage a technology ecosystem of different platforms that can handle all aspects of an organization's workforce. HR's new role for

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organizations now includes building the business case and driving user adoption for several types of technology platforms that cover the full life cycle of talent strategy. The key to successfully adapting to the Fourth Industrial Revolution is not asking "Is this amazing technology?" but asking "Is this technology a good match for us?"

To answer that question, HR leaders must first identify their primary challenges. What gets tackled first in workforce-strategy planning? Is it better to adopt a multipronged approach to address several challenges at once? An iterative approach, based on prioritizing deliverables and challenges can be a solid choice (and one that's least disruptive to an organization). For example:

- If recruiting and talent retention are the top priorities, an approach that leverages a mix of staffing providers, digital platforms (to attract freelancers and gig workers), and recruitment processing outsourcing solutions can be a good way to expand the talent supply chain and provide insight into performance and delivery. Many staffing providers are broadening their service offerings beyond staff augmentation and direct placement. They are delivering total workforce solutions and partnering with different digital platforms and ATS (Applicant Tracking Software) to support their clients' needs.
- If a better understanding of performance is the top priority, an approach based on metrics and workforce analytics is a good place to start. A big-data–based analysis can provide an organization with the compass it needs to source, recruit, retain, and engage top talent and identify problem areas. The ability to use metrics to drive effectiveness in those areas is a game changer that has shaken up the HR world in recent years.
- If addressing problems with training and development is the top priority, consider an approach based on using technology platforms tailored to specific needs. Some provide comprehensive training modules, for example. Others automate employment reviews with immediate and interactive feedback between hiring managers and employees. Tech-based training and development platforms are increasingly taking the place of traditional annual performance reviews and training.

HR leaders shouldn't feel daunted by the idea of adopting new technology. Many new technology platforms in talent acquisition and HR management are being designed specifically to integrate with existing systems and platforms (such as CRM) in order to accommodate organizations that often already have multiple platforms and legacy systems. And having some of the new systems in place to automate (and even make visible) some HR processes can create much more favorable candidate and employee experiences (particularly when those systems have robust mobile capabilities to meet younger generations' communication preferences). By working with the right technology partners, innovative HR leaders will position their organizations for success.

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The founder and president of Gallagher and Consultants, Terri Gallagher has over two decades of experience in enterprise contingent workforce strategies in the finance, healthcare, manufacturing, and telecommunications sectors. She can be reached at terri@gallagherandconsultants.com.

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# The Gig Economy and Your Internal Workforce

BY MICHAEL HABERMAN

Today many websites (such as TaskRabbit, UpWork, and Fiverr) enable businesses to connect directly with freelancers. Business post descriptions of their jobs (or "gigs"), and freelancers bid on them. Although more and more work is being done this way, not all employers are comfortable in hiring freelance labor, especially if the work involved is the basic work of the company. (In fact the Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Department of Labor have rules that specifically prohibit companies from using contractors to perform that type of work.) But what if there was a way to apply the gig model to a company's current workforce?

At most businesses, workers are assigned to particular tasks and responsibilities that are outlined in their job descriptions. After doing certain aspects of their jobs day after day, employees get good at them (which is an advantage for the company), but they also get bored with them—and that eventually weakens their performance and can even lead to turnover. What about shaking up this system and offering work to internal employees on a "gig" basis?

Rather than assign work, a boss could announce that a certain job needs to be performed by a stated deadline and invite employees to "bid" on it. Bidders might be interested in jobs that build out their resumes. Or they might welcome the opportunity to challenge themselves by trying something new.

This arrangement would be advantageous to the company because of the cross-training that would occur. At the same time, it would be advantageous to employees because it offers them a chance to learn new skills and have more variety in their daily work. Companies could even link this arrangement to a bonus program in order to appeal to employees who want to enhance their income.

Lastly, the gig model could potentially decrease turnover by addressing the lack of variety, challenge, and skill improvement that makes it difficult to keep workers (especially younger ones) longer than the three years spent, on average, in a job. Adopting the gig model has the added benefit of creating more hypergeneralists who are able to take on a wide variety of tasks. ■

Michael Haberman is cofounder and senior HR consultant of Omega HR Solutions Inc. (www.omegahrsolutions.com), which offers compliance reviews, wage and hour guidance, supervisory and managerial training, strategic guidance, executive advisement, and more. He also contributes articles to the Workology website. He can be reached at mhaberman@omegahrsolutions.com.

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# A Better Skills Gap Analysis

BY AMANDA GROVES

For a business to really thrive, it must get the best out of every employee and make smart decisions when it comes to hiring new staff. Knowing what skills the workforce has, where they are lacking, and how to bridge any gaps is crucial to remaining competitive in today's market. A skills gap analysis can help a company hire the right people for the right positions, improve the effectiveness of its current workforce, keep up with advancements in the industry, and plan for the future. When conducting a skills gap analysis for your own organization, be sure to include the following three steps.

## 1 IDENTIFY YOUR BUSINESS GOALS

Where is your company headed? Straight off the bat, you need to think about your company's goals and objectives. This helps you identify what skills will be required in the short, medium, and long terms—knowledge that's especially valuable if the technology in your area is rapidly evolving or if growth and diversification are your organization's strategic aims.

Prepare a project plan that identifies your company's current business needs and what they'll be in the future. Examine the job descriptions of your employees, your business objectives, and your company values. This analysis will help you determine which processes and skills you require now and which will be needed further down the track.

Be sure to ask crucial questions: What skills do our employees need to do their jobs well? What skills do we value as an organization? How is our industry advancing, and what skills will we need that we don't currently have?

## 2 DO YOUR RESEARCH

List all of the roles within your organization and the specific skills that each one requires. This information can be gleaned from reading job descriptions, talking with managers to determine what skills are most critical to their departments, and asking the employees themselves. The people who are actually doing the job should be able to provide valuable insight into what's involved on a day-to-day basis. Don't forget to ask both the managers and the staff about what skills they think are missing and could be beneficial to the business. Remember that thinking outside of the box can often produce interesting results.

## 3 PRODUCE A SCORECARD

Once you have a list of skills required for each individual role, you need to rate them. This means assigning each skill a numerical value on any scale you like as long as one end indicates lack of skill and the other indicates expertise. Measure skill levels through surveys, assessments, interviews with employees, feedback from performance reviews, and conversations with managers. Creating this "scorecard" for every employee and role in your organization will present a clear picture of what skills the organization has, what skills it lacks, and which skills need improvement.

## TAKE ACTION

After analyzing the data and identifying areas in which skills are lacking, use training and hiring to close those gaps. If your scorecard shows room for improvement, providing some form of training (by giving an employee allotted time for online learning, hiring a consultant to conduct workshops and training sessions, establishing employee mentorship programs, or sending employees to industry conferences and events, for example) can probably accomplish this. But if your skills gaps are too wide and cannot be resolved by training, it may be time to look for new talent with the knowledge and expertise you need—and armed with your new skills gap analysis, you will be able to hire the right candidate for the job. ■

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# Why Passion Is the Key to Success

BY WILLIAM CLARKE

Among the traits and abilities that lead to success, passion stands alone. Unlike skill, knowledge, or other factors, passion is innate: it can't be learned or acquired but is always present. Passion, an overwhelming drive to reach one's goals, is the one factor that unites all successful people in equal measure.

When asked to reflect on his long and successful NBA career, Michael Jordan said:

> The greatest thing about the game of basketball to me is the passion and the love I have for it. Because when you have a love for anything, you'll go to the extreme to maintain that level. . . . To be the best at anything, you've got to have a certain love for that to make you overcome all the obstacles that will be thrown in your way.[1]

Passion powers the hard work, determination, and creativity that make great accomplishments possible. Successful novelists, film directors, scientists, CEOs, world-class athletes, and other people who have risen to the tops of their fields all possess a deep motivation that gives them the wherewithal to work extraordinarily hard at something even when it's uncertain how, when, and even if they will enjoy rewards for their efforts.

Because passion can't be taught or faked, recruiters need to be able to identify truly passionate candidates reliably. This is no easy task, especially because people who are passionate about *getting* a job may not necessarily be passionate about *doing* that job once they have it. But the ability to identify genuine passion is critical to being able to hire the best possible candidates.

## WHY PASSION MATTERS

Passion correlates to a person's desire and capacity to go above and beyond the call of duty to achieve superlative outcomes. Clearly, passionate employees contribute more to an organization. Passion is also an indicator of an individual's future success. Even if someone's resume checks all the right boxes (e.g., good college, relevant experience, compatible personality), the absence of genuine passion means that he or she could easily wind up as an average or even below-average hire. The difference in ROI between average hires and great hires can add up to a lot of money—by some estimates as much as a million dollars over the course of an employee's time at a company. By any measure, these are massive stakes.

## FINDING PASSION

Despite its importance, passion remains a difficult skill to define. Trying to identify passion is a bit like trying to identify motivation: the key to is figure out the "why" rather than the "what." Why did someone

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accomplish what he or she did? Is a particular individual motivated by money, recognition, or something else entirely? Does someone thrive on solving complex problems? Or on being part of a team and helping others out? Finding the answers to these questions can help a recruiter figure out how well a candidate aligns with an organization.

If a recruiter correctly identifies in a candidate 90% of the key skills needed to thrive in a role but offers the job to someone who doesn't have enough passion for it, the result could still be a bad hire—even though the candidate has the "official" qualifications. So it behooves recruiters to learn what passions are most predictive of success in various roles, starting by asking the right questions.

As early as the phone screen, ask candidates about their goals to find out what drives them. Are they team-oriented or more individualistic? Do they focus on the long term or on the short term? What matters to them when it comes to work? What makes them get up in the morning? What gives them satisfaction? A candidate's responses to these questions can yield crucial insight into how he or she will perform within the organization's work culture and expectations.

## FAILURE AS A PRECURSOR TO SUCCESS

The etymology of the word *passion* is the Latin *pati*, which means "to suffer" or "to endure." Over the centuries, the meaning of *passion* has evolved considerably. But one enduring aspect is the idea that it involves a certain degree of forbearance.

Work is rarely easy. Succeeding at work requires a willingness to grit one's teeth, dig deep, and grind it out when the going gets tough. It also means not quitting when something doesn't work out as intended or hoped. Passion can help people power over these hurdles—another reason why it is a desirable trait among successful candidates.

Regardless of a person's industry, career path, or talent level, he or she will inevitably encounter some failure and might not achieve success for years. The path to success looks more like a zigzag than a straight line, and how well a candidate is prepared to endure, learn from, and overcome setbacks will determine his or her performance. For example, Steffi Graf played on the professional tennis circuit for almost five seasons before winning the first of her 22 Grand Slam titles—a feat she probably would not have accomplished if she had reacted badly to losing!

Identifying how candidates respond to failure is essential to identifying their resilience. People who deal with failure by assessing and adapting are apt to see it as an opportunity to learn and improve. But responding positively to failure is impossible for people who don't care enough about why they're doing what they're doing in the first place. Passion is what generates the desire to learn, try again, and do better next time.

## THE STUFF OF GREATNESS

Passion is the fuel that inspires and drives people toward specific goals, no matter how unlikely or difficult they might be. It generates the enthusiasm needed to plow through the biggest obstacles and overcome the most intractable challenges. It inspires loyalty, teamwork, hard work, and, eventually, success. ■

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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.

1. Interview with Michael Jordan conducted by Ahmad Rashad. 2013. *One on One with Ahmad Rashad*, February 18, NBA TV.

# "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors": The Power of Effective Boundaries

BY RICHARD FAGERLIN

**IN EASTERN COLORADO**, where I grew up on a ranch, people understand the importance of maintaining the fences along their property boundaries. Fallen fences can lead to lost animals and conflicts (even feuds) with neighbors. After spending my formative years building fences, mending fences, and tracking down animals that weren't contained by their fences, I fully understood the meaning of the old proverb "Good fences make good neighbors." That proverb rings true in the world beyond ranchlands and farmlands, too. Boundaries also play key roles in the workplace. Their primary purpose is to define expectations, and in that respect they function more as "guardrails" than as "fences."

## CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Behavioral scientists have found that the best way to motivate an employee is to give him or her clear expectations. In fact, when employees are asked if better defined expectations would increase their job satisfaction, they almost always respond yes. In spite of these findings, though, managers consistently fail to meet their employees' needs and desires in this regard.

Managers who don't provide clear expectations tend to fall in one (or more) of these categories:

- They are too tired, lazy, or overwhelmed to do so.
- They think their teams already know what is expected.
- They don't actually have clear expectations to give.

In all cases, though, these managers are letting their employees down, because setting expectations is crucial for building a "fence" that defines the boundaries of a position or project. Without those boundaries, employees can't function at their full capacity.

A manager's primary job is to make each of his or her employees more efficient, productive, and better every day. Through the following actions, managers can improve their ability to set expectations (and therefore improve the performance and satisfaction of their teams):

- **Make people better.** Learn employees' strengths and passions, then give them opportunities to pursue them through their work. When people do what they enjoy, they thrive and give more to their teams (and to their managers).
- **Take small steps and don't try to do everything all at once.** Identify and focus on the one area that would give a team member the most clarity, then share specific expectations about it.
- **Define the game.** A team that isn't sure if it's winning might not know what game it's playing. Work as a team to determine what a win should look like and come up with a game plan to achieve it. Every week, ask each team member, "Are you winning as an individual? Are we winning as a team?"
- **Learn—and borrow—from others.** Surround yourself with people who have patterns of success in areas that you do not. Observe them, learn from them, and ask them questions.
- **Get a scoreboard.** Create ways to measure progress objectively, track goals, and get input.

When setting expectations, however, it's vital that managers don't just say, "Here's what you need to accomplish—now go do it." Managers also need to provide guidance on the specific aspects of the project. Here's how.

## STEP 1: BUILD FENCES

It's important to create boundaries that delineate the project. At the same time, though, it's also important not to create so many boundaries that they hobble employees. The key is to strike a balance between guidance and rules. At a minimum, these boundaries should include:

- Detailed explanation of the project
- Statement of desired outcomes and expectations
- Clearly stated levels of authority
- Timeframe
- Required tools, resources, skills, and knowledge

This list is a starting point. Each project will have its own needs. Other possible boundaries include information about the milestones necessary to complete the project, a list of involved parties (and the roles they will play), and any rules, budget, or additional requirements for the project.

### STEP 2: EMPOWER EMPLOYEES

- **Explain the project in detail.** Share relevant background information that will help the team succeed. What is the significance of the project, and how does it connect to the organization's overall strategy or goals?
- **Provide clear expectations.** Explain specific desired outcomes, define what constitutes "good" for the project, and spell out what is absolutely nonnegotiable.
- **Establish the level of authority.** Of all of the boundaries, this may be the most critical. People rarely take the right amount of authority: they either take too much or not enough—and it is usually the leader's fault. Establishing the level of authority from the beginning sets everyone up for success.
    - **Level 1: Act when directed.** The employee is asked to execute someone else's directives. Here, the manager has already created the tasks and steps to follow and is asking the employee to follow through with them.
    - **Level 2: Act after approval.** The employee brings multiple options to the manager, who then approves one for action.
    - **Level 3: Act after consultation.** This is similar to level 2, except that the manager provides input, advice and counsel, but allows the employee to make the decision.
    - **Level 4: Act and report.** The employee makes decisions and reports on them to the manager after the actions have been taken.
    - **Level 5: Act autonomously.** The employee has full authority and total autonomy to act and make decisions without need for approval, consultation, or reporting to the manager.

  (Note that each aspect of a project may have a different level of authority. Be clear about this up front and provide specific expectations and levels of authority as needed.)
- **Determine the timeframe**. Identify expected milestones, accomplishments, and what defines completion. Be specific and be realistic.
- **Identify required tools, resources, skills, and knowledge.** Determine what resources are at the employee's disposal and what skills or knowledge he or she needs (or needs to acquire). This step may also include a discussion of budget constraints.

### STEP 3: GAIN AGREEMENT AND COMMITMENT TO THE BOUNDARIES

Don't look for compliance—that is, when an employee simply obeys and does what he or she is told. Rather, look for commitment, which arises from self-accountability. Make sure everyone agrees on all of the boundary areas and ask if anything has been left out. Move forward only once there is mutual agreement and commitment.

### STEP 4: FOLLOW UP REGULARLY AND ADAPT AS NECESSARY.

Agree early on what follow up will entail—both its form (e-mail, in-person conversations, etc.) and its frequency (daily, weekly, etc)—and do it. Be prepared to adjust outcomes (and reestablish boundaries) as new information emerges.

### STEP 5: ASSESS THE OUTCOME.

Don't miss an opportunity to celebrate a win and—just as important—don't miss an opportunity to learn from a mistake. Address the challenges that arise and treat every project as a path toward overall improvement.

Just as ranchers build literal fences to keep their cows in one place, managers can build figurative fences that circumscribe projects and employees' responsibilities. By following all the steps of this process, managers can establish boundaries that help employees succeed in their work by defining the goals, tasks, and other factors that shape a project. Setting expectations doesn't limit employees but actually enables them to do their best work. ■

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# UP, COMMUNICATING DOWN,

BY VALERIE M. GRUBB

One of the best things you can do for your career is learn how to be a great communicator. After all, if you're unable to get your point across in a way that inspires others to take action, how can your HR initiatives (or your career) possibly succeed? In any workplace conversation—whether it's with a direct report, a peer, or the boss's boss—effective communication skills are what distinguishes a good employee from a great leader.

## EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

Surprisingly, good communication doesn't start with the words that come out of your mouth. Rather, a good chunk of it takes place via body language. Good communicators know how to use words and body language to develop "executive presence," which helps them command their listeners' attention.

Start with good eye contact—but don't stare someone down. A good rule of thumb is to make eye contact with someone for a full thought before moving on to the next person. Making this connection with all the people at the table helps increase your engagement with them.

Show that you're listening carefully by nodding and repeating back to them (paraphrasing the words, though) what you hear. Speak slowly and clearly, breathing consistently so your voice doesn't trail off or warble. Vary your pitch and speak loudly and clearly enough to be heard at the back of the room: people won't have confidence in what you're saying if they can't hear you (or if you sound terrified!).

## ADAPTING YOUR STYLE

When preparing to speak with others (especially a boss or a peer), it's critical that you adapt your communication style to fit theirs. If you want someone to make a decision or take a particular course of action, present your proposal in a style that he or she can hear. For example, when speaking with people who are very direct and don't like a lot of detail, don't lead with detail; instead, lead with your recommendation before going in to more detail. If, on the other hand, you're talking with someone who likes to hear the detail first, then by all means adapt your style to give that person what he or she wants. If you're not sure what someone's preferred communication style is, pay careful attention to his or her interactions (especially nonverbal cues) with others. Take notes on the situations and styles to which you think that person did—and did not—respond well, then think about how you can emulate the good (and avoid the bad) when communicating with that person.

## COMMUNICATING UP

Remember, bosses are typically circling at the 30,000-foot-high level. So if you're not sure of your boss's style, it's best to err on the side of less detail (although always bring additional information with you just in case he or she wants all of it). When you're working in the dark, try this technique to engage them right from the start.

1. **Set expectations for your presentation.** Indicate to your audience that you're going to lead with the headline, then go into detail about how you reached your decision, and then open the floor to questions. This "road map" lets everyone know there will be time to dissect your proposal.

2. **Lead with your recommendation.** How many times have you been promised 30 minutes with the boss only to see your meeting whittled down to 10 minutes? If you meticulously go through the details about how you arrived at your conclusion, you may run out of time before you get to share the conclusion itself. So start with "My recommendation is . . ."

3. **Share key details that support your conclusion.** Once your boss knows your recommendation, offer to walk him or her through the details that led you there. I've found it useful to present three or four major points and then, to make sure I'm hitting the one that interests my boss most and keeping him or her engaged, I ask which one I should drill down into first. If applicable, this is also be a good time to share any alternatives that you considered (and rejected), in case they were also on your boss's mind.

# AND ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION

4. **Invite feedback on your proposal.** Your request can be a simple "I would love your input." Or you can ask for more information with "Do you have any concerns about my proposal?" or "I would love your advice on how to make this even better." Directly asking for feedback shows that you're actually interested in hearing your boss's perspective (which is good, because he or she is probably going to give it to you anyway!).

When communicating with your boss, always remember that his or her time is precious. Use it wisely (and quickly).

## COMMUNICATING DOWN

Engaging in this type of communication can be very similar to engaging in good management practices. There are some differences, though, so keep in mind these practical recommendations for communicating with employees who are junior to you.

- Whether you are detailing your expectations, describing what is (or is not) working, or merely passing on information, *be explici*t. Someone junior to (and less experienced than) you may need more information in order to proceed.
- Remember that even if your message has good intentions behind it, you cannot control how it's received. Because the same words can mean different things to different people, follow up to verify that your message was indeed heard as you intended—and if it wasn't, then clarify what you meant.
- Don't display impatience or annoyance if someone repeats an already-asked question or isn't communicating clearly. Remember, each time you move up in an organization, chances are you'll be learning something new. So show the same respect and patience to junior team members as you would like your superiors to show to you.
- Positive reassurance goes a long way toward ensuring that junior members learn quickly so they are ready to move up. Don't skimp on saying "Thank you" and "Good job," because those recognitions reinforce positive behaviors—and promote more of them in the future.
- When things don't go well, don't shy away from giving feedback to employees on how to improve. If you don't, how else they get better? Employee performance never improves through osmosis. People need specific (and supportive) feedback.

## COMMUNICATING ACROSS

Communicating with peers across departments can be tricky for many reasons beyond differences in style. For example, in some instances personal conflicts between department managers can have a trickle-down effect on individual employees. Being in different physical locations can reduce the amount of communication flow ("Why walk down a flight of stairs—and back again—when I can shoot over an e-mail and call it a day?"). And departmental silos can often hamper interdepartmental communication.

There are all valid reasons for poor communication—but not valid justifications for it. Unresolved, they can jeopardize the future success of your company (or your career). HR is uniquely positioned to ensure that everyone gets along in the corporate sandbox, so make it a priority to give more information than you get before you're asked. A great rule of thumb is to follow "the JFK rule" for communication: "Ask not what information other departments can deliver to you but what information you can deliver to other departments." In other words, be the leader who doesn't withhold information in order to make his or her own department look better.

To ensure t hat you're doing all that you can to improve communications throughout your company, constantly ask yourself these questions:

- What can I do differently to improve my communication with other departments?
- What can I do to help my boss improve his or her communication with other departments?
- What can I do to help my department colleagues improve their communication with other departments?

Author and former presidential speechwriter James Humes said, "The art of communication is the language of leadership." If you want to up your leadership game, focus first on your communication skills. By setting the example and following good communication practices (and calling out those who don't), you'll be helping to break down communication barriers for employees at all levels of the organization. ■

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# Moving from Administrative HR to Strategic HR

BY CAROL ANDERSON

What is the role of human resources today?

The answer to that question isn't readily apparent. On the one hand, decades-old "administrative" HR roles are being increasingly joined by "strategic" HR roles, partly in response to new developments in recruiting, hiring, and retention. But when asked to categorize how they spend most of their time, most HR leaders are still likely to come up with something that looks like this:

The truth is, administrative work takes time and resources—both of which are typically in short supply on HR teams. Consider, too, that strategic work can become mostly administrative in nature under some circumstances (such as when HR struggles with the technology that supports talent-management programs and doesn't have time for crucial conversations about assessing and developing talent.) So how can HR executives move from doing mostly administrative tasks to becoming strategic advisors?

## FOCUS ON WHAT MANAGERS NEED

First, don't take the human element out of the equation. When HR focuses on configuring systems, obtaining data, figuring out why the data is wrong, and spending time fixing the data, working with technology becomes primarily an administrative task. (And it's often one that ends up being a poor use of time: a significant amount of the data HR produces is not used by clients—because they don't have time to review it, they don't know what to do with it, or they don't find it credible.) But when the focus shifts from finding data to starting conversations, HR's use of technology shifts from "administrative" to "strategic."

To achieve this shift, HR needs to engage managers in dialogue about their teams' performance and productivity. HR must be genuinely interested and listen carefully, because managers might not be able to articulate their concerns in "HR speak." (For example, they may not immediately observe that "turnover is high" but might indicate that productivity is down and they aren't sure why.) Once HR gets a sense of managers' needs, then it's time to bring out the data.

## UNDERSTAND THE STATE OF THE BUSINESS

It's not simple a matter of just giving HR data to managers, though: that data needs to be connected to business data. It should enable managers to answer several critical questions. Is business up or down? How are product lines doing? What's happening with the competition?

Once an organization's performance is clearly sketched out, it can be connected to the people data. What personnel changes or shifts in hiring could have changed productivity (and therefore affected sales)? How many employers have left the company? How difficult is it to hire and train new team members? If team members are leaving, are they seasoned employees or new hires?

Last but not least, HR should think twice before sharing its discoveries solely by e-mail. Because, an e-mail with a report on turnover can get lost in a busy manager's inbox, it's better to schedule a meeting to discuss the findings. Through this conversation, HR can more easily make the data relevant to the manager—and therefore more meaningful.

## USE DATA AS A CONVERSATION CATALYST

Data is nothing more than a starting point for good dialogue, research, and discovery. Using the "five whys" method to identify the true root of a problem and avoid relying on the canned reports offered by every technology solution. Time spent configuring, correcting, and distributing those canned reports is time spent on administrative work that, on its own, doesn't lead to talent development. But time spent gathering relevant and meaningful data by talking with managers, identifying their needs, and understanding an organization's current state is time spent doing strategic work—and time well spent indeed. ■

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Carol Anderson is the founder and principal of Anderson Performance Partners LLC, a business consultancy focused on bringing together organizational leaders to implement and evaluate a workforce-alignment strategy. She has over 35 years of executive leadership and is the author of *Repurposing HR: Moving from Cost Center to Business Accelerator.* She can be reached at carol@andersonperformancepartners.com.

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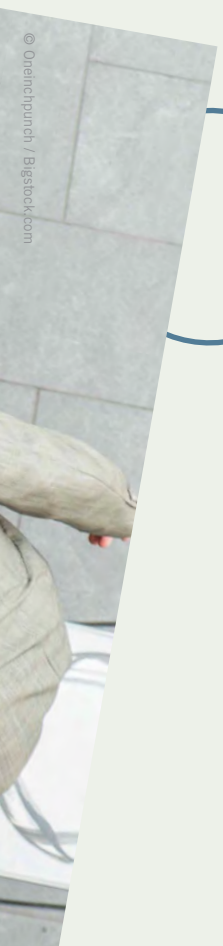

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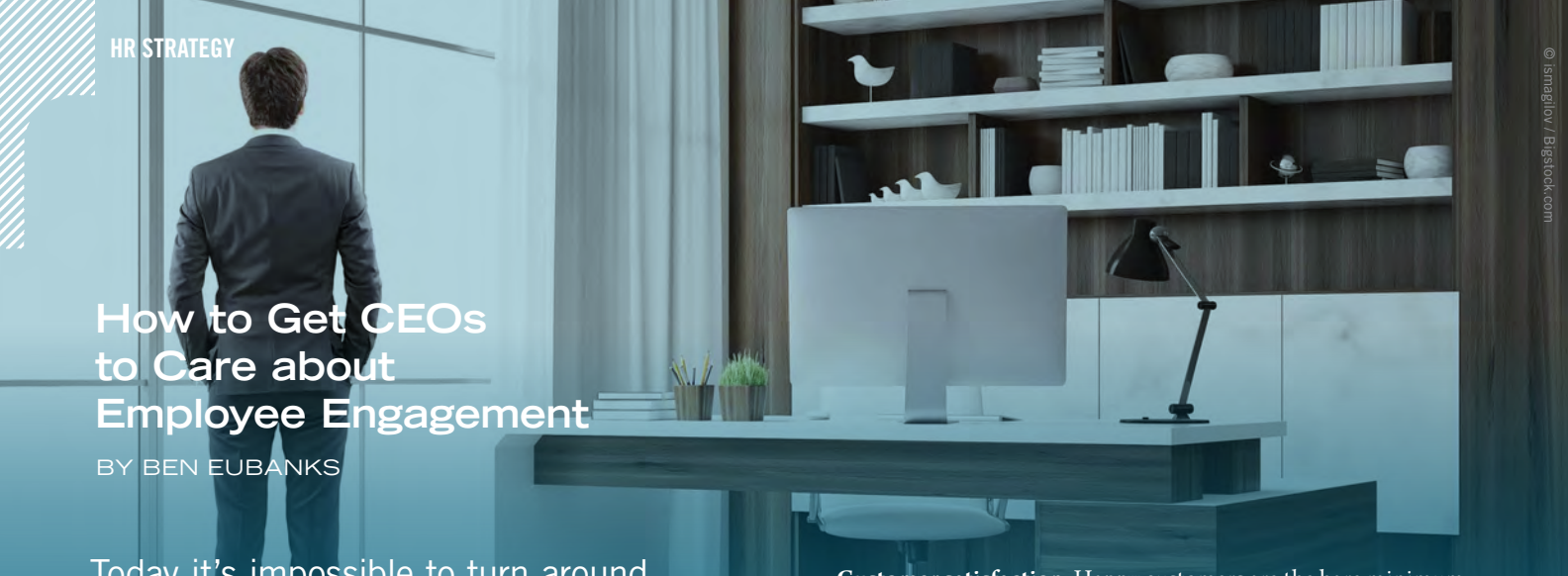

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# How to Get CEOs to Care about Employee Engagement

BY BEN EUBANKS

Today it's impossible to turn around without having a conversation that touches on employee engagement. Surveys, tools, and methodologies are all promoted as ways to create or drive worker engagement. Yet despite all the attention the subject receives, the needle hasn't moved: Gallup's research paints a dismal picture of "a worldwide employee engagement crisis."[1] The bottom line is that companies are still failing to engage employees. Why?

## ENGAGEMENT IS NOT A PROGRAM

The first thing many leaders do when they get feedback from employees is think about how to create a new program or initiative to improve engagement scores. Those efforts invariably flop, though, because employees are tired of "programs" that don't give them what they truly value.

Once the company meets an employee's financial needs, nonmonetary factors have an increasingly positive effect on influencing his or her level of engagement. That means that spending a large chunk of money on engagement won't make it grow. In fact, an "employee [who] gets a raise . . . won't necessarily become happy or motivated, just less angry."[2]

The challenge is to see engagement not as a one-off activity but as part of a holistic employee experience. A great employment relationship will drive engagement more than a pat on the back or a gift card. Being able to tie every activity together to produce a cohesive experience that employees are proud of is the key to driving engagement numbers.

## ENGAGEMENT IS NOT AN OUTCOME

Some leaders check engagement scores as if they were the latest sales figures or turnover statistics. In reality, though, engagement is not the desired outcome. Rather, leaders should aim to achieve deeper and more meaningful goals.

- **Customer satisfaction**. Happy customers are the bare minimum necessary to create a sustainable business. The real goal should be to create an experience for employees and customers alike that is positive and rewarding on a variety of fronts.
- **Innovation**. Companies everywhere are trying to create environments that produce more innovative thinking among their employees. But the answer isn't open office space but higher engagement. Gallup research has found that engaged employees are more likely to be inspired by their colleagues' creativity and feel more creative themselves.[3]
- **Revenue**. A discussion about concrete impacts would be incomplete if it didn't touch on the one that matters most to many organizations: the bottom line. The link between engagement and financial results has been well researched. For example, when compared to companies with low employee engagement, companies with highly engaged employees enjoy much better operating margins and net profit margins.[4]

## ENGAGEMENT IS THE ANSWER

Once CEOs understand that engagement isn't the goal but the means to success, they can recognize its value. By fostering true engagement that results in strong relationships—and isn't just an element of another standalone, low-impact, HR initiative—organizations can unlock its full potential as a business enabler that can drive performance and results across the enterprise. ■

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# BITE-SIZED LEARNING AND PHISHING

BY STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES INC.

**Q. My manager is interested in implementing "bite-sized learning" at our organization. What is this technique? Why would we want to do this?**

—

A. Bite-sized learning (also knowns as micro learning) has been trending upward in the training world over the past two years. A replacement for eight-hour-long PowerPoint sessions, bite-sized learning sessions are an effective way to offer workplace training to adult learners who have tight schedules and short attention spans.

Deloitte research has found that "1% of a typical work week is all that employees have to focus on training and development."[1] In a 40-hour work week, that adds up to only 24 minutes per week or 4.8 minutes per day—which makes it difficult to offer long training sessions on important HR topics such as compliance, leadership, documentation, and coaching. But breaking these trainings into smaller, "bite-sized" pieces fits the training into the employee's schedule while keeping his or her focus and attention for its duration.

The sessions can be quite effective with appropriate breakdown of topics and implementation. If you decide to make this move, keep in mind that the lengths of these sessions can vary according to the training content and the organization's culture. ■

1. Deloitte. 2017. "Leading in Learning." Deloitte website, www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/HumanCapital/gx-cons-hc-learning-solutions-placemat.pdf.

**Q. Lately, I've been hearing a lot about cybersecurity and phishing. What is phishing, and does HR need to be doing anything about it?**

—

A. You're concerned—that's good! The Federal Trade Commission describes phishing as "when Internet fraudsters impersonate a business to trick you into giving out your personal information." The perpetrator uses wit and guile to persuade the victim to ignore common sense or best practices and hand over the requested information.

To help employees recognize a phishing scam, HR should do the following (and encourage employees to take these steps, too):

- Check phishing reports (such as those produced by Kaspersky Labs) quarterly for information on trending and common scams so you can more easily spot them.
- Always double (and triple) check the source of a request for any personal or sensitive information. (Phishers are adept at spoofing e-mail addresses and pretending to be a target's friend or family member, for example.)
- Never let your guard down. (Phishing is a problem only when it succeeds—so always be vigilant!) ■

*(Insights on cybersecurity provided by Tyler Throckmorton of SafePhish.)*

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Strategic Human Resources Inc. is a national full-service HR management firm based in Cincinnati, Ohio. Its president and founder, Robin Throckmorton, can be reached at Robin@strategichrinc.com.

# ALWAYS ASK "DOES IT SUPPORT YOUR MISSION?"

BY MIKE MCKERNS

In a 2007 article about the then-three-year-old Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg declared, "I'm here to build something for the long term. Anything else is a distraction."[1] At the time, he wasn't planning to follow the "exit strategy" example of the many other tech founders who built up their companies and then sold them for huge amounts of money. Ten years later, his stance hasn't changed (even though the company went through a very successful IPO in 2012 and today has an annual revenue over $27 billion). Zuckerberg is definitely in it for the long haul.

Of course, there's absolutely nothing wrong with having an exit strategy in mind when building a company. But if your goal is to build a company that endures for the long term, then every hire you make, every piece of software you buy, every facility you open, every new product or service you launch—pretty much *everything* you do, actually—needs to support that mission. To paraphrase Zuckerberg, "Anything that doesn't tie into the company's mission is a distraction."

For example, Amazon's official mission is "to be Earth's most customer-centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online." When Amazon first announced it would start selling hardware (Kindle tablets and e-readers), I first thought this venture was a distraction from the company's mission. Then I realized that it actually directly supported that mission, because nearly all of the purchases made on those devices would be from Amazon.

On the other hand, remember the BlackBerry? Not that long ago it totally dominated the mobile phone market. Today, though, the company is barely clinging to existence and holds just 0.0481% of the market.[2] There are analyses galore about how this happened, but most of them boil down to the same observation: the company rested on its laurels and failed to engage in actions that promoted its mission (probably, in part, because the company never clearly articulated what that mission was).

So the next time you need to hire, fire, create a new position, expand into a new market, or take any other business-oriented action, ask yourself, "Does this decision support the company's mission?" If the answer is "no," you may want to reconsider that action. And if the answer is "I'm not sure," it may be time to tune up your mission statement and make sure everything your company does connects to it. ■

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

1. Ellen McGirt. 2007. "Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg: Hacker. Dropout. CEO." *Fast Company* online, May 1, www.fastcompany.com/59441/facebooks-mark-zuckerberg-hacker-dropout-ceo.
2. Rob Price. 2017. "BlackBerry's Share of the Global Smartphone Market Is Now Officially 0%." *Business Insider*, February 15, www.businessinsider.com/blackberry-smartphone-marketshare-zero-percent-gartner-q4-2016-2017-2.

## A PIQUANT PICKLE THAT PACKS A PUNCH

Spring has sprung, and "too hot to cook in the kitchen" weather is just around the corner. Whether you're firing up the grill outside or throwing together a refreshing salad, you'll want to have some of these pickled red onions on hand. Equally at home in burgers, sandwiches (it makes egg salad *sublime*), and salads (lettuce, bean, potato—you name it, it works!), this condiment also makes a great side dish on its own. Once you discover how versatile—and easy to make—these flavorful onions are, you'll never want to be without a batch of them in your refrigerator!

### PICKLED RED ONIONS

**YIELD:** 6 servings (approx.)
**TIME:** 75 minutes (nearly all of which is waiting time)

**NUTRITIONAL INFO PER SERVING:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Calories:** | 13 cal |
| **Fat:** | 0 g |
| **Dietary fiber:** | 0.5 g |
| **Sugars:** | 1 g |
| **Protein:** | 0 g |

**WHAT YOU'LL NEED:**

1 medium red onion
½ tsp salt
¾ cup vinegar of your choice

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Bring 4 cups of water to a boil while you peel, halve, and thinly slice the onion.
2. Place the onions in a sieve in the sink, then slowly pour the boiling water over them. Let them drain thoroughly.
3. Combine the salt and vinegar in a lidded container, then add the onions.
4. Store in the refrigerator. They will be ready to eat in about an hour and will keep for several weeks (if they last that long!)

**NOTES:**

- A lidded Mason jar is a great container for these.
- Distilled vinegar and apple cider vinegar work just fine here. But if you want your onions to turn a lovely fuchsia color, use red wine vinegar.
- If desired, add ½ tsp sugar to the salt and vinegar to take the edge off the vinegar. ■

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