

**THE RESOURCE**

VOL. VII, ISSUE II

# HR INSIGHTS

Magazine

*from the eyes of industry leaders*

DEVELOPING

YOUNG  
LEADERS

FOR  
TOMORROW

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Implement a Better Return-to-Work Program

A Radical Proposition: Phone-Free Conference Rooms

There's No Silver Bullet for Hiring the Best Talent

# 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 light 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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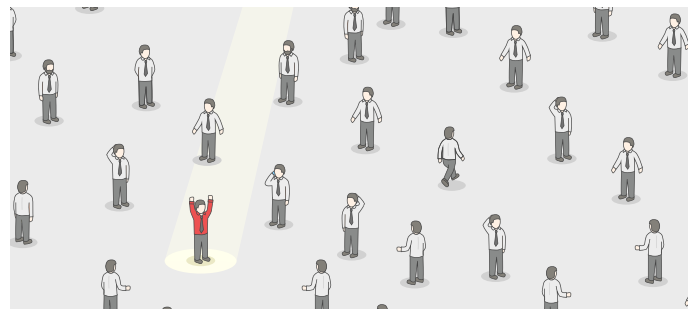
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# HR INSIGHTS

*from the eyes of industry leaders*

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DEVELOPING

YOUNG  
LEADERS

FOR  
TOMORROW

BY RIYA SANDER

A company is only as successful as its employees. With Millennials now the largest generation in the general workforce, their numbers at leadership levels are also increasing.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, companies need to recognize the importance of youth leadership development. In order to thrive, those organizations must develop young leaders who have the passion and enthusiasm to help them grow.

### FOSTER CONFIDENCE

One of the main challenges young leaders face is the fact that they are often significantly younger than the people they manage. Therefore, it is essential to make sure that young leaders have the confidence needed to lead their teams. Positive reinforcement helps them build their skills and knowledge, and public recognition of their abilities and accomplishments helps prove (both to the young leaders and to the people they manage) that they have what it takes to manage a team of people effectively and that they have the authority to do so.

### PROVIDE SPECIAL TRAINING

Not everyone is born with leadership skills, and young leaders often need special pointers in these areas. Specially designed engagement programs can help them learn how to address employees, how to be aware of body language during workplace interactions, and how to deal with inappropriate behavior. Such training programs also give young leaders opportunities to connect with and support each other as they advance in their careers and take on more work and responsibilities.

### **PRACTICE THROUGH ROLEPLAYING**

Roleplaying sessions let young leaders improve their new management skills by exploring scenarios that are likely to occur at work and establishing the best ways to deal with various situations. In the sessions, young leaders have opportunities both to work through scenarios and to offer feedback on their peers' reactions. Through roleplaying, they learn how to tackle certain situations effectively and how to appear strong and confident in their decisions without alienating other employees and causing feelings of resentment and discontentment.

### **GIVE MORE RESPONSIBILITY**

Giving a young leader more responsibility (under supervision) is one way to determine if and when he or she is ready to take on additional challenges. Assign extra responsibilities gradually and closely monitor how young leaders handle them.

### **OFFER FEEDBACK**

All leaders can benefit from input on their performance. Therefore it is important to provide employees with opportunities to provide open and honest feedback on the capability and suitability of their managers, especially those who are young leaders new to their roles. Anonymous comments can encourage honesty without fear of repercussions and serve as an important tool for helping young leaders hone their leadership skills.

### **PROVIDE A MENTOR**

Mentors are usually senior employees with experience and expertise who advise younger colleagues. A mentorship with an experienced manager is a great way for a young leader to learn valuable knowledge about his or her new role. A mentor can answer questions, provide important tips and advice, and offer guidance when he or she feels that the mentee is handling situations incorrectly. Pairing a young leader with an older mentor who is already respected in the company can also raise the status of the young leader in the eyes of his or her employees.

### **RECOGNIZE THE POTENTIAL AND QUALITIES OF YOUNG LEADERS**

When selecting the people who will lead a team and help lead a company to new heights, senior management must be able to define the skills required by leadership roles and select employees who have them. They must also be careful not to conflate confidence with capability: people who appear to be confident enough to lead a team often lack the skills to do so; conversely, many people with the skills to be very successful leaders are overlooked because they are unable to draw attention to those skills. Therefore, people who are charged with developing young leaders in the workplace need to be able to read people well and understand how to nurture them so they reach their full potential.

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Riya Sander specializes in organization management, marketing, and business communication. She writes for Workology.com.

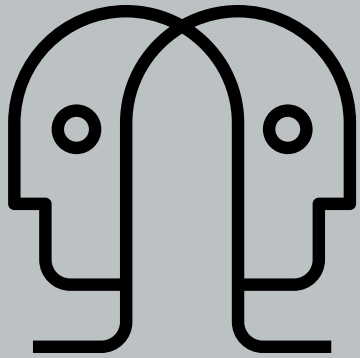
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# The IMPORTANCE of **SOFT SKILLS**



BY CATHERINE GONCALVES



Companies that want to hire the best people are increasingly coming to the realization that they need to look for strong soft skills in their candidates. But what are soft skills? Why are they important in the workplace? And how can employers identify and evaluate them?





Sales and training expert Rob Jolles defines soft skills as “communication skills, time management, problem solving, working with teams, selling, negotiating, and basically learning how to work well with other people.”<sup>1</sup> In the past, companies have usually prioritized hard skills (skills that can be taught and measured, such as knowledge of a software program). But the days of soft skills being underrated may be coming to an end. With “one in three recruiting professionals [believing that] job candidates’ soft skills have gotten worse in the past five years,” there’s widespread agreement that “parents and colleges need to do a better job of teaching students soft skills before they enter the workforce.”<sup>2</sup>

With his famous assertion that “technology alone is not enough,” Steve Jobs placed a high value on art, design, and social considerations at Apple. Other tech-oriented companies have been following suit. More and more Silicon Valley organizations are recognizing the importance of cultivating social and cultural skills among their employees.

For example, a few years ago, Google analyzed the HR data from its first fifteen years and found that “among the eight most important qualities of Google’s top employees, STEM expertise comes in dead last”—a startling realization for one of the top technology companies in the world. The corollary to this discovery was equally stunning:

The seven top characteristics of success at Google are all soft skills: being a good coach; communicating and listening well; possessing insights into others (including [others’] different values and points of view); having empathy toward and being supportive of one’s colleagues; being a good critical thinker and problem solver; and being able to make connections across complex ideas.<sup>3</sup>

Hard skills are important, but putting too much emphasis on them makes it hard to establish a positive and productive workplace. In light of such findings, it’s clearly time for employers to recognize the importance of soft skills when searching for new hires.

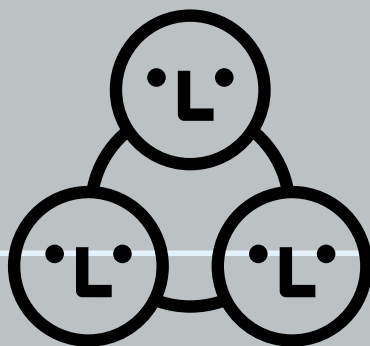
It isn’t easy to evaluate candidates’ soft skills, and because hiring the wrong person can be very costly, many employers are using technological solutions to help them make smarter hiring decisions. Video screening (as a recorded video cover letter or as a live interview) and pre-employment screening tests are a few useful tools. Some employers also require candidates to participate in job simulations that shed light on how they would perform on the job.

As the business world shines an ever-brighter spotlight on soft skills, hiring managers and HR staff must develop new—and more effective—ways to identify and analyze them. Although tech skills have dominated much of the hiring conversation for several years, the abilities to communicate, negotiate, and work well with others will never go out of style. ■

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Catherine Goncalves is a RFP writer for iCIMS Inc., a leading provider of innovative Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) talent-acquisition solutions that help businesses win the war for top talent. To learn more about how iCIMS can help your organization, visit [www.icims.com](http://www.icims.com).

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*They may forget what you said—  
**BUT THEY WILL  
NEVER FORGET**  
how you made them FEEL.*

—CARL BUEHNER

## **Building Relationships with Unsuccessful Candidates**

BY ELIZABETH SILAS-HAVAS

In many companies (especially those that are desirable workplaces), very few of the candidates who apply for jobs actually get interviews. So what happens to those who don't? Unfortunately, the transition to Internet-based job-seeking has made the candidate experience even more impersonal, often to the point that it leaves candidates feeling overlooked or completely ignored. In fact, in one CareerBuilder study, 45% of job seekers reported that lack of response from employers was what bothered them most about the job-seeking process.<sup>1</sup>

Today, any organization that wants to enhance its employer brand and streamline the recruiting process should focus on providing a good candidate experience to *all* job seekers who come its way. To accomplish this, a company needs to implement practices to make job seekers who take the time to apply feel that the firm has given them sufficient attention, even when they don't get the job (and perhaps not even an interview).

It's important to consider the experiences of unsuccessful candidates for several reasons:

- They may become successful candidates at the same company in the future.

- After a poor candidate experience at a particular firm, they may tell other candidates (via Glassdoor, industry-specific message boards, other online outlets, or in-person conversations, for example) not to apply there.
- A poor candidate experience may make them less likely to become clients of that company or to refer other potential customers there.

People now expect employers to treat candidates as they treat consumers. In particular, this means being responsive to candidates and not ignoring them. As Gerry Crispin, founding member of the Talent Board and expert on candidate experience, put it, "There's absolutely no excuse for not telling someone they didn't get the job or thanking them for applying. You've got to be able to do that—and, at the very least, technology makes it easy to automate this."<sup>2</sup>

But a stiffly worded form letter that concludes with "Do not respond to this e-mail," for example, may not leave candidates with a good impression that can help an organization build its talent network. On a whole, the recruiting space is not doing enough to improve the candidate experience for unsuccessful candidates. Acknowledging and building relationships with some of them, though, can help companies turn unsuccessful (and even unqualified) candidates into assets.

### **FIVE EASY WAYS TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES**

- At the very least, use recruiting automation software to thank everyone for applying. When possible, let them know a general timeframe for the hiring decision; this is one way to set expectations that are easily met, thus improving candidates' ratings of their experiences. Go one step further and provide closure by automating the process of letting them know that they haven't been chosen.
- Modulate the tone and wording of automated responses to match both the employer brand and candidate personas. (Based on





interviews with both new hires and unsuccessful candidates, candidate personas are composite sketches of each of the candidate “types.”) These give everyone involved in recruiting for the organization a sense of who their target audiences are when crafting automated responses (and when creating other new communications and processes).

- Ask candidates who have been eliminated to join the company’s talent network, database, opt-in newsletter list, or whatever vehicle the organization can use to stay engaged with unsuccessful candidates and update them on openings for which they are better qualified (and at the same time stay on job seekers’ radars as their own qualifications improve).
- Tell the company’s recruiters to connect personally with candidates on LinkedIn, where they can grow and maintain their talent networks by engaging their connections periodically (for example, through quick e-mail notes) and by inviting them to consider other opportunities.
- Give actual feedback whenever possible, especially to unsuccessful candidates who not only applied but also took the time to interview. Leave them on a good note by giving positive feedback and mentioning that they just weren’t the right fit. Even when volume makes it impossible to offer detailed, individualized feedback, a formulaic response can still stay positive and emphasize the difficulty of the decision process.

### ONE MORE SUGGESTION

The only thing more important than giving feedback is receiving it. Offer candidates channels through which to offer direct feedback (before they take their criticisms and insights elsewhere). Gerry Crispin suggests that companies use these strategies to “listen” to their candidates:

- Chat with candidates via Twitter or pop-up windows on the company website
  - Respond to direct communication from candidates on social media
  - Give candidates direct e-mail addresses for the people overseeing their application process
  - Make it possible for candidates to reply to automated e-mail<sup>3</sup>
- Pay attention to what job seekers say. Their feedback may shed light on aspects of the recruitment and hiring process that need improvement.

### CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL CANDIDATES

The more relationships a company has with individuals, the more applications it will receive for open positions. With significant numbers of currently employed people looking for or interested in new jobs (one study puts 71% of workers in that boat<sup>4</sup>), organizations that cultivate relationships increase their chances of finding excellent candidates. Building strong relationships across many networks—both digital and in-person—can help companies improve their long-term recruiting performance, and treating all candidates well now makes it easier to source top-quality workers down the road. ■

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## 6 Easy Ways to Foster a Sense of Belonging

BY AMANDA GROVES

A sense of belonging is such a powerful force that the pioneering social psychologist Abraham Maslow included it in his famous Hierarchy of Needs. In order to thrive, people need to feel a sense of belonging in their lives—and that holds true for their work lives, too. They want to feel that they fit in, are valued, and share a common purpose and connection with their colleagues. In the workplace, a sense of belonging creates community, encourages better collaboration, drives employee retention, and boosts productivity. In short, it produces great business results.

Not surprisingly, then, fostering a strong sense of belonging among its employees is one of the most valuable things a company can do. The question, of course, is how should it accomplish this?

**Show employees that their work has meaning.** Before they can have a sense of belonging, employees must first have a sense of purpose. Work just for the sake of work can leave employees feeling disconnected and depressed. But when they know that what they do *matters* and that it makes a difference, people are more likely to feel connected and committed to their organizations and their coworkers. Managers should clarify and prioritize the link between an employee's work and its impact on the "big picture."

**Set team goals.** When people operate as part of a team and work toward a common goal, they build each other up and support one another. Companies should set team goals that encourage individual employees to build connections in order to collaborate with each other—and flourish together.



**Recognize results.** Recognition is a powerful motivator and fosters an important emotional connection to the work, the team, and the company. Publicize group successes so that the rest of the workforce knows what has been achieved through teamwork and collaboration. Encourage management to acknowledge how these successes support the organization's larger goals and mission.

**Solicit input.** Inclusiveness emerges when people are asked to contribute. When people believe that their opinions matter and can actually make a difference, they feel that they're a part of something larger than themselves. Workplace leaders should include team members in meetings, solicit their input, and act on that feedback to help employees feel invested in the organization's performance. This sense of ownership promotes a sense of belonging and encourages employees to stay with the company.

**Encourage camaraderie at work.** Getting things done should be the top priority in the workplace, but there's nothing wrong with building camaraderie and having a bit of fun now and again. Managers can encourage people to connect through at-work and outside-of-work events, such as birthday celebrations, monthly team lunches, group volunteering events, and employer-subsidized activities. Fostering a positive workplace culture can pay enormous dividends, so it's well worth investing the time and resources to bring everyone together.

**Celebrate successes together.** Commemorating successes (such as hitting sales targets, achieving long-term goals, and landing new clients) as a group can foster strong bonds within a team or department. Such celebrations give employees a chance to reflect on their teamwork and appreciate what they have achieved together.

There's no doubt that a sense of belonging is a powerful motivator for employees in the workplace. Nurturing this feeling in the people who work for an organization isn't hard or expensive to do. When employees feel that they truly belong to an organization, their increased commitment, productivity, and engagement can lead a company to success. ■

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Formerly the senior marketing manager at JazzHR, Amanda Groves is now the product marketing manager at Appsembler.

This article originally appeared at [JazzHR.com](https://jazzhr.com).







# EMPLOYER BRANDS: SHAPED BY *Culture and Opportunity,* **NOT SALARY,**

BY JONNA SJÖVALL

What factors persuade someone to recommend his or her employer to a job seeker? Salary, though a very important factor for most employees, does not drive most job changes. In fact, in an extensive survey of over 10,000 LinkedIn members from around the world, only 34% of the respondents gave “I was unsatisfied with the compensation/benefits” as their top reason for leaving their jobs, whereas 59% offered “stronger career path/more opportunity” as their primary motivation for taking a new job.<sup>1</sup>


Because salary is no longer the main draw for job seekers, it's time for companies to shift their focus to what's really attracting high-level hires: company culture and career development opportunities. In order to do that, though, an organization must have a strong sense of its employer brand—and that isn't something that can be pulled out of thin air. An employer brand must be based on hard data about what appeals to the target audience. And because a company isn't part of that audience, it can have a hard time knowing what potential candidates are looking for.

For that reason, many organizations rely on outside research (such as Universum's annual “World's Most

Attractive Employers” report) to provide them with in-depth insight into what graduates and job seekers want from employers. Simply reading those studies isn't enough, though. The employers that are most attractive to candidates use such data to shape their employer branding and focus on two areas in particular.

## CULTURE

Tip: The first step toward developing a great EVP is to identify the organization's brand essence—the one quality it most wants to be associated with as an employer.



Companies that succeed in pulling in the best candidates each have a strong and clearly-defined employer value proposition (EVP), a unique set of offerings, associations, and values that can positively influence target candidates and employees. Because 76% of job seekers “want details on what makes the company an attractive place to work,” a strong EVP gives candidates a good reason to come work for a company.<sup>2</sup> A strong EVP also yields long-term benefits: “Companies that implement a strong employee value proposition are twice as likely to outperform the competition financially and five times more likely to have employees that are highly engaged in the office.”<sup>3</sup>

Although culture is a key component of an EVP, many companies do not exhibit a strong work culture. Those organizations may be relying too heavily on salary and benefits (two other aspects of an EVP) to attract candidates and neglecting other important factors. Because culture ties directly into the employer brand, the lack of a strong and dynamic company culture will only hurt a company—especially when it comes to employee recommendations and referrals, which play a large role in employer brand development.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Tip: Showcase career-development programs to potential candidates by including those programs in job descriptions and highlighting them on social media sites.

The most successful companies know that investing in their employees is one of the best ways to strengthen their employer brands. Career development programs are gaining popularity, (especially in the United States, where spending on corporate training now tops \$70 billion).<sup>4</sup> By investing in such programs for their employees, organizations communicate an interest in keeping those workers around for the long term.

Focusing on career development will definitely pay off. According to one recent survey, 87% of Millennials consider “professional or career growth and development opportunities” to be important elements of a job.<sup>5</sup> When they’re looking through job boards and doing research about companies, the presence—or lack—of such opportunities can make the difference between one organization and its competitor.

As it becomes harder for companies to ignore their employer brands, more and more of them are increasing their investments in that area. But where should they focus? Each company may want to allocate resources differently, depending on the types of candidates it wants to reach. (For example, social media may be most effective with new graduates, whereas a traditional career website may appeal more to older generations.) For that reason, companies need to do their research when developing their employer brands and make sure that any strategic investments are backed up by strong data. ■

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# Business



It's Time to Ditch the

# Stigma of Unemployment

BY LYNDA SPIEGEL





HR professionals don't like to admit it, but companies don't afford the same level of consideration to unemployed candidates or candidates with employment gaps as they do to working applicants. (Sometimes, companies even prefer to attract and recruit passive candidates—who haven't applied for a job—over those who aren't working!) Even when unemployed candidates' resumes make their way to hiring managers, how many HR professionals actually try to understand why great candidates find themselves out of work and try to counter the claim that "If the candidate were any good, she or he would already be employed"? That stereotype holds no merit at a time when mergers and acquisitions are driving excellent workers to the unemployment line.

In 2010, as part of the American Jobs Act, the federal government exempted employers from paying the 6.2% Social Security tax on wages paid to previously unemployed workers that they hired, and offered employers a \$4,000 tax credit for hiring workers who have been looking for a job for over six months.. During the period of that exemption, I actively searched for unemployed candidates—and none of the ones I found were less competent than workers who had been employed when they took new jobs. The evidence is more than anecdotal: one study of data gathered from nearly 20,000 employees "found virtually no difference between the performance of those who had not held a job within the past five years and those who had."<sup>1</sup>

Now that the tax break has expired, there are still a number of advantages to hiring qualified unemployed candidates. For one, hiring managers have noted that this cohort has higher rates of retention than those who haven't experienced the hardship of being out of a job. Lower recruitment costs are another benefit, because when employers source qualified unemployed candidates, they don't have to pay premium recruiter fees. Finally, employers who hired based on skills (rather than on recent job experience) often see "25–75% reduction in turnover, 50–70% reduction in time to hire,

70% reduction in cost to hire, [and] 50% reduction in training time."<sup>2</sup>

A prejudice as deeply ingrained as the one against unemployed job candidates is difficult to overcome. (For example, LinkedIn experts have long advised candidates against stating that they're "actively seeking new opportunities" in their profile headlines because it signals their unemployed status.) Nevertheless, efforts directed at overcoming the anti-unemployment prejudice are gaining traction. Keep an eye out for the new hashtag #ONO (Open to New Opportunities), which makes it easier for recruiters and hiring managers to source, qualify, and hire unemployed candidates whose value proposition might be exactly what their companies need! ■

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The founder of Rising Star Resumes, Lynda Spiegel is a human resources executive with over 14 years of experience recruiting and hiring thousands of talented individuals. She can be reached at [Lynda@risingstarresumes.net](mailto:Lynda@risingstarresumes.net).

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*There's No*  
**SILVER BULLET**  
*for Hiring the Best Talent*

BY SHARLYN LAUBY

It might be tempting to think of pre-employment testing as a “silver bullet”—that is, a quick, simple, and seemingly magical solution to a complicated matter. But such an assumption couldn’t be further from the truth. In fact, when I spoke with Josh Millet, CEO of Criteria Corporation, about this subject, he said that when a testing provider promises that companies that use its services will “never make a bad hire again,” hiring managers should run (not walk) in the opposite direction:

Testing isn’t a crystal ball, and that’s not how the science of employee selection works. Incorporating pre-employment tests into the hiring process is about making more informed decisions and maximizing your chances of hiring people who are likely to succeed. Think of it as improving your batting average.

Although pre-employment testing isn’t the complete solution for hiring needs, organizations *can* use it to improve their recruiting processes and select the best talent. For example, such tests can predict learning potential—a particularly valuable piece of data in a time when most companies are struggling to find the talent they need.<sup>1</sup> When faced with the choice between hiring a candidate who has most of the needed skills but will need to be trained for the rest or waiting until the candidate who already knows everything comes along, companies can use pre-employment tests to identify and hire candidates with the potential (with some investment in their development) to be rock stars.

Another way to improve hiring is to reduce risk by, as Millet puts it, “improving the number of good people you get in the door and avoiding the truly toxic hires.” And there’s good reason to avoid those bad hires; *they are expensive*. For example, according to Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh, his company lost “well over \$100 million” during its first eleven years because of bad hires.<sup>2</sup> Arte Nathan, former CHRO for the Wynn Las Vegas, highlights the impact that bad hires can have throughout the entire organization<sup>3</sup>

Most companies don’t know the full cost of the turnover, so they don’t apply the resources up front to avoid it. If you make a bad hire, there is a ripple effect among all who work for you, your product, and your product quality.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to saving the company the cost of a bad hire, pre-employment testing can also reduce risk by reducing the likelihood (and cost) of workplace injuries, employee errors, and employee theft and fraud. Risk mitigation means different things in different industries and occupational settings, and depends on the business outcomes the organization is trying to achieve. Consider these examples:

- **Manufacturing:** Companies want the employees who are most likely to follow rules and avoid accidents. Workplace accidents and incidents can harm employees, thus leading to increased workers’ compensation claims.
- **Retail:** Organizations want employees who are unlikely to steal inventory, cash, or customer data.
- **Technology:** Companies want software engineers and workers who can motivate and push their teams to deliver projects on time, within budget, and without coding mistakes that could jeopardize security.
- **Marketing:** Organizations want public relations and social media managers who are not prone to posting inaccurate or inappropriate content that could damage the company’s consumer brand.

Pre-employment testing won’t magically prevent a company from ever making a bad hire again. But testing *can* provide data an organization needs to reduce the overall risk it faces each time it hires someone. In fact, some insurance companies give discounts to companies whose hiring processes use testing that correlates to reduced risk.

Today’s organizations are focused on retention. In order to accomplish that goal, they must make the best hires possible. After all, no company wants to spend a lot of time and money hiring someone who leaves after six months! At the same time, no one wants employees whose on-the-job practices (such as theft or errors) are costly to the organization. Pre-employment testing can help companies mitigate their risk in hiring: instead of hiring toxic, unproductive employees who bring down the entire organization, they’ll be more likely to hire long-term contributors. ■

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# How to Implement a **BETTER** Return-to-Work **PROGRAM**

BY JAMES OLNEY

What can a company do when its workers' compensation costs keep increasing year after year? The obvious solution is to dress employees in padded suits (like the one the Michelin Man wears) so they couldn't possibly get hurt, and then tether them together like kindergarteners on a field trip. Unfortunately, such measures would hinder efficiency (and the suits would probably get pretty smelly in the summer.) The more realistic approach is to prevent claims from occurring while mitigating costs for those claims that do occur. One of the best ways to reduce claims costs is to implement an effective return-to-work program.

It's well known that the dollars paid out on a workers' compensation claim go against the employer's experience modifier, which is a multiplier that can increase or decrease workers' compensation premiums depending on whether the modifier is above or below 1.00. The fewer dollars spent on a claim, the lower the impact on the modifier. But not many people know that a "medical only" claim (as opposed to a claim that also includes lost time) will reduce the amount of dollars that count against the modifier by 70%. As a result, there can be great value to offering light-duty positions and returning employees to work as soon as possible.

When implementing or maintaining a return-to-work program, keep in mind these considerations:

## **MANAGEMENT IS IN CONTROL OF THE LIGHT-DUTY WORK.**

As long as the company provides work within the employee's restrictions and isn't obviously trying to humiliate him or her (e.g., by making the employee clean toilets with a toothbrush while wearing a tutu), management has the right to dictate the work to be performed.

## **DON'T FORGET TO COMMUNICATE TO INJURED WORKERS THAT LIGHT-DUTY WORK IS AVAILABLE.**

The company should be able to prove that it offered work within the employee's restrictions. Using a written offer letter can be one way to eliminate any uncertainty or misunderstanding.

**INJURED WORKERS WHO REFUSE AN OFFER OF SUITABLE LIGHT-DUTY WORK WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR WAGE REPLACEMENT FROM WORKERS' COMPENSATION.**

Injured workers who turn down assignments, leave early, or stop showing up shouldn't get paid. Make sure the claims adjuster knows when an employee is not working so that his or her wage replacement can be cut off as soon as possible.

**TRANSITIONAL DUTY DOES NOT HAVE TO BE FUN.**

If someone's usual job is to tar roofs under a blazing summer sun, performing light filing work in an air-conditioned office can seem pretty attractive—and serve as a disincentive for that person to recover quickly from his or her injury. For that reason, companies may want to make transitional duty just irritating enough to motivate injured workers to return to their regular jobs as soon as possible.

**PROVIDE MEANINGFUL WORK.**

Even when transitional jobs are designed to be slightly irritating, they should still benefit the organization in some way whenever possible.

**CONSIDER KEEPING INJURED WORKERS SEPARATED FROM OTHER EMPLOYEES.**

To avoid having injured workers bring down employee morale (or brag about the benefits they are receiving), removing them from the general employee population. Not only can this improve coworker morale, but it also gives injured workers another incentive to recover quickly.

**COMMUNICATE FREQUENTLY WITH THE CLAIMS ADJUSTER.**

Because claims adjusters handle many case files at the same time, the old saying "The squeaky wheel gets the grease" holds true. Good communication is key: when an adjuster knows that a claim is important to an employer, it becomes important to the adjuster. (Similarly, adjusters who don't hear from employers often assume that those employers don't care.) Furthermore, adjusters often have great advice to help any organization through a complicated situation. ■

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# EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEYS

# Employee Engagement Surveys

BY STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES INC.

## QUESTION:

What are the benefits of using employee engagement surveys?

## ANSWER:

Employee engagement surveys are a great tool to have to help businesses get their employees involved and actively engaged in operations. Basically, it's a survey that gives employees the opportunity to share their opinions on the business-related issues of their company to help improve business functionality. Surveys are often administered anonymously and cover topics such as operations, benefits, culture and satisfaction to name a few of the more common ones.

1. The first step in conducting an employee survey is be sure the company is committed to taking action based on the input of the employees and to define what that action will be. Action may include telling employees their recommendations cannot be implemented because of certain factors (i.e. cost, time, resources). Responses will need to be sincere and honest and might include ways for employees to overcome any obstacles presented.
2. The next step is to plan and construct the survey. There are many online tools and resources to help you create and administer an employee survey. Decide if you will want to have recipients answer questions anonymously. You'll likely get a larger number of responses and higher quality input by allowing respondents to provide anonymous responses. Using a third party administrator or a highly trusted staff member can be critical to "selling" the anonymity of the survey. If promising secrecy, be sure the survey is conducted with the utmost of confidentiality and explain that in detail to participants.
3. Finally determine a plan of action for your line of questioning. What are some trouble-spots in your company that you would like to explore and learn more about? Are you having high turnover? An increase in safety problems? Is productivity down or customer complaints up? Or are you trying to get a read on the pulse of your company and its culture? Pick the areas you can tackle and target questions that will help you get the information you need to move

forward. Don't tackle too much in one survey or you will lose employee interest and patience. Your questions can be canned or customized to your situation, long or short, choice-based or open-ended. If this is your first survey, we find even the basic questions can be helpful.

- What do you like most about our organization?
- Why do you come to work every day here rather than for another company?
- What would you like to see improved at our organization?
- Would you recommend our organization to a friend as a good place to work? Why or why not?

Once the survey document is complete it's time to administer the questionnaire. Some great online solutions include **SurveyMethods** and **SurveyMonkey**. Both offer various service levels of membership from free to paid access depending on the features you need for your survey. Both allow you to trial these tools to determine what level you need and to see the reporting features provided.

The survey results should help you make improvements and focus on strengths in your organization. You'll find the feedback from employees will help with developing communications, recruiting techniques, benefits, and more. Employees who operate in the day-to-day of the business tend to have practical suggestions that may not be "huge" or "costly" to implement but can make a big impact. Overall outcomes can include increased safety, productivity, quality, profitability, lower turnover, and higher levels of customer satisfaction. Not to mention that by simply asking employees for their opinions it can heighten their engagement and give them a sense of satisfaction and worth. You'll see even more value as you repeat the employee survey year after year to assess the improvements. ■

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## A RADICAL PROPOSITION: PHONE-FREE CONFERENCE ROOMS

BY MIKE MCKERNS

**HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF PHONE STACKING?** When a group of people are out together (say, for dinner at a restaurant), they put their cell phones facedown in a stack and do their best to ignore the buzzes and rings and other notifications. At the end of the meal, they all pay their bills as usual—but if someone grabs his or her phone before that point, that person has to pick up the whole tab.

When this “game” was created a few years ago, it made waves because it hit a nerve: growing numbers of people were fed up with the intrusion of mobile devices into face-to-face social gatherings. But restaurants aren’t the only places where phone stacking could come in handy. Conference rooms, too, could benefit from phone-free interactions.

When was the last time you and your colleagues chatted with each other while waiting for a meeting to start? As a society we have become so addicted to our phones that most people usually spend that waiting time checking their e-mail, text messages, Facebook feeds, Snapchat streams, and myriad other social media and communication forums. And once the meeting actually starts, many people can’t ignore the siren call of the notification chime and check their devices whenever they can.

Marketing consultant and motivational speaker Simon Sinek makes this bold proposition: “There should be no cellphones in conference rooms. None. Zero.” Because the instant gratification of responding to a phone notification is difficult (if not impossible) for most people to resist, he says, let’s just eliminate the temptation—at least, for the duration of the meeting.

But with no group dinner bill on the line, phone stacking might not work so well in the conference room. So instead, just keep phones out of the conference room entirely. Ask meeting attendees to drop their phones into a bin on their way into the room, then stow the bin somewhere else (perhaps behind a locked door, to stop people from checking “just one quick thing”) until the meeting is over.

There’s a time and a place for everything. But a gathering at which attendees are expected to interact with each other or listen to a speaker or do something else that requires their full attention is *not* the time and place to look at cell phones. Many people have accepted the pervasiveness of cell phones as the new reality. But it doesn’t have to be this way: we can do a better job of living in the moment and building real face-to-face relationships. In fact, we *need* to do a better job at these things if we want to be successful in our professional lives (and in our personal lives, too). ■

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## IT’S ALWAYS TIME FOR CHILI!

Who doesn’t like chili? There are enough variations of this nutritious and filling dish to please any palate, and if you serve it with lots of different accompaniments, even the pickiest eaters should be able to put together a bowl of something they like. Because of the long cooking time, you’ll need to plan ahead for this one—but the results are definitely worth the effort!

### Nutrition Facts

Amount per Serving

<b>Calories:</b>	191cal
<b>Fat:</b>	5g
<b>Dietary fiber:</b>	9g
<b>Sugars:</b>	14g
<b>Protein:</b>	3.6g

### BLACK BEAN CHILI

**YIELD:** 4 servings

**TIME:** 1 hour 15 minutes

#### WHAT YOU’LL NEED:

- ¼ c olive oil
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 2 Tb chili powder
- 2 Tb ground cumin
- 3 Tb honey
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 28-ounce can of crushed tomatoes, undrained
- ¼ tsp dried chipotle
- 3 15-ounce cans of black beans
- 1 ½ tsp salt

#### DIRECTIONS:

1. In a large stockpot, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Sauté the onions until softened but not browned (about 7 minutes).
2. Add the chili powder and cumin and cook for 1 minute. Then add the honey, garlic, and tomatoes. Bring to a simmer, then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer (covered) for 30 minutes.
3. Add the chipotle, beans, and 1 cup of water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer (uncovered this time) until the chili is warmed through and the consistency you want (probably about 30 minutes).
4. Salt to taste. ■



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## CORE VALUES

Teamwork • Customer Focus • Innovation • Love What You Do

## WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

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