THE RESOURCE

VOL. IV, ISSUE V

Labor & Industrial INSIGHTS® Magazine

How to Manage Employees Without Killing INNOVATION

INSIDE

Weighing Soft Skills During Interviews

Why Hourly Employees Need Performance Reviews

Replacing Human Managers with Programming

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.

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

Labor & Industrial INSIGHTS® Magazine

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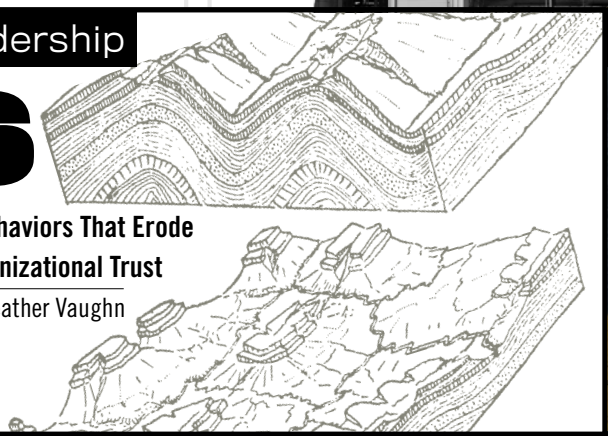

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HOW TO

Manage Employees WITHOUT KILLING

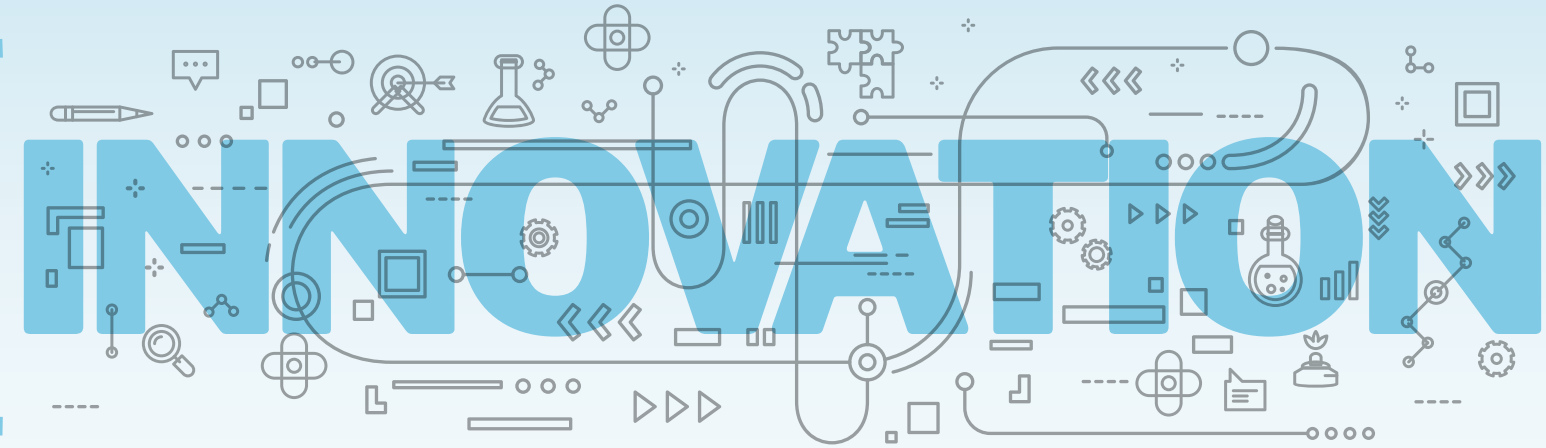
BY VALERIE GRUBB

Great leaders often have assertive and confident personalities that heavily influence their interactions with others. Sometimes these "strong" personalities go hand in hand with similarly forceful management techniques that can squelch innovation and the effectiveness of your team, because when people are worried about disappointing (or even angering) a boss they see as very much "totally in charge," they may be reluctant to speak up and do their best work.

Does your management style cross that line between "strong" and "domineering"? Is it possible that you are unknowingly stifling your employees' actions and opinions? Are you unwittingly killing innovation?

Take a look at the following problematic management scenarios and their solutions:

- **People don't speak up at meetings.** To encourage more participation from "silent spectators," end each meeting with a question such as "What are you going to do differently as a result of this meeting?"—then give everyone a chance to answer it. This not only keeps people on their toes, it also accustoms them to presenting their ideas in front of you and gives them opportunities to learn from how others present their ideas.



- **Others embrace your viewpoint too quickly.** Savvy managers know that thoughtful and thorough discussion can yield new (and often unexpected) ideas, so they welcome reasoned disagreement. When employees quickly give up on their opinions, challenge them with a smile: "You're accepting this idea that easily? What about . . . ?" Then offer arguments in support of their side for a while. Demonstrating a willingness to look at things from different perspectives will send a clear signal that you want people to speak their minds.

- **Staff members don't present new ideas.** This scenario can arise when you shoot down their ideas immediately or completely without giving them careful consideration. Instead of saying "no" right off the bat, take the idea to the next level by reviewing the pros and cons of continued exploration. Employees will see firsthand not only that you are open to new ideas, but also that you are invested in helping them grow and understand their own thinking better. After you've used this approach a few times, your employees will be even more eager to present their thoughts to you.

- **Few people come to you with issues or concerns.** Even superstar performers run into challenges, and when they are too afraid to tell you that they need help, that can lead to big problems down the road. When they approach you, first listen without judgment, then focus on coming up with potential solutions (and not on analyzing how they got into this situation). If an employee is truly not performing up to your expectations, work with him or her to develop a formal performance improvement process (PIP) plan. Otherwise, coach—don't condemn.

- **You rely on only a few people.** This creates a perception of favoritism and an atmosphere in which, outside the circle of "favorites," only a very few extremely assertive people are likely to speak up with you. To assess whether you favor certain employees over others, create a spreadsheet with your staffers' names and note how often you speak with each of them. If you see a pattern of favoritism, commit to broadening your communication efforts.

- **Your entire team is not living up to your expectations.** If you find yourself in this situation, it may be time to look in the mirror. Unless you've made very bad hires, poor performance on the part of an entire team typically indicates problems with leadership rather than with individual employees. Examine your overall management approach and be sure to surround yourself with employees who are smarter than you (they make you look better!) and focus on how you can unleash their creativity and talents while clearing obstacles in their paths.

Do any of those scenarios seem familiar to you? If so, in addition to implementing the specific solutions described for each one, it may be time for you to reconsider your management style in general. That doesn't mean you have to overhaul everything you do, though. You just need to develop a more nuanced approach that recognizes that different situations call for different strategies at different times. Here are some possibilities:

- **Command and control.** You make the decisions and tell people how to carry them out. In a crisis, you act with authority—and maybe a little forcefulness, too. (When the pressure's off, however, you're better off using other management styles.)

  Example: *There's an accident in the lab, and it's critical to isolate the problem and evacuate everyone. To accomplish this quickly and safely, you need to act like a drill sergeant and issue direct orders.*

- **Command and execute.** When an employee lets you down at crunch time, you must step in and do (or redo) his or her work. (Note that this scenario most commonly occurs in small or cash-strapped organizations where there's not enough training time for staff development.) If you have to resort to this management technique, make sure that you follow up after the crisis with coaching and encouragement to help ensure that it doesn't happen again (and to mitigate any sense of demoralization or intimidation the employee might feel after you "swooped in to save the day").

  Example: *Right before it's due, you realize that a grant application that you had delegated to a senior staffer needs to be redone, so you rewrite it. After the completed application is submitted, sit down with the staffer and go over what went wrong and discuss what can be done to prevent a similar crisis in the future.*

3 BEHAVIORS THAT ERODE ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST

BY HEATHER VAUGHN

- **Consensus building.** You communicate a vision and want the team to participate in exploring ideas, deciding which goals to set, and determining how best to achieve them. When decisions are made based on consensus, everyone feels that his or her input is valued—and you get everyone's buy-in on the project.

  Example: *As a new manager in a chemical-testing lab, you decide to use the "command and control" strategy to implement new safety procedures—a heavy-handed approach that alienates many of the company's experienced lab techs who have been using the old procedures for more than a decade and feel that the new ones slow them down. In this situation a better tactic would be to include the lab techs in the decision-making process. First ask them how they could meet new safety requirements while maintaining productivity, then work together to create new procedures that everyone accepts.*

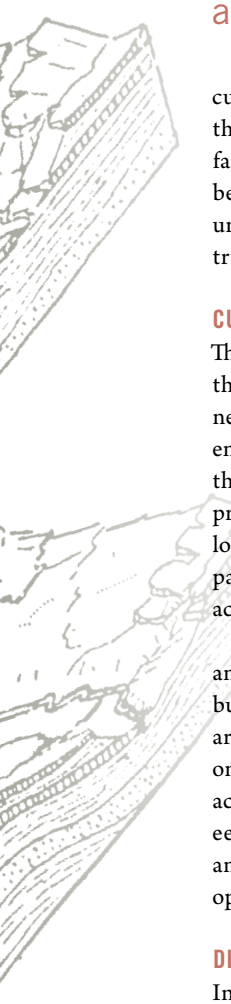
- **Coaching.** Provide individual mentoring to help employees develop critical skills. One way to do this is to look at how they accomplish their goals, then offer advice, suggestions for improvement, and encouraging stories about your own career development. This management technique can help build closer, more trusting, working relationships as well as increased productivity and better performance.

  Example: *Your new employee has a conflict with a more senior employee over time schedules and use of equipment. If you were a micromanager , you would impose a solution; if you were an impatient manager, you might merely warn the new arrival not to get a reputation as a hothead. But if you're committed to offering effective coaching, you would help the new employee develop the skills he or she needs to resolve this conflict (and, perhaps, future ones), by offering suggestions for how to work things out peacefully or by describing your experiences with similar situations early in your own career.*

Management doesn't involve simply telling people what to do. Good managers exhibit leadership by paying attention to their employees' behaviors and adjusting their management styles to address issues, needs, and other concerns. Such adaptability is the key to managing employees to achieve their best results—and if they work for you, that is exactly what you want!

Valerie M. Grubb of Val Grubb & Associates Ltd. (www.valgrubbandassociates.com) is an innovative and visionary operations leader with an exceptional ability to zero in on the systems, processes, and personnel issues that can hamper a company's growth. Grubb regularly consults for mid-range companies wishing to expand and larger companies seeking efficiencies in back-office operations. She is the author of *Planes, Canes, and Automobiles: Connecting with Your Aging Parents through Travel* (Greenleaf, 2015) and *Clash of the Generations: Managing the New Workplace Reality* (Wiley, 2016). She can be reached at vgrubb@valgrubbandassociates.com.

Considering the number of articles, books, and lectures that have emerged in recent years about how building positive workplace cultures and a better employee experience can have a positive impact on business goals, one might expect organizational trust to be on the rise. But a recent study by EY found that "less than half of global respondents have a 'great deal of trust' in their employer, boss or team/colleagues."[1] With such a strong recent focus on employee experience, why is there still a disconnect between leaders' and employees' perceptions of trust?



Improving trust takes more than implementing a new culture initiative. It requires building strong relationships in the workplace—a process that takes time. Organizations can facilitate relationship building, but they need to watch out for behaviors that can sabotage those efforts. If unrecognized and unchecked, those behaviors can actually erode organizational trust rather than strengthen it.

CUTTING CORNERS TO ACHIEVE GOALS

Thanks to technological advances, business now moves faster than ever before. Regrettably, operational speed can have a negative impact on how employees perceive trust. Rob Seay, employee experience director at Bonfyre, points out that in their pursuit of a goal or deadline, leaders might delay other projects—and "the initiatives that get pushed aside or overlooked to achieve those goals are often things that have an impact on the employees' view of trust . . . such as team-building activities, training courses, special projects, or team meetings."

Working toward a shared company goal can build trust among coworkers. But cutting culture- and relationship-building initiatives in order to meet that goal when resources are scarce may have the opposite effect: the organization not only undermines its efforts to build organizational trust but actually erodes it. Prioritizing speed to the point that employees feel they are juggling (and even dropping) basic tasks for an extended period of time can leave them feeling more like operational assets than valued team members.

DISCONNECT BETWEEN WORDS AND ACTIONS

In the EY survey, respondents identified "delivers on promises" as the most important factor that determines whether they have "a great deal of trust" in their organizations.[2] When dealing with customers, many companies use the "under-promise and over-deliver" strategy to ensure higher success rates in hitting their deadline, quality, and budget goals. But they often fail to apply this practice to their own employees and, consequently, harm that relationship. Leadership coach Peter Stark points out that when a company offers only "vague promises about bonuses or promotions that never materialize, [its] employees feel deceived and begin to lose trust."[3]

In his book, *Everybody Matters: The Extraordinary Power of Caring for Your People Like Family* Bob Chapman writes about how he discovered discrepancies between his leadership's behavior and the principles of trust he wanted his company to embrace. When he learned that manufacturing supplies were locked away in cages due to fear of employee theft, he decided to remove those locks and eliminate several other practices that were misaligned with his organization's new principles and undermined trust with its employees.

Failure to follow up on solicited employee feedback is another common complaint, especially when it comes to employee engagement surveys. By ignoring the results of those surveys, companies may be doing more damage than they realize to their corporate culture. In order to improve organizational trust, organizations needs to listen to and respect what their employees tell them.

INSUFFICIENT OR DELAYED COMMUNICATION

Fifty-nine percent of respondents in the EY study cited whether an employer "communicates openly/transparently" as a factor in determining the level of their trust. The lack of clear and timely communication can undermine trust in any relationship. Waiting too long to answer employees' specific questions can allow false theories to brew in the workplace. To build trust with employees, Seay says, rather than stay silent, companies should instead share an incomplete message (without all the details) as a sign of support for transparency. This can be as simple as an announcement letting employees know the current state of affairs with a promise to provide more details as they become available.

When an organization commits to building organizational trust, it's vital that its initiatives align with the words and actions of its managers and leaders. Trust doesn't develop overnight or with a single new culture initiative; rather, it takes time to build workplace relationships that will lead to trust among coworkers. By considering (and avoiding) these three problem areas, companies can develop effective trust-building initiatives.

Heather Vaughn is a writer and storyteller with more than 15 years corporate communications experience in the retail and technology industries. As an editor of the blog Gather Around (bonfyreapp.com/blog), she researches, writes, and publishes stories to help companies improve their culture through better communication and connections to their colleagues.

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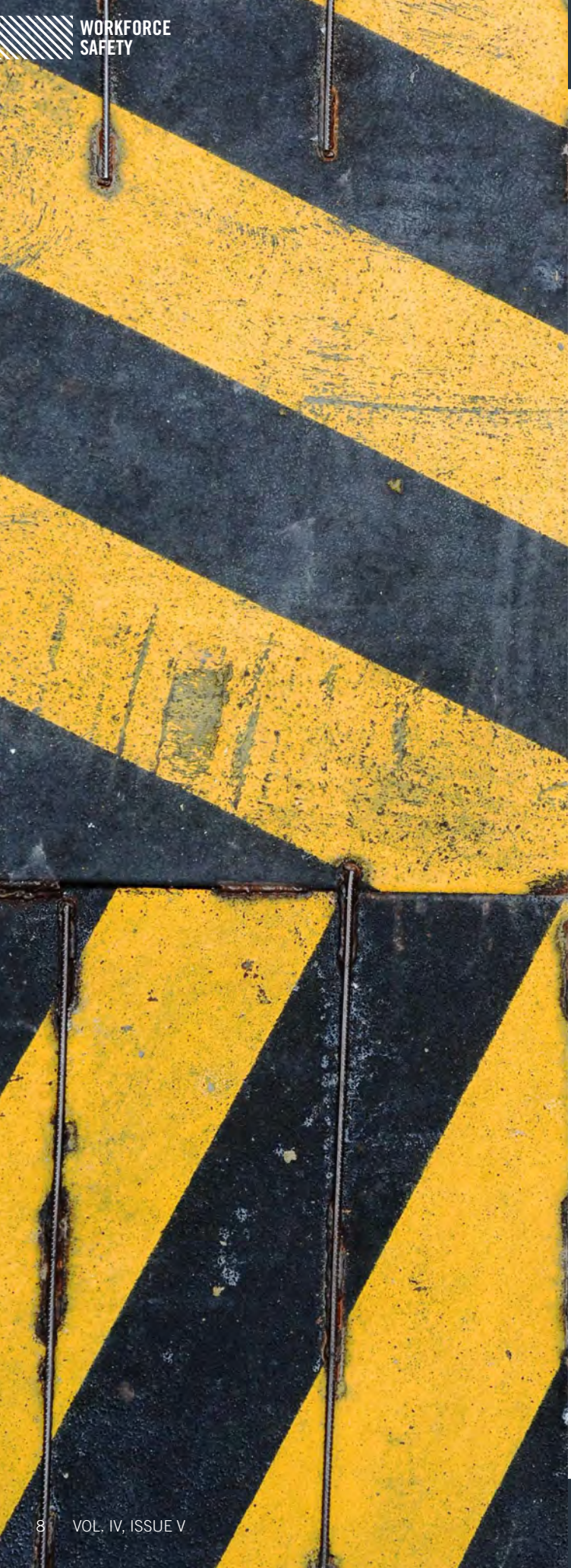

7 WAYS TO EXCITE WORKERS ABOUT SAFETY TRAINING

BY LANCASTER SAFETY

How do you turn around an unresponsive audience to have a great classroom safety training session or safety committee meeting?

Let's be honest, learning about safety can be boring and seemingly cumbersome at times. People often look at safety professionals as the "safety police" which can tend to create a barrier between them and workers. But safety professionals must get the safety message across and build a strong safety culture among their teams.This can be rather difficult when your audience is disengaged, uninterested, and doesn't participate in safety training or meetings. Changing their attitudes will take time and effort, but the results will be gratifying. There are ways to get better results from your meetings.

KNOW YOUR SAFETY TRAINING OR COMMITTEE AUDIENCE

Whether you hold safety meetings or training daily, weekly, or monthly, it is likely that your team, at some point, isn't going to evoke the response you'd like. Here are a few tips for dealing with a quiet, disruptive, or distracted audience.

IF YOUR GROUP IS QUIET:

Start the session by having everyone write down their names on a name tag along with how many years they have been with the company. Throughout the presentation, encourage the people who have been working at the company the longest to watch over and interact with the newer employees. This will help create more of a family atmosphere.

A good ice breaker is to have the group talk about accidents they have seen or have heard about. Generally, there will be at least one person in attendance that other employees may turn to or look up to in confidence. Try to identify this person(s) and make sure to involve him or her and watch as others join in.

Most people like giving their opinions but might be afraid to speak up in front of others. As a safety leader, it is your job to make the group feel comfortable and encourage them to speak up! If this doesn't work, give them a quiz or ask them their opinions and have them write it down on paper.

IF YOUR GROUP IS DISRUPTIVE OR CHALLENGING:
Have you ever heard someone say, "You know you've got your work cut out for you!"? Instead of avoiding comments such as these, use them as a tool to engage the rest of the audience too.

Employee: "This is stupid; why are we here?"
Response: I'm not sure why you feel that way but to answer your question… besides the fact that it's the law and company policy, we at (say the company's name) care that you make it home to your family at night. THAT is not stupid. Would you agree?
Employee: "I've been working here for 40 years and never have had an accident. What do you think you're going to tell me that I don't already know?"
Response: That's awesome! Can you talk to us about how you have kept safe for this long? Often times accidents occur because we aren't paying attention. What would you say is the most important part of accident prevention?"

***NOTE**: If the employee is really difficult and says "no" (they won't talk about safety), you can reply by saying, "No problem. I'll be glad to talk about safety and my own experiences and if anyone would like to add anything, please feel free to join in."*

If an employee continues to be disruptive, try taking a break and pulling them aside to talk to him or her privately. Management can also get involved at this point to decide if disciplinary action should be implemented.

IF YOUR AUDIENCE IS DISTRACTED:
Have you ever presented a safety talk to a yawning audience? When you see people playing on their phones, daydreaming, or even sleeping, it can get pretty frustrating, right? What is really important here is to not get frazzled but instead to change your approach.

ADDRESSING THE INVISIBLE ATTITUDE TOWARD SAFETY: CREATE SOME CHALLENGE AND INTERACTION

Don't come off as boring. Even if you've delivered the same message a thousand times, speak with enthusiasm! Remember that you are on center stage and your audience is expected to sit still and be quiet. Their blood is flowing slowly and their minds are not actively being challenged. You'll want to change that by implementing some of the following activities:

1. **Stretch Breaks**: A quick and easy fix is to have everyone stand up and take a stretch break. While they are doing this, start talking about ergonomics, proper lifting techniques, and ask about how their muscles feel on a day-to-day basis.
2. **Hands on Demonstrations**: Get them moving a little bit by having them put on a fall arrest harness the right way or challenge them to properly label a chemical container, hold a fire extinguisher and point out how to use it, or any site-specific tests you can think of (machine guarding, forklift maneuvering, safety evaluation drills, proper tool use, pointing out hazards they see around, etc).
3. **Show and Tell**: Bring in broken tools or equipment and discuss what to do when you see something around the workplace that looks like that. Even toys like construction vehicles or toolboxes add to the level of participation and make the topics more fun.
4. **Play Games**:" Safety Jeopardy" gets employees up after a safety talk. Just set up a podium with three stations (you can include lights, switches, and buzzers too). The students get to ask questions to other students that pertain to what they just learned.
5. **Scenario Training**: "Suddenly you are doing _____ and _____ happens — what are you going to do?" Brainstorm hazardous situations and ask everyone what they would do and discuss the safest way to actually handle the situation. If you need help coming up with topics, LSCI has some on-hand for our clients, so please contact us.
6. **Incentives**: Asking questions gets people involved, but sometimes people will just stare at you and not reply. If this happens, try offering incentives. Incentives can include tangible items (like candy, mints, coffee mugs, shirts), performance perks (an extra or longer work break or letting them leave early one day), or relief of a duty they don't particularly like for a set amount of time (cleaning or dirty work).
7. **Stimulating Pictures**: A large portion of people are visual learners. Think about when you go to a restaurant with a menu that has photos. Aren't you more likely to order something that is pictured? The same concept can be applied to safety. Pick clear, colorful, interesting, and demonstrational pictures. It also helps to incorporate pictures from the workplace or on-the-job tasks. This shows employees exactly what you're trying to focus on instead of giving them a general idea. Lancaster Safety Consulting, Inc. (LSCI) has found the "what's wrong with this picture" theme to be a great way to create discussions among the audience.

CHOOSE TO BE A SAFETY INNOVATOR

Most safety professionals are able to deliver a quick safety talk, but they aren't necessarily getting the message across effectively. Strive to be engaging, enthusiastic, and try not to be boring! Respect your employees/co-workers/audience and encourage them to speak up and get involved. A successful safety program starts with leadership and requires everyone to be on-board. Success takes time and hard work. Don't give up!

Lancaster Safety Consulting, Inc. (LSCI) provides occupational safety and health management services nationwide. Visit them online at lancastersafety.com.

Why Hourly Employees NEED PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

BY CRAIG FEARON

I think it's safe to say that popular wisdom would lead us to believe that giving hourly employees performance reviews is a colossal waste of time and resources- that the sheer volume and high turnover rates of such workers means investing the time to perform reviews is not good business practice.

But this mindset is changing, in part as a response to the growing number, and therefore impact, of hourly workers on business today. The latest US Department of Labor data revealed a surprising statistic. More than 78 million Americans, or almost 59% of the US workforce, are paid on an hourly basis.[1]

These large numbers mean that if the turnover rate in your organization is high, you have a problem. The Center for American Progress estimates the costs of replacing a $10 per hour worker is at least $3,000, which alone may not appear significant, but usually a company will have a larger number of hourly employees making this rather more costly.[2]

But a 2017 Retention Report by the Work Institute revealed that many or the reasons, 75% to be exact, employees leave such jobs are preventable.[3]

So what can you do?

While there are many measures to be taken, starting with the employee evaluation and performance review process is an excellent first step.

Performance reviews fulfill an important function, and I'm not just talking about rating how well someone completes a task. I'm talking about something a little deeper.

THE TOP FOUR PURPOSES PERFORMANCE REVIEWS SERVE:

1. Giving staff members a sense of belonging, or noting when they are putting in extra effort and acknowledging them for a job well done, or conversely, providing guidance when their work is not meeting expectations.
2. Providing feedback on adherence to time and attendance policies — both positive and negative, if applicable. Showing them the number of times they were late, left early, took long lunches, unpaid days off, and even how much sick time they have used.
3. Identifying any areas for improvement, training, and possibly advancement.
4. Demonstrating their value to the organization, which, in turn, may lead to them valuing the organization and being less likely to leave.

Of course, the very nature of the hourly worker can make scheduling a review a problem in itself. When or how should such evaluations take place in the hourly workplace? Suggestions for accommodating the work schedule and not overburdening the employee (or you) include keeping the performance review short and limited to say 15 minutes, scheduling the review outside of peak times, ensuring that you are not leaving the workplace understaffed, and using online performance tools to optimize your face-to-face time. Get creative! There will be gaps in the schedule where this can be fit in — just work around them.

A study on America's hourly workforce illustrates that the length of time employees stay in their jobs is often an indication of how engaged they are — in other words, how much they care about their jobs and put effort into their work but also know that they are valued by the organization.[4] It is in your interest to encourage and engage all employees, not just your salaried staff.

We can help you achieve this. Our SumTotal Talent Expansion Suite includes the tools and real-time feedback you need, including performance reviews and time and attendance tracking, to help you optimize and better engage your entire workforce.

Craig Fearon is a Senior Director, Product Management with SumTotal (www.sumtotalsystems.com) and a self-described "time & attendance geek." With over 17 years optimizing time & attendance, scheduling, absence management and more, he's mastered the art of incorporating complex requirements and unique customer feedback into a user-friendly system.

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IT IS EVERYONE'S JOB TO CARE ABOUT JOB DESCRIPTIONS

BY KATIE BISCHOFF

"That's not in my job description."

It's the response that irks almost every every manager on the planet. The manager then goes to her HR business partner, engages in a whole-body eye roll, and then complains about the employee's lack of team spirit. While we'll empathize with the manager about the employee, we may mumble to ourselves about how long it has been since the manager has actually updated the employee's job description. Then, we get pulled in 100 other directions, all of which demand more of our attention than job descriptions.

The job description (JD) may be the most out-of-date and inaccurate document in all of human resources. And the truth is, we know it. We know that JDs are on the bottom of our priority list and only surface when we need to recruit for the position. We know that JDs help us determine market salary comparisons. We know that employees look at their JDs. We know that candidates look at JDs. We know that JDs can protect us in a disability-discrimination case. We know that JDs provide the basis for classification analysis under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

So, why don't we update JDs regularly? Here are four reasons we should.

1. JDs outline responsibilities and expectations. Employees want to know what their responsibilities are and what's expected of them. From its engagement survey from 2016, Gallup discovered that the failure to set clear responsibilities and expectations is a foundational element to employee engagement.[1] A job description, paired with expectations, can give employees the clear direction they want and help to increase their engagement.

2. JDs repeat what you say. Psychologists (and advertisers) tell us that something needs to be repeated seven times before the human brain acknowledges it was said. This means that telling the employee her JD once at the beginning of her employment isn't going to cut it. A JD offers another way to repeat what you've said during onboarding. As a bonus, the employee can refer to the JD without fear of asking a seemingly embarrassing question. While an employee might already be trained in XYZ job, she may not know how your company operates specifically and might have questions. A job description offers guidance, and maybe even the answer. If it's outdated or inaccurate, she won't get help there.

3. JDs fascinate candidates. While I agree with many employment-branding experts that a vacancy announcement should not be your JD, candidates want to see the JD eventually. Having a JD that is both accurate and exciting can help seal the deal with candidates. So, have updated job descriptions for candidates to review once they progress beyond the initial screen.

4. JDs provide protection. Courts and jurors know to look at a JD for a list of essential functions of a job. If a JD does not have accurate, essential functions because the job has changed over time, there may be no proof to back a manager's claims. This puts the employer in danger of losing a disability-discrimination case. Moreover, when the U.S. Department of Labor questions whether an employee is really exempt under the FLSA, it asks for the JD. When the JD isn't accurate, the exemption could be at risk. When a race-discrimination plaintiff alleges his co-worker is similarly situated, the court will use a comparison of the two JDs to determine whether or not that's the case. If the JD isn't accurate, the employer could be liable.

Reviewing (and adjusting) job descriptions should be an annual practice. Often, however, when asked by HR for updates, many managers grumble, not at all concerned about JDs and even less concerned about why potential compliance issues stem from the document itself.

If you're reading this now, maybe you can be the one to suggest a company-wide JD review... even if that's not in your job description.

Kate Bischoff is an attorney and HR consultant at tHRive Law & Consulting LLC and an HR compliance adjunct professor at Mitchell Hamline School of Law. She can be reached at kbischoff@thrivelawconsulting.com.

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Seven Types of SUPPORT & TRAINING Managers Need

BY SHELLY WALLACE JOHNSON

We have all heard about the importance of learning and development, or training, yet not many employers actively partake in training. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employers with fewer than 100 employees provided only 0.8 hours — that's only 12 minutes — of manager training per six-month period. Organizations with 100-500 employees provided only 0.9 hours (6 minutes) of training for the same time span. Why is this? The number one reason is cost. Whether it is a small business or a Fortune 500 company, training is looked at as just an expense with no return on investment. WRONG! Training is an investment in your employees. The return is better productivity, higher retention rates for top performers, and the creation of a culture of learning.

When you have a top-down structure (think of a pyramid) — with the CEO on top, middle management, then regular everyday employees filling the majority, it's the majority that keeps the business moving forward. We've all heard that "employees leave a manager, not a company." By training those managers more effectively, you can help reduce employee turnover. In fact, a Gallup poll stated that, every year, disengaged employees cost the U.S. economy $370 billion. And the primary driver of that lost productivity is poor supervision.

WHAT TYPES OF TRAINING DO MANAGERS NEED?

The first step is to find out where the issues lie and conduct a "training needs analysis." Creating a survey for anonymous answers from all employees is a great start. Employees feel a better sense of security and less likely to be retaliated against when it is anonymous. By asking employees where they feel management is lacking, you receive a better picture of areas where training might be beneficial.

Typically the top seven areas for manager training are:

- **Leadership Development**: Holding effective meetings and expanding the capacity of performance.
- **Communication**: Business writing, conflict resolution and negotiation.
- **Harassment Prevention**: Sexual and non-sexual harassment.
- **Organization**: Time management, project management, and how to delegate.
- **Diversity**: Examining biases, learning to see all views, and all laws associated with it too.
- **Performance Management**: Building strong teams, employee performance reviews, setting goals.
- **Customer Service**: Without a happy customer, you don't have a business.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO START OFFERING TRAINING?

There are several avenues for implementing a training program. For example, if the company is smaller, it probably won't have a learning and development professional on staff, so outsourcing videos, consultants, and online courses are a good option. Since we are in the technology era, there are many games and apps that can be used too. Consider having multiple options for managers to learn from and evaluate the progress of each training. If people aren't engaged in what they are being taught, chances are they aren't learning. When implementing a training plan, be aware of the content. Is it relevant to one of the seven areas above? Is is relevant to a business need?

The takeaway message is that managers need continuous training, not a one-time class. A person retains information by repetition. Solicit continuous feedback from both the managers who receive the training and the employees of the managers to ensure the trainings are effective. The better a manager is trained, the better job he or she will do, and the higher the bottom line will be for the company.

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How to Weigh

Soft Skills DURING INTERVIEWS

BY ALLIE KELLY

Traditional interview questions often focus too much on experience. Interviewers ask candidates if they possess certain skills or how they've used those skills in the past. Those are helpful and necessary questions, but they don't provide a complete picture of candidates — especially of their soft skills.

In fact, the focus on soft skills has been pushed to the forefront lately. Even investment giant, Mark Cuban, has recently expressed their importance when determining whether or not a candidate can create a lasting career. A thorough interview should assess the candidate's hard skills (such as computer coding or writing proficiency), as well as his or her soft skills (like emotional intelligence, adaptability, and ability to communicate effectively). Assessing both sets of skills will help interviewers gain the most insight from their future interviews.

USE THE POWER OF THREE

Sometimes, it takes more than one person to completely assess a candidate. That's why Monster recommends taking a team approach to the hiring process. Essentially, there should be three main stakeholders in the interview: an advocate for the company; a technical expert; and a peer.[1]

The technical expert, who is often a manager, can assess the candidate for hard skills, while the peer (someone in the same or similar position) can assess for soft skills. Meanwhile, the company advocate is there to answer questions posed by the candidate and talk about the benefits of working for the organization.

This three-pronged approach ensures that the hiring team covers all bases, increasing the chances that the final hire will be a well-rounded professional who can bring real value to the team and to the company.

ASK CANDIDATES TO SELF-ASSESS

Asking candidates to self-assess can be a challenge for them because they tend to try to impress the interviewer. No one wants to kill their own chances of securing a job by downplaying their soft skills. To circumvent this issue, LinkedIn Talent Blog contributor, John Sullivan, recommends asking candidates to rank their soft skills.[2] Ranking forces candidates to reveal which soft skill they believe is their strongest. Then, the interviewer can evaluate that skill, along with the hard skills, to determine which candidate will make the best hire.

TRY PERSONALITY TESTS

Personality tests are not an exact science, but they can be a helpful tool for interviewers. Personality tests allow hiring managers to get a closer look at how candidates might react in certain job-specific situations. HR should always be in charge of administering these kinds of tests to ensure full compliance with all hiring laws.

ALIGN CANDIDATES WITH COMPANY CULTURE

Your employees shape your company culture, but the opposite is also true. There is a give-and-take between individual influence and collective appeal. A managed culture promotes good habits, teamwork, and accountability. Hiring managers should consider giving candidates an office tour to see how they interact with the culture.

To summarize, hiring managers should consider:

- involving more stakeholders in the interview process.
- asking candidates to assess their own skills.
- implementing personality tests.
- using company culture as a hiring tool.

Sourcing candidates in a tight job market can be a headache, but it doesn't have to be. Recruitment software such as JazzHR streamlines processes, automates time-consuming tasks, and frees up HR personnel to spend more time building relationships with candidates.

Allie Kelly is the vice president of marketing at JazzHR (www.jazzhr.com), where they're on a mission to make recruiting and hiring easy, effective, and scalable no matter what growth looks like at your company. The Jazz Performer Platform doesn't just help your company grow, it can help your recruiting process grow up, putting you on the path to hiring "Performers Only."

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REPLACING *Human Managers* WITH PROGRAMMING IN THE GIG ECONOMY

BY REBECCA KING

Although legal tests for determining employment status in the gig economy have taken center stage (thanks to numerous recent high-profile cases), lurking in the background is an even bigger question: what happens if and when traditional "manager" roles are filled by automated systems? A case study of one automation-dependent company yielded findings with interesting implications not only for that company and its industry but for all companies that rely on automated platforms to fulfill many managerial functions. Drawing on stakeholder theory (which "suggests that a company's managers should make decisions based on the considerations of all parties, including workers . . . [and not] exclusively on stockholders"), a team of researchers who evaluated drivers' stakes in Uber concluded that the ride-sharing platform itself fulfills some traditional managerial roles.[1]

The most obvious managerial function handled by Uber's automated platform is the assignment of work: the system uses its algorithm to assign pickup requests to Uber drivers. (Unlike the subordinate in a traditional manager–subordinate relationship, though, an Uber driver can choose to decline an assignment for any reason.) The system also conducts a type of performance review by averaging passenger ratings and feedback regarding the percentage of pickups a driver accepts: "drivers with a low average passenger rating and acceptance rate may be subject to review or even immediate deactivation on the ridesharing platform"—a practice that parallels termination for poor performance under traditional management conditions.[2] The platform can also send drivers requests to work particular shifts if it predicts heavy demand (though drivers who choose not to work those shifts suffer no consequences).

Although drivers can decline assignments and choose their own hours, a management platform could certainly be programmed to take actions (such as making assignments mandatory or automatically scheduling required shifts) that more closely support traditional manager–subordinate roles. Using artificial intelligence to take over some of these traditional management functions may become an increasingly appealing solution to organizations. In particular, companies may be more likely to make that shift if replacing managers with machines results in cost savings.

However, the study did reveal some of the significant shortcomings of such a system. These platforms do not yet seem to have a good way to collect and evaluate ideas or proposals in order to take the best ideas "up the ladder" to improve the company's products and services. Also, there does not seem to be a way for these systems to recognize interpersonal conflict or challenges among team members—an omission that could potentially leave explosive situations unresolved.

In addition, these systems have little ability to address grievances and investigate complaints. Although dealing with complaints may not be the most glamorous part of a manager's role, workers' ability to voice their concerns and grievances is important for the health of the company. And, perhaps most importantly, managers usually play an integral role in investigations of complaints because they generally have knowledge of the events and circumstances surrounding the complaint as well as the ability to voice the rationale behind business decisions. These investigations can be crucial both to identifying and terminating problematic workers while retaining good workers and to defending against claims or lawsuits.

Although machines have not yet replaced human managers, it may only be a matter of time before they do. In addition to evaluating any implications for determining independent contractor status, however, companies should be aware (and prepared to address potential issues) raised by the use of mechanical managers, particularly in regard to the resolution of grievances and investigations.

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