Using Data to
Recognize, Reward, and Retain
High-Potential Employees

> ## As we approach the 40th Anniversary of our Company in 2019, I feel compelled to reflect back on the incredible journey that brings us to this milestone. — *Kathy Hartung*

THE RESOURCE

It began with a successful Business Woman helping her employee strike out on their own, with her help. Then came an early 80's recession that made it difficult for a small Head Hunting company to survive - which lead to a majority Partner investing and keeping the business afloat. This majority Partner/ Investor was a brilliant visionary; always looking for the next venture and intrigued by the growing "Temporary business" in town that needed some competition.

My career here began 35 years ago, when a connection led me to this Visionary who wanted to compete in the Temporary market. He provided the financial support and left it to us to build it. It was the best job ever because we got to create it one day at a time, one customer at a time, and learn from every mistake and success along the way. I can remember that no one thought I had a real job because it wasn't one of the big companies everyone was familiar with. I think it was about 20 years before it was officially seen as a "real job"!

Let's just say the 'hiring landscape' today doesn't even resemble hiring 35 years ago..... As I think back to all paper, telephone and in-person. Newspaper was the only way to advertise jobs. No background checks until the early 90's. The mid 90's brought an influx of Spanish-speaking applicants, and we actually taught English as a second language in our conference room every week. Our first computers were purchased in the mid 90's and we hired a company to build our first Database/Applicant Tracking System. We also taught our applicants the Microsoft suite of tools, so they could qualify for our jobs. We had full-time Trainers on staff who worked with candidates everyday at no cost to them. Also in this 90's timeframe, the "drug free workplace" was the buzz and drug testing became the norm; Pre-employment, for-cause, and post-accident. We implemented Account Management and employee friendly services to help improve the success rate of candidates and the experience of the customers. Throughout the 80's and 90's we moved, expanded, contracted, and consolidated. We consolidated in 1998 to one location in Winston-Salem, before expanding again in 2004 to Greensboro, and 2005 into Mocksville and Lexington. Then, the recession of 2008 stopped us in our tracks - *with 47% loss of business in 30 days*. This forced us to reorganize, restructure and lay off a lot of valued employees. On top of this, we had to prepare to lose our biggest customer to a "lowest bid" situation, after 20 years of providing great solutions at a great value. I must say I still don't get "doing a great job" for a customer for a long time and being rewarded with the request to reduce price, cut pay and benefits for employees, and keep doing a great job. There is a time to walk away and we had to do that then. It never feels 'right' or 'good', but it is a smart and important business decision that must be made. If you keep the faith, the next opportunity is always on the horizon, and for us that opportunity was in new states!
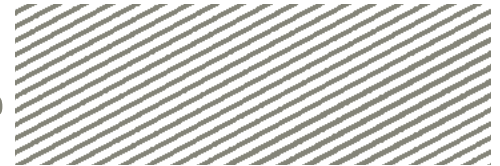
Stay tuned: As we celebrate our company's 40th Anniversary in 2019, I will continue to share more about how we are wired, the incredible POWER in that understanding, and growing to be your BEST SELF in business and in life!

> **" Are you operating as your BEST SELF? How can we help you be your BEST SELF? Call me. In 10 minutes after taking the CORE, I can begin to help you understand how... "**

Best Regards,

Kathy Hartung

Kathy Hartung, CEO

HR INSIGHTS Magazine

COVER STORY

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Using Data to Recognize, Reward, and Retain High-Potential Employees

BY ADAM ROGERS

HR INSIGHTS

from the eyes of industry leaders
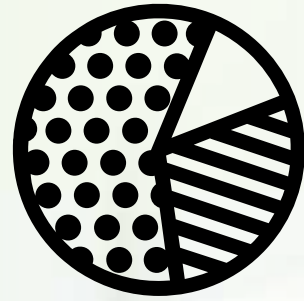
Using Data to
Recognize, Reward, and Retain
High-Potential Employees

BY ADAM ROGERS

FINDING, RETAINING, AND ENGAGING TOP TALENT is consistently one of the biggest challenges organizations face. Developing high-potential employees is crucial for priming future leaders and improving organizational performance while building a culture that fosters growth from within. Having a solid pipeline of high-potential talent is also one of the best ways to ensure future competitive advantage through intentional, strategic, and proactive (rather than reactive) succession planning.

Yet few companies have a formal program in place for identifying high-potential employees, and those that do "seem to lack a high level of satisfaction with its effectiveness."[1] With the right strategy and tools, however, identifying and developing both current and future high-potential employees becomes a data-driven and highly effective process. Organizations that follow this course will be rewarded with engaged, committed, and productive employees; better business outcomes; and strategic succession plans.

THE CHALLENGES OF SPOTTING POTENTIAL

Identifying high-potential employees is perhaps the most difficult—and most high-stakes—aspect of leadership development. Organizations that promote the wrong people lose valuable individual contributors to management roles and risk seeing other top performers flee to competitors. They must also deal with possible substantial reductions to team engagement and morale.

The innate difficulty of judging someone else's inner workings renders personality analysis ineffectual as a primary predictor of employees' future success. Manager nominations and performance reviews to determine future value are also inherently flawed tools, due to personal bias or political networking. Even current performance doesn't always indicate future potential accurately, because even though "all high potentials are high performers . . . not all high performers are high potentials."[2]

So if personality, manager recommendations, and high performance aren't quality indicators of potential, what's left?

THE SCIENCE OF POTENTIAL

Thanks to Big Data and tech innovation, today's leaders possess detailed profiles for each employee. A profile includes a great deal of information about a person, such as his or her job and salary history, goals, achievements, performance reviews, department-wide recognition, learning-module completion, advanced certifications, previous actions and outcomes, and so much more. By subjecting this employee data to statistically accurate algorithms, advanced human capital management tools can analyze millions of data points

Through this type of analysis, companies can zero in on employees who exhibit the potential for high performance or leadership. The ability to spot not only current top performers but also the employees most likely to succeed with strategic development is truly game changing. Armed with this information, organizations can build succession plans, consider future compensation or professional development, and decide which top performers are worth long-term investments. This is the kind of insight leaders could only dream about 20 years ago.

These advanced systems can also leverage data to identify and predict engagement and retention, thus allowing leaders to focus on retaining those high-value employees. The systems can also send managers automatic alerts when an employee falls below a specified benchmark,

so that they can suggest new challenges or training opportunities, for example, or offer promotions or compensation increases. Everybody wins: managers benefit from improved employee effectiveness, engagement, and retention; and employees enjoy increased recognition and opportunities to influence their career trajectories.

TURNING POTENTIAL INTO PERFORMANCE

Once high-potential employees have been identified, it's important that companies develop them strategically. Because high-potential employees usually know that they're outperforming their peers, it's crucial to begin the development process before their motivation wanes and they begin looking for outside opportunities. It's also important to remember that although these individuals have potential, they're often not ready to jump into leadership roles.

Here are a few best practices for developing high-potential employees into successful and effective leaders:

· **Create specialized leadership tracks.** These can include education, certifications, multidisciplinary programs across departments and divisions, and other types of development programs. If possible, offer unlimited learning opportunities for high-potential employees, most of whom will be excited about continuous skill growth and recognize that this investment in them signals confidence in their long-term value to the company.

· **Keep a finger on the pulse of their feelings.** Cognitive assessment and sentiment analysis leverage machine learning and natural-language processing to analyze open-ended text and identify themes, emotions, and red flags. They can reveal exactly how high-potential employees truly feel about their roles, motivations, and expectations.

· **Offer mentorship and coaching.** Many great leaders credit at least part of their success to the devoted mentors or coaches who guided them through their careers. The road to leadership is rife with potholes and detours, and the ability to learn from someone else's mistakes (as well as his or her successes) is truly invaluable.

· Leadership, both good and bad, plays a fundamental role in organizational effectiveness, success, and morale. Developing a succession program that effectively identifies and develops top talent into a steady pipeline of senior leadership is critical to the success of any organization. When a company's succession strategy leaves something to be desired, emerging technology offers solutions that can have a positive impact on the long-term quality and effectiveness of the organization's people and business.

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Note: This article originally appeared on the *Forbes* website.

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When Is
Change Management
Needed?

BY SHARLYN LAUBY
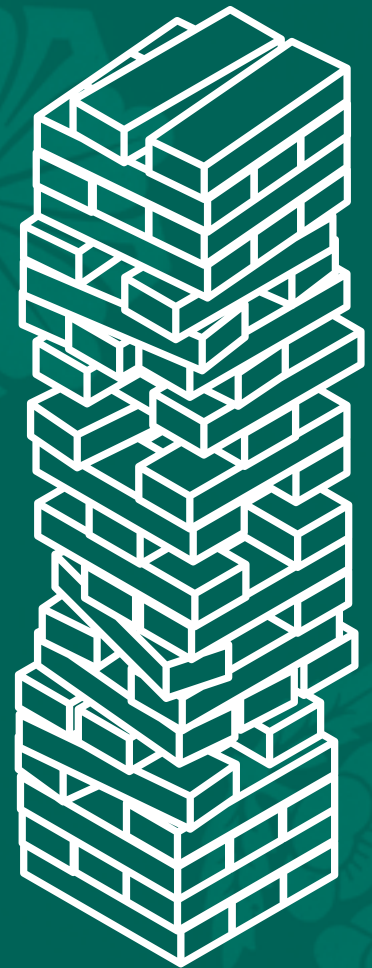
Research shows that 70 percent of complex, large-scale change programs don't reach their stated goals. Common pitfalls include a lack of employee engagement, inadequate management support, poor or nonexistent cross-functional collaboration, and a lack of accountability.[1]

The reasons for such management failures aren't surprising. The real surprise is that although those reasons and the odds of failure are obvious, organizations still haven't found a way to remedy the situation—even when it's clear that conducting change-management activities can yield significant benefits. (One study, for example, found that companies with excellent change management efforts gained an average of 143 percent of the returns they expected.[2]) In short, organizations that manage change well see a positive change to their bottom lines.

Ideally, companies should think about change management constantly. But that's not a reasonable expectation. There are, however, some situations in which they should definitely ask themselves, "Would it be helpful to include a change management activity in our plans?"

- **When something new is happening.** Many organizations think about change management for large-scale implementations (such as bringing a new technology solution in house or adding a new product line). But what about the small changes (such as a new policy or procedure)? Those are often the types of changes that frustrate employees the most—not because the changes are bad or wrong, but because the employees aren't adequately prepared for them. Organizations would benefit from using both large and small changes as opportunities to set expectations and make sure everyone is on the same page.

- **When something needs to be fixed.** Companies must regularly revise processes that no longer work. They often must repair broken equipment or even replace it with newer (and different) models. Change happens—and organizations have to react accordingly. But that doesn't mean these situations are easy. Creating process maps can help companies communicate with employees about the change, including the steps involved in moving from the current state to the desired one.

- **When business is falling behind.** Technology-related problems or a lack of infrastructure can hold companies back. For example, because many companies rely on technology to reduce redundancies and help their businesses grow, older hardware and software could limit their ability to service customers. People are accustomed to using the Internet for much of what they do in their personal lives (depositing checks, scheduling medical appointments, etc.), and expect to be able to do so for their work- and consumer-related lives as well. Organizations cannot afford to fall behind customer and employee expectations.

- **When the company wants to lead the competition.** Every organization has to make the strategic decision either to lead the market or to lag behind it. Each option has its own pros and cons, and the choice could be shaped in part by that industry's likelihood for disruption. Organizations that choose to lead will experience change more proactively, faster, and more frequently than those that choose to lag (and therefore must be prepared to react to the surrounding change). Whether a company chooses to lead or to lag, change management becomes to some extent a part of its culture. Dealing with change proactively is significantly different from reacting to it, though, and employees need to know how to do both effectively.

- **When an employee leaves or arrives.** The other situations all involve changes in processes and strategy, but change management is also necessary when the organization makes changes in people. Whether the new hire or the departing staff member is a good or bad employee is irrelevant to this point. Every individual is different, and everyone must adapt to new working methods, communication preferences, and leadership styles.

(Note that although these five situations are common examples of organizational change, they can also shape employees' personal goals, obstacles, and job changes, such as promotions or moves to other companies. So a mastery of change management is critical not just at the company level but at the individual level as well.)

FORMAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT EFFORTS PAY OFF

At first glance this list might seems to indicate that change management should be an "all the time" thing. But a closer look reveals that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" is the dominant theme here: when the status quo is fine, companies can leave well enough alone. When change is necessary, however, organizations should embrace change management (without trying to dismiss the need for it with "it's only a small change" or "no one will notice, so let's not bother" or "we already did change management training a couple of years ago"). By investing in change management, organizations not only mitigate future setbacks but also move closer to realizing their gains.

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how to keep today's TECH-SAVVY candidates engaged

Today's candidates have different expectations from job seekers of previous years. Technological innovations have shaped many of those expectations, and companies that want to attract those candidates need to figure out how to use new technologies to connect with them. Here are four strategies for keeping this group engaged throughout the recruitment process.

BY SAMANTHA SPANO

USE SMS AND MESSENGING

Text messaging may not be brand-new technology, but it remains one of the most widely used forms of communication on the planet. Today nearly 13 million texts are sent each minute![1] And SMS alternatives continue to grow and thrive as well, with the message apps WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, for example, conveying a combined 50 billion messages per day.[2] When appropriate, communicating with candidates via texting and app-based messaging can be a highly effective way to keep them engaged. With the average American spending "over four hours a day" on his or her mobile phone, recruiters who aren't leveraging mobile platforms could be missing out on many opportunities to reach candidates.[3]

RESPOND TO INQUIRIES QUICKLY

Candidates don't like to wait around to hear about their prospects of landing a desirable position. That holds especially true in today's communication environment, in which texting features heavily and "95% of texts [are] read within 3 minutes of being sent."[4] People expect quick responses to the texts they send and usually regard a delayed response as a sign of uninterest. Therefore the faster a company's recruiters can respond to inquiries from candidates in their recruitment pipelines, the more opportunities those organizations will have to keep their candidates engaged.

USE VIDEOS AS ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Companies that have qualified candidates but nowhere to place them yet need to keep those candidates engaged so they are still around when open positions become available. Providing candidates with additional materials about the organization's culture and values can keep those professionals interested, especially when that information is delivered by video. Cisco research indicates that "globally, IP video traffic will be 82 percent of all IP traffic (both business and consumer) by 2021, up from 73 percent in 2016"—clear signs that the growth of video won't be slowing down any time soon.[5] Because people are already accustomed to getting their information from video, companies can use this trend to their advantage by designing video content that speaks to candidates at each stage along the recruitment pipeline.

OPTIMIZE RECRUITING PLATFORMS FOR MOBILE

People of all ages use mobile devices to look for work. Although Millennials (at a rate of 78 percent) engage in this activity slightly more than other generations, the members of Generation X (73 percent) and Baby Boomers (57 percent), too, search for jobs on their devices.[6] If a company's website and application system don't work well on small screens, candidates will get frustrated and leave.

New innovations in communication keep coming down the pike, and companies that don't leverage them will be left behind in the race to attract top candidates. By paying attention to and following candidates' preferred methods of communication, organizations can broader their reach for recruitment. ■

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PROMOTING RESPECT AND COLLABORATION IN THE OFFICE

BY VALERIE M. GRUBB

> " Employees don't need to be best friends, but there does need to be a level of mutual respect and understanding.
> — **KATHRYN MINSHEW, COFOUNDER AND CEO OF THE MUSE**

In the era of #MeToo, how employees interact with one another has come under greater scrutiny—and for good reason: one recent study found that over 60 million Americans are affected (as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses) by workplace bullying.[1] Bullying takes many forms at the office, such as berating employees (including direct reports or other junior staff), stealing credit for work or ideas, excluding fellow employees from critical meetings or communications, making sarcastic or snide remarks, giving unfair criticism, and speaking negatively about someone behind his or her back. These behaviors take a massive toll on employees, with "40% of targets . . . believed to suffer from adverse health consequences from bullying."[2]

How do things get so out of hand?

Unfortunately, many organizations put so much emphasis on finding and hiring great people that they often give short shrift to helping their employees maximize their potential as colleagues. Instead, HR and hiring managers often just throw employees together and expect them to know how to get along with each other. Sometimes a company gets lucky, and that approach (or, more accurately stated, lack of approach) works. Often, though, it doesn't work—and occasionally it can backfire spectacularly. Rather than take the chance that "everything will just work out" in these situations, managers need to work actively to create environments that foster respect and collaboration among diverse populations.

INCLUSION AND COLLABORATION

"
Different people have different opinions, and it's okay to respect all of them.
—**JUAN PABLO GALAVIS**, FORMER PROFESSIONAL SOCCER PLAYER

When managers and company leaders respect differences and require collaboration, they create an environment in which employees are able to put their best selves forward to leverage their diverse talents, skills, and attributes in support of their organizations' missions (rather than get bogged down in petty infighting, gossip, or other unproductive behavior). But that's possible only when people respect each other, both as colleagues and as individuals with unique backgrounds and skills. Companies that promote and foster an attitude of respect position their employees to be more open to the richness of perspectives, ideas, and innovations that can emerge from diverse life and work experiences.

Note that respect doesn't require always agreeing with other people's perspectives. Complete agreement isn't possible, nor does it make sense (consider how "group think" can kill innovation!). After all, a company's workforce isn't made up of a bunch of identical automatons. Rather, each employee within an organization is an individual with unique abilities, goals, motivations, and personality.

These differences mean that every relationship (be it manager–subordinate or employee–employee) has to be negotiated on its own terms—there's no "one size fits all" solution. This approach takes some work but has an immense upside, because positive workplace interactions can have a huge effect on a host of factors that influence a company's bottom line, such as:

- A work environment in which everyone can reach his or her full potential
- Multiple perspectives on solutions to problems
- Better performance outcomes
- More successful hiring outcomes
- Increased productivity
- Increased retention rates
- Improved morale
- Improved customer relations
- Reduction in employee complaints and grievances
- Increased profitability

Creating an inclusive and collaborative work environment seems like a great idea, doesn't it? But how does an organization achieve that?

A NEW APPROACH TO LEADING

A culture of respect can exist only when interactions include positive and inclusive communication and an appreciation for what each person brings to the company. To accomplish this goal, managers need to encourage (and,

if necessary, teach) employees how to engage in the following behaviors:

- **Practice positive and constructive work habits:** give credit to others (especially to introverts who may be overlooked); meet deadlines (without being hounded by others to supply information or respond to e-mail); don't eat other people's food in the refrigerator (something that many people don't learn while growing up, unfortunately!)

- **Work cooperatively toward a common goal:** focus on solving the problem (not on being right); accept new ideas from any source (not just those suggested by a certain circle of friends); be open to change if it helps the organization (even at expense to oneself or to one's department)

- **Be sensitive to others' needs:** think (and listen) before speaking; don't interrupt others; actively seek out (and listen to) diverse opinions; during meetings, speak up for introverts (and manage strong personalities) to encourage everyone to contribute

- **Be open to differences:** ask tactful questions about how people want to be treated (and then follow those preferences); don't assume that one's own idea is the only idea with merit; assume positive intent (rather than assume that someone intended a slight)

- **Commit to inclusivity:** work to eliminate stereotypes, prejudices, and generalizations about others in the workplace (especially about physical appearance and other non–job-related traits); always remember that everyone is an individual who is striving to do a job to the best of his or her ability

Managers who want their employees to respect each other must help them develop the cultural competency they need to interact with people who are different from themselves. Employees need to learn how to respect others' opinions and acknowledge differences without becoming defensive about them. They need to be open to learning about other cultures and ideas, and when a dispute arises, they need to give others the benefit of the doubt and try to understand different points of view.

These are, however, just rough guidelines. Like people, organizations, too, are unique, and each company needs to develop its own goals and strategies to achieve them. Fortunately, companies don't have to figure all of this out on their own. With heightened awareness of the value of respect and its connection to collaboration, there's been increased interest in developing tools that can help organizations improve in those areas. So when a manager is ready to overhaul his or her organization's approach to how respect issues influence the workplace, a little digging around will almost certainly turn up an expert who offers presentations, workshops, and other trainings to guide the company through this process. ∎

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Reveal the

Hidden Talent

in Your Own Organization

BY DAVID STURT AND TODD NORDSTROM

It's here, it's real, and it's simultaneously stressful and awesome. The current talent shortage is great for employees and job seekers, but it's also creating intense competition as companies try both to hire more employees and to onboard new staff properly. "It's great to be hiring," Allison Davidson, an HR manager, told us in a recent conversation. "But I'm a little worried that we're losing focus on whether or not our new people are good fits for our culture."

Many leaders have expressed this concern—and for good reason: numerous studies have shown significant turnover rates within the first 90 days of employment (and those already high rates can increase dramatically during a talent shortage, when companies are actively recruiting each others' employees). Those aren't easy numbers for any organization to digest when it's just spent time, money, and energy trying to hire only the best.

Organizations that struggle to improve their onboarding and retention of new employees often overlook one particular pool of candidates: those who are already inside those companies. Through inboarding, companies can help existing employees improve the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitude they need to grow within their own organizations. More than just "hiring from within," inboarding empowers employees to discover new paths and opportunities within their organizations and resocializes them (many of whom might be longstanding employees) to the current and emerging cultures of their companies.

Jamie Schneiderman, CEO and founder of Career Spark (a company that matches people to jobs), recently explained to us that when his clients take a close look at their current employees when trying to fill openings, "they almost feel as though they've struck gold, because they realize that the people they like and trust—and who already fit into the culture—would exhibit superior performance in a different role." He continued:

Companies typically hire people to fill a specific need. But then sometimes they forget about what that person could do by either expanding the job description or moving them into a different role completely. We shouldn't be so focused

on what people have done in the past or what they do for us today.

Instead, leaders should focus on potential—on what people could bring to their teams if they were given the chance—particularly during talent shortages. "Think about how your current employees feel when you're out hiring all kinds of new people and they've committed themselves to your company for 5, 10, or even 15 years," Schneiderman pointed out. "If they see a perfect role open up and they get looked over for the position, they're not going to be happy."

Leaders who are currently looking to hire new talent should consider these points before they start making the big offers:

- **Are the organization's current employees in the right roles?** This is a big question, and answering it can be a big undertaking—but one well worth the effort. "If you've got people in the wrong roles, and don't change it, you'll never reach your potential," Schneiderman explained. "The wrong roles can be extremely costly."

- **Does the company have a good inboarding plan?** Remember, inboarding is more than just hiring from within or reassigning employees—it also involves reintroducing them to purpose and to the organization's current (and emerging) culture. A leader's job is to help his or her employees become the best they can be, and good leaders consistently look for growth and development opportunities for their current people.

- **Does the organization have a good onboarding plan?** Onboarding is more than just showing people where the breakroom is and wishing them luck. Taking the time to develop a solid onboarding program can yield great dividends.

- **Is the company keeping its best employees?** It's one thing for a company to be looking for new talent because it's growing, and another to be looking because its people are leaving for other opportunities. Find out why they are leaving (compensation, benefits, cultural fit, recognition, etc.) and do everything possible to hold on to the best.

With changes in the job market come changes in how leaders need to view recruiting, hiring, and retaining employees. Hiring new people might seem exciting (especially when it's part of a team or company's growth). But leaders shouldn't forget that the gold they seek might already be directly under their feet. ■

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Great Customer Experience
Can't Exist without
Great Employee Experience

BY MEGAN BURNS

Companies are investing millions to improve customer experience because they think that investment is the best way (and sometimes the only way) to attract and retain customers in a competitive market. But this approach has one major problem: it rarely includes HR—and the employee experience—as part of the conversation. If employees are not having great experiences as employees, it's hard for them to provide a great experiences to customers. As the Canadian restauranteur Stephen Beckta put it, "People can never really care for others if they don't feel cared for themselves."[1]

Donna Morris, the executive vice president of customer and employee experience at Adobe, echoes this sentiment. "Empathy is something that's so important in all relationships . . . whether it be with a customer or an employee, the reality is we're all people who want to connect," she points out.[2] Research shows that people are more loyal to an organization as workers and as customers when they feel valued by it, and a company's brand as an employer is intertwined with its consumer brand. For example, Google searches display Glassdoor ratings next to product details (whether the company likes it or not). And according to research by the Talent Board, 43 percent of people who have a negative candidate experience with an organization will "sever [their] ties completely" with it.[3]

Companies are starting to bring customer experience and employee experience together in more formal ways, particularly by emphasizing experience in some of their executive roles. (For example, Marriott recently named its first "chief customer experience officer," and Airbnb recast its chief human resources officer role as "chief employee experience officer.") But building a bridge between HR and customer experience doesn't require a certain title. A company's HR staff just needs to reach out to its customer experience experts (who are usually found in marketing, business units, or operations areas).

Once the connection is made, HR and the customer experience team can sit down together to review plans, priorities, and metrics. They will almost certainly find areas of overlap. They'll also find plenty of areas where they can join forces. Here are some success stories that can inspire any organization:

EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Software company Verint Systems wanted to know what its employees thought of how it treats customers, so the organization's HR and customer experience teams partnered to do an employee survey on the topic. HR led the design and fielding, while customer service led analysis of the survey results and incorporated the findings into its experience improvement roadmap.

COMMUNICATION

Because customer service representatives are often ill prepared to answer questions about a new product, one company asked its design engineers to make training videos specifically for that group and explain in their own words how things are supposed to work and why. The videos helped "translate" the products for the customer service representatives. They also helped build rapport between groups who might otherwise never meet.

RECRUITMENT

Security guards are the first and last people customers interact with at Tiffany's, and the company wanted its customers to feel as welcomed and protected as its expensive merchandise. So the customer service team at Tiffany's helped redesign how the company hires and trains its security guards. Since the changes, the guards have become the employees who receive the most praise in customer feedback.

EMPATHY

The process of mapping customer journeys can also boost employee morale. For example, HR can invite front-line staff to join workshops in which participants spell out in detail the frustrating rules, hoops, and workarounds they have to negotiate in order to resolve customer issues. At first, some attendees may be leery of participating ("How honest can these conversations really be?" they think), but that feeling fades quickly, and at the end of the day employees often feel heard in a way they never have before.

COMPENSATION

Oracle adjusted how it paid its sales teams so that the new system included customer referencability as a key measure of success. The company wanted to emphasize that *how* it sells (that is, the customer experience) matters at least as much as— if not more than—*how much* it sells.

As these examples show, leaders in HR and customer experience are working toward the same goal: a culture that treats people as human beings instead of "assets," "consumers," or "users." Progress on this is steady—but it's slower than anyone would like. But if HR and customer experience combine their expertise, resources, and passion on a larger scale, change can happen even faster.

Megan Burns is a speaker, writer, and executive coach who helps leaders find practical, sustainable ways to change company habits so their customer experience doesn't just get better, it stays better.

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THE FUTURE OF

THE APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEM

BY JEANETTE MAISTER

The applicant tracking system (ATS) may seem out of date to many people. But this type of software application still has plenty of open opportunities for improvement and innovation. Like a computer with ports for multiple types of USB connectors, applicant tracking systems are designed to be compatible with current and emergent technologies in order to create faster, better, and more robust recruiting experiences. Given such flexibility, ATSs are likely to thrive in several areas.
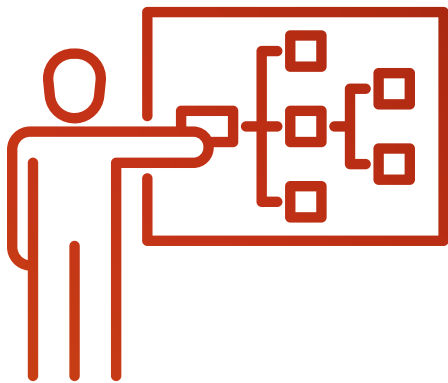
STRENGTHENING THE TALENT PIPELINE

Developing, managing, and nurturing candidate relationships are becoming vital aspects of talent acquisition. One recent survey highlighted their importance: "78 percent [of respondents] say the overall candidate experience they receive is an indicator of how a company values its people."[1] Another survey on the same topic found that "58 percent of those with a prior negative impression of the hiring organization said they would not apply again in the future."[2] Clearly, companies that want to acquire top talent (and keep them on board) need to make building candidate relationships a top priority.

Integrating candidate relationship management (CRM) software with an ATS can help an organization accomplish this goal. CRM enables companies to automate each step of their recruitment marketing processes, thus helping them nurture the right relationships and strengthen their talent pipeline. Through its integration with an ATS, CRM can promote the job description while nurturing candidates with unique communication and tailored, relevant candidate experiences.

One specific CRM feature that will help to further talent pipeline nurturing is SMS capability. This is something in high demand among job seekers, with 73 percent of respondents to one recent survey indicating that they prefer "to receive targeted jobs via text messaging."[3] For this reason using a CRM with this function makes it possible for a company to attract and engage with top talent more easily than ever before.

MAXIMIZING EFFICIENCY WITH ALGORITHMS

It's becoming increasingly difficult to predict whether someone will be a good fit. For example, just because a candidate has an impressive set of diplomas doesn't necessarily mean he or she will be a "rock star" employee. Some well-educated candidates may be naturally good at taking tests and passing classes, but traits such as strong work ethic, goal-driven passion, and determination can't be measured by academic evaluations.

Recruiters need to know which well-qualified candidates are most likely to accept an offer and stay with the team long enough to make a real impact at the organization. That's why they are increasingly using tools such as intelligent selection, which uses prescriptive analytics to measure overall job fit, offer acceptance probability, retention probability, and more. Another algorithm-based tool, intelligent automation, enables employers to automate interview scheduling for the most qualified candidates.

Intelligent selection and intelligent automation can be valuable partners for an ATS. They can reshape the talent acquisition process and enable companies to bring in the best, most diverse talent available. Such tools are what an ATS needs in order to grow a company-wide culture of upward talent mobility and improve their overall quality of hire

PROMOTING INTERNAL TALENT FASTER

The future of the ATS is no longer talent-driven; instead, it's team-driven. Talented employees are coming together into groups of highly-skilled, dynamic, and diverse individuals: a talent workforce. The more talent a firm has, the stronger its talent workforce. On its own, an ATS can't fully manage this resource.

No one wants a dead-end job, so most people seek opportunities for growth in their work. Career opportunity software provides the means to nurture internal talent for growth. Setting current employees on a path to success is usually faster and more cost-effective than recruiting new talent from outside the firm—and it keeps an organization's best talent on board longer.

Using an internal career opportunity platform gives the talent acquisition team the ability to customize application forms that leverage existing employee data and gather information unique to internal employees. Because their information is already being tracked by the system, internal talent can essentially be fast tracked to best-fit opportunities. This will give recruiters a better idea of how an individual may fit on a team and perform in particular situations. This information can improve recruiters' ability to form teams of talent based on existing employee pools of candidates.

Although the ATS may seem a little long in the tooth, it still has plenty of life in it yet! When combined with new approaches and technologies, applicant tracking systems have the ability to grow with their industries and increase their functionality. ■

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THE EPIDEMIC OF MULTITAS

BY DAVID MIZNE

I use only a handful of mobile applications, haven't owned a television in a decade, and choose to drive a 2001 truck because it doesn't talk to me or try to help me park. I proudly consider myself a Neo-Luddite and strive to use only as much technology as is absolutely necessary (and to forge a healthy relationship with the tech that I do use). Yet in spite of all that, I'm addicted to technology.

Like me, many people find themselves cycling constantly through the apps on their phones, a behavior that causes physical discomfort best described as "a cloud in the brain" and leads to periodic creative burnout. Many of these apps are designed (or, at least, marketed) to facilitate multitasking, which more and more research shows to be unhealthy. (Multitasking is today what tobacco smoking was just a few decades ago: an activity that everyone knows is harmful but still does anyway.) In an attempt to improve their ability to multitask, many people are turning to another unhealthy behavior: technology addiction. Hopping back and forth between different apps in an attempt to multitask better also causes anxiety, which increases activity in the more primitive brain structures designed to keep us safe from danger and decreases activity in other areas (such as the frontal lobe) that have adapted for critical thinking and creativity.

Turning away from technology isn't easy, though, because as Nir Eyal (an expert on the intersection of psychology, technology, and business and the author of *Hooked: How to Build Habit Forming Products*) points out, people are internally triggered to use certain software:

Internal triggers are cues informed by mental associations and memories. Certain places, situations, routines, and, most frequently, uncomfortable emotions all act as internal triggers. When we're lonely, we check Facebook. When we're uncertain, we Google. And when we're bored, we check YouTube, sports scores, Pinterest, or any number of other digital distractions.[1]

Nearly everyone who uses a communication app encounters these internal triggers. And things are made worse by what Eyal refers to as external triggers. These include the little red badges on apps; the pop-up notifications on screens; and the incessant buzzes, dings, and chimes that compel people to pay attention immediately to whatever new e-mail, Facebook post, calendar reminder, or tweet has appeared. ("Quick, tap the icon *right now!*")

Fortunately, all is not lost! By taking the following steps, it's possible to build a healthier relationship with technology and work.

TAKE SOME DOWNTIME

There's a widespread belief that both in business and in life it's important to be productive at all times. What nonsense! Numerous studies have shed light on the brain's need for downtime and on "how mental breaks increase productivity, replenish attention, solidify memories, and encourage creativity."[2] Naps, meditation, exposure to nature, exercise—these are all examples of effective "break" activities. Downtime can benefit anyone (not just so-called creative types), because every task and every job at work requires (explicitly or implicitly) attention and some skill in problem-solving.

SET COMMUNICATION BOUNDARIES

When someone fails to set adequate boundaries and communication expectations, that behavior leads others to believe that he or she will be immediately available and responsive—an expectation that can make it difficult for that person to get other work done. Even in workplaces that support stepping

away from online communication in order to focus on deep work, people often don't take advantage of that freedom because they don't want to be the bottlenecks for others' tasks.

To change those expectations, don't respond right away to such requests so you train people to stop interfering with your work day. Prioritize your own tasks by starting each day by doing the things that require the most energy, attention, and creativity. Define and publicize the windows of time when you *are* available for communication, so people know the best times to interact with you (and when they should leave you alone).

TAKE A BREAK FROM WORK DURING VACATIONS

The point of a vacation is to be free of work. But even when people physically step out of the office, they often bring some work with them. Sometimes that work doesn't seem like much, such as checking in on e-mail and tending to small tasks here and there to avoid a post-vacation reckoning with a huge pileup of work. But even that much is too much. In order to get the most out of vacation and return to work as refreshed as possible, people need to check out from work completely—and step away from technology altogether, too.

FOCUS ATTENTION

In the week after Pokemon Go launched a few years ago, millions of Americans saw hours (and even days) of their attention swallowed up by the new augmented reality game. To avoid getting lost in such a habit-forming product, Nir Eyal recommends using "attention retention devices—technologies specifically designed to block out the triggers and distractions from other technologies."[3] (His personal favorites include Pocket, which "removes [from online articles] all of the ads and links to other articles," and Freedom, which blocks his access to the Internet when he needs to focus on work.)

CHOOSE TECH WISELY

Choose apps that allow you to streamline your life and get things done efficiently so that you can stop using the app after a short time. There are lots of productivity-enhancing apps out there, and new ones hit the market each day. Some, for example, have expanded functionality and provide a sort of "one stop shopping" experience that makes it possible to use one app in place of several. Others (such as Pocket and Freedom) function as blinders to keep the user's attention on the task at hand. Take the time to research the options and find the tech that works best for you.

It's impossible to stop the flow of tech automation, which is creating more efficiency and increasing the velocity of life and business. But humans need space for thought, reflection, and connection. So when tech creates new space, don't just rush to fill it with more tasks or more distractions (such as a barrage of truncated, relatively meaningless posts and comments on Facebook or Instagram). Building deep personal and professional relationships with other people takes time and effort—and a willingness to put all the tech on pause periodically to give those people undivided attention. ∎

David Mizne heads up communications at 15Five, continuous performance management software that helps employees grow and develop in just minutes each week via a lightweight weekly check-in, OKR tracking, peer recognition, one-on-ones, and reviews. To learn more about unlocking your team's potential, please visit www.15Five.com/insights. You can also read more of David's articles on *The Next Web* & *The Economist*, or follow him on Twitter @davidmizne.

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HOW TO HAVE DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS WITH EMPLOYEES

BY SUZANNE LUCAS

MANY PEOPLE WANT TO MOVE INTO MANAGEMENT ROLES because those positions offer higher pay, more prestige, and the ability to finally do things their own way. But being a manager also means having tough conversations with employees. Managers need to be prepared for difficult talks on topics that can include performance, how a role is evolving, or enforcement of workplace policies.

Employment law attorney and human resources consultant Kate Bischoff has put together a detailed checklist of actions that managers should take before, during, and after one of those tough conversations.[1] To see how her general advice would apply to a specific situation, consider this hypothetical example of a dress code violation.

STEP 1: PLAN

Don't start a conversation about a sensitive topic without planning it first—after all, how can an employee be expected to take the conversation seriously if the manager isn't adequately prepared for it? Prepare not only *what* to say but also *how* to say it. Be sure to review the official company dress code policy beforehand and refer to a printed copy of it during the conversation.

STEP 2: CONSULT

Conversations about dress code violations may seem straightforward, but it's a good idea to run your plan by your boss, peer, or HR department first. It's important to make sure that you're approaching employees for the correct reason and that you have company support. For example, sometimes managers use dress code issues as easy excuses for reprimanding employees who exhibit other problematic behaviors instead of directly addressing those behaviors.

STEP 3: TAKE A BEAT

Never go to an employee in anger. Take the time to contemplate and calm down before beginning a difficult discussion.

STEP 4: SCHEDULE

Stopping someone on the floor for a quick discussion is fine, but it's best to set aside a specific time and place for a tough conversation. This is especially important in workplaces with open floor plans or cubicles that don't allow privacy. Conversations about sensitive or disciplinary issues (such as dress code violations) should be conducted in a private setting.

STEP 5: ANTICIPATE

Consider how the employee will react to the conversation. It's likely that he or she won't be thrilled. Be prepared to react to that response. For instance, having a printed copy on hand of the dress code can make it easier to respond to any claims that you are picking on that particular employee or being sexist.

STEP 6: PREPARE FOR A SURPRISE

In a conversation about an employee's dress code violations, his or her possible responses could include "You're right, this *is* inappropriate," "I don't quite understand what the problem is," or "This used to belong to my mother, who died when I was 12, and wearing this helps me feel close to her. I can't believe you'd insult my dead mother!" It's impossible to anticipate *everything* that will come out of an employee's mouth. But to increase your odds of having an appropriate response ready, work through several possible scenarios ahead of time.

STEP 7: DOCUMENT

After the conversation, write up detailed notes of the meeting and e-mail them to the employee. "The employee does not have to sign off on the documentation," Bischoff points out, "but should know of the document's existence."[2] Keep a copy of the notes in the employee's file so that if a follow-up conversation is ever needed you can easily remember which ground was already covered.

These steps provide a useful blueprint for any difficult discussion in the workplace (not just the ones about dress codes). Adopting these steps for every tough conversation can increase the likelihood of positive, effective correction. ∎

Suzanne Lucas spent 10 years in corporate HR, where she hired, fired, managed the numbers, and double-checked with the lawyers. She now focuses on helping people managers manage better and helping employees understand how to navigate the world of work. She can be reached at EvilHRLady@gmail.com.

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Why does training sometimes not succeed or produce the expected results?

BY STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES INC.

QUESTION:

Why does training sometimes not succeed or produce the expected results? How do I ensure that our training programs will be beneficial and successful?

ANSWER:

Successful training programs are an essential tool that organizations must have in place to help employees continue to grow and develop. The type of training (in-house, on the job, out of house, etc.) depends on the specific needs of the company and individuals being trained. Identifying the true needs is the key to the success of training.

Before any type of training can be implemented, a needs assessment should be conducted to assess exactly what training is needed and why. The U.S Office of Personnel Management explains: "The needs assessment should address the resources needed to fulfill organizational mission, improve productivity, and provide quality products and services."[1] Not every training will have this direct correlation; however, even professional growth opportunities have an indirect impact on an organization.

To develop successful training programs, a company needs to:

· Begin by conducting a needs assessment.

· Be able to tie the need for the training to the organization's goals and objectives.

· Obtain buy-in from management to support employees attending the training.

· Provide effective communications to ensure that employees understand the value of taking the time to attend the program.

Delivery of the training must be highly interactive and have some connection to how it can be used in the workplace. Once a program has been delivered, the training's success cannot be measured until it's determined if employees are indeed applying what they learned. All of these factors are needed for training to succeed.

Remember, measure the value of training from a cost-benefit perspective and return on investment. Keep in mind that the cost of training can also include the cost of *not* training. ■

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WALK THE TALK

BY MIKE MCKERNS

IN THE LAST ISSUE OF *HR INSIGHTS*, Heather Vaughn ("3 Behaviors That Erode Organizational Trust") wrote about some possible causes for a decline in employees' trust in their companies. One of those causes in particular, "disconnect between words and actions," can have a far broader impact than the negative effect on company culture that Vaughn describes.

I have always been the type of person who does what I say I'm going to do (which means I have absolutely no problem saying no to a request that I know I can't fulfill). I hold in high esteem others who also prioritize keeping their word. I just think it's the right thing to do. Ethical issues aside, though, there are plenty of pragmatic reasons for making sure that words and actions are aligned—particularly in the workplace.

For example, if employees don't consistently fulfill their commitments to their colleagues, none of those employees can get their work done. Resentment builds, morale slides, and before you know it the entire department is suffering. The last thing any organization needs is an employee who's always dropping the ball. That's one reason why hiring managers should look for indications of a candidate's ability to be part of a team and follow through on assignments.

Likewise, managers need to fulfill their promises to their staff. For example, this means not misleading new hires about the nature of the work they're about to undertake. One surefire way to drive new employees out the door is to do a bait and switch on them by describing their jobs one way during the hiring process and then giving them different roles and responsibilities when they show up on their first day. The high cost incurred by making a bad hire has been well documented in many places. Behaviors that increase turnover can hardly be categorized as "best practices."

Delivering on promises also means that managers should not guarantee employees specific financial rewards (such as defined amounts for commissions and bonuses) that are performance- or market-based. Because those factors are not within a manager's control, he or she isn't in a position to uphold such promises. That means there's a very real risk that employees' expectations won't be met and they will feel let down (or even betrayed) enough to become disengaged. And lack of engagement is expensive, costing American companies "between $450 and $550 billion each year in lost productivity."[1] Ouch!

On a larger scale, companies also need to keep the promises they make. An organization that wants its employees to give their best efforts needs to tell them in clear terms what its expectations are—and then follow through on rewarding employees who fulfill them. Companies must "walk the talk" with their customers, too. After all, when have you ever heard of an organization that told its clients, "We will deliver X to you," didn't fulfill any of those promises, and somehow still managed to stay in business? (Answer: never.)

Ultimately, it all boils down to the bottom line: a disconnect between words and actions can have a negative financial impact on an organization. The effects of a broken promise—to a colleague, to an employee, to a customer—are felt far beyond that one interaction. A company that wants to survive and thrive needs to make sure that it meets expectations and delivers on its word. ◾

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A LOW-STRESS WAY TO START THE DAY

The winter months can be a busy time of year, full of family get-togethers, holiday parties, and other social obligations. When things feel especially hectic, throw together this protein- and veggie-packed breakfast casserole. It requires only about 15 minutes of hands-on prep time, so once you pop it in the oven you can turn your attention to other matters. With its versatility and easy preparation, this dish will quickly become the clutch hitter of your breakfast and brunch repertoire!

BREAKFAST CASSEROLE

YIELD: 6 servings

TIME: 60 minutes (50 for baking)

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:
2 tsp + 2 Tb olive oil
1 cup onions, chopped
3 cups mushrooms, sliced
½ cup cherry tomatoes, halved
2 cups red pepper, chopped
2 cups fresh spinach, chopped
6 eggs
½ cup half and half
½ tsp garlic powder
salt and pepper to taste
1 cup cheddar, shredded

Nutrition Facts
Amount per Serving

Calories:	218 cal
Fat:	15.6 g
Dietary fiber:	2.1 g
Sugars:	4.2 g
Protein:	11 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Coat an 8" x 8" cooking dish with 2 tsp olive oil.

2. Heat the remaining 2 Tb olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onions and cook until soft (about 5–7 minutes), then add the mushrooms, tomatoes, and red peppers and cook through (another 5–7 minutes). Add the spinach and cook until just wilted (about 1 minute). Transfer the vegetables to the baking dish.

3. In a bowl, whisk together the eggs, half and half, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Pour the egg mixture over the vegetables.

4. Cover the dish with aluminum foil and bake for about 40 minutes, then remove the foil and bake for another 10 minutes (or until the eggs are cooked through).

NOTES:

· This is a great "make ahead" dish! Simply do everything up to the baking and store the dish (covered tightly with plastic wrap) in the fridge overnight. In the morning, replace the plastic wrap with foil, put the dish in the oven while it's preheating, then finish cooking as directed.

· Cooking for a crowd? Double the quantities of the ingredients, put everything in a 9" x 13" baking dish, and add a bit more baking time (about 15 minutes) to make sure the center gets cooked through. ◾

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