"*Inside of every problem lies an opportunity.*"

- ROBERT KIYOSAKI

THE RESOURCE 2020 REFLECTIONS

THE RESOURCE

Year in Review...

Well, I must say that "Hindsight's 2020" takes on a whole new meaning, for sure! No different than any other crisis we've faced in the past - we acknowledge it, react to it, make a plan and execute it, making necessary modifications along the way. Our 2020 hindsight now tells us that we faced this pandemic head-on, with courage and faith, and we are stronger and better because of the changes we were forced to make. Now, we plan to finish 2020 strong and head into 2021 anticipating a great year!

This year has been a doozy, but with every major life event (even the "unparalleled", "unprecedented" ones), comes an opportunity to learn, and to reflect...

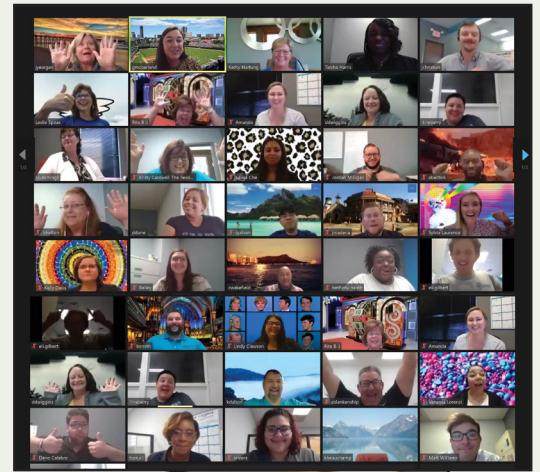_Here are some of the 2020 reflections of THE RESOURCE staff:_
- "Exhilirating"
- "Taking nothing for granted"
- "Mentally Exhausting"
- "Adapting & accepting CHANGE"
- "#AdjustAndLive"
- "Grateful - for a job, good health, and a forced slowdown"
- "DIFFERENT"
- "Emotional Roller-Coaster"
- "Trust in God no matter what comes your way"
- "We're not in control of anything except how we respond"
- "Transition"
- "Growth, nurturing wisdom, persevere"
- "One persons's courage can defeat the complacency of 1000s"
- "2020: When you feel like you're already tired tomorrow"
- "We'll either find a way, or we'll make one"
- "Unpredictable & Inordinate"

Like many others, our business was heavily impacted by COVID-19. Many of our customers had to cease operations for periods of time. We had to furlough some of our valued employees. We had to quickly adjust our operations to allow for safety precautions, and to go virtual! But through it all, we've been exceedingly blessed, with an internal staff willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done, and contract employees who worked diligently even in the midst of uncertainty; many of whom were considered "essential workers" in the manufacturing sector! 2020 also brought us recognition as a 'Best Place to Work' and a 'Fast 50 Growing Company'. All in all, we'll take what we've experienced this past year, and channel it towards growth, innovation, development, and culture in the year ahead!

Here's to 2021!

WHY HIRING SOFTWARE ACCESSIBILITY MATTERS

BY ICIMS

Even after reviewing countless applications and reference letters and wading through all of their talent pools, hiring managers can still come up short in their searches. In those cases they often assume that their ideal candidates simply don't exist. But sometimes those candidates do exist but just haven't applied for those jobs because they couldn't actually do so.

Today, approximately 25 percent of American adults have some type of disability. For some of them, their disability makes it more difficult for them to interact with hiring software, which increasing numbers of organizations are using to manage their recruitment and hiring processes. Unfortunately, most of those software applications aren't designed to accommodate people with disabilities.

How many candidates miss out because application accessibility considerations come second (or aren't taken into account at all)? In order to address this shortcoming, companies need to ensure that all candidates have an equal opportunity to apply to work with them. Hiring software must be accessible to everyone.

Case Study: Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Talent Acquisition Software

Comprising of subject-matter experts who focus on accessibility, security, and localization, the Center of Excellence at iCIMS makes sure that the company's hiring software considers all areas of accessibility (e.g., visual, speech, hearing, cognitive, motor) and puts equal emphasis on helping teams develop empathy for end users and on training them to build accessible software. Launched in 2019 during iCIMS' eighth annual Global Accessibility Awareness Day, the iCIMS Empathy Lab is filled with simulations of some of the different challenges that people with disabilities face in the workplace. Time in the Empathy Lab is part of each new hire's onboarding curriculum and helps ensure that engineers, testers, coders, and anyone who touches software gains a better understanding of what using technology is like for someone with a disability.

How to Make Tech Accessible to All

To help ensure that their hiring software is built with accessibility in mind, organizations can take the following steps:

◗ Ask for volunteers within the company (perhaps members of employee resource groups) to submit applications for open positions, complete the screenings for them, and share their feedback about the accessibility of those processes. Use that feedback to identify gaps or areas that need improvement.

◗ Ask the vendors who provide the company's talent acquisition software about accessibility in their products. What features are available? What are they planning to include in future versions? Find out how much they prioritize accessibility beyond just being compliant with laws.

◗ Determine what accessibility testing is needed and an appropriate cadence to leverage it. Constantly monitor, assess, and modify the testing experience so that efforts to improve accessibility do not fall by the wayside.

When each area of a company's hiring software is built with accessibility in mind, opportunities will no longer be limited only to those who are able to complete the online application. By increasing the accessibility of its application processes, an organization can open its talent pools to all candidates. Companies that seek to cultivate a culture of growth and belonging should implement technology that supports it. ■

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

4 WAYS TO PREVENT EMPLOYEE BURNOUT

As the business world continues to navigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis, workers (both onsite and remote) in different industries are experiencing immense pressure. Now, more than ever, leaders need to be acutely aware of workforce frustrations and learn how to avoid employee burnout.

In 2019 the World Health Organization defined burnout as "a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed."[1] In the past, the term burnout was applied most frequently to healthcare workers who worked too many hours in incredibly stressful conditions. Today, however, burnout can happen to any employee in any type of job and in any industry. And it is incredibly widespread: in one recent survey, 82 percent of respondents reported experiencing it.[2]

Burnout has tremendous costs. Annually, it contributes to 120,000 deaths and $190 billion in healthcare spending.[3] Even mild employee burnout can have detrimental effects on companies, to the tune of a "220 percent decrease in the probability of highly engaged employees" and a "210 percent decrease in the probability an employee will be a promoter of the organization."[4] And burnout may be responsible for up to 50 percent of employee turnover annually.[5]

Burnout can happen to anyone. Although certain jobs and industries might lend themselves to higher levels of physical or mental exhaustion, the type of job or number of hours worked does not cause burnout. Burnout occurs in both white collar and blue collar jobs, and workers of all generations experience it. The primary causes of burnout are (as the World Health Organization pointed out), chronic, unresolved culture issues in the workplace.

How can workplace culture cause burnout?

There's a clear relationship between workplace culture and burnout: as the first decreases in quality, the latter increases in incidence. When a company fails to adequately support the six essential aspects of workplace culture, the chance of burnout skyrockets:

Purpose: "Companies with a nonexistent or uninspiring purpose can increase odds of burnout by 39 percent."

Opportunity: "A lack of learning opportunities . . . increase[s] odds of burnout by 23 percent."

Success: "Increased perception that the bottom line is more important than people leads to an 18 percent increase in the odds of burning out."

Appreciation: "A reduction in giving and receiving recognition leads to increased odds of burnout by 45 percent and 48 percent, respectively."

Well-being: "Decreased work–life balance, feeling like work has a negative effect on health, or a decreased sense of belonging can increase risk of burnout by 22 percent, 40 percent, and 56 percent, respectively."

Leadership: "Decreased trust in leaders can increase burnout by 29 percent."[6]

Under such conditions, employees are more likely to experience exhaustion, avoid their work, and feel that their jobs are futile. Over time, all of this leads to burnout.
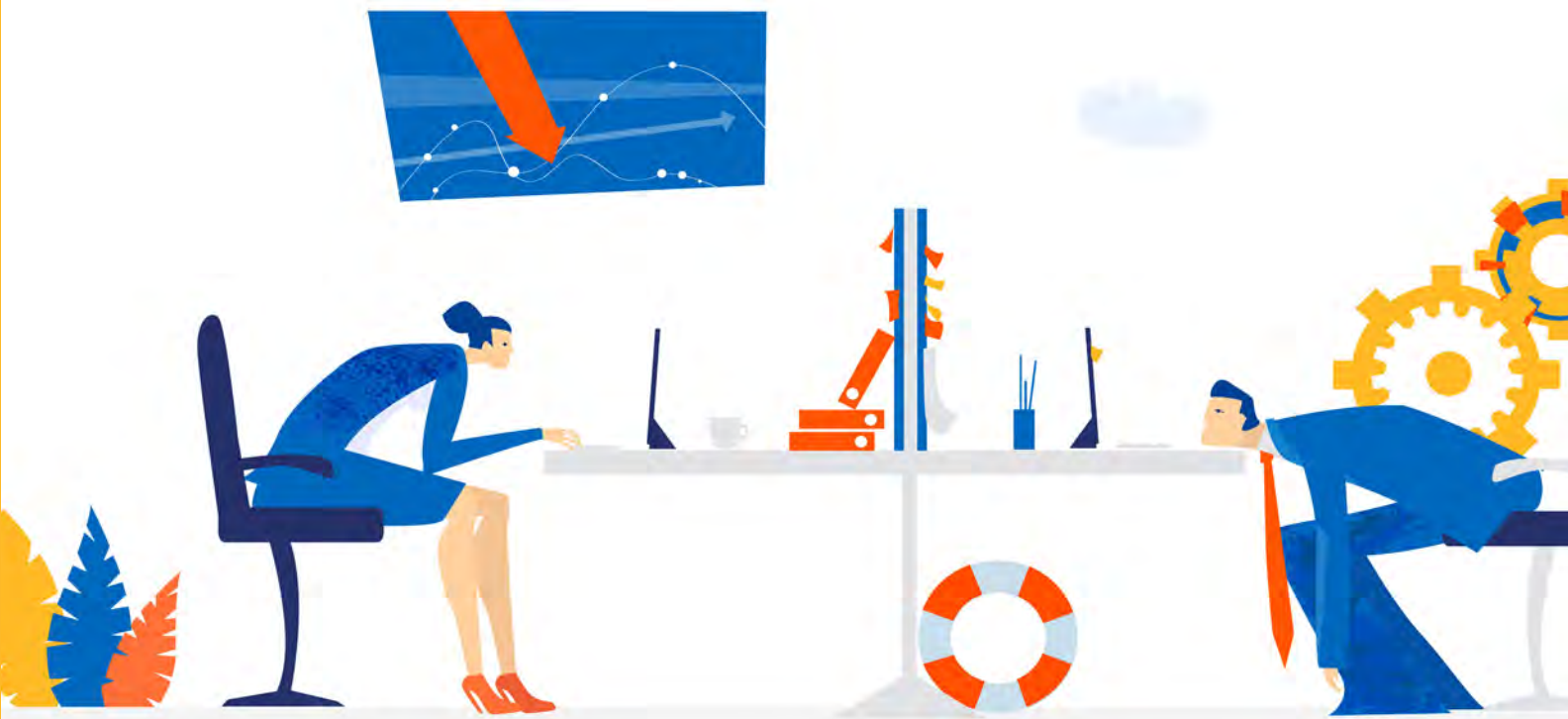
How can companies prevent employee burnout?

First, organizations should focus on creating positive employee experiences that strengthen the six essential elements of workplace culture. But these efforts can't be generic, top-down, company programs and initiatives. True culture change considers employees' specific experiences and follows from the implementation of the following four strategies.

Rethink leadership. Leadership no longer entails telling employees how to work and what to work on. The modern workforce demands leaders who inspire, not micromanage. Employees want leaders who will mentor, coach, and advocate for them. Leaders who successfully connect their people to purpose, accomplishment, and one another can reduce burnout by as much as 56 percent.

Utilize one-to-ones for connection. More than just times for employees and leaders to catch up with each other, one-to-ones offer connection and help identify issues that might lead to burnout. With every member of their teams, leaders should have ongoing one-to-ones that are cocreated conversations that cover not only the employee's current projects but also mentorship and coaching, opportunities for growth and development, praise and recognition, and the employee's well-being. Regular one-to-ones with their leaders help employees feel more connected and make them significantly less likely to burn out.

Build autonomous teams. Help employees feel psychologically safe and empowered to do great work by creating an environment in which they can share ideas, opinions, and feedback without fear and in which they have the flexibility and freedom to create and innovate. Tools such as peer-to-peer conversations allow individual team members to share feedback and ideas, learn new skills from each other, and network. Teams that use such interactions see their "odds of employees experiencing moderate-to-severe burnout" drop by 67 percent. When thriving teams feel a strong sense of purpose, opportunity, appreciation, and success, employees feel less stressed and feel more like they are doing meaningful work.

Use active listening. Too often, companies utilize annual surveys and pulse surveys to get employee feedback and then do nothing with the information. Active listening means soliciting employee feedback, paying attention to what it says, and making and communicating changes and improvements based on that feedback. In fact, employing a multimethod listening strategy (including focus groups, surveys, town halls, suggestion boxes, one-to-ones, etc.) can lower burnout by 28 percent, and using several communication methods and taking action based on the feedback can lower significant burnout by 54 percent. Through these processes, employees will feel heard and listened to—and companies can flag causes of potential burnout early and fix them quickly.

Today's employees are more burned out than ever. By paying close attention to the workplace culture factors that can cause burnout and by using four key strategies to change how leaders interact with their people, organizations can mitigate (and even prevent) many of the issues that cause employee burnout. The result will be employees who are healthier, more engaged, and more inspired to do incredible work.

O.C. Tanner helps organizations inspire and appreciate great work. Thousands of clients globally use its cloud-based technology, tools, and awards to provide meaningful recognition for their employees.
Learn more at www.octanner.com.

1. World Health Organization. 2019. "QD85 Burnout." ICD-11 for Mortality and Morbidity Statistics website, icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http://id.who.int/icd/entity/129180281.
2. O.C. Tanner Institute. 2020. "2021 Global Culture Report." O.C. Tanner website, www.octanner.com/content/dam/oc-tanner/images/v2/culture-report/2021/GCR-2021-sm.pdf.
3. Joel Goh, Jeffrey Pfeffer, and Stefanos A. Zenios. 2015. "The Relationship between Workplace Stressors and Mortality and Health Costs in the United States." Management Science, 62(2): 608–628.
4. O.C. Tanner Institute. 2019. "2020 Global Culture Report." O.C. Tanner website, www.octanner.com/content/dam/oc-tanner/documents/white-papers/2019/INT-GCR2020-12.pdf.
5. 5 Rachel Montañez. "Burnout Is Sabotaging Employee Retention: Three Things You Must Know To Help." Forbes online, June 5, www.forbes.com/sites/rachelmontanez/2019/06/05/burnout-is-sabotaging-employee-retention-three-things-you-must-know-to-help/#250477105f0e.
6. This entire list and all subsequent figures and quotes are from O.C. Tanner Institute (2019).

HR AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
LEADING BY EXAMPLE

BY JESSICA MILLER-MERRELL

AMID rapid advancements in technology, employee expectations of consumer-like experience and engagement, and a quickly shifting economy, companies are looking for ways to gain a competitive advantage with their people. This puts the spotlight directly on HR. Professional development is important for everyone, but is especially critical for businesses to think about when creating learning and growth opportunities for an existing workforce.

Executives increasingly see investments in "upgrading workforce skills, especially retraining midcareer workers" as an urgent business priority in the near future, thanks to increasing growth in automation and digitization.[1] This challenge lies at the heart of training and development for the existing workforce: companies will need employees prepared to move up within the organization.

HR must drive any development strategy aimed at meeting CEO expectations. But in order to successfully level up their organizations, HR professionals must first address their own professional development—and they must do so in ways that go beyond simply maintaining SHRM certifications.

HR leaders play a big role in making sure their teams have support for ongoing learning, development, and HR certification and recertification. But even though HR leaders have budget line items for professional development, their own learning plans often fall by the wayside. The "put on your own oxygen mask first" analogy applies here: HR professionals must prioritize their own learning and development in order to have the most up-to-date information on industry trends and technology they need to steer their teams' skills improvement.

Additionally, team members will be more likely to seek development opportunities on their own if they see their leaders doing the same. Professional development no longer follows a traditional model of seminars and panel sessions at conferences (although those are still quite relevant and useful). At the leadership level, it's become more and more common to seek out communities of other leaders in which to learn and grow with peer support. Through such learning communities, digital live events, on-demand learning, in-person retreats, and other channels, leaders can take control of their own career development and get the information they need to lead their HR teams.

HR leaders can benefit from building their skills in several areas. But based on current trends, the following are some that they should focus on now:

- ▶ Practical applications of the latest HR technology

- ▶ How robots and artificial intelligence are transforming the workplace

- ▶ Training managers to lead and engage a remote workforce

- ▶ Using online advertising and social media to recruit and hire in a very competitive job market

- ▶ Training and developing future leaders and executive teams

To achieve the best results, any employee development should start with HR leaders first learning about what matters today and about what will be important to HR

> **"HR LEADERS PLAY A BIG ROLE IN MAKING SURE THEIR TEAMS HAVE SUPPORT FOR ONGOING LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND HR CERTIFICATION AND RECERTIFICATION."**

in the future. They can most efficiently use their time by engaging in on-demand training that also covers credits needed for SHRM recertification as well as executive coaching and participation in a like-minded community of peers, which can help steer them toward the topics that are most relevant to their specific organizations or industries.

Many of today's HR leaders have spent most of their careers pursuing professional development primarily in seminar or conference sessions led by instructors or panels. But the future of learning and leadership is personal, and professional development is increasingly taking forms that allow individuals to choose what works best for their learning styles, are based on where they are in their career (and helps get them to where they want to be), are flexible, and empower them to make decisions about what they want to focus on next. These new approaches are very different from the programs of the past—and will better prepare leaders for the future. ■

Jessica Miller-Merrell is a workplace change agent focused on human resources and talent acquisition. She's also the founder of Workology (formerly Blogging4Jobs) and can be contacted on Twitter at @jmillermerrell.

1.   McKinsey Global Institute. 2017. "Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained: Workforce Transitions in a Time of Automation." McKinsey website, www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Industries/Public%20and%20Social%20Sector/Our%20Insights/What%20the%20future%20of%20work%20will%20mean%20for%20jobs%20skills%20and%20wages/MGI-Jobs-Lost-Jobs-Gained-Report-December-6-2017.pdf.

CLOSING THE CO

Thanks to HR talking about the skills gap for over a decade, companies are now working harder to address it. Yet despite these efforts, skills gaps continue to have a significant impact on the business world. A recent global survey conducted by Cornerstone People Research Lab (CPRL) found that investments in L&D, though helpful, are insufficient.[1] Although employers and employees worldwide recognize the importance of skills development, a confidence gap exists: employers feel optimistic about their ability to keep up with the rapidly changing skills economy, but employees are uncertain. **Mike Bollinger**, the vice president of strategic initiatives at Cornerstone and current manager of CPRL, discusses how companies can overcome this confidence gap and build more dynamic, more resilient workforces.

Heidi Spirgi (HS): Although 90 percent of business leaders feel confident they have the resources and ability to develop employees' skills for the future, only 60 percent of employees share that confidence. What's more, nearly 40 percent of employees feel they are not empowered by the learning resources provided at their companies. Can you explain this disconnect?

Mike Billinger (MB): Over the last five years, there has been a continuously increasing investment in L&D. Presence has gone up from an employer perspective—and as a result leaders feel more confident in how they are enabling skill development. But employees often feel that they don't have the right recourses or the time to take advantage of them." Both parties are feeling the pressure of these changes, but employees are particularly uneasy. Not only are they worried about whether they will be able to update their skills fast enough to keep up with the world around them, but they aren't really sure what new skills they have to learn.

(HS) A recent HCI report on skilling found that employers' L&D initiatives aren't enough to prepare employees with new skills. What are companies missing?

(MB) That report found that when L&D leaders are determining which new skills their workforce needs for the future, they often look inward.[2] They examine their company's business strategy, or talk to their employees and leaders to find skills gaps. However, in addition to examining internal needs, companies need to pay attention to external forces. CPRL research found that employers don't look closely enough at what their competitors are doing, or at how their industry or technology is changing. A successful new skilling approach requires that L&D leaders look beyond their walls to ensure that their internal efforts align with larger, external changes.

Another challenge is considering skill adjacencies. We understand skills progress along a line—junior analyst, analyst, senior analyst, etc.—but how do we help the business and individuals understand where an employee's current skill sets strongly overlap with those needed by other roles? HR departments often build tracks into or out of specific roles, but rarely is this happening at scale. To address the skills gap, we must consider where skills transfer into other areas, then offer employees a wider array of options to help them feel confident in their trajectories.

(HS) The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on employers and employees alike—notably in accelerating digitization efforts. Has COVID-19 had a positive or negative effect on companies' new-skilling efforts?

(MB) The effects of COVID-19 on the workplace aren't necessarily good or bad—they're just disruptive. We've entered a new, virtual world of work that requires different types of skills, and this is an opportunity for employees to adopt them. Some people are using low-code technologies (such as collaboration platforms, digital toolsets, and video conferencing tools) for the first time and have developed new technical skills as a result. Soft

ONFIDENCE GAP

BY HEIDI SPIRGI

skills have had to change as well. We're learning how to communicate with others effectively in virtual environments, because in-person interactions aren't an option.

In order for employees to be able to take full advantage of this opportunity, they must be able to set aside time to identify and explore new skills. This will encourage them to adopt self-directed approaches to learning and also give them chances to benefit from the their employers' investments in them.

During this rapid digital transformation, many employers looked internally to see who they had to contribute to or lead these initiatives. Some found that their "inventory" of skills required some work, so they didn't execute as quickly as they could have. The organizations that learned this

lesson and invested in better visibility into their workforces will have stronger capability to respond to future disruption.

(HS) Encouraging managers to foster a learning environment is only part of closing this confidence gap in the workplace. The CPRL report outlines a three-step plan for employers looking to improve their approach to skills development: create a vision, develop a plan, and then implement technology. How do the different steps of the process better position companies to develop their employees?

(MB) Creating a vision is about outcome, and any kind of strategic planning (whether it be skills planning or workforce planning) requires some degree of looking outside the organization.

Developing a plan is your measurement. True learning occurs only with behavior change. So first figure out how to measure employees' behavior changes. Track employees' sentiments toward L&D efforts as well—this will help companies determine whether or not they are actually closing the gap.

Implementing technology is a process. Right now L&D programs are going virtual, but this new mode of learning doesn't work for everyone, so companies can't get stuck in one way of teaching. Of course, with most companies still currently operating

via remote teams, virtual methods are the only real option now, but after COVID-19 employers will need to invest in technologies that support different kinds of learning.

(HS) If done well, these three steps can help companies align their L&D initiatives with their employees' needs and get better at predicting skills they will need in the future. What else can a company do to become a truly future-focused skills organization?

(MB) Look for adjacencies between skills. Identifying adjacencies makes new skilling efforts more effective and reduces the learning curve.

Many employees feel that they don't have enough time to learn. But lack of time can be a red herring for other things, such uncertainty, fear, or a lack of guidance. So find ways to help them along on their learning journeys. Start by investing in management teams and their learning, then encourage managers to talk to their employees about their career goals and motivations (and adjust their learning accordingly). A deeper understanding of employees' individual skills makes it easier to locate adjacencies and develop new skills with speed. That's what it means to be agile—and that's what a future-focused skills organization looks like. ∎

Heidi Spirgi is the chief strategy and marketing officer for Cornerstone OnDemand. An active participant in the HCM community and a frequent presenter and panelist at industry events, she speaks frequently on the topics of workplace practices, diversity and inclusion, HR, talent management and technology. This article was originally published at cornerstoneondemand.com/rework

1. Cornerstone People Research Lab. 2020. "A License to Skill: Embracing the Reskilling Revolution." Cornerstone website, skillsreport.cornerstoneondemand.com/#/.
2. HCI. 2020. "The Revolution Is Now: New-Skill Your Workforce to Catalyze Change." HCI website, www.hci.org/research/revolution-now-new-skill-your-workforce-catalyze-change.

HOW MICROLEARNING CAN HELP BUSINESSES

BY IRA S. WOLFE

Professional development and training can yield huge benefits, which is one reason why 94 percent of employees want to work at companies that offer such opportunities.[1] However, a heavy workload may discourage the development of new skills: when employees feel they have to complete projects first, training can take a back seat. Microlearning is one option that can help workers (and organizations) strike a balance between learning and work obligations. Because it helps employers offer more training in less time, microlearning can provide the kind of development employees want without cutting into their work time and without requiring companies to invest in pricy corporate training sessions.

1. Benjamin Spahr et al, 2018. "2018 Workplace Learning Report." LinkedIn, learning.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/learning/en-us/pdfs/linkedin-learning-workplace-learning-report-2018.pdf.

What Is Microlearning?

A prolonged in-person training can use hands-on practice and live interaction to keep employees engaged, but the same training presented online as a video conference may leave employees falling asleep at their computers. Microlearning addresses both the engagement problem and scheduling issue.

At its core, microlearning is training that's broken into small, bite-sized pieces and usually delivered via digital learning platforms. Unlike many online learning programs, which typically have long videos or activities designed to be completed in one sitting, microlearning uses brief, more frequent interactions called modules to promote regular learning and keep employees engaged. Through these small modules, someone can learn a skill or system in weeks or even days.

The most effective microlearning courses accommodate many learning styles, present information in ways that best suit their subjects, and use different teaching styles to keep employees engaged and interested (and may make certain topics easier to learn). For example, one course might include a video module, a reading module, and an interactive module. Some topics are best taught through hands-on learning, whereas others may require students to watch videos.

Better Retention and New Leaders

Microlearning is helpful for teaching soft skills (such as communication and creative thinking) that can prepare employees for promotions as well as hard skills (such as coding and analytics) that can make employees more versatile. By offering training for both types of skills, companies can help their employees become not only more well-rounded but also happier—and therefore more likely to stay with their organizations for the long term.

One of the top costs for small businesses is high turnover, which leads to increased costs for recruitment and training. Rather than spend months looking for the perfect employees, companies can better use their resources to train current employees and instead create the perfect employees!

Microlearning opportunities can even help companies create new leaders. Lessons in leadership training are more likely to stick when delivered via short videos and activities, especially when those sessions include actionable lessons.

High ROI

Microlearning offers the benefits of traditional training programs without the big price tag. Because microlearning offers a higher return on investment than "traditional" training, it's often easier to get management's buy-in for it.

Instead of building bulky online courses, companies can create microlearning modules when (and how) they are needed. Because modules don't need to be produced all at once, employees can start their training as soon as the first piece is available. Then trainers can develop future modules based on how employees respond to the first ones.

Another financial benefit of microlearning is that those programs often have a higher completion rate than other digital learning programs. In just a few minutes a day, team members can learn something new!

How to Implement Microlearning

On-the-job support is a good way to help employees learn hard skills incrementally. This approach is especially effective when training takes places right when it's needed. For example, when an employee clicks on a particular feature, a training module or brief tutorial could automatically appear and help the employee learn a new skill right when they need it.

In addition to "in the moment" training, microlearning can also take place whenever employees prefer. Some employees learn best in the morning, whereas others like to take a midday break to practice a new skill. Short modules keep employees engaged and let them learn at their own pace so they can absorb the material in the ways that work best for them.

Ideal for Remote Workers

Because online learning offers many of the benefits of in-person training without the logistical headaches, it is quickly becoming the go-to way to offer employee training. Microlearning can offer to remote workers training opportunities that in the past have usually been available only to onsite employees. It also makes it easier to deliver training to offsite workers who, because they aren't supervised directly, may procrastinate on required training or struggle to manage their time effectively to allow for long training sessions.

For example, mandatory compliance trainings may feel more achievable to employees when it's presented in small pieces. Supervisors can more easily enforce completion of this training by remote employees when it's delivered via microlearning, thus reducing the amount of time wasted by sending out multiple "please complete your training" reminders.

Microlearning Can Transform Employees and Businesses

Because many employees want to work for companies that value learning, companies that invest in their employees' training and development can have an easier time hiring and retaining great talent. Plus, more leadership training can help organizations promote their top performers to effective managers. Microlearning is a modern, cost-effective, and versatile training option that can help employees spend less time troubleshooting—and enables companies to stay ahead of the curve. ■

Ira S. Wolfe is a nationally recognized thought leader in talent management and an expert in pre-employment assessment testing, workforce trends, and social media. Wolfe is president of Poised for the Future Company (DBA Success Performance Solutions) and the author of several books, including Geeks, Geezers, and Googlization. He can be reached at iwolfe@super-solutions.com.

LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS: **CREDIBILITY**

BY VALERIE M. GRUBB

All the knowledge, experience, and skill in the world won't make someone a great leader unless people are confident that they know what they're doing and that they can achieve results. For that faith and trust to exist, that person must have credibility, "the quality or power of inspiring belief." Credibility isn't an inherent quality but one that must be actively developed and regularly sustained. It's difficult to earn and easy to lose. And as part of the foundation of effective communication, it's one of the most valuable items in any leader's box of management tools.

How to Build Credibility

Lack of credibility slays your character.
—BERNARD KELVIN CLIVE

Demonstrate mastery of your craft.

Before you can persuade anyone to believe (or follow) you, you first need to convince them that you know what you're talking about. Depending on your audience, your goals, and the particular field you're in, you have many options when it comes to establishing your expertise. For example, your credibility could be based on your level of formal education and training—university degrees, professional development seminars, and the like. Perhaps your on-the-job experiences have enabled you to master a subject (or position). The key is to be good at your current role and get stuff done. If you're not doing your current job well, your credibility will suffer tremendously.

In addition to building your knowledge, you also need to build trust. If your colleagues, your employees, your bosses, and your clients don't trust you, you won't get a chance to put your knowledge to work. Trust must be earned through thoughtful interactions with others.

> **TIP** ☞ Never stop learning! Even subject matter experts (SMEs) constantly expand their knowledge to ensure that they know the latest information on a topic. Sign up for formal training (even if you have to pay for it out your own pocket). Do your own research on topics that will help increase your skill level. Throw your hat in the ring to lead new projects that will help develop your leadership chops. Find mentors. Volunteer with nonprofit organizations in ways that help you develop certain leadership, management, or technical skills.

Deliver on your promises.

Build a reputation as someone who follows through on their claims. If you describe yourself as a person who can be relied on to hit a certain deadline or meet a certain goal, for example, be sure you actually do it.

> **TIP** ☞ That said, value yourself, your skills, and your time by agreeing to do only what you can reasonably expect to accomplish. Stay involved and work hard at your job, but learn how to set boundaries so you don't end up way over your head and unable to fulfill your obligations. Remember, "no" is a complete sentence!

Admit when you don't know something.

Saying "I don't know" out loud can be a humbling experience, but you're better off pointing out your own ignorance than having someone else shine a light on it. The longer you wait to reveal this—and the farther your project (or even your career) progresses before you're called out—the worse your fall will be. So rather than try to bluff your way through unfamiliar territory, ask relevant and thoughtful questions that will help you learn more about it. Don't be afraid of looking "foolish" in front of others: your willingness to ask questions can actually boost others' estimation of you. When you don't shy away from acknowledging what you don't know, people are more likely to have confidence in what you do know.

> **TIP** ☞ When you come up against your own knowledge shortcomings, consider that an opportunity to build connections with people who have more expertise in that area than you do.

Own up to your mistakes.

No one is perfect, and everyone makes mistakes. When (not if, but when) you mess up, assume responsibility for your actions. If you had any control (whether as the decider or as a bit player) over a situation that didn't have the desired outcome, own up to the role you played in it. Then do everything you can to correct the problem immediately.

> **TIP** ☞ Stepping up and being responsible for your actions can improve your credibility not just when things go wrong but especially when things go wrong. After all, everyone loves a good comeback story!

Be receptive to criticism and objections.

If you instinctively push back every time someone disagrees with you, you'll get a reputation as a difficult-to-work-with reactionary. But if people know that you'll give careful consideration to information even when it contradicts your own viewpoints, they'll be more likely to see you as someone who's open minded and a careful thinker—and therefore they'll be more likely to support your final opinion or decision.

> **TIP** ☞ Being open to criticism isn't the same as letting people walk all over you! If you truly believe that your proposal is the best, then by all means stick with it. But just be sure to examine other reasonable perspectives first.

Keep confidences.

When someone tells you that a piece of information is confidential but you share it anyway, you violate their trust and diminish your credibility. Whether your actions are intentional or accidental, the fallout is the same: others will not want to trust you with their own confidences. On the other hand, if you demonstrate your ability to keep a secret, others will feel more comfortable sharing sensitive information with you.

> **TIP** ☞ Along those same lines, refrain from gossiping about the company, its leadership, or its employees. However, think before agreeing to remain quiet about a potentially bad situation, and don't allow yourself to be drawn into a conversation that makes you feel uncomfortable: if you agree to hide anything immoral or illegal, you can kiss your credibility goodbye.

Show respect for others' input.

People who say, "I don't care what others think" may think that they're being independent but are actually setting themselves up for lots of problems in the workplace. By not respecting and valuing their colleagues' input, contributions, and time, they establish the precedent for their colleagues to treat them similarly. There's a big difference between being confident about yourself and alienating others. Credibility arises from positive social interactions, and those can't exist without respect and connection.

> **TIP** ☞ Show your colleagues that you care about their projects and especially their success even when it doesn't have an impact on your own work. Showing empathy and support builds trust and credibility with your coworkers. People will reciprocate the care and trust you show to them.

Avoid exaggeration.

Exaggeration and hyperbole can add lots of spice to stories, but if you use them too often people won't know when to believe you—so they'll assume that they usually shouldn't. Your credibility increases when people know they can count on you to deliver the truth accurately and consistently. Stick to the facts.

Stop asking for favors.

When you want input, never lead with "Will you do me a favor?" Instead, start with something like "What do you think the best solution for this problem is?" to make it clear that you are inviting (and valuing) someone's assistance and not asking them to do the work for you. (And on that same note, if you want people to have a helpful attitude toward you, be sure you have that attitude toward them.)

Remove "to be honest" from your vocabulary.

When someone prefaces their comments with "to be honest," that begs the question "Wait—are you usually not honest?" By implying that for you stating the truth is an exceptional (and not typical) behavior, you undermine your own credibility. If you yourself are announcing that you aren't usually believable, why should anyone else have faith in you?

Final Thoughts

Once you lose your credibility, you can never restore it.
- Reinhold Messner

If you want to be an effective leader, you need to know how to build workplace relationships that are founded on clear communication, trust, and respect. When you have credibility, people have faith that you know what you're doing and pay heed to your ideas and your feedback. They also have confidence that you'll have their back (and in return they'll have yours). Your credibility can inspire them to do their best work and achieve their goals, because they believe you when you tell them "I know you can do this."

Building credibility isn't a one-and-done accomplishment but an ongoing endeavor. The work can be challenging at times, but anyone who's willing to be thoughtful about their own actions and motivations can do it. The key is to cultivate behaviors that build trust—treating others with honesty and respect—while also cultivating your own knowledge. ∎

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.

DATA-DRIVEN EMPLOYEE RETENTION TECHNIQUES

BY JESSE FINN

AFTER a company puts in the hard work onboarding its new employees, it would be a shame to see them walk right back out the door in less than a year. Unfortunately, that's exactly what can happen if managers and team leaders don't make an effort to keep employees happy beyond the onboarding lifecycle. The following three retention strategies can help companies boost employee engagement and keep team members satisfied throughout their (ideally, lengthy) tenures.

DON'T ASSUME THAT EVERYONE WANTS THE SAME THING.

"One size fits all" isn't accurate in the world of fashion, and it doesn't work in the business world, either. Employees are individuals, and they each have their own interests, preferences, and goals. Workers who are busy parents may value flexible schedules over higher salaries, for example. Middle managers might want the traditional "promotion and a raise" kind of rewards. And younger employees could be looking for mentorship, training, and a supportive culture.

In one survey, when asked "What motivates you to excel and go the extra mile at our organization?" the 200,000 respondents offered a wide variety of responses. The top five motivations cited were "peer motivation," "intrinsic desire to do a good job," "feeling encouraged and recognized," "having a real impact," and "growing professionally."[1] Money, often perceived as the primary motivation for most people, ended up only in seventh place on that list.

Rather than assuming that money (or anything else) is what motivates everyone, managers should talk to their team members regularly about what would engage each of them most in their role. This conversation doesn't have to follow a formal process but could take place in a chat during a team breakfast in the office or during a one-on-one after-lunch walk around the block.

LEVERAGE STRENGTHS RATHER THAN FOCUS ON WEAKNESSES.

Too many performance reviews focus on what employees are doing *wrong* rather than what they could be doing *right*. Leveraging strengths over weaknesses is a far more effective approach. In fact, strengths-based employee development can boost employee engagement by as much as 15 percent:

Almost seven in ten employees (67 percent) who strongly agree that their manager focuses on their strengths or positive characteristics are engaged. When employees strongly disagree with this statement, the percentage of workers who are engaged in their work plummets to 2 percent.[2]

In addition to its positive effect on engagement, this approach can also drive increases in sales, profits, and customer engagement.[3]

OPEN DOORS, NOT FLOORS.

Transparency can lead to higher levels of organizational trust, which is one great reason to encourage an open-door policy and frequent communication between company leaders and the rest of the population.

But keep in mind that although open-door policies can help increase employee retention, open-floor policies can be huge collaboration killers. Despite the widely held belief that open-plan offices boost interaction and collaboration, they actually drive down face-to-face interactions by 70 percent.[4]

All of these strategies have proven their effectiveness over time and in multiple contexts. Clearly, they work. Now it's up to managers and leaders to follow the data and implement these practices in their own organizations. ■

Jesse Finn is the senior brand and content manager for Talmundo. He has a background in brand management and content creation and is passionate about ethical business. Visit them at talmundo.com.

1. Tiny Pulse. 2014. "2014 Employee Engagement and Organizational Culture Report." Tiny Pulse website, www.tinypulse.com/landing-page-2014-employee-engagement-organizational-culture-report.

2. Brandon Rigoni and Jim Asplund. 2016. "Strengths-Based Employee Development: The Business Results." Gallup website, July 7, www.gallup.com/workplace/236297/strengths-based-employee-development-business-results.

3. Ibid.

4. Ethan S. Bernstein and Stephen Turban. 2018. "The Impact of the 'Open' Workspace on Human Collaboration." Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B., 373 (1753), royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rstb.2017.0239.

SHOULD HR HAVE A VIRTUAL BACKGROUND POLICY?

BY MIKE MCKERNS

I was recently turned on to a Twitter account called Room Rater (@ratemyskyperoom) and spent at least a half hour scrolling through the photos and comments. To give a bit more background, Room Rater rates the video background of journalists, political figures, and some random interviewees. From what I can tell, the backgrounds that they rate are not the virtual Zoom backgrounds that have become so popular but are the actual living room, kitchen, and home office backgrounds. What's in the frame, what can they see on the walls etc. They use some humor but there's quite a bit of good advice in many of the posts.

This led me to the question posed here. With much of the country still working remote and many companies extending the timeline to the "foreseeable future", is it time to consider HR policy related to virtual meeting backgrounds (whether real or a virtual)? It seems to me that your background can be related directly to a company's dress code policy. We have policies in place to ensure that staff is dressed appropriately because they are representatives of our company and those policies should carry through to their virtual office as well.

In Fort Lauderdale, FL Broward Circuit Judge Dennis Bailey was so frustrated with the lack of professionalism he was seeing with attorneys he was meeting with virtually that he made a plea in a letter published by the Weston Bar Association. In the letter he pointed out that video meetings are still hearings and all involved should dress as they would for the courtroom. He went on to mention that "putting on a beach cover-up won't cover up the fact that you're poolside in a bathing suit."

While Judge Dennis Bailey's concern was primarily attire related, I believe policies in this area need to extend to what's in the background of your home office. Offensive or risqué artwork in the background during a meeting can reflect negatively on your company. ■

RECIPE

STUFFED BAKED APPLE

This sweet treat is made with pantry staples and easily scaled up—or down—to accommodate the size of your crowd. Just-picked fall apples really shine here, but this delicious combination of flavors can brighten up even lackluster out-of-season fruit, making this a great dish for any time of the year. It's fantastic as is, but if you're feeling particularly indulgent, enjoy your baked apple with some ice cream or freshly whipped cream on top.

Yield: 1 serving
Time: about 50 minutes

What you'll need:
- 1 medium-sized apple
- 1 TB light brown sugar
- 1 TB unsalted butter at room temperature
- 1 TB chopped walnuts (almonds or pecans would work too!)
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- Pinch of salt

Nutrition Facts
Amount per Serving

Calories:	286 cal
Fat:	16.2 g
Dietary fiber:	5 g
Sugars:	30.6 g
Protein:	2.6 g

Directions:
- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- Use an apple corer or a paring knife to remove the center (stem and seeds) of the apple.
- Combine the other ingredients in a small bowl, then pack this mixture into the hole.
- Cover the bottom of a baking dish with a very shallow layer of water, then stand the apple upright in it.
- Bake for about 45 minutes. Cool for a few minutes and serve warm.

THE RESOURCE

POWERFUL | *People* | SOLUTIONS

STAFFING & DIRECT HIRE

Our team specializes in your business

We do the searching & vetting so you don't have to. Reduced time to hire, pre-screened & tested candidates, increased employee retention. Your trusted partner.

HR, PAYROLL & ACCOUNTING Services

We'll take care of the back office so you can focus on growing a successful business

We work to determine your unique needs & customize our services accordingly. Whether you're a new or established business, outsourcing may be the right decision to reduce overhead, increase productivity, and ensure compliance.

CORE Assessment™

Start at the CORE and maximize your employee ROI

The CORE is a single tool; a groundbreaking assessment that allows you to hire smarter, create dynamic teams, develop leaders, and create a culture of top performers.

COACHING & Organizational Development

Solving Business problems by solving People problems

We offer a full suite of customized solutions to help you retain & engage top talent. Our coaching, development & training services help individuals and teams to unlock their potential in work and in life.

FULFILLMENT Center

Contract Packaging & Product Fulfillment

Drawing on our 20 years of fulfillment experience, our new facility allows us to offer our clients enhanced services. Re-packing, Labeling, Picking/ Packing, Returns/ Sorting, Cost-Per-Unit & More.

Employee UPSKILLING & FORKLIFT Certification

Developing candidate abilities & workplace readiness

Uplifting employees to reach their highest potential, through work-place simulation, preparation & training. Dedicated facility for Forklift training & certification, for both new & experienced drivers.

336.896.1000

INFO@THERESOURCE.COM

THERESOURCE.COM

THE RESOURCE

POWERFUL *People* SOLUTIONS

theresource.com

Staffing • Direct Hire • CORE Assessment™
Coaching & Organizational Development • Human Resources Consulting
Dedicated Forklift Training Facility • Fulfillment Center & Warehouse