THE RESOURCE

HR INSIGHTS magazine

VOL. X, ISSUE II

from the eyes of industry leaders

"In the old days, you would chastise people for reinventing the wheel. Now we beg, 'Oh, please, please reinvent the wheel.'"

-Alan Kay

IN THIS ISSUE

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(Kathy Hartung, CEO & Grace McParland, Marketing Manager)

APRIL: Facilitating Fairness in the Workplace

MAY: Handling Difficult Conversations *(Eric Waldrop)*

JUNE: Boosting Employee Wellbeing

JULY: Making the Most of LinkedIn *(Randy Wooden)*

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Stay tuned! Future issues of this magazine will contain more information about our CONSULTING division as well as our other service offerings.

THE RESOURCE

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Business Ethics in Human Resources

BY JESSICA MILLER-MERRELL

Business ethics is defined as "the study of appropriate business policies and practices regarding potentially controversial subjects including corporate governance, insider trading, bribery, discrimination, corporate social responsibility, and fiduciary responsibilities."[1] It's the application of a moral framework to the way organizations do business, and it shapes and changes the way businesses operate. It can be both normative (e.g., how employee behavior is related to cultural or social issues) or descriptive (e.g., how to incorporate best practices into an organization's policies and procedures).

Failure to implement certain ethical principles may hurt a company's bottom line. These principles include managing financial or other customer data in a responsible way, avoiding fraud and misrepresentation in operations, treating employees and customers with respect and dignity, and giving back to the organization's community.

Business ethics is especially important in HR. As the department that deals directly with people employed by a company, HR holds a large part of the responsibility for upholding business policies and practices in an ethical manner. SHRM's code of ethics for professional responsibility in HR states:

> As HR professionals, we are responsible for adding value to the organizations we serve and contributing to the ethical success of those organizations. We accept professional responsibility for our individual decisions and actions. We are also advocates for the profession by engaging in activities that enhance its credibility and value.[2]

(Indeed, ethics plays such an important role in HR that as of January 1, 2021, HRCI requires anyone seeking PHR or SPHR recertification to have at least one credit in ethics.)

Hiring is one of the areas for HR that is most affected by business ethics. For example, if an employee is found to have falsified information on a job application after they have already been hired, and HR does not have policies in place to address this specific situation, the organization could face potential wrongful termination lawsuits. Also, in order to achieve legal compliance as well as ethically sound decision making, at the earliest stage of recruitment the company must address issues of equal opportunity, antidiscrimination policies, and legal compliance with regards to hiring practices

Another issue that HR has to address with some frequency is the ethics relating to employee privacy. For example, companies routinely perform background checks on job applicants before extending offers of employment. From the employer's perspective, these checks are necessary because they reduce liability by verifying that the information the applicant provided is true. However, employers must follow reasonable guidelines in obtaining this information: inquiries must be related to the job to which the applicant is applying, and the applicant must be told what information will be checked and then give written consent for the potential employer to obtain it.

HR is also responsible for legal compliance with regard to recordkeeping. For example, the Americans with Disabilities Act specifies that employers must keep employee disability records separate from personnel files and in a secured location. Other laws, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, also have their own confidentiality requirements for the treatment of medical records. HR professionals must be aware of how federal and state laws affect the collection or storing of employee information.

In HR, the application of ethics means helping an organization embed and uphold its values at all levels in order to maintain and increase trust. Accountability, or taking responsibility, is a key aspect of that role. Ethical policies and procedures for the company are in place not just to ensure that employees and company leaders do the right thing but also to protect the company from liability. HR is the department that develops, distributes, and enforces these policies and procedures. ■

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. Alexandra Twin. 2020. "Business Ethics." Investopedia, July 1, www.investopedia.com/terms/b/business-ethics.asp.
2. SHRM. 2014. "Code of Ethics." SHRM website, November 21, www.shrm.org/about-shrm/pages/code-of-ethics.aspx.

How to Make Virtual Live Courses Engaging and Effective

BY TRACY PETERSON

When it comes to professional development and leadership courses, it's often the case that the most memorable learning experiences come not from the curriculum but from the interactions among the participants. That's why the most successful learning programs usually have a strong, in-person component. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has limited that option and forced companies to rethink how to do their training.

For many organizations, the pandemic-era game plan has involved a serious pivot to varied digital learning formats (such as on-demand, self-paced, and bite-sized). Amid all those changes, though, human interaction remains irreplaceable. But what can a company do when a pandemic removes in-person learning from the equation? Should the learning and development industry simply reformat its curricula as virtual instructor-led courses? That isn't the solution.

To get the highest-quality learning resources they can, organizations must remember that live learning is most effective only when used at optimal times and integrated into learners' overall journeys. They must consider certain factors to ensure that all parties involved—instructors as well as learners—are positioned to succeed.

Give learners the freedom to engage

The right time to offer live learning is when learners will gain value and fresh perspectives from being in each other's company. Consider the power of a simple question—especially when it draws attention to something that other participants hadn't thought of before. Such questions can take a course in new, thought-provoking directions.

Here are a few examples of live learning formats that can increase engagement, even in virtual settings:

- Instructor-led training that encourages learners to interact and participate in polls
- Breakout sessions in which participants brainstorm with peers or apply what they've learned to real-world challenges
- Roleplaying exercises that enable learners to engage in teamwork and learn from each other's diverse backgrounds
- Sandboxes that provide safe spaces in which participants can experiment together

Help instructors reskill for virtual formats

Reskilling in-person instructors for virtual environments ranks among the biggest challenges that organizations face today. Fortunately, there are several strategies that instructors can use to improve their success as educators under current circumstances:

- Engage in self-paced, online courses to develop dynamic skills for presenting to live audiences.
- Learn how to master the company's virtual collaboration and meeting tools. Even little things such as muting and unmuting participants can make a big difference in a learner's experience.
- Put themselves in their learners' shoes by taking courses on topics outside their usual areas of expertise.

Establish a knowledge baseline among learners

Before hosting a live course, make sure that all of the registered participants have already taken prerequisite courses. Otherwise, less-experienced students could jeopardize the group's time with entry-level questions, or simply disengage when they realize they're far behind their peers.

Some organizations attempt to enforce prerequisite policies by kicking off the class roster students who don't meet the requirements. A much more effective solution, though is to incentivize them, perhaps through some sort of gamification. For example, students who complete prerequisites could earn a prize, such as a digital badge they can show to their managers, peers, and networks.

Plan courses to sustain value from human interaction

Learning and development professionals also need to figure out how to replace in-person training content—a difficult task because learners (and the leaders who champion learning) are by nature social animals. An environment that enables questions, answers, and camaraderie elevates the learning experience from something valuable to something memorable.

But how can companies plan their live learning experiences so that these human interactions persist beyond the course? Recurring office-hour sessions and community groups are some possible solutions. In such virtual meeting spaces, learners can continue to come together to trade insights, ask questions, support each other, and satisfy their need for social interaction.

Consider how live courses fit into a blended learning strategy

Remember, learning should be easy and flexible whenever possible. This is especially true in the pandemic era, as learners continue to struggle with balancing life and work. In certain scenarios, live courses and the engagement they provide fit together perfectly. But in many cases, organizations will want to choose other options (such as on-demand videos and comprehensive learning paths, for example) from their blended-learning toolboxes. Blended learning options can also be tailored to fit employees' job responsibilities and daily challenges. Companies should also consider giving learners the flexibility to learn on their terms (perhaps on a self-paced basis and in bite-sized pieces) to meet the "how," "where," and "when" criteria that work best for them.

Final thoughts

It will be a while before the world can return to prepandemic life. Fortunately, in the meantime, technology makes it possible for people to connect with and help each other. By putting the proper time, planning, and creativity in their virtual live-learning sessions, organizations can give their learners experiences that are not only good for their jobs and careers but also good for their souls. ■

Tracy Peterson is the vice president of global learning for Hitachi Vantara, where she's responsible for the company's education services business and focuses on driving customer adoption and engagement. This article was originally published on the SkillSoft blog at skillsoft.com/blog.

How to Stay Ahead of Challenges to Virtual Recruitment

BY JESS WOLOSZYN

In response to the lockdown measures of 2020, virtual recruitment went from "nice to have" to "need to have" seemingly overnight. As talent teams use innovative recruitment software to transform the ad hoc solutions of 2020 into long-term strategies for the future, they are paying particular attention to virtual recruitment for several reasons:

- Work-from-home arrangements are expected to continue for some time, with hiring managers predicting that "26.7 percent of the workforce will [still] be fully remote" at the end of 2021 and flexible remote policies on the table for 57 percent of employers even after the pandemic ends.
- A significant number of people apply for positions outside their geographic areas (for example, during the fall of 2020, "more than a quarter of all applications submitted through iCIMS' platform were from out-of-state candidates"), which limits the use of in-person interactions during the hiring process.
- More and more companies are embracing the use of communication tools (such as video conferencing) that facilitate teamwork and collaboration among geographically dispersed colleagues. In fact, over two-thirds of the executives interviewed for one recent survey believe that "video conferencing delivers many of the benefits of being face-to-face."
- In light of these and other similar trends, now is the perfect time for HR to pause, reflect, and strategize on what's next for virtual recruitment.

Considering how successfully the HR industry collectively rose to the challenge of quickly adapting a process that depends on human interaction to one that works in a virtual environment, there is no doubt that HR can achieve much more in this area when it has more time to plan. By understanding and anticipating areas of opportunity, HR can stay ahead of challenges related to virtual recruitment and successfully develop and implement effective virtual hiring practices.

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2. Hired. 2020. "State of Remote Work Report: Unlocking Opportunity." Hired website, April 28, hired.com/blog/highlights/2020-state-of-remote-work-report/.
3. iCIMS Insights. 2020. "Monthly Snapshot Report." iCIMS website, December, icims.drift.click/December_Insights.
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CHALLENGE:
It's tough to stay compliant when business and legal requirements vary from state to state (or country to country).

SOLUTION:
Implement one system for viewing robust analytics from multiple recruitment tools.

The key to quickly and efficiently compiling reports to meet widely differing requirements is to access information from across the entire HR tech stack. A platform that integrates all of the organization's recruitment software solutions (such as tools for video interviewing and onboarding) provides transparency into the full talent life cycle, thus yielding flexible and straightforward reporting.

CHALLENGE:
The lack of in-person meetings makes it harder for recruiters to screen for emerging (and important) skillsets.

SOLUTION:
Use video to get to know applicants.

The past year has forced everyone to develop new soft skills, especially in areas such as social influence, resilience, active learning, and stress tolerance—all of which can be considered when making a new hire. Each role has certain baseline requirements, but employers also want to know how a new hire's abilities complement the skills their prospective team already has. With modern functionality that makes it easier to create a more structured interview process, improve feedback and reporting, and operate within an organization's ATS workflow, video interviews can play a crucial role in obtaining vital information about candidates.

CHALLENGE:
Social distancing makes it more challenging to engage candidates who have higher expectations for virtual interactions.

SOLUTION:
Secure high-performing hires by using engaging and scalable outreach throughout the hiring process.

To create high-touch experiences, most modern career sites now have recruitment chatbots, smart applications that automatically respond to FAQs in order to keep curious career-site visitors informed and interested. Allowing candidates to self-schedule interviews and using text messages for communication with potential hires can also help companies meet modern expectations for engagement. By freeing up recruiter time earlier in the hiring process, organizations not only reach more talent with no added effort but also gain more time for meaningful relationship-building.

CHALLENGE:
When they can't experience a company's culture in person, candidates struggle to know if it is a good fit for them.

SOLUTION:
Use video to show off the organization.

Video is useful not just for helping organizations assess candidates but also for helping candidates assess organizations. For example, live conversations with a diverse panel of current staff during the screening process can help applicants see multiple aspects of the company; prerecorded employee profiles posted on the organization's career site can also fill that function.

CHALLENGE:
Without in-person validation, the dreaded "application black hole" feels even more isolating.

SOLUTION:
Check in regularly with candidates (but use methods that don't incur extra work on the recruiter's end).

The speed of an organization's outreach can make the difference between an anxious applicant and a promising prospect. Timely responses are especially important when different time zones (and related communication delays) are involved. Text-based recruitment software is one great solution that allows recruiters to automate updates and easily send reminders and answer questions. This responsiveness shows candidates that companies value their time and therefore increases applicants' engagement.

CHALLENGE:
Poorly timed offer letters can cause companies to miss out on talent in competitive markets.

SOLUTION:
Create a formalized offer process that kicks off as soon as a verbal offer is made.

Automated offer management gives companies a competitive edge and enables them to maintain the personalized feel of their recruitment and hiring. A library of preapproved language (with location-specific terms and clauses) and e-signature capability can streamline the offer process and increase a company's chance of getting a yes from a desirable candidate.

With social distancing still the current norm and remote work predicted to remain widespread in the postpandemic workplace, companies have no choice but to innovate new recruitment strategies. Thanks to new technologies, virtual recruitment is one very powerful option for meeting that need. It does bring some interesting challenges to the table—but nothing that recruiters armed with careful planning can't handle.

Jess Woloszyn is a content writer who produced this article for iCIMS, the talent cloud company that empowers organizations to attract, engage, hire, and advance the talent that builds a winning workforce. Learn more at www.icims.com.

BY MATT BUCHANAN

HOW TO Run a Successful Wellness Challenge

Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, much of the population has been experiencing skyrocketing stress levels. Social distancing and working from home mean people are getting out less and looking at screens more. With all of these factors taking a toll on people's mental and physical health, some organizations are using wellness challenges to help their teams support each other's well-being and try to rebuild healthy habits that might have been lost in the transition to remote work.

A wellness challenge can take on many shapes and sizes, and what's right for one organization may not be right for another. The approach one company, Service Direct, used to run a successful three-month wellness challenge last summer could serve as a useful starting point for other organizations that want to develop their own programs.

Structure

After establishing a three-month timeline for the Service Direct wellness challenge, the planning team selected daily tasks in three categories and assigned point values to each:

- **High impact (3 points):** exercising for 30 minutes, digitally detoxing (no screen time) for 4 hours, getting at least 7 hours of sleep, eating at least 3 servings of fruit or vegetables
- **Medium impact (2 points):** drinking at least 64 ounces of water, sharing gratitude for 3 things
- **Low impact (1 point):** journaling for 20 minutes, stretching for 20 minutes, meditating for 10 minutes, reading for 30 minutes

An introductory video presented an overview of the program and made it easy for everyone to learn how to participate in it. Weekly updates (via Slack) to the scoreboard kept everyone updated on participants' efforts.

At the end of the challenge, a wrap-up party (held virtually) celebrated everyone's efforts. Branded wellness-challenge t-shirts were mailed to all participants ahead of time so they could wear them on camera at the party, and the top three point getters received wellness-related prizes. Afterward, all participants were asked to complete a survey to help the company measure the program's impact.

Overall, the response was very positive, with 100 percent of the participants (who were 70 percent of the company's employees) saying they would likely participate in a wellness challenge again. All participants also reported that the challenge motivated them to create new healthy habits, and some said that it helped them feel more aware and focused on their wellness. The only criticism was the program was too long, and some participants suggested that a monthly or bi-weekly challenge would be better.

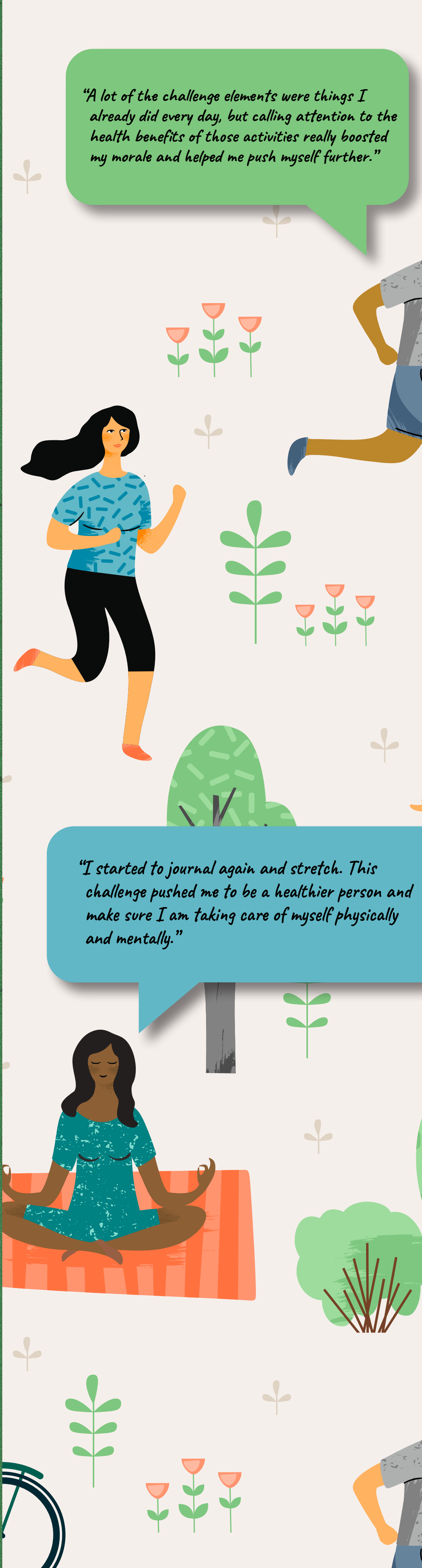
This program succeeded in improving employee wellness partly because it wasn't solely a fitness challenge but focused on overall wellness. In order to avoid narrowly defining wellness as just physical fitness (which can exclude some employees), the program intentionally featured a wide range of activities to include physical exercise, mental fitness, and emotional self-care.

The biggest positive result of the wellness challenge, though, was the sense of community and purpose it fostered as colleagues shared their wellness journeys with each other. Since the end of the wellness challenge, many Service Direct team members have continued sharing their wellness activities in the program's Slack channel. That alone speaks volumes about the value a program like this brings to an organization.

Setting Up a Wellness Challenge

Any business can benefit from running a wellness challenge (whether or not the world is in the middle of a pandemic) as long the program is well planned and well executed. By following these recommendations, program planners can help employees to get the most out of the challenge.

Pick a leader. Right from the start, the program needs to have a go-to person available to answer questions. Knowing who is running the program and where they can turn for help will make employees more likely to participate in it from start to finish.



Select a specific timeframe. People tend to struggle with commitment when a challenge or project is open-ended, which is why work projects tend to have specific deadlines. If a wellness challenge launches with no end date in sight, employees might put off joining until later—or just dismiss the program entirely.

Centralize task management. Making it easy and fun for employees to join and participate in the programs requires coordination and planning—which are made much easier by using one location (such as a shared list or discussion forum, for example) as a place for brainstorming, planning, managing, and delegating tasks. Possible tasks include building a leaderboard, getting budget approval, creating a registration form, determining awards, planning the wrap-up party, and sending out the post-program feedback survey.

Choose a variety of challenge activities. This step can make or break the success of a wellness challenge. Having diverse activity options makes the program more appealing to more people and better supports its ultimate goal: helping everyone feel good, be productive, and grow. Fitness-related activities provide a solid foundation for a wellness challenge, but the program should also include reading, having technology-free time, meeting sleep goals, and other activities that encourage everyone to be more mindful about how they use their time.

Provide a shared tracking environment. The social aspect of a wellness challenge is a big part of what makes it work. People who try to develop new wellness habits on their own often struggle to stick with them. To emphasize the shared effort of a wellness challenge, record participants' activities and track their progress in one digital location (even something as simple a spreadsheet works).

Increasing Participation

First and foremost: don't make participation in a wellness challenge mandatory. After all, someone who doesn't want to do it won't be motivated to engage in activities and make progress—which just defeats the whole purpose of such a program. The following strategies can help make the program more appealing to employees and encourage widespread participation.

Make a bold announcement. People get dozens (or even hundreds) of messages a day—which makes a standard company-wide e-mail likely to escape their notice. The launch of a wellness challenge should be news that no one can miss, so design a compelling announcement and send it out via all of the business's communication channels.

Simplify communication. Make it as easy as possible for participants to find and share information. From the start, keep all communication related to the challenge in one place—such as a dedicated Slack channel or digital document, or (once everyone is back in the office) a tracking station in the break room or other common space. Whatever the setup, it must be simple: making it complicated or frustrating will only cause people to drop out of the program.

Keep the signups open. Don't prevennt employees from joining the challenge late! Publicly sharing program updates with the entire organization (not just participants) often elicits "fear of missing out" feelings, and people who didn't show much interest at the start of the challenge sometimes decide to jump in late once they see how much fun it is.

Get some friendly competition going. Depending on a company's culture, a little friendly competition can encourage participation. Regular leaderboard updates and reminders about the wrap-up party (and the prizes!) at the end can help keep people motivated and interested. Don't let the competition become cutthroat, though: one key goal of a wellness challenge is to help employees learn to support each other and become a better team.

Host a wrap-up party. This event recognizes and celebrates everyone's efforts and provides an opportunity for them to share what they've learned. A small gift (such as a t-shirt) for each person is a nice way to thank them for participating in the challenge, and prizes for the winners highlight their extra effort.

Give It a Try!

Whether such a program follows the guidelines listed here or goes off in totally different directions doesn't matter as long as it focuses on bringing people together and provides support (and motivation) for them to improve their wellness. Under today's unusual circumstances, a wellness challenge is something that can help people find some much-needed positivity. But remember, the world doesn't need to be stuck in a pandemic to justify the launch of a wellness challenge. There's never a bad time to feel better! ■

Matt Buchanan is the cofounder and chief growth officer at Service Direct, a technology company that offers local lead generation solutions for service businesses.
A version of this article originally appeared on the BambooHR blog (www.bamboohr.com/blog).

The Reinvention of HR

BY KARINA SCHULTHEIS

Even though HR still struggles to dispel its decades-long stereotype as a group of technically incompetent, soft-spoken, corporate enforcers (think of Toby from The Office), in recent years savvy, effective, data-driven HR teams have been actively reimagining everything from performance management to corporate culture. In 2020, COVID-19 and societal unrest made the HR function even more mission-critical and underscored the importance of human intellect in people management. Today, companies are leaning on CHROs and CPOs to lead their pandemic responses and to shape their growth strategies while keeping employees engaged, reconfiguring workflows, redeploying talent, and upskilling staff.

Indeed, well-resourced HR teams that successfully managed the transition to a hybrid workplace are now a top competitive advantage for companies in every sector. Just as CFOs' roles were elevated following the 2008 financial crisis, HR's impact and innovative potential will be fully realized in the wake of 2020. Strategic, tactical people advocates will drive tangible business results.

The Shifting Nature and Language of HR

When it comes to being both process champions (who work to improve workforce continuity, automating processes, and compliance) and people scientists (who understand, predict, and respond to or change human behavior), no other field comes close to HR. To fully realize its potential, though, HR must change its nature and language. Rather than treat people as "human capital" and focus on "measuring performance," HR leaders must treat people as people and support their overall passions, contributions, and potential. HR must rethink what it means to be "qualified," challenge the status quo, and find ways to be fair and equitable in a world that has neither equal footing nor a one-size-fits-all handbook.

Employees as Primary Stakeholders

More than any other factor, employees have the single greatest impact on the success of their organizations. In fact, a 2019 panel of 600 senior executives "attribute[d] 72 percent of their company's value to their employees." As organizations adapt to putting people before profits, it should be overwhelmingly clear that the most important stakeholders in any organization are its people. Rather than treat employees as a resource (that is, as a commodity to manage or to extract value from), today's organizations should put them at the center of their purpose.

HR must lead these efforts. As technology continues to automate manual processes, HR has the opportunity—indeed, the obligation—to focus primarily on serving and enabling employees through meaningful strategic initiatives that address their well-being and long-term growth and development. It's time to think differently about employees, their relationships, and their impacts on organizations, and shift the focus to creating the right conditions that allow them to thrive.

In a 2020 McKinsey & Company study designed to evaluate employee "well-being and work effectiveness" during COVID-19, "ten employee experience elements accounted for approximately 60 percent of differences in outcomes." The study found that "in addition to basic needs (safety and security), three other experience themes (trusting relationships, social cohesion, and individual purpose) are having a disproportionate impact on employee well-being and work effectiveness." If HR doesn't prioritize enabling these drivers across every level of the organization, who will? And who stands to lose the most if they don't?

The Evolving Role of Technology

Thoughtfully applied technology will continue to play an important role as HR functions begin to shift their focus back to their people. Foundational levels of safety and security will remain essential, and employees and leaders alike will continue to expect convenience, speed, and accuracy from HR processes. Many emerging technologies are capitalizing on these changes by offering scalable solutions designed to truly serve employees, such as easing financial strain, improving mental health through charitable giving, or keeping a pulse on employee sentiment so leaders can act on the topics that matter most to their people.

Today's employees desire—and deserve—much more out of work than a paycheck. Armed with innovative workplace technologies and a renewed focus on supporting people, HR departments have never been more empowered to shift the employer–employee relationship from a transactional one to a transformational one. The result will be a diverse, engaged, and empowered workforce that's agile, flexible, and responsive to changing business demands. ■

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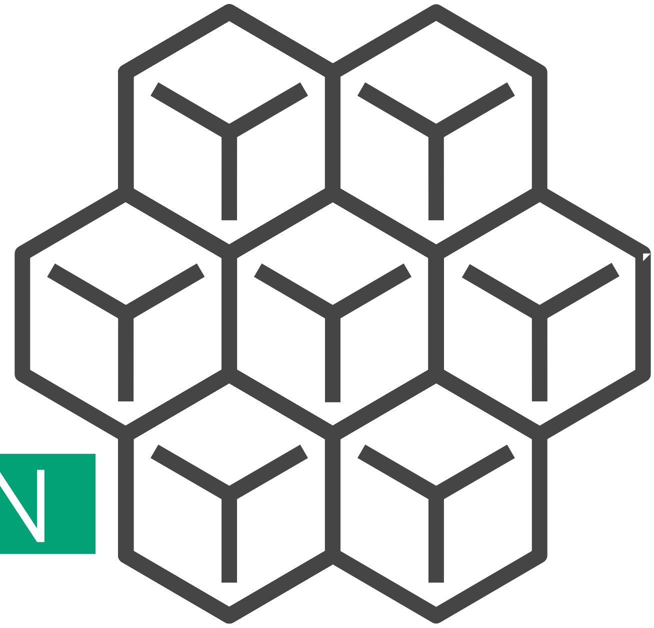


BLOCKCHAIN AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF HR

No longer a pipe dream but now a reality, the use of blockchain in HR has the potential to improve recruitment, hiring, learning, and many other aspects of people's work experiences. In a typical scenario, an applicant collects the relevant blockchain credentials (e.g., contact information, job history, education history) that have been issued to them over their careers, opens up their blockchain wallet on their smartphone, scans a QR code on a job description, then taps "accept" to submit their credentials in both machine-readable and human-readable formats. Their potential new employer then sees those credentials in its application tracking system. Best of all, this data has already been validated by authoritative sources, so recruiters can immediately make a decision whether to hire that applicant without having to spend more time vetting their qualifications.

This breathtakingly simple use for blockchain has powerful ramifications for HR. Like any business process, recruitment involves gathering clear data as quickly as possible and rapidly making decisions that have long-lasting impacts. Data gathering in most business areas is fairly straightforward (e.g., projected return on capital for the finance department, machine throughput for operations) but becomes more complicated when workforces are involved. Blockchain helps address that complication.

The promise of blockchain is an unlocked data-rich ecosystem in which users can accumulate data about themselves over their lifetimes and thus more easily show their unique value. For employers, blockchain mitigates the problem of unclear or missing data by providing validated data (which, until now, hasn't been readily accessible) to inform their strategic workforce decisions.

For some time, discussions about artificial intelligence have dominated HR conferences. However, AI hasn't managed to deliver on its promise of clearer decision making. AI must feed on a clean, rich, wide data set, and companies (large and small, global and local) have struggled to structure and house data in a way that powers effective predictive, prescriptive, and analytical insights. Blockchain is the high-octane fuel for better performance of artificial intelligence and machine learning systems.

The timing of blockchain's arrival couldn't be better, as the business world is currently working to address several momentous questions:

- How do we transition the workforce in the face of intense and perpetual disruption?
- How do we find talent to fuel growth and expansion?
- How do we rapidly redeploy talent in the face of automation?
- How do we recognize talent in an unbiased, modern way?
- How do we provide clarity to individuals about where they are and where they could go?

The answers to these questions are rooted in a clearer and deeper understanding of the current state of blockchain.

Better Data for Better Workforce Outcomes

Blockchain will help alleviate these problems by first improving the quality and availability of the data used to evaluate the value of workers. Currently, companies still rely on unreliable (and not necessarily relevant) information such as college credentials (e.g., GPA, alma maters) and titles. With more relevant job-related data, such as a certification for leadership, a highly innovative project, or a skills rating backed by an accrediting or authoritative body, employers can evaluate candidates on abilities and experience that are valuable for their organizations' specific needs.

The machine-readable and human-readable layers of data contained within blockchain reduce the filtering and processing of the data required by artificial intelligence and machine learning. For example, recruitment relies heavily on natural language processing to transform data so it can reveal insights about candidates. (However, that technology is still being refined.) Established standards for different values of data, such as O*NET (a U.S. Department of Labor database of occupational definitions) and Credential Engine (a nonprofit database of credential information), ensure that the value of a skill or credential is well understood wherever it goes.

A Cumulative Transcript for Long-Term Skills Development
Blockchain will also transfeorm the future of work by creating a development transcript for the employee. Today's modern learners can draw on after-work extension classes, massively open online courses (MOOCs), YouTube videos, and other learning options, and turn to corporate training systems only because they have to. By creating a continuous, uninterrupted record of employee development, blockchain can help people better leverage all of the development resources (especially modern corporate learning systems) at their disposal.

Companies are most familiar with the qualifications and abilities their employees have that relate to their current jobs. But as automation forces the business world to more rapidly deconstruct, evaluate, and reconstruct roles, visibility into employees' wider abilities (e.g., backgrounds, unique certifications, other dimensions of their capabilities) may become important for helping organizations adapt to their future needs. Combined with AI-powered tools such as the Cornerstone Skills Graph, "an engine powered by AI and machine learning that automatically detects skills from different sources (profiles, job titles, training, job offers) and identifies them in different use cases," blockchain can capture and standardize the individuals' capabilities so they can be quickly accessed when needed.

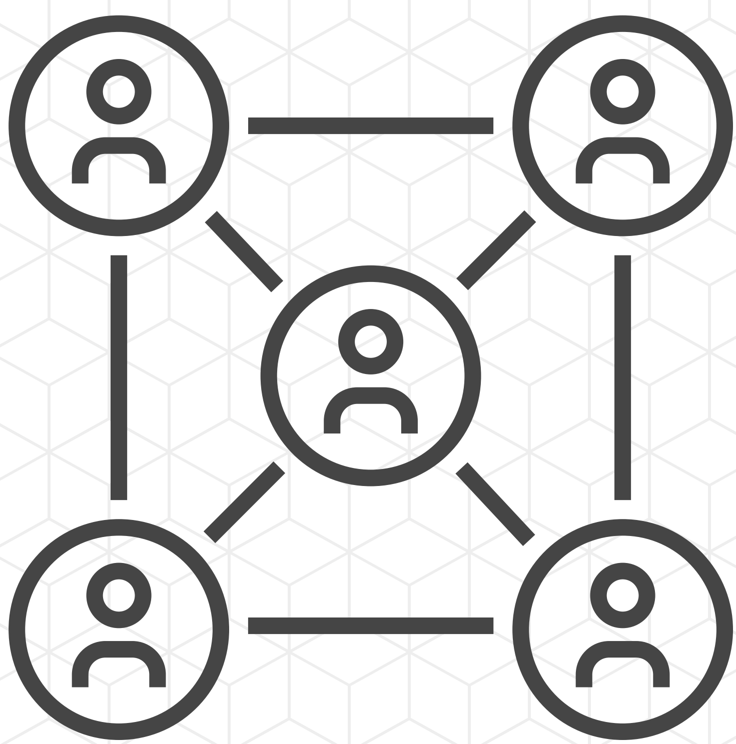
An Elevation of HR's Strategic Role

The third way blockchain will transform the operations of HR is by elevating HR's strategic position within the company. Even in the age of scaled HR, a lot of checking, double checking, inputting, background checking, modifying, and verifying is still taking place. Blockchain cuts the clerical work.

With more meaningfully structured data, different databases can share information in both human-readable and machine-readable layers. The effectiveness of AI systems to help predict retention risk, identify new skills, and plan succession would be much greater that it currently is.

The real-world applications of blockchain are just the first step in the transformation of HR. As powerful technology becomes more generally accessible, HR will be better positioned to manage disruption, to respond to growth opportunities, and to build a competitively skilled workforce for tomorrow's workplace. ■

Ike Bennion is a product marketing strategist for Cornerstone OnDemand, where he works on market analysis and strategy development for learning products.



Using the Check-in to Cultivate a Culture of Growth and Trust

BY LYNNE LEVY

As leaders and HR departments move away from last year's "keep the lights on" approach, they're turning their attention toward determining how best to help their organizations grow and innovate. With the rise of machine learning and artificial intelligence, the only way for organizations to survive and grow is to change their employee experience model by shifting from treating employees as resources to treating them as valued and respected human beings. Only by creating a more human-centered organizational culture will companies thrive in this new decade.

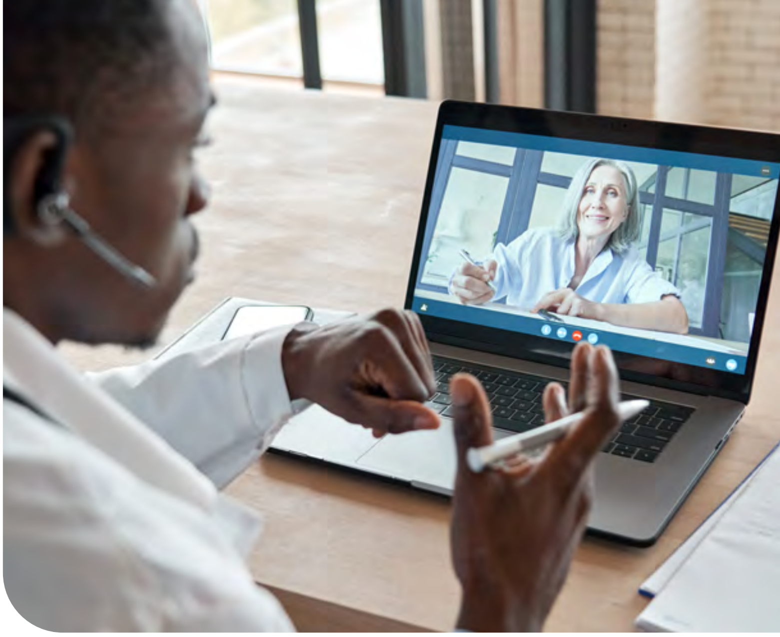
This human-centered culture is built around the manager–employee relationship, at the center of which is the check-in. As part of an ongoing conversation between managers and employees, the check-in has evolved from focusing on project status and deadlines to shaping ongoing, continuous employee growth and development. To fully drive a positive employee experience, managers and HR leaders must support three types of check-ins: goal-setting, ongoing, and career.

Goal-setting check-in
(1 to 3 times per year)

This check-in focuses on aligning the employee's goals, projects, and tasks to organizational goals. It helps keep the employee growing throughout the year and drives collaboration between the employee and their manager. It also helps the employee understand the impact of their work by giving them a look into the organization's vision. At the beginning of each year, employees and managers should define the employee's overall goals, then collaborate on breaking them down into the tasks that the employee will focus on in the first quarter. (Similar check-ins should take place at the start of each subsequent quarter.) Managers should also allocate time during each quarter to enabling employees to focus on their learning and growth.

The goals identified through these check-ins should have the following characteristics:

- **Easy to recall**. Keep goals simple, meaningful, and easy to remember. For example, "increase customer engagement year over year by 15 percent" is not particularly memorable, but few are likely to forget "ensure that customers are 15 percent more delighted."
- **Coherent.** Goals must fit together and not compete with each other. For example, employees may struggle to meet the goals "execute flawlessly" and "act with urgency," which conflict with each other.
- **Challenging but possible.** Make goals both measurable and attainable but also challenging enough to stretch the employee.



Ongoing check-in (weekly or biweekly)

This check-in focuses on continuous growth and course correction. It should not be an interrogation during which the manager grills the employee about the status of their projects. (Status updates should instead be shared via other channels, such as e-mail.) Rather, this check-in must be collaborative, build trust, and focus on growth.

This check-in should include the following actions:

- Identification of obstacles to the completion of goals
- Collaboration to manage challenges effectively
- Recognition of what is going well
- Discussion of feedback from across the organization

Because this check-in empowers the employee to influence the direction of their work throughout the year, they do not have to wait until the end-of-year performance review to adjust their path and overcome challenges. Feedback from this check-in can enable course correction and support employee growth and goal completion. This check-in also helps build trust between the employee and manager, thus improving engagement and retention.

Career check-in (1 or 2 times per year)

This check-in focuses entirely on the employee, with the goal of supporting them in both their short-term and their long-term career progression. The manager should brainstorm with the employee about potential future opportunities, any new skills they might need, and where the employee sees themself down the line. The outcome should include setting goals that help drive employee development.

Features of Effective Check-ins

Managers who want to ensure that their check-ins with employees are as productive as possible should use the following best practices:

- **Let the employee drive.** Empower employees to schedule check-ins and (within a broad framework) determine their content.
- **Keep check-ins separate.** When different types of check-ins are clumped together into one meeting, issues from one discussion will spill over into another discussion and become more difficult to address.
- **Embrace a growth mindset.** Always assume that the employee can learn, grow, and expand.
- **Open up.** Each person should come to the check-in with a mindset of trust, honesty, and positive intent. Even if difficult topics need to be discussed, remaining open creates a safe environment in which an authentic conversation can occur.
- **Listen actively.** Keep multitasking (such as checking texts or e-mail) to a minimum. When both parties are actively listening, the chance of miscommunication decreases—and trust increases.

Check-ins fulfill an essential role in the employee experience by providing employees with opportunities to receive continuous feedback. More collaborative check-ins yield engaged workers who will stay the course as the organization grows and evolves. As companies shift into the fast lane of growth, it is critical for them to remember that their workforces are their most vital assets. Keeping employees engaged is a key to organizational success. ■

Lynne Levy is a product evangelist at Workhuman, where she focuses on the psychology of how people interact work and how to improve engagement and productivity through gratitude, feedback, and the building of trust with leadership. She can be reached at www.workhuman.com.

Nurture and Drip Marketing for Recruiters

BY MIKE MCKERNS

As I'm sure you already know, recruiting and marketing have a lot in common. Both have prospects, pipelines, and leads. Writing a good job description is an artform that uses techniques directly from the marketing copy writer's playbook. The techniques recruiters use to attract candidates and the challenges they face staying top of mind are no different than what is being used down the hall in the marketing department.

In the marketing world, we can leverage drip and nurture marketing campaigns to stay top of mind with our prospects and these exact same techniques fit nicely into a recruiter's tool kit as well.

A drip marketing campaign is the easiest to implement. It's a type of automated email campaign that allows you to send out a series of scheduled and personalized emails to your contact database over an extended period of time. Drip marketing helps you to stay engaged with not quite ready candidates over a longer period of time through consistent touch points.

Once you determine the goal of your drip campaign (stay top of mind with candidates, gain more referrals, etc.) use an automation tool like HubSpot or Active Campaign to share content on a defined schedule.

Some examples of content you may want to email are

- A list of jobs you'd love to see referrals to
- Updates on how your company has flourished over the past year
- Interviews with current employees
- Anything that sets you apart from your competitors as an employer

A nurture marketing campaign takes a bit more planning but can be highly effective. This type of campaign is built around a series of emails that are sent based on a candidate's behavior. The campaign will deliver timely, targeted information that helps guide them through their job search (or any goal that you set).

As the candidate receives emails, they are presented with information based on your goals and their actions. Specific behavioral data matters in nurture campaigns, for example, how many times a candidate visited your website, which articles or guides they've read, and what jobs the applied to in the past. The goal is to deliver educational value while encouraging engagement. Unlike drip marketing, the nurture campaign is triggered by these actions, creating an even more personalized sending schedule.

It can often take a lot of work to bring candidates into your database. If they are someone you'd like to hire one day, it's a good idea to keep in touch and using a little automation will help make the effort easy and scalable. ■

Mike McKerns is the founder of Mamu Media, the SMART content division of Haley Marketing and the editor-in-chief for HR Insights. He can be reached at mike@mamumedallc.com.

RECIPE

Alfredo Sauce

When you're in the mood for a meal that feels like a decadent treat but doesn't require you spend to hours in the kitchen or purchase lots of exotic ingredients, make a batch of alfredo sauce, which comes together in minutes and uses pantry staples. It's best known as a pairing with fettuccine, but feel free to pour it over any pasta you like. It also works well over steamed vegetables, especially broccoli and cauliflower. (Note: this sauce is pretty rich, so you may want to save it for a day when you aren't worried about counting calories!)

Yield: 6 servings
Time: 10 minutes

Nutrition Facts
Amount per Serving

Calories:	453 cal
Fat:	43 g
Dietary fiber:	0 g
Sugars:	0.4 g
Protein:	15 g

What you'll need:

- 1 stick of butter
- 1 cup of heavy cream
- 2 cups of freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- salt and pepper

Directions:

- Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat, then add the cream.
- When the mixture is warmed through, remove the pan from the heat.
- Stir in the parmesan until completely melted. Add salt and pepper to taste.

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.

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