

THE RESOURCE

HR INSIGHTS

VOL. X, ISSUE VI

magazine

from the eyes of industry leaders

SUCCESSFUL
PLANNING FOR



IN THIS ISSUE

How to Get Better at
Strategic Thinking

Strategies for
Managing Change

Tracking the ROI of
Employee Recognition

The Power of Perceived
Value for Long-Term
Retention

Aftermath: The Labor Drought

In the last issue we discussed The Labor Crisis, referring to the Government assistance & incentives, COVID challenges, etc. - as **THE PERFECT STORM**. Now we're facing the Aftermath of that perfect storm, and dealing with...The Labor Drought.

The aforementioned "perfect storm" challenges, as well as the abundance of opportunities available for workers has resulted in a limited supply of people who are looking for jobs. We are also in the midst of a "turnover tsunami" as we emerge from the pandemic. 52% of employees say they will be looking for a new job (*Achievers*).

These factors continue to make it very difficult to attract and retain talent! And...these challenges are likely to continue. Another important element of this Labor Drought is the Great Sansdemic. Haven't heard of it? You're not alone. But, it's very real, and will have ongoing impact on the labor market.

The U.S. is suffering from the beginning phases of a Sansdemic (**SANSDEMIC: sans** - without, **demic** - people). By 2028, it is predicted that we will have a deficit of 6 million workers. A report by EMSI shares details on the Sandemic and how it will transform the labor market - "*The Demographic Drought*". Contributing factors of the Sansdemic include Baby Boomers Retiring (earlier in many cases), Boomer Wealth accumulated and being passed down, Low Birth Rates, Record Low Labor Force Participation, as well as the impact of Video Games and the Opioid Epidemic on Gen Y & Z (particularly Males).

The Bottom Line: The extremely challenging environment to recruit and retain employees that COVID brought on - is here to stay. COVID may very well have shown a light on (and exacerbated) a problem we were already facing, but were turning a blind eye to - the SANSDEMIC.

So, how are we going to face these ongoing challenges - this Labor Drought - inside our organizations?

Poll your organization on the employment factors below. Are your requirements and expectations realistic? Are they competitive in your industry? What could be re-evaluated?

- **Do you Drug Test?**
- **Have you relaxed your Background Requirements?**
- **Have you raised your pay rates in the last 3 months?**
- **Have you relaxed job experience expectations?**
- **Are you offering remote work or flexible work options?**

Now is an important time to audit your organization and ensure you're: promoting the 'Pillars of a Positive Work Culture', providing competitive compensation, gathering Employee Feedback, considering Leadership Development & Coaching, evaluating your Onboarding & Training Programs, and reviewing your Benefits package. We're happy to help you get started!

THE RESOURCE

"What is one thing you could change or implement that would have an immediate, positive impact on your work culture? If you don't know - ASK!"



Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Hartung". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathy Hartung, CEO



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WORKPLACE WISDOM

- 4 **How to Improve the Candidate Experience by Improving the Recruiter Experience**
By Gazmend Kalicovic

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

- 6 **Tracking the ROI of Employee Recognition**
By O.C. Tanner

WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

- 8 **How to Create a PTO Policy**
By Roger Carbajal



LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

- 10 **How to Get Better at Strategic Thinking**
By Valerie M. Grubb

WORKPLACE WISDOM

- 12 **Strategies for Managing Change**
By Strategic HR

WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

- 14 **The Power of Perceived Value for Long-Term Retention**
By Robin Schooling

WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

- 16 **Best Practices for Hiring Seasonal Employees in 2021**
By JazzHR



WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

- 18 **Two Simple Strategies to Improve Your Staffing**
By Mackenzie Froese

RECIPE

- 18 **Spinach and Artichoke Dip**



How to Improve the Candidate Experience by Improving the Recruiter Experience

BY GAZMEND KALICOVIC





Amid today's uncertainty, one thing remains constant in the realm of talent acquisition: talent leaders continue to emphasize the candidate experience. In fact, in one recent survey employers of all sizes across various industries still ranked candidate experience as the number one area of focus for global talent acquisition teams in 2021. This focus makes perfect sense: the world's most successful brands know that it's memorable experiences—not neat perks or features—that draw in customers and candidates.

When talent leaders dig deep and begin to look for ways to optimize each part of their candidate journey, however, they're likely to find that one factor—one common denominator—determines the experience each candidate has throughout the hiring process more than any other: the candidate's interactions with their recruiter.

Imagine a dinner at a beautiful restaurant. The setting is gorgeous, and the appetizers taste great. But then the server gets the dinner order completely wrong—or worse, they completely forget to put in the order at all. At that point, the beautiful setting suddenly loses its luster, and the dining experience is tainted.

Similarly, a company could have a beautiful career site, on-point branding, and an open position that's a perfect match for a particular candidate. But if the recruiter can't find that candidate's resume in their pile, or they lack the right tools to quickly and adequately engage the candidate, the candidate experience will inevitably suffer.

The candidate and recruiter experience are two sides of the same coin. Forward-thinking talent leaders know that when they improve the recruiter experience, amazing candidate experiences tend to follow. When talent leaders give their recruitment teams easy-to-use tools that provide them with the right information at the right time, they empower recruiters to engage much more meaningfully and memorably with candidates.

Here's a look at three things talent leaders are doing today

To activate better experiences for their recruiters—and, by extension, their candidates—today's talent leaders are taking the following actions:

- **They're enabling richer, more insightful conversations with a centralized candidate profile.** Imagine if recruiters could easily start a conversation with every single candidate by referencing a recent action they just took—an interaction with an e-mail campaign, for example, or attendance at a recruitment event. If all of that information were centrally located and easy to find, recruiters could have contextual, personalized conversations with each of their candidates and provide a truly differentiated, white-glove candidate experience.
- **They're facilitating better hiring team collaboration.** Recruiters spend too much of their time on administrative minutiae, such as scheduling interviews, receiving approval on job descriptions and postings, and hunting down hiring managers for candidate feedback. The more painless and seamless these tasks can become for recruiters, the faster they can move candidates through the pipeline—and the happier those candidates will be.
- **They're making recruiters' lives easier through more seamless integrations into the systems those recruiters use every day.** For example, on a typical day most recruiters likely have dozens of browser tabs open at any given moment and have to spend time hovering over those tiny boxes and trying to figure out which one is LinkedIn so they can begin their sourcing efforts for the day. Next, they have to hop into their applicant tracking system to see if the person they found on LinkedIn has previously applied to a job with the company. Then an email arrives from a candidate who is following up on their background check, so the recruiter has to open yet another tab to log into the company's background screening software. This kind of constant toggling among different systems isn't conducive to productivity, nor does it lead to a positive recruiter experience. To avoid this efficiency drain, talent leaders should work with their IT counterparts to map out and integrate their entire recruitment technology stack and workflow, from source to hire.

As companies continue to struggle to source top talent, they need to do whatever they can to get an edge in what is clearly a candidate market. One of the best strategies for accomplishing that is to improve the candidate experience by improving the recruiter experience. ■

Gazmend Kalicovic is a senior product marketing manager at iCIMS, where he is responsible for the global go-to-market strategy of the iCIMS Talent Cloud Platform, including iCIMS' integration, trust and security capabilities.

TRACKING THE ROI OF EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

BY O.C. TANNER

Employee recognition programs play an important role in top-performing organizations everywhere today, especially in companies renowned for their thriving workplace cultures. But is a recognition program truly worth the investment? Do its benefits outweigh its costs? And if so, is it possible to quantify the return on investment (ROI) of such a program? The answer to these questions is a resounding “yes!”

START WITH THE CULTURE

Take care of your employees, and they will take care of your business.

—Richard Branson

Caring for employees is truly possible only in a world-class corporate culture that encompasses the why, when, where, and how of work. If humans require a great culture—a fertile environment that motivates and inspires them to achieve—to do their best, how can leaders begin to create such a culture? Are the factors that shape that culture all created equal? And if not, which ones matter most?

The answers to those questions all point to one thing: employee recognition. Because no other investment can deliver a greater positive impact (and as simply and cost-effectively) on workplace culture, employee recognition has a significant ROI indeed. It provides a substantial lift to multiple areas, such as attracting top talent, increasing motivation, improving productivity, fostering innovation, encouraging great work, and improving business results.

But how can managers ensure that their recognition programs are generating the ROI they deserve? And how can they constantly improve the ROI of recognition over time? The first step is knowing how to measure the ROI of recognition, which is more than a dollar figure. Money plays a role, but the return on recognition investment is a combination of many impact measures that together form a complete picture of recognition ROI. It's critical to identify specific goals for recognition impact, establish benchmarks, and track measurable improvements as they occur.

The unique challenges an organization faces give it a starting point for determining which measures are most essential to track. For some companies, for example, that starting point is a problem, such as improving employee engagement, strengthening company culture, or decreasing employee turnover. As employee recognition begins to drive improvement in the company's chosen

areas of focus, managers can expand their impact wish lists and point their recognition strategies at other significant business results. Three areas of impact contribute most significantly to recognition ROI: experience impact, culture impact, and business impact.

EXPERIENCE IMPACT

Corporate culture is practically inseparable from everyday employee experiences. The corporate point of view of those experiences emphasizes the employee life cycle (attraction, recruitment, onboarding, development, etc.). Much more important—but less understood—is the employees' point of view, which includes small daily micro-experiences, such as interactions with peers, mentoring from leaders, opportunities for growth, challenging assignments, accomplishments, and other activities that define life at work.

Appreciating and being appreciated for great work are essential components of a thriving corporate culture. When a company lacks an effective recognition programs (or has programs with low participation), or when appreciation isn't woven into its cultural fabric, there's work to be done. In great organizations, showing appreciation prominently and often is second nature, like breathing. A great recognition solution should create hundreds (or even thousands) of positive employee experiences daily. These experiences reinforce employees' decisions to work where they work, help them connect with their teams and with company values, and motivate them to give their all to the organization's success.

For employee recognition programs to succeed, they must be supported and nurtured, and they must provide quality experiences. Determining the ROI of recognition begins with measuring the recognition experience. To see the flow of appreciation within the organization, managers need to monitor program metrics, beginning by answering some basic questions:

- How many employees have logged

into and begun using the company's recognition program?

- Do they stay involved and active as recognizers?
- Does participation increase over time? Or does it peak and then fall off?
- How satisfied are employees with the whole recognition experience from start to finish?
- Does the recognition program make them feel truly appreciated?
- Do recognition tools integrate well with daily workflow and other technologies?
- Is the program easily accessible, equitable, and fair? Does it include everyone?

The best way to find answers to these questions is to keep tabs on program adoption, program activity and engagement, and program satisfaction. When combined, systems data and mixed-method research yield a clear picture of experience impact.

Case Study

Ocwen Financial Corporation is one of the largest mortgage and lending servicing companies in America, with over 5,500 employees in the USA, India, and the Philippines. In 2015 a global engagement survey revealed that Ocwen employees wanted to see improvements in recognition. At that time, the company's recognition experience varied across departments and locations, and there was no direct visibility into who was being recognized or how.

Ocwen partnered with O.C. Tanner to design and launch a consistent, visible, global employee recognition program aligned with its core values. Senior lead-



ers were involved in the design, naming, and launch of the program (called Applause), which included technology and analytics for giving e-cards, spot awards, customer service awards, performance awards, and special mention awards worldwide.

Since the debut of Applause, 97 percent of Ocwen employees have given or received recognition through the program. Surveys conducted the year after launch showed a considerable jump in engagement scores related to rewards and recognition, and quarterly pulse surveys have also shown positive feedback from employees and leaders alike.

CULTURE IMPACT

Most leaders agree that great products, delivery, and service come from purpose-driven, happy, motivated people—the kind of employees who are present when their corporate culture is a breeding ground for success. How can companies measure the impact of recognition on culture? First, they need to understand what a thriving workplace culture is.

Many factors can influence workplace culture, but six aspects of the employee experience are the fundamental building blocks of a thriving culture. Companies with high-performing cultures excel in all six of these areas:

- Purpose (feeling connected to the organization's reason for being)
- Opportunity (having opportunities to grow and develop)
- Success (innovating, doing meaningful work, playing on a winning team)
- Appreciation (feeling valued and appreciated for individual contributions)
- Well-being (physical, social, emotional, and financial health)
- Leadership (having leaders who support, mentor, and help employees find joy in accomplishment)

To see culture impact, an organization must measure employee perceptions of the six elements of a thriving workplace—first to set benchmarks, and then to gauge improvement as the recognition experience improves. This data is gathered through both quantitative research (e.g., censuses, pulse surveys, integrated triggers) and qualitative research (e.g., interviews, focus groups, paired conversations). When combined, these two types of data offer a clear picture of culture impact.

Case Study

GE Appliances, a Haier Company, is a home appliance company with over 12,000 employees. The company's acquisition by Haier Corporation in 2016 gave leadership the opportunity to shape a more employee-focused culture that “makes life better” for employees and helps the business thrive by replacing a payroll/cash-based recognition system with more meaningful practices.

In partnership with O.C. Tanner, a cross-functional team of HR, IT, communications, marketing, and other GE groups met with executives and employee “cultural ambassadors” to gather input for shaping a new and improved recognition solution. The result was Recognize YOU, a comprehensive program that gives everyone in the company a chance to recognize and celebrate teamwork and accomplishments.

An instant hit with employees, Recognize YOU has made a measurable impact on the company's culture. Engagement survey scores showed the risk of attrition decreased by 58 percent when employees received any type of recognition in the prior month. Recognition increased employee perceptions of opportunity for growth and development by 108 percent and positive perceptions of leaders by 180 percent.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Once organizations begin to understand the true cost-benefit relationship of effective employee recognition, its value is difficult to ignore. The lift recognition provides to the everyday employee experience and culture includes improved perceptions of leaders, lower turnover, greater innovation, and elevated net promoter scores—all pretty significant outcomes from what can be a relatively small average annual investment per employee.

But translating all of that to some sort of bottom-line cost savings, customer benefit, or increased profitability is the proof of ROI many leaders seek. Fortunately, in spite of all the other things that influence financial success, it is possible to connect the dots between employee recognition costs and business results simply by following the money.

Symptoms of culture problems vary from company to company. Some organizations struggle with burnout, whereas others wrestle with attrition. Some have trouble motivating employees, inspiring innovation, increasing sales, or creating a great customer experience. All of these things can be measured and cross-tabbed with program data to reveal the

true impact of effective recognition.

Consider for a moment the high price of voluntary turnover, which costs businesses \$1 trillion per year in the USA alone. Taking into account that “79 percent of employees who quit their jobs cite a lack of appreciation as a key reason for leaving” and that an effective years-of-service award program can increase employee tenure by two full years, it's clear that recognition can help companies mitigate these losses. And doing the math on turnover-and-replacement costs (multiplying the number of employees who have quit by one-half of the average pay per employee yields a conservative estimate) highlights just how valuable recognition programs can be.

Case Study

Ohio Living is one of America's largest not-for-profit multisite senior living organizations, with more than 3000 employees across 12 communities. Knowing that its people truly want to make a difference in the lives of the seniors and other customers they serve, Ohio Living partnered with O.C. Tanner to create an employee recognition solution that connects employees' intrinsic motivation with the company's mission and purpose by providing tools for celebrating day-to-day accomplishments and major career contributions.

Ohio Living has enjoyed an extraordinary return on this investment. The organization's employee recognition practices have been quantifiably linked to higher employee retention across all locations, lower patient infection rates, fewer patient visits to the ER, lower hospital readmission rates, more five-star ratings than ever before, and public recognition as both a great place to work and one of the top healthcare companies in Ohio.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Recognition programs are powerful tools that can help companies engage and retain their best employees. Because such programs require time, effort, and money to develop and implement, it's important to ensure that they are effective enough to warrant those investments. Armed with knowledge gained from qualitative research, quantitative research, and other methods, organizations can measure the ROI of their recognition programs, and then adjust and improve them to achieve greater returns from them. ■

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.

HOW TO CREATE A PTO POLICY

BY ROGER CARBAJAL

Paid time off (PTO) is one of the most common and popular benefits employers offer to their employees. But in order to implement this benefit with the least amount of administrative and interpersonal hassles, a business needs a strong PTO policy along with an HR technology to track employees' use of PTO and ensure accuracy of records.

The purpose of a PTO policy is to establish ground rules and transparency while promoting objectivity and consistency in the application of those rules. In businesses with multiple locations, leaders may have to decide whether to create a companywide PTO policy applicable to all offices or have specific policies applicable to specific offices based upon state or local mandatory paid sick leave requirements.

In all situations, though, a company should document its PTO policy in writing within its employee handbook. The policy should include the following information:

- The number of PTO days employees (or certain categories of employees) get off annually
- The maximum amount of PTO that can be taken at once
- The procedure for requesting and approving time off

- The amount of notice that employees must give managers
- How unused PTO is handled when an employee leaves the company
- Any other special rules or parameters the company wants to put in place for using PTO
- To follow up on that last point, the PTO policy should address certain concerns that have become increasingly important of late.

Combine PTO with sick leave—or keep the two separate?

Many employers have traditionally given employees a set number of PTO and sick days lumped together, to be used for either vacation or sick time. But that's starting to change, with the number of U.S. employers that combine PTO with sick leave trending downward: only 41 percent did so in 2021, compared to 44 percent in 2020.

Many states now require companies to provide employees with a certain number of hours of paid sick leave—separate from PTO—each year. (Companies should check with the laws of the individual states in which they operate to determine whether these laws might apply to them.) Furthermore, many companies want to be able to track the difference between PTO and sick time to better assess how employees use this benefit. Also, separating the two types

of leave tends to be more popular with employees, who usually prefer not to have to use up valuable vacation time when they're sick.

Standard PTO—or unlimited PTO?

A standard PTO policy gives employees a finite number of PTO days to use throughout each calendar year. Although it can make employees feel more restricted, standard PTO plans offer important advantages to employers:

- More control over the costs associated with PTO (e.g., lost productivity)
- Easier scheduling
- More peace of mind that business needs will be covered

An unlimited PTO policy lets employees take off as many days as they want (usually with no questions asked) as long as they get their work done and their time away from the office accommodates the business's needs. For employers, unlimited PTO plans can be great recruitment and retention tools; for employees, they can lead to increased job satisfaction and a sense that the company cares about their well-being.

Because employee abuse of unlimited PTO can jeopardize business operations and productivity, companies that offer unlimited PTO should consider imposing certain restrictions on its use:

- Definitions of the types of leave that are approved under the policy and those that are not approved (for example, long-term absences associated with medical or disability leave)
- A separate sick-leave policy
- Clear parameters for how much PTO an employee can take at once

Unlimited PTO isn't recommended for nonexempt hourly employees, because companies need to be able to track the time those employees actually work. This option makes sense only for exempt, salaried employees. It's worth noting that there's seemingly a resurgence in support for standard PTO plans: in 2021, 51 percent of employers offered standard PTO plans, up from 49 percent in 2020.

Flat PTO—or tiered PTO?

On average, most U.S. employers offer 10 to 14 days of PTO to their new employees. Some companies give all of their employees—regardless of tenure—the same flat number of PTO days. This option certainly involves less tracking and administrative effort. In smaller



companies, employees may even desire equal treatment across the board. (However, employees' desire to be rewarded for tenure tends to increase as companies and staff size grow.)

In companies that want to reward employees for their loyalty and duration of service, one option is to increase PTO on a tiered system: the longer an employee stays with the company, the more PTO they're eligible for each year or each time they pass a set milestone. Not only can a tiered PTO system reinforce to long-term employees that the company values them, but it can also serve as a great recruitment and retention tool.

Front-loaded PTO—or accrued PTO?

A front-loaded PTO policy grants employees all of their allotted PTO for that calendar year on January 1, to use as soon as they want or at any point throughout the year. Employees tend to favor front-loaded PTO for its lack of restrictions. However, employers run the risk that an employee will use up all their vacation time in the first few months of the year and then quit.

In an accrued PTO policy, employees earn an increased amount of PTO per pay period or at other designated increments. This option requires more tracking and administrative effort. However, it also gives employers more control over PTO costs, planning, and scheduling throughout the year.

Companies that choose the accrual method must consider whether it will include negative accrual, which allows employees to use PTO before it's earned. For example, an employee who wants to take a vacation in February that requires more vacation time than they have in their PTO bank could use a negative accrual policy to apply both earned and unearned PTO toward the trip. If they leave the company before earning the PTO they used early, the company could (depending on relevant state laws) "charge" them for those days by deducting the cost of the unearned PTO from their final paycheck.

Negative accrual can also counteract end-of-year absenteeism. Without negative accruals, employees wouldn't be able to take larger blocks of time (e.g., five days or longer) until the second half of the year. This means that several employees could be out of the office at overlapping times, which could create staffing challenges.

Another compromise could be front-loading an allotted amount of PTO time at the beginning of the year, and then requiring employees to accrue additional time beyond that.

Rollover PTO—or "use it or lose it" PTO?

In companies with a "use it or lose it" PTO policy, employees must use all of their allotted PTO before the end of each calendar year to avoid losing it. (Note that some states prohibit these types of PTO policies.) For employees, the downside is that they can feel that they're losing out on an earned benefit or that they are forced to use PTO when they'd rather save it and use it at a more personally advantageous time. At the same time, although "use it or lose it" PTO policies enable easier, cleaner tracking of PTO for employers, they can spur a sharp increase in end-of-year absentee-

ism and can impair employee relations.

A rollover PTO policy allows employees to carry over unused PTO into the next calendar year. Because this can get out of control fast, companies should set limits on the amount of PTO that can be carried over into the next year, as well as the amount of rollover PTO that can be used at once. Companies should also set an expiration date on rollover PTO and establish a cap on the amount of available PTO (to prohibit employees from accruing more PTO until they use what they've carried over).

Additional considerations

When figuring out the structure and implementation of its paid PTO policy, a company should keep in mind the following questions:

- Will the company mandate that employees use a minimum amount of PTO each year?
- How will the company address the use of PTO during the certain times of the year when many employees want to take time off (e.g., major holidays and spring break)?
- To support diverse cultural and religious traditions and to give employees greater flexibility in using their PTO, will the company allow them to take floating holidays?

Of course, a PTO policy should address all the basics, such as eligibility, amounts, procedures, notice periods, and major restrictions. But a comprehensive policy should also include answers to the more pressing and timely issues outlined above. In addition to the general pros and cons, a company's PTO policy must also be evaluated in the context of its workplace culture, what its competitors are doing, what its employees prefer, and the needs of the business. ■

Roger Carbajal is an HR specialist at Inspireity. With more than 25 years of progressive HR experience, he has supported a wide range of industries, including manufacturing, telecommunications, medical devices, and automotive resellers.

HOW TO GET BETTER



AT STRATEGIC THINKING

BY VALERIE M. GRUBB

The ability to be a strategic thinker is a key characteristic of an effective leader. But one common mistake people make is to assume that strategic thinking is the exclusive domain of C-suiters or other positions with a senior title. That isn't true at all! Anyone can be a strategic thinker!

In fact, everyone should be thinking strategically from whatever chair they currently occupy. Even the receptionist should constantly be evaluating how they can do their job better—after all, they're the company's brand ambassador to clients (both current and potential) and to possible new hires. How the receptionist greets existing employees can help them start the day on a more positive note (and thus potentially contribute more to the company). That's the power of thinking strategically from every seat: by developing their strategic skills, anyone can elevate their game and improve their own leadership potential.

SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM THINKING

Leaders need to remember at all times that they are judged according to how their staff performs. Therefore, in all of their planning, they need to set their personal bar high and take steps to ensure that their employees meet those same high standards.

In the short term, planning should involve:

- Hiring the best people available (and not holding on to poor performers)
- Providing top-notch onboarding
- Ensuring that staff have the training they need to perform at their best
- Focusing the team's efforts on one or two metrics that help the business most

In the long term, planning should involve:

- Building a team that can react quickly to challenges and changes
- Identifying—and addressing—the obstacles to productivity
- Identifying—and seizing!—growth opportunities for the team
- Creating succession plans for critical positions
- Cataloguing employee skills (leaders who have this information at their fingertips when future opportunities or challenges arise will be better positioned to tap the right people for them)

However, no goal—whether short term or long term—is fully attainable without strategic thinking! Certain approaches work especially well for improving skills in each area of strategic thinking:

FORWARD THINKING

When examining either the organization's goals or their own goals, leaders should use these three methodologies to help them fine-tune their targets and how to reach them:

Gap analysis

Use introspection to figure out the current state, including which areas need improvement and which issues are the highest priority to address. Next, determine what the ideal future state is. This can be defined specifically (such as “increase social engagement by a factor of X” or “decrease absenteeism by 25 percent”) or broadly (such as “create a more inclusive work culture”). Then identify ways to bridge the gap between the current state and the future state. It doesn't matter if the solutions are qualitative or quantitative (or both), but they must be specific and trackable.

SWOT analysis

Identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that are most relevant to the organization. As anyone who grew up in the '80s watching the G.I. Joe cartoon show is well aware, “knowing is half the battle,” and once these categories have been filled and specific points to address have been identified, it's much easier to map a path forward.

Fishbone diagram

Also called an Ishikawa diagram (after Kaoru Ishikawa, the Japanese organizational management theorist who developed it), this tool links a problem to its possible causes. Its graphics-based depiction of the data makes it easier to see the connections between causes and effects and therefore easier to address problematic areas.

EAGER FOR INPUT

The best leaders know that they don't know everything, so they surround themselves with smart people and listen to them. When leaders understand that it's more important to get things right than to be right—and that it's okay to admit their own shortcomings—they gain access to information and tools that can improve the success of their projects. Leaders should ask questions and listen with an open mind to what others say.

FOCUSED ON THE LONG TERM

Achieving big goals takes both time and effort. (Rome wasn't built in a day, after all!) So always keep the big picture in mind. For example, strategic thinkers do their research on upcoming trends (such as technology developments, hiring practices, and skills gaps) so they can be prepared to meet them. At the same time, though, they keep both feet on the ground: rather than plan for every possible paradigm shift, they conserve their mental energy for the future scenarios that might actually come to pass.



WILLING TO TAKE RISKS

A leader who says “That’s not how we do things around here” needs to rethink how they approach strategy. Anyone who doesn’t want their company (and their career) to get stuck in a rut needs to push themselves beyond their comfort zone sometimes and embrace uncertainty. Strategic thinkers encourage their people to take risks (and make mistakes!), and they recognize and reward informed (but not reckless) risk taking. Most importantly, they give their people some autonomy to make these decisions. In other words: strategic thinkers trust their employees.

ADEPT AT PRIORITIZING TIME

An action priority matrix helps measure the impact of each task and the effort needed to complete it. Though often credited to David Allen’s *Getting Things Done*, this simple technique actually has its origins in a method favored by Dwight D. Eisenhower, which he described, borrowing the words of an unnamed college president, in a speech in 1954:

“I have two kinds of problems, the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent.”

This approach is clear, concise, and effective. When thinking about how to prioritize, keep the following two questions in mind (and answer them honestly):

- Am I focusing on easy tasks (e.g., quick wins, fillers) and actively avoiding the challenging chores on my plate?
- Am I being truly productive—or am I just being busy?

Once the priorities are identified, don’t get derailed by less important matters. Strategic thinkers focus on their most challenging projects when they’re at their peak mental state. (A “morning person,” for example, might tackle their difficult tasks first thing in the day.)

NIMBLE

Even people who do a great job of anticipating and preparing for possibilities occasionally look up to see something totally unexpected barreling toward them. At that moment, all they can do is figure out how respond to it quickly so they don’t lose their momentum. Do they try to duck around it and avoid it completely? Do they try to take hold of it and see what happens? The specific response varies according to the situation, of course, but the best way to be generally prepared for the unexpected is not to fear change.

Fear of change can divide workplaces, increase employee disengagement and turnover, lead to missed deadlines and drops in productivity, cause clients to take their business elsewhere, stunt innovation, and results in tons of other problem. In short, fear of change is bad. But change itself can often be very good, and if leaders and their staff are nimble—able to respond quickly and effectively—they can handle anything that comes their way. In addition to being prepared, strategic thinkers work to cultivate among their employees a mindset that values flexibility and creativity, and encourages colleagues and departments to help each other navigate challenging situations.

COMMITTED TO LIFELONG LEARNING

When strategic thinkers become aware of something new that could have a big impact on their organization or industry (e.g., technology developments, new data analysis methods), they learn what they can about it—including how it can be helpful for their company and for their own career. When opportunities to learn from past experiences present themselves (for example, in reflections on what worked—and what didn’t—in a previous project), seize them. “Knowledge is power,” as the saying goes, and in the corporate world that type of power can help someone lead a capable and engaged team, spur their career to new heights, or contribute to their organization’s success—or all three!

CREATIVE

First and foremost, strategic thinkers make a conscious effort to change their style of thinking. If leaders don’t actively search for new paths, they and their teams (and their company) will be stuck on the same road indefinitely—which means they won’t innovate. Here are just a few of the many great techniques for fostering creativity:

- Step away from work entirely, especially when feeling “stuck.” Taking a break from a work-related task and spending time on something completely different (such as going for a walk, drawing a picture, baking a pie, building an Adirondack chair—whatever!) can give the mind time to refresh itself and make space for new ideas to “sneak” in.
- Lie down for a few minutes. The simple act of relaxing can make it possible to resume projects or tasks with a renewed vigor.
- Try a fun “what if?” exercise to encourage staff to see things from a new perspective. For example, ask a team “What would you do if you had an extra million dollars in your budget?” After they come up with a list, revise the amount to \$100,000 dollars, and then again to \$10,000. Sometimes experiments in big, bold thinking can line people up to innovate on a smaller scale.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This strategy represents our policy for all time. Until it’s changed.

—Marlin Fitzwater

Leaders who strive to improve their skills as strategic thinkers must remember that this is a process, not a one-and-done event. It takes constant work, and it’s easy to lose momentum. So it’s critical that leaders block out time every day to work on strategic thinking—in ways that benefit their company and in ways that benefit them personally. When enthusiasm, effort, and energy are applied to this task, they create fertile ground in which strategic thinking skills can grow. ■

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Strategies for Managing Change

BY STRATEGIC HR

Change affects everyone at work and in their personal lives. Sometimes it happens suddenly and without warning, and as people scramble to process what's happened, what it means, and how it will affect them, they are forced to pivot and determine how to transition that change into the "new normal." Sometimes change is planned and enacted (by individuals and organizations) in the belief that it will bring improvements and produce a positive outcome. Unfortunately, in both situations managers too often underestimate—or overlook completely—individual reactions to change (whether planned or unplanned) and the level of effort needed for it to be embraced. Managing change can be difficult!

What Is Change Management?

The Society of Human Resource Management offers this definition:

Change management is the systematic approach and application of knowledge, tools, and resources to deal with change. It involves defining and adopting corporate strategies, structures, procedures, and technologies to handle changes in external conditions and the business environment.¹

When facing a change initiative, companies can draw on a variety of models for managing change. Some models focus on an organizational response to change, whereas others focus on individuals and how people respond and react to change differently. Regardless of which approach they take, companies should consider the following tools and recommendations for smoothing anticipated bumps in the road.

Organizational Responses to Change

It's not unusual for a decline in performance, morale, or overall productivity to accompany change within an organization. Employees tend to enjoy and expect a certain degree of the status quo, and when a major change is introduced, performance drops as individuals react to it.

Even in the best of circumstances, productivity levels aren't typically perfect right out of the gate. There may be glitches, unforeseen challenges, and learning curves—and it takes time for the organization to overcome them and adapt to the change.

Organizations can speed the transition from "adapting" to "thriving" under the following conditions:

- Managers understand and communicate regularly with their employees about the changes and their desired outcomes and benefits.
- Managers work closely with and aid their teams throughout the change process.
- There is a focus on employee training and development to provide individuals with the tools, knowledge, and materials needed to operate in the new environment.
- Individuals receive time to work through the emotional rollercoaster that can accompany a major change.
- Leaders have certain responsibilities to their employees when managing change. The Center for Creative Leadership describes three that are particularly important:²
 - **Communicate.** Share the "why" of the change—not just the "what": "Leaders who explained the purpose of the change and connected it to the organization's values or explained the benefits created stronger buy-in and urgency for the change."
 - **Collaborate.** Get people to work together: "Successful leaders worked across boundaries, encouraged employees to break out of their silos, and refused to tolerate unhealthy competition. They also included employees in decision making early on."
 - **Commit.** Embrace the change: "Leaders who negotiated [change] successfully were resilient and persistent, and willing to step outside their comfort zone."



Individual Responses to Change

A former vice president at Honda R&D Americas has observed similarities between how people experience change and how they experience grief³. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross famously identified denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance as the five stages of grief. Kübler-Ross used the term change curve to describe the nonlinear process of working through those stages. It works well for describing how people work through the stages of dealing with change: denial, resistance, commitment, exploration, and acceptance. Some people move through the process quickly, whereas others may linger in one stage longer than another (or even move backward, if the change isn't managed well).

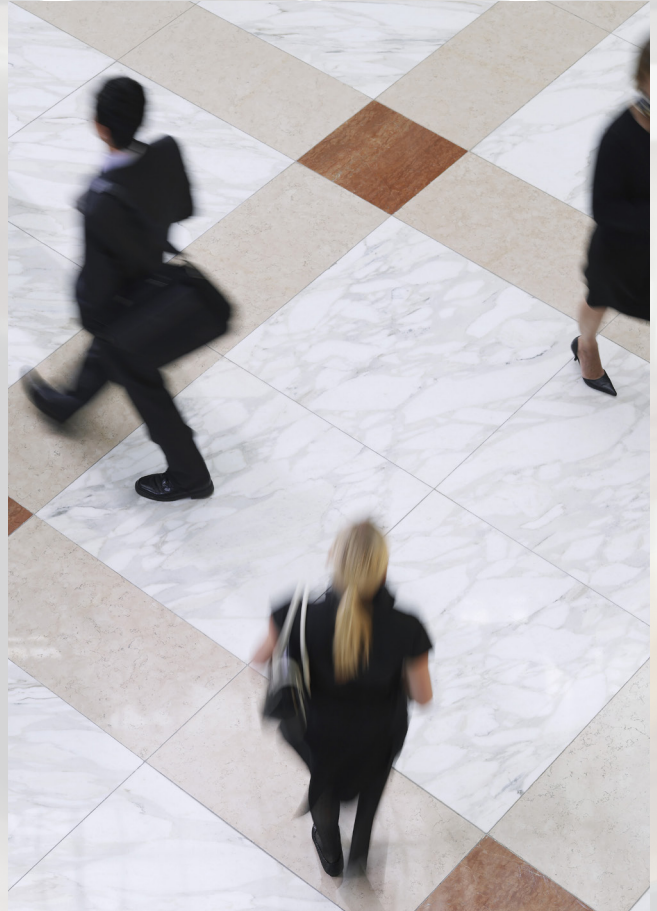
Depending on which stage of dealing with change employees are in, leaders can take certain actions to help their teams move toward the acceptance stage:

Denial. Supervisors should be in information mode, providing as much information as possible about the change and communicating a clear business case for why change is occurring. Management needs to “own” the change themselves and reinforce the company’s (or their own) vision for it.

Resistance. To help their employees overcome resistance to change, supervisors should be in empathy mode. They need to be active listeners, allow employees to express their thoughts, and acknowledge their feelings.

Exploration. Supervisors should be in facilitation mode to help employees see some specific, concrete changes (particularly those that will affect them). Management can provide new organizational charts, new tools, and new metrics, for example. Or it can set short-term goals to allow employees to practice operating under the changed environment and start seeing immediate results & benefits. Supervisors must provide support and clear direction so employees understand what is expected of them in the future. Training (if needed) works best in this phase, when employees have moved through denial and resistance and are open to learning new things.

Commitment. At this point, employees have overcome most of the obstacles, and supervisors should begin setting longer-term goals. Supervisors should continue providing support and encouragement, and should also work to eliminate barriers to and facilitate opportunities for learning. It’s important that management promote and celebrate the successes as well as identify and communicate any unanticipated additional benefits.



Throughout the change process, supervisors should be doing their best to actively support their employees in potentially difficult times. It’s also important that they reinforce the “what’s in it for me” aspect of change and discuss the benefits it brings not just to the organization and to the team but to individual employees as well.

The ability to deal with change effectively is a critical skill for people at all levels of an organization: employees must be able to embrace change, managers must be able to embrace and manage change, and leaders must be able to embrace, manage, and lead change! With a better understanding of the challenges that accompany change and knowledge of a variety of strategies to address them, managers and leaders can more successfully navigate their organizations through the turbulent waters of change. ■

Strategic HR Inc.’s mission is to be a strategic partner providing custom human resources business solutions to help our clients attract, support, develop, and retain a competitive workforce and achieve their business objectives. For more information, visit strategichrinc.com.

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The Power of Perceived Value for Long-Term Retention

BY ROBIN SCHOOLING

Several years ago, I met an early career HR professional who was debating whether to accept a new job offer. In the previous year, she had received a promotion, attained an HR certification, and greatly expanded her professional network. She enjoyed her job, liked her team, had friends at work, and was very satisfied with her pay. She had job autonomy and was able to implement initiatives that were important to her. Both her direct manager and “the powers that be” regularly provided recognition and kudos, and the organization celebrated milestones (such as birthdays, new babies, and business wins). Yet even though she was what many would consider “happy” in her job, she was looking for something more, and therefore began exploring other opportunities.

“Why,” one may wonder, “would a seemingly content and newly promoted employee look for another job?” Simply put, she had decided that the value she could receive from a new job would be higher than the value she was getting from her current job.

People have always resigned from jobs in pursuit of this perceived value. It may lie in higher compensation or in more robust benefit offerings. Or it may be based on culture, such as a desire to join an organization that affords better work-life balance, more closely aligns with one’s personal values, or better caters to an individual’s work style (for example, by offering the ability to work from home).

Someone may explore other opportunities because they anticipate enhanced career development and professional growth. They may want to broaden their knowledge base or work in a different industry. Or they may want to increase their perceived value by adding the name of a sexy-and-shiny company to their resume.

People quit jobs for any number of reasons. The Great Resignation of 2021 is creating a candidate market right now, and the business world is collectively gobsmacked at the increased turnover it’s experiencing. This turnover really shouldn’t come as a surprise, though: people are thinking about “value” in their work lives today just as they always have. And although employers can’t change the facts, they can use this opportunity to review how someone’s perception of value may affect their desire either to start a job search or to entertain a conversation with a recruiter.

UNDERSTANDING PERCEIVED VALUE

Marketing specialists most often discuss the concept of perceived value when they explore whether customers believe that a company’s product or service satisfies their wants and needs. Believe is the critical word here, and marketing professionals rely on this understanding to inform their branding and messaging. This leads to articulating the value proposition for said product or service, extolling its merits, or justifying its price.

HR is quite adept at using these concepts, especially in talent acquisition, where employer branding specialists and companies spend bundles of money to develop employee value propositions (EVP). HR departments align their employment brands with their EVPs, design unique (quirky? value-driven?) messaging, and target and source from critical talent segments in order to make great hires.

But what about existing employees? Are companies continuing to have the “value” conversation with folks who have been on board for six months? Or two years? Or twenty years? Do HR staff and managers know if those employees continue to derive value in their jobs or at the company? Do they even understand what those employees value? If the answers to these questions are “no,” now is the time to make some changes.

HAVING VALUE CONVERSATIONS

Value conversations with existing employees should be driven by individual managers. Pulse surveys offer a great starting point for managers to gain data-driven insights into the mood of employees across the organization and into the state of their own departments or teams.

But it's also critical that managers never lose sight of the fact that speaking with employees is the best way to really understand their unique needs and wants. In these conversations, managers can ask questions that include:

- "What makes you feel appreciated at work?"
- "How do you know when you're valued?"
- "How can I best recognize your contributions?"
- "What's important for you to experience at work?"
- "What factors need to be present in a job for you to be satisfied? Are we meeting those needs?"

And then, after getting answers to those questions, it's important that managers let their employees—those incredibly talented individuals they want on their teams—know that they have been truly heard. Managers must take the lead in ensuring that

employees feel psychologically safe at work, as well as in offering recognition and planning team celebrations (including knowing which employees like—or dislike—being in the spotlight of public recognition).

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

As for that maybe-ready-to-make-a-move HR professional, she decided to map out her personal value inventory, including what made her happy in her existing job and what was missing. She listed the things she loved to do and the things she wanted to avoid. She reflected on what she wanted to learn and where she thought additional experience would take her, both within her existing organization and at other companies. She then shared this insight with her manager, which allowed them to jointly devise a personal development plan that went beyond a performance plan that merely captured task, goals, and accomplishments. Together they worked to ensure that she would continue to get value out of her current job—as a professional, as a contributing team member, and as a human. ■

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"...it's important that managers let their employees— those incredibly talented individuals they want on their teams— know that they they have been truly heard."

BEST PRACTICES FOR HIRING SEASONAL EMPLOYEES IN 2021

BY JAZZHR



With nearly eleven million positions currently open in the U.S. job market, companies are struggling to deal with the significant shortage of labor.¹ People are more discerning about which jobs to pursue, thanks in part to increases in unemployment benefits in response to the pandemic. (For example, one study found that between March 2020 and July 2020 “a 10 percent increase in unemployment benefits caused a 3.6 percent decline in [job] applications, but did not decrease vacancy creation.”²)

As job seekers increasingly seek to work on a seasonal basis, companies must figure out how to get those individuals to work for them. Organizations have to address several significant challenges to hiring:

- Lack of flexibility. If job-level statistics reveal anything, it’s that the pandemic changed how most people work. Now more than ever, U.S. workers expect job flexibility, with three-quarters of the respondents to one survey affirming that “it is important to retain flexibility as part of the return to normal.”³
- Lack of empathy in the hiring process. Few employees will want to be part of an institution that doesn’t empathize with their needs.
- Alienating language in job descriptions. Qualified candidates often opt not to apply for positions when the postings for them contain “language that is aggressive, gender specific, and discriminatory.”⁴

Companies need to do whatever they can to avoid bad practices during the hiring process. Additionally, they also must ensure that the application process reflects well on them, or else they (and any prospective candidates) will be saddled

with a disappointing active recruitment process—and take a hit to their word-of-mouth hiring, too. Following three key practices can help companies improve their hiring of temporary staff.

Invest In Growth Training

Over 90 percent of respondents to one employee survey said “they would stay at a company longer if it invested in their learning and development.”⁵ Organizations that want to recruit quality temporary talent need to align their workplace cultures with those employees’ interests and needs.

This can be especially important when hiring temporary staff. Hiring employees early, well before the seasonal period begins, allows ample time to train recruits and gives companies plenty of opportunities to prove that they’re committed to employee growth.

Keeping employees up to date on their regular “how to



do the job” training can boost their performance as well as the company’s profit margin. Investing in meticulous compliance training can also have a significant impact by saving the organization from some hefty fines, lawsuits and worse and improving employee engagement and retention.

Invest In Diversity Training

Companies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in their strategies and training are likely to make smarter, more productive hires.⁶ One way they can achieve this is by highlighting inclusivity in their job descriptions and by using blind resume reviews. Additionally, they can keep all employees (especially recruiters and interviewers) informed on DEI issues such as unconscious bias, microaggressions, harmful stereotypes, and discrimination.

For one of the largest target markets for temporary hiring, young adults, diversity can be a deciding factor when they’re weighing whether to join an organization. Implementing diversity initiatives can help companies attract these socially conscious individuals who care about representation—and about being represented—within the workplace.



Implement Incentives

The pandemic forced people to confront the mortality of those near and dear to them, but possibly their own. It really made people—whatever age they are and whatever time they have left—think about how they want to spend it.

—Paola Peralta

Many people who have spent a significant amount of time at home over the past year and half are emerging from the lockdowns wanting to spend their time more meaningfully. After spending a considerable amount of that time counting bathroom tiles and watching Netflix reruns, it’s no surprise that many people feel an impulse to make every moment count. They’re looking for more consideration and mindfulness in their work, in their workspaces, and in their relationships with management.

Companies need to convince people that working for them—no matter how short their stay—can aid their future careers. To attract and retain talented people, organizations need to offer personal incentives that employees increasingly expect:

- Flexible hours
- Stringent cleaning measures to keep employees as COVID-safe as possible.
- Wellness programs and policies (such as free mental health apps, books, subscriptions)

- Bonuses and perks (such as gift cards, discounts, lunches)
- Fun experiences in the workplace (such as happy hours, social gatherings, games, lighthearted social media posts)

Get with the Times

In the many months since the pandemic began, many people have found themselves placing a higher priority on life, community, and wellness, both in their personal lives and in their professional lives. Job hunters now have new criteria in mind when looking for work, and businesses must be ready to accommodate (and even embrace) that new mindset.

JazzHR (jazzhr.com) is powerful, user-friendly, and affordable software built to help growing companies exceed their recruitment goals. JazzHR’s best-in-class solution replaces manual, time-consuming hiring tasks with intuitive tools and automation, empowering hiring managers to recruit and hire the right talent faster.

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TWO SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE YOUR STAFFING

BY MACKENZIE FROESE

So . . . how about that crazy job market?

For the past several months, companies have struggled to find top talent to fill their open positions. This situation long predates the arrival of COVID-19 (do a quick internet search for “skills gap” and you’ll see what I mean), but the pandemic has definitely made it worse.

Before, some organizations encountered difficulties mostly when trying to source people with certain skill sets. Today, companies of all sizes and in all sectors and industries are having a hard time with staffing—and the business forecast doesn’t call for this situation to change any time soon.

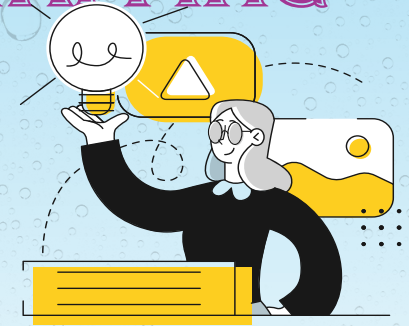
Fortunately, two simple strategies can help your company increase its chances of finding—and retaining—the employees it needs.

TAILOR YOUR RECRUITMENT FUNNEL TO THE MARKET

Take the time to do some research on what candidates actually want—and then offer it to them. In recent years (and especially during the pandemic) candidates have adjusted their expectations. Now, they are increasingly waiting for positions with remote work options, more flexible scheduling, or other features that allow for better work–life balance and offer more growth opportunities—and they are passing over positions that fall short in these areas. Obviously, this advice doesn’t apply to unrealistic demands. But companies that want to attract more qualified candidates will need to be more willing to accommodate reasonable (and feasible) expectations.

SHOW GRATITUDE

The end of the year is a time when companies often engage in “employee appreciation” efforts (such as holiday parties and annual gifts). But



expressions of gratitude shouldn’t be limited to the last two months of the year—especially these days, when individuals and companies are still keenly feeling the many negative effects of the pandemic. An organization is only as good as its people, so be sure to let your people know (via public recognition, thank-you notes, PTO awards, gift cards, or other forms) that you are grateful for all they do for your company. When delivered frequently and sincerely, your gratitude can improve employee engagement and influence their decision to stay with your company.

Mackenzie Froese is the director of content marketing at Haley Marketing Group and the editor in chief of HR Insights. She can be reached at mfroese@haleymarketing.com.

RECIPE

SPINACH AND ARTICHOKE DIP



Whether you’re hosting a festive gathering, contributing to someone else’s holiday potluck, or simply scrambling to find time to prepare your own dinner during this busy time of year, you can’t go wrong with this favorite. Pantry staples come together quickly to produce a flavor-packed dip that can be paired with crackers, bread, or chips as a crowd-pleasing appetizer. If you toss it with cooked pasta (penne or elbows are ideal), it makes a hearty main course.

Fair warning: this dip is very rich! But who’s counting calories during the holiday season, right?

Directions:

- ▶ Preheat the oven to 375°F.
- ▶ Squeeze the spinach to remove excess water, then chop it coarsely.
- ▶ Drain and coarsely chop the artichoke hearts.
- ▶ Thoroughly combine all of the ingredients in a large bowl, then spread the mixture evenly into an oven-safe dish.
- ▶ Bake for 20–30 minutes.
- ▶ Serve hot!

Yield: 8 servings (as an appetizer) thawed

What you’ll need:

- ▶ 10 oz frozen spinach, thawed
- ▶ 14 oz can artichokes
- ▶ 2 cups parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- ▶ 8 oz cream cheese, room temperature
- ▶ ½ cup mayonnaise
- ▶ ⅔ cup sour cream
- ▶ 1 tsp garlic, minced

Nutrition Facts

Amount per Serving	
Calories:	297 cal
Fat:	23.9 g
Dietary fiber:	2.6 g
Sugars:	2.8 g
Protein:	13.4 g

(To add some crunch to this dip, sprinkle bread crumbs on the top during the last ten minutes of baking.)

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