

# THE RESOURCE

# Labor & Industrial **INSIGHTS**® magazine

VOL. VIII, ISSUE I

HOW TO  
**OVERCOME THE  
SKILLS SHORTAGE**  
BY MAKING YOUR  
MANUFACTURING JOBS  
MORE ATTRACTIVE



## INSIDE

Why Is Our Talent Disappearing  
and What Can We Do To Stop It?

How Effective is the Feedback  
You Deliver?

The Best Questions to Ask  
in Performance Reviews

**AND MORE...**

# 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 of Kathy Hartung in black ink.

Kathy Hartung, CEO



# Labor & Industrial **INSIGHTS**<sup>®</sup> magazine

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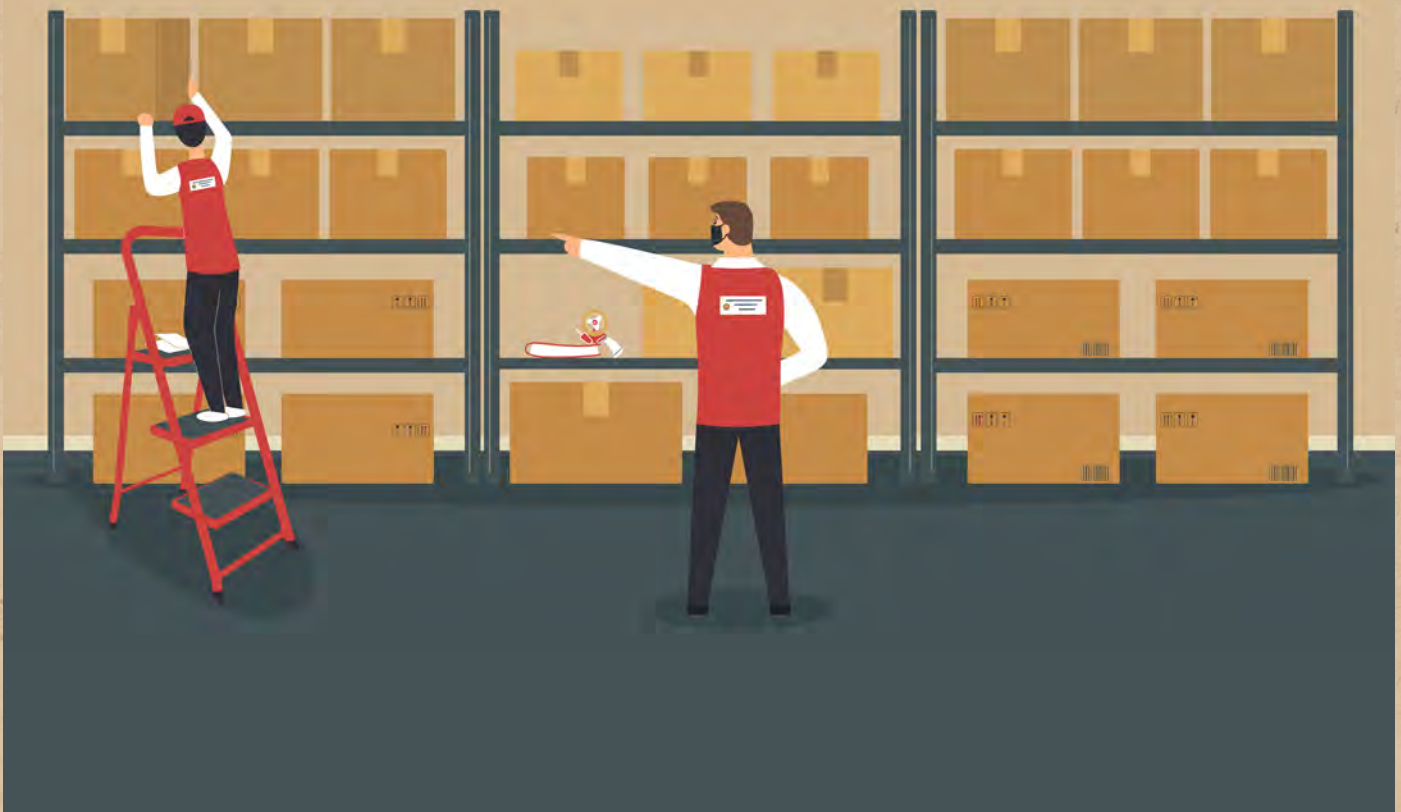
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# HOW EFFECTIVE IS YOUR FEEDBACK?

BY AMANDA USEN



Telling an employee they're "doing it wrong" is never easy. Even when you both share the same goal—getting the job done well—it's challenging to craft an approach and a message that will get you the desired outcome: Good reception and a positive behavior change.

## WHAT IS EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK?

Feedback is effective when the recipient hears what is offered and changes their behavior. It sounds simple, yet most managers don't like giving feedback and feel like their employees aren't listening. On the other side of the equation, many employees feel like they aren't getting the feedback they need to grow and improve in their roles. How does this disconnect happen? And how can managers harness the power of positive feedback in 2022?

## FOCUS ON THE PROCESS, NOT THE PERSON

When feedback is presented to solve a problem or improve a process, rather than as personal criticism, it is more likely to be received well. When giving feedback:

- ➔ **Be objective.** It's likely you have personal feelings about the situation, but don't allow your emotions to guide your words.
- ➔ **Be honest.** Sometimes it's helpful to begin a feedback discussion by praising something the employee does well, but be candid about the behavior that needs improvement.
- ➔ **Be clear.** Being vague will not get the results you desire. State a specific reason for the discussion and set a clear expectation for the future.





## **BUILD UP YOUR TEAM**

Giving valuable feedback is a skill, and like all skills, it can be learned. In fact, it's the responsibility of managers to learn how to offer feedback to their employees and continuously work to improve their delivery. Every successful feedback discussion builds a better future for the team and the company, and most team members want to develop into the best versions of themselves. However, they don't want to feel like they've done a lousy job or failed. For your feedback to have the most impact, try the following tips.

## **OFFER FREQUENT FEEDBACK**

Timing is everything. Too often, the yearly employee review is the only time employees are directly addressed about their job performance. Both parties might be a little nervous during the conversation, and emotions can run high. Consider offering frequent feedback in less highly charged situations. In fact, constructive feedback should be offered within 24 hours to have the most impact. It's often challenging to make time for difficult discussions but well worth the effort. Praising good performance in the moment and offering timely feedback can be a rewarding habit. When done consistently, your employees will begin to trust that you value them and want them to do their best.

## **EMPOWER CHANGE**

Feedback is a two-way street. Your employees will likely have their own version of events, and listening to their side can help you understand how to support them better. Ask questions that will make the conversation a learning experience for both of you:

*What would you do differently next time?*

*What went well? What could have gone better?*

*Do you see places where your performance could be improved?*

Asking questions and listening to the answers can empower the employee and help them understand that improving their performance is their responsibility. Close the discussion by summarizing insights and action steps for future behavior.

## **FOLLOW THROUGH**

Telling an employee how to improve a behavior or a process doesn't mean making the change will be easy for them. Offer to follow up with them in a month and let them know you will support them and answer any questions.

## **THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING**

When you consistently offer effective feedback to your team, they will begin to trust that you care about them. Building this trust can also increase motivation, confidence, and job performance. Employees who receive effective feedback feel respected, supported, and appreciated. They'll want to give their best, which will create a more positive, stronger team. ■

*Amanda Usen is a copywriter for Haley Marketing Group. As a multi-published author and voracious reader, she's spent most of her life immersed in words. She enjoys using her creative writing experience to craft impactful messaging and tell HMG's clients' stories.*



# Using Social Recognition and Spread Success

BY O.C. TANNER



**S**ocial networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are incredibly effective communication tools because they empower users to create posts and instantly share them with an online community. Other users can respond to those posts (through comments or “likes,” for example), which in turn spurs even more responses. As a result of those interactions, the original content has the potential to spread rapidly to a very wide audience.

Social recognition in the workplace operates in a similar way. In this case the community comprises a team, a division, or even the entire

company. The social feed—usually a component of the company’s employee recognition platform—becomes a powerful channel for recognizing and rewarding employees or praising the good work of top performers. Just as with a social media post, a community of employees can respond (with comments or “likes”) to a recognition post, which helps spread the news and increases the number of coworkers who participate in the celebration.

Most importantly, social recognition helps employees make positive, measurable impacts on their company culture. It allows them to celebrate successes together and build meaningful relationships with each other. For these reasons, social recognition is an essential component of successful employee recognition programs.

**SOCIAL RECOGNITION HELPS EMPLOYEES MAKE POSITIVE, MEASURABLE IMPACTS ON THEIR COMPANY CULTURE**

## BENEFITS OF SOCIAL RECOGNITION

It’s a best practice to make employee recognition announcements public (which social sharing can do seamlessly), because although social recognition is gratifying for the individual who is being singled out for great work, sharing that recognition can boost employee motivation and benefit the entire workplace:

*When news of success is spread across the organization, there is a 44 percent increase in feeling that the organization is successful [and] a 57 percent increase in feelings of appreciation, and employees are 82 percent more likely to have a strong understanding of what success looks like at their organization.<sup>1</sup>*

When success is shared, more employees feel that they are part of that success. A good social recognition effort can yield several other positive outcomes:

**Helping more employees participate in success.** Incorporating a social recognition feed (sometimes called a social wall) into a recognition program allows more leaders, team members, and other coworkers to participate in recognition celebrations. When comparing potential social recognition solutions, HR executives should ensure that the leading contenders include a robust set of social recognition features.

### Building a connected company culture.

Employee recognition solutions with effective social components can positively influence company culture. Effectively communicated recognition gives the entire organization visibility into the contributions and achievements of team members, which helps employees feel more connected to everyday successes and to each other.

**Increasing employee engagement and trust.** Employee engagement is key to productive, happy, and loyal teams



1. O.C. Tanner Institute. 2018. “2018 Global Culture Report.” O.C. Tanner website, [www.octanner.com/content/dam/octanner/documents/white-papers/2018/2018\\_Global\\_Culture\\_Report.pdf](http://www.octanner.com/content/dam/octanner/documents/white-papers/2018/2018_Global_Culture_Report.pdf).

# to Amplify

that have low turnover, high profitability, and high productivity. Sharing recognition moments through a social channel can help increase engagement and create peak experiences that employees will remember. Additionally, when leaders or team members comment on recognition to share positive feedback about a coworker's accomplishments, the organization can achieve a higher level of team camaraderie and trust.

**Promoting peer-to-peer recognition of great work.** This type of recognition (which can include both formal award nominations and everyday, casual acknowledgments) is important because it can happen in real time, whenever and wherever good work occurs. When shared through an internal social channel, peer recognition helps leaders and other teams become aware of great work they might otherwise miss, and it gives others a chance to share in the success and inspire even more team members to recognize their peers for outstanding work.

**Gaining insight into what's happening.** Monitoring a social recognition feed to see who is being recognized and how often is a fantastic way for leaders to measure employee engagement within teams. A manager who blocks off time regularly (say, every week) to read and comment on the recognition given to their employees gets a better sense of what is happening throughout the organization and has more opportunities to acknowledge the great work of individual team members.

## 8 WAYS TO AMPLIFY SOCIAL RECOGNITION SUCCESS

Social recognition is most effective when it fully leans into the “social” element. Here are some ways to increase the spread—and the impact—of this good news.

**Share with as many as possible.** Maximize the community of employees who will see social recognition of team members. Don't limit the audience to only the immediate team—make sure that employees throughout the entire organization can see those successes.

**Recognize often and in the moment.** Don't wait for the end of the month or quarter to recognize outstanding work. Encourage teams and individuals to call out achievements in real time, noting top performers or unsung heroes who exceed expectations.

**Ask leaders to set the example.** The best way for leaders to promote a program among their teams is to teach them by example. Leaders should show their commitment to employee appreciation by initiating leader-driven recognition as well as participating in peer-to-peer recognition.

**Set up social sharing communities.** Take advantage of an employee recognition platform's technology by leveraging its built-in capabilities for amplifying social sharing. For example, configure social recognition feeds to include activity from all of a team's coworkers and direct reports. Also, maximize social sharing communities by allowing individuals to “follow” additional leaders and coworkers from other teams or divisions.

**Encourage peer-to-peer sharing.** Peer-to-peer recognition works hand in glove with social sharing and is more effective when it's timely, genuine, and specific. When shared throughout the organization, peer recognition can become a regular part of the company culture.

**Celebrate other types of recognition.** A social sharing strategy should incorporate recognition not only of performance but of events such as service milestones and other achievements. For more opportunities for engagement, a company can also choose to include everyday recognition events as part of its social feed, alongside nominations for specific performance awards.

**Share on public social media sites.** Internal social feeds aren't the only places to share recognition. Many types of service or performance recognition can be appropriately shared on public social media sites, such as LinkedIn or Twitter. This can help companies improve engagement with millennials and the members of Generation Z, for whom significant use of social media is second nature.

**Consider monetary rewards.** Sending everyday, casual notes of recognition promotes greater feelings of appreciation, but the effect is substantially increased when the recognition includes a monetary component. A monetary reward also enhances peer-to-peer recognition and public recognition.

## GET THE MOST FROM SOCIAL RECOGNITION

When an employee recognition program has social feeds enabled, spreading appreciation throughout an organization becomes automatic and seamless. The entire team (or even larger group) can share in others' success and also feel inspired to recognize their own peers. By building a culture of appreciation, the organization will also enjoy greater levels of engagement, productiveness, and trust. ■

*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](http://www.octanner.com).*

# HOW TO OVERCOME THE SKILLS MAKE MANUFACTURING

**BY 2030** there will be an estimated 4 million open manufacturing jobs—1.5 million because of industry growth and 2.5 million because of retirements.<sup>1</sup> Because many of these will center around advancing technology, there will be increased demand for highly skilled and specialized talent. Currently, the U.S. manufacturing sector is on track to fill only about 1.9 million of those jobs, which will leave about 2.1 million quality, well-paying jobs unfilled at the end of this decade.

This labor shortage looms on the horizon at a time when many U.S. manufacturers are looking to increase domestic manufacturing as one way to improve the agility and resiliency of their supply chains. It's hard, though, for a manufacturing plant to compete with a nearby technology metropolis where employers promise hybrid work, flexible hours, and a range of perks, big and small. But with a little creativity, manufacturers can appeal to a wide range of potential talent that has never considered the industry.



## HIGHLIGHT MEANING AND PURPOSE

One of the big reasons workers aren't drawn to manufacturing is that they believe factory floors are noisy, hot, and loud—a perception that is mostly outdated yet still often true. At the same time, younger workers tend to be drawn to the businesses that seek to “change the world” and have big recognizable logos with flowery language about leading the way into the future and making an impact. As the workforce shrinks and automation increases, industrial chemical plants and companies that assemble polymer injection molds, produce roof insulation, or engage in other manufacturing activities are increasingly in direct competition with those “change the world” types in big cities around the world.

In fact, the most difficult to fill roles in the manufacturing sector are engineers, whose positions can take as much as double the time to fill as those of assemblers and fabricators.<sup>2</sup> Engineers with the right skills can have their pick of where they want to work. Companies that want to attract them can fight a bidding war—or they can change the conversation and appeal to their desire to build, design, and create physical, tangible products. Going forward, manufacturers that want to compete successfully for talent will have much better luck if they flip the script and highlight how they offer creative, innovative, and rewarding careers with the companies that build the world and keep the lights on.







# SHORTAGE: JOBS MORE ATTRACTIVE

BY ALEX OLIVER

Consider the Creator Wanted campaign (a partnership between the National Association of Manufacturers and the Manufacturing Institute), which “aims to reduce the skills gap in the United States by 600,000, as well as increase the number of students enrolling in technical and vocational schools or reskilling programs by 25 percent and increase the positive perception of the industry among parents to 50 percent from 27 percent.”<sup>3</sup> Using storytelling to fight the perception that manufacturing is tedious and unglamorous, it recasts the industry as the unsung hero of modern life and the economy. For example, one Creators Wanted project told the story of how manufacturers found creative ways to get toilet paper back on the empty shelves during spring 2020, despite pandemic restrictions and strained supply lines.<sup>4</sup>

Such stories convey a simple message: a career in manufacturing is essential and creative, and people who work in that industry get opportunities to engage in problem solving and do something that makes a difference. Considering that “having a positive impact on society” can significantly improve American workers’ feelings about their jobs, these kinds of stories can help companies attract and retain skilled workers.<sup>5</sup>

## SHIFT THE FOCUS FROM RETENTION TO ATTRACTION

The growing skills gap has been a slow-moving crisis in manufacturing where, until recently, companies haven’t really had to worry much about finding new workers. Unlike retail or healthcare, two industries in which turnover is high and workers are more willing to change employers for marginal pay increases, manufacturing as a whole has never really struggled with retention. This success with retention is due partly to generational factors: many manufacturing employees are baby boomers, who may be more inclined to stick around for the job security and solid benefits that careers in manufacturing typically offer.

Given a long enough timeline, retention will eventually become a problem when those long-time employees retire. The manufacturing sector’s noisy production floors will become a lot quieter over the next few years unless companies can replace those retirees with younger workers.

To attract younger candidates, companies need to connect to what drives them. At this point in many millennials’ professional lives, for example, they may be motivated by opportunities for rapid career advancement (perhaps through job hopping). The challenge is to convince them that manufacturing offers a chance at a successful career.

The oldest members of the next generation, Generation Z, are just starting to graduate and enter the workforce. Because the pandemic has scrapped some of their plans and delayed others, recent graduates may be more open-minded and pragmatic about finding a job today than they were just a few years ago. This presents an opportunity for companies to pull in talented candidates who, for the time being at least, care more about working at all than about where they work.

## THINK DIFFERENTLY

If there was ever a time for the manufacturing sector to rebrand itself, this is it. By emphasizing the industry as a place where people can find creative, fulfilling careers doing honest work that benefits employees’ communities and needs to be done, companies can communicate a message that will help them find the workers they need to bridge the skills gap. ■

*As a content creator at iCIMS, Alex Oliver is well-versed in content and digital marketing from B2B and B2C organizations big and small.*

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# Why Is Talent Disappearing— and What Can Be Done to Stop It?

BY STEPHANIE H. NELSON AND STACEY WANNINGER

As companies attempt to rehire and recover from the last two years, they're all trying to comprehend why some of their talented employees are pursuing new opportunities that often don't appear to be better (in terms of pay or advancement possibilities) than their current roles. To better understand this shift, organizations need to examine their work cultures closely. What underlying cultural issues exist? How can they be resolved quickly? What has changed in the last two years? To find answers to these questions, leaders should begin by exploring certain key areas.

## ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY

Over the past two years, it has become clear that many jobs can be handled remotely. When the pandemic began, businesses had no choice but to change their practices in order to survive; many leaders who had adamantly insisted that employees needed to be in the office to be productive suddenly shifted to a new way of thinking. Two years later, as the world continues to navigate these uncertain times, more and more companies are demanding that their workers return to the office full time. At the same time, though, employees have become accustomed to working from home and having a better work-life balance (as well as saving money on transportation costs), and many are pushing back against calls to go back to the office. Leaders must now ask themselves if requiring employees to return to the office full time is necessary for success—and whether they are willing to insist on



that if it means risking the loss of valuable talent to other organizations that view work differently and don't have that same requirement.

## TRUST

Leaders should not take their employees' trust for granted. It's important to survey employees and measure their trust in leadership periodically—and then adjust practices and policies as needed. Even when leaders feel that they have their employees' trust, they should never assume that employees think leadership has their best interests in mind when making decisions. Trust is never guaranteed and must be earned every day.

## VALUE

Everyone wants to feel valued, and a company's failure to acknowledge someone's work appropriately can be a deciding factor in their decision to leave the organization. Therefore, it's vital that leaders and teammates appreciate each other and value each person's contribution to the company. But employees are all individuals who each have their own (and different) ideas about how they want to be recognized. Some prefer one-on-one praise, whereas others might want public acknowledgment of their achievements. Whatever forms recognition takes, it must be given sincerely (employees will be quick to spot insincerity) and consistently.



## UNDERSTANDING

Although everyone might be in the same storm, they're not all in the same boat: each person has their own unique challenges and obstacles. Leaders should check in regularly with their employees to ensure that they are taking time off, balancing work and life appropriately, and not burning out. When trying to negotiate between making sure business needs are met while giving people the time off they need, leaders must consider how to handle situations in which several employees want to take time off simultaneously. Is it easier to cover for an employee for a day or a week while they take care of themselves, or preferable to fill the position if the employee leaves entirely? With employees across all industries more stressed and burned out than ever before, sometimes something as simple as encouraging an employee to take a vacation or at least a day or two off without guilt or repercussions can have a hugely positive impact on maintaining workers' motivation and productivity.

## COMMUNICATION

Employees often cite lack of communication as a major source of their frustration. When leaders fail to send out organizational updates, share words of encouragement, offer feedback, or recognize team members' accomplishments, employees can start to think that no one cares about or notices their contributions, which can lead to feelings of isolation. In addition, when employees feel left out of the loop, they may worry that the company isn't doing well or that leadership is hiding valuable information. The adage "no news is good news" doesn't hold true anymore: employees expect and value communication, because it could inform their decisions to stay (or leave).

## ALIGNMENT TO THE MISSION

Almost every organization has a mission statement. However, it's often buried (and unnoticed) in the employee handbook or completely forgotten when workloads increase. Employees often don't understand their companies' mission statements, and those who do and demonstrate commitment to them often aren't recognized for doing so. Having a clear mission statement—and communicating it regularly and prominently—can unite the organization and motivate employees to work together toward a common goal. Incorporating assessment of mission alignment in employee performance evaluations and recognition programs can further demonstrate the organization's commitment to the mission and its overall importance. When employees believe in the company's mission and overall goals, they are more likely to feel secure in their roles and stay with the organization.


## LEADERSHIP

It's essential for leaders to engage in self-reflection about their own performance. Some key questions they should ask themselves include:


- Am I approachable?
- Am I kind and considerate to my employees?
- Do I consider the impact of my communications and actions?
- Am I a servant leader willing to help anyone?

Employees often take cues from their leaders and emulate their behavior. For example, if a leader sends out work e-mail on a

Sunday or while on vacation, their employees are likely to assume that they are expected to do the same (even though this expectation does not exist). Because leaders bear responsibility for how their actions affect their employees, they also bear responsibility for how their actions play a role in losing those employees.



Employees often cite lack of communication as a major source of their frustration.



## FINAL THOUGHTS

Employees choose to leave their organizations for a variety of reasons, and it's impossible to predict all the factors that can influence such a decision. Even when a leader offers clear and effective communication, is flexible about employees' life situations, and recognizes their contributions, for example, an employee might still choose to leave.

By understanding the key reasons why an employee could look for different employment—and understanding their needs, values, and motivations—a leader can increase their chances of retaining valuable talent. ■

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# The Best Questions to Ask in Performance Reviews

BY ROB DE LUCA



**P**erformance reviews usually include questions that are carefully designed to minimize subjectivity when analyzing responses and to provide actionable items for recognition and growth. Consider the four standard questions found in the self-assessment created by BambooHR, for example (which are typical of those found in other similar assessments):

- How well does my company recognize my value?
- What would have the greatest impact on my ability to do my best work more often?
- What are some things I do well?
- How could I improve?

Traditionally, performance reviews usually took the form of long, annual or semiannual sessions filled with lots of tough questions. They tended to fill employees (and managers, too) with anticipatory dread. And because they took place so infrequently, they weren't particularly effective tools for managing and improving performance. (Few people can remember what they had for lunch yesterday, much less what they were working on six months ago!)

Fortunately, more and more organizations are moving away from this archaic model. Administrators are increasingly understanding that reviews have a bigger impact when they're relevant to what's going on in employees' daily work. Making them easier and more frequent takes some of the weight off the experience, which allows employees and managers to communicate more openly.

Even though "short and sweet" assessments are becoming the norm, there are still times when administrators might want to add questions that cover more than the general, broad topics listed above. Additional questions should be carefully worded to minimize subjective or vague replies. Gallup's list of the "12 needs managers can meet to improve employees' productivity," known as the Q12, is a good starting point for crafting questions that assess employees' needs and engagement:<sup>1</sup>

1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
5. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.
7. At work, my opinions seem to count.
8. The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
9. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
10. I have a best friend at work.
11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

One helpful strategy is to create questions that gauge whether one of the twelve engagement statements is true or false. To obtain more detail or



a result that can be tracked over time (one that serves as a springboard to improvements or recognition of future achievement, for example), administrators can ask for responses in the form of lists or open-ended comments.

**Here are some questions to consider adding to an employee's self-assessment:**

- What experience, project, or action are you most proud of since your last review?
- Which of our company values have you most supported in the last few months?
- How has your manager helped you achieve your goals?
- What do you enjoy most about the work you do?
- What corporate/personal goals did you accomplish? Which goals did you fall short of achieving?
- What skill or knowledge do people on your team or at the company rely on you to provide?
- What project or goal would you like to focus on in the next quarter (six months, year)?
- How were you able to contribute to the company's current goal of creating a more inclusive culture (closing more sales, launching a new marketing campaign, etc.)?
- What would colleagues or clients say about their recent interactions with you?

**Here are some questions to consider adding to a manager's assessment of an employee:**

- Describe a meaningful contribution that they have made since their last performance review.
- Which company value have you seen them most support in the last few months?
- How have you supported their ability to succeed and grow in their position?
- At what types of projects do they excel?
- How successful have they been at creating and meeting goals over the past few months?
- What role do they have on the team, and what is their impact there?
- What are some projects or focus areas that could benefit them?
- How have they contributed to the company's current goal of creating a more inclusive culture (closing more sales, launching a new marketing campaign, etc.)?
- What positive interactions have you seen them have with others?

**Asking managers and employees similar questions makes it possible to compare responses and see whether they are aligned with each other and can shed further light on engagement, productivity, and long-term goals:**

- Are you happy at this organization?
- What special projects have you worked on this past quarter/year?
- How can [name of manager or employee] help you?
- Would you recommend working here to your friends? Why or why not?
- How have you met corporate goals this quarter/year?
- How have you achieved your personal goals this quarter/year?
- What do you enjoy most about working with [name of manager or employee]?
- How do I show my focus on quality work? / How is [name of manager or employee]'s quality of work?
- How do I show my focus on clients? / How does [name of manager or employee] demonstrate a focus on client success?
- How do I show that I am solution-oriented and responsive in my role? / How does [name of manager or employee] demonstrate that they are solution-oriented and responsive?
- What do you hope to be doing within the company one year from now (and five years from now)?
- What do you want your next position to be at this company?
- To what recent project did you contribute significantly, and what were your contributions?
- How has [name of manager] helped you improve and do your best work during the past three months? / How have you encouraged and supported [name of employee] during the past three months?
- What do you need from [name of manager] to better support you in your role? / What do you need in order to better support [name of employee] in their role?
- What are your top three priorities for the next 6 to 12 months?
- What are your personal development goals (e.g., new skill, knowledge, work experience you'd like to acquire) to help you maximize your performance and potential?
- What training does [name of employee] need in order to improve?
- Do you feel comfortable taking risks and approaching [name of manager] with new ideas? Why or why not?
- What training do you wish you had?

Questions that go beyond merely asking “what have you accomplished?” (or “what has your employee accomplished?”) give respondents opportunities to describe their work experiences more fully. When respondents can share information about not only their accomplishments but also their needs, goals, and interests, their organizations will be better positioned to provide the support, training, career advancement, and other opportunities that foster the development of a more productive, more engaged, and happier workforce. ■

*Rob de Luca is the copy director at BambooHR and has written extensively on culture and best practices in the HR field, combining original research and input from HR experts with his own perspective as a manager, creative executive, and veteran of diverse industries.*

# Safety Buy-in Starts with a Single Thought

BY KEVIN BURNS

Most companies focus on business development opportunities. They hone and adjust their marketing messages to attract more revenue by getting more customers, making more sales, and upselling existing clients. Business doesn't develop until someone buys something, whether that something is a product, a service, an idea, or something else entirely. But in order for someone to buy, someone needs to sell.

Job seekers are selling themselves. Lawyers are selling their arguments to juries. Someone who is asking for a raise is selling their value and experience. Consultants and experts (sometimes self-proclaimed) are selling their expertise. And when companies try to get their employees to improve their safety performance, those companies are selling their way of doing things. Their goal is to get their internal customers—that is, their employees—to buy into safety.

When employees simply don't understand what exactly is expected of them, they may end up working at cross purposes. If they feel disengaged from, or even hostile toward, their own company, they might not want to give their all to an employer who doesn't seem to value them or their contributions. Internal marketing can mitigate these concerns, though, by helping employees make a powerful emotional connection to safety, which

in turn makes them much less likely to undermine (either intentionally or unconsciously) safety practices and programs.

Every organization should have a vision for safety—a unifying idea that employees can “live” in their day-to-day activities—because when employees live that vision, they are much more likely to experience their own participation in safety in a way that's consistent with working toward the vision and goals of safety. When employees believe in the mission and buy into the plan to achieve that mission, they're more motivated to work harder, and their loyalty to the company increases.

An organization that doesn't understand internal marketing will struggle to unify its employees around a common safety theme. Many companies keep people informed about their safety strategies and directions. But very few organizations understand the need to convince employees why safety is necessary to achieve the employees' own goals.

What's more, the people who are charged with internal safety communications (such as the safety team and HR department) and even the frontline supervisors don't necessarily have the marketing skills to communicate safety goals successfully. Instead, they usually rely on PowerPoint slides, bar graphs, charts, and lots of talk about numbers. Those tools aren't designed to convince employees of the uniqueness of the company's safety strategy. They are best for telling people what the company is doing, not for selling them on an idea.

The first step toward achieving employee buy-in to the safety program is to get rid of distractions and to stop assaulting employees with superfluous numbers. Every good communications strategy must revolve around a single idea that becomes the foundation for how all communication is structured. This foundational statement needs to be seven words or fewer in length so it is memorable, actionable, and effective. An organization that can't boil down its safety message to a single, short phrase will struggle to achieve buy-in from its employees. ■

*Kevin Burns is the president and CEO of KevBurns Learning, where he works with smart, caring companies to energize safety culture, build teamwork, and get employee buy-in. He is the author of *PeopleWork: The Human Touch in Workplace Safety* and can be reached at [kevin@kevburns.com](mailto:kevin@kevburns.com).*





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