THE RESOURCE

HR INSIGHTS magazine

VOL. XI, ISSUE III

from the eyes of industry leaders

FAST-FORWARDING TO THE FUTURE

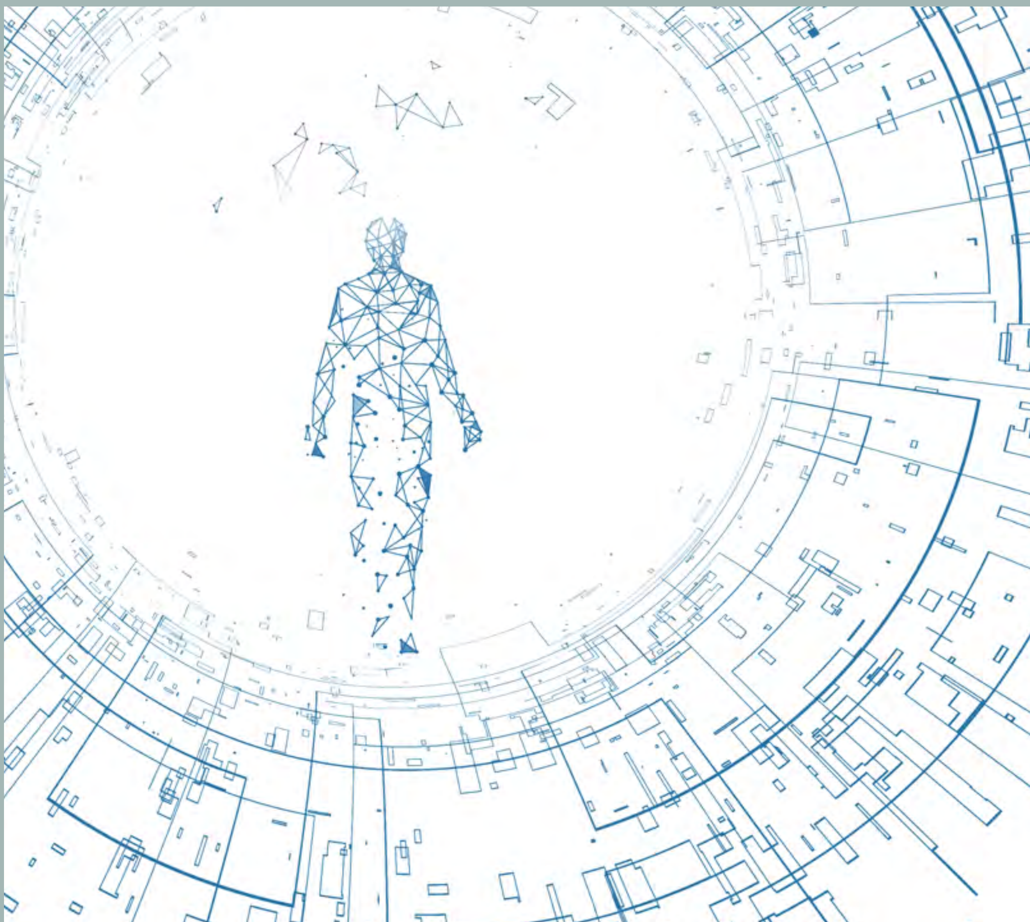
IN THIS ISSUE

Our Mantra for 2022
...and our Challenge for You

Don't wait for things to get easier, simpler, better. Life will always be complicated. Learn to be happy right now. Otherwise, you'll run out of time.

THE RESOURCE

HR INSIGHTS Magazine



VOL. XI, ISSUE III

PUBLISHER & EDITORIAL DIRECTORS
Haley Marketing Group

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Mackenzie Froese

MANAGING EDITOR
Marsha Brofka-Berends

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Leo Babauta
Jarik Conrad
Rebekah Cuevas
Kevin Eikenberry
Brian Formato
Jessica Miller-Merrell
Stephanie Nelson

DESIGN
Matt Coleman

SURVIVAL GUIDE TO FEELING OVERWHELMED

One of the biggest problems many people face today is feeling overwhelmed by work and personal tasks. There's so much to do, never enough time to do it, and uncertainty about what to focus on. Everyone feels that they're always behind and barely treading water. Fortunately, there are some powerful strategies for not only surviving an overwhelming life but turning it into a life of joy and positive impact.

FIRST STEPS

When feeling overwhelmed, start with a first-aid approach:

- ✓ **Do some triage.** Make a list of everything that needs to be done soon, then choose a few tasks to tackle first and put them on a "today" list. (This isn't a long-term solution—just something to provide some immediate relief.)
- ✓ **Buy some time.** Ask for extensions or reschedule some items on the "do soon" list.
- ✓ **Lighten the load.** Cross some items off the "today" list immediately, let people know not to ask for certain things, and delegate tasks or ask others for help.
- ✓ **Focus.** Put full attention on one thing on the "today" list and forget about the rest for now.

At the end of the day, take 20 minutes for the following actions:

- ✓ **Create a long list.** Separate everything that needs to be done into categories such as work, personal, financial, etc. (Use whatever categories make sense; the goal is to get everything down in one place.) Add tasks from email inboxes, messaging systems, open browser tabs, etc. This is likely to feel like a huge undertaking, but persevere and get it done!
- ✓ **Build tomorrow's "today" list.** From the long list, pick a handful (3 to 5) tasks to do tomorrow. (Keep this list short: if the tasks are completed early, more can always be added!) Creating tomorrow's "today" list at the end of each day makes it possible to start the next day already knowing what to focus on.
- ✓ **Create some space.** If there's still some of those 20 minutes left, let go of some tasks on the long list and buy some time for other tasks.

LONG-TERM PRACTICAL STEPS

Once the emergency has been addressed, spend time figuring out some long-term strategies:

- ✓ **Simplify or reduce the workload.** For example, a business owner might spend time hiring or training someone to take things off their plate. Automating or using simpler software for certain processes can also help. The goal is to have things running more smoothly so they don't require as much hands-on labor. Time spent here is an investment that will pay off many times over.
- ✓ **Block off time for important things.** If big projects or important tasks have been sitting on the task list for a while, set aside an hour or two at least a few times a week (but on most days, ideally) to work on them. Creating a work session with someone else to do this kind of focus work will help move things along.
- ✓ **Create structure for the small things.** When there are a thousand little things to take care of, and it all feels random, create blocks of time to work on those small things. For example, set aside 30 minutes twice a day to clear out messages and email, or a couple of hours every Friday to tackle administrative or financial tasks. This kind of structure ensures that these little tasks will get taken care of, leaving the rest of the time for focusing on the big and important things.
- ✓ **Create impact.** If tasks seem random and meaningless, commit to accomplishing something over an extended period of time (for example, over a year), then align a year's worth of tasks with that goal. Line up each daily task with a weekly target, which in turn leads to a monthly target, which in turn makes it possible to hit the goal for the year. Small tasks can have a big impact when they're lined up with impactful goals.

Obviously, these all don't have to be done in one day. But implementing one of these strategies each week will lead to a longer-term reduction in feeling overwhelmed.

CREATE TOTAL FOCUS IN CHAOS

Feeling overwhelmed can lead to a lack of focus. After all, how can someone focus on one thing when they feel pulled in a thousand directions? The solution is to find focus in the middle of chaos.

1. Pick one task (it really doesn't matter which one) from the "today" list and decide to work on it for 20 to 30 minutes.
2. Clear away distractions.
3. Focus fully on this one task, as if there were nothing else in the universe.
4. Take a break, then go back to the first step and repeat this process.

Focusing on tasks this way is the same as focusing on one breath at a time in meditation. Each person takes a lot of breaths in their lifetime but can't take them all at once, so they take them one at a time. Each breath is the only one happening at that moment—the rest will come in time.

MINDSET SHIFT

Finally, what if it were possible to transform feeling overwhelmed into something powerful? What if feeling overwhelmed didn't have to be a big deal but instead became an opportunity to find play, focus, commitment, joy, or curiosity?

People feel overwhelmed because they relate to tasks as burdens or as chances to let others down or fail or look foolish (or something similar). When people relate to tasks this way, then the more tasks they have, the more stressful and burdensome those tasks will be. Under these circumstances, having two tasks isn't too bad, but having a hundred chances to fail is super stressful!

What if a task were viewed as an opportunity to practice focus and to be present? An opportunity to serve and add value? An opportunity to play and be curious? A place to find joy and transcendent experience? Here's how to achieve that:

1. When feelings of being overwhelmed or wanting to procrastinate arise, reflect on what view of the task might be causing this kind of feeling.
2. Choose a new view of the task (such as one mentioned above). What would it feel like to view the task this way instead?
3. Try viewing the task in the new way and see how things feel. Practice this as often as possible, to slowly start to shift the default view of the task.
4. If feelings of being overwhelmed arise again, no problem—just remember the new view of the task.

When people relate to their tasks as opportunities for play, joy, and adventure, or as ways to serve with love and focus, having more tasks only lights them up even more. ■

Leo Babauta is the author of The Power of Less: The Fine Art of Limiting Yourself to the Essential . . . in Business and in Life. He can be reached via Twitter at @zen_habits.

Building Inclusivity Through Communication & Empathy

BY REBEKAH CUEVAS

More than a buzzword, DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) is the key to creating workplaces in which every employee can develop, grow, and thrive. As an organization develops its DEI strategy, its HR team will likely shoulder much of the responsibility for bringing everyone onto the same page of understanding and action. To do this, HR must be prepared to lead the way forward with an effective message that not only communicates the importance of DEI but does so clearly and with empathy.

THE ROLE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS IN DEI

It's invigorating to see so many businesses joining in the crucial work of building and promoting diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces. Between 2017 and 2020, the number of global organizations "planning moderate or heavy investment in diversity and inclusion" rose from 29 percent to 62 percent.[1] Although the growing recognition of DEI is certainly worth celebrating, leaders still need to do a lot of work to make an impact, starting with how they communicate about DEI to the rest of the organization.

As organizations throughout the world implement DEI initiatives, HR must set precedents for inclusive communication as an important part of making DEI an active, living part of the workplace. Most importantly, communication about DEI can't be a top-down mandate. To get everyone on board with DEI, HR must build trust through several key strategies, such as "transparent and inclusive communication" about these initiatives and "creating a work environment [in which] everyone's unique attributes are valued, respected, understood, and used."[2]

KEY SKILLS

When it comes to DEI, HR is often tasked with doing double duty: spearheading both the company's initiatives as well as managing internal awareness and action campaigns. HR does much of its work via employee communications, which boil down to what's directly related to human resource functions (information about benefits, setting career goals, following the employee handbook, etc.). But for some areas—such as DEI—HR must leverage internal communications, which target "an internal audience that encompasses not only employees but management and board members."[3] Much broader in scope than external communications, internal communications cover areas such as mission statements and branding strategies, as well as DEI initiatives.

Employee communications focus on getting employees to act (sign up for benefits, follow the organization's handbook, set career goals, etc.), whereas internal communications involve convincing the people within an entire organization to think a certain way or—even more challenging—to change their minds. Accomplishing this goal requires several key skills:

> *It demands a precise skill set, ranging careful and empathetic listening, clear and concise writing, oral and visual communications expertise, intellectual and emotional agility, and an almost journalistic sense of objectivity that enables telling a story straightforwardly with none-to-limited personal opinion.*[4]

EMPATHY AND TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Listening to employees with empathy means inviting all voices into the conversation and imagining how everything being said will be received by the different demographic groups represented in the workforce. This approach facilitates two-way communication that "builds loyalty and drives improved productivity."[5] This approach may feel counterintuitive in organizations with more rigid hierarchical structures, but HR won't be able to change anyone's mind or get them to buy into DEI initiatives without building trust and showing employees that the company truly does care deeply about being inclusive.

In order to build trust, listening with empathy must be coupled with action. There's no quicker way to lose employee trust and fan the flames of resentment than to ask for employee input and not act on it. After gathering employee feedback (from town hall meetings, for example, or via surveys or one-on-one meetings), HR needs to take action by discussing this feedback during company-wide meetings, by actually making changes, and by explaining company decisions to employees (especially when deciding against making certain changes).

Communicating with inclusivity means working toward two different goals:

- Communicating the organization's DEI commitment and strategy
- Communicating in a way that makes everyone feel welcome, included, and supported

In other words, communication is both the message and the medium. By taking into account how people with diverse perspectives will receive that message and incorporating an inclusive voice, HR reassures employees that it has really been listening to them and that it understands and values who they are as individuals (not just as a collective).

A CYCLICAL PROCESS

In order to deliver communication about DEI in an inclusive voice, HR professionals must not only practice empathic listening but also educate themselves about their biases. The work of identifying and uprooting biases in individuals—let alone in an organization full of diverse individuals—is a cyclical process of listening, learning, and accepting responsibility.

Listen

As people-focused, inclusive communicators, HR professionals have a special responsibility to feed their brains with as much positive and diverse input as possible. Doing this effectively involves identifying and combating the complex causes of biases:

- **Cognitive factors:** Human brains naturally want to take shortcuts, which include categorizing the world to achieve top efficiency.
- **Personal factors:** Past experiences shape future interactions.
- **Social factors:** Humans are vulnerable to the repeated messages around them.

These factors combine to create the mental landscape that can, in the classic example, make someone see a man's behavior as "assertive" and the same behavior from a woman as "aggressive."

What creates and feeds biases? What categories do those messages create in each person's efficiency-oriented decision center? What experiences influence how individuals listen and act?

Just as travel grants perspective by exposing people to different communities, customs, experiences, and environments, exposing people to more voices and greater representation in their input streams (social media feeds, bookshelves, television shows, podcasts, etc.) helps them fill their empathy wells. It's harder to see a group as a monolith after hearing many voices from that group describe their personal experiences.

Learn

Once new information is absorbed, it's time to digest, grapple with, and internalize it. This opportunity for self-reflection is the time for people to ask themselves several key questions:

- What about this is new to me?
- Why is this not my experience?
- What are the next steps in implementing, amplifying, and fact-checking this new information?

When DEI initiatives are implemented successfully, people don't just take in that new information—they also engage in the work of unpacking it and bring those new voices and messages forward in their own interactions with others.

Accept Responsibility

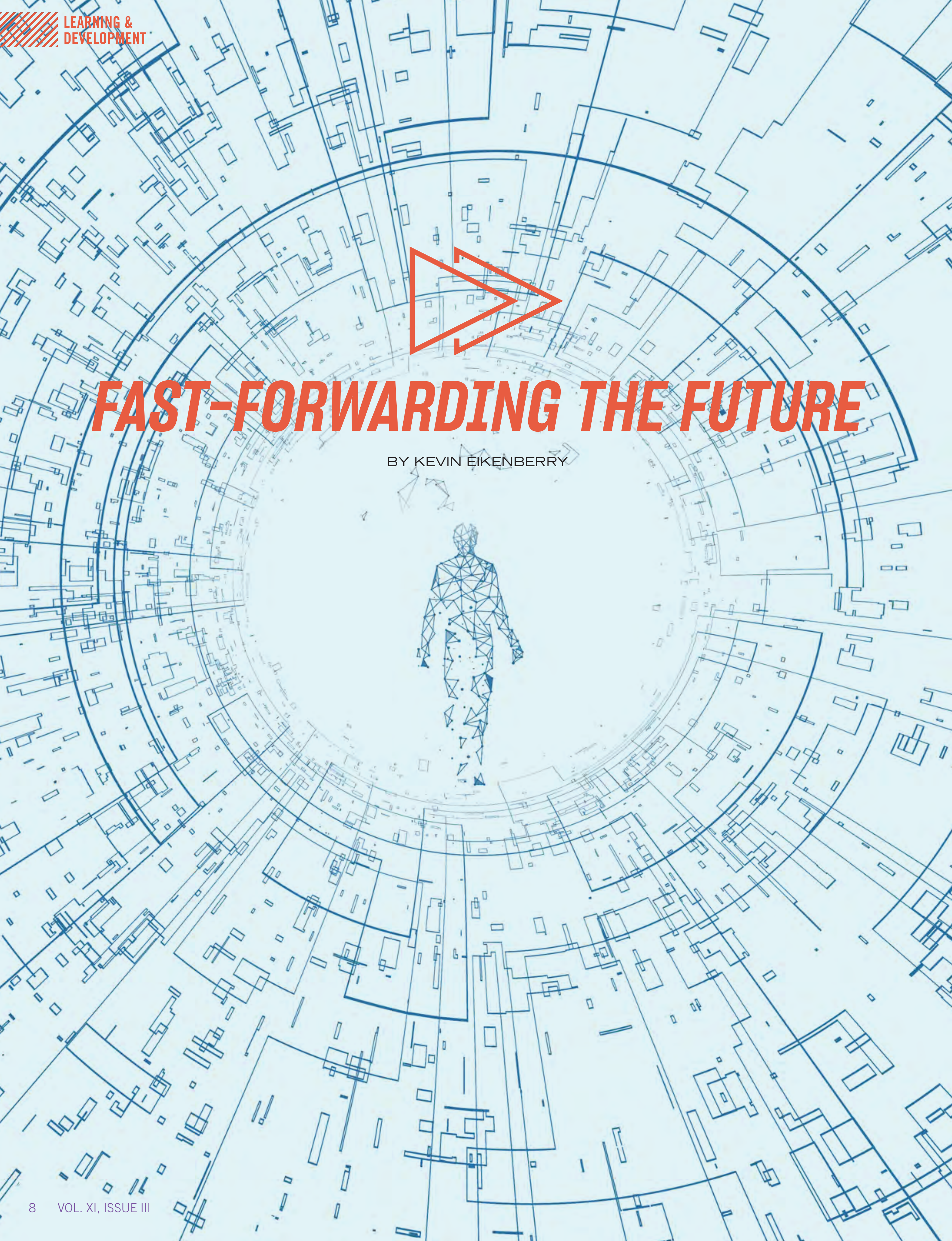
Words have tremendous power and impact. When someone receives feedback that they've communicated something disrespectful or harmful, it's important for them to recognize that mistake and resolve to do better. By circling back to step one—listening—to begin the process again, they engage in conversation and revisit the breadth of available options for addressing bias and building inclusivity.

BUILDING BRIDGES

Empathy-based communication, cultivating connections, and educating the workforce about the importance of DEI make it possible for HR to foster a more inclusive organization. Through these efforts, HR can demonstrate its commitment to better workplaces and help create an environment that encourages employee growth and care for others. ■

Rebekah Cuevas is a copywriter at BambooHR obsessed with empowering the "human" in human resources. She connects HR professionals to impactful HR solutions through research-driven narratives and has a special interest in promoting DEI initiatives that build stronger, safer, and more profitable workplaces for all.

1. Claude Werder. 2021. "Overcoming Diversity and Inclusion Challenges: Strategies for Success." Oracle website, www.oracle.com/explore/global-hcm/Brandon-Hall-diversity-success.
2. Ibid.
3. Michael Collins. 2019. "Does Internal Communications Belong To HR Or Corporate Communications?" Forbes website, March 15, www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2019/03/15/does-internal-communications-belong-to-hr-or-corporate-communications/?sh=24b13b7c1604.
4. Ibid.
5. SHRM. undated. "Managing Organizational Communication." SHRM website,



FAST-FORWARDING THE FUTURE

BY KEVIN EIKENBERRY

Many commonly held understandings about what work is and how it gets done are so ingrained that no one questions them. For example, for most people the "workweek" is framed as a 9-to-5 job, Monday through Friday. Even people who work shift work or in service industries that require weekend hours embrace that definition and tend to describe their own work as a deviation from the "normal" pattern.

But that pattern didn't always exist. Before Henry Ford and his colleagues adopted the assembly line and the standards that came with it in the 1920s, most people who didn't work on a farm or in a family business worked 10 or more hours per day, 6 days a week. That was the norm then, just as the 9-to-5, 40-hour workweek is the standard today. In fact, although there had been much testing of and discussion about an 8-hour workday as early as the 1860s, the 40-hour workweek didn't become a standard in the United States until the Great Depression, when the government saw it as a way to spread the work over more people and reduce unemployment. By 1940, laws had enshrined the 40-hour workweek as the norm.

Knowledge work has comparable assumptions built into it. For example, knowledge workers meet in conference rooms; brainstorm in groups; and have conversations in coffee rooms and break rooms, at water coolers, and in hallways. They go to lunch together and do their work together. They arrive at the office at a certain time and (for the most part) have a set quitting time.

Although many of these norms are rooted in the post-World War II boom in office work, they have remained largely unchanged up until today. These traditions and patterns have served the business world well for a long time and are fine in a static world. But the world of work—employees' experiences and needs, businesses, technology—has changed dramatically, especially in recent years. The events of the past two years have accelerated changes in ways no one ever anticipated. In short, the pandemic put the future on fast-forward. Everything seems to have changed in the blink of an eye. Previously, the business world spent 80 years talking about reducing the workday to 8 hours, then spent 80 years living with that schedule. Now, in the wake of the pandemic, everyone is reconsidering not just how many hours they work, but where they work, when they work, with whom they work, and how they work.

> Understanding the past while being open to new possibilities is critical to navigating the future.

For example, the trend toward a more flexible and remote working model has existed for many years. But it was accelerated by the pandemic, when a significant portion of the working world had an extended experience with working remotely, and most of the people who didn't at least knew someone who did.

Looking back at past changes, it might seem that all of those transitions went smoothly. However, the truth is that they didn't—and today's changes are even bumpier because they are moving so quickly. Fortunately, a few strategies can make that bumpy ride easier to manage:

Take a deep breath. Things may be moving fast, but no one has to run and think at breakneck speed every minute. Acknowledge the rapid change (and recognize that it's okay to want some stability and a sense of normalcy). Be willing to try and test when circumstances are new (e.g., a change to a work routine, a new way to meet or collaborate).Don't go it alone. Engagement with others is critical for everyone, and leaders in particular need to involve their teams in the thinking and testing for the future of their work. Bringing more perspectives and experiences together will help everyone.

Understanding the past while being open to new possibilities is critical to navigating the future. With the business world now on fast-forward, companies and employees will need to work together to determine what the future of work will look like. ■

Kevin Eikenberry is the chief potential officer of the Kevin Eikenberry Group, a leadership and learning consulting company that has been helping organizations, teams, and individuals reach their potential since 1993. His specialties include leadership, teams and teamwork, organizational culture, facilitating change, and organizational learning. He can be reached at info@kevineikenberry.com.

Rethinking Organizational

As the world starts to rethink its approach to work, many leaders are rethinking their organizations' roles and structures and looking at what might work better, what has changed over the last few years, and how they can better support their strategic objectives and better serve their clients. Successful organizations prosper because they're clear about their value and because their functions, roles, and processes are all designed to provide value to their customers and clients. When companies are unable to meet those goals, restructuring may be in order. Most leaders who are considering restructuring probably won't be throwing out the company's entire structures but will at least examine closely how the organization is designed, how it supports its service offerings, and how it does business.

How should leaders approach the question of restructuring? This multistep process can help them determine where to start and identify their objectives.

FIRST, DEFINE VALUE

What is the organization's service? What is the value that its customers and clients see? The measure of success for every function, process, and performance is whether this value is delivered.

DEFINE FUNCTIONS

What are the organization's functions, and what services do they need to deliver? Remember that the organization's functions aren't products or services or internal "deliverables." Rather, they are the needs or wants to be satisfied—the why behind what the organization does. To identify an organization's functions, look for the one or two or three big indications that it is doing a good job. What makes relevant parties happy when the organization has done its job well?

REVIEW TALENT

Next, think about the company's current talent and how it will fit into the new organizational structure. Consider what functions the organization performs or will perform (don't think about roles just yet). What value is the organization expected to deliver, and what functions make that happen? Write down all the work that gets done or needs to get done, whether it has a direct impact on a client or an internal function. Then evaluate how each function contributes to the value that the organization provides and whether that work needs to happen.

Don't confuse functions and roles. This flexibility enables employees to learn all the organization functions over time, builds speed and familiarity with each one, and keeps the work from quickly becoming monotonous. Because everyone can do everything, sudden reassignments (say, when an employee calls in sick at the last minute) are easier to accommodate, and speed doesn't suffer (at least, not too much).

Day-to-day role assignments may not work for every business, but it's still a good idea to keep functions and roles separate in future organizational planning. Locking people into roles that don't develop or enable people to grow risks isolating them by limiting the number of people with whom they interact and the places where they can add value. But dividing up functions more liberally can bring more variety to each role and expand the areas in which people in those roles can collaborate with others in the organization.

COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

Clear communication is valuable everywhere, of course, but speed may not be the value around which processes should be designed. People tend to like it, for example, when their doctors take extra time to listen to them and understand their needs. Medical offices that get patients in and out as fast as possible aren't delivering the value those patients typically want and soon get a bad reputation—and that reputation suffers even more if doctors take ample time with patients, but the office staff have been told to schedule as many appointments as possible.

Roles and Structures

BY STEPHANIE NELSON

To figure out how an organization should communicate and collaborate, let the value that the organization provides serve as a guide—and be sure that the same value guides every member of the organization.

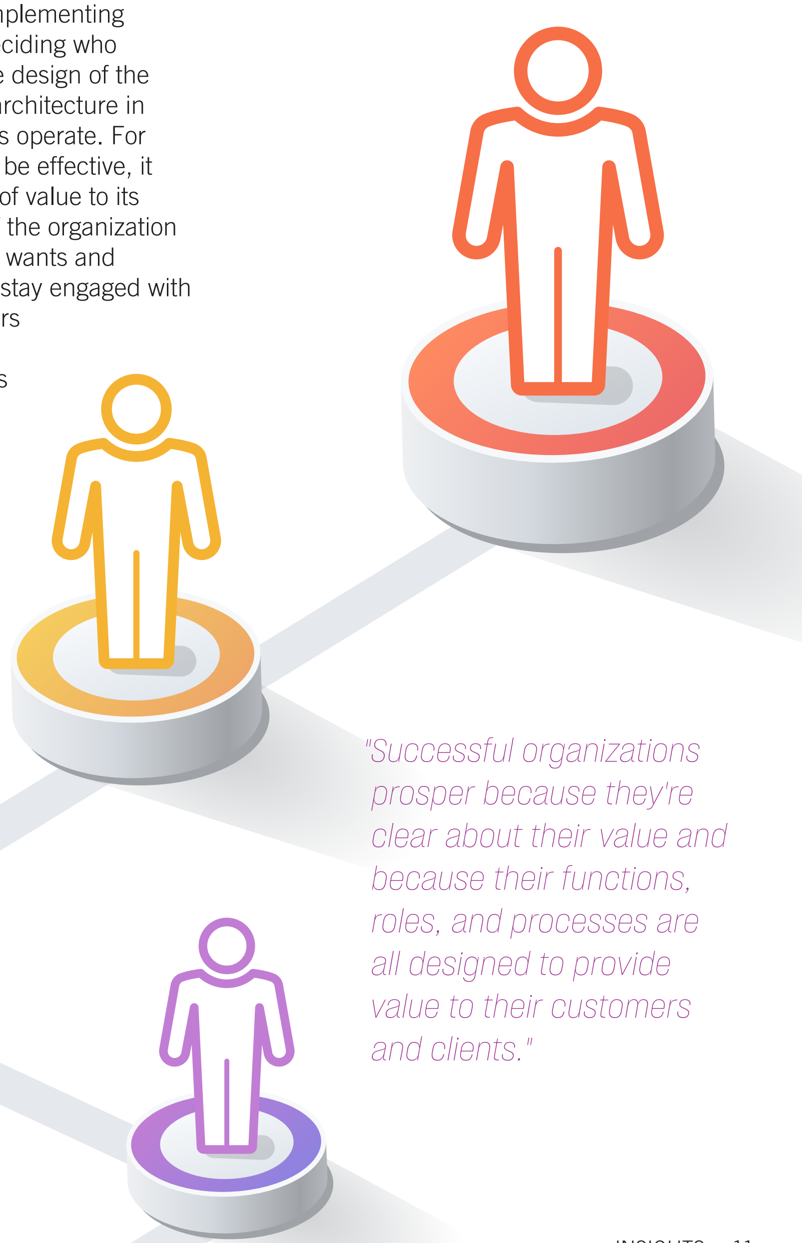
Deciding who makes decisions and in what circumstances can be a daunting task for managers. There's a high potential for something to go wrong. Some people enjoy having autonomy and authority over their own work (and having no say over their work and how it gets done might make them choose other employment), whereas others don't want the stress of making decisions that could help or harm the company. More people making decisions invites more bad decisions and workplace drama, but fewer decision makers can restrict an organization's ability to be creative and innovative.

Any decision about an organization's decision-making authority should align with and support the value that the organization delivers, especially in the long term. How decision making in the organization works must be clearly explained: no one should be uncertain about who makes decisions and when. Everyone (including leaders) should be held accountable for their decisions; decisions that add value should be rewarded, and decisions that detract value should be addressed.

INVEST IN THE ORGANIZATION

The steps detailed above—clarifying value, considering functions, assigning roles, implementing processes, and deciding who decides—form the design of the organization, the architecture in which its members operate. For an organization to be effective, it must be a source of value to its people. After all, if the organization doesn't meet their wants and needs, they won't stay engaged with it. Therefore leaders must not be afraid to allow employees to help shape the organization's design, because their input can make it even better. ■

Stephanie Nelson is the vice president of HR and marketing and the HR practice at FutureSense. She has more than 20 years of human resources experience in healthcare, technology, manufacturing, and nonprofit fields. She can be reached at snelson@futuresense.com.



"Successful organizations prosper because they're clear about their value and because their functions, roles, and processes are all designed to provide value to their customers and clients."

GENERATION X

FROM OBSCURITY TO PROMINENCE

BY JARIK CONRAD

The world stands on the cusp of a generational power shift. Whenever control moves from one generation to another, there's widespread hope that those coming into power will remember the perspectives they had during their formative years. Unfortunately, those hopes usually remain unfulfilled. But that may be about to change.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Great Resignation it fueled, Baby Boomers are retiring in ever-growing numbers, and the members of Generation X are stepping into those newly vacated industry and government leadership positions. Often overshadowed by the larger generational cohorts (Baby Boomers and Millennials) that surround them, Generation X professionals who are now reaching the top rungs of power have an opportunity to break with preceding generations' practices and chart a new course.

In young adulthood, a substantial part (perhaps even most) of each generation tends to be highly idealistic, perceiving ideas and values as more important than the ownership of material things. Born between 1946 and 1964, most Baby Boomers followed this pattern: during the 1960s and 1970s, their youthful commitment to change was evident in their opposition to the Vietnam War and in their impassioned support for the Civil Rights movement and the environmental movement. Over time, however, the storied idealism of this generation largely devolved into inward-focused careerism.

Born between 1965 and 1979, the members of Generation X were similarly idealistic during their own formative years, believing it was possible to achieve good things and change the world. Put down as slackers and whiners as teenagers, Generation Xers certainly had reason to question the value of toiling for companies that operated primarily to produce profits for investors and shareholders, irrespective of the needs of employees and society at large.

This demographic cohort takes its name from the 1991 novel *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, by Canadian writer Douglas Coupland. Coupland's use of the letter X in his title was inspired by *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System,* a 1993 book by cultural historian Paul Fussell that describes an "X category" person as someone who questioned authority, money, status, and other societal pressures.

Unlike the Baby Boomers, many Generation Xers were the children of parents who both worked. Growing up in the first dual-income families, Generation X children were the original "latchkey kids": they came home from school to little or no adult supervision (and sometimes also had the responsibility of caring for their younger siblings). They were also more ethnically diverse than prior generations, which arguably helped shape their youthful idealism on social issues. These various factors have combined to make Generation Xers independent, self-reliant, resourceful, skeptical, flexible, and adaptable—all good characteristics to have when leading a company or a representative body of voters.

Though not digital natives per se, Generation Xers are digitally savvy: they're the first generation to have grown up playing video games, using the Internet, watching 24-hour cable TV, digitally socializing on bulletin boards, and even blogging (before it was known by that name). As young and middle-aged adults, they also have launched more business startups than the generations that surround them (although Millennials are catching up fast).

Now that Generation X is taking the reins of power, will its youthful idealism fade completely and be replaced by self-interest and greed? Or is it possible that this generation will take a stand to make a lasting difference?

Possessing a compelling amalgamation of sociopolitical and technological expertise, critical thinking skills, natural skepticism, and flexibility, Generation Xers have the potential to remake businesses into socially responsible entities that emphasize the importance of all people before profits. Achieving this lofty goal will require this generation to be the first to retain its youthful idealism as it moves into leadership roles.

Generation X is clearly much more than confining descriptions such as "the 'sandwich' generation" (stuck between

retiring Boomers and ascending Millennials) and "America's neglected 'middle child' " would suggest. At a time when society demands that corporate America become more socially responsible, perhaps Generation Xers will give as much attention to environmental, social, and governance initiatives and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging goals as earlier generations have given to pure business objectives. These aims are not mutually exclusive, and the creation of social value and the creation of economic value are intertwined. Given Generation X's history of working alongside women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ individuals, the odds look good that this generation will bring much-needed change. ■

Jarik Conrad is the vice president of the human insights and HCM advisory team at UKG, as well as the executive director of the UKG-sponsored Equity at Work Council (EWC).

How to Leverage EVPs

BY JESSICA MILLER-MERRELL

At its heart, an employee value proposition (EVP) is the unique set of benefits an employee receives in return for the skills, capabilities, and experience they bring to a company. An EVP defines what the organization stands for by describing the company's characteristics, benefits, and ways of working. As the deal struck between a company and its employees, the EVP differentiates an employer from its competition.

Why Is an EVP Important?

A strong EVP provides the foundation for a company's brand, its internal retention efforts, and its external recruitment strategies. At the most basic level, an EVP represents everything of value that an employer provides to its employees (pay, benefits, training, career development opportunities, and so on) and is then "marketed" to the workforce. A well-crafted EVP that truly reflects the employee experience and company culture can bring big financial benefits, too: "Organizations that effectively deliver on their EVP can decrease annual employee turnover by 69 percent."[1]

Creating an EVP

One mistake companies often make when creating an EVP is focusing on the company's leadership rather than on its employees. To be an effective aid for recruitment and retention, an EVP statement must reflect the value *to the employee*, not the value to the company's leadership or its bottom line. To develop an EVP in the words of employees and potential candidates, a company should:

- Interview executives and conduct workshops with key stakeholders to understand talent priorities from a strategic perspective.
- Use qualitative focus groups to understand employee values and perceptions.
- Test branding and marketing support (including optimal and differentiated messaging) internally.

It's easy to throw a few value propositions into a statement and post it on a careers site or stencil it on a lobby wall. But creating an EVP that truly reflects a company's current values requires a more deliberate approach, starting with finding honest answers to the question "How is company morale?" If an EVP describes how much employees love working for an organization and why, but current employees roll their eyes whenever they hear it, the organization has two options: rewrite the EVP to more accurately reflect reality, or focus on improving current employees' morale before marketing that EVP to potential employees.

Improving morale often seems like a never-ending, overly broad task whose parameters vary based on who's being asked about them. (Not only are employees the best advocates for a company's brand, but they can sniff out an insincere statement from a mile away.) HR professionals know that they'll never make 100 percent of their employees happy 100 percent of the time. But they can try to unearth the one or two common factors that may be having a negative impact on employee morale. An anonymous survey can be a great starting point for gathering this information (though, if company morale is low enough,

1. Gartner. Undated. "Strengthen Your Employee Value Proposition." Gartner website, www.gartner.com/en/human-resources/insights/employee-engagement-performance/employee-value-proposition.

employees might not believe that a survey is truly anonymous—and this doubt can undermine the usefulness of this tool). Well-executed surveys can help establish trust between the HR department and employees, and allow HR not only to isolate the negatives, but also to uncover the positives.

What current employees love about the company is the best foundation of a strong EVP statement. For example, if most employees rate the CEO negatively (look at the company's Glassdoor reviews for indications of this) but love their autonomy and lack of micromanagement, the organization's EVP could focus on how employees are empowered to make their own decisions and take risks without consequences, how they feel that their creativity is rewarded, and so on.

An employee survey can also help identify what can be easily fixed from a human resources perspective. Asking employees about their interests and preferences is far better than making assumptions (or not caring at all) about what they want. For example, one CEO loved to promote the fact that he met one-on-one with every single employee, every quarter, but his employees saw those meetings as akin to "being called to the principal's office" and took as criticism every suggestion or comment made during those interactions. When asked what they preferred, the employees indicated that they wanted more communication with their direct supervisors. They didn't care whether the CEO knew them personally or understood what they did at the company. They did care, though, about whether the CEO could steer the company in a direction that would make a positive impact on its bottom line. As a result of this survey, the one-on-one meetings with the CEO were eliminated, and he started providing more regular and more transparent updates on the company's financial health. Knowing what employees want and value is essential to crafting a successful EVP. However, employers should not assume that they know which parts of the employment package employees view as the most significant. Employers that assume incorrectly could miss critical opportunities to emphasize how the organization provides what employees prize most.

Examples of EVP Statements

When creating an EVP, companies need to consider that the most significant contributors to retention are development and career opportunities, and the relationships that employees build with managers and peers within an organization. The most important question a company can ask itself when creating an EVP is, "What do we currently offer to our employees in exchange for their time and effort?"

Each EVP is unique to that company's culture, interests, strengths, and goals. These examples from the past several years illustrate how EVPs can vary widely in content and tone:

- "Be the person your dog thinks you are."—BARK
- "We're building a company people love. A company that will stand the test of time. So we invest in our people and optimize for your long-term happiness."—HubSpot
- "We work hard, throw Nerf darts even harder, and have a whole lot of fun."—Yelp
- "At Goldman Sachs, you will make an impact."—Goldman Sachs
- "Do cool things that matter." —Google
- "From empowering mentorships to customized coaching, PwC provides you with the support you need to help you develop your career. You'll work with people from diverse backgrounds and industries to solve important problems. Are you ready to grow?"—PwC
- "We're Shopify. Our mission is to make commerce better for everyone—but we're not the workplace for everyone. We thrive on change, operate on trust, and leverage the diverse perspectives of people on our team in everything we do. We solve problems at a rapid pace. In short, we get shit done."—Shopify
- "You can make a difference by helping to build a smarter, safer, and more sustainable world." —Honeywell
- "Lead the future of Beauty. When you love your work and the people you work with, amazing things can happen."—L'Oréal
- "We lead. We invent. We deliver. We use the power of sport to move the world."—Nike

A Useful Tool

A clear and descriptive EVP statement allows a company to easily communicate the value it offers and should be shared with employees, candidates, and new hires. The Society for Human Resource Management encourages employers to review their EVPs regularly to make sure that they remain relevant. Asking EVP-related questions when employees join or leave the company, during performance reviews, and in employee surveys can provide a steady stream of current data about how employees perceive the EVP. Recruitment and retention metrics can also indicate how well the EVP fits with employee needs and expectations. ■

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

THE IDEAL STRATEGY FOR COUNTERING THE GREAT RESIGNATION

BY BRIAN FORMATO

Together, the record 47.4 million voluntary quits in 2021[1] and the current (as of February) 3.8 percent unemployment rate[2] are leaving organizations short staffed and scratching their collective heads. Maybe the combination of the gig economy and the COVID-19 pandemic is to blame for the surplus of open positions. Or maybe Americans are just burned out by the grind and looking for a different approach to work.

The term "forward fill" describes an alternative approach to filling jobs. In contrast to the usual backfilling strategy, which involves filling a position after it has become open, forward filling requires thinking about open positions with an eye to the future rather than to the past. With the Great Resignation exacerbating the staffing shortage, this is the ideal time for organizations to implement a forward-fill strategy that emphasizes five key areas.

FLEXIBILITY

Today's employees desire and require more flexibility in their work arrangements, starting with the locations of their jobs. Once the pandemic started, "searches for remote work on LinkedIn tripled"[3]; during its first six months, remote job listings on LinkedIn increased sixfold.[4] Clearly, there's been a shift, and organizations must now meet workers where they are and where they want to be. The pandemic has proven that, thanks to technology, employees can be productive without having to be in the office. Workers want flexibility not just in job location, though, but also in areas such as working hours, benefits plans, technology choices (for example, whether to use a Mac or a PC), and PTO policies. The organization's goal should be to meet each employee's individual needs and also maintain equity among workers.

CREATIVITY

Employers must approach marketing job openings more as if they were marketing products: they must present a value proposition, entice job seekers to apply for a position, and be able to deliver on the promises made in the recruitment process. The high number of openings and the shortage of workers give job seekers lots of choices; therefore, companies must outcompete other employers to land quality hires. Hiring managers must be creative in their candidate sourcing, and consider strategies such as offering referral bonuses for existing staff and writing clever and unique copy for job advertisement placements that go beyond LinkedIn and Indeed to include social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

INGENUITY

During the pandemic shutdowns, many companies had to rethink how they interacted with clients, how their employees did their jobs—pretty much how they did everything. As they innovated new practices, organizations often found that those new approaches were actually better than their old ways of doing things. For example, companies that had deployed their sales forces geographically before the pandemic found that when salespeople lost the ability to call on their customers in person at their offices, being in the same city as clients and prospects became less important. As they assessed sales territories and industries, organizations that were willing to let go of their past ways of doing things often found that aligning salespeople around verticals produced higher close rates and more sales than aligning around geographies. This major shift enabled organizations to focus on hiring salespeople with industry experience regardless of where they lived, which in turn opened searches to national candidates with deep expertise in critical verticals. By reengineering the approach to their sales teams, those organizations boosted sales, attracted better candidates, and increased margins.

EMPATHY

Over the past two years, the leadership trait that has grown in value the most is empathy. During these professionally and personally challenging times, the best leaders have been in tune with their employees and the evolving needs of the business. Many of the workers who have resigned have done so because they did not feel valued, were treated poorly, and worked for rotten bosses. With more choices as to where to work and what to do, job seekers are being much more selective. Leading with empathy is critical to building the trust that can attract and retain top talent, and leaders who lack this skill must prioritize developing it. "Would I thrive working for me?" is a good starting point for leaders who want to measure their own empathy.

AUTHENTICITY

Every organization is not a good fit for every person. Every organization must be true to itself, then to its current employees, and finally to its applicants. By being clear and authentic about who it is, an organization gives candidates a realistic preview of what it will be like to work there (and why they should want to work there). An assessment of why people are leaving is a good starting point, because a revolving door for talent could indicate a toxic culture. Being honest with the candidate about what they are walking into—sharing the good and the bad—increases the likelihood of finding someone who is a good fit and ensuring that they are not surprised once they start the job.

Organizations that seek to forward fill their roles need to be flexible, creative, ingenious, empathetic, and authentic. They also need to be consistent: each team member must buy into these behaviors and model them for candidates. Companies with strong core values that are lived out every day tend to have fared better through the pandemic and have seen lower turnover rates. That said, turnover is inevitable, so organizations should forward fill roles as much as possible. By thinking about their future needs—rather than focusing on the past—companies can mitigate the effects of turnover and the Great Resignation.■

Brian Formato is the founder of Groove Management, a leadership development and executive coaching firm; and the creator of LeaderSurf, an adventurous development program for business leaders of all backgrounds, industries, and corners of the world who want to break old habits and create lasting change. He can be reached at bformato@groovemanagement.com.

1. Anneken Tappe. 2022. "A Record Number of Americans Quit Their Jobs in 2021." MSN.com, February 1, www.msn.com/en-us/money/careersandeducation/a-record-number-of-americans-quit-their-jobs-in-2021/ar-AATmHes.
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2022. "Employment Situation Summary." BLS website, March 4, www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm.
3. 99Content. Undated. "LinkedIn Statistics." 99Firms.com, 99firms.com/blog/linkedin-statistics/.
4. Maddy Osman. 2022. "Mind-Blowing LinkedIn Statistics and Facts (2022)." Kinsta website, February 17, kinsta.com/blog/linkedin-statistics.

Ready or Not, Here Comes Change

BY MACKENZIE FROESE

Bob Dylan penned his song "The Times They Are A-changin' " in 1964, as the country was in the throes of massive social and cultural upheaval. In the decades since then, that phrase has been used as a shorthand to describe countless big changes to societies, cultures, governments, and economies across the globe. And it applies to the enormous shifts taking place in the workplace right now.

Some of these changes have been in progress (or just on the horizon) for many years. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought others to the forefront. Regardless of their origins, all of these changes are picking up speed and will be around for a while—and HR needs to be ready for them.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives are becoming more widespread. These days, it seems that most companies either have implemented a DEI strategy or have plans to develop one soon. Society in general is becoming more diverse, and companies that want to connect with and engage top employees in that larger talent pool need to listen to and address their concerns.

Employees are placing a higher priority on their own mental and physical well-being. Dealing with the stress (and, for numerous people, outright trauma) of the past couple of years has been a struggle for many employees. Financial uncertainty (especially when some companies laid off employees or scaled back their hours—and wages—during early-pandemic business slowdowns), health concerns, and having to navigate new settings and schedules (e.g., working from home, juggling work with unexpected childcare or homeschooling) have created hardships for many employees, who are now reevaluating their priorities and working to take better care of themselves.

HR processes are incorporating more technological solutions. This should not really come as a surprise to anyone who hasn't been living under a rock during the past decade or so. Automation and artificial intelligence have made inroads into all sorts of business processes in recent years, resulting in increased efficiency and decreased costs. It makes sense that HR would want to embrace technology that improves HR processes.

Most industries are moving to incorporate some form of long-term remote work. Some companies are hybrid models, in which some employee time is spent in the organization's office and some employee time is spent off-site. (This could take the form of having each worker divide their work between office and off-site, or having some workers be completely in the office and others be completely off-site.) Other companies are ditching their real estate holdings and leases completely and moving everyone to work-from-home arrangements. The pandemic demonstrated to organizations and employees alike that extensive and prolonged remote work not only was possible but could even be an improvement over the traditional "everyone in the office" approach.

The staffing shortage is not only persisting longer than expected but is getting even worse, thanks in part to pandemic-related factors. "We can't find good employees!" (or even "We can't find any employees!") is a common refrain these days. Companies that want to stay ahead of this problem need to be sure their HR departments are ready to deal with these changes in employee expectations and requirements. ■

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

BAKED BRIE

Baked brie has a stellar presentation that belies its simple ingredients and preparation. It's the perfect dish to throw together when you want to impress your party guests (just sit back and bask in all the oohs and aahs!). And because baked brie is such a low-effort dish, you don't even need the excuse of a special occasion to enjoy it!

Yield: 8 servings
Time: 50 minutes

What you'll need:

- 1 round piece of brie, with the rind
- 1 sheet of puff pastry, thawed
- 2 Tb of fruit jam or preserves (or try dried fruit instead!)
- 1 egg, beaten

Nutrition Facts

Amount per Serving

Calories:	233 cal
Fat:	15.8 g
Dietary fiber:	0.5 g
Sugars:	2.7 g
Protein:	5.9 g

Directions:

- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
- Roll out the puff pastry until it's about 1/8" thick. (The size and shape of the rolled-out piece don't really matter, as long as it's somewhat symmetrical.) Place it on a pie plate or similarly sized shallow oven-safe dish.
- Slide the brie in half horizontally. Put the bottom half in the middle of the puff pastry. Spread the jam on the cut surface, then cover it with the other half of the brie.
- Fold the edges of the puff pastry over the top of the brie to cover it fully. Brush the entire surface with the beaten egg.
- Bake for about 40 minutes or until the puff pastry is golden brown. Let rest for 10 minutes before serving. (Great accompaniments include crackers, pita wedges, or baguette slices.)

THE RESOURCE

FOR YOUR PEOPLE

STAFFING Services

Hiring shouldn't be a risk.

We do the searching & vetting so you don't have to. We work to ensure the greatest ROI on every employee. Reduced time to hire, pre-screened & tested candidates, increased employee retention. Your trusted partner for Contract & Contract-to-Hire Positions.

DIRECT HIRE & HYBRID

Our team specializes in your business.

You already know it costs too much to hire the wrong person. That's where we come in. We take it as our personal mission to help create and build a workforce tailor-made just for your business.

Contract RECRUITING

Quality. Quantity. Quicker.

Replaces the old model of Hiring - that no longer works - with a new, alternative solution that will work! You get a team of experienced Recruiters, armed with the tools and expertise to tackle your toughest hiring challenges - and succeed!

HR Consulting

Attract. Retain. Engage. Comply.

Affordable Expertise to solve your People Problems – So you can get on with Business. We offer a full suite of customized solutions to meet your organization's specific needs. Helping individuals & teams elevate performance and achieve excellent results.

PAYROLL & ACCOUNTING

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

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

CORE Assessment™

Start at the CORE and maximize your employee ROI.

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

336.896.1000

INFO@THERESOURCE.COM

THERESOURCE.COM

theresource.com

THE RESOURCE

FOR YOUR PEOPLE