THE RESOURCE

Labor & Industrial INSIGHTS
magazine

CREATIVE RECRUITMENT SOLUTIONS IN A DIFFICULT LABOR MARKET
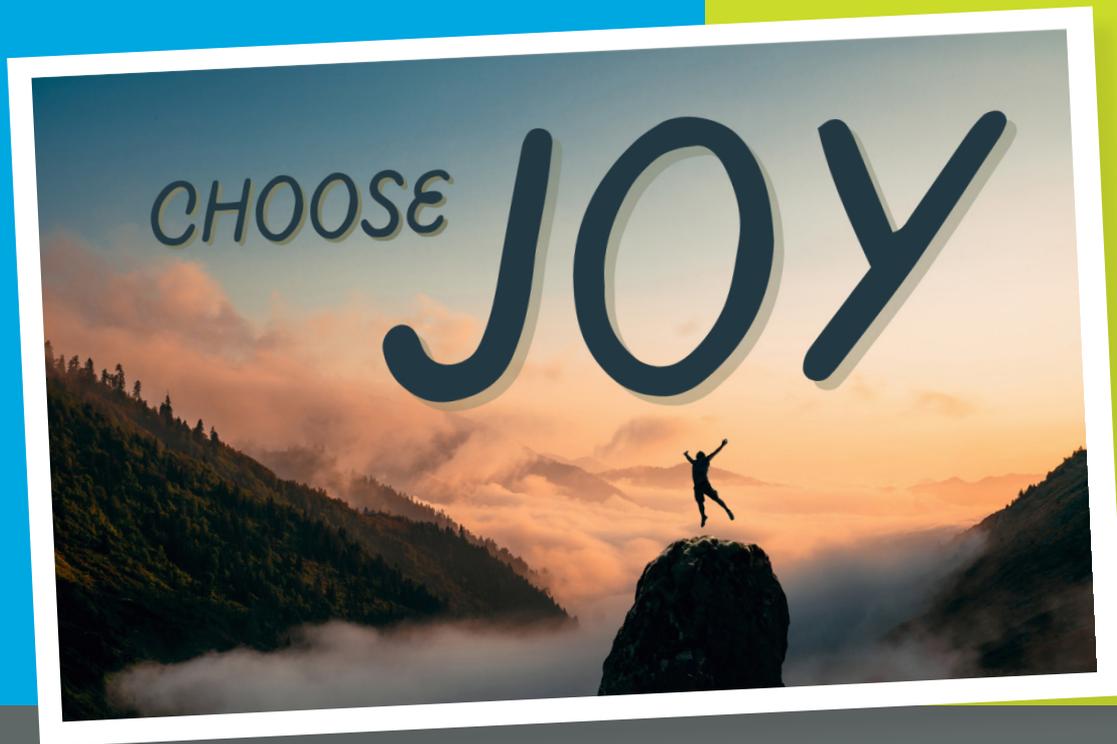
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AND MORE...

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.

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Labor & Industrial INSIGHTS® magazine

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How Pandemic Unemployment Has Affected Business Owners

BY THE STAFF AT UNEMPLOYMENT TRACKER

As the global pandemic goes into its third year, there is no question that it has had a major impact on business owners throughout the country. For example, due to restrictions on in-person gatherings, many companies have shifted (completely or partly) to online work environments and to online commerce spaces. Some businesses have even had to close their doors altogether.

Many business owners have been forced to lay off employees because the volume of business they once enjoyed has declined and they can no longer justify having those workers on hand. When business tapers off, as it has for many organizations due to COVID-19, it can become necessary to let some employees go.

At that point, there's not really any action required on the part of the company aside from responding to the claims that will be made to its state for extended benefits. The money that the company is required to pay for unemployment taxes then becomes the source used by the state to provide unemployment benefits to those individuals filing claims.

In the event new layoffs result in an unemployment claim, the state will contact the company to verify the details of employment. When a former employee files for unemployment benefits, their former organization is required to respond to their claim notice but also has the option of contesting it.

Employees who are fired for just cause are typically ineligible for regular unemployment benefits, because the program was set up to assist workers who have been laid off through no fault of their own or who are unable to work due to reasons outside of their control. Anyone who is terminated for violation of company

policy, poor performance, or for any kind of misconduct will most likely not qualify for regular benefits. In this scenario, the company will need to provide evidence that the employee violated company policy or provide some proof of misconduct on their part. Once this is done, the state will make a determination on whether the employee should receive benefits.

The CARES Act

Prior to the passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) of 2020, it was not possible for business owners to collect unemployment themselves if they fell into any of the following categories:

→ They were self-employed.
→ They were gig workers.
→ They were independent contractors.

That changed when the CARES Act went into effect, and business owners in those categories finally became eligible for regular unemployment benefits.

The only individuals ineligible for relief from this stimulus package are those who were still able to work from home or those who have closed their doors for reasons other than the pandemic. Most self-employed individuals who have been put out of business by the pandemic have been able to obtain relief through the CARES Act.

Resources Available to Business Owners

Many businesses and business owners have struggled with the government restrictions (such as social distancing requirements) enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of resources are available to offer them some relief.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program

Under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, which went into effect during the latter part of 2020, individuals who were previously ineligible for regular unemployment benefits have been able to qualify for the payments that others had already been awarded. Recipients are entitled to as many as 39 weeks of benefits and can receive PUA payments retroactively, dating back to January 2020. This program is similar to unemployment in that it's administered by individual states; therefore, claimants are obliged to submit their PUA applications through their state channels.

In addition to the PUA program, business owners received economic impact payments in 2020 that were intended to help taxpayers survive the hardships imposed by the coronavirus. Single taxpayers received $1,200, couples received $2,400, and couples were paid $500 for each dependent child in their custody.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act

Enacted in early 2020, this measure reimburses business owners that employ fewer than 500 employees. Its intent was to ensure that workers would not have to choose between staying employed and complying with safety protocols during the pandemic. It also reimburses the businesses in which these employees work in order to relieve some of the pressure on them.

Small Business Association Loan Program

Other guidelines were issued by the federal government with regard to programs already in place, such as the Small Business Association (SBA) loan program.

→ The COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan (COVID-19 EIDL) was made available to businesses that suffered serious economic damage as a result of a federally declared disaster. (As of January 2022, this program is no longer accepting new applications.)
→ The SBA also initiated the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to help businesses keep their employees working and avoid laying them off. By forgiving loans, it sought to help employers keep workers on their payroll since it would relieve the pressure of having to make loan payments, thus freeing up capital that could be used for payroll. (This program ended in May 2021.)
→ The SBA's Local Assistance Directory provides locations of local offices where assistance may be obtained.

The federal government is aware of the stress that the pandemic has placed on the shoulders of small business owners and has reacted as quickly as possible to provide help in many different forms. It is a worthwhile investment of time and effort for businesses to educate themselves about and make use of the loans and programs described above. ■

Unemployment Tracker empowers businesses to focus their funds and their time not on the employees of yesterday, but on the team they have today and the one they are building for tomorrow. For more information, visit unemploymenttracker.com.

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, employees might not believe that a

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

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 essen-

tial 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. ∎

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CREATIVE RECRUITMENT SOLUTIONS IN A DIFFICULT LABOR MARKET

BY ALEX OLIVER

Early retirements, burnout, employees rethinking their careers—the Great Resignation is in full swing. Job openings are up 44 percent since January 2021, and current application rates aren't any higher (or lower) than they were since the start of 2021. These hiring challenges aren't unsolvable, though, especially if companies look for inspiration in the successful recruitment strategies that other employers are using.

Challenge #1:

"We're not attracting enough of the right talent to our jobs."

THE FIX: Promote shared values and let employees do the talking.

Right now, many industries have more job openings than candidates. Companies in that boat are likely looking for ways to attract new candidates to their industry. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done in some industries.

For example, much of the public holds a perception of manufacturing careers as hot, dirty, and loud. To counter this perception, Fortune 500 chemical manufacturer Celanese adopted a new corporate branding strategy (with the phrase "The chemistry inside innovation") to present itself as a company that's innovative and socially and environmentally responsible. Celanese also asks its employees to help promote its brand by recording videos (posted on the company's career page) in which they share their experiences and perspectives on the company.

Challenge #2:

"We're not seeing great engagement with our candidates."

THE FIX: Build talent pipelines and touch base with prospects often.

Two of the biggest complaints candidates have is not hearing back from employers in a timely manner and not getting good information from them. The solution is clear: give candidates the information they need when they need it.

Companies that communicate clearly and accurately with candidates enjoy benefits such as happier hiring managers and better new-hire engagement.

One study found that when companies provide accurate information about open positions, they see a 57 percent improvement in "organizational fit" and a 51 percent improvement in "first year retention" among their candidates. Good communication is important to candidates regardless of whether their job hunt is active or passive.

There are several other tools companies can use to improve their communication with candidates.

> **COMPANIES THAT COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND ACCURATELY WITH CANDIDATES ENJOY BENEFITS SUCH AS HAPPIER HIRING MANAGERS AND BETTER NEW-HIRE ENGAGEMENT.**

For example, company newsletters are great for pushing out general information about the company and the latest news about it. Automated text updates can keep candidates informed about openings and about the status of their applications. And artificial intelligence–powered chatbots can engage with and guide candidates throughout the hiring process.

Challenge #3:

"We're having trouble retaining talent."

THE FIX: Encourage skill development and collaboration.

One effective method for limiting brain drain is to keep employees engaged. It's important that companies help their employees develop new skills, for example, and encourage them to take on challenging projects and build connections with other teams. These opportunities not only improve employee satisfaction (and, therefore, retention), but benefit the organization's bottom line by increasing productivity and reducing turnover.

👁 LOOK AROUND

When a company is facing a challenge, odds are good that another company is (or has been) in the same situation. Instead of trying to reinvent the wheel in their efforts to counter the effects of the Great Resignation, organizations should look around at what others are doing and try some new recruitment strategies. ∎

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

DAILY SAFETY TOPICS:
52 IDEAS FOR CREATING A SAFER WORKPLACE

BY TEAM SLICE

In 2019, 5,333 workers died on the job in the USA. In 2020, that number decreased (mostly because of pandemic-related shut-downs and slowdowns) to 4,764. Even that lower number is too high, though. Poor workplace safety remains a significant problem in the USA, with some of the most commonly violated safety standards in the areas of fall protection, respiratory protection, and eye and face protection.

One way to educate workers and promote better awareness of the risks they face is to incorporate daily safety briefings (also called "toolbox talks") into the workday. Sometimes, though, even the most seasoned safety manager might struggle to come up with fresh ways to present this information.

Here are some suggestions for how to organize a week's worth of safety talks around one subject, as well as 52 topics that safety managers can cover to help workers stay safe in warehouses, factories, and other potentially risky environments.

A Week of Daily Safety Talk Sessions (PPE Example)

Monday
Briefly introduce the topic. Cover the basics and explain why this issue matters. For example, why is personal protective equipment (PPE) so important in a manufacturing environment, even to someone who has been doing their job for 30 years without an injury (and therefore thinks they don't need PPE)?

Tuesday
Set up roleplay scenarios to explore how one worker could approach another who operates machinery without the necessary PPE. (What could an employee say to encourage a colleague to take proper safety precautions?) Use personalized hypothetical situations to make safety topics more memorable and impactful. For example, when covering the importance of hearing protection in noisy environments, ask workers with kids to raise their hands, then invite one or more of them to play out a scenario in which prolonged exposure to excessive workplace noise prevents them from hearing their children say their first word, laugh, or sing.

Wednesday
Find real examples of workers who were hurt on the job (such as someone who suffered an eye injury because they didn't use goggles). Videos, images, and statistics can all help drive the message home. Try using these examples in a game: describe a hazardous situation and see if anyone can guess what happened next.

Thursday
Invite workers to suggest their own ideas on improving safety related to each of your daily safety talk topics. For instance, they might be aware of a new type of PPE that could be beneficial, or perhaps they are concerned about the limited sizing options available for PPE. Use this discussion as an opportunity to identify safety gaps.

Friday
Host a short pop quiz to test workers' knowledge on the week's topic. For example, questions about PPE might include:
- What does a specific piece of PPE do to protect the wearer?
- What possible injuries could occur without a certain type of PPE?
- What should workers do if they feel their current PPE is unsuitable for a task?
- What should workers do with PPE after use to make sure it's safe for the next wearer?

Daily Safety Topics

Using this example as a guide, safety managers can structure their daily "toolbox talks" so that they are informative, engaging, and memorable. The sample format above would work well for any of the 52 safety topics listed below.

1. PPE. Discuss different types of PPE that workers need to use in their duties, how they help them stay safe, and what dangers they may face without them. Demonstrate how to use PPE properly.

2. Electrical safety. Cover how to handle electrical cables or machinery to reduce risk, the right PPE, and how to administer first aid to someone who may have been electrocuted.

3. Forklift safety. Lack of training, limited awareness of surroundings, and poor visibility can lead to improper handling of forklifts, which can pose a danger to the operator and to other workers. Offer tips on safe operation and common hazards (e.g., driving too fast in small workspaces).

4. Carbon monoxide poisoning. Because carbon monoxide poisoning can be fatal, this topic should be one of the key workplace safety topics for a daily toolbox talk. Examine what causes it, its effects on the body, and how to prevent it.

5. Fire prevention. Explore how and why fires may start in the workplace (e.g., faulty machinery, mishandling of chemicals). Show workers how they can decrease the likelihood of a fire.

6. Fire safety procedures. What should workers do if they discover a fire? How should they evacuate and to where? Cover everything they need to know to stay safe, including the locations of exit doors.

7. Hazard awareness. It's especially important to address this with warehouse workers, because their environments can become cluttered, piled high with stacks of crates, and hard to navigate. Offer advice on how to avoid distractions and identify potential dangers (such as cluttered package areas).

8. Accident protocols. What should workers do if one or more people are injured in an accident? Clarify who's capable of performing first aid, how to prevent a recurrence of that incident, and when specific areas should be closed off.

9. Side effects of accidents. Contextualize accidents in the workplace by examining their repercussions. For example, a back injury could prevent workers from playing sports with their kids or enjoying other hobbies in their downtime. Help them see why injuries are about more than the immediate pain.

10. Safe machine operation. Demonstrate how workers should operate machinery properly, no matter how familiar they may already be with certain devices. Cover how machine guards help protect operators and others. Go over how to check machinery for signs of damage or faults before switching it on.

11. Responsible behavior in the workplace. All workers should behave in a responsible manner, particularly when operating machinery, driving vehicles, or working at height. Examine the risks of reckless or inconsiderate behavior in the workplace.

12. Handling hazardous substances. Hazardous substances (such as acids and poisonous materials) should be handled with the utmost care. Discuss common accident scenarios and help workers learn what PPE is required for specific substances they may encounter.

13. First aid. Address different types of first aid that workers may be required to administer. Offer tips on a range of possible actions, such as dressing burns, cleaning out cuts, and performing CPR in emergencies.

14. The connection between hygiene and safety. Workers with poor hygiene may create a mess and not clean it up, creating a slip hazard. If they neglect to clean PPE after usage, they could put others at risk of exposure to unsafe substances.

15. Hand protection and common injuries. Discuss the circumstances in which gloves may be required in the workplace (e.g., lifting heavy objects, handling cutting tools, working with chemicals). Emphasize the risks of complacency and detail which gloves are most effective.

16. Staying safe when sick. Employees who come to work with the flu or another virus could affect others. Discuss the health risks and possible consequences to their colleagues if they fail to keep their distance, do not cover their noses and mouths when sneezing, or forget to

thoroughly clean communal cups and other dishware after using them.

17. Safe handling of flammable liquids. Explore how to handle and store these substances safely (including at dangerous temperatures) and how to handle leaks.

18. Using ladders. When distracted or in a hurry, workers are more likely to overlook basic safety when climbing up or down ladders. At the same time, improper positioning can increase the risk of falls, injuries, and structural damage. Discuss proper ladder setup, placement, and usage.

19. Proper lifting technique for large objects. Poor technique in this area can cause debilitating back injuries and over-exertion and put others at risk. Demonstrate safe and unsafe lifting forms.

20. Safety in noisy environments. This is one of the most important daily safety topics for manufacturing plants or other workplaces in which loud machinery, tools, or vehicles are constantly in operation. Examine the dangers of foregoing ear protection, how loud noises can distract workers, and how they may affect others within hearing range.

21. Working outdoors. Discuss best safety practices for outdoor work, such as warning pedestrians of potential obstructions or debris and assessing weather-related risks (e.g., slippery surfaces in heavy downpours).

22. How to stay safe in high temperatures. Employees need to know how to stay safe during summer months or in locations subjected to constant heat. Provide tips on covering up, cover the dangers of too much sun exposure, and emphasize the importance of staying hydrated and seeking shade.

23. How to stay safe in low temperatures. Discuss the risks of prolonged exposure to cold environments and how they can affect their ability to work safely (e.g., it is more difficult to operate machinery with numb hands). Advise workers on how to dress appropriately for lower temperatures.

24. How to perform risk assessments. This fundamental topic should be covered in every workplace. Detail why risk assessments are so important, how they're performed, and what constitutes a risk.

25. How to identify safety signs. Teach workers the different types of signage they need to know, giving special attention to those that may be easily misunderstood or ignored.

26. Rules of using safety signage. Workers performing specific tasks (especially in public spaces) are required to erect signage to maintain safety. Examine what signs they may need, what they mean, and why not displaying them could be dangerous.

27. How to set up scaffolding. Workers of all experience levels often set up scaffolding incorrectly due to inadequate training or a complacent attitude. Discuss proper setup techniques for different heights, building types, and weather.

28. Responsible behavior on scaffolding. Working on scaffolding creates the potential for workers to fall, drop heavy objects on others below them, slip when climbing ladders, and more. Focus on how to behave responsibly on scaffolding at any height.

29. How to hande cutting tools safely. Improper handling of cutting tools can lead to minor and major lacerations. Show how to use relevant blades safely to decrease the risk of cuts and advise on which glove density may be necessary.

30. Proper disposal of sharps. Explain how to dispose of sharps properly to prevent others from cutting or stabbing themselves. Discuss potential injuries that could result from improper disposal, and detail which objects qualify as sharp.

31. Why regular sleep patterns are important for shift workers. Employees who work night shifts may struggle to get restful sleep during the day and therefore may not be as alert at work as they should be. Share insights on the health effects of poor sleep and related workplace dangers.

32. How to recognize when co-workers may be too tired to work safely. Help workers understand what signs to watch out for if they suspect a colleague isn't alert or focused enough to perform potentially dangerous tasks.

33. What to do if people are on-site without authorization. Trespassers may create safety risks by interfering with operations or by distracting workers in control of machinery or vehicles. Establish standard procedures for reporting and removing unauthorized visitors.

34. Accident reporting. All workers need to know how to report accidents, whom to inform, and when to contact the emergency services. (This topic is ideal for roleplay scenarios.)

35. Stress in the workplace. Stress can have a negative effect on health and cause mood swings and distractions—all of which can be detrimental in the workplace. Explore relaxation techniques and warning signs that someone may be extremely stressed.

36. How to drive vehicles responsibly. Anyone at the wheel of a vehicle in the workplace must know how to operate it properly, what routes to take, and the maximum capacity limits when transporting cargo.

37. How to dispose of waste safely. Waste that could be harmful to the environment, wildlife, or humans should be disposed of carefully. Make workers aware of local and national regulations and be sure they understand what types of waste can be dangerous.

38. Working close to water. Any teams working near a body of water may be at risk of falling in or (in the case of an ocean or estuary system) being swept away by incoming tides. Increase awareness of these dangers and responsible behaviors.

39. Repetitive strain injuries. Help workers recognize the signs of these injuries and share techniques to avoid them.

40. Stretching to reduce discomfort and stress. Stretching the back and limbs can help to reduce the risk of developing aches and pains, particularly for workers who lift heavy objects repeatedly. Explore good stretching techniques (including their benefits) and address poor posture risks and prevention.

41. Handling power tools. Power tools are a staple of construction sites and other industrial settings, but complacent or untrained workers could injure themselves and others. Cover how to handle tools, how to know when they should be replaced, and other relevant information to mitigate risks.

42. Working in confined spaces. Risks associated with this type of work include oxygen depletion and low visibility. Discuss how to perform a risk assessment of the workspace, how to check for gasses, and how to know when breathing equipment is required.

43. Fall prevention. Any individuals or teams working at height should be aware of common risks, such as leaning too far over guardrails, walking on slippery surfaces, or using ladders irresponsibly.

44. How to prevent infections. Because cuts can occur under a wide variety of circumstances (e.g., handling blades, operating machinery, falling), workers need to know how to clean them to avoid infections. Antibacterial and antiseptic products should be available in every workplace.

45. Avoiding eye strain. Workers who use computers or screens repeatedly should be aware of eye strain (also known as "computer vision syndrome"), its causes, its long-term implications, and how to prevent it.

46. The dangers of drinking on the job. Inebriated workers may be unable to operate machinery safely or exercise sound judgment. Discuss the dangers they could pose to themselves and others and the disciplinary action that may result from this behavior.

47. The dangers of poor lighting. Clear visibility is a must in all types of work settings (e.g., offices, warehouses, construction sites). Discuss the minimum lighting requirements for the organization's particular environments and explain when workers should request more effective lighting.

48. How to protect the public when working outdoors. When they are in outdoor work spaces, workers have a responsibility to the public, whether they are driving heavy-duty vehicles along busy streets, digging up roads, or using noisy tools that create dust. Go over appropriate signage, good safety practices when working beside roads, and any other risks to the public.

49. Staying safe when working alone. Individuals working in a secluded area of a warehouse or at the top of a building undergoing development may be especially vulnerable in the event of an accident. They should know to keep a phone close by in case of an emergency. Make sure they understand that they still need PPE even if there's no one around to check them for it.

50. Working safely with gas. In workplaces where gas may be an issue, educate teams on how to identify leaks, what to do if one occurs, and how to store gas canisters securely.

51. Dealing with asbestos. Construction teams may run into asbestos when working on older buildings. Teach them how to recognize it, the dangers of asbestos, and whom to call if they encounter it.

52. Carrying loads safely by hand. It's vital to carry packages, tools, crates, and other materials responsibly to prevent injuries and property damage. Workers may try to carry too much at once to avoid going back and forth, but that could hurt them and cause more problems than it solves. Share tips on staying safe when carrying heavy or sensitive items, especially in bustling workplaces.

By focusing on one topic across a five-day period, safety managers have an opportunity to explore all the related problems workers may experience—and their solutions—in detail. Through daily safety talks, companies can build a well-informed, well-prepared team that knows how to identify accidents, how to avoid accidents, and how to handle them when they occur. ∎

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. ■

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Clarity: The Key to Safety Commitment

BY KEVIN BURNS

Safety commitment is distinguished from safety compliance by one critical factor: clarity.

It's impossible for someone to be fully committed to something that isn't entirely clear to them. They might go along with it because their friends or co-workers are involved, but that is not commitment.

Think about a major purchase or project, such as a home renovation. No one will commit to something like that without seeing the plan, the materials list, the costs, and the timeframe. No walls are getting knocked down until all the questions are answered and the plan is clear.

To commit to a plan, a program, or an idea, a person needs to have all the facts. They need to understand not just what and how, but also why. Once the why has been explained, the what and the how become more relevant. And once someone has all the information, they are more likely to commit.

Is it possible for an organization to get safety compliance without getting commitment? Yes. In fact, that's what exists in most workplaces. Unfortunately, most companies are content to let their employees meet the bare minimum in safety and rely on compliance to get them there.

Compliance is easy to achieve. All it takes is brute-force enforcement of rules. Sadly, that heavy-handed approach makes for a lousy place to work, so people leave. When new hires come on board, more enforcement happens . . . which leads to more turnover. Once a company falls into that cycle, it has a hard time breaking out of it.

Compliance is a short-term fix, not a long-term vision for a safety program. Blind adherence to safety policies isn't enough: it's important to have commitment to them. Workers should own their participation in safety, not just give it minimum attention so they don't get fired.

Before they can embrace safety wholeheartedly, though, team members need clarity on what they will get for their commitment. They need to know the plan, the details, the people involved, and how they will benefit from committing to it. People buy into things that make their lives better in some way. They don't buy into things that don't benefit them, and they certainly don't follow guidance from people they don't trust.

Companies can offer that clarity by giving employees extensive information about safety and presenting it in a way that persuades employees to buy into it. People don't commit to safety because someone is standing with their back to the room while reading out every slide in a big PowerPoint deck. They commit to safety when they engage with the information enough to fully accept and internalize it. ◼

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.

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