

THE RESOURCE

HR INSIGHTS

VOL. XI, ISSUE IV

magazine

from the eyes of industry leaders

6 Tips for Becoming an Influential Leader

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Culture

Battling BURNOUT

In our latest Client Learning Session, Dr. Shawn Ricks gave a fantastic presentation on Burnout. Titled *'Burnout, Boundaries & Balance: Maintaining Wellness in Uncertain Times'*, it was a timely topic for so many of the hiring managers we work with on a regular basis. And, let's face it, many of our staff members as well. Dr. Ricks highlighted the different mental health/wellness trends - both in and out of the workplace - in the wake of the pandemic. Increased agitation, harder to focus, feeling pulled in multiple directions, being asked to do more with less. Sound familiar? We're living in a state of hyperarousal and hypo-arousal in part due to: the pandemic, social and civil unrest, COVID/pandemic fatigue. We are ALL experiencing and living through trauma.

We covered the 3 Types of Stress: Physical, Chemical & Emotional. In our current state of less time...less resources...less rest, this daily stress can become chronic stress. This stress reduces the immune system, and when our body's defense system for stress is constantly left on throughout the day, it eventually burns out. We were given some helpful tips on determining whether STRESS or BURNOUT is being experienced, and then learned the 5 Stages of Burnout: subtle dissatisfaction, subconscious disregard, conscious numbing, anxious exhaustion, and full-blown trauma.

What are the causes of BURNOUT?

- Workload - load doesn't match capacity
- Perceived lack of control
- Reward - does it match time and effort
- Community - relationships and communication
- Fairness - equitable treatment
- Values mismatch

In order to prevent burnout, creating Boundaries is key. In order to create boundaries - Be clear on your 'WHY', Learn to say "no", Block your calendar, and Limit the amount of access others have to you via email and text. Balance is "an alignment between the use of time and personal and professional goals and priorities—not necessarily equal distribution of time between professional and personal activities, but rather general satisfaction with one's life". (Berry, 2010)

We are at our best when we're balanced in the four main areas: Physical (Health), Mental (Focus), Spiritual (Purpose) & Emotional (Happiness). Dr. Ricks left us with some practical strategies for immediate use in our efforts towards achieving balance.

An important note for organizations: While most companies focus on wellness practices that are individual, it is important to examine and shift the culture of the workplace. If everyone is burnt out, it's time to look at the environment and adjust norms and expectations that may be responsible!

THE RESOURCE

"Walls keep everybody out. Boundaries teach people where the door is"

- Mark Groves



Best Regards,



Kathy Hartung, CEO



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**PUBLISHER &
EDITORIAL DIRECTORS**
Haley Marketing Group

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Mackenzie Froese

MANAGING EDITOR
Marsha Brofka-Berends

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Leo Babauta
Valerie M. Grubb
Aaron Kinne
Terri Klass
Alaina Rivas
O.C. Tanner
Terkel

DESIGN
Matt Coleman

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11 Tips for Promoting Teamwork in a Hybrid Environment

BY VALERIE M. GRUBB

Even though the end of the pandemic is (finally!) within sight, that doesn't mean remote work is going away any time soon. Many employees are reluctant to return to long commutes, rigid work schedules, noisy workspaces, and other less-than-optimal features of onsite work. At the same time, many companies have realized that remote workers are often more productive, more engaged, and generally happier than their in-office counterparts. And of course there are the bottom-line savings associated with decreasing the size of a company's centralized physical workspace—or even eliminating it completely.

Although some companies have shifted to being completely remote, most seem to be aiming for a hybrid workplace: depending on company needs, employee preferences, and a whole host of other factors, some employees will be in the office, some will be remote, and some will move between both work environments. With much of the business world throwing in for some version of remote work for the long haul, managers need to figure out how to manage two groups of employees—in-office and remote—who have different needs, expectations, and responsibilities.

A key element of managing any workplace is making sure that workers are able to communicate with each other and work together effectively. This can be particularly tricky when employees aren't all in the same physical location. Fortunately, implementing certain best practices can help managers navigate the challenges of promoting teamwork in a hybrid environment.



THE BASICS OF TEAMWORK IN A HYBRID ENVIRONMENT

The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime. —BABE RUTH

Part of a manager's role is to keep a close eye on team dynamics, "the unconscious, psychological forces that influence the direction of a team's behavior and performance."¹ If team dynamics are a mess, the team can't work well together. And if a team can't work well together, it can't accomplish its goals and eventually ceases to actually be a team.

In a hybrid workplace, many factors can damage team dynamics, but one of the biggest obstacles leaders need to overcome is the phenomenon of "out of sight, out of mind." When a manager doesn't see someone every day (or at least pretty frequently), they might not think of that employee as often as they should—which means that the employee isn't getting all of the support, oversight, encouragement, and accountability they need to do their job. For this reason, most strategies to improve

teamwork in a hybrid environment focus on facilitating positive, high-quality, interpersonal interactions.

Pay extra attention to communication. Managers need to communicate regularly with all employees to understand what they're doing and what support they need. Remember that when people aren't face to face in the same room, certain communication cues (such as body language and tone of voice) are greatly diminished. Therefore, managers must be especially mindful of what they say—and how they say it—in video conferences, phone calls, and (especially) e-mail.

Make it possible for people to work anywhere—whether that's in the office or remotely. Give all employees the tools, training, and other resources they need to do their jobs. Technology can lend a major assist here: recent years have seen a boom in video conferencing software, virtual whiteboards, and other productivity and communication tools that make it easier than ever for people to do their jobs and connect with their colleagues and bosses.

Schedule interactions. Many people prefer remote work because it allows for flexible scheduling. (For example,

one person might want to plan their work hours around their kids' school drop offs and pick ups. Or maybe someone isn't a morning person, and their brain doesn't really get going until around midday, so they're more productive if they can start and end their days a few hours later than the usual 9-to-5 schedule.) As long as people get their work done, flexible hours are great—but watch out for any barriers they might create. In order to make sure that the remote workers aren't totally cut off from their in-office counterparts, require some overlap of hours, such as a one-hour window every day (or a two-hour window three days a week, or something else) when everyone is "on the clock" at the same time. By providing shared time for meetings, collaboration, and even just friendly social chats, this overlap facilitates synchronous, real-time interactions that help keep everyone connected to each other.

Leverage virtual tools. When there's a team meeting with on-site employees, send the Zoom link for it out to all team members so that remote employees, too, can join the meeting and stay in the loop. Remote employees don't get to do the in-person watercooler talk, lunch outings, and happy hours that help officemates connect with each other. So come up with virtual social events that give them similar socializing and networking opportunities.

Trust the team. Use feedback and coaching both to check in with all employees and to help them develop. Ensure that they have the training and resources they need. Hire good people and people who have potential, put them in roles for which they are prepared (or offer training to get them to that point), then get out of their way. No one likes micromanagers, and that management style is especially irritating to remote workers, who have a reasonable expectation of being able to do their jobs without someone looking over their shoulders.

WALK THE TALK: LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Leaders can't just tell their people, "I want you to do X and Y so everyone can get along better." They also need to be doing those things themselves. By modeling a few key behaviors, managers can inspire their teams to adopt those behaviors, too.

Be a better listener. Good managers don't multitask while someone's trying to share information with them. Instead, they give their employees their full attention and refrain from formulating responses in their heads while someone else is talking.

Be welcoming. Leaders can create communication-friendly environments by actively greeting others—including people they don't already know—at every encounter ("Good morning!"). They should keep their doors open to project friendliness and invite drop-by interactions (though closing a door for a bit is fine when they're up against a deadline and need to get work done).

Share information. In times of uncertainty, employees need more communication, not less. Managers should hold regular meetings with their staff. And if a manager or their boss (or both of them) is working remotely, the manager should send their boss weekly updates, which not only keep the higher-ups informed but also reminds them that the manager is getting stuff done.

Solicit feedback. Leaders should do regular check-ins with their teams to find out what's working (and what isn't). At each weekly meeting, for example, a manager could ask their project teams for a "one thumb up, one thumb down"—a quick assessment of one thing that's going well and one thing that needs improvement. Treating the "thumb down" points not as harsh criticism but as recommendations that can help everyone will make this kind of feedback easier both to give and to receive.

The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.

—PHIL JACKSON

Help colleagues. A manager should strive to be the mentor they wish they had. Even if they have a boss who isn't a great mentor, that manager can still be a great leader or mentor themselves to others in the department.

Be trustworthy. As much as possible, leaders should exhibit tact, diplomacy, empathy, and sincerity. They should deliver on their promises and admit their mistakes when they make them.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Great things in business are never done by one person; they're done by a team of people. —STEVE JOBS

The way an organization works as a whole determines its success. A company may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the organization won't succeed. Now that it's possible for team members to work separately from each other, at least part of the time (and sometimes exclusively), managers need to be proactive to keep everyone—regardless of their work location—engaged and connected. ■

*Valerie M. Grubb of Val Grubb & Associates Ltd. (www.valgrubbandassociates.com) is an innovative and visionary operations leader with an exceptional ability to zero in on the systems, processes, and personnel issues that can hamper a company's growth. Grubb regularly consults for mid-range companies wishing to expand and larger companies seeking efficiencies in back-office operations. She is the author of *Planes, Canes, and Automobiles: Connecting with Your Aging Parents through Travel* (Greenleaf, 2015) and *Clash of the Generations: Managing the New Workplace Reality* (Wiley, 2016). She can be reached at vgrubb@valgrubbandassociates.com.*

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STRATEGIES
FOR RETAINING
EMPLOYEES
& IMPROVING
COMPANY
CULTURE

BY ALAINA RIVAS



As organizations struggle to deal with the Great Resignation, the thirst for business growth has led some of them to engage in talent poaching and to offer massive incentives for employees to leave their current employers. Those employers must be doing something right if their competition sees value in their workers, but now they need to step up their game to keep those good employees around. Retaining top-performing staff is certainly a much better business strategy than trying to convince them to come back after they've left: not only does it keep top talent on board, but it also saves the time and money involved in backfilling roles. Fortunately, there are some tried-and-true strategies companies can use to help cultivate and retain a thriving workforce.

First, learn to recognize complacency. A company with long-term employees that is not experiencing as much growth as it would expect based on its resources should be asking its leadership team some tough questions: "How has our organization improved lately?" and "When was our last real success?" If the answers to these questions point too much to the past, the organization not only has a problem with hitting its goals but also has a workplace culture that has accepted these flatlining results. When team members are okay with the company's progress (or lack thereof), that's a problem. When team members have been loyal to the company in the past, their willingness to accept the company's progress (or lack thereof) puts employers in a tough spot when those employers care deeply about both honoring loyal employees' contributions and maximizing the organization's potential.

With the right approach, though, organizations don't have to sacrifice loyalty for performance. By implementing some (or all) of the following 13 creative strategies, companies can increase their ability to grow and retain great employees.

1 BRING IN NEW HIRES.

When a company has open roles or needs to expand its team, bringing in external hires is one way to "reset" the organization, especially when those outsiders bring new ideas that can help motivate current staff. The key to getting existing employees and new employees to gel together as a team is to honor each group's unique perspectives.

- Set aside ample time for everyone to get to know each other on a personal level.
- Acknowledge the successes of the existing team.
- Empower the new hires.
- Encourage existing employees to be open to the new hires' suggestions.

To make this transition most successful, though, companies also need a separate plan for improving employee engagement among any poorly performing long-term employees.

2 GIVE TEAM MEMBERS A CHANCE TO GROW.

Helping longstanding current employees shift into learning mode and restart their personal growth process is one of the best ways to get them excited to stay at a company—and back into a position where they can help the business grow.

- Provide personal development opportunities (such as attending a conference or networking with people in similar roles at other organizations).
- Offer skills assessments to generate excitement about developing their strengths further or picking up new skills.
- Create formal opportunities for them to try out new roles or responsibilities within the company.
- Identify tenured employees who have maintained a growth mindset while staying invested in themselves and the organization over their many years there, and inspire others to follow their example by publicly recognizing their contributions.

3 CREATE PERFORMANCE PLANS FOR THE BEST EMPLOYEES.

A company's competitors are interested in luring away only its top performers: the employees who want to be challenged and who often exceed expectations. Organizations can have better luck keeping those employees by finding ways to measure their performance. Performance reviews can shed light on where employees are going above and beyond (and where their weaknesses lie), but be sure to look past money and numbers, too, to see who is trying to excel. These measurements make it possible to set goals and expectations—metrics that are especially helpful in the onboarding process for new employees and give all employees clear direction and ensure that their work stays on track.

4 PROVIDE MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.

High performers want to expand their skill sets. Companies should provide viable methods for employees to expand their knowledge and gain experience.

- Appoint mentors to guide both new

and current employees, so they have someone to learn from and to go to with questions.

- Give employees opportunities to lead projects.
- Encourage employees to attend classes, webinars, and professional development conventions.

5 OFFER FLEXIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE.

Employees are human: they have kids, doctor's appointments, and countless other non-work-related commitments and interests. Flexible schedules and support for a healthy work-life balance can increase employee retention. Similarly, a policy that allows for some degree of remote work not only gives employees a break from the office but also saves them time and gas money. This simple "perk," which has become increasingly desired (and even expected) in the wake of the pandemic, can make an employer more attractive to employees—and incentivize them to stay.

6 PAY MORE COMPETITIVE SALARIES.

A company can gain an edge by keeping tabs on the competition via job websites such as Glassdoor or LinkedIn that make it possible to find out how other organizations compare when it comes to compensation, benefits, and workplace culture. By using this information to evaluate their own offerings, then adjusting them to meet or exceed top competitors' salaries and benefits, companies can increase their chances of retaining and attracting top talent.

7 START EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION INITIATIVES.

One of the easiest ways to keep employees happy is to let them know that their accomplishments are being noticed.

- Take note of employees' achievements or yearly anniversaries.
- Don't wait for annual performance reviews: offer recognition as soon as it's merited.
- Consider asking employees how they like to be rewarded. Some may be looking for just a pat on the back, and an occasional, simple form of recognition (such as "Great work!") could be all that's needed to keep them motivated.

8 OFFER PERKS AND INCENTIVE-BASED BONUSES.

Employees often respond favorably to performance-based incentives that give them opportunities to earn more money. (After all, who doesn't want a bigger paycheck?) Companies don't have to find this extra income in their budgets because the employees will bring it in themselves. Outside of healthcare insurance, organizations can also attract employees by offering them a wider variety of benefits, investments (such as stock options), and 401(k) retirement plans.

9 PROVIDE WORKPLACE AMENITIES.

Inexpensive niceties, such as free coffee, water, and snacks, can go a long way toward making employees happy and productive. Companies should also ensure that their employees have comfortable work environments; the ability to communicate with their co-workers easily; and any tools, equipment, software, and other resources that could make their jobs easier.

10 PROVIDE CAREER GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES.

Some employers see offering job title changes as a cost-efficient way to retain employees and boost morale. But that approach doesn't have long-term effectiveness unless those job title changes come with career growth paths and increasing responsibility. Knowing that there is more for them to accomplish and other roles to aspire to can increase employee engagement, which can help reduce turnover and improve job satisfaction.

11 USE NONCOMPETE AGREEMENTS SPARINGLY.

No matter how happy a company's workers are, some of them will eventually leave. When employees have regular access to sensitive information and their departures could lead to damaging consequences, a noncompete agreement can be a good way to protect the company. The effectiveness of these types of contracts varies from state to state, however, and some states are considering outlawing them altogether. When its employees don't have access to vital information, a noncompete agreement could open a company up to potential problems. Such agreements could also push away potential talent who might

see them as too limiting. And because most noncompete agreements have time constraints that eventually expire, companies that use them must also consider the costs involved with pursuing lawsuits against former employees.

12 WELCOME FEEDBACK.

Not all employers take advantage of exit interviews, even though these conversations can be the best opportunity to receive raw, honest evaluations from departing employees. Asking an employee why they are leaving may reveal why they found the competition more appealing—and how to prevent the departure of further employees. Survey existing employees about their jobs, too, and ensure that they will not suffer any negative consequences for offering their feedback. Make it clear that the organization is genuinely interested in their experiences, feelings, and judgments.

13 DON'T BURN BRIDGES.

Although it's easy to be bitter about an employee's exit, it's more productive to make their departure a positive experience. (No organization wants its disgruntled ex-employees to spread their negativity among current team members or potential candidates.) Focus on their contributions to the company and on the goals they've met, and encourage them to keep in touch after they're gone. There's always a chance that they could return to the company one day!

Final Thoughts

Because a high employee turnover rate can be detrimental to any business, companies must continually evaluate (and adjust as needed) their employee experience if they want to thrive in today's especially competitive job market. Organizations need to consider providing employees with more of the working conditions and perks they seek, such as learning opportunities, flexible schedules, and a stronger focus on overall employee satisfaction. By placing the emphasis on its most important resource—its people—a company can attract more top talent and improve its retention. ■

Alaina Rivas is the managing director of support services at Inspireity. Her focus on recruitment talent identification, recruitment advertising, marketing, and branding methods enables her to find the best talent using the latest recruitment strategies, talent attraction methods, and technologies.

6 TIPS FOR BECOMING AN INFLUENTIAL LEADER

BY TERRI KLASS



Imagine a scenario in which a team is struggling with a project because the information they need to complete it is not coming in as quickly as they expected.

As they debate whether (and how) to approach the client about moving up the deadline, some team members favor handing an incomplete document over to the client. The team leader, however, is certain that the best course of action is to wait just a few more days for all the data to be available so the team can present the client with a complete deliverable. They keep trying to convince the rest of the team to extend the deadline but don't get any support for this position. In the end, the deadline is not moved forward, and the client is extremely upset with what the team presents. If only the

leader had been able to influence the rest of the team to make a different decision.

The topic of influence often comes up in leadership programs and coaching. Although leaders may be strong technicians and extremely capable of carrying out their job responsibilities, they can also feel that they are not as influential as they would like. The inability to persuade others to support their ideas and suggestions can be frustrating and can throw off any leader's confidence level. By keeping six key strategies in mind, however, leaders can increase their influence.

Focus on Relationship Building

Every influential leader understands that being able to convince team members or bosses to embrace their ideas begins with cultivating meaningful and trusting relationships. A leader who doesn't show care and

concern for their team cannot expect to persuade that team to sign on to their strategies. Additionally, effective leaders also network widely and cultivate relationships with people from different teams and areas.

Develop Credibility

Influential leaders demonstrate their credibility by being dependable and following through with what they say they will do. Credible leaders listen to their team members to understand what they are really saying, and they never use “bait and switch” tactics to achieve their own goals. They are also trustworthy, so others can count on them to always be honest and tell the truth—even when it’s hard to hear.

Craft a Clear and Compelling Message

Influential leaders use descriptive language to express themselves with both clarity and energy. By presenting a compelling message that makes the case for why a certain choice is being suggested, they can persuade others to support their decision—and share their excitement.

Be Inclusive and Approachable

Influential leaders reach out to include input from many different demographic groups and thought leaders. When a discussion or a project includes many different (and sometimes opposing) perspectives and opinions, leading with openness and inclusivity can help prevent it from going awry. Influential leaders promote an open dialogue by welcoming feedback, even if it is critical. They also value their team members and treat them with respect, and they cultivate environments in which everyone feels safe to speak up.

Inspire Others

Influential leaders inspire others by presenting an exciting vision that team members and bosses want to support. These leaders understand what’s important to others, including their pain points and what information they need to choose their courses of action. An upbeat, positive disposition and a well-thought-out plan provide the foundation for an inspirational approach.

Value Appreciation and Recognition

Lastly, influential leaders are grateful for all of their colleagues’ hard work and input. They publicly demonstrate how much they appreciate others’ dedication, and they make sure people get credit for their contributions. (For example, they might offer to put something in writing in someone’s file for an accomplishment that was difficult to attain.) Leaders who become known as advocates for others will see their influence grow.

Being a leader doesn’t mean sitting in a position of authority and telling other people what to do. Rather, being a leader means earning a position of influence through persuasion, appreciation, and communication. Leaders who actively work to develop their skills in these areas will increase their influence—and their effectiveness. ■

Terri Klaas is a highly sought-after leadership skills facilitator, trainer, coach, and speaker who helps organizations develop influential leaders and retain their experienced talent. She can be reached at www.terriklaclassconsulting.com.



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HIRING TRENDS

RECRUITERS, HIRING MANAGERS, AND LEADERS FROM A VARIETY OF ORGANIZATIONS RECENTLY OFFERED THEIR INSIGHTS ON THE (SOMETIMES SURPRISING) HIRING TRENDS THAT COMPANIES HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2022.

Prioritizing Cultural Fit and Alignment

Experience and qualifications used to play an oversized role in hiring decisions, but the Great Resignation upended traditional expectations. Qualifications are important, but people don't want to work for just any company anymore. They want to work for those whose work cultures align with their mindsets and values—and they'll quit if those companies aren't the right fit. Hiring managers have to focus more on prioritizing cultural fit and alignment to stem the tide of increased turnover. *(Jon Schneider, Recruiterie)*

Talent Acquisition Teams Thinking More Like Sales and Marketing

Because the competition for talent is so steep, recruitment teams are needing to become more like sales and marketing teams for their companies. This means recruiters' priorities have shifted from sourcing and interviewing to also encompass branding and strategy. They need to spend more time and energy on creating memorable touch points throughout the full candidate experience; to keep up with these new demands, they are automating more of the repetitive tasks. As more recruiters become empowered to be brand advocates, they are also leading initiatives to research new tools and develop fresh, creative ways to promote their companies' values, missions, and cultures. *(Andres Blank, Fetcher)*

Niche Specialization of Recruiters

As the average number of applications per role has skyrocketed, many businesses and external agencies embrace the need for further specialization. Whereas in the past generalist recruiters sourcing candidates for a range of office jobs

were the norm, now recruiters specialize not only in specific job functions but even in their industry-related versions. For example, instead of hiring analysts, accountants, and administrative staff, some recruiters might handle only business intelligence specialists in e-commerce or database developers in financial technology. *(Michael Sena, SENACEA)*

Continued Growth in Outsourcing

If the pandemic proved anything, it's that companies with nimble workforces have an advantage over those that are stuck in old modes of handling staffing issues. In hiring, onboarding, and scheduling, outsourcing makes life easier. And so far 2022 is seeing recognition of the benefits of outsourcing in terms of operations, administration, and cost savings. This trend will continue through the year. *(Stephanie Tanhueco, C9 Staff)*

Video Resumes

Since Generation Z used TikTok to start the video resume trend, it has become a common way to apply to creative fields and positions, especially those in video

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BY TERKEL

editing and graphic design. Video resumes will most likely become popular among corporate positions as well, because it is a great way for recruiters to get a good look at who they are interviewing and potentially hiring.

(Olivia Young, Conscious Items)

Increasing Use of AI

I'm consistently surprised by the capabilities of AI in hiring, and I think the HR industry is catching on. As we're all still dealing with hiring problems that won't seem to go away from last year (e.g., labor shortages, Great Resignation, burned-out recruiters), we're seeing more and more HR leaders turn to AI assistants for . . . assistance. AI assistants can screen candidates, field questions, and schedule (and reschedule) interviews, thus allowing recruiters and hiring managers to shed the repetitive administrative work and focus on the highest priority: people. So although I'm surprised to see the problems of 2021 being so persistent, I love to see how more and more talent leaders are finding out how AI can assist their teams in hiring better and faster.

(Josh Zywein, Paradox)



Boomerang Recruitment

With the Great Resignation (also called "the Great Reshuffle"), I'm seeing an increased focus on hiring both internal candidates in order to retain top talent as well as former employees—"boomerangs"—in order to harness previously vetted talent. Our research finds that 72 percent of employees would consider rejoining a former employer given the right opportunity, and half said they have regretted leaving a former employer. Indeed, the grass isn't always greener on the other side of the fence, and now is the time to tap into this often forgotten resource. Boomerangs already know what they are signing up for in terms of culture and often outperform external hires.

(Brett Wells, Perceptyx)

Focus on Innovation and Technology

Medical schools and healthcare facilities are becoming more and more

technologically advanced. To minimize recovery time, decrease human errors, and reduce cost, more health professionals are learning to use innovation and technology to their advantage. When used for documentation, minimally invasive procedures, and more, technology is important for the future of healthcare. It's also great when newly hired healthcare professionals come on board already having significant knowledge of and experience with newer innovative tools and devices.

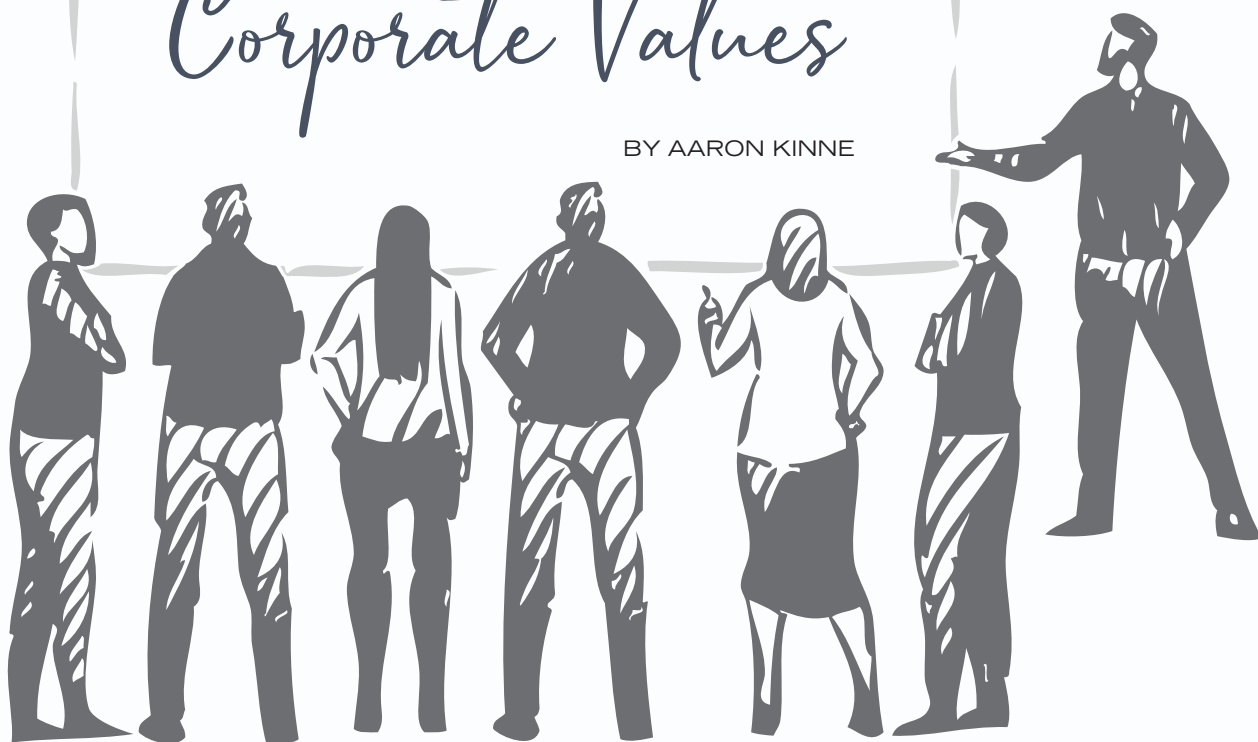
(Paul Breen, Strelcheck Healthcare Search)

Renewed Focus on Team Engagement and Collaboration

More employees are working from home than ever before, and hybrid work environments are also becoming increasingly common. Business as usual has had to make way for the new normal, and companies realize they must adapt quickly to changed circumstances. This is why, in 2022, there is a renewed focus on the ability of team members to collaborate with each other, wherever they are. Team engagement and collaboration lead to higher productivity levels across a company. *(Ed Stevens, Preciate)* ■

Back to Basics: Corporate Values

BY AARON KINNE



Core values define a company's beliefs and shape how it wants its employees to interact with people both within and outside the organization. They serve as its "highest priorities, deeply held beliefs, and core, fundamental driving forces."¹ In order to promote its core values, though, an organization must first define them.

The most impactful way to discover an organization's core values is to examine how employees see themselves and their company. To be most successful, the process of determining core values must be a company-wide endeavor that solicits input from employees across all parts of the organization. Anaplan, for example, uses a five-step series of facilitated workshops to collect "both input and buy-in from employees across all departments, locations, and levels."² This "bottom-up approach" starts by broadly asking employees, "What is important at our company and what is unique about working here?" Through discussion and evaluation, this broad list of responses is then narrowed down to a set of well-defined core values.

Any method a company uses to determine its corporate

values should incorporate three key elements:

- **A compelling story about the long-term future.** Often called a "vision statement," this lays out where the company wants to go and what it wants to be.
- **A plan for creating that future.** This thumbnail sketch of why the company exists and what it does is often referred to as a "mission statement."
- **A set of actions and behaviors that will guide the company to that future.** These are often called "organizational values," "company values," or "core values." They include the fundamental beliefs held by the organization's most engaged employees and declare how it will treat customers, suppliers, community members, and employees.

Core values should function as an "at-a-glance guide" to the company's culture, representing the best and strongest elements of that culture.

To determine whether the values it's formulated will be meaningful and effective in guiding its culture, a company

should ask these questions:

- How much do our values represent our current corporate culture?
- Are they aspirational? (That is, do they reflect what we want our company to be?)
- Are they unique to our organization?

Strong values are memorable, but not overly clever. Perhaps most important, they should be specific.

Organizations should avoid broad values (such as “integrity” or “innovation”) that tend to be too vague to have any real meaning for employees. When it’s necessary to use such values, companies should be sure to explain them thoroughly. For example, Netflix states that one of its “valued behaviors” is “curiosity,” and presents a detailed explanation of what that means:

- You learn rapidly and eagerly.
- You seek alternate perspectives to improve your ideas.
- You see patterns and connections that other people miss.
- You seek to understand members’ changing tastes and desires.³

Finally, it should be clear to everyone in the organization how to put company values into action. If the values are too abstract, employees will struggle to “connect the dots” to translate them to real-life behaviors.

Because strong, meaningful company values are deeply rooted in the organization’s culture, they should not be changed on a



whim but, rather, should endure and stand the test of time. When a company stays the course with its values, even during difficult times, they become a reference point within the organization.

PUTTING CORE VALUES IN ACTION

Once a company has defined its core values, how does it bring them to life? How does it infuse them into the lifeblood of the organization’s culture? How does it ensure that they guide and inform everyone throughout the company?

Taking as a starting point the fact that “an organization’s core values only have power when—and to the extent that—the humans in and around the organization feel a connection to them,”⁴ companies should be sure that their core values include three key characteristics that foster connections:

- Values must be operationalized. Organizations must design and create systems that ensure that values are viewed as integral to everyday business processes and decision making.
- Values must be lived—starting at the top. Because of leaders’ visibility and position of authority, it’s vital that they “live an organization’s core values, even in (or especially in) the smallest of actions, or the values have no teeth.”⁵
- Values must be communicated. One great way to do this is through stories told by employees who embody the company’s core values.

Of course, one of the most effective ways to get company values off the wall and to make them part of the organization’s DNA is to implement a values-based employee recognition program. A vibrant, comprehensive program plays an integral role in aligning the entire organization to its shared purpose and vision. Recognition reinforces company values and puts the power of gratitude to work, aligning everyone in the organization to its core values. Because a values-based employee recognition program is designed with rewards that map to each of the company’s values, it integrates those ideals into employees’ everyday thoughts and actions.



LINKING EMPLOYEES TO COMPANY VALUES

In the end, corporate values are the foundational cornerstone of a company’s brand. They reflect what the organization is and what it believes in. In this way, they become a portrait of the organization’s community and showcase the employee connections that make the company what it is. ■

Aaron Kinne is a senior writer at Workhuman.

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HOW TO BUILD

A MORE INCLUSIVE

Workplace Culture

BY O.C. TANNER



Workplace culture took some major hits over the past two years. New challenges forced organizations and human resources leaders worldwide to play defense in ways they could not have predicted a few years earlier. The global pandemic, the rise of remote work and its accompanying disconnection, the Great Resignation, and a global cry for more diversity and inclusion all contributed to the reshaping of company cultures.

Amid these ongoing disruptions, how can organizations create more inclusive workplace cultures that help employees reconnect with their organizations and with one another? Employees say they want to work for organizations that respect their diversity. Many companies claim to be

making progress in this area, but workers remain largely skeptical of inclusion initiatives: “Only 44 percent of employees say their organization’s D&I efforts are sincere, while even fewer (34 percent) feel they are effective or believe inclusion is part of their culture.”¹

The terms diversity and inclusion are often used interchangeably, but they actually mean very different things. In the workplace, diversity refers to representation: the number of different kinds of employees that make up an organization, based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and many other factors. Inclusion, on the other hand, is a measure of value: “how well the contributions, presence, and perspectives of different groups of people are

valued and integrated into an environment.”²

When an organization improves its inclusion, not only do its employees feel more welcome and valued, but the company as a whole also benefits. Studies have demonstrated that organizations with diverse and inclusive cultures are more likely to be innovative, for example, and to deliver dramatically better results.³ Clearly, it’s in a company’s best interest to make its workplace culture more inclusive. Five key strategies can help an organization reach that goal.

ENCOURAGE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Sometimes the way employees feel is a reflection of how they are treated or spoken about. Whether intentionally

or unintentionally, people may convey an unconscious bias through everyday work conversations. That’s why one important aspect of building an inclusive workplace is to encourage everyone to learn to speak inclusively.

For example, without thinking about gender, someone may refer to an employee as a salesman or businessman rather than use a more inclusive term, such as salesperson or business executive. Similarly, someone might use terms such as homosexual or transsexual rather than better options such as gay, transgender, or LGBTQ+. And instead of broadly describing a group as “a minority,” a more appropriate option would be to use descriptions that relate to specific ethnic or cultural groups (e.g., African American,

Native American, Hispanic). Small—but deliberate—improvements in how people speak to each other can go a long way toward building inclusion at work and creating an atmosphere in which everyone feels welcome.

FOCUS ON EVERYDAY MICRO-EXPERIENCES

Leaders should make deliberate efforts to implement inclusive workplace practices and educational opportunities throughout the work environment. This may take the form of more improved hiring practices, employee bias training, special town hall events, community collaboration, and policies for equal pay. Plans should include measurable goals, and management should provide the resources, tools, and training needed to ensure their successful implementation.

For example, as part of its inclusivity goals, Dow continues to modernize total rewards benefits (including pay equity), and its inclusive hiring standards have shown marked improvement in global representation of women and people of color. Similarly, Citi is “actively seeking out diverse perspectives at all levels of our organization” and champions a set of inclusion goals that spans “pay equity, Citi Affinity groups, LGBTQ+ equality and rights, disability inclusion, along with targeted recruiting and promotion paths.”⁴

However, inclusive behaviors in the workplace don’t always take place in formal programs. The employee experience comprises frequent micro-experiences, such as the conversations

someone has with teammates, the environments in which they work, the messages they get from their company, and the feedback and recognition they receive from their peers and leaders. These everyday experiences cumulatively help employees feel that they belong and are important to the organization and to the workplace culture. Therefore, leaders need to be sure that micro-experiences aren’t overlooked places in which to build inclusion.

TEACH LEADERS HOW TO MODEL INCLUSION

It’s hard for organizations to say they promote diversity and inclusion when their management teams lack diversity or are insensitive to diverse populations. To create a safe, inclusive environment, leaders should promote inclusivity by practicing what they preach. When leaders understand the importance of modeling inclusion, teams stand a much better chance of finding success as well.

Organizations should encourage leaders to become aware of others’ diverse experiences, skills, perspectives, and personalities. Then they can create an environment in which each employee feels that they belong and can contribute their uniqueness to the company culture and to efforts to achieve common goals and objectives. For example, Kaiser Permanente’s success in incorporating diversity and inclusion into its HR practices is the result of “having leadership teams model inclusive behavior, promoting a ‘speak up’ culture, and encouraging employees to ‘lead from where they stand,’



thereby giving everyone a voice and a platform to enact change.”⁵

BUILD A CULTURE OF INCLUSION THROUGH RECOGNITION

Employee appreciation serves as a powerful tool to build inclusion for all employees in an organization. However, significant numbers of employees feel that inclusion is not embedded in their company cultures.⁶ Clearly there is much room for improvement in how organizations build a culture of recognition. As a starting point, leaders can review which groups are being recognized and which groups are not, and then make adjustments based on that data.

CREATE FEELINGS OF BELONGING SO EMPLOYEES WANT TO STAY

Creating an inclusive workplace culture goes hand in hand with cultivating a sense of belonging at work: “When companies emphasize a culture of belonging, they . . . build a bridge to greater empathy and inclusion for the groups that are the most marginalized in the workplace today.”⁷ Helping people feel like they belong also helps organizations keep

employees longer, because it fosters valuable connections and strong relationships (which remote and hybrid workers find especially challenging to build and maintain).

THE BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE CULTURE IN THE WORKPLACE

Creating diverse teams and achieving meaningful inclusion requires thoughtful planning and investments in leadership, education, and workplace culture. But these efforts will pay off in spades. Leaders who promote inclusivity initiatives can help employees look forward to going to work and increase their productivity. By fostering a sense of loyalty that arises from feeling seen and represented, inclusivity can also make employees more likely to stay with their organizations longer. When inclusion is treated as an intentional priority, it will become part of the culture and something that flows throughout—and is embraced by—the entire organization. ■

O.C. Tanner helps organizations inspire and appreciate great work. Thousands of clients globally use its cloud-based technology, tools, and awards to provide meaningful recognition for their employees. Learn more at www.octanner.com.

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A Simple, High-Impact Productivity Protocol



MOST PEOPLE'S DAYS ARE FILLED WITH BUSY WORK AND DISTRACTIONS. THAT'S NOT NECESSARILY A BAD THING: ENGAGING IN BUSY WORK AND DISTRACTIONS CAN BE A LOVELY WAY TO PASS THE TIME. BUT SOMETIMES PEOPLE WANT TO USE THEIR TIME MORE POWERFULLY AND EFFECTIVELY.



To work with increased impact, start by imagining a protocol that would require doing less each day but have a bigger result. But be sure to include time for the smaller things, too, so that everything doesn't become a mess.

1. Choose high-impact tasks.
2. Use focus sessions to make progress on them.
3. Create rituals for taking care of smaller (but important) tasks.

This approach creates more space in the day and helps people feel less overwhelmed and more that they are making a meaningful impact with the time they do spend working.

Choose High-Impact Tasks

At the start of each week, intentionally choose the high-impact tasks to be accomplished that week. Similarly, at the start of each day, choose one to three high-impact tasks to be accomplished that day. Answering a few key questions can help decide if something is a high-impact task:

- Does this align with what I want to create in the long term?
- Will this have a big impact on my life and on the lives of others?
- Will I care about this at the end of this year?

(The answer for all three questions is likely to be either yes or no; it's rare to get a yes for one and a no for the others.)

These questions help train the mind to identify high-impact tasks. With enough practice, someone might not even have to use those questions—they'll just know whether something has the potential for high impact.

Use Focus Sessions to Make Progress on High-Impact Tasks

Because high-impact tasks are likely to be challenging, people tend to put them off and push them back



week after week. The best way to get them done is to use focus sessions (at least one per day) to face the discomfort of those tasks, remember why they matter, and overcome self-resistance to moving forward with them. Even better, schedule a focus session with at least one other person: get on a video call together, share what each person is going to focus on, and then go on mute while working to complete the task. One hour later, check in and report how the task went. This protocol works every single time!

Create Rituals for Taking Care of Smaller (But Important) Tasks

Focusing on the big things is amazingly helpful, but many people find that when they focus exclusively on the big things, the small things start to fall between the cracks: their email piles up, they start to get frustrated, and they start to let people down.

Rituals make it possible to balance the big things with the small things that need to be taken care of. Create a ritual for each type of small thing and put it on the calendar. Task areas that are well suited for rituals include:

- Email and messages
- Laundry and cleaning
- Meal preparation and grocery shopping
- Workouts, meditations, and walks
- Finances, taxes, administrative stuff

Assigning time to these small, necessary tasks makes it easier to get them out of the way and create space for high-impact tasks. For example, spending Fridays dealing with administrative issues, setting aside 30 minutes twice a day to reply to email and messages, devoting an hour each evening for a family dinner together, and starting each morning with meditation and exercise are all valuable rituals that can help someone get things done and don't take time away from focus sessions.

Ultimately, being productive comes down to reflecting on priorities, setting goals, and carving out dedicated time for tasks. Combined with focus sessions, which can provide a much-needed boost when a big task feels overwhelming (or when someone just needs some more motivation), these strategies form a set of protocols that can help anyone improve their high-impact productivity. ■

*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**.*

Keeping Up With the Evolving Job Market

BY MACKENZIE FROESE

Our entire society is constantly in flux, but over the past few years, the rate of change has definitely picked up the pace, particularly in the business world. An ever-shifting technological terrain, the persistent skills shortage, and of course, the ongoing pandemic—all of these have combined to create a work environment that's unlike anything previous generations encountered. It also means that many of the "traditional" ways of doing business no longer cut it. One department that's keenly feeling these changes is HR, as market pressures and worker expectations are forcing HR to rethink its practices, especially in three key areas.

HIRING

The days of employees staying in full-time jobs at the same organization for 40 years are long gone. Most companies can't guarantee that kind of employment security, and few employees want to stay in the same roles for long periods of time anyway. Consequently, filling open positions is one of the biggest responsibilities HR professionals have today.

In the current hiring climate, though, companies are struggling to meet their staffing needs: the skills gap makes it harder to find workers with the right qualifications, and a more competitive job market that lets job seekers be more selective about which opportunities to pursue makes it harder for companies to find

as many employees as they need. Increasingly, HR departments are partnering with staffing agencies and outsourcing some (or even all) of their hiring. These relationships make it possible for companies to cast wider nets into bigger ponds—and improve their chances of meeting their hiring needs.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION

It doesn't matter how successful a company is in hiring if it can't keep those new employees around. When workers don't stay, HR ends up stuck on the treadmill of "recruit, hire, onboard, train—then rinse and repeat." This costs the organization time and money and damages the morale of the employees who do stay on board.

The solution to improving employee retention is simple: give employees what they want. The task of finding out what that is falls directly under HR's purview. Wages, PTO, career advancement opportunities, health insurance plans, remote work, professional development—these are just a few of the benefits areas in which employee expectations have changed in recent years.

Of course, companies can't meet unrealistic expectations (after all, if companies gave people everything they might possibly want, we'd end up with two-hour workweeks, sky-high salaries, and unlimited PTO for everyone!), but they can at least use information about employee wants and needs as a starting point

for finding some middle ground.

WORKPLACE CULTURE

Whereas in the past, candidates were most often swayed to take the offer that came with the best salary (and maybe the most PTO), today's candidates are also considering other, less-tangible factors. Some of them want a work environment that promotes work-life balance, or team relationships built on mutual support and collaboration. Others prioritize joining organizations whose mission statements align with their own personal ethics. And some seek work that has purpose—a sense of making a contribution that extends beyond themselves and their companies. Because workplace culture is heavily weighed ("Is this the type of environment in which I want to spend 40+ hours a week?") when candidates are deciding whether to accept offers—and when employees are deciding whether to stay at their current jobs—HR should work with managers and employees to create an appealing work environment.

With the pace of change seeming to accelerate more each day, "business as usual" is no longer the dominant paradigm. Companies that want to stay competitive in the hiring market need to be ready to adapt. ■

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

Watermelon Salad with Feta & Mint

When summer arrives, so do rising temperatures. Warm weather can be pleasant, but when the heat gets to be a bit much (especially when combined with humidity!), sometimes the last thing you feel like doing is cooking. Enter this refreshing, chilled salad, in which the sweetness of peak-of-summer watermelon is tempered by tangy, zippy accents. Prep is easy, cleanup is fast, and the flavors can't be beat.

Yield: 4 servings
Time: 5 minutes of prep, plus 1 hour to chill

Nutrition Facts

Amount per Serving

Calories: 131 cal

Fat: 4.5 g

Dietary fiber: 2.5 g

Sugars: 15 g

Protein: 5 g

What you'll need:

- 6 cups of cut-up watermelon [*If you happen to have a melon baller, this is the moment to let that kitchen gadget shine! Otherwise, 1" cubes are fine.*]
- 1 cup of mint leaves, loosely packed
- ½ cup feta, crumbled
- 1 lime

Directions:

- Julienne the mint.
- Combine the watermelon, mint, and feta in a large serving bowl.
- Juice the lime directly into the bowl. [*For an added lime punch, add the lime zest to the bowl too!*]
- Mix everything together well, then chill for at least an hour before serving.



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**PUBLISHER &
EDITORIAL DIRECTORS**

Haley Marketing Group

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Mackenzie Froese

MANAGING EDITOR

Marsha Brofka-Berends

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Leo Babauta

Valerie M. Grubb

Aaron Kinne

Terri Klass

Alaina Rivas

O.C. Tanner

Terkel

DESIGN

Matt Coleman

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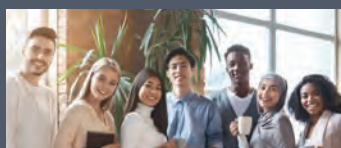
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11 Tips for Promoting Teamwork in a Hybrid Environment

BY VALERIE M. GRUBB

Even though the end of the pandemic is (finally!) within sight, that doesn't mean remote work is going away any time soon. Many employees are reluctant to return to long commutes, rigid work schedules, noisy workspaces, and other less-than-optimal features of onsite work. At the same time, many companies have realized that remote workers are often more productive, more engaged, and generally happier than their in-office counterparts. And of course there are the bottom-line savings associated with decreasing the size of a company's centralized physical workspace—or even eliminating it completely.

Although some companies have shifted to being completely remote, most seem to be aiming for a hybrid workplace: depending on company needs, employee preferences, and a whole host of other factors, some employees will be in the office, some will be remote, and some will move between both work environments. With much of the business world throwing in for some version of remote work for the long haul, managers need to figure out how to manage two groups of employees—in-office and remote—who have different needs, expectations, and responsibilities.

A key element of managing any workplace is making sure that workers are able to communicate with each other and work together effectively. This can be particularly tricky when employees aren't all in the same physical location. Fortunately, implementing certain best practices can help managers navigate the challenges of promoting teamwork in a hybrid environment.



THE BASICS OF TEAMWORK IN A HYBRID ENVIRONMENT

The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime. —BABE RUTH

Part of a manager's role is to keep a close eye on team dynamics, "the unconscious, psychological forces that influence the direction of a team's behavior and performance."¹ If team dynamics are a mess, the team can't work well together. And if a team can't work well together, it can't accomplish its goals and eventually ceases to actually be a team.

In a hybrid workplace, many factors can damage team dynamics, but one of the biggest obstacles leaders need to overcome is the phenomenon of "out of sight, out of mind." When a manager doesn't see someone every day (or at least pretty frequently), they might not think of that employee as often as they should—which means that the employee isn't getting all of the support, oversight, encouragement, and accountability they need to do their job. For this reason, most strategies to improve

teamwork in a hybrid environment focus on facilitating positive, high-quality, interpersonal interactions.

Pay extra attention to communication. Managers need to communicate regularly with all employees to understand what they're doing and what support they need. Remember that when people aren't face to face in the same room, certain communication cues (such as body language and tone of voice) are greatly diminished. Therefore, managers must be especially mindful of what they say—and how they say it—in video conferences, phone calls, and (especially) e-mail.

Make it possible for people to work anywhere—whether that's in the office or remotely. Give all employees the tools, training, and other resources they need to do their jobs. Technology can lend a major assist here: recent years have seen a boom in video conferencing software, virtual whiteboards, and other productivity and communication tools that make it easier than ever for people to do their jobs and connect with their colleagues and bosses.

Schedule interactions. Many people prefer remote work because it allows for flexible scheduling. (For example,

one person might want to plan their work hours around their kids' school drop offs and pick ups. Or maybe someone isn't a morning person, and their brain doesn't really get going until around midday, so they're more productive if they can start and end their days a few hours later than the usual 9-to-5 schedule.) As long as people get their work done, flexible hours are great—but watch out for any barriers they might create. In order to make sure that the remote workers aren't totally cut off from their in-office counterparts, require some overlap of hours, such as a one-hour window every day (or a two-hour window three days a week, or something else) when everyone is "on the clock" at the same time. By providing shared time for meetings, collaboration, and even just friendly social chats, this overlap facilitates synchronous, real-time interactions that help keep everyone connected to each other.

Leverage virtual tools. When there's a team meeting with on-site employees, send the Zoom link for it out to all team members so that remote employees, too, can join the meeting and stay in the loop. Remote employees don't get to do the in-person watercooler talk, lunch outings, and happy hours that help officemates connect with each other. So come up with virtual social events that give them similar socializing and networking opportunities.

Trust the team. Use feedback and coaching both to check in with all employees and to help them develop. Ensure that they have the training and resources they need. Hire good people and people who have potential, put them in roles for which they are prepared (or offer training to get them to that point), then get out of their way. No one likes micromanagers, and that management style is especially irritating to remote workers, who have a reasonable expectation of being able to do their jobs without someone looking over their shoulders.

WALK THE TALK: LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Leaders can't just tell their people, "I want you to do X and Y so everyone can get along better." They also need to be doing those things themselves. By modeling a few key behaviors, managers can inspire their teams to adopt those behaviors, too.

Be a better listener. Good managers don't multitask while someone's trying to share information with them. Instead, they give their employees their full attention and refrain from formulating responses in their heads while someone else is talking.

Be welcoming. Leaders can create communication-friendly environments by actively greeting others—including people they don't already know—at every encounter ("Good morning!"). They should keep their doors open to project friendliness and invite drop-by interactions (though closing a door for a bit is fine when they're up against a deadline and need to get work done).

Share information. In times of uncertainty, employees need more communication, not less. Managers should hold regular meetings with their staff. And if a manager or their boss (or both of them) is working remotely, the manager should send their boss weekly updates, which not only keep the higher-ups informed but also reminds them that the manager is getting stuff done.

Solicit feedback. Leaders should do regular check-ins with their teams to find out what's working (and what isn't). At each weekly meeting, for example, a manager could ask their project teams for a "one thumb up, one thumb down"—a quick assessment of one thing that's going well and one thing that needs improvement. Treating the "thumb down" points not as harsh criticism but as recommendations that can help everyone will make this kind of feedback easier both to give and to receive.

The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.

—PHIL JACKSON

Help colleagues. A manager should strive to be the mentor they wish they had. Even if they have a boss who isn't a great mentor, that manager can still be a great leader or mentor themselves to others in the department.

Be trustworthy. As much as possible, leaders should exhibit tact, diplomacy, empathy, and sincerity. They should deliver on their promises and admit their mistakes when they make them.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Great things in business are never done by one person; they're done by a team of people. —STEVE JOBS

The way an organization works as a whole determines its success. A company may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the organization won't succeed. Now that it's possible for team members to work separately from each other, at least part of the time (and sometimes exclusively), managers need to be proactive to keep everyone—regardless of their work location—engaged and connected. ■

*Valerie M. Grubb of Val Grubb & Associates Ltd. (www.valgrubbandassociates.com) is an innovative and visionary operations leader with an exceptional ability to zero in on the systems, processes, and personnel issues that can hamper a company's growth. Grubb regularly consults for mid-range companies wishing to expand and larger companies seeking efficiencies in back-office operations. She is the author of *Planes, Canes, and Automobiles: Connecting with Your Aging Parents through Travel* (Greenleaf, 2015) and *Clash of the Generations: Managing the New Workplace Reality* (Wiley, 2016). She can be reached at vgrubb@valgrubbandassociates.com.*

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STRATEGIES
FOR RETAINING
EMPLOYEES
& IMPROVING
COMPANY
CULTURE

BY ALAINA RIVAS



As organizations struggle to deal with the Great Resignation, the thirst for business growth has led some of them to engage in talent poaching and to offer massive incentives for employees to leave their current employers. Those employers must be doing something right if their competition sees value in their workers, but now they need to step up their game to keep those good employees around. Retaining top-performing staff is certainly a much better business strategy than trying to convince them to come back after they've left: not only does it keep top talent on board, but it also saves the time and money involved in backfilling roles. Fortunately, there are some tried-and-true strategies companies can use to help cultivate and retain a thriving workforce.

First, learn to recognize complacency. A company with long-term employees that is not experiencing as much growth as it would expect based on its resources should be asking its leadership team some tough questions: "How has our organization improved lately?" and "When was our last real success?" If the answers to these questions point too much to the past, the organization not only has a problem with hitting its goals but also has a workplace culture that has accepted these flatlining results. When team members are okay with the company's progress (or lack thereof), that's a problem. When team members have been loyal to the company in the past, their willingness to accept the company's progress (or lack thereof) puts employers in a tough spot when those employers care deeply about both honoring loyal employees' contributions and maximizing the organization's potential.

With the right approach, though, organizations don't have to sacrifice loyalty for performance. By implementing some (or all) of the following 13 creative strategies, companies can increase their ability to grow and retain great employees.

1 BRING IN NEW HIRES.

When a company has open roles or needs to expand its team, bringing in external hires is one way to "reset" the organization, especially when those outsiders bring new ideas that can help motivate current staff. The key to getting existing employees and new employees to gel together as a team is to honor each group's unique perspectives.

- Set aside ample time for everyone to get to know each other on a personal level.
- Acknowledge the successes of the existing team.
- Empower the new hires.
- Encourage existing employees to be open to the new hires' suggestions.

To make this transition most successful, though, companies also need a separate plan for improving employee engagement among any poorly performing long-term employees.

2 GIVE TEAM MEMBERS A CHANCE TO GROW.

Helping longstanding current employees shift into learning mode and restart their personal growth process is one of the best ways to get them excited to stay at a company—and back into a position where they can help the business grow.

- Provide personal development opportunities (such as attending a conference or networking with people in similar roles at other organizations).
- Offer skills assessments to generate excitement about developing their strengths further or picking up new skills.
- Create formal opportunities for them to try out new roles or responsibilities within the company.
- Identify tenured employees who have maintained a growth mindset while staying invested in themselves and the organization over their many years there, and inspire others to follow their example by publicly recognizing their contributions.

3 CREATE PERFORMANCE PLANS FOR THE BEST EMPLOYEES.

A company's competitors are interested in luring away only its top performers: the employees who want to be challenged and who often exceed expectations. Organizations can have better luck keeping those employees by finding ways to measure their performance. Performance reviews can shed light on where employees are going above and beyond (and where their weaknesses lie), but be sure to look past money and numbers, too, to see who is trying to excel. These measurements make it possible to set goals and expectations—metrics that are especially helpful in the onboarding process for new employees and give all employees clear direction and ensure that their work stays on track.

4 PROVIDE MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.

High performers want to expand their skill sets. Companies should provide viable methods for employees to expand their knowledge and gain experience.

- Appoint mentors to guide both new

and current employees, so they have someone to learn from and to go to with questions.

- Give employees opportunities to lead projects.
- Encourage employees to attend classes, webinars, and professional development conventions.

5 OFFER FLEXIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE.

Employees are human: they have kids, doctor's appointments, and countless other non-work-related commitments and interests. Flexible schedules and support for a healthy work-life balance can increase employee retention. Similarly, a policy that allows for some degree of remote work not only gives employees a break from the office but also saves them time and gas money. This simple "perk," which has become increasingly desired (and even expected) in the wake of the pandemic, can make an employer more attractive to employees—and incentivize them to stay.

6 PAY MORE COMPETITIVE SALARIES.

A company can gain an edge by keeping tabs on the competition via job websites such as Glassdoor or LinkedIn that make it possible to find out how other organizations compare when it comes to compensation, benefits, and workplace culture. By using this information to evaluate their own offerings, then adjusting them to meet or exceed top competitors' salaries and benefits, companies can increase their chances of retaining and attracting top talent.

7 START EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION INITIATIVES.

One of the easiest ways to keep employees happy is to let them know that their accomplishments are being noticed.

- Take note of employees' achievements or yearly anniversaries.
- Don't wait for annual performance reviews: offer recognition as soon as it's merited.
- Consider asking employees how they like to be rewarded. Some may be looking for just a pat on the back, and an occasional, simple form of recognition (such as "Great work!") could be all that's needed to keep them motivated.

8 OFFER PERKS AND INCENTIVE-BASED BONUSES.

Employees often respond favorably to performance-based incentives that give them opportunities to earn more money. (After all, who doesn't want a bigger paycheck?) Companies don't have to find this extra income in their budgets because the employees will bring it in themselves. Outside of healthcare insurance, organizations can also attract employees by offering them a wider variety of benefits, investments (such as stock options), and 401(k) retirement plans.

9 PROVIDE WORKPLACE AMENITIES.

Inexpensive niceties, such as free coffee, water, and snacks, can go a long way toward making employees happy and productive. Companies should also ensure that their employees have comfortable work environments; the ability to communicate with their co-workers easily; and any tools, equipment, software, and other resources that could make their jobs easier.

10 PROVIDE CAREER GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES.

Some employers see offering job title changes as a cost-efficient way to retain employees and boost morale. But that approach doesn't have long-term effectiveness unless those job title changes come with career growth paths and increasing responsibility. Knowing that there is more for them to accomplish and other roles to aspire to can increase employee engagement, which can help reduce turnover and improve job satisfaction.

11 USE NONCOMPETE AGREEMENTS SPARINGLY.

No matter how happy a company's workers are, some of them will eventually leave. When employees have regular access to sensitive information and their departures could lead to damaging consequences, a noncompete agreement can be a good way to protect the company. The effectiveness of these types of contracts varies from state to state, however, and some states are considering outlawing them altogether. When its employees don't have access to vital information, a noncompete agreement could open a company up to potential problems. Such agreements could also push away potential talent who might

see them as too limiting. And because most noncompete agreements have time constraints that eventually expire, companies that use them must also consider the costs involved with pursuing lawsuits against former employees.

12 WELCOME FEEDBACK.

Not all employers take advantage of exit interviews, even though these conversations can be the best opportunity to receive raw, honest evaluations from departing employees. Asking an employee why they are leaving may reveal why they found the competition more appealing—and how to prevent the departure of further employees. Survey existing employees about their jobs, too, and ensure that they will not suffer any negative consequences for offering their feedback. Make it clear that the organization is genuinely interested in their experiences, feelings, and judgments.

13 DON'T BURN BRIDGES.

Although it's easy to be bitter about an employee's exit, it's more productive to make their departure a positive experience. (No organization wants its disgruntled ex-employees to spread their negativity among current team members or potential candidates.) Focus on their contributions to the company and on the goals they've met, and encourage them to keep in touch after they're gone. There's always a chance that they could return to the company one day!

Final Thoughts

Because a high employee turnover rate can be detrimental to any business, companies must continually evaluate (and adjust as needed) their employee experience if they want to thrive in today's especially competitive job market. Organizations need to consider providing employees with more of the working conditions and perks they seek, such as learning opportunities, flexible schedules, and a stronger focus on overall employee satisfaction. By placing the emphasis on its most important resource—its people—a company can attract more top talent and improve its retention. ■

Alaina Rivas is the managing director of support services at Inspireity. Her focus on recruitment talent identification, recruitment advertising, marketing, and branding methods enables her to find the best talent using the latest recruitment strategies, talent attraction methods, and technologies.

6 TIPS FOR BECOMING AN INFLUENTIAL LEADER

BY TERRI KLASS



Imagine a scenario in which a team is struggling with a project because the information they need to complete it is not coming in as quickly as they expected.

As they debate whether (and how) to approach the client about moving up the deadline, some team members favor handing an incomplete document over to the client. The team leader, however, is certain that the best course of action is to wait just a few more days for all the data to be available so the team can present the client with a complete deliverable. They keep trying to convince the rest of the team to extend the deadline but don't get any support for this position. In the end, the deadline is not moved forward, and the client is extremely upset with what the team presents. If only the

leader had been able to influence the rest of the team to make a different decision.

The topic of influence often comes up in leadership programs and coaching. Although leaders may be strong technicians and extremely capable of carrying out their job responsibilities, they can also feel that they are not as influential as they would like. The inability to persuade others to support their ideas and suggestions can be frustrating and can throw off any leader's confidence level. By keeping six key strategies in mind, however, leaders can increase their influence.

Focus on Relationship Building

Every influential leader understands that being able to convince team members or bosses to embrace their ideas begins with cultivating meaningful and trusting relationships. A leader who doesn't show care and

concern for their team cannot expect to persuade that team to sign on to their strategies. Additionally, effective leaders also network widely and cultivate relationships with people from different teams and areas.

Develop Credibility

Influential leaders demonstrate their credibility by being dependable and following through with what they say they will do. Credible leaders listen to their team members to understand what they are really saying, and they never use “bait and switch” tactics to achieve their own goals. They are also trustworthy, so others can count on them to always be honest and tell the truth—even when it’s hard to hear.

Craft a Clear and Compelling Message

Influential leaders use descriptive language to express themselves with both clarity and energy. By presenting a compelling message that makes the case for why a certain choice is being suggested, they can persuade others to support their decision—and share their excitement.

Be Inclusive and Approachable

Influential leaders reach out to include input from many different demographic groups and thought leaders. When a discussion or a project includes many different (and sometimes opposing) perspectives and opinions, leading with openness and inclusivity can help prevent it from going awry. Influential leaders promote an open dialogue by welcoming feedback, even if it is critical. They also value their team members and treat them with respect, and they cultivate environments in which everyone feels safe to speak up.

Inspire Others

Influential leaders inspire others by presenting an exciting vision that team members and bosses want to support. These leaders understand what’s important to others, including their pain points and what information they need to choose their courses of action. An upbeat, positive disposition and a well-thought-out plan provide the foundation for an inspirational approach.

Value Appreciation and Recognition

Lastly, influential leaders are grateful for all of their colleagues’ hard work and input. They publicly demonstrate how much they appreciate others’ dedication, and they make sure people get credit for their contributions. (For example, they might offer to put something in writing in someone’s file for an accomplishment that was difficult to attain.) Leaders who become known as advocates for others will see their influence grow.

Being a leader doesn’t mean sitting in a position of authority and telling other people what to do. Rather, being a leader means earning a position of influence through persuasion, appreciation, and communication. Leaders who actively work to develop their skills in these areas will increase their influence—and their effectiveness. ■

Terri Klaas is a highly sought-after leadership skills facilitator, trainer, coach, and speaker who helps organizations develop influential leaders and retain their experienced talent. She can be reached at www.terriklaclassconsulting.com.



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HIRING TRENDS

RECRUITERS, HIRING MANAGERS, AND LEADERS FROM A VARIETY OF ORGANIZATIONS RECENTLY OFFERED THEIR INSIGHTS ON THE (SOMETIMES SURPRISING) HIRING TRENDS THAT COMPANIES HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2022.

Prioritizing Cultural Fit and Alignment

Experience and qualifications used to play an oversized role in hiring decisions, but the Great Resignation upended traditional expectations. Qualifications are important, but people don't want to work for just any company anymore. They want to work for those whose work cultures align with their mindsets and values—and they'll quit if those companies aren't the right fit. Hiring managers have to focus more on prioritizing cultural fit and alignment to stem the tide of increased turnover. *(Jon Schneider, Recruiterie)*

Talent Acquisition Teams Thinking More Like Sales and Marketing

Because the competition for talent is so steep, recruitment teams are needing to become more like sales and marketing teams for their companies. This means recruiters' priorities have shifted from sourcing and interviewing to also encompass branding and strategy. They need to spend more time and energy on creating memorable touch points throughout the full candidate experience; to keep up with these new demands, they are automating more of the repetitive tasks. As more recruiters become empowered to be brand advocates, they are also leading initiatives to research new tools and develop fresh, creative ways to promote their companies' values, missions, and cultures. *(Andres Blank, Fetcher)*

Niche Specialization of Recruiters

As the average number of applications per role has skyrocketed, many businesses and external agencies embrace the need for further specialization. Whereas in the past generalist recruiters sourcing candidates for a range of office jobs

were the norm, now recruiters specialize not only in specific job functions but even in their industry-related versions. For example, instead of hiring analysts, accountants, and administrative staff, some recruiters might handle only business intelligence specialists in e-commerce or database developers in financial technology. *(Michael Sena, SENACEA)*

Continued Growth in Outsourcing

If the pandemic proved anything, it's that companies with nimble workforces have an advantage over those that are stuck in old modes of handling staffing issues. In hiring, onboarding, and scheduling, outsourcing makes life easier. And so far 2022 is seeing recognition of the benefits of outsourcing in terms of operations, administration, and cost savings. This trend will continue through the year. *(Stephanie Tanhueco, C9 Staff)*

Video Resumes

Since Generation Z used TikTok to start the video resume trend, it has become a common way to apply to creative fields and positions, especially those in video

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BY TERKEL

editing and graphic design. Video resumes will most likely become popular among corporate positions as well, because it is a great way for recruiters to get a good look at who they are interviewing and potentially hiring.

(Olivia Young, Conscious Items)

Increasing Use of AI

I'm consistently surprised by the capabilities of AI in hiring, and I think the HR industry is catching on. As we're all still dealing with hiring problems that won't seem to go away from last year (e.g., labor shortages, Great Resignation, burned-out recruiters), we're seeing more and more HR leaders turn to AI assistants for . . . assistance. AI assistants can screen candidates, field questions, and schedule (and reschedule) interviews, thus allowing recruiters and hiring managers to shed the repetitive administrative work and focus on the highest priority: people. So although I'm surprised to see the problems of 2021 being so persistent, I love to see how more and more talent leaders are finding out how AI can assist their teams in hiring better and faster.

(Josh Zywejn, Paradox)



Boomerang Recruitment

With the Great Resignation (also called "the Great Reshuffle"), I'm seeing an increased focus on hiring both internal candidates in order to retain top talent as well as former employees—"boomerangs"—in order to harness previously vetted talent. Our research finds that 72 percent of employees would consider rejoining a former employer given the right opportunity, and half said they have regretted leaving a former employer. Indeed, the grass isn't always greener on the other side of the fence, and now is the time to tap into this often forgotten resource. Boomerangs already know what they are signing up for in terms of culture and often outperform external hires.

(Brett Wells, Perceptyx)

Focus on Innovation and Technology

Medical schools and healthcare facilities are becoming more and more

technologically advanced. To minimize recovery time, decrease human errors, and reduce cost, more health professionals are learning to use innovation and technology to their advantage. When used for documentation, minimally invasive procedures, and more, technology is important for the future of healthcare. It's also great when newly hired healthcare professionals come on board already having significant knowledge of and experience with newer innovative tools and devices.

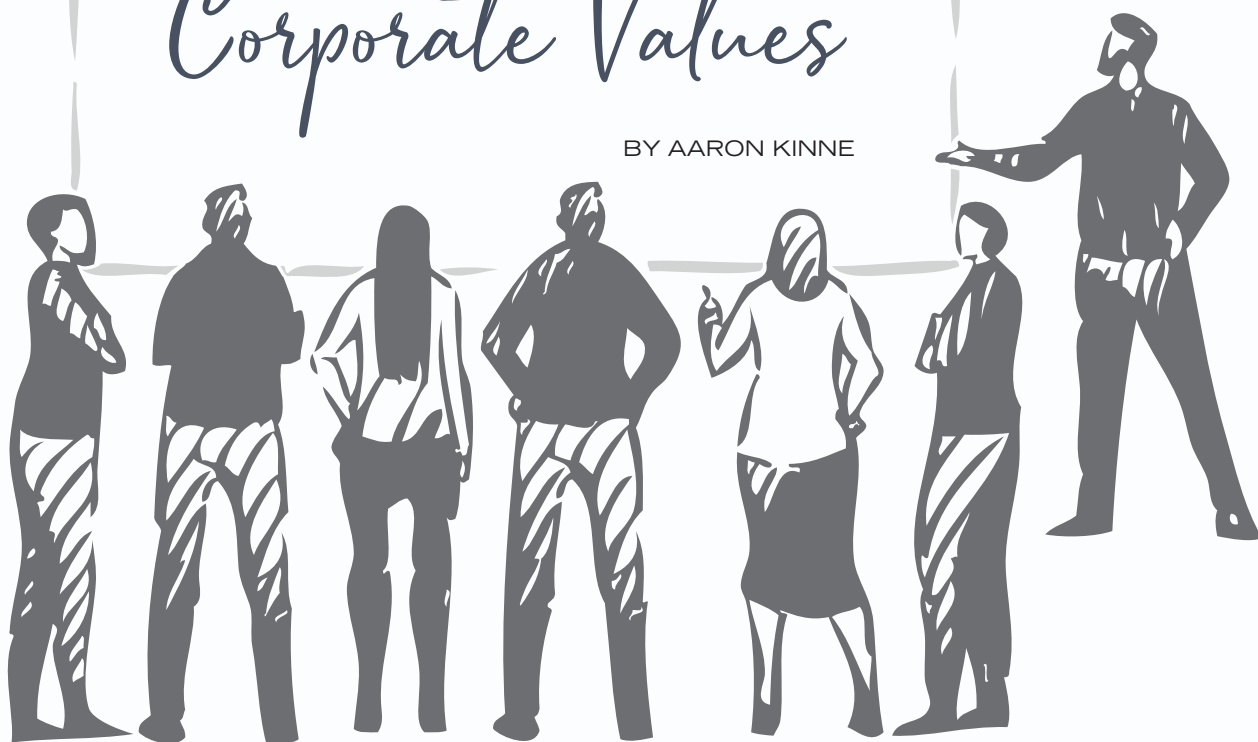
(Paul Breen, Strelcheck Healthcare Search)

Renewed Focus on Team Engagement and Collaboration

More employees are working from home than ever before, and hybrid work environments are also becoming increasingly common. Business as usual has had to make way for the new normal, and companies realize they must adapt quickly to changed circumstances. This is why, in 2022, there is a renewed focus on the ability of team members to collaborate with each other, wherever they are. Team engagement and collaboration lead to higher productivity levels across a company. *(Ed Stevens, Preciate)* ■

Back to Basics: Corporate Values

BY AARON KINNE



Core values define a company's beliefs and shape how it wants its employees to interact with people both within and outside the organization. They serve as its "highest priorities, deeply held beliefs, and core, fundamental driving forces."¹ In order to promote its core values, though, an organization must first define them.

The most impactful way to discover an organization's core values is to examine how employees see themselves and their company. To be most successful, the process of determining core values must be a company-wide endeavor that solicits input from employees across all parts of the organization. Anaplan, for example, uses a five-step series of facilitated workshops to collect "both input and buy-in from employees across all departments, locations, and levels."² This "bottom-up approach" starts by broadly asking employees, "What is important at our company and what is unique about working here?" Through discussion and evaluation, this broad list of responses is then narrowed down to a set of well-defined core values.

Any method a company uses to determine its corporate

values should incorporate three key elements:

- **A compelling story about the long-term future.** Often called a "vision statement," this lays out where the company wants to go and what it wants to be.
- **A plan for creating that future.** This thumbnail sketch of why the company exists and what it does is often referred to as a "mission statement."
- **A set of actions and behaviors that will guide the company to that future.** These are often called "organizational values," "company values," or "core values." They include the fundamental beliefs held by the organization's most engaged employees and declare how it will treat customers, suppliers, community members, and employees.

Core values should function as an "at-a-glance guide" to the company's culture, representing the best and strongest elements of that culture.

To determine whether the values it's formulated will be meaningful and effective in guiding its culture, a company

should ask these questions:

- How much do our values represent our current corporate culture?
- Are they aspirational? (That is, do they reflect what we want our company to be?)
- Are they unique to our organization?

Strong values are memorable, but not overly clever. Perhaps most important, they should be specific.

Organizations should avoid broad values (such as “integrity” or “innovation”) that tend to be too vague to have any real meaning for employees. When it’s necessary to use such values, companies should be sure to explain them thoroughly. For example, Netflix states that one of its “valued behaviors” is “curiosity,” and presents a detailed explanation of what that means:

- You learn rapidly and eagerly.
- You seek alternate perspectives to improve your ideas.
- You see patterns and connections that other people miss.
- You seek to understand members’ changing tastes and desires.³

Finally, it should be clear to everyone in the organization how to put company values into action. If the values are too abstract, employees will struggle to “connect the dots” to translate them to real-life behaviors.

Because strong, meaningful company values are deeply rooted in the organization’s culture, they should not be changed on a



whim but, rather, should endure and stand the test of time. When a company stays the course with its values, even during difficult times, they become a reference point within the organization.

PUTTING CORE VALUES IN ACTION

Once a company has defined its core values, how does it bring them to life? How does it infuse them into the lifeblood of the organization’s culture? How does it ensure that they guide and inform everyone throughout the company?

Taking as a starting point the fact that “an organization’s core values only have power when—and to the extent that—the humans in and around the organization feel a connection to them,”⁴ companies should be sure that their core values include three key characteristics that foster connections:

- Values must be operationalized. Organizations must design and create systems that ensure that values are viewed as integral to everyday business processes and decision making.
- Values must be lived—starting at the top. Because of leaders’ visibility and position of authority, it’s vital that they “live an organization’s core values, even in (or especially in) the smallest of actions, or the values have no teeth.”⁵
- Values must be communicated. One great way to do this is through stories told by employees who embody the company’s core values.

Of course, one of the most effective ways to get company values off the wall and to make them part of the organization’s DNA is to implement a values-based employee recognition program. A vibrant, comprehensive program plays an integral role in aligning the entire organization to its shared purpose and vision. Recognition reinforces company values and puts the power of gratitude to work, aligning everyone in the organization to its core values. Because a values-based employee recognition program is designed with rewards that map to each of the company’s values, it integrates those ideals into employees’ everyday thoughts and actions.



LINKING EMPLOYEES TO COMPANY VALUES

In the end, corporate values are the foundational cornerstone of a company’s brand. They reflect what the organization is and what it believes in. In this way, they become a portrait of the organization’s community and showcase the employee connections that make the company what it is. ■

Aaron Kinne is a senior writer at Workhuman.

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HOW TO BUILD

A MORE INCLUSIVE

Workplace Culture

BY O.C. TANNER



Workplace culture took some major hits over the past two years. New challenges forced organizations and human resources leaders worldwide to play defense in ways they could not have predicted a few years earlier. The global pandemic, the rise of remote work and its accompanying disconnection, the Great Resignation, and a global cry for more diversity and inclusion all contributed to the reshaping of company cultures.

Amid these ongoing disruptions, how can organizations create more inclusive workplace cultures that help employees reconnect with their organizations and with one another? Employees say they want to work for organizations that respect their diversity. Many companies claim to be

making progress in this area, but workers remain largely skeptical of inclusion initiatives: “Only 44 percent of employees say their organization’s D&I efforts are sincere, while even fewer (34 percent) feel they are effective or believe inclusion is part of their culture.”¹

The terms diversity and inclusion are often used interchangeably, but they actually mean very different things. In the workplace, diversity refers to representation: the number of different kinds of employees that make up an organization, based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and many other factors. Inclusion, on the other hand, is a measure of value: “how well the contributions, presence, and perspectives of different groups of people are

valued and integrated into an environment.”²

When an organization improves its inclusion, not only do its employees feel more welcome and valued, but the company as a whole also benefits. Studies have demonstrated that organizations with diverse and inclusive cultures are more likely to be innovative, for example, and to deliver dramatically better results.³ Clearly, it’s in a company’s best interest to make its workplace culture more inclusive. Five key strategies can help an organization reach that goal.

ENCOURAGE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Sometimes the way employees feel is a reflection of how they are treated or spoken about. Whether intentionally

or unintentionally, people may convey an unconscious bias through everyday work conversations. That’s why one important aspect of building an inclusive workplace is to encourage everyone to learn to speak inclusively.

For example, without thinking about gender, someone may refer to an employee as a salesman or businessman rather than use a more inclusive term, such as salesperson or business executive. Similarly, someone might use terms such as homosexual or transsexual rather than better options such as gay, transgender, or LGBTQ+. And instead of broadly describing a group as “a minority,” a more appropriate option would be to use descriptions that relate to specific ethnic or cultural groups (e.g., African American,

Native American, Hispanic). Small—but deliberate—improvements in how people speak to each other can go a long way toward building inclusion at work and creating an atmosphere in which everyone feels welcome.

FOCUS ON EVERYDAY MICRO-EXPERIENCES

Leaders should make deliberate efforts to implement inclusive workplace practices and educational opportunities throughout the work environment. This may take the form of more improved hiring practices, employee bias training, special town hall events, community collaboration, and policies for equal pay. Plans should include measurable goals, and management should provide the resources, tools, and training needed to ensure their successful implementation.

For example, as part of its inclusivity goals, Dow continues to modernize total rewards benefits (including pay equity), and its inclusive hiring standards have shown marked improvement in global representation of women and people of color. Similarly, Citi is “actively seeking out diverse perspectives at all levels of our organization” and champions a set of inclusion goals that spans “pay equity, Citi Affinity groups, LGBTQ+ equality and rights, disability inclusion, along with targeted recruiting and promotion paths.”⁴

However, inclusive behaviors in the workplace don’t always take place in formal programs. The employee experience comprises frequent micro-experiences, such as the conversations

someone has with teammates, the environments in which they work, the messages they get from their company, and the feedback and recognition they receive from their peers and leaders. These everyday experiences cumulatively help employees feel that they belong and are important to the organization and to the workplace culture. Therefore, leaders need to be sure that micro-experiences aren’t overlooked places in which to build inclusion.

TEACH LEADERS HOW TO MODEL INCLUSION

It’s hard for organizations to say they promote diversity and inclusion when their management teams lack diversity or are insensitive to diverse populations. To create a safe, inclusive environment, leaders should promote inclusivity by practicing what they preach. When leaders understand the importance of modeling inclusion, teams stand a much better chance of finding success as well.

Organizations should encourage leaders to become aware of others’ diverse experiences, skills, perspectives, and personalities. Then they can create an environment in which each employee feels that they belong and can contribute their uniqueness to the company culture and to efforts to achieve common goals and objectives. For example, Kaiser Permanente’s success in incorporating diversity and inclusion into its HR practices is the result of “having leadership teams model inclusive behavior, promoting a ‘speak up’ culture, and encouraging employees to ‘lead from where they stand,’



thereby giving everyone a voice and a platform to enact change.”⁵

BUILD A CULTURE OF INCLUSION THROUGH RECOGNITION

Employee appreciation serves as a powerful tool to build inclusion for all employees in an organization. However, significant numbers of employees feel that inclusion is not embedded in their company cultures.⁶ Clearly there is much room for improvement in how organizations build a culture of recognition. As a starting point, leaders can review which groups are being recognized and which groups are not, and then make adjustments based on that data.

CREATE FEELINGS OF BELONGING SO EMPLOYEES WANT TO STAY

Creating an inclusive workplace culture goes hand in hand with cultivating a sense of belonging at work: “When companies emphasize a culture of belonging, they . . . build a bridge to greater empathy and inclusion for the groups that are the most marginalized in the workplace today.”⁷ Helping people feel like they belong also helps organizations keep

employees longer, because it fosters valuable connections and strong relationships (which remote and hybrid workers find especially challenging to build and maintain).

THE BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE CULTURE IN THE WORKPLACE

Creating diverse teams and achieving meaningful inclusion requires thoughtful planning and investments in leadership, education, and workplace culture. But these efforts will pay off in spades. Leaders who promote inclusivity initiatives can help employees look forward to going to work and increase their productivity. By fostering a sense of loyalty that arises from feeling seen and represented, inclusivity can also make employees more likely to stay with their organizations longer. When inclusion is treated as an intentional priority, it will become part of the culture and something that flows throughout—and is embraced by—the entire organization. ■

O.C. Tanner helps organizations inspire and appreciate great work. Thousands of clients globally use its cloud-based technology, tools, and awards to provide meaningful recognition for their employees. Learn more at www.octanner.com.

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A Simple, High-Impact Productivity Protocol



MOST PEOPLE'S DAYS ARE FILLED WITH BUSY WORK AND DISTRACTIONS. THAT'S NOT NECESSARILY A BAD THING: ENGAGING IN BUSY WORK AND DISTRACTIONS CAN BE A LOVELY WAY TO PASS THE TIME. BUT SOMETIMES PEOPLE WANT TO USE THEIR TIME MORE POWERFULLY AND EFFECTIVELY.



To work with increased impact, start by imagining a protocol that would require doing less each day but have a bigger result. But be sure to include time for the smaller things, too, so that everything doesn't become a mess.

1. Choose high-impact tasks.
2. Use focus sessions to make progress on them.
3. Create rituals for taking care of smaller (but important) tasks.

This approach creates more space in the day and helps people feel less overwhelmed and more that they are making a meaningful impact with the time they do spend working.

Choose High-Impact Tasks

At the start of each week, intentionally choose the high-impact tasks to be accomplished that week. Similarly, at the start of each day, choose one to three high-impact tasks to be accomplished that day. Answering a few key questions can help decide if something is a high-impact task:

- Does this align with what I want to create in the long term?
- Will this have a big impact on my life and on the lives of others?
- Will I care about this at the end of this year?

(The answer for all three questions is likely to be either yes or no; it's rare to get a yes for one and a no for the others.)

These questions help train the mind to identify high-impact tasks. With enough practice, someone might not even have to use those questions—they'll just know whether something has the potential for high impact.

Use Focus Sessions to Make Progress on High-Impact Tasks

Because high-impact tasks are likely to be challenging, people tend to put them off and push them back week after week.

The best way to get them done is to use focus sessions (at least one per day) to face the discomfort of those tasks, remember why they matter, and overcome self-resistance to moving forward with them. Even better, schedule a focus session with at least one other person: get on a video call together, share what each person is going to focus on, and then go on mute while working to complete the task. One hour later, check in and report how the task went. This protocol works every single time!



Create Rituals for Taking Care of Smaller (But Important) Tasks

Focusing on the big things is amazingly helpful, but many people find that when they focus exclusively on the big things, the small things start to fall between the cracks: their email piles up, they start to get frustrated, and they start to let people down.

Rituals make it possible to balance the big things with the small things that need to be taken care of. Create a ritual for each type of small thing and put it on the calendar. Task areas that are well suited for rituals include:

- Email and messages
- Laundry and cleaning
- Meal preparation and grocery shopping
- Workouts, meditations, and walks
- Finances, taxes, administrative stuff

Assigning time to these small, necessary tasks makes it easier to get them out of the way and create space for high-impact tasks. For example, spending Fridays dealing with administrative issues, setting aside 30 minutes twice a day to reply to email and messages, devoting an hour each evening for a family dinner together, and starting each morning with meditation and exercise are all valuable rituals that can help someone get things done and don't take time away from focus sessions.

Ultimately, being productive comes down to reflecting on priorities, setting goals, and carving out dedicated time for tasks. Combined with focus sessions, which can provide a much-needed boost when a big task feels overwhelming (or when someone just needs some more motivation), these strategies form a set of protocols that can help anyone improve their high-impact productivity. ■

*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.*

Keeping Up With the Evolving Job Market

BY MACKENZIE FROESE

Our entire society is constantly in flux, but over the past few years, the rate of change has definitely picked up the pace, particularly in the business world. An ever-shifting technological terrain, the persistent skills shortage, and of course, the ongoing pandemic—all of these have combined to create a work environment that's unlike anything previous generations encountered. It also means that many of the "traditional" ways of doing business no longer cut it. One department that's keenly feeling these changes is HR, as market pressures and worker expectations are forcing HR to rethink its practices, especially in three key areas.

HIRING

The days of employees staying in full-time jobs at the same organization for 40 years are long gone. Most companies can't guarantee that kind of employment security, and few employees want to stay in the same roles for long periods of time anyway. Consequently, filling open positions is one of the biggest responsibilities HR professionals have today.

In the current hiring climate, though, companies are struggling to meet their staffing needs: the skills gap makes it harder to find workers with the right qualifications, and a more competitive job market that lets job seekers be more selective about which opportunities to pursue makes it harder for companies to find

as many employees as they need. Increasingly, HR departments are partnering with staffing agencies and outsourcing some (or even all) of their hiring. These relationships make it possible for companies to cast wider nets into bigger ponds—and improve their chances of meeting their hiring needs.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION

It doesn't matter how successful a company is in hiring if it can't keep those new employees around. When workers don't stay, HR ends up stuck on the treadmill of "recruit, hire, onboard, train—then rinse and repeat." This costs the organization time and money and damages the morale of the employees who do stay on board.

The solution to improving employee retention is simple: give employees what they want. The task of finding out what that is falls directly under HR's purview. Wages, PTO, career advancement opportunities, health insurance plans, remote work, professional development—these are just a few of the benefits areas in which employee expectations have changed in recent years.

Of course, companies can't meet unrealistic expectations (after all, if companies gave people everything they might possibly want, we'd end up with two-hour workweeks, sky-high salaries, and unlimited PTO for everyone!), but they can at least use information about employee wants and needs as a starting point

for finding some middle ground.

WORKPLACE CULTURE

Whereas in the past, candidates were most often swayed to take the offer that came with the best salary (and maybe the most PTO), today's candidates are also considering other, less-tangible factors. Some of them want a work environment that promotes work-life balance, or team relationships built on mutual support and collaboration. Others prioritize joining organizations whose mission statements align with their own personal ethics. And some seek work that has purpose—a sense of making a contribution that extends beyond themselves and their companies. Because workplace culture is heavily weighed ("Is this the type of environment in which I want to spend 40+ hours a week?") when candidates are deciding whether to accept offers—and when employees are deciding whether to stay at their current jobs—HR should work with managers and employees to create an appealing work environment.

With the pace of change seeming to accelerate more each day, "business as usual" is no longer the dominant paradigm. Companies that want to stay competitive in the hiring market need to be ready to adapt. ■

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

Watermelon Salad with Feta & Mint

When summer arrives, so do rising temperatures. Warm weather can be pleasant, but when the heat gets to be a bit much (especially when combined with humidity!), sometimes the last thing you feel like doing is cooking. Enter this refreshing, chilled salad, in which the sweetness of peak-of-summer watermelon is tempered by tangy, zippy accents. Prep is easy, cleanup is fast, and the flavors can't be beat.

Yield: 4 servings
Time: 5 minutes of prep, plus 1 hour to chill

Nutrition Facts

Amount per Serving

Calories: 131 cal

Fat: 4.5 g

Dietary fiber: 2.5 g

Sugars: 15 g

Protein: 5 g

What you'll need:

- 6 cups of cut-up watermelon [*If you happen to have a melon baller, this is the moment to let that kitchen gadget shine! Otherwise, 1" cubes are fine.*]
- 1 cup of mint leaves, loosely packed
- ½ cup feta, crumbled
- 1 lime

Directions:

- Julienne the mint.
- Combine the watermelon, mint, and feta in a large serving bowl.
- Juice the lime directly into the bowl. [*For an added lime punch, add the lime zest to the bowl too!*]
- Mix everything together well, then chill for at least an hour before serving.

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