THE RESOURCE

INSIGHTS

magazine

VOL. XIII, ISSUE VI

HYBRID WORK:

BALANCING SYNCHRONOUS AND ASYNCHRONOUS TOOLS

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE . . .

- AI in HR: Using Technology to Focus on People
- Building an ERG Strategy To Support Smaller Demographics and Groups

THE RESOURCE

can show you the way

We are all searching for it — the next opportunity to learn, grow, thrive. Whether you are a company looking for your next gamechangers, eager-to-learn up-and-comers, and team players. Or you are an individual looking for the next step forward in income, career or life. We are here with a different approach that combines unique insight into the available workforce and an in-depth understanding of organizations, culture, and employee needs.

At The Resource, we are a consultative partner that develops hiring solutions quickly and creates stronger employer-employee connections.

Our Services: flexible, powerful, effective

Our services are designed to be flexible, leveraging expertise across different industries and different organizational roles. What sets us apart is how we apply these services in unique ways based on your specific workforce challenges.

Custom Direct Hiring: This isn't hiring as usual. This is an adaptive, flexible solution that is structured to help create and build a workforce tailor-made just for your business. We work to match you with candidates that fit your role and your company to get them on board fast.

Contract Recruiting: You get a team of experienced recruiting professionals who work as an extension of your HR and operations. This approach consolidates and enhances your recruiting efforts, empowering you to tackle the toughest hiring challenges.

Consulting: We offer a full, customized array of consulting services to help your business manage, develop and retain your people — from employee training to leadership development and coaching to accounting and other specialized services.

Staffing: We do the searching, recruiting and pre-screening to successfully fill a full spectrum of light industrial, clerical and other roles, with a focus on reducing risk and improving ROI.

INSIGHTS Magazine

VOL. XIII, ISSUE VI

PUBLISHER & EDITORIAL DIRECTORS

Haley Marketing Group

EDITOR IN CHIEF

James Moul

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Juan Betancourt

Ted Kitterman

Jessica Miller-Merrell

James Moul

Clark Schaefer

Lyssa Test

Wayne Turmel

Alan Whitaker

DESIGN

Matt Coleman

Building an ERG Strategy To Support Smaller Demographics and Groups

BY TED KITTERMAN

THE FIRST STEP IN BUILDING BELONGING AND INCLUSION IS INVESTIGATING THE CONTOURS OF YOUR WORKFORCE.

What demographic groups are underrepresented or overrepresented? What are the gaps between the experiences of different groups?

Those are hard questions to answer when you only have a handful of members of a particular demographic group in your organization. The number of responses from a group in your employee survey might not produce a statistically significant sample. Popular strategies like creating an employee resource group (ERG) might not make as much sense, either—but that doesn't mean these groups shouldn't get support from the organization.

When employees look at the roster of ERG groups at a company and don't see one that fits their identity, they can feel overlooked, or worse.

"In some cases, they might feel that they can't be their full selves at work," says Matt Bush, senior strategic advisor at Great Place To Work®. "In a worst-case scenario, people might assume there is antagonism towards their identity in the workplace."

HOW TO SUPPORT INVISIBLE GROUPS

First, companies can ensure that employees feel comfortable sharing their identity with their employer.

"You may actually have more members of a group in your company, but not know because you have not created the conditions for them to be open about who they are," Bush says. A self-ID campaign is a crucial early step to increase visibility and build trust.

"What we always recommend is coming up with a listing strategy and inviting members of your target group to collaborate with you," Bush explains. Questions to ask include: “How would you like your organization to show up for you?” and “How would you like to be seen in the organization?”

Different groups will want different kinds of support. Employees might want to create an ERG, but they might also prefer something smaller, such as specific programming around a cultural holiday or awareness day.

Finally, if there is a specific group that your organization is looking to engage, you can lean on external resources and subject matter experts.

“Whether it’s a speaking engagement or someone that you can bring into consult, inviting in external leaders and experts can fill in the void,” Bush says. You can build a relationship with a resource and vet them over time, starting with a small engagement and building into a more meaningful partnership.

NESTED ERGS OFFER IMPORTANT SUBGROUPS

Great Place To Work’s report “Untapped Energy: The Potential of ERGs” offers insights on adapting these groups to offer inclusion and belonging to smaller subgroups within an underrepresented demographic.

These subgroups can be crucial for giving smaller subgroups a place to experience the full benefits of ERG participation. Bush gives the example of a women’s ERG, which can have a vast amount of diversity within the group.

“A member might say: ‘Yes, I’m in a women’s ERG, but I'm still very much a minority here because I’m a Black woman,’” he says. To counter this experience of marginalization, some ERGs will create subgroups with dedicated separate meetings, programming, and goals.

Another strategy for ERG leaders is to open membership to all employees.

“This is something that a lot of companies disagree on,” Bush says. “Should ERGs be exclusively for people who identify as part of a group, or should they be also inviting to people who are allies or people who do not identify as a member of that group?”

Whatever strategy you adopt, it’s important to clearly communicate your approach. Some companies add a plus at the end of ERG names to expand expectations on who can participate and how groups will operate.

MAKE YOUR ERGS WORK FOR ALL

To ensure that your ERG strategy creates space for every employee, Bush offers four tips:

1. Start with clear community agreements that provide space for all participants.
“We always recommend that when ERGs are started, founding members in the organization work together to come up with a charter that makes sense for the goals of the people, the community, and the business,” Bush says.

These are often positioned as agreements, not rules, and are intended to guide behaviors and practices that will be productive toward the goals to the group. One example: Always have space and open floor time for subgroups in the ERG at group meetings.

2. Don’t prioritize demographic groups based on their prevalence in the organization.
It’s a mistake to allocate your resources and levels of engagement solely based on who you think is represented in your organization, Bush says. Even if you are pretty sure you don’t have a single employee that identifies with a particular group, there is still value in raising the visibility of that group and its experiences.

“Whether it’s acknowledgement, education, lunch and learns, guest speakers — the value of these activities can still benefit the organization,” Bush says. “One day you might have someone who identifies with that group in your organization. You might have customers or suppliers who identify with that group. Building more understanding and empathy between groups is always beneficial.”

3. Find ways to get involved outside your organization.
When looking to engage with underrepresented groups, consider opportunities outside the workplace. Find relevant charities where you can donate or sponsor a volunteer event, Bush recommends.

“Those are always beneficial, not only for the people who identify as those groups, but also just for your entire workforce to build bridges for themselves and develop the skills to build connections across wider, more diverse groups,” Bush says.

4. Start where you already have engagement and momentum.
If you are just getting started with your ERG strategy, start by offering an ERG to employees who are actively requesting more support and resources. When one ERG launches and starts having events and producing results, other groups may want to follow suit.

“ERGs should be employee-led,” Bush says. “If some employees just have more energy or are just more gung-ho about doing it, let them take the lead.” ■

Ted Kitterman is a content manager at Great Place To Work®, the global authority on workplace culture. Powered by its proprietary platform and methodology, Great Place To Work® offers unparalleled data and benchmarking, the most respected workplace certification and lists, and industry-leading research and insights, all supported by a wealth of resources and a thriving community. To learn more, follow Great Place To Work® on LinkedIn, X, and Instagram or visit greatplacetowork.com and subscribe to their culture newsletter.

How to Make a Performance Review Less Stressful – and More Meaningful

BY LYSSA TEST

Let's face it: performance reviews get a bad rep. For many employees, there's a sense of dread surrounding these annual or bi-annual evaluations. They take a significant amount of time, ratings can feel arbitrary or unfair, and feedback frequently lacks substance and can miss the mark. Not to mention, the review process can feel one-sided, leaving employees with little opportunity for dialogue or input.

This negativity can create anxiety, reduce motivation, and hurt engagement—making it crucial for organizations to rethink their approach.

Performance reviews shouldn't be a source of stress. Instead, they should be an opportunity for managers and employees to come together, reflect on the review period, discuss growth, and leave feeling inspired. Here are a few tips to help your organization foster a culture of continuous feedback and open communication, so you can transform performance reviews into valuable growth opportunities rather than dreaded obligations.

1. Redesign the Performance Review Process

It's time to toss out traditional performance reviews. Many companies rely on annual reviews as the primary way for managers to give feedback, but once-a-year feedback is often ineffective, outdated, and too late to drive meaningful change.

Instead, shift toward a culture of continuous performance improvement by incorporating more frequent, informal check-ins. Consider bi-annual reviews, quarterly development conversations, and bi-weekly or weekly one-on-ones. Together, these ongoing touchpoints give managers and employees more chances to share feedback, make adjustments, and receive real-time input on progress. That can foster both better development and performance.

An added bonus? Ongoing check-ins can alleviate some of the anxiety and pressure that build up around annual reviews.

2. Leverage Technology for a Smarter Performance Review

Annual reviews often fall victim to recency bias, or when you place greater importance on more recent events rather than considering performance across the entire evaluation period. For example, an employee might have had an incredible Q1, Q2, and Q3, but just an average Q4.

Recency bias can lead a manager to concentrate only on the employee's performance in the final months of the year, potentially resulting in a rating of three out of five. Had the manager considered the individual's contributions over the entire calendar year, they might have been more likely to assign a rating of four out of five, reflecting a more accurate assessment of the employee's overall performance.

To empower managers to deliver fairer reviews, businesses can lean on HR technology. HR management systems (HRMS) simplify and centralize people data management, offering performance management tools that can help with:

- **Goal tracking:** Managers and employees can set, track, and readjust goals throughout the year, making it easier to evaluate progress during reviews.
- **Continuous feedback:** Managers can easily review feedback collected throughout the year, allowing performance reviews to be based on ongoing dialogue rather than once-a-year evaluations.
- **Meaningful conversations:** Shared meeting notes, trackable action items, and curated conversation templates allow managers and employees to dive deeper into performance beyond just ratings.
- **360-degree feedback:** Employees can complete self-assessments and request feedback from peers, helping managers conduct more holistic and unbiased reviews.

Not only do these features help managers conduct more accurate and well-rounded performance reviews, but they also empower employees to take a more active role in their own development. By centralizing goal tracking, feedback, and conversations, an HRMS encourages continuous growth, clearer communication, and a culture of transparency. Employees gain insights into their progress and receive actionable feedback throughout the year, making reviews feel less daunting and more constructive.

3. Focus on Coaching, Not Criticism

Many employees worry about receiving negative feedback, but reviews shouldn't center on criticism. By shifting the focus to constructive feedback and coaching, managers can turn reviews into opportunities for growth, helping employees see them as a chance to develop rather than just a critique.

Here are a few tips to deliver effective constructive feedback that pushes your employees to grow their personal and professional skills:

- **Be specific:** Avoid making sweeping general statements. Rather, try to reference specific actions or behaviors you've witnessed first-hand to highlight improvement opportunities.
- **Be timely:** Provide feedback promptly while actions are still fresh, making it more relevant and impactful to your employees.
- **Offer suggestions:** Don't point out faults, highlight solutions! Share actionable advice to help guide your employee toward improvement. You can always offer a few suggestions and ask them to choose the approach they prefer to improve buy-in.
- **Follow up:** For best results, regularly revisit the feedback and your proposed solutions with the employee. This will help you track progress, reinforce growth, and drive lasting behavior change.

By fostering a coaching mindset, your business and its managers can create a supportive work environment where employees feel empowered to perform and grow.

4. Empower Employees to Own the Process

Encourage employees to take an active role in their ongoing performance journey by engaging in the following:

- **Using self-assessments:** Allow employees to evaluate their own performance before formal performance reviews. These assessments encourage reflection and allow employees to be their own advocate.
- **Requesting peer feedback:** Encourage employees to seek peer feedback from colleagues and cross-functional teams. This approach not only leads to more comprehensive performance appraisals but also results in actionable feedback that can enhance working relationships and foster better collaboration across the organization.
- **Owning one-on-one agendas:** Both managers and employees should be able to add to the meeting agenda, allowing employees to determine how to utilize this time effectively. This shared ownership ensures that these meetings are productive and aligned with the employee's developmental journey.
- **Requesting feedback on-demand:** Give employees the opportunity to request and share feedback any time of year—not just during formal reviews.
- **Creating individual development plans:** Managers should collaborate with employees to create personalized development plans that align with their career aspirations. This encourages employees to take ownership of their career growth trajectory.
- **Setting goals:** Allow employees to set their own performance goals that align with organizational objectives. This gives employees a sense of ownership and autonomy over their work, which can make them more committed and motivated to achieving these targets.

Together, these steps transform performance conversations into collaborative, year-round exchanges that keep employees invested in their growth. When employees have a voice in these processes, reviews become more meaningful, creating a shared, proactive approach to both development and success.

5. Use SMARTer Goal-Setting

Goal-setting and tracking are essential to effective performance management. They allow managers and employees to define and align on what success looks like, monitor progress, adjust targets as needed, and assess outcomes at the end of each performance review period.

Simplifying goal setting and linking it to measurable outcomes can actually make reviews clearer and more productive. Using an HRMS, employees can input their goals for the month, quarter, or year, update progress, and see how their individual goals align with organizational ones.

To help motivate employees and help managers evaluate success, goals need to be set thoughtfully and effectively. Using the SMART goal-setting framework—which requires goals to be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound—businesses can ensure employee goals are clear and actionable.

For example, compare the goal "Sign up more clients" with the SMART goal "Make at least 50 cold calls to new business accounts weekly in Q1." In the second example, it's far easier to track and evaluate the associate's success throughout the quarter, allowing managers to provide more precise feedback and objectively assess individual performance. ■

Lyssa Test is a contributing content writer with a passion for HR and the evolving dynamics of the workplace. Outside of writing, she enjoys mountain adventures with her dog in the scenic areas around Denver.

AI in HR: Using Technology to Focus on People

BY ALAN WHITAKER

In the early 2010s, venture capitalist Marc Andreessen wrote that "software is eating the world," highlighting the emergence of new technology. Today, it seems it's artificial intelligence (AI) that's eating the world.

Steve Jobs once called the personal computer "a bicycle for the mind." But generative AI can feel like an e-bike for the mind: powerful, with the ability to take you further for the same effort. Now anyone can have personal experiences with AI as a partner for generating text, images, and even video content.

Meanwhile, businesses are investing and discovering how to best use AI as experts predict 2024 will be a pivotal year for AI. Big tech suppliers of AI services and infrastructure are seeing massive financial gains on the heels of the latest developments.

While the generative AI wave might feel sudden, AI and machine learning is really a decades-long story with a diversity of techniques, quietly doing many jobs—like filtering spam from your inbox—for years. Deep learning theory emerged in the 1980s, but it wasn't until powerful GPUs were abundantly available that it really took off (thanks gamers!). There are still many applications of "traditional" machine learning techniques to complement generative AI and large language models (LLMs).

Like other major technology evolutions, AI will be a disruptive force in the workplace. HR teams are distinctly positioned to help navigate change, and they can play a critical role in helping individuals and organizations adapt and make sure AI is beneficial.

Putting AI to Work in HR

Though just one in four employers use AI to support HR right now[1], most of those adopted it within the last year. Seventy-six percent of HR leaders believe using AI solutions in the next 12 to 24 months will prevent them from lagging behind other companies[2], which means it's likely to gain even more traction.

So how exactly do HR professionals benefit from AI solutions? HR is tasked with juggling complex human needs with reams of documentation and data analysis—and doing it all as efficiently as possible. Fortunately, efficiency is AI's specialty.

There's a spectrum of AI tools and methods to consider:

- **Off-the-shelf GenAI** is the most accessible way to begin using AI through services like ChatGPT or AI-enabled browsers to help research and author HR content like job descriptions, policies, candidate communications, internal announcements, and more.
- **AI-powered HR tech** is emerging rapidly. A powerful HRIS contains an abundance of information about an organization and its people. As HR tech vendors ramp up AI, it'll become easier to retrieve needed information and get helpful insights.
- **Job-specific AI tools** are built with engineers, marketers, support reps, or other groups of employees in mind. These tools can be thought partners in specific tasks like coding, copywriting, or customer service.
- **Custom AI solutions** can be built by in-house teams of AI/ML engineers and data scientists, weaving together commercial services and open-source tools with proprietary code and machine learning models to meet specific needs.

Three Ways AI Tools Are Shaping the Future of HR

AI tools complement the modern workforce, from the simplest recruiting tasks to complex payroll issues. Here are examples of how HR can benefit from AI today:

HR Data and Analytics

A big part of an HR professional's job is retaining employees and facilitating a positive company culture.

AI tools can help HR pros identify themes and trends in employee feedback. Instead of combing through hundreds of individual responses, leaders get summaries of what employees like, dislike, and suggest. Using this data helps leadership prioritize improvements to the employee experience that drive retention.

Hiring and Recruiting

AI-assisted recruiting and job advertising solutions accelerate the hiring process. In fact, your resume processing program has likely used machine learning for years to help sift and tag applicants.

Now, you can use generative AI to draft job descriptions, and job boards are using AI to help recruiters find new talent. Some companies have ushered their remote hiring processes into the future with virtual reality (VR)—and your next interview could even be with a bot.

Care must be taken to evaluate tools and ensure fairness and compliance with laws such as New York City's latest AI law, Local Law 144, which aims to combat potential bias in employment decisions.

Learning and Development

One opportunity for development is helping employees make safe use of AI. HR departments can be instrumental in developing AI guidelines. A typical workplace AI policy helps employees gain familiarity with best practices such as:

- Taking thoughtful ownership of content co-created with generative AI.
- Using discretion when evaluating where AI is acceptable—and where it isn't.
- Identifying reputable AI tools that meet standards of security, ethics, and fairness.
- Prioritizing data privacy to safeguard sensitive employee information.
- Setting standards such as opting out of letting vendors use your data for model training.

HR professionals can also help leaders consider how the organization should evolve, help employees cultivate job-specific AI tools and skills, or have generative AI assist in developing training curriculum.

Prepare for the Future Today

Delivering more humanity through artificial intelligence may sound ironic, but collaboration between people and machines has a history of streamlining mundane tasks to free up time for more impactful work.

As HR uses AI to tackle repetitive tasks, the "human" in human resources will always be needed to connect with candidates and employees on a personal level and to prevent misuse.

That being said, businesses are optimistic about the future of AI in HR, and HR professionals currently using the technology are 16 times more likely[3] to say it's transforming existing jobs, not replacing them.

Among US workers, those who are most exposed to AI are also the most likely to feel optimistic about the technology's potential—and HR professionals have a powerful opportunity to create positive experiences with AI through daily workplace activities. ■

Alan Whitaker is Head of Artificial Intelligence at BambooHR and leads AI initiatives, leveraging data-driven solutions to transform the employee experience. With a focus on innovation and impact, Alan's work empowers organizations to set people free to do their best work while redefining how technology supports human potential.

1. SHRM, 2024. "2024 Talent Trends: Artificial Intelligence in HR." SHRM website, https://shrm-res.cloudinary.com/image/upload/AI/2024-Talent-Trends-Survey_Artificial-Intelligence-Findings.pdf.
2. Gartner. "AI in HR: The Ultimate Guide to Implementing AI in Your HR Organization." Gartner website, https://www.gartner.com/en/human-resources/topics/artificial-intelligence-in-hr
3. SHRM, 2024. "2024 Talent Trends: Artificial Intelligence in HR." SHRM website, https://shrm-res.cloudinary.com/image/upload/AI/2024-Talent-Trends-Survey_Artificial-Intelligence-Findings.pdf.

Hybrid Work: Balancing Synchr

Real hybrid work is not only balancing who does what work where (should we be in the office three days a week?). For a truly hybrid team, we factor in time. This means we change the question to: What work needs to be done with everyone at the same time, and what can be done when it makes sense?

Hybrid work is a great way to overcome time zones on scattered teams and reduce the need for everyone to gather at the same time to do work that could be done better when people are at their physical and mental best. For this to work, we need to figure out not just what work needs to be done when, but what tools will help you all achieve the best results.

As a refresher, synchronous means, "at the same time." Tools that meet this criteria include real-time use of Teams/Slack, texting, live webcam and web meetings. It also includes (stick with me) telephone and meeting in-person in real time. Crazy, right?

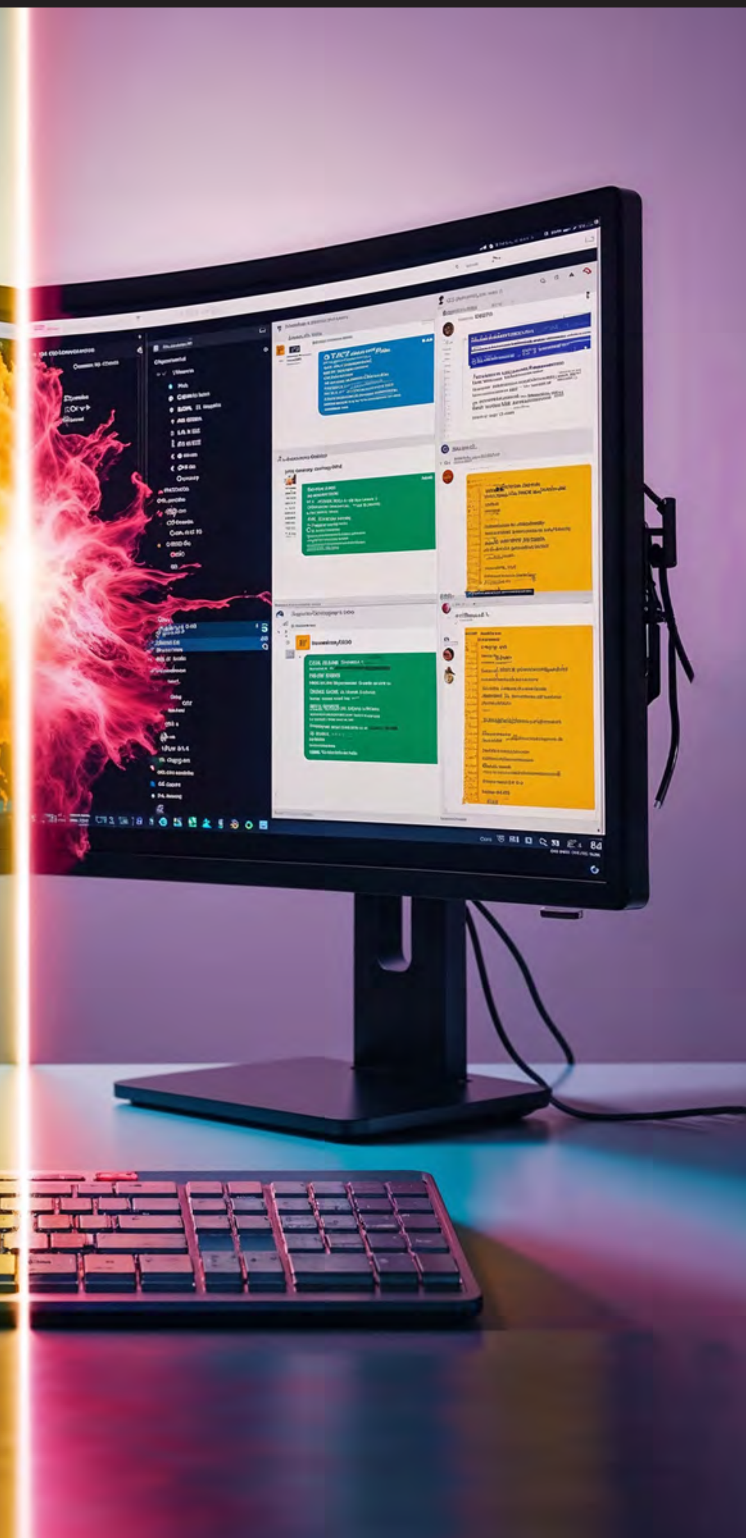
Asynchronous is defined as "not existing or happening at the same time." This means chat messages that don't need to be immediately responded to, ongoing discussions on topics where people can contribute when it's a good time for them or they've had time to think about their responses and emails (I can't stress this enough–email is NOT a synchronous tool).

Use Synchronous Tools When:

- Real-time oral conversation will get the best results. Brainstorming, reaching consensus, answering questions are often achieved well when people actually talk to each other.
- There is confusion over a goal or you seem to have reached a dead end in trying to solve a problem. We all know how endless email or chat threads can be frustrating and eventually unproductive. Getting together physically or on a web meeting can cut through some of the frustration and help everyone focus on results.
- You need an answer to a question from a subject matter expert. No matter where you work there are times when you know someone has information you need. The more complicated the question, the more likely reaching

ronous and Asynchronous Tools

BY WAYNE TURMEL



the right answer will require back and forth, whether that's oral conversation or a chat exchange.

- You want team members to interact with each other for team-building reasons. Human beings build relationships by real-time communication and working in rich ways that enhance verbal, vocal and visual understanding.

Use Asynchronous Tools When:

- Time isn't the primary factor. Not everything requires your teammates to drop everything and respond. Questions that don't need to be answered this second or require the responder to research, think or just be back at their desk can be handled asynchronously.
- You want to give people time to respond to enhance the quality of their thinking or give everyone a chance to respond. Real time brainstorming is great, but studies find that we often give more thoughtful and insightful feedback, and hear from everyone equally, when people don't feel the pressure to respond immediately. Time to think and craft a thoughtful answer is often underrated.
- When you need an answer RIGHT NOW. This might feel like a contradiction with what we said earlier, but simple answers to simple questions can be answered with technology. AI and chatbots are going to play more and more of a role in helping people get information they need in a hurry and get back to work. If it's noon in Singapore, you don't want to be waiting until the folks in the New York office are at work to find that file you need.

As we contemplate the future of work, it will be important to consider not only where work gets done, and who does it, but when it happens. A real hybrid approach is thoughtful about these things and not simply trying to recreate the "everyone-in-the-office-at-the-same-time" experience. ■

For nearly 26 years, Wayne Turmel has been dedicated to helping professionals build strong communication and leadership skills. He has taught and consulted with both Fortune 500 companies and startups worldwide. Over the past 18 years, Wayne has concentrated on the increasing importance of effective communication in remote and virtual settings.

RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT VETERANS

BY CLARK SCHAEFER • STRATEGIC HR

Developing a targeted strategy to include veterans in your recruiting process is not only the right thing to do, but it also makes good business sense. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), there were 17.9 million veterans in 2023[1]—nearly seven percent of the total adult population. Particularly for organizations struggling to fill open positions, this is a significant portion of the potential labor pool that should not be overlooked. The key is knowing where and how to best connect with them.

Veterans, with their top-notch training, work ethic, and leadership abilities, are highly sought after. Luckily, there are a variety of recruitment strategies and resources that employers can use to attract this in-demand population. Here are a few ideas to consider:

UTILIZE THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL)

The U.S. Department of Labor VETS Regional Veterans' Employment Coordinators (RVECs) provide access to dedicated regional employment coordinators who assist with locating and attracting service members, veterans, and spouses seeking employment.

We recently used this resource for one of our clients who was facing challenges in filling various key positions within their organization stemming from high turnover and a lack of qualified candidates. As their recruitment partner, we connected with the appropriate RVECs to find the best candidates for the jobs. We're happy to report that this valuable connection ultimately led to helping our client fill many of those key roles with veterans. In turn, it contributed to staff retention as they were no longer overburdened with compensating for the work of unfilled positions.

Additionally, the RVECs can assist should you need help in better understanding veterans' needs, developing your veteran hiring initiatives, or addressing skill gaps.

The DOL also provides a very handy employer guide to hiring veterans, which includes veteran demographics, best practices to attract, train, and retain veterans, and federal, state, and other resources to use in your veteran recruitment process.

PARTNER WITH VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS

Collaborate with organizations committed to the inclusion of veterans in the workplace. Some examples include the Military Officers Association of America, Hire Heroes USA, and Army Reserve's Private Public Partnership.

HIGHLIGHT YOUR COMMITMENT TO HIRING VETERANS

It's important to demonstrate a culture of inclusivity and appreciation for veterans in your workplace. For example, veterans often possess qualities and skills that can positively impact team performance and organizational culture. However, those attributes can sometimes get lost in translation between "military speak" and typical terms used in many workplaces. It's a smart move to help veterans see how they can use their special skills and talents to make a meaningful impact in your organization. Share success stories of current veteran employees and promote your company's veteran-friendly policies on your website, social media, and in your job ads.

THERE WERE 17.9 MILLION VETERANS IN 2023[1]

(NEARLY SEVEN PERCENT OF THE TOTAL ADULT POPULATION.)

Ultimately, you want veterans to easily see how they can be successful in your organization and to think of your company for their next career move. To further support that goal, consider applying for the HIRE Vets Medallion Program which recognizes employers for their commitment to recruiting, employing, and retaining our nation's heroes.

ADVANTAGES TO HIRING VETERANS

Among the many benefits of hiring veterans, a key one is its potential to strengthen your bottom line. For example, the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit for employers who hire and employ individuals from certain targeted groups (including qualified veterans) who have faced significant barriers to employment.

Additionally, veterans contribute to a diverse workforce, fostering innovation and team cohesion. Companies that actively hire veterans also tend to enhance their brand reputation, as they are seen as supporting national service members, which can boost employee morale and the company's public image.

Employers who leverage the extensive resources available to recruit, develop, and retain this exceptional group are well-positioned for a high return on their investment. ■

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

1. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023. "Employment Situations of Veterans – 2023." BLS website, https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf.

Balancing Confidentiality and Transparency During Workplace Investigations

BY JESSICA MILLER-MERRELL

***Disclaimer:** The information provided in this article is for general informational purposes only and is not intended as legal advice. For specific legal concerns, please consult with a qualified attorney.*

Workplace investigations are essential for addressing employee concerns, maintaining a fair environment, and ensuring compliance with company policies and legal regulations. However, managing these investigations can be a tightrope act for HR professionals and leaders. One of the most challenging aspects of workplace investigations is balancing confidentiality with transparency—two seemingly contradictory concepts that are both vital to the process.

On the one hand, confidentiality is crucial to protect the integrity of the investigation, ensure witness cooperation, and shield employees from retaliation. On the other hand, transparency builds trust within the organization, reassures employees that their concerns are taken seriously, and maintains a culture of openness. Striking the right balance between these two principles can be difficult but necessary to ensure a fair and effective process.

The Role of Confidentiality in Workplace Investigations

Confidentiality in workplace investigations serves several purposes, from protecting the privacy of those involved to legal considerations to preventing retaliation that may result from an investigation.

Protecting Privacy

Employees involved in an investigation—whether they are complainants, witnesses, or subjects of the investigation—expect a level of privacy. Disclosing too much information about the case could lead to embarrassment, damage to reputations, or even legal consequences. Maintaining confidentiality ensures that sensitive personal and professional details are safeguarded.

Preventing Retaliation

Confidentiality is crucial in protecting employees who come forward with complaints or act as witnesses. Fear of retaliation can deter employees from participating fully in an investigation. Ensuring that personal details and statements remain confidential helps employees feel safe enough to engage in the process honestly.

Preserving the Integrity of the Investigation

Sharing too much information too early can taint the investigation process. If details are disclosed prematurely, potential witnesses could be influenced or key evidence could be compromised. Confidentiality helps ensure that the investigation remains unbiased and that all parties involved provide genuine, uncoached statements.

Legal Considerations

In certain cases, confidentiality is not just a good practice but a legal requirement. Some types of workplace investigations, especially those involving harassment or discrimination, may be governed by laws that mandate a certain level of privacy for the parties involved.

The Role of Transparency in Workplace Investigations

While confidentiality is crucial, transparency also plays an important role in maintaining trust within the organization. Here's are four important reasons why transparency is necessary:

- **Building Trust:** Employees need to trust that their concerns will be handled with seriousness and fairness. Being transparent about the investigative process and its outcomes reassures employees that their voices are heard and valued.

- **Encouraging Participation:** If employees believe investigations are conducted behind closed doors with no accountability, they may be less likely to report issues or cooperate as witnesses. Transparency promotes a sense of responsibility and accountability within the organization, which can encourage employees to engage with HR on important matters.

- **Fostering Organizational Culture:** A culture of openness is essential to the long-term health of any organization. Transparency about how workplace issues are handled—without breaching confidentiality—helps maintain morale and sends a strong message that the organization values fairness, honesty, and integrity.

- **Mitigating Rumors and Speculation:** If information about an investigation is kept too secretive, employees may fill in the gaps with their own narratives, which could damage the reputations of those involved or lead to workplace unrest. A certain level of transparency can help control the narrative and prevent damaging speculation.

The Challenges of Balancing Confidentiality and Transparency

Balancing confidentiality and transparency requires walking a fine line between protecting individuals and maintaining organizational trust. Here are some common challenges HR professionals face:

Risk of Over-Disclosure

If too much information is shared in the name of transparency, it can lead to a breach of privacy or open the door to workplace gossip. This can result in harm to the reputations of those involved and may even expose the organization to legal liability.

Perceived Lack of Transparency

If the investigation is too opaque, employees may perceive the process as unfair or secretive. This can lead to a breakdown in trust, skepticism about the investigation's fairness, and a culture of fear where employees hesitate to report concerns.

Pressure from Leadership or Employees

Management may demand regular updates, while employees may expect to know the status or outcome of investigations that involve their colleagues or managers. Balancing these expectations while adhering to confidentiality guidelines is a major challenge for HR.

Conflicting Priorities

Different types of investigations may have varying requirements. For instance, investigations involving harassment or discrimination may necessitate stricter confidentiality than those involving policy violations or performance issues. HR must navigate these competing priorities with care.

Strategies for Balancing Confidentiality and Transparency

Finding the right balance between confidentiality and transparency is not a one-size-fits-all approach. However, there are several strategies HR professionals can use to navigate this challenge:

- **Communicate clear expectations early.** At the outset of an investigation, it's important to set expectations with all parties involved. Explain the importance of confidentiality and outline what information can and cannot be shared. This helps manage expectations and reduces the risk of over-disclosure.

- **Implement a clear investigation process.** Developing a formalized, consistent investigation process can help maintain both confidentiality and transparency. Employees should know how investigations are handled in the organization, including what steps will be taken and who will be involved. This can provide reassurance without compromising confidentiality.

- **Provide regular updates to the complainant and involved parties.** Transparency doesn't mean providing every detail, but it does mean keeping the parties involved informed. Provide regular updates on the progress of the investigation and reassure them that their concerns are being addressed. Make it clear when certain details must remain confidential to preserve the integrity of the process.

- **Maintain anonymity when possible.** To protect confidentiality, consider anonymizing statements or using general terms when discussing the investigation with broader groups of employees or leadership. This allows for transparency without revealing the identities of the parties involved.

- **Tailor communication based on investigation type.** The level of transparency required may vary depending on the nature of the investigation. For instance, investigations into harassment may require stricter confidentiality to protect the victim, while performance-related investigations may allow for more openness. Tailor your communication strategy based on the sensitivity of the case.

- **Train HR and leadership.** Providing training for HR professionals and organizational leaders on how to balance confidentiality and transparency is essential. They should be equipped with the tools and knowledge to handle investigations sensitively and appropriately, ensuring the organization maintains a culture of trust and integrity.

Conclusion

Balancing confidentiality and transparency during workplace investigations is challenging but necessary. Maintaining the right balance helps protect individuals' privacy, ensure the integrity of the investigation, and foster trust within the organization. By setting clear expectations, developing consistent processes, and tailoring communication strategies, HR professionals can strike the right balance, ensuring both confidentiality and transparency are respected during the investigation process.

As organizations continue to evolve, the need for thoughtful, well-executed workplace investigations will only grow. By prioritizing both confidentiality and transparency, HR can help create a workplace environment that values fairness, integrity, and trust. ■

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

5 Key Strategies for a Successful L&D Program in 2025

BY JUAN BETANCOURT

Now is the perfect time to reimagine how your Learning & Development (L&D) initiatives can better support your employees. Gone are the days when one-off workshops or expensive consultants drove meaningful learning outcomes. These traditional methods no longer deliver the long-term results today's workforce needs. Instead, modern L&D programs must embrace flexibility, personalization, and technology to remain relevant.

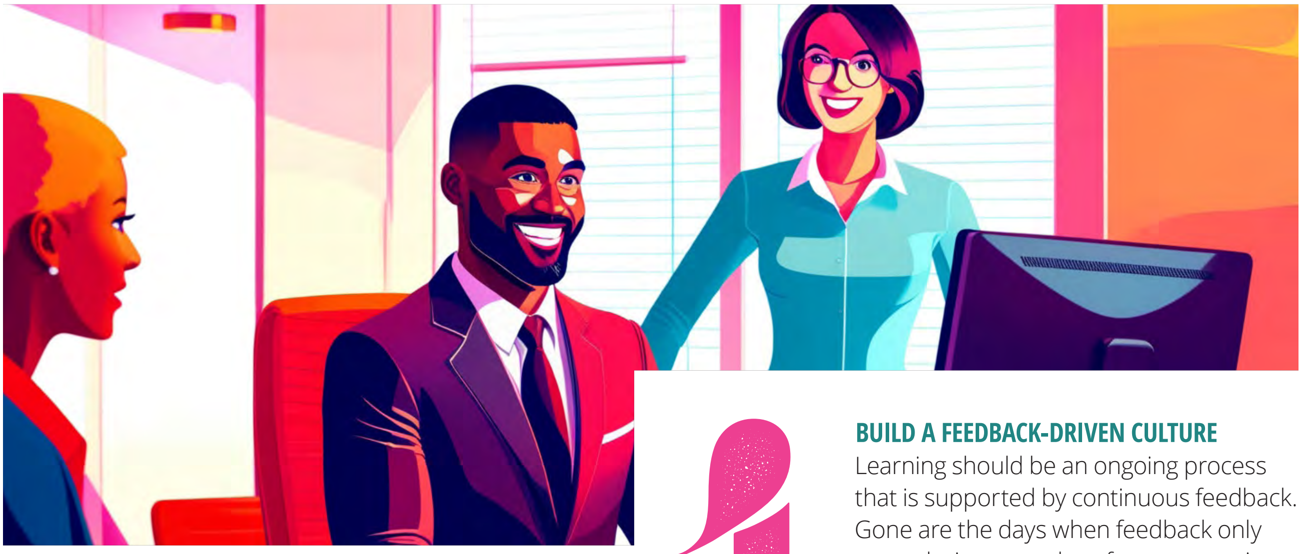
With remote and hybrid work models becoming the norm, reskilling, upskilling, and internal mobility have never been more essential. Research shows that 88% of employees would stay with a company if they had opportunities for career growth[1]. However, over 60% have left a job because they didn't see a path to advancement. Furthermore, 66% of talent professionals expect their L&D budgets to either stay the same or increase[2], underscoring the growing reliance on internal development.

So, how can you transform your L&D strategy to fit the future of work? Here are five key strategies to get started.

1 EMBRACE ON-DEMAND LEARNING

Traditional, in-person workshops no longer fit the needs of today's fast-paced, often remote, work environment. Employees want learning experiences that they can access anytime, anywhere—whether they're at their desk, on their phone, or working from home.

On-demand learning integrates training into employees' daily workflows, making it more relevant and easier to retain. Studies show that employees who control their own learning schedules retain 60% of what they learn, compared to just 8% in traditional settings[3]. By offering bite-sized, accessible learning modules, you allow your workforce to continuously improve their skills at a pace that works for them.



2 PERSONALIZE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Employees today expect a learning experience tailored to their specific needs, just as they do in their everyday digital interactions. Personalization has become a driving force in L&D, allowing individuals to take learning paths that align with their career goals, preferred learning styles, and areas of interest.

Using AI-driven platforms, you can deliver customized content and adaptive learning paths that reflect each employee's unique journey. This approach not only improves engagement but also encourages a deeper investment in professional growth.

3 FOCUS ON AGILE, COST-EFFECTIVE LEARNING

With the constant evolution of technology and industry trends, learning must be agile and adaptable. Outdated content and slow development cycles are no longer viable. To remain competitive, organizations need platforms that enable them to quickly deploy relevant training.

Agile L&D programs allow you to respond to changes in real-time, whether it's a new software rollout or shifting market demands. By delivering up-to-date content swiftly and cost-effectively, you keep your workforce equipped with the latest skills.

4 BUILD A FEEDBACK-DRIVEN CULTURE

Learning should be an ongoing process that is supported by continuous feedback. Gone are the days when feedback only came during annual performance reviews. Modern L&D programs incorporate 360-degree feedback, pulse surveys, and real-time performance management into daily operations.

By fostering a culture of feedback, you create a system where employees can regularly assess their progress, address skill gaps, and refine their development goals. Moreover, feedback platforms give managers the data they need to offer personalized coaching, which strengthens team dynamics and boosts engagement. Studies show that 87% of highly engaged employees are less likely to leave their jobs.

5 SCALE LEARNING FOR SUSTAINED RESULTS

How often have employees returned from training programs with certificates but without the tools to apply what they learned? For most companies, this is a common issue. Within an hour of training, employees often forget more than half of the content unless they can apply it immediately.

To address this, invest in technology that brings learning into everyday workflows. Tools that offer opportunities to practice new skills in real-time can dramatically improve retention and help employees seamlessly integrate their new knowledge into their roles. This not only ensures sustained learning but also enables scalability, as the learning becomes part of the business's ongoing operations. ■

1. LinkedIn, 2023. "2023 Workplace Learning Report." LinkedIn, https://learning.linkedin.com/resources/workplace-learning-report-2023.
2. SHRM, 2022. "2022 Workplace Learning and Development Trends." SHRM website, https://www.shrm.org/content/dam/en/shrm/research/2022-Workplace-Learning-and-Development-Trends-Report.pdf.
3. Research Institute of America. Forbes, 2017. Forbes website, https://www.forbes.com/sites/paycom/2017/02/14/learning-management-systems-101-rethinking-your-approach-to-employee-training/.

Juan Betancourt is the chief executive officer of Humantelligence, whose solutions help organizations accurately measure and manage culture at every level of an organization. Recently named a 2022 Top 30 HR Tech Influencer by Recooty and a 2021 Top 100 HR Tech Influencer by HR Executive, Betancourt is an expert in managing and hiring for culture fit and in helping organizations leverage culture analytics to build agile, highly collaborative teams and increase performance. He can be reached at juan@humantelligence.com.

Lessons from Nature:

How to Adapt and Grow During Periods of Change

BY JAMES MOUL

There's no question that we're entering a time of great change. Culturally. Politically. Socially. In the workplace. In our personal lives. It can be overwhelming – but the natural world offers timeless insights to help us navigate these shifts with resilience.

In nature, adaptation is key. Plants and animals evolve to meet new challenges, shifting behaviors and traits to thrive. And so can we.

EMBRACE SEASONAL RENEWAL

In winter, plants conserve energy to emerge stronger in spring. Similarly, times of change offer an opportunity to refocus and recharge, helping us approach new challenges with a fresh perspective.

FIND STRENGTH IN COMMUNITY

Wolves rely on their pack for support and survival. In the same way, building a strong community at work or in life makes navigating change easier. A sense of community strengthens resilience and creates a supportive foundation for growth.

ADAPT TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Coral reefs demonstrate how ecosystems can adjust to challenging environments. By building relationships and adapting to new circumstances – whether it's learning how to cook or garden or adopting a fresh approach in the workplace – we can thrive amid changes.

MAKE SMALL ADJUSTMENTS

Birds adjust their migration routes based on the conditions they encounter. Likewise, embracing small tweaks can make a big difference, allowing us to stay adaptable without feeling overwhelmed.

Nature reminds us that change, while challenging, offers a chance to grow stronger, more connected, and resilient. By taking cues from the natural world, we can navigate transitions with patience, perspective, and purpose – no matter what comes next. ■

James Moul is a copywriter with Haley Marketing Group and the editor in chief of Insights. He can be reached at jmoul@haleymarketing.com.

RECIPE

Winter Vegetable and Lentil Stew

A hearty, nourishing stew filled with winter vegetables, lentils, and warming spices, perfect for a cozy winter meal. Serve with crusty bread for a complete, comforting dish.

YIELD: 4 servings **TIME:** 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1 parsnip, diced
- 1 small sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup brown or green lentils, rinsed
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1 can (14 oz) diced tomatoes
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 cups chopped kale or spinach
- Juice of half a lemon
- Fresh parsley, chopped, for garnish

DIRECTIONS:

Sauté the vegetables:
In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add carrot, parsnip, sweet potato, and onion. Sauté for 5-7 minutes, until softened. Add garlic, cumin, smoked paprika, salt, and pepper, and cook for another 1-2 minutes until fragrant.

Add lentils and broth:
Add the lentils, vegetable broth, diced tomatoes, and bay leaf to the pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer for 30-35 minutes, until lentils and vegetables are tender.

Add greens and lemon:
Stir in the kale or spinach and cook for an additional 5 minutes. Remove from heat and add lemon juice.

Serve:
Ladle into bowls, garnish with fresh parsley, and enjoy warm.

DIRECT HIRE SERVICES

Find your next *innovative hiring solutions*

A customized approach to overcoming today's hiring challenges.

The Resource's custom Direct Hiring solutions can transform the way you recruit and onboard talent, getting quality candidates on the job fast. It's a unique approach to hiring that succeeds where traditional temp-to-hire approaches now fail.

Our Direct Hire experts work with your team to understand your specific needs, processes and culture. Then we handle the searching, vetting and evaluation of candidates to match the individual's skills, strengths and values to your business.

How it works:

- Qualified candidates are hired directly onto your company's payroll from day one.
- This candidate pool includes the permanent workforce, ensuring you have access to proven candidates.
- If a traditional Direct Hire fee structure doesn't fit your business, our Hybrid Pricing Structure spreads the fee out over time. This gives you a **built-in guarantee period** that reduces risk for you and your organization. If, for some reason, the candidate does not work out over the agreed upon time period, you don't continue to pay.

Why it works:

- Our staff size allows us to be an extension of your hiring team, promoting your company and your reputation to attract the working employees.
- We make the transition seamless for employees, taking the unknown out of changing jobs.
- We customize the onboarding process (skills assessment, backgrounds, etc.) to fit your exact needs.
- Innovative pricing structures are customized based on search difficulty, volume of positions, position salary, and length of payment terms.

Talk with us to learn more.

Our experts are ready to work with you to create the workforce solution that best fits your business.

TheResource.com | 336.896.1000

THE RESOURCE

Find Your Next