10 QUESTIONS

About the Future of AI in the Workplace

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

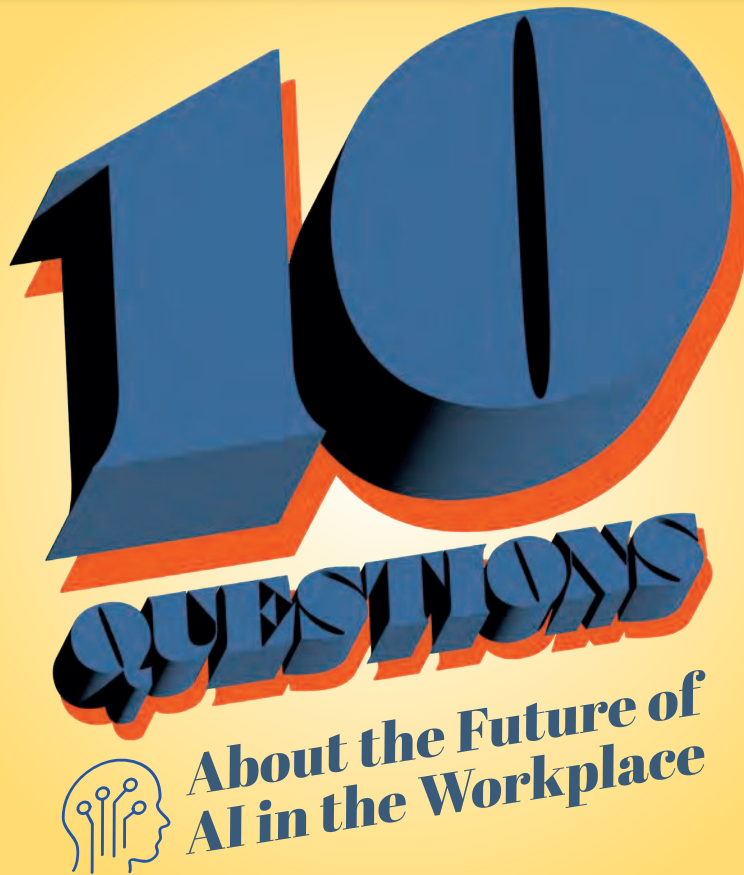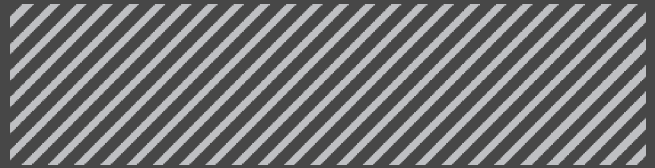## Our Services: flexible, powerful, effective

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.

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INSIGHTS Magazine

10 QUESTIONS About the Future of AI in the Workplace

Practical Approaches to Managing and Maintaining Pay Equity

BY FUTURESENSE

In today's diverse workforce, managing, and maintaining pay equity isn't just a legal imperative. It's a strategic advantage that boosts employee morale, satisfaction, and retention.

Keep reading to learn about practical strategies to ensure fair compensation practices within your organization, focusing on the role of pay structure design, the expertise of salary consultants, and how to address common issues like pay compression and unequal pay.

WHAT IS PAY EQUITY?

Pay equity refers to the concept of ensuring that employees are paid equally for jobs of equal value, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or other non-job-related factors. It's about fairness and equality in compensation practices, which is crucial for fostering a positive workplace culture and adhering to legal standards.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PAY EQUITY

Maintaining pay equity is vital for numerous reasons:

Legal Compliance: Many regions have laws requiring pay equity, and non-compliance can result in hefty fines and reputational damage.

Employee Engagement: Fair pay practices increase employee motivation and contribute to lower turnover rates.

Brand Reputation: Companies known for fair pay practices are more attractive to potential employees and often see increased loyalty from customers who value social responsibility.

HOW TO DESIGN A FAIR PAY STRUCTURE

A transparent and well-structured pay system is essential to achieving and maintaining pay equity.

An effective pay structure ensures that all employees are compensated fairly for their skills and contributions, reducing discrepancies that could lead to dissatisfaction and legal issues. Here's a detailed approach on how to design a fair pay structure:

1. Job Evaluation

The first step in designing a fair pay structure is conducting a thorough job evaluation. This process involves:

Defining Roles: Clearly define the scope, responsibilities, and duties of each position within the organization. This should include the complexities involved, decision-making authority, and the impact of the role on organizational success.

Evaluating Skills and Efforts: Assess the skills and efforts required for each position. Consider the education, experience, and training necessary to perform the job effectively.

Setting Benchmarks: Use the information gathered to establish benchmarks that align with industry standards and norms. These benchmarks will act as a reference point for setting salaries and will ensure that your compensation is competitive and equitable.

2. Market Research

To ensure your pay structure remains competitive and attractive to potential and current employees, engage in comprehensive market research. Collect and analyze salary data from similar roles within the same industry and geographical area. This can be done through salary surveys, online compensation databases, and networking with industry peers.

It's also helpful to analyze your competitors and understand what they are offering. This helps in positioning your pay scale competitively, which is crucial for attracting top talent and retaining high performers.

3. Developing Salary Bands

Salary bands are an effective tool in maintaining structured pay across the organization. They provide a framework within which all salary negotiations and increments take place.

Establish salary bands that are wide enough to allow for growth within a position but tight enough to avoid pay inequities. Each band should reflect the level of responsibility, skill, and the typical market rate for similar roles.

Ensure that your salary bands align with clear career progression paths within the organization. This helps employees see their growth potential and understand how their compensation can evolve as they advance in their careers.

Regularly review and update the salary bands to reflect changes in the market conditions, economic fluctuations, and changes within the organization that might affect job roles.

4. Transparent Implementation

Clearly communicate the pay structure to all employees. Transparency about how salaries are determined and the criteria for increases can enhance trust and fairness perceptions.

Train managers and supervisors on the pay structure so they can effectively communicate it to their teams and make informed decisions about pay increases and promotions.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Regularly assess and adjust the pay structure as necessary to respond to changes in the market and internal company growth.

Implement feedback mechanisms to gather input from employees on the perceived fairness and effectiveness of the pay structure.

THE ROLE OF SALARY CONSULTANTS

Salary consultants or compensation consultants play a pivotal role in establishing and reviewing pay structures to ensure they are fair and competitive. Consultants provide an objective analysis of your compensation structure, highlighting areas of improvement to meet industry and legal standards.

Consultants use salary data from similar organizations to ensure your pay practices are competitive. They can help develop a strategic approach to compensation that aligns with your company's goals and values.

MANAGING PAY EQUITY: PRACTICAL STEPS

1. Regular Pay Audits: Conduct regular audits to assess your organization's adherence to its compensation policy and identify discrepancies that might lead to pay inequity.

2. Transparent Communication: Foster an environment where pay practices are openly discussed, and employees understand how their compensation is determined.

3. Training and Development: Educate your HR team and managers on the importance of pay equity and how to manage compensation decisions effectively.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC ISSUES

Pay compression often happens when less experienced employees earn close to what more experienced colleagues make. This can be addressed by setting clear rules for increments and regularly adjusting salary bands based on market trends and individual performance.

Implementing a standardized process for setting and reviewing salaries can help minimize biases and discrepancies. Ensure that all compensation decisions are documented and justified based on clear and consistent criteria. ∎

FutureSense (futuresense.com) provides people-focused HR, compensation, and organizational development strategies that improve business performance.

How SLAs Can Transform Your Hiring Process

BY JESSICA MILLER-MERRELL

Do you use SLAs in your hiring process? If not, here are some great reasons to consider doing so.

Starting with the recruiting intake call, which is typically the initial conversation between the hiring manager and recruiter about an open role the recruiter is tasked with being filled. The purpose of the intake call is to set expectations, discuss the role, and determine if there are other important skills, experiences, or relevant abilities not outlined in the job description. During an intake call, the SLA or service-level agreement is discussed.

In addition to an intake call to discuss the new position, a recruiter can deliver 2-4 candidates during the intake call or within two business days from position sourcing to discuss the types of skills, experiences, and qualifications these candidates who were sourced based on the job description and intake call are lacking.

The SLA or Service Level Agreement Defined

Service-level agreements, or SLAs, are simply formal written agreements between recruiters and hiring managers that spell out the expectations and the responsibilities of each party in the recruitment and hiring process. By spelling out responsibilities, timelines, deliverables, and success measures in advance, SLAs outline who is responsible for what and what timeframes are realistic. These agreements make communication easier, improve results, and help to build strong hiring manager relationships. This is the key to hiring faster and gaining higher acceptance rates from your best candidates.

SLAs are essentially informal contracts that help facilitate conversations and help level set expectations focused on building a relationship between the hiring manager and recruiter. Both parties have a commitment in the hiring process, and within the service-level agreement are agreeing to commit to specific deadlines and promises, such as candidate follow-up, time of interview, recruiter/hiring manager communication, and the giving and receiving of candidate feedback.

There is one prerequisite to SLAs: Buy-in from your hiring managers. SLAs won't work if the relationship and the respect are not there first. SLAs have value even in just getting the conversation started with your hiring managers. Frame it as a process improvement that will serve both of your goals, and you can create that all-important buy-in.

SLAs in Hiring and Recruiting, and Best Practices

Since the recruiting function doesn't actually make hiring decisions, it

is defined as a "service function" that provides services to hiring managers. Because great service delivery is essential in recruiting, it makes sense for recruiting and HR leaders to follow the practices of other successful business service functions and to adopt service-level agreements.

Service-Level Agreements (SLAs) are important in human resources

and recruiting for several reasons:

1. SETS CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

SLAs establish specific performance standards for HR services, such as response times, hiring timelines, and resolution of employee issues. This clarity helps align the expectations of HR teams with those of other departments and stakeholders.

By setting clear expectations, SLAs hold HR and recruiting teams accountable for delivering consistent and high-quality services. This accountability ensures that tasks are completed efficiently and within agreed-upon timeframes.

2. IMPROVES EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY

SLAs help in defining and standardizing HR and recruitment processes, reducing inefficiencies and ensuring that tasks are handled in a timely manner. This leads to quicker hiring cycles and more effective HR operations.

With SLAs in place, HR teams can prioritize their workload based on agreed service levels, ensuring that critical tasks are addressed promptly while maintaining overall service quality.

3. ENHANCES COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

SLAs foster open communication between HR teams, recruiters, and their internal clients (e.g., hiring managers, department heads). This transparency helps manage expectations and facilitates smoother collaboration across departments.

By clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and expected outcomes, SLAs reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings or conflicts between HR and other stakeholders.

4. SUPPORTS MEASUREMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

SLAs include measurable KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) that allow HR teams to track their performance against agreed standards. This data-driven approach helps identify areas for improvement and drive continuous enhancement of HR services.

Regularly reviewing SLA performance enables HR teams to benchmark their services against industry standards or internal goals, ensuring they remain competitive and efficient.

5. ENHANCES CANDIDATE AND EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

SLAs in recruiting ensure that candidates receive timely responses, clear communication, and a consistent hiring experience. This improves the candidate experience and strengthens the employer brand.

For employees, SLAs ensure that HR-related services, such as benefits administration, payroll, and issue resolution, are handled promptly and efficiently, contributing to overall job satisfaction.

6. MITIGATES RISKS AND ENSURES COMPLIANCE

SLAs often include compliance-related benchmarks, ensuring that HR and recruiting processes adhere to legal and regulatory requirements. This helps mitigate risks associated with labor laws, data protection, and other HR-related regulations.

By clearly defining service expectations and performance standards, SLAs help HR teams anticipate and address potential risks, such as delays in hiring critical roles or failure to meet compliance standards.

Back to the SLA

By measuring the actual time it takes to receive feedback, talent acquisition teams can often uncover critical bottlenecks in the recruitment process and avoid both delays and the potential loss of good candidates who get caught in "we don't have an update for you" limbo.

Make sure you set and schedule follow-up meetings and appointments. Hold both yourself and the hiring manager accountable.

Getting quick feedback from the manager about the quality of the submitted candidate slate is critical. An internal SLA of two business days for managers to provide feedback and a decision on candidates is generally recommended.

Finally, if the recruiter and hiring manager don't understand each other, it can be incredibly costly. An unclear position leads to a mis-hire and can cost a client up to a third of the new hire's salary to replace them. Avoid the disconnect between hiring managers and recruiters to save everyone time and headaches. Because in this competitive war for talent, recruiting best practices like this can really make a difference. ■

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

THE FUTURE OF L&D:

How AI and Technology Can Improve Talent Development and Support More Employees

BY JUAN BETANCOURT

Thinking about what your learning and development programming should look like for employees? This might be a hard pill to swallow, but if you're thinking workshops and consultants, you're going to miss the mark!

Mandatory one-time workshops, expensive external consultants, certifications, and traditional classroom learning are simply dead on arrival. They don't deliver sustained results. You can't track them well. They don't take your learners into consideration. And they're counterintuitive to today's need for personalized learning.

The amount of people who work remotely at least once per week has grown by 400% since 2010[1], and as many teams now settle into remote or hybrid work models, a much-needed transformation in traditional learning and development is underway. This shift better supports people in how they now learn today, as reskilling, upskilling, cross-training, and internal mobility continue to prove new an,d up until now, often untapped sources of power for companies.

Research from Lighthouse Research & Advisory[2] shows that 88% of employees said they would stay at a job if they had career and growth opportunities ahead, but more than 60% have left a job in the past because they didn't see any way to advance.

This suggests employers will continue relying on building their workforce through internal mobility programs tied to reskilling initiatives and/or engage contingent talent instead of hiring externally. In this article, we'll share

suggestions—through the lens of pandemic-driven shifts—for leveraging technology and AI to implement and scale development programs with new ways of learning that aren't just customized, but that also cross silos and aid in retaining and motivating employees to want to learn more.

KEY FEATURES OF THE MODERN CORPORATE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Operating a successful business boils down to ensuring your workers are productive, happy, and actively engaged with activities that move the business forward.

Chief Learning Officer at AllenComm—a global learning developer and provider of custom content—Anna Sargsyan recently told Human Resource Executive:

"These new demands of hybrid and remote work are tasking us with being much more intentional about learning design. Employee expectations around more human-centered learning are creating a need for more personalization within L&D, while leaders also have to be proactive to help distributed employees learn from one another despite the distance, create innovative approaches to non-classroom learning and ensure learning is accessible everywhere—in different formats and to all employees."

In addition to supporting the employee experience, there's enough evidence now to demonstrate that companies that promote a culture of learning perform better.

A LinkedIn Learning course[3] (quoting a McKinsey report) that shows companies offering comprehensive training programs have higher income per employee by as much as 200%. And for millennials, learning opportunities at a company are now the top

metric in their likelihood to stay at a company. A PwC study[4] found the same—that "the current workforce is more motivated by personal and professional growth than they are by earning more money."

Critical to the success of any L&D program today, new digital tools have dramatically altered how, when and where we learn. Here's a handful of the key features you should consider when launching or leveling up to a modern corporate learning experience.

ON-DEMAND LEARNING

The brick-and-mortar professional development course is done. Instead of the rigid classroom model, learning should be part of employees' daily workflow—at their desks, on their mobile phones, or from wherever they work. They're much more likely to develop and retain information when they decide on the timing of their training, not when it is dictated by a mass group class.

Let's look at some statistics. Employees who have more control over the learning process and the opportunity to revisit training demonstrate retention rates of up to 60% vs that of 8% for in-person training[5]. In addition, research[6] shows that bite-sized learning makes the transfer of learning from the classroom to the desk 18% more efficient—encouraging employees to further develop and retain the training, which maximizes the effectiveness and value of the training you have delivered.

CONSUMERIZATION OF LEARNING

Just as apps have changed the way we call cabs or watch movies, new
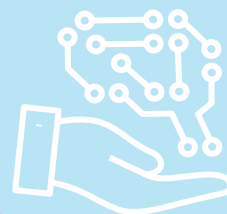
digital learning tools also offer the same intuitive, engaging, and easy-to-use experience for people at work.

AGILE, COST-EFFECTIVE LEARNING
In an era of rapid technological change, learning has become critical for companies to stay up to speed. A modern learning platform accelerates learning program delivery to ensure the most up-to-date training reaches your employees quickly and efficiently.

SELF-AWARENESS AND COACHING
With a better awareness of team dynamics (aka a team's culture), L&D leaders are working to understand individuals — and ultimately creating and delivering programming that leverages a psychometrics-based platform to improve managers' coaching, increase understanding of their teams, pave a pathway to building a stronger, better-connected team for purposes of more meaningful collaboration — which leads to increased productivity and strong employee engagement.

Companies that do have a high level of employee engagement are more profitable by a factor of 21%[7]. So, to more deeply understand what drives the engagement of your people, aside from skill building and growth opportunities, you also need to provide people with a centralized place to both give feedback to others and better understand themselves.

Consider employee engagement suites that incorporate self-assessments designed to empower people with a better understanding of their work behaviors, motivators, and work energizers. When investing in engagement solutions, look for a centralized solution that consolidates key feedback-focused areas, such as:

Career and Development Feedback
Knowing that coaching and feedback are key to ongoing performance management and engagement, provide an easy way for employees to obtain and manage peer, 360-degree, subordinate and manager feedback more frequently.

Pulse Survey Feedback
Pulse your employees on important topics and get instant and consistent feedback to help you make informed operational, policy, programming, or strategy decisions. Be sure you can analyze data by different populations, as well as product, territory, and functional groups.

Performance Management Tracking
Use a centralized learning or action management system to track performance and provide actionable content and assignments to help employees track performance, growth, and any new performance management processes. When you have psychometrics behind your AMS – that is, a clear understanding of what motivates each and every team member and how they learn best – you're able to further individualize the content and activities, as you align employees around specific strategic goals, tasks, and actions. You can do this by company, by division, by territory, or by function – enabling you to deliver fast, measurable business results.

SCALABILITY & SUSTAINED RESULTS
Finally, let's talk results. How often have your employees come back from training only to pin some certificate in their cube without ever implementing what they learned in a meaningful way? The answer is a lot! In fact, within one hour of any training, most people retain less than half of what was presented. Then you spend your time figuring out ways to reinforce and re-engage those team members in what they already learned. It can feel like an exhausting never-ending cycle – making it difficult to scale your programming.

The truth is, if participants can't flex their muscles and practice what they have learned on an ongoing basis after the training, they will most certainly forget it and revert to their old ways. But technology exists today that can bring your team's development program learnings into the participants' daily workflows, allowing them to practice what they have learned in a real live work situation without breaking away from their work. This ability is a game changer for post-program adoption and retention.

It's AI that operationalizes the application of what has been an in-person, workshop-based, self-service eLibrary model into each employee's day-to-day work. The result: watch ROI go from 1-2 uses per year of content to 200-300 times per year. Think what Grammarly did to vocabulary and grammar usage for individuals, but with insights within workflows for self-development, understanding, and all the soft skills needed for better leadership, training, and team effectiveness.

The needs of the global corporate training and learning market will continue to evolve, and in the increasingly complex world of the Future of Work, individualized, adaptive training journeys, including tailored and scalable micro-courses with real-world practice opportunities built into employees' everyday workflows, will help people thrive in remote and hybrid work environments. ■

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O ur 2023 data privacy report found that 80% of HR professionals have either witnessed or been guilty of questionable data management practices[1]. This could mean anything from accessing employee information from a personal device to leaving sensitive details out in the open. Even so, it's important to keep in mind that good data management isn't always digital.

As an HR representative, you have a unique seat at the table. You're tasked with working in your company's best interests, while advocating on your employees' behalf. This means you're the custodians of sensitive information on both sides, entrusted with balancing confidentiality, transparency, and ethical responsibility in the workplace.

Having good confidentiality training programs and policies in place can help you guide the chain of information sharing, either via a device or conversation. Otherwise, you run the risk of breaking more than just your employees' trust in your department.

In this article, we'll discuss what confidentiality means in HR and how you can protect personal employee information at your organization.

WHY IS CONFIDENTIALITY IMPORTANT?

Establishing guidelines for how your organization keeps personal data private and the role you play in safeguarding information helps everyone stay informed and much more. On the "human" side of HR, a corporate confidentiality policy does the following:

IT BUILDS TRUST. At the heart of it all, trust strengthens the employer-employee relationship. Employee privacy helps people feel confident that their data won't be used against them or for personal gain.

IT HELPS PEOPLE FEEL SAFE. Confidentiality contributes to psychological safety, which supports a more inclusive workplace where people feel comfortable speaking up.

IT SOLIDIFIES YOUR WORK CULTURE. Being transparent about what information is private in HR—and what isn't—takes the guesswork out of everyday interactions, creating a culture where people feel informed, respected, and protected.

Another very important thing to remember is that unlawful employee data handling puts your business at risk. Following strict confidentiality best practices helps prevent hefty noncompliance penalties and legal trouble.

HR confidentiality breaches can also affect your company's sterling reputation. If a pattern of data mishandling or misjudgment becomes public knowledge, your actions could make your customers question whether their information is safe with you or not.

EXAMPLES OF CONFIDENTIAL EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

Let's look at some of the employee information HR handles each day. From filling out new-hire paperwork during onboarding to applying for FMLA-protected leave, employees give their companies all kinds of personal data, including:

- Birth dates
- Home addresses
- Telephone numbers
- Spousal and dependent information
- Social Security numbers (SSNs)

- Driver's license numbers
- Bank account numbers for direct deposit
- Health-related information

HR also holds personal records related to the employee's work history and employment status, such as:

- Employee performance reviews
- Workplace injury reports
- Background checks
- Disciplinary actions
- Salary levels

A meticulous filing system helps prevent data loss or misuse and makes it easier to comply with potential workplace investigations or labor disputes. Not to mention, it helps ensure your employee records archive fulfills state and federal recordkeeping requirements.

EXAMPLES OF CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION

HR also has the inside scoop on a variety of business activities—a task in which confidentiality plays a big part. A host of sensitive company information that's not yet available to all employees or the public may run through your department, such as:

- Proprietary business strategies and processes
- Merger and acquisition plans
- Pending layoffs and terminations
- Branch openings and closings

No matter what's in store for your organization, navigating "need-to-know" conversations can be challenging. However, knowing what's at stake and how to handle these situations tactfully can help protect everyone involved.

ARE HR CONVERSATIONS CONFIDENTIAL?

Has an employee ever confided in you under the assumption their conversation won't leave your office? Unlike lawyers, therapists, and physicians, HR professionals aren't bound by confidentiality rules in the same sense. This means that disputes between co-workers or employees and their managers aren't always kept behind closed doors—even if the employee asks you not to mention their name or take action.

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CONFIDENTIAL?

PRACTICES FOR THE WORKPLACE

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What Information Can HR Give Out?

In certain situations, it's necessary to divulge sensitive data within your company. For instance, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) notes that the FMLA and ADA have built-in exceptions[2]. While your HR records must meet confidentiality standards, you can typically let supervisors and managers know about an employee's work restrictions or special instructions in the event of a medical emergency. You may also communicate scheduling changes related to the employee's condition, like taking full or intermittent FMLA-protected absences.

In this case, it's good practice to share sensitive details with caution. Clearly communicate your intent with the employee first and document who will know their personal information, according to your corporate information sharing policies. You may also need to train your managers on how to handle sensitive employee details properly to ensure your employees feel supported by their supervisors.

Manager-Employee Confidentiality Laws

Just like HR, your managers are responsible for respecting their employees' privacy and following the law. Employee privacy laws help prevent personal facts from being disclosed without consent. Employers have quite a bit of freedom, but several laws protect an employee's right to keep private details to themselves.

Some of the most common laws cover workplace surveillance activities, such as web, email, phone, and social media monitoring. Although many of these laws offer limited protection, managers and HR teams still need to know where the lines are drawn. Moreover, many federal and state regulations don't just apply to the HR department—it's everyone's responsibility to uphold the law at work.

Prioritize Confidentiality in Your Workplace

From technology usage to everyday interactions, it's all too easy to leak sensitive data. That's why many HRIS platforms include security measures that control information access. Confidentiality training and policies also put best practices at top of mind, including things like:

- What's considered confidential in the workplace and what isn't
- Appropriate employee monitoring activities
- How your company gathers, uses, and protects sensitive data
- Employee recordkeeping procedures and timelines
- Laws governing employee data privacy
- Guidelines for software admin privileges

When in doubt, always consult your legal and cybersecurity teams for the most current information. Educating yourself, your managers, and your employees about confidentiality in the workplace and using secure HR software are some of the best things you can do to protect sensitive data and your business. ■

Erika Shaughnessy is a Contributing Writer at BambooHR, specializing in articles and guides on the latest HR research and trends. Her recent work covers topics such as company culture, employee benefits, and recruitment marketing.

During an HR investigation for unlawful conduct, for example, you'll likely have to reveal pertinent details with those directly involved as you gather facts surrounding a complaint and resolve the issue. Sometimes, the best you can do is be upfront about what HR can and cannot disclose to other people and your legal responsibilities in any given situation. You can also reassure your employees that you'll only share information as absolutely necessary.

HR Confidentiality Laws

In HR, the concept of confidentiality typically revolves around privacy law and data protection compliance in the workplace. Some of the regulations that govern employee information include:

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The ADA prevents employers from discriminating against people with disabilities. It also states you must keep all medical exams and details about a person's disability confidential and in a separate medical file.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA): Allowing eligible employees to take unpaid, job-protected leave, FMLA also emphasizes that health information must remain confidential and separate from regular personnel files.

Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA): Protecting against genetic discrimination in the workplace, this law requires covered employers to keep this information about employees and job applicants confidential.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA): This law doesn't pertain to employers in most cases, but there are exceptions (e.g., if you obtain protected information through your group health plan). However, it's still best practice to support your employees' right to privacy.

Many states have laws that govern employee information. The California Privacy Rights Act (CPRA), for example, mandates that California employers be clear about what employment-related data they collect and how it's used. Also, international businesses are required to follow the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which protects citizens in the European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA).

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FIVE
LEADERSHIP LESSONS
FROM NFL FOOTBALL TEAMS

BY KEVIN EIKENBERRY

NFL football is a big business. It is more popular than ever and creates many of the most watched shows in the United States each year. And each of those games provides leadership lessons, if we look for them. If you are a football fan, you are going love this article. But even if you aren't a fan, read on, because the leadership lessons from NFL football that I am about to share might be more revealing to you.

For the fan, there are plenty of intricacies in the game that could lead to leadership lessons, but I want to make this piece interesting and accessible even if you don't know much about the game.

Here are five important lessons for leaders and organizations who want to improve – all available to you from watching even a little NFL football.

Practice

Football teams at all levels practice—a lot. They study their opponents, study their past performances, and practice both the details and the fundamentals. None of this is done in a haphazard or unplanned way. The best teams are the best prepared to perform when it matters most.

If an NFL team practiced the way your teams do, how successful would they be?

Positive Pressure to Perform

Simply stated, there are 24 positions on a football team. NFL rosters have 53 players (and some even more on a practice squad). This means that there are backups ready to step in, an obvious succession plan in place, and that every person playing has someone else wanting and working hard for their job. This raises the level of everyone's performance, every day.

A friend made this observation to me in a text message. "If there's someone sitting on the bench wanting to take your job, how would you change your work habits?" (Or would you maintain your position?)

Player Selection and Development

NFL teams take the development of their players seriously. They work harder and spend more time and money on selecting players (i.e., employees) than most any industry and provide resources and set expectations so that players can continue to grow into starting positions.

How much do you focus on and invest in selecting and developing your team members?

Clear Measures of Performance

It's true of every sport. There are clear measures of performance and success. I believe it is one reason we collectively like watching sports—that we can see what success looks like. NFL teams and coaches have many ways to measure the performance of their players. As important is that those players know those measure themselves. These measures provide clarity, motivation and much more.

Do you have the right measure to help your people know what to focus on and perform at their best?

Coaching and Feedback

There are 53 players on the active roster and up to 17 on the practice squad. Most NFL teams have 12 coaches—coaching 70 players. That is a ratio of just short of 6 players per leader. But beyond the numbers, you don't have to watch a game for very long to see how much real-time feedback is happening (and you know the same is happening during every part of practice).

How many team members do your leaders have on their teams? And how much of their time is spent in actual coaching and feedback activities?

What About Your Team?

I asked you a reflective question related to each of the five leadership lessons shared. How do you feel about your answers? I know the work of your teams isn't the same as that of an NFL team. But don't miss the lessons or justify your answers because your business is different. Take the time to think about these questions I've asked. Share them with other leaders in your organization. Then look for ways to apply those ideas in your organization.

You might not win the Super Bowl, but your team will get better. Maybe faster than you think. ∎

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

10 QUESTIONS

About the Future of AI in the Workplace

BY KEEN HAHN

It's no secret that generative AI is revolutionizing how we work. Researchers have equated it to when electricity was first introduced into the workplace. If history is any indication, that means we could see significant disruption to standard practices, roles, and responsibilities.

But the good news is that this shift couldn't have come at a better time – we need AI to help us fill critical labor gaps.

According to United Nations research[1], working-age populations have already peaked and are projected to decline through 2050. Generative AI is one of the best hopes for filling those gaps, but getting there means we must change the conversation from how we survive to how we thrive.

Thriving in the age of AI requires the right data and focus. It means developing an HR and people strategy based on credible benchmarks for culture and workforce activity, and then using that information to foster trust with your employees and improve the overall employee experience. It's about employing generative AI to support all employees – from deskless workers and those on the front lines to people managers and leaders.

1 We know AI isn't new. So, what's already working?

It's not new – at UKG, we've been developing it since the '90s. We've used it for scheduling optimization, retention prediction, natural language processing for survey and sentiment analysis, bias detection, and document classification. The key now is to broaden who has access to the technology. Soon, you won't have to be an expert to engage with AI; it'll be an active participant in daily operations at all levels of the employee experience and will be easily accessible in all roles.

2 Is generative AI a bust or a breakthrough for the HR and workforce management space?

Breakthrough, for sure, but it requires a thoughtful, ethical response to drive meaningful value. The bottom line is that you need access to the largest collection of high-quality, trusted data you can possibly connect with to succeed – and that data must teach the AI what the standards of operating a great workplace really are. And we need to ensure there is transparency and explainability around methods and data standards so humans are kept in the loop and understand how to use AI in their decision-making.

We know what great workplace benchmarks are – great workplaces have the trust of the people that work there, inspire pride in those workers around the jobs they do, and create environments where employees enjoy the people they work with. And this leads to tangible business value, such as increased retention, productivity, flexibility, and ultimately profitability. The magic happens when you mix these standards with workforce activity metrics and HR records like performance trends, benefits, and promotions. That's when you can get high-impact guidance.

3 How can generative AI really help people and workplaces?

When used correctly, generative AI can allow anyone at an organization to have a helpful conversation with their systems and the information captured within those systems. This conversational interaction makes HR and payroll system use and reporting and analytics far easier since it becomes a matter of asking questions rather than drop down lists and buttons or manipulating and visualizing data directly. Generative AI gets even more valuable when it can offer guidance and recommendations in connection with other AI machine learning capabilities. For example, it can help you develop frontline managers and leaders and improve the employee experience to drive organizational success. It can also uncover unique insights about a workforce and allow you to better serve their specific needs.

4 How do those benefits specifically impact frontline workers?

Imagine an exhausted nurse working a double shift. Instead of heading back to the nurses' station, logging in to her account, searching manually for her time off balance, she could simply pull out her mobile device and ask, "Do I have enough time off left to request Friday off?" This saves time, boosts productivity, preserves well-being, and reduces frustration from complex processes.

That's just the start. For frontline workers, if you're using a best-in-class workforce management

system, you have a huge advantage: numerical workforce activity data. That data gives generative AI tools the foundation to deliver insights and recommendations. For example, frontline employees can get proactive advice on open shifts, preferences, financial benefits, scheduling to prevent burnout, and other valuable, in-the-moment information. Frontline managers can ask simple questions and get instant answers, helping them focus on what matters for their teams, and improve their leadership strategies with meaningful benchmarks for team culture, career development, hiring practices, performance evaluation, and more.

Should people be worried about AI?

Not if they start with the goal of building trust and improving support for the workforce. Generative AI isn't going to save you money and improve your strategic results because it replaces people – instead, it's going to do those things because it makes visible what you need to do to take your relationship with your people from good to great and enable them to succeed.

What concerns around bias and ethics should organizations be aware of with AI?

Like many generations of emerging AI tech before, generative AI requires a clear set of ethical standards to operate in a way that truly serves people, and as a result, improves the business. The quality of the data makes a big difference: Maintaining high standards for the data that feeds the AI means the tools will be less likely to arrive at incorrect or unethical solutions. Ensure that the technology partners you're working with adhere to a clear and public set of ethical guidelines for how they engage with this technology – look for keywords like fairness, inclusiveness, transparency/interpretability, privacy/security standards, reliability, and safety.

What is HR's role in AI?

HR has an incredible opportunity to enhance workforce performance and achieve significant efficiency and strategic impact through generative AI. By becoming the trust leader and the holder of the culture strategy for AI use, HR can empower employees to go beyond self-service to self-actualization in their daily work. Employees can see clear career paths and get coaching on reaching their career goals, while leaders can inspire their teams with relevant facts and instant visibility into available resources and appropriate policies that support them. They can apply data in a meaningful way across the workforce to answer questions and show people the impact they can have.

Are we replacing jobs or adding a teammate?

The reality is there are less workers available today than there were yesterday, and that's going to continue. There are also fewer people of working age choosing to participate in the workforce. AI helps employers to overcome those macro trends by becoming an aide to existing employees to help retain them, augment their capabilities, and boost their performance. It can also help bring some hidden workers into the picture by revealing skills and competencies through non-traditional avenues and overcoming bias in recruiting processes. As a result, it might add more people back into the mix.

Should employers try to be the first to adopt generative AI in their respective industries?

Getting a handle on generative AI and identifying use cases quickly will pay bigger dividends if you get your organization in on the early side, but always remember to ensure you're applying it in the right ways. We're learning that the investment and growth with generative AI technology looks different than what we're used to – the returns may not be as immediate, but if you invest early, you'll likely see exponential value once it's woven into your operations.

What's one generative AI use case to focus on today?

Keep it simple. Look for ways AI can help you keep your eye on the ball strategically. For instance, see how you can use it to connect benchmarks from real employee feedback, like Great Place To Work's millions of employee responses, to your organization's specific workforce activity trends to build cultures of trust and belonging and uncover what greatness really looks like for your specific organization.

An example of this would be a senior leader being able to ask something like, "How can I improve retention?" directly in their HR technology platform and receiving a response that captures both what's happening right now in the workforce and how those results stack up against what retention looks like at the best workplaces in their industry. Beyond that, with the right generative AI solution involved, the leader should also receive curated options for how to improve retention, such as best practice articles, directional guidance, and pointers on what can be adjusted in their systems.

With those benchmarks under your belt, it enables you to lean in in the right ways for your people – deploying generative AI to nudge managers in the right directions, empowering employees to develop and grow, supporting and relieving pressure on frontline workers, and showing leadership how HR is moving the needle on strategic goals by deepening the focus on culture.

When you leverage high-quality, trusted data and apply it ethically and transparently, organizations can use generative AI to foster a culture of trust, boost productivity, and create engaging, supportive environments for all employees. Generative AI can change our workplaces for the better as long as we use it responsibly. ■

Keen Hahn is a Product Marketing Manager at UKG and plays a key role in shaping cross-vertical content and messaging strategies. Keen is passionate about connecting HR and payroll professionals with innovative ideas to address the latest industry challenges, focusing on people-first strategies and solutions.

1.   United Nations, 2019. "2019 Revision of World Population Prospects." United Nations website, https://population.un.org/wpp2019/.

ARE EVACUATION DRILLS MANDATORY TO MEET OSHA TRAINING REQUIREMENTS?

BY STRATEGICHR

EXIT

According to the OSHA Training Requirements, is it mandatory that your organization conducts practice evacuation drills as part of annual training?

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) does not require employers to conduct drills at a certain frequency. However, it is recommended as part of a comprehensive Emergency Action Plan, which is required. OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.38(a) outlines the requirement for written documentation, planning, and training for workplace emergencies, and as an employer, preparing for the "worst case" is something you should want to do. In today's world—where we've seen an increase in active shooter incidents, unpredictable weather patterns, and wildfires—emergency preparedness will allow you and your employees to have a plan in place should you be impacted by some type of potentially hazardous situation.

HOW TO PREPARE EMPLOYEES FOR WORKPLACE EMERGENCIES

Employers should consider evacuation plans as one small part of the required Emergency Action Plan and use them as the opportunity to practice. The drills could include evacuation due to a fire, chemical leak, or even a shelter in place in the event of an external chemical emergency.

OSHA's Evacuation and Procedures eTool provides step-by-step guidance to help you prepare your workplace for potential emergencies. Once you have a plan in place, OSHA recommends that you review the plan with employees and hold practice drills "as often as necessary." It is also advised to include outside resources, such as fire and police departments when possible. OSHA recommends that after each drill, you assess the effectiveness of the drill (and the plan) and make adjustments as needed.

HOW TO MEET OSHA TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Workplace safety training will vary depending on the type of business. Here are some important points to consider when deciding what types of training your employees need to meet OSHA Training Requirements and Standards:

- Educate your employees about the types of emergencies that may occur and train them in the proper course of action.

- The size of your workplace and workforce, processes used, materials handled, and the availability of on-site or outside resources will determine your training requirements.

- Be sure all your employees understand the function and elements of your emergency action plan, including types of potential emergencies, reporting procedures, alarm systems, evacuation plans, and shutdown procedures.

- Discuss any special hazards you may have on-site, such as flammable materials, toxic chemicals, radioactive sources, or water-reactive substances.

- Clearly communicate to your employees who will be in charge during an emergency to minimize confusion.

It's a good idea to keep a record of all safety and health training. Documentation can also supply an answer to one of the first questions an incident investigator will ask: "Did the employee receive adequate training to do the job?"

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN RESOURCES

OSHA has a number of outstanding resources to assist you in your planning process for an Emergency Action Plan, as well as all the required OSHA standards. Free resources to help you with your safety training plans can be found in OSHA's Training Resources Library, which outlines all of OSHA's training-related requirements in one place.

Keep in mind that although drills are not required, a well-developed emergency plan with proper training (including drills) will result in fewer injuries and less confusion and chaos during an emergency. A well-organized response will help you, your employees, and your business to be in the best position to effectively handle an emergency. ■

Strategic Human Resources is a national full-service HR management firm based in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 2021, it joined Clark Schaefer Hackett Business Advisors to lead key HR solutions. The president and founder of StrategicHR, Robin Throckmorton, can be reached at robin@strategichrinc.com.

The Quiet Power of the Introverted Leader

BY JAMES MOUL

When you picture a leader, who comes to mind? Likely someone charismatic, outspoken, and commanding a room with ease. But leadership doesn't always look—or sound—like that. In fact, some of the most effective leaders may not be the loudest voices in the room. Introverted leaders bring a quiet strength to the workplace, one that often goes unnoticed but has a profound impact on teams and organizations.

Thoughtful Decision-Making

Introverted leaders are known for their reflective nature. Rather than making snap decisions, they take the time to gather information, think critically, and weigh all sides before reaching a conclusion. This thoughtful approach leads to more well-rounded decisions and avoids the pitfalls of impulsivity. The lesson? Slowing down and carefully considering your options can lead to more successful outcomes in the long run.

Deep Listening

Ever noticed how some leaders seem to really hear you? Introverts excel at active listening, giving their full attention to what's being said without the need to dominate the conversation. This builds trust with their teams, fosters collaboration, and encourages more open communication. The takeaway: Sometimes, the most powerful thing a leader can do is simply listen—really listen—to their people.

Leading by Example

Introverted leaders often lead through action rather than words. They model behaviors they want to see in others, demonstrating hard work, empathy, and integrity. This quiet form of leadership creates a strong, stable foundation for their teams, showing that leadership isn't always about being the loudest or the most visible. The lesson here? Leading by example speaks volumes, even when you don't.

In a fast-paced, ever-changing workplace, we often celebrate the extroverts who can rally a room and energize a crowd. But let's not forget the quiet power of introverted leaders. They may not always be the loudest voices, but they lead with depth, purpose, and clarity—qualities that can inspire us all to lead in our own unique way. ■

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

RECIPE

Butternut Squash and Sage Risotto

This creamy risotto with roasted butternut squash, fresh sage, and Parmesan is a cozy, flavorful dish perfect for any occasion.

YIELD: 4 servings **TIME:** 40 minutes

INGREDIENTS:
- 12 oz spaghetti (or your favorite pasta)
- 1 lb large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- 1/4 cup white wine or chicken broth
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Grated Parmesan cheese for serving (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

1. **Roast the squash**
   Toss squash with 1 tablespoon of olive oil, salt, and pepper. Roast at 400°F (200°C) for 25 minutes, until tender.

2. **Cook the risotto**
   Heat broth in a saucepan. In a skillet, sauté onion and garlic in butter and remaining olive oil. Add rice and toast for 2 minutes. If using, add white wine and cook until absorbed.

3. **Add broth**
   Stir in warm broth one ladle at a time, letting it absorb before adding more. Continue for 18-20 minutes, until rice is creamy and al dente.

4. **Combine and serve**
   Stir in roasted squash, sage, and Parmesan. Season to taste and serve hot.

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