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HR NEWS



**Developing New Capabilities
in Today's Hybrid Workplace**

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Developing New Capabilities in Today's Hybrid Workplace

Since I started working on IPMA-HR publications in June, I've had the pleasure of interviewing some of your peers. All of them share one thing in common: They value learning and are continually climbing the lattice to a successful career in public sector HR. I use the term "lattice" instead of ladder because it's a more holistic, creative visual. It allows for a customized approach to how each professional navigates the framework of their own development and growth.

Accomplished individuals stay active. They gain knowledge and motivation from a variety of avenues and sources. Some attend webinars and courses, while others experience the IPMA-HR Annual Conference (September 28-30 in Washington, D.C., this year, and in person for the first time in three years!). Others crowdsource for vital information from their colleagues on the IPMA-HR platform, Engage. And, yes, some manage to go above and beyond, and they earn respect by getting IPMA-CP certified in the process!

It doesn't really matter how you develop new capabilities in today's hybrid workplace. The key is that you develop them. No government employee (city, state or federal) can afford to stay idle without being left in the dust.

It's a complicated, multigenerational workforce with high expectations and a low tolerance for unpreparedness. They expect authorities to know what they're doing and how to do it. What a concept!

This September issue of *HR News* has eight features that cover critical human capital issues. How do you satisfy the needs of a diverse employee population? You begin by listening to what they tell you is important. What's the No. 1 predictor of job satisfaction? Personal accomplishment. That may seem intuitive, but many organizations and managers fail to emphasize how the civil servant's work is valued, valuable and honorable. (See "Top 10 Predictors of Federal Employee Job Satisfaction," the first in a two-part article series.)

Behavioral science may not be a subject you contemplate in your day-to-day work life but learning about it may help you advance diversity and minimize bias in hiring. For example, to fill vacant job slots, have you considered encouraging your employees to act as workplace ambassadors to their alma maters or communities? Leveraging these social connections may welcome underrepresented candidates to apply for open positions. (See

It's a complicated, multigenerational workforce with high expectations and a low tolerance for unpreparedness. They expect authorities to know what they're doing and how to do it. What a concept!

"How Behavioral Science Can Help Advance Diversity and Minimize Bias in Hiring.")

We all know that the pandemic has significantly transformed the workplace and how people interact, but what has it done to the learning and development paradigm? While hard skills and upskilling remain integral to the efficient, mission-critical operations of an organization, the enrichment of soft skills, such as emotional intelligence, communication and decision-making, is more valuable now than ever. (See "3 Consequential Soft Skills That Should Be Part of Your Post-Pandemic Learning & Development Curriculum.")

Other highlights from this month's issue include informative discussions on how to bring women back to the fold, why you should consider boomerang employees as one solution to the Great Recession, and how to prepare for a Gen Z workplace.

We all know it's hard to play workplace superhero every day, but if you're looking for a shot of courage and two sips of inspiration, read this month's member spotlight on Malena Murray, MSHR, IPMA-SCP, the HR director for Draper City, Utah. Her mantra ("embrace change") really does say it all.

Dan Cafaro
Dan Cafaro
Editor



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Coming up in the October issue of
HR NEWS

**Recruiting, Hiring and
Promoting Without Bias**

FEATURES



6

Top 10 Predictors of Federal Employee Job Satisfaction



8

How Behavioral Science Can Help Advance Diversity and Minimize Bias in Hiring



10

3 Consequential Soft Skills That Should Be Part of Your Post-Pandemic Learning & Development Curriculum



12

How to Bring Women Back to Work



14

Are Boomerang Employees the Solution to the Great Recession?



16

How to Create a Recovery-Friendly Workplace



18

Employee Feedback: How 360s Can Improve Performance



20

Preparing for a Gen Z Workplace

3

From the Editor

26

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Malena Murray, MSHR, IPMA-SCP

DEPARTMENTS

22 VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

27 CALENDAR

29 MEMBERSHIP MATTERS



Top 10 Predictors of Federal Employee Job Satisfaction

By Gerome Q. Banks, Ed.D., MBA

*Editor's Note: This is the first in a two-part article series that analyzes U.S. Office of Personnel Management's **2019** and **2021 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey**, respectively. The author did not consider using 2020 data for this series because there was a great deal of confusion and flux in the federal government when COVID-19 started. The author contends that 2019 data is much more stable and reliable than 2020. In the following analysis and regression, the author uses the actual response data set, not the summary information that is linked. A version of this article was originally published on LinkedIn. Stay tuned for a 2021 OPM FEVS analysis in October.*

The U.S. federal government boasts approximately 2.1 million employees worldwide, according to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's FedScope database. In fact, it has long been touted as the largest employer in the country, closely followed by Walmart, per most accounts.

As federal human capital agencies together work on part of the Biden-Harris President's Management Agenda, organizations such as OPM, U.S. Office of Management and Budget, and the Chief Human Capital Officers Council collaborate on workforce hiring **reforms**. Still, little has been done to address and nurture the motivations of the millions of federal employees who work to maintain our national security and public safety.

After all, if prompt, decisive action is not taken to address federal employees' motivators, the integrity of our government and its ability to retain key talent will soon be obsolete. As the U.S. federal workforce becomes older, on average, and the federal government struggles to attract, develop and retain top talent during what appears to be a countrywide employment resignation, many have started to ask the question: *What exactly do federal employees want?*

To help answer the question of what motivates the federal employee workforce, the following is a list of the top 10 predictors

Figure 1: Top 10 Predictors of Federal Employee Job Satisfaction

1	My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.
2	I like the kind of work I do.
3	How satisfied are you with your involvement in decisions that affect your work?
4	My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues.
5	How satisfied are you with your opportunity to get a better job in your organization?
6	My talents are used well in the workplace.
7	How satisfied are you with the policies and practices of your senior leaders?
8	Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your pay?
9	Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes.
10	How satisfied are you with the recognition you receive for doing a good job?

of federal employee job satisfaction, in order of importance, based on a quantitative analysis of a random sample of responses to OPM's 2019 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (See Figure 1).

1. Personal Accomplishment

Personal accomplishment is the No. 1 predictor of job satisfaction. Federal employees, like all of us, value feeling good about what they do—organizations and managers should emphasize how the civil servant's work is valued, valuable and honorable. For most organizations, this requires little effort—public service motivation is a tremendous indicator of not only likelihood to serve in government, but also success and sense of accomplishment. The following predictors will help organizations ensure they're getting the most out of already dedicated and talented employees.

2. Liking What One Does

Like personal accomplishment, liking the work one does is a significant predictor of job satisfaction. What does that mean for federal managers? It means, *pay attention*. If an employee doesn't particularly like their work, don't ignore it. Find out how to make the job more engaging for your employees by having open lines of communication. If possible, adjust tasks or responsibilities to accommodate employee preferences. Of course, that doesn't mean the work will always be fun, but as Mark Twain once posited, "Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life." Just make sure there's a *fit* between the federal employee and the work. And remember, it's not just a job in federal employment, it's a calling.

3. Involvement in Decisions That Affect Work

This is directly out of the Leadership 101 playbook. "Buy-in" demonstrates that you trust your employees and value their input. According to a 2018 Forbes [article](#), "How to Encourage Employee Involvement in Decision Making," there are many ways to effectively include employee participation and support, including suggestion boxes, surveys, and influential committees that report directly to senior leaders. After all, employees have the intimate knowledge of the organization's operational details and will be more than happy to share their perspectives, if given an open and honest opportunity.

4. Work-Life Balance

Now, more so than ever, employees of all ages understand the value of balancing work with life and are exhibiting a low threshold for organizations that fail to understand and deliver on a common-sense equilibrium. It was long thought that the five generations currently occupying the workplace contributed to starkly different work-life value systems. However, common values have emerged across generations in the workplace: to varying degrees among generations, work-life balance has appeared as a critical factor in retaining talent, while alternate (or flexible) work schedules and remote work (or telework) are important ways to achieve better balance for many employees, regardless of generation.

5. Opportunities for Promotion

Many federal employees are perfectly happy in their current position, and some would not mind staying in one key job for a lifetime. However, ambitious federal employees want to know that there are real, competitive opportunities to advance in the organization—and it shows in the impact to civil servants' job satisfaction. Organizations that recruit, access, develop, and retain relevant talent have a distinct advantage in employee career development by preparing for and providing opportunities for promotion.

6. Well-Used Talents

Nothing is more frustrating than underemployment in a job beneath an employee's capabilities and potential. Not surprisingly, employees who are mentally unchallenged are not as satisfied with their work as they could be. Talents should be assessed against organizational strategic goals, then key positions filled with high-potential, high-performing employees. Offering opportunities to grow and stretch employees' capabilities could be as simple as presenting broadening or developmental assignments, mentorship programs, or targeted training and educational opportunities.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24



How Behavioral Science Can Help Advance Diversity and Minimize Bias in Hiring

By Michelle DiMartino, Michael Hallsworth, Yesenia Martinez, and Lila Tublin

Diverse workplaces typically are more innovative and accurate, and they outperform homogeneous workplaces. It's no wonder the public sector is striving to advance diversity in hiring. In 2021, the Biden administration issued an executive order mandating a more diverse federal workforce. Many state and local government employers have dedicated diversity and inclusion programs as well. But progress is slow-going.

According to a 2021 report by NeoGov, Black talent comprises 13 percent of the total U.S. workforce, but makes up 28 percent of public sector job candidates. However, even though a larger proportion of Black people apply for public service positions, they are hired below their application rate, while White candidates are hired above their application rate.

Clearly, racial bias and inequitable systems contribute to this gap. Strategies such as structured interviews and hiding applicants'

identities during reviews are common methods used to address this bias. But what about these strategies makes them effective? The science behind them can help HR professionals understand why and when they work and make the case for including them in their organization's hiring protocol.

What Is Behavioral Science?

Behavioral science is the study of human behavior and the ways that our actions are shaped by environmental and contextual factors. A behavioral insights approach combines evidence about behavior with rigorous evaluation to discover solutions to practical issues, like minimizing racial bias in hiring.

A common application of behavioral insights is called an intervention or "nudge." A nudge is any aspect of the choice

architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives.

The goal of a nudge is to arrange choices so that beneficial behaviors are more likely. For instance, imagine a grocery store where people overlook the fruit because it is tucked away on an inconspicuous shelf, and buy less of it than they would have if it was at the front of the store. If the fruit is put at eye level, it is more likely to be selected; placing it there would count as a nudge.

The public sector faces more nuanced barriers to building a diverse workforce. For example, unconscious racial bias can result in hiring managers favoring applicants with White-sounding names over those with Black-sounding names. A behavioral insights approach can take these kinds of factors into account and inform a realistic strategy to help address them, such as anonymously assessing applicants.

Using Behavioral Insights to Increase Workforce Diversity

There are many opportunities to test and innovate HR practices to ensure they are effectively addressing barriers related to diversity. By using evidence about why people act the way they do, public sector employers can design and implement policies that embed racial equity throughout the hiring process.

Our organization, The Behavioral Insights Team (BIT), has distilled the growing body of evidence from behavioral science into four key principles for encouraging a given behavior, a framework we call EAST: Make it Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely.

With our partners at the Volcker Alliance and support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, we reviewed existing evidence on strategies to minimize bias in hiring and recruitment and elevated the most promising ideas for government employers to advance diversity.

Make It Easy: Compare Applicants Directly

To decide which applicants should advance to the next stage of the hiring process, **assess one application element at a time across a group of candidates** instead of reviewing entire applications in isolation. Ideally, this should be done in batches. For instance, for a batch of five applications with a free-form question, reviewers should assess all five answers in succession to evaluate the quality of each applicant's response.

The behavioral barrier this strategy helps overcome is our

unintentional tendency to use stereotypes. Research shows that evaluators are more likely to rely on stereotypes when reviewing candidates in isolation rather than comparing them to one another. For example, when assessing whether a female employee is ready for a promotion, gender stereotypes may lead her to receive a worse evaluation than men. By directly comparing candidates, hiring managers rely less on intuitive judgments and may find it easier to be more deliberate in their assessment.

Make It Attractive: Craft a Genuine Diversity Statement

To attract a more racially diverse pool of candidates, **signal your agency's genuine commitment to cultivating a diverse and inclusive work culture on recruitment materials**. When considering whether to apply for a job, underrepresented job seekers look for signs that an employer truly values diversity.

Evidence from the corporate sector shows promise for addressing this barrier through honest, thoughtfully crafted statements. A Fortune 500 company explicitly signaled its interest in employee diversity in recruitment communications. This resulted in more than double the indicated interest in openings among racial minority candidates, increasing the likelihood that they would apply and get selected for a job.

Like many strategies to advance diversity in hiring, more research is needed to fully determine this intervention's impact. However, we know that there is a risk of including the standard Equal Employment Opportunity statement alone in a job posting. Research shows that potential applicants may interpret the generic message as a sign that employers are looking for people of color as token hires. Application rates among minority candidates may decrease as a result.

Make It Social: Engage Relevant Messengers

An important concept in behavioral science is that who delivers a message can affect whether people act on the communication or not. **Government agencies should engage employees as workplace ambassadors to their alma maters or communities from which they would like more applicants**. Leveraging these social connections may welcome underrepresented candidates to apply for open positions.

People tend to act on messages communicated by those who they see as credible, expert, or similar to themselves. Researchers have seen this play out in a study where they found that portraying

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

3 Consequential Soft Skills That Should Be Part of Your Post-Pandemic Learning & Development Curriculum

By Suzanne McCall

The pandemic has significantly transformed the workplace and how people interact. It has also transformed the learning and development (L&D) paradigm and its course of curriculum. Before the pandemic, L&D had been weighted toward “training” the tactical. It now must be transformed to balance skilling and upskilling with the soft skills needed to survive and thrive in a fluid corporate ecosystem with team members who are often disconnected by time and space. Today’s evolving hybrid workplace environment demands the learning and development of totally new capabilities and techniques for employees to be able to effectively communicate and work together from a variety of locations and across a diversity of generations and backgrounds.

Management skills are affected, too. Because we don’t have enterprise leadership and managers “walking the floor” anymore, they will need to learn and adopt new techniques to accomplish critical tasks more effectively, such as:

- Communicating
- Mentoring
- Fostering employee interaction
- Building corporate culture
- Delivering praise and criticism
- Obtaining feedback
- Brainstorming
- Supervising—approving work, catching errors and providing tips.

Today’s evolving hybrid workplace environment demands the learning and development of totally new capabilities.

It’s not just leadership that needs to learn skills for the new environment. Virtually every employee must reorient and enhance their skills. As important as hard skills and upskilling are to improving the efficiency and profitability of an organization, the enrichment of soft skills is more valuable now than ever in helping to center people and give them the ability and confidence they need to participate successfully in this new environment.

We have identified three main categories of soft skills that should guide the evolution of learning and development designed to help employees more effectively engage in today’s workplace environment:

1. **Emotional intelligence.** Emotional intelligence continues to be an important part of leadership and culture. Note the following definition of emotional intelligence that is highly relevant in today’s workplace: the ability to identify and regulate one’s own emotions, to recognize the emotions of other people and feel empathy toward them, to manage stress and to use these abilities to communicate effectively and build



healthy, productive relationships with others. In today's hybrid environment, care must be taken so as not to let technology and distance get in the way of connecting and of being connected to the organization and to its culture.

Without emotional intelligence, management now having less control over a work-from-home environment can lead to frustrations and negativity. Skills must be learned to enhance understanding, empathy, self-awareness, patience, connectedness and enthusiasm within the organization.

2. **Communication.** Effective communication in a hybrid world consists of two parts: having the skills to communicate the messages and knowing how to best utilize the latest technology to communicate. Learning and sharpening effective communication skills is especially valuable where proficiency in media, tools, techniques, etiquette, protocol, messaging, interaction and more will enhance communication success for the individual, helping strengthen relationships and get things done.
3. **Decision-making.** In today's hybrid work environment, methods that management use for collecting data and analyzing it to make management decisions have changed dramatically. Because the team is no longer in literal view of the manager, a manager needs to learn and develop new techniques to maintain that "view." For example, are metrics such as PTO use, clocking

in, and absenteeism even relevant? Learning new methods for identifying and collecting relevant data, analyzing it, and then making decisions that are pertinent to this environment are leadership skills that must be updated to lead to organizational success.

Although soft skills may be more difficult to quantify when calculating a return on investment, data suggests that learning new metrics to use may demonstrate soft skill value. For example, a number of studies have shown that employees actually place a higher value on learning soft skills because they perceive them to be in the area of self-improvement, that is, life skills they can use both in the workplace and in their personal lives. Using the metric of lowered employee turnover, in place of profitability or efficiency metrics, will more accurately validate soft skill learning and development's true value: the critical role it plays in moving the enterprise forward.

Suzanne McCall is a senior learning and development consultant at [Pinnacle Group](#). She has worked with a diverse roster of industries and clients in the areas of organizational development, leadership development, emerging leader development, team building, communication and other transformational organizational and management education and training. —*NC*



How to Bring Women Back to Work

By Leah Reynolds

Employers continue to see high turnover levels and are struggling to attract and retain employees as many workers realize they now have the upper hand in directing their careers.

Or at least, male workers do.

While it's true that women's participation rate in the workplace has shown some signs of recovery since hitting a low of 57 percent in January, [federal data](#) shows that the share of women working or looking for jobs remains depressed relative to 2019.

Additional data from Stanford's [RAPID Survey](#) showed that, by February 2022, 39 percent of women caregivers had left the workforce or reduced their work hours since the pandemic began—and it was less likely to be due to employer-initiated changes like layoffs and demotions than earlier in the pandemic.

The reason? The brunt of caring for children while working from home or tackling shift work during the pandemic fell almost exclusively on women. Burnout rates climbed as women either shifted to less demanding work or simply dropped out of the workforce. In two-parent families there is often a lack of support for the woman while the man pursues his career. And employers continue to show a hiring bias against those with long gaps in service, while still not providing equal opportunity and pay for women.

Fewer COVID cases, the reopening of schools and child care

facilities, and the resurgence of sectors like leisure, hospitality and health services are all factors that can contribute to “getting women back to work,” but it's up to employers to meet women halfway.

Retention, Recruitment and ‘Returns’

Employers facing a staffing shortage can do a lot to retain, and even boost, their female employees. Progressive employers will have to own up to providing support and incentives for women to reenter the workforce.

Paramount in achieving this is removing bias from the recruitment process. Map out the recruitment-retention strategy. Job postings should be written to emphasize inclusiveness, and interviewers and hiring managers will need unconscious-bias training, supported by a clear performance management system. Be sure to post salary ranges for positions—this signals that the employer is committed to fair pay and helps showcase your commitment to gender parity.

Employers could consider “returnships”—phased return-to-work programs to re-onboard women returning as new parents or those with gaps in their work histories due to caregiving and family obligations. And to help keep female talent from leaving, organizations should conduct “stay conversations” promoting flexible

work arrangements that support and balance family needs with productivity requirements.

Flex Time, or Even a Four-Day Workweek

Paid time-off policies are equally critical. Women are often primary caregivers in their families, and employers need to be more understanding of situations beyond the employee's control. Parental leave should be broadened: 84 percent of new mothers with six weeks of paid leave return to their employer, while only 56 percent of those with under six weeks of leave do so. Consider expanding parental leave to be a family care leave to give people the time needed to attend to ill family members whether on an intermittent or continuous basis.

Additionally, flex time, remote working, and predictable hours give employers a further avenue to success in keeping women working and combat female “self-extraction” to part-time jobs. Organizations that really push beyond the norm are going to win with women in the future. Studies show that male-female diversity improves organizational outcomes, and those organizations that attract (or re-attract) women to the workforce will win across the board.

An emerging U.S. practice is the flex workweek or four-day workweek. According to a study by workplace equity firm [Syndio](#), 68.5 percent of those with children at home rated having a flexible work schedule as more important now than it was pre-COVID, and 70 percent of those were women. [Himalayas](#), a remote-work job posting site, noted that 109 organizations have adopted the four-day workweek in 2022. For example, Panasonic, Microsoft Japan and Lockheed Martin each have a variety of flex schedules in place, including a four-day week.

Goals and Resources

If the organization hasn't already developed and established goals around female leadership, do so. This is not necessarily a quota system, but a proactive step that puts promotion to senior positions in the spotlight for women.

Further steps organizations can take to actively bolster the voices of women in the workplace:

- Provide employee resource and support groups at work for all women.
- Create mommy clubs and grief recovery programs.
- Institute mentoring, career mapping, and leadership programs for all career levels to bring women to the table.
- Consider permitting sabbaticals for career growth.

Employers should look at increased cross-training and certification initiatives to improve skill sets and present opportunities to traditionally “male-dominated” hourly jobs that are paid higher (e.g., warehouse and construction jobs).

Better Benefits: What Women Workers Really Want

Beyond PTO and flex working policies, employers can offer benefits that go a long way toward supporting the working realities of women.

Even in the absence of a similar federal commitment, an employer should commit to fair wages (for example, establishing a minimum wage of \$15, regardless of federal, state or local mandates), and pay transparency. Prevent interview questions around current pay levels and conduct frequent pay equity audits to stay on top of the market.

Many progressive employers already offer a range of employee benefits that support working mothers, including:

- Child care and elder care benefits
- Support for pregnancy such as financial assistance for fertility, fostering and surrogacy
- Private spaces for milk expressing and/or nursing, and breast milk shipments when on business travel
- On-site day care
- Family support memberships, like Maven
- An employee assistance program that is known and accessible
- Financial planning especially geared to women
- Life planning accounts that provide cash to employees to use as needed.

Clear Communication Is Key

Organizations need to honestly assess their employee value proposition (EVP) from a woman's perspective. Dig into your data to clearly see the generational makeup of your female workforce, where they are in their careers, and where there are gaps between the needs of women and what your organization offers. Be prepared to realign the EVP to highlight the benefits—beyond but including pay—that will appeal to the talent you need.

Then shout it from the rooftops. Create an open, clear communication strategy that presents the case for recruiting and retaining women, sharing stories about the women in your workplace. Consider creating a handbook with the resources in one place with a lens specific to women, at career and life milestones, for easy access and utilization. Celebrate the contributions of the women in your organization, internally as much as in the outside world.

With the right mix of ideas, thoughtfully and clearly communicated, women will want to come work with you—and stay.

Leah Reynolds is a principal in the engagement practice at [Buck](#), an integrated HR consulting, technology and benefits administration services firm. —



Are Boomerang Employees the Solution to the Great Recession?

By Paul Lewis

Boomerang employees are a phenomenon on the rise across the United States. The term is commonly used to describe anyone who has been re-hired to work at an organization they previously left. Despite the growing trend, HR professionals are often left wondering whether rehiring old employees is an effective solution to the current uncertain labor market, or whether it is more trouble than it's worth.

HR leaders are battling huge problems, such as smaller budgets for recruitment, more open jobs than unemployed talent, and the infamous “Great Resignation,” which is leading to high turnover rates. It's a difficult time, but can these recruitment woes be alleviated by rehiring former employees?

The Rise of Boomerang Employees

According to LinkedIn, boomerang employees accounted for 4.5% of all new hires last year, compared with 3.9% in 2019. What is the reason behind this growth?

The first place to start is its link with the Great Resignation. Employees increasingly know what they want and are willing to leave an organization if it doesn't match their needs and desires. This is reinforced by a shift in priorities following the pandemic, when workers experienced and became accustomed to increased

flexibility. If an organization stopped offering flexibility following lockdowns, some employees responded by resigning. Concurrently, some employers have been particularly slow to announce their return to office (RTO) policies and the uncertainty has discouraged employees. If workers are aware that their previous employer has an RTO or flexible working policy more suited to their needs, becoming a boomerang employee becomes an attractive option.

Other factors are also at play here. Organizations with Covid policies and vaccination mandates may have seen large changes in their workforce. Big-name organizations, including American Express, Lyft and Goldman Sachs, have mandates in place to prevent unvaccinated workers from coming into the office. From the employee perspective, some workers, particularly vulnerable workers, are seeking organizations that prioritize protecting staff from COVID. If an employer isn't providing clear guidelines to protect employees, some staff will see this as a red flag. Again, if previous employers are offering what their current employers are lacking, employees may “boomerang.”

Technology is another reason behind the trend; in particular, the rise of social media and professional networking platforms. These ensure that former employees can keep in contact with their old colleagues and see how an organization is progressing over time. Ultimately, former employees are reminded of what they are missing out on, piquing their interest to want to rejoin.

Why Employers Should Welcome Back Boomerang Employees

The pandemic caused many people to leave the workforce due to circumstances out of their control, including their health, child care duties and home schooling. According to a survey by Pew Research Center, almost half of all workers who left a job in 2021 listed child care issues as a reason. Ultimately, workers in this situation are unlikely to hold negative feelings toward an organization and will feel optimistic about the chance to return.

It's also important to recognize that embracing boomerang employees is mutually beneficial. Returning employees will bring certain benefits to their return. An example of this is that they already understand the operation. Boomerang workers know the ins and outs of an organization and are a tried-and-tested cultural fit, including having existing relationships with colleagues and managers. During the Great Resignation, this is welcome news for hiring managers as returning employees, therefore, carry fewer risks, especially as the average cost-per-hire is \$4,425, according to SHRM.

The onboarding process is also a draw to welcome back returning employees. Boomerang employees bring previous knowledge and experience of an organization and its systems/processes, meaning a much-simplified onboarding process. Hiring managers don't need to provide the same extent of training and qualifications that a completely new employee would need. Typically, the hours that managers spend training their employees cost organizations an estimated average of \$1,252, according to ATD. Boomerang employees will get up to speed quicker and require less time input from colleagues and supervisors.

There are also the added benefits of an employee working at a different organization before returning. By working elsewhere, employees will have gained new skills and experiences, which can provide additional value to the organization they are rejoining. This may spark new ideas for the organization, and boomerang employees can also bring insights into what others in the market are doing. Additionally, returning employees have likely gained new connections and customers. Pre-existing contacts and relationships are likely to come as welcome news to the organization to which they are returning.

Finally, boomerang employees can have a domino effect on talent retention and attraction. When previous employees return, it's

evidence that an organization is worth returning to and a signal to current staff that the grass isn't always greener elsewhere. For entry-level employees, boomerang employees are an advertisement for good organization culture, benefits and work-life balance.

What Are the Risks?

Welcoming back boomerang employees is not risk-free. A lot can change in an organization in a short time, and returning employees may struggle to adapt. Some organizations believe that rehiring employees may lead to a higher turnover rate as other employees at the organization think that the door will always remain open, even if they leave.

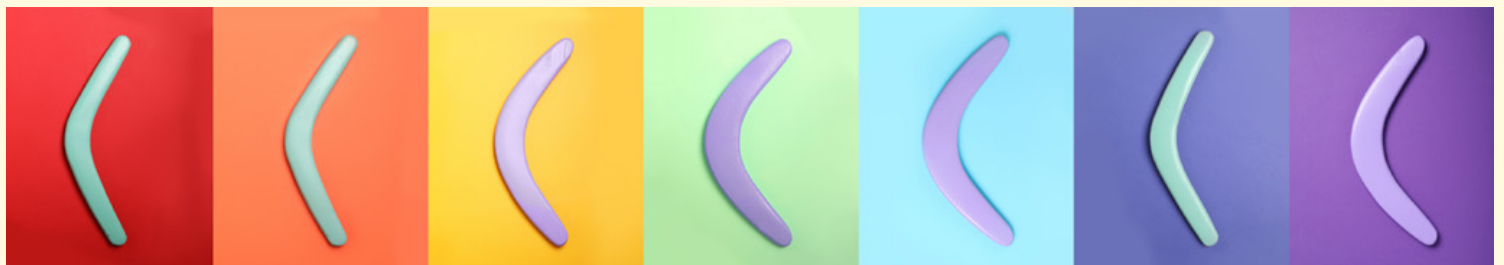
Another risk is that returning employees may hold grudges, either against a system, a person or a culture. If the organization or person has not moved on, it may be difficult for the boomerang employee to move past this, causing negative tension.

To combat this, employers should recognize the importance of a thorough offboarding process, including exit interviews. Rigorous exit processes can ensure that issues are uncovered earlier and will not come as a surprise if an individual decides to return to the organization.

Hiring managers should not be afraid to ask boomerang employees what they have done since leaving the organization or about any skills they have acquired. Interviews are a great time to ask questions about any unresolved issues and raise the question of why they want to return.

Overall, rehiring previous employees isn't a bad idea. The trend is happening across the country for a reason. In the age of the Great Resignation, hiring is becoming more challenging. With nearly twice as many job openings as unemployed Americans, competition for talent isn't going away anytime soon. By rehiring previous employees, organizations may find that they save a lot of money and time and gain loyal long-term employees.

Paul Lewis is chief customer officer at smarter job search engine Adzuna. He brings more than 20 years of experience scaling high-growth digital businesses and is responsible for growing Adzuna's audience of job seekers and helping them into new roles as the world gets back to work after the pandemic. —



How to Create a Recovery Friendly Workplace

By Cheryl Brown Merriwether

Leadership support and cultural safety fuel the workplace engine that empowers employees to identify, advocate for and drive workplace change. Since the racially charged 1960s, employee resource groups (ERGs) have been a valuable part of the workplace.

Joseph Wilson, founder of Xerox corporation, is credited with working with black employees to address discrimination that existed within the workplace. Not only did company leaders offer these employees support, but they provided a platform from which the employees could safely discuss their experiences.

From that time, and for approximately a half-century, employee-led resource groups have continued to multiply and thrive in the workplace. In fact, according to *Forbes magazine*, 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies sponsor ERGs and DiversityInc's Top 50 Companies for Diversity all have ERGs.

The names and purposes of these groups differ from company to company. Nevertheless, ERGs, Affinity, and Equity Groups are all company-sanctioned, employee led, have voluntary participation, and exist for the mutual benefit of the employees, the company and other key stakeholders. And, because many ERGs exist to promote and support a company's diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) goals, the connection between DEI initiatives and ERGs is firmly established.

Fast-forward to today. Employers and employees are learning to navigate in a post-pandemic VUCA world. Volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) are the new normal both inside and outside of the workplace. The result is an unprecedented mental, behavioral health, substance misuse and addiction crisis that affects everyone either directly or indirectly. According to a 2022 Mental Health America report, **50 million Americans are experiencing a mental illness** and more than **70% of illicit drug users are employed**. Substance misuse alone costs employers an estimated **\$81 billion annually in lost productivity**.

And, despite the fact that most mid- to large-size companies offer employee assistance programs (EAPs) to their employees, it is estimated that **only 4% of eligible employees use the services**. This underutilization, in part, may result from the fact that treatment providers and the supporting systems of care are stretched beyond capacity.

The *American Hospital Association* (AHA) recently reported that "the pandemic has intensified the unmet need for services and has led to heightened difficulties for individuals with behavioral health conditions in accessing care. ... More than 100 million Americans live in areas with shortages of psychiatrists ... and the shortage of psychiatrists and addiction counselors is expected to persist through 2030."

Given the insufficiency and inability of traditional services to meet the mental and behavioral needs of employees, what can empathetic employers do to help a hurting workforce?

In the spirit of DEI, one creative and emerging solution encourages employers to expand ERGs to promote participation by employees who may have "lived experience" or an interest in person-centered health and wellness issues, specifically those that focus on non-clinical mental and behavioral health, substance misuse, addiction and/or recovery issues.

Why would a company consider doing this? After all, according to the *Spring 2022 edition of HR Magazine*, burnout and exhaustion are widespread in HR, with 42 percent of teams struggling under the weight of too many projects and responsibilities.

The good news is that the help needed to implement this creative solution is already present in the workplace, just waiting to be "uncovered." Volunteers and willing helpers can be found among the **25 million people who are in recovery** in the United States. In addition to the existing recovery workforce, countless others are simply curious about mental health, substance misuse and addiction, and would like help to find answers to questions they



have about how to access resources for themselves, a co-worker, friend, family member or other acquaintance.

Several programs have a proven track record of success that could be easily adapted to ERGs. Examples include:

Recovery Friendly Workplace

The [Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative](#) began in New Hampshire under Gov. Chris Sununu. Recovery friendly workplaces now exist in more than [25 states](#). Recovery friendly workplaces encourage collaboration among government, employers, and other recovery care providers within a local community.

Recovery friendly workplaces recognize that individuals who are in recovery from substance use disorders possess incredible personal strengths and characteristics that, when tapped, can create positive change in workplace cultures by eliminating barriers for individuals whose lives have been impacted by addiction, mental illness or other behavioral health issues.

Recovery Supportive Workplace

[Recovery supportive workplaces](#) are less formal than recovery friendly workplaces. They do not require a formal collaboration between government entities and members of the business community (for example, a Chamber of Commerce), plus addiction or other treatment service providers.

A [recovery supportive workplace](#) could follow the example of companies like Salesforce, whose former regional vice president of enterprise service, [Marin Nelson](#), co-founded and promoted [Soberforce](#), an employee-led ERG, and [Belden](#), a cable manufacturing plant, located in Indiana, that created Pathways to Employment, a community-based solution that blends drug rehabilitation with the promise of employment for workers.

Peer Recovery Support

[Peer recovery support](#) is another low-cost, high-quality, evidence-based program that employers can implement. Peer recovery support services are provided by people who have “lived experience” with mental health, substance misuse or addiction, ultimately leading to a life of well-being and sustained recovery. The benefits of peer support groups are well documented and can be traced back to the establishment of such well known groups as [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) in 1935.

Today many peers receive formal training and certification, which makes them imminently qualified to help answer co-workers’ questions, or to assist others in navigating complex and confusing corporate or community-based systems of care.

Sober Curious Movement

The Sober Curious Movement was born in 2018 following the publication of [Ruby Warrington’s book, *Sober Curious*](#). “Sober

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK:

How 360s Can Improve Performance

By David G. Epstein, IPMA-SCP, SHRM-SCP, CWP, CDP

A 360-degree feedback program can be a powerful way of helping employees grow within their organization. Used successfully, it is a tool that increases engagement, identifies training opportunities, and helps employees develop in their own role and go on to succeed in a leadership role.

With a 360-degree assessment tool, employees receive anonymous feedback that can come from direct reports, indirect reports and vendors. Only feedback from their supervisor is not anonymous. 360s are used to measure performance, personal growth and development, or a combination of the two. In my organization, employees choose their raters, but our HR team reviews them and makes suggestions to ensure they are the appropriate choices.

To have a successful 360-degree feedback program, there are several key things to consider:

Make sure your CEO and senior leaders are on board. Leaders should understand the process, and ideally, go through it themselves so that they can relay a positive experience to other employees. In my organization, we started a 360-degree feedback program with the chair of the board, then piloted the program for the senior management team.

Ensure that it measures the core competencies needed to succeed. Create metrics that measure the core competencies needed to succeed within your organization and develop a 360-degree program based on that. Our metrics include business acumen, leadership ability and communication skills.

Have employees work with their coach to convert the 360 reports into an action plan.

The assessment should also be administered confidentially so that raters feel they can give honest, constructive feedback. One way to ensure confidentiality is by using an outside firm to administer a digital survey. Be sure to communicate to staff that only HR and the employee being evaluated will see the report.

Train all staff on the program so that the process is understood. Many organizations make the mistake of rolling out a program without proper training on providing constructive feedback. This can be a devastating setback. I train raters to give constructive feedback designed to help the person being evaluated grow professionally. For example, saying "It would be helpful to have more staff meetings that cover organizational objectives," is much more effective than, "My boss is a horrible communicator." The former is specific and focused on the area that needs work.



DEI and Competencies

When developing questions for 360s, it is important to reflect the competencies needed to succeed in an employee's role and within the organization. If competencies have not been developed yet, focus groups and surveys can help develop them, and ensure employee participation and engagement. It is also crucial to ensure that employees from across the organization are consulted, from a DEI perspective.

Ensure that it is used for the purpose of growth and development, not performance management. The 360 assessments should occur separately from performance and salary reviews. Having a purely developmental tool separate from promotions or raises prevents raters from overinflating feedback.

One way to emphasize growth and development is by providing post-360 coaching by internally trained HR staff or external coaches so that feedback can be discussed with participants in a safe environment. This stresses that the goal of the feedback is to identify areas of improvement and training and growth opportunities.

Some employees may be upset with some of the feedback, and they will look for an opportunity to reflect on areas that need to improve. A coach can help them focus on the issues they need to address and guide them through the 360-analysis report. An internal HR coach often is more effective because they know employees well. But for top executives, an external coach is ideal.

Create an action plan. Have employees work with their coach to convert the 360 reports into an action plan with steps to address the issues. For example, they may conclude that better communication is needed with direct reports. Part of the action plan may be to take specific training on communication skills or set up more meetings with their team.

Internal HR coaches should advise employees to train in the areas that they both agree need work. Coaches help identify courses and tools that help employees achieve their objectives. Coaches help an employee interpret the report *and* reflect on development opportunities, as well as the things in which they thrive.

Lean in. The 360-degree experience should be positive. It can even suggest to employees that they are ready to aim for that promotion! Above all, assessors should “walk the talk” and participate in their own 360 so that they can sing its praises and share how it has helped them.

Following these steps can help you implement and maintain a 360-degree feedback program that truly helps your organization and employees succeed.

David G. Epstein, IPMA-SCP, SHRM-SCP, CWP, CDP, is the director of human resources & talent strategy for Mobilization for Justice, Inc., in New York City. He is a certified wellness practitioner, a certified diversity professional, and a member of the American Counseling Association. —

Preparing for a Gen Z Workplace



By Steve McIntosh

A shift is taking place at work, and a new generation of workers is leading the way.

It's the much-talked-about Generation Z—digital natives who are eager to work and determined to make a difference by holding employers accountable for their value positioning and workplace culture.

Bridging the gap between generations in the workplace may be simpler than you think. To make your organization Gen Z-friendly, try these strategies.

Create a Culture of Belonging

Belonging is a critical human capital issue. The [2020 Global Human Capital Trends report](#) found that 79 percent of

respondents said a sense of belonging in the workplace was important to their organization's success within the next year to 18 months.

That's why it's particularly alarming—and relevant—that [a study from EY](#) reports 40 percent of U.S. employees feel physically and emotionally isolated when they're excluded at work. Even worse, Gen Z can be particularly susceptible to loneliness in the workplace, according to the [CIGNA US Loneliness index](#).

Everything we do at CareerPoint is based on eight drivers of value. Think of them as the atomic elements of employee value—a framework you could use to analyze almost anything in relation to HR or career advancement. Create a culture of belonging at your workplace using two value drivers: Impact on Morale and Relationships.

To keep Gen Z employees on track, consider incentives for learning and professional development opportunities.

Impact on Morale

Managers set the tone and create the culture within their workplaces. Sometimes, leaders think so much about correcting mistakes that they forget to praise employees of all ages for the good work they do. Make sure to give positive feedback along with constructive criticism. Empower all employees to show vulnerability at work, and show that you care about them as people, not just workers. Compassion and empathy raise morale, and happy employees are more productive.

Relationships

Form positive relationships with your employees and co-workers. Be an active listener, and create trust built on those conversations. Intentionally include those who may be left out of office life for whatever reason. And don't forget remote workers! While they may not be physically present in the office, you can check in for a coffee break or create a team chat that encourages remote workers to participate in office culture and rituals.

Of course, these tips can be applied to all of your employees. But creating an office culture is all-encompassing and takes the buy-in of each employee to make it work. An office culture of belonging makes your company attractive to all ages—especially Gen Z. Gen Z is [the most diverse generation in U.S. history](#), and they expect to see that reflected in the workplace.

Offer Continuing Education Opportunities

About 76 percent of Gen Z employees connect learning to career progress—more than other generations, according to the [LinkedIn 2021 Workplace Learning Report](#). LinkedIn separately found that nearly half (43 percent) of Gen Z learners reported a preference for [fully self-directed and independent learning](#).

These research findings establish that Gen Z values a strong learning culture. So, preparing for Gen Z in the workplace means ensuring that the continuing education opportunities they crave are available to them, preferably in an independent learning format where they can guide the course of study at their own pace.

To keep Gen Z employees on track, consider incentives for

learning and professional development opportunities. Connect certifications and other continuing education to bonuses, as well as to performance reviews to ensure they are completed on time.

Show Them the Big Picture

Approximately 74 percent of Gen Zers ranked purpose as more important than a paycheck in a recent study [conducted by Monster](#).

That's why company leaders should demonstrate how the organization affects society. There are several ways to get that message across, including brand and employer messaging, social media and onboarding. Onboarding should also provide new employees with an organizational chart that shows where their job fits in the chain of command. Discuss how their individual contributions play a role in the organization's overall success—and why.

[Research by HR analytics company Effectory](#) found that employees who are clear about their job role are 53 percent more efficient and 27 percent more effective at work than co-workers with more ambiguous role understanding. Having high role clarity resulted in 75 percent of employees feeling more passionate about their jobs and reporting higher levels of job satisfaction.

Using onboarding to clarify employees' roles and explain how their jobs contribute to the organization as a whole meets Gen Z's need for purpose in their jobs and encourages them to work harder.

Remember, Gen Zers are driven, opinionated young people. At the end of the day, they want a job, and you want to hire them. These strategies can help make sure it is a good fit on both sides of the table.

[Steve McIntosh](#) is a recovering accountant (ICAEW), HR professional (GPHR) and MBA (University of Oxford) originally from the west coast of Scotland. As the founder of [CareerPoint.com](#), McIntosh is the author of *The Employee Value Curve: The Unifying Theory of HR Helping Companies and Their People Succeed Together*. —

When Homegrown Talent Feels Stuck

By Devin Meireles

It was nearly a week, and I hadn't heard anything. Surely it was a tough decision, but I figured that I would've heard a response by then. I felt like I knocked the interview out of the park. One of those moments when everything seemed to go just right. I was confident, well-spoken, and touched on every aspect of organizational development. I was a homegrown talent that could embody the employer's values, like a poster boy. I demonstrated that I understood the fundamentals with tact. My presentation was the total package. So, what went wrong?

I knew that I was a strong candidate and built for the job. Sure enough, as time passed, my doubts began to set in. It was taking quite some time to hear the decision. They promised to let me know regardless. When I had succeeded in the past, the employer reached out to me so much sooner. My father always warned me not to count my chickens before they hatched.

As much as I tried to not get ahead of myself, it still hit me like a fly ball to the forehead. The news came nearly two weeks following the interview. I was disheartened when I finally got the email.

"I thought you would get bored in the position," the hiring manager later said in a feedback meeting. They had gone with somebody else. Would you believe it?

It's just a job but that feedback didn't sit well with me. In one breath they told me that I would be great, yet they shot me down for an assumption. Who are they to say what would bore me? It would've been a valuable experience toward my career progression. If I didn't find the job interesting, why would I have bothered to apply in the first place? It would've been my entry into human resources, something I'd been applying for since the last Olympiad.

As much as I tried to take it in stride, I



started to question everything that went wrong with the interview. Not to sound arrogant, but there wasn't much to critique. I started to doubt myself. It had felt like a home run, but sadly, I was mistaken. Why wasn't I good enough?

It was like the five stages of grief. It probably served me right for setting high expectations but at the end came acceptance. With that, I surmised that maybe things aren't as I thought they were. Maybe talent development isn't part of the strategic plan anymore. I doubted how much the employer really cared about their return on investment, especially after all they had spent on my education! Maybe it's not the same as it used to be.

Things certainly felt different on my first day of employment. That was the day after graduation. They brought me on for a summer contract with housekeeping. I reported to the supervisor at 6 a.m.

"Do you have a problem with feces?" they asked.

"No, sir."

"Good, I'm sending you to do grounds outside."

Apparently, the sidewalk around the hospital grounds was prone to defecation. Coming from a grocery clerk job, I was happy with any work—and

it was for more than twice the pay! With no experience needed, it was a golden opportunity to get my foot in the door. They onboarded and trained me immediately. All because someone took a chance on me—a kid out of high school.

At that time, recruitment practices didn't lean on testing scores and extended interviews for entry-level positions, not like nowadays. Managers had autonomy to consider more than work experience and could hire based on personality. It's not the same anymore.

Once I got in, I worked hard to make an impression. That was enough for them to offer me a permanent casual role by the end of my summer contract. It was rewarding to know that they noticed my effort and wanted me to stick around. I made myself available around the clock. Since there were no guaranteed base hours, I didn't mind heading over on short notice for any prospective shifts—days, evenings, nights, you name it.

"Hello," I answered my phone to private callers all the time, sometimes in the middle of sleep or an errand I was running.

"We had a sick call. Can you make it within the hour?"

"Yes, I'll be there." I dropped whatever I was doing to go make money.

It wasn't long before I developed into a substantial seniority role, simply by saying yes to everything. That greatly helped me later. Being an internal hire gave me an edge when applying for other positions. That's how I landed in the portering department, and later the receiving dock, as a permanent part-timer. My weekends were confirmed with a chance for weekday hours as needed. Climbing up the ranks was a slow chase but gratifying when you finally arrived.

The competitive compensation with intrinsic benefits for growth was unmatched. Nowhere else gave you flex benefits and a transportation allowance. The teaching hospital inherently lived the values of learning and developing their own talent. Room for growth was the biggest attraction to keep working there. That has always been an excellent method for retention, but for some reason, it's not the same anymore.

I could work my hours and attend internal workshops when permitted. They rarely objected to my requests. There were computer classes to sharpen my Excel skills—and achievements to strive for. Upon completing the prerequisites, I received an employee development certificate. I could attend college, and if the course material was applicable to the hospital, they'd provide tuition assistance with my manager's signoff. I had the support I needed to flourish. Most of all, I had a boss who understood my ambitions and supported me like a mentor.

When I eventually made the jump from services to administrative, the employer recognized my efforts and promoted me. With an excellent referral from my manager, I made the switch by using the resources at my fingertips. It was positive affirmation. I took to the office like a duck takes to water. It wasn't long before I stood out as an exceptional clerical with great communication. I could coordinate any health discipline, support their business needs, and provide superior customer service to the patients. That became my domain.

My journey continued when I discovered my affinity for staff development. After all that the employer had done for me, I wanted to do the same for other high achievers in the hospital. I believe that everybody deserves the opportunity to thrive. I explored human resources. My role earned some core competencies like recruitment, staff orientation, payroll, and health and safety. I went back to school in the evenings to complete an HR management certificate and pursued leadership opportunities within the organization. Considering

everything the employer had given me, I felt that I could give back by being a great contributor. I would be a great asset for them to continue making history.

Upon completion, I started to apply for entry-level positions within HR. Some recruiters reached out to encourage me to aim higher. So, I did. I started to apply for coordinator roles and specialists but had no leads. It was nearly three years before I finally got an interview. It was perfect. Leadership and organizational development coordinator. Considering my vast experience and knowledge of the system, I was an exceptional candidate. That's even what they said before saying that they thought I would get bored in the role! They offered it to a less senior person whom they hadn't developed. I was so close yet still so far away. That's when I realized that there had been a shift. It was clear that it just wasn't the same anymore.

From my perspective, the days of spotlighting talent based on merit are gone. A good reputation apparently can only go so far. Seemingly, internal hires aren't appreciated like they used to be. Even with interview scores and a testing matrix, the best candidates could fall through the cracks.

I don't mean to sound entitled but that's what I took away from that experience. How could they pass after investing so much in me? And that's how a top performer becomes despondent. Trust me. As soon as there is a sentiment of a ceiling, employees can check out mentally. That's how I felt for some time after that interview. If the employer isn't going to appreciate their workforce or any effort to climb the ranks, then why would an employee let that limit their potential?

Whatever that shift was, it sparked a new outlook. I always thought that I'd spend my entire career with this employer. That they would endlessly support my growth. But now that I feel a limit to their mentorship, I am not going to let that hold me down. Working so hard to move up the organizational hierarchy had been a motivator. Now that there may be a cap to where I can

go, I am actively looking elsewhere for another opportunity.

Perhaps that's the nature of today's labor market. That's something I never explored, nor felt the need to, but now I stand at the edge of uncharted waters. Is the grass greener on the other side? Will I obtain the experience I am seeking? If this employer won't give me the chance, then I must choose between taking a risk or sticking around and waiting for "someday."

Don't get me wrong. I appreciate my job. This employer has lifted me up and provided so many opportunities to grow. Probably more so than anywhere else would. But when an employee has exhausted all avenues and feels like they've hit a roadblock, there aren't many options.

If I stay, I won't be using my new skills toward the career of my dreams. I will just get more responsibility for the same title because I am too "reliable" and "capable." I won't get promoted because my department just "cannot live without me." At the first sign of hard financial times, I likely would be the first to get fired because I'm at the "top" of the pay range. And worst of all, my skills may go unused or become obsolete.

It's definitely not the same as it used to be. I was loyal to my employer and felt that was reciprocated. Now I realize that I need to stay loyal to myself. I still work in my current role but am actively looking for something else. Whether that is internal or with a new organization remains to be seen. Regardless, I won't let myself be limited. I know that I have so much more to give. My hope is to find a new boss who will leverage my skills and help me continue to grow. Until then, I plan to keep applying for HR jobs until someone takes a chance on me.

Devin Meireles is a health-care worker from Toronto who moonlights as a freelance writer and author. —

Top 10 Predictors

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

7. Organizational Policies and Practices

Admittedly, this predictor is a bit elusive and sometimes beyond an organization's or agency's span of control. But there are two critical ways to identify and revise antiquated and otherwise unhelpful organizational practices, policies and procedures: 1. **Ask.** To start, have an open-door policy, hold town halls and listening sessions, and/or establish a shared digital space for safely sharing ideas. 2. **Do something about it.** If it's in your span of control, act. If the decision to act is outside of your sphere, enlist the help of someone who can do something.

8. Pay

Federal employees still make only three-quarters of private sector pay, according to a 2020 *Federal Times* [article](#). Quite often, federal managers feel their hands are tied with respect to pay for performance. But the truth is, there are a variety of tools available to organizations to reward top talent. Recruitment incentives, cash awards and bonuses, time-off awards, and quality step increases are just a few of the options on the table. How and how often your organization employs these tools says a lot about its culture and regard for its employees. This is a great opportunity to reiterate that this list is in order of magnitude, and the previous seven predictors are effectively free. Take some time to understand your unique workforce culture and its needs, then begin implementing from the top of this list and from the top of the organization. Pay, of course, should be considered, but keep it in perspective.

9. Work Process Empowerment

Work process empowerment is closely related to buy-in (No. 3 on this list), with one very important distinction: Involvement details the level of employee contribution from the bottom up, while empowerment includes the cascading latitude to make important decisions from the top down. Still, in 2017, researchers at the University of Birmingham Business School found that despite the overwhelmingly positive effects on well-being and job satisfaction, “managers remain unwilling to offer employees greater level of autonomy.” Federal employers should ensure the greatest degree of autonomy to employees to foster overall fulfillment and satisfaction.

10. Recognition

This brings us to the last and, frankly, least impactful of the list of top 10 motivators for federal workers. This may fly in the face of conventional wisdom, and your anecdotal mileage may vary, but the data doesn't lie. Despite being the last on this list, it's still in the top 10 predictors (and first on the list for some federal employees) of job satisfaction! From public recognition to a

**Take some time to understand
your unique workforce culture
and its needs.**

sincere note of appreciation, or any number of formal or informal awards, the good news is that there are infinite ways to simply say “thank you” for everything federal employees do to serve this great nation and its people.

Now What?

Our nation depends on retaining the most talented employees this country has to offer. HR professionals should consider using these top motivators for federal workers *with intention* and *as a referendum* on how your agency, organization and workplace fulfill the intrinsic and extrinsic needs most important to the people. Employ the list as a baseline to evaluate your organizational efforts and employees' satisfaction with organizational performance, then make necessary changes in the organization, and don't forget to assess and follow up with your federal employees to measure effectiveness—our national security and public safety depend on it.

Gerome Q. Banks, Ed.D., MBA, is a federal government strategic talent management thought leader, social science researcher, and career coach. As the founder of Banks & Banks Consulting Co., LLC, he has dedicated his career to improving talent management in the federal public sector. Connect with Gerome on [LinkedIn](#) or by [email](#).

—*N*

Behavioral Science

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Black and Hispanic representatives in recruitment materials made Black and Hispanic people view the employer as more attractive.

BIT has also interviewed college students and campus career service professionals to better understand how and why young people seek out jobs. Alums were identified as effective messengers because when students see someone like them working in an organization, they feel more compelled to look up the employer.

**Small changes can
have a big impact.**

Make It Timely: Provide Targeted Support

People from underrepresented groups can face stereotype threat, which is increased anxiety in situations like exams or hiring processes. They are worried, in part, about confirming a stereotype about themselves or their group. As a result, they may underperform.

To counteract this barrier, **government agencies can support job seekers of color at key points in the application process.** Small changes can have a big impact. A study BIT conducted in the UK with police constabularies found that the greatest drop in minority applicants' success was during an online, multiple-choice assessment of how they might respond to real situations.

We changed the process by including a few sentences asking applicants to reflect on what makes them a good addition to

the police and the positive impact they would have on their community. Test performance improved significantly, closing the gap between minority and non-minority candidates.

Keep Human Behavior in Mind

These are just a few strategies that government agencies can use to help advance diversity. While these alone will not completely solve the problem of disproportionately homogeneous workforces since many of the factors affecting who applies for public jobs and who succeeds in their roles are structural, they can be useful tools for reducing bias at key steps in the hiring process.

We are optimistic that more evidence-based approaches like these will emerge in the future. One way to accelerate that process is for HR departments to try new strategies aimed at increasing diversity and testing to see what works. If you are already an advocate for strategies like these, we hope that you can use the evidence outlined in this article to build a persuasive case for implementing them at your organization—and continue building teams that reflect the diversity and excellence of our communities.

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Embracing Change

Malena Murray, MSHR, IPMA-SCP, Human Resources Director, Draper City (Utah)

If there's one key takeaway that Malena Murray has learned in her professional life, it's that change is inevitable. You might say "embrace change" has become her mantra.

Murray is an accomplished HR professional with more than 15 years of private and public sector experience. In February of this year, she started a new position as the human resources director for Draper City, Utah. She took time out recently to speak with IPMA-HR about her lessons as an educator, communicator, traveler, hockey fan, dog lover, and self-motivated lifelong learner.

How has the transition from the City of West Jordan to Draper City gone? What are the key differences that you've noticed? Any specific challenges in the new role?

Moving from one municipality to another was surprisingly seamless for me, and I attribute the smooth transition to my municipal experience. When I joined City of West Jordan, I experienced some minor challenges as an external hire for understanding government processes, such as requests for proposals (RFPs), hiring, navigating political relationships, et cetera, that I had not directly experienced in the private sector. I was fortunate that my previous work experience in government contracting in a highly political climate was great footing for me to gel in government. What I found helpful with municipal HR were structure and processes that are so important in the field of human resources. I just had to learn them. The greatest challenge I found at Draper as soon as I started was managing a one-person department (temporarily). Talk about a challenge. I hit the ground running and relied on my HR experience at West Jordan. It worked. I feel fortunate that I have an outside perspective from another city, and bringing on HR professionals with that same experience helped immensely. We are looking at opportunities from a fresh set of eyes.



You're also an online adjunct instructor of business management (HR discipline) at Rasmussen College. How much practical real-world application are you able to provide your students? Has the position been remote during your whole tenure (nine-plus years)?

I have been an online adjunct instructor with Rasmussen since 2013, and prior to that, I taught in the classroom for five years with Columbia College at their Murray campus. In both settings, I have integrated real-world working experiences with academia. I believe it lends a value to the course and students. The response has been overwhelmingly positive, and student feedback is favorable. "Yes, this happens in the work world." Comments like these tell me students are listening. These experiences put the disciplinary studies into perspective.

The United States, in particular, appears to be at a crisis point because many educators have stepped away from the classroom. As a full-time department director, you've somehow summoned up the energy to teach part-time. What drives you to teach? What do you most like about it and what do you find the most frustrating?

I have always been passionate about sharing my knowledge with others. I believe blending academic learning and professional work experience is invaluable to the curriculum. It provides an insightful perspective to student education. That is what drives me to teach. (It's also great getting IPMA-HR SCP credits.) I like teaching because it makes me a better HR professional. It's about communicating, learning and understanding. I haven't really encountered frustrations. I think it's because communicating can help resolve a lot. Let's talk!

You received your IPMA-SCP certification in June 2021. How much have you been able to convert what you've learned as a senior certified professional to your day-to-day job? What do you enjoy most about being an IPMA member?

The applications I learned in the prep course and tested on in the certification exam have been invaluable to my current role. I mentioned earlier about processes in HR, and I find myself applying those, which was a main focal point of the exam in my interactions among my team on day-to-day development and training, and with my peers and administration on HR strategy planning, for example, staffing design and policy creation, and council/mayor on managing political relationships.

The most important part of my IPMA membership is the connections with peers locally and nationally that I never would

have encountered without my membership. I got involved locally and met and expanded my HR network among municipalities in Utah and connected with peers nationally. About a year ago, after attending a webinar, I reached out to an HR peer in Oregon and got some really good input on a current topic in Utah. It helped our local chapter find a speaker on diversity and inclusion.

The western regional IPMA conference is coming to Utah in spring 2023 and I'm on the planning committee, helping with volunteer recruitment. That came to fruition through my membership. Can't wait to attend!

What do you do for fun?

When I'm not working, my husband and I love to travel the world and learn about new cultures and try new cuisines. We also enjoy the outdoors; we hike and ride motorcycles. We are hockey fans. We are in our fifth year as season ticket holders to the Utah Grizzlies. More importantly, we love hanging out with our dog—a rescue border collie named Tucker.

How do you balance your dual work life with your personal?

Foundation. I attribute my work-life balance to a strong foundation of family and friends. Giving and receiving support make it work. Have fun and be in the moment.

What has been the silver lining for you during this pandemic—and has it fundamentally changed the way you operate as an HR director?

Change. That was key to helping the city get through the pandemic. Changing the way we work, when we work, and how we work was the only option. We made it work because it had to. We pulled through. Change is inevitable and should be embraced. Out of this experience, I introduced a new motto in HR: embrace change. I often referred to this catchphrase at West Jordan, and it has now caught on in Draper HR. —*N*

CALENDAR

September 28–30, 2022
IPMA-HR Annual Conference 2022
Beyond All Limits of Public Sector HR
Washington, D.C.
[REGISTER](#)

September 8, 2022, 1 to 2 pm EDT
WEBINAR:
Tools for Strengthening Public Sector Employee Financial Wellness
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September 8, 2022, 1:30 pm EDT
WEBINAR: 2022 Coaching Program—Organizational Culture: Use the Return to Work to Attract and Retain Talent
Offered in partnership with ICMA
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September 20, 2022, noon to 1 pm EDT
WEBINAR: Get Certified! Benefits and Overview of IPMA-HR's Certification Programs
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October 4–December 20, 2022
Developing Competencies for HR Success
Online Course
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October 20, 2022, 1:30 pm EDT
WEBINAR: 2022 Coaching Webinar—Alternatives to Silos: Leadership at Every Level
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October 27, 2022, 1 pm EDT
WEBINAR: Influencing Up and Across: Making Difficult Conversations, Safe Conversations
Webinar
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November 17, 2022, 1:30 pm EST
WEBINAR: 2022 Coaching Webinar—Everyone Has Personal Challenges: How to Balance Personal Requirements and Organizational Demands
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Recovery Friendly Workplace

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

Curious” is now considered a lifestyle for many who are concerned enough about their drinking to make mindful choices about their use of alcohol.

Sober Curious employees are naturally well-suited to identify and rally other like-minded individuals, and their allies, willing to work together as an ERG to promote interesting, informative and engaging activities and events within the workplace.

Setting up the ERG

Organizations seeking innovative solutions to help struggling employees should encourage recovery champions to self-identify if they are willing to help the company form a “Recovery Ready,” “Recovery Supportive,” “Sober Curious” or similar type ERG. Doing so will create a spark that can ignite an organization-wide grass-roots recovery movement, the result of which will be the transformation of individual lives, and the creation of the type of workplace culture that is needed to create and sustain recovery-ready, -friendly or -supportive workplaces.

It all boils down to this: Mental health, substance misuse and addiction are terrible diseases. As such they are not pleasant topics most people are comfortable or eager to discuss. Unquestionably, people struggling with these issues suffer immeasurable harm, loss and sometimes death.

For this reason, these subjects are considered taboo in the workplace, which only causes the *sickness of silence* to spread. COVID-19 has further exacerbated the problem, creating a mental/behavioral health, substance misuse and addiction **pandemic within the pandemic**. Stigma, fear and misinformation are just a few of the barriers that prevent individuals from sharing their struggles or asking for help that is needed to find or access resources for themselves or others.

But just as the mythical phoenix rises from the ashes of the funeral pyre, symbolizing transformation from death to life, so does the human spirit rise from destruction and the death spiral caused by untreated mental/behavioral health, substance misuse and addiction. **These diseases are treatable** and reversible.

Here are some keys that employers can use to unlock and access the recovery workforce within their organizations. The first is inspiration. Inspiration is a powerful key. After all, inspiration is contagious, and, when asked to help, raises awareness of these issues. Made to feel psychologically safe, recovery champions are not afraid to engage, and that includes sharing their personal stories.

By design, ERGs must have leadership support and the freedom to operate within a psychologically safe workplace environment. Once

Made to feel psychologically safe, recovery champions are not afraid to engage.

provided, group members will feel empowered to share the stories of how their lives and families have been saved or transformed by the miracle of recovery, initially among one another, and gradually beyond the group, to inspire, encourage and engage others.

These individuals organically become “workplace evangelists” eager to share the good news with other employees that “recovery saves and transforms lives,” and, by extension, can positively impact their families, workplaces, and broader communities.

Organizations can further support this recovery-ready workplace movement by providing recovery champions with specialized training and certification. The [International Association for Professional Recovery Coaches \(IAPRC\)](#) offers a **certified facilitator in addiction awareness (CFAA)** train-the-trainer program that prepares recovery champions to plan and deliver relevant workplace initiatives, guide safe conversations, conduct lunch and learn, and other education programs related to the topics of mental/behavioral health, substance misuse, addiction and recovery, or connect individuals with community resources.

Cheryl Brown Merriwether, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, CPRC, CRSS, CM is the co-founder, vice president, and executive director at International Center for Addiction & Recovery Education™ ([ICARE](#)). Merriwether brings over two decades of experience in corporate HR management at AT&T, addiction recovery awareness, and adult education to the International Center for Addiction and Recovery Education (ICARE).

—*NC*

Certification Corner

Congratulations to these newly certified individuals!



Alyssa Brito, IPMA-CP
Human Resources Specialist
City of Buckeye
Buckeye, Arizona

Veronica Buenrostro, IPMA-CP
Senior Management Analyst
City of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California

Jennifer Coe, IPMA-CP
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City of Shaker Heights
Shaker Heights, Ohio

Danielle Draper, IPMA-CP
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Kimberly Gocha, IPMA-CP
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Sarah Gudger, IPMA-CP
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Christal Hines, IPMA-CP
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North Charleston, South Carolina

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Cuyahoga County Executive
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