

From: Business Management Daily

Subject: Practical HR strategies to boost your career

In The News ...

Average family health premiums now top \$20,000, which is up about 5% from last year, according to a new Kaiser Family Foundation survey. In the past decade, family premiums have risen 54% (and workers' contributions have risen 71%), several times more quickly than workers' wages (25%) and inflation (20%) since 2009. Currently, 83% of U.S. workers have a deductible in their plan, up from 63% a decade ago.

Job satisfaction and security on the rise. This year, 54% of U.S. workers say they're satisfied with their employment. That's up three percentage points from last year, one of the largest single-year gains in the Conference Board's 42nd annual survey. Among the reasons they're satisfied, "job security" saw the biggest improvement over last year. Two things they don't like: their employers' performance review process and communication channels.

Execs (not staff) feel comfortable approaching HR. More than 80% of executives and managers say they feel comfortable approaching HR with problems and believe they get excellent support from their HR departments, says a new BambooHR survey. But only 57% of nonmanagement employees say they feel comfortable approaching HR with a work-related or personal problem.

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On-demand pay: Heed risks of hot new trend

For some employees, biweekly or weekly pay is going the way of the fax machine.

On-demand pay—allowing workers to receive some or all of their accumulated pay electronically as soon as the day after they perform the work—is a growing trend. And more employers are using the “You don’t have to wait two weeks for your paycheck” message as a tool to attract and retain employees.

How it works: In most cases, employees use phone-based apps (such as Daily Pay and PayActive) that are linked with their payroll systems to request and access their pay, almost in real time.



On-demand pay allows workers to receive some or all of their accumulated wages (typically through an app) as soon as the day after they perform the work.

There is no definitive model for on-demand pay. It's not a loan, but it may be a pay advance, since employees are accessing some of their accrued pay, for a fee. In some models employers pick up the fee. In others, employees do. The fees are modest and typically follow ATM fees.

Also, employers can choose the group of employees who will have access to on-demand pay and set

Continued on page 2

Discipline meetings: Offer open door, easy exit

Discipline, termination or investigation meetings can get heated. But make sure supervisors understand the potential legal risks of these meetings, including claims of “false imprisonment” for blocking the employee’s exit or telling her she can’t leave.

To avoid such claims, make sure meetings are private, yet open. Allow the person to sit by an unlocked door with nothing blocking her exit. Never imply that she can’t leave the room. In fact, let employees know they can take a break at any time.

Conduct the meeting in a calm, deliberate manner. Workers (and a court) could perceive forceful statements and a blocked exit as false imprisonment.

Recent case: Therese was called into a meeting with her boss in a conference room. He pointed out her performance mistakes, and they argued over the critiques.

After 15 minutes, Therese said her blood pressure was rising and asked to leave. She went home, never returned and sued for false imprisonment and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

The court tossed out both claims, saying that while Therese “may have subjectively felt fear” to stay in the meeting, the supervisor did the correct thing to let her leave when she asked. (*LaLumiere v. Willow Springs Care*, 9th Cir.)



On-demand pay

(Cont. from page 1)

monetary limits. Most employers do allow all their workers the option to participate.

What's driving the trend? It's a fast-growing recruiting tool, as more paycheck-to-paycheck workers like the option of getting access to their wages sooner. Plus, on-demand pay is a way for workers to avoid expensive payday lenders.

Walmart offers the option to some of its workforce through its partnership with financial app Even. Walmart covers the cost of using the app for employees. Workers can access wages early up to eight times per year for free. After that, they pay \$3 per pay period to cover fees.

Two payroll issues: On-demand pay is ahead of the regulatory restrictions. Two issues of concern for payroll professionals:

1. "Constructive receipt." If employees can exercise control over some of their wages, they are taxable on all of them, regardless of when they're paid. If on-demand pay is considered a pay advance, then constructive receipt probably comes into play. On the other hand, if a third party handles on-demand pay, constructive receipt may not be an issue.

2. Reconciliations. The reconciliation process will differ, depending on the model. If it's through your payroll system, the on-demand payments are fed back into it. There's no direct feedback if a third party is handling the on-demand payments. The bottom line, however, is the same—on-demand payments must be netted out against the pay employees receive on payday.

Final tip: Before your organization takes the plunge, it's wise to explore the different models and how they would affect your payroll operations. It may also be prudent to wait until the IRS answers the constructive receipt question. It has promised to post FAQs on its website.

Closing the interview: Which questions to ask, and which to be prepared for

Before wrapping up a job interview and walking the candidate out, it's best to end the discussion with key housekeeping issues and final questions to make sure the candidate has a good idea of the job's requirements and to gauge their interest.

Avoid asking difficult questions last. Finishing on a positive note is part of creating a good candidate experience. Instead, you can recap job responsibilities and discuss logistical matters. Examples of potential closing questions:

- *From what you heard, does this position line up with your expectations?* (This will tell you something about your job ad.)
- *What are your salary requirements?* (Avoid asking about past salaries, if possible.)
- *How much notice would you need to give to your current employer?*
- *Why do you think you would be a good fit for this role?*

Before the person exits, explain the next steps in the process, including whether there will be more interviews, when the decision will be made and how the person will be notified. Always remember to thank the candidate. Then write your notes about the interview immediately; don't wait and rely on your memory.

Interviewee as interviewer

Even if you don't plan to hire interviewees, always end the discussion by offering the chance to ask their own questions of you. The person's questions may address issues you haven't considered or discussed.

What if candidates have no questions? That may tell you something about their level of interest or their preparation for the interview.

Hiring experts always advise applicants to prepare at least two questions that demonstrate their interest in the job and their ability. Here are some

of the common questions that experts suggest interviewees ask (and, thus, you should be prepared for):

- *Can you tell me about the culture of the company?*
- *What's the typical career path for someone in this position?*
- *What is the most important indicator of success in this job—and how is the position evaluated?*
- *Why is this job open? Is it a new role or why did the previous person leave?*
- *What is this organization's goals for the year?*
- *Can you explain more of the day-to-day responsibilities of this position?*
- *What companies do you consider your biggest competitors and why?*

Online resource Some of the best questions to ask candidates are behavior-based queries. For 20 sample "silver bullet" questions that identify great candidates, go to www.theHRSpecialist.com/silver.

5 odd responses to 'Do you have questions for me?'

HR and managers typically wrap up job interviews by asking "Do you have any questions for me?" In a recent Reddit discussion, people cited these memorable questions from applicants:

1. "How often would I be able to leave early?"
2. I was interviewing a young woman for an engineering position. I would have hired her until she asked "Is there any math involved? I'm not very good in math."
3. A recent college grad with no experience interviewed at our tech company and asked "How many people will I be managing." Not sure what he thought "entry-level position" meant.
4. "Do you regularly drug test?"
5. "Is it possible to try the job for two weeks to see if I like it?"





Firing for vacation during FMLA? Hit 'pause'

Even if it appears that an employee is misusing his FMLA leave, you must make discipline decisions based on a rational review of the facts, including medical certifications. When in doubt, check with your attorney.

Recent case: Richard, an IT manager, took FMLA leave for foot surgery. His certification said he'd need six weeks recovery. During that time, he went on a prescheduled Mexican vacation. He limited his activities because his foot was in a medical boot. When HR found out, it fired him.

Richard sued. At trial, the HR rep said she thought that workers on

FMLA could not take vacations. But the court said that's not automatically true, noting that "an employee recovering from a leg injury may sit with his or her leg raised by the seashore while fully complying with FMLA leave requirements, but they may not climb Machu Picchu without abusing the FMLA process."

The court sided with Richard, awarding him a whopping \$1.3 million verdict. (*DaPrato v. Massachusetts Water Authority*, Mass Sup. Ct.)

Online resource For tips on how to legally combat FMLA abuse, see www.theHRSpecialist.com/FMLAfraud.

Supreme Court outlook: Key HR law cases this term

The current U.S. Supreme Court term that stretches until next June carries a handful of key employment law cases, highlighted by a potentially landmark gay-bias ruling:

1. Sexual orientation discrimination. At issue: Does the federal law that forbids sex discrimination in the workplace also cover discrimination on the basis of someone's sexual orientation or gender identity?



For a generation, courts (and even federal agencies) have been split on the question of whether Title VII protects gay and transgender workers. The court will rule on three separate cases that address the issue.

Note: Despite uncertainty at the federal level, many states and cities already have laws prohibiting job bias based on these characteristics.

2. Benefits. At issue: Can employees who don't read benefits disclosures still sue their employers?

The case involves a worker who sued, claiming his employer made bad investment choices with his retirement dollars. Federal law gives three years to file such claims. The employee missed the deadline, but he claimed that his lawsuit is timely because he doesn't recall reading any of the investment information until just before he filed his lawsuit. (*Intel. v. Sulyma*)

3. Immigration. At issue: The high court will decide the future of the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. DACA allows some undocumented immigrants who came to this country as children to temporarily work and avoid deportation. President Trump has tried to shut DACA down, and the high could decide if that action is legal.

Look for a ruling on all of these cases in the first half of 2020.

Don't keep shopping for better doc opinions

If two independent medical opinions say that an employee is healthy enough to return to work, don't go chasing a third opinion. Courts frown on medical-opinion shopping and could see your actions as discriminatory.

Recent case: A Houston maintenance company faces an EEOC lawsuit after it fired a manager due to his impaired vision.



The man suffered an eye injury before he was hired there. But he

had obtained a medical release that cleared him to work. The company insisted on a second opinion, which ended up supporting the first one.

But the company didn't stop there. It sought a third medical opinion that it then used to fire the employee.

The EEOC says the company violated the ADA when it terminated him despite having two medical opinions stating he could work with no restrictions. (*EEOC v. Brock*, 1:19-cv-212)

Whistleblower at work? Protect, don't reject

The media spotlight recently has focused on a typically obscure part of U.S. employment law—federal whistleblower statutes.

Employers should use the impeachment saga (and a recent court case) as a reminder to never punish employees for speaking up about safety, financial or other illegalities in the workplace.

Consult your attorney before disciplining anyone who has reported alleged wrongdoing. Federal, state and local laws afford great protection to whistleblowers. Also, remember that an employee's whistleblower protection remains in force even if her

allegations ultimately are proved false.

Recent case: An attorney at a housing agency sued, saying she was fired in retaliation for alerting federal authorities to the misuse of housing vouchers. She sued under the False Claims Act, which protects employees who report alleged fraud in the spending of federal money. The case went to a jury and she was awarded nearly \$1.2 million in back pay, front pay and mental anguish. (*Miniex v. Houston Housing Authority*, SD TX)

Online resource Learn more about federal whistleblower laws at www.whistleblowers.gov.



U.S. ranks last in mandatory paid vacation

While several states and cities are passing paid-leave laws, don't expect any action from Congress this year or next. The United States continues to be the only nation with an advanced economy that does not guarantee its workers any paid vacation time or holidays, according to a new Center for Economic and Policy Research study. About a quarter of Americans receive no paid vacation or paid holidays. The most paid vacation days mandated by a country is France (30 days), followed by Britain (28). Canada requires 10 paid vacation days.

Federal contractors: Avoid gender pay bias

If your organization holds federal contracts or subcontracts, make sure your pay policies aren't discriminatory—the feds are watching. In just one day last month, the federal Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs announced settlements worth nearly \$17 million against two employers (Dell and Goldman Sachs) over charges of gender pay bias. For tips on what the OFCCP will look for in a compensation audit, go to www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/CompGuidance.

DOL proposes changes to tipped workers' pay

Employees who rely on tips might have to do more work for less than the minimum wage under a new U.S. Department of Labor proposal. The rule would scrap the so-called 80/20 formula that says tipped workers may be paid as little as \$2.13 per hour for doing things like filling saltshakers as long as the tasks don't take up more than 20% of their shifts. Currently, any additional nontipped time is worth at least the minimum wage. Critics say tipped workers will take home less pay. Read about the proposal and more on tip compliance at www.dol.gov/general/topic/wages/wagestips.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit may be ending

The WOTC provides tax credits of up to \$2,400 per employee to organizations for hiring people from targeted groups (veterans, ex-felons, etc.). The credit has expired and been reinstated at least a dozen times over the years, but these so-called extenders are becoming less popular with Congress. The WOTC is slated to expire at the end of 2020 and it's not clear if it will be extended again. **Note:** Employers claiming the WOTC must file a pre-screening notice (Form 8850) with a state labor agency within 28 days after new hires begin working, so get your paperwork into the pipeline now.

HR Q&A

Must we retain all those paper I-9 forms even if they're also stored digitally?

Q. We are switching to an HRIS system. If we E-Verify our new hires, and record the E-Verify system's case number in the new HRIS system, can we safely shred the original document and use that case number? How can we digitize this function, if we cannot do that?
— *Kary, Florida*



A. No, you should definitely retain copies of I-9 records, for the

simple reason that the U.S. government systematically purges E-Verify records more than 10 years old.

E-Verify recommends that employers write the E-Verify case verification number on the corresponding I-9 form and retain the historic record with the corresponding I-9. These forms should be retained indefinitely, but can be purged automatically (if you choose) either one year after the employee was terminated or three years after the date of hire, whichever is later.

To encourage staff to print their own W-2s, can we charge \$25 for the paper original?

Q. One of the reasons our company switched third-party payroll providers was to allow employees to access their W-2s from home. Most employees didn't do that for last year's forms, so we mailed them out as usual. To encourage employees to print their own forms this year, we'd like to try some tough love and charge each employee \$25 for their original W-2s. Management likes this idea. Can we do it?
— *Anonymous*

A. No, you can't charge a fee for original W-2s or W-2c forms. You can try to obtain employees' consent to have their W-2s electronically delivered or you can drop employees' copies in the mail by Jan. 31, 2020. Anyone expecting an early tax refund from the IRS will be disappointed.

You can charge employees a fee for replacement W-2s, since you've already met your obligation to provide them with original forms. However, your replacement fee can't be so high that employees who are nonexempt would take home less than the minimum wage.

Do you have a question? If so, you can email it to The HR Specialist at HRSEditor@BusinessManagementDaily.com.

Open enrollment season: Spread the word with 10 low-cost communication tips

With benefits election open-enrollment season arriving for some organizations, make sure you avoid the mistake that too many employers make: simply plopping a benefits booklet in front of employees (or pointing them to an insurer website) and telling them to figure it out.

That just doesn't work anymore. Benefits have become too complex and employees' poor benefits choices could hurt their finances and health, which also affects the company.

Here are 10 low- or no-cost ways you can do a better job of communicating with employees—and help increase benefits-plan participation.

1 Feed millennials' and Generation Z's focus on education. Your youngest employees were raised in a point-and-click environment, and they want to know everything. Help them understand which benefits they need during this time of their lives. Teach them how to be good consumers of benefits.

2 Tailor different kinds of communication for employees in different life stages. Young singles need different kinds of insurance than do parents or preretirement employees.

Discourage passive enrollment

A good open enrollment process makes it easy for employees to sign up for their benefits. However, it shouldn't make it easy for them to choose benefits that are no longer appropriate.

Nearly three-quarters (71%) of organizations automatically renew last year's plans for employees who don't take any action during open enrollment, says a survey by consulting firm HighRoads. But passive enrollment leaves many employees with inadequate coverage or costs more than they need to spend.

Require employees to affirmatively choose their benefits by requiring them to participate in presentations and one-on-one counseling.



Tailor different kinds of benefits communication for employees in different life stages—and then offer it a variety of formats.

Each of those groups likes to receive benefits information in different formats. Younger workers tend to like to get everything online, while boomers may prefer paper. Offer both.

3 Make your benefits messages pop. Repurpose old messages by tacking on engaging headlines and by delivering them via video, podcasts and email. If you capture employees' interest, they're more likely to pay attention. Otherwise, expect many to miss the enrollment deadline and simply hope last year's choices still work.

4 Use scenarios in your messages. *Example:* "If you have allergies and frequently visit your doctor, here's how Insurance A performs vs. Insurance B."

5 Create a web portal for benefits information so employees can access it anytime. Include information about life events in the form of questions and answers. *Example:* "How do I add my new baby to my insurance?"

6 Hold group meetings to explain your benefits and answer employees' questions. Invite vendors to speak about each benefit.

7 Offer employees a chance to meet one-on-one with benefits consultants to discuss personal needs.

8 Ask your benefits providers to work on site with employees and to contribute materials for your communication campaign. Many will do it free.

9 Include voluntary benefits such as dental, vision, identity-theft and pet insurance in your communication.

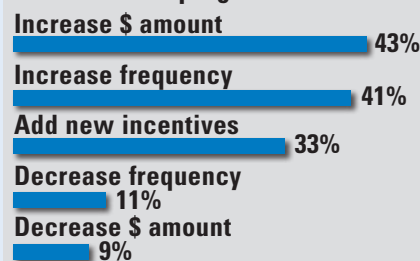
10 Communicate about benefits all year long—not just during open enrollment. Employees pay more attention to information if it comes when they need it.

Survey: Wellness works & is becoming more popular

More employers are going beyond providing traditional health benefits to address employees' well-being, say a new Robert Half survey. Employers surveyed said they offer physical (63%), financial (65%) and mental (74%) wellness programs.

A majority of employers said they plan to either increase the dollars spent on wellness programs next year or the frequency of the programs (*see chart*).

Employers' plans for wellness programs in 2020



Other key findings:

- The most valued wellness offerings (according to workers) include access to fitness facilities or fitness programs (24%), ergonomic evaluations and equipment (22%) and incentives for engaging in healthy behavior (18%).
- The most common perks offered at companies are flexible work schedules or telecommuting options (50%), paid parental leave (47%) and employee discounts (42%).
- Employers with 250 or more employees are more likely to have mental and financial wellness benefits and cover at least some of the costs of these programs than smaller organizations (20–249 workers).

A separate survey by Prudential Insurance finds that users of wellness benefits are more likely to be healthy than non-users.

The Prudential survey also found that wellness programs correlate with better mental health. While 59% of workers who use wellness programs consider their overall mental health to be "good," that number falls to 53% for workers who don't use wellness programs.

To: _____
 From: _____

Date: November 2019
 Re: Motivating & recognizing staff

Engagement Keep the flame alive: Simple ways to motivate employees

The days of “*Your paycheck is your motivation*” style of management are long gone.

The economy is running at full steam, and workers are finding it easier to jump ship for other jobs. That’s why it’s more important than ever for supervisors to create an environment that supports, motivates and empowers their employees. Some steps:

Don’t be a demotivator. Your job as a leader is to keep your people motivated and working toward the common goal. Negativity and demeaning comments will erode their motivation. Make sure your own actions aren’t defeating those efforts.

Give constructive feedback. To keep growing and developing, employees need to know what they are doing

right and what needs improvement. Providing regular feedback shows that you care about their progress as an employee and a person.

Let them lead. It doesn’t make sense to hire the best people if you ignore their input or talents. Help them find out what they’re good at, then let them unleash their talents in the most positive way.

Realize that people aren’t mushrooms. Mushrooms grow well when kept in the dark and fed horse manure. On the other hand, your employees will function best when they are kept in the loop and given the truth. Be honest and forthright with employees.

Reward risk-taking. Make it OK for employees to step outside of their comfort zones without fear—even if they fail. When employees are discouraged from failing when they take risks, they stop taking them.

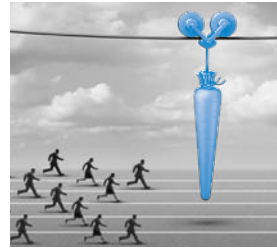
Actively listen. Encourage employee feedback about you and the company—then honestly evaluate what they have to say, without letting your ego get in the way.

Tell people what you want, not how to do it. You will find people more responsive (and happier) if you can give them guidance, not instructions. You will also see more initiative, more innovation and more of an ownership attitude over time.

Foster intrinsic rewards. These are the good feelings people get from doing their work: enjoyment of the task, excitement about opportunities and pride in doing a good job. You can’t hand someone an intrinsic reward, but you can create an environment that encourages these feelings. Make sure people know their work is worthwhile and let them know when they’ve done a good job.

Work collaboratively. Employees are more likely to achieve their goals or make changes if they let others in on their plans. Managers can help employees get on track by serving as coaches and making resources available. Encourage employees to share ideas about opportunities to improve, and ask for their perspective regularly.

Keep the flame alive. When people join an organization, they are fired up to do great things. Over time that enthusiasm can wear down. Instead, do what you can to fan the flames of their enthusiasm and you will be amazed at their output.



20 low-cost (or no-cost) ways to recognize your staff

Spoken & written words

1. Just say, thank you ... any time, anyway, anyhow and for any reason.
2. Handwritten thank-you notes.
3. A letter of appreciation in the employee file.
4. Handwritten cards to mark celebratory occasions.
5. Recognition posted online or the employee bulletin board.

Positive attention

6. Stop by an employee’s workstation or office to talk informally.
7. Provide frequent positive performance feedback—at least weekly.
8. Provide public praise at a staff meeting.
9. Take the employee out to lunch.
10. Give away logoed merchandise and other inexpensive items.

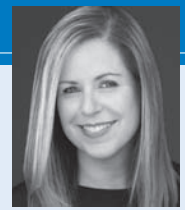
Encourage development

11. Send employees to conferences and seminars.

12. Ask people to present a summary of what they learned at a conference or seminar at a department meeting.
13. Work out a written employee development plan.
14. Make career development commitments and a schedule.

The work itself

15. Provide cross-training opportunities.
16. Provide more of the kinds of work the employee likes and less that he or she does not like.
17. Provide opportunities for empowerment and self-management.
18. Ask the employee to represent the department at an important external or internal meeting.
19. Provide opportunities for the employee to determine his or her own goals and direction.
20. Include the employee in brainstorming and decision-making meetings with other departments.



Tech tools to help manage your productivity & stress

Stress denial is both the angel and devil on your shoulder.

On one hand, we benefit from this denial when we buy time that enables us to cope with difficult situations more methodically. On the other hand, we risk falling into the black hole of inefficiency if we stay there too long.

Some stress is good. A recent study in *Psychology Today* encouragingly suggests “some manageable stressors, with recovery in between, can make us more mentally and physically tough and less reactive to future stress.”

However, *Molecular Psychiatry* warns that chronic stress results in long-term changes in the brain, possibly including shrinkage in the areas associated with regulating emotions, metabolism and memory.

The next time stress threatens to launch you into orbit, consider tapping into the following technology tools that may help bring balance back into your work and life:

GOAL-SETTING AND CALENDAR

APPS (e.g., Pomodoro Timer, Any.do, Trello, Fabulous, Way of Life, Google Calendar) enable you to organize activities, adhere to realistic timelines and coordinate

your schedule with others.

Resist the neurotic urge to do it all, which can result in Burnout Syndrome, which is now an official medical diagnosis, per the World Health Organization.

VOICE, NOTE-TAKING AND BRAINSTORMING APPS

(e.g., Voice Recorder & Audio Editor, Transcribe, XMind, Coggle, MindMeister, Brainsparker) offer an innovative, convenient way to build out goals and share them with colleagues—documenting not only the end result, but also key steps to getting there.

A study from Dominican University of California shows that structuring our goals in this way increases the likelihood that we’ll achieve them because “that level of intentionality [directs] thoughts and actions even when we’re not fully focused on the goal.”

MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

APPS (e.g., Calm, Insight Timer, Headspace, Simple Habit) link us to mental exercises that can “reprogram the neural pathways in the

brain” and increase self-efficacy, as explained by leadership coach and neuroscientist Dr. Tara Swart.

Runner’s World magazine adds, “For a century, researchers have focused on the role of the heart, legs, and lungs to explain the limits of human endurance. That was a mistake ... it’s how your brain interprets those signals.” So just as athletes train their bodies, training our brain to become more positive is extremely important too.

GAME APPS (e.g., Pigment, Zen Koi, Bubble Wrap, Words with Friends, Altos Adventure) that

promote relaxation and fun are scientifically proven ways of reducing stress and depression, while boosting motivation and learning. They also create a bridge to supportive online relationships with others engaged in a constructive activity.



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Scheduling the holidays: How to keep the peace

Five tips to avoid logistical and legal scheduling headaches: (1) Make clear to new hires and applicants they may need to work holidays; (2) Start asking employees now about their preferences to work during holidays; (3) Silence claims of favoritism by setting clear criteria for first choice of holiday leave—maybe by seniority or previous holiday service; (4) While you're not required to pay a premium to employees who work holidays, it could help fill the schedule; (5) Spread the burden by calling on as many employees as possible and break shifts into smaller increments.

51 years old: The age discrimination tipping point

American workers who are over age 40 say that 51 years old is the age at which Americans are most likely to experience age discrimination in the workplace, says a new survey of 400 people by Hiscox, an international insurance firm. Of those over-40 workers surveyed, one in five said they had experienced some kind of age discrimination in the workplace. Men are more likely to feel that their advancing age adversely affects their careers. For a free training article, *What Managers Need to Know About Age Discrimination*, go to www.theHRSpecialist.com/age.

Suspect employee theft? Skip the lie-detector test

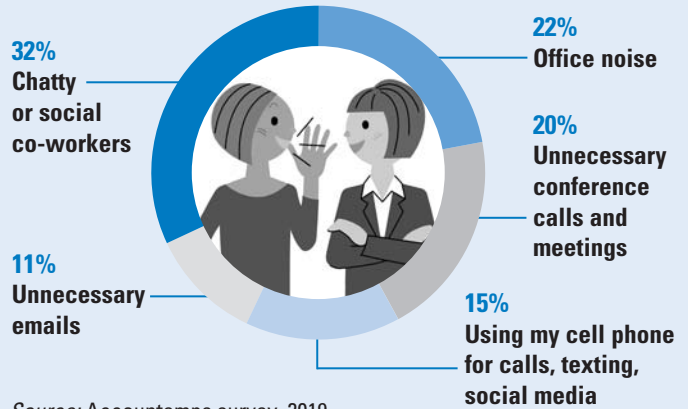
After noticing cash shortages, a medical clinic in Phoenix rounded up five employees and requested they submit to polygraph tests. Instead of finding the thief, the tests caught the attention of the U.S. Department of Labor. A judge ordered the clinic to pay \$15,000 in penalties for violating the Employee Polygraph Protection Act, saying the clinic failed to identify a reasonable suspicion for any of the employees. Federal law makes clear that most employers cannot require employees to take polygraphs.

Co-worker relationships: The key to staff well-being

While office productivity may take a hit from co-worker chitchats (*see box above*), don't shut down that water-cooler talk completely. A new Myers-Briggs survey

What's the biggest killer of productivity?

Nearly 3,000 office professionals in the United States were asked, "What is the single biggest distraction that impacts your productivity at work?" Their answers:



Source: Accountemps survey, 2019

says employees' relationships with co-workers is the number one contributor to their well-being at work. "Relationships" ranked as the highest contributing aspect of well-being, followed by "meaning," "accomplishments" and "engagement." The survey also found that the younger workers (18–24) report the lowest levels of well-being, while the oldest age group (65+ years) reported the highest.

Remind bosses: Never push beliefs on workers

It's bad form (and often illegal) for managers to impose their religious, political or other beliefs onto subordinates. Remind them not to do it. *Case study:* When a deeply religious manager found out that one of his female workers was having a relationship that went against her Pentecostal faith, he notified her father (a Pentecostal minister). She was excommunicated from the church. She sued and won a lawsuit for intentional infliction of emotional distresses. (*Snipes v. Wilkie*, ND CA)

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