HR Answers

advantage

June 2017

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MILLENNIALS SNAPSHOT

“The average job tenure for Millennials is just two years, compared to five years for Generation Xers and seven years for Baby Boomer,” said Gary Eisenstat, an attorney with Ogletree Deakins in Dallas. Therefore, it’s important to understand the young generation, because by 2025 they will, according to recent research, account for 75 percent of the workforce. Reading about their preferences and understanding how their minds work will be key to ongoing organizational success.

According to research from MTV, nearly 9 in 10 Millennials want work to be social and fun and 74 percent want flexible work schedules. A blog post on Inc.com revealed that 69 percent feel working in the office is passé and office attendance is unnecessary on a regular basis. Eisenstat has also noted that 81 percent believe they should be able to set their own hours.

Expect parents of Millennials to be involved. Of 700 employers surveyed about the hiring of a recent college graduate, nearly one-third of respondents said a parent had submitted a resume for their child—some without the applicant’s knowledge, 25 percent reported hearing from parents directly, while a Michigan State University study showed four percent of parents showed up at the interview.

Finally, Millennials want to be heard. Three-quarters of Millennials believe their boss could learn a lot from them and 65 percent of them say, “I should be mentoring older co-workers when it comes to tech and getting things done,” according to the MTV study.

RISK PROFILES

A risk profile is a statement of an organization’s willingness to take risks. It identifies what type of risks the organization might be subject to and it details how the organization feels about those risks. This is very important when thinking about which risks can be insured against and determining what level of compliance is desired. It is not possible for an organization to be 100% compliant at all times. This is true, partly, because it is possible for an organization not to be aware of more obscure aspects of a law and therefore not be comporting itself in accordance with those requirements. It also identifies areas where the organization (and the owners) may be willing to fudge a little on a requirement until it shows itself as a problem.

HR is about informed risk. It is important that the HR professionals in the organization know what the risk profile is. It isn’t appropriate for an HR professional to decide for the organization what risks it is comfortable with and what risks they want to avoid. The HR professional should present a policy or initiative to the organization addressing what risk HR is trying to mitigate. If the organization, through its executive, says that it is willing to take that risk, then HR should document the discussion and tuck the Memo to File away for possible future discussions. If, in reading or hearing about a case that another organization has encountered appears, then returning to the topic and explaining what the other organization has suffered may change the executive’s’ minds.

This is something that is often difficult for HR folks. They try to explain why a certain action is necessary and they aren’t wrong. It is just that the people involved in the overall management are not interested in taking that protective action. Sometimes it is about cost, sometimes it is about administrative burden, and sometimes it is about their perception that the risk is very limited. The organization gets to make that decision because the buck stop there. HR is about risk awareness, but it doesn’t get to decide for the organization.

One thing to be aware of is that risk assessments need to be conducted periodically. It isn’t enough to do it once and then not think about it ever again. Laws change, and organizations change, and executives change. Risk assessment is a process that should be conducted every few years.

Assistance with the process of doing a risk assessment is something that HRA can assist with. If this is something you are interested in, it can be done in concert with an HR Audit or as a stand-along project. Give us a call if you are interested in knowing more.

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WHAT IS UNCONSCIOUS BIAS?

Bias is a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another usually in a way that's considered to be unfair. Biases may be held by an individual, group, or institution and can have negative or positive consequences. If you are aware of your bias, then this would be referred to a **Conscious bias** (**explicit** bias). If, however you are unaware of your bias then it is an **Unconscious bias** (**implicit** bias).

It is important to note that biases, conscious or unconscious, are not limited to ethnicity and race. Biases may exist toward and from any social group. One's age, gender, gender identity, physical abilities, religion, sexual orientation, weight, and many other characteristics are subject to bias. And biases aren't just about people. You probably have a favorite restaurant, and there are likely some restaurants you just wouldn't go to. These are just as much a bias as the feelings you have about people

For the purposes of HR, **Unconscious biases** are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing; and they are likely developed throughout our lives, starting when we were children.

Because of the number of choices, we face every day, our brains are hardwired to make unconscious decisions leading to a direct link between our unconscious thinking and our actions and behavior.

Using easily observed criteria such as age, weight, skin color, and gender, research suggests that we instinctively categorize people and things. We also classify people according to educational level, disability, sexuality, accent, social status, job title, even the cars we drive. We automatically assigned presumed traits to anyone we have subconsciously put in those groups.

The "advantage" of this system is that it saves time and effort processing information about people, allowing us to spend more of our mental resources on other tasks. The clear disadvantage is that it can lead us to make assumptions about people and take action based on those biases. This results in a tendency to rely on stereotypes, even if we don't consciously believe in them.

No matter how unbiased we think we are, we may have subconscious negative opinions about people who are outside our own group. However, the more exposed we are to other groups of people, the less likely we are to feel prejudice against them.

While we may not be aware of our prejudices and prefer not to admit them, they can have damaging consequences on both the way we manage and the people we manage. Studies show that perceived discrimination (how people feel when they're being discriminated against) can affect various elements of their performance, such as commitment, job satisfaction and work tension. These are some examples of how this stereotyping works:

- Asians are good at math, but are not good leaders
- Younger workers are not dedicated to their employer
- Working mothers are not as committed to their jobs

Believing these things or not challenging them, may lead you to deny opportunities to individuals.

You can address these discrimination issues by increasing your awareness of your unconscious biases, and by developing plans that make the most of the talents and abilities of your team members. Think of this simple awareness the next time you want to say "no" to something about a person. Ask yourself, "why am I thinking that way: does it have to do with a bias I might have; is it an authentic reaction based on facts or is it a feeling based on some particular characteristic of the person?" We need to be honest with ourselves about the stereotypes that affect us and our actions related to the treatment of others.

Recruitment is an area where unconscious bias is likely to surface. Interviewers may unwittingly favor applicants from their own familiar backgrounds. Asking yourself if you become more attached to people who went to the same college or who came from the same town is a good start. You can take practical steps to reduce this bias. One concept is to ensure that the wording of your job posting, or a review of a resume does not favor one group of people or another. Don't let yourself get hooked by an applicant's similarity to you or things you like.

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Another useful exercise is to imagine a positive contact with the group toward whom you may have a bias. Research has shown that simply visualizing a particular situation can create the same behavioral and psychological effects as actually experiencing it.

Develop a better balance between task and relationship. It is important that you find time for task oriented functions of your job, but, it's important that you also employ good communication skills such as, being present, listening, establishing expectations, communicate plans, and give and receive feedback to everyone in your team.

Many organizations assume that their policies on Anti-Harassment & Discrimination are effective but upon closer examination, discover that they fail to weed out some subtle biases. Declare your intentions about valuing a diverse workforce. Say the words out loud or write them down. This sends a clear message to everyone you work with. Research says you own subconscious will listen to you as well.

Exposure to negative stereotypes can reinforce their influence on your behavior even if you don't consciously agree with them. Consider providing positive images in the workplace by using posters, newsletters, reports, videos, and podcasts that embrace diversity in all its forms. To help eliminate negative biases, surround yourself with positive words and images about people you might have stereotypical thoughts.

Everyone has unconscious biases. They are simply the brain's way of coping with and categorizing all the information we receive every day. Our tendency to discriminate against a group or type of person may not be intentional and with an effort we can change it. The more we expose ourselves to ideas, images and words that challenge any negative stereotypes we have, the less we have to worry about being discriminatory.

THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

Amplify your leadership with a whisper.

~ Dr. Nathan Hiller

I was seldom able to see an opportunity until it had ceased to be one.

~Mark Twain

A promise is a cloud; fulfillment is rain.

~Arabian Proverb

Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal.

~Henry Ford

It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer.

~Albert Einstein

Every day may not be good, but there's something good in every day.

~Author Unknown

Look at a stone cutter hammering away at his rock, perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred-and-first blow it will split in two, and I know it was not the last blow that did it, but all that had gone before.

~Jacob A. Riis

LOCATING LOST PARTICIPANT RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS

Just imagine if you get a call like this, what would your answer be?

Q: I just received a call from an ex-employee asking me about his retirement plan account. He was terminated many years ago. I was able to locate old payroll files confirming that he was enrolled in the 401(k) plan at one time, but our investment provider has no record of him. What should I tell him, and how can I help to prevent more calls like this in the future?

A: When participants who have been "missing" for many years resurface and request their money, it can cause a lot of confusion. While it's possible that the former employee initiated a distribution or rollover at one point in the past and has simply forgotten, most often this situation arises when that former employee's vested retirement account balance is under the plan's force-out threshold (most often $5,000) and is automatically rolled to an IRA in their name after they fail to respond to a mailed notice.

If your plan has stayed at the same investment provider since the former employee's termination date, most often it takes is a telephone call or email to that provider. The provider can look up the participant by Social Security Number (SSN) and should be able to obtain and provide a record of when and how their money was distributed. However, if your plan has changed investment providers one or more times since that date, your current provider may be unable to assist.

In this case, avenues available to help track down the money include:

1. Contact the plan's previous investment provider, if known. If the transfer took place many years ago, they would likely still have records of the plan and the participant's account.
2. Direct the participant to inquire with automatic rollover IRA firms, that should be able to search by SSN and confirm to the participant whether they have one or more accounts established. If you know which of these companies your plan has used in the past, you can direct the participant to that company. If not, a good place to start the search is with two of the most commonly used firms, Millennium Trust Company (mtrustcompany.com) and PenChecks (penchecks.com).
3. Penchecks has set up a National Registry of Unclaimed Retirement Benefits at unclaimedretirementbenefits.com , which your participant can easily search by entering his or her SSN.

As your organization's HR Director, there are procedures you can implement during exit interviews that may help avoid this scenario in the future.

1. Provide the departing employee with your plan's distribution forms and contact information for your financial advisor.
2. Terminating participants with a balance under your company's force-out threshold should be encouraged to proactively request a distribution in the manner of their choosing, rather than waiting for the force-out to occur.
3. Process force-out distributions in a timely manner after the employee terminates (many retirement plan providers can assist with this). This step can also reduce the likelihood of contact information being outdated and keeps things moving along while the account is still fresh in the former employee's mind.
4. Express to the departing employee the importance of keeping your organization apprised of any changes to their contact information if they maintain a balance in the plan, so that they continue to receive important retirement plan notices and information.

Content prepared by The Commerce Company. The Commerce Company, an independent firm, was founded in Portland in 1995 and provides corporate retirement and investment planning for small to mid-sized businesses throughout the Northwest. Contact us at thecommco.com or 503-203-8585.

HR BY THE NUMBERS

Good news! 78% of organizations report that gender diversity is a top priority of their CEOs. Yet, in hearing from HR professionals there is a different, more concerning, story. They aren't too sure this is truly reflective of their CEOs actual priorities, especially as it applies to women in leadership positions.

HR.com and DDI recently conducted new research on the topic, and here are a few concerning points they found:

- Only 27% of organizations see gender diversity as a high or very high priority for the CEO
- Only 19% of organizations had leadership programs in place for women
- Only 27% of HR professionals feel they have the ability to influence the level of gender diversity in their organizations.

* * * *

New workforce data from the recent U.S. Jobs Report shows that an increased number of people are entering the workforce. With the employee-to-population ratio rising to an astonishing 60%; it is the highest it has been since February 2009.

Roughly, 81% of prime-age workers (aged 25-54) are participating in the labor force, with unemployment among the millennial segment of that group less than 22%. In addition, American turnover rates are increasing and in 2017, quitting rates reached a new high of 2.2%. This, combined with the crop of college-graduates slated to enter the labor pool every year, equals a booming workforce. However, this growing labor market ¬¬actually can hinder your ability to attract and retain great employees so make sure your attention is on keeping them, not just getting them.

HRA WELCOMES A NEW STAFF MEMBER….

Gail Muller, Recruitment and Staffing Director serves as the staffing consultant for HR Answers talent acquisition services. She facilitates candidate recruitment, screening, and placement of experienced HR professionals for interim, part-time, or fulltime positions for HR Answer clients. She brings to HR Answers her business acumen, previous management experience in training and employee development, as well as her sales and marketing expertise.

Gail collaborates with hiring managers to identify roles and job requirements, clarifies desired experiences and qualifications, creates and revises job descriptions, advertises job openings, sources and recruits' candidates, screens and facilitates matches, interviews, negotiating employment contracts, and provides ongoing support around employee reviews, changing job tasks, and more. Gail will not just work with candidates and employers for HR positions, she is a full-service provider for all types of positions, both temporary and direct hire. Gail has 15 years of talent acquisition and placement experience within the private and non-profit sectors in the healthcare, manufacturing, educational institutions, and business services industries. Gail earned a Master of Arts in Business Administration and Bachelor of Arts in Management Organizational Leadership from George Fox University.

TRAVEL & TRAINING: TO PAY OR NOT TO PAY?

Employers often ask if they must pay employees for time employees spend in a seminar, class or traveling to a remote site for work activities. The general answer is yes, the time must be paid. Of course, there are rules and exceptions to be considered.
Employees are entitled to be paid for the time spent traveling to a remote work site or required training when the travel time cuts across the normal working hours of the employee, including those "working hours" that occur on days when the employee usually does not work. For example, an employee is scheduled to work Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 6 pm. This employee travels out-of-state to a work-related conference, boarding a plane at 7 am on Monday (a usual day off). The employer is not required to pay the employee until 10 am, the employee's normal starting time.
The employee must be paid for any travel that occurs between the normal work hours of 10 am and 6 pm, regardless of the day of the week. If the employee were driving them self and two co-workers to the convention, all travel hours of the driver/employee would be paid time. The passengers would only need to be paid for the hours that cut across their usual work day. Washington employers, however must pay for ALL travel time regardless of when the travel occurs or whether the employee is a driver or passenger.
In general, employees are paid for any time spent in work-related training, including seminars, conferences and meetings. If ALL the following four exceptions are met, the training time does not have to be paid:

1. The training takes place outside normal work hours;
2. The training is totally voluntary on the part of the employee;
3. The training is not job related; and,
4. No work tasks occur during the training.

For example, a Certified Nurses Aide who normally works 5 am – 2 pm, Monday through Friday participates in a navigation course on Saturday afternoon would not need to be paid for the time spent in the course. If that same Nurses Aide takes a first aid course on Saturday afternoon, the time must be paid. The difference is the first aid course relates to her job as a health care provider and the navigation course does not. It does not matter that the first aid course does not occur on the employee's normal work day because all four exceptions must be met for the employer to be relieved of the pay obligation.

There are requirements stating when travel and training time is paid time. Employers do have the discretion to pay employees at a different rate of pay for travel and training if the wage meets minimum wage standards. It is also important to know that travel and training time are included in the 40-hour work week as hours worked and must be included in overtime calculations.

This is just an overview of travel and training pay requirements. Further information can be found on the US Department of Labor Factsheet #22 and the Oregon Bureau of Labor Technical Assistance for Employers website http://www.oregon.gov/boli/TA/Pages/T_FAQ_Tafaq.aspx. As always, HR Answers is here to offer assistance and answer any specific questions.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Open up your Daytimers, Outlook, Palm Pilots, and all those Smart Phones. The following is a look at upcoming events, special days and other diverse and fun activities you will want to be aware of and get scheduled. ***To register for our workshops, please call any of our offices, or send an e-mail to Petrina Bigford at*** info@hranswers.com, ***or fax it to (503) 352-5582.***

JUNE

Aquarium Month, Gay Pride Month, National Camping Month

June 15	How to Develop Leaders and Why it Matters - PacificSource Speaker Series
June 18	Father's Day
June 20	Ice Cream Soda Day
June 24	Take Your Dog to Work Day
June 28	Salem HR Lunch Bunch – Topic: Is Training the Answer?

Coming Up:

JULY

Month of Cell Phone Courtesy, Ice Cream, Picnics, Horseradish, July Belongs to Blueberries

July 4	**Independence Day – Office Closed**
July 5	**Tigard HR Lunch Bunch – Topic: Benefits for the 21st Century**
July 6	Fried Chicken Day
July 10	Pina Colada Day
July 13	**HR 401 Series: Succession/Workforce Planning**
July 15	Give Something Away Day
July 20	Moon Day
July 24	Cousins Day
July 26	Uncle and Aunt Day
July 26	**Salem HR Lunch Bunch**
July 27	**HR 401 Series: Compensation & Classification**

Planning Ahead:

AUGUST

Month of Family Fun, Catfish, Gold, Peach, Romance Awareness, Eye Exam

Aug 2	**Tigard HR Lunch Bunch**
Aug 6	Root Beer Float Day
Aug 12	World Elephant Day
Aug 15	**Effective Customer Service**
Aug 16	National Roller Coaster Day
Aug 18	National Ice Cream Pie Day
Aug 20	National Radio Day
Aug 23	National Hug Your Boss Day
Aug 26	National Women's Equality Day
Aug 30	**Salem HR Lunch Bunch**

Flyers for our workshops can be found on our events page under each workshop.

View more details and register on our website here!

ON MY SOAPBOX

Many of you know that I have been teaching as an Adjunct Faculty member at Portland State University for a long time – 34 years now. I am privileged to serve on the Advisory Committee for the HR Certificate program. As such, I attend the meetings of this group. Our typical meeting covers the curriculum offered, discussion about any overlaps or gaps in the material presented, and examination of the attendance. A few months ago, I was invited to such a meeting. But when I arrived, I discovered that the agenda for this meeting was much different. Two individuals from the PSU Queer Resource Center were going to make a presentation about their work and the efforts that PSU is making to ensure that everyone feels comfortable and supported in their education endeavors regardless where they fall on the sexual identity spectrum. It took me a couple of minutes to reframe my expectations and to wonder what the experience was going to be. I was raised at a time when the word "queer" was an unacceptable label and most certainly not to be used. It wasn't slang, it was a derogatory slur. And yet, here I was, in a meeting with people who worked for an organization that carried that term and they were teaching me that it was now a word of choice. I couldn't help googling it immediately. Here is what I found, **"Originally a pejorative for gay, now being reclaimed by some gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered persons as a self-affirming umbrella term."** I was amazed and very curious.

(To provide a frame of reference for you, here is what the Center has as its Vision - **The Queer Resource Center's vision is to facilitate a campus environment such that Portland State University is the higher education destination of choice for students, staff, and faculty along the sexuality and gender spectrum.**)

The session was informative and aspirational. The instructors provided a glossary of the terminology associated with the sexual identity spectrum. There were words I had never heard and wouldn't have been able to define if not first exposed to them. Clearly PSU was making an effort to create space for people and conversations that differed from what I heard from my Mom and Dad. I left thinking about how much info I had gathered and how much I had been unaware of before this meeting. It made me wonder what else I didn't know, but invigorated by the new information.

There is a quote, attributable to Buddha, that says, "When the student is ready, a teacher will appear." This has proven to be so true! Since that meeting, I have had five separate occasions with clients to utilize the information shared that day. The fact that I was able to help or understand the situation was a direct result of the session.

From my perspective, this was new, but I recognize that for many, this is not new, it is a continuing struggle. And I can't help but wonder why society has so much trouble with acceptance. We all have fundamental differences, but why do those have to be chasms between us? Not sure I will ever get an answer to that question, and isn't that sad?

I am so pleased that I had a meeting far different than what I thought it was going to be. It was great to be jolted out of my comfort zone! It was great to be exposed to new thoughts that probably shouldn't have been new if I am in the people business.

If anyone wishes to have the handout we got that day with the terms and definitions, let me know. jclark@hranswers.com

- Judy Clark, President