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HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

As we say “good-bye” to 2020 (FINALLY) and look forward to a new year with new possibilities, this issue of Advantage has some observations, suggestions, reminders, and ideas for kick-starting your HR Department off in the right direction. Here is wishing each of you a successful New Year – taking stock of past accomplishments and looking forward to what the future can hold for you and your organization!! Good Luck!!!

RESILIENCY

It is safe to say that we are all anxious to say goodbye to 2020 and welcome in the new year. Surviving this last year took resilience. If nothing else, this year has taught us that resilience, adaptability, patience, and grace in the workplace are much needed.

Thomas Edison was quoted as saying “I have not failed. I have just found 10,000 ways that won't work.” Despite struggling with failure throughout his entire working life, Edison never let it get the best of him. Resiliency is our ability to adapt and to bounce back when things don't go as planned. Resilient people don't wallow or dwell on failures; they acknowledge the situation, learn from their mistakes, and then move forward.

There are key elements that are essential to resilience and they include challenge, commitment, and personal control. The way that we explained setbacks to ourselves (and to others) is an important observation. An “explanatory style” is made up of key elements like permanence, pervasiveness, and personalization. People who are optimistic see the effects of bad events as temporary rather than permanent. Resilient people don't let setbacks affect other unrelated areas of their lives. And they don't blame themselves when bad events occur. They see other people or circumstances as the cause, and they know how to work with that. Resilient people have a positive image of the future, have solid goals, and desire to achieve those goals. They also maintain a positive outlook and envision brighter days ahead and trust us they are there are brighter days ahead!

Have a desire to learn more? Want to see how resilient you really are? Join Deborah Jeffries [on January 15th](#) or [on January 29th](#) for ideas to build on toward Developing Your Resiliency.

COVID BENEFITS

While we may have widely available vaccine options soon, COVID is still here and workers are still challenged with balancing work and home. When employees feel like they are cared for and their well-being matters, employees can do their best and be their best for the employer. Employers are assisting in a variety of ways. A Marketplace Edison research poll found a little more than half of their respondents had been given greater flexibility in scheduling, 26% had been given additional paid time off and 17% had been given resources to help with childcare or remote schooling by their employers.

Here are some of the creative benefits being offered that may be for the short term but could also be something for long term. As you might imagine, many employers are allowing employees to set their own hours; sometimes this is working late or working early to accommodate family schedules. Some are allowing employees to reduce their hours or work compressed weeks. Some employers have offered childcare subsidies as well as online learning resources for kids. Ford Motor Company provides an hour of free tutoring a week and a virtual study Hall for kids to call into and it is staffed by Ford volunteers.

SHRM and Mercer found in their June 2020 survey that organizations are considering:

- Expanding **virtual or telehealth programs** (32%).
- Enhancing **mental health support**, such as employee assistance programs or additional services (25%).
- Increasing **cost-sharing for plan expenses** such as deductibles, premiums, or co-payments (20%).
- Adding or expanding **voluntary benefits** (16.5%).
- Augmenting **services for managing high-cost claims**, including specialty pharmacy claims (13.5%).

A side note for our readers: It is also important for employers to consider how voluntary benefits are structured. There are elements of voluntary benefits design that are not modern. Some of the products offered were designed for workforces of the past. To address this employers, need to consider:

- Working with carriers to offer benefit designs that mesh with the reality of employees' lives and circumstances (for today and the future).
- Offer new ways for employees to leverage their existing benefits.

NEW YEAR CHECKLIST

Goal Setting, Planning, and Prevention are keys to effective human resource management. Here are some reminders (this is not a complete list) to help your employment processes run smoothly this next year:

- If you have not already done so – reminder that Oregon passed the Pay Equity Law back in 2018 for 2019 roll out and auditing of your plan begins in 2021.
- Start scheduling your annual harassment training for employees and supervisors. In Oregon we passed the Workplace Fairness Act in October 2019 which had some new compliance requirements for handbook language and processes in 2020 and these need to be incorporated into your annual training.
- Assign one key HR policy per month for review and update - this makes the task of updating policies less burdensome. This works for job descriptions too. Divide the total number of job descriptions by 12 and tackle 1/12 of them per month.
- Verify and update employee emergency contact information.
- Review your application for employment form (and Form I-9) for relevance and compliance.

- Verify your employment posters are current and in locations where employees can see them and where prospective employees can see them too.
- Are you a targeted employer or do you have more than 1 employee? Make sure you have a safety committee! And make sure that your Workers' Compensation postings are being worked on so that they can go up promptly on February 1st as required. (Post OSHA 300 Form, Feb. 1 thru Apr. 30).
- Depending on your time-keeping process and attendance tracking, prepare new attendance forms/files for 2021 (perhaps even a payroll calendar – if not already done).
- Review personnel files - move old files to storage and destroy files as appropriate under your records retention policy. Perhaps this is the year you move to scanning all documents and getting rid of the paper.
- Assess benefits offerings to make sure you're getting the most/best for dollars invested.
- If you have an EAP (Employee Assistance Plan) invite them in for an update on what services are offered and perhaps their virtual training program calendar.
- Also, think about your workers' comp carrier: can they come in and do a complimentary educational program for you or conduct Ergonomic Assessment for employees who are remote?

If you have questions on any of these just let us know how we can help!

Q & A

Returning to Work

We are planning for small groups of our employees to return to the office once our stay-at-home order is lifted. We want to be prepared for employees that might not want to return out of fear, etc. We already had one employee tell us that she's not comfortable and would like to continue working remotely as much as possible. She's a receptionist and once we start opening, she needs to be at the front desk greeting visitors. What do we do?

When determining if an employee needs to return to the office, the answer is found in their job description. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Why does the job exist?
- Do the systems the employee uses to complete their responsibilities function efficiently and effectively away from the office (computer programs, or other specialty products)?
- Does the person have in-person responsibility that cannot be changed?

The answers to these questions frequently shed light on whether this job can be done from home. However, fear of getting COVID-19 is a real concern that does not change the employer's needs. So, what else can you do for a fearful employee? Ask the following questions:

- Have you shared your organization's OSHA-compliant plans, including sanitization, distancing, and other plans to mitigate the spread of the virus?
- Does your organization offer any discretionary leave the employee could request?
- And lastly (not to be hurried), have you explained that not coming back would be a resignation?

VALUING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND VALUES

The New Year is always a good time to start anew; to refresh and take a closer look at what you do and how you do it. This is a great time to look at your organizational culture and your value statements. As a consulting firm we often (until this last year) are asked to visit our clients' sites. As such, we have a wonderful opportunity to see first-hand the values that they have established because they are often posted on a wall (in the lobby, a conference room, the lunchroom, out in the warehouse, or out on the manufacturing floor).

A survey conducted by Boos Allen Hamilton and the Aspen Institute in 2005, found that organizations were starting to make their values extremely explicit. That focused activity continues today. Reaching your goals while sacrificing your values is not achievement at all. Why? Because your organization's values are the foundation in which your culture is built on, and the benefits to having a sound and thriving workplace culture are infinite.

Unsurprisingly, organizations that are more inclusive when developing their values (the corporate credo) will see a dramatic increase in their team performance and an improved work environment. Here is why: teams who spend time developing their values *together* are more focused, energized, and happier because they are clear about what's important.

Identifying and talking about your values is the easy part; living up to those values is where the real work begins. **Your culture cannot be built by posting platitudes on a wall.** It is not enough to *have* values; you must *live* them as well. The worst thing your organization can do is to advertise values you will not live up to; and the worst thing an employer can do is to become lazy about instilling these values into their everyday actions. Posting values in the lobby or break room is not enough. They need to be embodied at all levels of the organization. So, executives and employees alike need to consistently challenge themselves not just to understand the values. But to live them in day-to-day behaviors.

Organizations that do the best job of living up to their values and developing ethical employees at all levels recognize that the real cause of success — or failure — is always the people, not the words.

Ultimately, our actions will say much more to employees about our values and our leadership skills than our words ever can. If our actions are wise, no one will care if the words on the wall are not perfect. Some of the key words used in Value Statements include:

- ethical behavior/integrity;
- commitment to customers/employees/shareholders;
- teamwork and trust;
- accountability;
- social responsibility/corporate citizenship;
- innovative;
- adaptability;
- commitment to diversity;
- teamwork and trust;
- accountability;
- drive to succeed;

- initiative; and
- honesty and openness.

How do organizations align values and strategy? In other words, which management practices reinforce values in the organization and which factors enable executives to make decisions consistent with their corporate values? The CEO's support to reinforce values will always be at the top of the list. Then there is:

- corporate values statements;
- performance reviews;
- internal communications;
- training and non-monetary rewards;
- recruiting and hiring;
- internal monitoring and auditing; and
- incentive compensation.

If you wanted to take a closer look at your values, you might ask yourself:

- What are the dimensions of corporate values?
- What are the factors that enable and hinder executives in making decisions based on their corporate values?
- What is the value of corporate values?
- What are the best practices for applying corporate values?

WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS?

Soft skills are intangible attributes related to *how* you do your work. They are the traits and abilities you always possess that indicate how you'll engage with others—better known as interpersonal skills—and they indicate how you'll perform in the workplace.

While there is no doubt that employers are needing technical skills, it is the soft skills like creativity, public speaking, teamwork, and communication skills (which help you to interact with your coworkers, clients, and anyone else you come across in your job) that will keep you in the job.

"The way you get work done and interact with others is a critical component within the workplace", says Jennifer Smith founder of Flourish Careers. "Soft skills are crucial to your success and reputation, no matter

what your role or seniority level". Even as industries, professions, and the marketplace change and evolve, soft skills will always be more transferable and timeless than technical skills.

How Can You Improve or Develop Your Soft Skills?

Because they're not built on specific knowledge like technical skills, soft skills are often considered more difficult to learn or strengthen. While that may be true that doesn't mean you can't develop your soft skills.

The first thing to do is establish where your soft skills stand now. Experts like Jennifer Smith and Al Dea suggest the following methods:

- Look at past feedback from performance reviews and other sources and/or ask for current feedback: Are there any common themes, either positive or negative?
- Take some time to look at your past and current work responsibilities and try to identify which soft skills have helped you succeed in your job and which ones would have helped that you could develop.
- Take a skills assessment or quiz.

Identify one or two areas you want to focus on first. Then, just like anything else, soft skills can be improved through practice. Smith recommends putting yourself in situations where you'll have to stretch your soft skills but start small. And whenever possible during your practice time, ask for feedback.

You might also consider taking a class. HRA has assembled a whole series of soft skill programming for 2021. We encourage to [visit our website](#) to see the complete list. These programs are designed for employees at all levels with the organization.

You also look closer to home. You can turn to people in your personal or professional network. Smith suggests finding a mentor who is good at what you're trying to improve and ask them to coach you. Or, if you have a coworker who's great at the soft skill you're developing, you might ask to observe them and then evaluate what they do and how you can utilize these strategies for yourself. Again, after some practice or implementation time, ask for that feedback to assess your progress (like you would any goal) to see if there is a need to reevaluate the strategies you have been using.

HR BY THE NUMBERS

Data analysts in HR are rare. While 91% of organizations analyze HR metrics, just 15% of HR departments have a dedicated data analyst or data scientist according to XpertHR's 2020 HR Metrics Survey. The five most often analyzed metrics are:

- employee turnover 70%
- time to fill a position 49%
- employee absence 44%
- training costs 37%
- cost per hire 36%

Child Care Challenges. COVID has hit families hard in a variety of ways this last year. So, who's taking on more of the childcare duties in the household where one or both parents are working from home? According to Care.com May 2020 survey:

- 41% of families said mom has been providing the majority of extra childcare.
- 15% said dad has provided the majority of extra childcare.

What are employers doing to help with the working parent? According to SHRM 's survey from May of 2020:

- 86% offer flexible work hours.
- 71% allow full-time remote work.
- 63% provided reduced work hours.
- 9% provided or considering providing childcare subsidies.
- 7% provide or considering providing on-site childcare services.

Preparedness. Almost two-thirds of employers had an emergency preparedness plan prior to the pandemic. Of those, more than half are designed to cover communicable diseases.

Creating Culture. Managers are a big part of creating culture. SHRM’s 2019 culture report found the following:

- 76% of employees say their manager sets the culture of their workplace.
- 36% say their manager doesn't know how to lead a team.
- 40% say their manager fails to frequently engage in honest conversations about work topics.
- 58% of those who left the job due to culture claim their manager was the main reason they left.

In some respects, these are very sobering numbers and perhaps reinforces one of the reasons why HR Answers offers a supervisory training series that addresses these issues and concerns. It is hard to handle both the old and new responsibilities, so it matters how our supervisors behave, communicate, serve as role models, and represent the organization.

HRA CALENDAR

Open your Daytimers, Outlook, and all those Smartphones. The following is a look at upcoming events and workshops, special days, and other diverse and fun activities you will want to be aware of and schedule. To register for our workshops, go to [HR Answers Events](#) or click on the event below.

JANUARY: National Blood Donor, Braille Literacy, Hobby, Hot Tea, Mentoring, Slow Cooking, Soup and Walk your Pet Month.

Jan 1 **Happy New Year – HRA Offices are Closed**

Jan 3 **National Drinking Straw Day – Giveaway!!**

January 3rd is National Drinking Straw Day which commemorates the date in 1888 that Marvin C. Stone received the patent for the paper drinking straw. Since then, a variety of drinking straws have been created and used. [CLICK HERE](#) to request your very own HR Answers stainless steel straw with cleaning brush and carrying bag!

Jan 6 **HRA Webinar - Managing Remotely**

9:00am to 11:00am

[Register Here](#)

Jan 6 **HR Lunch Bunch - Performance Review Forms**

12:00pm to 1:00pm

[Register Here](#)

Jan 7 **HRA Webinar - HR Records Management**

10:00am to 12:00pm

[Register Here](#)

- Jan 10-16 Home Office Safety and Security Week
 Jan 13 National Clean Off Your Desk Day
- Jan 14 Job Search Webinar - FREE**
 11:00am to 1:00pm
[Register Here](#)
- HRA Webinar - Oregon Pay Equity: Self Audit**
 1:30pm to 3:30pm
[Register Here](#)
- Jan 15 HRA Webinar - Developing Your Resiliency**
 9:00am to 11:00am
[Register Here](#)
- Jan 17-23 Hunt for Happiness Week
- Jan 19 HRA Webinar - Self-Care for HR – Morning Session**
 7:30am to 9:30am
[Register Here](#)
- Jan 19 HRA Webinar - Self-Care for HR – Afternoon Session**
 3:30pm to 5:30pm
[Register Here](#)
- Jan 20 Martin Luther King Day**
- Jan 21 Get to Know your Customers Day
 Jan 24 National Compliment Day
- Jan 26 to Mar 16 Success for Beginning Supervisors (a series)**
 8:30am to 12:30pm on Tuesdays
[Register Here](#)
- Jan 27 HRA Webinar - Soft Skills: Communication**
 8:30am to 12:00
[Register Here](#)
- Jan 28 National Have Fun at Workday!
- Jan 29 HRA Webinar - Developing Your Resiliency**
 9:00am to 11:00am
[Register Here](#)

COMING UP:

- Feb 3** **HR Lunch Bunch - Job Descriptions**
12:00pm to 1:00pm
[Register Here](#)
- Feb 4** **HRA Webinar - Personal Improvement: Goal Setting**
8:30am to 11:00am
[Register Here](#)
- Feb 9** **HRA Webinar – Handbooks: Your Guide to Consistency**
1:30pm to 3:30pm
[Register Here](#)
- Feb 11** **Job Search Webinar - FREE**
11:00am to 1:00pm
[Register Here](#)
- Feb 16** **HRA Webinar -Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA): Tips and Tricks to Compliance Success**
9:00am to 11:00am
[Register Here](#)
- Feb 18** **HRA Webinar - Managing Generational Differences**
8:30am to 12:00pm
[Register Here](#)
- Feb 24** **HRA Webinar - Soft Skills: Conflict Resolution**
8:30am to 12:00pm
[Register Here](#)

LOOKING AHEAD:

- Mar 2** **HRA Webinar - Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation**
1:30pm to 3:30pm
[Register Here](#)
- Mar 10** **Mindfulness – Morning Session**
8:00am to 10:00am
[Register Here](#)
- March 10** **Mindfulness – Afternoon Session**
3:00pm to 5:00pm
[Register Here](#)

- Mar 11** **HRA Webinar - Employee Leaves: Protected, Discretionary, Paid or Unpaid**
9:00am to 11:00am
[Register Here](#)
- Job Search Webinar – FREE**
11:00am to 1:00pm
[Register Here](#)
- Mar 18** **HRA Webinar – Ideas for Creating a Happy Workplace**
8:30am to 12:00pm
[Register Here](#)
- Mar 24** **HRA Webinar – Self-Awareness Through DiSC**
8:30am to 12:30pm
[Register Here](#)
- Mar 31** **HRA Webinar - Soft Skills: Creativity and Curiosity**
8:30am to 12:00pm
[Register Here](#)

SUPERVISORS ARE OUR LEADERS

The role of a supervisor inside an organization is varied. We ask them to role model, we ask them to be the protector (whether that's legal, compliance, safety, or others) we asked them to handle employees on a day-to-day basis and so much more. Are your supervisors ready for this very large, encompassing, and sometimes ever-changing role in a set of responsibilities?

If you are not providing supervisory training on an ongoing basis, (yes, an on-going basis) then they might not be where you want or where you need them to be. Just read these quotes and then ask yourself: Do we need to do something more? Share these with your supervisors and ask them “Are you there yet or would you like some help?” And then we're going to encourage you to have your people participate in our supervisory success series that we have been offering for over 20 years and which starts at the end of this month. You can learn more [here](#) or find a link in our calendar section for January 26th.

THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

Don't lose sight of the most important factors that lead to successful leadership: commitment, a passion to make a difference, a vision for achieving positive change, and the courage to take action. -Lorraine Matusak

All successful leaders place a premium on keeping their promises and commitments. If they say they'll do something, whether important or seemingly insignificant, they remember it ... and they DO it. They count on the fact that people can count on them. -LEAD RIGHT

Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others. -Jack Welch

Leaders who don't listen will eventually be surrounded by people who have nothing to say.

-Andy Stanley

Successful leaders lead with the heart, not just the head. They possess qualities like empathy, compassion, and courage. -Bill George

Patience, persistence, and perspiration make an unbeatable combination for success. -Napoleon Hill

Learn the art of patience. Apply discipline to your thoughts when they become anxious over the outcome of a goal. Impatience breeds anxiety, fear, discouragement, and failure. Patience creates confidence, decisiveness, and a rational outlook, which eventually leads to success.

-Brian Adams

PROTECT WORKERS THIS WINTER

The following article was published by OSHA and is a good reminder for employers who have employees working outside during winter weather.

With winter here, hazards such as freezing temperatures, downed power lines and icy roads can affect workers, so it is important to prepare for winter storms *before* they arrive. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has resources for common [winter weather hazards](#) to help employers and workers stay safe.

Here are some best practices to remember as you prepare:

1. **Train workers.** Employers need to identify potential winter hazards and provide necessary training.
2. **Prevent cold stress.** Be sure to monitor workers' physical conditions during tasks, especially new workers who may not be used to working in the cold. Train workers on cold stress hazards and prevention, provide engineering controls like radiant heaters, gradually introduce workers to the cold, monitor workers and schedule breaks in warm areas. Find more information on how to prevent cold stress in OSHA's [Cold Stress Safety and Health Guide](#).
3. **Dress appropriately.** When cold weather conditions cannot be avoided, wearing the right clothing can help protect workers from cold stress:
 - Stay dry – wet clothing chills the body quickly.
 - Wear at least three layers of loose-fitting clothing. Layering provides better insulation.
 - Wear hats, insulated gloves, and insulated, waterproof boots.
4. **Provide engineering controls or implement safe work practices.** Use radiant heaters to warm outdoor workplaces such as security stations or curbside pick-up locations. If possible, employers should shield work areas from drafts or wind to reduce wind chill. Also, safely use aerial lifts or ladders to apply de-icing materials to roofs to protect workers from falling. See OSHA's [winter weather page](#) for more safe work practices.
5. **Never use portable generators indoors.** Check out OSHA's guidance on [properly working with generators](#). Safe generator use involves:

- Placing generators away from doors, windows, or ventilation shafts where carbon monoxide can enter and build up with deadly consequences.
- Inspecting them for damage or loose fuel lines.
- Keeping them dry.
- Maintaining and operating generators according to manufacturer instructions.

Learn more about how to prevent injury and illness during a winter storm and [find resources in English and Spanish](#).

If you have questions or concerns about workplace safety, [contact OSHA online](#) or by phone at 1-800-321-6742 (OSHA).

REMINDER(S)

2021 Minimum Wage Increases Set to Take Effect. In 2021 the minimum wage will increase in more than two dozen states (AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, IL, MA MD, MI, MS, MO, MN, MT, NV NJ NM, NY, OR OH, SD, VT, and WA with most of the changes set to take effect on January 1st but not all. Minimum wage will also increase at the local level in a number of counties and cities so be sure to check out your state resources for up-to-date and accurate information. For our friends in the Pacific Northwest, we’ve got you covered below:

Location	2020 Rate	2021 Rate
Alaska	\$10.19	\$10.34
Oregon	\$12.00	\$12.75, eff. 7/1/2021
Portland, OR	\$13.25	\$14.00, eff. 7/1/2021
Washington	\$13.50	\$13.69
Seattle, WA	\$15.75 (500 or fewer employees) \$13.50 (500 or fewer, plus tips and benefits paid by employer) \$16.39 (more than 500 employees)	\$16.69 (500 or fewer employees) \$15.00 (500 or fewer, plus tips and benefits paid by employer) \$16.69 (more than 500 employees)

Information and advice offered through **Advantage** should not be construed as legal opinion. The material contained herein will not apply to all circumstances or to all organizations. Use it as a resource and reference. Should you feel legal advice is required, please consult with your corporate counsel.

ON MY SOAPBOX

It is the custom to toast in the New Year. And this year we have more reason to celebrate this turning of the calendar. It is putting 2020 in the rear-view mirror. There is no question that we will have to dig ourselves out of the muck that was 2020, but with vaccines we can see a brighter year ahead. Here are some New Year's toasts that you may wish to consider...

- *"Here's a toast to the future, a toast to the past, and a toast to our friends, far and near. The past a bright dream; may our friends remain faithful and clear."*
- *"May you live as long as you want and never want as long as you live!"*
- *"As we start the New Year, let's get down on our knees to thank God we're on our feet."*
- *"Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man." — Benjamin Franklin*
- *"We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day." — Edith Pierce*
- *"For last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning." — T.S. Eliot*
- *"May all your troubles during the coming year be as short as your New Year's resolutions."*
- *"Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow ye diet."*
- *"Youth is when you're allowed to stay up late on New Year's Eve. Middle age is when you're forced to." — Bill Vaughn*
- *"As you slide down the banisters of life, may the splinters never point the wrong way."*
- *"He who breaks a resolution is a weakling; he who makes one is a fool." — F.M. Knowles*
- *"Here's to those who've seen us at our best and seen us at our worst and can't tell the difference."*
- *"There comes a time in every woman's life when the only thing that helps is a glass of Champagne." — Bette Davis*
- *Too much of anything is bad, but too much Champagne is just right." — F. Scott Fitzgerald*

My wish for you for 2021 is less grief, more hugs, less worry, more affection, less turmoil, more stability; and more friendship, laughter, and good food.



"Whatever the Question"

Visit Our Website for More Information

hranswers.com

Judy Clark, Founder

