



advantage



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National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and is a month-long observance that acknowledges workers with disabilities. During the month, awareness is raised about the challenges disabled professionals face and the improvements needed in the work world. This is also a month where we get to celebrate the success of these capable professionals and the progress being made in the work world. All of this positively affects our organizations and communities.



Celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month is important because though progress has been made in terms of accommodations for professionals with disabilities in past decades, there are still many more improvements to be made in terms of environment and awareness. National Disability Employment Awareness Month uplifts workers with adverse conditions and stresses the responsibility every professional has to make the work world inclusive for all team members. The month offers the opportunity to highlight the success and capability of these professionals, and also educates the workforce about the realities and nuances

of disabilities in the professional world. A rise in remote work has so far enabled even more disabled professionals to enter the workforce, and it is important for employees to be aware of and be sensitive to the experiences of these individuals.

Many employers take time during the month to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month at work including lunch and learns, movie screenings, donations to disability groups, book clubs, sharing quotes and more. Under a separate article we will share ideas with you - perhaps there will be a few you would like to adopt and share with others.

Interviewing Applicants With Disabilities

One in four people in the U.S. has a disability, according to the most recent data by the Centers for Disease Control. People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the country. Studies have shown that businesses benefit by hiring people with disabilities. They have lower turnover, less absenteeism, and they see improved morale and a more positive work environment.

One of the greatest barriers to employment for people with disabilities is fear of the unknown on the part of employers.

Common fears include:

- Fear of how other employees and customers will accept people with disabilities
- Fear of how to supervise someone with a disability
- Fear of increased accidents or injury in the workplace
- Fear of communicating with someone with a disability
- Fear of what happens if it doesn't work out

These fears are real, especially for those that have no or very little experience. People with disabilities want to be treated like anyone else and they want a career not just a job. People with disabilities are often still stigmatized with low expectations and have a 2x higher unemployment rate compared to their peers without a disability. By addressing fears and stigmas, we begin to see the person and not their disability.

One way of addressing our fears is to learn about different types of disabilities, visible and invisible. More than 70% of disabilities are not visible. Learning about different disabilities will help ensure you are not dismissing a qualified candidate during the interview process. Do not underestimate or overestimate; communicate to get a sense of who they are and what skills they have to offer. Our number one mistake - don't make assumptions.

Evaluating and adjusting your interview process is also a critical step in ensuring you are not unintentionally missing qualified candidates with disabilities. Ways to make the interview process more inclusive are:

1. **Updating the checklist.** If your organization uses a checklist to grade candidates during the interview, make sure the checklist focuses on the individual's skills and experience, and not on social skills, such as eye contact and firm handshakes, especially if these skills are not essential functions of a job. Sometimes individuals just do this differently.
2. **Eliminate large group interviews.** These can be intimidating for some with disabilities and also focus more on aligning into the group, not skills for the job (essential functions).
3. **Have candidates do a project instead of answer questions so they can show they have the skills to do the work.** Organizations like Microsoft have started using this approach to better highlight an individual's aptitude to do the job.



4. **Consider providing the interview questions ahead of time.** Few jobs utilize pop-quiz testing, and that is how we conduct interviews. Providing questions ahead of time can give those with cognitive processing challenges time to prepare their responses. The average time to let someone answer a question is 1.5 seconds. It is okay to give someone additional time. Many people are visual thinkers and learners. They need a little extra time to process the question. Also consider if the person doesn't understand the question, reword, and clarify. Keep your questions straightforward and concrete.
5. **Train hiring managers on appropriate interviewing practices** and provide refreshers if recruitment is infrequent, or it's been a while.

The Americans with Disabilities Act specifically prohibits employers from asking questions that are likely to reveal the existence of a candidate's disability before they make a job offer. The [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) (EEOC) says these questions are off-limits:

- Have you ever had a medical procedure related to your hearing or vision, such as a cochlear implant or eye surgery?
- Do you have a condition that may have caused a hearing or visual impairment?
- Do you use a hearing aid?
- Do you use any prescription medications, including medications for conditions related to the eye?



Likewise, employers generally are barred from asking job applicants whether they will need a reasonable accommodation to perform the job, since the answer is likely to reveal whether an applicant has a disability, according to the EEOC.

However, if the employer knows an applicant has a disability and it is reasonable to wonder whether the disability might pose difficulties for the individual in performing a specific job task, then the employer may ask whether the applicant would need a reasonable accommodation to perform that task.

Employers may ask questions relating to the applicant's ability to perform the essential functions of the position with or without a reasonable accommodation, such as:

- Can you respond quickly to instructions in a noisy, fast-paced work environment?
- Are you able to meet legally mandated safety standards required to perform a job?

Job applicants aren't required to tell a potential employer they might need an accommodation to perform the job. There are pluses and minuses for doing so, according to vocational specialists.

On the one hand, discrimination is real, and some employers may never even consider an applicant with a disability. On the other hand, letting an employer know of an applicant's need for an accommodation during a job interview will allow the employer to make the necessary arrangements in advance. Accommodations could include a translator or video hookup for a deaf applicant, or print-magnifying equipment if an applicant with a visual impairment needs to take a qualifying exam.

Do not try to imagine how you would perform a specific job if you had the applicant's disability. The individual has mastered alternate ways of living and working. If the applicant has a known disability, either because it is obvious or was revealed by the applicant, you may ask them to describe how they would perform the job.

It is important to note medical examinations are prohibited under the ADA at the pre-employment offer stage. However, a job offer may be conditional based on the results of a medical examination if all employees entering similar jobs are also required to take an examination. If, after the medical examination, the employer decides not to hire an individual because of a disability, the employer must demonstrate the reason for the rejection is job-related and consistent with business necessity.



NLRB Proposes Changes To Joint Employer Standard

The [National Labor Relations Board](#) (NLRB) recently announced a [proposed rule](#) that would broaden the standard for which businesses are considered co- or joint employers under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). The proposed joint employer standard would provide that: “two or more employers of the same particular employees are joint employers of those employees *if the employers share or codetermine those matters governing employees’ essential terms and conditions of employment*” This would mark a significant departure from the current standard, which requires that an employer exercise “substantial direct and immediate control over the employees’ essential terms and conditions of employment.” For many the rule would change the workplace substantially and alter how businesses use contractors and staffing organizations going forward.

Practically speaking, this rule (if adopted) could increase potential exposure for employers, including where the connection is vague, especially if the concept of what constitutes “indirect control” is not further clarified. It also greatly increases the risk profile where an employer enters into relationships with staffing firms or other third-party providers, and in the franchisor-franchisee setting.

That said, it is important to note that this is a notice of *proposed* rulemaking, meaning this rule is not yet final. It is still in the midst of the commentary period where the Board will receive important feedback from the public.

Nevertheless, given the potential ramifications of this proposed rule, we will stay abreast of any developments that emerge during the notice and comment period, and provide updates accordingly.

Monkeypox: Tips For All Employers

Perhaps you heard that in August California declared a state of emergency regarding monkeypox. The proclamation does not have any specific provisions addressing employers or requiring employers to do anything. It primarily appears to allow California to take action to mobilize state resources to combat monkeypox.



Additionally, President Biden declared monkeypox a national health emergency to ensure that federal funding may be quickly directed toward developing and evaluating vaccines and drugs, as well as toward the hiring of additional federal agency workers to help manage the outbreak. As with the California proclamation, the federal declaration does not include any specific employer responsibilities.

While these declarations of emergency for monkeypox do not address employer responsibilities, employers in every state should be familiar with how monkeypox is spread and be prepared to address employee absences related to monkeypox and even the potential for outbreaks in the workplace, though transmission in the workplace is less likely for most employers because of the way monkeypox is transmitted.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), monkeypox generally is spread through close, personal, often skin-to-skin contact, including direct contact with monkeypox rash, scabs, or body fluids from a person with monkeypox; touching objects, fabrics (clothing, bedding, or towels), and surfaces that have been used by someone with monkeypox;

and prolonged contact with respiratory secretions, such as kissing. It is not transmitted through casual contact, as COVID-19 can be. So, most office and warehouse employees likely are not at risk for transmission in the workplace, while healthcare workers, hotel housekeepers, and workers in laundries and dry cleaners (a few potentially more risky occupations) may be more at risk. Employers should consider their workplace job requirements and conditions to assess potential risks.

The CDC also recommends that people who have symptoms of the disease isolate at home or at another location for the duration of illness, generally until any accompanying rash has fully resolved, the scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed.

According to the CDC, symptoms of monkeypox can include fever; headache; muscle aches and backache; swollen lymph nodes; chills; exhaustion; respiratory symptoms (e.g., sore throat, nasal congestion, or cough); and a rash that may be located on or near the genitals or anus but could also be on other areas like the hands, feet, chest, face, or mouth. The rash will go through several stages, including scabs, before healing and can look like pimples or blisters and may be painful or itchy. Monkeypox symptoms usually start within 3 weeks of exposure to the virus. If someone has flulike symptoms, he or she will usually develop a rash 1–4 days later.



Monkeypox can be spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The illness typically lasts between 2 and 4 weeks.

[According to the CDC](#), monkeypox infection can be painful and extremely unpleasant, but it is seldom deadly, though those who are elderly, immunocompromised, and under the age of 8 may be at risk for more severe infections. And, there is a vaccine available for monkeypox, though supply is scarce depending on location.

Accordingly, employers should educate themselves on the monkeypox virus and begin to implement policies and procedures based on their risk analysis to ensure they are not caught by surprise by this new communicable disease. Many of the steps you may have taken to address COVID-19 in the workplace may be applied to this new transmittable illness. Here are several steps worth considering:

1. **Have a plan to address potential monkeypox outbreaks.** Review your leave, paid-time-off, compensation, and attendance policies to determine how they will be implemented if any of your employees report a case of monkeypox.



2. Provide a work environment that promotes personal hygiene. For example, provide tissues, no-touch trash cans with plastic liners, hand soap, hand sanitizer, disinfectants, and disposable disinfecting towels for workers to clean their work surfaces.

3. Regularly clean workspaces and surfaces. Bathrooms and break areas are obvious places that should be scrubbed, but do not forget to clean phones, computer keyboards, desktops, and doorknobs. Encourage employees to wipe down their personal workspaces at the end of each day. These precautions also will help prevent the

transmission of colds and the flu, and other communicable diseases that you can see in your workplace (especially as we move into the winter season).

4. **Ask symptomatic employees to stay home.** Encourage employees to follow the suggestions from the CDC, including going to their healthcare provider and self-quarantining if they are diagnosed with monkeypox.
5. **Send employees home who become ill at work.** Do this regardless of whether you think it is monkeypox, COVID-19, the flu, or simply a bad cold. Try to minimize their contact with other employees until they can go home to limit the potential spread of the virus. Encourage them to seek medical treatment from their healthcare providers and self-quarantine if they think this is monkeypox or COVID-19.
6. **Keep medical information confidential.** Remember, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), FMLA, and CFRA require you to keep medical information about employees confidential, including information about monkeypox.
7. **Keep up to date with the latest information on monkeypox from the CDC and local health authorities.** Monitor outbreaks in your community, and check the CDC's monkeypox website, online at <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html>, on a regular basis for new recommendations for responding to any outbreak.

Because of the public emergency declarations at both the state and the federal level and the uncertainty surrounding monkeypox, if you are worried or have additional questions you certainly can discuss this matter with one of our consultants to ensure compliance.



Recognizing National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Below is a list of ideas and events aimed at empowering employees with disabilities and to educate the workforce about the need for accommodation and understanding. These suggestions are ways to honor the occasion by including partnering with employee resource groups, hosting guest speakers, and donating to a disability philanthropy and more. The purpose of this month is to acknowledge the contributions of the disabled community to the work world and to educate the wider workforce on related matters.

Here is a list of some tried and true ways to celebrate and recognize National Disability Awareness Month at work.

1. **Hold a lunch and learn** - During these sessions, employees gather to share a meal and hear information about a topic.
2. **Screen a documentary** - To watch a movie, you only need a film, large screen and projector or AV setup, and a room big enough to fit the audience, or, streaming software that allows the group to watch together remotely. There are many documentaries that are both educational and entertaining and make for an informative and engaging team movie night.

Suggestions:

- Crip Camp (2020)
- Creating the Spectacle (2012)
- Unrest (2017)
- Right Footed (2015)
- When I Walk (2013)
- Born for Business (2021)



Fictional movies centered on disabilities are also options.

To make the activity more impactful, you can host a discussion after the film and have teammates talk about the movie together.

3. **Partner with employee resource groups** - If your organization does not already have an employee resource group for disabled employees, then this month is an ideal time to start one. If such an ERG already exists, then you can tap the group for help planning and hosting events throughout the month. Giving these groups a say in the planning process helps highlight the subjects that are most important to the community. Chances are that these individuals know how best to educate others and spread awareness, and have issues they would like to bring to light to the other community. This approach is a way to give more visibility to these groups. Leaders and members can sponsor events such as Q&A's, socials, and fundraisers. Here is a [guide to employee resource groups](#).

4. **Review company policies and accommodations** - Reviewing and revising policies is a practical suggestion. While celebration and recognition is nice, these gestures are less meaningful if the workplace is not accessible and empowering to disabled professionals. You can seek feedback from staff, hire a consultant, and review standards with leadership to search for more opportunities to better support workers facing physical or mental adversity. Use this month as a catalyst to ask, “what more could we do?” and identify immediate and longer-term steps you can take to make the workplace more inclusive to workers with different needs.
5. **Host a contest** - Employees are often an organization’s best resource. By holding a contest, you can tap your staff to make the work environment more amenable for disabled colleagues. Simply put a call out for ideas to make the office more accessible. You can give brainstormers a budget and have a panel of judges review the ideas and pick the most helpful option. The winning idea gets implemented, and the team or team member behind the idea earns a gift card. This approach sparks employee creativity while encouraging all employees to take responsibility for designing more inclusive work settings. Check out more [workplace competition ideas](#).



6. **Invite guest speakers** - Many advocates and motivational speakers dedicate their careers to speaking about disability issues. You can book a speaker to visit the office or call in via Zoom to give a talk to staff. For best results, these talks should be interactive and have time for questions and answers at the end. You could even recruit a host to lead a more hands-on workshop-style experience to help improve skills like communicating about disability at work or building more inclusive work environments. Here is a [list of virtual keynote speakers](#) who also do in-person events. Some of these individuals have conducted TED Talks on YouTube and they are free.

7. **Support a disability charity** - Supporting a disability philanthropy is one of the most meaningful ways to celebrate. The team can volunteer for an organization that supports folks with disabilities, for instance helping the vision impaired run errands via an app or helping to install accommodations like handrails or ramps. The team can also raise money for such organizations.
8. **Use company communications to spread awareness** - Communication is a major component of spreading disability awareness and giving recognition to the community. Most companies have multiple channels to use to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month, including blogs, social media handles, and emails. Campaign ideas include a disability spotlight, interview with an expert or advocate, employee or organization profile or takeover, fundraisers, and event partnerships. You could post tips about ways to support disabled coworkers or employees and how to be a good ally or use your platform as a

stage to shout out achievements of disabled professionals. Beyond helping your staff, these messages can educate other workplaces and the public.

9. **Start a Book Club** - Books are a good way to communicate the firsthand experience of the disabled community. Host a special book club session that highlights a disabled author or examines a book on disability issues.

Here are a few starter suggestions:

- Being Heumann by Judith Heumann and Kristen Joiner
- Disability Visibility by Alice Wong
- About Us: Essays from the Disability Series of the New York Times
- No Pity by Joseph P. Shapiro
- A Disability History of the United States by Kim E. Nielsen
- Demystifying Disability by Emily Ladau

If short on time, then the group can read essays or articles instead of full-length texts. For more reading recommendations, check out these [lists of books for work](#).





client accolades

KUDOs to all the organizations who have enrolled their supervisors in the HRA Fall Supervisory Success program. We tip our hats to you for investing in your people's growth and development. With 60 participants, it is the largest class we have ever had. THANK YOU! Our next series will begin in February 2023.



hr links

Staying with our theme of Working with People with Disabilities, etc. We wanted to share these resources with you.

[Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion](#)

[Job Accommodation Network](#)

[SHRM Foundation's Employing Abilities @Work Initiative](#)



whatever the question

Many employers have been asking and waiting for the final rules and information about Oregon's Paid Leave. With the help of our friends at Elliott, Powell, Baden, and Baker we have several Q & As for you.

1. Can I opt out of the State Plan?

- Yes, employers with 10 or more employees can obtain a private plan
- In doing so, another line of coverage will need to be added. (dental, life insurance, STD, LTD)
- Must file with State by November 30th, 2022, to avoid paying payroll tax 1/1/2023
- Coverage would be effective 9/1/23 with the private option through a carrier.

2. Why would I opt out of state plan and take a private plan with a carrier?

- Might be less than the state's 1%
- No prefunding
- Carriers know what they're doing and pay claims regularly and timely

3. Why should I keep my employer paid short-term disability plan when there is a state option available?

- State plan can be exhausted and then no benefit for 52 weeks
- Carriers offset for state plans and therefore reduce the premium an average of 65%

4. How is Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) funded?

- Through a payroll contribution
- No more than 1% shared by employee & employer for groups with 25+ employees.
- \$0.60 employee / \$0.40 employer
- There is no employer contribution requirement for groups with less than 25 employees

Many employers are exploring the option to opt out of the state program and are looking to talk with someone to explore alternatives. You might consider Jennifer French, Life & Health Manager from [ELLIOTT, POWELL, BADEN & BAKER, INC.](#) (the creator of these questions) as a resource. She can be reached at JFrench@epbb.com or by phone at 503-445-8416.

Is there a question you would like us to answer?

Email the question to info@hranswers.com and include the subject "newsletter question". We will publish the answer in our next issue.

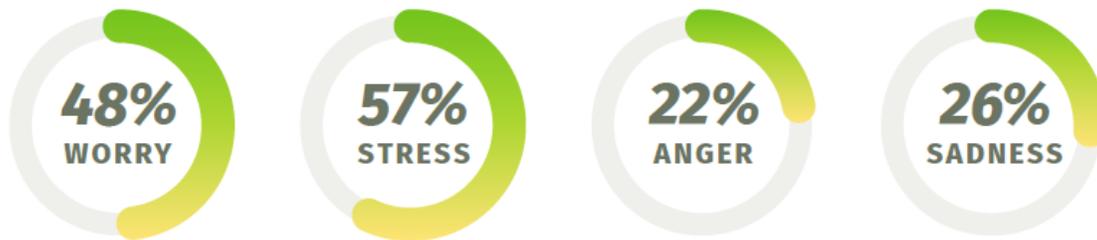


hr by the numbers

According to McKinsey & Company, "More than six million working American have a disability" but "less than 20% of Americans with a disability are employed." Their research further shows that "expanding labor-force participation among Americans with disabilities who want to work could add nearly \$215 billion to US GDP by 2040." Given this incredible opportunity for financial growth, what can business leaders do to create more inclusive, accessible, and safe environments for workers with disabilities? How would you bring this business case to your leadership? <https://buff.ly/3cvQ2Wh>



According to a Gallup study, daily employee stress worldwide reached a record high in 2020: 43%. In the U.S. and Canada, 2020 saw a dramatic increase in people who reported feeling negative emotions for most of each day.



No matter the source of these feelings, the physiological effect is the same over time: high levels of the stress hormone cortisol lead to headaches, muscle tension, and exhaustion. It's a situation that demoralizes employees and damages productivity. Here's a closer look at how the events of the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to employee burnout. It may be two years later, and these emotions are still with many of our employees. Employers need to be able to recognize and support employees.



While some companies seem to be catching on to what workers need, others remain out of touch and slow to respond to developing trends. According to [SHRM's 2021-2022 State of the Workplace Study](#), fielded late last year, 84 percent of employers are grappling with labor shortages, which begs the question: What do employees want?

Unfortunately for HR professionals, there is no easy answer. Still, workers across all demographics consistently value benefits related to three vital needs: physical health, mental health, and life balance (93% of organizations offer telemedicine or telehealth benefits – up from



hr by the numbers

73% in 2019 and 91% of employers of mental health coverage; source SHRM [2022 Employee Benefits Survey](#)).



Anxiety disorders affect 40 million adults aged 18 or older, or 18.1% of the population every year (Anxiety and Depression Association of America). Some 12.5 million working days a year are lost due to work-related stress, depression, or anxiety.



According to the *Society for Human Resource Management's* (SHRM's) [2022 Employee Benefits Survey](#), 91% of organizations offer mental health coverage, up from 85% in 2021.



thoughts to think about

"If we fill our hours with regrets of yesterday and with the worries of tomorrow, we have no today in which to be thankful." ~Unknown

"Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best." ~Henry Van Dyke

"We would be well on our way to perfection if we could weed out one vice from ourselves each year." ~Thomas à Kempis

"My business is not to remake myself, but to make the absolute best of what God makes." ~Robert Browning

"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence." ~Helen Keller

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." ~Aesop

"Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind." ~Henry James

"That light we see is burning in my hall. How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world." ~William Shakespeare

*"Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see."
~Mark Twain*

*"Kind hearts are the gardens
Kind thoughts are the roots;
Kind words are the blossoms;
Kind deeds are the fruits."
~19th Century Rhyme*

calendar of events



- 07** Supervisory Short: Stay Interviews
-  **12** Professional Practices: Americans with Disabilities Act
-  **13** Interviewing for Culture
-  **18** Professional Practices: Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation
-  **25** Professional Practices: HR Compliance - What You Don't Know Can Hurt You.
- 27** Essential Skills: Delegation



- 02** HR Lunch Bunch: What is Registered Apprenticeship? Creating a New Workforce Development Strategy
-  **02** Professional Practices: Employee Leaves - Protected, Discretionary, Paid or Unpaid
- 04** Supervisory Short: Teambuilding
-  **08** Generations
- 09** Workplace Civility
- 10** Essential Skills: Managing Change
-  **10** Professional Practices: Auditing Oregon Pay Equity
- 15** Foundations of Leadership
- 15** Overview of Paid Leave Oregon
-  **29** Professional Practices: Conducting an Effective Internal Investigation
-  **30** Preventing Employees from Becoming Plaintiffs

calendar of events



- 01** Overview of Paid Leave Oregon
- 02** Supervisory Short: Stress Management
-  **06** Onboarding: Jump Start for New Employees
-  **07** Employee Recognition
- 07** HR Lunch Bunch: Compensation
-  **08** Emotional Safety
-  **13** Professional Practices: Fair Labor Standards Act - Tips and Tricks to Compliance Success
-  **14** Interviewing for Emotional Intelligence
- 29** Essential Skills: Life Balance

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on my soapbox

Someone once said, “To have a good idea, you have to have a lot of ideas.” I assume the premise to be that amongst the larger number of bad ideas or barely workable ideas, there may be one really good idea. That if you have only one idea, it is unlikely that it will be terrific, but that if you conjure up lots of ideas, maybe one of them will be imbued with that creative spark of genius.



In doing some research about innovation, I bumped into a website www.ntlworld.com and found a plethora of information. For any of you who possess a curiosity about the generation of good ideas, this is a great place to visit. The author, Matthew Leitch, offers the following information about the characteristics of a “good idea” saying there are three distinctive qualities of a good idea. The first is that a good idea is “original.” He discusses that original ideas are necessary to gain an advantage. (In all honesty, it wasn’t at this point that I became impressed because I thought that one characteristic was a bit obvious.) His second distinction is that good ideas are functionally superior. Now this one may seem obvious, but I think it carries a subtlety that may require some thought. There are a tremendous number of ideas that we all may exclaim about and think they are wonderful, but after some reflection, we just can’t see how they would work. Mr. Leitch’s theory would suggest that these are not good ideas, specifically because they can’t be made to work and that good ideas must be implementable.

His third observation is that good ideas can be worked through in all the detail necessary to be understood and put into action. That if an idea can’t be explained, can’t be turned into a practical application, then it really wasn’t a very good idea. The essence of what he is suggesting is that for an idea to be a “good” one, it must have a realistic use and fill an existing or future need.

When I was first reading his material, I thought he had narrowed the perspective too much. Surely a good idea could be large in scope, could be grand in its concept. And then I thought more and found that I could adopt his definition because a “good” idea would not necessarily be one that was fun; one that invited our brains to flight of fancy. It would be one we could see becoming a legitimate alternative to the way things were previously done. It could become a new product, methodology, or a new way of thinking. Without it being able to come to fruition, the idea might be stimulating, but would not truly be an improvement in our lives or work. Mr. Leitch says it this way, “By contrast, ideas that usually come out of brainstorming sessions and corporate ‘off sites’ aimed at generating ideas for improvement are almost always stale, half baked, and later turn out to give no advantage.”

He describes “six keys” to good ideas identifying them as Critical Thinking, Careful Analysis, Collecting Solutions, Reading and Learning from like-minded people, Persistence in finding

solutions, and Testing and Learning. He provides detailed information about the value and rationale for each of these.

Initially, it took me a while to come to his point of view. But once I had considered the concept of a good idea, I concurred that the real test, is can the idea work, is it a step forward, will it improve our function or outcomes? I think I was taken by this new way of defining ideas because when we had retreats, we focused part of our time to thinking, where we each thought individually. As we work to implement the many ideas and suggestions that surfaced from our time together, we will try to apply the discipline and rigor that Mr. Leitch suggest. That way our action plans can truly lead to functional changes that improve our workplace and the products and services we provide to our clients.

I especially liked one point he made about this whole process not being for everyone. I thought he was going to comment that not all of us are designed to think this way, but no. His comment was that this type of thinking invariably brings controversy and conflict so not all of us are designed to deal with the product of the creativity very well. He did tell us that getting good at this requires practice, so it is possible for all of us if we simply apply ourselves.

I think I'll go find a cozy corner and practice thinking!

Judy Clark, Principal and Founder

To see more of Judy's writing and read the history of HRA Answers, [visit our website](#).

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