

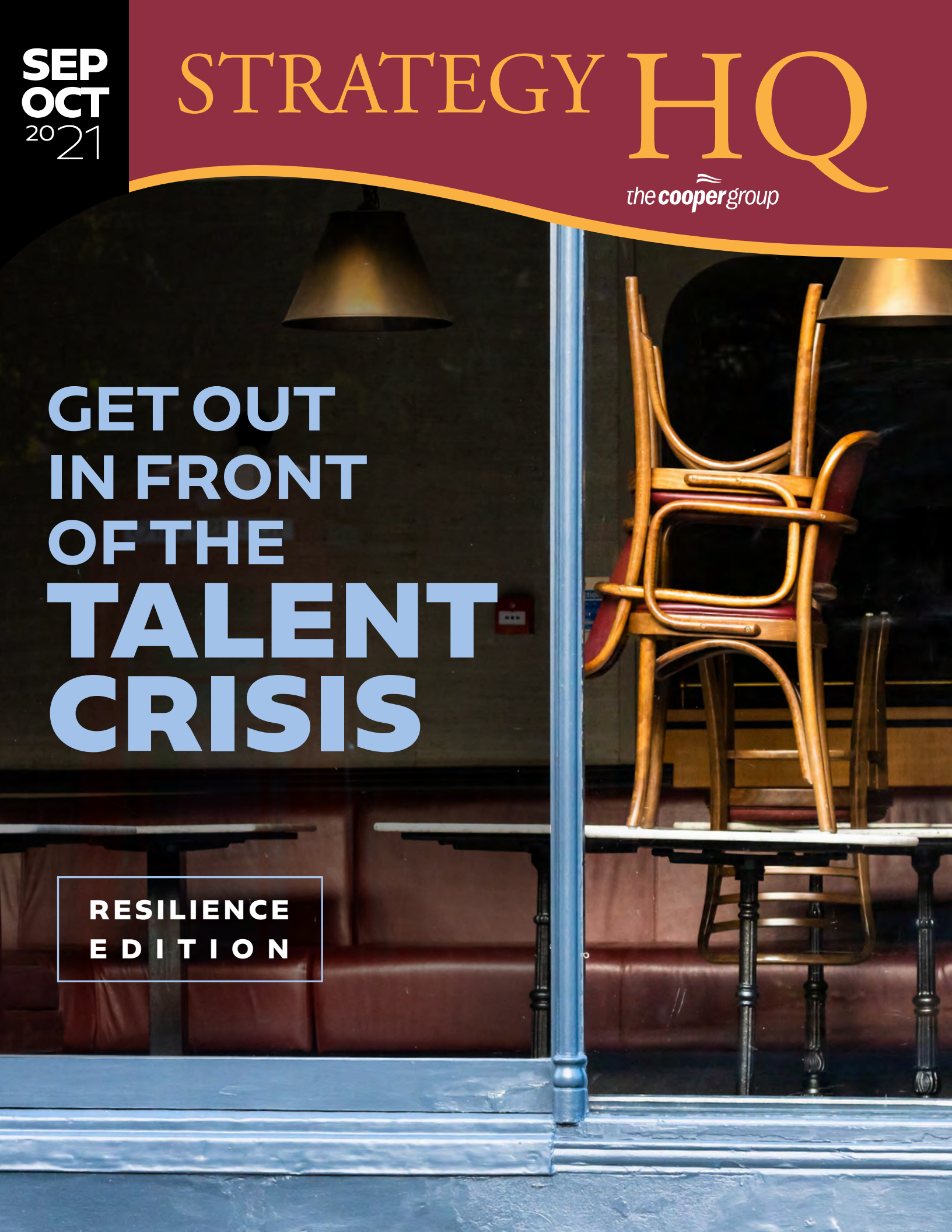
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# STRATEGY HQ

the cooper group

GET OUT  
IN FRONT  
OF THE  
**TALENT  
CRISIS**

RESILIENCE  
E D I T I O N





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# The Persistent Human Capital Crisis IN CORPORATE AMERICA

Onboarding talent was never easy. Now it's complicated. It helps to have a good, current grasp of what's happening, along with guidance on how to get in front of the talent crisis.

The pandemic indelibly changed workers' outlooks on their jobs, careers and lifestyles, thrusting quality of life to the forefront – above compensation. Clearly, the pandemic and its meddlesome effects on the hiring market are far from over. Real-life shapeshifting of the virus is creating variants and uncertainties that are feeding the crisis and interfering with business recovery. In-person schooling

is on thin ice, causing childcare issues for working parents. Fear of infection is also keeping people from returning to in-person job attendance.

Businesses everywhere are reckoning with the harsh reality of

today's candidate-driven market, doing what they can to keep and attract talent. Pre-pandemic talent acquisition and retention strategies and working models are changing to appeal to an otherwise resistant workforce, and more companies are imposing vaccination mandates or regular testing to allay concerns. According to Indeed, job postings with vax requirements are escalating in many sectors, from software development to marketing, education, sales, management, accounting, retail and more.

These measures appear to be working. Jobless claims keep dropping and hiring keeps rising – both encouraging signs for





today's employers. Nevertheless, the status keeps changing over the course of a week or month, to the extent even the experts cannot accurately project which way it will go. The Great Resignation is also alive and well, throwing a damper on the whole picture.

### **The fourth quarter of 2021 will bring more turbulence**

Jobs reports and statistics will continue to move over the next six to 24 months as employers adjust to worker reluctance to reengage as they previously did. Right now, in the face of strong resistance

It's going to take a few 'moments' for all of this to shake out. Until it does, facing and acting on the current reality is the best course of action for employers with immediate talent needs.

### **For now, consider current mindsets a lasting certainty**

Aspirations for more rewarding ways of living and working are not new, by a long shot. What's different today is a pandemic-weary workforce that is acting on their ideals in droves. The workforce is shifting away from historical employment norms that in their minds should never fully return.

working from home, without the inflexibility of corporate life, and with freedom from time-sucking commute times and of course lack of exposure. It's a genuine revolution not expected to subside, in part because viable alternatives exist.

People are choosing entrepreneurship, leaving jobs for companies with more flexible work policies (and higher pay), opting for early retirement, and pursuing other ways to generate income, some of which existed pre-pandemic, like the gig economy, the stock market, and industry sectors where work-from-home (WFH) strategies were in place long before the pandemic emerged. Cryptocurrency trading has also emerged as an alternative income source.



**People are choosing entrepreneurship, leaving jobs for companies with more flexible work policies (and higher pay), opting for early retirement, and pursuing other ways to generate income...**

and the pandemic's persistence, many employers are choosing to offer hybrid work models, with a few days in the office and the balance remote...with the 'unstated' goal of a full return to on-premises attendance at some point. That unstated goal will not work for many companies because limited time in the workplace has already become a competitive advantage.

Attitudes have changed, likely for good.

For workers in roles where remote work in 2020 was both possible and necessary, working from home led to a newfound freedom and improved quality of life, not to mention protection from the virus for themselves and their loved ones. People want to continue

### **Why talent acquisition and retention strategies must change – and are changing**

Unfortunately, many businesses are simply waiting to see if the expiration of unemployment aid to more than 7 million Americans this month will bring people back to the workforce. It's not enough.



Companies must do more to meet the moment.

Historically, I have believed that people need at least two of the following three things to be happy in their jobs. To stay or join, and to be productive and satisfied, people must:

1. Like their jobs
2. Like their superiors and co-workers
3. Like the money

Today's workforce is demanding not just two but all three of the above and more. Keep these must-have in mind, too:



4. Quality of life is paramount.
5. Company culture and values are paramount.
6. Compensation is about much more than financial benefits. Fewer people are willing to endure on-site stress or give up newfound freedom for money alone.

Today, creative talent acquisition and retention initiatives include

flexibility in schedules and how people work (remotely, in-office, or a hybrid), along with higher wages, incentives, bonuses, and more attractive benefits and perks. Company culture is also a deciding factor for many workers because it is directly tied to quality of life.

### Just how big is the current talent shortage?

- Last year, employers cut more than 22 million jobs from their rosters. This does not account for the millions of people who have quit their jobs since the pandemic began and through the present (see our article in this issue on The Great Resignation). In spite of it all, the U.S. job market is rebounding in 2021, having regained 16.7 million jobs, with openings increasing for several straight months, including 943,000 in July. Still, even though a record 10.1 million jobs were posted mid-year, many employers still can't find enough applicants. The Department of Labor reported in early August that 8.6 million people were considered out of work, revealing about 1 million more job openings than people seeking employment.
- ManpowerGroup recently released its 14th Talent Shortage Survey for Q3 2021, revealing that nearly seven in 10 (69%) of companies globally have reported talent shortages and difficulty hiring – representing a 15-year high. Companies with the least flexibility and workplace-based positions are having the most difficulty filling jobs.
- Before the pandemic, when many manufacturers were already understaffed, 38% of

manufacturers had trouble finding candidates with the right skills. Today, that number has jumped to more than half (54%). Talent shortages in this sector and others cannot be underestimated due to the domino effect deficient performance has on other industries.

### Closing the talent gap requires all hands on deck

The human capital crisis is painful, upending business processes and the ability to consistently perform and deliver, threatening company futures. It brings to mind the expression, "When you're up to your ass in alligators, it's hard to remember your objective was to drain the swamp." This particular swamp is actually a talent drought, but the proverbial expression still applies. Semantics aside, will you sink or swim?

Stay focused! Your leadership is paid to analyze and move quickly and strategically to solve problems in times of disruptive change. The solution for the talent crisis is a combination of innovative thought, flexibility and the ability to adapt. For insights into how other companies are changing and adapting, see the article in this issue entitled, Behold the Great HR Awakening.

Businesses must change to secure stability with the right talent and emerge stronger. The transformations you pursue to attract and retain employees will help you fill open jobs now and well into the future.



EMPLOYERS  
HOLD  
THE POWER  
TO

# Stop The Great Resignation

by David Cooper

I could not agree more with Daniel Newman, principal analyst of Futurum Research and CEO of Broadsuite Media group, who says [this](#) about the talent crisis and the need to improve employee experience: “This isn’t rocket science. It’s a basic realization that the way we work is changing. Employee expectations and needs are changing. And the companies

that continue to succeed will be the ones that change along with them.”

More Americans quit in April of this year than in any month on record going back to the beginning of the century, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The Bureau’s April ‘quits rate’ of 2.8% (the number of quits during the month as a percent of total employment)

included more than 700,000 workers in the mostly white-collar professional and business services category.

Resignation numbers across sectors, among blue and white collar workers alike, have remained high ever since, compared to recent pre-pandemic years when the usual monthly quits rate topped

out between 2-2.3%. While the April 2021 rate dipped in May to 2.5% (3.6 million), it jumped to 2.7% in June and July (3.9 million), steadily edging back toward April's daunting record.

Will it go higher? The odds say yes...unless employers take heed and action to stem the tide.

### **The numbers are not lying**

Results of a number of related studies and surveys vary widely; however, monthly statistics from the BLS affirm the validity of the findings, leaving no question about the direction and enormity of today's resignation trend:

- In a [PwC survey](#) of 752 business executives, nearly nine in 10 executives say they are seeing higher than normal employee turnover.
- Two-thirds of Americans are looking for a new job, according to another [survey by PwC](#), citing better wages, benefits, and flexibility as reasons they'd leave their current job.
- Gallup's [State of the Global Workplace: 2021 Report](#) finds 48% of the U.S. working population is actively searching or passively watching for opportunities, including workers in all job categories, from customer-facing service roles to highly professional positions.
- Microsoft's [2021 Work Trend Index](#) says 41% of employees are considering leaving current employers this year and 46% are likely to move because they can now work remotely.
- A [FlexJobs survey](#) says almost 70% of respondents would consider changing careers,

citing a better work-life balance, rather than higher wages, as the main motivator.

### **Stemming the tide will take more than a pay raise**

The vast exodus of people quitting their jobs for more desirable work-life horizons is fraught with realities today's employers must embrace – the biggest one being that pre-

a disruption as great as last year's sudden shift to remote work. Of particular note, the Index reveals that younger workers 18 to 25 are more likely to jump ship if they lose the flexibility to which they have become accustomed during the pandemic.

Another Microsoft report, [The Next Great Disruption Is Hybrid Work](#)



**2/3 of Americans are looking for a new job, according to another survey by PwC, citing better wages, benefits, and flexibility as reasons they'd leave their current job.**

pandemic talent recruitment and retention strategies will not work in the current climate, or possibly ever again.

To wit, in Derek Thompson's recent [article](#) in The Atlantic, subtitled, 'More Americans are telling their boss to shove it,' he writes, "If this sequence represents a genuine and lasting revolution in workers' rights, it wouldn't be the first time that a catastrophe became the midwife to progress. ... A major crisis has a way of exposing what is broken and giving a new generation of leaders a chance to build something better."

And 'something better' appears to include a major swing toward flexibility. In its Work Trend Index linked above, Microsoft's deep dive into the emerging hybrid work trend describes this shift as

– [Are We Ready?](#), suggests that 54% of Gen Z workers are poised to make an imminent exit. As Microsoft says, talent is everywhere in a hybrid world, and since flexible work is here to stay, out-of-touch leaders need a wake-up call.

### **Gallup reveals the cause as a workplace issue**

Gallup's Global Workplace Report linked above reveals that The Great Resignation is really the 'Great Discontent' – with data indicating it's not about industry, role or pay. Rather, it's a workplace issue because the highest quit rate is among workers who are not engaged and actively disengaged. And quitting is but the final chapter in their journey of discontent. While still employed, lost productivity among discontented workers is equal to 18% of their annual salary.

Companies obviously need to fix



# Employees don't quit companies; they quit bosses. As a result, senior leaders need to take a close look at their frontline managers.

this to maximize productivity and retain talent. To engage workers, Gallup says, managers are the key. They must fulfill the [12 essential elements of engagement](#), which range from knowing what's expected at work to having opportunities to learn and grow. And because engagement has a reciprocal relationship with wellbeing, engaged employees are healthier, more resilient, better performers – and more loyal.

Fast Company echoes Gallup's findings in its recent article entitled, [The 'Great Resignation' is here. This is how employers should prepare.](#) Employees don't quit companies; they quit bosses. As a result, senior leaders need to take a close look at their frontline managers. "They spend the most time with employees, and they make or break an organization's goals, objectives, and outcomes," says Cassie Whitlock, head of Human Resources for talent management software platform BambooHR.

## **Businesses are not alone in their pursuits to revitalize the workforce**

While closing the book on The Great Resignation falls squarely on the shoulders of business leaders and their well-equipped managers, help is on the way to

improve and grow the workforce to sustain an evergreen talent pipeline for the future.

Many entities, including the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#), educational institutions, industry associations and elected officials at federal and state levels are hard

at work in addressing the national talent crisis, to help Americans acquire the skills they need to fill open jobs, improve educational and job training opportunities for the jobs of tomorrow, remove barriers to entering the workforce and expand the workforce through immigration reform.





# Behold the Great HR Awakening

In response to the post-pandemic talent shortage and unusually high turnover rates, resilient businesses are on the offensive. Yes, wages are increasing to compete for and retain talent, and it's helping, but as companies everywhere are learning, it's not all about the money.





# It's time to stop relying so heavily on applicant tracking systems (ATS) and put more HR eyeballs on exceptionally talented candidates whose resumes are weeded out by software. It might also be time to relax some of your candidate qualification requirements.

In this environment, strategy is needed. Here are four strategies leaders and hiring managers are deploying to successfully onboard talent and encourage their best people to stick around.

## 1. Look beyond the resume

While the following views address the growing IT developer talent shortage, they extend across functionalities in every industry and sector:

- Forbes Technology Council member [Tigran Sloyan](#),

co-founder/CEO of CodeSignal, says, "In short, a simple resume review in today's competitive job market isn't enough for fair, unbiased recruiting. Companies should strive to look beyond resumes in an effort to take their hiring practices one step further."

More specifically, explore a candidate's background and experience, including non-mainstream ways they acquired their skills.

- Recruiting influencer [Hung Lee](#) puts a finer point on Sloyan's wise counsel: "Prestige hiring, or credentialism, as it's sometimes called, drastically reduces the total addressable market of candidates, and is likely one of the primary reasons for the tech talent shortage," Lee says. "We're making false-positive decisions by hiring developers with name-brand employers on the CV, and we're making false negative decisions by rejecting developers who don't."

It's time to stop relying so heavily on applicant tracking systems (ATS) and put more HR eyeballs on exceptionally talented candidates whose resumes are weeded out by software. It might also be time to relax some of your candidate qualification requirements. Pay closer attention to candidates put before you by recruiters who know your needs and have access to candidates with the chops to

fill them, even if they lack certain credentials or education.

## 2. Build flexibility into jobs traditionally seen as inflexible

The ManpowerGroup Talent Shortage Survey [cites](#) that eight in 10 workers surveyed want a better work-life balance. While three of every four employers surveyed will require at least 50% of their workforce to be based in the workplace all or most of the time, due to the type of roles they are in, most are working to build new kinds of flexibility into roles traditionally seen as inflexible. Initiatives include more flexible start and finish times, a mix of remote working and workplace-based working, flexible or condensed hours, job sharing, and more.

- **Consider what Microsoft is doing:** The philosophy and practice of their [hybrid workplace](#) offers deep insights for moving forward in a modern workplace.
- **Recognize that commute time is driving workers away.** A recent [article](#) in Harvard Business Review offers suggestions to make returning to the office more flexible and attractive: Structure workweeks as four shifts of 10 hours each instead of five-day workweeks to reduce worker commuting time by 20%. Move a shift's starting time away from rush hour to reduce driving time. Consider providing ride services, reimbursement for lengthier commutes, relocation incentives, or opening satellite locations – and over time, consider accessibility when selecting future locations.



- Find ways to re-integrate workers who must be on-site to perform their jobs: The Wall Street Journal's article, [How Working From Home Has Changed Employees](#), suggests ways bosses and managers can adapt to a workforce that is accustomed to far greater independence after spending more than a year working remotely, in which they adjusted to a radically different rhythm, both in terms of work and their personal lives.

### 3. Act instead of suffering from skills shortages

Employers doing well in the hiring market are known for developing and advancing careers. They know blue and white collar workers alike are looking for value-added employment, where employers are committed to reskilling, upskilling and cross-training staff.

Validating this trend is [Talent Accelerator](#), a recent study by Citrix, which cites that 82% of employees and 62% of HR directors believe workers need to hone current skills or acquire new ones at least once a year to remain competitive in the job market.

- **Make the investment:** Michael Collins, president of MPC Management, which focuses on challenges of small and mid-sized manufacturers, says, "It is time for corporations to quit stalling and make the commitment to long-term training. Yes, this will probably be an investment of 3% of sales, along with a commitment to long-term training, certificates for skills learned, and recognizing training as an

investment, not an expense. We don't need more 'shortage of skills' surveys; it is time to act."

- **Diversity and inclusion matter more than ever:** Manpower Group and companies nationwide are working to drive practical solutions to pre-skill, upskill and reskill workers for in-demand roles to create a better workplace where everyone is able to have a more equitable share of prosperity. Jonas Prising, ManpowerGroup chairman & CEO, says, "Companies have increasingly specific skills needs as transformation accelerates making the need to find new ways to close the inequity gaps that exist at the intersection of race, gender, education and economic status even more urgent."

### 4. Prioritize company culture

Any recruiting firm worth their salt will tell you that 'culture fit' is a priority as they match candidates with potential employers. They want win-win placements and so do job seekers. Our article in this issue – [Let Your Culture Keep You Competitive in the Market](#) – offers insights into how other employers are attracting top talent by improving their cultures.

- HRM America offers the essential [benchmarks](#) of good culture.
- Forbes CMO Network [details](#)

four ways employers are boosting employee experience. Continue to be flexible, apply the next wave of technology (think collaboration), increase pay and keep the perks, and create new opportunities for growth.

### Become a company where people want to work

The future of work is taking shape and the road is unpredictable. While we don't know the final outcome of the extended talent shortage on business and the economy, one thing is crystal clear.



Companies delivering on evolving employee expectations are the ones winning the war on talent. And size doesn't matter. Attracting and keeping great employees does not require being a multinational household name. What it does take is a hiring and retention strategy and a great culture that prioritize being a company where people want to work, whether they are on-premises, working remotely or a combination of both. Aim to win in every scenario.



# Let Your Culture Keep You Competitive in the Hiring Market

by **David Cooper**

**E**xcept for advertising and sales efforts, we don't hear much, if anything, from companies that are solely focused on what they sell. It's odd in today's environment.

We don't hear about what makes them different or better. There are no outward (or presumably inward) expressions of purpose, mission, values and commitments to customer and employee experience. Their people may as well be robots or ghosts for all we know about their proficiency and

desire to keep customers satisfied and bottom lines healthy. Just voiceless, faceless, vanilla entities in a sea of providers.

There was an era when limited choices made such companies necessary and profitable – back when consumers and professional buyers were also solely focused on the products or services they needed, always from their usual stand-by sources. Order it. Get it. All good. The inner nature of the seller was not relevant.

Those days have disappeared, and it's not just because choices and competition have grown. Left and right, buyers are breaking loyalties to providers that do not resonate with their own values and beliefs. Company culture, who you are at the core, and the ways leadership and employees demonstrate these embodiments are top of mind among customers and prospects.

An authentic and transparent company culture and connecting with customers on an emotional level are needed to win and retain customers in today's environment.

But let's not put the cart before the horse.

### **It's bigger and more primal than the consumer mindset**

Culture is what leaders sew internally, for better or worse. For example, employees cannot be expected to contribute to your success if they don't know what the company stands for and what it promises. Only a deep understanding of the mission can propel employee performance.

A positive culture – the values, attitudes and beliefs that

permeate your organization and characterize your fundamental nature – always travels from the top down. This ultimately becomes the lens through which everyone operates, and it projects outward to customers, prospects, partners, investors and the community – including the talent landscape.

### **Your true north matters to your workforce and ability to attract talent**

Since your people are your greatest assets, think about this from the perspective of existing and future employees. A [study from Glassdoor](#) reveals there is more to

**A positive culture – the values, attitudes and beliefs that permeate your organization and characterize your fundamental nature – always travels from the top down.**

attracting and retaining talent than compensation and benefits:

- When searching for a new job, 77% of respondents said they would consider a company's culture before applying.
- American Millennials are more likely to care about work culture over salary (65%).
- 89% of adults polled told researchers it was important for employers to "have a clear mission and purpose."

Here's an example. Stephen Dalby,

founder of Gabb Wireless, created Gabb when he couldn't find a phone he felt was safe for his child. Since then, his mission has been to make a mobile phone network aimed at protecting kids. The successful company keeps growing its portfolio.

When it comes to attracting top talent, Dalby says it's critical to "Lead with mission. Here in Palo Alto, we see so many tech startups and very few have considered a mission component to their company. When an enterprise has a very clear and measurable way of showing how the world is better because of its organization, it is a lot easier to attract and retain talent."

### **Your values are essential to your workplace**

Just before the pandemic struck, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce [highlighted several companies](#) that place a premium

on building strong, diverse and innovative cultures to attract and retain employees. This commitment places organizations in a better position to navigate both a normal climate as well as the health, economic and talent crises we are experiencing.

I will share an excerpt because it links to some wonderful examples of a truly innovative culture:

Hubspot, one of the top platforms for marketing, sales and customer service in the U.S., has attracted attention for its company culture.





The Cambridge, Mass.-based company has published its informative Culture Code for anyone to see, and it has updated the document dozens of times in order to keep it current and thoughtful. The Code sets the tone for all current employees and what sorts of employees it seeks out. Highlights from the Culture Code include that the company should share openly, be remarkably transparent, favor autonomy, dare to be different, and recognize that life is short.

For more inspiration and ideas, Harvard Business Review captures in this article What the Best Companies to Work For Do Differently. It's worth a read.

### **Culture is reflected at the bottom line**

I have focused a lot on internal culture because it is the lynchpin to all good outcomes. Great employee experience leads to great customer experience, and customer experience leads to business success or failure. The

order cannot be changed. Forbes features observations from SAP on how employee and customer experience go hand-in-hand in its article Culture Matters: Companies That Emphasize Employee Care Are Thriving, Despite 2020. The author shares the following...

The stresses that COVID-19 placed on businesses served to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of just about every business model and corporate culture. The leadership at automotive dealership Arnold Clark understands key features of a great corporate culture:

- Keep employees engaged and informed
- Be accessible and earn employee respect
- Increase empathy, improve business processes
- Build company culture starting at the top
- Enable and empower your employees to become culture carriers
- Listen to your employees

### **Your culture is your company's personal trademark**

I started this article with a focus on the need for differentiation, the traits that make a company stand out from the competition, that make them preferable to consumers over other providers, and to top talent over other employers.

A successful culture is a trademark your company projects, a certain type of experience for which you

are known to provide your people, customers and other constituents. There's no formula to follow to create, build and nurture it, because it is very personal to your company. Your leadership must start by solidifying fundamental truths about your company...

1. Your mission (the foundation on which culture is built)
2. Your values
3. Your goals
4. Your brand promise
5. The ways you excel
6. Your commitment to people, processes and community

...and then find powerful ways to communicate and instill those truths across your organization.

### **Let it shine and you will never lack in talent and customers**

The beauty of culture is that once you create and master yours, no one can compete with you. It is your true north and uniquely yours. Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, recognized as the greatest leader of his era, said, "No company, small or large, can win over the long run without energized employees who believe in the mission and understand how to achieve it."

Indeed, time changes things. Pandemics, market forces and trends, the evolution of your offerings and customer base, technology advancements – all of these factors impact your culture. So your commitment to a positive culture must be perennial. It must be authentic, upheld and refined over time. This is far easier to do when you stay true to your mission.

# Is There a Morale Doctor in the House?

These are not normal times, and this is not the average missive on the importance of employee morale.

Just as COVID-19 inflicted hardship on companies, and the assault continues, impact on the workforce has been equally if not more life-altering, manifested in layoffs, furloughs, pay cuts and financial peril. Employees who remained on board have had to overperform for a year to 18 months to fill talent gaps as companies brave the twists and turns of the pandemic.

While many companies are starting to rebuild their teams, although cautiously, the toll on existing staff has resulted in severe burnout and a visceral aversion to enduring yet more adjustments to adapt to their employers' post-pandemic realities. In short, this is not about you. It is about your people and what they need from you to keep your company afloat.

The biggest reality is this: It is not your employees' responsibility to restore their energies, spirit of enthusiasm or outlook on their future with your company, however



long or short a timeframe that may be. In today's candidate-driven hiring market, their timeframe with your firm may be shorter than you realize, and the challenge to retain them lies wholly on management's back.

## **Employee rejuvenation requires meaningful intervention from leadership**

COVID-19 introduced two new viruses into corporate culture. One called fear created a crisis

of confidence among workers in every industry – fear of becoming displaced, jobless and broke. Another called courage emerged fairly quickly as the workforce began to claim quality of life as a non-negotiable term of employment.

Both of these corporate viruses need to be addressed head-on by management and extinguished if companies want to keep and attract talent, and recover from the pandemic with reputations intact.



# Management must work to relieve exhaustion and the growing desire to leave. Start by recognizing that employees who escaped downsizing were nonetheless deeply affected.

It has never been clearer that recovery, the ability to maintain and improve performance and sales, rests on the cultural health of an organization. Given the talent shortage crippling so many of today's organizations, keeping employees on board is going to take crisis management and Human Resources skills.

Management can stabilize employee confidence with heavy doses of empathy and transparency to help them recover from exhaustion, renew their desire to stay, and keep them focused.

## **Compassionate leaders calm rough waters**

Management must work to relieve exhaustion and the growing desire to leave. Start by recognizing that employees who escaped downsizing were nonetheless deeply affected. They grieve peers, friends and family members who lost their jobs and many their lives. They have seen friends and family lose their homes. They know people who donated to food pantries, who suddenly had to

stand in those lines to feed their families. And viewing their own situations, they question what they are getting in return for redoubling their efforts at work.

Employees are your most valuable assets. You cannot perform or deliver without them. It's crucial to let them know on a regular basis that you value their commitments, contributions and talent. It is extremely important that the president or CEO communicate that management is doing everything in its power to protect jobs and the business, and to ease the burden on overworked staff.

Do this with compassion, empathy – and often.

## **Truth and transparency: The antidotes to fear and desire to defect**

One of the worst mistakes a company can make during today's dual crises – the persistent pandemic and the talent shortage – is neglecting to keep employees informed. You might ask, "How can we tell employees what's

going to happen if management doesn't even know? The virus keeps plateauing and surging and the market rocks with every shift. Nothing is certain!"

Here's my advice and that of other management consultants and HR experts:

1. Tell employees the truth, what you know today. Information is empowering and energizing.
2. If you do not anticipate further reductions in staff, or cutbacks in hours or pay, tell your employees. What they want and need is reassurance. If you cannot commit to this, be candid and honest. Say you cannot guarantee that jobs, hours or pay will not be affected at some point. You may think this contributes to fear, but it actually does the opposite.
3. Share revenue and sales projections so employees understand and appreciate operating goals. Let them know the state of the company and the state of the market, and update them at least monthly, even if nothing has changed.
4. Improve your company culture! In a survey of 2,000 employees, 34% said corporate culture was the main reason they were looking for a new role.
5. Get your empathy on: Ninety-two percent of employees said they'd be more likely to stay with their job if their managers showed more empathy.
6. Focus on employee engagement through training and professional development: Engaged employees are 59% less likely to seek out a new job.

7. Develop a robust onboarding program to increase your retention of newly hired employees.
8. Enhance technologies and communications methods to stay connected to remote staffers.

Dr. Ashish Jha, director of the Harvard Global Health Institute puts it in a nutshell: “You don’t scare people by telling them what’s going on. You scare them by hiding information.”

Real facts include specific actions management is taking to keep the company solvent until stability fully returns. Encourage employees to share their ideas and involve them in initiatives to transform the business, customer experience, continuous improvement, digital advancement – anything you are planning and doing to strengthen your standing in the market. Inspiration and action are also proven antidotes to fear and flight!

**Communicate, communicate, communicate**

The new work paradigm, with many employees working remotely, creates a challenge for employers in staying engaged with teams. This disconnect further isolates employees when they need to feel included and acknowledged. Establish more or better ways to share briefings, updates and plans. Keep communication open through email,

phone, video conferences, the company intranet or other means. Communication encourages and builds engagement.

Gartner shared these observations in their article [9 Future of Work Trends Post-COVID-19](#): Employees and job candidates will judge organizations by the way in which they treat employees during the pandemic. Progressive organizations communicate openly and frequently to show how they are supporting employees despite the implementation of cost-saving measures. I highly recommend reading the full article for insights into how companies are managing the onslaught of emerging Human Resources challenges.

For today, give your people the facts they need to process the dramatic changes

unfolding around them, and invite them to more fully exercise their skills and ingenuity. This will do four things: Build morale, increase retention, foster goodwill, and boost your performance – just what the doctor has ordered during these difficult times.

**Encourage employees to share their ideas and involve them in initiatives to transform the business, customer experience, continuous improvement, digital advancement...**





IT'S THE  
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