

HOT SHEET

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Full-Circle HR

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"Your office has a critical morale problem. My advice is to go from desk to desk licking people's faces."

Did you know that:

- Both houses of Congress are moving toward approval of bills that will enhance the ability of employers, small employers in particular, to offer 401(k) retirement savings benefits?
- Due to increased EEO-1 reporting requirements (for employers with 100 or more employees or government contractors with 50 or more employees) the EEOC extended the reporting date to 9/30/2019 to allow employers to gather the data?
- Recent research at XYZ University suggests that, while Gen Z (generally born 1996-2009) tends to be the most technologically connected and savvy of all generations, they still prefer face-to-face communication, seeing it as the best way to receive empathy, interest and care?
- Precisely written Essential Functions of a job description are critical if you want a defensible reason for requiring employees to do what is needed for your business, particularly in instances when a disability accommodation is needed?
- Pay increases for 2019 are expected to average over 3.4%?

Older Workers and Age-Diversity

According to a recent investigation by ProPublica and Urban Institute, 56% of workers over 50-years-old report being pushed into retirement by their employers before they were ready to go. Today's older workers are better educated and living longer than any other generation and they are choosing to stay in the workforce longer, which means that by 2024 experts are predicting that older workers will be the fastest growing group of any other in the workforce.

What does this mean for employers and how can they best take advantage of this labor pool? Additionally, how can older and younger workers learn to work well together so they can benefit from each other's strengths?

Actions employers can take include assessing their culture, practices and policies to assure that they do not have outdated language or assumptions that tend to

foster beliefs such as: "Older workers can't handle the day-to-day demands of the job;" "They can't be retrained and are difficult to manage;" "They cost too much in salary and benefits;" and "They bring with them a higher risk for employment discrimination claims." The first assumption has a narrow focus perhaps based on stamina, but oftentimes older workers who may or may not have as much stamina may instead bring experience, a broad network of professional contacts, and reliability. The belief that older workers are set in their ways and can't learn new technology is also not backed by science that suggests that our brains have the potential to continue to absorb new knowledge—this is particularly true when training adapts to different learning styles. As far as higher cost in salary and benefits, older workers are often willing to forego higher salaries in favor of a reduced and/or more flexible

work schedule and, if they are on Medicare, they do not require benefits. The final assumption can be debunked by the fact that age discrimination was recently made one of the most difficult forms of bias to prove by a Supreme Court ruling requiring that they meet a more stringent standard of proof than all other discrimination claims.

So, based on at least three factors, record low unemployment rates, restricted immigration, and the availability of older workers, it makes sense for employers to want an age-diverse workforce. Some additional suggestions for getting there include evaluating your recruiting practices, such as assuring that your website has age diverse pictures, having a diverse interview panel, and assuring that your application does not contain age-related questions such as graduation dates. Also

include age in your diversity and inclusion programs and work to foster a culture that rejects age stereotypes.

Another important aspect of helping an age-diverse workforce work well together is coaching them in how to interact with each other. Some younger workers are intimidated by having to supervise an older, more experienced worker. Findings are that older workers don't mind reporting to younger supervisors when their supervisor can relax and be themselves, while not expressing a need to force control by being overbearing. Likewise, older workers would do well to find tactful ways to contribute. Rather than saying, "this is how it's done; I've done it a hundred times and it works," they might try, "I've come across this before and I've seen doing it this way work well." Employees will value each other more and feel more valued and enriched at work.

The Value of an Apology

In the employment arena, and perhaps even in our personal lives, there may be a sense that apologizing is tantamount to admitting guilt or taking full responsibility for something that is not our fault alone or that we did not do. In a recent article in HR Magazine, attorney and mediator, Jathan Janove talks about his experience that a thoughtful, genuine, and well-timed apology can build relationships, open creative avenues for moving forward, and avoid, at least, ongoing hard feelings and,

at worst, litigation and enormous attorney's fees and settlement costs. He uses the acronym, MIDAS to describe the approach. It is also a handy way to remember the steps to making a sincere apology that has a good chance of being heard and accepted. Additionally, he suggests that the earlier the apology is made, the better. Once you are down the road and people have become entrenched in their story, it is more difficult to make amends. This is even more true if thousands of dollars

have already been spent on legal fees. The handy acronym he suggests stands for: M—acknowledge you made a Mistake. Be clear and ready to take complete ownership for exactly what you did; no more and no less. I—acknowledge the Injury you caused. Demonstrate empathy for the other regarding how your actions have affected them. You might also ask if you have captured the issue correctly in case you are not clear about what went wrong. D—How will you behave Differently in the future; what have you

Of course there is no formula for success except perhaps, unconditional acceptance of life and what it brings.

—Arthur Rubinstein

learned from this and how will you apply it. A—The gesture you offer to make Amends for your mistake shows the sincerity of your apology. Then, lastly, S—STOP. Do not go on to justify your behavior or attempt to demonstrate how others may have failed too; keep the BUT out of your apology. Janove provides several business situations where this has averted very serious consequences.