

# HOT SHEET

Volume 7, Issue 7  
December 18, 2020



Full-Circle HR



## HR Trends:

- On 12/2/2020, the U.S. Department of Labor and the IRS introduced a preview of the new 2020 Form 5500 used for benefits reporting and ERISA compliance.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being used more frequently to make the hiring process more efficient and to help make better matches between applicants and positions; government entities (such as New York City Council) are considering implementing applicant notification requirements regarding its use.
- Washington is the second state, after California, to begin developing new workplace health & safety rules on wildfire smoke exposure hazards, particularly in construction and agriculture; This work is being done by the Department of Labor & Industries' Division of Occupational Safety and Health (L&I).
- As employers work to navigate COVID-19 and the resulting employee leave and accommodation needs, lawsuits are arising, particularly in California due to the COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave law. Employers should know state and federal laws and look carefully at leave requests on a case-by-case basis.

## Updating Job Descriptions

Job descriptions are a cornerstone to your HR documentation and to helping your employees and managers work together with clear guidelines. During this time of COVID, employees may be doing a list of expanded duties and it's important that this document keep pace with the actual job they are doing and with the physical demands required to perform those duties. Often, we update job descriptions at the same time with annual performance reviews. That said, now is a good time to look at your job descriptions. Even if employees do not continue all the duties they have assumed during this time, it's a good idea to

have this document be flexible enough to accommodate these kinds of temporary adaptations and also to reset boundaries if employees will no longer be responsible for those duties. However, often once employees have shown themselves capable of certain duties, those duties tend to arise again for them, even when there is no pandemic. This pandemic may also have led us toward a forced cross-training that may actually strengthen your organization in the long-run.

Here are seven basic steps to conducting a job analysis upon which to base the job description: 1. Ask employees and their managers to identify their key tasks and

responsibilities, perhaps using a questionnaire or work sheet (if you already have this done—ask them to review the existing list of duties to see if all are still key and to identify any key duties that are missing). 2. Interview and observe employees performing the job at different times to assure understanding of how they perform the duties and how long they take. 3. Interview people who interact with the employee doing the job. 4. Collect wage data from outside sources for comparable job duties and responsibilities. 5. Compare similar jobs in the department and in the company to assure equita-

ble placement in the salary levels. 6. Assure that you are asking for reasonable requirements and must-have skills to do the job and that you have accurately captured the necessary physical requirements. 7. Review the findings with employees and managers—ask for their feedback to adjust the job description as appropriate.

Job descriptions and job postings are not interchangeable. A job description can be used to write the posting but the posting contains more descriptors about the company and should be written to speak to and attract a diverse applicant pool. There are online tools that can assist you with this.

## Supporting Employees During Unusual Holidays

As we find ourselves in the 2020 holiday season, employees have already experienced inordinate amounts of stress for 9 months and now they cannot be with their families for the holidays. A report from Limeade, an employee experience software company, showed that of 1,000 employees surveyed: - 49% reported having less energy for non-work activities; 42% said that they were less interested in socializing with friends; 42% were having trouble sleeping; and 33% reported using more alcohol and substances than usual. Reports from staff at employee assistance agencies say they are exhausted as the crises have not let up; the surge continues.

For some, holiday gatherings are possibly the only time they spend with family and can be a psychological anchor. Instead, the holidays may well be spent in physical isolation.

It's likely not whether or not your employees will be affected, but how much impact they will feel. You may be wondering how you might offer support to your employees. You can begin by meeting one-on-one to check in on their mental/emotional well-being. Just asking the question, "how are you holding up and what support can I offer you?" in a caring and concerned way creates a human connection that actually helps you both. You might also share your own story of concern and

how you are dealing with it thus removing stigma and opening the conversation. If possible, consider offering access for all employees to an Employee Assistance Program, meditation and group discussions. Remind your employee (and yourself) that self-care is really important to re-energize. Give your body what it needs—start with simple things like moving more, staying hydrated, taking mini-breaks from the computer, get outside and walk around the block (do it in nature if possible). Be the role model for your employees and you will find yourself being buoyed as well. Take time to recognize the incredible circumstances and give credit for

*Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.*  
— Brian Gerald O'Driscoll

the creativity, inspiration and/or flexibility with which you have responded. Share this with your employees. Some suggestions from other employers include personally encouraging employees to use their unused time off, even if only a few hours at a time. One employer started offering a one-hour virtual story time run by a volunteer to give parents an hour of uninterrupted time. While office parties are out of the question this year, virtual gatherings to celebrate the season are not and can boost morale and connection. If you had a budget for the holiday gathering consider putting it toward a holiday gift.