

HOT SHEET

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Full-Circle HR

Happy Memorial Day

HR Trends:

- Nearly half of all States are planning to drop Federal Supplemental Unemployment benefits; some starting in mid-June.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has submitted an Emergency Temporary Standard for workplaces as they re-open; While this is yet to be approved, many are wondering if it is even necessary in light of our improving COVID rates.
- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission had offered limited guidance that employers may offer incentives for employees to get vaccinated against COVID, provided the incentives are not coercive.
- According to a survey from SHRM the pandemic has caused many employers to rethink their benefits packages and they are now more likely to offer additional voluntary benefits that protect employees from big hospital bills, loss of income and other personal loss (e.g. pet insurance and identity theft).
- During this ongoing stressful time, particularly for customer service workers, it is a good time to offer additional skills training to your workers, including de-escalation skills.

The Hybrid Workplace

Back to business as usual—as it was pre-pandemic—is unlikely and, in some ways, this could propel us forward to a better and more broad way of doing things. One of those ways may be a hybrid workplace. Of course not all workplaces have this option but many have newly and creatively learned how to work remotely and now have the option to maintain this or create a hybrid model. Some advantages include less traffic, fewer carbon emissions, more flexibility for work/life balance for employees, and ability to employ geographically diverse workers from more diverse backgrounds.

Some companies have already approached implementing a hybrid model by allowing staff to work from home when needed but more strictly defined, a

hybrid workplace enables employees to use the office for work they cannot successfully do remotely. This primarily involves collaborative work with colleagues and in-person meetings—as well as some individually focused work. And this latter definition captures many of the reasons, according to workplace surveys, that employees want to come back into the office. This is causing employers to look at how they can support this process by re-evaluating policies, office design, office occupancy and real estate needs.

While there are many potential advantages to a hybrid workplace, there are also concerns. 1. How to operationalize this model for who is in the office, when and in which space. Some companies use software that helps people

schedule their office time and team meetings. 2. Fostering company culture can be difficult and has been difficult over the past year. This has been particularly true for employees who began work during the pandemic and did not get the opportunity to establish relationships with their co-workers, except via electronic meetings. Some companies mandate office time for senior managers for at least part of the week. Others are turning to technology that fosters connectivity. Find ways to foster the organic conversations that would normally happen in the office. 3. With more technology also come security concerns and IT staff must evaluate what protections may be needed and staff must follow those protocols.

A hybrid workplace model is not one size fits all. The structure must take into account the unique needs of the organization and its workforce. Your first step in considering this model is to involve your employees in the conversation. Their input can help in areas of preserving culture and the flow of day to day operations. Don't leave this implementation to chance. Carefully consider and craft new workplace policies. Evaluate your workspace and how it might lend itself to supporting the new model. Open a channel for feedback from all staff so that you can continually evaluate how this model is working.

The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind.
—Khalil Gibran

Signing Bonuses & Employee Referral Programs

Finding and hiring staff who want and fit your jobs and organizations continues to be one of the most challenging tasks in running a business. Some employers have turned to signing bonuses. Another approach is an employee referral program. Each has its merits and its drawbacks.

Signing bonuses can be used in a variety of ways. Sometimes they fill the gap for benefits that you do not offer if the new employee leaves a place that has those benefits. Other times they are used to lure an employee to you and possibly away from your competition. More and more they are being used in the retail

and hospitality industries. One employer offers a \$1,000 bonus after 5 weeks of employment for all positions including dishwashers. Others only offer bonuses to specific positions. A couple of issues that can arise are a concern about equity for employees who already work there and did not get this bonus. You may find that they begin to look elsewhere so they can get a bonus from your competitor. Another concern is if you only give bonuses to certain position and those positions are typically filled by a specific demographic (for example white males), while any bias may be completely unintentional, you could be at risk

for a claim of disparate impact to other protected classes. Additionally, this bonus can be costly in and of itself and even more so if the employee leaves at the end of the agreed upon period. It can, however, save you time and money spent in the recruiting process and in productivity if it draws the right employee more quickly.

Referral bonuses reward employees that are already working for you and who are presumably loyal to you. These employees are also the ones who often have the best insight into what it takes to do the job and are more likely to refer people who are quali-

fied and who fit the culture. Additionally, you tap into a pool of passive job seekers who wouldn't apply without a nudge from your employee and, similarly to signing bonuses, you often shorten the time to hire. One down side can be that you may tend to hire the same demographic that you already have, which could negatively affect diversity efforts. So using a wide range of labor pool sources that include diverse populations is important. A combined approach would be to offer a bonus to the employee who refers a successful hire and also give the new hire a signing bonus.