

HOT SHEET

Volume 8, Issue 11
November 29, 2021



Full-Circle HR



HR Trends:

- Despite another ruling going against the OSHA emergency temporary standard (ETS) for vaccine requirements in the workplace, SHRM experts still advise employers to be prepared in the event the ETS goes into effect.
- A recent poll found that 82% of employers adopted virtual interviewing as part of their recruitment process; 93% of those say that they will maintain the practice into the future.
- Retaliation claims under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) have risen significantly based on adverse actions taken against COVID-related complaints.
- The Flexible Spending Account (FSA) annual contribution limit is going up from \$2,750 to \$2,850 in 2022.
- Employee 401(k) maximum contributions (not including \$6,500 in catch up contributions for employees 50+ years old) will go up \$1,000 to \$20,500 in 2022; total employer plus employee contribution will go up from \$58,000 to \$61,000 for 2022.
- To ease potential conflicts between remote and on-site workers, employers would do well to offer a similar level of flexibility to both groups.

Suggestions for Flex Work Policies

While some employers never stopped on-site work during the pandemic, many employers are navigating how to bring staff back to the workplace. Some are requiring everyone to return, some are continuing remote work, and others may be doing everything in-between. No matter which of these employers you are, it's important to realize that trying to recreate the past is unproductive. Instead, it is vitally important to remember what the need for flexibility and creativity have taught you. In the past, unless an employee had a crisis or other exceptional circumstance, we didn't think to make accommodations and find creative ways to be flexible with their life circumstances. While these suggestions are addressing returning to

the workplace, they should be considered standard ways of operating. *1. Start one-on-one with understanding your employee's needs. Questions you can ask include: How is your current work situation working? How is your team functioning together? Are there resources you are lacking that could help you reach your full potential? Do you have enough access to Leadership? Have you been able to arrange cross-functional collaborations (particularly despite remote work)? You can't respond to every need, but your asking these questions in earnest helps your employees believe that you have their interests at heart. 2. Many employers have tended to emphasize self care with employees during these times, but this can

backfire on you if you are telling them it's their responsibility to make sure they are okay. The workplace systems, such as workload and scheduling, have to support having a healthy balance so that when they do go out for that walk they don't come back to an even bigger pile of work on their desk. 3. Ensure that you are aligned with your purported values. If you treat employees like vital stakeholders, then demonstrate how you can adjust their workflow to address demands they have in their lives—that directly impact their ability to do their best work for you. 4. Learn what your employees have missed about being together and what they have not missed. Their desire to be with

each other can be at the core for bringing them back into the office. Additionally address the things that they do not miss, perhaps it is a long and seemingly pointless meeting that happened weekly. That meeting could be restructured and happen less frequently. 5. Be willing to suspend your pre-pandemic policies and precedents. Rethink your handbook. It's that time of year anyway. Maybe you give them a trial period to try out a different approach to the job and check in during that period. 6. Recognize that during the pandemic employee priorities changed and their focus became more about taking care of their family. If you can accommodate that focus, your employee is less likely to leave and it may engender their loyalty.

Addressing Bias in Job Descriptions

Diversity in the workforce has been shown to increase performance. To increase diversity it's important to raise your awareness about bias in your systems. Any bias may inadvertently exclude some populations who do not find the language in your ads and job descriptions inviting. Having as much diversity of working style, perspective, and experience as you can in your talent pool leads to innovation. It also increases breadth of possible solutions in everyday practices and improved morale. When you work to eliminate bias in your ads and job descriptions it invites more qualified candidates who otherwise might not apply and it shows you as a forward-thinking employer.

**Unconscious bias incorporates assumptions we make based on gender, age, ethnicity and class. It's unconscious because it is done through the lens of the structures we live and operate in and we tend not to think about or question it. There are some simple edits and considerations that can be made to help address bias: 1. Ensure that your job titles are gender neutral and don't include modifiers that are generally considered characteristics of the young, male, female, upper class etc. (Salesperson instead of Salesman and Firefighter instead of Fireman). Using labels like rockstar, dynamo, warrior, and ninja may discourage serious, older, indigenous, or female candidates. 2. Use gender

neutral pronouns. While she/he is more open than he, it is still binary and many people, particularly in younger generations, do not view themselves as binary. They/them/their are more neutral choices. 3. Avoid potentially biased language such as aggressive, nurturing, bubbly, digital native, far-sighted (or any use of seeing words), using black to connote something bad and white to connote something good, etc. 4. Consider your job requirements. Long lists have been shown to discourage women who can't tick off each one, while men may be more confident that a few of them is close enough. Keep your lists succinct and only name

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.

—Helen Keller

the critical requirements. This will bring you a richer assortment of applicants. Consider whether you really need that degree from an elite school or will work experience plus some community college, technical school or management experience suffice. 5. Examine how you portray the nature of your culture—do you use words that may indicate elitism or bro culture? 6. Consider using online software to review your job descriptions for bias. One such text analyzer is On-Gig, another is Textio.

* SHRM, *Creating 6 flex-work policies for people with different needs*, November 2021

** *Global Job Confidence Index. How to Avoid Bias in Job Descriptions*, June 2021.