

HOT SHEET

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HR Trends:

- While initial reviews of the move to a 4-day workweek have been positive as far as maintaining productivity, a recent study also suggests that some factors, if ignored, can actually result in greater stress for managers and workers.
- A study by Ball State University shows that less than 5 percent of fathers take parental leave of 2 or more weeks; encouraging fathers to take their leave is better for the child and the family as a whole. It also normalizes parental leave so that women do not suffer the stigma, resulting in lower pay, and negative impact to their careers when they do take leave.
- The Federal Department of Labor is reviewing the classification rules for employee versus contractor and will propose a new rule; this will likely change the ruling that was made during the Trump presidency.
- The IRS announced a new mid-year mileage reimbursement rate for the remainder of the year of 62.5 cents.
- A SHRM study shows that staff who take a 60-90 second break from stressful situations by listening to a calming song, walking around, etc. can effectively reduce impact of cumulative stress.



Full-Circle HR

Organizational Empathy

According to a 2021 SHRM survey, a striking 97% of employees think that empathy is an important characteristic of healthy organizational culture and 92% said that they look for this when interviewing for a job at an organization. Empathy also underpins the success of DEI efforts in your organization because it fosters inclusion of different perspectives and people. Other benefits include increased collaboration, a greater sense of safety for employees to be able to bring their whole selves to work, better conflict management, and your organization will look more attractive in the job market. In a SHRM convention speech, Jeremy York* offers ways to build empathy

and what can block it. Building empathy means: 1. Engaging active listening by listening for deeper meaning, watching for non-verbal cues, and reflecting back what has been said to ensure your understanding. Ensure that you put away all distractions and avoid interruptions and that your body language shows that you are listening deeply. 2. Encouraging managers to understand situations from their employees' perspectives. 3. Awareness that your words can make or ruin someone's day. Being compassionate in your speech—even in difficult conversations when you need to deliver a critique or bad news. 4. Considering offering empathy training. This will normalize empathetic behavior and give



employees a common language. Adults learn empathy by being taught to identify emotions in others, responding appropriately, and then demonstrating emotions themselves. 5. Adjusting your hiring process by incorporating interview questions that encourage applicants to respond to how they show empathy. 6. Rewarding empathetic behavior with appreciative recognition.

In acknowledging the challenges of fostering empathy in the workplace, he listed a number of road blocks to it including: 1. Be aware of when you are feeling pressure. This can make it difficult to distinguish between your feelings and another's. Check in with yourself and ensure that you are not

letting your feelings impact your ability to connect with others—if necessary, consider delaying the contact for another time. 2. Similarly, be aware if you are having strong emotions and do not allow them to rule the interaction. Others will pick up on your feelings. 3. Avoid making snap decisions—if you are feeling pressured to make a decision, step back, take a few minutes or set a later time to get back to it. 4. Don't take it personally. If you do, you are more likely to come across as defensive and a person in a difficult situation is less likely to share. 5. Get to know your staff—it is hard to empathize with a stranger.

My mission in life is not merely to survive but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.—Maya Angelou

Factors of Resiliency and Organizational Viability

I am most familiar with resiliency from the perspective of individual emotional/psychological health, but since the pandemic the conversation has turned to organizational resiliency and how it may contribute to continuing viability as organizations have adapted during this time. My curiosity was roused by a SHRM article about it and so I dug a little more deeply and here are some of the key takeaways. Among the top characteristics listed in a survey by Survey Monkey** were agility and curiosity. Agility being the ability to turn quickly and change the systems of operation when faced with unexpected circumstances. This one was less common among those surveyed, but curiosity about how they could

adapt in creative ways was more abundant. Other characteristics named by Midnight Oil*** include flexibility (the ability to change within the existing systems), good communication (being transparent with customers/clients and employees), social responsibility (often connected with philanthropy, but during the pandemic it came to mean sanitizing and client/customer/staff protocols and more), resourcefulness (leveraging multiple sources of income and making strategic decisions that work for the long-term for those resources), creativity (thinking outside the box to address customer/client needs and problems), and empathy (we have been through over two years of unprecedented challenging times; we are still carrying

the stress of that even as we recover—empathy is just as important now as it was during the hardest times of the pandemic). In its study, SHRM focused on how leadership behaved in resilient organizations. Leaders of these organizations were: 1. More likely to make information and expertise available to employees and other stakeholders. 2. Break down bureaucratic barriers and bring employees in to enact change and ensure that procedures supported that enactment. 3. Supportive of out-of-box thinking and employees were empowered to use their skills and knowledge to make changes happen. 4. Prepared by having already listened for potential problems before the pandemic, had plans for

the unexpected, and implemented them. 5. Supportive of inclusive practices, decision making, and inclusive cultures. Making inclusion the norm allowed for creative responses to the ever-changing climate of the pandemic.

What's the point of this look back on how we did? Perhaps it's because we may find ourselves continuing to need to be able to weather the unexpected. As SHRM's President & CEO stated, "a resilient organization keeps the workforce going through crisis and protects staff and stakeholders." Let's continue to learn from this as we move forward.

* SHRM HR Daily Newsletter, Jeremy York, *6 Ways to Become a More Empathetic Organization*, June 13, 2022.

** Survey Monkey, *Adapting in times of Crisis*. September 15, 2020.

*** Midnight Oil, *6 Common Traits of Businesses that Thrived During the Pandemic*, January 26, 2021.

^ SHRM, *Research Pinpoints Factors of Organizational Resiliency*, June 14, 2022.