

# HOT SHEET

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## HR Trends:

- According to The Hartford's Future of Benefits report, 71% of employees think that deteriorating mental health of the workforce is having a negative financial impact on their company.
- Between 2020 and 2022, employee's desire for flexible/remote work increased from 37% to 55% (Employee Benefit Trends, Metlife).
- Employers who are stepping up to hire refugees are finding not only valuable workers but also that their employee retention rate is going up (SHRM, HR Magazine Winter 2022).
- Compared to onsite employees, hybrid and remote workers are more likely to say that their company culture has improved (Organizational Culture Research Report by Quantum Workplace).
- According to a recent Gallop Poll, while only 7.1% of Americans identify as LGBTQ, this number goes to 20.8% for Gen Z and 10.5% for Millennials.
- Effective 1/1/2023 Washington State will have the 2nd highest minimum wage in the country at \$15.74; California is 3rd at \$15.50; Washington DC is 1st with \$16.10. For a chart of all states go to [Horton Group](#).



Full-Circle HR

## Mental Health at Work

Stressors over the last year (plus) have been plentiful with the triple virus threat, inflation, social justice concerns, and more. Now add the oft stressful holiday season that may amp this up even further. How can we take care of ourselves and our staff? For a start, let's remind our staff about mental health benefits, encourage staff to take time off and to eliminate non-essential tasks, and embrace flexibility.\* Check in with employees and encourage your managers to do the same—those open lines of communication are even more important now. By doing this you can detect potential issues more quickly and provide more timely resources. Flexibility, in addition to work schedule and

allowing time off to go to a child's holiday play, can also mean allowing them to choose how, when, and if they choose to celebrate the holidays. Make parties optional. Avoid alcohol, which can be triggering during this time, and perhaps also forego gift giving in light of financial stressors due to inflation. By creating an environment that fosters mental health, is inclusive and empowers the individual, and provides useful information and resources you will speak volumes about who you are as an employer and it can change the course of someone's life. It communicates to the employees that they matter. Communicating this message to employees and enacting it are vital to the mental and, indirectly, finan-



cial health of your organization. In October of this year, the U.S. Surgeon General named 'mattering at work' as a top priority for mental health—particularly since employees spend up to 35% of their waking hours at work. Mattering is a little different than just inclusion. It is a bi-directional phenomenon. An employee feels like they matter when they feel valued and when they add value. They feel valued when you: Know their full name; Ask about their life; Know their struggles; Remember them; Miss them; and Check in on them. They feel that they add value when you: Show them how they make a difference; Affirm their unique gifts; Ask their opinion; Give them re-

sponsibility; and Show them that they are relied upon.\*\* Mattering can feed self-esteem which can have an internal outcome that helps avoid depression and lack of motivation. Mattering should not be brushed aside as a new touchy feely trend—it is as basic to human needs as food is to hunger and is part of the survival instinct. Zach Mercurio described the three basic drivers of mattering at work as: 1. Feeling Noticed; 2. Feeling Affirmed; and 3. Feeling Needed. All three of these can begin to be addressed by changing the simple question of 'How are you?' to 'What are you thinking right now?' 'What kind of day are you having?' 'How can I help?' and 'What's been most meaningful to you today?'

## Supporting Middle Managers/People Managers

Historically, middle management has been the most stressed level in organizations. In many cases, they navigate the politics of satisfying/representing upper management, support the work needs of their employees, and navigate the daily interpersonal challenges that come with managing people. Now, with COVID, pay not keeping pace with inflation, managing hybrid/remote workers, and having to convince workers to come back onsite and relinquish some of their flexibility, middle management has been challenged with still more. Middle managers are reporting the lowest levels of work/life balance and the highest levels of stress and anxiety.\*\*\* How can we better support this integral

level in our organizations?

Here are some strategies to consider: 1. Value and seek their input. These are often the folks who implement policies and initiatives in which they may have had no input. Give them a voice and incorporate their input into your decisions when practicable—they are the people closest to the boots on the ground that are actually doing the work of your company. If you cannot use their input specifically, let them know you heard them, tell them why not, and provide guidance or ideas on how their input might be used in the future. 2. Help them gain the management skills needed to be more effective leaders for their people. This may mean providing training in basic management skills or

it may be coaching them to be leaders. Many organizations reserve coaching for the highest level staff. But if you are taking succession planning seriously, it's important to develop your future leaders as well. And, coaching can be a great support for actively implementing what is learned in training. 3. In a hybrid workplace in particular, it can be an invaluable support to managers in learning from each other. Help them strengthen their peer group connection through a regular forum or some other network communication tool they can use to connect with each other and brainstorm issues and situations. 4. Provide them with needed technology to complete administrative

Remove everything pointless from an imperfect life and it'd lose even its imperfection.— Haruki Murakami

tasks more efficiently, leaving them more time to manage and lead.+ Unfortunately, sometimes these tools are left unused. So, it is important to make them accessible, provide training (possibly in small bites so it doesn't become yet another job to do), have leaders advocate for how these tools can help and lead by example by using those tools. 5. Restructure meetings so managers need only attend when their presence is necessary and communicating their input electronically will not suffice. Find ways to communicate the content of the meetings that they do not attend so they stay in the loop.

\*SHRM, *Tis the Season for Employers to Address Skyrocketing Stress*, Mayer, Kathryn, December 12, 2022.

\*\*Mercurio, Zach PhD, *How to Create Mattering at Work*, November 15, 2022.

\*\*\*SHRM, *How to Support Middle Managers in a Hybrid Workplace*, Hirsch, Arlene S, December 14, 2022.

+SHRM, *The Miserable Middle Managers*, Wilkie, Dana, February 19, 2020.