

HOT SHEET

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Full-Circle HR



HR Trends:

- Female leaders at senior levels and above are leaving their positions at higher rates than ever—higher than men; employers need to address the root causes of this and not just the symptoms.
- Recently the US House introduced a bill that would incentivize employers to engage skills-based hiring rather than depending upon educational requirements.
- New research by Mercer indicates significant declines in employee satisfaction & commitment to their employers since last year, most noticeably regarding compensation, work/life balance, benefits, & career goals.
- According to Illinois' Gateway Foundation, substance-use struggles are a daily occurrence for 1 in 10 Americans battling addiction, and it only got worse during the pandemic. This is something for employers to consider when planning a party and, in general, supporting employee health and well-being.
- The Tech industry that has historically lacked diversity is now seeing the progress it made with its DE&I efforts evaporate due to the current layoffs. This is particularly true when seniority is the determining factor.

Creating an Empathetic Workplace

Empathy has long been considered a soft skill that is readily overlooked when it comes to being directly considered as a performance indicator. And yet, according to the Center for Creative Leadership, empathy is positively related to job performance.* Empathy is a powerful way to show the other that they are not alone in their suffering and that there is care and understanding available as moral support for them. It connects on an emotional level and is not just a cognitive understanding. It openly acknowledges and welcomes the whole employee to work, rather than unrealistically expecting them to leave their problems at home. This can actually help them feel more engaged and free them up to

focus more fully on their job. It does not mean that you take on their problems but you acknowledge and support them with listening deeply, understanding, and offering resources. Here are some ways to foster empathy in the workplace:** 1. Watch for signs of burn-out—as the lines between work and home life continue to be blurred, particularly by easy access to work via technology, employees are working more hours than ever. Watch for signs of stress and check in regularly with your staff about how they are handling their workload. 2. Show sincere interest in their needs, hopes, and dreams. When you understand these things, it can guide you in matching your staff with work assignments that will

enhance performance and satisfaction. 3. Keep lines of communication open and encourage transparency. One way to do this is to be open yourself when an issue arises. Avoid automatic responses like 'fine' when asked how you are—answering honestly shows kindness to yourself and appreciation for the others' concern. Leading by example creates a sense of safety for others to share. When they do, listen fully and without judgment—be aware of your body language so that it says you are there to listen. If you cannot listen at the time, make a time to check back in and follow up. 4. Show compassion when someone shares a personal loss. Cultivate kindness and compassion in general,

leading by example. 5. Teach, learn, and practice skills that support empathy such as listening, reframing, body language awareness, and emotional intelligence. 6. Talk about empathy in the workplace. Encourage perspective taking by inviting employees to consider how someone else might feel in the situation. One company invites new hires to write what they would do if they had a free day to do it. They place it in a sealed envelope. Six months later they give them a day off and give the envelope back to them with encouragement to indulge in self-kindness.

It is in your hands to make a better world, for all who live in it.— Nelson Mandela

Company Culture and Pay Transparency

Currently at least 7 states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, Nevada, Rhode Island, and Washington) and an increasing number of localities require pay transparency with applicants and, in some cases, with employees. Even employers who are not required to disclose this information choose to do so. They are finding that applicants are responding well to their disclosures and they have seen an increase in the number of applicants applying for their jobs.***

In Washington State, an update to the 2019 Equal Pay & Opportunities Act takes effect on January 1, 2023. The law requires that employers proactively disclose 'in each posting' for each job opening the wage

scale or salary range and a general description of all benefits and other compensation to be offered to applicants. A 'posting' means any solicitation intended to recruit job applicants for a specific available position, including recruitment done directly by an employer or indirectly through a third party, and includes any postings done electronically or in hard copy that includes qualifications for desired applicants. Under current law, employers must disclose that information for internal transfers.

Whether it is a legal requirement or you choose to follow this trend for other reasons, it is important to also consider the cultural shift it may require in your organization. Many employ-

ers and managers have long considered pay rates a private matter, but employees want to know if they are being treated equitably. Transparency builds trust. It holds practices to the light of day and, by that, often encourages equitable treatment. Even when there is only a 'sense' that there is inequity, it gives employees enough knowledge to ask questions and raise concerns. Hopefully this is invited by the company and met with consideration and response.

As employers join the pay and benefits transparency movement and disclose this information, it is critical that they also disclose this information to their current employees. But this takes some preparation,

which means you need to review your pay structure—maybe even create one before you head too far down this path. If you feel there are inequities in your pay practices, it is better to let your employees know you are looking at righting this. Be transparent now as you move toward taking real action to correct it. Oftentimes these inequities happen because the market for a particular job demands that you hire an external candidate at a higher rate in order to get qualified applicants. Be honest with your employees—don't let them find out by viewing the ad—and then make plans to take action. Also, when you advertise and decide to only list the starting rate, be sure to indicate it as such in your ad.

*Center for Creative Leadership, *The Importance of Empathy in the Workplace*, Leading Effectively Staff, June 28, 2022.

**SHRM, *How HR Leaders can Help Create Empathetic Workplaces*, SHRM Online Staff, November 22, 2022.

***SHRM, *Company Cultures Adjust to Disclosing Pay Ranges in Job Ads*, Stephen Miller, CEBS, November 10, 2022.