

HOT SHEET

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Full-Circle HR

HR Trends:

- According to a September Kaiser Family Foundation poll, only about half of Americans intend to get the latest COVID vaccine, while 58% plan to get a flu vaccine.
- The social security cost of living increase for 2024 will be 3.2%, much less than recent years. The 2023 increase was 8.7% and 2022 was 5.9%.
- The new I-9 form must be in use as of November 1. Find the form here <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/i-9.pdf>.
- According to SHRM research 16% of employees have one or more invisible disabilities and almost half have not disclosed it to their employer.
- Pandemic era childcare benefits ran out September 30, 2023. This significantly impacts workers that need dependable/affordable childcare benefits. Employers can help by considering this in their benefits planning and scheduling (remote/flexibility) if it is a concern for their employees.
- Bank of America researchers say financial wellness is at an all time low, in spite of lowered inflation. Two-thirds of American workers are stressed by their experience of the cost of living outpacing their wages.

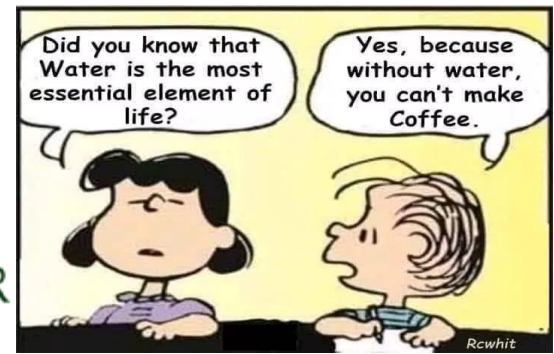
Top Ten HR Trends for 2023

Earlier in the year Jeanne Meister of Forbes explored the top 10 HR trends in the workplace.* These trends continue to play out as we come to the close of 2023. These trends will have varying impact depending on business factors but I think they warrant some attention and thought. **1.** Employee well-being is an imperative. It has been so seriously on the rise as an unmet need that in October 2022 the U.S. Surgeon General issued a report on it. This report states that 81% of respondent employees are specifically seeking workplaces that foster well-being and the 76% of them also reported at least one mental health symptom (e.g. anxiety, depression, etc.). Possible employer responses include greater access to mental health treatment, healthier food choices, and financial edu-

cation. **2.** Skills-based hiring rather than requiring a degree. This can remove employment and advancement barriers for up 2/3 of the American workforce. For the employer it broadens the talent pool, increases diversity of thought, and decreases the time to hire. **3.** Flexibility for all employees. This is not just about where the work is done but also when. Many employees seek more schedule flexibility than remote work. A prime example of this is Chik-fil-a who increased retention by allowing 3-day work weeks of 13-14 hours a day. **4.** Hybrid learning versus brick and mortar Corporate Academies. While this is less common for smaller companies, the basic concept is to provide learning opportunities closer to where the actual work is done. This means hybrid and online learning. **5.** Ex-

panding ESG (environmental, social, and governance) transparency beyond board and owner reporting. This includes a broad range of stakeholders (e.g. employees and customers). Many S&P companies are now making ESG goals a part of leadership accountability. **6.** Human skills (once thought to be soft skills) are becoming the new "Hard Skills." While technical skills are still highly valued, studies have found that over a third of the top 20 skills requested in job posting are ones such as communication, customer service, leadership, attention to detail, and collaboration. Added to this list they also expect to see personal learning and mastery, achievement focus, and cultural and social intelligence. **7.** Hybrid work is here to stay. Companies must work to

define it clearly, determine when it is best used, and measure performance. **8.** Bringing the off-site vibe on-site. Some employers are turning office space into meeting rooms where collaborations and company events can be held. The research suggests that connection between primary teams grew during remote work, but secondary impromptu connections diminished. Redesigning the space can help facilitate these missing connections. **9.** Humans and Bots create a new blended workforce. Automation is reaching new levels. Be sure you have a good audit system and training in place to make the most of it. **10.** Address HR burnout. The pace of change has been monumental. Understand, value, and appreciate the demands on your HR Team.



How to Respond to an Employee Bad Mouthing You

The growing number of forums for employees to express their frustrations provides ample opportunities for negative remarks about you and/or your company. How you handle this can depend on the forum. It is always wise to handle it with an open mind. While the extreme criticism is unfair and probably untrue there is likely an underlying truth that could serve growth.**

If you know who is making the comments, the tactful direct approach may be best. Hold the meeting in private unless there is some concern about needing a witness present. It's a simple human-to-human con-

versation where you confirm what you heard, ask questions about it so you can learn more, and remind the employee about the importance of respect and transparency. Encourage them to bring any further concerns to you first, but that does not preclude them from taking further legitimate (whistleblower) action if deemed appropriate.

It is best to respond to negative feedback which comes via websites such as Glassdoor with transparency and professionalism. Take a stance that is open to feedback and shows a willingness to look at and address shortcomings. It's important to demonstrate a responsive-

ness to both your current and past employees.

If negativity is coming from several directions and you can't identify a specific source, consider an employee survey. An initial step before the survey is to ask your people managers to do a temperature check with their employees. In doing this, encourage them to ask what employees are hearing in their department and in other departments. Ask about engagement and satisfaction. A question that was suggested is, "Are you able to do your very best work every day with peace of mind?"

Most importantly, engage in some negativity prevention

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is a quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow."

— Mary Anne Radmacher

by keeping lines of communication open. Have regular performance feedback conversations. Pulse check employees periodically. Conduct an engagement survey. Have and reinforce open-door policies. Conduct regular information and feedback sessions. Consider combining these sessions with team-building activities. Ensure every voice is included by drawing more quiet employees out through participation in activities or by directly inviting their comments.

*Forbes, *Top Ten HR Trends for the 2023 Workforce*, Meister, Jeanne, January 10, 2023.

**SHRM, *How to Respond When Your Employee Bad Mouths You or Your Company* Lobell, Kylie Ora, October 5, 2023.