

HOT SHEET

Volume 11, Issue 7
July 29, 2024



Full-Circle HR



I want to withdraw my resignation.
The company which hired me is
hiring my boss too.

HR Trends:

- According to the Employee Experience Index, the top four features of a positive employment experience are being part of a team, having a sense of purpose in your work, being treated fairly, and being valued for your contributions.
- On July 2, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued a proposed rule to shield indoor and outdoor workers from heat illness. For more information see [heat illness](#).
- A June 28 Supreme Court decision to overturn the [1984 Chevron decision](#) may pave the way for employers to more readily challenge rulings from Federal Agencies such as the Department of Labor (DOL).
- Summer job ads are down 16.9% from 2023 and 28% from 2022. Internships have suffered even more. Service workers are still in demand while corporate roles have declined.
- The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has announced a trial launch of its new E-Verify+ program that will integrate E-Verify with the I-9 Form process. It will shift much of the responsibility for the process away from the employer/HR and to new hires.

Psychological Safety at Work

The cartoon in this newsletter doesn't necessarily say that the issue for the employee is psychological safety—it could be. Or it could be an ill-equipped manager—either way it can contribute to an employee's lack of a sense of well-being at work. A big part of this is psychological safety.

Any business that faces uncertainty or seeks innovation needs employees to be confident that candor and vulnerability are welcome. Many managers and business owners may not realize how far their company culture is from this state. An employee survey might be useful to assess strengths in this area. Psychological safety is not only important for innovation but also for team cohesion, agility in responding to

changing circumstances, diversity and inclusion, and remote working.* Ultimately, all of these potentially contribute to attracting talented applicants, growing the bottom line, and/or helping meet the mission.

Unfortunately, it is natural for people to refrain from candor, hold back ideas, and choose not to make themselves vulnerable. Fostering this in the workplace is challenging but rewarding, both at the interpersonal level AND at the level of running a successful organization. Characteristics of a culture of psychological safety might include: • Mistakes are communicated quickly, learned from, and adjustments are made—without blame; • Many perspectives are considered and candid feedback and

communication flow freely; and • Employees are not afraid to take risks—sharing ideas and voicing problems readily and constructively.**

Some steps to consider if you choose to undertake the effort to foster psychological safety: 1. Focus on performance. It is much easier to focus on something that is concrete. While the softer benefits such as helping employees feel safe or helping leaders become better listeners so employees feel valued and heard are important, they are more abstract. 2. Train individuals and teams. Individual leaders must learn and practice the skills of perspective taking and inquiry that facilitate candid sharing of ideas and concerns. But these skills don't

take hold until teams practice them together as real work is getting done. 3. Incorporate visualization. Have leaders visualize a situation where they felt they were successful in perspective taking, speaking candidly, and/or helping participants engage fully. Then have them visualize and write down a future situation in detail as they walk through the facilitation applying the same skills they did in the previous situation. This will help hone their skills in navigating complex topics or decisions. 4. Normalize vulnerability related to work. Leaders can begin practicing vulnerability in small ways, gradually increasing the magnitude of these interpersonal risks. This will normalize vulnerability and the sense of safety will likely grow.

Managing Political Expression at Work

Political ads are everywhere and politics are more super-charged and divisive than ever. It is likely that employees are having political discussions at work. According to Beachboard Consulting Group, 83% of employees surveyed report this is true, but many wish that this would not take place.[^] Furthermore, 87% of employers they surveyed were concerned about managing divisive political discussions; 84% believed that these discussions would adversely affect employee engagement; and 79% believe this negatively impacts productivity. Beachboard interprets this disconnect to mean that employees want

their employers to provide guidance. It is inadvisable to prohibit these discussions, but providing guidance can offer employees a safe way to engage in them. Interestingly, Beachboard also found that only 8% of the surveyed employers had workplace policies on political expression.

While many employees maintain that they have the right to free speech and can therefore engage in these discussions at work, the 1st amendment does not apply in private workplaces, though it does apply in the public sector. Having said that, there are other laws that can protect these conversations at work. These include the National Labor

Relations Act (NLRA), which, under the current administration, has expanded this protection to cover political and social discussions as “concerted activity.” Another way that these discussions can have legal implications is when they cross over into areas that raise Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) issues such as race or sex. It is also important for employers to be aware of any state or local laws that offer protections.

Some suggestions to consider include: 1. Find out the extent of political discussion in your workplace and how much of an issue it is—if at all. 2. Reaffirm your workplace culture of

In the book of life, the answers aren't in the back.
— Charlie Brown

inclusivity and respect. Remind employees that healthy political discussions are okay. Some tips you can offer include using ‘I’ statements, fostering two-way conversations, and avoiding stereotypes.

If you discover there may have been inappropriate expression, find out: when, where, who, and what. Most importantly discern if it is political expression or hate speech. Take firm action in the case of the latter. To learn more about creating a policy see [Creating a Political Expression Policy](#).

* Harvard Business Review, *4 Steps to Boost Psychological Safety at Your Workplace*, Edmundson, Amy C. & Hugander, Per June 22, 2021.

** SHRM, *Psychological Safety in the Workplace: The Cornerstone of Inclusivity*, Beatty, Sara, July 15, 2024.

[^]SHRM, *How to Manage Political Expression at Work*, Maurer, Roy, July 12, 2024.