



HR

ADVISORY

Spring 2023

The HR Balancing Act

How Faherty's People Team Puts
A Value-Driven Culture into Action

Page 6

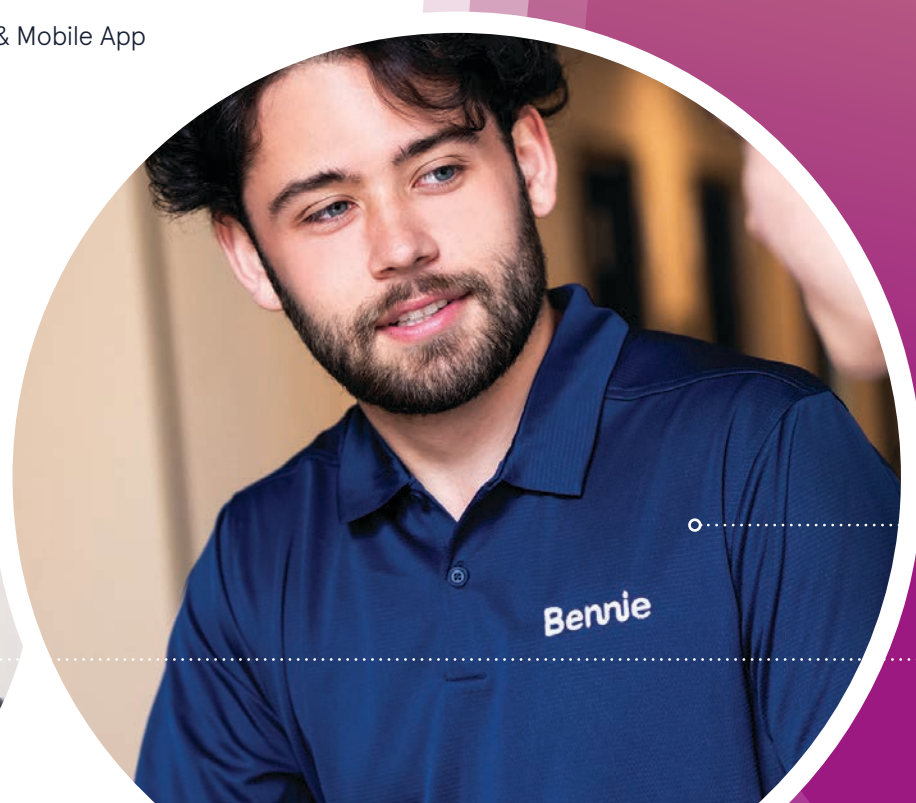
You run HR. We'll manage your benefits.

Bennie offers a modern, cost-effective approach to employee benefits with a user-friendly platform and world-class brokerage services. As a licensed broker in all 50 states, Bennie provides dedicated benefits support and personalized benefits programs to hundreds of organizations. Bennie's mobile and web app enhances the benefits experience for both employees and employers, allowing users to have up-to-date information and tools at their fingertips. Members can easily access ID cards, find in-network medical providers, view deductible balances, and chat with a live healthcare concierge that offers dedicated member support.

What We Do

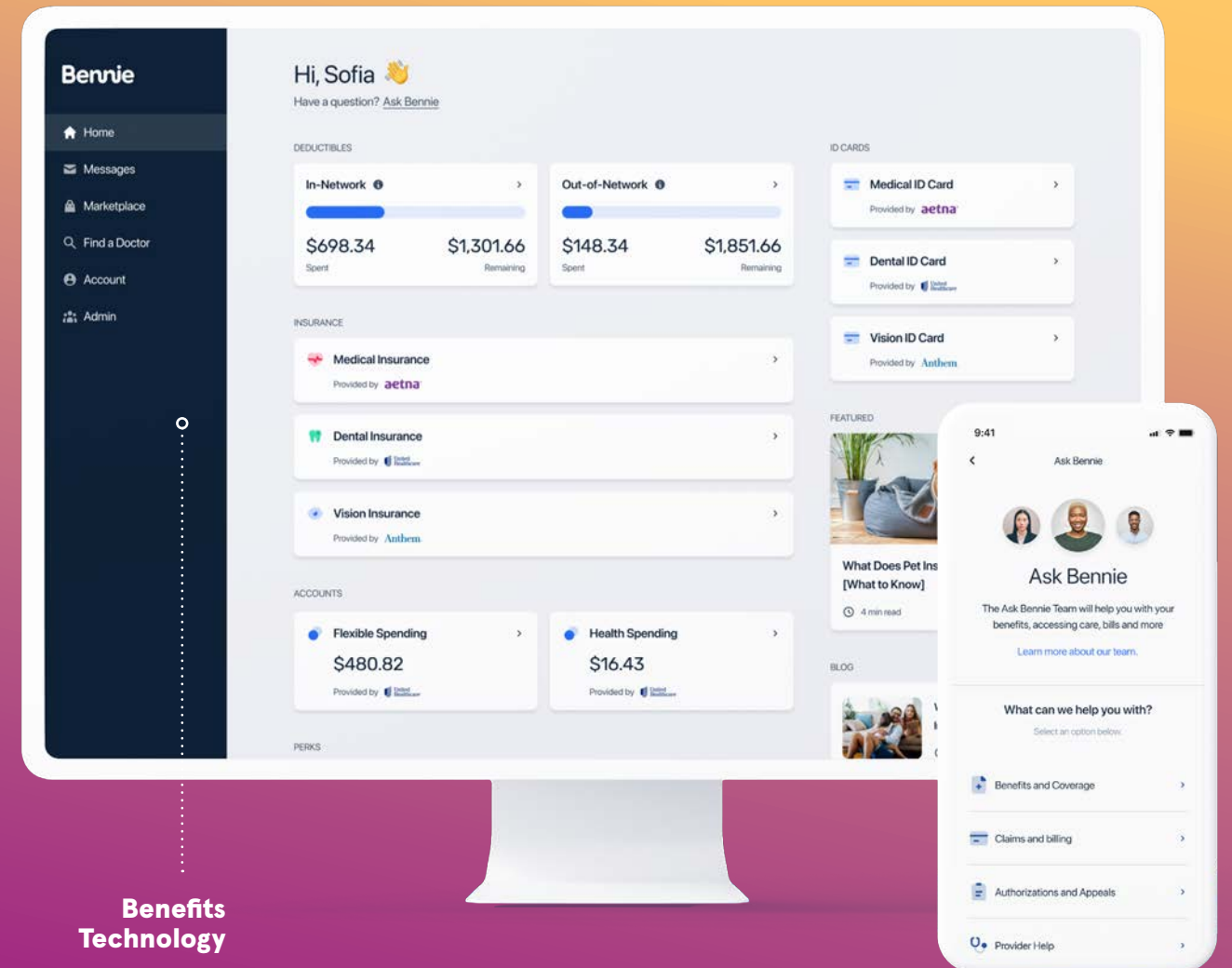
Full-Service Employee Benefits Broker

- Medical
- Dental
- Vision
- FSA & HSA
- HR Technology Consulting
- Benefits & HR Tech Resources
- Bennie Technology & Mobile App
- Compliance



CONSULTING + TECHNOLOGY

An All-Inclusive Benefits Experience



Benefits
Technology

Benefits
Consulting

HR Tech
Consulting

To learn more visit bennie.com



Table of Contents

Page 5

Publisher's Note: By Chris Flores

Page 6 BENNIE CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Faherty | The HR Balancing Act: How Faherty's People Team Puts A Value-Driven Culture into Action

Page 13

Zenefits: Find Your HR Match

Page 14

Doing More With Less as an HR Team of One

Page 18

Cigna: Creating Better, Thriving Together

Page 20

Compensation Planning in 2023: Where to Start

Page 22

5 Key Steps for Prioritizing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace

Page 26

Flexing Your Empathy Muscle: A Q&A with Dr. Nicole Price

Page 29

Guardian: Behind Every Supporting Employer is a Guardian

Page 30

Employers are Increasingly Offering Fertility Benefits. Here's Why.

Page 32

Developing a Leave Management Program with Limited Resources

Page 34 HR ADVISORY

HR Advisory's 2023 Annual Meeting! Reserve Your Spot Today

Page 35 BENNIE

Bennie's Marketplace Spotlight

Page 36

Navigating Your HR Career in a Volatile Job Market

Page 38

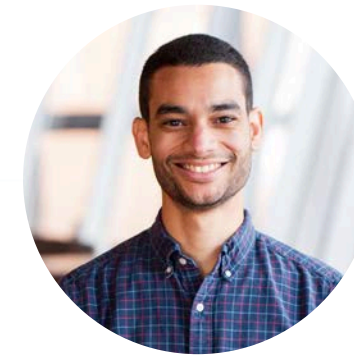
Why Company Culture Should Be On Leadership's Radar

Page 40 HR ADVISORY

HR Advisory's 2023 Benefits Series

Page 42

Better Health Plan



Publisher's Note

The HR Balancing Act

Managing a team of people is often a balancing act. No matter how big or small the organization, we must find an equilibrium with the needs of executives, leadership, management, and employees while ensuring every action is compliant. There's a logical and emotional aspect of the role. You have procedures and standards that you must adhere to, but at the same time, you have to be mindful of the fact that each individual has a different experience in life.

When tumultuous situations occur, HR is often the messenger and face of the news. Having the weight of expectations and emotions of employees and employers can make you feel like the world is on your shoulders. But, as we've seen in these last couple of years, there's been a shift - a recognition of the workplace as more than just a space where production and services are exchanged for payment, but where humans gather to work together and contribute to a larger goal.

And this shift has been felt in the HR world. But the journey to transition human resources to the human experience still has a way to go. In this edition of HR Advisory's Magazine, we dive into relevant topics like doing more with less as an HR team of one, empathy, fertility benefits, navigating your HR career, and so much more. I hope you find these articles helpful in your journey and can use them in your toolbox of resources to help you thrive in your role.

As always, we'd like to express our gratitude to our HR Advisory members, magazine contributors, and sponsors for helping to make this community a valuable space. This community is built by People professionals, and you help us shape this group and everything we do.

Chris Flores
VP, Marketing, Bennie



Bennie CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

FAHERTY

The HR Balancing Act

How Faherty's People Team Puts
A Value-Driven Culture into Action

By Kristina Dinabourgski



The HR Balancing Act: How Faherty's People Team Puts A Value-Driven Culture into Action

Culture and values are baked into everything Faherty does, from its company policies to partnerships to its products. As a purpose-driven organization, it's just as important to embody core values internally as it is to share them with customers.

Let's meet Faherty's People team and learn more about how they work to build, nurture, and maintain a culture of community, consciousness, collaboration, and inclusivity.

About Faherty

Faherty is a purpose-driven clothing brand founded by brothers Alex and Mike Faherty, who have a love for everything outdoors. The family-built company also includes Alex's wife, Kerry, who is the brand's co-founder and Chief Impact Officer, as well as the brothers' mother, Ninie, who is the VP of Store Design.

With sustainability and social impact as starting points, Faherty uses lower-impact materials, responsibly-sourced fibers, non-toxic dyes, and water-efficient processes and has led the way in establishing a path for brands to show authentic appreciation versus appropriation of Native designs.

The brand started as a beach house on wheels ten years ago and has since grown into a national brand. The New York-based company has 51 retail locations today and more than 500 employees, the majority of whom work in Faherty's stores.

Faherty's Core Values

- **Be the Best**
Deliver the best product, service, and experience. Always strive to be the best in class.
- **Stay Authentic**
Be proud of who we are and what we believe in.
- **Better Together**
We know that we need each other; that's why it's essential to communicate, collaborate, and create things together.
- **Spread Good Vibes**
Life is hard, so let's do our best to not make it harder. Smile, laugh, and be kind to one another and ourselves.
- **Deliver On Promises**
If we say it, then we do it—for ourselves, our partners, and our customers.
- **Lead Consciously, Bravely, and Inclusively**
Every decision has an impact. Be brave and inclusive in everything that you do.





The HR Balancing Act: How Faherty's People Team Puts A Value-Driven Culture into Action

Meet Faherty's People Team

A team that started with just two members and has since grown to nine, the People department at Faherty focuses on collaboration, community, and network-building.

“Together, we have built the Faherty People function from the ground up. We’re a group of women from diverse backgrounds who are experts in our own niches, and we love collaborating.” – Natasha Caicedo

Natasha Caicedo Senior People Operations Associate

Natasha's career started in a non-profit organization, where she learned the basics of HR and the importance of filing, record-keeping, policies, and benefits. She also worked at a construction company and Citi Bike, where she continued developing her HR and operations experience. Natasha's passion eventually led her to Faherty, where she now focuses

on system-based operational functions including benefits, operations administration, and payroll processing.

Her day-to-day includes communicating, troubleshooting questions and needs, and educating and updating associates on Faherty's benefits. Natasha's work also includes invoice processing and ensuring everyone gets paid on time and accurately.

Evangeline Vassiliou People & Culture Manager

Evangeline's HR journey started at Faherty eight years ago, when she joined as a sales associate while in college. After growing within retail operations in the organization, she transitioned into corporate and then moved into the HR department. Her day-to-day includes supporting the people team and ensuring she always promotes positive company culture.

Evangeline connects with employees at all life cycle stages, whether onboarding, offboarding or somewhere in between. When she's not with employees, she's strategizing and implementing new ways that help make the employee life cycle better.



Building and Nurturing a Human-Centric Workplace at Faherty

“We want people to feel good about everything we do.” – Natasha Caicedo

As a conscious and purpose-driven organization, these values permeate the initiatives and policies that Faherty's People team puts in place. As part of Faherty's focus on wellness and work-life balance, the organization offers a fitness reimbursement program, office yoga sessions, lunch-and-learn sessions, and an employee assistance program.

Faherty provides full-time and part-time employees with access to comprehensive medical, dental, and vision benefits packages, as well as low-cost minimum essential medical plans and 100% employer-paid short-term disability. Full-time salaried employees enjoy an unlimited vacation policy, and the organization takes a flexible approach to work as a whole.

The office is family and pet-friendly, and it's not uncommon for folks to be away because they're spending time with their families.

Fostering community is also encouraged through employee committees that anyone in the company is welcome to join, including the Good Vibes Crew and Green Team, which plan special events, challenges, and fun activities for the company.

A DEI leadership committee was launched in 2022, and in 2023 Faherty will be working with a consultant to more clearly identify and articulate its strategy around building an even more inclusive environment for all. Holidays and awareness months are celebrated, along with monthly birthday and anniversary celebrations.

The organization holds semi-annual town halls where everyone catches up on the current state and future of the business. In 2022, Faherty had its first-ever Faherty Fun Fest, where the entire HQ team visited a theme park.





The HR Balancing Act:
How Faherty's People Team Puts A Value-Driven Culture into Action



What's Next on the People Team's Radar

In addition to the current comprehensive benefits and perks available, Faherty's People team plans to introduce even more exciting new initiatives. Soon, the organization will roll out Faherty's first-ever sabbatical program. They also plan to expand their existing partnership with Blueboard for experiential rewards when employees hit certain milestones. Once an employee reaches a reward level, they can pick an experience based on that level, like swimming with manatees or going to a floatation spa, for example. The People team also plans to expand and elevate the swag provided to employees.

How HR Leaders Can Build Culture in Their Workplaces

"It's so important to enjoy your life outside of the office—it helps you come to work and appreciate your career." - Evangeline Vassiliou

So, if an HR leader wants to enhance culture and the employee experience, where do they start? Faherty's People team offers some pointers.

- Focus on embedding valued behaviors into the organization and throughout the employee lifecycle, including hiring, performance evaluations, and how you recognize and reward employees.
- Communicate consistently, openly, and transparently with employees, and keep the organization's purpose at the heart of everything you do.
- Offer employees the opportunity to step away. Remind them that there's always tomorrow; otherwise, they will keep going and burn out.
- Foster community at work. Many people now count on their workplace for a sense of community and well-being. Meeting that need is essential because, for many, it's not just a job. People rely on brands, companies, and organizations to provide opportunities to be social with others.

Looking at the workplace from a human-centric lens will give you the foundation to plant the seeds of a culture and environment that everyone can thrive in. 🗨️

trinet[®] **zenefits** **Bennie**

Find your HR Match

With our HR platform, you can build a solution that's right for your unique business needs.

Zenefits all-in-one HCM gives you access to key features and integrations:

- ✓ New Hire Onboarding
- ✓ Time & Attendance
- ✓ Flexible Benefits & Payroll Admin
- ✓ Recruiting powered by JazzHR
- ✓ People Analytics powered by Visier
- ✓ And more!



Ready to learn more?
Contact julianne.randolph@trinet.com
914.400.1452

Watch the Zenefits platform in action.



Doing More With Less

as an HR Team
of one.



By: Jennifer Wiseman

Doing More With Less as an HR Team of One

When tackling HR as a small team or team of one, it can sometimes seem as though it takes everything just to accomplish the bare minimum. New projects and initiatives you'd like to pursue fall by the wayside in favor of keeping up with your daily to-do list. This isn't tenable, and it doesn't have to be your reality. Even with limited resources, there are steps you can take to accomplish more with what you have – and without pushing yourself to the brink.

Efficient policies and procedures, mentors in your network, internal support from management and leadership, and external help from third-party services can all play a part in making your job more manageable, often at little or no cost to your organization.

Evaluate Your Current Policies, Procedures, and Documentation

Establishing and communicating policy, clarifying processes, and handling conflict are all normal parts of your role as an HR leader, but you may be able to reduce the amount of time you spend doing these things. If you find yourself getting bogged down with interpreting policy, navigating difficult decisions with leadership, or getting employees to follow standardized procedures, your current policies and processes may need some review.

Well-developed policies, processes, and documentation should be simple and scalable with clear, easy-to-interpret language. You want your policies to grow and change as your company does, and if they aren't doing so efficiently, they need to be evolved. Don't be afraid to pare down bloated processes or shore up vague or unclear policies or documentation. These things are in place to save everyone time, and if they are ambiguous or time-consuming, they aren't serving their purpose – especially not when you're already juggling so many other tasks.

If the prospect of auditing or revamping company policy is daunting, consider getting help from your network of peers.

Make Use of Your Network; It's a Goldmine

Having a robust network of peers is essential if you are the only HR professional in your organization. Whether you're confused about a new reporting requirement or facing a sensitive problem that has no clear answer, there's someone else who's experienced something similar, and they may be willing to advise you.

Here are a few ways you can make your role easier by tapping into your network:

- 1 Get useful, honest reviews of third-party services and software your organization may be looking at adopting.
- 2 Stay up-to-date on upcoming legislation, deadlines for reporting, and other compliance matters.
- 3 Get advice and insight when you're dealing with an unusual or gray problem, trying to implement a new system or launching a new initiative.
- 4 Find templates and guides for policies and common documents like handbooks or forms.
- 5 Potentially find talent when filling new roles at your organization.

Don't have a strong network yet? It's time to start building one. Find and join up with HR communities, in-person or online. National communities are great resources, but depending on where you live, you may be able to find local, state, or region-specific groups, as well. Attend in-person and digital events, curate your professional social media feed, and participate in HR discussions online. Plenty of HR professionals have been in your shoes and are happy to help. Just remember to pay that help forward when you can!

Harness Tech and Third-party Services To Streamline Your To-do List

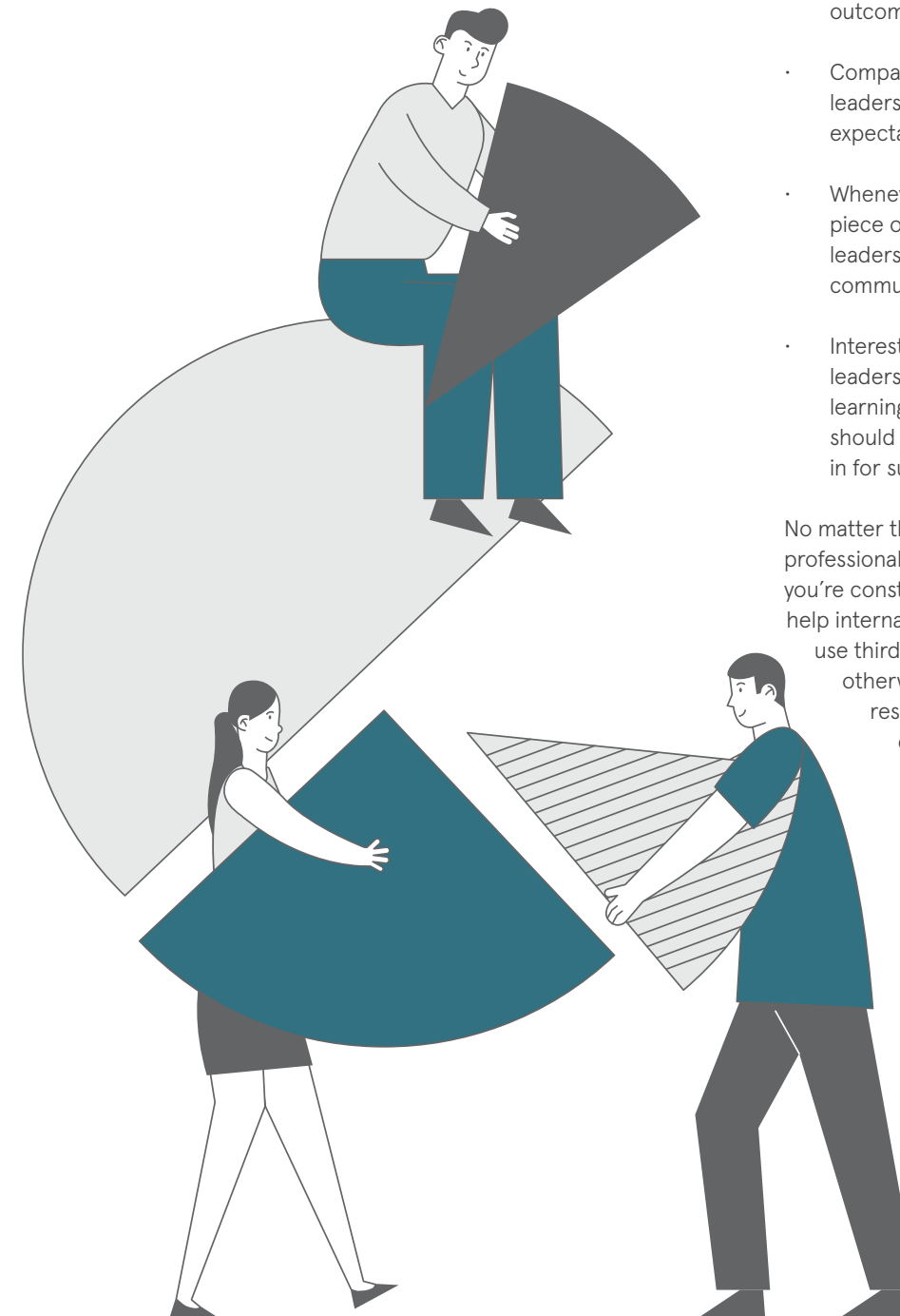
There's no end to the number of third-party services, systems, and apps that can help you to automate the most common HR chores. HR tech isn't just about freeing you up to focus on more important tasks, either. Automation can greatly reduce the risk of errors in process or compliance that might have otherwise led to serious issues, potentially saving your organization some money.

Not sure what options are available to you? Here are just a few of the many ways that automation and outsourcing could potentially save you time:

- Streamlining the recruiting process with automated application screening.
- Empowering employees to manage their own PTO, update their personal information as needed, and retrieve their own pay stubs with self-service portals.

- Managing time-consuming tasks like payroll, 401k, and benefits enrollment, which carries the added benefit of reducing the risk of pricey errors.
- Handling time-off scheduling, cutting back on the amount of time you spend answering questions or fixing errors in coverage.

Concerned about the cost of outsourcing HR responsibilities? Consider how much of your time (and your wages) are devoted to manually completing outsourceable tasks each pay period. If you calculate the amount exactly and compare it to the monthly or yearly cost of automating those tasks through a third-party service, chances are, you'll find the service still saves money in the long run. Keep this in mind when seeking leadership buy-in for such services.



Share Your Responsibilities Within Your Organization

As an HR team of one, many of your responsibilities may not fall neatly under the HR umbrella. Some of these tasks can be incredibly time-consuming and may even be more effectively handled by others in your organization. Don't hesitate to seek internal support from managers, leadership, and employees.

Roping them in may even benefit the business in unexpected ways. Consider:

- Performance management tasks like performance reviews and raises can potentially be handed off to management with the right training. Well-implemented, manager-driven performance management can improve communication and feedback within teams, leading to further positive outcomes down the road.
- Company culture can and should be guided by company leadership – they are, after all, the ones setting focus and expectations for your organization.
- Whenever a new initiative, like a new process or piece of HR tech, is on the table, seek a champion in leadership to support you with tasks like implementation, communication, and training.
- Interested employees, managers, and members of leadership can potentially assist with cross-training, learning activities, and mentorship opportunities but should be compensated for the additional time they put in for such extracurricular activities.

No matter the size of your organization, being the sole HR professional isn't easy, but you shouldn't have to feel like you're constantly treading water just to stay afloat. Recruit help internally, seek support from those in your network, and use third-party services to save a ton of time you might've otherwise spent on simple tasks. Even with limited resources, you can make your lengthy to-do lists easier to manage. ■



Creating better. Thriving together.

Cigna HealthcareSM is a proud sponsor of HR Advisory's 2023 Annual Meeting. We celebrate those in the Human Resources profession who work hard to bring the best in benefits and resources to employees and their families. Together, we're empowering people to make the best choices for improving their health and vitality.

Compensation Planning in 2023: Where to Start

By: Jennifer Wiseman

Thorough compensation planning has always been critical to remaining competitive in any job market, but this year it's shaping up to be more important than ever. Rising inflation, a looming recession, and continued high resignation rates mean planning a competitive compensation strategy will be a make-or-break task.

With budgeting, compliance, and competition to keep track of, there's a lot you need to juggle to see success. Take a breath, and let's look at where you should start.



Be Ready To Adapt to New Compliance Requirements

This year, depending on where your company operates, you'll potentially have some new compliance rules to account for. If your organization employs remote workers, you'll need to familiarize yourself with the regulations for every state you operate in.

When it comes to compensation regulation, there are a few things you'll want to be aware of this year, in particular:

- **The minimum wage will be increasing in at least 25 states in 2023.** While the federal minimum wage remains the same, state and municipality-level regulations are changing. Make sure you're meeting these requirements for all employees.

- **Pay transparency laws are going into effect in certain locations.** While some degree of pay transparency is required no matter where you operate, many states and cities are adopting legislation that requires more transparency – most often in the form of requiring job listings to have clear pay ranges – and the penalties for noncompliance are steep.
- **Salary history inquiries are also being banned in some states to prevent discrimination.** In states like Rhode Island, employers are forbidden from asking candidates about their salary history.
- **Make sure all workers are correctly classified.** The DOL recently proposed a new rule that would change the test for independent contractor status. Someone currently classified as an independent contractor may, upon closer

examination, actually legally be considered an employee, which means they would be covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act.

This is a lot to keep track of, especially if your organization operates in multiple locations. Don't hesitate to seek help from your legal team to ensure you're staying compliant.

Look Outside Your Organization to Zero in on Competitive Salary Numbers

A good compensation strategy starts with a plan, and a good plan begins with a clear goal. In 2023, will your focus be on retention or growth? Do you need to close pay discrepancies? Are there gaps in talent that you want or need to fill? Answering these questions will take some work – you'll need to analyze your current offerings, look at your business's performance, and do a bit of growth forecasting – but doing so can set you up to build out your compensation plan for the year.

Once you've identified your goals, it's time to determine competitive salary rates. Research both local market averages and median salaries for positions similar to those at your organization. Knowing what pay looks like in your area and across your industry will give you an idea of what you should budget to stay competitive.

Finally, you'll need to allocate your budget. How will raises be awarded? Will bonuses be part of compensation this year? Are there positions you won't be able to fill because the median salary for that role is out of your organization's reach? Will you need to look beyond base pay to keep your company competitive in this year's volatile job market?

A Competitive Compensation Package Goes Beyond Salary

According to a recent WTW survey, median salary increases are expected to hit 4.6% this year¹, and a Salary.com report found that a quarter of surveyed employers are planning increases between 5% and 7%². If these numbers seem out of reach for your organization, consider looking at other ways to build a competitive compensation package.

While compensation remains the most significant factor in whether or not workers decide to accept or stay in a position, it's not the only thing employees consider. The research shows that many employees also prioritize greater work-life balance, better benefits, and access to wellness programs. They may even overlook lower pay to acquire them³. If your company can't keep up with the salaries offered by larger corporations in your industry, striking a balance between benefits and flat compensation can help catch your organization up.

Looking for a starting point? A few key factors can help offset lack of competitive compensation packages.

- **Boost your total rewards with a robust benefits package.** The right benefits package is often the deciding factor for job seekers.
- **Look into voluntary benefits if your budget is tight.** Voluntary benefits like access to telehealth or financial planning services offer discounts to your employees, usually with little to no financial impact on your organization. It's a fantastic way to round out an existing benefits package without breaking the bank.
- **Offer equity.** Morgan Stanley has identified equity as a crucial tool in recruiting new talent and retaining employees. In their recent study, they found that it was the second most popular offering after compensation.⁴
- **Focus on building and strengthening company culture.** When a workplace culture is strong, employees are engaged and invested in the success of their company. A strong culture improves the retention of existing employees and makes attracting new talent easier.
- **Get flexible.** Work-from-home options and flexible scheduling continue to be both in-demand and affordable to implement, in some cases, even saving employers money in the long run.

If you plan on changing policies or benefits to compensate for less competitive salary ranges, be sure to consult your current employees before finalizing any decisions. Find out what they value most and where they see weak spots. By shoring up benefits and other perks in a way that appeals to your current staff, you can increase their satisfaction, strengthen company culture, and attract like-minded talent in the future. ■

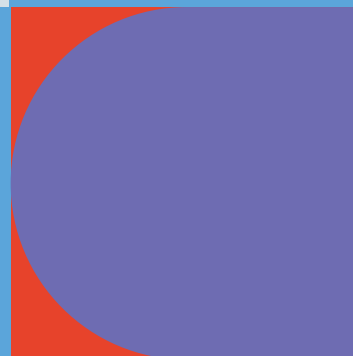
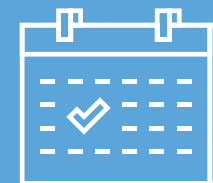
¹ U.S. pay increases to hit 4.6% in 2023, WTW survey. (n.d.). Willis Towers Watson. <https://www.wtwco.com/en-US/news/2022/11/us-pay-increases-to-hit-4-point-6-percent-in-2023-wtw-survey-finds>

² Mayer, K. (2022, December 5). What to know about salary trends in 2023. HR Executive. <https://hrexecutive.com/what-to-know-about-salary-trends-in-2023/>

³ McCain, A. (2023, February 2). 20+ vital work-life balance statistics [2023]: The difficult importance of maintaining it. Zippia. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from <https://www.zippia.com/advice/work-life-balance-statistics/>

⁴ Morgan Stanley. (2022). The 2022 State of Equity Plan Management Report: Equity Compensation and Talent Retention. Morgan Stanley at Work. Retrieved from <https://www.morganstanley.com/atwork/articles/state-of-equity-plan-management-report-2022>

5 Key Steps For Prioritizing Diversity, Equity, And Inclusion In The Workplace



By Nathan K. Low
Partner, Fisher &
Phillips LLP

Diversity, equity, and inclusion have become buzzwords in the workplace over recent years. As the workforce becomes more global, companies have realized the importance of creating a culture that embraces differences and promotes inclusion. But why is diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace so important, and what are the benefits?

First

A diverse workforce is essential because it brings a variety of perspectives, experiences, and ideas to the table. When employees come from different backgrounds and cultures, they approach problems and situations in unique ways, leading to more innovative solutions. A diverse workforce can also help companies better understand and connect with diverse customers and clients. For instance, a recent Global Marketing Trends Executive Survey showed that approximately 57% of consumers are more loyal to brands that are committed to addressing diversity and social inequalities.

Second

Inclusion is just as important as diversity. Inclusion means creating a workplace culture where all employees feel valued, respected, and supported regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or another personal identifying characteristic. When employees feel included, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work. Inclusion can also lead to a more positive workplace environment, where employees feel comfortable sharing their ideas and solutions to drive productivity.

Third

Prioritizing a diverse and inclusive workforce is not just lip service for improving a company's internal and external reputation. It is also good for business. Studies have shown that companies with diverse and inclusive workplaces are more innovative, competitive, and profitable. For example, a McKinsey report found that companies with more diverse executive teams were 33% more likely to outperform their peers in profitability metrics. Additionally, a Boston Consulting Group study found that companies with more diverse teams reported higher levels of innovation revenue than their less diverse counterparts.

Finally

Creating a diverse and inclusive workplace can also help attract and retain top talent. In today's job market, many high-quality candidates prioritize a potential employer's soft factors, such as a commitment to diversity and inclusion. By creating a workplace culture that embraces differences, companies can attract a wider pool of candidates. Additionally, current employees are more likely to stay at a company where they feel valued and respected, leading to lower turnover rates and higher employee retention.

Diversity and inclusion are critical components of a successful workplace. Companies that prioritize these values set themselves up for long-term success, especially given the landscape of recent employment law issues.

Recent Employment Law Issues

There are several legal trends related to diversity and inclusion in the workplace that have emerged:

1 Pay Equity Laws

Lawsuits related to pay equity have been on the rise in recent years. Employers need to ensure that they are providing equal pay for equal work, regardless of an employee's gender, race, or other protected characteristic. For example, California recently passed a law that requires employers to disclose the specific pay range for each job posting. Likewise, many California employers must also provide specific pay data reports to the governing state agency in tandem with the federal reporting obligations to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Other states, such as Colorado and Washington, as well as other local jurisdictions, have similar pay transparency and reporting laws in place. To avoid liability, employers must be able to provide a legitimate business reason for pay scale differences for each job category. Accordingly, employers and HR professionals should prepare by reviewing and analyzing the various pay scales within their organization and ensuring that each job category is defined through objective metrics like experience and productivity.

2 Accommodations for Disabilities

Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. This may include making physical modifications to the workplace or job duties, providing assistive technology or equipment, or modifying work schedules.

3 Inclusive Hiring Practices

Employers should ensure that their hiring practices are inclusive and do not discriminate against certain groups of people. This may include using blind resumes, removing bias from job descriptions, and ensuring that all candidates have an equal opportunity to be considered for a position.

4 Anti-Discrimination Laws

Anti-discrimination laws protect employees from being discriminated against based on certain protected characteristics. The list of protected characteristics is frequently expanding and can vary based on state and local jurisdiction. Employers are legally required to provide a workplace free from discrimination and harassment. This includes taking steps to prevent and address incidents of discrimination or harassment.

By taking proactive steps to address these issues, employers can create a more inclusive and equitable workplace for all employees while also staying in front of potential legal pitfalls.

However, implementing and maintaining diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives is not a silver bullet to defend against all legal claims. It is a step in the right direction to ensure that the workplace is not an environment that fosters potential misconduct.



How to Implement and Maintain Effective DEI Initiatives

Understandably, implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives is easier said than done. The following are some key steps to keep in mind:

1 Create a Concrete Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy

The first step to implementing an initiative is to create a strategy that outlines your company's goals, values, and policies. This strategy should include a clear definition of diversity, equity, and inclusion; specific goals and targets; and actionable steps to achieve them. It should also involve input from employees at all levels, as well as external experts, if necessary.

2 Train and Educate Employees

One of the most important steps in implementing an initiative is to provide training and education to employees at every level. This includes training on unconscious bias, cultural awareness, and inclusive language. It is also important to provide ongoing education and training opportunities to ensure that employees continue to learn and prioritize.

3 Build a Diverse Vertical Workforce

Building a diverse workforce involves more than just hiring employees from different backgrounds and for designated positions. It involves creating a culture that embraces differences and encourages diverse perspectives. This can include recruiting from diverse sources, offering internships and apprenticeships to underrepresented groups, and creating a welcoming environment that values diversity through the above-mentioned training and education. Importantly, diversity should be sought through all levels of management, including executive hiring.

4 Draft and Implement Inclusive Policies and Practices

Creating inclusive policies and practices means ensuring that all employees have equal access to opportunities and resources. This includes policies related to recruitment, promotion, training, and development. It also means creating an inclusive workplace culture where employees feel comfortable and supported – for instance, by creating affinity groups and committees.

5 Measure and Evaluate Progress

Finally, it's important to measure and evaluate the progress of specific initiatives. This includes tracking diversity metrics, conducting regular employee surveys, and evaluating the effectiveness of training and education programs. This information can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that the company is making progress toward its established and defined diversity and inclusion goals.

By prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion, companies can create a positive work environment that promotes innovation, attracts top talent, and drives business success. ■

Flexing Your Empathy Muscle

A Q&A With Dr. Nicole Price

CEO of Lively Paradox & Author of
Spark the Heart: Engineering Empathy in the Workplace.

By: Kristina Dinabourgski



Kristina D., Bennie

Q: What inspired you to focus on empathy in the workplace and create this book?

Dr. Nicole Price

A: I spent several years of my life working with leaders, trying to help them make a better workplace culture. One day, we were having a diversity and inclusion session, and the leaders on this board of directors were a group of multibillionaires. One of them said to me, *“I understand what you’re trying to tell me mentally. I get it. I was hoping you could help me understand it emotionally.”* And I said to myself, *“Did he just tell you he doesn’t care about what you just taught here today?”* After I got over my ego hit, what I had to realize was some people don’t care about creating trust in teams. They just want outcomes.

They don’t want to talk about it; they want you to just come to work and be a professional and get your work done. And I thought, *“None of this is going to work if we can’t help people see people as people and to be more empathetic.”* So I made a major pivot and said, *“Somebody needs to be teaching empathy. Somebody must speak about empathy to people who are not naturally empathetic, who need you to help them get it emotionally.”* You can’t just say, *“You do this because this is the morally right thing to do.”* They’re not going to be moved by that. So that helped me realize that I have got to spark an empathy revolution in organizations.

Kristina D., Bennie

Q: What do you find to be the biggest obstacle that organizations face in encouraging more empathy in the workplace?

Dr. Nicole Price

A: I think about time as this resource that I can’t get back once it’s gone - and empathy takes time. One of the practices that we try to get people to use is called a social-emotional check-in. At the beginning of a meeting, I just ask a prompt question. Some people call it an icebreaker. You can do that, or you can truly ask people, *“What emotion are you bringing into this meeting today?”* If you tell me you’re sad because your dog died, it doesn’t mean I have to do something about your dog dying. What it means is, now I know you’re dealing with grief. So, if you seem a little despondent now, I understand why. That makes trust go up. That social-emotional check-in is going to take me a couple of minutes every time at the beginning of my meeting.

It took me about six months of doing it to recognize that if I do this for two minutes at the beginning of the meeting, it actually makes the rest of the meeting more efficient. During the time I spend there, I slow down so I can go fast. It’s like taking your car to the gas station. If you don’t do it and run out of gas on the side of the road, now, that will take more time. So what do we do? We stop, we get gas, and then we can keep driving without breakdowns on the roadside. When we have People issues at work, I call them breakdowns on the side of the road. It’s typically because we did not take time to get gas.

Kristina D., Bennie

Q: What does it mean to “flex your empathy muscle?”

Dr. Nicole Price

A: Practice. To actually be the ones to practice. People who are naturally empathetic come to me all the time to tell me a story about someone who wasn't empathetic, “*Can you believe they just don't even understand these people, and they put the policy in front of the people?*” At that moment, they're not being empathetic to the people who are not being empathetic.

So what I want people to do is flex that muscle. Show it off. Demonstrate it in your language. I don't need anybody else to tell me that somebody else is not being empathetic. That's not helpful. I need you to help flex your muscle. Demonstrate to that person what empathy looks like. So then they have a model. Model empathy for others. We're terrible at acting like we care about other people. They're going to know you don't. But if you actually ask yourself, “*What would I want if I were this person?*” that exercise is bound to build empathy. You won't be faking if you answer those questions.

Kristina D., Bennie

Q: What are the effects of a more empathic workplace, both internally and externally?

Dr. Nicole Price

A: The biggest thing that I would say is the way we handle performance problems. Empathy helps us in positive ways. But we think about performance problems in a negative way. If I have to fire somebody, it is costly to my organization. So it's cheaper for us if we can have real, authentic conversations with people instead of about people. The thing I am on a personal mission to do is to get people to talk more to people and less about people by asking them to do this. Imagine you were not performing your job well. How would you want to find out? You don't want your peers going to tell your boss. You don't want everybody to talk about you after the meeting. You want someone who you think cares about you to tell you privately.

Here's what the expectation is. Here's where you are. How can I help you get here? That's what each of us wants. And that takes courage. We're not incentivized to have these conversations. So, what tends to happen is time goes on, the person's not doing well, and then eventually, they get put on a performance plan. Once you're on a performance plan, it is a very rare occurrence that you're going to turn that around. So I help leaders have the courage to actually treat people as they want to be treated. To talk to people, not about them.

There's an exercise that we do around listening to teach people to listen for understanding rather than accuracy. It's like if I say to a friend, “*We haven't spent any time together.*” And the person says, “*We were just together for an hour today.*” That person is listening for accuracy. What I'm really trying to say is, “*I want to spend more time with you.*” On a personal level, teaching people to listen for understanding instead of accuracy also improves romantic relationships.

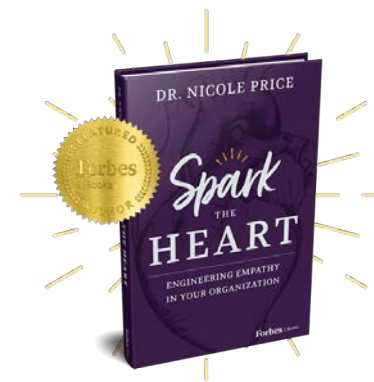


Kristina D., Bennie

Q: How can an HR leader get leadership buy-in to prioritize an empathetic work culture?

Dr. Nicole Price

A: I ask HR folks to get into the shoes of that leader. Your boss is not asking you about how empathetic you are with your people. They're not asking you about your coaching, right? They're not. They're asking you about cost, quality, and service. So we have to let people know that empathy is the buoyancy to lower costs, greater quality, and better service. That's what they're going to ask you about. This is going to help you get there. If you speak about cost, quality, and service, that's what your boss speaks. That's what your shareholders are going to be asking you about. No one is asking you about empathy. Empathy is what helps you get those outcomes. ■



To get your copy of *Spark the Heart: Engineering Empathy in the Workplace*, visit: drnicoleprice.com/book



Or scan the QR code to the left.

 **Guardian**

Behind every supportive employer
is a Guardian™

Where doing well means being your best.

Your most valuable asset is your people. And when they're healthy and happy, your business is healthy. It's why we offer proactive, comprehensive solutions that address emotional, mental, physical, and financial well-being.

Visit guardianlife.com

Copyright 2022 The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America. New York, NY | guardianlife.com
2022-141014 (7/24)



Employers are Increasingly Offering Fertility Benefits. Here's Why.

By: Ronelle Lichman

Employer coverage for fertility treatments and family-building services isn't anything new. Benefits like in vitro fertilization (IVF) coverage and adoption assistance have been offered in some form for years, but haven't been widely available. That's changing, though. According to Mercer's 2021 Survey on Fertility Benefits, in the last eight years, coverage for family-building treatments and services have been growing among large employers (those with more than 500 employees)¹.

Now, fertility benefits are trending, and their popularity shows no sign of slowing down. Just last year, Fortune called fertility benefits "a major weapon in the war for talent,"² and more major corporations, like Walmart and Pinterest, are adding family planning benefits to their compensation packages every year. Once considered a luxury offering, family-building options are topping this year's HR trends lists and have become must-haves for companies wanting to stay competitive.

So, what's changed?

Affordability Is Driving the Fertility Benefit Boom

Historically, fertility benefits beyond initial infertility screening – which is often covered as a part of a normal healthcare package – have been seen as too costly to include in a standard benefits package. Mercer's fertility survey found that more than half (55%) of businesses not currently offering any fertility coverage were refraining from doing so out of cost concerns. However, the data from that same survey shows that fertility benefits may not actually weigh that heavily on your benefits budget.

As fertility clinics and their treatments have become more accessible and their services more reliable, the cost of coverage has gone down. Add onto that the many ways that fertility benefits can offset other costs incurred by fertility-related issues, like coverage for infertility-related emergent medical care, absenteeism, and lowered productivity, and these benefits are actually affording some long-term savings. Respondents to the survey support this, with 97% stating that they saw no significant increase in costs when adding fertility coverage to their existing benefits packages.

Lowered costs aren't the only thing driving the newfound popularity of fertility benefits, though. As our understanding of infertility shifts to become more inclusive, employers are recognizing family-building benefits as a powerful tool for creating a more equitable workplace.

Inclusive Benefits Are Crucial To Creating a More Equitable Workplace

CDC estimates from 2006 to 2010 state that nearly one in eight couples has trouble getting or staying pregnant³, and according to one 2019 survey, 63% of LGBTQ+ millennials are working toward expanding their families with assisted reproductive technologies or adoption⁴. When you take a look at the out-of-pocket costs for common family-building services and infertility treatments, you'll see why the demand for employer assistance is there. AdoptUSKids prices the average adoption between \$10,000 and \$15,000⁵, and Forbes estimates similar numbers for a full cycle of IVF treatments⁶.

Without coverage, that's a tremendous cost barrier that disproportionately affects women – especially women of color, who face additional issues like lower average incomes⁷ – and LGBTQ individuals, who are often denied treatments entirely for not fitting the traditional definition of infertility. Offering inclusive benefits like fertility treatments that don't require an infertility diagnosis or access to support for adoption and surrogacy is a meaningful way for an employer to close this expense gap and support their LGBTQ+ and single-parent-by-choice employees.

It's not just your employees who benefit from employer-sponsored family-building services, though. Family-building assistance of all types has an incredible impact on employees who may have been tabling dreams of starting or growing their families. Those positive effects will echo back to your company. Inclusive benefits beget an equitable workplace, helping your company to reach DEIB goals, and that's just the beginning.

Undeniably Positive Outcomes Make Fertility Benefits Good for Business

With inclusive fertility benefits, you can ensure that all of your employees have access to quality, cost-effective healthcare – the most cited positive outcome of Mercer's Survey on Fertility – but that is far from the only advantage those offerings afford. From increased workforce diversity to improved bottom-line productivity, accessible fertility benefits are good for business.

With the right inclusive benefits, you may measure a boost to productivity and reduced absenteeism. Fifty-nine percent of respondents to a 2021 survey from Carrot said that fertility and family-forming issues have impacted their work performance, and 22% of those respondents additionally

worried about their job security as a result⁸. Access to fertility benefits can significantly reduce the stress employees experience as they try to grow their families or seek treatment for infertility, contributing to a reduction in sick days, improved job performance, and better morale.

Access to fertility benefits can also influence employee loyalty and retention in a big way. A 2021 report from FertilityIQ found that employees who received fertility treatment coverage were 61% more loyal to their employer and were 53% more likely to stay with them after treatments⁹. The 2021 Carrot survey backs up these numbers. It found that 77% of survey respondents would stay at their company longer if fertility benefits were offered. By contrast, 88% said they would consider leaving their employer if they found access to coverage elsewhere.

As those numbers suggest, the availability of coverage for fertility treatments and family-building support can also make your company more attractive to new talent – a crucial point in your favor in the midst of a tight job market. Good PR comes from offering a robust, inclusive benefits package. If you're interested in branding your company as "family-friendly" or sending the message that it cares about its employees and their families, adding inclusive fertility benefits to your compensation package is a great way to send that message.

With the U.S. job market turning volatile, companies increasingly need to offer singularly useful and unique benefits to attract the best talent. Fertility benefits are meeting that need, helping employers improve diversity and morale in the workplace in a meaningful and affordable way. Considering the many benefits these benefits are affording without serious cost, it's not so hard to see why so many employers are offering family-building benefits options this year. ■

¹ 2021 Survey on Fertility Benefits. Mercer, 2021. <https://resolve.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021-Fertility-Survey-Report-Final.pdf>

² Leonhardt, M. (2021, March 5). Fertility benefits have become a major weapon in the war for talent. Fortune. Retrieved February 20, 2023, from <https://fortune.com/2022/03/05/fertility-benefits-are-a-major-weapon-in-the-war-for-talent/>

³ Beck, M., & Beck, M. (2022, June 29). How Many People Have Infertility?. RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association. <https://resolve.org/how-many-people-have-infertility/>

⁴ Abrams, M. (2019). Modern State of LGBTQ+ fertility. Modern State of LGBTQ+ Fertility. Retrieved from <https://modernfertility.com/lgbtq-fertility-survey-2019/>

⁵ What is the cost of adoption from Foster Care? AdoptUSKids. (n.d.). Retrieved February 27, 2023, from <https://www.adoptuskids.org/adoption-and-foster-care/overview/what-does-it-cost>

⁶ Conrad, M. (2023, January 26). How much does IVF cost? Forbes. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/health/family/how-much-does-ivf-cost/>

⁷ G. Weigel, et al. (2020, Sept). Coverage and Use of Fertility Services in the U.S. Kaiser Family Foundation. <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/issue-brief/coverage-and-use-of-fertility-services-in-the-u-s/>

⁸ Fertility Matters Survey. (n.d.). <https://www.get-carrot.com/fertility-at-work>

⁹ 2021 FertilityIQ Workplace Index. (2021). FertilityIQ. <https://www.fertilityiq.com/topics/fertilityiq-data-and-notes/fertilityiq-workplace-index>

DEVELOPING A LEAVE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM WITH LIMITED RESOURCES

By: Jennifer Wiseman

Taking time off is key to maintaining work-life balance for employees at all levels. From studies by the American Psychological Association to reports from the Society for Human Resources Management, the research shows that effectively utilized paid time off is good for business.

Leave time bolsters physical and mental health, reduces the risk of burnout, and contributes to greater engagement, satisfaction, and higher productivity.

It's a crucially important part of a company's success, but it doesn't manage itself. Creating and enforcing policies, tracking time, and processing requests – without adequate assistance, leave management doesn't seem to leave much time for the person handling everything to take time off themselves, unless you have a plan.

Even small teams with limited resources can potentially benefit from a strong policy and efficient processes. Like many tasks in HR, it all starts with an audit.

Solidifying Your Organization's Leave Processes

Your organization almost certainly has a leave policy outlined already, but is it making your life easier or causing headaches? A quality leave policy goes beyond hitting necessary compliance. It facilitates making and explaining leave management decisions and supports processes that streamline tracking leave, requesting time off, and covering schedules for you and your employees. It should cut back on the time you spend managing leave, not draw it out. Done right, a strong policy can even emphasize company values and contribute to meeting DEIB goals.

Getting to that point necessitates a thorough review of your organization's leave management policies and processes. Familiarize yourself with current local and federal labor laws, and then grab a red pen. You'll probably be making some edits.

A strong leave policy should:

- **Comply with current labor laws** and outline a process to ensure changes and updates can be made as needed to maintain compliance more easily.
- **Thoroughly outline leave categories.** This is a great opportunity to inject inclusivity into your policy. For example, do you offer floating holidays that employees can take for important cultural, religious, or personal holidays not otherwise covered by an annual, company-wide calendar? Do parental leave options cover adoption, fertility appointments, and non-childbearing parents?
- **Identify dates your company will observe** as holiday time – this should generally be updated annually.
- **Clearly and concisely establish how time off is accrued,** how much each employee has, and what happens to unused time at the end of the year. Does it roll over, is it paid out, or is unused time lost? Whatever the answer, transparency is important for building trust with employees.
- **Establish a formal, fair process** for requesting and approving leave time. This includes establishing criteria for leave approval as well as a list of HR and management personnel who can review and process requests.
- **Detail the process for communicating with employees.** Employees deserve a timely, transparent response whether their requests are approved or denied. A strong policy should additionally make explaining those decisions easier.
- **Create processes that ensure schedules remain covered** while not overwhelming anyone who takes on additional work from employees on leave. This, in particular, is key to improving morale and willingness to take time off to begin with.
- **Echo company values.** Is your policy inclusive? Is it easy to understand? Does it encourage employees to take the time they need when they need it?

A clear, concise, and legally compliant policy is your goal. Shoot for something that improves the user experience for everyone at the organization – yourself included. Once you have it, it's time to get the word out.

Communication Is a Key Time Saver for Leave Management

How much time do you spend answering simple questions about your company's leave policy? What about chasing down employees who aren't working through the proper channels? Does it seem like you're always patching holes in coverage and sorting out schedule conflicts? There's a good chance that at least some of these issues can be curbed with a communication plan.

Relevant information should be easy to understand, unambiguous, and accessible to all employees. If policy communication begins and ends with the employee handbook, you may need to step up your tactics.

To start, create a centralized, easy-to-access location all employees can reference for the most up-to-date versions of the company leave policy and annual calendar. Whenever the policy or calendar is updated, those changes should be promptly communicated to employees. In addition to this one-stop spot for leave information, policies should be shared with new hires during onboarding and reiterated to all employees in the lead-up to major holidays and season changes.

Going beyond getting the word out, your organization's management teams must be on the same page regarding leave policy and processes. Not only will this help to cut back on potential mistakes or employee grievances, but leadership may be able to better support you with requests and questions.

Finally, is your organization encouraging employees to take time when needed?

An open dialogue about leave practices, one that reinforces worker's rights and wellness, can improve morale and reduce presenteeism; ultimately, a boost to your company's bottom line.

Seek Assistance in Automation

Any expansion of your HR tech stack will, of course, come with a cost. But even with an annual fee, leave management software can potentially net your organization considerable long-term savings. So, before you ax the idea of a new platform, consider how many hours you and your team will save annually if tracking, requests, and report generation are all automated -- hours you can redirect to other necessary projects and initiatives.

With a bit of math, you can determine just how many payroll hours will be saved by handing leave management tasks over to automation, but there are some less concrete savings to be found, as well. Consider how, with all available hours, requests, and schedules kept and maintained in one central location, the risk of error is reduced. In the end, automation keeps your company more compliant with labor laws and lowers the number of accidental gaps in coverage.

Your options for leave management software are nearly endless, and the number of new programs grows every year. If you're in the market, look beyond price tags. If it doesn't fit your company's unique needs or doesn't align with projected growth, you may end up making your life harder.

Keep a long view in mind. Investing a bit more time now in refining policies and adopting software can help even an HR team with a shoestring budget craft a breezy leave management program that facilitates rather than frustrates. ■





SOLD OUT!

YOU'RE INVITED!

HR Advisory's 2023 Annual Meeting

The largest free annual HR event in New York City.

Join hundreds of HR leaders in New York City for an exclusive, **free** event that's packed with engaging sessions about the most trending topics in HR.

WHEN

Thursday
May 11TH, 2023

WHERE

Convene
1 Liberty Plaza
New York, NY

LEARN MORE



To join the waitlist, visit:
start.hradvisory.com/annual-meeting-23



Speaker Sessions

Speaker sessions and roundtables led by HR leaders at innovative companies.

HRAdvisory.com
bennie.com



Networking & Community

Networking opportunities with hundreds of other HR professionals and insightful conversations around significant HR & workplace topics.



Professional Certifications

SHRM and HRCI accredited.



Browse Bennie's Benefits Marketplace

Our partner programs are designed for technology providers, consultants, insurance carriers, and referral partners who want to connect their networks with our benefits platform. Find the program that works best for you at bennie.com/partners.

Featured Marketplace Partners

kindbody

Kindbody is a new kind of women's health provider. It is an end-to-end provider for women's health, obstetrics, prenatal, fertility, and family-building for all. Using technology to treat the patient from preconception through postpartum, Kindbody has reinvented the member experience - in-person or virtual 24/7.

ginger

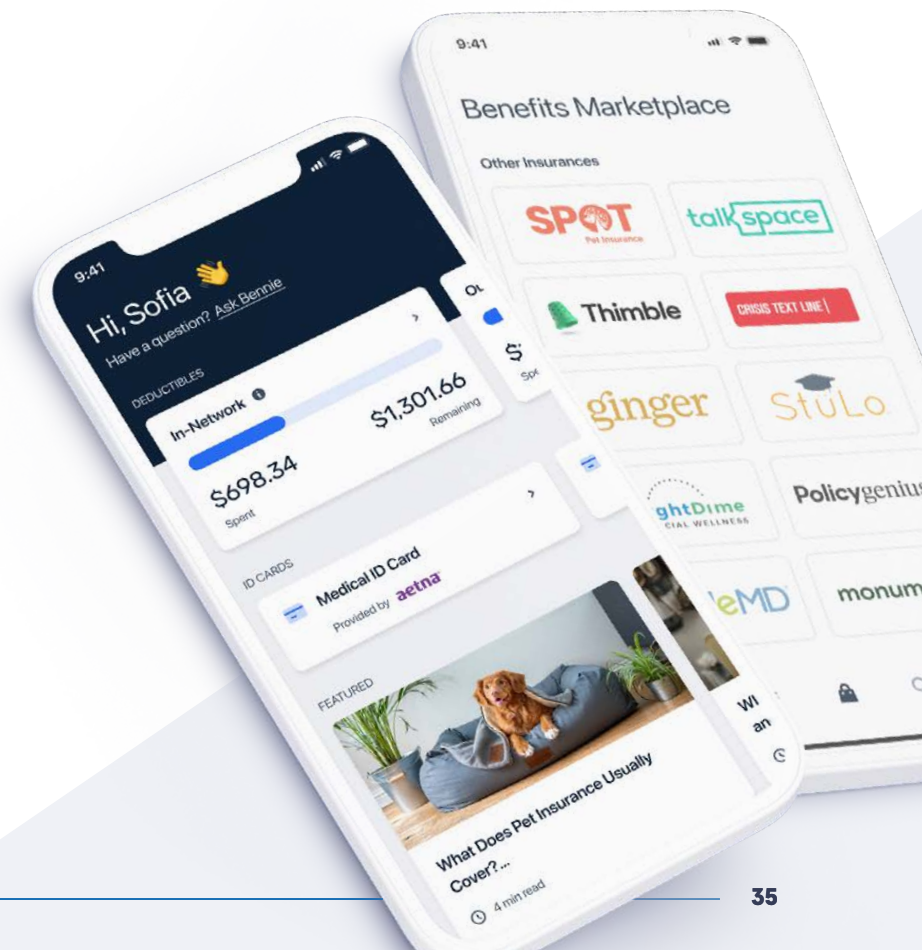
Ginger provides on-demand mental health support for all of life's challenges. Behavioral health coaches can help with anything from stress and depression to issues with work and relationships. Coaches are available 24/7/365 to provide support when needed. Therapy and psychiatry are also available (additional fees apply).

Beyond Med

Beyond Med is a membership program that saves you money and elevates your health and well-being. With the Beyond Med platform, members receive unlimited savings on services, including med spa and dermatology, cosmetic plastic surgery, weight loss and bariatric, fertility, hair restoration, laser hair removal, acupuncture, chiropractic care, physical therapy, surgical vision, hearing, and more. Members receive a reduction of 20% on average and have no limits on how many times the plan can be used. Beyond Med's network of providers are available in NY, FL, AZ, and Northern NJ..

Visit bennie.com/partners or email us at partnerships@bennie.com

Bennie BETTER BENEFITS



Navigating Your HR Career in a Volatile Job Market

By: Kristina Dinabourgski

Whether or not you've been directly impacted by the tech industry's waves of layoffs and reductions in force, now may be the time to step up your career. Yes, inflation is rising, and a looming recession is leaving everything uncertain, but the number of available jobs remains higher than the number of job seekers.

Across all industries, workers are still empowered to seek jobs that better meet their needs. Play it smart, and you can potentially harness the volatile job market to advance your career.

Referrals and Networking Are Overwhelmingly the Best Way To Secure a New Position

It's not what you know, it's who you know – you may be tired of that old phrase by now, but it's stuck around this long for a reason. According to a recent report from Zippia, referral candidates are currently four times more likely to be offered a job than those who reached a position by job board or other web-based application. To break the numbers down a little more, Zippia also estimates that referrals made up only 7% of total job applicants in the U.S. last year but were 30% to 50% of the total hires.

Statistically, your best chance of getting noticed when job hunting is with a direct referral from a friend or colleague, so don't let the opportunity pass if it presents itself – ask for that support. Colleagues can submit your name and resume directly when positions open at their own places of work or suggest you to recruiters or hiring managers in their circles.

An employee referral is a potentially powerful tool in your job search, but it's not the only one available to you. High-quality opportunities can still be found in your network without a direct line to the person making hiring decisions. According to Zippia, 85% of all jobs are filled through networking, and more than 90% of recruiters are using LinkedIn when looking to fill openings at their companies.

Not only will curating a professional social media circle on platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook put more opportunities in front of you in general, but connecting with recruiters and hiring managers in those spaces can greatly improve your chances of getting hired.

Get on Board With Virtual Recruiting

Whether or not you're applying for a remote position, it's a good idea to get comfortable with the common elements of virtual recruiting, like video chat interviews. As a necessity, virtual recruiting practices became much more widespread during the COVID-19 pandemic, but those numbers haven't gone back down since. In fact, roughly 70% of professionals now believe that virtual recruiting will become the standard.

This means a few things:

- If you're not comfortable with them yet, you'll want to familiarize yourself with popular video chat software like Zoom, Skype, and Google Meet. Also, get yourself set up with a decent webcam and microphone. Most modern laptops come well-equipped, but if you're working with an older computer at home, you may need to upgrade your accessories.
- Relatedly, if you haven't done so already, consider setting up a dedicated space in your home where you can sit for interviews. Ideally, this space will be private (and not in the room your cat loves to hang out in), with a blank or professional-looking backdrop and good lighting.
- As mentioned, you'll be taking your networking online. Look into attending virtual job fairs, career-building events, and webinars held by the organizations you'd like to work for.
- In general, your resume should be simple and easy to read, but if you suspect that it may be passing through an applicant tracking system (ATS), there are a few extra steps you should take. Avoid heavy formatting and graphic embellishments – consider looking specifically for ATS-compliant templates. Also, be sure to tailor your resume to the job you're applying to, which includes incorporating keywords from the job listing itself.

Virtual recruiting is here to stay, and that isn't a bad thing. It increases your pool of potential employers, making it more likely that you find a fulfilling job that meets your employment needs.

If You're Searching While Still Employed, Take Care

Common wisdom holds that you should start looking for a job while you're still employed. It takes added stress and risk out of your hunt and gives you a bit more leverage when negotiating for a new position. It's perfectly normal to job hunt while employed, but you should still exercise discretion while doing it.

Keep this advice in mind while you search:

- Unless everyone is aware of impending layoffs, don't tell anyone at work that you're searching or thinking of leaving. Avoid tempting the rumor mill, especially if you have concerns about how your superiors will react. If confronted by a supervisor, though, be honest about your intentions.
- Don't do any job searching or interviewing during work hours, and be aware of how you dress. If you work for a company that has a casual dress code and come in wearing interview attire, it will raise some flags.

- When searching for positions, don't publicly post your resume or announce on social media that you are looking. Your current employer may find it and realize you're searching. Keep your search to direct messages and job board applications.
- When supplying references, provide previous coworkers and supervisors, if possible, not ones you currently work with. Giving a current supervisor as a reference when they don't already know that you're looking to move on from your current position can put you in a bad spot with your company.
- Don't let your current job fall by the wayside. Maintain your current performance. You don't want to burn bridges or damage your professional reputation.

Don't let an unknown future slow you down. With a strong network and careful planning, you'll get through the chaos, not just by moving forward, but climbing up. ■

- 1 Working Through an Unstable Economy. (2023, February 14). SHRM. <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-news/Pages/working-through-an-unstable-economy.aspx>
- 2 Zippia. "25 Incredible Employee Referral Statistics [2023]: Facts About Employee Referrals In The U.S." Zippia.com. Feb. 27, 2023. <https://www.zippia.com/advice/employee-referral-statistics/>
- 3 Zippia. "15+ Incredible Job Search Statistics [2023]: What Job Seekers Need To Know" Zippia.com. Feb. 27, 2023. <https://www.zippia.com/advice/job-search-statistics/>
- 4 Zippia. "23 Recruitment Statistics [2023]: What HR Professionals And Hiring Managers Need To Know" Zippia.com. Feb. 23, 2023. <https://www.zippia.com/advice/recruitment-statistics/>

Do it for you

Aetna® is proud to support HR Advisory powered by Bennie.

Aetna.com



©2023 Aetna Inc.
2020282

Why Company Culture Should Be on Leadership's Radar

By: Giselle Lazo

From brand image to employee engagement, company culture shapes all aspects of business, and it isn't hard to see why. Look at the factors that contribute to culture: values, policies, goals, acceptable attitudes, and behaviors. Naturally, these components together have a tremendous impact on the success of a business, which is why it's important that culture be considered and managed appropriately. Organizational culture doesn't become strong on its own. It needs to be cultivated, and those best equipped to do the cultivating are the people at the top.

To see why company leaders need to be at the helm, we need only take a second look at the elements that contribute to culture.

Company values, goals, processes, and acceptable behaviors are all ultimately established and reinforced by the executive team.

Employees expect leaders to embody company values, not just espouse them. If C-suite employees aren't living the culture they want to see in the company, the rest of their company will not embrace that culture.

When organizational culture works, however, its positive effects are easy to see. Well-aligned policies, goals, and values empower workers to act decisively and think creatively, boosting productivity and job satisfaction. When honesty, trust, and diversity are truly fronted and embraced, employees are happier and more invested in company success. Absenteeism drops, retention improves, and each employee becomes a better brand ambassador. When everyone is engaged and has a clear sense of what's needed and expected of them, even recruiting is smoother and more successful.

Clearly, it's easy to list the many benefits of a strong culture, but when we try to name exactly what makes workplace culture strong, to begin with, things get murky. Each organization is unique, and the practices and values that are right for one business may be catastrophically wrong for another.

Still, we can pinpoint some green flags for good culture:

- A set of actionable values that are embraced from top to bottom. Strong values should go beyond the traditional, integrity, and teamwork and tap into defining what makes your organization truly unique.
- Policy, values, and standards of behavior that embrace and actively promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels.
- A strong sense of community that matches company ethos, boosted by collaboration, company-wide events, and appropriate employee recognition.

- Open lines of communication that encourage timely feedback and an atmosphere of trust in the workplace.
- Honest, respectful managers and processes that empower employees rather than micromanage them.
- A focus on employee wellness and work-life balance that is reflected in policy and benefits.

Successful businesses aren't just aspiring to these qualities, they're embracing and living them. Values are constantly reinforced, feedback and communication sought, and diversity promoted. To achieve a strong culture, visible action must be taken.

With or without direct input from HR, employees, or leadership, organizational culture will develop naturally as people work together. Without a guiding hand, perceived values and accepted employee and managerial behavior will inform that culture. If no action is being taken to build community and embrace diversity, if leadership is failing to embody stated values, you may find your organization mired in the negative repercussions of a toxic culture.

The data shows toxic culture drives employees away and weighs heavily on those who do stay. Consider the major forces pushing employee turnover during the Great Resignation.

Toxic culture -- unethical behavior, disrespectful management, and lack of efforts to improve diversity and inclusion -- was the number one predictor of high employee turnover.

In fact, it was 10.4 times more likely to contribute to voluntary resignations than compensation issues were.¹

High turnover isn't the only concern when a company's culture is weak. Lack of diversity, failure to build community, micromanaging, and a mismatch of values and behavior contribute to a significant lack of trust. Employees may feel disrespected and undervalued by leadership, and leadership may believe employees are entitled. Absenteeism and risk of burnout increase -- engagement and productivity tank.

If you fear that your organization has the makings of a weak or toxic work culture, all is not lost. Culture is mutable. It may not need input or oversight to grow, but that doesn't mean it can't be shifted and built strong with purposeful effort. This is where your executive team comes in. Your organization's best chance at preventing or improving a weak organizational culture is by making sure the ones deciding on values, goals, and focus are invested in seeing those qualities embraced from the top down.

Of course, achieving that crucial leadership buy-in is easier said than done.



Culture is ambiguous, and explaining its impact on business is a bit more complicated than sales metrics. How, then, do you bring the C-suite's attention to the importance of company culture?

Data, it's the strongest tool in your kit.

Your executive team will likely respond best to numbers that outline exactly how cultural change can solve existing issues at the company and improve the bottom line.

Luckily, there's almost no end to the number of modern studies that detail how culture, good or bad, affects companies.

Referencing these can help you to quantify how strong work culture improves retention, productivity, and more abstract concepts like engagement and employee satisfaction.

Point to successful companies in your industry or organizations you or your company's leadership admire. Identify the practices, policies, and unique values that make their culture stand out, and be prepared to relate how similar shifts at your own organization could improve things.

If possible, push those numbers further, and present data specific to your business. Tease out current pain points, things like high turnover, micromanaging practices, or difficulty filling an open role, and identify the steps that could be taken to fix these issues. If you can tie a solution directly to a cultural shift, perfect.

With a bit of persistence and personalized data, you can bring leadership up to speed on the importance of their role in organizational culture. From there, you can move on to building something great. ■

¹ Sull, C., Sull, D., & Zweig, B. (2022, January 11). Toxic culture is driving the great resignation. MIT Sloan Management Review. Retrieved from <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/toxic-culture-is-driving-the-great-resignation/>

Mark Your Calendars!

HR Advisory Benefits Series

2023 Kickoff on May 24!



HR Advisory's 4-week Benefits Series kicks off on May 24th. Each week, our Bennie Benefits Experts will hold 1-hour panel discussions surrounding today's most relevant employee benefits topics.

Bring your questions, and we'll bring the answers!

Scheduled Sessions:

Keep an eye on your inbox for more details on the sessions and how to register.

WEEK 1	Wednesday, May 24, 2023	1:00pm ET	<i>Virtual</i>
WEEK 2	Wednesday, May 31, 2023	1:00pm ET	<i>Virtual</i>
WEEK 3	Wednesday, June 7, 2023	1:00pm ET	<i>Virtual</i>
WEEK 4	Wednesday, June 14, 2023	1:00pm ET	<i>Virtual</i>

Learn More At: [HRAdvisory.com/Events](https://hradvisory.com/events)









Lower Your Employee Benefits Costs

better. health plan

Better Health Plan is a self-funded, cost-effective option for Medical, Dental, and Vision employer-based care.

You can now offer Better Benefits while simplifying how you evaluate, administer, and run your program. Enjoy all the benefits of self-funding with a lower monthly payment than most fully-insured plans.

-  Choose Your Monthly Payment
-  Predictable Cost Through Level-Funding
-  Improved Cash Flow
-  Bennie App Integration
-  Top Rated Employee Support
-  Wellness Tools for Everyone

Employer Benefits

- Keep all of your benefits the same
- Access major national networks
- Lower costs
- Get claims data
- Integrate with Bennie technology

Employee Benefits

- Access your plan information
- View ID cards
- Check account balances
- Healthcare concierge
- Preferred rates on additional benefits & products

Finally, a health plan that finance AND your employees will love.

Visit bennie.com/better to learn more.



Bennie BETTER BENEFITS





Bennie BETTER BENEFITS

HR Advisory is powered by Bennie. HR Advisory is a free, invite-only community that provides HR leaders with access to an expansive network of passionate professionals, insightful events, unique career opportunities, exclusive content, and other valuable resources.

Bennie.com | HRAdvisory.com