GENERAL HR

TACKLING WORKPLACE BULLYING

A recent study reports more than half of employees in global businesses witnessed or experienced workplace bullying. While that's alarming, research focused on the U.S. says closer to 75 percent of employees have been impacted by workplace bullying.

What are some of those impacts? Individuals experiencing bullying report increased stress, depression, lower self-esteem and disengagement. A company culture that allows workplace bullying to go unchecked is a culture that will struggle with overall retention, productivity and worker satisfaction. While the social-emotional and productivity impacts are not to be ignored, studies cited in _Safety and Health Magazine_ also show an increased risk of cardiovascular disease at rates rivaling diabetes and drinking as risk factors.

Given these impacts, it's not surprising workplace bullying is getting significant attention from both researchers and the popular press. While it would be easy to assume, then, that solutions are being proactively developed, that's not always the case. Several factors impact HR and other company leadership's ability to aggressively tackle this hot topic.

One challenge is that workplace bullying can be seen as harmless, unintentional, or a matter of subjective interpretation. To counter that, the Workplace Bullying Institute says to look for deliberate behavior or language that is repeated, harmful, intimidating, insulting, humiliating or sabotages the target according to an article in _Entrepreneur_. When looking, it's also important to look up and down the corporate ladder. This kind of workplace problem can come from a coworker or a misuse of power by a manager or leader.

According to an article in _The HR Director_, while more than 9 in 10 businesses want to make feeling safe a hallmark of employee wellbeing, only 1 in 10 is doing something about it. One reason so few are taking action is due to a disconnect about who should take the lead. Senior management skews toward expecting HR to take the lead, but most employees think management should be leading. A first critical step, then, is determining if employee psychological safety is a priority and then empowering a department or team to do something.

Once your team is ready, here are five steps to take.

ESTABLISH policies against bullying and to address allegations if you don't already have them. If you do have policies, take meaningful time to assess and improve them. Consider your social media policies as well. Not all workplace bullying happens at a physical place of work. Much happens online.

EDUCATE employees on new or existing policies. Employees who know there are clear systems in place are more satisfied and more likely to get help. Consider onboarding education for new employees and how you can let them know you're a company with a plan in place. Formal training that addresses bullying and how to intercede as a bystander can put everyone on the same team.

Empower employees to report bullying. Many people who experience workplace bullying are unsure if they should report it, worried they'll get in trouble if they do report it, and aren't comfortable reporting it because they're being bullied by a supervisor or manager.

Explore how your workplace works for gig economy freelancers and contractors. It's important to decide how your HR department will acknowledge and deal with their bullying concerns. Are they less likely to report something you should know about because they have less job security or don't feel protected by policies?

Exemplify the type of behavior you wish to see, says _Forbes_. Workplace civility and culture start at the top, and managers set expectations. Take claims seriously, behave in respectful, authentic ways, and you're on your way to a better experience for your employees.

Read more:
Workplace bullying is not going away
Here Is Why We Need to Talk About Bullying in the Work Place
Five Ways to Shut Down Workplace Bullying
Study shows workplace bullying rivals diabetes, drinking as heart disease risk factor
Effectively Addressing A Workplace Bully

PRODUCTIVITY

In Pursuit of a Better Meeting

Groans and sighs often greet the ping of a meeting invite hitting an inbox. While it may be impossible to make meetings more fun than the office holiday party, it is possible to lessen the dread, increase morale, and improve the results of a meeting.

Complaints about meetings are often justified, including wasted time, the same voices dominating the conversation time after time, and no follow up or action plan after the meeting. Another issue, according to the _Harvard Business Review,_ is that managers often rank the effectiveness of their own meetings much higher than attendees do, 90 percent of whom report daydreaming and nearly three-quarters of whom use the time to do other work.

Despite the challenges, meetings do have benefits beyond getting the to-dos done! They can bring people together for a change of pace, improve communication overall, and create a more cohesive team.

Want to empower your leadership and avoid being one of the almost 8 in 10 who think their meetings are going great when attendees beg to differ? Here are some things to consider.

Before
Be sure to set attendance, an agenda, and the tone for your meeting. Consider who is essential and get the meeting on their calendar but spare other people. If you want many opinions, open it up to more people after that. A leaner meeting may be more productive and allow critical voices and ideas to have the time and space to collaborate and percolate.

Sending out an agenda ahead of time not only shows you're prepared, it helps everyone prepare. Prime the problem-solving pump by putting the topics up for discussion into everyone's minds ahead of time. Plus, once the meeting is started, an agenda helps keep

things on track. In an article on the power of a well-run meeting, the *New York Times* calls a great agenda a compass for the conversation, helping guide a drifting discussion back on course.

If you are calling the meeting, be sure to make the agenda yourself and take the time to plan for a successful gathering. Don't delegate crafting an agenda but, maybe, says *The Balance Careers*, ask for input. A call for ideas or dedicated time to brainstorm helps set a positive, inclusive tone for the meeting. Culture starts from the top, so show you value both the time you'll spend together and everyone's potential contributions.

DURING

Meetings that are a routine part of the schedule can become too routine. Ask everyone to pick a different seat, bring in an outside expert or unexpected snack to mix things up. Try a brainstorming activity, an ice breaker, or a walking meeting outside instead of the conference room. There's no need to get gimmicky, but a little variety can go a long way.

Consider the pacing of your meeting and always allow for silence. Introverts or team members who prefer to fully process an idea before sharing will be more likely to contribute if some thinking time is offered before diving into the sharing. Remember that agenda? Don't cram it so full that it removes any time for serendipity. And if no lightning strikes, the team will enjoy a meeting that ends early instead of runs late.

As the leader of a meeting, once you've shared the agenda, then it's time to share the air. If you lead with your ideas, they may be the ones that win even if better ones exist. Rather than dominate the discussion, set some ground rules and let others talk. Facilitation is an art form the best leaders work to master.

AFTER

Follow up with a recap and next steps once the meeting has wrapped. Employees will be understandably frustrated if they feel like their time or ideas met a dead end. Knowing their contributions were valuable and that there is an action plan helps employees invest in the next meeting.

Meeting leaders shouldn't fear feedback. Sending an anonymous survey, asking for suggestions, and keeping an open mind about ways to improve can help your leadership and your team's attitude toward meetings.

A regular audit of your meetings and meeting schedule is a smart tip. How much do you talk versus other team members? Were attendees focused? What meetings really need to stay in 2019? What can you cancel and bring back if needed? Trimming the schedule can be a great start, but experts caution against assuming no meetings is the way to go.

Additionally, one coach recommends via an article in *Forbes* that one meeting always stay on the schedule, especially for new managers. A weekly one-on-one with direct reports is an essential way to hear what they need to succeed and take some time to plan. Face time is important for employees, certainly, but it's also a chance for meeting leaders to solicit genuine feedback about meetings. That's one way to make meetings come full circle!

Read more:
How to Run a More Effective Meeting
How to Lead Effective Team Meetings
Ten Things New Managers Need to Know

HIRING

WHO'S GHOSTING WHO?

Ghosting is a term coined by millennials to describe someone who disappears or is unresponsive without explanation. It may be in the online dating world or even after meeting IRL (that's *in real life*). Or, it may be leaving a party without letting anyone know. And now, it's popping up in the world of hiring and recruitment. It's even made the Federal Reserve's Beige Book, a national overview of economic trends, according to *Quartz at Work*.

The tight labor market — including consecutive months of more job openings than job seekers — has made it easier for potential hires to feel like there are plenty of options. This makes it more common for employers to see people disappearing during the interview process, agreeing to an offer but never showing up for the first day, or quitting without giving notice.

Many candidates and employees report that it's more reasonable for an individual to ghost a company than vice versa according to an article in *HR Executive*. From overly vague job listings or sloppy hiring practices, there are ample reasons a potential or new hire may feel ignored, misled, or disappointed.

In some ways, this is an example of the old adage about what goes around coming around. *Digiday* explores ghosting in marketing recruitment, noting the particular talent crunch in the creative industry. There, as elsewhere in a tighter labor market, never hearing back during the interview process was a common complaint of job candidates.

Employees who engage in ghosting should be mindful that it may come back to haunt them. Recruiters in an industry talk and share knowledge, and a repeat ghoster can get a reputation for being not worth the interview time or most certainly the job offer. Should the job market tighten up, having a legacy of ghosting may cost someone a much-needed job.
In the meantime, recruiters and people in charge of the hiring process have a great opportunity to reflect on their hiring process. *CNBC* explores what potential employees can do if they fear they're being ghosted, which more than half of all candidates report experiencing during their job hunt. Candidates report stress from the ambiguity but also from not knowing a smart next step.

Improving the candidate hiring experience can be a critical way to set a company apart in the tight labor market. Johnson and Johnson, for example, is just one company working to improve transparency about the process, putting systems into place that allow a candidate to track their process online. If your hiring software allows for alerts to candidates not getting an interview or moving forward, select that option. Ensure any calendars are kept updated or postings removed when a job is filled. For businesses not ready for large-scale investment, they can simply make a better effort to follow up, inform candidates when a decision has been made, or reply to inquiries.

Ghosting may be a sign of the times. The jury is out as to whether that sign is about an overall decrease in civility, a signal of just how tight the labor market is, or some

combination of the two. Beyond being frustrating, it leads to time and resources wasted for human resources.

To lessen the chances of getting ghosted, experts recommend emphasizing company culture and being more transparent during the interview process, keeping in touch and following up when hiring, and ensuring employees feel like they belong once they are hired.

Read more:
[Americans are enjoying the irony of employers being "ghosted"](#)
[Marketing has a 'ghosting' problem](#)
[You apply for a job. you hear nothing. here's what to do next](#)
[This Scary Trend Continues to Haunt Companies](#)

IN BRIEF

SHARPEN THOSE SOFT SKILLS

Knowing how to code or being well versed in Artificial Reality is one way for a recruit or employee to set themselves apart. In many companies, though, it's soft skills like time management, public speaking and oral communication, leadership, and even emotional intelligence that are desperately needed, according to the [LinkedIn 2018 Emerging Jobs Report](#).

Emotional intelligence is being able to read and express emotions in appropriate ways or manage or recognize other people's responses. While emotional intelligence (EI) may seem like something people are born with, it is in fact something that can be developed, says [HR Drive](#). And it's certainly something companies want since a refined collective EI across a team means better communication, relationships, conflict resolution, and outcomes.

Creating a learning culture at the workplace is one way to help professionals develop and improve EI, as well as increase innovation and generate results. For high-performing organizations, learning culture is one that embraces a growth mindset, [Capital H](#) reports, over demanding grit if something isn't working. Keeping a learning culture front and center not only helps improve engagement, it can be good for business.

For HR teams, there are ways to help improve everyone's soft skills. A company book club on relevant reads, sharing TedTalks or podcasts, having lunch and learns, and selecting speakers or professional development opportunities focused on soft skills are all chances to drive engagement, communication, connection, and more.

Individuals with better emotional intelligence are also more likely to be able to have good learnability, which means they're able to tackle those much-needed tech skills more readily, too!

Read more:
[LinkedIn 2018 Emerging Jobs Report](#)
[Can you train for emotional intelligence?](#)
[What gets in the way of a learning culture?](#)