

MORE THAN JUST A PAYCHECK:

Creating a Workplace that Attracts and Retains Employees



Regional Collaborative
LEARNING COMMUNITY

The work environment and the organization of work has been changing rapidly ([Tamers et al. 2020](#)). The recent labor shortage and its impact on worker well-being is one of the biggest issues facing employers. During the past several years, many workers shifted to working remotely, some left the workforce (often due to caregiving responsibilities, burnout, and/or retirements), and others remained in a work environment that was drastically changed. This led to a reduced workforce and additional challenges with hiring. The worker shortage has a direct impact on safety due to understaffing and overwork of current employees, lack of experience among new employees, and the need to quickly onboard workers. There has also been a shift in priorities among workers, who value more balance between work and personal life, flexibility of when and where work can be done, and a sense of social responsibility from their employers. There is a need for programs, policies, practices to more effectively impact communication, support, and workplaces to address these challenges.



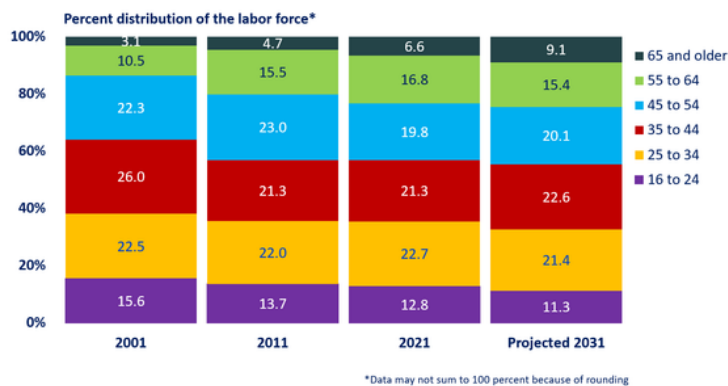
Work Impacts Health & Well-Being

The connection between work and health is well established; however, reports of chronic stress and burnout among workers is increasing (Ray et al. 2017, American Psychological Association 2019). These can be compounded by long work hours and demanding schedules, lack of supervisor or co-worker support, low wages and limited or no benefits, and harassment or discrimination (Hammer and Brady 2021, Hammer et al. 2021; World Health Organization 2020). Organizational changes are needed to address these issues.

The Impact of the Shrinking Labor Force on Health & Safety

Increased job growth and baby boomers exiting the workforce have led to labor shortages. Moreover, others left the workforce for personal reasons, caregiving needs, burnout, or jobs offering more pay and/or flexibility (e.g., the “great resignation”). In many workplaces this has led to increased job demands due to understaffing, high turnover, and an increased number of new and inexperienced workers which has impacted health and increased risk for injury.

Labor Force Share, by Age Group, 2001, 2011, 2021, and Projected 2031



<https://www.bls.gov/emp/graphics/labor-force-share-by-age-group.htm>

Employees Want Different Work Arrangements

Alternative work arrangements have increased substantially (Bartik et al. 2020). Employers recognize that remote or hybrid work arrangements can satisfy workers’ desires for work-life balance, greater autonomy in when and where they work, and can attract and retain workers (McFall 2021). However, even within a workplace, some roles can support remote work while others cannot. This can lead to tensions in the workplace. Additionally, there can be a blurring of boundaries between work and home.

The Unique Needs Of Workers Need to be Addressed

Workers needs vary and can impact work-life balance and subsequently well-being (e.g., caregiving responsibilities, aging, need for an adapted work environment). Failing to implement workplace policies and practices to address these needs can create a non-inclusive environment leading to stress and burnout, and ultimately turnover. Equitably addressing all the needs of these various groups can create additional challenges for employers.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING COMMUNITY

The Healthier Workforce Center of the Midwest (HWC) hosted a live virtual meeting in August 2022 for employers struggling with recruitment and retention. Coined a Collaborative Learning Community (CLC), the CLC was designed to bring together employers, researchers, and practitioners throughout our region to share innovative ideas and best practices on how to create a workplace that attracts and retains employees. The webinar was recorded and is available to those who were not able to attend.

Aug 23, 2022

More Than Just a Paycheck: Creating a Workplace that Attracts and Retains Employees

Having trouble with recruitment and retention? Join us for an online, interactive learning community. We're bringing together business leaders, community members, and experts like you to share innovative ideas and best practices on how to create a workplace that attracts and retains employees. We will describe how work culture, policies, and practices influence health and well-being and impacts recruitment and retention. Join the Collaborative Learning Community to share your experiences.



2:30-4:30 PM CST



Regional Collaborative
LEARNING COMMUNITY

GOALS:

- Describe how work influences health and well-being and impacts recruitment and retention
- Understand factors that impact recruitment and retention including workplace health and safety
- Identify ways to create a workplace that improves recruitment and retention
- Organize best practices into the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Worker Well-Being framework.

Worker Well-Being Framework

The Worker Well-Being framework* integrates worker health, safety, and well-being across five domains, including quality of life during work and non-work hours and mental and physical health. These domains are described in detail in the following sections.



*Chari R, Chang CC, Sauter SL, Petrun Sayers EL, Cerully JL, Schulte P, Schill AL, Uscher-Pines L. Expanding the Paradigm of Occupational Safety and Health: A New Framework for Worker Well-Being. *J Occup Environ Med*. 2018 Jul;60(7):589-593. doi: 10.1097/JOM.0000000000001330. PMID: 29608542; PMCID: PMC6553458.

Workplace Policies and Procedures

Organizational policies and culture directly impact worker well-being. Policies that address work balance and quality of life can support employees both on and off the job. Flexible work arrangements, for example, how, when, or where work can be done can allow for caregiving responsibilities, a shift to less demanding work (e.g., nurses working in ED rotating between departments) and reduced commute times and expenses. A key component of this domain is providing employees with benefits (e.g., health insurance addressing both physical and mental health, employee assistance programs).

Workplace Physical Environment and Safety Climate

Worker well-being is directly impacted by the physical work environment. This domain focuses on a hazard free work environment and includes not only physical hazards (e.g., noise, unguarded machinery, heights, lifting and awkward postures) but also psychosocial hazards (e.g., interpersonal conflict, bullying/harassment, and incivility). Eliminating these hazards is the most effective way to protect the health and safety of workers and to promote well-being.

Work Evaluation and Experience

The work evaluation and experience domain encompasses overall job satisfaction, which is impacted by support at work, the level of engagement with the work being done, and the type and amount of work assigned (e.g., too much work may lead to fatigue and burnout). Workers who have high levels of support from coworkers and supervisors are more likely to report they are assigned a fair amount of work, to have a sense of purpose, and are more likely to stay.

Health Status

It is well known that workplace factors can directly impact health. High demands and low control are associated not only with increased risk of injuries, but also chronic health conditions, pain, depression, and substance use disorders (Burton 2008). High job demands can also impact health behaviors such as hours and quality of sleep, physical activity, and diet.

Home, Community, and Society

Life outside of work does not stop when a work shift begins. The home, community, and society domain captures intangible factors such as life satisfaction and social relationships, as well as tangible factors such as financial insecurity and activities outside of work (e.g., caregiving demands). Acknowledging workers lives outside of work and allowing flexibility and/or support when possible (e.g., hybrid work environment, flexible scheduling), can impact employee recruitment and retention and lead to vibrant communities.



Best Practices to Improve Recruitment and Retention

Organized by the Worker Well-Being Framework

Workplace Policies & Culture

- Support professional development opportunities among your employees. In the future, this may allow you to promote from within.
- Consider incentives that reduce strain for new employees, especially those who have been out of or new to the workforce. For example, one organization provided a \$200 gas stipend for new employees. Another group paid for job certification if the employee stayed a certain amount of time.
- Support work-life balance. When possible, provide flexible work arrangements and allow employees some control over when and where they work.
- Model the behaviors you want to see in employees. This can range from modeling safe behaviors to work-life balance by using and encouraging the use of paid time off (PTO).
- Build trust and respect with your employees by being relationally-focused instead of task-focused.
- Provide education and training, both at hire and at regular intervals. This will ensure that your workers have the skills and knowledge to perform their job.
- Ensure HR and safety policies are clearly stated and consistently implemented. Transparency is important.



Work Evaluation & Experience

- Develop an onboarding program, including a “go-to person” or “buddy” to field questions from new hires.
- Provide mentoring throughout employment. Have a clear career path and support professional development.
- Show empathy. For example, one organization has “seek to find” conversations (e.g., instead of consequences for arriving late, supervisors will assist in finding a cause and solution).
- Instead of exit interviews, conduct “stay interviews” to check in with employees before they think about leaving. Stay interviews help managers plan and find ways to make staff feel like they are valued in the workplace. Stay interviews have nothing to do with performance evaluation, instead they are about asking workers how they feel in the workplace and how they feel about their work.
- Find ways to build connections at work. One organization held sessions where staff were given an opportunity to talk about the personal and professional challenges they have experienced.
- Provide leadership training for management so they are prepared to address employee concerns and support them when they are dealing with challenging issues.
- Match an employee’s tasks/job with their skill set or provide training.
- Recognize employee achievements.



"Individuals want to be involved in decision making around their job."

"Recruit leaders from within an organization. Have a lot of opportunity for growth – so seeing coworkers transition into higher positions has influenced people to stay and try and move up the ladder."

"Consistent messaging from the top down has proven successful. The relationship between employees and their direct supervisor is critical."

Home, Community, & Society

"Burnout is a longstanding issue especially with teachers...daycare for children and other factors impacting being able to stay in the workforce."

"Work-life balance is still a pain point, especially...for non-admin/office personnel."

- Recognize employees' competing demands from work and non-work activities.
- Show empathy. If employees know you care, they will be more likely to come to you when they have a problem.
- Role model work-life balance.
- When possible, provide solutions to help your employees manage work and life. Implement programs and policies that promote family friendly workplaces. This could include non-standard work arrangements that allow them some control over when and where they work.
- Consider creating committees to plan events or opportunities to bring people together and help foster community.
- Create opportunities to work with local communities to promote socially responsible practices and programs (e.g., provide paid opportunities to volunteer, develop partnerships with local non-profits, donate supplies to community groups).



Workplace Physical Environment

- Eliminate all types of workplace hazards including harassment, bullying, and violence.
- Model safe behaviors. Employees will do what they see you do.
- Support remote and hybrid workers by providing the right technology.
- Create a well-equipped, comfortable, and agreeable work environment that encourages collaboration. Consider layout and design, temperature, noise, and green space.

Safety Climate

- Empower your employees by encouraging them to speak up if they see or experience something unsafe.
- Have a clear reporting system and no repercussions for reporting hazards.
- Consider short, frequent safety training to make it more digestible.
- Utilize lunch-and-learn, toolbox talks, newsletters, and paycheck inserts as opportunities to address concerns and to encourage behaviors that prevent injury and promote health and well-being.



Health Status

- Provide benefits and resources for employees to address physical and mental well-being. This may include benefits such as employee assistance programs, extended sick days, and flexible work arrangements.
- Job accommodations can ensure people remain in the workplace. Create an environment that supports all employees and eliminates barriers in their return to work.
- Burnout and fatigue are rampant in industries such as healthcare, education, and caregiving. Start by setting realistic expectations and offer support by asking employees how you can help them do their job better.



Utilize the workplace to support health promotion and disease prevention. Examples include health insurance coverage for prevention, policies that promote healthy behaviors (e.g., tobacco-free campus), eliminating both physical and psychosocial threats in the workplace, and implementing program that support physical activity, access to healthy food, and health education.

-<https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/model/index.html>

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- Fatigue
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- Assessing Worker Well-Being
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- Burnout
- Non-Standard Work
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- De-Escalation Approaches for a More Harmonious Workplace
- Hazard Mapping
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- The Multi-Generational Workforce
- Managing Remote Workers Webinar
- An Introduction to Emergency Preparedness
- Inclusive Design



You can find more resources for employers at
www.healthierworkforcecenter.org