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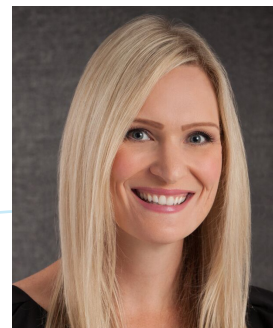
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Workplace Mental Health

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- Re-Entry Anxiety
- Mental Health Framework
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Managing the Health of Your HR Team: The Power of Recognition

Overtasked with managing the realities of COVID-19 within the organization, your human resource (HR) team has waded through layoffs, medical risks, and ever-changing local, state, and federal rules and regulations. Their ever-mounting stress has no real end in sight.

HR leaders simply have not had the time to remember that one of the most powerful retention tools, engagement drivers, and all-around feel-good potions is recognition. Experts agree that recognition doesn't work when it's just about paying people more.¹ The power of recognition happens when employers provide more autonomy, reward with professional development opportunities, and publicly recognize individuals.

Allow Autonomy When Deserved

During the last year, your team members have stepped up to master complex, important tasks to help your company navigate the pandemic. You didn't have time to micromanage, and, thankfully, they didn't need it. Circumstances forced many employers to grant greater autonomy to workers during the pandemic. Think twice before reeling that in. If someone has shone as a self-starter and motivator, let them continue. Meet with your supervisory staff, identify your new superstars, and ensure that management does not

remove the opportunities they have earned.

Reward with Professional Development

For the last year, professional development has been sidelined for the sake of crisis management. As the world begins to reopen and conferences and trainings reemerge, acknowledge your HR team by sending them to key seminars and trainings or to represent your company at a trade show or conference. Make sure they know these rewards are a recognition of them and how they served the company during the pandemic.

This creates an opportunity for employees to feel appreciated and reconnected, and it allows you to restart the skill building you need for your team to thrive. Don't underestimate the power of going to an overnight conference, attending a professional seminar by a known speaker, or representing the organization at your trade show booth. These engagements have been shown to be more powerful than a financial bonus or raise over time.

Recognize Your Talent Publicly

Who were the heroes in your HR team, and how do you publicly acknowledge that their sacrifices made a difference for the entire organization? Don't let starting a "perfect" recognition program stop you from doing what is

needed now. Voice your appreciation of your team, highlight individuals, and share their successes.

Often HR leaders don't understand the power of recognition. Perhaps they themselves don't need it — and assume others don't either — or they are not comfortable saying the words of appreciation. My advice: get over this. Your people need to hear from "the boss" that they rocked it! Most likely, they are hungry for someone to celebrate their successes. They sacrificed during this time. They weren't at home making artisanal bread or finding a new hobby. They were working and managing the stressors of the HR profession during a pandemic, and they need you to recognize that contribution and announce it out loud.

As we move forward from the pandemic, we must focus on our HR team, its ongoing health, and the overall health of the organization. Maintain and enhance employee engagement, productivity, and the passion of your HR team with targeted efforts to recognize them — including reinvesting in their continued development. Replenish what the pandemic depleted, and you may find new HR superheroes along the way.

References

1. Grant A, J Singh. The Problem of Financial Incentives — and What to Do About It. *Knowledge@Wharton*. March 30, 2011. Retrieved from <https://wharton/3c3yf6l>