



PT WORK Force®

2021 PT WORK Force Blog Posts

Giving Feedback in a Virtual Environment

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Providing feedback does not come naturally for many. Even more challenging can be giving feedback during a pandemic which has forced us to transition to a more virtual world. Yet feedback remains critical to fostering new behaviors, extinguishing others, and providing guidance that will ultimately result in the success of individuals and teams regardless of context. Setting aside organizational titles, we share a general desire to see our co-workers achieve great things and develop themselves in the process. Feedback is a key component in this formula for success. Yes, positive feedback and that proverbial pat on the back always feels good whether you are giving or receiving. Conversely, constructive feedback, which may be uncomfortable at times, is necessary to realign expectations, to make course corrections, and to increase the probability of success.

It is often proposed that feedback should be kind, necessary, and true. If any of these qualifiers are absent, then one should think twice about engaging in a feedback conversation. Additionally, *Thank You for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well* (Stone and Hen, 2014) places feedback into three categories: evaluation, coaching, and appreciation. Certainly, there are numerous additional theories, resources, and best practices with respect to providing and receiving feedback. Nevertheless, one common thread is the importance of the environment or context within which the feedback conversation occurs. Even the more traditional face-to-face feedback session must be planned and choreographed to ensure a successful understanding between sender and receiver. Undoubtedly, introducing the virtual context to the feedback session creates additional challenges. The planning process leading up to the virtual conversation is of utmost importance. Research informs that

over 70% of communication is in the form of non-verbal messages. These non-verbals are much easier to recognize and react to in a face-to-face conversation. Unfortunately, a computer screen will certainly limit one's ability to fully engage in the feedback experience. Body language, for example, will not be as visible. Therefore, one needs to recognize the challenges associated with providing and receiving feedback in the virtual world in which we find ourselves.

Regardless of the context, the feedback experience should be well-planned. Take the time to reflect on the type of feedback that is going to be shared. Always be clear in your intention. Certainly, we can all think back to an experience where the feedback was not well-intended, planned, or delivered in a manner that made it easy to absorb. When providing feedback, it is imperative that we create an environment of psychological safety—one that permits risk-taking and facilitates honest conversation without retribution. Within this safe context, the feedback will be well-received and acted upon.

Many times, the purpose for providing feedback is to encourage conversations that can lead to starting, stopping, or continuing certain behaviors. Feedback can, however, disengage the receiver if not presented in a thoughtful way. Feedback in a virtual space can pose an even greater challenge, as we cannot necessarily sense the receiver's reaction. As mentioned, body language and non-verbal cues can be filtered by the electronic, virtual model. Knowing the receiver then is more important than ever because of these challenges. Creating a nurturing, on-going relationship with those whom one provides feedback is imperative. Taking the necessary time to discuss personal challenges surrounding the pandemic, for example, is strongly recommended. Holiday celebrations, family events, personal and professional accomplishments, are all topics that can build relational trust and facilitate for a more productive feedback conversation whether face-to-face or virtually.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), in the article, "Don't Confuse Feedback with a Performance Appraisal" (Lee, 2020), proposes that feedback is most effective when it is verbal, immediate, informational, and neutral. Accordingly, on-going and timely feedback is a model that has corrected undesirable behaviors and resulted in improved performance. Ultimately, a regular cadence of feedback eliminates misalignment of expectations, uncovers the potential need for additional resources, and creates a culture of continuous improvement.

Our current environment which includes, amongst other things, a global pandemic, political uncertainty, and social injustices, has created concern, worry, and anxiety in all of us. As a result, it is important to recognize that employees are navigating through difficult and stressful times. Many are dealing with issues including childcare and remote learning models, elderly parents adversely affected by the pandemic, isolation, establishment of home offices, back-to-back virtual meetings, and so on. These present-day challenges can certainly have an impact on employee performance. Inquiry versus advocacy might be a strategy to remedy these issues. Asking questions versus

pushing an agenda will facilitate open conversation and hopefully allow these challenges to surface and be addressed. Additionally, these authentic discussions will create the connection between sender and receiver leading to more productive feedback experiences. Transparency and collaboration are encouraged to ease the concerns and worries that are ever-present in today's climate.

Finally, it is important that we address some of the mechanical aspects of a virtual feedback session. Establish ground rules well in advance which may include the expectation that both cameras will be on, for example. Ensure that the virtual meeting audio is clear and conducive to a productive conversation. Check in with your employee. In other words, initiate the session with a more casual discussion of what your employee is experiencing at that moment. Encourage him or her to share any mind chatter that might be a distraction. Especially when providing constructive feedback, ask if your employee needs a few minutes for a break in the action. Before concluding, allow ample time for your employee to share his or her thoughts on the feedback. Be clear with any follow-up action items—both in the feedback session and in a follow-up communication in the form of an email, for example. Always conclude by expressing thanks that your employee made the feedback session a priority by attending, listening, and engaging.

The global transition to a virtual communication model has changed many aspects of life including the way we provide and receive feedback. What hasn't changed though, is our desire to see individuals and teams succeed, develop, and flourish. Feedback is a key ingredient to this success model. Have you provided feedback in this virtual format? As we can all learn from one another, please share your experience in the comment section below.

Turning New Year Plans into New Year Successes

Posted On January 14, 2021

Many of us create New Year's resolutions for ourselves and our businesses. Everything seems to go great until about 2 to 3 weeks into the new year, when other things get in the way. We wonder, "What was I thinking of?"

Most New Year resolutions fail because we don't take time to include all the steps that go into making a resolution successful. Let's take a business goal of "Increase sales by 4% over 2020." Sounds good but you need a plan as to HOW you intend to do this.

If you want to be successful at achieving these goals, here are some steps that might help you get there:

- Involve your employees in setting the goals they'll be asked to help achieve.

- Define specifically what the goal is so everyone is on the same page when it comes to defining success. In our example on increasing sales, does everyone agree that this means ALL sales? Or is it specific to a product category?
- Is your team more comfortable with a shorter-term goal? For example, they might be more motivated by increasing sales 1% per quarter vs. 4% per year.
- What incentives can you offer for achieving the goal? Incentives should be offered to all employees, not just the sales team. After all, it takes everyone in the company to support your customers.
- Ask for feedback before, during and after you plan your goals. If you want the buy-in needed to focus on a goal, you need to ask right up front for their input.
- Make sure you share results regularly with your employees. If they don't know how the company is progressing toward the goal, they lose sight of it which decreases your chances of reaching your goal.

How do you make sure you are on track to achieve your personal and business resolutions? Share your steps with your fellow power transmission/motion control members by including them in the comment section.

Good Mental Health Benefits the Employee and Company

Posted On January 19, 2021

Many of us have experienced anxiety, depression or stress at some time during this abnormal set of circumstances tied to the coronavirus pandemic. Those who are younger are most affected. A recent study published in the [Harvard Business Review](#) showed that 50% of millennials and almost 75% of Gen Zer's have left jobs for mental health reasons compared to an overall response rate of one-third to this question.

Power transmission/motion control employers looking to add these younger workers to their organizations need to demonstrate support and shun the stigma surrounding mental health.

Not only can supporting workers' mental health lead to healthier employees, it can add to healthier companies. According to a recent [WHO-led workplace study](#), for every \$1 put into treatment for common mental disorders, there is a return of \$4 in improved health and productivity.

Consider taking the following steps to support your employee's mental health:

- Train your managers to recognize mental health warning signs. Encourage managers to work with human resources to find a way to assist the employee in seeking help from a qualified professional.
- Find a qualified mental health professional who can offer clinical screenings and, when appropriate, provide direct feedback and referrals. Pick up the cost for such a program.
- Take a look at your current health insurance plan and see how you can include mental health treatment. Offering such a benefit will be a major perk.
- Provide literature and programs on subjects such as mindfulness and mind-body exercises, like yoga or tai chi. If your employees are in the office, provide a “quiet zone” where they can go and chill without being disturbed.

Having employees return to the workplace probably won't happen in the first half of 2021, and it has been shown working from home has already taken a toll on the mental health of workers. Having programs in place to assist employees is a win-win.

What is your company doing to combat mental health issues such as anxiety and depression? Share your story in the comment section below.

Take Care of Your Mental Self

Posted On February 3, 2021

Stress, anxiety and depression tend to affect people more in the winter months. It makes sense that January is National Mental Health Awareness Month, but February and March can also bring the blues. The short days and lack of outdoor activity play a role in our mental health in the winter, and this year, the pandemic and the areas of life it has touched can intensify those feelings.

A recent [PTWORKForce blog post](#) offered ideas for you, as an employer, to assist your employees who may be struggling. But we also need to take care of our own mental health. Here are a few ways to improve your own mental health:

- Accept that it is alright to feel the way you do. Practice patience and kindness with yourself, accepting that your emotions are valid.
- Acknowledge we are not going to get back to our past “normal.” We will develop a new normal and we will adapt.
- Adapt your new routine to mimic what you had when you were going in the office. Get up at a regular time, get dressed, grab breakfast – whatever you did before, do it now.

Or create a new routine that incorporates what you enjoy about working from home or working different hours than pre-pandemic. Get moving—even if it's only around the kitchen table. Sitting all day isn't good for your body or your mind.

Having activity and routine in your life are essential. The upheaval and the unknown adds to our stress and anxiety. The more you can incorporate your new “normal” into a schedule and a routine, the more comfortable you’ll feel with it and the less stress you’ll feel.

Now is the time to take extra care of ourselves. Accept that things are different and do whatever you can to stay active in daily life. Practice self-care—only you can know what’s best for you.

What are you doing to lose the blues? Share your recommendations by using the comment section below. We can learn from each other and become resilient.

Virtual Interview Tips

Posted On February 9, 2021

Virtual interviewing is not the same as having your potential employee sitting in front of you and looking them in the eye while they respond to your questions. Now that remote work is a reality and the location of employees no longer a factor, more and more interviews will be done virtually.

When you are conducting a remote interview, look for these skills throughout the entire interview process.

- How does the person look “on screen?” Do they look professional? Are they articulate? Is the background professional looking? Although many people working remotely do not have an “office,” your interviewee can find a neutral spot without clutter to make a positive impression.
- Ask questions about the candidate’s technical ability. Can they solve minor computer issues on their own? What meeting/messaging platforms are they comfortable using – Zoom, Teams, Go-to-Meeting, Slack, etc.? Have they used collaboration software? Proficiency with technology is a requirement for remote work, not a “nice to have.”
- How well does your candidate work on his or her own? Consider asking questions about their motivators and work ethic. You could also consider using a skills assessment test before scheduling an interview. To find companies that offer these, just google “pre-employment skills tests.”
- Skills like time management, flexibility, communication and collaboration that were important when employees came in the office are still important in a remote work environment. Ask the questions you would usually ask to assess these skills.

- Update the position descriptions to include the skills needed for remote work, noting experience needed in online messaging and file sharing tools. Consider including “remote work experience required.”

What tactics do you use to interview for remote working positions? Share your thoughts on what skills those working remotely need to have in the comment section below.

Time Management Skills Make Better Employees

Posted On February 17, 2021

It is so gratifying to be able to check things off your to-do list! Not only do you get the satisfaction of having completed a task, but it’s also a visible indication of your productivity. Despite how you may feel from day-to-day, you really are getting things done.

February is “Time Management” month. Time management boils down to coordinating tasks and activities to get more and better work done in less time. How often do you hear (or even say yourself), “I need more time.”

For some, working remotely *has* added more hours to the workday. With no commuting and no travelling to visit customers, you find yourself spending more time in front of the screen. Time management—prioritizing and scheduling work so you have time to focus—are essential workplace skills that require more discipline in a work-from-home environment.

Sometimes, it’s not about working more hours in the day—it’s about organizing the work so you can get it done in the hours that you have. How can you help your employees get better at time management? There are thousands of ideas and suggestions but here are a few that are applicable to those in the PT/MC industry:

- John Masek (Bearing Service, Inc.) has found software, Airtable, that helps him create to-do lists and prioritize tasks. He also color codes his Outlook calendar according to task and branch so he knows just by looking at the color what the task relates to.
- Lauren Lanter (B&D Industrial) makes a list of tasks she needs to accomplish and then checks them off as they are completed. Checking off those handled leads to a feeling of accomplishment.
- Delegation can be a big part of time management. Dale Woitte (Optibelt Corporation) advises to set a due date with the person you delegated to.
- Prioritizing tasks so we accomplish the most important first is Brian DeBorde’s (Bearing Distributors, Inc.) practice. He also notes whatever time management tool/system you use is only good if you follow through.

- Keith Couvillion (Allied Bearing & Supply, Inc.) stresses being flexible. If someone doesn't show up and you need to cover that position, adjust your to-do list for the day.

What are your tips for managing time? Put them in the comment section so we can all learn from one another.

Thank You for a Job Well Done

Posted On March 17, 2021

March 5 was Employee Recognition Day. Actually, every day is a day to recognize and appreciate your employees. If you only do this once a year, employees will know you don't really "walk the walk."

The more you can show gratitude to your employees, the better their performance—and even more so during this pandemic when morale is dipping and stress levels are rising.

Need some inspiration? Here are 10 things you can do to start the ball rolling with little or no cost:

1. Ask your employees how they would like you to show your appreciation and then DO IT!
2. Celebrate birthdays with a card signed by their co-workers, with cake in the break room or with their birthday as a day off
3. Brag to your customers about how much you appreciate what your staff does
4. Hand write and mail a thank you card when an employee does a good job
5. Put pictures of your staff on your website and ask them to provide you with some information on what they like, hobbies, families, etc. The write-up doesn't need to be long, just include something about them.
6. When an employee does something great, make sure your other employees know about it
7. Establish a no-meeting day once a week
8. Bring in (or during the pandemic, send) treats every few months
9. Allow for flexible schedules as long as your core hours are covered
10. Say thank you sincerely and often

How have you shown your appreciation for the work your employees do for the company? Share in the comment box below.

Return to Work or Not?

Posted On April 8, 2021

Just over one year ago, remote working became the norm for many. But, with vaccines becoming more widely available, returning to the workplace is now back on the table.

Some of your employees may have never worked remotely during the pandemic because of the nature of their jobs (e.g., order fulfillment, fabrication, CNC machine operators). For these employees, you instituted the toughest safety protocols you could. It also meant some of your employees *did* work from home—the best way to keep them safe. But now vaccines are levelling that playing field, making it safe once again for people to be together. What does that mean for your work force? Do you go back to everyone on site or do you allow those who are working remotely now stay remote? Of course, these are the two extremes—there are countless scenarios in between. You'll need to make the decision that best for the company. Below are just a few questions to consider.

Those Working Remote Stay Remote:

- What is the effect on your current space?
 - If you own the building, what will you do with the vacant space? Can you lease it out?
 - If you lease your space, can you get out of your lease or change the square footage and layout needed with little expense?
- What kind of technology upgrade will be needed to assure continued increases in productivity?
- What do your employees want? Not everyone working remotely wants to stay working remotely.
- Will having a portion of your team continuing working remotely negatively impact teamwork and/or company culture?
- How will this affect morale? During the pandemic, some of your on-site employees may have been tolerant of policies that allowed some to work remotely when they couldn't. How will making work from home permanent affect their attitudes? Will compensation need to be adjusted to keep everyone happy? Do you want to keep everyone happy?

On Site for All:

- Will you need to reconfigure your space to account for social distancing? What is the estimated cost for reconfiguring the space?

- How will not being able to offer remote work affect your ability to retain and recruit employees?
- How will a total return to the office affect teamwork?
- What will be the attitude of those who had been working remotely but are now being required to return to the workplace? Will they resist the return?

What questions are you considering about a return to workplace for some or all employees? Share your experience in the comment section below so we can all learn from each other.

Hiring for Skills

Posted On April 15, 2021

Many power transmission/motion control companies have an interview system that bases their hiring decisions on the candidate's resume, what they say during the interview and how they present themselves. There are some organizations that also give personality tests to see how well a job seeker will "fit" in the organization. There are not many who actually test a candidate's skills before making an offer.

Skills-based hiring can give you insight into what the candidate is able to do. Granted, if you don't need the hire to hit the ground running once on board, there are skills that can be taught and developed for those with potential.

Consider asking candidates to complete a "job simulation" during their interview. Many professions have been doing this for years. For example, sports teams put potential recruits through "practice" to see what their talents are. The teaching profession requires potential teachers to spend time in a classroom student teaching while being observed by a veteran instructor.

Assessing skills isn't without its drawbacks. Asking the candidate to spend a day working in the office is a great way for an organization to rate skills and how someone will fit in; however, many candidates can't give a full day for an interview. You could consider giving the candidate a take-home assignment; but there is no guarantee the candidate personally completes the assignment.

The most effective assessment may be conducted during the interview so you know the work being produced is theirs. Design an assessment that provides an accurate representation of what the new hire will be doing. Give all candidates the same assessment and the same amount of time to complete. Keep it short and simple; know what skills you want to highlight. For example, if you are hiring for a sales position, tell the candidate about your product and ask them to give you a "sales pitch."

There are many different skills required within any position. Develop an assessment that will measure the most important skills needed. Pair assessments with responses to behavioral interview questions and you will have a better idea of what the candidate is capable of.

Do you use skills assessments when hiring? For which positions? What skills do you measure? Let us know in the comment section below. We can all learn from one another.

Is a Permanent Hybrid Workforce the Answer?

Posted On April 22, 2021

Odds are, you've been dealing with a hybrid workforce for the past year. Those who can work from home—accounting, IT, customer service reps, executives—have been. And those who can't—warehouse employees, drivers, machine operators and fabricators—have been coming in with all of the safety protocols you can enforce.

You've been making it work because you thought it was going to be a temporary situation—once things got back to “normal,” everyone would come back to the workplace and it would be like it was pre-pandemic. But now, you're rethinking the “temporary” aspect. Is it possible to continue to support a hybrid workforce to meet the needs of your customers? Although a hybrid workforce may sound like the answer to keeping everyone happy, consider the following:

- How will you decide who can stay remote and who needs to come into the office?
- Are there certain positions you feel you need to be in the office all or some of the time? Are these held by workers that want to remain remote? Are you ready to replace them if they leave because they want to remain remote?
- Will you require remote workers to come into the workplace at any time—for all-staff meetings, customer meetings, etc.?
- Does the workplace have enough space to allow for social distancing on those days when you need everyone in the office?
- What changes will need to be made to your current remote working policies? How will policies between remote and on-site workers?
- How do you ensure collaboration happens with a hybrid team? Are there core hours when everyone must be available to work together? How do you replicate spontaneous collaboration when some are in the office and some remote?
- How will a hybrid office affect overall company culture?

Every organization is different. You need to make the choices you believe will positively impact your organization's future. Listen to your employees and come up with the best solution for all.

Use the comment section below to share your thoughts with your fellow power transmission/motion control employers. We can all learn from each other.

Remote Work Can Increase Diversity in Your Company

Posted On April 30, 2021

Employee diversity can help organizations make better decisions. Employees from different backgrounds offer different ways of looking at an issue. That input can enhance the final decision. As companies make plans to return to the office, think about how adopting a hybrid or fully remote workforce can help your diversity efforts.

Having diverse employees on board is a great goal, but what if the local talent pool is not really diverse? Prior to the pandemic, you probably focused your recruitment efforts on those who lived close to your company. But, with a remote workforce, it's no longer essential for an employee live in the same city or even the same state or country if they won't be required to come to the office frequently. This opens up an incredibly large and diverse talent pool. And, remote working eliminates relocation costs.

Allowing remote work and flexible working options can help increase diversity in your company and find and retain great talent from all backgrounds.

How is your company handling diversity efforts? Tell us about your policies in the comment section below so we can all learn from one another.

Finding Diverse Candidates

Posted On May 13, 2021

Every employer wants to hire the best candidates for their organization. The right individuals will bring skills and experience which will help an organization succeed and exceed its goals. Employee diversity is a crucial aspect to any organization striving to gain a competitive edge. Offering a full spectrum of perspectives and backgrounds, diverse employees can provide creative problem solving, demonstrate adaptability and contribute innovative ideas. These attributes and many more can improve the company culture and help strengthen the bottom line.

In a recent post we noted how remote working increases diversity within your organization. Those in the power transmission/motion control industry benefit from the

perspectives of unique employees, who can relate to a variety of customers and connect with untapped markets.

Developing a diverse employee base requires examining your recruitment and hiring practices through a sharper lens. Rather than doing the same type of recruiting and expecting to find more diverse employees, companies benefit from adapting their recruitment process.

What are some changes you can make to increase applications from a diverse pool of candidates?

- Review your current job descriptions to see if the language you are using is unintentionally deterring people with diverse capabilities, women and people of color and underrepresented communities. Are the criteria listed truly necessary –Does an employee need to stand all day, or can the job be completed while sitting in a chair? Does someone in an office need to lift 50lbs? Instead of typing a certain number of words a minute, can an employee utilize software that types out their speech? Many people are looking for demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion, which involves removing emphasis on unnecessary specifics for achieving results.
- Consider new candidate sourcing channels. Use LinkedIn and diversity-focused websites to advertise your current openings. If you keep advertising open positions in the same places you are going to get the same type of responses.
- Encourage diverse candidates to apply by including – “we welcome diverse candidates to apply” in your postings and on your website. Take a look at your website – and update to make sure it can be used by people with disabilities. Your website reflects your culture. If you are serious about recruiting diverse candidates make it easy for them to apply. In addition, use “People First” language; encourage the applicants to select their pronouns and a way for applicants to request reasonable accommodations.
- Consider untapped markets. Reach out to schools in your area whose student body contains people from diverse backgrounds. Ask the administration how you can reach this student population to communicate the benefits of your company and current job openings. Day programs for special needs or differently-abled individuals also are a great resource.
- Look for organizations and associations that are made up of the populations you are trying to recruit – especially on college campuses. Groups of all types –People of color, LGBTQ(+) veterans groups, etc. thrive on college campuses.
- Once your organization starts to onboard employees with diverse backgrounds, make sure you incorporate inclusive practices and ask these employees to refer possible new hires.

How is your company recruiting a variety of people with diverse background and experiences? Let us know in the comment section below.

Mental Health in the Workplace

Posted On May 17, 2021

The pandemic brought more attention to mental health and various strategies employers use to support employees' when stress, burnout anxiety or depression is prevalent.

Power transmission/motion control companies are no different than other employers. You need employees to manage stress/anxiety, increase productivity and ensure efficient customer service. Employees struggling with mental health issues benefit from employer support.

Stigma surrounding mental health is beginning to dissipate and more employers are offering benefits related to one's mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Managers play an important role in supporting their employees in times of crisis. First, they need to recognize the signs of employee mental health issues which may include:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Decreased productivity
- Increased mistakes
- Falling behind in their work
- Lack of enthusiasm

Managers also can model behavior that supports mental health by taking good care of themselves and opening up about their habits, including:

- Establishing a daily routine – get up at the same time, start work at the same time, go to sleep at the same time, etc.
- Eating healthy – lots of fruit and vegetables and fewer sugary snacks.
- Exercising and getting out in the fresh air.
- Setting their office hours AND not exceeding the time they devote to work.

When a manager starts to notice signs that an employee is dealing with a mental health issue, they can give additional help to the employee by:

- Showing appreciation for the work they do.

- Helping them balance work and home life by giving them extra time off, suggesting different hours, offering ideas on how they themselves find balance.
- Conduct “wellness checks” by phone – ask how the employee is doing. It helps if their manager relates to what they are going through. If they have suffered from stress, anxiety or burnout, they can discuss how they handled it.

Companies are establishing new benefit offers to deal with this crisis including:

- Offering mental health leave.
- Providing childcare.
- Offering classes on stress management, mindfulness and financial planning.
- Offering reimbursement for programs and services that support employees mental health, e.g, gym memberships.

Mental health is just as important as physical health to ensure your employees remain happy and productive.

What are some of the mental health benefits your company is offering? Let us know by sharing in the comment section below.

Three Strategies to Increase Your Chances of Hiring the Best Candidate

Posted On June 9, 2021

Three Strategies to Increase Your Chances of Hiring the Best Candidate

It's been a long day and you are at your desk, drinking stale coffee for an energy boost. Your PT/MC company is currently short staffed. One of your top employees resigned three weeks ago and you need to replace them. You have successfully navigated the process of marketing the job position and now you have a variety of candidates' resumes to review to begin the interview process. This is a critical point in the hiring game. You should feel accomplished for reaching the “saved game” in your journey, however, there are still some potential hurdles. Any progress you lose from here on out will bring you right back to this spot.

Here are three strategies to up your game for building an effective recruitment and hiring strategy.

Strengthen Responses and Follow Up

As a job seeker, imagine sending out 30-40 job applications a week and receiving two responses. These two companies immediately rise to the top of a candidate's list. Acknowledging their application demonstrates that your company is willing to invest time in selecting the best candidates. Throughout the entire hiring process, even when

a candidate is not chosen or the interview process takes longer than expected, sending status updates about the process is critical. This can be as simple as an auto-generated messages indicating a resume and cover letter has been received. If a candidate's qualifications are not a match for the position, let them know that too. If you are using third-party websites like Indeed or Zip Recruiter, take advantage of their tools to help manage communication, like auto-generated messaging.

Lack of communication with any candidate can impact the reputation of a business. If a candidate did not receive any communication until they were offered a job a month later, they may question if the company values its employees or lacks organization. Or worse, they may assume the company is no longer interested and accept another offer. In this scenario, both the company and candidate have lost valuable time. If you choose not to select a candidate then let them know, no matter in what stage in the process they advanced. They may still be holding out or feel like they were ghosted. If they are in the trenches of applying for jobs, they may network with other job seekers and may speak poorly of your company given their personal experience. Be respectful of a job seeker's time and investment, even if they are not the right fit. They may know someone who is the right fit now, or in the future.

Be Expeditious and Manage Expectations

Chances are that candidates seeking employment, are applying for many positions. They may send upwards of 10 applications during one evening, (opting to skip their Netflix show!) This means the employer who first extends an offer is likely to land the candidate. They win the employee, and other companies will lose. Avoid drawing out the interview and selection process for an unreasonable amount of time. Be sure to notify the candidate how long the process is likely to take, and any potential delays. This will ensure they have appropriate expectations.

Many people who are actively applying are eager to make a commitment as soon as possible. Investing in a job search, from completing applications to scheduling and juggling multiple interviews is practically a full-time job! Many candidates expect to receive a timely response about their status in the hiring pipeline and will send an email to check in within a week. When a candidate reaches out, be sure provide accurate progress updates, even if this means that there is no immediate news. This will ensure they feel positive about their experience with your company.

Embrace Feedback

If you are not sending out a short survey after the interview process concludes for a candidate, you are missing out on crucial feedback about the processes and protocols of your recruitment and hiring strategy. Often candidates will vent to their friends or families about the long, redundant application process, the lack of communication, or the rude encounter they experienced with a company. You want to provide a safe, anonymous space for them to explain issues they encountered with the process. If they have been applying and interviewing for a few weeks, they can compare and contrast

your system with other companies. Giving candidates the chance to let you know what they liked or did not like, can help a company to become more competitive in its hiring practices.

You did it!

You remained committed to exceptional communication, reasonable speed, and asked for feedback. Whether you hired your first-choice candidate, or the feedback helps you know why you lost this next time around, you are prioritizing growth in your hiring process.

What hiring process strategies have you found helpful at your company?

Let us know in the comments.

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Embracing and Accommodating Employees' Diverse Needs is a Win-Win

Posted On June 19, 2021

Where were you when the pandemic started? Do you remember the last large gathering you attended before the lockdown began?

Collectively, we had to accept our new normal or try to squeeze some semblance of familiarity out of this new situation.

Society needed to urgently adapt on a massive scale. New processes for pt/mc companies to virtually connect with customers and engage employees needed to be created essentially overnight. As a society, we were doing our best to make accommodations during the pandemic to continue to contribute to our jobs, families and communities.

The need to adapt is a common experience of people with disabilities. During the pandemic, we realized society was built for interacting in person and we came up with solutions to work virtually. People with disabilities are in a world built around very specific abilities. When companies utilize reasonable solutions or accommodations to adapt to a variety of abilities, employees feel valued and are empowered to contribute to their jobs, families and communities. This motivates employees to excel at work, while the employer benefits from employees' who give it their all.

According to The World Bank, "one billion people, or 15 percent of the world's population, experience some form of disability..." and the University of Massachusetts states, "in the US about 10 percent of Americans have a medical condition which could be considered an invisible disability." This is in part because of advancements in medical care, but also an aging population. At any point, someone could find themselves a part of this statistic.

What can your company do to ensure your employees are doing their best work and receiving, not only motivation and engagement, but also accommodations to succeed?

It can be difficult to figure out what accommodations would work or be reasonable with a particular disability or job. You don't have to go it alone. There is a great resource called the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), where you can get free assistance via phone or online to brainstorm accommodation ideas and find solutions to better support your employees. Their website, askjan.org, contains Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant accommodation lists for specific disabilities. They even have a toolkit, which is a free, comprehensive online resource for employers seeking to move beyond basic compliance with the ADA in order to create more disability-inclusive workplaces. What resources do you utilize to assist employees? Tell us in the comment section below.

How I Got into the PT/MC Field

Posted On June 21, 2021

By Tammy Davis, Motion

I was born and raised in McLeansville, N.C. and began working in the tobacco fields when I was twelve. My dad's parents were sharecroppers, and my father supplemented his income by selling firewood and produce.

I went to North Carolina State University in Raleigh, N.C. and was the first in my family to graduate college. Additionally, in 1996, I earned my MBA from Brenau University in Gainesville, Ga. When I was in high school, I met a member of a well-to-do family who owned the local Amoco gas station (full service at that time). I received an offer I could not refuse from the family – I got a job working Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The owner advanced my college tuition each semester and deducted payment each week from my paycheck during the semester. I scheduled my classes around my work hours.

After work, one Friday with friends, I made conversation with a fellow NC State graduate who told me about Motion Industries and its trainee program. I sent my resume to Randy Till of Motion Industries, Kernersville, N.C., which got forwarded to a regional manager, Phil Schweers, who happened to be a North Carolina State graduate

as well. I think that connection influenced my chances of being interviewed. My lunch interview was in Birmingham, Ala. with Bob Leonard who asked, "Why should I hire you?"

I told him I had worked hard to pay my own tuition to North Carolina State University. Capable of learning, investing in myself, starting something and finishing, I would give the job all that I had. After several different interviews (Charlotte, N.C.; Birmingham; and finally Greensboro, N.C.), I was hired as a corporate sales trainee. My initial assignment was in Birmingham at the corporate office, training with Marilyn Dent and Marvin Walker. That was in December of 1990 and I have been with Motion ever since.

In April 1992, I was transferred to the Gainesville office as an operations manager for five years and then an account manager for two-plus years. In 2000, I became branch manager in Gainesville and in 2009, the Athens, Ga. branch was added to my responsibilities.

Since 2016, I have been the branch manager for Motion Industries at the Braselton, Ga. branch resulting from a merger of Gainesville and Athens. I have learned a lot along the way and had some great mentors. I've worked my way up the ranks from a corporate sales trainee to branch manager and am happy with my accomplishments.

In today's market, creativity and change are vital for success. Think outside your normal hiring channels and look for the intangibles. I still sincerely believe that work ethic, honesty and being respectful are traits always in demand by employers. Case in point: four of my newest hires are millennials with no experience in our industry and all from very diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. One had his own snack vending route, one was contract labor in the lumber industry, one was an installer for a custom drapery workroom, and one had been in banking right out of high school, went to the mission field, and then back to the workforce. All were some of the most respectful candidates I ever interviewed. Don't buy into the negative rhetoric. There are great folks out there, just think outside the box and look for the intangibles. With these in place, you're sure to be successful and can train anyone!

Five Quick Ideas to Reduce Employee Turnover

Posted On July 16, 2021

Power transmission/motion control companies who moved to remote work during the pandemic have begun to bring staff back to the office. Working remotely, however, is a concept that is expected to remain, prompting some employees to seek out new job opportunities and perhaps cause a mass exodus of talent. In fact, experts advise that 25% of workers plan to look for another job as the pandemic eases. ([Prudential's Pulse of America Survey done in March, 2021](#))

Many reasons for the exodus are attributed to new or updated policies that discourage remote work. Other reasons include flexibility, burnout, a disconnect with company culture, and—although not directly related to the pandemic—career advancement, salary and benefit issues.

What can employers do to squelch possible turnover?

- Survey employees on the types of benefits they expect from your company. Review the results to determine if you are providing attractive and applicable benefits. If not, consider where you can make adjustments to encourage your employees to stay.
- Offer opportunities for your employees to grow. Start a mentoring program, provide tuition assistance, send people to conferences/seminars (virtual or in-person) to learn more about their current role and prepare for future roles. One option is to commit a certain percentage of employees' salaries toward their professional development.
- Offer competitive salaries. Check salary surveys (salary.com, Bureau of Labor Statistics, payscale.com) to find the compensation for comparable jobs in your area. If you are a member of the Society for Human Resource Management, it offers additional resources on the topic.
- Incorporate mental health and other wellness benefits like a discounted gym membership or stipend, free seminars, complimentary mobile app subscriptions or counseling services to help relieve stress and burnout.
- Provide flexible and remote work options when possible and built around individual employee needs. This reinforces your company's commitment to "work-life balance.

What are you doing to prevent your current employees from leaving? Please share your ideas in the comment section below so we can all learn from each other.

IQ or EQ – Which is More Important?

Posted On July 19, 2021

By John Masek, Bearing Service, Inc.

If you were to ask the average person if they knew what the letters "IQ" meant, you would probably hear a response that IQ, or Intelligence Quotient, was a measure of how smart someone might be. If you asked a second question about what they knew about "EQ", that same person may not have a good guess. So, what is EQ? It stands for Emotional Quotient and is a measure of one's emotional intelligence.

For those companies which apply standardized testing or assessments during the recruiting process, it is common to measure the candidate's cognitive abilities or general intelligence. Yet today, many experts would say that a person's emotional intelligence is actually a better measure of future job performance than their IQ. While the definition and measurements vary from expert to expert, most would agree that a person's emotional intelligence can be defined as the following:

"Emotional intelligence (otherwise known as emotional quotient or EQ) is the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict."

Others would say that a person who has a high level of emotional intelligence possesses the following traits.

- Self-Awareness – Clearly understands their own strengths and weaknesses
- Self-Management – Has the ability to control their own emotions appropriately
- Social Awareness – Understands how to act in various social situations
- Relationship Management – Ability to build lasting relationships with others

We all can point to employees that we have hired, who clearly had the smarts to perform the job at a high level. Yet, when they assimilated into your work environment, they did not play well with others, were unable to interact appropriately in various situations, and were someone with whom others did not enjoy working. Likely, despite having a high IQ, they possessed a low EQ, and therefore, they were unable to become a productive team member. And of course, that meant that you either lived with them as a below average employee, or you had to terminate them as an employee and you had to start all over looking to fill their position.

On August 20 at 1:00pm CDT, the PTDA Foundation is sponsoring an EQ webinar – Speaker Debbie Muno of Genos North America, an expert in EI/EQ assessment and survey design, will provide advice on emotional intelligence, skills and assessments and how they can help in choosing the right candidate for your open positions. I encourage you to join me in learning more about EQ and its impact on your employees' success.

Register

John Masek is the Sr. Vice President at Bearing Service, Inc. He is on the PTDA Foundation Board and is Chair of PT WORK Force Recruitment and Retention Tools.

Pet-Friendly Workplaces: The Benefits of Canine Camaraderie

Posted On August 18, 2021

When it comes to attracting new hires and keeping current employees happy and engaged, many companies are taking novel approaches to work perks, offering benefits like pet-friendly offices. Search online and you'll find lists of the best places to work that allow pets. It has been shown that pets improve mental health, lower blood pressure and provide many other health benefits. For pet parents, a pet-friendly office may alleviate the expense of doggy daycare or pet sitter fees.

Of course, incorporating pets into the office is not one-size-fits-all approach. It is crucial for companies to adapt programs and perks for their workplace. Sarah Musser of Bartlett Bearing Co Inc., a family-owned business, says the company has successfully welcomed her dog, Tater Tot, into the office. Tater Tot is a curious, golden retriever puppy. Sarah is conscientious when he accompanies her to the office, generally choosing days with fewer meetings.

"It's nice having Tater here, and I know other people love it too, but there's also a balance that has to be measured," she says.

Only branch managers and members of the family are permitted to bring their dogs to Bartlett. This dynamic works well because employees can enjoy canine camaraderie, yet the office does not become a doggy daycare.

When an employee is having a difficult day, they can visit Tater Tot for some emotional support.

"Employees come see Tater when they need to take a break or minute away from whatever they're currently dealing with," says Sarah. "It helps calm them, so they get back to a peaceful place. People also stop, smile, pet and play with Tater Tot."

To accommodate employees who are unable to be around dogs or are not interested in dogs, Sarah highlights the importance of creating boundaries.

"If we're having a meeting, Tater stays in my office," says Sarah. "If I have a meeting in my office, I put up a gate. If an employee is uncomfortable with it, then we don't put that employee in that position."

Sarah offers crucial advice for companies contemplating incorporating a pet-friendly office:

"Make sure you check your insurance first. Then, if you don't own the building, consult your lease agreement. Also make sure that there is some way to gate the dogs in a specific area."

2020 and 2021 brought an increase of pet adoptions and many people discovered the comfort that comes with spending time with animals. When exploring the benefits of a pet policy for your company:

- Consider a trial period to determine its effectiveness. Perhaps allowing pets at work every day is not possible but allotting one day a month when pets are welcome is feasible.
- Remain sensitive to those who may not embrace pets or suffer from allergies.
- Make accommodations so not to interfere with anyone's safety or productivity.

Creative benefits like a pet-friendly environment can set your company apart by fueling job fulfillment and overall well-being, enhancing the office culture and making employees more excited about work.

What benefits has your workplace considered or implemented to boost enthusiasm and a create positive company culture? Please share your comments.

Fueling the PT/MC Talent Pipeline with Internships

Posted On August 23, 2021

Introducing new talent to the world of industrial sales distribution and manufacturing is essential for advancing the PT/MC (power transmission and motion control) workforce. Internships have long been one means for individuals to gain hands-on experience in fields of interest and for companies to train and recruit new talent for their respective industry. The experience can be a win-win for both parties, as two PTDA member companies shared.

This summer, Sarah Rothenberger, a student at Texas A&M University, interned at Motion in Pasadena, Texas. Sarah's interest in outside sales deepened through the internship, which reinforced her love for one-on-one customer interaction.

"I really enjoyed going on sales calls with our outside salespeople and observing the relationship between Motion and its customers," says Sarah. "Each customer visit was different, and I learned something new."

Sarah is enrolled in Texas A&M's Industrial Distribution (I.D.) program and says her professors do a good job sharing the potential of I.D. and what careers could look like in different fields. Sarah learned about an internship with Motion during an I.D. Career Fair hosted at the University. In speaking with a Motion sales trainee from the Pasadena branch, Sarah says, "He sold me on Motion as a great company."

Rob LaRue, president of Baldwin Supply Co., says his company's interns usually are found through team or business network referrals. Human resources manager Joelle Allord and a member of the management team take the lead managing the program, which they routinely grow and adapt to create a well-rounded experience.

"We work hard to have the interns feel engaged with multiple facets of our team and business," says Rob. "First off, we want them to have a fun, engaging, impactful experience. Each opportunity is unique and dependent on the intern's area of interest. Generally, we start with the basics in the warehouse and evolve from there. Our goal is to give them a perspective of our entire business process."

Internships also provide an opportunity to assess the company culture and witness how departments and teams collaborate – offering the interns a glimpse of how they may contribute to advancing the business, while also advancing their career. Offering ownership in projects is key.

"I didn't know what to expect and by rotating among departments, I saw how each one connected to another," says Sarah. "They are not really separate areas. I rotated through warehouse, inside sales, outside sales and toured the distribution center in Dallas. I also worked on two projects: increasing on-time shipping and increasing sales in targeted areas."

"Because the experience is hands-on, our interns generally enjoy and learn how they can make an impact," says Rob. "They are not just moving papers." Baldwin also conducts frequent check-ins with interns and an exit interview.

"Feedback provided in exit interviews generally indicates that our interns enjoy the autonomy to make recommendations and work on projects that have direct impact on business outcomes," adds Joelle.

Rob shares that it also helps raise the bar of our current team: "They step it up when they see how hard the interns are working!"

Baldwin currently has an intern who has committed to returning and referred two new employees. "Ultimately, if they decide to stay with our team, come back next year or stay within our industry, it's a win-win," says Rob. "We gain hard workers with positive energy who are excited about their future career."

Reflecting on her time with Motion, Sarah says the experience reinforced her decision to pursue a career in outside sales for industrial distribution.

"Before I started the internship, I felt I wanted to go into outside sales," she says. "This internship confirmed my desire. I enjoy visiting customers and helping them solve their problems. I learned so much from the experience and am grateful to my manager, Charleene Burgess, for answering my questions and showing me the ropes."

First Impressions: Attract Job Candidates with Curb Appeal

Posted On September 1, 2021

You may have heard the adage, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." Although commonly associated with personal impressions, let's consider what it means for your company. You should never underestimate what greets not only your customers, but job candidates when they arrive at your place of business. People may question if what they encounter on the outside of your building reflects the culture inside.

Exterior Curb Appeal

It's easy to neglect your building exterior and property when much of the day-to-day operations happen within your four walls; however, take a quick assessment. Ask your employees what they see and their input as to where you can improve. Here are some things to consider:

- What greets guests when they approach your property?
- Is the name of the business clearly marked?
- What is the state of your parking lot? Is it clear of debris and trash?
- Is your main entrance or front door clearly indicated and easy to access? If there are stairs or railings, are they in need of any repairs or a fresh coat of paint?
- Is the landscaping well-manicured, or are the lawn, shrubs and trees overgrown and neglected?
- What pops of color have you incorporated? Where, if possible, can you incorporate inexpensive potted plants, flower beds or borders to add warmth?
- How is the lighting around the outside of the building?
- Are gutters and downspouts free of debris and leaves?
- Dumpsters are an eyesore and may attract unwanted creatures. Are yours hidden or in plain view of visitors?

With a little effort, you can make your property sparkle and shine. Job candidates will be enthused to walk into a business that takes pride in its facilities, inside and out. Their first impression will set the tone for the interview and subsequent interactions.

Virtual Curb Appeal

Let's not forget that in the growing age of remote work, many companies continue to conduct virtual interviews. The curb has become the cube or office. Take a quick assessment of what job candidates and others see.

Is there clutter on surfaces or walls? Do you have a bulletin or white board that needs to be organized or wiped clean?

You may not be zeroed in on the clutter behind you during a video call, but such a sight is sometimes the only inside glimpse of your business job candidates use to make a judgement on a company's organization.

If circumstances do not allow you to organize the clutter, consider relocating it to a less prominent location. Incorporate a creative Zoom background or filter. [Check out this tutorial on changing your Zoom background](#) or [this tutorial on customizing your Teams background](#).

Do you have a creative curb appeal solution? We would love to hear it! Email us at foundation@ptda.org to share your story.

Sources:

[6 Affordable Ways to Improve Business Curb Appeal](#)

[The Crucial Importance of a Business' Curb Appeal](#)

<https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/video-interview-background-really-says/>

Different Time Zones, Same Goal: Remotely Managing Teams

Posted On September 15, 2021

For many companies, managing teams across multiple locations is a fact of life. For others, it may be a new directive, possibility or necessity in the future. Certainly, the COVID-19 pandemic brought the concept of the virtual office and remote work to the forefront.

Prior to the pandemic, while a few worked remote, most Dichtomatik employees were in their offices, split between Shakopee, Minnesota; Houston, Texas; and Durham, North Carolina. When the pandemic started, Dichtomatik made the decision to go fully remote. Chris Hanson of Dichtomatik is an inside sales/customer service manager for both the U.S. and Canada and manages a decentralized team of 18, along with a customer service supervisor. Her inside sales team is responsible for targeted distribution accounts.

Naturally, communication is key. "We have created teams within teams," says Chris. "Each of our regions has a team lead in both customer service and inside sales. We're in constant contact with each other. We use Microsoft Teams a lot to our advantage. That is our biggest opportunity for communication."

It is common to have employees working across different time zones. Some companies have extensive differences across multiple countries, and some operate with the time

zones in the U.S. and Canada. For Chris, she sees an important benefit when employees work in a variety of time zones.

“From a customer service perspective, it is actually really great. When you have people in each time zone, it makes scheduling a lot easier. When you have people working on the East Coast, you get a lot of good front-end coverage, but not a lot of back-end coverage. And when you have people on the West Coast, they can start late and still be done by 3:30 p.m. But it’s technically 5:30 p.m. Central Time and most of the world operates on that middle time zone,” explained Chris.

One aspect that requires mindfulness is scheduling meetings. It is not unheard of to accidentally schedule a meeting at 8 a.m., which means it is 5 a.m. for the West Coast. As Chris says, “It takes some getting used to, but we are good now.”

How is productivity measured among remote teams? Chris offers this insight: “Develop metrics based on what the customer wants. I am not necessarily measuring employee’s productivity with the metrics. I’m measuring how we service our customers, and the byproduct of doing so is the productivity.”

Chris offers these additional tips for keeping remote employees connected, engaged and feeling valued:

- Implement a monthly service award. “We’ll give a shout out to somebody that’s doing something that can’t necessarily be measured in a metric.”
- Demonstrate appreciation for remote colleagues, whether with praise or reward. “The beauty of technology is that I can Door Dash anything, anywhere.”
- Hire the right people by looking for intangibles like emotional intelligence. “If you have the right people, with the right skills, I don’t think it matters where someone’s sitting.”
- Remain empathetic. “My role forced me to really appreciate the importance of work-life balance. Understand that people are working from their dining room tables, their kitchen or their basement. Understand that this was a major life change for them.”

Leave a comment down below to let us know how you manage remote employees.

Supporting Women in the PT/MC Industry

Posted On September 22, 2021

While today, September 22, is American Business Women’s Day, we’re taking advantage of this recognition to celebrate **all** women throughout our PT/MC workforce,

across **all** borders. Acknowledging women's contributions, accomplishments and the importance of their role in business enables us to reflect on progress and address areas needing more growth. We each play a vital role in creating equitable and inclusive environments that recognize and value the ideas and perspectives that women bring to advancing the PT/MC industry.

We invite you to check out a few of the latest and forthcoming efforts of PT WORK Force and PTDA to elevate—and celebrate—the contributions of women in our industry:

- The recent Women in the Industry Community Conversation, "*Breaking the Glass Ceiling & Being a Successful Women in the PT/MC Industry*," featured female PTDA member panelists sharing inspiring stories of facing setbacks and finding success. [Read a recap of the discussion.](#)
- Tammy Davis, Motion, shared her PT/MC career journey with the goal of inspiring other women to find their way in this [recent blog post for PT WORK Force.](#)
- Women often juggle multiple responsibilities between their work life and personal life. The Women in the Industry Community is co-hosting a Community Conversation with the Next Gen Community on November 16 entitled, "*How to Hustle Without Burning Out.*" [Learn how to recognize burnout and find a solution by registering today.](#)
- The Wendy B. McDonald Award is bestowed annually by the PTDA Foundation upon a woman who has established herself as a critical contributor to her company's success and affected positive change on the PT/MC industry. We will honor our 2021 awardee, Barbara Ross, Garlock Sealing Technologies, during the PTDA 2021 Industry Summit next month in Atlanta. [Read about Barb's inspiring journey as well as past recipients of this award and their achievements.](#)

How does your company create an inclusive workplace for women? Let us know in the .

Creative Workplace Incentives and Ways to Energize Your Workforce

Posted On September 29, 2021

How do you energize and incentivize your workforce? It's no surprise that keeping everyone involved and passionate is a recipe for a productive and successful team. Missy Munte, product training specialist at NORD Drivesystems, offers a few suggestions to build relationships and incentivize your workforce.

Health and wellness are top of mind for most employers these days. Many companies, including NORD, have allotted resources and formed committees to develop programs and incentives to empower employees to improve their Health Risk Assessment (HRA)

scores. It's a win for both sides as HRAs are critical in determining NORD's cost to insure its employees.

Missy explains, "From nutrition to physical health, social, mental and even environmental health, NORD's health and wellness committee offers events and programs that address a variety of interests and needs. These activities are designed to boost employee retention, but also assist people with their goal of raising their HRA score."

- 5K Turkey Trot and Ham Hustle: A turkey or ham was awarded to each employee who completed the walk or run. During the pandemic, people could walk or run their own 5K and receive a gift card. If employees joined other 5k runs, NORD paid a portion of their entry fee.
- Health Risk Assessment Awareness Week: Healthy snacks and wellness boards in the break room featured suggestions like "Where can you walk on your break or lunch?" as a means to remind employees to stay active and take a mental break.
- Monthly themes, like Heart Health during February, featured activities to encourage movement, nutrition suggestions and (prior to the pandemic) fruits and vegetables in water diffusers. November was designed to help people quit smoking so they could increase their HRA by 20 points.
- Seasonal activities: In winter, the wellness committee encouraged people to read a new book or go skiing, snowboarding or sledding. In summer, they suggested water sports, berry picking, biking or donating your items or your time. Virtual engagement activities included a summer and winter scavenger hunt.

The wellness committee has a Facebook page where employees can post what they accomplished. It's meant to increase interaction, allowing employees to see what their colleagues are up to (and potentially find some motivation to step up their own efforts!).

Missy notes that incentives do not have to be large and expensive or entirely health-focused. One of the most popular rewards at NORD is an extra day of PTO. They also have seen success with a weight loss challenge that offered a PTO day as the prize. NORD also held a simple raffle for a PTO day.

"It was a zero-cost item," says Missy. "People would pay more than \$20 for a chance to win an extra day of PTO. Previously, NORD hosted a bake sale to raise money for a cancer organization and the vacation day raffle profits exceeded the bake sale by three times and required much less effort."

Another incentive, according to Missy is, "If some people can work a couple hours on Saturday, we will throw their names in a hat for a drawing for a gift card to demonstrate we appreciate them."

Additional low-cost workplace incentives NORD implemented include:

- Trivia Challenge Friday: Whoever won the previous week gets to draft the questions for the following week. It helps create conversation and boost morale.
- Post a weekly joke or game on the whiteboard near their office spaces so employees can see it as they walk past. Encourage relaxing and/or social gathering spots for lunch and breaks, like picnic tables outside, two speed bikes that people can ride around the property, a set of bean bags to play or picnic blankets for employees to sit outside. (Try places like Facebook Marketplace to purchase low-cost items.)
- Offer flexible work schedules like starting late or leaving early.
- Develop and encourage use of a positive mantra. For example, ask "What went well?" shortened to "WWW" for the workplace vernacular

What does your company do to energize and incentivize employees? Let us know in the comments.

Supporting Mental Health

Posted On October 6, 2021

October 10 is designated as World Mental Health Day to raise awareness of mental health issues worldwide and mobilize efforts in support of mental health. There is no doubt that over the past 18 months, managing mental health has become a top concern, given the stress and uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. More than ever, employers need to develop programs and provide resources in support of helping employees manage their mental health and strike a healthy work-life balance.

Since its inception, the PT WORK Force® blog has featured several posts offering suggestions and examples of various ways companies can create a healthy workplace and workforce. We invite you to revisit these blog posts:

- [Mental Health in the Workplace](#)
- [Take Care of Your Mental Self](#)
- [Good Mental Health Benefits the Employee and Company](#)
- [Stress-Buster? Try an Attitude of Gratitude](#)
- [Are Your Employees Stressed? How about You? How to Help](#)

As we continue our efforts, be sure to join PT WORK Force on November 5 for the webinar, "*How to Better Manage Your Energy to Feel Less Stress*," led by Cindi Ackrill, MD, PCC, Certified Stress Mastery Educator. She will offer new ways to help you reduce stress and tap into your best energy sources. [Register today.](#)

What changes or programs has your company implemented to foster a healthy work environment and support your employees' wellbeing?

Measuring Productivity—Does Remote Work Make a Difference?

Posted On October 13, 2021

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed how many companies operate almost overnight. For many companies suddenly shifting most or all of their workforce from the office to their homes was a dramatic shift that brings up some major concerns.

Now companies are forced to ask the question, "How do I know my sales and customer service team is being productive if I can't see them working?" Among the many concerns that have emerged from the remote workforce trend, this seems to be the one for which no one really had a good answer. Maybe we are making the issue more complicated than it needs to be. Instead, maybe a fair reply is "How do you know your team is being productive even when you can't see them?"

Measuring your team's productivity is not a new concept, but COVID has altered the way most businesses will measure it. Companies now are scrambling to find new ways to measure baseline data and calculations to understand how remote work affects their employee's ability to effectively do their jobs. Hafeez Hameer of Freudenberg-NOK and JT Wubbolding of NORD Drivesystems offered some insight into how their companies are creating, tracking and using metrics to evaluate productivity.

For Freudenberg-NOK, data is collected on four activities: inbound calls, outbound calls, quotes and lines. Since they were tracking this data pre-COVID, they can easily create trendlines that demonstrate ways transitioning remote impacted these activities. For example, the number of outbound calls increased from 400-900 in the December 2019-March 2020 timeframe to 1,400-1,600 in the July-September 2020 timeframe—an increase of nearly 80%!

NORD Drivesystems takes the calculations one step further and evaluates productivity not only based on activity but on the amount of time worked. They use activity measurements such as order items, quote items, calls in and calls out. Using a ratio of activity over hours worked, they determine how effective their team is using their work time. An ideal productivity ratio would be 100%—meaning every working hour is spent on one of these four activities. While that's the dream, the reality is every position has

some downtime or time spent on other activities. By tracking over time, NORD can determine how remote work has affected productivity.

COVID-19 may have changed the way that business operates and how productivity is tracked. How does your company measure productivity? Let us know by sharing in the comment section below.

The Road to Resolution

Posted On November 3, 2021

How do you feel when you know you need to work through a difficult situation? Take a moment and think about it. Are you consumed by stress? Do you ignore the issue hoping it will disappear over the weekend?

Companies must have strategies to effectively manage conflict in the workplace if they want to succeed in business. It can be challenging when people find conflicts overwhelming or frustrating. Why can't we all work together? Just the idea conjures up images of conversations with HR and venting to family or friends. Developing policies and processes to aid in resolving conflict within the workplace is critical to retaining employees and attracting new talent. When employees see their workplace committed to fostering positivity and productivity, they feel supported.

Conflict in the workplace does not need to be intimidating. It's a common occurrence and there are many strategies that can be adapted for individuals and companies to address a variety of situations. The overarching goal is to identify a solution that everyone can live with.

First, acknowledge there is an issue. Frequently, conflict in the workplace is running parallel with emotions. By conceding the concern and confronting entwined feelings, people can see the conflict more clearly. Employees can frame their situation in a new perspective by writing down their emotions, understanding everyone interprets situations differently and determining how this conflict impacts all involved.

Second, work toward a resolution. After an employee accepts their perceptions and contributions to the situation, all can work together or with a mediator to resolve the issue. Layne Graham, director of human resources at B & D Industrial shares:

"The preferred strategy for HR is for the individuals to discuss the issue and first try to resolve the conflict between themselves. But for this to be a successful strategy, it is critical to understand the conflict before making a recommendation. Once HR understands the conflict and that it can be resolved between the two individuals, they

typically recommend the individuals have a discussion in hopes of resolving the conflict between themselves.”

Barbara Goree, HR manager at B & D Industrial highlighted, “We include the employee’s supervisor(s) in most cases and allow them the opportunity to resolve it first; then move it up if necessary.”

In cases where the individuals and supervisor continue to struggle with finding a resolution, HR will provide assistance. Graham explains, “If that does not work, HR takes a more active role. If the issue is more complex and not easy to navigate, HR works with both parties to facilitate conversation and ensure the discussion is productive.”

Companies shape the road to resolution and should institute policies that provide guidance to employees when they are confronted with a challenge or dispute. Case in point, B & D Industrial’s policy states, “B&D is committed to providing the best possible working conditions for its employees. Part of this commitment is encouraging an open and frank atmosphere in which any problem, complaint, suggestion, or question receives a timely response from B&D supervisors and management.”

The topic of conflict resolution is ever escalating. How do you or your company overcome challenges at work? Let us know in the comments.

Sources:

<https://hr.berkeley.edu/hr-network/central-guide-managing-hr/managing-hr/interaction/conflict/resolving>

<https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/jobsuccess/resolving-workplace-conflict/1/>

Why Is It So Hard to Find Right-Fit People?

Posted On November 10, 2021

Facilitated by John Salvadore, GRN Coastal

Panelists: Layne Graham, Director of Human Resources, B & D Industrial; Billy Hamilton, SVP of Human Resources, Motion; Sylvia Silveira, VP of Human Resources & Operations, NTN Bearing Corp. of Canada

Recruitment is a two-way street, with variables affecting candidates and companies. During the PTDA 2021 Industry Summit, John Salvadore addressed current issues impacting both of these groups. The presentation included a panel discussion and

highlighted the following: 1) defining the right fit; 2) the candidates' view of the right fit; 3) recruiting, retaining and growing your team is a 24/7 undertaking.

Today's employment marketplace is drastically different. Employers determine right fit based on skillset, personality and qualifications. Candidates look for companies offering work-life balance, benefits and upward mobility.

Making a right-fit hire requires a strong, multi-vehicle communication plan that makes candidates feel comfortable by keeping them engaged and incorporating virtual interviews. It is critical to remember the need for speed. If a contender checks all the boxes, make the offer—don't continue looking for a better fit because candidate will accept another offer while you're still shopping.

Sylvia Silveira from NTN Bearing Corp. of Canada said, "We interview virtually beginning with HR, then with the department manager, and finally with leadership. From a forklift operator to VP level, the president gets involved to evaluate a proper fit."

With candidates receiving multiple offers, you must have a competitive package in your market. The competition is fierce. Employees are not only looking at salary and benefits, but also working conditions and company brand.

Moreover, candidates are considering a career change. Layne Graham states, "We're seeing many people in labor roles who are no longer interested in those positions. This requires a lot of knowledge transfer. We need to promote job openings to college students and do a better job explaining exactly what each position entails."

To cope with competition, especially regarding warehouse employees and drivers, Billy Hamilton shared, "It's very difficult. We offer retention and referral bonuses to drive the candidate pool. Those positions are the hardest to recruit behind skilled trades."

Check out the full recap of [*Why Is It So Hard to Find Right-Fit People?*](#) to learn more about tactics employers can use to find the right fit and explore more insights from industry experts.

Over the River and Through the Woods to Employee Appreciation We Go!

Posted On November 18, 2021

As many of us travel to our loved ones' homes to celebrate the holiday season, we will reflect on the things we are thankful for and appreciate the people in our lives.

Every employee, whether warehouse worker, sales rep, or driver, contributes to a company's success. It is important to remember extending appreciation and recognition

to employees should be common practice and can help boost morale. Brian Davis, PTDA president and co-CEO of B & D Industrial shares ways employee recognition and appreciation bring benefits to your company.

- **Profitability:** "People who are happier and more fulfilled in the workplace are more effective and make more money for their company. People who believe they work for a company that cares about them are more invested in the company they work for and the customers they serve. This should not be the primary reason for caring for your workforce, nor is it representative of those companies that truly cultivate culture, but if you are looking for tangible benefit—profit is certainly up near the top of the list."
- **Recruiting:** "It's easier to attract talent to a company where the current team can genuinely tell prospective employees it's a great place to work—and they will absolutely ask the current team!"
- **Retention:** "It's an investment of both time and money to hire, train and assimilate new employees. Obviously, happy and fulfilled team members are more likely to stay with the company."
- **Accountability:** "We have found in our company that a strong culture and high morale creates an environment where people hold one another accountable and frees up management or ownership involvement in personnel issues. For example, at B&D, we have a strong culture around customer service. If someone is hired who does not focus or place a high importance on responsiveness to a customer, that person will often be confronted by peers before there is a need for management intervention."

Strategies to Recognize and Thank Employees

What are some simple ways companies can demonstrate appreciation for employees? Brian shared these ideas:

- "Handwritten notes are an effective way to show care and appreciation. I read the more specific the praise, the more meaningful. I always try to remember this advice and to be very pointed in encouragement. A lot of people within our leadership team prioritize this."
- "Public recognition is given during an award ceremony held during our sales meeting. The award is named after our founder and highlights our core values (following the golden rule, taking ownership, being the best we can be, supporting innovation and going the extra mile) as criteria. Some years we have more than one winner. It is a really big deal to win and is presented in front of our key employees and suppliers. We then host an annual dinner with previous winners and their families."
- Newsletter spotlights, blast emails and a monthly video from leadership are other simple ways B & D highlights employee or team achievements.

Read more about the value of handwritten notes and public recognition in this recent study conducted by *Harvard Business Review*.

As you spend time contemplating all you are thankful for, remember to demonstrate appreciation to your employees during this holiday season.

What do you do to show your employees you appreciate their work? Share your thoughts below.

How to Better Manage Your Energy to Feel Less Stress

Posted On December 8, 2021

Presented by Cindi Ackrill, MD, PCC, Certified Stress Mastery Educator

Managing stress in healthy ways enables us to reclaim our energy, productivity and happiness. During the November 5, 2021 webinar hosted by PT WORK Force®, Dr. Cindi Ackrill addressed useful strategies to manage stress to build resistance and advocate for your needs. During the presentation, participants completed a handout allowing them to identify specific stressors in their lives. You can view the slides, recording, and handout here.

Stress lives rent-free in our lives and can consume a vast number of resources if we let it. COVID-19 is a roller coaster no one anticipated. When processing stressful and uncertain situations we use a lot of energy and become exhausted. This can cause people to feel numb or stuck. Many of us have not learned techniques to effectively manage stress. Dr. Cindi Ackrill provided tools to empower attendees to fix some of the leaks in their stress management.

To ensure peak performance we can:

- Stress Smart: Build awareness and learn tools to augment our brilliance and resilience.
- Stress Strong: Practice habits that make us more fit to handle life with more ease and happiness.
- Stress Wise: Learn when to use our tools and resources to better manage stress.

Five Things to Do About Stress:

1. **Raise awareness about your relationship with stress.** What do you notice first about yourself? Do you get headaches or tight shoulders? Deciphering your body's response will enable you to take steps to improve your response.
- **Learn a way to calm down – power up in the moment.** For example, when you go through doorways, use it as a moment to start over and check how you're feeling

- **Practice mindset superpowers.** Examples:
 - Calm
 - Clear
 - Curious
 - Courageous
 - Compassionate
 - Grateful
- **Recharge! Create habits to build up your energy, capacity, and resilience.** Habits uses less energy. For example, brushing your teeth is a habit. If you had to think about every step of getting ready in the morning, you would be exhausted. It is important to build habits because it allows you to save more energy.
- **Practice kindness to others and yourself.** Setting boundaries and speaking up for yourself or others is kind.

When addressing stress and energy management, it is crucial to realize that small steps lead to big changes. It is challenging to transform overnight but we make improvements one moment at a time.

Remember Your Deskless Workers

Posted On December 15, 2021

With COVID-19 transforming the workplace landscape for the foreseeable future, PT/MC companies continue to seek solutions for the upheaval in their business. The growing challenge is how to build employee connections and communication among the various roles within the company, especially when it comes to frontline employees.

Typically considered deskless, these essential roles vary widely from serving as the face of the brand for customers to factory and warehouse workers who are crucial to distribution. The demands of their jobs often keep them removed from the typical camaraderie and interaction occurring in an office or similar setting.

Globally, deskless workers are the majority. According to *Forbes*, there are 2.7 billion deskless workers around the world, comprising over 80 percent of the total workforce. Companies invest less than one percent of their enterprise software spend on these workers, but they will need to change that if they want to retain them. Little attention is paid to the stark disparity between desk-based and deskless workers, according to the recent study, *'Supporting the Deskless Workforce.'* Often, deskless workers feel as if they belong to a forgotten group. Their work is demanding and colleagues with desk jobs may not witness or appreciate the day-to-day realities of their work. Creating communication pathways and building camaraderie among the hierarchy is imperative.

Tips to Engage

Given the unique challenges of deskless workers, Dawn Pappas from Fenner Drives provided insight into strategies to engage deskless employees. "Historically, the most effective way to communicate with our frontline workers has been via in-person group meetings, but social distancing protocols have made that more challenging."

Deskless employees often lack regular internet access or internal communication vehicles via a dedicated computer, creating a major hurdle for PT/MC companies. Consider implementing a mobile app to send messages to employees on their personal phones. Some apps enable frontline workers to communicate with other employees. This is beneficial because when deskless employees struggle to find a space to communicate with a specific employee, they may take shortcuts.

"At Fenner, we post important information on what we call e-boards (TV monitors with information), on posters/bulletin boards in lunchrooms and near timeclocks," shares Dawn. This ensures employees can receive the latest information and leadership can efficiently keep track of what was communicated to employees.

Outlet for Communication

It is also important to give deskless employees an outlet for their ideas or opinions. While many companies implement a structure where employees can speak to their line manager, many do not engage this strategy because it is heavily dependent on their supervisor's communication style.

"Our managing director conducts 'Momentum Meetings' each quarter at a different location," says Dawn. "The sessions, comprised of information from our Leadership Team and Michelin North America, are videotaped then posted on the e-boards/Teams. . There is also a Q&A so employees have an opportunity to ask questions and air concerns."

Conduct Research

Companies need to avoid relying on secondary sources for their communication plans. It is important to determine communication channels based on unique employee populations. Created internally, or with help of a third party, a simple survey can pinpoint critical concerns.

"Fenner Drive's model is 'People Planet Profit,' so as you can see 'People' is one of our biggest assets. We conduct an annual 'Moving Forward Together' employee engagement survey coordinated by Michelin North America. Each department is responsible for reviewing the survey results with their teams, identifying actions to address employee concerns along with timelines –all in an attempt to improve our working environment/culture. Michelin takes this survey very seriously and that flows right through the rest of the organization. Everyone has a voice during engagement survey time."

Deskless employees are the backbone of many companies in the PT/MC industry and finding solutions to engage their ideas and contributions will enhance any organization.

Boost Retention by Upskilling and Reskilling

Posted On December 22, 2021

Often employers overlook the critical step of upskilling and reskilling current employees. After all, they are a viable pool of talent readily available and usually eager to step up to new challenges and opportunities.

“Upskilling and reskilling need to be the focus of the organization and the individual’s goals,” says Maxine Gomez, Belden Universal, who offers these benefits for expanding employee skillsets.

For the company:

- Provides a competitive advantage in the market, especially if it involves new technology.
- Positively impacts costs/revenues by improving the efficiency and quality of a specific process.

For the individual:

- Achieves a new set of skills.
- Increases productivity with the ability to focus on other tasks or alleviates pressure on the overall workflow.

Boost Retention

Gomez considers Maslow’s hierarchy of needs when it comes to employee retention: “When employees believe that they can do their job well, and are valued and respected, their desire to seek growth and opportunity elsewhere is reduced,” she explains.

When it comes to professional development, Paul Dent of Osborn emphasized the importance of not just giving lip service to upskilling or reskilling because employees will leave when they stop learning.

For entry-level positions and career growth, “Customer service staff touch customers a million times a day more than people in leadership, and in some cases, are overlooked or overshadowed,” shares Dent. “These roles are base positions for an employee to grow and develop their entire career. It is important for employers to remember the value of these employees and demonstrate that in every interaction. For example, interviews are an opportunity for employers and candidates to present themselves well. The hiring process should be viewed as a life cycle; not just filling a job.”

Dent suggests ensuring employees learn new skills by providing access to technology and informal learning platforms. "Provide computer workstations at all levels to encourage further expansion of your employees' knowledge base. Accessibility to technology, regardless of the position, is paramount," explains Dent.

Implementing Upskilling and Reskilling

Regarding reskilling, Gomez created a robust training program. "New hires come aboard with existing skills that align with the organization's needs and now training must focus on closing any gaps. It's important to have the right talent with the right skills to achieve your goals and have well-defined expectations for the skills and knowledge needed to execute them," says Maxine. "While upskilling is very similar and is organizationally and individually focused, it may include 'unlearning' a 'bad' behavior/skill," she concludes.

Six Resources to Set You Up for Success in the New Year

Posted On December 29, 2021

Kick-off the New Year with the tools and insights necessary to build and foster an exceptional workplace!

PT WORK Force® aims to assist employers in attracting and retaining top talent thanks to generous contributions to the PTDA Foundation Fund Drive. Check out our compilation of resources and programs created in 2021 that remain relevant to your recruiting and retention efforts in 2022.

- **Webinar: *Using Emotional Intelligence and Skills Assessments to Screen Candidates***

Explore insights and tools from Debbie Muno, Genos Emotional Intelligence Solutions to help you integrate Emotional Intelligence screening into your hiring practices.

- **Resource: *Virtual Onboarding for Power Transmission/Motion Control Companies***

Ensure your virtual onboarding procedures set remote employees up for success with our tips and suggestions for the first year. This resource offers a week-by-week schedule.

- **Community Conversation: *Next Gen Retention***

Encourage your Next Gen employees to communicate their needs and wants in the workplace for effective retention utilizing suggestions from millennials and Gen Z.

- **Community Conversation: *Employee Motivation Strategies***

Learn about different motivating factors and discover tips from industry peers.

- **Blog: *Fueling the PT/MC Talent Pipeline with Internships***

Gain the perspective of Motion intern, Sarah Rothenberger, a student at Texas A&M University to better grasp the benefits of internships in strengthening your talent pool. Rob LaRue, Baldwin Supply Co., also shares suggestions on how to source candidates.

- **Industry Summit Panel Session: *Why Is It So Hard to Hire Right-Fit People?***

It's not news that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed expectations for both job seekers and employees. Technical recruiter John Salvadore and PT/MC industry HR experts discuss the "dos and don'ts" to attract the best hires for vital sales and non-sales roles.