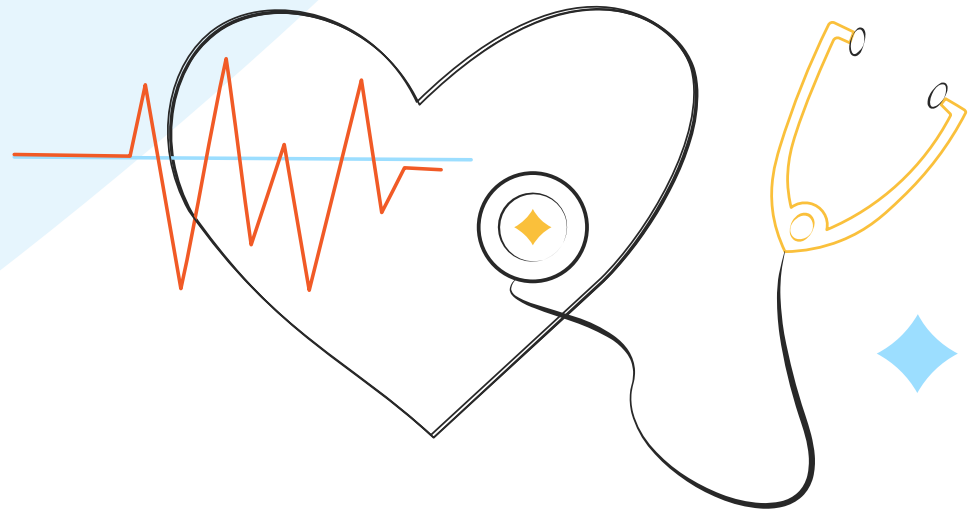


Mineral[®]

The Mineral[®] Guide to Healthy HR



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To understand how HR has navigated pandemic-driven challenges and what the outcomes were for businesses, Mineral partnered with The Fossicker Group, a Dallas-based research firm, to survey 2,644 senior HR professionals in the United States.

We uncovered what some HR leaders did differently that led to unexpected improvements in business growth, despite the pandemic. Some organizations saw increases in revenue and productivity, while others struggled just to maintain equilibrium. Our study found that even as companies climb the path to financial recovery, HR metrics like morale and ability to hire have decreased or remained stagnant. Only 38% of organizations have increased employee morale during the past year, and over half report morale is at or below pre-pandemic levels.

Companies that grew in both revenue and productivity had four things in common:

1. Thoughtful compensation
2. Good work-life balance
3. Potential for career growth
4. Appropriate workloads

These four indicators, which are all tied to employee morale, make up what we call “Healthy HR.”

While organizations reported varied success across each of these four indicators, our research shows that Healthy HR requires the need to have strong success in all four factors simultaneously. Under duress, the companies with Healthy HR adapted quickly, strengthened their connection with employees, and in turn, increased productivity and revenue. They were also twice as likely to take advantage of the pandemic to evolve their workforce and processes.

We’ve put together this guide to help employers of any size achieve Healthy HR today and in the future.



New to Mineral?

Get the State of HR Report [here](#).

Mineral customers, get the report on the platform [here](#).

Create a Thoughtful Pay and Benefits Package

Thoughtful compensation packages deliver what employees want and expect given their industry, location, and other market conditions. They tailor benefits to specific employee situations.

As the past few years have shown, employee desires and expectations are not set in stone. They evolve. Employees today demand not only higher pay, but also benefits that meet a variety of needs like childcare, elder care, mental health, and paid leave. They expect to be provided or be able to purchase insurance coverage beyond medical and dental, such as vision, life, and disability. They want benefits tailored to their specific needs. That said, expensive benefits aren't always the best.

Together, your offered pay and benefits form your total compensation or total rewards package. How do you decide what to include?



Here are some common benefits to consider:

- Medical insurance
- Vision insurance
- Life insurance
- Long-term disability insurance
- Short-term disability insurance
- Accidental death and dismemberment insurance
- Retirement plans
- Commuting assistance
- Parking assistance
- Tuition assistance
- Student debt repayment
- Employee recognition program
- Flexible scheduling
- Catered meals
- Sponsored wellness activities
- Sponsored volunteer activities
- Sponsored conferences
- Paid volunteered time
- Career coaching
- Training programs
- Meeting-free days



Do Your Homework

First, when putting together or reassessing your total rewards package, do your research. Keep current on the market pay for your area with tools like Salary.com. Also pay attention to what benefits are gaining in popularity. But don't just jump on the bandwagon. Ask your employees what benefits they'd actually like, and closely monitor utilization rates of your current benefit offerings.

Formulate Your Compensation Philosophy

Second, carefully consider how you make compensation decisions:

- Do you pay above market, at market, or below market?
- What's the overall pay range for each position?
- Do geography, inflation, and cost-of-living figure into your calculations?
- Are raises based on cost of labor or performance, both, or something else?
- When are bonuses given and how are they calculated?

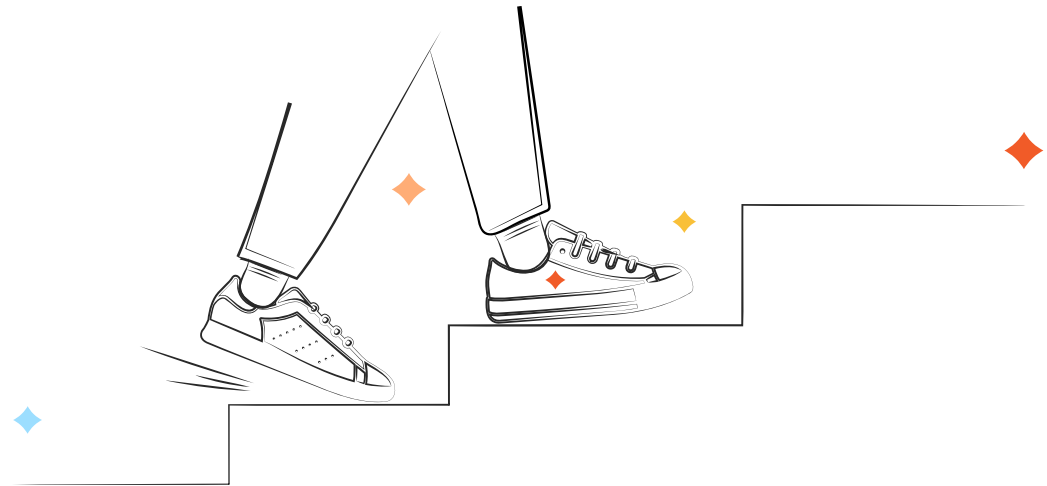
Your answers to these questions help you form your company's compensation philosophy—a statement documenting the company's position regarding employee compensation. This statement explains the “why” behind employees' compensation and creates a framework for consistency. It should be directly tied to the overall corporate goals or direction. Even if you don't share this statement with employees, understanding the company's approach to compensation enables leadership to evaluate compensation and benefits holistically.

Be Transparent

Third, determine when and how you discuss pay and benefits with employees and job candidates. Both employees and job seekers expect more transparency around these matters than they did in previous years. If you don't (and are not required by law to) post pay ranges in job postings, aim to get this information to applicants as soon as possible. An email before the first screening is an opportune time. You don't want to invest lots of time interviewing candidates who will jump ship the moment they find out what the compensation will be.

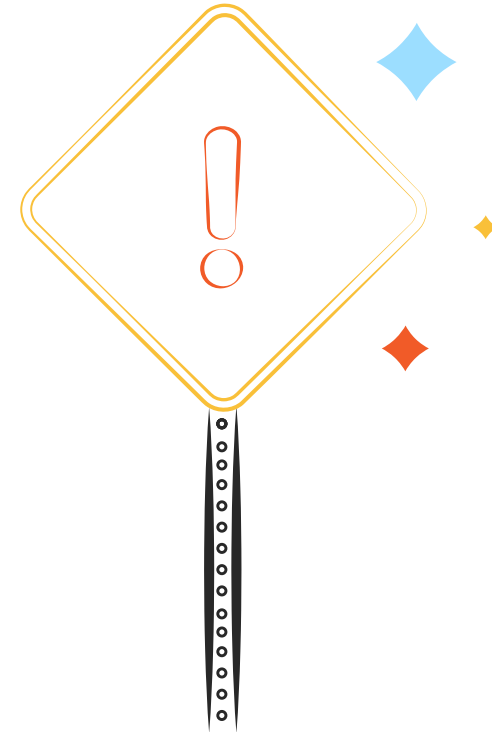
Ensure Fairness and Equality

Fourth, in addition to employees wanting compensation discussions to be transparent, they expect compensation decisions to be fair and equitable, so ensure that they are. The Equal Pay Act made it illegal for employers to pay unequal wages to men and women who perform jobs that require substantially equal skill, effort, and responsibility, and that are performed under similar working conditions within the same establishment. However, neither this law nor subsequent state equal pay laws have completely eliminated pay disparities between men and women. Bans on salary history inquiries have helped, but there's more work to do. It wouldn't be a bad idea to consider what you pay employees to verify that it's equitable. Employees have a legal right to talk to one another about their pay. If there are disparities, employees are likely to learn about them.



Prioritize Mental Health

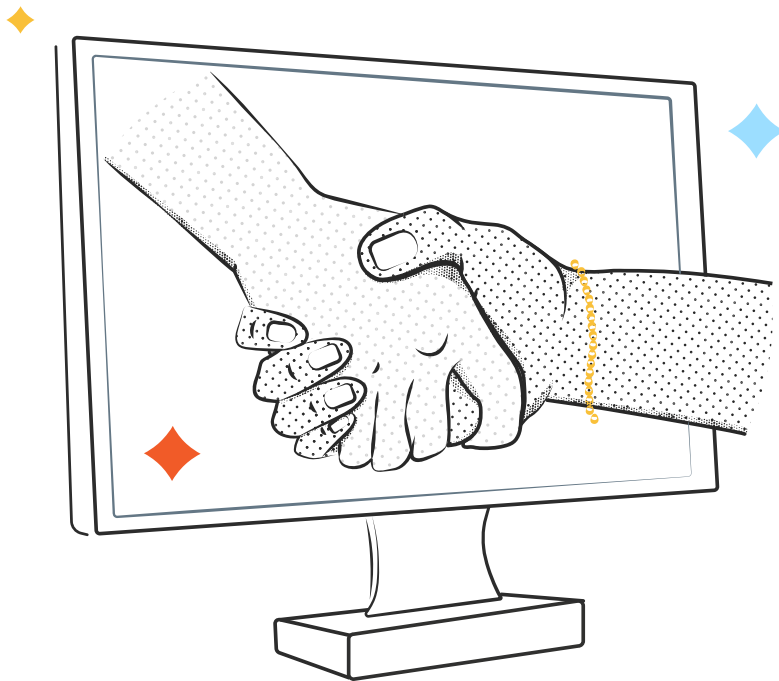
If you can, provide mental health benefits. In some cases, employees who want to get the mental health care they need can't afford the costs. Losing pay from a missed work shift might be too great a hardship, and effective treatments might be financially out of reach. These financial hindrances can exacerbate stress. In other cases, employees can afford the time off and the treatments, but they can't make regular appointments work with their schedules. If you can offer paid time off, health insurance benefits, or flexible schedules, these can help employees get the care they need.



An employee assistance program (EAP) may be another great option for employees who feel overwhelmed. It gives employees access to expert, confidential assistance for substance abuse issues, relationship troubles, financial problems, mental health conditions, and other major stressors.

Enable a Good Work-Life Balance

Flexibility is a big selling point for employees looking for better balance between work and life. Your employees have other commitments beyond work. Some are caring for young children or other family members while navigating daycare, school closures, or multiple appointments. Give employees the time to see to those commitments and have a life outside of work, and you'll get more from them when they're on the job. Options may include remote or hybrid work, paid time off, flex hours, four-day workweeks, alternative schedules, and reducing workload. Remember, however, that policies are only as good as the practices around them. Ensure that employees don't need to jump through hoops to request time off. Remind managers to be responsive to requests for time off and on the lookout for signs that employees are feeling overwhelmed.



Allow Flexible Schedules and Work Options

If employees need to work longer hours on some days during the week, consider allowing them to work fewer hours on other days of the week. Note that some states have daily overtime, spread-of-hours, or split-shift laws.

If employees can do their work from home, consider a remote or hybrid work arrangement.

Offer Paid Sick Leave

We've all seen it—one of our employees has a bad cold, maybe even the flu, but they come to work anyway. In some cases, the employee has the option of taking time off, and you'd prefer they do so, but still they show up, putting everyone in the workplace at risk. This often happens because the sick employee can't afford a reduced paycheck. You can encourage sick employees to stay home by providing paid sick leave.



Offer Paid Vacation Time or Paid Time Off (PTO)

There are a few important things to remember as you offer this benefit. First, keep it simple. Taking PTO shouldn't be a hassle. Too many rules about when time off can be taken may discourage use and cause unnecessary frustration. Second, remind employees to take time off. If it's getting late in the year and an employee hasn't taken many days off, a gentle nudge during their next check-in may be in order. Third, make sure that employees taking time off are not actually working. They shouldn't be reading emails or other work communications.

Offer Paid Family Leave

Clearly communicate what your paid family leave policy covers—how much money and time is offered and for what reasons. A lot of different benefits can be put under the “family leave” umbrella. To avoid confusion or misunderstanding, be clear about what you offer. Paid leaves to consider include baby bonding, bereavement leave, taking care of an ill or injured family member, and military family leave. Clarify how each leave can be used. For example, if you offer paid time off for bereavement, your policy might specify that it can be used following the death of an immediate family member or the loss of a pregnancy.

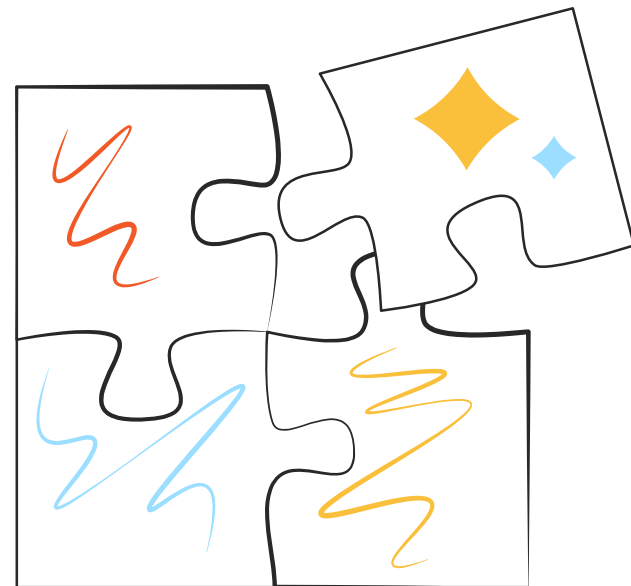
Reduce Stress in the Workplace So Work Doesn't Follow People Home

Not every stressor in the workplace can be eliminated, but some can. In any case, stress can be managed. It doesn't need to have the last word. Here are some practices that can help make the workplace less stressful:

- Don't assume the worst. Because the workplace is home to so much stress, it's easy to grow cynical about the employment relationship. It's true that there are bad employees, horrible bosses, and toxic cultures. Workplace problems can be entrenched and systematic. Nonetheless, the employment relationship isn't uniquely bad among human relationships, and it's a mistake and counterproductive to think it is. There are star employees, terrific bosses, and great places to work—and these aren't rare. Assuming the worst about employers or employees, or seeing them primarily as threats or liabilities, is like assuming all your friends are going to betray you. It's an attitude that creates more drama, adds more stress, and ruins otherwise functional relationships.
- Always act in good faith. There are times when the right thing to do is going to cause someone stress. For employers, it might be discipline for a policy violation, a poor performance review because of unmet expectations, or a layoff due to a shortage of work. For employees, it might be providing candid feedback to a peer, asking a coworker to cover a shift, or setting a hard deadline for a project. At some point, you're going to cause someone stress, and that's likely okay. The important thing is not to try to spare people necessary stress, but to approach decisions that will cause someone this stress in good faith. Good faith shows that you care about their success and well-being. It also helps put others in a better frame of mind to accept the demands or pressures placed upon them.



- Address sexism, racism, and other forms of inequality. These are stressors that every employer should be acknowledging and working to eliminate. Unlike other stressors, they are not inevitable. In these situations, employers have a responsibility not only to help employees manage their stress, but also, and more importantly, to do everything they can to put a stop to the hostility and discrimination that's causing the stress. Sexism and racism, subtle or overt, must not be tolerated.
- Promote support networks. We're not meant to struggle with stress alone. We need others, and they need us. You can facilitate friendships and support systems among employees by setting up virtual chat programs, video conferencing apps, and in-person spaces. Reassure employees that it's fine for them to take a little time during the workday to reach out to others about non-work matters and participate in virtual games and other fun group activities. Managers can set the tone by participating in these chats and activities and encouraging employees to join.
- Make sure employees know that they can remove themselves from an overly stressful situation. When a workplace situation causes someone to have a fight-or-flight response, it may be best for them to remove themselves from the situation before they say or do something they later regret or that causes more harm. They shouldn't have the added stress of worrying that they'll be punished for doing what they need to do to de-escalate the situation or step away so they can calm themselves and refocus.



Encourage Safety

When people face unsafe conditions in the workplace, those conditions become a constant cause of stress. Their fear follows them home.

There's a simple, legal, and safe way to motivate your employees to take safety seriously: keep the topic of safety front and center. If you talk a lot about safety, you'll have a safer workplace. You likely do this for customer service and performance standards, so why not do the same with safety?



Here are a few tools you can use to remind your employees to be mindful of safety:

- **Publish a monthly or quarterly newsletter.** Each edition could have an article on a specific safety or wellness topic, safety resources, a fun quiz (with the chance to win prizes), a reminder of important company safety policies, and emergency contacts.
- **Provide employees with a form on which they can document and report safety concerns they've noticed.** This promotes employee involvement in proactive safety assessments of the workplace. For this practice to work, employees need to feel comfortable bringing concerns to your attention and confident that you'll address them.
- **Offer a monthly 10- to 15-minute training on safety or wellness.** Make it fun. You could have trainings on anything from avoiding sleep deprivation to the health costs of stress to evolving safety standards. Promote employee involvement by asking various employees to facilitate them.
- **Talk to your workers' compensation company.** You can get good safety tips, training, and ideas from them, and you may be able to get write-offs. Like you, they want to keep costs down, so they'll likely appreciate your efforts to make safety a priority and do what they can to help.
- **Form a safety committee and invite employees to participate.** Involving your people in workplace safety discussions and decisions underscores the fact that safety is everyone's job.

These are tools that any organization can use, but remember that some industries have specific training required by OSHA. In any case, remember that your goal should be to have a safe workplace, not to maintain a workplace with absolutely no recorded accidents or injuries. Keep safety and wellness on your employee's minds, and you'll go a long way toward making your workplace as safe as possible.

Enable the Potential for Career Growth

Every employer, no matter the size, can help their employees grow in their careers. There's always something to learn, some new skill to develop. You don't always need a formal training program. A spur-of-the-moment decision to show an employee how to do something they haven't done before can set them up for success in ways you can't predict.

Contrary to common fears, training employees doesn't usher them out the door. Yes, training may prepare employees for employment outside your company, but it also prepares them for a better future working for you. There's an adage about an executive who worries that training their employees will be a bad investment because they might leave, to which the sage CEO says, "What if we don't train them and they stay?"



Make Expectations Clear with Job Descriptions

Job descriptions provide clarity on what success looks like for each role, but only if they're clearly written. They should include essential position tasks and required elements, qualifications, and employer expectations regarding the position, employee output, employee conduct, and any other applicable issues.

Employees are more likely to invest their time and energy in a role if they can envision where that role can take them. If a job has the potential for advancement or expansion (promotions, transfers to higher level roles, lateral moves), make sure employees know what those opportunities are and exactly what they need to do to move up.

Don't Hold Employees Back

When an employee is performing well in a role, it can be tempting to keep them there, but staying put may not be best for them or for the company. Instead of holding good employees back, encourage them to advance their careers, whether by moving up in their role or elsewhere in the company. Post jobs internally and celebrate employees who take chances on new roles.



Enable Prompt Application

Give employees time to reflect and practice the skills they've learned. In some professions, like music and athletics, you spend most of your work time learning, building, and reinforcing skills before the big performance, whether it's a concert, game, or race. Good performance necessitates constant practice. But in most professions, practice seems like a luxury you can't afford because you're expected to be performing during your work time. This is one reason trainings fail to deliver results. To master new skills, employees need time to focus on building those skills. That means some work time needs to be set aside post-training for them to reflect on and practice what they've learned.

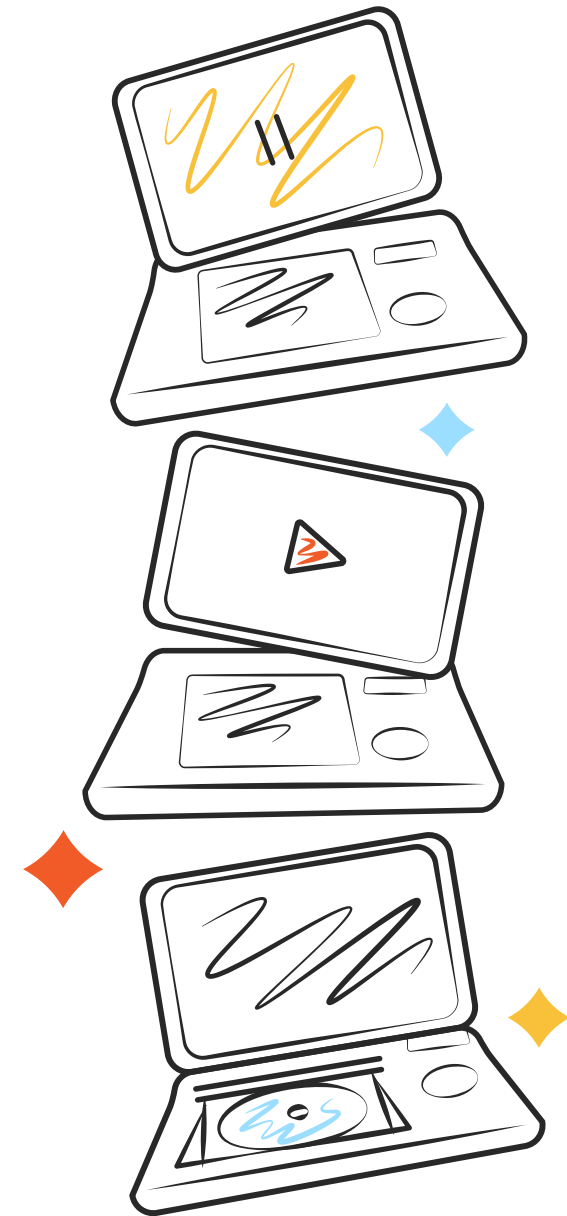
Be Creative with Training

It may be that the positions you need to fill don't come with an exciting career path or teach the kind of skills that employees are likely to put on future resumes. But that's not set in stone. Both you and the employee choose what skills are learned and used in every position.

Imagine, for a moment, a local deli that needs to hire a person to take orders at the register. The job market might consider this job "low skill," but the owner of this deli doesn't think of the job that way or advertise it that way.

Now, the owner doesn't use the gimmick of giving the job a fancier title than what it entails; instead, they set the job up to provide skills training for more advanced positions in customer service or sales. In the first few days, the new hire will learn the menu and the layout of the register, but then, in the lulls between rushes, they'll learn techniques for talking to customers, de-escalating tense situations, upselling, and the like—training that people in customer service and sales would expect to receive. Later, the new hire might even learn some of the ins and outs of starting and running a small business.

The aim here is to cultivate a reputation in the community as an excellent place for customers to grab a meal and an excellent place for employees to start learning marketable skills they'll use throughout their careers, increasing the size of both the applicant pool and the deli's profits.



Ensure an Appropriate Workload by Attracting and Retaining Talent

Companies with Healthy HR reported their employees were unburdened by excess work caused by open positions. These companies are able to both retain talent and fill open positions more quickly. Here are some ways you can remain fully staffed and minimize excess workload on the team you have today.

Write and Publish Attractive Job Postings

A job posting is often the first impression a prospective job applicant has with your organization. It's important for that impression to be an informative one. Your job postings should convey why someone would want to work for your company, what distinguishes your workplace from others, what's exciting about your mission and vision, what you have to offer, and what the job is and requires. Highlight the company's strengths, list the minimum requirements and essential functions of the job, analyze the results of previous job posting locations, and consider alternatives to where you've posted jobs in the past.

Simplify Hiring

The smoother and speedier your hiring process, the better your chances of acquiring the perfect candidate. The more obstacles applicants, candidates, recruiters, hiring managers, and interviewers have to overcome, the longer the process will take, and the greater likelihood awesome candidates will grow frustrated and go elsewhere.

To simplify your hiring process, require only what you really need. Are applicants having to enter information that's already on their resume into another form? Are they asked to submit cover letters that get only a cursory glance? Are candidates asked clever interview questions of questionable utility? Each of these tasks wastes time and complicates the process. Stop doing them.

To gauge the quality of your hiring process, there's no one better to ask than your new hires. They may be hesitant to speak candidly though, so implement a way for them to anonymously share their experience with you.

Invest Time in Onboarding

There's nothing like a bad onboarding experience to make a new hire regret accepting the job offer. It'll take a lot of work to restore the employee's trust, and that's if you're lucky enough to keep them.

A good onboarding process provides new employees with everything they need to be successful. They receive the tools, equipment, and instruction they'll need to do their job. They're given time to read and reflect on company policies and to get acclimated to the new environment. They're introduced to members of their team and to people they'll be closely working with. In short, they're given a warm welcome!

As with hiring, always be looking for ways to improve the onboarding process. Establish a way for newly onboarded employees to anonymously provide feedback.



Conduct Stay Interviews

As the name implies, a stay interview asks employees why they stay. Stay interviews ask employees to assess what they like and dislike about working for their organization. But if employees fear reprisal, they may be hesitant to speak candidly. For stay interviews to be effective, employees need to know they can trust the interviewer specifically and their employer generally. And they need to know that their employer will listen and strive to make improvements based on what they learn.

Some of this trust-building will take time. Employees will probably become more open and expressive after they've been interviewed a few times, especially if they've seen changes made in response to their feedback. However, when you first get started with these interviews, it's helpful to reassure employees that the answers they give will not affect their performance reviews or result in any kind of retaliation. If you're not confident that employees would be comfortable responding candidly to stay interviews, don't conduct them until you've done more preliminary work to build trust.



Conduct Exit Interviews

The exit interview is a conversation with a departing employee about their time at the company and the reason for their departure. It's optional, but some employers conduct them to learn about workplace issues they may want to address. Exit interviews can shine a light on toxic management practices, hostile work environments, departmental conflict, and employee concerns that haven't been shared with management or HR. They're often more informative than regular check-ins because departing employees have little to lose in being candid. Exit interviews are only useful, however, if you're willing to act on the information you receive.

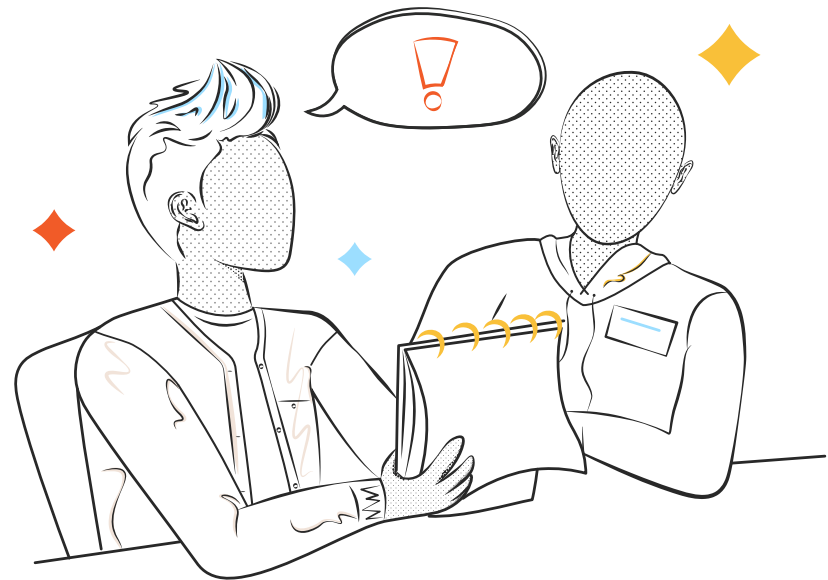
Invest in Cross Training

Imagine if every employee in a company received a basic level of training in other aspects of the business. Nora, for example, might be her company's graphic designer, but she's also been shown how to conduct a sales call, create a budget, write social media posts, calm a frustrated customer, create a pivot table and analyze its data, interview a job candidate, and facilitate the development of a new product. In turn, Nora has taught her colleagues some graphic design basics.

This "cross training" approach creates a versatile team of people who can move within the organization beyond their specialized skill sets. It establishes a work environment where people's place in the organization isn't limited by the skills they came in with or team they started on.

When someone is hired merely to fill a position, their connection and loyalty to the organization may only be as strong as their interest in the job duties on a given day. If they grow tired of doing their assigned tasks, they'll naturally look for a position that better suits their interests. Conversely, if the tasks they do cease to be of value to the organization, and there's no immediate position that matches their skill set in the organization, the employee will likely be let go.

When someone is hired to be on a team, they're part of something that extends beyond their current job duties. They're attached not simply to a set of tasks, but to a community of people. There are tasks to perform, of course, but these assignments are seen not as belonging simply to individuals, but as the responsibility of the team to manage. Team-focused leaders aren't just intent on keeping the positions they manage filled, but in creating a team, developing that team, preparing it for future needs, and keeping the team together.



Reward Success

Reward good performance and anything else you want to see more of. Whether large or small, the rewards should be meaningful. Ideally, figure out what type of reward speaks to each employee. For some, acknowledgment in a company meeting will make their heart sing. For others, receiving a token of your appreciation, such as a coffee gift card, will be more meaningful.



Manage Your Managers

The best managers work hard to improve the work lives of their team members. A big part of that is setting and communicating clear expectations. Good managers focus on performance, so their people get better at what they do. This includes empowering employees to identify development areas that matter the most to them. Another big part is facilitating cooperation so that their reports work better together and better with other teams. The best managers also recognize and advocate for their people. They listen carefully to know what their people need to be successful, and they aim to deliver it.

These managers are empathetic, understanding, and supportive. They listen to their people and have a keen understanding of what motivates and inspires them. They're available to troubleshoot problems, brainstorm ideas, and provide guidance on projects. They communicate effectively and correct mistakes in ways that build people up rather than tear them down. They teach what they know and always seek to learn. They have an eye for equity.

If your managers—or the people you intend to promote into management—don't have all of these qualities, don't worry. These traits and behaviors can be taught and nurtured. Managers also need to be managed.

Create an Inclusive and Respectful Workplace

Right now, organizations across the country are asking themselves what they can do to make their workplaces more inclusive, diverse, and equitable. They're hosting conversations, acknowledging areas where they've fallen short, and identifying opportunities for improvement.

For these efforts to be successful, employees need to be able to speak freely, offering critical and candid feedback about individual behaviors, workplace practices, and organizational policies. None of this can happen, however, if people believe it isn't safe for them to speak up. It often isn't.

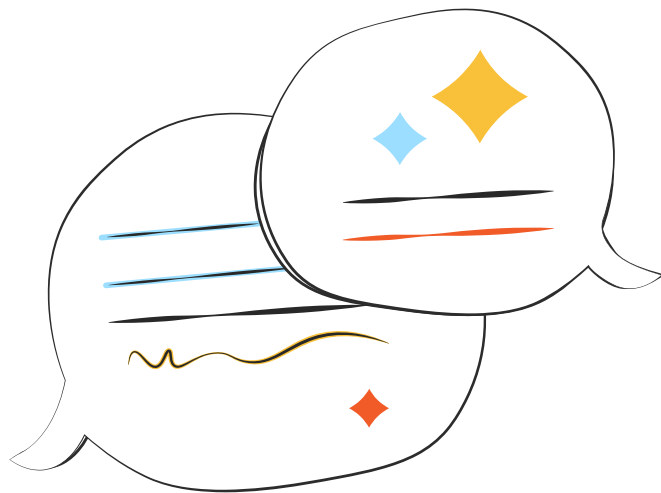
Employees who report harassment and discrimination, speak candidly to their supervisors, or challenge the status quo often find themselves excluded from projects, denied a promotion, or out of a job. According to a study by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 75% of employees who spoke out against workplace mistreatment faced some form of retaliation. Given this reality, it falls on employers to show their employees that they can report incidents of discrimination, identify institutional failures, and recommend solutions without fear of retaliation.



Provide Employees with Guidance on Respectful Dialogue

There is no perfect policy or approach that will guarantee that employees approach one another with open minds, compassion, and measured language. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't try to set the stage as best you can.

Acknowledge that conversations about current events can grow heated, and reinforce the expectation that employees treat each other with respect. Reiterate your company's commitment to a workplace that is free from discrimination, and remind employees that discriminatory comments will not be tolerated.



Provide employees with some basic guidelines for respectful conversation, such as these:

- Assume positive (or at least neutral) intent from other speakers.
- Treat communication as a dialogue, not a debate; if you find yourself wanting to “win,” pause the conversation and consider the other perspective.
- Be an active listener; if you catch yourself mentally planning what you are going to say next while someone is talking to you, refocus on what the person is saying. This will help the other person feel heard and contribute to meaningful conversation.
- Approach topics you don't fully understand with humility; allow yourself to be vulnerable and acknowledge you're out of your comfort zone.
- Acknowledge that the concepts of “right” and “wrong” differ greatly and attempt to learn about perspectives that differ from yours.
- Consider tough conversations as an opportunity for personal growth.
- Be open to learning new things.
- Use “I” sentences—speak from your own experience.
- Avoid generalizations about any group.
- Use respectful, non-inflammatory language in line with the company's professional standards and anti-harassment and discrimination policies.

These are useful guidelines in any setting and, if taken to heart, should help your employees engage in respectful and productive conversations.

About Mineral

Trusted by more than 500,000 companies, Mineral is the HR and compliance leader for growing businesses. Mineral's flagship solutions, including Mineral Platform, Mineral Intelligence, and Mineral Experts, combine data, technology, and human expertise to take the guesswork out of HR and compliance and give clients peace of mind. Partnering with nearly 3,000 industry-leading insurance brokers, PEOs, and HCMs, Mineral has built the largest HR community in the United States.

For more information, visit trustmineral.com.

About the Study

Mineral partnered with a third-party research firm to conduct a survey of 2,644 senior HR professionals in the United States through an online survey from February 4–24, 2022. Mineral engaged [The Fossicker Group](#) to provide the analysis, narrative, data visualization, and design for this report.

Respondents were gathered through a mix of professional panels, Mineral clients, and social media channels. Respondents were predominantly executive leadership and had significant knowledge and involvement in their organization's HR function.

Companies of all sizes were included, ranging from smaller organizations of less than 50 employees to enterprise-sized organizations.

The sample composition was balanced between five sectors: Consumer Goods & Services, Energy & Resources, Financial Services & Insurance, Life Sciences & Healthcare and Technology, and Media & Telecom.