

# Up\*link<sup>®</sup>

The Peoplelink Online Newsletter

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## Raising the Bar in Staffing Since 1987



## 5 Ways to Focus at Work from an Executive Who's Struggled with ADHD

### To Do

- ☒ Pursue the right roles
- ☒ Whiteboard your tasks
- ☒ Structure your days
- ☒ Never multitask during a conversation
- ☒ Have somebody always holding you accountable

Do you have trouble sustaining your attention at work? Try these workarounds, discovered through trial and error by an executive who has long struggled with ADHD. First, pursue the right roles. Most people find it easier to stay focused when they're working in a field they love. But go a step further and look for a job that meshes with the way your mind works. Second, whiteboard your tasks. List everything you have to do each day, with no exceptions—and stick to the list. Third, structure

your days. Set aside certain periods for short-term tasks and others for longer-term items. Fourth, never multitask during a conversation, even on the phone. People will know if they don't have your undivided attention. And fifth, share your struggles with a trusted colleague who can help get you back on track when your mind starts wandering.

### 1. Pursue roles that match your passions and attention style.

Most people find it easier to stay focused on things they're

deeply passionate about. Even if they're "scatterbrained" by nature, they may be fully present when teaching a class, treating a patient, or building a house. So try to work in a field that you love.

But go a step further and look for a job that meshes with the way your mind works. For me, that meant going into social selling. It allows me to use written communication in short bursts across multiple platforms. It also allows for lots of quick conversations. I reach out to

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# A PROCESS FOR IMPROVING HIRING DECISIONS

Given that most organizations spend roughly 70% of their operating budgets on workforce expenses, it is noteworthy how rare it is for organizations to measure the success of hiring managers in their ability to select the right candidates. It is also rare for individuals to hold themselves accountable for becoming better interviewers over time. By using a quantitative interview scorecard to evaluate the qualifications and suitability of job candidates, and by comparing interview-based predictions with subsequent performance on the job, it's possible to boost your interview hit rate and your organization's return on human capital investment over time.

Let's start by evaluating why most companies and individuals make less than stellar investments in human capital, particularly when using interviews to evaluate candidates. People are biased, emotional, and inconsistent when interviewing and as a result, decades of industrial psychology research has found, the validity or predictive power of a typical unstructured job interview is around 20%, meaning that only one in five interviews increases the baseline odds that a hired candidate will be successful.

Unconscious, implicit associations or stereotypes create a problematic, non-level playing field for job seekers. The solution,

according to some academics and practitioners, is to make people aware of their biases so that they are able to make more "objective" determinations about job applicant suitability. Asking all candidates a standard set of good interview questions can also boost the accuracy of the hiring process.

However, when it comes to interviewing, many of us have biases that cause us to not even realize how biased we are. When a candidate ends up being successful, many people in the organization believe and claim that they spotted her or his talent early on. And when a candidate does not succeed, suddenly it seems that the candidate was hired despite widespread doubts. To paraphrase an oft-repeated saying, success has many fathers, but failure is an orphan. Selective memory therefore makes it hard for us to accurately recall our impressions of candidates at the time we interviewed them, which in turn makes it hard for us to learn about our biases and to have an accurate assessment of how skilled we are as interviewers.

Using the model of detection theory, there are four basic scenarios for interviewing and hiring. The first is that a "good" candidate is hired, consti-

tuting a "hit." If the "good" candidate is not hired, this is a "miss." In the event that a "bad" candidate is not hired, this is a "positive" and if a "bad" candidate is hired, this is a "false positive."

Interviewers tend to be most concerned with trying to avoid "false positives" as hiring a candidate who doesn't work out can be highly problematic. It's rare that an interviewer ever finds out about a "miss", e.g. that a candidate that was not hired became very successful somewhere else. Your "hit rate" can be calculated by the ratio of your "hits" and "positives" to your "misses" and "false positives."

How can you improve your hiring hit rate? An interview scorecard can provide a quantitative basis for comparison between interviewers, enabling you to validate your perceptions with your colleagues

and learn where your ratings may be outside of the norm. By correlating your predictions with candidates' actual performance on the job, you can also get quantitative feedback about your accuracy at assessing different criteria. Only by developing awareness of our own evaluative interview biases is it possible to correct them.

To create an interview scorecard, write down ratings along five or so applicable criteria and then periodically revisit them. Here's an example, but be sure to identify those that are applicable to your business:

- Technical ability
- Leadership skills
- Interpersonal/team skills
- Presentation skills
- Organization citizenship

Discuss and debate your candidate ratings with colleagues

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# Bright Ideas

## How to Rediscover Your **INSPIRATION** at Work

By Kristi Hedges

When we're inspired, our work hums. We have a sense of purpose, buoyed by the feeling that our talents are being put to good use. We're doing what we should be doing. And then, just like that, inspiration evaporates. Perhaps a negative comment from your boss deflated you or you're not excited about a particular assignment. Inspiration can be frustratingly fleeting and difficult to recover when lost. Even if you're lucky enough to have a job you love, it's common to go through lengthy periods where you need to dig deep to feel excited about your work.

I've coached many executives in the thick of this morass and they often struggle to understand the cause: is it the company? Or a particular set of circumstances? Or is it them?

Psychologists Todd Thrash and Andrew Elliot have been studying inspiration for decades. They've identified three elements that occur when we're inspired: we see new possibilities, we're receptive to an outside influence, and we feel energized and motivated. Fortunately, inspiration is not



a static state of mind but a process that we can cultivate. While we can't force ourselves to be inspired, we can create an environment that's conducive to inspiration. Here's what I've seen work for my clients.

### **DON'T WAIT FOR POSITIVITY TO STRIKE.**

When you aren't feeling inspired, it's normal to feel stuck. But inaction is your enemy in this effort. Inspiration doesn't just happen while we're at our desks returning emails. Don't wait for a flash of insight to strike before making any changes. The field of cognitive behavioral therapy shows that our behavior affects how we think and feel. When we do different things, we feel

different feelings.

Waiting to act reinforces stasis. Instead, understand that any move you make will open up new possibilities and reveal emotions that you can't yet see. And remember that you often have more control over your work environment than you typically think.

### **DEVELOP AN INSPIRATION ROUTINE.**

When you've excelled in your field, it's natural to move out of learning mode. But researchers have found that when people believe that they're experts they become more close minded, a concept termed earned dogmatism. We're most likely to get, and stay inspired, when we have fresh experiences and information that can trigger insights.

There are lots of ways to gather these – take a class, read a book, attend professional gatherings, travel. It's best to pick one that works for you and then structure your time to integrate these actions into your routine. You might commit to traveling once every six months or take a few hours every Friday morning to read articles and books or set a goal to meet three new people in your field each quarter. Bill Gates

was known for having a twice yearly think week, spending full weeks away from his office, reading and mapping new ideas. For most professionals, this isn't possible but devoting even a couple hours a week to perspective-expanding activities will help you stay engaged and interested.

**FIND NEW FRIENDS.** The people we spend time with affect our energy and our mood. They also tend to reinforce our beliefs. We can easily get into a situation where we speak to the same people about similar topics, week in, week out.

Get out and meet new people. Make a concerted effort to find thought partners and guides who are doing different

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# Meet **KELLY PROCTOR**

## Regional Vice President Michigan

### » How long have you been in the staffing business?

20 years – all with Peoplelink.

### » What was your first job?

**What do you remember most about it?** At 14 years old, I washed dishes at the local tavern on the weekends. Watching the effects of alcohol on a person was amusing.

### » Who was the worst boss you ever had and why?

I worked at a party store while going to school and the owner would walk in and fire people just because she was having a bad day. Then she'd call them the next day and ask them to come back.

### » What motivates you each day to sell and service your clients?

Integrity is everything. I want to provide them with the level of service and deliver what we agreed to be win-win for both. Having clients today that I sold 19 years ago is a satisfaction I cherish – that shows I work for that true 'partnership' and not just the sale.

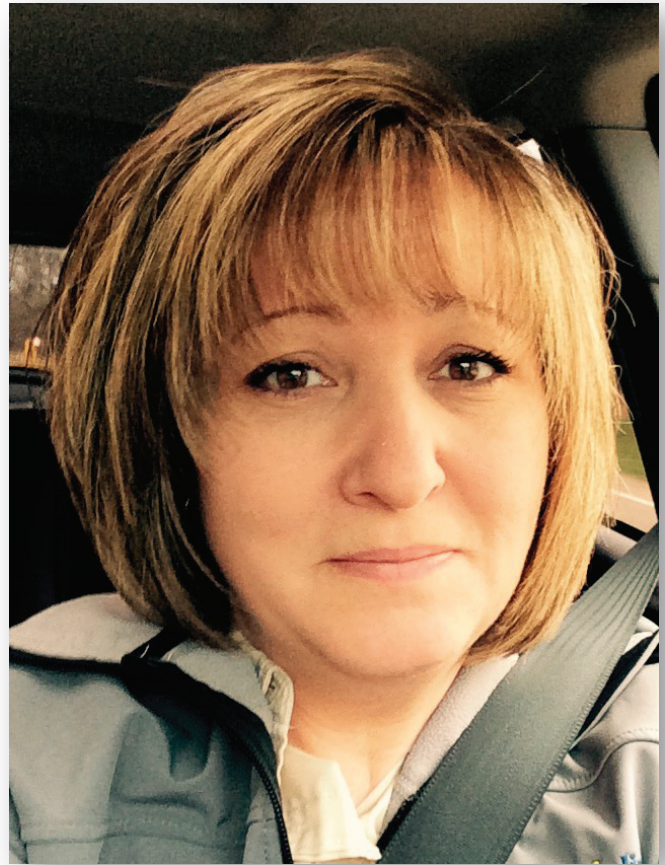
**» What are some of your long-term goals?** Mentoring the young staff I have in Michigan. I truly have some young performers that have the will/want/desires to grow into our high level manager positions. I believe I have the next generation of Peoplelink leaders working today in Michigan. So I'm

working on training my replacement – BUT not too soon...

**» What makes Peoplelink unique, from your perspective?** There are so many but, first and foremost is family. Over 20 years of working for Peoplelink, the entire company (field & corporate) have become part of my family. They all stepped up and supported me during a difficult time in my life and we continue to support one another every day, both professionally and personally.

**» What makes you successful as a Manager?** My team – we win together, we lose together. We make no excuses, we pick each other up and dust ourselves off. Being in the trenches everyday beside them makes my team believe in my commitment to them and their business and I'm by their sides and ready to take on the world.

**» What is the best advice you could give to other Peoplelink staff members?** My catchphrase is WILL/WANT/DESIRE – if you have those traits, you will be extremely successful. You don't need the experience or the knowledge (those are trainable). Just have those 3 traits and you will grow rapidly through the ranks of Peoplelink. Trust me. I started 20 years ago with Peoplelink in a part-time administrative position looking to get a break from my young boys.



In very short time, I've run up the ranks to where I am today. Use the knowledge from the people that surround you – absorb and you could be our next CEO.

**» What is your favorite movie?** Road House (gotta love Patrick Swayze) **Drink?** Sangari.

**» If you could have any car you want, what would it be?** 1969 Camaro SS – Black with a 396 big-block engine, 4-speed manual transmission.

**» What is your home city? What is the greatest feature about your home city?** Trufant, MI – don't laugh, but Trufant is the Stump Fence Capital. In the 1800s, it was the largest town the railroad went through and they lined the fields with tree

stumps to divide property lines. Today, those stumps are highly sought after.

**» How do you unwind when you're not at the office?** Driving my 2013 Camaro SS (yes, it's black with a 6.2L engine and a 6-speed manual transmission) and being at the racetrack watching my nephew dirt track racing his IMCA modify

**» What do people like most (least) about you? Least?** ? My honesty can be taken both ways. I tend to tell people the hard truth. Some people appreciate it and some can be a little more sensitive. ☹️

# EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION AND ENGAGEMENT: THE DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY ARE OPEN

Source: SHRM

ISSUE	INSIGHT	IMPLICATIONS
<p>Although job satisfaction is relatively high, there is room for organizations to improve employee engagement. Decreased engagement leads to less dedication by employees, higher turnover and lowered productivity.</p>	<p>Fairness and transparency are fundamental yet powerful concepts that can make a lasting impression on employees and employers. These principles have the potential to influence many organizational outcomes in the workplace, including job satisfaction and organizational commitment.</p>	<p>Integrating fairness and transparency into organizational procedures and initiatives will have a ripple effect of organizational enhancements. If these values are genuinely displayed by leadership, employees are more likely to mimic the desired behaviors of openness, establishing a more reciprocal relationship.</p>

In today's business landscape, organizations face numerous obstacles as they deal with the complexities of the 21st century workplace. Managing in a rapidly changing world and anticipating imminent challenges on the horizon are part of the survival of every organization. HR professionals cite sustaining high degrees of employee engagement and developing future organizational leaders at the forefront of their human capital challenges.<sup>1</sup> If left unaddressed, these substantial concerns could result in growing turnover rates and decayed performance due to a lack of direction and inspiration. Given these consequences, it is important for organizations to be well versed in their employees' satisfaction and engagement levels to retain and nurture key performers in a dynamic business climate.

Nearly two-fifths (38%) of U.S. employees reported that they were very satisfied with their current job, whereas a greater proportion (51%) stated they were satisfied but to a lesser degree, indicating that the majority of U.S. employees are to some extent satisfied with their present job role. Satisfaction with one's organization paralleled job satisfaction; 50% expressed some satisfaction (i.e., responded "somewhat satisfied") with their organization and 38% voiced a higher level of satisfaction (i.e., "very satisfied"). Similar levels of employee job satisfaction have been observed in recent years: a combined 88% in 2015 and 86% in 2014.

In 2016, job and organization satisfaction were also measured by calculating an average to encompass a more holistic view of the data. When examining satisfaction through this perspective, a moderate increase is seen between 2013 and 2014 for both job and organization satisfaction. However, there was a slight decline in organization satisfaction between 2012 and 2013. An explanation for the drop in organization satisfaction but not job satisfaction may include employee frustrations with stagnant wages that have lingered even as organizations have mostly recovered from the Great Recession as well as higher health care deductibles and prescription co-pays shifted onto employees.

Employees were surveyed about 44 contributors of job satisfaction within the categories of career development, compensation and benefits, employee relationships with management, and work environment. The five factors that employees assessed as the leading job satisfaction contributors were respectful treatment of all employees at all levels, compensation/pay, trust between employees and senior management, job security, and opportunities to use their skills and abilities at work. This executive summary discusses the degrees of importance and satisfaction, along with implications and recommendations for improvement.

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# EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION AND ENGAGEMENT: THE DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY ARE OPEN

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## GREATEST CONTRIBUTORS TO EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION

**38%** of U.S. employees reported that they were very satisfied with their current job, whereas a greater proportion (51%) stated they were satisfied but to a lesser degree, indicating that the majority of U.S. employees are to some extent satisfied with their present job role.

### Respectful treatment of all employees at all levels

Although respectful treatment of all employees seems straightforward and effortless, it has received much attention around the workplace and in society as of late. In the organizational sense, it encompasses a wide variety of challenges given that employee perceptions related to respect touch many facets of the workplace, ranging from diversity and inclusion to prevention of workplace violence and harassment. Building a company culture that explicitly welcomes respect and equality may be more difficult to stress if an organization has a homogeneous workforce or a strong emphasis on the hierarchy of job levels (i.e., substantial power

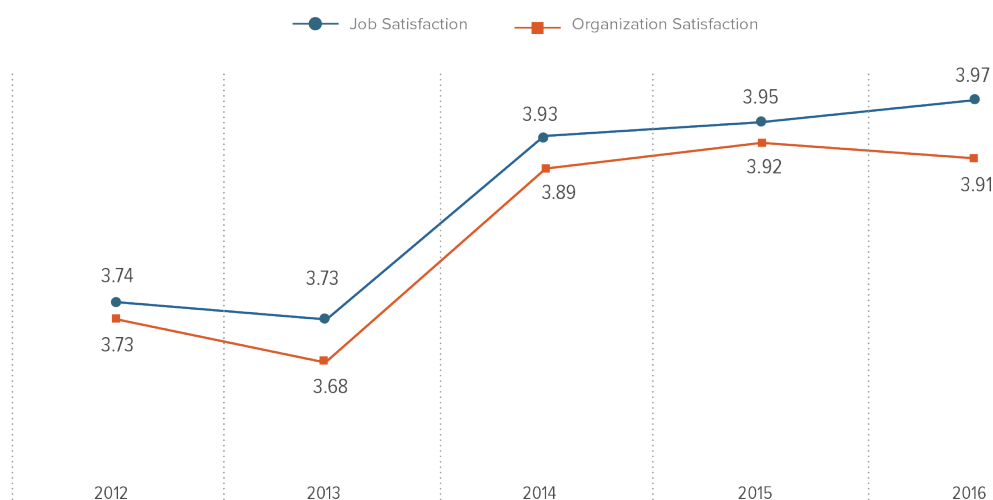
disparities); these risk factors may make organizations more susceptible to creating an environment where harassment exists.<sup>2</sup> Workplace environments that demonstrate fairness and allow employees to freely discuss opposing views and ask questions are most likely to thrive as a result of this factor's importance. The largest percentage of respondents have indicated that respectful treatment of all employees at all levels was a very important contributor to their job satisfaction each year since 2014. In 2016, roughly two-thirds (65%) of employees agreed with this sentiment; however, only 38% of workers were very satisfied with this aspect. Not surprisingly, this aspect reflected the most differences among workforce demographics:

- Female employees (72%) were more likely to report this aspect as a very important contributor to job satisfaction than male employees (57%) were.
- A greater proportion of Millennials (45%) were very satisfied with this aspect compared with Generation Xers (31%).
- Individual contributors (31%) were less likely than executives (52%) to be very satisfied with the level of respect shown to all employees.

Given the high importance of respectful treatment and the disparities between the perceptions of how well respect is given, organizations may want to try the following suggestions:

FIGURE 1

EMPLOYEE JOB AND ORGANIZATION SATISFACTION: 2012 TO 2016



Note: Averages are based on a scale where 1 = "very dissatisfied" and 5 = "very satisfied."  
Source: Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement (SHRM, 2017)

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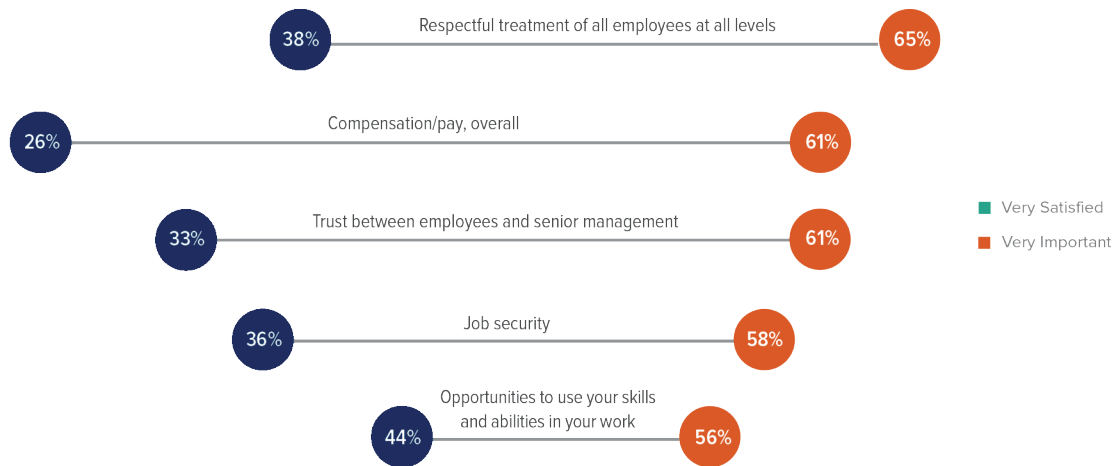


## EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION AND ENGAGEMENT: THE DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY ARE OPEN

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FIGURE 2

GREATEST CONTRIBUTORS TO EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION



Note: n = 572-586. "Not applicable" responses were excluded from this analysis. Data are sorted in descending order by the percentage of respondents who indicated "very important."  
 Source: Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement (SHRM, 2017)

- Gain self-awareness and strive for improvement.** To achieve maximum potential, organizations must recognize the multitude of commonalities and differences among employees and the benefits of diversity. This success begins with self-awareness. At times, unconscious or even conscious biases may cloud judgment or interpretation of a situation. Self-reflection can be a powerful tool to seek understanding because it builds empathy and emotional intelligence. Before acting, employees should take a moment to assess the impact their behavior may have on others and attempt to comprehend opposing viewpoints. Building self-awareness also includes promoting an organizational culture that holds employees accountable to seek resolution by displaying nonjudgment and even vulnerability at times.<sup>3</sup> Organizations that encourage self-awareness and self-reflection among employees will see a positive impact on employees' problem-solving abilities and relationships.
- Consider whether your organization may benefit from a civility policy and/or training.** The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) task force report maintained that encouraging workplace civility and respect could minimize the risk of inappropriate conduct escalating to a level of harassment; however, organizations may face some liability under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) when implementing a civility policy/training.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the enforcement of equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws may outweigh the risks of

### DATA TO ACTION

- Revisit** your organization's core values and discuss specifics about the behaviors that do and do not correspond to those guiding principles.
- Encourage** employees to ask for feedback to assess whether perceptions are accurate.
- Develop** guidelines that provide coaching and parameters on expected behaviors. Hold management accountable to ensure that the behaviors are promoted and followed.
- Build** a business case for customized civility and bystander intervention training to make education and intervention preparation more relevant and meaningful to employees.

violating the NLRA. It is recommended to apply language that is broader, using phrases such as "working in a cooperative manner." Organizations may want to create training programs that teach collaboration and listening skills to improve employees' level of civility. When calling attention to undesirable behaviors, provide suggestions of

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what suitable conduct may look like so that these unwanted behaviors can be substituted.

### • **Create bystander intervention training programs.**

Most often, employees complete training with an emphasis on learning about behaviors that are unacceptable in the workplace; however, teaching employees how to mediate a potential undesirable scenario may help keep workplaces safe and respectful.<sup>5</sup> Many schools and colleges/universities have successfully supplemented their training programs to include bystander intervention to prevent bullying and sexual harassment<sup>6</sup>; thus, it is plausible that this success could be transitioned into organizations. Bystander intervention training may consist of ways to recognize improper behavior and ways to intervene in a safe manner. These programs could help change norms and attitudes, allow for a greater sense of empathy and diffuse responsibility to staff as a whole. In conjunction with civility training, bystander intervention training could reduce offensive behaviors in the workplace.

### Compensation/pay

When applying Maslow's hierarchy of needs, compensation links to employees' most fundamental safety and security needs by offering financial stability. Hence, it is not surprising that research has found that compensation has influence over other organizational outcomes. For instance, satisfaction with one's pay had a negative relationship with turnover intent, meaning that when employees are pleased with their level of compensation, they are less likely to leave the organization and vice versa.<sup>7</sup> Pay satisfaction was tied to pay level, structure and raises. Other research revealed that individual performance pay was consistently linked to satisfaction, and discrete components of individual performance pay (e.g., commissions, bonuses, stock options, tips) also displayed a positive correlation with job satisfaction.<sup>8</sup> The only component of individual performance pay that had a negative correlation was piece rates, a compensation system in which payment is given for each unit produced or action completed. One may argue that commissions are the sales equivalent of piece rates; however, there may be an underlying issue such as job level that may prompt this distinction. Thus, organizations need to bear in mind the differences among employees and tailor their rewards programs accordingly.

Roughly two-thirds (61%) of employees noted compensation/pay as a very important job satisfaction contributor, yet a mere one-quarter (26%) of employees stated they were very satisfied with it, marking this factor with the largest gap at 35 percentage points.

- Millennial employees (37%) were more likely to indicate they were very satisfied with their compensation/pay

compared with Generation Xers (20%) and Baby Boomers (22%).

This year's survey findings were mixed regarding various types of rewards given to employees: although the proportion of employees receiving raises remained consistent with most recent years (62% in 2016, 65% in 2015, 63% in 2014), there was a drop in the percentage of workers who received bonuses compared with prior years (41% in 2016 vs. 50% in 2015 and 2014). In organizations where bonuses were previously awarded, their absence may partially account for the substantial gap between importance and satisfaction with compensation/pay, especially if no explanation or reasoning was provided to employees.

Organizations may want to begin with this basic yet effective tactic to help improve pay satisfaction:

- **Clearly communicate compensation.** Research studies have explored justice and its connection to pay level. Their findings suggest the equality of compensation amounts (distributive justice) and the equality of how those compensation amounts are decided upon (procedural justice) are connected to pay satisfaction.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, a recent study uncovered that informational justice—whether the reasons underlying the resource allocation decision are clearly, truthfully and adequately explained to the affected parties—has a relationship to pay satisfaction as well.<sup>10</sup> As a result, management must make substantial efforts to

### DATA TO ACTION

- **Review** your organization's current compensation philosophy and communication strategy to determine strengths and weaknesses.
- **Benchmark** against compensation surveys to verify whether salaries are competitive with current market rates.
- **Identify** the target audience (e.g., employees as well as their spouses, partners and dependents) if a compensation communication strategy does not exist.
- **Consider** these factors when constructing your compensation communication strategy: the audience's location, employees' work schedules and existing distribution channels.

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develop equity among the methods used to determine pay and deter any ambiguity in how those outcomes were established by communicating with staff in a clear and timely manner. Employees' understanding of the pay structure and its administration is a product of how well managers explain the system and how fair and unbiased the process is. A poor grasp of these procedures could induce adverse employee attitude toward pay.

### Trust between employees and senior management

Building a strong foundation of trust between employees and senior management is critical at any organization. A workplace atmosphere that lacks psychological safety—"the belief that engaging in risky behaviors like voice will not lead to personal harm"<sup>11</sup>—can manifest a variety of damaging outcomes: delayed identification of obstacles due to fear of challenging authorities, declining morale, lack of idea exploration and others. Many studies have found a connection between leadership style and the level of employees' trust in their leaders.<sup>12</sup> Transformational leaders, rather than transactional leaders, were more likely to foster trust from their followers, which, in turn, may initiate a host of additional positive results, including increased organizational commitment, job satisfaction and motivation.<sup>13</sup> Conversely, organizations with transactional leaders struggled to improve. Nevertheless, senior management may be able to restore employees' trust; through efforts such as apologies and policy changes, improvements in loyalty and openness were demonstrated.<sup>14</sup>

Given the numerous benefits that stem from this trust, it should not be surprising that 61% of employees rated this aspect as very important to their job satisfaction. However, only about one-third of employees (33%) were very satisfied with their level of trust toward their organizations.

- Males were less likely to describe managerial trust as very important to their job satisfaction compared with females (56% and 65%, respectively).

In light of the sizable disparity between importance of and satisfaction with this aspect, organizations should strive to close the gap by exploring approaches to strengthen trust between employees and management:

- **Create an open-door policy.** Encourage employees to bring forth comments, questions or grievances and emphasize that there will be no negative consequences for employees who use this policy. One study cited that employees who experienced positive personal incidents were more likely to hold greater perceptions of procedural fairness, which also resulted in higher degrees of satisfaction and probability of staying with the organization.<sup>15</sup> Although organizations cannot predict the

outcome of a complaint, another finding mentions that procedural justice accumulation—an accrual of when one finds equity in multiple methods in which outcomes are determined—may allow workers to tolerate unfavorable conclusions from time to time. Even though employees may not have submitted a complaint themselves, it is likely that they are cognizant of at least some of their employer's procedures to form an opinion; therefore, it is important to keep in mind procedural fairness when constructing processes for an organization's open-door policy. Other points to be mindful of are managers' time dedicated to resolving issues and policy misuse.<sup>16</sup> To minimize frequent interruptions, management should empower workers to initially solve these disputes with their immediate supervisor.

- **Commit to and reinforce openness.** Besides providing formal practices of allowing employees to freely express themselves (e.g., open-door policies, 360° feedback systems), senior management must be able to communicate effectively as well. A study found that managerial openness—rather than just a transformational leadership style—was a more reliable indicator of whether employees felt safe speaking up.<sup>17</sup> Often employees are afraid of limited advancement opportunities and reduced leadership and peer support as repercussions after voicing their opinion; however, senior management must clearly show employees a willingness to change and act based on their feedback. Organizations may want to strengthen the support around speaking up by integrating rewards such as bonuses, recognition or

### DATA TO ACTION

- **Urge** leadership to address any past mistakes or shortcomings that may have contributed to employees' skepticisms. Moving forward, strive for consistency in words and actions to regain employees' trust.
- **Encourage** leadership to get out of their offices and interact with staff to forge better communication channels. Requiring staff to start the discussion may induce anxiety. In addition, closed office doors may create negative associations (e.g., unwanted information such as job loss).
- **Ask** managers to establish specific hours for employees to use the open-door policy to preserve productivity.

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elevated status. Those leaders who promote and visibly display openness and vulnerability are more likely to create an environment in which their employees will follow in their footsteps.<sup>18</sup>

### Job security

Similar to the aforementioned financial stability that compensation/pay fulfills, job security can play a comparable role. Any risks that potentially interfere with the continuity of workers' employment can inflict a significant amount of harm to individuals and organizations alike, in short-term and long-term capacities.<sup>19</sup> The strongest relationships were seen between job security and immediate reactions of job attitudes (job satisfaction and job involvement) and organizational attitudes (organizational commitment and trust), whereas long-term responses to health and work-related behavior varied from weak to moderate strength.

One theory argues that emotional intelligence (EI) determines the coping behavior used to process increased perception of job security; individuals with high EI are better prepared to self soothe and reframe their feelings into a positive manner, whereas individuals with low EI are unable to or can only temporarily pacify the anxieties related to job insecurity.<sup>20</sup> High EI employees may see job insecurity as an opportunity and motivator to try harder, whereas low EI employees are prone to engaging in detachment, self-blaming and wishful thinking.

Nearly three out of five (58%) employees noted that job security was very important to their job satisfaction. However, approximately one out of three (36%) employees were very satisfied with the stability of their employment, a deficit of 22 percentage points. No importance or satisfaction differences between generations, genders or job levels were revealed for this aspect. One explanation may be that all employees want to experience guaranteed employment, yet they do not feel reassured in their roles. Organizations may seek to alleviate some of this insecurity through increased EI:

- **Build emotional intelligence.** Although not completely fixed, EI can be enhanced provided that one is willing to commit to change.<sup>21</sup> HR professionals may begin with helping employees acknowledge their feelings and evaluate whether their response is appropriate for the

situation. It is possible to experience more than one emotion simultaneously as they overlap during the emotional process. Facilitation on pinpointing those feelings that have the largest sway in workers' thought process may be useful. Encourage employees to ask for feedback. Although soliciting feedback is generally difficult for most, this insight is valuable as it can present a more accurate picture of one's strengths and weaknesses.

### DATA TO ACTION

- **Promote** honest communication and offer employees opportunities to voice their concerns about their position.
- **Address** employees' feelings when delivering bad news and follow up with a plan.
- **Seek out** support opportunities for staff through coaching and employee assistance programs; these programs can help improve employees' abilities to recognize, manage and express emotions with management.

### Opportunities to use skills and abilities

One study discovered that employee empowerment and job enrichment had a direct link to job satisfaction and an indirect link to whether an employee leaves the organization; meaning, empowerment and job enrichment influence job satisfaction, which affects turnover intention.<sup>22</sup> Given that turnover can be costly for organizations, retention of key performers is critical. Job enrichment can be described as providing employees with more stimulating work by integrating vertical work functions of that role. By completing more challenging job duties, employees may be more intrinsically motivated as they experience a greater sense of fulfillment.

Nearly three out of five (56%) employees expressed that the opportunity to use their skills and abilities was a very important contributor to job satisfaction, and 44% of employees were very satisfied with these opportunities in their current job.

**Any risks that potentially interfere with the continuity of workers' employment can inflict a significant amount of harm to individuals and organizations alike, in short-term and long-term capacities.**

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**One study discovered that employee empowerment and job enrichment had a direct link to job satisfaction and an indirect link to whether an employee leaves the organization. By completing more challenging job duties, employees may be more intrinsically motivated as they experience a greater sense of fulfillment.**

- Executives (64%) were more likely to be satisfied with opportunities to use their skills and abilities compared with lower-level employees (nonexempt nonmanagement (39%) and nonmanagement/individual contributors (42%)). This disparity in satisfaction is hardly surprising as lower-level employees seldom are the decision makers in what projects they are assigned and, thus, what skills and abilities they use.

Applying solutions proposed below will provide a more realistic outlook of which skills and abilities employees will be able to use in their jobs and may enhance the person-job fit:

- **Conduct a job analysis.** Research has shown that person-job fit has a strong positive correlation to job satisfaction; that is, the better the fit, the higher the employee's level of job satisfaction.<sup>23</sup> To ensure the proper match is found, organizations should create job descriptions that accurately reflect the essential job functions of the role. To do so, organizations must first conduct job analysis activities to delve deeper into those job functions: what is involved, how frequently, in what atmosphere and so on. Job analysis typically includes techniques such as observation, interviewing and conducting questionnaires as a means to gather information about the job (e.g., knowledge, skills, abilities, tools used). Only two out of five employees (41%) have conducted a job analysis at their current organization and an even smaller percentage (15%) have a certification that includes job analysis.<sup>24</sup> Breaking down the critical and necessary job responsibilities of a role could also lead to increased job performance.<sup>25</sup> For example, the dissection of job roles could identify where tasks can be modified to boost effectiveness or efficiency or even prevent injuries caused by miscalculated requirements.<sup>26</sup>

### DATA TO ACTION

- **Use** readily available templates for job analysis. Involve employees in the process by having them conduct a job analysis for their role (they know it best!). Their input will be important as they are the ones completing the job's duties and know what is needed on a daily basis.
- **Start** a pilot program where employees can be nominated or volunteer to participate in gaining new skills and knowledge.
- **Identify** skills and abilities that employees may be underutilizing and discover ways they can be applied.

- **Identify and train employees with potential.** Taking into consideration the expected skills gap ahead, organizations should recognize employees who have the aptitude to fulfill those missing organizational needs. With the investment to teach these employees, turnover intent may lessen as workers recognize the organization's commitment to further their knowledge and skills. Supervisors may allow employees to complete a full cycle of a project series or process by gradually introducing new tasks. Managers may even choose to give employees some independence on how to accomplish the assignments while maintaining accountability. Combining new activities with learned ones will prevent employees from engaging in too many repetitive tasks.

# 5 Ways to Focus At Work

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

business leaders and prospects over Twitter DM, Facebook, and LinkedIn messaging.

**2. Whiteboard your tasks.** I list everything I have to do each day, with no exceptions. A small, 2-foot-square whiteboard sits on my desk. All my short-term responsibilities are listed on it, in the order of when they're due: sales calls, proposals, meetings, contracts, and more. A larger, 6-foot-square whiteboard is mounted above my desk, listing my long-term responsibilities: business growth, prospecting, website changes, and so on.

These lists stare at me all day. I update them constantly and stick to them religiously. When I find myself thinking about a task other than the one I'm supposed to be working on, I glance up, make sure it's listed for me to tackle in the future, and immediately switch back to the task at hand. And to keep myself focused only on one task at a time, I make sure nothing else is in my line of sight. I have a mini-cabinet on my desk to hide magazines, books, gifts from clients, and other potentially distracting objects.

**3. Structure your days.** I do long-term tasks only on Wednesdays. On the other four days, the short-term whiteboard rules my schedule. I don't give myself the option to improvise or change my mind about this (unless there's an emergency). I'm strict with myself, because if I allow myself to shift back and forth between the two whiteboards at any time, I'll just keep bouncing around among different tasks and not get anything done.

Some people structure their

work differently — switching to long-term tasks every other day, halfway through the day, or every other week. Find the pace that works for you, and keep to it.

**4. Never multitask during a conversation.** When you're not focused on the person you're speaking with, they know it. If you're on the phone, they can hear it in your voice and inflection. If you're meeting in person, they pick up on it through subtle, or sometimes not so subtle, cues.

When I'm speaking with someone in a professional setting, I don't allow myself to do anything else at all. I can't. If I so much as open an email during a call, I'll miss what the other person is saying entirely. I prefer video conferencing over speaking on the phone — it engages me visually, reducing the risk that my attention will wander. If I'm talking to someone

in person, I set aside my phone and other distractions.

I've also learned to "scan" conversations for key points. As the person is talking, I pick up on certain lines and phrases — the points I would write down as a summary of what they're saying. It keeps me listening with intent.

As a result, people know they've got my undivided attention — something rare these days. They like talking with me, which matters a lot, since my work is all about relationships.

**5. Have somebody always holding you accountable.** Even when you take all these steps, there may be times your mind starts wandering. That's why it's helpful to have someone who knows your struggles and can help get you back on track.

For me, that's my wife, a partner in my business. She keeps an eye on my whiteboards as well as my calendar. But it doesn't have to be someone that

close. It can be an assistant, a colleague, or even a boss.

People who are similarly invested in your business want it, and you, to succeed. And there's reciprocity — you have their back, they have yours. You can hold each other accountable in different ways. Maybe you're teaching them how to be more confident speaking in front of a group, or sharing some of your savvy with a new technology. We all have things to work on.

Opening up to colleagues or bosses about your struggle to focus can be nerve-racking, because no one wants to be judged. But in my experience, if you give people insight into your world and your unique ways of getting work done, they're likely to open up to you about their challenges as well. It leads to a more empathic, collaborative, and human work environment. ☺☺





things from you. Role models are inspirational because they allow us to learn vicariously through their experiences. They stimulate new ideas, and provide a glimpse into the future.

Having role models who are a few years or levels ahead of you can help you rethink your own situation and what's possible for yourself. Make a list of people who have qualities that you admire. Aim for a few qualities rather than perfection. You don't need to establish a formal relationship with your role model. It's fine to observe and learn from them from afar. They don't even need to know that they're serving that function.

## **NARROW YOUR CHOICES.**

Sometimes we lack motivation, because we're not sure what

to do – stay in a job, leave for a different one, try out a new career, move departments, ask for a promotion. Too many options are paralyzing, as psychology professor Barry Schwartz discusses in *The Paradox of Choice*. Too often, we feel overwhelmed and do nothing.

We can boost our motivation by narrowing down our options, making it easier to act on them. We like to know we have a plan and are working toward it. If you feel stuck, try writing down all of your options and selecting the three you're most excited about in order. Then allocate time to work toward your top choices.

These aren't just actions to take when you're in a slump. It's important to keep them up even when you're feeling inspired so you can stay that way.

Inspiration doesn't have to feel elusive. It's in your capacity

to increase your opportunities for new insights and ideas. As Jack London said: "Don't loaf and invite inspiration; light out

after it with a club, and if you don't get it you will nonetheless get something that looks remarkably like it." ✍️

## **From the CEO's Desk »**

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in order to assess and improve your individual and collective accuracy. You might learn that you are good at assessing technical ability, but less accurate in your evaluation of leadership skills. Or that a colleague is too lenient on some criteria and too stringent on others.

This validation technique is analogous to artificial intelligence in which a neural network learns pattern recognition over time, for example, to read handwriting. For learning to occur over repeated trials, there has to be feedback in the system, wherein the computer makes a "guess" about what letter is represented and then gets feedback about whether it is right or wrong. If there are no "criteria

for correctness" it makes it difficult if not impossible for the computer to learn how to read different handwriting. Analogously, if you don't revisit your predictive "read" on candidates and validate it against their subsequent performance, you won't be able to learn how to better evaluate different candidates.

When used properly and consistently, interview scorecards help level the playing field for candidates, create a quantitative basis for comparison and validation, and enable you and your organization to make better hiring decisions over time. ✍️



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Left to right – Marcia Erickson (Zing! Recruiter), Caleb Capozella (Shining Star of the Year), Tracy Benzinger (Zing! Regional Manager).

Peoplelink Group is pleased to announce Caleb Capozella is our 2017 Shining Star of the Year. Caleb has been in Regulatory Affairs with Zimmer Biomet for over a year. He reports to Zing! Recruiting, Peoplelink's professional staffing division.

Caleb has moved from an Associate to a Specialist in Regulatory, performing remarkably due to his vast understanding of FDA and International Regulations for the Orthopedic Industry. Caleb's focus is international device registration. He coordinates FDA regulatory submissions in foreign countries to help capture expanding markets. His supervisor is happy to have him as a part of the team and states that his positive attitude and support of

Zimmer Biomet's international markets is greatly appreciated.

Caleb is a Notre Dame graduate with a Master of Science in Management. He has a Bachelors in Biomedical Engineering and studied abroad at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Caleb won the H.B. Atabek award – Outstanding Biomedical Engineer of his graduating class – in 2014. He is presently a Tau Beta Pi Member and is a member of the Engineering Honor Society.

While on the job, he enjoys gathering, organizing, and presenting information efficiently. In his free time, he enjoys swimming, eSports, and comedy.

Congratulations, Caleb!



## Proper Planning Keeps Telecommuting From Crashing

By Laime Vaitkus

Is telecommuting on a collision course with uncompromising business realities, or can working remotely still work to the benefit of employers and employees alike?

Earlier this year, IBM announced it was eliminating telecommuting for segments of its employee populations; Yahoo had done the same for all of its workers four years earlier. These were eye-popping examples of companies that went full throttle with telecommuting, only to slam on the brakes after discovering that business was suffering.

What companies need to understand is that the key to a successful telecommuting and flextime program is planning, according to Stephanie Penner, a partner with the consulting firm Mercer.

IBM's shift on telecommuting doesn't represent total backtracking, but a move away from broad application of the program, according to Penner. It's an eye opener for any company; telecommuting might not be the right thing for all employees, and it's important to recognize when it's not working, she said.

### Tailor Telecommuting

Flexible work schedules and telecommuting are popular programs that can be very successful at helping employees find



work-life balance, but it might not be right for everybody, according to Penner.

"Technology allows for working virtually across jobs. Figuring out which jobs and which groups can work mostly remotely is another matter. Companies have to think about what they are trying to achieve from these different groups," Penner said.

Some organizations might find employees who are constantly on the computer, and they can easily telecommute. Other employees might have positions that require more face time with customers, both internally and externally, making it more difficult for them to work remotely, Penner said.

Companies should examine both the job responsibilities and the connections that each particular job has with activities, and whether those are compatible with working remotely, according to Penner. Managers should schedule

regular check-ins with remote employees, keep them updated, and ensure they are on track with work goals, she added.

### Employees Want Options

Penner cited three main reasons that issues such as telecommuting and flexibility have come to the forefront: technology, demographics, and changing expectations. The desire for flexibility and work-life balance is strong among employees—especially millennials—and technology has loosened the shackles that kept workers chained to the office.

Organizations must look at the entire value proposition for employees if they want to get the most out of people, according to Dan Harris, an analyst with Quantum Workplace, a software company that focuses on employee engagement. "Some companies

think of employees as people with needs, others think of employees as robots with benefits," he said.

Employees who don't feel as if the organization is meeting their needs—including work-life balance—are more likely to leave, according to a survey from Quantum Workplace.

"Employees want their voices heard and opinions counted. They want to know that the company supports health, wellbeing, flexibility, and their life

outside of work. Employees are looking for that work-life balance," Harris said.

According to a Pearl Meyer survey on workplace flexibility, roughly half of companies have formal telecommuting policies for some or all employees, and another 20 percent have informal policies.

Rebecca Toman, manager of survey operations for the executive compensation consulting firm, recommended setting guidelines on telecommuting, rather than approaching the issue in an ad hoc or informal way. Different employees may have different reasons for wanting to work remotely, but they can all benefit from clear guidance under a formal policy that sets expectations regarding hours and other requirements for telecommuters, Toman said.

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# Court officially kills Obama-era OT rule, but changes are coming

By Jared Bilski

While the Obama-era changes to the DOL overtime rule had been on life support for some time, a recent court ruling officially euthanized the controversial changes. That means HR pros can officially scrub the \$47,476 salary threshold from their collective memories.

And, for the time-being, they can also forget about a flood of newly overtime-eligible employees.

In the recent ruling, a federal court just effectively said the DOL overstepped and set the salary threshold so high that it had effectively made employees' duties, functions and tasks irrelevant.

And the agency didn't actually have the authority under the FLSA to do that, the court added.

Finally, the court said the DOL's OT provision that automatically escalated the salary threshold every three years was also unlawful.

## How we got here

With all of the changes, revisions and drama surrounding the OT rule, it's understandable if you don't even remember how we got here in the first place. It all started last summer. As HR Morning reported, twenty-one states joined in a federal lawsuit that charges the Obama administration with overstepping its authority in rewriting the rules, which raise the overtime salary threshold from \$23,600 to \$47,500 per year. The suit claims the change will place an undue burden on

state budgets.

Then, after the states' suit was filed, a similar suit was filed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business groups. Both lawsuits were filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas.

After the lawsuits were filed, Judge Amos L. Mazzant, III, of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, issued a temporary injunction, which essentially halted the implementation of the DOL rule.

In issuing the injunction, Mazzant said the DOL had an uphill battle to climb in order to prove it had the statutory authority to issue such a rule.

Mazzant ruled the DOL exceeded its authority by raising the overtime salary limit so significantly (from \$23,660 to \$47,476). He said the DOL's rule changes, essentially, made the exemption test a one-factor test based on salary alone. He said the changes basically eliminated the duties test, and he said the DOL must examine the duties of employees to determine who falls within the FLSA's overtime exemption.



By issuing the injunction, Mazzant signaled that the lawsuit against the DOL had a significant chance of succeeding.

Of course, now the lawsuit has succeeded and the overtime rule change drama has been put to a rest — for the time being.

## What happens now

With the OT rule employers had been prepping for effectively dead, can firms go back to operating as if the current 2004 version of the FLSA is the law of the land? For the time being they can.

However, the DOL is already requesting info to draft a new proposed rule.

And while it's safe to assume the DOL won't try to double the minimum salary threshold, a more modest increase — \$33,000 has been tossed around frequently — will likely be on the table.

In addition, the agency is taking a closer look at the duties tests — something that had generally been pushed to the back burner with the Obama-era OT changes.

**Bottom-line:** Don't get too comfortable with the current OT exemptions; changes are likely coming soon.

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# Expert: Proposed Class-Action Lawsuit Against Google Could Reform Pay Disparities in Other Fields

By Aliah D. Wright

Should the discrimination lawsuit launched against Google by three female former employees reach class-action status, one labor law expert says, it could kick-start pay disparity reform across and beyond the technology industry.

The lawsuit was filed in San Francisco, coming on the heels of an investigation of the tech company by the U.S. Department of Labor, which has accused Google of extreme gender pay disparity.

"Class action is the principal vehicle through which discrimination violations can be remedied," said William Gould, a former chairman of the National Labor Relations Board who teaches law at Stanford University. He told *Wired.com*, "Corporations pay attention to the potential of monetary liability, and money relief produces reforms better than anything else that exists."

According to news reports, this could be the first class-action sex bias lawsuit against the search engine giant.

The former Google employees—Kelly Ellis, Holly Pease and Kelli Wisuri—claim that Google discriminates against female employees by not paying them in an equal manner to male employees in violation of multiple California laws, including the California Equal Pay Act.



Their suit cites as evidence the Department of Labor's findings that there were "six to seven standard deviations between pay for men and women in nearly every job classification in 2015" at Google. The agency said there was a "one in a 100 million chance that the disparity is occurring randomly."

Google is one of several tech companies to face recent allegations of discrimination:

- Uber. in June said it would make changes after a former female engineer wrote a blog post saying the ride-hailing app condoned the sexual harass-

ment of its female employees. Several of the company's senior executives left in the aftermath.

- Earlier this year, the Labor Department sued Oracle America, saying it paid white men more money than minorities and women in similar roles. In 2015, Twitter and Microsoft were also sued by former female employees who alleged pay discrimination.
- Last year, Qualcomm Inc. also settled a similar lawsuit brought by its former female employees for \$19.5 million. In the suit filed Sept. 14, the women say Google broke California laws

prohibiting unlawful and unfair business practices and requiring workers to receive the same pay for similar work. The trio's proposed class action is intended to represent women who have worked at Google in California since 2013.

According to Reuters, "The plaintiffs in Thursday's lawsuit are a former Google software engineer, a former communications specialist and a former manager who worked in various roles at the Mountain View, Calif.-based company. They say Google pays women in California less than men who perform similar work and assigns female workers jobs that are less likely to lead to promotions."

Kelly Dermody, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, said in a statement that "while Google has been an industry-leading tech innovator, its treatment of female employees has not entered the 21st century."

Google denied the claims made in the suit.

Said Google spokeswoman Gina Scigliano: "If we ever see individual discrepancies or problems, we work to fix them, because Google has always sought to be a great employer for every one of our employees." She said decisions about employment are vetted to guard against gender bias.

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# FMLA lawsuit: Seven stupid words that could cost this employer big

By Jared Bilski

Wells Fargo had mountains of well-documented evidence to back up its decision to fire a poorly performing employee, but a simple phrase by a clueless manager could wind up making all that evidence moot.

And if the lawsuit — *Stewart v. Wells Fargo* — does cost the organization big, perhaps it can serve as a lesson to other employers on what not to do.

## A slow, steady decline

Here's some background on the suit: After being hired by Wells Fargo in March of 2012 as a sales consultant, the plaintiff, Stewart, started a slow and steady performance decline, beginning with an initial review showing she under-performed in a number of areas including meeting the annual sales goal.

Her performance declined in the first quarter of 2013, and her supervisor claimed he received a number of complaints about her work. She was initially issued a "not uncommon" informal warning by her supervisor for her performance and low sales. Then, when her performance didn't improve, she was given a formal performance warning. That warning cautioned Stewart she could be fired if her performance didn't improve.

## FMLA requested

After receiving the formal warning, Stewart let her boss know she was

having health issues — myelopathy with doctor-recommended surgery — that she'd need to resolved.

Then, after receiving a mid-year performance review showing she was "Off Track" in every single performance category, Stewart requested FMLA leave for neck surgery, a request that was immediately approved. She returned after five weeks but was warned by her supervisor she was "close to being terminated."

Less than two months after she returned from leave, Stewart's supervisor sent an email to HR and his own manager saying, "I believe we need to move to termination as soon as possible for several reasons."

Stewart's supervisor then went on to list a number of valid, performance-based reasons for her termination. But, for some inexplicable reason, he added the firing "was justified because 'Debby submits a request for medical leave.'"

Following the supervisor's suggestion, Stewart was fired "for continued poor performance," which prompted her to file an FMLA retaliation lawsuit. Wells Fargo then attempted to get the suit dismissed.

## Two critical safeguards

As you can probably guess, a court refused to dismiss Stewart's

lawsuit despite ample evidence her performance was sub-par.

Essentially, the supervisor's ill-fated comments were what sunk the company. But it wasn't just the supervisor's stupid comments in the email that the court had a problem with.

As employment attorney and *FMLA Insights* founder Jeff Nowak points out, the supervisor not only unnecessarily referred to FMLA in an email suggesting termination, he also stated in his court deposition he was "not really familiar with FMLA leave" because he was "on the front line."

To avoid a fate like Wells Fargo, Nowak urges employers to keep the follow in mind:

**1. 'Front line' managers should never be 'not really familiar with FMLA leave.'** Because managers and supervisors are often the first to find out when FMLA is in play, they need to be prepared. Therefore, managers must to be

trained on how to handle leave under both your company's policy as well as federal and state law. It's often worthwhile to shell out some cash for this training to save hundreds of thousands on a lawsuit down the road.

**Key:** The training should remind managers — in no uncertain terms — that any comments about a staffer's leave (even innocuous ones) are prohibited.

**2. Pay attention to similarly situated employees.** Another reason Wells Fargo couldn't get this case dismissed: A number of other employees had also missed their sales goals but hadn't been fired like Stewart. Before firing any employees on or just returning from leave, compare those workers to other similarly situated folks within the company. Are the other employees under-performing in any way? If so, you could leave yourself open to a lawsuit if you pull the trigger on the termination.

