



# How to GET someone to **put AWAY** their phone **and** actually *listen* AND MORE



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November 2018

## How to COPE with Secondhand Stress



By Rebecca Knight

It's a well-known phenomenon: emotions are contagious. If you work with people who are happy and optimistic, you're more likely to feel the same. The flipside is true, too; if your colleagues are constantly stressed out, you're more likely to suffer. How do you avoid secondhand stress? Can you distance yourself from your coworkers' emotions without ostracizing them? And should you try to improve their wellbeing?

### What the Experts Say

First, the bad news: secondhand stress is nearly inescapable. "We live in a hyper-connected world, which means we are more at risk for negative social contagion than at any point in history," says Shawn Achor, lecturer, researcher, and author of *The Happiness Advantage*. "Secondhand stress comes from verbal, nonverbal, and written communication, which means we can pick it up even via cellphone." But the good news is that we are not helpless, says Susan David, a founder of the Harvard/McLean Institute of Coaching and author of *Emotional Agility*. "There are many specific skills you can learn, behaviors you can practice, and tiny tweaks you can make in your environment that will be helpful in dealing with secondhand stress," she says. Here are some strategies.

### Identify the Source

Before you wage war on secondhand stress, you must acknowledge that some stress can be good,

says David. "You don't get to have a meaningful career, raise a family, lead, or make changes in an organization without some level of stress." If certain members of your team are strained, David recommends, "trying to understand what's really going on" rather than "stressing about their stress." Ask them to describe what they're experiencing. "Find out whether they're anxious about [their workload] being more than they can cope with or whether it's more of a nonspecific discomfort." David says that, "When people accurately label their emotions, they're more likely to identify the source of their stress and do something about it."

### Offer Assistance

It's understandable why talking to your overstretched, stressed-out colleague might make you feel nervous. But Achor says you can keep your own emotions in check by being empathetic. "By expressing compassion for this person's concern and then engaging them in positive conversation — either to generate a solution to their problem or shift their focus away from it — we often positively influence them instead of solely letting them negatively affect us." David agrees that the power to influence goes both ways. "You and everyone else are doing the best you can with who you are, what you've got, and the resources you've been given." So, be helpful, she advises. Ask your colleague, "Is there anything I can do to help you move that project forward? Is there a way we might achieve a more constructive outcome?"



## Take Breaks from Certain Colleagues

Achor admits that it's not always easy to be compassionate toward your office's Negative Nancy. If you feel the person is starting to take a toll on you, you can "take strategic retreats" and limit your contact with anxiety-inducing colleagues. "Quarantine them" from work life as much as possible "until you can strengthen yourself," Achor says. David concurs. "If your conversations with certain colleagues tend to 'center on stress or negativity about the organization,' you may need to step back temporarily. 'Recognize which interactions are not helpful,'" she says.

## Cultivate Optimism

Another strategy for coping with secondhand stress is to "surround yourself with positive people," says Achor. Positive emotions can be just as contagious as negative ones. Make an effort to promote optimism in the ranks, too. "Most people make the mistake of trying to fix the most stressed-out, negative person in the office." Instead, he recommends acting as a role model by exuding positivity for "the people in the middle who could be tipped positive or negative." Doing so "tilts the social script" toward optimism and increases "the number of positive forces" in the workplace. Your goal, says David, is to "create an environment where people who are on the border" feel confident about the organization. You don't want a situation where "one individual's stress is the only voice in the room."

## Remember the Big Picture

Even if your job is manageable it can quickly become a source of anxiety "if everyone else around you is stressed" and vocal about it, according to David. "People often go on about their 'have-to' goals — as in 'I have to go to this meeting.' Or 'I have to be on this client call,'" she says. Grousing about a large and looming to-do list is seen as a badge of honor, and the complaining often catches

on. But, she says, it's dangerous. Categorizing your workload this way "creates a prison around yourself." She recommends turning your "have-to" goals into "want-to" goals. For instance, "'I value collaboration, and I want to attend this meeting because it will facilitate that.' Or, 'I value generating a high-quality product for my client, so I want to be present on this call.' It's powerful realignment for individuals who are affected by secondhand stress," she says. Think about "your career objectives" and "connect your obligations with something positive."

## Take Care of Yourself

One of the best ways to ward off stress — be it second- or firsthand — is to take impeccable care of your health. Eating well and getting plenty of exercise and sleep are critical to keeping stress at bay. So, too, is practicing gratitude, says Achor. "Thinking of things you are grateful for sounds trite, but it gives you a storehouse of positives to help neutralize and counterbalance any negatives you are inevitably going to experience," says Achor. Importantly, he adds, you must share what you have learned. He says he's often surprised by the number of leaders who tell him "that they journal positive experiences, or do yoga, or meditate, and yet they never mention it to the very people on their teams they are trying to motivate." This is a travesty, he says. "If you have a positive habit and it works for you, tell everyone."

## PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER:

- Show compassion to your stressed-out colleagues. Rather than getting agitated, ask how you can help.
- Don't try to fix the most stressed-out person your team; instead, model optimism and positivity.
- Surround yourself with positive people to benefit from their secondhand confidence and optimism.
- Take strategic retreats from negative colleagues when necessary.





## GREG SHEMANEK

Director of IT Staffing Division, Madison, WI



**How long have you been in the staffing business?** I've worked in staffing for 15 years. The first three years were in finance and accounting staffing. Since 2006, it's been all IT!

**What was your first job and what do you remember most about it?** In high school, I started working in a restaurant as a dish washer. The thing that I remember most is having to wash the disgusting soup containers that had been on the stove for hours!

**Who was the worst boss you ever had and why?** I won't name names or companies, but the worst boss I ever had showed up late, left early and didn't match the effort of the staff. It was hard to follow someone that believed more in managing than leading and didn't show the effort themselves.

**What motivates you each day to sell and service your clients?** Our competition. This industry has someone looking to take our market share at every turn. On the flip side, we have an opportunity to do the same back to them. That chase is what keeps me motivated.

**What makes you successful as a manager?** This is probably a better question for my team, but the fact that I've done their job in the past gives me credibility with the group. Also, the ability to relate to them and understand the natural ups and downs of working in this industry.

**What is the best advice you could give to other staff members?** Stay humble and never lose that competitive edge and take your book of business for granted. As I said earlier, there is always someone ready to step in and take it from you!

**What is your favorite movie?** Probably "Miracle".  
**Drink?** Drink would have to be coffee, although some of my teammates would probably disagree.

**If you could have any car you wanted, what would it be?** A flying one. My commute is getting worse daily.

**What is your home city?** Madison, WI. **What is the greatest feature about you home city?** I've lived in Chicago, LA, and Phoenix, and nothing compares to Madison. There is always something for everyone, no matter the season. Yes, even winter. Being a huge Wisconsin Badgers fan, I'd have to say the university and all of the opportunity it offers is the greatest feature!

**How do you unwind when you're not at the office?** Either on the golf course with friends, travelling, or hanging out at home with my wife and 13 year-old twins.

**What do people like most about you?** Depends on who you ask!



## The Magic Number

**The most productive meetings have fewer than 8 people in attendance.**

**T**HERE ARE MANY PROBLEMS WITH the way most meetings are run. One of the most political is the invite list. Deciding who to include can be tough but too many managers default to including everyone. In an effort to not make anyone feel left out, they unknowingly decrease the quality of the meeting. Robert Sutton, a professor of organizational behavior at Stanford University, looked at the research on group size and concluded that the most productive meetings contain only five to eight people. Why? There is a tipping point beyond which the quality of the conversation begins to erode.

**When well-intended managers are too inclusive with their meeting invites:**

- There is not enough time for everyone to participate in the conversation.
- Rich back-and-forth debate is replaced by shallow comments.
- Information-sharing and catch-ups distract from addressing higher priority issues.
- People become more guarded and less candid.
- Tough topics and decisions are not put on the agenda, then are dealt with off-line instead.

As a result, people often lose respect for the meeting which leads to less preparation, participation, and action. It can become a vicious downward cycle. Smaller groups, on the other hand, help build a sense of intimacy that opens the floor to a meaningful and candid discussion. Fewer people means more time to listen to and consider the perspective of each team member. Clarity and candor emerge. Alignment follows.

**First, tell your team that you're making a change.**

Be transparent. Let them know that, moving forward, your meetings are going to be smaller with the intention of making them more effective. You are aware of how much time and energy everyone spends in meetings, and you want to implement a strategy that will yield the best results. Tell them that the research says smaller groups lead to richer discussions and better decisions. While it may take some time, you intend to experiment with meeting size and use this theory as a touchstone.

**Be thoughtful with your invite list.** To make sure you have the right people in the room, you have to know specifically what you're going to address. Have a clear agenda and make sure you've allotted each topic of discussion enough time. From there, ask yourself: Who must be present for the discussion to yield results? Add attendees only if you think they will add value to the conversation or gain value by being there.



**To avoid confusion**, share the criteria by which you will extend invitations with your team. Explain it is based on:

- Who has the most knowledge about the topic of discussion
- Who will have a lot to do with the implementation
- Who will be directly impacted
- Who might learn from participating

**If your team is hesitant**, the below practices may help them embrace this shift:

- Extend permission for people to ask to be included. Err on granting permission if people present a solid reason for attending.
- Extend permission for people to decline to attend. Let people know that you trust them to make the right choices about how they spend their time.
- In every meeting, make sure someone takes minutes for people who are not in attendance.

**Be clear with your team about their responsibilities — both those who are in attendance and those who are not.** Encourage those present to actively participate by doing the following:

- Take ownership of their perspectives: perspective shapes participation.
- Practice focused listening: be attentive, patient, nonjudgmental.
- Practice focused speaking: be clear, concise, relevant.
- Practice self-awareness: ask for the information they need, be thoughtful in their responses.

Remind participants to take into consideration the perspectives of those who are not present.

- What questions would they ask?
- What would they like to be informed about?
- What would they like to be consulted on?
- What actions would they like to be involved in going forward?
- What should be communicated to them afterwards?

Lastly, if members of your team decide to decline their invitation to the meeting, make it clear that they need to:

- Review the agenda.
- Supply any relevant information they possess to someone who will be in attendance.
- Review the meeting minutes and check in with attendees about updates afterwards.
- Take on projects the leader assigns them.
- Align with the decisions that are made.

**Measure your successes.** Once you've implemented these changes into the structure of your meetings, track and manage how effective your meetings are and how your team is handling the change. Collect feedback and continue tweaking until you've nailed down the system that works best for your organization.

Keeping meetings to eight or fewer people is a guiding principle to help you be more deliberate about who attends. With skilled facilitation and good meeting practices, it's possible to have effective meetings of twenty people or more. But that should be the exception, not the rule. Ultimately, you may have less people in the meetings themselves, but your team — and your company — will benefit as a whole.



**Antinish McLaughlin**  
ALABAMA AUTOMOTIVE

## Shining Star OF THE YEAR • 2018

Peoplelink is pleased to announce that Antinish McLaughlin has been chosen as our Shining Star of the Year! She has been a Relief Team Lead with Sustained Quality for over 3 years. She previously reported to the Alabama Automotive branch of Peoplelink. Through her dedication and dependability, she achieved a full time position with Sustained Quality, Peoplelink Group's quality services arm.

In her role as Relief Team Lead, Antinish is responsible for starting jobs, including training team members and answering questions. According to Antinish's supervisor, Lisa Gilbreath, the quality of her work and her attendance are flawless as is her ability to adapt in an ever changing environment. She is a true team player, coming in early and staying late whenever she is needed.

While on the job, Antinish takes pride in completing projects. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, playing basketball, and cooking.

**Congratulations to Antinish for being our Shining Star of the Year!**

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## How to Get Someone to

# PUT

# AWAY

by Joseph Grenny  
and Kelly Andrews

their  
phone  
and **ACTUALLY  
LISTEN**



**N**O, IT'S NOT JUST YOU. If you've ever doubted that you had your boss's full attention while her laptop is open in front of her, stop doubting. In spite of her protests that "I'm listening, go ahead...", she wasn't. Decades ago, research settled the question of whether you and I can do two things at once. We can't. But emerging research shows that even the simple presence of a cell phone — much less its glowing screen and constant beeps — interrupts our ability to connect.

The problem is that manners haven't caught up with technology. In one online survey, my colleagues and I found that nearly 9 out of 10 people say that at least once a week, their friends or family stop paying attention to them in favor of something happening on their digital devices. And 1 in 4 say these interruptions have caused a serious rift with a friend or family member.

So, what do you do when faced with these interruptions? According to another VitalSmarts survey, not much. Only 1 in 10 people speak up to the offender, while the vast majority remain silent by either ignoring the behavior (37%), giving dirty looks or showing disapproval in other nonverbal ways (26%), or simply walking away (14%).

Too many of us are waiting for social norms to naturally evolve and catch up with a raft of novel social situations we face. But they won't. Norms develop when a critical mass of people begin to confront those who violate them. Each time someone is called out, not only do they learn, everyone who witnesses the awkward moment takes mental notes as well: "Note to self: Answering my phone in the middle of a funeral does not make me popular."

So how can we accelerate this necessary change, especially in the workplace? Let's say, for example, you're frustrated with coworkers who interrupt you to answer phone calls or texts. Or you are tired of presenting in a business meeting to people who are checking their emails.

It starts with speaking up. And though it may seem awkward and uncomfortable, our collective response to these behaviors will establish new norms of modern courtesy. Here are a few ways to begin the process.

- ☐ **Discuss the data.** If you're trying to change norms in a group, you might begin by sharing the "why." Share the studies like the one we cited above. If people aren't convinced about the impact on social connection, show them the evidence that the presence of a cell



phone impairs productivity too. Don't raise this kind of discussion after obvious transgressions when team members might feel shamed or defensive. Lightening the mood and having fun with the situation can make the issue easier to discuss. Engage the group in conversation about the upsides and downsides of having tempting devices lying tantalizingly in view during attempts to generate high-quality dialogue. Propose ground rules like, "Be totally present" and "Keep the phone in the bag."

- ⓐ **Make it personal.** If the norm you're trying to change is with a single individual (boss, spouse, friend), don't bludgeon them with data. Make it personal. Once again, don't raise the issue while they're devouring their phone. Wait until you're not feeling diminished and they won't feel shamed. Then say something like, "I've been noticing that I feel much different about my conversations with people when I or they are semi-distracted by technology. I'd like to both make a commitment to you and ask for a commitment from you. When I'm talking with you, I want to give you my full attention. And I'd like to ask for the same. And if it's not a good time for you to focus completely, I'll wait until it works for you to do that. Would that work for you?"

- ⓑ **Hold the boundary.** Now comes the hard part. You have to adhere to the norm — and speak up when others cross it. That means that if you sneak a peek at a device in a way you agreed not to, own up to it. And the instant you see others do the same, be prepared with a non-punitive, but crystal-clear acknowledgement of the violation. If you're trying to change a group norm, ask each member of the group to join you in owning the change. Agree on a simple and clear phrase like, "Scott, tech-check" — as a way of reminding Scott that this is a no-tech time. In a one-on-one setting, try something like, "Looks like you want to check your email. Would you like to do this later?" Be prepared for ruffled feathers, an annoyed look, or a defensive response the first few times you address violations. But have confidence it won't take long before manners align with the new norm.

Today's technology allows us to quickly and effectively communicate with a large network of friends and acquaintances we would not have access to otherwise. While there are great benefits to these advancements, they should not trump social norms of respect, courtesy, and politeness. It's time we learned to address these interruptions and build mutual understanding of their appropriate use in our life.



## COMPANIES SHIFT STRATEGIES TO COMPETE FOR TALENT

### 30% hire contingent labor | SIA

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Competition for talent is causing shifts in corporate strategy, according to a recently released talent acquisition study. It is also the source of disagreements among business functions regarding their companies' approaches to talent acquisition.

The study found 30% of companies hire contingent labor across all job levels, including 24% of senior roles, 28% of manager level roles, 32% of individual contributors and 41% of entry-level talent. This contingent labor includes temporary employees, independent contractors, consultants, interim executives and gig workers. The proportion of contingent labor in the total workforce is significantly higher in Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Middle East than in the US, Canada and Europe, according to the report.

#### Other key findings include:

**C-Suite is the most optimistic:** C-suite leaders are two times more likely than business leaders to think that their organization's strategic talent acquisition priorities are highly effective and 20% more likely than HR leaders to believe they will play a key role in talent decisions in the future.

**Technology implementation is not a priority:** Only 10% of companies surveyed identified new technology implementation as a priority for talent acquisition. As the technology market evolves and solutions become more intuitive, HR is more focused on finding solutions that can help improve quality and experience and less focused on implementing that technology. These companies are often using partners for implementation and ongoing support.

**Total talent acquisition is a priority for every stakeholder:** Ninety percent of respondents believe that "Total Talent Acquisition" needs to be a priority for their organization. As the demand for contingent workers increases, this more holistic view of talent will help organizations prepare for the future and help to align all stakeholders under one common objective. Currently, 68% of HR leaders believe they have ownership over total talent acquisition, while 65% of procurement leaders believe they do.

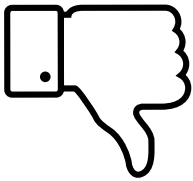
**HR and business are more closely aligned:** 2015 research found a significant gap between how the business and HR perceived talent acquisition priorities. In 2018, the gap has narrowed as business leaders and HR leaders are more aligned in priorities, effectiveness, metrics and technology.

**Diversity and inclusion programs need more support:** Only about 20% of C-suite leaders rated diversity and inclusion a priority, likely because they are not always included in these conversations — making it difficult to implement strategies and get buy-in for solutions to support attracting, hiring and retaining a more diverse workforce.

**Candidate communication falls short:** Stakeholders identified candidate experience as one of the most important metrics for success, yet most companies fall short when communicating with candidates. Companies are either not providing the status to candidates during the application process, not following up during the hiring process, or relying solely on email as a form of communication. Only 1% of candidates surveyed indicated that they received a text from a recruiter during the hiring process, and only 50% of candidates said they heard back from a company "sometimes."

*The study surveyed more than 1,100 C-level executives, HR leaders, procurement leaders and business leaders in North America, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and APAC. The surveys were conducted in July and August 2018 and the companies included have 1,500 or more employees.*

## HR News



### ACLU files complaint, says Facebook discriminates with job ads

by Staffing Industry Analysts

The American Civil Liberties Union filed charges against Facebook and 10 employers for gender discrimination claiming Facebook job ads target male users but exclude female users.

Charges were filed initially with the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on behalf of three female workers, but ultimately seeks to represent a class of millions of women allegedly denied information on job opportunities.

The charges claim Facebook delivers job ads selectively based on age and sex categories that employers choose, and that Facebook earns revenue from placing job ads that exclude women and older workers.

"I've heard stories about when people looked for jobs in the classified ads and big bold letters read 'help wanted-male' or 'help wanted-female.' I was shocked to find that this discrimination is still happening, just online instead of in newspapers," said Bobbi Spees, a job-seeker and lead complainant in the case. "I shouldn't be shut out of the chance to hear about a job opportunity just because I am a woman."

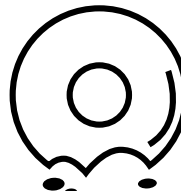
Joining in the ACLU's filing of charges were the Communications Workers of America and law firm Outten & Golden LLP.

"There is no place for discrimination on Facebook; it's strictly prohibited in our policies, and over the past year, we've strengthened our systems to further protect against misuse," said Facebook spokesperson Joe Osborne. "We are reviewing the complaint and look forward to defending our practices."

The employer and employment agency advertisers named in the EEOC charges are:

- **Abas USA**, a global software developer
- **Defenders**, a home security systems installer
- **Nebraska Furniture Mart**, a furniture retailer

- **City of Greensboro, NC Police Department**
- **Need Work Today**, an employment agency that procures workers for farm, construction, trucking and aviation employers
- **Renewal by Andersen LLC**, a window replacement and installation company
- **Rice Tire**, a tire retailer and provider of auto repair services with locations throughout Maryland and Virginia
- **JK Moving Services**, an independent moving company
- **Enhanced Roofing & Modeling**, a roofing and remodeling company based in the Washington, DC, metro area
- **Xenith**, an athletics equipment manufacturer and retailer



### Are Employee Breaks Compensable?

by Andrew Scott, ASA

The U.S. Department of Labor recently issued an opinion letter determining whether nonexempt employees'

15-minute rest breaks were compensable time under the Fair Labor Standards Act. The employees at issue required 15-minute rest breaks every hour, as certified by their health care provider, due to a serious health condition.

The opinion acknowledges that the compensability of an employee's time depends on whether it is spent predominately for the employer's benefit or for the employee's benefit.

Specifically, when an employee's breaks differ from ordinary rest breaks or are "solely due to the needs of the employee's health condition," the breaks primarily benefit the employee. Consequently, frequent health-related breaks are not compensable so long as the employees taking the breaks also receive as many compensable rest breaks as their co-workers.

DOL also noted that the Family and Medical Leave Act provides that FMLA-protected leave may be unpaid, and there are no exceptions in the FMLA for breaks up to 20 minutes in length.



## HR News

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### HR group calls for 'national conversation' with employers on skills gap

The Society for Human Resource Management, the US association for HR professionals with 285,000 members, called for all employers to join a national conversation about closing the skills gap.

"The economy is hot, unemployment is low, and the skills gap is wide," said SHRM President and CEO Johnny Taylor, Jr.

"We have an aging demographic," said Kevin Walling, chief human resource officer of The Hershey Co. "We have a skill shortage that is not in tune with the current needs of a digital industry. Without taking proactive action in how we're developing the next generation of the workforce, we will be at risk."

Research from SHRM indicates that eight out of 10 HR professional report that high-demand and soft skills are in short supply. The health and social

assistance and manufacturing industries report the highest levels of recruiting difficulty; for instance, 46% of respondents indicated that the most difficult-to-recruit-for positions are in the high-skilled medical job categories.

SHRM research has also found smaller organizations — those with one to 99 employees — reported having the most difficulty in filling full-time manager and skilled trade positions.

### EEOC sues employer for maintaining an English-only policy

by Kate Tornone

A plant manager at Porous Materials, Inc. (PMI) forbade employees from speaking languages other than English, in violation of Title VII, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has alleged in a lawsuit. The employer subjected its employees to "an ugly mix of sexism, racism, and xenophobia," EEOC said in a statement announcing

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the suit. According to the commission, a plant manager for the Ithaca, New York, company complained that he was “‘sick’ of immigrants stealing American jobs and not speaking English, forbade employees from speaking other languages, and urged immigrant employees to leave America.” He also used racial slurs, made sexist comments and subjected employees to unwanted sexual advances, according to EEOC.”

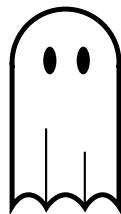
The company owner, rather than putting a stop to this, behaved similarly; he called female employees ‘dumb women,’ complained that ‘these women can’t do anything,’ and told a woman she would not be getting a raise because of her sex,” the commission said.

English-only rules continue to drive national origin discrimination claims, Kenneth M. Willner, a partner with Paul Hastings LLP, told attendees at a recent conference.

A rule banning other languages will often be discriminatory, according to EEOC, but can be used in very specific circumstances. If it is communicated in advance and narrowly tailored to meet business necessity, it’s possible to implement one without running afoul of the law, experts say.

Even so, employers who adopt these policies should be sensitive to the needs of staff members, Michael Studenka, partner at Newmeyer & Dillion LLP, previously told HR Dive. “This is all part of respecting diversity in the workplace,” he said; “It should be raised in any diversity training, especially with managers so that they avoid unknowingly overstepping here, for example, telling an employee on break in the kitchen that he must speak English.”

Willner offered similar advice: “I would say they should be narrowly tailored and not overly broad and not applied to jobs where not really necessary.” Such policies, even in customer contact positions, have been challenged and have sometimes not survived, because some customers might not speak English or other employees might understand another language better, he said; “that’s an area to tread lightly in.”



### ‘Ghosting’ Is Unprofessional Regardless of Whether You’re Taking or Submitting a Job Application

Entrepreneur.com

Recruiters may wish they had acknowledged receiving an application, or had called to thank rejected candidates, now that fierce competition in the labor market has put job seekers in the driver’s seat. Across industries and at every level, employers report they are being ‘ghosted’ by potential hires, who skip out on interviews, never show for their first day of work or just stop communicating during the hiring process.

No matter who does it, ghosting is highly unprofessional and ultimately costs both employers and job seekers alike. Fortunately, technology is helping to improve how candidates and potential employers communicate and to exorcise ‘ghosting’ for good.

Three out of every four American workers say they would rather be ghosted by a potential partner after a first date than not hear back from a potential employer after applying, according to a recent survey. For years, job candidates have complained about not knowing the status of applications they spent hours preparing only to submit and never hear from the prospective employer again.

And candidates have every right to feel spurned. Order a pizza today and you can track its progress from dough to delivery with technology first deployed over a decade ago. Yet, even today, job candidates can rarely confirm that their information was considered by the right person and almost never know why their applications were rejected. Should the pool of talent that could determine the future growth and direction of a company warrant less consideration than the status of a takeout dinner?

Employers that ghost candidates put their corporate brand at risk. The candidate snubbed today could control the potential business lost tomorrow. And, with websites like kununu and Indeed, a few candidates recounting a bad recruitment experience can damage

## HR News

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an employer's reputation and deter future applicants.

During the Great Recession, recruiters received as many as 400 applications within 24 hours of a posting. The demand for jobs gave recruiters all the power. Now, it's candidates that are in control. For the first time in U.S. history, there are more job openings than unemployed people to fill them and the fierce demand for talent means candidates have more leverage than they have had in decades.

The power may be going to their heads. Though hard data is scarce, some employers report they are ghosted by anywhere from 20 to 50 percent of applicants and initial hires, who either do not show for a scheduled interview or skip out on their first day of work. By some estimates, even 20 percent of white collar workers are guilty of ghosting.

Candidates might believe that recruiters deal with such large candidate pools they will forget who spurned them, or that the fierce competition for talent means they will easily attract other offers. But, candidates who ghost are burning multiple bridges. Because the job market is so competitive, recruiters will not forget who wasted their time or their company's money.

Businesses in the same industry often use the same recruiters who search for talent across multiple industries. Even if the disappearance had little impact on filling a position, dozens of people could learn of the ghosting and, while potential employers look for achievement, they rarely overlook such unprofessionalism.

Fortunately, new HR technology empowers recruiters to interact meaningfully with every potential job seeker and leaves little reason to ghost potential employers. Chatbots can contact candidates within minutes of applying and have a near-human initial screening conversation via text message. By gathering information relevant to future searches from candidates not suitable for the current position, chatbots help candidates feel sufficiently acknowledged, while still serving an important HR function.

On the other hand, technology can provide a dispassionate instrument for candidates who feel awkward informing a recruiter that they have reconsidered a particular role. Automated messaging programs can contact no-shows electronically and provide an indirect, unemotional medium to communicate, reducing the time recruiters spend trying to track down candidates and providing a chance to salvage the relationship in a way that benefits both parties.

Few people like having to deliver bad news. But ghosting a potential employer or an unsuccessful job candidate just to avoid an uncomfortable conversation is never a good idea, and now completely unnecessary. New HR technologies are making communication between employers and job seekers easier for both parties, so neither needs to pull a disappearing act and both can feel confident they have not been ignored.

### **Retailers to Hire More Temp Workers This Holiday Season**

by Staffing Industry Analysts

The National Retail Federation expects retailers to hire between 585,000 and 650,000 temporary workers this holiday season, up from last year's 582,500.

Several companies have already announced plans to increase seasonal holiday hiring this year.

The retail trade association also expects holiday retail sales in November and December – excluding automobiles, gasoline and restaurants – to increase between 4.3% and 4.8% over 2017 to a total of \$717.45 billion to \$720.89 billion. The forecast compares with an average annual increase of 3.9% over the past five years.

"Last year's strong results were thanks to growing wages, stronger employment and higher confidence, complemented by anticipation of tax cuts that led consumers to spend more than expected," said NRF Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz. "With this year's forecast, we continue to see strong momentum from consumers as they do the heavy lifting in supporting our economy. The combination of increased job



## HR News

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creation, improved wages, tamed inflation and an increase in net worth all provide the capacity and the confidence to spend.”

The National Retail Federation’s holiday forecast is based on an economic model using several indicators including consumer credit, disposable personal income and previous monthly retail sales. The number includes online and other non-store sales.

### **Acosta: More Deregulation on the Way as DOL Eyes Overtime Rule**

by Ryan Golden

Deregulation remains a priority for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Secretary Alexander Acosta told attendees at a U.S. Chamber of Commerce event — and overtime is on the docket.

“The president’s regulatory agenda should be issued in the coming weeks,” Acosta said. “We are just getting started — there’s a lot more to do.”

Acosta said the department had just completed “a couple of hearings across the nation” on overtime regulations under the Fair Labor Standards Act, with one remaining. DOL previously announced a series of listening sessions in late August, seeking public input on a rule that has been a compliance pain point for employers. Topics listed for those events included an appropriate salary threshold for overtime eligibility, DOL’s methodology for determining the salary threshold and the benefits and costs of an increased threshold for both employees and employers.

DOL’s most recent regulatory agenda showed the agency intends to propose a new overtime rule in January 2019.

DOL’s deregulatory efforts during the Trump administration amount to a figure of \$417 million in savings, according to Acosta. The labor secretary also spoke about recent updates to joint employer rules by the National Labor Relations Board, as well as updated independent contractor guidance, changes to apprenticeship requirements and President Donald Trump’s expansion of association

health plans.

Acosta was particularly focused on job training and apprenticeships as part of a panel discussion that included U.S. Small Business Administration Administrator Linda McMahon. DOL has changed requirements for certain grants for higher learning institutions that require them to find business partners to apply for the funds. Acosta said this change was implemented in part because of shifting business requirements and the need for school curriculums to keep up.

To support that reasoning, Acosta described a conversation he had with one senator about a community college in the senator’s home state. The college’s curriculum was teaching a method of welding that was no longer being used by local businesses in the area, meaning that new hires from the college had to be immediately retrained. He and McMahon both encouraged employers in the room to reach out to local educational institutions and help with curriculum development.

“We’re not just talking about business and education coming together, we’re requiring that business and education comes together,” Acosta said. They’re asking: “Are you working at the local level to ensure that education leads families to sustaining jobs?”

Similarly, the secretary talked about the need to consider changes in education. Acosta called specific attention to the construction industry: Workers are stepping up to meet the demand, he said, so much so that one academy had to turn away more than 600 applicants. “We need to tell our schools: Provide the opportunities that students want.”

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