



What to do if your
Career *is*
Stalled
and you don't know why

AND MORE



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What to do if your Career *is* Stalled *and you don't know why*

by Elena Lytkina Botelho
and Katie Semmer Creagh

A CEO whom we'll call Melissa was exasperated. Having delivered seven years of breakthrough performance and nearing retirement, she was eager to select and prepare her successor. Members of her executive team were strong in their current roles but none was quite right for the top job.

As we considered a broader group of potential candidates, the CHRO chimed in with an idea: "What about Tom? He is very strategic and his teams would take the hill for him. He might be worth looking at as an option." Then the CHRO paused for a moment and added, "Of course there is this issue of his executive presence. Tom often hogs the spotlight in meetings unaware of how that alienates his peers. And...well...I don't know how to put this, but he has noticeable body odor that's a real turnoff." Melissa agreed: "Tom is a brilliant business mind, but I just can't see him representing our company." As it turns out, for eighteen years Tom had received stellar performance reviews and top bonuses on the strength of his performance. "Executive presence" was mentioned in several reviews as an improvement area, but without any specifics, Tom had no idea what the real issue was and how damaging it could be to his career.

Having assessed over 2,000 CEOs and over 18,000 C-suite leaders since 1995, we are struck by how often careers of talented executives stall or even derail because of seemingly trivial issues, many of which are utterly fixable. We call these types

of issues "pandas." Pandas look innocent, but their powerful jaws deliver a bite stronger than a jaguars'. Pandas can be painfully costly to individuals whose careers stall for reasons unbeknownst to them and to organizations and managers unable to develop talented leaders to their full potential.

To better understand this phenomenon, we analyzed a sample of 113 strong performers who were finalists for C-suite roles but got turned down in the final decision round. In reviewing detailed assessments of their capabilities, we uncovered that 62% had at least one "panda" issue and 10% had more than one. Furthermore, for 35% of these executives, "pandas" were considered among the top three risks identified with respect to this individual's fit to a role. Often these pandas live on for years, seemingly innocent, but ultimately gnaw at the career trajectory of otherwise talented leaders.

Our analysis uncovered the most common types of "pandas":

- 36% of pandas related to executive presence
- 28% related to communication style
- 29% related to peer-level relationships
- The remaining 7% included excessive optimism and perfectionism

We'll now examine each.

Executive presence. This is an ill-defined catchall for a multitude of issues from the seemingly trivial but career damaging body odor, to deeper challenges, such as when someone doesn't carry herself/himself in a way consistent with company culture. Often executives who fail to appear confident get comments about lackluster executive presence. Dismiss this panda at your peril: Our research shows highly confident executives were 2.5 times more likely to be hired. This reminds us of Brian, a brilliant investment professional at a top firm who was passed over for promotion to partner due to his poor executive presence. Asked to coach Brian, we gathered extensive feedback from his colleagues and external parties. It turns out that while respected for his intellect, Brian showed up as meek and understated, leaving others with a perception that he was junior and not ready to represent the firm as a partner. We helped Brian identify and address the specific behaviors that created this perception and today he is a highly profitable partner at the firm.

Communication style. Complaints about communication style usually concern how one speaks up (or doesn't) in various forums. One's communication style shapes first impressions and can have a significant impact on career trajectory.

Lagging on communication effectiveness showed up as a risk area for 28% of executives we analyzed. Take Jim, a front-runner CFO candidate for a leading medical device manufacturer on the verge of an IPO. Jim's resume checked all of the boxes (and then some), but his Achilles' heel was a long-winded, almost philosophical communication style — more befitting a cerebral academic than a bottom-line-oriented CFO who can drive performance and credibly represent the company with the investment community.

Our research shows that candidates who used more esoteric, intellectual, or "ivory tower" vocabulary were, eight times less likely to be hired compared to candidates who used more colloquial language. Down-to-earth storytelling, drawing on memorable results, is vastly more powerful than a cerebral, academic style.

Another common communication pitfall has to do with use of "we" and "I." The weakest candidates for C-suite roles used "I" at twice the rate of the rest of the sample. The most successful candidates are clear about their individual contributions without overusing "I." Candidates who go on and on with their own accomplishments impress decision makers less than the ones who say, "My proudest achievement was the



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moment the team began to knock it out of the park” — and then clearly explain their role in the group’s achievement.

Finally, through research, we uncovered that CEO candidates for United States-based companies who had a significant accent were 12 times less likely to be hired. While in-group bias is a deep and persistent issue in hiring, we found that at least for some of these executives their insufficient language fluency lead them to be perceived as less competent than they were and that as this bias was brought to light and they worked to improve fluency and reduce the accent, their career trajectory improved.

Peer relationships. We often see talented executives hitting home runs in their own division and striking out with their peer group. Take Denise, a talented marketing executive who has helped reinvigorate some of the world’s most iconic retail brands. What ultimately cost Denise a coveted CMO job was a pattern of poor peer relationships. Her performance reviews were filled with praise from her bosses and her direct reports for her excellent results and relentless passion, but her peers believed that her own advancement mattered more to her than a team win. Individuals like Denise often do extremely well in the middle management ranks but stall out on the path to the C-suite, because they seem unable or unwilling to think beyond their own division or function. This is easier said than done, especially as powerful corporate incentive systems often reward achievement of individual targets. Furthermore, structural conflicts across functions are common in large complex organizations, leaving peers to fight for finite resources or at odds over projects and issues. Yet, leaders with the highest potential find ways to deliver on their target while also playing for the team.

Our CEO Genome research uncovered that stronger candidates for leadership positions are more effective at persuading others, including their peers. We also found that high-performing CEOs are more likely than lower performers to treat others with respect (73% of the high-performing versus 59% of low-performing). They may break glass when needed to deliver results but over the longer term they build strong followership and the reputation for doing what’s right for the business.

*As a manager, your responsibility is to develop your team by **delivering candid feedback with caring courage***

So, why do these dangerous pandas go unaddressed for so long? The problem is both on the giving and receiving side of feedback. For a manager delivering feedback, these issues seem so personal and almost trivial that it’s hard to raise them directly, especially with a strong performer. It is easier to skirt the problem, especially when it doesn’t hinder current performance. And as a receiver of feedback, we often dismiss pandas as unimportant “nice to haves” or at times contradictory to our values. I should be judged on my performance, not on airtime in a meeting! Unfortunately, as we have seen in our research, avoiding these difficult conversations or not acting on the feedback will damage the careers of talented individuals.

As a manager, your responsibility is to develop your team by delivering candid feedback with caring courage. By dodging it, you are actually doing a disservice to your direct report and to your team as a whole. No matter how uncomfortable, you need to be clear about the feedback. Offer specific examples and describe the impact one’s actions — or inactions — have on the individual’s ability to reach their goals in the current role as well as on his or her upside potential.

As a feedback recipient, don’t be misled by the innocent appearance of a panda. If one appears in your review, ask clarifying questions to get to the root and specifics of what you are doing, as well as how it is impacting your performance and other’s perceptions of your performance and potential. If you are still not getting a straight answer from your manager, engage a third party to provide candid expert feedback. Don’t let the dangerously innocuous pandas maul your career.



HOLLY COODE

Recruiter
Knoxville, TN



How long have you been in the staffing business? 6 years

What was your first job and what do you remember most about it? ? I was a hostess at a restaurant in high school. Bussing tables was not fun!

Who was the worst boss you ever had and why? I wouldn't say I have had a boss that was definitely the worst. I will say I've had much better experiences with the bosses I saw every day than the ones that didn't spend much time with their employees.

What motivates you each day to sell and service your clients? ? I like knowing that I am the person they count on to get them what they need! There is a sense of accomplishment that comes with building those relationships.

What are some of your long-term goals? I am continuing to develop and enforce best practices for our recruiting process and am looking to see everyone in my office achieve a level of success that exceeds expectations!

What makes Peoplelink unique, from your perspective? In any encounter I have with another office, group, or division, I get the sense that we are on the same page — like we're already friends. That's hard to find.

What is the best advice you could give to other staff members? Have more fun! Learn when to lighten up a little bit. It's motivating!

What is your favorite movie? *The Princess Bride*
Book? Crime and Punishment **Drink?** Coffee.

If you could have any car you want, what would it be? I want my old Toyota Land Cruiser back

What is your home city? Knoxville! **What is the greatest feature about your home city?** Mountains, lakes, and lots of craft beer.

How do you unwind when you're not at the office?
Yoga and books!

What do people like most about you? I like to think I make people laugh...

Anything else you can think of?
Look how cute my puppy is in his school graduation photo!



How to Earn a Reputation as a **Fair Manager**



At some point in your career, you likely encountered a manager you believed was unfair. You probably thought to yourself, “When I’m a manager, I’m never going to be like that!” Now that you’ve been promoted to a management position, you’re probably dedicating significant amounts of time and energy to making unbiased decisions, but no doubt finding that the right balance is elusive. Sadly, there is no objective measure of fairness. Instead, each time you attempt to level the playing field on one dimension, you throw it off balance on another. The best, if imperfect, approach is to understand the different forms of fairness and to be thoughtful about when and how you apply them.

You can start with the most standard measure of fairness, which focuses on the outcomes of your decisions. Did your decision-making process lead to a fair distribution (of inputs and outputs) for everyone involved? You can apply this test to common managerial decisions such as how you allocate workload, offer development opportunities, and dole out rewards and recognition. You can be sure that your team is scrutinizing the outcomes of these high-profile decisions. If one person is disadvantaged by your decision making (e.g., assigned a less desirable shift or given a more difficult assignment) multiple times, it’s likely that they will perceive your decision-making as unfair.

If that was all you had to worry about, life would be relatively simple. Unfortunately, there’s more to it. In addition to the fairness of the outcome, your team will be judging the fairness of your process. Was your decision-making process inherently fair, regardless of the outcome? For example, if you were evaluating performance, did you include the right factors (such as measuring salespeople on both the total revenue and the profitability to avoid rewarding the people who sell unprofitable work)? Was your assessment of the variables in your decision objective and unbiased (e.g., did you get input from multiple sources to reduce the likelihood of favoritism)? How you arrive at your decision will carry as much weight in how you are perceived as the decision you ultimately end up making.

The challenge is that when you try to optimize one version of fairness, you can inadvertently taint the other. As a simple example, imagine assigning workload based on a flip of a coin. Because a coin-flip is random, it can be considered a fair process. Now imagine that you flip the coin ten times and seven of those times it comes up heads. Now the person who chose heads gets 70% of the workload — an unfair outcome. The takeaway is that you need to be mindful about both your decision-making process and the resulting outcomes. You might need to compromise on one form of fairness to avoid damaging the other.

Whether the fairness of the process or the outcome takes precedent and whether the formula is equality or equity will depend on the nature of the decision. Where you are trying to strengthen teamwork and connection, an equal distribution of the outcome can be useful. Profit sharing is a common method for rewarding an entire group for the successes they have achieved through collaboration. Where you're hoping to spur individual performance, you can emphasize an equitable process. Sales incentives and other individual bonus payments encourage individuals to put in the maximum effort. Let the goals of the situation dictate which formula you use.

Even once you invest considerable effort in deciding fairly, that's no guarantee that it will be perceived that way by your team. Don't make the mistake of assuming your decisions will speak for themselves. If you are focusing on an equitable process for choosing who gets promoted, where you will weigh certain competencies or styles more positively than others, make your intentions known to your team. If

you're emphasizing an equal sharing of the bonus pool to reinforce the importance of every member of the team, be upfront about it.

You are the manager and you have the discretion to make those calls. Regardless of how you choose to make the difficult calls, it's critical that you communicate what you're thinking. Transparency increases trust in the process and has value for your employees above and beyond the specifics of the decision-making process.

In the end, we all learn that life isn't fair. As a manager, you'll learn this much sooner than others. You'll face difficult decisions where no resolution seems ideal and where the outcome will be perceived as fair by some and unfair by others. Don't be too hard on yourself. As long as you have thought carefully about what the business needs and made your assessment of the best answer as objectively as possible, you have done your job. You will always have an opportunity to restore balance with the next decision.



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To Cope with **STRESS,** Try Learning Something New

by Chen Zhang,
Christopher G. Myers
and David M. Mayer

Stressed. Anxious. Exhausted. Drained. This is how many employees feel at work due to stressors like longer work hours, more-frequent hassles, the need to do more with fewer resources, and so on. Such work stress has been shown to induce anxiety and anger, unethical behavior, poor decision making, and chronic exhaustion and burnout — all of which impair personal and organizational performance.

There are typically two ways people try to deal with this stress. One is to simply “buckle down and power through” — to focus on getting the stressful work done. Professional workers often have a “bias for action” and want to find a solution quickly; and they pride themselves on being tough people who can keep working despite feeling stressed and fatigued.

The other common tactic is to retreat — to temporarily disconnect from work and get away from the stressful environment. Research on workday breaks has grown rapidly in the past few years, finding that relaxing and engaging breaks can improve emotions and boost energy at work. This helps explain why “relaxation facilities,” such as nap rooms, workout equipment, and entertainment zones are becoming popular offerings at companies in knowledge-intensive industries.

Unfortunately, both “grinding through” and “getting away” have potential pitfalls. Research has long established that we humans have limits in handling heavy workloads, which restrict our ability to always grind through. Continuing to exert effort while stressed and fatigued will simply tax us and lead to depletion and impaired performance. And while a reprieve from work can provide temporary relief, it does not address the underlying problems that cause stress in the first place. When we return from a break, we are not only faced with the same issues, but we may also experience additional guilt and anxiety.

So what else can employees do to temper the ill effects of stress? Our research suggests a third option: focusing on learning. This can mean picking up a new skill, gathering new information, or seeking out intellectual challenges. In two recent research projects, one with employees from a variety of industries and organizations, and the other with medical residents, we found evidence that engaging in learning activities can buffer workers from detrimental effects of stress including negative emotions, unethical behavior, and burnout.

We investigated learning as a stress buffer because learning helps workers build valuable instrumental and

psychological resources. Instrumentally, learning brings us new information and knowledge that can be useful for solving near-term stressful problems; it also equips us with new skills and capabilities to address or even prevent future stressors. Psychologically, taking time to reflect on what we know and learn new things helps us develop feelings of competence and self-efficacy (a sense of being capable of achieving goals and doing more). Learning also helps connect us to an underlying purpose of growth and development. This way, we can see ourselves as constantly improving and developing, rather than being stuck with fixed capabilities. These psychological resources enable us to build resilience in the face of stressors.

Evidence of Learning as a Tool to Ease Stress

In two complementary studies, we studied more than 300 U.S. employees from various organizations and industries regarding their job stressors and behavior at work. Prior research has established that in the face of stress people tend to engage in unethical behavior at work (e.g., stealing, falsifying time sheets, or being rude to co-workers), so we examined employees' learning new things or relaxing at work as two potential remedies for this conundrum. The first study used daily surveys to track employees' feelings and activities at work over two weeks; and the second study used paired survey responses to link employees' activities and feelings with what their supervisors observed. In

both studies, employees reported the extent to which they engaged in learning activities at work (e.g., doing things to broaden their horizons, seeking out intellectual challenges, or learning something new), as well as their relaxation activities at work (e.g., taking some time to kick back, take a walk, or surf the web).

The first study revealed that, in the face of stress, employees experienced fewer negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, distress) and engaged in less unethical behavior (e.g., taking company property, being mean to coworkers) on days when they engaged in more learning activities at work compared to other days. Similarly, in the second study, these benefits were more common among employees who reported taking on more learning activities at work than other people.

In contrast, relaxing activities did not buffer the detrimental consequences of stress — employees experienced the same levels of negative emotions and engaged in just as much unethical behavior on days when they took on more relaxing activities at work, compared to other days (study 1), and when they generally focused on relaxation more than others (study 2). Relaxation thus did not appear to be as useful a stress buffer as learning was.

The buffering effects of learning were further illustrated in a study conducted with medical residents, whose



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jobs involve the stressful task of caring for patients with critical conditions while working long hours with little rest or reprieve. In response to the growing issue of physician burnout, we surveyed approximately 80 internal medicine residents at Johns Hopkins University to better understand the relationships between their work behaviors and burnout. Our analysis revealed that residents who thought their team engaged in more learning behavior (such as seeking out new information or reflecting on the team's work process) reported significantly lower levels of burnout. This correlation between team learning and reduced burnout was especially pronounced for residents who reported lower levels of learning goal orientation—meaning these residents were not already approaching their work with an eye towards learning. This suggests that being part of a team where others are learning may also help buffer the detrimental effects of stressful, challenging work, even (or perhaps especially) for those who may not be as inclined to focus on learning themselves.

Strategically Using Learning at Work

What specifically can you do to increase learning when faced with stress at work?

First, start internally. Practice re-reframing stressful work challenges in your mind. When stress emerges, change the message you tell yourself from “this is a stressful work assignment/situation” to “this is a challenging but rewarding opportunity to learn.” Reframing stressful tasks as learning possibilities shifts your mindset and better prepares you to approach the task with an orientation toward growth and longer-term gains.

Second, work and learn with others. Instead of wrestling with a stressful challenge solely in your own head, try to get input from others. Getting out and discussing a stressor with your peers and colleagues might reveal hidden insights, either from their experience or from the questions and perspectives they raise.

Third, craft learning activities as a new form of “work break.” Alongside purely relaxing breaks — either short ones like meditating or longer ones like taking days off — consider recasting learning itself as a break from your routine tasks at work. This might seem like a mere mental rebranding, but if a learning activity allows you to divert from the type of effort you use in regular work activities (e.g., numeric thinking, interacting with clients), and if the activity also fits your intrinsic interests, it can replenish you psychologically. Viewing learning as “more work” will make it less attractive in an already stressful situation, but approaching it as a form of respite can make it more appealing and more likely to create positive, enjoyable experiences.

Embracing learning can be a more active way to buffer yourself from negative effects of stress at work. At the same time, there is no need to wait for stress to arise before seeking learning opportunities. Even without pressing problems, engaging in learning as a central feature of your work life will help you build personal resources and equip you to be resilient and prepared in navigating future stress at work.

Practice re-reframing stressful work challenges in your mind.

Tell yourself, “this is a challenging but rewarding opportunity to learn.”



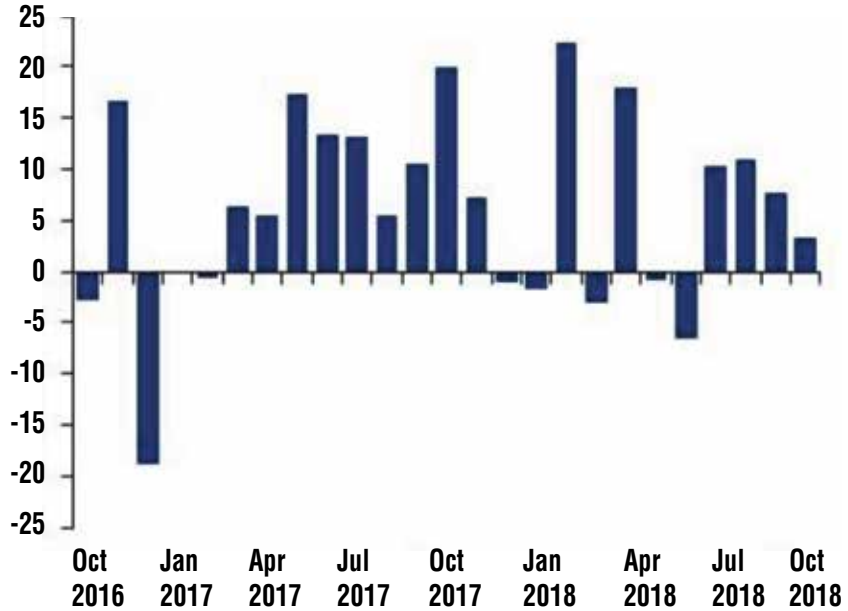
Temporary Help Employment up 3K in October, up 2.2% y/y

US temporary help services jobs rose by 2.2% in October on a year-over-year basis, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

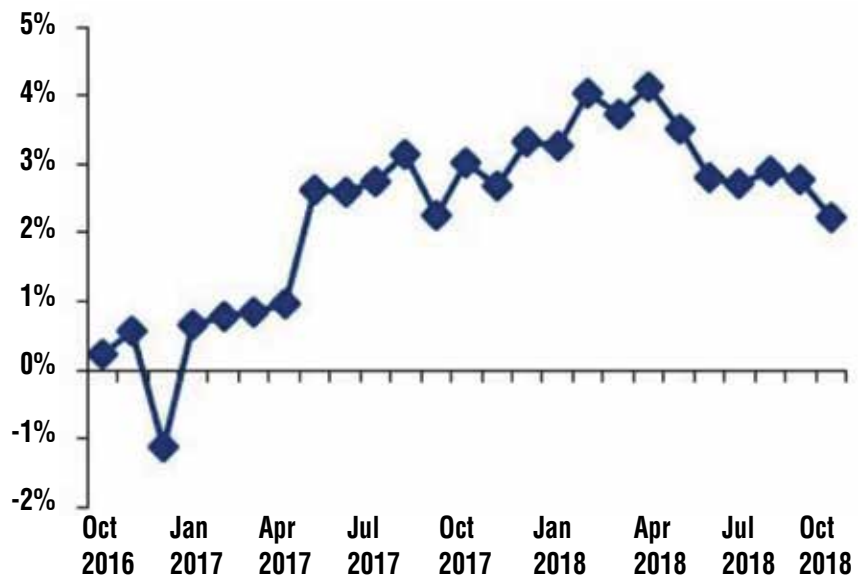
In total, the US added 3,300 temporary help services jobs in October.

The temp penetration rate - temporary jobs as a percent of total employment - was little changed in October from September at 2.04%.

Monthly Change in Temporary Help Employment



Year-over-Year Change in Temporary Help Employment



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Staffing Industry Analysts

HR News



EEOC sees retaliation claims rise: How to stay off its radar

by Tim McElgunn

The increase in sexual harassment charges filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have made headlines this fall, but that's not the only eye-opening statistic coming out of the agency.

Retaliation claims a bigger share of EEOC charges

Retaliation claims and lawsuits now make up almost 50 percent of the EEOC's workload. According to the most recent stats available from the agency, fiscal year 2017 saw retaliation jump from 46% of all charges filed to 49%, despite a drop in the total number of retaliation claims (from about 42,000 to 41,000). Retaliation claims under Title VII increased from 36% to 38% of filings.

Those figures should be a wake up call for all employers to review what constitutes retaliation under the law and how well policies and training prepare your organization to respond when you're hit with a claim.

Protected activity

All employees have a clear right to raise concerns about, express their opposition to, or complain if they believe an employer's practices or actions are illegal under the various statutes the EEOC is charged with enforcing.

Whether an employee slips a card into a suggestion box, hires a lawyer or contacts the commission, your organization may find itself paying out compensation if you punish, reprimand or take some other "adverse action" against the person who makes such a complaint.

Adverse actions can range from firing a worker after they point out possible safety lapses, demoting someone who claims she is not getting overtime pay despite working extra hours, or passing over an employee for a promotion after they request accommodation for an injury or disability.

While recent court cases make it clear that an employee can't claim retaliation for action you take

after they leave the company (like suing for breach of a non-compete agreement, for example), if the complaint is made while they are still employed, it may not matter if reported violations are unfounded. As long as an employee acts in good faith in making the complaint, taking any action against them can land you in front of a court or paying an expensive settlement to avoid a legal battle.

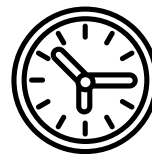
How to avoid retaliation claims

To protect against tripping retaliation land mines, you need to keep three major factors in mind:

- Timing of any actions
- Consistent disciplinary treatment of all employees, and
- Clear and complete documentation of any and all performance issues.

Try to avoid disciplining or counseling employees immediately after they engage in a protected activity. Of course, if the reason for your action is compelling and unrelated to that activity, you need to move forward regardless.

But if you do have to take action, make sure that your decisions are the same as they would be for any other employee. And, while an objective, detailed and complete record of any performance issue is always important, it becomes absolutely critical if you need to take action soon after a complaint is made.



Flexible schedules, telecommuting most sought-after nonmonetary perks

by Staffing Industry

According to research, professionals want more choices in when and where they work.

Flexible work schedules, a compressed workweek and the ability to telecommute are the most sought-after nonmonetary perquisites, according to the survey of more than 1,500 workers and more than 600 HR managers in North America. However, while many companies offer flexible work schedules, fewer than one in five offer shorter workweeks or remote work options.

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There was less of a disconnect when it came to monetary motivators: 44% of employers surveyed said they offer annual or biannual bonuses to employees, while 77% of workers cited bonuses as their most desired incentive when considering job offers. Profit-sharing plans and sign-on bonuses are also highly important to workers, tied at 49% each; however, they are offered by only 33% and 19% of employers, respectively.

The survey also addressed benefits and found most companies already offer the two most wanted employee benefits: health insurance, cited by 88% of workers, and paid time off — including vacation, sick days and paid holidays — cited by 80% of workers.



Job Titles Get a Rebranding by Te-Ping Chen

More companies are sprucing up job titles as a way to attract talent in a tight labor market. Forty percent of firms said they use titles to attract prospective employees, up from 31% in 2009, according to a survey by compensation consulting firm Pearl Meyer. The standard “human resources” title, for example, increasingly is being replaced as companies seek to pitch the role as one more focused on employee well-being.

In the past four years, the percentage of job postings seeking “head of people” has jumped more than threefold, according to job site Indeed.com. Advertisements seeking ninjas or rock stars—for example, “customer service ninja” or “sales rock star”—also have risen.

Rebecca Toman, vice president of Pearl Meyer’s survey business unit, says companies are using titles to show “you can have an impact or make a difference,” especially for younger workers.

Experts say more companies likely will allow employees a say in what their titles ultimately look like. Six percent of firms give employees wide latitude in establishing their working title, up from 3.6% in 2009, according to the Pearl Meyer survey.



National Business Trends Survey by Employer Associations of America

The national business trends survey indicates a fair amount of “optimism” on the part of business executives for 2019. Nearly 74% describe their projected 2019 business outlook as a slight to significant increase in sales/revenue.

Supporting that optimistic outlook is the fact that 54% of executives surveyed plan to hire permanent staff in 2019. When asked the primary reasons for their 2019 hiring plans, 72% said their hiring will be to fill newly created jobs.

When asked which strategies executives are using to overcome recruitment and retention challenges, respondents identified: adjusting pay ranges upward, focusing on existing staff receiving additional training and development, and increasing starting salaries as the top strategies.

In addition, due to the tight talent shortage, a survey question was revised for the 2018/2019 survey to determine the top five most important factors prospective employees are looking for to assist employers with recruitment and retention.

The top 5 factors employees selected included:

1. competitive pay **(82%)**,
2. good work/life balance **(69.2 %)**,
3. flexibility in work hours **(56.1%)**,
4. opportunities for advancement **(55.4%)**, and
5. competitive health benefits **(49.9%)**.

Executives also identified the following “serious” challenges for their business (listed in order of the top five long-term responses):

Survey Respondent’s Serious Concerns **Short-term**
(within next year) % of response

- Talent Acquisition **54%**
- Talent Retention **41%**
- Ability to pay for benefit costs **28%**
- Ability to pay competitive wages **33%**
- Competition in general **28%**

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Survey Respondent's Serious Concerns **Long-term**
(within next 5 years) % of response

- Talent Acquisition **57%**
- Talent Retention **48%**
- Ability to pay for benefit costs **43%**
- Ability to pay competitive wages **40%**
- Competition in general **34%**

The survey also indicated the top five measures executives say they have been or are planning to continue to implement in 2019 to strengthen business:

- Invest in technology **52%**
- Invest in equipment **50%**
- Increase recruiting emphasis **38%**
- Increase training budget **30%**
- Increase total rewards education **22%**



Employers Plan to Increase College Hiring by Almost 17 Percent

by NACE

Employers expect to hire 16.6 percent more new graduates from the Class of 2019 than they did from the Class of 2018 for positions in the United States, according to results of a recent survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). This year marks the best initial hiring outlook since the Class of 2007.

Another indication of the strength of the current job market for college graduates is the fact that 96 percent of employers plan to maintain or increase their hiring. Over the past three recruiting years, the largest group of employers responding to the Job Outlook survey expected to maintain their individual hiring numbers. That trend continues this year as 57.4 percent of employers plan to keep their number of college hires the same. (See Figure 2.)

While 38.6 percent of responding employers plan to increase their hires, perhaps the most encouraging finding is that just 4 percent of respondents will decrease their hires. This represents less than half of last year's respondents (9.6 percent) that planned to decrease hires, and it is the smallest group with these plans in the past seven years.

Respondents that expect to increase their new college hiring provided key factors for doing so that yielded common—almost universal—themes, such as an improved economy, company growth, anticipated retirements, and a focus on early talent/succession planning. Several others in this group reported that they plan to concentrate on converting more interns to full-time hires, thus increasing their overall hiring numbers.

Most of the respondents that are maintaining their new college hiring numbers indicated that the growth in their respective companies is steady, so they have no need to increase or decrease their numbers. Other respondents reported that they hired aggressively in the past few years, so they will maintain college hiring at their current levels.



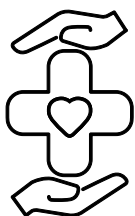
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Among the small number of respondents that are decreasing their hiring numbers, not all cited negative factors. A few mentioned that they, too, had hired more graduates last year than expected, so they will cut back slightly this year. Others noted college recruiting programs that are currently on hold or being revamped, hence a decrease in hires.



Employers offering health benefits at highest level since 2013

by Valerie Bolden-Barrett

Employers are offering healthcare benefits at the highest level since 2013 despite uncertain times for the U.S. healthcare system, according to a new survey of benefits decision-makers released by the Transamerica Center for Health Studies. The online survey, conducted by Harris Poll, showed 28% of respondents made changes to their healthcare benefits, with 32% adding health insurance and 36% adding other healthcare benefits.

Company size was cited as the top reason for not offering or being unable to offer health insurance; 59% of small business reps in the survey said their company offered healthcare benefits to full- and part-time workers, compared to 85% of overall employers. Respondents also cited cost (28%) as an obstacle. Only 16% of respondents said they think offering the best health benefits package is the biggest benefit-related priority. Just 1% of those currently offering health insurance said they won't be providing it in two to three years.

The survey results also showed that 61% of benefits decision-makers said their company is "extremely/very aware" of potential healthcare policy changes at the federal level. Just over a third (39%) of respondents anticipate health insurance quality improving in the next one to three years.

Healthcare coverage remains top consideration for job applicants. According to a survey released in February by America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP), health coverage is the reason 56% of employees remain on their current job. The AHIP survey also showed that most employees are satisfied with their employer's

health plan. Health coverage, therefore, can be an effective means of attracting, hiring and retaining talents.

After a being a strong point of discussion in the late months of 2017, Congressional health policy has generally failed to impact larger employers' pain points. Most employers in the Transamerica survey were aware of the potential healthcare policy changes, but were uncertain about the potential impact of repealing the Affordable Care Act's employer mandate. A smaller contingent (27%) in the survey were concerned about protections for preexisting conditions being overturned.

Employers are continuously trying to curb healthcare costs, which the Transamerica survey and other studies affirm. But those efforts have proven difficult, given healthcare system issues regarding the ability to evaluate quality of care, as well as the increasing cost of prescription drugs.

