# up link

## Why you should ROTATE Office Seating *Assignments*

### AND MORE

**May 2018**

By HBR.ORG

When corporate workspaces are reorganized, many employees view the process as nothing but a nuisance. Desks are cleared, boxes are packed, daily work is disrupted—for what, exactly? Design firms have long touted the benefits of such changes, promising that when people are able to circulate more freely and to randomly encounter different sets of colleagues, they're more communicative, collaborative, and creative. Some managers believe that too: When Steve Jobs was planning a new headquarters for Pixar, he famously located the large central bathrooms in the building's atrium, requiring employees to walk some distance to use the facilities—but creating unplanned "collisions" meant to spark innovation. Dozens of research studies have backed up these contentions. But the financial return on investment for office reconfigurations has been hard to prove—until now.

Sunkee Lee, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University, happened upon a "natural experiment" at a large South Korean e-commerce company that was moving into new headquarters. (The company requested anonymity.) In the old building, six teams of "merchandisers," tasked with sourcing and marketing flash deals for various product categories (electronics, baby, fashion, and so on) were seated in one area, while six other merchandiser teams sat in another one; the two groups were separated by a common entrance. Although the company wanted all the teams together in the new location, space constraints meant that nine of them were situated in one open area and three in another, with a common

entrance in between. The two spaces were identical in terms of decoration, lighting, equipment, distances between teams and workstations, and proximity to management, and they were very similar to those in the previous headquarters. Employees had no choice about where they sat.

Looking at 38,435 deals executed by 60 merchandisers over 200 days—120 days before the move and 80 days after—Lee found that merchandisers in the area containing more teams sourced 25% more deals from new suppliers, on average, than all merchandisers had sourced before the move. The deals weren't the result of collaboration; they marked a change in the quality of people's work. Lee characterizes that change as a shift from "exploitation" (simply repeating offers that worked in the past) to "exploration" (coming up with new ideas). Perhaps more important, the daily deal revenue of each merchandiser sitting with previously unfamiliar colleagues was, on average, 40% higher ($16,510 a day) than the merchandisers' pre-move average.

**"It Makes the Company Less Clique-y"**
Katie Burke is the chief people officer at HubSpot, a Boston-based marketing-software company with nearly 2,000 employees. She recently spoke with HBR about her firm's approach to rotating seat assignments. Edited excerpts follow.

The increase in creativity—the shift to exploratory ideas—was statistically significant only for people whose experience sourcing deals at that organization

was above the median and who had no previous social ties to at least some of the colleagues in their new workspace. Lee offers this explanation: "Once you've learned enough about the area you specialize in, exposure to new people will make you more creative. In particular, physical proximity promotes trust and the exchange of valuable and novel knowledge between newly met peers. Given the ability to do so, you will recombine this new knowledge with your own to innovate."

Examples of the new products sourced include a rice cooker that plugs into a car (a combination of the living and leisure categories), earmuffs with a built-in Bluetooth function (fashion and electronics), and a training potty that plays music (baby and electronics). The merchandisers didn't work directly with their newly met peers, Lee says; rather, they were inspired by overheard dialogue and informal conversations to shift from "incremental" to "radical" creativity and increased sales as a result.

Interestingly, the change to employees' physical space seemed to boost performance even more than did another switch the company made (which Lee also studied), from individual incentives to fixed wages. In addition, the effect generated by the relocation was quick—the rise in cross-category deals occurred within a month—and it increased throughout the 80 days post-move.

Lee's study is one of the first to use a before-and-after setup to examine how a seating change affects individual innovation and sales performance. But it's part of a long line of research suggesting that where colleagues sit can profoundly affect how they work together. In the 1970s, for instance, MIT professor Thomas Allen studied communication among engineers in the R&D facility of a multinational company. His finding, the Allen curve, depicts the dramatic drop in dialogue between people who sit far apart. Although most of the prior research dealt with businesses, the phenomenon holds in other arenas, too. For example, a 2015 study documented that members of the U.S. Senate who sit in close proximity are more likely to support one another's legislation, regardless of party affiliation.

Lee suspects that had he continued to collect data at the South Korean firm, he would have seen a maturation effect: "When you sit near a new person, there's only a certain amount of knowledge you can absorb from him or her," he explains. "This kind of thing can wear off in time." He also notes that his findings shouldn't be interpreted too broadly; the study involved a relatively small pool of employees at a technology start-up in a country with a collectivist culture.

**Exposure to**
**NEW PEOPLE**
**will make you more**
*creative*

Still, Lee sees potential for such interventions to get results at other companies and elsewhere in the world. "It depends on your organization's goals," he says. "If you want to maintain productivity, there's certainly a case for keeping your workspaces as they are. Research shows that moves, especially to open areas, can reduce employee motivation, satisfaction, and even health. But if your organization competes on knowledge sharing and innovation, periodic reconfigurations could be worth it"—provided previously disconnected people are brought together and those newer to their jobs are given more training and support.

Although many companies have ditched closed-door offices and even open cubicles in favor of communal, desk-to-desk workspaces in an effort to encourage unplanned interactions (and

to save money), fewer go so far as to routinely shake up seating assignments. Some that do: the gaming company Valve, which has put wheels on its workstations so that employees can move wherever their interests and projects take them; the travel website Kayak, where new hires are often used as a reason to move people around; and the marketing-software firm HubSpot, which randomly reassigns desks every few months.

Whether such office reconfigurations can boost revenue in the same way as they did in the South Korean e-commerce company is a question for future research. But they are increasingly common. "The idea is to encourage people from different worlds to mix and match ideas so that you come up with the best from both," Lee says. "That boosts both individual and collective performance."

**...encourage people from different WORLDS to**

**MIX & MATCH IDEAS**

# relate

# LAUREN HAYES

**Operations Manager,
Peoplelink Staffing PA/NJ**

**How long have you been in the staffing business?** I have been in the staffing business for over 10 years.

**What was your first job and what do you remember most about it?** My first job was as a lifeguard/swim team coach at local country club. I made my 1st and last save as a lifeguard there. One of the swimmers took a dive off the diving board and hit her face on the way down losing two teeth which I also later found at the bottom of the pool after jumping in to rescue her!

**Who was the worst boss you ever had and why?** The worst boss I ever had gave limited or no direction to tasks he wanted completed and he did not welcome questions on assigned tasks. To this day he attributes himself as being the reason for any of my career successes. I will credit him for teaching me how NOT to manage people.

**What motivates you each day to sell and service your clients?** I love problem solving. If a client comes to me with an issue, I like thinking through all the options and coming to a logical solution then implementing that solution.

**What are some of your long-term goals?** To grow the market in the Greater Lehigh Valley and become an Area Manager. There is so much opportunity in this area and we haven't even scratched the surface.

**What makes Peoplelink unique, from your perspective?** The comradery that exists between peers is like nothing I have seen at other companies I have worked for. Everyone has such passion for what they do and is always available and willing to lend a hand.

**What makes you successful as a manager?** I listen to my staff and always take their input into consideration. I like getting their feedback. I also make it a point to be as transparent as possible with them.

**What is the best advice you could give to other staff members?** Be kind and don't burn bridges. Paths often seem to cross more than once.

**What is your favorite movie?** *Shag.* **Book?** *The Alchemist*. **Drink?** Any sauvignon blanc from the Marlborough Region.

**If you could have any car you wanted, what would it be?** Tesla, Model X.

**What is your home city?** Bethlehem, PA. **What is the greatest feature about you home city?** Other than the famous Bethlehem Steel, it is also known for Musikfest – one of the nation's largest non-gated free music festivals.

**How do you unwind when you're not at the office?** With my daughter and my husband -- preferably outside if the weather permits!

**What do people like most about you?** I am organized, ambitious and honest.
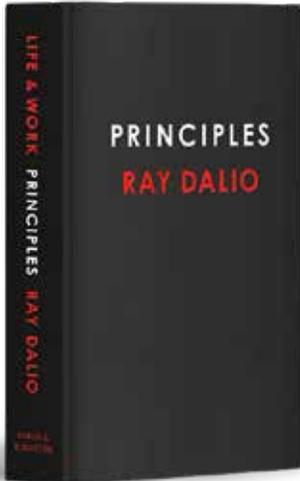
# BOOK REVIEW
**by Jay Mattern**

When he was 12 years old, Ray Dalio already had a couple of jobs (paperboy, caddy) and had saved up $300. Hearing about the stock market, Dalio invested his money in shares of Northeastern Airlines. "I bought it because it was the only company I'd heard of that was selling for less than $5 a share," Dalio writes in his book Principles: Life and Work. Unknown to Dalio, the company was about to go bankrupt when it was acquired by another company, and the young investor tripled his money — marking an auspicious start to the career of the man who would found and build the largest hedge fund company in the world, Bridgewater Associates, with more than $150 billion in assets under management. In Principles, Dalio lays out the life and work principles that have guided his journey from teen caddy to one of the 100 wealthiest people in the world.

## Motivator or Oppressor?
Principles is a unique book divided into three parts. The first section is a straightforward and honest autobiography describing Dalio's up-and-down Wall Street career. It includes a conversation, early in the history of Bridgewater, that Dalio had with his three closest collaborators. These trusted colleagues told him his strengths (being bright, innovative and energetic) but also his weaknesses (sometimes saying and doing things to employees "which makes them feel incompetent, unnecessary, humiliated, overwhelmed, belittled or oppressed."). The conversation was a shock to Dalio, who had no idea of the negative impact he was having. The problem was a lack of understanding, Dalio writes. "It was clear that I needed to be better understood and to understand others better. I realized then how essential it is that people in relationships must be crystal clear about their principles for dealing with each other." This insight was the genesis of the development of Dalio's work Principles, which he would continue to refine over the course of his career.

## Radical Transparency
Dalio's work and life principles share the common core themes of reality and openness. His first life principle, for example, is to "embrace reality and deal with it." Reality means understanding the unvarnished truth about oneself and others. However, it is hard to see yourself or others objectively if people are not honest and forthcoming (as his colleagues had been) and/or if you are not willing to listen to what they have to say. As a result, Dalio emphasizes the importance of being "radically open-minded and radically transparent." Radical transparency is equally prominent in Dalio's work principles. His first work principle is to "trust in radical truth and radical transparency." This requires a culture of brutal honesty. "Create an environment in which everyone has the right to understand what's going on, and no one has the right to hold a critical opinion without speaking up," he writes. One of his other core work principles is what he calls "believability-weighted decision-making,"

*"Be radically open-minded and radically transparent."*

which is based on the idea that, he writes, "it is better to weight the opinions of more capable decision-makers more heavily than those of less capable decision-makers." The challenge is to develop the measures of believability that are accepted by everyone in the organization — a challenge he meets through systematic and objective monitoring of people's track records. At nearly 600 pages, Dalio's Principles offers a comprehensive framework for personal and professional success that is detailed and inspirational. These are not after-the fact reflections on a life well led but, rather, the principles that Dalio developed in the moment as he sought to identify and capture the lessons of his successes and mistakes. "My hope is that reading this book will prompt you and others to discover your own principles from wherever you think is best and ideally write them down," Dalio writes. "Doing that will allow you and others to be clear about what your principles are, and understand each other better."

# recognize

**Brenda Gonzalez**
C.H. Robinson

**From left:**
Aubrey Bauer,
Senior Recruiter;
Brenda Gonzalez;
Mike Hafer,
C.H. Robinson
Supervisor

— THE **Shining Star** AWARD ————————————————— **APR, 2018**

Peoplelink is pleased to announce that Brenda Gonzalez has been chosen as our April Shining Star employee. She has been on assignment with Peoplelink as a Production Lead/Supervisor with C.H. Robinson for over a year, and has worked for C.H. Robinson for a total 8 years. She reports to the Allentown, Pennsylvania branch of Peoplelink.

Initially, Brenda started out as a Production Associate, and, through excellent quality work and dedication, moved up to Production Lead/Supervisor. She supervises production staff, works with other account managers, and insures products are flawless. Brenda continues to show a desire to learn and become more proficient in her role. She has taken Business Management Skills and Business Writing courses and is continually engaged in innovative problem-solving. According to her supervisor, Mike Hafer, Brenda is a very hard worker and has become a great asset to the team.

While on the job, Brenda enjoys being part of the C.H. Robinson team and takes pride in shipping out products. In her free time, she is a sports mom and enjoys taking classes, having just completed a class on acrylic nails.

Congratulations to Brenda for being Peoplelink's April Shining Star employee!

Find your shining star! Contact Peoplelink at 574.232.5400.

Find your
**Shining Star!**
Contact us at **574.232.5400**

# novate

## How Can
# Perfecti nists
## Get Out of Their
## Own Way

*by Alice Boyes*

Like any extreme trait, perfectionism can be a double-edged sword. Having high standards and being hardworking can help someone stand out in a crowded field, and their tenacity can help them improve their skills over time. And, to an extent, being very conscientious can help avoid errors.

The benefits I've mentioned, and a fear that any flaw will result in catastrophe, can keep people hooked on their perfectionist mindset. However, there are also significant downsides to attempting mistake-free performance.

If you're struggling to let go of some of your perfectionistic tendencies, or managing someone who is, it can be helpful to remember the ways perfectionists can self-sabotage in the workplace. I'll discuss five below. You'll notice a general theme of the person losing sight of the big picture.

### How perfectionists get in their own way
No matter how much it may feel like perfectionism is a helpful trait, it usually isn't. Not every perfectionist will do all of these things, but all of them are counterproductive.

**Struggling to make decisions or take action.** Perfectionists are motivated to make the

absolute best choice — even when doing so isn't strictly necessary. This can lead to decision paralysis. For example, Bob wants to buy a tool that will accelerate his work, but he's determined to find an option that has no negative reviews. He's driven to do this, even though logically he knows that even great products usually have some negative feedback, and that the specific negative comments he reads aren't particularly relevant to how he plans to mainly use the tool. But because of his self-imposed criteria, it takes him several weeks to choose what to purchase. As a result, he misses out on the benefits of using the tool, and the people on his team see him as indecisive and disorganized.

**Worrying excessively about sunk costs.** Since perfectionists tend to ruminate over even tiny mistakes, they're strongly motivated to attempt to recover situations involving sunk costs. For example, Andrea signs up to a service with a monthly fee but doesn't use it. She stays subscribed and sets a goal to get "double value" from the service going forward in order to emotionally recover the money she's lost paying the monthly fee for several months but not using the service. Likewise, Marcus spends 10 minutes on the phone trying to resolve a

customer service issue with an agent who clearly doesn't have the power to correct the problem. He doesn't want to give up without success, so stays on the phone for another 20 minutes. Perfectionists can spend too long working on marginally productive activities before moving on.

**Avoiding challenges to avoid failure.** Perfectionists want to feel absolutely ready before taking on challenges. This can lead to holding back from advancement or leadership roles. For example, Art thinks "Before I speak at a conference, I need to take a public speaking course" when that's not really necessary and not something he'll realistically do anytime soon. As a result, he misses a great opportunity.

**Applying their high standards to others.** For the most part, perfectionists tend to apply their extremely rigorous standards to only themselves. However, there can be some bleed-through were the perfectionist also expects others to conform to their standards. This especially applies to group projects where the end result will reflect on the perfectionist. Ranjay alienated his colleagues when he suggested a bunch of last-minute tweaks to a presentation they were preparing; the changes weren't that major, but the team was exhausted and wanted to head home. It felt to them like he was piling on. Nitpicking colleagues or being too demanding can harm relationships and sometimes lead to

the perfectionist being socially excluded because they're emotionally hard work to deal with.

**Ruminating about weaknesses, mistakes, and failures.** One reason perfectionists are so strongly motivated to avoid small mistakes is because making them triggers their tendency to ruminate. Andrea ruminates over the subscription service she doesn't use; Ranjay can't let go of how sloppy that presentation looked. Rumination is negatively-toned overthinking about situations that have occurred (in contrast to worry that's overthinking about situations that might occur). It intensifies emotional pain to the point it's out of proportion to the situation. It causes irritability and feelings of depression, and can disrupt the person's performance and relationships.

## What perfectionists can do to change

If you've had a "that's me" experience reading this article so far, these are some practical solutions for minimizing the downsides of perfectionistic tendencies.

**Learn from successes.** The idea of learning from your mistakes is likely to feel too confronting to a perfectionist, and trigger rumination. An alternative is to learn from your successes. By reflecting on the pathways that led to your successes, you'll be able to see that you achieved a meaningful end despite not doing everything completely flawlessly or being 100% certain of success in

One reason perfectionists are so
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Ask yourself… how can I
# IMPROVE
by **1%**

advance. Through this process, you'll be able to understand how you can benefit from taking a ready, fire, aim approach, where you tweak your processes and decisions based on experience rather than from exhaustive research and deliberation.

You can also identify non-perfectionistic, but successful, role models and colleagues — how are they able to be effective without succumbing to perfectionism? Observe what they do and learn from it.

**Develop heuristics to enable faster decision-making and action taking.** Heuristics or rules of thumb are aimed at producing good decisions most but not all of the time. They help balance the benefits of faster decision-making against any incremental gains you might get from delaying action and continued thinking. For example, a useful heuristic might be, when selecting a hotel to host a work event, you'll define 5 criteria and pick a hotel that meets at least 4 of these 5.

Heuristics are a great method of prioritizing for perfectionists. My personal rule of thumb is "Do jobs worth $100+ before <$100 jobs." This helps me de-prioritize marginally productive behaviors, like spending 30 mins returning an unsatisfactory low value item to a store when I could be doing something much more productive.

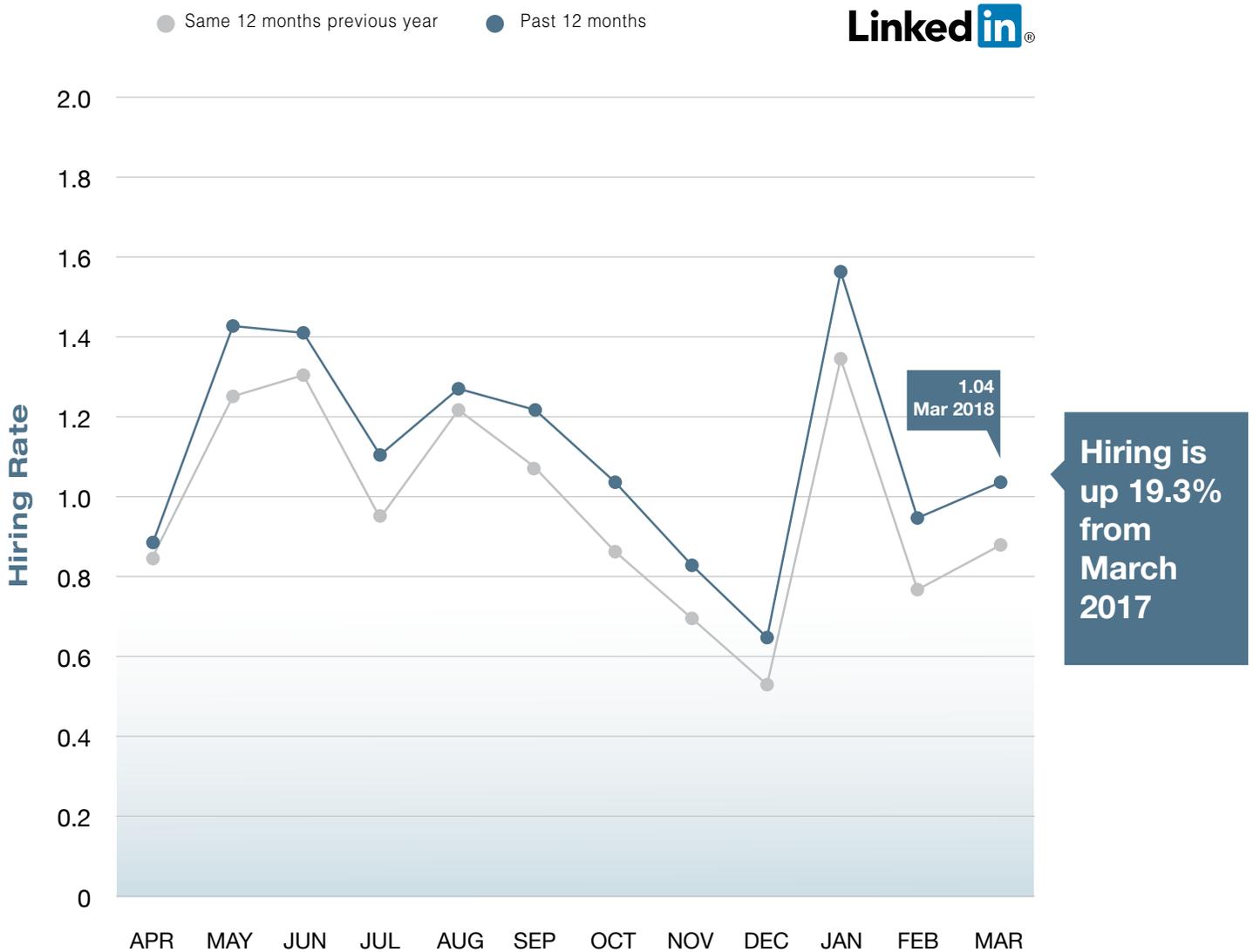**Ask yourself "How could I improve by 1%?"** This is a popular approach that's especially useful if you're prone to overcomplicating solutions to problems. Because perfectionists want to be flawless, they're typically dismissive of incremental gains. By looking for how you can improve your behavior by 1%, you'll start to see that there are easier ways to improve than what you're imagining. For example, someone who knows they're too negative and that others find their attitude demoralizing might decide to start making one positive comment during each meeting they attend. This is both a 1% improvement strategy and an example of a useful rule of thumb.

**Learn strategies to disrupt rumination.** It's a lot easier to tolerate making mistakes and having flaws if you know how to curb rumination. Notice when you are starting to mull over something, and ask yourself if obsessing over it is really helping you. Often, rumination feels like problem-solving — but it isn't. If your thoughts are just going in circles, or you're noticing that your rumination is putting you into a bad mood, let it go. By becoming aware of the costs of perfectionism, and how it affects your productivity, well-being, and relationships (both at work and at home), you can start to mitigate this destructive habit.

April 2018
## Hiring on LinkedIn in the United States

● Same 12 months previous year  ● Past 12 months

**Linked in** ®



**Hiring Rate**

2.0
1.8
1.6
1.4
1.2
1.0
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0

APR   MAY   JUN   JUL   AUG   SEP   OCT   NOV   DEC   JAN   FEB   MAR

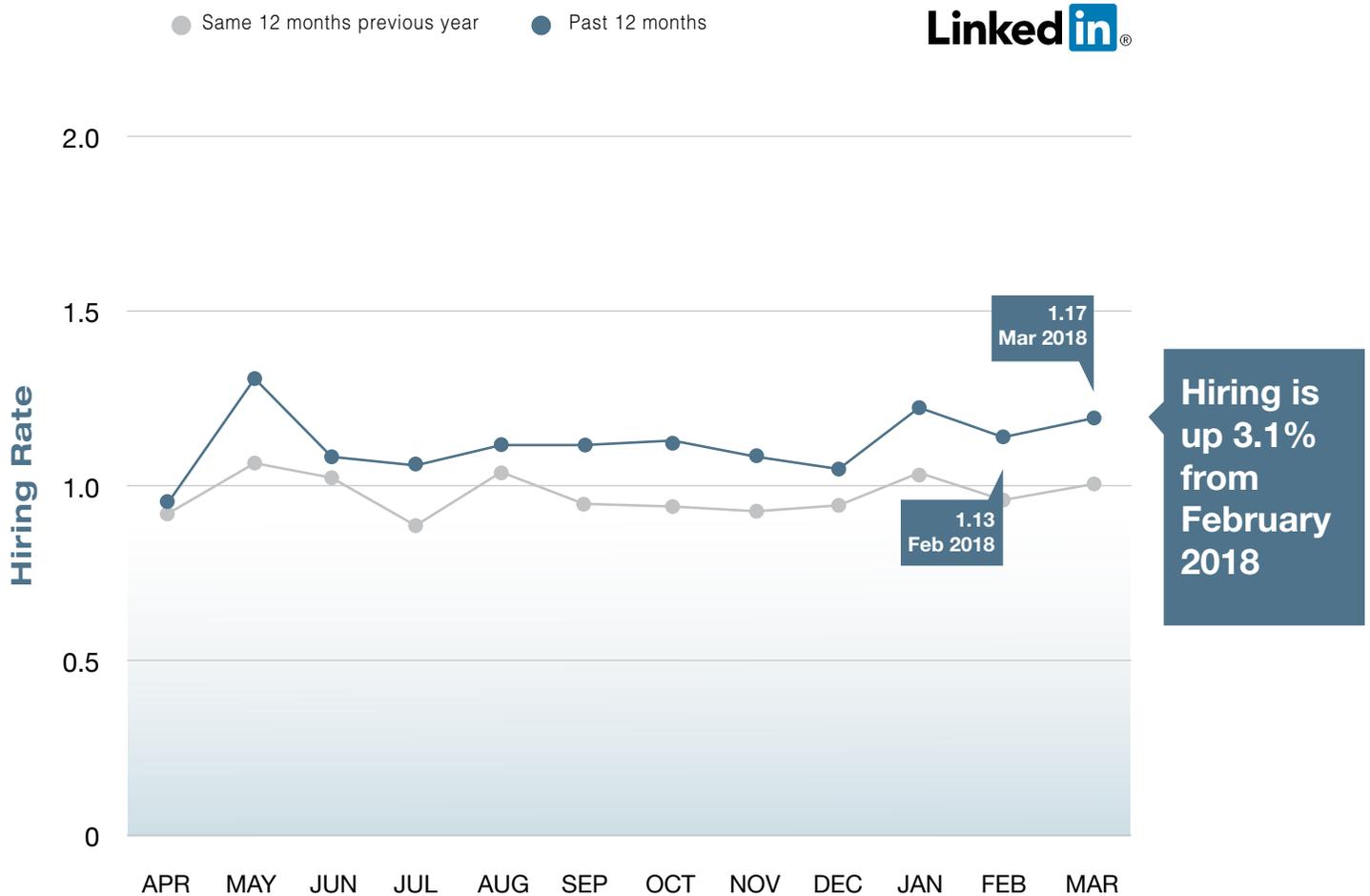**1.04 Mar 2018**

**Hiring is up 19.3% from March 2017**

*"Hiring Rate" is the percentage of LinkedIn members who changed the name of their new employer on their profile the same month they began their new job, divided by the total number of LinkedIn members in the U.S. This number is indexed to the average month in 2015-16 (for example, an index of 1.05 indicates a hiring rate that is 5% higher than the average month in 2015-16). Hiring in Mar. 2018 is up 19.3% YoY (non-seasonally adjusted) and up 3.1% MoM (seasonally adjusted).*

**Seasonally-adjusted hiring was 3.1% higher in March than in February 2018. Hiring has been slightly better through the start of 2018 than it was in the second half of 2017, but year-over-year comparisons will become more challenging as we move into spring, when hiring skyrocketed last year.**

# evaluate

## Seasonally Adjusted Hiring on LinkedIn in the United States

Adjusted for seasonal variations, like the spike in hiring that occurs every summer due to seasonal work and student internships. Removing seasonal variations allows for easier comparison between different months.

● Same 12 months previous year    ● Past 12 months

**Linked in**



**1.17 Mar 2018**

**1.13 Feb 2018**

**Hiring is up 3.1% from February 2018**

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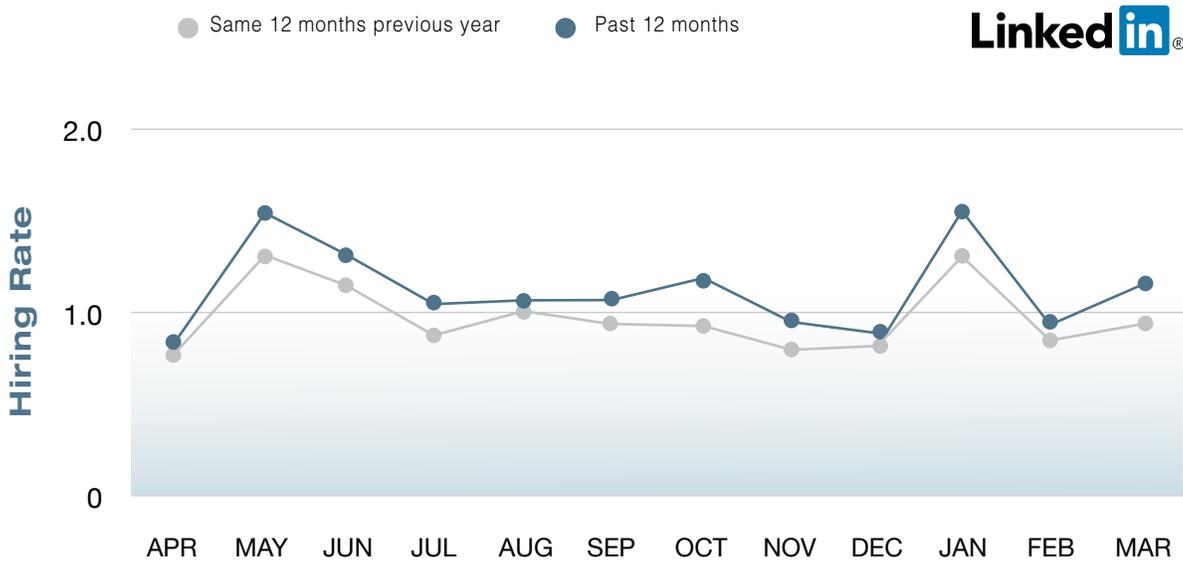
In line with national hiring trends, the industries with the biggest year-over-year hiring increases in March were financial services & insurance (20.9% higher); aerospace, automotive, and transportation (19.0% higher); and manufacturing and industrial (18.8% higher). Notably, hiring seems to be slowing in the professional services industry: after a strong run in 2017, seasonally-adjusted hiring fell in February 2018, stayed flat through March and was only up 9.9% year-over-year—much less than the national average.
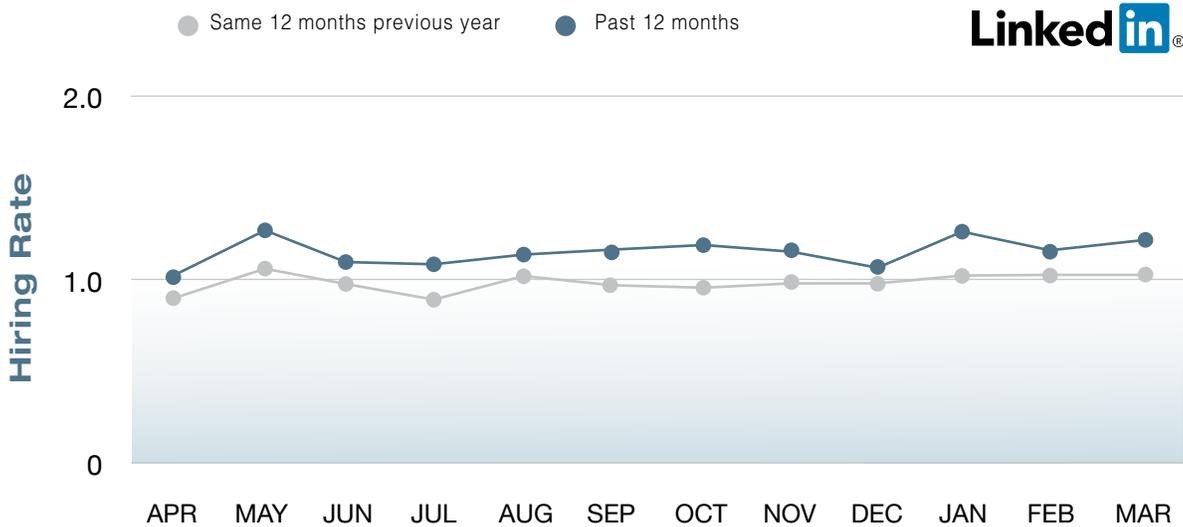
# evaluate

April 2018
## Hiring on LinkedIn by Industry

## Manufacturing/Industrial

### Hiring Rate

- Same 12 months previous year
- Past 12 months

**Linked in** ®



**Hiring Rate**

APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR

> **Hiring is up 18.8% from March 2018**

### Seasonally Adjusted Hiring Rate

- Same 12 months previous year
- Past 12 months

**Linked in** ®



**Hiring Rate**

APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR

> **Hiring is up 4.5% from February 2018**

*"Hiring Rate" is the percentage of LinkedIn members who changed the name of their new employer on their profile the same month they began their new job, divided by the total number of LinkedIn members in the U.S. This number is indexed to the average month in 2015-16 (for example, an index of 1.05 indicates a hiring rate that is 5% higher than the average month in 2015-16). Hiring in Mar. 2018 is up 19.3% YoY (non-seasonally adjusted) and up 3.1% MoM (seasonally adjusted).*

## HR News

### Gender Plays Vital Role in How Workers Are Saving for Retirement, Finds Willis Towers Watson

Financial wellness continues to be one of the top priorities for workers of all ages. However, a new survey shows that gender plays an important part in how workers are saving for retirement and securing their financial freedom.

The 2017 Global Benefits Attitudes Survey—conducted by global advisory, broking, and solutions company Willis Towers Watson—has revealed that while importance of retirement security has increased sharply over the past few years, workers' retirement confidence has turned downward, which could prompt employers to boost their offering of financial well-being programs.

"Saving for retirement is a significant challenge for the vast majority of working Americans," said Shane Bartling, senior consultant, Willis Towers Watson—in a press release. "Varying financial needs make it difficult for many men and women to build a retirement nest egg. While our survey finds that women place a lower priority on saving for retirement than men do, we believe it's a question of, 'Am I able to save for retirement?' rather than, 'Is it important to save for retirement?'"

According to the survey, 60% of working men ranked saving for retirement as their top financial priority. In contrast, 44% of women surveyed ranked saving for retirement as their top priority. In fact, saving for retirement was the fifth-highest priority for most women, who ranked meeting daily living costs (64%) and paying off debt (57%) as their top financial priorities.

To note, married women without any children under age of 18 ranked saving for retirement as their number one financial priority. The survey noted that most employees do not prioritize their own finances toward saving for retirement until their 40s or 50s, when other financial needs have been met.

The survey also found retirement security is becoming a much more important issue for all respondents, jumping from 52% in 2013 to more than three-quarters (78%) in 2018. And while retirement security has become a heightened issue for Baby Boomers (87%), it remains a key issue for even Millennial employees (71%).

At the same time, workers' retirement confidence has declined following several years of steady improvement. More than half of respondents (57%) feel confident they have enough financial resources to live comfortably 15 years into retirement, but that is down from 69% in 2015.

Retirement confidence had been rising steadily since 2009 when 61% were confident. In addition, less than two in five women (39%) are now confident they'll have enough resources to last 25 years into retirement compared with 54% of men.

### More Workers Expecting to Work into Their 70s

More than one in three (37%) workers surveyed expect to work past age 70, an increase from 30% two years ago. Only one in four workers (26%) says he or she will be able to retire before age 65, down from 29% in 2015.

Struggling employees—identified in the survey as those worried about their short- and long-term finances—are feeling the greatest pressure to retire later. Two-thirds of struggling employees who are age 50 or older today don't expect to be able to retire before age 70. About 30% of the employees surveyed were identified as "struggling."

"Financial pressures are driving many employees to retire later," said Pat Rotello, senior consultant at Willis Towers Watson. "Employees with money worries are more likely to keep working past normal retirement age to help sustain their income. Our research shows employees who work longer are typically less healthy, more stressed and less engaged at work. Given these developments, we believe employers will want to evaluate their retirement plans and financial well-being initiatives. In fact, it wouldn't surprise us to see more employers develop and implement financial well-being programs to help their employees achieve their

## HR News

retirement and financial goals."
Among other findings from the Global Benefits Attitudes Survey:

- Three in four workers (74%) believe their generation is likely to be much worse off in retirement than their parents' generation.
- About two-thirds believe Social Security (68%) will be much less when they retire than it is now and government medical benefits (66%) will be worse.
- Half of workers (50%) plan to retire from their main job but will keep working for some time before fully retiring.
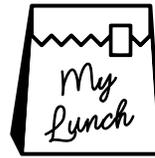
**7 out of 10 workers can relate to this viral story about a stolen lunch**
*by Rachel Mucha*

A recent tweet about a worker's lunch going missing and security footage being viewed to find the culprit went viral after employees everywhere related to the common office crime.

Last week, Zak Toscani shared this saga on Twitter: A co-worker's lunch was stolen, and HR and the victim viewed the security camera tape to find a female colleague removing the man's lunch from the fridge and tossing it into the trash. The man didn't want her to get in trouble, but HR emailed the whole company to remind them not to steal, or in this case, throw out, each other's food.

## HR News

### Common criminals

While the series of tweets were funny, food theft is a common office occurrence that leaves many employees angry and frustrated.

A survey by the online grocer Peapod found that 71% of workers have had a snack, drink or meal stolen from the communal kitchen. Only about 35% of employees admitted to swiping someone's food, though.

Art Markman, author of "The Psychology Behind Why People Steal Their Co-Workers' Stuff," says that food thieves generally don't think it's a big deal and justify their behavior in the following ways:

- "It's like the fridge at home — everything's up for grabs."
- "I was starving and couldn't help myself."
- "It's not like I'm stealing someone's money."

Survey respondent John, a self-confessed fridge raider, admits to taking co-workers' sandwiches or leftovers somewhat regularly. His philosophy is anything's up for grabs if the person's already gone home for the day, because "day old food is gross." He'll leave things with a longer shelf life alone.

### Preventative measures

There are a few ways employers can tackle lunch theft. Offering some free snacks in communal areas can reduce the number of hungry employees who resort to stealing.

Encouraging employees to put their names on their food items can cut down on theft, too. Better yet, bringing food in a brightly colored or personalized lunch bag will make it more noticeable when a worker has food that isn't theirs.

From an HR standpoint, Markman says food theft can really damage morale and cause friction between employees. Taking measures to catch and discipline lunch thieves can send a clear message that stealing food won't be tolerated.

### Supreme Court declines ADA leave case: Why that's not a bad thing
*by Jared Bilski*

So the Supreme Court decided not to tackle whether extended leave is a reasonable ADA accommodation. But that could be more good news than bad for employers.

The Supreme Court has declined to review an appeals court ruling in Severson v. Heartland Woodcraft, Inc.

In that case, the 7th Circuit Court ruled that "a multimonth leave of absence is beyond the scope of a reasonable accommodation."

**By declining to take up that case,** the Supreme Court leaves the Severson ruling in effect. And that ruling — a ruling which the the 7th Circuit Court said "[l]ong-term medical leave is the domain of the FMLA" — was hailed as a huge victory for employers. Although the 7th Circuit ruling only applies directly to employers in Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin, a number of other circuit courts have handed down similar rulings on extended leave under the ADA.

### Doesn't permit essential functions

The Severson case centered on when extended leave becomes an undue hardship for employers. In that case, Raymond Severson had a back condition that required surgery. After his FMLA leave was exhausted, Severson requested additional time off. Heartland Woodcraft terminated him, but encouraged Severson to reapply once he was better.

Severson took the company to court, claiming his employer failed to give him the accommodation he needed — more leave. Heartland Woodcraft argued that Severson had already been granted six months of leave and it just wasn't reasonable to give him any more time off. The court ruled that Severson would not have been able to work if he had been granted this additional leave, which is an essential part of an

ADA accommodation request.

"Medical leave spanning multiple months does not permit the employee to perform the essential functions of his job," the court said. It also added that long-term medical leave is what the FMLA is for, not the ADA.

### Not a leave-entitlement statute
For employers, leaving the 7th Circuit's ruling intact is ultimately a good thing. That ruling — and similar rulings — interprets the ADA as an "anti-discrimination" law as opposed to a "leave-entitlement" statute. So even though employers may have to grant some extended leave as an ADA accommodation in certain situations (and engage in the interactive process in all cases in which the ADA is in play), they now have some guidance into how much leave is too much in the eyes of some parts of the federal court system.

### Was an employee fired for being rude ... or French?
*by Rachel Mucha*

If an employee is "aggressive, rude and disrespectful," you have a pretty good reason to fire them, right? But what if that behavior is cultural, and they claim discrimination?

That's exactly what happened at a Canadian restaurant. A French waiter, Guillaume Rey, filed a complaint with British Columbia's Human Rights Tribunal, saying his employer discriminated against his culture by firing him for his behavior.

### Backstory
The restaurant says that Rey violated its code of conduct several times and received verbal and written warnings about his behavior. Nevertheless, Rey continued to be rude to customers.

After he was let go, Rey filed a lawsuit, claiming he was fired for being French. While he doesn't deny his rude behavior, he says that's just how his culture is. According to Rey, French people "tend to be

more direct and expressive," and being trained in the hospitality industry in France gave him a "direct, honest and professional personality."
Both the restaurant and Rey say that he was good at his job, apart from his demeanor.

### Complaint can proceed
The restaurant tried to get the complaint dismissed, but Rey will get the chance to present his case. Tribunal member Devyn Cousineau said:

"Mr. Rey will have to explain what it is about French heritage that would result in behavior that people misinterpret as a violation of workplace standards of acceptable conduct."

While not an expert on Canadian law (and having no guess as to how this case will turn out) Evil HR Lady Suzanne Lucas has doubts about this claim. She points out that Rey moved to Canada by choice, and a big part of living and working in a different country is adapting to its cultural norms.

Lucas goes on to say that an employer is perfectly within its rights to have expectations for how employees should behave, and to discipline them for not meeting those expectations. But we'll have to wait and find out what the court thinks.

### More Employers Are Using Biometric Authentication
*Roy Maurer*

Biometric authentication technology—including facial and voice recognition, and hand and iris scans—is now used in a majority of workplaces, according to a recent survey of IT professionals.

Spiceworks, a professional network for the IT industry, polled 492 IT professionals from North America and Europe in February 2018.

Sixty-two percent of the respondents' companies currently use biometrics for various security and business purposes such as employee access and data security, and an additional 24 percent plan to use

it by 2020, the survey found.

Fingerprint scanners are the most common type of biometric authentication used on corporate devices, with 57 percent of organizations using them, followed by facial recognition (14 percent), hand geometry recognition (5 percent), iris scanning (3 percent), voice recognition (2 percent) and palm-vein recognition (2 percent).

"With stories of computer hacking and data breaches making headlines, we're frequently reminded that passwords are far from a perfect way to secure sensitive accounts or data," Tsai said. "The use of default, weak or even nonexistent passwords is rampant."

Put simply, passwords are vulnerable, said Kevin Wheeler, founder and president of the Future of Talent Institute, a San Francisco-area think tank. "We're all very likely to jot down our passwords on a Post-It note and stick it in a drawer, where a determined person could find it and compromise the system. Companies are very concerned about losing proprietary information, and private communications getting out because of compromised security."

Tsai added that even when strong passwords are used, cybercriminals can find clever ways around them, especially if they're easily reset, reused on multiple sites or hit with an automated brute-force attack, which systematically generates a large number of consecutive guesses.

They're also expensive for companies to manage, according to Alex Simons, director of program management in Microsoft's identity division, in an interview with CNN. Simons said he spends over $2 million in help desk calls a month helping people change their passwords. In 2015, Microsoft introduced Windows Hello, which uses face scans or fingerprints to log in to Windows devices.

"To address password security concerns, many organizations have introduced additional layers of protection, such as two-factor authentication, which requires using another authentication method in addition to the standard username and password," Tsai said. "This second identification factor can

come in many forms, including a PIN number; a passcode delivered over SMS; or some form of biometric input, such as a thumbprint scan."

Barriers to adopting biometric authentication in the workplace include the cost, reliability concerns, systems upgrade requirements, and worries about the storage and management of biometric data, according to the survey.

**Security Concerns**

Spiceworks also found that, although most IT professionals believe biometric authentication is more secure than traditional text-based passwords, PINs and personal security questions, only 10 percent of respondents believe biometrics are secure enough to be used as the sole form of authentication.

That's because biometrics can be stolen. Over 5.6 million employees' fingerprints on file were compromised in the 2015 data breach at the Office of Personnel Management, leading some to wonder whether stolen fingerprints could be used to log in to devices.

A majority of survey respondents were especially concerned with the risks of false positives, compromised or replicated identifiers, and the lack of standards around biometrics.

"Many IT professionals aren't convinced biometrics can serve as a secure and reliable replacement for the standard username and password combo," Tsai said. "Unless technology vendors can address the security issues and privacy concerns associated with biometrics, the technology will likely be used side by side in the workplace with traditional passwords or as a secondary authentication factor for the foreseeable future."

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