



Human.
Resources.
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September Newsletter



September 7, 2021

Hello!

With summer in the rearview, we find ourselves in a much different place than what was expected just a couple of months ago. Our plans for a post-covid “return to normal” are quickly evaporating, and we seem to be right back in the middle of covid chaos.

Like you, I’m wary (and weary!) of the challenges we face, but I also believe we just need to summon the will and the skills to confront them. Our colleague **Kate Rogers** advises to, “hold things lightly, with open palms, not clenched fists. Don’t get attached to any one outcome or way of doing things. Embrace iteration and creativity. Know that good ideas can come from anywhere.”

I love that.

I asked the KMA team to identify the struggles our clients – and leaders as a whole – are facing, and some insights that can help. Three categories emerged: recruiting and hiring talent; employee flexibility demands; and mental health and wellbeing.

Recruiting and Hiring Talent

When it comes to the challenge of recruiting and hiring, the tight labor market shifts the power balance to the candidates. **Deb Bartol** empathizes: “The biggest angst employers are experiencing right now is the lack of a reliable workforce, especially in the service industry, and employers are bending over backwards to appease the staff they have.”

On the employee side of things, **Michelle Prejean** sees that “candidates are seeking open lines of communication from their managers/employers. They want their workplace to have a culture of transparency, with clear expectations and positive/constructive feedback so they know where they stand.”

Another facet of the tight job market is that compensation is a higher priority than ever, as candidates want to know the compensation package they're being offered is fair. "For open positions, it's important to look at what the market is paying by conducting a market assessment," says **Kari Meillat**. "This allows you to offer a fair and competitive rate of pay, reducing salary negotiations and ensuring you have an adequate budget in mind when interviewing candidates. I would also point out the value of thoroughly looking at your Total Rewards as an integral part of retaining and acquiring the talent you need."

We recently published this [Q&A with KMA](#) discussing the myriad challenges in recruiting and hiring right now. It's worth revisiting.

Employee Flexibility Demands

After an 18-month grand experiment with remote work, the case has been proven that most knowledge workers can work productively in either a fully remote or hybrid model. Rather than keeping physical tabs on team members, managers have had to adopt an attitude of trust, and to allow the job performance to speak for itself.

Debby Olken believes that "employers who embrace the flexibility being demanding right now will be rewarded with a new workforce: for example, mature employees who have great skills and experience to contribute – but on a scaled back work week; those who are caring for kids or elders who also have lots to contribute; and talented employees who are burned out and want a healthier workplace culture."

Strategic flexibility, as **Rhoda McVeigh** puts it, is especially critical for stressed out parents who have had to juggle their work, childcare and remote schooling all at once. "Each working parent's needs are different, and employers should engage in an interactive process to identify the work arrangements that will meet both the family's and the employer's needs." She warns that employers who don't do this well will not be able to attract or retain working parents.

While some businesses do function better when teams are together in person, or have no choice because of the nature of the work, organizations that *can* accommodate employees' demands to work when and where their schedule allows may also avoid the turnover tsunami, in which employees are resigning from their positions to pursue better opportunities. **Karin Nicoll** recommends Stay Interviews to keep talent engaged and motivated. "A Stay Interview is an opportunity to check in with potentially vulnerable employees to find out what they're struggling with, what they need from leadership, and

simply to ask how they are. It's an excellent tool for retaining your top employees."

Finally, **Laurie Saad** shares [this article](#) from Fast Company: Leaders are Missing What Employees Really Need.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that isolation and loneliness can contribute to feelings of stress – including at work. Anxiety and depression are on the rise, and are certainly not helped by virtual meetings, endless emails or Slack messages, and a general lack of human connection.

There are things we can do to relieve some of the pressures of remote work. Relying on technologies like Zoom to make remote collaboration possible was a revelation in the early days of the pandemic. But it's worth re-evaluating some of the practices we have put in place.

This HBR [article](#) challenges us to ask when do we really need to have a meeting? And if we're meeting virtually, do our cameras always need to be on? Adam Grant, organizational psychologist and author, argues, "The most underused tech of 2021: phones. Not every meeting needs to have cameras on. In voice-only calls, we're better at reading emotions – and more in sync. Video adds cognitive load: we worry about making the right facial expressions and struggle to interpret body language."

Managers and co-workers often don't recognize when an employee is struggling with mental health matters. In supporting employees who may be impacted, "It's critical to promote a culture of awareness and empathy, which can help remove some of the stigma attached to these issues," **Rhoda McVeigh** advises. She also advocates taking disconnected time off from work to rest and re-charge, which leadership should demonstrate by example.

This Forbes [article](#) on How Mental Health Awareness Can Help Shape a Better Workplace, is an excellent read.

I acknowledge these are all big, complex challenges with multi-pronged, nuanced solutions. If we can help take some of the weight off your shoulders as you deal with these and other HR stresses, I hope you will let us be your resource.

As always, reach out to me anytime!

Kim Anania
CEO and President
KMA Human Resources Consulting

Here's what else is going on at KMA...

New Team Members

We are thrilled to welcome these fabulous new consultants to our team:



[Jenn Bradford](#)

[Johnna Major](#)

[Karin Nicoll](#)

[Wendi Smith](#)

Have you ever wondered if you'd be a good fit for KMA? We are hiring HR Consultants and Recruiters. Please reach out to anita@kmahr.com to learn about current opportunities to join the KMA team.

Compliance Updates

Both Maine and New Hampshire legislatures have been busy with new labor laws. These blogs that explain everything you need to know to stay in compliance with the new legislation.

[Maine Employment Law Updates](#)
[New Hampshire Voluntary Paid Leave](#)
[EEO-1 Filing Deadline Extended](#)

Thank you for your 5-Star Google Reviews

Over the summer, we pledged to donate \$10 for each 5-star Google Review that we received, and together we raised \$430 to Make-A-Wish Maine! Our recipient for September is the Immigrant Welcome Center. Your positive review helps us in our search rankings, and you can do it right [here](#).

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