A Survival Guide to the Higher Ed Workforce

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Presenters

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Agenda

Higher Ed has always presented a challenging Human Resources environment, and does so even more during the pandemic era. This session presents an idea-rich set of insights into why our constituencies are so cranky, and how we can best deal with them most effectively for their and our sanity.

- Why are our Higher Education peers and constituencies so cranky?
- What do we do to address the crankiness for our institutions, our teams, and ourselves?
- What's next?

Objectives

After this session, participants will:

- better understand the unique organizational culture issues of higher education institutions;

- more effectively address issues that HR leaders face within our institutions; and

- more successfully end each HR work day with a better sense of satisfaction even in the face of conflict

Poll Question

Are our Higher Ed colleagues cranky?
- a)   Yes. And they're crankier now than they were in 2019 (before the pandemic)
- b)   Yes, but the pandemic didn't make it worse.
- c)   Meh.
- d)   No. Everyone seems pretty happy.

YOU HAVE ONE MINUTE TO RESPOND

What's the Problem?

What's the External Evidence?

How is higher education in particular impacted?

References: Higher Education Impacts

NOTE: The US Preventive Services Task Force for the first time recommended that doctors screen all adult patients under 65 for anxiety... (New York Times, September 20, 2022)

So What Do We Do About It?

Addressing each constituency:

- Interventions and approaches for the institution
- Interventions and approaches for our managers and teams
- Interventions and approaches for individuals

Key Institutional Approaches

- Supporting Employee Wellness
- Addressing Employee Satisfaction
- Focusing on the Employee Experience
- Addressing Culture, Values and Actions

Things to consider:
- What can I do first?
- How do I get started?
- How can efforts be configured for my community at this moment?

Institutional Approaches – Employee Wellness

- Wellness is more important than ever, and includes both physical and mental health components going well beyond the standard benefits packages we provide.
- Our employees may be anywhere in the country, or in the world. Our resources must be equally broad-reaching.

References: Employee Wellness

Institutional Approaches – Assessing Employee Satisfaction

- Employee Satisfaction Surveys
    - Working Conditions
    - Communication
    - Professional Development
    - Work/Life Balance
    - Compensation and Financial Issues
    - Benefits
    - Wellness
    - Safety
- Pulse Surveys on specific topics

References: Employee Experience and Employee Satisfaction

Institutional Approaches – Employee Experience

The Great Re-evaluation: *Employers and HR leaders are getting more creative, more innovative, more flexible and more employee-driven than ever in order to keep workers. It's about taking aim at employee burnout, connecting with workers, providing flexibility, focusing on well-being, ensuring employees have purpose and values, meeting employees where they are and much more.*

Kathryn Mayer, "EX is becoming central to the CHRO role. Here's why that matters."

Institutional Approaches – Employee Experience

Key initiatives include:

- Improved, comprehensive onboarding initiatives
- Engagement, recognition and reward initiatives
- Staff Development initiatives
- Internal career-pathing and apprenticeships
- Embracing flexibility
- Enabling new ways of working
- Adding technology to improve efficiency

References: Employee Experience and Employee Satisfaction

Institutional Approaches – Culture, Values and Actions

Culture is defined as the intersection of:

- Beliefs (mission, vision, values)
- Behaviors (norms, leadership styles, communication
- Decision-making (priorities, inputs, inclusion)

Institutional Approaches – Culture, Values and Actions

- Culture is *what* you do

- Values are *why* you do it

- Actions are the *how* – the specifics for how culture and values are reflected

- Organizational culture is most heavily driven and influenced by the senior leadership and the stated strategic priorities of the organization

References: Culture, Values and Actions

Institutional Approaches – Culture, Values and Actions

How do we CHANGE culture?

- Be sure our planning and assessments are aligned with the organization's mission, vision, and strategic plan
- Have clear statements of Values and well-defined Action Plans
- Measure the performance of individuals and managers against the Values and Actions
- Have champions throughout the organization, and foster continuous communication
- Don't rush it!
- Values should be relatively fixed, but Culture and Actions are "living" things and must be adjusted as needed.

Team Approaches

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." ~ African Proverb

Helping the team feel re-committed by focusing on the interdependence and reliance on each role.

Managers must be equipped and prepared.

Team Approaches

1. University-wide training initiatives to help managers reduce team crankiness and reset
2. Cohort programs: including train the trainer: resilience-based leadership training
3. Manager support: Lunch & Learns/book groups/mentorship circles
4. University-wide manager targeted training
   a. Engagement
   b. Recognition and Rewards
   c. Good Management Practices
   d. Balance Accountability and Compassion

References: Individual and Team Approaches

Team Approaches – Sample Manager Training Agenda

Looking past the pandemic: Best practices to reset yourself and your team (New School training course in 2022)

- Acknowledging the problems: Addressing survivor guilt
- Trust: Creating psychologically safe environments
- Addressing employee needs: clear goals/expectations, purpose, feedback, recognition
- Communication: best practices in a hybrid environment
- Helping managers help themselves
- Team success
- Helping managers personally succeed

Individual Approaches

- It all starts with oneself

- None of this matters if you're not okay

REMEMBER TO FILL YOUR CUP, because you CAN'T POUR from an EMPTY CUP.

MISMEDIA

Individual Approaches

We respond to difficult situations we can't control or impact with any and all of the following:

- Disengagement
- Disempowerment
- Anger
- Resentment
- Fear
- Stress
- Resignation

Individual Approaches

- Take breaks
- Get outdoors
- Spend time with friends and family
- Have outside activities
- Consider a side gig based on your interests and skills
- Practice gratitude
- Limit your focus on news and social media
- Have a work-at-home schedule (not 24/7)

References: Individual and Team Approaches

Individual Approaches

What's Next???

- Who knows?

- The literature on wellness, mental health, employee experience and organizational culture tells us that the approaches discussed here work best. Your mileage may vary.

- We in HR set the tone as leaders, and must continue to work to move our organizations and leaders forward.

- We don't have the option of "quiet quitting".

What's Next???

- In today's market and economy, give employees what they want and need:
  - Flexibility when possible
  - Hybrid work
  - Interesting work
  - Influence and agency
  - Appreciation and gratitude
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Keep an eye on market salaries/compensation packages
- Take care of ourselves and our HR teams
- Be bold, and lead!

Call to Action

What can you apply starting today:

✓ For yourself?

✓ For individuals on your team?

✓ For your team as a whole?

✓ For the institution?
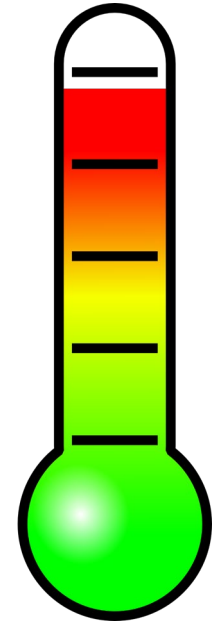
My Crankiness Meter

Have a Question?

Submit questions to our presenters using the Chat.

Thank You

Please complete your event evaluation

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