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HUMAN RESOURCES & PAYROLL

Workplace Rivalries are on the Rise

While many teams may be dispersed right now, a sense of workplace competition is alive and well, new research from global staffing firm Robert Half shows.

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While many teams may be dispersed right now, a sense of workplace competition is alive and well, new research from global staffing firm Robert Half shows. More than

one-quarter of professionals surveyed (28%) said the level of competition among employees at their company is higher than a year ago. About 6 in 10 (61%) reported no change, and 11% noted a decline.

Additional findings:

- More professionals ages 18 to 24 (35%) and 25 to 40 (37%) than those ages 41 to 54 (23%) and 55 and older (14%) said workplace rivalries have increased in the past year.
- Men (32%) were more likely than women (24%) to report a rise in competition levels.
- A greater percentage of respondents with children (37%) than those without (18%) felt employees are more competitive with each other today than they were a year ago.
- Among the 28 U.S. cities in the survey, Austin (42%), Houston (40%) and Miami (38%) have the most workers who noted heightened competition with their colleagues.

“Teams have been rallying to help their companies pull through the pandemic,” said Paul McDonald, senior executive director of Robert Half. “At the same time, workers may feel more pressure and less connection with their colleagues since transitioning from the office to a remote setup.”

McDonald added, “Fostering a healthy level of competition can increase engagement and motivation among employees — no matter where they’re located. But too much can have the opposite effect, so managers and their staff must do their part to cultivate a collaborative versus cutthroat workplace culture.”

Robert Half offers three tips for encouraging healthy competition among dispersed teams:

1. **Create a virtual challenge.** Organize a friendly contest where employees can win bragging rights or a small prize, such as a gift certificate or donation to a charity of their choice. Determine the goal to decide if it will be tied to performance or mainly recreational.
2. **Make time to celebrate.** Host a video call to recognize team and individual achievements, and consider arranging for treats to be delivered to star performers. Rewarding employee wins can boost morale and inspire continued growth.
3. **Watch for foul play.** Workers may feel more pressure to prove themselves in the current environment, but it should never be at the expense of themselves or others.

Negative behaviors — such as failing to communicate and taking credit for others' work — are signs competition may have gotten out of hand.

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