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how they can improve employee retention.

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By Marcel Schwantes, Inc. (TNS)

March 3 was Employee Appreciation Day, and it was a good opportunity for leaders to reflect on how [appreciation](#) can improve their [employee retention](#).

According to a recent [survey from Workhuman](#), an employee recognition and human capital management company, nearly half (46.4%) of all employees only feel “somewhat valued” at work, with over 10% sharing that they don’t feel valued at all.

Employees of color were more likely to report feeling somewhat valued than the

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1. Invest in well-being

One way to show your employees that you appreciate them is to invest in their well-being. **Over half** (59%) of all U.S. employees report experiencing at least moderate levels of burnout, according to Aflac's WorkForces report. When research shows that U.S. companies lose **\$300 billion** a year due to employee stress, burnout is as much of a financial risk as it is a cultural one. Numbers aside, employees want to know their companies care about them: per **Gallup**, 71% of employees who agree their workplace cares about their well-being will advocate for their company as a good place to work.

Beyond baseline health care benefits, there are many small, simple ways to improve employee well-being, including:

- **“Pop up” holidays.** Spotify **made headlines** for giving employees an entire week off to focus on their wellness. While not every company can afford to close up shop for a whole week, an extra day off or two may ease the stress.
- **Meditation and wellness apps.** Health care professionals **recommend** certain wellness and self-care apps as a supplement to encouraging a healthy lifestyle. However, if offering such subscriptions is not feasible, open it up to your employees to share how the company can best help mitigate stress and support their health and wellness.
- **Be flexible.** According to Bankrate, **55 percent of employees** find flexibility more important than salary when job searching. Wherever possible, giving employees a little more wiggle room in their schedules can be beneficial in reducing stress, especially if they're making time for doctor's appointments and therapy.

2. Listen closely and take action

We spend a lot of our lives at work. It's not enough for employee concerns to simply

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asking for feedback regularly and offering employees multiple ways to share their thoughts. A combination of frequent employee surveys, check-ins with managers, and even technology platforms can give leaders a regular and accurate pulse on employee sentiment. These measures enormously benefit employees; according to a [report](#) from Isolved, 52% of employees stated that regular meetings with their managers could reduce their feelings of impostor syndrome, and the same Workhuman [survey](#) showed that 30% of workers would feel more supported in general if they had more frequent check-ins.

Once you have ample feedback, work with fellow leaders to develop an action plan, using employee feedback to prioritize the biggest concerns. Most importantly, communicate the extent of the changes to your employees and encourage them to hold you accountable throughout the process. Transparency is key to making employees feel valued.

3. Celebrate authenticity

People's value lies not only in the skills they use to do their jobs but also the unique experiences, perspectives, and voices they bring to their companies. To reap the benefits of these diverse experiences, employees have to feel safe enough to be themselves and challenge the status quo, without fear of being embarrassed, marginalized, or punished. To that end, it's critical to encourage and grant your employees the freedom to bring their authentic selves to work.

Being respectful and affirming differences will reduce the need for people to hide behind their corporate masks, where people act out of character for the sake of professionalism.

That said, not every employee may necessarily want to bring their "whole self" to work. Respecting employees' personal boundaries is just as important to ensure they

feel safe and seen at work.

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Internalize the phrase, “praise, not performance.” Model [servant leadership](#) by making moments of appreciation about the individual being recognized, not yourself or the company. Doing so will build trust, and employees will feel that their hard work is truly acknowledged.

Whether or not your company breaks out the fanfare for Employee Appreciation Day, now is the time to assess how and where you can be more appreciative of your employees. When it comes to leading with positivity, the end goal should have a long-term strategy in place, but don't be afraid to start small.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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