

IN THIS ISSUE »

- The high cost of low employee engagement (1)
- From the President's Desk: 3 Emerging Alternatives to Traditional Hiring Methods (2)
- Bright Ideas: Relearning the Art of Asking Questions (4)
- Meet Amy Jordan (5)
- Staffing Statistics (6)
- Shining Star (10)
- HR News (12)



The HIGH Cost of LOW Employee Engagement

by Dan Kurber, Hr.blr.com

The impact of unengaged employees in your organization can be costly. According to Gallup's most recent study of the American workplace, 52% of United States workers are unengaged and 18% are actively disengaged. What is the cost of a 70% unengaged workforce?

Gallup estimates that unengaged workers cost the United States economy between \$450 billion to \$550 billion each year in lost productivity. The question leaders should be asking themselves today is, how are unengaged employees in my organization impacting the bottom line?

THE BUSINESS CASE

As you can see from the statistics above, there is a strong business case for addressing unengaged employees in your workplace. Gone are the days where an employee would remain at the same organization for their entire career. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the average American worker changes jobs every 4.4 years.

However, the workforce's youngest employees average only 2 years. That means, your employees will have somewhere between 10-20 jobs in their



adult life. Forget the cost of loss productivity, what is this costing your business in recruitment and selection? Then, once you get them in the door, what is the cost to onboard and train them?

From the Gallup study we can see the staggering cost of unengaged employees on the American workplace. Those figures, coupled with the BLS, make a convincing business case on the incredibly high cost of unengaged employees in today's U.S. workplace. If you have not already done so, address employee engagement in your overall strategy for 2015.

THE LEADERSHIP CASE

In addition to a strong business case, there is an equally robust leadership case for addressing

unengaged employees. According to best-selling author and leadership expert Stephen M.R. Covey, trust is the one thing that changes everything. This includes employee engagement. By establishing trust, you can begin building influence among your employees. Influence in turn, will be the key that opens many doors to employee engagement.

Time and time again, studies show us that employees are leaving their leaders and not their organizations. When leaders build trust and ultimately influence among their employees, the relationship between them becomes stronger and as a result, employees feel more of an obligation to perform for their leader. The result is increased

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



3 Emerging Alternatives to Traditional Hiring Methods

When evaluating talent for recruitment or development, you have just two key questions to answer: What should you assess? And how?

The *what* question is in part context-dependent. (For example, the skills and knowledge required to be a good neurosurgeon are quite different from those needed to be a good lawyer, banker, or software engineer.) Yet you'll also be looking for certain universal characteristics associated with effective employees, regardless of their job or role. First, you'll keep an eye out for the best learners and problem solvers — those who have good judgment and are *most able* to get the job done. Second, you'll want to know which people are *most willing* to work hard. And third, you'll try to identify the ones who are the *most rewarding* to deal with, the most likable and pleasant in their interactions with others.

These three dimensions of employability and career success have strong links with broad psychological traits. The first relates to IQ, curiosity, and decision-making styles; the second to motivation and ambition; the third to emotional intelligence and social skills. Employees who are smarter, nicer, and more hardworking than their peers will

always be in demand.

As for the *how* question, there has been much innovation in talent identification over the past five years, mostly as a result of the digital revolution and the ubiquity of smartphones.



Although many developments are still works in progress, three approaches in particular deserve consideration because of their potential to quantify individuals' talent and predict their future job performance:

Behavioral analytics.

Some organizations assess talent by monitoring and measuring day-to-day activity. Large call

centers are pioneers in this area — for years, they've tracked the number of calls and breaks employees take and the customer ratings for each call. Today, such methods are applied in a variety of environments. For instance, some companies use e-mail traffic

to collect employee data for performance assessment. But certain organizations, such as PepsiCo and Starwood Hotels and Resorts, are also analyzing employee data to create profiles of their most successful people — this gives them valuable benchmarks for outsiders.

Web scraping. Algorithms are also used to translate people's web and social media activity into a quantitative estimate of job potential or fit. Recent research indicates that this method of assessment, "web scraping," can help employers estimate IQ and personality with around 50% of the accuracy of scientifically valid tests. Candidates' digital footprints include information that they have deliberately collected and curated — such as LinkedIn endorsements and recommendations — but also comments, photos, and videos posted by colleagues, clients, friends, and family. (Unsurprisingly, there are now several businesses, such as reputation.com, that help people monitor and clean up their online reputations.) Clearly, web scraping has ethical and legal implications, particularly when firms request applicants' social media passwords as part of the vetting process. (Enough companies have done this that at least 23 U.S. states

to predict revenues that sales reps will bring in. Tracking daily behavior generates enormous quantities of data — more than a human being could possibly interpret — so organizations use algorithms to create individual, team, or organizational diagnostics. This approach has the greatest potential for identifying talent internally, since companies are legally entitled

The HIGH Cost of LOW Employee Engagement

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

organizational buy-in and engagement among employees.

Additionally, there is an element of reciprocity in employee engagement. As a leader, you cannot expect from others what you yourself are unwilling to give. I cannot count the number of times I have witnessed leaders walking through an office, head down, gazing at their phone. Are they really working or are they trying to avoid eye contact with

employees? Perhaps they feel that by making eye contact, they will be obliged to hold conversations with these employees.

Herein lies the issue, as leaders we must model expected behaviors. So, the best way to get engagement is by giving engagement. Stopping to say hello while walking through the office or simply smiling and making eye contact can be a fantastic way to begin building

trust among your organization. By making these connections with your employees, you will begin to improve engagement.

Making personal connections is an essential part of effectively leading others. If as a leader you are not connecting with your employees, it may be that you failed to make those personal connections. Stop, take some time, and make at least one personal connection with each

one of your employees. Then, you can work towards building influence which will ultimately lead to increased employee engagement.

Consider the cost of unengaged employees in your organization and make an effort to reclaim those lost dollars. It could mean the difference between a good year and a great year. ☺☺

From the President's Desk »

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

have introduced or considered legislation to ban the practice.) But it may be feasible to gather electronic intelligence on people without trampling on privacy rights, by creating apps or algorithms that enable users to own their data and voluntarily share it with employers and recruiters. Alternatively, organizations should limit themselves to collecting information that's freely available online.

Gamification. In the context of recruitment, gamification means creating IQ and personality tests that are fun to take — or at least more enjoyable than traditional assessment tools, which can be long and boring. Participants solve puzzles or complete challenges to earn points and badges. The goal of enhancing user experience like this is to increase response rates. By offering free, entertaining tests online — and providing instant developmental feedback — companies can attract many thousands of engaged test takers. Reckitt Benckiser, IKEA,

and Deloitte are a few of the global firms that have relied on gamified assessments to evaluate potential candidates, particularly Millennials. Developers still have some work to do in order to bridge the gap between “fun” and “accuracy” — and gamified tests are usually more expensive to create and administer than the typical questionnaire. Even so, employers are keenly interested in them because they can help identify more people with high potential by reaching beyond the applicant pool, effectively marketing the organization as a workplace that's fun.

How do these newer approaches to assessing talent compare with the more traditional ways, such as interviews, resumes, psychometric tests, work samples, and reference checks? It's still hard to say, especially in the absence of independent scientific studies confirming accuracy. In contrast, traditional assessment tests have been scrutinized by thousands of scientists over the past century.

The needed evidence will come from studies that put the same candidates through all assessment methods and measure how well each method predicts future performance at the individual, team, and organizational levels. Talent recruiters and managers will also want to consider factors such as costs, ethics, and user experience. For instance, behavioral analytics may be more accurate than intuitive managerial decisions, but the daily monitoring is also expensive to implement (though it should save businesses money over time). If your goal is not just to predict future behaviors but also to evaluate candidates' competence, likeability, and work ethic, traditional methods are still more informative than the innovative alternatives — at least for now. ☺☺

Making money
is art
and working
is art
and good business
is the best art.

Andy Warhol

Relearning the Art of Asking Questions

Tom Pohlmann, Neethi Mary Thomas, HBR

Proper questioning has become a lost art. The curious four-year-old asks a lot of questions — incessant streams of “Why?” and “Why not?” might sound familiar — but as we grow older, our questioning decreases. In a recent poll of more than 200 of our clients, we found that those with children estimated that 70-80% of their kids’ dialogues with others were comprised of questions. But those same clients said that only 15-25% of their own interactions consisted of questions. Why the drop off?

Think back to your time growing up and in school. Chances are you received the most recognition or reward when you got the correct answers. Later in life, that incentive continues. At work, we often reward those who answer questions, not those who ask them. Questioning conventional wisdom can even lead to being sidelined, isolated, or considered a threat.

Because expectations for decision-making have gone from “get it done soon” to “get it done now” to “it should have been done yesterday,” we tend to jump to conclusions instead of asking more questions. And the unfortunate side effect of not asking enough questions is poor decision-making. That’s why it’s imperative that we slow down

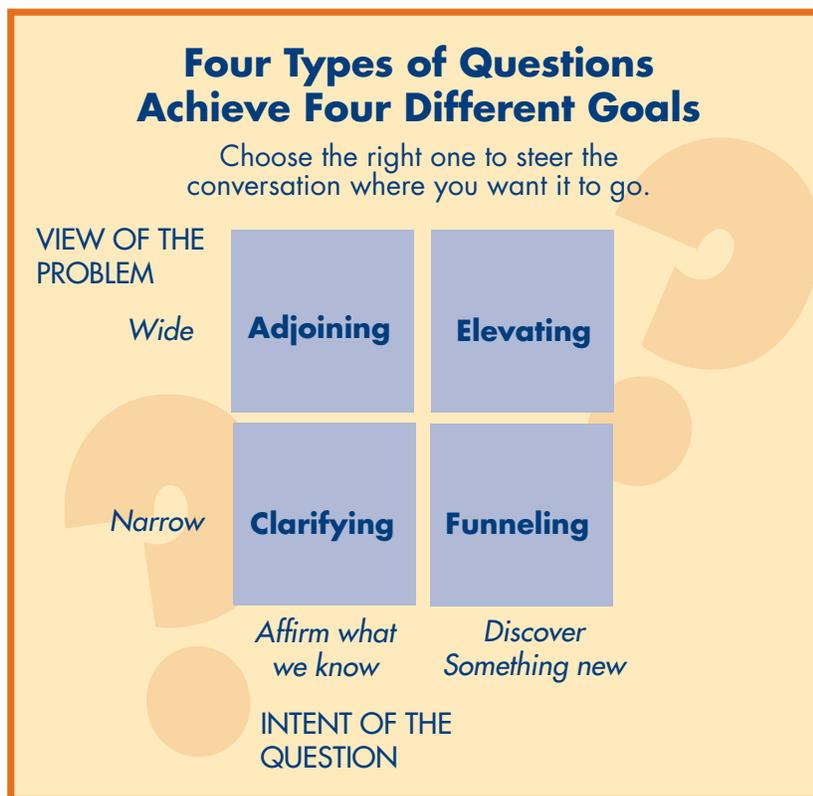
and take the time to ask more — and better — questions. At best, we’ll arrive at better conclusions. At worst, we’ll avoid a lot of rework later on.

Aside from not speaking up enough, many professionals don’t think about how different

challenge basic assumptions or affirm your understanding in order to feel more confident in your conclusions.

Consider these four types of questions — Clarifying, Adjoining, Funneling, and Elevating — each aimed at

and lead us toward relevant follow-up questions. “Can you tell me more?” and “Why do you say so?” both fall into this category. People often don’t ask these questions, because they tend to make assumptions and complete any missing parts themselves.



SOURCE: MU SIGMA €

© HBR.ORG

types of questions can lead to different outcomes. You should steer a conversation by asking the right kinds of questions, based on the problem you’re trying to solve. In some cases, you’ll want to expand your view of the problem, rather than keeping it narrowly focused. In others, you may want to

achieving a different goal:

Clarifying questions help us better understand what has been said. In many conversations, people speak past one another. Asking clarifying questions can help uncover the real intent behind what is said. These help us understand each other better

Adjoining questions are used to explore related aspects of the problem that are ignored in the conversation. Questions such as, “How would this concept apply in a different context?” or “What are the related uses of this technology?” fall into this category. For example, asking “How would these insights apply in Canada?” during a discussion on customer life-time value in the U.S. can open a useful discussion on behavioral differences between customers in the U.S. and Canada. Our laser-like focus on immediate tasks often inhibits our asking more of these exploratory questions, but taking time to ask them can help us gain a broader understanding of something.

Funneling questions are used to dive deeper. We ask these to understand how an answer was derived, to challenge assumptions, and to understand the root causes of problems. Examples include: “How did you do the analysis?”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Meet **AMY JORDAN** »

Regional Vice President

KY, TN, MS, IN, PA



» **How long have you been in the staffing business?**

12+ yrs

» **What was your first job?**

What do you remember most about it? My first official job: Business Transient and Catering Coordinator at the Radisson Hotel (Now - Hilton) This position was entry level, fast paced and allowed me to work directly with my clients on their catering and business travel needs. I knew then I needed to be in a position that worked directly with my clients and that I wanted to give the best in customer service.

» **Who was the worst boss you ever had and why?**

G. Davis. She thrived in a micromanaged and controlled state of mind, she spoke terribly to our team and was very demeaning (She called the team her minions). All ideas were hers (even if she stole them). She was rarely visible and or supported a Sales and development/coaching environment.

» **What motivates you each day to sell and service your clients?** Passionate about being a part of the solution, and all the challenges and new opportunities that spawn from discovery, qualifying and brainstorming. True Teamwork and partnership that is built along the way.

» **What are some of your long-term goals?** Ensure that I

never forget where I came from and all the hard work and steps along the way (stay grounded). Continue to be a source of leadership, motivation and positive energy to my team and colleagues around me (Energy bus). I am service/solution oriented and am passionate about the workforce industry, so I see myself continuing to grow and learn more in this ever evolving world of staffing. Want to go to Europe and experience the different cultures, eat great food and drink amazing wine!!! Retirement = a house by the ocean, traveling and enjoying my family and lifelong friends. I will be successful in all that I do by ensuring strong work ethic and above all happiness!!

» **What makes Peoplelink unique, from your perspective?** Great sense of teamwork and the ability to make the necessary and impactful changes without all the hurdles and heavy corporate policy. There is a strong sense of ethics, teamwork... leadership is engaged, and encourages thought leadership from others within the company. Peoplelink is not afraid to evolve alongside our partners and create something truly customized. Embraces change!

» **What makes you successful as a Manager?** TEAMWORK. My ability to embrace change and select

the talent that will continue to allow the team to level up. I am a positive person and truly care about others growth and development...even if it takes them in a different career path.

» **What is the best advice you could give to other Peoplelink staff members?** Embrace change, see obstacles as new opportunities and work with passion and determination. Never give up.

» **What is your favorite movie?** Tie - Star Wars and Back to the Future. **Book?** As a kid - the Chronicles of Narnia and The Lorax. I am still a Hunger Games fan! **Drink?** Monster Ultra and any fruity drink with my toes in the sand.

» **If you could have any car you want, what would it be?** Porsche Panamera and/or an Old Jeep Wrangler.

» **What is your home city? What is the greatest feature about your home city?**

Lexington, KY. Keeneland and Wildcat Basketball baby....Don't hate IU Fans!

» **How do you unwind when you're not at the office?** Watching my kids at a sports event and chilling on the back porch, grilling out with my family and neighbors.

» **What do people like most (least) about you?** I'm outgoing, positive, open and honest. Sometimes that's what people don't like about me.

» **Anything else you can think of?** I enjoy trying new things. Love the obstacles and not taking myself overly serious. 🧩

HOTTEST U.S. JOB MARKETS

Source: SreeThiyagarajan, Research Associate, Staffing Industry Analysts

Highest ranking specific industries

- The table below displays the 20 specific industries that ranked highest in employment growth according to their composite growthscore. The composite growth score factors in the average monthly job growth over the prior twelve, six and three months as well as the level of acceleration or deceleration in growth observed over each of those periods. Composite growth scores in this table are rounded to the nearest whole number.
- Although 'retail -electronic shopping and electronic auctions' (ranked #6 in table below) had the highest year-over-year percentage growth, it did not have the highest composite growth score because it is smaller in employment size than the industries ranking above it and thus represents less overall opportunity, by this ranking method.

	Composite Growth Score	Employment (thousands)	Y/Y % Change	Average Monthly Change in Employment		
				12-month	6-month	3-month
1 Retail - Warehouse clubs and supercenters	78	1,425	4.9%	5.3	5.6	7.4
2 Nonresidential electrical contractors	76	816	3.5%	2.7	4.3	4.3
3 Computer systems design and related services	76	1,846	4.6%	6.6	8.0	7.4
4 Management consulting services	76	987	6.2%	4.4	4.5	5.2
5 Residential specialty trade contractors	74	1,751	6.3%	9.0	8.8	8.4
6 Retail - Electronic shopping and electronic auctions	74	206	13.7%	2.0	2.2	2.4
7 Motor vehicles	74	217	11.2%	1.7	2.0	2.2
8 Nonresidential drywall and insulation contractors	73	231	5.4%	1.3	2.4	1.8
9 Hospitals	73	4,864	1.9%	7.5	11.0	11.5
10 Spectator sports	72	148	1.9%	0.0	0.3	2.4
11 Wholesale - Motor vehicles and parts	72	920	6.8%	4.6	4.4	4.6
12 Highway, street, and bridge construction	72	309	4.3%	1.1	2.5	1.6
13 Offices of physicians	71	2,538	3.2%	6.8	8.8	7.1
14 Accounting and bookkeeping services	71	996	5.1%	4.1	4.3	4.3
15 Airport operations	71	80	9.4%	0.6	0.6	1.1
16 General warehousing and storage	71	658	4.7%	2.3	3.2	3.0
17 Services for the elderly and disabled	70	1,526	5.4%	5.7	5.2	5.8
18 Offices of real estate agents and brokers	69	299	4.9%	1.1	1.1	2.1
19 Nonresidential plumbing and HVAC contractors	69	948	4.9%	3.7	4.0	3.6
20 Employment placement agencies	69	277	10.9%	2.1	0.5	2.4

Note: Employment figures are in thousands. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Staffing Industry Analysts.

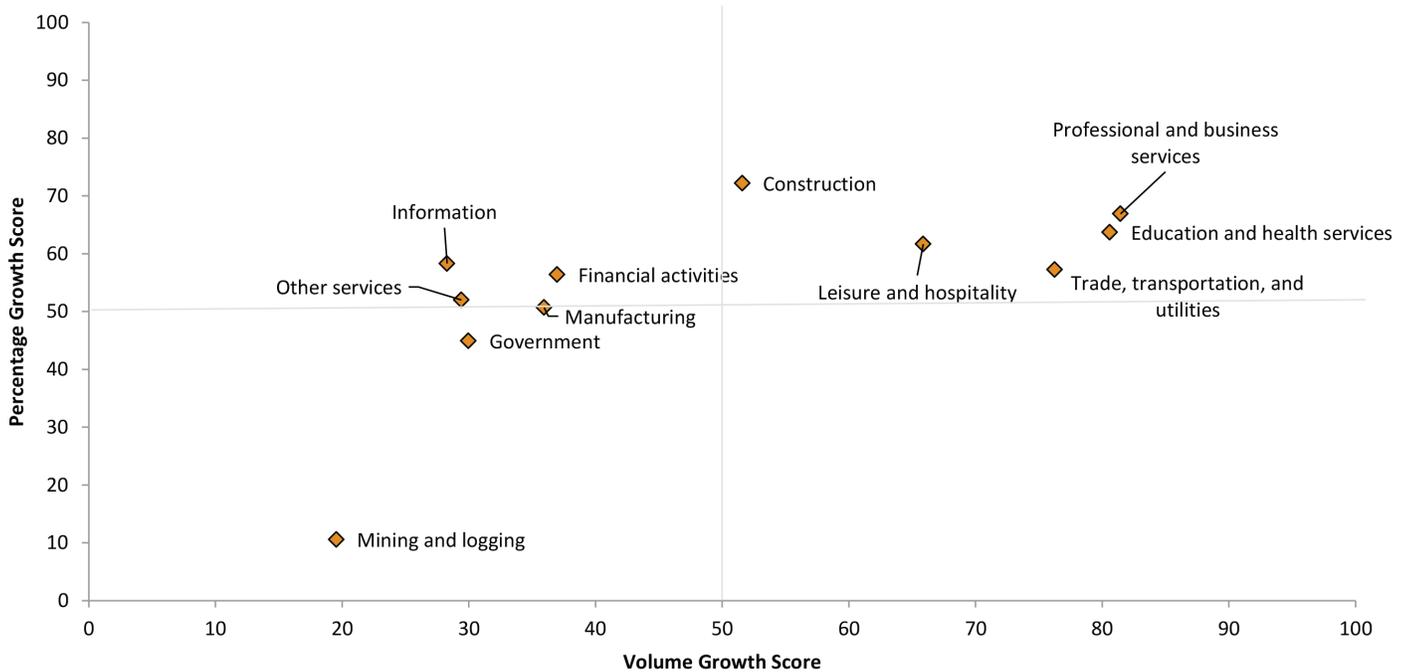
CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

HOTTEST U.S. JOB MARKETS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Major industry groups ranked by volume and percentage growth score

- The scatterplot below plots the volume growth score (x-axis) against the percentage growth score (y-axis) for 11 major industry groups, which are broader categories than the specific industries shown in the prior two pages. Industry groups to the right had a relatively strong volume-growth trend, industry groups at the top had a relatively strong percentage-growth trend, and industry groups in the upper-right had both.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Staffing Industry Analysts.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

HOTTEST U.S. JOB MARKETS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

States ranked by composite growth score

- The following table displays employment growth metrics for all 50 states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. They are ranked by their composite growth score.

		Composite Growth Score	Employment (thousands)	Y/Y % Change	Average Monthly Change in Employment		
					12-month	6-month	3-month
1	Florida	81	8,046	3.6%	23.4	20.9	25.4
2	South Carolina	70	1,999	2.9%	4.8	5.0	6.1
3	California	70	16,012	2.9%	39.7	36.8	31.8
4	Washington	70	3,162	3.6%	9.3	9.6	8.0
5	North Carolina	67	4,232	2.6%	9.4	9.1	7.9
6	Nevada	67	1,249	3.4%	3.0	3.5	3.7
7	Massachusetts	66	3,469	1.9%	5.2	6.1	8.0
8	Minnesota	66	2,852	1.6%	2.9	3.6	8.4
9	Utah	65	1,372	4.0%	4.8	5.7	3.5
10	Oregon	64	1,771	3.4%	5.2	5.0	4.1
11	Georgia	64	4,248	3.0%	10.6	6.9	7.5
12	Indiana	63	3,034	2.0%	4.9	5.5	5.9
13	Idaho	63	674	3.1%	1.9	3.2	1.7
14	South Dakota	61	430	1.6%	0.5	1.0	1.6
15	Maine	60	609	1.1%	0.1	0.4	2.5
16	Michigan	59	4,255	2.4%	8.2	10.5	4.8
17	Vermont	58	316	2.3%	0.5	0.7	0.8
18	Pennsylvania	57	5,846	1.1%	4.7	4.3	7.7
19	Wisconsin	55	2,890	1.8%	4.9	5.2	3.3
20	Colorado	55	2,509	2.6%	5.3	5.0	2.9
21	New Jersey	52	4,003	1.2%	3.7	4.7	4.6
22	Maryland	50	2,653	1.5%	3.0	2.3	2.8
23	Illinois	50	5,920	1.1%	5.2	5.5	5.0
24	Virginia	50	3,803	0.8%	2.1	1.7	4.1
25	Montana	49	458	0.7%	0.2	0.7	0.8

Note: Employment figures are in thousands. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Staffing Industry Analysts.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

HOTTEST U.S. JOB MARKETS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

States ranked by composite growth score (continued)

		Composite Growth Score	Employment (thousands)	Y/Y % Change	Average Monthly Change in Employment		
					12-month	6-month	3-month
26	Ohio	48	5,395	1.4%	6.3	6.8	3.7
27	Texas	47	11,755	2.5%	27.2	14.3	-4.9
28	Arkansas	45	1,209	2.1%	2.3	1.9	0.1
29	New York	44	9,177	1.2%	10.2	9.6	3.4
30	Iowa	44	1,566	1.3%	2.0	2.1	1.5
31	Arizona	44	2,615	2.3%	6.3	4.7	0.5
32	New Mexico	44	831	1.8%	1.2	0.8	0.3
33	Nebraska	42	1,004	1.1%	1.1	1.7	0.7
34	Connecticut	42	1,687	1.4%	2.2	2.9	0.8
35	Puerto Rico	42	910	-0.4%	0.1	0.4	1.6
36	Kentucky	41	1,886	1.8%	3.2	1.7	0.2
37	Mississippi	40	1,126	0.8%	0.8	0.5	0.5
38	Kansas	39	1,402	0.8%	1.2	0.7	0.9
39	District of Columbia	39	762	1.3%	1.1	0.1	0.3
40	New Hampshire	39	653	0.9%	0.6	0.2	0.8
41	Alaska	38	341	0.8%	0.3	0.4	-0.2
42	Hawaii	36	631	1.2%	0.6	1.1	-0.1
43	Tennessee	36	2,851	1.7%	4.4	1.6	0.0
44	Rhode Island	36	481	0.9%	0.3	0.5	0.2
45	Delaware	35	443	1.6%	0.7	0.3	0.1
46	Missouri	32	2,753	0.7%	2.4	3.5	-1.8
47	Wyoming	31	295	0.8%	0.3	0.4	-0.4
48	Alabama	30	1,943	1.4%	2.6	0.5	-1.3
49	North Dakota	29	469	2.6%	1.1	0.1	-1.0
50	Louisiana	27	1,985	0.7%	1.0	-1.9	-1.6
51	Oklahoma	25	1,664	1.1%	1.9	-0.1	-3.1
52	West Virginia	21	757	-0.7%	-0.6	-1.3	-3.0

Note: Employment figures are in thousands. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Staffing Industry Analysts.



Anthony Rodriguez is pictured with his supervisor, Erin Smith.

Peoplelink is pleased to announce that Anthony Rodriguez has been chosen as our July *Shining Star* employee. Anthony is a Loader with Plasti-Paint. He reports to the Alma, Michigan branch.

Anthony has worked at Plasti-Paint for nearly 8 months. His responsibilities include loading parts for quality onto a line and inspecting them. Anthony's Supervisor, Erin Smith, is impressed with the perfect

quality of his work, his willingness to assist with other areas of the line, and his efforts to help prepare packaging for the next shift.

While on the job, Anthony enjoys sanding and packing. In his free time, he enjoys watching sports.

Congratulations to Anthony for being Peoplelink's July *Shining Star* employee!

Find your shining star! Contact Peoplelink at 574.232.5400.

and “Why did you not include this step?” Funneling can naturally follow the design of an organization and its offerings, such as, “Can we take this analysis of outdoor products and drive it down to a certain brand of lawn furniture?” Most analytical teams – especially those embedded in business operations – do an excellent job of using these questions.

Elevating questions raise broader issues and highlight the

bigger picture. They help you zoom out. Being too immersed in an immediate problem makes it harder to see the overall context behind it. So you can ask, “Taking a step back, what are the larger issues?” or “Are we even addressing the right question?” For example, a discussion on issues like margin decline and decreasing customer satisfaction could turn into a broader discussion of corporate strategy with an elevating question: “Instead of talking

about these issues separately, what are the larger trends we should be concerned about? How do they all tie together?” These questions take us to a higher playing field where we can better see connections between individual problems.

In today’s “always on” world, there’s a rush to answer. Ubiquitous access to data and volatile business demands are accelerating this sense of urgency. But we must slow down and understand each other

better in order to avoid poor decisions and succeed in this environment. Because asking questions requires a certain amount of vulnerability, corporate cultures must shift to promote this behavior. Leaders should encourage people to ask more questions, based on the goals they’re trying to achieve, instead of having them rush to deliver answers. In order to make the right decisions, people need to start asking the questions that really matter. 



Experience the Peoplelink difference.

Drive productivity. Reduce staffing costs. Run more profitably. Those are just a few of the ways in which Peoplelink can help you achieve success.

To ensure we deliver the best return on your staffing investment, we first take the time to understand your organization, your expectations, and your objectives. By combining old-fashioned fundamentals, like hard work, integrity, and service, with a strategic approach to staffing, Peoplelink can not only fulfill your hiring needs, but can make a significant positive impact on your profitability.

Our “people first” approach to staffing will help you meet and exceed your business goals.



For more information, call Jeannine Victor at 574.232.5400 x 261.

Good deed punished: Firm didn't do enough to accommodate scent-sensitive worker

By Tim Gould, HR Morning

Just how far do employers have to bend to provide a scent-sensitive employee a reasonable accommodation? You won't believe what a federal judge just ruled.

Christine Brady was a credit manager for United Refrigeration in Pennsylvania. She told her employer she had a long-term "heightened sensitivity to perfumes, fragrant chemicals and lotions."

After being under a doctor's care for some time — and treating her sensitivity through medication — Brady's condition apparently worsened. She asked United's HR department "if there is a way to have a fragrance free zone or [if she] could be placed in a fragrance free area."

The employer responded. Here's attorney Eric B. Mayer's rundown of the steps the company took:

- Purchased a portable air cleaner for use at the plaintiff's work station
- Purchased a second portable air cleaner for the plaintiff after she broke the first one
- Distributed — several times — a notice to all employees not to wear perfume, cologne or aftershave to the office
- Purchased face masks for the plaintiff (which she later refused to wear)



- Relocated an employee who had to wear medically-prescribed skin lotion
- Cleaned a wall panel that plaintiff claimed had fragrances on it
- Cleaned the rug around the plaintiff's workstation, and
- Cleaned the rug around the plaintiff's workstation — again.

The company also relocated her desk "out of the main stream" and sent her a memo assuring Brady that United "takes your sensitivity seriously."

But Brady still had a hard time maintaining regular attendance at work. She was finally laid off. In a letter, the firm explained that "... [a]fter what we consider to be extraordinary efforts to accommodate you, you have still not been able to ... report to work regularly, which we need you to do. We do not have work available that meets all of your restrictions. Accordingly ... you are being laid off."

And then, of course, she sued. Brady claimed that United's ban on fragrances wasn't enforced strictly enough, and that the company violated the ADA by firing her.

Absenteeism as accommodation?

She couldn't possibly win, right? After all the company did to accommodate her disability?

Well, she won the first round — the court

indicated that despite all the steps it took, the company may not have done enough.

The court's reasoning:

[Brady's] circumstances do not involve unexplained absences; rather, [her] condition is triggered by stimuli that are at least somewhat within [United's] power to control. If [United's] own no-fragrance policies are not being sufficiently administered or enforced, as [Brady] alleges, [United] may have to accept that [Brady] must take some time away from that environment.

Huh? So unless a firm's policies are perfectly enforced, absenteeism is a reasonable form of accommodation? Pretty tough call for this employer.

Now the company faces an expensive trial or an expensive settlement.

The case is Brady v. United Refrigeration, Inc

Employers ready to hire, and workers are ready to make a move

By Tim Gould, HR Morning

Planning on adding staff this year? A lot of companies are.

According to CareerBuilder's recent Midyear U.S. Job Forecast, both employers and job seekers are feeling confident in their prospects these days.

Nearly half of employers surveyed plan to hire full-time, permanent staff over the next six months and one-third plan to hire temporary or contract workers — both improvements over 2014.

At the same time, workers are looking to take advantage of a labor market that has

produced 245,000 jobs per month on average in the last year. Three in ten workers (29%) plan to change jobs in the next 12 months, up from 25% last year.

A breakdown of what companies have in mind for the second half of 2015:

- 49% of employers plan to hire full-time, permanent employees in the second half of 2015, up from 47% last year
- 28% plan to hire part-time employees in the second half of 2015, up from 27% last year, and
- 34% plan to hire temporary or contract workers in the second half of 2015, up from 33% last year.



WHERE THE JOBS WILL BE

Information Technology (56%), health care (56%), hospitality (54%), financial services (52%), manufacturing (52%) and retail (50%) are among the industries expected to outperform the national average for full-time, permanent hiring in the back half of the year.

The top functional areas where employers will be adding jobs in the second half of 2015 include:

- Customer Service — 31% of hiring managers
- Sales — 23%
- Information Technology — 22%
- Production — 18%

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

- Accounting/Finance — 12%
- Marketing — 11%, and
- Human Resources — 9%.

Some of the in-demand areas employers will be recruiting for include those tied to mobile, search or cloud technology; cyber security; social media; wellness; financial regulation; managing and interpreting big data; content strategy for the Web; alternative energy sources and robotics.

Small Business Hiring

Hiring managers in small businesses are indicating a greater sense of confidence when it comes to recruitment plans. Hiring is expected to increase three percentage points over last year for companies with 50 or fewer employees.

Quick breakdown:

- 50 or fewer employees — 27% hiring full-time, permanent employees, up from 24% last year, and
- 250 or fewer employees — 37% hiring full-time, permanent employees, up from 35% last year.

Three in five hiring managers (62%) plan to add full-time, permanent employees, up from 61% last year.

HIRING BY REGION

The Northeast displayed the biggest increase in the percentage of employers planning to add full-time, permanent headcount in the second half of the year. Hiring in the other regions is expected to experience a slight shift or stay in line with last year.

The breakdown:

- Northeast — 52% hiring full-time, permanent employees, up from 48% last year
- South — 49% hiring full-time, permanent employees, up from 48% last year

- Midwest — 46% hiring full-time, permanent employees, on par with last year, and
- West — 46% hiring full-time, permanent employees, down from 47% last year.

STARTING SALARIES

Nearly half of employers (47%) expect to increase starting salaries on job offers over the next 12 months. Around 1 in 6 employers will raise starting salaries by 5% or more.

Investigators now coming after you . . . in disguise

By Christian Schappel, HR Morning

One government agency has just taken the wraps off a new way its officials intend to enforce employment laws. If this tactic spreads, it could be very costly for employers.

New York City employers are now faced with the possibility of having government officials poking around their hiring practices disguised as job applicants.

Mayor Bill de Blasio (D) just enacted a new law (Bill 690-A) that requires the city's Human Rights Commission to conduct "matched-pair" testing of at least five employers' hiring processes between Oct. 1, 2015 and Sept. 30, 2016 — although there's no limit to how many of these tests the commission can conduct.

The "matched-pair" testing will work like this: The commission will have two "testers" apply for, or inquire about, the same position at the same company. The testers will have similar qualification, but the major difference will be that one will have a characteristic

protected by the city's Human Rights Law.

The protected characteristic may be, among other things, the person's:

- race
- color
- creed
- age
- national origin
- alienage or citizenship status
- gender/gender identity
- sexual orientation
- disability
- marital status
- partnership status
- criminal history
- unemployment status, and/or
- status as a victim of domestic violence, stalking or sex offenses.

The testers will be required to report any incidents of discrimination to the commission's Law Enforcement Bureau.

MORE AGGRESSIVE APPROACH

While it's not uncommon for government enforcement agencies like New York City's Human Rights Commission to use investigators, their primary duties up until now have been to investigate complaints filed by aggrieved individuals.

This new action marks one of the first times an agency will actively seek out discrimination on its own, and this massive shift in mindset should have employers worried.

These investigations will be conducted without provocation or warning, and if they turn up significant employment law violations, you can bet this is a model that will be adopted by

other government agencies across the U.S..

Caroline Berdick, an attorney who chairs the employment and healthcare practice at Goldberg Segalla, told *Crain's New York Business*, "This agency is supposed to enforce discrimination law, not create new actions. . . . This is going to open a whole can of worms."



Other law firms, like Jackson Lewis P.C., are saying that while employers should obviously be doing everything they can to prevent discrimination in hiring and employment actions already, they must now approach every applicant as if he or she's one of the investigators.

Skills Credentials Proliferate, Causing Headaches for HR

by Steve Bates, SHRM

New credentials designed to demonstrate mastery of job-related skills are growing rapidly, prompting confusion among recruiters and students.

Spurred in part by the explosion of low-cost and free online learning opportunities, the trend represents the democratization of credentialing. The new skills designations are helping people around the world who lack the educational background, money or time to gain more traditional academic degrees or professional credentials. Yet the sheer numbers of credentials are making it difficult for HR professionals to determine which are legitimate and relevant to the jobs they are trying to fill.

Some credentials can be earned in as little as a weekend, such as an internal corporate credential or one that demonstrates mastery of a single computer program.

Other credentials require substantial educational attainment and/or professional experience, such as those that demonstrate competency in the HR field.

Some of the new credential programs are designed to help close the skills gap by offering training linked to available jobs. Other programs benefit professionals who already have jobs but want to improve their skill sets. Some workforce experts say that skills credentials might already number in the thousands and should continue to grow.

"It is the future," said Nate Anderson, a director at Boston-based nonprofit Jobs for the Future.

Still, the unfamiliar groups of capital letters representing credentials on resumes can be bewildering. "Employers are like, 'Oh my God,'" said Mary V.L. Wright, senior director for demand side engagement and analytics at Jobs for the

someone else to take his or her test. In addition, some online educators don't provide much support to participants, and the dropout rate is high.

Jamie Hopkins, an associate professor of taxation at The American College of Financial Services in Bryn Mawr, Pa., which offers some online credentials, urges employers to investigate all

many educational programs leading to credentials have academic rigor and a firm timeframe for students to complete their studies.

Many of the new credentials recognize attainment of skills that are narrow in nature. "In a lot of cases, we're not trying to get you a new job but to help you do better at what you do now,"

Hopkins said.

"These alternate credentials are a more precise description of skills to employers" as well as a supplement to traditional academic degrees, said Minh Tran, Hong Kong-based director of research and academic partnerships for EF Education Trust. "I have a psychology degree from Yale, but that doesn't tell you much about my skills." Tran and his team worked with LinkedIn to launch a free online educational program and credential that allows people around the world to demonstrate proficiency in English.

He acknowledged that the new breed of credentials will be disruptive to some traditional credentials. "It remains to be seen how they will coexist," he said, adding, "I don't think we will ever get rid of traditional credentials." Tran said that once technology advances enough to prove the identity of test takers and verify the accuracy of their scores, "The sky's the limit for online credentials."



Future. "I can understand why they want to throw their hands up in the air" when trying to decipher certain credentials.

Most industries set no standards for credentials, and experts say that some organizations offering credentials could be the equivalent of diploma mills. "It's a completely out-of-control system," Anderson said. "Everybody's trying to get into the credentialing game." Even legitimate organizations offering credentials online can have a tough time ensuring that a student isn't paying

credentials listed by prospective hires. "Employers do need to be proactive about this," he said. "Don't pay a premium for something you are not getting." Calling the confusion over credentials "a challenge for individuals and for employers," he added: "You can always hope that the market will sort this out over time."

However, he said, the benefits of some of the new credential programs are clear. "We're getting closer to just-in-time education." Hopkins said