



imagine HR

NEWS

A Healthy, Energetic and Less Stressful Start to the New Year!

Can You Imagine A Better Workplace?

HEALTH

Looks like the 2020 pandemic will move with us into the new year (but let's leave the fear behind!). We have a vaccine, a new stimulus bill and many resources that can help us all stay calm and productive. The best workplaces will be those who continue to take wellness to a whole new level. They are the organizations that are going beyond mere compliance and health/safety checklists – and instead focusing on a broader concept of workplace wellness.

ENERGY

Every business strives to be as productive as possible – which is why we should look closely at the research that's telling us healthy-minded and more energized workers tend to be more productive. A workplace that values 'positive energy' tends to keep a good vibe going even when times get tough. It's easy to get cynical during these strange times, but it is possible to develop 'resilience habits' to keep a high level of positive energy alive. More about this below.

STRESS-LESS

Notwithstanding the rhetoric and negative news out there often painting a "gloom and doom" picture, living a less stressful life is possible and within reach. Life happens! We cannot avoid stress altogether, but we can learn to manage our stressors. There are personal choices we make every minute of every day affecting our stress levels. And as we know, stress from work can also compound the stress of daily living (and vice versa).

"LIVING AND WORKING WITH WORRY AND STRESS" – A WORKPLACE WELLNESS WEBINAR

**Join me as I interview Viktoria Levay Higgins
(Health and Resilience Expert) on January 28th
from 3-4pm for a Wellness Hour.**

*Learn from our favorite health coach as she reveals insights on how to be more resilient, strengthen our immunity and build a work environment focused on well-being (as we continue to weather the Covid storm).

A Chance To Connect With An Extraordinary Local Health Coach!



The pandemic of 2020 has forced many companies to reevaluate what it truly means to have a 'safe and healthy' workplace. Most employers have traditionally focused only on injury and accident prevention and providing basic health benefits for their employees and, since the pandemic, taking the necessary measures of washing hands, wearing masks and disinfecting workspaces. While these are important steps, real change towards workplace wellness goes beyond checklists and guidelines.

Reinforcing a positive message that encourages taking charge of our health and immune system is the true spirit of wellness. Fear spreads faster than anything so empowering employees with inspiration for better health and wellness is more critical than ever.

Today, businesses must do more. Taking a holistic approach to workplace wellness will boost health AND productivity. A workplace dedicated to health and wellness on a deeper level will reap lasting benefits – a laser-focused workforce and employees capable of managing the continued challenges ahead.

Viktoria Levay Higgins

Corporate Health Coach & Resilience Trainer

JOIN US on Thursday, January 28th

for an exciting and enlightening discussion on building Resilience and Workplace Wellness. We will discuss why resilience is the key to avoiding HR problems and Viktoria will talk about how her Resilience Training is critical to building a more cohesive and well-functioning work environment.

Why resilience matters

Work is often associated with stress, deadlines, communication challenges or unclear roles and responsibilities, but the covid-19 pandemic has elevated these factors to a completely new level. If work culture is not supported positively, employees dealing with demanding situations may struggle to be productive. Think of your workplace for a minute. Are the people on your team, your coworkers and employees working coherently, managing their stress factors and conflicts and are they dealing with the pressures and work at their best? Is your company losing productivity, sales or money because of communication mistakes, guesswork or stress reactions?

Are your employees indeed resilient?

Resilience is often described as the ability to cope with life's challenges and being able to recover from stressful situations. But resilience goes beyond bouncing back easily. It also means resilient people are flexible and can adapt to challenging situations or know how not to get into them in the first place. Resilience gives you the ability to respond appropriately in situations without much energy drain.

It's about how we respond to our stressors

Nagging, negative emotions we carry around for any extended period of time can easily drain our energy and decline our resilience. When our emotional battery is drained, we lack energy and become less resilient to

stressors outside of our control. We are more likely to make poor choices in our words, decisions or actions. Managing our energy is crucial not just to our overall well-being, but to others around us as well.

Start building your resilience now

Imagine knowing how to manage stress, anxiety and negative emotions in the moment. Experience improved focus, sleep and calmness by using proven techniques that regulate and help shift towards renewing emotions. Research has discovered that our heart rhythm patterns are the best reflection of our inner state. With the right techniques you can shift into a state of balance in the moment and with such an approach you can achieve a positive outcome not only to your personal, but your work life benefit as well.

Build your immunity by building your resilience

Stress takes a physical and emotional toll on the body as the stress hormone cortisol severely suppresses immunity, giving way to infections and inflammation to rise. Chronic stress is associated with harmful health consequences such as high blood pressure, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, insomnia, heartburn, indigestion, and heart disease. While sleep, diet and exercise can all improve our health and well-being, it is difficult to improve health conditions while stress, worry and anxiety remain unmanaged.

REGISTER HERE

This is a free event and a great opportunity to learn about the importance of resilience in our workplaces.

Please visit Viktoria's website for more information at www.nourishwithviktoria.com.

What Can You Do to Boost Employee Engagement in the New Year?

Start with a Pulse Survey!

Technology has connected us in ways we never knew possible. With this hyper-connectivity has come amazing opportunities to stay continuously attuned to customer needs and market demands, but it has also come with a price – a loss of motivation due to burnout and the inability to fully disconnect and decompress. Everyone needs time away from screens and phones but unfortunately, in some industries, it's hard to completely detach from work.

It's more imperative than ever that leaders and managers 'set the tone' from the top, giving their employees permission to relax and rejuvenate. Here are several ideas to consider if you want to promote a more balanced work environment – adding more PTO to your policy, providing flexible work schedules, and bringing in a trainer or coach to discuss ways to balance workloads, manage stress and give healthy lifestyle tips. Sometimes to speed up we need to slow down.

While it may sound cliché that happy and healthy people make better employees... it's true! If your employees are motivated to get up in the morning and come to work, this

is a surefire sign they will give their best effort. Employees who report a high level of 'feeling good' when they are at work are more engaged, which has a direct correlation to optimal business results. Obviously, it's impossible to influence all aspects of your employees' health and happiness as much of it is dictated by their own personal DNA and circumstances. However, there are things you can influence and should consider.

Creating a comfortable and safe (physically and psychologically) work environment where employees feel they can do their best work will be one step in the right direction. Gallup reports that employees are the most engaged when they have (1) someone who supports them at work and (2) when they feel their work matters and is valued.

The ADP Research Institute says that if employees answer the below statements in the affirmative, they are 'engaged' in their work (and most likely very happy and productive!). Take the Pulse Survey and see where your employees land:

- **I am really enthusiastic about the mission of my company**
- **At work, I clearly understand what is expected of me**
- **In my team I am surrounded by people who share my values**
- **I have a chance to use my strengths every day at work**
- **My teammates have my back**
- **I know I will be recognized for excellent work**
- **I have great confidence in my company's future**
- **In my work, I am always challenged to grow**

Congress Allows Employers to Choose If They Would Like to Continue FFCRA

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) required employers to provide both emergency sick leave (80 hours of leave for six qualifying reasons) and expanded family leave (up to ten weeks for parents when schools and daycares are closed due to Covid-19) to employees for various Covid-related reasons. This law technically expired on December 31, 2020.

On December 21, 2020, Lawmakers decided not to extend the FFCRA per se but instead will allow employers to decide if their company will continue to provide paid leave to those who have not exhausted leave time. As currently drafted, the tax credit will be available until March 31, 2021. This means, if an employer allows, employees can carry over unused FFCRA leave not yet used by an employee if that employee qualifies for emergency sick or extended family leave.

Most employers will likely continue to allow for this leave (due to the continued Covid cases). You will want to give notice to employees that such leave is still available so long as they have not exhausted their FFCRA leave in 2020.

2021 IS YOUR YEAR TO FRESHEN UP POLICIES AND TRAINING

There is no better time than the start of a New Year to reflect on your employment policies. With new laws and best practices quickly evolving, there is always opportunity to enhance your employee handbook and clear up any confusion on workplace expectations.

In recent years, there has been an emphasis on policies regarding social media, cell phone use, remote work, leaves of absence, dress codes, substance abuse, equal pay, and many more. Having a strong mission, vision and values statement is also essential. Last but not least, employers will benefit from 'simplifying' their handbook, making it more reader-friendly and less legalese.

Training has also become a vital part of every well-run organization. Training managers and supervisors will not only help prevent potential legal claims, it will also provide key insights into leadership and communication best practices.

Freshening up your workplace policies and training can make a big difference this year.

What You Should Do NEXT:

Decide whether you will be voluntarily extending FFCRA leave and inform your workforce as soon as possible. Also, decide if leave should/ can be extended beyond FFCRA through FMLA or ADA (providing additional time off).

These scenarios can be very nuanced – feel free to reach out if you'd like assistance in navigating an employee's time off request.

What To Do NOW:

Dust off that handbook and ask yourself if the policies are still relevant. Take the perspective of an employee – would a new hire be excited about working for your company after reading the handbook? Or would they feel turned off having to read "up to and including termination" a hundred times? Ask yourself if your management team has been handling employee relations issues appropriately. Are they holding employees to consistent standards? Communicating effectively? Leading by example?

JOIN US For a FREE Virtual Workplace Coffee Talk

JANUARY 20th, 9-10am

The 2021 Workplace: Building a Healthy, Safe & Productive Start to the New Year!

For more information and easy registration, click on the link below

REGISTER HERE

2021 Virtual Workplace Coffee Talk Dates & Topics – Save the Dates!

Happy New Year! We are heading into our 3rd year of our Workplace Coffee Talk Series – a series designed for anyone with a passion for learning about leadership, law and workplace best practices.

We are excited to discuss these workplace ‘hot topics’ throughout the new year!

If you'd like to sign up for our monthly invites, please let me know.

Jan 20th

The 2021 Workplace:

Building a Healthy, Safe & Productive Start to the New Year

Feb 10th

Leading with Emotional Intelligence:

Self-Awareness Strategies to Becoming a Great Leader

March 10th

Workplace Compliance:

What All Employers Need to Know About Employment Laws in 2021

April 14th

Servant Leadership:

Attributes of the Most Effective Leaders

May 12th

A Workplace Balancing Act:

How to Hold People Accountable Without Using an Iron Fist

June 9th

Workplace Communication:

Breakdowns, Bottlenecks and How to Make it Better

July 14th

Agility as a Strategy:

Organizations Focused on Agility Will Rise Above the Rest

August 11th

Strategic Workforce Planning:

What it Means and Why it Matters More Today Than Ever

September 8th

Employee Benefits Best Practices:

Benefits That Will Attract/Retain Top Talent

October 8th

Live2Lead Leadership Event

November 10th

Building a More Inclusive Workplace:

Why It's Important and How to Do it The Right Way

December 8th

The Future of Work:

Our Changing World of Work and What to Expect in 2022 and Beyond

Thank you for taking the time to read my newsletter.

I will continue to share important information on relevant workplace topics and spotlight businesses and consultants here in Northeast Ohio making a difference. Feel free to reach out anytime at stella@imaginehrconsulting.com or 440.897.1991 for more information.

imaginehrconsulting.com

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