

UBA
HR Elements

Ideas and information for
human resource professionals



Office Culture

Ready to Spark Joy in Your Office?

The hit Netflix show “Tidying Up with Marie Kondo” has set off a wave of house organization, purging, and general tidying. Many thrift stores and donation centers report being overwhelmed with bags and boxes of items recently filling American’s homes. What, though, of the workplace? Should a similar wave of de-cluttering and cleaning be happening at desks and in cubicles across the country?

Messy or cluttered spaces can make people feel more anxious and stressed, less able to focus, and more likely to procrastinate. It makes sense, then, that workers can boost both productivity and mood with some spring cleaning.

Start with easy things like bringing all those coffee cups back to the office kitchen and then move on to larger tasks like sorting and recycling or shredding irrelevant paper. Once a state of tidiness is achieved, then it’s time to get organized, says [AZ Big Media](#). Managers can help by making sure employees have access to file folders, labels, markers and other tools to aid the process of going from chaos to compartmentalized.

[The Muse](#) reminds workers to also actually clean. Dusting, including your screens and using compressed air on your keyboard, and wiping down surfaces with a disinfectant might keep employees healthier and will definitely help them feel good about their space. Then, take a moment to spruce up, not just clean up. Adding photos or art, getting a few new desk accessories, and other small touches not only help personalize a space, they may just inspire great ideas too.

Think too, about shared and communal spaces. Often, one person winds up as the default fridge cleaner. Create expectations for tidiness but also ensure resentment doesn’t grow. A gift card to a coffee shop for the person everyone knows tackles the task after the fact, or a small compensation in exchange for agreeing to do it ahead of time, can keep things tidy and emotions in check.

Don’t neglect digital spaces, either, according to the [Harvard Business Review](#). Having a logical system for online file storage will set team members up for success. If your workplace doesn’t have one, invest time in creating one. Make time for team members to clean out email and files.



Why? Beyond lost time searching for files, responses, or photos, it helps keep systems ship shape when they aren't burdened with duplicates or gigabytes of unused files. Everyone knows the employee who reaches Inbox Zero on the regular, and the one who has 18,000 unread messages! There are more and more technologies available to help, from streamlining communications to centralizing workplace applications, says [HR Technologist](#), and those tools are smart investments.

[The Nav](#) suggests these times of spring cleaning are also a chance to audit a company's online presence. Update personnel on the website, refresh social media accounts, and check that plugins and apps are up to date.

To empower your company to find a place for everything, consider having dedicated time for spring cleaning. Better yet, make it a more frequent activity and do it quarterly or monthly. Workers may balk at having requirements but no time to complete the task, so don't just expect people to stay late or make the time. Why not make it fun, too, and order lunch for the team! Once things are in good shape, it should be easier for your team members to keep it that way. Stock disinfecting wipes and other tools in a place employees can access to encourage ongoing efforts.

Keep in mind, tidying may not be magical for everyone. There are studies that suggest clutter makes us more creative. And, conversely, that too tidy a space makes people less willing to take a risk or propose a bold idea. Find what works for your teams and champion their spring cleaning efforts.

Read more:

[Spring Clean Your Cubicle!](#)

[How to Tidy Up Your Business for Spring Cleaning](#)

[10 Tips for Better Spring Cleaning in Your Workplace](#)

[The Case for Finally Cleaning Your Desk](#)

[The Marie Kondo Effect: Tidying Up Your Workspace](#)

Employee Compensation

Money Talks

April 1 may be April Fool's Day, but for many workers April 2 is no joke. For 2019, it represents National Equal Pay Day, or the day up to which women have to work to make what men made the previous year on average. For women of color, the day is even later in the year every year.

Many long-held beliefs about the pay gap, including that it is because of job choices women make or time off for having children, aren't borne out by the research, says a recent article in the [New York Times](#). One long-held reason, that women don't negotiate their wages, has proven to be more nuanced. Research shows that while women have grown more comfortable with negotiation, those negotiations aren't always successful.

Wage transparency, whether at a corporate level or from conversations between employees, is one way to help combat the pay gap, even if cultural norms make discussing wages rarer. [HR Exchange Network](#) points out that most of the laws in place are specific to discussing salaries for federal or state contracts and roles, not the general workforce or hiring population. So, for



now, HR departments may need to decide on their own if it's time to reconsider older policies that forbid employees from discussing their pay. If exact salary numbers are hard to share, consider sharing a salary range and more information about how decisions are made, says an article on [NBC News](#).

Not all money conversations at work are productive, or even legal. While it may seem like knowing someone's past salary would help determine the best compensation in a new role, it can also reinforce the pay gap, since a man and woman candidate may be applying with equal experience but not equal pay history. Make sure your hiring team understands the laws surrounding questions about salaries and how they vary across cities and states. [Money](#) has a helpful map of the cities and states that now ban asking about salary history.

More than any law or regulation, most experts agree it will be individual companies and leadership recognizing and committing to equal pay that moves the needle. Before the next Equal Pay Day in 2020, consider beginning the important conversations at your company about how you can better support equal pay for all your workers.

Read more:

[To Promote Equal Pay, More Places Are Banning the 'Salary History' Question. This Map Shows Where It's Still Legal](#)

[Why pay transparency alone won't eliminate the persistent wage gap between men and women](#)

[Four encouraging signs we are closer to closing the gender wage gap](#)

[Womansplaining the Pay Gap](#)

Employee Benefits

Is it Time for Unlimited Time off?

While more and more perks — catered lunches, on-site gyms, immunizations programs — are about employee health, wellness, and happiness, they ultimately are also designed to keep workers at work. A recent article in [Quartz at Work](#) points out that more than anything, employees want more time off and out of the office. Unlimited time off, to be exact.

Once the perk of tech firms and startups, more companies are beginning to explore unlimited paid time off. And, though still rare at only one to two percent of companies, it's a popular request in part because workforce demographics continue to shift. Nearly half of employees are Millennials, whose priorities are changing the benefits conversation. For this group, finding more balance and having more control of their time are key. In part, this may be because time off has fundamentally changed. [Well and Good](#) looks at the fact that, with near-constant connectedness, vacation days often still involve checking email and getting other notifications.

Add to that cultural and workplace expectations of accessibility and availability, and workers are at risk for burnout. One in four workers report feeling burned out all the time and almost half feel burned out sometimes. This burnout can cost employers in lost productivity, and employees in terms of health and happiness. Today, someone doesn't need to psychically spend 90 hours a week at the office to be working 90 hours. With our always-on lives, restorative time off is rarer but still as important to prevent burnout.



That doesn't mean every business is jumping on the unlimited time off bandwagon. Want other ideas? A writer for [The Guardian](#) suggests a middle ground, with more days off the longer an employee has worked at a company. And, while rollover sounds generous, it may make employees less likely to use it. Want to give it a try but concerned about misuse? [Business Management Daily](#) suggests it's also more than reasonable to consider limits on unlimited and critical to set sound guidelines around pay as well as whether days off can be all in a row.

For many employees, unlimited time off offers the extra flexibility for life's challenges and can aid satisfaction and retention. Before HR Departments worry the system will be abused, research shows that people take significantly less time off when it's unlimited. In fact, what may be more impactful is a minimum number of days off may be required so as to ensure employees take advantage of a benefit meant to restore and replenish their energy, creativity, and engagement. To work, it needs to be modeled by managers and other higher-ups, as a CEO details in a [Chicago Daily Herald article](#).

Read more:

[The Benefit Workers Want Most is Less Work](#)

[Vacation Time and Being Off Work Are No Longer the Same, so Avoiding Burnout Is Trickier than Ever](#)

[What Could be Better than Unlimited Paid Vacation? Well, this ...](#)

[Unlimited Vacation -- the One Benefit Workers Want More than Anything](#)

[Ask These Questions when Considering Unlimited PTO](#)

In Brief

Bringing Design Thinking to HR

Across industries, design thinking has continued its rise in popularity. At its core, design thinking is about centering people in the creation of products. Whatever you're designing, whether a process or a tool, connecting your work to the people who will use it makes a better solution.

As [HR Executive](#) points out, design is more than logos and graphics. It's the plan for anything produced, including the policies, tools, and systems of an HR Department. Ensuring those are designed with intention for today's busy workforce means a better chance of them being successful. While HR in the past has been all about adoption, today's departments have to think toward more than just first use to continued use. This means not just understanding, but connecting with, the people who will be using the tools, following the policies, and using the systems. The sheer number of workplace components HR manages, from compensation to workforce experience to productivity also means HR creates an immense amount of data. When that data is rooted in design thinking approaches, it becomes more valuable to the company as a whole.

If you're already convinced of the value of design thinking, the *Harvard Business Review* has a few things to keep in mind to help ensure implementing design thinking processes goes smoothly.

1. Encourage your team to think differently. Not just differently, but divergently. Outlier ideas, big reaches, and unexpected notions are more than useful, they're essential.



2. Empower your team to fail, more than once. Iteration and testing are parts of the design process and lead to improvements that don't come from running with a safer idea.
3. Embrace it yourself. For HR teams used to having clear directions and focusing on efficiency, these are new experiences so it's up to managers to lead the way.

Read more:

[The Right Way to Lead Design Thinking](#)

[How to Incorporate Design Thinking into HR Processes](#)

Employer Webinar

Practical Tips for Structuring Compliant Wellness Programs that Include Premium Incentives

Tuesday, May 14, 2019

2:00 p.m. ET / 11:00 a.m. PT

This webinar will cover how to structure a wellness program that includes premium incentives.

This webinar will:

- Describe the laws and regulations that govern wellness programs with premium incentives, including the EEOC's final rules that removed portions of wellness regulations that were vacated by a U.S. District Court
- Briefly discuss the extent to which employers offer a wellness program, including the types of program components that employers offer
- Discuss best practices for payroll deduction administration, such as applying a discount to an employee's premium, changing premium amounts, and giving money back to employees based on their wellness program participation
- Describe whether an employer's wellness incentive payments can be spread out over a period of time
- Discuss how an employer can offer a wellness program that requires an employee to complete biometric screening, a medical exam, or a health risk assessment to receive a premium incentive
- Provide practical tips, including examples, of how to design compliant wellness programs that involve premium incentives

This 60-minute intermediate level webinar will help employers understand how to structure wellness programs that include premium incentives.

Registration

[Register here for the webinar](#). The presentation will be posted on the [UBA website](#) the afternoon before the webinar.



About the Presenter

[Chelsea Deppert](#) is an associate in the Atlanta office of Fisher Phillips. She provides practical guidance to employers on the technical aspects of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and other state and federal laws impacting the design, implementation and ongoing compliance of employee benefit plans and programs. She advises clients with respect to all aspects of employee benefits, including retirement plans, health and other welfare benefit plans.

Chelsea works with employers on a broad array of issues relating to tax qualified retirement plans, such as plan operation, drafting, participant communications, and compliance with ERISA's fiduciary responsibility provisions. In her practice, she regularly represents employers in curing qualified plan operational issues under the Internal Revenue Services (IRS) Employee Plans Compliance Resolution System (EPCRS) and other corrective programs, as well as counsels employers with respect to income and employment tax issues related to employee benefits. Chelsea also advises employers with respect to their obligations under Health Care Reform, ERISA, Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other federal laws that regulate health and welfare plans.

Certification

This webinar has been submitted to the [Human Resource Certification Institute](#) and the [Society for Human Resource Management](#) to qualify for 1 recertification credit hour.