



HR ELEMENTS®



HR & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the UBA Partner Firm exclusive monthly newsletter delivering insights about timely human resources and employee benefits topics.

HR Elements | February 2023

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Dear HR Manager,

One of my employees is infringing on my responsibilities. He emails directives to the department without my approval. Sometimes the information is incorrect and sends the team into a tizzy. At other times, it is correct but outside of his domain. What do I do?

– Stepping On My Toes

Dear Stepping On My Toes,

This situation is tricky. On the one hand, you have an employee eager to help with communications. But, on the other hand, you have incorrect information reaching a large group of people.

What an ideal coaching opportunity!

Work with your employee to harness this excitement around communications and mentor him on the appropriate process. Provide feedback to him about the repercussions of distributing inaccurate information. Ask questions to gauge his interest in communications as a development area. If he is interested in growing in this area, partner with him to outline an approval process that includes you as a critical stop along the way.

– HR Manager

Workplace Culture | Unplugged: Creating Time to Think

In today's "always on" work culture, it is not uncommon to be in a virtual meeting, viewing a presentation, and checking your phone simultaneously.

Your time is precious. Research shows it takes almost 23 minutes to get back on track after being interrupted.

Getting space to think without phone and computer alerts interrupting you can be challenging. In response to this tech invasion, some are [joining the "unplugged" trend](#) and disconnecting from gadgets.

Here are a few digital detox strategies to get started.

- **Start small.** While [Tiffany Shlain](#), author of *24/6: The Power of Unplugging One Day a Week*, employs a tech-free day a week, you may want to start with a more manageable goal. Try scheduling screen-free time for short spurts (15 – 30 minutes) and work your way up.
- **Update your calendar.** Blocking time to unplug will help you to follow through. Pick a day of the week when it is less likely you will be disturbed. Notify colleagues when you will be offline.
- **Hide technology.** Power off your phone and laptop. Tuck away electronics in a drawer or another room when they are not in use to avoid being sidetracked. Grab your notebook or use a whiteboard instead.
- **Schedule in-person meetings.** Your thinking time may include an in-person tech-free brainstorming session with colleagues. You may notice that your relationships improve sans technology. You can better observe body language and tone in this setting which may be missed in an email or text.

Friday, March 3, is the National Day of Unplugging. This tech-free 24-hour period is devoted to doing anything other than using your devices. Think of this day as an experiment for you. See if a device detox invites new ideas around your work. Try looking at your projects from a 30,000-foot view. What new discoveries can you make?

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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Inclusive Meetings: Creating Spaces Where All Can Contribute

It's true – the loudest voice often gets the most “airtime.” You have likely been in a meeting where one person dominates the conversation, leaving teammates struggling to add their ideas and questions. Research reveals that men from minority groups and women are often uncomfortable speaking up in a group setting. Managers play a pivotal role in ensuring their [teams feel included](#) in meetings. You can make a significant impact by creating a more effective meeting structure.

Try these four tips to create an inviting meeting environment.

- 1. Send meeting materials ahead of time.** Providing an agenda and relevant data before a meeting allows employees to *think* about the content ahead of time. This accommodates employees for whom English is a second language and those who need time to process information.
- 2. Host pre-calls.** Holding informal conversations before a meeting produces multiple benefits. First, you can pressure-test ideas with your audience. And second, you may hear from individuals who are uncomfortable speaking up in a group setting. These one-on-ones are also an opportunity to make sure that people understand their value on the team and at the meeting.
- 3. Create ground rules.** Bring “rules of the road” that outline the expected code of conduct to your next meeting. Define what an inclusive meeting looks like. Include items like “3 before me” to remind attendees to give three others a chance to speak before piping up again. Offer alternative communication options, such as allowing virtual comments meetings.
- 4. Identify a facilitator.** A meeting facilitator can manage the tempo of the conversation, keep the meeting running smoothly, and steer the discussion back on course. A facilitator can be especially helpful in blocking interrupters and ensuring all points of view are heard. It can be challenging to be a meeting participant and facilitator simultaneously. In these cases, identify a skilled facilitator who can manage the meeting so you can participate.

A part of your job as a manager is to [foster an environment](#) that allows your team to work well together. Creating meeting safety goes a long way in establishing an inclusive workplace. And research shows that creating an environment that supports diversity in all shapes and sizes creates a more dynamic, engaged workforce that thrives. Use your next meeting as an opportunity to pilot these best practices.

References

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Leadership Tip

Hire employees more intelligent than you. As a leader, you need to understand the value of hiring employees who supplement your knowledge and complement your strengths.