



Stay HR Savvy with HR Elements®

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

HR Elements | April 2023

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Dear HR Manager,

Last week my company had layoffs and my team lost several members. The employees who remain are struggling. I don't know what to do. How do I re-engage my team after this layoff?

– Workplace Guilt

Dear Workplace Guilt,

Layoffs are brutal for everyone involved. The remaining employees can feel lost even with a thoughtful layoff communication plan. They are grieving the loss of their colleagues and may experience all five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Leaders can support their team following a layoff in several ways:

1. **Check in regularly.** Employees need to know you care about their wellbeing, especially during hard times. Sharing your own feelings can help them feel safe to voice their questions and concerns.
2. **Connect them with support.** Employees may experience burnout, depression, or anxiety, and other mental health issues, following layoffs. Connect them with Employee Assistance Program (EAP) resources.

3. **Ask for feedback.** Changes in roles and responsibilities are often necessary after a layoff. Include your team as much as possible to give them some control.
4. **Overcommunicate.** Transparency is vital during times of change. Continue to provide your team with as much information as possible.

With your support, your team can grow closer during this challenging time.

– HR Manager

Workplace Culture | Are “Love Contracts” Outdated?

Love is in the air, and workplace romances are on the rise. In a [2022 Society for Human Resource Management \(SHRM\) study](#), 33% of participants reported a past or current workplace relationship. It may be time to update your relationship policy. However, creating a non-invasive policy that provides clear guidance can take time and effort.

As you update or develop your policy, consider these areas:

- **Word choice.**
A common part of a workplace relationship policy is a “[love contract](#).” This document confirms the consensual status of a romantic relationship and confirms both parties will follow the company’s sexual harassment policy. Some employees may find this term outdated and not take it seriously. Update using modern verbiage like “relationship consent” or “consensual relationship” contract.
- **Employee types.**
Are all relationships off limits? Or just certain relationships? Dating up and down the employee hierarchy has long been a point of concern related to favoritism and workplace harassment. Spell out those relationships that need to be flagged.
- **Local laws.**
Various jurisdictions have employee privacy laws that restrict employer oversight. Are you able to restrict activity for remote workers?
- **Culture.**
Evaluate what makes sense for your organization. Employees may feel like this is an invasion of their privacy. And it may not make sense to limit relationships at a globally disbursed company. It is also imperative to consider your HR team’s time and availability. Do they have the bandwidth to monitor employee relationships?

Most will agree that workplace relationships will happen, regardless of the restrictions. The critical piece is identifying what formula makes sense for your organization. As an HR leader, how can you put [meaningful structure](#) in place to support workplace romantic relationships in a healthy way?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion | The ABCs of Inclusion

Described as “death by a thousand cuts,” microaggressions damage work culture and employee satisfaction. Over time, these insensitive statements, actions, or assumptions can make employees feel excluded and marginalized. Countering microaggression is an “all-staff” issue. Creating a culture of allyship can be part of the answer.

Allyship is advocating for colleagues who have a different identity than your own.

Leaders can champion allyship and empower employees to become allies for marginalized peers. HR teams can educate, train, and support employee growth in this area. Measuring the success of initiatives like this can be difficult. The ABC model of inclusion can be used to benchmark individual and company growth.

- Acknowledge** Educate employees on the various types of microaggression. Acknowledge that the problem exists and offer training to identify microaggression.
- Build** Encourage opportunities to build new relationships, collect diverse perspectives, and use active listening techniques.
- Champion** Model behaviors to actively counter microaggression and proactively identify change solutions.

Transparent communication is a vital part of building an allyship movement. However, finding the right words to use can be challenging in a situation that requires diplomacy and tact. HR leaders can use the ABC model of inclusion to educate staff and raise awareness. As an added benefit, the “Challenge” stage can be inspirational, acting as a north star. It points employees in the same direction, with the same goal in mind.

Leadership Tip: Motivation

To motivate an exhausted workforce, start with the basics. Use [Maslow’s hierarchy of needs](#) as inspiration – ensure your employees’ physiological, social and safety needs are met before tackling higher needs like fulfillment and motivation.