



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 | October 2023

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Dear HR Manager,

My company had offered flexible remote work options but has now mandated that employees return to the office at least twice a week. My team works well in the remote setting, but I also see the benefits of in-person collaboration. How do I establish a new hybrid schedule guideline for my team that gains their buy-in?

- Hybrid Schedule

Dear Hybrid Schedule,

Hybrid schedules continue to grow in popularity, yet many employers still need a formal policy. A flexible hybrid schedule policy can [balance](#) employee preferences for shorter commutes and work-life balance with the employer's need for in-person collaboration.

[Consider these factors](#) in your hybrid schedule policy:

Maintain open communication.

Initiate open dialogue with your team and keep communication channels open for them to express concerns, provide feedback, and seek support.

Set clear guidelines.

Develop transparent guidelines that define core working hours for team collaboration and specify when employees can work remotely or are expected to be in the office.

Provide tools and resources.

Provide the necessary technology and resources to facilitate hybrid work to ensure seamless communication and collaboration to support productivity.

Offer training and development.

Offer training opportunities to help employees adapt to the hybrid model and ensure they have the necessary skills for seamless collaboration.

Ensure equity and inclusivity.

Ensure the policy is fair and inclusive, accommodating employees' diverse needs and circumstances.

Acknowledge Individual Needs.

Recognize each team member's unique needs and preferences. Provide options or customize the approach to increase acceptance.

Lead by example.

Show your commitment to the hybrid schedule by actively participating in remote and in-person activities. Lead by example to inspire confidence and encourage your team to embrace the new work format.

By combining open communication, flexibility, and a focus on individual and team needs, you can [establish a hybrid schedule](#) that gains your team's buy-in and ensures a smooth transition to the new work model.

Developing a formal policy around a hybrid work schedule will set expectations to keep your current team happy and make your organization more competitive to attract new talent.

Workplace Culture: The Need for a Modern Dress Code: Staying Relevant in Changing Times

Updating a company's dress code might not be the most pressing concern for HR departments and managers, but it's crucial in today's evolving workplace. As work dynamics undergo significant shifts, including an influx of younger employees and the prevalence of remote work, reevaluating your dress code policy is essential to ensure it aligns with current cultural and workplace norms.

Company Dress Codes: Still Relevant

While some [argue that dress codes are antiquated](#), they remain essential for organizations. Your company's dress code communicates its culture and expectations to employees who serve as the face of your brand. In certain industries, like healthcare or manufacturing, dress codes are necessary for safety and compliance. Even in remote or non-client-facing roles, employees should consider their attire for virtual or in-person meetings.

Time for Change?

Your employees are vital to your organization's success, so their input matters, especially when dress code policies directly affect them. If you adhere to an old-school dress code, it's [time to reassess](#) its relevance to your business and your employees' expectations. If safety, legal, or client-facing reasons don't require a strict dress code, consider relaxing it.

Your dress code should mirror your company's culture and values. Many companies have maintained the same dress code for years, often calling for formal attire and restrictive rules about tattoos, piercings, and hair colors. However, cultural standards have shifted, particularly with Millennials and Gen Z entering the workforce. Your dress code should align with your company's values and help attract the right talent.

If you're contemplating updating your company's dress code, [consider these factors](#):

Competitor Analysis

Investigate what other businesses in your industry say about company attire. Employees might prefer competitors with more flexible policies, which may hinder staff retention.

Safety Considerations

Remember that specific industries mandate dress codes for safety, such as steel-toed boots and hard hats in the construction industry. Assess clothing, jewelry, and hair options for safety.

Client Messaging

Evaluate the message you want to convey to your clientele. Consider practicality against employee comfort for non-client-facing roles.

Company Culture

A company's dress code reflects its culture and values. A more relaxed dress code can foster a fun environment, enabling employees to express themselves.

Realistic Standards

While flexibility is valuable, some standards such as maintaining good hygiene, are necessary. Ensure your policy is rational and non-offensive. For example, allow visible tattoos but request coverage of offensive content.

Clear Communication

After revising your dress code, communicate it transparently. Include it in your employee handbook, have employees acknowledge it, and discuss the changes with teams. Address concerns and be clear about noncompliance consequences.

A modern dress code reflects a company's adaptability and understanding of shifting workplace norms. Updating your dress code policy is not merely a matter of attire but an essential step in staying relevant and attracting and retaining top talent.

Employee Benefits: Tips for a Successful Open Enrollment

Open enrollment is a [critical period](#) for HR managers and employees, especially given the evolving healthcare landscape and the changing nature of work. Rising healthcare costs, persistent inflation, hybrid work models, and increased employee expectations have reshaped the open enrollment process.

To ensure a successful open enrollment, HR managers should consider a [range of strategies](#) that prioritize communication, technology, voluntary benefits, and addressing rising healthcare costs.

Engage with Employees.

Before open enrollment begins, gather feedback to understand employees' needs, concerns, and expectations. Conduct surveys or hold listening sessions to gauge their preferences. Are they looking for ways to manage healthcare costs or interested in additional employee-paid options?

Set Clear Objectives and Metrics.

Establish clear objectives and metrics to gauge the success of open enrollment. Determine what you want to achieve as an employer. Are enrollments mandatory, or is carryover acceptable? Defining success will guide your strategy and help measure its effectiveness.

Embrace Technology and Traditional Communication.

With the prevalence of remote work, digital communication is essential. Virtual employee benefits fairs, portals, virtual meetings, and platforms like Slack make it easier to reach employees. However, pay attention to traditional communication methods such as personalized guidance, group meetings, and one-on-one counseling sessions to connect with employees. Consider sending benefits information via snail mail to engage spouses and family members who often influence healthcare decisions.

Discuss and Explain Healthcare Costs.

Healthcare costs are on the rise, and employees need clarity about their implications. If your company plans to increase premiums or deductibles, communicate this well in advance. Provide explanations to ensure employees are not caught off guard. Encourage discussions about how employees can become more informed healthcare consumers and save money throughout the year.

Educate on Health Savings Accounts.

Open enrollment is the perfect opportunity to educate employees about flexible spending accounts (FSAs) and health savings accounts (HSAs). Many employees need to be made aware of the full range of expenses these accounts can cover. Explain how FSAs and HSAs can be used for over-the-counter medications, routine clinic visits, surgical procedures, dental care, and more.

Highlight Voluntary Benefits.

Voluntary benefits are gaining importance due to the rising cost of living. Offer voluntary benefits like supplemental health coverage, critical illness, accident insurance, and hospital indemnity to help employees manage healthcare expenses. These options can fill gaps left by traditional health plans and provide financial relief.

Promote All Benefits Offerings.

Open enrollment isn't just about health plans; it's also a chance to educate employees about all available offerings. Promote wellness programs and mental health resources, particularly given the increasing focus on employee well-being. Share real-life stories from employees to make these initiatives relatable and compelling.

HR managers must adapt to changing circumstances and employee needs during this busy open enrollment season. Organizations can enhance employee satisfaction and well-being by proactively engaging with employees and tailoring benefits offerings to their preferences while helping them manage rising healthcare costs.

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