



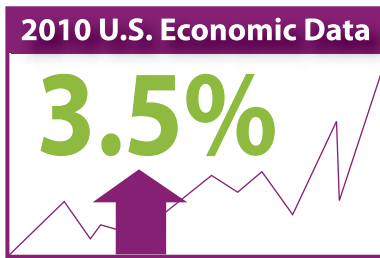
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Lauren's Corner

Employees on the Move...Are You Ready?

To quote Bob Dylan, "The times they are a' changin'." Despite the 9.7 percent unemployment rate reported in May by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, several signs point to economic growth over the next 12 months. The Federal Reserve's latest regional business survey published in June, known as the Beige Book, reported all 12 district banks showed an improvement for the first time since October 2007. According to the Beige Book, manufacturing picked up, transportation improved and retail sales grew nationwide. Even Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke recently stated that the Fed still expects the U.S. economy to grow at a 3.5 percent annual rate in the months ahead. Although I think the recovery will be moderate -- after all, we did lose about 8 million jobs in the latest recession -- there is positive movement in the job market and optimism in the air!



Along with an improved job market, however, comes the reshuffling of employees at all levels and across all industries. Since October 2008, the number of people voluntarily leaving their jobs dropped by 40 percent, which means numerous employees are waiting for the economy to improve before they make a move. The recession created pent up demand among employees who wanted to seek new opportunities, but weren't able to because of limited job availability and fear of economic instability. Workers seeking other employment opportunities on a moderate scale can have a huge impact on any organization that is not ready for it. Is your organization prepared for the implications of an improved job market?

The past two years have been tough on employees who withstood layoffs and endured wage cuts or freezes. As the economy improves, there is a strong possibility that workers will leave in search of better opportunities if they don't feel they are supported and valued within the organization. Many organizations are preparing for this potential "talent fallout" by focusing on talent development programs for a much broader segment of their workforce. Companies realize that talent development programs can help improve employee retention by demonstrating to their employees that they are valued within the organization. Talent development can also improve succession planning and contingency management while providing more engaged, productive and satisfied employees. These are key components for a competitive organization, and if talent is not engaged, productive and valued, they will leave.

My hope is for all organizations to adopt a program that supports a productive, engaged workforce. At IMPACT Group, our talent development program, Talent Alliance™, combines both one-on-one coaching and integrated technology. This unique combination can be delivered to any level of the organization and will enhance their developmental growth, retention and productivity while ensuring the alignment of their career objectives with company goals.

Overall, I am excited about the next 12 months and optimistic that it will be characterized by new innovations, a focus on talent and overall economic growth.



Helping employees stay engaged

In today's economic climate many companies have been forced to reduce the number of people they employ by downsizing. Unfortunately, this activity can have a serious impact on the morale of the employees who survive, which can effect their engagement and productivity. Because downsizing an organization results in fewer human capital resources, there is a shifting of responsibilities, fewer people to perform the same amount of work and sometimes more work. There is also fear, confusion and a sense of loss. These elements and feelings need to be addressed before they become detrimental to the success of the organization.



According to a recent survey of 4,172 layoff survivors by Washington, D.C. research and training firm, Leadership IQ, 74 percent of people who kept their jobs during a staff reduction say their own productivity has taken a nosedive. The survey also indicates that 77 percent see more mistakes being made at work, and 81 percent believe customer service has declined. More alarming is that 87 percent of these layoff survivors say they are less likely than before to recommend their company as a good place to work.

So, how do you prevent these statistics from becoming a reality in your organization? By being proactive and following some of these simple recommendations that will help your employees stay engaged and productive:

- **Earn trust** - This is the essential foundation for being an effective organization. Be available to your employees and remove barriers, allowing them to do fulfilling work.
- **Stress ownership** - Provide a clear vision of which direction the company is headed and allow your employees to have input into that vision.
- **Feedback** - Remember that feedback is a gift - Let them know what they do well so that they keep doing it with confidence. Feedback should include both low and high performers.
- **Communication** - Talk and listen more. Encourage your employees to have open dialogue with management. This is the most effective vehicle for increasing performance and building trust.
- **Match projects, passion and proficiency** - Everyone comes with a different set of values and goals that they are hoping to accomplish at their job. Help them align what is important to them with what is important to the organization.
- **Get to know your people** - You don't have to be their friend but you do need to know what motivates them.
- **Invest in the workforce** - Reduce performance barriers by providing the resources and developmental programs they need when they need it.
- **Take time out from the daily grind** - Take time to understand how they are feeling and validate those feelings.
- **Don't take the top performers for granted** - Engagement, particularly when the workforce is thin or has been recently reduced, is hard to get back and sustain. Nurture, recognize and develop them.
- **Pay attention to the new culture** - Allow management and their teams to work together to create a new, improved and stronger culture of fully engaged employees.



Evaluating Pre-Employment Background Screening

Let's start with a couple of questions:

- Do you have a policy?
- Has it been reviewed lately?
- Are you performing the necessary due diligence to ensure safe hiring practices and a safe and secure work environment?

Now that the economy is starting to recover, you may be considering additional hiring. More than ever, it is important to take a proactive approach to ensure you are selecting the right individuals to join your organization. This is a perfect time to review your background screening program to ensure it is actually doing what you intended it to do. You certainly don't want the background check to be nothing more than a "checking the box" process.



Many companies are choosing an outside vendor to perform their screening, particularly when they include criminal background investigations. The following are some areas to consider if you are selecting an outside vendor.

- When you get the information back, your vendor should be acting as a consultant. Too many times HR and recruiting professionals are left to fend for themselves when it comes to understanding adverse findings and how to deal with them. Without a trained researcher to help you navigate the data, you can get inaccurate or incomplete information.
- Make sure you ask how your criminal investigations are being completed. A National Criminal Database search is not very effective on its own for the simple reason that it is only as good as the information in it. Make sure you ask how your criminal investigations are being completed and that actual court research is the standard. There is a common term in the database industry known as "data drops," which refers to the inaccuracy of shared information between databases resulting in inaccurate data. It is estimated that at least 5 to 8% of the data is lost when sharing information from one platform to the next. Even more important, "data drops" are indiscriminate, which means a drug trafficking conviction is dropped just as easily as a traffic ticket.
- The last area is the common issue of applicants purposely omitting information. For that reason, the first part of the screening process should include getting critical identification information from credit bureaus and other repositories. A good researcher will have relationships and experience with each vendor source, which allows follow-up when necessary, ultimately providing you with the most comprehensive report.

Finally, what should you look for in a trusted partner to perform your pre-employment background checks? When your firm's reputation and integrity is on the line, you should demand to work with a vendor that is ready, capable and willing to support you in your hiring process way beyond just data mining! Also, look for the company's professional memberships in organizations such as ASIS, SHRM, NAPBS and others. This indicates a combined knowledge of the screening and security industries as well as an understanding of your challenges in talent acquisition.

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