

HOW UP TO DATE ON HR TOOLS ARE YOU? THE ALL-IN-ONE GUIDE TO RECRUITING SUCCESS



Are You Hiring the Best Candidates?



Hiring the right candidate is not something that just happens out of pure luck. In fact, if you rely on luck, the odds will be stacked against you, and you'll end up with a clown on our payroll.

In a new edition of his book, *Knock 'em Dead: Hiring the Best*, career expert and author Martin Yate reveals some successful tactics for employee selection. Known for his job seeker strategies in the Knock 'em Dead series of books, this time, he's sharing his advice with hiring managers and HR professionals who are trying to add the best talent to their teams.

Take a look at some of the book's top lessons...

Give the newbie a chance. You might think your dream candidate is the person whose qualifications are an exact replica of the job requirements, but that's not necessarily the case. "The person who seems most qualified may not be the best

person for the job,” writes Yate.

He says you can build a more effective team by hiring people who

“He really is about the best in the business.”
—Dun & Bradstreet

**Knock
Dead**

How to Build
**Winning
Teams**

HIRING THE BEST

SIXTH EDITION

Proven Tactics for Successful
Employee Selection

MARTIN YATE, CPC
New York Times bestselling author

can do perform 60 to 80 percent of the job, since that will keep them motivated and give them some room for professional growth. That’s the perfect formula for high productivity and a positive attitude. On the other hand, someone who comes

into a position at a high level will likely be hired at the maximum salary, and may feel unchallenged and more likely to move elsewhere.

Use phone interviews to narrow down your list of candidates. Everyone is busy, but scheduling a 10-minute phone call can help weed out applicants who aren't the right fit, thus avoiding an awkward and time-wasting in-person meeting.

Talk generally about money early on. Often, the last part of the puzzle when making a hiring decision is salary negotiation, but that's a mistake, says Yate. Again, you don't want to waste everyone's time by finding, screening, and interviewing a bunch of job seekers, only to find that your top picks have different salary expectations than you can offer. Ask candidates about salary range preferences, as well as about their current/previous salaries to make sure you're in the same ballpark for future negotiations.

Don't talk too much. The goal of the job interview is to get the interviewee talking 80 percent of the time, says Yate. You want to ask well thought out questions to get at the heart of the candidates ability, motivation, and teamwork and manageability. Ability refers to technical skills, being able to perform the job's functions, and work experience. Motivation is how willing the person is to learn and grow. Teamwork and manageability is essentially people skills, and recognizing the right personality and mindset for your company.

For an excellent list of interview questions for all types of positions from entry to executive level, check out Yate's detailed suggestions in the book.

Know what you want. "Tying each job to its specific problem-solving responsibilities and identifying its role in the bigger picture is the most critical step in hiring effectively," writes Yate. In other words, if you hire people without a clear sense of what their role is in the company, how can you properly evaluate the job they are doing?

Five Hiring Mistakes You Don't Want to Make



When you take a look at your staff, you may see some folks who would *not* be invited to join your team if you had a do-over.

Some candidates might have seemed good on paper, but now that they're part of your company, their abilities don't match up with their resume. Maybe their work ethic isn't as strong as it appeared during the interview process. Or perhaps their "team player" qualities aren't as team-oriented as everyone hoped.

Don't get discouraged but instead learn from your mistakes and the mistakes of others. Marion Bayers, a human resources consultant with Leading Edge Human Resource Services in Fort Myers, Fla., identified five frequent hiring errors – and we offer some ways to fix them.

1. Hiring the first person who comes along.

Being desperate to fill a position, which Bayers calls "crisis hiring," could cause you to offer a job to the first warm body that expresses interest in the job. That individual may be unqualified, and it could be costly in the long run when you have to rehire and retrain someone.

Do this: Make sure you have a job description for each opening, and use that to measure the qualities each candidate possesses and to make a smart hiring decision.

2. Lacking training to conduct a proper (and legal) interview.

During the interview process, you, your colleagues and company leaders could jeopardize your company's ability to attract and hire qualified individuals, or incur a lawsuit. Mistakes include discriminatory questions about religion, sexuality, or race. Also, if you or your managers talk, talk, and talk, you could miss the opportunity to adequately learn about a candidate before offering them the job.

Do this: Provide training about discriminatory questions to everyone involved in the hiring process, even to those conducting informal interviews. Your state may have guidelines in an easy-to-follow format, such as this document created by the state of Idaho.

3. Conducting insufficient reference and background checks.

Not doing your due diligence could cause you to miss out on red flags that would cause you to pass on a job applicant. You may hire someone who has had criminal history or just been a ringleader for poor morale in a past position. Also, you could get your company into trouble if an employee commits a crime while on the clock, including a lawsuit for negligence if a worker harms a potential client or existing customer, Bayers says.

Do this: Take time to call the candidate's references and find out his or her strengths and weaknesses, as well as past job performance. Invest in criminal history, drug, even credit checks.

4. Dragging your feet about filling a position.

If your company is not ready to hire someone for the job but the job candidates think there is a current need to fill the position, you're being unfair, Bayers says.

Do this: Be upfront with applicants about your timetable for hiring. If it's still uncertain, let them know, so that they can move forward in their job search and in interviewing with other companies.

5. Being narrow-minded.

If you only think someone who is young and energetic can do the job, you may be

missing out on the opportunity to hire a more experienced or more introverted candidate. You also could face a discrimination case, Bayers says.

Do this: Don't fall into the trap of being too narrow-minded regarding the type of person you think is the best fit for the job. Go back to that job description to base your impression on how their skills match up with the position.

From having an open mind to taking the time to do your homework in the hiring process, you can correct mistakes companies often make and find the right employees for each job.

How to Make Your Employees Love You



Wouldn't it be amazing if your company made it onto Fortune's list of the Best Companies to Work For? Contrary to what you might think, the top companies are not *all* Silicon Valley giants. Smaller, lesser-known companies like CHG Healthcare Services in Utah and Hilcorp Energy Company in Texas have garnered recognition for their über-friendly culture and outstanding perks that keep employees happy –and firmly planted. Here are five ways you can do the same.

1. Make a big deal about new employees.

Intel is serious about keeping new hires happy. On the first day of orientation each quarter, new employees walk the red carpet – complete with company photographers and videographers – and receive a welcome package after introducing themselves onstage. It may sound silly, but fun little ceremonies and traditions like this can go a long toward making your company a place where people actually want to go to work every day.

2. Show employees you care about their life outside of work.

Though many employers are required to provide 12 weeks of maternity leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act, Google is way ahead of the game, offering a full 18 weeks of leave for moms and 12 weeks for dads. Not only that, but the company also hosts baby showers each month, where new moms and dads

receive parenting tips, credit for an on-site massage, and about \$500 worth of “baby-bonding bucks” for services like laundry, cleaning, and gardening.

3. Help employees stay healthy.

Many adults wish they had the time and money to spend getting their heart pumping at the gym, but with long work hours and a family waiting at home, it's just not feasible. So if you can't get the people to the gym, why not bring the gym to the people? Dozens of companies like Aflac, Goldman Sachs, and Mattel provide an onsite gym for their workers; they also offer gym discounts in case employees would prefer to work out away from work.

4. Encourage employees to have fun.

Happy employees are typically the most motivated, so don't squash the fun out of work. Just take a page out of the playbook of quirky Midwestern accounting firm Plante Moran. The company's managing partner, Gordon Krater, travels with employees in the form of a 12-inch cardboard cutout of himself. The “balance buddy,” which symbolizes the firm's dedication to work/life balance, has been photographed in such far-off lands as India and China on everything from camels to water skis. Employees also enjoy “Kratering” – photographing themselves in the same cross-legged position and posting the pics to the company Intranet.

5. Provide incentives employees actually want.

Forget the standard gold watch – how many people are actually motivated to work long years on the job for that? Auto services company JM Family Enterprises takes loyalty rewards to the next level by granting 10-year company veterans a weekend getaway at a resort in nearby Boca Raton, Florida. If you like the first weekend, stick around another five years to earn another. It might cost the company a bit more than the watch, but it pays dividends in the form of employees who feel appreciated.

Reasons Why Job Seekers Say ‘No’



When filling positions in the company, HR executives are likely considering the major benefits for future employees — salary, health insurance, vacation, and retirement plans. But what about the small things, such as parking, dress code, or scheduling? Do those options really cause job seekers to say “yes” or “no” to a new position?

Apparently, they do. Many job seekers are looking for advice about reasons why to turn down a job and the best way to do it professionally.

And sometimes the concerns can seem even more insignificant. On a VoINation forum board, several University of Tennessee fans and alumni noted unusual reasons why they or others turned down a job. The person who started the post kicked it off with an interesting anecdote:

I was talking with my niece the other day who was an outstanding student and had several job offers upon graduation (BS – Actuarial Science). I asked her why she declined an offer from a well known firm in an attractive metro area. She told me “I didn’t know where to park

my car.”

What a lesson! What does this say about job supply and demand going into 2014, especially when it comes to college graduates, specific degree areas or unrealistic expectations? A second post gives HR executives an idea about how even the interview process can affect the applicant pool.

The interview location was too far away. The job location was very convenient, but the new contract company hadn't set up an office on site yet, so they did initial interviews in the next town over. My buddy (45 year old man) couldn't be bothered to make the 20 mile drive.

Of course, the excuses don't stop once hired. Additional aspects of the job can break the employer-employee relationship once the contract has started, whether justified or not. Another forum post illustrates this point:

I quit a job while I was a student at UT because they wanted me to work during a home game.

Job seekers and job suppliers are facing pressures on all sides, including the current advice trend of creating a business or becoming self-employed. But the most important aspect to keep in mind is finding the employer-employee relationship that works, not worrying about the person who complains, “They offered me too much money.”

Lessons from Yahoo: How to Make Your Employees Hate You



If you're looking for a surefire way to send morale to all-time low and turn your employees against you, take a page out of Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer's book – rank 'em on a bell curve.

You may have thought that hard-line rankings were just for colleges, but these data-crunching systems are currently making a splash in Silicon Valley.

A little over a year ago, the newly appointed Mayer (pictured here) sent a “goals” memo to employees that outlined a new system of evaluating staff. A variety of benchmarks and data points were created with the purpose of evaluating employee performance, and the bell curve became one of the elements used to determine how well an employee is doing compared to a peer group.

Indeed, mandatory calibration of employees is a key feature of Yahoo's controversial Quarterly Performance Review (QPR) system, with workers being ranked in one of five categories: Greatly Exceeds, Exceeds, Achieves (the biggest category), Occasionally Misses, and Misses. Predetermined percentages are allotted to each category, though Mayer says the rankings allow for a divergence

of one to three percentage points. Still, someone has to fall within the “Occasionally Misses” or even “Misses” category. And what if there’s no one in your group who’s truly a “Miss”?

Therein lies the problem. Managers feel they are being forced to rank some of their staff as “Occasionally Misses” and “Misses,” even if those employees are performing well. And you can guess what happens to those who fall into the bottom categories. (They get fired.) It’s a high-stakes system of performance reviews.

Rumblings About Rankings

In response to employee grumblings, Mayer has said that the QPR system is not a forced ranking, a strict bell curve, or a “silent layoff”; rather, the designations are “guidelines.”

Whether the problem is a poorly designed system or just poor communication about the system, Yahoo is clearly a tense place to be right now. Because managers *do* perceive the rankings as required. And if the bell curve is mandatory, some have argued that it should be applied companywide – meaning Mayer should rank her own top leadership to show that all Yahoos are being treated equally. There’s no sign that this has taken place.

In addition, pitting employees against each another will not help morale, and it can have a negative impact on innovation. Cliff Stevenson, who studies workforce issues for i4cp, says that when employees worry about being ranked at the bottom, they take fewer risks.

Another problem with employee rankings is that there’s no way for them to be based on purely objective data. It’s almost impossible not to insert your own personal opinions and prejudices into your evaluation of another person, which then gets translated into crunchable, black-and-white data. Personal bias is inherent in the numbers, making the rankings even more arbitrary.

Of course, ranking systems are not mandatory for your company. According to the Institute of Corporate Productivity, just over 5 percent of high-performing companies used a forced ranking system in 2011, down from almost 20 percent in 2009. And companies performing well were less likely to be using forced ranking systems than those that weren’t.

The takeaway: Think long and hard about the way you design, implement, and

communicate about performance reviews. Forced ranking systems can lead to unhappy, resentful employees – which is bad for them, bad for you, and bad for business.

Creating a Workplace with Social Human Resources



Social media doesn't need to be delegated to non-work activities or banned from the workplace. More and more businesses are using social media to promote themselves and their products and services, as well as their involvement in the community, so human resources executives and owners also should consider going a step further and using social media platforms internally to benefit employees.

An interesting blog post by Phil Lotter at memeburn.com, which provides tech-savvy insight and analysis, notes:

“Combined with cloud computing and mobility, human resources is becoming an exciting and creative area that business can leverage to maximize their people capabilities.”

Phil Lotter, CEO of Piilo Software, a Boston-based privately owned software company focused on innovating talent management and human resources for businesses, notes some key components of social human resources. Among the five he identified (gamification, social recruitment, employee engagement, performance management, and skills development) we're intrigued with

gamification.

Although it may sound like you're to ask your employers to play at work, it's actually more of a conceptual approach to gaming. The concepts of tokens and other rewards that we strive for when playing game apps on our smartphones or tablets can be used in a human resources setting.

Gamification can be used to reward employees in a fun way. Lotter writes:

“Companies can embrace gamification by incorporating game mechanisms into non-gaming activities, such as skills development and performance management. When introducing gamification, this can include gathering tokens, rewards, or medals based on set rules within business processes.”

Companies can take a similar approach by using social platforms with performance feedback, where employees are praised and recognized in real time for good work, instead of waiting for a quarterly or annual performance review.

Social media also has created ways for employees to engage with their employer, by learning about everything from corporate citizenship and social responsibility to the company vision/strategy, Lotter writes. It's also a way for employees in all positions to feel as if they can provide input, and when that happens, workers may have higher morale and want to remain with the company.

One of the best opportunities is using social medial platforms to develop skills. Your company already may have web-based training or distance learning opportunities, and using social platforms may enrich those efforts in real-time settings.

How to Become a Great Interviewer (and Get Great Hires)



Every hire starts with an interview. But how can you be sure that a good interview will translate into a good hire?

Unfortunately, industrial and organizational psychology research indicates that the average validity of a typical unstructured interview is around 20 percent. That means interviews are notoriously inaccurate predictors of actual job performance.

Want to flip the odds in your favor? Become a great interviewer. Here are a few tips to get you started:

Come prepared.

Before the interview, review the candidate's resume and cover letter and see what stands out to you about his or her background, experience, and interests.

You might even want to Google the candidate's name and see what turns up. Getting the facts before you meet means you won't have to waste time on the basics in the interview, leaving you more time to get to the good stuff – what makes the candidate unique.

Listen up.

If you do most of the talking, all you're going to learn enough about the candidate is if he or she is a good listener. Save your monologue for acting class. Lean forward, smile, and ask follow-up questions like "how" and "why" to keep the candidate talking. Use the 80/20 rule – 80 percent candidate, 20 percent interviewer.

Keep an open mind.

It can be tempting, but don't spend the whole interview confirming the impression you got when the candidate walked in the door, whether positive or negative. One good or bad attribute should not determine the entire evaluation. Stay mentally present while you're conducting the interview, and remind yourself not to rush judgment.

Be consistent.

Though your conversations won't be the same with all candidates, it's important to rate each candidate on the same predetermined criteria, using the same predetermined scale. Make your ratings as soon after the interview as possible, while it's still fresh in your mind. And don't compare candidates until you've rated them independent of one another.

Keep it legal.

Steer clear of conversations about race, religion, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, and disabilities. While state and federal equal opportunity laws do not explicitly forbid employers from asking questions about most of these things (it's only illegal to ask about disabilities), it's critical that your comments show no evidence of discrimination.

As your interviewing skills improve, you will be better equipped to separate the candidates who are a poor fit from the ones who will make a difference in your company. Get ready for great hires!

The Benefits of Cost-Per-Applicant Recruiting



Sometimes recruiting can feel like a thankless job – until you get the payoff of a great hire, that is. But until then, you wonder how successful your campaign will be as you invest time, energy, and company dollars into finding the best candidates for your open positions.

The fact is, some methods of recruiting work better than others, enabling you to meet your goals and your organization to succeed. In recent years, cost-per-applicant (CPA) recruiting—where you only pay for qualified applicants—has emerged as the clear choice for successful recruiting campaigns.

Here are a few reasons why CPA is the crown jewel of recruitment:

No Upfront Fee

The beauty of cost-per-applicant recruiting is that there is no fee to list positions. You might have several open positions in a variety of locations, and you can list all of them for free. You only pay when your listings generate a response from qualified applicants (*more on that next*), so there is little risk involved. It's the CPA affiliate's job to drive traffic to your posting. All you're paying for is a job well done.

Qualified Applicants

You need to generate interest in your open positions, but time is precious, and you don't want to waste it on those who don't meet your qualifications. That's where CPA recruiting comes in. Quality CPA sites vet all prospects for you, meaning you get only those applicants who meet your specified job requirements. Dealing with a stack of applications from unqualified job seekers is a waste of time for everyone involved.

Timely Leads

If your company has all the time in the world to fill an open position, then by all means take a wait-and-see approach. For the rest of us, waiting around to fill positions is a costly move, a waste of precious human resources. Quality CPA sites are highly motivated to get your ads seen by the right people, and get your open positions filled with the proper workers. CPA recruiting typically reduces your time-to-hire, generating solid leads on which you can follow up.

Better ROI

You know the adage "You have to spend money to make money"? Turns out it's true. When you invest in CPA recruiting, you're investing in quality hires – and quality hires are the ones who will bring success to your organization.

Less-than-stellar candidates might be cheaper to procure, but they won't perform as well on the job, which will cost you in the long run. Investing in quality hires through CPA recruiting helps you maximize profits and minimize costly turnover.

When it comes to cost-per-applicant recruiting, there is almost always a payoff. Isn't it time you invested in a recruiting strategy with high rewards?

How to Combat Employee Disengagement



Employees often spend more time at work than at home, so when their job starts to feel like a chore and they lose their passion, it could impact your bottom line.

A recent Gallup poll shows that only three in one Americans (or about 30 percent) are actively engaged at work. Even worse, America's "actively disengaged employees" costs the U.S. between 450 billion to \$550 billion in lost productivity each year, cites the report.

If you want to get the best out of your employees, you have to recognize that how they are carrying themselves in the workplace. Think about your workforce. How do they fit into the types of employees that Gallup identified?

- **Engaged employees:** Work with a passion; have a "profound connection" to the company; drive innovation; move the organization forward.
- **Non-engaged employees:** Sleepwalking through their workday without energy or passion; "checked out"
- **Actively disengaged:** Unhappy and are "acting out" their feelings by undermining the accomplishments of their co-workers.

Finding a way to reinvigorate your employees' love for their jobs could be just like spouses trying to put the spark back into their marriage. To start with, you'll want to open up the lines of communication, then find ways to inspire them to be more productive and enthusiastic about being at work.

Some employees approach their work as a job, seeking only a paycheck and benefits; others seek career advancement; and yet others view their work as a calling and deeply connect with what they do every day, says Trevor Wilson, CEO of TWI Inc., a human equity strategist and author of *The Human Equity Advantage*.

Wilson says it's important to look at the unique assets each individual brings to the workplace that often are unrecognized. Their strengths, heart, attitude, personality, experience, and virtue are key qualities in searching for the best talent.

4 Things Every Recruiter Should Know



Finding the best talent and keeping hiring costs down is an ongoing twofold challenge faced by recruiting professionals.

Luckily, there are lots of resources and organizations like ERE — which hosts conferences and publishes magazines and blog content for the human resources and recruiting industries — to turn to for guidance. We caught up with Todd Raphael, editor-in-chief of ERE Media (pictured at right) to get his thoughts on what today’s recruiters should know.

1 – Don’t believe the unemployment rate hype. Despite the number of people out of work, there just aren’t that many workers who have that specific skill set needed to fill a company’s particular role. “There might be a lot of resumes to sift through, but it’s still hard to find good people,” says Raphael.

2 – Employment branding is hot. While many stories have touted social media as a big trend in recruiting, the really interesting trend is happening from within companies’ own messaging. “Company career sites are changing,” says Raphael. That’s why you’ll see many top corporations featuring videos of their actual employees (not actors) sharing their real stories, and what they love about their jobs.

3 – Forget the old school way. Part of the goal of ERE.net is “to try to bring a science to recruiting,” says Raphael. In other words, when it comes to the best ways to recruit and hire candidates, it’s necessarily to evolve, and not just do

things a certain way because that's how they've always been done. Some old behaviors to avoid: Asking the same classic job interview questions (like "describe your biggest weakness") and getting a canned answer that doesn't tell you much. Or, telling candidates they need a BA when in actuality, those with pertinent work experience who don't hold a degree, might be better qualified.

4 – Think of the interview as an extension of your company brand. "I've heard of candidates who go deep in the interview process and the company just disappears," says Raphael. As a result, you can bet those poorly treated job seekers won't be patronizing that business, or have anything nice to say about the company within their personal network. On the other hand, some companies reject candidates so well that they actually gain customers, says Raphael. Sometimes, they'll even refer one of their friends or colleagues who may be a better fit.

Why Social Recruiting Can be a Game Changer for Recruiting and Talent Pros



The online recruiting game has changed, and that's a good thing, says Kaushik Nag, manager of talent acquisition for Amway, one of the world's largest direct selling organizations, focused on quality beauty, nutrition, and home products. With 25 years in recruiting, he's seen the evolution, and is embracing it.

"About three or four years ago, organizations were dependent on the job boards for hire," he explains. The problem with doing so, he says, is that you were facing a pool of people who lost their jobs and were desperate. "The quality and talent

you want to go after are usually not found on the job boards,” he explains.

These days, he says, recruiters are wise to utilize the Internet – specifically social media — as long as they don’t expect it to be a quick fix. The fact is, it’s not enough to simply slap up a LinkedIn profile and company Twitter account and expect candidates to find you. “It’s going to be a while until we can see value especially as it relates as ROI,” says Nag. What social media really does is act as a tool to create awareness and attract people, so that companies can brand themselves and begin cultivating relationships.

Here are some unique ways Amway leverages its social accounts to target, engage, and ultimately hire full-time candidates for all of its corporate staffing needs.

Sparking interest. The most important goal of social recruiting is engagement. “Once we identify passive candidates, what do we do to engage these people? They might not know Amway is a great employment destination,” says Nag. Using that notion, Nag’s team aims to give potential employees lots of content about the culture of the company, the opportunities available, and more. The nature of that content changes based on where it lives and who it is targeting. “If you’re going after Generation X, mid- to senior-level pros, you may look to LinkedIn because that’s where they are. Generation Y and people early in their career go to Facebook,” he explains.

Being accessible. With traditional job postings, there is no conversation – you cannot ask questions of the hiring manager, says Nag. That’s why Amway began conducting chats and event sessions on Facebook and LinkedIn, so that potential employees could converse directly with hiring managers. “It works for the job seeker because they have a much clearer idea, and helps the hiring manager to be able to sell and pitch the opportunity.” It’s also another way to be able to engage more people over a period of time.

Pushing out content to educate. If an organization brands itself and identifies people to engage with, that can simplify the recruiting and hiring stages that come later, says Nag. Amway sends out a variety of published content including a quarterly newsletter that’s sent out to 25000 candidates in its database; email messaging that targets specific users; and industry news bulletins and other social media updates. “We stay in touch, provide them with relevant content, and when they’re ready, we can bring them in,” says Nag.

While Nag stresses that social media is an important skill set for recruiters to hone, in the end it's just an extension of networking basics. "If you already have a networking mindset, then you should be able to transfer those skills to the social recruiting area. The fundamentals are going to remain the same, but it's a new tool in your arsenal to spread your message."

What Your Employees are Saying Behind Your Back



It's quite normal for organizations to go through HR growing pains, especially when they have meteoric rises, says Jason Carney, director of human resources for WorkSmart Systems, a human resources outsourcing firm with more than 300 clients.

While it might feel like the right move to go out and spend a lot of money on consultants, Carney says HR professionals can start making improvements organically and internally just by paying attention to the vibe around the water cooler.

Here are three common things that you might hear your employees saying, along with strategies for how to address them...

"I don't feel appreciated."

"Employers have trimmed their staffs and been left with this classic feeling that if you're a good practitioner, you must be a good manager," explains Carney. But without the proper training, he warns that poor management skills end up being the root of most employee frustrations. "This leads to low job satisfaction, and employees that are not motivated," he says. And eventually, it will evolve into high turnover and a bad reputation in the industry.

HR strategy: Making sure your supervisors are trained in employee relations. The "reset" conversation – we've talked, I think you should know what your performance is, what's going on here? Once employees feel they are more comfortable saying whatever it may be, knowing they have that open line of communication is 70 percent of the battle.

"I'm overworked."

Downsizing is a very real issue at most companies these days, so if an employer feels like they've taken on four people's jobs with no compensation, that's a big problem, says Carney.

HR strategy: "If someone is working 60 hours a week, you need to truly step back and analyze the workload," says Carney. See what type of support the employee needs and if there are other staffers that could share some of the additional duties. In addition, look for ways to pump up your top performers so they know you're aware of their hard work. No one should make promises like 'you're going to have a job no matter what,' but it's perfectly OK to remind your hardest workers that "if something should happen, I'll want you on my team."

“I have a problem and nowhere to turn.”

Coworker conflicts are huge as is workplace bullying, says Carney. “Management needs to understand employee conflicts and deal with them before they get out of control.” In fact, he points out, gripes and bad attitudes can also spark complaints to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which have reached record numbers each of the past two years nationally.

HR strategy: Employee surveys are a good way to kick off a culture conversation if they’re done correctly, says Carney. “They give employees opportunity to be heard even if they’re anonymous.” But be careful what you ask for, he warns, and be ready to address and act on the important concerns.
