



LILLIS 305 WEST 6TH STREET
MCKIBBEN ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA 16507
BONGIOVANNI (814) 452-4085
& CO. <http://www.lmbcoerie.com>



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

November 2024

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- Workplace Culture | Building a Culture of Mental Health Support
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Dear HR Manager,

As year-end reviews approach, I want to ensure these conversations are constructive and meaningful. What are some innovative strategies to make our reviews more impactful?

- Seeking Effective Reviews

Dear Seeking Effective Reviews,

[Year-end reviews](#) are an opportunity to reflect on achievements and create alignment and motivation for the year ahead. Here are three strategies for making your reviews dynamic.

1. Begin with a Reflection Exercise

To start the review on a reflective, productive note, ask employees to complete a short, open-ended reflection before the meeting. Rather than merely listing achievements, it prompts them to think about their most fulfilling project, a challenge that helped them grow, or a recent skill they're proud of improving. These reflections encourage self-awareness and help employees see their progress, which prepares them for a deeper, more intentional conversation.

2. Provide Feedback That Resonates

Use “impact moments”—specific examples of work that directly influenced team results or advanced a strategic goal. Show how their unique contributions made a difference. For example, instead of a simple “Well done on that project,” try saying, “Your initiative to streamline our project process reduced the delivery time—your proactive approach was instrumental in our success.” For growth areas, frame feedback in terms of future impact, like, “Building on your ability to prioritize will position you as an even stronger lead on upcoming projects.” This approach gives employees clear examples of where they’ve excelled and clarifies how they can make an impact moving forward.

3. Co-Create a Focus for the Coming Year

Collaborate with each employee to identify one key focus for the coming year—a single, targeted area of growth that’s both achievable and directly relevant to their role. This focus gives employees a clear and manageable goal that will not only build their skills but also make a noticeable difference in their contributions to the team. For example, if an employee is looking to improve their project management skills, their one key focus might be “Delivering clear, data-driven updates in project meetings.” With this focused approach, employees leave the review with a concrete development goal that’s easy to remember and aligned with team priorities.

By incorporating these strategies, you can make year-end reviews a true catalyst for growth. Through reflection, targeted feedback, and a clear focus for the year ahead, you’ll inspire your team to approach the new year with clarity, motivation, and a sense of purpose.

– HR Manager

Workplace Culture | Building a Culture of Mental Health Support

Employees increasingly want—and expect—a work environment that values their well-being. Companies that commit to supporting mental health see improved productivity, more robust engagement, and increased employee loyalty.

Mental health is a cornerstone of a productive and engaged team. According to the American Psychological Association, [92% of employees](#) believe working for a company that values their emotional and psychological well-being is important.

Lead by Example

A supportive mental health culture starts at the top. [Remote workers](#) often report feeling a lack of boundaries between work and personal life, leading to burnout as work creeps into evenings, weekends, and vacations. When leaders openly discuss mental health, set boundaries, and encourage a balanced work-life approach, employees feel they can prioritize their well-being. At Rare Beauty, all new employees receive “[Mental Health First Aid](#)” training, equipping them with the skills to recognize and respond to mental health challenges in themselves and others. When leaders model this transparency and commitment, it fosters a foundation of trust, making it easier for employees to seek support when needed.

Empower Employee-Led Wellness Initiatives

Encourage employees to create and lead wellness initiatives that resonate with their needs and interests. By allowing team members to organize wellness groups, peer support networks, or interest-based clubs, companies provide an authentic platform for connection and mental well-being. For example, employees could start a mindfulness club, a monthly book discussion focused on personal growth, or a peer-led exercise group—whether virtual or in person.

This approach creates a genuine and relevant community of support for each other's well-being. Allowing employees to create and shape these groups ensures engagement and alignment with what matters most to the team.

Set Boundaries and Normalize Time Off

The pressure to be “always on” is one of today's most significant mental health challenges. Establishing clear boundaries around after-hours communication and encouraging employees to log off entirely at the end of the workday is essential. Companies should also actively promote using vacation time and mental health days without stigma. Regular time off is critical for sustained productivity and well-being, and managers can set the tone by respecting these boundaries and modeling them for the team.

By embedding these strategies into company culture, organizations demonstrate a genuine commitment to mental health. Prioritizing a supportive workplace not only boosts morale but also strengthens resilience and loyalty, laying a foundation for long-term success and helping to attract and retain top talent.

Employee Benefits | Empowering Employees with Flexible Perks

Flexible benefits allow employees to tailor their work experience to fit their personal needs, creating a supportive environment that respects work-life balance and diverse lifestyles. By offering a variety of options—such as remote work, condensed work weeks, flexible hours, and personalized health benefits—companies can build a workplace culture of trust and respect.

The Power of Flexibility

Flexible work perks give employees the autonomy to shape their work in a way that supports their lives. Options like remote work, flexible scheduling, and condensed work weeks allow employees to manage their time more effectively. Some companies offer “work-from-anywhere” days, enabling employees to spend a certain amount of time working from a location of their choice, whether that's home, a different city, or even a country within specific guidelines. For others, a four-day workweek offers an appealing alternative to the traditional schedule, helping employees recharge and stay productive.

Research shows that [51% of employees](#) consider flexible work hours essential for achieving work-life balance. A condensed or adjustable schedule can reduce burnout and increase morale. Companies that give employees control over their schedules empower employees to perform at their best. According to [86% of managers surveyed](#), employee well-being improved after implementing flexible work options, with most supervisors seeing no drop in productivity.

Offering Choice in Health and Wellness Benefits

Beyond flexible work hours, personalized health and wellness benefits have become increasingly important. Health reimbursement arrangements (HRAs), for example, allow employees to select health insurance plans that meet their specific needs, with the company covering a portion of the cost. Wellness stipends are another option, enabling employees to use allocated funds for activities or services that support their health—such as fitness classes, mental health resources, or even home office improvements.

Flexible Learning and Development Opportunities

Flexibility also extends to career growth; companies can offer employees more choices in pursuing learning and development. Options like self-paced online courses, professional development stipends, and mentoring programs allow employees to upskill in a way that suits their goals and schedules. When employees have access to a range of educational resources, they're empowered to take ownership of their career paths, which can lead to greater job satisfaction and long-term engagement.

By implementing flexible benefits, companies create a culture of trust and respect, where employees feel empowered to manage their responsibilities in ways that align with their personal lives. This trust builds loyalty, reduces burnout, and supports a positive work environment. Flexible perks demonstrate that companies recognize employees' diverse needs, strengthening the connection between employees and the organization.

As the demand for flexibility grows, companies that prioritize adaptable work perks and personalized benefits will be better positioned to attract and retain top talent.

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