PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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The Turnover Tsunami: Prioritizing Healthy Workplaces as Hiring Accelerates



Credit: Getty Images by Westend61



By RJ Frasca

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Hiring is roaring back to all-time highs as the pandemic continues to slow. Employers added more than 900,000 jobs in March alone, and a recent survey shows 52 percent of employees plan to job hunt this year, up from 35 percent in 2020. At the nucleus of this turnover tsunami is a newfound awareness among employees of potential health hazards in the workplace. Health and wellness efforts to protect employees and customers are more than just incentives to boost confidence and safety. Employees are expecting and searching for employers that actively work to protect their workforce.

So how do retailers get ahead of this trend and prepare their businesses for this new recruiting opportunity? As the pandemic hit in early 2020, technology companies pivoted and evolved to solve for new problems faster than ever before. When health guidance seemingly changed daily, software emerged to capture various forms of health data and began to provide actionable insights for employers. Retailers reacted quickly to ensure the safety of their employees and customers while continuing operations as smoothly as possible.

Now is a great opportunity for retailers to make permanent the temporary measures they used to boost safety confidence in employees and customers while combining proven best practices in process, technology, and data to mitigate risk in the future. Protecting employees and advocating for their safety will increase the value of your brand and make it more attractive to consumers and new talent alike.

Retail organizations best position themselves to attract a skilled talent swell if they focus less on 'beating' a particular virus, and instead create a unified culture and strategy that addresses the importance of employee safety, both on the job and at home. Studies show 46 percent of employees feel less connected to their current employer, and 42 percent say company culture has dwindled during the pandemic. Taking actionable health and safety measures to demonstrate how your retail organization is prioritizing employee wellness is one way to rebuild those connections with your employees and recruit new talent as well.

As companies look to the future and what changes they need to permanently make, one thing is clear: health and safety culture will be at the forefront of these changes. Although COVID-19 is the catalyst for health and safety efforts now, companies have long tried to solve for the cost of illness to their business each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Foundation reported in 2015 the average cost of influenza for businesses averaged $87 billion annually. Now add what is potentially an annual seasonal outbreak of coronavirus to that number, and you are looking at a very real, very large problem retailers must solve. If COVID-19 has collectively taught us nothing else, it is that viruses spread quickly, often with dangerous and terrifying outcomes. However, much of what we learned in the past twelve months can be applied indefinitely to ensure healthier, more cost-effective operations and better overall employee and customer experiences.

Retail is an extraordinarily data-driven industry as it is. This new health and safety data is merely another lens through which operations can be streamlined. Here are some of the approaches to health and safety that have proven to work best:

1. **Health Screening:** Screening employees prior to work with a simple set of symptomatic and exposure-related questions can greatly reduce breakouts from occurring in the workplace. These types of questionnaires can be taken in under a minute from any device.
2. **Automated Distance Monitoring and Contact Tracing:** Small, low-cost, ultra-wideband wearables can be provided to employees and allow for haptic and visual reminders of social distancing, as well as post-exposure instant notification for contact tracing purposes.
3. **Occupancy Tracking:** Automated occupancy tracking systems can help retailers steer traffic, staff adequately, and get better insights into potential areas of concern.

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4. **Air Filtration Systems:** These systems can help prevent illness from spreading. Although there is no one size fits all solution in this area, filtration providers can help strategize the best options for filtration, airflow, and circulation in any space.

When faced with attrition, many organizations will naturally look outward to fill open positions. It makes sense on the surface to replace one skilled worker for another. However, the pandemic has shown organizations the importance of looking inward and truly responding to the changing needs of the workforce. Employees and job hunters alike have steadily voiced their concerns about finding a healthier work-life balance, and this includes feeling safe while at work. If retailers truly want to seize top talent during this turnover tsunami (or prevent top talent from leaving), it's imperative you prioritize a healthy workplace.

RJ Frasca is Vice President of Marketing and Product of EBI Inc., a leading background screening provider, and EBI Workplace Health & Safety, its comprehensive monitoring, tracing, and data insights platform.

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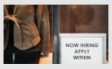


RJ Frasca
Author's page
RJ Frasca is Vice President of Marketing and Product of EBI Inc., a leading background screening provider. Frasca brings over 20 years of marketing and product experience with companies such as Yahoo, Microsoft, Time Warner, and Verizon.

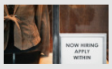
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tmana
3 years ago

I'm noting in-store personnel issues NOT related to the above:
(1) In many places, Amazon's starting rate outpaces retail starting rates, so there is a lot of hiring away from retail towards Amazon warehouses

(2) The pandemic has added on to the Amazon effect, meaning that in-store retail is moving further away from employee interaction, reducing employee hours, to the point that store associates can no longer meet their living expenses with the reduced hours offered.

(3) Retail cannot afford the increased expenses of upping in-store associate pay without either running into the red or risking a buyout (which will eventually result in the particular brand's moving out of brick-and-mortar and/or running in the red)

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