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The employment landscape is evolving, characterized by new work arrangements, the presence of five generations in the workforce, and changing employee expectations. Creating culture and connection in this environment is a critical challenge. In response to this, CAHRS hosted a working group session where members gathered to discuss their experiences and insights in navigating this dynamic landscape. Participants shared strategies and identified areas of opportunity to address the evolving needs of employees.

Key Challenges that CAHRS Companies Shared:

- *Generational Differences in Job Expectations*

There is a noted generational divide in job expectations. Younger employees desire flexibility, the ability to stay in their preferred geographic location, quick career advancement, and work that aligns with personal values. Meanwhile, older generations have traditionally prioritized stability and long-term growth. Companies have also recognized that some contrasts that appear generational may in fact reflect life stage differences of employees in particular generational cohorts.

- *Mission and Ethical Alignment*

Employees are increasingly evaluating their alignment with the company's mission and ethical stance. Many want to work for organizations they perceive as doing good in the world and are reassessing their employment based on the company's social and political engagements. This existential debate is particularly noted among younger generations, who tie their identity more closely to the company's mission. For employers, this means they must not only articulate a clear and compelling mission, but also demonstrate genuine commitment to social and ethical practices, which can be challenging to maintain consistently across all areas of operation and within all geographies the organization operates in.

- *Expanded Expectations of Employers*

With declining reliance on traditional institutions like government and religious organizations, employees are turning to their employers for security and answers to existential questions. This is placing unprecedented demands on companies to provide a sense of purpose and stability. Employees are expecting more from their employer, with some expecting stability and security benefits traditionally provided by the government and others seeking purpose and ethical leadership. Employers must navigate these expanded expectations, evaluating what is reasonable to provide while also ensuring they offer support and resources that fulfill these needs without overstepping their core business purposes.

Responses the CAHRS Companies are Pursuing:

Bridging Differences to Foster Connection

To bridge generational divides and improve communication, companies are experimenting with various initiatives like reverse mentoring and intergenerational employee resource groups. These efforts help employees from different generations understand their differences and similarities, and appreciate each other's values, building a stronger culture and connection within the workforce. Similar tactics can be used to build connections across other areas, such as different geographies or varying veteran and disability statuses.

- *Feedback Mechanisms and Accountability*

To navigate the evolving employment landscape, effective feedback mechanisms are essential for employers. Employers can prioritize optimizing their listening architecture, utilizing tools like surveys and town halls, to gather crucial data without overwhelming employees with survey fatigue. What is even more important is creating structured follow-up processes to act on feedback and communicate the actions taken. This can help build trust and demonstrates a commitment to accountability, continuous improvement, and employee engagement.

- *Leadership and Empathy*

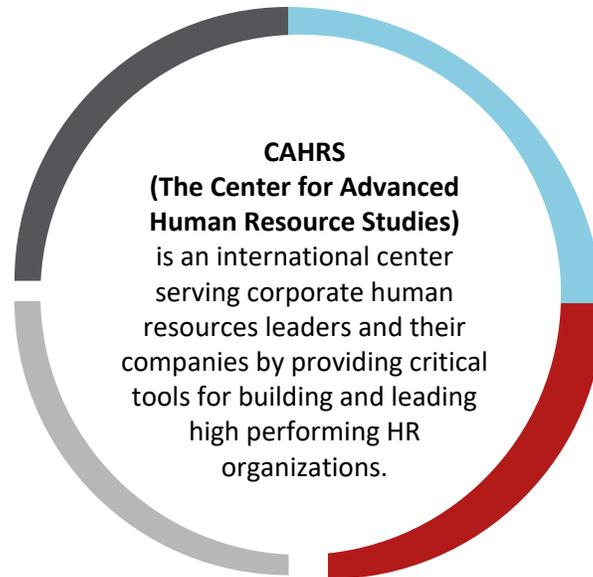
Coaching managers to be more empathetic and understanding of their employees' personal and professional challenges is crucial. Effective leadership in a complex environment requires a focus on emotional intelligence and the ability to navigate diverse perspectives and conflicts. Creating an inclusive culture is not just the responsibility of managers; equipping all employees with these tools can help build a stronger, more cohesive culture.

- *Employee Storytelling and Value Communication in Recruiting*

In response to employees' increasing scrutiny of their employer's mission and values, companies are implementing strategies to communicate their commitment to social responsibility and ethical practices. One approach involves leveraging employee storytelling as a tool to convey the company's positive impact and the employees' role in these efforts. As social responsibility becomes an increasingly salient factor in recruitment, companies are recognizing the importance of articulating their values during the hiring process to help attract candidates who align with the organization's mission and values. By actively communicating and demonstrating their value commitments, companies can not only attract and retain top talent but also cultivate a culture where employees feel proud to be associated with the organization's mission.

- *Impact of Hybrid and Remote Work*

The shift to hybrid and remote work has fundamentally altered the dynamics of the employer-employee relationship. With a variety of work arrangements in place, organizations face significant challenges in maintaining equity, culture, effective onboarding, and more. Companies are grappling with how to measure and manage these arrangements, with some opting for strict return-to-office policies and others allowing more flexibility. Striking a balance is crucial. However, companies emphasize that creating a program founded on trust and treating employees as responsible adults is paramount in preventing these arrangements from becoming highly disengaging and detrimental to culture, performance, and safety outcomes.



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