

# Communication

## Bulletin <sup>TM</sup> for Managers & Supervisors

A fast-read source of information to help managers communicate better within and between departments, twice a month.

April 13, 2022



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### Management Skills Center

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## Training needs a post-COVID revamp: 5 keys to get it right

*How we learn and apply new skills has evolved*

We've said it before – and you probably agree: COVID changed everything.

That couldn't be more true than the workplace. And here's the newest thing that needs a post-COVID revamp: training.

Whether it's new-hire, ongoing or re-introduction-to-the-workplace training, you'll likely need a different approach now.

### Learning and application change

Many employees learn differently than they did before the pandemic, relying on virtual and on-demand instruction more than ever. Plus, how employees apply new skills and knowledge has evolved because their roles evolved.

Some training fundamentals will always hold

true. But here are five ways you might revamp, upgrade or overhaul employee training now.

### Create smaller bites

Many training routines – and especially new-hire plans – once included full-day events with lots of participants.

But people don't have the attention spans and retention abilities they once did – thanks to the speed and availability of technology at our fingertips. One expert says people have training lapses every seven minutes!

To keep employees' attention, change the teaching method often. For instance, move from slides to breakout groups and hands-on

*Please see Training ... on Page 2.*

## Sharpen Your Judgment

### Bully claims race discrimination when on leave

"Maybe you can take this time to reflect on your career, working relationships and what's important to you," said Manager Jenny Delgado. "Then we can sit down with HR again."

Employee Eric Jones sat quietly, his lips pursed and eyes narrowed. The tense silence filled the room as much as a heated argument would.

"Sound OK?" Jenny finally said.

"No – not at all!" Eric said, his voice loud and terse. "Paid leave for what? For disagreeing with others. You're an irrational idiot!"

"And this is an example of why we need you to step away," said Jenny. "You know several employees and customers have complained about

your yelling, bullying and general disregard for other people and company rules."

"Well, I may be the only Black person here," Eric said. "But I'm not the only one here with a temper."

"Maybe not," said Jenny, "But you're the only one who doesn't control it."

### And for an encore ...

Eric stormed out, took his leave, and resigned a week later. His encore: a lawsuit alleging he was the victim of race discrimination because other people in his position who were white and acted similarly weren't punished or put on leave.

The company fought the case. Did it win?

This regular feature sharpens your thinking and helps keep both you and your firm out of trouble. It describes a real legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

*Make your decision, then please turn to Page 4 for the court's ruling.*

### The Purpose of Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors

Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors provides relevant and actionable business ideas to help managers and supervisors improve communication and increase effectiveness.

The Bulletin helps improve communication within and between departments, a major goal for most businesses seeking better performance.

All in a fast-read format, twice a month.

## Training ...

(continued from Page 1)

practice every 20 minutes.

If it's a long instruction program, break it into shorter sessions throughout the day.

### Train more often

One-and-done training has never been particularly effective, even when on-the-job practice reinforced the skill or knowledge. That's because people tend to adapt when they forget exactly how to do something, and then adopt the inferior habit.

What's better is regular training reinforcement. Practicing the correct skills in a monitored environment can ensure the right things get done when employees are on the job.

Try sending email reminders and tips, plus online refreshers, followed by short exercises or tests.

### Incorporate more activity

People don't tend to retain as much information when they just listen to it.

Nowadays, they need to physically participate in training to get the most out of it.

You might try more interactive elements such as quiz games where

employees try to answer questions based on what they've just learned.

Or, go back to old-fashioned role playing, asking them to play out two or three different possibilities. Then discuss what works best.

### Make it a team event

Help employees learn from each other. Many managers have found peer-to-peer training works better these days because employees work in context every day. Staff often knows what they need better than their manager or a trainer does.

You might pair employees to help each other in informal ways.

Or consider asking employees to head up training on a topic or skill they feel they're particularly qualified to teach.

### Make personalization possible

You might grab employees' attention if you offer training opportunities geared to how they want to grow.

Work with them to identify their strengths and potential career path.

Then serve up a menu of training and assignments that suit them best.

The personalized approach can also build engagement and foster employee loyalty.

*Source:* Wall Street Journal, [tinyurl.com/training522](https://www.wsj.com/articles/training-522)

## TECH CORNER

### 3 ways tech tools can fix monotony with work

Most jobs have some element of monotony.

When people do the same thing day-in, day-out, boredom can set in. And that's when mistakes happen.

But you can use technology to help overcome potential mistakes or miscalculations that might happen.

#### Stay alert and engaged

Here are three tech tips to stay alert and engaged when doing monotonous work:

- Set alerts or reminders on your

device. Schedule them so you look and possibly walk away from the work at least every hour. Include a brief task to get your mind off the task at hand, too.

- **Share or journal.** Use apps (and a timer so you don't get distracted too long) to mingle on social media or journal something you appreciate about work or life.
- **Get moving.** Turn to different apps for a few minutes of stretching, exercising or meditating to free your body and mind briefly from the work that could become boring.

*Source:* MakeUseOf.com, [tinyurl.com/monotony522](https://www.makeuseof.com/articles/monotony-522)

## COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

### ■ Subtracting could be the best way to add value

Sometimes the best way to add value to a project, your job or the entire company is to subtract.

That's the conclusion from four Harvard Business School researchers. The default of most leaders and organizations is to add something when they want to improve. For instance, an engineer creates a new feature for equipment. Or an HR manager creates new modules for refresher training.

But, subtracting something from what exists can add value, too. Imagine if the engineer removed frivolous features that deterred productivity. Or the HR manager eliminated barriers to information access.

Subtraction as a problem-solving or value-added solution can work if you make it:

- **an option.** Remind teams and colleagues that eliminating something is a viable solution
- **a policy.** For every solution that includes an add-on, make subtraction part of the equation, and
- **a hero.** Regularly share success stories on how people or teams eliminated something to overcome a problem or find a solution.

*Source:* HBR, [tinyurl.com/subtract522](https://www.hbr.org/2022/04/subtract-522)

### ■ What not to do in Zoom meetings now

Even if people work on-site more these days, Zoom meetings are here to stay. They're more inclusive and efficient.

But Zoom still presents an issue, according to research from Roborock: Lax professional standards. Nearly 70% of employees harshly judge colleagues and their surroundings in Zoom calls.

The biggest complaints: noisy pets, messy workplaces, interruptions from family members and disheveled appearances.

Remember: A Zoom meeting is still a work meeting. Keep it professional.

*Source:* Roborock.com

# Real Problems, Real Solutions

Our subscribers come from a broad range of organizations, large and small. In this regular networking feature, three of them share their successes in improving workplace communication.

## 1 First-day experience to engage new employees

We wanted new employees to feel at home at our workplace from Day 1.

That was a little bit easier before the pandemic when everyone worked together in a location. Remote and hybrid work made it more difficult. But we came up with a new idea and combined it with an old one to create a one-of-a-kind first-day experience.

### Two video events

We kept a long-standing tradition of creating a video of new hires' families sending well wishes on the first day. For that, we were usually able to track

down willing family members from the new employees' emergency contact list.

To that, we added a Zoom call when a large part of the company participated by clapping and wishing the new hire well on the first day.

These personalized welcomes make new employees feel important and valued right out of the gate. And that helps start building their loyalty to us immediately.

*(Brad Goldoor, Chief Employee Experience Officer, Phenom, Philadelphia)*

## 2 Giving employees chance to shine

My team did a great job of working together to finish projects, reach goals and come up with valuable solutions and new ideas.

I was proud of them and always commended them when I presented ideas and accomplishments to senior leaders.

But words aren't as powerful as actions. And I thought I was missing an opportunity to help my team develop their skills, careers and confidence.

### Let them carry the torch

So I started to look for opportunities to put the spotlight on the team more often.

One of the best ways: I asked team members to present to senior leaders. If they'd put the hard work into a project or idea, they would be best equipped to explain and tout it.

Most people liked the opportunity. It signaled my confidence in their capabilities. And it helped them develop more professional skills.

*(Michael Keeton, Director of Data and Analytics, Barclays U.K., shared this success on the Eblin Group Blog)*

## 3 A plan that makes work 'work' for everyone

I don't need to tell anyone that the pandemic changed work. So when we realized the things we could accomplish working in ways we never imagined – fully remote for some time – we recognized that we might need to change how we manage the workplace.

We surveyed employees and found 9% wanted to be in an office full time, 68% wanted to come in occasionally, and 23% wanted to be fully remote.

### Made the shift

That prompted the decision to shift to a fully flexible workplace. Everyone could pick the model that worked best. The options included:

- **Hub** prefers to work in the office four to five days a week.
- **Flex** prefers a mix and are in the office one to three days, and virtual the rest of the week.
- **Remote** prefers virtual all the time. Employees love the plan.

*(David Hanrahan, CHRO, Eventbrite, shared this success at the online conference "Elevate 2021: Building the Future of Mental Health in the Workplace")*



## YOUR LEGAL COACH

### ■ Can – or should – we pay in cryptocurrency?

**Question:** We can't believe it – a couple of employees asked to be paid in cryptocurrency. Can – or should – we?

**Answer:** It presents some risks, especially under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), says Allan Bloom, an employment law attorney with Proskauer Rose LLP.

### Better bet

As it stands, the FLSA requires you to make "payments of the prescribed wages, including minimum wage and overtime compensation, in cash or nonnegotiable instrument payable at par." The FLSA has allowed employers to pay in foreign currency under certain circumstances. But it's still unclear if crypto falls into that kind of exception.

Because crypto is fairly new and still evolving, it's a better bet to hold back on using it for now, Bloom says.

**Source:** [tinyurl.com/crypto522](https://tinyurl.com/crypto522)

## LIGHTER SIDE

### ■ Just one line to a smile or a laugh

Sometimes all it takes is one line to put a grin on a colleague's face or send a ripple of laughter across the team.

We hope these one-liners can help with either or both:

- Just so everyone's clear, I'm going to put my glasses on.
- I lost my job as a stage designer, but I left without making a scene.
- A generous army general walked into a bar and ordered everyone around.
- Fran and her friends named their band Duvet – it's a cover band.
- Dave lost his wife's audiobook, and now he'll never hear the end of it.
- 6:30 is the best time on a clock, hands down.

**Source:** [RD.com](https://RD.com)

## COMMUNICATION NEWS

## Learn to communicate without masks again

Masks helped health throughout the pandemic, but hurt communication.

Now that most mask mandates have been dropped, and people feel more comfortable without them, it might be time to think about how we communicate again.

For instance, with masks, people used and read nonverbal cues differently than they had traditionally.

We couldn't see smiles or frowns that often revealed how others really felt. Some people also started to use more animation with their eyes and eyebrows when speaking behind a mask. And most of us spoke louder to be heard through the masks.

Now, some of those habits may be annoying in a maskless workplace!

### Monitor now

So at work, you might want to monitor:

- **volume.** Are you talking loudly and enunciating excessively?
- **gesture.** Are you still using extra hand gestures and head nods that helped get points across when behind the mask?
- **facial cues.** Remember to smile more now! It's good to see smiles again.

*Source: The Denver Channel, [tinyurl.com/nomask522](https://tinyurl.com/nomask522)*

## Who's afraid of being looked over for a promotion?

Most employees like working remotely, but many fear it puts their career in jeopardy.

A third of employees prefer hybrid work. Still, 43% think they could be passed over for a promotion if they aren't in the office all the time, according to the study "The New Hybrid Workplace, Built on Resilience, Transparency, and Trust."

### Out of sight, out of mind?

These employees fear the "out of sight, out of mind" syndrome. Fortunately, leaders can

make sure that it doesn't affect anyone's career. Here's how:

- Create written policies and procedures that address criteria for advancement for whatever your new work environment is
- Make sure remote/hybrid employees have the same technology tools as onsite employees, so they can collaborate equally with colleagues, and
- Give everyone the same career development opportunities.

*Source: [tinyurl.com/promotions522](https://tinyurl.com/promotions522)*

## Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

Yes, the company won when an appeals court affirmed a lower court's decision.

The employee's attorney claimed he was the victim of racial bias because he was subject to an adverse employment action. He was put on leave for infractions his white colleagues committed, too. But the others never faced adverse consequences for their part.

The company's attorney argued the employee was put on leave for legitimate reasons – bullying, disruption and disregard for company rules. Paid leave was not "an adverse action." Plus, none of his colleagues – regardless of race – acted in ways similar to him.

The court agreed with one important point

when it ruled in the company's favor: The employee didn't experience an adverse action. Paid suspension isn't an adverse action. Instead it's a "useful tool" that employers can use to "hit pause" while investigating alleged misconduct.

### Stay within policy

No manager wants to put employees on suspension. But sometimes it's best for everyone to hit pause.

Just be sure to document violations of company policy, and to treat everyone the same, including with disciplinary actions.

(Based on *Davis v. Legal Services Alabama Inc.* Dramatized for effect.)

## Quotes

Always do your best. What you plant now, you will harvest later.

– Og Mandion

If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way.

– Napoleon Hill

Find out who you are and do it on purpose.

– Dolly Parton

Action is the foundational key to all success.

– Pablo Picasso

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