

HOUSTON NEXT

The Partnership convened over 320 business leaders, diversity and inclusion officers, HR professionals, recruiters and ERG leaders at the second annual Houston NEXT: An ERG Summit to address the region's workforce needs and ways to help ERGs thrive. Through presentations and breakout pods, attendees shared best practices, challenges, recruitment/retention needs and suggestions on adopting new norms associated with corporate culture.



1. OFFICE LIFE:

Address the physical work environment to allow for greater flexibility and ease in doing a variation of tasks. This includes creating work pods and building seamless technology to allow for remote, collaborative and individual work. Another important addition to life at the office is incorporating health and wellness rooms and exercise facilities.

2. FLEX SCHEDULE AND COMMUTING:

Companies aren't always able to quickly adopt remote working policies and oftentimes experience resistance from leadership. Options for employers include creating microhubs in neighborhoods throughout the city for shorter commutes, regional employee collaboration and to help reduce isolation from working remotely.

3. SKILLS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Create a culture of empowerment for employees to "drive the bus" to their development. Employees want a career plan and growth tracks as well as more internal transfer opportunities, job shadowing and reverse mentoring. Employers could show the cost assessment for upskilling and share the success stories. Employee retention and succession planning strategies are essential and employers should develop needs assessment toolkits on which skills are required for employment.

4. MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS:

Employers may consider providing mental health awareness training for managers and employees. Many wellness scheduling solutions are available, such as scheduling every fourth week off and offering "siesta" breaks. Other suggestions include holding happy hours in the office, providing on-site sleeping pods, wellness rooms and massages, as well as offering free support, counseling and medication.

5. WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION:

Look for creative ways to give time and benefits back to employees, such as providing an on-site grocery store, mandatory early dismissal weekly and using sick days for student loan payments. Offer the opportunity for employees to grade their organization on work-life balance and the company can use the outcome for salary treatment. Adjust the 40-hour work week and focus on project completion rather than designated work hours.

6. REVIEWS AND RECOGNITION:

Companies may allow employees to choose how they want to be recognized and offer unique benefits and incentives, such as: student loan matching similar to 401k matching, personal time off, job rotation programs, sabbaticals and onsite childcare. Employees prefer more frequent check-ins with their supervisors, especially Millennials and Gen Z, over annual reviews.

7. MISSION DRIVEN WORK:

Your consumers and your employees should know what your company's social mission is, which will increase their loyalty and personal value alignment to your company. Employers should focus on one prioritized effort with dedicated resources and engage a multi-disciplinary employee task force to determine what is in it for the employees. Tie integrated products and technology into your social mission and invite the impacted community members to share their story with your employees.