



# Employer's Advantage

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of interest:

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- ♦ *Getting & keeping your employees engaged*
- ♦ *Experts urge Companies to Look Inward For the Keys to 2009 Success*
- ♦ *Test your knowledge about workday attitudes*

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## How to Fly Safely Through Turbulence

CEOs these days must feel as if they are piloting a plane upside down and backwards through the perfect storm, where all things that can go wrong, do. Following the storm, comes a brief period of misleading calm before the chaos begins again. Everyone on board gets a wild, somersaulting ride and fears what lies ahead. For some organizations, holding on for dear life is all they can do to survive.

In today's economy, surviving the storm has become an organization's main priority. The uncertainty that makes quick changes necessary means organizations must rely on their well-trained employees to carry them through. Strong workers who come to work each day with enthusiasm, focus and creativity make for trusty copilots during times of economic turbulence. They can help navigate above, below or around obstacles while offering solutions that no one else has thought of to help calm everyone aboard.

But, as leaders prevail upon key players to do more with less manpower and fewer resources, we cannot just distribute assignments and walk away hoping they will figure out what to do. Keeping the company steady through tough times requires commitment from the top to stay on course. Now is not the time to abandon goals, ignore the problems, or adopt an "every person for himself" attitude.

Remember, nothing is more crucial than hiring competent people and helping them develop the skills necessary to help pilot the plane. Making sure your employees have the talent, skill and knowledge to make it through the storm is more important than ever. Here are some key things to do- in good times and bad.

- **If you are not operating under a hiring freeze, count your blessings.** Then treat every new hire as if he or she might be your last. Be sure managers take the important steps of recruiting potential candidates that fit the position and your company. Insist on tools that help recruiters ask the right questions during the job interview and help them make decisions based on science instead of guesswork.
- **Train new workers well, and do not neglect the old guard - the stalwarts who choose to stay with you even when the going gets rough.** Even in a good economy, everyone needs training. Specific training and everyday coaching helps retain workers and makes sure they are ready for current and future challenges. In a down economy, some might covet the training budget with an eye toward making the bottom line look healthier. Repeat this mantra: short-term pain, long-term gain.

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## Getting and keeping employees engaged .....

...is a challenging (and endless) process in organizations around the globe. Engaged employees don't accept satisfactory results. They are committed to and enthusiastic about their work, and in the overall objectives of the organization. Engaged employees feel a sense of connectivity with their employer and are more productive because they feel connected to and dedicated to the success of the company's mission.

The American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) recently published a study titled, "Learning's Role in Employee Engagement," where they discussed leveraging learning opportunities to optimize engagement. Nearly two-thirds of ASTD's survey respondents noted 'the quality of training and learning opportunities' as a factor positively influencing their engagement with their employer. The survey found that employees who recognized that their organization provided opportunities for advancement, with resources for learning and developing their career path, felt more engaged and connected to their organization of e m p l o y m e n t .

How do we ensure that our organizations provide a supportive learning culture to keep our employees engaged? The ASTD study suggests that highly engaged organizations are likely to have a number of influential practices at work:

- ✦ Peer coaching among employees
- ✦ Learning through stretch assignments
- ✦ Employee on boarding processes
- ✦ Communities of practice
- ✦ Informal learning opportunities

Highly engaged organizations leverage these communal learning opportunities, in addition to traditional development resources to provide an open culture of learning and career development. Link your learning objectives and practices with the performance management process at your organization. Providing your managers with the skills they need to engage their employees, and when you're designing your training curriculum and choosing content, technologies and platforms – keep engagement in mind.

Coaching is sometimes seen as something that only happens downwards – performed only by senior people with subordinates in the organization. But upwards and peer-to-peer coaching can be just as important. Your organization can demonstrate its ongoing commitment by ensuring that coaching is all-inclusive.

Here is a closer look at what upwards coaching and peer-to-peer coaching mean and with whom they take place:

- ✦ **Upwards coaching** – You are expected to coach people who are more senior or experienced than you. For example, you may be asked to coach or give feedback to a CEO or a director.
- ✦ **Peer-to-peer or sideways coaching** – You may get involved in coaching your coworkers, providing sideways coaching to people at the same level as you.

### Strategies for upwards and peer coaching

Because some people do not feel comfortable coaching their superiors or even their peers, it's not the norm in all organizations. If you plan to encourage upwards and peer-to-peer coaching in your organization, then you need to follow specific guidelines and set boundaries. There are specific strategies that you should adopt to encourage sideways and upwards coaching. You should:

- ✦ Determine how and when the coachee would like to receive feedback.
- ✦ Ask your coachee to define a specific focus – "Is there anything you'd like me to concentrate on?"
- ✦ Find out how you can best provide coaching when the coachee is stressed or preoccupied.

Providing upwards and peer-to-peer coaching can often feel inhibitive. Most people are nervous about telling people with more experience what they may be doing wrong, and coaching your peers is not always easy. But by following guidelines, you can ensure that your coaching is welcome and accepted. It is key to remember that everyone can profit from coaching, not just subordinates. Your peers, your manager, and even the CEO can benefit.

### Course Review: Trends in Coaching

#### Course Code

mgmt\_09\_a06\_bs\_enus

#### Media

e-Learning

#### Target Audience

All employees in a coaching and/or management role

#### Course Overview

When is a good time to coach? And what is the business case for coaching? Is coaching just another popular fad, or can organizations really benefit from it? Every coach should be aware of the strategic uses of coaching: the organizational benefits that are offered, how coaching can be used to help coachees deal with positive and negative change, and ways of coaching innovators and mavericks. What factors are important when coaching teams? It's true that many of the techniques that you use for individual coaching will be the same. But when coaching teams, you'll need to run an initial meeting, set boundaries, and deal with team tension. In order for coaching to improve the bottom line for your organization, you must display an ongoing commitment to coaching. Coaching works in all directions--consider upward and peer-to-peer coaching--which is one of the reasons it is so powerful. Total confidentiality and life coaching can also help to foster a long-term coaching strategy that leads to ultimate business success.

#### Expected Duration

2 hours, 30 minutes

## Jim's Course Review

*Trends in Coaching* is an engaging and interactive course that outlines today's best practices and trends in both one-on-one and team coaching scenarios. This course defines the different roles you'll need to take on in order to support your coachees, such as: teacher, listener, enabler, and taskmaster. *Trends in Coaching* will provide you with best practices for coaching through change, coaching for innovation and creativity, coaching different personalities, and coaching for your organizational culture.

*Trends in Coaching* is a great course for employees that are both new and veteran to the coaching role. This course outlines, in detail, various strategies for tackling difficult coaching situations in order to maximize workplace performance. *Trends in Coaching* outlines several key concepts for improving your coaching skills, and obtaining insight into which coaching style is most appropriate, given the situation and the culture of your organization. For example, in some scenarios, you may have to work as a change agent, helping those you coach to move through both positive and

negative organizational changes and transitions more easily. While some coaching scenarios require a softer more coaxing style, in some cultures and organizations a more direct and telling style might be preferred. Role-play scenarios and testing components are utilized throughout this course, making it a media-rich and engaging experience. *Trends in Coaching* is an excellent, thorough course that will provide your organization's coaches with new strategies for effective, performance-driving coaching sessions.

*Interested in learning more about the robust features and capabilities of your own online university? Take a look at our course catalogs or search by topic/title at: <http://www.automotivehr.com/toolbox.htm> click [View Detailed Course Descriptions](#)*

*and then call Jim toll free:*

**1.888.202.1112**

**"Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do" – John Wooden, coach**

## Experts Urge Companies To Look Inward For The Keys To 2009 Success

Hiring is an interesting process, susceptible to many pitfalls. Here are several hiring mistakes you'll want to avoid:

- 1.) Not being clear about what you're looking for. Before you begin the hiring process, you should have a "people strategy." In order to grow your company, will your strategy be to hire newbies and train them or will you need top-level, experienced professionals. Pre-screen your candidates so that you're not wasting your time in interviews that aren't appropriate.
- 2.) Failing to be prepared for the Interview. The biggest mistake employers make is that they talk too much during the interview and don't ask the right questions that will give them the information to make the best choice. If you're interviewing with a team, coach them as well. Ask good questions and then listen.
- 3.) Only using the interview to evaluate the candidate. It's a big mistake to think that one interview will give you what you need to make an informed decision. You'll also want to talk to references, spend some time in other scenarios with the candidate, check out their car (lots of trash or clean) and find out about their track record. People's behavior doesn't change that much, so watch for clues that are based on behavior, not just anecdotal information.



Developing an effective process is critical to the success of hiring the right people for your team. Call 1.888.202.1112 or email [jim@automotivehr.com](mailto:jim@automotivehr.com) to see how you can find the right people, increase the success of your hiring, cut down on turnover and make your company more successful.

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- **Do not assume anything about your employees.** Know them better than they know themselves. New tools are available to tell you exactly who is working for you – their competencies, their weaknesses and their goals. Do not decide that you can apply the same management style to everyone and get the same results. A multitude of different faces greet you when you walk into the department. They are likely to include four different generations, both genders, and different races and ethnicities. In the global marketplace, you will find variations even within identifiable groups. It is imperative that you learn what skills your employees have, the skills they are capable of acquiring and what it takes to keep them motivated.



- **Check the pulse of your key leaders.** Are they engaged? A recent study reveals that more than half of senior executives possess “less than ideal emotional connection and alignment” to their organizations. Are any of these your co-pilots? If so, re-coaching, and moving around employees is likely in your future, if you want to be assured of a future.

- **Have a plan and use it.** Do not fear adjusting it as necessary. Traveling through turbulence is much smoother and less alarming if you carefully map out your flight plan before you proceed, tweak the course as needed, and make sure you have a team of willing and able employees to make the necessary in-flight changes.

Now, buckle your seatbelts and prepare for takeoff. We may have a bumpy ride ahead.

## Oops, The Mistakes We all Make

Hiring is an interesting process, susceptible to many pitfalls. Here are several hiring mistakes you'll want to avoid:

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# AHR Helpline



## We have nothing to Fear but Fear itself!

Bob arrived at the store only to find his employees gathered around the coffee pot in a serious conversation. He approached and asked what was wrong and Sue, the front counter employee, said they were talking about the economic crises. "We are really worried," she said. "What if our customers stop buying? Will we lose our jobs? Or will the shop close?" Bob was surprised since after weeks of serious news about the economy, they hadn't noticed and downturn in business. In fact, it seemed they were busier than usual. "But," he thought, "bad times could be coming. What should I tell them?" He was tempted just to tell them to get back to work and quit worrying, but he had to admit, he was worried, too.

It is important for Bob not to ignore the concerns of his employees. Besides the obvious impact on productivity, his employee's stress levels could cause them to miss work due to illness. In addition employees who are distracted may have more workplace accidents. Sometimes people take on additional side jobs which can make them tired which can lead to injuries on the job or less productivity.

But Bob worries if he talks about business or his concerns he's just bringing attention to the issue and after all he doesn't know what will happen, he doesn't have a crystal ball!



In times of uncertainty it is best to deal with the concerns rather than try and sweep them under the rug. There are several things he can do that might help:

1. Provide information about the condition of the business even sharing some ideas of how the company has remained profitable.
2. Ask the employees how they think everyone can work together to either make more money or better yet ways to save money.
3. Point to how standing around and talking about their fears may have some value but spending too much time takes away from work time. If customers have to wait for service, they may go somewhere else for the products or services.
4. Try and assure the employees that he will do every-

thing he can to keep the company healthy and profitable so that no one loses his or her job. He should focus on the short term since no one knows what will happen in the long term.

5. Plan times to meet and talk about business and for employees to ask questions. People feel better if they are given honest feedback and a chance to address their concerns.

6. Look for local programs offered by public service providers on how to deal with stress or financial difficulties and financial planning. If he has health insurance the company may provide programs or the local YMCA may have programs that are inexpensive.

7. Provide or support stress relief programs or exercise programs that help relieve stress or encourage healthy eating.

Talk about ways to save money at home like recycling things or shopping at sales or flea markets.

### If the Worst Does Happen

If Bob finds himself in a situation eventually where he has to lay people off, it is important that he give lots of thought to how he should proceed. If he has done a good job in cross-training employees, he may be able to ask for volunteers for layoff or for shortened work weeks versus laying someone off.

If he must do layoffs he should communicate openly and honestly about the situation and make it clear that he has no choice due to business conditions. Having information on hand about how to file for unemployment and even possible leads for jobs helps people leave with less anger. A calm parting is best for everyone. He should also avoid any potential discrimination issues by making the layoffs consistent with some objective criteria, like length of service, laying off newer employees first, etc.

### The Future is Uncertain

No one knows what the future will bring, but looking back to bad times we have faced in the US, like those during which the title of this article refers, we can see that people are resilient. Sitting back and being afraid never seems to solve the problems we face.

Keep communication open and as honest as you can and you can keep your employees working and doing their best as we join together to face the economic crises.

--Phyllis G. Hartman, SPHR

## POP QUIZ: Test Your Knowledge about Workday Attitudes

**Employers, how much do you know about your employees?** Test your knowledge here. Circle an answer for each question. Answers appear below each set of questions:

**1. What is the most important factor keeping your employees in their jobs right now?**

- a. Pay and health insurance
- b. Satisfaction with work
- c. Job security
- d. Satisfaction with co-workers

**2. What do employees want most from their jobs?**

- a. Feeling valued
- b. Less stress
- c. Being part of a team
- d. Shared vision and values

**3. What percentage of employees say they plan to stay in their job for the next year?**

- a. 50 percent
- b. 20 percent
- c. 80 percent
- d. 60 percent

**4. Half of employees are satisfied with the number of hours they work.**

- True
- False

**5. More than half of employees believe this is a good time to take on extra work on the job.**

- True
- False

**Employees, how well do you know your manager?** Test your knowledge here. Circle an answer for each question:

**1. What percentage of employers plan to stay in their jobs the next 12 months?**

- a. 65 percent
- b. 75 percent
- c. 60 percent
- d. 45 percent

**2. Which one of these things are employers most satisfied with at work?**

- a. Compensation
- b. Flexible hours
- c. Amount of work
- d. Opportunity to learn new things

**3. Employers believe fair compensation of employees is more important to employees than surveys indicate.**

- True
- False

**4. Employees and employers are equally satisfied with the number of hours they work.**

- True
- False

**ANSWERS** courtesy of Randstad's World of Work Survey 2008

- 1. c
- 2. a
- 3. d
- 4. True
- 5. True (in fact, 68% of employees believe this)

**ANSWERS** for 1, 2 and 4, courtesy of Randstad's World of Work Survey 2008; answers for 3, courtesy of salary.com

- 1. a
- 2. d
- 3. True
- 4. True

Wishing you a New Year filled with happiness & prosperity!