

Workplace themes to embrace in 2017

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Saturday, being the last day of the year, when all things seem possible and the opportunities endless.

Many of us will be making career decisions for the next year, including where to work, how to work and how your work integrates with your life plans. To help you, here are trends some workplace experts expect to see in 2017 and concepts we look forward to leaving behind in 2016.

Move from commitment to passion

Passion has been a buzzword in workplace discussions for several years now, starting out with the publication of Paul Atof's book, *Passion Capital*, in 2012. As companies become more comfortable with the word, its value is slowly infiltrating corporate ranks.

The need for passion can't come soon enough, according to Brady Wilson, founding partner of Juice Inc., a training organization in Guelph, Ont., who notes that companies are seeing more employees "engaged but exhausted, dedicated but depleted."

To combat this, organizations are teaching employees resilience, such as how to bounce back from a restructuring where you lose your favourite colleagues or experience an ill-fitting merger. Ways in which companies infuse passion back into their employees, Mr. Wilson observes, include giving them the opportunity to take risks and making their work so meaningful that they lose track of time.

Change your concept of success

Right now, the default answer to "How are things?" is inevitably "I'm busy," says Katie Miller, managing director of Impact Hub Ottawa, which offers a collaborative workplace and learning environment for 250 entrepreneurs.

"It is a point of pride we mistake as a synonym for achievement or purpose."

That concept must change, she argues, and companies with a continued focus on building workplace cultures bent on finding meaning will discuss that their employees will not only redefine their own concept of success, but will stop using "busyness" as a barometer that all is good at work.

Reimagine your workspace

One hot trend we expect to continue is the rise of shared and on-demand workspaces.

New York-based Breather, a company that offers on-demand work space, just raised an additional \$40-million (U.S.) to expand its services to new cities. Given freelance work trends, there is no expectation that this demand for flexible workspaces will end anytime soon.

"We expect to see shared workspaces continue to grow in popularity with an ever-increasing number of organizations downsizing their office space and shifting to mobile and remote workers as a result of our work moving online," Ms. Miller said.

However, for companies with permanent staff, she cautions against blindly embracing shared work environments, which has not been proven to increase productivity in comparison to closed offices. Rather, she encourages employers to let employees out of the office more and interact with those they would normally not meet.

"(Employers) will be surprised how much productivity can increase. New connections and interactions can bring new ideas, business and collaboration opportunities, and there's often insights that can come from learning how different sectors approach challenges similar to yours," Ms. Miller said.

Reconsider your employee's life cycle

It used to be the case that an employee would decide to leave one day and, after the exit interview, the tie between employer and employees was severed.

But with employees changing jobs more frequently, companies are increasingly looking to tap into their former employees when looking for new hires and contract workers.

"We are already seeing more of our clients turning to Alumni Programs to remain connected with employees that have left their company," said Lisa Taylor, president of Challenge Factory and author of the upcoming book, *Retain and Gain: Career Management for Small Business*, who observed that companies now see a "lifetime value" from even short-term employment relationships.

Words and phrases to leave behind in 2016:

With any New Year, most of us making resolutions not only want to aspire to new goals but also to get rid of the detritus that psychologically holds us back.

Mr. Wilson hopes the term "disruptive" is among those things that don't make it into the New Year. He's not alone. The Guardian has also made a plea to kill this meaningless buzzword beloved by Silicon Valley. Then again, Forbes and New York magazine has made these entreaties in the past with little success.

Meanwhile, Ms. Taylor hopes the phrases to go will be "our people are our greatest asset," calling it "outdated and wrong."

"It sets companies and employees up for failure. People are not assets. Assets are acquired at a value, depreciated over time as they are used and then written off at the end of their useful life," she says.

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