



# HR EVOLUTION

## Tackling Today's Top Topics

By Rebecca Patrick

Five years isn't that long in the grand scheme. Yet, it's really a matter of perspective.

That time span may seem like another lifetime ago for those involved in human resources. Changes rooted in showing more respect to employees, as well as what is no longer tolerated, have reshaped the industry.

To provide a flavor of what's going on in the modern HR world in Indiana are:

- Brian McDermott, office managing principal, Jackson Lewis P.C. (Indianapolis), at [www.jacksonlewis.com](http://www.jacksonlewis.com)
- Tim O'Malley, human resource manager, FileWave (USA), Inc. (Indianapolis), at [www.filewave.com](http://www.filewave.com)
- Cara Silletto, president and chief retention officer, Crescendo Strategies (Jeffersonville), at [www.crescendostrategies.com](http://www.crescendostrategies.com)
- Pam Warmoth, human resources coordinator, Boone REMC (Lebanon), at [www.bremc.com](http://www.bremc.com)

### Quick takes

McDermott, a labor employment attorney, comes at the recent trends from a compliance standpoint, whether it's

counseling employers before something happens or in litigation after it takes place.

The #MeToo movement immediately springs to his mind.

"We see the headlines of the big-name celebrities or high-level executives, but it's also trickled down into normal, good companies like the ones in Indiana as well. So that's forced people to recognize that it's a problem. It's forced employers to look at their policies and really up their game in training employees," he says.

"The second area is pay equity. It's a huge issue, trying to make sure that we're paying employees fair wages, but more importantly in a nondiscriminatory way – whether it's male or female or majority versus minority employees."

Both O'Malley and Warmoth cite the recruiting rush.

"The shift from employers having their choice of candidates versus, at this point, where it's the employee's market ... just being attractive (as a company) to the talent that is out there is the tallest task," O'Malley reports.

"I would say 60, 70% of my time right now is going to be spent on recruiting. ... Probably a couple of years back, that number was 40%."

Warmoth shakes her head in complete agreement and adds, "For instance, even being involved in job fairs and that kind of thing, that was not anything we had to do before."

Silletto encourages her clients to

illustrate the turnover problem by looking beyond the annual occurrence and examining the last five years.

"What every one of them finds is that the length of tenure for new hires is getting shorter and shorter every year, and that that is really where the problem lies – with the revolving door that's getting faster and faster, and it's putting more work on the (HR professional's) plate."

She links the trend to a "different employer-employee relationship" that exists today.

"(Increasingly), there are two buckets (of employees). There are those that have been there forever. They have all these great benefits and the pension for long-term employment. But those under 35 don't ever think they will see pension dollars, even if it's promised."

### Social connections

Whether it's using Twitter, Facebook or other platforms to promote an organization or making sure employees aren't doing anything on their own accounts that will reflect poorly, social media has become a real factor for the HR professional and companies.

Being proactive and not reactive is what Silletto preaches, but acknowledges the latter is where she most often gets inquiries.

"How do I respond to somebody on Glassdoor that bashed us and they were just disgruntled? They said things that weren't even true about us.' ... But it's really understanding the capabilities that social



“What I’m seeing is the more successful organizations and the more successful leaders are shifting from visibility at the office, at your desk, does not equal productivity any longer, and they are shifting over to results-oriented leadership and organizational expectations.”

– Cara Silletto

media brings to you and the value that it can bring if you stay ahead of it, versus treating it in a reactionary situation.”

Warmoth notes, “For us, it’s been especially helpful in educating about what’s an electric cooperative, so we’ve used social media for that benefit.”

On the legal side, McDermott outlines a possible scenario with a supervisor who is on her best behavior in the workplace and with her professional communications, but strays from that approach on her own time.

“She makes an off-color joke or comment on Facebook. Then, she ends up terminating somebody at work; they know about this comment out there and it ends up in the workplace anyway.

“I see harassment, discrimination issues, confidentiality issues. People will put things on Facebook or other social media outlets that they shouldn’t from a confidential standpoint. Defamation claims have increased as well over the years for social media.”

Companies are also turning to social media for an HR advantage.

“(It can be) for discipline of employees when they’re off on a leave of absence, for instance, but yet they’re posting on Facebook they’re down in Cancun having a good time,” McDermott explains. “There are a lot of cases like that out there where employers have searched that social media to their benefit.”

The forum also has its place in the hiring process – to learn more about a possible candidate, positively or negatively – acknowledges O’Malley.

“Because of the labor market and where it’s at from a recruiting standpoint, you’re doing yourself a disservice if you don’t use it and every avenue possible.”

Studies have been done that repeatedly show that employees are going to be online at work, whether it’s social media or browsing the web.

“(Most) companies don’t care if you’re shopping on Cyber Monday to get the best deals as long as you’re still going to get your job done that week,” Silletto offers.

“You just need to limit yourself. Don’t go down the rabbit hole for an hour and a half.”

Warmoth says her cooperative tends to put the focus on results.

“If our employees are getting their work done, it’s fine. Though sometimes I am concerned about an hourly employee that’s in the break room at lunch and they’re answering email on their lunch break, or in the evening or on the weekend. So, I’m always trying to make sure that we’re not crossing a line that way (because of the policy being too lenient).”

McDermott responds, “Most companies recognize the dichotomy between salaried exempt and hourly. They’re going to put more restrictions on hourly just because the risks are so significant. You could have a class or collective action for working off the clock, and it really cost the company a lot of money.”

### Diversity and inclusion

First, the “great thing” about the topic.

“What we have going for us now is that the younger workforce only sees a lack of diversity versus not wanting diversity,” Silletto declares. “They will notice when it is a whole room of white people. So that’s going to change things, as more of the folks that are under 40 get into more of these leadership positions, more of the hiring positions.”

Most of her clients, she says, equate race, gender, ethnicity and LGBTQ with diversity, but it can also be age/generational or diversity of mindset between someone from a rural area as opposed to a city.

“And I believe today, when we talk about inclusion, that we really need to do a lot more training on tolerance and seeing others’ perspectives. Whether they look like

you or don’t look like you, or sound like you or don’t sound like you, that inclusion is really just about being curious instead of being critical.

“There’s so much judgment in today’s workplace. If you don’t dress the way I do and come in at the time I come in and work the way I do, you’re not doing it right. So, to me, there’s a lot more training needs in that space for building empathy, building tolerance, understanding and being able to see both sides of any spectrum of diversity that would exist,” Silletto concludes.

O’Malley chimes in: “To your point, in terms of ongoing training on unconscious bias, I think that will be very helpful going forward.”

McDermott sees much momentum in this area.

“It’s not only the right thing to do, to support D and I (diversity and inclusion), but also it’s good for business. Clients want to see that you’re tolerant, that you’re treating people fairly, that you’re like them. ... I



“Things only change if we know about them. That’s the piece of (harassment) I tend to harp on when I’m going through training. Treat people the way that you want to be treated, but if you’re not being treated that way, you need to please be comfortable and come forward and let us know, with the faith that it’s going to be handled appropriately.”

– Tim O’Malley



“I want to share what our history is because to me that’s value, and the more value you can put in your occupation hopefully the happier employees will be. So being that historian, being that storyteller and getting them excited about it too, that’s really important.”

– Pam Warmoth

think that’s why you see good companies having roles like the chief diversity officer and creating important roles within the organization so that that initiative can have (greater) impact.”

### **Burnout and work-life balance**

They are opposite sides of the same coin, but where do we stand in 2019?

“Many years back I think that the badge of honor was the number of hours that you put in. So, burning the midnight oil was something you did proud and right. But it’s come to a head,” O’Malley asserts. “Maybe (it was) Gen Xers seeing millennials dig in their heels against it, (and wonder), ‘Well, why the hell am I doing it?’ ”

Silletto concurs and contends, “If we are honest, we would look back and admit that we put too much work on a lot of salaried workers’ plates over the last 10 to 20 years and that Generation X got the raw end of that deal.

“Baby boomers told the Gen Xers you stay until the job gets done, and you’re great so I’m going to give you more. You’re great, I can count on you, so I’m going to need you to finish this extra thing,” she describes.

“(Now) Gen Xers have had enough and the millennials who watched it say it’s not going to happen to me, plus baby boomers want to slow down a little bit. So, everyone is starting to push back and say, ‘I’m not going to work somewhere that does not let me go home for my kid’s game if I need to leave at 4:30 or 5:00, or even just at the end of my shift.’ ”

O’Malley stresses employees need to be able to speak candidly with their manager (and HR) about their workload.

“If there is too much on their plate, how to prioritize some of the tasks – projects that they have in front of them ... so that the work doesn’t suffer, so the employee doesn’t suffer. Otherwise, no one is any good if they are losing sleep, sick, calling in and all of the things that become symptomatic of burnout.”

In tandem with workers having these shifts in mindset, achieving a work-life balance became paramount. It must remain a high priority for employers and something they continue to cultivate, says the panel.

That said, it can be challenging for small businesses to deliver on.

“From (their) standpoint, it’s still a concerted effort to find solutions that are mutually beneficial,” O’Malley remarks. “I would say (work-life balance) is commonplace to the point that I think employees expect it, understandably so. And, employers certainly want to provide it, understandably so. It’s just a matter of resources.”

Overall, McDermott believes that employers are looking for ways to accommodate, but they’re “somewhat hamstrung by the service that they provide.”

It’s about looking for opportunities for what you can do as an employer versus what you can’t, according to Warmoth.

“Is there an opportunity where we can provide more time away, paid time away, that may offset where we can’t make a certain accommodation (elsewhere)?”

### **Winning mentality**

McDermott has noticed that the HR professionals who succeed in their work are the ones “who really get to know the business and also where that business fits within the industry. If you get that background, you can actually provide more value (to the company) as an HR professional.”

For O’Malley, the connections are what stand out.

“I do take a personal stake with everyone. I want to see them happy with their role, growing with their role,” he begins. “To the point that – and, again, it’s been an

experience with smaller organizations – if you outgrow us and you’re ready for the next step, take the experience and the knowledge that we have given you and Godspeed.

“If things open up and you want to come back, absolutely. ... They can become your (company’s) champion on the outside.”

Silletto, a speaker and trainer, relishes the impact she’s able to have as a storyteller.

“Just tapping into the emotions of today’s leaders and explaining to them why the new workforce is so different than the traditional mindset that we had for many years,” she shares.

“It’s very powerful for me when I have a more traditional or old school kind of leader that comes up after a program and says, ‘You know, I always thought it was ridiculous that people told me to thank my staff for showing up, because that’s why they get a paycheck ... I shouldn’t have to award them for mediocrity.’ But they say, ‘Today you changed my mind. I realize that I am truly grateful for the people who show up and do their job well, and I’m going to start thanking my people more.’ ”



“I’ve seen a lot more state legislative activity and enforcement (of the labor policies) across the board. Employers that have operations in multiple states really have to stay up on top of all these changing landscapes, and that can be a daunting task.”

– Brian McDermott