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Beyond Inclusion: Looking in the D&I Crystal Ball

As we close out Black History Month for 2021, it's worth noting that the scope of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has expanded and evolved over the years alongside changes in how companies function, how teams are managed, how employees set their expectations for work. Every year we anticipate trends that we expect within the field of DEI. However, I don't believe anyone could have pictured a year like 2020. DEI professionals must focus their attention on people management to continue providing engaging and exceptional work experiences for their people.

This is more important now than it ever has been before. After a year of the public witnessing social injustice while amid a pandemic, companies have been put in many different situations where they have needed more assistance from their HR departments. So, what should we expect from HR in 2021?

Here are five trends we can anticipate for HR in 2021:

1. Companies Will Need to Enforce or Build a Teamwork structure during Remote

Some employees may feel disconnected since adapting to a remote environment. The chief diversity officer's (CDO) responsibility is to guide the company on engaging employees and providing employee collaboration methods. Companies could use virtual job shadowing over Zoom or participate in a rotating online buddy system that helps people connect and stay engaged. By informing your team of these, reminding employees that they are not simply working in a vacuum alone at their desks. They are part of a greater team.

2. Remote Hiring and Recruitment Practices Will Gain Momentum

Companies have seen the benefit in a remote environment, and some have even decided to remain remote regardless of cities and states reopening after the start of COVID-19. Even for some companies that will return to an in-person work environment, the use of remote interviewing may be a continued practice. Given its convenience and ability to be used on short notice, this provides more freedom and availability for recruiting and hiring managers. This also minimizes unnecessary contact with everyone who may be in the office.

3. Finding the Balance: How to maintain a work-life balance in a remote work environment.



Companies have found themselves prioritizing workers' physical and mental well-being as a matter of survival, protecting their health, and alleviating their stress became critical to operations. In a remote work environment, work and life are somewhat inseparable. Conversations about the toll of social isolation and economic recession on workers' mental and emotional health have entered HR dialogue. Keeping workers physically healthy and safe has continued to be a top priority since the start of the pandemic.

4. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Training Will Continue to be a Priority for Companies

After a year like 2020 with social injustice being displayed all over the media, everyone from all races, cultures, and ethnicity were outraged by what they witnessed. As a result, some individuals even educated themselves on microaggression subjects to better understand how to avoid using them. Diversity, equity, and inclusion in business can bring underrepresented thoughts and experiences to the table, inspiring increased creativity and innovation within teams. The CDO must lead companies in diversity, equity, and inclusion even more now and with the intention of it being a continuous practice. CDOs will need to determine their business goals and what resources they will need to achieve them.

5. Businesses Will Adjust Their Time-Off Policies According to Government Guidance

As we have witnessed the many changes regarding the Family First Coronavirus Act, we have recognized that we need to stay informed to inform our employees. We may not have control over the stipulations of employment law. However, by keeping your employees in the loop, you will build trust through transparency.

DEI trends are ever-changing and evolving, yet they help DEI professionals predict changes and make the required alterations to their business model. Employees should get support to behave responsibly, take the initiative, work independently, and respond quickly to changes in business conditions. Through effective implementation, the DEI professionals can thrive while helping the company achieve all business goals.