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CHRO insights

PwC Pulse Survey—September 15, 2020 findings

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CHROs focus on employee anxiety as a key to recovery

As the US heads into the final stretch of the election season, chief human resource officers (CHROs) are worried about anxiety and burnout among their employees. Election years often take a toll on the workforce, heightening tensions and anxieties that can affect people's ability to focus and be productive. But this year's election comes on top of a slew of stressors people are already grappling with, including the pandemic, a summer of social unrest, fears of layoffs, the always-on nature of virtual work and anxiety over returning to the office. More than half of CHROs (51%) identified employee anxiety and burnout as a top challenge for their business when delivering on their company's workforce priorities.

Human resource leaders know keeping the workforce productive and focused is critical to their organization's recovery. This urgency has spurred companies to explore a range of tactics to help employees manage their stress, from revamping benefits to ramping up mental health support. In addition, they're giving new attention to diversity and inclusion in response to increasing calls from stakeholders for racial equity and corporate transparency on diversity.

51% of CHROs identified employee anxiety and burnout as a top challenge

Top findings

Seventy-five human capital leaders from F1000 and private companies, along with other C-suite executives, weighed in on this and other policy-related issues in our latest PwC Pulse Survey, fielded August 28, 2020, to September 3, 2020. Find these insights in our Road to Election 2020 report. In the ongoing survey, CHROs also shared their perspectives on other top-of-mind issues, including addressing employee anxiety and burnout, developing a strong company culture in a virtual world, and investing in metrics around diversity.

Developing a strong company culture in a virtual world

With many companies marking six months since their teams started working remotely, HR leaders are worried about their corporate culture. Forty-one percent are concerned about their organization's culture weakening in a virtual world.

Concerns over culture have prompted some companies to bring people back to the worksite, citing the benefits of in-person interactions on work—especially for early talent—and on people's mental health.

But other organizations, including many large tech companies, are choosing to keep their people remote until next summer. If this is the case for your company, now is the time to double-down on everything you've learned about working remotely so far. A strong sense of connection is core to a company's culture, so assessing what your team needs to better connect, collaborate and feel like they're part of a community is a strong first step.

Which of the following pose the biggest challenges for your business when delivering on your company's workforce priorities?

Highest-ranked choices for CHROs from a list of 9 options.
Source: PwC Pulse Survey
September 3, 2020: CHRO base of 75

Adding new options for employees to manage stress

Health and safety continues to be a top priority for CHROs, with 60% saying they plan to increase their focus on workplace safety in the next 12 months. But they're also ramping up support for mental health, recognizing the strain employees are feeling now. Sixty percent of CHROs say they plan to increase support for well-being and mental health for their workforce during the next year.

Which of the following workforce initiatives is your company planning to implement over the next 12 months?

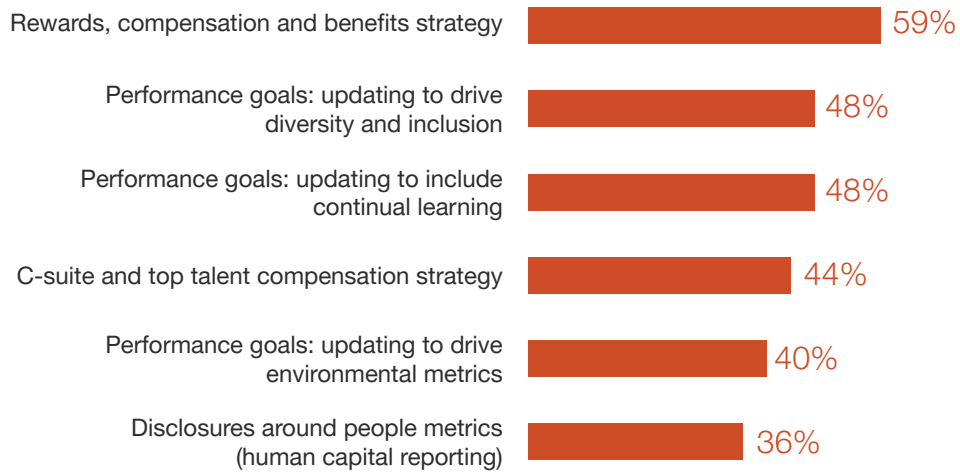
Highest-ranked choices for CHROs from a list of 11 options.
Source: PwC Pulse Survey
September 3, 2020: CHRO base of 75

Redesigning benefits to fit employees' changing needs

Many CHROs are taking a fresh look at employee benefits as the pandemic continues to alter the kinds of support people need. More than half (59%) are offering new benefits to employees as a result of the pandemic and global recession, such as reduced hours, caregiver support and a temporary leave of absence. The same percentage of CHROs (59%) are also planning to change their rewards, compensation and benefits strategy.

Given the wide range of unique challenges people are facing now, it's critical to involve employees when making decisions about benefits. Work individually with employees to address their particular needs, like offering parents a more flexible schedule to accommodate homeschooling or giving people who are wary of returning to the office the option to continue working remotely. Consider using pulse surveys and listening tours to gain a clearer understanding of what can help employees the most.

As a result of the global pandemic and recession, which of the following is your company planning to change?



Highest-ranked choices for CHROs from a list of 8 options.
Source: PwC Pulse Survey
September 3, 2020: CHRO base of 75

Investing in metrics around diversity

The spotlight on racial equality and new SEC disclosure requirements around workplace resources, measures and objectives have CHROs focused on diversity and inclusion. Almost half (48%) are updating their performance goals to drive diversity and inclusion, while 36% say they're planning to change their disclosures around their human capital reporting.

48% of CHROs are updating their performance goals to drive diversity and inclusion

Latest findings: Road to election 2020

No matter who occupies the White House next, business leaders must anticipate what policy and regulatory shifts will mean. The election focuses on big issues, such as economic stability, the role of government programs in driving economic recovery, and responsibility of business in creating domestic jobs and championing diversity and inclusion. See what's top of mind and keep up with perspectives on how your company can be more agile and responsive to whatever comes next.

Learn more

Current and past surveys

PwC Pulse—September 2020

Workforce Pulse—July 2020

CFO Pulse—June 2020

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