



IDEAS AND INFORMATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

DESIGN THINKING

Solving Problems—While Increasing Employee Satisfaction

“Design thinking” is a fairly common term. Even if the phrase is new to you, it’s reasonably easy to intuit how it works: design thinking is a process for creative problem solving, utilizing creative tools like empathy and experimentation, often with a strong visual component. The term dates from 1968 and was first used in *The Sciences of The Artificial*, a text written by Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon.

For Simon, design thinking involved seven components, but today it’s usually distilled to five: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test. In this way, creative tools are employed to serve individuals in a group, with a solution-driven focus. It’s important to note that these components are not necessarily sequential. Rather, they are specific modes, each with specific tools that contribute equally to solving an issue.

Most significantly, as Steve Boese of *HR Executive* noted in a recent column, design thinking is a rising trend in HR leadership. [“Those using this strategy,” he says, “challenge existing assumptions and approaches to solving a problem, and ask questions to identify alternative solutions that might not be readily apparent.”](#) Design thinking helps teams make decisions that include employees in meaningful ways, personalize target metrics, work outside the box, and produce concrete solutions. Even teams with established, productive structures use design thinking in the review process, or to test out expanded options.

Boese says that the key shift design thinking offers any team is the opportunity to troubleshoot solutions *before* they’re put into real-time practice. The main goal of design thinking is not process completion, low error rates, or output reports, as with other forms of HR technology, but employee satisfaction and engagement. More often than not, this leads to increased morale and even more opportunities for success.

Read: [“Graduates from d.tech Show the Life-Changing Potential of Design Thinking”](#).

Read: [“Design Thinking for Doctors and Nurses”](#).

WOMEN’S ISSUES IN CORPORATE AMERICA

A Real-Time Action Plan for Increased Revenue

[As HR Technologist reported recently, current best-in-class companies know that the rising talent pool is composed of millennials, people of color, and women](#), and so they are already working in concrete ways to leverage this shifting workforce. One crucial factor is making sure that this work is centered: an integral and shared component of marketing, sales, and operations, as opposed to an outsourced diversity group.

In other words, says Jeffery Tobias Halter, President of YWomen, if your Operating Unit Business Presidents can't articulate to you, in real dollar terms, the value of your company's women's leadership strategy, something needs to change. According to Halter, there are three specific business reasons to implement an integrated women's leadership strategy: women help grow revenue, women improve operating profits, and women enhance company reputation. This is a real-time action plan, says Halter, and it significantly benefits companies for decades to come. In other words, engaging women isn't "just a nice thing to do."

Furthermore, these techniques and principles will strengthen other shifting areas in the workplace. Identities are complex and intertwined, and so a conversation about one specific aspect of diversity and inclusion will benefit other aspects too. Indeed, many underserved employees of all kinds find themselves code-switching, doing extra emotional labor, or at a loss for mentors, meaning that eventually everyone is operating at a deficit. Strong, forward-thinking companies, and HR departments in particular, will address these issues now for a stronger, more effective workplace over time.

Read: ["How Black Women Describe Navigating Race and Gender in the Workplace"](#).

Read: ["Cracks in Diversity Initiatives Widening Gender Chasm"](#).

MANAGING MILLENNIALS

Leveraging Generational Factors for Overall Success

Millennials, commonly but not exclusively defined as people born between 1981 and 1996, occupy a complicated space in today's workplace—predominantly because they're the youngest generation in it. While many consider this group "ambitious" and "tech-savvy," others understand it to be "whiney," "distracted," or "entitled." As with any stereotype, this is a flat, un-nuanced version of a partial truth. [The most important thing to remember, says Brad Karsh, CEO and founder of JBTraining Solutions, is that each generation in the workforce—from Boomers to Millennials—has been shaped by their upbringing.](#)

For example, says Karsh, many millennials grew up with working parents, the privileges of after-school activities and clubs, and constant individual mentoring. In a work environment, this translates to a desire to be told what to do, to be monitored while doing it, and then to receive praise for doing everything successfully. While not every work environment is able to supply such a structure, for any number of good reasons, it's important to remember that the desire for it is rooted in generational factors, not necessarily selfishness or weakness.

A solid compromise, offers Karsh, is to provide concrete explanations from the start, so that millennials always have a structure to return to when they desire it. At the same time, it is best practice to "ween them off structure," for example, reminding them that a supervisor might not check in every day, and that this isn't a bad sign. Often, he says, millennials respond well to direct communication. Of course, everyone is an individual no matter their generation, and over time, most new structures can be learned and put to effective use. Other best practices that have proved effective for millennials are future-focused credentials, real time conversations, and microlearning.

Read: [“Don’t Blame Tech Industry Turnover on Millennials in the Workforce”](#).

Read: [“How EY Has Cultivated a Culture of High Performing Millennials”](#).

IN BRIEF

Tools to Support Working Parents

Today, balancing career and family is no longer a women-only issue. [Employed parents of all genders say their primary concern is not having enough time for their children](#). While every family is different, employers can still take an active role in supporting working parents ([sometimes, their teenagers too](#)).

Rising trends include onsite childcare, dependent care flexible spending accounts, fixed alternative hours, [paid family leave policies](#), on-site amenities like gyms or banks, mental wellness, college savings assistance, and even laundry services. Just as there is no one kind of family, there is no one solution, but there are plenty of resources and tools.

EMPLOYER WEBINAR

What Employers Need to Know About the DOL's Association Health Plans Final Rule

Tuesday, August 14, 2018
2:00 p.m. ET / 11 a.m. P.T.

This webinar will provide an overview of the U.S. Department of Labor's association health plans final rule and explain how small employers and certain self-employed individuals may join an association health plan (AHP).

This webinar will:

- Provide an overview of the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL's) association health plans [final rule](#).
- Discuss the pre-rule definition of "employer" and pre-rule guidance on association health plans.
- Describe how the association health plans final rule is different than pre-rule guidance.
- Discuss the challenges and potential solutions to forming a self-funded association health plan.
- Explain how states currently regulate association health plans and discuss how states may continue to regulate associations health plans, in light of the final rule.
- Discuss successful models of association health plans.
- Discuss how brokers can assist employers in joining or creating association health plans.

This 60-minute intermediate level webinar will help employers understand the advantages to joining an association health plan under the final rules.

Registration

[Register here for the webinar](#). The presentation will be posted on the [UBA website](#) the afternoon before the webinar.

About the Presenter

[Lorie Maring](#) is Of Counsel in the Atlanta, Georgia, office of Fisher Phillips. She focuses her practice on helping employers navigate Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and other state and federal laws impacting the design, implementation and ongoing compliance of their employee benefit plans and programs.

She regularly advises clients on the Affordable Care Act, health and welfare benefits, qualified plans, executive compensation, Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs) and multiemployer plan issues.

Lorie also represents employers in managing Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Department of Labor (DOL) audits, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliance and fiduciary obligations. She serves clients in the public and private sector, including non-profit organizations and trade associations.

Certification

This webinar has been submitted to the [Human Resource Certification Institute](#) and the [Society for Human Resource Management](#) to qualify for 1 recertification credit hour.