



**KEY CHANNEL PARTNER
OF THE MONTH**

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**OCTOBER
Economic Outlook:**

One Number Can't Tell You Everything

Quick Takeaways:

- **Point-in-time numbers reflect just that**—a point in time. A short-term dip or peak may not indicate a long-term trajectory. Give any new data some time before it influences your decisions.
- **Resiliency and flexibility are hard.** We're all craving a breather. Take stock in the last quarter of the year and, if you can, celebrate your successes both big and small.

Connections & Comparisons Matter.

If you feel that things are moving in the right direction, that you're able to pay your bills, and your job is stable, you're probably OK going out to eat, booking a vacation, or buying stuff that isn't strictly a necessity. That, in turn, enables restaurants, stores, and service companies to maintain or boost their workforces. Which then enables those employees to pay their bills and buy their own extra stuff.

We watched that happen in real time this summer. COVID-19 cases dropped. People got vaccinated and gathered for long-delayed weddings and barbecues and parties. Spending and hiring ratcheted up. And then life got bumpy again. Cases jumped. Those sunny headlines have, in some cases, turned gloomy. But, in general, things aren't as bad as they were a year ago, and we don't know what will happen next. Which is why comparisons matter.

The stock market is pretty ... weird right now.

The Dow Jones and S&P have both been setting records in 2021, with overall trajectories that, for the most part, keep going up. Is it the calm before the storm? History says, maybe. The challenge for you, as an individual investor, is unwarranted exuberance (or pessimism) which leads to quick decisions that may be costly in the long term.

The supply chain will keep sticking. You'll keep adapting.

Generally when we talk about supply chains, we're talking about goods—those scarce semi-conductors that have slowed vehicle assembly lines, for example. But we're in a strange time when supply chain pressures aren't just

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about goods, but also about people. There are workforce shortages everywhere. The supply chain stickiness isn't likely to resolve itself anytime soon, especially as different parts of the globe experience different points in their pandemic recovery. Clothing retailers, for example, are pulling forward deliveries to help accommodate holiday sales. Restaurants are trimming hours until they can staff up. If you're like many Americans, you may have boosted toilet paper supplies and savings. answer says Winston.

"We're all antsy. We want to be done with this and turn the page. It's taken a big psychological toll."

- Heather Winston

principal.com

DE&I Without Cancel Culture

Recently an HR director told me about resistance she experienced from a senior executive toward the company's new diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) initiative. The executive made comments disparaging the new practice of adding gender pronouns to employees' e-mail signature blocks.

I suggested that the executive's comments created an opportunity for a one-on-one conversation. "Rather than trying to pressure him or avoid him," I said, "explore with him why he feels the way he does. What's the source of his concern? Why does he feel the way he feels? What are his overall thoughts about the DE&I program?" By engaging with him, I explained, the HR director might learn ways to connect. "If nothing else, he'll at least know that HR is willing to listen and try to understand differing viewpoints."

Often in circumstances where someone voices opposition to a DE&I initiative, the reaction is hostility, rejection or avoidance. The operating assumption is that there's something wrong with the person who voiced the opposition. He or she is the problem, the obstacle, and some may call for the person to be "canceled." These negative assessments and the negative feelings and emotions they generate will undermine the overall DE&I initiative. The negativity translates into resistance, passive or otherwise. In the end, you may have diversity. But you won't have inclusion.

Alexander Alonso, Ph.D., SHRM-SCP, SHRM's chief knowledge officer, describes this problem as "diss-versity." Simply put, he explained, "this refers to seeking people who look different from you but believe in the same things."

Alonso cites research showing that 1 in 5 people reported being excluded or pushed out of their organizations because of their beliefs. He said DE&I initiatives that practice diss-versity undercut their organizations. "Dissing diversity of thought results in two key disadvantages: increased distraction [from the initiative because people are] focused on making sure everyone is aligned, and diminished collaboration because of assumed alignment. Both mean a less productive organization."

In my experience, for any DE&I initiative to be truly successful, it will likely include employees whose personal views don't exactly align with the DE&I principles. For example, after launching a DE&I initiative, the HR director of a client of mine encountered resistance from a white male senior partner at the law firm. "This is politically correct nonsense," the senior partner said. "The 'woke police' have taken over!"



The HR director could have easily gone into fight-or-flight mode: "How dare you, you rotten Neanderthal!" Or thinking to herself, "Henceforth, I'll avoid him like the plague." Instead, she engaged him in a conversation about his views. After listening to him (here are some good listening techniques), she shifted the topic to how he might be part of this program, help others and potentially experience something meaningful and positive. The senior partner ended up mentoring a young female associate, helping her develop litigation and client development skills. It became one of the program's success stories. The key here was the HR director's willingness to engage, not condemn.

My DE&I Experience

Many years ago, I managed a law firm. We had an applicant for a staff position, who I'll call Michelle. When she came in for an interview, she disclosed that she was a transgender woman undergoing transition. I felt Michelle was the best candidate and was prepared to make her an offer. However, I ran into resistance, especially from another staff member, who I'll call Susan, who is a devout Christian. In Susan's belief system, Michelle's transition was a sin before God. In addition, two other women expressed anxiety about being in the women's restroom at the same time as Michelle.

I listened to their concerns. We talked them through. I didn't try to debate, argue, pressure, shame or intimidate. I didn't try to change anyone's view. Instead, I focused on the importance of welcoming Michelle as a team member. "We have a great team-oriented culture here," I said. "Let's help make Michelle feel part of it."

I made the offer. Michelle accepted. She joined us and did a great job. There was never a single complaint from her or about her. In fact, Michelle and Susan became friends.

Conclusion

I've personally experienced how a DE&I initiative can produce major positive organizational change, one where organization members benefit across all lines of race, gender, orientation, age, religion and so forth. A critical element has been inclusion, which means including people whose views may differ from yours. The words "inclusion" and "cancel" simply don't fit together. Instead, let's pursue DE&I energetically — and without the cancel culture. That's the true path to diversity, equity and inclusion.

shrm.org

Telehealth Platforms Tackle Rising Rates of Adolescent Mental Health Challenges

When COVID hit, Naomi Allen knew she needed help. “My oldest kid, who has anxiety, had gotten very stabilized but had a total recurrence of his anxiety at multiple points during COVID,” Allen says. Allen, the co-founder and CEO of Brightline, a family mental health provider, is one of millions of parents who have been faced with skyrocketing rates of mental and behavioral health issues among adolescents and teens. Pre-COVID, 12.8 million children between 3 and 17 years old had been diagnosed with anxiety disorder, depressive disorder, and ADD or ADHD, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. A growing problem before, COVID wreaked havoc on an already vulnerable group. “During COVID, there’s been a 25% increase in pediatric anxiety and a 50% increase in pediatric depression,” Allen says.

Learning How to Cope For young people, the stressors of the pandemic have affected them differently, says Katie McKenna, a licensed social worker and clinical lead at Lyra Health. Because they have not developed the same coping skills as older adults, they’re less likely to verbalize or identify their feelings. “[Young people] are just less developmentally equipped to cope with those issues in the same way that adults would,” she says. “They’re not as good at advocating for themselves, or knowing who to ask for help, or knowing when they need to ask for help. They’re not as good at noticing when they’re struggling or being able to identify coping skills on their own.”

While an adult may be able to identify their emotions outwardly by saying things like, “I feel stressed and hopeless about the future,” McKenna explains, children and teens translate these emotions into irritability, defensiveness and withdrawal from their parents. A parent might brush it off as a phase, but it’s really a warning sign. “Most kids are not going to be able to articulate to their parents, or really understand why they don’t feel good,” she says. “So they’ll say, ‘I hate this, don’t talk to me, leave me alone.’ And that can be really challenging for parents to know what’s going on. But if you’re noticing changes that are out of the norm for your kid, that’s a clue they’re struggling and may not know how to articulate it to you.”

Filling in the Gaps Simply talking about mental health isn’t always enough, yet when it’s time to seek treatment, many parents quickly hit a wall. Brightline research found that while

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS



92% of parents with children experiencing a behavioral health challenge sought support, less than half received the help they needed, and 12% received no support at all. A study by the International Journal of Health Services found that the average wait time to see a child psychologist is 43 days, and just 17% of psychologists specializing in pediatric behavioral health have availability to see new patients. Even then, the costs can be prohibitive. 55% of child psychologists accept insurance; the rest are out-of-network with out-of-pocket costs ranging from \$150-300 per hour. The stress and financial strain takes its toll: according to Brightline data, 21% of parents have quit their job or plan to in order to deal with behavioral or mental health issues.

Finding Support Telehealth providers have found that their platforms are uniquely suited to address gaps in pediatric behavioral healthcare and are expanding their services to adolescents. Brightline, launched just before the pandemic, offers an “on-ramp” to behavioral health services, Allen says. The platform does an intake assessment and then provides education and 30-minute coaching services for parents and their children. Lyra’s coaching and therapy services are available to all ages and also include family therapy. The Lyra network offers individual sessions with therapists and licensed social workers with a background in working with adolescents, and parents can receive coaching to establish family goals and get them involved in the conversation. Allen says her son and daughters have been able to get support during the pandemic with their anxiety and ADHD, and the experience has made her even more empathetic to the clients she works with everyday. Brightline has plans to expand to all 50 states and partner with nine healthcare plans in 2022, giving employers an opportunity to offer the benefit without “dealing with another vendor,” she says.

As COVID continues and mental health remains strained, it’s critical to understand that there may not be a clear end in sight, Allen says. But while that means more challenges in meeting the needs of families and their children, there’s also plenty of reason to hope.

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