



UNLOCKED

WE ARE THE KEY TO YOUR SUCCESS!



KeyHR is the KEY to Your Success

How successful could you be if you could focus on what you do best? It's a question worth asking. And we not only HAVE the answer... We ARE the Key!

KeyHR is aligned with preferred provider companies to offer new and innovative ways to meet our clients' payroll, employee leasing, benefits and insurance needs.

Our relationship with these companies helps business owners reduce costs, save time, optimize their workforce, increase revenue and minimize risk. If your company needs to save money, address compliance issues, improve efficiencies and increase productivity, we have the solutions.

If your company needs to save money, address compliance issues, improve efficiencies and increase productivity, we have the solutions and the key to your success.

Trust Key HR to provide you with...

- Access to more service providers than any other business of our kind
- Specialists in every area of Human Resources
- Solutions for companies at all stages of development – from startups to fully mature
- A firm commitment to stay current on the laws that affect your industry and business
- Savings from 20 to 40 percent off your bottom line

It could be one of the smartest business decisions you ever make!

KEY CHANNEL PARTNER OF THE MONTH



Well-Being Index: Small-Business Hiring and Employee Retirements Both on the Rise

Businesses—especially small businesses—are hiring more workers compared to a year ago.

The Principal Financial Well-Being IndexSM in November 2020 saw only 19% of small businesses (those with fewer than 500 employees) reporting that they had increased their staff in the previous three months. That compared to 55% of large businesses.

Our latest survey shows that small-business hiring has surged to 42%, more than double the increase among large businesses, now at 65%.

Thumbnail of the Well-Being index results.

See charts and insights from the latest Principal Financial Well-Being IndexSM.

In October, we surveyed 500 business leaders from companies with two to 10,000 employees. The Well-Being Index spans a diverse array of industries, with more than half of the employers falling within finance/insurance, professional/scientific/technical, construction, manufacturing, and information management.

This is the eighth year of our Well-Being Index and the second year since we expanded it to multiple waves throughout the year to help businesses navigate a more volatile and complex economy.

While small businesses have gained ground in their relative rate of hiring, they also disproportionately cope with a higher rate of churn: The share of employees leaving a company voluntarily is 67% among small businesses compared to 61% for large.

"Employers are trying to stay fully staffed as employees leave at a higher rate—maybe even faster than they're replaced," says Mark West, national vice president of business solutions for Principal.

Retirement now is No. 1 among reasons employees are voluntarily leaving their jobs—even ahead of caregiving responsibilities challenged by the pandemic:

1. Retirement
2. Additional caregiving responsibilities due to COVID-19
3. Changing career path
4. Geographic relocation

West wonders whether some among this latest wave of retirees may gradually reenter the workforce in part-time roles or even launch their own business.

"My belief is that 'retirement' and 'changing career path' will end up somewhat commingled when the financial reality of a premature retirement sets in," he says.

principal.com

First Amendment Does Not Protect Employee's Criticism of Supervisor

HUMAN RESOURCES



An employee's criticism of her supervisor's possible misconduct in her official area of responsibility was not protected under the First Amendment, ruled the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The plaintiff worked as a customer service representative in the Bargersville, Ind., clerk-treasurer's office collecting utility bills and setting up payment plans for customers. In August 2017, the plaintiff noticed that a wealthy resident had fallen behind on his utility payments so she disconnected his service.

The clerk-treasurer countermanded her decision and reconnected the resident's utilities after business hours. The plaintiff believed that the clerk-treasurer's action was influenced by the resident's prominence in Bargersville and by the fact that the two were business partners in a land development project.

The plaintiff confronted the clerk-treasurer about the reconnection and expressed her view that customers should be treated uniformly, regardless of their wealth or the extent of their property ownership. The clerk-treasurer testified that reconnecting the resident's utilities was consistent with his general policy of reducing the number of disconnections in Bargersville, which he viewed as an unnecessary waste of resources.

Shortly after this incident, the plaintiff was removed from handling disconnections. Later that year, she made a fee collection error that cost the town about \$1,000. The clerk-treasurer fired her in January 2018.

The plaintiff sued the town, alleging a violation of her First Amendment right to free speech, specifically her objecting to the clerk-treasurer's decision to reconnect the resident's utilities. The First Amendment protects "a public employee's right, in certain circumstances, to speak as a citizen addressing matters of public concern," the court said. But it "does not prohibit managerial discipline based on an employee's expressions made pursuant to official responsibilities."

The plaintiff's job duties during the relevant time included handling utility disconnections. The court noted that her criticism of the clerk-treasurer for reconnecting a delinquent

citizen amounted to a complaint about possible misconduct in her official area of responsibility and therefore was not constitutionally protected.

Despite the plaintiff's contention that it was not her job as a low-level employee to confront a high-ranking elected official about questions of policy, the court stated that precedents did not define job duties so narrowly but rather the inquiry goes beyond an employee's formal job description. Since the plaintiff was responsible for utility disconnections and she criticized her boss over his decision to reconnect a wealthy delinquent customer, the 7th Circuit concluded that her speech "owed its existence to her professional responsibilities," even though she was "not strictly required to make it."

Additionally, the court explained that even if the plaintiff's criticism was constitutionally protected, she lacked sufficient evidence to support an inference that it was a motivating factor in the termination of her employment. The plaintiff's criticism about the decision to reconnect the utilities in August 2017 and her termination five months later in January 2018, the court observed, were "far too distant" to support a causal link between the two.

Alternatively, the plaintiff contended the relevant timeframe should be measured from the time of her criticism to the time that the clerk-treasurer decided to fire her, reducing the timing gap to three months. Nevertheless, the 7th Circuit expressed that to assess whether the employer's timing is suspicious enough to show retaliation, courts look to the duration of time between the protected speech and the adverse employment action itself, not the steps in the decision process that preceded it.

Sweet v. Town of Bargersville, 7th Cir., No. 20-2061 (Nov. 17, 2021).

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EMPLOYEE BENEFITS



Nearly a Quarter of Young Workers Have Only Ever Known Remote Work. This is How to Create a Culture of Support

Employees entering the workforce for the first time may not know what kind of office life they're missing out on due to the pandemic, but it doesn't mean employers shouldn't try and make up for the cultural loss.

Sixteen percent of companies worldwide are entirely remote, according to a survey conducted by software insights company Findstack, and that's before factoring in the growing number of hybrid models. And for younger employees, it's gearing up to be the only thing they know — one in five current Gen Z employees has only ever worked remotely, according to a survey conducted by employee invoice company Skynova.

Despite being known for adapting to change quickly, younger employees are going to be met with new, unique obstacles when navigating an entry into an entirely remote workforce, according to Nicholas Wyman, president of the Institute for Workplace Skills and Innovation.

"Making sense of a whole new working life and culture was a challenge during the age of office work," he says. "It's an even greater challenge in our new normal of remote work settings."

But producing quality work likely won't be a struggle for these employees — 77% of remote workers say they're more productive when working from home — but rather, they may have a hard time connecting with their coworkers, their managers and their environment, according to the Findstack

survey. Twenty-two percent listed the ability to disconnect after work as the biggest challenge of remote work followed closely by loneliness (19%) and communication and collaboration (17%).

"Managers should try to check in personally on a daily basis with remote employees that are new to the workforce," he says. "Be attentive and make them feel part of the company's community, not as a one-off, but continuously. Consider mixing up your contact with emails, phone calls, video meetings, recorded videos, or reach-outs via online collaboration portals."

Building strong relationships is going to be harder for young employees in a virtual world, but not impossible — just as long as there's a supportive c-suite prepared to make concessions wherever is needed, whether that means being more explicit in nurturing soft skills in your new staff or considering a reward and recognition program for remote workers who demonstrate self-direction and creativity.

"If a new staffer begins work for you remotely and after a while, you meet with them in-person, there may be some awkwardness," Wyman says. "Mention that as a way of putting your worker at ease about any discomfort they may be feeling — encourage questions and, as teachers say, celebrate mistakes as learning opportunities."

benefitnews.com

WORKERS' COMP



The Only Thing That Will Change is Your Bottom Line

Worker's Compensation is a critical business issue. If you haven't thought much about it, chances are it's costing you too much — and if an incident happens, it can cost you a lot more.

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Want to learn more about what KeyHR can do for your business?

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Valued Client,

W2 INFO

We are pleased to announce that all 2022 W-2's will be available and ready to download from our online Employee Service Center by the close of business on 1/31/2022.

For Instructions, go to :

<https://files.ctctusercontent.com/f2bdcd15701/aed552b9-b5ba-4878-ac21-dcade3c6d028.pdf?rdr=true>

For CONEXUS W-2 Retrieval to go:

<https://key.prismhr.com/key/auth/#/login?lang=en>