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Rekindling a Sense of Community at Work

By Christine Porath and Carla Piñeyro Sublett

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For decades, we've been living lonelier, more isolated lives. As our social connectedness has decreased, so has our happiness and mental health.

To learn more, we conducted a survey with the Conference for Women in which we asked nearly 1,500 participants about their sense of community at their jobs. When people had a sense of community at work, we found that they were 58% more likely to thrive at work, 55% more engaged and 66% more likely to stay with their organization.

Here are several ways companies have successfully built a sense of community.

CREATE MUTUAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

After creating an internal university for training years ago, Motley Fool, the stock adviser company, realized that the teachers got even more out of it than the students. The feedback led to a vibrant coaching program in which about 10% of employees act as coaches to other employees.

TAP INTO THE POWER OF NOSTALGIA.

Nostalgia can help counteract anxiety and loneliness, encourage people to act more generously toward one another and increase resilience. Research has also shown that when people engage in nostalgia for a few minutes before the start of their workday, they're better at coping with work stresses.

EAT OR COOK TOGETHER.

In 2015, Jeremy Andrus, who took over Traeger Grills as CEO in 2014, decided to reboot a toxic culture and moved the corporate headquarters to Utah. Employees cooked breakfast together every Monday morning and lunch Tuesday through Friday. According to pulse surveys in 2020, Traeger Grills employees rated the culture a nine out of 10 on average, with 91% reporting a feeling of connection to the company's vision, mission and values.

PLUG INTO YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY.

In partnership with local schools, Salt & Straw holds an annual "student inventors series" where children are invited to invent a new flavor of ice cream. The winner not only has their ice cream produced, but they read it to their school at an assembly, and the entire school gets free ice cream. Salt & Straw looks for ways like this to embed themselves in and engage with the community to help people thrive.

CREATE VIRTUAL SHARED EXPERIENCES.

Sanjay Amin, head of YouTube Music + Premium Subscription Partnerships, will share personal stories or suggest the team listen to the same album or try one recipe together. It varies and is

voluntary. He said he tries to set the tone by being “an open book” and showing his human side through vulnerability.

MAKE REST AND RENEWAL A TEAM EFFORT.

Energy Project CEO Tony Schwartz described the work his group did with a team from accounting firm Ernst and Young. In 2018, this team had been working on a particularly challenging project during the busy season. Team members became so exhausted and demoralized that a majority left the company afterward.

To try to change this, the 40-person EY team worked with the Energy Project to develop a collective “Resilience Boot Camp” in 2019 focused on teaching people to take more breaks and get better rest in order to manage their physical, emotional and mental energy during especially intense periods.
#WednesdayWisdom

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