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# PERSPECTIVES

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NOVEMBER 2022



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**PHRA**

AFFILIATE OF  
**SHRM**  
SOCIETY FOR HUMAN  
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

# PERSPECTIVES

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# PHRA President's Message

Lenore Seifer, SHRM-SCP

Dear Members,

Is it true? 2022 is nearly over? Already? Where's the pause button?! I am so honored and thankful to have had the opportunity to serve as the PHRA President in 2022. I am forever grateful to all of you – our PHRA Staff – Liz, Katherine, and Judith; Executive Committee; Board of Directors; Committee Chairs and Volunteers; Members; and Business Members and Sponsors. Thank you for making 2022 a successful year for the PHRA – we couldn't do it without each and every one of you!

2022 has been a year full of opportunities and challenges – and the PHRA has exceeded so many expectations along the way. Here are some of the accomplishments that we can celebrate:

- The PHRA was awarded the distinct honor of Chapter of the Year Award by the Pennsylvania State Council of SHRM for the 2021-2022 accomplishments.
- Many thanks to Liz, Pete Schramm, and our guest speakers who successfully launched the PHRA's first podcast – [P4 – People, Purpose, Passion, Pittsburgh](#) (available on Spotify and YouTube).
- Membership continues to remain strong and is a vital component to our organization. The strength of our numbers shows the community the PHRA has built over the years as the top resource of choice for local HR companies and professionals.
- 3 hybrid conferences were rolled out this year – HR Academy; the Annual Conference; and the Employment Law Day Conference – which allowed our attendees to choose how to attend AND awarded everyone the opportunity to watch on-demand sessions to gain additional knowledge, resources, and certification credits.
- 40+ members received their SHRM certifications through the PHRA's Certification Study Group, which was also named a SHRM Learning System Champion. The PHRA's certification pass rates exceed the national average for both the SHRM-CP and SHRM-SCP exams. Additionally, don't forget that the PHRA offers a scholarship for those interested in taking the certification exam ([Apply Today](#))!
- 110 + earning and professional development seminars were offered to members, with a number of them at free or reduced costs.
- 2 multi-sessions of the PHRA HR Leaders Mastermind Cohort (thank you to our spring session hosts Michael Couch and Richard Citrin and to the fall session hosts Dave Baker and Pete Schramm) where we explored topics focused on culture and HR excellence and executive HR leadership.
- 3 book club meetings where we discussed HR-related topics
- 2 new resource pages available to all members:
  - [Legislative Resources Page](#)
  - [Identity Based Professional Resources Page](#) for both professional and personal growth and development
- Support of the local community by partnering with the North Hills Community Outreach for the 2nd Annual Toy Drive. Donation information can be found at [www.PittsburghHRA.org](http://www.PittsburghHRA.org).

It's now time to pass the title of President to Dan Corkum – as past President, I, along with all of the others who have served before me, will be cheering him on as he helps to define the PHRA in 2023 in his own terms. He has our support, as well as the vast PHRA network. I look forward to seeing what comes next and hope that you do, too.

Lenore Seifer, SHRM-SCP  
2022 PHRA President  
S.R. Snodgrass, P.C.

# Pittsburgh HR Association Awarded Chapter of the Year

By the Pennsylvania State Council of SHRM For Elevating Human Resources & Improving Workplaces



Dear PHRA Members,

We are proud to announce The Pennsylvania State Council of SHRM has awarded the Pittsburgh Human Resources Association (PHRA) the Chapter of the Year Award for our 2021/2022 accomplishments.

The Chapter of the Year Award recognizes outstanding achievement in chapter initiatives, major accomplishments, strategic activities, and tactical initiatives that elevate the profession of human resources.

“So much of PHRA’s impact on the region can be traced back to the dedication and hard work of our volunteers, board members and staff. These leaders took the initiative and drove changes to serve and advance the profession, so we can all thrive together.” said Lenore Seifer, PHRA President.

## **Top 2021/2022 Accomplishments....**

- The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) awarded the PHRA its prestigious EXCEL Platinum Award.
- NEW! PHRA Legislative Resources Page was designed to help keep members up-to-date and comply with new legislation and regulations. With the support and resources provided by SHRM’s Advocacy Team (A-Team) PHRA members can be educated on workplace policies that are pertinent to their business.
- NEW! PHRA Identity Based Professional Resources page was created to highlight educational resources and content based on various identities designed for the HR professional to turn to for both professional and personal growth and development.

# Pittsburgh HR Association Awarded Chapter of the Year (cont.)

By the Pennsylvania State Council of SHRM For Elevating Human Resources & Improving Workplaces

- PHRA Launched a Podcast! P4: People, Purpose, Passion, Pittsburgh! P4 aims to help build HR leaders through discussions with thought and business leaders on the most critical success factor of any business – its people! P4's host and PHRA volunteer Pete Schramm, Founder & CEO, Lattitude, is dedicated to building better businesses in Pittsburgh through modern approaches to managing people, making connections, and discussing the most important topics impacting people in the workplace.
- PHRA continues to provide trial membership's offering three free months of member benefits, to all HR professionals in the Pittsburgh region. Our objective is to ensure no HR professional, or business goes without the valuable resources that can help them navigate and successfully manage the uncharted and rapidly changing workforce landscape.
- PHRA Leadership was selected to Judge SHRM's 2nd Better Workplaces Challenge Cup! The challenge looked at creative ways to reinvent work by featuring U.S. organizations that are working through innovation and technology, to solve today's most pressing workplace challenges. Thank you to PHRA's judge Ashleigh Sager for representing PHRA.
- To mark the honor Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy PHRA highlighted organizations in our region that daily demonstrate the message of Dr. King Jr. and "Living the King Way." Congratulations to Auberle, ConnectiveRx, Robert Half and Point Park University, The Rowland School of Business.
- Engaged 93 volunteers throughout our Committees, Board of Directors, and Executive Committee.
- 1,500 + HR Professionals participated in our programming and networking events.
- Helped 40 members achieve their professional certification through our SHRM-CP and SHRM-SCP preparation courses. We continue to maintain an 94% pass rate! Our Certification Study Group was also named a SHRM Learning System Champion.
- Provided 110 + Learning & Professional Development seminars resulting in 95 SHRM & HRCI Recertification Credit options.
- The PHRA began using Lattitude, an online mentoring and engagement platform! Click here to learn more and sign up to participate

This distinguished award would not be possible without the support of all our dedicated members and chapter leaders.

A huge thank you goes out to all our Committee Chairs, Directors at-Large, Volunteers, Business Partners, Members at-Large and Staff for making 2021/2022 a huge success!

Our very best regards,

**Liz Lamping**

Executive Director

[LLamping@PittsburghHRA.org](mailto:LLamping@PittsburghHRA.org)

**Katherine Miller**

Membership Development Specialist

[KMiller@Pittsburghhra.org](mailto:KMiller@Pittsburghhra.org)

**Judith Hall**

Administrative Assistant

[JHall@Pittsburghhra.org](mailto:JHall@Pittsburghhra.org)

## Remove unnecessary waste & inefficiencies

For cost-effective benefits that attract new employees while retaining current team members



With a limited labor pool, today's marketplace is pressuring employers to enhance their employee benefits offering in order to attract personnel while retaining current employees. Simultaneously, health care costs continue to increase, so upgrading benefit offerings appears unattainable.

It isn't. Oswald Companies' Billy Grebenc, an employee benefits advisor, sees consistent opportunities for employers, even with marketplace challenges.

Grebenc recounted a recent interaction to help explain, "Last month, a manufacturer approached us with over \$3 million annual spend in medical and prescription drugs claims. After reviewing their program and walking through Oswald's process, we saved the employer over \$450,000 by implementing prescription drug carve out, our proprietary high-cost claimant management, network analysis, and year-round education and engagement."

This is not an anomaly.

He accredits this client story to the Oswald LEAN process, an approach that removes unnecessary waste and inefficiencies within the employee benefit program without artificial suppression of costs, i.e., raising deductible levels or increasing employee contributions. The overall outcome results in equal or greater benefits at a lower cost.

Specifically, Oswald LEAN is comprised of 25 different waste and risk reduction tactics, none of which increase the deductible or employee contributions.

The LEAN analysis is run each year for existing clients, and the employer can choose to act on any findings at

## Remove unnecessary waste & inefficiencies

For cost-effective benefits that attract new employees while retaining current team members (cont.)

their convenience.

Seismic economic and health shifts require rethinking of how employers are managing their benefit program.

“Oswald’s process has consistently been focused on improving our clients’ experience, year over year,” Grebenc said. “As an employee-owned firm, we are able to prioritize our clients allowing us to continuously drive innovation in the marketplace.”

It is because of this consistency and foresight that Oswald Companies year one engagements with clients save employers, on average, more than \$1,000 Per Employee Per Year, decreases the cost of inpatient and outpatient services using Medicare as a baseline, and reduces prescription drug spend by more than 20%.

The LEAN strategies offer insight into the driver of number of units used and the cost of those units within each employer’s benefit program. Once Oswald understands what variables are most affecting costs, targeted programs are put in place to better manage select cost drivers while mitigating future risk.

Oswald can assist companies seeking savings within the program to achieve improved benefits or reinvest in other benefit offerings for team members. Oswald leverages today’s challenges to outline opportunity for increased control, and transparency while rewarding clients that actively manage their risk.

Grebenc concluded, “The broker relationship is about identifying competitive advantages. We bring the ideas, constantly working for you throughout the plan year, without you having to ask.”

Employer’s health insurance spend is within a company’s top three highest expenses depending on industry. Implementing a three-to-five-year strategy around the current program and where it will be in the future provides a clear path forward for employers. There is a better way and Oswald Companies would welcome the opportunity help.



To learn more how other employers are taking greater control of their health care costs, contact Billy Grebenc [bgrebenc@oswaldcompanies.com](mailto:bgrebenc@oswaldcompanies.com) or 412.218.1445

# FCRA Lawsuits Can Paralyze Your Business – Don't Make These Avoidable Mistakes!

by Mario Pecoraro, CEO of Alliance Risk Group, Inc.

The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) involves federal legislation that stipulates fair treatment of consumer information in credit reports, consumer reports, and, by extension, background checks. Nearly \$200M in lawsuits have been filed against employers as well as background investigation firms for failing to follow basic best practices. The FCRA includes protections for individuals to ensure accuracy, fairness, and privacy of data. If a problem arises, lawsuits can result and can be very costly. Sometimes, the company is found not liable, but the negative press comes with a price. It shouldn't be left to chance as huge settlements can be involved. For example, earlier this year, Facebook settled a case for \$650 million in a class action suit claiming the company violated the Illinois' Biometric Information Privacy Act by using facial recognition technology to store user data without consent. In light of these settlements, it makes sense for employers to be aware of FCRA cases, learn from other's mistakes, and implement correct procedures in their hiring processes.

According to a legal analytics company's 2021 Consumer Protection Litigation Report, "FCRA claims nearly tripled over the last decade." The following cases will show different types of lawsuits related to FCRA litigation in the background investigation process and what can happen when avoidable mistakes are made. Here are some examples:

## **CLEAR AND CONSPICUOUS DISCLOSURES**

When it comes to background investigations, one FCRA rule that gets employers into trouble is not providing disclosures that are "clear and conspicuous" and "in a document that consists solely of the disclosure." The disclosure usually refers to the fact that a background check will be conducted. Employers must be careful here because the courts take this measure quite literally. In the 2020 case of *Walker v. Fred Meyer, Inc.*, the disclosure document given to the plaintiff included additional information about his rights under federal and state law. Helpful information, right? Well not quite. Although the employer probably meant no harm in providing information on his rights, Walker claimed they violated the FCRA by not disclosing the background check disclosure in a "clear and conspicuous" manner. The US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (includes Alaska, Arizona and Central District of California) ruled in Walker's favor cautioning, "that the explanation must not be so long or confusing that it detracts from the disclosure or in any way makes the disclosure unclear and conspicuous." The takeaway? Only provide separate disclosures that are short and sweet and do not include extraneous details.

## **INACCURATE RESULTS ARE COSTLY**

When it comes to background investigations, accuracy cannot be stressed enough. After all, people's livelihoods are at stake as they apply for jobs or maintain their existing jobs. In the case of *Williams v. First Advantage LNS Screening Solutions*, the plaintiff was wrongly identified as committing crimes he didn't commit. After Williams was incorrectly mistaken for a criminal in two separate employment background investigations by First Advantage, he filed a Fair Credit Reporting Act lawsuit. The first background report claimed he was arrested and convicted for selling cocaine. The second report claimed he committed burglary and aggravated battery on a pregnant woman. By the time he cleared his name with both employers, they had moved on and hired someone else. In 2020, the plaintiff won the case, and the Court affirmed a \$250,000 compensatory damages award and reduced a \$3.3 million punitive damages award to \$1 million.

# FCRA Lawsuits Can Paralyze Your Business – Don't Make These Avoidable Mistakes! (cont.)

by Mario Pecoraro, CEO of Alliance Risk Group, Inc.

## **FAILURE TO ADDRESS CONSUMER DISPUTES**

Another unbelievable suit related to accuracy in the background investigation is the case of a man who sued Checkr, Lyft and Uber over a botched background check. You may find this helpful if you are ever accused of being dead and you are trying to prove that you are, in fact, alive. In this complaint, Donald Buckley, plaintiff, sued the background screening provider, Checkr, Inc., as well as his employers, Uber Technologies and Lyft, Inc. for FCRA violations and demand for jury trial. Buckley had worked for both Uber and Lyft for several years and had annual background checks conducted by Checkr using Buckley's Social Security Number (SSN.)

Around April of 2021, Buckley received a notice from Uber that there was a problem with his background check and was unable to continue working for them until the problem with his SSN was resolved. He attempted to contact Checkr through several methods, but his attempts went unanswered. In early July, Uber notified Buckley that since he could not correct his background check problem, he could not continue to work for them. It wasn't until the last week of July 2021, that Buckley was notified by Checkr that the social security number in their files for him was associated with a number on the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Death Master File and he would have to contact SSA about being reported as deceased.

After Buckley confirmed with SSA that he wasn't listed as deceased in their records and they would mail him paperwork to help prove he was alive, Checkr still would not correct the error. The same scenario played out with Lyft. He was notified at the end of July 2021 that after a background check was conducted by Checkr, it was reported that he appeared on the SSA Master Death File. He has not been able to correct the situation because "his correct SSN number has been and is currently still uploaded to his Checkr portal." The error resulted in Buckley losing the opportunity to work for both Uber and Lyft.

According to the complaint, "it is unclear why Checkr continued to inform Plaintiff that it is unable to verify his SSN number as that belonging to a living individual when the SSA confirmed that their files reflect that Plaintiff is alive and stated that they will be sending him proof of this." It also mentions that Checkr "...fails to employ procedure to assure only maximally accurate consumer information is compiled and published in the consumer reports it sells to third parties for a profit."

This case demonstrates the need for background screening providers to verify that the information they are reporting is accurate. If you have questions about the integrity, responsiveness, or accuracy of your background investigation agency, it may be time to move on to a more trustworthy resource.

## **LEGAL BASIS FOR AN FCRA VIOLATION CLAIM**

In order for a person to bring an FCRA violation claim in federal court against an employer or background investigation company, the Supreme Court has established legal rights or "standing" for a basis to move forward. A plaintiff must establish that they meet the legal criteria for standing which involves:

1. Injury in Fact – the plaintiff must have suffered an invasion of legally protected interests that is concrete and particularized and is actual or imminent as opposed to conjectural or hypothetical.

# FCRA Lawsuits Can Paralyze Your Business – Don't Make These Avoidable Mistakes! (cont.)

by Mario Pecoraro, CEO of Alliance Risk Group, Inc.

2. Causation – the injury must be fairly traceable to the conduct that is the subject of the lawsuit
3. Likelihood of Redress – a decision in the plaintiff's favor must be likely to provide an adequate remedy for the plaintiff's injuries.

As mentioned, there have been significant FCRA cases where the courts ruled there was “no concrete harm, no standing” and ruled in favor of the defendant. In the case of TransUnion LLC v. Ramirez, a California dealership ran a credit check on the plaintiff when he and his wife sought to purchase a car. The credit check provided by TransUnion, indicated a potential match between the plaintiff's name and a name appearing on a list of terrorists maintained by the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). The plaintiff sought to represent a nationwide class of individuals who received a similar letter from TransUnion indicating the recipient's name potentially matched a name on the OFAC list. Out of 8,185 individuals, only 1,853 had this information disseminated to a third party.

After six days of trial in 2012, the jury originally returned a verdict for the plaintiffs, awarding each class member \$984.22 in statutory damages and \$6,353.08 in punitive damages for a total award of more than \$60 million. In February 2020, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit held that all members of the class had Article III standing to recover damages, but they reduced the punitive damages award to \$3,936.88 per class member, for a total of \$40 million. On June 25, 2021, the Supreme Court reversed the Ninth Circuit on the grounds that only the 1,853 class members have standing for the claim. The court ruled that the 6,332 individuals who didn't have their reports provided to a third party did not suffer “concrete harm.” Only those (1,853 class members) who had erroneous derogatory information disseminated to a third party would be recognized as a “basis for relief.” This case is significant because it means that every member of the class action suit must establish Article III standing to be awarded individual damages.

## **SELECTING A BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION PARTNER**

When choosing a company to perform background investigations, be sure they know how to protect you from FCRA lawsuits. Examples of decisions finding employers in violation of FCRA legislation are extensive with record-breaking settlements in class actions over the past several years. Background investigation companies that prioritize FCRA certification can help mitigate that risk. The Professional Background Screening Association offers training for FCRA Basic Certificates, Advanced Certificates and PBSA Criminal Research Provider. These certifications teach FCRA concepts, terminology, basic rights and duties of end users, consumer litigation and regulatory enforcement. Advanced certifications focus on what constitutes “maximum possible accuracy” and disclosure form compliance among other things. PBSA Criminal Research Provider certification demonstrates a knowledge of responsibilities as it relates to criminal history, FCRA compliance, data retention and security, as well as correcting information, disputes, and complaints. Be sure your background investigation company is a member of the Professional Background Screening Association, and their background investigators maintain proper FCRA certification so that your company can avoid lawsuits. Alliance Risk Group, Inc. can help make sure that you are in compliance. Local Pittsburgh contact; Jennifer Kerrigan [jkerrigan@allianceriskgroup.com](mailto:jkerrigan@allianceriskgroup.com)

# Important Considerations for your Organization's Health Plan in the Wake of the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health decision.

By Shari Herrle and Peter Horne

After a leaked opinion and much anticipation, the Supreme Court of the United States issued its decision in the abortion rights case of Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization. Many viewed the decision as controversial; some due to the political implications, and some due to the significant shift away from a federal protection regarding reproductive rights versus what will likely become a new framework of state-by-state authority and rules on the topic of abortion. Controversy aside, the Dobbs decision raises important questions for how employers will design their health & welfare plans in the future. Furthermore, the same employers will have to deal with related cost and tax issues for the benefits they are permitted and elect to offer. This article highlights those questions and issues and provides considerations to employers for what direction they may choose to take in order to achieve health plan compliance, attract and retain employees, resolve tax matters, and be prepared for potential future changes that are within an employee's right to privacy.

The Dobbs decision raises these multiple questions and issues, because the Court's holding overturned the existing law regarding abortion rights and potentially weakens all health and personal choices that rest on principles of privacy. The Dobbs decision overturned Roe v. Wade and Casey v. Planned Parenthood. Those two previous decisions had established a federal right to and accompanying protections around obtaining an abortion. Now, after Dobbs, this constitutional protection for abortion rights is eliminated. Instead, the various state governments now assume control over reproductive rights and restrictions. Moreover, Roe v. Wade served as text and constitutional support for many other areas concerning federal privacy rights. With Dobbs overturning the holding of Roe v. Wade, those federal privacy rights may be perceived as weakened, or may actually be reduced at the state level, which may implicate other employee and health & welfare plan issues.

State governments have already begun to act on their newfound authority in this post-Roe era. Lines are being drawn where individuals will have more free access or more restrictive access to abortion services and treatment.

## **Impact on Employers – Post-Roe era**

There are many unknowns as to how this post-Roe era will play out across the states, which leaves serious questions for employers, especially those who provide group health benefits to employees that reside in multiple states with differing abortion laws. Understanding and addressing the implications of the Court's decision on a business's workforce and benefits package will be an ongoing process.

The Dobbs decision immediately impacts health benefits for employees living in states that either restrict or ban abortion. Many employer-provided health plans will have to comply with these state laws or make plan design decisions within the context of the state-by-state framework, if the employer is able to rely on ERISA preemption for its multi-state, self-funded plan.

The extent of Dobbs' impact on the coverage of abortion services is still unknown, as states continue to present new legislation related to abortion. Because abortion coverage is not required by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), group health plans that do not cover abortion services may not be directly impacted by the case. Employers that want to add abortion coverage, continue coverage, or expand abortion benefits, including adding a travel

# Important Considerations for your Organization's Health Plan in the Wake of the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health decision. (cont.)

By Shari Herrle and Peter Horne

benefit have numerous issues to consider, some of which are:

- What does our health plan cover now?
- What does state insurance law require now?
- Is our plan regulated by state insurance law?
- Are we getting questions from employees?
- What is our culture?
- What are other employers doing?
- What are our options? i.e., - Do we provide communication only or alter or expand health plan coverage? Do we add travel benefits?
- What are the tax implications for the coverage we are considering?
- Is there risk to the company if we provide abortion-related services and travel benefits?

## Civil Liability Concerns

For some employers, providing travel benefits for abortion-related services and providing coverage for abortion medication present potential legal compliance issues. State laws restricting or banning abortion vary in their form and applicability, and some state laws, including laws passed in Texas and Oklahoma, create a private right of action against those who aid and abet the performance or inducement of an abortion. Employers with employees residing in these states should proceed very cautiously and weigh their risk, as these laws state that aiding and abetting includes paying for or reimbursing the costs of an abortion through insurance.

## Other Compliance

Under the Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA), an employer may not provide mental health and substance use disorder (MH/SUD) benefits that are less favorable than the benefits provided for general medical/surgical care. The Department of Labor, which issues regulations for the MHPAEA, has not addressed whether parity is required for travel reimbursement benefits. If the DOL finds that travel benefits are subject to MHPAEA parity requirements, employers may consider broadly defining the travel benefit so that it may be used for any type of medical care, including MH/SUD care. This will add additional cost for employers that want to add travel coverage for abortion but have had no intent to provide travel benefits for other medical conditions.

Now that states are passing laws banning abortion, in some cases criminally, employers are concerned about HIPAA privacy and security regulations and the consequences of being exposed to an employee's private health information. For example, human resources and company benefit departments may be concerned about being exposed to abortion information that may involve company staff in a civil suit or criminal investigation of an employee. These investigations could take up significant resources and expose the company to unexpected liability. Some investigations may even expose a company to unwanted media attention as well. Employers will need to be educated on when HIPAA privacy and security regulations do apply and when they do not

# Important Considerations for your Organization's Health Plan in the Wake of the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health decision. (cont.)

By Shari Herrle and Peter Horne

apply, specifically when the employer is functioning as the employer when health information for an abortion is disclosed.

## Communicating to Employees

Employers should make informed decisions about changes they make to existing policy or new policy they develop with regards to benefit coverage and paid time off programs. Crafting effective communications with consistent messaging is key to addressing employee questions and concerns. Employers should consider reminding employees of existing policies that may be implicated outside benefits and paid time off, such as those regarding employee conduct, social media and maintaining a respectful workplace. Companies should make certain policy and communication goals are continuously aligned among all key stakeholders and internal messaging should be carefully constructed so communications remain consistent. This is especially important for multi-state businesses with benefit packages and policy that could be influenced by state law changes.

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**Let PHRA be your guide to understanding the legal  
landscape that affects your organization!**

# “Quiet Quitting” ...Trendy but Nothing New!

By Ron Kubitz, HR & Recruiting Manager, Forms+Surfaces

“Quiet Quitting” is a trendy new topic circulating on TikTok and other social media platforms involving a supposedly new workplace trend. Gen Z’ers are spreading the word in regard to quiet quitting and also taking the credit (blame) for this new trend. I will argue that quiet quitting is not a new trend but has been around for decades just not under this catchy name.

So, what is quiet quitting? In a nutshell quiet quitting is when an employee pretty much emotionally and mentally checks out of a job and does the bare minimum at that job in order to essentially stay employed and not be fired. Or in terms that a Gen Z employee might understand quiet quitting is when you do not actually quit your job but you have quit the idea of going beyond giving 100% or no longer are willing to go beyond an eight-hour workday as you come to the realization that work is not your life. In essence you are no longer buying into the hustle and bustle mentality that has been the culture in many workplaces for quite some time now.

Taking a quick trip on TikTok one will find over 5 million or so views under the hashtag (in some form) quiet quitting and see both views for and against the concept. Many argue for the concept of quiet quitting and the fact that one’s worth is not defined by their labor output. These employees also feel that going above and beyond leads to nothing but burn-out and turnover. On the other hand, others argue that quiet quitting does not benefit the worker at all. Many view it as a waste of time that does not benefit the worker or the company and in fact can come back and do more harm to the employee than good.

Recent polls seem to show that due to the pandemic and the rise of Gen Z employees that the desire to invest fully in one’s job has declined. According to Gallup’s State of the Global Workplace: 2022 Report, employee engagement in the US and Canada was found to be only at a level of 33%. We see all around us talk of burnout, lack of engagement, pandemic misery and economic pressures which all tend to lead to the notion of quiet quitting.

In this post-pandemic time many employees now also feel a sense of being overworked and underpaid and they feel that they are putting in a great deal more effort than what is reflected in their salaries. As our cost of living rises and salaries do not keep pace many are now realizing that going above and beyond is not worth the extra stress and worry.

As I had mentioned earlier the term quiet quitting is a trendy one and is now generating great media attention and mass coverage in social media, print and even SHRM has dedicated articles on the topic. It seems as if every day there are articles and polls on the topic prevalent on LinkedIn and we cannot escape seeing the dreaded words quiet quitting for any length of time. But is this really a new phenomenon...NO!

When I mention terms such as “slackers”, “coasting”, “disengagement”, “withdrawal” and the like what comes to mind? Aren’t these terms really another word for quiet quitting and have they not really been around for decades?

## “Quiet Quitting” ...Trendy but Nothing New! (cont.)

By Ron Kubitz, HR & Recruiting Manager, Forms+Surfaces

The term may be new, but the idea behind quiet quitting has long existed, says Anthony Klotz, associate professor at University of College London’s School of Management. “Although this has come from a younger generation and in new packaging, this trend has been studied under different names for decades”.

Let us face facts workers have always looked to “get by” in a job for various reasons. There are many people not in a position to leave their role (location, skills, flexibility) so they do the bare minimum to get by. Also, the economy can also play a role in keeping unhappy workers in their jobs. In these cases, coasting can make sense for workers who feel they can’t progress, or no longer prioritize their career over other pursuits. Many of us who are forever going above and beyond the call of duty know that it consumes a great deal of mental resources and may cause a great deal of stress. Many employees realize that there is little reward for going above and beyond especially if they perceive they’re stuck at a company. So, quiet quitting doesn’t just speak to younger generations as it speaks to anyone who has ever felt stuck in a job but has little reason to resign and this has been evident in many past generations of employees.

As mentioned earlier many feel that the pandemic (working through the pandemic especially), may have been the fuel to the fire of the quiet quitting phenomenon. The pandemic really brought to the forefront issues that have been boiling near the surface for some time and now are starting to spillover. The pandemic has caused a decline in employee engagement which is a major factor in quiet quitting. We also see how the pandemic magnified a deepening disconnect between employees and companies and employees and managers. Many employees now feel that their companies do not care for their physical or mental wellbeing and this coupled by the decline of real wages in the face of inflation has caused workers to drift further away from their employers.

Since the pandemic workers in higher numbers state that their performance is overlooked by their employers and that the workplace is becoming more toxic and harder to face on a day to day basis. In total the massive reaction to this current trend of quiet quitting is a result of in many cases employees reassessing how much their careers mean to them and what portion of their daily existence should be consumed by work.

Instead of joining the other current trend of “the great resignation” those that opt for quiet quitting prefer the “coasting life” and have decided to prioritize other aspects of their life over their careers. That being said we must ask ourselves is quiet quitting a viable long-term strategy? Will our employees be content doing this over the long haul or are they only delaying the obvious? More importantly we as employers must ask what are the underlying issues to this crazy new trend? Can it be a poor company culture, lower than normal salaries and opportunities for advancement, lack of employee engagement or one of many other possible causes that need addressed now.

It seems to me that many employers still have not grasped the impact of the pandemic on workplace well-being. More importantly they have not grasped that the same problems they have dealt with in past generations of employees are still present if not addressed on a constant basis. Some workplaces are allowing

# “Quiet Quitting” ...Trendy but Nothing New! (cont.)

By Ron Kubitz, HR & Recruiting Manager, Forms+Surfaces

more remote work, more flexibility, and new models of working. However, many organizations have not addressed the well-being needs that people used to find in the workplace, which may not be available. Much of this has to do with social interaction, psychological safety, and the social cohesion of the office that creates a sense of belonging. So how do employers foster that in the reality that is our modern workplace?

It seems that employers that are working to create deliberate and informal interactions are on the right track. It is important to create and foster a workplace culture that keeps people engaged and motivated toward attainable goals. It is a good opportunity to “Re-interview” employees and discuss what creates a mutually beneficial arrangement to create a positive outlook toward work.

So, in conclusion I ask once again is quiet quitting really a trend or an issue that has been around for decades? The answer lies deep within the underlying causes of quiet quitting which sadly have remained mainly unchanged through many past generations of employees. Unless we as employers get our act together we will be soon discussing the next trend identical to quiet quitting only it will be termed another fancy catch phrase.



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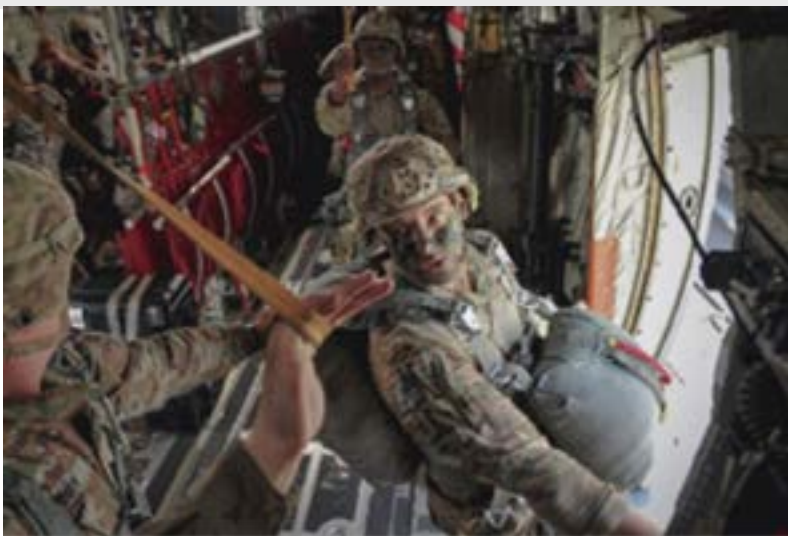


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# Real Combat vs. Corporate Combat – How Authentic Value Can Transform a Nation

By: Eddie Dunn, Founder & CEO, Eddie Dunn Consulting, LLC



## *“IF YOU THINK, PRIVATE DUNN, YOU’RE WRONG!”*

was the booming southern drawl of a U.S. Army Jumpmaster as I was preparing to exit the aircraft. He saw my fear and confusion in my eyes, and it wasn’t pretty. We were minutes away from the drop zone when the doors opened. The rush of wind and near-deafening noise that occurs at that moment is hard to describe. A split second of relief from the oppressive heat in the aircraft was immediately replaced by the terror of doing something so

unnatural: jumping out of a perfectly good airplane. When the green light came on, the jumpmaster screamed “GO,” as he hit the backside of the first paratrooper exiting the aircraft. Suddenly, the plane jolted and dropped in altitude for a brief moment. With nearly 80 pounds of equipment strapped to my body, I lost my balance as I neared the door. It was the second-worst jump of my military career, but more on that, later.

### **HARD TRUTHS**

Unlike any civilian occupation, being genuine, being real, defines our authentic value in the military. It is the fuel of great leadership at the intersection of our character and competence. In the military, you cannot fake it until you make it. Without it, you cannot earn the trust of your soldiers. For the many who have served, it is our source of truth. It is our foundation.

For those who have eyes to see, our authentic value is often disguised as a quiet patriotism that runs deep, always giving away credit, just in time, to go unnoticed. Imagine, hundreds of thousands of LeBron James hitting the winning shot at the buzzer every night to an empty arena. How is that possible? Has our authentic value come at a high price? I submit that our greatest strength has become our greatest weakness, in a civil society that is blinded to our selfless service.

A bold statement, but consider the following:

- 17 veteran suicides per day<sup>1</sup>
- 37,252 homeless veterans<sup>2</sup>
- Mental health exacerbated by COVID-19<sup>3</sup>
- 2 million veterans lack health insurance<sup>4</sup>
- 87% of youth responded ‘definitely not’ or ‘probably not,’ to serve in the military<sup>5</sup>
- 200,000 exit the military each year significantly underprepared and underemployed<sup>6</sup>
- An unintended consequence of 45,000 Veteran Service Organizations creating confusion in a fragmented employment ecosystem<sup>7</sup>
- 3 primary employer bias in PTSD, lack of education and translation of skills<sup>8</sup>

# Real Combat vs. Corporate Combat – How Authentic Value Can Transform a Nation (cont.)

By: Eddie Dunn, Founder & CEO, Eddie Dunn Consulting, LLC

How is it that we spend trillions of dollars creating the greatest fighting force in human history, yet we have not proportionally reinvested in solving for “D” all the above?

## CONFRONTATION OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

Despite these incredible challenges and barriers, veterans possess a rare superpower of resiliency in the face of adversity. It’s what sets us apart from all others. Our muscle memory is predisposed to overcoming fear (and sometimes cheating death) in accomplishing any mission, in any circumstance. Being resilient AND selfless is a unique skill set.

When I was in real combat, my soldiers depended on me demonstrating this true north, every time, through my character and competence. In every convoy, every mission, every jump, every dangerous situation we found ourselves in, I had to earn their trust, as our lives literally depended on it. Facing life and death has an interesting way of keeping it real.

Strangely, when I started my corporate career, there was an uncomfortable similarity to real combat. In what I’ve come to define as ‘corporate combat,’ I saw the same fear, the same yearning from employees for that authentic value to come through in its leaders, especially in times of crisis. Great organizations have great values, that are lived and breathed by great leaders – PERIOD. In the confrontation of the impossible, rests the true potential and impact, authentic value veterans bring for those who can see it.

Yet, in these challenging times, our nation continues to struggle to meet its moral obligation in bridging the gap between service to one’s country and the transition back to civilian life. But there is hope.

In our emerging post-COVID, post-George Floyd world, the alignment, and integration of the right talent strategy with the right business strategy has the potential to transform everything we do.

## A FORERUNNER OF THINGS TO COME

The world is flat, thanks to COVID. The rise of the independent workforce is exploding. Rising alongside, are innovative talent strategies, cutting across industries that are redefining the employment ecosystem.



# Real Combat vs. Corporate Combat – How Authentic Value Can Transform a Nation (cont.)

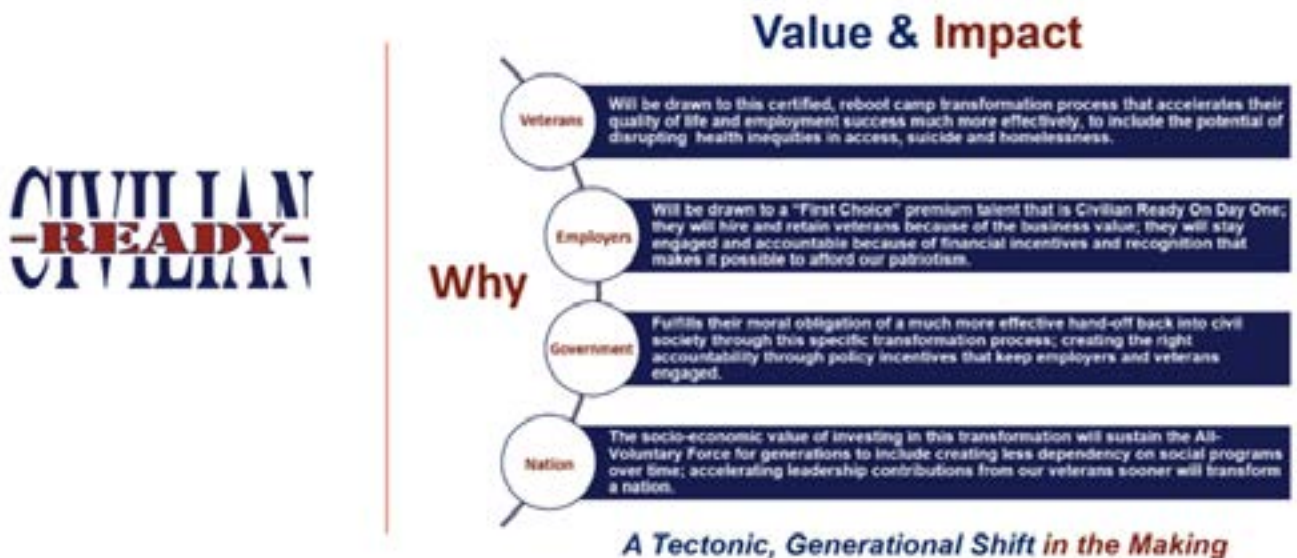
By: Eddie Dunn, Founder & CEO, Eddie Dunn Consulting, LLC

One such emerging strategy is our Civilian Ready, train to hire, retain model, accelerated by talent advocacy across a full employment lifecycle. With a strong diversity and inclusion lens, our niche practice is creating new and competitive career pathways, that are making extraordinary impacts for both veterans and employers.

Such is the case of a top industry client of ours, who adopted this model, experiencing high employee conversion rates and retention value in a cost-effective military fellowship program. Our client went on to achieve #2 in the nation as a Top Military-Friendly Company by G.I. Jobs Magazine in 2021.

## A TECTONIC, GENERATIONAL SHIFT IN THE MAKING

Veterans and their families are a national treasure and our greatest untapped resource in a nation that needs them now, more than ever. Trailblazing a socially innovative market-based solution in the veteran talent supply chain ecosystem will be the tectonic, generational shift that will inspire a nation to embrace its authentic value. Imagine 200,000 transitioning service members, year over year, who are:



- Certified, Civilian Ready on Day One, entering the marketplace as a 1st choice premium talent
- Going to veteran ready employers who understand and embrace their authentic value
- Coming from a government that proportionally re-invests, achieving their moral obligation
- Driving the socio-economic value, when you transform a veteran, you transform a nation

To this 'Lebron,' I'm encouraged and inspired by the faint applause of those early adopters, entering the veteran employment arena. Although the value and impact of this emerging re-entry market are not yet known, I believe it represents, the tectonic, generational shift of our lifetime.

A TOUGH-LOVE MOMENT

# Real Combat vs. Corporate Combat – How Authentic Value Can Transform a Nation (cont.)

By: [Eddie Dunn, Founder & CEO, Eddie Dunn Consulting, LLC](#)

Now back to the second-worst jump of my military career: Planting his size 12 boot on my backside, along with a few choice words, the jumpmaster encouraged my quick exit. I recall, bouncing off, face first, on the side of the aircraft as I fell out, stunned and spinning out of control. I don't think I lost consciousness, but when my parachute finally opened, I was all twisted up, falling faster than the rest of my fellow paratroopers. Within seconds, I braced for impact, crash landing in a shallow creek, swallowing, what felt like a gallon of swamp water, but hobbled off the drop zone with my authentic value intact! It was a tough-love moment I never forgot as it prepared me for THE worst jump of my military career when I later joined the elite 82nd Airborne Division.

I learned a very hard lesson that day: I needed to trust my training and allow my muscle memory to overcome my fear. Over time, this has served me well, deepening my resiliency and selfless service, reinforcing my authentic value as a:

- Chaplains Assistant at Ground Zero, during 9/11
- Combat Veteran in Iraq 2004
- Army Jumpmaster – size 9.5 boot
- Retired honorably 2008
- HR Professional in Organizational Design
- Architect of the most successful veterans program in U.S. history
- A national thought leader in the veteran transition space
- Elected Town Councilman, Vernon, NJ, 2011 – 2013
- Unique practice bridging gap between veterans & employers
- Builder of a #1 Military Friendly Employer Program Fortune 500
- Builder of a #2 Military Friendly Company for a Fortune 10 client
- Visionary of Civilian Ready nonprofit, driving transformation
- 2021 Veteran Champion Advocate of Year, G.I. Jobs Magazine

As to my 'worst' jump? That's for another story, another time!

Eddie Dunn is a national thought leader in the veteran transition space, driving a unique and dynamic talent management consulting alliance focused on bridging the gap between veterans and employers. His primary focus is on Veteran Transition Management, Talent Management, Change Management, Organizational Development and Management Consulting. He is the owner of Dunn Alliance Group which you can learn more about on his [website](#).

# Should I Accept A New Job Offer Or Stay With The One I Have?

By James E. Taylor, Ph.D, Chief Diversity, Inclusion, and Talent Management Officer at UPMC

Several friends and colleagues have reached out to me lately, looking for advice to help them answer an important question: “Should I accept a new job offer or stay with the one I have?” As the Great Resignation (or the Great Reshuffle) continues, almost 50% of workers are looking for another job. From my perspective, it’s worth considering where your desire for change comes from?

We know the chaos, confusion, and uncertainty brought on by the pandemic comes into play, especially as it seems to have triggered a society-wide reevaluation of priorities. But are you also being influenced by the very human suspicion that if you were just in a new company with a new job that everything would be different – and by different, I mean better?

Sometimes, when we make big external changes – new job, new house, new partner – we bring along all the stuff we actually wanted to change (e.g., patterns of thought, habits, behaviors, feelings, etc.). A new job might be the spark you need – a way to realign your values and purpose. But in other situations, you may be better off staying where you are instead of “paving paradise.”

So, should you stay or should you go?

## How To Evaluate Staying Vs. Going

If you’re stuck in a loop, wondering whether you’re better off at your current job or branching out to something new, take some time to evaluate your desires and motivations.

Start by envisioning success. Be specific and tap into your emotions, too.

Ask yourself a series of questions:

- What does success look like for me?
- Who do I want to be?
- What do I want to achieve?
- What do I want to contribute to the world?
- What’s most important – income, perks and benefits, career advancement, work location, company brand and culture, supervisor, etc.?

Similarly, ask these questions that relate to your values:

- What excites me?
- What would make life unbearable if taken away?
- What am I most proud of?
- Who are my role models?
- How do I want to be remembered?

What themes are emerging? Reflect on your thoughts, including how you would feel once you achieve your version of success. Then start to develop or clarify related goals. In other words, how will you achieve the success you’ve envisioned? It helps to write things down.

# Should I Accept A New Job Offer Or Stay With The One I Have? (cont.)

By James E. Taylor, Ph.D, Chief Diversity, Inclusion, and Talent Management Officer at UPMC

Once you have a few specific goals, take inventory of your commitment to your current job. Does it support your goals?

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I feel heard at my job?
- Do I feel valued?
- Do I understand how I contribute?
- Does my work align with my vision for success?

Once you've reflected on your responses, take a step back. Let these new perspectives marinate, so to speak. Clear your mind before readdressing the primary question: to stay or to go.

## **Creating A Reality**

Give credence to what these perspectives tell you about what you desire at this stage in your career, then take steps to create your ideal reality. Is it best attained through a big external change like a new job? Or is it something you can develop and grow from where you already are?

Ultimately, once you better understand your ideas of success, values, goals, and your current commitments, you can choose the path that satisfies them. Lasting success is a cycle and balance of choices and revaluations you'll need to revisit again and again throughout your career.

# The Thin Line That Separates Confidence & Ego

By James E. Taylor, Ph.D, Chief Diversity, Inclusion, and Talent Management Officer at UPMC

The pandemic has thrown us off-kilter in so many ways — work environments, values, goals, and even personality traits have shifted, perhaps out of what was once the status quo. While I believe many of us have moved beyond the misconception that confidence and ego are the same, we still may be unclear about the inherent value of both.

Can ego go bad very quickly? Yes, I believe so; but that doesn't mean there isn't a time and place for it. Now in 2022, how do we find the balance between confidence and ego without becoming entitled or narcissistic?

First, let's clarify what I mean when I say "ego," and how that differs from confidence. With ego, I'm referring to someone's sense of self-importance, and in the more psychoanalytical realm, their simple sense of Self, and how that Self interacts with the world. Confidence, on the other hand, is certainty and trust — sometimes in our own abilities, and sometimes in the abilities of those around us.

## Ways To Find Balance Between Ego And Confidence

So, how do we create a balance between confidence and ego:

- 1. Develop confidence first.** Of course, on some level, we're born with an ego, but try to focus your energy on strengthening your confidence first. The key here is to lean away from arrogance and into justified faith in yourself. That requires some experimentation with how you work best on your own and with others, during both calm and chaotic times. For this, you'll need time, a trial-and-error attitude, and the ability to pay deep attention.
- 2. Ask yourself four questions.** When confronted with a situation that requires a mix of confidence and ego, pause and ask yourself a few questions:
  1. What do I believe is important?
  2. How can my beliefs fit into what the group thinks is important?
  3. Am I leading myself toward a meaningful outcome?
  4. How can I also demonstrate to others that they can make their own way?
- 3. Become more comfortable with ambiguity.** Slow down and make space for curiosity and reflection on other people's thoughts and opinions. The next time something ambiguous occurs, try not responding right away. Allow yourself to see the situation from multiple perspectives.
- 4. Lean into vulnerability.** The dangerous side of ego rears its ugly head when we turn our backs on vulnerability. Ultimately, this just leads to fear and defensiveness. Vulnerability allows us to reflect and apologize if we've made a mistake. It also allows us to express when we're scared or unsure, thus making us more resilient.

## Having Both Confidence And Ego

Confidence can be built, whereas ego is inherent, but can be shaped for the better. There's no reason to think you're unimportant or practice false humility. Know your worth, and know how to leverage your worth. Along the way, help others do the same.

# New Members

**Constance Mayer**

Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh

**Devon Taliaferro**

City of Pittsburgh Department of Human Resources

**Bettina Rauso**

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**Nikki Raveling**

The Midwife Center for Birth and Women's Health

**Jessica Bender-Gerard**

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**Emily Kutzavitch**

Comparion Insurance

**Julisa Hampton**

Guardian Healthcare

**Shiloh Wagner****Timothy Zaprazny**

KCF Technologies

**Janice Folcik**

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**Jacki Herzog**

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Universal Stainless

**Malik Barber**

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**Melissa Snyder**

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**Haley Kilar**

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**Sandra Scott**

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**Jaimie Sebeck**

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Carnegie Mellon University

**Meghan Gorman**

Carnegie Mellon University

**Bill Hertzler**

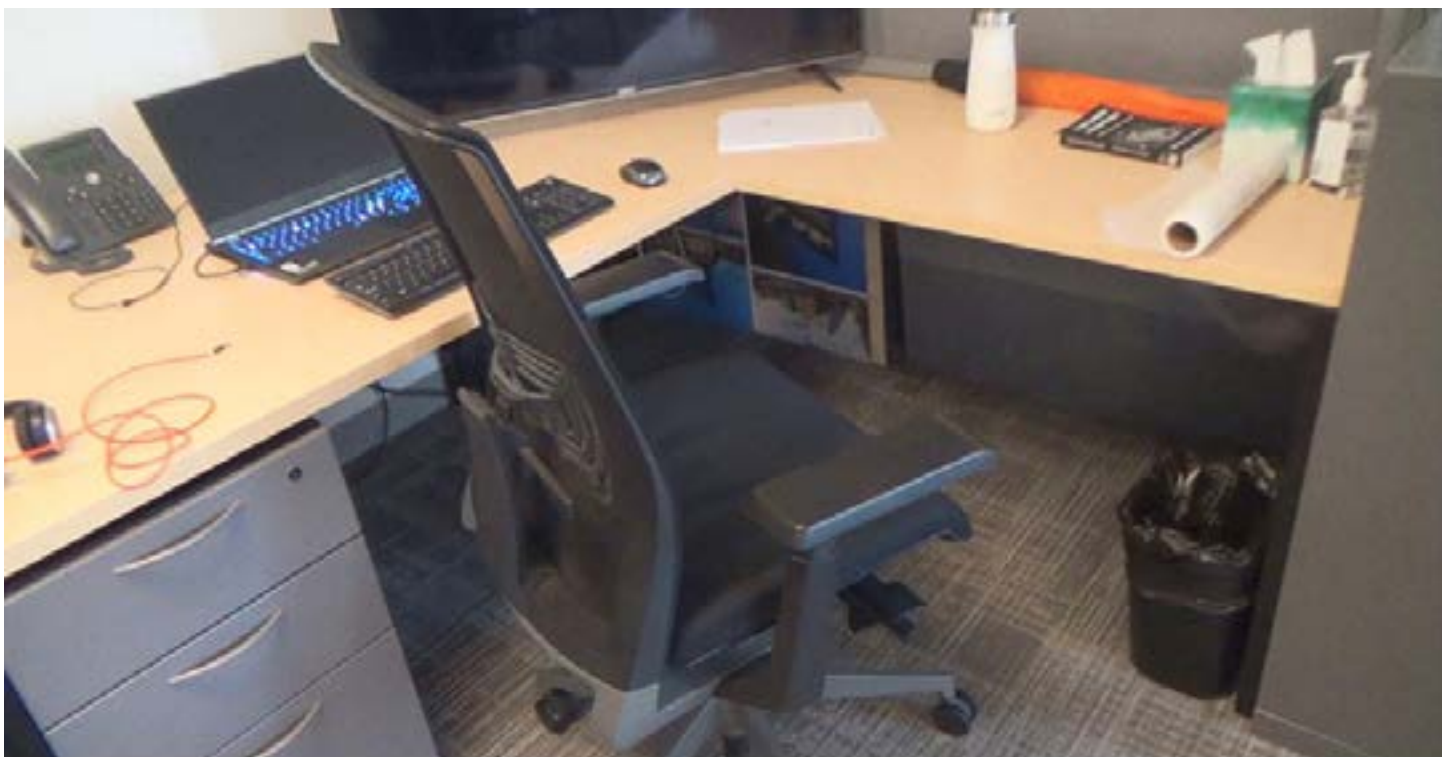
Bobby Rahal Automotive Group

**Heather Lynn**

McCutcheon Enterprises, Inc.

## Members on the move

Politics is all around us on television and social media, even at the dinner table. KDKA-TV political editor Jon Delano reported that a recent SHRM study found that 1 in 4 American workers experience political bias in the office. Click [here](#) to see what Past PHRA President, Phyllis Hartman and SHRM President and CEO Johnny Taylor has to say on KDKA-TV regarding Politics in the Workplace.



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# 2022 Events

The Pittsburgh Human Resources Association offers many valuable networking and education programs throughout the year. Keep an eye on the PHRA online event calendar for a complete and up-to-date listing of all programs. Register for an upcoming event today!

November 8 | [Learn](#)  
Graduate Connections: Preparing for Your Future Career

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Phone: 412-261-5537  
[www.PittsburghHRA.org](http://www.PittsburghHRA.org)



A man in chainmail armor, likely a knight, is the central figure, looking down with a somber expression. In the foreground, a woman is looking at a smartphone. The background shows a crowd of people in a historical setting.

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