

State of work in manufacturing (with Bob, Kim and Sharon)

Bob Lemke: Kim, I saw that we just released the results of our recent State of Work in America survey.

Kim Jacoby: We did.

Bob Lemke: This is going to be excellent. Good timing because I'm heading out to speak with a client, a manufacturing client, that I think some of the data and information insights that were drawn from the survey might be helpful. It certainly would resonate with them. Do you have a few minutes to kind of talk through what your insights are?

Kim Jacoby: Absolutely. Let's start off and talk about a key theme across the survey, which was wellbeing. So we saw that mental and emotional stress along with long hours, was one of the things that was causing burnout among employees. On the other hand, we also saw that people shortages were a big stressor among manufacturing employees.

Bob Lemke: Yeah, I can understand both. Absenteeism in this particular situation is a growing concern, and so it's probably a signal of some of the result of the stress in the environment. This is a highly numbers-driven organization where productivity and production schedules are the main course of the day. So I can see the tension, especially in today's environment, how that might creep up on them.

Sharon Whittle: Yeah, definitely. I mean, with an emphasis on production numbers hitting target, I think sometimes our clients in the manufacturing space can forget that a lot of the value that people derive from their employer comes from really that soft skills of a leader, right? And so you need to sometimes double down on training around soft skills and coming out of a difficult environment really across all industries. I think it's really important for leaders to be able to show that aptitude.

Bob Lemke: Now, it makes sense that there's an aging population here as well within this manufacturing environment and probably the transfer of those soft skills and knowledge into the new leader and the new workers could be an opportunity for them as well.

Kim Jacoby: That came out in the data as well. One of the questions we asked was why employees would leave their organization. And two things came out. One was that wages aren't going to keep up with inflation, and the second was not feeling valued as an employee. So when we looked at the specific pay questions as well, in general, employees don't feel like they're fairly paid for the contributions they're making to the organization's success. And further, when we looked at that data by gender, we saw that females were much less likely than males to feel like they're paid equally for equal work.

Bob Lemke: Yeah, yeah. We've always focused on the hourly workforce within the manufacturing environment, but it's interesting. Where is the potential for, you know, the difference between the men and women's view on that? On that topic, I would imagine, you know, transparency in the environment around pay is becoming, you know, kind of a driver of

that. And that's a good thing. That's the whole intent. So that certainly is another topic worth raising. The other is the effect of automation. So the environment is becoming much more advanced and the technical side, and kind of the pace at which pay keeps up with the increased level of knowledge and skill that's required to the job could be another disconnect that they face as well.

Kim Jacoby: Growth and development was a big theme as well within the survey results. So, employees do not feel like they have the opportunity to build skills and that they don't feel like their organizations are placing enough value on how important learning and development is to them.

Sharon Whittle: We've seen a lot of our manufacturing clients really double down on their partnerships outside of their environment for training resources, in particular with the community college systems, which are really growing and tend to be very effective in these types of areas. So I think a lot of good things coming out of that is employees are looking to reskill if they're reentering the market like you talked about or upskill because technology plays a greater role in the production facility.

Bob Lemke: Yeah, it's a lot of great information, good timing on the recent survey results that we can share. That's excellent. Good timing, and thanks for taking time to invest a little bit on the insights that the data might progress. I'll keep you posted on what's happening, and you continue to look for any insights that you might be able to share.

Kim Jacoby: Absolutely. And if you're preparing, anything comes up, you know where to reach me.