How do you keep refreshing your investment in medical and business education—long after you’ve graduated from school and are running a healthcare business?

For over 30 years, hundreds of California’s most respected healthcare business leaders—from a cross-section of providers, payers, diagnostic, and digital health organizations—have been answering that question through their active participation in ABL’s Healthcare-focused Round Table program.

In these confidential, monthly sessions, Members continually refresh and hone their best business practices, by discussing the implications of healthcare’s hottest trends for their healthcare business, learning in real-time how their peers are dodging the latest curveballs the ever-changing healthcare environment is throwing at them.

Much more than just a “think tank,” ABL Members put each other’s ideas and connections into action. In addition to Member Presentations, recent discussion themes have included:

- “Preparing for a Virtual-First Healthcare Future”
- “Healthcare M&A Trends”
- “Best Practices for Dealing with Payment Reform”

As David Sayen, CMS Region 9 Administrator (ret’d), quoted above, continues, “[ABL] has opened the door to parts of the healthcare world that would have been closed to me!”

“I Got My MBA at University and My PhD at ABL”

Mimi Grant, President
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A year ago today, no one had “global pandemic” on their HR bingo card and as 2020 started, nobody expected the radical redesigns and refocusing that the pandemic would prompt.

2020 was a year of big change, which is likely to continue during what some are calling 2021’s “Big Reset.” The good news? 2020 proved how absolutely vital Human Resources is and how quickly HR professionals can adapt in the face of a crisis. In many ways, HR was one of the unsung heroes of 2020, finding ways to simultaneously keep businesses going and protect workers against unseen threats.

In 2021, expect HR to continue to be agile, resilient and market-driven. Nothing is going back to the 2019 “normal,” though some aspects of that old normal may reappear. Take a look at some of the changes you can expect as 2021 plays out.

1. Remote Work Will Continue

Companies may have been forced into remote work setups by the pandemic, but many quickly saw some upsides. Employees appreciated the easy commute from bedroom to home office (not to mention the top-only work clothing required for Zoom), and some organizations were able to reap financial benefits through reduced lease commitments. However, a lot was lost through the pivot to remote work. All that chit-chat in the hallways may have seemed like a waste of time during a pre-Covid workday, but it turns out that casual, face-to-face communication is core to building teamwork and trust. As people return to the office in 2021 — and as some companies keep part of their workforce working remotely — it will be up to HR departments to create and maintain the cohesion needed between all workers, no matter where they are.

2. HR Will Move Forward With an Increased Awareness of Employees’ Lives

At the beginning of 2020, an invisible boundary existed between employees’ work experience and their lives away from work. However, that boundary exploded once the pandemic hit. Suddenly everyone could see into employees’ homes via zoom, lack of babysitters became a workday issue, and personal health issues were discussed freely and in public.

While some employees are understandably uncomfortable with the blurring of the work-life lines, 2020 made it clear to savvy HR professionals how important work-life balance actually is. The acknowledgement that, yes, employees have children who need education, care and safety actually made many employees grateful for the support they received from HR departments. HR departments were able to point to real-life examples of employees who performed better when their companies made choices to support work-life balance.

3. Mental Health and Well-being Will Be Prioritized

Related to the work-life balance issues that HR departments face in 2020 were concerns about employee mental health and well-being. Not too long ago, people used to boast about overwork and even about the personal well-being issues it caused, wearing their stress, insomnia, and burnout as badges of honor. Those attitudes vaporized under the amp ed up levels of stress caused by the pandemic, as organizations came face to face with the negative effect of employee burnout on performance.

Going forward, HR will take the lead in prioritizing employee wellness, realizing that organizations reap a big return when they take good care of their workers. Look for mental health and wellness days to become commonplace and for workplaces to find ways to encourage mental health.

4. Diversity and Inclusion Will Come to the Forefront

2020 was a year that sparked conversations that were sometimes uncomfortable about inclusion and representation at all levels of society and work. Many companies have had a commitment to ethnic diversity in hiring deep in their DNA for a long time, of course. But other companies are just beginning their education and commitment to diversity inclusion.

In 2021, expect to see HR companies focus on representation across their organizations — including in HR departments themselves. HR professionals will dig deep to create and employ the best educational materials to help employees understand and address systemic inequity, and they may have to be prepared to untangle the results of long-held discriminatory choices and practices in their companies. HR can take the lead in fostering that all-important atmosphere of psychological safety, and it can serve as the conduit for transparent conversations between executives and employees.

5. Flexible Time Choices Will Join Flexible Locations

In 2020, HR departments and businesses around the world learned how to be flexible when it came to location. In 2021, expect to see flexible time added to the loosened attitude toward work-from-home. After all, if office workers can prove their value even when they’re not physically at “work,” who says they should have to punch a time clock?

Many employees have already had to flex their schedules to accommodate the need to supervise their kids’ online schooling. Don’t be surprised if they see no reason why those accommodations shouldn’t continue. The shift to demanding specific outputs rather than specific hours may be something that many HR professionals will have to potentially accommodate, but it’s something that should boost productivity in the long run.

6. HR Will Face Challenges to Covid-related Requirements

What requirements is your organization likely to set for employees returning to the workplace? Will your company require proof of Covid-19 vaccination? Even if your organization decides not to demand vaccination, you may face this question in other ways. If your employees travel frequently, they may have to present proof of vaccination to fly on certain carriers. In addition, some employees, particularly those with pre-existing health conditions, may demand that the people working around them be vaccinated.

While any legal issues surrounding demands for vaccination are out of HR’s purview, you should be prepared for these issues to surface. It’s time for serious discussions about how your company will respond if key employees refuse to get vaccinated. And HR, of course, will have to deal with any slowdowns in returning to work that result from conflicts that arise.

At Marquee Staffing, we’re ready to partner with you to help you face some of the HR challenges that 2021 is likely to bring. Contact us today to see how we can help your organization return to full speed and full productivity.

Claudia Perez,
Sr. Vice President of Operations
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Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, there’s been a growing mental health crisis—and not just for COVID-19 patients. Studies show rising depression rates among the medical residents who care for them.

Can anything be done to help them?
Yes, says a research team led by Jason Siegel, a professor in the Division of Behavioral and Organizational Sciences (DBOS) at Claremont Graduate University (CGU).

Siegel’s team is involved in an ongoing research project with the Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), which operates some 186 hospitals and thousands of other care sites in the U.S. and abroad.

Siegel and his graduate student researchers are developing strategies to minimize stress and depression for this especially hard-hit segment of doctors.

Residents are workhorses: They face long hours and grueling schedules that affect their sleep and diets as well as normal healthy social interactions (ABC's *Grey’s Anatomy* makes their situation seem far more glamorous than it is).

“Before COVID-19, residents were already struggling,” Siegel explained. “They’re a very resilient group, but you can’t take them for granted, especially now. Taking better steps to ensure their health and well-being is beneficial not only for them, either. It’s obviously important because of their patients.”

What causes their burnout?
Siegel said the causes include long work hours, limited levels of autonomy, a lack of certainty about the future, and the perception that personal needs should be put aside.

To work under those conditions was hard enough before, but now “during COVID-19, it’s become even harder, and they’re feeling even more worn down,” he said.

So, the team’s HCA study will show hospital systems how to take a more humane approach in supporting them—especially when it comes to schedules and the number of hours they’re logging—and helping them keep their psychological capital as intact as possible.

Research results
The team conducted a survey of medical residents with data from 366 respondents. The average age of survey participants was 31, and the survey looked at a range of factors that contribute to their sustained experiences of stress.

Respondents reported that an increased workload and work schedule directly translated into a much greater degree of burnout. The team’s current survey fits into a greater effort that is also recording levels of resident stress pre-pandemic.

Over time, Siegel said, the team will create recommendations and interventions that hospitals can use to protect residents’ health. The team’s work also includes co-authoring a paper about their research results.

All of this captures the hallmarks of the CGU experience. At CGU, students work closely with leading faculty on meaningful research and can publish in scholarly journals while still in their programs.

“It’s never too soon to plunge into fieldwork. That’s what I tell all of my students,” Siegel said. “You shouldn’t have to wait until after graduation to conduct important, helpful work that’s going to improve someone’s life.”
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