

“In terms of a unique tool or technique used to help create a more sensitive or respectful workplace environment nothing beats one-on-one connections and conversations.”

Written by B.I.



Brad Federman

F&H Solutions Group

COO

<http://www.FHSolutionsGroup.com>

[F&H Solutions Group](#) (FHSG) is a national consulting firm specializing in human resources and labor relations matters. Their HR consultants have unmatched expertise and experience in working with all types and sizes of organizations in different industries in both the private and public sectors.

FHSG provides solutions for a better workplace. Clients value their ability to develop strategies that have a positive impact on their organization and save them time and money.



BusinessInterviews.com: What are some trends in the human resources industry that you're excited about?

Brad: I'm excited about several trends in the Human Resource industry. One of the first things I find exciting are the millennials. We have such great diversity in terms of generational differences in the workplace. It has opportunity to cause a lot of conflict, yet it also has an opportunity to create change. We have so many tools out there that promote networking and connections that are no longer hierarchical and yet we live in organizations that make it difficult to utilize those platforms in a productive manner because they are focused on hierarchy and outdated policies. When organizations catch up to where society is you have moments when things really work, where people truly connect at a unique level and a great deal of innovation occurs. I think this next generation is going to drive that, they are going to make that happen. They believe in workplace balance, being treated as an adult, jumping in and participating on the frontend. They want to put their imprint on what they create which means that our workplace needs to begin to represent that in the way that we establish our structures, our policies and procedures, etc.

The second trend I really am excited about is globalization. While that trend has been going on for a long time, what's unique and different is that it is continuing to infiltrate every aspect of business. It doesn't matter whether you work for a large company such as Microsoft, or you work for a small mom and pop shop, at some point the concept of diversity, globalization and dealing with different cultures is going to impact your business. I know small firms with one or two people in them that work across the globe and respond to clients of different backgrounds and nationalities. This presents a real challenge for a lot of miscommunication, etc. However, what is exciting is that people are getting better at understanding differences, embracing differences, learning about different cultures. We are becoming more mature in the way we view people around the globe.

The last trend is technology in HR. Now, I am not excited about the technology per se, I am excited about what possibilities it presents. You see, the history of HR is it's an outgrowth of the legal profession so it's been focused on risks and compliance. The truth is that in today's world with everything becoming more and more transparent due to technology and because of the type of worker in place it is imperative that HR is focused more on building a strong culture and relationships that drive business success and performance. Focusing on risks and compliance doesn't allow HR to do that. The idea of risks and compliance are going to go away would be foolish and unrealistic. However, with the amount of technology that is coming into play and the ability to outsource so many of these compliance functions to organizations that specialize in these areas allows HR an opportunity to shed what does not add value to the company and focus their activities on what does. That is exciting.

BusinessInterviews.com: Can you provide an example of a unique tool or technique that you've used to help encourage a more sensitive, respectful workplace environment?

Brad: In terms of a unique tool or technique used to help create a more sensitive or respectful workplace environment nothing beats one-on-one connections and conversations. People are always more respectful and sensitive to those they understand, that they know personally. They are also more respectful and sensitive to those that they really listen to. So one activity that we do to encourage this kind of situation is called "rant and rave." We have them stick two flipcharts up in the workplace for their team. One is rant, "What makes you rant about this place?" "What drives you crazy on a day to day basis?" And the other one is rave. "What makes you want to cheer?" "What makes you excited about working here?" And the leader gives people time to write things upon on those flip charts privately and when they are finished we encourage the leader of that team to have a conversation with their team about what is on those two flipcharts. The conversation is centered on two things (1) how do we remove, eliminate or reduce the things that drive us crazy, that make us rant; and (2) how do we increase or keep the things that make us rave, that we love? The wording is key because it is not how can I as the leader do it, it is how can "we" as a "team" do it? This should not be about the leader it should be about the group.

The second technique is that we create interviews for leaders to foster interesting conversations with their employees such as specific questions that we know will generate a conversation centered on personal things. In working with a major retailer, we had them take two or three questions that we supplied them and asked them to incorporate these questions into conversations with their people. They were shocked at what they found out. They learned about hardships and about the fact that many of their people are struggling financially. They realized that some of the things that they did as a leadership team actually caused their people to be frustrated or disengaged even though they had good intent. When they had this new information about their employees they were able to respond in kind and change the way people viewed them in the workplace. Because of this knowledge changes were made to make the workplace more respect oriented and fun. Ultimately it was all because they understood who their employees were and what they were going through.

BusinessInterviews.com: What are some common obstacles you see top-level managers encountering and how can they be avoided?

Brad: Top level managers are encountering a lot of obstacles in their daily work. One of the biggest obstacles that people face is their pace of work. Since technology follows us wherever we go managers struggle to be more efficient and one way is to multi-task. Unfortunately, when we try to get more done more efficiently the quality of our work and ability to problem solve goes down because we need space and time to really reflect. Also, when we multi-task we know that

things actually take longer, the quality of our work drops and we wind up sending a message to the people around us that they are not valued because doing things like answering emails while having conversations. Leaders who do a great job of handling this issue do it by knowing what to say “no” to. They do that to free up time and space to tackle complex challenges and problems. Problems that need buy in from different stake holders. The ability to say “no” to different things is what gives you an opportunity to truly say “yes” and commit to others.

The second obstacle that top level managers encounter is forgetting what it is like to be an employee, a worker on the line, or in an entry level position in today’s work world. They don’t know their employee’s concerns and don’t realize that employees struggle just to make their rent or pay the gas to get to work. They become further removed from their employees by only hanging out with other leaders, creating separate dining rooms, separate bathrooms, putting themselves on separate floors and creating environments where they sit up high and watch over the staff. This creates barriers between themselves and the people with who they work. When those barriers exist even with the best intent we take actions that cause people to disengage and promote significant distance between us and those with who we work. The best way we can avoid making this mistake is reducing those barriers by promoting cross-pollination between different levels of people so people can talk openly and freely and encourage people to build connections with each other, not just professional connections, but to get to know each other personally.

The client I referenced earlier, where we had them ask two or three questions of each employee is a good example. One of the “aha’s” they had was they had a lot of people who were struggling monetarily in their company. They had made a decision in some of the charity work they were doing to stop crediting people with giving their time and asking people just to give money. Some of the people they were asking to give money to a food bank were actually spending their time at the food bank because they needed food. The idea that their manager asked them to give money to the very same food bank that they have to go to so they can eat was emotionally distressing. When these leaders realized what they were doing to their people they had a very different perspective about their charitable efforts in the office. They had a very different perspective about the reaction employees had to the charitable efforts in their office and they would never had a sense of humility and a sense of empathy towards their employees if they had never asked such questions.

BusinessInterviews.com: Do you ever find that time-management is over looked as an important component to building a strong leadership foundation?

Brad: I think time management is actually not only over looked, I think it is misunderstood. There are some things you can tack with basic time management such as keeping meetings short, putting some rules in place not to waste time, but time management is a subset of something bigger which I would call choice

management. Every day we walk into work and we make choices. Where will we spend or not spend our time and how will we spend our time? I believe it is about choice management not time management. People look at time management as a date book, as scheduling in Outlook and it really is about priorities. The way we spend our time is a reflection of our priorities. Those people that struggle with time management are really struggling with priorities. Being a leader means understanding what has the most impact and then spending time and resources on those impactful activities. That's our core effort. Anything else either needs to be outsourced or removed, or managed efficiently using a system. The tasks that deserve our time, our efforts, that are truly core and important, those are our priorities and that is where our time and energy should be spent.

BusinessInterviews.com: What advice would you pass onto a manager who has been experiencing a long-term, high volume of staff absences?

Brad: The advice that I would give to a manager that is experiencing long-term, high volume of staff absences is to first look at them self and ask them self, what am I doing or not doing that is inherently contributing to the absences? Your team is a reflection of you. We create a shadow that we cast on our departments, our groups, our teams, based on our own behavior. Second they should look at how they are recruiting, hiring, and on-boarding new employees. Are they hiring for job and culture fit, not just skill set? People need to be good, but they also need to feel good (about what they are doing).

BusinessInterviews.com: Can you share with our readers why this is such an exciting time to be working for F&H Solutions Group?

Brad: When you ask me why it is such an exciting time to work at F&H Solutions Group, the reason has a lot to do with the trends in the human resource industry going on now. The complexity, challenges, excitement of the change that is happening in our organizations, and in the HR industry as a whole, makes working here fun. We are on the preface of significant shift in the way we operate, the way we think about human behavior and the way we interact with organizations. To me this is an thrilling moment in time and because the transformation in the workplace is creating some stimulating projects and a lot of growth. After all we like to learn and be challenge ourselves.

F&H Solutions Group is a creative, innovative organization that is reflecting today's organizational needs. I would much rather work for this firm because a lot of firms have not moved forward and are basically are stuck in the 80's and 90's workplace and mindset.