

HR checklist: 5 things to-do before the new year

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2020 has been... a year. But before HR professionals look hopefully to the future, they need to tie up loose ends to ensure their workforce starts the new year off on the right foot.

"This has been a strange year, and a stressful one for both employees and their companies," says Tauhidah Shakir, vice president of human resources and chief diversity officer at Paylocity, an Illinois-based HR software company. "Anything you can do to get ahead of things to wrap up this year is going to help alleviate that stress and get everyone off to a good start."

The pandemic has caused a lot of stress in the workplace. In November alone, 42% of Americans reported experiencing cases of anxiety or depression, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As an HR manager, Shakir believes that staying organized, and helping employees through end of year changes will help alleviate stress for everyone. To help other employers cope with these unprecedented times, she created an end of the year to-do list to help other HR professionals stay on track.

1. Note last payroll date

"Keep an eye on the payroll process, and be sure to note the first day of the New Year falls on a Friday so it doesn't take you by surprise," Shakir says. "You have to make sure people are getting their sick and bonus time. Have it all plotted out so you're not rushing at the last minute."

2. Open enrollment

"This isn't like any other open enrollment; HR needs to over communicate what benefits they're offering, and which ones are going to help their employees the most," she says. "We don't know how much things are going to change in the New Year; make sure employees are prepared by making them aware of any mental health, financial wellness and other benefits that can help."

3. Go paperless

"Since many of us are not all working in the same space right now, this is the perfect time to switch the workforce over to a completely paperless documentation process," Shakir says. "Email employees their end of year documents; it's going to be a lot less stressful than them waiting for it to come through the mail."

4. Employee feedback

"This year presented a lot of challenges for everyone, and you're going to want to take any lessons learned into the New Year," she says. "You're looking for lessons learned, ways to improve to make benefits more accessible to employees. There's always room for improvement, so be sure to be open to what employees are telling you."

5. Be flexible

"A lot of employees are fatigued about working from home and feeling like they have no control right now," Shakir says. "Remember employees have a lot on their plate right now, especially with the winter holidays going on, so be kind and flexible about when they work so they can juggle all their responsibilities."