

news & notes

THE GREATEST CHALLENGE

In a press release from Robert Half® Finance & Accounting (www.roberthalf.com/finance), a survey revealed that 39% of chief financial officers (CFOs) say the greatest challenge for finance and accounting professionals—when working with other departments—is learning to interact with a variety of personalities.

“For functions such as accounting and finance that interact with a broad cross-section of business units, navigating disparate protocols and personalities can be tricky,” said Paul McDonald, senior executive director for Robert Half. “The most successful and satisfied employees work well with just about everyone. Building relationships across departments ensures enhanced collaboration, smoother processes, and greater influence for practitioners.”

The survey was developed by Robert Half Finance & Accounting, a firm specializing in financial recruitment service. It was conducted by an independent research firm and is based on telephone interviews with more than 2,200 CFOs from a stratified random sample of companies in more than 20 of the largest U.S. metropolitan areas.



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5 tips for collaboration

Take these steps to work well with others

There's the nose-to-the-grindstone worker, the social butterfly and the visionary. Every office has a mix of personalities, and getting along with everyone is not easy.

Paul McDonald, senior executive director for Robert Half® Finance and Accounting, insists that showing mutual respect while working cooperatively is imperative. “Find ways to support each other, even if you don't all agree,” he advises. “A little empathy can go a long way to promoting goodwill and fostering a positive work environment for everyone.”

Here are five tips to improve cross-department collaboration:

1. **Build bridges.** The person you call out publicly in a budget meeting could be the one you need to sign off on an expense request next week. Instead of burning bridges, try to understand pressures your colleagues may be facing in their own jobs. This can give you greater insight into their approach and help you enhance rapport.
2. **Make sure everyone has a voice.** Meet frequently with team members and be sure to ask less vocal colleagues for their opinions so everyone has a chance to chime in. Also get to know employees in various departments so it's easier to work together in the future.
3. **Don't put off the inevitable.** Avoiding confrontation doesn't address the root of a problem or help to foster collaboration. Take the time to peacefully resolve work conflicts, and listen as much as you talk during these conversations.
4. **Skip the silo mentality.** Companies that readily share information across departments tend to see greater efficiencies and higher staff morale. Providing others with insight into processes also helps them understand the time or resources needed for various cross-department initiatives.
5. **Put yourself out there.** Spend time outside the office with colleagues to strengthen relationships at work. Chat at company gatherings or invite coworkers from other departments to lunch to get to know them better.

For additional commentary on why successful cross-departmental collaboration is so critical for accounting and finance teams, read McDonald's post here: www.roberthalf.com/finance/blog/confronting-the-challenges-of-cross-departmental-collaboration.

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NONTRADITIONAL WORK DAY

More than 1,000 full-time workers in information technology, financial services, sales, and professional and business services—industries that historically have more traditional work hours—participated in a nationwide study, conducted online by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder (www.careerbuilder.com), to discuss their habits and attitudes toward the nine-to-five work day.

According to the survey, 63% of workers in these industries believe “working nine to five” is an outdated concept, and a significant number have a hard time leaving the office mentally. Nearly one in four (24%) check work e-mails during activities with family and friends.

Today, many workers in these industries find themselves working outside of the traditional 8-hour time frame: 50% of these workers say they check or respond to work e-mails outside of work, and 38% say they continue to work outside of office hours.

Though staying connected to the office outside of required office hours may seem like a burden, most of these workers (62%) perceive it as a choice rather than an obligation.



Holistic health

Know the mind/body connection

The first full week of October is “**Mental Illness Awareness Week**” (www.nami.org/miaw), which makes it a good time to discuss this important wellness issue. In a blog entry called “Morbidity and Mental Illness” (www.nimh.nih.gov/about/director/2015/mortality-and-mental-disorders.shtml), Dr. Thomas R. Insel, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, discusses a study that shows the median reduction in life expectancy among those with mental illness was 10.1 years less than the general population.

Insel, citing a paper (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25671328) in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, says the paper “does support the longstanding view that people with mental disorders do not die of their condition; they die from the same chronic health conditions as the rest of the population”

While Insel writes that the study’s results show, “17.5 percent of deaths appeared related to ‘unnatural causes’ such as suicide and unintentional injuries,” he notes that “[m]ost of this early mortality was attributed to ‘natural causes’ such as acute and chronic co-morbid conditions (heart diseases, pulmonary diseases, [and] infectious diseases).”

“This is an important insight because it means that mortality may be reduced by addressing the high rates of behaviors such as smoking, substance use, physical inactivity, and poor diet that contribute to chronic and deadly medical conditions,” he says.

Halloween fashion

Dress appropriately for company parties

A website hosted by experts from the fashion industry (halloweenfabrics.net/2010/09/20/workplace-costumes) cautions that you’d better be careful when selecting costumes to wear in the workplace lest you offend someone—or hurt your career by looking unprofessional.

Think about your company culture, your coworkers’ sensibilities, and your own workplace image when choosing a costume. Avoid anything “revealing, lewd, crude,” says the website, or “discriminatory ... religious, or controversial.” Remember that the purpose of a company celebration is to bring people together, not pull people apart.

The panel suggests that home-created costumes are best because they are unique, fit well, and can be fine-tuned for appropriateness and comfort. They are usually less expensive, too.

Also, since work costumes have to be worn most of the day, comfortable materials are wise. The type of job—and safety—must also be taken into consideration. For example, flowing sleeves are dangerous around machinery, and some fabrics would be inappropriate near hot work.

The safest bet? Something unrevealing and inoffensive. The recommendation of the panel at halloweenfabrics.net is to dress as your dream career, which is safe for both men and women.