

## RESEARCH NOTE:

### Creating a Holistic People Culture Camping World



## Creating a Holistic People Culture at Camping World

### The Interview

Kimberly Bourne is an Instructional Design Manager for Camping World, a North American camping and recreation retailer. She was contacted as part of Brandon Hall Group's research on *Creating an Employee-Centric Culture*, which began as a survey in March 2022. The research on this subject was to highlight practices of organizations that were bringing on or maintaining services and processes that serve the employee first, but still help the organization reach its goals.

### Complications

One of the more striking data points to come out of the *Creating an Employee-Centric Culture* research was that only 3% of organizations strongly agreed with the statement, "Employees feel their work stress is manageable." From Kimberly's perspective, that is a strong contributing factor to the Great Resignation phenomenon. She says that "If only 3% of organizations strongly agree that the work stress is manageable, then there is a good chance that no matter where you go, you are going to encounter that same issue. What I see happening with friends, family and colleagues is that it is easier to get a pay increase and negotiate more flexible terms (i.e. work-from-home, flextime, etc.) when you are looking for a job than it is in your current position."

### Philosophy and Strategy

When it comes to what makes a workplace more "employee-centric," Kimberly is quick to point out that her area of expertise is Learning & Development, so that is the perspective she approaches this issue from. However, she does feel that employees "... are looking for the focus to be switched toward their growth and opportunities. They want to desperately know how to be successful and that if they are, they will have opportunities for a future at a company."

She goes on to submit that employees are looking for companies that value them as a whole person, not just a unit of productivity, something that Brandon Hall Group has heard in other interviews on this subject. Kimberly says that "They [employees] want the company to acknowledge and support their families and home lives, their development in general (tuition support, mentoring, etc.) and their physical, mental and emotional well-being. It can't always be a focus on the KPIs of the business. I believe that as companies shift their focus toward supporting those areas and giving them the tools to be successful — both in the present and long-term — the KPIs will naturally be met and likely exceeded, causing the growth and success of the company to rapidly increase."

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#### Consequences

In the same *Employee-Centric Culture* study, Brandon Hall Group asked respondents their level of agreement with the following statement: “Managers display all the qualities employees would expect in a great leader” and only 7% strongly agreed with the statement. Kimberly feels that this is also a strong contributing factor to why so many employees are taking this time to look at other opportunities. As she puts it, “As the saying goes, employees don’t generally quit the organization, instead, they quit their managers. In many organizations, they want to promote from within, but don’t always do so until *after* they have learned these leadership/management skills. Their focus is on whether or not they are meeting KPIs rather than if they have also developed leadership skills. The result is that these managers don’t realize their goal should be to partner with their employees to meet the KPIs, which can be done through focusing on the employees and showing them how to be successful in their jobs.”

Once again, this is in line with other research from Brandon Hall Group, specifically that many organizations are having a hard time getting employees to understand how performance is evaluated for their roles.

#### Insights

Organizations such as Camping World are seeing these issues as they develop, though, and are taking steps to create that more employee-centric culture. Kimberly’s company has been shifting its focus toward employee well-being for many years, and has only seen that focus sharpen in the last few pandemic years. She explains that this is happening, “Not only because they genuinely want to support their employees who have experienced more stress, heartache and challenges over the last two years, but also because they are learning the true cost of turnover and want to regain stability in our organizations. I see our organization shifting away from basic employee “benefits” packages and turning toward a “total rewards” approach designed to fill gaps not addressed in earlier models.”

Finally, Kimberly also points out that her organization is, “investing more into training their employees to be successful.” The end result is more resources invested in leadership development, manager/employee relationships, skills growth, career mapping and generally taking a more holistic approach to the employee experience.

*-Cliff Stevenson, Principal HR and TA Analyst, Brandon Hall Group*

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### About Brandon Hall Group

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