

FP WEEKLY CHECKLIST: MICRO-UPSKILLING YOUR WORKFORCE

Insights

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Each week, FP Weekly members receive a practical and cutting-edge checklist of issues to consider, action steps to take, and goals to accomplish to ensure you remain on the top of your game when it comes to workplace relations and employment law compliance. This week we look at micro-upskilling your workforce.

What is “Micro-Upskilling”?

It’s a simple concept. When employers facilitate a process to ensure workers receive training and education on a weekly basis to learn a new skill or hone an existing one, that’s micro-upskilling.

- Note that the emphasis is on the **employer’s** role in the process, not the employee’s. Obviously the worker needs to be committed to and invested in the process, but it is incumbent upon the employer to put the wheels in motion and provide the resources to keep the process going smoothly and successfully.
- Also note that the process requires a **weekly** commitment to teaching and learning – but we could be talking about as little as an hour per week. This is upskilling on a “micro” basis.

_____ Determine where the skills shortages exist in your organization. Don’t just focus on the ones that you know can only be solved by hiring additional employees. Broaden your thinking to encompass how your existing workforce can fill the open gaps.

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Raymond W. Perez
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Determine whether there are necessary areas of training based on identified operational deficiencies or risk assessments you have conducted (history of theft, allegations, data breaches, ESG failings, etc.) and plan for such areas. In some cases, government investigators from the Department of Justice will examine whether you offer “off based” training in this manner when determining whether to pursue action against your organization for perceived violations.

Take an inventory on the kinds of training and development programs you have in place related to the areas where shortages exist.

Survey your workforce about their comfort levels regarding the resources you have available to them in the areas of focus, especially those that are technology related. Often, employees feel intimidated and do not want to ask for help that they don't understand how to operate programs. Your problems can be addressed by offering additional training.

Offer courses, lectures, and trainings in identified areas (either in person or online, either taught by your own staff or third parties) in bite-sized fragments over the course of several weeks or months, one hour (or less) at a time.

Tailor your training sessions to be appropriate for your audience – in form, language, method, and level of interactivity.

Ensure your offerings are brief but consistently helpful. It is easier to create a habit by providing sustained activities than even if each session is brief in nature – than providing inconsistent and unreliable services.

Consider only preparing 45 minutes of material per session, leaving plenty of room for overrun or questions. Most individuals lose the ability to concentrate and retain information around the 45-minute mark, and your workers will appreciate the brevity and efficiency around shorter meetings.

Measure the effectiveness of the training sessions through testing, surveying, polling, or other analytical means. Evaluate whether you need to re-offer training sessions to employees who "fail" portions of the training.

Make sure you compensate your participants for the time spent on the upskilling programming, regardless of whether they attend the sessions during traditional working hours.

Develop "micro-credentials" that you hand out to workers who attain a certain level of proficiency or attend a certain number of trainings. Many workers are motivated by the gamification aspect of reaching a goal and getting a credential, and the credential can be added to their resume or LinkedIn profile to make them feel even more activated in the workplace.

Determine whether you want to keep records of your employees' participation in the upskilling sessions. On the one hand, they could be helpful information for personnel records to demonstrate an employee's proficiency and involvement in their development. On the other hand, they could create evidence of a manager's deficiencies if leadership personnel do not regularly attend their sessions. Work with your legal counsel to determine how to handle this aspect.

Conclusion

We will continue to provide weekly checklists to assist employers in their workplace law compliance, so make sure

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