**BEST PRACTICES AND RECENT INSIGHTS**

(as of **March 10, 2025**) that HR leaders and legal counsel can use to maintain employee engagement and well-being in the face of uncertainty—whether driven by changing regulations, tariffs, or broader economic concerns.

**1. STRENGTHEN FINANCIAL WELLNESS SUPPORT**

1. **Offer 401(k) Education and Guidance**
   * **Why**: According to a **January 2025 survey by the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI)**, 73% of workers reported increased stress over financial planning amid economic volatility.
   * **How**:
     + Invite 401(k) brokers or financial advisors to host virtual or in-person sessions on retirement planning, especially given concerns around potential tariff impacts on certain industries.
2. **Promote Emergency Savings Options**
   * **Why**: The **2024 SHRM Financial Wellness Study** found that employees with a small emergency fund reported 40% less financial stress than those without.
   * **How**:
     + Partner with banks or credit unions to facilitate automatic payroll deductions into emergency savings accounts.
     + Consider matching contributions or incentives to encourage participation.

**2. Support Mental Health & Well-Being**

1. **Enhance Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)**
   * **Why**: The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** and the **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)** note a continued rise in anxiety and depression linked to economic uncertainty and global events.
   * **How**:
     + Offer free or subsidized mental health counseling through EAPs.
     + Provide resources on stress management, mindfulness, and coping strategies for employees worried about tariffs, job security, or general economic turbulence.
2. **Promote Flexible Work Arrangements**
   * **Why**: A **February 2025 Gartner HR Survey** revealed that flexible scheduling and remote/hybrid options correlate with a 35% decrease in reported burnout.
   * **How**:
     + Implement or maintain remote/hybrid options where feasible.
     + Encourage managers to be flexible with work hours to accommodate personal obligations, reducing stress and turnover.

**3. Communicate Transparently and Often**

1. **Regular Company Updates**
   * **Why**: According to a **Q1 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer** update, 74% of employees want more frequent communication about organizational direction and economic changes.
   * **How**:
     + Hold monthly or biweekly town halls to address potential impacts of tariffs, legislative changes, and overall business health.
     + Provide clear, concise updates on any changes to policies or benefits, highlighting how they may affect employees’ day-to-day work.
2. **Two-Way Feedback Channels**
   * **Why**: When employees can voice concerns and receive timely responses, it fosters trust and engagement.
   * **How**:
     + Use anonymous pulse surveys or suggestion boxes to gather real-time feedback on employee concerns.
     + Offer “Ask HR” sessions or manager-led listening sessions to tackle pressing questions about market conditions or potential layoffs.

**4. Invest in Skill Development & Career Growth**

1. **Upskilling & Reskilling Programs**
   * **Why**: The **2024 World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report** emphasized that rapid economic shifts and new trade policies (including tariffs) require adaptable workforces.
   * **How**:
     + Provide employees with training opportunities in high-demand areas (e.g., digital skills, data analysis, cross-functional competencies).
     + Consider job rotation or mentorship programs to help employees broaden their skill sets and remain marketable.
2. **Career Path Transparency**
   * **Why**: A **LinkedIn Workforce Learning Report (January 2025)** found that employees who feel supported in career development are 2.5 times more likely to remain at their current employer.
   * **How**:
     + Clearly outline growth paths and required competencies for each role.
     + Incorporate regular development discussions into performance reviews and one-on-one meetings.

**5. Foster a Positive Culture Amid Uncertainty**

1. **Recognize Achievements**
   * **Why**: Public recognition and appreciation can boost morale, especially when external news is largely negative.
   * **How**:
     + Implement peer-to-peer recognition tools or hold monthly “wins” meetings to highlight successes.
     + Tie recognition to company values, reinforcing a shared sense of purpose.
2. **Encourage Team Building and Social Connection**
   * **Why**: **A 2025 Gallup poll** indicates employees with strong social connections at work are 25% more likely to report higher job satisfaction, even in stressful economic periods.
   * **How**:
     + Host informal gatherings (virtual or on-site) to build camaraderie.
     + Organize volunteer or community service events that give employees a shared mission beyond work tasks.

**Key Takeaways**

* **Financial Security**: Proactively engage with 401(k) brokers or financial advisors to help employees navigate economic changes.
* **Mental Health**: Provide robust EAPs and flexible work arrangements to counter rising stress levels.
* **Communication**: Be transparent about business health, tariff impacts, and organizational changes; listen to employee feedback.
* **Professional Growth**: Offer skill-building opportunities and clear career paths to foster resilience and retention.
* **Legal Compliance**: Monitor evolving regulations (e.g., tariffs, DEI scrutiny, labor laws) and adjust HR policies accordingly.
* **Positive Culture**: Recognize achievements, encourage team bonding, and maintain a supportive workplace environment.

By adopting these strategies, employers can help their workforce stay motivated, engaged, and prepared—even as government policies and economic conditions remain in flux.