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LAUREN WILLIAMS



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Innovative, "Scrappy" HR for the 21st century

By Kathy Hunt

No matter the size or type, at some point, all businesses require the deft skills of a human resources (HR) expert. From defining workplace culture and onboarding new staff to handling compensation packages and labor law compliances, an HR specialist provides knowledgeable, tactful management of innumerable employee-related matters. Noticed a dip in company morale? Wondering how to encourage employee education, growth, and advancement? Unsure how to handle sensitive situations, such as mediating coworker conflict, company downsizing, or terminating a problematic employee? However complicated or fraught a situation may be, an accomplished HR associate knows how to get the results that businesses need.

Unfortunately, not all organizations have the budget or bandwidth for a dedicated HR department. That's where Lauren Williams and her team at Workplace Harmony come to the rescue. To help businesses navigate the diverse and ever-changing landscape of today's workplace in a flexible, fast-paced fashion, in 2019, Lauren Williams launched her HR company Workplace Harmony. After seventeen years in corporate HR, Williams yearned to blow the cobwebs off the old, staid approach to HR and reinvigorate it with authenticity, open communication, empathy, passion, and charisma. She envisioned an outsourcing service that nurtured workplace health, wellness, culture, and engagement. With this in mind, she designed Workplace Harmony to "celebrate, cultivate, and harmonize dynamic workplace cultures for passionate entrepreneurs through open dialogue and creative strategy."



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“We’re new-school HR, not ‘let’s just do your compliance,’” said Williams, who holds a master’s degree in Organization Leadership and is the CEO at Workplace Harmony. “We want to make you think about doing things in a new way and help you enhance your company. Let’s look at how we all show up better together.”

A range of solutions for a range of business needs

Although Workplace Harmony has a physical office at 168 West Ride Pike #208 in Royersford, with clients in Chicago, New York, California, and other locales, its reach is nationwide. It supports Private Equity Companies and their Portfolio groups, and obtains the majority of its clientele through firm referrals and word-of-mouth. Williams’ service specializes in entrepreneurship, particularly startups, many of which focus on green energy, e-commerce, sports and social media, or beauty.

“With small businesses, we work on engagement and retention,” Williams said.

Because no two businesses possess identical goals or quandaries, Workplace Harmony has developed four HR support service contracts, all of which can be adapted to meet a client’s specific needs. Service contracts last for no longer than six months and are tiered to company size and requirements. See the sidebar “Amplify impact with a Workplace Harmony service contract” for details about each.

It makes no difference which service package a client selects — all profit from Workplace Harmony’s “boots on the ground” approach. Lead HR Advisor Megan Keough explained the company’s interactive methods. “What we mean when we refer to a ‘boots on the ground’ approach is that we actively engage with clients, have the ability and eagerness to be physically present, and participate directly in the processes relevant to the client’s needs,” she said, adding, “The benefits of this approach that we’ve seen — and our clients could attest to — are improved communication, real-time problem solving, and building personal connections with the teams within an organization. It allows us a better understanding of the organization’s business and work environment, increases responsiveness, enhances client satisfaction, makes us even more adaptable to change, presents a strategic collection, and much more.”

Being part of the team

When Keough and other advisors visit an organization, they look at what’s working and what isn’t. They sit down with employees and key stakeholders and solicit their feedback. “We meet with the people who are getting the work done and find out what’s holding them back,” Williams said. “A lot of times, we’re automating processes to make things quicker and more efficient. The biggest thing we’re doing, though, is opening up communication, explaining a change that’s taking place and saying, ‘Here’s why.’ We make people feel supported, cared for, and in the loop.”

Workplace Harmony’s advisors become the employees’ liaison, coaching them through difficult work situations. Often, employees don’t realize that Williams and her team are consultants and not part of their company.

“Workplace Harmony isn’t just another standard HR firm,” Melissa Brenner, a Senior HR Advisor at Workplace Harmony explains. “Yes, we address HR topics and work with clients on HR issues but our services are much broader than HR. **Our goal isn’t to make you HR compliant or HR diligent but to bring life to your people and culture and the compliance and diligence is just part of that,”** she said.

All of Workplace Harmony advisors have years, if not decades, of HR experience, giving the company a competitive edge over other, less established HR firms. Williams and her team have been exposed to the complexities and nuances of business, including the dynamics of working with a family business and why you can’t just fire the owner’s brother or demote a sister, Williams said. Her team of Advisors take time to understand each business and makes recommendations that aren’t one-size-fits-all.

Michelle May, who is a Senior Human Resources Advisor at Workplace Harmony, summed up Workplace Harmony’s commitment to its customers. “We give the client 200-percent effort, just as if we were their internal HR,” she said.

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Infusing office culture diversity, equity, and inclusion

All employees want to feel that they belong, are valued and safe, and can succeed at work. Those who don't have that sense of fidelity and security tend to be less productive and are likely to leave for more supportive and satisfying situations. A 2021 study from Deloitte and the Manufacturing Institute indicated that businesses with open, positive, and diverse atmospheres perform better, are more innovative, and possess a competitive advantage in their fields.

Workplace Harmony values the concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) and their impact in the workplace and has several staff members versed in DEIB protocol. Developed in-house, Workplace Harmony's DEIB micro-courses teach business leaders how to foster an inclusive workplace culture. They promote the recruitment of a qualified individuals from an array of different backgrounds. Its trainings aim to ensure that employees are prized by their employers and motivated to contribute fully to the company's mission.

"Many leaders are recognizing that embracing diversity and promoting inclusion isn't just the right thing to do morally, but it also brings tangible benefits to their bottom line. Companies are realizing that diverse teams are more innovative, creative, and better equipped to address the needs of an increasingly diverse customer base," said Domonique Revere, Ph.D. Revere is the Lead DEIB Advisor and a Senior HR Advisor at Workplace Harmony.

Revere added, "Moreover, as societal awareness around DEIB issues continues to grow, businesses are

under increasing pressure to demonstrate their commitment to these principles both internally and externally. Training is just the tip of the iceberg. These sessions need to be supported by policies, procedures, and principles."

Among the micro-courses that Workplace Harmony clients can purchase and use to create their own DEI roadmap are Cultural Competence Training, Conflict Resolution Training, and the ABCs of DEI with Dr. Dom. Workplace Harmony also assists with inclusion resource groups and inclusive leadership development.

Time and again, research shows that companies promoting the principles of DEIB can expect employees to feel emboldened to take creative risks, pursue original ideas, and hone their problem-solving skills. They also become more aware of possible biases and confront them in a faster, equitable manner. Workplace Harmony helps to facilitate these positive changes.

Online, cost-effective Scappy HR

Tailored to small businesses under 20 employees, Workplace Harmony's Scappy HR is an online, cost-effective HR solution. It walks people through the lifecycle of an employee, supplying interview questions, hiring tips, a guide on how to assess job candidates, and a 12-week onboarding plan that includes what to send new hires before they start working. It also includes an offer letter that can be downloaded and customized to feature a company's logo and information. After 30 days, Scappy HR users receive a new-hire check-in so that managers can assess how the new employee is doing and if expectations are being met. Williams developed this proprietary tool in-house; she filmed the videos and the team produced handy worksheets and templates.

True to Workplace Harmony's dedication to DEIB, Scappy HR delves into how to build an inclusive, thriving culture. "We talk about tips to make your culture really strong, but still make it you," Williams said. "How do we think broader so that everyone feels welcome and feels like they have a stake in the game?"

Scappy HR also explains how to lead high performing teams. Helpful to anyone who oversees one or more people, it shares hacks, tips, and tricks on how to manage and spark growth, have difficult conversations, and give feedback. Williams noted that Scappy HR's "Revamping Performance" segment discusses using "workplace love language" to communicate appreciation and produce a positive work environment.

The final module deals with discipline and how to terminate an employee without experiencing any legal backlash. "Our hope is that you never have to use that, but we have had people buy Scappy HR for the sole purpose of reducing liability when letting someone go," Williams said.

Because Scappy HR is based on Pennsylvania law, Williams advises out-of-state clients to have their legal departments review the offer letter and any other legally-based policies.

In addition to online resources, Scappy HR affords customers three hours of monthly consultations with their own "HR Bestie." This is a Workplace Harmony HR Advisor who answers questions and brainstorm solutions to unique situations that may arise in the workplace. Businesses that sign up for the resource likewise have access to its Facebook page where they can pose questions and get answers from peers and fellow Scappy HR users.

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With Scrappy HR, there is no long-term commitment. Customers pay \$300 per month and can cancel at any time. It's a handy online tool that extends beyond the usual nuts-and-bolts of hiring.

Keeping an eye on business and community welfare

Along with aiding businesses large and small, Williams and her team actively assist a variety of nonprofit community organizations. For the past two years, Williams has served on the Board of Pottstown Beacon of Hope, which provides shelter and support to the unhoused. She sits on the board's HR committee, holds HR workshops for board members, and helps with questions around hiring and challenges. She is also on the board of the Foundation for Pottstown Education, which supports educational and charitable activities that enrich the education of students in the Pottstown School District. "We do a lot of fundraising so that the students in Pottstown have access to resources, the arts, field trips and exposure to things that sometimes they may not have the funds for," Williams said.

Besides Williams' pro bono activities, Workplace Harmony works with animal rescues, church associations, rec centers, and clothing donation organizations, many of which utilize Scrappy HR.

For additional information about Workplace Harmony, consult the company's website at <https://workplaceharmonyhr.com> or email your inquiries to Advisor@WorkplaceHarmonyHR.com.

Amplify impact with a Workplace Harmony service contract

To best meet each client's HR needs, Workplace Harmony has created four customizable service contracts. All are scalable and possess no long-term commitments. None include staff recruiting, payroll, or benefits services.

Perfect for companies from two to 100-plus employees, Dynamic Human Operations offers three tiers of HR support. Human Ops Ignited supplies small businesses with a minimum of 10 hours with an HR advisor and admin each month. Starting at \$200 per hour, this category fits best with businesses consisting of 20 employees or less. For entities with 20 to 50 workers, Human Ops Amplified provides retainer access to a senior HR advisor and one admin for a minimum of \$3,500 per month. The third tier, Human Ops Optimized, serves companies with staffs ranging from 50 to over 100 people. Beginning at \$7,500 per month, Human Ops Optimized includes one HR director, one senior advisor, and an admin.

Large companies with a minimum of \$50 million in yearly revenue or over 100 employees profit from either of the Advanced Human Operations contracts. Tailored to private equity-backed firms, Chief Vibes Officer (CVO) gives retainer access to Lauren Williams, who serves as fractional vice-president of HR, and one additional team member. CVO Boosted amps up its services with retainer access to a vice-president, two directors, two senior advisors, and two admins in HR. The cost of these Advanced Human Operations tiers is either \$25,000 or \$60,000 per month.

Sometimes, businesses need a bit of assistance with one-time HR projects. For these scenarios, Workplace Harmony has three types of Organizational Enhancements and Evolution — Innovation Tech Wiz, Cultural Enhancement, and Change Management. As its name indicates, Innovation Tech Wiz aids in implementing innovative technology such as employee data systems and paperless solutions. Cultural Enhancement offers strategies for increasing employee satisfaction and retention, while Change Management eases major changes and transitions at an organization. Each has a one-time cost that starts at \$7,500.

Companies facing mergers and acquisition will appreciate Workplace Harmony's M&A packages. These feature pre- and post-sale services such as risk assessment, employee onboarding, management integration, and overall project management and information gathering. For companies with fewer than 200 employees, Workplace Harmony offers Amplified Acquisitions, which starts at \$25,000. Companies with more than 200 employees have Optimized Acquisitions, which begins at \$50,000. Both tiers incorporate a combined 30 years of experience in mergers and acquisitions as well as the energetic, can-do approach that Workplace Harmony delivers to each client.