

17 HACKS FOR SMALL HR TEAMS

Build efficient processes that make your team wonder how you get it all done.



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INTRODUCTION

While mid-sized companies grow rapidly, we've noticed a trend: their HR teams stay lean. Many of these companies operate with HR teams with as few as one member. These HR pros have to keep up with the rapid influx of paperwork, job applications, and employee complaints—not to mention payroll and benefits. Especially in these high-growth conditions, efficiency is key to tackling the vast set of HR responsibilities. But fear not, we're here for you.

When you can expedite basic administrative duties, you get more time to focus on employee engagement and company culture initiatives. However, finding the time to invest in strategy can be especially challenging for one-person HR teams. Technology can help [increase efficiency and productivity](#) in any field, but there are also a variety of on-the-job hacks that can help you achieve business goals with speed and accuracy.

How can you save time on core HR functions and dedicate yourself to more human initiatives? We've compiled a list of tips and tactics for each stage of the HR lifecycle in order to help you operate like an army—no matter how big your team.

Ready? Let's get started.



1

TALENT ACQUISITION

Optimize your recruiting practices.

The power has shifted: qualified candidates now have their choice of great jobs at top companies. It's not always easy to set your company apart in a competitive market, especially when you're strapped for time. Follow the below tips to increase efficiency in your recruiting process to bring in top talent.

HACK #1

Hire En Masse

Moving candidates through the job application process can be tedious and finding the perfect candidate takes time. A great way to simplify the process is to host a hiring fair. By inviting candidates onsite, you can tackle multiple open positions across different departments all in one go, rather than one-by-one. Give each applicant a 15-20 minute interview with hiring managers. You may not make a hire on the spot, but you're able to screen multiple candidates and get manager feedback all at once. After the fair, sync up with hiring managers and arrange to bring back any promising candidates for a final interview.

HACK #2

Onboarding Classes

As with hiring, leading the same new hire onboarding process on an ad hoc basis can be a time-consuming and repetitive process. Rather than onboarding employees one at a time, try to line up employee start dates across the company to support a more efficient process. Between all the forms that need to be filled out and basic employee information, proper new hire onboarding can take a full day or more. By onboarding new hires as a class rather than managing individual start dates, you can put many hours back in your week.

HACK #3

Internships

While interns should be hired with the same care and consideration as full time employees, [recruiting interns](#) can be an efficient way to fill open roles at the company. You can think of internships as an extended interview, with the possibility to turn into a full-time position. You'll save on time and costs because many interns are inbound applicants, they receive onboarding and exposure to the culture, and if hired, they won't be starting from scratch.

HACK #4

Employer Brand

Attracting talent takes a combination of several factors—reputable benefits, employee retention, job satisfaction, and more recently, [branding](#). Building up your company's employer brand can help you reach a broader talent pool, as candidates start to know and recognize your company. A great reputation can decrease the amount of outbound recruiting needed to fill positions. Work closely with your leadership and marketing teams to build and execute on a shared vision of your employer brand, and make sure it's reflected across platforms like Glassdoor and LinkedIn.



2

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Save time with ongoing reviews.

Best practices around performance reviews are rapidly changing. Annual compensation review cycles are becoming a thing of the past, replaced by 360s, continuous feedback, and the separation of performance and compensation reviews. These new models of talent management can help save time for HR teams. Here are three ways that you can evolve your performance review cycle to increase efficiency.

HACK #5

Ongoing Feedback and 1:1s

One of the best ways to optimize performance reviews is to implement ongoing feedback. When you train managers to provide continuous feedback, it makes the formal review cycle a breeze for everyone—including HR. In this model, managers are encouraged to meet with their direct reports on an ongoing basis to provide them with real-time feedback.

With continuous feedback, no employee should be surprised come performance review time. If there is room for growth, the employee should already be aware and working closely with the manager to improve. How does this help HR? It takes much of the employee stress out of annual reviews, and simply asks managers to document the conversations they are already having. The most effective way to ensure this ongoing feedback happens is to encourage regular 1:1 check ins where employees and managers can catch up each week.

HACK #6

360 Reviews

Another way to minimize the stress of performance reviews is to implement a 360 review cycle where employees review themselves, their managers, and their peers. This paints a more holistic picture of employee performance and draws attention to any discrepancies between self-assessment and peer-assessment. This can also save you the detective work of hounding managers to provide clearer context.

HACK #7

The Right Tools

Utilize tools that allow you to track and manage talent [all in one place](#). Have employees set goals at the beginning of each quarter and track their progress over time. If they don't achieve their goals, challenge them to self-assess, uncover why this happened, and identify what to do in the future to overcome similar roadblocks. If you can align goals and performance reviews in a single tool, it will be much more efficient to track employee performance.



3

BENEFITS

Communication is key.

The world of benefits can be confusing for HR and employees alike. Crafting a robust benefits package and adequately communicating it to the team is incredibly time-consuming. Not to mention, this process requires ongoing attention as employee needs and the insurance landscape evolve. Keep these four considerations in mind as you craft your benefits offering.

HACK #8

Core Benefits

When it comes to [benefits satisfaction](#), the most important place to start is the core. While flashy perks can contribute to attracting and retaining employees, healthcare benefits lay the foundation, and without a solid foundation, the rest of your benefits are essentially meaningless. Stay up to date on trending perks, but also work closely with your broker to ensure you have a strong core health insurance offering.

HACK #9

Employee Wants and Needs

Be sure to build your benefits package around the [actual needs and wants of your employees](#). If you have a very young team, a paternity leave policy may not resonate the same way it would with a workforce that is in a more family-centric stage of life. Don't waste valuable budget on perks that employees don't use. Get to know your employees and actively solicit feedback, so you can craft a benefits plan that employees use and love.

HACK #10

Benefits Communication

The vast majority of employees don't have a clear understanding of their healthcare plan. With the rapidly [rising cost of healthcare](#), plans have gotten increasingly expensive and confusing. If your employees don't speak the language of deductibles, premiums, copays, and supplementary funds such as HSAs and FSAs, how can they make informed insurance decisions? Communicate your offering in a variety of formats to ensure employees have access to the answers to their questions. Use posters, email, videos, and meetings to clearly communicate available plans to employees.

HACK #11

Benefits Surveys

The best way to ensure you maximize your benefits spend is to get feedback directly from employees. Do a regular pulse check and benefits survey to make sure you stay on top of employee needs. Ask questions, like which benefits they like most, and provide open-ended opportunities for employees to suggest new benefits. This is especially important after you introduce something new.



4

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Don't neglect company culture.

Employee engagement is a key driver of culture, productivity, and retention. Employees who are happy and passionate are crucial to a company's success, so this topic deserves HR's time and innovation. However, this doesn't have to be a siloed effort, like many other pieces of HR. Here's how to involve employees as you build your company culture.

HACK #12

Survey, Survey, Survey

Employee engagement is such a broad topic that it's hard to know where to start. Why not ask employees directly what motivates them? While they may be hesitant at first to give honest feedback, understanding what's working and what's not in terms of company culture is essential to building a more engaging workplace. Don't be afraid to ask for employee Net Promoter Score ratings or constructive feedback. Even if the results are not yet pretty, it's a great way to benchmark and measure your progress as you introduce new initiatives.

HACK #13

Stay Interviews

As much as you need to learn what isn't working, you should also look to find out what is working and why tenured employees are choosing to stay. [Stay interviews](#) on an ad hoc basis or once an employee reaches a certain tenure milestone can be a great way to get this information. While this may sound like a time-consuming task, the upfront effort will pay off, as it's less than the work required when an employee leaves. Stay interviews can help build trust with existing employees, inspire new cultural initiatives, and decrease attrition.

HACK #14

Work with Other Departments

HR teams at any stage can utilize the skills of other departments to both help engagement initiatives and to establish a sense of company unity. The finance team can help answer questions around payroll or budgeting, marketing can help with employer branding and collateral, and the C-suite can help define company values. Don't hesitate to engage with these teams—your time is valuable and their contributions can benefit everyone.

HACK #15

Don't Forget to Keep It Personal

The most engaged employees feel some level of personal connection with their peers and managers, so it's important that HR has a physical presence in the office. Consider walking around the office in the morning to say hello. Remember names, acknowledge life events, and even take employees to lunch or coffee to get to know them better. Engagement starts with a personal touch, so take time to get to know employees beyond their W-4s.



5

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Where does your company stack up?

In a small or high growth company, professional development can sometimes fall by the wayside. Employees are always looking to grow their skills and advance their careers, and HR has a huge opportunity to build employee loyalty through L&D programs. No time to plan an entire program? Have no fear, there are a variety of ways to utilize existing resources to nurture employee growth.

HACK #16

Train Managers Thoroughly

With the right training, managers will be equipped to handle more low-stakes situations with their direct reports (without involving HR). Whether it be conflict resolution, career development, or performance reviews, managers can tackle the challenge personally. Encourage self-sufficiency, but make yourself available when they need assistance.

HACK #17

Utilize Free Resources

The best things in life are free! Bring free and low cost L&D resources to your employees, such as skill workshops and employee-led trainings. Encourage managers to run team building or career development activities. Send employees to local events to develop skills and ask them to share the experience with their peers. These efforts all help develop the skills of existing employees at a low cost, and also remove the burden from HR as the sole trainer.

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