

# What's Ahead for HR and Compliance in 2022



Over the past two years, employers in Canada have had to create and revise their HR policies and procedures in order to stay compliant with all of the legislative changes required to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, what we thought were temporary measures, are proving out to be anything but, as Canada battles Omicron and transitions towards endemic and not pandemic management. So, what does this mean for HR and compliance in 2022?

## **Vaccinations**

Between the massive potential fines and civil liabilities for not having a safe workplace and the need to retain motivated employees, employers will focus even more attention in 2022 on workplace health and safety. If you aren't, you should be!

With Omicron and the further spread of COVID-19, governments and private businesses are leading the way with compulsory vaccinations and policies that basically say "be vaccinated or get fired" and they are being upheld in courts. With fewer and fewer jobs without these requirements for holdouts to move onto, even anti-vaxxers will be forced to fall in line and take a job. What's more, fewer and fewer businesses are willing to take on independent contractors or gig workers that are unvaccinated for fear of liability and additional costs, while underwriters are exploring designating non-vaccination as a pre-existing condition that would nullify insurability.

## **Employee Benefits & Compensation**

While Canada, unlike the US, has yet to experience the Great Resignation of early retirements and transitioning workforces, Canadian businesses are facing a labour shortage. According to a recent BDC survey, 55% of Canadian SMBs said they are finding it difficult to hire new staff, and 26% reported retaining staff was a challenge. The 2022 Hays Canada Salary Guide, reports that 62% of employees said they would switch jobs if not given opportunities for professional growth, while 65% were seriously considering changing jobs.

Provinces are mandating paid sick leave, but in order for you to remain a competitive employer, in 2022 you'll need to look into your employee retention strategies, offering competitive pay and benefits, flexible work schedules, wellness programs, and upskilling. The proactive investments will actually save your bottom-line because we all know the real costs of recruitment and attrition.

## DEI

“While some employers have drafted or adopted DEI policies in recent years, it’s important to cultivate a workplace that practices what these values preach. DEI will undoubtedly be at the top of many organizations’ priority lists next year, as they face pressures – both internal and external – to become more diverse, as well as cognizant of the issues that inhibit the creation of safe, respectful and fair working environments for all employees.” (Benefits Canada) What are the 5 things that an HR professional can do to advance their DEI strategies:

1. Ask employees what helps them feel like they do or don’t belong.
2. Evaluate your current metrics with a DEI lens – compensation, recruitment, hiring, promotion – where can improvements be made?
3. Engage your leadership team.
4. Get help – there are so many consulting firms focused on helping you improve your structure and your hiring brand through DEI strategies.
5. Set short and long-term targets.

## Hybrid Work & Technology

All of those temporary policies you’ve floated for WFH arrangements; you know, the ones you thought you’d sunset in 2022 – well, Omicron has quickly put an end to that. Canadian businesses need to embrace a model where some employees may work in the office, some may not, while others may float between the two. Not only does this pose opportunities to expand your recruitment market, but there are challenges too, such as:

- Health and safety concerns
- Productivity concerns
- Progressive discipline and reporting issues
- Encouraging healthy and regular communication
- Supporting mental health and well-being

Ontario’s new Right to Disconnect law is forcing Canadian businesses to consider the impact of our glorified worker-bee work culture on mental health and work/life balances towards the bottom line. That same BDC survey cited that over 65% of remote employees report having some degree of anxiety towards their work, nearly double that of workers in a traditional work arrangement. Do not read that as a flaw in WFH arrangements, look at it as a challenge that highlights the need for clear communication and expectations, as well as transparent management. If done right, WFH arrangements are not only a cost savings, but can have a tremendous boost on productivity too.

Technology can and will be even more of a friend to HR in 2022, as we look to virtual interviews, automation, virtual meetings, and maybe even a “metaverse” for answers to building and sustaining our workplace cultures.

**2022 has to be the year that Canadian businesses are people-focused, and HR can lead this transition. People-focused means focused on retaining your people, growing your people, protecting your people, and building out the tools your people need to succeed. Being people-focused not only ensures your compliance, but makes you the employer of choice in what will definitely continue to be a difficult labour market moving forward.**