

Hiring to Firing* Podcast — Coffee Badging: Mastering the Art of Office Presence*Hosts: Tracey Diamond and Emily Schifter****Guest: Donna Griffin****Recorded: March 24, 2025****Aired: June 3, 2025****Tracey Diamond:**

Emily, our upcoming episode is on the concept of coffee badging, which we'll talk about in a minute, where employees will visibly come into work, have their cup of joe in front of their co-workers, and then, sneak home to work at home the rest of the day. We're going to use some clips from Jerry Seinfeld to illustrate this point. That kind of made me think, you know, what are you, are you a coffee person or are you a tea person?

Emily Schifter:

Hundred percent a coffee person. I don't hate a good cup of tea in the winter to kind of wind down. But there's something about that experience of that first cup of coffee in the morning, the smell of it and the taste, a true addict. What about you?

Tracey Diamond:

I never used to drink coffee until really just a couple of years ago, and everybody who knows me is shocked to see me drink coffee now, because I'd really hated it before. But now, I'm a complete addict too. My favorite thing is that warm mug in my hand in the morning when the house is still quiet, just that moment to yourself. It is really very symbolic of just peace and tranquility, isn't it? Or in the case of coffee badging, it's symbolic of employees sneaking home to do work at home. So, listen in for our next episode on coffee badging.

[INTRO]

Tracey Diamond:

Welcome to *Hiring to Firing*, the podcast. I'm Tracey Diamond, and I'm here with my partner and co-host, Emily Schifter. Together, we handle all employment issues from *Hiring to Firing*. Today, I'm very happy to introduce Donna Griffin, director of people and culture at Intelligentsia Coffee. Donna, so nice to have you. Thank you for joining us. Why don't you start by telling us a bit about your background and about the coffee brand?

Donna Griffin:

Sure. Hi, Tracey and Emily. Thanks for having me here today. I have been in HR for over 30 years. I landed here by accident. I have had incredible bosses who have taken the time to train me and invest in me. I have learned to say yes to everything that was offered to me and figured it out later. It never started out as much fun, but it certainly became that as I went along. I have

worked in every aspect of HR from relocation, to executive comp, to being a generalist. I have worked in single site roles and I've managed a global HR function. I've worked in both union and non-union facilities. So, I have experience all over the place.

Tracey Diamond:

Sounds like you've seen it all.

Donna Griffin:

I've seen a lot. I have been at Intelligentsia for about a year and a half. We are a specialty coffee company and a tea company. We offer a direct trade model that we purchase our exceptional coffees, directly from coffee farmers. We're really proud of the international family that we've built as partners.

Tracey Diamond:

So, how many employees do you have?

Donna Griffin:

We've got about 180 throughout the US.

Tracey Diamond:

And are you global as well?

Donna Griffin:

We are not global.

Tracey Diamond:

Not yet, anyway.

Donna Griffin:

Well, we do have some coffee bars over in Korea. We've just opened our fourth one.

Tracey Diamond:

Oh, wow.

Donna Griffin:

But that is more of a partnership and definitely an option for the future.

Tracey Diamond:

I see the brand all over the place. I was in Target, I saw some, and I saw it in airports, so you definitely are making inroads. It's becoming very recognizable.

Donna Griffin:

Yes. We have a great marketing team. We have a great team everywhere, actually. And at the retail section or in the grocery section, you will see that we're going to have brand new bags coming out soon, so we're in the middle of rebranding a little bit as well.

Tracey Diamond:

Excellent.

Emily Schifter:

Very exciting.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes.

Emily Schifter:

Well, since we're on the topic of coffee, we thought since you are from a coffee company or coffee-focused and tea company, it would be fun on this episode of our podcast to pull a few TV clips that talk about coffee. So, in our first, the character George Costanza drives a date home, and while they are in the car, the date asks if he would like to come up to her place for a cup of coffee. George responds by saying, he doesn't drink coffee at night because of the caffeine. But the next day, he has some second thoughts, kind of a typical Seinfeld. Let's take a listen

[VIDEO CLIP PLAYS]

Jerry:

You're still thinking about this?

George:

She invites me up at 12 o'clock at night for coffee, and I don't go up. "No, thank you. I don't want coffee. It keeps me up. Too late for me to drink coffee." I said this to her. People this stupid shouldn't be allowed to live.

[VIDEO CLIP ENDS]

Tracey Diamond:

So, of course, that was from an episode of the iconic TV show Jerry Seinfeld. And some employees like coffee so much that they drive all the way to the office just for a cup of joe. This is known as coffee badging, but coffee badging isn't really about how great the office coffee machine works, even though I'm sure your office coffee machine would work particularly well, Donna. Coffee badging is one of those euphemisms, like quiet quitting, that has arisen in the post-pandemic workplace and is a response to return to office mandates, at least in the types of professional roles that can be performed remotely.

The concept here is that, employees come into work, they badge in, They grab a cup of coffee in a very visible way, chat with their co-workers, and then, head home to work remotely for the rest of the day. It's similar to the proverbial suit jacket on the chair to show you are present at work. Donna, what do you think about this phenomenon and what does it say about return to office mandates generally?

Donna Griffin:

Yes, it's unfortunate that coffee gets associated with such a negative thing, so I feel like I need to defend the industry. I do agree that coffee badging is a little bit like quiet quitting. It is doing the bare minimum to comply where you disagree. I think it's a great example of being clocked in, but not plugged in as a sign of engagement that employers really should pay attention to, because ignoring it is not the greatest strategy.

Tracey Diamond:

So, I think we've all probably seen some of these recent headlines talking about President Trump and Elon Musk and their mandates that federal government employees need to return to the office or they would be terminated if they didn't. And many large companies have before and after this announcement recently been requiring a return to the office full-time. So, definitely something that I think we're seeing trending more. Donna, why do you think that employers generally are pushing more and more for employees to return to work? And what do you see are sort of the most commonly cited benefits of having people be back in the office together?

Donna Griffin:

Yes, I'll speak about Intelli for some of my answer. I think we have a lot of conversations that take place in the hallway versus in a formal meeting. We are a little bit more casual in that regard. We connect and we form relationships during those conversations. So, the meetings that we have are a little bit more structured. They start on time; we try for them to end on time. And your ability to engage as a remote employee in any sort of small talk falls by the wayside. So, being able to connect with employees is a little bit more difficult. It requires a great deal of conscious effort.

We know that the psychology behind team building, whether you love it or you hate it, is that it's about the team getting to know each other and like each other. Because if they like each other, they're more likely to work together to help the other person succeed. So, with the remote

workforce or a hybrid workforce, you have to work to figure out how to do the daily things. We've had to figure out how to do training and policy rollouts via video, because we are all over the U.S. But if we had the ability to be in-house, I think it's better. It's a better way to connect. It's a better way to create a better employee experience.

For remote work, there's sort of two camps, for me. There's the group of employees who started out working in-house at a company, and then, COVID happened. They have always been in-house. They don't know what it's like, and COVID sent everybody home, or at least a lot of people home. They were previously in office. But then, there's this group of employees who have always been remote. They were hired to be fully remote. They have no expectation, there was no agreement for them to be in the office.

When I answer questions about work from home or hybrid relationships, I always have a greater amount of empathy for people in the second group, because the return to office directives are really a change for them. So, then you've got the other pushback, and that's the people who can't work from home. You've got a growing pushback of people who are just tired of the conversation. They are tired of hearing the discussion and the entitlement that comes with working from home.

At Intelli, we have baristas, we have production workers. They can't work from home. Either can someone who works in a hospital, or in law enforcement, or a restaurant, or in retail. There are dozens of industries, where there is a growing tension of people in these industries who are tired of the discussion, and they are tired of the expectation that working from home is a right. I think if it makes sense for the employer and the employee, and both agree to it, I think that's great. It's a great day when both of those can align. But I do believe that ultimately the company has the right to determine the work location and the employee has a choice to make after that.

The other thing I would say is that, companies haven't fully considered whether they can house all of their employees in a return to work. I know someone who downsized to a 20-person open desk environment and they use just people come in and they work remotely throughout the week in a hybrid environment. The CEO recently mandated a return to work, but they don't have enough desks. That really should have been figured out before issuing the mandate because I think it's a really bad look that erodes trust and it erodes confidence in leadership.

Emily Schifter:

I think that's right. I've definitely seen those companies who say everyone has to come back, and then, they realized, we don't have spaces, so we need to push it out. Or you're coming back to a hotel arrangement, which might be fine, but it's a big change for a lot of folks. I think you're absolutely right about that.

Tracey Diamond:

And chaotic way to implement a return to office mandate because you have to now implement not only the return to office and get everybody used to that, but also, the logistics of making sure people know when they have a desk, and when they don't have a desk, and timing it appropriately. And how does that work in real life with meetings that maybe need you to be in the office versus not be in the office. It can get complicated.

So, I know that Donna, you said you have categories of employees, obviously, that their job requires them to be on site. But I believe you also have groups of employees that are working fully remote, like you said, across the country. Are there benefits to a fully remote workforce, at least for certain categories of employees?

Donna Griffin:

Yeah, absolutely. I would say that there's probably two big benefits. The first one is that, we can hire specialized talent regardless of where they live. That means, we get the best and the brightest on our team. The other benefit would be retention, because let's face it, with work from home, there is a great deal of flexibility, more flexibility than when you're in-house. So, you might have better work-life balance, which is important for retention. You can eliminate an expensive or a lengthy commute. You can wear casual clothes, you can use your own bathroom and kitchen, and that sounds so silly, but those are often reasons that employees cite for wanting to work from home.

When you look at reduced costs for an employer, you're hoping that you're able to address the real estate you have. Is it a lease or is it something I can sell? And if not, that becomes a driver in a return-to-work decision too. The greater debate about working from home, though, for us, has been about productivity when you're working from home. I think some people do it really well and they set boundaries. Some people find that they work longer hours, but it's sort of offset by household chores if they're able to throw in a load of laundry, or throw dinner in the oven, and then, go back to work for an hour.

I think if you look hard enough, there are studies to prove your side of the story, regardless of which side you're on. So, I would encourage managers when they have a fully remote team to build in little conversations, and if you don't know what that means, you can Google icebreakers for virtual teams, and help with team connections during schedule calls just to get people talking and connected, because you can't do those on-site interactions anymore.

You didn't ask about it, but there is a little bit of a downside to a fully remote force too, from an HR perspective, especially. From an HR perspective, we have to keep track of every single darned state and local law that exists. It can feel like a full-time job just to keep track of everything that's going on so that you minimize your risk. I say that because sometimes, employees are like, "Well, it doesn't matter if I go live in North Dakota? I'll still do my job." Well, that's great, but there is a business impact to you making the decision to go work from North Dakota.

Additionally, there are situations employees with children aren't engaging in child care support, so they're scheduling their time around children, and events, and school pickups, and after-school programs. Those schedules might not align with core hours. There are companies where having children on calls is accepted, and it's celebrated, and everyone loves it. There are a lot of companies where it's not okay and it's taboo.

When you talk about fully remote, I think that some of the return-to-work mandates are because of a few bad apples. A few people that have taken time to take naps, do their gardening, or do anything but get the job done, or those that never seem to be available or responsive. So, a big frustration with people who are remote when you're an in-office person would be the people at

home who don't get it. They're not here. They're not on site. They don't see that our hair is on fire. It's stressful, and it's chaotic, and maybe they're a little unrealistic with their demands or their requests. So, I think that when that happens a lot, when those clashes happen a lot, it throws work from home in jeopardy for everyone who gets painted with a very broad brush.

Emily Schifter:

That's kind of unfair, but that's the reality of the situation.

Donna Griffin:

It's how most HR policies are created.

Tracey Diamond:

That's so true. The one, that example, that's exactly right. So, I've definitely seen some employers say, "Okay, well, maybe we can come up with a happy medium. Let's do some sort of a hybrid schedule as the best of both worlds." Do you see a company making that meaningful? Obviously, one of the challenges is you've got people at home and remote at the same time on any given day. How do you avoid problems related to that?

Donna Griffin:

Yes, I think you used the right phrase, "The best of both worlds," and hybrid does offer that. So, you could, as a company have core office days, either each week or each month. You could encourage remote employees like sales to plan their visits to the office on those days to increase collaboration and connection. I am not a big fan of doing lunches on those days, because I think it sends the wrong message to the team that shows up every day. It looks like we're celebrating the people who or hybrid or work from home. It sort of takes advantage of the folks who are there every single day.

I think that having an in-office schedule works if there's a reason behind it, it's a control issue. The managers want to control or the managers don't trust because I don't think either of those are really helpful with retention.

Emily Schifter:

I think the worst is someone who has required to come into the office for X, Y, Z, whatever on a Tuesday. Then, they spend every single Tuesday with their door closed on Zoom calls all day long. That definitely will breed resentment and you'll lose that employee's motivation. So, I think it's important to be thoughtful about it and make sure that those in-office days are meaningfully in the office.

Donna Griffin:

I agree with that 100%. I am a hybrid employee myself, and I usually work from home on Mondays and Fridays. On Fridays, I heavily load my Friday calendar to be heavily scheduled

with meetings. I am on calls all day long. But that's because when I'm in the office, I need my door to be open. I have to accept when I'm in the office that I may not get as much done because of interruptions. That may be a really great case of why I could say to my boss, "Hey, I need to be remote because I'm just not as productive when I'm in the office." But I don't know how I can say that I'm in charge of HR or I'm leading a team if I'm not on site and present at some point. I need to engage with our employees, I need to engage with our managers, and I

need to build relationships for all of the small things. Because when the big things happen, they won't hesitate to ask for help. So, for me, it does take a lot of intentional effort and it's a lot harder to build those relationships when my connection is only through video.

Tracey Diamond:

You mentioned earlier that challenge of the fully remote workforce and how do you get to know your coworkers when you're always remote? What tips do you have in order to reach in through the internet and really get to know your co-workers when you're not physically in the same building?

Donna Griffin:

I think that's really hard. I think it takes a lot of intentional effort. Again, I kind of preparing for this podcast, I went around and pulled some people at the office and said, "Hey, what's your biggest frustration or pet peeve with remote workers?" A lot of it came back to, they just don't understand what it's like to be here in the trenches. They just don't understand their home with a lot more flexibility and we're here putting out fires. So, trying to bridge the gap.

What would I say? I would say to a work-from-home person to be very careful in publicizing their flexibility. Saying, "Well, I can't do that call at two o'clock because I've got to take Suzy Q to her tap dancing" or "I need to go to Little Johnny's program in the morning at school." I think all of those are really legitimate things, by the way, I think –

Tracey Diamond:

Within reason.

Donna Griffin:

Yes, every parent has those things. However, there could be a perception from people who are working on site, that this person at home just has all this flexibility, and that person at home may be making it up at night. They may be doing emails to catch up, they may work weekends. But I would say, be cautious with over publicizing your flexibility because it sounds a little tone deaf in some cases. I think that hybrid or remote workers need to work a little bit harder to connect and be understood. I think the number is 90% of language is body language, or communication is body language.

When you're only communicating through email or you're a box on a screen, you lose the context of body language. So, you as a remote worker may choose to send a message through

email that's really tough, but it's efficient. It's a quick way for you to get the information out there. Yet, you miss the opportunity to have a discussion around it, especially if you think it's going to land really rough. So, I would say, the other thing for remote workers is to make sure that you're really well connected with your manager. Does your manager have this ability to what's getting done? Are you sharing a weekly work plan? Are you doing frequent one-on-ones?

I think, some of the return-to-work mandates come from managers not being aware of what's going on, and they fear not being able to speak to what's going on because they can't see or touch those employees. So, not being connected with your manager is a really quick way for a return-to-work mandate to go into effect. So, in that regard, I would say employees should manage up in this situation. They should create visibility and communicate frequently. I do believe that a manager is less likely to support return to work if they're comfortable the work is getting done.

Tracey Diamond:

I think that's a really important point about the managers. You said, before one bad apple will lead to a return to work, frankly. A bad manager could do the same thing, because a bad manager, if they're not – you require so much more active management of a remote workforce. If you don't have managers that are up to the task, it's really easier just to bring everybody back into the office.

Donna Griffin:

Yes. In some roles, it's easier. If you're doing data entry for home, it's easier to understand, the system tracks your efficiency or tracks your metrics and your performance.

Tracey Diamond:

Sure.

Donna Griffin:

A lot of jobs that are work from home are not that easy to track. So, having that communication and that connection with your manager, I think, is a really great positive offense to mount as opposed to reactively having to deal with a return-to-work mandate.

Emily Schifter:

I loved your point about how different cultures are different. Like you mentioned, some companies are fine with children in the background of calls and in others, you would never do that. I think, both from the employee and the employer's perspective, being aware of the culture of your organization or your role. Like you mentioned, in HR, it's important for you to have an open door. There may be some other roles like an in-house council where it's important to have a closed door, where they can have private conversations. So, I think, you're absolutely right. Being aware of what those differences are, rather than just saying, "Hey, I'm reading in the

news that this return-to-work mandate is happening, so let's just do the same thing in my company."

Tracey Diamond:

It's funny. I was thinking about what you said before about open workspaces, because that was a big topic right before COVID. A lot of my clients were moving to this sort of open workspace model with telephone booths for private phone calls and whatnot. I always kind of cringed about that when it came to HR and legal, because I can't imagine having an open space when you're having to conduct so many confidential conversations.

But on the other hand, to your point before Donna, you see how important it is for you to have an office that has an open door when you're in the office so people see you're there and can connect with you. So, I guess it goes both ways.

Emily Schifter:

So, do you see generational differences in terms of whether employees have a preference on working from home or remote?

Donna Griffin:

That's probably the biggest loaded question I've heard in a while. Because I think the minute you start to talk about generational differences, people want to fight or they want to talk about bias. So, I will kind of pivot toward the publicly available definitions when I say that, obviously, the youngest generation is Gen Z. Their jobs provide for their lifestyle and it doesn't define them. They are tech savvy.

The reason I think that that's important is that they're used to working on their phones as a computer. They don't own a printer. They're used to working whenever and wherever and however they want. If you go back and see a Gen Zer at a college campus, they're doing school projects on a phone, which to me is unheard of. They do not see value in being tied to an office at all. So, they are more likely to look for that hybrid or remote environment. They are also willing to trade salary in exchange for time off.

So, working anywhere for them gives them freedom to be able to travel and explore at night or on the weekends if they're traveling and they take a trip for a month. To them, it is a right to be able to work remotely, not a privilege. So, it becomes a more difficult conversation. The other interesting fact to me about Gen Zers is that they have a reputation. Again, I'll pivot to the word reputation for being easily distracted online. So, their productivity can be affected by a fully remote situation.

Generationally, the last fact I think is really fascinating about them, is they are used to being involved in every single decision their family has made from the time that they could talk. They we're able to talk about what they wear, what school to go to, what to have for dinner, where to go on vacation. They are used to having a seat at the table. So, they believe they should be able to decide whether they work remotely or on site.

Tracey Diamond:

They want a seat at the table, but they want it to be a virtual table.

Donna Griffin:

They don't want it to be an actual table, absolutely. For me, that's kind of the biggest wildcard because they're the workforce that's entering our job market right now. When you get to the next generation of millennials, they are tech-savvy, they are supportive of a hybrid role because they want meaning in their work. They're good problem solvers, so they'll figure out how to make it work so that it doesn't go away. But they want to control the hybrid schedule.

Millennials also really focus on mental health. So, a hybrid schedule gives them a better work-life balance. They're probably practical when it comes to the hybrid, maybe not as insistent about remote work. And a Gen Xer is what's known as the most flexible generation, not because of age, but because they are not digital natives. They were not raised with computer technology. So, they've had to learn it. They've had to learn new technologies as adults, and they are more likely to comply with the company directive versus resisting it. However, a growing number of Gen Xers are starting to value it, a remote or a hybrid situation.

A baby boomer, not surprisingly, tends to prefer an office setting. They see remote work as a perk. It is not a right to them. That's the opposite of a Gen Zer. A boomer gauges their success by presence and wanting to be seen, and wanting to have that personal connection, and technology can sometimes prove to be difficult for them. Again, I gave a disclaimer at the beginning that says I was going to be using generalizations, so it's not an indictment of any generation, but I do think the generations have tendencies that either lend to remote or work from home.

Tracey Diamond:

It's interesting because they're the ones who probably need to be in the office the most for training purposes, particularly the ones just entering the

workforce and don't really know the job yet.

Donna Griffin:

Yes. So, when you talk about which generation should be in office, you know, if you're a company that hires a lot of inexperienced employees, I can see where it makes sense to have people on site for training, or observation, or coaching. Just being able to reinforce and build up that employee and give them a really good toolbox. But in order for that to happen, you're going to need people to train them. So, that means, you're going to need experienced people on board too.

I have three adult children and none of them have ever worked full-time in an office. That to me is just mind-blowing. One of them has been with his company for five years and he has never once worked in an office. He has been remote the entire time. Again, to me, that's mind-

blowing, but it's the times that we live in. So, I'm not sure that it's about generations. I think that all of the generations together create diversity at a company. I think that they create diversity of thought and in process. So, I would focus more on the job and what's needed versus the generation if you're making it an office decision.

Tracey Diamond:

Donna, in some large companies, employees complained on internal platforms and the company disabled the platforms. It seems like the employer wasn't listening. Oftentimes, we hear employees threaten to leave if they're required to return to the office. What is the best way to communicate a return to office policy and to handle employee pushback?

Donna Griffin:

Another hot potato, right? I think that an employer sometimes is darned if they do and they're darned if they don't. It's really hard to make everyone happy all the time. I was once told that there was no limit to the amount of people I could offend by trying to do the right thing. That probably comes to visit me on a weekly basis at work. I think, sometimes, when a company does respond to an issue or a posting, and they try to provide an explanation, it only seems to invite more arguments or it gets weaponized. So, I do have empathy for companies that decide to disable the platform. I also think it's probably a bad look. It's like telling the emperor he's not wearing clothes and no one wants to do it, but that is what's happening.

For me, it would boil down to trust, and whether or not the employees trusted their leaders to make good decisions. Did they trust the leader to make decisions that benefit the company while still providing a value and a respect for the employee? If they did, then I think a company should provide as much notice as they can for a return to work. They should have a phased-in schedule so that employees can adjust to the reality, and hopefully, an employee can ease into it. I said earlier that a Gen Zer believes that the decision to work remotely is solely theirs and not the company's.

It's largely true, because they do have a choice, right? They can return to work with a mandate or they can find another job. That sounds really, really brutal to say out loud, but I don't think that employees have the right to tell a company that they're wrong, and that's harsh to hear out loud. The company may end up changing, they may end up reversing, or walking back a return-to-work order if they have a lot of turnover, but the damage has already been done. So, hopefully, there's a middle ground, and that's when hybrid scheduling becomes attractive.

Tracey Diamond:

Of course, that also depends a little bit on the job market, on a tight job market. When you really need your employees, you might be more apt to be more empathetic to the employees' demands to work from home than in a market where there's not a whole lot of jobs out there, and too many employees, where sometimes, the company is using it as an excuse to just call out their workforce, kind of get rid of those employees who aren't willing to work wherever the company mandates that they work.

Donna Griffin:

Yes. I've definitely seen return to work be used as a soft laugh. Business results are falling, or they're starting to struggle with certain people who are being more difficult than probably necessary. I've seen that companies had said, "Okay. Well, let's just do this and see what happens."

Emily Schifter:

I would say, the only caveat to our conversation that we haven't really addressed yet is the legal compliance issue of, if an employee asks for a work-from-home accommodation under the ADA, it's something that needs to be handled on an individualized case-by-case basis. Keeping in mind that attendance, depending on the job, can be considered an essential function of the job. Although, if the job has been done fully remotely for a long time prior, there needs to be a good explanation to why that's changed now and it is an essential function of the job where it might not have been before.

Donna Griffin:

Yes. I think that's come up too from people who have I actually have someone that, you know, when you work in HR you have a lot of people who call you for advice. I get a lot of phone calls that start with, "Hey, can my company do this?" or "Is it okay that they did that?" Most of the time, it is okay that the company did that or that that happened. But I've got a couple of people that I know who have had situations where there was a return to work, and they were maybe a little bit more difficult and persnickety than they needed to be about that return to work. And the company ended up saying, "We're going to part ways with you, and we're going to replace the position in-house." At that point, the employee changed and said, "Well, wait a minute. Wait, wait, wait, wait. Don't be getting crazy."

Emily Schifter:

"I'll come in now."

Donna Griffin:

"Don't be crazy. I might be able to do something." By that time, the decision's already been made, and the scab has already formed. So, I do think it's a conversation. Again, employees always have a choice. They vote every single day when they show up to work, whether or not they want to work for that company. Hopefully, companies can be the company that you want to work for, that this is the place you want to spend your time, because it's so limited. But it's definitely not a right as much as it is a privilege, and it has to make sense from a business standpoint.

Tracey Diamond:

Yes. So, making sure you're rolling out any return to office mandate thoughtfully, not just as a knee-jerk reaction.

Donna Griffin:

Yes. I think that – so if you look at, let's say, we have a hybrid situation and I'll talk about the company that has those 20 desks, and they've got 45 employees, and 20 desks. Now, they're doing a hybrid situation and it's working quite well, but their CEO is coming into town, and he's going to do a fireside chat. So, there's no agenda, just a chance to talk, and ask questions, and just talk.

So, what happens when all the desks are reserved, and all the employees are now working on laptops in every single available space, including sitting on the floor? Again, it's just not a good look. So, I think companies need to have better plans about rollout and be more inclusive at the leadership team level. I do favor a lot of leadership collaboration for big people decisions, because I expect that when we've made the decision, and we've all agreed, that the leadership team is going to own it with their teams. It's not going to be, "The CEO screwed up" or "The HR department did this." No, no, no. We, as a team, we talked about it, we understand the risks, and this is what we've agreed to do.

I will say, for my company, there have been a number of decisions and conversations just like this one, where the CEO will bring it up and we'll have a lot of conversation at the leadership team level about it. In some cases, the leadership team has brought up enough points that we've walked away from a decision. But I think, a CEO – if you have a company where the CEO is a little bit more ego driven, that probably lends to those more brutal directives without a lot of explanation, communication, or notice, and that's where it gets really, really uncomfortable. Those are the things we see about and we hear about in the news.

Tracey Diamond:

Sure. It's like a symbol, this coffee badging idea. and return to office mandates in general is sort of symbolic of all employee initiatives, and thought leadership. And taking into consideration all viewpoints and making decisions in a thoughtful way as empathetic as possible to employees while clarifying expectations to make sure work is going to get done in a productive way.

Donna Griffin:

Yes. I think it's firing the warning shot, that this is going to happen. It's an announcement from the CEO. We're going to explain why we believe it's important for our business, and we're going to give a deadline that's going to be far enough away that people have choices. Even if that choice is that they don't want to be part of our team anymore, it's better than – it's going to happen next Monday and half the staff quits. That's just a bad day for everybody involved. It affects our brand. It affects our ability to retract or track, and retain, or recruit people for the jobs to replace them.

If Glassdoor blows up with negative reviews, people are not going to be so excited to send us their resume.

Tracey Diamond:

But the coffee tastes so good.

Donna Griffin:

Our coffee is pretty fantastic. So, it does forgive a lot of sins. Our coffee and our tea, our tea's pretty phenomenal.

Emily Schifter:

maybe at the end of the day, it is about the coffee and the tea. So, in our next clip, which we're going to leave our audiences with, Jerry Seinfeld actually talks about his love of coffee on an interview with Jimmy Fallon. Let's take a listen.

[VIDEO CLIP PLAYS]

Jerry Seinfeld:

I think coffee is the most important part of a human's life.

Jimmy Fallon:

Really?

Jerry Seinfeld:

Yes.

Jimmy Fallon:

Wow. I mean, they agree.

Jerry Seinfeld:

When you get to the end of this life, before we move on to whatever is next, I think it's quite possible. Your last thought will be, "That was good coffee." That was good. Everything after my morning coffee was pretty much a pain in the ass, but the coffee –

Jimmy Fallon:

– was fantastic.

Jerry Seinfeld:

– was good, because it's the only thing in your life that's 100 % on your side every day, every cup. Come on, let's go, me, and you. We can do this.

Jimmy Fallon:

Yes, that's right.

Jerry Seinfeld:

Only coffee.

Jimmy Fallon:

Coffee is there, it's one job.

Jerry Seinfeld:

Yes, and it does it.

[VIDEO CLIP ENDS]

Emily Schifter:

Thanks so much for joining us today, Donna. It was a really fun conversation. I really feel the need to go get my cup of caffeinated something right now. Thank you to our listeners for listening in. Shoot us an email, tell us what you think, and don't forget to check out our blog, hiringtofiring.law. Thanks, everybody.

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