

## RETAINWORKS Reaches its Largest Audience: 18,000 State Employees

November 2022 RETAIN Success Story

*“The economic well-being of our country could not be more important right now, as we recover from unprecedented challenges. ... It is therefore important that we do all that we can to retain skilled employees and ensure they have the support they need to return to work after an injury or illness.” – Kansas Governor Laura Kelly*

### BACKGROUND

Nearly 18,000 Kansas state employees are learning about the benefits of RETAINWORKS through an employee awareness campaign created in collaboration with human resources (HR) teams statewide. Through this campaign, Kansas state employees will know that if they are ill or injured—whether on the job or not—RETAINWORKS can help them develop a plan so they can stay at work or return to work safely and productively. Kansas state employees can benefit from all RETAINWORKS services at no cost: determining job accommodations, connecting with doctors if they need help managing their injury or illness, accessing other job-supportive resources, and working with their employers to ensure a smooth transition back to work.

According to Susan Weidenbach, the workforce development and special projects manager with the Kansas Department of Commerce, RETAINWORKS is achieving this significant employee outreach through thoughtful and intentional strategies that other programs could replicate.



### Challenge-Action-Results

**Challenge:** To effectively reach all state employees, RETAINWORKS needed to dispel misconceptions about the program and create a successful outreach strategy.



**Action:** RETAINWORKS has leveraged relationships with other state agencies to promote best practices and emphasize the program as a resource for employee retention.

The program gained support from state HR staff and the state governor. HR staff in every department will now receive quarterly emails about RETAINWORKS to share with their employees.

**Results:** Information about RETAINWORKS is now accessible to 18,000 Kansas state employees through the State Employee Services page, quarterly email blasts, and posters with QR codes linked to the program.

## CHALLENGE

Kansas state employees are located throughout Kansas. RETAINWORKS knew that promoting the program to state employees would be a sure way to spread the program statewide and increase enrollment. The RETAINWORKS team met with HR staff at all Kansas government agencies to explore how information about RETAINWORKS could be shared with state employees.

Yet as RETAINWORKS reached out to state HR staff, they uncovered misconceptions and confusion about the program. Some HR staff assumed RETAINWORKS is a disability or workers' compensation program. Others were concerned the program might conflict with their workers' compensation contracts. Some believed their employees would not qualify for RETAINWORKS. To reach statewide employees, RETAINWORKS met with state HR teams to emphasize all that the program has to offer and to address any misconceptions so HR teams could promote RETAINWORKS widely and accurately to Kansas state employees.



## ACTIONS

RETAINWORKS implemented strategies to gain employer support and to provide accurate, accessible information about the program to all Kansas state employees by:

### ***Fostering buy-in from HR.***

RETAINWORKS laid the groundwork for its state employee outreach by engaging with the state's HR staff. Early in the program, RETAINWORKS received a letter of support

from Governor Laura Kelly. "The governor's letter of support," Weidenbach said, "helped us to quickly develop a strong working relationship with the state human resources director. You would be amazed at how many doors that opens." From there, the RETAINWORKS team met with HR staff from all the state agencies in Kansas. The team delivered follow-up presentations upon request to address additional questions or misconceptions.

***Emphasizing RETAINWORKS as a resource for employee retention.*** Kansas has a low unemployment rate. Employers scramble to fill positions and keep valued employees. The positive impact of RETAINWORKS on employee retention and productivity resonated with state HR teams and gained their support.

***Widely promoting RETAINWORKS to state employees.*** RETAINWORKS sends quarterly email blasts with information about the program to HR directors in every state department. These emails reach nearly 18,000 state employees. RETAINWORKS encourages state agencies to promote the program in other employee communications and to post RETAINWORKS flyers with QR code links. The Kansas Department of Commerce promotes RETAINWORKS in its

weekly employee newsletter, which can serve as a model for other agencies. In addition, a link to RETAINWORKS is posted on the State Employee Services web page alongside other state benefits and resources.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS AND RESULTS

- RETAINWORKS established a state employee awareness campaign that reaches 18,000 Kansas employees throughout the state, which will increase enrollment and contribute to the program’s sustainability.
  - RETAINWORKS engaged with state HR staff at all levels to gain support for the program. RETAINWORKS had previously received the endorsement of the state governor and will continue to engage state employees through quarterly emails, posters, and the State Employee Services page. Employees can directly enroll in RETAINWORKS. HR staff are also familiar with the program and can share information about RETAINWORKS as needed.
  - RETAINWORKS leveraged existing relationships to connect with HR staff across all state agencies. They dispelled misconceptions about the program and emphasized RETAINWORKS as a resource for the state agencies and employees. As the program expands throughout the state, RETAINWORKS is sharing its successful employee outreach process so other Kansas businesses can replicate it.

## RETAIN WORKS

*Kansas is participating in RETAIN (Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network) to build connections and improve coordination among employers, health care providers, and other key parties to help newly injured and ill workers stay in the workforce. The Kansas Department of Commerce leads RETAINWORKS in coordination with several partners. The U.S. Department of Labor, in collaboration with the Social Security Administration, sponsors RETAIN.*

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