

HR Checklist to Close Out the Year



Namely 

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Introduction

As 2022 approaches, so do important HR dates and year-end tasks. And despite increases in vaccination rates and some companies returning to the in-person office, many HR teams across the country will still be closing out 2021 virtually.

To help you confidently ring in 2022, Namely has compiled this HR Checklist. From staying compliant and rethinking your benefits plans to adjusting your company culture, we've got you covered.



□ KEEP UP WITH PAYROLL DATES AND STAY COMPLIANT

To stay compliant, you must keep up with important year-end dates. Whether it's meeting payroll processing deadlines or reviewing tax withholdings, keeping up with these dates is crucial to closing out 2021 and setting your company up for success next year.

Make sure you don't miss these upcoming year-end dates and deadlines:

October 31st

Form 941 is due (Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return).

Before December 1st

Remind your employees to complete a new W-4 form if their withholding allowances have changed.

December 15th

Open enrollment ends for 2021 health insurance plans.

Before January 3rd

Payrolls for 2021 must be processed, including special processing to pay bonuses, make adjustments, and record manual or voided checks.

As Soon As Possible

Ask your employees to confirm that federal, state, and local income tax withholdings are accurate by reviewing their name, address, Social Security Number, and W-4 Form.



□ RETHINK YOUR BENEFITS PLANS

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues and employees are still working from home, it's a no-brainer to reevaluate your benefits offerings before 2021 ends. Not only will rethinking your benefits plans help you retain your current employees, but it will also help you attract candidates in 2022.

Here are a few benefits employees will be looking for in the new year:

Wellness Benefits

Studies show that employees are **more likely** to think that it's their companies' responsibility to support their health and wellness. Since the pandemic began, companies have been expanding their **wellness benefits** by offering **telehealth** programs and virtual mental health services—which is especially important during these difficult times. As for physical wellness, companies have been encouraging employees to exercise by offering virtual workout classes, online fitness memberships, and at-home work workout equipment.

Remote Work Opportunities and WFH Policies

Due to COVID-19's impact on remote work, you should reevaluate your **work from home policies** as you close out 2021. If you're planning to **reopen your office** in the new year, consider letting employees work from home every Friday or a few days a week. If your company is working from home indefinitely, you can also hire for remote positions and attract candidates from all over.

New PTO Policies

As the year comes to an end, you need to make any necessary adjustments to PTO rollover balances or pay your employees out for PTO. However, since 2021 was a challenging year, you need to take that a step further by reevaluating your PTO policies to avoid employee **burnout**.

According to Robert Half's survey, **44 percent** of employees say they are more burned out on the job today compared to a year ago. To help your employees avoid burnout during this time, you need to encourage them to take time off—especially as they **work from home**. Consider giving them a few extra days off around the holidays, implementing mandatory mental health days, or making your vacation plan unlimited in 2022.



□ CONDUCT END-OF-THE-YEAR PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

From quality of work to productivity, **performance reviews** recognize your employees' accomplishments and areas of improvement. Although you should be tracking your employees' performance throughout the year, conducting annual reviews allows you to measure their year-over-year growth.

When conducting end-of-the-year performance reviews, you should ditch the generic review template and **customize them**. By using **company-specific metrics**, conducting 360-degree reviews, and asking questions about your core values, you can collect feedback that is actually meaningful to your company.

If you're conducting performance reviews **virtually this year**, you should also consider prioritizing qualities that are relevant in a remote setting. Focusing on skills like teamwork and collaboration will help employees become more successful in this new environment.

Not sure where to start? Here are some example questions:



As for setting objectives for 2022, collaborate with your employees to set ambitious yet realistic goals. To help employees understand how they contribute to your company's overall success, these **“SMART”** individual goals should tie to team and organizational goals.

For Manager Reviews

- What were the employees' 3 biggest accomplishments and how did they impact your team and overall company?
- How has the employee exemplified our core values in 2021?
- Does the employee demonstrate leadership?

For Self Reviews

- What were your 3 biggest accomplishments and how did they impact your team and overall company?
- What are 2-3 development areas that you feel could help your performance and grow your career?
- How have you exemplified our core values in 2021?

For Peer Reviews

- How has your teammate exemplified our core values in 2021?
- Which core value does your teammate demonstrate the most?
- How well does your teammate communicate?

□ ADJUST CORE VALUES AND COMPANY CULTURE

Since the beginning of 2021, a lot has happened in the world. From the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to rolling out vaccine mandates and the Great Resignation, the past year has impacted American's daily lives drastically—which means your company needs to react accordingly.

Here are some ways you can support your employees as you close out 2021 and beyond:

Adjust Core Values

It's never been more important for a company to embrace and demonstrate its **core values**. Having core values along the lines of Empathy, Transparency, or Giving Back is especially crucial during times like these. These core values can establish a company **culture of empathy**, encourage your employees to be open and honest about their feelings, and create opportunities for them to give back to one another and the community.

Establish Employee Resource Groups

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are employee-led interest groups that aim to raise awareness of issues facing people of a specific demographic, race, religion, or sexual identity. With everything going on in the world, it's never been a better time to encourage your employees to **start ERGs**. These ERGs can meet on a weekly basis, create a Slack channel, host events, and serve as a unified voice at your company.

Supporting your Black employees during this time is also critical. By establishing an ERG for the Black professionals at your company, your employees can educate one another, host allyship workshops and fireside chats, and have a safe space to share their feelings.

Due to the effects of COVID-19, some of your employees may be struggling to balance working from home with **child care**. By establishing an ERG for parents and caregivers, your employees who have children can also share resources, experiences, and insights with one another.

Get Your Executive Team Involved

Even if you make changes to your company culture, your employees won't feel supported unless your **executive team** is involved. And when we say "involved", we mean walking the walk, not just talking the talk. Your executive team needs to embody your core values and lead by example.

□ EVALUATE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

When companies suddenly transitioned to remote work due to COVID-19, many employees started to feel unmotivated. In fact, according to Namely's survey, the top concern that HR professionals had at the beginning of the pandemic was **employee morale**.

As the pandemic continues, it's likely that some of your employees may still be feeling this way. So as 2021 comes to a close, it's crucial to evaluate employee engagement.



Here's how you can check in with your employees and keep them engaged as you ring in the new year:

Adjust Core Values

By sending out surveys, you can get a real-time pulse check on employee engagement. How are your employees' relationships with their managers and do they think your company offers enough career development opportunities? How do they feel about your executive team and would they recommend your company as a great place to work?

Although all of these questions are critical to ask in engagement surveys, make sure you also incorporate questions specifically about the past year. If they are still working from home, how has that been going and what else can your HR team do to support them? Collecting this feedback will help you keep your employees engaged in the new year.

Establish Employee Resource Groups

The end of the year is a perfect time to reflect on your employees' hard work. Whether it's by sending them company swag or personal thank you cards from your CEO, recognizing your employees will not only keep them motivated, but will also boost morale. Consider giving out end-of-the-year awards that **recognize** employees for embodying your core values.

Get Your Executive Team Involved

As you close out the year, it's important to reevaluate your L&D opportunities. Find out what percentage of your employees take advantage of your current L&D programs. Looking into 2021, what new L&D opportunities are your employees looking for? If your employees are still working from home, make sure you offer virtual L&D opportunities in the new year.

CONCLUSION

Of course it's important to hit year-end deadlines and conduct performance reviews, but HR professionals need to go the extra mile in order to ring in 2022 smoothly. From rethinking your benefits and adjusting your company culture to evaluating employee engagement, the key to closing out 2021 and setting your company up for success in the new year is making sure your employees feel supported.

ABOUT NAMELY

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