

The most current information on how financial professionals can increase cash flow & control costs.

**March 10, 2022**

## The psychology of a scam: Why folks fall for them

### ■ 3 biases crooks prey upon to capture your cash

**W**e've got good news and bad news when it comes to fighting off costly cyberattacks.

The good news: You don't have to sink a ton of money into technology to fend off these scams.

The bad news: That's because the vast majority of incidents come from human mistakes!

In fact, a full 77% of cyberattacks are caused by human failures, compared to just 23% stemming from inadequate security technology.

That's the finding of a recent BCG analysis of 50 major data breaches.

Info like that will have you wishing you could be buying some software to keep the threats at bay.

Instead, to keep your company from paying the price of a cyberattack, you want to look at the psychology behind why people click those links they shouldn't or initiate that wire transfer just because an email asked them to.

### Exploiting 3 cognitive biases

Perry Carpenter of KnowBe4 explained to the folks at SC Media

*(Please see Psychology ... on Page 2)*

## IRS creates new fast-track PLR program

### ■ Companies can now get quicker answers to pressing tax questions

**P**ivate letter rulings (PLRs) from IRS can offer helpful tax guidance to companies. But the process typically took months – until now.

The Service has just launched a fast-track PLR pilot program where businesses can receive a response from IRS in mere weeks.

And it could be just the thing you need to answer those time-sensitive tax questions.

### Details you need to know

Usually, IRS considers PLR requests in the order they're received.

However, under the fast-track program, companies can submit a separate letter along with their request for a PLR that states why they'd need a response sooner.

Requests will be considered for businesses that have an urgent need to receive an answer from the agency so they can avoid severe financial consequences due to circumstances beyond their control.

IRS recommends you make your request electronically via email with the letter sent as a secure attachment.

**Info:** For more details, visit [irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/rp-22-10.pdf](https://irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/rp-22-10.pdf)

### The Cumulative Effect of CFO & Controller Alert

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# Psychology ...

(continued from Page 1)

about five cognitive biases that lead to phishing attacks, three of which are particularly applicable in a business setting.

Hackers play upon each of the following biases to get people to do things they might even know aren't the smartest moves:

1. **The Halo Effect.** This is when people tend to have a positive association around a given person or business, and the crooks exploit that. Emails impersonating your bank, for example, are more likely to have folks clicking on links they shouldn't.
2. **The Recency Effect.** Makes sense – people tend to remember the things that happened most recently and that can lead to incorrect assumptions. So if the last suspicious email a staffer sent to IT to check turned out to be nothing, they're much more likely to

open the next attachment that comes through.

3. **The Authority Bias.** Most people have been conditioned to do what authority figures tell them to. And that's exactly why business email compromise (BEC) has been such

## Most people are conditioned to do what authority figures say.

a successful scam in recent years. Posing as your CEO – or even as you – will certainly get an A/P clerk to initiate a wire transfer. Wouldn't want to ignore (or perhaps even question) the boss!

Any one of these – or all of them – could be at play when scammers approach your finance staffers.

### Best approach for maximum protection

Which means that instead of sinking money into security technology you're better off putting the time, effort and expense into training.

Making folks aware of these cognitive biases and how they play out in phishing and BEC scams is a great start.

And be sure this info travels beyond Finance.

For example, Carpenter says the Recency Effect really comes into play in IT – most security teams admit to ignoring one-third of all security alerts. The reason? They've gotten false positives in the past.

That's one expensive gamble your company should not be willing to take.

*Adapted in part from "The five most popular cognitive biases that result in phishing attacks," by Perry Carpenter, at scmagazine.com*

## Sharpen your JUDGMENT

*This feature provides a framework for decision making that helps keep you and your company out of trouble. It describes a recent legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.*

### ■ Should new owner have to follow old contract terms?

CFO Bill Keeper picked up an on-hold call from Janet Sheffler, the controller for a customer's office.

"This is Bill," he answered.

"I hate to do this, Bill. But we're going to start using another vendor," Janet said.

"You can't," Bill replied. "Your contract runs for another two years."

"But Bill, it's out of date. We changed owners a year ago, and the board of directors just voted to terminate all contracts the former owner signed," said Janet.

### Do terms still apply?

Bill pulled up their contract. "The customer agrees that in the event it sells its business, it will require the purchaser to assume all responsibilities under this agreement," Bill read.

"Speaking of our agreement, since your balance is so high, we need to pursue the arbitration clause to get that settled," he continued.

"That's a waste of time. We're not bound to that anymore," Janet replied.

The company went to court to be released from the arbitration process. It told a judge because the contract was with the business's previous owner, it didn't have to honor it.

Did the court let Janet's company off the hook?

- *Make your decision, then please turn to Page 6 for the court's ruling.*



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# Latest data comparing paper checks to ACH shows big cost difference

■ *Why it's key to continue efforts to increase electronic payments*

New research proves just how critical it is for your company to keep moving toward electronic payments – and how expensive it is to keep cutting paper checks.

Data from the 2022 Payments Benchmarking Survey, released by the Association for Financial Professionals (AFP), compares the cost of making and receiving ACH payments to the cost of issuing checks.

And the difference is substantial.

AFP estimates the median cost of initiating and receiving an ACH transaction for businesses is between 26 and 50 cents. This includes both internal costs (e.g., personnel) and external costs (e.g., bank fees).

When looking at the costs of ACH debits and credits, the median internal cost is 15 cents and the median external cost is 25 cents.

Paper checks are much pricier across the board.

Issuing paper checks cost a median price of between \$2.01 and \$4 per check. Receiving them had a median cost between \$1.01 and \$2.

Much of that cost is all the labor involved with paper checks, AFP said.

Your best bet is to work with A/P and A/R to make both your payment and collections processes fully electronic. Any tech investments needed to get there will quickly pay for themselves in full.

*Info: [bit.ly/achcheck622](http://bit.ly/achcheck622)*

## FOR MORE ...

To see how one firm boosted e-payments from its vendors, go to [cfoandcontrolleralert.com/whats-working-wednesday-the-nudge-that-gets-more-vendors-to-use-edi-efit](http://cfoandcontrolleralert.com/whats-working-wednesday-the-nudge-that-gets-more-vendors-to-use-edi-efit)

# Plug this big cash leak for companies now

■ *Issues with expense compliance steadily rising*

Employees are submitting more business expenses for reimbursement than ever before – and they might not be accurate.

While expense requests are increasing right now, compliance with reimbursement policies is at a low point, new research says.

## Problems increasing

According to the Corporate Spend Playbook from PYMNTS and Airbase, 90% of companies have allowed employees to expense new items during the pandemic – mostly for work-at-home expenses.

And nearly a third of Finance pros

have seen employees take advantage of these changes.

However, not all of them fall in line with expense policies. Finance pros are also seeing more mistakes in expense reports.

Additional research showed that almost all Finance managers noticed employees submitting expenses that weren't compliant with company policy. And many of these expenses are being reimbursed, no questions asked.

Avoid losing money by reminding A/P to stay on top of all expense reports submitted, double-check that all expenses are legit and remind employee of your expense policies.

*Info: <https://bit.ly/expenses622>*

## ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

### ■ Potential impacts of war between Russia & Ukraine

By now, you've heard about Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

What we're still waiting to see is how the war between the two countries will impact the economy.

While the strongest effects will likely be felt abroad, the conflict is poised to impact the U.S. as well.

### Higher fuel prices & more

One key area where experts expect to see changes: gas prices.

Russia is one of the top producers of oil and natural gas in the world.

Signs of unrest have already caused gas prices to climb to levels we haven't seen in years.

The cost of a barrel of oil hit \$100 on Feb. 24, 2022, the most expensive it's been since 2014.

Experts suggest the price could rise to \$120 as the invasion continues – pushing the average price of gas to \$4 per gallon in the U.S.

Along with higher gas prices, we may also see food get more expensive at the grocery store. Russia is the largest exporter of wheat in the world, and Ukraine is a significant producer of barley, corn, rye and wheat.

Although this would more directly impact the European market, any grocery supply chain disruptions caused by a war would have ripple effects on food prices in the States.

And the volatile stock market, which was already falling before the Russia-Ukraine situation, has been steadily declining.

Time will tell if this puts us in a bear market that lays the foundation for another recession.

*Info: [nyti.ms/36xoXPf](https://nyti.ms/36xoXPf)*

## 4 tech strategies for driving value & results for your organization

■ *Communication, innovation, metrics among key elements*

**Y**ou probably know exactly what your firm spends on technology. But are you getting the return on investment (ROI) you expect?

To get a clearer picture, here are some IT strategy suggestions from *AccountingWeb.com*.

### Analyze present, future needs

1. **Form an IT committee with representatives from different departments.** It gets more of your company involved in planning and prioritizing tech projects. The committee should meet regularly (e.g., quarterly), have an agenda and keep the focus on aligning technology with the business's strategic plan.
2. **Focus on innovation and growth.** Instead of investing the majority of your budget in maintaining existing systems, set aside some funds for innovation and developing new

services. You may have to consider new platforms for company functions that are scalable and accessible from any place at any time, such as cloud-based systems.

3. **Track key IT metrics.** These include revenue per full-time employee (FTE), amount spent on IT per FTE, and percent of revenue spent on IT and end-users per IT support person.
4. **Participate in peer networks.** You can learn a lot by talking with decision-makers and IT pros at other firms, including your vendors, about best practices for tech investments.

Ultimately, the strategies you choose to make sure your IT projects are delivering high ROI should be focused on developing a thought process about tech that helps you meet customer expectations and get the most bang for your buck.

*Info: [bit.ly/ITstrategy622](http://bit.ly/ITstrategy622)*

## Cloud security breaches: Are you at risk?

■ *These well-known companies got hacked & it could happen to you*

**C**loud security breaches can cost companies like yours in more ways than one – including damaged brand reputation and lost customers.

Some recent examples that happened to companies you'd think were invulnerable to cyberattacks:

1. **Yahoo.** The hack started with a spear-phishing email sent to an employee and wasn't reported until two years later. More than 3 billion customers were affected.
2. **LinkedIn.** A data scraping breach resulted in info on 700 million users being posted to the dark web, setting the stage for a flood of social engineering attacks.
3. **Facebook.** A leak of user info

landed the social media company in big trouble with the feds and a \$5 billion penalty.

### Data-compromise control

Although it's impossible to stop every cyberattack, your firm's IT team could use some help defending the company's assets, including:

- investments in up-to-date prevention and detection technology
- cybersecurity insurance, and
- tools for recovering company data if it's ever stolen or locked up by ransomware.

*Info: [bit.ly/breaches622](http://bit.ly/breaches622)*

## MANAGING FOR RESULTS

### ■ Could your firm use a Chief Remote Work Officer?

Will your company's complex hybrid work arrangements – with some workers in-office and others dividing their work hours between home and office – be sustainable for the long term?

If you aren't 100% sure, you may want to consider appointing a chief remote work officer (CRWO).

Although this new C-suite role will likely take some time to become fully defined, here are some of the potential duties that a CRWO could help with.

### The value of a CRWO

A CRWO can collaborate with Finance and HR to manage:

- **Company culture.** Because full-time remote workers may become disengaged, the CRWO can take the lead on creating a culture where everyone feels included and has equal opportunity to thrive.
  - **Cybersecurity.** Cyberattacks on remote workers can cost the company big bucks. The CRWO can make sure everyone's following best practices for password management, encryption and VPNs.
  - **Talent acquisition.** A CRWO can fine-tune job descriptions to appeal to remote workers. They can also help build a company brand that shows remote workers are welcomed and supported.
- This person could be a big help to your company. However, it's up to you to decide if your firm's budget can support another C-suite salary.

*(Adapted in part from "Why your company needs a Chief Remote Work Officer" at [RobertHalf.com](http://RobertHalf.com))*

Our subscribers come from a broad range of companies, both large and small. In this regular feature, three of them share success stories you can adapt to your unique situation.

## 1 Persuaded collections vendor to update ERP

To ease the workload on our accounting department, we assigned collections to the outside firm that handled sales for our organization.

That way, accounting could focus on invoice data matching and reconciling our income with our inventory.

However, outsourcing collections ended up making more work for our A/R team because the sales firm was using an older, DOS-based enterprise resource planning (ERP) system.

A/R had to take the data from their ERP and verify it with our system, which is unacceptably inefficient.

### Time to upgrade

We needed to convince our sales partner that an update to something more compatible with our ERP system was necessary. Here's how we sold them:

- Software needs to evolve to be able to keep up with company growth.
- Duplication of data entry efforts defeats the purpose of

our partnership.

- Not upgrading puts them in danger of using technology that might not be compliant with security regs.
- We're willing to help them find an affordable solution that their other customers' ERPs can work with.

Moving to a newer ERP has improved the sales firm's synergy with us, while driving efficiency and growth.

*(Brinna Rischen, Accounting Manager, FirstFruits Farms, Prescott, WA)*

**REAL PROBLEMS  
REAL SOLUTIONS**

## 2 Reducing comp claims through ergonomics

When work-from-home started at the beginning of the pandemic, many employees assumed it was temporary.

So if they had ergonomics problems with their work-from-home set-up, they didn't complain much.

But a lot of people were working at dining room tables and using other furniture not meant for office use. As a result, work surfaces were too high, employees' hands and arms weren't in the correct typing position, and chairs had no back rests.

And as time went by, that opened the door to more complaints, injuries and workers' comp claims.

### Aiming for neutral posture

The goal was for employees to have neutral postures, whether working remotely or in the office. Here are some steps we've found to help:

- If employees are using a laptop, ensure they have a keyboard, mouse and monitor.
- Make sure each employee has a good desk chair.

- Encourage the use of alternate work surfaces, such as card tables, that will help employees work at a better height.

- Have them use stands if their laptop is their primary screen.
- If they'll be on the phone, get them a headset, and
- Remind them to build regular movement into their days.

*(Based on a presentation by Jeremy Wilzbacher, Sr. Consultant, Aon, Lander, WY, at the American Society of Safety Professionals' 2021 conference)*

## 3 Master vendor file rule: Only last 3 years matter

Since we were switching to a new accounting system, I thought it was a good time to clean up the list of all our company's suppliers.

I was stunned to discover the master vendor file had the names of 2,600 different vendors.

At first glance, it looked like we were only currently using about half of them.

Even worse, it looked like we were missing Forms W-9 for a few

of the current vendors.

It was obvious that updating the master vendor file was way overdue.

### Condensing a long list

I decided that if we hadn't worked with, and paid, a vendor in more than three years – which would've been before the pandemic – it wasn't worth keeping it in the master vendor file.

If it had been that long since we used that vendor, what are the odds we'd start using them again?

So I ran a payment register report just for the last three years, identified

which of those vendors were in the master file, then removed anyone that didn't show up in that report from the file.

It was also important to identify everybody we paid in the last year that might be due for a Form 1099. From there, I could tell which vendors I needed a W-9 from.

Our master vendor file is now much leaner and easier to manage, and all vendor W-9s are accounted for.

*(Deb Turner, Staff Accountant, Peabody Retirement Community, North Manchester, IN)*

# Don't let top job-seekers disappear! Latest research shows why candidates ghost during hiring process

■ Prepare yourself when recruiting to fill Finance roles

Not only is it hard to keep good people in Finance right now, it's also tough to recruit new ones.

Even worse, more top candidates than ever are "ghosting" employers.

## Why great candidates ghost

A term once only seen in the dating world, ghosting has become common in the office. Proof: Nearly 40% of senior managers surveyed said ghosting from potential job candidates has gotten worse in the last two years.

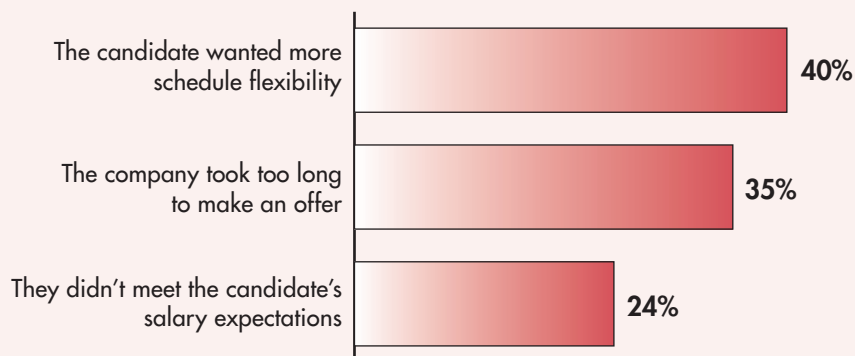
Those who've ghosted potential employers cited multiple reasons for their decision, including:

- The interview process was poor
- The job wasn't what they expected, and
- A mandatory return-to-office policy was implemented.

With these reasons in mind, you may want to push for more transparency for candidates in your hiring and interviewing processes.

## THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

In the last year, our company missed out on a potential hire because:



Source: Robert Half survey

Because salary is a significant reason why promising candidates seek greener pastures, you may have to adjust your salary budget to fill key Finance roles. Adding in perks like sign-on bonuses and flexible schedules might also help draw in top talent.

## Sharpen your judgment... THE DECISION

(please see case on Page 2)

No. The judge ruled Janet's company is still committed to the contract for its remaining duration. That meant it's required to participate in arbitration of the billing dispute with Bill's company.

The customer argued that because it never signed the original contract – since it was between its previous owner and Bill's company – it's no longer bound by the agreement or its arbitration provision.

However, the language of the contract that spelled out what happens in the event of the sale of the customer's business meant that it still applied to the new owner, the court said.

Since the contract was valid, all of its terms were also valid, including setting the billing issue via arbitration.

### Analysis: New owners still often have old obligations

Whenever there's a business ownership change that affects your company, it's important to review all relevant contracts and to discuss their terms with the new owners.

Keep in mind that not all parties involved in a contract may be aware of the ownership change and how it impacts them.

The headaches of this case might have been avoided by giving the business partner who wasn't in the know timely notice about what was going on so the problems could've been ironed out before going to court.

**Cite:** Noah's Ark Processors LLC v. UniFirst Corporation, No. S-21-086 310 Neb. 896 SC Nebraska, 2/11/22. Dramatized for effect.

## Experts give their solutions to difficult workplace problems

*Finance professionals like you face new questions every day on how to deal with everything from accounting and tax regulations to management and employment law issues. In this section, experts answer those real-life questions.*

### New reg gives workers more power to sue

**Q:** I've recently heard about the "Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act." Can you tell me more about it? What does it mean for my company?

**A:** According to Laura Lawless of law firm Squire Patton Boggs, Congress has approved the act, and it's expected to be signed into law by President Biden.

The act says that any employment agreement clauses that require employees with claims of workplace sexual misconduct to go to arbitration aren't legally binding.

Even if an employee has signed a document agreeing to arbitrate sexual harassment/assault disputes, the person would have the right to bypass that policy and take the claim straight to court.

This also applies to any sexual harassment/assault joint action waiver agreements.

With this new law, it's even more important to have a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment so costly legal battles don't spring up out of the blue. Be sure employees are regularly reminded of what behavior is appropriate in the workplace.

### Are employees who had COVID covered by ADA?

**Q:** Can employees medically cleared to return to work after recovering from COVID-19 ask

for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)? We don't want to run into legal problems.

**A:** If someone reports that they're having trouble doing their job because of the condition post-acute COVID-19 syndrome ("long COVID"), it's a good idea to work with HR to make an individualized assessment on essential job functions and what tasks the employee is/isn't able to do.

While the ADA doesn't specifically address COVID, lawyer and business law consultant Max Muller noted during the Premier Learning Solutions webinar "ADA and FMLA Updates: Navigating Overlapping Regulations" that it's important to be proactive about worker accommodations.

The ADA doesn't necessarily require employers to provide employees with leave, but does mandate making an effort with the employee to discuss reasonable accommodations that don't cause undue financial hardship to the employer.

Examples include light duty assignments or modification of the work schedule. And the accommodation doesn't necessarily have to be the one the employee asks for.

To stay in compliance, Muller recommended looking at the Job Accommodation Network's website [askjan.org](http://askjan.org) for ideas.

*If you have a question you'd like our experts to answer, email it to Jess White at [jwhite@CFODailyNews.com](mailto:jwhite@CFODailyNews.com)*

### COMMUNICATION KEYS

#### ■ How much does your office resemble 'The Office'?

Challenge your team to use their smartphones to create a mockumentary of your workplace in the style of the hit NBC TV show "The Office."

Later, you can gather virtually or in-person to premiere the finished video. Besides the laughs from poking fun at your company culture, it might also provide takeaways about how to treat and talk to one another.

**Info:** [bit.ly/office622](http://bit.ly/office622)

#### ■ Employee profiles can benefit the entire team

Effective workplace communication is difficult when you don't know who's who in the office.

Encouraging each employee to fill out a profile on the company intranet including a photo, personal interests, etc., can help both you and the rest of your team know each other better.

**Info:** [bit.ly/profile622](http://bit.ly/profile622)

#### ■ The discreet way to remove a LinkedIn connection

If you have a LinkedIn connection that you want to remove, here's how to do so with tact:

- Click on "My Network."
- Under the "Manage my Network" menu on the left, choose "Connections."
- In the connections list that appears, search for the person you want to remove, then click on the three-dots menu to the right of their name.
- Choose "Remove connection." You'll get a confirmation box that asks if you're sure.

**Info:** [bit.ly/linkedin622](http://bit.ly/linkedin622)

# Recent developments that can help your business stay ahead

## IRS: Here's what counts as an electronic signature

IRS is now allowing Finance pros to submit more forms using electronic signatures. But do you know what counts as an e-signature for the Service?

According to the latest guidance, acceptable types of signatures are:

1. a typed name on a signature block
2. a scanned or digitized image of a handwritten signature that's attached to an electronic record
3. a handwritten signature input onto an electronic signature pad
4. a handwritten signature, mark or command input on a display screen with a stylus device, and
5. a signature created by a third-party software.

*Info: [bit.ly/signature622](https://bit.ly/signature622)*

## 1 underused benefit that can save you money

There's one benefit many employers aren't offering employees that could save big bucks and improve retention.

It's child care. Employers that help employees with access to child care can claim the Employer Provided Child Care credit on their taxes. This credit is underused right now, even among companies that can claim it, according to a new report from the Government Accountability Office.

The credit can be claimed along with any other tax deductions for providing child care. Make sure you aren't leaving this money on the table.

*Info: For more on the credit, visit [gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105264.pdf](https://gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105264.pdf)*

## Latest evidence on 4-day workweeks for companies

You may have heard the recent buzz about four-day workweeks. But

do they actually boost the bottom line?

Buffer, a social media company, shifted its operations from a typical Monday to Friday schedule to a Monday-Thursday workweek.

To make the adjustment, the company cut back on meetings, started using communication tools like Slack and shifted around deadlines.

Result: 91% of employees said they were not only happier, but more productive at work.

That can help you hold on to your best people, saving you the hassles of a costly onboarding and hiring process.

*Info: [cnb.cx/3LS0tjW](https://cnb.cx/3LS0tjW)*

## 3 keys to getting great ROI on online training

Companies spent an average of \$1,071 per employee on training in 2021, according to *Training Magazine*. Much of that was spent on remote, online training.

But getting people engaged and interested in remote training can be tough. How can you make sure you're getting the best ROI from online training programs?

There are three keys, according to Marilyn Hubner, the managing director of Buildup Research.

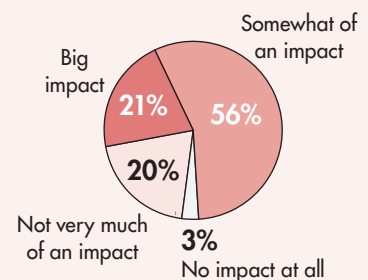
1. **Design training well.** Focus on how employees can interact with instructors and how teachers present the material.
2. **Invest in what counts.** Look for virtual training that hones in on the most mission-critical areas.
3. **Take your time.** Survey employees on past online training they've done. What worked, and what didn't? Use these answers to shape your next training sessions.

*Info: To get more info on avoiding common online training pitfalls, visit [safetynewsalert.com/articles/top-5-online-training-mistakes/](https://safetynewsalert.com/articles/top-5-online-training-mistakes/)*

## MEASURE UP

### Economic impact

What impact, if any, do you feel that macroeconomic concerns will have on your department's 2022 budget?



*Source: BillingPlatform's 2022 Trends in Finance survey*

Fewer of your peers think the economy will have a big impact on their budgets in 2022 than in 2021. However, half of companies that expect a large increase in revenue this year expect the economy to significantly impact their budgets.

## Lighter side: Careful of candidate bait & switch!

At the bare minimum, you'd think the person you hired for a job would be the same person you interviewed when they showed up for work.

Apparently, that's too much to ask for these days!

The *Ask a Manager* blog recently fielded a question about a potentially fraudulent employee. Although the person was hired virtually, it was done by video, so everyone saw his face.

But the person who came to the office looked very different. He also didn't remember the hiring manager who interviewed him. Additionally, he said he had a wife and kids when he claimed he was single in the interview. And he knew little about the job's requirements at all.

Before the company could confront the new hire, he abruptly quit.

Might want to take a screenshot of the interview to make sure your next virtual hire is legit!

*Info: [bit.ly/candidate622](https://bit.ly/candidate622)*