

Live from Workplace Horizons 2025: Hospitality Roundtable

By Amanda A. Simpson & Allison P. Dearington

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Meet the Authors



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Welcome to a special edition of We get work®, recorded live from Workplace Horizons 2025 in New York City, Jackson Lewis' annual Labor and Employment Law Conference. Over 500 representatives from 260 companies gathered together to share valuable insights and best practices on workplace law issues impacting their business today. Here's your personal invitation to get the insights from the conference, delivered directly to you.



Transcript

INTRO

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CONTENT

Alitia Faccione

Senior Director of Business Development

Welcome to the Live from Workplace Horizons 2025, We get work® podcast studio. I'm sitting this afternoon with Amanda Simpson, principal in the Orlando office of Jackson Lewis, and Allison Dearington, principal in the Hartford office of Jackson Lewis.

Ladies, welcome, and thank you for taking the time to sit behind the podcast mic today. First, I am going to ask you a really easy question. Just tell us a little bit about yourself, your practice, and really what is on the minds of employers this year as you talk to them every day.

Amanda Simpson

Office Managing Principal, Orlando

Absolutely. I am the co-leader of the firm's Hospitality, Restaurant Group. Since

that's what our roundtable is about, not only is it my focus being in the greater Orlando area nationwide, but there's really been a question of what comes next, especially in the last 100 days. Staying in tune with the workforce, since the administration is focused on immigration, and how that can impact the hospitality industry as a whole. Both advice and counsel, and guiding employers when they are faced with some of those issues.

Allison Dearington

Principal and Office Litigation Manager, Hartford

Similarly, I'm the office litigation manager in the Hartford office. My practice primarily focuses on employment litigation and advice and counsel. I do a lot of work with hospitality clients, mainly in the realm of wage and hour class actions.

I would say that that's largely what I see continue to be a focus, especially with the new administration. We're always looking at how the wage and hour laws might be impacted. We're seeing an overhaul of administrative agencies focusing on regulations. I would still say wage and hour continues to be a hot-button issue.

Faccone

You hosted the hospitality roundtable here at Workplace Horizons, which is a great opportunity to really understand what is on employers' minds. So, what came up and what issues were covered during your roundtable?

Simpson

Allison hit it on the head; wage and hour was number one. It really makes sense from an industry focus because what we've realized at Jackson Lewis, and we're training our attorneys internally, is that there is a whole different world of compensation and terminology and industry-specific roles that are so nuanced that employers in the hospitality industry really need to be in tune with those. Their outside counsel also needs to be in tune with them. As Alison indicated, there are always pitfalls in the wage and hour space. We talked about how employers are being creative in their approach.

I saw an article this morning where Americans are over-tipping. They're sick of it, they're avoiding those screens with tips, they're staying at home and using cash. That really started the conversation on service charge models, going to minimum wage, keeping the tips and having those conversations with their employees, because ultimately they said, you ask your employees, what do you want and what makes you happy?

Faccone

Alison, a lot to talk about, right? Things change every day, but it seems like the pace has accelerated. What were some of the other issues that were really on the attendees' minds when you had your roundtable discussion?

Dearington

One of the things that's so nice about our roundtable is that I learn from our clients. One interesting topic that came up is just engagement. We've been talking

more broadly at the conference about how to keep employees engaged, especially when you have multiple generations in your workforce. We talked a lot about this younger generation coming into the workforce and using social media to keep them engaged, like highlighting their contributions on social media as a way to recognize their talents, is something really important to them.

We also talked a lot about accommodations. As we're coming out of this post-COVID world, a lot of employees are getting used to working from home. What does that look like when you're trying to get employees back into the office and the workforce? Those are definitely two topics that, separate from wage and hour, we spent a lot of time on.

Facone

Amanda, I'm sure we sat across from each other at this table last year at Workplace Horizons 2024. What do you think are some of the most significant changes that have taken place? We know there have been a bunch of changes, but particularly for hospitality employers?

Simpson

One thing that we heard was actually very surprising to me, but it made sense, was that they're receiving fewer employee concerns and complaints. We really discussed why they thought that was happening. It goes back to what we were discussing at the beginning – there were a lot of unknowns in the first 100 days. There are concerns with immigration and other things.

They also are listening to their employees and having that engagement to deliver on what they want. They're seeing that it's working, there are less internal complaints, and fewer complaints going to agencies, et cetera. It's actually a pretty productive and happy workforce, focusing on the various generations and what they want. It was really nice.

Facone

That is amazing. As we all talked about, one of the great things about a roundtable is actually getting our clients to talk to us in an environment where it's not, pick up the phone, I have an issue, and really learning from them.

Alison, when you take that back to the office, how do you translate that? How do you add that to how we're already helping clients in the hospitality sector?

Dearington

It is a lot about being proactive rather than reactive. We're making sure we are monitoring legislation, keeping our check-it surveys updated and giving our clients access to a lot of different content, whether it's through podcasts, articles or blogs on our website. That's one important piece of it.

Our industry knowledge is the second truly important piece. Understanding the business, making sure our lawyers understand the business and that we're giving practical advice. It's one thing to say, here's the law, but really, our clients want to know how that impacts their industry specifically? We do a great job of that.

Faccone

The industry roundtables at Workplace Horizons every year also give us an opportunity to really get that feedback.

Amanda, Allison, thank you so much for joining us in the studio this morning. Hope you had a wonderful conference, and we will see you next year. Thanks.

OUTRO

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