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IT'S BUDGET TIME

Is your organization one of the many that conducts their budgeting process at this time of year? If so, it's time to start to thinking about your needs for next year. While this is usually a lengthy and difficult process, it does give an organization the opportunity to think about the direction it is headed, both employee and management development, as well as actions and projects that might be appropriate for next year.

Once you determine the types of activities you plan to engage in during the upcoming year, a dollar (or resources) figure must be associated with it. It is not always easy to identify how much should be set aside for upcoming activities. Give us a call; we welcome the opportunity to help you estimate costs for any Human Resource projects that you might be considering. Time is money. Outsourcing some of your project work can definitely save you time and allow you to focus your time and energy on items that only you can do; work that helps you to add to the bottom-line. We see this as results-oriented outsourcing.

Some of the projects that we specialize in and might be beneficial to you are:

- Pay or salary research (using our library of published salary surveys) or salary structure design;
- Internal investigations where objectivity and time sensitivity is a must;
- Development or revision of employee handbooks or policy manuals;
- Drafting job descriptions;
- Developing an incentive plan that ties your pay program to actual employee or team performance;
- A survey of your employees to get their perspective on workplace practices, policies and/or benefits;
- Training programs that increase supervisory/managerial skills, enhance communication or team building, provide awareness of harassment/diversity; and,
- If this is the year that your employee count will cross one of those critical headcount thresholds that changes your compliance requirements (ADA, FMLA, AAP, OFLA, ERISA, etc.), we are capable of helping you meet those new requirements.

Wouldn't you like less stress in 2016? We invite you to call us to talk about the work you are planning for next year. There is no charge for any member of our staff to meet with you, and it would be our pleasure to talk with you about your Human Resource plans.

REMINDER FOR LARGE EMPLOYERS: *TIME TO START PLANNING FOR ACA REPORTING*

With the U.S. Supreme Court's June decision upholding the Affordable Care Act (ACA), employers subject to the Act's information reporting provision can no longer afford to put off planning.

Beginning in 2016, "large" employers as defined by the Act must file Forms 1094 and 1095 to provide information to the IRS and plan participants about health coverage provided in the previous year (2015).

Fortunately, recent IRS guidance helps clarify the reporting requirements. A new IRS Q&A document addresses more specific issues that may arise while completing the forms.

Keep in mind that, while some "midsize" employers (generally employers with 50 to 99 full-time employees or the equivalent) can qualify for an exemption from the play-or-pay provision in 2015 if they meet certain requirements, these employers still will be subject to the information reporting requirements.

We highly encourage you to consult your legal and/or tax professional when considering your options in meeting the requirements set forth by the ACA.

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“Large Employer” Definition

If you're uncertain about whether or not your organization qualifies as a large employer under the ACA, you're not alone. Here are the current guidelines:

- An employer must have employed during the previous calendar year at least 100 full time and full-time equivalent employees.
- Based on the current number of employees, employers will need to determine each year whether or not they will meet the requirements as a large employer for the following year.
- Employers average the number of employees across the months in the year which will help account for fluctuations that employers may experience in their work force throughout the year.

You are also not alone if you don't understand the difference between full-time employees and full-time equivalent employees. A standard full-time employee is one who works an average of at least 30 hours per week or 130 hours per month. The term full-time equivalent employees, however, reflects the number of full-time employees an employer would have based on the hours for all employees who are not full-time employees.

The number of full-time equivalent employees for a calendar month is determined by aggregating the hours of service (including fractional hours rounded to the nearest hundredth, but not including more than 120 hours for any one employee) for all employees who are not full-time employees for that month, and then dividing by 120.

Keep in mind that hours of service includes any hour for which an employee is paid or is entitled to payment, including vacation, holiday, illness, incapacity, layoff, jury duty, military duty, or a leave of absence.

Main content of this article provided by Wellmark: Determining Applicable Large Employer Status.

ACA-Required Benefits

There is one more item of note we feel should be mentioned in this edition. As of January 1, 2016, ACA-defined large employers will be required to offer benefits to all full-time and full-time equivalent employees and their dependents (children up to age 26). This health coverage must meet the minimum value requirement of 60% and be affordable relative to an employee's household income.

According to healthcare.gov, a health plan meets the minimum value standard if it's designed to pay at least 60% of the total cost of medical services for a standard population, and if its benefits include substantial coverage of inpatient hospital and physician services. Individuals offered job-based coverage that provides minimum value and is considered affordable aren't eligible for a premium tax credit. This requirement will affect HRA clients with 100 or more full-time and full-time equivalent employees that use our staffing service. We will send out additional communication to our affected clients as we approach the end of the year.

Main content of this article provided by Wellmark: Determining Applicable Large Employer Status and healthcare.gov.

We highly encourage you to consult your benefits broker when considering your options in meeting the requirements set forth by the ACA.

COME SEE OUR BEAUTIFUL NEW OFFICE SPACE!

On **Monday, September 21, from 4:30pm until 7:30pm**, HR Answers will be hosting an Open House event to welcome our many clients, friends, and alumni to our new location in Tigard. If you would like to attend, please R.S.V.P. by September 4 by calling our office or emailing Bryse at bbishoff@hranswers.com. We'd love to see you here!

DIGITAL FORENSICS – YOUR NEXT GREAT HR RESOURCE

What is digital forensics? In a nutshell, it is looking at data in the purest form possible to try to determine if an incident has (or has not) taken place involving a computer, smart phone, tablet, etc. If evidence exists of an incident, the data is compiled and presented in a format that helps “put the pieces of the puzzle together.” In the business world, a digital forensic expert may be used to help solidify a case for disciplinary action involving misuse of company computers or to help prove that a former employee stole intellectual property before leaving and going to work for a competitor.

Editor: Deborah Jeffries, PHR, CPC. Advantage is published monthly and is designed to provide information on regulations, HR practices and management ideas and concerns. The intended audience is managers, supervisors, business owners, human resource and employee relations professionals. If you have questions about the content, an opinion about the information, questions about your subscription, or if you need additional Advantage binders, please give us a call at (503) 885-9815 or e-mail djeffries@hranswers.com.

Small-to-medium sized businesses often have executives and managers who wear multiple hats. In fact, it's not uncommon for a smaller startup to have one person who deals with accounting and HR or safety and HR. And while organizations like this may not have the full-time staffing to deal with issues like information security, misuse of company networks, data breaches, or intellectual property theft, rest assured, these issues are ongoing within organizations at all levels and sizes.

What tends to be most lacking when facing an information security breach is having the policy in place prior to an incident. Experts often urge organizations to get the proper employee management tools, such as new hire agreements and a handbook in place, to minimize risk as much as possible. After all, being proactive matters and an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

What happens, though, when an incident takes place? For example, let's say the MNOP Construction Company has an office employee who is using his down time to gamble online on an organization computer. The manager at MNOP discovers the employee is engaged in this activity and decides it is against the policy and culture and wants to terminate the employee. There may be an underlying challenge to consider, though: How does MNOP minimize the risk of the soon to be ex-employee challenging the organization for wrongdoing (a.k.a. legal challenge/lawsuit)? Should an HR call in the IT gurus to help prove the case? Sounds like an HR issue, right? Well, maybe and maybe not. It might not be that simple and may require a more comprehensive approach.

IT and information security professionals often don't have the requisite training and expertise to conduct these types of investigations while preserving the evidence. This is the point at which MNOP should call in a digital forensic examiner to help determine if there is a case against the employee. A digital forensics specialist can acquire the data on the employee's work station and conduct a thorough examination. This will likely include internet history, email history, document history, and even deleted data. Yes, deleted data! This can help the organization illustrate how long the activity has been ongoing and pinpoint exactly how much time has been spent on the activity. Keep in mind that a digital forensics specialist may not always find what you want them to. Sometimes a thorough investigation may prove there is no issue at all.

This illustration is very basic and, as you can imagine, could get much more complicated if the issue involves embezzlement, hacking, or theft of intellectual property. Regardless of the scope of the incident, organizations of all sizes need to bear in mind three basic principles when dealing with suspected misuse of digital assets,

- Make sure your organization has a signed Acceptable Use Policy for all company-owned computers, cell phones, tablets, etc. for all employees. This "ounce of prevention" goes a long way toward preventing litigation down the road after disciplinary action takes place (including termination).
- As soon as wrongdoing is suspected, isolate the digital media (computer, tablet, smart phone, etc.) involved in the incident and lock it down as much as practicable. Ideally, if a work station at an employee's desk is suspected, seize, secure, and replace the workstation after hours when the employee is not present. Seek HR guidance on what steps are necessary to follow when an employee inquires as to why the workstation has changed or is being investigated.
- Don't assume your IT staff knows how to retrieve digital evidence in an acceptable format for presentation at an administrative hearing, deposition, or court hearing. Evidence-based practices are always the best option for seizure and collection of data that may be used in later proceedings.

In summary, lock down the suspected device(s), call in a digital forensic professional, and don't try to conduct your own examination. The digital forensic expert offers the benefit of impartiality, which you may not be operating under as a manager or owner of an organization who just discovered that your employee may be stealing from you.

Does this seem a little overboard? We think not when you consider that when employees get disciplined or terminated, emotions become a factor, and that's when lawsuits and labor complaints can be filed. You will be more at ease and able to sleep at night if you take all the appropriate steps available to you before discipline or termination, as opposed to sitting in a deposition wishing that you had.

The name of this game is to minimize your risk and that takes teamwork! HR, IT, and a digital forensic expert can work in concert to help respond more effectively, should some form of an information security breach occur.

Main content of this article provided by Patrick Siewert of Professional Digital Forensic Consulting.

THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.

~ Dwight D. Eisenhower ~

Leadership should be born out of the understanding of the needs of those who would be affected by it.

~ Marian Anderson ~

A good leader takes a little more than his share of the blame and a little less than his share of the credit.

~ Arnold H. Glasgow ~

Leaders don't force people to follow – they invite them on a journey.

~ Charles S. Lauer ~

Outstanding leaders go out of the way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it's amazing what they can accomplish.

~ Sam Walton ~

The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority.

~ Ken Blanchard ~

Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't.

MANAGING 101

Recent surveys continue to indicate that employees state the worst thing about their job is their boss. That means employees are far less productive than they could be, which directly affects an organization's profitability.

How are you filling open management positions? Do your job descriptions define what you are looking for? Does the section marked "Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities" include "proven ability to lead and motivate others" and "skilled at change management, while fostering a positive work culture?"

What should you expect from a "good manager?" They should, at a minimum, be viewed as a reasonable person, who can be trusted to:

1. Limit liability (do they understand employment law basics?)
2. Handle issues fairly and consistently
3. Counsel poor performers privately
4. Offer praise and recognition
5. Lead by example
6. Be able to build a work group that understands how to work together.

Ultimately, how effective a manager is depends on their commitment, comfort, training, and how well they are managed. It all rolls down from top leadership.

So the BIG question is: are your managers making these common workforce management mistakes?

1. Hiring without a job description?
2. Asking inappropriate, potentially discriminatory interview questions?
3. Hiring the "wrong" employees, resulting in high turnover costs?
4. Allowing new employees to "sink" because there is no supervisory on-boarding taking place?
5. Not able to help employees resolve conflicts?
6. Failing to pay overtime to those who are eligible (non-exempt)?
7. Taking unauthorized payroll deductions?
8. Not able or willing to provide feedback to employees?

9. Failing to document policy violations and poor job performance?
10. Missing 90 day and annual performance review dates?
11. Allowing employees to take anytime or day off because they are worried about violating leave laws?

If the answer is “yes” to any of the above, you may want to consider some basic employment law and best practice supervisory training. The return on investment is a minimized risk of violations/fines, a more productive workforce, and improved supervisory/employee relationships!

What type of leader and manager skills are you looking for from your current staff? Do you think they are lucky to have a job, or are you lucky to have them? Positive leadership directly affects your businesses ability to get a return on investment from your employees.

Recruit the best, motivate the new, coach the existing, and INSPIRE productivity from everyone. **And guess what, we are here to help, too. Ask us about our on-site training programs and workshops. We have a Supervisor Series coming up from Sept. 17 – Oct 22 and we can help set the stage. See the HRA Calendar for more details and check out our website too. <http://hranswers.com/event/hra-workshop-beginning-supervision-for-success-2/>**

MISCONDUCT – SUSTAINING THE BURDEN OF PROOF

Unemployment claims can be time consuming and frustrating for employers, but documentation is critical. In cases where the claimant has been separated as a result of a discharge, the employer carries the burden of proof to establish the termination was attributable to misconduct connected with the work in order to disqualify the claimant from receiving unemployment insurance benefits. The basic definition of misconduct is any action that reflects an intentional or willful violation of policy or standards of behavior the employer has the right to expect from their employees.

The first step in the process is to provide the agency with complete and detailed information concerning the claimant’s involuntary termination from your employment. This includes a description of the former employee’s specific actions or activities that were in violation of the organization’s policy or code of conduct. Documentation that can be an important factor to sustain the burden of proof includes detailed termination reports, prior warnings if applicable, a copy of the policy violated, and a handbook acknowledgement that will establish the employee knew, or should have known, that their actions could result in termination of employment.

Consideration should also be given to the submission of witness statements, although this may be more complicated due to confidentiality issues or concerns. When the discharge involves a performance issue, providing details related to the nature of the problem is beneficial, whether it involves repeated errors, negligence and carelessness, or failure to adhere to established policies related to the performance of job duties. For cases involving attendance issues, the reason given for the final incident is normally required, and whether or not proper notice was provided is necessary. (Proper notice includes a verbal conversation, a documented note of final warning, and language indicating “job jeopardy: if occurs again.”) If one is available, it is also recommended that a copy of the attendance record be submitted. In cases involving a termination due to unsatisfactory performance or attendance, it is critical that copies of previous warnings be submitted with the claim response.

WORDS CAN HURT

Can you relate? Has something like this ever happened in your organization?

Client Relations Manager Brittany is having a rough day. A year ago she inherited a motivated staff that had a reputation for delivering quality service, but her sixth employee has just resigned, sales are down, and client retention is sliding. The president of the organization is not happy. Brittany is beginning to realize that ‘sticks and stones... and words CAN hurt.’ They can damage your organization’s culture and reputation, which hinders good hiring. They can demotivate your employees, which ultimately cuts into profits.

Her missteps were common, but over time, caused damage. Brittany wasn’t given a ‘how to say it’ manual that addresses the employee/management challenges she would face. At one time she believed that because she was ‘the boss,’ she could say what she wanted to get the job done, without giving much thought to the consequences. Negative interactions with employees will cause them to act out and will take a toll on everyone.

First time and long time supervisors have difficulty finding the right way to deliver information. The biggest mistake? Texting and email! The downside of technology is allowing poor communicators to hide. Why a supervisor would email an employee about a performance deficiency when they are sitting in the cubicle beside them is a mystery! And texting an unprofessional message to an employee after hours is worse.

If you want to a good leader, you have to have difficult conversations, period. These conversations should be verbal whenever possible and should take place on the business day of or the business day closest to when the challenge occurred.

If you or your supervisors are like Brittany and are at a loss on what to say during a first time or difficult conversation, here are some suggestions on how to address the most common situations:

Interviewing – Watch out for landmines!

- Replace “What daycare do you use?” with “Are you able to begin work at 6 AM?”
- Replace “Do you have any disabilities?” with “After reviewing the job description, are you able to perform the essential duties of this job?”
- Replace “When did you graduate from high school?” with “Are you at least 18 years old?”

New Hires – Demotivating them will waste all your recruiting efforts.

- Replace “Do not, do not, do not” with “This is a great place to work; here’s why.”
- Replace “I know you may be overwhelmed, but…” with “This is a lot of information to take on at once, so here is a schedule to follow and reference material.”
- Replace “A 90 day review will be scheduled later on…” with “90 day reviews are an important piece of our employee success process; yours has already been scheduled for X day at Y time.”

Performance Management –Try not to turn an above average employee into disgruntled and unproductive.

- Replace “I’m tired of you being late” with “Has your ability to report to work on time changed?”
- Replace “I’m not paying for that overtime” with “I appreciate you working late. Please remember that our policy requires pre-approval first.”
- Replace “It’s just a joke, get over it” with “I am listening. I can tell this is important to you. I appreciate your concern and I am happy to assist you. Let’s review our policies and decide on how to best proceed.”
- Replace “This is not up for discussion!” with “Our organization has an open door policy. Please review those guidelines and schedule a time with me to discuss your suggestions.”

No one is perfect and no one has all the answers. The best leaders in the world can trip themselves up from time to time, but reasonable judgment, strong values, and thinking before you speak should help. Don’t let constant negativity damage culture, productivity, or profits. Before you say it, put yourselves in the other person’s shoes first. Or as many of our mothers used to say, “Think before you speak!”

HR BY THE NUMBERS

By 2020, nearly half of the U.S. workforce will be made up of temps, according to research by Intuit.

According to the 2015 Employer Branding Study by CareerArc found **38% of respondents who have been terminated or laid off had left one negative review** of that former employer on a review site, social media, or with a personal or professional contact. The survey also found 54% of those who have been let go at least once in their career reported that the layoff or termination had negatively impacted their perception of their previous employer.

Unemployment. In July it was reported that the number of Americans filing initial applications for unemployment benefits fell to a 42-year low. Also, the unemployment rate is at a 7-year low at 5.3%.

Stress in America Survey 2015. Every year since 2007, the American Psychological Association has commissioned a “Stress in America Survey.” And, just like each of the previous years, money stress tops the list in 2015. Seventy-two percent of Americans say they worry about money at least some of the time, and 22% say they worry about money much of the time. Emotional support is what most people report as helping them cope best with money stress—specifically, having someone they can turn to, such as family members and friends. If you’re stressed about money, support is crucial because it has positive ripple effects. For example, those who had emotional support were likely to worry less, participate in fewer sedentary and unhealthy coping behaviors, make more life changes, and be less likely to have their stress levels become worse. Get guidance and help from a counselor for how to find emotional support if you are suffering from money stress problems—even if there appear to be no immediate answers to increasing your income. Many employers have Employee Assistance Plans (EAP’s) that cover financial planning. This program can be a valuable service for employees facing financial concerns. *Source: www.apa.org (search “Stress America 2015”).*

E-cigarettes Less Than Helpful. E-cigarettes (electronic vapor nicotine devices) probably won't help you quit smoking tobacco, according to a recent study that found e-cigarette users 49% less likely to decrease cigarette use and 59% less likely to quit smoking compared with tobacco smokers who try to quit. One prediction did come true: Adolescents using e-cigarettes get hooked, and one third of them have never smoked real tobacco. Teen use of e-cigarettes rose 300% between 2013 and 2014. (4/16/15; New York Times) *Source: health.ucsd.edu (Search: "e-cigarettes")*

Stalking Comes to Work. No employee wants to bring problems to work, but some problems may not stay away—like a stalker. Do you have an employee who has feared for their safety because of someone making unwanted phone calls, sending unsolicited letters or e-mails, or following them, perhaps at work, for no legitimate reason? Stalking is a serious criminal offense with over three million victims per year. Stalkers often appear at work because the victim must show up there. About one-fourth of stalking victims have experienced lost income or work time dealing with a stalker. Workplace stalking is not the employee's fault—accountability lies with the stalker, not the victim. Employees should seek and expect help in the same way they would expect for any threat or risk occurring at work. Reminder: many states have additional laws and allow time off for individuals to deal with this personal safety issue. *Source: Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, CAEPV.org ("get information/statistics/stalking")*.

Slips and Falls. Slips and falls are the most common types of accidents with injury—over 38 million incidents worldwide each year. For every 100,000 people, ten will die from a fall. Knowing what causes slips and falls can help an organization prevent them—cluttered floors, loose floorboards, defective sidewalks, parking lot potholes, poorly constructed staircases, torn carpeting, recently mopped or waxed floors, poor weather conditions (ice, sleet, rain), improper training or technique when climbing or walking in hazardous areas or pathways, improper monitoring or assisting of elderly or disabled patients, and unsuitable footwear. Safety matters for employees and visitors, and accidents can have expense consequences.

Here's what frightens most Americans. What are people most afraid of? The Chapman Survey on American Fears examines the everyday fears and worries of Americans. From a recent sample of 1,500 people, the survey determined that Americans' top fears (as distinguished from mere "concerns") are:

- Walking alone at night
- Identity theft
- Internet safety
- Random/mass shootings
- Public speaking

At a lower level of anxiety, the study also identified the top five areas of concern among Americans:

- Identity theft via the internet
- Corporate surveillance of Internet use
- Running out of money
- Government Internet surveillance
- Illness

And when asked about natural disasters, respondents admitted being most afraid of these catastrophic events:

- Tornadoes and hurricanes
- Earthquakes
- Floods
- Epidemics
- Blackout/power loss

Again, employee safety is a major employee responsibility. Assess your physical surroundings and make necessary adjustments to minimize these common concerns.

Internet Gaming Disorder. (IGD) affects 3 to 10% of internet and video gamers—mostly young adults. Although not yet a mental disorder, IGD is characterized by preoccupation with internet gaming; feeling unable to stop gaming, feeling guilty because one can't quit, experiencing neglect of physical health, with decreased academic performance and a decline in social and normal recreational pursuits. IGD is treatable, but seeking help with an assessment from a trusted counselor is key. Many online internet help resources are not reliable, and it's better to be followed by a professional who can evaluate and monitor progress in recovery. Inquire as to whether your EAP can address this condition. *Source: www.dsm5.org.*

Q. How do I practice detachment so when I go home at the end of the day I am able to focus on home life, sleep better, and not be overly concerned about employee issues at work? Is this a learned skill or an ability a few lucky supervisors are born with?

A. Detachment is more of an art than a skill. It comes with practice, and you get better over time by practicing letting go, observing your resistance, and making adjustments to improve your ability.

Detachment allows you to become a more accomplished worker and contented, happy family member. There is always more to learn about detachment. You will not succeed all the time. No job that entails interacting with the human condition enjoys complete and utter detachment, because a continuum of problems guarantees new acute experiences will test your ability to let go. Imagine an emergency operating room physician who could not detach from work. Stress and its ultimate effects would incapacitate even the most skilled doctor.

Here are a couple of suggestions that might aid in the process:

Added drive time. Depending on the amount of drive time you have at the end of the day, this is a good time to create the barrier or the distance from work and home. If your drive is not long enough, perhaps add time or a few more blocks to offer you additional minutes to clear your head.

Music, Exercise, and/or Massage. These often help people reset. Do more of all three.

How do you show up? Before entering your house, have a conversation with yourself. How do you want to be with the family when you come home at the end of the day? What do you want to give and what do they deserve? Take a deep breath and think about how you want to be, want to feel, and how you want to be perceived by others when you walk in the house.

15 minute decompress. Some like to have 15 minutes when they come home to just “be.” Perhaps you change your clothes, or walk into your backyard, or grab a beverage. Your request from the rest of the family members is that you just need 15 minutes to get settled and then you will be completely focused on them.

EAP. Again, since this is a work-related concern, your EAP may have some services that may be helpful. If it is provided, perhaps you can chat with someone who can work with you specifically and offer you additional ideas and suggestions.

EVERYDAY RECOGNITION

Emphasize. What is the focus for your department or team, right now? This week, month, or quarter? Is it meeting deadlines, cost-cutting, reducing errors, number of sales, new pieces of business, or streamlining operations? Whatever the initiative, bring it into the spotlight.

Create a customized (yet simple) recognition program around it:

- A traveling trophy that is awarded once per week
- An on-the-spot award for an individual
- Peer kudos cards
- A personalized email card (especially for folks at a distance)
- A wall of fame
- Lunch brought in for the team

Use recognition to emphasize what is important now and what reinforces your mission and the organization’s values!

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Open up your Daytimers, Outlook, Palm Pilots, and all those Smart Phones. The following is a look at upcoming events, special days and other diverse and fun activities you will want to be aware of and get scheduled. **To register for our workshops, please call any of our offices, or send an e-mail to Bryse Bishoff at bbishoff@hranswers.com, or fax it to (503) 352-5582.**

AUGUST

Happiness Happens, National Win with Civility, National Immunization Awareness, Children's Eye Health & Safety, and What Will Be Your Legacy Month

There are no workshops or events this month. We hope you are enjoying the summer!!

Aug. 3 International Friendship Day

Aug. 10 S'mores Day

Aug. 13 International Left Handers Day

Aug. 15 National Relaxation Day

SEPTEMBER

Aug. 17 HRA Employee Appreciation Lunch
HRA office will be closed for several hours around lunchtime

Aug. 26 HR Lunch Bunch – CCBI, Salem
Topic: Wellness
12:00pm – 1:00pm

Sept. 2 HR Lunch Bunch – HRA Office Tigard
Topic: Engaging Reluctant Leaders
12:00pm – 1:00pm

Sept. 11 HRA offices will be closed for the day

**Sept. 17– Oct. 22 HR Answers Workshop – Tigard
Beginning Supervision Series
8:30am-12:30pm**

**Sept. 21 HRA Open House – Come see our new digs
4:30pm-7:30pm**

**Sept. 23 UEA and HRA Workshop - Tigard
Safety Series – Class 1
Managing an Effective Safety Committee & Safety Programs
9:00am – 12:00pm**

**Sept. 25 UEA and HR Answers Workshop – Tigard
Oregon Legislative Update
8:30am – 10:30am**

Sept. 30 HR Lunch Bunch – CCBI, Salem
Micro-Inequalities
12:00pm – 1:00pm

Planning Ahead:

Oct. 5-7 NHRMA Regional Conference – Portland

**Oct. 14 HRA Workshop – Tigard
Improving Your Interview Skill with Behavioral Interviewing
8:30am – 12:00pm**

**Oct. 21 UEA and HR Answers Workshop – Tigard
Safety Series – Class 2
OSHA Inspection and Hazardous Communication
9:00am – 12:00pm**

Oct. 28 HR Lunch Bunch – CCBI, Salem
Topic: Organization (Time/Space)
12:00pm – 1:00pm

**Oct. 29 HRA Workshop – Tigard
HR - Ripped From the Headlines
9:00am – 12:00pm**

Nov. 4 HR Lunch Bunch – Tigard
Topic: Hot Topics in HR – Open Forum for Your Questions
12:00pm – 1:00pm

Nov. 18 HR Lunch Bunch – CCBI, Salem
Topic: Older Workforce
12:00pm – 1:00pm

**Nov. 18 UEA and HRA Workshop – Tigard
Safety Series – Class 3
Documentation & OSHA 300 Logs
9:00am – 12:00pm**

**Nov. 19 HRA Workshop – Tigard
Getting Organized
8:00am – 12:00pm**

Dec. 2 HR Lunch Bunch – Tigard
Topic: Real Coaching Practices for HR
12:00pm – 1:00pm

Information and advice offered through Advantage should not be construed as legal opinion. The material contained herein will not apply to all circumstances or to all organizations. Use it as a resource and reference. Should you feel legal advice is required, please consult with your corporate counsel.

ON MY SOAPBOX

I am intrigued by the presence of a word and concept that seems to dominate our collective psyche. The word is “fast.” The presence of this is everywhere. All you have to do is watch a few commercials to recognize how prevalent this is. Let me offer a few illustrations. Images stay on the screen only for fractions of seconds. Sometimes I am not even sure of what the image was that flashed before my eyes, and it is only after several repetitions that I am able to digest the message of the nanosecond viewing. (Maybe that is what they are trying to accomplish – and if that is the case, then they have been wildly successful!)

In some commercials, cars are seen racing down thoroughfares as the voice-over talks about its power, its sleekness, and highlights its digital virtues. I am particularly struck at the speeds that are shown as these cars traverse city streets. Clearly the producers of these bits of advertising have not driven on byways clogged cars and trucks that are part of my everyday travel. Clearly they have not had to allow for 45 minutes for a 15 minute trip. Their depiction screams speed.

One commercial has a character saying that she is a member of 14 dating sites. The gentleman she is talking to asks if one of those is eHarmony. She comments that she “doesn’t have time for all those eHarmony questions.” To which he replies, “Do you want fast or forever?” A thoughtful question, for sure.

Recently, I took my car in for an oil change. The staff at the station was fascinated by the fact that my speedometer went to 170 miles per hour. They inquired as to how fast I had tried to go and were disappointed when I said that there was no place for me to try to drive that fast, and that I thought it was silly to have an instrument that suggested that as a possible top speed.

Quiz shows also contribute to this sense that speed is a virtue. Contestants are called upon to have instant answers and recall. The large ticking clocks on the wall indicate how little time they have. There is often a countdown process accompanied by music of increasing volume and intensity. Even as viewers, we succumb to the sense of urgency the contestants experience and find our heart rate and breathing affected.

We have fast food, high-speed computers, magazines that provide only snippets of the news so they can be read in an instant, diets that promise fast weight loss, movies that are both fast and furious, creams and lotions that promise anti-aging results in a matter of days, and pain relievers or antacids that tout their fast acting properties. We seem to have lost any sense that things worthwhile are sometimes worth waiting for or that patience truly is a virtue.

Speed certainly has its advantages in some situations. It is great that with final pricing already marked on the automobile purchasing a car can now be done in an hour or so as opposed to a tedious, conflict-ridden, and often painful multi-hour process we used to endure. For those with access to high speed trains, traveling long distances has become much easier. We are now able to consume or research vast amounts of information in very short timeframes because of technology.

However, the disadvantages of speed, of this orientation to be “fast,” are also significant. There is a pressure to decide quickly, to have instant solutions to complex problems, to hurry up almost all aspects of our lives. There is little time given to ponder, to reflect, to let ideas percolate, to thoughtfully consider options and alternatives. We rush into action. This is captured by the old statement, “Ready, Fire, Aim” which seems to be the default process we utilize. And, we can all imagine what the results of that practice could be.

This approach also affects HR. One example of this is the sense of urgency regarding the hiring process because a qualified candidate may be lost to some other organization. So we cut corners and rush to a job offer. While this might work out upon occasion, it often results in a poor hire because of skipped processes (background checks, second interviews, or Supplemental Questionnaires, etc.), inadequate consideration time, or a reluctance to make time for all interested parties to weigh in on the candidate. Yes, there may be a risk of taking time to do it right, but that is small compared to the consequences of doing it wrong.

I believe that we need to carefully consider when speed is an asset, and when it can create a major obstacle or adverse outcome. We must not allow the sense of pressure to compromise our decisions, our actions, or our thinking. The environment we are experiencing regarding “fast” contributes to our feelings of stress and inadequacy. Taking the time to be thoughtful, practical, and considerate reduces this stress and allows us to reach better solutions. Time can be our ally if we will let it.

- Judy Clark, President



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