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PROCLAMATION OF THANKSGIVING

This is the proclamation which set the precedent for America's national day of Thanksgiving. During his administration, President Lincoln issued many orders similar to this. For example, on November 28, 1861, he ordered government departments closed for a local day of thanksgiving.

Sarah Josepha Hale, a 74-year-old magazine editor, wrote a letter to Lincoln on September 28, 1863, urging him to have the "day of our annual Thanksgiving made a National and fixed Union Festival." She explained, "You may have observed that, for some years past, there has been an increasing interest felt in our land to have the Thanksgiving held on the same day, in all the States; it now needs National recognition and authoritative fixation, only, to become permanently, an American custom and institution."

Prior to this, each state scheduled its own Thanksgiving holiday at different times, mainly in New England and other Northern states. President Lincoln responded to Mrs. Hale's request immediately, unlike several of his predecessors, who ignored her petitions altogether. In her letter to Lincoln, she mentioned that she had been advocating a national thanksgiving date for 15 years as the editor of Godey's Lady's Book. George Washington was the first President to proclaim a day of thanksgiving, issuing his request on October 3, 1789, exactly 74 years before Lincoln's.

The document below sets apart the last Thursday of November "as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise." According to an April 1, 1864, letter from John Nicolay, one of President Lincoln's secretaries, this document was written by Secretary of State William Seward, and the original was in his handwriting. On October 3, 1863, fellow Cabinet member Gideon Welles recorded in his diary how he complimented Seward on his work. A year later, the manuscript was sold to benefit Union troops.

Washington, D.C.

October 3, 1863

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People.

I do, therefore, invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.

And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this Third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the Eighty-eighth.

By the President: Abraham Lincoln

William H. Seward,
Secretary of State

Here is wishing each of our readers a wonderful and meaningful Thanksgiving!!

And we thank Kimball Ferris of Miller Nash for permission to include his recent intro to this proclamation.

NEW YEAR...NEW BENEFITS

What better way to start the New Year off than by considering some new employee benefits? Benefits aren't just health insurance and vacation days anymore; many organizations are looking at new, and sometimes unusual, benefits to help attract and retain top talent.

Perhaps the benefit options below can improve employee engagement and commitment to your organization without depleting the budget!

- 1. Office Comforts:** Allow workers to wear slippers at their desk on days when they don't have client meetings, take their suggestions on the office décor, allow them to personalize their office spaces, or provide a "lounge" type space for breaks. It's the little things that make all the difference, so you can also purchase heated toilet seats for the bathrooms – you'd be surprised at what a difference that one-time purchase can make, especially in the winter months.
- 2. Pet Insurance:** Many employees think of their pets as their children, so organizations could offer an optional pet insurance plan that will help cover the costs of ill or injured pets and, just as with regular health insurance, the premium can be covered entirely or partially by the employers.
- 3. Fruit and Veggie Delivery:** Employers naturally want to encourage their employees to be healthy which in turn can contribute reducing the cost of benefits. What better way to keep them healthy than with free, fresh fruit and veggies delivered to the office each week? Or perhaps enroll in a weekly juice delivery for the office instead; either way, employees will appreciate this simple offer. Need a jolt of caffeine? Perhaps a traveling coffee bar is what will do the trick.
- 4. Late Mondays:** Many employers are now embracing the dreaded Monday morning slump by allowing employees to come in at 10:00 am on Mondays. One organization found this to be an extreme morale booster among their employees without reducing their work productivity - sounds like a possible win/win! Perhaps you could also implement No Meeting Fridays.
- 5. Onsite Beauty/Grooming Services:** Find professionals to come to your office once a month to offer haircuts, facials, manicures, or massages. Employees can cover the expenses of their chosen treatments, but the convenience of doing these things at work will be priceless! This concept works for dry cleaning services, too. They come to your office and pick up on a regular schedule.

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.

6. **Casual Day:** And, of course, do not forget the ever-popular casual Friday! A good day to wear jeans without holes and a company logoed shirt.
7. **Commuting Relief:** Whether your people take the bus, train, or drive themselves, more and more are looking for commuting relief benefits. Gas isn't getting any cheaper. Why not incentivize carpooling? Depending on where you are located; purchase employees' bus, subway, or train tickets at discounted prices or allow for employee purchase with pre-tax dollars. You could even offer bike maintenance or bike repair assistance on-site.
8. **Buy in Bulk:** The organization can buy movie tickets or restaurant gift cards in bulk and then pass the savings on to the employee.
9. **Special Rooms:** Would your space allow for a health room if employees are feeling a little under the weather or have a headache? Perhaps the rooms could be for prayer or meditation? Maybe even a rest break or a chance to decompress and listen to music?
10. **Social Concierge:** Perhaps you would like to sign up for a service that can arrange reservations at restaurants or entry to exclusive events or can organize group outings for people with similar interests. Absolute Recreation in Portland, Oregon has what they call their Life Balance Program. It is a wellness program designed to help individuals find well-being by participating in healthy activities. You want to go to a concert – sometimes they have seats you cannot get at retail and usually at a reduced rate. Perhaps you want to go skiing or white water rafting, but don't want to go alone, they have outings covering a wide variety of activities. You need to check them out at www.lifebalanceprogram.com and tell them that HR Answers sent you!

MAY I ASK A FAVOR, PLEASE?

When we ask a favor, we all hope to hear a positive response. That is more likely if we ask in a manner that fits the person. Some people are “thinkers” – they typically require more information, more detail, and mostly, more time to consider. If, however, you are asking a “doer,” then they want a concise, succinct request and they want to know why it matters. Whoever has the need, needs to flex to the style of the person being asked, and this is true whether the asker and the receiver are at the same or different levels in our organizations or families.

As an example, if I ask you for a favor, I need to ask in a way that is best for you, because I want your best effort to assist me. Understanding this concept is essential for supervisors and managers. If you want the best effort from your employees, then ask them in a way that they can best hear and respond to you. You may have the right to tell them, but it won't get you the best results.

UI CLAIMS RESULTING FROM UNAUTHORIZED USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This bulletin discusses eligibility for unemployment benefits when an individual has been discharged for issues relating to social media posts.

Generally, a former employee may be disqualified from receiving unemployment benefits after being discharged for a reason that amounts to misconduct connected with the work. This can include actions that are potentially harmful to the employer or to other employees. However, rulings related to eligibility for benefits are not as consistent as one might expect because the statutes, policies, and precedents that govern eligibility for unemployment compensation vary from state to state.

One characteristic of social media cases is that they involve the power of words, as opposed to the performance of tasks or behaviors while at work. How does one gauge the impact or potential impact of a social media message on the employer? We are sensitive in this country to the freedom of expression. The denial of a benefit from a social program such as unemployment insurance, as a result of posting a statement, requires clear and convincing evidence that such a denial is justified.

There have been some UI claim rulings related to social media posts that have some common threads. The cases described below offer some insights into the key considerations in determining eligibility for benefits.

To read about a few interesting examples, click the following links:

- [State of California](#) – Bernadet Guevarra v. Seton Medical Center, California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board, and Robert Dresser
- [State of Michigan](#) – Andrew Shirvell v. DAG and DL&R/UIA
- [State of New York](#) – Laura Q. Sullivan v. Brookville Center for Children's Services, Inc.
- [State of Pennsylvania](#) – Stephen J. Burns v. Unemployment Compensation Board of Review
- [State of Washington](#) – Jeff Kirby and Puget Sound Security Patrol, Inc. v. Washington Department of Employment Security

Takeaways from UI Claim Decisions Involving Social Media

Rulings related to social media are not dissimilar to any other UI rulings in which misconduct is the issue. The employer must establish misconduct, and in so doing, the employer must show that the offending conduct was connected to the work.

To establish misconduct, it is helpful to have a written, clear, and reasonable policy addressing the use of social media, which is made available to all employees. It is advisable to secure a signed receipt from each employee that he/she has been provided with a copy of the policy.

The connection to the work can be harder to establish in social media cases when the claimant does not specifically mention the employer or when the social media activity is conducted outside of the work environment and/or outside of the employee's scheduled work hours. However, the employer may still prevail if it can be established that the comments are harmful or potentially harmful to the employer. A private post on social media may be derogatory to the employer, but may not rise to the level of misconduct if the recipients of the post are limited and have no affiliation or connection to the employer. The issue here is whether the post actually harms the employer or could potentially harm the employer, as opposed to being a private comment containing no risk to the employer. In this regard, the individual's privacy settings for posts may be a consideration in the UI claim decision.

If the content of the posts does not include references to co-workers, supervisors, or the employer, but does involve clients, constituents, vendors, or other individuals indirectly connected to the employer's business activities, the state UI agency may find no direct connection to the work; and therefore, decline to impose a disqualification. However, an indirect connection may be sufficient to establish misconduct (as in the Michigan case), depending on the circumstances of the case and the evidence presented.

In some states an element of misconduct is the employee's intent or knowledge that the employer's interest would suffer as a result of the employee's actions. Such intent or knowledge can be particularly difficult to establish, as shown in the Washington case. A close look at the recipients of the message, in addition to the content, can help determine whether there was an agenda to harm the employer. Finally, social media posts may be tame or harsh. The actual content of the post may be considered by the UI agency in determining whether a single occurrence amounts to misconduct. A similar situation may be a discharge for attendance problems. Tardiness may be a rule violation, but a single instance of tardiness may not necessarily rise to the level of misconduct for UI purposes. The employer may wish to adopt a policy that maintains the flexibility to take disciplinary action short of discharge, taking into account the content of the social media message, especially if there have been no prior occurrences.

If you are revisiting your policies regarding social media issues, we note that the Texas Workforce Commission has offered some very common-sense guidance at the following site: http://www.twc.state.tx.us/news/eft/social_media_issues.html. Also available on this site are samples of written policies on computer and internet usage and use of social media.

TO DO LIST RESPONSE TO PROPOSED OVERTIME RULE

Employers don't have to be in a holding pattern while waiting for the Department of Labor's (DOL's) proposed overtime rule to be finalized. While the DOL continues to review 290,000 comments on the proposed rule, it is probably best that employers "hope for the best and prepare for the worst."

Here are a few simple steps from Paul DeCamp, an attorney with Jackson Lewis, which may help with employers' compliance efforts even before the final rule is released.

- Identify currently exempt jobs with salaries that fall below the proposed new salary threshold for exempt employees, using \$970 per week, or \$50,440 per year.
- Determine whether to have a zone within which employees close to the new threshold will get bumped up to maintain exempt status, or whether the approach will be to reclassify as non-exempt all employees whose current salary is below the new minimum.
- For employees who probably will be reclassified, understand now how many hours they are working per week so employers can model pay going forward with reasonable accuracy.
- Determine what approach to take in setting non-exempt pay rates. Whether the hourly rate will simply be the current weekly salary divided by 40, or whether there will be an effort to replicate current pay and hours, such as by lowering the hourly rate to account for the possibility of overtime compensation.
- For employees subject to the highly compensated standard but below its new proposed pay level—that is, between \$100,000 and \$122,148 per year—determine whether those jobs satisfy the full duties test of one or more exemptions, as opposed to the relaxed duties standard applicable for highly compensated employees.
- Consider whether to reclassify other positions at this time to manage risk and enhance compliance.

You also need to ask yourself, “What operational changes need to happen as a result of the reclassification: changes to job duties, changes to schedules, changes to staffing levels?”

For critical positions that often result in overtime pay, employers could consider hiring more full-time, part-time and/or seasonal employees, or restructuring their workforce to offset a potential expansion of overtime pay. Employers should review job descriptions and identify work of an exempt nature that could be reassigned to other exempt employees.

Developing a communications strategy about the changes in overtime exemptions is in order. Preparation is the key. Will there be group communications? Individual meetings? It is likely that your employees are probably talking about these changes right now and may have some anxiety about losing exempt status, benefits and pay (in their minds a demotion).

It may be appropriate for your workplace to consider preparing FAQs and letting employees know that you understand they are struggling with these issues, so that there will be fewer surprises whenever the amended regulations become effective.

Of course it is also possible that DOL could back down from its doubling of the salary threshold for exempt employees. The DOL might concede that its proposed salary level of the 40th percentile of earnings for full-time salaried workers is too high and may settle on a salary amount based on the 30th or 35th percentile instead. A salary level at either of these possible percentiles would be a substantial increase: \$852 per week or \$44,304 per year at the 35th percentile, or \$773 per week or \$40,196 per year at the 30th percentile. Employers should analyze which employees fall below these thresholds as well, to better prepare themselves for the possibility of a different salary threshold. Another area employers consider is to determine whether reclassified employees will be paid on a salaried basis with overtime eligibility, using the fluctuating workweek option or a Belo plan, or paid on an hourly basis. Other options include finding out whether it’s possible to use exemptions other than the white-collar (administrative, executive, professional and computer employees) exemptions, such as the retail sales or service establishment exemptions.

Again, all of these options and strategies will require detailed planning and thorough communications throughout the organization.

Update Note: Recent materials suggest that the DOL may not issue new regulations early in 2016. Some are suggesting that it may be mid- or even late 2016. Keep your fingers crossed!

STAFFING NOTE

HR Answers would like to bid a grand farewell and GOOD LUCK to **Bryse Bishoff**, our hardworking and fantastic Administrative Assistant. Now that Bryse is about to graduate from OSU with her Bachelor’s degree in Sociology, she has decided to pursue a new avenue of interest for her career. Bryse has been a dedicated, admired, and valuable asset to the administrative team at HRA and her smiling face will be greatly missed, but we wish her the very best in her next adventure!

THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

“If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

– Henry David Thoreau

“What the fool does in the end, the wise man does in the beginning.”

– Proverb

“Men are wise in proportion, not to their experience, but to their capacity for experience.”

– George Bernard Shaw

“A man who gives his children habits of industry provides for them better than by giving them a fortune.”

– Richard Whately

“Be bold. If you’re going to make an error, make a doozy, and don’t be afraid to hit the ball.”

– Billie Jean King

DOL CAN NOW ISSUE ADMINISTRATIVE GARNISHMENT ORDERS

Total garnishments could take up to 25 percent of an employee's disposable income. Employers may receive an order to garnish an employee's wages for any number of reasons. Many garnishments come from courts, such as child or family support orders or creditor debts orders. However, some government agencies have the authority to issue administrative orders, without going through a judge. The Department of Education is one example; that agency may issue a garnishment for student loan debts without obtaining a court order.

Employers could see more administrative orders in the future, since the Department of Labor (DOL) recently adopted authority to, without obtaining a court order, garnish the wages of non-federal workers who are indebted to the DOL. The new regulation took effect on October 8.

A law from 1996 called the Debt Collection Improvement Act authorizes federal agencies to issue administrative garnishments in order to collect debts. The law allows for garnishing up to 15% of an employee's disposable pay. The employer must then withhold and remand those amounts to the creditor.

Some employers will receive more than one garnishment order for the same employee, which raises questions about which order takes priority. The DOL clarified that "a withholding order for family support would always have priority over an administrative wage garnishment order." The agency also noted that "if there are multiple federal garnishment orders, priority depends on which garnishment order was first obtained." Essentially, this means that administrative orders are first come, first paid.

Despite the garnishment limit of 15% of disposable income for a single order, the DOL stated that total garnishments could take up to 25% of an employee's disposable income. For example, if the employer is withholding 20% of an employee's disposable pay for a family support, the amount withheld for an administrative withholding order would be limited to 5% of the employee's disposable pay, for a total of 25%. Then, when the family support order terminates, the employer would increase the withholding on the administrative order by 15%.

HR BY THE NUMBERS

Hispanic purchasing power in the U.S. is \$1.5 trillion per year, according to the Pew Research Center.

51% of U.S. employees say innovation is supported at work. Business Services is highest at 66%.

1 of every 4 elementary school children in the U.S. is Hispanic.

For the past several years, retaliation has been the most common discrimination charge filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), making up 42 percent of the charges (37,955) resolved by the EEOC in 2014.

84% of U.S. Hispanics ages 16 and older say they can get ahead by working hard, while only 64% of all U.S. adults ages 18 and older say the same.

70-80% of purchasing decisions in the U.S. are made or influenced by women.

A Wells Fargo survey of 100 U.S. middle-market and large companies found that 85% say they have purchased cyber and data privacy insurance, while 44% have already filed a claim as a result of the breach. Most large businesses now believe cyber risks are greater than other insurable business risks such as natural disasters and fires.

Adults over 30 are less happy than their predecessors, concludes a study by Social Psychology and Personality Science, which examined happiness data from more than 50,000 adults, gleaned from the General Social Survey. Reasons: Rising inequality may have more of an impact on the well-being of older adults than on younger ones, who are more apt to think they can overcome such things given that they have more time. And older adults may be more disappointed by the "increasingly unrealistic expectations for educational attainment, jobs, material goods, and relationships," the authors write, while younger adults still have hope for these things.

REPORT SHOWS FEWER RECORDABLE INCIDENTS IN 2014

In October, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released the 2014 Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses. The findings show that private industry employers reported nearly 3 million non-fatal workplace injuries and illnesses in 2014. While the total recordable cases incidence rate fell 0.1 cases per 100 full-time workers, the rates for cases involving days away from work and for cases of job transfer or restriction only were unchanged.

Additional findings from the 2014 Survey of Occupation Injury and Illness include:

- Private industry employers reported nearly 54,000 fewer non-fatal injury and illness cases in 2014 compared to a year earlier.
- Among all private industry sectors, the rate of reported injuries and illnesses declined in 2014 only among the retail trade, health care and social assistance, and accommodation and food services sectors.
- Manufacturing continued a 17-year trend as the only private industry sector in which the rate of job transfer or restriction only (DJTR) cases exceeded the rate of days away from work (DAFW) cases.
- Over half of the nearly 3 million private industry injury and illness cases reported in 2014 involved days away from work, job transfer, or restriction (DART cases).
- Of the nearly 3 million non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses in 2014, 2.8 million (95.1 percent) were injuries. Among injuries, nearly 2.1 million (75 percent) occurred in service-providing industries, which employed 82.4 percent of the private industry workforce.
- An estimated 722,300 injury and illness cases were reported in 2014 among the approximately 18.3 million state and local government workers — for example, police protection and fire protection — resulting in a rate of 5.0 cases per 100 full-time workers.

For the full report visit www.bls.gov/news.release/osh.nr0.htm.

RETIREMENT PLANNING KEY NUMBERS

The Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration have announced the various retirement plan benefit and employment tax limits for 2016. For most matters, the limitations will not change for 2016 because the increase in the cost-of-living index did not meet the statutory thresholds that trigger their adjustment. However, other limitations will change because the increase in the index did meet the statutory thresholds. The limits for 2016, as compared to those in effect for the current year, are set forth below. The limits that have changed are printed in blue and bolded.

RETIREMENT PLAN LIMITS		
	2015	2016
Limits on benefits and contributions:		
401(k) & 403(b) plans, elective deferral limit	\$18,000	\$18,000
457 (b) plan, total contribution limit	\$18,000	\$18,000
Age 50 catch-up contribution limit	\$6,000	\$6,000
Defined contribution plan, total contribution limit	\$53,000	\$53,000
Defined benefit plan, annual accrual limit	\$210,000	\$210,000
“Highly compensated employee” status	\$120,000	\$120,000
Annual compensation limit	\$265,000	\$265,000
“Key employee” officer status	\$170,000	\$170,000
SIMPLE plans:		
Elective deferral limit	\$12,500	\$12,500
Catch-up contribution limit	\$3,000	\$3,000
IRAs		
Contribution limit	\$5,500	\$5,500
Catch up contribution limit	\$3,000	\$3,000

SOCIAL SECURITY LIMITS		
	2015	2016
FICA wage base	\$118,500	\$118,500
Earnings test thresholds:		
Before normal retirement age	\$15,720	\$15,720
Year of normal retirement age	\$41,880	\$41,880
Maximum monthly benefit	\$2,663	\$2,639

HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS		
	2015	2016
Annual HSA contribution deduction limit:		
Self-only coverage	\$3,350	\$3,350
Family coverage	\$6,650	\$6,750
Catch-up contribution	\$1,000	\$1,000
Out-of-pocket spending limit:		
Self-only	\$6,450	\$6,550
Family coverage	\$12,900	\$13,100

HEALTH CARE FSA		
	2015	2016
Annual salary reduction limit	\$2,550	\$2,550

QUALIFIED TRANSPORTATION FRINGE BENEFIT		
	2015	2016
Maximum monthly qualified parking benefit	\$250	\$250
Maximum monthly qualified transit pass benefit	\$130	\$130

Content prepared by Schwabe Williamson Wyatt. The information has been obtained from sources considered to be reliable, but we do not guarantee that the foregoing material is accurate or complete. You should discuss any tax matters with the appropriate professional.

MANAGING HOLIDAY STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Holiday time in the workplace is unlike any other time. Impractical expectations and added responsibilities can make the holidays anything but merry. For many people, the holidays magnify loneliness, financial burdens, and family problems. For others, it's a happy time, yet extremely busy and demanding. As an employer, it's important to recognize the challenges of the holidays without becoming "Scrooge."

Here are some tips to ease the pressure and make this season truly one of "comfort and joy" for your employees.

- **Acknowledge Diversity around the Holidays**

Don't forget that some employees celebrate other holidays such as Hanukkah, Ramadan, and Kwanzaa. Display a multi-cultural calendar to help all employees be aware of other important activities. Honor diversity by changing your holiday party to a festival of cultures.

- **Consider having a New Year's Party instead of a Holiday Party**

Not only will this be a positive event for employees to look forward to after their lives have settled down a bit, but it will also encourage employees to get on board with the organization's mission and vision for the New Year.

- **Allow Employees to Volunteer**

Support departments or teams finding volunteer opportunities such as adopting a family in need to provide gifts or food to during the holidays. Or, instead of having a gift exchange, consider doing something together for a charity like supporting a "giving tree," sponsoring a family, making a financial donation, or donating time at a shelter.

- **Be a Little Flexible**

Let employees take an extra half-hour at lunch to do some shopping when the malls are more manageable. Be a little more patient with employees who are more absent-minded than usual during this crazy time of year.

- **Offer Assistance**

Prepare a lunchtime talk about dealing with holiday stress or living within a budget during the holiday season. If your organization offers an EAP program, remind employees of its availability.

- **Appreciate Employees**

Be sure to thank employees who are working extra hard during the holidays. Small rewards and words of encouragement can really make a difference to employees who are struggling with the pressure. A nice card around the holidays or at the New Year can really boost an individual's spirits.

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.**

NOVEMBER

National Adoption Awareness, National Alzheimer's, National Epilepsy, National Novel Writing, Peanut Butter Lovers Month, and Aviation History Month.

Nov. 25th HRA Offices will Close at 2:30PM

Nov. 26th Thanksgiving Day - Holiday

Nov. 27th HRA Offices will be Closed

Coming Up:

DECEMBER

Identity Theft Prevention and Awareness, National Tie, Universal Human Rights Month and Safe Toys and Gifts Month

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

Dec. 7 Chanukah Begins

Dec. 16 National Chocolate Covered Anything Day

Dec. 22 Winter Solstice

Dec. 23 HRA Offices will Close at Noon

Dec. 24 HRA Offices will be Closed

Dec. 25 Christmas – Holiday
HRA Offices Will be Closed

Dec. 26 Kwanzaa Begins

Dec. 31 No Interruptions Day

Planning Ahead:

Jan. 19– HR Answers Workshop – HRA Tigard office

Feb. 23 Beginning Supervision Series

8:30am-12:30pm

(March 1st will be reserved as a make-up date should any class need to be cancelled due to inclement weather)

ON MY SOAPBOX

A recent article caught my attention. It was headlined, “No Degree, No Problem.” I wondered if it could be true that someone wrote an article that espoused my belief that there is more than one way to develop both knowledge and skill. Now, before you all scurry around to find my email and tell me how important college/university experience is, I am not denigrating the institutions. I am simply saying that there is another way to develop the expertise and ability to perform most jobs.

Here is why I feel so strongly about this. My Dad was an Architect. When he graduated from Benson High (it was then far more a technical institute than what it is today), he couldn't afford college and most of the loan opportunities didn't exist then, but he knew what he wanted to do – design buildings. So he enrolled in an eight-year Apprenticeship program. Each class that he studied for was augmented by the direct experience he was given as a Draftsman at a downtown architectural firm. Every six months, he sat for a day-long intensive test which required him to demonstrate all types of learning. There were math tests, design tests, engineering equations to solve, and a host of blueprints to read and then answer questions about the flaws that were shown on the documents. At the end of eight long years, he completed the Apprenticeship and was awarded his Architectural license.

So guess what I learned from him. His experience taught me that there were other ways to learn and develop capabilities than being a college graduate. He even had the audacity to suggest that his course of study was harder, longer, and more meaningful because of the length and the requirement of individual initiative that was necessary to complete the program. So when I read or hear someone talking about the fact that “a college degree is required,” I struggle with that. I saw a Job Description earlier today, and it said that a four year degree was required, and that old feeling surged within me as I said to one of the consultants here, “So they wouldn't take someone without a degree even if s/he had 20 years of experience?”

There are two mistakes that get made. The first is that only by completing a four year degree does an employer know that you have stick-to-itiveness. There are many ways that persistence and dedication can be shown. Completing college is not the only way to demonstrate those qualities. The second mistake that is made is thinking that without the college preparation, the applicant won't possess the knowledge-base necessary to do the job. This is a mistake because someone could have a college degree that is 20 years old but not have kept up with the rapidly changing dimensions of a particular knowledge base. We know that the half-life of learning is shrinking considerably. If you haven't been learning all along, the knowledge you got from university classes may well be outdated and irrelevant.

There is one more major issue with requiring a degree when it isn't really necessary. That requirement has been found to cause both age and race discrimination. The younger someone is, the more likely that they completed college; the more Caucasian someone is, the more likely it is that they went to college. Organizations don't mean to discriminate by requiring a degree, but the adverse impact can be present anyway. So simply from a protective perspective, it is better to describe the needed knowledge than to assume that a degree is the only way someone can qualify for a position.

When assessing an applicant for a position, care needs to be taken to ensure that he or she possesses the needed expertise and knowledge to do the job, but there are very few jobs that can't be done by someone with experience and a thirst for learning. The legitimate requirement for a college degree is where a license or registration cannot be obtained without the degree. Think about Doctors, Attorneys, Engineers, CPAs, etc. Asking the right probing questions during the interview should reveal whether the applicant has the capability to do the job that you need. College can certainly be preferred, but imagine how many wonderful applicants you are saying “NO” to, if you insist on a degree.

- Judy Clark, President



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