



advantage



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'TIS THE SEASON

Are you at a loss to find something to say when you open that present and discover that it isn't at all what you had hoped for or expected. In fact, you are stunned that someone would give you that. Well, just in case, here are some responses that you might find helpful.

10. Hey, that's quite a gift!
9. Well, well, well.....
8. Boy, if I hadn't grown so much lately, this would have fit.
7. This is absolutely perfect for wearing around the house.
6. Gosh, I hope this never catches fire. But it is fire season and there are lots of unexplained fires.
5. If the dog gets this and buries it, I will be furious.
4. I love it, but I am afraid of the jealousy that it will bring out in others.
3. Sadly, tomorrow I will be entering the Federal Witness Protection program and they told me I can't take any personal affects.
2. To think – this is the year that I vowed to give all my presents to charity.
1. I really don't deserve this.

GETTING READY FOR 2018

In January 2018, Oregon employers must provide employees with Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) information with their W-2. This notice needs to be sent at the same time as the W-2, whether it is electronically or mail delivered. The Workers' Compensation rate goes from 6.8% to 7.4%. There are a host of other changes for next year and we will be providing information to you about those as they occur. If you want more information about this one, you can contact BOLI at <https://oregon.gov/DOR/programs/individuals/pages/credits.aspx>.

And for our Washington clients, remember that the minimum wage go up to \$11.50 next year. So work with your payroll department (internal or external) to ensure you are timely with this change.

For everyone, Social Security is going up to \$128,400, the 401(k) limit will be \$18,500, and a SIMPLE Retirement has no changed; it stays at \$12,500.

For those of you who are federal contractors, effective January 1st 2018, for employees doing work on a federal contract must be paid at least \$10.35 per hour.

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THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT

Every year, a judge in Columbia City, Tenn. who loves carols, allows minor traffic offenders to pay their fines with a holiday tune instead of a checkbook.

Each year, the tunes can be heard emanating from City Hall. The judge allows minor traffic offenders to sing their own rendition of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, *We wish you a Merry Christmas*, and *Jingle Bells* in exchange for lower fines. One violator was asked if he wanted to make a donation of five canned goods and sing a solo. He promptly complied and sang a wonderful rendition of *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*.

People who watch the judge's annual show usually find it humorous. Most of the offenders who sing are embarrassed to do it, but as one of them admitted, it was better than paying the \$160 fine.

A Version of "Night Before Christmas" (some liberties have been taken).

'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house
I searched for the tools to hand to my spouse
Instruction were studied and we were inspired
In hopes we could manage "some assembly required."

The children were quiet (not asleep) in their beds
While Dad and I faced the evening with dread.
A kitchen, two bikes, Barbie's town house to boot
And, thanks to Grandpa, a train with a toot!

We opened the boxes; my heart skipped a beat...
Let no parts be missing or parts incomplete!
Too late for last-minute returns or replacement;
If we can't get it right, it goes in the basement!

When what to my worrying eyes should appear.
But 50 sheets of direction, concise, but not clear.
With each part numbered and every slot named,
So if we failed only we could be blamed.

More rapid than eagles the parts then fell out,
All over the carpet they were scattered about.
"Now bolt it! Now twist it, Attach it right there!
Now slide on the seats and staple the stair;
Hammer the shelves, and nail it to the stand"
"Honey," said hubby, "you just glued my hand."

And then in a twinkling, I knew for a fact
That all the toy dealers had indeed made a pact
To keep parents busy all Christmas eve night
With "assembly required" 'til morning's first light.

We spoke not a word, but kept to our work,
‘Til our eyes, they went bleary; out fingers all hurt.
The coffee went cold and the night, it wore thin
Before we attached the last rod and last pin.

They laying the tools away in the chest,
We fell into bed for a well-deserved rest.
But I said to my husband just before I passed out,
“This will be the best Christmas, without any doubt”.

Tomorrow we’ll cheer, let the holiday ring
And not have to run to the store for a thing.
We did it! We did it! The toys are all set
Then the perfect, most perfect, Christmas, I bet.

Then off to dreamland and sweet repose I gratefully went
Though I suppose there something to say for those self-deluded...
I’d forgotten the Batteries were never included.

SOME BIG CHANGES

The end of the year is busy enough without major changes in the employment arena. But this years we will have to manage both end of year activities and identifying what changes in the NLRB rulings and tax code provisions will impact each organization.

The newly-constituted National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has only been in place for a few weeks and already there are major changes. They have overturned the Joint-Employer adopted in 2015. Many HR professionals, attorneys, and organizational executives found the change that was made unworkable. The definition seemed to depend on who you asked, and no one was quite sure if they got it right. We don’t need to worry about that anymore. The Board has returned us to the previous posture. This means that there must be a direct and immediate control in order to find that the two entities are joint employers. This is welcome news for employers and it is thought that it will bring balance back to both the decision making and the understanding of this important relationship.

Another significant shift brought to employers courtesy of the NLRB is that they are taking us back to when reasonable work rules were acceptable. On December 14th, they gave employers a great holiday gift. They described it as “ensuring a meaningful balancing of employee rights and employers interests.” Recently, the old NLRB told us that almost any restriction of employee conduct or verbalizations were likely to cause a chill regarding their Section 7 rights and therefore were not permitted. The new posture states that neutral work rules designed to bring civility to the workplace will not be considered unlawful. They stated, “When evaluating a facially neutral policy, rule, or handbook provision that, when reasonably interpreted, would potentially interfere with the exercise of NLRA rights, the NLRB will evaluate: (i) the nature and extent of the position impact on NLRA rights, and (ii) legitimate justifications associated with the rule. This represents a great change for employers. Employers can now expect that the NLRB will consider the business justifications for rules and that will hopefully bring a much more reasoned approach to their decisions.

THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

Winter bites with its teeth or lashes with its tail.

~ *Montenegrin Proverb*

In seed-time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy

~ *William Blake*

The best of all gifts around any Christmas tree: the presence of a happy family all wrapped up in each other

~ *Burton Hillis*

Families are like fudge — mostly sweet with a few nuts.

~ *Author unknown*

The greatest oak was once a little nut who held its ground

~ *Author unknown*

Nobody trips over mountains. It is the small pebble that causes you to stumble. Pass all the pebbles in your path and you will find you have crossed the mountain

~ *Author unknown*

NOT A MOMENT, BUT A MOVEMENT

Not a day goes by now without a new case of harassment being part of the news. Whether it is the media industry, political figures, Hollywood/entertainment, big business, or local stories, there are new revelations daily. It is appalling that this has been going on so long and it is only now that people are speaking up about what they have experienced or what friends and relatives of theirs have been confronted with. Being in the HR business we have been privy to what has gone unnoticed by others. We get phone calls asking for harassment training and we get phone calls asking us to do investigations. This upsurge in conversation and coverage being experienced is a good thing. If we can talk openly about what has occurred; if we can encourage people who have been harassed to come forward, then we are likely to reduce the number of instances that occur.

During our investigations and in response to some of the investigations that are going on in the public view, we have learned one thing. Almost always there is someone who knew about the situation. That “someone” probably felt like they were doing the victim a service by not saying anything. Unfortunately, that doesn’t help address the situation; and in fact, it may allow it to continue. One action that employers can take to encourage people who know about these instances, is to have a policy that not only says that the victim can come forward to talk about what s/he is experiencing, but that the organization expects anyone who knows that someone is being harassed to speak up as well. This reporting requirement can be put in place via the organization’s policy and training. The law says that if the organization knew or should have known about the inappropriate behavior, touching, or verbal statement that they are liable. By telling all employees that they must report any situation where someone is being harassed gives the organization some protection if a claim is made. If you would like a sample policy addressing this language, please just let us know. (info@hranswers.com or 503-885-9815)

HR BY THE NUMBERS

There has been a fair amount in the news recently about the possible impact of automation. Jobvite did a survey and uncovered some interesting numbers.

- 43% of the Recruiters surveyed said that automation will make their job better, compared to only 7% who said it would be worse.
- 55% say no one in their company will be displaced by automation in the next three years
- 22% say that leadership at their company is discussing automation's impact or preparing for it.

If these numbers hold true for the general public, it looks as though automation is not the scary thing that many assumed previously.

According to the Compdata Turnover Report for 2017, there has been a progressive increase in turnover, departure of employees. The stats look like this:

- 2013 – 15.1% total turnover
- 2014 – 15.7% total turnover
- 2015 – 16.7% total turnover
- 2016 – 17.8% total turnover
- 2017 – 18.5% total turnover

A quick scan of their report shows that voluntary departures, employees leaving on their own has increased from 9.1% five years ago to 18.5% for 2017. This data comes from 28,208 participants so it is not a picture of just a few organizations. The breakout by industries is also very revealing. Here is what they found for the past year:

- Banking and Finance 3%
- Healthcare 44.3%
- Hospitality 2.7%
- Insurance 3.6%
- Manufacturing/Distribution 29.8%
- Not-for-Profit 7.2%
- Services 4.2%
- Utilities 2.9%

Comparing your turnover for this past year against these numbers may give you reasons to celebrate, or reasons to examine everything you are doing to see what can help you reduce the voluntary turnover you are experiencing.

A QUICK PEEK TO THE FUTURE

We were impressed by Watson, the IBM artificial intelligence. Many have said that they were glued to the TV when Watson was on *Jeopardy* and amazed at his performance. For Watson to accurately answer so many questions in so many different topics, it was almost like magic. And, now there are commercials playing that promote the SAP capability which is named Leonardo. And not far behind is the newest offering from India named Amber. This one is obviously female in orientation. Blogs and promotions pieces are now cropping up in a multiple number of places regarding this new entrant to the AI world. The time of AI appears to be upon us. Josh Bersin, founder and principal at Bersin by Deloitte, an HR research and advisory firm, is one of the world's most-revered voices on people management. In his HR predictions for 2018, Bersin is gung-ho on the likes of Amber - an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered chatbot built by Gurugram-based startup Infeedo, which helps CEOs keep track of the mood of employees in real time and take action before things get out of hand.

Having Josh as a backer, will mean that the HR community will start paying even more attention to AI capabilities. He is known for spotting trends and break-throughs that have significant HT impact.

So, if you are not reading about AI or if you don't have a Google Alert for that subject, you want to add it to your growing list. This is BIG stuff and we cannot afford to not be aware of what is on the horizon. Our organizations deserve to have us keeping an eye to what is coming, and the smart money is on AI for the next 10 years.

CLIENT ACCOLADES

DW Fritz was in the news recently. An article appearing in the *Portland Business Journal* told of the company's efforts to minimize expenses and reorganize for efficiency. They have made this a long-term effort having started in 2011. Since then they have been able to increase revenues by more than 1000%, a trend that they see continuing! Mike Fritz, the CEO, says, "We work everywhere in North America. Across all manufacturing industries, there is a small sliver called advanced manufacturing, that's where we work. The projects we do involve micron and milliseconds." He adds, "if you can't find a machine off the shelf, then you'd come to us and we'd engineer-to-order any piece you'd need to automate that process. Congrats to all of you at DW Fritz – we are so proud to be associated with you and wish you years and years of success!!

One of the organizations that we have worked with for almost two decades is **Woodfold Manufacturing**. They too were recently the focus of a **Portland Business Journal** article. Their company philosophy is very short and simple – **Do the right thing!** That statement encompasses all they do – from sourcing of their wood products to the choice of bathroom soap and toilet paper. (Just as an aside, Judy wrote a Soapbox about toilet paper and what the quality of it says about the employer several years ago.) Woodfold has a long-term commitment to sustainability and is shows in all their decisions. They have won several awards for the way they manufacture and the way they run their company. Woodfold is a B Corporation and an Employee Owned enterprise. We value that enduring relationship and are so honored to work with them!

And we are pleased to report that many of our clients were recognized for the positive workplaces they have created in the recent **Portland Business Journal's** list of Most Admired Workplaces. We couldn't be more tickled that we get to work with the following:

Bob's Red Mill
R & H Construction
Gerding Edlen
Melvin Mark Companies
Umpqua Bank
Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon
Legacy Health System
Providence St. Vincent Medical Center
Avamere
Providence Health & Services
OHSU

Catholic Charities – Oregon
Boys & Girls Clubs of Portland
Albertina Kerr Centers
Central City Concern
Barran Liebman LLP
DW Fritz Automation
A-Dec. Inc
Adidas America
Columbia Sportswear Co.
Cambia Health Solutions

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Open up your Daytimers, Outlook, and all those Smartphones. The following is a look at upcoming events and workshops, special days, and other diverse and fun activities you will want to be aware of and schedule. To register for our workshops, go to HR Answers Events or email your registration form to Petrina Bigford info@hranswers.com

DECEMBER

Month of AIDS Awareness, Human Rights, Operation Santa Paws, Safe Toys and Gifts, Spiritual Literacy, Quince and Watermelon, National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention

Dec. 21 Winter Solstice

Dec. 25 Christmas Day. OFFICE CLOSED

Dec. 27 National Fruitcake Day

Dec. 31 New Year's Eve

Coming up:

Jan. 1 New Year's Day – OFFICE CLOSED

Jan. 18 HRA Workshop – HRA Office - Tigard
Improving Your Communication
8:30am – 12:30pm

Jan. 24- Feb 7, 21 HRA Workshop 3 Part Series – HRA Office – Tigard
Advanced Supervision
8:30am – 12:00pm

Jan. 30 HRA Workshop – HRA Office - Tigard
Job Descriptions and Pay Equity
8:30am – 12:30pm

Jan. 31 HR Lunch Bunch –Chemeketa Small Biz Center- Salem
12:00pm – 1:00pm

Planning Ahead:

Feb. 6 HRA Workshop – HRA Office – Tigard
Conflict Resolution Understanding Differences
8:30am – 12:00pm

Feb. 7 HR Lunch Bunch –HRA Office
12:00pm – 1:00pm

Feb. 13 HRA Workshop – HRA Office – Tigard
Comp & Classification with Equal Pay Act
8:30am – 12:30pm

Flyers for our workshops can be found on our events page under each workshop. View more details and register on our website here www.hranswers.com.

ON MY SOAPBOX



Here's wishing you more
happiness
Than all my words can tell.
Not just alone for Christmas
But for all the year as well.
~ Christmas Toast



SOAP
BOX

- Judy Clark, President



ANSWERS, Inc.

“Whatever the Question”

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