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Portland Office
7650 SW Beveland St., Suite 130
Tigard, OR 97223
503-885-8915

Willamette Valley Office
7287 Park Terrace Dr. NE, Suite 101
Keizer, OR 97303
503-463-7269

Editor: Deborah Jeffries, SHRM-CP, SPHR: **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 resources professionals and labor relations professionals. If you have questions about the content, an opinion about the information, or questions about your subscription, please call us at 503-885-8915 or email us at info@hranswers.com



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ONBOARDING - PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT IN YOUR EMPLOYEES

by Kasha Tindall Webster, SHRM-SCP, Professional Consultant

Labor costs represent the largest cost of doing business to an organization. Significant money and time are utilized to hire new employees. What if there was a way to optimize the investment in your workforce? A way to reduce recruiting costs, increase productivity, and optimize employee engagement? Utilizing an induction system, such as a formal new employee onboarding system, can have all these benefits. But onboarding should not be attempted as a half-measure. Raising a new employee's expectations and then not following through or having an ineffective program could be far more detrimental than not having a formal program at all.

First, what are the purported benefits of a new employee onboarding program? Benefits can include:

- Reducing employee turnover through better retention rates
- Better employee adherence and understanding of an Organization's safety requirements and their work environment
- Immediately establishing the supervisor as a resource for information and authority
- Creation of a communication pathway to HR and other coworkers for questions and information
- Employees have an immediate understanding of their role in the Organization and their contribution (one of the major contributors of engagement).

However, a well-thought-out orientation process takes organization, energy, time, and a commitment to consistency and follow-through. That is why successful onboarding programs range from 3 to 12 months and include pre-determined checkpoints for the employee to anticipate feedback and the opportunity to share their experience. This may sound like a long period of time, but the desired result is that this period is just a fraction of the employee's tenure with the company. To begin a successful transition for your new employee, below are some suggestions to prepare an engaging first day:

- **Prepare the workspace:** Set up a work area that has all the equipment and comfort items the new employee may need to become productive on their first day.
- **Determine the best start date:** Schedule the new employee to start on the manager's least busy day. Arrange for the new employee to spend several hours with their manager meeting coworkers and learning about their job. Make certain that a new employee orientation schedule is developed.

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- **Alert and prepare the front desk for the new employee's arrival:** Have front desk employees welcome the new employee in an informed, supportive way. Front desk personnel should be prepared to direct the new employee according to the manager's instructions.
- **Arrange meet-and-greet lunches:** Schedule lunches for the new employee for the first few days so the employee has a chance to meet people.
- **Send paperwork and the handbook prior to the start date:** Ask the employee to complete any paperwork and review the handbook before their first day. Schedule time at work for the employee to ask questions and get clarification on company information such as benefits, payroll, or rules and regulations.
- **Assimilate the new employee into the company:** Schedule meetings with friendly interested coworkers who can build relationships with the new employee.
- **Plan a first assignment:** Have the employee work on a core component of their job on the first day. New employees thrive when they feel immediately valued and productive.

Onboarding is a multi-step process that requires planning and interaction from the immediate supervisor, coworkers, and human resources. HR Answers has several resources to assist your organization in creating a value-added program that will engage your employees and create tools and built-in support for your management team. Email or call us to discuss customizing a program and learning how you can engage and optimize your company's most valuable resource.

ARE YOU READY TO RETIRE?

Being ready to retire means more than being ready to stop waking up early and going to work every day. What it really takes to retire is a solid grasp of your budget, a carefully considered investment and spending plan for your life savings, debt that's under control, and a plan you're excited about for how you'll spend your "going forward" days.

With that in mind, here are signs you might *not* be ready to retire yet:

- **Struggling to Pay Your Current Bills** - It goes without saying that if you are struggling to pay your bills with a paycheck from work, retiring won't make things easier. As a general rule, retirement income may be 75%-80% of your pre-retirement income. That income typically comes from Social Security, pensions, 401(k)s, IRAs, and other savings. Will those sources give you enough income to meet your obligations and enjoy your free time? It's important to take taxes and healthcare expenses into consideration.
- **High Level of Debt** - Large amounts of debt will severely strain your savings once you retire. Try and reduce or eliminate credit card payments and car loans. Depending on your situation, paying off your mortgage or downsizing may also help.
- **No Monthly Financial Plan** - You need to map out your monthly cash flow before you retire. The paychecks stop coming but the bills do not go away – you need a solid grasp of your expenses. Knowing what your expenses will likely be means knowing how much income you'll need. Once you know how much income you need each month, you can assess whether your nest egg is large enough to allow you to retire, or whether you need to keep working and saving and/or cut your anticipated retirement expenses. Planning your monthly cash flow means considering when you will start drawing Social Security benefits and how much you'll receive, as well as how much you'll withdraw from your personal

retirement accounts and in what order. If you have both a traditional IRA and a Roth IRA for example, you have to think about the taxes and required minimum distributions (RMDs) on your traditional IRA withdrawals and how that affects your Roth IRA withdrawals, which won't be taxed and aren't subject to RMDs.

- **No Long-Term Financial Plan** - You should understand how long your savings will last and what spending level you can maintain. The popular 4% rule, which says you can tap 4% of your retirement assets each year, is projected to allow your money to last at least 30 years in most scenarios.
- **The Thought of Retirement Worries You** - Even if your portfolio is in good shape, you may not be mentally ready to let go of your work life and see years of unstructured time ahead. How about test-driving retirement to gain a sense of how much money you will need and where you would feel comfortable living. Consider a phased in approach. If you still enjoy working, there's nothing that says you must retire just because you've reached Social Security's definition of full retirement age. Working has benefits beyond the financial. A job you enjoy engages your mind, offers social interaction, gives your days purpose, and creates a sense of accomplishment. All these things can help you stay healthy and happy as you age.

Perhaps now you have decided that you may not want to retire. If that is the case, you may want to work on addressing some of the concerns above before revisiting the retirement question again. If you are considering retirement and are ready to take the next step, you may want to meet with a professional financial advisor or financial planner prior to finalizing any decisions.

For more information contact Tom Davenport, AIF[®], CRPS with Priesz Financial (503) 224-1600 ext. 111 or tom@preis.com

WE CAN DO BETTER! INTERVIEWING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

There are many frustrations with the job search process including the difficulty of getting an interview and then having a successful interview experience. Many individuals with disabilities struggle with the decision to disclose information about a disability or the accommodation they would need. Many believe that if the employer had just asked specific questions, they would've had a more successful experience during the interview and at work. Applicants say that an open discussion about obvious issues would have allowed for clarification of any concerns. But let's take a step back and explore whether or not HR Answers and others can legally ask questions that applicants want to discuss.

The ground rules are fairly simple: under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), the general rule, familiar to human resource professionals, is that an employer may not ask disability related questions until after it makes a conditional job offer to an applicant. Disability related is defined as anything that is likely to elicit information about the applicant's disability. But there are exceptions to the general rule, some of which apply to the proposed questions and some of which apply to questions applicants most wish to discuss. To determine whether these questions are lawful, we must first distinguish between three different situations during the pre-offer stage. In the first, the applicant voluntarily discloses a hidden disability. In the second, the applicant does not voluntarily disclose, but the employer believes that the applicant will need reasonable accommodation because the disability is obvious. And in the third scenario, the applicant does not disclose any disability and the disability is not obvious.

The EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) said that in the first two situations, and employer may ask certain limited reasonable accommodation questions. In the third situation however, non-disclosure,

EEOC said that no disability related questions during the pre-offer stage are allowed. Courts have generally agreed with the EEOC's analysis.

Here are some possible suggested questions that you can use and some of the reasoning behind them:

- **“Is there any setting or equipment that will facilitate the interview process for you?”** This question is acceptable because an employer may always ask applicants whether they will need reasonable accommodation for the hiring process. The question will probably make most sense after a brief description of what the hiring process involves (an interview, written test or some sort of job demonstration).
- **“Is there any specific technology that you are currently using or have used in your previous jobs that assisted you in your work performance?”** This question, placed in the proper context, is acceptable under any of the three scenarios above: a) an applicant voluntarily discloses a hidden disability b) an applicant voluntarily discloses that they will need reasonable accommodation to perform the job or c) the employer has reason to believe that an applicant will need reasonable accommodation because of an obvious disability. This question is permissible because the interviewer can explain that, despite the query about past and present technology, the question is intended to identify reasonable accommodations that may be necessary in the future. Please keep in mind that even under the three scenarios described above, an employer may not ask questions about the applicants underlying condition. Nor may an employer ask reasonable accommodation questions that are unrelated to the applicants expected job functions.
- **“Other than technology, what supports did you have in the previous jobs? If none, are there any you would benefit from?”** This question appears to be another way of asking whether an applicant needs reasonable accommodation and what type of accommodations are needed to perform the job. To the extent that the interviewer frames it as such, it's permissible under any of the three scenarios described if it is in response to the previous question. However, if directed to an applicant who does not voluntarily disclose a hidden disability or whose disability is not obvious, it may be unlawful.
- **“Provide an example of how you use technology to carry out job duties.”** Questions that are not disability related are not unlawful under ADA. Posed to applicants who use workplace technology to carry out job duties, it does not appear to be disability related. If the question is posed to applicants who do not use technology, the request may very well elicit information about a disability. Assuming the question is posed to an applicant who voluntarily discloses a hidden disability, or to one who has an obvious disability, it is permissible under the three scenarios described.
- **“Is there any technology that you don't currently have that would be helpful to you in performing the job duties of this position?”** Under any one of the three scenarios described in response to the second question and as part of a discussion regarding the types of accommodations that will be necessary to perform the job, then this question is permissible.
- **“Do you anticipate your technology needs changing in the near future? If so, why and how?”** In the context of a discussion about the types of accommodations needed to perform job functions, and under one of the three scenarios described in response to the second question, this inquiry is permissible.

A word of caution: it is best not to ask any questions about transportation or scheduling issues. Rather, an employer should focus on the employer's attendance standards and the applicant's ability to meet them.

Some things worth considering as possible steps to improve your interviewing process and your workplace culture regarding individuals with disabilities.

- Be sure to provide a comfortable environment in which open discussions of issues are welcomed.
- Describe what the interview process involves, i.e. any tests or job demonstrations, so the interviewee we can be prepared.
- Increase employer knowledge about assistive technology and what it can do for an employee with special needs.
- Provide your IT staff with training on assistive technology so that they can be prepared to address any compatibility challenges between the company system and the employee's technology.
- Provide more opportunities such as summer jobs and internships for individuals with disabilities, since these experiences will introduce people with disabilities to the work world. These experiences can alleviate some of the hardships of the job search by providing valuable interviewing and work skills.
- Consider flexible work schedules and job share options. The option of flexible work schedules is often within the top five of common requests and accommodation requests.
- Provide more diversity training to your HR staff and other staff responsible for conducting interviews.
- And finally, provide more training to all employees about disabilities.

One of the best resources for an employer looking to learn more in this area is the Job Accommodation Network (JAN). Contact them at <https://askjan.org/> or 800-526-7234.

THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

“Deal with the faults of others as gently as your own.” – Chinese Proverb

“The first five days after the weekend are always the hardest.” – Unknown

“Coffee: the favorite drink of the civilized world.” – Thomas Jefferson

“Life is a journey, not a destination.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will.” – Zig Ziglar

“Never buy a car you can't push.” – Unknown

“A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book.” – Irish Proverb

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.” – Benjamin Franklin

“Life is not always a matter of holding good cards, but sometimes, playing a poor hand well.” – Jack London

“The powers of a man's mind are directly proportioned to the quantity of coffee he drinks.” – James Mackintosh

TALENT ACQUISITION AND RETENTION 20/20 VISION

by Gail Muller, Director of Recruiting & Staffing HR Answers

A new year's goal of our recruiting and staffing department is to shine a spotlight on topics that are important to candidates when they apply, interview, and obtain new positions within organizations.

Recruiting, especially sourcing qualified candidates, has indeed become more arduous within the Pacific Northwest, especially during the last four years due to record low unemployment rates. Most candidates have multiple choices of where to land next within a few weeks of job searching. This means Hiring Managers must plan accordingly with a short timeline in place to contact qualified candidates for interviews. If you delay, you will lose candidates to other organizations who are nibble in getting through the process and/or extending a job offer. It's "the bird in the hand" kind of analogy, candidates have bills to pay, just like everyone, and the best ones get snapped up quickly.

You may need to delegate some of your workload to other staff member(s) to allow you more time to spend on recruitment and interviewing. While you may resist this notion, being down a teammate (or more) for an extended period drains energy and productivity out of you and your department.

Other mistakes for Hiring Managers to avoid will be in our April newsletter, so be sure to check that out next month.

If you don't have the time, energy, or focus to post jobs, source qualified candidates, and interview top contenders for your new hire(s), HR Answers can help. Our recruiting and staffing team are here to assist! Please give us a call at 503-885-9815 and we will be happy to discuss your challenges and how we can help.

In other related talent acquisition and retention news, here are two other resources for your consideration:

- 11 Millennials' traits you should know about before you hire them 5/8/19 <https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/2013/12/8-millennials-traits-you-should-know-about-before-you-hire-them>
- 8 Behaviors of the World's Best Managers 12/30/19 https://www.gallup.com/workplace/272681/habits-world-bestmanagers.aspx?utm_source=linkedinbutton&utm_medium=linkedin&utm_campaign=sharing

HR LINK

As you might imagine we have received a number of calls from clients asking about the Coronavirus and what to say to employees along with best practices. Based on recent reports, both Oregon and Washington have individuals who are infected. There are many views on how we should protect ourselves. Here are two resources for you with some specific guidance:

World Health Organization (WHO) www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/... and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/...

HR BY THE NUMBERS

In the last ten years, our ability to measure and utilize HR metrics has evolved by leaps and bounds. Today, it isn't just the Googles and the Facebooks of the world keeping an eagle eye on their people numbers. The following results from a survey of 1,510 respondents in 23 countries illustrate this:

- 51% of HR respondents said they could perform predictive or prescriptive analytics (compared to just 37% in finance). This indicates a degree of data processing maturity ahead of other departments.
- 89% of respondents agreed that they could use HR metrics to plan the future of their workforce; only 1% disagreed.
- 94% said they had real-time insights into their employees' career development goals.
- AI is commonly used alongside HR metrics to detect attrition risk, shape talent pipelines, and predict candidate performance.

Here is a list of questions/metrics. Which ones are you already doing and which ones should you be doing?

1. Which sourcing channel is the most influential?
2. How long does it take for new hires to reach full productivity?
3. How many candidates interacting with your employer brand actually convert?
4. What is the diversity make-up of your pool of recruits?
5. How much money are you spending per hire?
6. What is the retention rate for a specific manager?
7. What is the impact of training after 30 days of course completion?
8. What is the revenue earned per employee?
9. How does productivity change after implementing a new tool?
10. How accurate are your job planning capabilities?
11. How likely are employees to recommend your company as a good place to work?
12. What is the average amount of non-productive effort employees are putting in?
13. How easy is it to access the necessary benefits?
14. When was the last time the employee was recognized?
15. What does the participation level for your L&D program look like?
16. How effective is your internal hiring mechanism?
17. Are HIPOs opting for voluntary turnover?
18. What is the ROI of your L&D programs?

Okay, so maybe these are not so much numbers, but they will be your numbers!



FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Open 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 <https://hranswers.com/events/> or click on the event below.

MARCH: National Month of Breast Awareness, Caffeine Awareness, Cerebral Palsy Awareness, Craft, Kidney, Music in our Schools, Noodle, Nutrition, Peanut, and Women's History.

Mar 1 - Women in Construction Week

Mar 7

Mar 4 HR Lunch Bunch Online - Webinar/Teleconference

[On-Boarding - Ensure New Hire Success](#)

12:00pm – 1:00pm

Mar. 8 International Women's Day

Mar. 10 HRA Webinar - Online/ Teleconference

[Is It Time To Update Your Handbook? \(Probably Policies & Forms Too\)](#)

9:30am – 11:00am

Mar 12 Job Search Support Workshop – Portland/Tigard

[Register Here](#)

11:00am – 1:00pm

Mar. 12 National Girl Scout Day

Mar. 14 National Pi Day

Mar. 17 St. Patrick's Day

Mar 18 HR Lunch Bunch Online - Webinar/Teleconference

[On-Boarding - Ensure New Hire Success](#)

12:00pm – 1:00pm

Mar. 19 - HRA Workshop Series - Portland/ Tigard

May 14 [Spring Supervisory Success Series](#)

8:30am - 12:30pm

Mar. 21 National Single Parent Day

Mar. 24 HRA Webinar - Online/ Teleconference

[Managing Leaves Of Absence](#)

9:00am – 10:30am

Mar. 26 HRA Webinar - Online/ Teleconference

[Recruiting – Sourcing Options](#)

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Mar. 29 National Vietnam War Veterans Day

Mar. 31 National Equal Pay Day

Coming Up:

Apr. 1 HR Lunch Bunch Online - Webinar/ Teleconference
[Employee Coaching](#)
12:00 – 1:00pm

April 8 HRA Workshop - Corvallis
[Reinforcing A Respectful Workplace](#)
8:30am – 11:30am

Apr. 22 HRA Webinar - Online/ Teleconference
[Employer Branding – Part of Talent Acquisition](#)
9:00am – 10:30am

Apr. 29 HRA Webinar - Online/ Teleconference
[Performance Review for Executive Directors](#)
9:00am – 10:30am

Looking Ahead:

May 6 HR Lunch Bunch Online - Webinar/ Teleconference
[Topic: Improving Communication](#)
12:00pm – 1:00pm

May 21 HRA Webinar - Online/ Teleconference
[Pay Equity](#)
9:00am – 10:30am

May 27 HRA Workshop - Portland/Tigard
[Conducting an HR Audit](#)
8:30am – 12:30pm

View more details and register for our workshops on our website at hranswers.com.

CLIENT ACCOLADES

We are proud of the **Oregon Farm Bureau** for making their opinions known to the Oregon Legislature regarding the proposed Senate Bill 1530. As HR people, we are very conscious of how much difference experience makes when hiring an employee. It can be the difference between success and failure. The **Bureau's** belief that having Board members be experienced with energy and climate issues will be critical to leading the organization's efforts.

There was a great column written by one of our clients, Jeff Carr, CEO of **Albertina Kerr**, in the *Portland Business Journal* in the February 21st issue. He wrote about the need for caregivers and what a demanding job it is to serve as one. Part of the crisis he describes is the low pay for this type of position. But the need is growing and will continue to grow as our population ages. We commend him for bringing this emergency to the attention of everyone and sincerely hope his words will spur action from all agencies and the state.

ON MY SOAPBOX

One of the parameters we put around Soapbox when it was first created was no text about religion or politics. Many are the times when I regretted not being able to write about some political event that was either frustrating or inspiring. On those occasions I wished I could write about whatever had happened. Now that I am beginning to face the time when I will no longer do Soapboxes, I feel released from that early set of parameters. I want to write this month about behavior that is about politics...I think I will still refrain from religion.

The political environment that we currently experience is very unfortunate. There is anger and some might even say rage, about candidates, proposals, the way we express our beliefs, and there is a coarseness to the language. There is an increased air of emotionality that I don't recall in previous run-ups to elections.

I remember the Clinton impeachment process, and while there definitely were different points of view, I don't think they were expressed with the vitriol that I heard in people's statements this time around. The finger-pointing and blaming that is occurring is detrimental to our public discourse. And in the word of the day, it is terribly divisive.

One of my biggest concerns and gripes about what is occurring is the role-modeling we are doing for our very attentive children. We can be so occupied by forcefully stating our truths (opinions) or needing to aggressively defend our point of view, that we don't listen or manage our behavior well. Our children watch and mimic it at school or the playground. If you don't believe me, just Google the subject and see how many articles there are about children and their ugly behavior. They will tell you straight out where they learned that speech or conduct. Once they have learned it, it is very hard to have them unlearn it!

My reading of history says that our founding fathers had bitter confrontations over the concepts and language of the Constitution and that is one reason why there is a Bill of Rights and the Federalist Papers. Many of them needed to express their difference of opinion. And while that period may have been tumultuous, it wasn't petty or nasty for nastiness' sake.

Surely, we can do better if we try. It means staying on the subject about which we disagree. It means not letting ourselves descend into personal attacks. It means recognizing that whomever we are arguing with has just as much right to their opinion as we do. It means recognizing that the reason we may come to different points of view is because we have experienced different life events which impacts our perspectives.

It is perfectly appropriate to disagree and attempt to persuade others to give thought to our perspectives or see the inherent rightness of our thoughts. It is not okay to assail someone's character, to know about a vulnerability and savagely assault that. Those actions do not speak well for the person using them, nor do they speak well of the opinion being attacked. If all someone can do to try to win someone else over is to verbally attack who and what they are, instead of contesting the concept they espouse, it doesn't speak well of their own concept. Big and persuasive ideas can be simply stated, argued about in civil tones, and perhaps result in adoption or change of others' viewpoints. In fact, the louder we must argue for our idea or concept, the less it is likely that it will be persuasive; and the more likely it will be that emotions will be amped up into anger.

We are still several months away from our presidential election. I am concerned about the behavior that is currently being exhibited and wondering what level it will grow to by voting time. My hope for all of us is that we stop, think about the privilege of voting, think about the country that we want to live in, and manage our emotions and behavior so that our nation's children have good role models to emulate.

Additional articles authored by Advantage Newsletter Editor, Deborah Jeffries, SHRM-CP, PHR, Co-President



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