



December, 1999

Human Resource News You Can Use During the Next 1000 Years!

As We End This Millennium. . .

It's hard to believe! What we have all talked about and to some extent feared is upon us—the new millennium. The warnings of power outages, food shortages, computer malfunctions and elevators falling to the ground may (or may not) come to pass over the next few weeks. Let's hope not. With all of these year 2000 concerns, however, the proper managing of our businesses must continue. This includes the ongoing administration of our "people" programs in terms of hiring, training, coaching and when necessary, disciplining or terminating.

As a special year-end issue of the HR Bulletin, I thought it useful to comment on some of the current trends in managing your human resources. The following paragraphs hopefully will be of help to you and perhaps generate thoughts of developing or revising applicable human resource practices which make your organization more efficient and competitive. All the best in 2000!

Dan Golombieski
NWSA HR Consultant

What New Managers Need to Know

Like any other skilled worker, managers need training—especially new ones. But what kinds of training should you provide? Here's a quick checklist of skills your new managers will need to master:

- ❑ **Interviewing.** A manager's most important job is hiring the right people, and that makes top-notch interviewing skills essential.
- ❑ **Labor law.** You want to make sure your new manager doesn't make any costly mistakes when it comes to legal responsibilities and liabilities.
- ❑ **Performance management.** This includes conducting performance reviews effectively, coaching, and learning how to deliver praise and criticism with equal skill.
- ❑ **Delegation.** As a manager's staff grows, handing over the decision-making responsibility to other people becomes a critical talent.
- ❑ **Time management.** The ability to manage time effectively frees up every manager to pay closer attention to his or her employees.

Your Human Resource Consultant can assist distributor owners or managers in establishing needed training programs especially for the new supervisor or manager.

Before You Promote an Employee . . .

Promoting a staff member or hourly employee prematurely can cause no end of problems—for you, for your organization, and especially for the employee. Ask yourself these questions before making a promotion decision.

Is the employee:

Performing present duties well enough to justify a promotion?

Experienced and qualified to do at least part of the new job?

Willing to hand over current responsibilities to a new person?

Enthusiastic about taking on a new role?

Familiar with the new position's responsibilities and priorities?

Proficient in the interpersonal skills necessary to work with others in a new role?

Adequately trained, or willing to be?

Prepared to bow out gracefully if the promotion doesn't work out as planned? The more questions you can answer Yes to, the better the chances for the promotion to succeed. Thoroughly investigate and resolve any No answers, however, before making any changes.

Salary Increase Projections Show Modest Gain for 2000

Most distributors are now in the budgeting process for the year 2000. Along with this is determining a budget for employee pay raises. Forecasts from several leading compensation survey sources project year 2000 pay increases to be relatively unchanged from 1999 actual figures. Survey projections are shown below.

Year 2000 Salary Increase Budgets			
	American Compensation Association	The Conference Board	William M. Mercer
Executive	4.5%	4.0%	4.4%
Exempt	4.4%	4.0%	4.2% (Management) 4.2% (Technical/Professional)
Non-Exempt	4.1% (Non-Union Hourly) 4.2% (Non-Exempt Salaried)	4.0%	4.0% (Non-Union Hourly) 4.1% (Clerical/Technician)

Get the Most Out of Temporary Employees

Many distributors hire temporary employees on a regular basis. The following points should be seriously considered to insure temps maintain a high level of productivity and morale:

- **Introduce.** Don't put temps in a corner and throw work at them. Even if they're assigned to you for only a few hours, they deserve to be treated with respect. Introduce them to others within your organization, and don't refer to them as "the temps."
- **Prepare.** Set tasks up ahead of time with full instructions so temps can begin work as soon as they arrive. There's nothing worse than having to find the temporary worker "something to do".
- **Show them around.** Give temps a tour of the office or plant (supply and cylinder areas, photocopy room, restroom).
- **Assume.** Always provide instructions for processes unique to your company. Don't assume your normal procedure is the same for everyone.
- **Share the rules.** Make the rules clear. Can the employees drink coffee at their desks, listen to the radio, eat food, make personal calls?
- **Simplify.** Don't overwhelm the temp with company jargon or names that are not needed for the assignment at hand.
- **Involve them.** Include temporary workers at meetings or company events and ask for their input.
- **Train.** In addition to job training of primary duties, insure completion of DOT required training for hazmat employees during the first 90 days.

Discrimination Against Childless Workers May be the Next Big Issue

Is a backlash building against companies providing on-site child care services and other family-friendly programs? *Forbes* magazine notes that more than 60 percent of the labor force have no children under the age of 18, and that among working women, mothers with children under age 18 (25 million) are far outnumbered by working women without kids in the 18-or-younger bracket (38 million). A 1996 Conference Board study found that 56 percent of companies with family-friendly policies have noticed employees without children resenting those with kids. Seems time for some awareness training and a little research on what perks companies may offer workers without children. This may become a bigger issue over the next several years. Currently, there are minimal case studies on what if anything companies do for the "no-dependent" employee.

Explain the Rules to All Your Workers

Most distributors have rules, but you can't depend on employees to learn them on their own. As a leader you've got a responsibility to make sure everyone knows what policies and procedures to follow. It's a good idea to discuss rules at times like these:

- ◆ **Orientation.** This is the best time to make sure employees get a thorough introduction to your workplace rules. Depending on how large and formal your organization is, you should explain to your new employee what sort of behavior you expect, then give the newcomer an employee handbook or a copy of your rules.
- ◆ **Discipline.** When an employee breaks a rule, explain why such behavior is prohibited. The employee may not have realized that he or she was breaking any rule, or thought that a particular action didn't apply in this specific situation. In addition, take the opportunity to go over any related rules and procedures with the employee (or with your entire staff, if the situation warrants it). Be sure to ask if employees have any questions. You may also want to ask your employee to sign a document stating that he or she has been informed of the rule, as evidence in case the violation is repeated. Again, an employee handbook can serve this purpose.
- ◆ **Changes.** Don't make any changes to your rules or policies without communicating those changes to employees. Whether you make a general announcement at a meeting or send around a memo, confirm that everyone is aware of the new rule to prevent accidental violations.
- ◆ **Questions.** Encourage your staff to ask questions anytime they don't understand a rule or aren't sure whether it applies. Be open to comments and suggestions so your employees feel comfortable checking with you.

Teen Girls Vulnerable to Harassment

Sexual harassment is a serious problem for workers of all ages. But it can be especially threatening to teens, who typically work in areas where harassment is most common: food service, clerical work, and health care. In a *Teen People* magazine survey, 20 percent of 1,000 teenage girls with part-time or full-time jobs said they had experienced sexual harassment at work. Among the poll's findings:

- Sixty-five percent of the girls were exposed directly to jokes or conversations about sex.
- Sixty-four percent received repeated compliments or other flirtatious comments from bosses or co-workers.
- Forty-seven percent were touched without their consent by bosses or co-workers.
- Thirty-seven percent were continually asked for a date by bosses or co-workers.

It is imperative that all distributors develop and at least annually communicate its non-harassment policy. Special care should be taken too that temporary employees or seasonal (summer) workers, such as teenagers, are not subject to harassment on the job. Your Human Resource Consultant has sample policies available to interested readers.

and finally

When You Call for References

Because of the possibility of a defamation lawsuit, most previous employers are reluctant to provide negative information about a job applicant. How can you get a true picture of the job seeker? Try asking past employers to describe the applicant's strengths. If the list is short or vague, you will have learned a lot without any risk of litigation.

As always, feel free to contact me if I can be of any help with your employee issues!

Dan Golombieski
NWSA Human Resource Consultant

J.L. Nick and Associates, Inc.

4934 Peach Street
Erie, PA 16509

(814) 864-4052 (Voice)
(814) 864-1283 (Fax)
jlニック@erie.net (E-mail)

Have you ordered your Human Resource Management and Compliance Manual? Start the new year right by auditing and improving on your human resource programs. Contact NWSA Headquarters to order your copy today!