



# advantage

## Another \*&%! Meeting? Part 2

By Ray Redburn, Ph.D.

Yes, there is hope! You really can turn time and energy-burning meetings into productive endeavors. Last month, in Part 1, we discussed the first five of *The 10 Essentials for Great Meetings*. Those were:

**Essential #1: Just Say “No!”** Do not begin any meeting without an agenda. It’s a sure way to squander your organization’s time and talent.

**Essential #2: Identify the Purpose(s).** It goes without saying that any meeting that lacks a compelling purpose should be cancelled. Next, look at each item on the agenda and determine its purpose. A few of the many purposes might include: impart information, gather input, make a decision, or solve a problem. No group can be efficient and effective unless its members are clear about the purpose of each item on their agenda.

**Essential #3: Always Start On Time.** Do anything else and you invite a host of negative consequences.

**Essential #4: End On Time.** This becomes easier as you master Essential #3. When it’s time to stop, STOP! Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting (this is treated in Essential #5). In those rare cases where the meeting leader believes it imperative to complete an item of business that goes beyond the agreed-upon adjournment time, be sure to first contract with the group for an extension of the meeting.

**Essential #5: Use 10-Minute Magic.** Ten minutes before the meeting’s scheduled ending, the leader takes the floor and calls attention to the time, accomplishments, action assignments, and unfinished business, and helps the group set its next meeting.

And now for Meeting Essentials #6 through #10.

**Essential #6: Use Meeting Minutes That Go To Work.** Most meeting minutes are too lengthy, too boring, and too late getting in the hands of participants—usually long after they’ve forgotten the meeting. If the minutes are going to help the meeting be productive in getting the work of the organization accomplished, there are a few simple pointers to follow.

The final product should be a one-page summary (or close to it). In those rare instances where a detailed accounting of the meeting must be kept...okay, but put the one-pager on top. The one-page summary contains only the facts, the key issues, and decisions. Any time the person taking the minutes thinks a decision (especially a consensus decision) has been made, the group should be asked to clarify the decision. The other key ingredients for one-page minutes are follow-up action assignments (put those in bold type) and information about the next meeting (date, time, and location). The final key for the minutes to really go to work is one-day turnaround. With laptop computers and other technological short cuts, getting minutes written and distributed quickly is not the challenge it once was. Getting the minutes back to participants while the meeting is still fresh in their minds greatly increases the odds they will complete their action tasks. As participants see productivity flow from their meetings, they will take their meetings ever more seriously.

**Essential #7: Use Meeting Roles.** If your meeting has more than a handful of participants, use the following roles to enhance your meeting effectiveness:

- Discussion Leader—runs the meeting; keeps to the agenda.
- Timekeeper—times each part of the meeting; signals when it’s time to move on.
- Secretary—prepares and distributes the minutes.

- Vibes Monitor— takes the “pulse” of the meeting; suggests breaks or changes from the agenda if things are not working; neutralizes dissention.
- Recorder—records key ideas and displays them on a flip chart, whiteboard, etc. so the ideas are prominently display and in the forefront of the meeting. (The Recorder does not prepare the minutes or record of the meeting).

Rotating roles is an especially effective way to heighten all members’ awareness of meeting management techniques and build their individual and collective skills. Better yet, it leads to better meetings.

**Essential #8: Adopt Ground Rules.** Whatever you call it—*code of conduct, operating guidelines, principles, etc.* – a set of simple statements about the behaviors you expect in your meeting will help you achieve successful meetings. Wherever possible, state the behaviors you DO want rather than the ones you don’t. Effective ground rules must be *owned* by the group, not imposed by a leader or facilitator. We encourage groups to adopt a small number of values or principles that will help them be an effective group. Once adopted by the group, these ground rules are part of each member’s “contract” with the group. A few examples of commonly used ground rules include:

- Keep the work moving forward.
- Be respectful (that may include “Don’t interrupt.”).
- Use time well (that may include having members prepare for meetings).
- Listen (often that is translated to, “Be present with your head and heart as others speak.”).

Whatever ground rules the group adopts, the more crucial feature is what the group says it means by each particular one. Setting ground rules is an activity to be done quickly, with the participation of the full group at its first meeting. Then be sure to revisit them periodically to see if any need updating or refining.

**Essential #9: Use the Ground Rules.** Blow them up to large print and post prominently during each meeting. This helps remind everyone of the agreed-upon standards of “good behavior.” To be truly useful, ground rules must be more than just words on paper. Members of the group should be given permission and positively encouraged to respectfully “stop the process” or call “time out” when they believe a ground rule is being violated. The Leader and Vibes Monitor are both likely candidates for invoking the ground-rules contract during meetings.

Ground rules really go to work only after they have been violated, as they inevitably will be. When a violation occurs, there are but two choices: ignore the destructive behavior or invoke the relevant ground rule. Many groups weaken or kill their group’s development of healthy norms because they don’t want any “upset” or “friction” in their meeting. Instead they unintentionally condone destructive behaviors. The usual result of a healthy use of ground rules is a meeting with a minimum of distractions, greater group energy and greater productivity.

**Essential #10: Evaluate the Meeting.** Meetings only get better if you continue to evaluate them. Like continuous improvement in any part of your business, it’s necessary to take a look at results and how you got there. Three essential questions in any evaluation are:

- Did we achieve our desired result?
- What did we do right?
- What can we do better next time?

If you want to continually improve the quality of your meetings, regular evaluation is a requirement, not an option.

Put these 10 Essentials to work and your meetings will improve. Knowing what we know today about how to run effective meetings, there simply is no excuse for anything less. If you are missing any of the 10 Essentials in your meetings, adopt them immediately and watch your meetings flourish.

## JOB DESCRIPTIONS: A NECESSITY

*By Deborah Jeffries, PHR*

For most organizations, Job Descriptions (JDs) are the cornerstones of many Human Resource programs. JDs are used to assist with the creation of a job announcement, develop interview questions, build compensation programs, develop performance appraisals, etc. Many of these programs are only as good as the JDs they are based on. The passage and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1992 increased the importance of Job Descriptions to organizations, becoming a vehicle for defining the Essential Functions and skills required by the position. The result is that JDs are becoming, in general, more detailed and work-specific. There is also a greater effort to clearly define the specific mental and physical requirements.

The Job Description format recommended by HR Northwest is designed to clearly identify the Essential Functions (EFs), and define the specific mental and physical requirements of the position. In the following materials, each section of the JD will be defined and explained. Specific examples will demonstrate how the descriptions are written based on the information found in the Job Analysis Questionnaire (JAQ), and how to build a list of required mental and physical abilities.

While no two Job Descriptions are the same, much of what they address and their individual content are very similar. There are no hard-and-fast rules for writing JDs, but there are general principles that can ease the writing process. The following three guidelines can be applied to all Job Descriptions:

1. Focus on Actual Tasks and Duties.

By focusing on tasks and duties that are observable, measurable, and easily described, the HR Professional is able to develop a document that can be clearly understood. Developing EFs based on observable tasks and duties should significantly reduce confusion, and should also increase the usefulness of the description in Performance Appraisals, Job Evaluations, etc.

2. Be Specific Regarding Mental and Physical Requirements.

Clearly defining the specific mental and physical requirements of a position can greatly aid the interview process. Specifying actual requirements can aid applicants in their decision to apply for a position, and serve as a basis for discussion of reasonable accommodations. The ADA requires organizations to make reasonable accommodations to allow those with disabilities to perform job duties.

3. Specify Time and Scope.

When defining a position's job duties, be sure to include time and scope components. For example, a description that calls for typing skills would need to include the required speed and accuracy. A clearly written JD might state, for example, "Accurate typing at 60 wpm required." Lifting and carrying requirements should specify how much is to be lifted, how often, and possibly how far the weight is to be carried.

Each of these guidelines can be applied to all sections of the Job Description. The key is to make the description as clear and concise as possible. By focusing on tasks and duties, clearly defining mental and physical requirements, and specifying time and scope components, confusion can be decreased and validity can be increased.

The following defines our nine recommended parts of the Job Description format and provides a short explanation of each.

1. General Summary

The general summary introduces the reader to the position and briefly summarizes the duties. This is an introductory paragraph consisting of three or four sentences. The information in this section of the JD should relate to why the job exists and focus on the end results of the job tasks. It may also summarize the essential job functions.

2. Essential Functions/Major Duties

This section outlines the Essential Functions of the position. It should be a listing of only the essential job functions, all of which must support the General Summary. Essential Functions are defined as fundamental job duties of the position. Job duties can be identified as essential for three reasons:

- A. The position exists to perform these functions; and/or,
- B. Only a limited number of employees are available among whom the function can be assigned; and/or,
- C. The function is highly specialized and only a few employees can perform it.

Traditionally, these functions are listed from most important to least important. They are normally short statements, and it's best to begin each one with an active verb so that the action required is clear. Typically, there are eight to twelve functions listed.

### 3. Secondary Functions

This section lists functions generally performed by the position that are not essential or primary, and/or that can be, or are, performed regularly by others.

The format in this section is very similar, if not identical, to the previous section in that it is a listing of job duties in short statements. Job functions that should be included in this section are those functions that are incidental to the position and could reasonably be performed by another position.

### 4. Demands/Complexity

This section describes the complexity and breadth of the position including the guidelines for tasks and duties, decision-making and the impact of errors.

Beginning with a description of the nature of the work, this section describes the guidelines, policies, procedures and constraints that the position works under. Such factors typically include the degree of complexity or difficulty, the amount of guidance or direction received, the diversity of work situations, latitude for decision-making, the level of initiative required and the degree to which the work is reviewed or inspected. In addition, this section addresses the responsibility for records maintenance, potential for impact on expenses, budgets, and work products, accountability for capital assets/equipment, involvement in long-range planning, and impact of errors.

### 5. Supervisory Responsibility

This section identifies the type and level of supervision and leadership responsibility vested in the position. It defines the breadth of the supervision given, including whether simple work direction is given or whether the responsibility extends to making employment decisions (e.g. hiring, firing, reviewing performance, terminations, pay changes, etc.). Also, the number (in general terms) and type of employees supervised should be defined.

### 6. Contacts with Others

This section specifies the type and nature of interpersonal contacts, including what type of interactions occur (one-on-one, group, presentations, face-to-face, via telephone, via written correspondence, etc.), how complex the interactions are (simple information exchange, negotiation, giving/receiving instructions, problem-solving, etc.), typical content of interactions (e.g. whether confidential and/or sensitive information is discussed), and with whom the interactions occur both inside and outside the organization. Also, the potential impact that may result from interactions should be addressed.

### 7. Specific Job Skills

This section identifies the minimum personal skills required to perform the essential job functions, including the mental and physical capabilities that are required (e.g. reading, writing, speaking and understanding English, math skills, vision, standing, lifting, walking, talking, hearing, mobility, correspondence, composition, problem analysis, etc.). In addition, any knowledge, skills, abilities, mental or physical capabilities required by any other portion of the JD should be included (e.g. if making presentations is required, then oral presentation skills, speaking ability, and the ability to develop presentations should be included here). Equal attention should also be given to job skills that are required in order to successfully carry out the functions of the job, such as the operation of specific medical equipment. A sentence regarding the requirements to work in excess of 8 hours per day and/or 40 hours per week should also be included if applicable.

### 8. Education/Experience

This section should address the specific educational background and/or other credentials required in order to perform the job. Items that should be included are diplomas, degrees, certifications and licenses. This section should also specifically identify the number of years and type of experience that is necessary in order to meet minimum job requirements.

### 9. Job Conditions

This final section of the JD describes the working conditions under which the job duties are performed. It is important to identify the work environment, job demands, and any undesirable features of the position. Some of the areas to address include extensive travel, overtime, evening meetings, interruptions, extensive close or CRT work, exposure to hazardous materials, etc.

If you're an employer with 15 or more employees, JD's are beneficial to comply with ADA. If you would like assistance in creating job descriptions for your positions we have a do-it-yourself packet you can purchase for \$85. Call any of our offices or visit our website [www.hrnorthwest.com](http://www.hrnorthwest.com) for more details.

## What's simple about HIPAA Provisions?

*By Barbara Stollberg*

Anyone who has looked at the entire HIPAA Act of 1996 (all 168 pages of it) may have noticed that the two areas most recently publicized and controversial comprise a very small portion of the law. These are found in Title II, Subtitle F, Part C: "Administrative Simplification." Congress mandated that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) establish standards for electronic data transmission and privacy of individual health information. The ultimate goal is to simplify procedures, improve customer service and protect patient's rights. It will not happen overnight and the road to get there will not be simple. Since privacy is one of the more sensitive areas of this law, the following focuses on that.

HHS developed "Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information" as the second part of their mission. These standards protect the rights of people and their individually identifiable health information under specific circumstances.

### Who must comply with the privacy regulations?

HIPAA covered entities are health plans (individuals or groups who pay the cost of medical care), healthcare clearing-houses (health information data processors) and healthcare providers (those who conduct financial or administrative transactions). Self-insured employers must comply if there are 50 or more participants in their health plan (less than 50 are exempt). In addition certain "business associates" who receive protected health information from a covered entity will also need to comply with the regulations. Business associates' functions and activities include such areas as legal, accounting, accreditation, technology, consulting, management, and administration.

### What does a covered entity need to do to comply?

*Write privacy and security policies and procedures.*

Privacy procedures should specify who has access to protected information, how it will be used within that organization and the conditions under which the information may be disclosed. Keep in mind how you currently use protected information (and how other associates use it) to develop the procedures. What are the procedures for routine disclosures of such information? What is the minimum information necessary to complete these transactions?

Evaluate current security systems and detail necessary steps to revise processes. Develop security and privacy policies to cover all forms of records (written, oral and electronic). Security of written records may include locking file cabinets. Electronic systems (including the Internet) will require methods to prevent unauthorized access to information, encryption of transmitted records, electronic signature capabilities for message authentication and guarantees of receipt of transmission. Develop a security manual that includes this level of detail.

Establish firewalls to restrict access to only those individuals named in plan documents as having the right to the information and only for the purposes allowed by the rule. Create job categories by job functions which will determine who has a particular level of access. Self-insured plans must separate health information activities from regular employment activities and records. They may require separate departments and staff to ensure compliance.

*Train employees in privacy and security procedures.*

Training is mandatory under the law, not optional. Training must be completed by April 2003 and updated as needed when policies change.

*Appoint a privacy official to oversee protection.*

This person will be responsible for ensuring the new procedures comply with the regulations by developing plans, implementation schedules, budgetary requirements and having the authority to make decisions.

*Include disciplinary procedures for those who violate the regulations, and enforce them.* This may require you to update your Employee Handbook to specifically include this provision.

*Include grievance procedures for individuals who feel their privacy rights have been violated.*



*Ensure that health information is not used to make employment decisions* such as terminations and promotions. It is even more critical under HIPAA that supervisors and managers understand what they can and can't ask during applicant or promotion interviews.

*Require that health plans and clearinghouses obtain written authorization* from patients before using protected health information for anything besides treatment, payment or health care operations. Protected health information includes electronic, paper or oral records for past, present or future health treatment, payment or health care operations.

*Prohibit retaliation* against an individual who refuses to sign authorizations allowing additional use of their medical records.

## **When does compliance take effect?**

The schedule for compliance with the privacy regulations is April 14, 2003, for most health plans, and April 14, 2004, for small health plans with annual receipts of less than \$5M. Procedures must be in place at that time.

## **What else should a covered entity be concerned with?**

Determine if your vendors and business associates are also covered under HIPAA. Identify contracts and track termination or renewal dates. The new contract provisions must have certain requirements. Contact your legal counsel to help develop them. Make compliance a condition of your contracts. In some extreme cases you may be found liable for violations by these entities.

Strongly consider creating contingency and disaster recovery plans. These should identify potential breaches of security, prevention procedures, responses to disasters, restoration, and continuation of operations until business returns to normal.

## **What are the penalties for violations?**

Civil penalties include up to \$100 per violation, with an annual maximum of \$25,000 for each transaction standard violation. Criminal penalties include up to \$50,000 and one year in prison for obtaining or disclosing protected health information; up to \$100,000 and five years in prison for obtaining or disclosing protected health information under false pretenses; and up to \$250,000 and 10 years in prison for obtaining protected health information with intent to sell, transfer or use for commercial advantage, personal gain or malicious harm.

## **Where can you go for more information?**

The HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is the department responsible for implementing and enforcing the privacy regulation. Their website has fact sheets, guidance documents and other technical assistance information. The address is: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa> or call them toll free at 1-866-627-7748.

The website for HHS Administrative Simplification information is: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/admsimp/Index.htm>

## **Reduce Risk with Employee Handbooks and Policy Manuals**

*By Connie P. Roberts, PHR*

Handbooks and policy manuals are important organizational tools that should clearly communicate the information that is relevant and important to employees and supervisors. Yet, too often handbooks and manuals are incomplete, outdated, poorly organized or written in a manner that might place the employer at risk. Sometimes they don't exist at all.

Remember the old saying, "You don't get a second chance to make a first impression?" A handbook often provides employees the first written impression of the organization's corporate culture, mission and philosophy. A well-written introduction helps the new employee feel they have joined an organization that will value their contribution, while at the same time providing clear expectations and guidance.

Clearly outlined policies on topics such as workplace rules, safety, workplace violence, drugs and alcohol, performance management, corrective action and dispute resolution are important issues to address in your Handbook. Specifically we recommend the following:

- Employers should use caution not to include words or phrases in their handbooks that may be construed as contractual language. In some instances, courts have ruled that words such as "agree to" and "abide by" in handbooks and employment forms may place the organization's "at-will" employment status at risk. For the same reasons, we recommend use of the term "Introductory Period" instead of the traditional "Probationary Period" to describe your new hire trial period.

- Harassment is another critical issue that should be included in every organization's handbook, regardless of size. Your Harassment statement should address sexual harassment specifically (as well as other forms of harassment) and include examples of behaviors that will not be tolerated. Make sure you include a statement prohibiting retaliation and include a reference to your Dispute Resolution policy in your Harassment statement.
- Organizations with more than 15 employees are required to include a handbook statement regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA is a federal civil rights law that covers people with mental or physical disabilities. The statement should outline the conditions that are protected under the ADA, as well as a statement that reasonable accommodations will be made for otherwise qualified individuals.
- An Equal Employment Opportunity handbook statement should convey the organization's commitment to compliance with state and federal EEO regulations. The EEO statement should cover all aspects of the employment relationship from recruitment and selection through termination and everything in between. Organizations with 15 or more employees should reference federal law (Title VII) and list any specific state-protected classifications in their EEO statement. A brief reference to your Dispute Resolution policy should also be included in this policy. Better that employees walk through management's door to settle a dispute over a potentially discriminatory practice, than the door of the local EEOC office!
- Now that your Handbook has the required content, be sure you use a Handbook Acknowledgement Form. This is an essential tool in documenting that each employee has received a copy of the handbook and has "read and understood" its content. The signed forms should be kept in each employee's personnel file. A reminder...any time you make a revision to policies or the content of your Handbook, each employee should be required to sign an acknowledgement that they've received a new copy of that policy.

How is an Employee Handbook different from a Policy Manual? A Policy Manual is a separate guidebook that provides managers and supervisors with the information and guidance necessary to carry out the handbook statements, including federal and state requirements. Therefore, the Policy Manual provides a greater level of detail than would be found in an Employee Handbook. It should be the manager/supervisor's implementation road map, if you will.

A Policy Manual also provides a framework for consistent treatment of employees on issues of performance management, dispute resolution and harassment. This is a critical part of your defense against discriminatory employment practices.

Regardless of your size, we recommend drafting an Employee Handbook relevant to your organization and the federal and state laws it is subject to, and a Policy Manual to guide supervisors and managers in the implementation of critical laws and policies.

A Handbook doesn't have to be legalistic to be effective. In fact, a positive well-considered Handbook can be a great contributor to culture clarity. If you would like assistance in creating your Employee Handbook, we have created a generic version that will save you a tremendous amount of time. Give any of our offices a call or visit our website for more details.

## Labor Day APPRECIATION

In September we recognize Labor Day! It's time for parades, backyard cookouts, a last trip to the beach, and sending the kids back to school. Sometime between the afternoon hot dog and your evening toasted marshmallow, tip your baseball cap to this historic holiday; think about what it celebrates and perhaps ponder for a moment the future of the American worker.

Labor Day is recognition of the labor movement, and is dedicated to the amazing achievements of American workers. It is recognition of how hard work created a prosperous country and sustained our democracy.

It was hard times in the 1880's. A depression led to widespread wage cuts and unemployment. Children and women labored in sweatshops. Factory workers were at the mercy of corrupt bosses. The many factories had working conditions that were unhealthy. In the 1880's, working people began to join together in trade unions to bargain collectively for wages and benefits for all members.

The first Labor Day holiday was organized by the Central Labor Union and celebrated with a large parade on Tuesday, September 5, 1882, in New York City. In 1884, the group held a parade on the first Monday of September and passed a resolution to hold all future parades on that day and to designate the day as Labor Day.

The Central Labor Union urged similar organizations in other cities to follow the example of New York and celebrate a “workingman’s holiday” on that date. The idea spread with the growth of labor organizations, and in 1885 Labor Day was celebrated in many industrial areas of the country.

Oregon was the first state to recognize the holiday in 1887. During the year, four more states created the Labor Day holiday by legislative enactment. By 1894, 23 other states had adopted the holiday in honor of workers, and on June 28th of that year, Congress passed an act making the first Monday in September of each year a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories.

The American labor movement derived its strength from the blue-collar worker. Today things have changed dramatically. Our country and economy shifted from manufacturing to service; from products to knowledge. Currently white collar and service positions increase while blue-collar production jobs continue to disappear. There has been a dramatic fall in the membership of labor unions recently. Unions now represent only 13% of the American workforce. Many in business today see unions as an inconvenience. Teachers on strike delay the start of school. Airline workers strike and travel plans have to be changed. Baseball, the all-American game, gets a bad rap in significant part to wage and union actions. But for others, a union job provides a roof, a good education, and allows many to retire more easily because of their role in negotiating better working conditions and stronger employee protections.

Whether you support the union concept or not, we can all agree that working is a more positive experience because of the efforts of men and women that began 120 years ago.

## WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?

*By Steve Myhre, SPHR*

In June, we asked our readers to share their wisdom regarding an HR issue. Specifically, we asked, “Do bonuses need to be included in a non-exempt employee’s pay for the purpose of calculating overtime pay?” Thanks to everyone who responded. One reader hit the nail right on the head. Lori Shelby, Director of Human Resources at Willamette View in Salem, Oregon, replied that “under federal law a non-exempt employee’s regular rate of pay...include[s] the payment of bonuses and commissions.” Good Job, Lori!

The government’s rationale for including bonuses is to prevent employers from minimizing overtime expense by paying a low dollar rate per hour (thereby reducing potential OT cost) and then making up the difference with a “bonus.” And though bonuses directly related to productivity, quality and attendance must be included in an employee’s regular rate for the purposes of calculating overtime. There are a few exceptions worth noting:

- 1) Bonuses based on employee’s total earnings. When a bonus is calculated based on the employee’s total earnings, it automatically recognizes any overtime earned and is therefore ok.
- 2) Discretionary bonuses. If a bonus is truly at the employer’s discretion—where the employee had no expectation of receiving it—the bonus can be excluded for overtime purposes.
- 3) Gifts, Christmas and special occasion bonuses. Employers are allowed to give bonuses for special occasions if they are not too large, not expected, and not calculated based on productivity, efficiency, attendance, etc.
- 4) Profit sharing and thrift plans. Under certain circumstances, dollars contributed by an employer to the employee by way of a profit sharing plan or thrift plan are excluded from overtime calculations. However, such plans must meet very specific requirements to qualify.

If you have any questions regarding your bonus plan and whether or not it is exempt for overtime purposes, give us a call—we’d be glad to help. For next month our question to you is:

**Q: In an effort to minimize the potential for sexual harassment claims, is it a good idea to implement a “no dating” policy? Why or why not?**

E-mail your answer to [smyhre@hrnorthwest.com](mailto:smyhre@hrnorthwest.com). In our next issue we’ll share some of your responses. Please let me know if you’d prefer that your name not be published (which I would only do anyway if it made you look good!).



## HR NORTHWEST CALENDAR

*Open up your daytimers, computer calendars and palm pilots. 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.*

### AUGUST

American Artist Appreciation, National Golf, and National Inventors Month

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|------------------|--|
| August 1         | Respect for Parents Day  |
| August 4-10      | National Clown Week  |
| August 6         | Friendship Day   |
| <b>August 8</b>  | <b>HRN Workshop - Portland<br/>Employee Recognition<br/>8:30 – 12 noon</b>   |
| August 11-14     | National Smile Week  |
| <b>August 14</b> | <b>HRN Workshop - Willamette Valley (Salem)<br/>Sailing the Rough C's – Communication,<br/>Counseling &amp; Conflict Resolution<br/>8:30 – 12 noon</b> |
| <b>August 20</b> | <b>HRN Workshop - Puget Sound<br/>Compensation Basics<br/>8:30 – 12 noon</b>   |
| August 21        | National Homeless Animal Day   |

### SEPTEMBER

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|-----------------|---|
| <b>Sept. 12</b> | <b>HRN Workshop - Portland<br/>Leading People at Work<br/>8:30 – 12 noon</b>                      |
| <b>Sept. 18</b> | <b>HRN Workshop - Willamette Valley (Salem)<br/>Mentoring in the Workplace<br/>8:30 – 12 noon</b> |
| <b>Sept. 24</b> | <b>HRN Workshop - Puget Sound<br/>Recruitment Strategies<br/>8:30 – 12 noon</b>                   |
| <b>\</b>        |   |

## ON MY SOAPBOX

It has taken me about 2 ½ years to begin a venture that I have long had in mind. It's just about finished. The project has been converting an extra garage space into a craft room. My brother, Craig, has been the major renovator of the area.

Ever since I saw one at a Street of Dreams home, I have wanted one of those nifty rooms where you have dedicated space to wrap presents, explore your artistic capabilities, or do whatever other craft pursuits you might consider. (Here's where I say, "Please let me have some type of artistic ability, or else how am I ever going to explain that room!")

When I was between 8 and 10 years old, my parents sent me to art classes at the old Marylhurst College. I loved those classes, and my memories (which quite possibly have been slanted by the intervening years) include compliments of the artifacts I created in class. My question has been, did the generous spirit of my parents and their friends generate that praise, or did I have a shred of talent?

The closer the room came to completion, the more I had to think about what would be my first project? What was I going to try and create? What medium should I attempt? Did I need a worktable or an easel? Should I get a pedestal for working in clay? I ruled out starting with sculpting in stone or carving in wood – those sounded very dangerous for a beginner. Metal welding not only sounded challenging, I could just imagine explaining to the fire department how I set my home ablaze. Nope, blowtorches are not for me, either.

Art is an expressive activity requiring one to stretch and step out of the usual constructs of life. Jackson Pollock used to paint in the nude using various body parts as his "brush" on canvas. That's another artistic approach not in keeping with my style. So, then, what is to be my first endeavor?

But what if I show no talent – no artistic aptitude? While I don't yet have an answer about what my initial art project will be, I do have some thoughts about how to handle the "not yet emerging" artistic flair. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Every artist was first an amateur." Cesare Pavese wrote, "The only joy in the world is to begin." And, John Haywood observed, "A hard beginning makes for a good ending." I have decided that any evidence of capability is unlikely to surface in my first works. In fact, it may take a long time (months, years, decades, or eons) before any credible affirmation may exist. But my happiness will lie in the production, in the effort, in connecting with my imagination.

So what is the message? Well, it is primarily a personal one about balance, new challenges, taking risks, and never being too old to be a child experiencing art through exploration. I will rejoice in the room's completion, decide what venture to undertake, purchase whatever furnishings or tools may be required.....and begin. It is likely I'll have moments of solitary hilarity as I laugh at my own foibles, and instances of frustration when I can't find a way to do what I want to do. Hopefully, there will also be fragments of triumph along the way as I overcome some hurdle or see improvement. Having waited so long for this, the words of Frank Tibolt seem quite appropriate: "We should be taught not to wait for inspiration to start a thing. Action always generates inspiration." So I will begin, and hope that inspiration is not too far behind.

- Judy Clark, President



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