



HR Northwest

advantage

'TIS THE SEASON

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Celebrate Kwanzaa, Feliz Navidad, God Jul, Frochliche Weihnachten, Buon Natale, Vesele Vianoce, Vrolyk Kerstfeest, Houska Joulua, Joyeux, Happy New Year, Kala Christougena, and Boze Narodzenie.

Season's Greetings from us! We at HR Northwest want to wish each and every one of you a very happy holiday season and a very prosperous and personally satisfying New Year!

THE VALUE OF RETAINING TOP PERFORMERS

You know it's to your benefit to acquire and retain the top people in your field. Many in business are looking for the "right formula" for making this happen.

Good managers understand that they can't treat all workers equally. Great managers have figured out how to treat top, average, and poor performers "differently." If you want to give your organization a competitive advantage and increase employee productivity, and thus organization performance, you should dedicate more time and resources to the top 20% of your employees. In fact, you can substantially increase revenue by retaining the top 20% and releasing non-performing employees.

This doesn't mean you should abuse or ignore the rest of your employees. It simply means you should treat all employees fairly, but you do not treat all employees the same. Employees are individuals and they have individual needs.

Top performers almost always exceed the performance of average workers by at least 25%. It is not unusual in some industries to find that the performance differential between average and top performers is 10 – that's 1,000%! If you invest in an asset (whether that asset is an employee or any other financial investment) that costs 25% more, but produces 10 times more in output or revenue, you have a net gain and an outstanding one at that.

Demonstrating the dollar value of top performers in comparison to average workers is not difficult. First, start by identifying several jobs that have easily measurable results (the outputs by which your employees should be measured). Sales positions are an easy starting point. The goal is to compare output or results of those with average performance and those ranked as the best in each job function.

Review the following steps to calculate your top performer differential:

1. **Average output per employee.** Start with the output of the average performer. This is called the average output per employee.
2. **Top performer output.** Calculate the output of your very top performers (or the average of the top 1% of your employee population).
3. **Top performer increase factor.** Divide the top performer output per employee, for a specific position, by the number you identified as the average performer output. The resulting number is your "top performer increase factor" for that position. (The ratio is usually between .5 and 3, but sometimes is as high as 10.)
4. **Revenue per employee.** Calculate the average revenue per employee for these jobs. (Total divisional revenue for a year divided by the number of divisional employees. If that is not available, take the total revenue of the firm for a year, and divide it by the number of employees.) You can also choose to do "profit per employee" instead. Just substitute dollars of profit for revenue.
5. **Revenue increase for top performers.** Take the average revenue per employee and multiply it by the top performer increase factor. The resulting number is the revenue generated by the top performer.

Portland Office
7672 SW Mohawk St.
Tualatin, OR 97062
(503) 885-9815

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

Puget Sound Office
700 108th Ave. NE, Ste. 202
Bellevue, WA 98004
(425) 454-6170

6. **Value difference between top and average performer.** Subtract the average revenue per employee from the revenue of a top performer. The difference is the value added each year by hiring or retaining a top performer versus an average performer. (The same calculations can be done to compare average and poor performers.)
7. **Add other jobs.** Next, do it for other measurable-output jobs. If the ratio (the percentage difference) is close for most jobs, use that ratio for all jobs in the firm. If various positions provide dramatically disparate differentials, average them to come up with an organizational differential.

If you find yourself at a loss for potential outputs to use in measuring your employees' performance, then consider some of the following as starting points. You can always refine these over time as you figure out what works best for your team and organization. Your goal is to test tools and strategies of measure. So, begin by using multiple measures. No single measure will be without its faults, so "triangulate" to verify your initial findings.

Examples of direct measures of results (data-driven results):

- Output data/overall results for current period
- Percentage of goals or targets met
- Error rate
- Customer complaints or compliments
- Impact (accuracy) of key decisions (amount of money that a decision lost or made the organization)
- Impact (accuracy) of forecasts
- Percentage/number of repeat customers
- Number of ideas, suggestions, or innovations implemented

Examples of indirect measures of results (proxies for performance – subjective team or manager review of an individual's performance):

- Key accomplishments ranking (first to achieve or last to achieve)
- Speed of promotions
- Performance improvement
- Scores on standard performance appraisals, 360-degree assessments
- Performance of their employees (in the case of a manager)
- Success rate of teams they are members of
- Customer feedback
- Output results from previous projects/positions (assuming that past performance is indicative of future performance)
- Ranking by direct peers
- Ranking by project team
- Ranking by manager(s)
- Ranking by neutral (selected) panel of experts /committee
- Attendance
- How high they are ranked by outside recruiters
- How high they are ranked on the organization succession plan

Pay as indicator of worth:

- Percentage of bonus target(s) met
- The ratio of employee bonus to salary (how high their bonus-to-salary ratio is)
- Employee base pay rate compared to market rate

Training as indicator of worth:

- Scores/assessments in training courses
- Scores on job simulations

Editor: Deborah Jeffries, PHR, CPC. Advantage is published monthly and is designed to provide information on regulations, HR practices and management ideas and concerns. The intended audience is managers, supervisors, business owners, human resource and employee relations professionals. If you have questions about the content, an opinion about the information, questions about your subscription, or if you need additional Advantage binders, please give us a call at (503) 885-9815 or e-mail us at djeffries@hrnorthwest.com.

- Number of certifications
- Number of jobs employee can do/fill in for
- Tools and technology employee can utilize

Recognition as indicator of worth:

- Name recognition in the field
- Number and quality of awards, recognition, and commendations (internal and external)
- Number and/or value of copyrights and patents
- Number of requests for employee's work or services
- Number of employees who cite the employee as a factor in their development/learning
- Number and severity of disciplinary actions
- Customer compliments and complaints

If you'd like an example of calculating performance please email djeffries@hrnorthwest.com – the sample provided will be that of a salesperson.

To continue this conversation on retention, next month we will provide you with a sample Retention Checklist.

(Special thanks to John Sullivan & Workforce Magazine for the main content of this article.)

COMMUNICATING TOUGH BENEFITS NEWS

BY DEBORAH JEFFRIES, PHR

Many organizations are in shock over the double-digit health-cost increases they are being quoted. According to Hewitt Associates, employers will experience double-digit health-cost increases in 2003, most likely in the neighborhood of 14% to 16%. However, because of economic pressures, most employers will only be able to absorb an 8% increase, leaving a cost increase gap of 6% to 8%. The only containment options available to organizations are to cut benefits or pass the increase on to the employee.

The intensifying cost pressure is placing a tremendous burden on HR professionals, who must determine not only how to respond to the ongoing increases, but also how to communicate this news to employees. The challenge is compounded by the fact that employees regard medical benefits as the most valuable organizational perk. After much deliberation many firms have chosen to reduce the health-insurance reimbursement rates offered to employees. For example, instead of getting 100% reimbursement for a medical procedure employees would get 90%, 80%, or 70%, depending on the plan in which they chose to enroll. Some organizations are also making the jump to change their health-insurance cycle from a calendar year to a fiscal year, which could mean employees would have an initial plan "year" that would be only three months long. One of the concerns for employers is that the "push" of these costs onto the employees' plate could affect workplace morale and recruitment efforts. If an organization does too little, overall job security suffers. So what's an organization to do? How do benefits professionals decide what cost containment strategy to use? Then, once that decision is made, how do they communicate that news to employees in a way that doesn't destroy morale?

Some of the changes that organizations consider using are increasing insurance deductibles or co-pays, increasing employees' monthly health-insurance contribution, or reducing reimbursement percentages.

One suggestion is to look at where costs are coming from in your medical plan. For example, prescription drugs may be a fast-growing portion of your health-care budget. An organization can look at redesigning the program to have more employee involvement in the costs, like increasing the prescription co-pay amount, or move toward plans that have prescription deductibles.

Before employers decide on plan changes, they have to understand their overall approach to health benefits by looking at three areas. First, look at their organization's competitive posture and how they stack up against organizations with which they are competing for labor. The main objective is to make sure your health-benefits plan remains competitive and that any changes you make will be in keeping with your industry or geography.

The second area of consideration when deciding on cost containment strategies is the organization's overall health-care philosophy. Some may offer health care only to be competitive while others may offer a high level of coverage, believing it's the right thing to do.

The third area is that of the vendor marketplace. Employers should "partner" with their vendor jointly, exploring ideas and methods to reduce costs.

Once employers decide how they are going to deal with rising health costs, the work of communicating the news to employees begins. You know your employees will not be happy about such changes, but you certainly can work to get people to accept the news.

Not surprisingly, communicating these changes requires a great deal of work. Our recommendation: communicate the changes to employees in simple terms, early, often, and thoroughly. These are the keys to ensuring that employees will understand (and maybe even embrace) the changes you must make. Do not make the mistake of waiting until a week before a change to talk about it. Some consultants believe it's a good idea to hold focus groups with employees early in the process, not only to decide what kind of benefit change would be most palatable to employees, but also to get input on the communication strategy.

Regardless of whether you decide to seek employee input on the changes or not, all benefits communication should answer four questions:

1) What health-benefits changes is the organization making? You should provide employees with the specifics of the impending change, including how the plan redesign works, what the cost structure is, when the change will be implemented, and what the expectations (if any) are for employees.

2) Why is the organization making the changes? Employers must begin to explain the changes in their health-benefits plan at a very basic level because employees tend to have little understanding of what health care really costs. Because of the co-pay they make, some employees may have the impression that going to the doctor is like getting a haircut. A 2001 Watson Wyatt survey showed that 63% of employees underestimate the total costs of health care and 69% overestimate the percentage of costs they pay. Because of these misconceptions, every communication campaign must include some basic education on what the true cost of health care is and why the costs are going up in organizations, regions, and industries. The organization also has the responsibility to communicate that the changes to a health-benefits plan are based on tough business decisions that have to be made to help keep the organization viable. It might also help to explain market trends and competitive pressures to employees and to relate the importance of managing health-care costs to overall objectives for the organization.

3) What does the change mean to employees? All benefits communication must be very specific about how the change affects employees, such as increased co-pays, higher deductibles, or larger monthly contributions. If possible, the communication should also compare costs of different procedures in different plans.

4) What can employees do to keep costs under control? To help employees understand their role in keeping costs down, organizations should encourage such things as exercise, healthy eating, regular checkups, and the use of emergency rooms for immediate, life-threatening care only. Many employers are also putting links to health-information sites on the intranet and building "healthy libraries" so that employees can seek health education on their own.

Once you know what you're going to say to employees, how you say it is just as important. Here are some general guidelines we recommend in communicating challenging news:

1. Have the information come from a senior-level executive so that HR doesn't become a scapegoat.
2. Thoroughly educate the HR and benefits people about the changes so they can answer questions.
3. If possible, provide a means for face-to-face communication with employees so they can ask questions and get immediate feedback.
4. Use a variety of media, including e-mails, newsletters, and letters sent to homes.
5. Make the content clear and easy to read. Provide less information, more often.
6. Make the communication eye-catching and memorable. Employees have a lot of messages competing for their attention.
7. Anticipate employee questions. You have to be ready with responses when employees start asking questions such as: Why are you changing the benefits plan? Has the organization done enough to decrease costs?

BUSINESS RESOURCES AVAILABLE

HR Northwest has provided practical resources and products for the business community for many years. Over the last several months we have been in the process of updating many of our HR Resource Packets. In addition we have added a couple of new resources to our collection and will have a few more to offer in 2003. Here is a quick update:

Workplace Violence (new) \$95. There is fear in the workplace. Employees, as well as employers, are worried...and with good reason. Workplace disagreements, frustrated customers, and disgruntled ex-employees can now mean physical assault, threatening behavior, and even violence. Guns, knives, and fists are injuring and killing in the workplace. The challenge...many

organizations are unprepared and unsure how to address and prevent these hostile situations. This packet addresses:

- Causes and types of violence;
- Assessing an organization's vulnerabilities;
- Workplace prevention programs and training;
- Sample forms and materials; and,
- Additional resources available.

* * *

Job Descriptions (revised) \$85. The most common type of job documentation is the job description, which identifies, defines, and describes the most important features of a job as it is being performed. This includes the general nature and level of the work, specific duties and responsibilities, and specifications necessary to perform the job. When properly developed to meet specific needs, job descriptions have the potential for a wide variety of administrative applications, including:

- Employee guidance about what to do and how to do it;
- Information that can be used in staffing the job – not only technical skill requirements, but also information about the “nature” of the person best suited for the work;
- An “expertise directory” or “who’s who” that enables people in the organization to know who does what and who knows what;
- Evaluation of the content of one job in relation to other jobs in the organization, for the purpose of developing an effective compensation program;
- Establishment of career paths and succession planning;
- Performance standards for individuals, work units, and the organization as a whole; and,
- Legal defense.

* * *

Our Bookshelf. You come to us again and again working on your HR projects, conducting research or building training materials. In turn, we continue to add materials to our Library. The following are the newest resources now available to you....remember, just give us a call and set a time to rent our Library (Tualatin site only) for your use.

How to Discipline & Document Employee Behavior. Williams, Anne H.

This report discusses the necessity of good documentation to back disciplinary decisions in order to avoid lawsuits. The basis for good documentation is in having an effective disciplinary policy. Other topics are personnel file basics, file contents, file maintenance, restricted access to files and medical information privacy.

Family and Medical Leave Act Compliance Guide

Loose-leaf subscription to FMLA and other leave laws. In addition to in-depth FMLA compliance information, the binder includes FMLA interactions with state leave laws, COBRA, ERISA, and FLSA. Other topics are ADA compliance, Workers' Compensation, jury duty, military leave, and voting.

Fish: A remarkable way to boost morale and improve results. Lundin, Stephen C., Ph.D., Harry Paul and John Christensen.

This parable is about a fictional manager who is faced with the responsibility of energizing and creating an effective work team from an unenthusiastic department. The lessons are derived from the fishmongers at Pike Place market in Seattle.

The Loyalty Effect: The hidden force behind growth, profits, and lasting value. Reichheld, Frederick F.

The book is based on the concept of loyalty-based management that will increase employee and customer retention, measure value, improve productivity and provide a strategic advantage for an organization that follows its principles.

Deliberate Success: Realize your vision with purpose, passion, and performance. Allenbaugh, Eric, Ph.D.

The author views success as the result of deliberate planning and action. He provides success strategies and performance principles that resulted from over 20 years of research into peak performing organizations and individuals.

Empowering Human Resources in the Merger and Acquisition Process. Clemente, Mark N. and David S. Greenspan.

This book provides guidance for HR professionals in several key areas of M&A integration activities. It includes 10 critical success factors, as well as graphs, charts, and checklists to help understand and facilitate the process.

Mediation and Arbitration of Employment Disputes. Dunlop, John T. and Arnold M. Zack.

This book focuses on the evolution of workplace protections through the regulatory process and procedures for solving disputes in the workplace. The authors present arbitration as part of the evolution of employment law and discuss its advantages inside and outside of the workplace.

The Fine Art of Small Talk. Fine, Debra.

A simple description of this book is... "how to start a conversation, keep it going, build rapport - and leave a positive impression." It presents tips, techniques and skills to develop a conversational style to increase your network of colleagues and customers.

Discovering the Leader in You: A guide to realizing your personal leadership potential. Lee, Robert J. and Sara N. King.

The premise for the book is that leadership should be a deliberate decision by managers rather than a default move. The authors provide guidelines to understand how personal characteristics match with leadership activities. It helps the reader decide whether or not they fit the role.

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As a reminder as you continue your budgeting process, we still have several of our **Not-For-Profit Salary and Benefits Surveys** available for purchase. To place your order or if you would like to know what positions we surveyed, please give any of our offices a call. The price is \$200.

Q & A

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?

BY STEVE MYHRE, SPHR

In our last column we asked our readers to respond to the question: **With all the dangers of an employee handbook being construed as a contract, are there times when it is best to just not have one?**

One reader responded this way:

My answer is that there is one overriding situation in which it is not only best, but ESSENTIAL to not have a handbook... When you are not equipped with the time, money and patience to keep it updated and legal (lawyer reviewed). If you can't make these commitments, then do without!

We say good point! Clearly, the handbook is a double-edged sword – it can work for you if you do it right and against you if you do it wrong. However, having a well-written handbook is almost always better than not having one at all. Why? In a word, communication. An organization is a collection of individuals. It can only be as effective as the individuals it employs and those individuals' ability to work together. This requires communication. A good handbook can play an important role in this regard. It informs employees of the organization's purpose and history. It explains common expectations for all employees. It describes the policies and practices regarding wages, promotions, benefits, corrective actions, leaves of absence, discrimination, safety, etc. The handbook provides an excellent means of familiarizing employees with how their particular employers operate.

But, as important as a handbook is, it can also work against you. How? By being construed by the courts as a contract, thereby limiting management's ability to act. How do you prevent this? By including disclaimers in the handbook stating that it is not a contract. By including language throughout the handbook emphasizing that employment is at-will. By avoiding the inclusion of any language that commits the organization to a particular course of corrective action prior to termination. By ensuring that the "probationary" period is called an introductory period and stating that at-will status is in effect during and after this period.

So, is it worth having a handbook? Yes. Is it worth doing it right? Absolutely.

If you have any questions regarding employee handbooks, please feel free to give Steve a call or e-mail him at smyhre@hrnorthwest.com.

THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

One learns in life to keep silent and to draw one's own confusions.

- Cornelia Otis Skinner

Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.

- Confucius

It seems to me that there are only two parties in the world, and these parties have no basic difference as to the facts. The two parties in the world today are, first, those who look at problems and say no, there is nothing we can do, and thus become paralyzed, and those who say the problem is difficult but we've got a chance and no one knows enough to be a pessimist.

I would ask you to join that second party, because no one does know enough to be a pessimist. The uniqueness of the human race is represented by its ability to do that which it has never done before. The uniqueness of human life is that it has done, and can do, the impossible.

- Norman Cousins

I am only one,
But still I am one,
I cannot do everything,
But still I can do something,
And because I cannot do everything,
I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

- Edward Everett Hale

Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work; so most people don't recognize them.

- Ann Landers

We are told that talent creates its own opportunities. But it sometimes seems that intense desire creates not only its own opportunities, but also its own talents.

- Eric Hoffer

The way to get things done is not to mind who gets the credit for doing them.

- Benjamin Jowett

TRAINING TIP

THE QUEST TO ENGAGE AND INVOLVE YOUR AUDIENCE

BY DEBORAH JEFFRIES, PHR

Many speakers begin a presentation with a strong introduction, but fade as the important details are discussed in the body of their presentations. This often coincides with an audience that becomes less and less engaged as the presentation moves on. By using some creative speaking techniques you can jump-start your audience by getting them personally involved and interested in what you have to say.

Quote an interesting or unusual authority/expert. People love to hear what others have said on the topic at hand. For example, when the audience has drifted away, try using the words of Lord Birkett, a British lawyer and politician who once said, "I do not object to people looking at their watches when I am speaking. But I strongly object when they start shaking them to make certain they are still going." The use of an appropriate quotation can establish a mood by interjecting humor or, alternatively, setting a serious tone.

Use strategic name-dropping. Audience members perk up at the mention of people and organizations with which they are familiar. If during your research you come across a case study showing how another organization handled the same challenge your organization is facing, use that example. You can do this by simply dropping in a line such as, "At American Express, the finance department responded to this concern by _____." This type of insight is a great way to regain attention and back up the main points of your presentation.

Engage your audience. Audience participation in a presentation may be the most effective technique for holding attention. Ask the audience questions, solicit stories or examples related to the topic, use small groups for discussions, conduct a group

brainstorm – all can go a long way toward keeping them focused. When the audience is engaged in thinking, reacting, reflecting, and discussing the issues, they are no longer bystanders, but active participants in their own learning. If you are feeling really brave, try role-playing.

Show and tell. Audiences are made up of many types of learners, so be sure to use a variety of communication techniques. Although the auditory learners may hang onto your every word, others will learn better by watching a video or handling an object related to your topic. Design slides with appealing graphics to help visual learners and pass around samples of the new product to examine. Instead of demonstrating the new software, let the audience try it out. Relate your topic in a way that appeals to all types of learners which will help people remember your key points. Your audience remembers 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, and 30% of what they see. So the best combination is an auditory and visual presentation.

Tell stories and give examples. Stories are naturally engaging to people because of their narrative tone. We've listened to stories throughout our lives and we're comfortable with them. In a presentation, they provide a good break from all the numbers and bullet points. You can use personal stories or things you've read, but be sure to breathe life into your story with the details of people, places, ideas, and emotions.

Similarly, you can use examples to illustrate points. Explaining the nuances of a new attendance policy may miss the mark with the audience, but concrete examples of how the new policy will save them time and make recording work easier can make the topic come alive to audience members.

Taking the time to learn and use these methods of audience engagement is the key to keeping everyone in the room focused on your topic. Notice that by staggering and dispersing these techniques throughout a presentation you will help refocus wandering eyes and get drifters back on track. The cumulative effect is an audience that absorbs more information with greater understanding, resulting in a presentation that succeeds in achieving your objectives.

ABOUT TIME MANAGEMENT

BY DEBORAH JEFFRIES, PHR

Everybody has exactly the same amount of time – 24 hours a day, 168 hours a week, 8,760 hours a year. Napoleon once told his officers, “You can ask me for anything you like, except more time.” Yet, that's exactly what most of us do ask for – more time.

Why, then, does it seem like other people have more time, while you're hurried and harried to get things done? Parkinson's first law says, “Work expands to fill the time available.” Perhaps your office is caught in an activity trap, which does not produce many results.

Time wasters are the symptoms, not the causes, of time management problems. To relieve the symptoms, you must first look to the causes. One of the best ways to discover your causes is to keep a “time log” (log your time spent on everything for two weeks). Here are some typical causes:

- 1. Reacting Instead of Directing.** Most managers spend their days reacting to others' demands instead of directing how their time will be spent. They seldom, if ever, have quiet, uninterrupted time to work on major projects. One study found that the average interval of quiet time in a typical manager's day is only five minutes!
- 2. Short-Term Planning.** Too many managers spend their days meeting short-term commitments and putting out fires, instead of working on long-term goals. Their days are filled with activity, but nothing really worthwhile is accomplished.
- 3. Inadequate Preparation.** Long meetings where nothing is accomplished; staff working far into the night to meet a tight deadline; production on hold because one aspect of the project isn't ready; all of these are symptoms of inadequate preparation and not planning ahead.
- 4. Inability to Delegate.** Managers who try to do everything themselves are wasting their own time. They're also wasting other people's time by not letting them grow in their jobs through added responsibility.
- 5. Lack of Communication.** When something isn't explained clearly, people either do the job wrong or pester the manager with questions. When people at a meeting don't understand what's going on, the meeting flounders and nothing is accomplished.
- 6. Lack of Clear-Cut Goals.** When you don't know the ultimate goal of your activity, you can be caught up in details and not see the big picture. By setting goals and objectives first, you'll be less likely to mistake activity for results.
- 7. Over-commitment.** If you have broad interests, you sometimes end up doing too much and accomplishing too little. By learning how to set priorities, you can begin to put first things first. Also, one must be able to say “no” occasionally.

8. Indecision. When you can't make an important decision, projects get stuck in midstream. Perhaps you don't have all the facts and need to do further research. Perhaps you have enough facts, but are delaying for other reasons, like being afraid the decision won't be the right one. Those individuals, who are classified as "thinkers," often spend so much time thinking of all the possible scenarios to a situation that a decision is never reached.

9. Poor Organization. If your papers are scattered, your tools misplaced, or your files are a mess, you spend more time getting ready to do your work than actually doing it. Organizing your papers, files, desk, and drawers may seem like busywork, but it pays off in valuable time saved not searching for minutes or hours for a piece of paper.

HRN HAPPENINGS

Please join us in congratulating staff members who celebrated anniversaries in the fourth quarter of this year. They include:

Susan Jeffries	8 years
Valerie Stinson, PHR (HR Extras)	3 years
Ray Redburn, Ph.D.	2 years
LaVerne Wood	1 year

Internal investigations are essential for all organizations. Conducting them can often be extremely uncomfortable and nerve wracking. Many employers find investigations tricky and would like to outsource this activity. On our staff, both **Kathryn Dodge, PI, PHR**, and **Steve Myhre, PI, SPHR**, can now assist with your internal investigations. Both of these staff members recently received their PI licenses.

The Business Journal's Top 25 List - Again. HR Northwest received honors again at the Portland Business Journal's Annual Women In Business event in November, by placing 13th (last year at #18) among the Top 25 Women Owned Businesses in the Portland Metro area. This event was created with the concept of recognizing successful businesses in the region, both conceived and owned by women. As most of you know, HR Northwest has demonstrated this kind of ingenuity by standing the test of time and serving clients for over 17 years. We are thrilled to add this accomplishment to the growing list of achievements our organization has merited over the years.

Hats off to **Judy Clark, SPHR**, who has been selected to serve on the board of the Oregon Entrepreneurs Forum (OEF).

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. To register for our workshops, please call any of our offices, send an e-mail to Susan Jeffries at sjeffries@hrnorthwest.com, or just register online at www.hrnorthwest.com under Consulting services.

DECEMBER

All HRN Workshops are on hiatus

December 21	World Peace Day
December 24	HRN Offices will close at 12 noon
December 25	Christmas HRN Offices will be closed
December 26- January 1	Kwanzaa

JANUARY

January 1	Minimum Wage Increases: AK - \$7.15 OR - \$6.90 WA - \$7.01
January 1	HRN Offices will be closed
January 16	HRN Workshop - Tualatin One-on-One Coaching Techniques 8:30 - 12 noon
January 22	HRN Workshop - Willamette Valley Compensation Part I 8:30 - 12 noon
January 28	HRN Workshop - Puget Sound Being Your Own Internal HR Consultant 8:30 - 12 noon

ON MY SOAPBOX

Have you ever thought someone was just a bit too happy? Ever considered someone a “Pollyanna” because of their ever-positive approach to problems? Ever thought that someone just didn’t understand the situation or otherwise they would be concerned just like you?

I think we have all encountered someone like this at one time or another. I know someone who won’t even use the word “problem” because it casts the situation in a negative light. She constantly refers to “challenges” or “situations,” never to something that might have an aura of an issue, a hint of bad.

What brought this subject to mind is a quote I found in one of my spam emails. (I guess you shouldn’t call it “spam” if you find something of value.) It was in an ad for a free credit report. I can’t figure out if the quote had to do with whether I do or don’t have good credit, but I found it interesting, *“I have always been delighted at the prospect of a new day, a fresh try, one more start, with perhaps a bit of magic waiting somewhere behind the morning.”* That was written by JB Priestly.

I wish I knew who JB Priestly is/was. It might give me a better sense of whether he/she was always this chipper. But maybe it is better that I not know. This way I can use my imagination. Is it someone who has lived a long, full life and is sharing words of wisdom with us? Is it someone quite young who hasn’t yet discovered that life isn’t always like this, and that there are plenty of mornings that dawn without internal sunshine? In other words, is JB Priestly a reliable source? Should I consider this a message for each of my days? And by writing about it, am I suggesting that you should too?

I wonder what the words were that preceded and followed this. I wonder when it was said, and for what occasion. Was this a commencement speech, words shared with children in the family, written in an inspirational sermon, or...? When I was first considering this, it seemed like the context for the remark would matter. But the more I thought about it, the more I decided that the occasion, year, or construct for the words weren’t important. The words themselves were what mattered.

So here’s the bottom-line, at least for me. The words are a reminder of something that we have heard many times, that we choose our own attitudes, that we are responsible for our own happiness. The words give us hope about each new day being a new beginning, and time to enjoy, achieve, wipe out the mistakes of yesterday and do better. They also encourage us to see each day as a unique opportunity to relish our experiences.

I think there is one other vital message in this little quote. I love the reference to “magic.” Each day brings special moments, flashes of laughter, instances of warm friendship. That is the magic of living.

So as we enter this holiday season, I will try to find joy in each waking moment and happiness in each new day. As I wake up and stretch out my body from sleep, I will remind myself that the true gift is living life well and fully. And I wish for each of you the same gift, not just at this holiday time, but each and every day.

- Judy Clark, President



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