



advantage

TREND REPORT SHOWS HR FUTURE

A considerable amount of research has been done into the future of human resources both as a profession and as a critical component of the corporate leadership team of tomorrow. It would be impossible to present all the details of this forward-thinking. There are some issues to explore, however, as we consider the roles of human resource professionals and chief executives.

Let's start with the chief executives, since they have the responsibility, authority, and accountability to assure that every one of their team members performs at the highest level. We forecast a shake-out over the next few years; expect the departure of a surprising number of senior executives who lack the critical skills of mentoring, coaching, confronting, and weeding. To be successful, tomorrow's top leaders must have the courage to demand high performance from every member of their executive teams.

Standards must be high, with deliberate cross-education and collaboration at senior levels. Instead of competing or protecting their territory, functional leaders will teach each other about their areas of specialty. In the most successful organizations, they will share their results, their shortcomings, and their needs. In return, their colleagues will respect their achievements and strive to help them overcome their deficiencies as individuals and as organizational components.

The common thread will be people, so human resource executives will play an increasingly important role. While serving as advocates for employees, they will concentrate on providing a high level of service for their customers — management. With a drive for a more meaningful measurement of performance, these people professionals will leverage their knowledge to guide future-focused staffing, training, education, and corporate restructuring.

In the years ahead, an uncomfortable number of executives will be forced to outsource human resource services because of insufficient expertise in-house. This trend suggests more opportunities for more proficient people strategists to form their own businesses, growing the human resource consulting profession.

In-house or outsourced, well-educated, business-literate human resource executives will be increasingly valuable. Wise executives will help them grow. *(We thank The Herman Group for permission to share the Herman Trend Alert, June 2003.)*

GRIEF IN YOUR WORKPLACE

It's never easy to lose a loved one. Many books have been written and suggestions made on how to deal with grief. As employers, we employ the whole person, and we know that life does go on. This means we have employees who come to work after the recent loss of a family member, close friend, or business associate. Here are a few suggestions for co-workers on how to relate to someone who is grieving.

- Don't try to fix them. There is no magic pill.
- Don't tell them to snap out of it. They cannot. Everyone recovers at their own pace.
- Don't take it personally if they don't return your phone calls. If you care, keep trying.
- Don't be afraid to talk about the loved ones. They often will find comfort in knowing that other people care enough to ask and/or might miss them too.
- No pity.
- Don't tell them how strong they are - - this is not the time for them to be a role model.
- Don't abandon them. They need you even though they may be moody and cannot express themselves well.

For those who are grieving, one of the best methods to accept people's concern without having to relive the difficult situation over and over again is to simply say, "Thank you for your concern." This accepts their offer of sympathy and reaching out to you, but does not encourage them to continue with a conversation.

HR NEWS

In a recent court case, the claimant sales representative was terminated by the respondent employer approximately two weeks before the Corporate and Criminal Fraud Accountability Act, commonly called the Sarbanes-Oxley Act after the sponsoring members of Congress, was enacted into law. The claimant alleged that the termination violated the whistleblower protections contained in the Act, which prohibit retaliation against workers of publicly traded companies who complain or provide information about corporate fraud.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the agency within the US Department of Labor responsible for enforcement of the Act's whistleblower protections and those contained in other federal laws, rejected the claim. The claimant then appealed to the Department of Labor's Office of Administrative Law Judges (OALJ). The administrative law judge rejected the claim as well, saying the Act created new and increased liability on employers so applying the provisions retroactively is not permitted.

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There are four "white collar" exemptions under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). An employer need not pay overtime to workers if they meet the criteria of the exemptions. These "white collar" exemptions are as follows: executive worker, administrative worker, professional worker, and outside salesperson. Suits for payment of overtime due to improper classification of a position as exempt can be very costly, so employers should carefully evaluate each position within their organization.

Here are some suggested steps to take when evaluating a position's status under the FLSA:

- Ensure that job descriptions are up-to-date and reflect the true day-to-day tasks that are being performed.
- Look at the discrete tasks included in the job description and determine the amount of time spent per week performing each task.
- Determine whether the tasks are exempt or nonexempt as defined by the FLSA and its regulations.

Following these three steps will give an organization an initial impression as to whether the position is exempt or nonexempt.

Because FLSA claims are on the rise, including very costly class-action lawsuits, we urge you to contact an experienced advisor for further information on white-collar exemptions, the criteria for meeting these exemptions, and properly classifying workers under the FLSA. It is critical to understand the nature of work being performed, given that the FLSA requirements are expected to change later this year.

* * * *

Many employers have policies regarding recruiting from within the organization. In general, this manner of filling open positions can be very effective – it can speed up the recruitment and selection process, and employees can be encouraged and motivated when they see their employer offering opportunities for advancement.

Hiring from within has a number of advantages, but relaxed interviewing standards is not one of them. Employers must remember that the same set of rules applies to both external and internal recruitment and selection. For instance, an interviewer may have some personal knowledge about an internal candidate, whether it is related to plans to start a family, their religious beliefs, or current medical condition. The interviewer, though, is still prohibited from asking questions that solicit information regarding the worker-applicant's race, color, national origin, sex (including pregnancy), religion, age, or disability, as prohibited by the federal anti-discrimination statutes, plus any other protected characteristics included in state and/or local law.

We encourage you to develop guidelines and training for interviewers. If you are looking for assistance, give us a call. We can help with group or individual training, provide you with good interview questions, and help interviewers with the "don'ts" of interviewing.

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 djeffries@hrnorthwest.com.



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The Conference Board says that 2003 salary budgets are increasing at a 3.5% rate, lower than the projected rate of 4%. WorldatWork is also projecting a 3.5% increase, just short of the 4.1% they had originally forecasted.

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Hewitt Associates reports that the number of large organizations requiring a \$15 doctor's office co-pay increased from 24% in 2002 to 43% in 2003. Emergency room co-pays have also increased, with 16% of organizations requiring more than a \$50 co-pay, compared to 7% in 2001. As for prescription co-pays, 52% of organizations are now asking for a \$10 co-pay, compared to 40% in 2002.

DEFINE SUCCESS

One of the most important career and life planning activities you can engage in is having your own definition of success. This is vitally important for a number of reasons: If you haven't done this, how do you know what's best for you? How can you make career decisions if you're not crystal clear about how you define success? How can you be happy if you don't know when you've met your goals?

There is never a bad time to discover and be clear on your definition of success. Today's economic realities make the timing even better. If your career hasn't gone according to plan, or even if it has, re-examine what it is you actually want. Doing so can make you a lot happier.

If you haven't taken the time to define it, success has already been defined for you. You're already following models of career and life success. The question is whether they are your own, or ones you inherited. One of your greatest career challenges is identifying goals and definitions of success that are true to you, rather than ones you inherited from family, society, and other outside forces. Your current model of success may or may not work for you. The important thing is to understand your assumptions and to question them. Success is on your terms, not someone else's. If you follow a path to success that isn't your own, you may achieve your goals, but when you arrive at your destination you may not feel successful or fulfilled at all.

Keep in mind that your existing job may hold the key to your happiness. For example, if you were to discover that making your customers happy was the one thing that defines and inspires you, what would that do to your focus and state of mind?

You have the power to reaffirm existing models or adopt new models of success. All it takes is some honest thinking, clarity of purpose and the discipline to stay true to your values in the long run. It really is your choice. And remember, success is not all about work. It is who you are as a person. What have you accomplished so far and what is waiting out there for you?

- **Accept that there are always alternatives.** The very fact that so many of us have not questioned the paths we are on speaks to a lack of awareness or acceptance of alternate paths. There are many options and valid ways of defining career and life success.
- **Examine your path.** Do you love what you do? Do you do fantastic work as a result? Does your work complement your personal and family life or detract from it? Are you excited about your vision of the future? Is this your best use of your precious gifts and time?
- **Create some quiet, introspective time.** Ask yourself these questions: What makes me happy? How do I feel? What do I want? Then answer the question, "I know how successful I am by how (fill in the blank)." The answers to these questions will point you in the right direction. You can have several definitions of success; just be sure they do not contradict each other.
- **Refine your responses.** Ask yourself "why?" and "is that what I really want?" after each response to the statement until each rings true. For example, if your first response was, "I'll know I am successful when I am a millionaire," ask yourself why you want to be a millionaire. You might, for example, find out that success for you is the ability to use your time as you wish, or the ability to travel or not to have any financial worries. This process may lead you to make other decisions in your life that will help you reach your goal.
- **Test your responses with others who know you well.** Do they ring true?

One definition of success that puts this philosophy into simple words comes from American author Christopher Morley, who wrote: "There is only one success — to be able to spend your life in your own way." Being clear about how you define success will reap immeasurable rewards.

CORPORATE TRAVEL SAFETY

For those of you who are frequent business travelers, here's a website for you: www.corporatetravelsafety.com. This website contains links to articles and tips on safety and security for all modes of travel, both business and pleasure. Topics include: how to prevent laptop theft; travel dangers; airplane emergencies; hiding valuables; hotel credit card scams; culturally appropriate clothing; table manners; traveling with children; and many other bits of travel information. The main focus of the website describes the seminars, products, and services of Kevin Coffey, a leading expert on travel safety training to business travelers. Mr. Coffey is a Police Detective with the LAPD and has investigated numerous crimes committed against travelers. His programs provide advice on safeguarding travelers and their property. Even if you don't have a need for the products and services offered, the articles will be useful. *(Just a note – Kevin is not related to our own staff member, Rick Coffey!)*

ARTICLES YOU CAN FIND ON OUR WEBSITE

There is so much information to share with our readers in the arena of human resources, we simply cannot provide it all to you in our newsletter. To provide you with timely information, HRA regularly posts articles and updates on our website, under the Alerts link. We encourage you to make our website one of your "favorites" and check out our Alerts periodically. Recent postings include:

- SARS – Policy and implementation.
- United States Patriot Act – affects employers regarding electronic surveillance and records/documents accessibility to the government.

KEEPING YOUR TRAINING FRESH

Anyone who has ever sat in an audience knows it's all too easy to watch a presentation and come away with a feeling of "what a waste of my time." The problem might be the content or perhaps the technology used, but most likely the fault lies with the presenter. Although all speakers strive for success, it's easy to be seen as dull or a know-it-all. So, what are the best ways to avoid these situations? The answer is really simple: by continually looking for ways to improve your presentation style.

That statement makes it sound so simple, but it isn't — especially since presenters have often developed a style that works for them in just about any setting. However, it never hurts to re-analyze your skills and incorporate new ideas to keep fresh and in touch with your audience. Here are a few suggestions to consider when your style needs some adjusting.

Analyze and review others and then yourself. After sitting through a presentation you don't enjoy, do you consider what did not work well? Do you take the next step and consider what went right? Now compare the pluses and minuses with your own style. Do you see similarities? Analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of other speakers while considering your own traits is a good way to identify areas for improvement.

Another way to gather information is to ask for feedback. This can be done via a form or asking a person you trust to sit-in on your session. Just make sure to ask the right questions on the form itself. Does it encourage honest and thorough feedback? Do you give audience members an incentive to spend time giving a thoughtful critique?

Adapt to the environment. You have gathered feedback and are prepared to make some changes with future presentations. The next step is to make sure that the changes work for your audience. After all, what one audience or individual sees as good presentation style, another sees as ineffective. The key to avoiding the wrong application of style is the ability to change and adapt your presentation to fit the current situation.

Although this skill can take years to perfect, it's crucial to the art of good presentations. This usually means dumping rigid agendas. It is easy to encounter an "off-topic" discussion between an attendee and the presenter. In addition, there are times when you will sense excitement for a particular aspect of a topic, and you may need to make adjustments to run with the topic and/or shorten up other material that you would have covered in greater detail.

Talk to attendees, not at them. Most people, in conversation, conduct a dialogue. When presenting, however, many presenters fall back on giving a monologue. A presentation is more powerful when dialogue with the audience is sprinkled throughout. This encourages a bond with the audience and allows the presenter to feel more relaxed and comfortable, in addition to creating an environment in which he/she can learn from attendees.

One of the fastest and easiest ways to bring dialogue into your presentation style is to work it into your introduction. Do not start by listing qualifications. Even though the goal is to build credibility, it can backfire. Build credibility in your introduction by demonstrating a genuine interest in the audience. Don't be afraid to ask questions and take the time to listen to the responses. Ask at the beginning of the program what the attendees hope to learn from the session, and why they are attending the program. Getting a good sample of what the audience is looking for from your topic gives you the tools to make last-minute topic changes and lets your audience know you're a colleague, not just an expert.

Something to hang on to. Attendees are more likely to remember content and ideas when they write them down, even if they never review their notes later. Supplying handouts with space for additional notes, along with questions and fill-in-the-blank statements, can be a good strategy to help an audience retain information. Providing a handout reinforces that the participants should spend their time listening and taking a few notes instead of having to write everything down. This also helps to engage them in conversation and continues to build rapport.

At the end of the content, consider adding any supplemental reading material, and always include your contact information. Also, leave time to answer questions the attendees may have, as well as go over any handout questions that may come up.

These are a few suggestions to incorporate over time as you feel comfortable in making changes to your style. It's also good to revisit your style from time to time to polish it up.

BREATHE IN...OUT

It wouldn't be called "work" if there wasn't any stress. Unfortunately, where there is stress there are doctor visits and medical bills. Roughly \$300 billion, or \$7,500 per employee, is spent annually in the United States on stress-related compensation claims, reduced productivity, absenteeism, health insurance costs, and employee turnover.

Here are a few guidelines on how to reduce stress on the job.

Take a walk. Sounds so simple and yet it's commonly overlooked. Get out of the office for a breather.

Talk to somebody if the job is getting to you. Knowing when to ask for help avoids more serious problems down the road.

Volunteer your services. The more you do for others, the better you'll feel about yourself.

Prioritize responsibilities. Don't try to do everything at once.

It sounds like a cliché, but when everything's going crazy, **paint a picture in your head of a serene and quiet place**, like a countryside or beachfront.

Q & A

TELECOMMUTING & REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

BY: STEVE MYHRE, SPHR

Q: Do I have to allow a disabled employee to work from home as a reasonable accommodation?

A: Well...it depends. As you know, the Americans with Disabilities Act requires an employer to make reasonable accommodations for a qualified employee with a disability. So the answer to your question depends on whether the essential functions of the job can be done from home and whether it is reasonable to do so.

Before even considering telecommuting, be sure you have looked at other options. Engage in an interactive discussion with the employee to determine his/her limitations and other workable accommodations. If there are accommodations other than telecommuting that are preferable to you as the employer, then you have the freedom to choose one of these. You don't have to select the accommodation that is most preferable to the employee.

If telecommuting has the most potential, then take a close look at the essential functions. If the job requires the employee to be on site to do the work, such as a cashier, retail clerk, truck driver, it is clear that the essential functions cannot be performed via telecommuting and you can cross this option off your list. However, keep in mind that it may be possible that some of the job's essential functions can be performed at home while others can be done at work. In other words, telecommuting on a part-time basis may be reasonable.

Also, look at other requirements of the job, such as the employee's need for supervision or face-to-face interaction with customers, vendors, other employees, etc. If there are high needs in these areas, then telecommuting may not be reasonable. Remember, however, that a lot of interaction can be carried out just fine over the phone and email (even more so if we're talking about part-time telecommuting).

If you have any questions regarding accommodations or any other employee-related topic, please feel free to give us a call or email Steve at smyhre@hranswers.com.

THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

Looking back

If I had my life to live over, I'd try to make more mistakes next time. I would relax, I would limber up, I would be crazier than I've been on this trip. I know very few things I'd take seriously anymore. I'd certainly be less hygienic . . . I would take more chances, I would take more trips, I would scale more mountains, I would swim more rivers, and I would watch more sunsets. I would eat more ice cream and fewer beans. I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones. Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had to do it all over again, I'd have many more of them, in fact I'd try not to have anything else, just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of my day. If I had it to do all over again, I'd travel lighter, much lighter than I have. I would start barefoot earlier in the spring, and I'd stay that way later in the fall. And I would ride more merry-go-rounds, and catch more gold rings, and greet more people and pick more flowers and dance more often. If I had it to do all over again—but you see, I don't.

—Jorge Luis Borges

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

Finish every day and be done with it. You have done what you could; some blunders and absurdities crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Be glad you had the moment.

—Steve Shagan

ABSENCE/TURNOVER NUMBERS

One way of measuring an organization's employee relations temperature is to compare numbers regarding absence and turnover. The new numbers for First Quarter 2003 have just been released by BNA (Bureau of National Affairs). The unscheduled absence numbers were:

All Employers	1.7% month	Manufacturing	1.5% month	0 – 249 employees	1.7% month
Western Employers	2.3% month	Health Care	1.7% month	250 – 499 employees	2.0% month
Northeast Employers	1.5% month	Finance	1.8% month	500 - 2,499 employees	1.8% month
North Central Employers	1.8% month	Non-manufacturing	1.7% month	2,500+ employees	1.3% month
South Employers	1.7% month				

Unscheduled absence does not include long-term absences after the first four days, vacations, holiday or other scheduled leave, or absences of less than a full day. The rate is computed by: the number of all worker days lost through absence during the month, divided by the average number of employees, multiplied by number of workdays, multiplied by 100.

The turnover numbers were:

All Employers	0.9% month	Manufacturing	1.1% month	0 – 249 employees	0.9% month
Western Employers	1.2% month	Health Care	1.6% month	250 – 499 employees	1.4% month
Northeast Employers	0.8% month	Finance	1.0% month	500 - 2,499 employees	1.1% month
South Employers	1.2% month	Non-manufacturing	0.9% month	2,500+ employees	1.0 % month
North Central	0.7% month				

Turnover figures cover all permanent separations, whether voluntary or involuntary. They do not include employees placed on temporary or indefinite layoff. The rate is computed by: the number of separations during the month, divided by the average number of employees on payroll during the month, multiplied by 100.

If your organization's numbers differ substantially, you may want to examine your attendance policy, your employee relations climate, and/or your compensation/benefits plans. If you want further details about any of these statistics, please give us a call.

CHILD CARE IMPACTS BOTTOM LINE

When employees are concerned about child care or the safety and well-being of their children, they may be distracted by these concerns during work and their productivity may suffer. With budget cuts slashing days from the school year, working parents are scrambling to juggle work schedules and childcare. They must make hard decisions: to work or to stay home with children to save money or quit work because of a lack of available, high-quality child care. Businesses suffer from lost productivity, the costs associated with employee turnover, low morale, and a weaker bottom line, which means reduced profits.

High-quality, affordable, and available child care is a national concern. Twenty-nine million children under the age of 13 are in dire need of child care, according to a survey by the YMCA of the USA.

According to the Families and Work Institute's 1997 *National Study of the Changing Workforce*, "Only 50% of employed parents are able to take a few days off from work to care for sick children without losing pay, forfeiting vacation time, or having to fabricate some excuse for missing work." This says employers should care about child care, because employees will be more productive and committed.

While the following information is cited from some research done in the state of Oregon, similar numbers and information exist in your state. Data provided by the Oregon Child Care Research Partnership, September 2002, show there are 605,495 Oregon children under the age of 13, and approximately one-third of Oregon families with children under the age of 13 are using paid child care. The report states, "Only one-third of children have a parent who is not in the paid workforce."

According to Diana Howell, an Area Manager for Barrett Business Services, "Child care issues have a serious potential for economic loss for our organization, the customer, and the employee." Howell sees "two major barriers to employment and the economic security for the people trying to survive in the workforce; child care and transportation."

"People are a very valuable asset to us. To make a profit we need them to show up at the job site. At least 50% of the people we initially interview either can't get there or have child care issues – 50%!" Howell and her staff work closely with their employees and customers to try to overcome these obstacles.

Child care is very important to worker productivity. It helps sustain a workforce by enabling parents to enter new jobs or return to them sooner. It also allows increased productivity and advancement for parents who are already employed.

In June of 2002, the Oregon Employment Department's Workforce and Economic Research Division conducted its biennial employer survey to find out what workforce issues employers are facing. Flexible work schedules, which can help parents adjust to child care needs, seem to have become more common over the past two years. The survey found that 68% of private-sector employers provided flexible schedules or telecommuting to their managers, and 66% offered this to their non-management employees. This was up from the 2000 survey, which indicated that 43% of private-sector employers offered this benefit to both managers and regular employees. Flexible schedules were increased at local government employers by a much smaller fraction.

Firms with 10 or more employees are more likely than small firms to offer all of the major employee benefits; but, among the small firms, flexible work schedules are provided by 65% of businesses, tied with paid vacations and holidays as the most common benefit provided by such firms.

“Flexible work schedule” placed second among types of benefits offered to employees, after the most common benefit, “paid vacations-holidays.” At the bottom of the list, the least offered benefits are the child care-related ones. Another benefit that can assist employees by offering flexibility is “telecommuting.” It was the ninth most common benefit offered to employees.

There is also a need for the availability of child care alternatives. According to the YMCA of the USA survey, more than two out of three parents say they have no programs in their communities that offer extended-hour child care. When studies show waiting lists at some providers and openings at others, it suggests that the openings that do exist aren’t meeting the needs of parents. This may be due to factors such as non-traditional schedules. Those parents who work night or weekend hours often can’t find centers or family child care homes that are operating during those times. Parents with special needs children or those who speak a foreign language can also have a difficult time finding a provider.

The Families and Work Institute’s 2001 *Business Work-Life Study*, which surveyed a representative sample of employees in the U.S. labor force, found that employees with more supportive work places, as well as better quality jobs, are more likely than other workers to have the following traits:

- higher levels of job satisfaction;
- more commitment to their companies’ success;
- greater loyalty to their companies; and
- a stronger intention to remain with their companies.

Additionally, they found that when employees’ personal and family well-being is compromised by work, they experience more negative spillover from home to work, which diminishes job performance.

A Hewitt Associates study surveyed 945 U.S. employers in 2002 and identified the most commonly offered work-life benefits among large organizations. Focusing on work-life programs that address the child care issues identified:

- Flexible scheduling. Fifty-nine percent of the study’s large employers offer this. In addition, 48% offer part-time employment, 28% offer job sharing, 21% offer compressed work schedules, and 12% offer summer hours. The survey shows 74% offer some type of alternative work arrangements, both scheduled and non-scheduled, up from 66% in 1994.
- Child care assistance. Overall, 93% of large employers offer some kind of child care benefits. Nine out of every 10 employers offer dependent care spending accounts, 43% offer child care resource and referral, 15% offer sick or emergency child care programs, and 12% offer on-site or near-site child care centers.
- Adoption benefits. More than a third of large employers offer adoption assistance, with an average maximum reimbursement of \$3,414.
- Family and medical leave. Nineteen percent of large employers offer more than the 12 unpaid weeks required by federal law.

The challenge for business leaders is to plan, anticipate, and prepare to become an employer of choice. The partnership between business, employees, and the child care system is increasingly important for a strong workforce, as well as to ensure that we will have one in the future. An employer of choice recognizes that work and personal life are interdependent. Employers who face that fact head-on put flexibility and supportiveness at the forefront of their values. Employers of choice stand to realize bottom line results from flexible, supportive workplaces that include: increased productivity; improved employee morale; and enhanced recruitment and retention.

Whether you are a large or small business, child care concerns impact your workforce and, eventually, your bottom line. High-quality childcare provides a safe and nurturing environment where children feel respected and working parents can feel comfortable leaving their child. In addition, high-quality child care affects the economic health of the community through improved employee performance, job retention, career advancement, and increased income as people move within the workforce. Employers who want to attract and keep the best workers are addressing the child care needs of the changing workforce. Main content for this article provided by Debbie Singer, publication; Oregon Labor Trends.

FOR YOUR 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.

JULY

National Hot Dog, Foreign Language,
and Picnic Month

- July 10** **HRA Workshop – Tualatin**
Conducting Effective HR Investigations
8:30 - 12 noon
- July 20** National Ice Cream Day.
In 1984 then-President Ronald Reagan
designated the third Sunday of July
as National Ice Cream Day.
- July 25-31** National Salad Week.
- July 27** Parents' Day. To recognize the importance of
effective parenting and to encourage the
development and nurturing of children.

AUGUST

- August 14** **HRA Workshop – Tualatin**
Beyond Performance Appraisals
8:30 – 12 noon
- August 20** **HRA Workshop – Salem**
Top 10 Policies for Every Organization
8:30 – 12 noon
- August 26** **HRA Workshop – Puget Sound**
Compensation topic – title to be announced
8:30 – 12 noon

ON MY SOAPBOX

The Greek language has four words for love each with its own distinct meaning. In the interest of being complete, they are *agape*, *storge*, *eros*, and *philia*. (There are some accent marks for three of them that are beyond my keyboarding skills, but you get the gist.) They range in meaning from sexual love (*eros*) to familial love (*storge*).

The one I want to offer a few words about is *philia*, the love between friends. Friendship is an everyday word. It doesn't seem to fully express the caring and commitment that is shared between true friends. Friends who have *philia* for one another behave differently. They go way out of their way for each other. They don't keep score or tally how much has been done for them, and then calculate how much they need to do in return. They simply respond in ways designed to sustain. They are sensitive to expressed and unexpressed feelings. They know when to push and when to let a subject rest. They offer encouragement with a look and a knowing smile. They reach out and touch a shoulder to comfort. They connect, they care, and the power of their caring is felt even when distance separates.

There is a characteristic that often accompanies *philia* (at least in my experience), and that is hugs. A hug supports and consoles us in times of great hurt. A hug is a warm embrace that eases the soul, and assures that in time the pain will lessen. It is a quiet moment of connection when two hearts feel each other's rhythm. It replenishes and nourishes us. It reminds us that we do not have to stand alone, no matter how isolated we may feel. The circle of a friend's arms creates a safe place, if only for a minute or two.

I have been the recipient of such love, such *philia*, lately. I shall always remember and cherish the gestures of caring and concern when I needed them most. The allowances that others made for my distraction, lack of concentration and focus was much needed and appreciated. The squeeze of a hand, a quick note or email, reminders to me to accept the caring of others have all been provided to me over these past several weeks. Some might say they are simple gestures, and it would be hard to disagree intellectually. But the potency of each one is seared in my memory, clung to in difficult moments.

Gratitude seems like such an inadequate word. There ought to be a powerful word that I can use in its place. I searched the Thesaurus looking for a word of depth, a word of strength that might convey how much all your care and consideration has meant to me, but found nothing even remotely powerful enough. So I am left with no words to truly describe my emotions. I must hope that just as you understood my grief and pain and made efforts to soothe it, that you will understand my abundant gratitude for all you did and gave.

To each of you who knew the words or who struggled to find something to say when words felt insufficient, I thank you for your efforts and the caring. To each of you who thought that words were not necessary, only a hug would do, I thank you for the touch of your heart to mine. For each of you who have asked how I am doing and really meant the question, I appreciate the opportunity to tell you the truth. The loss of a loved one is a difficult time, and I have been told that losing your Mom is one of the hardest. You have all made it easier with your sensitivity, insight, and tenderness, and I shall forever be grateful. I feel blessed to have so many who reached out to me in *philia*. To each of you, thanks for being in my life!

- Judy Clark, President



"Whatever the Question"

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