



advantage

A MIGRATION IS TAKING PLACE

It's happening once again.... the **Tualatin, Oregon** office of HR Answers, Inc. is moving! It's been five years since our last move. While you read this, we should be in the final throes of moving chaos to a building across the street. Yes, we said across the street. While the physical new location is close we still have to pack it all up. Our actual move time is June 13th at 4pm, but our phones will remain open until 5pm. We'll take some time on Monday the 16th to unpack, but we'll still be available to answer your questions and work on your consulting projects.

With this move we will be better able to serve our clients through the addition of two meeting spaces, a much larger training room and a bigger resource library. There will be a host of other improvements and we are looking forward to showing them all to you in the coming months.

We are anxious for all of you to have a chance to visit us and see the new space and amenities, but we'll need a little time to complete our migration and spruce things up a bit. After we get settled in, we'll be inviting everyone to our Open House so be on the lookout for your invitation!

The particulars of our new location are:

7659 SW Mohawk St.
Tualatin, OR 97062
503-885-9815 (stays the same)

For our Washington clients, the Bellevue office will be staying in the same location at 700 108th Ave. NE.

WHO'S GOT YOUR NUMBER(S)?

Remember a few years ago when one of the most widely purchased Christmas gifts was a paper shredder? All your credit card bills and bank statements can now be discarded in little pieces. Think you are safe? Think again!

Theft of employment records has become the top cause of identity fraud, as reported by TransUnion credit reporting agency in 2002. Personnel files are rich sources of Social Security numbers, addresses, benefits information, bank account numbers and other "confidential" information. Unfortunately, theft of employment or payroll records usually affects many employees, not just one. Some victims of identity theft are suing employers for negligence regarding the security of their personnel files.

One of the most disturbing facts about theft of employment records is that the responsible parties are often "insiders" - anyone who has access to paper files or computer data has the means to steal this information. In some cases, thieves may take a temporary job with an organization just to have access to the records. Cleaning staff may be checking the "round files" for those discarded credit card receipts. Stealing co-workers' purses has been a concern in the past, but now thefts are not just limited to money. Bank account information is available in organizations that offer direct deposit of paychecks. ID badges or paperwork that use Social Security numbers also provide easy access to personal information.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the agency responsible for dealing with all forms of fraud, including identity theft. Their 2002 annual report (released in January 2003) indicates that identity theft topped the list of fraud complaints. The number of complaints almost doubled in 2002 (161,819) from 2001 (96,198). To bring these numbers closer to home, 64% of Oregon's 2,200 identity theft complaints involved credit card/bank fraud. The same fraud categories covered 65% of Washington's 3,894 complaints.

The FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection addressed Congress on April 3, 2003, concerning their efforts to control identity theft. They have a toll-free hotline to report identity theft, maintain a repository of identity theft complaints, and provide victim assistance and consumer education. The agency has brought enforcement actions against organizations having inadequate precautions against security lapses, and will soon publish a self-audit guide to help measure the security processes used to manage personal information.

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

The Federal Government and several states have enacted legislation to help protect against identity theft. The most recent federal legislation is the HIPAA Privacy regulations (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) to protect access to health information that includes personal data. California limits uses of Social Security numbers and requires employers to notify employees if there is a computer security breach and records have been accessed without authorization. A 2002 Washington law could make employers liable for identity theft of employee records if the disposal is deemed "careless." The law indicates that destroying personal information, including personnel files, means shredding, erasing, or modifying a record so that identifying information is unreadable.

One of the best ways employers can help prevent identity theft is to develop a formal privacy policy on the maintenance and destruction of employment records for both paper and computer files. Include a response plan in case identity theft does occur. Also, institute or enforce background checks on employees and temps during the hiring process.

For more information on identity theft, see the following websites:

<http://www.ftc.gov>

Federal Trade Commission website for information, news releases, and reports on identity theft and other forms of fraud.

<http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>

The U.S. government's central website, maintained by the Federal Trade Commission, for information about identity theft, including a hotline phone number, online complaint forms, and links to the major credit bureaus.

<http://www.transunion.com/>

TransUnion credit bureau website, that includes information about its Fraud Victim Assistance Department (FVAD) and an online "Information Kit" to help prevent identity theft.

<http://www.victimassistanceofamerica.org/>

Victim's Assistance of America: a nonprofit organization that aggressively addresses the needs of the victims of identity theft in the U.S. (Authored by Barbara Stollberg)

RETAIN YOUR BEST EMPLOYEE STATEMENTS

Telling people "You're doing a great job" isn't going to make them stay with your organization – the statement is not specific enough. Praise can help retain your top employees, but only if it is detailed, relevant, and done immediately. Managers and supervisors need to develop an array of "openers" to keep their praise specific. Adapted from Mark McCormack's Success Secrets, here are a few sentences to get you started:

"You really made a difference by..."

"One of the things I enjoy most about you is..."

"I'm impressed with..."

"You can be proud of yourself for..."

"You got my attention with..."

"We couldn't have done it without your..."

"You're doing top quality work on..."

"What an effective way to..."

"You're right on the mark with..."

"You've made my day because of..."

ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS

For most organizations, job descriptions are the cornerstone of many human resource programs. Job descriptions are used to develop interview questions, build compensation programs, develop performance appraisals and training programs, and may influence other business strategies.

However, these programs are only as good as the job descriptions on which they are based. In addition, the passage and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) increased the importance of job descriptions to organizations with 15 or more employees, becoming a primary vehicle for defining the essential functions and skills required by a position. The result is that job descriptions are becoming more detailed and work specific than they've been in the past, with added emphasis on specific mental and physical requirements for each position.

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.



Depending on its purpose, a job description can be in one of several different formats. The format recommended by HR Answers is designed to help you clearly identify the essential functions and define the specific mental and physical requirements of a position. This job description format includes 10 sections:

- Job Title
- General Position Summary
- Essential Functions/Major Duties
- Secondary Functions
- Job Scope
- Supervisory Responsibility
- Interpersonal Contacts
- Specific Job Skills
- Education/Experience
- Job Conditions

Essential functions are defined as fundamental job duties of the position. Job duties can be identified as essential based on three criteria:

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

These functions are traditionally listed in order of importance (most to least). They are normally short statements that begin with a verb or action word. Typically, there are 8 to 12 functions listed. Whether you are preparing a job description or analyzing a position for ADA accommodations, you need to know the essential functions of that particular job. So, how do you determine what's really essential? Here are some questions to ask:

- Why does the job exist? What does it accomplish for the organization?
This answer is key to what is essential. Think beyond just the duties - have a solid reason for each function.
- Is there a current job description that identifies these functions?
Make sure the job description accurately reflects the position. A collective bargaining agreement (if applicable) may list essential functions.
- How many other employees perform or are able to perform the same function? Could other employees fill in?
It may not be essential for a particular position if several employees do the same thing.
- Does the job require any specialized training or skills?
A function that requires highly specialized skills or training will probably make it essential.
- Does the job require specific physical demands?
Understanding the physical demands of a position is necessary in order to evaluate for an ADA accommodation.
- Is the job performed under certain environmental conditions?
Outdoor work under a variety of weather conditions may be essential for many positions.
- What percentage of the employee's week is spent performing the function?
Generally the relative importance of a function may be determined by the percentage of time spent on it. However, even if the function occurs infrequently there may be serious consequences if it is not performed.
- What would be the consequences if the employee could not perform the function? Would the job be modified or eliminated?
The answer to these two questions is particularly important when evaluating for an ADA accommodation.

Keep in mind that just because an employee performs a particular function during the average workday, it does not mean that function is essential. Many employees perform extra duties that fall outside of their normal scope of work, especially in a downsized environment. Also, essential functions may vary for the same position within an organization depending on the department.

The preceding questions are the basis of a job analysis that provides very specific details about the functions being performed and the amount of time devoted to each. These details can then be used to develop a job description. Job descriptions should be available for every job and used for recruiting, hiring, performance management, and job accommodations. Review the essential functions regularly and revise when necessary.

If you need assistance developing job accommodations, see the Job Accommodation Network (U.S. DOL, Office of Disability Employment Policy) at <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/>. This is a free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the employability of people with disabilities. *(Authored by Barbara Stollberg and Deborah Jeffries, PHR)*

EXPERIENCE LEVEL OF AUDIENCE DETERMINES CONTENT

One sure way to lose the attention of your audience members is to lose sight of the sophistication level of the audience and the appropriate level of presented content. Following are a few suggestions to avoid that mistake.

When your audience is relatively unfamiliar with the material you are presenting:

- Use clear visual aids.
- Emphasize key points and review them using different words.
- Summarize frequently.
- Allow more audience participation by encouraging questions and getting audience members to share their observations and answers.
- Go from the known to the unknown. Start with where the audience is in its skill and knowledge development, then move into material that may be less familiar.
- Offer examples. For your key points, use two to three illustrations, stories, analogies, etc. to drive the points home.
- Think realistically about what can be accomplished in the time available.
- Be aware of your ability to “information overload” your participants.

When your audience has some understanding of the subject:

- Assess your audience in terms of what they know, so that their information can be used as a frame of reference. Usually, this can be done at the very beginning of the program by asking where they believe their level of understanding is, or by asking, “What areas do you want or need to have covered today?” etc.
- Be sure to get feedback during the session so you are sure of the level of comprehension.
- You may not have to cover everything; the program may be better served by just filling in the gaps for participants. You can then be more flexible in the amount and level of information and knowledge of the subject material.
- Eliminate complex discussions unless they are critical to the participants’ comprehension of the material.

For an audience of experts (or near-experts):

- Make sure that, for this level of audience, the material is still practical, relevant and useful. Your audience doesn’t want details with which they are already familiar.
- Take the big-picture approach.
- It is best not to use jargon unless you first clearly define the terms.
- Consider focusing more on an update of what’s new on the subject.

LEGISLATIVE AND LEGAL UPDATES

Oregon amends its UI rules. The Administrative Rules of Oregon’s Employment Department covering unemployment insurance have been amended as follows.

Exemption from coverage. An election not to provide unemployment insurance coverage applies to all corporate officers who are directors of the corporation, have a substantial ownership interest in the corporation, and are members of the same family.

The term “family” now means any two or more related persons. In addition, such an election is not effective unless it is approved by the Director.

Reconsideration of determinations. The Director has added the Assistant Director for Unemployment Insurance and the Supervisor of Special Projects to those individuals with the authority to act for and in the name of the Director regarding reconsideration and correction of determinations of employer subjectivity, tax rates, or tax assessments.

* * * *

Discussion of settlement for Oregon employers. In *Potter v. Schlesser Company, Inc.*, the Oregon Supreme Court recently addressed whether an employee’s attorney could recover money for his fees directly from his client’s employer following a private settlement.

Plaintiff is an attorney who represented a client in a racial discrimination lawsuit. That case resolved after his client and his client’s employer privately settled their dispute for \$12,000 without knowledge of or payment to plaintiff/attorney. Plaintiff sued the settling company pursuant to ORS 87.445 to collect his portion of the settlement proceeds in accordance with the retainer agreement with his client. The trial court concluded that there was no statutory authority for enforcement of attorney liens against third parties when settlement occurs before judgment, and the Court of Appeals affirmed. On review, plaintiff/attorney argued he had standing to bring a claim for payment of his lien against either his client or the company, or both. The company argued that plaintiff/attorney only had a lien claim against his client, who possessed the “proceeds” of the settlement. Reversing, the Oregon Supreme Court rejected the company’s argument and held that ORS 87.445 provides “notice to the world” that an attorney’s lien for fees arises when an action is commenced. Further, applicable statutes establish that an attorney’s lien survives the parties’ settlement. Plaintiff’s lien thus remained a “charge on the action” to which the company was a party, and both the company and plaintiff’s client were legally obligated to satisfy the lien.

Consequently, employers who settle directly with employees should not assume that they can cut the employee’s attorney completely out of the deal. It is possible that the court’s ruling may be applied to disputes that settle following a demand letter by an attorney, but before a lawsuit is filed. To minimize any risk, an employer should evaluate its potential liability for attorney fees when settling with an employee who has retained an attorney. (*Authored by Barran Liebman, attorneys*)

* * * *

Oregon legislative update. The following is a summary of new legislation. As an organization, we encourage you to contact your legislator to voice your support or opposition to these proposed changes in the law. If you’d like more information, please visit www.leg.state.or.us. Special thanks to Randy Sutton at Saalfeld Griggs for this content, www.sglaw.com.

SB 40 HB 2649

The IRS currently uses a 20-factor test to help determine whether a person is an employee or an independent contractor. This legislation would adopt a modified version of the IRS 20-factor test. Status: Passed by the Senate. House work sessions held.

SB 73

This bill would expand OFLA to require additional family leave for K-12 “school activities.” Status: Stuck in the Business & Labor Committee.

SB 284

This bill disqualifies employees who have been terminated for certain drug/alcohol misconduct from receiving unemployment benefits. Status: Referred to Business & Labor Committee. Public hearing held.

SB 406

This bill would prohibit an employer from discriminating against an employee inquiring about or submitting a request for family leave. This bill would codify what is already a “best practice” for avoiding liability. The recent *Denny v. Union Pacific* decision found that OFLA creates a remedy for retaliating against an employee who requests leave. Status: Referred to Business & Labor Committee. Public hearing held.

SB 610

This bill would require certain employers to allow employees who are crime victims to take leave from employment to attend criminal or juvenile proceedings or other proceedings at which crime victims have the right to be present. Status: Referred to Judiciary Committee. Public hearing held.

SB 722

This bill would prohibit smoking in all places of employment, effective July 1, 2005. Status: Referred to Rules Committee. Public hearing held.

HB 2276

This bill would restore compensatory and punitive damages for failure to reinstate/reemploy an injured worker. Following a recent revision to the statutes, these remedies were unintentionally omitted. Status: Passed by the House. Referred to Judiciary Committee of Senate. Public hearing held.

HB 2471

This bill would provide that an employer is not in violation of rules requiring employee rest periods if employee chooses not to take rest period. Status: Stuck in Business, Labor & Consumer Affairs Committee.

HB 2624

This bill would discontinue the annual adjustment of the minimum wage. Currently, the minimum wage is tied to the consumer price index and is adjusted on a yearly basis. Status: Passed by the House. Referred to Business & Labor Committee of the Senate. Public hearing and possible work session scheduled.

HB 3179

This bill would make an otherwise valid noncompetition agreement void and unenforceable if employer lays off the employee. Status: Referred to Judiciary Committee. Public hearing held.

* * * *

Washington clarifies rules for “exempt” employees. An employee who meets the definitions of executive, administrative, or professional employee and who is paid on a salary basis is considered an exempt employee. However, payment of a salary does not in and of itself exempt a worker from minimum wage and overtime requirements.

Salary basis is where an employee regularly receives a predetermined monetary amount consisting of all or part of his or her compensation for each pay period of one week or longer (but not to exceed one month). The salary may not be subject to deductions for variations in the quantity or quality of the work performed. Salaried employees may receive additional compensation or paid time off and still be considered exempt.

If an employee performs no work in a particular week, regardless of the circumstances, the employer may deduct for the entire week. In addition, an employer may make deductions (in full day increments) when an employee takes at least a whole day off for personal reasons other than sickness or accident. Deductions for absences due to sickness or disability may be made in full day increments if the deduction is made according to the employer’s bona fide plan, policy, or practice of providing paid sick and disability leave. Deductions are permitted when leave is exhausted or the employee has not yet qualified under the plan. In addition, deductions are permitted even if an employee receives compensation under that plan or under workers’ compensation laws.

If an employee is eligible for leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, deductions may be made for partial day absences due to leave taken according to that law. In the first and final week of employment, an employee’s salary may be prorated for the actual days worked. Deductions are allowed for disciplinary absences that are imposed for violations of safety rules of major significance, but only include those relating to the prevention of serious danger to the plant, the public, or other employees.

Generally, deductions are not permitted for partial days of work. Deductions are not permitted for lack of work for any amount of time less than a full week. Deductions are not permitted when the employee participates in jury duty, acts as a witness, or takes temporary military leave if the employee performs any work during that week. The employer may, however, offset any amounts received by an employee as jury or witness fees or military pay. In addition, deductions are not permitted for absences due to sickness or disability if the employer does not have a bona fide plan, policy, or practice in place for sick or disability leave.

A limited window of correction will be permitted when an improper deduction is shown to be infrequent and inadvertent and the employer immediately begins taking corrective steps to promptly resolve the improper deduction. Such corrections will be allowed only to the extent that the deduction is not due to lack of work or part of a pattern of the same or substantially similar deductions.

Deductions may be made from compensatory time in any increment. Deductions may be made from bona fide leave banks in partial or full day increments. However, partial day deductions may be made only on the express or implied request of the employee for time off from work. Leave bank deductions may not be made for less than one hour.

A “bona fide leave bank” is a benefit provided to employees in the case of absence from work due to sickness or personal time off, including vacation. It must be in writing and contained in a contract or agreement, or in a written policy that is distributed to employees. A leave bank policy, or a leave bank provision in a contract or agreement, is not “bona fide” if it is used as a subterfuge to circumvent or evade the requirements of the regulations. Generally, when leave banks are exhausted, deductions from salary may not be made. *(Content from CCH)*

ARE YOU SUFFERING FROM EMPLOYEE DISCONTENT?

There are clues to look for to determine whether your employees are unhappy and likely to leave your organization. Fortunately you can use those clues to turn the situation around. Here are some warning signs to pay attention to, and ideas for dealing with each one:

WARNING SIGN	ANTIDOTE
<p>Employees...</p> <p>...rarely participate in meetings</p> <p>...show a lack of creativity or innovation</p> <p>...start to form cliques</p> <p>...rush out the door at closing time</p> <p>...seldom smile or laugh</p> <p>...don't share their personal lives</p> <p>...stay away from the manager</p>	<p>Here's one thing you can do:</p> <p>Rotate the leadership for each meeting so that every employee has the opportunity to run a meeting.</p> <p>Designate a specific time to brainstorm and discuss new ideas.</p> <p>Arrange interdepartmental get-togethers to help employees become better acquainted.</p> <p>Recognize people who have stayed late or put out extra effort to complete a project or achieve a company goal.</p> <p>Cultivate an atmosphere of fun in the workplace with a joke board where people can post cartoons and funny stories.</p> <p>Set the example by talking about your own life outside of work – e.g., what you did over the weekend, where you plan to go on vacation.</p> <p>Ask yourself what you're doing to discourage communication: Do you become angry when you hear about mistakes? Do you frequently use sarcasm?</p>

EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND PLACEMENT PROGRAM

We are continuing the theme of the older workforce by presenting information about a service through AARP, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor. This program provides temporary work for low-income individuals aged 55 and older with local nonprofit community organizations (host agencies). Here they receive training to develop skills while searching for permanent jobs and working with a local SCSEP project director to locate permanent full or part-time positions.

Eligible applicants receive on-the-job training for at least 20 hours per week at a host agency. The applicants benefit not only by getting paid work experience, but also by improving job skills and receiving additional training, an updated resume, paid sick leave, paid holidays, a yearly physical exam, and a one-year AARP membership.

How can this service benefit you as an employer?

- It provides a valuable resource for identifying skilled job applicants who are motivated to work.
- The applicants are available and able to fill a variety of positions from entry level on up.

- The program is a free referral service.
- It conveniently provides access to qualified job applicants with the right mix of skills, experience, and job ethics, which will save time and money on recruitment activities.

In addition to direct placement, the service offers an Employer Incentive Program. This program is provided on a limited basis and will pay 100% of wages, workers compensation, and unemployment insurance during a specified training period.

The program also benefits the community organizations that serve as hosts by providing additional workers. According to the AARP website, these organizations receive “nearly 8 million hours of community service” through the temporary training assignments. The host agencies may be daycare centers, hospitals, libraries, senior centers, public works agencies, or other social services.

The SCSEP has 90 project sites in 31 states and Puerto Rico. If your organization has positions to fill, see below for the SCSEP offices in Oregon and Washington. Sorry Alaska, there are no offices in your area yet.

OREGON

Portland, Oregon (serving Multnomah & Clackamas county)

Daisy Rush, SCSEP Project Director

4601 SE Belmont, Suite #104

Portland, OR 97215

(503) 231-8078

(503) 231-0480 (FAX)

scportlandor@aol.com

Salem, Oregon (serving Marion and Polk county)

Daisy Rush, SCSEP Project Director

724 Hawthorne Avenue NE

Salem, OR 97301

(503) 362-1572

(503) 362-4734 (FAX)

scsalem@aol.com

WASHINGTON

Spokane, Washington (serving Adams, Spokane, Whitman, and Lincoln counties)

Steve Reiter, SCSEP Project Director

1801 West Broadway, Suite #110

Spokane, WA 99201-1874

(509) 325-7712/7483

(509) 325-7729 (FAX)

scsreiter@aol.com

Seattle, Washington (serving King, Kitsap, and Snohomish counties)

Steve Reiter, SCSEP Project Director

1511 Third Avenue, Suite #815

Seattle, WA 98101

(206) 624-6698 (& TTY)

(206) 624-6699 (FAX)

scsep047@aol.com

Yakima, Washington (serving Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Kittitas, and Yakima counties)

Steve Cook, Area IX Manager

410 West Chestnut Avenue

Yakima, WA 98902-2652

(509) 248-6736

(509) 248-4410 (FAX)

scyakimawa@aol.com

For additional information and other states with project sites see the AARP website <http://www.aarp.org>. Go to “Money & Work” for information on SCSEP.

THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

Integrity

The soul is dyed the color of its thoughts. Think only on those things that are in line with your principles and can bear the full light of day. The content of your character is your choice. Day by day, what you choose, what you think, and what you do is who you become. Your integrity is your destiny . . . it is the light that guides your way.

— Heraclitus

The straight-and-narrow path would be wider if people used it.

— Kay Ingram

Achievement

Greatness is not in where we stand, but in what direction we are moving. We must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it - but sail we must, and not drift, nor lie at anchor.

— Oliver Wendell Holmes

Life does not require that we be the biggest or the best. It asks only that we try.

— Unknown

I could not, at any age, be content to take my place by the fireside and simply look on. Life was meant to be lived. Curiosity must be kept alive. One must never, for whatever reason, turn his back on life.

— Eleanor Roosevelt

Humility

In order to keep a true perspective of one's importance, everyone should have a dog that will worship him and a cat that will ignore him.

— Dereke Bruce

When people ask me if I have any spare change, I tell them I have it at home in my spare wallet.

— Nick Arnette

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.

JUNE

International People Skills, National Candy, National Rose, and Gay and Lesbian Pride Month

June 13 HRA Tualatin Office - Moving Out Day!

June 16 HRA Tualatin Office - Moving In Day!

June 14 Flag Day

June 15 Father's Day

June 18 National Splurge Day

June 21 First Day of Summer

June 22-28 National Cheese Week

June 23-27 Take Your Pet to Work Week

June 24 HRA Workshop - Puget Sound
One-on-One Coaching Techniques
8:30 – 12 noon

JULY

July 4 HRA Offices Closed

July 10 HRA Worksop - Tualatin
Conducting Effective HR Investigations
8:30 - 12 noon

ON MY SOAPBOX

It was a whirlwind, a hectic mass of service providers and “delegates” (HR Executives) changing places every 25 minutes. While this may not necessarily be the description that Richmond Events would choose for its matchmaking affair, it is nonetheless an accurate statement. Let me start at the beginning.

Richmond Events hosts an annual activity that puts potential HR Executives interested in purchasing services or products, on a luxury ocean liner for two and a half days with providers who offer those same services and products. They send out profiles on the potential buyers and sellers scheduled to be on board, about 450 people in total, and ask both parties who they want to meet with. Next, they schedule meetings between willing partners, beginning at 7:30 in the morning and ending at 10:00 in the evening. Except for appointments at meals, the meetings are only 25 minutes in length. In order to ensure maximum attendance at the appointments, the spa, pool, shops, casino, and all other attractions on board are closed during appointment times. Just imagine, a setting like an upscale vacation, but it's all about work.

The trip was both exhilarating and grueling – 43 appointments in two days. I met some great and very interesting HR Executives and service providers. They listen well and ask terrific questions. They are decisive and willing to purchase products or services that will assist their organizations in achieving business objectives. I also discovered some things they didn't tell us in the brochure, such as that many HR professionals like blackjack, wine, and, judging by the sounds around me, laughing a lot. They stay up late, often after 2:00 a.m., and engage in conversation with strangers easily.

We were there to promote our HR Flipcards. There was nothing else like this product on board, and they caused a great deal of conversation. I even had other service providers stopping by my table to talk about how HR Flipcards might help them. That felt very affirming. The interest level was high, and it looks as though we'll have substantial orders as a result of this event.

We have never participated in anything like this previously; in fact until a couple of years ago, I was unfamiliar with the concept. Now, having experienced it, I am a huge fan for one particular reason. Everyone in life is a “buyer” and a “seller.” We are all trying to market ourselves as competent and capable. We work to make positive impressions on others, which is nothing less than “selling.” We want people to “buy” that we know what we are doing, that we are the best option for a job or an assignment. Purchasing is an almost daily operation for us. Whether it is clothes, food, or household items, to say nothing of purchasing for work, we routinely make buying decisions.

This was power shopping for HR. The buyers and sellers knew their roles and everyone was there for the express purpose of exchanging information designed to achieve a sales transaction. In a strange way, it took the pressure off all of us. Everyone was congenial, warm and interested in both the service/product and the person. What a grand way to make a living – talking to people who want to know how you can help them achieve their goals. Exhausting, yes – satisfying, you bet!

- Judy Clark, President



“Whatever the Question”

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

WWW.HRNORTHWEST.COM

WWW.HRANSWERS.COM