



# advantage

## NOT-FOR-PROFIT SALARY SURVEY

HR Northwest is pleased to once again offer our annual Not-for-Profit Benefit and Salary Survey for Washington and Oregon. The survey covers positions typically found in non-profit organizations, with results published by geographic area, organization size and budget. The average salary range minimum, midpoint and maximum, a weighted average, and high and low rates are also reported. Benefit information includes both insured and voluntary programs. A discounted rate of \$145 is being offered to participants and a rate of \$200 to non-participants. If you think you are interested in purchasing the survey this year, please contact Lon Southard or Jennifer Sheets, at 503/885-9815. You may also reach them by e-mail at the following addresses: [lsouthard@hrnorthwest.com](mailto:lsouthard@hrnorthwest.com) or [jsheets@hrnorthwest.com](mailto:jsheets@hrnorthwest.com). As always, we appreciate your referrals to organizations that might benefit from this information.

## COACHING: THREE REASONS WHY IT'S SO HOT (PART 3)

*By Ray Redburn Ph.D.*

Business coaching and the broader field of coaching is *the* organizational phenomenon of the past decade. Business or executive coaching is one of the many high profile applications of coaching. Other coaching specialties include such traditional applications as sports performance improvement, physical conditioning and weight loss, couples coaching, money coaching, learning coaching and even coaching for coaches. Expect these micro-niches for coaches to continue to proliferate. This leads us to the interesting question of why this new field has seemingly exploded on the scene.

Commentaries on the coaching boom focus on the supply side rather than the demand side. A myopic perspective of this looks only at the numerous training programs and their self interest in furthering a field from which they profit. These articles also look at the large number of therapists who want to escape the challenges of dealing with managed care. Others, particularly therapist critics of coaching, see it as a fad that has caught on because it has the appearance of delivering a "quick fix" compared to the relatively longer process of most psychological therapy. Generally coaching is "brief work," delivered in 6 to 15 hour sessions with some clients having occasional follow-up appointments. Most therapy programs are much lengthier.

The many pundits who have weighed in with coaching commentaries seemed to have missed a rather obvious point, especially given the reality that we live and work in a capitalist economy. The supply side explanation may have made sense in a socialist economy where the government mandated the use of coaches. But it is downright silly in the U.S. The overwhelming reason that coaching is growing almost exponentially is that people want it and are willing to pay. The real question is what is it that the customers of coaching (individual clients and the employing organizations that pay for many coaching clients) find so attractive?

**Reason #1 Strengths-based approach.** Most coaching looks at identifying a client's strengths and working with them to achieve a desired goal. With a focus on solutions rather than challenges, a client loses little time or energy feeling inadequate or dwelling on "what's wrong" and the negative and discouraging energy that can produce. Put simply, clients can positively work toward their goal, rather than be on the defensive trying to explain why they are right or okay.

**Reason #2 Results, not process focused.** While most coaches do have a process, their attention is on results, not process. With a language and practice that deals in action, goal achievement and results, coaching speaks the mother tongue of American business. Decision makers are willing to buy coaching results for themselves or other key contributors; they are most impatient with traditional psychological process approaches.

**Reason #3 Clients don't resist a stigma.** Two interesting facts say volumes about the recent millions of new coaching clients. Seventy percent of therapy clients are women, whereas 60% of coaching clients are men. In addition to the athletic sounding name that coaching carries, it may be that men find it attractive because it doesn't sound like their mental health is



in question or that they will be seen as vulnerable. Also, it is much easier for people to talk about going to “my coach” (some even brag) than to tell others about going to a mental health professional.

Coaching's strength-based approach to helping clients achieve definite goals is continuing to attract new individuals and businesses that are willing to pay for results. Coupling that with the cache of having one's own “personal coach,” we can expect coaching to continue to ride a rising tide. In next month's article we will provide some pointers on how to select a coach for yourself or other key contributors in your organization.

## TOP-TEN REASONS PEOPLE QUIT THEIR JOBS

Good employees quit for many different reasons, most of which are preventable. From our years of experience as consultants, we've identified the following list of reasons why people leave their jobs:

1. Management demands that one person do the jobs of two or more people, resulting in longer days and weekend work.
2. Management cuts back on administrative help, forcing professional workers to use their time copying, stapling, collating, filing and performing other clerical duties.
3. Management puts a freeze on raises and promotions when an employee can easily find a job earning 20-30% more somewhere else.
4. Management doesn't allow the rank and file to make decisions or allow them pride of ownership. One website visitor commented in an e-mail, “Forget about the ‘professional’ decisions, how about when you can't even select the company's holiday card without the President rejecting it for one of his own taste?”
5. Management constantly reorganizes, shuffles people around and changes direction.
6. Management doesn't have or take the time to clarify goals and decisions. Therefore, it rejects work after it was completed, damaging the morale and esteem of those who prepared it.
7. Management shows favoritism and gives some workers better offices, trips to conferences, etc.
8. Management relocates the offices to another location, forcing employees to quit or double their commute.
9. Management promotes someone who lacks training and/or necessary experience to supervise, alienating staff and driving away good employees.
10. Management creates a rigid structure and then allows departments to compete against each other, while at the same time preaching teamwork and cooperation.

It is sad to note that all of the above are “management” based. It is also worth noting that many of these high-turnover factors are preventable. Our work with clients confirms the truth that, “Employees don't quit their jobs, rather, they quit their bosses.” Some surveys report that 35% of respondents answered “yes” to the question, “*Was the attitude of your direct supervisor/manager the primary factor in your quitting a previous job?*” Soft management skills (people skills) are a critical element in battling high turnover and creating a high-retention workforce, or what some call “retentionship.”

## MAKE YOUR CO-WORKERS LOVE YOU

Offices are like mini-families. Co-workers spend up to 11 hours a day in close proximity, sharing the same office space, facilities, break rooms, refrigerators, coffee pots. Everyone shares responsibility for making the organization work, run smoothly and stay profitable. They arrive together, take breaks together, eat lunch together, meet to solve problems together, and

---

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](mailto:djeffries@hrnorthwest.com).



finally, at the end of the day, head off to their “real” homes. All this closeness and familiarity can wear thin at times, just like in real families. Here are some tips to make interacting with co-workers a delightful experience and boost job satisfaction.

- If you’ve used the last piece of paper in the copier or printer, fill it back up.
- After you’ve drained the coffeepot, make another pot for the next person.
- After completing the copy job for 125 sets of 1.25X enlargements, double-sided, stapled in the left-hand corner, reset the copy machine to the “normal” settings.
- Resist the urge to bring the leftover fried catfish from last night’s dinner and heat it up in the lunchroom’s microwave. It may have smelled great last night, but not everyone will appreciate the aroma for the rest of the afternoon.
- Be responsible for your leftover lunches, snacks, water bottles, condiments, soda cans, etc, that jam up the communal refrigerator. Before your leftovers sprout green fuzz, toss them.
- Set up a schedule to read and respond to your e-mail, voice mails and faxes several times each day. Avoid overloading the office Intranet with junk e-mail and jokes as well as cartoons or graphics that take a lot of time to download.
- Show your co-workers that you value their time and contributions by making the most of yours. Instead of cruising the office or catching up on the latest office gossip, get busy on your piece of the group project, tomorrow’s team meeting, or the stack of work in your in-box.

## WAKE UP CALL!

*By Barbara Stollberg*

A number of disasters have been reported and horror stories told about incidents that were caused by fatigue. Four major ones familiar to most people are Exxon Valdez, Chernobyl, Three Mile Island and Bophal. The costs of such accidents can be astronomical, and not just in dollars.

Accidents due to fatigue of shift workers have been well documented. It has been reported that night shift employees are 40 times more likely to have accidents at work, at home, and while driving than day shift workers. Nine-to-five workers are not immune; many also suffer from sleep deprivation. Fatigue can result in decreased concentration, memory, communication and decision making skills. The work environment may contribute to the problem by instituting shift work that fights natural circadian rhythms, excessive overtime, high stress, and even repetitive or boring work. It can become a vicious cycle—sleeplessness negatively affects job performance, stress management, decision making and problem solving while the physical and mental stress of a job often lead to sleeplessness.

Studies find there are three categories of employees who don’t get adequate sleep:

1. Those who choose not to get enough sleep due to high intensity or late night activities. There is a tendency to burn the candle at both ends.
2. Those who want to get enough sleep, but can’t due to uncontrollable interruptions such as children.
3. Those who have a sleeping disorder.

The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) survey indicates that:

- 43% of respondents report that fatigue interferes with daily activities a few days or more each month.
- 27% feel sleepy on the job two or more days per week.
- 8% either occasionally or frequently fall asleep at work.

There is a misunderstanding that less sleep must mean a person is more productive. Not true. Employers should be aware that employees’ lack of adequate sleep may result in increased healthcare and worker’s compensation costs from accidents and injuries, increased absenteeism from illness, lower productivity and product quality which reduces profits, and poor customer service (tired employees may simply not care).



Consider these other sleep statistics:

- At least 50% of the adult American population is chronically sleep deprived, according to Dr. James Maas, professor of psychology at Cornell University.
- According to NSF, fatigue in the workplace costs American businesses \$77 billion per year.
- The National Commission on Sleep Disorders (NCSD) estimates that businesses lose over \$150M due to lost productivity resulting from employee fatigue.
- A 1995 article in *Safety & Health* reported on a nine-year study in California that indicated people who slept 6 hours or less each night had a 70% higher mortality rate than those who slept 7-8 hours.

Often people who are fatigued aren't aware of it. The word microsleep is used when people fall asleep for a second or two without realizing it. The brain actually enters a sleep state even though the individual is performing wake-time activities. Microsleep may even occur when a person's eyes are open. Many drivers who survived accidents after falling asleep at the wheel say they didn't feel tired at the time. A full 8 hours is recommended for optimum physical and mental health.

The industries most associated with shift work are healthcare, railroad, trucking, aviation, motor coach and some manufacturing facilities. Legislation to limit shift hours has been introduced by professional organizations, the U.S. Congress and some federal and state agencies.

There are steps organizations can do to address fatigue, which include:

1. Evaluate work schedules to determine which allow a high level of safety and low rate of fatigue.
2. Identify the most hazardous jobs and note safety requirements. Monitor employees in those positions.
3. Provide adequate lighting and air circulation to reduce fatigue.
4. Structure the work environment to be ergonomically designed to reduce physical stress.
5. Introduce fatigue management into wellness programs.
6. Include training on how to reduce the risk of fatigue as part of health and wellness programs.
7. Encourage exercise or stretching activities during work breaks.
8. Allow naps during the day.

Yes, that's right, naps! Even if they aren't allowed, employees may be found napping in the bathroom, break room, lunchroom, their cars or even at their desks. A survey by the NSF reports that 16% of employees said their employers allowed napping. A NASA study found that a 40-minute nap improved pilot performance by 34% and alertness by 100%. Even a simple 20-minute nap can refresh employees.

The best step, by far, is to get the necessary 8 hours of sleep, so go home tonight and catch some zzzz's.

Resources for more information:

- Circadian Technologies Inc. [www.circadian.com](http://www.circadian.com) A leading international research and consulting firm specializing in optimizing the 24/7 workforce. They offer a free download of *Shiftwork Practices 2000*.
- National Center on Sleep Disorders (National Institutes of Health) [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/) A government-support sleep research, training and educational organization.
- National Sleep Foundation [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org) A nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve public health and safety through understanding of sleep and sleep disorders.
- Power Sleep [www.powersleep.org/powersleep.htm](http://www.powersleep.org/powersleep.htm) Web site by Dr. James Maas, professor of psychology at Cornell University, and author of *Power Sleep: The Revolutionary Program That Prepares Your Mind for Peak Performance* (Random House and Harper Collins). The site includes a sleep diagnostic test and other helpful sleep resources.



## THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

"If we all did the things we are capable of, we would literally astound ourselves."

-Thomas Edison

"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

"The dream is real, my friends. The failure to make it work is the unreality."

-Toni Cade Bambara

"I am beginning to learn that it is the sweet, simple things of life which are the real ones after all."

-Laura Ingalls Wilder

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than success, than what other people think, say or do. It is more important than appearance, gift or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...the only thing we can do is play on the string we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitudes."

-Charles Swindoll

"Honesty is the cornerstone of all success, without which confidence and ability to perform shall cease to exist."

-Mary Kay Ash

"I try to avoid looking forward or backward, and try to keep looking upward."

-Charlotte Bronte

## THE LEGAL CORNER

Discrimination litigation? Computer screen saver policies? As most of you know, computer screen savers are graphics or text images that are programmed to appear on a computer monitor during periods of inaction. Although the true purpose behind screen savers is to reduce the unnecessary wear and tear on the computer monitor while an employee leaves their desk or talks on the telephone, screen savers have evolved from a work tool to an outlet for employee expression in the workplace. Some employees personalize their screen savers to relay messages to passersby such as "At Lunch – Be Back at 1:00 PM," while others download pictures of pets, children, animation, etc. to personalize their workspace. What appears to be harmless, however, can lead to litigation.

In December 2001, the case of St. Joseph's Hospital vs. the National Labor Relations Board ("Labor Board"), was presented with an "issue of first impression" and held that an employer violated the National Labor Relations Act ("Act") by prohibiting an employee from displaying a union-related screen saver message on her computer. Specifically, during the budding stages of a union organizing drive by the United Food and Commercial Workers Union to organize the hospital's nurses, nurse Patricia Elalem programmed a screen saver "Look for the U" on the monitor in her workstation. Her supervisor issued a written warning to her for displaying "union-related" content and further advised that "bulletin boards and screen savers are hospital property and it is inappropriate to post pro union messages on hospital property...."

As a result, the Labor Board found two violations of the Act. First, the Labor Board found that the hospital discriminatorily prohibited the employee from displaying a union-related screen saver. The evidence established that the hospital routinely permitted the nurses to display a wide variety of personal, non-work screen saver messages. These messages included "Go Buccaneers," "Go FSU," "Be Positive" and "Have a Nice Day." Second, the Labor Board held that the hospital discriminated against the employee by issuing a written warning to her for exercising her protected right to engage in union activity.

The Labor Board's holdings in St. Joseph's Hospital may foreshadow a greater change in the American workplace than ensuring compliance with the Act. The absence of a policy restricting the contents of screen savers or an organization's failure



to enforce an otherwise valid screen saver policy may lead to litigation and the potential for litigation is immeasurable. What if an employee displays a picture of his wife in a revealing swimsuit on his screen? Will that lead to claims of a sexually hostile work environment? What if another employee displays a religious message? Can there be a race discrimination claim against your organization for permitting the screen saver chosen by a Caucasian, but prohibiting the screen saver used by an African-American? The real question is whether your organization is ready to respond to screen saver issues.

Therefore, employers should consider whether they have an existing policy prohibiting employees using personal screen savers or restricting their content, or if the organization permits its employees to post whatever graphics and text they desire on company-owned computers.

These questions address the fundamental issue of whether an organization is vulnerable to attack by a disgruntled employee who claims to have a right to use a personalized screen saver. But having a valid policy does not mean that you are shielded from potential liability. Implementation of a screen saver policy is one thing; nondiscriminatory enforcement is another. If you have a policy, check to see if it is enforced, and if so, if it is done in a non-discriminatory manner. As in St. Joseph's Hospital, the employer permitted employees to use personal screen savers and violated the law by attempting to restrict the content of another employee's screen saver.

Generally, employment policies should be drafted to cover all possible situations and be further tailored to meet an organization's specific concerns. The simplest form of a screen saver policy, however, is to completely prohibit the use of customized screen savers. Therefore, the employer can implement and enforce a zero tolerance policy. Although certain employees may feel that the policy is harsh and restricts their ability to personalize their workstations, it removes the possible arguments (and litigation) over discriminatory enforcement. If an employer is looking to be viewed as "more friendly," it can implement a less restrictive policy that specifically sets forth the types of permissible screen savers. However, be advised that permitting certain screen savers and not others has the potential to open the door for a myriad of discrimination claims.

As the workplace evolves and becomes more computer dependent, it is important for organizations to be proactive by implementing and enforcing policies addressing the use of technology. In this regard, organizations should also have e-mail and Internet policies. The Labor Board has also addressed an employee's right to use the organization's e-mail system for union organizing when the organization does not expressly restrict employee use of the system. Depending on your organizational culture you may want to consider drafting an e-mail/Internet policy.

**Federal Data Quality Act.** This law will require government agencies to ensure the quality of the data they use when issuing new rules, regulations and studies. Organizations that believe federal regulations are costly and based on inaccurate data are cheering, and some are upset because they believe this strikes a blow to public access to information. Either way, for the first time, those who desire can challenge the data used in formulating government regulations instead of challenging the law.

The law states that agencies must provide a way for groups affected by the data to contest it if they believe it to be unsound or untrue. In order to ask for a correction, the person or group must be identified as one who is affected by the information. If the agency refuses to correct the information, the affected party can sue.

One area where HR professionals will be impacted immediately will be for those employers with Affirmative Action Plans. With the design of the EEO File from the Census 2000 data files matching US Census rules for designating multiple-race categories will see one result. If the concerned agencies decide to continue using existing single-race categories for affirmative action purposes there will be a different result. In any case, it's possible the outcome will be challenged by someone or some organization. **This law goes into effect October 1, 2002.**

**IRS, Treasury Dept. set 2002-03 goals.** The IRS set an ambitious to-do-list of projects for the coming months, releasing 250 items on which they plan to issue formal guidance during 2002-2003.

Regarding employee plans and executive compensation, IRS will mull over:

- guidance on the definition of a highly-compensated employee;
- rules on compensation expense deductions relating to stock options outstanding at the time of a corporate buyout;
- guidance on non-statutory stock options converted to nonqualified deferred compensation; and
- guidance on employment taxes with respect to incentive stock options and employee stock purchase plans.

Although this year's list is shorter than last, it is laden with issues dealing with executive compensation, after several corporations bottomed-out financially yet top brass left with generous pay and bonus packages.



## LEGAL OUTLOOK

by Terri Ano, Ph.D., SPHR

There have been some landmark cases in the news lately and these cases have provided some lessons to be learned. Here is one attorney firm's approach to some of these cases:

**Armstrong v. Rogue Federal Credit Union** (Used a no-call, no-show policy to terminate an injured worker because the claim was initially found non-compensable under worker's comp program – the claim was later found to be compensable.)

Lesson Learned:

- Don't include injured workers in a no-call, no-show policy.
- Be sure you can support non-reinstatement all the way through a court hearing.
- If leave runs concurrently with FMLA, you can't terminate employment if the employee fails to return to light duty.

**U.S. Airways v. Barnett** (Series of seniority "bumps" lead to the lay off of a disabled employee who had "bumped" into the position. The employee claimed that the position was given as a reasonable accommodation, but the court determined that the seniority system prevailed.)

Lesson Learned:

- If you want to use the seniority system to prevail over a reasonable ADA accommodation situation, it must be used very consistently. If exceptions are sometimes made, you will likely be asked to make an exception in an ADA case.

**Chevron v. Eschazabal** (This case concerned whether and to what extent an employer is required to let an employee work at a job that will lead to his/her death – sometimes called the death wish case.)

Lesson Learned:

- You must consider both the ADA and OSHA regulations when making a decision in this type of situation. An organization has duties under both and these must be balanced with regard to employee safety.
- Be sure to obtain physician documentation to support your decision. You do not want a jury to be making this type of decision.

## ON THE BOOKSHELF

Many of our clients like to come in and use our Resource Library to do research work on their own. We are continually adding resources to our library to help keep us, and you, current with good information and resources. Please remember that you can "rent" the Library (Tualatin location only) for research and development of your own HR knowledge, materials and training programs. Give us a call at 503-885-9815 for further information. Our newest additions to the Library include:

Bolman, Lee and Terrance Deal. ***Leading with Soul: An uncommon journey of spirit.*** Jossey-Bass, 2001

This revised edition of a 1995 book includes insights into the new workforce and the changing nature of work. Included is a parable of a dispirited leader who discovers the true meaning of leadership by rediscovering his soul.

Galpin, Timothy J. and Mark Herndon. ***The Complete Guide to Mergers and Acquisitions: Process tools to support M & A integration at every level.*** Jossey-Bass, Inc., 2000.

The authors provide a blueprint for the planning and efficient integration of organizations to minimize the negative results of such things as declining market share, profits or failed transactions.

McKenna, Patrick J. and David H. Maister. ***First Among Equals: How to manage a group of professionals.*** The Free Press, 2002.

Described as a "playbook," the authors provide examples, self-evaluation materials and advice on day-to-day management issues faced by leaders of professionals. Lessons will provide insights and assistance to leaders to help inspire professional staff to reach their full potential.



## **Training Roleplay — Terminations that Result in Lawsuits.** BLR Special Report.

A report that uses 10 hypothetical lawsuits filed by employees who were terminated. It allows readers to test their knowledge and try to predict the outcome.

Clemente, Mark N. and David S. Greenspan. **Winning at Mergers and Acquisitions: A guide to market-focused planning and integration.** John Wiley & Sons, 1998.

This guide provides assistance and tools to successfully implement M & A activities. It shows managers how to minimize the impact of a merger on employees and achieve financial and strategic benefits quickly and efficiently. The authors include personal examples of best and worst practices, as well as charts, checklists, templates, graphs and other tools.

Dudik, Evan. **Strategic Renaissance: New Thinking and Innovative Tools to Create Great Corporate Strategies Using Insights from History and Science.** AMACON, 2000.

The author presents case studies and models of breakthrough corporate strategies based on scientific, philosophical and military concepts applied with political and business history.

Kleiman, Mel. **267 Hire Tough Proven Interview Questions for Hiring the Best Hourly Employees.** Humetrics, Inc. 1999.

This 44-page booklet contains interview questions designed to elicit specific information about a job candidate's skills, experiences and attitudes to help avoid hiring mistakes.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The federal government has just expanded the services available at the [GovBenefits.gov](http://GovBenefits.gov) site to provide access to 30 additional benefit programs from 10 agencies through the Internet portal. This is all part of the President's e-government initiative about promoting efficiency and eliminating red tape.

Some 13,000 users access the site daily to get information about and enroll in government programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and children's health insurance programs. The Department of Labor expanded its offerings on the site to include employment and training assistance programs along with access to unemployment benefits, youth education and job training services.

A screening tool asks basic questions about income, marital and employment status and family size to help users assess eligibility for government services. Eligible visitors may quickly and easily enroll in government programs via the portal.

\* \* \* \*

Statistics show nearly one in four adults currently cares for an elderly loved one, and their numbers are growing. New research by the [Kaiser Family Foundation](http://Kaiser Family Foundation) finds that employer assistance will become increasingly important for larger numbers of employees as the caregiving burden falls on the baby boom generation.

The Kaiser Foundation found most caregivers (68%) are assisting close family members (parents, grandparents or a spouse). The majority of them are under age 45 (54%), work full-time (53%) and are married (60%). Forty percent of care recipients cannot afford professional care, yet nearly half of caregivers (49%) have incomes under \$35,000 and may not be able to help out financially.

With the number of Americans over age 65 increasing five to eight times faster than the working-age population, the number of caregivers will inevitably increase. Acknowledging the need, employers are trying to assist employees as much as possible with programs like eldercare teleconference seminars and an Elder Care Fair, where employees could gather information from vendors.

Most caregivers, however, just need more flexibility in their schedules, which has prompted many employers to expand work/life benefits to accommodate them

\* \* \* \*

Parents with children under age 18 represented nearly two-thirds (74%) of the workforce in 1999, according to the latest available statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. With this baby boom has come a louder cry for childcare assistance and other benefit programs, and many employers are responding.

A report by BLS economists, "Childcare Benefits Continue to Evolve," finds almost 14% of all employees and 45.8% of workers at large firms had access to child care resource and referral services in 2000, compared to just 1% in 1985.



According to the 2002 Benefits Survey by the Society for Human Resource Management, 20% of employers offer child care referrals, and 11% have on-site or company-supported childcare facilities. Busy working parents are taking advantage, as childcare referral services are the second most-used work/life benefit (81%).

In soft economic times with abounding job and benefit cuts, such benefits are even more important to employers, says Jodi Grant, director of the National Partnership for Women and Families. "Employers know how important it is to keep quality people, especially when they have to let others go. So they work to maintain those benefits, and it's worth the cost to keep good people."

## 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.*

### SEPTEMBER

Cholesterol Education, Classical Music, Health in Aging, Library Card Sign-Up and National Honey Month

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| September 2         | Labor Day  |
| September 5         | Be Late for Something Day  |
| September 6         | Rosh Hashana   |
| September 8         | National Grandparents Day  |
| September 13        | Blame Someone Else Day   |
| September 15        | Yom Kippur   |
| <b>September 11</b> | <b>HRN Breakfast Briefing – Portland</b><br><b>What's Hot What's Not in Compensation</b><br><b>7:30 – 9:30am</b> |
| <b>September 12</b> | <b>HRN Workshop - Portland</b><br><b>Leading People at Work</b><br><b>8:30 - 12 noon</b>                         |
| <b>September 18</b> | <b>HRN Workshop - Willamette Valley(Salem)</b><br><b>Mentoring in the Workplace</b><br><b>8:30 - 12 noon</b>     |
| September 23        | Good Neighbor Day  |
| <b>September 24</b> | <b>HRN Workshop - Puget Sound</b><br><b>Recruitment Strategies</b><br><b>8:30 - 12 noon</b>                      |
| September 27        | Native American Day  |

### OCTOBER

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| October 1-6                   | Customer Service Week   |
| <b>October 8, 15 &amp; 22</b> | <b>HRN Workshop - Puget Sound</b><br><b>Beginning Supervision I-III</b><br><b>8:30 - 12 noon each day</b>   |
| <b>October 10</b>             | <b>Special HRN Workshop - Portland</b><br><b>No to Low Cost High Return Benefits</b><br><b>for Employees Featuring a panel of</b><br><b>experts with ideas on low cost benefits.</b><br><b>8:30 - 12 noon</b> |



## ON MY SOAPBOX

As an HR consulting firm, our typical challenges are matching staffing to projects, keeping up with compliance requirements, balancing our internal needs with the needs of our clients, etc. This last 12 months have provided us an interesting and demanding difference.

As many of you know, we have designed a variety of ways to utilize our HR proficiency. In addition to consulting and project work, we have codified our knowledge into products (packets, training materials, etc.) for purchase. While we have discussed it, we have never made a major marketing push with them. About 12 months ago, though, we initiated a major shift in our thinking. It started with a booth at last year's SHRM national conference. We saw a product offered by a first-time vendor. Our minds began to conjure ways to turn that product into an HR-specific creation. The company was LCI, and their product was a set of slender software training cards that mounted to the front of a computer monitor. In our imaginations, we could see sets of HR cards on monitors stretching across the country.

That vision is still alive, but boy, have we learned a few things about building a national product! For any of you who regularly work in product development, we have a far better appreciation of what it takes to handle all the ups and downs of that enterprise. The highs, marked with glasses of champagne, when the design is done; the devastating lows when you discover that the design isn't anywhere near finished, even though you were celebrating its "completion" only days before, and who knew that the expense of shipping a few large boxes would seem appropriate only if the destination was the moon?

We learned about sourcing some of the most unusual things for an HR firm, including thousands of baggies. We have journeyed into trade shows, e-commerce, and GSA approval – major changes from our typical assignments related to compensation and employee relations. And then there are the marketing and promotion activities. We're accustomed to talking with people about our services, and we've had experience promoting our training materials and Information Notebooks. But a real stand-alone product – now that's quite different (she says, the master of understatement). It was back to the books and conversations with sales professionals to become more familiar with a vastly different type of interaction. You're seeing the results of those discussions – samples included.

Throughout it all, we have been driven by our belief that what we were creating could be of substantial benefit to organizations - that it would relieve HR professionals of the burden of responding to repetitious questions from supervisors, and put compliance information speedily at their fingertips. That the outcome would be greater organizational consistency and far less employment risk for employers trying hard to do the right things. We have been using that belief as our compass, helping us steer through this unfamiliar territory.

It has been a thrilling time of developing new organizational capacities. I never cease to be amazed at what the staff here can do! We think it's a cool idea; now you get to see what all the fuss has been about. I am so curious and intrigued to learn what you think. I am not objective about HR Flipcards. Objectivity, if it ever really existed, left several months ago. (Fancy that, me being emotional and passionate about something – who would ever have thought?)

So e-mail, holler, call, write, or send smoke signals - tell us what your thoughts are about this venture. If you love them, please tell us. If you think this was folly, tell us why. After all, we did it for folks just like you. I can't wait to hear what you say!!

- Judy Clark, President



Providing Customized HR Services That Matter Most

Please feel free to visit our website:

[www.hrnorthwest.com](http://www.hrnorthwest.com)