

# Westchester Human Resource Management Association



## WHRMA News

March 2009

AFFILIATE OF  
**SHRM**<sup>TM</sup>  
SOCIETY FOR HUMAN  
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### WHRMA President's Note By: Edwin Bowman

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The ability on the part of HR professionals to be knowledgeable about current and future *business conditions* is increasingly important as we continue to evolve from focusing on administrative and operations issues to engaging as strategic partners within our organizations. Doing so will certainly require us to continuously screen large amounts of information in order to detect emerging trends so that we may develop successful scenarios which keep our organizations viable and competitive.

Just as important is the ability to be knowledgeable about our current and prospective *employee conditions*. Notwithstanding the growing popularity of online screening techniques and social networks, the concept and practice of environmental scanning, which is not unfamiliar to the HR community, still has a role to play in helping us understand all elements of our external environment and their affects on our employees. A clear understanding of governmental, economic, geographic, and competitive influences and their relevance to the workplace and

personal lives our employees requires more personable face-to-face communications in many instances.

How we initiate our "employee conditions scans", whether conducted formally through surveys or more informally by "managing while walking around", may be critical to our ability to summarize information that may be valuable for the strategic planning process with emphasis on:

- 1) Understanding employee motivation and expectations and,
- 2) Determining the status of the unspoken psychological agreement between employees and employer.

Recently, I asked a class of college students to respond to the question: What do you consider to be the factors that have the most influence on your (our) lives today? The answers were difficult to ignore as each item could possibly be a bellwether on issues, attitudes, and expectations we will have to effectively manage during challenging times, current and future.

The responses follow:

Technology; Money; Job Security; Uncertainty; Anger; Status; Education; Religion; Competition; Terrorism; Source of Income; Diversity; Acceptance; Family Values; Happiness; Political Power

Obviously the rank order and the scenarios that can be applied to these observations and opinions would require more study and evaluation. But, at the very least, we should be able to pick the low hanging fruit and use it to increase our awareness (and even sensitivity) to what's in the thoughts of our existing and prospective workforce.

Networking, both live and virtual, gives some insight. However, let's not lose the core competency of face-to-face and relationship building communications. This is an essential ingredient to get a handle on the human perceptions we deal with on a day-to-day basis. Leveraging that knowledge in our role as strategic partners is a critical organizational outcome. Competency in the selection and management of talent, problem solving, decision-making, and policy development, in context, is our value added.

### WHRMA Members in Career Transition

Are you a WHRMA member in career transition? Our Chapter Job Bank/Networking Chair would like to connect with you. While we know that you are involved with networking, please take a few minutes to learn about WHRMA's services that are available to support your career search. This will also afford you the opportunity to share ideas to enhance WHRMA's career transition services. Contact Angela Bellizzi, Job Bank/Networking Chair at 914-214-8653 or email [anbellizzi@aol.com](mailto:anbellizzi@aol.com).

## January Breakfast Meeting Recap

Our topic was the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA) which went into effect on January 1, 2009, and our speaker was Johan Lubbe of Jackson Lewis. Johan did a great job of recapping the ADA and its enactment in 1990 as well as reviewing the changes we all need to be aware of. One point that I found most helpful—that the amendment is more of an interpretive tool. So really, how should the statute be interpreted; what do we need to do differently, should we be thinking differently, etc. The definition of a disability in the amendment did not change and remains the same; what is different is how the definition will be interpreted by the courts. Our decision making process needs to change—we, employers, need to make decisions regarding an employee's ability to perform a function without taking into consideration any mitigating factors (except for eyeglasses or contact lenses). HR must take a good faith, law based approach to determine if a disability exists. The process needs to be interactive with the employee when we consider accommodations—what does the person need vs. what we can do. As in most circumstances, HR cannot act within a “bubble” - we need to interact with the employee, document our process and detail the steps we take in all instances. What steps do we need to take now?

1. Be aware of the changes to the law
2. Revisit the ADA and its interplay with other federal and state disability leave laws
3. Educate your managers/supervisors
4. Review your policies/procedures
5. Ask for help and guidance if you need it!

## WHRMA Programming

### HR JOBS:

Visit our website [www.whrma.org](http://www.whrma.org) for HR openings in our area. We'll be happy to list any openings you may have as well!

You can also post your resume on the site as well.

Any questions? Send an email to Angela Bellizzi:  
[anbellizzi@aol.com](mailto:anbellizzi@aol.com).

Danielle Martin our Program Chair has worked hard to line up topics through May of this year, perhaps longer once this goes to print. We will also do our best to get our programs approved with HRCI credits as soon as possible. Remember though, you can submit a program as part of your recertification credits even without the approval. Thanks for your patience as we fine tune our process!!

## Q&A

### **Q. Is there a limit on the number of hours that an employer can require an employee to work in a day?**

**A:** The federal wage and hour law, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), sets no such limit. It does say that nonexempt employees who work more than 40 hours a week must be paid time and a half overtime. Beyond that, child labor laws are very specific about hours that workers of various ages under 18 may work per day and per week—as well as the type of work they're allowed to do. There are still more restrictions under state and federal laws relating to health-care workers, airline pilots, truck drivers, and workers in other safety-related positions.

Source: What To Do About Personnel Problems in NY, National Update, February 2009

## Your Board—Your WHRMA Resource

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**Wellness programs are inexpensive benefits that save money for both employees and employers. You can start small—with a newsletter and awareness building. You can grow the program from there once you've established support and participation.**

## Workplace Diversity: Developing an Innovated, Forward Thinking Workforce By: Julia Nesbitt

Greetings! I have had wonderful conversations with H.R. professionals who have asked the question, why diversity, especially with the financial crisis looming over so many organizations? With budgets being slashed; hiring freezes in place, & with everything else that you must consider - how can one possibly think about a diversity program? In response, I thought a series of newsletter articles would be a great forum to focus on workforce diversity relevancy and issues. To begin, I offer this suggestion... why not start by thinking about a most valuable, and in many cases, untapped resource - your own workforce!

Diversity is no longer just a black/white, male/female, old/young issue. It is much more complicated and interesting than that. In *"The Future of Diversity and the Work Ahead of Us"*, Harris Sussman writes, "Diversity is a strategic lens on the world." "In the real world, innovative organizations must respond to human complexity by leveraging the talents of the workforce to grow their businesses and their customer base." As we all know, the long-term success of any business requires a body of talent that can bring fresh ideas, perspectives, & views to their work. The challenge that diversity poses is to capitalize on these diverse groups to respond to business opportunities more rapidly and creatively. So, how do you develop a holistic strategy that gets results? The following is offered as points of interest as you begin to think about your own diversity initiatives.

**Link diversity to the bottom line.** As your company explores ways to increase profits, they might look to new markets or to strategic partnering. Consider how a di-

verse workforce would enable your company to meet those goals. Think outside the box. Your new customers may be people with disabilities or people over the age of 65. How can your employee pool help to reach these markets?

**Walk the talk.** If senior management advocates a diverse workforce, make diversity evident at all organizational levels. If you don't, some employees will quickly conclude that there is no future for them in your company. Employee turnover is time-consuming and costly. How do you demonstrate your company's commitment to diversity?

**Broaden your efforts.** Expand your diversity definition and your diversity efforts. Reach out to all qualified candidates. Baby boomers are staying longer or returning to the workforce; there is an increasing influx of cultures entering the workplace; specialized equipment & supportive services enable people with disabilities to contribute successfully to their work environments, and so on. If your organizational environment does not support diversity broadly you risk losing talent to your competitors.

**Remove artificial barriers to success.** The style of interview - behavioral or functional- may be a disadvantage to some job candidates. Older employees, for example, may be less familiar with behavioral interviews and may not perform as well. Employees from countries outside the US and non-Caucasian populations may downplay their achievements or focus on describing, "who they know" rather than "what they know." Train your recruiters to understand the cultural components of interviews.

**Retain diversity at all levels.** Diversity should also encompass lifestyle issues. Programs that address work and family issues - alternative work schedules and child and elder care resources and referrals - make good business sense.

**Provide practical training.** Using relevant examples to teach small groups of people how to resolve conflicts and value diverse opinions can help far more than large, abstract diversity lectures.

**Develop a diversity mentor to keep your focus spot on.** Some of your most influential mentors can be people with whom you have little in common. Find someone who doesn't look just like you; someone from a different background, a different race, or a different gender; someone who thinks differently than you do.

**Measure your results.** Conduct regular organizational assessments on issues like pay, benefits, work environment, management, & promotional opportunities to assess your progress. Keep doing what is working and stop doing what is not working.

The long-term success of any business calls for a diverse body of talent that can bring fresh ideas, perspectives & views, and a corporate mindset that values those views. Develop a plan using the complex multi-dimensional talents & personalities of your workforce - and make diversity work for you.

For comments on this article, and suggestions for future articles, please write me at [jnesbitt@qcccares.org](mailto:jnesbitt@qcccares.org).



**WHRMA has qualified for Membership Star Status for 2008 for the Northeast**

## In a Recession, Keep Employees Engaged

Source: BLR What to do About Personnel Problems, New York Edition, February 2009

Mark Murphy, CEO of Leadership IQ, has advice for managers hoping to lead their teams effectively in difficult times. Leadership IQ recommends that each manager assess his or her own ability to motivate by taking a self-test the firm offers. Here are some sample questions: (1) Do I believe I have control over my professional success? (2) Do I get excited when I'm given a really difficult problem to solve? (3) Have I uttered (even in jest) a negative comment about a new goal or change initiative? And (4) Have I ever rolled my eyes, sighed, or otherwise used body language to convey anything less than total support for a goal or initiative

Leigh Branham and Mark Hirschfeld at Keeping the People have also been focusing on employees in tough times. Using Quantum Workforce surveys of Best Places to Work employers done in 2007 and 2008, Branham and Hirschfeld identified 210

employers that had participated in both years to compare their employee engagement scores. Sure enough, by November 2008, employers reporting that their scores had gone down since the previous year were nearly double those reporting the engagement rose (134 to 76).

Keeping the People dug deeper to identify steps taken by those reporting better or the same scores from year to year. They found that successful employers used the following practices that their counterparts with falling scores did not:

- Set a clear, compelling direction that empowers each employee.
- Maintain open and honest communication.
- Continue to focus on individual's career growth and development.

- Recognize and reward high performance.
- Offer employee benefits that demonstrate a strong commitment to employee well-being.

The first two are like Murphy's recommendations for leaders, but the other three fall into HR's arena. Even if you must conduct some layoffs, for example, stay interested in the career paths of the remaining employees; it's a big motivator. And, though you may be instituting hiring or salary freezes, you should still find ways to reward your top performers. Individual recognition is often a stronger motivator than money. Finally, despite the high costs of healthcare coverage, invest in your employees by maintaining their benefits, including the 401(k) match.

WHRMA now has sponsorship and advertising opportunities. Contact Danielle Martin, Manager Human Resources, A&E Television Networks, 203-353-7285, [Danielle.martin@aetn.com](mailto:Danielle.martin@aetn.com)

## Welcome to Our New Members!!!!

Michelle Tinkoff

Joanne Novak, VP New Development, Hartville Group

Paul Shashaty, Corporate Wellness Director, Stern Creating Wellness

Melanie Haniph, Director of HR, Evolution Markets

Patricia Moss, HR Generalist

Melissa Getz-Vele, HR Manager, SSC, Inc.

Sharon Teta-Amelia, Career Counselor, Monroe College

Maria Boccardi, HR Assistant, The Osborn

Patricia Saunders, HR Manager, UST Inc.



### February Meeting Recap—prepared by new WHRMA Member, Maria Boccardi

Our February meeting was on the topic of Social Networking, and was presented by Brian Tietje, Strategic Account Executive for Linked In. There are differences between all of the social networking sites such as Facebook, Linked In, Twitter, etc. Here are some of the facts presented:

- Twitter was not recommended as a useful recruitment tool since it is a fairly new and has not yet gained overwhelming popularity. It is a work in progress.
- Facebook's content cannot be 100% controlled—you can control what you post but you cannot control what your friends post—so weekend happenings can end up on the site even if you don't want it there! With Facebook you are “guilty by association”, so from a professional perspective you want to be careful.
- Linked In is definitely the favored professional social networking site at this time; it's free, allows you to market yourself as well as your company, it's the “what you are doing professionally” personal blog, it can help separate you from the competition, and the more you put into it the more you'll get out of it. You have 100% control of the content and you are networking with different people than on Facebook or MySpace (you eliminate the teenage element on Linked In).

As with anything else, be sure to assess the sites for how they would benefit you personally or professionally.

## 2009 SHRM Programs—Make Your Plans Now...

### SHRM Employment Law & Legislative Conference

Washington, DC  
March 9—11, 2009

### SHRM Global Conference and Exposition

Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
March 30—April 1, 2009

### SHRM Staffing Management Conference & Exposition

Las Vegas, Nevada  
April 28—30, 2009

### SHRM 61st Annual Conference & Exposition

New Orleans, LA  
June 28—July 1, 2009

For more information, check out the SHRM site at [www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org).



**2009 Chapter Meeting Dates**

All are breakfast meetings EXCEPT for September, which is a dinner meeting.

**Tuesday, March 17th** A panel discussion hosted by our International Special Interest Group

**Tuesday, April 21st** Financial Literacy—Employer Fiduciary; Speaker: Frank Alcorn

**Tuesday, May 19th** Topic Changed—TBA

**Tuesday, June 16th** Diversity Conference

**Tuesday, September 15th** Compensation

**Tuesday, October 20th** Panel Discussion on HSAs

**Tuesday, November 17th** TBD

More details can be found on the website as they are finalized: [www.whrma.org](http://www.whrma.org).

**Our Purpose:**

1. To provide a forum for educational presentations and the discussion of topics relative to the HR profession.
2. To encourage and support members in their pursuit of professional certification.
3. To provide a clearing house of human resource information to the business community.
4. To cooperate with other human resource organizations in meeting the needs of the HR professional.
5. To provide information and services to serve the professional and advance the profession.

**International SIG Dates Compensation/ER SIG**

**UPCOMING MEETING DATES:**

**Tuesday, April 14th**

**Wednesday, March 11th**

**Wednesday, April 15th**



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