



# advantage

## SHOW APPRECIATION EVERY WEEK

BY DEBORAH JEFFRIES, PHR

April brings Administrative Professionals Appreciation Day. Some skeptics might think that the florist, restaurant, and gift industries dreamed up this special day. Even talented professional assistants snicker mainly because they feel they are under-appreciated the rest of the year.

The business environment has changed and there are fewer traditional secretaries today. When corporations slashed budgets and put a computer on every desk, many traditional secretarial positions disappeared. Although tasks such as typing and filing were the traditional duties assigned to secretaries, we all know they did and do so much more.

The word secretary comes from Latin, *secretarius*, meaning one entrusted with secrets. The dictionary says that is an obsolete use of the word. Those who publish dictionaries need to rethink that statement. Many of us have worked with professional assistants. Without them our success might be questionable. They listen when we need to rant and they keep us in line when we're headed off the deep end. A few of you have seen professional assistants manage their boss' duties for extended periods (long vacations, surgery) without some other employees even being aware the boss was missing. They truly do it all.

With Administrative Professionals Appreciation Day approaching on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, we want to encourage every one who works with a professional assistant to appreciate that person every week, every day, on every task.

To reinforce your relationship built on honesty, trust, and respect, forget the candy and skip the flowers. Instead, try:

- Saying "Thank you," more often.
- Taking them to lunch when it isn't Administrative Professionals Day.
- Awarding an extra day off.
- Giving a gift certificate to their favorite store, restaurant, etc.
- Giving them a raise.
- Sending them to the spa for the day, etc.

## CORRECTION

Our apologies, the deadline information in our January article on HIPAA Compliance Categories was incorrect. The one-year extension applies only to the Electronic Transaction Standards. The Privacy rule deadline is April 14, 2003, for all except small health plans having receipts of \$5M or less (who have an extra year).

## WORKPLACE UPDATES

New research indicates the total cost of time-off and disability programs continues to rise, simultaneously commanding more attention from employers.

Time-off and disability program costs averaged 15% of payroll in 2001, up from 14.6% in 2000, according to the "2002 Survey of Employers' Time-Off and Disability Programs" by Mercer Human Resource Consulting and Marsh, Inc.

For an employee earning \$40,000 annually, this means that \$6,000 was paid for time away from work. This cost translates into 39 days of absence per employee per year, 27 scheduled days and 12 unscheduled days, up from 38 days the previous year. Unscheduled absences, including incidental absence/sick days, salary continuation, STD, LTD and workers' comp costs, also rose to 4.7% of payroll in 2001, up from 4.4% in 2000 and 3.9% in 1999.

The 723 U.S. employers responding to the survey covered about 6,200 employees, on average. Analysts found that even large firms are paying increased attention to absence management.

**Daylight savings time wage and hour issues** – Daylight savings time starts at 2 a.m. Sunday, April 6, when clocks are set forward one hour. Shift workers on duty at that time work one hour less; paying them for a full shift may raise questions under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Remember that an additional hour of pay provided to employees who work less than a “full” shift need not be included in figuring the regular rate of pay when considering any overtime for that week. At the same time, the extra hour of pay may not be credited toward any overtime pay that may be due. When daylight savings time ends in six months, however, employees working a nine-hour shift because the clock is turned back must be paid for all hours worked, and the extra hour must be counted in establishing the hours worked in that week.

**A clean desk keeps the doctor away.** There could be a bigger benefit to keeping your desk clean other than being organized and impressing the boss. It could prevent you from getting sick. The average desk has 400 times more bacteria than the average toilet seat, according to Charles Gerba, a germ expert who studied 12 workplace surface areas. Why? Generally, the evening cleaning crews steer away from them for the sake of an employee’s privacy. As a result, coffee spilled here and there is never cleaned up, not to mention those cinnamon-coffee-cake crumbs.

Those who keep a dirty desk, in fact, are more susceptible to catching a cold and other ailments spread by unchecked germs, according to the study. Consider this: 80% of colds and flu come from touching surfaces, the study said. The solution is simple: buy a disinfecting product, such as Clorox wipes, and clean your desk daily. This will reduce germs and bacteria by as much as 99.9%. Now that will impress the boss!

**Minimum Wage.** Reminder employers - if your state increased the minimum wage at the beginning of the year you need a new poster. If you have not purchased a new poster you need to do so immediately and then post it right away. A good resource we highly recommend is [www.govdocs.com](http://www.govdocs.com). We have found they have a great product at a good price – let them know HR Answers sent you.

**OSHA Note.** A new standard is in place for reporting hearing loss on the OSHA 300 Log. If an annual audiogram reveals a Standard Threshold Shift (STS) in either or both ears and the hearing level is 25 decibels above audiometric zero, it must be recorded. The rules provide that if testing is redone within 30 days and does not confirm the STS, it is necessary to record the hearing loss on the OSHA 300 Log. But if the re-test confirms the hearing loss, the case needs to be recorded within 7 days of the re-test. Going forward, if subsequent testing is done under the testing requirements of the noise standard and the subsequent test indicates that the TST is not persistent, it can be eliminated from the OSHA 300 Log. This new requirement can be found in OAR 437-001-0700. As you are aware, most employers are required to post the summary of their OSHA 300 Log for 2002 on February 1, 2003. NOW the posting is to remain up until May 1, 2003 (that is 60 days instead of 30).

**Proposed legislation.** Forty-one million Americans currently have no health coverage, and 85% are from working families. Enter the Bush proposal, the Small Business Health Fairness Act (H.R. 660 and S. 858), that would allow small employers to band together and swing the clout of their numbers toward negotiating sweeter deals with insurers. Pooling their resources across state lines, the associations would be subject to federal oversight, but not to regulation on the state level, and would receive none of the consumer protections and required benefits that come with state regulation.

Supporters of the proposal say the Act can reduce the high cost of health insurance for small firms, who deserve the opportunity to obtain high quality health insurance that’s competitively priced. In addition, the association health plans (AHPs) allowed by the bill would achieve the following:

- Slash insurance costs by 15 to 30%.
- Promote competition and choice.
- Put in tough new solvency standards to protect patients’ rights and ensure that benefits are paid.

The opponent’s biggest concern is that AHPs would wreak havoc on the small group marketplace because they would draw off the healthier, younger employees, leaving behind older employees prone to illness. People with greater health needs wouldn’t be attracted to AHPs because their benefit levels would be too lean. The expected cost savings with the AHPs is that they would be exempt from providing the mandated benefits required by state law. Another state law feature from which the AHPs would be exempt is the rating bands, the controls that keep premiums within a certain range. Without those controls, AHPs would be too expensive for older patients who are more prone to illness, and with these individuals left behind that would make premiums go up for everyone else left behind with them.

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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@hwnorthwest.com](mailto:djeffries@hwnorthwest.com).

## Q&A

BY STEVE MYHRE, SPHR

**Q:** We have an employee whom we moved to part-time and, as a result, she lost her medical benefits. However, now her hours are creeping back up to 40 per week. Is there a definition of part-time that we need to abide by?

**A:** There is no legal definition. Part-time status is determined by your organization's policy and/or past practices. The main concern in your situation is to be sure that your practice is not discriminatory – either intentionally or *unintentionally*. For example, say you returned other part-time employees – who all just happened to be male – back to their full-time positions. Leaving your female employee in a 40-hour “part-time” position may appear to be depriving her of certain benefits because she is female. Now, the fact may be that this is purely coincidence. However, if challenged, could you show that the difference in treatment is for legitimate business reasons and not because she is female? If not, you may be treading on dangerous ground. When it comes to illegal discrimination, it is not enough to *know* that you are not discriminating, you must also be able to prove it. That's why HR professionals always emphasize the importance of documenting the reasons for employment-related decisions. So, although there is no legal definition for part-time, be sure that you have a clear procedure for determining when a person is considered part-time and follow it consistently – especially when pay or benefits are at stake.

(Just as an aside, we're hoping you did a COBRA notification when she lost her benefits, and that you will bridge her to reinstate her with full coverage as soon as she becomes full-time.)

If you have any questions regarding part-time or benefits eligibility, or any other employee-related topic, please feel free to give us a call or e-mail me at [smyhre@hrnorthwest.com](mailto:smyhre@hrnorthwest.com).

## ELDER CARE

Elder care as a workplace issue is now at the stage where child care was 20 to 30 years ago. If elder care follows the same road that child care issues took, HR professionals could find themselves radically restructuring employment benefits policies to accommodate this social change.

Life expectancy in the United States reached a record 76.9 years in 2000 and, because of continuing medical advances, will keep rising. By 2030, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 20% of Americans, or about 70 million people, will be 65 or older. In fact, people 85 or older make up the fastest-growing segment of the older population. Older people not only are living generally healthier lives, but also are more independent than they may appear. About 60% of people 65 or older live on their own; only 5% are in nursing homes.

Longer life and greater independence add up to good news for older Americans, but ultimately they will encounter the limitations associated with aging, and that in turn will directly impact the workplace as more employees begin caring for aging parents or relatives.

Like child care, the needs of elder care center on time, but there the similarities end. For example, the stress for employees dealing with elderly relatives' health problems or disabilities is different from the pressures felt by employees dealing with children's school schedules or doctor visits. Moreover, medical emergencies and diagnoses for the elderly often increase time demands and stresses for the caregiver. By one estimate, productivity losses attributable to employees caring for elderly relatives cost U.S. businesses \$11 billion per year.

But while age-related health care issues form a big concern for employers, few companies seem to realize the impact that elder care responsibilities could have on their employees. Elder care does not crack the top 10 categories of family-friendly benefits offered by employers, according to the 2002 Benefits Survey from the Society for Human Resource Management. Elder care is “not on most employers' radar screens.”

Expanded elder care benefits for employees, experts say, could include health care and long-term care insurance for aging parents or other relatives, dependent care tax credits in addition to or in lieu of child care tax credits, and sick leave and flextime policies that take into account employees' elder care responsibilities. It would mean additional financial costs for employers, and it would require that they change a workplace culture that currently does not value elder care as much as it values child care.

Organizations with great elder care benefits and scheduling flexibility can't cover all the dependent care situations that employ-

ees may have to deal with. Some employees may have to leave the workforce entirely, cut back on work hours to gain more flexibility for elder care duties, or transition to more accommodating careers. All of these options have tremendous implications for a workforce that's shrinking a bit now and could become much smaller over the long-term as the population ages.

AARP provides assistance by offering classes. Their programs are designed to help individuals figure out how best to help their parents, whether that is with hands-on care or independent living options. Organizations could really help employees by sharing these educational opportunities. You can learn more by visiting their website <http://www.aarp.org>.

*(Special thanks to Dave Potel and HR Magazine for the main content of this article.)*

## MAKE YOUR WORKPLACE SAFE

Robert Grossman's article, *Bulletproof Practices*, in the November issue of HR Magazine describes the situation the best. Here is an excerpt:

*It's been seven years since the fateful day when Janet Robinson, a housing specialist with the Richmond, California, Housing Authority, had lunch with receptionist Michael Pearson. Pearson, who had just been written up by his supervisor, said he "felt like committing a mass murder," says Robinson, who laughed it off as a joke. He seemed to laugh, too, she recalls, and added, "I won't kill you, though."*

*But, over the weekend, the conversation weighed on Robinson's mind, so she reported it to her supervisors. They consulted with HR, and the decision was made to fire Pearson the next day. The plan, she says, was for a supervisor to deliver the bad news to Pearson, who then would be escorted from the building. But Pearson wasn't ushered out.*

*Instead, he was allowed to return to his desk. He then went into a restroom where he had stashed a gun, and began looking for people who, in his mind, had wronged him. First to fall was supervisor Lorraine Talley, shot in the head. Robinson and co-worker Barbara Garcia heard the gunfire and tried to hide under a table, but Pearson cornered them. "He shot Barbara twice," Robinson says. "She died on top of me." Robinson pleaded for her life. She says Pearson replied, "I told you I wouldn't shoot you." He left the room and minutes later surrendered to police.*

*"If I hadn't treated Michael with respect, even though he was sick, he would have killed me too," she says. Robinson believes HR could have been better prepared to handle Pearson's dismissal that day. "HR made the decision to terminate him too quickly, and they didn't provide us with any protection," she says. "They should have handled it differently, maybe providing counseling. They should have made sure he was escorted out."*

Employers are increasingly being sued for negligence and injuries resulting from workplace violence—and could pay \$5 million to \$6 million for settlements and verdicts. Organizations must establish a program to help employees recognize potentially violent situations and prevent confrontations. This activity cannot be a low priority in your organization.

"Ten percent of organizations have a program that you could sit on the stand and defend," says consultant Larry Chavez, founder of Critical Incident Associates, Chavez estimates that 40% of organizations have programs in name only, and that 50% have no programs at all. Failure to act, however, can place employees in harm's way—especially front-line supervisors and HR professionals, who often are the targets of disgruntled employees. Almost 80% of workplace killings—there were 677 last year—occur when strangers come onto the premises, usually to commit a crime. In the remaining 20%, the killer has or had some relationship with the workplace—as a client or customer, or disgruntled or former employee—or has been involved in a domestic dispute.

Therefore, organizations need to have a plan in place to reduce the number of victims and the dollars, as the costs are enormous. The statistics from the National Center for Health Statistics indicate that the annual tab for violence, as well as stress-inducing hostility in the workplace, comes to about \$13.5 billion in medical costs and 500,000 workers missing 1.75 million days of work.

An anti-violence strategy begins with a "zero tolerance" policy and a written plan backing it up. Some employers may ask, "Must it be on paper?" Absolutely! A written plan may not work as written, but an unwritten plan will never work.

A typical zero tolerance policy prohibits intimidation, threats of violence (bodily harm or property damage) and acts of violence (regardless of whether they cause harm or damage). Intimidation generally means actions or words that cause another person to reasonably fear for his or her safety or the safety of others. An employee who violates a zero tolerance policy may be referred for counseling or other help, such as a substance abuse program. Or the violator may be subject to criminal prosecution, as well as discipline up to and including dismissal in accord with applicable HR and collective bargaining agreements.

Robert Grossman's article identifies three components every organizational plan should have. These three components include: preventive measures, procedures for dealing with a potentially violent employee, and post-incident management.

- The pre-incident component explains zero tolerance, giving clear examples. It covers hiring procedures, training and methods of assessing and reporting threats. It can set forth the consequences of violating the zero tolerance policy—perhaps referral for counseling through the employee assistance program (EAP), disciplinary action such as suspension, or termination.

At Intel Corp., a pioneer in addressing workplace violence, the pre-incident phase consists of four types of training. One educates senior managers on workplace violence. Another focuses on threat assessment for the workplace response team, made up of individuals from HR, security, HR-legal and occupational health. It can also include an outside consultant. A third type of training helps line managers and HR—the front-line people—learn how to tell if a particular type of behavior could be an indicator of future violence. The fourth type of training is a one-hour class for employees on zero tolerance and how management will respond to threats or violence.

- The second component of most plans—the incident phase—lays out responsibilities and procedures when a potentially violent person is identified. This phase at Intel addresses reporting, investigating, and risk assessment by a team that has 24-hour access to a violence assessment expert.
- The “post-incident” component deals with crisis management, including strategies for handling employee stress and public relations after a violent event. At Intel, this phase focuses on what happens after the police leave. It expands the workplace response team to include media experts and spells out the processes for responding to queries and for analyzing the incident. Internal communication, as well as public relations, are important at this stage.

## COMPANY LAUGHS

Humor is a powerful motivating tool that can fire up an office, build camaraderie, and increase productivity. If you're a manager convinced that your workplace could use an infusion of levity, here are 10 practical suggestions:

1. Start a humor bulletin board. Post witty articles, cartoons, quotes, and pictures. Make sure you put it in a high-traffic area. Encourage your staff to take a humor break once a day.
2. Inject droll comments in your memos and reports. Start a humor section in your company newsletter.
3. Decorate meeting rooms with humorous pictures and posters.
4. Issue phony policies and send out crazy directives. You'll finally discover who actually reads that stuff.
5. Wear funny buttons. For example, if a meeting promises to be stress-filled, wear a button with the message, “Save time . . . see it my way!”
6. Organize a staff development program on humor. Bring in a humorist professional who can explain the positive benefits of laughter to an organization.
7. Infuse your speeches and presentations with self-deprecating remarks, quirky observations, etc.
8. Schedule “stress-buster” events when you anticipate high stress days. Celebrate those wacky holidays like April Fool's Day and National Left Handers Day.
9. Have surprise birthday parties. Decorate staff members' offices on special occasions before they come into work.
10. Create a “Joy Gang” responsible for bringing mirth into as many events and activities as possible.

## OLDER WORKERS OVERLOOKED AND UNDERUTILIZED?

BY DEBORAH JEFFRIES, PHR

It is clear that the approaching wave of older workers presents challenges for HR in the years ahead. HR professionals will see an increase in the number of older workers because of demographics. As the nation's 78 million baby boomers age, the number of older Americans will skyrocket. While the oldest baby boomers turn 56 this year, within sight of traditional retirement years, many won't be able to afford early or on-time retirement. Only 20% of baby boomers are confident they will have enough money to retire, according to the Employee Benefit Research Institute, in Washington, D.C. Nearly two-thirds of older boomers (age 48 to 56) are behind on planning and saving for retirement, and almost 25% have no retirement savings at all. Those who have failed to save funds for retirement won't get immediate help from Social Security, because the eligibility age for full benefits is increasing in steps and will reach 67 for those born in 1960 or later. It is no wonder then that 60% of older boomers, and nearly two-thirds of boomers now 38 to 47, expect to work during “retirement.”

But what about now? What should HR be doing to prepare for the age boom? The first step is to analyze your current workforce. Organizations should mine employee data to determine turnover patterns and retirement history, and to create

projections for 5, 10 and 20 years from now. It's also important for organizations to investigate the demographic mix of the community that supplies their workers. Find out if the population is growing or shrinking, aging or becoming younger.

It is also suggested to conduct surveys with current older workers to learn how an organization could improve its relationship with older workers. This is an extremely important step because older workers are getting little encouragement from their employers to remain in their jobs, according to a report from The Conference Board, a nonprofit business organization headquartered in New York. Based on a survey of 1,500 workers whose organizations participate in The Conference Board's "Engaging Mature Workers" taskforce, the report said many older workers are delaying retirement not only for economic reasons, but because they feel the need to remain active or contribute to society. However, a substantial number of older employees reported they did not believe that they were receiving the respect they are due and that supervisors have denied them developmental opportunities because of their age.

So the idea and notion of the boomers leaving the workforce does not compute. People are healthier and therefore better able to work than previous generations. The rate of disability among older Americans is declining. The rate dropped from 26.2% in 1982 to 19.7% in 1999.

The battle to attract and retain people has become very ruthless; it's hibernating right now because of the slowdown in the economy, but unless something catastrophic happens, it will return. To attract and retain adequate numbers of employees in the future, HR will have to include older individuals in the pool of candidates and will have to understand how older workers' needs and motivations differ from those of younger workers.

Suggested strategies for managing older workers:

- Identify the training needs of older workers.
- Include aging and generational issues as components of diversity training.
- Examine policies and practices to determine whether these penalize or exclude older workers.
- Base rewards on performance, not tenure.
- Promote health and wellness initiatives.
- Provide opportunities for knowledge transfer.
- Offer extended leave.
- Help employees make informed retirement decisions.

Career success changes with age. Getting a raise is the main motivator for 11% of generation Xers and 7% of baby boomers, but just 1% of mature workers (defined as those over 65). As a result, HR professionals may need to consider new performance incentives tailored to older workers. Rather than cash, new incentives could include opportunities to add vacation time, change work schedules, assist in personal development and so forth.

Job flexibility is a high priority for older workers. According to a recent poll conducted by the institute and research firm Zogby International, 71% of baby boomers who plan to work in retirement would prefer a part time schedule. This means flexible work arrangements such as job sharing, flexible scheduling, part-time work, and extended time off will become more popular in the decades ahead.

It's especially important for older workers to keep their skills fresh through training. Experts agree that "training throughout the lifecycle is critical." Some say older workers are less likely to participate in training programs than "prime age" workers, which makes it harder for some older workers to stay employable over the course of a longer career. In some cases, older workers may shy away from training; in others, employers do not encourage them to participate. Both situations may be prompted by the assumption that mastering new skills becomes more difficult with age. However, this assumption is incorrect. Research shows that the ability to learn continues well into older age, and older workers can and do learn new technologies.

But training may need to take into account the way older people learn, says gerontologist Sandra Timmermann of the Mature Market Institute. "People learn differently as they age," she explains. "Because your reaction time is slower, it's more difficult to learn things by rote memory." Nonetheless, older people, unlike those who are younger, have "crystallized intelligence." It's the product of many years of experience, she says, and helps older people put new information in context and make better judgments in new situations. The result: an older person will work better in a self-paced or self-directed, pressure-free learning environment. Other ways to improve training for older workers include allowing employees to have input in training design,

inviting older employees to share their experiences as part of the training program, and grouping employees for training by experience and skill levels rather than strictly by age. It's important to shed presumptions about older workers, such as "they aren't as quick," It is about appreciating the different things that a person brings to a position ... and really trying to leverage that learning.

The next step is education. One of the best ways to persuade aging workers to stay on the job is to provide retirement education workshops. Boomers retire prematurely because they don't understand the economics of retirement. Many workers don't even know how much they need for retirement, so if you sponsor a well-conducted retirement workshop, a lot of employees will look at their own numbers and say, "Guess what? There's no way that we're going to be able to retire." Money isn't always the main reason a person stays on a job through the later stages of a career, but the prospect of a downgrade in lifestyle upon retirement can strengthen the appeal of continued employment. And HR managers hoping to recruit and retain older workers should keep in mind that although such workers supposedly care less about the money than they once did, a paycheck usually remains a good incentive for getting a person to show up for work.

If these challenges weren't enough for HR and business owners, the longevity of the workforce also brings up the issue of age discrimination. In our May issue we'll take a look at this issue for employers.

## PENDING LEGISLATION

The following is a summary of new legislation. More information is also available at [www.leg.state.or.us](http://www.leg.state.or.us).

**SB 40** The IRS currently uses a 20 factor test to help determine whether a person is an employee or an independent contractor. Oregon uses a simpler test, which is most applicable to construction trades and less helpful in analyzing many other occupations. This legislation would adopt a modified version of the IRS 20 factor test. *Status: Referred to Business & Labor Committee.*

**SB 73** This bill would expand OFLA to require that an employer allow full-time employees to take an additional 25 hours of family leave for K-12 "school activities" each year. Employees would be limited to 3 hours per calendar month. The law would apply only to employers with 50 or more employees. Employees would usually be required to give 7 days prior notice of the school activity. *Status: Referred to Business & Labor Committee.*

**SB 263 & 264** These bills would apply rules regarding overtime and meal and rest periods to employees performing agricultural labor. Presently, the Bureau of Labor and Industries does not have the authority to regulate the hours worked by agricultural employees. In addition, agricultural employers are presently exempt from paying overtime. *Status: Referred to Business & Labor Committee.*

**SB 284** This bill disqualifies employees who have been terminated for certain drug or alcohol related misconduct from receiving unemployment benefits. Misconduct that would result in a denial of benefits includes: the failure or refusal to take a drug or alcohol test as required by the employer's written policy; attempts to subvert a drug or alcohol test; use of false identification; testing positive for alcohol or an unlawful drug; and other offenses. *Status: Referred to Business & Labor Committee.*

**SB 406** This bill would prohibit an employer from discriminating against an employee who inquires about or submits a request for family leave. This bill would codify what is already a "best practice" for avoiding liability. *Status: Referred to Business & Labor Committee.*

**HB 2276** This bill would add compensatory and punitive damages to the remedies available for failure to reinstate/reemploy an injured worker. Presently, remedies are limited to injunctive relief (reinstatement/rehire), with or without back pay, and reimbursement of the employee's attorney fees. *Status: Referred to Judiciary Committee. Public hearing & work session held.*

**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: Referred to Business, Labor & Consumer Affairs Committee.*

**HB 2720** This bill would allow employers to pay minors an "opportunity wage" during the first 60 days of their employment. The opportunity wage would be 50 cents less per hour. Employers could not displace an existing employee to hire an employee at the opportunity wage. *Status: Referred to Business, Labor & Consumer Affairs Committee.*

(Special appreciation to Randy Sutton at Saalfeld Griggs for this content. )



## HRA HAPPENINGS

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

<b>Judy Clark, SPHR</b>	<b>18 years</b>	<b>Nancy DeJardin</b>	<b>4 years</b>
<b>Dale Lander</b>	<b>7 years</b>	<b>Jennifer Sheets</b>	<b>3 years</b>
<b>Terri Ano, Ph.D., SPHR</b>	<b>5 years</b>	<b>Milena Dadaj</b>	<b>3 years</b>
<b>Mike Brock, SPHR</b>	<b>5 years</b>	<b>Meghann Dailey</b>	<b>1 year</b>

Our very own **Dale Lander** is involved in the US Tennis Association League. We congratulate him and his mixed doubles team (that's Men and Women) from Clackamas River Racquet Club who won the Portland Metro Area Playoffs. They are now headed for the Sectional Playoffs at Sunriver in August. If they are fortunate enough to succeed there, they would go to the National Playoffs in Florida later in the year.

## ADDITIONAL OFFERINGS FROM HR FLIPCARDS

Last fall, we shared with you the release of our newest product, HR Flipcards. You might remember that one set covers HR Compliance and another set covers Supervisory/Management topics. It is with great pleasure that we announce three additional HR Flipcards topics to aid you: HIPAA, OFLA and, for those of you with California locations, our new California Employment Law Set. All three new sets will help you navigate through the "must knows" of compliance and procedures in each area. We encourage you to learn more about HR Flipcards by visiting our website at [www.hrflipcards.com](http://www.hrflipcards.com), or to order by phone please call us at 503-885-9815. The new sets are priced as follows:

HIPAA .....	\$12.95
OFLA .....	\$9.95
California Employment Law .....	\$14.95

## 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](mailto:sjeffries@hrnorthwest.com), or just register online at [www.hrnorthwest.com](http://www.hrnorthwest.com) under Consulting services.*

### MARCH

	American Red Cross, Help Someone See, International Mirth, National Nutrition, National Women's History, and Youth Art Month.
March 2-8	National Procrastination Week
<b>March 13</b>	<b>HRA Workshop - Tualatin</b> <b>Building a Workplace Safety Program</b> <b>8:30 - 12 noon</b>
March 17	St. Patrick's Day
<b>March 19</b>	<b>HRA Breakfast Briefing - Puget Sound</b> <b>Termination without Tears</b> <b>7:30 - 9:30 a.m.</b>
<b>March 25</b>	<b>HRA Workshop - Puget Sound</b> <b>Violence in Your Workplace</b> <b>8:30 - 12 noon</b>

### APRIL

<b>April 9</b>	<b>HRA Breakfast Briefing - Tualatin</b> <b>Dealing with Office Politics</b> <b>7:30 - 9:30 a.m.</b>
<b>April 10</b>	<b>HRA Breakfast Briefing - Puget Sound</b> <b>Dealing with Office Politics</b> <b>7:30 - 9:30 a.m.</b>
<b>April 17</b>	<b>HRA Workshop - Tualatin</b> <b>Understanding &amp; Implementing Leave Laws</b> <b>8:30 - 12 noon</b>
<b>April 23</b>	<b>HRA Workshop - Willamette Valley (Salem)</b> <b>HR for the Non-HR Professional</b> <b>8:30 - 12 noon</b>
<b>April 29</b>	<b>HRA Workshop - Puget Sound</b> <b>HR for the Non-HR Professional</b> <b>8:30 - 12 noon</b>

P.S. - Watch for our special April issue of Advantage!

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## ON MY SOAPBOX

What is your definition of a “friend”? Is it someone you have known for a long time so that you know each other’s histories? Is it someone with whom you share a common interest so that there are activities or special times you spend together? Is a friend someone who is a constant presence in your life, an email buddy, or can there be friends you go for long periods without seeing?

What is your emotional connection with your friends? Are they people you do things with, or are they individuals with whom you talk about your greatest hopes and fears? When you introduce someone to another person you know, when do you say, “This is my friend...”? Is your feeling casual, or is there a much deeper sense of connection between you and your friends?

I suspect that the word “friend” means many different things. It is too bad that we don’t have a variety of words to help us more accurately describe the state of our relationship. There is the word “acquaintance,” but it so clearly is a word of distance or unfamiliarity. We don’t have a large selection of words to use to differentiate between those life-long individuals who are an integral part of our life, versus those people whose company we enjoy.

I have lots of “friends” if I am describing people I look forward to seeing and with whom I do something occasionally. There are numerous people who make me smile and with whom I want to share a story or catch-up with each other’s life. But they are not people who know the real me, the hurts and joys of my life. They are the “conversation people” with whom I chat about current events and activities. There may be a few moments upon occasion that some more in-depth exchange takes place, but for the most part, the relationship is more surface than substance.

There are “friends” I have lost or misplaced through my own neglect. People who could have been life travelers accompanying me through this incredible journey, but because I didn’t make enough time or pay sufficient attention, the relationship shriveled from a lack of attention. Those are scars on my heart, reminders of what might have been if only I had placed greater value on our connection.

But there are a couple of hardy souls who have graced me with their care and regard. They have understood me, even when I didn’t. They have blessed me with the gift of their presence when I needed them, and they have graciously stepped away when I could not bear to be with anyone. Their love and affection allows me to step in and out of their lives after periods of separation as though it is only hours. They provide me the comfort of being my true self, without artifice pretense or a mask.

I really want to call them something more than “friend.” I want a new designator for them, a word that speaks of the depth of emotion and the tremendous debt I owe them for being so perfect for me at so many different times. Even when we do not talk or see each other, I always know that they are there, ready to reach out to me with a steadying hand and heart; and that knowledge gives me strength.

I have scanned the Thesaurus and even asked a couple of “friends” if they could think of synonyms. Companion, playmate, chum, associate, etc. have all been offered and fallen far short of my need. I have considered confidant and soul mate, but each of these seem to imply something a shade different than I want.

I’m not used to being inarticulate so this search for a perfect word is a frustrating exercise. But in its absence, to those who are described above (I know you know who you are), I would not choose to journey without you, and my appreciation for your essential goodness is without bounds. For me, you are my treasure!

- Judy Clark, President



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