

PEOPLE POINTERS

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Communicating Your Wishes

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Employers often complain that their employees don't follow through on directives. The usual assumption is that employees don't want to do what they are told to do. However, most employees try very hard to do what their boss wants of them. So if your employees aren't doing things the way you want them to, you may need to communicate that in another way.

Usually, we tell people what we want them to do. But people frequently do not hear what is said to them. So it is a good idea to **follow up a verbal directive with a confirmatory email or note.**

What is often clear in our heads is not always clearly stated to others. If your employees aren't doing what you told them to do, you may want to **look at how you tell them.** If you say too much, they may miss the point of what you are saying.

Another problem is that some people start talking one way but end up in a different place. Their listeners, however, usually pick up on the first few words and go to the logical end, which may

not be the same end at which the speaker arrived.

To address these common communication problems, **ask your employee to repeat the directive** to you to be sure they heard it correctly.



Catch Your Employees Doing Something Good!

By: John M. Turner, Ph.D.,
President & CEO

It is very time consuming and costly to recruit and hire high quality employees. Once you find the perfect match for your job opening and company culture, it is imperative that you have an effective retention program. When one of your top employees comes into your office and delivers the bad news – "I am giving you my two week notice effective today" – it is generally too late. Employee turnover is very expensive and has a negative impact on your business. Although there are many plans that can be used as an effective retention strategy, one of the most critical is a competitive compensation plan. In today's economy the annual merit increase is not what it used to be. Perhaps your business has gone a year or two without giving your employees an annual raise. Also, a year-end bonus

may not be practical or affordable.

A spot bonus is an easy-to-implement incentive tool that can be used to improve your employee retention and morale. Basically, this is an award given to an employee for outstanding performance. The gift can be money or some other reward, such as theater tickets or dinner for two at a local restaurant. The key to a successful program is utilizing an award that truly motivates your employees. This means you must do your homework to identify the appropriate award. It is very important that the award is presented shortly after the excellent performance is observed. Delaying the recognition diminishes the positive effect.

The spot bonus doesn't replace your current compensation program. It becomes an integrated component. It is generally best utilized for your hourly employees rather than your managers or executives. The relative value based on income is an important consideration and the overall program cost to your business will be relatively low based on the percent of total compensation.

Managing the spot bonus program is very important.

Managers should not feel obligated to give out all of the allocated awards, but rather honestly recognize outstanding performance. As mentioned above, timing is very important. It is best to start out with a simple program with clear written guidelines. Don't confuse spot awards with other types of compensation – keep them separate. And finally, it is a good idea to conduct an annual review of your program.

Communication is a key element of this program. Employees must understand how the award system works and managers must be reminded to utilize the program. It is also important to let other employees know who is getting the awards and what they did to earn them.

Another important point is to consider the tax implications of your awards. Check out IRS Publication 15-B, "Employer's Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits," to see if your particular gift is taxable. Always consult your tax professional with any questions you may have.

Although a spot bonus program may not be appropriate for all business situations, it may be an effective tool to consider as part of your employee relations program.



Lawsuit Mania

In a survey of 300 executives at privately held companies, 44 percent of respondents said they

believe it is likely an employee or former employee will sue their company by year's end, while 50 percent said they thought it is likely that an employee will file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission over that same time period.

Source: Chubb Group of Insurance Cos., Warren, N.J.



Workplace Violence

By: The Safety Department

Are your employees subject to workplace violence?

If you do not have a written violence prevention program in place, you increase the chance for exposure to "Workplace Violence."

OSHA recommends employers establish and maintain a violence prevention program as part of the health and safety program. It should be made available to all employees.

As part of the program, managers and supervisors should demonstrate a true concern for employees' emotional and physical health and safety.

Employees should be involved in development of the program

with strong leadership by the facility's safety representative. This plan must demonstrate a clear policy that violence, verbal and nonverbal threats and related actions will not be tolerated. It should also ensure no reprisals are taken against anyone reporting or experiencing workplace violence. Local law enforcement can be included as part of the program for maintaining facility security.

A Threat Assessment Team can be implemented to develop the plan, which should include:

- A check sheet or worksheet with all necessary information for a quick and thorough investigation.
- A common sense look at existing or potential hazards.
- Engineering control to prevent identified hazards.
- Annual and New Employee Training for awareness of hazards.
- Recordkeeping and progress.

An effective program must have the support and commitment of all employees including management.

Management's Commitment:

- The outlined policy including violent threats, harassment, intimidation and other disorderly behavior is not accepted.
- All reports will be taken seriously, investigated and handled properly.



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Employee's Involvement:

- Understand the seriousness of the policy, support and comply with all workplace violence guidelines.
- Participate and provide accurate reporting and follow-up to any incident.

Violence can't always be prevented. Violence is sometimes unpredictable due to health, job or family-related stress or unpredictable circumstances. Decrease your chances by good planning and training. Teach management and employees how to recognize and deal with hostile persons and how to identify a potentially hostile situation. They should be prepared to act quickly during the early stages of an argument, disagreement or any disruptive behavior.

Recordkeeping is an important part of the program. It can help track potential problems and identify training or counseling needs. It also protects employers and employees when disciplinary measures are needed.

You can get more information on workplace violence at www.osha.gov.



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Non-Discriminatory Hiring

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As all business owners and Human Resources professionals know, one of the most difficult and costly aspects of running a successful business is hiring and retaining good employees. Hiring good employees and reducing employee turnover can be the difference between a successful, profitable business and operating with mediocre success or, worse, failure.

Not only are employers faced with the prospect of having to commit a great deal of time, money, and human resources to the search, interview, and hiring processes, but they are also faced with the real possibility that the employee they choose to hire won't turn out to be the appropriate person for the job. Then the employer is faced with revisiting the entire process.

All companies want to hire loyal, hardworking employees. This can be a daunting task and one that must be approached carefully. Employers must comply with both Federal and State laws that prohibit various kinds of discrimination including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment And

Reemployment Rights Act of 1994.

Among other things, these laws prohibit employers from requiring employees to meet criteria that could be discriminatory to certain classes. Protected classes typically relate to an individual's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or citizenship.

It can be difficult for employers to recognize that one or more of their hiring criteria could be creating a disparate impact against members of one group more than others. These types of criteria could include height requirements or educational requirements. An employer may impose certain requirements that will create a disparate impact against a certain group as long as the requirement is necessary to do the job properly, i.e. educational requirements for a teaching position. These issues can be complex for the employer to deal with.

Employers should review their hiring practices and make pre-employment inquiries uniform to all applicants as well as have a specific anti-discrimination policy in their employee handbook. Should questions regarding hiring practices arise, employers should consult with their legal counsel to review the criteria used when hiring to ensure their hiring requirements are necessary for the employee to do the job.