

PEOPLE POINTERS

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NEWS

New Poster Required

On December 10, 2004, President Bush signed into law the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004. The Act amends the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and modifies and extends housing, education and other benefits for veterans. Most significant for employers, the law increases the period of time employers are required to offer continuation of health coverage to employees on military leave and contains a new notice requirement.

The increased continuation coverage requirement under USERRA is effective for continuation coverage elections made on or after December 10, 2004. Employers will be required to comply with the notice requirements on March 10, 2005.

USERRA applies to all public and private employers in the United States, regardless of size. It also applies in overseas workplaces that are owned or controlled by U.S. employers.

A poster is now available from the Department of Labor. It should be posted on the

employee bulletin board, or where employment information is normally posted.



Socialization of New Hires

By: Sandra Kay Neal, Ph.D.,
Industrial Organizational Psychologist

Each company is unique. It is essential new hires pick up on that uniqueness and value it. Socialization is the process of incorporating new people into an organization's culture, "the way things are done here." Companies are very careful to hire the person whose skills capture the company's needs.

But the next step is equally important to ensuring that this new person performs as the company expects. The next step involves socialization. This step is too essential to leave to chance. To ensure that this happens, it is important for a company to assign a mentor to a new hire. Choose a mentor who embodies the company's values and behaves as the company wishes all employees would behave.

In a very real sense, this is on-the-job training at its best. Not only does the company want those new employees to use the skills for which they were hired,

but the company wants them to enhance the uniqueness of the company.

New hires come fully socialized into the company for which they used to work. They may find the company doing things "wrong." It is essential that they discover as quickly as possible why "we" do things our way.



Employee Compensation – What Does It Mean?

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

Compensation policy development is a very important aspect of human resource management. Compensation practices affect a variety of business components. Some examples include recruitment, morale, absenteeism, and turnover. Current employees and the people considering your company as a place to work must consider your compensation to be fair and competitive. Their perceptions are very important for you to consider when developing your compensation policy.

Many clients ask us if an employee's satisfaction with their pay is just simply a function of the amount of pay

they receive. In other words, the more money a person makes the greater their satisfaction. Although a lot of executives and small business owners truly believe this, research has shown that other factors heavily influence an employee's satisfaction with their level of pay. One such theory states that a person's perception of equity is more important than the actual dollar amount of their compensation.

Why is this important to you? Because equity is such an important concern to employees, when developing your compensation policy it is imperative that you recognize this concern. Employees will compare their pay rate to others to determine if they are receiving a fair amount of pay. Who do they compare it with?

An employee will compare their pay rate to one or more of the following people:

- a) Someone doing the same job they are doing within your company.
- b) Someone in your company NOT doing the same job.
- c) Someone doing the same job in another company.

For example, your payroll clerk may compare their pay rate to their neighbor's pay rate. The neighbor could be a payroll clerk at another company, perhaps your competitor. This comparison will allow your

employee to determine if they perceive their pay to be fair.

What are the consequences? If your employees feel they are underpaid, based on the theory of equity, they will experience increased levels of tension. They will attempt to reduce this tension by:

- a) Reducing the effort put towards their job.
- b) Trying to get a raise.
- c) Changing their behavior – absenteeism, excessive breaks, tardiness.
- d) Quitting your company.

As you can see, the actions caused by setting the wrong pay scales can have a serious negative impact on your business. Your specific pay rates should reflect the overall contribution of each employee's job to your company. Employees must perceive that they are getting paid what they think they are worth.

There are a variety of HR tools available to guide you through this process. Some of the more common tools include job evaluations, point-factor compensable factors, pay grades and ranges, salary surveys, sample pay policies, bench-marking data and skill-based pay programs.



Personal Hygiene

By: The Safety Department

A Sanitation Plan, including Personal Hygiene, may not be OSHA-required training, but is included in Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). These GMP's should be included in your company's policy manual. According to FDA statistics, foodborne illnesses or microorganisms kill over 10,000 people each year, as much as 40 percent of these outbreaks being the result of poor hand washing and cross-contamination. An understanding of the principles and reasons for personal hygiene is a mandatory part of GMP training.

Diseases

If you have any communicable disease, you should immediately advise your supervisor or owner/manager and leave the premises. Upon being advised of any communicable disease, management should take any steps necessary to advise the appropriate authorities if it is a notifiable disease in your locale. Communicable diseases or illnesses encompass a wide range of conditions. They could include: influenza, common cold, mumps, measles,



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whooping cough, Hepatitis (all variants), chicken pox, rubella, tuberculosis, cholera, Legionnaire's Disease, Norwalk, plus many others.

Jewelry

Jewelry can be a real source of both unhygienic materials coming into contact with foods plus the high risk of losing them in food if they drop off. Everything can fall off!

Jewelry includes but is not limited to: watches, rings, earrings, studs, hair clips, hair bands, necklaces, and chains (no matter where they are worn). The back of rings and watchbands are harbingers of accumulated dirt that can be a real threat to the preparation of safe food.

Hair

Long hair, beards, and mustaches can be a real problem in any food preparation area. Hair covering is always recommended and in some jurisdictions is mandatory, but in the case of facial hair or long hair covering is always mandatory. Long hair is any hair reaching or touching the collar.

Hair is continuously falling out our entire lives, and it readily contaminates food, so every precaution should be taken to reduce the risk. Long hair or facial hair is also a Safety Issue. If it is loose, it can get caught in a piece of equipment and cause serious damage to the

equipment, not to mention bodily injury.

Fingernails

Long and/or dirty fingernails are unacceptable in any food preparation environment. Long nails are doubly dangerous as they can collect bacteria during the actual food preparation process.

Nail polish is another problem in that it readily chips and falls into food which is not acceptable. This includes clear as well as colored nail polish. False nails, much like jewelry, are far too dangerous to wear during any food preparation or serving process. Also, like long nails, they can harbor dangerous levels of bacteria and are almost impossible to clean on the job.

Cuts Sores or Abrasions

Cuts, sores, abrasions, etc. can be another cause of food contamination and they should be fully covered with a highly visible waterproof bandage. If this cannot be achieved, the worker should not be involved in any food handling process. Any soft bandaging should be covered with a waterproof barrier and all food handling activities carefully monitored for suitability. If the food processing activity's safety is compromised in any way, that activity should not be undertaken by the relevant worker. Make sure that any sores are not caused by any infectious or communicable disease. If they are, send the

worker home and do not allow them to return to work without a doctor's clearance.

Clothing

Street clothing means any clothing which was worn out in the street. This would include a chef's outfit worn to work! If a uniform is provided then it should not be worn to work but changed into upon arrival at work. Such uniforms must be washed and sanitized after each wearing. Any form of transport will add dirt, bacteria and other undesirable items onto individual clothing, none of which is wanted in any food processing area. Like hands, clothing can be a major source of food contamination.

Clean Hands

Carefully and thoroughly wash hands, including forearms, using a germicidal liquid hand soap, nail brush and warm water. To effectively wash your hands every surface of the fingers and backs of the hands must be thoroughly cleansed and washing MUST LAST AT LEAST TWENTY (20) SECONDS.

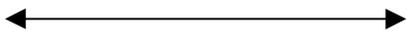
After washing and scrubbing there are germicidal rinses available and are recommended and then hands should be dried with clean, fresh paper towels. Studies show that even roller towels are not as hygienic as paper towels. Normal multiple use hand towels and hot air blow dryers are even worse.



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During the work period there are many activities undertaken, most of which require you to re-wash your hands after they have been completed. Such activities include but are not limited to: handling used crockery/cutlery, money, garbage, processing or handling raw meat or seafood, smoking or eating, sneezing, blowing your nose, touching your face or other parts of your body, leaving the food preparation area, and using the toilet. As a minimum, your hands should be washed at least every hour. That means during an eight hour work shift a minimum of eight (8) hand washing processes must be carried out.

Clean hands are absolutely vital to ensuring that both cross contamination of food and initial contamination is eliminated as far as practicable and possible. Dirty or contaminated hands can lead to all forms of food contamination issues including enhancing the growth of molds on stored products as diverse as cheese, bread, bread crumbs, meats, vegetables, etc., let alone the transmission of potentially deadly pathogens directly to the food being processed. Note that there is no end to this procedure - clean hands are a permanent and ongoing requirement.



Employee Handbooks

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Employee handbooks are traditional in small, medium and large corporations as a means of creating a uniform culture and distributing important information about a company's pay procedure, holiday schedule and written benefits, just to mention a few. A handbook can be a few photocopied sheets or an attractively printed book. Employee handbooks are excellent tools for employers to set out specific policies for their employees creating an atmosphere of trust as to how the employer will operate its business in connection with its employees. As employers know, your employees are one of your most valuable assets and ensuring that the employee is made aware of what is expected of them on a daily basis creates a sense of professionalism and confidence.

The employee handbook seems like a non-controversial, non-problematic good thing. However, it must be drafted carefully and kept up to date to avoid legal problems. Many employers have discovered that they were held to provisions against their will because of a statement in the handbook or the way it was interpreted.

An example of when a handbook can be more trouble than it is worth is if it is carelessly drafted so that it creates an implied contract that is unwanted by the employer. All too often, employers have written something that's just supposed to sound impressive but has no real

binding effect, only to find that it has become obligated to do something it would rather avoid. If something is described as a corporate credo or a goal, it will probably not be treated as a contract, but you never can tell. Don't express goals unless you're prepared to follow through.

Make sure that you understand the applicable state and federal statutes and that you are in conformity. For instance, a policy against leaves of less than one day might violate the Family and Medical Leave Act or might be tantamount to refusal to make reasonable accommodation to the disabilities of qualified employees, thus violating the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

A first line of defense for the employer is to include a disclaimer in the handbook stating that employees are hired at will, can be discharged as the employer sees fit, and that the handbook information is for guidance only and does not bind the employer to a contract. Such disclaimers must be clear and conspicuous. They can't be buried in small print somewhere in the back of the book; in fact, the first page is an excellent location. When a disclaimer is issued, it doesn't apply to people who were already employees and working under the old policy.

Handbooks can play a useful role in training employees about the employer's expectations and

furnishing a ready source of reference about work rules. An employee facing discipline or discharge can reasonably argue that it's unfair to penalize someone for rule breaking or for substandard performance if that person has never been informed of what was expected or what would constitute adequate performance.

The mere fact that the employer has a system of progressive discipline, spelled out in the handbook, does not stop the employees from working at will. Nevertheless, it makes sense to include a disclaimer explaining the function of the disciplinary system.

It's also a good idea to provide orientation for new employees so they understand the way you do things. It's an even better idea to standardize the orientation process with standard documents for welcoming and instructing new employees. Both the employee and the supervisor who handle the orientation should sign the document so that later on the employee can't claim that he or she was promised lifetime employment if the document clearly states that employment is at will. Employee handbooks are essential for all business owners. Employee handbooks can be as simple or as comprehensive as the employer would like; however, there are certain provisions that should be spelled out in every employee handbook. Implementing a customized employee handbook

for your company is a great way to balance your risk when it comes to making important decisions regarding your employees. If you have questions, consult your legal counsel.



SURVEY

Seventy-five percent of 506 U.S. employees polled in a recent study said they are seeking to leave their current jobs. The top reasons listed were:

43% - Better compensation elsewhere

32% - Improved career opportunities

22% - Dissatisfaction with opportunities at current job

Source: The Society for Human Resource Management, Alexandria, VA and CareerJournal.com, Princeton, NJ



ABOUT US

JMT & Associates, LLC is a full service Human Resources (HR) & Safety solutions provider. We partner with small, mid-size, and large companies to develop and improve HR processes and procedures. We offer extensive "real-world" experience in a variety of industries, including: manufac-

turing, service, union, union-free, profit, not-for-profit, private, and public sectors. Our level of involvement ranges from complete management of your HR needs to providing project-based assistance to your in-house HR person, depending on your specific business requirements. These services range from basic policy development to in-depth HR strategic planning. We begin with a comprehensive HR assessment of your current policies and procedures, then we provide a detailed analysis and a "roadmap of recommendations" to maximize your HR investment. We then provide the necessary follow-up to ensure process effectiveness.

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