



JMT & Associates, LLC

Human Resources Consulting

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PEOPLE POINTERS

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NEWS

Do you offer your employees either a medical/dental or childcare flexible spending account (FSA)?

The IRS issued Notice 2005-42 on May 18, 2005 that requires each employer that sponsors a flexible spending account (FSA) for its employees to decide whether to extend the deadline for reimbursement of health and dependent care expenses and how to communicate any decision. Employees may be given up to two and a half months past the end of the plan year, beginning with the current plan year, to incur reimbursable expenses. Any change to the deadline requires modifying your plan documents.

You are encouraged to contact your plan administrator to discuss the specific details of the Notice and what action steps you should take to comply with the Notice.

If you currently don't offer these plans, you should consider adding a FSA to your benefits package. There are significant benefits to both the company and the employees.



Participative Decision Making

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

Research has found that employees who are asked for their input tend to value their organization more wholeheartedly, which is important to retaining employees.

Research has also learned that **when employees give their opinion on a decision, even if the actual decision is against their opinion, they are likely to support it.** This is particularly true when a decision has a negative impact on employees (such as reduced hours or pay, or a change in policy).

Managers sometimes think that decisiveness is displayed by their making the decisions and then informing their subordinates. While this undoubtedly falls under the purview of their job, it is not usually the best way to lead.

A better way is to **bring into the decision-making process all those who will be impacted by it.** Minimally this means sending an email to everyone, but a more useful approach is to discuss an issue at a staff meeting. They may even provide a better way of handling the situation than the manager first thought.

Participative Decision Making does not mean that the manager no longer makes decisions. It does mean that a wise manager incorporates the opinions of subordinates to get full support.



Job Analysis

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

Why bother with taking the time and expense to conduct a job analysis at your organization? The key advantage is that this process will allow you to find new and more productive ways to get work done. In other words, you must have a basic and thorough understanding of the actual jobs being performed. Without this knowledge, how can you effectively hire people, assign them to certain jobs, train them to perform those jobs, and later evaluate how they are performing?

Job analysis is the process of gathering and organizing detailed information about various jobs at your organization. Job analysis affects both your selection and hiring decisions. It also helps managers more effectively manage people. The results of the analysis detail the skills and abilities needed to perform the



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job. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), job analysis has taken on an even more important role in the selection of new employees. Job analysis also relates to performance appraisals. It is necessary to understand what an employee should be capable of doing in a job before you can assess how well that employee is actually performing. Training and development is also affected, because it provides useful information to better understand the kind of training and development programs that are necessary in your organization. Line supervisors can also benefit by understanding the work-flow processes that characterize their particular work unit.

The job analysis process consists of the following three steps:

1. Determining Information Needs – The exact type and nature of the information depends on both the intended purpose and any constraints, such as time and budget. Examples of the types of information include: general work activities, tools/equipment used, job context, work schedule, and skill requirements.

2. Determining Methods of Obtaining Information – The most common methods are observation of task and job behaviors, interviews with job incumbents, and the use of questionnaires and checklists.

3. Determining Who Will Collect the Information – Most of the time the information is collected by the line supervisor, the HR department and the job analyst. The job analyst could be someone on your staff, or in some cases this component is outsourced to an outside expert.

There are a variety of techniques that can be used. Some of the popular techniques include:

- Narrative job analysis
- Fleishman job analysis system
- Task analysis inventory
- Functional job analysis
- Position analysis questionnaire
- Critical incidents approach

Job analysis is an effective way for you to improve your business. Whether your company is large or small – whether your company produces a product or provides a service, this process should be included in your management plan. There is an investment required, whether in-house staffed or outsourced, but the benefits will outweigh the costs.



Stairways and Ladders

By: The Safety Department

**Code of Federal Regulations:
Part 1926.1050 through
1926.1060**

Stairways and ladders are a major cause of injuries each year. Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP's) and training are critical parts of an employer's responsibility to ensure the safety of its employees.

Below is a brief overview of some ladder and stairway safety guidelines. Following these simple guidelines could prevent an injury or even a fatality in your workplace.

All Ladders:

- Keep free of debris
- Follow load limits
- Use the right ladder for the right job
- Place on flat stable surfaces
- Avoid slippery surfaces



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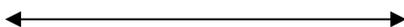
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- Secure ladders, ensure people are detoured from area where ladders are being used
- Clear area above and below ladder
- Do not move ladder while in use
- If using for electrical work, ensure ladder is equipped with nonconductive side-rails
- At a minimum, always use one hand for climbing
- Do not carry a load that is too heavy or could cause imbalance

Stairways:

- Use handrails
- Remove any liquid (rain or spills) from stairs
- If load requires both hands, ensure clear visibility, proceed with caution
- Do not run or jump up or down stairs
- Provide proper lighting to area
- Avoid clutter on stairway or steps
- Repair all broken steps or handrails
- Report unsafe conditions



Employee References

By: Bryan S. Mollohan,
Attorney at Law
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How many times have you received a call from an employer asking for a reference about a former employee's position with your company and his job duties? Additional questions may have included: How well did he perform these duties? How well did he cooperate with management and his co-workers? How would you characterize his abilities? Would you re-hire him? Why did he leave your company?

Although such questions are posed every day, employers are increasingly reluctant to fully and candidly respond to these types of questions. Their fear is of being sued by former employees who believe that their former employer unfairly hampered their job searches by providing negative employment references. This reluctance is justified, as the potential for liability looms in every statement made to a prospective employer about a former employee's job performance or abilities, and may expose an employer to a defamation claim.

Employers can decrease exposure to defamation claims by formalizing their policies and practices for responding to requests for employment references. An employer's policy for responding to requests

for employment references should include the following protective features.

In order to prevent unwittingly making defamatory statements to prospective employers, all employment reference inquiries should be made to human resources personnel. This will ensure that the employer speaks with "one voice."

An employment reference should not be given without the written consent of a former employee. The consent should be obtained at the time of the departing employee's exit interview.

An employment reference should be expressed in writing only, so there is no question about the content of the reference. "Over-the-phone" references should be declined.

An employment reference should identify no more than dates of employment, position held, and salary or wages at the time of termination.

A former employer's response to a request for an employment reference should plainly state that it is the former employer's policy to provide no more than dates of employment, position held, and salary or wage information at the time of termination. By making it known to prospective employers that the former employer, as a matter of policy, refuses to disclose more than this information, a prospective



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employer will have no reason to think that the former employer has anything unfavorable to say about its former employee.

An employer should be certain about the factual circumstances that result in an employee's discharge. The underlying reasons should be documented contemporaneously with the termination decision.

When informing an employee about the reasons for termination, an employer should express only those reasons, which can be reasonably substantiated.

Improper handling of employment references provides former employees with another course of action against their former employers. Employers can readily avoid liability and the expense of defending claims by implementing a defensive policy for responding to inquiries which concern their former employees.

If you have questions, consult your legal counsel.

SURVEY

In a survey of 584 executives, respondents were asked about the types of social activities they commonly participated in with their superiors. They answered:

- 48% Dinner
- 25% Golf and other sporting activities
- 17% None
- 8% Sporting events
- 2% Theater

Source: TheLadders.com, New York

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.

Areas of Expertise: Coaching & Leadership Development, Compensation & Benefits, HR & Safety Compliance, Diversity, Employee Relations, General HR, Health & Safety, HR Assessments, HR Policies & Procedures, HR Strategy & Planning, Labor Relations, Organizational Development, Performance Management, Job Analysis, Job Descriptions, Employee Assessments, and Training.

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: manufacturing, 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

If you or a colleague wishes to be added to this newsletter's email list, please email jmt@jmt-associates.com.