



advantage



Table of Contents

KICKING OFF THE NEW YEAR WITH A KICK! 2

YOUR FRIEND, NOT YOUR FOE! 2

ADAAA – UPDATED RESOURCE AVAILABLE 3

HEALTHY GOALS, HASSLE-FREE 3

EMPLOYEE GRIPES 4

LEGAL WOES AFFECT EMPLOYEES WORK 5

KNOWING YOUR BOUNDARIES AT WORK 5

OSHA: PER-EMPLOYEE CITATIONS FOR PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT VIOLATIONS ... 7

2009 QUICK REMINDERS 7

OOPS: PRESENTATION MISTAKES 7

THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT 9

THE NEED FOR TRUTH 9

FOR YOUR CALENDAR 10

ON MY SOAPBOX 11



advantage



KICKING OFF THE NEW YEAR WITH A KICK!

The start of the New Year is often filled with personal post-holiday recovery, year end financial and inventory considerations, and a variety of other yearly transition tasks or issues. It can be overwhelming and a distraction from kicking off the organization's New Year with positive steps and momentum. This is likely to be especially true after this very difficult 2008. So, what should be done to increase the opportunity to start with a positive and focused workforce and work environment?

1. Review the goals and objectives that have been set, and update all employees on the status of those goals and objectives. Tied into this update can be lists of "what we are doing well," "what we can do better," and "changes we need to make." It's important during this time of economic challenge and uncertainty that organizations proactively communicate with the workforce.
2. Review employment policies and processes, and determine which ones need to be updated and which ones need to be communicated. By starting the year off with a reminder regarding certain policies, the organization can make certain that the workforce stays up-to-date on key ones. This review doesn't have to be comprehensive, but can focus on certain essential policies such as communication and anti-harassment, and certain leave policies. One key issue that many organizations face entering 2009 are the changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the revised regulations for the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The ADA revisions take effect on January 1, 2009, so it is important that management is educated on the impact of those changes on internal organization decisions and actions. The FMLA changes go into effect on January 16, 2009, and also entail several changes to policy, process, and documentation. In both cases, management should be made aware of the broad impact on how they interact with the workforce, as well as specific effects on steps in various processes. (We can help – just call us!)
3. Review the files for any employees who may be facing performance or behavior issues. The timing is good for individual supervisors to assess their staff in light of what they face or anticipate for 2009. This assessment includes reviewing relevant documentation. The year end can also be a good time to determine if the department has the "right people in the right positions" and what options may exist to make that happen.
4. Review training needs and plans for 2009. Training management on the effects of the ADA and the FMLA requirements will be essential to not only protect the organization, but also assure that the workforce is properly managed with limited risk. One thing to remember is that the training on legal issues usually involves management utilizing other skills such as good communications and proper documentation. Evaluate which skills are management's highest priority needs and plan accordingly.
5. Review employee status regarding overtime eligibility. Assessing exempt versus non-exempt status can be sensitive; however, an annual review of each employee's status increases legal wage and hour protection for the organization. The sensitivity comes when having to deal with an employee who has been misclassified in the past, or whose classification should be changed due to changes in their job duties. Because many organizations have gone through layoffs or operational adjustments that have impacted individual employee's job tasks, this status assessment is even more important entering 2009.

There are other actions that organizations can consider entering the New Year, but these five provide a jumpstart by focusing on critical issues that have both immediate and long term impact. It may take some time to address these issues now, letting the calendar be a reminder that certain priorities need to be focused on, resolved, then moved forward. But, starting 2009 with a kick of momentum is worth the effort!

YOUR FRIEND, NOT YOUR FOE!

A recent *Kennedy Publication's* newsletter suggests far fewer engagements for consulting firms, and a *Portland Business Journal* article entitled "Outsourcing Companies Eye Underserved Market" suggests that HR consultants should take full advantage of this tough economy, contact the business owners or CEOs, and offer to replace the HR departments.

We strongly disagree!

HRA prides itself on being a partner to the internal HR function, not a competitor. What we see is opportunity for us to serve internal HR as an extension of your role doing things that you need to have done, but may not have the staff or time to do. We want to help you be successful, not replace you! We can be your ace in the hole, your backroom, or your extra set of capable hands. Clients describe HRA as another HR head to assist in thinking through the best way to handle or approach dicey HR issues that crop up, especially when the organization is stressed and facing difficult challenges. As the impact and value of HR on your organization's operations increases, HR Answers, Inc. is there to walk alongside and support you!

[Click here](#) to read more of why HRA is not your rival.

ADAAA – UPDATED RESOURCE AVAILABLE

Responding to the federal government's changes, as well as to questions from many of you, our kind readers and clients, we've updated our ADA Compliance resource guide to cover the changes resulting from the ADAAA, what an employer needs to know and say, and how to say it.

Our ADAAA Resource Guide covers:

- Implications of the ADA and the 2009 Amendments
- Definitions (Reasonable Accommodation, Hardship, Episodic Impairments, etc.)
- Pre-Employment (Essential Functions, Policies, Background Checks, Medical Exams, etc.)
- Requests for Accommodation
- ADA Compliance Responsibilities for HR Departments
- Management Conversation Scripts (absence vs. tardy, corrective action, worker's comp, etc.), and
- ADA connection and interplay with other federal laws.

We know this is a big deal for our clients and most employers, so we want to make sure you have easy access to the material. In light of the economy and the high need to stay in compliance, we are offering this resource at a special price of \$50.

Of course, you all know by now that ADAAA is not the only change coming our way this January. Be looking for our email announcement about our updated FMLA Guide as well. We are in the final editing stage with this Guide, which will also be enhanced with scripts for HR and managers to use, and it will be available to you for only \$95.

As always, if you have any questions about whether these materials are ones you need, give us a call. We'll walk you through it and answer your questions.

Special note to our Advantage Plan Clients (standard service program): These resources are available to you at no additional fee on our website by using your login and password. If you have any trouble finding them, please let us know by calling 503-885-9815, or 877-287-4476, or email ewilson@hranswers.com.

HEALTHY GOALS, HASSLE-FREE

New Year's resolutions are easy to make and even easier to break. For those of you who dislike the struggle to honor your good intentions, here is a collection of easy, no-hassle health goals. Pick a few. You won't need enormous reserves of willpower to master these good habits.

- Keep emergency phone numbers handy so you're prepared for the unexpected.
- Practice deep breathing whenever you're feeling tense or fatigued.
- Sit up straight. It helps reduce cramping and backache caused by slumping.
- Walk tall. Good posture can give you the appearance of being fit and confident.
- Buckle up for every car trip - it can cut your risk of accidental death in half.

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@hranswers.com.



- Go to bed early enough to get 7 to 8 hours of sleep every 24 hours.
- Get “out of yourself” with community volunteer activities. You’ll find endless opportunities listed in the yellow pages under “volunteer.”
- Be happy with your job or take steps that will help you enjoy it more.
- Make every day a fresh start. Don’t worry about past mistakes or disappointments.
- Lighten up. We’re only human, and tidiness and perfection can be boring. That’s not to say you shouldn’t clean up your act a little.
- It is not about stopping or quitting something. It is not negative self talk. Reverse your thought process. Your brain works better if you tell it to START doing something (the new behavior), rather than to STOP doing something (the old behavior). So what gets reinforced is the new activity...not stopping the old activity.

EMPLOYEE GRIPES

How to Respond During Tough Times

The American workplace is quite different than it was six months ago, and is drastically changed from even a year ago. The global financial meltdown has workers merely nervous on a good day, fearful for their jobs on an average day, and perhaps downright ill and maybe even angry, when their fears are about to be realized.

In Portland, Oregon, employees who had been working for a car dealership went to the owner asking for their final paychecks. The owner replied, “I have them and I could give you the paychecks, but they would bounce.” In Chicago, 250 unionized employees of Republic Windows and Doors staged a sit-in that began when the organization shut down with just three days’ notice. Management said it could not borrow the working capital necessary to keep the doors open. Furious workers say that’s just cover to open a new plant in Iowa. And they say they’re owed 60 days’ notice of the shutdown—plus severance pay—under federal law and their union contract.

Labor experts say this kind of ugliness can be avoided, even in today’s panic-inducing economy. The solution to staying productive (and in business) during tough times lies beyond labor relations and beyond compliance with the law.

Employers who plan on surviving the recession know that managers must engage employees now, acknowledging the fear and anger that can pollute the workplace.

Here are seven common complaints managers are likely to hear, along with some responses that can promote harmony in the office and on the shop floor. Please feel free to share them with your organization’s supervisors. (**Editors Note:** These activities are positive actions that all managers and supervisors should be doing even when times aren’t tough. Employers want happy employees; otherwise, they could have reasons to go to outsiders to help solve their challenges and concerns)

1. “My boss doesn’t respect me.”
 - Get to know your employees as people.
 - Treat them as adults and respect their privacy.
 - Recognize that employees have lives outside work and try to accommodate those needs.
2. “Nobody appreciates my hard work.”
 - Provide regular feedback and recognition.
 - Mix an equal number of “thank-you’s” and “good jobs” with your critiques. Ask employees for their ideas, and then use them.
 - Thank and reward employees while they’re in the act of performing well; don’t wait for their next review.
3. “There are different rules for different people.”
 - Focus on being fair and consistent with the workload, pay, perks, and appreciation.
 - Be aware of the legal risks of making work decisions based on race, age, gender, religion, or disability status.
4. “My performance reviews are useless.”
 - Provide continuous feedback. Nothing in the review should come as a surprise.
 - Involve employees in setting goals, and adopt a development mind-set.

- Focus on specific employee behaviors (and cite documented examples). Don't criticize the person's character traits.
 - Conduct reviews on time.
5. "My boss micromanages my work."
- Realize that employees are not happy when they can't make decisions. Delegate when possible.
 - Create an environment where employees have more say in how they do their work.
6. "We have too many meetings."
- Institute a time limit on meetings. Start and stop on time.
 - Use a meeting facilitator.
7. "I hate coming to work."
- Ask employees what specifically would improve their outlook. Try to meet them at least halfway.
 - Consider how you can enrich jobs (or juggle tasks among employees) to make them more motivated.
 - Studies show that many employees suffer from "Sunday Night Blues." What can your organization, department, and/or team do to make Monday/s more enjoyable and a bit less stressful?

LEGAL WOES AFFECT EMPLOYEES WORK

When you go out for the evening with four of your friends, it's likely that at least two in your group are worried about debt, according to Bankrate.com's 2008 Financial Literacy Series. Sixty-one percent of Americans have some type of debt, excluding mortgages. The type most frequently cited (by 45% of those surveyed) is credit card debt.

When it comes to attitudes about debt and saving money, Americans seem to exhibit a split personality. Ninety-one percent say they believe that debt can be controlled by disciplined saving and spending, yet 72% also say that they believe debt is just part of modern life and difficult to avoid.

Surprisingly, only 10% of Americans who carry debt say they are "really worried" about the amount and aren't sure how they're going to pay it back. Bottom line: about 25 million working-class households have to deal with unmanageable debt. Experts warn that with the current economic crunch, people should be taking a good, hard look at what they owe and coming up with a plan for whittling it down.

Employers need to be thoughtful that if employees are feeling overwhelmed by their debt, it could be impacting their daily work. It could show up in many ways, such as absenteeism, tardiness, distraction, strained communication with co-workers, moonlighting, increased conversation about money, requests for additional hours and overtime, and requests for pay advances. Overwhelming debt can even go so far as to encourage employees to think about theft of money, supplies, or equipment.

Many of these situations could benefit from employee education about options around their finances. Some employees might be well served by connecting with resources provided by an Employee Assistance Program provider. As a reminder, HRA would encourage you to not allow pay advances. While it may be tempting in an effort to assist employees, it sets a precedent you don't want. It can be difficult to collect and adds one more odious chore for your accounting and payroll staff. Remember, you're not a bank (well, at least most of you aren't).

KNOWING YOUR BOUNDARIES AT WORK

Sally in Sales refuses to back down from a challenge. She refuses to take no for an answer. Amber in Accounting leaves no stone unturned. She leaves the office late when necessary. Did you hear she's leaving her husband?

Understanding co-workers' skills can be powerful — knowing their scuttlebutt can be problematic. Employers want employees who can share information with others, and having the ability to carry on a conversation is crucial in building relationships with fellow employees. But boundaries must exist!

There is a border separating professional and personal relationships, but it is often difficult to locate. For many, this is difficult terrain and hard to patrol within smaller, informal offices. Experts suggest that conversational boundaries help to determine the reputation as well as preserve the integrity of an individual and/or staff.

Whether you're an executive, manager, or hourly employee, taking the following advice will help to ensure that conversations with co-workers don't distract from a productive, positive workplace.

Beware of being too informal. Some organizations clarify "appropriate" office communication, but most codes of conduct mention only potential legal headaches such as sexual harassment and invasion of privacy. There's generally no clear rule about where to draw the line, so a good rule of thumb is to avoid issues that might make someone uncomfortable. Such topics as romance, physical appearance, health, race, religion, and personal finance should be avoided.

This means no more gossip. Many of us heard from our mothers, "Those who talk to you about others will also talk about you to others." Gossip and other inappropriate conversations occur in places that feel informal, such as elevators, hallways, a bathroom, and office spaces. The key is that no one should ever get the false sense of security that they're off duty in these locations. Pretend your personal microphone is always on. Don't say something if you don't want it heard or repeated. Picture what you've said being repeated on the evening news or the radio. Making unkind remarks damages the other person, but it also influences how others perceive you. These negative effects can have an impact on your reputation and future advancement in your job and in the community.

But making such remarks isn't always the concern; co-workers should also have prevention as their goal. While it's natural for employees to show interest in one another's lives, someone has to be courageous enough to cut off a co-worker when warranted. One strategy is to turn off-topic conversations back to work-related issues as quickly as possible. An unwillingness to reveal too much personal information, or to listen to another person reveal it, shouldn't be seen as unfriendly. One suggestion to stop the conversation is to simply smile and say, "Let's not go there."

Just as informal places can get co-workers into trouble, so can seemingly informal methods of communication. Employees should treat email as broadcasted words that can be read and printed. Email is the preference of many when it comes to passing around rumors, gossip, and tasteless jokes to multiple people. If you think before you speak, and then think one more time before you hit the "send" button, you have reduced your risk of crossing the boundaries as well as minimizing offensive remarks.

Forge office friendships with care. When you're at the office for around 2,000 hours a year, you're bound to develop friendships with co-workers. Some office mates may become confidants with whom you share personal details.

Friends are nice at work, but make sure you know and completely trust this co-worker friend because it's a risk any time someone has knowledge about details you don't want made public. When co-worker friendships begin to fizzle, the parties often still have to see each other daily and that can be uncomfortable, especially if you are constantly looking over your shoulder or walking on eggshells thinking that someone is about to drop the bomb on or about you. Also, keep in mind that office walls can be thin, so it's best to share personal information during non-working hours. Have you ever noticed that if you talk in a regular voice no one pays attention, but as soon as you start whispering then people's ears start to perk up? Also consider that sometimes a close friendship in the office can cause a reluctance to express concerns. Employees whose friendships interfere with objectivity need to create some distance so those difficult conversations can take place.

Expect boundary differences. The workplace not only combines people of different backgrounds, ages, talents, and skills, but also folks with different boundary lines. Employees with wide open boundaries often are brash and don't notice they're sharing too much information, while people with more limited boundaries often are of the mindset that it is not courteous to shut someone down, but they would never share that much personal information (TMI).

Getting along with others at work is often a matter of being flexible and willing to compromise. It's also important to be open-minded of individual differences. Individual differences are what makes each of us special and we bring our unique skills and talents to the table for the department/organization.

Employ tact. If you have a challenge with a co-worker, address what you can do to solve it. Talk to the individual directly, privately, and as an adult. Any time you talk behind someone's back, this makes the situation worse and often forces other co-workers to take sides. If a co-worker says something that offends or upsets you, try to respond instead of react. Remember, we *choose* how we react to someone or to a situation and usually our reaction is immediate and emotional. This is definitely a time to think first and then respond. When we react to something, we are more likely to say or do things we might later regret. When we are responding it is usually more planned and controlled, and definitely leads to fewer misses and communication challenges.

Those of you in HR and management roles are even more restricted in your personal sharing, and you must be the one who cautions others to observe the guidelines identified above.

OSHA: PER-EMPLOYEE CITATIONS FOR PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT VIOLATIONS

On December 12, 2008, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced a final rule clarifying that employers who fail to provide covered employees with personal protective equipment (PPE) and appropriate training are subject to liability on a per-employee basis. The new rule does not require employers to provide any new type of PPE or training. However, OSHA may now cite an employer with a separate violation for each instance where it does not provide a covered employee with appropriate PPE. The new rule takes effect in January 2009.

Although all employers should make workplace safety a priority, employers specifically subject to federal and state PPE requirements should be aware that the new rule ramps up OSHA's citation authority and may lead to costly penalties for violations. [Federal OSHA](#), [Oregon OSHA](#) and the [Washington State Department of Labor and Industries \(WSHA\)](#) all provide online guidance for employers who need assistance complying with PPE regulations.

2009 QUICK REMINDERS

We want to take a quick moment and remind you of a few items you'll want to take care of, including the following:

1. The IRS has stated that the standard mileage reimbursement rate for businesses to use beginning in January will be \$.55 per mile.
2. Effective Jan 1, 2009, Oregon's minimum wage will increase to \$8.40 per hour, and Washington's will increase to \$8.55 per hour. Of course you should check in your state for any changes. With this annual change comes the need for employers to post current employment posters.
3. It's a new year and you need new compliance posters! Failing to display employment law posters can place your organization at risk for fines, but what you may not know is that fines can range between \$100 and \$7,000 per incident.

The best move is to have all the mandatory state, federal, and OSHA requirements together and in an all-in-one poster. There are several organizations out there that can help you, but we suggest that you visit our partner, Poster Compliance Center. You'll benefit from their comprehensive offerings, great customer service, and – if you let them know HR Answers sent you – special pricing! Plus, they provide a guarantee and they back it with money - that's something that no other provider does! The Poster Compliance Center will send you new posters whenever there is a change, if you subscribe to their service. Click on the following link from our website to receive a sizeable discount: <http://www.postercompliance.com/serviceplus/hranswers/>.

OOPS: PRESENTATION MISTAKES

Many of you HR professionals are responsible for training and educational programming for your employees. Whether the topic is job specific or more of the softer skills there are some definite “don'ts” that you want to be aware of and avoid. A book called *Visual Selling: Capture the Eye and the Customer Will Follow* by Paul LeRoux and Peg Corwin outlines some of the common mistakes presenters can make and some possible remedies. You might want to copy this page and use it the next time you are in front of employees or executives.

Mistake #1: Overlooking “Murphy”

If it can go wrong, it will go wrong. This mistake basically means that you walk into the room where you're going to present and something is wrong. One story shared is about a multimillion-dollar sales presentation to which “Murphy” paid a visit—in the form of missing curtains and a boardroom window overlooking a huge pool surrounded by female swimmers (you can guess what the attendees looked at instead of the presenter).

Remedy: Visit the presentation room at least a day in advance to make sure it will meet your needs. Sometimes when we are inside our own organizations we do not really look at the room from the presenter standpoint. If you're not on-site, can someone take pictures from different angles and email them to you? If that is not an option, please ask someone to describe in detail what the room looks like and the various resources within the room.

Mistake #2: Delivering Split Presentations

When presenters stand at a distance from the screen, they can create a challenge for the attendees because their attention is divided. Do they look at you or the screen? Presenters don't build as much rapport with someone whose focus is repeatedly divided.

Remedy: The easy answer is to stand next to the screen and present a united message. If you are someone who walks around or your overheads are simply intended to supplement the program content (depending on whether there are handouts or not), be clear up front about what you have designed and how you will present so you can establish appropriate expectations for your audience.

Mistake #3: Positioning Yourself Incorrectly

Right-handed presenters usually stand with the screen to their right. This allows them to point more easily. However, people read left to right. Presenters are unable to capitalize on this fact when the screen is to their right.

Remedy: Position a screen, flip chart, or easel stand to your left. Then people will naturally start with their eyes on you and return to you after glancing at the screen.

Mistake #4: Seating Decision Makers in the Wrong Chairs

In presentations, seating arrangements matter. The first chair to the presenter's left is the best viewing point for a decision maker (if you have one in the room) and the first chair to the presenter's right is the least desirable. Depending on the number of people in attendance, whether there are small group activities or exercises these elements also influence how you will set up the room (U-shape, theatre, classroom, etc.)

Remedy: Obviously, if needed, place the decision maker in the first chair to your left. Plant your feet firmly perpendicular to your group and be conscious that your body will continuously try to rotate toward the screen. Don't let it, or you'll give more eye contact to the non-decision makers. Otherwise match the room to the activities and to your style of presentation. If you move around, make sure you have room. Otherwise, you'll feel trapped and that impacts your delivery.

Mistake #5: Dimming the Lights

Darkness induces drowsiness and mental wandering. Plus it eliminates the best part of a presentation—you.

Remedy: Keep the room lights on or dim them slightly. If multiple light switches are available, turn the lights off directly above the screen. (Of course, since the lights are on, you will need to design slides that are visible at higher light levels.) Lighting offers impact to the topic and the presentation style.

Mistake #6: Promoting the Screen

Too many presenters feel that the information on the screen is the real "star." But the audience needs to see you as well—you pull them into the story unfolding on the screen and bring the message to life. As an American Indian proverb goes, "Move closer to the campfire, so I can see your words." And with your aging population it just makes good sense. If people cannot see what you have put together (too small or too much), they start to opt out of the program.

Remedy: Bring the lights up enough so that both you and your visuals are clearly seen.

Mistake #7: Playing with Pointers and Other Toys/Holding Remotes or Clickers

Remember, it's human nature to play with objects in your hands. If you're nervous, you'll speed up and change the slides faster than you should. Besides, holding a remote causes you to gesture less. Anything you hold in your hands can become a plaything with which you'll fidget. You might as well twirl a baton, since your hands gripping some object will distract people just as much.

Remedy: Place your laptop or remote on the lectern or a table under the screen. Keep your hands free to gesture by not holding a pointer, marker, or remote. Sometimes props can be useful, so think carefully about what you are using and how often.

Mistake #8: Blocking the Screen

Do not turn toward the visual and point with your right arm. This causes you to partially block the screen from viewers to your right.

Remedy: This may sound nitpicky (we know you're not trying out for a game show host or sidekick), but point at the screen with your fingers together, palm down and parallel to the floor. Point to the screen with only your left arm, but when you gesture, use both arms. It looks better and flows more easily which makes it easier on the attendees.

Mistake #9: Positioning the Lectern to the Side

Usually, in presentations, two items dominate the room—the screen and the lectern. Too many presenters place the lectern well away from the screen (causing the split presentation), and then they hide behind the "box." To "take cover" defeats the whole idea of selling visually and easy conversation.

Remedy: Position the lectern, screen, and presenter together, so the presenter can interact closely with the screen and use the nearby lectern to hold content paperwork or the remote to change slides. If you're the presenter, stand in the center of the room or stage, with the screen to the left and the lectern to the right.

Mistake #10: Reading Someone Else's Text Slides

If you take over someone else's text-heavy presentation at the last minute, you face an uphill battle. By just reading the text slides, you'll put your audience to sleep.

Remedy: Use different words from what appears on the screen. Being enthusiastic about your topic helps but you also need to have pictures in your presentation. Many learn by visual cues. You need to have variety in the presentation so as to tap into each participant, engage them in your topic/presentation, and keep them wanting more.

Good luck on your next presentation. We hope you knock 'em dead!

THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

"Always tell the truth. That way, you don't have to remember what you said."

– Mark Twain

"Snow and adolescence are the only problems that disappear if you ignore them long enough."

– Earl Wilson

"Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; remember that what you now have was once among the things you only hoped for."

– Epicurus

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."

– Albert Einstein

"No great discovery was ever made without a bold guess."

– Isaac Newton

"People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing - that's why we recommend it daily"

– Zig Ziglar

THE NEED FOR TRUTH

It's well known that e-mails are a source of misinterpretation and miscommunication because they lack nonverbal and behavioral cues. However, two new studies at Lehigh University reveal that e-mail is the most deceptive form of communication in the workplace. Perhaps more surprising, though, is the finding that people feel justified in lying when using e-mail.

In one study, MBA students were given \$89 to divide between themselves and a fictional party, who knew only that the amount of money to be divided was between \$5 and \$100. The students sent e-mails to the fictional parties stating the amount of money to be divided and how much the other party would get. However, the students using e-mail lied 92% of the time about the total amount being divided, while students who used pen and paper lied only 64% of the time. In another study in which the students were more familiar with whom they were e-mailing, researchers wondered whether the familiarity would reduce the e-mailers' impulse to lie. But the lies continued at about the same rate.

"These findings are consistent with our other work that shows that e-mail communication decreases the amount of trust and cooperation we see in professional group work, and increases the negativity in performance evaluations, all as opposed to pen-and-paper systems," says researcher Terri Kurtzberg. "People seem to feel more justified in acting in self-serving ways when typing as opposed to writing."

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Open up your Daytimers, computer calendars, Palm Pilots, and of course those Blackberries. 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 Melissa Sambuceto at MSambuceto@hranswers.com, or simply register online at www.hranswers.com and click on the "Workshop Registration" tab at the top of the homepage.

JANUARY

International Creativity, National Get Organized Month, National Glaucoma Awareness, National Mentoring, National Personal Self-Defense Awareness, and National Skating Month.

Jan. 1-2 **New Years: HRA Offices Will Be Closed**

Jan. 7 **HRA Workshop (Breakfast Briefing)**
Facing the Revised FMLA Regulations
HRA Tualatin Office
8:00am-11:00am

Jan. 12 National Clean Off Your Desk Day

Jan. 14 **HRA Workshop**
Get Organized
HRA Tualatin Office
8:30am-3:30pm

Jan. 19 Martin Luther King Day

Jan. 21 National Hugging Day

Jan. 22 Celebration of Life Day

Jan. 22 **HRA Workshop (Breakfast Briefing)**
HR Dashboards
HRA Tualatin Office
7:30am – 9:30am

Jan. 24 Compliment Day

Jan. 30 Fun at Work Day

ON MY SOAPBOX

The CNN website is a treasure trove of information, vital and obscure. During a recent visit, I saw a slide show memorializing those we lost in 2008: Sir Edmund Hillary, Bobby Fischer, Heath Ledger, Roy Scheider, William F. Buckley, Jr., Arthur C. Clarke, Charlton Heston, Sydney Pollack, Yves Saint Laurent, Bo Diddley, Jim McKay, Tim Russert (one of my favorites), Cyd Charisse, George Carlin, Jessie Helms, Tony Snow, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Bernie Mac, Issac Hayes, Paul Newman, Eartha Kitt, and Michael Crichton, just to name a few.

I had two thoughts. The first was about our sense of loss when a public figure dies. Most of us never even thought of meeting any of these people, but because of their presence in our lives through stage, screen, music, or news, we felt as though we knew a bit or a lot about them. Some of them were constants in our days, based on our preferences for movies, music listening, or the news. Or it may be that they were a weekly presence because of our penchant for a particular program or watching the White House press conferences. We may have admired them, just been interested in their comments or activities, or unable to escape them because they enjoyed more than 15 minutes of fame. We knew they were here on earth, and at some level we took notice of them being here.

My second thought was, "But what about...?" What about all those individuals who also left us during the year who were not public figures; but people, oh so important, to all their family members and friends.

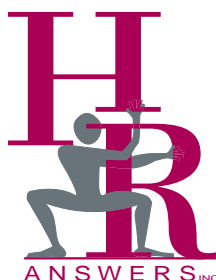
What would our memorial list look like if we created one about all the people we personally lost over a year's time? There would be relatives who are not celebrating the holidays with us this year. There would be friends who succumbed to an illness, old age, or an inexplicable accident. There would be acquaintances or business associates whom we were accustomed to encountering at the various neighborhood or industry gatherings. We will miss their smiles, their words, and their spot in our lives.

These people are not likely to make any year-end memorial list, but they need to be remembered, treasured, and talked about because they played important roles in the fabric of our existence. They were friends, mentors, guides, and family; they were the signposts of our lives and we will miss them.

And of course, their loss is a reminder to us all to value these relationships, tell the people important to us how much we care about them, and vow to do a better job in 2009 of recognizing and acknowledging the individuals who add luster and depth to our lives. It is always time for "I love you" and "You matter to me." Don't let the opportunity get away. It isn't something we can ever get back.

Here's hoping that your 2009 is a joyful year filled with many new positive and celebratory memories, and no regrets about words left unsaid!

- Judy Clark, President



"Whatever the Question"

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

WWW.HRANSWERS.COM