



# advantage



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## BUDGET TIME AGAIN?

It's that time of year again, when you're sitting in your office with pen and paper, the calculator, the computer, printouts from accounting, proposals from service providers, and on and on.

There is so much work, and a few prayers too, during budgeting time. It can be a lengthy and difficult process, however it does give an organization the opportunity to think about the direction it's headed, employee and management development, and services and projects that might be appropriate for next year.

Perhaps there is an HR project work you have identified. Let us know!! Typically, we assist organizations by handling assignments where outside objectivity and/or technical expertise is needed. Some of the projects we specialize in are:

- Pay or salary research (using our extensive library of published salary surveys) or salary structure design;
- Development or revision of employee handbooks or policy manuals;
- Drafting job descriptions;
- Developing an incentive plan that ties your pay program to actual employee or department performance;
- Surveying employees to get their perspective on workplace practices, policies, and/or benefits;
- Training programs that increase supervisory/managerial skills, enhance communication or team building, provide awareness of harassment; and,
- Labor relations assistance.

If this is the year that your employee count will cross one of the critical headcount thresholds that changes your compliance requirements (ADA, FMLA, AAP, OFLA, ERISA, etc.), we can also help you identify those needs and meet the new requirements.

We encourage you to call us and learn about the resources available to aid in your project work (e.g., manuals and packets, research resources or on-line computer services, library materials, etc.). There is no charge for any member of our staff to meet with you to talk about the work you're planning for next year. Our goal is to help you build success from within, and our promise is to be as focused on your success as we are on our own.

We wish you a profitable and productive 2009 and hope that we have an opportunity to aid you in building an even more successful HR function.

## DELIVERING BAD NUMBERS

With the burden of bad numbers growing heavier each day, leaders of organizations large and small are undoubtedly wondering what "spin" to put on their situations. Yet another "perfect storm"? Yet another "challenge against headwinds"?

But 'spin' is the last approach executives should be using at this critical time. The best approach is one that is straightforward and direct. Discard the hype and instead focus on the three C's of effective speaking: be calm, clear, and concise. This is the advice Anett D. Grant, president of Executive Speaking Inc., suggests to her clients.

Being calm is critical when the news is disappointing. To achieve this calmness, Grant recommends speaking with a steady pace, making sure your eye contact is in five-second intervals — no rapid scanning or avoiding eye contact altogether — and making sure your voice goes down at the end of sentences. If you raise your voice at the end of each sentence, you sound tentative, seeking approval.

Being clear is crucial when the bad numbers are big and complex. Being clear means presenting your news in terms of key messages, with supporting details, and using words your audience understands. This is not a time to “data dump,” put on a slick sales hat, or use big fancy words that people do not understand or that give the impression of a cover up.

To achieve this clarity, Grant recommends answering these basic questions before clicking on the PowerPoint: Who are you talking to? What do you want to say? What do they want to hear? How do you reconcile what you want to say with what they want and need to hear? The goal and the most important question is: What message do you want your employees to walk away with?

The key to communicating complexity is organization, said Grant. You should strive to package your points in ways that resonate with your audience. While Latin American and European executives may want background and context, American executives tend to want “just the facts.”

Being concise is essential when you want to communicate the whole story, not just a lot of random explanations and points. Grant offers that “Being concise means getting to the point: no big preambles, no beating around the bush, no rambling, and no drifting off into endless tangents of what may be somewhat relevant but not absolutely critical.

To achieve concise communication, Grant recommends thinking of your topic in terms of concept questions, perhaps four or five per 20-minute presentation. Once you have defined concept questions, you are more likely to get to the point and stay focused.

“When you pose the right questions, you are setting the thinking at the right level. A good rule of thumb that is suggested is to focus on what questions for upward communication and how questions for downward communication.”

Special appreciation to Anett Grant for allowing HRA to reproduce the article. To learn more visit: <http://www.ExecutiveSpeaking.net>.

## EXPECTED AGE OF RETIREMENT ... AND WORKING IN RETIREMENT

What is the age at which American workers are planning to retire? Is that age changing? Why do some workers continue working beyond the usual retirement age?

The 2008 Retirement Confidence Survey® answers these and other questions. Here are some of the results:

- Workers of all ages appear to be planning to retire later, on average, than similarly aged workers were a decade ago, in 1998. In particular, the percentage planning to retire at age 66 or older has increased for almost every age group.

### Expected Age at Retirement

	All Workers		Ages 25–34		Ages 35–44		Ages 45–55		Ages 55+	
	1998	2008	1998	2008	1998	2008	1998	2008	1998	2008
Less than 60	24%	11%	30%	19%	25%	10%	20%	10%	11%	2%
Ages 60–64	25%	21%	20%	21%	23%	18%	29%	24%	38%	22%
Age 65	25%	24%	25%	25%	25%	29%	23%	23%	22%	18%
Age 66 or older	9%	30%	7%	21%	10%	32%	10%	28%	12%	38%
Never retire	9%	6%	8%	6%	12%	6%	10%	7%	6%	8%
Don't know/Refused	85%	7%	10%	6%	5%	5%	8%	7%	10%	11%

Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Mathew Greenwald & Associates, Inc., 1998 and 2008 Retirement Confidence Surveys

- Sixty-five percent of workers under age 55 expect to work for pay after retirement, compared with 54% of workers age 55 or older.
- Among those planning to work in retirement, women are more likely to cite keeping health insurance or other benefits (64% of women versus 50% of men) and wanting money to make ends meet (56% of women versus 38% of men) as major reasons for continuing to work.
- Men and women are equally likely to expect to work for pay in retirement (62% of men versus 63% of women).

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](mailto:djeffries@hranswers.com).

## Major Reasons for Working in Retirement

	All Workers	Men	Women
Wanting to stay active and involved	64%	62%	67%
Keeping health insurance or other benefits	57	50	64
Enjoying working	49	48	49
Wanting money to make ends meet	47	38	56
Wanting money to buy extras	38	34	42
Trying a different career	16	18	13

Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute and Mathew Greenwald & Associates, Inc., 2008 Retirement Confidence Survey.

We believe the next set of questions an employer would want to ask is, “What incentives might make workers delay retirement? What are the most effective actions employers could take to encourage workers to delay retirement?”

First and foremost, workers want to feel they are needed, according to survey results that appear in the July, 2008, *EBRI Issue Brief*. When asked what opportunities would be most effective in persuading them to delay retirement, workers most often said feeling truly needed for an assignment (29% say it is one of the *top three* most effective, 12% say it is *the* most effective). Other incentives that retirees rank highly, according to the survey:

- Receiving a full pension while working part time (24% top three, 9% most), a pay increase (22% top three, 7% most).
- Continuing company-subsidized health insurance at the same level as full-time workers (21% top three, 5% most).
- Receiving a partial pension while working part time (21% top three, 6% most).

No other incentives were ranked among the top three by 20% or more of retirees. The full list is below for your review.

### Retiree Ranking of Most Effective Opportunities

	Top Three Summary	Most Effective	2 <sup>nd</sup> Most Effective	3 <sup>rd</sup> Most Effective
Feeling truly needed for an assignment	29%	12%	10%	7%
Allowing you to receive your full pension while working part time	24%	9%	8%	7%
A pay increase	22%	7%	8%	7%
Continuing to receive company subsidized health insurance benefits at the same level as full-time workers while you work part time	21%	5%	8%	8%
Allowing you to receive a partial pension while working part time so that your total income remains the same	21%	6%	7%	7%
Being able to work seasonally or on a contract basis	18%	5%	6%	7%
Allowing you to lock in the pension benefits you had already earned so you could be sure the company could not modify or reduce them	18%	6%	6%	6%
Allowing you to do work you feel is more meaningful, such as teaching or mentoring or improving existing services	17%	4%	7%	6%
Being able to work part time rather than full time	15%	4%	5%	6%
Giving you the option to telecommute	14%	4%	5%	5%
Being able to take time off for extended periods of time, such as one or two months	12%	2%	5%	5%
A one-time cash bonus	10%	2%	4%	5%

## Retiree Ranking of Most Effective Opportunities

	Top Three Summary	Most Effective	2 <sup>nd</sup> Most Effective	3 <sup>rd</sup> Most Effective
Being able to compress your work week into three or four days so that your weekends are longer	9%	2%	4%	4%
Receiving training that will enable you to move into new areas of the company	8%	1%	3%	3%
Receiving additional paid time off each year	8%	1%	3%	4%
Being able to take a paid sabbatical	6%	2%	2%	2%
Changing your position to decrease your management responsibilities and increase the amount of time you spend in technical or production work	6%	2%	2%	2%
Protecting you against the possibility of a lower pension payment due to a change in interest rates	5%	2%	2%	2%
Being able to shift your work hours from week to week so they better fit with activities in your personal life	4%	1%	1%	2%

Established in 1978, EBRI is an independent nonprofit organization committed exclusively to data dissemination, policy research, and education on economic security and employee benefits.

The 2008 Retirement Confidence Survey® was sponsored by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute and Mathew Greenwald & Associates. Full results for the survey, now in its 18<sup>th</sup> year, are available at <http://www.ebri.org/surveys/rcs/2008/>.

The Retiree Ranking survey involved responses from 4,981 workers in aerospace and defense industry companies who retired in 2003 or later and who were between ages 55 and 65 at the time of the survey. The full report is available online at [http://www.ebri.org/pdf/briefspdf/EBRI\\_IB\\_07-2008.pdf](http://www.ebri.org/pdf/briefspdf/EBRI_IB_07-2008.pdf).

### THE CEO CORNER BY DONALD R. WALKER, CMC

## THE IMPACT OF THE POLITICAL CLIMATE TO EMPLOYERS

Political changes are on the horizon that will significantly impact *every* organization's human resources activities. Organizations are likely to see a harsh business climate due to proposed legislative action that, coupled with the economic downturn, will further complicate employee relations and positive business results.

Here's a snapshot of what may be coming your way over the next several months:

- A resurgence of union organizing efforts. The **immediate** and initial concern is the proposed passage of legislation that would require employers to be neutral when confronted with a union organizing drive. This legislation would also eliminate private employee voting and elections, replacing them with only card signing as necessary to establish a union's right to represent your employees. Should this legislation pass, it will also increase the penalties for employers who violate its requirements. Coupled with a change in the White House that closely aligns leadership with organized labor, the result may be a significant swing upwards in organized labor's opportunities.
- Employees may gain the right to *individually bargain* over the number of hours and times the employee is required to work.
- Damages for gender, religion, and disability discrimination could increase to the level of race discrimination with the repeal of damage limitations, making it much more expensive for employers to be found at fault.
- Protection for employees' gender identity and/or sexual orientation may be broadened.
- The statute of limitations for pay discrimination claims may be reversed. *Each new paycheck* could then be seen as a potential act of discrimination, allowing employees to wait until just before exit or retirement to raise a concern, and be awarded years of back pay in a successful claim.

How can you as a prudent leader and CEO respond in light of these potential changes and their impact? It's important to be aware of them so you can contact your legislators and have an active voice as they consider this legislation. It's equally important to identify its specific implications for your organization. And, because you cannot change certain practices once union organization activities have begun, it's important to establish positive employee relations *now*.

We recommend that you look ahead and take action now! There are at least two ways to start taking steps in the right direction:

- An **HR Audit**. Provides an outside evaluation of current human resource policies, practices, and procedures. This process will identify areas of full compliance, current problem areas, and opportunities for improvement. It can look at the HR-related knowledge and capabilities of front-line supervisors, who often bear the daily practical brunt of legal changes on a daily basis. If you currently have supervisors who are unskilled, uninterested in fulfilling the role of supervisor, or behaving in a manner contrary to good HR risk management, you can effectively step in now, address those deficiencies and prevent future issues.
- **Proactive training for supervisors and managers** aimed at reducing the risk of union activity and increasing supervisory competence is critical. By focusing on leadership and communication skills, the training can have a broad, emotional impact on employees' perspective on their organization, reducing the dissatisfaction and helping to avert increased interest in union representation. This training assists supervisory and management staff with developing connections and maintaining positive relationships with the employees. They will not only learn to *do the right things*; they learn to *do them in the right way*.

We want to help. Please call us to have a **complimentary** discussion of strategy and options as you face these approaching changes in your workplace.

## A WORD FROM THE WISE™ CALL THE BLUFF!

Great poker players know how to see one coming and how to make it work for them—the Bluff! After years of bargaining with unions and employees, knowing how to see and use the bluff also becomes a great tool. That is, it's a great tool as long as you understand the pros and cons of each bluff. For example, telling your boss that "I'll walk if you don't give me a raise" might get you that raise, or might get you shown the door.

For many organizations, the bluff is unfortunately now becoming a common employee ploy in the workplace. An employee throws out legal terms or even threatens legal action hoping for a knee-jerk response, or a "fold," by the employer. Knowing what, when, and how to respond has become essential for any organization's management. It's time to call the bluff!

For instance, during a disciplinary discussion, an employee threatens the organization with a list of broad allegations, laws, and damages, or maybe even an assertion of "wrongful discharge." The employee may then, or later, offer to "go quietly away into the night" in exchange for a nice cash payment. The employee hopes that the organization will "fold" by either backing down the discipline or offering a payment to settle the situation. Don't fold - consider how to call the employee's bluff!

What, when, and how does management call the bluff? First, anticipate the bluff and mentally rehearse your initial response. No knee-jerk reactions, emotion-filled responses, or backing down on your actions. Instead, focus on "what" is your response. Investigating the employee's contentions before moving forward is the "what." If needed or beneficial, the employee can even be "suspended pending investigation" while you check into the contentions.

Immediately following is the "when." Don't wait to call the bluff. A delay allows the employee to better build their story, and gather their own information or even support. So, tell the employee that you want to hear the facts or information that supports their "bluff." Now! Get the employee's story right away, and then broaden the investigation.

The "how" is to have an internal investigation process already in place. Make sure management knows how to conduct an internal investigation or has a ready outside resource to rely on. Be comfortable taking that first step when a need occurs. Know what steps will follow that first interview. Gather facts and information, then you are ready to decide if and how to call the employee's bluff.

It's interesting how the workplace has changed to the point that threats exist even from employees who are gainfully employed. The threats have become leverage for the employee who wants more money, different working conditions, and protection from having to meet expectations. The danger is that concern about the multitude of laws that exist may cause the employer to flinch or blink at the threat. Why not respond strongly? Force the person to show their cards and then decide how to respond. It never hurts to see the cards when critical decisions need to be made. Even though we have used the poker analogy, this isn't a game! It's your money.

## THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT

Challenge is a dragon with a gift in its mouth. Tame the dragon and the gift is yours.

- Noela Evans

Mistakes are the portals of discovery.

- James Joyce

Nobody stands taller than those willing to stand corrected.

- William Safire

If people are informed, they will do the right thing. It's when they are not informed that they become hostages to prejudice.

- Charlayne Hunter-Gault

I was going to have cosmetic surgery until I noticed that the doctor's office was full of portraits by Picasso.

- Rita Rudner

Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone.

- Pablo Picasso

Only of one thing I am sure: When I dream, I am always ageless.

- Elizabeth Coatsworth

## MANAGING YOUR TIME

It's been said, "Procrastination is the thief of time." But it's not the task you're avoiding; it's the magnitude, size, or pain linked to the task. Reduce the pain and you'll start moving forward. Divide any task into three to five steps. Make the first step small and no longer than five minutes in duration. Begin. Subsequent steps will probably follow immediately or shortly after. If you procrastinate at step two, apply the formula again, beginning with a short first step.

Here is another thought. Can a task you have to do be done in two minutes or less? If so, do it immediately rather than postpone it because you don't feel like doing it now. Live by this rule and you'll accomplish more and procrastinate less—and your productivity will soar. All of us face many tasks, and life is a never-ending parade of them. Postponement is often the easy, but temporary, crisis-building fix for this stress. But can a task be done in less than two minutes? If so, act on it. Test this tactic for personal productivity, keep track of your outcomes, and discover how much you get done.

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Is email consuming your life? Continuously checking emails at work can drag down your productivity, yet 20% of people check e-mail 10 times a day or more — a lot more, according to a recent survey by AOL. Here are some tips from those who are in the know.

- Dedicate small blocks of time for catching up on e-mails during the day.
- Kill alerts for incoming mail so you won't be tempted to respond to them.
- Avoid distractions by using filters to separate work from personal e-mail.
- Minimize e-mail volume by asking co-workers to contact you by phone or in person whenever possible.
- Don't let dealing with e-mail become a way of "taking a break" from your regular work.

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**Parkinson's Law.** If you took too long to do an unpleasant work task you knew was not time-consuming, you were probably a victim of something called Parkinson's Law. Parkinson's Law states, "Work expands to fill the time available to do it." The phenomenon combines procrastination and busywork (or distractions) to avoid an unpleasant task until a deadline forces you to finally complete it. The more time you have, the more likely it is that you will substitute unimportant and sometimes unnecessary tasks for those that are undesirable. Here's how to conquer this:

1. Tackle unpleasant work first.
2. Compress time by promising completion of tasks to others sooner.
3. Try using a kitchen timer and break tasks down into 45 minute segments. Work intensely without distraction. Then break for 15 minutes. Repeat with 45 minute work segments and breaks until finished.

## DOING MORE WITH LESS – LESS SLEEP, THAT IS

We've been hearing the phrase, "We just need to do more with less" in our workplaces for a long time now. It applies to the area of sleep as well. There is such a high demand for our employees' time, both inside and outside the organization, that something has to give. And guess what: more and more, our employees are cutting back their sleep time or having trouble sleeping because of everything they need to do and the amount of time they have given to all the different directions they are pulled on a daily basis.

Why do employers care? When employees are well-rested, they are more productive, have better internal and external relationships, and handle stress better. Otherwise, lack of sleep, or "sleep debt," can leave employees feeling tired, listless, and sleepy on a daily basis. This leads to poor function and reasoning (safety concerns), a body at health risk, and perhaps a job in jeopardy.

Over the last hundred years, our average nightly sleep has dropped from 9 to 7.5 hours, with a third of adults now getting an hour less than that. And, says the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), almost half of adults admit they sleep less so they can work or play more. *What's wrong with that?* Everything. Sleep is not simply a passive activity; it's one of the most important elements in a healthy lifestyle, as important as good nutrition and exercise, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

Researchers know that a lack of deep sleep, as opposed to irregular or fragmented sleep, undermines the body's ability to fight off disease. Sleepiness also reduces the quality and quantity of people's work by a third, according to the NSF. Nearly one in four people younger than 30 say they're sometimes late to work because they're sleepy. And where you find sleepiness, you find "sleep debt." Researchers have found that people who are deprived of sleep have higher concentrations of sugar in their blood than those fully rested. That could contribute to development of a pre-diabetic condition. While three out of five Americans told the NSF they have trouble sleeping several nights each week, fewer than half were asked about the quality of their sleep by a physician, and less than 20% initiated such a discussion.

All it takes is TWO restless nights of sleep to throw your health into a tailspin. According to *Prevention Magazine*, here's what you have to look forward to when a few hours of sleep are missed.

- **After only two restless nights:** Doctors found that your body produces more hunger-inducing hormones, and less of the appetite-suppressing hormone called leptin. This leads to more junk food cravings for sugar and starch. Why? Because you're trying to *artificially* get more energy. So you wind up eating more calories than your body needs and that increases your odds of becoming obese.
- **What if you have six restless nights?** According to a study by the University of Chicago, your body is less able to process glucose. That's the fuel that every cell in your body needs to function. Also, tests show that after six nights of disturbed sleep, our body can't metabolize sugar properly. Those are two major things that contribute to Type 2 diabetes.
- **How about eight sleepless nights in a row?** That same study by the University of Chicago found that extended sleeplessness causes a spike in the stress hormone cortisol. This leads to a faster heart rate and higher blood pressure, and that puts you at higher risk of developing hypertension and heart disease.
- **Now for the big number - 10 sleepless nights:** At this point, your immune system is shot! In fact, studies show that after only ten days, sleep-deprived men were found to have HALF the usual disease-fighting antibodies in their system. That means it takes twice as long to fight off a common cold or flu. Over time, that increases your risk of a stroke.

Sleep disorder specialists say sleep and mood are regulated by the same brain chemicals. So when you don't get enough sleep, your mood is affected. Employers who have wellness programs should also make sure they cover the value and benefits of sleep, and encourage employees to get a good night's sleep!

Here's wishing all of you pleasant dreams!

## 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](mailto:MSambuceto@hranswers.com), or simply register online at [www.hranswers.com](http://www.hranswers.com) and click on the "Workshop Registration" tab at the top of the homepage.*

### SEPTEMBER

Hispanic Heritage, Better Breakfast, Classical Music, Piano, Self Improvement, and Fall Hat Month

- September 11<sup>th</sup> Patriot Day
- September 15<sup>th</sup> Thank You Day
- September 19<sup>th</sup> Talk Like a Pirate Day
- September 21<sup>st</sup> HRA staffers participate in the Susan G. Komen "Race for the Cure" Run/Walk
- September 21-27<sup>th</sup> Deaf Awareness Week
- September 22<sup>nd</sup> First Day of Autumn  
American Business Women's Day
- September 24<sup>th</sup> National Punctuation Day
- September 28<sup>th</sup> Good Neighbor Day
- September 29<sup>th</sup> Rosh Hashanah
- September 30<sup>th</sup> "Winning the Race Against Documentation" workshop**  
**Tualatin HRA office**  
**8:30am-12:00pm**

### OCTOBER

- Thursdays;** **Beginning Supervision Series**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> through 30<sup>th</sup>** **Tualatin HRA office**  
**8:30am – 12:30pm**

### NOVEMBER

- November 6<sup>th</sup>** **Getting Organized!**  
**Tualatin HRA office**  
**8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

## ON MY SOAPBOX

A recent article in the *Portland Business Journal* stirred my thinking. CareerBuilders conducted a survey of almost 7,200 people and then reported that “47% percent (sic) of workers live paycheck to paycheck.” That number is big and impactful. I couldn’t help but think about all those employees apprehensive about each employee meeting or memo hoping that it didn’t indicate trouble in their organization and a possible layoff. And I couldn’t help but think about employers for whom these findings are bad news.

Half of the workforce (since the survey isn’t a scientific one, these numbers could be off a bit) is dependent week to week or month to month on their paycheck. Employers are being pushed by tough economic times and have little or no wiggle room regarding dollars for pay or benefits. You can almost see the collision coming. It reminds me of the movie *Intersection*, in which the slow motion sequences of cars careening towards one another foretold the fatal outcome.

Employers can’t raise pay and, in some cases, can’t give assurances of future company growth or employment stability. Employees say they can’t make it on their current income. Four in ten said they need an extra \$500 per month to live comfortably. Employers are relying on their current staffs to help them get through this difficult period, while employees may be looking for other work that will pay them more each month. Included in this mix are the rising unemployment figure and concerns that any turnaround may still be many months away.

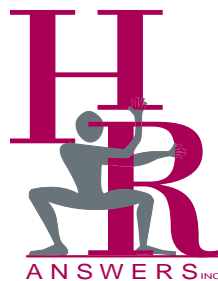
So what can employers do? While there may be no money for higher wages, organizations may wish to offer work time flexibility, reduced hours, or voluntary moves to part-time status. Surveys consistently show that employees want more personal time, and often are willing to take a lower rate of pay to have greater balance or time with family in their lives. Some employees may want to take a week of vacation and a week unpaid and that may ease financial tensions for the employer. It never hurts to offer or ask if employees would like greater flexibility in their work schedule. Some may want to move to four days a week to minimize the expense of commuting, or to give them one more day at home.

Offering employees some assistance with financial planning may also be a worthwhile effort. Often there are financial planners attached to the investment advisors of an employer’s 401(k) or CPA. By spending a few dollars to have someone come in to meet with employees and assist them with their budgets, expenditures, or financial planning, the employer may be helping the employee in a way they are unable to help themselves. Checking to see if your EAP offers such financial assistance may also be a good resource. If you don’t have an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP), now is a great time to secure one. Employees who are financially stressed are likely to have other difficulties as well, and an EAP can be a highly valued source of counseling, support, and referral in the community to providers that might be beneficial.

Employers also need to think about sharing information with employees. That can be scary for an employer because the news may not be so positive. But it is far better that employees get a preview of what is occurring than to be completely surprised by the fact that things are tight. The article earlier in this edition of Advantage about sharing bad numbers should give you some ideas about how to approach those conversations.

Times are tough and everyone is feeling it. Being able to instill a strong sense of “we can handle this together” is critical. Tell employees the truth, engage them in generating ideas about how best to deal with the situation, ask for their help, and be sensitive to their fears. While it may sound a bit Pollyanna-ish, shared adversity can build strong bonds. Don’t let this time of difficulty send you into hiding. Be accessible, be optimistic, be open to employee concerns, and you are likely to come out of this downturn with loyal employees who contribute their best to your customers.

- Judy Clark, President



“Whatever the Question”

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

[WWW.HRANSWERS.COM](http://WWW.HRANSWERS.COM)