

## Simple Actions That Pay Big HR Dividends

There are many things in human resources that are extremely complex, think ERISA, COBRA, FLSA, and FMLA. Other issues are really about common sense and implementation of practical policies and procedures. Getting the “nuts and bolts” right avoids problems and can solve those that do arise. A few of the basics to keep your eyes on include the following. You’ll note that they’re free or very low cost.

- **Getting the Hire Right. Share information.**

It’s expensive to have to replace an employee or make a new hire. The time and expense in finding the right person can be considerable. It may take months to train a new person so that he or she is at least minimally productive and effective. Some studies have shown that as many as 25% of new hires leave during their first year of employment. What’s going wrong?

Part of the problem undoubtedly arises because of bad information. Given the limited nature of the interview process there are bound to be misunderstandings. Therefore it’s critical that hiring managers give complete pictures of jobs and company expectations (even the tough parts) and that they are pretty certain applicants understand them. The key is to establish a match between the company and applicant.

- **Making the Orientation Effective. Take Time to Integrate.**

Getting the right hire in the door is only the beginning. Unfortunately, many organizations then fail to spend little thought or effort implementing the expectations that should have been set during the hiring process.

The first few days of employment should be a time to connect what was discussed during the interview with what happens at work. First impressions are powerful. New hires draw a lot of conclusions during the first weeks on the job. Obviously it’s important to provide a training schedule and job ramping regarding the elements of the job. But don’t forget the need to begin to make clear the relationships between the jobs within the department and the links to broader organizational goals.

While it seems obvious, it’s important to make clear the purpose, value, and importance of the position. Managers who focus on communication, making a new hire feel like he belongs, and who help new employees quickly grasp how the organization works will have a greater ability to retain staff. Good orientation is a process, just like good interviewing.

- **Ask for Input.**

Studies repeatedly find that poor communication is one of the greatest problems in the workplace. Improving communication skills can be a challenge. But a simple way to get things started is to ask your employees for their suggestions, ideas, and solutions. It’s obvious, easy but often underutilized. Seeking more input immediately opens communication lines, puts meaning behind the phrase “we value our employees,” builds trust, and taps into a ready source of knowledge.

- **Provide Specific Feedback and Detailed Praise.**

Recognition demonstrates that someone notices and someone cares. Precise, specific and descriptive feedback is a powerful communication device and a strong motivating device. Letting an employee know why his performance is important to the company helps align organizational goals with an individual's and makes it more likely that the behavior will be repeated. Meaningful and personal feedback, which goes beyond the generic "nice job" and "good work" makes it more credible. Providing good feedback and praise seems simple and just common sense. Unfortunately, it's not very commonly (or well) done in many workplaces.

- **Terminate Poor Performers and Problem Employees.**

The fear of lawsuits, discrimination allegations, confrontations or just plain not wanting to appear mean, often paralyze organizations from addressing employee problems. Nobody likes terminations and they can be costly in terms of time, morale, lost productivity, and rehire costs. However the costs of retaining a poorly performing employee can be even greater. Therefore once you've carefully reviewed the situation, ensured proper documentation and review, and otherwise made sure you've followed applicable termination procedures, act. Inaction may be far worse than taking what may appear to be a drastic step, termination.

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