

Breakfast Meeting Develop Your Strategy Plan for HR

Speaker Kelley L. Rexroad, SPHR

Registration starts at 7:30 a.m. - Breakfast
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*If you are interested in attending, contact Tracy
Becker by July 13th at (727) 450-7122 or Preston
Hearn at (727) 450-7044 or send e-mail to
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Kelley L. Rexroad, SPHR

Kelley is the founder of krexconsulting and its Principal Consultant. She has twenty-five years in the communications and human resources fields. She earned her B.A. from Mary Baldwin College and holds the professional designation of Senior Human Resources Professional and International HR Management certification. Kelley has extensive experience in the following areas:



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Welcome to the New Reality

Navigating the Quagmire of Humor and Political Correctness

by David Granirer MA

North America's Psychotherapist/ Stand-up Comic

Confused is how many people feel when it comes to the whole idea of political correctness and workplace humor. Some resent having to watch every word that comes out of their mouth, while others now feel safer knowing their vulnerabilities won't be targeted for ridicule. The bottom line is that political correctness has brought a whole new perspective to what is and isn't acceptable humor. And that's not necessarily a good or bad thing; it's just a reality to which people have to adjust.

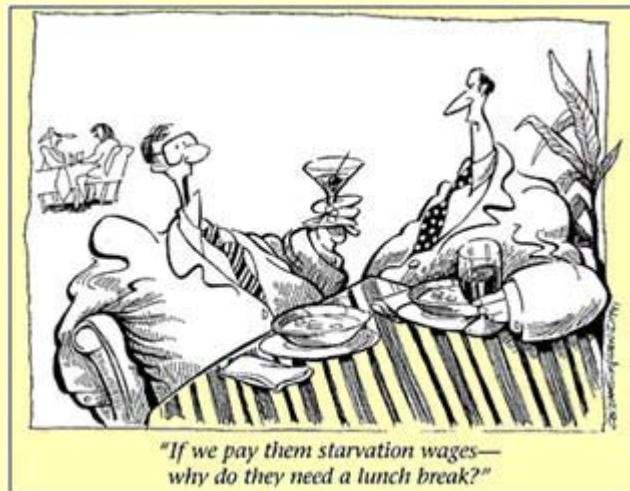
In order to bring some clarity to this complicated and emotionally charged topic, it helps to put aside the issue of what is or isn't politically correct, and look at the functionality of our humor. In other words, what healthy workplace humor is supposed to accomplish, and whether or not the way we use our humor accomplishes those purposes.

Healthy Workplace Humor

My definition of healthy workplace humor is "acts involving some sort of surprise and/ or exaggeration that make people feel good." Certainly this can take the form of joke telling, but it can also take many others. Leaving a cookie on a coworker's desk, giving an unexpected compliment, and sending an encouraging e-mail are all acts that involve some form of surprise ("Hey, I wasn't expecting that!") and leave people feeling good.

By "making people feel good," I mean that healthy workplace humor accomplishes four main goals: It releases tension, creates a sense of acceptance, conveys a sense of unity or support, and restores a healthy perspective on a given situation. So if I'm having a bad day and someone does something humorous, chances are I'll feel less tense, more accepting of myself and my situation, less alone, and more able to see the whole picture, whereas before I may have been fixated on just one small part of it.

These four goals of healthy humor are non-controversial - something everyone supports, regardless of their views on political correctness. We all want to work in an environment



that is as tension-free as possible, where we feel accepted, supported, and able to develop a healthy perspective on the difficulties we inevitably face as working people.

So a good criteria for the functionality of our humor is to ask ourselves if how we use it promotes or undermines these four goals. And what we find is that politically incorrect humor undermines them all. Take an actual case in point. A female employee receives a surprise gift from some male coworkers. So far so good, but unfortunately, the gift contains lingerie and sexual devices. Of course workplace tension immediately shoots up, acceptance is destroyed, office unity is shattered, and now everyone is hyper-focused on the issue of sexual harassment, losing any sense of perspective they may have had. So this kind of humor is not only politically incorrect, it also creates a negative atmosphere, something no one wants in his or her workplace.

This act, which perhaps to give the benefit of the doubt may have begun as a seemingly harmless practical joke, broke some very important rules of healthy workplace humor, resulting in a lawsuit and several people losing their jobs.

Safe Humor Rules

Practicing the following four rules ensures that humor will achieve the aforementioned four goals:

Rule#1: Don't make jokes about coworkers' sexuality. People are very uncomfortable with sexual

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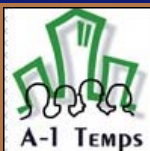
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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By David Steffen



While things often slow down during the summer months, this June there were several noteworthy developments. In order to touch on these issues, I wanted to provide a quick update highlighting several things that occurred over the last few weeks.

Immigration Legislation Fails Again

Despite efforts to revive the comprehensive immigration reform legislation, on June 28, 2007, the Senate Bill (S. 1639) fell 14 votes short of the 60 needed to advance it toward a final vote. The revived Bill contained more than two dozen amendments. These included a revised employment verification program that was supported by the Society of Human Resource Managers, but opposed by President Bush and the Department of Homeland Security.

While the most recent vote was a significant defeat, Senator Edward Kennedy, and the Bill's other supporters have promised to continue their efforts to pass immigration reform legislation.

Employee Free Choice Act

On June 27, 2007, the Employee Free Choice Act fell nine votes short of the number needed to proceed to a full vote by the U.S. Senate. While the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other employment and business groups consider this to be a significant victory, organized labor has vowed to continue its fight to pass union friendly organizing legislation. John Sweeney, President of the AFL-CIO, responded to the vote by saying, "Those who continue to support our broken system will find themselves on the wrong side of history. And that battle engages now, as we move into the 2008 elections, when working people will elect more senators and a president who will champion their concerns and fight for their futures." Therefore, it is probably safe to assume that the Employee Free Choice Act, or similar legislation will resurface as organized labor tries to turn it into an election year issue.

DOL's Report on the FMLA

For the first time since the United States Department Labor ("DOL") promulgated the Family and Medical Leave Act's ("FMLA") rules and regulations in

1995, it released an in-depth report analyzing their impact on the American workforce. Based upon the almost 15,000 responses and more than 2,000 comments, the DOL identified several common themes that were identified as causing problems in the workplace.

In its summary report, the DOL indicated that intermittent leave "...is the single most serious area of friction between employers and employees seeking to use FMLA leave. With respect to employer comments, no other FMLA issue even comes close." It also acknowledged that "The [DOL] is cognizant that certain of its regulatory decisions may have contributed to this situation."

A second major area of concern, for both employers and employees, involved the medical certification rules and regulations. The summary report noted that employers and employees both identified issues they had with certifications that fail to provide meaningful guidance regarding an employee's use of intermittent leave.

Apparently, simply identifying the most common problems and publishing a report to document the frustration people have with the FMLA was enough for the DOL. The department made it clear that the report is not a prelude to any proposed rule changes, but was simply designed to provide information to interested parties and policy makers regarding the impact of the DOL's regulations on the workplace. Therefore, we cannot expect any changes to the rules and regulations in the near future.

Case Law Update

In *Albra v. Advan Inc.*, 11th Cir., No. 06-15969, the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Americans with Disabilities Act does not permit an employee to sue individuals for retaliation when the alleged underlying discriminatory conduct involves workplace discrimination. (In contrast, an individual may be sued for retaliation under the ADA's public services provisions.)

A second significant issue in the case involved an employer's liability under the Florida Omnibus AIDS Act. The Eleventh Circuit affirmed the lower court's dismissal of the Mr. Albra's discrimination and retaliation claims, based on his HIV status, against the company's individual officers as well.

Enjoy your summer.





The Book Corner

July Book Suggestions

By Daniel T. Bloom



Summer is here, as if could not feel it by walking out the door, and the nation's publisher's are planning on releasing 121 titles in the business management arena for the month of July for those moments when you need something "light" to read. My new phone number, if we can be of any assistance, is (813) 340-1126. The email address is remaining the same. Here are some titles that would be relevant to HR professionals:

Searching for the Human in Human Resource Management by Sharon Bolton

This is a contributed text that challenges the traditional way in which the management of people is often viewed solely within an economic framework by acknowledging that human relations are social, reciprocal, multi-dimensional and embedded in group and societal dynamics. The contributions come from a range of international experts and explore the tensions that come about due to a neglect of the societal nature of human relations in the workplace.

The Solution Tango: Seven Simple Steps to Solutions in Management by Louis Cauffman

Based on techniques and methods from the world of psychotherapy, this book presents a new approach to conquering the numerous challenges, problems, and failures that managers encounter at work, many of which are people-related. An important lesson identified in the book is that a manager must act as both the leader who provides direction for a team or company and as the coach who enables others to make the most of their skills, enabling the individual and the organization to succeed. A seven-step framework to enhance problem-solving capabilities, examples and tips, and a survival kit for sinking managers will help managers improve their people skills and learn how to approach



everyday issues from a positive perspective.

Executing Strategy for Business Results by Harvard Business School Press

To survive and thrive under today's competitive conditions, companies must constantly formulate effective strategies and they must execute those strategies flawlessly. Thankfully, mastering the skills needed to define and carry strategy is possible. And this volume will help you. Learn about the common pitfalls of strategy creation as well as the tools to successfully surmount the challenges.

Succession Planning: Survey Report 2006 by Shawn Fegley

This report interprets the findings of a survey of human resource professionals about the prevalence of organizations with succession plans in place, including HR professionals' insights about these plans and HR's role in the succession planning process. The results are reported by exploring the difference between organizations with formal plans in place compared to those without formal plans, and significant findings are reported by organization staff-size and sector. Information on how to implement and communicate a succession plan and interpretations about current applications and future trends are also included.

Understanding Action Learning by Judy O'Neill

As much as adult learners can absorb in a classroom, they learn and retain a lot more on the job. Action Learning, or AL, can be based on any of several different schools of thought, and there is much debate as to which is ideal. The authors advocate tailoring the best attributes of each approach to the specific purpose and the learning environment.

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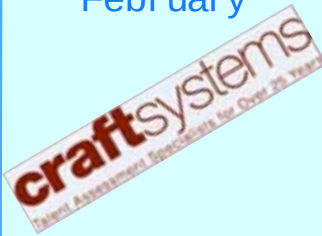
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Book Corner

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Building Cultural Intelligence (CQ): Nine Megaskills

by Richard Bucher

Developing Diversity Consciousness: Nine Megaskills assists readers to become CEO's of their CQ skill development rather than relying on others to take the initiative. Explores the bottom line relevance of CQ. Multiple means of engagement tap into different interests and ways of learning. There are a large number of helpful learning aids built into each chapter. Practical, real-life applications of CQ. Assessment questions provide learner with feedback on those areas that need the most improvement. The book is highly interactive and engaging. The learner becomes more intelligent in terms of developing the ability to adjust to cultural differences.

Self-Coaching Leadership: Simple Steps from Manager to Leader

by Angus McLeod

Generally, leadership is about influencing people to make big things happen. Management is a process of organizing people to get things done. They are different skills, but equally critical to success in today's workplace. The key is to know which approach works best in each situation.



Written in a clear, simple style the book redefines and demystifies the journey to leadership. Angus McLeod's no-nonsense thinking, straightforward approach and practical tools enable readers to more easily identify when a leader is needed - and coach themselves toward improved influence, performance and effectiveness.

The Theory and Practice of Training Revised Edition

by Roger Buckley

Firmly established as a comprehensive introduction on the topic, this revised 5th Edition provides a wide-ranging outline of the major instructional and training concepts and their relationship to training in practice. The authors have expanded on information relating to the training environment, equipment, strategies, and the target population, and have included a completely new section on ethics. Written with the newcomer to the training function in mind, it provides numerous real-life case studies to illustrate the theory. This book is as valuable to those who want to put their training experience into a coherent context as it is to managers who need to understand the role training can play.

Daniel T. Bloom

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Welcome to the New Reality

Continued from Page 4

innuendo in a workplace. Your friends may find it hilarious, but unless all the people you work with are close friends you've known for years, leave it at home, because someone is bound to be offended.

Rule #2: Don't make jokes about people's appearance. This is another emotionally charged area, and whether you agree or not, just don't go there.

Rule#3: Avoid jokes about religion, ethnic background, nationality, sexual orientation etc. unless it's to joke about your own.

Rule#4: Avoid jokes about bodily functions. The only exception is if you work in a healthcare or other setting where these jokes are necessary to maintain your sanity.

Surprise, surprise, these rules also conform to what would be considered the guidelines for politically correct humor, which essentially are not to make jokes about people's sexuality, minorities, God, and, grossness. But we're not talking politically correct, we're talking about achieving the four goals of healthy humor, which everyone can support.

So what's left to joke about? Here are three safe areas:

#1: Yourself, your flaws, neuroses and inadequacies. When you make these jokes, people are brought closer to you because they can relate. And so far, no one's ever been sued for joking about him or herself.

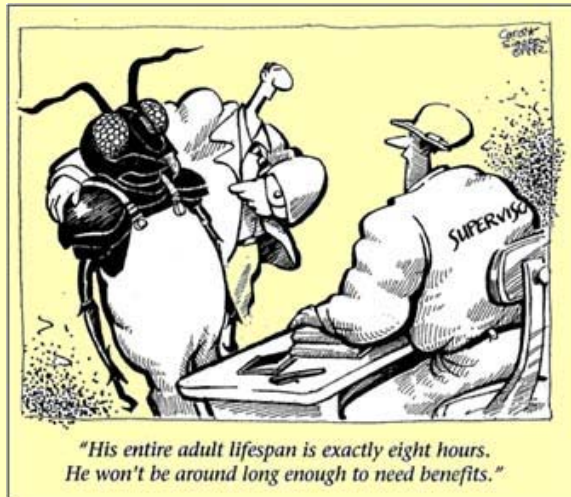
#2: The situation you all face, i.e., the upcoming merger, the new reorganization, the difficult customers you deal with, etc.

#3: Personal characteristics in areas of low ego-involvement. Though most people are extremely sensitive about appearance, they're much less invested in other aspects of themselves. For example, I don't mind if someone makes jokes about my bad handwriting or the fact that I look tired because I had to get up at four in the morning to change a diaper. Poking fun at Peter because he'd rather ski than do paperwork, or Mary because she has a distinctive laugh is relatively safe to do, and communicates affection rather than disdain.

No question, the reality has changed. What used to be okay in terms of humor isn't any more. Before it was easy to get a laugh by putting someone down. But as we've seen, all this creates is negativity. However, this new reality forces us to be more clever, creative, and considerate in the way we use

humor. And I think that most people would like to think of themselves as clever, creative, and considerate, regardless of their views on political correctness.

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