# LERIA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION JANUARY 2008

# **January Luncheon Meeting:**

STOMP THE ELEPHANT IN THE OFFICE

Start the New Year off with a thought provoking talk centered around a new book, *Stomp the Elephant in the Office*. Each Attendee will receive a complimentary copy of the Book!!!!

When:Tuesday, January 8, 2008Where:Cornusker Marriott, 333 S. 13th St.Speaker:Craig Ross,<br/>Pathways to Leadership, Inc. and<br/>Co-Author of the book,<br/>Stomp the Elephant in the Officeinteraction:11:00 a.m.

Registration:11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.Meal & Program:11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.Cost:\$15.00<br/>(includes lunch, free parking, guest speaker and FREE book)Meal:Cuban Sandwich, Pasta Salad, Dessert,<br/>Coffee, Tea or MilkUBCL credit applied for will be approximated at meeting

HRCI credit applied for will be announced at meeting

## ABOUT THE EVENT:

HR professionals, are you interested in serving as strategic business partners – not just cheerleaders? Do you want to contribute to your organization's success by inspiring and influencing – not by convincing and persuading? If you answered yes, then this is a session you do not want to miss. You will hear the co-author of a new book talk about destructive behaviors (elephants) that often crush desired results. Best of all he will give us tools to overcome these elephants in our office!

#### ABOUT THE PRESENTER:

Craig W. Ross serves as President of Pathways to Leadership Inc., a leadership development company in business for over 15 years. Craig facilitates the transformational Pathways to Leadership® program to corporations worldwide, increasing productivity and bottom line results through the development of healthy work cultures. His background in education and coaching brings high energy and enthusiasm to many corporate clients, including Owens-Illinois, Procter & Gamble, Gerber, Nestlé, Mazda Motor Company, CIBA Vision and many others. To learn more about Pathways to Leadership Inc. and its programs, please visit www.pathwaystoleadership.com

Craig, along with his business partner Steve Vannoy, co-authored Stomp the Elephant in the Office (Wister & Willows, 2008), a breakout leadership book full of practical tips that offer readers an instant leadership upgrade. Check out www.stomptheelephant.com for leadership tips, audio downloads and a How Big is the Elephant in Your Office quiz.

## NEW LHRMA MEMBERS

• Douglas Walker, PHR HR Director GT Exhaust dwalker@gtexhaustsystems.com

• Sharon Johnson Systems Change Grants Coor. Health & Human Services Sharon,jjohnson@dhhs.ne.gov

• Pamela Benner, SPHR VP of Employee Relations Mosaic Pam.benner@mosaicinfo.org

• Roxanne Krasno, SPHR Senior Consultant SilverStone Group rkrasno@ssgi.com

• Royce Drake Business Development Kingery Construction royces@kccobuilders.com

• Patricia Runge

Personnel Officer State of Nebraksa Patty.runge@nebraska.gov

• Michael Carroll HR Administrator State of Nebraska

Michael.carroll@nebraska.gov

## • Joni Dulaney

HR Assistant Nebraska State Patrol jdulaney@nsp.state.ne.us

#### Welcome to LHRMA!



# **President's Message**

Cathy Maddox, President

are Enough To Know, Know Enough To Care.....

This was the message from Steve Gilliland, an outstanding speaker at the SHRM Leadership Conference that I attended in November. This message has stuck with me since hearing it, and it reminds me of what really is important about the HR profession. So many times we find that our work hours are filled to the brim and some of the tasks we do are done automatically – you've done it enough times that you could do it in your sleep. But, if we don't take the time to really listen to what a distraught employee is saying, are we being resourceful humans? There are times when someone walks into my office and I just cringe. My desk is full, people are expecting projects to be completed, and if I do not write down that grocery list while it is in my mind, I will not remember a single item. But that really is not what is important to that employee at that second – they need attention, for whatever reason. There are times that I have rushed somebody, or listened with half an ear – and later on I hear about it! Our company is small enough that you eventually hear what the employees are really saying. When that happens, it stops me dead in my tracks and reminds me that I am really not doing my job to the best of my abilities.

With the horrible tragedy in Omaha at the shopping mall, the above saying takes on even more meaning. Did someone forget to care? Did someone forget to listen? In some cases that might not make a difference. But what if it had? Many of us are lucky enough to have the services of an EAP, but sometimes employees just want to talk to someone that they know. And I think no matter how busy we are, it's up to all of us to give just one more minute to our employees.

I'm really looking forward to the coming year as your president. Lovie Magruder helped me join this wonderful organization a number of years ago, and I have been grateful to her ever since. I have learned so much from the programs and especially the people in this group. I consider it a privilege to be in this position!

Your LHRMA board recently got together to go over the results of the survey we asked the membership to complete. Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete this. It has given us direction for the coming year, and you will hear more about the results very soon.

See you at the January meeting (if this snow and ice ever lets up!)!

Sincerely,

Cathy Maddox

•No Board Meeting in December



#### LHRMA MEMBER CHANGES

Check and verify your name and address on this month's LHResource for accuracy. Please contact Kathy Harper our LHRMA Administrative Assistant, for any of your personal job and address changes. Please either email your changes to Kathy at lhrma0048@yahoo.com or by telephone at 402.483-4581 x 339.

Update your 2007 directory with the following changes:

• Ruth Jones, SPHR Human Resource Manager Nebraska Book Company 4700 S. 19th Street Lincoln, NE 68512 421-0464 Fax – 421-0001 rjones@nebook.com

#### ATTENDANCE DRAWING WINNER

*Who Says There's No Such Thing as a Free Lunch?* Congratulations to Kendal Garrison with TMCO. Kendal will receive free registration at the January 2008 meeting!

#### **REACH OUT TO THE STUDENTS**

LHRMA members can use the LHRMA Website to advertise Student Internships or Summer Jobs. The three Student Chapters will be told that they can look on the LHRMA website, throughout the school year, to find job openings as well as internships. Please use this as another FREE advertising tool to get qualified interested candidates to help fill your open positions. Send job postings to Kathy Harper at: lhrma0048@yahoo.com.

# L<mark>HR</mark>MA

## PRACTICAL APPROACHES FOR REDUCING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COSTS

In this time of rising workers' compensation costs, an employer has no excuse for failing to get involved in workers' compensation claims. This is because involved employers can take control of rising costs and create a better work environment. Below are some practical approaches that will get you involved and can lead to reduced costs.

**I. GET INVOLVED** No employer is immune from workers' compensation claims, and ignoring this fact can create even greater liability. The proactive employer, on the other hand, can limit liability by creating an atmosphere focused on safety and that encourages employees to return to work after they have suffered a workers' compensation injury. To create this type of environment, an employer must begin working with employees from day one. Therefore, the first goal for any employer should be to create a firm yet supportive culture regarding injured workers.

**A. Training** In the defense of workers' compensation claims, many times employees use the excuse "I was afraid" when explaining why they did not report a work injury. This fear is often driven by the current stereotype of workers' compensation claimants as "fakers." Unfortunately, this fear and stereotype can actually increase costs. To move away from such fear and create a culture that accepts work injuries as a natural part of employment, employers need to provide training.

A safe work environment requires immediate training of new employees and ensuring that no one is exempt from training. The emphasis on safety training needs to start at the top of the organization and trickle down to the managers and supervisors so that all incoming employees understand the importance of the training and the creation of a safe work environment. While there are several different ways to train employees, the best way to provide training is to use a variety of techniques that get the point across to employees.

On the job safety training and one-on-one discussions are usually the most effective methods, however, group training and the use of safety videos and other media can be helpful. To make sure training techniques are effective, and that the proper culture is being cultivated, it is important to involve all employees in the development of the training program and the continued analysis of that program. This will give the employees a vested interest in the creation of a safe work environment, and including current employees in the training of new employees will keep safety fresh in the minds of everyone.

**B.** Closed-Ended Return To Work Program The above recommendations will certainly help reduce the number of work injuries, however, just as important is what happens after there is a workers' compensation injury. The best way to reduce costs and foster the proper culture is to

have a closed-ended return-to-work policy. A closed-ended return to work policy needs to involve the employee, the employer, and any medical providers. This will ensure that any restrictions on the worker are being followed so that a plan can be put together to reduce risks or further injury, and ultimately bring the case to conclusion. Further, understanding that a closed-ended plan may have a duration of many months will allow a better focus on restoring the employee to his or her prior work ability and avoid rushing employees back into jobs that they are not ready for.

Ultimately, the ability to bring an employee back to work lays with the employer becoming involved in the workers' compensation claim. This includes constant communication with the claimant and the treating physician. The physician needs to understand what jobs are available and what accommodations can be made so that a safe and proper return to work plan can be put together.

It is also extremely important to make sure that any thirdparty administrator or workers' compensation insurance carrier understands your return-to-work policy. This will promote consistency and continuity in your application of the plan and will lead to a better understanding by employees as to what is expected of them regarding returning to work. The major focus of a return-to-work policy is to eventually bring closure to a workers' compensation claim as the loss of communication with an employee can often lead to long periods of absences and increase the chances that an employee may never returnto-work or recover from the injury. An effective return to work program will avoid employees becoming dependent on their doctors and will provide them with a social structure that will help them recover more quickly.

**II. Encourage a Healthy Lifestyle** Obesity greatly increases the costs of workers' compensation claims. The Duke University Medical Center recently published a study regarding obesity and its effect on workers' compensation costs among its 11,728 employees. The main focus of the study was a person's body mass index (BMI) and its relation to certain workers' compensation costs. In America, a BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 is considered normal, a BMI of 25 to 29.9 is considered overweight, and a BMI of 30 or above is considered obese.

The results of the study showed that employees with a BMI greater than 40 had 11.65 claims per 100 employees and averaged 183.63 days of lost work per 100 employees. The employees in the normal range only had 5.8 claims per 100 employees and only averaged 14.19 lost days of work per 100 employees. Most notably, the medical costs per claim for obese employees were \$51,019 per 100 employees versus \$7,503 for employees in the normal BMI range. This supports the current statistics that show obesity costs U.S. companies an estimated \$13 billion per year.

Obesity also affects the amount of short-term disability used. In fact, a recent study showed that overweight workers had a

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26% increase in short-term disability claims versus those with a normal BMI, and obese workers had a 76% increase versus employees with a normal BMI.

An employer's primary defense against obesity is to encourage a healthy lifestyle through the use of a wellness plan. A wellness plan encourages a healthy lifestyle and provides incentives and structure for employees that may otherwise not seek out the healthiest lifestyle. Another method for improving the overall health of employees is to have an employee assistance plan. An EAP will help link-up employees that are struggling with various areas of their life with the appropriate care. One of the benefits of an EAP that can reduce workers' compensation costs is the ability to reduce anxiety and depressive disorders as those often diminish the desire of an employee to return to work, as well as create a lingering pain cycle that may be difficult to break.

**III.** Do Not Fear Workers' Compensation Claims Not fearing workers' compensation claims is easier said than done. The rise of workers' compensation retaliation claims and the involvement of third-party administrators or insurance carriers can lead to hesitation by employers when it comes to dealing with workers' compensation claims. The most important thing to keep in mind is that someone that has suffered a work injury is still an employee and needs to be treated as such. For instance, if an injured worker is released to work with restrictions and light duty work is available, then that worker must be required to work all available hours.

Probably the best advice that can be given in this area is to remain consistent. This means that a workers' compensation claimant should not be treated any different than any other employee. The only exception would be the providing of a return-to-work program based on the restrictions that have been assigned to that employee. However, all else needs to remain equal, including the enforcement of attendance policies. Being consistent can avoid workers' compensation retaliation claims by eliminating differential treatment.

While the current litigious climate makes it understandable for employers to tread carefully in regard to workers' compensation matters, failing to act can lead to workers' compensation nightmares ranging from never-ending claims to employees that file numerous workers' compensation claims starting with their first week of employment. Hopefully, the approaches discussed above help eliminate such nightmares and help you save money in the process.

-CHARLES L. KUPER chazk@berenstate.com

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IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A HUMAN RESOURCE JOB THEN YOU CAN CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE, WWW.LINCOLNHR.ORG.

## **Help Achieve the Superior Merit Award**

You can help achieve the LHRMA Chapter Superior Merit Award by notifying Julie Singh, Workforce Readiness Chair, with any dates that you provide service to local schools or adults in regards to: career days, mock interviews, speaking on the HR profession, provide internships to students to gain HR knowledge, etc.. The following information would be needed: name, date of event, location/school name, hours spent or duration of program. Email your information to jsingh@notes.state.ne.us throughout the year.







# **EAP's New Year Resolution for You**

## By: Kevin J. Mattran, Continuum EAP

The soup has started to cook. The soup is that bubbling cauldron of good intentions that we optimistically stir up every year then ladle out promises of weight loss, exercise, philanthropy and self-improvement often with fingers crossed behind our backs...just in case.

Some of you are fortunate and work for companies who are long time EAP subscribers and some of you fought tooth and nail to convince the executive level of your company that EAP is not just expenditure, but a valuable benefit for employees with a real return on investment. So why risk EAP going the way of the three martini lunch in the next round of budget cuts? Your EAP has some New Years Resolutions for you to help keep this important program vital in your organization.

**Make EAP more visible.** Your EAP does a great job providing posters, brochures and other promotional materials to help keep EAP in front of your employees' eyes, but companies with the best usage have found creative ways to remind people that EAP services are available. Schedule an EAP re-orientation or show an online or video orientation at the beginning of a staff meeting, and include EAP in yearly reviews of benefits.

**Talk to an EAP counselor yourself.** A few years ago I was speaking to my uncle on the phone and he was in the market for a new car. He had it narrowed down to a Cadillac or a Mercedes Benz. I, with great conviction, told him to buy the Benz. I later realized that my advice was meaningless as I have never driven a Mercedes.

**If you sing the praises of EAP, do it from personal experience.** While you may not have the need for counseling, use some of the other resources and services available. Give yourself the opportunity to have stories of the great service you get from EAP. Being able to speak from personal experience makes you much more credible. By the way, my uncle bought the Caddy.

**Learn how to make the most of your EAP contract.** Just like you have employees who give back unused vacation time they have earned, many companies never take advantage of services included in their EAP contracts. Your annual EAP report is a good place to start. It can tell you if there were training hours included in your contract that were unused, it will identify any value added resources or services available and levels of usage in each of the service areas. Your consultant can also help you develop a plan to use your EAP services more effectively.

**Make the EAP website easy to access.** Your EAP's website contains useful information training, links to webinars and other resources. Make it easy for your employees to access this information by putting a link to the EAP website on your company's intranet, set up a computer in an employee commons area or the human resources office with the EAP website set as the home page, and include a link to the webpage on emails concerning benefits, company wide changes and wellness issues.

As you serve up this year's resolutions, set a place at the table for EAP. Your efforts in keeping the resolutions suggested in this article will make EAP more visible, accessible and vital in your company. You will also reap the benefit in lower turn-over and higher productivity. Soup's on!

Kevin Mattran is the Organizational Training and Education Specialist for Continuum EAP. To find out more about the services Continuum EAP offers or for information on other workplace issues, call us at (402) 476-0186 or email at consultant@4continuum.com

# L<del>ER</del>MA LEGAL UPDATE **Changes in Employee Deductions** to Start on January 1, 2008 by Sarah S. Pillen, Esz. • Rembolt Ludtke, LLP • Lincoln, Nebraska

Iffective January 1, 2008, a new state law – LB 223 – will impact all employers with 25 or more employees. This law, introduced by Omaha Senator Tom White, requires employers to withhold 3% of an employee's gross wages, minus tax qualified deductions for state income tax, unless the employee can prove a lesser amount is justified. The term "tax qualified deductions" is defined to include tax-deferred compensation, and other tax-sheltered items i.e. cafeteria plan benefits such as health insurance, retirement, medical and dependent care reimbursement.

This law was passed in hopes of allowing some employees to keep more of their salaries instead of receiving the money back in large refunds. On the flipside, LB 223 may cause some employees to have more money deducted from their paycheck and create headaches for employers. The underlying policy behind LB 223 is to ensure that no one - particularly undocumented illegal aliens - can claim several exemptions to reduce a state income tax withholding so as to avoid paying state income taxes.

Employers will likely encounter some difficulties in determining the proper withholding amounts. The Nebraska Department of Revenue has provided new updated withholding tables that employers can follow. These tables can be found on the Nebraska Department of Revenue web-site at http://www.revenue.ne.gov. The nonshaded areas of the tables indicate that withholding must be at least 3%. The shaded areas of the tables indicate withholding amounts less than 3%.

Certain employees may qualify for less than a 3% withholding, but only if such employees provides satisfactory evidence that a lesser amount should be withheld. If an employee alleges that he or she qualifies for less than the 3% withholding, the employee must produce evidence to the employer in any of the following forms: birth certificates, Social Security cards, bank/mortgage firm year-end statements, payroll statements or past W-2s. Without such documentation, the employee's withholding must be set at 3% or at some other level within the non-shaded area of the withholding table. If employers do not obtain proper documentation they will be subject to a \$1,000 fine for each employee for whom too little is withheld.

Employers are not required to maintain any of the information that employees produce in support of a less than 3% withholding. However, the Nebraska Department of Revenue recommends that employers develop a summary document that includes a statement signed by the employee that the employee's Form W-4 allowances have been reviewed and have been determined to be reasonable. A sample copy of this type of summary document prepared by the Nebraska Department of Revenue, can be found at www.remboltludtke.com

Although this new law may cause some initial disruption for employers and discontent in the workplace, such issues can be avoided if you are properly prepared. Please contact us if you need any additional information or would like further clarification regarding your legal obligations.

Sarah Pillen is an associate with the Lincoln-based law firm of Rembolt LLP and may be reached at (402) 475-5100 Ludtke 0r spillen@remboltludtke.com. This article is provided for general information purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice. Those requiring legal advice are encouraged to consult with their attorney.

### LHRMA CHAPTER #0048 **ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2007**

• Received the Superior Merit Award this year for 2006.

 Changed our meeting guest practices to allow guests to come as often as they want but pay a guest meeting rate. This practice is less restrictive and will maximize the potential of reaching out to more and increasing our membership.

 Started using a new online method of collecting feedback from the membership on chapter meeting presentations.

• Sent out a new online membership survey to collect feedback and ideas from the membership. We had approximately a 30% response rate.

 Supported the community by holding 'drives' for the Center for People in Need for their Back to School Supplies Drive and Toys for Tots.

•Collected \$288 from membership for the SHRM Foundation at a May Basket raffle and donated \$500 to the Foundation. Held another awareness raising effort for the SHRM Foundation in October to raise money for the SHRM Received the SHRM Chapter Champions Award for 2007.

•Added sixty-eight new members to the Association.

• Started adding pictures to the newsletter when there was an opportunity.

•LHRMA members visited with legislators about HR related bills on Capitol Hill while attending the SHRM Legislative Conference.

 Brought in two nationally known speakers, Scott Warrick, J.D., SPHR for a workshop on diversity in employment and Scott Christopher to talk on the "power of recognition".

•Held one workshop in addition to monthly meetings.

• The Board attended a HRAM meeting to gather ideas on how we can enhance our Chapter meetings.

• We created a tabletop display holder for Chapter meetings to promote upcoming events.





Lincoln Human Resource Management Association

#### This Program is Designed For:

Professionals desiring a review course in preparing for the HRCI exam. *To earn the PHR or SPHR designation, the candidate must have 2 years of exempt-level HR experience or meet student eligibility requirements.* Individuals applying for the PHR/SPHR Certification Exam must submit their application with payment by the dates specified to HRCI. Any questions re: the Certification Exam or eligibility should be directed to HRCI. HRCI's Certification Handbook can be accessed on line at www.hrci.org.

PLACE: BryanLGH East

DATE: Feb. 4th - April 28, 2008 TIME: 5:30 - 8:30 pm (Monday evenings) CERTIFICATION EXAM: May 1 - June 30

**Certification Course Instructional Format and Material:** 

The Certification Course uses a lecture format that encompasses the six functional areas that make up the test specifications effective with the May 2008 HRCI Certification Exam.

	Human Resource Development
	Employee & Labor Relations
	Risk Management

Classes are held one night per week, three (3) hour sessions, for 13 weeks. LHRMA instructors are certified practitioners in Human Resources and are able to provide both practical and technical expertise to participants. The Certification Guide written by HRCI will be provided to all participants.

The core text for the certification study course is "Human Resource Management" (12th edition) by Robert L. Mathis and John H. Jackson. You may purchase the text books on your own. The best rates available are at the SHRMstore (www.shrm.org). Prices are listed below. You must be a SHRM member to get the best rate. Other sources may be Amazon.com, textbooks.com or the University or Nebraska bookstores. If purchasing a used book, be sure to purchase the 12th edition.

Human Resource Management (Mathis) \$165.95/139.95

Text plus Study Guide \$175.95/\$163.95

2008 PHR/SPHR SPRING CERTIFICATION PREP COURSE

S. 48th St. - Room to be announced

Study Guide only \$46.95/\$42.95

#### **CERTIFICATION COURSE ENROLLMENT AND FEES/CANCELLATION POLICY:**

Fees: \$40 for LHRMA members \$50 for non-LHRMA members (NOTE: Fees do not include the cost of the HRCI Certification Exam.)

#### **Registration Deadline: February 4, 2008**

Cancellation Policy: Registration fees will be refunded in full for cancellations received by Monday, 2/5/2007. Refunds will not be given for any study materials received.

#### To enroll complete the registration form below and mail with payment

You will only be contacted prior to the start of class if there is a problem with your registration. Your cancelled check is your receipt. Contact Darci Spence, Certification Director, at (402) 475-2525 or if you have any questions.

NAME:		
TITLE:		
COMPANY:		
ADDRESS:		
PHONE:	FAX:	E-MAIL:
Do you plan on taking the Spring exam? YESNO		If yes, which exam will you take? PHR SPHR GPHR
MAIL FORM WITH A CHECK PAYABLE TO LHRMA:		LHRMA, P.O. Box 81066, LINCOLN, NE 68501

# LHRMA

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**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT** 

#### SHRM LOCAL CHAPTER 0048

PLEASE CALL KATHY HARPER AT 402-483-4581 x 339, WITH ANY CHANGE IN POSITION, COMPANY OR ADDRESS OR SEND HER AN E-MAIL AT: LHRMA0048@YAHOO.COM

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