LHRMA RESOURCE

PUBLISHED MONTHLY FOR LINCOLN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION June 2009

About our Program

By an almost two-to-one margin (134 to 76), more employers had lower overall employee engagement scores in the fall of 2008 than in the fall of 2007. This result is out of the ordinary from our trends for the last five years, and strongly suggests that external circumstances regarding the economy may well be influencing employees' attitudes about their jobs and workplaces. To explore this issue further, we conducted an analysis of the 210 companies, both those that has higher engagement scores (gainers) and those whose scores had dropped off (losers). Quantum's presentation will describe 5 actions leading workplaces are taking to increase employee engagement in a bear market.

Three learning outcomes:

1. Uncover the impact a recession has on employee engagement
2. Identify five key differentiators that reveal how some employers are growing and where others may be losing their hold
3. Provide examples of best practices used for maintaining employee engagement in rough business conditions

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June 2009 Program & Workshop

Program Topic: Beating the Bear Market with Engaged Employees

Presenter: *Greg Harris*- Quantum Workplace

When: Tuesday, June 9, 2009
Where: The DelRay Ballroom
817 R Street

Registration: 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Meal & Program: 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Workshop: 1:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Cost: $15.00 Luncheon Meeting
-Approved for 1 hour of HRCI credit
$35.00 Workshop only
-Approval for HRCI credit pending

Meal: Italian Buffet, salad, foccacio rolls, chicken parmigiana, lasagna, tea & coffee, brownie and chocolate chip cookies.
Meeting Sponsor: HireEase

Workshop Topic: Update on Current Legal and Immigration

Presenter: David Brown, Brown Immigration Law
Chad Richter, Partner, Jackson Lewis LLP

About the Speaker: Greg Harris & Quantum Workplace

Greg Harris leads Quantum Workplace, an Omaha-based company that builds science-based tools to measure and manage employee engagement, loyalty and retention. Prior to joining Quantum, Harris founded a research firm specializing in client loyalty research for financial companies. Harris graduated from Nebraska Wesleyan University with degrees in Political Science and Research Methodologies. He is married with four children and resides in Omaha, Nebraska. Quantum Workplace is an industry leader in building tools to measure and manage employee engagement, loyalty and retention. Best known as the research firm behind Best Places To Work programs in over 40 metro areas, they survey over 1.5 million employees among 4,000+ companies across North America every year. They partner with Jane Weddle, M.A. of Weddle Performance Group in Lincoln, Nebraska which utilizes Quantum Workplace tools and benchmarks to help companies measure and manage employee engagement. Visit www.quantumworkplace.com

Program/Workshop Info continued on pg. 7 .....

President's Message

Cathy Maddox, President

Just got home from watching the last Husker baseball game of the season – it was a great weekend for baseball! The Huskers won all 3 games, and in 2 of the 3 games, the pitcher pitched a complete game. This was especially poignant on Sunday because it was Senior Day, and Eric Bird who is a senior was the pitcher. The season did not go as well as anybody had hoped, but I must say that this group of kids never gave up. As our section was emptying, a few of us looked at each other with some trepidation, realizing that we will not see each other again until next March! We are fortunate enough to have season tickets through my husband's company, so we are in the same seats every year. These are people that we do not generally see any other time of the year – I do not even know where most of them work. But you do get to know them all on a different level. A few years ago when the season ended the couple in front of us were pregnant with their first child. The next season they brought little Miss Ruby and all of us around her have enjoyed watching her grow. This season started out with them pregnant again, and pretty soon Dotti was coming to the games! The couple to our right just celebrated their 56th anniversary on Saturday, and delighted in giving us updates 6 weeks ago about their granddaughter who was in labor at the time. By the end of the game they had a new great-granddaughter! I'll never forget last year during one game the couple to our left had their son with them. I think he is probably 24 or so, and all of a sudden his mother said to him – what is that on your arm??? And he replied that he had gotten a tattoo – and mom said – as in the permanent kind?? If looks could kill…….. Relationships do come in all shapes and sizes don't they? You have those friends that you feel especially close to; friends that you stay in touch with through yearly Christmas letters; friends you only see at specific sporting events, or school events. Work is the one place though that I think we HR people find it extremely difficult to have a friendship. In fact, I think it is rare, and that's really too bad because we may be missing out on some great relationships and great memories. However, because of the confidentiality of our work, we really can not take a chance of letting something slip – it could mean the end of our employment. And while I understand and respect the boundaries I do not like feeling that I have this wall built around me, keeping people at arms length. I love my job, but sometimes I really don't like my job and the choices we have to make. I know, I know, everybody has something about their job that is not ideal, but I really think HR can be a very tough profession.

The State Council will be giving every chapter the opportunity to give away one free registration to the State Conference, which will be held in September. Be watching for further details!

Many thanks to those of you that bought raffle tickets for our SHRM Foundation Basket Raffle. I thought for sure that basket sponsored by Nebraska Bookstore was going to be mine!! I put almost all my tickets in that container. I figured if I flooded the thing surely I would win! I'm very proud to say that we again increased our donation this year, thanks to all of you, and especially Russ Roberts. Russ works very hard on getting all the baskets donated, volunteers lined up to help sell raffle tickets – thanks Russ for everything you have done.

By the time you get this school will be out, graduations will be done, and vacations will have begun. Hmmmm, the hammock is calling my name I think! The countdown is at 109 days – that seems so far away! Have a wonderful summer!

–Cathy Maddox

Attendance Drawing Winners

Who Says There's No Such Thing as a Free Lunch? Congratulations to Leah Jones with Linweld, Inc.. Leah will receive free lunch registration at the June 2009 meeting!

Board Meeting Recap

- Will be reviewing the Bylaws and Polices and Procedures for LHRMA.
- Workforce Readiness is starting to plan 2010 Career Fair.
- All Directories and Names badges have been mailed out.

Future Meetings

- July 14: Firefighter's Hall
  - -10:00 Bonus Program
  - -Rapid Response Demonstration – Dept. of Labor
  - -12:00 Tom Osborne for Team Mates
  - -1:15 Behavior Based Interviewing – Kevin Mattran (HRCI approved)
- August: Benefits, Silverstone – Country Inn & Suites/afternoon workshop
- September: State Conference
- October: ASTD Duad Meeting Country Inn & Suites
- November: The Isles–Brad Black, President HUMANeX -afternoon workshop
- December: Social - TBA

LEGAL UPDATE
STIMULUS WHISTLEBLOWERS

by Jack L. Shultz • Harding & Shultz, PC, LLO • Lincoln, NE

Most of America is aware of and becoming more familiar with the stimulus package passed by Congress and signed by President Obama on February 17, 2009. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was described by Congress as dealing with short term spending which would create jobs to assist the economic recovery. Of course, many ear-marks were also included which involved spending on projects which don't appear to be directly related to the creation of jobs in the short term. Many Nebraska employers are excited about the possibility of significant funds being directed toward projects in Nebraska. However, most employers have not focused on the whistleblower provisions of the stimulus package.

EMPLOYERS COVERED

Under ARRA, whistleblower protections apply to employers receiving covered funds as a contractor, subcontractor, grantee, or recipient, a state or local government receiving ARRA funds and any contractor or subcontractor paid with ARRA funds, and any professional membership organization, certification or other professional body, agent or licensee of the federal government and any person acting in the interest of an employer receiving ARRA funds. Education in the manufacture and operation of rockets (rocket scientist) is not required to understand that this is a very broad definition of the term employer.

PROTECTED DISCLOSURES

Under the ARRA, disclosures are protected if they contain information which an employee reasonably believes is evidence of:

-Gross mismanagement of ARRA funds;

-A gross waste of ARRA funds;

-A substantial and specific danger to public health or safety related to the implementation or use of ARRA funds;

-An abuse of authority related to the implementation or use of ARRA funds; or

-A violation of law, rule or regulation related to an agency contract (including a competition for or negotiation of such contract) or grant awarded or issued concerning ARRA funds.

While the breadth of disclosures covered by the whistleblowing sections of the ARRA may have been intended to assure taxpayers that ARRA funds will not be misspent, the sheer magnitude and broad scope of the disclosures covered will have a substantial impact on employers covered by the ARRA.

PROHIBITED REPRISALS

The ARRA prohibits discharge, demotion and "other discrimination" against an employee who makes a protected disclosure. If the ARRA is broadly construed, as will probably be the case, the "other discrimination" portion of the prohibition may include oral or written reprimands, transfers, and reassignments even if there are no tangible economic consequences.

EMPLOYEE COMPLAINT

Disclosures by employees are protected if the disclosures are made to the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board (RATB), and Inspector General of any federal agency which expends ARRA funds, the Comptroller General, any member of Congress, any state or federal regulatory or law enforcement agency, any court or grand jury, the head of any federal agency, a person with supervisory authority over the employee making the disclosure, or a representative of any of the persons listed above. Under some whistleblower procedures at both the federal and the state level, a formal written complaint directly to the agency in charge of the issue at hand is required. ARRA is substantially broader than the traditional whistleblower concepts, especially when it comes to making complaints to the employee's supervisor.

NEW PROCEDURES

No single federal agency is responsible for investigating or holding hearings on whistleblowing complaints under ARRA. Rather, ARRA vests jurisdiction over whistleblower complaints in any agency which expends or obligates ARRA funds. Employee complaints are to be filed with the Inspector General of the appropriate federal agency and the complainant carries the burden of proof by demonstrating that the protected disclosure was a "contributing factor" in the reprisal. ARRA expressly allows proof by circumstantial evidence which might focus on knowledge and timing. In order to escape liability, an employer will need to demonstrate with clear and convincing evidence that it would have taken the action constituting the reprisal even in the absence of the disclosure. After the administrative remedies have been exhausted, the complaint may go to a U.S. District Court. Remedies may include reinstatement with back pay, compensatory damages and an award of costs and expenses with reasonable fees for attorneys and expert witnesses. Significantly, there are **no express caps or limits on damages** under ARRA. Employees will be sure to learn of these procedures because each employer receiving ARRA funds is required to post a notice of the whistleblower rights and remedies provided by ARRA.

CONCLUSION

ARRA expands very significantly the concept of whistleblower protection. As is often the case, whenever a "new concept" is enacted into one federal law, other federal statutes are sure to be amended. In addition, state statutes around the country are also likely to be amended to include the "new concept" from the federal government. In this case, the "new concept" has very expanded definitions in the whistleblowing area with **no damage caps**. Plaintiff's attorneys will be certain to explore and exploit these procedures during 2009 and the years to come. Employers who receive ARRA funds should be careful to document any disciplinary action taken against any employee working on an ARRA funded

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project. That employee may be a whistleblower and in the investigation and hearing which will follow, the employer will need to have very good evidence of the reasons for the employee discipline if the employer is to escape a remedy for which there are no monetary caps.

Editor's Note: This article is not intended to provide legal advice to our readers. Rather, this article is intended to alert our readers to new and developing issues and to provide some common sense answers to complex legal questions. Readers are urged to consult their own legal counsel or the author of this article if the reader wishes to obtain a specific legal opinion regarding how these legal standards may apply to their particular circumstances. The author of this article, Jack L. Shultz, can be contacted at 402/434-3000, or at Harding & Shultz, P.C., L.L.O., P.O. Box 82028, Lincoln, NE 68501-2028, or mailto: jshultz@hslegalfirm.com. Mailto: wharding@hsdlegal.com.

YOU CAN DO IT!

Plan now for the Fall PHR/SPHR/GPHR Study Group – August 24th thru November 16th. Visit the LHRMA website www.lincolnhr.org for more information and to fill out the registration form. If you have any questions please contact Melissa Price at mprice@nebook.com.

JOBS, JOBS & MORE JOBS!

Do you have one to advertise or are you looking for one?
CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:
www.lincolnhr.org
*If you are an employer who has a LHRMA member employee, then you can post your Human Resource job opening on our website by contacting Kathy Harper at **lhrma0048@yahoo.com** or at **402.483.4581 x 339**.*
If you are looking for a Human Resource job, then you can check out our website at:
www.lincolnhr.org

Employment Transition Workshop Unemployment-to-Work

The LHRMA Diversity Committee is sponsoring a community outreach workshop on "Transitioning from Unemployment-to-work". In association with Grace United Methodist Church, the workshop will be held on Saturday, June 27, at Grace United Methodist Church at 27th and R Street from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

This workshop will provide individuals with a Human Resource perspective of the selection process as well as basic survival technique. Those attending will be able to practice interviewing skills with a Human Resources professional, learn about job search tools, or tips on creating a resume. Sessions will be concurrent and will also include tips on surviving a layoff, manage a budget during these difficult times, dressing for success, and career planning/assessment tools. Nebraska Workforce Development, Lincoln Action Program and ASI are scheduled participants and will be available to provide information to those who attend. Refreshments will be provided and door prize will be awarded.

Designation Awarded

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in Alexandria, VA has awarded the Superior Merit Chapter designation to LHRMA for its scope of work in perpetuating and supporting the mission of the organization in 2008.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management. The Society serves the needs of HR professionals and advances the interests of the HR profession. Founded in 1948, SHRM has more than 250,000 members in over 130 countries, and more than 575 affiliated chapters.

LHRMA is one of 79 chapters receiving the distinction in SHRM's North Central Region comprised of 10 states and 153 affiliated chapters.

"This recognition demonstrates both the leadership and the successful partnership the chapter has with SHRM to serve the networking and professional development needs of human resource professionals and to the advancement of the human resources profession" noted Pamela J. Green, SPHR, Chief Membership Officer for SHRM.

Save the Date!
2009 SHRM Nebraska State Conference
Thursday, September 24 & Friday, September 25, 2009
Embassy Suites ~ LaVista, NE

Learn how you too can "go for the gold" at this fun and educational conference. Hear first hand the winning strategies used by motivational keynote speaker and Olympic Gold Medalist, John Naber.

For more information on the 2009 Nebraska State Human Resource Conference, or to register, visit: http://www.shrm-ne.org/conference.htm

Volunteer position opens on the State Council

The SHRM Nebraska State Council currently has an open position for a Special Initiatives Director/Technology. This position would be assigned to work on technology and website issues for the State Council, specifically to improve the current website content and appearance. The Council contracts with a website administrator to perform the technological functions of updates, links, etc. The Technology Director works with other Council members to gather information and create ideas.

Interested candidates should contact the State Council Director, Michele Spadt at mspadt@lincolnsurgery.com or 402-484-9016.

Open committee positions

Workforce Readiness Committee is looking for a "few good people". Planning is already started for the 2010 Career Fair and more people are needed to help in the planning process as well as other Workforce projects. If you would like to be on the committee contact, Tara Jennings at 420-1980 or tjennings@oasisadvantage.com.

NEW MEMBERS

Renae Zimmerman
HR Benefits Coordinator
Pathology Medical Services
zimmermanr@pmspc.org

Mary Shanahan
Administrator
State of Nebraska
Mary.shanahan@nebraska.gov

Chris Bockmann
President
Bockmann Inc
ab@bockmanninc.com

Tami Seaman
Director of HR
KVC
tseaman@kvc.org

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.

Open LHRMA Board Position for October 2009

If you are interested in the following position contact the current board member. Will need to have all interested candidate names turned in by June 2. Candidates will be announced at July LHRMA monthly meeting and voting will take place at the August monthly meeting.

Membership: Contact Lin Blodgett 434-1743 linb@nebcoinc.com.

Coach's Corner

How To Stay Positive in Tough Times

by Jane Weddle, M.A. • Weddle Performance Group

Look around—times are tough right now. The economy has impacted our 401 K's, jobs, our businesses, our buying power and people we know have lost jobs--the list could go on!

So how does one stay positive in tough times! After all research shows that staying positive improves productivity stress management and our health. Last week watching Michael J. Fox's new show "The Adventures of an Incurable Optimist", I was able to see several stories where people are find ways to stay positive in this tough time.

In producing the special, they found that there is a genetic marker for optimism. Martin Seligman, a pioneer in the field of optimism, said even if you aren't born an optimist, you can learn to become one. Whether you tend to lean more towards the side of optimism or lean more towards the side of pessimism we all still face the challenge of staying positive when tough times hit. For us optimist types we do have an advantage. For pessimistic people, Seligman states it can be done—it just takes a little more effort to stay positive and you have to be more mindful of your thoughts!

So here are 8 ways to stay positive when times are tough—in no particular order and some ideas came from asking people the question-"What are you doing to stay positive at work/home during these tough times?"

Give Back. A Health Care Account Manager told me that "Sometimes it's not all about me; I gear my thoughts on how I can make a difference in someone's life on a daily basis." So one idea is to take time and make a difference in someone's life—who could benefit from a random act of kindness that you know?

Practice with affirmations: This is a way to program you subconscious mind with positivity. To change negative thinking into positive thinking. Instead of saying—"I am losing so much money in my retirement investments"—change it to "I am able to buy low at this time which will result in a gain long term." Write down 5 positive affirmations and say them 3 times a day!

Read the Daily Motivator at www.greatday.com. A friend of mine told me about this site 2 years ago and I make it a habit to go in everyday and read the daily message and it helps me to keep moving forward!

List your Positive Buttons---make a list of things that keep you positive when triggered—a take off of the "old hot button exercise". Find a way to have those positive buttons show up on a regular basis either by an act on your part or from the help of a friend or family member!

Dance like no one is watching! My good friend and co-author of the book Stomp the Elephant in the Office, Steven Vannoy--gave me this tip! When feeling low—close and DANCE with or without music! Tip from personal experience—works really well with the Mamma Mia Soundtrack!

Forward Focus Questions---Create 3 x 5 cards with questions to ask yourself to help keep you moving forward at what is working vs. the backward focus questions that keep us stuck or bring us down. Put those cards in places that would be most helpful for you—the visor of your vehicle, next to your computer monitor, etc. Examples: What is working? What did I learn today that would be of value? What went well? What are my 3 greatest strengths in my life?

Get Active. Studies show that your brain gets marinated in powerful positive endorphins when your heart rate goes up. Go for a walk, go to the gym, get a partner and play a game of Wii bowling, golf, etc.

Take a "news fast"—the media can really hit us hard with negative messaging and catastrophic thinking. If you're a big news watcher or reader. Give yourself a break for awhile!

Jane Weddle is the Sr. Performance Consultant and Certified B-Coach for Weddle Performance Group. To find out more about the services and products ranging from hiring to development that WPG offers or for more information on other organizational needs, go to www.partnerinperformance.com or call 402-429-5224.

Three audit volunteers needed

Per the LHRMA Board, an audit of the books should be conducted by three LHRMA members during odd numbered years. Therefore, the Board needs three volunteers with a basic knowledge of accounting to review the books to ensure there aren't discrepancies or problems with our accounting procedures. Hopefully this would be a one time meeting to review the reports and checkbook ledger for the past 12 months. Rest assured the books are audited by a CPA firm during the even numbered years.

If you are interested in volunteering some time and your expertise, please contact Cindy Mefford at 486-2221 or by email cindym@eastmonttowers.com. We would like this audit to occur in June or July.

Which of the following presidents took the least amount of vacation days during his presidency?

Richard Nixon • George H.W. Bush • Gerald Ford • Jimmy Carter

Answer: Jimmy Carter. President Carter spent 79 days on vacation during his four years in office. He normally vacationed at his home in Georgia.

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Afternoon workshop: Update on Current Legal and Immigration Topics

Despite changes in Administration, some of the same challenges still remain in employment verification and liability for hiring undocumented workers. David will talk about some of the new programs, and changes to not so new programs that employers are likely to face. He'll discuss I-9s, Social Security no-match, e-verify, new verification programs, and how to navigate through all the recent changes to ensure you protect your employer.

Wage and Hour Watch: Discussion on the rise of class action lawsuits including effective time clock rounding practices, off-the-clock work, misclassification of exempt versus nonexempt status, independent contractor designations, impermissible deductions and effective policies and practices to avoid liability. This presentation will also discuss the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and the increased enforcement strategies by the Department of Labor with regard to wage and hour claims.

The Labor Beat: Discuss the change in traditional labor law and a forecast into the future including the Employee Free Choice Act, the composition of the National Labor Relations board and what that could mean for employer policies (i.e. Weingarten Rights, employee use of an employer's electronic devices, etc.) and recent Executive Orders signed by President Obama in his first days in office.

David Zaritzky Brown

Managing Partner, Brown Immigration Law, LLC

David has more than ten years of professional legal experience dedicated to U.S., Canadian and International immigration matters for large, medium and small companies, and for individuals.

David manages all aspects of immigration compliance, including I-9 issues, ICE response, daily status issues, corporate mergers/acquisitions, and permanent residence processing. David prides himself on helping people and companies get out of tough immigration situations.

He also manages the outbound immigration process for U.S. and Canadian companies seeking to receive "one-stop" shopping for immigration legal services.

Client Experiences

David has continuously supported a number of key corporate clients and individuals at all times throughout his career. His individual clients have run the gamut of professions and his corporate clients have represented most major industries in the U.S.

David has dealt with every nuance of business immigration imaginable. David was born in Canada and became a naturalized U.S. citizen in October 2008 – so he's had his own experiences with the U.S. immigration bureaucracy.

Former and/or current corporate clients have included:

Cisco Canada; Microsoft Canada; NCR; State Street Bank; Deutsche Bank; Ernst & Young (Accounting, Consulting and Cap Gemini); Electronic Arts; Varian Medical Systems; Lucas-Film Entertainment Co. Ltd.; Gartner Group; Polycom Inc. Intersil Corp; Sitel Corporation; DivX; Global Cash Access; Lincoln Industries; Provena Health, among others.

David's reputation is stellar among former and current clients, and in 2006 Brown Immigration Law, LLC formed a strategic partnership with Berens & Tate, PC, LLO, one of the best known and respected boutique labor relations and employment law firms in the Midwest, to assist their clients with immigration needs. Should you or your firm require immigration assistance, please do not hesitate to contact David Zaritzky Brown at dbrown@brownimmigrationlaw.com

Chad P. Richter

**Partner, Omaha Office
Jackson Lewis LLP**

Chad Richter has extensive experience representing management in the areas of labor relations, human resource counseling, training, and employment discrimination. In the event of litigation, Chad has experience advocating for employers before state and federal courts nationwide. He also aggressively defends employers before the EEOC and the Department of Labor regarding issues arising under FMLA, Title VII, ADA, FLSA, the Worker Adjustment Retraining Notification Act, and corollary state Law. Mr. Richter graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and received his law degree from Creighton University, graduating cum laude, and also received a certificate of concentration in corporate law. Mr. Richter is also a certified Mediator in the state of Nebraska.

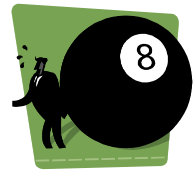
Mr. Richter is a member of the Labor and Employment Law Sections of the American Bar Association, Nebraska State Bar Association, and the Omaha Bar Association. He is admitted to practice in the State of Nebraska as well as before the U. S. District Court for the District of Nebraska and has appeared pro hac vice in various courts and administrative agencies throughout the country.

Mr. Richter is a frequent speaker to both business and civic organizations and is active in numerous professional associations. He is on the Board of Directors for the Midwest Chapter of the American Teleservices Association, National Chairman of the Labor Relations Forum of the American Teleservices Association, Labor and Employment Counsel for the Nebraska Restaurant Association, Co-Chair for the Human Resources Association of the Midlands Governmental Affairs Committee, and works closely with numerous SHRM chapters and other similar business organizations throughout the country.

EXTRA!!

EAP CORNER NEWS

We're here to help.



How Employers Can Help with Employees in Financial Trouble

By Julie Gibson, LMHP, LMSW • Directions EAP, LLC • Lincoln, NE

We are reminded daily multiple times even, that times are rugged. The economy on every level from micro to macro faces challenges to do things differently. Survival is the name of the game. Some folks are frantically trying to keep up with their investment portfolio and wonder if anyone knows the plan. Others are worried about their mortgage or gas for the car to even get to a job if they had one. Maybe the TV should warn us that listening to the news of the day could be hazardous to your health!

I recently ran across some research that suggests some practical ways to help people cope with the tough economic times we face. All of the research cited in this article comes directly from the February 2009 issue of Research Works. I highly recommend reading the full article, but knowing how busy everyone is I wanted to share at least a brief summary.

Surprisingly, in April 2008 the Kaiser Family foundation reported results of a survey that showed almost two-thirds (61%) of Americans reported having 'serious financial problems.' The problems mentioned included paying for gas (44%), getting a good paying job or a raise (29%), paying for health care and health insurance (28%) paying rent or mortgage (19%) paying for food (18%), problems with credit card debt or other personal debt (18), and losing money in the stock market (16%). [1] Another survey in the same year done by the Principal Financial Group of employees found 56% were cutting back on spending due to challenging economic conditions, half were concerned about the future of their company, and one in four had concerns about losing their own job. Also most employees feel unprepared financially for economic strain, with less than 30% saying they had enough savings to cover more than six months of living expenses. [2]

As an EAP counselor working with employees from a broad range of companies, I can attest that financial stresses are bringing more people looking for help with increasing financial pressure and job insecurities. To bring this home for the HR industry -more and more people are looking to their HR and business managers for advice on financial issues. In 2008 a survey of 329 human resources and employee benefits managers found an increase (39%) in number of employees asking for help with personal financial issues;

26% reported an increase in the number of employees who had their wages garnished by debt collection agencies; and 20% reported an increase in the number of employees asking for an advance in pay. [3] However, less than half of companies surveyed offered programs to help employees with their financial problems. For many the financial challenges companies face have them already challenged to the max. Even if they want to help, many employers don't know where to turn. The end of this article discusses a few things that can be done immediately and at little cost.

We all know reasons employees get into financial troubles. Research pointed to 4 causes specifically:

1) Life happens – things like college, weddings, loss of job, emergencies, disasters, accidents, illness;

2) Financial Literacy – a general lack of understanding about how to manage, save and invest money;

3) Psychological Factors – things like impulse spending and responding to advertising tactics; and

4) Income Stagnation – A look at IRS stats shows that for the bottom earning half of Americans, the average after-tax annual income in 2000 was $14,506 and in 2005 it was $14,526 – only about $20 more. The US government consumer price inflation index data shows an increase from 172.2 to 195.3 over the same period – a 13.4% increase. Thus taking into account the rise in inflation, a zero percent increase in income over five years translated into having almost $2000 less money to pay for living expenses in 2005 than they had in 2000. [4]

Obviously the decline in actual income increases the financial strains of personal and family budgets and increases the chances of taking on additional personal debt, home equity loans, and other credit obligations or additional part time employment. Our clients have talked about their lack of concentration and ability to focus on tasks at work because they are preoccupied with fear of collections people calling at work, or utilities being turned off, or foreclosure issues. Clearly financial stress can have negative consequences on worker health and job performance. Research continues but it is beginning to show the link between workers' financial stability and their productivity and performance at work.

What are some steps for employers who care about the financial stresses of their employees?

1. Communicate – employers may help maintain a positive work climate through frequent communication from management to employees on issues of company viability in general and on employee job stability in particular. Open communication might also open the door for employees to ask

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supervisors about resources for help with personal financial issues.

2. Provide Prevention and Treatment Services – personal financial education increasing money-management knowledge and skills in all employees; Credit Counseling and Debt Management- help employees find the local resources;

3. Employee Assistance Programs – many include education and financial counseling services through individual financial counseling, workshops, phone and web based resources and referral services.

Economists say the challenges are going to continue for some time yet. I like a comment by Robert Schuler, pastor, who said – "tough times don't last, tough people do." We need to find all the resources we can to help one another through. We're all inter-connected. Our employees cannot be struggling without it affecting us in the workplace. Perhaps addressing this issue even in very small steps will be appreciated by your employees. If you have questions about what an EAP can provide for your company, we'd be happy to have you call Directions at 800-563-8201 or locally 434-2900.

References:

[1] APA "Economy and Money Top Causes of Stress for Americans" June 4, 2008

[2] Principal Financial Group (2008) www.principal.com/wellbeing/sbnews.html

[3] Weaver, P., & Rollins, G. (2008) Easing the burden of employees' debt. HR Magazine, 53(7), 61-64

[4] Johnston, D.C. (2007) Tax Cuts Increased Income, but Hardly Equally, New York Times, October 12, 2007.

Article is summary of Research Works, Partnership for Workplace Mental Health, "Employee Personal Financial Distress and How Employers Can Help" Vol 1, February 2009

MAY BASKETS BLOOM AND GROW!

The annual effort to raise funds for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Foundation was a super success! Persons attending the May 12th lunch meeting of the Lincoln Human Resources Management Association (LHRMA) donated $545 to the SHRM Foundation, an increase over last year's giving. Listed below are the names of the eleven (11) basket sponsors, along with the names of the basket winners. Actually, we are all winners as recipients of the professional support and scholarships provided by the SHRM Foundation.

Our LHRMA Chapter and its members are grateful to our corporate friends for providing the excellent baskets for the fund and awareness raising event.

Lincoln Industries, *Pampered Living Basket* won by Elizabeth Coker; **Nebraska Wesleyan University/Wesleyan Advantage**, *Life Long Learner's Bag* won by Kenda Fink; **Novartis**, *Relaxation by Candlelight Basket #1* won by Melissa Hynes; **Novartis**, *Relaxation by Candlelight Basket* #2 won by Angela Smathers; ***Nebraska Book Company***, *Nebraska Sports Fan Basket,* won by Debbie Russnogle; **Continuum EAP, Training and Consulting**, *Soothe Your Stress Away Basket* won by Georgia Glass; **Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital**, *Summer Fun! Basket* won by Gretchen Thornburg; **LHRMA Board of Directors**, *Barbecue Blast Basket* won by Barb Benes; **TierOne Bank,** *Recipes for Success Basket,* won by Tammy Schroeder; **One Source, The Background Check Company**, *Exotic Holiday at Home Basket* won by Marv Renner; and **BlueCross BlueShield of Nebraska**, *Golfer's Little Caddy Basket* won by Tara Jennings.

2009 LHMA SALARY/BENEFITS SURVEY

Each year LHRMA conducts a Salary & Benefits Survey for LHRMA member organizations. The survey will be conducted this summer and survey questionnaire instructions will be emailed to all LHRMA members. Only one response from each company will be accepted. Following is a timeline for the survey process:

•June – questionnaire instructions emailed
•July 17 – deadline for questionnaires to be completed
September - survey report will be available

There are 2 ways to participate: on-line or paper submission. Payment is required prior to receipt of the report as follows:

•$50 – on-line completion
•$75 – paper submission

The survey may be purchased by LHRMA companies that do ***NOT*** provide data. The cost to purchase the survey is $300 for non-participating companies.

Please contact Nancy Conway or Kelly Riley if you have any questions regarding the survey. Email Nancy at nancy.conway@cabelas.com and put Survey in the subject line. Kelly can be contacted at Kelly@clarion-group.net.

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LHRMA
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