

TAHRA

Volume 1, Issue 4

March/April 2009

TRAVERSE AREA HUMAN RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

The President's Corner

TAHRA is off to a terrific start for 2009. We have grown to 80 members and continue to get applications and inquiries each month. We've had two terrific programs, Humor in the Workplace and Team Building on the Fly, both very relevant and refreshing topics in what some call very challenging times. The team-building workshop was well attended, fun and provided some good networking time and ideas that could be implemented easily. And the even better

news is that we still have some terrific programs planned for you this spring.

Yes, spring is just around the corner! As we move into a new season, as human resource professionals it's critical that we remain focused and bring a positive approach to the business initiatives we support. Now is the time to be creative, encourage innovative ideas and engagement, reward your performers and strive to increase workforce mo-

rale.

I know great things are being done in the workplace, so reach out to your fellow professionals to share best practices and Happy Spring!

-TAHRA
President
Janet Yankee,
SPHR



Dates and Events to Remember

March 10, 2009

Monthly TAHRA Meeting

Waterfront Conference Center

12:00 noon—2:00 pm

Topic: OSHA CET Division

April 14, 2009

Monthly TAHRA Meeting

Waterfront Conference Center

12:00 noon—2:00 pm

Topic: Diversity

Inside this issue:

President's Corner	1
Spring HRCI Study Group/New TAHRA Members	2
Spotlight on TAHRA Board Member	3
COBRA/ Employee Free Choice Act Seminars	4,5
Team-Building Workshop a Success	4&6
HRCI Credit/Building Stronger Teams	6&7

"Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfills the same function as pain in the body. It calls attention to unhealthy state of things".

- Winston Churchill

Spring 2009 HRCI Study Group

Attention TAHRA members:

Have you considered attaining your HR Certification this year? If so, please consider joining a TAHRA sponsored study group. A certification study group is forming and can assist you in preparing to take the certification exam for the PHR, SPHR, or GPHR. If you would like to find out more about joining the study group, have questions about certification in general, or for more information about how you can become certified through the HRCI Certification program, contact Bill Morrison at 932-9650 or email bmorrison@cproducts.net.

The winter testing window is:

PHR and SPHR: May 1, 2009 thru June 30, 2009

GPHR: May 1, 2009 thru May 31, 2009

Application deadlines for all levels:

Regular deadline: March 13, 2009

Late deadline: April 17, 2009

Possible Opportunity:

Don't let financial needs stop you from pursuing your educational needs. Remember, TAHRA offers a \$200 scholarship for those who qualify. Scholarship applications are available on the TAHRA website by going to www.tahratic.org and logging into members and clicking on addendums.

Welcome New TAHRA Members!

We are pleased to announce the following new members to TAHRA!
Please be sure to introduce yourselves and get to know these fellow HR professionals!

Rachelle Bushong

Kathryn Hall

Cindy Karker

Denise Kuschell

Kelly Services

Northwestern Michigan College

Team Elmers

Traverse City Light & Power



Spotlight on TAHRA Board Members

Carol Kasper, TAHRA Secretary Human Resources, Northwestern Michigan College

Hi! I'm Carol Kasper, currently in the second year of a two-year term as TAHRA's Secretary. I have held the Secretary position since June 2004, previously sharing the Co-Vice President of Programming position with Patti Williams June 2002 through May 2004.



My current position is Human Resources Specialist for Northwestern Michigan College, where I have worked in the HR Department since October 1999. At the College I work closely with recruitment and search management, compliance activities, database maintenance and information management, and benefits administration and reporting. NMC has given me the opportunity to expand my HR expertise into many new areas of HR management, and I was fortunate to have the backing and support to pursue and pass the HRCI exam for Professional in Human Resources in May 2005.

My husband Tom and I moved to Traverse City from the Chicago area, where we were both born and raised. After various administrative assistant positions in the editorial departments of World Book/Childcraft Inc. and in sales departments at Du Pont, I settled into an administrative assistant position in the Human Resources Department for Sandoz Agro, Inc., a chemical company specializing in agricultural products. Sandoz was merged with BASF after I had worked there for 5 years, and our site in Des Plaines, IL, was closed as a result. After taking several months off and then working for 7 months as a temporary in the HR department of a magnet manufacturer in Marengo, IL, we decided to make a drastic move out of the area, ending up in Traverse City in November of 1998.

My love of gardening started with planting morning glories in a small dirt patch of my childhood backyard in Chicago, which trailed up strings to our second-floor apartment. Here in the TC area I find the sandy soil a real challenge after the rich soil we enjoyed in Illinois! I also like to read, particularly mystery novels.

I enjoy the networking with other HR professionals that TAHRA affords me on a regular monthly basis, as well as the opportunities for professional development. I recommend to any of our members who want to make some good friendships and want the opportunity to stretch a little and do some valuable volunteer work, consider joining the TAHRA Board or at least getting involved on one of the committees. It's a win-win situation!

New COBRA Requirements: Economic Stimulus Program requires quick action.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, signed by President Obama on February 17, requires employers to subsidize COBRA premiums and offset the subsidy with a credit to their payroll taxes. In some very limited circumstances, it also extends the period of COBRA coverage. This new law is effective immediately and requires prompt action. Join us as we explore the new COBRA requirements and the steps your company needs to take to implement the new law.

Grand Rapids Program

March 3, 2009

8:00 am - 10:00 am

Crowne Plaza

5700 East 28th Street, SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Registration fee includes program, materials and continental breakfast

Southfield Program

March 5, 2009

12 noon - 2:30 pm

Skyline Club

2000 Town Center

Southfield, MI 48075

Registration fee includes program, materials and buffet lunch

Registration fee is \$75 payable by check (made out to Warner Norcross & Judd) or credit card. To register, please contact Sharon Sprague ssprague@wnj.com at 616.752.2326.

Team-Building on the Fly Workshop Hits the Target!

Designing and coordinating the programs for the year can be a challenge. Finding monthly speakers with relevant topics and meaningful information is sometimes difficult. Pulling together a workshop is even a bigger challenge. What type of information should we bring to the members that will be useful in helping them achieve their goals? What topic, time of day and price will create enough interest for members to justify leaving work for? This year's workshop hit the target! We had 24 attendees- 19 member and 5 guests. This is the largest turnout we've had for a workshop.

For those unable to attend, you got a little taste of the workshop during the regular program. Dave Trippett was an energetic speaker who got his points across with humor and enthusiasm. The 'label' exercise was both fun and enlightening. It provided a few minutes of interaction with other members and insights into how we respond to others based on how we see them. It was also a great icebreaker to meet other members and guests at our tables.

Continued on page 6

Protect Your Business! Sign Up for an Employee Free Choice Seminar

Federal legislation will be re-introduced known as the Employee Free Choice Act. Expected language in the bill will revise the way employees are able to form a labor union, shorten contract negotiation periods before requiring binding arbitration, and impose strict penalties on employers. Enactment of this legislation could have a serious impact on businesses across northern Michigan. Do you know what to do?

The Chamber and the Northwest Michigan Regional Chamber Alliance is hosting a Traverse City seminar focused on educating members about the Employee Free Choice Act and how enactment could affect their local business.

The event will provide an overview of the proposal but also discuss the implications of the legislation and how employers can proactively address the initiative with employees.

March 6th - Traverse City - Oleson Center on the campus of Northwestern Michigan College

10:00am - Noon. Guest presenters will be business and employment law specialist Rachel Brochert Roe of Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge's Traverse City office, and the Midwest Director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Cost for the event will be \$10 for Chamber members or members of a Regional Chamber Alliance partner, and \$25 for non-members. RSVP to the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce website through the Events and Registration tab at www.tcchamber.org.

Strategic HR - building strong work teams

By Bill Hendry, SPHR

As a human resource professional, you know that much of the work we do relies on the development of strong and effective teams. Many times you will be called upon to be a part of a cross functional team at work, and even asked to facilitate solutions when a team needs help to work more effectively. Much of the work in organizations gets done through team based approaches. I read with interest the most recent SHRM Workplace Visions article titled Innovative Work Teams in a Challenging Business Environment. One of the key points made is that while there are "...major financial difficulties facing many organizations, the use of high performing teams is more important than ever." The article points out that while it may be a tough time to invest in teams, this is exactly the type of strategic investment that will pay off now and in the future so organizations can continue to meet workplace challenges.

So how do you go about building a strong team? For years I have used a model of team effectiveness that looks at seven key areas. It was designed by Dr. Greg Huszycz, a professor at Eastern Michigan University and author of Tools for Team Excellence. The areas are:

- Clear sense of direction
- Talented members (a great reason to invest in that PHR/SPHR/GPHR!)
- Clear and enticing responsibilities
- Good operating procedures
- Constructive interpersonal relationships
- Active reinforcement systems
- Constructive external relationships

If you want to build a stronger team, one of the most important areas and a great place to start is having a clear sense of direction. Think about your own department and ask yourself: What is our mission here? Do we have a department mission statement? Do we have specific goals and targets? Setting goals as a team provides motivation and helps team members determine if they have succeeded together or not. Having a vision of the future that you are all working toward will help team members handle the present. Team goals help establish mutual accountability between team members. Do you have a shared vision of the future and what kind of team and department you are building? You have heard the Lewis Carroll quote "if you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." Having a clear sense of direction helps you get on the right road to success.

Next time we will take a closer look at other parts of the model and how you can use it to increase the effectiveness of any team.

Bill Hendry, SPHR, is programming co-vp for TAHRA and consults on team effectiveness.

Team-Building Workshop continued from page 4

The workshop provided more interaction with the group and several ideas on how to use team building exercises effectively. Dave had us practice various techniques and he provided us with resources to utilize later on.

Here are some comments from the participants:

- **Energetic speaker; great tools; good thought provoking information**
- **Zoom – what an eye opening experience!**
- **This interaction w/ others brought us closer & we got to know one another much better. It was so interactive & everyone was engaged.**
- **Learned a lot by brainstorming w/note cards-meetings**
- **Will use the teambuilding exercises—loved the barrel and Zoom exercises**

As Human Resources professionals we are key to the development of effective teams in our workplaces. With the downturn in the economy we face even bigger challenges. Our goal with the workshop was to provide you with tools and resources to help you do more with less. I want to thank those who attended the workshop. Your participation made it a success.

Karyn Oncu
Programming



Need HRCI Credits?

Don't let these tough economic times stop you from earning recertification credit for your HR certification. There are hundreds of activities that will count for recertification credit that are FREE or have little cost. The HR Certification Institute has created a list of recertification activities that will either cost you little to no money to participate in.

For example, many organizations such as SHRM or HR.com offer webcasts at no cost which you can watch right from your PC. You can also earn recertification credit for first time on-the-job activities that you are engaged in or for a leadership role that you may currently hold that is HR related.

To learn more about recertification activities that are affordable and accessible to you, download our "[Tips For Earning Credit Hours](#)" flier.

The HR Certification Institute has a directory with a great number of pre-approved programs that count for recertification credit. [Search](#) for activities that fit your schedule and needs.

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Leadership in an Uncertain Economy

5 Tips for Building Stronger Teams

In an uncertain economy, the idea that a company will succeed or fail based on its people is as true as ever. But in times like these, even employees not directly affected by mass layoffs may be negatively impacted when it comes to work. Employers can expect to see increased job insecurity, higher stress, heavier workloads, and reduced teamwork among employees in this type of climate, according to research by Sirota Survey Intelligence, specialists in attitude research.

So, what can employers do to combat these negative effects and get the best out of every employee? One great solution is to focus on building stronger teams. When strong teams characterize your workplace, it helps increase retention of top candidates, encourage innovation, and even boost productivity. Here are five tips for building stronger teams, based on ideas from Patrick Lencioni's book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*.

1 – Build Team Trust. Without trust, teamwork is virtually impossible. In teams, trust occurs when every member of the team knows their teammates' intentions are good – not just the leader's. Trust is present in teams when co-workers are vulnerable and comfortable with each other. In uncertain economic times, employees are more likely to put their own interests ahead of the team's, making fostering trust within teams a particularly challenging prospect. Leaders focused on building team trust communicate openly, reward employees who put the team first, and take the lead in being vulnerable themselves.

2 – Discuss Issues. One of the five dysfunctions many teams have is fear of conflict. This is present when teams don't openly engage in debate or discuss issues. But, productive conflict is healthy for team growth. This doesn't mean co-workers should engage in office politics or interpersonal conflicts. Rather, teams should discuss pertinent business issues to quickly resolve challenges and achieve results. Leaders can set the stage for this aspect of team building by setting the standard for healthy conflict resolution among team members.

3 – Foster Commitment. Teams that demonstrate commitment aren't held back by the lack of consensus that plagues dysfunctional teams. That's because they know the value of acting even when everyone does not agree on the course of action. They also demonstrate the ability to act without complete certainty of their results. As Lencioni says, putting off a decision to wait on certainty or consensus is dangerous, because this habit breeds lack of confidence and inactivity within a team. So, great leaders foster commitment by enabling their teams to commit to a course of action quickly – even without complete consensus – for the good of the team. They allow every member of the team to be heard but create deadlines for decision making and ensure the process is moving forward.

4 – Require Accountability. In team accountability, everyone recognizes the importance of holding each other accountable for performance. One good way to enable this accountability is by sharing group goals and standards. When everyone on a team knows what is expected, professional accountability is possible. This also enables the creation of group rewards, which helps to establish a culture of mutual accountability. "More than any policy or system, there is nothing like the fear of letting down respected teammates that motivates people to improve their performance," Lencioni says.

5 – Focus on Results. Unfortunately, many get distracted by team and individual status. Particularly in times of economic uncertainty, this is a threat. Work groups often tend to pour their attention into the question of their survival as a team and ignore performance. Ironically, this focus does more harm than good and increases the risk of downsizing. Great teams, on the other hand, focus on producing great results, no matter what. Leaders who want to equip their teams to focus on results can use results-based reward systems, retain achievement-oriented employees, and make a personal commitment to results themselves.

Even in an uncertain economy, it's important to focus on building the best possible team. By ensuring that employees are committed to each other and to your company's vision and goals, your business can do more than just survive in a competitive world. Start by focusing on these five behaviors, and equip your entire workforce to thrive as a committed team.

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2008-2009 TAHRA Leadership Board



2007 SHRM **SUPERIOR MERIT AWARD**
CHAPTER



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Who said this famous quote?

"You cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the wealthy out of freedom. What one person receives without working for, another person must work for without receiving. The government cannot give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from somebody else. When half of the people get the idea that they do not have to work because the other half is going to take care of them, and when the other half gets the idea that it does no good to work because somebody else is going to get what they work for, that my dear friend, is about the end of any nation. You cannot multiply wealth by dividing it."