

HR BASICS

*Answering the world's most
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
about human resources*

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Table of Contents

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>WHAT ARE THE SIX BIGGEST HR MISTAKES TO AVOID?</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>HOW DO I RESOLVE CONFLICT?</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM HR COMPLIANT?</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>HOW DO I RETAIN GOOD EMPLOYEES?</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>HOW CAN A MANAGER BUILD TRUST?</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>HOW DO YOU FIRE AN EMPLOYEE BOTH COMPASSIONATELY AND LEGALLY?</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>HOW CAN I BETTER COMMUNICATE WITH MY EMPLOYEES?</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>HOW SHOULD I DEAL WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE?</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>WHAT DO I DO IF I RECEIVE A COMPLAINT OF HARASSMENT OR DISCRIMINATION? ...</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>WHAT IF MANAGEMENT IS THE PROBLEM?</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>HOW CAN HR MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS SUCCESS BE ALIGNED?</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>HOW DO I DEAL WITH UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR?</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>WHAT IS EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT?</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND ITS EFFECT ON HR MANAGEMENT?</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>HOW CAN HR MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS SUCCESS BE ALIGNED?</u>	<u>ERROR!</u>
<u>BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</u>	
<u>HOW DOES MANAGING EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION RELATE TO OVERALL BUSINESS GOALS?</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>HOW CAN I GET EMPLOYEES EXCITED ABOUT CHANGE?</u>	<u>30</u>

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BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

HOW DO I HANDLE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?36

Introduction

Thank you for getting a copy of my e-book, *HR Basics: Answering The World's Most Frequently Asked Questions About Human Resources*.

For over 40 years I've been fortunate to be able to provide human resources assistance and services to a multitude of businesses and industries all over the country with specialization in the following areas: Internal HR Policy and Procedures; Compliant Onboarding and Terminations; Employer Coaching & Guidance; Compensation Compliance; Sexual harassment and Non-Discrimination; PTO and Employee Handbooks; Federal & State Law Mandates; Managing Unemployment Claims; Overseeing Internal Company Documents; Handling Government Communication; Staff Training; General HR Support; and much more.

The scope of human resources is vast and continually evolving, and if neglected could have a significant impact or legal ramifications within any company big or small. Therefore, my goal with this e-book is to offer sound professional answers to twenty of the world's most frequently asked questions regarding human resources, based on my life and experiences in the HR field.

After reading this e-book I invite you to Schedule a Free HR Discovery Meeting: <https://book.besthrassistance.com/book-discovery-meeting> or by calling my office at: 859-208-BEST.

The purpose of the discovery meeting is not to sell you products and services you don't need, but instead to listen to your questions, and help you create real step-by-step solutions to complex HR problems that you may be facing right now. If you would like to explore further HR help after we speak then we can arrange for setting up a comprehensive HR Audit of your business to gather more information.

This discovery meeting will be a virtual conference using the online video platform, Zoom. All you need to do is select the day and time that works best for you. You are welcome to invite anyone within your company that you want to join us.

To your HR Success!



Gary Barksdale

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5

What are the six biggest HR mistakes to avoid?

1. Failure to document performance related issues or taking an employee action without documentation.
2. Not having a formal compensation plan resulting in:
 - No stated pay philosophy, lack of a standard in establishing pay. Pay philosophy is most associated with competitive position within the labor market and budget limitations. Different pay philosophies can be established for different jobs based on required skills, knowledge education in tight labor markets.
 - Lead the market in pay
 - Match the market in pay
 - Lag the market in pay
 - Equal pay concerns
 - Not establishing caps on salary ranges to avoid overpaying for a job based upon market data.
 - May be in violation of equal pay act, requiring equal pay for equal work men and women.
 - Not being competitive in wages and benefits as compared to the market
 - Inefficient, or ineffective, use of personnel related resources.
3. Outdated employee handbook or HR policies or polices not meeting actual practice. Policies and practices should align, inconsistency could result in legal challenges
4. Failure to take action in dealing with difficult employees. There is a saying that 20% of employees will take 80% of your time. Employees observe how these difficult coworkers are dealt with, or not. Not taking corrective action with difficult employees affects supervisor credibility and overall effectiveness.
5. Failure to align HR strategies with organizational goals. The cost of personnel is usually the largest budget line. All HR functions should be structured to support organizational goals and ensure the best use of these resources.
6. Not having a formal policy on harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment to ensure prompt investigation, maintaining confidentiality, protection from retaliation, and not taking appropriate correct action.

How do I resolve conflict?

Wherever there are people in a relationship, personal or professional, there will be conflict. It is a characteristic of the human condition, People will disagree. You, as a manager, cannot eliminate conflict in the workplace.

On the other hand, if constructively managed, differing ideas lead to innovation and invention. It is one of the reasons why a diverse workplace can be so valuable. People with different backgrounds, experiences, educations, nationalities, genders, and ages will come up with something new. The key is to manage the conflict so that it doesn't erupt into anger and retribution. You can't let it get out of hand.

Peter T. Coleman, in his book, *Making Conflict Work*, says that controlled conflict can allow organizations to be "more effective, creative, and innovative."

Conflict resolution and mediation requires special training and skills and is not typically a competency of most managers. HR professionals may be better prepared to provide conflict resolution if they have knowledgeable, experienced resources. A poor attempt at resolving conflict could make things worse for all parties.

The key to dealing with conflict is to first recognize the conflict and to initiate decisive action. Determine resources available to provide conflict resolution and mediation. If you do not have qualified internal support, consider hiring a qualified external mediator. This approach may have the additional advantage of having a mediator who everyone recognizes as a neutral party.

Conflict resolution and mediation must be voluntary. It is difficult to force people, or teams, to resolve conflict on their own.

Some of the basic steps to resolve conflict are:

- Bringing the parties together to listen to each other
- Using an effective mediator to skillfully guide participants with a quality interaction.
- The mediator working with the parties to explore possible solutions and to formulate decisions if appropriate.
- Reaching a point at which parties understand — not necessarily agree — with each other and possibly arrive at a resolution that all parties can live with.

How do I know if I am HR compliant?

- HR compliance begins with an assessment of all HR policies, practices and procedures to determine areas which may be out of compliance.
 - The assessment may be done in house or with external assistance. A complete HR assessment requires working knowledge of employment law, both state and federal.
 - Some of the most important employment laws relate to non-discrimination. No practice, policy, or procedure should result in a discriminatory action. Discrimination may be obvious and intentional, or subtle and unintentional. All forms of discrimination based on race, sex, age, disability, gender, national origin or religion are illegal. All companies are required to have a policy on harassment, sexual harassment or sexual misconduct.
 - The policy defines ways in which a complaint may be lodged, usually with more than one reporting choice. Policies dealing with harassment, sexual misconduct and non-discrimination should spell out steps regarding a prompt legal investigation of the complaint.
 - The employee filing the complaint must be protected from retaliation.
 - Leadership should take appropriate corrective action based upon the findings of the investigation.
- Wage and hour laws have been in place since the great depression. Areas of interest to Wage and Hour Investigators are:
 - Proper classification of employees as exempt (salary) or non-exempt (hourly)
 - Proper payment of overtime after 40 worked hours
 - Adequate pay records to document overtime payments
 - Child labor restrictions
 - Posting of required signs
- OSHA regulations deal with safety and security requirements and reporting of workplace injuries and illnesses.
- Americans with disabilities act requires assessment for the provision of reasonable accommodations for qualified applicants or employees with a disability.
- Other legal compliance requirements include:
 - Family and Medical Leave Act
 - Equal Pay Act
 - Age Discrimination and Employment Act

HOW DO I HIRE THE RIGHT PEOPLE THE FIRST TIME?

Finding the right person to fill a key position in your company is important. The process takes time, effort, and resources, so you want to get it right the first time.

- **Job Skills Analysis.** Before moving into the recruitment process, conduct a job analysis to confirm:
 - The role of the job in the company,
 - Duties and responsibilities,
 - Required skills and knowledge,
 - Traits the successful applicant needs to be successful.

Skills, education, experience and other qualifications you list for the job should be both legal and directly related to job success.

- **Recruitment Plan.** Recruitment plans provide a guide to address each aspect of recruitment and other considerations in finding the best candidates. It should consider what will differentiate your offer from that of other companies searching for candidates in the same applicant pool.
 - What is the market from which qualified candidates are most likely to be found? For example, how broad a job search is likely to be required: local, regional, or nation-wide?
 - What competitive advantages does your company have that would make a candidate want to work for you? Are your compensation and benefits competitive in the market you are searching?
 - How will you announce your job opening? Will you use social media, professional journals, or professional organizations? These are example of sourcing tools.
 - What is your timeline to fill the position and what is your recruitment budget?
 - Plan to be flexible and open to alternative approaches if the initial steps are not effective in developing an acceptable applicant pool.
 - Plan to be responsive to applicants. Each step of the recruitment process should be a good experience for them. Good applicants have other choices. The lack of a professional and courteous response sends a message to applicants that your company is disrespectful and

unprofessional. In addition, applicants share their experiences online with the world. Your company is rated against competitors.

- **Interview Plan.**

- Determine the stakeholders to be involved in the interview process.
- Determine if interview will be virtual or face-to-face and make plans to facilitate the interview based on circumstances.
- Review the candidate's resume and application prior to the interview.
- Develop open-ended questions to be used consistently with each applicant. Have some acceptable answers in mind.
- Consider the generational characteristics of candidates during the interview process. An effective approach with millennials may be less effective with baby boomers.
- Reserve time for applicant questions.
- Don't oversell your company. Provide an honest insight into company culture and working conditions. No company is perfect and well-informed candidates will be turned off if everything is presented as "perfect."
- Don't neglect the need to determine organizational "fit".

- **Follow-up**

- After the interview, perform background checks and contact references.
- Prepare a competitive job offer.
- If accepted, develop a legal and specific employment agreement regarding terms and conditions of employment.

How do I retain good employees?

“If they don’t like it here, let them leave. Good riddance!”

(What do you think the costs are of that practice?)

The Toll of Turnover. The failure to take steps to retain good employees is expensive. Estimates range from one half to two times the salary of the employee being replaced. Costs associated with turnover include:

- Loss of production,
- Shifting the burden of more work to co-workers, perhaps resulting in overtime pay,
- Loss of institutional knowledge and experience,
- Loss of specific, hard-to-find skills,
- Recruitment costs for new hire,
- Training of new employee.

Excessive turnover leaves an impression with other employees and potential new employees that something is wrong with the company. That could lead to more turnover or the inability to hire quality candidates.

Admittedly, some turnover is inevitable for a variety of personal and professional reasons, having little to do with the culture of the company. For example, about a third of the worldwide workforce consists of millennials (ages 23-39) and a 2019 workplace survey by Akumina revealed that 75% of them believe that constantly changing jobs advances their careers. A Gallup survey showed that at any given time 60% of millennials say they are open to a different job opportunity.

In spite of all this, employees are less likely to leave good jobs with a good company.

Upping the Odds for Retention. Here are some steps you can take to keep employees engaged and positive about their jobs:

- Develop a retention strategy so that you can identify key, high-performing employees early. Know who those employees are and understand their motivations and needs. Then you can take steps to minimize reasons for them to leave.
- Listen to employees so that you can understand and mitigate reasons for job dissatisfaction.

- Review your compensation structure to make sure your pay remains competitive for the job categories you employ.
- Maximize the use of the employee's skills, knowledge, interests and talents so that employees feel engaged and valued.
- Work with employees to develop a career path so they don't see themselves in a dead-end job. Commit to training and development for them so that they can be successful.
- Enhance jobs by adding meaningful job responsibilities where appropriate.
- Involve the employee in decision-making about the job and the work environment where opportunities allow.
- Celebrate success to recognize and emphasize the value of the employee to the company.

How can a manager build trust?

Above all, be trustworthy.

Building trust with your employees and business associates, like establishing trust with family and friends, is a matter of being reliable and dependable all the time. It is hard to repair broken trust. Hemingway said, "The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them."

Leadership traits that matter in establishing trust within your organization:

- Having the competence with the skills and knowledge required to do your job.
- Being consistent in meeting commitments.
- Acting with integrity.
- Accepting responsibility for your mistakes rather than shifting of blame or accountability to someone else. That includes things you do and don't do.
- Recognizing and celebrating the accomplishment of others.
- Showing respect for people in your organization, regardless of their position. All employees are valuable.
- Not breaking promises. If there are circumstances beyond your control that prevent you from delivering on a promise, let employees know the truth about what happened.
- Listening and striving to understand the perspectives of others. Being open to the views of a diverse workforce and allowing those viewpoints to be understood and respected by other employees.
- Being sincere in all interactions. Others will quickly recognize statements, actions, or compliments that are insincere.
- Supporting your employees, even in the face of criticism from someone else. Provide constructive criticism in private.
- Keeping the interest of employees at heart.

How do you fire an employee both compassionately and legally?

Terminating the employment of individuals from time to time is a fundamental Human Resource responsibility. The consequences for people who are terminated may range from disruptive to catastrophic. Therefore, you want to be as compassionate and supportive as possible. On the other hand, employees may feel threatened and react angrily or even aggressively. In addition, employees may seek legal relief by filing a lawsuit. So, you have to follow best practices and the letter of the law to defend yourself and your company.

Act Compassionately. Just because a termination can be legally done may not make the termination decision right. Think about termination as a type of capital punishment in which you're taking away a person's livelihood. Such a decision should be made carefully and advisedly, not hastily.

- **Fact Based.** A justified but compassionate termination is based on facts, not opinions or speculation. A termination should be supported by findings from an appropriate investigation that clearly documents the employee's performance or behavioral issues, corrective action taken, efforts to improve performance, and other pertinent facts. Termination, in most cases, should not be the first course of action.
- **Immediate Separation from the Premises.** There may be times when an employee should leave the workplace immediately. You may need the time and space to conduct an investigation in an unemotional and unbiased way. In that case, you can suspend the employee pending completion of investigation.
- **Supportive and Unemotional.** Conduct your termination discussion in a straightforward manner and avoid heated exchanges.
 - Present a valid, reasonable, and consistent reason for termination.
 - Allow the employee to be heard if they want to.
 - Try to avoid embarrassing or humiliating the employee.
 - Allow the employee to maintain their dignity.
 - Offer assistance to the employee if possible.
 - Assist the employee in filing for unemployment if appropriate.

Act in Accordance with the Law and Company Policy and Procedures.

- **Review Laws.** Read state and federal law regarding employee terminations as well as company policies and procedures.

- Review Documentation. Identify the basis of the termination and review documentation in the case file to support it? There is a legal requirement to be consistent in the application of policies or procedures. Failure to be consistent holds both legal risk and possible accusations from employees that you have been unfair.
- Employment at Will. In most states, this provision is a contractual relationship in which an employee can be dismissed by an employer for any reason, and without warning, as long as the basis for termination is legal. For example, the termination cannot violate laws against discrimination based on race, gender, sex, age, religion, disability or national origin.

Other illegal reasons for termination include:

- Hostile work environment,
 - Wage and hours disputes including unpaid overtime,
 - Whistleblower retaliation,
 - Workers compensation claims.
- Final Review. If you find issues, investigate further. Be thorough and be fair.

How can I better communicate with my employees?

Communication is the bedrock of an organization, just as it is in personal relationships.

Communication takes place. We communicate all the time, whether we intend to or not. Choosing to say nothing and retreating to your office with the door closed and a sign that says “Do not disturb” delivers a message to those around you. Even though you didn’t say a word.

We know from the frustration of trying to interpret texts in the absence of any other input, that meaning is conveyed in many ways beyond words such as gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions, and actions. Most people are very good at interpreting such non-verbal cues. As a matter of fact, such signals can negate what you actually say. The moral of this story is to be honest in your communications. And do not underestimate your audience. They are not stupid.

Peter Drucker said, “The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn’t said.”

Communication is a two-way street. It is amazing how often people design newsletters, Webpages, reports, videos and other pronouncements to flow outward but not back in. The audience gets no opportunity to respond. As a result, the initiator gets no feedback about whether the intended audience received the message, understood it, agreed or disagreed with it, was confused, or had a response. In such cases a statement was made but communication did not take place. Of course, managers sometimes do this on purpose because they don’t want to hear dissenting opinions.

Tips to Communication. Communication in a successful organization flows continually, smoothly, genuinely and naturally. What works best in one organization may not be the best alternative for another. But here are some tips to consider as you look for the best ways to communicate with your employees:

- Ask your employees what method of communication they would prefer.
- Identify the method(s) of communication most convenient and effective with your employees.
- Consider how long your employees have to focus on a topic before resuming work.
- Keep your message concise and clear.
- Consider using a variety of modes of communication based on the demographics of your employees and their accessibility to technology.
- Continuing communication is more effective than sporadic messaging.

- Face- to-face communication, when possible, opens the opportunity for an exchange of information and conversation.

Employees typically communicate effectively with their leaders in cultures where the leader shows passion and competence and are deemed trustworthy.

"Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships."

Stephen Covey

How should I deal with difficult people?

You must not ignore objectionable behavior of difficult people. People who are disruptive, antagonistic, condescending or just generally hard to get along with are not going to change, or leave without supervisory intervention.

- As with any employee action begin with the development of documentation outlining the nature of the difficult behavior, the impact on the workgroup, and required changes.
- It may be helpful to confirm your views of the person discretely and confidentially with other supervisors who may have experienced or observed the troubling behaviors. Dealing with a difficult or disruptive personality is a little different than dealing with unacceptable behavior in general. The difference may lie in the inherent nature or personality of the person. They may not realize what effect or reaction they are having on others within their work group. The objectionable behavior may not be intentional. It may just be how the person receives and reacts to new information.
- Take time to try to understand the employee, including matters they be dealing with in their personal lives. The act of showing empathy may be one of the most important steps in dealing with difficult people. Having this information may prepare you for the frank conversation you must have with them.
- Invite the employee in for a conversation about the issues. Be direct and specific about the behaviors that are impacting others in the work group. Consider opening by asking them if it would surprise them that they are viewed by members of the workgroup as someone who is difficult to work with? It is not uncommon to find out that they are indeed surprised by this. From this point on, you have a basis upon which you build your conversation. If possible, involve the employee in helping to identify what changes in behaviors must occur if they are to remain a member of the work group.
- Establish a clear timeline during which behavior will be monitored and when, if the behaviors are not modified, further corrective action will be taken. Do not sugarcoat the possible consequences of not making the needed change. Make sure they understand that their continued employment is at stake.
- Continue your documentation with details of the conversation, specific modifications that are required, timelines established for required improvement, and any subsequent progress made or additional corrective action taken.
- Do not let the issue go unresolved. Follow up!

What do I do if I receive a complaint of harassment or discrimination?

Always take the complaint seriously and initiate prompt action. These kinds of cases can result in a lawsuit if not handled judiciously.

- **Immediate Response.** Promptly initiate a thorough and legal investigation of the complaint. The investigator should be familiar with relevant U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) guidelines as to what is appropriate to ask the accuser, the accused and witnesses.
- **Factual Information.** Safe and appropriate questions related to the incident(s) focus on specifics. The investigation should include only facts and not rumor, speculation, or innuendo.
 - What specifically happened?
 - When did the incident(s) occur?
 - Who was involved?
 - Where did the incident(s) occur?
 - Who witnessed the incident(s)?

Conduct interviews of witnesses and any other relevant personnel. Gather other relevant evidence such as e-mails, notes from meetings, timecards and schedules. Document and date each step of the investigation.

- **Unbiased Investigation.** The investigator should listen attentively to all parties relevant to the case to fully document the facts of the complaint. The investigator must remain impartial as the information is discovered and recorded for the case record. Keep in mind that the final investigative report will become a “legal finding” as to the validity of the complaint.
- **Special Considerations.** If the complaint is related to sexual harassment or sexual misconduct, make sure the accuser does not remain in a position of potential risk of retaliation throughout the complaint, investigation, and resolution process.
- **Leadership Judgment.** Appropriate leaders of the organization receive the full final investigative report to determine the merits of the complaint and what, if any, corrective action is to be taken. The standard is that for an action to be considered “appropriate,” it must eliminate the possibility of recurrence of inappropriate behavior. Judgment may include corrective action that ranges in severity from a written warning to termination of employment.

- Final Dispensation. Document the action taken by leadership and include the judgment with the investigation records. All information related to the complaint must be kept strictly confidential.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

- There is some discussion in other research about not rushing the investigation until a thorough plan is developed to avoid inadvertent and unnecessary missteps that can bite you in the ass before the dust settles.
- DOL has a lot to say to employees who may feel they are being harassed or discriminated against. Definitions and courses of action. But I could not find a DOL guideline for employers who have received a complaint in how to conduct an investigation of the matter. I found some pretty good info from SHRM, such as those below. But I know you know this:
<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/workplace-harassment-investigation.aspx>
<https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0218/pages/how-to-investigate-sexual-harassment-allegations.aspx>
- Some discussion is presented about who should conduct the investigation, whether an internal or external individual. I suspect that those who find their way to you for assistance may not have a great deal of expertise in house. Often it falls to some hapless and inexperienced HR soul who doesn't have a clue and, because they know those involved on both sides of the equation, may be biased from the get-go.
- Is confidentiality of information an absolute from the receipt of the complaint through final dispensation and beyond?

What if management is the problem?

Dysfunctional management at any organizational level, including members of the top leadership team is not uncommon.

Warning Signs. Poor management can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including:

- Communication breakdowns,
- Lack of transparency and trust,
- Lack of shared vision,
- Lack of follow-up,
- Unresolved conflict,
- Abuse of power,
- Poor decision-making.

Consequences. Obviously dysfunctional management can wreak havoc on organizational success. Dysfunction may be masked in such a way that it is not obvious to corporate management or a board of directors until a great deal of damage has been inflicted.

Symptoms of poor performance in leadership may include:

- Employee turnover,
- Poor morale,
- Ineffective communication,
- Inconsistent treatment of employees,
- Poor overall company success.

Toward Resolution. The existence of ineffective management should be addressed sooner than later. Successful companies have developed reporting systems for such concerns. The use of third-party hotlines, open-door policies at levels beyond local management, and other cultural assessments (surveys) are common practices to bring light to dysfunctional behaviors at any level to someone with the authority to take corrective action.

How can HR management and business success be aligned?

The human resource function, more than other any other area of the company, affects the operation and execution of all other business functions.

- Major HR functions:
 - Talent acquisition,
 - Performance management,
 - Compensation and benefits,
 - Employment
 - Legal compliance,
 - Employee retention and engagement,
 - Training and development,
 - Employee safety and security.

Each of those functions, if not aligned with human resources, could be working at odds with organizational goals.

- HR Tactics or Tasks:
 - Getting new employees on payroll,
 - Compensation and benefit management,
 - Daily transactions
 - Maintaining records.

While these tasks are important, they are not activities linked to organizational goals.

- Human Resource strategy is about adding value to the company and ensuring that all resources related to personnel are used effectively in achieving organizational success. In order to align HR Strategy, human resources must be “at the table” where organizational decisions are made.
- Strategic HR leaders must be competent and have appropriate training, education and experience commensurate with other key leadership roles. HR strategy is developed after having a clear understanding of the business, including such topics as threats, opportunities, organizational culture, organization values and beliefs,
- HR works as a business partner in resolving organization issues. Human Resources is responsible for bringing innovation and best practices into the decision making process while ensuring that the various HR functions are aligned to support the needs of the organization.

How do I deal with unacceptable behavior?

Unacceptable behavior should not be ignored and requires prompt corrective action.

- Unacceptable behavior, which should be documented in the employee handbook or HR policies, may include:
 - Bullying
 - Lack of civility
 - Anger
 - Bad manners
 - Disrespectful behaviors toward peers, subordinates, or superiors
 - Horseplay
 - Dishonesty
 - Failure to follow safety procedures
 - Poor attendance or tardiness
- Immediate action:
 - Document the specific unacceptable behaviors and describe how the behaviors are adversely affecting business operations.
 - Define all steps the employee must take to ensure that the unacceptable behavior does not continue. Include a description of what acceptable behavior would consist of. Make it clear that the change in behavior is required and will be closely monitored by the supervisor.
- Corrective action: If the unacceptable behavior continues, the range of possible corrective action includes, the following depending on circumstance:
 - Suspension from the workplace pending the results of an investigation.
 - Verbal warning
 - Written warning
 - Termination

Bad behavior may result from a variety of issues, including those in an employee's private life. Listen to the employee's explanation with an open mind. However, failure to deal with unacceptable employee behavior will destabilize the environment and reflect doubt on the credibility of the supervisor.

What is employee performance management?

According to Wikipedia, “performance management is a process of ensuring that a set of activities and outputs meets an organization's goals in an effective and efficient manner.”

Traditionally, performance management is the process by which employee performance is documented by and shared at some frequency — typically annually. The employee evaluation also involves setting personal and professional goals for the upcoming year.

For many managers and employees alike, the formal performance management process is a task that is dreaded. In fact, for some organizations today, the traditional performance management process is judged to have little value in continuous improvement toward established goals. Some organizations have deemed it to be a waste of time and resources and have discontinued it.

Today companies are using a variety of techniques to enable managers and employees to communicate about performance, goals and objectives, and other topics relevant to success. Regardless of the details of new performance management programs, good ones share many of the following characteristics:

- The process is meaningful to all parties.
- Employees have an understanding of their importance and their role in the success of the company.
- Individual goals are motivational, maybe even aspirational, but are such that engages the talents, interest, skills, and passion of the employee.
- Performance management is conversational and ongoing.
- Those conducting performance management interviews have specific training preparing them to lead the process.
- Performance management supports employee engagement through recognition, honest feedback, input into the job and job environment, and work having an intrinsic motivation.
- Most employees enjoy having a meaningful, adult conversation about their job performance and working with the supervisor to establish goals linked to individual rewards and recognition.
- Constructive feedback, if done properly, is not something to be avoided. The conversation around performance is balanced with recognition of success and identification of areas for improvement.
- Supervisors are more engaged in the employee performance process when they to see how the improvement of individual performance will result in better team performance and the recognition which may follow for them.

What should I know about organizational culture and its effect on HR management?

Organizations, like people, have personalities some more pleasant than others. The culture of an organization establishes the environment in which all work and transactions are done.

More specifically, organizational culture affects how:

- Policies are written and enforced,
- Decisions are made,
- Employee actions are handled,
- Employee communications are conducted,
- Trust is established.

Many companies, recognizing the significance of a positive culture, are actively pursuing strategies to reshape their culture for the better. However, organizational culture by its definition is ingrained in the organization and is very difficult to change. To do so requires determination, stamina and consistency. Cultural change cannot be accomplished overnight.

According to an article posted on Gallup: Workplace, “A culture that doesn’t just exist but that wins for your organization is one you must intentionally create. Strong organizations understand their unique culture, use multiple methods to continuously monitor the state of their culture and align the culture they want with business performance priorities -- like attracting top talent.”

Perhaps the need for a company to change their culture may result from a thoughtful internal assessment of:

- How things get done,
- How decisions are really made,
- How personnel interact with one another and clients,
- Where the power bases in the company actually lie,
- The effectiveness of the leadership team.

The need for cultural change may also be driven by external factors, such as the need to retain or establish a competitive advantage.

Cultures, like individuals, are not all good or all bad. In addition, even successful cultures typically vary a great deal from company to company. The type of industry, geographic location, and composition of the workforce all have impact on the culture of

an organization. A manufacturing plant in the south would typically have a very different culture than a technology company in Silicon Valley.

All companies have shared organizational values, beliefs, and practices (even if they don't formally address them), which are widely known and affect the success of the organization.

How does managing employee compensation relate to overall business goals?

Payroll represents a huge amount of a company's outlay. Those resources should play a significant role in guiding employees toward performing duties and encouraging behavior that contributes toward the company's success. Otherwise, the money is ill spent. To that end, a total rewards plan, which includes cash compensation plus benefits, can be developed that continually recognizes and rewards team and individual success as well as meeting company goals.

- There are many forms of employee compensation and benefits, some dependent on the nature of the organization:
 - Sales incentives,
 - Piece-rate production,
 - Regularly occurring or special bonuses,
 - Fixed and variable plans.
- Each form of compensation sends a strong message to employees as to what is valued within the company. Aligning compensation plans in a way so that there is a direct link between individual, and work group performance and success toward meeting business goals is the desired outcome. Such direct alignment ensures that payroll dollars are being used in the most effective manner and provides the best ROI.
- Compensation plans also meet other business needs:
 - Providing competitive pay and benefits sufficient to both attract and retain top talent.
 - Meeting all federal and state employment laws related to how employees are paid.
 - Providing a structure for the defensible setting of pay for employees without regard to sex, race, age, disability, and other protected classes of employees.
 - Establishing pay plans to prevent the overpayment or underpayment of employees based upon documented skills, knowledge, education, and experience. Salary ranges should have both minimum and maximum rates for each position. Pay below established minimums or maximums should also be managed in a way supportive of business needs.
 - Providing transparency for all to see and understand how pay is established for new hires and how pay changes for existing employees.
 - Supports performance-improvement plans.
 - Provides for general fairness and consistency which is good for employees and good for the business as a whole.

- When calculating and reporting on company-provided benefits, be sure to include all expenses the company is incurring regarding compensation. For the employee annual communication about total rewards, be sure to include the value of all reward and benefits, not just cash compensation.

How can I get employees excited about change?

One of life's fundamental truths is that change is inevitable. That goes for our business lives as well as our personal lives. People generally don't like it. They fear it, resist it, and complain about it. Sometimes they become despondent or physically ill over it. But change happens, nonetheless. President John Kennedy said, "Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

One of the biggest challenges for modern managers is helping employees embrace inevitable change, even those changes that are monumental. Beyond that, they need those employees to be enthusiastic about it, innovative, and to embrace the possibilities. Managers need employees to be excited about change.

- **Honesty Is a Good Policy.** You should determine what the true impact of the change will be and how those changes will affect employee's lives, both the obvious positive aspects and the more challenging ones. Don't sugarcoat it. Be factual and practical. Don't just lecture. Listen and hear what employees are worried about. Work together to first find a path through the changes and then to embrace them.
- **Don't Underestimate the Impact of Extreme Change.** If employees are experiencing change that is substantial, like the loss of a beloved manager or long-time co-workers, forced relocation of their family to a new city or country, or reduction in pay or benefits, their reactions can be severe.
 - Such employees may experience reactions much like grief. You can anticipate that they could exhibit symptoms of each stage of grief — denial, anger, bargaining and, eventually, acceptance. In these cases, you must be tolerant and supportive. You must work to move employees through these stages and not allow them to get stuck at a stage before ultimate acceptance.
- **Share the Vision.** A fundamental duty for leaders, especially during times of significant change, is to clearly share the rationale for the change and what the benefits can be.

Don't discount the inevitable question, "What's in it for me?" For employees to accept change, they have to be able understand what the changes will mean for them and their families. They must be able to see the goals. Remember that dogs don't chase rabbits that they can't see. Leaders must share the vision.

- **Communicate, Communicate, Communicate.** Develop a plan and practice ongoing communications.

- **Provide Needed Training.** Make sure employees have the knowledge and skills they need to incorporate the change. Employees will not become enthusiastic about assuming new roles and responsibilities if they feel that they don't have the competencies to perform well. Give them a reason to be excited.
- **Identify and Eliminate Barriers to Change.** You must recognize real barriers to change. Obstacles may include employees who refuse to accept the change and work to undermine it. You must deal with these employees

Other barriers may be a lack of resources, the lack of cross functional work teams, and counterproductive interactions.
- **Open Door, Open Mind.** Consider an open-door policy so that employees can share their concerns and you can help them with their transition. Reward progress with recognition of individual and team success in achieving milestones. Recognition of success is encouraging.

WHY IS TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYEES IMPORTANT?

Overall training and develop is important because companies must continuously improve organizational and individual performance

- **Training is teaching a person a particular skill or behavior.** Having formal training opportunities are needed to :
 - Train and orient new employees
 - Develop new skills for current employees
 - Reinforce safety and security practices
 - Inform employees about policies such as harassment, sexual misconduct and discrimination
 - Support cross training of jobs to provide flexibility within the workforce
 - Improve and enhance customer service
- **Employee development has more to do with preparing employees for their next job and meeting future company needs for talent**

- Employees want to work for, or join, companies committed to improving their skills to be in line with peers at other companies, or ensure they have up-to-date professional knowledge.
- Development of current employees may be necessary to supply missing skills, on a temporary basis, or long term, for skills in high demand in the market.
- Organizations experiencing continuous change require development of employees to enhance engagement, commitment and preparation for changing roles and responsibilities.
- With tight budgets in recent years, professional development opportunities were diminished. In today's competitive labor market, an investment in employee development may be required to enhance organizational talent internally, while demonstrating a positive ROI.
- Employee development is driven, and should be aligned with, the strategic directives set by top leadership, such as the adoption of new technology, increasing innovation, improvement of processes directed at meeting financial goals.
- Effective succession planning may provide additional development needs in being prepared to have qualified internal candidates to fill projected vacancies related to the retirement of older employees or company expansion. .

Is employee self management and empowerment important?

Managers and leaders have differing opinions about the importance of self-management and empowerment of workers based on what they believe about human work motivation. The two major viewpoints about this subject are referred to as Theory X and Theory Y.

- **Employee Behavior – Theory X.** Theory X accepts the following assumptions:
 - Typical workers have little ambition, avoid responsibility and are motivated to pursue individual goals—primarily higher pay and increased benefits—with little regard for organizational success.

- Workers are less intelligent and lazier than managers.

As a result of these beliefs, Theory X managers utilize rewards and punishment to motivate employees. Employee self-management and empowerment are not accepted as valid concepts or goals.

- **Employee Behavior – Theory Y.** Those who accept Theory Y believe that employees:

- Are internally motivated,
- Tend to take full responsibility for their work,
- Basically enjoy their work,
- Do not require close supervision to create quality work products,
- Work to better themselves without direct reward in return.

Theory Y managers tend to view employees as “assets” and work with them on a more personal basis. The concept of self-management and empowerment is an outgrowth of company cultures supportive of Theory Y.

Organizations “working lean” with fewer layers of management and broader bands of authority are turning more to self-directed teams. These teams combine different skills and talents to work without the usual manager oversight to achieve team and organizational goals. The teams work within the boundaries of the organization and uphold the values and mission of the organization.

Companies dependent upon excellent customer service as a competitive advantage have a great deal to gain through empowered employees. Customer service decisions made at the first point of customer contact are most effective in resolving complaints. Employees with the knowledge, training, and understanding of company values and beliefs, if empowered, will use their best judgment at all times, to the benefit of the organization.

How do I handle Employee Engagement?

Let's first be clear that employee engagement is not equal to employee happiness or employee satisfaction. Engagement is an emotional commitment to organizational goals. Engaged employee's performance leads to better business outcomes. Engaged employees are involved emotionally and they actually feel passion for the work they do.

Drivers of engagement are varied and unique to each situation. In general drivers may include:

- Personal resources, the confidence an employee feels about performing their job duties based on the skills, training, and knowledge they have gained.
- An engaged employee will be allowed to critically think about their work and work processes.
- Employees who see that their job is important to organizational success are more likely to be engaged.
- Engaged employees have a shared understanding, with their supervisor, of job expectations.
- Employees have the proper resources to do their job.
- Engaged employees are empowered to do their job without micromanagement.
- Surveys regarding engagement show that employees want to have input into things having direct effect on their work or work environment.
- Cultures in which quality working relationships with superiors, peers, and subordinates support employee engagement.

Employee engagement is most affected through inspirational leadership. A leader's ability to share their vision for organizational success is critical for employees to understand where they fit and how they have a direct link to organizations goal accomplishment.

Leadership, regardless of style, based upon trust, may be the bedrock of an engaged workforce.

Recognition and appreciation of others, expressed openly by leadership, is very important to an engaged employee.

Special Invitation

Do you have more questions or need professional assistance in any of these HR areas?

- Internal HR Policy and Procedures
- Compliant Onboarding and Terminations
- Employer Coaching & Guidance
- Compensation Compliance
- Sexual harassment and Non-Discrimination
- PTO and Employee Handbooks
- Federal & State Law Mandates
- Managing Unemployment Claims
- Overseeing Internal Company Documents
- Handling Government Communication
- Staff Training
- General HR Support

The fact is, human resources is vast and continually evolving, and if neglected could have a significant impact or legal ramifications within any company big or small.

The good news is that you're not alone.

Schedule a Free HR Discovery Meeting: <https://book.besthrassistance.com/book-discovery-meeting> or by calling my office at: 859-208-BEST.

The purpose of the discovery meeting is not to sell you products and services you don't need, but instead to listen to your questions, and help you create real step-by-step solutions to complex HR problems that you may be facing right now. If you would like to explore further HR help after we speak then we can arrange for setting up a comprehensive HR Audit of your business to gather more information.

This discovery meeting will be a virtual conference using the online video platform, Zoom. All you need to do is select the day and time that works best for you. You are welcome to invite anyone within your company that you want to join us.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Gary Barksdale