



October, 2013

Vital Business Solutions Newsletter

Employee Morale

Layoffs have been frequent in both the public and private sector in recent years. The latest government shutdown has affirmed to some federal employees and government contractors that they are deemed "non-essential" and fear exists that in a few months there may be a recurrence of a shutdown. This follows on the heels of the sequestration that resulted in furloughs and terminations of employees. Improving and maintaining employee morale under these conditions can be a challenge. However, it is worth the effort and we have provided a few tips below to help you boost employee morale in your company:

- Treat employees with respect and dignity.
- Be fair and consistent in the manner you treat employees. Attempt to resolve employee issues.
- Develop an Independent Development Plan with each employee. Provide professional development, feedback, and coaching.
- Empower employees and have them participate on projects that will help build their professional portfolio.
- Offer opportunities for open communication, take employees' concerns seriously, and attempt to resolve problems.
- Recognize employees' contributions.
- Offer perks of value to the employee but that are not too costly for the business. Promote from within - give employees access to career opportunities within the organization before posting jobs externally.
- If feasible, offer benefits that surpass those of your competitors.

The above list is not all inclusive of all the possible ways in which you can improve employee morale. Take the time to understand your employees' desires and needs, create programs to meet them, and remain committed to building positive morale. Measure employee satisfaction by conducting surveys at certain intervals during the program.

Celebrations at the Office

The holiday season is fast approaching. In addition, birthdays and other events are often celebrated at the office. Do you have policies in place to remind employees of expectations for celebrations at the workplace? As you put guidelines and policies in place, some things to consider are:

- **Celebrations**
 - Individual holiday celebrations and their respective protocols, e.g., appropriate costumes for Halloween, decorations for Christmas, Hanukkah, etc., and appropriate attire and behavior for off-site parties
 - Use of a multicultural calendar when planning events to ensure inclusion
 - The proper handling and sharing of food, especially since it is also the flue season
 - Acceptable venues for holiday parties
- **Time Off**
 - How to handle time off for employees who celebrate non-traditional holidays and not the ones designated for paid time off
 - Time off requests during the holiday season to ensure proper coverage to maintain expected performance levels
- **Gift Giving**
 - Allowable gift exchanges to and from colleagues, clients, and vendors and the monetary value of gifts

- **Decorations**
 - Holiday decorations in the office, including the public, shared, and private work spaces and the risks that can be associated with them
- **Employee Relations**
 - The meaning of the different holidays to different employees and the best way to show respect and sensitivity to the employees' rights
- **Safety**
 - Potential fire risks from overloaded outlets, flammable objects, and candles
 - Alcoholic consumption at parties

You may already have guidelines in place. However, during the Fall and Winter months, it is important to remind all employees since you may have acquired new employees in the past year who may not be familiar with the company rules regarding gift giving and company events. In addition, you may refer to EEO guidelines when developing these workplace guidelines to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion and at the same time respect personal beliefs and preferences.

HR Professionals have the resources to get everyone on the same page. At Vital Business Solutions, we have a variety of expertise to help business owners plan and grow with the proper resources and programs. To learn more, please visit us at www.vitalbusinesssolution.com or call us at 202-832-1388.

Reminders

VETS 100 and 100A Reporting

According to the United States Department of Labor website, the filing deadline for VETS 100 and 100A reports has been extended to **October 31, 2013**.

Filing Assistance:

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/vets-100.html#filing>

Affordable Care Act (ACA) Document for Employees

If you have not provided the New Health Insurance Marketplace Coverage Options and Your Health Coverage document to employees, you may download it at the Department of Labor Website:

<http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/pdf/FLSAwithplans.pdf>

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Is your Employee Handbook updated for 2013?

We can help you with your Policies & Procedures Manuals!

VBS can update your Employee Handbook and HR forms. An Employee Handbook identifies management's objectives, outlines company rules and regulations, and identifies the company's expectations.

Let us know if you need the following documents:

- Employee Handbook
- Policies & Procedures Manual
- Human Resources Forms
- Job Descriptions
- HR Audit/Assessment
- Federal Compliance Review

Get everyone on the same page!