



## HHRAM Herald December 2008

*The HHRAM Herald is the quarterly member newsletter for HHRAM members. To submit an article please send an email to [info@hhram.org](mailto:info@hhram.org)*

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### **Coming Events**

Region 3 meeting – ADAANA and FMLA Changes- January 30, 2009

2009 Spring Conference "Mission Possible – HR Making a Difference" April 16-17, 2009

*Please see the website for details about coming events*  
<http://www.hhram.org/events.htm>

### **Announcements**

Remember – Renew your 2009 membership dues! [Renew Online Now](http://www.hhram.org/apply.htm) – to make things easier for you, your annual dues can be renewed online at <http://www.hhram.org/apply.htm>.

For additional membership opportunities join ASHHRA – the American Society for Healthcare Human Resources Administration. Get a \$15 discount on your ASHHRA membership if you are a member of SHRM. Click here for more information  
[www.ashhra.org/ashhra/membership](http://www.ashhra.org/ashhra/membership)

### **Message from the President**

Happy Holidays! First off, I would like to thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to serve as the HHRAM President. I can't tell you how wonderful this experience has been. I would first like to thank Dave Tabert; I don't know what I would have done without your guidance. Thank you to the board and all of the Regional directors, you have worked hard to plan successful events and spread the word about HHRAM. I appreciate all that you do and feel privileged to have worked with all of you.

We have accomplished so much this year. As a board we have revised our job descriptions and enhanced the HHRAM website with major changes coming in 2009. We continue our goal to grow our membership numbers and strengthen in networking and regional events. The new membership brochures and membership recruiting cards have assisted with this goal. Our special projects director Kim O'Neil conducted a needs assessment to find out what all of you want to get from your HHRAM membership. The results said clearly that HHRAM members get the most value out of networking with other HR professionals and conferences and regional activities focused on issues specific to healthcare human resources.

Our final goal for 2008 was to become active in a philanthropic endeavor. At both of the 2008 conferences, HHRAM members donated personal care items to Ready for Success, an organization that assists women re-entering the workforce by providing personal care items and clothing appropriate for interviews. I was overwhelmed with the kindness that was shown in these donations and the HHRAM board has decided to continue our relationship with Ready for Success in the years to come.

Thank you for assisting HHRAM in achieving our 2008 goals. I look forward to continuing my commitment to the HHRAM board as past president as Becky Thiesfeld takes over as President. She is an exceptionally talented woman that will bring so much to this organization.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Gryte  
HHRAM President



*Jennifer Gryte and Becky Thiesfeld at the 2008 ASHHRA conference in San Antonio, Texas.*

## The Rising Stock of HR

Seven ways the HR Department can add more value to the organization

*By Daniel R MacDonald, Business Improvement Solutions*

Former CEO of General Electric Jack Welch has been quoted many times stating that the Human Resource Director should be just as important if not more important than the Chief Financial Officer of a company. He often uses the analogy of a baseball coach putting more value on the team accountant than the team talent recruiter. Doing so doesn't make sense. So why does the typical CEO spend a lot more time with the CFO than with the Human Resource Director?

If you really think about it, the financial state of a company is the result of the efforts of their people. People determine the company's financial state. Based on this understanding, wouldn't it make sense to spend more time focused on developing your people than analyzing the financial results? Though financial information is necessary, the quality of a company's people is what will determine its long-term viability.

This is where human resources come in. Having the right team doing the right things in the human resource department can positively affect an entire organization. Proper management of human capital can help an organization take giant strides towards a more profitable and successful future.

Unfortunately during economic downturns, the HR budget is often the first to be cut. To prevent this from occurring, here are seven ways that HR can add more value to an organization and get the recognition and budget it deserves:

1. **Improve internal communication** – Effective, timely internal communication is critical to any organization. No organization can survive without it. To add further value to a company, the human resources department could play a more active role in improving communication. HR can improve communication flow by utilizing an online system to not only send a consistent and accurate message to everyone at every level of an organization but also to check to ensure that the message has been received. BISTrainer ([www.bistrainer.ca](http://www.bistrainer.ca)) is an example of an excellent online system that can be used to deliver text or video based information to every member of an organization. Systems like this one can revolutionize your internal communication.
2. **Foster a learning organization** – One of the greatest opportunities for growth for any business is to become a learning organization. According to *Fifth Discipline* author Peter Senge, learning organizations are, "organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together." One of the greatest benefits of a learning organization is that it is flexible, adaptive and productive.

To help create a learning organization, company leaders should be encouraged to teach classes or make presentations on topics from their field of expertise to others within the company. Encouraging people to sign up for these classes and presentations is an important part of making these programs work. This type of program is very beneficial as the teachers learn the subject matter on a deeper level through preparation for the class and their experience and expertise is seamlessly transferred to others within your organization. These types of programs can be developed across the organization with very little cost to the company.

3. **Implement innovative retention solutions** – One of the most innovative strategies that I have encountered for improving employee retention is very simple and can cost the company as little as \$0.35 per hour. Imagine the effect on your organization if you announced that starting tomorrow every employee with good performance will earn an annual free flight that can be redeemed anytime for anyone for travel anywhere within the country. Some reasonable conditions would

apply of course but imagine the impact this would have. Your employees could fly a relative in for the holidays each year or accumulate flights for a family holiday. One might think that this would cost the company a fortune, but in reality it's very affordable.

Based on average flight prices and volume travel discounts it would cost a company approximately \$700 per person. When this amount is divided by 2,000 hours per year the cost would be just \$0.35 per hour. Offering an employee \$0.35 more per hour won't have them jumping out of bed but offering them a free flight each year can really motivate them even though it's the same cost to the company.

The great thing about a program like this is you can choose any incentive in this price range that would have broad appeal to members of your organization. It could be a golf club or fitness membership. The key is determining a reward that is appealing to the people within your organization. By offering perks that have mass appeal you can increase retention and attract the people your company wants.

4. **Make training desirable** – Some of the most successful companies in the world offer training retreats in desirable travel destinations as rewards for top performing department heads, sales teams, or operational managers. The awarding of these trips is dependent on the achievement of specific organizational profit goals. When these goals are achieved the top performers attend a three to seven day training retreat in a tropical destination. Half the time is for training while the other half is for enjoying the location. Everyone benefits: the company, the employees, and the HR department.

These types of training incentive programs help the human resources department obtain a much bigger budget. Any reasonable CEO would sign off on a \$150,000 training travel budget if the company makes \$2.8 million dollars in additional profit as a direct result of the HR department's incentive program. These programs are easy to develop and can inspire amazing performance when executed properly. Over time these events can inspire great performance by all as they vie for a spot in the training travel excursion.

5. **Implement a mentorship program** – Develop a company wide mentorship program that matches up senior executives with junior managers who demonstrate leadership potential. Most of the effort involved in running mentorship programs is required at the outset to ensure that it is properly designed. A list of objectives and actions for both the mentor and the protégé must be established. Once established these programs are incredibly valuable and cost little to maintain yet their effect on the organization can be profound.
6. **Let unsuitable people go** – Letting unsuitable people go is probably one of the most difficult yet necessary actions for any organization to take. Often times you'll hear someone list many reasons why you cannot let someone go or why it's bad for a company to do so, but in terms of the health of a company it's always better to remove employees that have a negative impact on the people around them than it is to keep them in the organization.

In my research I constantly hear of companies that have employees who are underperforming or have a negative attitude. We all know these types of employees. They seem to carry a grey raincloud over their head. Sometimes companies allow these employees to stay with them for years. Instead of removing them from the company, they move them to a new position. This process can go on for years. When these individuals are finally let go, it seems as if the sun has come out and life is better for everyone. We have found that often times the colleagues asks, "Why did that take so long?" It's always better to remove negative employees than it is to allow them to adversely impact others.

When a friend of mine was promoted to a management position she was given the gift of a negative team member with a personal file a mile high. No one before her had the strength to let this person go, instead allowing them to become more and more bitter and negative as the years went on. Unfortunately, bureaucratic company policies and the fear of negative press have kept this employee in the company for years where they continued to cause discomfort to everyone around them.

7. **Optimize the organization** – Optimizing the organization involves listing all the things that each department does on a regular basis and working with them to identify what activities should be dropped. As Michael Dell once said, "It's deciding what not to do that's important". In most organizations about 20% of people's activities can be completely eliminated. This simple act will allow for a substantial increase in productivity. In addition to identifying what not to do, it's important to determine what should be done. This helps ensure that everyone is focused on valuable tasks that advance the organization.

The cost for optimizing the organization can be very little. Even if consultants are brought in to assist you, your company can likely save 10 to 20 times more than it will pay in consultant fees.

These seven strategies can profoundly affect the health and performance of any organization if implemented properly. By using these valuable strategies, the human resource department can effectively get the stature and respect it rightfully deserves.

*To learn more strategies for improving your organization read "Management" by Dan MacDonald available at [www.chapters.ca](http://www.chapters.ca). **Dan MacDonald** is the President of Business Improvement Solutions, an Alberta based performance management consulting firm. He has co-authored 3 books on business and personal success. He regularly speaks to groups across Canada and the US on topics that include goal setting, sales, and personal development.*

### **REMINDER – TIME TO RENEW YOUR HHRAM MEMBERSHIP**

2009 Membership Annual Dues/Invoice Notices were mailed out the last week in December and your annual HHRAM dues are payable by January 15, 2009.

You are again able to renew your HHRAM membership with a convenient secure, online payment option at <http://www.hhram.org/apply.htm>. Payments can be made using your Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover card. Dues submitted online are secure and will be processed by Meetings Etc., Inc. and will reflect as such on your credit card statement.

You can also mail your payment to our HHRAM administrative office at W175 N11117 Stonewood Drive, Suite 204, Germantown, WI 53022. Your continued membership in HHRAM is contingent upon receiving your dues, so please don't delay renewing your membership.

## Bad News? Communication is Key

By Edith M. Swiatek, MBA, Health Care Executive, Experienced Resources, LLC

It seems inevitable that 2009 will bring continuing fiscal challenges and with that decisions more difficult than many leaders have made at any time in their careers. And as painful as the decision making process can be, the communication of those decisions looms even more challenging. How can we impart any "bad news" to our employees with the greatest compassion and the least organizational cost? Depending on the culture and size of your team, news may travel formally via employee forums or small site meetings. News is intelligence and information - and it is important that it make its way appropriately to those concerned about the impact of the current situation.

Once your strategic decisions are made, schedule a meeting with employees to transfer this information as quickly as possible. Colin Powell perhaps said it best: "Bad news isn't wine. It doesn't improve with age." As a leader, your role includes being the "calm in the storm" and the timelier you are at relating information the more trust you will build and maintain with your team.

Once everyone is in the room:

- ✚ State the facts and deliver the message directly with empathy and sympathy. If you shy away from being direct, it's possible that the message will be heard as less important or impactful. Choose your words carefully and utilize words such as *modest*, *carefully*, *thoughtfully* and avoid harsher semantics such as *crisis*, *cuts*, *bottom-line*, etc.
- ✚ Share the good news too – it may not be about dollars, it may be a quality award, a successfully completed initiative or simply that there are no lay-offs scheduled in the near future.
- ✚ Remind employees that they are valued and that you take seriously your stewardship of all corporate resources.
- ✚ Share the priorities as seen by yourself and the leadership team. If maintaining base hourly wages are of a higher priority than funding the retirement plan, let folks know this.
- ✚ Anticipate questions and be prepared with answers. In attending a few employee forums over the past four weeks, I've observed that every employee group asked the question "What can we do to help?" Offer every team member an opportunity to be part of the solution.

Before, during and after the meeting, ensure the entire leadership team delivers ONE consistent message. If necessary, provide a 1-2 sentence script for managers and other leaders (physicians included) and make clear the expectation that this is the organization's one message on the topic. Identify the best of the news and share it – "I am truly proud to be part of a leadership team/organization that supports compensation increases, however modest they are". As an individual professional, the challenging months ahead of us present the opportunity to lead with wisdom, confidence and integrity. The real "winners" will be those who make good decisions and follow-up with compassionate communication and timely implementation.



Edith Swiatek is a Healthcare Executive with Experienced Resources, LLC. You may contact her directly at 612-423-9120 or [edithswiatek@FlexGenER.com](mailto:edithswiatek@FlexGenER.com).

## HHRAM/MOLN Partner to Create a Culture of Safety

Members of the HHRAM board have partnered with representatives of MOLN (Minnesota Organization for Leaders in Nursing) to address the recent JCAHO Sentinel Event Alert designed to help put an end to intimidating and disruptive behaviors in the healthcare workplace.

The new standard goes into effect January 1, 2009 and many healthcare facilities are struggling to implement an effective program. If you are interested in serving on our workgroup please contact Marit Brock at [mbrock@mngastro.com](mailto:mbrock@mngastro.com). To read the news release regarding the new standard click the link here [http://www.jointcommission.org/SentinelEvents/SentinelEventAlert/sea\\_40.htm](http://www.jointcommission.org/SentinelEvents/SentinelEventAlert/sea_40.htm)

HHRAM is looking forward to building new relationships with our peers in nursing leadership through this project. Watch for more information at the HHRAM Spring Conference on April 16-17<sup>th</sup>.

### **Do you have information that you want to see in the HHRAM Herald?**

We are interested in seeing well-written features, how-to articles, book excerpts, legal updates, best practice tips and hints, instructions, motivational articles and other articles that will help our members gain knowledge that will help their organizations and/or their career.

For the full newsletter submission guidelines please go to [www.hhram.org](http://www.hhram.org)

## Save the Date for the 2009 HHRAM Spring Conference.



**April 16-17, 2009**  
**Riverwood Inn**  
Otsego, MN

## HHRAM at the 2008 ASHHRA Conference

HHRAM was well represented at the 2008 ASHHRA Conference in San Antonio, Texas. In addition to national recognition of our chapter several individuals received awards for their work for HHRAM and our profession.



Dave Tabert accepted the Outstanding Chapter Officer Award from Karmen Reid, Region 6 Liaison. Dave was nominated based on his diligence as HHRAM Secretary and his efforts to interpret and update our organizational bylaws.

Rachael Redenius received the Outstanding Chapter Achievement Award. Thanks to Rachael for her tireless efforts to update our membership listings and her contributions to a more than 20% increase in membership in 2007.

Teresa Jacobsen accepted the Communications Award from Karmen Reid Under Teresa's leadership as 2007 President, HHRAM improved member communications including the introduction of the electronic HHRAM Herald newsletter.



Special recognition to Karmen Reid who was awarded the Paul Guy Mentorship Award for her leadership in HHRAM and in Region 6. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a mentor as "a trusted counselor or guide." A mentor is a more experienced individual who helps and guides another individual's development and this guidance is not done for personal gain. ASHHRA had the privilege of having such a mentor in Paul Guy. In memory of Paul Guy, a past president, the American Society for Healthcare Human Resources Administration has developed the **Paul Guy Mentorship Award**. The purpose of the award is to recognize members of ASHHRA who exemplify those qualities of mentorship as demonstrated by Paul Guy.

The ASHHRA conference is a great way to round out your Healthcare Human Resources knowledge – hope you can make it to the 2009 conference in Chicago!



*Members of the 2008 HHRAM Executive Committee (left to right) President Jennifer Gryte, President-Elect Becky Thiesfeld, Secretary Dave Tabert, Past-President Teresa Jacobson.*



*HHRAM Members at the 2008 Conference – See you there next year?*

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AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR HEALTHCARE HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION OF THE AMERICAN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

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## The 2008 HHRAM Executive Committee

The HHRAM Board of Directors is made up of current HHRAM members and meets monthly to continue the business of HHRAM. The Executive Committee provides leadership to the Board of Directors and is elected directly by HHRAM members. We welcome feedback so please contact us with suggestions, concerns or compliments that will help us continually improve HHRAM!

President, Jennifer Gryte. Jennifer is the Human Resources Manager for Minnesota Gastroenterology in the Twin Cities. Her phone number is 612-870-5562 and email address is [jgryte@mngastro.com](mailto:jgryte@mngastro.com)

President-Elect, Rebecca Theisfeld. Becky is the Director of Human Resources for Cuyuna Regional Medical Center in Crosby. Her phone number is 218-546-2353 and email address is [rthiesfeld@sisunet.org](mailto:rthiesfeld@sisunet.org)

Treasurer, Bonnie Barnhardt. Bonnie is the Vice President of Human Resources for Avera Marshall Regional Medical Center in Marshall. Her phone number is 507-537-9358 and email is [bonnie.barnhardt@averamarshall.org](mailto:bonnie.barnhardt@averamarshall.org)

Secretary, Dave Tabert. Dave is the Personnel Representative for Minnesota Veterans Home in Minneapolis. He can be reached via email at [databert@mpls.mvh.state.mn.us](mailto:databert@mpls.mvh.state.mn.us)

Past President, Teresa Jacobson. Teresa is the Director of Human Resources for Riverwood Healthcare Center in Aitkin. Her phone number is 218-927-5587 and email address is [tjacobson@sisunet.org](mailto:tjacobson@sisunet.org)

For a complete listing of the HHRAM board members and Region Directors please visit the HHRAM, Inc. Leadership section of the HHRAM website at <http://www.hhram.org/leader.htm>

### HHRAM, INC. VISION STATEMENT

The Healthcare Human Resources Association of Minnesota, Inc. will be the professional association of choice for healthcare Human Resource Professionals, supporting the members through advocacy, innovation, collaboration, partnership, education and networking.

