

Fall is finally here! A few months ago we wrote a series of articles about trends in human resources and realities for employers in today's workplace. This month we pick up with 21st Century realities for employees. We also have a case study on an HR Audit, as well as news about our upcoming projects and speaking events.

21st Century Employee Realities

As the country slowly moves out of the recession, many organizations find themselves facing some of their worst budget situations yet. This month we focus on how the employment relationship has changed and how employees' workplace realities are affected.

The "life-long employment" concept is beginning to change in organizations. Employees will be more like free agents rather than having a job for life, with employers and employees alike striving to make the most of the employment relationship *while it lasts*. Some employee realities we are seeing include:

- Employees know their job stability within the organization will be based on their reputation for performance;
- Employees are more responsible for managing their own benefits;
- Employees will want and need to continue to hone and grow their skills; continuous learning will be the norm with much of it self-directed and the employee's responsibility;
- Employees will always be open to new jobs and new employment opportunities, inside the organization and elsewhere.



Organization leaders and HR staff are learning that employees no longer plan to work in their organization for 20-30 years. Most new (and younger) employees will have up to five jobs in the next 10 years. What you *can* expect (and *demand*) is that employees passionately support your organization's vision and values while employed there – in other words, a focus on mutuality of purpose.

As described above, employees have some additional responsibility and accountability in this scenario. Performance is more important than ever, with many organizations facing smaller and smaller personnel budgets. Organizations who may have previously avoided differentiating performance increases because of the tough management decisions involved are now realizing that with limited merit budgets they need to get the most bang for their buck. Suddenly, providing a 2% across-the-board increase to all employees (outstanding and poor performers alike) makes much less sense than it did three years ago. Employees' performance is taking a stronger role in organizations, public and private sector alike.

With the never-ending rise in health care costs, employees are responsible for managing their benefits to maintain their affordability. Whether that is pursuing more preventive care,

News:

The Singer Group is proud to announce a new service — **HR To Go**. Follow the link to check out our new offering of services custom tailored to *your needs and budget*.

Laura Francisco will speak at the University System of Maryland's Women's Forum Conference in College Park, MD on Friday, October 22. Laura will speak about "Negotiation — What else is on the table?" Go to <http://usmwf.usmd.edu/events.htm> for more information.

Lorraine Kituri will speak at the Maryland Municipal League's Fall Conference on Friday, October 22 on "How to Write a Personnel Manual." The conference will be held at the Loew's Hotel in Annapolis. For more information, [click here](#).

Paula Singer will conduct a Board retreat for a metro-area library system in the midwest in early October.

Paula and Laura kicked off a comprehensive compensation project with a regional library system in the southwest. The

participating in the organization's wellness programs, or setting aside funds for a health care savings account, employees bear more of the burden for health care in today's environment.

Employees are also more responsible for managing their own development and growth than they ever have been. With no or few budget dollars available for pay increases, employees are seeing that one clear way to advance in an organization is to gain new skills so that they are more valuable to the organization. Even with training budgets slashed, the variety of free or low-cost on-line trainings alone is broad and valuable. Employees are also finding value in mentoring and peer/colleague relationships in order to develop additional skills and competencies.

Organization leaders are seeing the entry of a new era of a flexible, diverse and multi-generational workforce. How employers and employees both adjust and adapt to these new realities will play a large part in the success of the organization in engaging employees and building the passion and commitment for the work while the employees are with them!

Are You Keeping Your Eye on Compensation?

As economic news gradually turns from bad to good, organizations are starting to take a look at what several years of salary freezes and small or no pay increases has done to their compensation systems. A recent survey by Mercer shows that over 1/3 of the 550 employers surveyed nationwide took a look at their compensation program design during 2010. Even if you don't have an implementation budget, keeping your eye on compensation to ensure that your base salaries are fair and competitive will be critical as employment opportunities begin to open up for your employees on the other side of the recession. Communicating that you are on top of this situation is also critical in keeping your top employees engaged and loyal to your organization. The same survey shows that only 51% of organizations let their employees know of the full salary range for their position! Even though your staff may have gotten used to the "zero salary increase" during the down economy, concerns about morale and whether these employees will stick around are driving increased efforts related to compensation-related communication.

Do you need help with communicating information to employees about compensation? Would you like to do a review of your compensation system? We can provide services ranging from a communication plan to a quick market review or a comprehensive study of the competitiveness of your pay plan. Please contact us at pmsinger@singergrp.com or (410) 561-7561 for additional information.

Adapted from "Employers Assessing Salary Programs for Affordability, Competitiveness," Stephen Miller, SHRM, September 2010.

Case Study : HR Audit

The Singer Group recently conducted an audit of the HR Department for a major East Coast public sector organization. The purpose of the audit was to identify and clarify the work and roles of HR within the organization; to establish a baseline for future improvement; and to standardize practices across locations.

Our first step was to gather information through confidential interviews and meetings with organization leadership, management, union representatives and HR staff. We also held system-wide focus groups with staff, as well as a confidential online survey sent to all staff. Our goal was to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to be heard and to contribute to the success of the project. We also collected baseline data from the HR department and researched best practices in HR in other organizations which was used to aid continuous improvement and responsiveness.



project will continue through December.

The Singer Group has kicked off the 4th year of an ongoing contract of compensation review for a state agency.

Paula will conduct a webinar on Emergency Succession Planning for Infopeople on November 2nd. For more information, please go to www.infopeople.org/workshop

Lorraine will present "Trustees 101" for Eastern Shore Regional Library Trustees at the Caroline County Library on October 23, 2010 from 10am to 1pm. Now that you have the newly revised Trustee Manual, find out what's next! For more information, [click here](#)

Dear SingerHR:

Do you have a question you need answered?

A challenge you are facing?

Ask us anything you'd like to know about HR. Email your questions to [Dear SingerHR](#). Each issue will feature as many questions as possible.

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As a result of this work, we identified 32 short- and long-term goals for the HR Department with corresponding timelines and lines of responsibility. We identified new competencies for HR staff and set out a plan for training that would guide successful performance and provide objective measures for evaluation. Our recommendations also included a new HR philosophy and strategic plan, including plans to improve and streamline current HR practices and processes, developing a dashboard system for tracking HR metrics, recommending and implementing the use of technology in moving towards a more paperless HR, adding a senior training position to oversee staff development, and developing a plan for ongoing evaluation of the HR department.

One unforeseen outcome was the development of a new HR staffing structure that included modified reporting relationships and areas of responsibility. The audit also positively impacted management, union and employee relationships by shedding light on what each specifically needed/wanted from the other as well as how to get it. Our focus was to evaluate the department, not to find and assign blame, and this was stressed in all communications, creating an environment that fostered change instead of resistance.

Though we know that each organization is different, this learning was reinforced during the project. Different cultures and ways of getting things done demand flexibility and adaptability on the parts of the organization and the Consultant. With all parties working toward one goal – making the HR department (and the organization) the best that it can be – we were able to set personal agendas aside. Another key to success (and one particularly evident during this project) was support from the top of the organization.

I contracted with the Singer Group to perform an audit of the existing HR department from top to bottom, and to prioritize our focus in addressing the most critical issues within HR. The Singer group did an outstanding job with interviewing existing staff to hear their concerns with HR, identifying problem areas within the current HR structure, evaluating current staff capabilities and providing a comprehensive report consisting of over 100 recommendations for improvement. Our department would not be where it is today without the assistance of the Singer Group. They did an outstanding job with revamping our HR department and providing a road map for continued improvement.

—Chief Business Officer

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If you like our newsletter, please feel free to pass it on in its entirety.

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