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Forum for HR Executives

THURSDAY, 30 APRIL 2009

In these challenging economic times, it's unsettling for workers to stay focused amid daily rumors of layoffs and cutbacks. As budget-pressed HR directors re-tool, reexamine or reduce benefits, shed excess office space and close underperforming retail outlets, workers are often left to ponder their future.

So what's an HR Manager to do? Your company is reasonably healthy and you need your employees to feel secure, focused and productive. Sandy Asch, San Diego's leading HR Workplace Consultant, author of Excellence at Work and sponsor of the quarterly Employer of Choice Forums that attract San Diego's top Human Resource executives looking to hone their skills and share successful workplace strategies offers advice.

On May 8, Asch will host the next Employer of Choice (EOC) Forum, entitled "Spice it Up or Get Left Behind," at Cobham Sensor Systems in San Diego. The EOC Forum, the second in the quarterly series, will touch on strategies to motivate workers during the economic downturn.

San Diego Senior HR Executives recently completed the first Employer of Choice Forum. The sold out Forum featured a cross-generational panel of LPL Financial employees candidly discussing what managers could do to make them feel more valued and appreciated.

Asch counseled her Senior HR attendees to listen closely to the nine-member panel, because rewarding top performers during lean times is vital. Says Asch, "Your best and brightest will have options and may head for the door, so it's best to build morale across the ranks to attract and retain your top people." The Forum is designed to give HR managers tools and best practices that they can immediately implement to improve workplace performance.

To support her claims, Asch points to recent research that indicates that 45 percent of layoff survivors worry about being fired in the next six months. Another study suggests that employees spend up to three hours per day thinking about layoffs...and crafting back-up plans.

Here are four "workplace management" strategies for HR Executives that emerged from the half-day Employer of Choice Forum in March.

- 1.) Engage Employees - Tap employees for underutilized talent and skill sets. Create planning teams; For example, invite an artistic employee to design an Event poster. Encourage a web-savvy worker to survey your competitors' E Signatures and then turn over results to marketing group. Create opportunities where all workers feel like they are doing their part during the current downturn.
- 2.) Promote positive thinking by promoting the THINK model. Managers can actively limit negative unproductive talk by asking employees to verify information before spreading rumors. The Think model calls for each individual to THINK and answer these questions before they speak: Is it True? Is it Helpful? Is it Inspiring? Is it Necessary? Is it Kind?
- 3.) Simple Gestures Count - The LPL Financial panel of employees universally revealed what they treasured most from their employers - and it wasn't the free mugs or tee-shirts many companies frequently pass out. Instead, employees wanted to be acknowledged for a job well done. It turns out, employees save simple handwritten notes from their superiors for years. Other employees shared that they appreciated it when they were publicly acknowledged for their good work in front of their colleagues. Asch counseled HR Directors to implement these "strategies" or "best practices" to gain a competitive edge, engage employees and increase workplace productivity.
- 4.) Promote Cross-Training. Today's worker understands their employer can't guarantee life-time employment. But they do understand the importance of amassing a basket of skills that are transferable in the work environment and will position them to capture a future job if need be. Survey your top employees for their interests and arrange networking lunches that coincide with their career

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goals and aspirations.

The Alliance for Organizational Excellence presents quarterly Employer of Choice Forum seminars geared to educate business leaders on "best practices" to attract, retain and motivate today's workforce and showcase companies in San Diego who have proven successful and innovative in their workplace/people practices.

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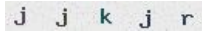
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