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San Diego companies adopt creative measures to attract top talent

In today's competitive business environment, attracting and retaining top-notch talent is a major challenge for regional employers.

The San Diego Employer of Choice Forum, presented by Sandy Asch, Alliance for Organizational Excellence LLC, has brought together the region's leading human resources professionals and business leaders to address employers' most pressing challenges. The speaker series will hosts its final 2007 seminar, from "Bland To Brand" on Nov. 16 at PETCO headquarters in San Diego.

According to Asch, principal

of the San Diego-based Alliance for Organizational Excellence, the Forum gives forward-thinking leaders a chance to share "best practices" and brainstorm new approaches to attract, retain and motivate today's work force. Says Asch, "The Forum also serves to showcase companies in San Diego who have proven successful and innovative in their people practices, including Modern Postcard; Biogen Idec; Cox Communications; San Diego Zoo and PETCO."

Forum attendees are drawn from San Diego's leading employers, including Illumca Defense & Space, Harrah's Rincon

Casino, SANDAG, United Way, ICW, Newland Communities, Anthony's Seafood Group, Volunteers of America, UMD Chemicals and Pat & Oscar's Restaurants. Seminar sponsors include John Burnham Insurance Services and Modern Postcard.

Forum participant Peggy Keens, human resources director at Harrah's Rincon Casino, shared with colleagues that today's workplace managers must be skilled communicators in order to engage their growing ranks of turned-in Generation X workers, who crave constant communication and are accustomed to cell phones,

text messaging and blogs 24/7.

To engage Harrah's 1,800 workers, Harrah's human resources department publishes a daily newsheet called the Daily Buzz, plus a weekly print newsletter. In an industry known for its high turnover, Harrah's has been able to steadily reduce turnover over the past five years, posting a 3-percent improvement in 2006.

According to Asch, an 18-year veteran of workplace excellence, increased competition for talent demands that San Diego employers adopt creative ways to attract and retain talent. "The new wave of business evolution will require

companies to entice, engage and retain employees in order to gain their interest and loyalty," she says.

Asch is author of "Excellence at Work: The Six Keys to Inspire Passion in the Workplace," published by World at Work Press, and a nationally recognized speaker. More than 20,000 individuals from over 400 companies have participated in her programs.

For more information or to register for the San Diego 2008 Employer of Choice Forum, contact Sandy Asch at (858) 461-7742 or visit www.litcal.com.

WEA expert judges report keen competition in human resources practices

Six judges had the daunting task this year of sifting through stacks of applications from all over the county and all sectors of business to determine which company could lay claim to being San Diego's "Employer of Choice" in 2007.

Their findings were announced last night during a ceremony presented by the San Diego Society for Human Resource Management and The San Diego Union-Tribune.

The cadre of judges — all human resources vice presidents or former VPs who now use

their expertise to consult — hail from large high-tech, energy, and service industries. Many of these prominent human resources professionals also share their acumen by teaching at human resources leadership programs.

Prior to the final judging, applications went through a screening process by human resources leaders who are also former Marble winners. These screeners reviewed applications to ensure they met basic criteria and were "judging worthy."


Judges had less than a month to review each of the finalist applications from small, mid-size, large and mega organizations and make their determinations. In particular, they scrutinized applications for accomplished results in significant human resources impact areas where outcomes could be demonstrated and quantified. They also evaluated CEO statements regarding the business impact human resources had and how human resources practices aligned with the

company's vision and goals. Half of this year's judges have served in this capacity since the Workplace Excellence Awards were first created, eight years ago, to honor local companies' human resources practices. Two of the judges returned for their second year and one judge was new to the process this year.

Several judges say the competition has become keener and more sophisticated over the years, especially with regard to businesses comprehending and

valuing the professional role human resources occupies. Despite the intense time commitment, all the judges have agreed to participate in next year's awards, indicating they enjoy the process and especially like their part in recognizing and endorsing the best human resources practices San Diego businesses have to offer their own employees.

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Congratulations

Lee Hecht Harrison extends warmest congratulations to the 2007 SHRM Workplace Excellence Award Winners for exemplifying the principles of excellence and leadership.

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Health care

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61 percent of employers with 500 or more employees indicated that they'd be offering one or more CDHPs. More importantly, perhaps, these statistics point the way to greater cost-sustainability. CDHPs delivered substantially lower cost per employee than either preferred provider organizations (PPOs) or HMOs in 2006.

But the success of consumerism in health care will require innovative programs to create involved and informed consumers, as well as good benefit and health-plan management basics, vendor negotiations, network discounts and access, disease management programs, plus health assessment and improvement efforts. In today's fiscally fragile corporate landscape, the advent of consumerism sounds a note of sense and sustainability.