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Managing Changes in the Workplace

***“Managing change is a way of thinking,
and there are some people it just comes naturally to.”***

**Donna Curry, SPHR, recruitment program manager,
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Is there any industry or business in today's world that can honestly state that they are not facing changes or the need to make changes in their workplace? The economy, technology, competition, productivity, revenue streams, and business loss are just a few of the causes of change hitting businesses head-on. Failing to manage employees through the process of change can be costly as well. Employers need a structured, proactive approach that includes communication, a road map of the change, training programs that go along with the project and a plan for dealing with resistance. Employees who are dissatisfied with or upset by change are generally less productive than they could be and that affects the bottom line.

To meet the challenges of the future, employers have to get the most productivity out of every single employee. Getting buy-in for change management isn't always easy so managers need to have a change management plan that incorporates change management activities. Timing is important and the sooner the better for bringing employees on board with the plans. People are going to know something is up, and if they don't know what or why, they'll make up their own facts.

Training in a change management process needs to be a dialog – not the one-way communication often used. Executives need to talk to the entire workforce, senior managers speak with managers, managers engage with their staff and the conversation has to go both ways. Executives need to stay involved and interested throughout the process and employees need to hear the same message from everyone.

Here's what managers need to address in change management: 1. What is changing? 2. Why is it changing? 3. How will it affect your area? 4. How will it affect each person individually? 5. What if your employees don't support the change? Once management works through this analysis, they will identify areas of possible resistance

and find ways to overcome those barriers and gain an understanding of what their employees may be feeling. The process will build competencies with managers and help them have conversations about managing the change rather than managing resistance. People have a natural tendency to drift toward negativity when change is in the offing so employees at all levels should be trained to refocus their thoughts in a positive way and work to understand the difficulties they have in accepting changes. For example, they may feel they lack skills for dealing with the change, or are coping with stresses in other parts of their lives and by reassuring them they will still have their jobs, or they will receive the necessary training, will help them overcome their resistance and embrace the change. Helping employees understand their role in an “ownership” environment will show them that what they do is essential to the success of the company and, ultimately, to their own success.

Create the dialogue for change success by giving employees opportunities to express their concerns and ask questions. Let them bring any issues they may have to the table and find out what their concerns really are. In the end, it's up to employees themselves to decide if they want to support the upcoming change. You have to be willing to accept the fact that it's not part of your goal to drag the unwilling or the uncaring along! Good luck with managing your changes!

Excerpted from article written by Nancy Hatch Woodward, SHRM Magazine May 2007, To Make Changes, Manage Them. "Reprinted with permission of the Society for Human Resource Management, www.shrm.org. Copyright 2007.

MTA HR Committee Reorganization

As part of the MTA-MART merger activities to reshape the organization and expand member involvement and benefit, the MTA HR Committee has transitioned into the MTA Human Resources Peer Group. As a Peer Group, we will continue to operate under the direction, policy and oversight of the MTA board. Internally, a leadership group will organize and facilitate discussion meetings and event planning. Sub-committees within the leadership group will plan and organize MTA-U education programs for frontline and management employees, write and publish the HR Bulletin, plan HR-related educational events, conduct surveys, provide HR luncheon speakers and a Break-out Session at MTA's Annual Convention.

Our focus is to identify issues related to human resources functions and flow that information to the association members to benefit those whose jobs include HR responsibilities. All companies have responsibilities to their employees and need to observe basic HR practices and employment laws. The membership is diverse and to that end, we want to create added value for a wider audience.

Watch for registration and details about our premier HR Peer Group Conference coming in February 2009 and please forward the information to the person in your organization who would benefit from attending!

HR Bulletin is written by members of the MTA Human Resources Peer Group and is intended for MTA members only.

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