

# HR SOLUTIONS

## THE FUTURE WORKFORCE IS HERE

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You've heard the phrase for years: workforce demographics. Experts across the nation have been analyzing national and global demographic and economic trends to predict what challenges and opportunities our future workforce will present. The past predictions of a radically changing workforce are here and you, as a State of Alaska manager or supervisor, are on the front line facing this nationwide challenge.

You may have already felt the impact of the changing workforce; smaller applicant pools, increasing numbers of retirements and quicker turnover in professional positions. Why are these changes happening and what can you do as a manager to lessen negative impacts?

Factors influencing the changing workforce in Alaska include:

- ◆ The workforce is aging. Retirements are increasing and a larger percentage of workers are retiring at earlier ages.
- ◆ As workers retire institutional memory is lost as well as specialized knowledge and expertise that comes from "time in grade."
- ◆ Fewer candidates are in the "pipeline," due to downsizing nationwide over the past decade. This results in fewer candidates to choose from and the ones available may be eligible to retire.
- ◆ Finding qualified candidates may be difficult in a wide range of occupations, including information technology, accounting/auditing, nursing, other health professions, teaching, law

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Most of us who have been in the workforce for awhile remember times where we had robust applicant pools and healthy budgets. Today, managers and supervisors are faced with critical shortages of qualified applicants, budgets that require us to meet our program goals with fewer bodies, and an environment that demands greater program accountability and efficiency. We know we are working harder. To successfully meet the challenges in front of us we also have to work smarter. In this day and age, working smarter from a human resources perspective means taking a step back and thinking strategically about our workforce, thinking about new ways of organizing our work, and developing effective strategies to find and keep the right people who will help further our program goals. That's a tall order.

This issue of HR Solutions offers some insights and some practical tools to

help you along the path of creating a dynamic and functional work environment. There are tips and techniques for strategic workforce planning, suggestions on how to make your hiring processes more effective, and articles discussing the importance of training and performance management.

Working smarter also means taking the time to keep your skills and abilities as a manager or supervisor sharp. This is difficult to do if you are already feeling program pressures and haven't seen the top of your desk in months, but I guarantee it will be worth the effort. Take the time to focus on one aspect of your people management skills that you'd really like to improve and then look for ways to do so. It is easier to do than you think if you do it one step at a time. And remember, it's not a luxury, it's a critical part of retaining the employees who will make a significant contribution in your organization.

## THE FUTURE WORKFORCE IS HERE CONT.

*“Planning to meet staffing needs in these challenging times is an opportunity to think, work and organize in new ways, using creative problem solving and innovation.”*

*“Get ahead of the curve. It has been called workforce planning, succession planning, or strategic staffing. Regardless of the name, the steps are pretty much the same. The main point is to get the right people in the right jobs at the right time.”*

enforcement, and engineering to name a few. Statewide and nationwide, the number of workers in the 25-44 year old range has declined.

- ◆ Retention of remaining employees may be difficult as increased promotional opportunities become available and agencies compete for the limited pool of experienced staff.

What can you do? Get ahead of the curve. It has been called workforce planning, succession planning, or strategic staffing. Regardless of the name, the steps are pretty much the same. The main point is to get the right people in the right jobs at the right time.

Why plan for the changing workforce?

- ◆ Make sure employees are prepared for the jobs and responsibilities of the future.
- ◆ Have enough qualified people for that strategic initiative, new project or critical work assignment.
- ◆ Make sure employees with obsolete skills get training so they can continue to contribute.
- ◆ Have people who can develop and use that great new technology you need.
- ◆ Provide a workplace and work opportunities that make employees actually want to stay in your agency.
- ◆ Avoid wasting valuable time and money training people in skills that don't support the agency's strategic direction.

Workforce planning may seem like a daunting task, but there are available resources to help you. Future issues of the Workforce Profile will provide key workforce planning information and statistics.

The Workforce Profile is published semi-annually by the Division's Statewide Planning and Research Team. The Profile can be found online at the Planning and Research home page: <http://dop.state.ak.us/index.php?id=11> Additional resources are available at the Department of Labor's research and analysis web site, Internet sites, books, and seminars.

“What do workforce demographics mean for you?”

Consider these State of Alaska statistics:

- Over the last 14 years, the average age of State of Alaska employees has increased.
- 40% of permanent Executive Branch employees are between 45 and 55 years of age.
- The average time of state service is 9.2 years for permanent Executive Branch employees.
- About 18% of the permanent Executive Branch employees are minorities.
- 8% of the permanent Executive Branch employees are eligible to retire within one year (13% in one department).
- 19% of the permanent Executive Branch employees are eligible to retire within 5 years (over 25% in 6 departments).

The Statewide Planning and Research Team is currently developing a workforce planning model for use in operating agencies. In addition, the team can work with you to tailor demographic information specific to your program. Finally, the Division of Personnel is looking at ways to help increase the numbers of qualified applicants for State of Alaska vacancies. One such initiative is reviewing minimum qualifications to see if they need to be broadened or rewritten in order to allow you as a manager to consider more applicants from the current workforce.

Challenges present difficulties and opportunities. Planning to meet staffing needs in these challenging times is an opportunity to think, work and organize in new ways, using creative problem solving and innovation.

## EFFECTIVE REFERENCE CHECKING

Finding the most qualified employee can be one of your greatest challenges as a hiring manager. Current State employees are a valuable commodity to consider when reviewing qualified applicants for your vacancies. One of the best indicators of an employee's skills and abilities is past work performance. All applicants who apply through Workplace Alaska sign a certification form affirming their work history is accurate and stating they give their approval for the hiring manager to check references.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission offers two broad guidelines that are useful for reference checks:

- ◆ Will the answers to the question, if used in making a selection decision, have a disparate effect in screening out minorities and/or members of one sex, i.e. disqualifying a significantly larger percentage of members of a particular group than others?
- ◆ Is this information really needed to judge an applicant's competence or qualification for the job in question?

Here are some

guidelines for reference calls:

1. Ask only for job-related information (based on the job analysis) or for verification of information provided by the applicant.
2. Write down in advance the questions or areas that will be explored.
3. Cover the same areas for each applicant for which you check references.
4. Contact only former supervisors or persons who have direct knowledge of the applicant's qualifications to perform the job.
5. Ask for factual information that can be documented. Stay away from subjective

impressions of character, personality, etc.

When you check references on a current or former state employee, consider reviewing past performance evaluations first. The Employee Records section of the Division of Personnel can provide copies of evaluations. These documents can supplement the information that you receive when calling for references. **To request copies of evaluations:**

- ◆ Call Employee Records at 465-2191 to make the request.
- ◆ Fax a copy of the Applicant Certification Form to 465-6624.



Once you've collected all the data on the applicant, review it for discrepancies and verification of their information. Does the applicant's evaluation match the reference you got from his/her supervisor? Use the information to confirm valuable skills and experience as well as to identify possible areas of concern. If you have questions about checking references, contact your recruitment expert in the Employee Services section of the Division of Personnel. And remember, a little research up front can go a long way towards helping you hire the most qualified person for your job.

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*"Only you can help the EEOP monitor employment practices in connection with Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity plans."*

## THE EEO PROGRAM NEEDS YOUR HELP

State of Alaska Hiring Managers,

Only you can help the EEOP monitor employment practices in connection with Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity plans. This crucial service ensures the State of Alaska uses legal hiring practices and helps protect you the hiring manager from lawsuits and grievances.

As part of the monitoring process, the EEOP reviews selection procedures and determines if policies or practices have an adverse impact on the employment opportunities of any race, sex or ethnic group. The EEOP also compares hiring rates for these different groups. Applicant information is obtained from Workplace Alaska recruitments and that is where we need your help.

The EEOP currently faces a challenge

in that hiring managers do not always identify applicants as not meeting minimum qualifications in the disposition status when that situation exists. As such, an excessive amount of time must be spent reviewing recruitments to ensure accurate data is used in the applicant flow analysis. This can result in the EEOP calling you as the hiring manager in order to get additional information. The EEOP would appreciate your help in appropriately identifying applicants by using the dispo comments. When you identify applicants who do not meet minimum qualifications, you allow the EEOP to ensure accurate applicant flow data is available for analysis and you save yourself time by eliminating the need for follow-up emails and phone calls.

We appreciate your help in this!

## THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERIM PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

As Supervisors and Managers one of the most important activities you can do for a new employee is to assure that they receive an interim performance evaluation. The performance evaluation report is one of several steps in the performance management cycle and is particularly important during an employee's probationary period. Assuring that the employee understands your expectations and receives documented feedback is critical to helping good performers achieve higher levels of performance and in helping poor performers understand what development areas exist.

with performance or job behaviors for the first time. Nor should it be the first time an employee is told the areas in which they are excelling. Frequent feedback and coaching should be provided throughout the rating period.

The timely preparation of an interim performance evaluation is also essential. Failure to provide the interim performance evaluation in a timely manner may affect a department's decision to separate a probationary employee who does not meet expectations.

Range	Length of Probationary Period	Interim Due
13 and below	Exactly 6 months from appointment date	3 months from appointment date
14 and above	Exactly 12 months from appointment date	6 months from appointment date

A probationary employee is due an interim or mid-probation performance evaluation halfway through their probationary period.

The purpose of the interim performance evaluation is to formally communicate to the employee areas in which his or her performance is strong and where it could be developed further, to identify factors or circumstances that may have affected performance, and to document any improvement that is necessary for successful completion of the probationary period. It is essential that probationary employees have a clear understanding of the expectations that must be met to obtain permanent status.

As with any effective performance management program, the interim performance evaluation is not the place to point out problems

The Division of Personnel's Management Services staff are available as a resource to supervisors. Supervisors are encouraged to contact Management Services staff at the first sign of performance deficiencies.

The Division of Personnel also offers courses in Performance Coaching and the Performance Appraisal process. Both classes provide managers and supervisors the opportunity to increase their knowledge and brush up their skills in these critical areas. For more information or to register for these classes please go to: <http://dop.state.ak.us/index.php?id=10>

For more information on the performance appraisal process the recently revised Rater's Guide can be viewed at: [http://dop.state.ak.us/index.php?id=158&no\\_cache=1](http://dop.state.ak.us/index.php?id=158&no_cache=1)

*"It is essential that probationary employees have a clear understanding of the expectations that must be met to obtain permanent status."*

## INTRODUCING.....THE PARF!

Occasionally, when everybody else in the office is gone, you get that call - Technical Services needs a PARF for an employee, to get payroll done. You have heard the term before, PARF; you probably had to do this a couple times last year too. Here is some basic “refresher” informational questions to help speed you through the process.

**What exactly is the PARF?** The Personnel Action Request Form (PARF) is the official statewide form used to request a personnel or payroll action effecting an employee’s status, pay or employment record. The PARF is submitted to Technical Services for processing in the Alaska State Payroll System (AKPAY) along with all the required forms necessary for the action.

**Where can I find the form?** The PARF form can be found on the Department of Administration, Division of Personnel web site <http://dop.state.ak.us/>, in the Quick Links - HR forms, under Alphabetical Form Listing. Bookmarking this site provides for easy, quick access to the PARF and many other related HR forms.

**What needs to be filled out on the form?** Complete all requested information at the top of the form and check the appropriate box to indicate the nature of the action.

To complete the middle section of the PARF, the left side, labeled “FROM”, should contain the employee’s current information and the right side, labeled “TO”, should reflect all changes being requested. A new hire requires only the “TO” side to be completed and a separation requires only the “FROM” side to be completed.

The bottom section must have required signatures approving the requested action.

**What is the “Comments” section for?** Use the “Comments” section to note any unusual circumstances or special handling pertinent to the action.

**Who signs the PARF and what is responsibility/liability/expectation for signing?** The PARF must be signed by an Appointing Authority (assigned or delegated under AS 39.25.020) and have the signature for the required Divisional/Departmental

approval for personnel actions. The signatures ensure the form has been reviewed and the information is accurate;

- 1) all required documents are attached;
- 2) copies are provided where necessary; and
- 3) vouches for legality of the action itself.



### State of Alaska Personnel Action Request Form

SSN	Last Name	First Name	M.I.	Effective Date
Division/Dept. & #	Section	Location	Retire Code	Contact Code
EE Phone Number ( )	EE Fax Number	Add/Change EE Email Address	Supervisor's Name	Supervisor's PCN
<input type="checkbox"/> Term Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Probationary Appt.	<input type="checkbox"/> Transfer	<input type="checkbox"/> Sep/Ori/Rehire	<input type="checkbox"/> Rtn (B/L/WOP)
<input type="checkbox"/> Emrgncy Appt.	<input type="checkbox"/> EX/IX Appt.	<input type="checkbox"/> Layoff	<input type="checkbox"/> Sep/Resignation	<input type="checkbox"/> To (B/L/WOP)
<input type="checkbox"/> Nonperm Appt.	<input type="checkbox"/> Promotion	<input type="checkbox"/> RTN Layoff	<input type="checkbox"/> Sep/Appointment	<input type="checkbox"/> Acting Status
<input type="checkbox"/> FT Appt.	<input type="checkbox"/> Demotion	<input type="checkbox"/> Separation	<input type="checkbox"/> Merit Salary Increase	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Changes
Comments:		DOCF Technical Service Comments:		
FROM:		TO:		
Status				
Seasonal Indicator				
Balanced/Hourly				
Merit Anniversary Date				
Pay Rate				
PCN/Firearm				
Bargaining Unit				
Location				
Range/Step/OT Ind				
Class Code/Job Title				
Organizational RI Code				
Payroll RO Code				
Salary Schedule				
HI Code/Effective Date				
Resident Address				
City/State/Zip				
Warrant Mailing Address				
City/State/Zip				
COLC - Accts Charged				
Generator Pattern				
VIA Code				
Appointing Authority Approval (when applicable)				Date
Divisional Approval (when applicable)				Date

Revision Date 05.01.2004

FORM 32000

The completed PARF and forms are routed to the appropriate Technical Services Center. It is important to provide all necessary information as partially completed forms and/or missing documentation may delay timely processing. If you have additional questions or need further clarification regarding the PARF, contact you Technical Services Center. We are happy to be of service!

## SUPERVISOR'S CHECKLIST FOR POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

*Be sure to check that:*

- *Correct information is on the front page of the PD.*
- *Type the name of each signatory in blocks 20, 28, and 29.*
- *Sign next to the printed name in Sections 20, 28, and 29. (If the position is vacant, no signature is required in block 20).*
- *A current agency organization chart is attached.*
- *The org chart reflects the duty and supervisory assignments.*
- *The hard copy and electronic copies of the PD are identical.*
- *Save the electronic copy using the following naming protocol – PD PCN# DEPT.doc (For example: "PD 091234 DMVA.doc.")*

Among the many duties of the supervisor is the preparation of position descriptions (PDs) to establish new positions and update or reclassify existing positions. The following guidelines will help supervisors prepare PDs and speed the review process by the Classification Section.

Prepare the PD using the form from the Division of Personnel/Classification/Forms web site: <http://dop.state.ak.us/index.php?id=44>

This is a revised form that includes additional information in section 2 regarding the current title, job class code, range, and bargaining unit of existing positions. Classifiers often contact the supervisor to verify information and clarify discrepancies. Therefore, it is important that the supervisor include their telephone number in section 8. Section 10 includes information about requirements for commercial drivers licenses and access to firearms and ammunition.

Be sure to check that:

- \* Correct information is on the front page of the PD.
- \* Type the name of each signatory in blocks 20, 28, and 29.
- \* Sign next to the printed name in Sections 20, 28, and 29. (If the position is vacant, no signature is required in block 20).
- \* A current agency organization chart is attached.
- \* The org chart reflects the duty and supervisory assignments.
- \* The hard copy and electronic copies of the PD are identical.
- \* Save the electronic copy using the following naming protocol – PD PCN# DEPT.doc (For example: "PD 091234 DMVA.doc")
- \* Describe the duties assigned and performed by the position. Section 12 is a brief summary of the primary purpose of the position; it should not exceed three or four sentences. Section 13 provides a more detailed description of the duties. Do not copy the examples of duties from the class specification. The description of duties should provide sufficient information and detail about the work so that the Classifier can determine the proper job class for allocation. The PD should not be a desk manual; it need not identify every single step of the process.
- \* Section 14 has been revised. Please read the definitions carefully before deciding if an activity is not applicable, present but not

essential, occasional and essential, or frequent and essential.

- \* Section 22 identifies the positions supervised. This section and the organizational chart should be consistent. While many supervisors have level 1 or 2 authority to appoint, promote, and transfer subordinates, they rarely have level 1 authority to take disciplinary action, discharge, or settle grievances. Information from this section is used to determine the proper bargaining unit of a position.
- \* When the PD is complete and appropriately signed by the employee, the supervisor and the division director, forward it to your department's Administrative Services Director (ASD) for review and signature in Section 30. The signature of the ASD indicates budget authorization exists to take the requested action. If an RP is required, it should be completed before the PD is submitted to the Division of Personnel.
- \* When signed, the ASD forwards the original PD to the Division of Personnel, Classification Section (Mail Stop 0201).
- \* The WORD copy of the PD is also submitted to Classification. Some departments require both the hard copy and e-copy to be submitted through the ASD's office, others allow the division to submit the e-copy directly to Classification. Check with your Administrative Manager or the ASD's office to determine department procedures. When approved by the department, e-mail the WORD copy of the PD to: [classification@admin.state.ak.us](mailto:classification@admin.state.ak.us)
- \* Upon receipt of the signed PD form the Classification Section will make an entry into PD Tracker, assign the PD to a Classifier for review, allocate it appropriately, and notify the department (Division Director, ASD, supervisor and incumbent) of the final classification action via e-mail. The message will contain the allocation memo and the final PD.
- \* You can verify receipt of the signed PD and follow the progress of its review by logging into PD Tracker on the Division of Personnel web page at <http://dop.state.ak.us/pd/>

## THE TRANSFER OF TRAINING CHALLENGE

You have just completed a Division of Personnel or Certified Public Manager program course. During the class you had several of those “ah-hah” moments when you realized that what you learned will help you be more successful and effective back on the job. You are anxious to use your new knowledge and skills back on the job.

Now you are back on the job and the reality that it is difficult—and often risky—to change your behavior starts to replace the delicious anticipation for change that you carried from the classroom back to work.

You are experiencing the transfer of training challenge. Your ability to successfully and effectively apply the knowledge and skills you learned in class to performing tasks back on the job is a skill known as transfer of training. Most academic and organizational training courses are designed to teach knowledge and skills at a low proficiency level. In other words, there is a lot of work left to be done to build your proficiency in using your newly learned knowledge and skills. You must build proficiency from understanding the basic concepts, practices and behaviors—which is the proficiency level targeted by most learning objectives—to successfully applying the knowledge and skills in the process of completing tasks back on the job.

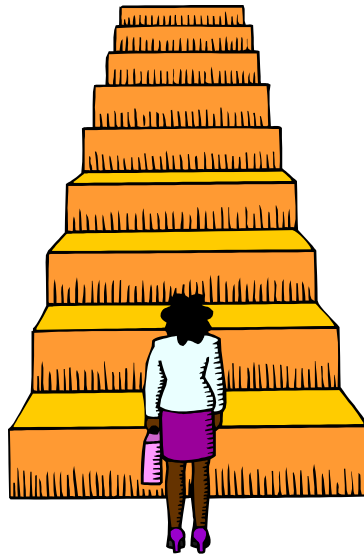
Transfer of training is often more difficult when faced with the challenge of building proficiency in newly learned “soft” or “interpersonal” skills. Proficiency development with those types of skills often requires that you choose very different behavior in dealing with people back on the job.

### Barriers to Transfer of Training

Once back on the job, you often encounter barriers to applying the knowl-

edge and skills you learned. The types of barriers can vary in different situations, but often include some or all of the following:

- ◆ There is a lack of reinforcement on the job. Reinforcement is most often provided in the form of feedback from knowledgeable peers or supervisors skilled at coaching. It is often said that “feedback cements learning.”
- ◆ Interference from immediate work environment issues. Interference is sometimes a result of work and time pressures that make it easier to delay choosing newly learned behaviors. Coworkers and supervisors all too often interfere with transfer of learning by resisting change in a variety of ways.
- ◆ Insufficient authority to change how you do things back on job can also stop proficiency development in its tracks.



### Overcoming Barriers

The first step to dealing with the transfer of training challenge is to identify the barriers you will have to deal with back on the job. Sometimes you can anticipate the existence of a barrier, other times they become painfully obvious as you work to build your proficiency in applying your newly learned knowledge and skills.

Once you have identified a barrier, you can develop strategies for dealing with them. Often the solution is obvious; other times you will want to enlist the help of your supervisor to overcome a barrier. In any case, one of the most effective steps you can take to eliminating barriers is to develop a skill proficiency development partnership with someone who is willing and able to observe your performance and give skillful feedback. That someone is a coach.

### Knowledge and Skill Proficiency Levels

*We use the four levels of proficiency to measure how competent someone is in choosing behavior—knowledge, skills and abilities—in accomplishing a specific task:*

**DISCOVERY**  
*(Level One)*  
*Expressed awareness of basic or fundamental concepts, procedures and practices of the subject area.*

**LITERACY**  
*(Level Two)*  
*Able to communicate all relevant concepts, procedures and practices of the subject area.*

**FLUENCY**  
*(Level Three)*  
*Able to successfully apply all relevant concepts, procedures and practices of the subject area.*

**MASTERY**  
*(Level Four)*  
*Able to successfully apply all relevant concepts, procedures and practices of the subject area, and facilitate knowledge transfer to others.*

## RATER'S GUIDE REVISED

"The Division of Personnel has revised and updated the Rater's Guide. The guide can be accessed on the DOP web site at [http://dop.state.ak.us/index.php?id=158&no\\_cach.](http://dop.state.ak.us/index.php?id=158&no_cach.)"

"The updated and revised Performance Evaluation Coversheet has been added to the HR Forms link. The Performance Evaluation Coversheet can be accessed on the DOP website at [http://dop.state.ak.us/fileadmin/DOP\\_Home/doc/EvaluationForm082704.doc](http://dop.state.ak.us/fileadmin/DOP_Home/doc/EvaluationForm082704.doc)."

Are performance evaluations really a torture device left over from medieval times? It may seem so at times to everyone involved, to employees, managers and supervisors. In fact, the performance appraisal process is an effective tool for establishing and maintaining a vital communication link between supervisor and employee and for improving employee job performance and behaviors. Performance management is an ongoing process, of which evaluations are an integral part.

The *Rater's Guide* is a valuable addition to your supervisor's tool box. A supervisor who skillfully uses the performance appraisal process clearly defines the job to be done, establishes acceptable performance expectations, carefully review and reports performance, and provides the developmental guides necessary to improve future performance. As the supervisor, you give the employee the assistance and tools necessary for his or her success on the job.

The newly revised and updated *Rater's Guide* contains a general discussion of the process, with primary focus on the steps typically taken by you the supervisor to analyze performance and to report the evaluation assessment.

The following overview is excerpted from the *Rater's Guide*: Evaluating job performance and filling out a performance evaluation report fit within the larger performance appraisal process. While many different models are used to describe this process, they typically include the following six steps:

- Clarify the job duties
- Communicate performance expectations and standards
- Observe and document performance
- Analyze performance
- Report performance
- Develop performance

A list of steps looks like a linear process, but the performance appraisal process is actually cyclical. Supervisors continuously assign work, communicate performance expectations, observe and record performance, and evaluate how well the work

has been done. Change in any one of these steps may trigger change or a need for action in another. Some steps in the performance appraisal process, such as observing performance and giving feedback, are often performed ad hoc in the course of daily interactions or the routine review of work products. Other steps, such as documenting performance or clarifying job duties, are more typically done according to a defined process or schedule, such as an evaluation written at an employee's merit anniversary date or a position description (PD) updated in preparation for recruitment.

The Division of Personnel is your resource for performance appraisals:

- Consultation services are available from your Management Services Team.
- The Training and Development program offers Performance Appraisal: The Basics. This one-day course is designed to provide an overview of the performance management process and provide the basic knowledge necessary to write performance appraisals. In addition, the Academy for New Supervisors provides a briefer outline of the performance appraisal process.

Performance Appraisal: The Basics classes are offered in Anchorage, Juneau and Fairbanks. Classes will be held in Anchorage on 10/7, 11/17, and 12/15/04.

Classes will be held in Juneau on 10/7, 11/4, and 12/15/04.

Classes will be held in Fairbanks on 11/3/04.

A full class schedule for Performance Appraisal: The Basics, as well as other courses offered, may be located on the Division of Personnel's Training and Development site. <http://dop.state.ak.us/index.php?id=10&class=54#8>

An effective performance appraisal can bring big rewards, to employees and to supervisors. The *Rater's Guide* and Division of Personnel training courses can help you maximize the benefits of performance appraisal. Your key performance appraisal resource is DOP HR staff. Give Management Services a call!





## ARBITRATION / CASE LAW

### Stand-by Pay Requires Specific Conditions

Employees alleged in a recently awarded arbitration case that the employer broke the contract by not paying standby pay to employees who carried State provided cell phones and answered calls off duty. The arbitrator denied the grievance because carrying a cell phone to answer calls did not meet the minimum requirements of the stand-by provisions of the contract at issue. The requirements of the contract state in part: "When Bargaining Unit members are ordered to remain at home, or periodically report their whereabouts and be available for immediate recall. . ."

Some specific management actions or decisions are required in order for the language to apply. "Ordered to remain at home, or periodically report. . . ." means the employer has told the employee to adjust his/her behavior by restricting his/her movements. The restriction of movement make clear the expectation that the employee make themselves available for contact and that consequences may follow if they are not available to the employer when called.

" . . . available for immediate recall. . . ." means that the employee must be able to come back to work quickly and be ready to perform their duties. When it is not necessary to return to work to perform the duties the employee must be in a condition to perform over the phone. The expectations of this language are two: 1) being able to return to work in a short period of time and, 2) being able to perform duties. These expectations require the employee to modify their behavior by not being so far away from the worksite that it will require a long time to return and by not engaging in activities like drinking alcohol that will render them incapable of performing their duties.

And element that is always present with not fulfilling the employer expectations associated with stand-by is possible discipline.

The arbitrator found that when an employee is not specifically ordered to meet the required expectations of the stand-by provisions and there the employer is not require to limit their personal activities the conditions required for the payment of stand-by pay are not met.

There are two underlying messages for managers in this decision: 1) communicate clearly with employees when you need to restrict their personal time and put them on stand-by and, 2) the stand-by provision is not in place to augment pay, it is in place to prevent a management decision that will inconvenience and employee's life outside work and to provide a means for addressing the inconvenience when necessary.

### Resignation Means I Quit My Job

In a case decided earlier this year an arbitrator addressed the following fact set. Three employees were concerned that the performance of a coworker had become dangerous and unsafe to clients. Two of the employees made numerous reports of their coworker's poor performance and felt these complaints were getting no attention from management. The two employees making the reports and a third employee in the same job class chose to submit resignations in



hope of getting management's attention and thereby effect change. Management took steps to remedy the performance situation and allowed the

first two employees to rescind their resignations. Management accepted the resignation of the third employee and did not return her to work.

The Union grieved management's decision to accept the resignation arguing constructive discharge and concerted activity. The arbitrator heard the case and reviewed the evidence and testimony presented and denied the grievance. The grievant resigned of her own free will and was given no assurance of return the arbitrator found. The exercise of free will with out coercion put the employee in a position to allow management to exercise its discretion under the contract to allow the rescission of the resignation only by mutual agreement.

While the decision to resign could be seen by some as concerted activity the arbitrator found engaging in concerted activity in and of itself does not confer job protection. In this example threatening a work stoppage through resignation, while a concerted activity, is expressly prohibited by the agreement. With the expressed prohibition against work stoppages the employer is free to take action against employees that choose to engage in such concerted activity.

There are two lessons in this case for employees and managers. Work now grieve later. The arbitrator stated clearly that when employee resigns they allow the employer to exercise discretion in rehiring the employee. So, the employees took great risk by resigning in an attempt to effect change. When employees make reports of poor performance check them out. Management took great risk and allowed a significant disruption of the workplace by not attempting to address employee concerns earlier.

*"When employees make reports of poor performance check them out."*

## SUPERVISOR'S CORNER

### The Challenge of "Challenge" How to Find Just the Right Work Balance

**TALK ABOUT IRONY.** It's Labor Day, and while my neighbors gather around their grills, I'm huddled over my keyboard laboring over this column. There's a deadline to meet, and though my editor is kind and understanding and possibly responsive to subtle buttering up from a tardy columnist, I need to finish this up before tomorrow.

Really, I'm in something of a panic because my schedule for the rest of the week is so jam-packed. If I don't finish this column now, it's going to be another late night. But wait, is that the smell of bratwurst wafting up from a grill? Wow, that smells good. (Long pause while every fiber of my being focuses its attention on an imaginary brat.) Forget the bratwurst, get back to the column! You have to get it done or your appointment book will never forgive you. What was the topic again? Oh yeah, challenge.

My monthly *Workforce Online* column provides insights into the twenty-two key ingredients of a meaningful workplace -- what I call the "meaning keys." These keys emerged from my extensive interviews and focus groups with people from all walks of life. Each column is devoted to a separate key.

Challenge is one of them, and it just so happens to be one of the most, well, challenging. So many people find deep fulfillment in situations that stretch their skills, talents, know-how, and deep interests. Yet so many workplaces go too far in either direction -- either they wear people out with impossibly demanding work, or they keep hands busy but leave minds unengaged.

Despite excessive brat-

wurst fumes, I have developed a detailed assessment tool that will help you determine where you fall on this challenge continuum. While I run outside and visit with my neighbors, review the following items carefully, and place a checkmark in front of each statement that accurately describes your current situation.

- You're famous around the office for your Post-It Note origami.
- People occasionally snap their fingers in your face and call out: "Hello, is anyone home?"
- A big decision consists of "cheese on wheat" or "fig bar."
- Out of the blue, you get a call from a casting director who wants you as an extra in the upcoming movie "The Stepford Employee."
- You follow with some anticipation the results of Howard's Tuesday evening bowling league.
- You feel genuine pride after sorting your paper clips by size.
- A colleague asks you how long you've been practicing self-hypnosis.

If you've checked any of the above items, or if any of them seem even remotely true to life, you're seriously under-challenged. I strongly recommend that you fire up your grill, cook yourself a tasty meal, and worry about things later on in this column.

If you didn't check any boxes, you're not in the clear just yet. Review this second set

of assessment items:

- You look up at the clock and it's already 5 p.m. -- the next day.
- To replace those time-draining coffee breaks, you opt for a caffeine patch.
- As another time-saving measure, you stop using all commas, colons and semicolons.
- After a late-night work session, you're pretty sure you see religious icons in



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## SUPERVISOR'S CORNER CONT.

your screen saver.

\_\_\_\_\_ You've operated a pager, a cell phone, and a laptop ... at the same time ... while eating dinner ... at your child's recital.

\_\_\_\_\_ You come up with a neat idea: the waterproof laptop, perfect for achieving high productivity in the shower.

\_\_\_\_\_ The evening cleaning crew offers to put aside its own chores and help you finish whatever it is you've been working on for the past several months.

If any of these seven items seem to apply, you face a major case of overwork. In your case, I'd bypass the grill entirely and have the food delivered.

Seriously, there are certain actions you can take whatever your situation: Gather your immediate colleagues for an ongoing conversation about the current situation. Perhaps you can team up and help each other. Collective effort is more likely to produce a long-term solution that benefits everyone.

If you're seriously under-challenged, take a process that's all your own and make it faster, better, and more cost effective. You'll end up saving some time in your schedule, so direct it to stuff that will engage your brain and stir your deep interests.

I you think you're not in a position to re-create how your work is done, search for one sliver of opportunity -- something you can do differently to get your brain back in gear, or something you can stop doing so you can use the saved time for more challenging activities, or at least someone you can talk to who can help you start turning things around.

Establish a demanding stretch goal just for yourself. It should be aligned with all the other goals around you -- in your work unit, for instance, or the organization

as a whole -- but it's yours and yours alone.

Consider making this personal goal setting process a group endeavor. If these goals are big enough -- and they should be -- you'll need help to turn them into reality.

If you're totally over-challenged, put your schedule under a microscope.

Which of your work activities adds little or no value? This can be a painful process as you realize that those monthly reports you've been laboring over for the past several years are read by a grand total of one person: you. Sort out what's really important and what only seems to be important.

Then start trimming away.

Watch out for perfectionism. If you're doing something over and over and over to get it just right, get in touch with your customers and find out what they think. You want to thrill them, to be sure, but it won't do anyone any good if you burn yourself out in the process.

Recognize the sharp distinction between being conscientious and being a control freak. Ironically, your excessive workload just might be an opportunity to widen responsibility and boost empowerment.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Tom Terez is a speaker, consultant, and author of the book 22 Keys to Creating a Meaningful Workplace. His Web site, BetterWorkplaceNow.com, is filled with strategies and tools for making the workplace more meaningful and productive. To contact Tom, use this site's online form or call him at 614-571-9529.

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