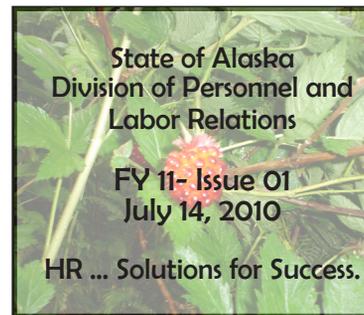


# HR Update



Frank Hurt

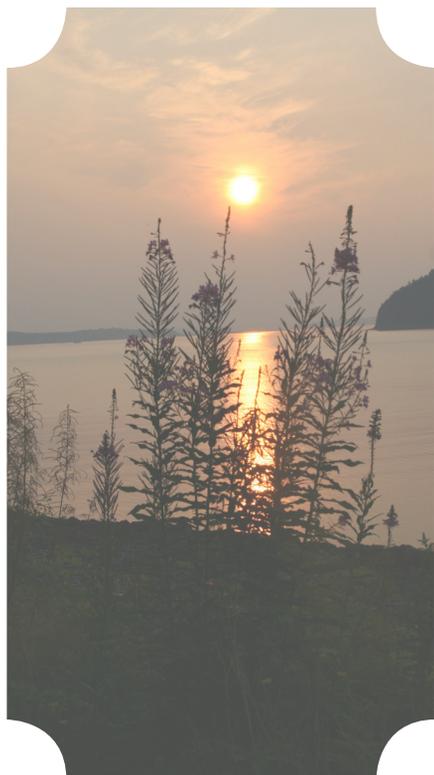
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## HR UPDATE

### LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

Please let us know what you think of our publication. If you have any suggestions about how to improve the HR Update or topics you think should be addressed, please contact [franklin.hurt@alaska.gov](mailto:franklin.hurt@alaska.gov).



Staci Augustus

## Managing Diversity

By Camille Brill

Managing diversity and good management are the same thing. If you are a supervisor or a manager, you should ask yourself: Am I fully tapping the potential capabilities of each individual in my work unit? Managing diversity means enabling every member of your staff to perform to his or her potential. It's creating an environment where everyone can do their best work

Most people assume that workplace diversity is only about increasing racial or ethnic representation from traditionally underrepresented groups. But the diversity I'm talking about includes not only race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, age, but other dimensions such as a person's background, education, heritage, physical abilities, work experience, life experience, job class, length of service, veteran status, even style of thinking. *The objective is not to assimilate people to one homogenous work culture but instead to create a work culture that values inclusion and individual differences.*

Why do we want to do this? Because it will allow us to have an efficient and effective workforce to do the State's work – everyone benefits. Social scientists have shown in study after study that diverse work groups promote creativity, adapt better to change, and produce better solutions to problems and a higher level of critical analysis. People with varied backgrounds bring knowledge and different perspectives to the workplace that can provide fresh and meaningful approaches to our work.

When employees are individually valued and their potential realized, morale and productivity are high, absenteeism is low, and work units develop a reputation as the place to work and attract the best talent from shrinking labor pools, which in turn leads to even better work environments. People who are included in information networks or decision making are more committed to the organization's goals and success. This leads to higher productivity and savings of time and money in recruitment and turnover costs.

One question that HR folks often hear: But don't we have to treat everyone the same? The answer is we must treat everyone fairly, but "fairness" and "sameness" are not always the same thing. Sometimes "sameness" is important – such as the same performance standards, the same interview questions, or the same pay for the same work. But "fairness" is often the real consideration. An employee struggling with new software might be offered remedial training to help him get up to speed. While this extra training for one employee causes inequality (i.e. one employee receives more training than another), it is not unfair to the employees who did not need the training. It is recognizing that sometimes differences call for varied solutions so that the overall process or outcome is fair.

How well do you manage diversity? How would you answer these questions?

- Do you know what motivates your individual staff members, what their career goals are, how they like to be recognized?

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- Have you examined the “unwritten rules” of your work unit? And do these unwritten rules have the effect of excluding certain people?
- Do you seek out and appreciate different points of view when formulating policies?
- Do you actively search for behaviors of exclusion and eliminate them if found? Whether exhibited by yourself or others, many exclusionary behaviors are unintentional — or even well-intentioned, such as assuming a working parent would refuse a weekend travel assignment.
- Do you make a conscious effort to include everyone on your team? Small, unintentional inequalities can become pervasive in a work culture. A culture of inclusion fosters an environment of small advantages — such as candid feedback, special assignments, and invitations to contribute at meetings — that are available to all.
- What level is your own self-awareness, in terms of understanding your own culture, identity, biases, prejudices, and stereotypes?
- When hiring staff, do you seek employees who work well with people from different backgrounds? One of the ways that this can be done is by specifying the need for skills to work effectively in a diverse environment in the position description and job bulletin, such as, "demonstrated ability to work effectively in a diverse work environment." Do you include “diversity competency” interview questions to ensure that new hires will be able to support the culture of diversity in your work unit? Diversity-competent people can readily recall working with, and learning from, people different than them.
- Do you evaluate performance objectively?
- Do you examine your work unit's existing policies, practices, and procedures to ensure that they do not unfairly impact different groups? If they do, do you change them?
- Is feedback common in your work unit? Are people with different backgrounds (i.e. race, gender . . . ) comfortable giving and receiving feedback? Are you willing to listen to constructive feedback from your staff about ways to improve the work environment? Do you acknowledge their contribution? Do you implement staff suggestions; and when you can't, do you explain why?
- Do you take immediate action with people you supervise when they behave in ways that show disrespect for others in the workplace?
- Do you actively promote a work atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect?
- Do you model respectful behavior in the workplace? And if you make a mistake, do you acknowledge it and correct yourself?
- Have you checked to see if your underlying assumptions are actually true? Many managers plan and implement organizational policies without soliciting and considering different viewpoints. Have you examined your work unit's policies and practices from different angles and determined if they contain or have the effect of unintentional cultural or institutional bias?

If you are doing these things and are cognizant of them, you are managing diversity.

*If you want to build on your knowledge of diversity issues in the workplace, the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations offers a one-day course entitled “Valuing Diversity.” The September 2010 to June 2011 course schedule will be published at the end of summer on Division of Personnel’s web page at <http://doa.alaska.gov/dop/>*



Frank Hurt

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## Alaska Statewide System for Employee Time (ASSET) Project Update & Logo Design Competition

By Tammy Ignell

The ASSET Project was initiated in July 2009 to: 1) Implement a statewide comprehensive, integrated, browser-based time and attendance collection system; 2) Eliminate the need for paper-based processes through automated entry and approval of timesheets and leave requests; 3) Eliminate redundant timekeeping systems across State agencies; and 4) Automate, for consistent application, complex time and leave business rules throughout the State.

ASSET **does not** replace the current statewide payroll system, AKPAY, but will interface time and leave data to AKPAY for pay and benefit processing. ASSET will be compatible with the system that replaces AKPAY within the next ten years.

The ASSET project team successfully completed the project Initiate Phase in November 2009 and the Discover Phase in April 2010. The Design Phase began May 1, 2010, and we are on target for our phased-deployment of the system that will begin in March 2011.

The ASSET name was selected in September 2009 from more than 60 submissions and reflects the purpose of the system as well as the value of and appreciation for our dedicated State employees.

During the Design Phase, we are kicking off a **competition for designing an ASSET logo**. We know from the project naming contest that the State is fortunate to employ a lot of creative people. You don't need to be a graphic artist to enter (your idea can be "cleaned up" for actual use), so please consider contributing. You may submit your ASSET logo design entries via email with attachments to your departmental [ASSET Agency Liaison](#). Please ensure the email Subject is: "ASSET Logo Contest." Multiple entries are acceptable and must be submitted to your ASSET Agency Liaison by close of business, Friday, July 30, 2010

Your ASSET Agency Liaison will gather your department's entries, determine the top 10 choices, and forward these to the ASSET Project Team by close of business Friday, August 6, 2010. The ASSET Steering Committee will select their top choice. The winning submission will become the logo for ASSET, and the winner will receive a prize for the entry, such as a jacket or vest with the ASSET logo.

We look forward to seeing your creative designs for the Alaska Statewide System for Employee Time (ASSET)!

## Classification - Study Updates

### Active Studies:

- GIS/Cartographer I-IV
- Insurance Analyst I-III
- Fishery, Habitat, & Wildlife Biologist I-IV
- Equal Employment Opportunity Officer
- AK Military Youth (AMYA) Instructor
- Program Coordinator Study Phase 3 (outliers)
- Regulatory Commission of Alaska job classes

### Recently Completed Studies:

- Eligibility Technician and Workforce Development Specialist, effective 07/01/10
- Laboratory Quality Systems Manager, effective 06/16/10
- Information Systems Coordinator, effective 04/16/10
- Employment Unemployment Insurance Technical Manager, effective 03/01/10



Staci Agustus