



PERSONNEL >

HR SPECIALISTS OFFER EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS TIPS AND ADVICE ABOUT APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR, ALONG WITH TALES OF FOOLISH MISTAKES.

by Kevin Fritz

Admit it. There are days you go to the office when you really don't feel like dealing with people. You are just not in the mood to hear their stories, their complaints and their endless issues.

Well, put yourself in the shoes of a human resource director. Their job is to listen to all those complaints and issues, day in and day out, week after week. Kind of makes your next morning in the office seem tame.

It takes a special person — candidly, a caring and patient person — to be a human resource professional. As Mark Perlberg, president and CEO of Oasis Outsourcing, puts it: "It is rare to have that passion for HR."

Indeed, human resource professionals have seen it all and have had to deal with virtually everything, from telling a co-worker his or her body odor is ... pungent to dealing with prospective employees who bring their kids along for the interview. Invariably, the most interesting person,

league of Wilson's, stating, "This shade would look good on you."

Also, Wilson says she interviewed one male candidate who came dressed in 1970s attire, complete with open shirt and necklace. It was the year 2000.

"I thought 'Stayin' Alive' should be playing in the background," she jokes. A consummate professional, Wilson suppressed her laugh and did the interview. Not surprisingly, the retro wannabe didn't get the job.

Although Wilson stresses that people need to dress appropriately for interviews, she says that suits are not mandatory for every position. "For upper-level positions, yes, but for staff level, I don't expect them to be in a suit," she says, adding that a suit never hurts.

Wilson's advice to job seekers, beyond putting their best foot forward, has to do with one of her pet peeves, an event that sometimes happens after the interview process is over and the candidate has been



NEGLECT THEIR TRAINING AND THEY COULD DISAPPEAR ON YOU.

In a tight labor market, training is a benefit that can keep your best employees from looking elsewhere and help them grow. **WORKFORCE CENTRAL FLORIDA** offers awards that could cover **HALF** your training costs — whether that means \$500 or \$100,000. When you're looking for ways to reward and retain productive workers, look to us. **Apply today at WorkforceCentralFlorida.com or call 407.531.1200 for more information.**



WORKFORCE CENTRAL FLORIDA
Recruitment, Retention and Retraining Solutions

WCF offers equal opportunity programs. Auxiliary aids & services available upon request to individuals

BLUNDERS >

offering the highest level of comic relief, at a cocktail party will be the human resource director. Search out this person, and you're bound to get at least a chuckle, not to mention a boost of self-esteem.

Here, experts in human resources share their stories, and knowledge, on a range of HR topics, so the rest of us can learn some of the finer points of dealing with people in the workplace. And maybe even smile a bit.

PASS THE LIPSTICK

Robin Wilson, director of human resources at the law firm ShuffieldLowman in Orlando, has experienced a lot in her eight years in human resources. Her anecdotes about dealing with the hiring and firing process surely will leave you grinning, while at the same time pondering human behavior.

Take the new hire who showed up with her children, both under age 5, who repeatedly opened and slammed Wilson's door while she was having the mother/new employee fill out paperwork.

Then there was the woman who, during an interview, took out her lipstick and began to apply it. That's only half of it. She then offered the used stick to a col-

offered and accepted the job. After the necessary paperwork has been filed and the background checks conducted, the new employee says he or she doesn't want the job anymore.

"You act in good faith, and they change their mind," she says. "It's not only rude; it's burning bridges."

WORKFORCE TRAINING IS NOT PUNISHMENT

Monica Wofford, president of the Clermont-based firm Monica Wofford International, specializes in coaching and workforce training. As such, she helps companies understand and correctly implement employee training, which she considers a vital part of a company's health and well-being.

Her first task when she visits an office is to find out if the company or organization is "treating training as punishment."

"If the answer is yes, they need to reevaluate what they are doing and understand the consequences," says Wofford, noting that she often sees the scenario in which management doesn't gain the results it's looking for, so it implements mandatory training sessions that seldom get to the core of the problem.



Celebrate the spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr.

With the Orlando Mayor's Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission

22nd Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Luncheon
Friday, January 18

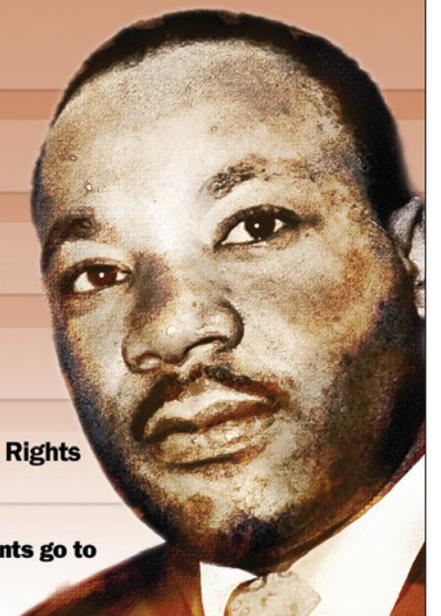
Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Parade
Saturday, January 19

Candlelight Vigil & March
Sunday, January 20

Arthur "Pappy" Kennedy Prayer Breakfast
Monday, January 21

Green Up Orlando Plant Seedlings for Civil Rights
Monday, January 21

For more information on these and other events go to www.cfnews13.com



"Sometimes a company will put you in training because there is a morale or motivation issue," she says. "That's just a Band-Aid."

Wofford is reminded of a group of male 40-year-old sewer line workers she was asked to address. She said management thought they needed motivation and an attitude adjustment. "It turned out that 75 percent of the room was functionally illiterate," she recalls. "They couldn't read the manual that management thought they were reading to do their job."

Wofford says the real issue at that company, which she finds more often than not, was a disconnection between management and its workforce. In those cases, no type of training is going to fix the problem without digging deeper.

Wofford adds that trainers can help at the management level, too. She points to the dreaded "life jacket method," which companies inadvertently apply to promo-

According to Mark Perlberg of 11-year-old Oasis Outsourcing in Orlando, outsourcing allows a company to focus on its core business. While they're doing that, companies such as his help attract and retain employees, plus deal with complex HR issues.

"It is virtually impossible [for small companies] to have the expertise to handle these tasks," he asserts. He says it costs too much money, time and effort for some companies, making it imprudent to leave HR in-house. Essentially, he believes outsourcing those aspects can keep an organization or business out of trouble.

"The world is getting considerably more complex every day," says Perlberg. "The rules are more complex, and the penalties are harder. It's a real area of [legal] exposure."

His anecdotes mainly involve companies that have come to him after outsourcing elsewhere. From those experiences, he advises anyone who is thinking about outsourcing its human resources to carefully check references and be suspicious of long-term contractual agreements. "Look for a 30-day out clause and for someone who stands behind their work with a 90-day guarantee," he says.

Also, after shopping around, know exactly what you're buying. Be careful of the nature and breadth of what the outsourcing company is offering. He notes there are many facets involved, such as benefits, payroll, risk management and medical benefits, and he has seen firms not realizing what they have signed up for before it's too late.

Moreover, he advises that you be leery if you start dealing with a company that just can't seem to get you all the information you request. That's a big red flag. "Align yourself with someone who has your vision and molds the service to you," Perlberg says, adding that your real goal should be to create a company that is a great place to work.

THE ART OF DOWNSIZING

Downsizing is an area of human resources on which many commonly tread lightly. Like the firing of an employee, downsizing can be traumatic to both those who have been let go and those who remain. Uncertainty abounds.

Kathryn Griffiths, senior vice president and general manager of Lee Hecht Harrison in Orlando, an international company that specializes in talent management solutions, offers two scenarios to bring home her point on what can go wrong during a downsizing.

"At Company A," she says, "leaders planned a major downsizing and kept all of the information to themselves. Not even human resources were briefed until the last minute." Then the day of the announcement went poorly, and the consequences became long term and damaging.

Because the human resource department wasn't in the loop until the last minute, it wasn't able to pull together packages and final paychecks in time for the announcement. Managers delivering the news were not prepared or trained and said the wrong things, resulting in potential litigation from angry employees. Griffiths adds that departing employees were immediately escorted from the building by security, worsening the situation. Embittered, these employees told "everyone in the community" how badly they were treated, and future job candidates avoided applying to Company A due to its bad reputation.

Can it get worse? It sure can, says Griffiths. A key employee assigned to the most important account was included on the termination list. Company A missed a big deliverable to a client because the employee wasn't around to solve the problem. The customer wasn't happy with the level of service and decided to move the account to a competitor, causing millions of dollars in lost revenue.

"Customer experience, a loss of revenue and relationships with key accounts all impact the bottom line," she points out.

By contrast, Company B senior leaders, including human resources, structured their downsizing by carefully analyzing skill sets needed and key employees to be retained. A termination date was planned in advance so packages could be ready, managers were trained to deliver the message appropriately and outplacement was deployed properly.

"ANYBODY CAN OFFER SOMEONE MORE MONEY. BUT YOU CAN OFFER AN ATMOSPHERE THAT PROVIDES EQUALITY, DIGNITY AND RESPECT?"

*//> SANDY SEAY, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
SEAY MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS*

tions. An employee is given a new office, title and business cards, but no transition or training program.

That, she concludes, is a recipe for disaster.

OUTSIDE THE LINES

While Wofford is hired as an outsourced specialist in a specific human resource discipline, other companies outsource the entire department.

Griffiths says that Company B went on to provide good severance packages, extended insurance coverage and career-transition assistance to help ease the transition. Those who remained were given retention bonuses.

Griffiths says that on the day of the downsizing, Company B employees were notified individually and told they could leave, gather belongings later, or go back and say goodbye to colleagues. Outplacement counselors were available to provide emotional and job search-related assistance.

"The bottom line here is this business is better able to recover from the trauma and move forward," says Griffiths. Of the utmost importance, she adds, outgoing employees were treated with dignity and respect, and the downsizing didn't impact the company's future ability to recruit the best and the brightest.

RETENTION PONDS

"We are in a society now where employee movement is more prevalent than ever," says Sandy Seay, president and CEO of Seay Management Consultants in Orlando, a human resource management and labor relations consulting firm with more than 400 clients nationwide.

Seay, who began his career in 1966, says the days of employees joining a company intending to stay for an extended period — as it was from the 1940s through the 1970s — are gone. Consequently, employee retention is a top-line concern these days.

And the No. 1 reason employees move on? They have the sense that nobody is listening to them, contends Seay. "A void in communication is usually filled with negativity," he says.

Seay believes the message of open com-

munication with an open-door policy has to be adopted as a company philosophy and orally expressed to each employee. Yet, the most important thing to do to retain employees is institute an employee survey, administered every 18 months, to determine strengths and soft spots before it's too late.

To fill the communication void, Seay says, an employee handbook and a policies and procedures document must be in place. Without both, employees don't know what to expect. Those documents, however, must be crafted properly to convey the correct message. Don't be vague or generic. "They might say things like, 'Military leave is defined by federal law,' he says. "What is that?"

Other handbooks are so negative they can strike fear in the employee from day one. For example, they only list the things

an employee may not do and what can happen if the employee does them.

Seay believes many employers are short-sighted about keeping employees happy, merely focusing on wages and benefits. That's only half the battle in managing retention. Often, more important are the subtleties of nurturing high performance, teamwork and individual responsibility. Combined, those elements can create a can-do spirit along with a place where people truly want to work.

"Anybody can offer someone more money," he says. "But you can offer an atmosphere that provides equality, dignity and respect?"



UPCOMING EVENTS

at the Center for Entrepreneurship

February 12 -

-Kevin McCarthy, author of "The On-Purpose Person" and "The On-Purpose Business" will be speaking.

March

-New seminar series "Sell Your Business" will launch
-Business Plan Competition

For More Information:

Call 407-646-2067
or email cfe@rollins.edu
www.rollins.edu/entrepreneurship



**WINE.
ENJOY.
REPEAT.**
(EVERY WEDNESDAY)

Be our guest as we sample the flavors of the world's finest wine regions.

\$12 Wine tasting, flatbread and appetizers.
5pm-8pm

for more information, go to urbanflats.net
183 South Orange Ave, Suite 100 Orlando, FL 32801 321.332.6889