



Blackhawk Human Resource Association

May 2005 Newsletter



**Serve the
Professional,
Advance the
Profession**



In this issue:

- **Letter from the President**
- **Upcoming Program Information**
- **2005 BHRA Summer Family Fun Day**
- **And Much More!**

MEMBERSHIP OF



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Message from the President

The month of May brings so many changes in life with the blossoming of spring flowers & plants, warmer weather and soon to come summer vacations. So is the case with BHRA. May is our last membership meeting of the program year and the opportunity to welcome new Board officers/members for the upcoming year.

I would like to take this time to thank the BHRA Board members for an outstanding year. During this year, we experienced continued growth in membership, excellent attendance at our monthly programs and annual seminar, and some new initiatives in Workforce Readiness, wage survey and professional networking opportunities. The members of the Board are dedicated to providing great experiences for the HR professional and developing an engaged membership. On behalf of the Board, I also want to recognize two Board members that will be leaving the Board in June – Lesa Crawford and Jenny Revels. Lesa has served on several committees and brought great enthusiasm to the many projects she participated in. Jenny also served on several committees and in the leadership roles of Vice President, President-elect, President, and most recently Past President; Jenny provided direction and leadership in the many projects she oversaw. Thank you to Lesa and Jenny for their time, contribution and dedication to BHRA.

The April BHRA meeting was held on April 12. The topic was “Creating Cultures of Excellence.” Rick Piraino, VP of Corporate Services at The Resource Network, Inc., provided information redefining the role of management and four leadership areas managers must master to create a culture of excellence and become confident in dealing with the confusing variables of human nature.

Our next meeting is “Cultural Nuances and Tendencies” on Tuesday, May 10, 2005. The meeting will be at Domenico Pizza & Restaurant, Beloit; registration social period is at 5:30 p.m. with dinner and meeting at 6:00. In addition, we will be electing new Board members. Please join us for this last meeting of this programming year.

I look forward to seeing everyone on May 10!

Brian Gohlke, SPHR

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2004-2005

President:	Brian Gohlke, Director of HR, Blackhawk Technical College
President-Elect:	Jackie Swanson, HR Generalist, Scot Forge Co.
Vice President:	Jennifer Anderson, HR Generalist, Freedom Plastics
Past President:	Jennifer Revels, HR Manager, Bliss Communication
Secretary:	Amy Parkhurst, HR Manager, Freedom Plastics
Treasurer:	Heather Niles, HR Manager, Mercy Health System

MEETING SCHEDULE FOR BHRA 2004/2005 SEASON

Meeting Date	Time	Location	Speaker	Topic
May 10th	Dinner	Dominico's	Milton Perkins, MHRM, SPHR	The Value of Human Capital: Understanding Cultural Nuances

MAY DINNER MEETING

BHRA May Dinner Meeting - Cultural Nuances and Tendencies

Don't miss the last meeting of the year, and what is sure to be a dynamic presentation on Cultural Nuances and Tendencies by Milton Perkins, MHRM, SPHR! Join us on Tuesday, May 10 at Domenico Pizza & Restaurant, 547 E. Grand Ave. Beloit for our last meeting of the year. Registration begins at 5:30, dinner at 6:00, and the presentation will follow. We will also be electing new board members and officers at this meeting. To RSVP, please contact Amy Parkhurst, PHR at (608)754-2710, ext. 1305 or parkham@freedomplastics.com, or RSVP on the website at <http://www.stayinvolved.com/splash/bhra.htm>.

The Topic: Understanding Diversity is achieved by recognizing, valuing, respecting and including the differences in ethnicity, abilities, culture, education, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion. Further, to celebrate this diversity is to appreciate and value individual differences as a strength. Although the term is often used to refer to the previously mentioned categories, diversity encompasses an infinite range of individual unique characteristics. During this session, we will explore behavioral nuances and tendencies of various individual groups. Additionally, we will expand the definition of diversity, present you with a greater awareness of our differences and similarities, as well as teach you how to leverage those differences as a source of strength. This session will be content rich, and is presented in light-hearted, enjoyable and humorous way.

The Speaker: Milton J. Perkins, MHRM, SPHR is a Regional Director, Member Services for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). In this role he is responsible for facilitating strategic planning and provides advice and counsel to the Society's volunteer members and leaders. He is responsible for ensuring executed regional strategies are aligned with the overall organizational vision, mission, values and goals of SHRM. He provides leadership and supervision to the regional Member Services team, as well as contributes to the strategic direction of the organization as a member of the Member Services Management Team and SHRM's Senior Management Team. Lastly, he is the Legislative Liaison between SHRM's legislative staff and volunteer leaders across the country.

Among his current research interests are cultural nuances and axiology, the labor market entrance of Echo Boomers/Gen Y, the exodus of Baby Boomers, alternative labor markets, diversity and talent acquisition strategies to address them all. His recent accomplishments include Employment Committee member - Society for Human Resource Management; Conference Organizer for the Rainbow Push Annual Conference, a member of the Employer Management Association and the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Mr. Perkins has been featured in The Black Collegian Magazine, and has also appeared in both Savoy and Black Enterprise magazines. He has been a speaker at the HR Masters, the HR Forum, AIRS Diversity Summits, Computer World Diversity Recruitment Conference, ERE Forum, Savoy Magazine's Diversity Summit, the National Black MBA Association's Conference, the National Society for Hispanic MBA's conference, TMP Worldwide's conference on diversity and college recruitment, and the Employer Management Association's Chicago Chapter Convention. He authored articles/whitepapers on various topics for the Society of Human Resource Management's publications and has been interviewed for numerous publications.

Mr. Perkins received his Masters of Science in Human Resources from Keller Graduate School of Management, and his Bachelors of Science in Management Computer Information Systems from Parkville University. He holds certifications as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) by the HR Certification Institute, and is a Certified Personnel Consultant (CPC) with the National Association of Personnel Services. He has completed human resource leadership studies at the Disney Institute, the Society for Human Resource Management/HR Certification Institute, as well as the executive leadership development program at Babson College, Wellesley, MA.

HR HAPPY HOUR- Won't you join us?

Come and join your HR friends for some informal networking time and unwind from that long day of problem solving! HR Happy Hour will normally be held on the last Thursday of each month. You don't need to sign up in advance. We will send a global email a few days before the gathering as a friendly reminder, and also to verify the location. To best accommodate all of our members, we will rotate between Janesville and Beloit locations. The next event will be held on **Thursday, May 26th** from 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm. at La Casa Grande in Beloit. For more information, contact Jackie Swanson or Jennifer Anderson.

BHRA Fun Day - Friday, July 29th

All-U-Can Eat/Drink Tailgate Party, Beloit Snappers Game, Fireworks
Pohlman Field - Beloit, WI
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm All-U-can-eat food/drink
7:00 - Beloit Snappers Game (Reserved 1st based Deck & Box Seats)
Fireworks following the game
*10% discount on all Snappers merchandise

This is the final BHRA activity for the 2004-2005 year and the event is open to all BHRA members, their families, and friends. Cost will be:
Ages 4 & under – Free 5 & Up - \$15.50 ea. (Reserved seating & box ticket price, all-u-can-eat food & pepsi, fireworks)
Age 21 & older who wish to include beer - \$17.50 ea

You are encouraged to reserve the date now. Registration information will be sent out in June. Contact Lesa Crawford, Event Coordinator, at 608-373-2803 if you have additional questions.

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We're on the Web!
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<http://www.shrm.org/governments/hrvoice>

Employers anxiously await new FMLA rules

By Bill Leonard

Twelve years after the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was enacted and three years after a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is poised to issue revised regulations governing the act sometime in March. Although DOL officials have given no indication what the new rules may include, employer and labor relations groups believe the changes could have wide-ranging effects on the way employers administer their leave policies.

“We have no idea what the new regulations are going to be, but we definitely will have March marked on our calendars and will be looking at the changes with great interest,” said Sarah F. Pierce, manager of employment policy for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and director of the FMLA Technical Corrections Coalition.

FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible employees for certain family and medical reasons. Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least one year, for 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months, and if the employer has at least 50 employees within 75 miles.

It has proved difficult for many HR professionals to administer, prompting SHRM, the coalition and other organizations to press for changes.

The DOL regulatory agenda published in December 2004 set March 2005 as the deadline for issuing the proposed changes to the FMLA regulations. According to the agenda, the rule revisions will focus on changes required under the Supreme Court’s March 2002 decision in *Ragsdale vs. Wolverine World Wide Inc.* and could address issues raised by several other lower court rulings.

DOL officials have been tight-lipped about which issues—other than those involved in *Ragsdale*—the rule changes might include.

“Frankly it could be a wide range of issues because the DOL has broad authority to make changes to these regulations as they see fit,” said Pierce. “We hope that the changes will focus on some of the key issues that we believe need to be addressed. But right now, we just have to wait and see.”

Organized labor also has declined to make predictions. “We can’t comment on what our position will be until the proposed rules are released in March and we’ve had a chance to review them carefully,” said a spokesperson for the AFL-CIO.

Typically, government agencies schedule at least a three-month comment period following the release of proposed rule changes. It generally takes three to four more months of review and revision before rule changes are finalized and released. Therefore, most sources agree, it would be the end of this year or even the start of 2006 before the new FMLA regulations would take effect.

Even though DOL officials declined to comment further on the rule changes, they have made it clear that the revisions will address the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Ragsdale*. That decision nullified a DOL notification requirement that forced some employers with extended leave policies to grant 12 additional weeks of leave to employees under the FMLA. The court found that it was not the intent of Congress to make employers add leave to existing and generous time-off policies.

Some of the other FMLA issues addressed in lower court rulings and potentially subject to DOL rule changes include handling of intermittent leave time, the definition of a chronic health condition and the definition of a serious illness.

Feedback encouraged

DOL officials have encouraged feedback from employers on these issues and have held workshops and summits to gather information on the difficulties employers face in complying with the FMLA's complex regulations.

Critics of the FMLA rules, such as the National Association of Manufacturers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the FMLA Technical Corrections Coalition (which was formed by the Society for Human Resource Management) have provided comments to DOL and the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) stating that the regulations go beyond the original intent of Congress.

The key problems they cite include an overly broad interpretation by DOL of what constitutes a "serious health condition" and a provision that allows employees to take intermittent leave in increments of less than one-half day.

In February 2004, OMB launched an initiative to identify federal regulations that harm the competitiveness of domestic manufacturers and should be revised to help increase productivity. OMB received more than 50 comments and nominations from business-related groups, with most of the responses suggesting that changes to the FMLA regulations should be a top priority for DOL. Officials postponed the release date for the new regulations three times last year before settling on this March.

When announcing the delay, DOL officials stated that the Wage and Hour Division had expended most of its 2004 resources on the new white-collar overtime exemption regulations that went into effect in August and did not have the time or staff needed to complete work on FMLA changes by the end of that year.

"The DOL's timing for the March release makes good sense," said Deanna Gelak, president of Work for the Future, a Washington, D.C.-based public policy consulting group. "During a non-election year, the hope is that you can focus entirely on policy-making decisions and that none of the decisions and influences on the rules changes will be politically motivated."

Although the political climate has calmed a bit following the 2004 elections, Gelak and Pierce said employers and HR professionals need to be aware of the FMLA rule changes and to let their legislators know that revisions to the FMLA and its regulations are desperately needed.

"The focus here is on the medical aspects of the leave act, and these changes should not affect the family leave portion of the bill," said Gelak, who has followed the issue closely since the FMLA was enacted 10 years ago. "If the changes to the rules are done correctly, it could definitely strengthen protections for both employers and employees, and a strong grassroots effort from employers and HR professionals would really help bring this point across."

Meanwhile, Democrats in Congress have introduced three bills designed to increase worker leave protections under the FMLA. The Guard and Reserve Enhanced Benefits Act of 2005 (S. 24), sponsored by Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., would expand the FMLA to include military family leave and expand the leave protections to all civil service employees. The Family and Medical Leave Enhancement Act of 2005 and the Family and Medical Leave Protection Act are pending in the House Education and Workforce Committee.

Bill Leonard is senior writer for HR News.

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May Foundation Article

Your Foundation at Work: The SHRM Information Center

The **SHRM Foundation** supports the SHRM Information Center through a quarter million dollar grant. The Information Center, a free service to SHRM members, publishes the online White Papers series, maintains the Competitive Practices Database and answers more than 70,000 HR inquiries annually. The Foundation grant ensures that the Information Center has the latest technology and the most current resources to help HR practitioners get the answers they need quickly and easily. For an overview of the Foundation's work, visit www.shrm.org/foundation.

The SHRM Foundation: *Investing in Your Future as an HR Leader*

HR TIP OF THE MONTH

How to Be a Better Listener Using Active Listening Techniques

- A. **Stop Talking** This is usually much harder than you think
- B. **Relax the Person** Ask them to sit down, make them comfortable, exhibit inviting body language
- C. **Don't interrupt** - use silence
- D. **Empathize** by reflecting their feelings. Do not say: "I know how you feel." Do say: "It sounds like this makes you frustrated, angry, overwhelmed, etc."
- E. **Paraphrase** - repeat back to them what you heard them say
- F. **Ask open ended questions.** Prompt them to continue speaking with who, what, where, why questions. Talking is therapeutic.

If you know a human resource professional that would be interested in joining our association, please spread the word! We can all benefit from each other's experience!

If you have anything you would like to submit to the BHRA Newsletter, please contact Shannon Moe at the Rock County Job Center at (608) 741-3567, or email s.moe@jobcenter.org.