



Your Advantage

NEWS AND INFORMATION TO HELP YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS SUCCEED

AUGUST 2011 ISSUE

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**EMPLOYER
ADVANTAGE**
A Professional Employer Organization

1027 South Main Street, Suite 401
Joplin, Missouri 64801

PH 417-782-3909 | TF 800-467-3909 | FX 417-782-3802

EM info@employeradvantage.com | WS www.employeradvantage.com



Employer Advantage announces

Employer Advantage is proud to welcome Alma Rago to the front desk of Employer Advantage. Alma is a student at Missouri Southern University and is planning on a Business Management degree with a Human Resources minor. Alma lives in the Joplin area with her husband and three children.

The Marketing Department of Employer Advantage is pleased to announce the addition of Tammy Leeman to the team. Tammy comes to Employer Advantage from Able Manufacturing where she worked as a Senior Buyer. She has lived in the Joplin area for 14 years and feels that she has northern roots and a southern heart. Tammy will be working with the Onboarding of new clients.

Susan Hutcheson and Suzanne Bowling from the Human Resources Department of Employer Advantage attended the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) State Conference for Missouri August 3 through August 5. The conference offered updates in a variety of Human Resources topic areas as well as continuing education for certified Human Resources professionals. Both Susan and Suzanne hold the national certification of Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) from SHRM.

Please be advised that our offices will be closed Monday, September 5th, in observance of the Labor Day Holiday. If possible, please transmit payroll data to us on the previous Friday, September 2nd. Our fax lines and internet website will be fully operational through the entire weekend. We request that we receive your information by 10:00 AM Tuesday, September 6th, to ensure timely delivery of your payroll.

Three Updated and Improved Interview Questions

Every so often, we need to look at our interview questions to ensure that they are effective at finding the best candidates possible. By updating the interview process with new and fresh questions, we not only get the information we need, but we set our company apart from all the others.

Old question: "What are your weaknesses?"

Employment articles, blogs and career counselors all tell us how to answer this question – it's our perfectionism, of course!

New question: "What areas of professional development would most benefit you?"

By not putting the employee on the defensive, or having them repeat a stock answer, you may get an honest assessment of areas that need additional training. This will help you decide if the applicant is the perfect candidate for the job.

Old question: "Where would you like to be in five years?"

The typical answer is the candidate sees themselves in a more responsible position/growing with the company or in the president's chair.

New and improved question: "How does this position fit into your career path?"

By changing the old question a little bit, we can now see where applicants believe they are in their career.

Old question: "Why do you want to work for our company?"

Everyone knows how to answer this. If they have looked up your company website, they'll respond that they have an interest in your product or services and they want to grow.

New and improved question: "What skills, knowledge or abilities do you have that will make you a great employee for our company?"

This question will allow the applicant to specifically talk about their abilities and what they can do for the company.

The Employer Advantage Human Resources Department will be happy to assist you with the interview process or provide training for supervisors and managers who do interviewing.

Being Prepared

The 2011-2012 school year begins on August 17, 2011 in Joplin, Missouri. That shouldn't surprise anyone, since we've had almost daily news reports on the school buildings, Facebook updates, two-a-day football practices and band camp. However, this school year is not "normal" as compared to other school years. Briefly, some of changes include: Joplin High School is now two different campuses, the tech school, one middle school and four elementary schools have moved to different buildings along with various departments and programs of the school district.

The public and private school systems have done a remarkable job of getting things done in the last 87 days. I am certain that some plans and processes will need to be tweaked during the school year, but ultimately Joplin students will be in a safe environment to continue their education.

I think the take-away is that businesses of all sizes and types need disaster recovery plans. While the Joplin School District disaster plans probably didn't cover the magnitude of the May 22nd tornado, it's probably safe to say that parts of the plans were used to start the recovery. If you do not have a disaster recovery plan, now is the time to start thinking about one. Our Risk Management/Loss Prevention staff can help you with the basics of a plan, but each company will need to look at specifics to their own business. If you already have a disaster recovery plan but haven't reviewed it in a while, it's time to update any lists or call trees and ensure new employees know about the plan.

We can't predict when a disaster can strike our company, but being prepared with a plan and communicating it to employees can assist with a fast recovery and return to business. Other additional information on disaster preparedness can be found at www.ready.gov.

Managing Your Time Wisely

The world of work is synonymous with continuous interruptions, and it's common to have a to-do list, but never get to it. Situations need to be addressed as they arise, and it's difficult to accomplish any real project work. However, by using some of the time management tips below, you may be able to achieve better control over your workday. Bob Nelson who wrote "1,001 Ways to Take Initiative at Work" provides the following tips on time management:

- At the end of your workday, make a to-do list for the next day. Put the most important tasks at the top of your list, so the next day you'll know what you need to do and where you need to start.
- Commit yourself to arriving at work on time and ready to work every day, so you can begin working on the most important tasks immediately while you are fresh.
- Don't skip to lower priority tasks until you've made satisfactory progress on your higher priority tasks.
- Use a calendar to plan your time. You will be more organized and you'll know what you need to do when.
- Schedule times to review, prioritize, and respond to emails so you aren't constantly interrupting yourself when you are trying to complete your tasks.
- Eliminate unimportant meetings. If you don't need to attend the meeting, then don't go. You will be wasting your time, and your list won't get any smaller.
- Delegate tasks that others can do, whenever possible, and focus on the tasks that only you can do.

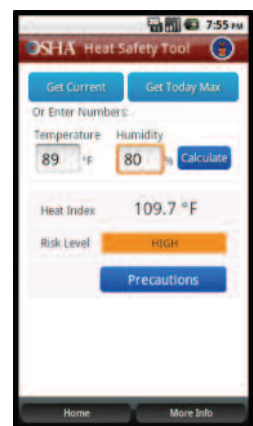
There's an App for That

According to the February/March 2011 Social In May, the Department of Labor released a timesheet application.

Now, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has released the "Heat Safety Tool" which calculates the heat index and worker risk based on the temperature and humidity at the worksite.

Supervisors can also get reminders about protective measures to take to reduce the risk of harm to employees. Reminders can include: drinking enough fluids, scheduling rest breaks, adjusting work hours, building up the workload for new employees and planning for emergencies.

Currently the smart phone application is available on Android with a Blackberry and iPhone version coming soon.



Missouri Encourages Job Creation

On July 8, 2011, Missouri House Bill 45, "Big Government Get Off My Back", was enacted to encourage hiring by small businesses. The law provides a \$20,000 deduction for each new job created for which the employer pays at least 50% of employee health insurance or a \$10,000 deduction for each new job created by an employer not providing health insurance. Such deductions reduce a taxpayer's Missouri adjusted gross income or federal taxable income in the case of a corporation. At a 6% Missouri income tax rate, the effect is a \$1,200 or \$600 Missouri income tax saving for the employer. The law is effective from January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2014.

A small business is defined as any small business consisting of fewer than fifty full time or part-time employees. To qualify, the annual wage for each new job created must be at least equal to the average county wage or, if the average county wage exceeds the Missouri average wage of \$40,168, the latter will be used. Average wage for the following counties is as follows:

| | |
|-----------|----------|
| Barry | \$30,975 |
| Christian | \$26,531 |
| Greene | \$34,676 |
| Jasper | \$33,530 |
| Newton | \$33,321 |
| Osage | \$25,955 |
| Jackson | \$46,116 |
| St. Louis | \$49,918 |
| Statewide | \$40,856 |

The above data was taken from the Census of Employment and Wages, MERIC. These average county wages are used for the Missouri Quality Jobs Program and are effective for that program until July 1, 2012.

A full time employee is one that is required to work at least thirty-five hours per week for a fifty-two week period. Further, a "new job" is determined by comparing the number of full-time employees employed by the small business on the qualifying date that exceeds the number of full-time employees employed by the small business in Missouri on the same date of the immediately preceding taxable year.

The Missouri Department of Revenue will issue rules to clarify and implement this new legislation. We will provide information to our clients from 2011 through December 31, 2014 to give to their tax preparers. If you have any questions, contact Richard Scott, CFO at 417 782 3909 or send an email to richard@employeradvantage.com.

Family Responsibility Discrimination

Family Responsibility Discrimination (FRD) is a form of gender or disability discrimination created by hostile or unequal treatment of an individual because of caregiving responsibilities. At this time, there isn't a federal law that deals solely with FRD, but depending upon the perceived discrimination, workers may file a complaint under any of the following: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, Pregnancy Discrimination Act, Family Medical Leave Act, or the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Some examples:

- An employer believes that mothers should stay home with children and doesn't offer jobs or promotions to women with children, may be discriminating based on a protected characteristic (gender) under the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- A supervisor who is trying to be "nice" and limits a pregnant employee's workload, without a request from the employee, could be showing "benevolent" discrimination. Under the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, an employer must treat a pregnant employee like any other employee, unless special treatment is requested.
- A new father, who wants a few weeks off to care for his newborn but is denied leave at a large company, may have a complaint under the Family Medical Leave Act. (FMLA) Companies of 50 or more employees may be able to avoid a discrimination complaint by ensuring their leave policies are in line with FMLA.
- A company that refuses to promote a worker, because he has to take time away from work to care for his disabled father, may be treating him unfairly under the Americans with Disabilities Act. (ADA) The ADA prohibits discrimination or unfair treatment of a worker who has an association with a disabled individual.

By not stereotyping groups of people or making assumptions of what is best for an employee, companies may be able to avoid the appearance of Family Responsibility Discrimination. Additionally, companies should encourage employees to present any special scheduling needs to management for consideration.

To learn more about Family Responsibility Discrimination, please contact the Human Resources Department of Employer Advantage.