



SME HR - Winter Newsletter February 2010

Introduction

Welcome to our Winter Newsletter. We aim to provide SME business owners with useful information on current topics and trends that are of particular interest to SME businesses, together with information on employment law and health and safety matters.

We hope that you find the information useful and welcome your feedback, please email christine@smehrconsultants.co.uk with your comments or suggestions for items that you would like to see included in future newsletters.

Business Focus

In the current uncertain times we need more than ever to communicate and manage employees – but only a quarter of our employees are clear on company objectives for 2010

A survey commissioned by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) has found that employers are not doing enough to communicate their strategy to staff, with only a quarter of employees understanding their firm's goals for the year.

The survey also found that a further third of employees had no idea whether a vision for their business's future existed. The report suggested this is having a negative impact on employee motivation levels, as only 27 per cent felt positive about the year ahead.

BIS adviser, David McLeod, warned employers that poor employee engagement could "put the brakes" on performance and urged bosses to inspire staff.

"If leaders don't explain where the business is going and what it's seeking to achieve, how can people be motivated or know what they're meant to contribute?" he said.

Defining objectives, inviting ideas and input, being flexible on how the business progresses and celebrating success were all ways to involve staff and boost morale, according to McLeod.

"There are lots of simple steps employers can take which will ensure employees are engaged and ready to play their part in delivering business success in 2010," he added. "There must be a continued commitment throughout the year to ensure employees feel involved and motivated by the business and its goals."

SME HR helps SME's to communicate and engage with their employees by setting up communication channels that not only puts employees in the picture but also gauges their thoughts, elicits their ideas and support, thereby improving communication, working relationships, and providing employees with a clear idea of the company's vision and what is required of them to help businesses achieve this.

We can design and implement a performance management process to help the business measure employees' performance and develop their skills and knowledge. This can range from a simple appraisal system to something more complex, for example linked into performance related pay.

We know from experience that communicating with, and acknowledging the involvement of, employees is vital to the success of any business, however small.

So we work with businesses to identify the important messages employees need to know, and help them to design and deliver the best way of conveying this information to them; whether it be 1:1 feedback interviews, 360° feedback, employee newsletters, or an ongoing communication strategy.

Croner employment technical consultant, Gillian Dowling, suggests that the recession has been one of the reasons for low staff morale. "Although employment figures are showing signs of improvement and redundancies are beginning to ease, we still have a long way to go," she said.

"Motivating employees who remain in the business after large scale redundancies will be an issue for 2010," added Dowling.

Christine Perrin from SME HR says "Unfortunately the impact of redundancy on those left behind - referred to as "survivor syndrome" is often underestimated resulting in the remaining workforce lacking in direction and morale. Whilst in the past our outplacement support service has concentrated on the employees that are leaving the business, we are now extending our range of services to provide training and coaching so these "survivors" are motivated as a team to support the business so that it is well placed to recover quickly, as we hopefully move out of recession and into less turbulent times".

Employment Law Update – February 2010

Keep up to date with upcoming changes to employment law legislation here!

Use this update to help you reduce your risk of exposure and prepare your business for important employment law changes that have already or will shortly come into force.

Need to consider requests for time to train

From 6 April 2010, approximately 11 million employees working in companies with 250 or more employees will have a new right to request 'time to train'. This will be extended to cover employees in **all businesses from 6 April 2011**.

Employees' requests can be to undertake accredited programmes leading to a qualification, or for unaccredited training to help them develop specific skills relevant to their job, workplace or business. While employee requests may involve agreeing time away from their duties, the primary focus of the new right is about agreeing relevant training with your staff.

As an employer, you are required to consider any requests and respond within a set timeframe. You can turn down requests when you have a good business reason to do so, including where you do not believe the training will help improve business performance. The new right closely follows the model used for agreeing requests under the flexible working arrangements.

Draft Additional paternity leave regulations

Expected to come into force on 6 April 2010

Will apply to parents of babies due on or after 3 April 2011 and to adoptive parents who are notified of having been matched with a child on or after that date.

Key provisions under the above draft Regulations will include:

- A mother will be able to transfer up to six months maternity leave to the father which can be taken once the mother has gone back to work and the child is over 20 weeks old.
- Some of that leave may be paid if it is taken during the mother's maternity pay period.

Use this update to help you reduce your risk of exposure and prepare your business for important employment law changes that have already or will shortly come into force.

SME HR can provide advice and guidance on all employment law matters. Our consultants are CIPD qualified and we continually update our skills and knowledge. Contact us to find out more about the range of services we can offer.

www.smehrconsultants.co.uk

Health and Safety

Recent Health and Safety press releases and cases below illustrate the importance of making sure your business keeps up to date with all mandatory requirements and that you regularly update and monitor your health and safety practices.

Slips, trips & falls caused 457 major injuries to workers in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Slip, trip and fall incidents in the workplace affected 1,249 workers in Hampshire and the Isle Wight last year, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has warned as it launches a hard-hitting campaign.

HSE figures show that slips and trips are the most common cause of major workplace injury in Britain and cost society an estimated £800 million each year. More workplace deaths are triggered by falls from height than any other cause, according to official statistics.

There were 457 major injuries to workers, as well as more than 790 workers having to take over three days off work.

In response, HSE is launching a new phase of its Shattered Lives campaign, aimed at reducing slips, trips and falls in the workplace. The hard hitting campaign involves raising awareness of the impact of slips, trips and falls in the workplace and directs people to the new Shattered Lives website (www.hse.gov.uk/shatteredlives) for practical advice and guidance.

The campaign is targeted at those sectors where there is a high number of slips, trips and falls accidents each year, specifically, health and social care, education, food manufacturing, food retail, catering and hospitality, building and plant maintenance, and construction.

The reality

Most slips and trips are preventable and many happen when spills aren't cleared up or clutter tidied away. Don't take things for granted, cut corners or wait for someone else to do it. Clear up!

Prosecution launched against a high street retailer and four contractors for exposing people to asbestos-containing materials during refurbishment

At Bournemouth Magistrates' court the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) initiated criminal proceedings against Marks and Spencer plc and four other companies for asbestos-related breaches during refurbishment work at shops in Reading, Bournemouth and Plymouth, where it is alleged that the companies failed to ensure that staff and members of the public were not exposed to risks from asbestos-containing materials.

SME HR can provide advice, guidance and training on Health and Safety matters to ensure your business remains up to date and compliant with current Health and Safety legislation. Contact us to find out more about the range of services we can offer. www.smehrconsultants.co.uk

Information Sources: BIS, CIPD People Management, Business Link, HSE.