



Fall 2014/Winter 2015

The Adviser

A GPBG Employer Advisers Publication

Updates and Advice for *your* Business and Personnel

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FROM THE DESK *of the president*

Time and tide wait for no man. The ageless wisdom that teaches us that: no one is so powerful that they can stop the march of time. It seems like only yesterday that the choice was made to leave the security of the corporate world and set out to form an entrepreneurial enterprise called Great Plains Benefits Group, Inc., August of 1988 was the date.

For those of you too young to have a memory of that time, let me give you some background on the times. An IBM 286 desktop computer was state of the art. If you needed a hard copy of the data on your computer screen, you printed it to an Okidata continuous paper feed printer. The finished product had to have the perforated edges removed and the sheets individually torn apart. When the laser perforated continuous feed paper was introduced, everyone's quality of work soared to a more



professional look. All office desks came standard with electric typewriters and desk phones.

Faxing documents was high technology. The first thing you did when you returned to your office was to check the stack of paper phone messages gathered in your absence. The most advanced features on your phone were the "hold" button, call forwarding, and if you were fortunate, a primitive speaker phone that rarely functioned properly.

There were no cellphones, laptops, I-pads, Internet, Skype or any of the technology we take for granted today. Meetings involved real people traveling to a central location and sitting down; nose-to-nose, and knees to knees, talking; exchanging ideas and thoughts. People brought paper tablets and pens to the meeting to record their thoughts and ideas. Really high tech offices had a stainless steel Bunn coffee maker and no one knew of flavored coffees, much less a latte.

Am I waxing philosophically here and pining for the good old days? Absolutely not! These almost 26 years of history have brought us over 875 Clients and incredibly helpful technology, much of which couldn't even be dreamed of in 1988 by the

average person.

The one constant, the lynchpin of these 26 years, has been the simple but powerful concept of RELATIONSHIPS.

We are grateful for the privilege we have had to serve as partners in commerce with our Clients. The trust and confidence YOU,

**The one constant,
the lynchpin of
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RELATIONSHIPS.**

our Clients, have given us in that Relationship Basis has been the greatest cornerstone of the success we have enjoyed.

"Trust is earned. Respect is given. Loyalty is demonstrated.

Betrayal of any one of those is to lose all three."

Ziad K. Abdelnour

Thank you for the Privilege of Serving You.

"Live Long and Prosper!"

Dr. Spock, First Officer, Starship Enterprise, 2260 A.D. ●



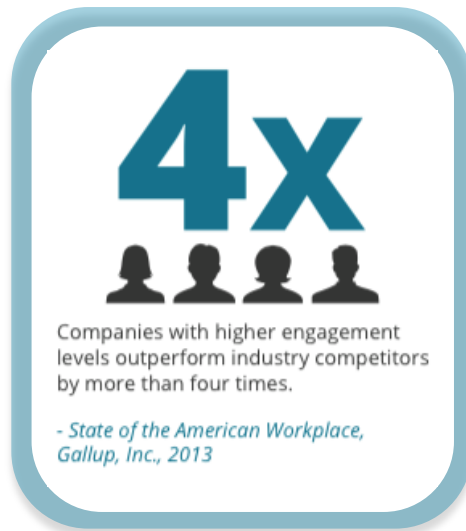
and disengaged employees in the US alone is \$450 billion to \$550 billion per year. In today's economic climate, businesses simply cannot afford to neglect the needs of their workforce. And it's a massive problem -- **70% of American workers are 'not engaged' or 'actively disengaged'.**" (*State of the American Workplace, Gallup, Inc., 2013*)



North Dakota has a unique problem. Compared to the rest of the nation, who is not hiring due to a slow down in their economy, seemingly every store window in North Dakota prominently displays a "Now Hiring" sign. But once that first layer of uniqueness is peeled off, the similarities between North Dakota and the nation are revealed. While the workforce gene pool may be relatively shallow in North Dakota, due to all the possibilities for work, the rest of the nation struggles to hold on to the "princes and princesses" they've found through kissing plenty of frogs. North Dakota and the nation have unified objectives as it relates to their workforce: *keep* and *improve* their talent!

meantime, they'll continue to work for you in an "actively disengaged" manner.

Improve your talent. Engagement. That's going to be one of the new buzzwords in 2015. And for good reason: *when companies focus on their employees the results show it's an expense well worth the investment.* For example, "companies with higher engagement levels outperformed industry



So what are employers to do to keep their workforce engaged? Employers hand out books, send employees to seminars, have employees go on retreats, hire high-priced, fast-talking, motivational consultants, the list goes on. All those options are great, especially the one about the high-priced consultants (Wink, wink!) Those options are light years ahead of the alternative: doing nothing.

Keep your talent. All but gone are the days where employees spend their 30 to 40 year career with the same employer. The anxiety levels of gold watchmakers are skyrocketing. The average amount of time a person spends working for an employer, before moving to another employer, is shrinking every year. Here's a scary thought: starting on day one, it only takes a new hire 2-3 weeks to decide whether or not they are: A) "all-in" and going to commit themselves to this new job; or, B) decide to start looking for a new job, but in the

competitors by more than four times." (*State of the American Workplace, Gallup, Inc., 2013*) There's no doubt about it -- employee engagement impacts key business outcomes. Engagement is a two-edged sword. As shown above, companies with higher engagement levels outperform their competitors. The other side of that sword is, "The current estimated cost of demotivated

All too often, they have a tendency to fall into a "one-size fits all" procedure. And what employers have learned, through assessments like the DISC behavioral profiles, is that *what* and *how* employees need to learn are as different and unique as the fingerprints of the employees themselves.

Human nature is: the path of least resistance. A person usually knows what they're good at. Unfortunately, people tend to focus

only on what they like/are good at, and they are unable or unwilling to venture into “uncharted territories.” When people are unable or unwilling to learn new things, they unknowingly handicap themselves, and therefore the company that they work for.

So, is there a way employers can A) help their employees find out what their strengths and weaknesses are, B) show them a customized plan to improve their weaknesses, and finally C) help track their progress/hold them accountable for their progress? As of early 2014, the answer to that question is now, “Yes!”

To guarantee the health of your people and your organization, you need more. You need something that picks up where the assessment stops. You need a treatment plan, a prescription.

You need the HRxPlan Platform.

HRxPlan isn't an assessment. It's a software application that creates a unique Action Plan based on individual assessment results. If a team member scores poorly in an area such as communication, HRxPlan automatically follows up with a recommended course of

managers can track their progress on an online dashboard.

Here's a point-by-point rundown on how it works:

After creating the customized Action Plan, HRxPlan works behind the scenes with automated tracking that makes sure everyone continues to grow. For HR and managers, visual dashboards are created to show the real-time progress of each employee. They can even use metrics and milestones for each recommended action -- such as assigning a 30-day time line to finish a book.

HRxPlan even makes adopting new corporate policies and initiatives much easier. Distributors and HR Departments have the ability to add additional content for recommendations: If an organization has mandatory sexual harassment training, they can include it as part of each employee's Action Plan. Employees can even build personal plans next to their customized Action Plans to drive engagement. Comparison tracking can show HR Departments and managers what methods are working for their workforce -- and employees can even retake an assessment a year later to show their improvement! Plus, any information in HRxPlan can be shared with existing HR



directly added to an individual's plan by the HR department. For example, historical data contained within Salesforce can be accessed and used to create actions for the Action Plan for both sales and customer service reps. The flexibility of the HRxPlan platform also provides for a wide array of custom configuration options including “white labeling” options by third party companies. Gamification capabilities are also available!

GPBG Employer Advisers has received the training and certification to become a licensed distributor of the HRxPlan product. We have begun using the HRxPlan with clients in industries such as: manufacturing, distribution, service, and more. The buy-in from employees has been incredible. When employers invest in their employees, employees get to see how much their employer really does care about them and their careers. The motivation and productivity that comes from that bond will take your company to levels you have never even imagined. ●



action — books, workshops, trainings, and webinars. And as the employee advances along their treatment plan, HR reps and

Management Systems and Learning Management Systems.

Additional actions can also be



CHAPLAINS IN THE WORKPLACE



While preparing this newsletter, I had my radio tuned to the local NPR radio station. *Morning Edition* was airing a story about a “change in corporate human resources.” Like a guard-dog hearing a ruckus, my ears perked up (because I’m an HR Consultant.) I was expecting a story on “improved time management,” or, “new, enigmatic policy changes,” but it was definitely not. With skepticism, I listened to the entire piece. I found it both interesting and intriguing, and I’d like to share it with you in order for you to form your own opinions.

December 11, 2014 4:55 AM ET
from **KERA**

By: LAUREN SILVERMAN

Chaplains have long been present on college campuses and in the military but increasingly they can also be found in the workplace, specially trained to help employees offload office frustrations.

STEVE INSKEEP, HOST:

Here's a change in corporate human resources - more companies are hiring chaplains. These are the same kinds of people with religious training you find in the military or on college campuses. Chaplains work in companies to help people talk through office frustrations. Here's

Lauren Silverman of our member station KERA in Dallas.

LAUREN SILVERMAN: Every week, Chaplain John Eaton knocks on the doors of employees at Purdy McGuire, an engineering firm in Dallas.

(KNOCKING)

CHAPLAIN JOHN EATON: Hey Scott. How's it going, man?

SILVERMAN: How's it going is more than a greeting, it's part of Eaton's job. He talks with employees about anything - sports, church, problems at home. Scott Brown is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormon faith. He likes the check-ins.

SCOTT BROWN: A lot of times, you know, we're dealing with deadlines and stress and things like that, so it's nice to have somebody come in and just unload for a minute and get away from it.

EATON: Our job is, a lot of it, just to help them see that there's hope.

SILVERMAN: Eaton visits 30 companies every week. He works part-time for Marketplace Ministries, the nation's largest provider of workplace chaplains. The Plano-based nonprofit is huge. With an annual operating budget of \$14 million, it sends

thousands of chaplains into high-rises and factories across the world, from Pilgrim's Pride to BNSF Railway.

EATON: Some places, you know, they're more reserved and it takes a long time to build credibility with the employees. I've had people brush me off for three years and three years and a day goes by - they want to talk. We don't have an agenda. We're not here for ourselves. We're here for you.

SILVERMAN: Almost all workplace chaplains are Christian. Eaton is a pastor at his own nondenominational church, but he only talks about religion when asked about it. Otherwise he keeps it secular and social.

The idea is not really a new one, it's just gaining a new resonance in corporate life.

SILVERMAN: David Miller, with Princeton University's Faith and Work Initiative, is writing a book about workplace chaplains. He says embedding missionaries goes back centuries, from English factories during the Industrial Revolution to the U.S. military.

So what's brought clergy from the battlefield to the board room? A desire to make employees happy.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8...

“MERRY CHRISTMAS!” FROM UNCLE SAM-TA CLAUS

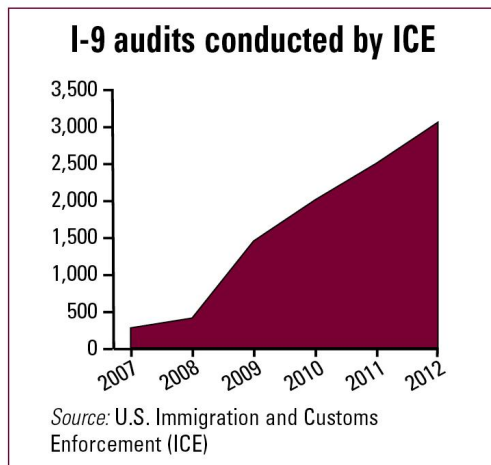
On March 8, 2013, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) issued a new version of the Employment Eligibility Verification Form (aka the I-9.) Employers have been required since 1986 to complete the I-9 Form for each new hire to verify the person’s identity and work eligibility, then to keep the form on file.

To get the new I-9 Form either:

A) go to <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-9.pdf> and download the PDF form, or B) Send us an email (roger@employeradvisers.com) and we’ll send you the new form, either electronically, or hardcopy. The new form carries a “Rev. 03/08/13N” notation in the bottom left corner.

“What’s new about the new I-9 form?” you may ask: According to the USCIS, the new form “makes several improvements designed to minimize the errors in form completion.” These include:

- Adding new data fields, including room for the employee’s telephone number and email address, as well as foreign passport information;
- Clarifying the form’s instructions; and
- Revising the layout of the form and expanding it from one to two pages (not including the form’s



instructions and List of Acceptable Documents) Update as soon as possible! The mandate to start using the new I-9 Form, as directly quoted from the USCIS webpage says, “After May 7, 2013, all employers must use the revised Form I-9 for each new employee hired in the United States.”



One reason for this update and its urgency is the increase in USCIS (Formerly ICE) Audits (see graph figure); Since 2007, Employers today are 12 times more likely to get a Federal audit from the USCIS.

Total fines have grown from just \$1 million in 2009 to nearly \$13 million in 2012. Median fines were \$11,000 for workplaces with noncompliant I-9s. Plus, ICE has made a big effort to publicly emphasize its *criminal* investigations of executives, HR and managers. Last year alone, ICE arrested 238 corporate officers.

Employers do NOT have to complete a new Form I-9 for current employees if they already have a complete I-9 on file for that worker (unless re-verification applies). Unnecessary verification efforts of your employees could trigger a discrimination complaint. So, starting today, only use the new form with new hires or employees who need I-9 re-verification. **Although not mandated, we strongly recommend, for consistency and accuracy, that employers complete a new form, using the revised/updated I-9 Form, for existing employees and new employees.**

If you, or the person designated to oversee Personnel Files in your company, is unsure whether or not you’re using the new I-9 Form, check your Personnel Files, make sure your I-9 Forms are up-to-date, and completed. And, with all new hires, make sure you are using the new I-9 form with the “Rev. 03/08/13N” notation in the bottom left corner. ●

SHOVES & TUGS

It's not enough to recruit the right employees. To succeed in the long term, employers must retain them.

The secret to doing so isn't always money. More often, it's clear communication, which starts with **accurate and detailed job descriptions**, says Anthony Ysasaga, a talent acquisition consultant at HR consultancy TriNet. "I used to conduct exit interviews, and the reason employees gave me most often for leaving was, **'The job isn't what I expected,'** or, **'the job wasn't what was explained to me during the hiring process,'**" Ysasaga says.

Good communication is just as important after you hire an employee, according to management consultant Mark Murphy. Once every month, he recommends **having a 15-minute conversation about "shoves and tugs"** with each of

CHAPLAINS IN THE WORKPLACE...

If a chaplain can help keep anxiety down and workers on task, productivity goes up. Still, there are risks to mixing religion and work.

your employees. "Shoves are things that demotivate you, tick you off, and burn you out," Murphy says. "Tugs are what tug at you to stay."

Ask employees to reflect on the past month and share with you instances when they were stressed out (i.e. shoves) and instances when they were excited (i.e. tugs). "If you listen closely every month, you can then craft situations to minimize the shoves and maximize the tugs," Murphy says. **"It's not usually about money; it's about giving employees a deeper connection to the business."** ●

**This information originally appeared in the NFIB *Business Magazine* article: "How to Hire Smarter 2015"

DAVID MILLER: What signal are you sending to the employees? Is your business a house of worship, or is it a house of work? With chaplains running around, some people might feel a little awkward.

EPHRAIM KARP: Generally, the professional chaplain is not out proselytizing or trying to convince people to have a relationship with God. Chaplains really are less about talking and more about listening.

SILVERMAN: Ephraim Karp is a rabbi and president of Neshama, an Association of Jewish chaplains. He says the industry is starting to adopt common standards, and growing fast. That's certainly the case at Marketplace Ministries. When Gil Stricklin started the nonprofit 30 years ago, he had trouble getting a single client. Now he has chaplains in a thousand cities and maps of his operations in China and South Korea hang on office walls.

GIL STRICKLIN: We're there to take care of everybody, no matter if you're Buddhist or Baptist.

SILVERMAN: Stricklin, who's 80 years old, was an Army chaplain for decades. He's worn patrol caps, hard hats and cowboy hats to work sites. Chaplains, he says are kind of like a pickup truck - you might not think you want one, but there comes a time when you'll need one.

For NPR News I'm Lauren Silverman in Dallas. ●

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UPDATES

We continue to remind to our Clients that any Policy Manual which has not been reviewed or up-dated within the last three (3) years may be out dated. **We provide the up-dating service as part of your Service Agreement.**

RECOMMENDED POLICY UP-DATES:

1. Check your I-9 Forms to make sure that they are: A) The new form with “Rev. 03/08/13N” in the bottom left corner, and, B) that the forms you have on file are completely filled out and up-to-date.
2. Check to see that your Policy Manual has a Workplace Violence Prevention policy (usually it is policy #521.) If your Policy Manual does not contain that Policy, please contact us right away so we can add it to your Policy Manual.
3. Do you have a Social Media Usage policy? If you do, it would be policy #514. If you do not, contact us and we will help you compose one that will best fit your company.

Please feel free to contact us for this service at:

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Help us GO GREEN!

To receive our newsletter electronically,
please send an email to :

info@employeradvisers.com.

Place **GO GREEN** in the subject

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CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB

Our Mission

To partner with our clients to effectively maximize strategic positions regarding people assets and resource deployment with the opportunities they present for improved commerce.

Contact Us

- PERSONNEL POLICY MANUALS
- DISC BEHAVIORAL PROFILES
- EMPLOYEE TRAINING & RETENTION
- TEAM BUILDING
- HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
- BOARD OF DIRECTORS TRAINING
- STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLANNING
- BUSINESS ANALYSIS & EVALUATION
- SUCCESSION PLANNING

GPBG – Employer Advisers

Great Plains Benefits Group, Inc. is like a family medical practice for businesses and specifically business executives. Most people go to doctors primarily when they have symptoms of illness which defy their own abilities to self diagnose. A rare few go to their doctor to partner in staying well via an annual physical.

Great Plains uses state of the art diagnostic techniques to objectively evaluate companies, their resources, their relative position in their industry and their personnel to enable the decision makers of the company to plan and give vision to the company either with the intent of fixing what ails them or getting on to bigger and better events. Among the diagnostic techniques we employ, are behavior profiles, employee questionnaires, key management surveys and industry searches.

Paramount in our service to the client is the sentiment, "if it ain't broke, we don't fix it!", but if it is broke we don't pull any punches regarding the resolution to the problem. We report exclusively to the senior most decision makers of the client company and only to them. We do not perform either legal or financial advisory activities.

Back to the analogy of a Doctor with a patient, once we diagnose the ailment, we provide a series of remedies to relieve the problem and then, if requested, partner in keeping the patient, company well and growing.

Roger A. Krueger, President

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