



HR Examiner

Examining practical HR issues business owners and managers encounter every day

Labor Day

August 2010

**SINGular
Celebration for
Labor Day**

Sing the following Labor Day Song to the tune of "Cabaret"

What good is sitting alone
in your cube
Working your life away
Life should include more
play, old chum
Come celebrate Labor

An Oxymoron

If we don't work on the first Monday of September, why is it called Labor Day?

According to the Department of Labor, "Labor Day is a creation of the labor movement and is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers. It constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our country." Labor Day was first celebrated in 1882 and by 1894 became a national holiday.

Somehow over the years Labor Day has lost its meaning and has just become a day off from work. The weekend has become our kids' transition from summer break to back-to-school and the start of our mental transition from summer heat to autumn coolness.



Day!

Put down your laptop, iPad
and cell phone

It's time for a holiday
Life is too short, so don't
delay

Celebrate Labor Day!

Come clear your head

Sing out this song

It's time you just stop
hesitating

Right this way start
celebrating!

No use permitting some
coworker full of doom
To wipe every smile away
Work and play can go side-
by-side

So, celebrate Labor Day!

Start by creating more fun
at your job

What more can I say?
Enjoy your long weekend
and start today

To celebrate Labor Day!

As managers and employers, what are we doing to celebrate our employees this Labor Day? Many of our organizations celebrate Administrative Professionals Week. I have clients who celebrate Customer Service Week. But that leaves out any special celebration for the rest of our employees who all fall under the category of our Labor Force.

Here's my challenge, whether you proactively celebrate Labor Day or celebrate it belatedly (which isn't much different from how many of us celebrate others' birthdays), come up with some fun approach to thank your employees for their contributions to your workplace. Whether you create your own Labor Day card, bring cupcakes (or something healthier) for your team, email them a nice note or create a big bash, take time out in this next week to honor your team.

Or you can sing them the song I wrote for Labor Day in the column to the left. I'm sure your singing to your team will have one of two results – (1) get them singing along – or – (2) get them running back to work!

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That's Not My Job!

In this article I'm twisting the subject from (a) celebrating your team for their work contributions to (b) making sure your employees know what work they're supposed to be performing.

My consulting projects interestingly go in waves. Right now I'm surfing a job description wave, working on creating and updating job descriptions for a half-

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dozen of my clients. While job description creation sounds dull and many people see it as restraining employees, I see it differently. I see job descriptions as the guidelines that help our employees stay on track with their work to ensure their piece of the puzzle matches the objectives of the organization.

If you approach job descriptions with the mentality of “do this task, but don’t think, don’t stretch, and don’t go outside the box,” then you will get the dreaded employee response of “That’s not my job!” But if you create the job description as the core responsibilities and, where appropriate and beneficial to the employee and the organization, give the employee the opportunity to creatively accomplish those responsibilities, you get a win-win of structure and creativity.

Here are some examples of why my clients are working so hard on their job descriptions.

- ▶ Job descriptions serve as the foundation for evaluating whether or not employees are being paid competitively in the marketplace. If you don’t know what the job entails, how can you compare your pay structure with other organization’s pay?
- ▶ One client’s employees tend to wander away from their own responsibilities and start treading on other employees’ responsibilities. I’m not saying that helping coworkers isn’t a great thing. But if this help is unsolicited and unauthorized, it can create conflict as employees cross standard workplace boundaries. So we’re creating solid job descriptions to help these hard working employees focus in their own area of responsibility.
- ▶ At another client we’re creating job descriptions as the core for designing performance appraisal tools where employees are evaluated on their responsibilities, not merely on generic

competencies. A blend of evaluating employees on their core responsibilities and the core competencies that it takes to be successful in the job is much more effective.

There are lots more ways to use job descriptions, such as to create employment ads, interview questions, orientation and training programs, as well as to hold employees accountable. Don't let your job descriptions sit in the drawer. Make sure they're active tools used by employees as well as supervisors.

One last note, don't forget that if you have 15 or more employees, under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you're required to have written current job specifications for each position (reviewed and updated as needed when the position becomes vacant). Although ADA doesn't require job descriptions per se, it's hard to tell the difference between a written job specification and a job description. Here's an outline of the sections that I include in my ADA-compliant job descriptions:

- Position summary
- Primary responsibilities
- Secondary responsibilities
- Education, experience and credentials
- Knowledge, skills and abilities
- Physical requirements necessary to perform this job
- Tools and equipment used
- Work environment

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About Arlene Vernon

Arlene has provided HR consulting and management training services to over 300

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If you're planning a conference, seminar or special event, Arlene specializes in keynotes, seminars and workshops to meet your talent management needs. And if you're seeking a more lively entertaining activity, Arlene's custom songs and musical-inspirational keynote may be perfect for your organization!

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