

RBA's Annual Wage & Salary Surveys – Valuable Benchmarking Data

Results are out for Rochester Business Alliance's 2007 Annual Wage and Salary Surveys.

Participation in this year's survey continued strong, with 198 Rochester Business Alliance member companies, representing some 94,650 employees, completing at least one of the surveys. Wages and salaries are surveyed in four categories of employees: nonexempt, manufacturing, professional/managerial, and health care. In total, data was reported on more than 350 jobs.

Rochester Business Alliance Corporate and Partner members participating in surveys receive a complimentary copy of the results.

For the 2007 survey of nonexempt employees, 193 companies responded. Starting and average rates by job category were reported as follows, with 2006 figures in parenthesis.

Other highlights:

- The average cost of benefits as a percent of payroll is 28.1 percent, up from 27.3 percent in 2006.
- The average hourly rate paid for a nonexempt (hourly) job reported by 130 firms is \$14.89, up from \$14.26 in 2006.
- The average shift differential reported for 2nd shift is 70 cents per hour, up from 67 cent per hour in 2006, while for the 3rd shift it was 86 cents per hour, up from 82 cents per hour in 2006.
- From the 2007 Manufacturing Survey, the average hourly rate paid for a manufacturing job, based on reporting from by 84 firms is \$14.27, up from \$14.12 in 2006.

Corporate or Partner members unable to participate in the wage surveys this year can purchase these or any other

surveys offered by the Rochester Business Alliance at the discounted member price, as a benefit of membership. The enclosed survey order flyer contains information on all surveys as well as pricing information.

Rochester Business Alliance continues to publish the region's most comprehensive data on wages, benefits, HR practices and other business-related topics, going back as early as 1919. ■

For more information on the above surveys, or for other HR benchmarking questions, contact Kathy Novak, director of research & surveys at (585) 256-4618 or e-mail kathy.novak@rballiance.com.

2007 Starting and Average Wage Comparison

	Starting \$/hr	Average \$/hr
• Clerical	\$9.36 (\$8.82)	\$11.41 (\$10.79)
• Unskilled	\$9.52 (\$8.82)	\$11.66 (\$11.07)
• Technical	\$13.76 (\$13.03)	\$17.25 (\$17.22)
• Secretarial	\$10.08 (\$9.99)	\$12.77 (\$12.75)
• Skilled Trades	\$13.81 (\$12.74)	\$18.13 (\$17.02)

Calendar of Events

HR Professional Forum

May 8 8-9:30 a.m.

Friday Business Briefings

May 4 8-9 a.m.

May 18 8-9 a.m.

Sr. HR Executive Forum - large

*May 17 8-9:30 a.m.

Sr. HR Executive Forum - small

*May 17 8-9:30 a.m.

*Combined Session

★ Friday Business Briefing

May 4

My Turn: HR Professional Development

With a focus on everyone else's careers, human resources professionals have little time to consider their own development. Join Deb Koen, president & CEO of Career Development Services, to take a fresh look at your own personal and professional development by:

- Exploring HR priorities as they relate to you
- Uncovering potential career derailers
- Identifying development goals for your future

May 18

Immigration Law Update - The H-1B numbers crisis, stepped-up enforcement, and the prospects for Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Immigration simmers in the headlines as the annual allocation of H-1B visas was exhausted in one day, Washington debates Comprehensive Immigration Reform, ICE increases worksite raids and I-9 audits and CBP increases border scrutiny. Join us as Maggie Catillaz, head of Harter Secrest & Emery's Immigration Group and past president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association updates employers on the hot topic of Immigration Law, with a generous portion of practical advice for dealing with the current system.

Time: 8 - 9 a.m.
 Location: Rochester Business Alliance
 3rd floor
 Open to: **Members Only**
 Cost: None
 Register:
 E-mail Edna.Smith@RBAAlliance.com or
 call Edna Smith at (585) 256-4641

www.RochesterBusinessAlliance.com
 (585) 244-1800

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

When asked what concerns them most about their business' future, Rochester Business Alliance members repeatedly offer this response: the rising cost of health care. In fact, health care costs have been their No. 1 concern for the last three years, as measured by our annual survey.

To address this concern, the Rochester Business Alliance last year launched the RBA Healthcare Initiative. Its aim is to bring together business leaders and key stakeholders in the health care system to work together on finding ways to promote wellness, enhance quality and improve access to health care.

The same year, that initiative launched its first formal program – a roll out to all our member companies of the eat well. live well. challenge, originally designed by Wegmans Food Markets Inc. for its work force. We piloted the program last year with six companies and 15,000 workers. The results were impressive, and the idea seems to have caught on. When we offered the more expanded program this year, 91 of our member companies – maybe even your company – signed on for the 8-week “2007 eat well. live well Challenge.”

The premise is simple. Studies have shown that making changes to improve one's diet and becoming more active can lead to improved health, and therefore less need for medical care.

Over the past two months, we have been challenging ourselves to meet the program's two basic guidelines - walk 10,000 steps per day and to eat five cups of fruits and vegetables per day. Not only have we been challenging ourselves, but we have been challenging our teammates as a means of support and encouragement. The goal is to be the team that has the greatest average number of steps and cups consumed. So here at the Rochester Business Alliance – as in many other companies participating in the challenge – we've been coming up with creative ways to spur on the competition and keep the focus on the goal of wellness.

On April 21, Rochester Business Alliance employees got in some extra steps by participating in the Rochester Heart Walk on behalf of the American Heart Association as it toured through the Historic Corn Hill neighborhood. As chair of the committee seeking new teams to participate in the walk, I was pleased to see so many of our member companies signing on in support. It was a great day where we volunteered our time to a great cause and gave our pedometers a few extra miles for the day.

With the support of our peers as well as the resources found on the eat well. live well. website (www.eatwelllivewell.org), this challenge has proven to be an effective way to improve employee health, and maybe even morale.

All 91 companies will reach the end of the eight-week challenge in June, and I hope that the dedication we've seen to set goals and increase the quality of life will continue past the Challenge. In the long run, a few extra steps a day along with more fruits and vegetables can decrease sick days taken, hospital visits, and help prevent future health problems for some employees. If so, that's one step closer to lower health care costs for employers and employees.



*Sandra A. Parker
 President and
 Chief Executive Officer*

Sandra Parker

Wellness in the Workplace

Talking to Your Child About Smoking



Sue Grace, RD

Most employer groups offer smoking cessation programs. Extend your program to parents grappling with how to keep their children from smoking. Teaching parents how to have the conversation with their children around smoking can benefit the employee and the employer group.

Talking to children about risky behavior can be uncomfortable and difficult especially if parents use tobacco. Research shows though that children do pay attention to what their parents say. Teens who talk with their parents about risky behaviors (tobacco, alcohol and drug use

and experimentation with sex) are half as likely to get involved in these activities or use these substances. Parents who stay involved in their children's lives and communicate effectively have a positive influence on their child's lifestyle habits.

So how do you start a conversation with your child?

You might bring it up after seeing a smoking ad. Discuss how these companies are trying to get kids to smoke.

Make the message you relay to your child meaningful.

Children often feel they are infallible-nothing is going to happen to them. So talking to them about diseases related to smoking use may not be meaningful. Frame smoking use consequences in a way that they understand. Letting children know that smoking gives them bad breath, smelly clothes, yellow teeth and poor performance in sports may be the ticket to getting their attention. Also sharing with them how much it costs to smoke cigarettes can be very impactful. These short term consequences are much more tangible for a child to grasp.

Here are several things you can do to make the conversation with your child about important issues such as smoking more effective:

- Let your child know that you are listening by using eye contact and repeating some of the key points they have shared or asking an occasional question about what they said.
- Look for nonverbal cues. Their body language can provide insight on how they are feeling.
- Find a place that allows for a comfortable conversation. Talking to them about sensitive topics in a public area or in front of their friends maybe embarrassing to them.
- Offer insight but don't pretend you know everything about the subject. Be able to admit that you "don't know, but let's find out". Go to a reputable website for information.
- Acknowledge your child's emotions regarding the subject. "I can see this is a difficult situation for you since most of your friends choose to smoke". Avoid personally attacking one of their friends.

Finally pick your battles. Be clear though that certain things –drugs, alcohol and tobacco –are non-negotiable. ■

Sue Grace, RD, is the Manager of Worksite Wellness for Preferred Care, WHAGR Public Relations Chair.

Public Policy Corner

Achieving Rochester's Fair Share

The New York State budget passed on April 1 and the results are in. So how did the Rochester Fair Share Coalition and the City of Rochester fare in efforts to secure additional state funding through AIM (Aid and Incentives to Municipalities)?

Thanks largely to the work of Mayor Duffy and the Rochester Fair Share Coalition, a coalition comprised of 29 community leaders from business, labor, government, non-profits and faith-based organizations, for the second year in a row Rochester received a higher percentage increase in state aid than any other upstate city. The state is increasing aid to Rochester by \$9.66 million- a 13.5 percent increase over last year. Coupled with last year's gains, over the past two years Rochester has received a 52 percent increase in state aid.

These increases have been the result of ongoing efforts to heighten visibility and support around the equity aid issue. In February, Rochester Business Alliance hosted a meeting with coalition partners to lay out a communication, advocacy and event plan. This year's efforts included:

- Feb. 15: Press conference at City Hall highlighting the Fair Share campaign
- March 2: Rochester Business Alliance hosted local delegation and requested support for equitable aid
- March 17: Fair Share petition drive at the St. Patrick's Day Parade
- March 18: Fair Share Sabbath – Mayor Duffy visited four churches in Rochester and spoke about the need for fair share funding
- March 21: Fair Share Albany Day – Sandy Parker and several coalition members joined Mayor Duffy in meetings with the Governor, Speaker Silver, Majority Leader Bruno's budget director and members of the Rochester delegation to request equitable aid for Rochester
- March 25: Fair Share 5K Run – more than 160 people participated in Fair Share run led by Mayor Duffy through downtown Rochester

This year's e-advocacy campaign faxed letters to the Governor, House Speaker, Majority Leader, and members of Rochester's delegation. Using Rochester Business Alliance's Voter Voice program, more than 15,500 letters were sent from the citizens of our community.

But more work still needs to be done.

Even as Rochester received the state's largest percentage increase in AIM funding, our neighbors in Buffalo will receive \$530 per person, Syracuse will get \$468 per person and Rochester's share stands at \$370 per person. The intent of the Fair Share Coalition has never been to take aid away from our peer cities, but considering the severity of Rochester's problems, it is vitally important that the city receive the same level of per capita support. Receiving the same level of aid as Buffalo would mean an increase of \$35 million dollars in AIM funding for Rochester- more than eliminating the city's \$21 million dollar budget deficit.

We would like to thank Mayor Duffy, our Fair Share Coalition partners and our local legislative delegation for leading the Fair Share fight. Most importantly, we would like to thank you for participating in the Voter Voice campaign and expressing your views with letters to our state leaders.

The Fair Share Coalition will be back again next year. With your help, Rochester will continue to forge ahead in its effort to achieve equitable state aid. ■

RBA HRx

Spousal Military Leave

Question: Is it true that spouses can take unpaid leave when their military spouse is on leave?



reserves who have been deployed

Generally, yes, though the amount of leave is limited. Effective Aug. 16, 2006, spouses of members of the U.S. armed forces, national guard, or

during a period of military conflict must be allowed to take up to 10 days of unpaid leave. It also bars employers from retaliating against those who seek such leave. This applies to public and private employers of 20 or more, and to employees who work 20 or more hours per week. Additionally, employees may take the leave only when the military spouse is on leave. The bill also explicitly states that it doesn't prevent employers from providing leave under any other provision of law, and that it doesn't affect those other leaves.

Policy Pointers

In creating a spousal military leave policy, employers should consider including the following:

- Non-retaliation statement. Employers cannot retaliate against employees for

requesting or taking a spousal leave of absence.

- Procedure for military leave requests. Employees must notify their employers that they need time off for spousal military leave.
- Pay continuation. Employers are not required to do so but may go beyond their legal obligations by providing pay continuation to employees on military leave.
- Benefits continuation. If an employer continues group health care coverage for regular leaves of absence, it must do so for military leave as well. ■

Source: SHRM, BNA

Survey SPOT LIGHT

Survey

Release Date (week of)

National Executive Compensation

May 21

If you have questions, please contact Kathy Novak at (585) 256-4618 or e-mail Kathy.Novak@RBAAlliance.com.

Reminder! NYS Labor Law Guide Released!

The Employer's Guide to New York State Labor Laws was released in March. If you didn't receive the email containing the free PDF of the Guide, please contact Kathy Novak at (585) 256-4618 or Jennifer Suppé (585) 256-4608 to request one. Only Partner, Corporate, and Business Builder members are eligible to receive a free PDF copy of the Guide as a benefit of membership.

If you have an HR question, call or e-mail the Helpline staff:

- Kathy Novak
director, research and surveys
(585) 256-4618
Kathy.Novak@RBAAlliance.com
- Jennifer Suppé
HR specialist
(585) 256-4608
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This newsletter is the official monthly HR newsletter of Rochester Business Alliance. Articles printed are for information only and are not intended to render legal advice. For more information, contact Rochester Business Alliance at 150 State Street, Suite 400, Rochester, NY 14614. Phone: (585) 244-1800, Fax: (585) 263-3679, or go to www.RochesterBusinessAlliance.com.

Events

The Road to a Passionate Workforce

By Andrew Harrison

At a recent Rochester Business Alliance Friday Business Briefing, author Andrew Harrison shared what he has learned as he traveled over 40,000 miles of the United States and interviewed over 110 people about the power of motivation. Because of the comments and interest we received from this event, we are sharing a synopsis of his presentation.

Traveling the country interviewing people excited by their jobs, he learned that passionate people produce incredible results. At the same time, Harrison learned the U.S. economy loses over \$300 billion each year due to unmotivated workers (the employee quits, doesn't tell anyone, and still comes to work every day). This staggering statistic shows that there is a disconnect in the motivation equation.

During meetings with various American business leaders, it became evident that companies in tune with motivating their employees are also in tune with making profits. What he has learned and passes on today is:

Motivated Employees lead to Motivated Customers which lead to Profits

It doesn't matter what product your business makes or what services you provide, if you have motivated people, they will produce desirable results. There are numerous companies in Rochester who have acted on this basic but hard to implement equation. Those companies thinking about motivation have seen amazing results in growth, profitability, and visibility.

The first step in the motivation process is to truly believe, especially as a human resource professional, that employees

want to be motivated. Part of human nature is the drive to be successful. Part of the company's job is to help spur on that drive.

The most important factor in the motivation equation is the immediate manager. As I have been told, "People don't quit their company, they quit their boss."

The old school management philosophy of, "You will do your work because I told you to do your work," is not effective. It may get the job done, just barely, and it saps the effort out of people. It turns them into zombies, coming to work each day, but only doing enough to get by. They are working solely for the paycheck. Where is the productivity, attention to detail, creativity, and innovation in that process?

A motivated workforce is a win for all involved. It is a win for employees because they actually like their jobs and companies. It is a win for managers because motivated people are more productive. It is a win for customers because they have better quality products and services. It is a win for companies because they have satisfied customers and employees working smarter, which means a stronger bottom line.

You can learn more about Andrew Harrison's interview experiences in his forthcoming book and at <http://www.iamontheroad.com/engagement.asp>. Check our website www.rochesterbusinessalliance.com under Business Information for future Friday Business Briefing topics. ■



Andrew Harrison

LPGA Corporate Volunteer Program

The Rochester Business Alliance in partnership with the Wegmans LPGA is proud to present the LPGA Corporate Volunteer Program.

Participants in the LPGA Corporate Volunteer Program are asked to provide four to six employees to volunteer at the Wegmans LPGA for one day (June 18- June 22).

For more information please contact Becky Brown, Rochester Business Alliance Member Services, at (585) 256-4610 or e-mail Becky.Brown@RBAAlliance.com.

CEO Wants to Know... What's on Your Mind

Sandy Parker, Rochester Business Alliance president and chief executive officer, wants to know what's on the minds of members. This is a networking event and opportunity for members to have an open roundtable discussion with Rochester Business Alliance leadership. To register or for more information, call Edna Smith at (585) 256-4641 or e-mail Edna.Smith@RBAAlliance.com.

The next 8 a.m. breakfast will be held on:

Wednesday, May 2

Employment Law News

By: Roy R. Galewski
Harris Beach PLLC



Take Steps to Avoid Employee Retaliation Claims

Most employers take steps to prevent workplace discrimination and harassment based on protected characteristics such as race, religion, gender, age, and disability. Policies and procedures addressing discrimination and harassment are important and should not be overlooked. Even when these steps are taken, however, many employers remain vulnerable to retaliation claims by employees and former employees. There are several employment statutes that declare it unlawful for an employer to take adverse action against an employee because that individual engages in a protected activity.

Retaliation claims can be especially troubling and difficult to defend because an employee can succeed in proving retaliation even when unable to prove that discrimination has occurred. For example, if an employee files a lawsuit against his employer alleging both discriminatory treatment and retaliation, the employer can be held liable for unlawful retaliation even if the plaintiff's discrimination claim is dismissed. Given this fact, it is not surprising that the number of retaliation claims filed against employers has grown significantly.

In order for a plaintiff to establish a claim for unlawful retaliation, he must demonstrate three elements: (1) the employee engaged in a "protected activity"; (2) the employer took an "adverse action" against the employee; and (3) a causal connection exists between the protected activity and the adverse action. "Protected activities" include employee conduct such as making internal complaints about discrimination or harassment to the employer, filing discrimination claims with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the New York State Division of Human Rights or a court, and providing testimony or assistance to a person who has filed a discrimination claim. An

employee who has engaged in protected activity and is subsequently subjected to an adverse employment action (e.g., discipline, discharge or demotion) may have a cognizable retaliation claim if he or she can prove a link between the two actions. Often employees will rely on the proximity in time between the protected activity and the adverse action to demonstrate the required link.

The timing of an adverse action is normally important because, in most retaliation claims, there is no direct evidence linking that action to an employee's protected activity. In addition to this timing issue, other circumstantial evidence may be relevant. On the other hand, if an employer can sufficiently demonstrate that the reason for an adverse employment action is unrelated to an employee's protected activity, the retaliation claim will fail.

It is important to point out that the courts take a broad view of what constitutes an "adverse employment action." The test is whether a reasonable person would find the action materially adverse, meaning that it might dissuade a reasonable worker from making or supporting a charge of discrimination. The United States Supreme Court has also held that an "adverse employment action" need not occur in the workplace to be actionable. Employer action that harms an employee outside the workplace may also meet the standard.

Although retaliation claims are difficult to defend, employers can take proactive steps to avoid these claims and put themselves in a position to better defend them. The first step is to implement a clear policy against retaliation in the workplace. It is also important that employers be able to substantiate the legitimate nondiscriminatory reasons for all adverse employment actions. This is often a matter

of whether supervisors and managers have properly documented prior disciplines and the reasons underlying the adverse employment action. Along the same lines, it is advisable to train supervisors and managers on discrimination, retaliation and proper documentation practices. Finally, when considering whether to discipline or discharge an employee who has engaged in some protected activity, employers should consider consulting counsel before making a final decision to be sure they understand all the legal implications of the decisions they make.

Consistency in employment decisions, that is, treating employees the same way for the same conduct, is always important, and retaliation claims are no exception. Consistency helps employers demonstrate that an employee's protected activity is irrelevant and not a motivating factor in the decision to implement an adverse employment action. For the same reason, failure to properly train supervisors and managers can have dire consequences. There have been several recent verdicts in retaliation cases that should shock employers of all sizes. In three 2006 cases, juries issued awards of \$2.6 million, \$2.5 million, and \$1.15 million after finding that the plaintiffs were victims of retaliation. Suffice it to say, successful retaliation claims can be extremely costly and dangerous. Taking immediate steps to reduce the risk can pay dividends for employers in avoiding a similar outcome.

Roy R. Galewski is an associate with Harris Beach PLLC and a member of the firm's Labor & Employment Law and Litigation Practice Group. His legal practice focuses primarily on counseling and representing employers in all aspects of labor and employment law, including the federal and state discrimination laws, wage and hour laws and labor relations issues. ■

May - June Seminars & Computer Training

Date(s)	Seminar	Time	Member Rate	Non-Member Rate
May				
1 +	Supervision (8 sessions)	1:00 – 5:00 p.m.	\$795	\$995
1	Staffing and Recruiting	8:00 – 12:00 p.m.	\$125	\$165
2	Telephone Tactics	8:30 – 12:30 p.m.	\$125	\$165
3	Stress Management	8:30 – 12:30 p.m.	\$125	\$165
7	Communication Power	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
8 +	Coaching, Mentoring, and Motivating (6 sessions)	8:30 – 12:30 p.m.	\$595	\$775
8	Employee Rights and Discipline	8:00 – 12:00 p.m.	\$125	\$165
9	Sexual Harassment	8:30 – 12:30 p.m.	\$125	\$165
15	Compensation	8:00 – 12:00 p.m.	\$125	\$165
21	Critical Thinking	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
22	Benefits	8:00 – 12:00 p.m.	\$125	\$165
23 & 24	Project Management	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$665	\$865
29	Health, Safety, and Security for HR Professional	8:00 – 12:00 p.m.	\$125	\$165
June				
1	Managing Time and Priorities	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
4	Negotiations	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
5	Training & Development	8:00 – 12:00 p.m.	\$125	\$165
6	Dynamic Listening Skills	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
6 & 13	Gaining the Title, Earning the Respect	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$390	\$530
7	Assertiveness	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
11	Customer Service and Relations	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
12	HR Effectiveness	8:00 – 12:00 p.m.	\$125	\$165
14	Dealing with Difficult Personalities	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
18	Conflict Management	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
20	Budgeting for the Non-Financial Person	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
26	Finance for the Non-Financial Person	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
28	Communication Power	8:30 – 4:30 p.m.	\$195	\$265
June Computer Training				
4 & 6	PowerPoint Introduction	8:15 – 11:15 a.m.	\$129	
4 & 6	PageMaker Introduction	8:15 – 11:15 a.m.	\$129	
5 & 7	Quick Books	1:00 – 4:00 p.m.	\$129	
5 & 7	Windows Introduction	8:15 – 11:15 a.m.	\$129	
11 & 13	Access Introduction	8:15 – 11:15 a.m.	\$129	
11 & 13	Word Introduction	1:00 – 4:00 p.m.	\$129	
12 & 14	Excel Introduction	8:15 – 11:15 a.m.	\$129	
18 & 20	Excel Advanced Part 1	8:15 – 11:15 a.m.	\$129	
18 & 20	PowerPoint Advanced	1:00 – 4:00 p.m.	\$129	
19 & 21	Word Advanced	8:15 – 11:15 a.m.	\$129	
25 & 27	Excel Advanced Part 2	8:15 – 11:15 a.m.	\$129	
26 & 28	Access Advanced	1:00 – 4:00 p.m.	\$129	

+ *indicates multiple sessions*

Register online at www.RochesterBusinessAlliance.com.

For more information on these courses call (585) 256-4641 or e-mail Edna.Smith@RBAAlliance.com.

Seminars are held at the Rochester Business Alliance, 150 State St. Parking is free.

Computer courses are held at Accent Training Center, Gateway Plaza, 2352 Lyell Avenue.

Set your company injury target to zero

This month, following a short break, we continue our series on safety myths.

Small improvements in safety will get us better over time. This is a good one. By now, nearly every employer in the country uses the teachings and tools of quality management. One of those teachings is the continuous improvement cycle. As I interpret what Dr. W. Edwards Deming was telling us about the Shewhart Cycle, the objective is to constantly improve the system of production and service.

How does this continuous improvement cycle actually get applied to safety?

In this scenario, goals are revised annually to reduce injury rate by ten or fifteen percent. The goal gets set in apparent isolation from any other process. I see this repeatedly in companies I visit and usually everyone spends the year trying to figure out how to actually meet the numbers.

Dr. Deming would have us focus on the process—the system—and improve that. But that's not what happens in the minds of many well-intended managers. They try to improve the bottom-line measure and completely overlook the need to tweak and adjust the process that will make any improvement possible.

Obviously, for this to work, both a process

and a strategy are necessary. Tweaking or continuously improving a hit or miss approach to safety is useless. If you don't have a proven process already working, radical redirection is needed, not mid-course corrections.

Managers, safety directors, safety committees and company newsletter writers—when the improvement goal is actually met—thump their chests and exclaim with pride how much better safety is this year vs. last. Better! Really!? The company put ten percent of its people out of work two years ago with an injury and last year they only disabled nine percent! In the minds of most people, disabling nine (or fifteen or three) percent of your people is bad. Disabling any is bad. Yet by a strange twist of logic, disabling ten percent fewer allows managers to say the company did a good job.

A good friend of mine, a safety director on the west coast, sent me an e-mail a while back and ended it with this comment. I'm working on the safety plan. The bean counters want me to tell them how many people we plan to hurt and how long they will be out of work. That's how staff and line employees interpret the message about the small improvement in the bottom line.

Some managers do understand the lunacy

of setting injury targets. There's a story I've heard often. It may be many stories with the same theme. A senior executive, when presented with the committee recommendation for a percentage improvement in injuries, slammed his fist on the table and said *Great! That means we only need to hurt fifteen people next year. Do we have any volunteers?*

Yes, have a process for safety improvement and continuously improve it. But when it comes to injury targets, set those at the only acceptable point there is—zero! That goal may not be met, but it sure beats implying to your people that hurting them is acceptable and maybe even good business thinking.

This discussion of safety myths is excerpted from the Dawson book, *Safety for the Leader/Manager...From Compliance to Excellence*. For information on obtaining a copy, contact me at the e-mail address below. ■



Chip Dawson

HSE Updates Available... If you have HSE questions or column suggestions, or would like to be added to the e-mail HSE Update list, contact Chip Dawson at (585) 425-1639 or chipdawson@aol.com

How To Reach Us...

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