

David Pevlantis

IRS Braces for Filing Onslaught

With April 15 only weeks away, taxpayers across the nation are starting to sweat.

Where's that pile of credit card receipts? How much interest on the car loan will they let me deduct *this* year? Which form do I use to record the amount I lost on Black Monday? Can I deduct my dog's orthodontia?

Most of us approach income tax time with fear, loathing, and disorganized frenzy, but IRS service center managers are taking an orderly look at how they can better handle the annual filing hassle.

Writing in *Leader's Digest*, a new periodical from the IRS's HRD staff, Judy Van Alfen details steps service center managers need to take to prepare their people for the spring deluge of tax returns. Among other measures, Van Alfen, assistant director of the IRS's

Austin Service Center, gives some sound advice that seems to apply to any organization embarking on a huge project:

- *Prepare an action plan.* It will help anticipate problems and assign responsibility for solving them.
- *Train the people who do the work.* The IRS has to keep up with annual changes in the tax code; other organizations face similar recurring revisions of the standard operating procedures. Training helps ensure nothing gets lost in the shuffle.
- *Consider the needs of new hires.* Massive undertakings often signal an influx of raw recruits. They need special training and orientation support.
- *Keep lines of communication open.* Make sure information flows both ways—up and down the line.
- *Emphasize quality.* When deadlines

drive a project, it's too easy to let expediency override excellence. But, Van Alfen points out, simple mistakes made early take a long time to fix later on.

Words to live by for organizations of every stripe. It's especially gratifying to hear them from the IRS. For information on *Leader's Digest*, contact Ruth Gentilman, Internal Revenue Service, 3905 Davis Place NW, #201, Washington, DC 20007. Now, where's the receipt from that business lunch with . . . ?

Pay, Performance, and the Training Process

It's hard to figure the link between how well we do our jobs and how much we get paid, said 72 percent of the rank-and-file workers surveyed by The Wyatt Company last year. The study represents a fairly shocking indictment, to say the least, of performance appraisal and salary adjustment systems in the 805 firms reviewed.

The good news? Most companies seem to have a good idea of what causes inequities. When asked about impediments to successful management of pay for performance, 55 percent identified inadequate manager training as the biggest roadblock.

Nearly three quarters of all salary administration programs are based on merit pay, with employees earning raises by doing more or better work. This sounds eminently fair, but there's a bothersome fly in the ointment.

Only 27 percent of merit pay systems rate individual performance against well-defined performance standards. This failing creates confusion among line managers, who often admit that their appraisals depend on subjective personality judgements. And because subjective judgements create a lot of employee resentment, managers hate appraising performance.

Teaching the beleaguered supervisor how to set and apply job standards improves effectiveness and morale, according to Pete Smith, a member of Wyatt's board of directors. "Performance appraisal should be a tool of reinforcement, rather than an ordeal that leaves the manager uncomfortable and the employee frustrated," he said.

"Well-defined standards enable managers to focus directly on job perfor-

mance rather than personality," Smith noted. "In effect, managers can say, 'You're an outstanding person and I like working with you, but your performance has to improve substantially if you want a raise.'"

To acquire the necessary standard-setting and rating skills, managers need training in "the *dynamics* of performance management," said Smith. "In many companies, the training that does take place concentrates on procedures and forms, rather than helping supervisors hone their communications skills, deal with difficult appraisal situations, and develop precise performance standards."

Smith advises an interdisciplinary approach to performance-management training. Successful programs require input from specialists in compensation, communications, management development, finance, and corporate planning. Don't forget to include supervisors and line workers too.

The performance-appraisal payoff?

Said Smith, "In terms of return on investment, there is great potential for achieving higher levels of performance—and higher productivity—through improved management training."

Selection and Training Ease Start-Ups and Relocations

Successful plant start-ups and office relocations often depend on the quality of employee selection and training systems, said William C. Bynham, president of Development Dimensions International (DDI).

"An up-front human resources strategy, including effective employee selection and training, is the key to ensuring that a new operation—start-up or relocation—begins production on time and stays within budget," he said.

DDI and Universal Training recently

formed an organization called The Startup Group to address the needs of companies undergoing large-scale technological or labor-force changes.

"Particularly in staffing and training workers for high-tech environments, professionally produced new-employee interactive and technical skills training can yield a significant return on investment," said John H. Rosenheim, president of Universal Training.

For a free management guide on new-plant and office-relocation issues, contact The Startup Group, 255 Revere Dr., Northbrook, IL 60060; 312/498-9700.

Smoking Restrictions Gain in Workplace

Smoking restrictions are in effect at more than half of the firms responding to a new nationwide survey.

STOP, LOOK, LISTEN



The art of effective people managing requires the cultivation and refinement of critical management skills. Britannica's dramatic new video series, **Managing People Problems**, gives managers the skills they need to:

- **STOP** problems that occur when employees feel stuck on a job plateau
- **LOOK** at how employees' personalities affect work output and
- **LISTEN** to what employees are really saying

Using dramatizations from real situations, **Managing People Problems** shows managers how to effectively meet workplace challenges.



Motivating Employees: Trapped on a Plateau outlines the four steps required to motivate employees who feel stuck on plateaus. The manager will learn how to diffuse employee resentment, how to develop solutions with the employee, and how to develop problem-solving commitment on the part of the employee. 18 minutes.

Dealing with Different Personalities allows managers to cut through the jargon of personality labels and deal with the person—not his task. The video shows how effectively treating problems which stem from personality differences will render a cooperative work environment. 16 minutes.

Are You Really Listening? explains how managers can cultivate the skill of active listening—listening not just to what is said but to the underlying feelings and attitudes of the speaker. The program also looks at three individuals who represent the most common listening faults: the "presumer," the "selective listener," and the "partial attender." 15 minutes.

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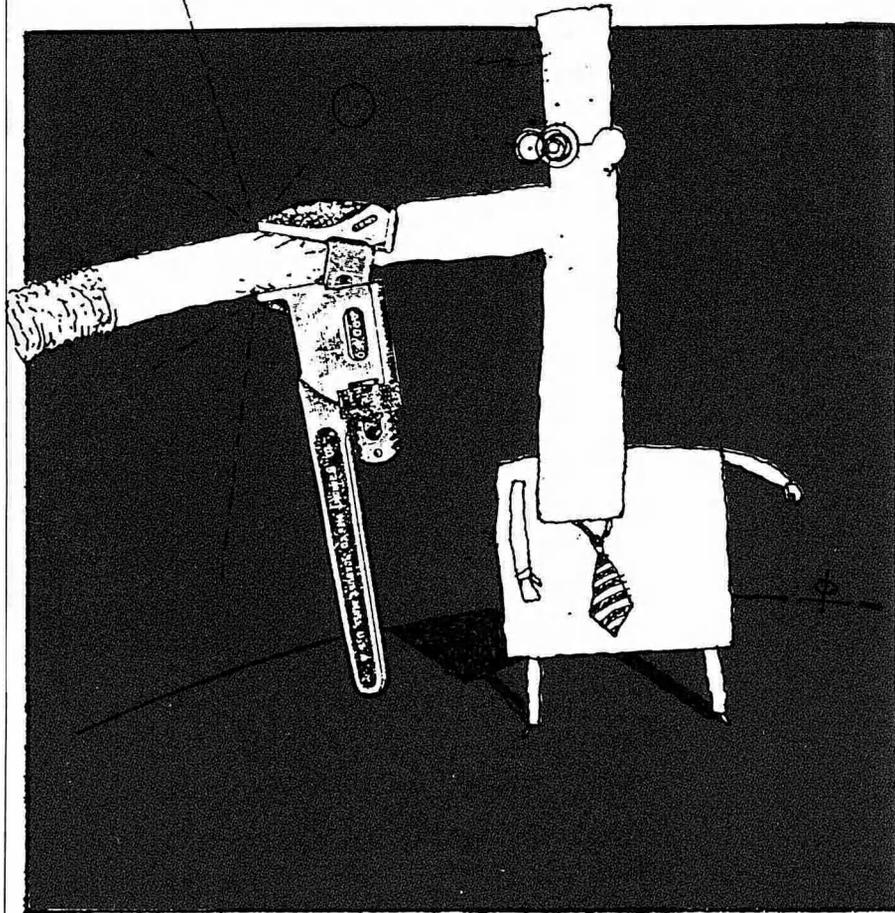
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In Practice



The survey, conducted by the Bureau of National Affairs, Inc. (BNA), and the American Society for Personnel Administration, found that 54 percent of the responding employers have established smoking policies to address employee health and comfort issues, up from 36 percent in a similar 1986 survey.

Another 4 percent of the firms surveyed will implement restrictive policies by the end of this year, and 21 percent are considering workplace smoking policies. Only 22 percent say they have no rules, nor are they contemplating any. That's down from 41 percent in 1986.

Among the survey highlights:

- Only 12 percent of companies with smoking policies prohibit smoking in all company buildings, although that percentage is up from 6 percent two years ago.
- Half of the policies (51 percent) prohibit smoking in all open work areas or shared office space, up from 41 percent in 1986.
- Only 5 percent of employers' smoking

policies explicitly mention a preference for hiring nonsmokers.

■ Few employers report any effect—positive or negative—of their smoking restriction on either company costs or worker productivity.

Results of the survey appear in the second edition of *Where There's Smoke: Problems and Policies Concerning Smoking in the Workplace*, a BNA special report. In addition to results from surveyed companies, the report also shows that some union officials support smoking restrictions, although most labor leaders continue to oppose strict policies. It also details the ongoing debate over the health risks of environmental tobacco smoke and discusses the degree to which air filters and ventilation can contain the fumes.

Copies of *Where There's Smoke*, Second Edition, including survey results and analysis, case studies, legal analyses, and more are available from BNA. Survey results alone are also available. Contact BNA Customer Service, 9435 Key West Ave., Rockville, MD 20850; 800/372-1033.

Heard in Passing

"Recall that an inch is, indeed, a cinch, and a yard is, indeed, very hard. Forget fancy management theories; it makes down-home common sense that the less you're expected to do, the more likely it is that it will get done."

From Getting to the Bottom Line: Management by Incremental Gains—by Richard S. Sloma. The Free Press, a division of Macmillan, Inc., 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022. 196 pp. \$18.95.

"[T]here is no such thing as an American economy, at least not in the way the term is usually employed. Rather, there are about 7 million companies, close to 90 percent of which employ fewer than 20 workers. Taken together, these small companies create more jobs than the giants comprising the *Fortune* 500 . . .

"[To understand job creation, start] with the idea that the function of an economy is to produce desired goods and services. Firms that succeed in tapping customers' wellsprings receive orders, which down the road translate into a call for additional workers. But we begin with the cravings for goods and services, either by consumers, other companies, or government, and not the need to create jobs. Successful gratification of the former results in expansion of the latter."

From Job Creation in America: How Our Smallest Companies Put the Most People to Work—by David Birch. The Free Press, a division of Macmillan, Inc., 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022. \$22.95. 244 pp.

New in the Stacks

■ *The Complete Book of Training: Theory, Principles, and Techniques—by G. Douglas Mayo and Philip H. DuBois. University Associates, Inc., 8517 Production Ave., San Diego, CA 92121. 217 pp. \$31.95.*

■ *The Comprehensive Guide to Successful Conferences and Meetings—by Leonard and Zeace Nadler. Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 433 California St., San Francisco, CA 94104. 447 pp.*

■ *Evaluating Business and Industry Training—edited by Leslie Steven May, Carol Ann Moore, and Stephen J. Zammit. Kluwer Academic Publishers, 101 Philip Dr., Assinippi Park, Norwell, MA 02061. 294 pp.*

■ *Groups at Work—by Oscar G. Mink, Barbara P. Mink, and Keith Q. Owen. Educational Technology Publications, Inc., 720 Palisade Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. 279 pp.*

■ *Interactive Video—by Richard Schwier. Educational Technology Publications, Inc., 720 Palisade Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. 204 pp.*

■ *The Invisible Bureaucracy: The Unconscious in Organizational Problem Solving—by Howell S. Baum. Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016. \$24.95. 214 pp.*

■ *The Leadership Factor—by John P. Kotter. The Free Press, a division of Macmillan, Inc., 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022. \$19.95. 161 pp.*

■ *The Manager as Negotiator—by David A. Lax and James K. Sebenius. The Free Press, a division of Macmillan, Inc., 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022. \$22.95. 395 pp.*

■ *Managing Human Resources in Small and Mid-sized Companies—by Diane Arthur. AMACOM, a division of American Management Association, 135 West 50th St., New York, NY 10020. 278 pp.*

■ *The PIMS Principles—by Robert D. Buzzel and Bradley T. Gale. The Free Press, a division of Macmillan, Inc., 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022. \$24.95. 322 pp.*

■ *Training Needs Analysis—by Allison Rossett. Educational Technology Publications, Inc., 720 Palisade Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. 294 pp.*

"In Practice" is edited and written by John Wilcox. Send items of interest to: In Practice, Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.

In Memoriam

With the death of Jane S. Mouton last December, the management-development world lost one of its true pioneers. Along with her colleague and business partner Robert R. Blake, Mouton wrote the landmark text *The Managerial Grid* in 1964.

The Managerial Grid proposed a matrix that identifies management styles and interactions between supervisors and subordinates. In the years since 1964, Blake and Mouton expanded on their original model, in print and through their popular workshops. Their most recent collaboration, *Executive Achievement: Making It at the Top*, appeared in 1986.

Mouton was a regular contributor to the pages of *Training & Development Journal*, and we note her passing with great sadness.



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