



How Focused Are Your Human Resources Resolutions for the Year Ahead?©

Lisa B. Bell, M.Ed

Veterinary Business Advisors, Inc.

Flemington, NJ (908) 782-4426

www.veterinarybusinessadvisors.com

2011 is behind us and it was some year – unusual weather patterns, unexpected natural disasters, new technology offerings, financial markets on a rollercoaster ride, economic recovery hiccupping starts/stops – but here we are, ready to tackle 2012 and setting our sights on success. Let's narrow the scope of the lens and focus on accomplishing Human Resources resolutions for 2012!

1. Comply with new/revised employment laws that are required for 2012 or have recently been implemented which you might have overlooked:
 - a. New National Labor Relations Act (“NLRA”) Notice must be posted by **April 30, 2012** (*new deadline date*) - All Practices subject to the NLRA must post a notice of employees' rights under the Act, including the right to unionize.
 - b. Employers Must Begin Reporting the Value of Group Health Care Coverage on employees' W-2s, effective January 1, 2012 - Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (“PPACA”), all employers will be obligated to report on Form W-2 the value of employer-provided health coverage if the company issued more than 250 W-2's in 2011. "Small Employers" will have at least one more year before the reporting requirement has to be implemented.
 - c. 401(k) Plan Sponsors Must Provide the Required Plan Notices to Their Eligible Employees - For calendar year Plans, these notices should have been distributed by Dec. 2, 2011. Depending on the plan's format, these notices can include the Safe Harbor 401(k) Plan Annual Notice, the Qualified Automatic Contribution Arrangements Safe Harbor Notice, the Qualified Default Investment Alternative Notice, and the 401(k) Automatic Enrollment Notice.
 - d. Can You Benefit from the IRS's Voluntary Classification Settlement Program (“VCSP”) - If your Practice currently has workers classified as "Independent Contractors", evaluate whether the classifications are appropriate, and if not, determine whether you are eligible to take advantage of the IRS's VCSP.
 - e. Review State Statutes to ensure compliance – some states such as New Jersey (Updated New Jersey Wage & Hour Notice must be posted and distributed and Job Advertisements cannot exclude unemployed), Connecticut (Connecticut's Sick Leave Act: Effective January 1, 2012) and New York (NY Wage Theft Prevention Act: Effective April 2011, amended NY's existing Labor Law increasing employer's notice and record-keeping requirements) have new employment laws that may affect your Practice.
2. Take the pulse of your employee handbook for a health check - Update information to reflect changes in such areas as internet, social media, Americans with Disabilities Act

Amendment, etc. Review policies that have caused you concern in 2011 to determine what needs to be modified if necessary and ensure that all policies and procedures are consistently and equitably administered.

3. Budget for Training Dollars – Why? In the Practice’s best interest, a culture that promotes and inspires continual expansion of the employees as professionals, as individuals and as an organization builds a cohesive group identity and internal branding. And don’t forget, accelerate your focus on leadership development programs – leadership belongs throughout your organization, not just at the top.
4. How will you recruit new employees? Same old way or Hire with Precision! Many Practices can effectively identify applicants who have the right technical skills for the job, but still fall short when it comes to identifying the behavioral characteristics job candidates need to fit and thrive in the Practice’s culture. That ‘miss-fit’ can lead to high employee turnover, poor client satisfaction, and lost revenues. In the new year, implement a disciplined recruiting approach, aligning the hiring process with organizational culture, tied closely to the Practice’s mission and values.
5. How are you nurturing and cultivating your existing organizational culture? Do you know if your employees are satisfied, what motivates them or are they just going through the motions of being there? When was the last time you executed an employee engagement survey and implemented changes as a result of the survey’s findings? The single biggest factor in retention is whether people feel valued and their voice is heard. Are you listening and providing feedback?
6. What are you doing to booster employee engagement? Practices that recognize and address the concerns of staff members can instill greater loyalty over the long term. Link engagement efforts to high performance recognition and reward. Management and leaders need to personally live the practice’s values casting a large shadow of ‘walking the talk’. Reinforce and reward the behaviors tied to the results the Practice is seeking.
7. What’s your recipe for the care and feeding of your high potential employees? Don’t let them get away. One of your first priorities should be to get thinking about what it means to reward high performers, write good goals and have honest evaluations, so that the ‘A’ players could rise to the top and reap greater benefits, and employees who are coasting, not engaged or non-productive, would see the opposite. Wouldn’t that be a big cultural shift?
8. With the start of a new year, are you thinking about incorporating changes within your Practice? How do you think the staff will respond? Make sure key people, department heads/leads and people who might be naysayers are involved in the process and have the support and tools necessary to be successful. Communicating promptly, even if that means providing a time frame for a later response and sharing information about how the Practice is performing, even if the news isn't positive is important. Employees need to know what the Practice's annual goals are and should be looking at the Practice’s

business model to understand how each position or service affects the bottom line. Have meetings and an open-door policy to answer staff questions.

So as you are beginning this year, keep your human resources management focused, agile and accountable. Remember to:

- Continuously, assess key performance trends and risks that are either appropriate for your Practice or can be tailored for success
- Always, organize and manage your critical talent – reinforce and reward the right behaviors
- Benchmark and continuously raise the bar for the Practice
- Establish innovative operating approaches
- Drive alignment to support change and transformation – ask employees what they think and check the Practice’s organizational pulse frequently
- Navigate Leadership Transitions – everyone within your Practice is a leader

If would like to discuss further or need assistance in implementing any of the above HR resolutions, please contact Veterinary Business Advisors, Inc. at 908-782-4426 or through its website at www.veterinarybusinessadvisors.com.