

Do My Parents Need Help?

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Well-written policies are important, page 5

Holiday Shipping Tips

Ken Ariathurai, page 7

VOLUME 7,  
NUMBER 9

## Human Resources: Your Most Important Asset

Dec  
2006

### “Opportunities” to Improve HR Practices



by Irene Koehler  
*First Thing Tomorrow*

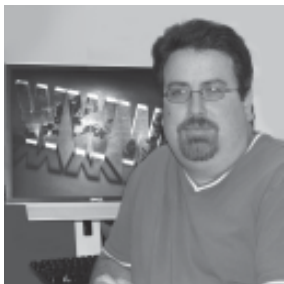
Running a business can be both rewarding and risky. Hiring the right people, managing a highly productive workforce, maintaining legal compliance, retaining records properly, instituting sound pay practices and policies—all while delivering outstanding products and services to your customers—are among the enormous challenges facing all businesses every day.

It is easy to feel that there isn't enough time to stay on top of human resources tasks and requirements. These areas may seem to be disconnected from the core mission of the business. If you were presented with

an opportunity to run the business more effectively, improve employee morale and productivity, and reduce potential legal risk, wouldn't that opportunity seem relevant to the success of the business? Some see it as a “pay now or pay later” proposition, while others see a focus on human resources matters as a structured way to focus on the primary assets of every business—the employees. Either way, looking for ways to build human resources systems and practices makes good

—HR Opportunities  
page 6

### Eight Tips for a Successful Web Site Design



by Gordon Mack  
*president, info-mgt.net*

Web Designing is a cocktail of creative skills & technical prowess - and one is no less important than the other. This article defines the primary aspects

that a well rounded website design will include.

**COMPATIBILITY:** Many websites may operate and look good on one browser, but be incompatible with others. A quality designer will design and test your site for compatibility on common browsers like Explorer, Safari, Mozilla, FireFox, Netscape, and Opera as well as operating systems for Mac and Windows (98/2000/XP).

**PICTURES:** A picture, they say, is worth a thousand words, unfortunately, a picture is also worth a thousand words of download time. Proper care needs to be made to use the right balance of pictures to written content to speed download times and provide a pleasant and valuable browsing experience. Another important point to

note is that each file on the page requires a separate HTTP request to the server. So a lot of small images - even if they do not add up to a lot in terms of bytes - will slow down page loading.

**GRAPHICS:** A quality designer will pay close attention to how they display all the content and navigation buttons, ensuring that consistency to a clearly defined brand identity is maintained.

**FLASH:** Flash Animation is becoming more and more popular. It provides an attractive movie with interactive functions to deliver your message more clearly. Flash Animation is an art unto itself and requires a keen sense of not only graphics, but timing and programming. Animations can be quite large and may require substan-

### Breaking Up Is Hard To Do

by Irene Koehler  
*Human Resource Consultant*

“I’ve had it with this employee! Help me fire this person - TODAY!”

As a human resources consultant, I have heard this so many times, it is hard to recall all the conversations that have begun this way. The decision seems to have been made, but has it been made in the right way?

When a manager has an immediate desire to terminate an employee, it is often apparent that the manager is frustrated - frustrated with the employee’s poor performance, the employee’s failure to understand that there is a problem, and the amount of time it takes to continue managing this issue.

With few exceptions (such as theft or violence), it is advisable to take a step back and review how you arrived

at this point, assessing the pros and cons of potential next steps. Whether working with an outside consultant, an attorney, or in-house human resources staff, approaching such decisions prudently may minimize the legal risks to the business, preserve the integrity of all parties involved, and possibly salvage what seemed to be an unsolvable problem.

There are three ways to bungle an employee termination, all of which are preventable.

1. Doing it too soon
2. Doing it too late
3. Doing in for the wrong reasons

**Terminating an employee too soon**

For the most part, employees truly want to perform well. People

—Letting Go  
page 2

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*Our Mission is to promote, support and enhance a positive business environment.*

—Web Design Tips  
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The United States Chamber of Commerce has acknowledged the excellence of the Fremont Chamber of Commerce by granting the designation of “Accredited Chamber” Only 12 percent of all Chambers nationwide have received this honor.

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YEARS



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Guest Editor’s Message

**The Power of a Kind Word**

People are the greatest asset of any business. We hear this so often, but do we truly place caring for and about the people we work with at the top of our priority list?

How easily we become immersed in the challenges and emergencies of the day - the irate customer, the vendor who didn't deliver on time, a new competitor, critical financial spreadsheets. We mean to nurture and recognize the people who work for and around us; we really do. So many other tasks seem to get in the way. When it comes down to it, though, do we really know what it means to take care of our employees?

I've heard some say, "Well, I pay them don't I? Isn't that enough?" Depending on one's objective, it might be. If the objective is to simply comply with legal requirements, you are on the right track. For most of us, though, this isn't enough. We would like to have happy, productive and loyal employees. Not only does it make for a more pleasant work environment, it is good for business. Underperformers and employee turnover require extensive management time, while decreasing morale for the other employees.

Most of us really want to do a good job for our employers. Whether we are doing it for the money or for the experience, we all hope our efforts are noticed and appreciated. We all want to know that our contributions play an important role in the overall mission of the business or organization. If money was the only motivator, why would so many of us offer to serve as volunteers for non-profit organizations, where our time and talents go unpaid? It is because we want our efforts to make a difference in the overall success of a larger effort.

While we are all busy managing the myriad of daily tasks, we often overlook the simplest motivational tool - a kind word. We've all heard the expression, "Catch someone doing something right." When things go poorly, we "catch" them or take notice right away. This allows employees who are "under the radar" because they are doing well to feel unrecog-

nized. Performance which meets our expectations doesn't command our immediate attention the way problems do.

There is much good news in this in that this is easily addressed and the coming New Year is the perfect time to begin. At least once each week, make it a point to "catch" each person doing something well, even if it is something they do everyday. It can be as simple as a sincere remark: "I really appreciate the way you listen to customers and respond to their needs", "I know you had to work extra hard to finish that report this week. That extra effort made a big difference", or "You've gone out of your way to help our new employee and I can see that your efforts have had great results."

No, a kind word will not keep employees motivated if they do not feel treated fairly in other ways, but it is a tool we should all keep handy in our leadership toolbox. It may seem awkward at first. As with all new habits, it is work to develop them, but becomes easier with practice. Just remember - be sincere and be timely. Recognizing someone's efforts on a project which was completed six months ago may not have the impact you're hoping for.

The kindest words of all are the simplest and most often overlooked - Thank You. I have appreciated the efforts of all of the employees I've hired and led over the years. Did I tell them this? Did I thank them? No, not always. Long ago, as a new manager, I understood that that the employees were paid and were expected to deliver results. It was just that simple. Why should I make a big deal and thank them? It turns out that it wasn't that simple. Many years and much learning on my part later, I see clearly that the power of a kind word cannot be underestimated. And, as an added bonus, it feels good to focus on delivering good news amidst the chaos of the daily business challenges.

So...thank you for reading this issue. Thank you for being interested in ways in which you can build your own skills to manage your business. Thank you to those of you who have entrusted me to guide you through periods of business change and growth. Connecting with you all is a privilege and special opportunity as I continue to learn from each and every one of you.

Best wishes to you and yours for a wonderful holiday season.

Irene Koehler

**Letting Go of Employees—**

from page 1

want to feel successful and know that they play an important role in the business. To deliver the desired results, they must clearly understand what is expected in terms of conduct and performance. Yes, we would like to believe that employees simply know what's expected of them. We like to think they know when they are doing well and when they are falling short. Often, we imagine the employee is already aware of poor performance. This is not always true.

Spell out clearly what you expect from employees. Counseling an employee to "shape up" or "work harder" is not sufficient to achieve improvement. If the employee knows specifically where problems exist and how the business is impacted, the employee can better judge what needs to be addressed and whether it has been accomplished successfully. Talking openly and frankly with an employee about your specific concerns and expectations may go a long way toward a smooth resolution, regardless of the eventual outcome.

**Terminating an employee too late**

While it is important not to rush into a decision to terminate an employee, it is equally important to avoid prolonging a hopeless situation. If you have allowed an opportunity for the employee to improve and the situation persists, be prepared to address it head on. Failing to respond appropriately sends mixed signals to the struggling employee and affects the rest of the workforce.

Set realistic timelines for expected improvement, but also recognize when sufficient time has been allowed. After you have communicated to the employee specifically where problems exist and agreed upon a timeline, follow up with the employee periodically to check on progress. If you are seeing little or no progress, assess the impact on the overall productivity of the business and the amount of management time being consumed by this situation. When your analysis yields the conclusion that the situation is unlikely to result in sufficient improvement, it is time to initiate termination procedures.

**Terminating an employee for the wrong reasons**

In the world of employee relations and employment law, appearances can be everything. While an employee may be disciplined or terminated

for what seem to be job-related reasons, unless the communication is clear and timely, employees may be left to speculate as to what the "real" reasons for the action are. Without a direct explanation of your rationale, some may wonder if the decision violated the law. Needless to say, a termination should never be based on religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, or other prohibited reasons. Even with an "at-will" employment policy in place, employers should be prepared to demonstrate the reasons behind employment decisions.

**"While an employee may be disciplined or terminated for what seem to be job-related reasons, unless the communication is clear and timely, employees may be left to speculate as to what the "real" reasons for the action are."**

Two critical elements in working toward the best outcome possible are process and documentation. The process includes the action plan and communication with the employee, which must be timely, clear, and realistic. Documentation of the process is important because copies of documents given to and signed by the employee will be essential if it becomes necessary to defend the decision at a later date.

Fortunately, the need to "break up" with an employee occurs relatively infrequently. If we take care in hiring the right people for the job those with the needed skills who truly want to be a part of the team-and if we create a positive work environment, any problems that arise are often easily addressed long before the need to consider termination. Still, considering termination is a serious business matter. Knowing the right steps to take and the pitfalls to avoid will help prepare you to handle such a situation appropriately and minimize your legal exposure.

Irene Koehler is a Human Resource Consultant and owner of First Thing Tomorrow. With over twenty years in the Human Resources field, Irene Koehler's professional experience has included work in the public and private sectors, union and non-union environments, and in organizations employing from 10 to 70,000 people. Providing guidance to senior leaders in times of change is a key area of expertise. Irene's skills have enabled her to lead, advise and support successful organizations and business leaders in a way which was instrumental to the achievement of critical business objectives. For more information, contact Irene at 510.438.0735, email: [irene@firstthingtomorrow.com](mailto:irene@firstthingtomorrow.com).

# How Do I Know If My Parents Need Help?

*Taking notice during this holiday season can prevent a crisis later on*

by Jennifer Abrams, CSA, CHES  
*Comfort Keepers*

We live in a very mobile society where families don't always live in the same town or even the same state for that matter. Unlike the "old days", entire families throughout America don't have the opportunity to come together as often as they would like. That's why the holiday season has become an important time to take stock of our loved one's health and everyday living capabilities. Family gatherings with loved ones from out of town, or even the more frequent family phone calls from long distance relatives, are a perfect time to 'check up' on seniors living on their own.

It is not uncommon for the adult children of seniors, especially the Baby Boomer generation, to have some concerns about how their parents are doing. In fact, according to the Family Caregiver's Alliance, families provide 80 percent of the long-term care in this country. This holiday season while you are enjoying your visits or on the phone with your aging loved ones, make good use of your time by reviewing their living status.

## Using Your Five Senses

Many holiday traditions tempt your five senses. These same senses can be put to use in evaluating the status of elderly family members. Below is a checklist using each of your five senses to determine if your family members are in need of additional care or assistance.

**Sight** - Looking at the senior's appearance can be a sign that they are being limited either physically or mentally from completing otherwise normal daily tasks. Watch for things like clothes with stains, poor personal hygiene and a disorganized or dirty house.

**Sound** - Listening to what and how seniors speak can tell you a lot about their current mental status. You should not assume that "old age" is causing these problems. Do they call you by name? Are they speaking normally? Are they staying involved in outside activities?

**Smell** - Using your nose as an indicator to determine if your relative is bathing properly, cleaning their house or have spoiled food in their kitchen.

**Taste** - Tasting their food and sorting through their medications can help you determine if they are eating healthy or taking expired medications. Look at expiration

dates and for fresh and stocked pantry items.

**Touch** - A simple hug can tell you if your family member is fragile or losing weight. Is their skin soft and the color normal? Do they have any bruising or tearing of the skin?

## Review Status By Phone

During telephone conversations, gently probe for information about the person's health and well-being. Below is a list of sample questions that are key indicators or warning signs to help determine if your family members are in need of additional care or assistance:

- What did you have for breakfast? If your loved one cannot remember what he/she ate for breakfast that morning, forgot to eat breakfast or the meal appears to lack nutritious value, a memory problem could be setting in.
- Did you go to the beauty salon to get your hair cut? Did you use the new shower gel I bought you? These are good 'backdoor' questions to finding out whether or not your loved one is remembering to take care of his/her hygiene.
- Did you make it to Bingo this week? An early sign of depression is withdrawal from social activities.
- Is your loved one speaking normally? Differences in speech patterns are warning signs for medical problems that should be looked into immediately.

## Help is Available

If you sense a problem based on the above indicators, you and other family members should waste no time in taking the appropriate next steps. As difficult as the process might be, keep reminding yourself that by being proactive, as a result of your observations, you will not only provide safety for your family member, but will also keep them happy and healthy for years to come.

As a result of assisting many families throughout the Bay Area

—Comfort Keepers

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## Calendar of Events December

**11 Communications Team Meeting**  
1:30 p.m., Chamber Conference Room

**12 City Council Meeting**  
7 p.m., City Council Chamber

**13 Finance Committee Meeting**  
7:30 a.m., Chamber Office

**Connection Club Leaders Meeting**  
8 a.m., Chamber Conference Room

**Chamber Holiday Mixer**  
5-7 p.m.  
39488 Stevenson Pl, Ste. 100., Fremont  
Phone: (510) 795-2244  
www.fremontbusiness.com

Please join us to celebrate the holiday with good food, good friends and good times. Please bring a new, unwrapped toy for our annual "Toys for Tots" drive and help every child in the Tri-Cities to have a wonderful holiday.

**14 Leadership Fremont, Class of 2007**  
8:30 a.m., Family Resource Center

**18 Last day to bring toys in for the Toys for Tots Drive**

**19 Leadership Steering Committee Meeting**  
8 a.m., Chamber Conference Room

**Fremont City Work Session**  
4 p.m., City Council Chambers

**22 Chamber office closes for the holidays and reopens on January 2nd**

**26 City Council in recess**

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Jan. 25, 2007: Business MarketPlace 2007**  
4:30-7pm, Hilton Hotel, 39900 Balentine Dr., Newark.

# BUSINESS MARKETPLACE 2007

*Fremont Chamber of Commerce Annual Trade Show*

**Thursday, January 25, 2007**

4:30 - 7:00 pm

**Newark Hilton**

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- Listing on Chamber Web Site
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- List of Trade Show Attendees

8' x 8' Booth Space \$250  
16' x 8' Booth Space \$450  
electrical service \$35

*Booths include a skirted 6' table and two chairs. Electrical service is limited, please reserve service early. Exhibitor is to provide signage. Exhibitors may purchase more than one booth space. Distribution of printed and/or marketing materials is limited to exhibitors only. Deadline for reserving exhibit space is January 19, 2007. Please call KK Kaneshiro at 510-795-2244, ext. 103 to reserve your space. Vendors are not permitted to share booths.*

To reserve your booth, call KK Kaneshiro at 510-795-2244, ext. 103. You can also visit [www.fremontbusiness.com](http://www.fremontbusiness.com) to register online.



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Commerce)  
Indo-American Community  
Federation  
Joanne Louie Facility Manage-  
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HND Solutions Inc.  
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Kitchen Tune-up  
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Pacific Contract Solutions  
RAFT - Resource Area For  
Teaching  
Raymond F. Churchill, Attorney at  
Law  
Scarlet Girl  
Scott Design  
Stage 1 Community Theatre  
The UPS Store  
Woodbury Financial Services

**1 Year**  
511 Regional Rideshare Program  
DEF Enterprises  
Faggiano Chiropractic Health  
Center  
Lotta Java  
Son T. Ly, D.C.  
First National Mortgage Sources  
Secure Taxes Inc.

*Congratulations to all our members who have reached these  
milestones*

## Welcome, New Members

### Automobile Dealers- New and Used

**Dublin Toyota/Scion**  
*Michael Wallace*  
6450 Dublin Court  
Dublin, CA 94568  
c5corvette777@hotmail.com  
www.dublintoysota.com  
Phone: (925) 829-7700  
Fax: (925) 829-9025  
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#### East West Bank

*John Chen*  
491 So. El Camino Real  
San Mateo, CA 94402  
johnchen@eastwestbank.com  
www.eastwestbank.com  
Phone: (650) 375-5128  
Fax: (650) 340-1689  
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### Bookkeeping Services

**Bergstrom Financial Ser-  
vices**  
*Danna Bergstrom*  
P. O. Box 14525  
Fremont, CA 94539  
dbergstrom@bergstromfinancialsvcs.com  
Phone: (510) 552-4848

### Health Care - Smoking Treatment

**Remedy Laser of Fremont**  
*Stephanie Rae*  
200 Brown Road, Ste. 108  
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most advanced technology. Treat-  
ment is painless. Become smoke  
free in only 30 minutes!

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*Jumana Dajani*  
1000 Broadway, Ste. 625  
Oakland, CA 94607  
jumana@bbbemail.org  
www.goldengatebbb.org  
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soned investors. Commercial loans  
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are linked via our  
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## Monthly Visits to the Chamber Website

[www.fremontbusiness.com](http://www.fremontbusiness.com)

**14,464**

Total number of distinct visits during the month of Oct 2006

**14,346**

Average # of visits per month (2006)  
[data provided by Deep Metrix LiveStats]

## Online business directory statistics

### Top 150 Member Displays

12,184

### Click Throughs

987

### Map Referrals

203

### Email Referrals

22



## Member Benefit

### Top of the Week Report

Monday mornings are always a challenge and it's difficult to jump back into the fast-paced business world. The Fremont Chamber keeps you linked to the business community through just one of its communication tools, *Top of the Week Report*, an e-newsletter delivered to you every Monday morning.

Using email delivery technology, the *Top of the Week Report* will be loaded with valuable business information from pending legislation to Chamber events to city council actions to economic forecasts. The *Top of the Week Report* has become an essential source for keeping up with Fremont's fast paced business life and is currently delivered to nearly 3,000 email addresses.

In addition to the education and informational content in the *Top of the*

*Week Report*, it also represents a great advertising opportunity for members through banner and side bar ads through which members can promote their products and services. Advertising is sold in 4-week increments with rates and ad size information available through the Chamber office. Each week, advertising members experience a huge surge in visits to their web site as a result of *Top of the Week Report* advertising.

The *Top of the Week Report* has become such a valuable tool, that many have members have requested the publication be sent to their clients.

If you are not receiving the *Top of the Week Report* or would like to make the publication available to your clients, please email [nbatalao@fremontbusiness.com](mailto:nbatalao@fremontbusiness.com) and type SUBSCRIBE in the subject line.



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## Connection Clubs

### Meeting Dates, Times, Places

The Chamber's Connection Club is a "business to business" referral program, designed to give maximum support and opportunity to Chamber members who understand the value of networking and doing business with people they know and trust. No duplications of business types allowed. Each club may only have one representative of any given profession or specialty.

**To visit a Connection Club, please call the Chair or Vice Chair to reserve your space.**

**Tuesday Noon**  
meets weekly at 11:45 a.m.  
**Fellini O's**  
3900 Newpark Mall Road, Ste. 101, Newark  
Chair: Ron Machado, (510) 657-9946  
Vice-Chair: Lirio Gonzalez, (510) 894-0764  
[www.tuesdayconnectionclub.com](http://www.tuesdayconnectionclub.com)

**Connect 2 Succeed**  
2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday at 11:45 am  
**La Piñata Restaurant**  
39136 Paseo Padre Parkway, Fremont  
Chair: Dr. Joe Joly, 510-249-9037  
Vice-Chair: TBD  
[www.connect2succeed.com](http://www.connect2succeed.com)

**Fridays Women In Business**  
meets weekly at 7:30 a.m.  
**Best Western Garden Court Inn**  
5400 Mowry Ave., Fremont  
Chair: Hong Burt, (408) 425-2714  
Vice-Chair: Kathy Cotton, (510) 490-7740  
[www.fremontwib.com](http://www.fremontwib.com)

**Professional Source**  
meets at 11:30am. on 3rd Thursday  
**The Depot Cafe**  
37260 Fremont Blvd., Fremont  
Chair: Kevin Dean, 510-687-9737  
Vice: Rich Hemmerling, 408-234-4394  
[www.theprofessionalsource.com](http://www.theprofessionalsource.com)

**Wednesday Noon**  
meets weekly at 12 noon  
**Aegis Living of Fremont**  
3850 Walnut Ave., Fremont  
Chair: Susannah Ahn, (510) 739-1515  
Vice: Drew Thompson, (510) 657-8776  
[www.fremontreferrals.com](http://www.fremontreferrals.com)

**Thursday AM**  
meets weekly at 7:30 a.m.  
**The Depot Cafe**  
37260 Fremont Blvd., Fremont  
Chair: Renee White, (510) 440-1100  
Vice-Chair: Brad Gelesic, (510) 612-3858  
[www.thursdayAM.com](http://www.thursdayAM.com)

**Referrals Plus**  
1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday at 11:45 am  
**Nouvelle Bistro**  
43543 Mission Blvd., Fremont  
Chair: Melinda Yee, (510) 651-2448  
Vice: Sheryl Marymont, (510) 661-0906  
[www.thursdayreferralsplus.com](http://www.thursdayreferralsplus.com)

**Friday AM Connection Club**  
meets weekly at 7:15 a.m.  
**The Depot Cafe, Fremont**  
37260 Fremont Blvd., Fremont  
Chair: Brendon Whateley, (650) 472-1116  
Vice-Chair: Guido Bertoli, (510) 790-2444  
[www.fridayconnections.com](http://www.fridayconnections.com)

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## Company Policies

At the top or bottom of your to-do list?

Unsure whether the need for employer policies applies to your business? Ask yourself the following questions...

- Has it been over a year since the policies were last reviewed and updated?
- Were any of your policies "borrowed" or copied from another business?
- Are any of your employees performing below expectation and don't understand that this is a problem?
- Is the business growing, changing, or facing new competition?

If one or more of the answers to the questions above is "yes," now might be the time to move an updated policy manual from the bottom of your to-do list to the top.

Well-written policies are the basis for documenting how a business manages its employees. They are also the foundation for communicating what is expected of employees and the consequences when an employee's performance or conduct fails to meet expectations. Also, written policies ease the burden on supervisors and managers. In the absence of written guidance, they are often left to handle employee matters on a case-by-case basis and end up doing so inconsistently.

Although a comprehensive policy manual is not legally mandated, there are a few policies that you are required as an employer to have in place. When you have such policies in writing and distribute them to all employees, you are demonstrating a good faith effort

to comply with Federal and State laws.

One of these required policies relates to prohibiting harassment. All California employers are required under the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) to take all reasonable steps to prevent harassment or discrimination from occurring in the workplace. Having a well-communicated policy in place is widely viewed as the first step in demonstrating that the employer has taken compliance seriously.

Another example of an important policy to have in place is one affirming that all employment with the company is "At-Will." Most "At-Will" statements include language such as, "Employment may be terminated by the employee or by the company at any time and with or without any reason." As a matter of fact, there are several documents in which a solid "At-Will" statement should appear so there is no misunderstanding.

Other key policies to incorporate in the policy manual may include pay practices, attendance policies, disciplinary actions, meals and rest breaks, hours of work, definitions of employee classifications, leaves of absence, standards of conduct, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), paid time off (sick, vacation, holidays), etc.

I always caution businesses strongly against simply adopting policies that were originally written for a different business or work environment. Often these do not fit the needs and challenges of your own business. In the end, what seemed a convenient short-cut may

cause more problems, whether in terms of legal compliance, operational matters, or employee morale.

Employment policies should be regularly revisited and updated as necessary when legally required or when they no longer address the needs of your business. A properly maintained policy manual is an important tool in effective workplace management, as well as the foundation of a good defense against employment-related charges or lawsuits.

Once your new policy manual is in place, don't forget about it. You aren't done yet. Two critical steps still lay ahead.

First, it must be properly communicated and shared with your employees. After all, what point is there to documenting what is expected of all employees if they don't know about it?

Second, all members of the management team - anyone with lead or supervisory responsibility - needs to have a thorough understanding of the policies and be prepared to enforce them consistently. Consistency is imperative. Without this, you undermine the value of all of the policies (not just the one you aren't administering consistently). If you are ever faced with a lawsuit or formal charge, you don't want to try to justify inconsistent application of your own policies.

So get out that to-do list. Knowing that written policies can potentially reduce employer risk and improve employee morale, you will surely want to make a new year's resolution to update your policy manual.

## HR Opportunities—

from page 1

business sense, regardless of the number of employees.

The following are some of the more common opportunities (or mistakes) overlooked by employers. As you read through the list, ask yourself, "Does anything on this list sound familiar?" If so, you are definitely not alone. Addressing these matters directly now will certainly save some headaches down the road. If this seems intimidating, just remember that human resources professionals would not be able to step into your shoes and do what you do. We lack the skills and expertise that you possess. Similarly, it is perfectly reasonable to think that familiarity with human resources management techniques and legal requirements are not your strengths and to seek resources to answer questions or guide you as you address these matters.

Now, in no particular order, here's the list...

**1. Pay practices** - Outlined in State and Federal law are criteria that must be evaluated when deciding how an individual working for the business should appropriately be classified. At times, non-exempt (hourly) employees are incorrectly classified as exempt (salaried) employees by paying them

a monthly or weekly salary, when these employees should be paid hourly and be eligible to receive overtime pay. While this situation in entirely inadvertent, the exposure to risk for the business can be sizable, as seen in numerous legal cases. Also in this category are individuals treated as independent contractors who truly are employees. Contrary to a commonly held belief, the title of the position has no bearing on how a position should be classified and paid.

**2. Policies and Procedures** - These are an absolutely critical part of a productive - and legally compliant - workplace. Policy manuals should be reviewed and updated annually. No workplace with employees should accept the risk that results from failing to make this a priority.

**3. Employment Practices** - Every year, changes in State and Federal law impact the requirements employers must follow. Employers must be familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), State and Federal leave of absence legislation (Family Medical Leave Act, California Pregnancy Disability Leave, etc.), OSHA, duty to provide sexual harassment training, etc. The burden is on the employer to be aware of all requirements and to comply appropriately.

**4. Training** - This is often an over-

looked area when it is seen as an "unnecessary" expense. Understanding how training may impact your business and workforce effectiveness is essential. Additionally, some training, such as Sexual Harassment and Workplace Safety, are now required for many businesses.

**5. Hiring and Promotion Processes** - Selecting the best individual has a long-lasting impact on any business (as does selecting the wrong person)! A coordinated and strategic approach to this process up front is well worth the investment of time. Often, feeling the pressure of the need to fill a position immediately, people begin interviewing applicants. If they have not spent time developing a job description in order to define the expectations of the job and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to meet those expectations, they are unprepared to appropriately evaluate how closely each applicant meets our needs. Spending time on this now will pay huge dividends when it comes time to making decisions to hire or promote.

**6. Employee Performance Issues** - Almost all employees truly want to deliver value to the business, yet there are times when, for one reason or another, their performance fails to meet expectations. Failing to address issues directly, honestly, and promptly is a disservice to the business and to the individual. Ideally, involving the em-

ployee in the problem-solving process, while preserving their integrity, will quickly improve the situation for all involved.

**7. Confidential/Proprietary Information** - Often we see this as a key concern in the technology or medical industries. To consider how this might impact your business, ask yourself this: "How would it impact this business if any of this information was shared with a competitor - customer or vendor contact information, marketing strategies, production plans, pricing structure, etc.?" If keeping confidential information confidential is important, steps to address this must be a priority.

**8. Forms, Forms, and More Forms** - Accurate and compliant document completion and retention are essential. Knowing the proper procedure for completing the required forms is vital. From employment applications to employee disciplinary documents, I-9's and W-4's, and benefit enrollment forms, failure to follow the prescribed requirements can result in huge penalties, having a detrimental impact on the business.

Any business that has employees and is looking to increase productivity, assess current legal compliance, and aim to minimize potential risk is advised to ask for help. Even if you're not sure where to start, many resources are available to help point you in the

right direction. If your business has experienced human resources professionals on board, planning to meet with them should be your first step. Many local and state Chambers of Commerce have a wealth of information available to their members, much of it online. For many businesses, working with an employment attorney or human resources consultant who understands your needs and objectives will prove to be a valuable option.

As stated previously, if any of these issues sound familiar, you are not alone. Not to seize this "opportunity" to review these items with your business in mind and develop an appropriate plan of action might indeed be a "mistake."

*Irene Koehler is a Human Resource Consultant and owner of First Thing Tomorrow. Irene lends her expertise and guidance to small to mid-size businesses interested in managing change, improving employee performance, increasing workforce productivity and reducing employer liability. With over twenty years in the Human Resources field, Irene Koehler's professional experience has included work in the public and private sectors, union and non-union environments, and in organizations employing from 10 to 70,000 people. For more information, contact Irene at 510.438.0735, email: irene@firstthingtomorrow.com.*

## Web Design Tips—

from page 1

finer navigation that is consistent throughout the site.

**FONTS:** Keep in mind that the cool ultra-jazzy "Cloister Black MT Light" font that looks so amazing on one computer may well display into plain old Times New Roman on the browser's computer. The reason? He/she does not have that font installed on his/her machine. Stay clear of out-of-the-way hard-to-find fonts. Use plain vanilla fonts like Arial, Verdana, Tahoma, and Courier. If need be, make your jazzy fonts into an image and put that on the page. (and while you're there, do not forget Tip #1.)

**OPTIMIZATION:** Search Engine Optimization is extremely valuable in driving potential customers to your website. This subject is often the most misunderstood function of website design, even among professionals, considering that most search engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.) do not

publish their page-ranking methods. Defining best practices would require another lengthy article, let's just say it far exceeds using META Tags.

**DYNAMIC vs. STATIC:** Simply put, A Static Web page is like a document, in that each page is individually designed. Dynamic websites are websites generated through database inquiries (PHP/SQL/ASP). Dynamic website content is most-often used for content that must be displayed in multiple ways. This allows one data entry to be listed in many different ways, for example. A listing for a home, could be displayed by region, by price range, number of rooms, etc. . . . Proper understanding of your content and long term goals should be well understood before a designer begins the design.

Moral of the story, only experienced web designers truly understand all aspects of a well rounded design. A well designed website will is a

worthwhile investment that will truly pay dividends in the long run. Do not be penny wise and pound foolish when it comes to your website needs. Working with quality web designers will pay dividends for years to come.

*Gorden Mack is the president of Info-Mgt.net. Established in 2004, Info-Mgt.net and specializes in helping businesses manage their information more effectively, on-line, face-to-face and in print by providing a menu of services to satisfy the full spectrum of marketing requirements, thereby allowing clients to remain focused on their core capabilities. Info-Mgt.net can help your business achieve increased sales through improvement of document libraries, on-line presence and communication to your customers through press releases, e-mail marketing and targeted advertising. For more information contact Gorden B. Mack at gmack@info-mgt.net.*

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# Holiday Shipping Tips

*Be sure your holiday treasures arrive safely*

by Ken Ariathurai  
owner, *The UPS Store*

Christmas Season is upon us. That means shopping, shopping and more shopping. What do you do with the crystal bowl you bought for Aunt Claire or the nifty toys you purchased for little Jeff? Well, if they live out of town, you have to somehow get it to them, intact and before Christmas. Here are some tips on how to pack and ship those items.

## Packing:

There are two options to do this. One way is to pack it yourself using whatever packing materials are on hand and risk that it may not make it there in one piece. The other option is to let a professional pack it for you and have the peace of mind that it will make its journey safely. For the do-it-yourselfers, you can achieve a professional packing by following these guidelines provided by UPS, the world's largest shipper:

- wrap items in bubble wrap.
- use a box, which is 2 inches larger than the item, in all dimensions. Ex-

ample: if the item is 14 x 12 x 6 inches, use a box that is at least 18 x 16 x 10.

- fill the bottom of the box with a 2-inch layer of packing peanuts.
- place the item on the cushioning material.
- pour more cushioning material into the box, to fill the 2-inch gaps on all sides and the top.
- fold the flaps and seal with strong shipping tape.

The gift is now properly packed and ready to brave the shipping world of handcars, trucks, conveyor belts and airplanes.

## Shipping:

There are two main methods of shipping. One is to ship by ground through a shipping company or the postal service. This usually takes about a week-so plan ahead. UPS and Express Shippers provide tracking numbers for your package. Each package automatically includes up to \$100 insurance - in case of damage or loss. Additional insurance can be purchased for more valuable items, such as a necklace for your sweetheart in Colorado.

The second method is to ship by air. UPS and Express Mail carriers provide this service. During the Christmas rush, if you delay, air may be your only guarantee to get it there on time. However, air shipment is more expensive than ground, especially if your package is large or heavy. If you shop early and plan ahead, you can get your gifts professionally packed and shipped at a lower cost.

## Important Tips:

Packing - if you pack it yourself; purchase a new box, packing materials and good strong shipping tape. You can save time and avoid stress by taking it to the professionals at The UPS Store or similar outfit.

- the box should be new and 2 inches larger on all sides than the item to be packed
- use proper packing materials not newspapers or old rags (newspapers compress and can damage the item).

Use tape to seal all openings (seams) of the box.

## Shipping

- Insure the items for the proper value

- Write the 'to and from' information clearly on each box
- Ship early to get it there on time

## Key Dates:

- Dec. 4th - busiest shipping day
- Dec. 14th - last day for UPS ground shipments to get there before Christmas
- Dec. 15th - Hanukkah
- Dec. 18th - last day to ship via UPS 3 day
- Dec. 19th - last day to ship via UPS 2 days
- Dec. 20th - last day to ship via UPS next day

*Ken Ariathurai is the owner of The UPS Store on Mission Blvd. across from Ohlone College, and next to Starbucks. Ken's store specializes in packing and shipping fragile items. They also provide all printing services. He can be reached at [kenaria@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kenaria@sbcglobal.net) or (510) 687-1600.*

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### Continuing Education: Professional growth for continued success

Many professions require continuing education in order for professionals to keep their license or credentials. But for those whose professions do not require continuing education, it is equally important to invest in yourselves by seeking out opportunities for professional growth. During December's FCCTV *Continuing Education: Professional growth for continued success*. KK Kaneshiro, direc-

tor of member services and host of the Fremont Chamber of Commerce television show (FCCTV) interviews guest Patricia Carrera, Senior Learning Consultant for Kaiser Permanente. Patricia discusses Kaiser's program of developing employees by grooming them for future leadership positions by taking advantage of special leadership classes and seminars offered within communities and educational institutions.

## Comfort Keepers—

from page 3

during this difficult process, here is some advice based on the experiences we encounter every day while working with these families. Below are the next steps that you and your family should follow:

1. *Discuss the situation with the individual* - Don't be afraid to ask or talk to your aging family members. Often seniors will not tell you if they are having trouble unless you ask. It is important to reassure seniors about your questions. They do not want to lose their independence and are afraid of being moved out of their home into a strange environment.
2. *Make a doctor's appointment for the individual* - Be sure and make the appointment when you, another family member or someone else can relay the concerns directly to the doctor. If you are not able to be there in person, schedule a time to call the doctor.
3. *Determine what services are available in their community* - Talk with local social service agencies or community organizations such as a local Area on Aging office or church group.
4. *Make minor adjustments in their lifestyle* - It may be necessary to bring in outside help to provide companion-

ship and to assist with daily activities such as meal preparation, light housekeeping, trips to their doctor's appointments, etc. Here are some questions to consider when selecting a caregiver:

- Is the care provider a home care agency, employment agency, registry/broker, or an independent contractor?
- How long has the agency been providing private duty home care?
- How does the agency screen and select caregivers prior to an assignment? Do they hire independent contractors or are they employees of the agency?
- Are references and criminal backgrounds checked on all employees?
- Is there a health care professional, who along with the client and family develops an individualized plan of care? How are emergencies handled after normal business hours?
- 5. *Use this time to plan ahead for unforeseen events* - Take this time to establish advanced directives including establishing a power of attorney, will, living will, etc. There is no such thing as being too prepared.

Remember, the holiday season is a time for family, togetherness and es-

tablishing lifelong memories. By taking the time to address these issues before they reach the crisis stage, your family will have the much-needed sense of security, comfort and hopefully the ability to create new memories with your aging loved ones for many years to come!

*Comfort Keepers can provide guidance and assistance to families throughout the Bay Area. Comfort Keepers offers companionship and other non-medical services for aging adults, new mothers and others needing assistance. In-home services include companionship, meal preparation, light housekeeping, grocery shopping, transportation, personal care and more. Owners, Jessica and Jennifer Abrams (Sisters and Certified Senior Advisors) understand from their own family experiences the importance of helping people live independent and dignified lives within the comfort of their own homes. If you are in need of assistance or are interested in learning more about Comfort Keepers, please call (510) 790-9555 or (925) 469-9555 or visit [www.comfortkeepers.com](http://www.comfortkeepers.com). Each office is independently owned and operated.*

### FCCTV Times & Channels

FCCTV is shown in over 646,000 households! Would you like to be a guest? Call KK Kaneshiro at 510-795-2244, ext. 103. Fremont Chamber of Commerce Television (FCCTV) highlights Fremont Chamber of Commerce members

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# Happy Holidays

from the Fremont Chamber of Commerce