



HR Matters

Lisa Bergersen, JD, SPHR, Human Resources Director, City of Pewaukee

Human Resources is the management of people. It matters because individuals are the heart of our organizations. The services that municipalities provide are only as good as those who provide them. Therefore, people are our greatest asset.

HR matters for several additional reasons. Here are three major ones:

1. *Legal liability is minimized.*

Employment laws govern every aspect of the employment relationship, including hiring, training, discipline, termination, medical situations, safety, wages, hours, benefits, and how people treat each other in the workplace. These laws can be local, state, or federal, and they are numerous. Many organizations are unaware of the fact that they are out of compliance with one or more applicable laws.

Non-compliance with a particular employment law could be exposed at some point, whether through a complaint, audit, or other means. Consequences can involve the payment of damages, backpay, fines, or other penalties. Organizations need to understand which laws apply and how to remediate non-compliance when applicable.

Adherence to employment laws is the foundation upon which all good HR procedures are built. Policies and practices that are legally compliant

should be in place and govern every aspect of the employee lifecycle.

2. *Delivery of services is improved.*

When we value employees and strive to bring out their best, the delivery of services is improved, our organizations thrive, and our constituents are the benefactors. HR helps create a customer-focused culture by aligning people programs with the organization's overall strategic plan, and by paying the utmost attention to who is hired, and how employees are trained, coached, and treated. As a result, every employee in the organization can come to understand how critical his or her function is in the organization and customer service is enhanced.

This is an ongoing process, and people management must evolve and adapt to the current workforce. Command and control no longer works. Coaching, feedback, and productive conflict management must become the new norm. A great HR program can drive these concepts into the culture of the organization.

3. *Organizations save time and money.*

HR improves internal processes, functions, and employees, so that the organization operates more efficiently and effectively. Proper management of benefits, safety, payroll, and technology

saves money. Use of sound recruitment, hiring, background screening, onboarding, and talent development practices reduces turnover and the costs associated with it. HR studies the workforce and how tasks and jobs are accomplished and uses that information to look for ways to cross-train employees and to improve the efficiency of the way work is organized and executed.

HR monitors the work environment to ward off costs associated with unsafe work practices, bullying, harassment, and discrimination, before those situations result in the filing of a claim or lawsuit. Legal compliance ensures that our organizations do not suffer financial loss associated with expensive claims, such as class actions that are often brought as part of wage and hour litigation.

Where to Start

This column is written with the understanding that most municipalities in Wisconsin do not have a dedicated HR professional. Often oversight for human resources management falls to the administrator, finance director, or clerk. My goal is to provide relevant HR information in this monthly column to assist such communities.

In addition, there are several available resources to educate the person in your organization responsible for

compliance and people management. Many professional associations such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)(<https://www.shrm.org/certification/about/Pages/default.aspx>), the HR Certification Institute (HRCI)(<https://www.hrci.org/our-programs/our-certifications/>) and the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR)(<https://www.ipma-hr.org/advance-your-career/get-certified>) offer certification programs in human resources management. These courses provide a deep dive into the study of legal compliance, HR basics, and best practices, for a relatively reasonable cost. Other organizations, such as the International City/County Management

Association (ICMA), offer numerous free HR resources (<https://icma.org/topic-search/human-resources>).

There are also local chapters of SHRM throughout the State (<http://wishrm.org/Chapters>). These groups provide many educational programs in legal compliance and people management, many of which are free with an annual membership.

The Wisconsin State SHRM Council puts on a comprehensive two-day conference every October in the Wisconsin Dells (<http://www.wishrm.org/2019-State-Conference>). There are more than 50 teaching sessions covering a wide array of compliance and HR management topics.

Another source of great information is the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)(<https://www.opm.gov/>). OPM's material as it relates to recruitment and hiring is particularly valuable (<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/>).

Future Editions

This monthly column will offer HR basics, best practices, and compliance information. If you would like to see a particular subject addressed in a future column, please email your suggestions to bergersen@pewaukee.wi.us

Employees 351

ELGL #CityHallSelfie Day is August 15!

(And yes, Villages can participate too!)

Come on Wisconsin cities and villages! This is your chance to showcase your local gov love. Participation is easy:

1. Take a picture of yourself in front of your local government building – any municipal building works!
2. Post the picture on social media with the hashtag #CityHallSelfie. On Twitter, tag @LeagueWIMunis in your post and the League will retweet you, take a screenshot of your tweet and post it to Facebook. Tag us on Facebook and we'll share your post to the League's page.

The Engaging Local Government Leaders will have trophies, recognition, and prizes for the people and organizations that show the most pride and creativity on the big day.

This day is all about local government pride. So it doesn't matter if you work for a city or village, town or county – just hop in front of your municipal building, snap a picture, and use the hashtag to share it with the world!

Learn more here: <https://elgl.org/cityhallselfie/>

