



## Fact Finder

HRA Services, Inc.  
[www.hraservices.com](http://www.hraservices.com)

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"...helping organizations find solutions to people-related problems"

*We wish you a happy, healthy, and successful New Year.*

### EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK MAYBE NEXT MONTH

What's our policy on Internet and cell phone use? What can I do about Mary who spends a good part of her day sending personal emails and ordering stuff online? How does our overtime policy work in a week with a holiday like Thanksgiving or Christmas? It's a common problem. The employee handbook project or proposed changes keep slipping down the "to do" list.

For more than two decades, HRA has been helping law firms, service organizations, manufacturers, medical practices, and financial institutions design and develop employee handbooks and managers' guides that promote clear communications and reduce liability. Well-written handbooks and managers' guides contribute to improved supervisor-employee relationship, higher productivity and morale, and profitability by giving managers clearly articulated company policies and procedures that ultimately save time and money otherwise wasted by re-inventing the wheel each time a specific employee issue arises. While these need to address legal and regulatory requirements like the Fair Labor Standards Act, Family and Medical Leave, and many others, they must also strike a key balance in conveying such policies while reflecting the unique aspects of the organization's culture, management style, and history.

HRA's approach to developing these vital tools results in professionally prepared, customized, readable documents usually in six to ten weeks. If you need an employee handbook and managers' guide, and most employers do, or you need to review your current publications to be sure they are up-to-date, give us a call.

Remember well written employee handbooks and managers' guides provide both employees and supervisors a clear view of how your organization works and bring an important sense of consistency and fairness that promotes good management and employee loyalty.

**NEW FOR 2007**  
**COLLABORATIVE SKILLS FOR TEAMS**

*Collaborative Skills for Teams* provides your organization with the key to building collaborative, effective teams by teaching participants the importance of different roles on a team and exploring how various team roles communicate and manage time and priorities.

By incorporating proven, research-based assessment data, *Collaborative Skills for Teams* personalizes the learning experience for each team member. Participants discover four distinct team roles, identify which team role they are most comfortable utilizing, and learn the four stages of team projects. Relevant, entertaining video and hands-on experience-based learning activities generate rich opportunities for participants to learn strategies for maximizing their contributions, resulting in creation of highly productive, efficient, and cohesive teams.

Participants come away with skills, knowledge, and tools they can immediately use when working on a team. Your organization will benefit from having more productive teams, higher employee morale, and lower turnover.

Participants will:

- Learn the four different roles within teams, their preferred roles, and the diversity of priorities and preferences of each role in a team
- Understand team project stages and the activities and priorities associated with each of the four stages
- Understand the challenges and communication breakdowns they may face when working with others who have different priorities and tendencies
- Explore how team roles interact in meetings and learn strategies to be more effective in managing differences
- Understand their own time-management preferences based on their team roles
- Gain a clearer understanding of how people manage time to become more aware of how they might be helping and hindering team efforts
- Create personal action plans for strategies to consider when working and communicating with each of the four roles

This program has synchronized the following training essentials for you:

**Online Assessment-** Includes trusted, proven assessment. The assessment is sent as pre-work completed online prior to training, ensuring training time is maximized.

**Individualized Participant Workbook-** Workbooks incorporate personalized assessments for each individual. The learning becomes relevant and the facilitation time more effective and productive.

**Synchronized Participant Pages-** Corresponding participant workbook pages for every PowerPoint reference. Note taking is made easy, guesswork is removed, and participants keep in step with every reference you make.

**Fully Scripted Leader's Guide-** Synchronized with Participant Workbooks and PowerPoint, and editable. Leaders' Guides are generated in easily accessible PowerPoint files, which are ready to use as they are, or may be edited with your personal touches.

**PowerPoint That Makes a Point-** High-impact, visual storytelling slides with effective animations. Professional, high-quality presentations that quickly engage learners.

**Video Built into PowerPoint-** PowerPoint files built with video synchronized right into the presentation. No more wasting time searching for video clips in a VHS tape or DVD, taking the stress out of transition time.

## **PAY RAISES REMAIN BELOW FOUR PER CENT VARIABLE PAY OPTIONS CONTINUE TO GROW**

For the last four years, annual pay increases budgeted by American companies have been below four percent and are expected to remain at that level for 2007. Average increases for 2006 are at 3.5% for most industries, including manufacturing, retail and wholesale, utilities, and commercial banking. Looking ahead at 2007, surveyed companies estimate a median salary increase of 3.8% for executives and 3.5% for nonexempt and exempt employees across all industries.

"Moderate inflation has allowed employers to continue to control payroll costs," said Charles Peck, Conference Board compensation specialist. "This continued control is reflected in the pattern of salary increase budgets this year compared with last year's projections." The rate of inflation should remain below the salary increase budgets this year and next, Peck said. The Conference Board estimated a 3.1% increase in inflation for 2006 and a 3.3% increase for 2007.

This sustained trend in modest base pay increases continues to prompt the growth among U.S. organizations of variable pay programs that tie performance-based increases to the accomplishment of discrete annual objectives. Employers are using this sustained pattern as a platform for keeping base increases modest while recognizing more productive performer with the opportunity for additional pay measured against specific annual goals. In fact, a recent survey showed variable pay program usage by large employers at 80%, up from 51% in 1991. The survey also noted: "Variable pay programs allow companies to manage fixed costs, create focus on key business objectives, motivate and reward employees with bonuses when performance goals are attained. The bottom line is that variable pay is a smarter way to manage a business in a good or bad economy."

For almost a quarter of a century, HRA has helping organizations sustain success with tailored, innovative salary administration and variable pay programs designed to promote productivity and profitability. Please give us a call if you would like to discuss developing innovative compensation programs to fit your organization's needs.

### **DON'T LOSE SLEEP OVER HR ISSUES**

There are few things as worrisome to most normal people as how to handle a nagging performance or employment problem. "Perhaps if I'm just patient, she will get the message . . . ." "He knows the areas where I need his performance to improve, but . . . ." "I know what I'd like to do to correct the situation, but . . . ." "I know she feels she is ready to move ahead, but . . . ." "We really need to part company; however . . . ."

HRA offers clients day-to-day advice, counsel, and coaching on a variety of employment, employee relations, and organizational issues. This service provides timely responses to client questions and concerns on day-to-day management, leadership, and supervisory concerns. If you're wrestling with difficult people decisions, give us a call. We have extensive experience and expertise, developed over the last twenty-five years, in helping others find productive solutions to people problems.

The *HRA Fact Finder* is published by HRA Services, Inc., to keep clients and business associates abreast of developments and trends in human resources and personnel management and is not intended to serve as professional advice on specific personnel and organizational issues.

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