

HR Resources for Associations

By Lynn Brown, CHRP

It's a balancing act. Doing more with less is the plight of many organizations and associations are not exempt. The senior management of any association often has deluge of responsibilities wearing many hats, including finance, fundraising, operations and human resources.

Human resources, in particular, is a place where a manager often has to spend a considerable amount of time because the infrastructure of most associations depends on the good work of its staff. The good news is that there are more and more resources available to make a manager's job easier, at least as far as HR is concerned.

There are several resources for professionals with HR concerns. Internet resources abound and are able to answer basic HR questions. The Government of Ontario, Ministry of Labour web site www.gov.on.ca/LAB has restructured their web site to make it much more user-friendly and accessible, particularly for employers. Rather than search through legislative documents, the web site has a number of *Fact Sheets* and *Frequently Asked Questions* in areas of most interest to employers.

The Human Resources Professional Association of Ontario (HRPAO) offers affiliate memberships for non-HR professionals. Very reasonably priced, the affiliate membership provides you with most of the benefits and is an excellent resource to research HR-related issues and trends. www.hrpa.org.

For more complicated situations, a very cost-effective solution can be outsourcing. Just as major corporations are looking to save costs by outsourcing, associations can also stretch scarce resources by taking advantage of this trend.

There are many ways outsourcing can work for an organization. You can have an individual regularly on-site a few days a week or month. They can come in for a specific project, or you can call on them for advise on an as-needed basis.

The main advantage of outsourcing is the ability to retain expertise in a wide-range of HR

areas without taking on significant cost in overhead. For organizations of fewer than 100 people, having a full-time in-house HR resource can be difficult to justify. And rather than having to develop specific HR knowledge that may or may not be relevant to your staff, you simply pay for what you need as you need it. This can be especially cost-effective for specific projects such as compensation, updating performance measurement/evaluation systems, reorganizations or developing policies or procedures.

When looking for an outsourcing consultant make sure the person has the expertise in the areas that you need. If you are using them as a resource for HR basics, they should certainly be able to advise you in areas such as employment contracts, terminations and employee relations. As well they should have a solid understanding of relevant legislation. Fit is also important. Make sure the person has a particular understanding of the special challenges facing not-for profits and especially those in member-focused associations.

Utilizing any or all of these resources can make a significant difference in your time and the smooth functioning of your association.

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