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2012: WORKFORCE TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The coming year holds promise of continued recovery in the economy and labor markets. There are, however, several areas employers should pay close attention to as the year progresses. Following are a few of the issues which will be significant to employers over the next year.

1. Increased Wage and Hour Compliance: Over the last few years wage and hour litigation and compliance fines have increased by 80%, with the average settlement being \$12 million. The Department of Labor is vigorously enforcing the current wage and hour regulations resulting in more audits, litigation and state rules. This trend will continue through 2012 and beyond.

Steps to Take: Employers should evaluate their pay practices and position classifications to ensure they comply with current regulations. Conducting a thorough review helps ensure regulatory standards are met and confirms the effectiveness and competitiveness of current pay practices.

2. Immigration and E-Verify: As of April 2012 all Alabama employers will be required to participate in the Federal E-Verify employment verification program. Employers will have new administrative processes which must be managed correctly to avoid audits, fines and potential litigation. Failure to comply – even unintentionally - can wind up costing many thousands of dollars and potentially lead to the loss of business licensure.

Steps to Take: The E-Verify system can be quite complex, so employers should seek assistance with enrollment and training. In addition, companies should audit their internal I-9 forms and processes to ensure compliance with current regulations as well as other standards set by the Immigrations and Customs Enforcement Agency.

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3. Social Media Boom: In 2012 41% of business plan to increase their social media investments to take advantage of the unique marketing and customer service opportunities afforded by these channels. Although social media offers many benefits, it also raises many concerns about privacy and employee productivity which companies must address up front. Failure to manage these risks could result in lost productivity, compliance fines and potential litigation.

Steps to Take: Companies should determine the best use of social media for their business purposes and then establish clear policies which dictate acceptable use. A strong social media policy should establish employee use parameters, privacy policies and essential data protection. Make sure employees are aware of corporate policies and that those policies are consistently enforced.

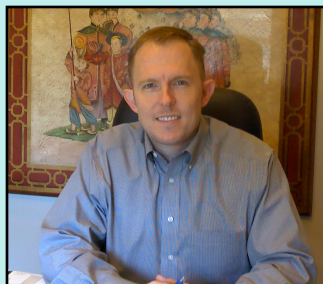
4. Continued Multitasking and Outsourcing: In 2012, companies will continue to face increasing demands on resources and time despite projections of a very slow economic recovery. Many managers are finding themselves responsible for aspects of the business that they may not have the time, experience or resources to handle. such as HR, accounting and marketing. Trying to find affordable and effective assistance with such issues is of increasing importance and companies are finding that identifying outsourcing partners to assist in these areas is becoming an integral part of their strategic plans.

Call on HBK to assist you in preparing for these and other workforce management issues. Our experienced staff can help your company manage compliance issues and build a strong foundation for growth.

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