VOLUME 3 ISSUE NO. 5 — SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2017

MERIT SHOP CONTRACTOR WISCONSIN

TURNING BRAIN DRAIN INTO KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

FLSA EXEMPTIONS – TAKE TWO

USING SOCIAL MEDIA DURING RECRUITMENT

THE POWER of YOUR PEOPLE

GETTING THE BEST OUT OF YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES

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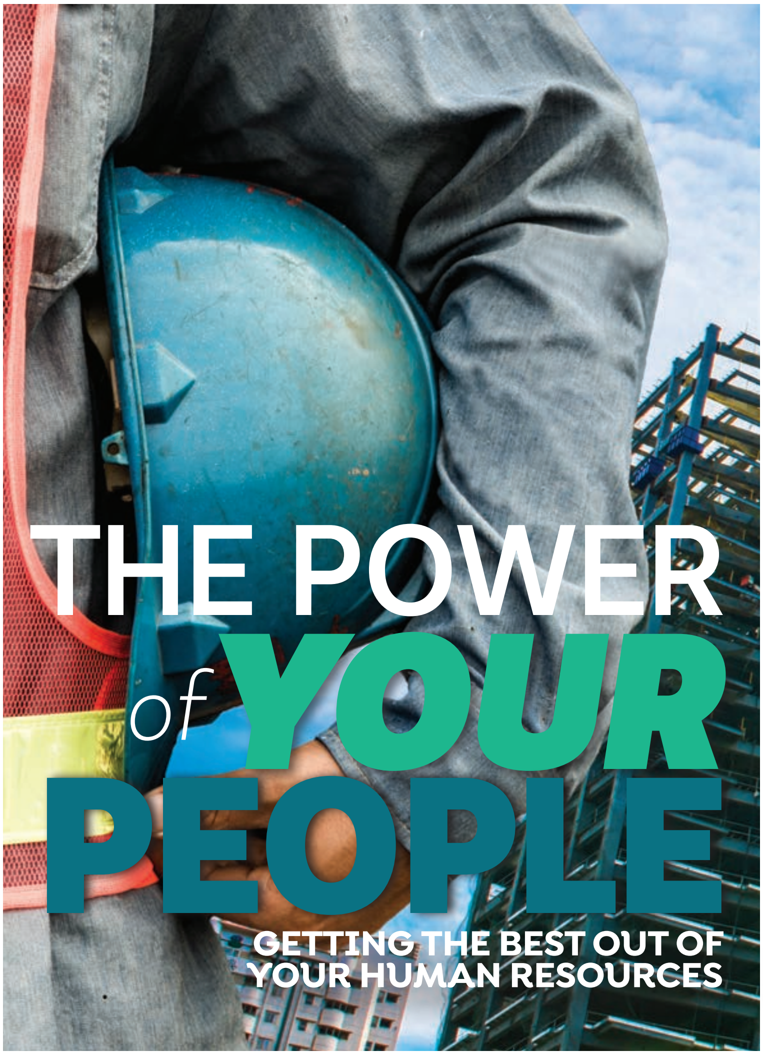

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Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc.
Wisconsin Chapter

Website: www.abcwi.org
ABC National: www.abc.org

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Postmaster, send address changes to:
ABC of Wisconsin, 5330 Wall Street, Madison, WI 53718

Merit Shop Contractor Wisconsin is published six times annually by
Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin, Inc.
(ISSN# 10642978))
5330 Wall Street, Madison, WI 53718. Periodicals Postage Paid, Madison, WI and other additional mailing offices. (UPS 340-650). Subscription price is $50 per year.

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FROM OUR PRESIDENT

A Bigger Boat for Skilled Workers

REMEMBER THE SCENE IN THE MOVIE JAWS, when Roy Scheider's character, Martin Brody, catches his first glimpse of the size of the great white shark? He utters one of the film's best lines to grizzled Captain Quint, "You're gonna need a bigger boat!"

That scene comes to mind as we ponder the immensity of the Foxconn project in southeastern Wisconsin. It is estimated that it will take 10,000 construction employees working five years to build the facility. There has been a lot of discussion, appropriately, on how we meet the skilled labor requirements of a project this size, especially considering strains already placed on our labor force.

I personally have met with the Governor's chief of Staff and Scott Walker himself to make sure that the construction work is open to all qualified contractors regardless of union affiliation. In addition, I participated in a recent panel discussion of industry groups addressing this challenge for the expected Foxconn project, the largest, single economic development in Wisconsin history. Several members of the panel fixated on how our industry must do everything possible to make training more accessible to individuals.

A bill introduced in the Wisconsin Legislature by State Senator Chris Kapenga (R-Delafield) and State Representative Rob Hutton (R-Brookfield) would help do just that. The measure, backed by ABC, would reduce the skilled worker-to-apprenticeship ratios required by the State of Wisconsin, thereby allowing more apprentices to be trained.

Currently, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's ratios are complicated and confusing. For example, sprinkler fitter and bricklayer is 1:1 regardless of the number of apprentices, but painter is 1:1, and then goes to 4:12; which amounts to 12 skilled workers to supervise four apprentices. Laborer is two skilled workers supervising one apprentice until you get to over 10; then you are required to have five skilled workers supervise each apprentice moving forward!

This legislation would eliminate these complicated rules and allow an across-the-board, one-to-one requirement and, therefore, allow contractors to train more individuals at any given time. The bill would also give the apprenticeship advisory committees the ability to come to consensus on the length of carpentry and plumbing apprenticeships.

Wisconsin's ratios are much more stringent than many states that allow for one-to-one or even two or three apprentices to one journey worker, in some cases. Last year, Michigan's Legislature changed its ratio for electrical apprentices from one apprentice per journey worker to three apprentices per journey worker.

More flexibility for the ratios provides another tool for our members to meet workforce needs, take on more work and expand their companies. It also addresses the skills gap by making the skilled trades more accessible to more individuals looking to make a career in construction.

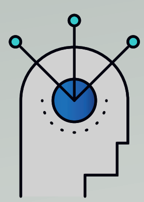
I would not argue it's a panacea for the Foxconn project, but it's a good, common-sense step toward building a more robust pipeline of workers and expanding the number of skilled workers we have in our boat.

— John Mielke

"WISCONSIN'S RATIOS ARE MUCH MORE STRINGENT THAN MANY STATES THAT ALLOW FOR ONE-TO-ONE OR EVEN TWO OR THREE APPRENTICES TO ONE JOURNEY WORKER, IN SOME CASES."

TURNING BRAIN DRAIN INTO KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

By Mary John — Human Resources Coordinator, DeLeers Construction, Inc.



One of singer and song writer Bob Dylan's most famous song lines – "the times they are a changing" – could certainly be applied to today's workforce. These words especially hold true for the long-held beliefs about older workers. People are working longer nowadays, and not just because they have to do so. That is music to the ears of those of us in the construction industry who have been losing sleep over the skilled labor shortage and brain drain that occurs when employees retire.

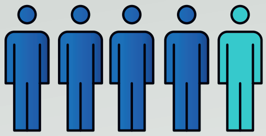
According to the latest numbers from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), one in five workers in the construction industry is age 55 or older. So then, we can easily see how retaining at least some of these workers could be beneficial to our industry, where the employment rate is expected to continue to grow into the 2020s. According to the BLS, the construction industry is projected to grow ten percent by 2024, making it one of the fastest growing sectors of the U.S. economy.

The issue is not the number of available workers. Population data suggests there will be plenty of workers from which to draw, with 75.4 million millennials – those currently 19-35 years old – surpassing the roughly 74.9 million that make up the baby boomer generation, aged 51-69. In the next several years, construction companies will be increasingly reliant on younger workers to fill their open positions, making the availability of workers with the necessary construction skills and experience a significant concern.

The construction industry as a whole is reaching a dramatic shift with our departing retirees to younger replacements. This article examines the challenges and benefits that these ongoing generational shifts will have for the construction industry and offers strategies for the transfer of critical knowledge and expertise to the younger generation of workers that will make up the majority of the industry's workforce in the coming years.

Companies that leverage generational diversity will be better prepared for workforce challenges

Countless articles have been written about workplace tension, resulting from generational differences. Avoiding genera-

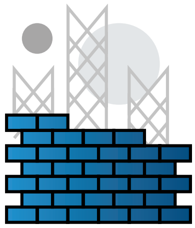


1 IN 5

WORKERS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IS AGE

55 OR OLDER.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IS PROJECTED TO GROW

10 PERCENT BY **2024**

tional conflict in the workplace is not always possible. However, companies that take advantage of their generational diversity by developing strategies for adapting to a younger workforce and transferring the knowledge and skills their more seasoned workers possess will be better positioned for the strong projected growth in the construction industry. What often gets lost in the conversation about age-related issues in the workplace is the fact that both generations bring a lot to the table. Baby boomers have a wealth of experience in the industry to share. Millennials, meanwhile, bring new technologies and a strong desire to discover new efficiencies.

Strategies for transferring the industry knowledge and expertise boomers possess

There are ways to capture the enriched knowledge of older workers as they approach retirement.

1. **Have a knowledge-transfer team.** The knowledge-transfer team can consist of the younger employee in the company with the soon-to-be retired employee. During this time, the younger employee can ask job-specific questions of the older employee. As the older employee is working on a project, the younger employee can shadow him/her and eventually take on the responsibility from the older, soon-to-be retiree.

2. **Many construction companies are preparing for the loss of older workers by establishing a form of apprenticeship, in which the most experienced, older worker is shadowed from task to task by the younger worker with the same skill-set needs.** A departing employee may be asked to put together a detailed manual that lists procedures for the younger employee to use as a reference in the future, if needed. As the departing employee lists procedures and details for the younger worker, he may list details that the younger "apprentice" was never exposed to.

3. Companies may ask the retired worker to return to the company on a part-time basis. This can confirm the retiree's real value to the company, its mission and its new workers. It can also help the retired worker feel as if they still possess a great deal of knowledge. The younger employee may feel they are learning from an expert, with "hands-on" learning instead of theory from a book.

4. Some companies are developing mentoring programs. With so many baby boomers on the cusp of retirement and with so many younger workers joining the ranks of the construction industry, there is an unprecedented – but fleeting – window of opportunity for older workers to use mentoring to leave the industry stronger. Mentoring is going to become very important for the future of the construction industry, especially as a means of transferring important knowledge and skills to the younger workers coming into the industry. The more experienced workers have significant institutional knowledge and experience in which younger workers can benefit. However, if they're not willing to pass knowledge down, it's lost. It is vital for our industry to move forward with mentoring relationships so that we're operating efficiently and not reinventing the wheel. Mentoring also benefits the individual and can lead to better retention of quality workers. By fostering such relationships in the workplace, younger workers are able to navigate the industry more easily in their early careers and are often more comfortable asking questions, making them more likely to stay with the company.

Age diversity and generational shifts offer unprecedented opportunity for the industry

While generational differences in the workplace can lead to conflict, smart companies find ways to leverage these differences to their advantage, developing strategies that include:

- Embracing new technologies and allowing younger workers to use them where possible to discover new efficiencies and improve processes.
- Transferring the wealth of knowledge and expertise to younger workers who will soon comprise the majority of the industry's workforce.
- Offering benefits and implementing workplace practices that appeal to the millennial generation.

As the older generation of construction workers leave the jobsites, let's not let their knowledge go to waste. All contractors should implement knowledge transfer strategies so their younger successors can put their energy and restless innovation to work and sustain the Boomers' proficiency that has made the construction industry in the U.S. the best in the world.

GAIN A COMPETITIVE EDGE BY OFFERING NONTRADI EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

By Jesse Oberloh — GBA, Hausmann-Johnson Insurance

Employers looking to gain a competitive edge in attracting and retaining employees may want to offer non-traditional benefits in addition to employees' core compensation and benefits packages.

Many employers expand their voluntary benefits to compensate for increasing health care costs, which is a major factor in the recent trend toward providing a wider array of voluntary benefits. Voluntary benefits cost employers little to nothing while making compensation packages more attractive to employees.

These benefits can be insurance or non-insurance products. Voluntary insurance benefits give employees the opportunity to take advantage of lower group rates, the convenience of payroll deductions and, in some cases, pre-tax deductions. Non-insurance voluntary benefits, which offer extra value to an employee's benefits package, are designed to offer simplicity, convenience, or money-saving options to various aspects of employees' lives.

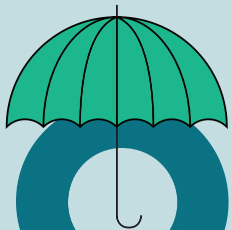
There are three, increasingly popular, nontraditional voluntary benefits that employers are using to gain a competitive edge in the battle of attracting and retaining employees in a tightening talent pool.

LEGAL PLANS

Studies reveal that employees suffering through legal problems are typically absent from work five times more than average, resulting in lower productivity. Group legal plans can alleviate stress and reduce the time it takes for employees to resolve legal issues, enabling them to again focus on their jobs.

Let's take a look:

TIONAL



• Employees pay into the program through payroll deductions and, when legal assistance is needed, an attorney is accessible without the high cost of legal fees.

• Legal plan benefits can help employees in a variety of situations, ranging from phone consultations to courtroom appearances. For any legal plan, certain services are covered. Matters that are not covered will often be provided at a reduced rate.

• Offering a group legal plan comes at no cost to the employer. Employees pay through a payroll deduction, and when they need to use the benefit, they communicate directly with the legal plan provider.

PET INSURANCE

According to a survey by the American Veterinary Medical Foundation, almost two-thirds of pet owners consider their animals to be members of the family and are willing to go to great lengths to ensure their pets' health. Offering pet insurance as a voluntary benefit may be a useful and appreciated benefit. The possibility of saving a pet from life-threatening injury and disease has increased. However, the cost of veterinary care has risen as well. Having pet insurance can provide employees with the ability to say "yes" to costly but life-saving operations.

Let's dive in:

• Most plans are focused on non-routine care and will cover a new illness, disease or injury.

• Pet insurance policies will specify expenses that are not covered. While every plan is different, the following are items that are typically excluded: elective procedures; prosthetic limbs; grooming; training or behavioral problems; pre-existing conditions; breeding; burial-related expenses.

• Employees pay premiums through payroll deductions. Employers receive a group discount code to give to interested employees, who then handle enrollment and benefit selection processes on their own. Claims are handled by the insurance carrier, so very little attention needs to be paid beyond the initial setup.

IDENTITY THEFT INSURANCE

According to the Federal Trade Commission, as many as 13 million Americans become victims of identity theft each year. Identity theft occurs when someone obtains personally identifying information, such as a person's name, credit card number, birth date, Social Security number, home address or bank account numbers, and then illegitimately uses this information. This unauthorized use of personal information can result in great financial loss as the thief amasses credit card debt and tarnishes the victim's credit rating.

Repairing the damage from identity theft can be a daunting and financially taxing task. After losing money to identity theft, no one wants to spend more on the fees and charges that accompany re-establishing a good name and credit.

Here's some additional background on identify theft insurance:

• It assists with the process of recovery from identity theft. Most plans will cover basic expenses incurred during the identity recovery process. In addition, the insurance may cover fees for a fraud specialist who can support and guide your employees through the recovery process.

• Employees pay their premiums through payroll deductions and benefit from a group rate, which is likely less expensive than insurance they could purchase individually. The insurance carriers handle all claims, minimizing the paperwork employers have to process after initial setup and enrollment.

• This type of insurance does not reimburse loss from theft, such as a stolen credit card.

• Aside from some plans, which may provide free credit monitoring, identity theft insurance does not work to prevent identity theft.

Offering nontraditional voluntary benefits is a great way to enhance your benefits package, differentiate yourself from competitors and increase employee satisfaction, all with little impact on your budget and time. Employees benefit from reduced group rates, convenience of payroll deductions and the ease of having multiple options all in one place. Additionally, a good voluntary benefits selection promotes goodwill because employees can choose the options that are best for them and their families.

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FLSA EXEMPTIONS

TAKE TWO

By Douglas E. Witte — Boardman & Clark LLP

About a year ago, many employers were gearing up (or scrambling) to comply with the new "salary level" amount, which must be paid in order for employees to be considered "exempt" from the minimum wage and overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). The May 18, 2016 Department of Labor (DOL) regulation would have required the salary level floor to more than double from $455 per week to $913 per week (or $23,660 annually to $47,476 annually). Just before that regulation was scheduled to take effect on December 1, 2016, a federal judge in the Eastern District of Texas issued a nation-wide injunction prohibiting the new salary threshold from taking effect.

That lawsuit has been appealed to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals where the parties are awaiting a decision. In an interesting development, the United States DOL filed a brief stating that it was no longer going to defend the specific salary level set by the 2016 Final Rule, but that it was defending the Department's authority to establish a salary level test in the first place. The Eastern District Court judge had ruled the DOL did not have the authority to establish any salary level regarding exempt employees. The court did not address the actual salary level issue.

As a result of this case and a change in administration, new Labor Secretary Alex Acosta has decided to revisit the entire issue of "exempt"

The DOL regulation would have more than doubled the salary-level threshold from

$455

per week

to

$913

per week

To qualify for an exemption an employer must prove an employee meets all of the following requirements:

1. *Be paid on a salary basis.*
2. *Meet a minimum salary requirement.*
3. *Perform the exempt work as the primary duty.*

employees under the FLSA. The DOL has issued a Request For Information (RFI) seeking input on how to update the FLSA exemption regulations. This RFI will not be limited just to the salary level, which was the primary change proposed in May of 2016. Rather, the DOL has decided it will also look at the "duties test" and the "salary basis" issues in a comprehensive review of this issue.

This RFI is a precursor to a formal rule-making process. The DOL believes that gathering public input on these issues will greatly aid the Department in moving forward with rule-making in a timely manner.

Exempt Employees

As a review, employees covered by the FLSA fall into two categories: non-exempt and exempt. The main exemptions are typically referred to as the "White Collar Exemptions." This includes executive, administrative, and professional employees. The presumption is that all employees are non-exempt employees unless specific criteria are met. To qualify for an exemption, historically, an employer must prove an employee meets all of the following requirements:

1. Be paid on a salary basis. Employees must be paid a pre-determined and fixed salary that is not subject to reduction because of variations in the quality or quantity of work performed.

2. Meet a minimum salary requirement. Currently the salary level is $455 per week but was proposed to increase to $913 per week.

3. Perform the exempt work as the primary duty.

Comments Sought

The DOL's RIF sets forth 11 specific questions focusing on these three areas. Specifically, the DOL seeks input as to whether the proposed $913 per week salary level is appropriate or whether a different salary level would be more appropriate for exempt employees. There seems to be an acknowledgement from the DOL that the $913 per week requirement was too high. There also seemed to be an acknowledgment from commenters to the 2016 Rule that $455 per week was too low. Where the new level will fall between $455 and $913 remains to be seen, but it is almost certain to change. The DOL noted that the 2004 salary level, updated for inflation, could be one method used.

The DOL has asked whether each White Collar exemption should have its own salary level or remain the same. That is, should executives and administrative employees be subject to the same thresholds?The DOL is interested as to why a different salary level would be more appropriate or effective.

The DOL also queried whether the regulation should contain multiple salary levels. If so, how should those levels be set: By size of employer, census region, state, metropolitan statistical area, or some other method. What would the impact of multiple salary levels be on a particular region or industry and on employers with locations in more than one state?

The DOL seeks input as to how the “duties tests” might be changed. One question is, should the exemption rely solely on the duties performed by an employee without regard to the amount of the salary paid? If so, what elements would be necessary in a “duties only” test? The DOL also requested that commenters weigh in on whether the salary level in the 2016 Final Rule excluded from exemption particular occupations that had traditionally been covered by the exemption.

The 2016 Final Rule, for the first time, permitted non-discretionary bonuses and incentive payments (including commissions) to satisfy up to 10 percent of the standard salary level. The DOL has questioned whether inclusion of bonus and incentive payments should continue and whether 10 percent is an appropriate cap.

The DOL asked for discussion on the highly compensated employee exemption, including whether there should be multiple total annual compensation levels and, if so, how they should be set.

Finally, the DOL asked if the salary levels should have some sort of automatic updating on a periodic basis. The 2016 Rule proposed an update every three years. The Department asked what method should be used and how frequently should the level be adjusted.

The comments are not limited to the 11 questions set forth in the RFI. Rather, the DOL is engaging in a wide-ranging process to gather as much information as it can before drafting new rules. The 2016 Rule process generated over 300,000 comments.

Conclusion

Comments will be accepted until September 25, 2017. However, employers should not expect quick action after that. The 2016 Final Rule was the product of prolonged rule-making notice and comment action (over two years). We would not be surprised if this rule-making process was as detailed and perhaps as lengthy. Then again, predicting this administration has not been easy.

For now, employers do not have to worry about any new changes. The 2016 proposed changes have been enjoined and it is not known when the Court of Appeals may issue a decision on the injunction. However, many employers are not in compliance with the current (2004) regulations with respect to paying employees on a “salary basis” or following the “duties” requirements required for a specific exemption. This may be yet another reprieve for employers to examine their payroll practices, specifically with respect to exempt employees, and make any necessary changes. Wage and hour litigation continues to be an active and growing area. Employers would be wise to make sure they are in compliance with the current exemption requirements, as well as other provisions of state and federal wage and hour laws.

The use of social media by employers is now a routine practice. For human resources and recruiters to dismiss social media as a vetting and recruitment tool today would be akin to ignoring e-mail 20 years ago. Millennials account for 36 percent of the U.S. workforce and according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, they will account for 75 percent of the global workforce by 2025. Given that this group of employees has grown up actively communicating via social media sites and devices, the use of social media is a workplace trend that is here to stay. Social media may be an essential and effective tool utilized during the hiring process, but its use is not without legal risks. The perils and benefits of utilizing social media to (1) recruit candidates by publicizing job openings and (2) conduct background checks on applicants for employment, will be analyzed below, along with important best practices to adopt when relying on social media to recruit your leaders of tomorrow.

THE RISKS AND REWARDS

USING SOCIAL MEDIA DURING RECRUITMENT

By Tiffany L. Hutchens — Attorney, Husch Blackwell LLP

RECRUITMENT TOOL

Through social media, employers can reach candidates faster and at a lower cost (and at times, free). Social media tools allow employers to engage with their target audiences and easily identify whether the candidates are a good cultural fit for the company. On social media platforms, like LinkedIn, job seekers can be specifically targeted and chosen from followers, connections, or supporters of the organization. When using social media as a tool for recruiting, employers should remember that social media postings are “advertisements” that must include the appropriate equal employment opportunity (EEO) and/or affirmative action language. Further, the postings must be retained like all other hiring documents as required by company policy and applicable document retention laws.

VERIFYING AN APPLICANT’S BACKGROUND

Social media may be a successful recruitment and applicant screening tool, but employers should be concerned with the legal risks associated with social media use. For example, an employer may likely discover information about protected characteristics when viewing candidates’ social media profiles. To this end, from a candidate’s social media profile and picture, an employer may learn his or her likely race, approximate age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and more. Users of social media may also commonly post personal information such as medical conditions or family problems that may reveal a disability or need for family leave under the federal or Wisconsin Family and Medical Leave Act.

DISCRIMINATORY HIRING PRACTICES

The use of social media as a recruitment tool may also have a disparate impact on the hiring of older workers who may not utilize social media frequently to apply for job openings. In 2012, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal agency that administers and enforces civil rights laws against workplace discrimination, filed a complaint against the National Park Service. The complaint was prompted when a 61-year-old applicant, who believed she was qualified for the Park Ranger position, was not hired. The EEOC alleged that the National Park Service's "recruitment of younger people through Facebook and other social networking sites put older workers at a disadvantage as older people use computers less often than younger people." The complaint was dismissed, in part, because the EEOC failed to introduce any evidence that the National Park Service exclusively recruited through social media. Furthermore, there was no evidence based on the applicants selected to interview that older workers were disparately disadvantaged or excluded during the application process. Nonetheless, the lawsuit highlights the importance of utilizing social media as one tool (but not exclusive tool) to be utilized during the recruitment process.

Although legal risks do exist for employers utilizing social media to recruit and screen applicants, the fact that the employer may learn information about a candidate's protected status or other personal information does not mean that the employer will use it when making a hiring decision. Furthermore, the same legal risks routinely arise during an interview as candidates often disclose protected information during an interview that an employer cannot consider.

Below are a number of best practices to consider when using social media during the recruitment and hiring process:

• **Do Not Ask For Social Media Passwords.** In Wisconsin, employers cannot ask an applicant (or employee) for his or her social media password by law. The law prohibits employers from:

❍ Requesting or requiring an employee or applicant, as a condition of employment, to disclose access information (e.g., passwords, user names), to a personal social media account or to otherwise grant access to or allow observation of the account;

❍ Terminating or otherwise discriminating against an employee because the employee:

- refused to provide the employer access to a personal social media account; or
- opposed the employer's potential violation of the law, or filed a complaint or testified or assisted in an action against the employer for such a violation; or

❍ Refusing to hire an applicant because the applicant refused to provide access to a personal social media account.

Under federal law, asking for an applicant's (or employee's) social media password creates a real risk of violating the federal Stored Communications Act. For this reason, employers should only view and consider social media content that is public.

FOCUS ON AN APPLICANT'S OWN SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS, NOT ON WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID ABOUT HIM OR HER.

• **Use Human Resources.** It is best if someone in human resources, rather than a project manager or supervisor, screens candidates' social media profiles. The human resources professional is more likely to know what he or she can and cannot consider.

• **Wait.** Check social media profiles after an applicant has been interviewed or been offered a conditional offer of employment, when his or her protected status (if any) is likely already known.

• **Be Consistent.** Do not look at only one applicant's social media profiles. Employers should develop legitimate business policies for determining when social media screenings are appropriate and perform such checks on a consistent basis. For instance, the employer might decide such screening is necessary only for supervisors or office workers.

• **Document Your Decisions.** Print out the page containing social media content on which an employer bases a legitimate hiring decision and record any lawful reason for rejection, such as harassing, discrminatory or illegal conduct on a public social media site. This helps to protect an employer if damaging content has been deleted by the time a hiring decision is challenged by an applicant.

• **Consider the Source.** Focus on an applicant's own social media posts, not on what others have said about him or her. You may want to give the candidate a chance to respond to findings of worrisome social media content.

• **Other Laws May Apply.** If you retain a third party to perform a social media screen, you are probably subject to the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, which contains specific applicant disclosure and authorization requirements, as well as pre-adverse and adverse action notification requirements. Also, Wisconsin state law prohibits adverse action based on off-duty use of a lawful product (e.g., tobacco or alcohol), so employers should be cautious in refusing to hire an applicant for "questionable" but otherwise lawful off-duty contact.

Retain Your ROCK Stars

By Nicole Frank
PHR, SHRM-CP, HR Manager, Dave Jones, Inc.

We are all fighting for talent, and the reality is that we're facing a numbers game. There simply aren't enough people entering the workforce to replace those who are retiring and exiting the workforce.

As a result, it's especially important to not only work hard to recruit new talent, but focus on retaining your current employees and making sure you are not burning out your rock stars. These rock stars will then help you attract other high performers and support the creation of an employee-centric company culture. If you build it, they will come.

Burnout, defined by Mayo Clinic, is a state of physical, emotional, or mental exhaustion combined with doubts about one's competence and work value. During the economic recession, many companies asked their top performers, typically people you could always count on to get things done, to do more with less and perform the job tasks of multiple people. As work continues to improve and business is picking up, have you shifted some of the responsibility of these top performers back on to others? Have you hired additional people to take some of the workload off their shoulders, or looked to do things differently?

One of the first steps in ensuring that these employees are not overburdened is to see what your employees think about the culture of the company and the environment in which they work. It's important to understand what they are thinking and what the actual state of your company is; not just what you think it is. A great way to obtain this information is through an employee survey, which can be conducted annually, or less often, depending on your company and need for the information. The key with employee surveys is to ask pertinent questions related to the culture of your company; make it simple and relevant; and make sure you take action, or at least communicate your findings to your employees once it is completed. By doing so, you will encourage future participation and honest feedback and build positive connections within your company. This information will give you a great starting point and a sense of the current state of the culture.

Members of the Kraemer Brothers team in front of a recent Projects of Distinction Award-winning project, an AC Hotel by Marriott.

Maybe you'll find out you are burning out your employees – including your top performers – and that you have the opportunity to make some impactful changes. What options do you have? Consider some of the following:

❶. Ensure everyone has clear and specific job descriptions with job tasks and expectations clearly defined, and then share the **information with employees.** By clearly defining responsibilities of the team, you allow employees to be able to prioritize tasks and understand what is important for the company and their positions. Employees can then focus on what can truly make an impact on the company and work to move initiatives and tasks forward. They can prioritize tasks and be impactful in their actions. If you don't know where to begin, ask your employees to help you get started by creating their own job descriptions.

❷. Think outside the box with work arrangements. Can employees work from home? Can you allow for flexible work hours? Many of your employees are thinking about work, or performing work outside of the standard or expected work schedule. It's important to remember that they are also working at creating balance with life happening outside of work at the same time. Can you create a culture in which family matters and you allow your employees to take time to

Look for ways that you can create balance for your employees.

attend a child's school program or get them to sports practices? How about an employee who needs to work from home to stay with a sick family member? What about your employees who have aging parents? How can you be flexible with them to meet their family requirements? Look for ways that you can create balance for your employees. Many employees – especially your high performers – will flourish under these arrangements and bring you even better work.

❸. **Utilize strong leadership.** People often don't leave a job; they leave because of a supervisor. Ensure that you have well-trained and fair leaders. Do your leaders understand the demands of the positions they are overseeing? Are they being fair with schedules, wages and responsibilities placed on their teams? It is important that you have the right people in the right seats and ensure all leaders within your company understand the company culture, are consistent with their practices and are supportive of the culture that exists within your company.

❹. **Make the work environment fun!** This doesn't mean that it is all fun and games; but how can you make the company culture more inviting and relaxed? How can you avoid added stressors that people are encountering on the job? Are you including employees in decisions that are being made that directly affect their jobs or daily activities? Are you soliciting and taking their input? Take a look at your employee handbook and rules that you have in place. Have you created an environment that is too tight and unforgiving? Depending on the environment, you may be institutionally stifling creativity. Many workers enjoy working in – and thrive in – collaborative and creative work environments. Look for ways to encourage collaboration and ideas within work teams. Sometimes, less is more. Ensure all your policies and procedures are impactful, relevant and helpful for the growth and support of your company culture.

❺. **Create the opportunity to unplug.** Look for ways to allow your employees to recharge both on and off the job. Establish an environment at work where people can interact with each other. If employees have friendships at work they will be connected with others and with their work. By having these connections, people have an outlet to stressors at work and an environment rich in collaboration. Just like outside of the workplace, people tend to hang out with their friends, with people they can depend on and trust and who have an interest in their success. Think of other "fun." Have gatherings to connect your teams and encourage the employees to unplug. This could be as simple as a company lunch, office games, a fun holiday celebration or monthly birthday celebrations. You will find that even small things can make a big difference. Make sure to not overlook your time-off benefits. With our busy workloads, there are times where companies have great intentions, but employees may feel that taking time off of work creates more work or stress. Work to find ways to allow your employees to take time off of work without having to come back to added chaos or cause them to perform work while they should be unplugged. Encourage time away from work and look to create a work environment where people are cross trained, so people can take time away without coming back behind.

While there may not be one silver-bullet answer that could be applied to every company, it is important that companies put resources and thought into how to avoid or eliminate burnout of workers. Retaining high performers is a key to future success and a key part of the worker shortage we are all living in. Eliminating and reducing burnout will require that you think outside the box, do some things differently and sometimes get a little uncomfortable. It will all be worth it as you build a more engaged and efficient workforce and strong company culture.

NEW MEMBERS

*For membership information contact **Bill Stranberg**, Membership Director*
Associated Builders & Contractors of WI – 608-244-5883

JULY NEW MEMBERS

• **Adleman Electric, LLC**
Scott Adleman
W6045 County Line Rd, Elkhart Lake, WI 53020
Phone: (920) 894-1657
Description: Electrical Contractor
Sponsor: Gerry Krebsbach, K-W Electric, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 29

• **Ansay & Associates, LLC**
Erik Mikkelson
101 E Grand Ave., Port Washington, WI 53074
Phone: (800) 800-6183
Description: Insurance Provider
Sponsor: Roger Kaland, Sentry Insurance
Beam Club Members-to-date: 5

• **Baehr Electric**
Fred Baehr
W5985 Cty Rd X, Withee, WI 54498
Phone: (715) 229-2837
Description: Electrical Contractor
Sponsor: Tom Altmann, Altmann Construction Co., Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 29

• **Buss Electrical Contracting LLC**
Scott Buss
W10971 State Hwy 19, Waterloo, WI 53594
Phone: (920) 253-6568
Description: Electrical Contractor
Sponsor: Nick May, Refrigeration Installation Specialists
Beam Club Members-to-date: 10

• **Caribou Property Management**
Shaina Welch
8383 Greenway Blvd., Suite 110
Middleton, WI 53562
Phone: (608) 286-3825
Description: Property Management
Sponsor: Dan Bertler, Supreme Structures
Beam Club Members-to-date: 14

• **Decker Supply Co. Inc.**
Greg Frank
1115 O'Neill Ave, Madison, WI 53704
Phone: (608) 249-2405
Description: Transportation/Signage Supplier
Sponsor: Megan Decker, Mega Rentals Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 3

• **Gustave A. Larson Company**
Chad Martin
W233 N2869 Roundy Circle West
Pewaukee, WI 53072
Phone: (262) 542-0200
Description: HVAC Supplier
Sponsor: Greg Jones, Dave Jones, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 3

• **L.W. Meyer Inc.**
Greg Keyes
3970 Commercial Ave.,
Phone: (608) 241-8008
Description: Industrial Sales & Equipment
Sponsor: Joe Daniels, Joe Daniels Construction Co.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 14

• **Oregon Community Bank**
Elyse Smithback
837 Raven Ct, Oregon, WI 53575
Phone: (608) 835-3168
Description: Banking/Lending
Sponsor: Dan Bertler, Supreme Structures
Beam Club Members-to-date: 15

• **Pat's Heating & A/C, Inc.**
Patrick McNamee
1833 Executive Dr.,
Oconomowoc, WI 53066
Phone: (262) 567-7499
Description: Mechanical Contractor
Sponsor: Jay Zahn, R&R Insurance Services, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 31

• **Quandt Plumbing, LLC**
Kimberly Quandt
2909 Green Hill Court, Suite J
Oshkosh, WI 53066
Phone: (920) 420-5185
Description: Plumbing Contractor
Sponsor: Gerry Krebsbach, K-W Electric, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 30

• **RWH Plumbing**
Ronald Haag
10851 Blue Mountain Ave, Blue Mounds, WI 53517
Phone: (608) 437-3365
Description: Mechanical Contactor
Sponsor: Nick May, Refrigeration Installation Specialists
Beam Club Members-to-date: 11

• **SES Group, Inc.**
Peter Conradt
PO Box 1349, Grafton, WI 53024
Phone: (262) 376-1126
Description: Mechanical Contactor
Sponsor: Steve Klessig, Keller, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 42

AUGUST NEW MEMBERS

• **Advanced Heating & Cooling LLC**
Joe Goodwin
W106 153rd, Spencer, WI 54479
Phone: (715) 659-3913
Description: Mechanical Contactor
Sponsor: Tom Altmann, Altmann Construction Co., Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 30

• **Construction Management Associates, Inc**
Jonah Hetland
4015 80th St
Kenosha, WI 53142
Phone: (262) 942-3500
Description: General Contractor
Sponsor: Jay Zahn, R&R Insurance Services, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 32

• **Electric Avenue Electrical Contractors**
Zachary Tonn
129 Germainia St., Randolph, WI 53956
Phone: (920) 210-9219
Description: Electrical Contractor
Sponsor: Greg Jones, Dave Jones, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 4

• **Greatland Electric, LLC**
Ed Alexander
225 Pine St., Fredonia, WI 53021
Phone: (262) 271-4930
Description: Electrical Contractor
Sponsor: Dan Bertler, Supreme Structures
Beam Club Members-to-date: 16

• **Koenig Custom Concrete, Corp.**
Steve Koenig
1401 S. Industrial Ave.
Jefferson, WI 53549
Phone: (920) 674-4130
Description: Concrete Contractor
Sponsor: John Boettcher, Pioneer Roofing, LLC
Beam Club Members-to-date: 6

• **Neenah Framing Inc.**
Dylan Seymour
PO Box 7411, Appleton, WI 54912
Phone: (920) 809-5643
Description: Wood Frame/Trim Carpentry Contractor
Sponsor: Jim DeLeers, DeLeers Construction, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 4

• **Philippi Quality Construction, Inc.**
Boyd Philippi
PO Box 903, Manitowoc, WI 54221-0903
Phone: (920) 684-5993
Description: Wood & Plastics Contractor
Sponsor: Steve Klessig, Keller, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 43

• **PlanGrid**
Caroline Kossek
2838 Fremont Ave S, Unit 201
Minneapolis, WI 55408
Phone: (608) 447-0067
Description: Construction Software
Sponsor: Eric Bauer, Brickl Bros., Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 15.5

• **Russ Darrow Group**
Michael Brady
W133 N8569 Executive Pkwy
Menomonee Falls, WI 53051
Phone: (262) 523-2017
Description: Commercial & Fleet Vehicle Dealer
Sponsor: Greg Jones, Dave Jones, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 5


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