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The Human Resources Department and Career Development

By Paperitalo Staff

When I was a youngster in this industry, I mistakenly thought the human resources department of my employer was actually interested in the human resources of the company, e.g., developing career tracks to optimize the use of various staff and professional personnel employed by the company. At certain places and times, that may be the case, but it is not the case in the majority of companies to which I have been exposed.

No, the human resources department exist to (a) ensure compliance with all the regulations of modern government at the local and national level and (b) to minimize employee actionable items, which may result in great liabilities to the company, i.e., lawsuits directed towards the company by employees. While most human resource departments may express a mild interest in your career development, such a subject is not part of their charter nor is it an activity for which they have any budget. To those early in their careers, this may come as a great shock, for undoubtedly the human resources department was one of the pathways through which new employees are recruited and a place that may have, in the recruitment process, touted the great career opportunities within a given company.

So, how does a young person build a career? First, in all things be legal, moral and ethical. This means, for instance, if you are hired into an organization as a junior sales person and it appears the main tools used for sales are the easy delivery of graft or “entertainment” by young ladies procured for just such purposes (don’t be shocked, all this junk still goes on) the first thing you should do is quit and go find a job in a company that makes products of such a quality such nonsense is not necessary in order to sell them. Second, you must do your fiduciary duty. If you do not know what fiduciary means, look it up in several dictionaries and burn its meaning in your mind. Third, make your boss look good. For if your actions do not make your boss look good, you will never move your own career forward. Finally, do not watch the clock. Balance in life is important, but, as a professional, your devotion to the company is not a time-based issue. Extra time and being at work at odd hours is a lifestyle necessity in the pulp and paper industry—get used to it.

These seem like simple little lessons. However, I have seen young people trying to ignore them winding up in mid-career as cynics, alcoholics and worse. Watch the hearings and trials being conducted in courts around the world today with executives of companies with names like Enron, Parmalat, Tyco and so forth. The path to the dock (a wonderful English term denoting being in court in the defendant's chair) starts the first day of one's career. Resolve to do otherwise.

Speaking of hearings, are you faithfully wearing your hearing protection? Hearing loss is a condition which develops slowly. It is largely preventable if you wear hearing protection faithfully. If you are not in this habit, start it today. Work safely and we will talk next week. ##