

# Beyond the Horizons Consulting

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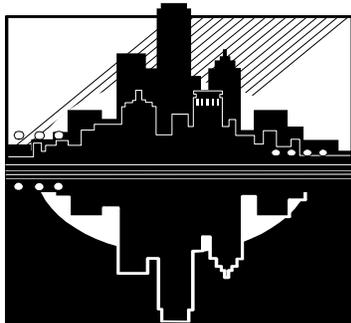
September 2006

## Workplace Violence: Part IV

This is the fourth article in a series about workplace violence. If you are just “tuning in” now, please read our June, July and August Newsletters, containing 11 important warning signs of workplace violence and the first steps to creating a *workplace violence prevention program*. We continue our series with some thoughts on physical security at your workplace and the ramifications of company culture. We conclude this Newsletter with a look at “Domestic Violence in the Workplace.”

### Physical Security

This is the hardware of your company’s violence prevention program. Here are some things to ask your-



self:

- 1 Have you given terminated employees every opportunity to leave with a sense of having been respected and understood?
- 2 Have you provided terminated employees with the opportunity to receive grief/loss counseling , career counseling, or outplacement services?
- 3 Have you employed a security consultant to assess physical security, including access points to the facility?
- 4 Do you have in place a policy to quickly communicate

to employees that a critical incident has occurred?

- 5 Do you readily have a critical incident response team available to counsel employees, using Critical Incident Stress Debriefing?
- 6 Do you have a team who will review any threatening correspondence and take appropriate action, including contacting law enforcement?

### The Ramifications of Company Culture

All policies that become part of company structure metaphorically resemble the human skeleton. Without an infrastructure we might loosely term “civility” or “following the Golden Rule,” a company is operating without muscles, organs, and soft tissues. Company infrastructure clicks in when managers go beyond the strict letter of the law to model ethical, caring, and even compassionate behavior. We might ask ourselves the following questions to gauge our organiza-

**Written company policies resemble the human skeleton. Without “civility” or “following the Golden Rule,” however, a company is operating without muscles, organs, and soft tissues. Adding an infrastructure of civility as part of company culture encourages managers to model ethical, caring, and even compassionate behavior.**

tion’s ranking in this area:

- ◆ Do employees feel free to talk with their supervisors or with Human Resources or to contact the EAP when they need help?
- ◆ Do employee behaviors and attitudes convey feelings of trust and openness, or is the atmosphere instead charged with fear, mistrust, and secrecy?

- ◆ Are employees secure in knowing that they will be treated with dignity and respect when they approach a supervisor with a problem?
- ◆ Is confidentiality being maintained in all one-on-one meetings and in any mediations?
- ◆ Are supervisors being trained to deal immediately with any performance issues so as to avoid resentment from coworkers and miscommunication about what is expected in each position?
- ◆ Is negativity on the part of employees and supervisors being addressed?
- ◆ Are rumors being identified and addressed in team or company-wide meetings?
- ◆ Has the company thought out and implemented a policy for communicating with the media about issues that come to the attention of the general public, including critical incidents?

## Domestic Violence

A very ugly and growing subset of violence in the workplace is domestic violence. For the last 25 plus years, we have become more aware as a society of the incidences of domestic violence, a crime normally committed in the sanctity of the home. There have arisen in cities and towns of all sizes rape crisis and domestic abuse centers. These groups of concerned citizens have organized to increase awareness of this type of devastating abuse among the public through vigils, written materials, and public education events. Domestic abuse and rape crisis centers have also conducted fund raising campaigns to build, staff, and maintain safe homes for women and their minor children.

Despite all these efforts, domestic abuse remains a much underreported crime, and one that is most dangerous for law enforcement officials, who are often caught between helpless victims and explosive, out-of-control abusers.

Domestic abuse has now “come out of the closet” in a particularly virulent way. For the first time since the 1940s, women are entering the labor force in record numbers. Through the availability of counseling and support groups such as Al-Anon, women are also taking steps to protect themselves legally and emotionally from abusive relationships.

One of the steps women are taking prior to filing for divorce is to separate from their husbands, partners, or boyfriends in order to take time to reflect on the future course of their lives. Many men do not have the emotional resources to deal with assertive women and thus resort to using physical or emotional force, such as stalking their

former partners with intent to harm them. Sometimes the perpetrators are aware of what they intend to do, sometimes they just allow their impulsive emotions of anger and fear to drive them to commit unspeakable crimes.

Companies with large numbers of female employees — especially those in the clothing and cosmetics industries — are beginning to deal proactively with issues of domestic abuse. According to the Family Violence Prevention Fund,



- ◆ One in three women in the workforce is a victim of domestic violence.
- ◆ Between 1993 and 1997, there were 1.7 million reported attacks on women in the workplace.
- ◆ 7.9 million workdays are lost annually because of domestic violence.
- ◆ Injuries stemming from domestic violence impact healthcare expenses to the tune of \$4.1 billion annually.

According to Barbara West, a human resources manager at Macy’s West, “Employers have a corporate responsibility to maintain a safe environment at work, if not out of concern for their employees, then out of a legal responsibility to them.” Macy’s is one of a growing number of companies that recognize the enormity of this problem and is taking steps to deal with it. This makes good sense, because employees who are stressed to the max because they do not know what trauma will face them when they return home each day are clearly less able to cope with the demands of full-time employment. Let’s face it — there are the normal stresses of everyday life (the pressures of the kids’ activities schedule, colds and stomach aches, appliances breaking down, etc.) — and then there are the extraordinary stresses of confronting alcoholic or drug-induced abusive behavior, where it seems as if the bottom is falling out from under a person.

Nest month's Newsletter continues with the topic of prevention of domestic abuse in the workplace by inviting you to look at

- \* signs of domestic abuse in the workplace, and
- \* suggestions for structuring a preventive program to combat domestic abuse in the workplace.

**Meanwhile, stay tuned to Beyond the Horizons Consulting Newsletters for timely information to solve your management challenges! Please feel free to write us at**

[info@beyondthehorizonsconsulting.com](mailto:info@beyondthehorizonsconsulting.com)

**or to call us at 505-466-4990 to schedule a free, complimentary coaching session or consultation for your business needs.**

**Beyond the Horizons Consulting offers a variety of services for individuals, teams, and organizations.**

- ◆ **Individual coaching for managers is a process that begins by identifying your style, what you want to retain and strengthen, and what you want to modify. Objective assessments are part of the process, as are also a mutual give-and-take of creative problem solving and supportive guidance.**
- ◆ **We offer group seminars on identifying and dealing with stress in a relaxing and supportive environment.**

- ◆ **We also offer group seminars on teamwork, using the MBTI or DISC.**
- ◆ **Our conflict resolution services help opposing parties identify mutual purpose(s) and restore harmony to your workplace environment.**
- ◆ **It is our pleasure to tailor a seminar to your company's, department's, or team's needs!**

**Take a look at our May and June, 2005, Newsletters to see our new, serene home, a place we invite you to take advantage of!**

**Call us to schedule a complimentary consultation for yourself or your business!**

**Our helpful Office Administrator, Stan, will work with you to schedule a meeting time that fits your schedule.**

**Stan and Jean Eva can be reached at  
(505) 466-4990**