

EAP and the Ever-Changing Workplace

This article by Continuum EAP's Kevin J. Mattran was originally published in the Lincoln Human Resources Management Association (LHRMA) newsletter in May 2008.

I remember in the early 1980's my dad bought a new computer. It was a Radio Shack TRS-80. The system had a whopping 64K of RAM, no hard drive but two 5.25 inch floppy disk drives for storage (correction: one ran the application, the other was for storage). The keyboard, monitor and CPU were all in one hulking unit. He bought the extras like a tape drive, a dot matrix printer and a modem (on which there was a cradle for the telephone receiver). The system set him back over \$5000. It is still in my mom's basement if anyone is interested.

In Sunday's paper there were flyers from the big electronic stores listing home computer systems with 1G or more of RAM, 250G hard drives, dual core processors, the ability to read and write DVD's and CD's, high definition flat-screen monitors, photo quality printers and more. Most of these systems will cost you less than \$750.

If you look over the past 15-20 years you'll see how we've adapted to change. We've grown accustomed to new words, phrases and jargon like: Wi-fi, text message, global positioning system, Bluetooth, MP3 and so many more. All of these changes came about because of drivers like needing to conduct business away from the office, the need for information paired with a need for caffeine (coffee shops with wireless internet), and a need for portable music that won't interfere with your daily workout (MP3 players).

While we are able to embrace change in a number of areas, many of us resist change at our workplace. "It's too hard. If it's not broke, don't fix it. We've been doing it this way for years and it works just fine." As HR professionals we hear, and sometimes even join in the protests. All too often, workplace change is associated with a person; the new supervisor, HR director or plant manager, "Who is this hotshot coming in and telling us how to do our jobs?"

Workplace change is driven by the same sorts of factors as most other change in our lives. It isn't that new supervisor but the advances in technology, it isn't the new HR director but changes in labor and workplace safety laws, and it isn't the new plant manager but changes in the needs and expectations of our customers; that is the reason for change. Therefore, when initiating change we must effectively communicate the reasons behind the change, let people know how they and the company will benefit from the change and encourage people to participate in rather than resist the change.

Your EAP can be a great resource when initiating change. EAP can provide change

management training for your staff, consult with your management about effective ways to communicate the need for change, conduct climate surveys to help identify internal drivers for change and be there to counsel individuals who might be having a difficult time adjusting to change.

Employee assistance programs have changed and grown over the last 40 years or more as well. We've adapted to the changing needs of our clients, our diverse community and the technology that has become such a part of our lives. We can help you make change a valued part of your organization's culture.

*For help with dealing with organizational change, contact Continuum EAP at:
(402) 476-0186 or (800) 755-7636
You may also contact an employee assistance professional at:
easpecialist@4continuum.com*



 **Continuum**
• EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE
• TRAINING
• CONSULTING