

## HR Versus Vendors: Why This Needs to Change!

“Vendors . . . Friend or Foe??” That was the topic of the October HR Roundtable at the monthly GCHRA HR Roundtable which meets on the Great Oaks Campus in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The HR Roundtable took a much different spin because it was tackling a “taboo” subject!!! Everyone who came was intrigued because the topic of (cue scary music) . . . VENDORS!!!!

Since everyone was anxious to talk, I listed the questions for discussion.

- 1) Why does HR hate vendors?
- 2) Why do vendors hate HR?
- 3) How can we fix this?

The group was a little thrown by the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> questions because they had in mind the unfortunate stereotype that vendors are the cause of why these relationships do/don't work and that the HR side isn't. So, the small groups had a lot to chew on. Here's what they came back with:

(To capture this, I put the answers next to each other so that the attendees focused on both sides of this issue.)

### Vendors

### HR

1) Vendors lie

HR lies

- Isn't this sad!! To have both sides of this issue have a lack of trust!! Now, “lying” is different than credibility. But be careful . . . credibility fits both camps as well.

2) Vendors go over your head

Vendors take up MY time

- These may not seem the same, but they do relate. Vendors may feel they have to go over your head because you feel your time is too important to be bothered. Now, one issue that was brought up was the mistake vendors make when they want to skip HR because they want to deal with a “decision maker.”

For all of my vendor friends out there reading this . . .

Quit doing this please. You may not be dealing with the “final” decision maker, but why stomp on someone who could be your ally? Have HR pull you along as a partner and resource and then move up the chain.

For all of my HR friends out there reading this . . .

Stop looking at vendors as time wasters. Both sides (vendors and HR) need to determine what business relationships really work and foster those. Be honest with someone if it's not a fit and tell each other.

## Vendors

## HR

- 3) Vendors don't always provide what they promised
- HR doesn't always provide what they promised
- Kind of the same as #1. We have to say to each other . . . Why are we choosing to work this way???
- 4) Vendors don't listen to what I **NEED**
- This one is only on one side. Vendors would do a lot better to listen to what HR "needs" and then see if that can be provided. Taking the approach of "I have what you need" without asking or listening is just a ploy for a vendor to push their product/service.
- 5) Vendors are a threat to my job
- HR is the gatekeeper that only keeps things OUT vs. bringing services IN
- Again, this has a tie to it. Due to outsourcing there are vendors who can be a threat to jobs. However, HR needs to be a facilitator and not a "gatekeeper."
- 6) Vendors don't allow HR to say "No"
- HR doesn't say "No" when it should
- Time for us to be more honest with each other. If vendors are "sales at all costs" type services, then this establishes some of the hard feelings between the two sides. HR also needs to take the business perspective for its Company and make decisions. Remember, "No" is a decision!!
- 7) Vendors "play games"
- HR "plays games"
- Decide whether you are going to have beneficial relationships between each other and quit doing this.

## Possible solutions:

- Both sides need to treat each other as resources. In doing this, hook up with the vendors that make sense for your Company, and vendors do likewise. You can't (and shouldn't) sell to everyone!!
- Both sides need to establish reasonable expectations around processes, budgets and how decisions are reached.
- Don't work together UNLESS there's a relationship!!!
- Make the time to build relationships. Respect each other's times and priorities.

Two things to close on. One of the attendees recommended a book on this subject. Debbie Friedman wrote a book called “Demystifying Outsourcing: The Trainer’s Guide to Working with Vendors and Consultants” and Steve shared a story . . .

The story was that two of his closest relationships in the world of business and HR are with consultants. Ironically, he hasn’t used their services (to this point) and yet they are great friends and incredible sources of networking.

Making healthy vendor/HR resources will propel you as an HR professional within your Company because you are establishing partners that will make your Company move forward and succeed.

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