

CLAREMONT EAP IMPACT

July-September 2009

Employee Newsletter

DID YOU KNOW?

- Free "Simple Will" Kits are available from Claremont EAP
- A free credit report is available once per year
- Claremont EAP provides legal referrals for family law, consumer issues, traffic violations, and personal injury
- Referrals are available for child care, adult/eldercare, adoption assistance, school/college selection, and pet care

800.834.3773

www.claremonteap.com

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Responding to a Changing Workplace
- 2 Tips for Staying Healthy & Safe at Work
- 3 Getting Your Freshman Off to College the Right Way

RESPONDING TO A CHANGING WORKPLACE



In a changing workplace, where downsizing and re-engineering are facts of life, you need to hold yourself accountable for your own job performance, morale, attitude and behavior.

"You need to take initiative to ensure that you will prosper when changes come to your department and the expectations aren't as

clear as they once were," says Rosemary T. Salmon, coauthor of *The Mid-Career Tune-Up*. "And instead of waiting for your boss or the company to issue new guidelines, take the opportunity to initiate some personal action plans, so you can actively respond to recent developments."

Strategies for success

- Do your best to meet cost, time, quality and quantity requirements. "Even as things around you change, keep your work moving along at a steady, predictable pace," says Ms. Salmon. "You may need to interact more with others who can help you with the resources you need and you may need to keep others informed about new and unexpected obstacles or bottlenecks."
- Adjust to changing priorities. You should be able to shift from tasks that are comfortable, habitual and easy to new activities that will help you meet new priorities. "It may be difficult for you to let go of routine actions that you've been doing for a long time," says Ms. Salmon. "But the need to change your approach to accommodate new priorities is essential."
- Take the initiative in developing creative solutions to problems, and do what's necessary to get the job done. Decide which is the better option -- a thoughtful, analytical, data-based approach that leads to informed and tested conclusions; or an intuitive, creative, gut-feeling approach based on brainstorming and other imaginative techniques.
- Accept responsibility for your work and for the consequences of your efforts. Accountability is an important concept for employers. Companies and their managers are looking for people willing to accept responsibility for whatever happens, even if the results aren't as positive as they may have been in the past. "In times of rapid, unpredictable change, doing the best you can is a fair expectation," says Ms. Salmon. "Plus, accepting responsibility when things fall short of your manager's expectations or your own personal standards is the first step in learning how to make things better."

(Continued on page 4)

TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY AND SAFE AT WORK

As we go to work every day, we often think about the tasks we need to do and our interactions with co-workers. Most of us may not think much about our health and safety on the job, but we probably should. Colds and other viral infections can spread quickly and can affect productivity, and more than 3 million disabling accidents occur in American workplaces every year. To avoid being sidelined by an illness or injury, start taking action today.

Protect yourself against infection

Colds and flu are caused by viruses that can pass easily from one person to another when you sneeze or cough, or handle objects contaminated with a virus. Some viruses can live up to three hours on phones, doorknobs and desks. Because most adults average about two to four colds a year, there's a good chance that germs may abound in many workplaces.

You can help limit your exposure with these tips:

- Wash your hands frequently. Be sure to scrub them with soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds. The scrubbing action removes germs so that you can wash them away. If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based gel or wipe.
- Try not to touch your face. Once a virus gets on your hands, it still has to get inside your body. Touching your eyes, nose or mouth gives it easy access.
- Use a disinfectant. Clean surfaces such as telephones and keyboards regularly, especially if you share them with others.

If you do get sick, should you still go to work? Sometimes staying at home is a better idea, especially if you:

- Are coughing, hacking and sneezing, all of which can spread a virus
- Have a fever
- Feel nauseous, are vomiting or have diarrhea
- Are so sick that you can't do your job

If you feel well enough to go to work, try to prevent infecting others. Avoid shaking hands with anyone, always use tissues to cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and wash your hands or use an alcohol-based gel or wipe afterward.



Make routine tasks safer

Repeatedly clicking a computer mouse or turning and lifting can take a toll on your body. In fact, about half of injuries that occur in the workplace are related to frequent repetition of everyday movements such as these.

You can help reduce your risk of injury:

- Vary your activities. It's important to give your body a break now and then while you're at work. It's a good idea when you're off the clock, as well. "If you're working assembly in a manufacturing environment or typing in an office, you're better off not doing those same motions when you're not at work," says Tim Morse, Ph.D., associate professor of ergonomics at the University of Connecticut.
- Check your computer setup. If you spend a lot of time working at a computer and it isn't positioned correctly, you may be risking pain in your neck, shoulders, elbows or wrists, says Jack Dennerlein, Ph.D., associate professor of ergonomics at Harvard University. To check your computer's position, stand in front of your chair. The backs of your knees should be about two inches above the seat. When you're sitting down, the top of the monitor screen should be at about eye level. Position your keyboard so that your elbows are at an angle of at least 90 degrees. This may help relieve stress on your wrists.
- Avoid overreaching. Whether or not you work at a desk, it's important to keep frequently used materials and tools within reach. When sitting, you shouldn't have to reach more than 15 inches. When standing, items should be no more than 14 inches away if you're reaching for them with both hands. If you're using just one hand, 18 inches is OK for most people.
- Listen to your body. "Little aches and pains are good indications of a potential injury," says Dr. Dennerlein. If you start having these types of symptoms, call your doctor.

(Continued on page 4)

GETTING YOUR FRESHMAN OFF TO COLLEGE THE RIGHT WAY

Parents struggle to save for college, but some of the biggest money challenges don't have anything to do with paying the tuition bill. What happens if a child gets in an accident or suffers a sudden health emergency? What if a natural disaster - like Hurricane Katrina - displaces a student without an action plan? What if your child gets in trouble with credit or botches his bank account?

Before junior heads off to college, it makes sense for parents to develop a "worst-case scenario" plan for money disasters that can affect both parent and child. Some ideas:

Consider an advance medical directive for your child: If your child becomes sick or is hurt at college, how would you feel about a doctor you've never met administering a course of treatment that could be at odds with previous medical history? If your child contracts a virus, would you be content with overnight treatment at the school's student health center, or would you want your child transported to the closest major hospital? An advance medical directive isn't simply for terminal conditions for older people. The creation of such a document by your attorney can spell out in precise language how you and your child want a sudden or chronic medical issue handled. Have a serious discussion with your child to incorporate his or her wishes into this document, and then check with the school to see where it should be filed for reference.

Make sure your child is insured: From health insurance to renter's insurance, check with your health and home insurer to find out if there are ways to economically cover your child where he or she is going to school. Also, most schools will offer resources of temporary or short-term health insurance to cover students who are attending schools across state lines from their parents. Talk with a financial planner about these options. A good site for learning about health insurance options after graduation is www.PlanForYourHealth.com.

Put plastic on training wheels: Many experts believe it makes sense for students to handle their first credit or debit card while at home. You might want to introduce them to plastic in their senior year of high school instead of their first year of college. Consider a lower-limit card that allows a parent to be a co-signer but puts the name of the student squarely on the card. Specific agreements should be made on what the card can be used for and what funds need to be set aside to pay the card in full each month.

Make the student pay his tuition check: Even if you are fortunate enough to have enough money to completely cover your child's tuition, make sure your child writes the check to the bursar. They need to know what an education really costs and they need to understand the importance of major payments made on time. That will get them ready for mortgages, car payments and hopefully, saving early for their child's education.

Discuss financial aid: Make sure you have an ongoing dialogue with your child about financial aid, scholarship and grant renewal.

Discuss taxes: Many college students with assets have their parents do their tax forms or have their taxes done by their parents' tax preparer. Even if the parent continues to handle tax preparation, parents and students should discuss tax issues at appropriate intervals so the student isn't clueless about filing when they are finally on their own.

In fact, it might be a good idea for the student to attend the meeting with the tax preparer so they understand how the process works and what important financial documents to keep handy.

You and your kid should check his credit report - together: As long as your child is accepting your support, you should have them pull their credit reports annually so you can sit down and review them together. Not only will this teach the child the importance of building a strong credit rating and confirming the accuracy of their credit report on an annual basis, but it provides another level of parental oversight on the use of credit cards. If the student knows he needs to review his credit record with Mom or Dad, they'll know problems won't be easy to hide.



RESPONDING TO A CHANGING WORKPLACE (continued from Page 1)

- Set high performance standards for yourself. You know what you're capable of doing, and you know how much time and energy you're willing to invest in your changing job duties. Once you have defined your own performance expectations and made certain they meet at least the minimum required by your company at this time, you should be able to proceed with confidence.
- Maintain a high level of enthusiasm and an optimistic perspective about changes in responsibilities and directions. "Even if you feel that what your company has done or is doing isn't in your best interest, you need to keep your end of the bargain by working as conscientiously and efficiently as possible," says Ms. Salmon.
- Do your best to foster cooperation and teamwork with others. "Everyone is probably in the same situation, trying to figure out how things are going to develop and stabilize," she says. "Some of your colleagues may have figured out approaches that can help you, and some of them may be able to benefit from your ideas."

TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY AND SAFE AT WORK (continued from Page 2)

Be prepared for emergencies

Ask your supervisor if your company has an emergency action plan in case of fire, natural disaster or another emergency. Then, read it so that you'll be prepared. If your employer doesn't have a plan, consider volunteering to help develop one. The American Red Cross can help you learn more about preparing your workplace for an emergency.

Practice safe lifting

Try not to lift more weight than you're used to carrying. How much you can handle safely depends in part on your level of conditioning. Technique also makes a difference.

To help avoid back injury, remember to lift with your legs. Here's how:

- Bend your knees.
- Keep your back straight, even when you're putting down the load.
- Hold the load close to your body and use a slow, steady lifting motion.
- Don't twist while carrying something. Instead, turn your feet and your body in the direction you want to go.

If you need to move something that's too heavy for you to lift, ask someone to help you. Or, if you're authorized to use a forklift or other device, use it to move the object.

CLAREMONT EAP

Claremont distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance.

You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.

800.834.3773
www.claremonteap.com