



# Fact Finder

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"...helping organizations find solutions to people-related problems"

## WHAT'S YOUR BRAND?

What would your employees say if asked about your company brand? Would you win "One of the Best Places to Work" awards or would your brand suffer from bad press and consumer complaints? Creating and sustaining top-notch organizations is a daunting task and requires persistence, energy, and vigilance related to all aspects of those programs that affect employees and their families.

The first order of business is determining what you want your brand to be and how you will express that brand in ways that employees will understand and relate to. Often this step entails striking a balance that includes the company's organizational structure, its prevailing leadership style, and quality of communications, as well as key human resource programs like recognition, compensation, and benefits.

Sometimes top managers need assistance in determining the root cause of organizational issues. It's not uncommon, for example, for managers to point to compensation when, in fact, effective leadership and management practices are the real causes of increased turnover or low morale and productivity. Sometimes, too, the organization suffers from having such diverse leadership styles that employees have a hard time figuring how they are expected to behave and perform. Here there may be no real organizational brand—just a collection of managers doing their own thing with no organizational continuity.

Employees easily recognize organizations that value and promote cohesiveness and unity—that move forward with a clear sense of direction, commitment, and accountability—where fairness is the watchword and where hard work is rewarded and mediocre performance is not tolerated. Can your leaders articulate your brand and do your employees buy it?

## NEW I-9'S, EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION FORMS

Effective November 7, 2007, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced a new Employment Eligibility Verification Form (I-9), revised 06/05/07. The new form is available at [www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-9.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-9.pdf). The new form is now the only valid version, although there is a 30-day phase-in period after notice is posted in the Federal Register.

The new I-9 changes the items on List A, "Documents that Establish Both Identity and Employment Eligibility." The I-9 and accompanying instructions detail the documents employers must now use for verification of employment eligibility.

## LINK PAY TO PERFORMANCE

A recent *Business and Legal Reporter* article emphasizes that companies are continuing to shift from emphasis on base compensation to pay linked to meeting specific goals and objectives. Forty-one percent of companies surveyed in 2007 said their pay is based on performance, up from 35% in 2006. Keys to effective performance-based pay programs include:

- **Well defined company values and employee performance measurements.** Speed and accuracy are criteria that lend themselves to establishing performance standards. A good starting point for the process of establishing standards is the employee. What does she think are appropriate areas and measures of performance in her job? Through good communication, standards can be set that are specific, measurable, realistic, and achievable. Professional development goals are equally important to increased individual growth and overall organizational effectiveness.
- **Holding the line.** Once pay for performance programs are put in place, give them a chance. Often both supervisors and employees will have to make adjustments in their approach to the goal-setting and performance monitoring process.
- **Talking and measuring frequently.** The quality and timing of communications is critical to program success. Emphasize the importance of flexibility and consistency. It is important for individuals to see the connection between their day-to-day performance and broader departmental and company goals.

## KEEPING UP WITH POLICY

A recent issue of *The HR Specialist* identified the top ten issues in developing an effective employee handbook:

1. Don't adopt a "form" handbook. Be sure yours reflects your organization's unique history and style.
2. Avoid excessive detail in communication policies and procedures.
3. Do not talk about "probation periods" for new employees.
4. Be sure company policies are consistent with one another.
5. Don't incorporate existing policies that were poorly conceived and communicated.
6. Include "at will" and "not to be construed as a contract" disclaimers.
7. Do not undermine written policies by poor judgment and thoughtless oral statements.
8. Keep your policies up-to-date.
9. Don't make rules you are unwilling to enforce.
10. Be realistic—don't paint yourself into a corner.

## BUILDING A TEAM

Leaders and managers sometimes try to develop teams by focusing on experience, functional expertise, and other factors and overlook the importance of behavioral tendency among potential group members. Because behavioral tendency is more subtle and more difficult to identify and describe than, say, physical differences, they may not be considered at all or may be given last priority. Such oversights are akin to trying to assemble a group of skilled athletes with each representing a different sport with different rules and uncomplimentary strengths and weaknesses.

If instead managers use their knowledge and understanding of the four behavioral types, they substantially increase the probability of group success by putting together a team where participants will naturally complement one another's abilities in accomplishing the group's goals. D's will drive the team to get moving and stay on schedule. I's will work to maintain relationships and focus on the participative aspects of the team's effectiveness, while S's will seek to keep the team in harmony and moving in a direction consistent with its articulated goals and objectives. In turn, C's provide critical thinking skills, in-depth analysis, factual grounding in day-to-day realities, and the closure needed to move the project to the next level. In terms of teamwork, the interactions of team members in getting

the job done are more dependent on behavioral tendency than any other single factor.

The time-tested adage that “The whole is greater than the sum of the parts” is still true and if used effectively amplifies the concerted efforts of individuals. So the next time you face the need to meet a goal that requires unified, cohesive team effort, think first about this primary and critical aspect of group performance.

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