



War at Work

Roger Herman

Some employers are concerned about employees talking about the war at work, listening to the radio, watching television, or checking internet news sites. Concerns range from negative effects on productivity to distraction and psychological problems.

Workforce specialists from The Herman Group advise employers to encourage employees to talk openly about their interest and concern about the war in Iraq. "This is an emotional issue for people," explains Joyce Gioia, president of the firm. "If workers are not permitted to learn about events and discuss their feelings, they will feel anger at being deprived of the freedom of conversation."

A workplace is a community, an extended family. Community means communication: Free, open communication and sharing. During these dangerous times, people have a greater need to share, to support each other. The Herman Group recommends that, where appropriate and safe, employers might even want to allow employees to listen to radio reports or spend a few minutes watching the news on television. "While there are some people who may become obsessed with getting every little detail, most employees will still focus most of their attention on work. Some coaching or counseling may be advised for people who spend considerably more time following the war news than getting their work done," Gioia notes.

Denying workers the opportunity to stay current with such important breaking news can build resentment. That resentment may be expressed at the time, or may be harbored until the employees have opportunities to leave the company for other employment. Such bad memories die hard, so providing access to vital news can actually be an employee retention strategy. Responding to employee needs in these unusual times is a way for employers to demonstrate sensitivity and balance.

With over 200,000 Reserve and National Guard personnel activated and over 100,000 other members of the armed forces on duty, many members of the workplace community are directly affected. Employees will be concerned about their co-workers, relatives, and friends. Watching the news—staying connected—is one way people can express their concern about fellow employees who were activated to join the military effort. Employers can confirm their support of absent employees by supporting remaining employees in their anxiety about their colleagues and others serving with them.

Some employers may want to set up television sets or computer monitors in break rooms, conversation areas, or conference areas to provide communal access to information and other members of the community.

If employers know how to transmit messages to activated Reserve and National Guard

members, this would be a good time to send cards or letters signed by fellow workers.

Such gestures will be highly appreciated by the men and women on active duty, while giving their friends opportunities to do something physical to express their support.

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Roger stays close to reality. His ongoing "front line" experience working in a wide range of organizations re practical orientation to every aspect of his work. As a result, his clients always gain practical, applicable strategies for future success

Roger Herman holds a BA from Hiram College, where he majored in Sociology, and received an MA in Public Administration from The Ohio State University. Prior to starting his firm, he gained almost two decades of experience in sales and staff positions in both public and private sector organizations. In the public sector, he served as a City Manager (and municipal government). During the Viet Nam era, Roger served as a Counterintelligence Special Agent. Roger started his own company in 1980.

Roger Herman's concentration is on workforce and workplace trends. He helps corporate leaders see and understand trends and prepare for their impacts. He accomplishes this work as a speaker, as a consultant, and as an author. He has served [clients](#) throughout the United States, South America, Europe, and Africa.

To help people have a better understanding of his perspectives, Roger has published eleven [books](#) and over 600 magazine and journal articles since 1980. His writing style is down-to-earth, direct, and easy to understand. In each of his books and articles, Roger explains the "why" and "how-to." Three of his books have been translated into other languages and several have been featured by business book clubs. Roger has produced a number of [audiotape programs](#) on employee retention and future trends.