In today’s changing economy, productivity and workforce efficiency are key components in the quest to sustain a competitive advantage amidst volatile and unpredictable market forces. In efforts to maintain profits during turbulent financial times, employers must respectfully and responsibly insist on a commitment to the efficient production of goods and execution of services so that customers and clients are served, and the company’s bottom line is not only preserved, but has an opportunity to grow.

Additional benefits associated with increased workforce productivity include the ability to regularly meet deadlines and production goals, routinely fulfill contractual obligations and maintain satisfied customers, employees and business associates who are without reason to pursue legal claims against the company. Accordingly, as your company heads into the new year with new goals toward sustaining growth in these tough times, consider the following measures to increase workforce productivity.

**Focus employees on the importance of meeting contractual obligations in a timely manner**

When employees work efficiently and productively, meeting deadlines comes easy and the company can consistently fulfill contractual obligations to customers and clients. Typically, contractual terms relating to timing and production quantities are based

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**Avoiding litigation and liability by creating an efficient and productive workforce**

This is the third in a series focusing on hiring practices. This installment focuses on employee productivity from an attorney’s perspective.

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on reasonable projections derived from past experience and are mutually agreed upon by the contracting parties. These contractual terms form the basis of the parties’ expectations and the failure to meet those expectations as agreed upon can form the basis of liability for the breaching party. Therefore, employers should focus employees toward the importance of consistently meeting contractual expectations in a timely manner so as to avoid the cost of litigation and the payment of damages associated with unmet contract terms.

A productive and diligent workforce tends to avoid careless and unsafe activity. A productive workforce tends to be a diligent workforce committed not only to accomplishing goals in a timely and efficient manner, but also according to company rules, industry standards and government regulations. This translates into safer work practices that in turn helps to avoid injury, property damage, litigation, liability and civil and criminal penalties associated with careless, negligent and reckless activity or willful violations of safety standards and laws. To encourage safe practices, regularly train employees on the importance of working productively, efficiently and most importantly, safely. Post safety notices throughout facilities and at every worksite. To facilitate these efforts, recognize and reward employees who exhibit safe work practices and who regularly meet productivity standards for a significant duration while also avoiding safety infractions or injury.

Measure productivity in quantifiable and objective terms. Measuring productivity in quantifiable and objective terms through a regular and consistently-implemented evalutive process not only motivates employees to stay on track with respect to production standards, but also encourages an efficient work ethic by serving as a standard by which employees can assess their own opportunities for promotion and increased compensation. Fair evaluation standards that are regularly communicated to employees through a
formal performance review process helps to motivate individuals toward achieving and exceeding company goals if for no other reason than to attain their own personal financial and career objectives.

Increase morale

Individuals who feel appreciated by their employers are more inclined to work productively and efficiently and will tend to avoid slacking off on the job. Therefore, employers should encourage productivity by making efforts to increase workplace morale. In tight economic times increasing morale may be particularly challenging if the company is faced with having to downsize or decrease fringe benefits and perks; however, assuring employees of the company’s financial health, publicly recognizing quality work, and awarding even small benefits such as gift cards, company lunches, or paid time off can go a long way to increase morale — and in turn — productivity.

As an added benefit, increasing morale translates into fewer lawsuits. Productive employees who enjoy their work and feel appreciated are less likely to pursue claims against their employers if and when they are terminated or laid off.

Let employees in on the big picture

When employees have a sense of ownership over a project or task they have a tendency to welcome the responsibility of executing it in a timely manner and with accuracy and precision. Thus, an awareness of the “big picture” breeds productivity and efficiency within the workforce. With this in mind, employers should encourage employees to learn the “why” behind each endeavor and engage them in decision-making regarding the execution of ideas. When employees accomplish their tasks accurately and efficiently the company is not only better positioned to meet the expectations of its clients and customers, but also will find itself protected from legal claims associated with the failure to meet its obligations.

Today, perhaps more than ever before, productivity and efficiency in business are imperative to sustaining growth in rough economic waters. In efforts to boost the bottom line, retain personnel and avoid unnecessary litigation and associated liabilities, companies should emphasize the importance of accuracy, efficiency and productivity in every endeavor. By focusing employees on working to meet and exceed contractual obligations; encouraging diligence and safety; measuring productivity in quantifiable and objective terms; increasing morale and emphasizing “big picture” thinking, employers can reap the benefits of a more efficient workforce who will make fewer mistakes, maximize productivity and will in the process avoid costly litigation and liability.

Today, perhaps more than ever before, productivity and efficiency in business are imperative to sustaining growth in rough economic waters.

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