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Issue Ten

## Did You Know?



Four Point HR has a new **Drug Testing and Background Check Program.**

The benefits of this program include:

- Reduced Pricing
- Internet-Based Access
- Billing Through Payroll
- Drug Free Workplace Compliance
- Client Customization

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## BLOG CORNER: Utilizing Unpaid Internship Programs

Stay connected  
to Four Point HR.  
Post a response  
on this topic and  
others to our blog  
at  
[fourpointhr.com/peo](https://fourpointhr.com/peo).

Unpaid internship programs can provide numerous benefits to your organization. Interns often bring energy and excitement into the workplace resulting in a positive affect on employee morale. They allow employees who may not have the opportunity to mentor regularly to do so, adding greater fulfillment to their positions. Finally, if structured properly, unpaid internships can take non-critical activities off of your busy employees and allow them to focus on more critical tasks. The Department of Labor has a few guidelines that you have to meet to ensure the position qualifies as unpaid versus paid:

- Training is similar to the vocation or study they receive in school
- Training is for benefit of trainee
- Training does not displace regular employees
- Trainee is not necessarily entitled to jobs at the end
- Trainer and trainee understand that trainee is not entitled to wages for time spent in training

How are you utilizing unpaid interns for your business?



# EYE PROTECTION In The Workplace

Every day an estimated **1,000** eye injuries occur in American workplaces. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) found that almost 70% of the eye injuries studied occurred from falling or flying objects, or sparks striking the eye. The BLS reports that approximately three out of every five workers injured were either not wearing eye protection at the time of the accident or were wearing the wrong kind of eye protection for the job. Most workers were hurt while doing their regular jobs. Workers injured while not wearing protective eyewear most often said they believed eye protection was not required for the job being performed. Even though the vast majority of employers furnished eye protection at no cost to employees, about 40% of the workers received no eye safety training explaining where and what kind of eyewear should be used. About 1 in 10 injuries require one or more missed workdays to recover from the injury. Of the total amount of work-related injuries, 10-20 % will cause temporary or permanent vision loss. Experts believe that the right eye protection could have lessened the severity or even prevented 90% of eye injuries in accidents.

The Occupational Safety Health Administration (OSHA) has standards that require employers to provide their workers with the appropriate eye protection. Take a moment to think about possible eye hazards at your workplace, including but not limited to:

- At what location(s) in the business could employees have an eye hazard?
- Did your business have eye related injuries in the past?
- What was the cause of the eye injuries?
- Where did the eye injuries occur?
- What equipment, chemicals and tools are being used that pose an eye exposure to the workers?

There are three things you can do to help prevent an eye injury:

- Complete an eye hazard assessment and implement an eye protection program as part of your safety program.
- Eliminate hazards before starting work. Use machine guarding, work screens or other engineering controls.
- Use proper eye protection for the work being performed such as goggles, face shields, welding helmets, full-face respirators and safety glasses.

To protect the eyes, follow these safety tips:

- Wear goggles or a face shield around flying chips or particles, electrical arcing or sparks, liquid chemicals, molten metal, dusts and swinging objects.
- Remove protective eyewear only after turning off the tool.
- Keep sharp or pointed objects away from the face and eyes.
- Be certain that protective eyewear is approved protection against the hazard for which it is being used.
- Check with suppliers for the most appropriate types of eye protection for the hazard.

Eye Protection Maintenance:

- Inspect eye protection daily. Replace as needed or required.
- Replace cracked, pitted or damaged goggles or spectacles.
- Clean the lenses thoroughly with soap and water. Disinfect eyewear that has been exposed to a hazardous substance or worn by someone else.
- Store clean eye wear in a closed, dustproof case.

Please contact our Risk Management Department for your safety needs.



# Focus On STRUCTURED INTERVIEWING

Structured Interviewing is a predetermined interview process that allows the interviewer to collect the same data from all applicants. It is easy to implement and it will improve your chances of finding the most qualified applicant from the field of available candidates.

**How does it work?** Structured Interviewing has three requirements:

- (1) The interviewer may only ask job-related questions,
- (2) Each applicant is asked the same set of questions and follows the same process steps, and
- (3) The same rating scale is used to score each applicant.

Any or all of the following steps may be included in your Structured Interview process:

**Step (1) - The Prescreen:** This step can be conducted face to face or over the telephone and allows you to determine if the applicant is qualified to perform the job, and if they will fit into your organization and salary structure.

**Some basic prescreen questions might include:** Is the applicant interested in the position and job responsibilities that you have available? What is the current rate of pay? What rate of pay might they expect to earn to perform the job you have available? Would the commuting distance to your facility be acceptable? Does the candidate have the knowledge, skills and abilities (listed in the Job Description) to perform the job? In addition, what will the candidate tell you about their past job performance? Ask what their current manager would say about their work performance and what changes they might like to see.

**Step (2) - The Face-to-Face Interview:** Use every interaction with the candidate to continue the screening process. When you set up the interview, give specific instructions about where the applicant should report, the time they should arrive, and what the applicant should bring with them. This may include extra resumes, a list of references, a writing sample, or a work sample from their current job.

Greet the applicant and note whether or not they arrived on time. If the position requires that the applicant work directly with customers, make notes on your first impression. Did the candidate bring the items that you requested?

Review job history with the aid of an employment application. Always ask: How did you get started at XYZ Company? What did you learn while you were there? Why did you leave?

Next, ask preplanned questions that focus on the expertise, skills and abilities listed in the job description. These behavioral questions should use past behavior to predict how the applicant will perform on the job.

The interview process can be as formal or informal as you like, but using the same questions and process for all candidates will allow you to equally evaluate all applicants.



## First Time Unemployment Claims Drop

The number of workers claiming unemployment benefits dropped slightly from 6.25 million to 6.13 million. This is the lowest level since the beginning of April 2009.

The number of unemployed workers is still high for a healthy economy; however, the number of first-time unemployment claims and the number of workers continuing to collect unemployment benefits has dropped. Economists continue to keep an eye on initial claims, as they are an indicator of layoffs as well as companies' potential to hire new workers.

While the decrease in jobless claims is encouraging, the unemployment rate is still expected to increase during the remainder of this year.

Nationally, first-time unemployment claims have decreased, but first time unemployment claims in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Florida and Missouri are on the rise. States with the largest decrease in first-time unemployment claims are California, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin and Ohio.

Most state unemployment agencies have a 3-year look-back period when adjusting an employer's unemployment tax rate. That is, the state will go back the previous 3 years to determine the level of unemployment insurance paid out to the terminated employees of a specific employer and adjust the employer's unemployment tax rate accordingly.

With unemployment rates as volatile as they are in the current economy, it is important to protect your employer unemployment tax rate. The employer has the burden of proving that an employee was terminated for cause. Four Point HR can help by ensuring the proper procedures were followed and proper documentation was completed and submitted to the state unemployment agency in a timely manner when an employee is terminated.

# Good Customer Service

What is good customer service and what does it bring your business? Let's explore this question to determine how pivotal customer service is to a company's success.

Whether you realize it or not, customers seeking goods or services will always recognize and even search for good customer service. This is one of the first things they notice when dealing with a company. With such a high ranking, businesses today cannot afford to have 'bad' customer service. The approach you take with your customers could lead to repeat business and referrals or the loss of clients and a drop in revenue.

What steps can you as an owner or manager take to ensure you keep your current customers while adding satisfied new customers to that number? While pricing and inventory play a large part, make sure that the following components of good customer service are commonplace at your place of business:

**Answer the Phone:** A customer should always get a live person on the other end of the line when calling a company. Not only is this more personal, but it also saves time and frustration. No call back is necessary when questions are answered with the first phone call.

**Listen:** When a customer calls, they should receive your undivided attention. This is very important, as sometimes the questions can be very detailed, so make sure you fully understand what they are asking in order to give a correct response.

**Be Helpful:** Always provide assistance to the customer in a professional and courteous manner. If you don't know the answer to a question, tell the customer you will do the research and call them back as soon as possible. Sometimes the answer may involve several different scenarios, so give the client options. Companies are diverse in how they operate and you never know which alternative may work better for that particular client.

**Follow Through:** If you tell a customer you will call them back, do so in a reasonable amount of time. Follow up with them to make sure that your answer was the solution to their inquiry.

**Address Complaints:** No one likes to hear complaints, but they are inevitable within the business world. Everyone makes mistakes, but how you rectify can say a lot about your company. Never place blame or act in a rude manner if a customer calls to complain. Get complete information, calmly address the issue and offer to correct the issue. Importantly, learn from the mistake to improve your business operations.

Good and repeat customers are the bloodline to any business. It is well worth taking the few steps above and applying them to your routine every day to retain and build your client roster. Word of mouth is a powerful marketing tool.



## PAYROLL CORNER

- **Daylight Savings Time** for 2009 ends Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, at 2:00 a.m. Remember to set your clocks back one hour.

- Review Your **Payroll Information**

As another year comes to a close, please contact Four Point HR if employees have had any of these major life changes in 2009:

- Change of address: Be sure Four Point has any new employee addresses so their W-2 forms will arrive promptly after they are processed in January.

- Change of marital status: Did your employees marry, divorce, or lose a spouse this year? If so, they should review their federal and state withholding exemptions to make sure the proper tax is being withheld from their paychecks.

- Birth or adoption of a child: If an employee's family size increased this year, they should also review withholding exemptions. Increasing the number of exemptions they claim on their W-4 will decrease taxes each payday and increase take home pay.