

THE TRISTATER

THE MEMBER NEWSLETTER OF THE TRI-STATE
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

Serving the HR Communities of Southern NJ • Northern DE • Southeastern PA



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LET'S RECONNECT!

By: Debbie Deissroth, MBA, PCC, SHRM-SCP, SPHR



Welcome back to Tri-State! We are filled with excitement as we adjust to the lingering pandemic reality and find ways to live our lives to the fullest again. Tri-State HRMA had an incredibly busy year in 2021-22 thanks to the efforts of so many volunteer members and leaders. In case you may have missed some of our events, I'd like to remind us all of how much was accomplished, working together!

Tri-State HRMA persevered through the past year with great virtual and in-person programs on a range of topics from storytelling, resilience, hybrid communication strategies, LGBTQ awareness of pronoun usage in speech and in written policies, to staffing solutions that include people with disabilities. There were new partnerships with the National Speakers Association of Philadelphia and the Food Bank of South Jersey as our designated philanthropic initiative, raising over \$2,000 to support people with food insecurities. We introduced a new DEI virtual series, held a spectacular 35th Annual Conference back at the Westin, and experienced some great infotainment with a stellar musical performance on Dueling with Disruption and an improvisational comedy twist on managing change effectively. What a year!

As if that wasn't enough, Career Management delivered another exceptional year of monthly virtual programming, Emerging Professionals served up a year of mentoring with seasoned professionals, Student Relations inspired graduating Rowan HR students through a virtual networking session with emerging professionals and head shots. Workforce Readiness partnered with RCSJ to produce a new committee mission and logo. The Marketing Committee highlighted our events on social media (perhaps you noticed our tagging strategy?) and hosted a virtual wine tasting event, benefiting the SHRM Foundation. Membership held several mixers to provide social time together. The Legislative Committee was back providing monthly updates, and HR Strategies for the Non-Profit Community celebrated its 20th Anniversary event. In addition, this Newsletter celebrated several milestones with its 20th anniversary and its 75th issue! And finally, three Tri-State members were recognized by HR Person of the Year as finalists and two members were selected as winners in their category! Congratulations to all those who participated in making these events so successful!

If you missed any of these events, I encourage you to join in the fun, fellowship, and professional development to maximize your membership with Tri-State this year. If you're not a member yet, connect with any of our volunteer leaders or members to learn more about how Tri-State HRMA can support you in your career! And for anyone who may be interested in getting involved with a committee, Tri-State is a member-driven, volunteer organization. We count on our members to help us create all the services that we provide each year. Please reach out to me, to our Talent Scouts - Monica McClintock and Spencer Broad, or to any Tri-State leader - we'd love to have your support!

I can't wait to reconnect with YOU and share what makes Tri-State HRMA the premier quality regional affiliate of SHRM - see you soon!

With all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debbie Deissroth".

Debbie Deissroth
Tri-State HRMA President



CHAPTER NEWS

You can submit your articles, photos, and news items to Joe Giamboi, at his email address below. Feel free to contact him with any questions about publishing in our newsletter. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

> **Joe Giamboi**
jgiamboi@forgeerc.com

> **Deadlines**
October 15th for November Publication • January 15th for February Publication

Articles of interest would include but are not limited to:

- Legislative Issues
- HR News
- Best Practices
- Upcoming Events
- Community Involvement
- Awards that any of our Tri-State Members have received

The views expressed in our Newsletter's submissions or announcements do not necessarily represent the specific views or endorsements of its directors, administration, committees, or membership. They are provided in the spirit of embracing a professional dialogue for the benefit of Tri-State members and our community.

DEI STRATEGY REQUIRES MORE THAN TRAINING AND REPRESENTATION!

**By: Kristina Kohl, Managing Principal, HRComputes | DEI
Published Author & SHRM Speaker***



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are hot topics! Unfortunately, much of the conversation on these important issues remains limited to aggregated organizational representation numbers and check the box training programs. As HR professionals, we need to spearhead our organization's DEI strategy expanding the scope to support aligning DEI and business imperatives to create opportunities and drive meaningful impact. With changing employee demographics, increasing employee requirements for employer equity and inclusion, growing community demands for ESG alignment, and expanding global opportunities, a strategically aligned DEI strategy is a business imperative.

Building a culture of belonging that welcomes and supports a variety of identities, experiences, and perspectives is crucial to transforming an organization's DEI strategic alignment. Much of this work focuses on building a culture in which our employees, contractors, customers and community members feel welcome, appreciated, and able to show up as their true selves. Creating a culture of belonging improves employee retention and engagement, opens new talent pipelines, strengthens community engagement, and creates new business opportunities through welcoming diverse perspectives and ideas.

Moving beyond meeting threshold requirements requires developing a strategy to promote organizational justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) across the organization. While it begins with leadership, it must reach deep within the organization to change the actions and behaviors of managers and employees. This transformation requires understanding your organization's culture, resources, and capacity for change. Each organization is on its own JEDI journey, which includes multiple stages-Compliance, Awareness, Integration, Embedded and Systematic. Each of the stages involves a broadening of JEDI focus, key players, programs and actions and desired outcomes.

From an HR perspective, there are numerous actions that can be taken to promote creating a JEDI culture of belonging. The following ideas will begin to drive impact within your own organization:

1. Develop leadership training and development
2. Redesign talent pipeline and acquisition processes and access for underrepresented groups
3. Redesign employee development and career pathing
4. Engage stakeholders and gather the voice of employees
5. Build resource groups such as ERGs and Affinity groups
6. Promote allyship through mentoring and sponsoring programs
7. Build capacity for managers and employees on cultural competencies, multistakeholder engagement, addressing microaggressions, and informing on concepts such as white privilege and model minority

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*By: Kristina Kohl, Managing Principal, HRComputes | DEI Published Author & SHRM Speaker**

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8. Develop benefit, wellness, and well-being offerings that support the diversity of your employees' needs
9. Review systems, policies, and processes to realign and support a culture of belonging
10. Promote data driven decision making to reduce bias

As you can see from the list, the scope of DEI is well beyond just representation and trainings. It requires peeling back the layers of an organization to really understand the artifacts of culture including what is valued by the members of the organization. As HR professionals, we have a key role in developing programs, systems, and processes that support an equitable culture allowing each employee to bring their true selves to work and to contribute fully to our organization.

**Bio Note: Kristina has expertise in DEI and presented as an invited speaker at the Tri-State HR Conference in May 2022. She will be a speaker at the SHRM Inclusion conference in San Diego, October 2022.*



LISTENING AND LEARNING FROM EMPLOYEES

By: Louis R. Lessig, Esquire, SHRM-SCP, SPHR



The pandemic had created all sorts of new experiences for everyone, including those who train, speak and educate like myself. Over the past twenty four months that has meant engaging with audiences both virtually and in-person. Over the same time period many organizations have sought to address their training, such as anti-discrimination training via programs that are video in nature, where employees watch them as a form of compliance with required materials done on various intervals depending on where around the country you may be located. For example if you are located in places such as New York City, California or the State of Illinois all have dedicated laws that provide the particular interval of such training and in some cases, the actual materials that are "recommended." They are not alone, many places around the U.S. require some form of discrimination training, especially as a result of grassroots movements such as #metoo and #blacklivesmatter.

From an organizational perspective, finding what appears to be an efficient way to streamline the educational process does make sense in terms of being able to check a box and know you can state to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or the respective state agency that you have in fact done the "required training." But is that the point? Yes, you can say you did it, but has it moved the needle in regard to the actual discrimination or harassment you are trying to eradicate from your workplace? Do your employees pay attention? Or do they turn on the video and leave it on in the background while doing other work or even have the material playing on their phone, while they go shopping or watch a game? There is no reason to sheepishly consider what I am saying, because we all know that these things do happen.

The real issue may be less about how a percentage of the workforce does not really pay attention, but how it impacts future investigations and litigation. As part of a larger investigation into significant allegations of serious sexual harassment I had the opportunity to interview several female employees about a particular situation and the discrimination training they had received over the course of several years. All shared that their organization did conduct annual training sessions, done via video at their desks or at home. To a person, all agreed they attended as required. During the discussion I ask the catch-all query in every interview, "What do you think about the training?" And that is when most shared what I feared the most... The response. "It does nothing." "No one takes it seriously." "It does not change anything." When I ask the obvious follow up – why? The replies all pointed to the fact that the online version versus an interactive live opportunity meant that the real perpetrators ignored the sessions that were playing on their screens, but could say they did attend the session. These women went on, some while becoming



quite emotional, stating that the employer does not care. They are just doing the bare minimum, but nothing is going to change.

That my friends is the problem. The perception by your own employees that even if you do what is required, it's not enough and your culture will not change. So what can you do? Commit. Commit to doing live, interactive training that is not generic, but designed for your organization, to address general issues and your actual organizational concerns. This is the type of training I have done for years and continue to evolve and create ways to engage with audiences in-person and virtually live. Need a reason to commit for yourself? You need look no further than the trash can of tissues, sitting next to a chair where I met with several employees discussing with all of them an egregious pattern and practice of harassment that was not altered at all by one way video training. We can do better. We can achieve before the lawsuit is ever filed. Heck, if you want the litany of cases where this exact training checked THE box, but the bad acts continued, let me know, I got them.

At a time when recruitment is at an all time critical point, we know that potential employees are looking around, wondering about all sorts of things, we have the basics, pay, benefits, the snacks in the break room, but your culture is why people stay. For example, I had the good fortune to go one site with a client to do their company wide training. In the first session, the COO was in the crowd. I will admit to a few nerves there, but when I began to speak about LGBTQ+ issues in the workplace and how we treat one another, the COO interrupted me. They told everyone in the room about a book they were currently reading on the subject and how important it was for everyone in the company to support one another, independent of their sexual preference or protected class. Yes, you could have heard a pin drop in the moment.

As I took back the mic and continued, it was so clear to me. That was a moment as employment counsel and speaker, which solidifies the main points and shows everyone in the company that they are committed to inclusion. It is sessions like that one which make what I do so rewarding. After the session I thanked the COO for their words and supporting my message of inclusion. One that I am sure got out to the rest of the company even before everyone left the room.

As you begin to plan your budgets for 2023, I want to challenge everyone reading this article. To make a difference in your organization. Let's stop checking a box and find ways to deliver for our employees. The benefits of inclusion, protection, retention, support and engagement are there for everyone to enjoy.

EMERGING PROFESSIONALS

By: Michael Petrilli, HR Business Partner

Are you new to HR?

The Emerging Professionals Committee is gearing up for our second year, and we are adding new experiences and opportunities to our program. We are welcoming our first sponsor, D&D Consulting, to our team to help further Emerging Professionals! As a late summer activity, we are hosting our first volunteer event with South Jersey Foodbank on August 27th to distribute food and necessities to the community. EP's Year kicks off with a September 14th mixer introducing our plans for the upcoming months. Register for these events on TRI-State's website.

We are a growing committee and are always looking to expand. Are you new to HR? We consider new to be your first 8 years! One of our members, Lisa Jackson shared why she continues to be in Emerging Professionals by saying "Without a doubt, the Emerging Professionals group of Tri-State HRMA has been a valuable asset to me as I embark on my HR career. Changing careers after 40 is difficult and having a group of like-minded emerging HR professionals available to network and share experiences with has helped me immensely. The Mentor Match program gave me access to seasoned HR professionals and opened doors I never thought I would have access to. This group and program are amazing!"

Interested in joining or just have questions? Reach out to Mike Petrilli (MPetrilli@wsfsbank.com).







