

# **DECISIONS FACING HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONAL IN THE AFTERMATH OF SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup> 2001**

*Amy E. Hurley-Hanson, Chapman University, Argyros School of Business and Economics, One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866. 714 628-7312, ahurley@chapman.edu*

## **ABSTRACT**

September 11, 2001 has had a profound effect on the world. Many decisions are made differently now. Our lives and our career decisions have changed. One of the groups of employees who had to make organizational decisions quickly after 9/11 was the Human Resource Professionals. In the short term they needed to decide how to locate people, provide workspace, communicate with their employees etc. In the long term they face important decisions regarding security and disaster plans.

## **HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS AND SEPTEMBER 11, 2001**

Despite their shock, many HR professionals were the first back to work after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. "In an effort to establish a semblance of normal business operations, HR professionals have been putting in long hours finding workspace for displaced staff members, keeping scattered employees informed, providing counseling and benefits, and putting temporary security measures into place." [2, p. 1]. There were many issues HR professionals needed to make organizational decisions about. These included office space, communication, safety and security, economic downturn, diversity and a host of other issues.

Human Resources (HR) professionals have had an active role in dealing with the aftermath. Because HR professionals were among the first back to work, many may not have had opportunities to deal with their own emotions. "People who hold their emotions in check are much more likely to experience post-traumatic stress complications.... That includes CEOs, HR Managers and others in a position of responding. In the short term, they're busy. They don't have time to deal with all of those emotions. They need very purposefully to make sure they take the time to be debriefed" ([1, p. 6]. HR professionals will continue dealing with their own emotional responses while getting everyone else back to work.

The total impact of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> on people and businesses has yet to be seen. To help business continue moving forward, HR professionals will help workers continue to cope. Even in businesses where they have not been actively involved in business planning, many are beginning to have a "seat at the table." People issues are on everyone's minds since 9/11, and HR is often seen as the link between the business and the people. The attacks have and will continue to effect people in their home and work lives, and have affected the way businesses operate and treat their people. HR professionals have and will continue to have a significant role in the changing work environment and decisions made in their organizations.

## References

- [1] Clark, Margaret M. 2001. "Businesses help workers learn to cope," HR News, November.
- [2] Overman, S., 2001. "Companies go back to work," HR News, November.