

## For Your Info

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Massachusetts is posting job gains! In January of 2005, the statewide seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 4.9%. In January of 2006, the statewide seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 4.6%.

> Do you know what the minimum wage is in Massachusetts? It was last adjusted in January of 2001. See next page for the answer.

> How much do US companies spend on training and development? See next page for the answer.

## How to Focus Your Investment in HR

**“We can’t be all things to all people.”**

“We don’t have enough time or energy to complete every item on the HR ‘to do’ list.”

**“Our priorities change quickly.”**

“We only have so much money.”

**“We have 1001 activities moving forward  
but nothing ever really gets completed.”**

As we move into a period of growth in the US, employers are beginning to invest in HR again. What we are seeing is a more focused and targeted approach to developing and delivering Human Resources services and activities. What are some of the ways that our clients can better spend their dollars but not break the bank? And avoid a lot of false starts and incomplete projects? Here are some ideas:

- **Develop an HR Strategy.** What are your overall company goals for 2006 and beyond? How can HR link their activities to your firm’s strategic plan?
- **Listen to your employees.** Consider holding focus groups or launching an online employee survey. Both methods can help fine-tune your HR services. You may be working on improving benefits offerings but your employees instead are more concerned about internal inequities around stock option grants. Listen to your outgoing employees. Make sure that you are conducting exit interviews with your employees before they leave the company. Yes, there will undoubtedly be some gripes but if you hear a pattern of gripes, you may need to address the core reason behind those complaints. Remember, rehires happen! Once you have a plan in place, make sure that you communicate your 2006 initiatives to your employees. Be honest – you can’t be all things to all people. But you are more likely to have some success doing 3-6 things really well.
- **Re-assess your HR goals on a quarterly basis.** Things change and your plan may need to be changed too. That is ok as long as you communicate it back to your customers.

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*Answers to Page 1.*

> The Massachusetts Minimum Wage is \$6.75!

> According to the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), high performing companies spend approximately \$1500 per employee per year for formalized employee training and development programs. Most US companies spend approximately \$750 per employee per year for formalized employee training and development programs. (*source: ASTD 2002 survey*)

**HELPFUL LINKS:**

American Society for Training and Development  
([www.astd.org](http://www.astd.org))

Department of Labor  
([www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov))

NEHRA - Northeast Human Resources Association  
([www.nehra.com](http://www.nehra.com)).

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• **Look at ways to automate.** Consider employee self-service options. Online or telephone benefits enrollment all reduce errors, paper and wasted time.

Every company is different. One strategy that works at a competitor may not work in your firm. Every company has a unique culture and norms (the “unwritten” rules). Testing your strategy with a cross-section of employees may encourage “buy-in” and support.

## 20/20 Insight Gold – The New Way to Get Employee Feedback

“Listen to your employees” the experts say! As a leader, how do you do that? What do your employees really want from your company? How do you find out? One method that we have used successfully is an online feedback tool, 20/20 Insight Gold. Gone are the days of paper, number two pencils and filling out little oval boxes! With 20/20 Insight Gold, we can develop an employee satisfaction survey for your company quickly and cost-effectively! We can customize a survey for you and the survey is completed online. Your company receives a comprehensive report summarizing the results. We can then help develop action plans to address perceived weaknesses in your company.

*Contact us for more details!*