TEN YEARS OF SERVICE

10 1997-2007

Volume 10, No. 9
September 2007

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

supporting EAP professionals

'I Just Want an EAP, Pure and Simple'

By RaeAnn Thomas

As Dave Worster described in the July 2007 *EAR* cover story, *"Employee assistance professionals are climbing a steep mountain of establishing ourselves as a true 'profession.'"* I'd add that employee assistance professionals are making that climb more difficult than it needs to be by offering everything and anything an organization may need in order to sell a contract.

> *"...are we blinding clients with the glitz and splash of one-stop shopping to meet all of their organizational needs?"*

Are we building business? Or are we committing ourselves to mediocrity by becoming brokers of the very "professional service" that we said merits its own credential?

The Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) has developed standards to help us provide consistent and quality EA programming to the organizations that we serve. The standards that Dave referenced in his article combine to create a service that addresses organizational productivity, and personal employee issues that affect work performance.

While it is generally agreed that we must provide the best service possible to help organizations maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of their employees, many EAPs have moved beyond core technology standards (see accompanying sidebar) to offer work-wellness plans that are losing sight of our mission. Maybe we have gone too far. Let's consider some of the services that we provide:

CISS

Critical incident stress services have become part of every organization's toolbox. It makes sense to provide these services in collaboration with EAP because it is often the EAP counselor who follows up with individuals significantly affected by traumatic incidents in the workplace. Critical incidents may have a prolonged effect on an individual's work performance.

However, if the EAP is the central provider of CISS, there can be a conflict of interest when critical

continued on Page 2

Definitions of an EAP and EAP Core Technology

The "employee assistance program" or "EAP" is a worksite-based program designed to assist: work organizations in addressing productivity issues, and (2) "employee clients" in identifying and resolving personal concerns, including, but not limited to, health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal issues that may affect job performance.

Employee assistance program core technology represents the essential components of the

continued on Page 3

FEATURED INSIDE

- You've Got Mail — Now What?
- Honesty Still Best Policy
- Reward Good Deeds!
- Meth Use Higher than Thought
- Conversations that Transform Workplaces
- Rethinking Performance Reviews
- *From Our Files:* Keep Email from Landing a Business in Court

INSERTS

- *Brown Bagger:* Using Email to Make, not Break, a Career
- *Payroll Stuffers*
- *LifestyleTIPS©*

 continued from Page 1

incident services need to be provided, sometimes at the expense of regularly scheduled EAP appointments. Can EAP providers adequately staff organizations to provide on-demand CISS services without stealing time from individual "non-crisis" services? Are we advertising the services of a crisis line as opposed to EAP? Can we keep counselors up to date with the newest advances in CISS services, or are we asking EAP counselors to perform work that is not in their field of expertise?

Training

EAPs nearly always offer trainings. In fact, we consider training as part of an EAP "package." Training educates the employees about how the EAP works, it assists managers and leaders in utilizing EAP in a proactive way to get the maximum benefit from EA services, and it can be seen as a type of ongoing "commercial" for employees when we offer brown bag seminars or other brief trainings to keep the program on the minds of our potential clients.

However, we are increasingly being asked to provide training in performance improvement, customer service, and management skills, to name a few. Where does EAP end, and a company's education/training department begin? Are we providing services under the guise of EAP that really belong elsewhere? Are we offering services that are really beyond our scope, but considered necessary by the organization?

SAP Services

EAP's origins lie in the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) field. It is generally understood that EAP counselors will have AODA education and experience in order to assess and provide follow-up care for individuals with alcohol and drug issues. In fact, the Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) is a necessity for companies required to comply with Department of Transportation (DOTR) regulations.

Because we have basic standards within EAP, many of our providers have the knowledge and experience to provide assessments and follow-up. One-stop shopping means that the EAP and SAP counselor (sometimes one in the same) can provide value-added services by combining EA programming while helping to meet regulatory compliance issues for the organization. This makes good fiscal sense for an organization.

However, from a service perspective, the EAP has moved into murky water. We have provided employee advocacy in the past — but now we must forego doing so, in favor of ensuring public safety and compliance. In fact, the DOT specifically notes that the SAP professional is *not* an employee advocate.

Organizational Development

Retreats, leadership training, participation in project management, change management, and succession planning are just a few of the EA services that are possibly beyond the initial intent of the EAP. Certainly, EAP counselors frequently have experience in many of these areas. We may enhance our services to accommodate requests for training, OD services that lie beyond our core area of expertise.

Moreover, the organizations we serve are frequently forced to cut the frills, and as such may rely on us for many services that were once available elsewhere in the organization. Organizational development is likely an area that doesn't fall in the range of core EAP services. That is, unless we want to just call it "training."

Web-based Services

Have websites taken the place of quality face-to-face assessments? Are we counting website hits in utilization reports? Certainly, websites are a great promotion tool for an EAP. Online assessments, links to resources, and other quality information

continued on Page 3

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

Editor - Mike Jacquart
Publisher - Jennifer Heisler
Circulation - Scott Kolpien

COPYRIGHT © Impact Publications, Inc. 2007. *Employee Assistance Report* (ISSN 1097-6221) is published monthly by Impact Publications, Inc., 1439 Churchill Street, Unit 302, Crystal Plaza, Waupaca, WI 54981, Phone: 715-258-2448, Fax: 715-258-9048, e-mail: mikej@impact-publications.com. POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to *Employee Assistance Report*, 1439 Churchill Street, Unit 302, Crystal Plaza, Waupaca, WI 54981. No part of this newsletter may be reproduced in any form or by any means without written permission from the publisher, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review which must credit *Employee Assistance Report* as the source, and include the publisher's phone number, address, and subscription rate. Yearly subscription rate is $229.00. Material accepted for publication is subject to such revision as is necessary in our discretion to meet the requirements of the publication. The information presented in *EAR* is from many sources for which there can be no warranty or responsibility as to accuracy, originality or completeness. The publication is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering product endorsements or providing instructions as a substitute for appropriate training by qualified sources. Therefore, *EAR* and Impact Publications, Inc. will not assume responsibility for any actions arising from any information published in *EAR*. We invite constructive criticism and welcome any report of inferior information so that corrective action may be taken.

 continued from Page 2

make it possible to use these services without ever seeing an EAP counselor face-to-face.

If the employee knows (or believes they know) the nature of their problem, organizations may potentially be able to develop websites that will make personal contact with EA professionals obsolete. We've done so well at becoming technically capable that we've shifted the focus of EAP from personal, individualized assessments to instant info available at the employee's fingertips.

Work/life Resource Referral

Some EAPs can help employees find a good daycare center, legal services, or Realtor ®. EAPs have developed networks of service providers to connect employees with any potential resource they may need. But it can be very challenging to provide EAP-caliber quality care when it involves referring a client to a distant organization. Instead of providing the services themselves, EAP has sometimes become the keeper of an extensive phone directory for nationwide and/or global resources.

Summary

These aforementioned services are sometimes nice additions to core EAP technology and overall service. Many organizations have benefitted from them. However, as we continue to build a wider continuum of services, what suffers? EA professionals begin to sound as if we don't value the fundamental services of EAP. Core technology is seen as an incidental piece of a wellness package that over time gets lost in the haze of a benefit continuum posed to serve all clients and meet all needs.

If EA professionals don't value the basic philosophy of EAP, we certainly will not be in a position to cultivate that appreciation in the organizations we serve. When we work with an organization to develop programs that will have a positive impact, are we selling core EAP services first — or are we blinding clients with the glitz and splash of one-stop shopping to meet all of their organizational needs? We may become the Jack-of-all-trades, but master of none. ■

RaeAnn Thomas is the executive director of Associated Employee Assistance Services. Contact her at (800) 540-3758 or ThomasR@smhosp.org. RaeAnn is also a former contributing editor of Employee Assistance Report.

 continued from Page 1

employee assistance (EA) profession. These components create a unique approach to addressing work-organization productivity issues and "employee client" personal concerns affecting job performance. EAPA defines EAP core technology as:

(1) Consultation with, training of, and assistance to work organization leadership (managers, supervisors, and union stewards) seeking to manage the troubled employee, enhance the work environment, and improve employee job performance; and, provide outreach to and educate employees and their families about the availability of EAP services;
(2) Confidential and timely problem identification/assessment services for employee clients with personal concerns that may affect job performance;
(3) Use of constructive confrontation, motivation, and short-term intervention with employee clients to address problems that affect job performance;
(4) Referral of employee clients for diagnosis, treatment, and assistance, plus case monitoring and follow-up services;
(5) Consultation to work organization in establishing and maintaining effective relations with treatment and other service providers, and in managing provider contracts;
(6) Consultation to work organization to encourage availability of and employee access to health benefits covering medical and behavioral problems, including, but not limited to, alcoholism, drug abuse, and mental and emotional disorders; and
(7) Identification of the effects of EAP services on the work organization and individual job performance. ■

Source: EAPA (www.eapassn.org).

Do you have an upcoming conference you'd like to promote?

Let us know
and we'll post it
FREE OF CHARGE
On Our New WEBSITE!

www.impact-publications.com

You've Got Mail — Now What?

Is it OK to check email during business meetings? A new survey shows that the verdict is still out, although many executives are doing it.

According to a poll conducted by Robert Half Management Resources (www.roberthalfmr.com), 86% of senior executives said it's common for professionals to read and respond to emails during meetings. However, close to one-third of this group (31%) disapprove of this practice.

RHMR offers these tips for using mobile devices during meetings:

- **Be discreet.** If you need to bring a mobile device to a meeting, set it on vibrate to avoid disturbing other attendees or the meeting leader.
- **Consider your audience.** Co-workers may be more forgiving of a need to respond to email from a client, for example, so adjust email activity accordingly.
- **Respond only if it's urgent.** It's tempting to check every message that comes in, but avoid doing so unless there's a compelling reason.
- **Step out of the room.** If you receive an urgent message during a meeting, step quietly out of the room to reply.
- **Know when to let go.** Spending a considerable mount of time checking email will make others feel unimportant. It's better to bow out of a meeting altogether than be distracted during most of it. ■

Editor's note: *See this month's Brown Bagger insert for more information on the proper use of email.*

Honesty Still Best Policy

The mark of a good leader may lie in his or her ability to be honest and exhibit integrity, a new survey suggests. Nearly one-third (31%) of chief financial officers polled by Robert Half Management Resources said the most important quality for a business leader to possess is integrity. (It was followed by experience and communication skills, both at 27% each.)

"History has shown the importance of integrity in all aspects of business, from managing assets to managing people," said Paul McDonald, executive director of Robert Half Management Resources. "Corporate scandals of the recent past have underscored the need for sound corporate governance practices and transparency in financial reporting."

In addition, as the survey also found, leaders must also be effective communicators. "Financial executives must be able to translate complex concepts into terms other audiences, from investors and board members to employees and the general public, can understand," McDonald added. "The ability to motivate and inspire also is crucial for fostering loyal and productive employees." ■

Reward Good Deeds!

Workers who feel their good work often goes unnoticed may have a case. More than one-third (35%) of professionals polled recently said businesses are not effective at rewarding good performance. In fact, 30% of managers agreed!

"Businesses need to make retention an ongoing priority," stated Diane Domeyer, executive director of OfficeTeam (www.officeteam.com), which conducted the survey. "Firms that fail to reward great work risk losing employees to businesses that do invest in recognition programs."

In addition to monetary rewards, OfficeTeam offers the following easy, yet meaningful ways to recognize staff:

- **Say thanks.** Don't underestimate the power of saying "thank you," either in writing or in person.
- **Celebrate achievements.** Honor employees' accomplishments in front of their peers. Staff events recognizing individuals or groups can enhance morale while highlighting exemplary behavior.
- **Give the gift of time.** Reward accomplishments with extra days off or extended lunch breaks. Time away from the office allows staff members to recharge after major projects.
- **Provide "plum" assignments.** Give strong performers the option of working on desirable projects. Doing so improves motivation and enthusiasm, and it encourages others to excel in their positions. ■

Meth Use Higher than Thought

Crystal methamphetamine use among young adults in the U.S. is considerably higher than previous surveys indicated, according to new research funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The study, published in the July issue of the journal *Addiction*, found 2.8% of young adults (ages 18-26) reported using crystal meth during 2001-2002. This is higher than the annual prevalence of crystal methamphetamine use by young adults (ages 19-28) of 1.4% reported by NIDA's 2002 *Monitoring the Future* survey.

Previous national surveys indicate that meth prevalence is highest among young adults, but until now, few scientific papers have looked at the characteristics and behaviors associated with its use in this age group. Using nationally representative data, and examining the age group most prone to meth use (ages 18-26), the study found that young adult users are disproportionately white and male and live in the West, and that the odds of use for Native-Americans were more than four times higher than that for whites. Users also tend to have lower social economic status, use other substances, such as alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine, and the male users are more likely to have had incarcerated fathers.

"The study showed not only greater use of crystal methamphetamine, it also suggests the drug is associated with risky and antisocial behaviors, including other illicit drug use," said NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. "By examining these connections, we hope to identify new avenues for treatment and prevention."

The study authors asked respondents about their use of crystal meth in the past year and past 30 days. They examined certain characteristics of meth users, such as their use of other substances, sociodemographics, and novelty behavior. They also looked at what was unique about meth users compared to other drug users, and the associations between meth users and antisocial or risk behaviors, such as crime/violence and risky sexual behavior.

The study found that use of meth and associations with both criminal behavior and risky sex differed between men and women. Among women, the study found meth use to be significantly associated with drug sales and risky sexual behavior, such as low condom use. However, the authors emphasize that more research is needed to determine whether women who sell drugs are more likely to use meth or whether use of the drug leads to criminal drug sales among women.

Crystal meth (also referred to as "ice," "crystal," "glass," and "tina") is a common form of methamphetamine, a highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system. As with the powdered form, users of crystal meth are drawn to its euphoric and stimulant effects, but the drug has higher purity and more potential for abuse.

"This study presents a new perspective on crystal methamphetamine users in the United States," said Dr. Denise D. Hallfors of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation and a co-author of the study. "We hope that this new information will aid in the development of appropriate interventions and help to inform public policy." ■

Sources: National Institute on Drug Abuse (www.nida.nih.gov) and Employee Assistance Professionals Association (www.eapassn.org).

Subscribe to EA Report Now!

YES! Please start _____ or renew _____ my subscription to *Employee Assistance Report. If I'm not completely satisfied, I can cancel and receive a refund for the remaining portion of the subscription.*

☐ 3 years (36 issues).....$522.00
☐ 2 years (24 issues).....$380.00
☐ 1 year (12 issues).....$229.00

___ Extra copies per month at $2 each, $24 per year (e.g., 5 extra copies per month for 1 yr. = $120 per year). Add to above rates.

Foreign orders please add $10 per year.

Name:.....
Title:.....
Organization:.....
Address:.....
City:.....
State or Province:.....
Zip Code: .....
Daytime Phone: .....

All payments must be made in U.S. funds or by check drawn on a U.S. bank.

Method of Payment:
☐ Organization's check
☐ Personal check
☐ Purchase order
☐ Bill me
☐ Charge my: ☐MC ☐ Visa ☐Am. Express
Card #:_____
Expiration Date:_____
Signature:_____

Credit card orders may call 715-258-2448.
Mail to: *EA Report*, PO Box 322, Waupaca, WI 54981

Editor's Notebook

Combined with Dave Worster's July cover story, we hope that Dave's and RaeAnn's articles have given readers plenty to "chew on" regarding the future of EAP. I'd like to offer just a few thoughts.

First, regardless which direction EAP takes, I think it's imperative that EAPs increase awareness of their services. Very rarely have I run into someone who was aware of what an EAP was or what it did. Don't misunderstand, I realize that it's difficult to add one more thing (marketing) to already BUSY schedules, but I think it's important to find some way to do just that.

Don Jorgensen, past president of EAPA, and Judith Braun, CEAP and vice president of organizational services with Mines & Associates, outlined some marketing ideas in the June 2005 *EAR*. One of the better ideas, I thought, was Judy's suggestion for small EAPs to hire someone on an hourly rate who can *focus their attention on marketing*. Otherwise, you're spreading yourself too thin, trying to add one more thing to an already busy plate. It just doesn't work.

Second, I would agree with the premise that, again regardless of the model or services, EAP must better explain to businesses how vital EAP is to their future success.

No one's suggesting that any of this is easy. However, it stands to reason that as today's workplaces undergo revolutionary transformations, that EAP will continue to be part of those changes. EAPs have always been creative and adaptable. I don't see that changing now, do you? Until next month. ■

Mike Jacquart, Editor
(715) 258-2448
mikej@impact-publications.com

Quick Ideas

Conversations that Transform Workplaces

By Tom Terez

There are plenty of conversations that occur at work — about today's tasks, about that rush order, about the project that should have been done yesterday. But do you and your colleagues ever step off the task treadmill and talk about the workplace itself?

If you work full time until retirement age, you're going to log at least 90,000 hours on the job! Doesn't it make sense to spend a *few* of those hours teaming up with co-workers and perhaps your EAP to make the workplace better?

Share the following ideas with colleagues, select the ones that seem most relevant, and then set aside some time to talk. There are no right or wrong answers, and just an hour or so of dialogue will deepen understanding and point the way toward practical improvement.

1. Mind-engaging work

When was the last time you got so caught up in interesting work that you lost track of time? What were you doing? What was it about the work itself, how you were going about it, its connection to a greater good — that made this such a wonderfully consuming activity?

2. Seeing the fruits of your labor

How do you know that your effort is having a positive impact? If you could wave a wand and instantly create a more meaningful system for tracking results, what would it look like?

3. Meetings, and more meetings

How many hours do you spend each week in meetings? How many of these hours are well spent, and how many are wasted? If you could redirect unproductive time to worthwhile activity, what would you do?

4. Teamwork vs. individuality

What gets greater emphasis in your workplace: teamwork and togetherness, or individuality and diversity? If it's teamwork and togetherness, does the pursuit of unity prompt people to downplay differences? If individuality and diversity are the main focus, does the workplace ever feel like a loose collection of conflicting styles and agendas? What can be done to maintain a balance between unity and uniqueness?

5. Giving and getting respect

Johann von Goethe said, *"The way you see people is the way you treat them, and the way you treat them is what they become."* What did Goethe mean, and what could be done to make respect one of your workplace's greatest strengths?

6. Can we talk?

Is there a problem or concern so big that no one ever talks about it? If so, why isn't it acknowledged? What are the risks of talking about it? What are the potential benefits?

7. Empowering yourself

"If I had just a bit more authority at work, I would _____." Fill in the blank with several actions you'd like to take to be more effective in your job. Then explore what's holding you back? What is an action you can get started on right now? ■

Tom Terez is a speaker, workshop leader, and author of "22 Keys to Creating a Meaningful Workplace." For more information, visit http://BetterWorkplaceNow.com.

Rethinking Performance Reviews

By Lauren Stiller Rikleen

When Sue was called into a meeting with the managing partner, she was curious, but not concerned. She had been working at the firm for four years, and had always received satisfactory performance reviews. But when she walked into his office and saw the Director of Human Resources, she had a sinking feeling that she was not there to receive a new assignment.

In less than five minutes, Sue's world changed dramatically as she was told that she was being terminated. Too stunned to ask questions at the time, only later did Sue feel increased anger at the unexpected and brief discussion. And her frustration only increased as she thought about her past annual performance reviews. Had she missed something? Can it be that she really never saw this coming?

Sadly, the answer for Sue — and many others who find themselves unexpectedly terminated — is that these events too often *do* come without warning. The reasons can be found in the fundamental fear that most managers have of providing negative feedback. The process of properly addressing an employee's work performance is so fraught with discomfort that it rarely gets the time and attention it warrants.

The fact is, face-to-face discussions about someone's strengths and weaknesses are difficult. The positive messages are frequently too brief to seem validating, and few managers are skilled at properly conveying negative feedback so it can truly be heard and understood.

> *"...properly addressing an employee's work performance is...fraught with discomfort..."*

The result is a performance appraisal where the evaluator gets to check something off the to-do list, and the person evaluated leaves the interaction puzzled, angry, or frustrated, rather than with a clear understanding of job strengths and weaknesses.

If this sounds like the process used by your company clients, it may be time to help them rethink how they conduct performance reviews (e.g. appraisals).

Implementing the following three tips can help create a more meaningful process.

1) **Consider feedback as part of everyday conversation, rather than an annual discussion.** Did you like the way a situation was handled? Offer praise and an analysis of the factors that contributed to the success. Perhaps you observed a poorly managed interaction? Immediately suggest some helpful ideas for improved ways to manage a similar situation in the future. And even better, do it in person, instead of by email.

2) **Don't hide behind technology to communicate with staff.** The irony of today's workplace is that, even as there are more ways than ever to communicate, there are fewer meaningful conversations taking place. Technology has replaced direct discussion, which results in an even more awkward formal review.

3) **Try to avoid formal performance reviews in which the feedback will be unexpected.** Information conveyed during a review process should never be a surprise. Behavior cannot meaningfully be modified through a conversation that only takes place annually. Most people want to succeed. It is the manager's job to make sure that employees understand what they need to do to improve performance on an ongoing basis.

The bottom line? Performance reviews are far more effective tools for improving behavior and performance when they are integrated into an ongoing culture of communication. Let the workplaces you're involved in become ones where regular feedback translates into a culture of success. ■

Lauren Stiller Rikleen is the author of "Ending the Gauntlet: Removing Barriers to Women's Success in the Law." She is a senior partner with Bowditch & Dewey, and executive director of the Bowditch Institute for Women's Success. For more information, visit www.bowditch.com/success.

Employee Assistance Report is published monthly. For subscription information contact: Employee Assistance Report, 1439 Churchill Street, Unit 302, Crystal Plaza, P.O. Box 322,Waupaca, WI 54981. This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought. (From a Declaration of Principles jointly adopted by a committee of the American Bar Association and a Committee of Publishers.) *Employee Assistance Report* does not necessarily endorse any products or services mentioned. No part of this newsletter may be reproduced in any form or by any means without written permission from the publisher, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review which must credit *Employee Assistance Report* as the source, and include the publisher's phone number, address, and subscription rate.

From Our Files

Keep Email from Landing a Business in Court

By Patricia Eyres

Email and Internet abuse can cripple communications, disrupt operations, or embarrass a business. It also increasingly leads to lawsuits.

One company faced six claims of sexual harassment because an employee downloaded an "adult bulletin board" to the company's computer system and programmed it to display the offensive material on employees' screens when they accessed their email. Another paid $2.2 million for racially charged email messages exchanged at work by employees.

Many email-related legal challenges can be controlled or even eliminated through proactive techniques. The following is a synopsis of the four critical steps that every company should take to reduce their chances of an electronic disaster.

1. Enact an email policy.

Clearly define what rights the company reserves and explain that email communications are not private. The specific language of the policy will vary depend on the company, industry, and specific needs of the work environment.

The policy should be written and incorporated into employee manuals or similar materials. Employees, indicating they have read it and agree to its term, should then sign it. Some common highlights include:

- **Defining permissable uses of email** — Make it clear that emails are the property of the company, and that emails should be used for business communications only.
- **Defining appropriate and impermissible content** — Employees must know specifically what is allowed, and what is prohibited. Inform employees that violations will result in appropriate discipline.
- **Reserving the right to monitor email** — Include a description of how you, as the employer, will go about monitoring email.

2. Encourage employees to use effective writing techniques to minimize potential miscommunications.

For example, ask them to limit "off the cuff" responses that are often incomplete or misleading. In general, stay within the same tone and format of any business communication.

Employees should also be aware of their responsibilities to safeguard proprietary business records, intellectual property, and other company assets from inadvertent disclosure.

3. Enforce your email policy consistently.

A policy is of little use if it isn't enforced and if employees aren't aware of it. Consider using an electronic disclaimer that is triggered each time the individual logs onto the email system or accesses a personal email message. This also helps establish that the employee has no reasonable expectation of privacy.

4. Educate employees and managers about the email policy.

This last point cannot be overestimated. Despite the prevalence of email abuse and consequences played out in the media, many employees still believe their email is private, and that personal access to the Internet is untraceable.

Employers must educate their employees that this is not the case. Effective employee education will alert them that even the use of passwords does not indicate a message is confidential or that the company will not be able to intercept it.

As email communications continue to dominate the business world, it's more important than ever for employers to keep tabs on employee email messages.

Summary

In today's electronic age, such policies are a necessity to keep employees safe from inappropriate communications, and they may even save a company millions in potential lawsuits. ■

Patricia Eyres is an experienced attorney with over 20 years defending businesses in the courtroom. ***Editor's notes:*** *This article originally appeared in the September 2003 EAR. See this month's Brown Bagger insert for more information on the proper use of email.*

a look ahead

UPCOMING EAR FEATURES...

- Negotiation
- Mentoring
- Diversity Initiatives