

Experts Share Their Insights

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Avoiding Legal Difficulties

What to Expect from the EEOC in 2011

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has benefited from significant budget increases in recent years, allowing it to hire additional investigators, experts and attorneys. With the EEOC's newly acquired resources, what should you expect in 2011? While the EEOC has always pursued claims of systemic discrimination, these claims are now a strategic priority, resulting in an increase of systemic claims. EEOC's General Counsel recently remarked that the agency's goal is to identify and litigate "big cases where we can have the broadest possible impact."

Due to the dramatic effect these claims may have on your business, it is beneficial to have advance notice of EEOC's decision to target you for a systemic investigation. The first warning sign may be EEOC's refusal to mediate when a charge is filed. The EEOC routinely refuses to mediate when it plans to pursue a systemic investigation. Other red flags include multiple charges with similar allegations filed in a short period of time; allegations in an individual charge of discrimination suggesting that a group of employees may have been impacted; and the EEOC sending questionnaires or surveys to a company's employees concerning specific practices or policies.

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Family Businesses

Opportunities Remain Despite Difficulties

In Indiana, as well as nationally, closely-held family businesses have been hit hard by the economic downturn. Some have closed their doors, but most of you are still fighting hard and making the necessary changes with your expenses and cash flow to keep weathering this storm, which may last one or two more years.

Even though business has been difficult for the last three years, there are many positive aspects to owning a closely-held family business here in Indiana.

Fortunately, there are some signs that the economy has stabilized this summer and hopefully next year will be a better year. Large national businesses are starting to rebuild inventory, which usually means there are prospects for future growth. Since June 2008, public companies have been cutting their expenses drastically and conserving cash flow to build a war chest for the future. As an owner of a closely-held family business in Indiana, you should also have a plan in place by now to control your expenses and generate cash flow, which will make your company stronger over the next one or two years.

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Business Artifacts

How to Use Them in the Workplace

A visit to an office, grocery store or other establishment might seem routine. When we step inside a place of business, however, we are in a sense venturing into an active archaeological site. Our workspaces are filled with artifacts of every imaginable shape and variety.

It's obvious that we need physical tools to do our work, but we don't usually spend much time thinking about the design and placement of these items. Resources we have at work impact our ability to complete projects. It really is true, for instance, that a salesman who places a telephone in the center of his desk will call more prospects.

Put on your archaeologist hat for a moment and think about the items in your workspace. Just as a pottery shard or a Renaissance painting tells you something about the culture and lifestyle of generations past, a change request form provides insight into the society of the organization that produced it. Every aspect of this artifact has some meaning, and a few moments of examination prompt countless questions about its design.

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