

HUMAN RESOURCES: A LABOR OF LOVE

AN HR GEEK'S JOURNEY TO THE PROPANE INDUSTRY

As I pen this, my first human resources (HR) column for *LP Gas*, I thought it helpful to start by sharing a little about my background.

I am a self-designated "HR geek." Call me crazy, but I love reading all things HR: periodicals, books, news stories or white papers. You name it, and I've read it. I've even been known to read HR books on the beach on vacation. Despite my love of reading, I've found it tough to stay on top of the ever-changing legal landscape. My fellow HR geek friends and I would often lament the fact that many HR laws need a legal degree to understand the practical application of the regulations.

"WE RECOGNIZE HOW IMPORTANT IT IS FOR EVERY OPERATION TO MAINTAIN AN ATMOSPHERE OF ENGAGEMENT, INCLUSION, TRUST, GOODWILL AND RESPECT FOR ONE ANOTHER."

KATHY JOHNSON, EDP

As someone who has had responsibility for HR compliance the bulk of my career, I've had to keep up with the constant changes to regulations across all HR disciplines. Needless to say, it's been a challenge.

► BACK TO SCHOOL

Given that challenge, when I received an invitation three years ago to what I thought was a webinar on employment law, I signed up. I did not realize it was a webinar for Tulane Law School's Master of Jurisprudence in Employment and Labor Law program. As they say, the rest



Kathy Johnson is earning a law degree to supplement her HR expertise.

is history. Attending Tulane Law School has fulfilled a lifelong dream of learning law. In August, I will graduate from the two-year program.

With that said, it doesn't take multiple degrees to be successful in HR. It does take someone who can understand the law and incorporate it into a practical approach to real business needs. It also takes someone who genuinely cares about employees and about building a culture that nurtures them and helps them achieve their career goals.

► BECOMING A PROPANE HR GEEK

Having joined EDP in 2018, I've spent the past five-plus years deeply immersed in the propane industry. Given EDP's more than 40 locations across the country, I work with propane operations large and small, in rural communities and large metropolitan cities. In each operation, my HR team and I work hard to ensure the employees not only enjoy their work

but also retain the unique culture their owners had long nurtured.

We recognize how important it is for every operation to maintain an atmosphere of engagement, inclusion, trust, goodwill and respect for one another. And we do our best to help each operation's general manager not only retain their current employees but also recruit new employees as their business grows and prospers.

► WHAT I'LL SHARE WITH YOU

Speaking of retention and recruitment, those are just two topics I'll address in this ongoing column since they are high on the priority list for nearly every employer in today's economic environment. Other topics I will address include:

- HR 101 for managers who have never had any formal HR training.
- Managing and developing your employees.
- Leadership tips for new supervisors and managers.
- Important legal updates.

► I'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

When *LP Gas* asked me to write a regular column about human resources issues, I pondered what readers would most want to know. Do any of these topics "trip your trigger"? If so, please tell me. I'd love to hear from you. My goal is always to bring you practical advice and valuable tips that make your job a bit easier and contribute to your company's success in the propane industry. **LPG**

Kathy Johnson is executive vice president and chief human resource officer for EDP. She leads an HR team that serves the company's 700-plus employees. With more than 20 years of HR experience, Johnson has an undergraduate degree from DePaul University and is completing her Master's of Jurisprudence in Employment and Labor Law from Tulane University. She can be reached at kjohnson@edplp.net or 312-254-5977.

