

Working With the Media

AN SHRM® GUIDE



Working With the Media: An SHRM® Guide

Introduction

Effective media relations is more than just a way of increasing chapter visibility or highlighting activities and accomplishments. Strategic media relations is critical to the success of the human resource management profession as well as the Society for Human Resource Management and its affiliates.

The news media industry has changed dramatically over the past 10 years. News is now available 24 hours a day, thanks to the Internet, and is delivered through a wide range of communication mediums.

SHRM receives thousands of inquiries from the media each year and generates many proactive calls to the media to help shape the way the human resource profession is perceived. The potential number of business and workplace-related news stories is astounding and cries out for the voice of the human resource profession and the perspective it brings to the table.

As part of its mission, SHRM is committed to help advance the HR profession (ATP) by building relationships with members of the media in order to help educate them about the value of the HR profession and the impact HR professionals have on the success of every organization and its employees.

In recent years issues such as ethics, privacy, health care, labor shortages, layoffs and economic recovery have been at the forefront of the news media. All of these topics, and many others, represent an important opportunity to educate the news media about the role that smart people management plays in effective business strategy.

While SHRM staff work hard to advance the HR profession, the true potential to advance the profession can only be reached with the involvement of its volunteer leaders and members around the world. SHRM chapters and other affiliated groups have a unique voice that journalists in their local areas are eager to hear.

This guide is intended to provide basic guidance in working with the media and provide some ideas for building a relationship with your local news media in order to enhance the credibility and visibility of the chapter and the profession as a whole.

We encourage you to read this guide—it will answer many of your media relations questions. However, a guide cannot replace the effectiveness of two-way communications. Please do not hesitate to contact the SHRM Media Affairs staff if you have any questions or need further assistance:



Media Affairs Contacts:
(800) 283-SHRM (Ask for media affairs.)
E-mail: press@shrm.org
Web site: www.shrm.org/press/

What's Inside This Guide?

Inside the *SHRM Media Relations Guide*, you will find numerous tips and advice to answer your questions about working with the media:

- What is media relations and where do I start? (page 1).
- How do I determine what is newsworthy? (page 2).
- Is it difficult to write a news release? (page 3).
- They want an interview. Now what do I do? (page 3).
- What are the differences between television, telephone, print and radio interviews? (page 4).
- Should I hold a press conference? If so, how? (page 6).
- What message should I try to express to the media? (page 6).

Plus, a sample news release is included at the end of the guide, as well as an invitation to be a voluntary media contact for SHRM.

What Is Media Relations and Where Do I Start? Focus on “Relations.”

Media relations is easy once you understand a few basic concepts. The challenge is getting started formulating a media relations plan and building relationships with members of the media to make your chapter a consistent source of local and even national media coverage.

For example, chapter leaders may spend all of their media relations time writing news releases about chapter activities, awards and events. While such a strategy is great for getting blurbs in the regional newspaper, chapters are often disappointed when reporters don't show up or provide more extensive story coverage. The fault here lies in a misunderstanding about media relations and how members of the press function on a daily basis. This section will shed light on such an issue and provide insight on the nature of a reporter's relationships with news sources.

First, effective media relations begins with “relations.” News releases and invitations to chapter events often never make it to reporters writing in-depth news stories. Such items often land in the hands of staff in charge of calendar items or notices of local events. Worse, many of these items end up in the bottoms of wastebaskets. Newspapers have limited space. Televisions and radio programs have limited time slots. And they all receive hundreds of news releases or announcements each day.

More valuable media relations time should be spent getting to know reporters and building relationships. As already mentioned, reporters are hungry for local news regarding business and workplace issues. The interest in issues related to HR is growing. In all of 1990, SHRM received approximately 350 calls from the media. Currently, the Society receives hundreds of calls each month. This type of growth is continuing as the Society gains attention and credibility in the press. Your chapter can enjoy interest by the media by getting to know the reporters in charge of business or workplace issues in your area. Call them to say hello. Invite them to lunch and to chapter activities. Reporters are usually open to such invitations. At the very least, most reporters welcome telephone or e-mail conversations to develop sources and story ideas.

If you are not sure about media outlets in your area, SHRM will assist chapters in finding information about regional and local media outlets. Please contact the Society's Media Affairs staff through the contact information listed on the first page of this guide.

The following are pointers for cultivating long-lasting media relationships:

- **Get out and meet the reporters.** You can't build media relations by sitting behind your desk. The more you know a reporter, the more likely you will be called on as a source for breaking front-page news in your community.
- **Know the media outlet before you call.** Be familiar with the kinds of stories that the publication, site or station has done in advance. Do they want in-depth business stories? Do they cater to a general audience? Do they focus on compelling local ties for their news stories?
- **Have top quality materials.** All press materials must be informative, well written and easy to use. Don't forget, you have SHRM materials, including survey research, white papers and people resources, at your disposal as well.
- **Tie the local angle to national events.** Reporters are always looking for local angles to national news stories and reports.
- **Maintain a list of chapter spokespeople.** Once you have established a media relations program, reporters will call for information about all kinds of issues. Develop and maintain a steady list of dependable spokespeople and make sure they understand that press turnaround time is often the same day or even within hours. Spokespeople should know the business of human resource management and be able to say things in unique and interesting, but concise, ways. Spokespeople should absolutely stay informed of human resource and business trends.

Again, use SHRM resources such as:

- SHRM Online (www.shrm.org).
- SHRM Research (www.shrm.org/research).
- Governmental Affairs Department (www.shrm.org/government).
- Online press room (www.shrm.org/press).
- Workplace Trends and Forecasting Program and *Workplace Visions*[®] newsletter (www.shrm.org/trends)
- *HR Magazine*[®] (www.shrm.org/hrmagazine).
- White papers and sample employment policies (www.shrm.org/whitepapers).
- SHRM Diversity Initiative (www.shrm.org/diversity).

- **Maintain a list of names and phone numbers of all pertinent press.** The list may be compiled through your own experience. You may also call SHRM for press information in your chapter area. Other press information sources include *Bacon's Directories*, *Broadcast Interview Source* and *Working Press of the Nation*. The Internet is an excellent source of contact information for the media and Yahoo! offers a rundown of media outlets broken down by region and subject.
- **Be prepared for an initial negative response.** Reporters are often on tight deadlines. Your call or greeting may not come at a good time. Don't get discouraged. Simply offer your expertise and provide a number where you can be reached. Reporters are always looking for contacts and are willing to cultivate sources when time permits. The best time to call a reporter is generally in the morning as afternoons are often when deadlines are set.
- **Write and contribute.** Write letters to the editor and contact newspapers to see if they are interested in an opinion-editorial piece or a regular column on workplace issues. Local radio and television stations are often looking for local experts on a variety of topics to be regular guests on community-affairs-type programs. And, the Internet has opened up new opportunities for increased coverage on industry topics.
- **Be a spokesperson for SHRM.** Every day, SHRM receives dozens of calls from reporters seeking help with stories and features. Human resource professionals with "real-life" experience are always needed and SHRM often puts members of the media in contact with local chapters. Be prepared. If you don't have the answer the reporter is looking for, that's OK. It might be a good time just to make the contact and to explain how you and your chapter may be helpful on future stories. Also, take time to fill out and return the form at the end of this guide to help SHRM link national reporters with experts in various human resource management specialties. If you are called by someone in Media Affairs, please return the call even if you aren't interested in talking to the reporter. We rely on good communications between chapters and the Society's headquarters in order to provide the best service possible to the media and encourage good exposure to the chapters themselves.
- **Keep trying.** Media relationships are not built overnight.

How Do I Determine What Is Newsworthy? Choosing the Right Stories.

Once you've established rapport with local media contacts, choosing newsworthy items to communicate becomes easy. Often, media members will tell you what they're working on and will ask whether you have anything to add to the subject. However, until that time you may want to generate a list of potential story ideas to share with reporters, since they are always looking for the next story.

Ask yourself the following questions to determine what is newsworthy:

- **What is considered a "hot" human resource management issue in the news?** You or a chapter member can provide the media with meaningful local insight on the ramifications of national and world events. Don't be shy if you know the subject. You are the expert and reporters need all kinds of expertise to fully cover stories. If you think your company may be too cautious about having you quoted and attributed as representing them in the news media, use your chapter leadership role for attributes by the press. For example: According to "Jane Doe, SHRM Chapter President," instead of "Jane Doe, VP of HR for Company X"—just be sure to be clear about that with the reporter.
- **What surveys, news releases and legislative items are coming from the Society's headquarters?** The Society encourages chapters to use national press items to provide local contacts and viewpoints. All news releases are posted on the SHRM Online Press Room (www.shrm.org/press). SHRM members may also sign up to receive the Society's news releases automatically by e-mail. For more information, chapter leaders may also call Media Affairs or sign up online (see contact information on the first page).
- **What has your chapter recently accomplished that would be of local interest?** Community or chapter events tied to important issues often get attention in the local press.
- **What is your organization doing that's different from what other organizations are doing?** What are area businesses doing that's unique in the human resource management field?
- **What are the members doing?** Consider their skills, backgrounds, accomplishments and innovative business programs. Remember, it may seem like routine human resource management stuff to you, but many of today's practices are unique to the general public.
- **What events are taking place?** Be sure to fax or e-mail

the press notices of chapter events to the appropriate media person. Most likely there is a business calendar of events and a person in charge of calendar announcements. Chapter events and awards aren't likely to be developed into feature stories, but the media often reports calendars of upcoming events. For true business stories, contact the workplace or business reporter.

- **Remember:** Reporters are looking for news that is local, unusual, interesting, timely, about people or surprising.

Is It Difficult to Write a News Release? Turn News Releases Into Hits.

Your chapter may want to produce a press release to distribute to your local media via e-mail or fax. This may occur whenever there is chapter information to announce or news topics on which you wish to comment. Although the idea of writing a press release may seem like a daunting task to some, there are just a few thoughts to keep in mind to make the process easy and effective.

Keep It Concise. Reporters receive hundreds of press releases every day. If they don't know the main purpose and message of your press release in the first line, it doesn't matter what else you write because they won't read it. Try to engage the reporter in the first sentence. After that, answer: Who? What? Where? When? Why? Even though you may have a lot of information you want to include, think of a press release as an abstract. Keep it to one page. Include the main ideas and most important information in your release. If you were a reporter, would the heading of the press release sound like a good story to you? If reporters are interested in your release, they will call for more information. Be sure to include direct contact information for someone who can respond to calls quickly.

Clarity Is Key. Most reporters are not experts in HR. Avoid jargon that may seem normal to you, but will read as foreign to a reporter who is unfamiliar with your language. Also, try to keep one main idea as the focus of your press release. Too much information will read as cloudy and confusing.

Be Consistent. Use a standard format every time you send a press release. Make sure to include contact information for your chapter and dates for your release. (See page 8 for an example of a press release format.) Organize the release to put the most important information first. Also, be sure to proofread the release. Grammatical errors or misinformation sends an unprofessional message.

At the end of this guide is an example of a news release. It is an actual news release issued by SHRM. It is designed to

attract media interest in regulation changes in the FLSA. News releases on other topics could follow a similar pattern. This same format can also be used to announce chapter awards, events or changes in chapter leadership.

They Want an Interview. Now What Do I Do? Mastering the Interview.

With a media relations program in place, you or another chapter spokesperson may be called on by a reporter for an interview. Giving a good interview takes a little practice. This section will provide some tips to help put your chapter or chapter spokesperson and SHRM in a positive light. Generally, there are three things to remember to ensure good interviews: Preparation, practice and performance.

Preparation

- Prepare for tough questions and opposing points of view. It's a good idea to develop some possible questions so you can prepare possible answers.
- Think about the key messages you want to get across about the human resource profession. Be sure to work those into your comments (see section on messages).
- If you have time, get familiar with the publication in advance. Make sure you know any biases and hot-button issues of the publication and the reporter. If possible, read past articles on your topic.
- Take into account the readers of the publication or the viewers or listeners of the program. This is your ultimate audience. If the audience has only general knowledge of the issue, you should avoid technical answers. Remember that, for general audiences, anecdotes and explanations are more informative than theories and procedures. Business audiences, however, may want more "how-to" information and some technical language may be acceptable. It's always safe to explain technical terms.
- Sometimes there may not be time to prepare for an interview because the reporter needs information immediately. Don't panic. Remember, you are an expert on HR topics. Just talk about what you know and stick with facts rather than guessing. It's easy to avoid saying something wrong or embarrassing—just don't say anything with which you're not completely comfortable.

Practice

- Develop pithy answers to questions the reporter might ask. State conclusions first and be brief.

- Rehearse answers with a friend or colleague. Your objective is not to memorize, but to appear comfortable with the subject and your knowledge of it.
- If you are preparing for a television interview and have access to facilities, it's a good idea to videotape yourself and watch your performance. Do you maintain eye contact and control your gestures? Do you roll your eyes? Lick your lips? Wiggle or rock in your chair? Do you slouch?
- Think about the question before answering. Give yourself a few seconds to digest it, then answer. The short pause will help you appear thoughtful and makes the difference between a rambling, incomplete answer and a succinct, intelligent response.
- Listen to your answers and make sure they are precise and understandable. Do you enunciate clearly or do you mumble? Does your answer stay on track? If you can't use a video camera for practice, have someone observe a mock interview and provide you with feedback.
- Keep comments and explanations short. Reporters look for sound bites—pieces of your remarks that will fit in with particular aspects of their story. The use of long explanations and jargon will not get you in the story. It's likely that one good nugget of wisdom is what will be used in the piece. Be clear and concise. At the same time, avoid one-word answers.

Performance

- During television interviews, be aware of posture and body language and maintain eye contact.
 - Keep remarks and answers within the agreed upon time frame.
 - Repeat or paraphrase all good questions.
 - If you don't understand a question, don't hesitate to ask for clarification.
 - When a question is broad or general, use the opportunity to include points you want to stress during the interview.
 - Use full names. No acronyms, unless they are widely known (such as IRS or CIA). This is especially important when referring to your own chapter or the Society. For example, don't say "Sherm" or some other nickname for the Society. Say S-H-R-M, but only after you've used the Society's full name—the Society for Human Resource Management. Use your chapter's proper name until the reporter is familiar enough to recognize the acronym.
- Use any anecdotes that are relevant, interesting and help you make your point, but keep them brief.
 - Speak in positive terms rather than in negative terms.
 - Remember to speak clearly by relaxing and taking your time.
 - If you are in doubt about a fact, or if you want time to give a little additional thought to your response, tell the reporter you will call back. Don't fake it. If you don't know the answer, say so instead of trying to "finesse" an answer.
 - Finally, be sure to call the reporter if new information develops that changes the facts or opinions you had originally given him or her.

Television, Telephone, Print and Radio Interviews. Understanding the Differences.

Interviews come in different shapes and sizes. There are telephone interviews, interviews in your office and visits to radio and television studios to name a few. Each type of interview requires special considerations.

Television Interviews

- Dress professionally. Avoid black or white clothing. Blue shirts and traditional ties for men. Women should wear solid colors. Stay away from herringbone, checks or other busy patterns that come across as fuzzy on the television screen. No flashy or noisy jewelry, including bracelets.
- Don't look at your notes while on the air.
- Don't fidget or swivel in your chair.
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer, not the camera, unless your interviewer is off-site; then look directly into the camera.
- Find out how the interview will be aired. Is it live, live-to-tape or subject to editing? If the interview is being edited and aired later, feel free to stop the interview and restate a comment to a difficult question. However, interviews that either air live (as you're being interviewed) or air in their entirety at a later date (live-to-tape) cannot be interrupted for retaping answers.
- Declining to answer a question is acceptable. The reporter

may not like it, but you do have a choice of whether or not to answer a particular question. Generally, refrain from responding to questions asking you to identify organizations or individuals in a negative light. For example, a reporter preparing a story on downsizing may ask you to identify organizations that have not handled a downsizing well. Instead, offer to identify organizations that have performed well or give the reporter examples of bad practices without naming specific organizations.

- Ask if you can have a copy of a tape of the program or interview. If they aren't willing to make a copy for you, be sure to find out when the program will air so that you can tape it yourself. Watching your performance will give you an opportunity to critique yourself and is a critical element to future successful TV appearances.

Some Don'ts During Any Interview:

- Don't lose control of your emotions.
- Don't do anything distracting while being questioned.
- Don't get personal and don't put down anyone.
- Don't get mired in statistics and numbers.
- Don't hesitate to admit that you don't know.
- Don't point out that you answered a question earlier if you are asked the same question more than once. Reply briefly instead.

Telephone Interviews

- Always get the reporter's name, organization, phone number and e-mail for future reference. Many reporters now prefer to be contacted via e-mail, and even prefer receiving news releases via e-mail.
- Spell out names (including your own) no matter how simple you think they are.
- Keep noise and distractions to a minimum by finding a quiet place to respond to the reporter. Stay away from background noise such as music, outside conversations and ringing phones.
- Speak clearly and slowly.

Use your chapter's full name. No acronyms for telephone, radio or television interviews.

Magazine and Newspaper Interviews

- Don't say it if you don't want it in print. Many have been surprised to see their "off-the-record" comments in the next day's newspapers.
- Do be friendly and warm but don't try to be a comedian. Humor generally doesn't translate well into print and can cause misunderstandings.
- Offer background information and any appropriate graphs, illustrations or SHRM survey results.

Radio Interviews

- Test your microphone before you go on the air. If someone has to give you instructions while you are already on the air, you will be distracted and it could throw you off balance.
- Speak clearly. This point cannot be emphasized enough when doing a radio interview. Your voice is the only sense that listeners will have of your authority on the issues and your knowledge.
- Speak concisely. Keep your statements as simple as possible. Extended or intricate explanations will confuse listeners and they will lose interest.
- Don't shuffle papers or notes. These sounds will be picked up by the microphone. Don't wear clothing or jewelry that will make noise into the microphone. Additionally, as in a television interview, do not move around in your chair. The movement will disrupt the sound quality as your body moves too close to or far from the microphone.
- Reporters are often on deadline and must have the information as soon as possible. You very well may not have time to prepare as thoroughly as you'd like. If you tell them you will call back before their deadline, follow through on that promise and speak only to the extent of your knowledge. If you can't make their deadline, let them know. Sometimes, they have a little time to spare and, if your information is important to them, they will work with you. If you can't answer them at all, call and tell them. They may be disappointed, but they'll appreciate the effort and remember you in the future.

When you have trouble answering questions, these phrases may be helpful:

- "That's a much larger issue than the one I'm familiar with."

- “To fully answer that, you’d need an expert on _____. In general, I can tell you ...”
- “The answer to your question may come down to an employer’s personal preference and may be different in each organization.”
- “The important issue here is ...”
- “Could you give me an example of the kind of situation you’re referring to?”

Cardinal rule: If you don’t want to see it or hear it later, don’t say it!

In addition, don’t be surprised if you’re not quoted or mentioned in the final story. Often, editors will delete portions of a story to meet space restrictions when bigger stories break. Also, reporters may use your interview to gain background information. Don’t worry. Usually, reporters will remember when you have helped them and they will call you back for future stories.

Should I Hold a Press Conference? If So, How? Selectivity Is the Key to Success.

Your chapter may want to hold a press conference. Press conferences can be held when a chapter wants to announce something of importance and general interest to the public. For example, if your chapter is releasing the findings of a major study or is announcing a large-scale campaign in the community, a press conference is an effective way to relay your information.

However, a press conference should only be held for those events of importance and general interest to the public or business community. If you hold a press conference about an activity or event of little significance, it will be nearly impossible to get the press to attend. Also, this will hurt the chapter’s credibility and the press may be reluctant to cover future press conferences. So, choose selectively and only hold a press conference when you are sure it’s appropriate and newsworthy.

Once you’ve decided to hold a press conference, there are several rules you should follow:

- Start on time. Reporters are on strict deadlines and will not appreciate being kept waiting.
- Greet each reporter personally and keep a list of who attends.
- Lay the ground rules clearly: Start the conference by giving the order of the speakers and outlining when ques-

tions will be taken. Also, set a time frame for the entire conference so the reporters and your speakers won’t waste time.

- Keep it short. No more than 45 minutes, including time for questions and answers. Try not to get bogged down with too many speakers. Keep it to one, two or three speakers at the most and ask them to be as brief as possible. If reporters want more information, they will ask for it during the Q-and-A session.
- Read statements directly, loudly and naturally. Monotone voices are neither interesting nor inspiring.
- Don’t react to hostility in kind. Remember, it will be your reply that will be heard by the public, not the reporter’s hostile question.
- If you don’t know the answer to something, say so. Refer them to someone else or tell the reporter to call you later and you will have the information.
- Don’t expect everyone you invited to attend. Reporters have deadlines, schedule changes and numerous stories to manage. Even if they say they’ll be there, don’t be surprised if they don’t show.
- Location and timing are important. The best time to hold a press conference is in the mid-to-late morning. The best location is in a central location accessible to reporters’ offices.

Messages. What Message Should I Try to Express to the Media?

When speaking to the media, it is important to remember that you are not only sharing your personal experience and expertise, you are also speaking on behalf of the HR profession. Please keep the image and credibility of the profession in mind whenever speaking to reporters.

The mission of SHRM is to serve the professional (STP) and advance the profession (ATP). When interviewing with a reporter, you are an especially important player in the second component of the mission. You have the opportunity to increase the credibility of the HR profession by highlighting the important strategic role that HR professionals play in their organizations. While many business leaders now understand the value of effective people management and the role HR plays in it, there are still many people who think of HR as having a primarily administrative role. When speaking to reporters, you have a platform to correct that misconception.

In every story, there is an opportunity to show reporters that the HR profession has evolved and many HR executives are members of the executive leadership team, acting as strategic business partners with the C-suite.

Although the focus of a news story will vary depending on the subject, there are main message points about the HR profession to keep in mind. Remember that speaking with a reporter is an opportunity to highlight the importance and value of HR professionals to a public audience. You can simultaneously act as an HR expert and industry advocate.

There are three basic points to keep in mind for any interview related to business or the workplace.

- First, HR professionals play a key role in driving the performance and reputation of an organization because they leverage the organization's most important asset—its people.
- Second, HR contributes to the performance and reputation of an organization by aligning values and vision with business goals.
- Third, people, and the HR professionals responsible for them, should be regarded as an investment in an organization's success.

Some supporting points to the overarching message above are as follows:

- HR professionals are vital components to the overall success of an organization. Organizations that have a documented HR strategy also have 35 percent higher revenue per employee than those with no documented strategy (PricewaterhouseCoopers, *Global Human Capital Survey*, 2002).
- Effective management of human capital by human resource managers is a critical component of bottom-line success in any organization. The better an organization is doing in managing its human capital, the better its returns for shareholders (Watson Wyatt, *Human Capital Index*, 2001–2002).
- Good HR leadership can improve the bottom line, decrease turnover, maintain ethical work cultures and recruit the best and brightest for organizations.
- Watson Wyatt's 1999 *Human Capital Index* shows 30 key HR practices were associated with a 30 percent increase in a company's market value.

- Human resource leaders see the workplace from an important vantage point. This perspective must be included and considered as part of an organization's high-level discussions.
- From long-term strategic planning to day-to-day organizational management, HR professionals deliver solid, tangible results and solutions that directly impact a company's bottom line. Executives are now, more than ever, looking to HR to justify expenditures and demonstrate the economic value of an organization's people practices (Watson Wyatt, *Human Capital Index*, 2001–2002).
- Good HR can mean the difference between a surviving company and a thriving company. Human capital practices may account for as much as 43 percent of the difference between a company's market-to-book value and its competitors (Deloitte & Touche, *Human Capital Return on Investment Study*, 2002).
- The everyday tasks of an HR professional are necessary pieces for creating and sustaining a successful corporate environment. Ninety-six percent of organizations with a documented HR strategy report their HR strategy is explicitly linked to business strategy (PricewaterhouseCoopers, *Global Human Capital Survey*, 2002).

Note: This is a copy of an SHRM news release. It is an example of a news release that is appropriate to send to business or workplace beat reporters.

NEWS RELEASE

Contact
Names and contact numbers for the chapter.

Press Contacts:
Frank Scanlan (703) 535-6043
fscanlan@shrm.org
Will Gray (703) 535-6012
wlgay@shrm.org
Jen Jorgensen (703) 535-6356
jjorgensen@shrm.org



Logo
Use letterhead or chapter logo if available.

SHRM Press Page:
www.shrm.org/press

For Immediate Release

Headline
Main topic of press release.

SHRM Welcomes the FLSA to the 21st Century
Department of Labor to Clarify Regulations for Exempt Employees

Kicker
Subtitle, can provide additional key information.

Release date
Release date and city.

(Alexandria, Va., March 27, 2003)—The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) today applauds the Department of Labor's (DOL) initial efforts to clarify the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and its regulations regarding exempt employees.

Lead
Opening line, 38 words or less, convey main point.

The proposed changes, to be published Monday, March 31, will have tremendous ramifications on every single U.S. employer. As the largest association in the world dedicated to human resource management, SHRM is uniquely positioned to analyze the proposed changes and provide the DOL with input from the professionals who are responsible for implementing the regulations every day. For the last 12 years, the definition of an exempt employee under FLSA has been the number one question SHRM receives from its members, with over 8,000 calls on the issue in 2002 alone.

Body
Short, supporting paragraphs.

The DOL is expected to publish in the *Federal Register* a notice of proposed rulemaking that brings the 65-year-old FLSA regulations into the 21st century. The FLSA of 1938, the federal labor law establishing standards for minimum wage, overtime pay and child labor, is severely outdated. For example, the regulations still refer to jobs from the 1930s, including gang leader, linotype operator and straw boss. The law established exemptions, Section 541, from the act's overtime provisions for employees in certain professional, executive and administrative jobs.

The DOL has included modifications to the white-collar exemptions in its regulatory agenda since the early 1980s, but those efforts have been largely unsuccessful. Given the rapid changes in the workplace and workforce, and the complex and confusing nature of the FLSA, the Society has long pushed for necessary and reasonable revisions.

"The FLSA is 65 years old and it is time for it to retire or be amended to reflect the changes in the workforce," said SHRM President and Chief Executive Officer Susan R. Meisinger, SPHR. "This is an extremely important issue, which is why we are hosting FLSA working groups throughout the country to receive feedback from our members—those very individuals tasked with FLSA's implementation."

Quote
Main message, full title of spokesperson.

End
"###" signals the end of the text message.

###

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management. Representing more than 175,000 individual members, the Society's mission is both to serve human resource management professionals and to advance the profession. Founded in 1948, SHRM currently has more than 500 affiliated chapters within the United States and members in more than 100 countries. Visit SHRM Online at www.shrm.org.

Boilerplate
Brief description of chapter and membership, including affiliation with SHRM.

Components of a Press Release

Headline

The headline of your press release should be brief, yet convey the purpose of the press release. Since this is the first thing a reporter reads, you want the headline to be strong, news focused and engaging enough so the reporter reads more. Placing the name of your chapter in the headline is key to let the reporter know where the press release is coming from and who is sharing the news.

Kicker

The kicker is essentially the subtitle of your press release. Additional information that is vital to the release, but not in the headline, should be written here.

Release Date

News must always be timely. Knowing the release date is essential for a reporter. Printing the date of the press release and the city where you are writing from is standard information that must be in front of the text of the release. Also, be sure to include "For Immediate Release" to let the reporter know that he or she may use the information right away. On the other hand, if information needs to be embargoed until a certain date, that must be noted.

Lead

This is the lead paragraph of your press release. It should answer who, what, where, when and why. You want to convey the purpose of the press release, the main angle you are presenting in the release, the reason why the reporter should be interested and the overall message you are trying to project in the lead of your press release. The lead is kept to one or two sentences. A good rule of thumb is to keep the lead under 38 words. This may be hard to do, but the more efficiently you can word your lead, the more effective your release will be.

Body

The body of the press release is written in short two- or three-sentence paragraphs. Again, due to the time restrictions of reporters, the entire release should be kept to one page unless there is enough crucial information that a second page is needed. Cover the most important information first. Get main idea and supporting evidence across in the body of the release. Editing the release for errors and length is essential. If you have the opportunity to have others edit your writing, do so.

Quote

If you choose to provide a quote from a spokesperson at your chapter, remember to put a full title for the spokesperson when attributing the quote. Quoting a spokesperson from your chapter is an opportunity to lend a personal voice to your chapter. Be sure that the quote reflects the voice of the chapter and can essentially stand alone so that reporters can use it in their articles. For example, say "Changes to the FLSA regulations are long overdue," instead of "This is long overdue." Short, pithy statements are most effective.

Contact Information

Contact names and numbers are essential in your press release. If the reporter has a clarifying question, wants more information or wants to set up an interview, he or she must be able to easily know whom to call. Print the name, phone number, e-mail address and cell phone number if you can be contacted after hours at the top of the release. Reporters know to look there if they need more information regarding the release.

Logo/Letterhead

For the same reason that organizations send important letters on letterhead, chapter logos or letterhead should be used to send out press releases. It is a quick way for reporters to identify the source of the press release, and it adds a professional signature to your release. If you are e-mailing the release and cannot attach the logo, be sure that the identity of the chapter is clear.

###

The triple pound sign is centered at the end of the press release and is an international symbol that indicates the end of the text. If your press release is longer than a page, be sure to place the “###” only at the end of the second page.

Boilerplate

A boilerplate is a brief organizational description that is placed after the triple pound sign. It is an opportunity to identify your chapter, mention a few brief descriptors, and give an overview of your chapter for reporters who are not aware of your organization. If you do not have your own boilerplate, feel free to look at the SHRM boilerplate as an example. An updated version of the boilerplate can be found on recent SHRM press releases found online at www.shrm.org/press.

Be a Media Resource for SHRM

SHRM's Media Affairs staff often receive inquiries from reporters who want to speak with HR professionals regarding HR and workplace-related issues and trends. Your expertise and experiences are valuable resources for SHRM and help to promote a positive image of the profession. If you are interested in speaking to reporters as a representative for the HR profession please complete the form below.

YES! I am interested in serving as a media resource. Please contact me if you need an HR professional to speak to the press.

Return to:

Media Affairs
Society for Human Resource Management
1800 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 535-6043
Fax: (703) 535-6492
E-mail: press@shrm.org

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Chapter Name: _____

Phone: _____ Alt Phone: _____

Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Please check yes or no:

May we refer media calls to you directly?

Yes No, I prefer advance notification

I am usually able to talk with members of the media on a tight deadline:

Yes No

Do you have special requirements or considerations about responding to media calls?

(For example: No more than one call per week, etc.):

Yes No

If yes, please explain:

I have been certified as either a PHR or an SPHR by the Human Resource Certification Institute®:

Yes, PHR Yes, SPHR No

Please check the one that applies unless otherwise instructed:

I am an:

- HR practitioner
 HR consultant
 Attorney

- HR academic
 Other

I have had experience in dealing with the media:

- Frequently
 Occasionally
 Rarely
 Never

I have had experience with the following news mediums:

- Print
 Television
 Radio
 Web-based
 Not applicable

**I am most interested in responding to inquiries related to
(please check as many as apply):**

- HR as a Strategic Business Partner
- Performance Management and Productivity
- Succession Planning/Mentoring
- HR Outsourcing
- Ethics
- Corporate Culture
- Disaster Planning/Crisis Management
- Employee Volunteerism
- Marketing HR/Employers of Choice
- Mergers and Acquisitions
- Recruitment and Retention
- Compensation and Benefits
- Diversity Management
- Workplace Health and Safety
- HR and Workplace Trends
- Public Policy and Compliance Issues
- Legal Issues
- Labor Relations
- Training and Development
- HR Technology and Information Systems
- Education or Workforce Readiness Issues
- Reference and Background Checking
- Executive Level Employee Issues, such as CEO pay, etc.
- Workplace Privacy
- Employee Communication
- Staffing Issues, such as using contingent workers, labor shortage, layoffs, etc.
- Other areas of expertise (feel free to elaborate):



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E-mail: shrm@shrm.org Web site: www.shrm.org