

SHRM® / eePulse Survey on the  
**HR Implications of the  
Attack on America:  
One Year Later**



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Survey on the

# HR Implications of the Attack on America: One Year Later

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# HR Implications of the Attack on America: One Year Later

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### About this Report

The following report analyzes the results of the SHRM/eePulse Follow-up Survey on the HR Implications of the Attack on America. In September 2001 a survey invitation and link was e-mailed to the SHRM membership to determine the HR implications of the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Over the three day period during which the survey was fielded a total of 5,673 HR professionals responded. In August of 2002, a follow-up survey was sent to the SHRM membership using an e-mail invitation and link. Over a 10-day period during which the survey was in the field 7,466 HR professionals responded.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management. Representing more than 170,000 individual members, the Society serves the needs of HR professionals by providing the most essential and comprehensive set of resources available. As an influential voice, SHRM is committed to advancing the human resource profession to ensure that HR is an essential and effective partner in developing and executing organizational strategy. Founded in 1948, SHRM currently has more than 500 affiliated chapters within the United States and members in more than 120 countries.

eePulse, Inc. delivers relationship management tools designed to improve the productivity of an ENTIRE organization – from the CEO to first line managers and workers. Productivity enhancement comes

from the utilization of Pulse Reports' of business trends reported by employees, customers, suppliers, investors and more. Pulse Reports provide management with synthesized information that allows them to act quickly on opportunities and solve problems TODAY. The core of the eePulse solution is actionable data used for productivity improvement, real-time auditing, and advanced leadership development. eePulse developed Measurecom', a web-based measurement and communication software package, to power Pulse Reporting and the next frontier in management science, Data and Dialogue Driven (3D) Leadership'.

### About the Author

Debra J. Cohen is the Director of Research at the Society for Human Resource Management. She holds a Ph.D. in Management and Human Resources and is SPHR certified. Prior to joining SHRM in May 2000, she was a professor of HRM.

### Acknowledgements

Theresa Welbourne partnered in the development of both the first and follow-up survey and had direct oversight of fielding and data analysis. She holds a Ph.D. in Management and is the founder and CEO of eePulse.

# Introduction

Everyone in the United States and around the world was affected in some way by the terrorist attacks that took place on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Human resource (HR) professionals have had a first hand opportunity to see the impact on the workplace and on employee behaviors and attitudes. Immediately following the attacks in September of 2001 there was a strong desire across the nation to learn as much as we could about what happened and of course, how the workplace was affected. As a result of this desire and need, SHRM built a section on its website devoted to resources that could help organizations and managers deal with various workplace issues associated with the attack. SHRM also conducted a survey to find out how organizations helped their employees during this difficult time and how they predicted the workplace would change.

One year later, the country has recovered from the immediate impact of the attacks, but we are still feeling the affects in many ways. In addition to the economic upheaval that has affected both individuals

and organizations, there have been other direct outcomes. Travel, for business or personal reasons has become more stressful and certainly more time consuming. Employers and employees are more security conscious or security concerned. And in some ways, people are more caring toward one another both at work and during leisure time. Moreover, there has been greater talk about work/life balance and individuals have tried to follow-through with these desires.

The purpose of our follow-up survey was to determine current experiences of HR professionals and their organizations with regard to the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 one year later. Specifically, we were interested in learning what has happened in the past year in terms of continued organization efforts, how the workplace has changed, whether or not disaster plans had been created or updated, and how organizations are planning to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the attacks.

# Methodology

In mid-August, 2002, an e-mail invitation and link to an on-line survey was sent to approximately 100,000 HR professionals who are members of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). The survey remained open for ten days and a reminder was sent mid way through the fielding period. The survey was patterned after the first survey sent in September of 2001. Six of the 11 questions were repeated (with some minor modifications) and four new questions plus one open-ended were

added. Almost 7,500 respondents completed the survey (7,466). Data from the 2002 survey was analyzed and has been compared to the data from the 2001 survey. For the purpose of this survey, only members for whom valid e-mail addresses were available were used and various subgroups (such as students, academicians and consultants) were filtered out since the questions were designed for HR professionals working in an organization.

# Survey Results

## Organization Efforts

Question one asked, “In the wake of last year’s 9/11 tragedy (terrorist attacks), over the past year, what has your organization done or continued to do for or with your employees?” The results indicate that organizations have continued to do quite a bit for employees and also confirm predictions and declarations that travel has decreased and security has increased. For example, 56% of the respondents from the August 2002 survey indicated that their organizations have allowed employees to postpone or cancel business travel compared with 67% of HR professionals who gave this response in September of 2001. Overall, 5% more respondents in 2002 reported offering EAP services or encouraging EAP use with 54% in 2002 and 49% in 2001 offering this access and encouragement. Slightly more than half of the respondents in 2002 continued to collect money and supplies to be sent for aid compared with exactly 50% of the respondents in 2001. Thus, on these three issues, the efforts of organizations remained fairly constant.

Immediately following the attacks, employers overwhelmingly (83%) allowed employees to watch TV or listen to the radio. Most people were anxious for news and updates of rescue attempts and efforts to bring justice to those responsible. In 2002, 52% of employers stated that in the past year their organization had still allowed this effort to continue. This represents a fairly large decrease but may be reflective

of organizations attempting to help employees get back on track with day-to-day activities. The only other large decrease of a particular effort from 2001 to 2002 survey was in allowing employees time off if needed (to attend events associated with 9/11/01 or to recuperate) with 62% and 35% respectively. A slightly greater percentage of organizations organized a blood drive or purchased /distributed flags or ribbons in 2002 than in 2001. More than twice the percentage of organizations in 2002 compared to 2001 established a task force to look at safety and security with 34% and 14% respectively reporting such activities. As a percentage, fewer organizations circulated articles and psychological information about issues that arise from violent events, but still, almost one third of organizations reported doing this as a continued effort over the past year. About one fifth of HR professionals report encouraging open discussions of diversity in their organization.

Three items were added to the 2002 survey that were not included in the 2001 survey. Fifty-nine percent of respondents indicated that they have an open door policy with management to discuss any concerns. This may be an indication that although specific activities may have been discontinued or that there was an expectation that the workplace return to regular productive standards, organizations have continued to be concerned about employee reactions and issues and wanted to provide an opportunity for employees to express their concerns if necessary. Indeed, only 10% of respondents indicated that they

had done nothing substantive over the past year. The third item, “diversity training to improve awareness about issues of ethnicity and race”, was reported by 20% of the respondents as an organization effort over the previous year. Full comparative data is

reported in Chart 1. Overall, however, it appears as though many organizations continued, at least for some period of time, to engage in efforts to help employees cope with or adjust to the tragedy that occurred on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

<b>Chart 1</b> Organization Efforts September 2001 compared to August 2002		
2001 n = 5,671; 2002 n = 7,435		
<b>Question:</b> In the wake of last year's 9/11 tragedy (terrorist attacks), over the past year, what has your organization done or continued to do for or with your employees? Check all that apply:		
Scale <sup>1</sup>	09/01	08/02
Open door policy with management to discuss any concerns	—	59%
Allowing employees to postpone or cancel business travel	67%	56%
Offering EAP services; encourage EAP use	49%	54%
Collecting money and supplies to be sent for aid	50%	52%
Allowing employees to watch TV or listen to the radio	83%	52%
Organizing a blood drive; allowing employees (paid) time off to donate blood	39%	42%
Purchasing and/or distributing flags or ribbons	33%	39%
Allowing employees time off if needed (to attend events associated with 9/11/01 or to recuperate)	62%	35%
Establishing a task force to look at safety and security	14%	34%
Circulating articles and psychological information about issues that arise from violent events	42%	32%
Employee meetings with some form of remembrance	29%	23%
Diversity training to improve awareness about issues of ethnicity and race	—	20%
Encouraging open discussions of diversity (religion, ethnicity, culture, race, etc.)	22%	19%
Bringing an EAP counselor on site	17%	19%
Organizing volunteer activities	10%	17%
Allowing employees to volunteer time - on (paid) company time	16%	17%
We have done nothing substantive	—	10%
Sharing relevant information from the SHRM website	11%	9%
Providing financial advice	8%	8%
Flying the American flag at half mast	51%	—
Canceling meetings and events	45%	—
Walking the building by HR and Senior Management	30%	—
Closed our organization on Tuesday, September 11 <sup>th</sup>	26%	—
Calling staff meetings with all employees about the events	24%	—
Closing organization for more than one day	4%	—

<sup>1</sup> Three items were asked in the August 2002 survey that were not asked in the September 2001 survey. Six items were asked in September 2001 that were not asked in August 2002.  
Source: 2002 SHRM/eePulse “HR Implications of the Attack on America: One Year Later”

## Changes in the Workplace

Question two asked, “In your opinion, how has the workplace changed as a result of last year’s tragedy (terrorist attacks)?” In addition to the 23 items included in the 2001 survey, 14 items were added to the 2002 survey. Immediately following the attacks in 2001, the top two changes that HR professionals predicted were:

- Employees will be more caring toward one another (66%)
- Organizations will put higher security provisions in place (56%)

In 2002, these two items were identified as the top two changes in the workplace over the past year, but the positions had reversed and decreased as a percentage of respondents – considerably so in the case of employees being more caring toward one another:

- Organizations have put higher security provisions in place (52%)
- Employees are more caring toward one another (43%)

Although the percentage of respondents reporting employees being caring toward one another has dropped from about two-thirds to a little under half, the percentage is still rather high compared to the other responses. Taken together though, these results indicate that HR professionals were fairly accurate in predicting workplace changes immediately following the attacks. In addition, they indicate that perhaps a positive outcome of the events of one year ago is that there is greater genuine concern and caring for one another.

In addition to organizations reporting that higher security provisions are in place, HR professionals also report that there have been higher expectations by employees for security. This was predicted in 2001 (47%) and was similarly reported as a change in 2002 (42%). Other items covered security issues and are important to note. For example, about one quarter of HR professionals report that there has been greater screening of employees for hiring. In

addition slightly less than one-quarter report that workers have been more wary of their work environment. As noted above, in 2001 a higher percentage of HR professionals predicted that workers would be more caring. It may be that although workers are still somewhat wary of their work environment, the fact that employees are more caring to one another provides some comfort and has eased the wariness felt about security in one’s immediate work environment. However, almost 30% of HR professionals report that there are higher stress levels in the workplace, indicating that issues and concerns may still exist.

Travel has been the subject of much discussion and indeed, changes, since September 2001. Visible security enhancements have been put in place in most airports and the length of time it takes to board a plane has increased and has become more complicated. Initially, a little over half of HR professionals predicted that employees would not consider travel as glamorous and a little over one third predicted that business travel would be curtailed. Although the percentage has dropped, almost four in 10 HR professionals report that employees do not consider travel to be as glamorous and one-third report that business travel has been curtailed. Additional items, added in the 2002 survey show that slightly less than one third of HR professionals think that employees are reluctant to travel for business and one quarter report that business events have been cancelled.

A few of the changes anticipated in 2001 have not been reported to be as much of a change by respondents in 2002. For example, almost one third predicted that there would be more training about crisis management, but a little less than one fifth report that this has been the case in the past year. A little over one third predicted that workers would have greater sensitivity to working high in the sky, in tall buildings yet only 13% report this today. Seventeen percent thought that workers would have less privacy in the future, yet only 4% report that this has been the case in 2002. This small percentage is interesting given that higher security provisions are reported

as the number one change. It may be that because expectations for security are high, that providing security is not viewed itself as an invasion of privacy.

Several items were added to the 2002 survey to determine if there had been either positive or negative changes in turnover, absenteeism, productivity and the like. In the case of turnover, 8% of respondents report that it is lower and 5% report that it is higher. Productivity and absenteeism were reported by only 2 or 3% of respondents as being either higher or lower. As a result, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the events of September 2001 have not had a huge impact on HR outcomes such as absenteeism, productivity and even turnover. In addition, workplace violence was reported by only 1% of respondents as either increasing or decreasing in 2002, down from 5% predictions in 2001.

One final item produced somewhat interesting results. In 2001 the item “HR will have a greater

presence; less outsourcing of HR” generated an 8% response that this change would occur. In 2002, this item was broken down into two items. Interestingly, 16% of HR professionals in 2002 report that HR has had a greater presence and only 1% predict that there will be less outsourcing of HR. That there will be less outsourcing of HR is NOT a prediction that is at all surprising. In fact, increased outsourcing, as a general rule has been pervasive in HR activities in recent years and has been predicted to increase. However, the change that indicates HR has had a greater presence is somewhat interesting. This perhaps implies that in at least some organizations, the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> have precipitated a need to rely on HR and have given HR more visibility in their organizations. It is difficult to speculate why this has occurred, but one reason may be in renewed interest in security and disaster planning. All of the comparative data for this question can be seen in Chart 2.

**Chart 2** Changes in the Workplace September 2001 compared to August 2002

2001 n = 5,460; 2002 n = 6,855

**Question:** In your opinion, how has the workplace changed as a result of last year’s tragedy (terrorist attacks)? Check all that apply:

Scale <sup>2</sup>	09/01	08/02
Organizations have put higher security provisions in place	56%	52%
Employees are more caring toward one another	66%	43%
There has been higher expectations of employers for security	47%	42%
Employees do not consider travel as glamorous	52%	38%
Business travel has been curtailed	37%	33%
Employees are reluctant to travel for business	—	31%
Higher stress level in the workplace	—	29%
There has been greater screening of employees for hiring	23%	26%
Business events have been cancelled	—	25%
Workers have been more wary of their work environment	31%	23%
There has been more training about crisis management	32%	18%

<sup>2</sup> Fourteen additional items were included in August 2002 compared with September 2001.

<sup>3</sup> In September 2001 this item was phrased HR will have a greater presence; less outsourcing of HR. In August 2002, this item was split into two items: HR has had a greater presence and less outsourcing of HR.

<sup>4</sup> In September 2001 this item was phrased HR will have a greater presence; less outsourcing of HR. In August 2002, this item was split into two items: HR has had a greater presence and less outsourcing of HR. Source: 2002 SHRM/eePulse “HR Implications of the Attack on America: One Year Later”

**Chart 2** Changes in the Workplace September 2001 compared to August 2002 continued

2001 n = 5,460; 2002 n = 6,855

**Question:** In your opinion, how has the workplace changed as a result of last year's tragedy (terrorist attacks)? Check all that apply:

Greater use of EAP	—	18%
<b>Scale<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>09/01</b>	<b>08/02</b>
HR is relied upon more for its expertise and input	—	17%
HR has had a greater presence <sup>3</sup>	8%	16%
Leaders have been involved in more training initiatives around disaster recovery	21%	15%
Workers have had greater sensitivity to working high in the sky, in tall buildings	35%	13%
HR has received more training in disaster recovery	22%	12%
Employees are more tolerant of diversity	18%	11%
Business travel has become optional, but not required	20%	11%
There has been more first-aid training for employees	10%	10%
Lower turnover	—	8%
Increased mental health benefits and costs	—	5%
Higher turnover	—	5%
Employees are less tolerant of diversity	12%	5%
Telecommuting has grown at a faster pace than previously predicted	14%	4%
Workers have had less privacy	17%	4%
Some employees have switched to less stressful positions with in the organization	—	4%
There has been more training about religious differences	9%	3%
Greater absenteeism	—	3%
Turnover for reasons of taking a more civic-minded position (i.e., "making a difference")	—	3%
Lower productivity	—	2%
Greater productivity	—	2%
Lower absenteeism	—	2%
Less outsourcing of HR <sup>4</sup>	8%	1%
Employees are more distant toward one another	2%	1%
Workplace violence has decreased	5%	1%
Workplace violence has increased	5%	1%

<sup>2</sup> Fourteen additional items were included in August 2002 compared with September 2001.

<sup>3</sup> In September 2001 this item was phrased HR will have a greater presence; less outsourcing of HR. In August 2002, this item was split into two items: HR has had a greater presence and less outsourcing of HR.

<sup>4</sup> In September 2001 this item was phrased HR will have a greater presence; less outsourcing of HR. In August 2002, this item was split into two items: HR has had a greater presence and less outsourcing of HR.  
Source: 2002 SHRM/eePulse "HR Implications of the Attack on America: One Year Later"

**Changes in the Workplace: Narrative Responses**

The third question of the survey was an open-ended question that gave respondents an opportunity to share more of their thoughts about how the workplace had changed or to add other changes that they thought might have occurred in the workplace as a result of the events last year. A huge number of comments were received, 124 pages of typed, single-spaced, comments in all. These comments ranged everywhere from “no changes at all” to greater security concerns to less travel to greater patriotism to fewer employee complaints to comments about the economy and so forth. Some of the comments were very broad and others very specific about the troubles that have befallen individual companies or HR functions within those companies. It is not possible to display all of the comments here, but a few below are categorized to show examples of the comments that tended to be repeated. In addition, some of the comments relating to HR activities as well as a few of the more unique comments have been included:

**Positive**

- *Our employees have worked better as a team.*
- *Employees appear to no longer be taking security for granted.*
- *Our workplace has more of a community feel; the tragedy of 9/11 has without a doubt brought us closer as a company.*
- *Staff are seeking more of a work/life balance.*
- *Our employees are staying closer to home.*
- *People share more personally with one another.*

**Negative**

- *We have had a significantly increased number of employee relations problems.*
- *Employees are more wary of packages sent to them*
- *People are worried.*
- *Travel definitely NOT seen as glamorous anymore...more of a risky business.*
- *Employees are less inclined to take risks, financially or career related.*
- *Turnover has increased due to stress related aspects of being injured or killed at work.*

**Economy**

- *The economic impact is great and has had a substantive effect on our lives.*
- *Feeling less secure about one's job and the future financial situation of the company.*
- *Today, most of us seem more focused on the state of the economy and job security than we are on the war against terrorism.*
- *Because of economic downturn, layoffs, cost cutting, morale is very low.*
- *The economic repercussions have been the thing we have felt the most here. We are in the longest slowdown in the history of the company.*

**HR**

- *We now run a background check on all employees during the hiring process.*
- *HR has become more aware and made a more conscious effort to learn more about how to provide the safest work place environment possible.*
- *We have updated our safety and evacuation plans.*
- *Employees have increased expectations from management to create a better work environment*
- *We now have sign in, have ID picture badges, and have tags on our cars.*
- *Management just did not know how to handle themselves or the company on Sept. 11, 2001, or after. A few of our employees expressed anger (to me as HR) that our management team wasn't more sensitive and responsive in the weeks following the tragedy.*
- *Worker's Comp claims have increased.*

**Unique**

- *We had a baby boom! Five of our employees and two spouses of employees have had or will have a baby between July and December of this year. This tragedy has brought people closer together.*
- *Appreciation of living relatively far from a major metropolitan area.*
- *The company purchased and distributed a disaster survival backpack to all employees to be retained in the trunk of their car in case of a ter-*

rorist attack or earthquake or other natural disaster.

- Patriotism is displayed with fashion.
- We held a ceremony last November; we buried a time capsule under a plaque and planted a tree in remembrance of those lost in the attacks (from a company in close proximity to NYC).
- Significant change in the ATTITUDE of younger workers who thought that this kind of thing would never happen in their lifetime.

### Preparedness to Deal with the Aftermath of Attacks

The fourth survey question asked respondents: “In retrospect, how prepared was your organization to deal with the aftermath of last year’s tragedy (terrorist attacks)?” This question was an exact replica of a question asked in 2001. As can be seen in Charts 3a and 3b, there was almost no difference in response to this question in 2002 as compared to 2001. Immediately following the attacks, HR professionals seemed to think that their organizations were ill prepared to deal with the aftermath. Indeed, almost one-year later HR professionals reported that, in retrospect, this was in fact, the case.

This question was included in the follow-up survey to determine if HR professionals initial impression about their preparedness was accurate in retrospect. It appears as though again, as with the predictions about changes in the workplace, the impressions of HR professionals were accurate. Given the intensity and magnitude of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, it is easy to understand why organizations felt ill prepared. Questions and responses later in the survey, however, reveal what HR professionals have done to overcome this lack of preparedness.

### Preparedness to return to “Business as Usual”

The fifth question, also asked in 2001, yielded some very interesting results. Respondents were asked, “In retrospect, how prepared was your company to move forward and get back to “business as usual” after the event?” In 2001, almost three quarters of the respondents reported that their company was to

a very great or great extent prepared to get back to business as usual. The shift, depicted in Charts 4a and 4b, is quite visible and indicates that in retrospect, only four in 10 HR professionals felt that their company was to a very great or great extent prepared to return to business as usual and that at

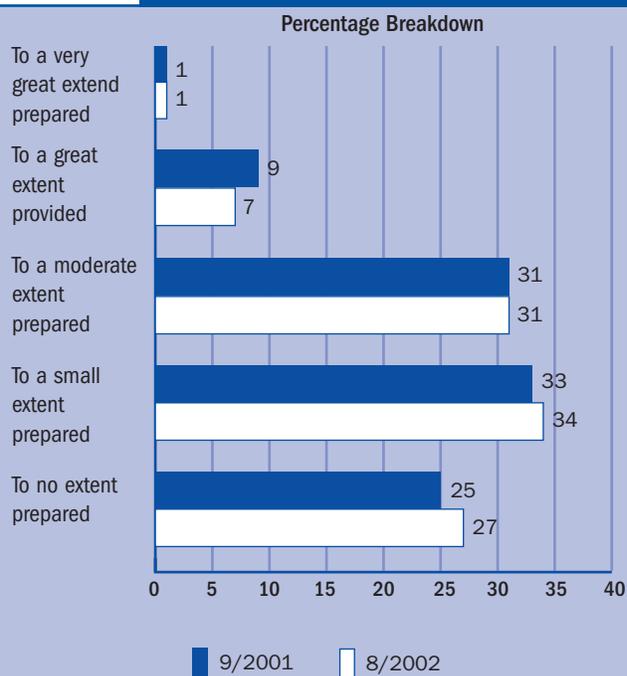
**Chart 3a** Preparedness to Deal with Aftermath of Attacks September 2001 compared to August 2002<sup>6</sup>

**Question:** In retrospect, how prepared was your organization to deal with the aftermath of last year’s tragedy (terrorist attacks)?

Response Scale	09/01	08/02
To a very great extent prepared	1%	1%
To a great extent prepared	7%	9%
To a moderate extent prepared	31%	31%
To a small extent prepared	33%	33%
To no extent prepared	27%	25%

<sup>6</sup>2001 Mean 2.23; 2002 mean 2.27  
Source: 2002 SHRM/eePulse “HR Implications of the Attack on America: One Year Later”

**Chart 3b** Graphic Depiction



Source: 2002 SHRM/eePulse “HR Implications of the Attack on America: One Year Later”

least one fifth felt they were to no extent or only to a small extent prepared.

This shift perhaps reflects the initial reaction of organizations that they were strong and that we as a

country and workforce would bounce back and move forward in a positive and constructive way. The retrospective perhaps indicates the more realistic perspective that the attacks took their toll not only on workplaces directly affected by the consequences but also those indirectly affected. Since the initial and subsequent changes, such as greater security, less travel, the desire for more work/life balance and so forth identified earlier have been both confirmed and extended, it is not surprising that in retrospect there was less preparedness for getting back to business as usual.

The initial reaction may have been a reflection of the determination to pull together as a country and show unity and strength. While these characteristics may have indeed been the mood of the country at the time of the attacks and immediately following, the sad reality is that the economy has been hard hit and many organizations and workers have been affected. Getting back to business as usual may simply not have been possible for some organizations.

**Chart 4a** Preparedness to return to “Business as Usual” September 2001 compared to August 2002<sup>7</sup>

**Question:** In retrospect, how prepared was your company to move forward and get back to “business as usual” after the event?

Response Scale	09/01	08/02
To a very great extent prepared	20%	8%
To a great extent prepared	53%	33%
To a moderate extent prepared	24%	38%
To a small extent prepared	3%	15%
To no extent prepared	0%	6%

<sup>7</sup> 2001 mean 3.89; 2002 mean 3.22  
Source: 2002 SHRM/eePulse “HR Implications of the Attack on America: One Year Later”

**Chart 4b** Graphic Depiction

Percentage Breakdown

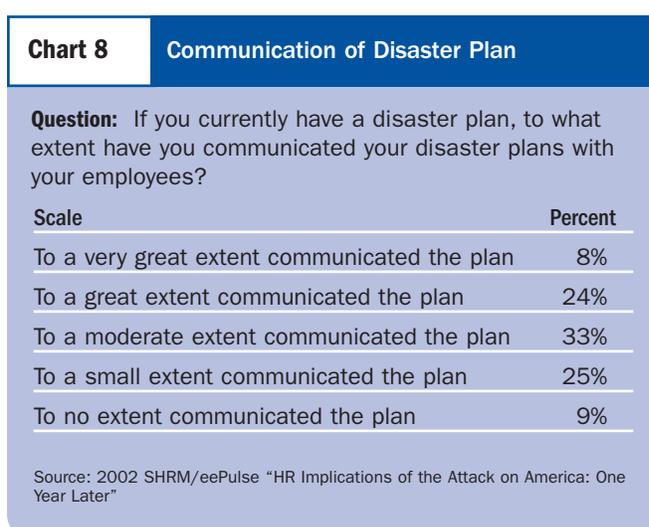
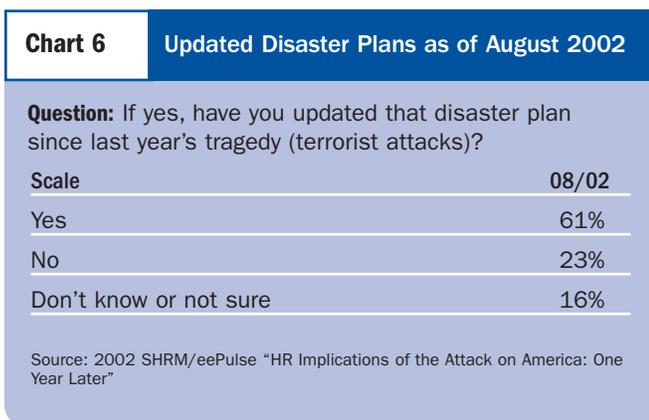
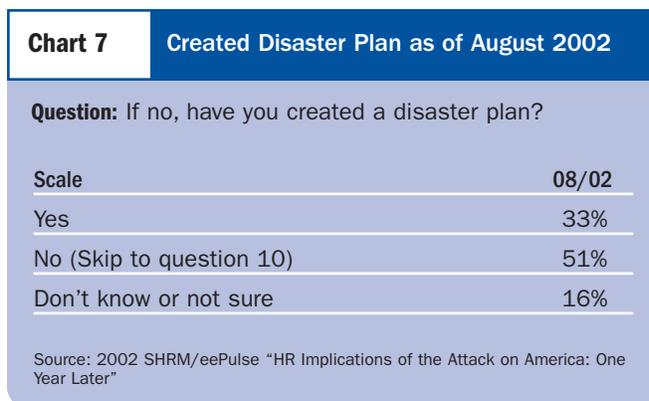
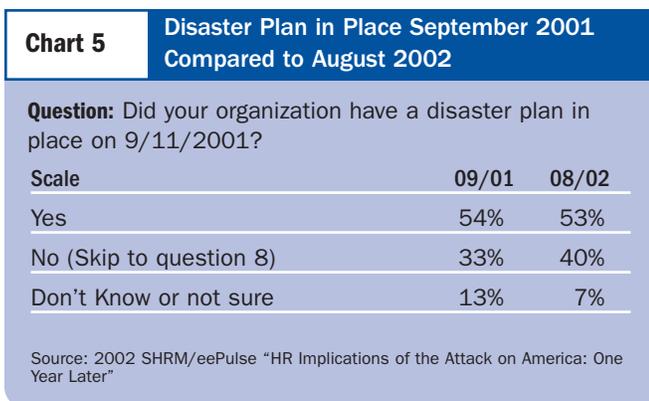
Preparedness Level	9/2001	8/2002
To a very great extent prepared	20	8
To a great extent provided	53	33
To a moderate extent prepared	38	24
To a small extent prepared	15	3
To no extent prepared	6	0

Source: 2002 SHRM/eePulse “HR Implications of the Attack on America: One Year Later”

**Disaster Plans**

The next four questions on the 2002 survey asked about disaster plans and communication of disaster plans. In 2001, 54% of HR professionals reported that their organizations had a disaster plan in place while 33% said no and 13% did not know. In 2002, 53% of organizations reported that their organizations had disaster plans in place, 40% said no and only 7% did not know. For organizations that did have disaster plans, they were asked if that plan had been updated since the terrorist attack and indeed, 61% of respondents reported that the plans were updated. For respondents whose organization did not have a disaster plan, 33% said that a plan was created.

These data show that a little over one half of all organizations had a disaster plan in place in September of 2001. It can be surmised that many of those plans were insufficient or outdated to handle the issues that might result from a terrorist attack or other major disaster since the majority of the plans have been updated in the past year (61%). Finally,



one third of those organizations that did not have any plan were compelled to create one. When asked to what extent disaster plans have been communicated with employees, responses were equally split between to a very great or great extent (32%), to a moderate extent (33%), or to a small or no extent communicated (34%). All of the data for these questions can be seen in Charts 5, 6, 7 and 8.

During the past year, many organizations perhaps asked themselves the questions "What would we do if we were directly affected by such a disaster?" "Would we be prepared"? Clearly, given the results of this survey, that most HR professionals felt ill-prepared, that only half had disaster plans and that most of those plans were in need of being updated, it is actually curious that more disaster plans were not created or updated during the past year. As a nation we have showed our resilience. As a profes-

sion, HR has shown its resourcefulness. As a strategy though, we clearly need to be prepared for contingencies.

**Plans for Commemoration**

The last question of the survey asked participants "What are you doing or planning to do to commemorate or recognize the 2001 9/11 terrorist attacks for 9/11/2002?" Respondents were given a list of 21 possible activities and asked to check all that applied. In addition, there was an open-ended question that asked respondents to share any additional ideas and comments about what their organization was doing to commemorate the events of 9/11 2001. Chart 9 depicts the results

from the closed ended question. This survey was closed and data were tabulated on August 26th 2002. As of that date, 45% of respondents had not yet planned any activities or events to commemorate the anniversary of the attacks. Only 12% stated that they did not plan to do anything to commemorate the event.

The most common answer by respondents was observing a moment of silence (32%) followed by flying the American flag at half-mast (24%). Fifteen percent of respondents indicated that they would be giv-

ing employees red-white-and-blue ribbons or lapel pins to wear. After this, the remainder of the items generated only a small percentage response as activities that organizations planned to sponsor or hold. For example, 6% said they would hold a blood drive, and 5% said they would: hold an all-staff meeting, allow time off without pay, hold a celebration of life, have a staff event in conjunction with any televised national observance, collect donations from employees to be given to an appropriate charity, or conducting a spiritual affirmation.

**Chart 9** Plans for Commemoration September 2002

**Question:** What are you doing or planning to do to commemorate or recognize the 2001 9/11 terrorist attacks for 9/11/2002? Check all that apply:

Scale	08/02
Nothing is planned yet	45%
Observing a moment of silence	32%
Flying American flag(s) at half-mast	24%
Giving employees red-white-and-blue ribbons or lapel pins to wear	15%
We do not plan to do anything to commemorate the event	12%
Holding a blood drive for/from employees	6%
Holding an all-staff meeting	5%
Allowing time-off, without pay, for employees (liberal leave)	5%
Holding a “celebration of life” event – such as a toast to the fallen heroes	5%
Staff event in conjunction with any televised national observance	5%
Collecting donations from employees to be given to an appropriate charity	5%
Conducting a spiritual affirmation	5%
Allowing time-off, with pay, for employees	4%
Bringing an EAP counselor on-site	4%
Making a donation (by your organization) on behalf of the employees	3%
Organizing discussion groups for employees to discuss the event and associated emotions	2%
Sending employees out for a volunteer opportunity in the community	2%
Bringing in a speaker to your organization	2%
Planting trees or flowers on-site in memory of those who lost their lives	2%
Holding a candle-lighting ceremony	1%
Closing your office	1%

Source: 2002 SHRM/eePulse “HR Implications of the Attack on America: One Year Later”

**Figure 1****Example of Commemoration Activities for a 250 Employee Company**

- A brief commemoration event will be held the morning of 9/11. It will begin at 8:40 and will include a moment of silence to coincide with the national moment of silence at 8:46 am.
- SHRM will provide a television for employees to view the televised commemoration events available throughout the day. Employees should coordinate this viewing time with their supervisors.
- SHRM will recognize National Civic Participation Week during the week of September 10th. This event encourages employees to vote, volunteer and be involved in their communities during the week and throughout the year.
- SHRM will host two community service events through DCCares that will link to the Spirit in the Unity of America commemoration. These volunteer opportunities will be offered in late September or early October.
- We will host a brown bag lunch on Thursday, September 12th, highlighting some of the positive outcomes from 9/11 and providing an opportunity to discuss feelings that employees may continue to experience with regard to the event.
- SHRM will post a list of worthy organizations to which employees could make a contribution if they wished. Many organizations have been adversely impacted due to 9/11 and are in great need of donations at this time. These will be available on ISIS.
- Employees who would like to take vacation or personal leave on 9/11 should arrange for time with advance approval from their supervisor.

Source: SHRM Internal Communication to Employees

In late July, a single question poll on the front page of SHRM On-line, asked: “What is your organization doing to commemorate Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>?” At that time the poll closed in mid August, 69% of respondents (a little over 7,500) indicated “nothing” with 28% responding that they would have a moment of silence. The current survey, conducted just two weeks after this poll indicates that organizations are still planning but that fewer organizations (45%) were still saying “nothing”. In fact, narrative comments, described below, indicate that organizations want to do something, but are unsure of what to do or simply had not yet finalized plans.

As an organization, SHRM began planning events for its 250 employees about a month before the preparation of this report. For us, as an organization, we respond to member questions and concerns on a daily basis. As a result, our planning process began earlier than some because the issues were at the forefront of our discussions. What follows in Figure 1 is a listing of the activities planned for SHRM employees and it is meant to serve as an example of the combination of activities that organizations might be conducting. Figure 1 depicts the activities as outlined by SHRM’s HR Department. The fact that 45% of respondents had not yet planned any events may be indicative of the fact that there was uncertainty about what to do, but a clear desire to do something.

**Narrative Responses**

The final question on this survey asked respondents to elaborate on what they were doing to commemorate or recognize the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 terrorist attacks by adding ones that were not on the survey list or by telling us other ways in which they planned to commemorate the event. We received 70 pages of typed, single-spaced comments from respondents. Many of the comments reflected our statistical result in that they said that nothing had been planned yet or that they were still deciding what to do. Some respondents stated that they had employee committees who were formulating plans and many actually thanked SHRM and eePulse for conducting the survey and providing them with some good ideas on what to do. Besides the frequent comment that the planning process was underway or would be started, the two other most common comments surrounded the idea of holding a moment of silence and to encourage employees to wear patriotic clothing or red-white-and-blue colors in their clothing for the day. Some of the comments indicated that the organization would host a lunch or breakfast for employees in conjunction with some form of remembrance and still other comments indicated that nothing would be done or that their organization had not been directly affected and that it would be “business as usual”. Below are

some of the responses and comments. A few reflect elaborations of what was on the survey list and others identify some of the unique approaches that organizations are taking. There were many touching and thorough comments and those reprinted here are by no means an exhaustive list of the activities planned by respondents to the survey.

### Community Related Events

- *There will be a memorial concert here in our building (community event) which we plan to allow our employees to attend during work time.*
- *We will be sending cookies with a letter of appreciation to our local firefighters; even though they may not have physically aided in the actual event of 9/11, they are always available to us locally and we are comforted by their presence. This would be a small way to pay tribute to all firefighters.*
- *We are donating to our local Food Bank and matching employee contributions as well.*

### Planning Process

- *We haven't given it much thought—but thanks to this survey I will start planning.*
- *We were looking for ideas...this list provided many for us. Thank you.*
- *Not sure what is appropriate to do.*
- *We are sending a survey to our employees to ask for their suggestions for commemoration.*
- *We have an employee committee looking for ideas.*

### Lack of Support/Not Doing Anything

- *I am having a tough sell with leadership and would like to know what others are doing.*
- *An e-mail was sent to all employees asking how they would like to commemorate the event. The response thus far has been minimal, mostly wanting a moment of silence.*
- *We are too diverse and feel it is best to stay neutral at work and private people may do as they wish.*

- *Many of the management team feel that we should do business as usual, so that the terrorists have not "won".*
- *The media and others are already over-saturating us all every day; there is no more to say or do.*

### Special Events/Activities

- *Plan to have a wall of remembrance; where employees can share an item which they feel symbolizes their feelings.*
- *We'll have a short remembrance/prayer service then a cook-out lunch celebrating the coming together of the American people after 9/11 demonstrating that we have chosen to contribute our way of life regardless of terrorist threats.*
- *We have produced a 17 minute video "Commemorating September 11<sup>th</sup>, Assisting Employees Through the Healing Process". The video includes a reflective moment of silence and features a trauma expert who provides information on normal reactions to the 9/11 Anniversary and what people can do to help themselves and others recover.*
- *Our company is sponsoring a televised broadcast commemorating the victims, their families, and the heroes.*
- *Essay opportunity: "What do you hold more dearly since 9/11?" Then displaying the responses for all employees to read.*
- *Voicemail message from the CEO commemorating the date and expressing appreciation for our employees' contribution to the continuation of the American way of life.*
- *We plan to focus on emotional well being during the month of September, with articles to help them deal with the many stressors in life they face including dealing with tragedy, death, grief, etc.*
- *We are asking employees to wear red, white, and blue.*
- *Holding a charity bake sale on 9/12 with proceeds going to American Red Cross – WTC Relief Fund.*

- One of our employee's birthday is on 9/11 – we plan to celebrate his life.
- Giving each employee 4 daffodil bulbs to plant in remembrance of those lost on 9/11.
- Will put a message on the sign board at front of property entrance.
- We have a “memory garden” where trees are planted to remember associates who have passed away. This year we will include a tree and marker for those who perished in the 9/11 terrorist attacks.
- We are going to create a special issue of our company newsletter that highlights the acts of human kindness during that time.
- Plan to release a rehabilitated bird back into the wild.
- Since we are a news organization, we will commemorate 9/11 by working hard as we did on the day and the days and weeks following the attacks.
- We're allowing 2 hours off with pay to do whatever a person needs to remember 9/11.
- We plan to send a firm-wide e-mail (with an American flag backdrop) in remembrance of 9/11 and the fallen heroes.
- We will not be doing any advertising that day (we are a beer distributor).
- As part of the Museum Society, we are providing free admission to the public to visit our Museum on 9/11.
- We gave “United We Stand” t-shirts to the entire plant (about 90 people).
- Publishing a proclamation, having journals available in key locations for employees to record thoughts then forwarding these books to appropriate official in NYC.
- We plan to minimize all employee travel on 9-11-02.
- Bulletin board in memory of the victims of 9/11 and their families.
- CEO and other leaders will speak at an optional meeting.
- We are leaving travel as an option for employees that week.
- Sept. 11 falls within the same week as our United Way Kick-off; therefore we are planning events around the “Be a Hero” theme with patriotic colors and opportunities for the employee to give back to the community through the United Way.
- We are prepared to offer EAP services to any employee who feels a resurgence of the angst from last year, but do not intend to contribute to the frenzy.
- We are hosting a memorial service in our Hospital garden with live music, and moments of remembering. All employees will be encouraged to be present or gather around windows overlooking the garden.
- We plan to say the Pledge of Allegiance at noon.
- Our speaker will be a minister from a non-denominational church that will give us a fresh view on the diversity of our nation and the tolerances we need to bear for one another to insure our freedom.
- We are planning to introduce our new Disaster Preparedness Plan to all employees at a meeting on this day.
- Commemorative plaque will be placed at the base of a tree.

# Conclusion

America is a different place in 2002 than it was in 2001. The lives of our citizens and our workers have been irrevocably changed. For some, the changes have been far more dramatic and intense than others, but for all, the impact is very real. Most of us will not forget where we were or what we were doing on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Because it occurred on a weekday and in the early hours of a workday, the impact was felt not just by individuals, but also by organizations and workplaces. As a result, HR professionals as a group have been called upon to respond to the needs of their organizations and employees.

The comments in this survey by HR professionals indicate that workers are seeking more balance in their lives relative to work, that they are more caring toward one another, that they work better as a team and that they want and expect to be safe at work. All of these changes in attitude and behavior will have huge implications for HR professionals as time passes. If workers demand more balance in their lives and are concerned about spending time with family

and friends given the fragility of life and quickness with which it can be lost, then organizations will somehow need to accommodate this. As a result, HR professionals are going to need to address these and other concerns as expressed by the American workforce.

The tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 will be commemorated in 2002 and for many years to come. It is fervently hoped that HR professionals never need to feel ill prepared again and that the newly updated or created disaster plans need never be used. However, should the need ever arise, HR professionals will be at the forefront and will rise to the occasion and will spearhead efforts to help their employees and their organizations.

*For further information or resources to help with planning for September 11<sup>th</sup> 2002, please visit a special section on the SHRM website ([www.shrm.org/hrnews/sept11/](http://www.shrm.org/hrnews/sept11/)) devoted to helping HR professionals and managers deal with issues related to the 2001 terrorist attacks.*

