



HR Implications of the Attack on America:

Executive Summary of Results of a Survey of HR Professionals

About this Report

The following report analyzes the results of the SHRM[®]/eePulse Survey on the HR Implications of the Attack on America. Over a three-day period the survey was e-mailed to approximately 120,000 SHRM members. Responses were tabulated on-line as they were received over the same three-day period. The results of this report are based on the responses of 5,673 HR professionals.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM[®]) is the leading voice of the human resource profession. SHRM provides education and information services, conferences and seminars, government and media representation, online services and publications to more than 165,000 professional and student members throughout the world. The Society, the world's largest human resource management association, is a founding member of the North American Human Resource Management Association and the World Federation of Personnel Management Associations (WFPMA)

eePulse, founded in 1997, combines technology and research to enhance the work environment by gauging the "pulse" of the workplace. The company was developed based upon research generated by Dr. Theresa Welbourne, CEO of eePulse and an expert on management strategies in high-growth and high-change organizations. Welbourne was commissioned to conduct a study for a firm going through an initial public offering process. Throughout the study, Welbourne tested and refined the processes that now serve as the foundation for the company's proprietary Measurecom[™] (measurement and communication) system. Companies currently working with eePulse to meet the goal of "optimizing the pulse of everyone, everywhere" include Brio Technology, General Motors, Inktomi, MSC Laminates and Composites, MSX International, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, and Oxygen Media. For more information about eePulse, visit the corporate website at www.eepulse.com.

Introduction

Everyone in the United States and around the world was affected by the tragedies that struck in New York, Pennsylvania and at the Pentagon on Tuesday, September 11th, 2001. Whether at home or at work, everyone stopped what they were doing to witness and try to process what they saw and heard. For a time it seemed as though only those involved in the rescue in some way were engaged in work. We know that the reaction around the country and around the world has been one of anger and sadness. We have heard many anecdotes about how people are coping and what people are feeling, but we do not know the full impact on American productivity and what is happening in U.S. workplaces around the country. In fact, we may never know.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM[®]) and eePulse, Inc. joined together to conduct a survey of human resource professionals with the goal to find out what HR professionals and employees around the country are experiencing and thinking since this tragic incident. It was our hope that we could learn not only what people have done and are experiencing but that we could learn from these tragic events and somehow have a positive impact on the workplace. It will be many weeks and months before we learn the complete and true impact and even then we may only know part of the story. However, this mini-survey asked and received answers to ten short questions, and this report incorporates the responses of 5,606 respondents.

The survey was fielded on Tuesday afternoon, September 18th and the results for this Executive Summary were tabulated on Saturday morning, September 22nd. The survey was successfully sent, via e-mail with a URL designation, to approximately 120,000 individual members of SHRM around the country and some around the world. Given how sensitive the subject is, it was difficult to know how the survey would be received. There were eight closed-ended questions and two open-ended questions. The written comments have been both moving and enlightening. What follows is a summary of responses to all 10 questions.

Fear is not an unknown emotion to us – Neil Armstrong

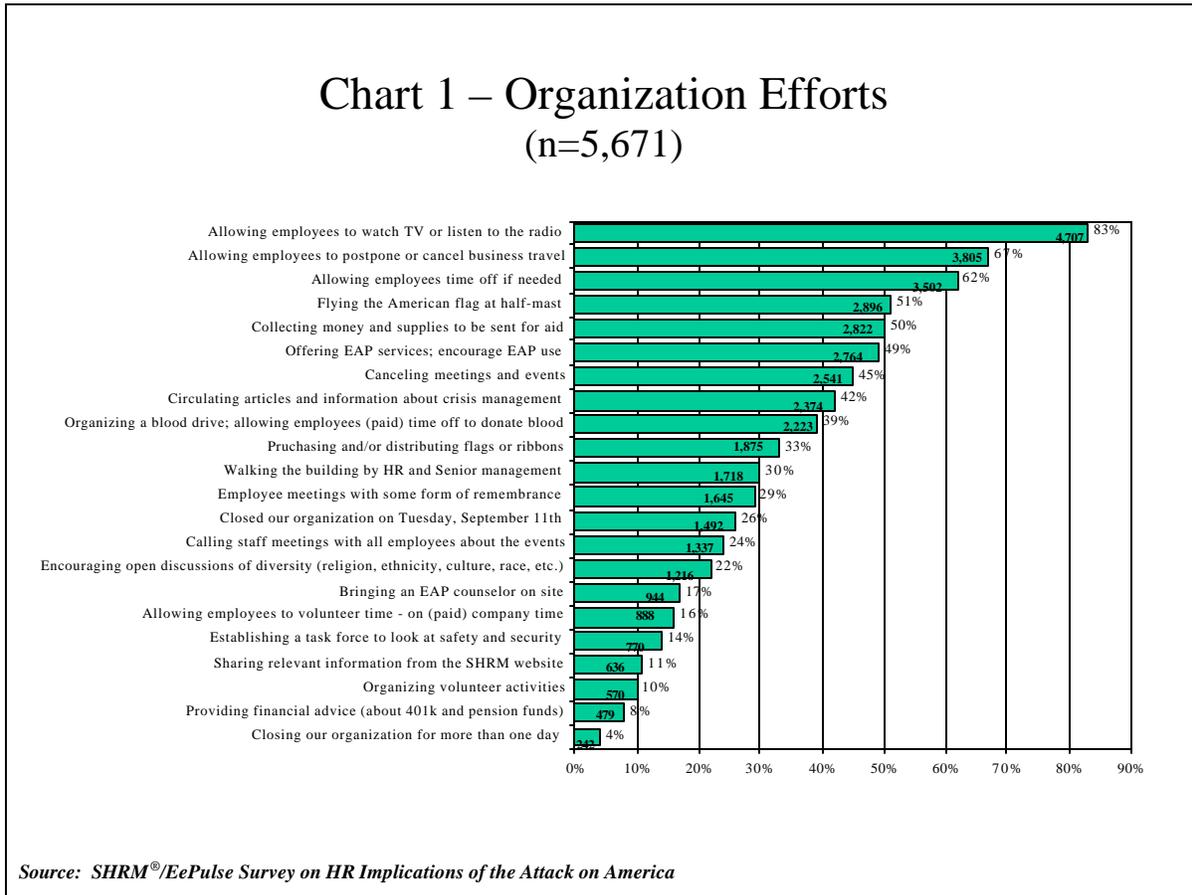
Survey Results

The first survey question asked “In the wake of last Tuesday’s tragedy, what did your organization do and what are you continuing to do for or with your employees?” Twenty-two possible responses were provided¹ and respondents were instructed to check all that applied. Eighty-three percent (4,707) of respondents indicated that they allowed employees to watch TV or listen to the radio. Sixty-seven percent (3,805) indicated that employees were allowed to postpone or cancel business travel. Sixty-two percent (3,502) allowed employees time off if need, and 51% indicated they were flying the American flag at half-mast². Fifty percent of respondents indicated that they collected money and supplies to be sent for aid, 49% offered EAP (Employee Assistance Programs) services and encouraged EAP use, 45% cancelled

¹ Survey responses were written based on a thorough analysis of SHRM member dialogue in the SHRM bulletin board that was started on Tuesday afternoon, September 11th – as well as feedback from an internal survey committee.

² It should be noted that the profile of SHRM members is such that many come from small to medium-sized organizations and it may have been logistically difficult for some to fly a flag at all, let alone at half-mast.

meetings and events and 42% circulated articles and information about crisis management. All of the results from this question can be seen in Chart One.



What does not destroy me makes me strong – Friedrich Nietzsche

Question two asked respondents to “please elaborate on any of these responses, or add others, by telling us more about the effect of your actions on the workplace or the process you utilized so that others can learn from your experience.” It would take hundreds of pages to reprint the comments here, and it is almost impossible to capture the sentiment that was shared in a few paragraphs, however, there were some common themes that clearly came through. Patriotism and detailed discussions of what employees were doing to help in some way were among the most prevalent comments. Some, however, identified displeasure at how little their organizations did or how little public acknowledgement went out to employees. Many of the comments were moving and insightful. However, for HR professionals, perhaps the most meaningful comments were those that centered around the impact on HR as a profession:

- *Ironically, the person affected by this tragedy the most seems to be me, the HR manager*
- *Our associates are really looking to HR to provide guidance and resources.*
- *I wish I had more training in psychology*

- *We have a diverse employee base.... my focus is on diversity education to help people realize that just because someone is Muslim or “Arabic looking” that in itself is not cause for suspicion*
- *I am committed to the circle of influence I have here.... and I have had many employees thank me for my efforts and assistance*

Members reported overall feelings of helplessness expressed by their employees:

- *Everyone feels completely helpless*
- *Reactions from most people were that they wanted to help*
- *I believe that our employees needed to do something when they felt so helpless*

And with this type of sentiment, the American working community helped in a number of different ways. Below are just a few of the things that were reported in the survey:

- *From Texas, “we adopted stores in DC and Manhattan, making signs, collecting donations, and more”*
- *Donated \$5m to the Red Cross*
- *Organizing a garage sale to donate money for the relief fund*
- *Donated some of their office space to a competitor that lost their space in the New York tragedy*
- *Donated \$3m to a relief fund [There were quite a few like this.]*
- *We have about 340 employees and to date have collected over \$1,500*
- *We have 55 employees, all in one location, and we provided breakfast all last week*
- *Our hospital staff sent over 200 hand-written notes to our counterparts in New York and Washington DC hospitals expressing our gratitude and support for their efforts in treating victims*
- *As a global organization, we donated \$5 million*
- *We have committed to a \$1m donation; employees’ contributions up to \$500,000 will be met and donated to the Red Cross and United Way*
- *Firefighters did a boot campaign at intersections in the city and collected \$7k in 20 minutes*
- *Our company is keeping a notebook (scrapbook) of this horrible event and inviting staff to make contributions of pictures, stories, articles, etc.*

Reading through these comments, one is struck by the generosity and sharing that is occurring in corporate America. However, not all companies responded in this way, and granted, the recent economic downturn has left many small firms in a position where they cannot afford to donate cash, or even afford large decreases in productivity, even if the events are horrific. As a result, some members were struck by the lack of attention given by their leaders. At the same time, a few respondents were bothered by the overall attention that this tragedy received:

- *Unfortunately, our President wanted to ignore the whole thing and run “business as usual”*
- *Our owner has been largely insensitive to the effects of this upon people*

- *Unfortunately, my firm has done nothing about this situation except issue an e-mail statement from corporate. No local leadership on the issue. How sad! Productivity is definitely impacted here, but it's business as usual according to employees*
- *Some of us, myself included, suffered from information overload. Too much TV in the office and too many people running in every five minutes with different updates and opinions*

There were some very practical reactions to the situation:

- *We are receiving a lot of requests from employees who are in the reserves regarding what will happen to their employee status if they are called up for an extended tour of duty*
- *Our building is putting together a list of names of employees working on each floor of our high rise*
- *As an HR manager, I recognized the need for a centralized log of employees' travel plans*
- *There is grief counseling on site*
- *Due to the fact that our 140 locations are spread across the US, we immediately made plans to wire money to locations to replace the paychecks that were grounded along with all air flights*
- *Metal detectors are now being used*
- *The CEO asked me to investigate EAPs, and I have suggested that I chair a safety committee to develop a disaster plan*
- *Remaining calm and taking charge of organizing sequences of events is the most helpful thing an HR person can do*

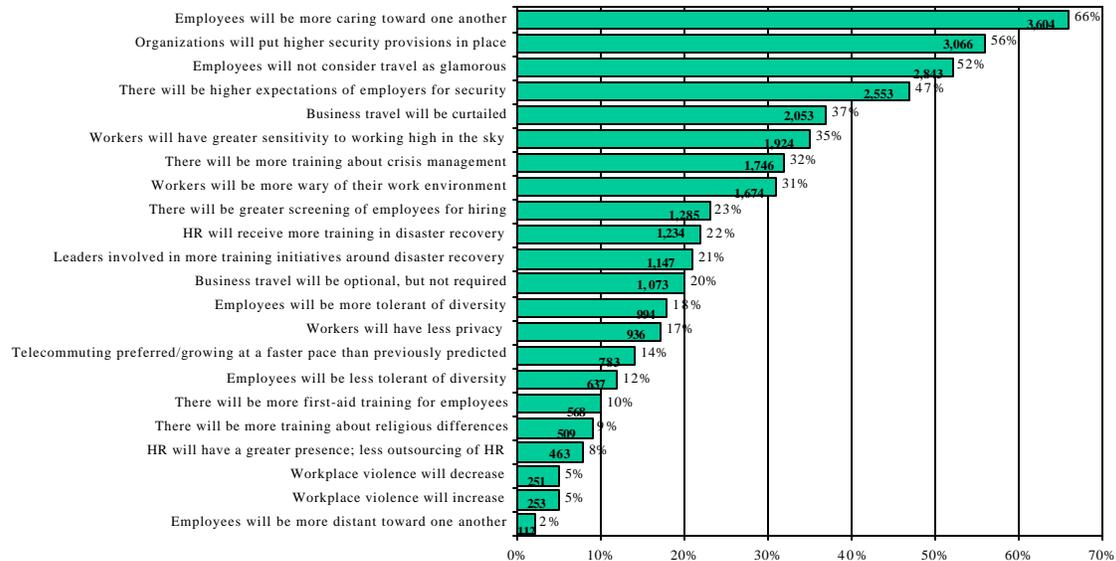
A more detailed analysis of the comments will be available at a later date from SHRM and eePulse. In order to get the survey results out quickly so that they can be useful to others, the qualitative analysis, which takes much longer, is an on-going effort.

The third question asked, "In your opinion, how will the workplace change as a result of last Tuesday's tragedy?" Twenty-two possible responses³ were provided and respondents were able to check all that they thought would apply. The top response, with 66% (3,604) states that employees will be more caring toward one another. The next closest response with 56% (3,066) indicates that organizations will put higher security provisions in place. Fifty-two percent (2,843) indicated that employees will not consider travel as glamorous and 47% responded that there would be higher expectations of employers for security. Thirty-seven percent indicated that business travel will be curtailed, 35% said that workers will have greater sensitivity to working high in the sky and 32% and 31% respectively said that there will be more training about crisis management and workers will be more wary of their work environment. The full set of responses can be found in Chart Two.

Question four asked respondents to "please take time to share more of your thoughts about this question (three) or add other changes that you think might occur in the workplace as a result of the events last week." As with the second question, it would take hundreds of pages

³ Survey responses were written based on a thorough analysis of SHRM member dialogue in the SHRM bulletin board that was started on Tuesday afternoon, September 11th – as well as feedback from an internal survey committee.

Chart 2 – Changes in the Workplace
(n=5,460)



Source: SHRM®/EePulse Survey on HR Implications of the Attack on America

to repeat all of the comments and it will be difficult to capture all of the sentiment in a small space, but there were several themes that can be identified. First, respondents indicated a concern over violence in the workplace and commented that companies might be less likely to “leave their doors open.” Security was a recurrent theme and focused on the need for greater security and the feelings that employees have toward it. There was great concern over layoffs and the impact on the economy. Finally, there were many comments about putting together disaster kits and disaster plans – or updating the ones that were already in place. HR will clearly be at the forefront of these changes:

- *EAP programs will be regenerated, HR will advertise them more, and more employees will utilize them*
- *Employees will rely more on the HR function and on management to be caring and supportive, rather than the protectors of the company*
- *Telecommuting will increase and having that as an option will become more and more a selling point for jobs*
- *[There will be] suspicions about the value of diversity*
- *The scope of disaster recovery plans has increased dramatically*

A large number of respondents discussed issues of diversity in some detail:

- *I am concerned about violence (workplace or otherwise) directed toward Middle Eastern and/or Muslim people working in the US*

- *I believe it is important to encourage employees to accept diversity in the workplace, but I don't know if they are prepared to take it with them to their homes and private lives*
- *Our Middle Eastern employees are more withdrawn than before and the American and Hispanic employees are doing little to make them feel better*
- *Employees are angry and believe this country gives citizens from other countries too much freedom and too many rights*
- *As an African American, I believe that events of last week will have a lasting impact on lives for people of color. I have concerns that history may be repeated in that civil liberties may be taken away, and also the possibility of increase in hate crimes toward people of color*
- *We have already experienced an increase in workplace harassment directed at Middle Eastern employees as a result of the tragedies. As events unfold, it will get worse*
- *We are very concerned about the safety of our employees on the street. We have many people in the high tech industry from Pakistan and China. One employee was accosted on the street and was verbally assaulted "You people are responsible for this." He is Indian*
- *I keep thinking about the disabled people in the World Trade Center – how did they get down the steps*

And then, we had many practical concerns and responses about the economy and impacts on their organizations:

- *More possible layoffs*
- *Adverse effects on the economy*
- *The potential military response may impact the workforce immediately and in the future*
- *Decreased employee morale*
- *Folks will be raw and on edge*
- *Productivity will take a dip*
- *The Internet will be slower due to heavy traffic*
- *Workers will have more appreciation for their jobs*
- *Employees will not want to fly*
- *We will institute an evacuation policy*
- *An emphasis to get on with it – business as usual*

There were a number of comments about work / life balance and the need to spend more time with family and less at work:

- *Employees will weigh work/life balance issues more seriously*
- *I believe that women, especially, will re-evaluate the need to work as opposed to staying home with children*
- *I believe we may see more work/life balance. Employees will want to spend precious time with their family and friends*
- *Some workaholics will spend more time away from the office and become more focused on family and loved ones*

Then there were the comments that were very practical:

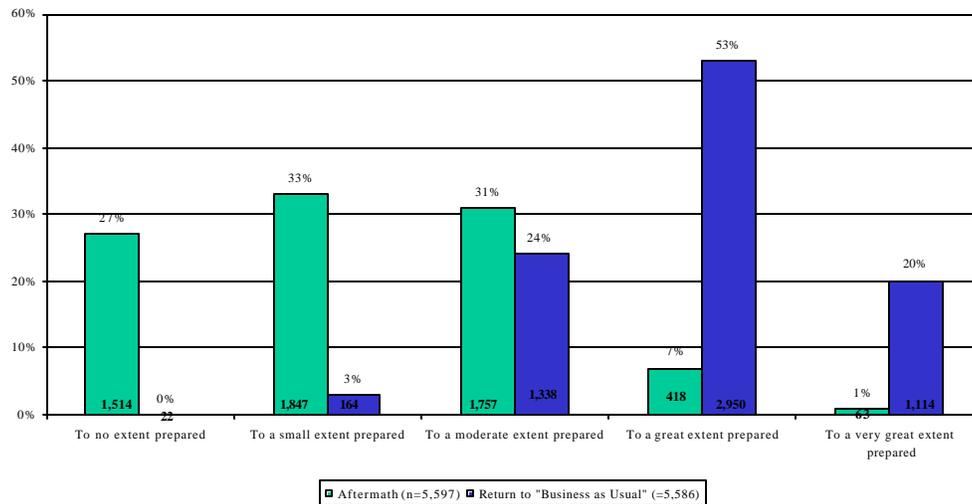
- *People will rent more cars instead of flying*
- *Internet conference technology will be more prevalent*
- *EAP programs will be regenerated*
- *HR training and counseling will increase*
- *All aspects of training will increase*
- *Employees will rely more on HR and on management to be caring and supportive*
- *I think that skyscrapers will not be built, and if they are, people will refuse to work in them*

A more detailed analysis of the comments will be available at a later date from SHRM and eePulse. In order to get the survey results out quickly so that they can be useful to others, the qualitative analysis, which takes much longer, is an on-going effort.

In response to the question “how prepared is your company to move forward and get back to “business as usual” over the next few weeks?” most responded that they were prepared. In fact, 73% said that they were prepared to a great or very great extent. Although the written comments showed the depth of how people have been feeling, the response to this question indicates that people, from an organizational perspective are trying to get back on track with their work and their business. A second question about preparedness asked “how prepared were you to deal with the aftermath of last Tuesday’s tragedy?” Interestingly, the responses to this question were at the opposite end of the same five-point scale. The mean response for this question was 2.23 and the mean response for the other question was 3.89. For this question, 60% said they were to no extent or to a small extent prepared to deal with the aftermath.

Taken together these two questions are interesting. The responses indicate that although HR professionals and their organizations felt ill-prepared to deal with the aftermath, in a short period of time they and their organizations are indeed prepared for and preparing to move forward. This is encouraging and demonstrates the strength of not only the country but the workforce as well. Detailed responses to these two questions can be found in Chart Three.

Chart 3 – Preparedness to Deal with Aftermath & Return to “Business as Usual”



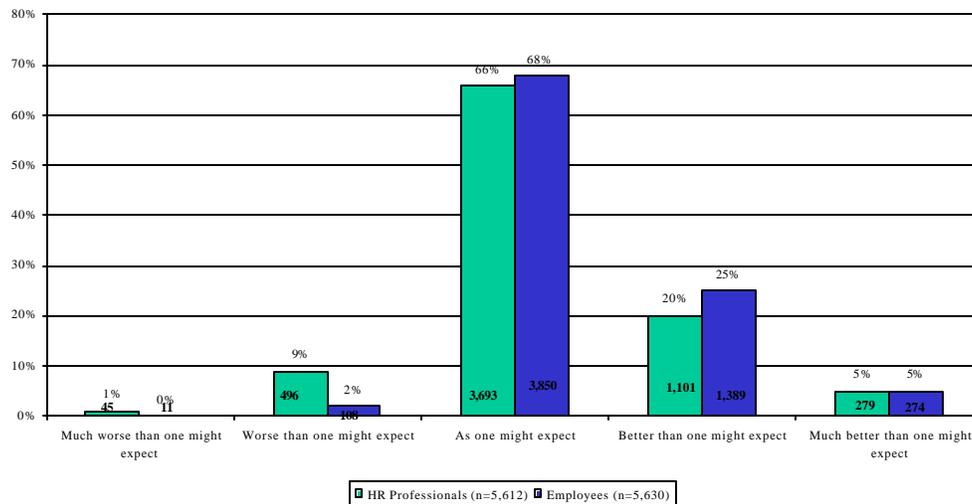
Mean Return to Business as Usual Rating = 3.89

Mean Preparedness to Deal with Aftermath Rating = 2.23

Source: SHRM®/EePulse Survey on HR Implications of the Attack on America

The next two questions dealt with coping. The first asked, “Overall, how well do you think your employees are coping with the events of last week?” and the second “how are you personally coping with the aftermath and the way it affects your job and your organization?” For the most part, HR professionals said that both they and their employees were coping as one might expect with 68 and 66 percent (respectfully) responding this way. Another 30 and 25 percent respectively said they were coping better or much better than one might expect. What is interesting to note in this set of questions is that almost 10% of HR professionals indicated that they were personally coping worse or much worse than expected whereas they perceived only 2% of their employees were coping worse or much worse than expected. It may be that HR professionals have greater difficulty in coping due to the fact that they are frequently the ones charged with overseeing and dealing with organizational aspects of the aftermath. Detailed responses to these two questions can be found in Chart Four.

Chart 4 – Coping of HR Professionals & Coping of Employees



Mean Coping Rating for HR Professionals = 3.19

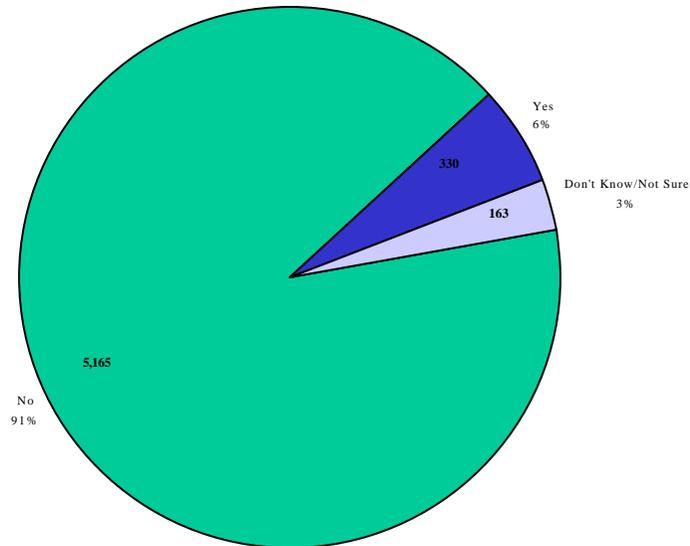
Mean Coping Rating for Employees = 3.32

Source: SHRM®/EePulse Survey on HR Implications of the Attack on America

The final two questions were straightforward and factual. To the question “were any of your employees, either at your location or elsewhere, killed or injured during last Tuesday’s attack?” 91% responded negatively. Six percent⁴ said “yes” and 3% did not know or were not sure. Taken together with a previous question, what the data indicate is that although a strong majority did not have an employee killed or injured in the attack, most respondents still indicated a lack of preparedness to deal with the aftermath. The final question asked “does your organization have a disaster plan in place?” Thirteen percent did not know or were not sure if they had a disaster plan in place while 34% did not and 54% did have such a plan. Based upon some of the comments, however, it may be that some portion of the 54% that have such plans are out of date or not comprehensive enough to cover the type of disaster with which we are currently faced. Charts 5 and 6 display this data.

⁴ A six percent affirmative response indicates that 330 HR professionals say that an employee was killed or injured in their firm. Given the buildings and airplanes lost, this number may be possible. However, it is more likely, that individual HR professionals working in subsidiaries or divisions of companies that were directly affected said “yes” and this resulted in multiple people from a single larger organization responding “yes”. The purpose of asking this question was to determine if employees in organizations that lost employees or had employees injured at their location or elsewhere responded in a different fashion.

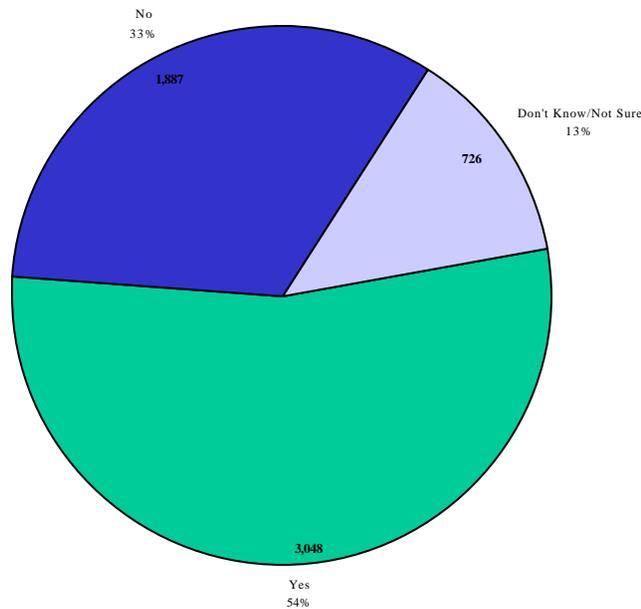
Chart 5 – Employees Killed or Injured During Attack (n=5,673)



Note: A six percent affirmative response indicates that 330 HR professionals say that an employee was killed or injured in their firm. Given the buildings and airplanes lost, this number may be possible. However, it is more likely, that individual HR professionals working in subsidiaries or divisions of companies that were directly affected said “yes” and this resulted in multiple people from a single larger organization responding “yes”. The purpose of asking this question was to determine if employees in organizations that lost employees or had employees injured at their location or elsewhere responded in a different fashion.

Source: SHRM®/EePulse Survey on HR Implications of the Attack on America

Chart 6 – Disaster Plan in Place
(n=5,644)



Source: SHRM®/EePulse Survey on HR Implications of the Attack on America

Sorrow makes us all children again – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Summary

The results of this mini survey tell us that for the most part, as human resource professionals, we should be proud of how our employees and organizations have reacted. In addition, however, they also tell us that we have a great deal of work ahead of us. First, the results tell us that for those who felt ill prepared, upset and distracted (as the comments indicated) we should take some comfort that we were not alone in feeling this way. We have all been personally and profoundly affected by this tragedy, but we should also remember that our workplaces have been affected as well.

Although we are angry, sad and finding it difficult to concentrate as a result of the events of September 11th and the pending future events, we should all be proud of how we are coping. That is, we have all showed our emotions in varying degrees and even experienced our emotions in differing and varying degrees but it is clear from the comments and responses that everyone is pulling together and doing what needs to be done. The American workplace has suffered a major blow, but the employees that comprise that workforce and the HR professionals that oversee that workforce are indicating a readiness and preparedness to get back on track and not be down trodden.

We know from these results that only about half of the respondents have disaster plans in place. This indicates that many HR professionals will be turning their attention to these activities. It can be expected that new disaster plans will be written and existing plans will be updated or expanded. In addition, however, the comments indicate that greater emphasis will be placed on disseminating these plans in new employee orientation and throughout the organization to current employees. Moreover, many of the respondents indicated that there would be greater training for how to deal with a disaster and the counseling and psychological needs that result.

Greater emphasis on security can be anticipated and these results indicate that this will most likely be translated into training and development activities. Training is likely for HR professionals and management employees as well. Increased security may also mean increased screening of employees and greater attention to employee relations' issues. Additional training will be needed to handle these increased responsibilities. Other training implications also exist for diversity training and issues of violence in the workplace. The fastest growing religion in the world is the Islamic religion and the American workplace has gotten increasingly diverse in this regard. According to a 2001 survey about religion in the workplace, there has been a 36% increase in religions represented in the workplace over the past five years (*SHRM[®] 2001 Religion in the Workplace Survey*). Results of this current survey are mixed as to whether or not tolerance for diversity would increase or lessen or whether violence would increase or decrease. Due to the fact that there is no single direction that HR professionals' opinions point, it is likely that more training will occur in a good faith attempt to increase understanding and minimize the possibilities of problems in the future.

Although some of the comments indicated disappointment over the way that some organizations and organization leaders were handling the current situation, HR professionals should be proud of the fact that results indicated a concern for employees and employee needs. One-quarter of respondents indicated that their organizations were closed but the majority (62%) indicated that employees could take time off if they need to do so. Many of the comments indicate that there is still much talk, both formally and informally and that organizations have been generally supportive of this. There were also many comments indicating what organizations were continuing to do or planning to do.

The events of September 11th were tragic and unsettling but the American workforce and the HR professionals who stand ready to help their organizations and this workforce as a whole have responded with dignity and creativity. From the organization that allowed its employees to mow and paint an adjacent field into the shape of an American flag to the countless organizations that donated funds and materials and who have assisted their employees with doing the same, the results of this survey are clear. The workplace and the workforce have been profoundly affected. As of Sunday the 23rd, American flags are no longer flying at half-mast at organizations around the country and around the world, showing that the "official" mourning period is over. We know, however, that this period of mourning has not ended.

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are – Theodore Roosevelt⁵

⁵ All quotations used in this Executive Summary are from *The Harper Book of Quotations*, 3rd Edition, Robert I. Fitzhenry, Editor, Harper/Collins Publishers, 1993.