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Raising the Bar in Staffing Since 1987



## Root cause problem-solving

by Peter Vajda

For many years, the Japanese have approached the process of problem-solving with a strategy known as “the Five Whys”. In its simplest form, many Japanese managers will ask themselves “why?” five times when they’re confronted with a problem. Why? By the time the fifth “why?” is answered, they believe they will have found the ultimate cause of the problem. Asking “why” repeatedly directs one’s focus toward root-causes, enabling problems to be solved and solutions to be found in a long-term, sustainable way.

In this context, a “problem” is defined as the gap between what you have and what you want. For example, it may be a matter of getting something, of getting rid of something, of avoiding something, or of getting to know what you want.

In many Western organizations, thanks to the work of Peter Senge and others who have brought systems thinking into the corporate arena, the “Five Why” problem-solving strategy has gained ever-increasing popularity, and credibility.

In many situations, in your immediate position or in your

# WHY?



organization, for example, real root causes become obscured by other, “apparent” problems. Thus the goal of the “Five Why” exercise is to ensure that root causes, not merely these superficial symptoms, are identified and resolved. That’s what makes the strategy so useful for identifying the root of a problem, issue or conflict, be it at work, at home or even in relationships.

### How does it work?

After identifying a recurring problem, the roots are identified by asking “why?” five times. By doing so, you identify systemic relationships - connections and relationships between and among problems or issues.

The process can take from five minutes to five days depending on the depth of the problem and the process.

So, here’s an example, taken from Peter Senge’s, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*. The exercise can be done in groups of any size.

- 1.** Identify individual issues or problems your unit, department, organization or entity (family, relationship...) is facing. Ask, for example, “what problem do we have to solve in the near future?” You can display these problems on cards, on a white board, a screen, etc.
- 2.** Arrange similar problems with one another and eliminate duplicate descriptions. List these problems with short explanations; but without discussion.
- 3.** Identify the problem(s) you want to start with by ranking. For example, every member/

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# THE ONE SKILL ALL SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE POSSESS

What is the one skill all successful people possess? It certainly isn't the ability to invent things, or communication skills or technical skills. Successful people come in all shapes and sizes.

Some of them are highly technical and some aren't. Some of them have a knack for business and other successful people don't. That's okay! They can always hire people who know more about business than they do.

The one skill all successful people possess is the ability to learn from their mistakes. It is not really an ability — it is a willingness. People who achieve their dreams make way more mistakes than most people do, because they try way more things than most people do. They are always experimenting. They are always moving forward.

If something they try doesn't work out for them, they say "Oh well — great learning!" and they try something else.

People who are not successful either don't try new things, or they try them but they get frustrated and stop trying when their early efforts don't work out. They blame other people for slowing them down. Other people cannot slow you down unless you let them.

Everybody has had a difficult boss

at some point. People who look at roadblocks as opportunities find a way to overcome the obstacle called "My Difficult Boss."

Everybody has been treated badly at work at some point. Successful people work around the problem or veer off in another direction on their path. They feel the same pain and frustration anyone would feel in their situation, but they take stock and then say "Okay, now that I know what I'm up against — what am I going to do about it?"

They don't stay stuck in a bad situation and complain about it, as though complaining about a bad situation were a solution to it. It's not!

We can decide to let career headaches and hurdles limit us, or we can ask "How do I get over this wall — or bust through it or tunnel under it? I know there's a way!"

Successful people get knocked down and they get up again and try something different. They don't judge themselves when they fail. It's not even failure — it's just free learning!

If you call yourself a loser, get down on yourself or decide that the world is against you, how can you ever succeed? The number one person who has to believe in you is you! No one else will



believe in you if you don't believe in yourself.

If you want to be successful, first give yourself permission to make a big dream. Create a vision for yourself. That's a hard step for many people. They don't believe they have the right to live the life or have the career they want. They don't even dare to imagine what that life and career might look like!

The second step is to start to put a plan together. If the plan is going to take twenty years to accomplish, that's fine. Some plans take much longer than that.

If you want to define your own life and career, you have to stay open to learning — especially learning

about yourself. You have to look in the mirror all the time and ask "How could I have handled that situation better?" When you do that, you won't stop having problems or running into roadblocks. Instead, you'll vault over each new roadblock more quickly than you vaulted over the last one!

They say that the reward for solving a big problem is another, even bigger problem. When you can shift your view from "Problems are bad — I hate them!" to "Problems are amazing — they teach me so much!" your success will be all but assured. All it takes is a shift in perspective. Can you make that shift right now? ☞☞

## How to Beat Procrastination

Caroline Webb, HBR

Procrastination comes in many disguises. We might resolve to tackle a task, but find endless reasons to defer it. We might prioritize things we can readily tick off our to-do list—answering emails, say—while leaving the big, complex stuff untouched for another day. We can look and feel busy, while artfully avoiding the tasks that really matter. And when we look at those rolling, long-untouched items at the bottom of our to-do list, we can't help but feel a little disappointed in ourselves.

The problem is our brains are programmed to procrastinate. In general, we all tend to struggle with tasks that promise future upside in return for efforts we take now. That's because it's easier for our brains to process concrete rather than abstract things, and the immediate hassle is very tangible compared with those unknowable, uncertain future benefits. So the short-term effort easily dominates the long-term upside in our minds—an example of something that behavioral scientists call present bias.

How can you become less myopic about your elusive tasks? It's all about rebalancing the cost-benefit analysis: make the benefits of action feel bigger, and the costs of action feel smaller. The reward for doing a pestering task needs to feel larger than the immediate pain of tackling it.



### To make the benefits of action feel bigger and more real:

**Visualize how great it will be to get it done.** Researchers have discovered that people are more likely to save for their future retirement if they're shown digitally aged photographs of themselves. Why? Because it makes their future self feel more real—making the future benefits of saving also feel more weighty. When we apply a lo-fi version of this technique to any task we've been avoiding, by taking a moment to paint ourselves a vivid mental picture of the benefits of getting it done, it can sometimes be just enough to get us unstuck. So if there's a call you're avoiding or an email you're putting off, give your brain a helping hand by imagining the virtuous sense of satisfaction

you'll have once it's done—and perhaps also the look of relief on someone's face as they get from you what they needed.

**Pre-commit, publicly.** Telling people that we're going to get something done can powerfully amplify the appeal of actually taking action, because our brain's reward system is so highly responsive to our social standing. Research has found that it matters greatly to us whether we're respected by others—even by strangers. Most of us don't want to look foolish or lazy to other people. So by daring to say "I'll send you the report by the end of the day" we add social benefits to following through on our promise—which can be just enough to nudge us to bite the bullet.

**Confront the downside of inaction.** Research has found that we're strangely averse to prop-

erly evaluating the status quo. While we might weigh the pros and cons of doing something new, we far less often consider the pros and cons of not doing that thing. Known as omission bias, this often leads us to ignore some obvious benefits of getting stuff done. Suppose you're repeatedly putting off the preparation you need to do for an upcoming meeting. You're tempted by more exciting tasks, so you tell yourself you can do it tomorrow (or the day after). But force yourself to think about the downside of putting it off, and you realize that tomorrow will be too late to get hold of the input you really need from colleagues. If you get moving now, you have half a chance of reaching them in time—so finally, your gears creak into action.

### To make the costs of action feel smaller:

**Identify the first step.** Sometimes we're just daunted by the task we're avoiding. We might have "learn French" on our to-do list, but who can slot that into the average afternoon? The trick here is to break down big, amorphous tasks into baby steps that don't feel as effortful. Even better: identify the very smallest first step, something that's so easy that even your present-biased brain can see that the benefits outweigh the costs of effort. So instead of "learn French" you might decide to "email Nicole to

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# Meet **CONNIE WENDT** » » »

AVP CWO, Corporate



## » How long have you been in the staffing business?

Altogether about 12 years in the staffing industry, but over 22 years in business. I started in the staffing industry right out of college with Kelly Services, in the Detroit, MI metropolitan area, January, 1989. Then I worked in the logistics industry for 10 years. I went back to workforce solutions for KellyOCG June, 2006.

## » What was your first job?

### What do you remember most about it?

My first job was when I was 16 years old, I worked at Arby's. I remember that at first I was so concerned about customer service and getting the order correct that I forgot to collect the money from a customer. Luckily they were honest and said they hadn't paid yet

## » Who was the worst boss you ever had and why?

I am fortunate that I've had some excellent bosses in my career. True leaders in the industry. Each had their strengths and weaknesses. But there was this one boss I had early in my career that was a micromanager and publicly reprimanded his employees, including me. He was not very well respected.

## » What motivates you each day to sell and service your clients?

I am really passionate about solving problems. I love the challenge of problem solving and like to exceed the client's expectations. I'm at my best

when trying to creatively devise a solution that will more than satisfy the client.

## » What are some of your long-term goals?

Long-term I'm planning that Peoplelink's Workforce Solutions Process Outsourcing group will grow not only to include a best-in-class Contingent Workforce Outsourcing (CWO) business unit, but will also include Recruiting Process Outsourcing (RPO), Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and Payroll Process Outsourcing (PPO) business units. Ideally, I would like to be the leader of the Process Outsourcing division. I would like to respond with confidence, from our experience with successful Process Outsourcing programs, to all RFI's, RFP's and RFQ's. I would like to be recognized by Staffing Industry Analysts (SIA) as a thought leader in workforce solutions. I'd like to be a speaker at one of the SIA Executive Forums or conferences. I would also like to be listed on the SIA top 100 leaders in the industry.

## » What makes Peoplelink unique, from your perspective?

What I think makes Peoplelink unique is our high-touch approach to customer service. This gives Peoplelink's CWO program a competitive advantage as well. What will make us stand out against the competition is that we are just now entering into the 20 year-old MSP specialty. The current MSP

model needs updating and we can build a more modern and customized approach. Our "biggest-little" smaller size will work to our advantage in that we are more nimble and are not going to take a "cookie-cutter" approach to our MSP programs. Feedback from Staffing Industry Analysts and the voice of the customer is saying the current model is stale; Peoplelink's approach will be more innovative without adding complexity. We will focus on how Peoplelink as a "staffing partner" can elevate our market share by embracing a more advanced "workforce solutions."

## » What makes you successful as a Manager?

I think what makes me a successful manager is that I work to discover what is unique about each person and then capitalize on it. Great managers know and value the unique abilities and even the eccentricities of their employees, and they learn how best to integrate them into a coordinated plan of attack. Managers will succeed only when they can identify and deploy the differences among people, challenging each employee to excel in his or her own way.

## » What is the best advice you could give to other Peoplelink staff members?

The best advice I could give to other staff members is if they are in a leadership position that happy customers come from happy employees. Empower your employees to truly own their job. They work harder, happier, and more productively. I would tell our staff that employees are equally responsible for their own empowerment. Take initiative. Most supervisors would welcome the initiative.

## » What is your favorite movie?

I have a new favorite movie, The Theory of Everything. Starring Eddie Redmayne and Felicity Jones. This is the extraordinary story of one of the world's greatest living minds, the renowned astrophysicist Stephen Hawking (age 74), who falls deeply in love with fellow Cambridge student Jane Wilde. Once a healthy, active young man, Hawking received an earth-shattering diagnosis of motor neuron disease, ALS, at 21 years of age. With his wife fighting tirelessly by his side, Stephen embarks on his most ambitious

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# Meet **CONNIE WENDT**

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scientific work, studying the very thing he now has precious little of – time. Together, they defy impossible odds, breaking new ground in medicine and science, and achieving more than they could ever have dreamed.

**Book?** My favorite book is *The Giving Tree* is a children's picture book written and illustrated by Shel Silverstein. **Drink?** a good Cabernet Sauvignon wine.

» **If you could have any car you want, what would it be?** BMW X5.

» **What is your home city? What is the greatest feature about your home city?**

My home city is Detroit, MI. I was born in Detroit but raised in Clinton Twp, MI a small bedroom community in the Detroit metropolitan area. The greatest feature is the unpretentious, salt-of-the-earth people who live there.

It has strong blue-collar roots. My home city has taught me a very strong work ethic.

» **How do you unwind when you're not at the office?**

- I enjoy hanging out with family and friends, I have two boys ages 15 and 11. I enjoy gardening in the summer. I'm trying to get back into running. Three years ago, I trained for a 5k. Then did a 10k three months later. Then I accomplished my

goal and ran two half marathons a month apart. I blew my knee out after the Chicago half marathon, but it's feeling much better. I'm a member of the Mattawan Lions Club and enjoy volunteering in my community.

» **What do people like most (least) about you?**

Most: my genuine personality and smile. Least: I can be very critical of myself and others at times. 🧩



## BLS: Staffing Employment Edges Up in October

Temporary help employment edged up 0.2% from September to October, according to seasonally adjusted data released today by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Staffing firms added 6,400 jobs in October, which was 1.3% higher than October 2015. Over the past six months, year-to-year staffing job growth has averaged 1.4% per month, compared with 2.0% over the past 12 months.

Nonseasonally adjusted BLS data, which estimates the actual number of jobs in the economy, indicated that temporary help employment increased by 46,300, up 1.5% from September to October. Year-to-year, there were 1.8% more staffing employees in October than in the same month last year.

"Although growth rates have slowed in many sectors, staffing companies continue to report steady demand for temporary and contract employees, providing job seekers with opportunities across the full spectrum of most occupations," said Richard Wahlquist, president and chief executive officer of the American

Staffing Association. "Given the current level of uncertainty about the global economic and political environment, businesses will continue to place a high premium on strategic sourcing and flexibility when it comes to their talent acquisition strategies."

Total U.S. nonfarm payroll employment increased by 161,000 jobs in October (seasonally adjusted), BLS reported. Incorporating revisions for August and September, job gains averaged 176,000 per month over the past three months, less than the average of 208,000 for the prior 12 months.

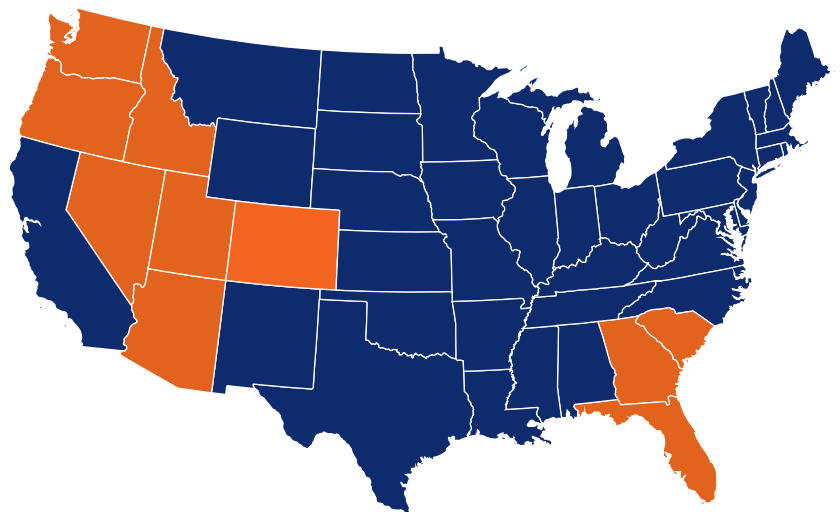
The unemployment rate was little changed at 4.9% in October, compared with 5.0% in September.

BLS also released preliminary September employment data for search and placement services, which, seasonally adjusted, increased 1.2% from August. Search and placement jobs totaled 320,200 in September, 5.9% higher than in the same month last year.

## Best States for Future Job Growth Forbes.com

The United States is projected to add 10 million jobs over the next five years at an average rate of 1.4% annually, according to Moody's Analytics. These 10 states are expected to increase employment at the fastest rates through 2020.

1. **Nevada** – Projected annual job growth: 2.6%,  
Median household income: \$52,431
2. **Florida** – Projected annual job growth: 2.3%,  
Median household income: \$49,426
3. **Utah** – Projected annual job growth: 2.2%,  
Median household income: \$62,912
4. **Arizona** – Projected annual job growth: 2.2%,  
Median household income: \$51,492
5. **Oregon** – Projected annual job growth: 2.1%,  
Median household income: \$54,148
6. **Idaho** – Projected annual job growth: 1.9%,  
Median household income: \$48,275
7. **Washington** – Projected annual job growth: 1.8%,  
Median household income: \$64,129
8. **Colorado** – Projected annual job growth: 1.8%,  
Median household income: \$63,909
9. **South Carolina** – Projected annual job growth: 1.8%,  
Median household income: \$47,238
10. **Georgia** – Projected annual job growth: 1.8%,  
Median household income: \$51,244



# Root cause problem-solving

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participant has six votes, i.e., 1=most pressing problem; 2=second-most pressing problem, etc. Then, indicate the problem with the highest number of votes. And take your time.

For example, suppose a marketing department is undertaking this process and they come up with the following ranked problems. The number in parentheses equals total number of votes each problem received.

1. Increased customer complaints about new products (10)
2. High frequency of computer breakdowns in the office (8)
3. Salaries are too low (6)
4. Advertising efforts were too expensive (5)
5. Too much overtime (4)
6. New marketing campaign did not attract new clients (2)

Now, focusing on the highest-ranked problem, ask the first "why?" That is, "why do we have increased customer complaints about our new product?"

Record or display all responses, and for every response ask, "why?"

Now you have moved to the first level of answers.

Then, start with one of the answers. For example, "Because of the frequent level of breakdowns."

For every answer, ask another "why?" For example, "why do frequent breakdowns occur?"

Repeat the process for other first-hand answers. This is the second level of answers - the second level of "why?"

The repeat the whole process until you have covered five levels of "why?"

Depending on time, you can focus on one answer; however, to honestly identify root causes and systemic cause-effect relationships, you should go into as much detail as possible and you should focus on every answer. In fact, you may discover that varied problems have a common cause and answers will begin to converge on the common cause.

For a different example, let's take a medical practice. After having uncovered the highest-ranked problem, "the patient is receiving incorrect medication.", you begin a Five-Why process.

**Q. Why** is the patient receiving the incorrect medicine?  
**A.** Because the prescription is wrong.

**Q. Why** is the prescription wrong? **A.** Because the doctor made the wrong decision.

**Q. Why** did the doctor make the wrong decision?  
**A.** Because she did not have the complete information in the patient's chart.

**Q. Why** wasn't the patient's chart complete?  
**A.** Because the doctor's assistant omitted a lab report.

**Q. Why** hadn't the doctor's assistant entered the latest lab report?  
**A.** Because the lab technician phoned the result to the receptionist who forgot to tell the assistant.

**Solution:** Develop a system for tracking lab reports.


This solution also highlights that the core of many problems tends to be a failure of process, not the fault of an individual. So always bear in mind that "people do not fail, processes do".

The Five Why strategy is useful for challenging - in a positive way - statements or answers to questions. It can be also used to ensure that you have thought through the answer as well as the validate whether your answer actually answers the question. Often, a statement that does not fit the question is due to misunderstanding the meaning of the question.

Granted, it's a method that tends to drive some of us a bit crazy, but when used in the

proper circumstance, it is very effective and encourages mutual understanding.

In systems thinking and Five Why problem solving efforts, you simply need to select one problem. It doesn't matter where you start; during the process, you will be able to identify a link that represents influence on another problem or issue.

These connections don't exist in isolation. There is always a "cause-effect," relationship - influenced by some variables, and influencing others. Sooner or later, through the Five Why process, a pattern of relationship among the problems will emerge. Then deeper and systemic issues also come to the fore. Figuring out how variables link takes some practice, but it is worth the effort. 



ask advice on learning French.” Achieve that small goal, and you’ll feel more motivated to take the next small step than if you’d continued to beat yourself up about your lack of language skills.

Tie the first step to a treat. We can make the cost of effort feel even smaller if we link that small step to something we’re actually looking forward to doing. In other words, tie the task that we’re avoiding to something that we’re not avoiding. For example, you might allow yourself to read lowbrow magazines or books when you’re at the gym,

because the guilty pleasure helps dilute your brain’s perception of the short-term “cost” of exercising. Likewise, you might muster the self-discipline to complete a slippery task if you promise yourself you’ll do it in a nice café with a favorite drink in hand.

Remove the hidden blockage. Sometimes we find ourselves returning to a task repeatedly, still unwilling to take the first step. We hear a little voice in our head saying, “Yeah, good idea, but . . . no.” At this point, we need to ask that voice some questions, to figure out what’s

really making it unappealing to take action. This doesn’t necessarily require psychotherapy. Patiently ask yourself a few “why” questions—“why does it feel tough to do this?” and “why’s that?”—and the blockage can surface quite quickly. Often, the issue is that a perfectly noble competing commitment is undermining your motivation. For example, suppose you were finding it hard to stick to an early morning goal-setting routine. A few “whys” might highlight that the challenge stems from your equally strong desire to eat breakfast with your family.

Once you’ve made that conflict more explicit, it’s far more likely you’ll find a way to overcome it—perhaps by setting your daily goals the night before, or on your commute into work. So the next time you find yourself mystified by your inability to get important tasks done, be kind to yourself. Recognize that your brain needs help if it’s going to be less short-sighted. Try taking at least one step to make the benefits of action loom larger, and one to make the costs of action feel smaller. Your languishing to-do list will thank you. 🧩

## Let's Connect

Want to learn more about how Peoplelink can help you?  
Have a question about the staffing services we offer?  
Need a difficult assignment filled quickly?

Since 1987, Peoplelink has been making better matches between employers and job seekers throughout the country. Now we’d like to help you.

**Sound good?  
Then let's connect.**

Web: [www.peoplelinkstaffing.com](http://www.peoplelinkstaffing.com)

Wire: 574.232.5400

World: 431 East Colfax Ave., Suite 200  
South Bend, IN 46617

We look forward to  
working with you!



*For more information, call Jeannine Victor at 574.232.5400 x 261.*





Esdras Perez Lopez

Peoplelink is pleased to announce that Esdras Perez Lopez has been chosen as our November *Shining Star* employee. Esdras works for Ajinomoto Windsor and reports to the Joplin, Missouri branch.

Esdras has worked as for Ajinomoto Windsor through Peoplelink since 2014 . He is currently in the packaging department, packing products and checking the line product. According to Esdras' Supervisor, Barbara Ford, the quality of his work is

excellent. He is extremely reliable and takes initiative to jump in and help where he is needed. His knowledge of the job extends to multiple positions.

While on the job, Esdras enjoys everything about his job. In his free time, he enjoys reading the Bible, walking, and spending time with his family.

Congratulations to Esdras for being Peoplelink's November *Shining Star* employee!

Find your shining star! Contact Peoplelink at 574.232.5400.



## EEOC makes \$56K example of employer over deaf applicant: What went wrong?

By Christian Schappel, HR Morning

Here's an expensive reminder that job applicants — and not just employees — are also protected by the ADA.

The EEOC recently filed a **disability discrimination lawsuit** against McDonald's Corp. and McDonald's Restaurants of Missouri, accusing a Belton, MO, restaurant of discriminating against a job applicant because he was deaf.

The Belton McDonald's had an open position for a cook, and a deaf man, who had prior experience as a cook at another McDonald's branch, applied.

When the man, who is unable to hear or speak, notified the restaurant manager that he would bring his American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter for the interview, the manager canceled the interview, according to the lawsuit.

The EEOC then said the restaurant continued to interview and hire new workers, despite the man's attempts to reschedule the interview.

The EEOC claimed the restaurant's conduct violated the ADA. It said the law requires employers to seek out reasonable accommodations, and provide them



when available, to deaf and hearing-impaired employees and applicants.

It said working with deaf applicants' ASL interpreters is key to providing them with equal opportunities to compete for jobs.

Rather than fight the lawsuit, the McDonald's decided to settle to the tune of \$56,500. The restaurant also agreed to:

- make sure managers are trained on the ADA's requirements
- provide reasonable accommodations to disabled applicants and employees
- maintain a phone line that applicants can call to request accommodations, and
- submit annual compliance reports to the EEOC.

## Judge issues OT rule injunction: What happens now?

By Christian Schappel

A Texas federal court judge has issued a preliminary injunction, delaying the DOL's changes to the FLSA overtime exemption rule. And while many may welcome the news, the reality is it creates a huge mess for employers.

Granted, you could argue the rule changes themselves created a mess for employers. But for the most part, employers have adapted to them by now in preparation for the Dec. 1 compliance deadline.

Employers are now left wondering: Now what?

For months, employers have been preparing to deal with a higher salary threshold for

exemption — along with communicating to employees who make less than \$47,000 about how the rule changes would affect those workers.

Now, those same employers are stuck between a rock and a hard place as the rule changes have been delayed indefinitely. Do they revert back to their previous pay practices and act like all the prep work they've done up to this point was all for naught — only to possibly have to move forward with their compliance plans in a few months if the DOL successfully defends its position on the rule? That would require a lot of delicate conversations with employees.

Or do employers move forward with their compliance plans as if the injunction/delay was never issued? That could result in having to shell out a lot more overtime than

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the FLSA would require.

Those are questions employers will have to address on their own — no federal court ruling can help.

## WHAT HAPPENED?

Judge Amos L. Mazzant, III, of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, Sherman Division — after hearing arguments from the DOL, as well as the 21 states and more than 50 business groups challenging the DOL's changes to the overtime exemption salary threshold — issued a preliminary injunction against the changes.

The injunction doesn't kill the rule changes. It simply halts them from becoming effective on December 1, the original compliance deadline. Whether or not the rule changes take effect, and when, will be determined at a later date in court. The injunction sets the stage for a future court battle, during which the judge will rule on the merits of the states' and business groups' lawsuit against the DOL.

But if the judge's language in the injunction ruling is any indication, it sounds as though he's likely to strike down the rule changes.

Mazzant ruled the DOL exceeded its authority by raising the overtime salary limit so significantly (from \$23,660 to \$47,476). He said the DOL's rule changes, essentially, made the exemption test a one-factor test based on salary alone. He said the changes basically eliminated the duties test, and he said the DOL must examine the duties of employees to determine who falls within the FLSA's overtime exemption.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

No timetable has been given on when the judge would rule on the merits of the lawsuit.

If the judge does, in fact, determine that the DOL had the authority to raise the salary threshold as much as it's trying to do, the rule changes could take effect rather quickly after his ruling. As a result, employers must stay ready to comply with the changes.

The question now is whether or not the DOL will attempt to defend its position — especially in light of the fact that the Trump administration will take office in less than two months.

## EEOC's 2016 Performance By The Numbers

*By Tim Gould*

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) secured more than \$482.1 million for victims of discrimination in private, state and local government, and federal workplaces during fiscal year 2016, which ended Sept. 30, the agency reported.

This includes \$347.9 million for victims of employment discrimination in private sector and state and local government workplaces through mediation, conciliation, and settlements; \$52.2 million secured for workers through agency litigation; and \$82 million for federal employees and applicants.

The figures were contained in the EEOC's fiscal year 2016 Performance and Accountability Report.

Resolved cases rose by 6.5%.

Other agency benchmarks for fiscal year 2016:

EEOC increased the number of charges staff resolved to 97,443, 6.5% more than last year. This resulted in a reduction of charge workload by 3.8% to 73,508, a 3,100 charge reduction compared with fiscal year 2015.

The agency also handled over 585,000 calls to its toll-free number and more than 160,000 pre-charge inquiries in field offices, reflecting the significant public demand for EEOC's services.

EEOC helped workers obtain relief by resolving over 15,800 charges of discrimination through the agency's administrative processes—settlements, mediations, and conciliations.

In fiscal year 2016, EEOC resolved 273 systemic investigations before filing litigation, obtaining more than \$20.3 million in remedies. In litigation, EEOC resolved 21 systemic cases, six of which included at least 50 victims of discrimination and two of which included over 1,000 victims of discrimination.

The agency's outreach programs reached 315,000 people during the year through participation in 3,700 no-cost educational, training and outreach events. EEOC also revamped its Youth@Work website to provide updated resources for America's next generation of workers.

To help small businesses, EEOC launched the online Small Business

Resource Center to provide a one-stop shop to help small businesses access information about employer responsibilities to prevent or eliminate discrimination on the job.

In fiscal year 2016, EEOC's legal staff resolved 139 merits lawsuits in the federal district courts for a total monetary recovery of \$52.2 million. EEOC filed 86 lawsuits alleging discrimination during fiscal year 2016 and achieved a favorable resolution in approximately 90.6% of all district court resolutions.

The filings include 55 individual suits and 13 suits involving multiple victims or discriminatory policies, and 18 systemic suits.

The agency also resolved 6,792 hearings complaints and secured more than \$76.9 million in relief for federal employees. EEOC also resolved 3,751 appeals of agency decisions on federal sector complaints and secured more than \$5.1 million in relief.

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# Jobs of the Future Will Require Data Analysis

By *Aliah D. Wright*

By 2021, organizations will increase the number of jobs requiring data analysis skills, say 59 percent of respondents to a new survey from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

As a result, recruiting will be much harder for companies seeking professionals skilled in data analysis.

Hitting even closer to home: More than half—54 percent—of organizations now require data analysis skills in the HR department.

Nearly 400 HR professionals from a randomly selected sample of SHRM's membership were surveyed for the *Jobs of the Future: Data Analysis Skills* report, sponsored by the American Statistical Association.

Today, according to the report, 53 percent of HR departments use big data to help make strategic decisions; 71 percent use it for the sourcing, recruitment or selection of candidates; 63 percent use it to identify the causes of turnover and for employee retention strategies or trends; and 61 percent use it to manage talent and performance. The study points out that 51 percent of organizations say they don't use big data because of a lack of knowledge or expertise and 30 percent said there wasn't enough data collected or available.

Two percent of organizations say they expect to create positions requiring data analysis skills in 2016. "Publicly owned for-profit organizations were more likely than privately owned for-profit organizations to have data analysis positions," the study reveals.

While the demand for these skills

is great, it's not easy to find qualified candidates: 78 percent of those polled say that within the last 12 months they've had a hard time recruiting candidates with data analysis skills for jobs such as data analyst, data scientist, statistician, market research analyst, financial analyst and research manager.

## Preparation Begins Now

HR professionals can prepare for the onslaught of demand from hiring managers for workers with these skills by promoting more professional development, training employees and workforce planning.

"It is valuable for organizations to engage in workforce planning to define future business needs, identify gaps between the existing and future workforce, and to develop strategies to meet these needs—especially for in-demand skills," said Evren Esen, director of workforce analytics at SHRM.

SHRM polled nearly 400 of its members who work for companies with 25 or more employees in August and September 2016.

Researchers also discovered, not surprisingly, that 71 percent of organizations had data analyst positions in finance and accounting.

Most of the roles are full-time and are in mid-level management (79 percent). About 73 percent are at the individual contributor level. Some 60 percent of companies require their senior managers and executives to have data analysis skills, too.

About 83 percent of those polled said that some moderate data analysis skills are required for these types of positions and, for those jobs, organizations usually require at least a bachelor's degree. At least one-third of these organizations prefer a degree in analytics, statistics or computer science.

## Other findings:

- About 72 percent of organizations hired people in data analysis positions in the last 12 months. Of those, 78 percent reported difficulty recruiting for these positions.
- Organizations with 500 or more employees were more likely than organizations with 25 to 499 employees to have hired data analysis positions in the last 12 months.
- Publicly owned for-profit

organizations were more likely than all other sectors to have hired for positions requiring data analysis skills in the last 12 months.

"Growing complexity in the use of data analytics could lead to organizations seeking out talent with these highly specialized skills," Esen noted. "If this happens, HR may be faced with recruitment and retention difficulties. To deal with these potential skill shortages, HR needs to prepare for its current and future workforce needs, including justifying investments in employee training and development."

The study's authors suggest HR consider the following workforce planning advice:

- Set strategic direction.
- Analyze the workforce by conducting a supply analysis, demand analysis and a gap analysis.
- Develop action plans that include recruiting and training plans to deal with gaps.
- Implement action plans.
- Monitor, evaluate and revise plans.
- Involve key stakeholders in the process, including a high-level executive who will support the plan.
- Make sure plans align with the organization's strategic business plan.
- Coordinate with succession planning and career development initiatives.
- Make workforce planning an ongoing activity.

