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Top 10 Survival Tips For New Human Resource Professionals

10. **Don't go it alone.** Get involved in organizations like Society of Human Resource Managers ("SHRM") in which you can learn from the experiences of other human resource managers and keep up with new developments.
9. **Develop a relationship with an experienced labor and employment lawyer.** You don't and can't be expected to know all the answers. Similarly, most lawyers simply do not have the employment experience to be a valuable advisor. Access counsel's insight and experience early and often in the decision-making process to minimize risk and cost.
8. **Have a clear understanding with counsel.** When you retain counsel, get a clear understanding of how much they charge for their services, and for what you will and will not pay. Consider establishing a cap on fees for particular assignments or a fixed fee. Make sure counsel understands your budget. Misunderstandings can be costly.
7. **There is always somebody watching.** You now live in a glass house. Personal indiscretions and advantages to favored employees will be used against you. Count on it. Also, beware of supervisors or counsel who may encourage you to cut corners or make exceptions.
6. **"Loose lips sink ships."** You will have information that has value in the rumor mill. You share this information at great legal and professional risk. If you cannot be discreet, you cannot be promoted.
5. **Do not be "penny wise and pound foolish."** It is almost always a better value to engage counsel for an hour or two of loss prevention as decisions are made, than to retain counsel to defend you once the lawsuit has already been filed. Be bold enough to get a second opinion on judgment calls as sometimes you are just too close to be objective.
4. **"No good deed goes unpunished."** Actions taken with respect to one employee may often trigger significant issues with other employees. While there will always be occasions to depart from policy, do so sparingly, because departures for even the best of reasons will almost always come back to haunt you.
3. **Principle is a wonderful thing, but it costs money.** Unless/until it is your company, be careful of the price of choosing principle. It is the rare case where principle is truly at issue. Make sure to confirm the principle will justify the cost. When principle is not at issue, make the prudent business decision early and move on.
2. **Pick your battles carefully.** Aside from the cost, you simply cannot justify the resources and distractions of fighting every battle. If you choose to fight, however, fight to win lest you reinforce the wrong behavior. Consider the ripple effect of high profile losses.
1. **Jealously guard your credibility.** You cannot be effective dealing with employees and/or unions if you cannot be trusted. Employees and unions don't have to like what you say, but they have to be able to rely on it.