

Nevertheless, Arizona's minimum wage increase is part of a national trend. In the November elections, voters in four states and two California cities adopted minimum wage hikes by wide margins.

Thanks to voters, Arkansas (\$7.50) and Nebraska (\$8) will have minimum wages that are slightly below Arizona's 2015 rate. Employers in Alaska (\$8.75) and

South Dakota (\$8.50) can thank voters in their states for minimum wages that are higher than Arizona's 2015 rate. Among the four states, South Dakota had the lowest percentage of voters in favor of a minimum wage increase (54.9%), while Alaskans were most in favor of raising wages, with 68% of voters saying yes on the ballot initiative.



## WORDS ON WISE MANAGEMENT

### The importance of proper preparation

by Cassandra Lewis  
F&H Solutions Group

Just as a good chef carefully prepares all aspects of a meal before plating each dish, successful HR professionals carefully map out every aspect of a task before executing it. In fact, HR professionals are probably some of the most well-prepared individuals in an organization—or at least they should be.

While thorough preparation is undoubtedly stressed in most professions, HR veterans have learned the value of being able to “expect the unexpected.” HR professionals know that all tasks require preparation. That's true regardless of whether you are implementing an unfamiliar system, conducting a routine meeting with an employee, or pitching a new idea to senior management.

Although every situation requires specific preparation, here are some universal tips to keep in mind when approaching a task:

- (1) **Know the background.** Being the most knowledgeable person in the room never hurts, but that is not always possible. Get as much background information as possible so you will understand the story behind the situation. Walking into a meeting without understanding why the meeting is necessary in the first place is not just uncomfortable, it is also irresponsible. Always take the time to research events leading up to a meeting, especially if you are a latecomer to the situation. Do not hesitate to reach out to other employees for a rundown of the situation. Keep in mind, however, that everyone has a different perspective, so it is a good idea to check several sources.
- (2) **Organize the evidence.** Organization and preparation go hand in hand. When doing your prep work, make sure you stay organized so you can use those hours of preparation effectively. For example, if you spend hours investigating and

preparing a response to a grievance, sitting down and writing the response will be much easier if you take the time to organize your notes into meaningful categories.

- (3) **Anticipate possible counterarguments and reactions.** It is absolutely critical to anticipate push back from others. Sometimes laser focus on a matter prevents us from taking a step back and evaluating other perspectives. A lack of preparation will be noticed immediately when you are unable to effectively manage adverse reactions or counterarguments. For example, during a termination meeting with an employee, don't take any chances. Hope for an amicable conversation, but prepare for the worst.
- (4) **Develop a Plan B.** Being fully prepared means that you have already thought through a Plan B. Most of us have experienced situations in which our original concepts either didn't pan out or were not accepted by senior management. Ideally, you should come prepared with several alternatives, but you certainly should have a solid Plan B. If you end up needing a Plan B, you will be very thankful you prepared one in advance.

The better prepared you are to tackle a challenge, the more successful the outcome will be. Your preparation (and resulting success) will not go unnoticed. Developing preparation skills will enhance your reputation as a reliable “go-to” person in your department and organization. Being a “go-to” person will allow you to know that you are valued by others and that you bring value to your organization. As an HR professional, it is your job to be an expert. Make sure you are prepared.



*Cassandra Lewis is a labor analyst for F&H Solutions Group. She can be reached at [clewis@fhsolutionsgroup.com](mailto:clewis@fhsolutionsgroup.com) or 202-719-2024. ❖*