



# The Performance Letter

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competitive  
advantage through  
human resources



Scott Mastley, SPHR,  
MBA

In addition to consulting and speaking, Scott Mastley, SPHR, MBA, coaches supervisors and managers through challenging circumstances.

For more information on coaching from MPG, [click here](#).

Call Scott if your emerging leaders - the future of your organization - could benefit from professional performance coaching.

I lost my only brother in a car accident 15 years ago in December. It's not something that I usually write about in business publications and this may seem an unusual time of year to do so. But when *Business and Legal Resources* asked for an HR-related e-pinion for the Daily Advisor, I wanted to do something different than the usual tips on hiring or firing. I hope that explains the topic I chose for the article in BLR's HR Daily Advisor that went to 155,000 subscribers in November. The article is below.

Thanks for giving me and MPG the opportunity to work with you in 2009. We want to be a part of your success as much as you are a part of our success. A friend, Ken Futch, recently said, "People don't buy from you because they understand your business; they buy from you because you understand theirs." I couldn't have said it better.

Happy Holidays, and here's to a 2010 that will turn out to be surprisingly successful for all of us. I asked Santa for it, so we're good to go.

Scott Mastley, SPHR, MBA  
Principal, MPG, Inc.

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## Bereavement Leave can Make or Break Employee Loyalty

The way you handle bereavement leave could strengthen or sever an employee's loyalty to your company. A death in the family changes things. When employees lose a family member, they're worried about how to continue, how to handle the funeral, how to take care of surviving family members, how to uphold job responsibilities, and more. They might even start to think about new

directions - such as making a career change.

## **Good Grief**

The death of a loved one can be overwhelming, but a little help from you can make a considerable difference in reducing your employee's distress.

HR professionals are a caring bunch. That's one of the reasons why we get to handle the tougher employee situations. We address them with tact and compassion. When I lost my brother in a car accident 15 years ago, my employer said, "Take as much time as you need." It eliminated the worry that I was piling on top of my grief about fulfilling my job duties. Their generosity allowed me to focus on my family and my grief.

If you only allow one day off for bereavement leave, it's not enough. If you lost your parent or your child, would one day be enough to grieve and get back to work? This is one benefit that is not used often, but when it is needed, it can be crucial in strengthening the employment relationship and in helping your employee handle the loss. Go beyond any state requirements (if you have any in your state) and lead the field with a generous bereavement leave policy.

## **Show Them You Care**

Show your employees that you truly value them, not only as workers but also as people. If you have an employee assistance program (EAP), refer the grieving employee to it for counseling. Having this benefit helped me immensely when I was trying to process my grief and be productive at work. Since EAPs are usually employer-paid benefits, there's no concern about paying for the initial visits. When an employee is grieving, the easier you can make it for him or her, the better.

Read a grief book or get coaching from an EAP grief counselor about how to talk with your bereaved employee. You might be the only person who takes the time to do this, and your employee will appreciate your understanding. Know that work might not be your employee's first priority in the days and weeks following a loss in the family. If your priority is giving the employee time to grieve and providing support resources, he or she will remember your actions. That's how personal and professional relationships are strengthened, and employee loyalty is priceless. Doing the right thing when it comes to bereavement leave is a short-term sacrifice for the employer that results in long-term gains for both the employee and the organization.

Scott Mastley, SPHR, is the principal of Mastley Performance Group, Inc. (MPG). MPG provides human resources and safety consulting, keynote, online and onsite training sessions for supervisors and managers ([www.mastleyperformancegroup.com](http://www.mastleyperformancegroup.com)). Mastley is the author of *Life with Grief: When a Brother or Sister Dies* ([www.survivingasibling.com](http://www.survivingasibling.com)).

**Mastley Performance Group, Inc.**

Phone: 404-425-4154 or Toll Free 877-327-2688

[www.mastleyperformancegroup.com](http://www.mastleyperformancegroup.com)