EMPLOYMENT & LABOR LAW ROUNDTABLE

What Valley Business Owners and Executives Need to Know

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As the legal landscape continues to evolve in terms of labor and employment, the San Fernando Valley Business Journal turned to some of the leading employment attorneys in the Valley region to get their assessments regarding the current state of labor legislation, the new rules of hiring and firing, and the various trends that they have been observing, and in some cases, driving. Following is a series of questions the Business Journal posed to these experts and the unique responses they provided – offering a glimpse into the state of business employment law in 2014 – from the perspectives of those in the trenches of our region today.

LABOR & EMPLOYMENT LAW ROUNDTABLE

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◆ What are some common mistakes growing businesses make when it comes to employment law related issues?

BENDAVID: The biggest employer mistakes are usually due to lack of knowledge – not because of bad intent. Employers unknowingly make wage and hour mistakes, particularly in misclassifying employees, paying everyone on a "salary" or allowing employees to have flexibility – which later turns out to result in violations (e.g., missed breaks; "off the clock" work, etc.). Many employers also fail to adhere to federal and state leave requirements – there are more than 15 types of leave available to employees. Sometimes they fail to properly document the leaves to demonstrate compliance.

MINKOW: The most common mistake new and growing business make is failing to start out with a strong and legally compliant employee handbook to establish proper policies and procedures in the workplace. Putting solid employment policies in place, and maintaining a practice of complying with and enforcing those policies, will give a growing business a good foundation in the effort to avoid costly lawsuits down the road. Growing businesses also fail to appreciate the risk of failing to comply with California's wage and hour laws and often categories employees as "exempt" when they are really "non-exempt," thus exposing the company to liability for missed meal and rest periods and unpaid overtime.

ROSENBERG: A common mistake is reliance upon the internet or the company's CPA or business attorney for labor law advice. The labor laws are technical and nuanced. And, in many cases, the legal rule which must be followed is hidden within case law. A compliance review with a labor lawyer expert is a sound investment every growing business should invest in to avoid costly mistakes.

GABLER: Even when business owners are proactive in developing appropriate policies and documentation for their new business, they often fail to consider how those employment law elements must change as the business grows. Key changes are required in employer policies and training programs when the company reaches five, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five and fifty employees. With each new hire, the job descriptions and day-to-day responsibilities of related employees may change. Supervisors must be trained and evaluated on their ability to manage a growing team. Workplace culture may suffer as employee ranks grow, often leading to increased claims of harassment, discrimination and workplace stress. By revisiting the policies, management style and culture of the business each time it grows by five to ten new employees, business owners can maintain an appropriate level of legal protection while ensuring that employees are supporting the employer's business goals.

◆ What new kinds of discrimination cases have your corporate clients been facing in the last year or two? What can they do to prevent such cases from becoming an issue?

MINKOW: We have seen a significant amount of disability discrimination claims, especially from injured workers with a litigated workers' compensation claim. This is because many employers are reducing head counts in an effort to save costs, and are having a difficult time managing the workload of a long-term absent employee with temporary staff. Employers can avoid these claims by documenting every step of the interactive process so they can demonstrate later on that they complied with their obligations to provide a reasonable accommodation.

BENDAVID: While religious discrimination has been one of the least common claims historically, they have increased over the past decade. But our corporate clients seem to be facing more retaliation claims than ever before, often times originating with discrimination complaints. Employees are claiming they are harassed or retaliated against when they complain about discrimination for religion, sex orientation, gender bias, etc. Employers should remember that every complaint should be investigated and documented. If the complaint has merit, fix the problem immediately.

◆ What is the legal community doing to help employers avoid lawsuits and provide employee risk management?

GABLER: In recent years, there has been a tremendous increase in the use of alternative dispute resolution methods for employment matters. State budget issues, increased burden on the judiciary and the availability of high-quality mediators and arbitrators have made it more attractive and effective for employers and employees alike to work cooperatively to resolve workplace disputes, rather than engaging in protracted and costly litigation in the court system. More employment attorneys are embracing their roles as "counselors" instead of merely "litigators," working with clients to pursue creative solutions to workplace problems (thereby reducing stress and cost on both sides). By providing proactive guidance to clients, employment law attorneys can promote legal compliance for employers and a better understanding of legal rights for employees, thus preventing disputes from arising in the first place.

◆ What are some of the most common Leave of Absence related mistakes that employers make?

ROSENBERG: Most employers simply want employees to show up on time and do their jobs. But, federal and state mandated time off laws allow employees to be late, leave early, and in some cases not show up at all. The biggest mistake is ignorance by supervisors regarding when employee absences have legal protection and what must be done to accommodate an employee's need for time off. Underinformed managers often say things which create costly lawsuits which are otherwise avoidable.

BENDAVID: One of the biggest difficulties employers face is administering leaves of absence. There are several overlapping laws, so it's quite a challenge for employers to understand all employee leave rights and how they complement or conflict with each other. To compound the problem, many employers fail to document the time off. If an employee has a work-related injury, the employee can take a workers' compensation leave. However, the time off may also qualify as leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act/California Family Rights Act. It may also qualify as a reasonable accommodation under the ADA and the Fair Employment and Housing Act. Employers should make sure they understand the rules and send letters to employees so the employer can later demonstrate it complied with the leave requirements.

MINKOW: The most common leave-related mistake is failing to provide unpaid time off as a reasonable accommodation to a disabled employee who is unable to return to work after the expiration of his or her protected leave under the FMLA and/or CFRA. Both California's Fair Employment and Housing Act and the Americans With Disabilities Act require employers to provide a reasonable accommodation to a disabled employee, unless such accommodation would pose an undue hardship upon the employer. The cases confirm that a leave of absence is a reasonable accommodation under the law. Implementing a hard and fast cap on the length of that leave (i.e. maximum of 6 months beyond FMLA exhaustion) is also a grave mistake as each employee's situation must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

◆ Is sexual harassment training still a necessary thing in 2014?

MINKOW: Absolutely! You would be surprised to learn how many employers are still facing problems in the area of harassment. Employees become comfortable in the workplace and often let "down their guard" when chatting and joking with their friends around the water cooler or in the break room. Unfortunately, constant and regular reminders of appropriate workplace conduct is needed.

GABLER: Harassment complaints remain on the rise, and ongoing workplace training on all forms of harassment and discrimination is more critical than ever. Supervisors at companies of fifty or more employees must receive two hours of training on sexual harassment issues every two years as a matter of law, but employee claims arise out of harassment and discrimination in all forms and at companies of all sizes. Training both supervisors and staff provides all employees with a better understanding of appropriate workplace behavior. It clarifies the availability of internal complaint and resolution procedures, making it

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clear that the company will not tolerate harassment and employees can complain about harassment without fear of retaliation. It provides a defense to claims of harassment, demonstrating that the employer took stringent steps to prevent harassment from occurring. It also supports a culture of self-management, giving employees the freedom to reject, if not actively oppose, harassing and discriminatory comments by others.

ROSENBERG: It's still a legal requirement for every employer with more than 50 employees. Documented training of every people manager (including the owners!) must be done at least every two years. Employees elevated to supervisory positions must be trained within 6 months of hire or from the date they are promoted into a people management position.

BENDAVID: From a practical rather than legal standpoint, it makes sense for all employers to provide this training, to both management and staff, since harassment can be instigated by anyone. As an employer, you have a responsibility to protect your workers and prevent harassment claims. In addition to prevention training, you should make clear that all harassment claims will be investigated thoroughly and that perpetrators will be disciplined or terminated.

◆ Do small to mid-sized businesses really need an employee handbook?

BENDAVID: Any business with employees should have a handbook, or at least clearly defined policies in writing. A well-worded handbook is a useful tool to help defend employee litigation. For example, an employer can have policies describing its harassment and equal employment opportunity policies. It can have policies describing prohibited conduct, which can give rise to employee discipline or termination. It can have policies which discuss meal and rest breaks and record keeping rules to help demonstrate compliance with wage and hour rules. It can have at-will policies to preserve the at-will nature of employment with the company. But this goes beyond merely having a handbook. It's important for companies to actually know and adhere to their policies. Companies must also frequently review and update their handbooks to ensure they are up to date and do not have policies in conflict with the law.

MINKOW: ALL companies need an employee handbook. It is the one and only document that sets forth the policies and procedures of the company, including the leave policies, at will language, code of conduct, meal and break rules and expectations, pay periods, holidays, etc. While some of these essential policies can be found elsewhere, it is a better practice to have them all in one place – the employee handbook. While small businesses may not see the benefit of spending the money to have a good handbook prepared and implemented, putting solid employment policies in place, and maintaining a practice of complying with and enforcing those policies, will give these businesses a good foundation in the effort to avoid costly lawsuits down the road.

ROSENBERG: Handbooks are important for many reasons. For example, there are certain legally mandated policies which must be in communicated in writing. The handbook is a great place to do that so you can prove you made the requisite communication. Handbooks also communicate the company's culture, which is important when onboarding new hires. Under no circumstances do we recommend taking one off the internet or buying one of those $79.00 versions sold in the back of the airplane magazine. Shortcuts can be very costly. Finally, handbooks should be reviewed for compliance by a labor law expert to insure compliance.

◆ What are your clients most worried about in terms of labor laws today?

ROSENBERG: Whistleblower cases and class action lawsuits for technical wage and hour law compliance. Several of these are filed in the Los Angeles area every day. To incentivize lawyers to file suit, the legislature added penalties for almost every labor law violation found in the Labor Code and then deputized the state's lawyers to file suit to collect these penalties. Though these attorneys must share some of the recovery with the state, it's still a powerful incentive for the class action lawyer because these penalties add up fast. Even a relatively small employer can be facing six and seven figure exposure for technical mistakes that are entirely avoidable with a little up front advice.

GABLER: The most significant source of stress for our employment clients remains the never-ending stream of employment legislation placing ever-increasing burdens upon California business owners. The average employer focused on keeping a business afloat cannot reasonably track, implement and document its compliance with thousands of employment laws and cases in a cost-effective manner. Employers who make every effort to treat their employees fairly often find that "no good deed goes unpunished," with minor mistakes leading to unreasonably excessive liability. A great percentage of the work we do with our clients today is focused on proactive strategies designed to enhance employee productivity and morale while protecting the business from often-missed legal nuances or baseless legal claims.

MINKOW: Most companies are simply worried with "getting it right." There are so many rules and regulations to keep track of, especially with regard to wage and hour issues, that even the good intended company can make an honest mistake, leading to significant exposure. This is why having the employee handbook reviewed regularly by competent counsel is key. Also, consistent enforcement of these policies is necessary.

◆ What should companies take into account when drafting a workplace romance policy?

ROSENBERG: When it comes to affairs of the heart, people resent being told what to do. And, the law says that what people do on their own time is their own business in most cases. Telling employees who they can date is a privacy violation, absent a sound business reason to do so, such as when one employee is a supervisor of the other, or at least in the supervisory chain of command. You have the right to prevent an actual or potential conflict of interest which could result when a supervisor is dating a subordinate. You also have the right to regulate PDA's (public displays of affection). People behaving this way at work make coworkers uncomfortable and when managers do it, then it could convey the impression that such behavior is a job requirement.

BENDAVID: This is about balancing employee privacy while protecting your company from poor morale and potential harassment. When employers discover burgeoning romantic relationships (particularly between supervisors and subordinates), they should take immediate steps. Both parties should confirm the relationship is welcome and that neither is coerced. Consider having the employees sign "love contracts" to document this and provide guidance regarding workplace behavior to avoid offending colleagues. Love contracts can also advise employees to speak up if the relationship turns into harassment (no longer welcome). The company must prevent claims of coercion, harassment or discrimination (i.e., if the subordinate gets passed over for promotion or terminated after the breakup). Also, if a supervisor and subordinate are in a romantic relationship, create a different reporting structure, if possible, so the subordinate no longer reports to the boss.

GABLER: Employers must balance employee privacy and lawful off-duty rights with workplace productivity and protection. Employees have the right to engage in personal or romantic relationships, as long as those relationships do not adversely impact the workplace. Employers can prohibit ongoing personal relationships between supervisors and subordinates to avoid harassment claims, interpersonal conflicts or favoritism. In the event of an unexpected relationship, however, employers should consider transferring one or more employees to alternative reporting relationships before moving straight to termination, and note the intent to do so in the policy. Employers should also include behavioral components, prohibiting displays of affection as well as interpersonal disputes at work. The policy should note the right of all employees to be free from harassment, to end any relationship at will and to be protected from retaliation when they do so. Finally, the policy should clearly designate the methods by which any employee can complain of harassment or retaliation and receive protection from the employer.

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◆ What kind of rights do unpaid interns have as compared to full-time employees?

BENDAVID: The U.S. Department of Labor and the California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE) both provided specific guidelines for employers regarding interns (and whether they can be paid or unpaid). The guidelines partially focus on whether interns are working to learn something of value related to their chosen profession, or whether they are simply performing menial tasks like other employees. If unpaid, an employer cannot expect interns to catch up on filing, get coffee and pick up dry cleaning. In fact, interns should actually impede your operations to a degree (e.g., spending valuable time training them) and the employer should not seek to benefit from the intern relationship. Further, don't promise your unpaid interns a job once they complete their internship – this could be perceived as inducing them to "work" rather than "learn" which is what they are supposed to be doing.

ROSENBERG: Unpaid interns have the same rights as any other employee. Except in the medical profession, there is no legal status called "intern." In the vast majority of cases, these folks are unpaid workers, plain and simple. That's been made clear by recent pronouncements from the government and is being played out in class action back pay suits all over the country. There is such a thing as legitimate unpaid "learners," provided that certain requirements are met. For example, they cannot be a substitute for a paid worker or do work that you'd otherwise pay someone to do. This means that the business cannot derive any real benefit from their work. To pass muster, the whole set up must look and feel "educational" in nature. That's why most so-called internships won't hold up legally. The simplest and cheapest insurance is to pay these people the minimum wage and applicable overtime pay. Finally, an agreement to have the learner be unpaid won't protect you in court if the other rules aren't followed. If anything, it's proof you are violating the law.

◆ How can employers remain current on the ever-evolving employment law trends?

MINKOW: Employers should participate in the training available for human resource professionals and company executives. Many local law firms and human resource organizations invest a significant amount of time and money in providing seminars and training regarding employment law compliance. The focus of these seminars is always litigation prevention. By attending regular training sessions, employers and management can learn best practices in handling a variety of issues that could lead to litigation if handled poorly. We find that most employers intend to comply with the law and mistakes are made simply when the decision makers are unaware of the applicable regulation or requirement, or they are relying on an outdated personnel manual without any guidance from counsel. Indeed, many of these seminars are free for employers.

GABLER: There are three particularly effective methods of keeping abreast of the most current employment law issues. First, update and distribute the employee handbook and other human resource documents each year, after review by qualified employment law counsel. A fully-compliant employee handbook can serve as a treatise for employers as well as a guide to employees. Second, attend the myriad of employment law seminars available today, both online and in person. Regular education is critical to keeping up with new laws and workplace trends. Third, develop and maintain a relationship with a skilled employment law attorney to address ongoing workplace issues and disputes. Although the internet has a wealth of information about employment law issues, much of it is inaccurate or inapplicable to California employers. There is no substitute for solid legal advice from a trusted advisor who knows you and your business.

◆ What is one of the most important things employers should do to prevent a lawsuit from occurring?

BENDAVID: You can reduce potential claims and you can strengthen your defense if you are sued, by following this rule of thumb: Document everything. Before firing an employee, make sure you have lawful reasons for termination, and that the reasons are on record. A good termination is one that does not come as a surprise. Make sure your company policies are clearly written and understood, whether you're outlining how commissions are paid, who is entitled to certain leaves, or what the dress code is. If an employee makes a complaint, make sure to fully investigate and record the findings. Properly worded emails, signed letters and interoffice memos are absolute musts. Good documentation supporting your defense tends to gain early dismissals and sometimes even a withdrawal of claims when a plaintiff is faced with mounting evidence in your favor.

ROSENBERG: The old saying "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is particularly apt in employment law cases. The vast majority of labor law cases are entirely preventable. Employers should spend the money to sit down with a labor law expert and do two things right away: (i) scrub all of your employment practices and policies for technical compliance; and (ii) train all people managers on the many labor law requirements they and the business must follow. California law holds a business responsible for what supervisory employees say and do. So, it only makes sense to arm them with the information they require to keep them and the business out of court.

◆ What are some legal issues that companies overlook during the hiring process?

GABLER: There are two critical steps employers should take to protect themselves in the hiring process. First, fully research the applicant's prior experience and education. In a majority of employment lawsuits, we find that the employee does not have the education or experience he claimed to possess, or he has omitted critical background facts from his resume or application. Second, do not permit the new hire to commence employment before all pre-hire conditions are met. If you want your new employee to take a drug and alcohol test, pass a physical exam or sign an arbitration agreement, inform the applicant of your prerequisites in the offer letter, and wait for compliance before letting him start the position. It is always easier to withdraw a conditional offer of employment than it is to terminate a new employee.

MINKOW: Companies often ask employees to conduct hiring interviews without providing those individuals any training. This oversight can lead to discrimination claims, especially if the interviewer asks inappropriate questions regarding an employee's disability or other protected categories during the interview process. Employers should make sure their pre-hire paperwork is compliant with current law and that interviewers are asking appropriate job-related questions.

ROSENBERG: Checking references is a must. I would not hire anyone without one. Also, since many common sense questions are illegal, it's important that hiring managers know these rules. Job applicants can sue for these violations.

BENDAVID: Only allow experienced, trained personnel to handle the interview process. Your managers should know what questions can and can't be asked. Your Human Resources personnel should know how to investigate credentials without invading privacy, and the procedures and documents necessary for criminal background checks, drug testing, etc. As the prospective employer, focus on the "KSAs" – the "knowledge, skills and abilities" of the applicant. Once you have chosen a candidate, send a well-written offer letter that confirms the terms of employment, including "at-will" (if hired at-will), job title, duties, pay and benefits. We often use offer letters to defend post-termination claims. They help establish what was promised, what was expected, and why the terminated employee failed to meet expectations.

◆ What are some legal issues that companies often overlook during a layoff or termination process?

MINKOW: There are many issues an employer should

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EMPLOYER DEFENSE:

- Individual & Class Action Lawsuits
- Department of Fair Employment & Housing (DFEH Charges)
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC Charges)
- California Labor Commissioner (DLSE Wage Claims & Audits)
- U.S. Department of Labor (DOL Wage Claims & Audits)
- California Employment Development Department (EDD Unemployment Audits)

CLAIM PREVENTION:

- Hiring, Firing & Discipline Practices
- Wage & Hour Compliance
- Employee Performance Management & Training
- Leaves of Absence
- Employee Handbooks, Policies, Procedures & Guidelines
- Employment Agreements
- Protection of Trade Secrets & Confidential Information
- Mass Layoffs, Plant Closures, WARN Act
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KAREN L. GABLER

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consider prior to terminating an employee. First, employers should base all employment-related decisions on legitimate, non-discriminatory reasons and have appropriate documentation to support such decisions should they be challenged. Second, all decisions should be made consistently. For example, if a company decides to terminate an employee for excessive absences, the decision makers should feel confident the attendance policy is applied consistently to all employees, otherwise the affected employee might claim he or she was singled out for some discriminatory reason. Third, employers might consider obtaining a valid release in exchange for some amount of severance from a departing employee when there is a risk of a possible legal challenge to the termination. Fourth, companies in the process of conducting a "mass layoff" must keep in mind the California and Federal WARN notice requirements.

BENDAVID: Establish and document criteria for identifying workers to be laid off. Is the decision regarding who stays or goes dependent on seniority, experience, job performance, disciplinary history, or other reasons? Ensure the layoff candidates meet the standards you established, and you have supporting documentation. Review personnel files to ensure there are no "red flags" that might cause an employee to believe they were selected for layoff for unlawful reasons. Apply similar rules to terminations: your reason should be established via policies (such as in a company handbook). Demonstrate your reasons for firing with documented facts. Don't "sugar coat" a layoff or termination (don't call a termination for cause an elimination of a position if that's not what occurred). Plaintiffs who claim wrongful termination often say they were surprised – because an employer gave them consistently positive reviews, or said, "we really like you, but…."

GABLER: The most critical factor in any layoff or termination is being able to justify the legitimate business reasons for the decision – and then, actually justifying it with written documentation. Why is this employee losing his job? Is his position being eliminated? Is he a poor performer? Will we have to re-open the position later? Can someone else do his job? Has he been warned about any deficiencies? Has he been given an opportunity to improve? If not, why not? Is the decision in line with internal memoranda and prior performance reviews? Does he fall into any protected categories that will give him a reason to complain that his separation from employment was discriminatory or retaliatory? If asked, how will we prove that we had a legitimate, non-discriminatory reason to remove him? Employers hoping to avoid confrontation often fall back on "you're an at-will employee" or "you're not a good fit." Unfortunately, if the employer does not provide the reason for the separation, it leaves the door open for the employee (or the employee's lawyer!) to fill in that blank with an unlawful reason, creating risk and cost for the employer.

◆ What do businesses need to know about finding, interviewing and hiring the best attorney for their needs?

GABLER: The most common mistake in retaining counsel to handle employment issues is choosing an attorney who specializes in business or litigation instead of an employment law expert. Obtaining quality employment law advice depends upon retaining an attorney well-versed in thousands of employment law statutes and cases, with substantial experience "in the trenches" of employer-employee interactions. In addition to researching the experience, skill and references of potential employment counsel, business owners should consider whether the attorney is creative and proactive, rather than merely adversarial and reactive. The best attorney will work with you to develop a risk management and problem-solving strategy that best serves your business – not the law firm's business – taking into account your workplace culture and business goals. Look for the attorney who knows the law, but who can also provide effective and thoughtful ways to integrate legal compliance into your business operations in a cost-effective manner.

BENDAVID: Ask for referrals from those you know and trust. Look for someone with experience in handling employment law. Interview the person to make sure you are a good match. Not all lawyers are the same and lawyers have different strategies for defending claims based on their personal experiences. Beyond that, find an attorney who's knowledgeable and willing to review your current policies and procedures – in all aspects of your dealings with employees, not just someone who only wants to deal with hearings and litigation. Make sure they understand the big picture of your company and your goals.

ROSENBERG: Look for someone who is a subject matter expert and knows your industry. Often, colleagues in your industry will be a good referral source. Your labor attorney can play an important role in your team of trusted advisors. This means that you have to be comfortable with their style. Do you get an adequate explanation for why something is being recommended? Do they come up with creative solutions? A good labor attorney is a risk option manager.

MINKOW: There are so many experienced and qualified attorneys in the Los Angeles area that finding the right one can be a daunting task. Look for attorneys that are experienced in the practice area but also take the time to learn about your company and your business. Employment law advice is not always a "one size fits all" solution. Each business is different and your attorney should appreciate the nuances of your company and your industry. Look for attorneys who conduct regular training seminars as they are also typically known in the industry. Our clients like the personal attention they receive, as they feel like their issues are our top priority. The bottom line is that a company needs to trust their counsel.

◆ How does a law firm specializing in labor and employment differentiate itself from the competition?

GABLER: To be truly effective, it is not enough to be an employment law expert or to provide quality legal advice (although both are critical). Business owners should want and expect their employment law counsel to be an external team member of the organization, working closely with management to develop the most productive and efficient workforce as well as protecting against legal violations and resolving employee disputes. Our firm provides twice-monthly complimentary seminars in two locations, designed to give our clients the basic tools necessary to address their most common questions. By actively investing our time and resources into their businesses, we gain a deeper understanding of how we can best serve their needs when thornier issues arise, and we can share in the joy of their successes as much as we do our own.

◆ Looking to the future, what changes do you anticipate for the legal and employment law landscape in the coming years?

ROSENBERG: It is going to get worse for employers. The legislatures continue to churn out new labor laws which make it tougher on business as workers clamor for their piece of the ever shrinking middle class pie. Also, though jobs are by no means plentiful, the younger generation seems especially willing to vote with their heart. Workplaces are openly discussed in social media. Employers that are really smart about the investments they make in hiring a new employee are to benefit far more than those who continue to view employees simply as dispensable units of production.

GABLER: Technology and related workplace privacy issues are likely to have an increasingly-significant impact upon the employment law landscape in coming years. Technology provides remote workplace options, greater flexibility and new workplace efficiencies. At the same time, it also poses increased security risks, difficulty in effective supervision and training, and significant challenges to workplace collaboration. Most employment law claims arise not out of an abuse of the employee's legal rights, but because of a communication breakdown between employer and employee or among co-workers in the company. As we become more invested in our relationships with technology and less invested in our relationships with people, we are likely to see an increase in claims of workplace stress, harassment and cyber bullying. The most successful businesses will be those that find ways to bring people together even when we no longer have to do so, but simply because we want to do so.