

# A NEW VOCABULARY FOR HR PROFESSIONALS

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Any human resources professional will tell you that their job can be difficult. Every employer is subject to a vast array of state and federal employment laws. These laws are often complex and filled with subtleties that can trap the unwary. Further, new laws and variations on existing laws are enacted each year, chock full of surprises for the uninformed employer. However, the real challenge for the HR professional is not the law which, although complicated, can be understood, but rather the employees with whom the HR professional works. Because attempting to understand and anticipate the actions and motives of people, and the seemingly endless permutations thereof, is what keeps the HR professional up at night.

With this in mind, we offer a new vocabulary for HR professionals, an abridged dictionary of terms for some of the more common problems faced by those who are on the front line of employee management.

**The Believe.** A leave lacking documentary support or any medical verification whatsoever, save the representations and urgings of the absent employee that his or her word alone is sufficient and should be believed.

**The Lottery Winner.** An employee who demands more money or other job benefits, although he or she has yet to earn it.

**A Train In Vain.** An employee who blames poor performance on a lack of training and requests additional training, but who has already received as much or more training as everyone else who holds the position.

**A Debbie Downer.** An employee whose constant grumblings about the workplace have a negative impact on employee morale.

**The I'll Be Back.** An employee who keeps extending his or her medical leave in small increments, often well past any statutory or company leave requirements.

## PROFESSIONALS

Kelly O. Scott

## PRACTICE AREAS

Employment

**The Rubber Review.** When the employee, during or shortly after a poor performance review, attempts to turn the tables on the reviewer with pointed criticisms or complaints about the company or his or her supervisor.

**The Tasmanian Devil.** An employee who always seems to be in an argument and who is very combative.

**The Magic Break.** Magic because any evidence that the employee has taken his or her rest break, meal break or recovery period is invisible.

**The Mall Cop.** A non-supervisory employee who is full of instructions for co-workers.

**Termination Fever.** A sudden illness, leave of absence or workers' compensation claim prompted by the employee's uncanny sense that he or she is about to be terminated.

**The Mystery Achievement.** When an employee has an inaccurate and overinflated sense of their workplace value or contributions. The mystery achievement is often most noticeable around the time of performance evaluations.

**The Catch Me If You Can.** An employee who can rarely be found but who, when located, typically offers a precise and usually unverifiable explanation as to his or her prior whereabouts.

**The I Dare You.** A worker who wants to be fired, and often requests or dares the employer to terminate his or her employment, usually with the goal of collecting unemployment or, worse, filing a claim against the employer.

**Holidayitis.** An absence following a holiday. An employee's pattern of holidayitis is referred to as Holiday Disease.

**A Kardashian.** An employee whose addiction to tweeting, facebooking, snap chatting, and texting seems to have replaced any job-related efforts.

**A Time Traveler.** An employee who falsifies or alters his or her time records, often with the assistance of other workers. See also Bonnie & Clyde.

**A Tom Sawyer.** An employee who manages to get coworkers to do his or her work.

**A Bonnie & Clyde.** A pair of employees who work together to cover each other's mistakes or misdeeds.

**The Time-Clock Tortoise.** An employee who always clocks out late in order to gain overtime pay. The time-clock tortoise typically doesn't work very fast at all, thereby needing to incur lots of overtime.

**The Who Me?** The employee who recognizes flaws in others, but not in him or herself.

**A One-Armed Juggler.** An employee who lacks any real ability to multi-task.

**The Little Engine That Can't.** An employee that is pessimistic about any project.

**A Dodo Bird.** An employee who is reluctant to adapt to any change. A dodo is typically someone who has been with the company a long time.

**The Boomerang.** When an employee raises a serious complaint shortly after disciplinary action or counseling.

**A Dudley-Do-Wrong.** An employee who will find a way to mess up any project.

**A Ron Burgundy.** An employee, frequently a manager, who thinks he or she knows all the rules, but who violates them with misdirected sense of humor, charm or management style.

Seasoned HR professionals know that dealing with these issues can be tricky and that a knee-jerk reaction to a given problem can land the employer in hot water. Careful consideration of all the circumstances is required, and consultation with legal counsel is frequently necessary. Over the months ahead, we will tackle these and other issues in greater depth in our blog, appropriately named "The Staff Report".

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