

## **Douglas Burtch Quoted in National SHRM Article: “What to Do When Employee Behavior Changes”**

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The Society for Human Resource Management interviewed Douglas Burtch of Macaulay & Burtch for a recent featured article in *SHRM Online*. “What to Do When Employee Behavior Changes” gives HR professionals important action steps when employees repeatedly have bad days or display strange behavior in the workplace. Below are select excerpts from the online article:

**Safety First.** Employers must ensure the safety and security of employees and guard against workplace violence. Anyone who observes unusual employee behavior should promptly report it to management. An employer should call the police if an employee:

- Makes an actual threat of violence to him or herself, another employee, or a customer.
- Refuses to return company property.

Also, an employee should be placed on paid administrative leave pending the outcome of a thorough investigation when that employee makes a veiled or vague threat of violence.

**Protect Company Property and Information.** Employees exhibiting erratic behavior in the workplace should not be allowed to leave with any company property. Also, their access to the company’s e-mail, server, systems and information should be cut off.

**A Variety of Causes.** Sometimes suspicious employee behavior is a sign of an employee’s illegal actions, such as embezzlement, conversion or misappropriation of trade secrets. Such behavior can also be a sign that an employee plans to leave to join a competitor, possibly with proprietary information in hand.

**Avoid Assumptions.** Sometimes situations involving erratic employee behavior are a result of a medical issue or a disability. In those instances, after any immediate safety risk is addressed—including the safety of the employee acting strangely—management should ensure that it properly guards each employee’s medical information and should also be attuned to any issue that may be covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or similar state statute.

**Assess the Situation.** The company should conduct an individual assessment for each employee situation and may consider a period of leave or even a fitness-for-duty evaluation, depending on the circumstances.

**Conclusion.** Employers who are observant and alert to erratic employee behavior are best prepared to handle each situation and are best able to minimize legal exposure.

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If you are a SHRM member, you may read the complete article online at: <http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/employeerelations/articles/Pages/EmployeeBehaviorChanges.aspx>