

Groups merge their HR services

Fresno, Sacramento organizations create one employers association.

By Robert Rodriguez / The Fresno Bee

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Two longtime human resource organizations have merged their operations, hoping to continue helping small and large business owners wade through an increasingly complex workplace.

The Fresno-based Valley Employers Association and the California Association of Employers in Sacramento have combined their dues-paying memberships to form one nonprofit group: the California Employers Association.

The new group, now with about 750 members, will be based in Sacramento. It has hired Craig Strong to serve as its new regional director for the greater Fresno area.

Strong has more than 24 years of human resources experience, including regulatory compliance, conflict resolution, employment law and team building.

"Both of our organizations had been looking to partner with a similar association to combine strengths in such a competitive marketplace," said Kim Parker, executive vice president of California Employers Association.

The associations specialize in handling unemployment insurance claims, labor commissioner hearings, union negotiations and training for business owners without full-fledged human resource departments.

Fresno's association was founded more than 60 years ago and grew out of a need to keep small-business owners aware of changes in labor law.

In recent years, the association was headed by Bob Cherry and Jim Lloyd.

These days, the Fresno association's members represent a cross section of business, including retailers, manufacturers and food processors.

Many employers said it isn't easy to know how to handle difficult work-related issues or stay on top of changes in workplace regulations, such as the new rules for taking breaks and meals or new sexual harassment training requirements.

"They have been a great resource for employers," said Sarah Hayden, assistant risk manager for PrideStaff, a Fresno-based staffing company. "Members can call and get advice and receive consultation on a number of different issues."

Hayden also is a member of CEA's new board of directors.

Parker assured members of the former Valley Employers Association that the California Employers Association will provide the same level of service and supply members with newsletters, salary surveys, training and monthly luncheons.

"They [Valley Employers Association] have had a real good presence in the community," Parker said. "And we intend to continue everything that people have loved about them, plus a lot more."

The California Employers Association's Web site is www.employers.org.

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