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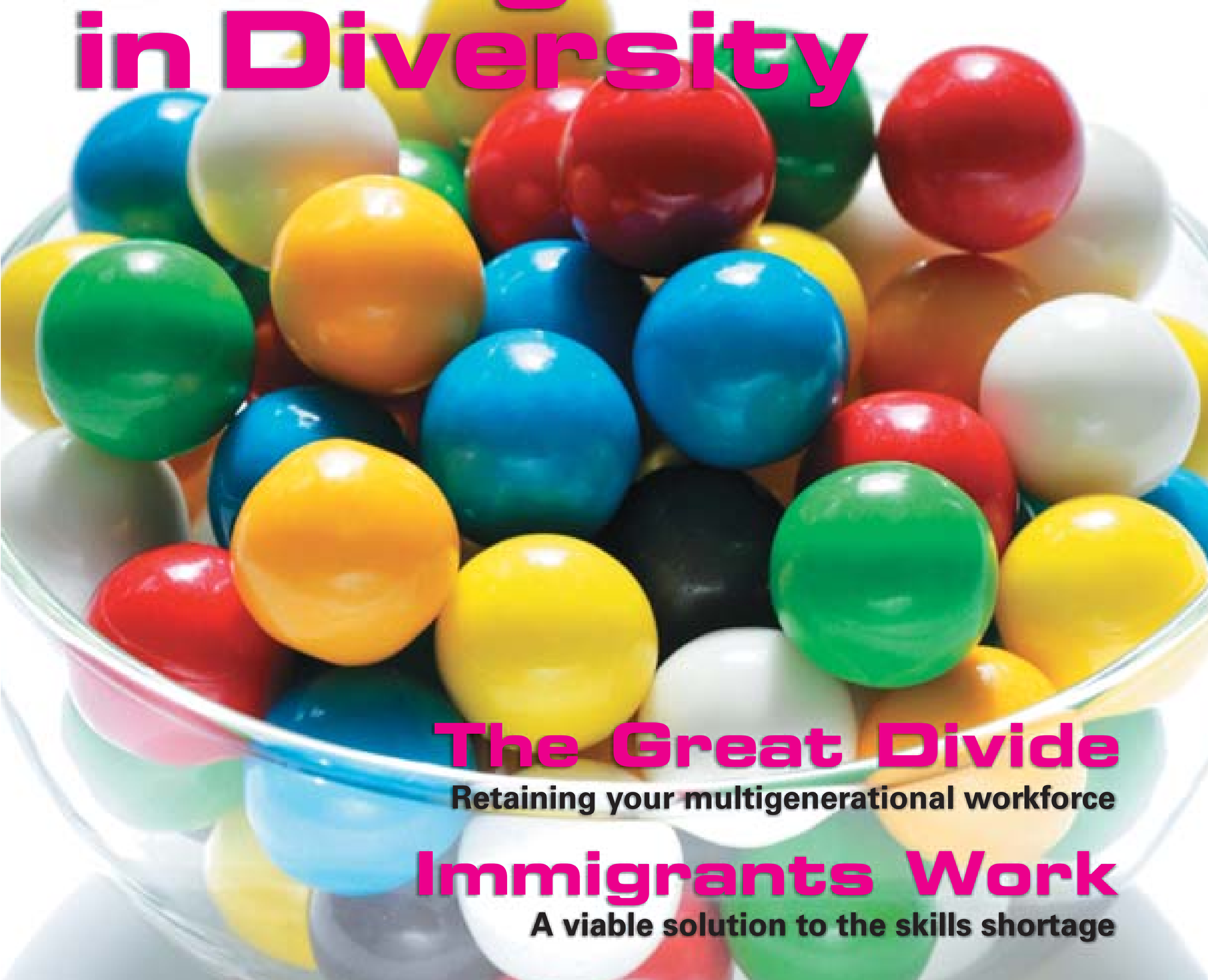
HR Professional

THE MAGAZINE FOR CANADIAN HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

Creating dynamic and competitive organizations

Strength in Diversity



The Great Divide

Retaining your multigenerational workforce

Immigrants Work

A viable solution to the skills shortage

Harnessing Collaborative Intelligence • Pandemic Planning • Leveraging Personality Assessments

INTEGRATED SYSTEM

- Human Resources
- Payroll
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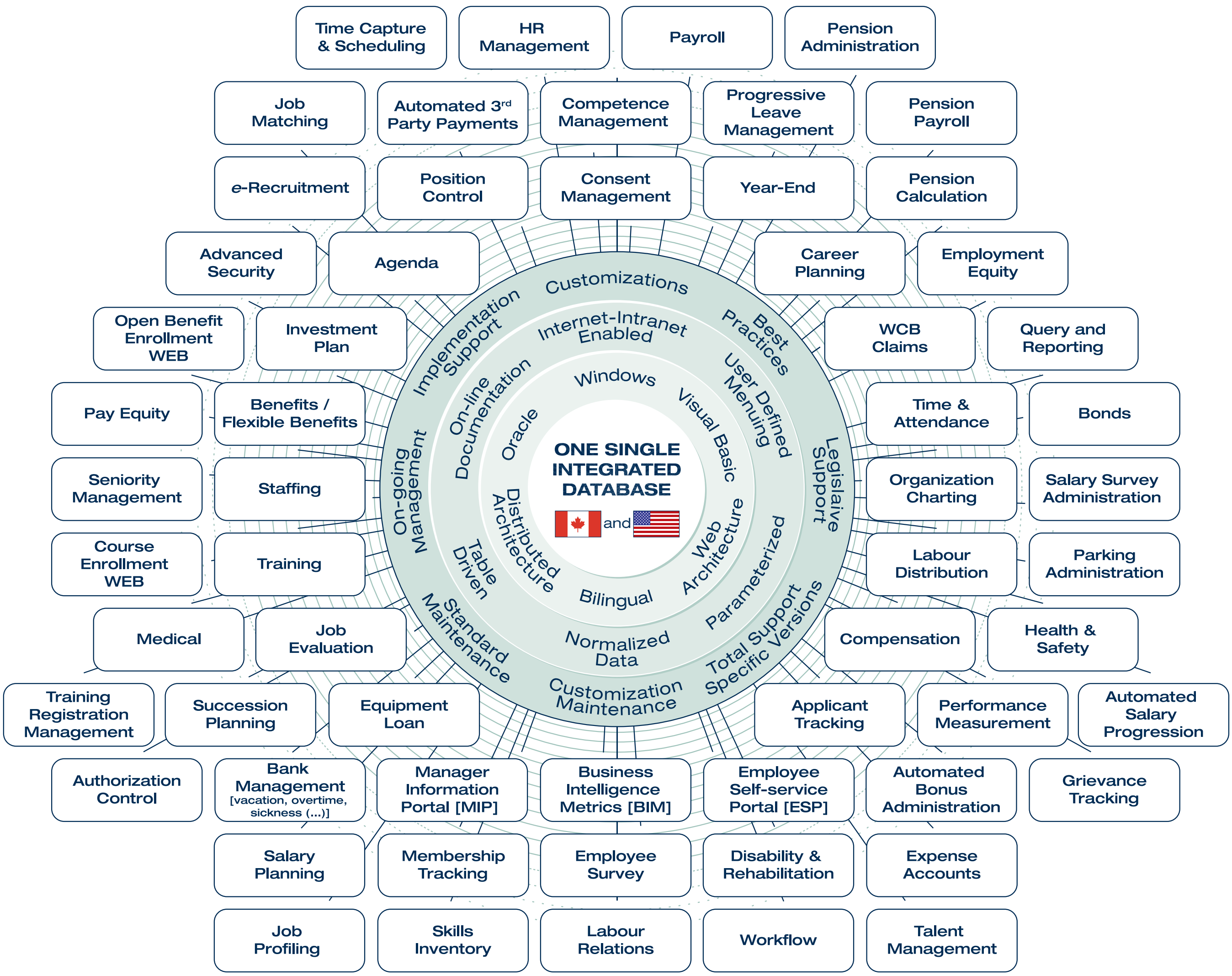
- Pension



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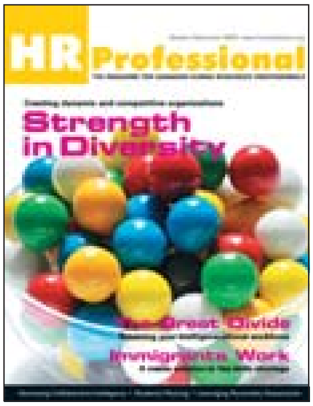

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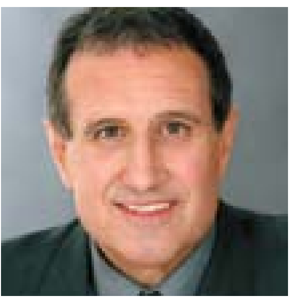
IT'S THE EXECUTION THAT COUNTS



IF YOU LOOK in any bookshop, there is a myriad of books on strategy: what it is, how to write one, the value and benefit of having one. And every expert has an opinion on what makes his or her approach the right one.

In fact, virtually every company spends weeks or even months each year reviewing its long-term goals, reassessing its vision, mission and value statements, and looking at competition and markets. All of this information is amassed, analyzed and methodically put in strategic-planning binders that, in many cases, get filed to gather dust until they are replaced the following year.

Among these organizations, there are many that create excellent plans, but, in reality, it doesn't matter how good a strategic plan is—what counts is how it gets executed. The best strategy in the world has no value if it is left in a cupboard and ignored, or worse, resides at the top of an organization but never makes its way to the front line.

Take the extreme case of Operation Overlord, the D-Day landings in France that led to the end of the Second World War in Europe. This was possibly the biggest and most detailed strategic plan ever conceived and it took years and millions of man-hours to create. Yet Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander for the invasion, recognized that as soon as the first shot was fired, the battle would take its own course and the rest of the plan would be history.

And his prophecy turned out to be true. With hundreds of thousands of personnel involved, there were many times when events did not unfold as intended, but in spite of that the immense plan worked incredibly well. In large part because every individual knew his part in the plan, the overall goal and objectives. There are many accounts where things went awry, but groups were able to adapt and seize success out of potential failure because of the knowledge they had and training they had received.

Think about any organization you deal with regularly—airlines, telecommunications companies, banks—and ask yourself, is the service I get what the senior executives set out to deliver in the strategic plan they spent so much time developing?

Let's take a telecommunications provider we'll call Telco as an example. It is likely that Telco has a strategic goal to sign on more customers and increase revenue per customer by encouraging customers to take every service it offers—cable, telephone, Internet, cellular, pay-per-view—through hard-to-resist pricing plans and giveaways.

The linchpin to making that strategy work is to make it as simple as possible for customers to add these services. When they call Telco, the service representative needs to know the different product offerings, including how the different services work and the related pricing, inside and out.

Getting all this, efficiently and effectively, to the customer during interface, is often what separates the great companies from the also-rans—it's the execution that counts. An average strategy executed well is of far greater value than a brilliant strategy not executed at all.

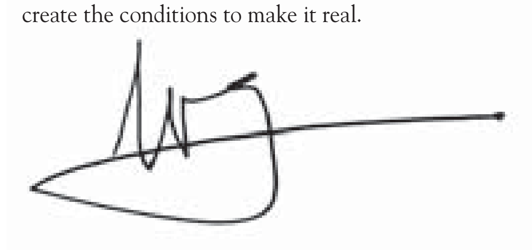
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO PUT A STRATEGY INTO EFFECT?

Start with communication—if the people who are meant to deliver the strategy don't know what it is, the result is going to be predictable. Is the training in place so the service department can offer customers "one-stop shopping"? Can the IT department deliver information to front-line staff, to allow them to answer customer questions in real time? Are there rewards and incentives in place that will drive the behaviour needed to deliver the strategy?

SO WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH HR?

Every single item on this list—whether it's hiring, training, creating the culture, developing reward schemes or organizational design—falls under the human resources area. And if these things don't happen, neither will the strategy.

So when CEOs say that people are their biggest resource, what they mean is that the right people, motivation, training and culture are the differentiation in organizations, and the HR department does—or should—be at the focal point to create the conditions to make it real.



William (Bill) Greenhalgh
CEO, HRPAO

CANADA'S MULTICULTURAL PARADOX

IN THE NEXT 15 years, as the baby boomers retire from the ranks, organizations will be bracing themselves for a talent shortage. Smart organizations have already begun devising strategies and are looking to maximize the resources they have on their proverbial doorstep. Solutions include keeping potential retirees in the workplace, maximizing the engagement among younger generations and utilizing the vast numbers of skilled unemployed and underemployed immigrants residing in this country.

The latest public-awareness campaign by the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) really hits home on the last issue. I'm sure you've seen it; the print ads feature a cashier at a fast-food place with an MBA, a cabdriver has a Ph.D, and one TV commercial features a cleaning woman offering financial advice.

The stats are staggering: six out of 10 immigrants make a downward shift into a career or job when they move here. Forty per cent of immigrants who arrived in the 1990s had a least one university degree, compared to 22 per cent of Canadians. According to the hireimmigrants.ca website, between 1991 and 1996 immigrants accounted for 77 per cent of growth to the labour force, but by 2016 they will account for 100 per cent.

The true irony is that Canada has built its national identity on multiculturalism. You don't join the melting pot when you come to Canada, your differences and cultural experiences are celebrated—unless of course you expect to work in the field you've been trained in. This paradox is not lost on me. It's sad that it takes a looming talent shortage to embrace policies of inclusion in our workplaces. But something has to change and if it takes a crisis, as it so often does, then so be it.

AN ISSUE OF INCLUSION

I wish we could have covered all aspects of diversity in this issue—and been truly diverse—but unfortunately the subject is far too broad. We've covered ethnic diversity in "Immigrants Work," and generational diversity—a topic I can assure you will be coming up again and again—in "The Great Divide."

What is glaringly absent is something on physical disabilities in the workplace. As of press time, we've been trying to schedule an interview with Ontario's newly appointed lieutenant-governor, broadcaster and author David Onley, about his mandate to improve accessibility across the province, but it's proven tricky because he hasn't officially taken office. I do promise there will be something about this on our website, HRThoughtLeader.com, by the time this issue is in your inbox. And we will cover office accessibility, accommodation and mobility issues in a future issue, as well as gender and sexual diversity.

There is a lot of food for thought, along with practical solutions in these pages. As always I'd love to hear from you, so please e-mail me at mbirchall@hrpao.org. Enjoy!

Meredith Birchall-Spencer

Meredith Birchall-Spencer
Editor

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The Lost Wallet Ploy

Everyone knows you can't board an airplane without photo ID and every young person knows they have to present ID to buy liquor or enter a Club. However each week, a disproportionately large number of our client's applicants claim to have recently lost their wallets or some similar misadventure when asked to produce ID during that portion of the background check process.

Unfortunately individuals with shady pasts know that by changing some of their identification particulars, they may have a better chance of slipping past a background check. Of course, this deception is made easier if there is no ID to verify.

BackCheck recommends that a thorough process of ID verification be part of your background check process, and that compromises should not be made. There are always ways to verify identification, even if someone has legitimately lost their wallet. While these steps might not be convenient, making exceptions and handing someone the keys to your business without proper ID verification is very risky – no matter how convincing their story might be.

Dave Dinesen
Founder, President and CEO, BackCheck™

A Complete BackCheck includes the following services. Of course, you never know which inquiry discipline will expose an area of concern.

Criminal Record Checks — Screens for candidates with a criminal record.

- Prevents the hiring of unsuitable individuals.
- Fully compliant with PIPEDA and Human Rights legislation.
- *10.7% of Canadians have a criminal record.*

Credit Bureau and Identity Verifications — Screens for ID theft, unreliable or irresponsible behaviour patterns.

- Reveals financial pressures which may affect certain employment positions.
- Identification verification: Helps protect against candidates who use stolen identity.
- Reduced success of unscrupulous applicants who attempt to "beat the system" by providing a false name or date of birth during the criminal record check process.
- *22% of candidates have Identity inconsistencies or possibly unsuitable credit for certain positions.*

Reference Interviews — Screens for candidates with poor work history.

- Unbiased references: We have never met the candidate. As a result you know that our reference checks will be free from bias and not influenced by the candidate's personality or performance in an interview, nor do we have financial motives or quotas.
- Eliminate telephone tag: Thorough and professional references are completed every time. We never miss a call!
- Demonstrates reasonable due diligence in the event of negligent hiring allegations.
- *17% of candidates have a red flag in this area.*

Employment Verifications — Confirms resume, and ensures legitimacy of previous employers.

- Includes: Verifying dates of employment, positions held, and reason for leaving.
- *Industry averages indicate that as many as 30% of candidates make misleading statements on their résumé.*

Education & Credential Verifications — Screens for misrepresented or bogus qualifications.

- Direct from the source: BackCheck will verify the highest level of education listed by the candidate directly with the educational institution.
- We leverage our relationships with educational institutions across Canada to obtain thorough and accurate information quickly.
- *10% of candidates have made exaggerated claims on their résumé.*

TECHNOLOGY

MENTORING THE MYSPACE WAY

TO CONNECT THE different generations working within one organization, U.S.-based company Nobscot has created an enhanced version of its mentoring application. While the standard edition of Mentor Scout allows mentors and mentees to fill in profiles and then search for appropriate matches based on the desired qualifications, Mentor Scout 2.0 Talent Networking Edition (www.mentorscout.com) features MySpace-style profiles where employees can keep each other updated on their projects, share favourites (from lunch spots to books) and touch base on social activities.

The new elements speak to generation Y's need to learn collectively and have instant feedback and recognition. The intent is to increase communication between employers and employees and, ultimately, enhance workplace engagement. "The challenge is to keep a generation Y worker, who currently thinks that a good, long stay at a company is one to two years, connected to the company," says CEO of Nobscot, Beth Carvin. *—Sue Bowness*

NEWS

OVERTIME LAWSUIT

IN JUNE, LAWYERS from two Canadian law firms, Roy Elliott Kim O'Connor LLP and Sack Goldblatt Mitchell LLP, announced a massive unpaid overtime class-action suit against CIBC on behalf of thousands of current and former non-management, front-line employees. Dara Fresco, a teller who has worked in more than a dozen branches during her 10-year tenure with CIBC, is the representative of the class action. A case management judge has been assigned to the file and the certification hearing will take place early next year.

"Employers should obviously familiarize themselves with what the law requires and obey it. It's really no more complicated than that," says lawyer Louis Sokolov of Sack Goldblatt Mitchell LLP. The Canada Labour Code states that federally incorporated businesses may not require or permit non-management employees to work beyond eight hours per day or 40 hours per week without paying overtime. The statement of claim in this lawsuit alleges that class members are assigned heavier workloads than can be completed within their standard working hours.

Sokolov and his legal associates on the case have been contacted by hundreds of people, mostly in the banking industry, via their website www.unpaidovertime.ca, which provides updates and information as the case progresses. *—SB*

MARKETPLACE

ASSESSING LEADERSHIP

IF YOU'VE EVER made a hire or promotion that turned out to be a mistake, you know how costly it can be to fix. Now a company called MICA Centre for Leadership (www.micaworld.com) is offering leadership assessment programs that will enable employers to test-drive internal leadership candidates to see if they have what it takes to move up in the organization.

"With succession planning being so important now, people are trying to find the best predictors of success," says Catharine Larkin, managing partner of MICA Toronto. "The assessment centre allows employers to see individuals participate in multiple activities to simulate the role the candidate is being assessed for."

Typically offered to people being considered for promotion, the leadership assessment takes one to two days and features such activities as a formal behavioural interview and role-playing exercises within a hypothetical company.

Most interesting is the activity where candidates are handed an envelope meant to represent their new inbox and are instructed to work through documents without knowing anything about the firm—a challenge meant to discern how politically savvy and experienced they are. All the scenarios in the assessment are always set outside the candidate's own industry, so that they are unable to rely on their previous experiences.

Reports on the assessment are direct, indicating, for instance, a candidate may be more suitable to move up one level but not two, or should be offered a lateral opportunity instead of a promotion. The company also offers public leadership assessment workshops to allow smaller companies with only one or two candidates to participate. *—SB*

THE SECRET

by Rhonda Byrne

THE SECRET IS an enormously popular and somewhat controversial book, which asserts that people can attract anything they want simply by thinking positive thoughts.

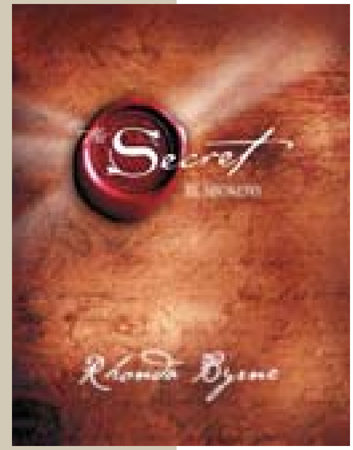
Byrne purports that the law of attraction is the key to both professional and personal success. According to this law, apparently known by history's greatest thinkers including Plato, Newton and Einstein, we create our own circumstances based on our thoughts; so if we change our thoughts, ergo we can change our lives.

The public chatter on *The Secret* ranges from "enlightening" and "life-changing" to "trite" and "innocuous."

Personally, I found the simple, straightforward conversational style of the book an entertaining and insightful read prompting reflection and reminders of lessons learned long ago, yet somehow forgotten in the busy ramble of everyday life.

I recently discussed the book with someone from a radically different career background than myself and we found, page after page, points for debate, learning and discovery. Readers will either agree with the message that anything is possible or be repelled by Byrne's assertion that negative thoughts are alone the cause for such hardships as illness and disaster.

No matter, for me it met the three key criteria of a stimulating read: it forced me to stop and think; it didn't take itself too seriously; and I didn't have to double-check to see if it was a textbook or leisure reading. It is, if nothing else, a quick read that puts you on the inside channel of books in the current reading circles. Oh, and for some—the best news—is that it is also available on video! —*Yvonne Malcolmson*



Yvonne Thevenot is an executive in the financial services industry.

WEBSITE

TALENTTECH.COM

VANCOUVER'S TALENT TECHNOLOGY Corporation, specializing in recruitment technology, recently launched talenttech.com. The site not only provides details on its for-purchase software offerings—HireDesk and Resume Mirror—but also offers extensive industry resources.

Under its knowledge centre, the site features white papers—topics include tips for optimizing your hiring process and best practices for online communication with candidates—case studies, surveys and interview guides as well as recordings of the company's "webinars."

Praj Patel, Talent Technology's executive vice-president, says that the company plans to expand the information centre in several sections, including adding more competency interview guides, which visitors can download as PDF documents. The site currently carries interview guides for three positions—account executive, project manager and software developer—and covers topics like building rapport with the interviewee, how to review a candidate's work history and indicators of success behaviours. —*SB*

QUOTE

"WE ALL SHOULD KNOW THAT DIVERSITY MAKES FOR A RICH TAPESTRY, AND WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT ALL THE THREADS OF THE TAPESTRY ARE EQUAL IN VALUE NO MATTER WHAT THEIR COLOUR."

—MAYA ANGELOU, AMERICAN POET

STUDY

TECH-SAVVY WORKERS

IN THE WORKPLACE, it seems mature workers embrace technology more than generation Y, according to the latest World of Work survey by Randstad USA.

The study, which focuses on employee productivity, retention and morale found that while generation Y is reputed to be the most technologically dependant, they are the least likely to use communication tools—computers, faxes, personal digital assistants (PDAs), mobile and land-line phones—in the workplace. The "power-users" proved to be in the oldest segment of the workforce who were well into middle age when the personal computer was introduced, and the youngest of whom were 50 years of age when business discovered the Internet.

According to Genia Spencer, managing director of operations and human resources for Randstad USA, this mature workforce segment values the freedom to efficiently manage their workload more than younger generations. Their active use of new technology enables a more flexible work schedule with maximum career engagement. Conversely, the study finds that younger generations could be more effective and have more flexibility if they took greater advantage of technology.

What is even more ironic is that the study found that the generations who stand to benefit the most from the job opportunities that will be created by the upcoming wave of retiring boomers, care the least. Half of genX and only 36 per cent of genY employees feel the shortage is a reality compared to 69 per cent of traditionalists and 68 per cent of boomers. —*SB*

WORLD

TIME OFF FOR WORSHIP

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES often share in the confusion over paid religious leave. For Christians, two days of religious significance—Good Friday and Christmas Day—are considered statutory holidays and are included in the Ontario Employment Standards Act (2000) and the Canada Labour Code. But those observing non-Christian holidays, such as Rosh Hashanah in the Jewish religion or Vesak in the Buddhist faith, also have the right to observe their own religious beliefs, even though they are not statutory holidays.

The Supreme Court of Canada decided that the employer has the duty to consider and grant the request of religious leave, including paid religious leave, and it must be at least equal to the number of Christian religious days off—which is two. Any additional time off is up to the discretion of the employer.

For more information, see the Ontario Human Rights Commission's document, *Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances* (http://ohrc.on.ca/english/publications/creed-religion-policy.shtml), or the CCH's *Ultimate HR Manual* (www.cch.ca/business/uhrm/).

COMPANY

OUTSOURCE RECRUITING

RAISING THE BAR for recruitment outsourcing companies, ROSS requires all of its recruitment solutions managers to obtain the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation.

Peter Needham, director of organizational development at ROSS, believes this not only signals greater professionalism but also puts companies who are nervous about outsourcing recruitment at ease. "When the client is thinking about whether to outsource or keep recruiting in-house, their biggest fear is whether the quality will suffer," says Needham. "The CHRP designation makes fear go away."

Specializing in recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) solutions for small to medium-sized enterprises, ROSS operates using a placement fee—instead of the traditional contingency model of payment used by many outsource recruiters. While the young company currently focuses on the Ontario market, it is looking to expand its services across Canada.—*SB*

Human Dynamics

Leveraging personality assessments can help HR fine-tune leadership development, improve workplace culture and increase productivity

By Todd Harris

THE USE OF personality assessments in business continues to grow rapidly. Personality assessments tap into each employee's unique "behavioural DNA," yielding key insights into individual drives, temperaments and motivations (e.g., the reason why I might enjoy analyzing financial statements, while you'd prefer to be out of the office developing relationships with customers). There is a direct connection between how well a person fits his or her job to his or her productivity, and this, ultimately, influences a company's bottom line.

WHY IS PERSONALITY IMPORTANT?

The field of personality is a hot one right now for a number of reasons:

- Personality traits have a direct and substantial impact on job performance. Research suggests that between 20 and 25 per cent of an individual employee's effectiveness on the job is attributable to his or her personality.
- Well-developed personality assessments predict performance effectively across a broad range of jobs, countries and cultures, and just as importantly, they do so in a non-discriminatory way.
- The changing nature of work. In today's increasingly customer-focused, service-based and team-oriented business environment, companies are discovering that the personality attributes of their employees can be key competitive differentiators. In an era of consumer empowerment and fleeting brand loyalty, people truly make a difference. I drive a mile out of my way in the morning to visit my favourite coffee shop because I know I will be greeted warmly and served quickly.

USING PERSONALITY DATA THROUGHOUT THE EMPLOYEE LIFE CYCLE

There are many milestones across an employee's career with a company, and personality assessments can play a useful role at each one. Many leading companies are maximizing their return on investment by using these familiar instruments in new and creative ways:

- **Recruiting**: Personality assessments can be used to define the key behavioural characteristics required for a job, and to craft targeted recruiting messages and strategies to attract key talent.
- **Ramping up**: With the insights yielded by personality assessments, new employees can be brought up to speed more quickly and comfortably, making the on-boarding process smoother.
- **Coaching**: Managers can use the data yielded by personality assessments to tailor their coaching strategies for their direct reports, leveraging each employee's unique strengths.
- **Leadership development**: Personality assessments are increasingly being incorporated into leadership development programs at all organizational levels, from front-line supervisors to middle management to the executive suite.
- **Team effectiveness**: Team structure, communication, role-clarity, decision-making and performance appraisal can all be improved via the use of personality assessments.
- **Culture and strategy change**: Many companies are in transition—moving into a new phase or market, or merging with another company—and are experiencing a cultural shift that now places a premium on speed and risk-taking. Personality assessments can be used to identify people who would more naturally thrive in that culture and be able to coach other employees during the time of change.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Ask these seven questions when evaluating personality assessments:

1. What is the assessment designed to measure and accomplish, and how will it benefit the organization?
2. Does the assessment come with an accompanying job analysis tool that allows for the thorough identification of a job's requirements?
3. Is the assessment free of bias with respect to the respondent's age, sex or ethnic group?
4. Is the assessment reliable? Are people's scores on it consistent and repeatable over time?
5. Is the assessment valid? Does it effectively predict important workplace behaviours that drive metrics such as sales, customer satisfaction and turnover?
6. Is documentation supporting questions 3, 4 and 5 available in the form of a technical manual or equivalent document, and is research on these areas ongoing?
7. What are the key implementation issues such as cost, time it takes to complete the assessment, data security, scalability across the organization, ongoing support from the vendor (the degree to which the vendor understands your business challenges) and degree of client self-sufficiency/knowledge transfer?

Todd Harris, Ph.D (tharris@piworldwide.com), is the director of research for PI Worldwide, an international management consulting organization based in Wellesley Hills, Mass., with offices throughout Canada.

Driving Performance

Is your annual incentive plan in need of a tune-up?

By Dave Neilly

ANNUAL INCENTIVE OR bonus programs exist in most organizations, yet they are often the subject of employee criticism and cynicism, tweaking by compensation professionals and hand-wringing by senior executives and board members who want the annual bonus to motivate the organization to higher levels of performance. A client once said to me, "We spend thousands of person-hours and millions of dollars de-motivating more than 50 per cent of our staff."

Organizational frustration is understandable. Here are a few telltale signs that your plan is not fulfilling its promise:

- There is a broad entitlement mentality regarding the annual bonus payout
- You cannot articulate strategic goals for the bonus program
- There is very little differentiation of bonus payments between employees at the same general pay level
- There is a high frequency of "unfair payouts" (too high or too low) to individuals and groups
- You believe that cancelling the bonus program and rolling the funds into base pay would not significantly affect corporate performance (and would save you a lot of time)

Annual incentive plans succeed or fail based on three critical factors:

1. Articulation of strategic objectives for the program
2. Alignment of program design with company strategic objectives
3. Execution of the program

Your bonus program's success is only as good as the degree to which its design rests upon a solid foundation of strategic goals, and that hinges on whether your management team implements the program with consistency and persistence.

STRATEGIC PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Here are some questions you should address in developing strategic objectives:

1. In what proportion do you want to emphasize company performance, local team performance or individual excellence through the program?
2. How much differentiation do you want in your bonus payouts?
3. Will you design your salary/bonus mix to follow market norms or "make a statement" with a pay mix different from the market?
4. Do you believe that every employee should have the opportunity to earn a bonus even if the company is not successful, or is there a level below which nobody will earn a bonus, no matter how well they performed?
5. How will the bonus program be funded?
6. Should the bonus program apply to all employees, or only those positions having a significant impact on corporate performance?
7. Should there be different bonus programs to suit the needs of different departments within the company, or will there be a one-size-fits-all program?

FIVE KEY PROGRAM DESIGN ELEMENTS

1. **Bonus targets and base/bonus mix**. Usually defined as the percentage of base salary paid to an employee if on-target performance is achieved. Start by benchmarking your workforce against competitive norms using compensation surveys, and let your strategic goals ultimately guide your decision.
2. **The bonus formula**. This determines how your bonus pool will be created and allocated based on company, team and individual performance.
3. **Payout curves**. Once you have designed the bonus formula you must now design the relationship between performance and payout for company, team and individual performance factors.
4. **Modelling for extreme conditions**. The bonus formula usually takes several iterations to get right. The more scenarios you use to test the model and the more people you review it with, the more confidence you will have that the formula will align with your strategic program goals.
5. **Performance management program alignment**. Your performance management program should support the annual incentive program by being consistent with your annual incentive program cycle, by connecting individual goals with your corporate goals and by making clear to employees what "above and beyond" performance looks like.

BONUS PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Finally, you must execute the program, which involves communication, training, goal setting, ongoing feedback, performance assessment, bonus allocation to individuals and bonus distribution.

There is no easy way or one single formula that will provide the perfect annual incentive plan for your company. But there is a series of steps to follow that will make a dramatic difference to the impact of your compensation programs. If you believe your company's incentive plan is running a little rough, now is the time for a tune-up.

David Neilly (david.neilly@peoplecomp.ca) is the managing director of PeopleCOMP, a full-service human resources consulting firm specializing in employee compensation and performance management.

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The Great

Retaining your multigenerational workforce

By Adwoa K. Buahene and Giselle Kovary

ORGANIZATIONS AREN'T GOING to keep people forever; long-term corporate loyalty is virtually dead. However, this doesn't mean that retention strategies are pointless. The goal of the next wave of retention strategies is to create highly engaged employees that stay *longer*, not forever.

Though some critics claim that today's employees are fickle, that's not necessarily true. They will stay if they know that they are valued by the organization. This value is more than an emotional feeling, it's a rational calculation based on what organizations do for them through organizational people practices. Each generational cohort (traditionalist, baby boomer, genX and genY) will evaluate and calculate the value of people programs or practices differently. Because of the differing generational values, expectations and behaviours, people strategies can no longer be one-size-fits-all. They must be tailored to the operational environment, the strategic business goals and the characteristics of all employee groups.

Federal Express Canada Ltd. is a relatively young company (20 years) that has many seasoned, long-term employees (average age of 40 years). FedEx's goal is to retain and engage the experienced generation, while evolving as an organization that attracts and retains the best from younger generations. It knows that the tactics and environment that motivates experienced employees are not necessarily the same for younger employees and provides a menu of integrated people strategies to engage all employees.

These integrated people strategies must be executed with discipline by every leader and manager. It's the everyday implementation of people practices that positively influences how all four generations calculate the value of staying with an organization. To successfully design and execute the programs and practices that engage a multigenerational workforce, two fundamental conditions must be met:

1. The strategies, programs and practices must be holistic and integrated, yet flexible enough to respond to the values, behaviours and expectations of each generational cohort.
2. The strategies, programs and practices must be executed by demonstrating three characteristics—transparency, responsiveness and partnering.

The characteristics of transparency, responsiveness and partnering serve as the framework by which organizations demonstrate the desire to create a win-win employment relationship. At a minimum, retention strategies should include the following programs and practices:

1. Total rewards programs
2. Employee brand promises
3. Development practices including learning and development and mentoring

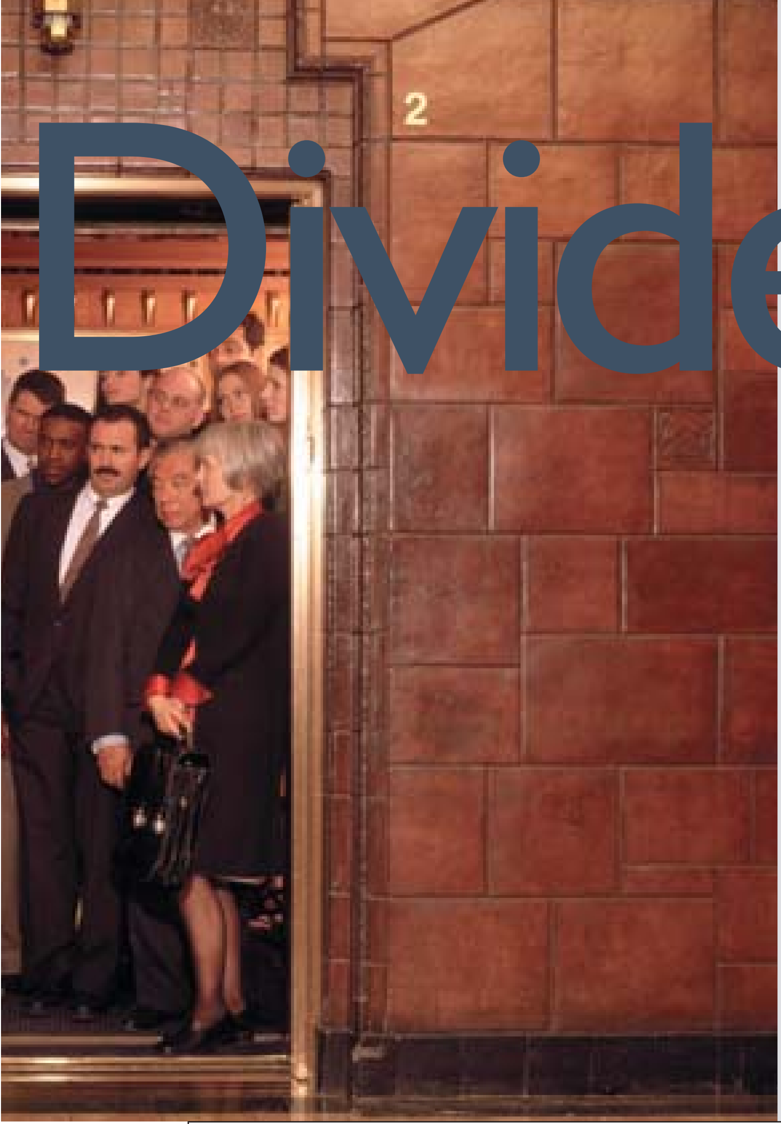
TOTAL REWARD PROGRAMS

Employees today view themselves as investors. They invest their knowledge, skills and experience in organizations. The return demanded on that investment is more than just a paycheque. Generational cohorts calculate their return on investment based on different criteria. GenX and genY employees evaluate their investment portfolio more frequently than baby boomers or traditionalists. The younger cohorts assess whether or not their investment is growing on a quarterly, if not monthly basis. Additionally, in geographic areas with hot labour markets, employees can insist on a higher rate of return more quickly than in areas where there is less demand.

Total rewards programs (TRPs) are one mechanism by which organizations demonstrate value to employees and, concurrently, by which employees evaluate their return on investment. TRPs are designed to create a working environment that makes an organization the all-around most attractive place to stay and build a career for target employee groups. In their most robust form, TRPs include both financial (tangible) and non-financial (intangible) rewards.

From compensation surveys and market research, many organizations have a good understanding of the tangible, financial rewards employees expect, including pay, bonuses and benefits. The struggle remains with identifying the intangible aspects including recognition, skill development, career development and quality of work/life. A successful total rewards program

Divide



The Four Generations

	Traditionalists 1922-1945	Baby boomers 1946-1964	GenXers 1965-1980	GenYs 1981-2000
Attitudes, Values and Expectations	❖ Loyalty ❖ Respect for authority ❖ Dedication ❖ Sacrifice ❖ Conformity ❖ Honour ❖ Privacy ❖ Stability ❖ Economic conservatism	❖ Optimism ❖ Involvement ❖ Team-oriented ❖ Personal growth and gratification ❖ Youthfulness ❖ Equality ❖ Career-focused	❖ Independence ❖ Self-reliance ❖ Pragmatism ❖ Skepticism ❖ Informality ❖ Balance	❖ Confidence ❖ Diversity ❖ Civic duty ❖ Optimism ❖ Immediate access to information and services
Key Characteristics	❖ Compliant ❖ Stable ❖ Detail-oriented ❖ Hard-working ❖ Dedicated ❖ Fiscally frugal ❖ Trustworthy ❖ Risk-averse ❖ Long-term focused	❖ Driven to succeed ❖ Team player ❖ Relationship-focused ❖ Eager to add value ❖ Politically savvy in the workplace ❖ Competitive	❖ Techno-literate ❖ Flexible and adaptable ❖ Creative ❖ Entrepreneurial ❖ Multi-tasker ❖ Results-driven ❖ Individualistic	❖ Techno-savvy ❖ Collective action ❖ Expressive and tolerant of differences ❖ Eager to accept challenges ❖ Innovative and creative

includes the right mix of these programs, and ensures they are executed consistently across the organization.

Total rewards programs need to be customized to an organization's operational environment and targeted to the groups of employees who make the organization successful. From a generational perspective, programs need to tap into the motivations and expectations of each generational cohort. Surveying or conducting focus groups with employees helps to determine the programs that each employee group values and cares about most.

Agrium is a Calgary-based global producer and marketer of agricultural nutrients, industrial products and specialty fertilizers. Its people practices are created in collaboration with employees. Agrium added an additional eight flex days (two per quarter) for all employees in response to feedback from younger employees during exit interviews. These additional days, over and above regular vacation, allow employees the flexibility to take time off when needed based on their schedule. In addition, telecommuting is now a reality for many Agrium employees, allowing all employee groups greater opportunity for a work/life balance.

Once an organization has determined what its employees care about, then managers must be supported to execute the programs. For example, if learning and development opportunities are positioned as one of the advantages of working at the organization, then budget constraints or continuously busy schedules that don't allow for attendance at training aren't acceptable reasons to not deliver on the deal. Managers demonstrate transparency by constantly informing employees of all the total rewards programs that are available; they demonstrate responsiveness by asking employees what components they most value; and they demonstrate partnering by finding the time and resources for employees to take full advantage of them.

DELIVERING ON EMPLOYEE BRAND PROMISES

The combination of a total rewards program, plus the statement of corporate values, equals an employee brand promise (EBP). Most organizations have value statements that exist to guide both organizational and individual behaviour. These values create the formal and informal codes of conduct that all employees, at all levels, are expected to demonstrate each day. However, they also act as a checklist for how employees expect to be treated by the organization. For example, if an organization commits itself to providing great value to external customers, then how is the organization demonstrating great value internally to its employees?

FedEx, for example, focuses on rewarding behaviours and attitudes that support both the customers and the employees. FedEx demonstrates transparency by cascading the business strategy right down to each employee's performance objectives—there is a clear line of sight between organizational goals and individual goals. Suggestions from town hall meetings are responded to and development opportunities are robust and varied, allowing employees to grow in their desired professional direction.

Since the reality of a brand is based on perception, senior leaders need to constantly communicate and reinforce the organization's EBP. From a generational perspective, execution on promises is increasingly important to retaining younger employees. GenX and genY have a need for speed. This means that they won't give managers or organizations a long time to deliver

Transparency means an organization and its leaders are open, honest and forthcoming with information. Their motives and intentions are obvious. A transparent organization shares information with all levels within the organization and highlights how individual roles, responsibilities and/or accountabilities are affected.

Responsiveness requires that an organization actively listen to its employee groups and be committed to taking action in a timely manner. A responsive organization communicates what it can and cannot do to meet employee expectations and proactively manages expectations.

Partnering means an organization recognizes that employees are equal partners and investors in the organization. It seeks a win-win relationship with its employee groups. An organization that partners with employees has leaders and managers who view themselves as part of the team, not outside of it.

Generational Emphasis Within Total Rewards	
Traditionalist	Promotions, incentives and stocks, health benefits (life/disability), pension, stability, formal recognition, community involvement
Baby boomer	Promotions, high-visibility projects, brand reputation, external company representation, support around work/life issues, personal learning and development, secondments, on-site facilities, industry recognition
GenX	Training and development, challenging tasks/stretch assignments, independent work environment, project variety, work/life balance, two-way communication and coaching, flexible work arrangements, variable pay
GenY	Corporate citizenship, meaningfulness of work/projects, manager feedback, casual work environment, daily work/life balance, access to senior leaders, mentoring, social activities, customer interaction, community involvement, flex-time

on their EBPs. The younger cohorts won't necessarily jump ship when elements of the EBP can't be delivered, but they do expect transparent, frequent, two-way communication on the changing scope of the EBP. Additionally, they expect an organization to be responsive by asking employees how the EBP can be delivered effectively. The very act of involvement demonstrates that an organization values its employees by partnering with them to create a win-win relationship.

Agrium's senior leadership is involved in communicating the organization's brand promise and modelling desired behaviours. The people component of the business is central to the organization's success and is discussed at each month's senior leadership meeting. The attraction, development and management of employees is an ongoing process that influences, supports and impacts business decisions.

Energy distribution giant Enbridge is another believer in promoting employer/employee partnerships. It demonstrates the principle of partnership by collaborating with leaders in their development of specific leadership competencies, their understanding of employee engagement, development and retention practices, and ensuring managers have the resources and tools necessary to be effective people leaders. Being a manager means supporting an employees' performance in their current role and their development for career advancement. This tripartite partnership between the organization, leaders and individual employees reinforces Enbridge's strategy of creating a sustainable organization.

INCREASING THE VALUE OF DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

More and more, organizations acknowledge the critical role learning and development programs play in retaining employees and driving engagement. For baby boomers and traditionalists, learning and development serves as a mechanism to re-engage them in the organization, by tapping into their expertise and expanding their skills.

For many employees at FedEx, the demands of physical labour may become challenging over time. In response to this, FedEx created the position of field instructor. Through working with the younger employees, the mature employee's knowledge can be transferred to the next generation. For experienced employees, their

careers take on a new valuable meaning within the organization.

For genX and genY, learning and development programs influence how long they stay with an organization. GenX is constantly focused on gaining and maintaining marketable skills. If they cannot learn new marketable skills through informal or formal learning supported by the organization, then they will look elsewhere. GenY sees the opportunity to learn as a right, not a privilege. They expect an organization to provide them with growth opportunities. Learning doesn't mean just formal classroom training; it includes job shadowing, peer mentoring, action learning and stretch assignments.

FedEx's goal is to retain and engage the experienced generation, while evolving as an organization that attracts and retains the best from younger generations.

Learning and development programs can be stand-alone activities, but ideally, they support the organization's career-pathing and succession planning processes. They provide employees with opportunities to improve performance in their current role *and* develop competencies required for future career growth (lateral or vertical). Historically, learning and development programs focused on developing skill sets that the organization deemed most important. Today, the types of learning and development experiences offered need to be both employee and employer driven. A true form of partnering is created by arriving at a mutually beneficial learning plan.

Enbridge invests in its talent management through an integrated set of programs and practices that are developed and expanded on an ongoing basis. Employee growth is actively facilitated through formal learning, in-role development, coaching, formal stretch assignments and learning through mentoring relationships, such as their participation in the Undergraduate Mentorship Program at the Haskayne School of Business at the University of Calgary. These initiatives include being mentored as well as mentoring others.

Again, the responsibility to execute learning and development strategies lies with managers. Managers need to be equipped with the process and the skills to conduct transparent developmental conversations with employees and communicate the full range of options that are available. Communication is a two-way street. As responsive managers, they must also actively

SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS TO EVALUATE ORGANIZATIONAL ENGAGEMENT TRANSPARENCY, RESPONSIVENESS AND PARTNERING

TRANSPARENCY

- Do you communicate the uniqueness of your total rewards program in your recruitment and retention messages?
- Are all HR strategies/programs linked to your employee brand promise?
- Are learning and development programs/initiatives linked to career paths?

RESPONSIVENESS

- Do you know what components of your total rewards program your employee groups value most?
- Do employees have an evaluation mechanism to judge whether or not the organization is living up to its employee brand promise?
- Can employees select learning and development experiences that align with their career goals (if outside of current role)?

PARTNERING

- Can employees negotiate/renegotiate their total rewards package?
- Do managers and employees discuss how to live your employee brand promise in their day-to-day actions?
- Do managers co-participate in learning activities?

While these questions are based on a yes/no response, a Likert scale may provide richer data, depending on the size and complexity of your organization. Be sure to analyze data along demographic lines as well.

solicit employees' learning desires. If an employee in the operations department wishes to move into marketing, then the manager needs to know how to open doors to make that happen. The potential retention power for organizations is to tap into the employees' motivations, and identify ways to use employees' new skills within the organization. Even if the organization doesn't have an immediate need for those new skills, it's smart for managers to support all learning paths.

Home Depot Canada offers associates—whether full time, part time, hourly or salaried—with a tuition reimbursement program where it reimburses 50 per cent of the cost of any courses, books and registration directed toward completion of a degree or diploma to a maximum of $5,000 a year.

From a generational perspective, it's important to consider how the organization supports the development of all four cohorts. For baby boomers and traditionalists, organizations need to reconsider providing development opportunities later in their career. Many baby boomers want to work past eligibility for retirement, but only in roles that interest them. If organizations tap into those interests and help develop them, the experienced generations will be more inclined to continue working. Also, programs that have been historically reserved for young emerging leaders, like an MBA, should be considered as valuable for retaining experienced employees as well. If an employee starts an advanced degree program at 50 years old and graduates by 55 years old, the organization has the opportunity for a productive employee for at least another 10 years. The younger generations, in particular genY, will have numerous careers. So while working in one position/field they may be educating themselves through night courses or weekend programs to prepare for their next career. In general, the critical piece to development and retention is to focus on the value employees place on their personal growth. This leads to retention because employees remain engaged and committed to the organization because they feel supported in their career development.

There is no silver bullet to employee retention. Previous mechanisms used to retain traditionalists and baby boomers, such as pension plans, long-term bonus incentives, stock plans and options, no longer guarantee that employees will stay, unless all employees value these people practices. Many employees today are looking for a mixed return on their investment in an organization, comprised of short-, medium- and long-term returns. This is especially true of genX and genY employees. If organizations only focus on creating people practices that appeal to medium- and long-term employee investors, they will have challenges in retaining short-term employees. People practices need to be integrated and varied in their design in order to appeal to all four generations of investors. From there, the key to success lies in the disciplined execution of all programs by managers, guided by the characteristics of transparency, responsiveness and partnering. Organizations that provide employees with a high rate of return on investment that is easily calculated will have the greatest success in retention.

Adwoa K. Buahene and Giselle Kovary are the authors of *Loyalty Unplugged: How to Get, Keep & Grow All Four Generations* and co-founders of n-gen People Performance Inc. (www.ngenperformance.com), a performance consulting company that provides performance solutions layering on a generational perspective.

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Immigrants Work

A viable part of the solution to the skills shortage is waiting on your doorstep, complete with education, experience and ambition. What are you waiting for?

By Claire DeVeale

Imagezoo/Getty

WHILE MOST EXECUTIVES are acknowledging the looming skills shortage, many, as of yet, have not seen any impact on their business and have not begun to plan for it. But be forewarned, by 2011, 100 per cent of net labour market growth will come from immigration[i] and the first wave of baby boomers—a group that comprises about one-third of the total Canadian population—is slated to reach age 65 in five short years.[ii]

But there is a viable way to help address this potential labour shortage. There are scores of economic immigrants in this country who come with post-secondary education—61 per cent—and, often, several years of international work experience. Here we focus on immigrants in non-regulated professions.

Although Canadian business has a positive attitude toward immigration, hiring immigrants is consistently ranked lower than other priorities when employers address future labour market needs.[iii]

While there are opportunities that come with hiring newcomers, there are also challenges—some real, some perceived—which can be a turnoff for companies, especially those that do not boast large human resources departments. It is important to know the facts, recognize the opportunities and know what resources are available to support companies that hire skilled immigrants.

MANAGING OTHER CULTURES

Some companies, like i^{3}DVR International Inc., which designs, manufactures and supplies digital video technologies for the security industry, rely on skilled immigrants to grow their business and spur innovation. In its Scarborough head office, skilled immigrants make up 50 per cent of i^{3}DVR's 70-member staff. In fact, i^{3}DVR's entire research and development department—which is more than 20 per cent of i^{3}DVR's entire workforce—is made up of skilled immigrants. Even more impressive is the fact that the R&D department boasts an 80 per cent retention rate.

Nada Miskovic came to Canada from Serbia in 2003 with five years of IT experience in both the public and private sectors. Initially she started at i^{3}DVR as a part-time software programmer-engineer, but within a short time she worked her way up to more senior roles. She is currently the assistant manager of research and development in the head office in Scarborough, and leader of the integration group, which is based in Vietnam.

At first, heading the integration team was a challenge for Miskovic and her direct reports, but Miskovic's experience navigating a new language and culture has made her much more accepting of and in tune with

feature

Top 15 Non-Regulated Occupations of Immigrants to Canada, 2005

STATS FROM CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA

OCCUPATION
Computer programmers and related occupations
Post-secondary teaching and research assistants
Sales, marketing and advertising managers
Professional occupations in business services and management
Financial and investment analysts
Chemists
Technical sales specialists, wholesale trade
Economic development officers and marketing researchers
Financial managers
University professors
Information systems analysts and consultants
Biologists and related scientists
Secretaries (except legal and medical)
Administrative officers
Banking, credit and other investment managers

different communication styles. Grace Baba, administration and HR manager at i3DVR, credits Miskovic's background as a big contributor to her success. "She doesn't interpret things literally and she can get to the heart of what people really want to say because she's experienced it herself. They feel like she knows where they are coming from," says Baba.

DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES, FRESH APPROACHES

Workers with international experience bring with them new approaches and ways of doing things. A stickler for detail, Miskovic ensures that each new project is properly scrutinized before proceeding and she isn't afraid of challenging the R&D manager—

also the president of the company—if she feels the project is jumping ahead of where it should be. "Back home we analyzed a project more in depth before starting it. Sometimes here, people want to move too quickly," she says.

Having lived and worked in several countries, Henry Lukenge has a wealth of international experience. Lukenge is the accounting manager for Hays Specialist Recruitment, a company with locations across Canada and more than 100 employees in the Greater Toronto Area. Born in Uganda, Lukenge grew up in the U.K., where he obtained his ACCA designation (an international accounting certification administered by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants). Prior to emigrating to Canada in 2006, he worked in Kenya, the Bahamas and Luxemburg for six years.

Lukenge's experience—working his way up through a number of small companies, and specifically having staffing industry know-how—was the big reason he was hired at Hays. His designation in accounting will allow him to pursue Canadian equivalency, which means he can compete with Canadians of similar skills. The final factor was Lukenge's personality. The finance director believed Lukenge would be a great fit with the other personalities on the team.

But the move was not without its challenges. Because Lukenge's experience was based on international business practices and standards, he would need ample time to ramp up his knowledge, particularly in accounts payable, which can be demanding for someone without familiarity of Canada's different provincial tax systems.

So far, Lukenge has made a significant contribution to Hays, establishing and implementing new processes and formalizing procedures to speed up month-end closes. He has filled an important gap within the team, having taken ownership over key areas. Significantly, he feels there is a lot of room to grow within Hays, which translates into his commitment to the company. An investment by the company in the short term will pay off in terms of employee retention in the long term.

ENSURING PROSPERITY

Hiring diverse staff, particularly at the management level, is a great way to build cross-cultural competencies into an organization. Working with new cultures is not just a possibility in the future; it is a fact in today's global economy. Organizations that build those competencies slowly and early, ensuring a more open and dynamic workplace, will succeed, where ones that don't will be left behind.

Ross Jorge worked for the advertising and marketing agency McCann Erickson in India (MacLaren McCann in North America), where understanding different marketing approaches for different cultures was essential. "India is so diverse, you have to understand multiculturalism. People coming from

Challenges vs. Opportunities

WORK EXPERIENCE/CREDENTIALS

Challenge: Ignoring resumés featuring overseas education or international work experience from immigrants because it's too difficult to verify.

Opportunity: Go the distance to confirm information because a strong track record of performance in another country will likely be repeated in Canada. Credential assessment service providers such as World Education Services (WES) will verify foreign experience.

COMMUNICATION

Challenge: Avoiding a candidate with a strong accent or one who is not completely up to speed on industry terms.

Opportunity: Employees who can communicate effectively in more than one language have a business edge within changing local and growing international markets. There are also many services available (some free, some fee-for-service) that can help immigrants with their business communication skills.

CULTURE

Challenge: Assuming that skilled immigrants lack an understanding of Canadian business norms.

Opportunity: A diversity of cultural perspectives brings new solutions to old problems.

Britain, other European countries and the Middle East all have various ways they understand and respond to brands," says Jorge.

From India, Jorge moved to another international agency in Dubai, where he managed such brands as Land Rover and Jaguar. But even with his great track record, Jorge found that breaking into the marketing industry in Canada was tough. Agencies can be reluctant to hire someone without Canadian industry experience. As well, they look for strong soft skills, which are sometimes an

Resources

JOB-READY SKILLED IMMIGRANTS:
Settlement.org
Find a range of services including listings of community agencies across Ontario that have pre-employment programs for immigrants, which usually include language screening and training in the Canadian workplace.

ONLINE JOBSEEKER DATABASE:
SkillsInternational.ca
A free, web-enabled, searchable database of skilled immigrant job-seekers in Ontario.

HIRE AN INTERN:
Careerbridge.ca
Career Bridge is an internship program, run by the Career Edge Organization, designed to meet the dilemma of "No Canadian experience, no job; no job, no Canadian experience." Internships can be four, six or nine months and all candidates are prescreened.

UNDERSTAND INTERNATIONAL CREDENTIALS:
Wes.org/ca
World Education Services (WES) determines the Canadian equivalency of educational credentials obtained from any country in the world and attests to the authenticity of each certificate, diploma or degree.

MENTORING:
TheMentoringPartnership.com
Mentoring skilled immigrants gives employees cross-cultural competencies and leadership and coaching experience. Mentors are asked to commit to 24 hours of time during a four-month period and are matched up with a newcomer who shares the same profession.

area of development for newcomers without experience in the Canadian context.

It took several months, but Jorge now works for Partners and Edell, a small Toronto-based advertising agency with 16 employees. “The importance of better understanding—or at least being sensitive to—other cultures is changing but is still underrated in this industry,” says Dennis Edell, president of Partners and Edell.

In marketing, teamwork is integral. Some employers are reluctant to hire someone who might not fit in with the team. Jorge knew that wouldn’t be a real barrier. Says Jorge, “I have worked on much more diverse teams. It’s about learning what others do and what I should be doing.”

To assimilate, Jorge made a real effort to uncover and understand the nuances in the local market. “Many of the staff and clients liked that I knew how to make small talk,” says Jorge. “Sometimes there is a perception that immigrants don’t integrate enough, don’t know popular culture.”

In a knowledge-driven economy, bringing diversity to the table only increases the opportunity for advancement. All companies must strive for innovation, otherwise they will lose out to the competition—and staying competitive means hiring from the skilled immigrant talent pool. Whether it’s bringing a new lens to a project, managing and building a team of people from different cultures or understanding a multicultural audience, companies who leverage the education, experience and skills of immigrants will find them prepared for what the labour market brings in the next 15 years.

Claire DeVeale (cdeveale@triec.ca) is communications co-ordinator at hireimmigrants.ca and Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council.

[1] Conference Board of Canada, *Making a Visible Difference: The Contribution of Visible Minorities to Canadian Economic Growth*, April 2004, p. 3.

[2] Conference Board of Canada, *The Skills Factor in Productivity and Competitiveness: How Canada’s Sector Councils are Helping Address the Skills and Labour Needs of Employers*, 2005, p. 8.

[3] The Public Policy Forum, *Bringing Employers Into the Immigration Debate: The Public Policy Implications of the Survey Finding,* November 2004, p.8.


Navigate.
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Getting Clever Together

Harness collaborative intelligence and build a more efficient team

By Stephen James Joyce

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, HUMANS have pulled off amazing feats as a result of our ability to build upon our collective efforts. As a species, when we co-ordinate and play to our higher purpose, we are pretty amazing. The launching of the Hubble telescope is a testament to what we can achieve when we pull together. Never has this collaborative intelligence—the process of harnessing the intelligence and energy of networks of people—been more important or more challenged by the environment we live in.

The co-operative potential within corporations and teams is huge; tapping into their collaborative intelligence becomes a game everyone needs to play. Highly successful organizations are those with the most effective teams—this is no accident. Building on this is crucial to organizational success.

10 WAYS TO HARNESS COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE

1. Establish a "higher calling" or common purpose for the team. This brings context to the significance of the team's existence. Providing a service to society is the simplest way an organization can isolate a higher calling. The higher calling is reflective of the culture and intentions of the organization as a whole and therefore is core to what the organization is "for" and how it plans to achieve its goals.
2. Establish a reward system for innovation and creativity. Ensure that rewards are equally available for ideas that don't work as for those that do. The focus should be on the level of innovation, even those that don't result in "success" in a conventional sense.
3. Use all of the experience within the team. Think of the years of life experience represented in a room of 15 people with an average age of 35. That's more than 500 years of wisdom.
4. Recognize the importance of shared assumptions. Teams will continue to run the same old routines for a long time without anyone noticing if assumptions go unchecked and unchallenged. If the same old is getting you and your team the results you need, that's great. If not, maybe it is time to lift the hood and have a peep into what's driving your team's behaviour.
5. Encourage team members to find out about each other's roles. The more they know about other perspectives, the more likely they will be able to empathize with them when the going gets tough. It also helps us understand what other team members' needs and motivations are.
6. Set intentions. Just as a team's attention is important, so too is its intention. Intentions have an eerie way of manifesting into reality. Intention directs attention. Having the team form a positive intention around an objective is one of the best ways of doing this.
7. Celebrate successes. Celebration reinforces a team and emphasizes the importance of reaching desired objectives. The rituals observed in different cultures, such as Ramadan and graduations, are a testament to how important this is. Making celebration an integral part of the life of a team or organization helps the individual feel more deeply connected to it.
8. Invest resources in learning. Continuous improvement is only possible when individuals and the teams they belong to are learning new things. By publicly demonstrating support for the learning process, leaders model the importance of building learning organizations. Creating "learning teams" is one of the core strategies employed by organizations that are highly adaptive and responsive to change.
9. Provide opportunities for sharing ideas during the project-planning phase. When everyone has taken an active part in the planning process, buy-in and commitment to the project is much simpler.
10. Balance top-down with bottom-up processing. Directives and guidance from the top must be balanced with feedback and "street-level" information. One of the reasons baboons are faster learners than chimps is that they congregate in larger numbers and are quicker at sharing large amounts of information. Most organizations would benefit by facilitating more bottom-up processing.

Managers and leaders are realizing that more efficient collaboration is the key to their teams being more effective. Helping teams tap into greater levels of collaborative intelligence at work promises many things, the least of which is making it possible for us to enjoy our work more.

Stephen James Joyce (www.zenergypd.com) is a professional speaker, business consultant and author of *Teaching an Anthill to Fetch: Developing Collaborative Intelligence @ Work.*

Getting Ahead

Mastering the art of persuasion can reap big rewards

By Greg Schinkel

HR PROFESSIONALS ARE always looking for an edge that can improve their effectiveness in implementing more positive and productive employee relations strategies in their organizations. Learning the advanced communication skills of influence and persuasion can help you win organizational support, increase your credibility and potentially bolster your career.

CONSCIOUS AND SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

Most people like to think that their rational, conscious minds are in control of their behaviours. The reality is the subconscious and emotional mind are really in control and we are frequently operating on autopilot, or in trances, throughout the day. As you drove to work this morning, you likely remember getting in your car and arriving at work with little recollection of what happened in between.

This is because our subconscious memorizes behaviours that are repetitive, which become habits, to free the conscious mind to tackle more difficult decisions and problem-solving.

UNDERSTANDING PERSUASION

We naturally resist ideas from outside, and readily buy into ideas that come from inside our own minds. The secret to persuasion and influence is to get the other person to think it is really their idea to take the action you desire.

Rapport is the easiest method to build trust and open up a person for persuasion and influence. When you examine two people in a state of good rapport, you will usually notice that their physiology begins to match—their body language, breathing and blinking rate will begin to synchronize.

Take notice of the people with whom you have good rapport and then contrast that with individuals with whom you feel more distant and disconnected. Chances are the latter exhibit different body language and communication styles from your own.

If you want to have a greater relationship with someone, begin to match and mirror their body language. At first, this can be difficult to keep track of while trying to carry on a conversation, but with practice, these skills can become automatic. It is best to integrate these skills slowly, one at a time. For example, practice matching and mirroring those people with whom you want to have a stronger relationship for a few days or weeks. Then turn your focus on the tempo and tonality of your speech, ensuring that your key messages are delivered confidently.

Greg Schinkel (www.LeadershipWizard.com) is a leadership expert, author, speaker, coach and trainer. His company, Unique Training & Development Inc., is located in London, Ont.

Mirror Image

Learn to watch for these communication keys:

BODY LANGUAGE

Act as if you are a mirror image of the other person. Rest easy knowing that the subconscious notices matching behaviours, even if there is a delay of a minute or two. The subconscious also notices subtleties, so there is no need to exaggerate.

TEMPO

There are three primary processing styles used in communication: kinesthetic, auditory and visual. The **kinesthetic** person speaks at a slower pace and prefers to have time to mull over information before making a decision. The **auditory** processor speaks at a medium tempo and prefers to discuss information—talking and listening in order to process information. The **visual** processor talks very quickly and uses their arms because they think in pictures. To become more effective with each different style, adapt your tempo and speak at the same pace as the person with whom you want a stronger connection.

TONE

The tonality of your voice can either convey certainty and confidence in what you recommend or it can create doubt in the mind of the listener. Using a deeper tonality is more soothing and exudes confidence to the listener. More confident speakers will use a down inflection at the end of their sentence, which is interpreted at a subconscious level as a command. It is important to avoid using an up inflection at the end of a sentence or statement unless you are asking a question—otherwise it's interpreted as insecurity.

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Pandemic Planning

A global epidemic will hit this country in the not-so-distant future. Will lack of preparation devastate your business?

By Jamie Knight

IMAGINE 40 PER CENT of your workplace is absent due to illness. Imagine another 20 per cent is absent on emergency leave to care for a sick or dying relative. Imagine the curtailment of essential services, like transportation and telecommunications. These are the very real threats of a pandemic.

No organization can fully prepare for a flu pandemic. We do not know when it will come, how big it will be, or the effectiveness of the public health response in terms of prevention and treatment. At this point, we cannot even identify the virus, although the H5N1 strain of avian flu is currently the leading candidate.

What we do know is that pandemics occur with some regularity. Unlike the annual onslaught of flu season, a pandemic is the result of a runaway virus that creates serious illness and death that mounts into the millions on a worldwide scale. Although death is the most dramatic result, the real damage for workplaces would be caused by significant absenteeism and distraction due to illness, family-care and general anxiety.

PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL

Most serious observers feel a pandemic is inevitable and will strike sooner than later. Go to websites for the World Health Organization, Health Canada or Health and Safety Ontario and you will see the seriousness of the threat. The message is consistent: although the pandemic may be unavoidable, preparation by individual organizations and society should significantly reduce the impact and accelerate our capacity to rebound faster and better.

Employers have a legal duty and a moral obligation to get ready. Health and safety law expects that employers will take all reasonable steps to protect their employees. In the event of a pandemic, there will be many other legal issues, including leave entitlement, privacy rights, return-to-work issues and insurability. The central role of employers in modern society demands that they act as positive agents for preparation, information sharing between organizations and ongoing communication with employees.

The essential steps that workplaces should take right now to deal with this threat are:

- Establish an ethic of infection control in your workplace, to be reinforced during the annual influenza season
- Establish contingency systems to maintain delivery of essential goods and services
- Establish mechanisms to allow workers to provide services from home
- Establish partnerships with others (suppliers, customers, even competitors) to provide mutual support and maintenance of essential services

OBLIGATIONS

Human resources professionals have two primary obligations. First, convince your organizations that pandemic planning is necessary and urgent. Pandemic planning is an effective exercise for any organization even if pandemic fear proves to be overstated. There are obvious benefits to be achieved from stripping an organization to its core objectives, identifying key personnel, considering alternative methods of delivering services and products and organization-wide cross-training.

Second, HR professionals should be active members and leaders of the pandemic planning team. Strategy development and the operational implementation of macro-policies that have a direct and varied impact on employees is where you can truly shine.

As with any significant area of policy development, such as safety, harassment and privacy, you need to involve both senior leadership and operations to convince them of the importance of devoting time and resources to preparation right now. Just like other policies, you need to renew, refresh and retrain on an ongoing basis.

You will find that many organizations are already well underway in taking the practical steps to deal with this threat. This includes the creation of a pandemic preparation committee, development of a policy, internal communication and training with a focus on proper hygiene, especially hand-washing, the promotion of good health and proper medical care, and the accumulation of protective gear and medicines, including Tamiflu.

Jamie Knight (jknight@filion.on.ca) is a partner in the Toronto office of Filion Wakely Thorup Angeletti LLP. He is a frequent speaker on the legal and human resources response to a potential pandemic, and co-author of the *CLV Special Report—Public Health in the Workplace,* 2nd Edition (Thomson Carswell, 2007).

Saving Face

Managing social networking sites in the workplace

By Jeff Pekar

CALLSAURUS INC. IS an Ontario-based third-party inbound call-centre solutions provider with 800 employees in three locations. The call attendants, often college students or recent graduates, take in calls related to a variety of products from dozens of companies that have outsourced their toll-free customer service responsibilities to Callsaurus.

Although productivity is highly monitored (e.g., number of calls answered per hour, per cent of issues resolved with the first attendant) there are often slow times when calls aren't coming in. In such instances, it is common for Callsaurus employees to surf the web, sometimes to get competitive information or to take online training; other times to catch up on personal business, such as e-mail and bill payments.

The company's current electronic communications policy allows for reasonable personal use of company equipment (phone, fax, e-mail and Internet) as long as it does not interfere with customer service, productivity or corporate security. Employees are not able to download programs or applications unless they have permission from the director of IT. Certain websites, such as gambling, pornography and gaming, are blocked by the company.

Our case studies are fictional representations of common HR dilemmas, to which HR experts offer solutions.

But more and more employees are accessing social networking sites, such as YouTube, Facebook and MySpace during office hours. The VP of operations, Dino Astrodon, is aware that several organizations, such as the City of Toronto, Toronto Dominion Bank and the Ontario government, have blocked access to these sites. To determine whether Callsaurus should do the same, he convened a meeting of the company's directors. Here is a sample of their comments:

Sales director: "We must not block access to the Internet. Our employees use it to research competitive offerings and also to go to technical sites to get more information. I'm thinking about launching a social networking strategy that would encourage our employees to access blogs, Facebook and other sites, so that we can add to discussion forums, see what people are saying about our services and respond accordingly."

Product support director: "Maybe we should post stuff on YouTube to show how to use some of our products? That might cut down on our length of calls and make us more efficient."

HR director: "There's a lot of information about us online right now. Social

networking is all about employment branding. If we are draconian in our policies, it will get out in the blogosphere and become impossible to attract the young, tech-savvy employees we need. Of course, I want more productivity, but I don't want morale to suffer by imposing a no-Internet policy."

Director of call-centre operations: "Our productivity is suffering. We have employees who abuse the system. Some are addicted to Facebook and MySpace. They make personal calls, look for old classmates and, in one case, divulge company secrets online. We deal with these on a case-by-case basis, but it is time-consuming and frustrating. I think only managers and above should have access to social networking."

Corporate security director: "Spending time on non-work-related sites is the same as stealing from the company. Whether it is pencils or time, stealing is stealing. Also, I don't want our company secrets out there for everyone to know. We don't even publicize our call-centre locations because we don't want disgruntled customers showing up at our doors!"

Director of teleworking operations: "With today's telecommunication technology, we have more and more people working from home and on flex-time, often using their personal computer for work purposes. Surely, we can't stop them from accessing 'inappropriate' sites…can we?"

Director of IT: "I'm concerned about bandwidth. Downloads and increased Internet activity slow down our network. Also, it takes up our time to administer all the requests we get to download programs and add-ons. There's no way around it if we want to protect against a virus."

Director of finance: "If we need to get more servers to accommodate all the increased Internet activity, it's not coming out of my budget!"

Astrodon left the meeting with more questions than answers. He knows Callsaurus needs to modify its Internet policy, but he's not sure how to reflect the various directors' objectives (or even if he needs to consider everyone's comments in his decision).

expert commentary

TRUST EMPLOYEES TO DO THE RIGHT THING

LAURA CORNACCHIA

CALLSAURUS INC. IS in a situation where a decision needs to be made on how to deal with social networking sites in the workplace. In a society where the Internet has become a major part of people's lives, companies such as Callsaurus must implement a policy to regulate social networking in a way that is fair to both the company and its employees. Many people rely on websites such as MySpace, Facebook or MSN Messenger to keep in contact with friends, family and acquaintances. People also do their banking, shopping and vacation planning on the Internet. It has become a part of everyday life. To restrict access to certain websites in the workplace would be unacceptable to many people, especially to the young, Internet-savvy generation Callsaurus Inc. hopes to target in its recruitment efforts.

Callsaurus Inc. should implement a policy that finds middle ground between the employer's needs and the employee's freedom that clearly states what is acceptable and what is unacceptable regarding personal usage of the Internet. Employees should have access to social networking sites but only during specific time frames for a limited period of time each day—during the lunch hour, for example. This would be a cost-effective way of dealing with the abuse. Periodic monitoring would still be required to make sure the policy is not being abused and, while there would be costs of having IT monitor the Internet activity, the time restrictions should cut back on the amount of policing necessary.

If the Internet policy is still being abused by the company's employees, then action should be taken and monitoring increased. Employees who abuse this privilege should be spoken to on an individual basis and dealt with according to the company's disciplinary action policy. The Internet policy should be continually evaluated and revised if necessary.

Callsaurus wants to recruit young, Internet-savvy people; therefore, blocking websites or totally restricting access would not benefit the company in the long run. By showing employees that Callsaurus Inc. trusts them enough to allow them to access social networking websites, it increases their morale and overall respect for the company. If social networking sites are going to be used for business purposes, as the recommendation of the sales director suggests, it should be organized by management. This will assist in the regulation process and will restrict employees from using excuses to justify their Internet activity for personal usage.

The directors all have different viewpoints on the policy. Some directors feel that employees should not have access to these websites. Other directors feel that the social networking sites should be used to promote the company, while others are concerned about costing, budgeting and virus protection. Restricting certain websites seems somewhat juvenile; therefore, monitoring user activity would be reasonable. It allows employees to continue to enjoy the Internet; however, because personal time on the Internet is limited, productivity will not be affected. A monitoring process and up-to-date virus protection is the most reasonable solution to this social networking site issue.

All employees should be aware that their Internet activity is being monitored and if they do not adhere to the policy, disciplinary actions will be taken.

There will never be a definite consensus among all employees. Allowing everyone access to the Internet for a limited time per day is somewhat of a compromise for both employees and the company. It shows that Callsaurus recognizes and accepts social networking sites, but it also demonstrates Callsaurus's dedication to run an efficient and successful company and strives to achieve the best productivity levels possible.

This new policy will stir up some conversation among employees. Generally, any change in a company will be spoken about among the workforce and there will always be those resistant to change. But as long as the lines of communication are open and the purpose of the policy is clear, the change will be seen as positive by most employees.

Laura Cornacchia (lcornacchia@eswcanada.com) is an HR generalist at ESW Canada Inc., and is currently pursuing a CHRP designation.

A COHESIVE AND CONSISTENT MESSAGE

LINDA CLARK

THIS IS A VERY complex issue that many businesses face right now. The challenges include getting buy-in support from leaders with varying interests, making and communicating adjustments to the policy, future recruitment and retention opportunities and inhibitors, not to mention company morale.

The support of the managers and executives is dependant on the success or failure of this project. Astrodon, the VP of operations, has sought out the leadership team to determine if social media and additional Internet sites should be blocked. The response of the directors demonstrates the dissension among leadership regarding access to the Internet and the issues related to their own areas.

Callsaurus's Internet policy is insufficient to deal with the use of programs and inappropriate sites. An addition to the company's current policy that states clearly that the company will be reviewing blocked sites frequently to deal with the use of inappropriate content would signal a change to employees.

Morale will be affected depending on the communication used to articulate this message. Focus groups or town halls explaining objectives and consequences of abuse, financial challenges, and recruitment and retention issues would be helpful and create buy-in from employees. This helps to educate and creates a self-monitoring process within the workplace. The current policy rules should be rearticulated to employees and the message that employees who allow personal Internet use to affect their customer service and productivity will face discipline.

In terms of employment branding, allowing employees the freedom to look after personal issues in downtimes sends a message of trust. Employee morale will improve as the company demonstrates its confidence in its employees. This will appeal to the demographic that Callsaurus is targeting. Referrals and networking are the most successful ways to recruit and retain staff. Allowing access to the sites will give the company's employment branding a boost for the present staff and in turn promote their referrals. Allowing visits to YouTube, Facebook and other popular sites in the workplace could be viewed as positive in the marketplace.

Productivity should be monitored by the measurements and tools the company has in place. If there is an individual not reaching their objectives, they need to be approached and coached on a one-on-one basis. If personal usage on the computer is excessive and productivity is low, a performance improvement plan needs to be instituted. Individual approaches are usually boosts to surrounding staff because they know that the person is not working as hard as them.

The costs of additional programs are controlled by the director of IT and the director of finance. In today's environment of ever-increasing viruses and security risks, the level of security has to keep up with the challenges of the marketplace. Having access to popular programs might increase the risk of security but these risks exist through all forms of Internet communication. The firewall must be constantly improved to sustain effectiveness.

Communication is a key issue in the workplace regarding whatever is changing. One of the communication tools that companies have put in place is an annual code of conduct, which addresses many of these issues including the policy around personal computer use and is signed off annually by all staff. This allows for a common understanding of the practice in a company. Changes could be highlighted in a campaign on e-mail, intranet or posters.

Callsaurus's leadership has conflicting views and these need to be massaged to ensure cohesiveness. The VP of operations should research both the practises in the workplace and marketplace. Each director should be approached and an individual discussion should take place around their concerns and how they could be dealt with. Many of the concerns raised by the directors are common issues not necessarily exclusive to the blocking of socially popular websites. Once these bigger picture issues are heard and discussed and the marketplace research communicated, an adjustment in policy or practice should be agreed upon and supported by all leaders. At the next board meeting, the VP of operations should present the final recommendation based on feedback from the leaders and research. Then the policy should be communicated to staff.

Linda Clark, CHRP (lclark@knightsbridge.ca), has more than 20 years of experience in human resources and is currently a partner with Knightsbridge Interim Management.

Do As I Say, Not As I Do

Study finds alarming work/life harmony practices among HR practitioners

By Carolin Rekar Munro

SAVVY ORGANIZATIONS RECOGNIZE employee health and wellness as catalysts for enhanced employee performance, productivity and retention, in addition to decreased medical claims, absenteeism and workplace injuries. As human resources practitioners, we play an integral role in championing the business case for work/life balance and fostering cultures that live the values. We avidly experiment with ingredients to perfect the recipe for wellness, the gateway to healthy lifestyles for our employees; but do we practise what we preach as a profession?

HOW HEALTHY ARE WE?

I conducted a research study between January and April 2007, examining the wellness practices of HR practitioners with data collected from 376 online surveys and 43 interviews. HR professionals' response average, when asked to described their overall personal wellness on a Likert scale, was 5.4 (10 being outstanding)—with five per cent having fully integrated work/life balance. Of those five per cent, 62 per cent were motivated to make lifestyle shifts following a health crisis. HR practitioners also reported that their health management is submerged by duelling personal and professional obligations, with 39 per cent experiencing symptoms of burnout.

The research found that prevailing stressors include work overload compounded by daily interruptions; strenuous work hours and a frenetic work pace; struggles to retain knowledge currency; role conflict attributed to incompatible demands from multiple sources; and eroding interpersonal work relationships.

BUSINESS IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT WELLNESS PRACTICES

Chronic hours, fatiguing workloads and shrinking deadlines characterize the emergent HR culture, which works at cross-purposes to corporate values, philosophies and practices that advocate wellness. Given the altruistic nature of HR's role, personal health management takes a back seat to the dizzying pace in which it fulfils its professional mandate.

If health management is the essence of strategic advantage in organizations, there are parallel strategic implications for human resources. Success and longevity as strategic business partners hinges on HR's health management practices. Contributing a full complement of skills, talents and knowledge to the strategic mandate comes from a place of "peak performance" rooted in personal wellness. Only when grounded in wellness does HR have the stamina to fully operationalize its evolving roles as internal consultant and facilitator of change.

RESTORING WORK/LIFE HARMONY

Reclaiming work/life harmony reaches beyond provisions for secondary health management interventions—EAPs, fitness regimes and stress management events—which target stress after it has taken root. Focus should be on detecting root cause culprits of work/life discord lurking in our work environments, specifically on probing into our HR departments and combing every facet of functionality to identify and eradicate—or at least control—forces sustaining work/life dissonance.

Primary interventions may alleviate operational burdens, liberating HR practitioners to reposition themselves in the strategic arena. Specifically, it may relinquish time for the evaluative phase of project management; testing the merits of HR initiatives, and ultimately, putting measurement and evaluation on the radar as compulsory to the work that's done. HR's compass must be fixed on delivering ROI data to justify program costs and benefits.

Key Findings

39% feel burnt out
5% fully commit to work/life balance
67% of management works in excess of 60 hours a week
39% said they accomplish only 50% of daily objectives.
19% have no support system
48% non-management and 70% management did not take all of their 2006 vacation days
71% experience stress resulting from technology
55% spent at least half of their day in e-communication

The research findings expose the tentative nature of wellness management practices in HR and petition us to set in motion the process by which we restore wellness. There needs to be a dialogue between colleagues to de-stigmatize attitudes and behaviours toward wellness, and HR must advocate success and professional survival as contingent upon health management. A culture of wellness is the hallmark of personal and professional excellence.

Visit www.HRThoughtLeader.com for the complete results and analysis.

Dr. Carolin Rekar Munro, CHRP, CTDP (Carolin.Rekar-Munro@durhamcollege.ca), is a consultant, professor and co-ordinator of human resources at Durham College and associate professor at Central Michigan University.

I
HR

Back to School

Best practices in campus recruitment

By Mohan Doss

STUDENTS GRADUATING FROM a university or college program are all provided similar education and training and are groomed at about the same level. So, it stands to reason that campus recruiting for entry-level positions from that pool must be easy, right? Ask a campus recruiter how easy it is and you'll receive the opposite answer. That's because the top one or two candidates are just that—one or two. Effectively competing with all the other big organizations, and going after the best students, needs a lot of strategic marketing, careful recruitment planning and execution.

THE COOL FACTOR

Employer branding communicates your Employee Value Proposition (EVP)—the totality of your organizational culture, values, attitudes and management-employee relationships. But to a student, these complex factors can be summarized into one thing—cool. Most students simply want to work for a cool company, one that demonstrates a variety of attractive qualities such as diversity, ingenuity, an appealing mission and/or a vivid presence in the media. It is important for HR to be introspective and identify the combination of factors that are most attractive to students and promote it on campuses.

While wine and cheese events are fashionable and career fairs are popular, there are other low-cost, high-efficiency ways of campus outreach such as targeting student associations and diversity club events where organizations can extract a lot of brand promotion mileage. Organizing business case or tech competitions through these associations not only improve an organization's brand but also help identify outstanding talent. Another effective way of reaching a targeted group of students is through employer info sessions, where representatives from an organization can present information about the company and its career opportunities to an invited group. These sessions also offer the opportunity for recruiters to spend some quality one-on-one time with specific students.

JOB BRANDING

While employer branding on campus helps a student figure out who they should work for, job branding helps the student answer, "What would I do there?" One of many successful ways of promoting your job brand is through offering a co-op or internship program. This helps students sample the jobs that are available within your organization. Even though not all students from a targeted educational program may get the opportunity to participate, employers can successfully create brand ambassadors for their companies on campus. With the growing power of today's peer group influence, this is one job branding opportunity that no organization can afford to miss.

It is also important to recognize that students may approach co-op and entry-level positions with some skepticism, fearful that they will be doing tedious rather than career-stream work. Providing students with information tying the position to the overall goals of the organization, and illustrating the importance of the work they would be doing, effectively promotes an organization's job brand.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Job postings are an important way to attract candidates to your jobs. While most organizations articulate the duties, responsibilities and qualifications of a position, they rarely address the most basic question applicants tend to ask: "What's in it for me?" Solid information about the value of the work experience both in terms of the student's ongoing study and as a viable stepping stone to a successful career should help attract more and better candidates.

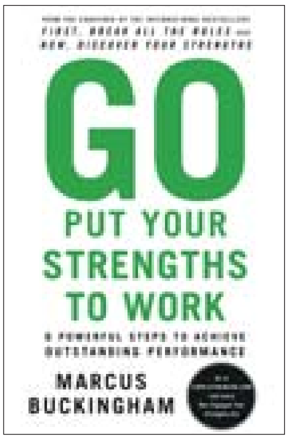
The students' experiences at an interview and how they perceive the company has a major impact on who they decide to go with. I have seen many students who had a great impression of an organization change their minds after an interview. Students usually interview with multiple employers over a short, fixed period of time, which gives them the opportunity to rate and rank them accordingly. So, it is very important for organizations to ensure all candidates have a positive interviewing experience, regardless of fit.

Other ways of selection could include developing an on-campus student development program. This would identify outstanding student talent in the early years of their education and recruit them into a group that can be monitored throughout their academic progress, supported with beyond-the-classroom learning and training opportunities or, in short, moulded to an organization's desired fit and then hired for respective positions when they graduate.

Mohan Doss (mohan@campuslogix.com) is the president of Campus Logix, a campus recruitment process outsourcing and consulting firm.

Book Reviews

GO PUT YOUR STRENGTHS TO WORK
BY MARCUS BUCKINGHAM
FREE PRESS, 2007



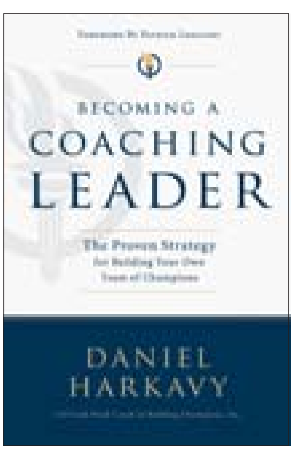
Ask HR professionals about their biggest daily challenge and they will likely say employee engagement. Many self-help HR books provide tools to keep employees motivated but are usually written for the manager, offering only a one-sided solution.

Marcus Buckingham's new book, *Go Put Your Strengths to Work,* approaches this issue from the employee side. He aims to empower readers to identify and apply their natural strengths to their daily work, the goal being higher productivity and personal satisfaction.

The book includes a link to simplystrengths.com (and an access code), which features a short online quiz to assess a reader's strength quotient. This value is rated out of 100. A result of 50 or less is an indication that the reader is not optimizing his or her strengths at work. Once this benchmark is established, Buckingham encourages the reader to make a list of daily tasks to better identify strengths and weaknesses, so the reader can eliminate or delegate the tasks at which they don't excel. Questionnaires in the book help the reader identify and apply core competencies. Each chapter also includes a corresponding online video.

This is an easy-to-understand how-to manual to improve productivity. The goals outlined in *Go Put Your Strengths to Work* are realistic and obtainable, making this a useful resource for anyone's career toolkit, regardless of whether they're on the way up or just looking to improve. —*Sarah Twomey*

BECOMING A COACHING LEADER: THE PROVEN STRATEGY FOR BUILDING YOUR OWN TEAM OF CHAMPIONS
BY DANIEL HARKAVY
THOMAS NELSON, 2007

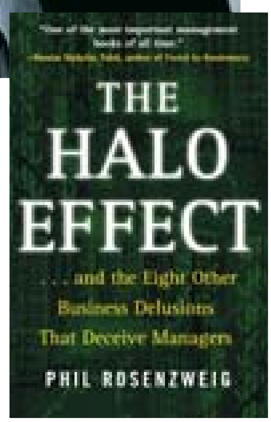


As founder, CEO and head coach of Building Champions Inc., Daniel Harkavy feels coaching others is the best way for a good leader to become a great one. Coaching leaders commit to people development and help their direct reports grow professionally and personally. In *Becoming a Coaching Leader*, Harkavy brings in his own story and other real-life executive coaching cases to show readers why coaching makes a unique leadership proposition.

Harkavy identifies eight core competencies of a coaching leader: discernment, conviction, accountability, systems, communication, self-discipline, vision and leadership. He also walks readers through his proven coaching strategy, the Core Four Success Puzzle—a personal development strategy, which includes advice on how to build a life plan, business vision, business plan and manage priorities. Once you've created your own core four, you can guide employees through the same procedure and obtain a greater level of success as a team.

One caveat: coaching leaders only work well in a coaching culture. And while this book does not elaborate on how to build a coaching culture, it is a practical how-to manual on becoming a better leader of people. Readers who are not quite that senior in their careers will also benefit from learning the business planning and priority management techniques. —*Nova Liu*

Interview



Finding a specific formula for business success is today's Holy Grail. Many books—like *Good to Great and Built to Last*—claim to have the answers. Author Phil Rosenzweig, professor at the International Institute for Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland, argues that the foundation of those books, and most of what we read about company performance in popular media, is based on flawed data and, therefore, is dangerously misleading.

In his new book, *The Halo Effect…and the Eight Other Business Delusions That Deceive Managers,* Rosenzweig reveals how we fool ourselves into believing a good story and suggests how we can get to the truth about company performance and leadership.

HRP: What is the halo effect?

PR: It's a concept in psychology that speaks to the way a general impression shapes specific judgments we make. For example, if we know a company is doing well—sales are up, profits are up—we assume they must have a great strategy, a brilliant leader, a strong culture and so forth. When the company falters—revenues fall and profits are wiped out—we tend to make the opposite assumptions—the leader is weak and the strategy faulty. Now, sometimes the company really does change in those ways, but usually it's the observer making attributions about the company based on company performance.

HRP: What are the business implications?

PR: How we misunderstand the drivers of company performance, and many of the things that we commonly believe shape company performance, are actually reflections *of* company performance. The people who try to explain performance gather lots of data but unfortunately the data is flawed. Often the material out there saying what leads to success is really a reflection of success.

Right now one of the biggest halos out there is about Google. I don't blame Google for this—they get written about with great praise, investors have bid the stock price way up. The press talks up Google's great corporate culture—it has games and free food. It has this motto that says, "Do no evil."

As long as the company is doing well we say, "Gee, Google treats its people well and that must be driving its success." Well, eventually the company's performance will falter for lots of reasons including competition, imitation, regulation, and when that happens, we're going to say, "Google was really inefficient with all that free food, it was way too indulgent and that motto was naive."

HRP: What do you say to critics who assert that the halo effect is all about perspective? Isn't an employee's perception their reality?

PR: Certainly there is an element of self-fulfilling prophecy but you need to be careful about whether you're measuring something objectively or you are telling a good story in the hopes of changing their perceptions and, ultimately, their behaviour. It's great to be positive but you shouldn't confuse that with rigorous analysis. I have issues with things that present themselves as data-driven and really aren't more than a good story.

HRP: Is there still value in these good stories if they continue to inspire?

PR: Absolutely, but you have to be careful because they are not what they say they are. They are not a clear analysis of why some companies succeed and others fail.

What's totally missing from Jim Collins's field of vision in *Good to Great* is that companies must make choices about strategy to be different from their rivals, and making those choices has risks. Collins doesn't want to talk about risks and uncertainty. These stories are reassuring and they make you feel positive, but it comes at the expense of thinking clearly about strategic choice, which is fundamentally uncertain. That approach is misleading.

HRP: Why are we quick to believe these theories?

PR: I think people like to believe what's comfortable and inspiring. Professors, teachers and journalists haven't done a good enough job of teaching people to think critically about what is put in front of them. We tell them what they want to hear and leave them asking for more. Why do people write these kinds of books? Because they are big sellers and the cycle goes on.

HRP: What compelled you to blow the whistle on this?

PR: A few years ago I had what I like to call my *Network* moment where the movie's title character, Howard Beale, says, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not gonna take it anymore!" I was seeing colleagues of mine, people with good training, say things that simply weren't true and smart managers were lapping it up. My *Network* moment led me to collect examples and explain what's really going on here and push against the tide.

HRP: What's the difference between absolute and relative performance?

PR: After the halo effect, this issue is one of most important in the book. All these ideas about formulas for success are based on a notion that business success is something you can achieve as an absolute. But in a competitive market economy, it is more relative than absolute. In order to do things better than your rivals, you have to do things differently than your rivals and take chances, which opens you up to risk of failure. The job of the manager is to carefully and appropriately gather information that will raise their chances of success but never imagine that they are going to achieve success.

HRP: One of the delusions you mention in the book is the delusion of rigorous research. Why are well-known studies like the Evergreen Project not reliable?

PR: The book about this management practice study is called *What Really Works* and it purported that this was *the* formula for business success. If you do x, you will achieve high performance. This can't be achieved, however, if all the data you gather is tinted by the halo effect. The data gathered in Evergreen were not independent of performance; in fact, it was influenced by performance. If you look at their results, the authors have not remotely shown what really leads to high performance. What they have shown is that companies that are high performers or low performers tend to be described in different ways. It's backward in terms of what we can learn by causality and effect.

HRP: Does the delusion of lasting success mean that all companies are doomed to fail? Aren't there some that have done well year after year?

PR: All companies are doomed to fail eventually. The business world is about rise and fall: best performers will regress to industry means over several years because business is about competition and rivals will copy what works. It happens to everyone—Wal-Mart and Microsoft. Organizations need to ask themselves, How can we be successful *now*? Companies that are successful in the long term probably got that way by stringing together a number of short-term successes. If you try and be a long-term success, you may overlook things you need to be a success right now.

HRP: How can we relate this to our own workplaces?

PR: Try not to let your judgments about your own company be overwhelmed by whether the performance right now is good or not good. Try to think about the components of the organization on their own merit. Take customer orientation, for example. Be careful not to think that because the company is doing well, it must be customer-oriented and any company that is not doing well has forgotten about its customer. There are ways to measure customer orientation that are very rigorous: how frequently do you contact customers about their satisfaction? How much of compensation is related to meeting customer-related targets?

HRP: How can we learn to discern between reliable indicators of company success and those that aren't?

PR: There are a lot of very good studies out there but they don't usually become bestsellers. Unfortunately, what we've never learned and will never learn is that there is no quick fix for high performance, but through reliable metric execution, we can better evaluate what works and what doesn't. Company X, for example, sells widgets and is interested in the speed of the bill-to-order process. This can be measured accurately. This information allows Company X to evaluate how effective they are at execution. What isn't useful is going to an employee at Company X and asking, "How good are you at execution?" Because employees will say, "Pretty good, because the company is doing well." Don't ask for evaluations that are shaped by the overall measure of high performance. Measure what you are trying to measure directly. Instead of asking employees if they have a strong culture, you might observe behaviours to see the way in which employees do or do not conform to certain values. All of those things are ways to measure something that are truly independent of performance.

Employee satisfaction is also tricky because people who are at successful companies will tend to say they are satisfied. This has huge implications for what managers should do. Better research shows that if you do what it takes for the company to be successful, people feel good when they play on a winning team and they have more confidence in the future. That's how you are going to make your employees happy. *—Meredith Birchall-Spencer*

INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

Executive Intervention

How HR can help management teams help themselves

By Jim Clemmer

AN ORGANIZATION'S BEHAVIOUR ripples out from the senior management team leading it. Far too seldom do attempts to lead change and/or implement HR initiatives start with the leadership of the senior management team.

AVOID DESTRUCTIVE HUMOUR

Management team members often poke fun at each other and send playful "zingers" around the meeting room. While this can add valuable additions to the team's "laughter index" and boost the team's health, too often team members blur the line between good clean fun and destructive potshots. Cowardly team members who don't have the skills to constructively confront their colleagues often wrap serious messages in humour.

HR should spotlight the problem and build agreement on a No Sniping Rule. If any team member makes a comment that sounds like a cheap shot, the others should tap their glasses or cups with a pen.

Don't allow cowardly behaviour that belittles, berates or criticizes peers or team members in front of others. Quietly point out the behaviour in personal conversations with the offender or when discussing team effectiveness with the team leader.

CONFUSING COMMUNICATIONS WITH INFORMATION

Many HR professionals and managers are great at supplying information, but they're not good at communicating it. Many HR professionals talk about communication but few really do anything about it because they confuse information dumps with communication. In response to organizational pleas for "more communication," too many HR professionals send more e-mails. Real communication is verbal and consists of a dialogue with stories and values.

MEETING MADNESS

Meetings are more important than ever in our increasingly interconnected world. Research clearly shows that when run effectively, groups make better decisions than individuals. Useful meetings involve and engage participants in problem-solving and planning. But most management meetings are poorly run.

Meetings run by HR should be a model for the whole organization. No HR professional should participate in a meeting that doesn't have an agenda with timeframes and objectives for each agenda item; clarity on whether each agenda item is there for a consensus decision; input for someone else to make a decision; an update of information; or action-planning for a decision already made. HR should keep participants on topic and set clear action plans or "next steps" following each agenda item. What was decided should be documented and followed up with a communication plan for all affected.

DECIDING HOW TO DECIDE

There is a continuum with three basic ways a management team makes a decision: command, made by a team member (often the boss) without any input from other team members; consultative, made by a team member after consulting with others who have knowledge or who must commit to the decision; and consensus, made by the entire team as a group.

The farther the team moves toward the consensus end of the continuum, the more buy-in or commitment there is to the decision. Decision-making time takes longer but implementation time and effectiveness dramatically improve.

A common source of conflict in management teams is when the type of decision-making method used is not clear to everyone at the outset. Team leaders exacerbate the problem by leading what seems to be a consultative or even consensus discussion when he or she has already made up his or her mind. Weak team leaders will often intimidate team members into "forced consensus" (an oxymoron) and leave the discussion believing that the team is united.

HR professionals can help clarify the type of decision method being used at the outset of each agenda item and facilitate discussions around whether the right approach is being used.

Effective and strategic HR professionals help management teams step back periodically to look in the mirror and review what is and isn't working with the current process. Strong HR professionals help leaders move beyond building a team of champions to building a championship team. High-performance teams partner with HR professionals to work *on* the team as well as *in* the team.

Jim Clemmer (www.Clemmer.net) is a keynote speaker, workshop leader and management team developer on practical leadership. His new book is *Moose-on-the-Table: An Organizational Fable about Courageous Conversations.*

Executive Challenge

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Executive Decision

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