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PROFESSIONAL

INNOVATION KILLERS



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RICHARD FLORIDA reveals how workers can transform our economy

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Cover illustration: C. Jaffe

Cover design: Marianna Gajewska

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HR PROFESSIONAL is published six times per year for the Human Resources Professionals

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toll-free 1-800-387-1311, fax 416-923-7264, e-mail info@hrpa.ca, www.hrpa.ca. As the premier

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HR Professional magazine is published by Naylor (Canada), Inc. 2 Bloor Street West, Suite 2001,

Toronto, ON M4W 3E2, Tel. 1-800-665-2456 — Winnipeg or 1-800-461-4828 — Toronto,

Fax 1-800-709-5551. www.naylor.com

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SUBSCRIPTIONS (Prices include shipping and handling) \$29 per year in Canada;

\$49 per year in the United States; \$69 per year International.

Published articles and advertisements do not necessarily reflect the views of HRPA.

ISSN 847-9453

HRPA is proud to be a founding member of the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations.

Published May 2009/HRP-SU309/8464



INNOVATION REQUIRES CREATIVE PEOPLE

If you haven't heard of Richard Florida in the last year, you've either sworn off all forms of news media or you've been in a coma. Formerly professor of public policy at George Mason University in Washington, the popular academic and speaker relocated to Toronto to head up the University of Toronto's new Martin Prosperity Institute. I got the chance to interview him just after his keynote at HRPA's 2009 Annual Conference & Trade Show

in January. We discussed his views on human capital in the "creative age," which you can read about on page 48.

Just days after our meeting, Florida and Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, released their much-anticipated report, *Ontario in the Creative Age*. Commissioned by Premier Dalton McGuinty, it serves as a plan to transform Ontario's failing manufacturing economy.

The ambitious 46-page report is far too detailed to fully outline here, but in it Martin and Florida suggest innovative ways in which to harness the creative potential of Ontarians. The full report is worth reading and can be found at www.HRthoughtleader.com/creativeage.

What's most exciting about their plan is that all of their recommendations for building prosperity in Ontario hinge on talent, which means HR is critical to the success of the future economy. To foster creativity and broaden our talent base, organizations will need to change their business models, redesign organizational structures and retool job functions—none of which can be successfully implemented without collective HR expertise.

In both the report and my interview, Florida advocates looking at the economic recession not as a crisis but as an unprecedented opportunity for transformation and growth. What an innovative approach.

I hope you enjoy the issue!

Meredith Birchall-Spencer

Meredith Birchall-Spencer

Editor



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JUNE/JULY 2009



REBECCA SCHALM

Rebecca Schalm, PhD, RPsych, is a practice leader for RHR International in Calgary, an executive and organizational development firm. She writes about developing a successful stress management strategy, on page 20.



TERESA MCGILL

In the high-tech industry, many talented professionals are recent immigrants who often find their performance hindered by communication issues. Teresa McGill, president of Gandy Associates, offers solutions for some common problems, on page 36.



PETER TINGLING

Peter Tingling, Ph.D, CEO of Octothorpe Software Corporation, discusses downsizing mistakes and how best to position your organization for the future, in Talent Management, on page 35.



ELIZABETH KELLY

Elizabeth Kelly penned “Innovation Killers,” on page 24. She is an award-winning freelance journalist and author of a new novel, *Apologize*, published by Knopf Canada.

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PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

BY ANTOINETTE BLUNT

REGULATING THE HR PROFESSION

The vision of the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA) is to be a global leader in advancing the profession as the essential driver of business strategy and organizational success. That means HR must continue to evolve. Such evolution has resulted in the advancement of a regulatory framework, and most specifically, the Rules of Professional Conduct. The mandate for the development of these rules stems from the *Human Resources Professionals Act of Ontario, 1990*, which gives HRPA the regulatory authority for human resources management in Ontario. The Rules of Professional Conduct were designed to protect the public (organizations, businesses and clients) by ensuring human resources professionals are competent and behave in an ethical manner.

The Rules of Professional Conduct support human resources professionals and provide the assurance and public protection that is so necessary for self-regulating bodies such as HRPA. The rules incorporate HRPA's Code of Ethics but provide more behavioural specificity to help guide the practice of HRPA members. When members renew their membership to HRPA, in 2009, in addition to confirming they will abide by the Code of Ethics, they will also verify their commitment to follow the Rules of Professional Conduct.

Over the next year or so, HRPA will continue developing Standards of Practice that will provide more specific guidance in certain areas deemed necessary to support our members.

Making it happen

The need for practice standards or guidelines will be defined through inquiries made to the association, complaints or other communications from members or from the general public. Emerging trends in human resources or the

workplace environment may demand the development of new standards or guidelines. New or amended legislation (such as the *Employment Standards Act* or the *Labour Relations Act*), may also require the revision of existing standards or guidelines. A literature search will be carried out to inform the development of these guidelines and to incorporate current evidence-based information.

Standards and guidelines will be developed with expert professional assistance if required and input from the HRPA's Professional Standards Committee. In addition, the association may consult with members, and when appropriate, with other key stakeholders such as employers and government—anyone who may be affected by the standard or guideline. Consultation may also be warranted and could occur through a number of means such as member surveys and focus groups with potential revisions based on the feedback obtained. Approval would first require review and input from the Professional Standards Committee with recommendations to the Board of Directors for approval. Approved standards or guidelines and any subsequent amendments would be communicated to our membership.

The introduction of these rules reflects a milestone in the maturation of the human resources management profession in Ontario. Self-regulation is a privilege. **HR**



Antoinette Blunt, BScN, MPA, CHRP is the new chair of HRPA's Board of Directors (2009-2011). She is president of Ironside Consulting Services Inc. located in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., specializing in human resources and labour relations services for employers.

UP FRONT

COMPENSATION | CAREERS | OTTAWA

MONEY

HR GENERALISTS' SALARIES ACROSS SECTORS

ACCORDING TO A RECENT Payscale SURVEY OF ONTARIO HR GENERALISTS' SALARIES, IT APPEARS THERE ARE NO HUGE DISCREPANCIES ACROSS DIFFERENT SECTORS. THE SURVEY WAS FOR GENERALISTS WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE AND FIVE TO EIGHT YEARS EXPERIENCE.

SECTOR AVERAGE:
MANUFACTURING AND DISTRIBUTION

\$56,919

FINANCIAL SERVICES

\$54,954

SOFTWARE

DEVELOPMENT

\$55,902

HEALTH CARE

\$54,125

BUSINESS CONSULTING

\$55,695

ACCOUNTING/AUDITING

\$55,969

INSURANCE

\$55,024

NON-PROFIT

\$53,512

GOVERNMENT

\$59,665

Source: Payscale.com

CAREERS

GET MAD TO GET AHEAD

Getting angry at work may help you move up the corporate ladder, according to researchers from the Harvard Medical School.

A 44-year study tracking 824 men and women found those who repress their frustration are three times as likely to say they've reached their career limit. But those participants who vented once in a while were more likely to be professionally well-established.

"We all feel anger, but individuals who learn how to express their anger while avoiding the explosive and self-destructive consequences of unbridled fury have achieved something incredibly powerful in terms of overall emotional growth and mental health. If we can define and harness those skills, we can use them to achieve great things," says lead researcher, George Vaillant.

Source: The Observer



GOVERNMENT

FEDS HELP EMPLOYERS AVOID LAYOFFS

In response to the economic slowdown across the country, the federal government has made changes to its work-share program to help employers avoid job cuts.

Work-sharing, a current element of the Employment Insurance (EI) program, helps employers avoid layoffs by offering EI income benefits to qualifying workers who work a reduced work week while their employer recovers. For example, workers might reduce their work week to four paid days, while collecting EI for the fifth day.

The changes include extending work-sharing agreements by 14 weeks, to a maximum of 52 weeks, and increasing access to work-sharing agreements by easing qualifying criteria. These changes will be in effect until April 3, 2010.

To qualify, a company must be reducing operations for reasons beyond their control and have a plan explaining how they can resume normal activities when the work-share program ends.

For more information, go to www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/work_sharing/index.shtml.



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DIVERSITY

MASTERING ABORIGINAL INCLUSION



The Aboriginal Human Resources Council (AHRC) has introduced Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion—a two-day workshop or self-study program on recruiting, retaining and advancing Aboriginal workers.

The business case for hiring First Nations peoples is considerable, according to AHRC president, Kelly Lendsay. “Not only can Canadian organizations tap into a growing talent pool, but Aboriginal perspectives can help drive innovation and build links to business opportunities with First

Nations communities,” he says. “It’s also a huge corporate social responsibility opportunity. Canadian consumers and shareholders want to know they’re investing in real social challenges in Canada. And with 52 per cent of First Nations children living in poverty, every job that’s created eliminates part of our social deficit.”

Students can choose between a five-module self-study course or attend two-day workshops at select locations across Canada. Learning outcomes include:

- Support the business case for creating a workforce that is inclusive of Aboriginal people
- Locate and communicate effectively with urban and rural Aboriginal talent
- Strategies to recruit, train, mentor and advance Aboriginal employees
- Become an employer-of-choice for Aboriginal talent

For more information on the program or to find a workshop near you, go to www.aboriginalhr.ca.

Immigration

NAFTA work permits boosted to three years

Professionals seeking temporary Canadian work permits under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) can now receive permits for up to three years, according to the federal Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Previously, NAFTA workers were required to renew their work permit every 12 months.

The change matches the United States’ new rules on issuance of Trade NAFTA (TN) work visas to Canadian and Mexican professionals under NAFTA.

For more information, go to www.cic.gc.ca/english/hire/index.asp.



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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

DEMAND FOR FINANCIAL COUNSEL SKYROCKETING

THE NUMBER OF FINANCIALLY DISTRESSED EMPLOYEES ACCESSING FINANCIAL COUNSELLING FROM EAP PROVIDERS IS RISING TWICE AS FAST AS ALL OTHER EAP SERVICES, REPORTS SHEPELL-FGI.

LAST YEAR SAW A 13 PER CENT INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR FINANCIAL COUNSELLING OVER 2007, AND AS THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS DEEPENS, SO TOO HAVE CALL VOLUMES, WHICH ROSE EVEN HIGHER IN DECEMBER AND EARLY 2009 ACCORDING TO ROD PHILLIPS, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF SHEPELL-FGI. THE COMPANY ALSO REPORTS:

20.3% INCREASE IN CASES RELATED TO COLLECTIONS ISSUES

24.4% INCREASE IN CREDITOR PROBLEMS

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41% INCREASE FOR FINANCIAL COUNSELLING RELATED TO DIVORCE

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RESEARCH

HRPA TO STUDY FOREIGN-TRAINED HR PROFESSIONALS

The Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA) is undertaking a study to better understand the challenges and barriers facing foreign-trained HR professionals entering the Ontario labour market.

The association, which represents more than 18,000 Ontario HR professionals, is currently soliciting participants for a number of focus groups it will be conducting with internationally educated HR professionals later this year. The focus groups will ask participants about their experience, both positive and negative, with Ontario's HR labour market.

HRPA also wants to determine if routes for obtaining the Certified Human Resources

Professional designation should be altered to better accommodate the skills and experiences of internationally educated HR professionals, says Claude Balthazard, HRPA's director of HR excellence.

The association hopes the research will lead to the development of an integration awareness strategy for Ontario employers who are willing to develop culturally sensitive selection, orientation and engagement strategies in their workplaces to better acclimatize foreign-trained HR professionals.

For more information and to register for upcoming focus groups, please visit www.hrpa.ca/hriep.

TIP FROM THE TOP



JAC FITZ-ENZ, PHD, FOUNDER OF THE SARATOGA INSTITUTE, ON **PREPAREDNESS**: "READINESS IS THE PERCENTAGE OF KEY POSITIONS WITH AT LEAST ONE FULLY QUALIFIED (COMPETENT) PERSON READY TO TAKE OVER *NOW*."

"IF WE HAVE PEOPLE WHO CAN STEP IN AND TAKE OVER AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE, WE WILL PROBABLY EXPERIENCE FEWER SLOWDOWNS IN THE EVENT OF UNFORESEEN EMERGENCIES. THIS CADRE OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL CAN ALSO BE MOBILIZED QUICKLY FOR PROBLEM SOLVING, TEAM PROJECTS OR NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES."

—*excerpted from The ROI of Human Capital*

Compensation

Huge wage, benefits gaps favour public sector

Federal employees make an average of 17.3 per cent higher salaries than their private sector counterparts, according to a study by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB). The research also shows an average gap of 7.9 per cent between comparable provincial government and private sector occupations across Canada.

CFIB members say the public sector's fatter compensation packages make it harder for them to compete for talent.

On average, provincial employees make \$52,863 per year, while an average equivalent private sector salary is \$49,002. Ontario has the highest disparity, with a \$7,000 spread between



its public sector's average salary of \$60,656 versus a comparable private sector wage of \$53,682.

When pensions and other benefits are included, the gap widens to 41.7 per cent in the federal public sector and 24.9 per cent at the provincial level.

"Our members find it perverse that they're funding the public sector with their tax dollars to poach away their employees—especially after they'd trained them," says CFIB president, Catherine Swift. She says the problem is especially acute in smaller communities where lower living costs make the wage and benefits disparities appear even larger.

UPFRONT

BEST WORKPLACES | CONDUCT

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THE GREAT PLACE TO WORK INSTITUTE RECENTLY RELEASED ITS FOURTH ANNUAL BEST WORKPLACES IN CANADA LIST. WHILE THERE IS NO SINGLE RIGHT WAY TO BECOME A GREAT PLACE TO WORK, THE SURVEY FOUND THERE ARE FIVE TRUST-BUILDING ELEMENTS COMMON TO THE 75 WORKPLACES ON THE LIST: CREDIBILITY, RESPECT, FAIRNESS, PRIDE AND CAMARADERIE. THE TOP 10 COMPANIES:

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SEX SAY NO MORE, SAY NO MORE

Next time you hear an employee tell a racy joke or overhear some flirting, don't be so sure it's harmless. Even if the staff involved found it funny, it's probably hurting morale. So says a groundbreaking paper from the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, co-authored by researchers from the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management and the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Management.

The researchers looked at the effects of sexual behaviour in the workplace such as jokes, innuendo and flirtation, as well as whether the men and women involved get anything positive, like social bonding, out of it. Researchers found even employees who enjoyed the behaviour tended to be withdrawn from work, felt less valued and



reported depressive symptoms more often than those who had little exposure to this conduct in the office.

Co-author and Rotman professor Jennifer Berdahl says the study's findings should act as "sage advice" for employers. "We approached the study with an open mind," she says. "We thought maybe these behaviours are a positive thing for employees who enjoy them. And then we found they weren't."

WOMEN IVEY LEADERSHIP RENEWAL PROGRAM

The second installment of ReConnect, the first-ever leadership renewal program for professional women returning to work, is scheduled for this fall. The program, launched last spring by the Richard Ivey School of Business and sponsored by CIBC, is designed for women who have left the workforce for a minimum two-year period. The program is a weeklong workshop at the University of Western Ontario's Ivey Business School in London, followed by a two-day intensive program in Toronto that covers business issues such as governance, finance and global trends.

"It really enriched my communications and presentation skills—my presence. When I came into the position I have now I didn't need to be brought up to speed," says Maureen Kelly, who, after completing the program, went on to get a job with CIBC as a financial advisor—at the same level as when she left to raise her children.



More than one-third of highly skilled women take a leave of absence from their careers and while 93 per cent of those want to return to work, only 74 per cent succeed in doing so, with a low 40 per cent returning to work on a full-time basis, according to a study conducted by the Center for Work-Life Policy and the *Harvard Business Review*.

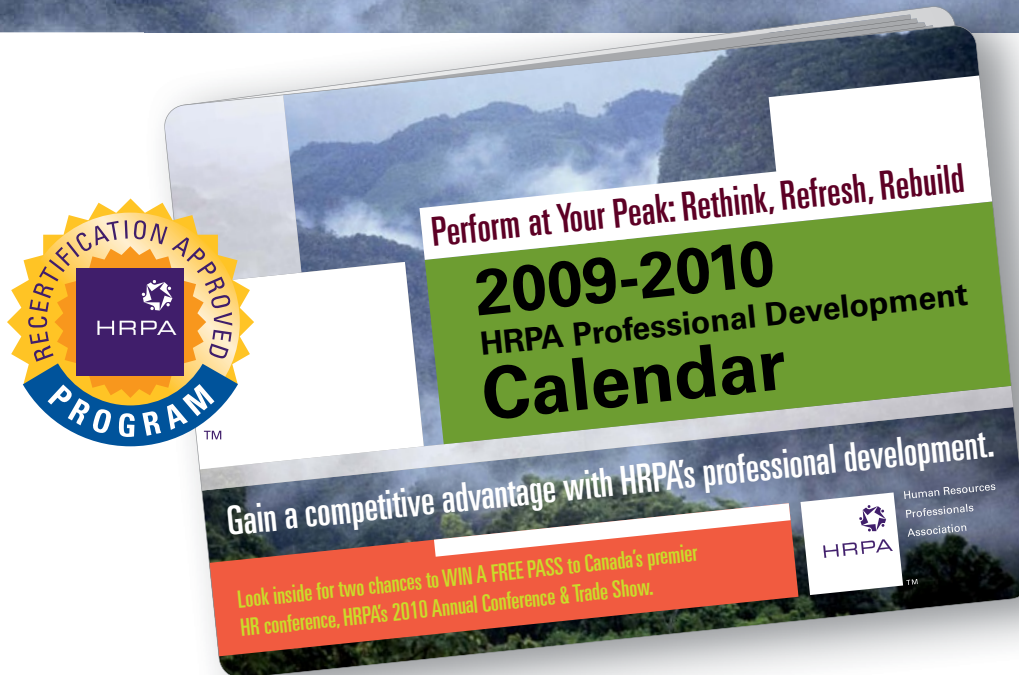
"Canadian businesses benefit from having a strong complement of talented women in their ranks," says Jacqueline Moss, executive vice-president of human resources at CIBC. "ReConnect will provide a source of talented professional women for employers looking to reinforce their management teams with highly skilled leaders."

ReConnect module 1 takes place October 26–30 and module 2 is November 16–17.

For more information, visit www.reconnectyourcareer.ca.

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About HRPAs

The Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA) is Canada's HR thought leader with more than 18,000 members in 28 chapters in Ontario and other locations across Canada and around the world. HRPAs is internationally recognized for its knowledge, innovation and leadership. It connects its membership to an unmatched range of HR information resources, events, professional development and networking opportunities and it annually hosts the world's second largest HR conference. In Ontario, HRPAs grants the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation, the national standard for excellence in human resources management.



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SETTING PRECEDENT: RECESSIONS AND SEVERANCE

As our economy worsens, the number of organizations seeking to reduce labour costs through downsizing and corporate reorganizations is becoming increasingly common.

While employers attempt to survive yet another recession through various workplace restructurings, it's important to understand just how organizational practices in the business world influence decision-making in our legal system. Specifically, whether employers are justified in offering smaller severance packages in a recessionary economy and, if employees should be entitled to larger severance packages due to the lack of comparable positions in a depressed job market.

A quick survey of cases ranging from the 1960s to the present shows a distinct judicial shift on the subject, in which courts initially stated that businesses should be granted a degree of

hardship experienced by employees by detailing the lack of employment opportunities. As a result, judgments in this period often ignored the company's financial circumstances or the reason for dismissal. For instance, the court in *Bullen vs. Proctor & Redfern (1996)* stated, "...the financial burdens of the recession ought not to be shifted to the backs of employees by decreasing notice periods to which they would otherwise be entitled."

Current application

Fast-forwarding to the present, the belief that notice of termination is a contractual matter, not to be influenced by a company's financial circumstances or the broader economic conditions, was again reflected in the very recent decision *Munoz vs. Canac Kitchens (2009)* where the court ignored the steady decline in the company's business, or that the company was in danger of closing down entirely, when it awarded a 12-month notice period. Moreover, this past January, a month in

“... businesses should be granted a degree of flexibility in addressing economic challenges”

flexibility in addressing economic challenges, to the more recent view that the state of the economy and the corresponding availability of comparable employment must be considered. This was the case in the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Bardal vs. Globe and Mail Ltd. (1960)*, where the courts outlined the various factors that should determine an employee's reasonable notice period; one of them being the availability of alternate, comparable employment.

Looking back

In the 1980s, the judge in *Ansari vs. B.C. Hydro (1986)* found economic considerations such as reduced business activities or opportunities should not be a factor in fixing the period of reasonable notice.

With the emergence of the 1990s recession, however, courts began to emphasize the economic

which Canada lost 129,000 jobs, the court in *Mahesuram vs. Canac Kitchens (2009)* awarded 18 months' notice to a 59-year-old accounting supervisor with 19 years of service.

The takeaway from this look at recessionary employment case law is the importance of using written employment agreements, containing carefully crafted termination clauses that clearly stipulate the employer's obligation with respect to providing notice of termination or severance in lieu. In fact, implementing (or negotiating) reasonable severance provisions that allow for greater workplace or labour flexibility is a prime example of the types of proactive steps an organization can take in increasing its ability to weather the bad times. **HR**

Jeff Hopkins, LLB, specializes in all aspects of labour and employment law with an emphasis on wrongful dismissal litigation at Grosman, Grosman & Gale LLP.

HELPING PEOPLE MANAGE IN TIMES OF STRESS

What a difference a year makes. We've gone from helping our organizations manage the pressures of a boom economy to helping them deal with a global recession. The situation went from one of sudden, unexpected crisis to that of chronic, daily stress. The pressure to make good decisions and produce results has never been more intense. To successfully emerge from this healthy and intact, we all need to hone our ability to manage stress at work.

Identifying a stress success strategy

Stress does not show people at their best. Before you can suggest strategies for coping, you need to diagnose how an individual reacts to stress. Coaching should focus on helping them develop insight into how they are translating their stress into career-limiting or team-damaging behaviours in the workplace.

Once people understand how they respond to stress, you can help them develop a strategy for managing it more effectively. Here are some typical reactions and accompanying strategies and advice to give people coping with stress. **HR**

| REACTIONS TO STRESS | COPING STRATEGIES |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "I struggle to be productive—I lack focus and energy." | Deploy every organizing technique you know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize • Focus on one thing at a time • Schedule regular breaks to help maintain focus • Keep lists on paper, not in your head |
| "I'm having a hard time making decisions." | Learn the difference between a good decision-making process with a bad outcome and a bad decision. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set clear deadlines for when a decision needs to be made • Take time to gather information and evaluate options • Partner with others to talk through alternatives and their implications • Encourage people to give themselves a break—they won't make the right decision every time |
| "I tend to react emotionally and take it out on other people even though I don't mean to." | When stress builds up it can surface quickly and unexpectedly. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be vigilant. People don't forget how they are treated • Make a note of the people, issues or situations that are most likely to trigger reactions • Encourage outlets for anxiety such as exercise or meditation • When it happens, acknowledge it, take ownership for it and apologize |
| "I get paranoid—do they want to get rid of me?" | Encourage people to get things out in the open. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions. They may not always get answers, but it is important to let others know you are concerned • If someone has genuine questions about performance, now is the time to give feedback • Manage the need for reassurance. Asking questions is healthy; asking for daily reinforcement is not • Quell the desire to listen to rumours • Keep people focused on doing their job to the best of their ability |
| "I'm not sure about my future here. Maybe it is time to start looking." | Economic crises stimulate job search behaviour. Remind people of the downside: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To justify voluntarily leaving an employer they have to find faults, which can increase their level of dissatisfaction • Losing the motivation to perform—this is not the time to be seen as a slacker • Changing jobs is one of the top five most stressful life events. Be sure this is the time they want to add that stress to their lives |

Rebecca Schalm, PhD, R Psych is a practice leader with RHR International in Calgary, an international executive and organizational development firm.

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SEVERANCE TRENDS FOR CANADIAN EMPLOYEES

As the global economy grinds through recession, an unfortunate reality for many struggling companies is restructuring and downsizing at operations around the world.

Understanding how severance practices vary by country is a critical component of an effective global workforce strategy and should be directly aligned with a company's business strategy.

Right Management recently conducted a global severance practice study drawing on more than 1,500 responses from HR professionals and senior managers across 28 countries, including Canada. The major finding was that employees laid off in Canada receive greater severance than their U.S. counterparts—regardless of employee level or length of service.

Best practices

Employees who are offered severance benefits in any country should be asked to sign a general release of all claims against their employer—regardless of societal norms. At the very least, it may cut down on the few cases that are brought against employers outside North America; at best, it pre-empts a pattern of litigation. Managing borderless workforces in a global economy may increase the provision of releases, as many North American practices tend to gain global acceptance over time.

Companies in North America lead the way with waivers and releases—meant to cut down legal claims against employers by fired employees. Countries outside the United States do not require releases as frequently, due at least in part to their cultures not being as litigious and the fact

that rights of terminated employees are more defined by statutes and regulations.

The concept of severance has changed a lot from the days when it was simply used to provide compensation for employees whose positions were eliminated. As organizations are challenged to attract

and retain needed talent, separation agreements may not mean a complete disengagement from the employee, but rather serve as a means to continue the relationship on an as-needed basis. **HR**

Monika Morrow is national practice leader with Right Management, a leading global provider of integrated human capital consulting services.

“Understanding how severance practices vary by **country** is a critical component of an effective **global** workforce strategy”

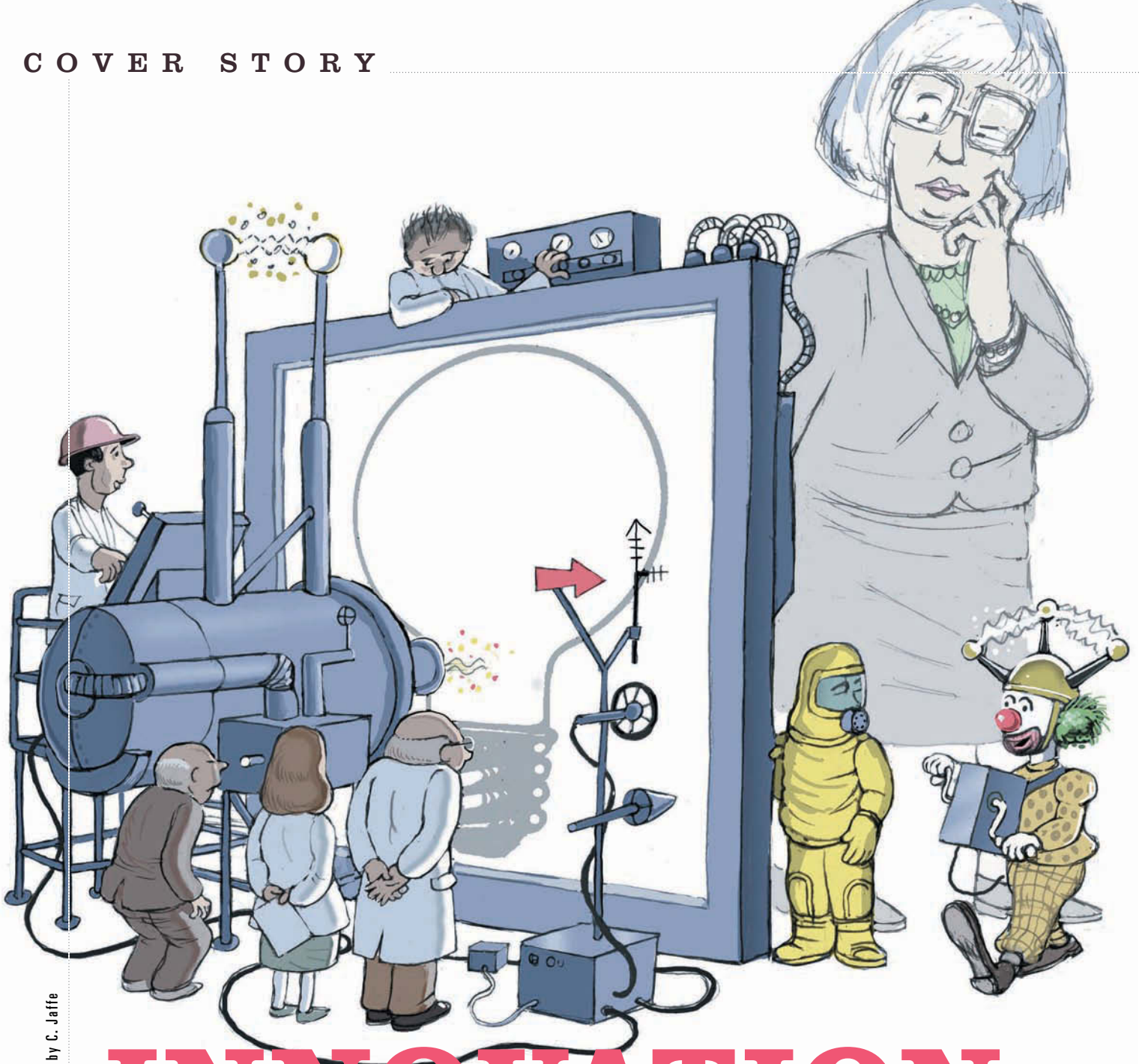
Additionally, Canadians who are fired from professional and/or management positions earn greater severance than their counterparts worldwide. In fact, top Canadian executives received as much as 4.66 weeks of severance per year of service, compared to a worldwide mean of 3.52 weeks per year of service.

Benefits

Regardless of position or level, the top benefits offered tend to be assistance programs (such as outplacement and financial planning), continued benefits (such as health care), and to a lesser extent, company resources (such as a car). Companies in the Americas consistently offer continued health benefits more so than in Europe or Asia Pacific, which may be the result of more socialized health-care programs available in countries outside the Americas (except Canada).

OTHER KEY FINDINGS:

- Canadian employers are more likely (76%) to enforce a cap on severance payments than the rest of the world (56%).
- 97% of separated employees in Canada are required to sign a waiver before they can access severance benefits.
- 43% of companies in Canada tend to offer severance right away with no minimum tenure required, which is in line with the worldwide mean of 42%.



Illustrations by C. Jaffe

INNOVATION KILLERS

Identify and fix the six things your organization is doing
to quash creativity and growth

BY ELIZABETH KELLY

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING TIMES, and adaptation and creative thinking—innovation—is a competitive necessity. And best of times or worst of times, it's the innovators—the Apples, WestJets and Googles of the world—that come out on top.

By nurturing innovation at every level of your organization, you can reap staggering rewards—not only in terms of the bottom line, but in increased job satisfaction among employees. It may even ensure that not only will you survive the downturn, you might even flourish.

Unfortunately, true innovators are a rare breed. So many companies, either through Byzantine process or idea-crushing cultures, manage to quash creativity and innovation at the root—with its people.

Herewith, *HR Professional* presents six ways to kill innovation in your company (along with plenty of ideas to make it flourish from some global innovation experts).

➔ ONE

FOCUS LIKE A LASER BEAM

A quick and easy way to sap the strength from your innovation process is to turn on the tunnel vision.

“Too many people think about innovation too narrowly,” says Judy Estrin, former CTO of Cisco.

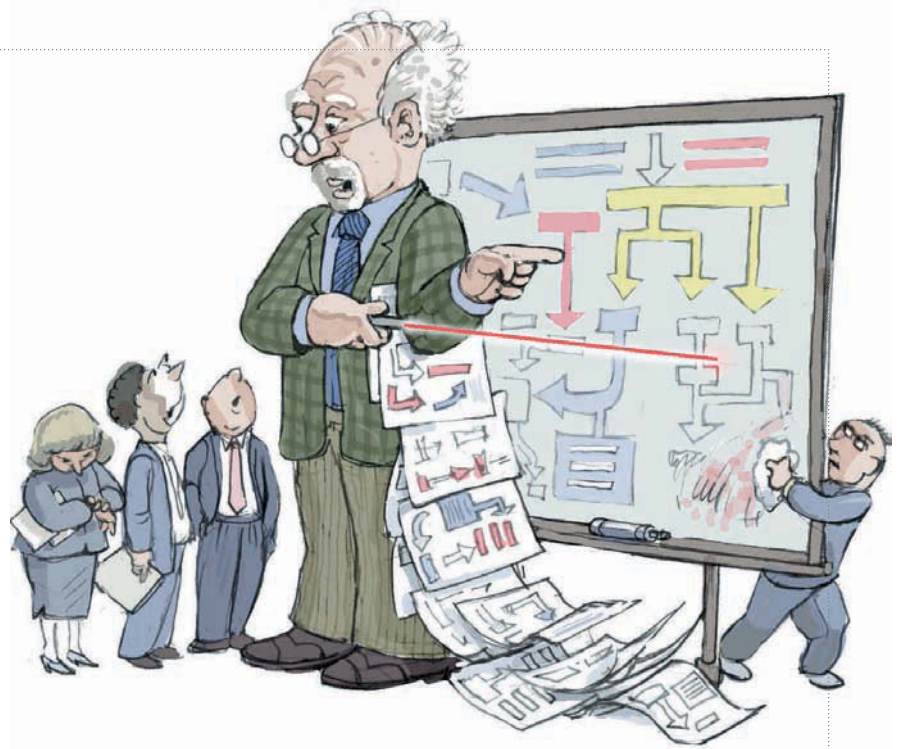
There are two kinds of innovation. Incremental innovation improves on what already exists, such as product or process. Break-through innovation looks to the future with an eye to creating

growth markets years down the road.

Companies need a balance of both, according to Estrin, author of *Closing the Innovation Gap, Reigniting the Spark of Creativity in a Global Economy*. “You need to be planting the seeds for the future at the same time that you are incrementally innovating. Companies have become increasingly focused on incremental innovation and they aren’t doing enough to set up the longer term or what I call future-growth horizon.”

Don’t be afraid to customize and diversify your management goals and strategies, allowing for distinctive methodologies and approaches even within the same company.

Estrin cites the example of FedEx: “Here is a company that really has to focus on operational excellence yet they have a commitment to long-term innovation. They have something called FedEx labs, which is very connected to the business, but it’s not managed the way the rest of the organization is run. It’s focused on the moment but has strategic vision and invests in the future.”



➔ TWO

MICROMANAGE YOUR INNOVATION EFFORT

Want to stamp out innovation in your organization? Get in the way.

Let go of dogma and restrictive management techniques—creative leadership is about good instincts, patience and nurturing.

“The role of leadership in innovation is to create the right environment, to inspire by communicating a shared vision and purpose; to provide the resources and spread those resources in a balanced way between addressing today’s problems and addressing the future; to create the environment where teams of people can work together and then get out of the way—with the exception of focusing on removing the barriers to innovation,” says Estrin.

Harvard Business School Professor, Dr. Linda Hill, author of *Managing Up* and the forthcoming

Collective Genius (2011) has travelled the world to better understand how leadership affects innovation.

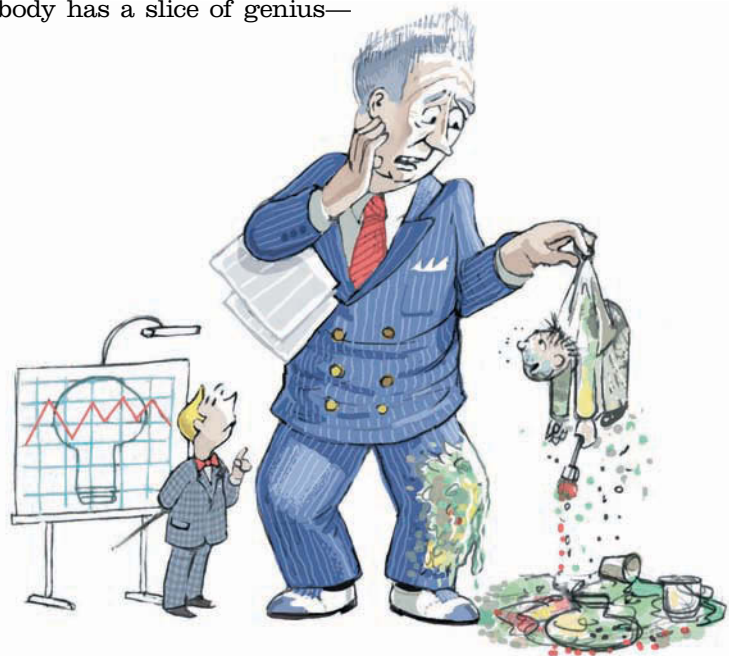
“One of the most important roles of a leader is to set direction; but, in reality, if you’re going to do breakthrough innovation, you don’t exactly know what direction you’re going to go in.”

One of Hill’s ongoing case studies, HCL Technologies, a successful Indian IT company, subscribes to the revolutionary notion: Employee First, Customer Second.

Through savvy use of social-networking, HCL encourages the formation of diverse interest-based communities that develop new ideas and then wrestle with each other for support and funding. It works. The company has an excellent track record when it comes to attracting top talent.

“Innovation leaders need to focus on shaping context as opposed to setting the direction,” says Hill. “Everybody has a slice of genius—

the leader’s role is to unleash individual genius and harness it for the collective good.”



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➡ THREE

KEEP THINGS NEAT AND ORDERLY

Innovation thrives in chaos.
Keep it down by tidying it up.

Deep innovation, says Estrin, is all about ambiguity. It's about trying and testing, when you don't know the outcome. "Many business managers are uncomfortable with disruptive innovation because it's a messy process. You can't plan it. You can't control it," she says.

And nor are you meant to.

At architectural firm HOK Global, employees are encouraged to "make a mess," says Keri Daniel, HR programs manager at the firm's Toronto office.

"In HR, we are constantly reminded of the value of incorporating design thinking into our HR processes and programs. In our space planning, for example, we allow ample room for designers to make a mess, to spread their work out physically and engage their peers in impromptu 'desk critiques' of emerging designs. We encourage a culture that is open to risk, with open-door policies and an atmosphere where input from all levels of the organization is encouraged and valued."

Google, Twitter and Zappos are also known for creative workplaces, says Sue Marks, Wisconsin-based CEO of Pinstripe. "The CEO's 'office' at Zappos is a cube in the middle of the chaos."

Structure is also valuable to innovation, but you need to know what of kind of scaffolding to put into place. Collin Maria Ezzell, division director for The Creative Group's Toronto office, suggests asking people to come to brain-

storming sessions with a certain number of ideas, setting ground rules around acceptable behaviour and trying to limit tangents without stifling the creative process.

➡ FOUR

CONTROLLED CULTURE

Keep your organization in also-ran territory by limiting innovation input and restricting its creation to the top.

put a man on the moon before the end of the decade. In that case, pronouncement was the first step towards realization.

HOK Global acts as both mentor and coach to employees, often hosting various events with an eye to infusing the company culture with innovation and creativity. There are weekly studio critiques in which employees or guest speakers talk about design innovation.

Volunteer employees from all levels make up the design core, which was formed to spark creative discussion and activity and act as a social catalyst, promoting discourse among different disciplines.



"Companies need to be able to develop the capacity for innovation. That means very different ways of thinking about it, including not limiting innovation to creative functions like R&D, but trying to develop an overall innovation culture in the organization," says Dr. Hill.

Constructing a clear innovation statement is critical, like former U.S. president John F. Kennedy's 1961 declaration that the U.S. would

Keri Daniel also cites HOK's Idea Board, which was set up to encourage Blue Ocean-type thinking (ideas for new business in uncharted waters), as a springboard for creativity. Essentially, a team of senior leaders review all ideas submitted by employees of all levels and if the employee's idea is selected, resources are allocated to bring the idea to fruition. No idea is outrageous or unwelcome, she says.


FIVE
**LOOK INWARD
FOR INNOVATION
IDEAS**

A surefire way to stifle innovation is to keep your organization firmly focused inward. Don't look beyond your walls for new ideas.

Take advantage of what you can get from the greater world—avail yourself of regional and international talent beyond your own organization.

“Netflix offered a \$1 million prize to the individual or team that could increase the power and effectiveness of their suggestion engine by 10 per



“It’s essential to take risks and reward creativity.”

cent. At the end of the day a team won a \$50,000 consolation prize for a nine per cent improvement. Could this have happened as quickly and cost-effectively, if Netflix only used talent inside the organization?” asks Marks.

Half of all Procter and Gamble’s products emerge from outside sources, part of an international program they call Connect and Develop.

Do what your competitors won’t do. According to *Business Week*, Genentech, unlike their industry counterparts, encourages its researchers to publish their findings in academic journals. Consequently, they can recruit top scientific talent.


SIX
PUNISH FAILURE

Forge a culture where people are afraid to take risks and watch your profits fall!

“All great companies find different ways to be innovative but they are all different. All bad companies also find different ways to kill innovation,” says Claude Legrand, program director of the Centre of Excellence in Innovation Management at the Schulich Executive Development Centre in Toronto. “Very innovative companies usually

have some areas that are innovative and some not. One of the few that is innovative almost throughout is Google. 3M has a pioneering R&D team. Starbucks has creative staff-motivation programs. Lululemon and Running Room have novel marketing strategies.”

It’s essential to take risks and to reward creativity. It’s equally necessary to accept the consequences, both the good and bad that can happen as a direct result of taking chances—and this practice and philosophy needs to prevail throughout your company hierarchy.

“Equally important to the CEO and top leadership fostering innovation, middle managers must relish it and not be threatened by it. And when something fails, celebrate the failure! Microsoft and Apple have done a great job at this,” says Marks.

At Intuit Inc. in California, a software company that makes Quick-*en*, Turbo Tax and its Canadian

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version, Quick Tax, the HR team champions innovation by organizing projects such as Intuit Idea Jams, which involve one-day con-

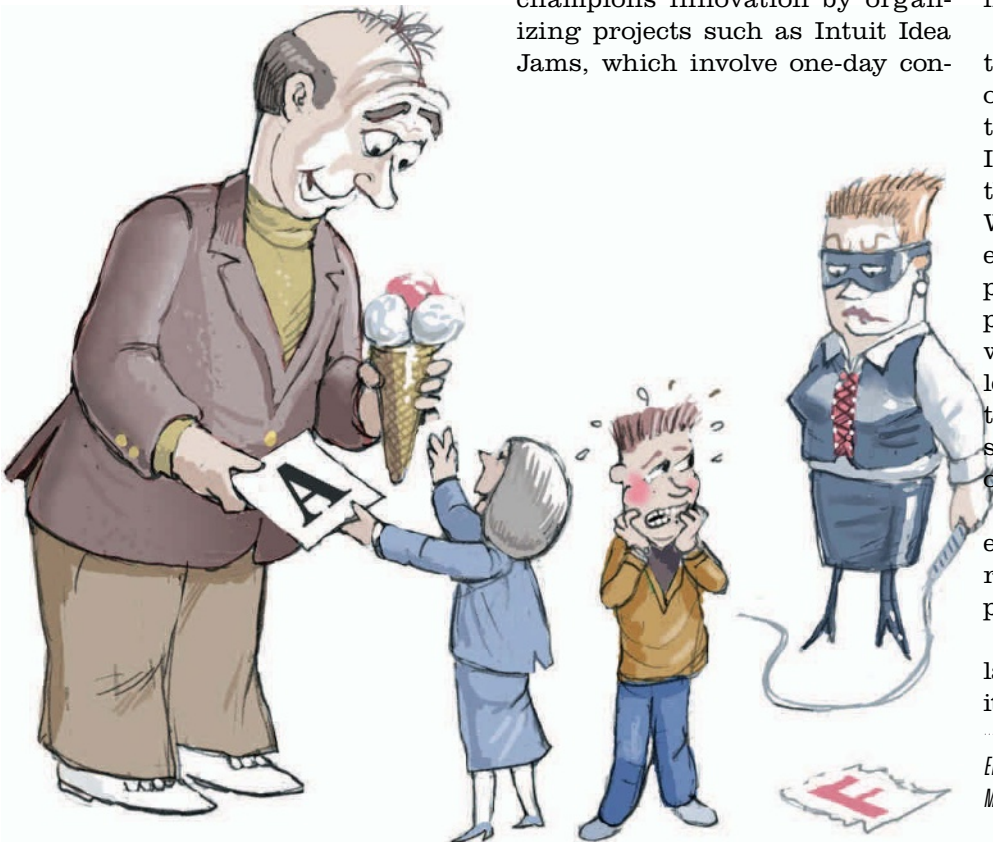
centrated sessions spent developing new innovations.

"The HR team used the Idea Jam to innovate around the company's onboarding process. Those innovative ideas often continue past the Idea Jam to become the focus of the employee's "unstructured time." With unstructured time, employees have the option to devote 10 per cent of their time to work on projects they're passionate about, whether solving customer problems, learning new skills or innovating to improve the work environment," says Allison Green, Intuit manager of corporate communications.

In the end, an innovative culture emerges from combined effort—it's rarely imposed with any degree of prolonged success.

"Innovation is the result of collaborative work," says Dr. Hill, "and it's really hard work." **HR**

Elizabeth Kelly is an award-winning freelance journalist from Merrickville, Ont.



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MERGERS, MANAGEMENT AND MESSAGES

Maintaining morale during a merger takes a lot more than handing out corporate coffee mugs. Without solid leadership backed by strategic communication, companies will lose valued employees and see productivity dive during this turbulent time.

For employees in the acquired companies, mergers are emotional events. For the optimism of opportunity to counterbalance the pessimism of the unknown, human resources needs to support honest, abundant communication.

Day 1

Start communicating with all employees immediately because uncertainty and a lack of trust will create a vacuum that will be filled by rumour.

The day of the announcement, the CEO should talk to all the new employees in person or via webcast; and senior executives should hold town hall meetings at all key locations during the first week to provide a high-level view of the vision for the future, why the company was purchased and what employees can expect.

To ensure leaders are consistent and clear, they should deliver the same key messages, work from the same presentations and distribute the same print materials, such as brochures on the merger's benefits and a corporate overview.

Introduce new employees to their colleagues and feature employees from different levels in the company, especially ones who have benefited from earlier integrations, explaining their jobs and welcoming the new employees to the company.

Manager communication

Executives must meet with local managers and supervisors regularly to listen to their views on employee concerns, as they are vital to the integration.

These managers will be thirsty for meaningful information they can take back to their employees. Executives should share as much as they can in the beginning and at regular intervals during the merger—local managers will appreciate being part of the loop.

Corporate pipelines

These questions and answers should also be shared with employees—via internal press releases, podcasts, intranet postings, Facebook—to provide a steady flow of information to everyone and provide a way for employees to ask questions or express concerns, which should be followed up on immediately.

Any official communication should avoid acronyms, corporate jargon or terms new employees might not understand. The language should be concise, simple and steer clear of overly positive rhetoric.

To avoid losing valued employees or plummeting productivity, senior management must first deal with the top merger-related employee concerns, including job security, changes in locations, job descriptions, compensation, reporting structure and systems. To reduce the uncertainty, they should provide a timeline of projected decisions.

Once decisions have been made it's important for the local managers to discuss them first with the individuals or teams directly affected, then deliver the news company-wide.

Building bonds

On top of feedback from managers, corporate communication vehicles should make use of any employee opinion research the acquired company has produced. This will reveal values shared by employees in both the acquired and acquiring company. As the merger progresses, employee communication should continue to seek out and respond to issues through managers and other feedback mechanisms including surveys and focus groups.

From these shared values, the team-building can begin. Bonds can also be built through local sports teams, charity fundraising and social activities. They are an important part of identifying with the new employer and thanking employees for getting through the stress that a merger inevitably brings. **HR**

Barb Sawyers is a writer and communication consultant from Toronto. She has provided communication services on several public and private sector mergers.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

During an economic downturn, employee fear of layoffs becomes an unfortunate reality. This causes stress levels to climb and engagement to nosedive—a dangerous combination since studies show that engaged workforces are 50 per cent more productive and 33 per cent more profitable.

In a time when companies rely on staff to help them through the slump, HR leaders can ensure employees are motivated by putting the right engagement drivers in place.

Communication

“Nothing kills employee engagement more than a lack of communication and a transparent relationship between the executive, management and employee levels,” says Razor Suleman, founder and CEO of I Love Rewards, a web-based employee rewards and recognition program provider. A recent survey by the Institute for Corporate Productivity found that employees cited having a good relationship with their immediate supervisors as a top driver of employee engagement.

“We constantly keep information flowing through our managers and supervisors, as well as by holding quarterly town hall meetings where all employees are invited,” says Mike Truscott, director of human resources for Marriott Hotels and Resorts in Vancouver.

back to basics and focusing on the initiatives that align with your organization’s values, HR leaders can evaluate current workplace practices and programs to see whether they truly motivate employees to exhibit the behaviours that are most important to the organization.”

Carol Crow, vice-president, human resources at GrowthWorks Capital Ltd., a Canadian venture capital firm, runs an employee rewards and recognition program that uses core values to drive employee engagement. “Core values are part of our everyday workplace culture. We reward employees for living our values such as integrity and a drive to perform, and give them the opportunity to reward their peers for doing the same. It’s a way to build trust and alignment between the company and our employees, who are located in offices across the country.”

Culture

During uncertain times there is a tendency to let workplace culture slide but this is when it’s more important than ever. It takes years to build a great culture and even longer to restore it if it’s damaged by cuts.

HR professionals should take advantage of high-impact, low-cost programs that make their organizational culture distinctive. This may include professional development or social corporate responsibility opportunities and events that celebrate success on a company and individual level.

For example, one organization awards its staff points for bringing in sales, recruiting and PR leads. Top point earners are publicly recognized each quarter and can redeem their points for prizes. This makes the recognition meaningful and is a cost-effective alternative to costly perks and salary hikes.

With an understanding of the three Cs of engagement and the ability to put them into practice, HR professionals are in a position to lead their organiza-

tion through the changes and challenges of a down economy by building a strong, engaged workforce that is motivated to perform. **HR**

Christina Weber is public relations co-ordinator at I Love Rewards, a web-based employee rewards and recognition program provider.

“...employees cited having a good relationship with their immediate supervisors as a top driver of employee engagement.”

Core values

Suleman advises all HR leaders to have clear, solid answers to these questions: Do the employees know what the organization’s values are? Are the employees’ values and interests aligned with the organization’s values and interests? “By going

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DOWNSIZING: MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE

If you had to shed 20 per cent of your workforce, how would you start?

Three common actions that managers often take are to offer voluntary departure incentives, evenly distribute reductions and use performance appraisal information to decide who should stay and who should go.

Unfortunately, though common, these strategies are almost guaranteed to leave your organization in a worsened state.

Voluntary incentives sound fair and have the advantage of reducing the need to make difficult decisions. However, even when properly designed, they often motivate and enable your best employees to leave. Your short-term objective of reducing costs is achieved, but many of your top performers have departed for the competition. If used at all, voluntary incentives should be available only when management is certain that high-value employees have been identified and steps have been taken to retain them.

The second mistake is to implement a horizontal reduction in all departments. While it may allow management to appear egalitarian, this policy rewards poor performance and punishes everyone. Although almost all downsizings contain an element of horizontal reduction, best practices are to apply vertical cuts where weak or non-strategic areas are excised and stronger areas are protected or grown.

The third common mistake is to use the latest performance appraisal data to release the lowest rated employees. While culling non-performers is never a bad idea, this approach has several flaws. Not only does it assume the evaluations were accurate, it assesses skills, knowledge and attitudes required for the previous conditions rather than the forward-looking criteria demanded by new realities. As a result, rather than retaining key employees and releasing non-performers, many companies make expensive and regrettable attrition errors. Besides the impact

on morale and loss of employee confidence in management, the cost of these mistakes includes the expense of bringing back a recalcitrant employee who has already been paid a large severance and is in a strong position to negotiate a second payment.

Effective strategies

Begin by identifying the competencies, attributes and characteristics required in your new environment. Then have your senior managers individually assess and evaluate all employees against these criteria while allowing provisions for employees who may be high performers but not part of the go-forward organization or those whose particular knowledge or circumstances require that they be retained regardless of their performance. Only when this is done should managers collaborate and finalize their recommendations.

The decision can take two forms. The most common approach is to rank employees and categorize them as those who will be retained, those to be released and those “on the bubble.” Alternatively, other organizations take a “zero base” perspective and frame their decisions with the assumption that all employees have been terminated and they are free to “rehire” the ones that are essential. Either way, the evaluation and assessment process requires significant effort. Given that each employee was recruited at great expense, this is not only justified but appropriate.

Done properly, downsizing is not just about reducing short-term costs but positioning the organization for the future. How does it compare to the cost of mistakes? A recent study found that well-designed procedural layoff processes saved \$1.28 million US in litigation costs alone for every 100 employees released, and many estimate that each mistake costs at least \$100,000 US. **HR**

Peter Tingling holds a Ph.D in organizational and technological decision-making and is the CEO of Octothorpe Software Corporation.

BOOST PERFORMANCE IN HIGH-TECH TALENT

Particularly in culturally diverse environments, ongoing development and maintenance of employees' business communication skills, English-language proficiency and intercultural awareness maximize leadership and innovation potential. For a multicultural high-tech sector, communication skills are often the last skills developed, which can damage productivity if left unchecked. Below are three common communications issues.

Fireworks in the meeting room

Problem: Recently promoted to technical project manager in a financial institution, Yuri* was not achieving leadership results. Team members resisted or ignored his commands, jeopardizing projects. The direct, table-pounding authoritarian leadership style Yuri had developed did not translate well in a Canadian workplace and his booming voice came across as too intense. Nonetheless, Yuri, with his two PhDs and almost 20 years of experience, was considered indispensable to top management.

messages. Her technical insights and mission-critical questions were often ignored for weeks. Her performance appraisals pointed to project delays caused by written communication challenges. She front-end loaded her e-mail messages with copious facts to justify her conclusions, which were buried in the middle. She also had English-language issues (she interchanged pronouns and confused past and present tense), which left readers unclear about the timing and staffing of projects.

Solution: With language coaching, she learned to position a clear purpose statement at the beginning of her written messages so readers could grasp her main points at a glance. She also practised and improved her grammar and punctuation skills. In a relatively short time, these practical adjustments increased the readability of her e-mails and helped keep projects running smoothly.

Off-target solutions

Problem: A gifted engineer with 25 years of international experience, Mohsen's first project with an aerospace firm failed to satisfy a long-time customer. While technically brilliant, the client felt the solution didn't meet actual business needs. The required fixes doubled both costs and timelines.

In-depth probing revealed Mohsen felt it was too time-consuming to interact with the client in his second language—English—so he had minimized direct communication with all involved. When concerns were

raised, he compensated by immersing his team more deeply into a misguided technical solution rather than meeting with the client to discuss crucial issues.

Solution: Mohsen's employer enrolled him in a communications course tailored to technical professionals who speak English as a second language. Since learning how to effectively clarify information and probe for details in English, he can maintain checks and balances on his projects and his clients have renewed their contracts as a result. **HR**

**Names have been changed.*

“...communication skills are often the last skills developed, which can damage productivity if left unchecked.”

Solution: A cross-cultural communication expert brought clarity to this complicated team dynamic. With coaching, Yuri learned “You're wrong” is more graciously expressed as “Let's look at that from another perspective.” He learned to adopt more diplomatic tactics and softer speech patterns when communicating in the office. Without the interpersonal drama, team members co-operated with each other and this leadership-track employee became a top performer.

The long and winding e-mail

Problem: Kin Fun, a senior software developer, was frustrated with the slow responses to her e-mail

Teresa McGill is president of Gandy Associates.



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CONFRONTING ADDICTION

Drugs and alcohol take a huge toll on Canadian workplaces. Between absenteeism and presenteeism costs, reduced productivity, accidents and mistakes, the workplace costs of substance abuse and addiction run to the billions of dollars per year. *HR Professional* talks to three experts on how to confront substance abuse in the workplace.

Sniffing out trouble

The physical signs of substance abuse typically depend on the substance, says Gerry Smith, vice-president of organizational behaviour at Shepell-fgi, a leading Canadian employee assistance program (EAP) provider. "If someone appears drunk or smells of alcohol or marijuana that becomes evident very quickly; but other substances are more difficult to detect," he says. If you suspect someone's high on cocaine, prescription painkillers or some other substance that lacks tell-tale signs, then look

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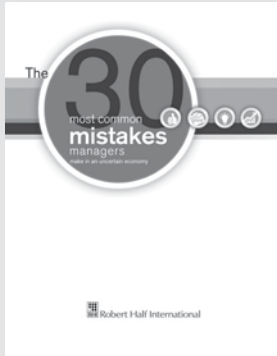
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- www.medicouncilalcol.demon.co.uk/work.htm
- www.gowlings.com/ohslaw/pdfs/OHS-June2007.pdf

Human Rights Issues

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- www.chrc-ccdp.ca/pdf/poldrgalceng.pdf

—Compiled by John Johnson

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HR 101

for behavioural changes like increased agitation and aggressiveness, euphoria or withdrawal and non-participation.

“Other indicators of a substance-abuse problem include frequent absenteeism—especially calling in sick on Mondays and Fridays, people coming in looking sick and haggard, taking longer lunch hours, taking more breaks, irritability, suspiciousness, standoffishness and a sudden increase in mistakes. These are all signs of a problem,” says Toby Levinson, manager of clinical services, special assessment and interventions at Toronto’s Bellwood Health Services Inc.

Document your suspicions

Someone smells like pot after an extended lunch break? Write it down. “We always recommend managers document all incidents and keep close tabs on what’s going on,” says Levinson. “Ultimately the manager is responsible for speaking to the individual about what’s been noticed, and it’s not good enough if you talk about it in general terms—you need to provide details, dates and times.”

Document your suspicions regarding changes in behaviour, appearance, mistakes and, if it continues to be a problem, arrange a discreet meeting with the individual.

Let’s chat

“If you continue to have suspicions about an employee’s behaviour, then it’s time for a respectful and supportive conversation based on the incidents you’ve documented,” says Janice Rubin, a partner with Rubin Thomlinson LLP. It might go something like this:

Jim, over the past two weeks, we have observed that you’ve fallen asleep on the line for 15 minutes, four times during a shift. Your error rate has quadrupled, there was a mistake made when you did X, and several of your co-workers have complained that you smell of alcohol.

We are concerned about your health and the safety implications for our operation. Can you please tell us what’s happening?

The conversation will either end with the person admitting to being under the influence, or denying it—which is not unheard of with people suffering from addiction.

“Either way, you want an understanding that they are not to be coming to work under the influence, and you need to be monitoring the situation,” says Rubin. “I would also add some open-ended questions: Is there anything we need to consider? Is there anything we can help with?

Can we refer you to an EAP? You want to give the employee the opportunity to tell you that information.”

You should also do some research and provide some resources available in your area that the employee can access if they want to get help—EAP, distress centres, doctors, Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous chapters, etc.

“I would also suggest a followup meeting within a week or two to see how the person’s getting along,” says Smith. “If the problem persists, then it’s time for ultimatums.”

Ultimatums

If the behaviour continues then the person must get assessed by an addictions specialist or seek help as a condition of continued employment. “Suggest that if they don’t seek help, then HR will have to start a formal disciplinary process,” says Smith. “Be supportive, let them know they’re valued, that you care about their well-being, but that if they continue showing up stoned or drunk on the job, then they’re working themselves out the door.”

Rubin also suggests having the employee sign off on a behavioural agreement that spells out that the person’s not to come in under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Treatment and accommodation

While you can’t force an employee to seek treatment, you can make it a condition of continued employment, says Rubin.

There are several treatment options depending on the type of addiction, level of addiction and costs. Many private clinics like Bellwood offer a full menu of treatments for a range of addictions such as alcohol, drugs, gambling and sex. “Some is outpatient, but largely it’s intensive residential treatment, anywhere from 21 to 66 days,” says Levinson.

Both Bellwood and Shepell-fgi offer programs that include the employer, and Levinson says addicts that have the support of their employer have much greater success rates than those that don’t.

The Bellwood program involves a three-way contract between the patient, the employer and Bellwood that spells out workplace issues and expectations around return to work, plus what the patient needs to be accommodated. “Then we draw up a contract that’s signed by all involved that says Bellwood will send regular status updates about how the employee is doing in recovery,” says Levinson.

HR 101

Shepell-fgi uses a method they call “monitored referral” where the EAP provides assurance to the employer that the person is attending counselling, is following treatment and whether they’ve successfully completed treatment.

A very important thing to remember from a human rights/

employment law perspective is that alcohol and drug addictions are considered disabilities and must be handled in the same rational and sensitive way that you’d handle any other disability. And this includes accommodating the inevitable relapses that are very common among people in recovery.

Co-workers

The fact that your employee is turning up stoned every day will be old news to their colleagues. In most cases, co-workers will collude to protect the individual—even when they’re forced to pick up the slack when the person is absent or makes mistakes. This often breeds resentment and poor morale in the workplace, but people will still go out of their way to hide the person’s problem from managers. “But they typically won’t collude to get the person help,” says Smith.

“You have to train people and raise awareness that addiction is a mental-health problem and that if you really want to help someone, you have to intervene. It takes courage because often the person who needs help is the last one to recognize it and accept advice from a colleague.”

Workplace drug and alcohol policy

A policy spelling out your organization’s expectations around drug and alcohol use and possession is important in ensuring all employees are cognizant of what’s expected of them. The policy should emphasize your commitment to a healthy work environment and explain the purpose of the policy. It should also: define the scope and application of the policy—who’s covered, plus definitions of company business, premises and worksites (including social events); set out standards expected of employees while on the job, regarding alcohol and drug use and possession; and use of medications.

A good policy will also set out procedures to be followed when the policy is violated, as well as how an employee can get help for a substance abuse problem. **HR**

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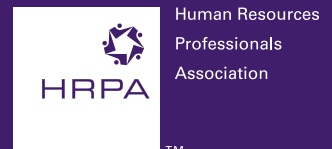
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HEALTH CARE HR



IN A WORK ENVIRONMENT WHERE SITUATIONS SHIFT ON A DIME, MANAGING CHANGE IS MISSION CRITICAL FOR ONTARIO'S HOSPITAL HR EXECUTIVES

BY DUFF MCCUTCHEON



Just as an emergency room can go from quiet to Code Red with the arrival of car accident victims, health care HR staff must react fast to changing circumstances. Like staffing shortages. Or funding cuts. Or sudden disease outbreaks like SARS—the deadly respiratory illness that essentially shut down hospitals across the province in 2003.

“SARS was brand new for everybody and it just came out of nowhere,” says Colleen Cook, director of HR at Bluewater Health, a two-site, 320-bed hospital serving Sarnia-Lambton in southwestern Ontario. The hospital wasn’t affected like facilities in Toronto, where 44 people died of the disease; but like hospitals across the country, it had to implement all precautions

Change management is such a crucial HR skill that it’s a core component of Toronto’s University Health Network’s Leadership Development program, a health care specific leadership school the hospital created in partnership with the University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management. “Enhancing the skills of leaders to lead in an ever-changing complex environment like health care is always challenging and we invest a lot in it,” says Emma Pavlov, senior vice-president of the University Health Network (UHN)—a three-site hospital with 14,000 employees. “Our annual leadership development program is mandatory for all directors and managers.”

In Timmins, Ont., change has recently come in the form of a sudden surge in long-term care patients—people filling up hospital beds who should really be in nursing homes. “We staff hospitals for 85 per cent occupancy, and we were seeing 110 per cent occupancy over a number of months,” says Mike Resetar, chief human resources officer at the Timmins and District Hospital. As a result, nursing staff were burning out quickly.

“Enhancing the skills of leaders to lead in an ever-changing complex environment like health care is always challenging.”

and restrictions to safeguard staff and patients. “We set up a team consisting of HR, senior nurses, occupational health and safety and infection-control practitioners, among others,” says Cook. “Everyone brought their own expertise to the table and HR was no exception—especially regarding staffing implications. We were strategic about planning out what we had to change and strategizing how we were going to get through this from an HR standpoint.”

Recruiting and retention

Like many sectors across Canada, health care is on the cusp of a wave of baby boomer retirements, with an aging frontline workforce—registered nurses (RNs), registered practical nurses (RPNs) and other allied professions—soon eligible for retirement.

In Timmins alone, 50 of its 350 RNs could walk out the door tomorrow; and given its recent bed shortage, many



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are giving retirement closer thought. In consequence, Resetar and his HR team took a two-pronged approach to tackling the problem—look for ways to retain older nurses, and attract new ones.

In terms of retention, to ease the strain and keep people

healthy, Resetar and his team organized a wellness committee that provides lunchtime yoga and tai chi, Weight Watchers meetings and a walking club.

Resetar's recruiting drives involve attending recruitment fairs at colleges, hyping northern Ontario as a great

place to live and offering signing bonuses. "Plus, we talk about flexible scheduling, we put a lot of money into our mentorship program, as well as up to \$2,000 a year in professional development for nurses who want to upgrade their skills," he says. Unfortunately, recruiting is always a struggle: "we can send out as many job postings as we want, we just don't get responses."

At Sarnia's Bluewater Health, recruiters typically deal in waves of shortages in different medical professions. "We'll get one area stabilized, then have trouble filling another area, like pharmacists," says Cook. And while it's not experiencing a nursing shortage—yet—the hospital is working to retain experienced staff. "As employees get older, shiftwork isn't as desirable. We participate in some sponsored things such as the late-career nursing initiative that offers opportunities for older nurses to take on different projects, which takes them out of the regular rotation for a while," she says.

Sarnia also works on filling vacancies in house with its internal professional development committee. The group looks for potential opportunities within the organization, promotes them to staff and provides advice to interested people on what they need to get themselves qualified for the positions. "We want to give them the tools to get them where they want to be," says Cook.

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trouble attracting new hires—it receives 30,000 job applications every year. But to help ensure the institution stays top-of-mind for potential hires, Pavlov and her team recently developed a UHN employer brand that builds on the strength of the hospital's reputation for excellence.

“We are an academic hospital and we use that to brand our hospital,” says Pavlov. “This is the kind of workplace where you can come and develop your career over many years. We have lots of opportunities to work with brilliant people and practice at the leading edge with the best technology. We’re also a research organization, and many health care professionals want to do some teaching and research. All

of this differentiates us as an employer and we make use of this on our website and marketing tools.”

Labour relations

A hospital HR team must have some skilled negotiators on board to deal with the myriad unions that represent health care workers. The Timmins hospital has 800 employees represented by the Ontario Nurses’ Association, OPSEU and United Steelworkers; UHN has seven unions representing its thousands of workers.

While Timmins’ Resetar enjoys a good working relationship with his unions, averaging maybe 10 grievances per year, Pavlov had to work hard to build a more collaborative labour relations

environment. When she first arrived at UHN, 12 years ago, union/management relations were very adversarial and it took a focused initiative to change things.

“First of all we created a very explicit strategy to change our relationship, laying out where we wanted to be,” says Pavlov. She also made collaborative labour relations part of mandatory training for all new managers. “And we just spent a lot of time talking and resolving issues and grievances in a collaborative fashion. It takes years to gain peoples’ trust, but we got there and we’re very pleased. We strive to do right by the individual while always honouring the collective agreement.” **HR**

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URBAN THEORIST RICHARD FLORIDA SAYS THE KEY TO FUTURE PROSPERITY IS THE CREATIVE CLASS

Lsat down with Richard Florida after his jam-packed keynote address at HRPAs 2009 Annual Conference & Trade Show in January. In the last 10 years, Florida has penned three bestsellers, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, *The Flight of the Creative Class* and *Who's Your City?*, which have changed the way companies, communities and nations compete and thrive.

A leading intellectual on economic competitiveness and demographic trends and cultural and technological innovation, he was named one of *Esquire* magazine's "best and brightest." His theory about the creative class has been lauded by the *Harvard Business Review* as one of the

major breakthrough ideas of our time and has inspired leading companies like Apple and Virgin Atlantic to rethink their marketing and business strategies.

HRP: How do you define the creative class?

RF: The creative class describes 40 million workers—30 per cent of the workforce in the U.S. and Canada—and includes two segments of workers: creative professionals, which are the classic knowledge-based workers and include those working in health care, business and finance, the legal sector and education; and the super-creative core, which are scientists, engineers, techies, innovators and researchers,



“Perhaps the biggest challenge for society is the potential economic inequality of the creative age.”

as well as artists, designers, writers and musicians. In terms of Canadian breakdowns, there are 3,797,483 creative and 2,086,075 super-creative workers in Canada and 1,950,768 creative and 1,062,050 super-creative workers in Ontario.

HRP: What is the economic impact of the creative class?

RF: The creative class is the core force of economic growth in our future economy. In fact, the creative class is expected to add more than 10 million jobs in the next decade.

Even though the creative class represents only one-third of the workforce, they earn more than \$2.1 trillion dollars—50 per cent of all wages and salaries in the United States and the same is true for Canada. This total represents as much as the manufacturing and service sectors combined.

In addition, the creative class controls nearly 70 per cent—almost \$500 billion—of the discretionary income (buying power) in the U.S.

This is more than double that of the manufacturing and service sectors combined.

HRP: Are there costs to having a creative economy?

RF: In terms of costs or contradictions, we still don't know how to effectively harness creative energy without burning people out. The biggest one is stress because we don't have the support structures in place. In a factory, we have occupational health and safety—we've learned how to deal with those workplace dangers and health issues. But in the

creative age, it's really mental stress—too many engagements and overwork. One of the things we found in our research is we have to learn how to deal with getting that work/life balance right. Both the individual and the organization have to address that. SAS Institute, for example, discourages its employees from working 12-hour days because it's not good for creativity. Creativity requires down periods.

We also still don't know how to harness the creative capabilities of each individual. And we have to consider the opportunity cost of all the lost creativity. But perhaps the biggest challenge for society is the potential economic inequality of the creative age. Creative workers do make a lot more money than other workers because creative work is engaging and exciting and requires ability and education, but with that economic inequality grows. Therefore, finding ways to engage other groups fully is critical if we want to narrow the inequality and have a more cohesive society.

HRP: With the shift toward creative workers, do people-management strategies and processes have to change?

RF: Effectively managing creative talent is the most important decision companies can make for their future. Creative employees spur economic growth. They will invent new technology, develop increased expertise and stimulate scientific thinking. In an interview with the *Harvard Business Review*, James Goodnight, founder and CEO of SAS Institute, and I outlined three principles employers can use to guide their management of creative types.

First, an employer must eliminate distractions for its creative workers. This allows employees to remain fully engaged in their work. Goodnight did this at SAS by creating a campus setting equipped with a Montessori school and high school.

Second, managers are responsible for sparking creativity. Goodnight built a campus that included public art, landscape sculpture and jogging trails.

Finally, employers must engage creative workers as invested equals in the company's future. At SAS, Goodnight gave each of his employees individual challenges and tasks, instead of stock options or bonuses.

Goodnight says that long-term employment is essential. Creativity is embedded in relationships, and it thrives among people who have worked

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Next move: To write a book on music and its effect on the economy, technology and business

Vacation destination: Miami Beach

Last iPod download or CD purchase: TV on the Radio's *Dear Science*

Favourite author or book: John Dos Passos's U.S.A. Trilogy—comprised of three novels: *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), *1919* (1932) and *The Big Money* (1936)

Source of current motivation: The hope that my work can help make the world a better place

The best piece of advice I ever got: Surround yourself with positive people



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INTERVIEW

together a long time. If he keeps people for 20 or 30 years, that human capital forms creative capital.

HRP: How do we create looser organizational structures to support and engage creative talent?

RF: It's a structure that doesn't look like a structure, a workplace that doesn't look like a workplace but there has to be enough structure that it's not just a free-for-all.

For example, let's look at a successful, enduring rock band. There is an incredible structure beyond their music performance. It's not just Bono and the Edge or Jagger and Richards, there is a real management structure with sales, marketing and logistics. But it is a structure that doesn't look like the old bureaucratic structures. In the *Rise of the Creative Class*, I call it a new form of soft control; it's not the hard, policy-driven, institutionalized structure of the past, but there is a structure there; you don't want Woodstock. What we're looking for is a way to engage creativity in a more structured way because when you don't, you either squander it or it burns out.

HRP: Any examples of companies that have capitalized on the creative class?

RF: If you ask me, the first company to really make creativity its business was Toyota—before SAS and Google—because they were the first ones that really saw their workforce as their creative effort. In other service businesses, Whole Foods elevated the grocery worker to an advisor on food choices; Starbucks—love 'em or hate 'em—transformed a drink server into a barista; and BestBuy figured out that to get better performance out of a BestBuy store, they must engage their workers and harness their creativity. BestBuy employees, for example, are encouraged to find new ways to configure displays, organize the stores and reach out to different clients in their neighbourhoods. In the Canadian context, Four Seasons revolutionized the hotel industry by engaging its workers and giving them control over the guest experience.

HRP: You've said the key to engaging creative workers is to have looser organizational

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structures, but with the downturn in the economy, won't companies step back from implementing these kinds of structural changes?

RF: Yes, and the companies that do that will lose their talent. A great comment I heard when I was writing *The Creative Class* was "I'd rather work at Starbucks." Meaning, if you don't give an employee what they want, provide them with the environment they need, they'd rather take a pay cut and career sabbatical and work at Starbucks instead.

So many of the best and brightest in the world, particularly in North America, were attracted to the financial services industry—Wall Street. We know many young Canadians that went to that market. Not only are the layoffs mounting on Wall Street, Tom Philippon, professor at the business school at New York University, is saying that wages will be reduced 30 to 50 per cent in finance because salaries have become too inflated. The same thing happened in the 1920s. After the crash, those wages returned to normal and the rapid wage escalation we see today didn't occur again until the 1990s.

The good news is that a lot of the talent that was attracted—or distracted—to go into finance is going to become available for all kinds of other endeavours. The real challenge for HR will be to attract that talent to their organizations. For Canada, it's a golden time because the economy is relatively stable [in comparison] and our banks are solid. So we have an enormous opportunity with our open immigration policies and diverse cities to make a play for talent at the world scale. **HR**



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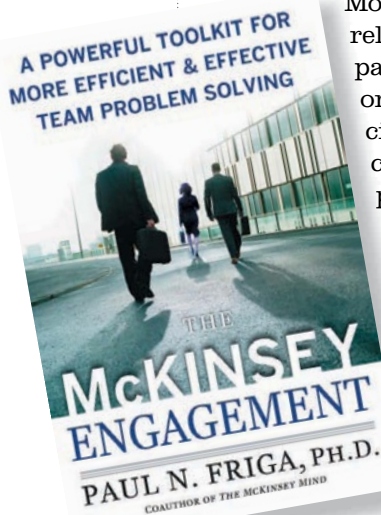
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WHAT'S WORTH READING

The McKinsey Engagement: A Powerful Toolkit for More Efficient & Effective Team Problem Solving

By Paul N. Friga
McGraw Hill, 2009



Most of us can relate to being part of a poorly organized, inefficient team that can barely order pizza together, let alone solve business problems. *The McKinsey Engagement*, written by former McKinsey & Co. consultant Paul

Friga, aims to fix this problem by offering the reader a field manual to team-based problem-solving.

If you've read other McKinsey-based books (*The McKinsey Way* and *The McKinsey Mind*) you're familiar with the methodology here, expanded on with Friga's TEAM FOCUS model, which forms the bulk of this book. The first part concentrates on the soft-skill components of working with a team (TEAM: Talk, Evaluate, Assist, Motivate). Before framing the problem at hand, Friga advises teams begin by separating issues from people, discussing group dynamics, leveraging expertise, setting individual and team expectations and, of course, rewarding and positively

reinforcing teammates.

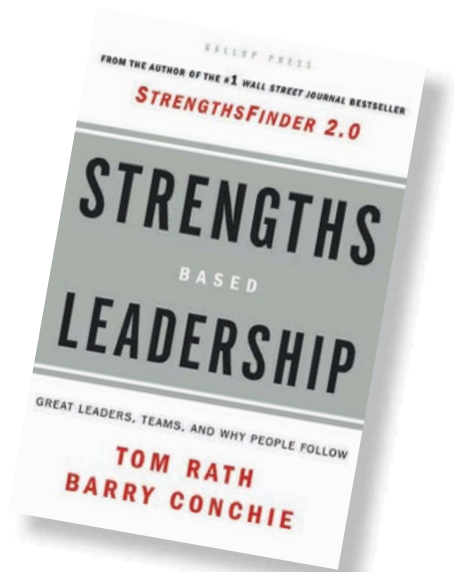
Only once the TEAM-centred components are addressed can a group effectively move forward to the task at hand: the hard skills of FOCUS (Frame the key question, Organize, Collect data, Understand implications, Synthesize).

Each chapter brings the reader through the model, explaining the concept, rules of engagement and how to actually follow the advice with real-life examples and a case study that shows how the model can be implemented.

Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow
By Tom Rath and Barry Conchie
Gallup Press, 2008

What kind of leader are you? Tough question, but before taking a two-week sabbatical to think it over, consider a gentler query: What are your strengths? Once you can pinpoint those things you excel at, while stepping away from skills you're not as adept at, you're well on your way to becoming an effective leader.

So goes the argument in *Strengths Based Leadership*, co-written by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie, both of whom work for U.S.-based pollster Gallup. Nearly a decade ago, Gallup released findings from a 30-year-long research project on the topic of strengths, well-documented in books *Now, Discover Your Strengths* and



Strengths Finder 2.0. Here, Rath and Conchie expand on this research, focusing on how to create well-rounded teams rather than perfect people.

Using statistics from the Gallup study, the authors detail how balanced leadership teams exhibit vigour within four central areas: strategic thinking, relationship building, influencing and executing. Very few people excel at all four strengths—whereas building a balanced team is a reasonable expectation of any leader.

What a great idea: focus on your strengths and let others focus on theirs. But as it turns out, divvying up strengths, let alone pinpointing them, isn't easy work. Gallup's assessment tool offers up to 34 different themes, from achiever to deliberative, and it's hard to pinpoint a top-five list; they all seem plausible.

Classifying people into types might not work in practice, but that doesn't mean it's not worth the effort to attempt to create teams that exhibit different personalities. **HR**

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INNOVATION AT WORK

Innovation isn't the domain of the lone genius, toiling away in some laboratory waiting for that Eureka! moment. Most innovation is the product of collaboration—people coming together

to do something in a way that is different than how it has been done before. The most effective strategy an HR professional can use to foster innovation is to create a climate that naturally supports the expression of great ideas.

Looking at productivity studies over time, we see that most people only contribute about 50 per cent of their potential; as jobs move toward service and knowledge environments, the implications of this statistic grows. Today, leaders are increasingly dependent on the discretionary efforts of their employees. If employees don't voluntarily contribute their great ideas, businesses can't compete and won't survive.

Employees need to have a clear and compelling vision of the future in order to get excited about the hard work they do every day. **Clarity** drives alignment of the hearts and minds of employees. It incents people to optimize their days around organizational success rather than individual survival.

Employees also need to have clear **standards of performance**. They not only need to know *what* they are expected to do—specific, measurable, achievable results—they also need to know *how* they are expected to do it. Success at any cost is not acceptable and alienating others in pursuit of goals is also not OK. Understanding how employees are expected to treat one another is critical to creating an environment that will naturally lead to the expression of new ideas.

Today's workforce expects **flexibility**. The necessity for diligence around execution is important, but in a highly educated workforce, the freedom to approach one's work with flexibility leads to higher satisfaction and increased productivity.

Meaningful **responsibility** for work increases engagement and commitment to success. Over-involved leaders suppress innovation in several ways. Employees will rightfully feel unempowered. They may develop a learned helplessness as they wait for approval from above. Because they aren't leading at their level, they are less likely to develop. Since they aren't growing, the leader's need to intervene increases. This self-fulfilling pattern

of disempowerment is hard to break. Leaders who squander their time on less important matters often don't get to the more strategic work necessary for the long-term success of their company.

The right **reward structure** is also important. A common mistake is overemphasizing individual contributions at the expense of team success. Innovative climates are created when reward structures strike the right balance between individual and team performance.

The last element of a climate that fosters innovation is **tolerance for change**. If one accepts the notion of innovation as simply doing something differently than it has been done before, then change as a concept must be embraced. Blind adherence to bureaucratic process has driven more than one good idea to its death. **HR**

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John Colburn is a senior facilitator at Bluepoint Leadership Development.



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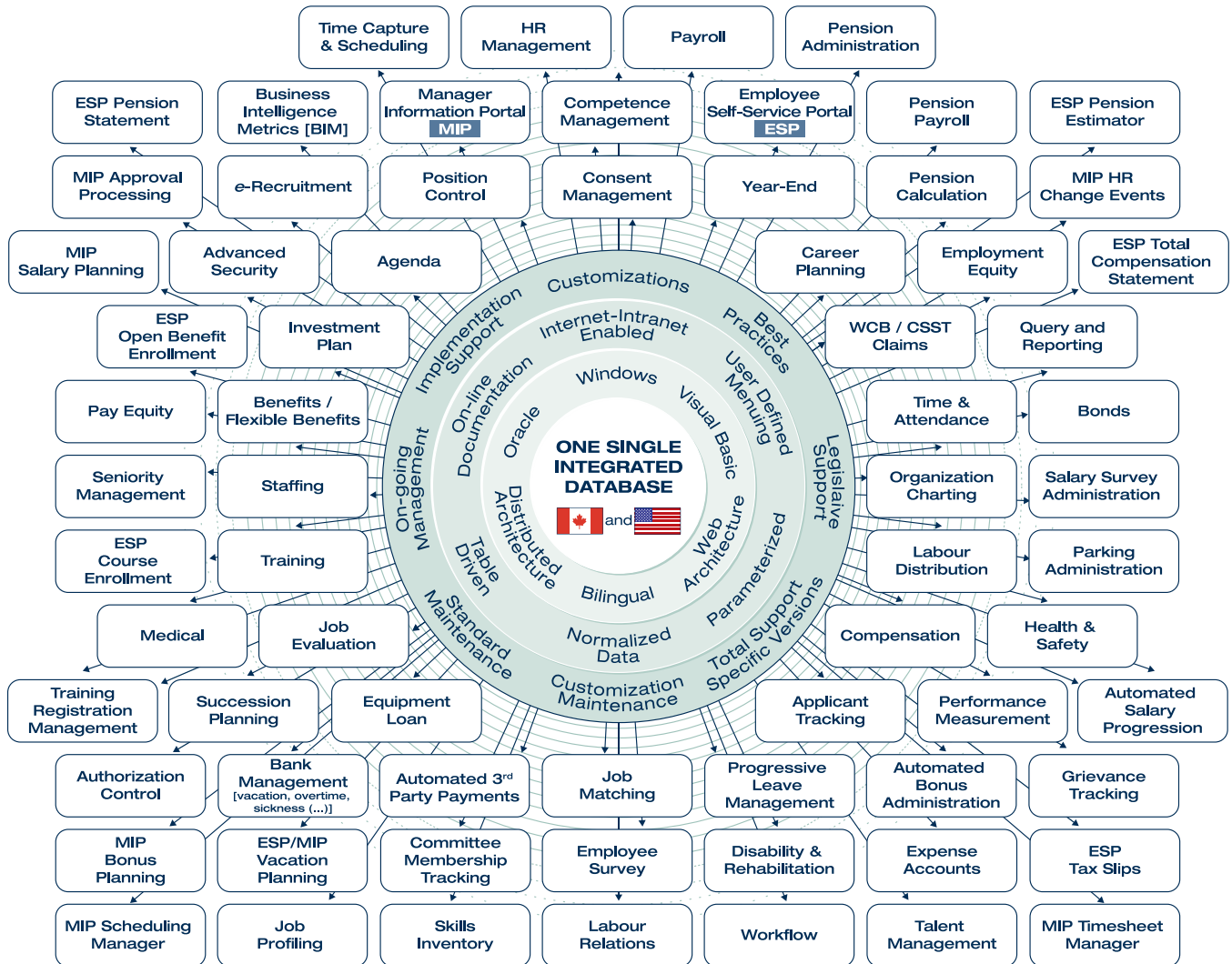
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