

HRMA

PeopleTalk

Founding Our Future



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The Root of
Organizational Success

That Was Then, This is HR

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Rethinking the
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Paradigm





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te contracts	862,763	994,980	276,062	209,999
ge Contracts				
aps	1,068	1,025	2,874	3,789
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	25,873	24,175	18,600	22,814
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People. Passion. Profit. Founding Our Future

ONCE A YEAR, WE GATHER - AND IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE for our entire profession. With the upcoming 50th Annual BC HRMA Conference and Tradeshow just around the corner, the theme of "Founding Our Future" is all the more relevant.

These are exciting times for us, as HR professionals and members of the BC Human Resources Management Association. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the conference and the 70th year of our association.

Once again, the conference organizing committee has managed to engage top speakers and arrange for many networking events that I am sure you will find very beneficial and enlightening. The underlying message of "People, Passion, Profit" is both timeless and one into which HR has grown. "Founding Our Future" takes on even greater significance in this light, as we acknowledge our evolution and accomplishments as HR professionals.

Some of us have been around long enough to have experienced and even contributed to the great shift in the human resources practice. Many of us remember the former 'industrial relations officer' or 'personnel manager' roles that hallmarked the early years. Looking back, I truly see how far HR has come and the key role we are positioned to play in the future.

I think of how transactional we once were in our actions. Today, when I look around, I see a true paradigm shift in our profession. The trend is certainly strategic, rather than transactional. There is truly a marked shift in the thinking of business leaders when it comes to involving HR at the strategic, decision-making level.

How did that happen? By chance? Not by a long shot. Are we fully there yet? No, but we are well on our way. A large portion of that credit is due to you as HR professionals and BC HRMA as an association that continues to set the standards for industry excellence. The continued success and strategic focus of our profession is one we share, especially at events such as the 50th Anniversary Conference.

Coming back to the core of people, passion and profit, I believe it illustrates the great responsibility we also share. The future is in our hands, hearts and heads to found and it is we who must drive the continued focus on improvement. More strategic alignment of 'people' resources is mandatory for businesses to turn a profit. In this light, people drive the quest for success in any business; driving with passion makes for a world of difference. Great HR is the key.

How often have you noticed the difference in certain outcomes when you can see and feel the urgency for change, when the passion that people have in the desired outcomes is evidenced in everything they do? If you do so on a daily basis already, then congratulations. If not, well, isn't that the place where you would rather work? Again, HR makes the difference.

I welcome you to continue to be part of this drive for success. Show your passion for your profession and for yourself! I hope to see you at the BC HRMA Conference, April 25-27 and join in on the great sessions and networking opportunities.

This is your event - participate, be active, and support our sponsors in the tradeshow as they make your conference a complete event.

I look forward to seeing you at conference.



Mike Cass, CHRP

Mike Cass, CHRP
President, BC HRMA
president@bchrma.org



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The Past Presents Our Future

IN LOOKING BACK, WE GAIN NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE FUTURE.

1942. Powerful good can come from the darkest places. Perhaps no other truth underscores the origins of human resources in the heart of WWII. The Holocaust raged and science was waged in ways never thought imaginable. No Nobel prizes were awarded in the year that the War Industries Coordination Committee banded together on the West Coast. Though it would be decades before the term HR would rise to prominence, it is here that our story begins.

Over the course of the intervening 70 years, the world changed. How much it has changed we are perhaps only beginning to comprehend as the pace of that change and its multiple points of impact on both our lives and workplaces is realized. Fortunately, amidst exponentially-evolving technologies, global economic tensions and tectonic demographic shifts, HR too has undergone a transformation.

Naturally, when we speak of HR, we are really talking about people.

What has perhaps changed most about the working world is the way in which people are viewed. From cogs to "Cultural Capital: The Root of Organizational Success" (p.16). Cathy Fulton captures HR's contribution to the bigger picture of profitability and employee happiness. Unsurprisingly, and much in keeping with findings of Zappos.com founder and Conference 2012 headliner Tony Hsieh, happiness counts in large amounts and HR plays a key role in creating that culture.

As captured in our cover story (p.20), HR has grown "from gatekeeper to bridge builder to architects of productivity," accruing along the way ever greater realms of responsibility. "Founding Our Future" only appears to be a grand theme for the 50th Annual BC HRMA Conference and Tradeshow. In truth, it is a reality grounded in the history of the association itself. "The Voice(s) of HR" (p.10) are not only relevant today; their volunteered efforts created our present in which HR is not only respected at the table, but expected to provide critical leadership in tumultuous times.

The challenges facing HR have never been greater nor has the interest in the profession. Neil McEachern explores just why the change in HR is attracting a new generation of future leaders in the aptly-titled "That Was Then, This is HR" (p.14).

As is well-known, our collective future is rife with both positive and negative potential. From income disparities (p.42) to skills shortages (p.32) to social business (p.44), the business world of today needs the HR of today.

As for where the future of HR is headed, April 25-27, 2012 at the Vancouver Convention Center is by far the best place to find out. Our back page interview with Jeremy Gutsche, founder of Trendhunter.com, is another great place to get a start on tomorrow today. See you at Conference 2012.

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Diversity Delivers in a Decreased Labour Pool

By **Shandele Yuen**

Tej Singh Hazra, head of diversity and inclusion for HSBC, was special guest speaker at a recent BC HRMA business mingle. He spoke about new and interesting concepts evolving on the topic of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

<http://www.hrvoice.org/diversity-delivers-in-a-decreased-labour-pool/>



Why People Stay



A recent study demonstrates that employees who are more embedded in their organizations and their communities are less likely to leave their jobs. Given the high cost of voluntary turnover, this study has clear implications for HR professionals and HR functions.

<http://www.hrvoice.org/why-people-stay/>

Work-Life: Redefining Balance

By **Nilesh Bhagat**, **CHRP**

People have this whole work/life balance thing all wrong. I'd like to argue that there exist two concepts for 'balance' – one is dichotomous, while the other is continuous. For illustration purposes, I'm going to split a composite workplace into two demographics: on one side are the Net Generationals (those born between 1977 and 1996), and on the other are the Boomer +s (those who have perfected organizational efficiencies over the last several decades).

<http://www.hrvoice.org/work-life-redefining-balance/>



Guiding Change: How HR Adds Value

By **Chris Edgelow**



HR work lies at the critical intersection of business and people — and that intersection is a very turbulent place these days. Core competencies are no longer enough. The ability to guide change has become increasingly important for HR over the past decade.

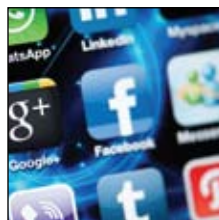
<http://www.hrvoice.org/guiding-change-how-hr-adds-value/>

Social Media No Substitute for Face Time

By **Lana Bradshaw**

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, IM, E-Mail – all things we believe we need. And they all have one thing in common. Zero face time. With your friends, your family, your clients; this, for someone who's responsible for building relationships, is what I find most alarming.

<http://www.hrvoice.org/social-media-no-substitute-for-face-time/>



CHRP: Going to Source



What does the Canadian Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation mean to you, your organization and the bigger picture of a changing workplace? During CHRP month in February, BC HRMA members shared their insights succinctly.

<http://youtu.be/55NyxUMPhCM?hd=1>

LinkedIn Discusses Disciplinary Process

We are looking for some guidance on a "disciplinary" process aligned with the various infractions that occur. How does your company handle these types of situations?

<http://tinyurl.com/6wyngqk>

BC HRMA's Top of the Tweets

#hrvoice article: Welcome to the HR Store. How May We Help You?

<http://ht.ly/8MLYZ>

Check out our Tradeshow Speaker Series and get ready to laugh... @rickmercer is coming to Vancouver: <http://ht.ly/8ztwa> #hrma2012

Interesting article by #hrma2012 conference panel member Nicole Byres: <http://ht.ly/8YWRu> @bcbusiness

Accessibility for Ontarians legislation impacts businesses in BC:

<http://ht.ly/930hq> #hrvoice

One-half of employers don't have policies welcoming new Canadians: Survey

ht.ly/94b7z via @HRReporter

RT @leo_ng803: @BCHRNA Thanks for a great networking event at #Hilton Hotel tonight! @DebraLFinlayson outdid herself with the food &...

BC HRMA: The Voice(s) of HR Past

By Jason McRobbie

"IT'S ALL ABOUT BECOMING A NEW business partner," said BC HRMA's CEO Simon Evans, CHRP. "If I go back 20 or 30 years, HR was very transactional. Today we see fantastic CHRPs leading the HR function, and not only the HR function, but having experience in finance, marketing, communications, IT - in all the various sectors of the province. That's exciting. That's acceptance and that's professionalism."

It is the scope of that professionalism that defines the difference. Put simply, human resources is far more about people.

"HR is just so different from even 25 years ago. Certainly in forward moving organizations, HR has become more integral to the overall strategic direction of the business," said Les Waldie, past-president (2006-07) and Fellow CHRP (FCHRP). "The reality is that there is a growing awareness that the difference between good and poor organizations is the people and how they are managed. HR has made great strides in how companies deal with their people and we're still working hard to find a niche that makes everyone comfortable at the senior level. There is no question though, we are more involved and there is a growing expectation."

BC HRMA Origins: HR's Laboured Past

In BC, one association under many names evolved alongside that expectation.

The British Columbia Human Resources Management Association (BC HRMA) has come a long way in the course of 70 years of varied existence. Born into being as the War Industries Coordination Committee of 1942, only in its most recent incarnation as BC HRMA has human resources become the primary focus.

"When I first joined in the late 1960s it was really about industrial relations.

About 50 per cent of us were industrial relations types and it was not until the late 70s that a strong dose of the personnel side became involved," said past-president Gordon Storey (1981-82). "The real growth didn't occur until certification got going. We were just a much smaller association. We're talking about the days when the paid staff was one part-time person who operated out of her home office. So we had no head office other than our administrator's and the presidents would pass their boxes of information along to one another. The pressures then were immense to generate revenue and provide services; that has not changed."

**"In those
days, the
whole emphasis
was on labour
relations."**

One such box was pulled out of storage by past-president (1986-87) and FCHRP Joan Harrison over a quarter century ago; within, a history that defined how far HR has progressed.

Collectively, BC HRMA has evolved, as has the breadth of both its membership and value offering. Under the varied auspices of the Personnel Administrators Association of BC, the Vancouver Chapter of the Pacific Northwest Management Association, the Vancouver Personnel Management Association and the Industrial Relations Management Association, a legacy focus of labour diminished in light of the changing times.

People Focus: A Hallmark of Human Rights

"Looking back over the years to the 1980s, many organizations focused on production and safety; people management was generally an afterthought. People management at that time consisted of human resources managing compensation, pension and benefits," said Dave DeLong, who sits on the present-day BC HRMA board of directors. "Today people management in most organizations is viewed as an integral part of the business and is a strategic component of an organization's business plan and incorporates the way business is conducted. People management today includes: vision, mission, values, sustainability, change management, leadership development, organizational development, succession planning and individual development plans."

It was very much a mandate of change driven from within - as well as in the highest court of Canada.

"The work that we do now has evolved from industrial relations to human rights; privacy and health issues are wrapped together with other discrimination issues," said past-president Gavin Hume, QC. "There is still a chunk of old fashioned labour relations, but the Supreme Court of Canada really shifted the focus to diversity with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 and that contributed to a growing awareness of that whole area."

"In those days, the whole emphasis was on labour relations. The HR side was not the emphasis at all when I first became involved," said Hume. "When the CHRP was broached it was a big issue, whether it was appropriate. It was very much pooh-poohed in the day and highly controversial with the senior guys saying 'We don't need that.' Now it is an appropriate given and has very significantly improved human resources."

Building a National Designation

Contentious at the time, the development of a nationwide standard to supplant the provincial industry recognitions, has been invaluable to the profession. The Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation has flourished since its inception in 1996, setting a new standard of professionalism and providing an accredited assurance that HR comes to the proverbial table equipped with the necessary skills and mindset.

Now, with over half of BC HRMA's 5,400 members holding the CHRP designation and a growing awareness of the impact of good HR practices, it is difficult to imagine the opposition the designation originally faced.

Integral to the development of the CHRP, Harrison was instrumental in evolving far more than a national designation. Her leadership embodied a paradigm shift that is today considered a human right, chiefly one of egalitarianism - a unity of professional vision unencumbered by gender issues. As per the contention around the development of the

CHRP, Harrison said, "You really learned what the guys who wrote the Constitution went through."

"If you're going to complain, you need to get involved."

"You have no idea what it was like to be a woman in that group and that has totally reversed now. There might have been one or two women at the labour table and now you see the excellence in everybody," said Harrison. "Gender balance has shifted from those dominant industrial relations guys to strong, tough-minded, highly educated young women who, in fact, outnumber the HR guys in many organizations."

Regional Discontent: Renewed Focus

Upon that wave of change, human resources rose to the forefront - as did a newfound provincial focus for the Association.

"When I joined in the local chapter in the late 80s it was because I didn't like what we were getting for our membership. The networking, mingles, education, mentoring: the bigger picture of what we are now getting from the Association did not exist back then - especially if you lived outside the Lower Mainland. If you're going to complain, you need to get involved," said Susan MacIntyre, FCHRP and past BC HRMA board member (2002-09). "Lorne Armstrong was president then. We got organized. I ended up on the Board, the chapters disappeared and things changed. In Kamloops, we had 34 members. Now we have over 120. What has changed is the whole value for membership. Now BC HRMA services HR professionals of every type on a truly regional, provincial basis."

"What we did was make the shift from an operational to a strategic board and



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— **Chris Taylor**, VP, Human Resources, Best Buy Canada

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from Vancouver-centric to provincial. I didn't invent it out of thin air. When I became or was about to become president, I got together for dinner with some of the past-presidents and that was the conversation we had, 'Where did you want us to go? What was the thread you were pulling on? What do you see ahead for the association?'" said past-president (2002-04) Lorne Armstrong. "I didn't have some huge vision, but once inside and seeing

That flipped the whole thing on its head and allowed us to ask, 'Okay', what can we really do?

what was going on, I could see that something more was possible."

From that conversation, and those that preceded and followed, came BC HRMA as today it is known.


Job One: Meeting Member Needs

"When I got involved, we were very much on the cusp of a transition. From a personal point of view I had been a member, but not so active, so it seemed a good time and a great opportunity to get involved," said Waldie. "It was obvious that we needed to refocus the organization in terms of the fundamental raison d'être of serving the membership. It was historically a very hands on operational board that was relying on busy business people to commit a hunk of their time to do the work of the organization."

"We decided we could really see something here, something that we could really go for and make work. We slowly started coming together to figure out what this would look like," said Armstrong. "What drove it was knowing it was possible to do a far better job of serving our members - and that if we wanted to have a voice we needed more members to gain credibility, speak business and be listened to by senior executives."

A more diverse and strategically focused board emerged - and with a few good hires, BC HRMA went to work. "With the debt we had at the time we thought we could break even in a decade. That would be reasonable. Then we found our new CEO and he had us back there inside of three years. That flipped the whole thing on its head and allowed us to ask, 'Okay, what can we really do?'"

"That was really the thrust of what we did over those years and bringing Simon Evans in was the start of that. The organization needed to reflect what was happening to the HR function and needed to support and lead. There was a pretty focussed effort to do that and the research function is a good example. There has been a ton of refinement since that has defined that strategic approach," said Waldie. "BC HRMA today is something members can be proud to be associated with. It has become a very useful organization and a model that is respected across the country."

The rest is more recent history. 



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HR's Guiding Hand is Yours:

Shaping Tomorrows Together

By **Maureen Campbell**

FOR THE MOST PART, PEOPLE LIVE PRETTY routine lives – going to work, raising families, enjoying life, and through it all, many aspire to achieve goals. Living day-to-day, the majority don't often think of the impact they have on those around them. Stop and think about it; can you think back to at least one person who helped to set the course that you're on today, even if inadvertently? To take this thought one step further: whose path have you helped to shape either directly or indirectly?

Our lives and interactions are in this way akin to the popular butterfly effect in chaos theory. In simplest terms, the butterfly effect states that a small change at one place can result in large differences to a later state. So, when thinking back to that person (or persons) who have helped to set your course, what was the catalyst that moved you towards where you are now? It could have been a large, grandiose action, perhaps it was something more subtle – a seemingly non-consequential interaction where we, as individuals aspire to achieve your career goals. And as this happens day in and day out, everyone has a hand in shaping the futures of those individuals around them.

One could argue that HR professionals have a greater hand in shaping the future as they guide organizations in setting the culture, standards and ethics. This in turn provides a guide and a standard for employees to adhere to. HR professionals cover off everything from labour law to conflict resolution, employee retention and management, and setting the employee standards in technological advancements. All of these practices work in the here and now, but they set a precedent in shaping the future as well. And

you, an HR professional, are an integral part of this process.

Your efforts help to shape your provincial association. Your vote elects your provincial Board members. And those same members voice your opinions at the national table with the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations (CCHRA). Rather than a 'trickle-down' effect, CCHRA works on a 'trickle up' effect. Our best practices, our ethics, and our standards are all based on what works for each provincial member association.


"Your efforts help to shape your provincial association"

The national assessments work much the same way. Item writing panels are created to allow volunteers from across the country to share their expertise and experience in developing engaging, thought-provoking and, most importantly, topical questions for each exam. The dedication that these individuals possess to ensure both the validity and integrity of these assessments really is a testament to their passion for their career.

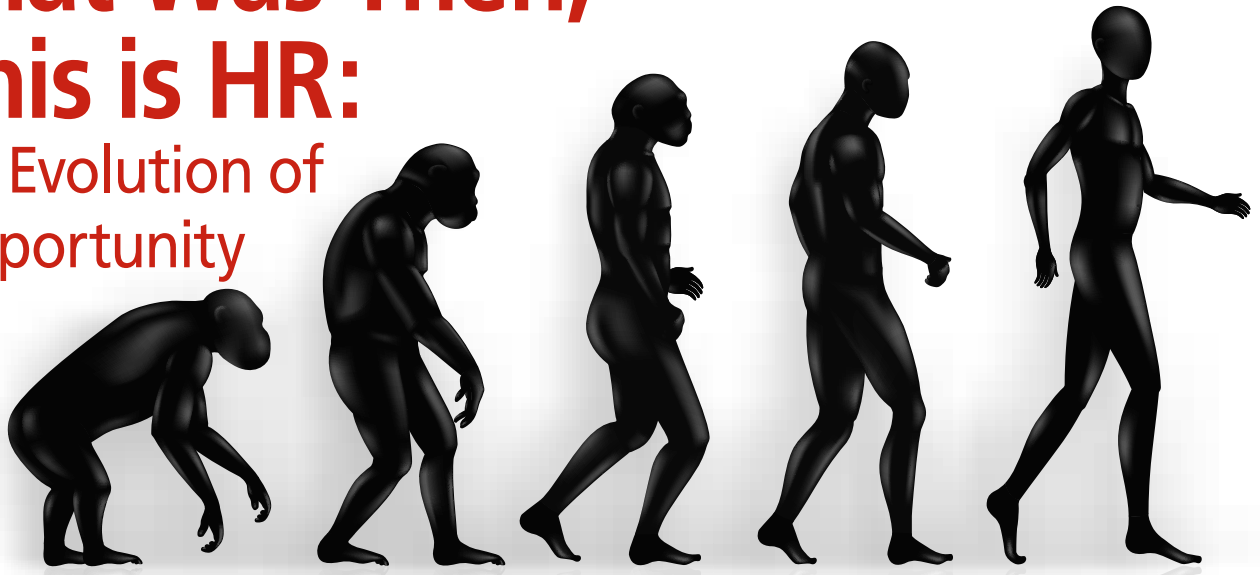
When I left my last position to come to CCHRA, I had an exit interview with HR. The organization had a very proactive, friendly, professional HR team. When I told them about my new job, they seemed to be more excited than I was about the opportunity – that was when I discovered that this was a team of CHRPs, all of which are quite active in the local chapter of their association. The entire team are supporters of the CHRP; in fact, the term

I would use for them would be advocates. And that is how I would describe many of the volunteers that I have met. Each and every one of them are advocates for the HR profession. Their enthusiasm for the work they do is infectious.

People volunteer for various reasons, most often because they feel they have something to give, or can receive something either tangible or intangible, fulfill a need, or simply because they believe in a particular cause. Almost always though, volunteers do so because they gain some personal and professional return. HR professionals involved in their member association, regional activities, and committees can network, enhance their professional development and gain CHRP points. Member associations gain a lot from volunteer efforts, it becomes stronger, the designation gains even more value and the profession as a whole gains integrity. BC HRMA is flourishing even after 70 years and it is looking at an even stronger future. The volunteer efforts that have been put forth really are a part of history in the making!

Time and time again, volunteers have said how much they have gained from volunteering, both as a professional and a person, and how happy and proud they are to represent the CHRP and the HR profession as a whole. At the end of the day, it's their efforts and successes that provide value to the CHRP designation and the profession, which in turn makes CCHRA a vibrant, successful association. It's through their advocacy, and yours, that the HR profession is building a solid foundation and reputation of integrity in Canada and abroad. And for that, professionals – HR and otherwise – should all say thank you! 

That Was Then, This is HR: An Evolution of Opportunity



By **Neil McEachern**, CHRP Candidate

ONE CAN SAFELY STATE THAT IN RECENT years there has been a large expansion of practitioners joining the field of human resources. Why is this the case? Why has our chosen field so greatly attracted this new generation into joining the ranks of HR professionals?

To determine this, we must first explore the origins of human resources and investigate the changes that have occurred since its beginnings in the early 20th century. We will then progress to its current state and examine how this relates with the ideals of the millennium generation that has ultimately caused the number of new HR practitioners to swell.

The origins of human resources can be tentatively traced back to one of the most critical times of civilization: the industrial revolution. Without the mechanization of the textile industry in Europe in the early 19th century, it would be difficult for one to posit that what we know as human resources would exist in its current form. Why? Because the introduction of mechanization, aided by the invention of steam power, was what catalyzed the shift from our primarily agrarian roots to an industrial society; the backbone of this new society was the factory.

The working conditions found in factories along with public policy (mainly in response to employer action against workers attempting to unionize in the early 20th century), gave birth to the predecessor of our field (consequently still a part

of it), industrial and labour relations. As union membership began its retreat in the later part of the 20th century, we saw a decline in the effectiveness of industrial and labour relations with more and more employers being non-unionized.

**“...there was value
in attempting to
effectively motivate
and manage...”**

However, employees were still a valuable resource that need to be managed effectively, and thus personnel administration was born. Unlike today, where employers are known to value the true potential of their employees and thus see our profession as a key piece to tapping said potential, the employers of the mid to late 20th century had yet to fully realize this.

The onset of the 21st century led to many changes in our field: primarily the realization by employers that employees were more than just cogs in the system and that there was value in attempting to effectively motivate and manage the workforce to help reach an organization's full potential. This evolution was aided by thought leaders in our field who began

to challenge the status quo of personnel administration and ultimately lead to the creation of the term “human resources management”¹.

One of these thought leaders was Dave Ulrich, who is credited with defining what have become four key parts of our industry²:

- the alignment of business and human resources strategy (the HR business partner);
- administration and operational reform (HR administration);
- employee engagement and relations; and
- operational transformation (HR change agents).

Ulrich's thinking, along with other academics paired with business leaders such as former GE chairman, Jack Welch (a noted fan of our industry), have helped to further advocate the value of our field to not only current business leaders but also the new entrants to our profession.

As stated at the outset, there are two parts to the recent swell of HR professionals; the second part we must explore is what is driving the Millennial generation to embrace this profession?

The running commentary on the millennial generation is that they are made up of ambitiously entitled narcissists who show utter disregard for traditional social conventions³; how this parleys into a boon of new HR practitioners is anyone's guess. The accuracy of this generalization has

fortunately been disparaged by the emergent reality of a workplace in the throes of ongoing change.

Our field has changed significantly since its origins as industrial labour relations in the early 20th century and this, as well as having finally moved into the C-suite, has shown that our field is one full of potential. That potential is being realized across the full generational range of the workplace, but it is important to note that it is Gen Y and the Millennials who are most comfortable with the changing tools and demands of our profession.

Another shift in recent times has required us to show HR's bottom line value, thus leading to the creation of a more strategic field of thinking that requires less empathy than was previously required (i.e. "I went into HR because I love people"). In short, HR is serious business and this has transformed our profession into a similarly serious career opportunity.

These changes ultimately have helped to attract individuals who are ambitious and motivated to make an impact in the workplace, which is something that human resources management can and does offer to its practitioners. Whether acting as business partners, in administration, engaging employees, or as change agents, HR invariably matters on multiple levels.


As the commentary on the Millennial generation continues to evolve and our profession changes, one can expect to see an ever increasing number of people attracted to the potential found in the evolving field of human resources management. **P**

Born, in Hong Kong, Neil McEachern grew up in North America, South America, Europe and Asia, before completing his B Comm at UBC Sauder School of Business. Currently a research associate at Odgers Berndtson, and a board member of the Steveston Community Society, Neil is a frequent *PeopleTalk* contributor.


1 It is interesting to note that the Society of Human Resources Professionals changed its name in 1998 from its original name of the American Society of Personnel Administration.

2 Ulrich, Dave (1996). *Human Resource Champions. The next agenda for adding value and delivering results.* Boston, Mass. Harvard Business School Press.

3 Twenge, Jean M (March 6, 2007). *Generation me: Why today's young Americans are more confident, assertive, entitled—and more miserable than ever before*



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Cultural Capital: The Root of Organizational Success

By **Cathy Fulton, CHRP**

SO, WHERE DOES HR STAND? Times are turbulent, change is here to stay and organizations must be engaging and high performing. Easy, right? Not quite.

Despite best efforts, employee engagement strategies often fail to net the desired results. Recent research explains that while engagement is critical, it's only part of the solution. Organizational culture is reportedly the root to success and should demand most of our attention.

The Business Case for Culture

Research shows that the highest performing organizations in the world pay a lot of

attention to their organizational culture. Studies by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras, as outlined in the books *Built to Last* and *Good to Great*, show how companies that consistently focused on building strong corporate cultures over a period of several decades outperformed companies that did not - by a factor of six - and outperformed the general stock market by a factor of 15. As shown in Figure 1, these companies gave 26 per cent of their time and attention to culture, more than any other category.

In the book, *Firms of Endearment*, Raj Sisodia, Jag Sheth and David Wolfe, describe how the best companies in the world consider their corporate culture to

be their greatest asset and primary source of competitive advantage. These companies outperformed the S&P 500 by an 8:1 ratio over a ten year period ending June 2006.

A 2008 Best Employer Study carried out by Hewitt Associates and the Barrett Values Centre also confirmed that cultural performance is a lead indicator of organizational performance. Their research demonstrated (Figure 2) that the best employers considered culture their top value, while the worst employers gave no priority to culture.

In the same study, Hewitt and Barrett discovered that while employee engagement is very important, culture drives employee engagement. So simply focusing on employee engagement is not enough. Corporate culture must also be consciously managed, to ensure it provides the appropriate foundation for positive engagement and strong organizational performance to occur.

Cultural Capital – The Next Frontier of Competitive Advantage

The impact of culture on organizational performance is powerful. So powerful, Richard Barrett believes it has triggered a new stage in our organizational evolution - the Consciousness Age (Figure 3). With it, our focus has shifted from intellectual to human and now cultural capital. Much as human capital evolved from intellectual capital and encompassed a broader, more holistic perspective of the talent within organizations, cultural capital is more highly evolved again. Cultural capital recognizes the whole system; the system in which our human capital collectively engages and operates.

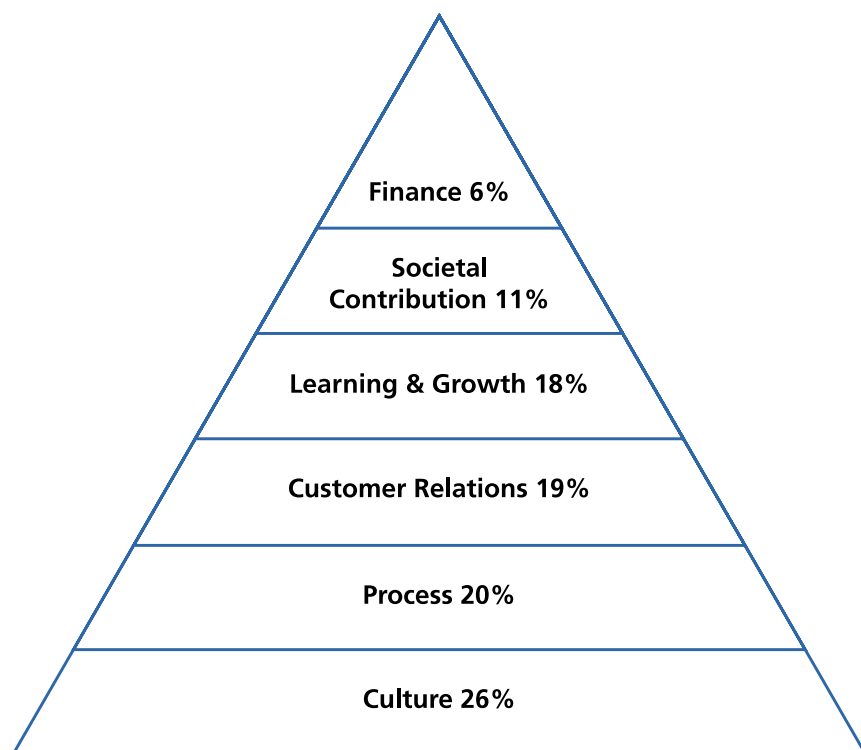


Figure 1: Long Lasting Successful Companies Focus on Culture

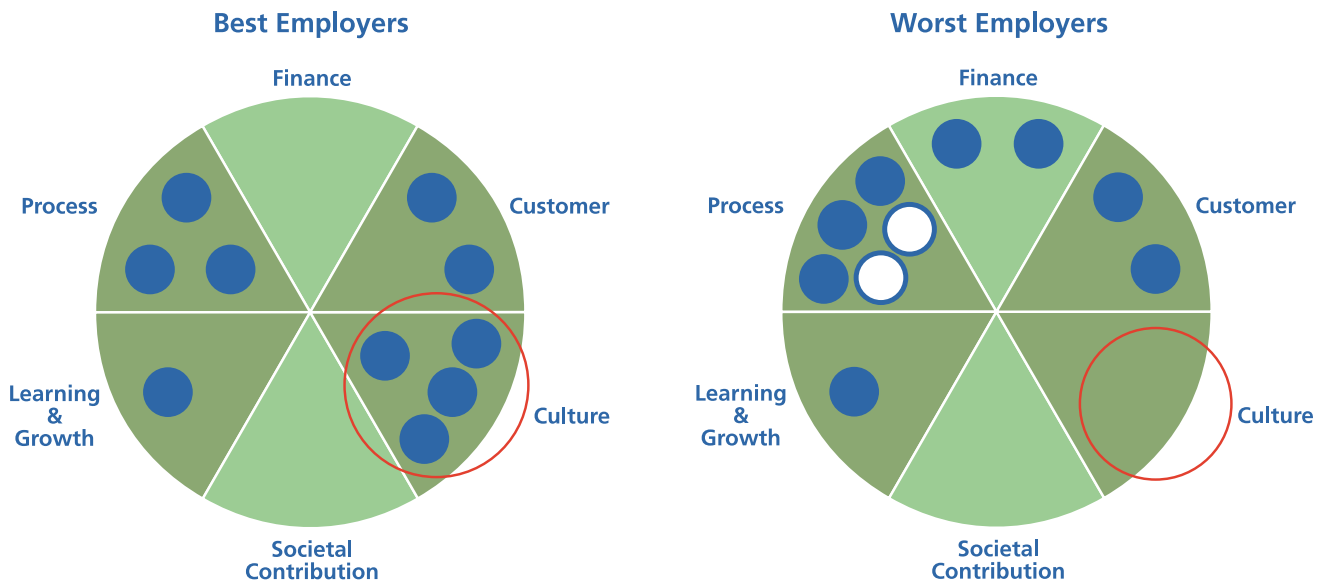


Figure 2: Allocation of Top 10 Values, adapted from Hewitt & Barrett, 2008

Culture Defined

But what exactly is culture? Simply put, organizational culture can be defined as the way things are done around here. Edgar Schein, a guru on the topic, describes culture as a pattern of behaviours driven by values, assumptions and beliefs that have worked well enough for the group to perceive them as the right way to think, feel and act. In essence, culture is exhibited in the multiple decisions, conversations, routines, processes, structures and practices that take place between members of an organization

on a daily basis. These collective patterns, consciously or unconsciously, make up the “real” working culture of an organization.

Characteristics of a High Performance Culture

So what makes a high performing culture? Well, with the rate of change, complexity and increased expectations on organizations today, a level of agility, resilience, adaptiveness and responsiveness - to all stakeholders - is required as never before.

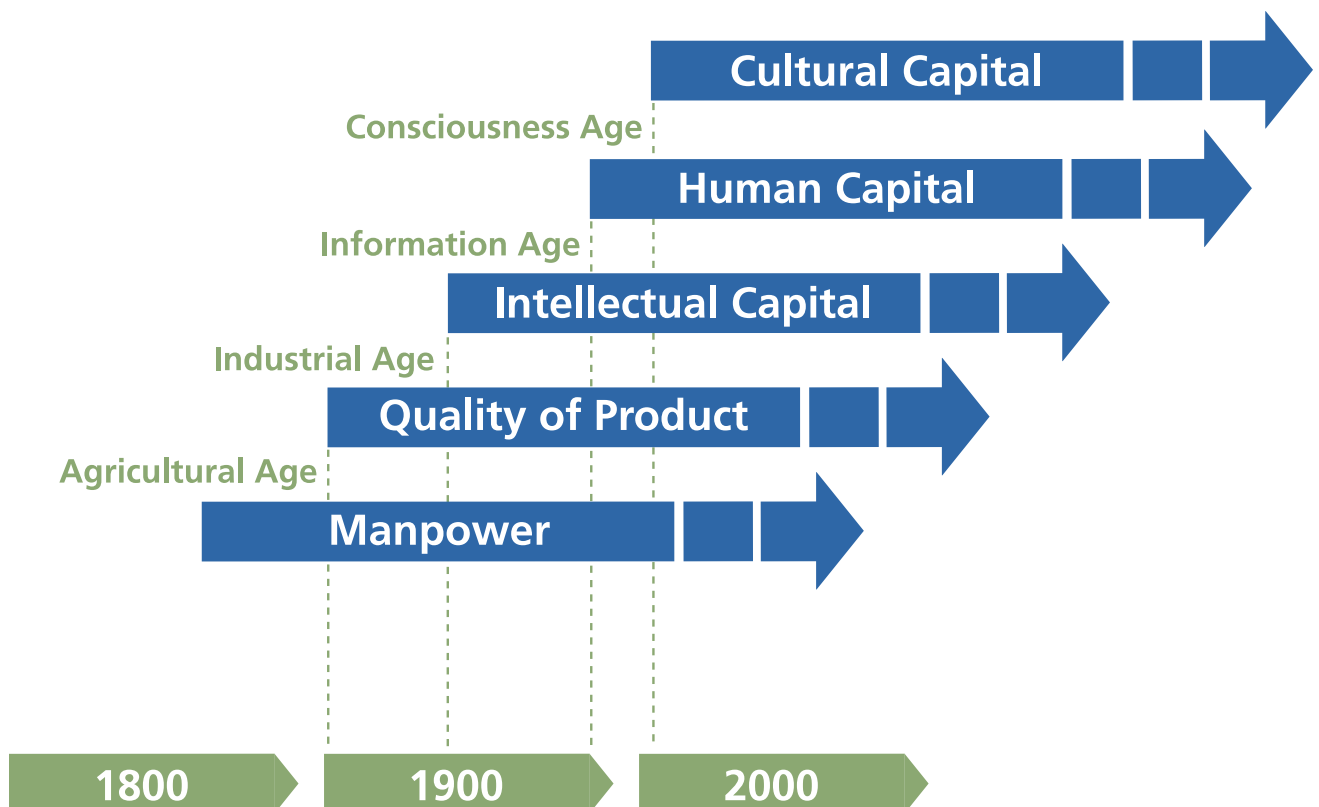


Figure 3: Evolution of Arenas of Competitive Advantage. Adapted from Barrett, Richard (2008)

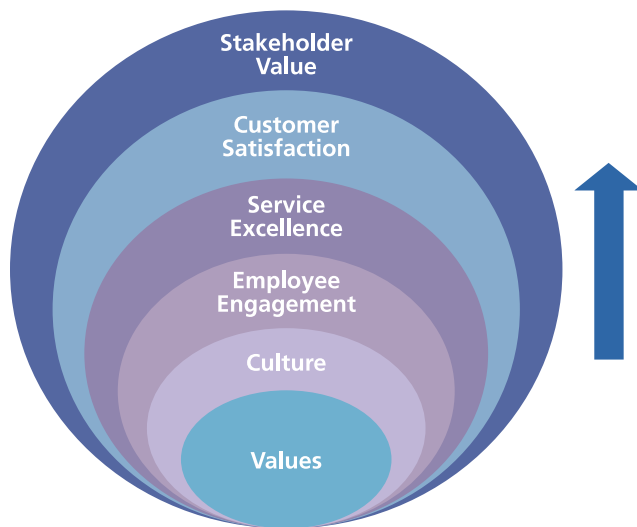


Figure 4: The Culture Value Chain – Adapted from Barrett, Richard

Unprecedented issues driven by global economic instability, terrorism, natural disasters, corporate disasters, climate change and environmental uncertainty, to name a few, are stretching systems and people beyond anything experienced in the past.

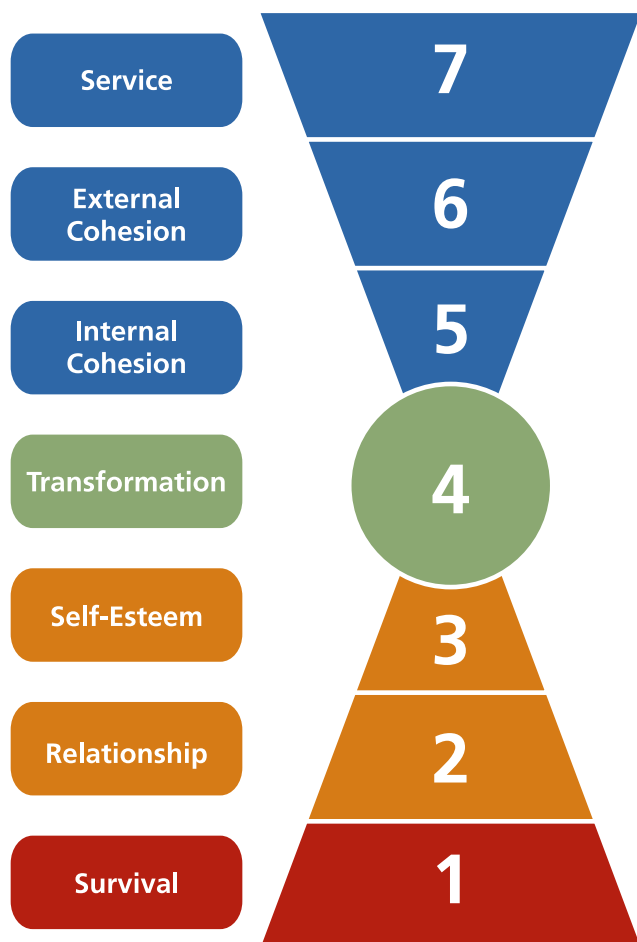
We can no longer accurately predict the road ahead and expect a three to five year map will effectively guide us forward.

Achieving business goals amidst this uncertainty and complexity takes the collective wisdom and talents of everyone associated with the organization and their ability to collaborate, innovate and accelerate through the constant tide of challenges and opportunities presented. To quote Einstein: *“The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking that created them.”*

Key Success Factors

A key cultural differentiator that separates highly successful organizations from the rest of the pack is their belief in more than just profit. In recent years, we’ve seen a flood of thought leaders, business leaders, researchers, authors, and academic institutions urging us for something more than a one-dimensional focus on bottom line results. We’ve been challenged to think more holistically and encouraged to adopt models with Balanced Score Cards, Triple Bottom Lines, Full Spectrum Leadership, Values Based Leadership... and the list goes on.

Jim Collins and Jerry Porras said it nicely in *Built to Last*. They said it’s about the “genius of the AND” ...and not the “tyranny of the OR” that often pushes leaders to believe things must be either



Positive Focus / Excessive Focus

Service To Humanity and the Planet

Social responsibility, future generations, long-term perspective, ethics, compassion, humility.

Strategic Alliances and Partnerships

Collaboration, environmental awareness, community involvement, coaching, mentoring, volunteer work, employee fulfillment, making a difference.

Building Corporate Community

Alignment, shared values & vision, commitment, integrity, creativity, openness, transparency, trust.

Continuous Renewal and Learning

Accountability, adaptability, empowerment, innovation, teamwork, goals orientation, personal growth, courage.

High Performance

Efficiency, productivity, quality, systems, processes, best practices, pride in performance. **Bureaucracy, complacency.**

Customer Satisfaction

Connectivity, open communication, respect, employee recognition, friendship, family. **Manipulation, blame.**

Financial Stability

Profit, shareholder value, organizational growth, employee health & safety. **Control, corruption, greed.**

Figure 5: Cultural Values Assessment, Barrett Values Centre

A or B, but not both.

In *Firms of Endearment*, the authors hail the need for a SPICE stakeholder model where society, partners, investors, customers, and employees are each considered important in their own right and given equal attention, understanding that the whole is better than the parts.

Tony Hsieh, CEO of the highly successful Zappos online shoe store, writes in his 2010 book, *Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profits, Passion and Purpose*, about how his focus on developing a tribe of like-minded employees, suppliers and strategic partners was a critical factor in achieving organizational financial success and, perhaps even more importantly to him, organizational happiness.

Gone too are the days of entitlement when the company can over focus on one ideology or one stakeholder. And gone also are the days of entitlement wherein shareholders, customers, leaders and employees focus exclusively on their own self-interests. None of these models are sustainable. The new model must be grounded in mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its stakeholders. In essence, the tribe must be in service to each other with cultural norms and behaviours that are aligned and reflective of their common interests and values.

How Culture is Created – The Value Chain

Alignment of stakeholder values is critical because, as Richard Barrett states, values drive culture, culture drives employee engagement, employee engagement drives service excellence, service excellence drives customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction drives stakeholder value.

Zappos.com certainly concurs with this thinking and as a result, they give a great deal of focus to looking for people whose personal values match their corporate values. CEO Hsieh is very open about wanting people on his team who “just naturally live the Zappos brand whether they are in the office or off the clock”. In fact, he believes that people who don’t fit the company culture are better off being paid to leave ...and sooner than later. At the end of their first week of training, all new recruits are offered compensation for the time already spent in training plus

a bonus of \$2,000 to quit immediately. According to Hsieh, this weeds out those whose values are not aligned and supports the integrity of Zappos’ culture.

HR’s Call to Action – Consciously Creating Your Culture

HR and organizational development have a huge responsibility to help the organization focus on and consciously create its desired culture. They must build the organization’s literacy around culture and help determine whether the culture and supporting systems, programs and processes are congruent with each other and in alignment with the vision, values and interests of all stakeholders.


First Steps in Getting Started

Understanding your organizational culture is a key first step. There are many tools on the market that can help you assess your culture and determine its effectiveness. One model I really like was developed by Richard Barrett from the Barrett Values Center (Figure 5). It’s full spectrum and clearly demonstrates the degree of

stakeholder alignment and cultural function/dysfunction in the organization.

Regardless of the model you use, ensure it’s:

- easy to use and understand;
- takes a full spectrum/full systems approach;
- measures alignment of stakeholder values; and
- involves your employees (and other stakeholders as much as possible) in the cultural assessment and transformation initiatives that may follow.

Just remember that helping your organization create strong cultural capital is, arguably, the most important thing HR can do! 

Cathy Fulton, MA, CHRP is a senior consultant with The Intersol Group (www.intersol.ca), where she enjoys helping organizations create workplace cultures that provide winning conditions for success and generate breakthrough results. Cathy offers consulting and facilitation services in organizational development and effectiveness through Intersol’s Western Regional Office in Victoria, BC.

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Founding Our



Celebra



Tony Hsieh

By **Jason McRobbie**

FOR THE PAST 70 YEARS, IN ONE FORM or another, the BC Human Resources Management Association has been *"Founding Our Future"*. As the underlying theme for the 50th Annual BC HRMA Conference and Tradeshow, it is more apt than ever for HR professionals.

Even a cursory glance at the roster of presenters confirms that this is not the HR of old. From Rick Mercer headlining the pre-conference, Tradeshow Speaker Series on April 25th with his insights on *"A Nation Worth Ranting About"* to a neuro-scientist taking the primary plenary stage, this HR has been decades in the making.

HR might not be rocket science, but that is only because said science is comparatively straight forward. There is no blueprint for building better workers except for building better HR. As a field, as an association, and as individual professionals, that has been both the challenge

and the commitment of BC HRMA and its members.

Given HR's lettered designation and growing renown in strategic circles, it comes as little surprise to find HR attracting greater numbers - and in the 50th year of conference, offering as diverse a list of speakers and attendees as it does.

**"This HR has
been decades in
the making"**

With economists, trend-spotters, neuro-scientists and visionaries claiming center stage at Conference 2012, there is no denying that the profession and the Association which embodies it in British Columbia, have changed in

more ways than one. What first emerged as the Wartime Industries Coordination Committee in 1942 has come a long way in so many ways. For example, there are more women at the table, the computers are mostly handheld and we have a flag to rally 'round with the Certified Human Resources Professional designation.

Diversity a Sign of the Times

BC HRMA has a history of *"Founding Our Future"*, both as a sign of the times, and as a champion of evermore upwardly-mobile people practices. Today, with over 5,400 members spread across seven regions of the province, the HR professionals at the heart of BC HRMA represent businesses large and small, unionized and otherwise, across nearly every aspect of industry. From students and future leaders of HR to CHRPs, vice-presidents and HR leaders of present, the sheer diversity of the

Our Future:



Anticipating an HR Milestone



Dr. David Rock



Linda Nazareth



Jeremy Gutsche

membership today stands in sharp relief to the not-so-distant past and in near-complete contrast to its origin.

The field of HR has become more diverse in both its practitioners, as well as the array of responsibilities with which it now contends. Industrial labour relations, once the stock of the trade, has long since become a single aspect of a picture both more complex and simply human. From gatekeepers to bridge builders to architects of productivity, BC HRMA's membership has long defined the leading edge; the annual conference is what has kept them there for half a century.

From Hot Springs to Global Trends

Naturally, the first conference in 1962 was a smaller affair, held in Harrison Hot Springs and HR was not as prevalent in the language of business. Labour relations

held the floor, fellowship and hot springs the prime interest. The numbers in attendance, much like those of the membership itself, were to be polite, more intimate.

"From gatekeepers to bridge builders to architects of productivity..."

Cue the timeline for April 25-27, 2012 and sheer numbers alone, to say nothing of the view, dictate that the new Vancouver Convention Centre is one of the few venues capable of accommodating the 50th Annual BC HRMA Conference and Tradeshow.

As per the talent? This year's line up of speakers could not have been imagined

in 1962. BC HRMA's annual conference has not so much evolved as it has helped shape the evolution of HR. From the core cadre of industry professionals headlining the breakouts to the multi-faceted luminaries in the spotlight, Conference 2012 is *"Founding Our Future"* in fine detail and by broad strokes alike.

Consider opening speaker Jeremy Gutsche, founder of Trendhunter.com, the number one trend-spotting site in the world. Quite literally, Gutsche has a history of tracking the future with a high success rate. At 28, as one of Capital One's youngest business directors, he led his team to grow a billion dollar portfolio. As a management consultant for the Monitor Group, he advised Fortune 50 clients on top level strategy. As author of *Exploiting Chaos: Ways to Spark Innovation During Times of Change*, Gutsche speaks to the heart of the opportunity for organizations

to explore, exploit and harness the creativity that helps top companies thrive and survive alike.

This was not the purview of yesterday's HR; it is imperative to the present.

Rethinking Your Brain At Work

The first day of conference also provides a rock to found that future upon - and a whole new way of thinking. Dr. David Rock co-founded the NeuroLeadership Institute as a global initiative to build a new science for leadership development, guest lectures at universities in five countries - including Oxford University's Said Business School - and has authored four books including the business-best-seller *Your Brain At Work*.

In a world once black and white, Rock's metier is gray matter: how our brains function, both individually and collectively. As most work involves thinking

or influencing other people's thinking, Rock's science goes well beyond rocket science to explore some of the surprises emerging from brain research, many of which speak directly to the primary pain points of HR.

People. Passion. Profit. The unspoken unifying element is productivity. The key to that productivity does not lie in clinging to the lingering legacy of a work world that has already undergone such massive, dynamic change.

The Twist to Mastering Uncertainty

According to Linda Nazareth, the key is an unlikely metaphor. What is needed is a twist. As an economist, author and broadcaster, since 1999 Nazareth has been the in-house economist for Business News Network, Canada's only all-business television network. Her first book in 2001 was called "the first important book on

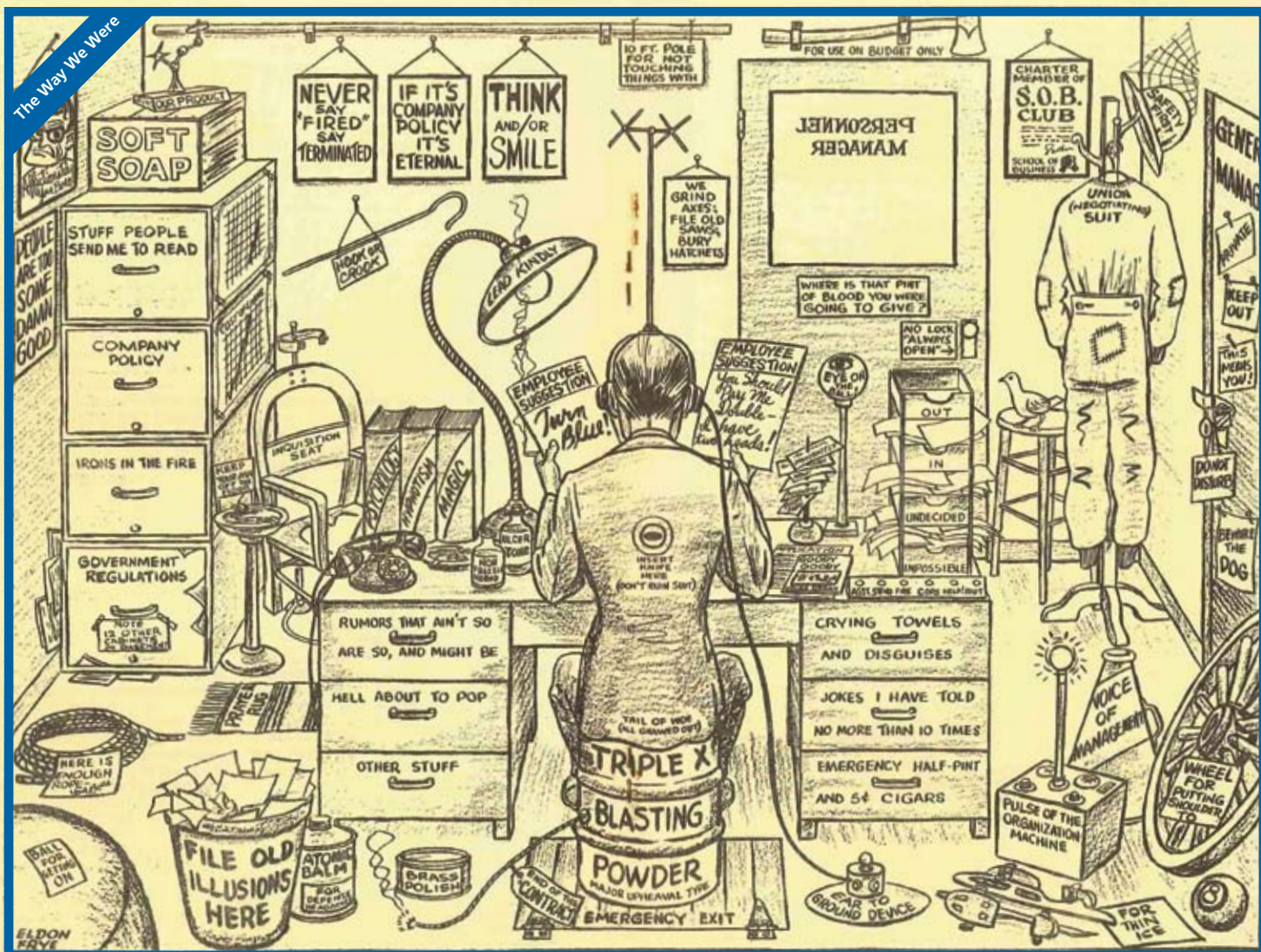
the 1990s stock market boom" and "one of the best books of the year on the Canadian economy."

What Nazareth brings to the second day of Conference 2012 is "The Twist: Finding Your Path in the Post-Everything Economy". An expert on demographic and social change, her most recent book *The Leisure Economy: How a Shift from the World Will Reshape Our Lives and Industries*, paints a clear picture of the challenges faced by HR in the broader business picture.

As per Nazareth's insights and HR's direct experience, the extreme "time-crunch economy" of the past three decades is transforming into something entirely other, what she calls a "leisure economy" that has already and will continue to necessitate adjustments on every level of our lives and workplaces.

Is this HR? Absolutely.

Continued on page 27



How ghastly true 'tis. Probably the essence of Personnel work has never been so exquisitely captured as in this cartoon by Eldon Frye, Assistant Advertising Manager, Convair, San Diego. Earl Johnson, Seattle Chapter brought it to Panarama's attention.

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Presenter: *Stephanie Milliken, CHRP, HR consultant, Milliken HR*

How To Create & Implement Effective HR Policy **NEW**

This session contains everything you need to know about how to create and implement the right policies and practices, at the right time for your organization. Ones that are not only culturally aligned but also support the company and its workforce.

Presenter: *Corinne Maedel, CHRP, CEO, Jouta Performance Group*

Legal Symposium: A Safe & Healthy Workplace

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This symposium will engage a range of topics and speakers, see the website for details: www.bchrma.org/events

Diversity, Inclusion & Engagement: Practices for the Workplace

Through engaging and interactive exercises, this workshop will help you define what respect really means to you and your organization, and it will build a variety of communication and conflict resolution skills that will foster an engaged and productive workplace.

Presenter: *Randy Kennett, Senior Advisor, Edge Learning*

Building Organizational Resilience **NEW**

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Presenter: *Tara Cree, Principal, Market Team Lead, Knightsbridge Leadership Solutions. BC HRMA webinars are sponsored by BCIT School of Business.*

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Disputes and dispute resolution forms an integral part of the day-to-day challenges of HR professionals. This session will provide you with insight into what to expect when disputes take on a legal aspect, then become legal battles.

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FEATURED WORKSHOP

Key Business Skills for HR: An Introduction **NEW**

Thursday, April 12, 2012 (Vancouver) and Thursday, May 10, 2012 (Victoria)

This workshop will provide you with an introduction to the key business skills essential to personal growth in a company including how to communicate your initiatives in terms of value and return on investment, the key financial statements in an organization, key HR metrics and how they relate to a company's bottom line, and more.

Presenter: *Colin McWhinnie, business owner, management consultant, SalesXperts Solutions Inc.*



The Pursuit of Happiness Results in Better Business

As widely versed and varied as the voices celebrating the 50th Annual BC HRMA Conference are, each speaks to the expanded role of HR.

As for the final speaker, Zappos.com founder Tony Hsieh is both a perfect fit and living proof of leading HR's impact. After selling LinkingExchange, a company he co-founded to Microsoft for \$265 million, Hsieh joined Zappos.com as an advising investor and eventually became CEO before growing the company from almost no sales to over \$1 billion in gross merchandise sales annually.

"Is this HR? Absolutely."


How he did so is revealing and an important reminder to HR professionals seeking further validation at the table of big business. Hsieh's bottom line results bear considering the title of his first book, *Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profits, Passion and Purpose*. In Hsieh's HR, happiness carries bottom lines to levels beyond prior consideration. The language behind the business is as key to the delivery of the goods.

Hsieh's take on work/life resulted in Zappos.com being listed as one of Fortune magazine's "Best Companies to Work For." His message, in turn, has evolved into a movement to help people, organizations and business apply the different frameworks of happiness to their lives and work.

In closing the conference, Hsieh provides confirmation of the true worth of HR's 'soft' skill set. Herein, solid HR futures are founded upon a fond return to what has always mattered. Happiness. Results.

An HR For Founding Our Future

The keystone of that future has already been laid. For those attending BC HRMA's 50th Annual Conference and Tradeshow, the work and the wonder continues. Visit www.bchrma.org/conf2012 for full conference registration and detailed information.

Look to *HRVoice.org* and the summer edition of *PeopleTalk* for further conference interviews and coverage. 

It Takes a Team to Found Our Future

By **Lisa Ryan**, CHRP, BC HRMA Conference Chair

As the underlying theme for the 50th Annual BC HRMA Conference and Tradeshow, "*Founding Our Future*" is more apt than ever for HR professionals.

Recently, I found my locking, black leather, hard briefcase from the early 90s when I worked as an HR advisor with the Royal Bank of Canada. My young daughter commented that it was a 'gangster getaway' case used by bad guys to carry cash in the movies. My 'information storage device' had become an anachronism, long ago surpassed by a steady stream of laptops, tablets and smart phones.

It is not just our tools though, but our roles which have changed. Human resources has come a long way from the personnel department of our industrial past. Finding, hiring, developing and retaining an organization's human resources has become more complex and challenging in today's world of changing technology, demographics and rising customer and employee demands.

Building on the lessons of the past, at the 50th Annual BC HRMA Conference we'll explore the future of HR and how we can work more strategically with business in the internet /digital age of global change. We'll begin with pre-conference 2012 featuring Rick Mercer's rant for our great nation's politics and carry on with great speakers - futurist Jeremy Gutsche, economist Linda Nazareth, neuro-psychologist Dr. David Rock, and successful leader Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos.com.

The BC HRMA conference is ultimately all about people and the business of people. Ever since last year's conference finished, a committee of dedicated industry professionals and BC HRMA staff has been working hard to bring this great event to fruition.

The inspiration and guidance provided by our steering committee members Kevin Jeffrey, FCHRP, Peter Saulnier, CHRP, Harry Gray and Tyler Pronyk, CHRP together with our other volunteers and staff, helped us anchor an overall design and theme. From there, the efforts of so many individuals deserve recognition that I apologize for my brevity.

Special thanks to Nic Tsangarakis, Conference Vice Chair and Skill Development Track Lead; Susan Karda, Talent Management Track Lead; Vincent Chow, Organizational Effectiveness Track Lead; and Marino Sveinson/Judith MacFarlane, co-leads of the HR and the Law Track. All spent many hours over the summer and early Fall working with their teams to source and select great speakers. We couldn't have done it without you!

BC HRMA's annual conference has always been a great place to network and reconnect with colleagues old and new. Every year the pool of talent drawn to conference only deepens and as HR continues to evolve, so do we all. For the love of learning and the experience of the past year, I have been honoured to serve as the chair of Conference 2012 and look forward to seeing you in April.





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BC HRMA PROFESSIONAL AWARDS

THE BC HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT Association celebrates leaders who inspire above-average professional people practices. The Professional Awards, presented at the annual conference, provide an opportunity for the spotlight to shine on innovative and inspiring HR practitioners.

The recipients of the awards, as well as those HR practitioners granted Fellow CHRP (FCHRP) status, will be announced at the Awards Luncheon on April 27th, 2012 at BC HRMA's 50th Annual Conference and Tradeshow in Vancouver.

THE 2012 FINALISTS ARE:

Award of Excellence:

HR Professional of the Year

The Award of Excellence: HR Professional of the Year, sponsored by *The Globe and Mail*, recognizes the HR leaders of today. This award is BC HRMA's highest honour for established HR practitioners, exemplary HR individuals who have made a contribution to human resources by improving organizational performance, achieving business results, demonstrating excellence in leadership or developing innovative programs.

- **Crysta Kynaston**, CHRP
Vice President, Human Resources
WCG International HR Solutions, Ltd
- **Eileen Stewart** Independent HR
Practitioner
- **Diane Taylor**, CHRP
Human Resources Manager -
Store Operations RONA

Award of Excellence: Innovation

The Award of Excellence: Innovation, sponsored by *The Globe and Mail*, recognizes an individual or team that has successfully applied an innovative and progressive program and/or project (within financial or corporate limitations) to a new or ongoing HR challenge or opportunity.

- **Ann Leckie** HR Head Teldon
Media Group
- **Capital Regional District Team
Victoria, BC**
 - **Christopher Neilson**, CHRP,
Senior Manager, Human Resources
 - **Sarah Hood**, CHRP,
Manager Workforce Development
and Strategies
 - **Elaine McMath**, CHRP,
Human Resources Advisor
 - **Angela Maunders**, CHRP,
Human Resources Advisor
 - **Mary Stock**, CHRP,
Manager, Employee Relations
 - **Nadine Dillabaugh**, CHRP,
Manager, Employee Services

Rising Star Award

The Rising Star Award, sponsored by the Beedie School of Business, *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Province*, recognizes the HR leaders of tomorrow. These up-and-comers, within the first five years of their human resources career, are considered to be lighting the HR community on fire and hold the future of the profession in their hands. Each of the nominees has made significant contributions to their past and present workplaces at a very early stage in their career.

- **Nikki Cescon**, CHRP
HR Advisor Kelowna Flightcraft Group
- **Tyler Cheyne**, CHRP
HR Advisor Omicron Canada Inc.
- **Candice Wright**, CHRP
Candidate Labour Relations Research
Analyst BC Public School Employers'
Association



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Attendance and Wellness Promotion: A Case Study of Win-Win-Win

By **Ian J. Cook**, CHRP

WHILE EVERYONE KNOWS THE rules around attendance, people invariably will set their own “acceptable standard” if they do not think anyone is watching. In that way work attendance is much like driving without enforcing the speed limits according to Wayne Balshin, executive director of employee engagement at Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH).

Over three years ago, this became an important issue when VCH took a hard look at employee attendance; when they reviewed the attendance of their union staff relative to similar organizations, VCH had the highest rate of hours not worked with a 5.7 per cent paid sick time rate. The high cost of sick time was manifested in the following ways:

- **Reduced Productivity:** each 0.1 per cent of sick time = 18,000 Productive Hours
- **High Costs:** In 2008, VCH had more than 1,000,000 hours of sick time costing \$35,000,000. (This amount did not include LTD or WCB.)
- **Workload and Morale:** staff working “short” when little notice of sick call and can’t find replacement casual

Driven by Balshin and Judy Doyle (the AWP manager), with support from the executive team, three years later the results have been significant. VCH now leads other health authorities with the lowest sick rate of 4.7 per cent. The AWP with a clear and consistent process in place has saved more than 300,000 hours of sick time since the program’s inception in October 2008.

These results are not a temporary boost, the system is now in place to continue supporting the best level of attendance possible. The process and insights that led to the development of this system hold valuable messages for any organization.

A Higher Standard of Care

The internal impact of the program has been similarly positive, benefiting the staff at VCH in many ways. Employees now see the standard for attendance as clear, monitored and applied fairly to all. This has improved the perception of fairness in the workplace as well as helping reduce impacts on individual workloads.



Wayne Balshin, director employee relations, Vancouver Coastal Health walks BC HRMA’s Ian J. Cook through the AWP experience.

<http://youtu.be/8ny88zsJ7MM?hd=1>

According to Anne Harvey, VP, employee engagement at VCH, “The AWP program has improved the productive tone of the workplace and made a significant impact on individuals. Less absence means less instances of units working short staffed allowing staff to deliver better care to patients. While the cost savings from the AWP program are valuable, this ability to enhance patient care is the outcome of which we are most proud.” The development of the AWP program involved many steps, including research, consultation, development and testing, this conscious and systematic approach has paid dividends and enabled the program to succeed.

Designing A Program that Works

Step one: Can’t manage what you can’t measure!

The first step is the need for accurate tracking and reporting of people’s attendance.

In order for the employee to understand there is a sick leave issue, VCH designed a new Work and Leave Calendar Report (only takes 10 seconds to produce) illustrating all work shifts and types of absences (e.g. vacation, sick, WCB) over the year. Sick absences are coded as “red”.

Establishing a robust process to track the sick leave of more than 13,000 employees on a regular basis was key to ensuring the ongoing success of AWP.

Step Two: Setting the standard

The next step was to determine the criteria that would trigger the need for the AWP meeting. This criteria needed to be objective, easy to communicate and logical/defensible to all staff. VCH uses a single sick leave trigger calculated each year based on the average sick time taken by all regular union staff across all collective agreements.

So you would be asked to attend an AWP meeting only if your absence rate was above the average for other unionized employees. Those with known conditions or on some form of accommodated work program are excluded from the calculations.

Step Three: Taking an inclusive and supportive approach

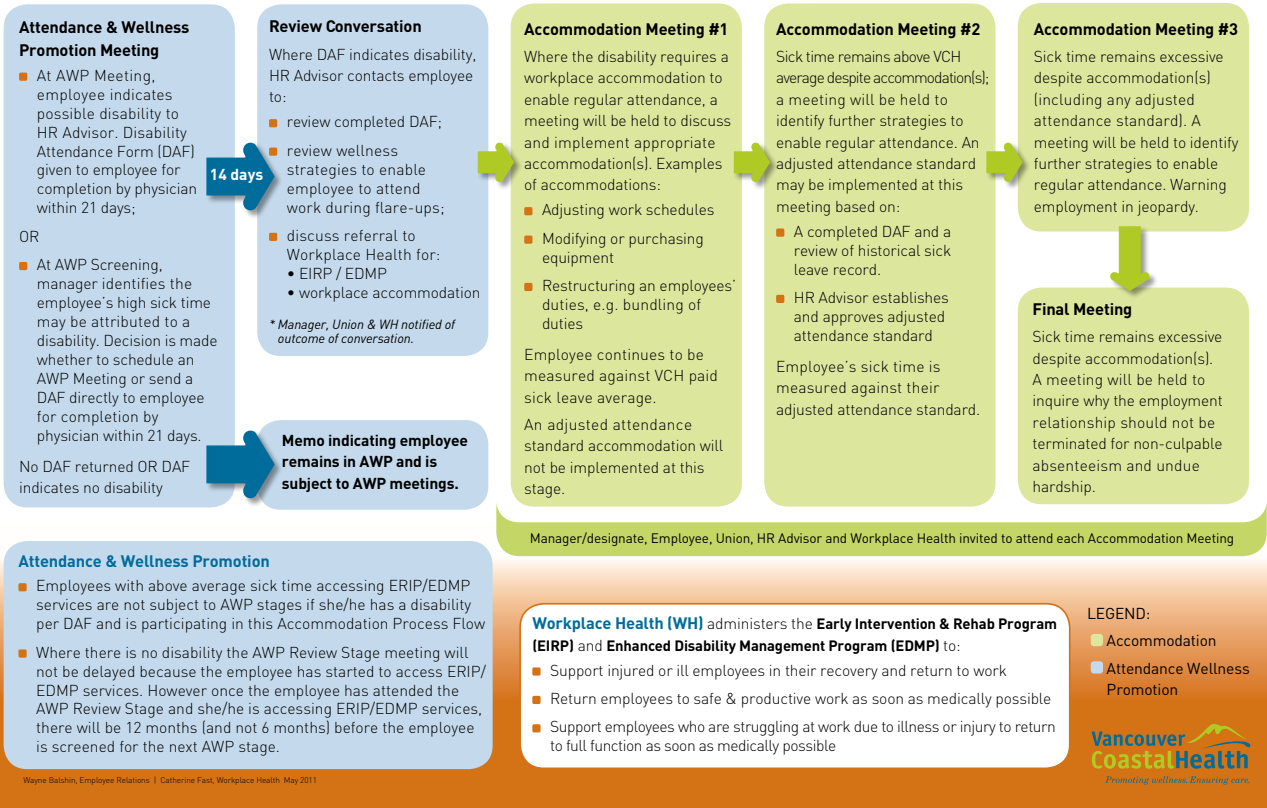
With the data and the criteria in place the next step was to work out what would happen through the AWP stages. The AWP starts with an initial review meeting. This meeting is attended by the employee, their union representative, their manager and an HR advisor. By having HR and the union present, the interests of the employee are fully represented.

HR is front and center in the AWP meeting process. The HR advisor ensures the tone is positive, the focus remains on helping the employee to understand there is a sick leave issue and reviews wellness

Attendance & Wellness Promotion:

Accommodation Process for Employees with High Sick Time Due to a Disability

Disability is a recognized medical (physical or mental) impairment which limits the person's ability to perform the activities of daily living; and whose symptoms may prevent the person from attending work regularly.



strategies (e.g. influenza immunization, employee assistance program; early disability management program (EDMP); respectful communication workshops, brochures/internet advice (e.g. nutrition, exercise, elder/child care), etc.

There are no assumptions made about why the attendance is at the level it is at. The statements are fact-based and objective. There is no suggestion that the employee's behavior is blame-worthy or wrong.

A Measure of Success: Ongoing Diligence

While there are three other stages to the AWP meeting process, each involving deeper exploration of the attendance patterns, few employees have gone further than the initial review meeting. Over the three years that the program has been operating 70 per cent of the AWP review meetings do not progress to stage one and the majority of employees who are stage one, do not progress to stage two.

The final stage of the process involves termination. In all of the time the AWP program has been running, no one has reached Stage 3 and been let go. Moreover, after holding 5,000 AWP meetings, no grievances have yet been arbitrated. All of this speaks to the effectiveness and perceived fairness

of the process being used by VCH.


The efforts of Balshin and his team have had impacts beyond reducing sick time; they have also changed the way HR is perceived at VCH. The ongoing role of the HR advisors in the AWP process, and the clear results, have changed how the management group views their HR advisors. As those results contribute directly to improved VCH services, the extent to which HR is viewed as a strategic partner essential to overall organizational success has increased.

In Summary

There are enduring principles in the program designed and run by VCH that are valuable to anyone looking to design a sick leave program that works: employee behavior. In addition to the AWP being based on objective criteria and supportive in terms of how employees are treated, Balshin highlighted some other innovative features such as:

- Centralize management of AWP administration to HR thereby ensuring AWP meetings happen.
- AWP analysts meets with manager quarterly to screen high sick time usage, ensuring that meetings are aligned with sick time occurrences.

- HR advisor and union steward attend all AWP meetings (some staff improve attendance simply to avoid future meetings).
- Staff at AWP Stages 1-3 are NOT permitted to pick-up overtime work, thereby incentivizing regular attendance.
- Staff who reach AWP Stage 3 have their hours reduced to determine whether regular attendance is possible based on lower FTE.
- The philosophy is to accommodate employees whose disability is causing high sick time in order to enable their continued employment to the point of undue hardship.

The results achieved far outweigh the investment required. 

A global citizen, Ian J. Cook, MA, MBA, CHRP (ijcook@bchrma.org) has chosen to make his home in Vancouver where he heads the growth of BC HRMA's research and learning services.

AWP Powerpoint presentation:
<http://tinyurl.com/7z6on22>

AWP PDF materials:
<http://tinyurl.com/82pgf88>

Skills Shortages:

A Paradox Resolved (In Principle)

By **Amelia Chan, CHRP**

IN TURNING OUR FOCUS TO THE FUTURE, IT IS interesting how often the past provides resolution to present challenges.

The ever-looming paradox of the skills shortage is unresolved. Changing technologies and titles aside, need it be? Has not much the same held true since the inception of what we recognize as HR?

As we realize in our daily lives only three things have truly changed: the pace, the perspective and the talent pool. The first is picking up, the second is broadening and the third is off the deep end of complex. It was a point driven home by the “Complexity Made Simple” theme of BC HRMA’s 2011 conference.

In “Founding our Future” with the 50th Annual Conference, how might we as HR professionals look to the past to explain the prevailing paradox of the present?

The Question of Supply and Demand

For simplicity’s sake, let us focus on the paradigm of supply and demand. At present, there are tensions on both sides of the equation: a vast supply of candidates claiming opportunity lost and a surplus of organizations in demand of the ‘right fit’.

As one who works closely with the recruitment field and sees firsthand the challenges of local and international job seekers, I find this disconnect a little

puzzling. Is the problem that these two groups are not finding each other or that each is approaching the other in the wrong way?

Can the supply and demand for qualified candidates be reconciled in a practical sense? People who are good at what they do will always be in demand.

The increasingly specialized skills, training and talent sought by the employer are as unique as the skillsets possessed by the candidates in crafting their career paths. As our technologies evolve, so to do those roles and talents. The pace of that change is exponential, so let’s focus on the principles of good recruitment practice and leading HR.



nciple)

Principles of Good Recruitment Practice

Most directly, employers must take the lead with their approach to recruitment. To do so, they need only empower the HR function to what is essential.

Candidates respond and present themselves based on the information that is communicated to them. The representatives, whether it is the hiring manager or the recruiter, needs to be clear and concise with all stakeholders in order to hire properly. This “demand” influences how the “supply” responds because employers are offering the jobs which require the skills and abilities of the workers.

Unsurprisingly, the ball falls in HR’s court:

1 Know the business and work closely with your leadership.

Human resources professionals and hiring managers who are involved in recruiting must be knowledgeable and informed about the company and its “business” in order to perform effectively. Regardless of whether your role is to lead or execute, recruiting must understand where the leadership’s thinking and direction is headed. How can new employees be hired for the right function(s) when the hiring process doesn’t clarify what is required and how it will fit into the organization?

2 Keep the big picture in mind - don’t fall victim to the “fire fighting” mentality.

Closely related to understanding the business and working with the leaders, recruitment shouldn’t be an isolated function or event. Bad hiring decisions are made because a manager is desperate for help and ends up hiring for the wrong skill set. Recruiting should have a much bigger scope than simply hiring; it ideally encompasses the bigger picture of where the company is heading, not just making the numbers in this quarter.

3 Conduct a needs analysis which reflects your practical parameters.

When companies are reactive versus proactive, they miss the mark. Doing a proper needs analysis on the position helps identify the practical considerations and limitations of a job vacancy. Too many companies have no staffing or HR plan which is surprising since operational growth and success is directly related to its employees. Because of its importance and impact on the bottom line, salary budgets and headcount should not be an afterthought. The other key to this practicality principle is to remember to check in regularly to make sure the parameters are still valid because the speed of business can derail or affect an important hire if conditions change.

4 Set up an “organized” process with flexibility for change.

By setting up a fair and consistent recruitment process, employers can “hire on demand” because the planning,

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***better
retention***



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budgeting, interviewing and hiring has flexibility to adapt under pressure.

5 **Make a policy of clear communication to facilitate finding and keeping the right fit.**

All the principles discussed thus far require timely decision-making and effective communications. This can only be done when there is a consistent flow of information between all parties involved: from leadership to HR to candidate. In

an online, global culture those communications begin well before the hiring. What an organization is not saying about itself on a 24-7 virtual basis can affect its recruitment opportunities as much as what it communicates in real times of need. The gap between the supply (candidates) and demand (employer's vacancies) shrinks when the communication channels remain open.

Without communicating clearly and seeking clarity, employers and candidates

will never be able to reach each other in an effective way. It is vital for all parties to find out what is working and not working for each of them or it just remains a vicious cycle of frustrated best practice. **1**

Amelia Chan, CHRP is the principal of Higher Options (www.hr-options.com), a boutique consulting firm providing support to small and medium-sized businesses specializing in HR management, operational excellence and immigration services.

A Sampling of 'Supply' Side Myths

By **Amelia Chan, CHRP**

THE "SUPPLY" OF QUALIFIED, MOTIVATED AND SUITABLE candidates will always be constrained by the requirements of the job and the ability of the employer to seek them out. Let's examine some popular misconceptions of the candidate pool.

1 There are no jobs out there. This popular doomspeak is not true. Even in periods of high unemployment, there are always new businesses or existing organizations seeking to hire. It may be more accurate to say there are no suitable jobs for a particular individual or fewer vacancies for an industry/area. The challenge for job seekers is to be more creative and persistent in their job search. Job openings often remain unfilled because an employer's needs may have changed during the recruitment period; candidates aren't following up to find out this information.

2 There is an endless supply of candidates, especially during challenging economic times, so it should be 'easy' to find someone with such choice. While it is true that there are more candidates looking for work in tough economic times due to layoffs and financial cut-backs, this does

not always benefit employer's seeking specific skillsets. Nor does the percentage of qualified and suitable finalists selected for interviews necessarily increase proportionally. Even if there are more qualified people in the pool, suitability and cultural fit cannot be overlooked. There may be larger numbers of responses to a posting, but again, this is not an assurance of fit; if anything, it takes more time and effort by the recruiter to shift through the mountains of people who are applying.

3 When unemployment is high, employers can scale back their offerings to take advantage of 'desperate' times. Sloppy practices and unprofessional behaviour is not acceptable at any time. Employers who are unethical and treat candidates and employees with little respect risk their businesses and reputations. There truly is no such thing as a lapse in integrity. Memories may be short but there is a huge difference between tightening belts and milking a situation. Operating your business in this manner affects the longer term culture, trust and viability of the company. When the economy recovers, these bad employer practices won't be forgotten.

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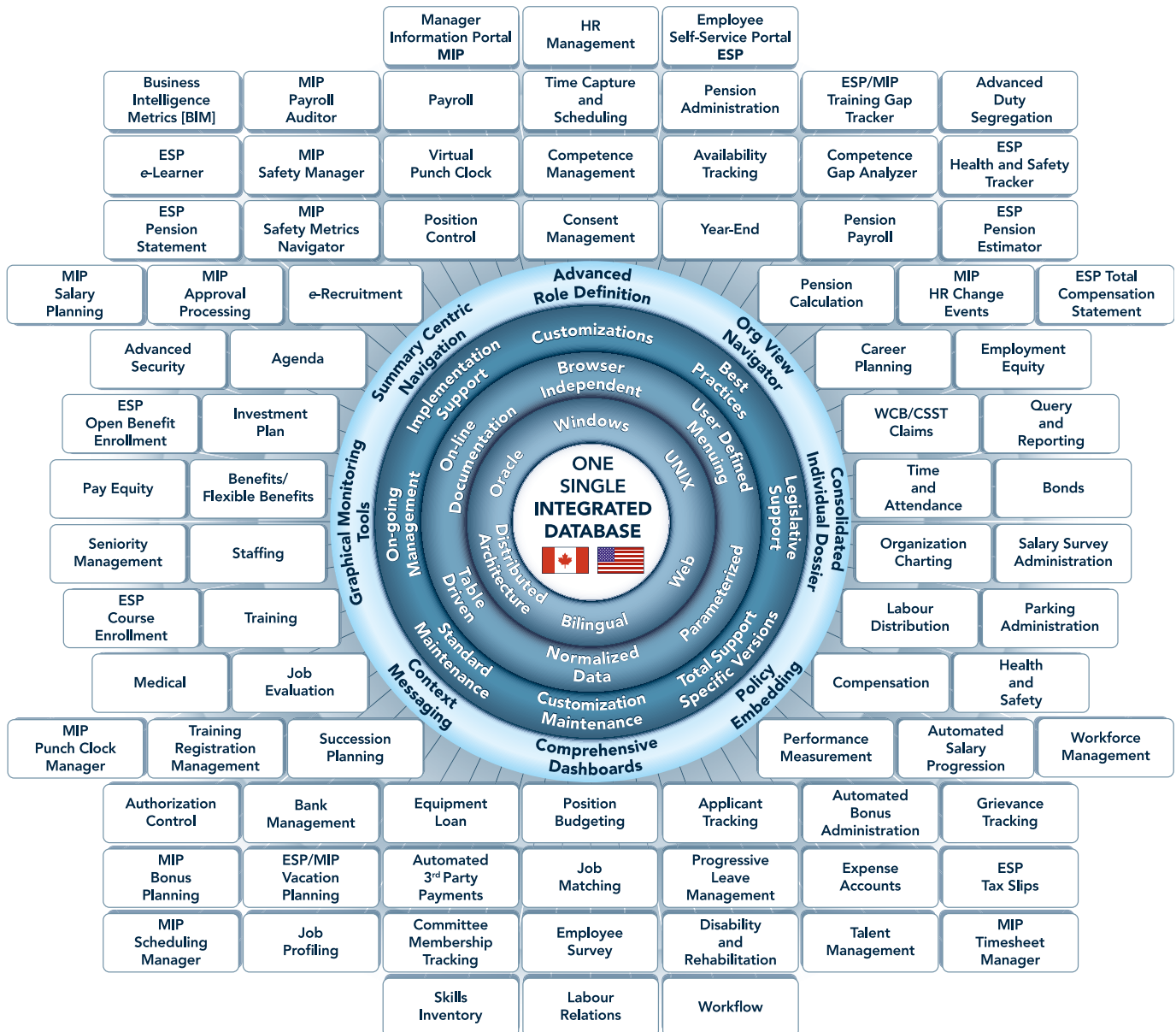
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Your Brain at Work:

Rethinking the Productivity Paradigm

By **Nilesh Bhagat**, CHRP

HR HAS OFTEN BEEN PIGEONHOLED between a rock and a soft place.

The practice of human resources management has historically been depicted as 'soft', 'warm' and 'friendly'. While none of these characteristics are inherently negative, these presumptions have been a traditional impediment for HR in the C-suite. Nor do they cast an accurate reflection of HR's strategic evolution as a core business function.

Fortunately, we can always turn to the rock for some solace - most specifically, Dr. David Rock, a headlining speaker for the 50th Annual BC HRMA Conference in April and author of *Your Brain at Work*.

With his findings, Dr. Rock has taken the pre-eminent challenge of HR - chiefly, maximizing the productivity of the people factor - a major step forward by defining the previously elusive: those subjective influences which drive our everyday behaviour.

Your Brain at Work is a true indicator of just how much our workplace has changed since its inception in the industrial era. Management science has traditionally broken systems, processes and tasks into their basic units to produce efficient combinations.

While the Taylorisms of yesterday focused the paradigm of productivity primarily on 'hours', the neuroscience of today promises far greater return on what is 'ours'. Both speak to a culture of productivity, but the prior has become anachronistic in light of the knowledge economy in which we now live and work. It is in this light that Rock's research and applications of brain science create a database of brain-based behaviours to build efficient - and more importantly, effective - combinations of people practices aimed to develop and maintain a productive workforce.

Most encouragingly, it is in the everyday that he finds fresh inspiration for HR.

Behaviours are the key: shaping our interactions in the workplace, dynamically shaping the cultures which themselves

define the best organizations. As the principal founder of the NeuroLeadership Institute, Rock not only realizes the value of the 'soft' set, but arms HR with the ability to objectify and quantify those skills. While many books busy themselves with teaching HR the language of business, Rock encourages HR to take full stock and consideration of those 'soft' skills - albeit in a fresh light.

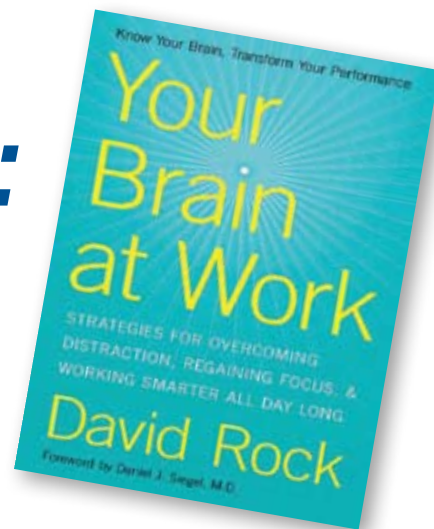
These are not skills that can be taught - knowing what to say or how to act, and when - and are imperative in an era wherein culture and communication are considered key to innovation and profit. Rock breaks these skills down to their neurological foundations to help us better understand why and how we interact with others the way we do - and how it connects to the bigger picture of productivity.

Your Brain at Work revolves around a model that attempts to describe how, when and why we behave. Rock applies this to the context of various business scenarios to illustrate how behaviour can be optimized. He calls this model SCARF - a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others.

SCARF includes five domains of social experiences that your brain treats the same as survival issues:

- Status
- Certainty
- Autonomy
- Relatedness
- Fairness

He describes our tendencies as being either toward or away responses. Toward responses are behaviours which we seek to repeat because they bring us a sense of reward. Away responses are the opposite; they enact the behaviours which we do not find rewarding and are perceived as somehow aversive to our well-being. The five domains which influence the response are the variables of Rock's SCARF model. Finding the optimal behaviour for any given situation at work depends on adjusting the dynamic interplay of these five characteristics.



Rock breaks our behaviour down to its root and builds it back up to describe how behaviour influences ourselves and those around us. In the context of business, this breaking down and redefinition of individual and organizational behaviour is creating the textbook for what's been missing in HR. It gives us defined and reliably quantifiable elements of behavior that enable us to understand how and where to deploy our human resources - much the same way finance uses mathematical models to quantify how the application of monetary resources affects decisions in a business.

Rock's brain-based models build the foundation for HR's business cases. Knowing how and when to influence behavior for individuals and groups provides a database for deploying optimal people practices. More importantly, such foundations provide solid ground for building better HR relations at the strategic level, providing concrete evidence of effectiveness and efficiency when making claims for resource allocations.

Let's use an example of applying Rock's database to increase talent productivity. Rock illustrates how neurological research has shown that creativity relies on a positive, loosely focussed brain state. Creative impasses occur when we are too focussed at times when we should not be. Any one of the five factors of his brain-based model can be at work here; status pressures or lack of autonomy may be creating stress and restricting thought processes. Whatever the case, when an impasse is reached, Rock advises to break the flow of neural activity by activating different parts of the brain to interrupt the impasse-producing networks. By doing so, you are counteracting any sort of threat categorized in the SCARF model and creating the neural milieu necessary for positive, creative work to reoccur.

The concept is simple enough. Get up and shake it off, return refreshed. Rock explores the why of what is a known working formula through the lens of neurochemistry. Fortunately, the language is lay-friendly. Essentially, non-productive neurochemical activity will continue until interrupted. Pushing through an impasse is less effective than allowing synaptic accumulations to disperse by more pleasurable means - like taking a walk. Why?

Walking activates the motor cortex and disengages the planning and preparation centers used to focus on problems.

Similarly, today's organization must learn to adapt continuously and can ill-afford to be caught in creative ruts. HR's takeaway is this: for an innovative and productive workforce, promote the freedom to disengage from tasks, as necessary.

A more flexible workplace is needed to enable an optimally creative and innovative workforce. Creativity and innovation create competitive advantages that enable an organization to stay ahead of its competition. Implementing practices which enable creativity directly influences the bottom line. That's the brain-based behavioural data at work for HR's business case.

How we think, act and behave relative to others is literally a quantifiable dance of chemically generated electricity in our heads. The model Rock proposes in *Your Brain at Work* is based upon this notion of quantifiable energy producing desired behaviour.

Key to turning a good read into a better tomorrow, Rock provides ample scenarios illustrating how we can alter our external and internal environments to produce controlled and accurate behaviours which are optimal for varying situations - specifically with respect to business life. Reduce the threats to Status, Control, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness in any given interaction, and you can change the way networks of neurons fire within differing brain areas, resulting in one type of behaviour over another.

For HR, this means a more connected, responsive and innovative workforce. Stay soft, work smart and don't forget your SCARF. **1**

Nilesh Bhagat, CHRP (nileshrbhagat@gmail.com) is a rewards analyst with Best Buy Canada's Compensation Team.

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Rethinking Workplace Wellness in a Results-Oriented World

By **Antonio Zivanovic**

WHILE IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT health and productivity are definitively linked, wellness programs are a tough sell in tough times. Fortunately, many business leaders are seeking creative ways to reduce healthcare costs and increase workplace productivity.

My stance has always been, “Take care of your people and they’ll take care of your business.” It was not until the economic turmoil of 2008 and the subsequent slashing of company health services that I realized many HR professionals and business leaders lacked the knowledge of practical cost-containment strategies ensuring a solid return on investment for the investors.

A book I was given changed the way I viewed the challenge of delivering preventative healthcare services to the people who need them the most: the single parent, the dedicated employee, the worker on the fringe of mental health issue, and many more. Chris Anderson’s *Free: The Future of a Radical Price* inspired me to both thrive and evolve; it also got me to thinking about Jell-O. While it is a grocery staple now, in its early years, the ownership of the Jell-O brand changed hands several times as there was no apparent demand for the product. What did Jell-O do? What value did it provide people? What void could it fill?

Well aside from jiggling colourfully in a nutritionally devoid, gelatinized state, Jell-O did - and continues to do - very little of importance. However, with the right awareness campaign, replete with a blanketing of free recipes highlighting its fun factor, it found a ready audience and has been a staple since. In this light, educating the consumers about the offering of workplace health and wellness services is akin to how Jell-O educated home gourmards in its infancy. Unlike Jell-O however, health and wellness programs offer more than empty calories.

Good Programs Begin with Good Questions

Implementing effective workplace health and wellness programs first entails educating people. That involves asking questions which lead to more than theory-based solutions:

- What does an effective workplace health and wellness program like? What does it offer?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- How is the service model strategically linked to minimize health care cost drivers?
- What are the program objectives? What is the evaluation plan?
- How much time and resources are required for success?
- How do (typically reactionary) Employee Assistance Programs differ from preventative healthcare services?
- How does one measure the human and financial impact of investment in workplace health services?

“the tangible and intangible results of a health and wellness program must be established before adopting any program”

In seeking to educate people about the uses and value of workplace wellness services, we developed a three-tiered model (see chart).

Accounting for Wellness

One thing remains constant before any of the formats might be considered: the need the ability to report both the tangible and intangible results of any program must be

established before adopting any program. This involves evaluation planning, data collection, data analysis and a system for capturing program costs. Put simply, the metrics of wellness matter.

A range of metrics is essential. This isn’t a service-provider issue. It’s the HR professionals and senior management of companies who typically lack the information to make the calculations.

The Conference Board of Canada found that over 60 per cent of Canadian companies do not track absenteeism. Even when statistics are collected, the errors in validity and reliability in the collection process often compromise the integrity of the results. With thanks to the HR Metrics Service, those figures are now available, so there is no reason to delay; if you are not collecting baseline data, it’s time to start.

The Morale-Oriented Approach

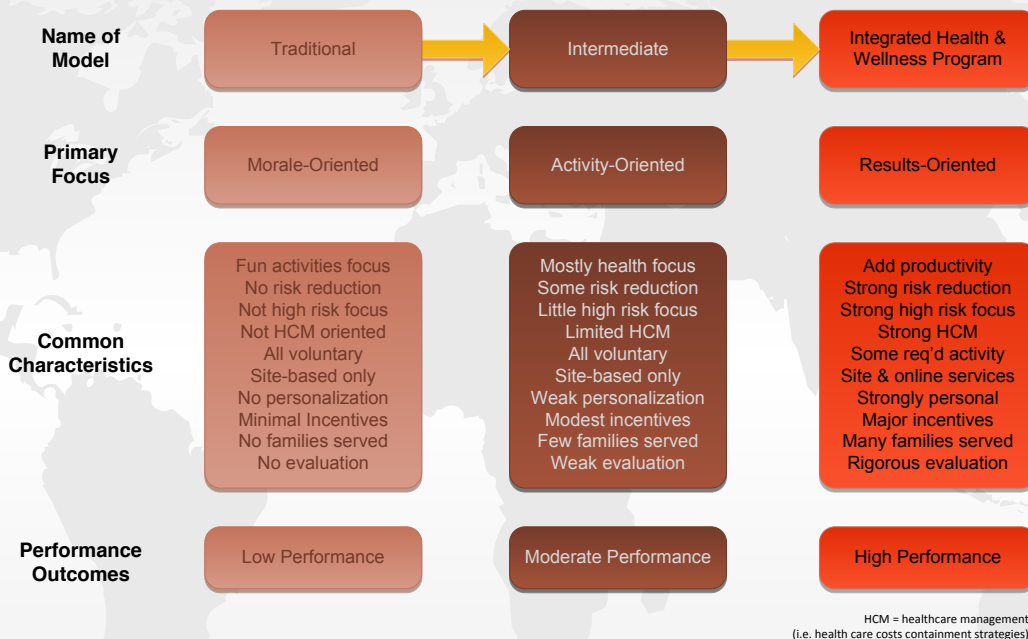
Most companies operate on a morale-oriented basis, offering employees:

- a standard benefits package of \$500 per health service (e.g., massage, physiotherapy, and chiropractic);
- semi-regular lunch-and-learn sessions;
- a discount on a gym membership or a small fund for fitness-related items;
- an employee assistance program; and
- ergonomic assessments on request.

The challenge of a morale-oriented approach is it proceeds without targeting specific cost drivers within the companies benefits plan: mental-health claim increases, greater use of pharmaceuticals to control hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes and the like.

Human resources professionals want to help, but more often than not lack the detailed understanding needed to support effective programs. They remain stuck in the morale-oriented mindset and are effectively prevented from pursuing a more activity, or ideally, results-oriented approach. Truthfully, such programs are great when strategically deployed and

Evolution of Workplace Health & Wellness Programs



linked to business metrics, but in the grand scheme of a well-thought plan, they only begin to meet the demands of today's workforce.

A Failure to Communicate

Robert Half's recent paper, "CFO Concerns: What are the top challenges facing today's financial executives," indicates that CFOs ranked three issues as being most pertinent to the continued viability and growth of their firms:

- healthcare costs;
- controlling spending and improving profitability; and
- staff morale and motivation.

While this bodes well for wellness as an issue of priority, it fails to address the reality. Benefit consultants still apply a transactional perspective, managing plans without providing a global cost-containment strategy, with the exception of shifting funds here and there, which is deemed as 'plan management.'

HR professionals are partly at fault. While they have good relationships with benefit consultants and insurance carriers, they typically renew plans each year, rather than continuously working to find solutions for escalating costs associated with the health of the workforce. It's vital to provide people with ways to improve their health in tandem with the financial wellbeing of the business.

Evaluation Essential to Results

Moving from a morale to activity-oriented approach is a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, evaluation of the program objectives are still weak - and that is the beginning of the end when attempting to demonstrate the value of health and wellness programs to C-suite leadership. Health and wellness programs that lack rigorous evaluation cannot demonstrate their value.

**"as with Jell-O,
shaking things up
a bit is the ideal
place to start."**

If you want to develop and support a high-performance team, a results-oriented approach will help you and your company's bottom line. In this model, you develop program objectives and have a rigorous evaluation plan in place. In companies deploying this model, HR professionals are typically exceptional leaders; they understand the need to link and report on services in a cohesive fashion and achieve meaningful results by linking the health and wellness service model with business objectives.

Foundations for Future Wellness

At the end of the day, decision-makers must get the foundation for program delivery right. The next step for leaders is to ensure that health and wellness programs are not just random initiatives delivered sporadically, but services aligned with business objectives and used as a cost-containment strategy to minimize the top concern: healthcare costs. Where this is not the case, healthcare costs will continue to rise without positive changes in sight, and sooner than later, the costs will either be passed along to the employees and/or they will see a reduction in their overall benefits compensation package.

Is your program results-oriented? Identify potential gaps to ensure that your program can demonstrate a return on investment when in your next conversation with C-suite members. There are many excellent health and wellness service providers out there, who can help you establish realistic baselines that enable your team to do what they do best: deliver exceptional service to keep you and your company fit for success.

And, as with Jell-O, shaking things up a bit is the ideal place to start. **11**

Antonio Zivanovic (azivanovic@thinkCOS.com) is the CEO of Corporate Occupational Solutions Inc. (www.thinkCOS.com), a workplace health and wellness services provider.

The Age of Uncertainty: No Horizon Line for Retirement

By Graeme McFarlane

AS THE BABY BOOMERS AGE, THE MAKEUP of the Canadian workforce is changing. Economic uncertainties combined with longer life spans have prompted employees to work longer than in previous times.

Historically, employers could reasonably expect employees to work approximately until they were 65 years old. They could also implement mandatory retirement programs that would require that an employee cease work. In theory, such a program would provide opportunities for younger workers as they move through the workforce. However, mandatory retirement policies discriminate against workers on the basis of their age; they were only permitted to operate through an

exemption created by the age definitions within Human Rights legislation.

In response to a number of influences, many provinces across Canada, including British Columbia moved to eliminate mandatory retirement. The British Columbia *Human Rights Code* was subsequently amended to eliminate the exemptions for workers past the age of 65. However, removing these exemptions has created a number of challenges for employers.

Workforce planning has become more difficult. When retirement dates are uncertain, succession plans can be disrupted. When this occurs employers may face increased training costs. More concerning in this type of situation is the risk that an employer may lose a promising junior

employee because they are not willing to wait indefinitely for promotion opportunities.

Moreover, productivity may decrease. Everyone suffers from decreased performance with age. For some the decrease is slow; in others it can be rapid. However, when managing performance, employers must be careful when performance decreases are linked to aging. Because age is a protected ground under the *Human Rights Code*, if an employer sanctions an employee because of his or her decreased performance in an age-related situation, it may face a Human Rights Complaint. Resultantly, an employer may be required to accommodate age-related performance decreases to the point of undue hardship.

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The right to terminate may be restricted and/or more expensive. As per common law, an employer may terminate any employee at any time for any reason provided that reason is not restricted by legislation or any other legal construct. As long as the employer provides reasonable notice (or pay in lieu of that notice), it can design its workforce as it pleases. One source of restriction comes from the *Human Rights Code*. Therefore, if an employer decides that it would like to terminate an employee past the age of 65, it must be very careful about the reasons for that termination. It is illegal to terminate someone in whole or in part because of their age.

The employer faces a challenge when trying to address any decreased performance issue. Usually, an employer is free to dismiss an employee for performance reasons on a without cause basis by providing notice or pay in lieu. However, when faced with an older worker with performance issues it faces the risk of a Human Rights complaint if the decrease in performance is linked to the person's age. This can become especially problematic when the employee refuses to accept

that they may no longer be capable of performing their job and refuse to retire.

Even if the termination decision is not linked to age, separation costs could be higher for older workers. The prevailing wisdom as expressed in the court authorities is that as workers get older

**"Workforce
planning has
become more
difficult"**

employers are less likely to hire them. As a result, courts have increased notice periods for older employees. As one judge put it, "with the exception perhaps of a few professions, society considers that persons over 65 years of age are in the twilight of their careers." The courts' assumption is that because of this belief, employers are less willing to invest in hiring older workers if their commitment to the company may be short lived.

Interestingly, the opposite argument may also be made, namely that a terminated employee over the age of 65 should receive less notice. If an older employee is in the twilight of their career and retirement is imminent, why should a court award a notice period that would provide full remuneration past the date of intended retirement? The answer is that it should not. Therefore, arguably, if an employer can provide evidence that a certain employee intends to retire at a certain age, the court should not award a notice period that goes beyond that date.

No court has reconciled the above propositions, and it will be interesting to see how they balance these competing propositions. Until the courts have spoken, the best advice is to be very careful when addressing termination decisions involving older workers as the traditional rules may not apply. **P**

Graeme McFarlane is a partner at Roper Greyell LLP which is a firm focused on partnering with companies to find solutions to workplace legal issues.



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Income Disparity Deepens Divide

By **Jock Finlayson**

THE PAST YEAR WITNESSED CONSIDERABLE public and media interest in the issue of inequality, as evidenced by the emergence of the “Occupy Wall Street” movement in the United States and its counterparts in several other countries. A recent study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) confirms that income disparities have indeed widened in many affluent nations, including Canada.¹ The trend is especially pronounced in the United States; there, the richest per cent of households have almost six times as much income as the bottom per cent.

The ratio in Canada sits at four, putting us in the middle of the inequality pack among advanced economies. In many OECD countries, a rising share of all income seems to be accruing to the top one per cent of earners.

Multiple Factors Influence Disparity

Academic research points to a number of factors that have increased inequality and boosted incomes at the upper end of the distribution: globalization, the impact of technological change, competition from low-wage emerging economies, and (until recently) rapid growth of the financial

sector. Fast-climbing compensation for chief executives, professional athletes, entertainers, and some successful business owners has also played a role in driving income gains at the very top. But the most important contributor to greater earnings inequality is increases in what economists refer to as “the education wage premium” – the economic returns to individuals who possess one or more university degrees (or other high-value work-related credentials). Continued growth in the demand for better-educated workers has noticeably raised earnings for people in the top 25-30 per cent of the income distribution.

Another phenomenon that has fostered larger gaps in household (as opposed to individual) income is “assortative mating.” This awkward term captures the reality that marriages today increasingly occur among individuals drawn from the same socio-economic strata. Thus, people with university degrees are more apt to marry other degree-holders than to wed someone with lesser educational qualifications. It is striking how often one encounters couples where both spouses are lawyers, physicians, accountants, finance professionals, professors, or MBAs. Combined with the fact that a large majority of working-age women are now full participants in the labor force, “assortative mating” has significantly accentuated divergences in household income.

Employment Polarization Widens Gap

Also affecting income inequality are other forces that are impinging on the quality of jobs and recasting the earnings distribution. One key trend, operating on the “demand side” of the labor market, is employment polarization. Across many advanced economies, more job opportunities are tending to concentrate at the two ends of the skills spectrum: skill-intensive positions that demand high-level cognitive abilities and formal educational credentials, and a plethora of less skilled jobs that offer substantially lower compensation.

American economist David Autor has explored this topic in detail.² Looking at patterns of job creation and employee compensation in the US, he finds three broad groups of occupations. The first consists of managerial, professional and technical occupations that require several years of post-secondary education and pay well above-average wages/salaries. Most households in the top 10 per cent of the income distribution have one and sometimes two members in these kinds of occupations.

The second group is made up of what Autor refers to as “middle-educated, middle-paid” occupations; these include sales, office, production, and repair occupations along with fabricators and operators. Workers in these fields commonly have

some tertiary education, but not usually a university degree. In the past, such occupations formed part of the bedrock of the American middle class and often provided a pathway to upward mobility.

A final set of occupations spans a diverse mix of service-related jobs in which employees generally don’t have any formal post-secondary qualifications. Workers in many of these jobs are engaged in performing manual or other “in-person” tasks that can’t easily be replaced with technology, or out-sourced to jurisdictions with lower labor costs. Examples are food preparation, cleaning, home and building maintenance, basic retail services, and a wide range of personal care services.

Occupational Grouping Insights

Autor’s research shows that job creation differs across the three categories of occupations. Since the early 1980s, employment in the US has grown briskly among both managerial, professional and technical occupations, as well as in many relatively lower-skilled service positions. But the picture is different for middle-educated, middle-paid occupations. Here, employment gains have lagged the economy-wide average and actually trended down over time. And these shifts in job creation among occupational groupings are expected to continue for the rest of the decade.³

Autor argues that an important consequence of “rising demand for both highly educated workers... and less educated workers performing manual or service tasks is the partial hollowing out or polarization of employment opportunities.” If he is right, we can assume that similar occupational dynamics are unfolding in Canada. Looking ahead, this may well herald a “partial hollowing out” of middle-income employment opportunities in our own labor market, a development that would serve to magnify concerns over income and earnings inequality. **■**

Jock Finlayson is the executive vice-president of the Business Council of BC.



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1 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries* (Paris: OECD, 2008).

2 David Autor, “US Labor Market Challenges Over the Long Term,” October 2010, available at: <http://econ-www.mit.edu/faculty/dautor>.

3 US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2010-11 edition, available at: www.bls.gov/oco.

Digital IQ and Social Business: Seven HR Hotspots

By **Christine McLeod**, CHRP

HR HAS NOT TRADITIONALLY been known for its propensity towards ‘early adoption’ and while HR has come around to game-changing technology like email, cell phones and the Internet, the human capital side of the organization tends to lag behind other innovators in the business world. Whether stymied by legal fears, swayed by gloomy stories from their peer networks or simply because of technophobia, HR has always taken a more cautious approach to new technologies.

However, lagging behind is no longer an option in this time of unprecedented change in the workplace. Today’s array of technology resources are so simple to use and readily accessed that everyone can use them – transforming how, where and with whom we work. These technologies now directly impact and indirectly define the workplace with which HR is entrusted. HR can no longer afford to look at technology as anything other than both a reality and an opportunity to achieve the goals of their organization.

“The talent management world is being rocked by emerging social learning practices that leverage the wisdom within us all,” said Chuck Hamilton, social learning and smart play leader, IBM Center for Advanced Learning. “Our new social technology thinking is the glue that bonds the HR organization to its key business drivers, meaning HR can now be the enabler of game changing crowds everywhere.”

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube: business is increasingly, for lack of a better word, socialized. Today, we talk about ‘social’ media and ‘social’ business because we need to have a name for this new way of conducting ourselves. Most likely, five years from now ‘social’ will drop from the vocabulary and these tools will be recognized as just media that helps us do business.

As a profession, HR is facing a tsunami of technology issues it could have barely dreamt facing 10 years ago, all of which are impacting business, culture, employment brand and organizational strength. Social media interest becomes a social business mandate at this point.

“Social business is the blueprint for the transformation of an organization—bridging the external communication initiatives with internal operations and change management, which creates shared value for all stakeholders – customers, partners and employees,” explained Michael Brito, SVP, social business planning at Edelman. “And, human resources should serve as the enabler and change agent for such transformation to occur.”

While chief information officers (CIOs) are immersed in the technology 24-7, HR has an opportunity to add a valuable employee perspective through tools and social best practices to help transform the organizations. This all starts with raising the HR professional’s personal level of Digital IQ.

Price Waterhouse Cooper defines Digital IQ as an assessment of “how well companies understand the value of technology and weave it into the fabric of their organization. Growing your organizational Digital IQ entails more than merely adopting the latest tools or having a large IT budget—it is about integrating technology into the way a company plans, innovates, measures results, interacts with customers, and ultimately creates value.”

So what kind of issues is HR being bombarded with that require a greater level of tech savvy? Here are seven important topics that 10 (or even five) years ago, we would never have thought would enter into an HR professional’s daily conversation.

1 Mobility: We are leaving the age of the tethered consumer and the tethered employee. In 98 countries of the

world, cell phone penetration exceeds 100 per cent of the population. Every possible aspect of communication has already been impacted and will continue to do so. Leveraging mobile in every aspect of the employee life cycle will be paramount.

2 Social Media: The lines between personal and professional, communication internally and externally, as well as what to do and how to react when things go sideways, are all hot topics right now: understanding which platforms make sense, how to listen, what to listen for, how to measure, how to monitor, how to train employees at all levels to use it in a business context is now a critical skill.

3 Social Business: A generic definition for “social biz” is a company or business that leverages social communications and the social graph to accomplish a business goal: sales (chatter, Salesforce), talent management and retention (UpMo), team collaboration (yammer), recruiting (JobVite), performance management (Rypple, Work-simple)... to name a few. Right now all this is so new, one of the challenges for HR is how to help raise the digital IQ of the whole organization- externally and internally.

4 Cloud Computing & Business Intelligence: How can HR and the companies they work in leverage applications that are cloud-based? This will influence how flexible, collaborative and nimble an organization might be. The landscape of traditional HRIS is changing drastically; we need to understand what expertise is required to navigate these waters?

5 Multiple Personal Devices: The effects of a 24-7, plugged-in culture have yet to be fully evaluated, but there are certainly a host of HR issues on the radar — some are positive while

other issues may raise red flags. Mobile apps, texting and emails pushed to smart phones increase the need to be responding immediately to communication. What is that plugged-in cultural norm doing to our lives outside of work? Is it enhancing them because we are not tethered to a desk or depleting them of time to pause and process the flood of info?

6 Content Curation: HR is experiencing a flood of information. It will be critical to have an effective means of filtering necessary and relevant information. A new term in the digital space is 'curation'—suggesting you are going to have vast collections that you need to curate. For recruiters, the ability to sort through loads of information, including applications from various platforms and employment data, will be a skill worth honing. Even within an organization, how content can be accessed, processed and used will be critical to productivity. Simply opening the floodgates and having MORE is not the answer. Can HR play a bigger role

in the management of information?


7 On-demand self-service: More than ever, HR is faced with a growing appetite for on-demand, tailored learning and information. Whether it be company orientation, sales training, or benefits program details, employees want bite-sized learning content that is accessible to them as needed, — content that adds value, solves a need or answers a question on demand. HR need no longer be the bottleneck where programs and communication get held up.

By taking an interest and setting aside time to increase their own Digital IQ, HR leaders position themselves to stay abreast of the monumental changes sweeping our workplace.

There is a quote I love in *The Business Wisdom of Steve Jobs*: "You've got to start with the customer experience and work back towards the technology - not the other way around." If you replace the word customer with employee, then I think you have a pretty compelling case for why HR should care about understanding the

technology around them: to design the best employee experiences possible.

As for the future? Dan Pontefract, head of learning and collaboration, TELUS said, "The future of HR is to act as the simultaneous translator of social business intelligence for the organization. If HR doesn't get in front of defining and embedding new behavioural norms and expectations of social technologies into the workflow of business operations, it may result in an unproductive workforce downstream."

Tech tools will not CREATE a culture, but if your organization values creativity, innovation, and collaboration, and recognizes the value of feedback and the importance of "connection to team and fellow colleagues", these resources will enable HR to impact the people who impact results. Jump in! What are you waiting for? 

For those interested in all things innovative with HR feel free to ask to be included in the closed facebook group Innovative HR run by Christine McLeod, CHRP or visit www.impact99.ca to find out about Canada's only HR "Connected Workplace" conference.

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Jeremy Gutsche:

Exploiting Chaos, Embracing Culture

Calgary-born Jeremy Gutsche, MBA, CFA has his finger on the pulse of innovation. As the founder of Trendhunter.com and the award-winning author of *Exploiting Chaos*, he has been described as “a new breed of trend spotter” by *The Guardian*, “an eagle eye” by Global TV, an “oracle” by *The Globe and Mail*, and an “intellectual can of Red Bull” by *Association Week*. Equipped with a website that collects cutting edge trends and has attracted more than 840,000,000 views, his insights have already made him one of the most sought after keynote speakers in North America. Gutsche’s presentation at BC HRMA’s 50th Annual Conference and Tradeshow is a surefire catalyst for organizational change.

How has HR trended over the past decades? What do you view as the key evolution of HR in recent years?

I think the new role of the HR is one of culture manager. Culture has become extraordinarily more important. If you are with a company like Google, Apple, Red Bull or Trendhunter, culture is not passive, but extremely proactive.

Fifty years ago, traditional HR was fairly fundamental hiring and firing. Where things are shifting now is towards developing a culture of innovation and fostering that connection to the customer.

I think the key evolution is the realization that organizational culture trumps strategy. There is a quote that sits outside Ford’s strategy war room that says it best: ‘Culture eats strategy for breakfast.’ It does not matter how brilliant your strategy is; it will break or succeed on the basis of how your organization gets things done. That comes down to culture and that brings us back to HR’s ability to create culture.

There are four ways I break down culture: perspective, failure, intentional destruction and customer obsession. One big role that HR plays is grounding an organization’s vision and bringing the mission into focus for a team. By encouraging people to experiment and destroying those aspects of the status quo that prevent innovation, HR creates a culture that understands more deeply what the customer wants. It also keeps the organization focused on the big picture.

What is driving the constant change that now defines the workplace?

I think the ubiquity of information created by the Internet has given us a glimpse into how the world works: what other companies are doing, what the opportunities are. On a whole, we are more mobile, more connected and share more knowledge. We have a wider view of what is out there and as a result, there is more competition to be that “Best Place to Work”.

HR teams compete to become that best place and, as a result, workplace culture is continually evolving. There is a lot of on-upmanship in the culture category.

We think of our own office at Trendhunter as a culture machine. At any given time, half of our 25 people are new; we set them up with a four month program that explores and explains the new social media. We call it ‘The Academy’ and everyone in it knows they are the heart and soul of Trendhunter. We have our Friday beer party where we share personal and professional updates and once a month we go further with a fun day; that can be anything from improv to jet boating to Powerpoint karaoke. When the perks come into the office, we distribute those to the most junior as opposed to our senior editors.

These sorts of things are how organizations compete. It’s also how we manage to take away some great talent from stuffier companies - and we’re not the only ones. Smart HR is making it happen in all sorts of industries.

How can organizations adapt quickly enough to exploit chaos successfully?

The way I like to think of it is that we put in place rules and procedures to preserve the status quo. That works well when all is well. However, with the world pivoting chaotically, that status quo needs to go. Right now, we see that chaos within our economy, consumer mindsets and technologies. That status quo structure is not going to help; you need to intentionally destroy it to liberate the speed of an organization.

Back when I was with Capital One, we managed to grow a billion dollar portfolio, but the money wasn’t the coolest takeaway. Interest rates were skyrocketing, so we needed to reinvent how we approached the customer. That crisis situation raised a flag and demanded we reinvent, so we did. If we had not used that sense of urgency to cut through the red tape and force ourselves to reconnect with our customer, we would not have succeeded. I think that experience lends itself to other organizations.

These are chaotic times. We need to cut out a few steps to focus on what keeps us moving forward. I remember listening to a professor talk about car companies and what was the most important part of the business. The only thing that really mattered was the car. Despite all of the organizational policy, procedure and legal flags thrown up, the car was the only thing that really mattered. As consumers, we get that. Bringing that same focus to our own organizations is the opportunity. ①

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