

HRMA

PeopleTalk

The Innovative Workplace

Does HR Hold the Key?



The Upside of Downsizing Done Right

Developing 20/20 Foresight

Embracing the Unorthodox:

Welcome to the High Commitment Workplace

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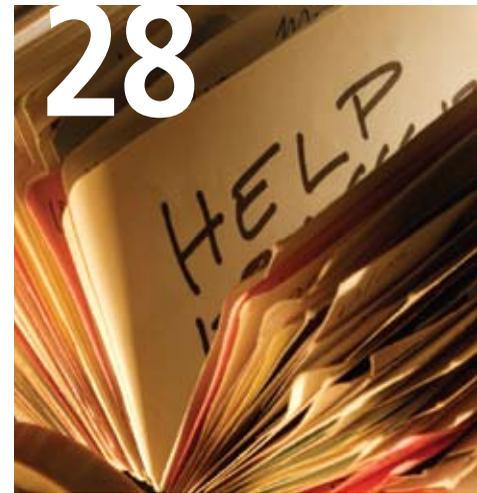
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PeopleTalk

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(millions)					
Contracts	Within 1 year	1 to 3 years	3 to 5 years	5 to 10 years	Over 10 years
	\$ 316,504	\$ 319,302	\$ 243,974	\$ 181,336	\$ 55,000
Agreements, futures and options	546,259	75,678	32,088	19,007	2,000
Lease contracts	862,763	394,980	276,062	209,999	57,000
Large Contracts					
Swaps	1,068	1,025	2,674	3,789	2,000
Interest	25,873	24,176	18,600	22,814	5,000
Exchange					
Derivatives and options	162,025	17,652	17,524	599	
Change contracts, derivatives and options	188,966	32,852	28,998	27,202	7,000
Contracts	29,200	17,500	13,209	860	
Options	388,921	159,250	36,547	15	
Contracts	418,121	176,750	39,756	875	
Derivatives	32,102	2,562	3,256	2,256	
Derivatives	11,236	25,689	39,456	16,523	
Amount	\$ 1,513,188	\$ 632,837	\$ 387,528	\$ 256,855	\$ 67,000
(millions)					
	Gross amount		Specific allowance		General allowance
	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Engagements	\$ 53,256	\$ 64,025	\$ 16	\$ 3	\$ 16
Consumer instalment	38,952	35,065	2	3	330
Government loans	63,488	55,265	130	135	550
Owned or purchased					
Agreements	37,098	31,562	-	-	-
	192,794	185,917	178	141	896
Liability under acceptances	12,532	7,336			56

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Innovation Takes a Team

WHILE THE WORD 'INNOVATION' SPARKS CURIOSITY AND interest, what does it mean in the world of human resources? When we consider how innovation can drive business results, do we ask ourselves how, as HR practitioners, are we being innovative or at least supporting innovation?

What does being 'innovative' really mean to us? I used to believe that the true 'innovators' were the ones everyone always talked about: the creative ones. The rest of us would wait for the creative ones to come up with the brilliant ideas and then we would decide if they warrant implementation. The fact is that we are all innovators and we all have the creativity in us to bring forward the ideas and implement change that drives improved business results.

It is likely that most businesses today have something in their vision or mission statements reflecting them wanting their business to be 'innovative'. But how do businesses take what is a statement and turn it into action?

BC HRMA provides a good example of how that comes about; in mandating 'value, viability and voice' for our members, wheels were put in motion that continue to inspire innovations. From the Research and Learning function to the HR Metrics Service, along with the creation of an online, members-only community and re-invigoration of HRVoice.org, the innovations have emerged through the efforts of the Board, staff, members and volunteers alike.

The truth is that true innovation is always a collaboration; it is the power of the coalition that will drive a better outcome. There aren't many of us who do not recognize Steve Jobs as one of the 'innovators' of modern times, but he did not produce the Apple products on his own; he always had a great team behind him to put visionary leadership into practice. The challenge Apple's board now faces is one to which we can all relate: can innovation be replicated? What is the plan for developing future 'innovators'? This is where human resource practitioners can provide the environment to identify, to promote and mentor the innovators that are among us.

When you consider your own company and your own work environment, is it set up for success? Are you creating an environment for innovation and creativity in your company - or is the environment like many we see? Are we stifling this type of open environment in our companies?

When you read these articles regarding innovation, I challenge you to view them in a different context. Challenge yourself and your company to see what you are doing to create the environment for success in innovation. Moreover, review your processes such as performance management and succession management to ensure they are supporting innovation and creativity.



Mike Cass,
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Putting Invention to Good Use

WHAT IS THE PRIMARY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN invention and innovation? In a world of invention, innovation is the people factor. Innovation lies within putting invention to good use and it does not happen in isolation.

In bringing *PeopleTalk* in-house, we've done some innovating of our own with a top team of people who bring their talents to all sides of the equation; all of them deserve recognition. Their names are below, to the right and throughout. They have my gratitude for making the transition something more than smooth; together we've managed to take print one small step forward - to source with video interviews.

For those of you with the proper 'app' and appetite for video update, we have embedded QR codes for you to jump to source with some innovative thinkers. For those whose phones actually only work as phones, we have posted an active-PDF edition of this issue on HRVoice.org; just click on the picture and you're connected. The very same works with those whose products and services are pictured throughout.

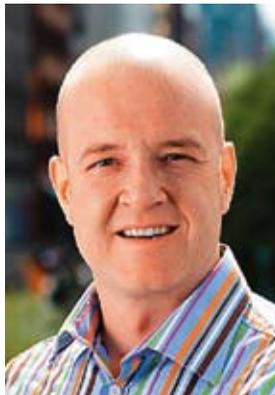
As we delve into this issue of *PeopleTalk*, we engage innovation as a mindset. As revealed in our cover story by Anya Levykh, the challenges to innovation are at least as great as the potential benefits. The primary impediment, according to the authors of *The Enemy of Engagement* (p.38) is frustration. Fortunately, their research focuses on the breakthroughs.

As exemplified by Neil McEachern's article on cross-generational mentoring (p.34), innovation requires the simple admission that while many of our organizational processes are flawed, the solutions are multiple. Lindsay Macintosh carries this line of thinking further on page 12 in her overview of the skills shortage paradox. Faced with ever-changing technologies, employers are seeking skilled employees from a diversified pool of talent. Moreover, as Jennifer Gerves-Keen relates on page 37, pilot programs are already exploring such wisdoms, along with compressed modules of training and development.

Innovation, then stems from a blend of frustrations, flip sides and forward thinking: the fortunate by-product of organizations both imperiled and empowered by greater sums of information and decreasing pools of traditional resources. Jock Finlayson of the Business Council of BC makes a solid case for such 20/20 leadership foresight on page 44 and provides strong insights into what changes might affect us all in years to come. Echoes of such sentiment resound in "*The Mother of Innovation*" (p.26) by ResearchVOICE's Ian J. Cook in which the HR challenge to innovate is firmly set against a universal tightening of purse strings.

Everyone wants innovation then, but at what price? We explore that question perhaps indirectly in a pair of articles by Dr. Merv Gilbert (p.28) and Jeff Russ (p.32) wherein they examine the costs and merits of psychologically healthy workplaces.

Perhaps, David Creelman captures the ethos of innovation best in his article on the unorthodox nature of high commitment workplaces (p.10). Then again, perhaps those kudos should go to the executive of BuildDirect who donned superhero costumes to show their commitment to fighting organizational challenge (p.42). Both examples capture the most challenging and elusive aspect of innovation: the willingness to go against the engrained.



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The Impact of Trust on Organizational Performance

In the study entitled *Trust that Binds: The Impact of Collective Felt Trust on Organizational Performance*, Sabrina Deutsch-Salamon and Sandra L. Robinson prove that employees who feel trusted by their organization become more willing to accept responsibility for their organization's performance...



<http://www.hrvoice.org/the-impact-of-trust-on-organizational-performance/>

The Turnover Plague

By **Kyla Nicholson, CHRP**



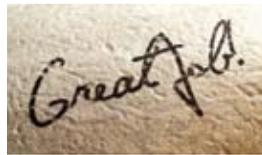
Research into turnover has most commonly focused on the individual factors or economic and organizational factors. In the 2009 study *Turnover Contagion: How Coworkers' Job Embeddedness and Job Search Behaviours Influence Quitting*, Felps et al. studied the impact of social influences on decisions to quit...

<http://www.hrvoice.org/the-turnover-plague/>

Kudos not Cash...

By **Steven Green**

Monetary incentives don't buy workplace happiness. The age old methodology of motivation, using monetary 'carrots' – such as perks or financial remuneration – has a weak exchange rate with today's knowledge worker, for whom the most valuable currency is recognition.



<http://www.hrvoice.org/it%e2%80%99s-kudos-not-cash-how-non-monetary-social-recognition-delivers-more-for-less/>

Eight Conversation Competencies for Leaders

By **Dene Rossouw**



There are at least eight essential conversation competencies that can help CEOs engage their stakeholders, peers, clients and staff in a more productive and meaningful way. The CEO is also the Chief Engagement Officer – each conversation is an investment. When the 'CEO' gets it right, he or she can experience a very good return on engagement (ROE) as a culture of authentic engagement begins to trickle through the organization...

<http://www.hrvoice.org/eight-conversation-competencies-for-leaders-2/>

Principles for Communicating Change

By **Chris Edgelow**

Communication continues to be one of the greatest challenges facing any changing organization. Here are seven basic principles every changing organization should follow when approaching the daunting task of communicating change information...

<http://www.hrvoice.org/principles-for-communicating-change-2/>



LinkedIn Discusses CHRP Mandatory Experience

I think it proves the CCHRA is listening, but I am not impressed with the implementation process. This is going to flood the ranks of CHRPs with even more non-experienced people looking to beat the deadlines - worsening the main detractor of the designation in its current state.

<http://tinyurl.com/3pj2xyd>

Leadership Assessment: Simulating for Success



As part of a 3-part video series with BC HRMA professional development speaker, Dr. Seonaid Charlesworth explores the merits of Fortune 500 companies using simulation to access real business value and improve decision-making regarding selection, development and succession.

<http://youtu.be/qSQz2twPq28>

BC HRMA's Top of the Tweets

RT @hrreporter: Youth expecting to earn more than \$70,000 per year by age 30: Report [#HR](http://bit.ly/ssn4qm)

Know Your Audience: Critical Stats About Health, Finances, Benefits, More <http://ow.ly/7fVGG>

Why Employees Leave: It Comes Down to a Stressful Work Environment <http://ow.ly/7fVyp>

RT @iec_bc receives WelcomeBC Award! Award for our employer-immigrant job-matching site tapintalent.ca #WelcomeBCDay

Reading 10 Ways to Create a Proud and Productive Workplace <http://j.mp/qX0ScZ> by @BCHRNA #smithbrook #HR

RT @yosie23: Dumb firing mistakes landed these companies in court <http://bit.ly/v3T3Ng> #employmentlaw #emlaw #hr #humanresources #workplace

Embracing the Unorthodox: Welcome to the High Commitment Workplace

By David Creelman



OUTSTANDING COMPANIES OFTEN have unorthodox HR practices.

Retail giant Costco does not pay for performance; instead employees get increments based on how long they have worked there. Lululemon, famous for its fitness clothing, does not hire based on a competency interview; they take you to a yoga class and see how you fit in. Award-winning Fusion Homes doesn't stick to standard policies; they readily make exceptions, such as paying one employee's petrol costs because he has a terribly long commute.

So are your hiring practices based on yoga or behaviourally-based competency interviews? Do you pay for performance or seniority? Do you follow policy or play it by ear? Are you managing in a normal way or are you following the sort of unorthodox practices found in highly successful firms?

If you keep an eye out for oddball practices you will see them again and again in good companies. A good example of 'oddballishness' is the Brazilian conglomerate Semco. In his books *Maverick!* and *The Seven Day Weekend*, CEO Ricardo Semler describes cases where employees can fire

their boss, set their own wages, or decide where to locate a new plant. Semco is very profitable despite this stunning disregard for normal management practice. The success of oddball companies raises the question: are the orthodox HR practices we preach a bad idea?

Understanding the Unorthodox

When you listen to these companies talk about their practices, one of the common characteristics is a deep sincerity. They don't deviate from regular practice because they think it is cool or because they think they are smarter than everyone else. They

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do so because they are convinced it is the right thing for the business. Lululemon blurts out they want the company to be a place of “love and support” then almost apologizes for using the word “love” since you are not supposed to say that in HR. Yet, it is that fundamental belief that if they are to thrive in the brutally competitive retail world then the business needs to be a place of love and support that drives their hiring practices. They want, they need, employees to be more than competent at their work; they need employees to be the kind of person you want to hang out with.

When you have deeply held beliefs about what it takes to be a successful organization, you do not pull your management practices out of a textbook; you craft them based on what feels right for the business.

The High Commitment Workplace

The companies mentioned here, while seeming quite different, are all examples of what is called a high commitment workplace. High commitment workplaces believe their success rests on getting a committed group of employees working towards a common goal.

They typically have a strong culture—one that won't appeal to everyone. They hire slowly to ensure fit and fire quickly if they make a mistake. They emphasize training and teamwork. They tend to pay above the market. They minimize status differences between senior managers and

everyone else. The academic research has shown again and again that high commitment companies outperform ones following the command and control tradition.

Are the orthodox HR practices we preach a bad idea?

If you can kindle some passion you will find the courage to do what's right instead of what is normal.

So why don't all companies adopt the high commitment model? Dr. Ed Lawler of the University of Southern California says it is because this kind of culture is hard to build and easy to break. It takes an intense belief to keep the spirit of high commitment alive, to always keep an eye on the intangibles not simply do what is expedient. Also, I dare say that many managers like to command and control; they like status differences and they are not inclined to build a different kind of workplace even if it is more effective.

Take Aways

Even if you do not work in a high commitment organization, there are lessons you can learn from these successful companies. One is to start with a deep understanding of the business when designing practices. What you do should be driven by the business strategy, not by what everyone else is doing. There is a slight twist on this worth noting: the high commitment companies drive practices not just on a calculated assessment of business needs, but on deeply held values. These organizations say clarity of values helps them make difficult decisions. They believe that a big part of strategy is having values.

Don't be afraid to be unorthodox. If it is clear that performance management doesn't work in your organization or that you should have hourly fitness breaks or it is important that managers be funny then act on those insights.

It is worth remembering that in management a bad approach done with passion is almost always better than a good approach done in a lackluster way. If you can kindle some passion you will find the courage to do what's right instead of what is normal. 

David Creelman (dcreelman@creelmanresearch.com) is CEO of Creelman Research, providing writing, research and speaking on human-capital management. He works with a variety of academics, think tanks, consultancies and HR vendors in Canada, the U.S., Japan, Europe and China.

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Highly Skilled Workers a Competitive Challenge



By **Lindsay Macintosh**, CHRP

DESPITE HIGHER UNEMPLOYMENT RATES and current economic uncertainties, employers face the growing challenge of availability and competition for highly skilled workers.

In a world of rapid technological change and shifting labour markets, more jobs demand advanced skills in new technologies; some occupations will decline or disappear altogether in the coming years. The increasing complexities of jobs make it more difficult for people to move from one occupation to another.

The current overall employment picture is not as bleak as headlines suggest. Although the number of hires has decreased, employers still find it difficult to fill jobs. The recent economic downturn is masking labour shortages in non-urban regions such as the Cariboo and the North Coast, as well as occupationally in areas such IT and skilled trades.

The contradiction between higher unemployment rates and labour shortages can be explained by the recent economic downturn and the people in the workforce. There are too many jobs for too few people in some regions, and too few jobs for too many people in others. Employers face skills shortages and regional and skills mismatches in the coming years. The looming challenges include:

- a much slower growth in the labour force;
- regional mismatches between labour supply and demand, particularly in non-urban areas;
- skill shortages and mismatches brought on by rapid technological change;

- shortage of skilled managers across the province;
- shortages of doctors, nurses and other health care workers;
- shortages of workers in IT and the skilled trades; and
- increase in demand for post-secondary education.

“Regional mismatch is a growing concern in non-urban communities...”

Mismatch refers to general gaps in qualifications, knowledge, education and training, as well as specific skill shortages.

Regional mismatch occurs when job opportunities exist in regions with shortages of local qualified workers, wherein there is an acute lack of skills and too few qualified people for particular occupations in a community. Skilled workers may exist, but do not have the right skill mix or live in different regions.

Regional mismatch is a growing concern in non-urban communities, particularly those in the Cariboo and the North Coast, and will get worse as the province’s resource sectors expand to less populated regions. Many unemployed and under-

employed workers in urban communities are unwilling to move to non-urban communities where employment opportunities exist; instead, workers will command higher wages and bonuses for moving to smaller and rural communities.

In today’s world of rapid technological change, changes in skill composition for a job are becoming rampant. As organizations use new technologies and alter business processes, their workers’ skills become obsolete. Skills obsolescence diminishes workers’ capacities to perform their jobs.

Roslyn Kunin, director of B.C. Office, Canada West Foundation, says, “Technological change affects all occupations. For example, Fed EX has made delivering parcels a high tech industry.”

Another factor driving labour shortages is the aging population. Workers between 55 and 64 years have doubled over the past 20 years. The number of young people under 30 has been on a decline.

Going after youth is a big challenge for employers. Employers in the tourist and food/beverage industries in which many jobs are filled by young people, are facing this challenge. Jesse Ferreras’ article, “Labour Crunch Hitting Whistler”, which recently appeared in Whistler’s *Pique Newsmagazine*, says that Zog’s, Moguls and Gone Bakery and other businesses at Whistler are experiencing difficulties in getting applications, even after putting ads on Craigslist as well as *Pique*.

Employers will have to continuously assess the labour market and make ongoing adjustments if they are to keep aligned with the changing needs of the economy.

Dawn Longshaw, managing director, professional recruitment, at Vertical Bridge Corporate Consulting Inc., says, "Employers must take a creative and flexible approach to finding qualified workers". Longshaw adds, "Employers must:

- review what steps they have taken;
- review job descriptions and specifications, making sure they know what they are looking for;
- discuss whether expectations are realistic and how flexible they are prepared to be in looking at other markets and search criteria; and
- determine which criteria are most important."

To find more suitably qualified workers and sustain labour force growth, it is essential for employers to look at markets outside their communities. They must fully utilize the pool of potentially available labour by encouraging participation of under-utilized groups including aboriginal people, immigrants, people with disabilities and older workers.

"Employers must take a creative and flexible approach to finding qualified workers."

In our knowledge-based economy, business and industry must work together with educators to expand training opportunities and ensure there are enough qualified workers. Apprenticeship, internship and co-op programs can offer relevant work experience with a focus on education. They are essential to building a highly qualified and productive work force.

Change is ongoing, but it needs to be factored both strategically and internally; it is becoming more critical for business, government, and educators to constantly assess and re-assess whether education, training, policies, and labour are aligned with the changing work force. **P**

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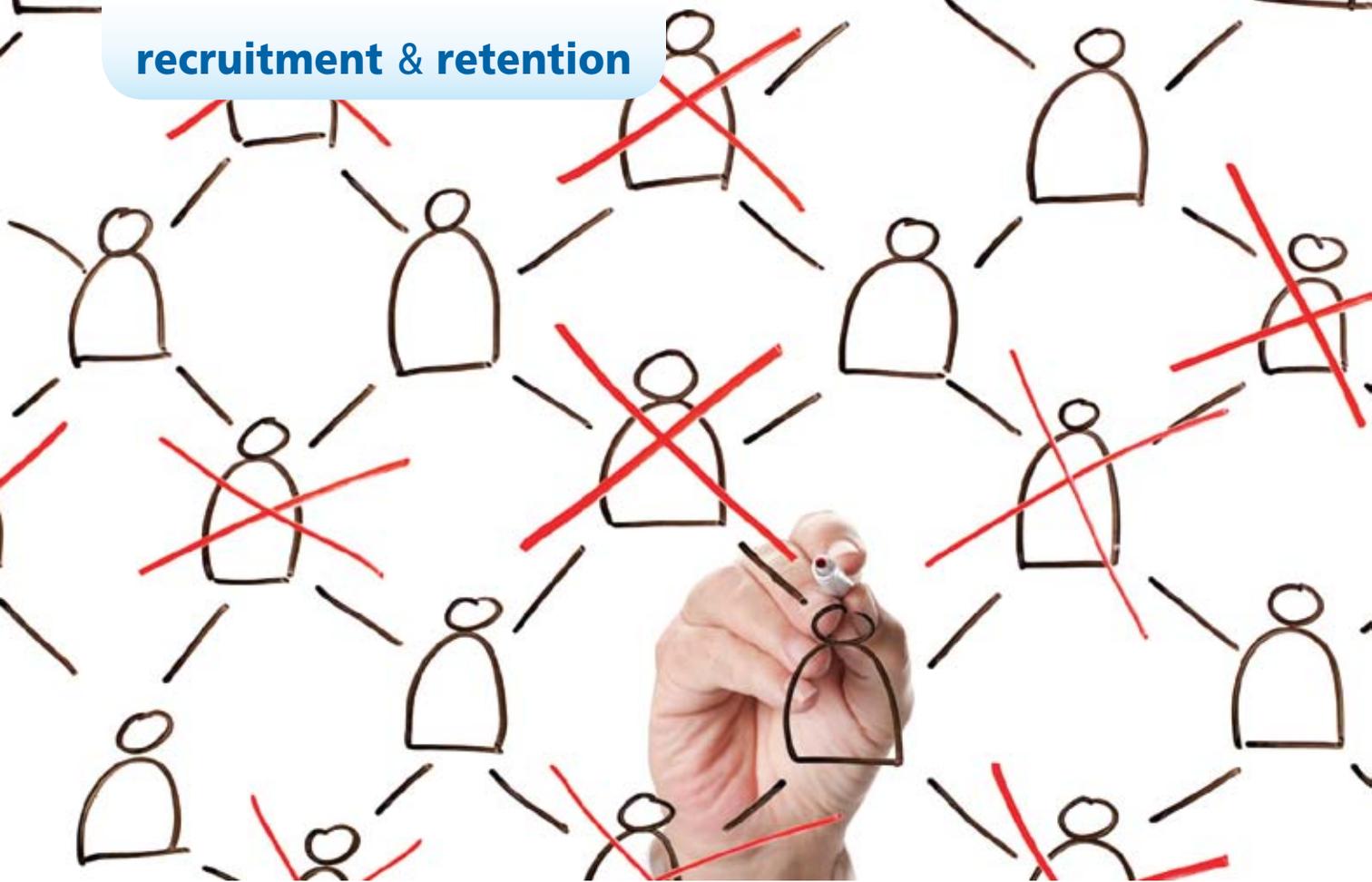


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The Upside of Downsizing Done Right

By **Peter Tingling**, PhD

WE ALL KNOW THAT ONE OF THE important managerial functions is hiring. Who we hire not only has a direct effect on performance, but also sends important signals about our priorities, capabilities, and competencies. As a result, modern selection processes are rigorous evidence-based processes that involve multiple decision-makers and varied input.

However, if the benefits of methodological, systematic and analytic selection processes are so well-established, why are they not applied to termination and layoff decisions? In short, why are there so many examples of companies that pay high performers to leave; conduct ongoing multiple rounds of layoffs; or have to bring back erroneously released key employees?

Although it is tempting to suggest that economic termination decisions are different because they are characterized with a sense of urgency and are often imposed from the top down, such an explanation

simply makes excuses and perpetuates poor management. The very fact that there is a sense of urgency argues for more rigour and analysis not less, and, unlike the information asymmetry of hiring

"...a sense of urgency argues for more rigour and analysis not less..."

decisions where the candidates know more than the employer, the company tends to have much more information than the employee.

Among the many layoffs with which I am familiar, one or two managers quickly and collectively review the employees within their departments and provide a list of those that can be released.

There are three problems with this approach.

1 The Duress of Stress: Without the proper process managers often make poor decisions. Decision-making is notoriously difficult and decision-making under stress and time pressure even more so. Many managers have been trained in how to evaluate or interview candidates but few have experience making layoff decisions and are typically underprepared and under supported.

2 The Problem with Appraisals: The second problem is that managers usually rely on partial information obtained from rearward facing performance appraisals that were not only designed for an entirely different purpose

(predominantly salary adjustment), but may not only have been poorly conducted (a problem that many HR professionals freely acknowledge) and vary significantly across the organization. As a result, a low performing employee from one department or division may still be more valuable than a highly rated employee in another and the wrong employees are retained or released.

3 The Diversity of True Teams: The third problem is that such an approach rarely reflects the “go forward” environment and lacks the ongoing dynamic that is essential to higher levels of performance. As anyone who has seen a professional team of high paid athletes knows, it is not just about assembling raw talent. Almost invariably all organizations have a few high performing employees who are more trouble than they are worth and a few who, while they may be evaluated poorly on traditional metrics, form the social glue and connective tissue that holds the organization together. Rarely however do managers review their decisions in context.

Tips for Tough Calls

The fact that layoff decisions should never be easy does not mean that we should not try to improve them. Here are three suggestions:

1 Avoid thinking too quickly about “who” and instead think about “how”. It is well known that better decisions are made when collaboration is delayed until individuals have formed their own initial ideas rather than rushing towards group think. Einstein is famously quoted as having said that if he had one hour to save the world he would spend 55 minutes defining the problem and only five minutes finding the solution. Helping managers think about “how”, a process many human resource professionals are good at, means that managers will make less mistakes regarding “who”.

2 Recognize that good decisions take time. Although it is naïve to think that the business will wait significant amounts of time no organization should be in a hurry to make bad decisions. These are decisions with significant employee implications and they

deserve management’s full attention and reflection rather than intuitive or capricious guesswork. A rule of thumb is to allocate at least the same amount of time and energy as was spent in initial selection.

3 Consider reversing the problem.

That is, rather than identify which employees are to be released, assume that you are reforming the organization from scratch and have the luxury of identifying which employees you would like to rehire. Begin by identifying the competencies, attributes and characteristics required by the new environment. Then have the new management team individually assess and evaluate all candidates against these criteria while allowing provisions for those candidates who may be high performers but not part of the go-forward organization or those whose particular knowledge or circumstances require that they be selected regardless of their performance.

“...assume that you are reforming the organization from scratch...”

This approach of course requires significant effort. Employees however deserve this level of attention. If we are to overcome the fact that most downsizing efforts at white collar knowledge intensive organizations fail, we must try new approaches. Done properly, downsizing does not simply reduce short-term costs, but positions the organization for the future. It will not and should never be easy; that doesn’t mean that we should not try to make fewer mistakes. 

Peter Tingling is an Associate Professor at the Beedie School of Business and the CEO of Octothorpe Software Corporation, a decision sciences company. He has worked with numerous organizations on restructuring decisions and holds a Ph.D in organizational and technological decision making.

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The HR Black Belt: CHRP Learning Never Stops

By Maureen Campbell

INNOVATION HAPPENS IN EVERY ERA AND with every innovation, society must adapt. So too in HR.

In the work environment, the HR department needs to have its eye on the ever changing business landscape; to adapt organizations HR needs to ensure that they are continuing to attract the best, as well as provide a stimulating environment for their employees.

It is a perpetual learning curve requiring high performance individuals who consistently demonstrate continual learning, excellence and expertise. In the realm of HR, these high performance individuals are the leaders in their profession and are typically Certified Human Resource Professionals or CHRPs.

While the CHRP designation may appear a credentialed invention, it is the essence of innovation; CHRP holders aren't just gaining practical knowledge, but applying and teaching that knowledge, along with a new way of listening and thinking; this is exactly what CHRPs and HR professionals are mandated to do within their organizations.

Consider this analogy. When studying a martial art the goal is to achieve a black belt status. However, no black belt might imagine that upon 'graduating' they have learned all there is to know of that particular art. Instead, even as a teacher, when one achieves the status of sensei, the belief that there is no more to learn only grows stronger. This is when the true application of skills and learning enhancement blossom. Herein the real learning begins – applying and continuously testing what one has learned, and adapting those lessons and theories to fit reality.

Like the sensei, CHRPs are the respected representatives and experts of their profession; their continual drive to learn, apply and grow is what identifies them as leaders in their profession.

The CHRP distinction is important, especially in today's society where a heavy

emphasis has been put on human capital. In fact, a 2010 Ontario Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA) study showed that several organizations consider 'people are their most important asset'. More and more, CEOs and senior level management are seeing the value that HR departments bring forward; more often than not, CHRPs are relied upon to drive the success of a multitude of related activities, including employee retention, recruiting high level talent and addressing multi-generational teams. Whether developing creative recruitment processes, developing social media guidelines or designing programs geared for retention, the CHRP draws upon their designation - and the acquired mindset.

“Driving change is vital for HR departments.”

These skills and techniques will become even more critical to key HR functions especially in areas such as talent management and succession planning. With a large number of baby boomers expected to retire over the next several years, many organizations are looking to HR to play a leadership role in identifying and developing talent to replace retirees and/or lead learner organizations. Managing the resultant change and conflict, motivating and building teams requires strategies that are not only innovative, but flexibly fitted for varied generational appeal. Creating such strategy requires a sound understanding of traditional HR practices, knowledge of new technologies used to reach out to prospective candidates and innovative ideas to bridge the gap.

Driving change is vital for HR departments. Change management is a vital component for effective HR strategies, and executing proactive strategies will drive productivity. It is also HR's responsibility to identify the skills and behaviours that will drive business productivity and success. Aligning the company's culture with its objectives to define and communicate the merits of the work environment, HR is both at the heart and on the front line of the business equation.

As CEOs and senior management teams rely more heavily on HR departments to engage, recruit and inspire employees, it is important for HR professionals to have outlets in which to collaborate and share ideas; the CHRP designation provides a platform in which to do this.

These challenges define where innovation and expertise meet.

CHRPs are prepared to apply their expertise with philosophies and principles, including supporting systems, tools and most importantly, practical experience, to the innovative potential of their organizations. With an emphasis on employees, adjusting to change has become critical for many HR departments that require leaders that strive to continually learn and grow in their position.

Like the sensei, the CHRP is on a constant journey to learn, grow and evolve. Who better to advance with than one's peers? One of the benefits to earning the designation is the welcome to a network of CHRPs across Canada which enables one to collaborate and learn with like-minded HR professionals: sharing, creating and testing new and innovative ideas and techniques benefits the CHRP, the profession and their organization.

If you haven't yet taken the next step to attain your CHRP designation, perhaps now is the time to set forth on the journey of innovation. Contact your Member Association today to find out what you need to do to achieve your CHRP designation. **▶**

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Presenter: Cori Maedel, CHRP, CEO, Jouta Performance Group

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This workshop will provide a practical overview of workplace attendance management policies and practices from both an HR practitioner perspective and a legal perspective. You will leave with practical tips and tools support you to plan and implement effective attendance management in your workplaces.

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Presenter: David Cory, President, The EI Training Company Inc.

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FEATURED PRESENTER

Natalie Michael, CHRP, is an Executive Coach and Leadership Development Consultant of the Karmichael Group. She provides leadership coaching, succession management and assessment services to a cross section of industries such as venture capital, the public sector, tourism, and technology. Prior to becoming a coach and consultant, she was an award winning HR professional with accolades such as *Top 100 Employer*, *Best Place to Work in BC*, and *Top 50 Best Managed Company*.

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The Innovative Workplace: Does HR Hold the Key



By Anya Levykh

“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.”

— Steve Jobs (1955-2011),
co-founder and late chairman/CEO of Apple Inc.

STOP THE PRESSES. SHUT THE DOOR. And hold on to your hats, ladies and gents, there's a new buzzword in HR-ville, and its name is innovation.

Hold on, really? Well, okay, maybe not. Innovation has been an HR—and corporate—buzzword for several years now. How many times have you heard, “If you don't innovate, you die” from sages, seers and CEOs at conferences, seminars and book readings? More often than necessary, most likely.

However, as HR continues its metriculation in the language of business, it is also being called upon to unlock the innovative potential of organizations' intellectual capital. And yes, innovation is considered key to remaining competitive in our changing marketplace, both in terms of the teams we build and the products/services we sell. So, with the ball bouncing at our feet, where do we go from here?

Accepting Risk, Managing Change

One widely-touted definition of innovation is the commitment of resources to an uncertain future. Innovation, (which is really just a fancy word for change), by its very nature, implies a journey into the unknown, an abandonment of certainty; with that abandonment comes the embracing of risk. If the company as a whole can't accept that risk, the chances of any meaningful innovation occurring become almost nil.

“Culturally, I think it's embedded in us,” says Chris Mills, executive chef for Joey Restaurants. “(At Joey), we really do embrace that, and feel that risk is rewarded. We're okay with things that don't work, because the opposite of that would be stifling any innovation by being over-reactionary or overly-cautious. We try something and look at the cost afterward, but that only adds to the anticipation, the wonderment about what's going to happen next. And at the micro-level of





Ann Leckie



Chris Mills



Anne Kinvig



Marjorie Calibaba



Mandy Whiting

a new employee, that allows them to feel part of this larger 'spark' that is happening in the company."

That "spark" is a highly valuable side benefit of innovation, according to Marjorie Calibaba, CHRP, vice-president of HR at Oppenheimer Group. "Innovation creates energy in the workplace, and that energy is exciting. It means you're moving forward, re-inventing yourself."

Mills agrees. "I approach it with guns a-blazing. One of the joys for me of working with my company is that there are no boundaries to what you can try. Most of it is 'shoot first and ask questions later,' which is a luxury, but it also produces some great hits."

Business Readiness: A Work in Progress

For those who feel the "shoot first" method is a bit extreme, taking a page out of the Pacific Blue Cross playbook might be more palatable.

"We created a role within the company to specifically look after change management," says Anne Kinvig, former director of HR and current chief operating officer for Pacific Blue Cross and BC Life. "We've been refreshing our systems since 2004, but the biggest change is ahead, as we are

Kinvig takes an integrated approach to all of the people elements associated with change: including change management, strategic workforce planning, resource management, effective communications, preparing leaders, and learning and development models.

**We try to promote
the mentality of
'It's your business.'**

replacing our core claims and administrations systems, which impact the entire organization. We realized we didn't have the same amount of rigour on the people side of the change as we did on the technology side, and, for me, the people side is just as important—if not more—as getting a code right."

As PBC's "business readiness manager",

"We also use a business readiness score card," continues Kinvig, "which tells management how we are doing on the technology front, how we are doing on the business readiness front, and how we are doing on our stakeholder management, as our clients will be interfacing with us differently [through the new self-serve portals]. It's a work in progress."

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Rethinking Risk:

A Reapplication of Resources

Regardless of the approach, once a company has embraced the concept of risk with all that it entails (namely, the possibility of failure), the question then becomes: how much risk is too much?

It's basically a dedication of resources," says Ann Leckie, director of Human Resources at Teldon Media Group. "And you want to break down those resources into process improvements. This is what I call incremental innovation or the inch-worm method of innovation. People often don't see this as innovation, but I believe it is, because you are constantly focused on process improvement. How can I do this better, faster, cheaper, higher quality?"

"The constant application of resources to finding a way to do something better means you don't see innovation day-to-day, but you see it looking back, you see how far you have come from where you were. And if you can get an entire organization focused on doing things better, you can actually transform the company in a relatively short period of time, by everyone making day-to-day innovative decisions on how to find a better way," says Leckie. "That is the unsung hero of innovation."

Of Inch-Worms and iPods

That incremental form of innovation may not have the flash and bang of more obvious and dramatic changes, but it does have the benefit of being more common than what Leckie calls "the iPad approach" to innovation, referring to when a company comes up with a new product, service or system that didn't exist before.

"Those types of innovation, generally speaking, are few and far between," explains Leckie. "Look at the automobile. We're still essentially using cars with an internal combustion engine. There hasn't been a huge leap. There has been constant improvement, constant change, but we haven't replaced the automobile with personal flying saucers for everyone. But there are some places where the leap of innovation has actually occurred. Software, for instance, or moving from textbooks to e-readers. That's a leap. Those innovations are fabulous, but both types of innovation are what corporations want and need, and HR has a role to play in both."

Inform and Educate to Create

If knowledge is power, then HR is in the unique position of creating innovative power through its more traditional roles of information dissemination and knowledge building. "I think people are more innovative when they have all of the information," says Calibaba, "because they know what to target in terms of making it better."

At Oppenheimer, that belief has resulted in the creation of Oppy-U, a corporate "university" that has the tri-fold purpose of teaching employees how to get the best out of themselves, the people they lead, and the company as a whole.

"We also communicate a lot with our employees on our business priorities and the results that we've achieved," continues Calibaba, "so that we keep them in the loop. They get the minutes of all of our management meetings, so there's no one who can say they don't know what's going on in our company."



 JOEY's Chef Mills introduces Food Network's David Adjey to the League of Extraordinary Chefs. <http://youtu.be/rnORlu6390A>

The idea of transparency is one that is echoed by Leckie. "HR, at its heart, is a communication vehicle. You're either communicating internally or externally. Internally, you're communicating how things get done around here, like organizational design, compensation, how employees win by getting promoted, training, etc. Externally, HR communicates the values and principles of the company in order to encourage the right type of candidate to come into the organization."

Education can also drive innovation in a more direct way, by utilizing the collective energy of a group. "We run a company-wide program called the League of Extraordinary Chefs," says Mills. "I'm very passionate about having young cooks learn all aspects of running what is a very complicated business, as well as learning to cook. So, we create various projects or

challenges that anyone in the company can take on, and suddenly you have over 400 chefs tackling the same project. Last year's winner accompanied me to New York to cook at the James Beard Foundation. It's very rewarding."

Innovative Employees:

Nature vs. Nurture

No amount of education or knowledge can change those who aren't receptive to change. Finding innovative people is a key component of HR's mandate, but what makes for an innovative employee?

"In the recruiting process, I do believe past experiences can indicate the nature of the person," says Leckie. "So, are the matrices we develop to select new candidates asking the candidates questions about innovation? Are we measuring future candidates by their ability to be innovative and finding examples in their past where they were innovative? But, I also believe that, in many cases, innovation is actually a learned behaviour. You are teaching people how to break the mould, when being outside the box is actually important and value-added. So are we creating learning and training programs that create the environment for learning and innovation?"

Mills, whose company just won a PRISM award from the International Federation of Coaching for their commitment to innovation through people development, adds: "When someone is willing to speak up, to voice their opinions and ideas in front of a group; that already shows their potential for leadership. Just being able to communicate and be vocal with ideas is the beginning of innovation. So we look for people who can express themselves, and aren't afraid to say things."

Calibaba agrees. "We look for people who are interested in connecting to the business, who get involved, who have tons of ideas and are willing to share them."

"We want our people to be capable, ready and engaged," concurs Kinvig. "We want to know they've had the right training at the right time, and the adequate resources and support."

One of the ways a company can provide that support, according to Leckie, is through the creation of an innovation circle, where people are pulled together for a short time from the different areas of the company in order to brainstorm

and develop innovative products and services.

At Oppenheimer, that circle is known as the Strategic Planning Advisory Forum. "There's an employee from each of our offices in the U.S. and Canada," explains Calibaba. "We get together once a year and develop our strategy together. We also survey our employees and ask them for their ideas and suggestions for a variety of areas. Our job is to communicate what the

company is doing and where it's going, to be the eyes and ears of the organization."

Reward Programs and Treasure Chests

No amount of education or knowledge can change those who aren't receptive to change. Finding innovative people is a key component of HR's mandate, but what makes for an innovative employee?

So you've got your people primed to innovate and you've implemented new

hiring policies to seek out more potential innovators. You've also given them the knowledge and skills to begin the creative process. How do you keep the ball rolling?

"HR needs to help create a corporate structure where innovation can flourish and is encouraged," says Leckie. "Are we setting up reward programs for innovation, for process improvement? Are we including a spot to reward innovation in our succession plans and performance reviews?"

At Oppenheimer, a peer-to-peer recognition program allows employees to receive intangible and tangible rewards. "Our Treasure Chest program allows our employees to tell each other when someone has done a good job," says Calibaba. "Anyone can submit a note congratulating a fellow employee, and the recipient may receive a gift card to Starbucks or something similar. We also have supervisor-to-employee awards, and employee of the year awards."

"We want our people to be capable, ready and engaged"

Mills believes that rewards can be tangible as well. In addition to Joey Restaurants' League of Extraordinary Chefs, the company has a special program for managers that allows them to own shares in the company. "We try to promote the mentality of 'It's your business,'" says Mills. "We give them the ability to contribute and see how those contributions are affecting the business—both positively and negatively."

The Key Tie to Culture

A key method of promoting innovation is creating an environment where creativity can flourish. "We believe culture is one of the most important elements in this industry," says Calibaba. In fact, Oppenheimer places such a strong emphasis on culture that it has created a tie-in between the corporate culture and employee involvement, and its profit-sharing program.

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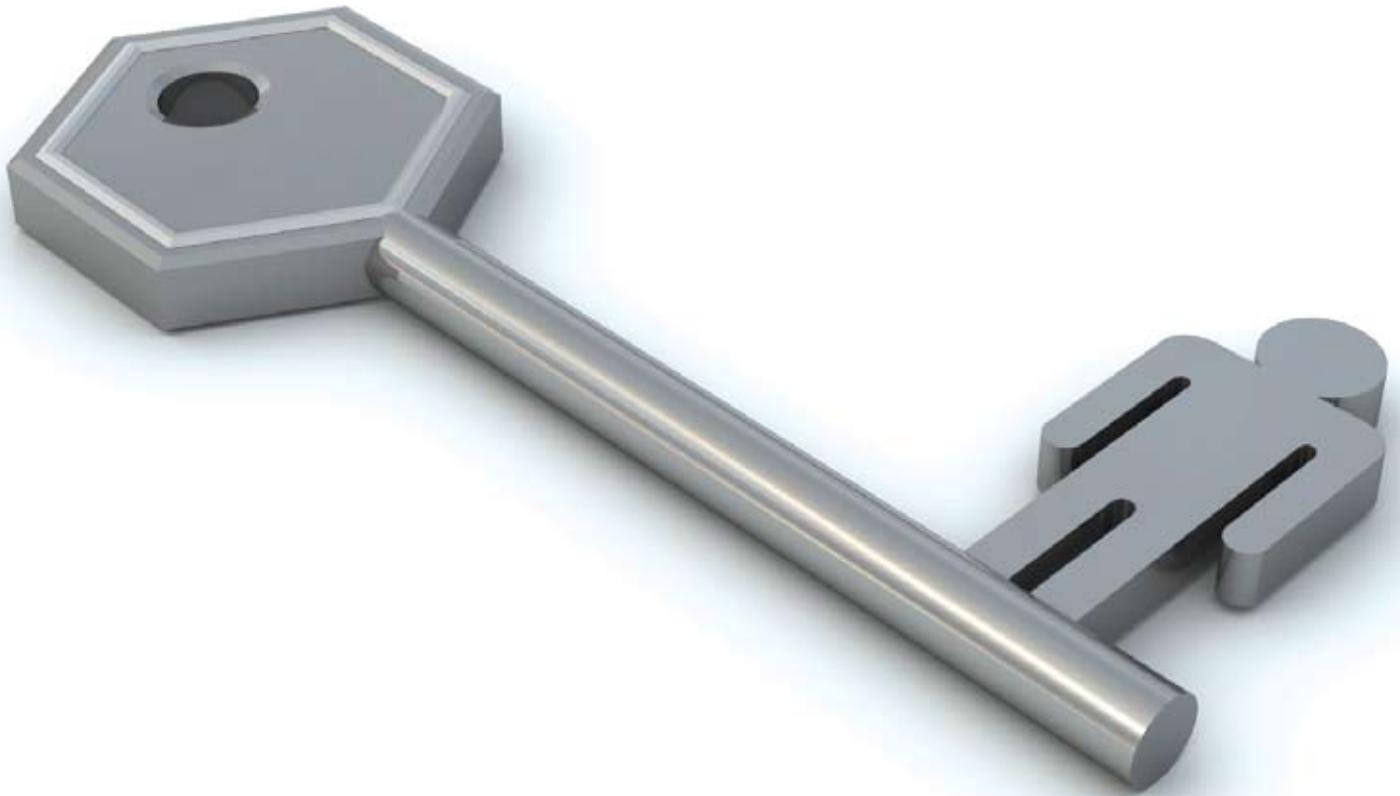



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The push to get employees involved extends to things like providing company shirts for employees and their families who participate in sponsored runs; free company bootcamps, personal defence training, earthquake preparedness at home and at work, and more.

“The community outreach programs that we have are not only a team-building exercise, they also make people feel good about what they do,” Calibaba continues. “I think it has changed people’s awareness of the needs of their community and their willingness to be part of that. And they get to share that with their colleagues, rather than being on their own.”

That environment can also have the intangible but necessary benefit of reinforcing for employees the values of the company they work for.

Vancity’s recent implementation of the Living Wage program is one example of this. “It underscores for employees the true vision and direction of our organization,” says Mandy Whiting, director of HR service delivery and total rewards at Vancity. “There is a certain amount of cost attached, but the bottom line is that profit was not a driver for us getting involved with this. It’s a real example of walking the talk, of putting our money where our mouth is. We’re very much a

community-based organization and this was about doing what was right for our communities. It’s been an initiative that’s brought a lot of pride to our employees and underscores what we’re really about, in a tangible reflection of the company’s vision.”

“...people are more innovative when they have all of the information...”

HR: Facilitator vs. Leader

So is HR poised to become the new leader of corporate innovation? Actually...no.

“HR can drive the culture and capabilities required for an organization to become more innovative,” says Kinvig. “But the reality is that no organizational change of that magnitude can happen without the leader of the organization supporting the HR role to create transformative change. It can’t be an HR program, it has to be an organizational program, with HR being a

leader in facilitating that change.”

Leckie agrees. “HR is meant to be a strategic driver in the organization. Is this taking HR from transactional to strategic? Yes. Should it be a leap? No, not if HR is actually doing its job. HR is supposed to be strategic, and being strategic means, to my mind, being innovative.”

“We all have a responsibility to make the company better,” Calibaba sums up. “And it’s not just management’s or HR’s purview—it’s everybody’s purview.”

The Next Step

As HR stands ready to become the great enabler of innovative futures everywhere, some are already asking what the next step will be. With the growing shift from position- to project-based work, a careful look at the systems and structures in place for suppliers and contractors might be a logical place to start.

“I think more and more work is going to be parcelled out into project work,” says Leckie, “and I think that will cause us to rethink a lot of former HR processes and systems, documentation, and knowledge management.”

According to Leckie, some of the next big leaps in innovation for HR will be in these areas, as well as in social media and knowledge management. **■**



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The Mother of Innovation

By **Ian J. Cook**, CHRP

THERE ARE MANY SOURCES OF INNOVATION. Most often though, stories of innovation focus on the breakthrough of an inspired individual, someone whose intuitive talents or spark of genius leads to something new. In this light, innovation is a hallmark of the gifted few whose high levels of creativity or mysterious gift of insight sets them apart.

In truth, there are many sources of innovation. For every unique spark of insight there are many stories where the impossibility of the situation has led to repeated attempts to solve a problem, which has led to incremental enhancements and ultimately an innovative solution.

It's not as romantic a tale in the telling, but it is a timeless truth of necessity and resultant invention. We are imperfect historians as such. Human nature pays little heed to the grind, failure, and confusion that accompanies the scramble out of an impossible situation. The achievement is celebrated, the process is ignored. The lesson learned is that at some point a bright idea saved the day. The truth is far more messy.

Although desperation is often the "mother" behind great innovation, there is another factor that bears consideration: spotting the signs of an impossible situation early. This provides the space and time to work through the complex process of re-learning how to be successful in the new context or environment.

We have and continue to seek incremental improvements.

On a prior page of *PeopleTalk* (Winter 2010¹), we explored the ways in which innovation may be brought to a situation. A year later, our purpose is to alleviate the need for a messy scramble to change by facing the simple fact that HR functions are heading for what looks like an increasingly impossible situation: trying to deliver an increasing workload with fewer and fewer resources.

While this situation can and has been managed through finding efficiencies, alerting processes, transferring work, etc... there comes a time. At a certain point, if the trends of increasing

workloads and diminishing resources continue, and all the tinkering that can be done has been, something greater is required to solve the challenge - a fundamental re-design of our approach.

The evidence we have cannot predict exactly when this trigger point will come. It is likely to hit different organizations at different times. What we can demonstrate is that the activities which drive HR workload are increasing rapidly, and yet the resources available to service these needs are declining. It is also true that this situation has been consistent for some time. Herein, is all the drive needed to inspire innovative solutions.

We have made some bold claims – it is time to substantiate them.

What drives HR workload? There are many factors some of which are relatively stable and some of which vary based on choices made by people within the organization. Three key areas where HR is required to respond to demand are Absenteeism, Turnover and Vacancies. In each of these areas, HR's role is to manage the requirements of the organization as they ebb and flow. Over the last 2.5 years these three areas have increased in volume between 10 and 50 per cent. Chart A shows the Index for the drivers of HR workload. Combining the three factors and taking Q1 of 2009 as a start point, the overall volume of activity from these three factors has increased by 27 points.

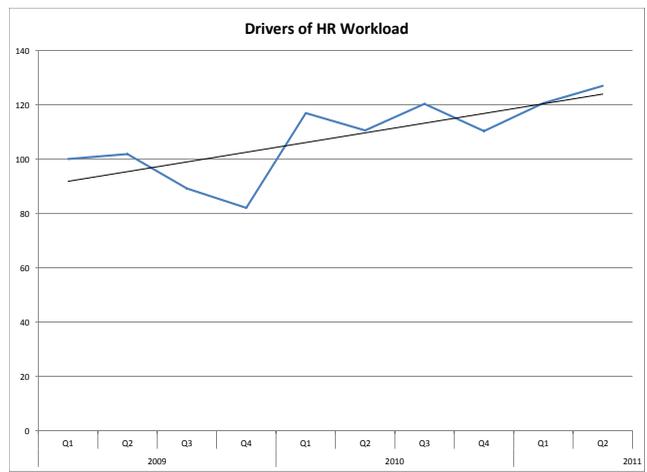


Chart A. Source: The HR Metrics Service / BC HRMA 2011²

While it is plausible for workload to increase if the resources available keep pace, this has not been the case. In looking at HR resources we have considered two main factors. The first is the

HR headcount ratio which indicates how many people each HR person has to cover. The second is HR costs per employee. The outsourcing of HR tasks can change the HR headcount ratio; however, the costs of this outsourcing will be reflected in an increased spend per employee.

The number of employees covered by each HR person is on the rise. Over the time period tracked, the median ratio has increased by 40 per cent. What this means is that each HR person is responsible for 40 per cent more people than before. Over the same period, the median spend per employee has decreased by three per cent.

Chart B shows a combined index of the resources available to HR, both staff and dollars, and how these have changed over the last 2.5 years. There has been a 22 point reduction in this index from Q1 of 2009. The lift at the end of 2009 was due to HR spending, most likely related to staff reductions. Since that time the trend is steadily downwards.

The evidence from organizations shows that HR workloads are increasing at the same time as HR resources are decreasing. A recent study into the challenges facing HR heads³ by BC HRMA showed that all were focused on finding efficiencies and seeking ways to streamline the existing system. Mixing this information into the crystal ball of projection suggests that the time is now for innovation. The workload is set to keep increasing as economic volatility persists and the dynamics of a multi-generational workforce play out. We have and continue to seek incremental improvements. All of these are hot elements in the crucible of change. It is time to join Einstein on his light beam and instead of asking how do I do this faster or cheaper. We should ask:

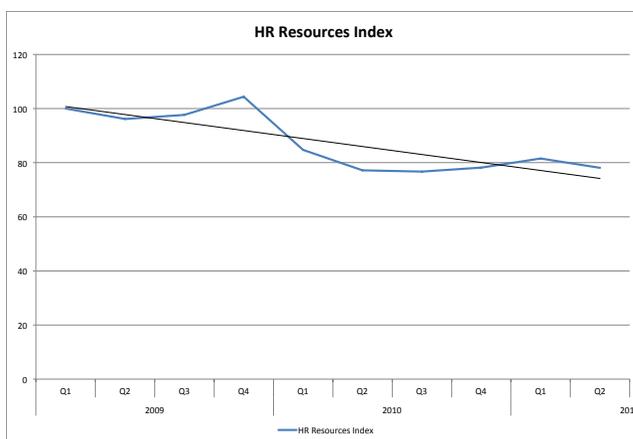


Chart B. Source: The HR Metrics Service / BC HRMA 2011⁴

- What would ops do if they ran HR?
- What would the organization do if there was no HR function?
- What if HR became the shared responsibility of the employees – what would they do?
- We are not suggesting that you simply act on the answers you find. However in this exploration you may find the spark of the bright idea that saves the day. 📌

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.

1 <http://www.hrvoice.org/the-innovator%E2%80%99s-perspective/>
 2 The HR Drivers Index is created from the median scores of the following three metrics Absenteeism, Turnover and Vacancy. It is designed to show the variation in the activities which drive a key part of the workload for HR groups.
 3 What Keeps the Heads of HR up at Night - <http://www.bchrma.org/temp/pdf/hr-structures-whitepaper.pdf>
 4 The HR Resource Index is a combination of HR costs per employee and HR Headcount ratio indicating the general resource base in terms of HR staff and HR dollars available to the HR function. It is based on the median score for each of these measures.

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Improving Mental Health in the Workplace:

10 Tips For Psychological Health and Safety

By **Merv Gilbert**, PhD, R. Psych.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS ARE OFTEN REFERRED TO AS 'invisible' as there is no physical evidence of the condition as there is with, for example, a broken arm. Despite this, the impact is anything but invisible to both employers and employees. They are the fastest rising cause for short and long-term disabilities; they are expected to exceed 50 per cent of all claims administered within the next five years. They contribute to conflict, accidents, injuries and incidents.

Furthermore, emerging changes in policy and legislation at a provincial and federal level such as the upcoming national standards for psychological health and safety — as well as recent court rulings holding employers accountable for the psychological health of staff — will place an increasing responsibility on business to adequately and effectively deal with psychosocial risk factors that manifest in the workplace.

Many employers recognize this and realize that doing nothing is not an option but don't know what to do. The following tips are offered in response to this dilemma:

- 1 Make managing mental health disorders in the workplace a high priority.** This should be based on a solid business case that demonstrates the relevance of worker mental health to organizational priorities and strategic plans. Support from senior management for these efforts needs to be clearly communicated throughout the organization.
- 2 Measure the impact of psychological disorders in the workplace.** The most obvious indicators are things like absenteeism, number of long-term disability cases and benefits costs. These so-called trailing indicators are very
- 3 Identify the risks to employee psychological health.** Rising costs and regulatory requirements have helped pave the way for organizations to make strong advances and progress in identifying and addressing workplace factors that contribute to worker physical illness and injury. There are a number of useful tools available to accomplish this.
- 4 Address identified workplace and workforce hazards.** This should entail interventions aimed at both minimizing the presence or impact of organizational hazards while at the same time supporting the workforce in building their capacity to manage possible risks.
- 5 Provide information, programs and policies that promote early recognition and response to employee distress.** As with any problem, the earlier that a problem is identified and acted upon the better the outcome. If an emerging psychological concern such as anxiety or depression is appropriately addressed there is a much greater likelihood that intervention will be effective, workplace morale and functioning will be maintained and disability will be prevented.
- 6 Provide managers and supervisors with resources and supports to address workplace mental health issues.** Managers and supervisors play a critical role in determining if employee distress is resolved or gets worse. To do

this effectively, managers and supervisors need ongoing support and training and should have access to useful tools and programs to address the mental health of employees. It is important to recognize that managers are by no means immune to distress; they also need supports to maintain their own psychological health.

7 Review current processes, programs and policies with a psychological health lens. Do selection processes and position descriptions adequately encompass the interpersonal, cognitive and emotional aspects of the job? Do health and safety and/or wellness initiatives provide information, resources and programs to help employees maintain their psychological health? Do benefits and/or Employee Family Assistance Programs provide adequate access to mental health interventions that are proven to make a difference?

8 Help employees who are, or may be, dealing with psychological health issues to stay at work. Studies have found that the majority of individuals with a diagnosed, or diagnosable, mental health condition are not off work or on disability but remain in the workplace. Employers that recognize the practical and ethical merits of providing appropriate support for the employee while they address their health issues are more likely to avoid extended absenteeism and disability.

9 Work together to assist with returning employees off work because of a psychological health condition in a timely, safe and appropriate manner. Regardless of the condition, the longer someone is off work the harder and more difficult it is going to be to successfully return to work. Thus the best form of planning for work return begins at the point where the employee goes off work in the first place. This is most likely to occur when there is respectful, but honest communication between the employer, the insurer or disability manager, the union (when appropriate), the employee and their treatment or rehabilitation provider.

10 Prevent or minimize relapse or recurrence. Although there are effective treatments for psychological disorders, they may recur. It is therefore important to plan for 'slips' in a timely manner so that they are less likely to impair functioning and result in return to disability. These efforts will only be successful if the working environment is psychologically healthy.

Further information on these actions,

and many others, will soon be available in a free national guide commissioned by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, "Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers". 

Dr. Merv Gilbert is a consultant and an occupational health psychologist and principal in Gilbert Acton Ltd. (www.gilbertacton.com). He is an Adjunct Professor at Simon Fraser University. Dr. Gilbert can be reached at mervgilbert@gilbertacton.com.

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Smoothing the Transition From Maternity Leave

By Tammy Reid, CHRP

RETURNING TO WORK AFTER MATERNITY leave is a time of transition: often emotional and exhausting for moms regardless if it's the first child or fourth. In short, stress is not uncommon for returning mothers seeking to establish a new balance of roles both at home and within the workforce - where often much has changed during their absence.

Fortunately, there are many creative ways for organizations to help moms reintegrate with the workforce. As a leader, "the employer plays a critical role in employee's health and well-being, and can help make the transition as smooth as possible" (Supporting an Employee's Return To Work, 2011). This naturally reduces the stress levels and diminishes the frustrations that can occur for the returning employee.

Three key elements underpin this initiative; employers can ensure a smooth transition by making accommodations for employees, maintaining clear communication, and being supportive wherever they are able.

Return-to-Work Plan

Without a plan, the lack of preparation can often cause both parties to become frustrated and unhappy (Lehrer, 2011).

As with all great challenges, a smooth return is predicated by planning that

meets the needs of both parties. The new mom needs a return-to-work plan that will allow her to organize a life with many more details than prior: how to make it out the door each morning, shop, cook meals, do laundry, fit in appointments, spend time with family - and ultimately, do her job. A key part of that plan is simple: communications. Establishing a good line of

...learning from one another can provide both a heightened and accelerated learning curve.

dialogue with either HR or her manager is essential for the returning mom to communicate her childcare arrangements and family commitments; it also opens the door to further flexibility and provides the organization the opportunity to either share or develop a process plan for this not uncommon scenario.

The employer's plan would include coordinating "refresher" training: upgrades to software/phone systems,

changes to policies and procedures and updates on organizational charts that have taken place during the employee's absence.

For managers, scheduling a weekly or bi-weekly "check-in" meeting with the returning mom is also beneficial as it allows open dialogue and the opportunity to make adjustments to the plan if necessary.

Graduated Return-to-Work From Maternity Leave

Returning to the flow of work can bring with it an exhaustion that can result in an emotional period of transition. A graduated re-entry to the workplace can ease tension, confusion and diminish conflict for the returning mom.

For instance, many daycares provide a graduated entry for children to allow them time to adjust from being with a parent full-time to spending several days a week with multiple children and other adults.

A graduated entry program should be developed with the participation of the employee and employer and include specific hours, duties and a defined end date.

Flexibility is Key

A flexible start/end time would be advantageous for both employee and employer and aids with further reducing employee stress. Such flex hours have already become

more common in many workplaces with mutual benefits assured through clear goal setting and ongoing communication. The reality of the 9-5 world has already shifted to accommodate the realities of the 24/7 world with an abundance of tools to make the most of the time available.

For example, a returning employee might be expected to arrive in the office between 8 – 8:30 am each day and depart between 4 – 4:30 pm. This is advantageous for any parent who has to take their children to daycare/school, as well as for employees with long commutes. Similarly, an employer would benefit by having people working at times which provide extended service hours. Floating hours allow for service levels to increase and stress levels to decrease which would result in a happier, healthier employee.

Telecommuting

Telecommuting provides employees with greater control over their work which can result in the ability to integrate work and family commitments so that they are much more balanced (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

This is another way to ease the transition, allowing employees to work from home while remaining wired to the workplace in a wireless world. There are a plethora of options for employees to stay connected to the office - such as meeting online using Skype or Illuminate live, instant messaging, texting and email.

Technology is continuing to evolve and the quality of audio and video combined with flat screen, high resolution tv's and monitors make it a great alternative to face-to-face meetings. Results from studies indicate that telecommuting increases productivity, job satisfaction, retention, and stress (Gajendran, & Harrison, 2007)

Telecommuting is a growing reality for organizations spread across varied geographies and demographics and, while not for everyone, can be ideal for the returning mom.

Working With a Mentor

Mentors are a fantastic resource for discussing challenges and opportunities, working through problems and easing anxieties. For an organization to create a mentoring program that would pair a mom returning to work with another who has recently made the transition themselves, can be

invaluable. Learning from lessons and life is involuntary; learning from one another can provide both a heightened and accelerated learning curve. As such, 'mommy' mentors would provide support, encouragement, and empathy to the returning employee to help ease the transition back into the workforce.

Best intentions and inventions aside, returning to work after maternity leave is always going to be stressful, emotional and require a period of transition. However, it is well within the grasp of all employers and managers to be proactive and innovative by creating a return-to-work plan that works for everyone. **1**

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7 Steps Towards 'Disability' Management

By **Jeff Russ**, PhD, CHRP

In a 2005 PeopleTalk article, entitled "Workplace Addiction: Treat it as a Disability," Doris Toovey suggested 12 strategies to flush out unreported addictions in the workplace, assure that employees received the assistance they needed and reduce employer costs. Toovey's strategies made a very good case; their potential benefit and undiminished relevance to the ROI of any organization remains.

Return-to-Work Plan

However, to actually test those strategies, several things needed to be done. First, the strategies had to be focused on a single metric of the costs to employers; the measure that was chosen was absenteeism. Second, the strategies needed to be rephrased in such a way to enable HR professionals to define, monitor, and implement those strategies consistently in various organizations. Third, here in BC, where the bulk of employees are covered by collective agreements, the actual testing or implementation of these strategies should have strong union support. Finally, to assure that HR had de facto "permission" to test or implement these strategies, it was important to determine what strategies union members would perceive as effective and be willing to support in order to facilitate managerial implementation.

7 Steps For Healthy Consideration

This article addresses the results of a recent survey with the Prince George District Teacher's Association. Below are the union member's reiteration of seven of Toovey's 12 original strategies perceived as effective with management support:

- 1 Reform Employee Assistance Program/Group Benefits** by assuring that the company provided mental health/substance abuse plan will cover up to the cost of one full residential treatment program for each family member per year;
- 2 Develop flexible return-to-work** with a joint labor-management committee to review, analyze, and reconnect return-to-work employee progress on an individual-by-individual case;
- 3 Educate managers** on relationship between mental and physical illness by providing training to managers four days a year as a team, regarding the relationship between mental health and physical illness;
- 4 Reduce emotional work hazards** through the development of a complaint process and a monthly review of any complaints through the joint-union management committee;
- 5 Promote work and life balance policies by increasing the value of the benefit package** to include employee additional funds for discretionary spending of up to a \$1,000 annually for balance activities, such as health, sports, travel, and child/elder care;

6 Encourage people to seek the necessary professional assistance via the marketing of the Employee Assistance Program through a new message sent with each pay stub; and

7 Communicate the intent to eliminate the main sources of workplace stress with a quarterly newsletter, including such issues as overwork, lack of clear instruction, unrealistic deadlines, harassment and discrimination, isolated working conditions, and conflict.

The results of this study may benefit human resources planning efforts in many environments. The principles behind this study and the proposed strategies could be utilized within any environment, as long as the proper input was secured from the employees prior to any implementation. The results may benefit not only the employees and the employer, but also family members impacted at home.

Mental Health: A Joint Initiative

The strategy of developing a joint union-management committee to review, analyze, and reconnect return-to-work employee progress on an individual-by-individual case basis reflects the opportunity to work collaboratively with the management on potential issues that concern both sides.

When colleagues may be abusing their sick time, the workers who remain may develop a sense of unfairness regarding the behavior of their union colleagues while management also needs to reduce the costs that are attributed to prolonged absences from work. This would become a responsibility of the joint committee, rather than a back to work management push alone, thus creating a more balanced perception of fairness.

The reduction of emotional work hazards through the development of a complaint process and a monthly review of any complaints through the joint-union management committee strategy offers a potential place to discuss issues outside of the formal grievance process. Constructive discussion honors the intelligence of both sides with a focus on creating a mutually agreeable solution and may eliminate the adversarial grievance process before it begins.

Communicating Care as a Core Value

Seeking to eliminate the main sources of workplace stress through open communication addresses multiple problems. When the employees sense that management is hearing or writing about a concern in a newsletter, this awareness is positive for both sides.

Reforming the EAP and group health plans to assure that the company provides a mental health-substance abuse plan, that will cover up to the cost of one full residential treatment program for each family member per year potentially, provides a new benefit to employees and their families. This could be a strategy where help away from the workplace results... in a workplace performance improvement.

**Where
common ground
meets the needs
of both sides,
the greatest
potential exists for
the establishment
of mutually
desired results.**

The education of the managers about the relationship between mental and physical illness provides intense training that is close to the work unit. This shifts the focus of the problem to the manager. If management is properly trained, they may be better able to defuse the problems that individuals may experience in the workplace.

As per encouraging people to seek the necessary professional assistance by marketing the Employee Assistance Program via pay stubs, this should not to be considered personally intrusive. The employees may not be fully aware of the number of issues that an employee can bring to the EAP program. By offering a different

message about the range of services available through the EAP, individuals that are impacted by the more usual issues, such as smoking cessation, may be encouraged to seek help.

Taking a Step Forward...

While each of the strategies merits exploration, not all need be applied to affect positive change in both absenteeism and workplace culture. To maximize the effectiveness of the strategies it is critical to identify which are received with the strongest support by senior executives, management and employees alike. Where common ground meets the needs of both sides, the greatest potential exists for the establishment of mutually desired results.

The implementation of these evidence-based strategies for present and future industrial or counseling psychologists, therapists, human resources professionals, and other researchers represents a significant social change - particularly in the highly unionized labour environment within BC; it does so by giving employers de facto permission to further study or implement such strategies, better understand their individual roles in the return-to-work process, and improve knowledge about treatment approaches in return-to-work therapy programs.

...Towards a Healthy Return

This is the beginning of the process to strategically implement a mutually agreeable disability management process that will reduce absenteeism, flush out the unreported addictions or mental illness in the work place, assure that employees receive the assistance that they need, and reduce costs to the employer that occur due to unreported addictions or mental illness that underlies some absenteeism. The strategic, collaborative implementation of these strategies can be made in-house or through contracting with an HR management consulting firms. **PD**

Jeff Russ, PhD, MPA, ICADC, CHRP, and winner of the 2009 BC HRMA Award of Excellence (Prince George Living and Working Committee), is president of Resources United, providing HR consultation to clients across Canada and the Western States. This was Jeff's dissertation topic; he can be reached at: resourcesunitedsupportiveservices@3web.net or 1-250-640-2020.

Inverting the Mentor/Mentee Framework:

The Cross-Generational Potential

By Neil McEachern, CHRP

A more innovative approach to mentoring is called for, one that capitalizes upon our four generation workforce, and allows the younger generations to bring forth the potential of more recent inventions to benefit both their seniors and the shared bottom line.

MENTORING HAS LIKELY EXISTED in various forms since the beginning of time. However, the origin of the word has been linked to Homer's *Odyssey*, with a character called Mentor, who was entrusted by Odysseus to look after his son while he sailed off to fight in the Trojan War. In its modern form, the word mentor was not seen again in literature until *The Adventures of Telemachus (1699)*, where the French author, Francois Fenelon, added to the work of Homer's *Odyssey* by filling in what Mentor and Telemachus would have talked about in their mentoring relationship while Odysseus was on his adventures.

Having touched upon the ancient origins of mentoring, we skip forward to the present day where mentoring in North America has moved from the domain of tradespeople (think apprenticeships) to executives in the boardroom. While much has changed, throughout its history, the core relationship of mentor/mentee has been a reflection of the hierarchical wisdom benefiting those in the process of learning.

It is only recently that we have looked at inverting and exploring a more reciprocal approach to mentoring. With technologies changing at an accelerated rate and the youngest generations holding the greatest familiarity, the question we need to ask more often is, "What are the benefits of establishing and supporting

cross-generational mentorship in the workplace?"

One of our key mandates as human resources professionals is to ensure that employees are properly trained and developed to enable them to have the greatest organizational impacts possible. Cross-generational mentoring takes traditional mentoring (the more experienced individuals transferring their knowledge to the younger individuals) and adds in reverse-mentoring for good measure.

Once we lose the knowledge of our predecessors, we have lost that knowledge for good.

While one may think that there are no immediate benefits from mentoring, in reality there are, and they are especially pertinent to HR practitioners such as ourselves - not in the realm of training and development but rather that of employee engagement. There is evidence that suggests employees who receive mentoring are more likely to feel engaged by their organizations and thus more likely to stay, which one could attribute to the strong

desire by most millennials to continue their education outside the classroom and be in a state of constant learning.

Furthermore, not only is the mentee engaged, but there is the possibility that the mentor becomes reengaged/energized; one could posit that this stems from their mentee's desire to learn and an underlying human wish to be considered altruistic. Ultimately, we are interested in the long term benefits of mentoring - the transfer of knowledge from the mentor to the mentee and vice versa, that enables both training and development to occur.

One of the immediate benefits of implementing cross-generational mentoring is that it enables the creation of what could (and ideally should) be a symbiotic relationship between mentor and mentee, facilitating learning for both parties.

However, gaining technical expertise isn't the only benefit of reverse mentoring; mentees have a lot more to offer. One clear example of this would be a "younger" and perhaps fresher perspective in regards to current business practices; this would be due to the mentees imparting their more recent learning into the discussion with their mentors. Thus through a symbiotic relationship that involves reverse mentorship, the mentor is then able to learn about new theories in his/her field and together with their mentees explore their applicability in the workplace. As one can see, this mutual exchange of knowledge could certainly have a large impact on the



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organization as a whole and likely would only come into existence through the cross-generational mentoring process.

When we consider the long term benefits of mentoring we must accept a certain measure of intangibility. This is due partly to the nature of modern mentoring; unlike a trade apprenticeship where the protégé is taught the actual methodology of task completion, today's mentee is more likely to learn how to complete a task (think more guidance than actual instruction).

Does this realization make mentoring ultimately a less effective tool? While the answer to this question could be quite complex, especially based on situation specific variables, the reality is that learning and development are still occurring. One could likely measure the effectiveness of the overall program by surveying both mentor and mentee to determine if the program has met its goals.

Having considered both the potential short and long term benefits, as well as

the current popularity of mentoring, we as HR professionals need to consider how to implement a cross-generational mentoring program in our respective organizations; this is particularly true as we finally begin to realize the long-slated end of the baby-boomer workforce. We must recognize that irrespective of our belief in the process, once the current generation of executives are retired, the knowledge they possess will no longer be available to those who reported to them; the same can be said of those in the younger generations who may have innovative ideas but no place to fully realize them.

Mentoring will be, and probably is, occurring in your current organization, with or without a formal process; however, it would likely be beneficial to the company for HR to exert some type of control on mentoring by implementing an internal cross-generational mentoring program. While there is no foolproof method of matching mentor and mentee, there are ways to increase the likelihood of success such as polling candidates on interests (both professional and personal). Another step that we can take to increase success is to establish a framework for the relationship and ultimately facilitate a goal (ideally a tangible one to be able to determine the value of the program to the corporation).

As one can see, there are benefits to implementing cross-generational mentoring in the workplace and, if already implemented, hopefully one has seen the benefits in continuing to support such a program. The reality is that without programs such as these, there is a good chance for knowledge to be lost between generations, which can lead to serious organizational issues as we continue onwards into a knowledge based economy. In conclusion, we as HR professionals have to be the stalwarts of cross-generational mentoring, for once we lose the knowledge of our predecessors, we have lost that knowledge for good. As the saying goes, knowledge is power. **P**

Born in Hong Kong, Neil 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.



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Effective Learning & Affecting Change: BCIT and First Nations Pair for HR Pilot

By Jennifer Gerves-Keen

A CCESSIBLE AND EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IS the cornerstone of civilization as we know it. In order to maintain the excellent standard of living that many of us enjoy here in Canada, we need to start paying attention to the future of learning...and the flexibility and openness that it needs to represent.

In June 2011, the Corporate & Industry Training department of the School of Business of BC Institute of Technology (BCIT) launched a pilot project that goes to the heart of such thinking: delivering the BCIT Human Resource Management certificate in collaboration with the BC Aboriginal Mining Training Association (BCAMTA).

One of the most effective ways to learn and be engaged as an adult learner is through work experience. The work of organizations such as BCAMTA is to engage individuals in successful careers through partnerships with potential employers; partnerships with BCIT and other educational institutions give them even further recognition and solid credentials. These types of partnerships also give individuals access to education and learning that might not be possible when presented in more traditional formats.

Both the format and the audience were unique, as was my opportunity to step aboard as a core instructor of a truly innovative initiative. This marked the first time BCAMTA delivered a 'professional', diploma program; it was also the first time BCIT condensed the HR certificate into an intensive delivery schedule.

Those who have pursued the BCIT HR certificate through traditional part-time studies are familiar with the intensity of the workload. The delivery method for this particular pilot, though challenging, was agreed upon as the ideal format for focused efficiency and student effectiveness: an intensive, almost full-time approach. As such, the 15 courses were divided into two week modules, each delivered four days a week over a period of six and half months - with no breaks.

Eyebrows were raised at the notion of a pilot project that tackled the requisite course work in six months, replete with assignments, textbooks, mid-terms, group project work and finals. As a training and development professional, my concerns centred on whether we could keep the motivation high enough throughout to prevent burnout, dropouts or poor results.

Nearly six months later, those fears have proven unfounded and valuable lessons have been learned on all sides of the learning equation. With nine students put forward by BCAMTA following a demanding selection process, the pilot is finishing with seven, a retention rate of 78 per cent.



From left to right: Jacqueline McKay, Katy Gottfriedson, Roberta Moses, Jackie Jules, Barbara Jules (holding the sign), Valerie Matthews, and Leona Rabbitt.

Taken out of their comfort zones, confronted with a massive workload and faced with new instructors every two weeks, the students' resilience and commitment has been inspiring, especially in consideration of other factors ranging from full-time jobs to family and health issues. These students are living proof of what people can accomplish from any background when challenged to push their boundaries and given an opportunity to focus on their own development.

Also inspiring has been the ripple effect in their respective First Nations communities; the knowledge which some of the participants carry back with them is already having a positive impact on developing policies and procedures that further facilitate self-governance. Others are sharing their new knowledge of recruitment tools to help family members and friends with successful job searches. Some wish to stay in their communities; others are looking for a complete change.

As all of those participating in the pilot project have been women, representing three different generations from four different First Nations communities in the Kamloops area, they are living proof the African proverb: *"If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation)."*

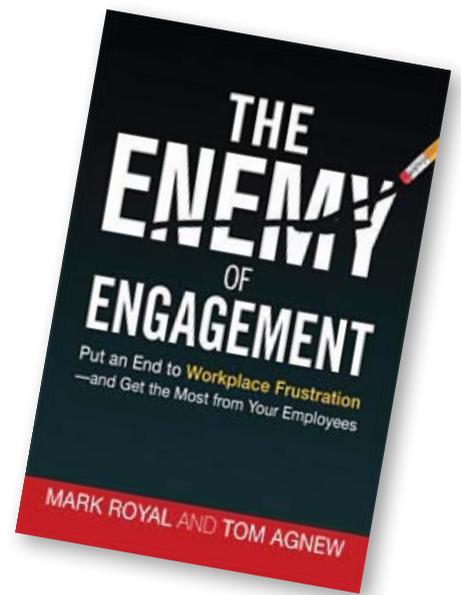
My own cultural learning has been enriched immeasurably by the experience. First Nations culture and learning is alive and well within these communities and the different perspectives and added value that they can bring to an employer should not be overlooked.

As a learning experiment, this BCIT/BCAMTA pilot project is in many ways just the beginning for the talented graduating class and future initiatives; the words of Dr. Seuss seem most appropriate for all involved: *"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. You are the guy who'll decide where to go."* 

As a professional facilitator, speaker and coach, Jennifer Gerves-Keen (www.jgkonline.com) has worked alongside some of the world's largest and most successful organizations.

Willing and Able (but Frustrated):

The Enemy of Engagement



By Jason McRobbie

WHAT IF THE ENEMY OF ENGAGEMENT lies within the structure of the workplace itself?

Engaged teams and innovative potentials are natural byproducts of functioning systems and shared principles. They are also absolutely essential to buoying the bottom line in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

In this light, engagement is optimal people potential - an intrinsically motivated workforce aligned and enabled by inspired leadership and the aforementioned functioning systems. It is the latter that is most often found lacking.

In *The Enemy of Engagement*, Hay Group management consultants Mark Royal and Tom Agnew take aim at the flip side of the familiar 'how to get more

out of your people' refrain. Much goodwill hunting on the topic of engagement has already uncovered the merits of such non-shockers as authenticity, vision, trust, non-hierarchical communications and community.

"Engagement is not enough to sustain maximum levels of team and organizational effectiveness. Frustration is overlooked. Frustration is an everyday

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occurrence, but it is different in the workplace," says Agnew. "How we match people to roles is just the start. How do we give people the chance to do what they do best? How do we create a supportive work environment that makes optimum use of team, tools and time? These are good questions, but the most important one is one we as leaders can address right away; how do we stop hindering motivated employees from getting things done?"

The Enemy of Engagement offers a look through the other end of the microscope. What they uncover in their research, and share anecdotally in alternating chapters, is common ground for those in HR: frustrated people and non-functioning systems.

"Frustration is a common response in people to the inability to achieve a common objective or goal. In the workplace, it is something that trips up a lot of engaged people," says Royal. "Ultimately, engagement walks through the door and trips over enablement. Motivation can only carry an organization in the short-term.



 *The Enemy of Engagement* authors Mark Royal and Tom Agnew discuss enablement. <http://youtu.be/MJLy01q2fiM>

Without being supported by enabling processes, that flash of motivation burns out or becomes frustration."

In the workplace, frustration can be systemic, stemming from micro-management, policy restrictions and antiquated information systems. Enabling processes and removing impediments is the key to more than engagement alone; it is essential for any organization seeking to stem attrition and tap the full potential of high-potential employees.

"What we find is that in many organizations more than 20 per cent of the

workforce is frustrated - meaning they want to contribute, they are motivated to help the organization succeed, but they are being held back," explains Agnew. "That state of frustration is very unstable. People either withdraw their motivation or they end up leaving the organization. Not only are organizations leaving performance on the table by not enabling their engaged employees, but they also have great risk of losing the very people they care most about keeping."

The new data collected by the Hay Group suggests that many high-potential employees are also frustrated employees. In an 80:20 world, these high-potential individuals account for the top functioning 20 per cent. Their impact upon the bottom line is notable, and even more so when they leave.

"Your best people always have options and frustration hits them hardest. Fortunately, just by management starting the conversation, a flip begins that brings the frustrated, engaged employees into the solution making process," says Royal. 

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Facing Up to Facebook:



Social Media Policy Key for Employers

By **Graeme McFarlane**

THE NUMBERS ARE ASTONISHING. THERE are more than 500 million active users. Half of those - a quarter of a billion - use it every day. Each uses it with an average of 130 people. Every month people spend over 700,000,000,000 minutes using it. What is it?

Facebook.

The rapid growth in the use of Facebook and other social media platforms has injected a whole new set of concerns for employers. Serious problems have emerged from their use, including decreased productivity, defamation, disparagement of managers, disclosure of confidential information and harassment of employees. Certain of these problems are complicated by the fact that some of these behaviours occur “off-duty”.

The good news is that employers can expect that employees will not harm them through the use of social media sites. A relatively recent example indicates that an employer may terminate the employment of individuals who misuse these platforms.

The British Columbia Labour Relations Board described such a situation in the decision in *West Coast Mazda and UFCW, Local 1518*, BCLRB No. B190/2010. In this case, two employees were Facebook friends with their manager. Over a period of time, the manager noticed various postings that were critical of both the management of the business and the business itself. Examples of postings included statements like the “[Boss] is a complete

jack-ass ... not just half-a tard” and “West coast detail is a *%\$* joke ... don't spend your money there ... they are crooks and out to hose you ...”

“...the employees had posted disrespectful, derogatory and potentially damaging comments on Facebook”

The employer investigated these postings and the two employees denied making derogatory comments about the business and its management. The two employees were fired for cause. The employer reasoned that the employees had posted disrespectful, derogatory and potentially damaging comments on Facebook. The employer also relied on the fact that the employees were dishonest during its investigation.

The Labour Relations Board upheld the employer's decision. It found that the

Facebook comments were damaging to the employer's business. Regardless of the fact that the postings were made off-duty, it decided that the employees had no reasonable expectation that comments posted on social media could be private. In addition, it held that the postings about the supervisor were serious and insubordinate. The employees' dishonesty during the investigation compounded their misconduct. The penalty imposed by the employer was not out of proportion with their serious misconduct, and the employer was justified in terminating the employees.

In another case, the British Columbia Employment Standards Tribunal upheld another employer's decision to terminate an employee for inappropriate Facebook postings. The employee was away on maternity leave. While absent from work, she posted a disparaging comment on a co-worker's Facebook page. She criticized her employer in postings on her own page as well. The employer found out about these postings, and as a result, refused to allow her to return to work after her maternity leave. The employee filed a complaint alleging an unjust dismissal.

The Tribunal dismissed the complaint holding that the employer had just cause to terminate the employee. It held that by making the Facebook postings, the employee had breached her duty of loyalty and faithful service.

The trend in these cases suggests that the various employment adjudicators have recognized the special characteristics

of social media. These platforms allow potentially disparaging comments to be broadcast to a very large public audience that includes customers and suppliers. The damage to reputation can be instant and severe. Once the damage is done, it can be very difficult and expensive to repair.

A good way for an employer to protect itself from these problems is to implement a comprehensive social media policy. Some important elements of such a policy would include:

- 1 The type of permissible and impermissible conduct with respect to the following:
 - a Personal internet use at the workplace and off duty conduct;
 - b Participation in company and employee Facebook groups;
 - c Disparagement and defamation of the employer and its employees, customers, clients and suppliers;
 - d Breach of confidentiality; and
 - e Discrimination and Harassment
- 2 Examples of inappropriate use in cyberspace;
- 3 Employees may not directly or indirectly represent that they are speaking on behalf of the employer during their online activity;
- 4 Prohibition against the use of the employer's intellectual property like brands, logos and trademarks;
- 5 A warning that employees may be held personally liable to third parties for their online comments;
- 6 A warning about the consequences of breach: eg. discipline up to and including termination of employment; and,
- 7 A warning that legal action will be taken, if necessary, against ex-employees for disparaging and defamatory comments made post-employment.

Social media is here to stay. It will likely become even more pervasive. However, with a little planning, employers can stay abreast of this technology and protect their business and employees. ☎

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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Impacting with Social Media (Used Wisely)

By Jason McRobbie

FOR THOSE STILL WRESTLING WITH THE fine print of a social media policy - or still wondering about its worth - look to the people who know the weight words carry best: the people at Canada Post.

No fewer than three times was their social media policy praised from the stage at the recent *Impact99: Social Workplace Leadership Conference* at Quest University atop Squamish on October 6, 2011. With due reason, much like the blue sky and bold peaks beyond the *Impact99* classroom, Canada Post's social media policy is clear, encompassing and provides a ready template.

Social media is no longer simply an option for the workplace; it is an ongoing opportunity already being engaged by innumerable employees, entrepreneurs and organizations. Unlike the printing press, telegraph, telephone, radio, fax machine, scanner, computer and Internet before it, social media represents something more than a revolutionary technology: an evolutionary opportunity to connect via more intelligent use of available technology.

What is required is a translation of the billboard concept of brand to a more fluid, responsive and multi-media telling of your story: sharing with your audience/customers, and building that brand with purpose, narrative and personality. Moreover, that story is already being told. Social media has already gone viral in the business community, at least for those who see the longview of small windows of time and multi-media.

Organized by ImpactPeoplePractices' founder and BC HRMA member Christine McLeod, CHRP, *Impact99* took specific aim at the implications and opportunities of social media as they pertain to human resources. McLeod took her own social media inspiration from a presentation at BC HRMA's annual conference in 2009 when IBM's Chuck Hamilton brought the technology's potential to the HR stage. Much has since evolved.

The time has come for what Shane Gibson, author of *Sociable! How Social Media is*

Turning Sales and Marketing Upside Down, describes as leadership 2.0:

"Trying to stop the conversation will only stimulate it. There is really one real thing to do - that is do. There are no marketing gurus to show you the way, only consumers with megaphones and all these tools we share. From a marketing and HR perspective, the question is 'how do we rise above all the noise to communicate?'"



Impact99 founder Christine McLeod, CHRP discusses the gift of leadership.
<http://youtu.be/DI0izi4YECA>



Sociable! author Shane Gibson explores learning in the wireless world.
<http://youtu.be/hx9o0BVyr2o>

The answer is simple. When ingenuity runs rampant, be genuine and engage others. Know your audience, trust your people and use your characters wisely - and so become a font of service and source of ongoing story. As with all good business, strong support from above is key to social media's strategic implementation.

Gibson cites ING Direct and BuildDirect as organizations that utilized social media to engage their shareholder groups both internally and online. "This is an intimacy revolution. we are looking for much closer relations with the people we work with, for and who we buy things from," said Gibson.

ING Direct CEO Peter Aceto not only helped anchor policy to put social media to work for clients and culture alike, he also tweets actively and explains the merit

of doing so: "I heard I should be where our customers are and this works to the ethos of what we are aiming for in transparency as a bank."

As founder and CEO of BuildDirect, Jeff Booth drew upon social media to encourage a culture played for serious fun in serious times. Donning a superhero costume for camera and culture challenge alike, Booth empowered others in the organization to do the same and help conquer the company's financial statements. Booth's strategy was simple: to engage the youngest members of his team, the millennials who needed a bigger purpose than profit to rally to the company cause. That viral success story is now engrained in BuildDirect's culture and comprehension of the cohesive value of social media inside out.

Tweeting bankers and CEOs in tightness with tongue in cheek and visions parceled into 140 characters, are not however, all that is required for full strategic implementation of social media; that takes a team both online and out there.

"Social media doesn't really work if you have one person in a cubicle running it," explains Gibson. "Who owns social media is a good question and key for any and all companies. Is it the CEO, marketing, sales or HR?"

In answering his own question, he offers a valid reality for organizations of all types and sizes. "We are all media. Social media belongs to everything with applications in all departments."

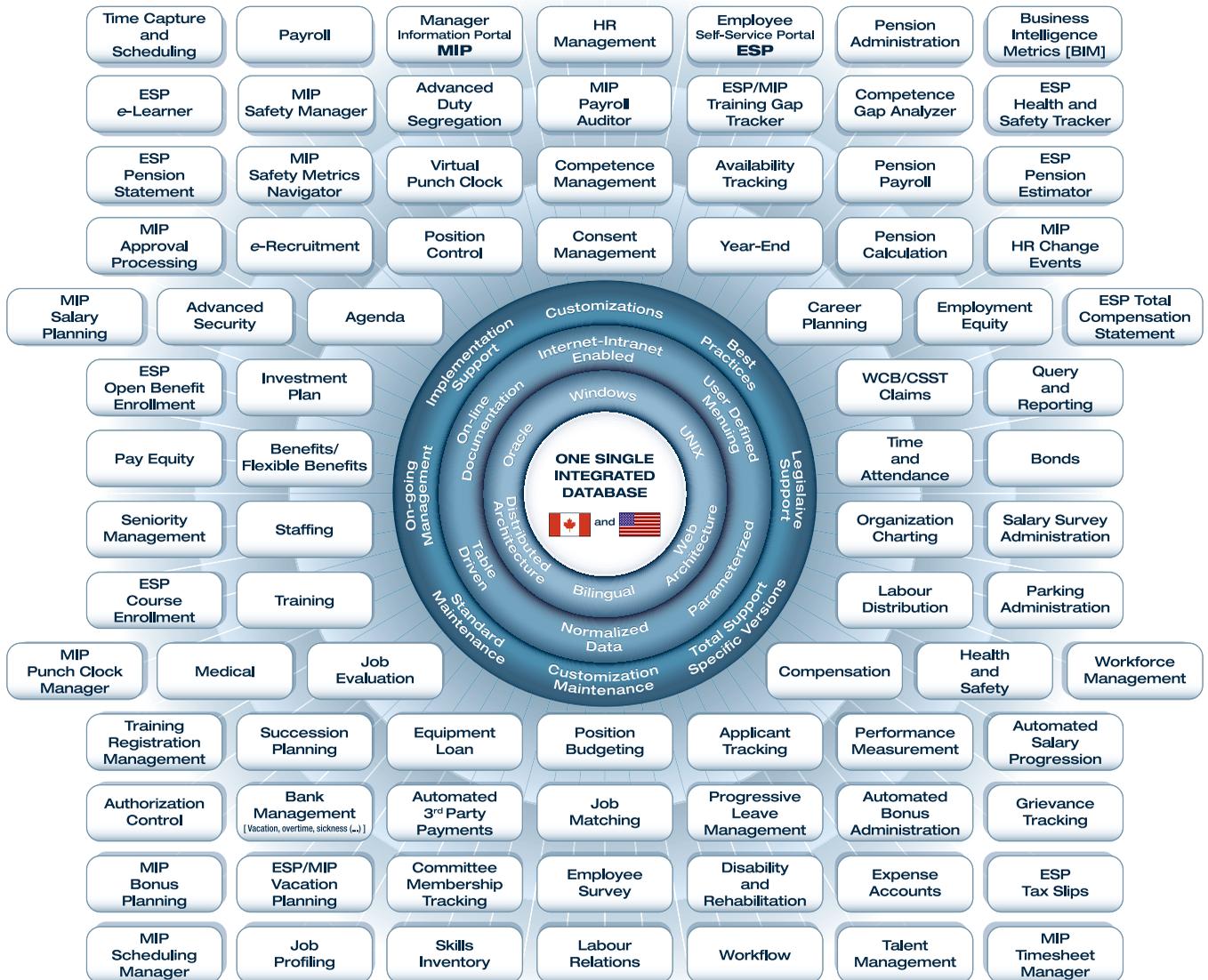
For HR, those applications, as illustrated by the speakers that followed Gibson at *Impact99*, run the gamut from recruitment to retention while opening wider avenues for employee engagement and innovation.

Though social media strategy can be readily equated as a Return on Influence, the traditional definition holds true as well for those who access the lateral audience factor. How does a local pub gain a global clientele? Doulin's Irish Pub in Vancouver did it with one Twitter account and a 10 letter keyword search: conference. The after-party business is no small pot of social media gold. **■**



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Developing 20/20 Foresight

By Jock Finlayson

THREE YEARS AGO, THE BUSINESS Council of British Columbia launched an ambitious project under the banner of Outlook 2020.¹ The objective was to help shape a realistic vision and agenda for British Columbia's economic future, with a particular focus on improving broad measures of prosperity in the post-Olympic decade.

The project identified four desired hallmarks of the British Columbia economy by 2020:

1 Open and connected to the world, in terms of trade and investment, as well as the transportation and communications linkages necessary to support the province's role as a gateway economy;

2 A successful exporter, with more enterprises engaged in trade across a spectrum of goods-and-services-producing industries and a diversified export mix;

3 A recognized leader in combining smart environmental and energy practices; and,

4 An innovation-led economy, as reflected in the behavior and strategies of firms and institutions in the public and private sectors.

It is the fourth hallmark, innovation, that is key to both the theme of this issue of *PeopleTalk* and fulfilling our 20/20 vision of the future.

The rapid pace of scientific and technical change is reshaping the economic landscape. From health care to energy,

manufacturing and environmental remediation, the development and application of new knowledge generated by science and technology is redefining the way business is done. This has profound implications for the ability of countries, regions and even cities to prosper. As the principal science and technology advisory body to the federal government recently observed: "Strength and leadership in science, technology and innovation is the price of entry to full participation in the knowledge-based global economy of the 21st century."²

Science and technology are closely linked to innovation. Innovation involves new or better ways of doing things that have economic value. New ideas and technologies that stay in the lab may increase the stock of knowledge, but only when they migrate to the commercial world do they produce significant economic benefits.

Innovation in a business context can be thought of as activities that fall under the following umbrella:

- **Product innovation** – developing and bringing to market new/improved products.
- **Process innovation** – making changes in the way goods/services are produced.
- **Direct investments** in research, development, and the acquisition of capital goods and software that embody advanced knowledge.
- **"Soft" innovations** at the level of the enterprise – changes in management and organizational practices and functions that lead to improvements in productivity, quality and customer service.



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British Columbia has a decent, but far from stellar, record of innovation. The province ranks 4th in Canada in R&D spending as a share of GDP. Business investment in R&D is low, a finding that is linked to the province's industrial structure (weighted heavily toward resource extraction, construction and real estate, and service industries). Government support for front-end pre-commercial research, particularly in universities and teaching hospitals, has increased over time, but relatively few businesses are directly involved in R&D.

Indeed, for most BC enterprises, innovation has nothing to do with research and development. Instead, it means using machinery, equipment, software and other assets that embody advanced technological knowledge; deploying novel marketing or inventory management strategies; and adopting human resource and other organizational practices that lead to gains in productivity, efficiency and market share.

Innovation is not limited to science, nor does it always entail visible advances in technology. Human behavior is at the heart of successful innovation. As the Council of Canadian Academies noted in its landmark 2009 report: "Innovation...is the manifestation of creativity, the uniquely human capacity to transform the imagined into the real." Innovation matters to society, the Council added, "because it is the means by which problems are solved and new opportunities are created."³

Creativity is the production of new ideas that are fit for a particular economic or business purpose. British Columbia is a fertile environment for the formation and growth of creative industries; the province also boasts a substantial "creative class." However, from the perspective of the macro-economy, the challenge is less to spur the growth of creative industries than it is to stimulate all industries to be more creative and innovative.

British Columbia is well-positioned to further leverage its significant public investments in R&D by devoting resources and attention to commercialization and to facilitating user-driven innovation. A strong entrepreneurship infrastructure can increase the birth and success rates of innovative firms. The BC government is already a large contributor to the province's entrepreneurship infrastructure, through its funding of the Regional Science and Technology Network, universities, specialized incubators like Genome BC, and business competitions like New Ventures BC. In recent years, governments have taken many steps to encourage commercialization. Federal and BC government support provided to the Centre for Drug Research and Discovery (CDRD) at the University of British Columbia is an excellent example: CDRD's mandate is to commercialize new life sciences products and technologies developed by small and medium-sized innovators.

In the post-Olympic decade, BC would benefit from a multi-pronged innovation strategy that sets goals for improvement and seeks to optimize the substantial public resources already dedicated to innovation and commercialization. In this connection, it is critical that the province coordinate with the federal government – leveraging Ottawa's funding of both pre-commercial and applied research, technology and industrial development, and defense procurement. Provincial dollars allocated to innovation will deliver greater results if they are linked to federal priorities. **❶**

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



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1 More information on **Outlook 2020**, including the papers referenced in this essay, can be obtained from the Business Council's web site: www.bcbc.com

2 Science, Technology and Innovation Council, *State of the Nation 2008*, Ottawa (2009), p. 5.

3 Council of Canadian Academies, Expert Panel on Business Innovation, *Summary Report (2009)*, p. 3.



Christine McLeod: Innovating at *Impact99*

As the founder of *Impact People Practices*, Christine McLeod's vision is to become the trusted adviser for all things related to the "HR of the Future." Drawing upon her prior executive and operational leadership experience within the hospitality and retail spectrums, McLeod's team is immersed in the innovative potential of the workplace via coaching, technology, social media and branding. Most recently, McLeod organized *Impact99*, a social media conference for HR and e-published a book on social media in the workplace.

What was the principle motivation for *Impact99*?

We had this crazy idea that if we could bring 99 senior HR leaders in one room, for one day in a really experiential way, we would take the conversation of "Canadian HR of the Future" further in eight hours than anything that's been done to date. If 99 decision makers could leave the one day event and impact 999 people in their networks and organizations *then we would have the beginnings of a movement* on our hands to re-think the role of HR in organizations today.

What is the key connection between social media technologies, culture and innovation?

We don't wake up as humans and say "today, I want to operate at 50 per cent of my potential" - yet 71 per cent of Canadians are either apathetic or disengaged with their jobs and that is **PRECISELY** what they are doing. Technology allows us to connect the spaces **BETWEEN** the dots, or the silos.

Social media and the internet have pretty much re-wired how we answer questions (google it), make decisions (what does my network think), share, learn and collaborate. The more time we spend on the web the more stifling corporate "culture" feels.

Projects, decisions, feedback, initiatives get clogged in the system and decision-making has to flow up several layers and then back down- which makes the real-time, collaborative nature of the web that much more unique and attractive to businesses looking to reinvent **HOW** they work.

How does social media change both the toolkit and role of HR?

It is not all about the big trifecta of Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook (although each has their application in building strong employer brands).

In Canada alone we have some incredible social HR platforms that can help us do things like self serve employee services, share goals and objectives, give kudos or recognition to each other, gain status for contributing answers to real issues, communicate in real time, at our finger tips, store information differently and elevate our game and our HR brands. Why do we still do such process heavy work in HR when we have these tools popping up to help do things differently?

Social Media also allows leaders to have a voice and a personal brand much bigger than "the job they perform'.

What are the primary challenges companies face in realizing the potential of social media?

1 It's NOT about the tools: Let's get one thing straight- social media and the toolkit of HR is not about implementing a bunch of tools. If you first don't have the company culture that is bent on creating a connected, engaged workforce, that believes the crowd has better answers than the one leader, that leadership exists at all levels and that people are really smart and creative if you truly give them the chance to show it- then you are wasting your time. You may implement the tools but

you will fight a culture not yet ready for WE.

2 It doesn't translate to ROI overnight:

Contrary to what people think, social media is not about collecting fans and its not about "5 minutes a day". It's a mindset to commit to becoming more open, transparent and creating powerful talent communities. Over time that increased "attraction" others have for your brand translates to filling jobs faster, or with higher quality talent or retaining your engaged employees longer, but it takes consistency which in turn also requires resources- human, capital and time.

3 Senior Leaders aren't wired for social... yet:

If HR could help raise the digital IQ of senior leaders that would be incredible. If HR could think about where **THEIR** customers (current and future employees) were and how **THEIR** customers wanted to be communicated to and then focus on those platforms... that would be wild.

Although the fastest growing Facebook demographic is boomers, as a rule social media is not part of their DNA yet, but it will come. There is an entire generation about to not only step into the workplace but re-invent it. Like the mobile phone, and email, and the internet, having a digital mindset is quickly becoming an essential skill that **EVERYONE** in the organization must possess. 📌

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