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ELISA O'DONNELL

Elisa O'Donnell, VP of Innovation Solutions, Imaginatik, brings over 20 years of management consulting experience in the field of innovation and change. She has been part of the leadership team at Continuum, a design-thinking consultancy; Synecticsworld, an innovation consultancy; and has held other leadership positions at A.T. Kearney and Coopers and Lybrand (PwC). Her work has spurred innovation with clients such as Fidelity Investments, L'Oreal, American Express, Blue Cross Blue Shield and Merck Pharmaceuticals. She discusses how to inspire and activate innovation in your organization, on page 41.



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Every two years, the HR Professional team sends out feelers to top HR professionals and others in HR-related fields for candidates to become members of the magazine's Editorial Advisory Board. These are the folks who help us develop the overarching concepts for each issue, and they also make themselves available for interviews, as well as providing us with potential contacts and people-of-interest to interview on various topics.

We were really pleased with the wonderful response to this year's request—we received expressions of interest from more senior HR professionals than we can actually add to the board. We want to thank all who replied, and hope if they were not appointed this time around, we'll hear back from them in 2015 when we start the search again.

The 2013-2015 board members are listed in the masthead information at the right side of this page. You can also read the views of a number of these members as they do a bit of crystal ball gazing in the article on page 30, looking ahead at some of the major trends affecting HR over the next few years.

I would like to thank the 2011-2013 board members—they were willing, informative and helpful advisors, setting the bar quite high for our new and future boards.

Also in this issue, writer J. Lynn Fraser discusses the emotional and business impacts of the sudden loss or departure of a leader or staff member, discovering that planning can help everyone in the company move forward. And, what about those millennials? Writer Sheldon Gordon spoke with a number of organizations to learn what motivates these up and coming employees.

As always, we want to hear from our readers. You can contact me directly at lblake@naylor.com, or post on our Facebook page, at www.facebook.com/#!/HRProfessionalMag.

Cheers,



VOL. 30, NO. 6 SEPTEMBER 2013

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HR PROFESSIONAL is published eight times per year for the

Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA),

150 Bloor St. West, Suite 200, Toronto, ON M5S 2X9,

tel. 416-923-2324, toll-free 1-800-387-1311, fax 416-923-7264,

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HR Professional magazine is published by Naylor (Canada), Inc.

Suite 300 - 1630 Ness Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3J 3K1

Tel. 1-800-665-2456; Fax 1-204-947-2047.

www.naylor.com

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SUBSCRIPTIONS (Prices include shipping and handling) \$49 per year in Canada; \$79 per year in the United States and International.

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

ISSN 847-9453

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

PUBLISHED August 2013/HRP-H0613/8752



This publication is printed on recycled, FSC-certified paper stock.

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CANADIAN PUBLICATIONS MAIL PRODUCT SALES AGREEMENT #40064978

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Leadership matters



BY PHIL WILSON, SHRP

THE SHRP VALUE PROPOSITION

Meet Lara—an HR Director at a major Canadian telecom company.

Lara is a career-focused senior HR leader who is seriously considering earning the Senior Human Resources Professional (SHRP) designation. But, she has some questions around what the designation will provide in terms of advancement, recognition, career development and networks.

She's thinking: Is applying for the SHRP worth it? Would I be better off earning an MBA? Do any other HR leaders around me have the SHRP? How have they benefited? Do non-HR executives recognize it? Will it take me where I want to go in my career?

Lara is a fictional character that was fleshed out by a small group of SHRPs at an HRP focus group held early this summer to discuss how the designation has impacted their careers and make recommendations around building an SHRP value proposition for would-be Senior HR Professionals.

HRPA introduced the SHRP designation in 2009 as an evidence-based designation for senior HR executives who demonstrate six key senior-level attributes: trusted advisor, strategic orientation, breadth of knowledge, the ability to build HR strategy that aligns to business and significant impact and influence across their organizations. It was rolled out to engage senior members and provide them with a senior level network to



Members of a Seniors Human Resources Professional (SHRP) focus group discuss the designation with HRP CEO Bill Greenhalgh.

share ideas and challenges facing HR leaders at the executive level.

To date, about 150 members have gone through the application and

vetting process to earn the designation and include senior HR executives at public and private organizations across the province.

Leadership matters

Four years after the launch, HRPA is revisiting the designation with an eye to encouraging more senior members to apply and earn their SHRP. With this in mind, HRPA sat down with 15 SHRPs at a day-long event at Horseshoe Resort to discuss the process for earning the designation; defining the SHRP, the value of having an SHRP; and increasing awareness and marketing of the designation to both HR professionals and non-HR colleagues—particularly CEOs.

In short, how do we do a better job of selling the SHRP to Lara?

All agreed that a key benefit of the designation is that it provides a senior-level forum with which SHRP peers can connect to share ideas and challenges facing HR leaders at the executive level. To encourage interaction, the group said they wanted to see more networking

opportunities—both in-person and online—where SHRPs can engage in targeted discussion that go narrow and deep into topics of interest to senior HR leaders.

But of course, a big professional impetus to earning a designation is recognition—from both HR peers and non-HR colleagues—and the upward career prospects that that recognition can provide.

The group asked, since CEOs are typically the ones hiring senior HR executives, will the SHRP resonate with them?

As my colleague Louise Taylor-Green, SHRP, executive vice-president of corporate affairs and strategy at Hamilton Health Sciences, said during the discussion, “CEOs don’t care about HR credentials, they just want solutions.”

But as an evidence-based designation, that’s precisely what the SHRP

demonstrates. Applying for the SHRP means providing real-life examples of what you’ve done—marrying HR know-how, leadership and deep knowledge of the business—to provide those solutions.

As we look back on the first four years of the SHRP and examine what we need to tweak in terms of process, defining the designation and providing value to SHRPs, a big piece will be communicating the huge value Senior Human Resources Professionals provide to chief executives.

Building recognition of the SHRP among non-HR senior executives—making the connection that an SHRP equals a strategic business partner—will go far in building perceived value of the designation for Lara and her colleagues. ●

Phil Wilson, CHRP, SHRP is chair of the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA).



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REMOVE THE “CANADIAN EXPERIENCE” REQUIREMENT, SAYS OHRC

The Ontario Human Rights Commission’s (OHRC) released its new policy on removing the “Canadian experience” barrier in mid-July. The OHRC had found that many newcomers turn to unpaid work such as volunteering, internships or low-skilled “survival jobs” to meet the requirement for Canadian experience. They also face obstacles when trying to get professional accreditation since some regulatory bodies will not admit new members without prior work experience in Canada. As a result, they end up in jobs that do not correspond to their education, skills and experience.

“Ontario attracts highly-skilled immigrants from all over the world,” comments Chief Commissioner Barbara Hall, “but if they have to meet a requirement for Canadian experience, they are in a very difficult position—they can’t get a job without Canadian experience and they can’t get experience without a job. In most cases, that is discrimination under Ontario’s Human Rights Code.”

The new policy sets out the OHRC’s position that a strict requirement for “Canadian experience” is discriminatory, and can only be used in rare circumstances. Employers and



regulatory bodies need to ask about all of a job applicant’s previous work—where they got their experience does not matter. The policy also tells employers and regulatory bodies how to develop practices, policies and programs that do not result in discrimination.

Last fall, the OHRC consulted newcomers to Canada in the last 10 years about their experiences looking for jobs in Ontario since their arrival, and employers or human resources representatives, who use “Canadian experience” as a job requirement. The OHRC also spoke with a number of organizations and individuals, including agencies serving newcomers, employers, government and regulatory bodies.

JOB INSECURITY AND BALANCING WORK/LIFE KEY COMPONENTS OF WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES



Job insecurity, abusive supervision, excessive demands, the encroachment of work on family life and domestic relationship problems top the list of factors that contribute to the development of mental health issues among workers.

These findings are the results of the largest research study ever conducted on the subject in Canada. The study was undertaken by researchers at the Université

de Montréal, Concordia University and Université Laval, with the support of Standard Life.

Researchers focused on a series of factors that may lead to the development of psychological distress, depression and burnout at work. More than 2,100 employees at 63 companies were interviewed about their personal and professional lives. The results of this questionnaire were supported by cortisol measurements. Cortisol is a hormone found in saliva and recognized as an indicator of an individual’s stress level.

The researchers responsible for the study, professors Alain Marchand and Pierre Durand of the Université de

Montréal's School of Industrial Relations, are convinced the impacts of individuals' personal and work-related problems on their mental health cannot be considered separately. Durand explains: "The strength of this research is that it takes a large number of factors into account. These include work organization, family and employment relationships and certain personality traits, such as self-esteem, as well as other potential risk factors, like chronic illness or alcohol misuse."

The study also provided an opportunity to review approximately 65 corporate practices designed to reduce stress

and improve employee health. These practices range from operating a company fitness centre to implementing shorter working hours. "The good news is that we know it is possible to introduce effective measures to reduce mental health risks," says Eric Pfeiffer, senior consultant, health and wellness, at Standard Life.

The study was funded in part by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Fonds de recherche du Québec-Santé, and conducted over a period of more than 4 years with 2,162 workers from all sectors.

ONLY ONE IN SIX COMPANIES ADOPTS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY OF TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

Canadian companies that focus on expanding into competitive global markets outside of North America—and orient their innovation efforts to compete globally—reap the best bottom-line results. However, only about one-sixth of Canadian firms adopt an innovation strategy that focuses on competing in international markets, according to 2012 survey findings: *The State of Firm-Level Innovation in Canada*, published by The Conference Board of Canada's Centre for Business Innovation.

"Few companies pick the most successful innovation strategy of expanding to provide products and services to new international markets, even though these firms earn between 10 and 30 per cent more net income than their counterparts using other approaches," says Bruce Good, executive director of the Centre for Business Innovation. "Most Canadian firms prefer to operate within provincial or national borders, or in North America, rather than competing in international markets."

The survey results indicate that more than half of Canadian firms surveyed pursue a user needs-driven innovation strategy, in which they obtain new ideas stemming from customers' needs as the basis for developing



products and services. About one-third of responding firms adopted a technology-driven innovation strategy that relies on exploiting advances in technology to gain a competitive edge.

Just 14 per cent of the survey respondents said they made territorial expansion the focus of their innovation strategy.

Funding for firm-level innovation was identified as a challenge among survey respondents. Internal cash—from within an operation or obtained from the headquarters of the corporation—is the most frequently-used source of funds, followed by government funding. In addition, firms that look to expand the size of their markets/territory make more use of internal financing and less use of government funding or private equity than do firms with user- or technology-driven innovation strategies.

The report is available for free at www.conferenceboard.ca.

STUDY REVEALS SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN EMPLOYEE HEALTH, DRUG AND DISABILITY COSTS

A survey of Canadian financial leaders suggests that employee health, drug and disability costs have increased significantly or are expected to rise. Yet only 15 per cent of those surveyed said their company has considered a funding strategy to address the impact of these future

costs. Drivers such as an aging workforce, the cost related to drug and disability plans, as well as legislative changes were key issues, according to the new research study *Banking on productivity: Managing employee health costs*, conducted by the Canadian Financial Executives



continued on page 45



BY LAURIE JESSOME AND KRISTIN TAYLOR

RETAINING EMPLOYEES BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER A SALE OF A BUSINESS—PART 1

This article will be the first in a series of two articles on the topic of employee retention, specifically in the context of the sale of a business. The intent of this instalment is to provide an overview of some of the challenges employers encounter in the planning stages of any transaction and to provide human resources professionals and in-house legal counsel with tools to assist your business with responding to those challenges.

Keeping employees post-closing is often critical to the success of an acquisition. The relationships that employees have with customers and suppliers as well as all of the institutional knowledge they possess generally form part of the goodwill that is fundamental to the value of the sale. Occasionally, a purchaser only seeks to acquire certain assets and employees aren't essential to the deal. This is the exception, though, not the rule. Even where the purchaser does not perceive employee retention to be a key element to its success, the vendor will often want to ensure that certain employees stay on through the sale process to assist in closing the deal.

In our experience, it is crucial that employers appreciate that the uncertainty associated with the sale of a business often creates a great deal of anxiety and de-motivation in an employee population. Where the direction and future of the business is

questionable, it is human nature to engage in conjecture and speculation. A sense of unease can prevail and it is common for unprepared employers to see departures of key employees and hesitancy on the part of those who remain. So, from a legal standpoint, what can be done to retain and motivate employees through the challenging (and often disruptive) sale process?

SHARE PURCHASE VS. ASSET PURCHASE

In considering retention issues associated with the sale of a business, it is important first to understand that, insofar as employees are concerned, there are fundamental differences between a sale purchase and an asset purchase. Although we often hear about employees being transferred as part of a deal, the concept of a "transfer" between unrelated companies is actually inconsistent with Canadian employment law. There are two types of sales: either a purchaser can buy the shares of a business or its assets. In complex global transactions, there also can be combinations of the two. The choice between a share and asset purchase usually involves tax considerations and often depends on the underlying structure of the vendor business.

In a share deal, the purchaser actually inherits the employees of

the vendor, without any interruption in their employment relationship. By buying the shares, the purchaser *becomes* the vendor as far as employees and the law are concerned. Employees' existing terms and conditions of employment must be respected post-closing, subject to the usual concerns arising when an employer seeks to impose changes on employees without triggering a constructive dismissal claim.

In an asset deal, the employees' employment at least technically terminates on the closing of the transaction. If the purchaser has made an offer of employment, employees may choose to accept it and, where they do so, they will continue in their employment with the purchaser on the terms and conditions set out in that offer, subject to one caveat. The caveat is that employment standards legislation requires the purchaser to respect the employees' service with the vendor for the purposes of that legislation. This requirement exists in all Canadian jurisdictions. As a result, service-based entitlements like leaves of absence, vacation, notice of termination and severance pay, must be calculated based on the employees' original date of hire by the vendor.

It is important to note that this concept of uninterrupted service after a sale of business is a minimum



standard that cannot be avoided by contract. Purchasers can apply some flexibility with respect to terms and conditions of employment that are not governed by applicable employment standards legislation and we will return to this topic later in the series. If the purchaser does not make an offer of employment to the vendor's employees or if the vendor's employees reject the purchaser's offer, then the vendor will have liability for termination costs. We also will return to this topic later in the series and provide a discussion on how to mitigate the risks that arise when an employee declines to accept employment with a purchaser.

PRE-SALE CONSIDERATIONS: IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS AND AVOIDING RISK

In most transactions, the vendor employer will be able to readily identify key management personnel who will be essential to a successful conclusion to the deal and who must be

"in-the-know." They may be part of the team that seeks out and evaluates prospective purchasers and/or they may be part of the team that assists purchasers in the due diligence process. To expect this team to excel in their roles—which may mean, if they succeed, that they will be out of a job later—usually requires retention or change in control bonuses. These bonuses generally remain the liability of the vendor in the case of an asset purchase, but may become the liability of the purchaser in a share purchase. As a result, it is important that the vendor thoughtfully evaluate the employee's role and importance in the transaction as well as the appropriate compensation that would be required to ensure continued commitment to the company.

Vendors should also be mindful of how a retention bonus or change-of-control bonus may be viewed by a potential purchaser. Will it undermine the perceived value of the company or will it demonstrate that the

vendor is committed to ensuring a smooth transfer of goodwill? From a timing standpoint, it also must be recognized that sales rarely occur quickly. Given the investment and energy that the identification and evaluation process takes on the part of the vendor to generate a letter of intent and then the due diligence and negotiation process takes on the part of the purchaser, sales can take months and even years to close. It is key that both the vendor and the purchaser use this time to identify and respond to employment issues rather than wait until the last days of the transaction to attempt to identify and mitigate potential risks and costs.

Once a letter of intent and appropriate confidentiality commitments have been signed, a purchaser will want to review contracts of employment, offer letters, proprietary rights agreements, non-competition/non-solicitation agreements, compensation arrangements, incentive plans, benefits plans, RRSP and/or pension plans, collective agreements, employee handbooks, organizational charts, workers' compensation statements, as well as any outstanding complaints and litigation. The purchaser will want to identify who it believes are the key employees it needs to run the business. It then will decide whether it needs to ensure that retention of these key employees is a condition of closing or complete payment of the purchase price. Often a purchaser will want key employees to sign its employment agreement with certain critical restrictive covenants as part of the closing of the sale.

The vendor, on the other hand, will want to rid itself of as much employee-related liability as it can on closing. This will mean ensuring that employees are offered comparable employment by the purchaser and that the purchaser commits, as is required by labour relations

legal words

legislation across Canada, to honouring existing collective agreements and bargaining relationships. The vendor also must be sensitive to employee privacy issues and human rights concerns. Not all information may be disclosed without employee consent to a purchaser. Vendors must take care only to disclose

information that employees either have actually consented to disclose or would reasonably expect would be disclosed to avoid privacy issues. This is a particular concern for federally-regulated employers as well as employers with employees working in Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia in light of the personal

information protection rights these employees possess by virtue of statute.

Both the vendor and the purchaser also should be cognizant of potential human rights issues that may arise from disclosure of information relating to protected grounds, e.g., disability issues, maternity and parental leave status, and from the use of such information to select employees who will receive an offer of employment from the purchaser. It is certainly understandable for purchasers to want to know how many employees are out of the workplace due to disability or other protected leaves, but both purchasers and vendors should be aware that using that information to make employment-related decisions can lead to complaints of discrimination.

Our next instalment will tackle the sale itself and post-sale retention issues. ●

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Benefits



20 WAYS TO SAVE ON YOUR BENEFIT PLAN

BY Yafa SAKKEJHA

There are many ways that you can reduce your premiums without drastically cutting benefits.

REDUCING ADMIN FEES

- 1. Join a buying group:** Admin fees are based on the volume of a group. If you have less than 200 employees, it makes sense to join an aggregator in order to reduce your fees.
- 2. Negotiate your target loss ratio (TLR):** The higher your TLR, the lower your rates are. The best possible one is in the high 80s. Ask your broker—if it's anything lower than high 80s, see if you can get it up between 83 per cent and 89 per cent.
- 3. Negotiate a crown scale commission structure:** You are entitled to know how much commission is built in for your broker—it comes directly from your pocket. It should decrease as your group expands and hires new employees. A fair percentage is 8-10 per cent for small employers, and five to six per cent for large employers.
- 4. Partner with other companies to reduce admin fees:** Even if you are already part of a buying group, you can link up with another business owner under the same policy # (maintaining different plan designs) in order to obtain a lower commission rate.
- 5. Negotiate a refund on unused health and dental premiums:** If you have joined a buying group, or if you are currently on a fully

insured plan with more than 100 employees, you should easily be able to receive a refund on any premiums you paid that were not put towards claims or fees.

- 6. Negotiate a lower trend or inflationary factor:** All carriers will inflate your premiums in anticipation of higher claims in the next year. However, the inflation rate they set is often higher than reality. Bring this down to 11 per cent for health and five per cent for dental.
- 7. Negotiate the reduction or the Incurred But Not Reported (IBNR) reserve:** IBNRs were originally built into plans to budget for claims that employees made, but which have not yet been submitted: the shoebox effect. However, in the electronic age, most claims are submitted very soon after occurring. Reduce this reserve requirement as much as you can.
- 8. Negotiate a refund on unused life & long-term disability premiums:** If you are large enough, or part of a buying group, rebates on pooled insurance products exist. Ask your broker how to build this in.
- 9. Negotiate a refund on retail or provincial sales tax:** If your plan is ASO, make sure that your sales tax is calculated as a percentage of Claims + Fees, instead of on Premiums. The government allows this, and make sure your carrier is paying you this tax refund.



- 10. Ask your carrier if they have rebates for prescription drugs:** Some insurance companies are starting to give rebates on the prescription drug benefit, which is completely separate from surpluses from any ASO arrangement.

PLAN DESIGN

Benefits are priced in the same way that hydro is billed: the more usage, the more you pay. You can control the consumption in fair ways by trimming the fat, without cutting back on benefit levels.

- 11. Cover the dental fee guide from last year or 2 years prior:** The dental fee guide is the fair market price list set by the provincial dental association, and it increases every year with inflation by about 3 per cent. However, a closer look shows that more frequent services may increase by 10 per cent, and less frequent ones by 0 per cent, netting out to an average of 3 per cent. Having your plan pay last year's fair market price does not cut on the benefit, but allows your

legal words

employee to ask the dentist to slightly discount their service—it is very commonly allowed.

- 12. Change your drug formulary to a two-tiered list:** Some employers recognize that there can be 20 drugs that have the exact same efficacy and molecules for an illness, but have different pricing.

You can penalize the more expensive identical ones on a lower tier.

- 13. Put in a cap on your prescription drugs** and refer the rest to your provincial means-tested drug benefit program (for example, the Ontario Trillium Drug Program): However, handle with care. Ask

your advisor, a doctor and a pharmacist for help completing this step so as not to hurt any employee. This change should also reduce your stop-loss premium overnight.

- 14. Reduce or eliminate the amount covered towards dispensing fees:** Costco's fee is \$3.89, and no membership is required, compared with Shoppers Drug Mart's \$12.99.
- 15. Change your drug plan to mandatory generic substitution:** These still allow provisions for members to appeal if the generic does not work in their body, and have the brand drug covered.

DELIVERY

- 16. Join a preferred provider network for dental care or partner with a local dental office:** You would have to change your plan design to put in incentives for employees to use them, but you could ask the dentist to discount their services by 25 per cent in exchange for the guaranteed business.
- 17. Join a preferred provider network for prescription drugs.**

PREVENT FRAUD

- 18. Referral Requirement:** Have the most abused paramedical benefits subject to doctor's referrals or pre-approvals.
- 19. Restrict or eliminate coverage for compression hose** to a dollar amount, instead of the number of pairs per year.
- 20. Restrict coverage for orthotic inserts or orthopaedic shoes** to \$300—the fair market price. ●



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cover feature

Embracing Loss: Succession Planning for Sudden Departures

**What HR can do to help prepare for change from
or loss of a leader or key employee**

BY J LYNN FRASER



A friend, business owner and leader of her close-knit community passed away suddenly a few weeks ago. Although she had been fighting cancer for a number of years, no one, least of all her, expected her to leave us so soon. As a small business owner, she left behind many of us not only grieving, but with no contingency plans in place and many questions about how to move forward.

This type of situation is not as rare as it might seem in the larger business world. Many organizations find themselves floundering with the loss of key leaders and employees, for instance, during the loss of Steve Jobs, the transitioning of Bill Gates from Microsoft, as well as the result of disasters such as the destruction of the World Trade Center Towers and, more recently, the train derailment and fire in Lac-Megantic, QC.

“Catastrophic loss” is a term often applied when individuals and/or communities lose resources, property and lives during a hurricane, flood, fire or an extreme accident. When an organization loses a beloved or visionary leader, key members of management or staff and/or workmates in any sudden fashion, the effect on employees can be likened to a catastrophic event as their sense of security, continuity and community can be shaken.

Sometimes, tremendous feelings of loss can also be experienced by any kind of sudden departure of a respected and well-liked leader or management member—even when it’s the result of a merger/acquisition, particularly if it’s a hostile event, or a sudden and unplanned retirement.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION CRUCIAL

Rather than simply hope these situations never happen, HR departments must be able to help their organizations respond to the loss of a leader, management or staff member in a number of overlapping ways to facilitate resilience for their organization and its employees. A prepared organization includes this kind of sudden loss in its succession planning.

It’s a difficult and delicate task, but policies and procedures must be in place prior to a sudden loss to provide for ongoing and future leadership. “It’s interesting that organizations think they have great succession plans. It is interesting, shocking and surprising—because they actually don’t. When there is a sudden loss there are a number of organizations that find themselves in a ‘spin cycle,’” observes Brad Beveridge, managing director, executive search, Knightsbridge Human Capital Management.

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
MUST BE IN PLACE PRIOR TO
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LEADERSHIP.**



cover feature

And, it can quite a challenge. For instance, Michel Nadeau, executive director, Institute for Governance of Private and Public Organizations (Montreal), notes, "Entrepreneurs will always refuse to take [steps to prepare for retirement]. They think they are above the human condition...even when they are in poor health. The HR department has to sell the issue to the advisory board or the Board of Directors."

HR departments and boards of directors "need a contingency plan," Nadeau cautions. He suggests that an organization's HR department should have a representative on a company's management or advisory board to advise on policy for contingency plans and to act as the organization's guide during a crisis. Nadeau suggests that it might be easier for a leader or entrepreneur to accept a five-year development/transition plan or the assigning of a 20 per cent reduction in power/responsibilities to an emerging leader.

EMBRACE GRIEF

First and foremost, grief and loss must be recognized as a natural part of life—they cannot be ignored. Second, an organization and its remaining management must acknowledge that grief is subject to individual and cultural interpretation, HR policies should be flexible to accommodate differing reactions to grief while at the same time be attuned to unhealthy reactions to grief. Third, providing authentic ways to both mourn and celebrate the departing leader will make it easier for employees to accept a new leader. This transition is essential for a psychologically healthy organization.

The faith and the emotions of employees play an important role in a company's continued success. The steadier the company is, the more faith employees will have in the long-term viability of the company.

A charismatic leader will have a profound connection, both professionally and personally, with his/her employees. There is almost a paternal or maternal relationship at play. Thus, it is important for HR professionals to understand that grief cannot be "managed." An individual's grief has a natural ebb and flow. "Stifled grief," a term coined by Dr. Frank Eyetsemitan, a psychologist at the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing (UK), refers to the policies of organizations that stifle natural grief processes because the employee is expected to resolve his or her feelings within an allotted bereavement period. Policies developed by HR should be flexible to incorporate both individual responses to grief as well as cultural differences. This will affect whether employees are open to counseling or if policies need to be in place for paid and unpaid leave policies for bereavement.

Grief can transcend the individual and can affect the company as well. Grief is known to affect concentration,

it increases work-related accidents as well as errors in judgment. Employees may not realize that they are experiencing grief or that it is affecting their performance at work or their home lives. Such things as domestic violence, substance abuse, decreased productivity, anger and irritation, depression, isolation, problems eating and/or sleeping, as well as physical symptoms such as high blood pressure and diabetes may result due to grief. HR must appreciate and be prepared for the idiosyncratic responses grief may bring out in employees and have an up-to-date database of appropriate resources available.

It's important to be open with employees—it's okay to say you don't have an answer for why a sudden loss of a leader has occurred. Part of dealing with grief is dealing with the "unreality" of the person suddenly not being a part of day-to-day life. It's more important that employees know that management and HR department staff are ready to help and they understand the employee's grief because they, too, are also experiencing the loss. For example, one organization's policy notes, "Everybody reacts differently to a disaster like this one, so you can be sad...of course angry, you can be tired...stressed."

LOSS OF CONFIDENCE

Death is not the only cause of feelings of sudden loss. Therefore, procedures should be in place for dealing with a variety of scenarios regarding a CEO or other company personnel.

"Commitment [to the organization] may go down if there has been a firing with cause [as] the person they thought the CEO was, was not. It's a kick in the teeth... and a betrayal. People will start looking for alternative employment," observes Dr. Natalie Allen, a specialist in the psychology of work at the University of Western Ontario. "If a beloved person is kicked out, communicate all that can be communicated without legal complications. Decide what is disclosable."

Dr. Richard Leblanc, associate professor, law, governance and ethics at York University also notes that a gradual transition is best as an "abrupt" loss of a CEO may cause "talent flight and emotional stress."

Yet, developing strategies to deal with this kind of situation can be an unsettling procedure for senior management or a board of directors. "There is an emotional quandary, as talking about succession may be interpreted as a lack of faith and confidence in the CEO," states Leblanc. "The greatest challenge will be if the CEO is well liked." He suggests a 360-degree review for what employees, at all levels of the company, as well as advisors, investors, peers want in a new CEO.

It is "procedural justice in an organization," Allen comments, if employees at various levels of a company

are asked "to give input for the replacement and to be involved [in the choice]."

EMBRACE COMMUNITY

A study in *World Psychiatry* (February 2013) of how individuals in Thailand coped with the devastating 2004 tsunami found that those who coped with the loss of their homes, family and livelihood after the disaster were able to do so due to a combination of personal strength, faith, hopefulness, and external support in the form of friends, family and neighbours. Significantly, the creation of monuments to commemorate their grief and loss as a community helped a great deal. The resiliency of this community can be applied to employees who have lost a leader, because companies are communities and their grief can be shared.

In the event of an unexpected loss or when a sudden departure has occurred it is important to honour the CEO's or staff member's work, personality and contributions to the company. Enable employees at all levels to contribute to a condolence book, blog or website. Public celebratory events are symbolically and emotionally important. Such events help to heal an organization.

HR departments should be prepared to deal with the departed person's personal effects and passwords, dealing with press and investors, as well as ensuring that top people, particularly the CEO, have made wills, as company shares may be involved. Both the HR department and a company's board of directors will be experiencing grief, as well as pressure to steady the company's course during the loss of key management. The efficacy of their roles will be facilitated if procedures are already in place for dealing with the loss.

On the other hand, observes Audra August, principal, talent planning and succession solutions, Knightsbridge Human Capital Management, "It's important not to move on too quickly."

Leblanc notes the transition of COSTCO's James Sinegal out of the company he co-founded took nearly a year with a "deliberate and explicit" effort to introduce the new leader, Craig Jelinek. "When the new CEO steps in [he or she should] acknowledge the legacy and the good things that were done," he says. Authentic tributes as well as "monuments" are healing and reinforce community ties within a company. Smoothing and enabling a transition from present-day loss to future-hopefulness in a company is critical for employees to deal with change and loss.

Embracing loss, grief and community will help HR prepare for change from or loss of a leader or company member. Key to a successful transition and employees' emotional well-being is to plan for a variety of loss scenarios, ensure that procedures are in place during the transition period and to embrace both grief and community. ●



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Motivating Gen Y

Are they really all that different—or are they just more willing to tell us what they want?

BY SHELDON GORDON



Generation Y employees, also known as the millennials, present a special challenge to HR managers.

Studies show that this cohort has the lowest level of engagement at most workplaces. They comprise only five to 20 per cent of staff at a typical organization, so the workplace culture is often more oriented toward older employees. How, then, can organizations succeed in attracting, motivating and retaining Gen Y'ers?

Scott Bunker, national practice director, performance, rewards & talent consulting at Aon Hewitt in Toronto, doubts the underlying drivers of engagement are all that different across the generations. "They're all looking for career opportunities and performance feedback," he says. "They're looking for recognition. The differences are in expectations—the pace at which they will be able to progress within the organization and how they will communicate and get things done."

Given those different expectations, managers have to interface differently with Gen Y'ers than with the older generations, Bunker says. The Gen Y'ers want to move up quickly, but need time within lower-level roles to develop their competencies.

"It's the manager's job to provide feedback and create development opportunities," for the millennials, he says. "It could be interesting new challenges within their existing role or exposure to different parts of the business."

Along the way, bosses need to give Gen Y more feedback and recognition for the contribution they're making. "The message is not to coddle them, but to provide objective and helpful feedback—both positive and negative. It should be based on observable fact. You observe something, you share the facts with the individual

GEN Y'ERS WANT TO MOVE UP QUICKLY, BUT NEED TIME WITHIN LOWER-LEVEL ROLES TO DEVELOP THEIR COMPETENCIES.

and they are given an opportunity to understand the impact their behaviour is having.

"An effective manager would provide suggestions of how they might be able to act differently in the future. But in most organizations, this is the exception. It is something that both managers and employees need help with."

COLLABORATION OPPS

Daneal Charney, an HR expert and co-author of *Hitting Stryde: The Gen Y Career Survival Guide*, says the key characteristics of the millennials is that they're more digitally savvy and more collaborative than other generations, having grown up with computers and teamwork projects in the school system.

"If you look at organizations like Wikipedia, Facebook and Napster, it's all about sharing, being collaborative and co-creating something together. That was normal to the people who created those organizations. The old normal is that by sharing, we actually give up power. That is not the mentality of this younger generation," Charney says.

This generation can be the most productive one we've ever had, says Charney, "but it will take more maintenance [by bosses] to achieve that. Gen Y'ers are asking for things that are the right 21st Century workplace practices to engage everyone," she says. "So they're asking for real-time feedback, they're asking their managers to coach them on career direction, and to be transparent about what's going on inside the

company. They definitely want things done at a quicker pace, but that's what is needed in a fast-changing workplace."

Managers, she says, need to enable Gen Y'ers, to clear the way for them and to coach them. "You see more of these practices in high-tech organizations, where not only do you have a strong Gen Y demographic, but things such as using collaborative technology and having flex-work styles are just normal."

REVERSE MENTORSHIP

David Heather, vice-president of HR, at Cisco Systems Canada, says a successful company needs to have a strategy that embraces all three broad demographic groups—Gen Ys, Gen Xs and boomers. "One size doesn't fit all. We've done a lot in the last few years in focusing our hiring practices to attract Gen Y employees to Cisco and to retain them."

Cisco sends new Gen Y hires on a three-month "deep dive" at one of its U.S. corporate hubs, where they are immersed in the technology, marketing, corporate culture "and all things Cisco." The new hires divide into two streams—sales and engineering. Back in Toronto, they are assigned to field roles that allow them to "touch the customer almost immediately. This gives them the opportunity to show their true value."

Then it's up to the Gen Y'ers how quickly they progress. They can choose to remain a sales or engineering specialist or become a manager. "We give them a framework that shows them what their career

feature

path can be at Cisco," says Heather. "It's great to see how, over three to five years, some graduates come in and progress to senior management roles."

Gen Y'ers want to be mobile and technologically-enabled, says Heather. "We give them the flexibility to work where they want, when they want and how they want. They can choose the digital device that works best for them." About 85 per cent of Cisco's workforce in Canada either works off premises or outside traditional hours at some point. The result, says, Heather is a high retention rate among Gen Y employees.

While Cisco, like many companies, has a mentorship program, it is unusual in having reverse mentorship, too. For the past two years, Cisco Canada president Nitin Kawale has been meeting with a 28-year-old sales associate who advises him on his style of communicating to her Gen Y demographic. He has, in fact, adjusted his style to be more inspirational to that cohort. "All of our senior vice-presidents in Canada now have a reverse mentor from Gen Y," says Heather. "Graduates know they have access to the leadership team, and that is a powerful engagement tool."

OFFER AUTONOMY

EllisDon Corp., the London, ON-based building contractor, gives its millennials more autonomy than they could expect at other construction outfits. "Construction is a pretty traditional industry, but we try to attack it in non-traditional ways," says Monica Darroch, corporate manager, human resources. "We have people at a very young age given a lot of responsibility."

Entry-level employees are usually hired through EllisDon's co-op program. By the time they join the firm on a full-time basis, they already understand what a project coordinator does. So it's not unusual when

putting up multi-storey office tower, for EllisDon to give a promising young employee sole responsibility for an entire storey.

"Because it's such a collaborative environment," says Darroch, "they're constantly getting feedback throughout the process from their manager, the architects and the subcontractors. If all goes well, the Millennial might then be given an even bigger chunk to manage on the next project," she says.

GEN Y'ERS ARE ASKING FOR THINGS THAT ARE THE RIGHT 21ST CENTURY WORKPLACE PRACTICES TO ENGAGE EVERYONE.

SECONDMENTS ABROAD & CSR

Professional services firm KPMG LLP is highly attuned to Gen Y, since 50 per cent of its staff is under age 30. "We have to spend a lot of time listening," says Moses Bar-Yosef, executive director of talent attraction. "They expect an open dialogue. Regardless of your rank or tenure, you have the opportunity to go to the leadership and express your views. We recognize that innovation should come from the base up."

Although Gen Y'ers want to be fast-tracked, KPMG does not consider managers in their first or second year ready for partnership. But it has a Next Generation program where partners identify their senior managers who show the most promise. This talent pool then receives the kind of client interactions, overseas secondments and other developmental opportunities that ready them for future leadership.

One of those opportunities is to be seconded to a KPMG firm abroad for either a six-month stint or a

one-to-two year posting. Some 60 to 90 KPMG employees go abroad each year to do a global assignment at one of the 147 member firms.

KPMG also taps into Gen Y's interest in corporate social responsibility as a way to bolster employee engagement. The firm is a strong supporter of the Free the Children charity. "We've helped [brothers Craig and Mark Kielburger] grow their organization through our support, because it matters so much to our people," says

Bar-Yosef. "It's not just about giving money. We've designed two KPMG exchange programs: individuals from the firm have a sponsored three-week trip to India or Kenya, where they work in the villages building a school or clean water facilities."

KPMG's sponsorship of Free the Children's annual rock concerts in Montreal and Toronto introduces the firm to the thousands of students who fill the stadiums. "Through this interaction," says Bar Yosef, "we develop a new stream of potential recruits—appealing to students who may not have experienced KPMG through the traditional events we run at schools, which draw the business students."

COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Horizon Utilities Corp., which provides electricity to customers in Hamilton and St. Catharines, finds it easy to attract and retain Gen Y'ers. Brenda Schacht, vice-president of human resources, says about 60 of the utility's 400 employees are under age 30.

Horizon's commitment to environmental sustainability appeals to Gen Y'ers. "Our programs for green options, energy conservation and renewable energy matter to them," says Schacht. "Our apprentices have a lot of opportunity to provide their perspective and feedback on how things are being done in our conservation and demand management programs."

Horizon encourages enterprise-wide projects where cross-functional teams can collaborate. "You can get exposure not only to the area where you work but to other parts of the organization," says Schacht. For example, Horizon is introducing a new health and safety management system, a corporate-wide project on which employees from every part of the organization will work together.

THE MESSAGE IS NOT TO CODDLE THEM, BUT TO PROVIDE OBJECTIVE AND HELPFUL FEEDBACK—BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE.

Although Horizon is heavily unionized, it still manages to fast-track promising young employees who show leadership skills but lack seniority. Often they fill in for supervisors taking an extended leave. "Some of our emerging line managers are Gen Y'ers," says Schacht. "We're encouraging some of our younger staff to consider a supervisory position."

Attracting, motivating and retaining Gen Y'ers takes more than gimmicks

or access to the latest tech toys, HR experts agree. As Charney observes, "They believe they have [other] options: they don't need to go into the workforce and 'do their time.'" Keeping them engaged through a progressive corporate culture is the challenge for HR and non-HR executives alike. "You see some of these practices in some of the larger organizations," says Charney, "but overall they're slow to adopt them." ●



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Looking Ahead 10 Years: **Top Challenges Facing HR**

HR Professional taps the experts for their take on the trends and their advice about how to meet the challenges head on

BY JAMES CARELESS

How will HR evolve in the next 10 years, and how will demands on HR professionals and their departments change in that same time period? We asked a few of the members of the incoming HR Professional Editorial Advisory Board for their input. Here's what they told us.

HOW WILL HR EVOLVE OVER THE NEXT DECADE?

The twin forces of an aging workforce and technological advances will pose some unique challenges to HR professionals over the next 10 years.

"During this period, the boomers will be retiring; depriving organizations of a wealth of knowledge and

experience," says Joseph (Val) D'Sa, manager of administration, compensation & benefits with the York Region District School Board. "Organizations that have not foreseen this change and have not prepared for it will pay a heavy price."

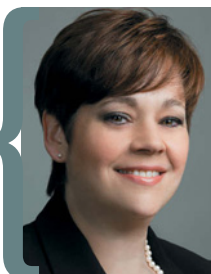
This is why HR professionals will need to "create tools and a working environment to manage effective knowledge sharing/transfer between

generations," says Melissa Sonberg, SVP global brand, communications and external affairs with Aimia (formerly Groupe Aeroplan). At the same time, the retirement of the boomers will allow "people with numeracy, organizational change and strategic skills to move into senior HR roles," notes Eric Cousineau, managing director of OCG Strategy & Organization Consulting.



"During this period, the boomers will be retiring; depriving organizations of a wealth of knowledge and experience."

Joseph (Val) D'Sa



This is why HR professionals will need to "create tools and a working environment to manage effective knowledge sharing/transfer between generations."

Melissa Sonberg

To make this generational passing of knowledge happen smoothly, retiring boomers should "gradually reduce their working hours or days to preserve continuity," says Mary Ann Baynton, program director, Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace. Such a graceful withdrawal from working life could



To make this generational passing of knowledge happen smoothly, retiring boomers should “gradually reduce their working hours or days to preserve continuity.”

Mary Ann Baynton

“provide a healthier transition for the retiring employee, and contribute to a better orientation for new staff,” she believes.

At the same time, “Technology will make things easier and faster on the tactical, administrative side,” says leadership coach Bonnie Flatt, with MasterCoaches. Cousineau agrees, noting, “Most of the administrative detail of HR will be mechanized and somewhat downloaded to the employee and the manager.”

inspire and motivate employees,” says Flatt. “It is not a one-size-fits-all solution, as we’re seeing with a paradigm shift with millennials. They, for example, are focusing more on what’s emerging in the world and on social responsibility.”

Fortunately, when it comes to evolving HR practices, “I believe we’re seeing a swing back of the pendulum, with employers becoming more savvy about how to engage their people,” says Michael Bach, founder and CEO

says Sandra Smith, vice president, people services, organizational development & chief human resources officer, with North York General Hospital. “The importance of leadership development will be critical over the next years with the demographic shifts. Increasingly, technology will transition the day-to-day functions in the broader HR functions and a further focus on strategic people practices will develop.”

NEXT DECADE DEMANDS ON HR

Over the next 10 years, the demands placed on HR professionals and their departments will evolve and change substantially.

A case in point: Cousineau believes that as technology allows HR administrative functions to be reduced, simplified, and downloaded to non-HR staff, HR professionals will be expected to expand direct contact with clients. To meet this expectation, “HR should be sitting in management meetings at every level,” he says. “They need to physically demonstrate their inclusion in the group through their physical presence and contribution to achieving the goals of that business unit.”



“Technology will make things easier and faster on the tactical, administrative side.”

Bonnie Flatt

On a strategic level, the need to manage demographic and technological change effectively will require HR to become “more proactive,” says Dr. Parbudyal Singh, a professor in York University’s School of Human Resource Management. “In addition to working with partners in and out of the organization to improve employee and organizational performance, HR will begin to grapple with wider strategic issues, such as organizational governance, ethics and fairness,” he says. “In some organizations, HR will be increasingly asked to deal with issues related to the effects of the physical environment, including climate change.”

As the generations change over the next 10 years, HR must take the lead in finding and developing present and future leaders. “HR will also need to be up on the latest research regarding drivers of behaviour and how to both



Fortunately, when it comes to evolving HR practices, “I believe we’re seeing a swing back of the pendulum, with employers becoming more savvy about how to engage their people.”

Michael Bach

of the Canadian Institute of Diversity and Inclusion. “The pendulum swung far to the side of ‘we must engage our people at all cost’, and the typical response was to pay people more,” Bach observes. “Employers are now realizing that engagement isn’t just about compensation. It’s about connecting a person’s work with their core values—and this is particularly true of younger generations.”

The bottom line: Over the next decade, “Our focus as HR professionals will evolve as the global focus shifts,”

As part of this increased service to clients, HR professionals will need to become more focused on directly achieving their organizations’ goals. “There will be more demand for HR professionals to think more strategically and outside of the box,” says Bach. “If HR is to be taken seriously and invited to the table, we need to be able to offer up new and innovative solutions that will add value to the top and bottom lines of our workplaces.”

The good news: “High performance organizations recognize that strong

feature



“HR should be sitting in management meetings at every level. They need to physically demonstrate their inclusion in the group through their physical presence and contribution...”

Eric Cousineau

HR develops people solutions that yield bottom-line results and a competitive advantage that allows them to outpace their peers,” says Norm Sabapathy, Maple Leaf Foods’ vice president of human resources. For the HR profession, this fact “presents a real opportunity for HR to boost its contribution by, for example, improving understanding of how business works and what levers truly improve performance, anticipating required individual and organizational capabilities, and understanding external trends and stakeholder expectations to build aligned internal action plans,” he says.

To help make this happen in an increasingly virtual workplace, “HR will need to be more creative in how they source work and manage talent,” says Flatt. She believes, “Virtual team leading will be a reality, requiring HR to coach and provide leaders with



“High performance organizations recognize that strong HR develops people solutions that yield bottom-line results and a competitive advantage that allows them to outpace their peers.”

Norm Sabapathy

tools and approaches that support their team and have them feel valued and respected.”

Coping with new workplace requirements will require new skills, our board members advise. “In the new global HR world, HR practitioners can no longer rely on their old HR tools and tricks to problem solve current people issues,” says D’Sa. Singh agrees: “HR professionals will have to pursue relevant university education and professional development, as basic qualifications and on-the-job training will not be sufficient.”

Back to employees: The psychological issues associated with workload stress will also become a higher priority for HR, predicts Baynton. “The interesting thing is that it is rarely about the amount of work, and much more often about the pressures around

the work that is done in a regular work week,” she says. These pressures include intimidating and unreasonably demanding supervisors, and the battles parents face in juggling workloads and family requirements.

All told, the next 10 years will require “the HR profession to continue to progress and develop,” concludes Sandra Smith. From a positive standpoint, she notes meeting these challenges means that “the portfolio of HR will evolve and our specialization will deepen.” ●

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Human Resources
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Making Connections for Immigrant HR Professionals

HR Connections program builds bridges between employers and newcomers with HR experience

BY MELISSA CAMPEAU

Ewa Solarczyk arrived at Pearson International Airport on a cold, wet day in December 2011, with hopes of building an HR career in Canada. Working for Phillip Morris International in her native Poland, she had been involved in change management and learning and development programs. Now looking to start a new chapter in Toronto, Solarczyk found herself without contacts, lacking a support network, and with no clear understanding of how to conduct a targeted job search in her newly adopted country.

Luckily for Solarczyk, a well-informed employee at a Brampton, ON community centre pointed her in the direction of ACCES Employment's HR Connections program. A determined

Solarczyk enthusiastically attended the program classes designed to help her transition to a new culture, brush up on skills with sector-specific training, build her professional network and design and conduct a targeted job search.

"From the beginning, I treated the classes like a job," says Solarczyk. "I went to all the sessions and took part in all the exercises," says Solarczyk, who adds she was serious and focused about the job search and followed every bit of advice given. "The instructors were amazing. They were interested in us and very motivating," she says.

A growing awareness of cultural differences made a significant impression on Solarczyk, too. "I said to myself, 'Okay, I come from a different place and a different culture and I

need to open up.' It was very helpful for me to realize that."

Solarczyk finished the courses, used her new skills to target her job search and continue applying for positions. She eventually landed a new job—at the KPMG Global Resource Centre—as a Global Audit Learning Consultant and L&D Project Manager. For Solarczyk, HR Connections was the springboard to her career in Canada. "That one program proved to be the vehicle for me to get this job. I am where I am today because of the program," she says.

IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERING AND MENTORING

For many others in a similar position, the HR Connections program, and mentoring in particular, is the key to developing a strong industry network and ultimately, landing a great job. A growing number of high-profile companies are discovering the benefits of mentoring. ACCES Employment partners with The Mentoring Partnership at the Toronto Region Immigrant and Employment Council (TRIEC) to identify mentors and to match them with appropriate individuals.

Shashi Krishan, Director of Human Resources at The Kingbridge Centre in King City, is a current volunteer with



the HR Connections program and is also a mentor with The Mentoring Partnership.

Krishan recognizes the importance of volunteering and mentoring from firsthand experience. When he came to Canada in 2002—before ACCES Employment’s HR Connections program existed—despite extensive experience working in HR in Dubai and many other countries, he couldn’t find work in his field. He was eventually forced to look beyond Canadian borders and accept work in the United States with a cruise line. Krishan remembers vividly the struggles and frustrations involved in looking for work in a new country. He eventually landed his current role with The Kingbridge Centre. When he discovered the HR Connections program later in his career, he immediately enlisted as a volunteer. “I got to know what they were doing and it kind of touched my heart,” says Krishan. “I won’t say I had it tough because there are some people who have some really hard times.” Krishan logged plenty of hours at minimum wage positions during his early days in this country. “My first two years were very, very hard,” he admits.

Krishan volunteers his time to the HR Connections program as part of an employers’ panel. He and several other foreign-trained HR professionals prepare information sessions for newcomers and answer questions on a wide range of topics: from questions about work ethics to technical details about policy changes, recruitment and collective bargaining.

On his mentoring experience, “I learn a lot from the people I mentor,” says Krishan. Even though he’s worked in five countries over the course of his career, “It’s not the whole world yet,” says Krishan, who notes there are still plenty of good HR practices to learn from foreign-trained professionals. “I’m humbled by their knowledge,” says Krishan, commenting on the people he has mentored.

He also points to a sense of satisfaction and purpose that comes from

mentoring. “The networks you help them build are forever,” says Krishan. “You are touching their lives in a very different way.”

So far, Krishan has been a mentor to five newcomers. For each, he notes, the time commitments are very different. “If they are coming from a country with different employment standards than Canada then there will be more meetings,” says Krishan. “Sometimes I’ve had as many as 10 meetings with a mentee and sometimes as few as three or four.”

As for what is covered during mentoring sessions, it could be almost anything, notes Krishan. They might review a resume or discuss search tactics. Other conversations are more basic. Discussions about punctuality—especially for mentees from cultures where arriving 15 minutes late is typical and acceptable—are not uncommon. “Some mentees have basic questions on dressing and will ask, ‘Do I wear suits to work or can I go in shorts because it’s summer?’” says Krishan. “Most of the time we talk about how to integrate into mainstream Canadian culture.”

Before a volunteer engages in a mentoring relationship, the program gives them an overview on what to expect from the mentees, the individual’s professional background, what questions to expect and what mentees hope to get from the relationship.

“The purpose of the mentoring relationship is clear,” notes Krishan. “It is not to find a job for them. For the person being mentored, that may be the objective, but it’s not the purpose of the mentoring itself.”

Instead, mentors are there to help newcomers expand their professional network and gain knowledge about the Canadian job market. “My main goal is to help build their self-esteem,” adds Krishan. “I tell them, ‘You’re in the right place. This is a great country. Like in any other country, you’ll have ups and downs. Don’t give up, you’ll find something.’” He adds, “Most of them do.”

SPEED MENTORING

Volunteers can also get involved in ACCES Employment’s Speed Mentoring program. Much like speed dating, newcomers meet one-on-one for just 10 minutes—with multiple meetings over the course of one session with potential employers. Mentees gain industry insight, instant feedback and ultimately expand their professional networks.

For mentees (more than 800 participated last year alone), it’s a focused and effective way to get valuable feedback around their job search in Canada. For the companies involved, over 100 in the Greater Toronto Area alone, it is an effective and efficient way to ‘give back’ while witnessing the remarkable talent of new Canadians. They can also gain insight into the potential of bringing greater diversity into the workplace.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Newcomers to Canada, many with impressive CVs and no shortage of relevant experience, stand to gain access to a vital professional network and establish a footing on the path to a rewarding career in their chosen field. Organizations will always be on the hunt for well-trained and qualified professionals in every field. In today’s global market, HR professionals with international experience, innovative points of view and valuable insights into Canada’s multi-cultural makeup can provide a crucial competitive edge.

Ultimately, when an HR professional with international experience lends his or her talent to a Canadian organization, it’s a proverbial win-win. And when seasoned professionals volunteer a few hours to help out newcomer colleagues, they’re likely to get back as much professional wisdom as they offer. “These new immigrants are the people who will build Canada, as a nation,” adds Krishan. “We need good skills and there are good skills out there. It’s best to have an open mind, to learn from each other and give them a chance.” ●

Interview

WITH AN
HR HERO

BY DUFF McCUTCHEON



Rod Jackson, MPP

Multifaceted HR

You meet a lot of lawyers in politics, but not many HR professionals. Barrie MPP Rod Jackson is the exception. This labour-relations expert and Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA) member turned politician says his HR background has been a huge asset to his political career, from liaising with stakeholders and working with constituents to informing his political thinking—especially around the people challenges faced by Ontario small businesses.

HR Professional caught up with Rod Jackson at his Queen's Park office recently for a Q&A on what it's like being an HR professional in government.

HRP: HOW AND WHEN DID YOU DECIDE ON AN HR CAREER?

RJ: After I graduated from York University with a political science degree, I went to Japan and got a job teaching English. I found I didn't really like teaching and when they offered me a job in the school's HR department, I jumped at it. The school hired a lot of foreign staff to teach English and foreign-language instruction. It needed an HR person to take care of them. That's how I got into HR—it was a way for me not to teach.

Apart from doing a bit of hiring while working at my family's business (Jackson's Toyota in Barrie), I had zero HR background, but in that job, I did everything: negotiated contracts, liaised with the unions, recruiting. They chose me because I knew English and the culture of the people I was hiring. Plus, because I could speak Japanese, I was able to liaise with the Japanese management. I really enjoyed it. I liked meeting people and I enjoyed the challenge of helping them integrate into Japanese culture.

When I left, I felt lucky because I had discovered a new career that

JUST AS HR PROFESSIONALS HAVE TO CARE ABOUT EMPLOYEES, POLITICIANS HAVE TO EMPATHIZE WITH CONSTITUENTS AND LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND THEIR PROBLEMS TO HELP SOLVE THEM.

I could take back home with me to Canada.

HRP: HOW DID YOU GROW YOUR HR CAREER WHEN YOU GOT BACK TO CANADA?

RJ: When I got back to Canada, I got the job as a staffer at Queen's Park where I got to match my love of politics with my new-found HR skills: diplomacy, writing, negotiation and dealing with multiple stakeholders. And along the way, I got a dispute resolution certificate because I wanted to specialize in labour relations.

After a year or two at Queen's Park, I got a job as HR director for Moore Packaging—a consumer packaging company in Barrie. That's where I cut my teeth in human resources and I got thrown into the fire right away. They had me doing everything from negotiating with the union, and dealing with grievances, to health and safety. On my second day I got hit with a WSIB Workwell audit, which I handled myself because it didn't occur to me to outsource it.

I was young and inexperienced and I made mistakes, but I was allowed to make them and it was a good way to learn—I didn't make the same mistake twice. I was very thankful for the opportunity at Moore Packaging. I think the most difficult part of the HR role is being the bridge between the employer and employee, because neither likes you a lot of the time. The employer says you're too easy on staff, and employees say you're too hard on them. Each one sees you as a representative of the other so it can get lonely if you're doing your job right.

HRP: YOU ALSO HAVE EXPERIENCE AS AN HR CONSULTANT. TELL US ABOUT THAT.

RJ: While I was at Moore Packaging, my dad asked me to put together an employee manual for the family Toyota dealership. Car dealerships are a different work environment—it's hyper competitive because it's commission-driven for both sales and service, and there's high turnover in sales positions. It required a specific type of employee manual. Word got around to other dealers and they started contacting me for manuals for their shops. One thing led to another and I started Redline Strategies.

Redline began as an automotive-specific HR consultancy but it soon got to the point where automotive amounted to less than 50 per cent of my business. During the last recession, I started specializing in terminations. It was just like the George Clooney movie *Up in the Air*, except I was traveling to places like Parry Sound and Sudbury.

It was hard and I felt guilty. But the one saving grace was that I was providing career transition services. After you fired someone, you would hold their hand for the next month or two and help them move on.

HRP: HOW DID YOU GET INTO POLITICS?

RJ: Growing up in Barrie, my best friend's dad was Ron Stewart, our local MP, and I got to tag along with him to political events. He was very gracious and gave me all kinds of opportunities to attend events and meet people that I wouldn't have otherwise.

interview

In 1984, when I was 13, Brian Mulroney came through town and I went with the Stewarts to meet him. I just stood in the corner and watched, but I was thinking, “how cool is this? This guy will likely be the next prime minister of Canada.”

That’s where it all started. The next year I helped out on Ron’s campaign and loved it. Ever since, I’ve been involved at the riding level and through the years I’ve done every job on the campaign: putting out lawn signs, canvassing, communications, managing campaigns. After I’d managed a few campaigns, I ran for Barrie city council myself and got elected, so I was running Redline Strategies and acting as city councillor at the same time.

When Joe Tascona (former Barrie MPP) was defeated, I decided to run for the local PC nomination. I won by 30 votes on the third ballot and here I am today living my dream. I’ve always been interested in provincial politics because this is where the rubber meets the road: health care, education, transportation. It’s much more grass-roots oriented and busy than federal or even municipal politics. You’re really close to what’s going on.

HRP: HOW DID HR HELP GET YOU HERE?

RJ: HR skills have definitely helped me along the way—like dealing with difficult people and listening more than talking. Just as HR professionals have to care about employees, politicians have to empathize with constituents and listen and understand their problems to help solve them.

HR is similar to politics in that they’re both so multifaceted. In HR, you’re not just dealing with recruiting—you’re dealing with health and safety, labour relations and compensation. In politics, you’re switching gears all the time too: talking to media, dealing with constituents, keeping up with your critic role, internal issues.

HRP: HOW HAS HR INFORMED YOUR POLITICAL THINKING?

RJ: Having provided HR services to many small businesses, I see firsthand how our labour laws affect business. Ontario’s labour laws are archaic and they’re slanted to favour employees to the point where it’s getting difficult for small and mid-

OVER THE YEARS, WE HAVE DELIVERED A MESSAGE TO KIDS THAT THE SKILLED TRADES ARE SOMETHING YOU DO IF YOU CAN’T GET INTO UNIVERSITY. IT’S JUST NOT THAT WAY.

sized enterprises to do business. It’s great for HR because it keeps us busy doing compliance, but bad for entrepreneurs. It’s ironic, but these restrictive rules are keeping business from hiring more people.

SMEs are the biggest employers in Ontario. The answer to growing business and employment in Ontario is ensuring small businesses have the ability to grow.

Our party is proposing a lot of reforms, including revisiting the Rand Formula. If you’re a union and you want people to belong, you should be confident of showing the value of paying dues and you shouldn’t worry about them being forced to join. Unions provide value, but this will force them to think about their business case—what do we bring for the people we represent? How do we fit into how business operates? How can we work together with management?

HRP: WHAT CHALLENGES DOES ONTARIO FACE IN TERMS OF TALENT, SKILLS AND EDUCATION?

RJ: The shortage of skilled trades is a huge problem. Over the years, we have delivered a message to kids that

the skilled trades are something you do if you can’t get into university. It’s just not that way. Many tradespeople can easily clear six figures and employers are desperate for them. In Barrie alone, there were 60 businesses looking for more than 100 skilled trades positions recently. Our unemployment rate last year was 11

per cent, we have hundreds of local skilled trades jobs going unfilled—yet the Georgian College skilled trades program is half full.

We also need to make it easier to do apprenticeships. Currently in Ontario, the ratio of apprentices to journeymen needed to earn, say, an industrial electrician’s ticket is 1:4. That ratio needs to be changed to make it easier for both apprentices and employers. We’re competing with Alberta and Saskatchewan which both have 1:1 ratios. Europe has had 1:1 ratios for years.

Another thing we need to improve on is how colleges and universities work with employers and industry to find out what the needs are. Right now you have a lot of kids graduating from universities and they have skills, but not the right ones. And we don’t specialize enough at the undergrad level. In the U.S., you can earn a degree in automotive marketing. In Canada, you get a BA and then go to college to get a diploma in HR or something to get a practical skillset.

Schools need to be more in tune with what’s needed in the job market—matching education with demand. ●

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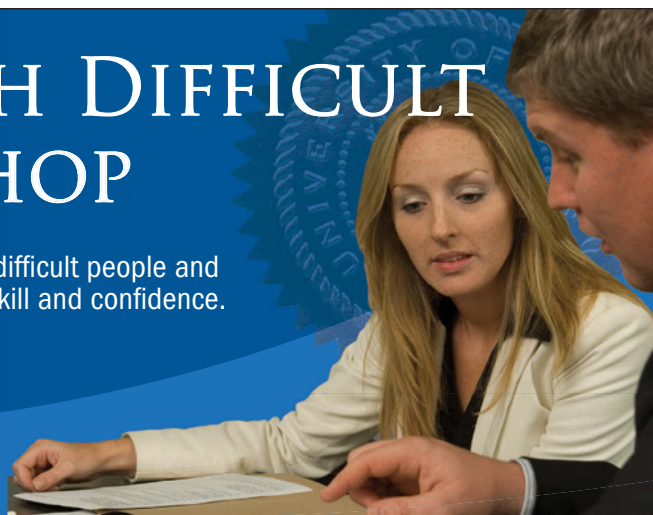
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MIND THE GAP

INSPIRING THE RIGHT HUMAN DYNAMICS, CONNECTIONS AND CREATIVITY TO BUILD AN INNOVATIVE ORGANIZATION

BY ELISA O'DONNELL

When asked how innovative your company is, you may find two different answers depending on who you ask. Often times, employees point fingers at their management team for squelching innovation while leaders feel like they are doing a great deal. In fact, according to research from Development Dimension International, leaders think they're doing much better than employees do when it comes to leading innovation.

This perception gap masks disconnects between the rallying cry of innovation and the existing organizational system in which innovation needs to happen. Understanding the gaps in the organizational system and how to bridge them is critical in enabling a dynamic, innovative culture, and one that leads to real market breakthrough and impactful business results.

THE IDEA POTENTIAL GAP

The scenario goes something like this: an innovation team conducts an ideation session and everyone gets excited because they generate some really great ideas that they believe have huge potential. Yet, by the time the idea gets launched, it has become watered down, less risky, less appealing and so its impact is also diminished.

Why did this happen? Rather than being nurtured along the way to execution, the idea was subjected to a "system of bureaucracy," handoffs, and decision-making that did not enable the kind of risk taking that could lead to breakthrough. Leaders



may have been too quick in asking the innovation team how the ideas can drive immediate impact without first exploring what could be achieved in the longer term. Further, organizational resistance causes team members to lose passion around the idea and confidence for taking a risk. They instead default to the path of least resistance; making decisions to force fit the idea into the existing system versus using the idea as a springboard to drive something new.

A couple of ways to address this idea potential gap include:

- Creating metrics that are more expansive than ROI; e.g., metrics for effort, failure and what gets dropped as well as what gets out into market. Also performance systems that encourages creative inquiry and exploration versus having the right answer.
- Building skills in creative idea development—overcoming the hurdles while preserving the intriguing aspects of the idea and a mindset that defers evaluation until the idea is strengthened. This also includes skills in helping people visualize or experience an idea; e.g., through storyboarding and prototyping, allowing an innovation team to fail fast and cheaply.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT GAP

Often, there is a trust gap between leaders and employees. Trust is derived from interactions and experiences over time. It is also about a personal field between individuals—and defines the nature of their relationships (i.e., supportive or punishing). It is not something that can be easily quantified yet is something easily felt or missed. Trust is also about personal risk—if there is no trust, there is no risk taking.

Time represents another gap. Executives provide the rallying cry for innovation, put it in the corporate mission statements and declare it a core value. However, they often don't give employees time—structured or

innovation

unstructured—to innovate and often don't adjust the performance systems to include both results and efforts. When there is a leadership mandate for innovation but there isn't the time given to actually being innovative, the organization doesn't have the opportunity to think and percolate the big thoughts.

Organizational environment can be influenced by:

- **Paying attention to how we treat ideas, and each other, the language we use** and how we convey meaning (tonality and non-verbal's as well as words). This is common sense but surprisingly not common practice.
- **Mitigating personal risk.** Leaders have a key role to play in innovation by supporting and protecting those who are courageous enough to take a personal risk. That support needs to be credible, real—it needs to convey a sense of personal caring and active facilitation.
- **Scheduling time.** For instance, building time between meetings for reflection and debrief, banning meetings at certain times (e.g. Every Friday afternoon), and building time for organizational storytelling and collaboration

THE PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT GAP

For innovation to be a core competency of the organization, it needs to be the purview of many, not a few,

reaching deeply and broadly across organizational groups and boundaries. There still needs to be a culture of accountability and ownership, but the goal has to be to get engagement and participation in innovation so that many minds can contribute to the future and growth of an organization.

Engaging middle managers is of crucial importance. Middle managers are the glue of organizations. They can translate the rallying cry into tangible practice in their work groups and they have a powerful role influencing up and across the organization as well, conveying front line knowledge about what is working and what is not. They also are well placed to identify individuals who might be doing something different, something innovative, and spread this across the organization so that it becomes a practice that scales. Finally, their ability to leverage informal networks can drive innovation traction. Without their support and willingness to coordinate across the organization innovation cannot scale.

But, in order to successfully play this role middle managers need support from leaders and this means coaching, time, permission to fail and corporate funding.

Engagement is also enabled by:

- Building communities of collaborators—networks inside and outside organization, cross boundaries, cross levels, functions.
- Use of catalysts to provoke and “disturb” current mind-sets and thinking.
- Process, systems and tools that enable broad scale engagement and collaboration.
- Physical spaces that inspire not constrict.

Bridging these gaps can be powerful levers for driving innovation and aligning perception with reality. ●

Elisa O'Donnell, VP of innovation solutions, Imaginatik, brings over 20 years of management consulting experience in the field of innovation and change.

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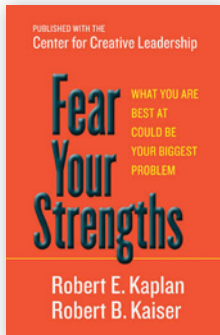
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off the shelf



BY ALYSON NYIRI, CHRP



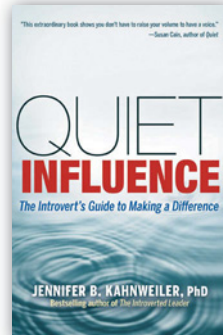
FEAR YOUR STRENGTHS: WHAT YOU ARE BEST AT COULD BE YOUR BIGGEST PROBLEM

Robert E. Kaplan & Robert B. Kaiser
Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2013

To succeed in the leadership field leaders must find their strengths and maximize them. Surprisingly, the authors offer this caution to readers: while it's a good thing to discover your strengths, overplayed strengths are often at the root of career failure. In the course of their work, the authors report two core dualities that confront all leaders: to combine being forceful as well as enabling and to have both a strategic focus and an operational focus. This dynamic tension forms the core of organizational issues focused on by managers.

TALKING POINT

What style is favoured in your company? Forceful leadership? Enabling leadership? Does gender play a role here? Do you think strategic and operational leadership abilities can be combined?



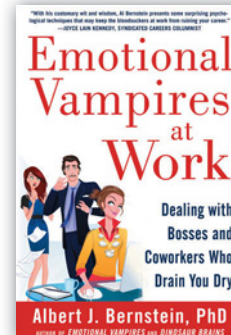
QUIET INFLUENCE: THE INTROVERT'S GUIDE TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Jennifer B. Kahnweiler
Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2013

In a world that favours the extrovert, introverts often feel overlooked. Kahnweiler reminds introverts that they are effective influencers when they focus on their natural strengths instead of trying to act like extroverts. She has created a self-assessment for introverts called the Quiet Influence Quotient (QIQ) which helps to identify current strengths and improvement opportunities. Filled with anecdotes, assessments and reflection points, *Quiet Influence* supports and encourages introverts to capitalize on their particular methods of influence.

TALKING POINT

Should performance appraisals account for introverted work styles? Is there a benefit surfacing this in appraisals?



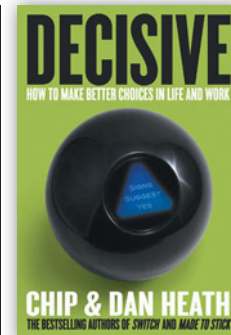
EMOTIONAL VAMPIRES AT WORK: DEALING WITH BOSSES AND COWORKERS WHO DRAIN YOU DRY

Albert J. Bernstein
McGraw-Hill, 2013

Despite the humorous title, Bernstein offers his insight into how human minds operate gained through his 40 years as a psychologist and business consultant. With eerie clarity, Bernstein describes the most difficult and draining people we will encounter at work and offers tips on how to gain some control over our interactions with emotional vampires such as the antisocials, histrionics, narcissists, obsessive-compulsives, and paranoids. Importantly, Bernstein covers the types of organizational cultures that can attract, breed, and nurture emotional vampires.

TALKING POINT

To survive working with or for an emotional vampire, Bernstein says we need employ slow thinking. Emotional vampires use fast thinking which dumbs down the complexity of issues to two-category thinking—good versus evil. What types of vampires lurk in your organization?



DECISIVE: HOW TO MAKE BETTER CHOICES IN LIFE AND WORK

Chip & Dan Heath
Random House, 2013

Biases undermine decisions. Quite often we put too much weight on the information right in front of us. Drawn from an exhaustive study of decision-making literature, the Heaths have fashioned a four-step process to counter-act biases: widen your options, reality-test your assumptions, attain distance before deciding, and prepare to be wrong. The Heaths provide numerous examples of how their model can be applied to personal, career and organizational choices.

TALKING POINT

As we have come to expect from the Heath brothers, more resources are available online at www.heathbrothers.com. Here you will find workbooks, decision situations, podcasts and book club guide.

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upfront *continued from page 15*

Research Foundation (CFERF) and sponsored by Morneau Shepell.

The study is based on the results of an online survey of Canadian financial executives that took place in February 2013, and was expanded with insights gathered during an executive research forum that included participants in Montreal, Toronto and Calgary in March 2013. Participants were drawn from a wide range of industry groups and sectors.

The survey found that employee engagement and recruitment challenges stand out as major threats, with 56 per cent and 50 per cent of respondents rating these respective factors as the greatest threats to productivity. Some 38 per cent of the financial executives surveyed said they were accountable for the human resources (HR) function in their organization and 85 per cent had some type of involvement with HR. All emphasized their role in working with HR to predict and control costs. Health benefits were deemed the greatest cost-related concern by most respondents. Short-term disability was also on the radar of survey respondents concerned about cost.

"The survey indicates clearly that health benefits costs are rising due to various factors such as aging of the workforce. This trend will only increase as new and more expensive drugs arrive on the market," points out Paula Allen, vice president of research and integrative solutions at Morneau Shepell. "Companies also need to be aware of the impact of mental health issues on their bottom line. One third of disability claims are mental health related," she adds. "And mental health disability claims are approximately one third more expensive than physical health claims."

For more detail, view the report at www.morneaushepell.com. ●

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Roland Chiwetelu, CFP, Consultant
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10 PHRASES THAT SHOULD BE BANNED FROM THE WORKPLACE FOREVER

BY DARLENE PRICE



It's crucial to learn that there are certain words and phrases certain to cause damage to one's progress. If you want to maximize your success as you climb the career ladder, here are 10 phrases to stop using in the workplace.

1. **"I can't do that!"/"That's impossible."** Even though you may feel this way on the inside, these negative phrases are perceived by others as pessimistic, unconstructive and even stubborn. People want to hear what CAN be done. Instead say, "I'll be glad to check on that for you" or "What I can do is...".
2. **"You should/could/ought to have."** These words imply blame, finger-pointing and fault. There's no quicker way to upset someone than to suggest they're guilty of something (even if they are). Instead, take a collaborative

approach. "Please help me understand why..." or "Next time may we adopt an alternative approach."

3. **"That's not my job/problem"/"I don't get paid enough for this."** If you're asked to do something, it's because it's important. Even if it's not in your job description, by saying so displays a career-limiting bad attitude. For example, if your boss makes an unreasonable request, reply, "I'll be glad to help you accomplish that. Given my current tasks of ... which one of these would you like to place on backburner while I work on this new assignment?" This clearly communicates priority; reminds the boss of your current workload; and subtly implies realistic expectations.
4. **"I may be wrong, but..."/"This may be a dumb/silly question/idea, but..." or "I'm not sure about this, but..."**. Eliminate any prefacing phrase that demeans or negates what you're about to say. Instead, drop the "but" and make your comment.
5. **"I'll try."** The word "try" implies the possibility it may not get finished. It presupposes possible failure. Instead say, "I'll get it finished" or "I'll have it on your desk by 9 a.m."
6. **"I think..."** "Think" and "might" are weak words. These words make you sound unsure or insecure and subtly undermine your credibility. Replace the word "think" with "believe" and strike the tentative "might."

7. **"...don't you think?"/"...isn't it?"/"...okay?"** To convey a confident commanding presence, eliminate validation questions. Make your statement or recommendation with certainty. Don't say, "This would be a good investment, don't you think?" Instead say, "This solution will be a wise investment that provides long-term benefits."
8. **"I don't have time for this right now"/"I don't have time to talk to you right now."** Other than being abrupt and rude, this phrase tells the person they're less important to you than something or someone else. Instead say, "I'd be glad to discuss this with you. I'm meeting a deadline at the moment. May I stop by your office (or phone you) in this afternoon at 3 p.m.?"
9. **"...but..."** The word "but" cancels and negates anything that comes before it. Simply replace the word "but" with "and" for a more positive outcome.
10. **"He's a jerk/lazy"/"I hate my job"/"This company stinks."** Making unconstructive or judgmental statements that convey a negative attitude toward people or your job is a mishap that tanks careers quickly. If a genuine complaint or issue needs to be brought to someone's attention, do so with tact and consideration. ●

Darlene Price, author of the book Well Said! Presentations and Conversations That Get Results, uses the lessons learned from over 20 years of working closely with top corporate executives and leaders helping them present themselves and their message more effectively.

Shouldn't your prescription drug benefit do more than just dispense drugs?



Express Scripts Canada's active pharmacy benefit management service can result in better health decisions and lower costs

Research from Express Scripts, a Fortune 25 company, has determined a large amount of money is being wasted in the drug plans of companies across Canada.

Sadly, private plans in Canada waste more than \$5 billion in drug spend per year by paying for higher-cost maintenance medications that generated no additional health benefits. Add another \$7 billion to \$9 billion in health-care costs caused by patients who fail to take medications as prescribed.¹

That is waste that no health-benefits plan can afford.

Express Scripts Canada offers a proven solution that is helping employees and their companies reduce the cost of the prescription drug benefit. To learn how, call (888) 677-0111 or visit www.express-scripts.ca/learnmore

1. Express Scripts Canada 2011 Drug Trend Report
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EXPRESS SCRIPTS®

Added peace of mind

Green Shield Canada's Prism health and dental plans now deliver even more protection to those individuals who are losing or not eligible for group health benefits

With costs escalating, provincial health insurance plans limiting, reducing or eliminating coverage for many health-related services, and many organizations capping, cutting or eliminating healthcare benefits, the need for individual supplemental health insurance is more essential than ever before. This is especially true for those who are losing or not eligible for group benefits through their employer, including:

- Retirees • Staff facing job loss
- Part-time and contract workers
- Students and overage dependents
- Divorcees and surviving spouses

Thankfully, by taking advantage of the economical, yet comprehensive healthcare coverage offered by Green Shield Canada's Prism health and dental programs, these individuals can gain the security they deserve, knowing they have protection against both unexpected and routine healthcare expenses they'd typically have to pay for out of their own pocket, including prescription drugs, dental care, visits to registered therapists and specialists such as chiropractors, and much more.

Understanding that everyone's healthcare needs and finances are unique, Prism offers individuals three programs to choose from – Prism Spectra, Prism Precision and Prism Continuum. Within each of these programs are four different plans, each offering varying levels of coverage.

Eight of the twelve Prism plans available offer guaranteed acceptance if coming off a group plan – with no medical questions or exams required – an important consideration if an individual has any pre-existing medical conditions. **Individuals coming off ANY group plan are eligible to apply, no matter who their prior coverage was with.**

More out-of-pocket protection than ever

Best of all, numerous enhancements have been made to Prism plans this year, plus a NEW Level 4 Plan with higher maximums is now available, giving individuals even more protection against healthcare expenses.



Why Prism Health and Dental?

Faster underwriting – We typically process applications in just 10 days, unlike many providers who can take up to 8 weeks

No waiting period – once your application is approved your coverage will become effective on the first day of the following month, unlike some plans that make you wait months before you can take full advantage of all of your benefits

Special rates for families – recognizing that families may have an even greater need for coverage, Prism has separate rates for families, unlike many providers who only offer per person rates

Fewer rate increases – Prism Plans typically only incur rate increases every two years, unlike many insurance companies that raise their rates annually

The smart solution

By providing individuals with information about Prism, you'll help them gain the critical individual healthcare coverage they need. NO employer contributions, contractual obligation or fees are required on your part. Simply distribute our Prism material to those individuals who are losing or not eligible for group benefits and we'll do the rest. You can request Prism brochures and enrollment packages by phone, fax or online – whatever works best for you.

Learn More

If you have any questions, want more information about Prism or would like to receive Prism packages to distribute to your employees, simply:

- ▶ Visit us online at www.sbis.ca/hrpa
- ▶ Send an email to hrpa@sbis.ca
- ▶ Call us at **1-800-667-0429** or **416-601-0429** between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm ET

You won't get an automated response like you will with many companies. **Instead, you'll speak directly to one of our helpful Customer Service Representatives. We care enough to answer each call personally.**

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As Canada's leading agency for individual health and dental plans and the exclusive partner for Green Shield Canada's Prism health and dental programs, we market and administer the Prism plans, while the billings, claims and risk are managed by Green Shield Canada.

