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CITY	COURSE DATE	APPLICATION DEADLINE	FACULTY
Toronto	November 17, 2015	Limited seating - call to inquire	Kathleen O’Neill, FCPA, FCA, ICD.D
Edmonton	January 19, 2016	December 16, 2015	Lucio Di Clemente, CPA, CA, ICD.D
Calgary	April 19, 2016	March 18, 2016	Christine McGinley, CA, ICD.D

HUMAN RESOURCES & COMPENSATION COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS

The Human Resources & Compensation Committee Effectiveness one-day short course was created to help directors develop deeper insights into issues such as CEO succession planning, executive compensation and incentive plans, human capital development beyond the CEO, and dealing with increased scrutiny of executive compensation plans by activist shareholders and proxy advisors.

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Vancouver	April 14, 2016	March 2, 2016	Bonnie D. DuPont, M. Ed, ICD.D, F.ICD & Scott Munn
Calgary	April 12, 2016	March 11, 2016	Bonnie D. DuPont, M. Ed, ICD.D, F.ICD & Scott Munn
Winnipeg	May 3, 2016	April 1, 2016	Bonnie D. DuPont, M. Ed, ICD.D, F.ICD & Scott Munn
Ottawa	May 5, 2016	April 1, 2016	Bonnie D. DuPont, M. Ed, ICD.D, F.ICD & Ken Hugessen

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IN THIS ISSUE

Today's digital era brings with it the unprecedented opportunity to connect personally with massive numbers of people via social media. By engaging themselves with both employees and customers, leaders can appear more trustworthy and improve their organization's overall image. While there are certain risks and roadblocks, HR can play a key role in developing effective social leaders. To learn more, turn to our cover feature, which starts on page 16.

contributors



VINCE MOLINARO, PH.D.

Dr. Vince Molinaro is a *New York Times* best selling author, speaker and global managing director of the strategic leadership solutions practice within Lee Hecht Harrison Knightsbridge.

As a senior executive of an award-winning company, Molinaro has helped create one of the leading brands in the human capital industry. He is regularly called upon by the media for his innovative opinions on the future of leadership. An engaging speaker, he conducts keynote presentations for corporations and conferences. He is the author of several books, including *The Leadership Contract*, a *New York Times* best seller. Read Molinaro's article about creating a leadership accountability mindset in your organization, starting on page 16.



JIM HEMMER

Jim Hemmer is the CEO of CorporateRewards. Hemmer has more than 25 years of experience in the high-tech and software industries, and has been a senior executive at companies in all stages of development from early stage to Fortune 500. Read his article that discusses bringing employee recognition into the digital age, starting on page 29.



CONNIE BENTLEY

Connie Bentley has been leading Insights' U.S. business for over five years. Her career spans 30 years in the learning and development industry. Before coming to Insights, Bentley was president, CEO, COO, VP and director with AchieveGlobal, Paradigm Learning, Sylvan Learning Systems, Zenger Miller and Dun and Bradstreet. Through her broad leadership experience, she has developed an operating philosophy focusing on the three P's: people, passion and performance. Read Bentley's article on the importance of hiring a diverse workforce (and, specifically, avoiding hiring carbon copies of yourself), starting on page 31.



MICHAEL BUNGAY STANIER

Michael Bungay Stanier is the senior partner at Box of Crayons. He is the author of a number of books, including *Do More Great Work* and the upcoming *The Coaching Habit* (March 2016) and is a regular speaker at HR conferences, including at the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA) annual conference. Read his article about how to make conversations more useful by asking what he calls the "Learning Question," starting on page 48.

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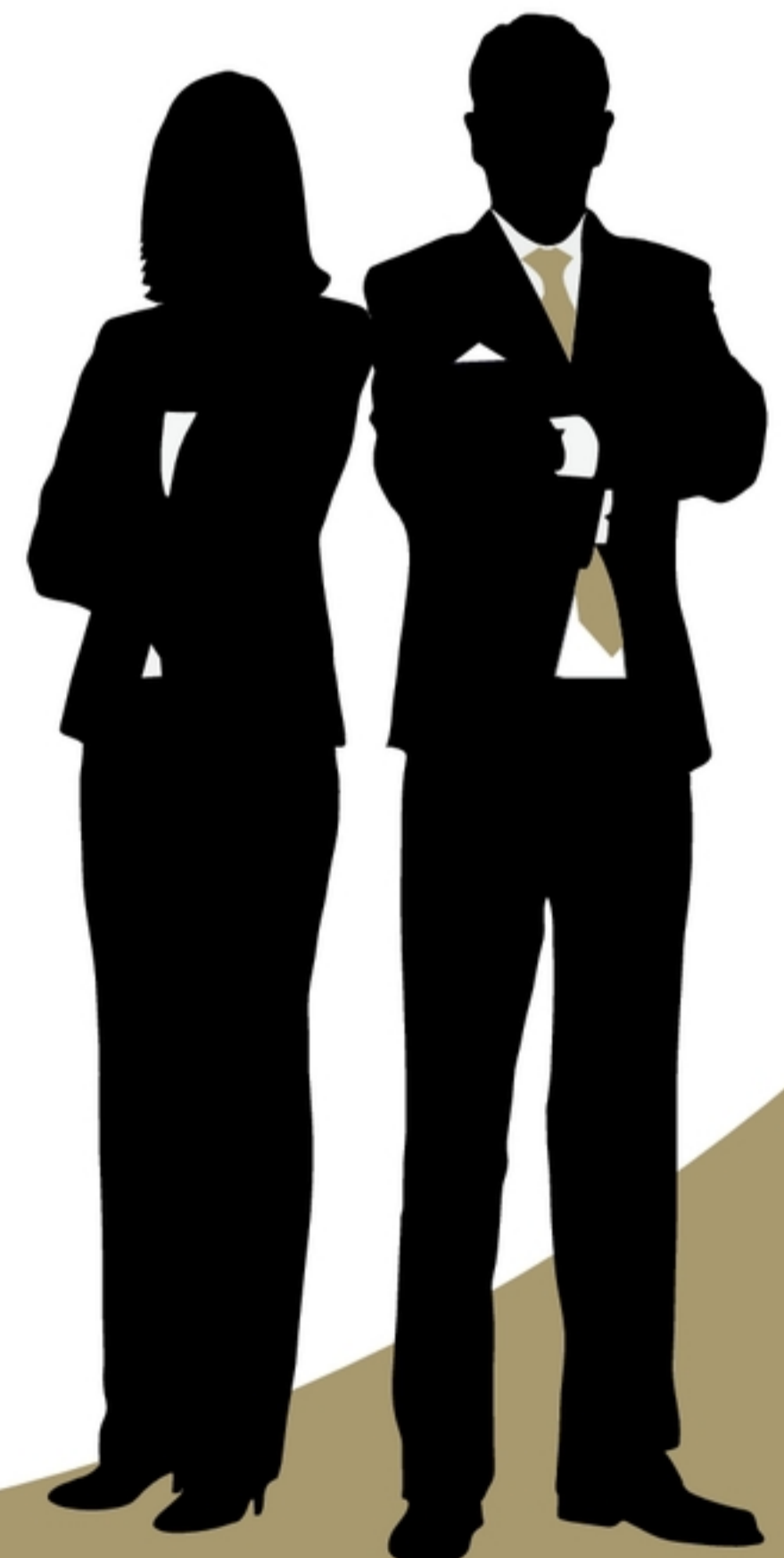
- Patricia McConnell
HR, Lanark County

"The workshop will enhance my role within human resources and help me to look at things in a different light."

- Frank MacNeil, HR
Bank of Montreal

"Role plays and coaching were extremely effective, as was the Interpersonal Skills Exercise. I personally believe that everyone would benefit from this type of training."

- Jim Cutler, HR, Lasting Solutions



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SAYING GOODBYE TO 2015

Here we are, already at the last issue of *HR Professional* for 2015. We added a couple of things for 2015: the HR Career Paths column, for one, which has received tremendous positive feedback. We will be continuing that column in 2016, and if you would like to nominate yourself or someone you know to be featured, please get in touch with me. We still have many facets of HR to cover!

We also added a diversity-themed feature article in each 2015 issue; I would like to thank Cathy Gallagher-Louisy with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) for researching and writing each of those articles, and Michael Bach of CCDI whose idea it was to include the diversity features. I'm very pleased with how the articles have impacted *HR Professional* magazine. In this issue, Cathy looks at the lack of women at the corporate board and executive levels in Canada. It's one of my favourite articles of the year. To read more, flip to page 20.

As we head into another new year, technology and social media are more critical than ever. The cover feature of the November/December 2015 issue is focused on exploring the social leadership phenomenon: turn to page 16 to read writer Melissa Campeau's article about what it means to be a social leader, the benefits and potential pitfalls, and where HR fits into the mix. The opportunity for leaders to connect with massive numbers of people has never been greater, and you can help your company capitalize on that chance.

I hope that you've been continually learning from the magazine throughout the year. The digital edition is now live on hrpatoday.ca, along with information about how to submit an article proposal for publishing consideration and the 2016 cover themes. I encourage you to share articles from the digital edition via your own social networks.

Happy reading,



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Taking a Proactive Approach to Your HR Career



By Brenda Clark, CHRE

Do you have aspirations to become a CHRO? Maybe you have your sights on a HR teaching role at some point in your career? Or perhaps you're a generalist who wants to specialize in a specific HR discipline?

Whatever your goals, you need to take a proactive approach to attaining what you want out of your career. Over the last couple of years, *HR Professional* has featured "Meet the HR Influencers" – a regular Q&A article that profiles senior HR executives, including details about their current roles leading HR in Canadian and multinational organizations and how they got there. When you read them, it's clear these individuals had carefully mapped out their career paths, including deciding where they wanted to be and getting the education, experience and mentors they needed to get there.

CAREER GPS 2.0 CPD NEEDS ANALYSIS ASSESSMENT TOOL

At the 2016 Annual Conference (January 20-22, 2016 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre), the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA) is introducing a new online skills self-assessment tool that will let HR professionals create their own personalized continuing professional development plan to help them uncover the professional development they need to move forward and achieve their career goals.

This new assessment tool allows users to complete a half-hour assessment based on HRPA's new HR Competency Model, and receive a personal development plan report based on the results.

The plan will highlight both an individual's HR competency strengths and gaps and recommend and prioritize specific areas for professional training and development options.

The plan can also be used by the individual as their business case for their employer to invest in the learning and development outlined in the report.

The questions in the analysis are underpinned by HRPA's new HR Competency Model that tests a

defined body of knowledge, and the ability to apply that knowledge at all levels of HR practice. The personalized report will provide insight into an individual's expertise across the competencies in the new framework.

The Skills Assessment Tool lets you take a strategic and tactical approach to your career path by targeting your professional development and focusing on the things you need to move into the role you want. It shows you gaps between your current capability and what you need in order to be effective in your current role or what you need to develop in order to get your dream job by identifying professional development, on the job training and the benefits of mentoring.

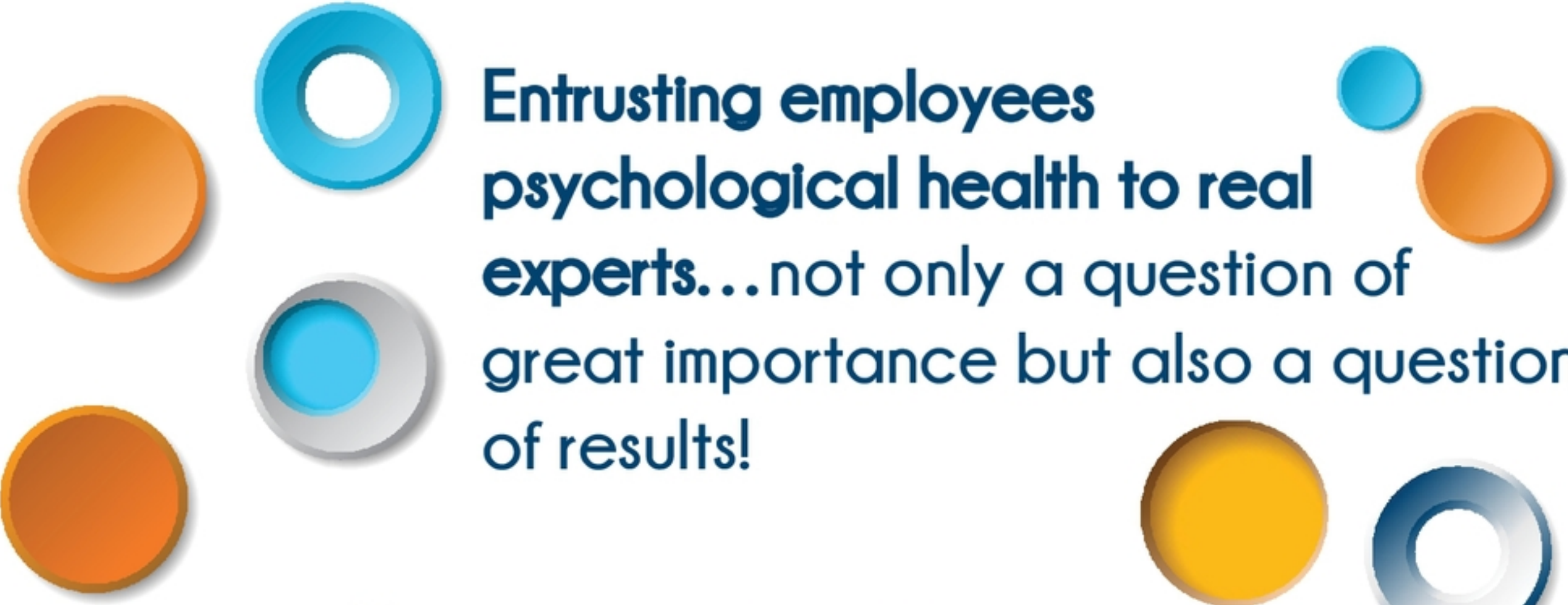
HR DESIGNATION ASSESSMENTS

For individuals who want to earn a Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) or Certified Human Resources Leader (CHRL) designation, the Skills Assessment Tool also assesses a user's current knowledge relative to what is expected of those qualifying for the designations.

A similar tool has already been rolled out and is in use by the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI). It has proven very popular with members and has helped AHRI identify and address gaps in its professional development programming.

As HR moves into a more professional arena, it is important to know where you are before you can plan where you want to be. Assessing your skills, and being proactive, is always the key to success. Like planning a wedding or planning to buy a home, you need to know what you currently have (money, time to invest) and where you want to be (large, small, expensive, cost-effective). Career planning should be the same. Let HRPA's new online skills self-assessment tool help you get to where you want to be. ■

Brenda Clark, CHRE is chair of the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA).



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UPFRONT

HALF OF CANADIAN EMPLOYERS HAVE CAUGHT LIES ON RESUMES

They say that honesty is the best policy, but it appears as though several job seekers are putting that theory to the test. According to a new CareerBuilder.ca survey, 49 per cent of Canadian employers have caught a lie on a job applicant's CV. The national survey was conducted online on behalf of CareerBuilder.ca of more than 400 hiring managers across Canada.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON LIES?

Skill sets, responsibilities and job titles are the areas in which job seekers tend to stretch the truth the most. When asked about the most common lies they have come across, employers named the following:

1. Embellished skill set: 58 per cent
2. Embellished responsibilities: 53 per cent
3. Job title: 32 per cent
4. Academic degree: 31 per cent
5. Companies worked for: 31 per cent
6. Dates of employment: 27 per cent
7. Accolades/awards: 20 per cent

VYING FOR ATTENTION

It's not hard to understand why some job seekers feel the need to lie. Capturing – and holding – an employer's attention is no small feat: nearly one in four employers say they spend 60 seconds or less reviewing a CV for a specific position. The majority (65 per cent) spend less than five minutes on this task.

Job seekers may also feel the need to enhance their resumes in order to meet all of the requirements in the job posting; however, not meeting 100 per cent of the qualifications is not always a deal breaker. Nearly three in five employers said that if they were hiring for a position with five key qualifications, they would consider a candidate with only four of those qualifications, and approximately the same amount would consider a candidate who met only three.

"With increased competition for jobs, job seekers may feel the need to embellish their CVs to stand out and impress hiring managers and recruiters," said Mark Bania, managing director of CareerBuilder Canada. "What job seekers may not realize, however, is that most hiring managers are willing to consider candidates who do not meet 100 per cent of the qualifications. While employers need a certain level of skills, they also want to see job seekers who show enthusiasm, a potential for learning and cultural fit."

FEW EMPLOYEES WAITING IN THE WINGS

Research suggests few employers have backup plans should star performers leave their company. In a Robert Half Management Resources survey, only 13 per cent of accounting and finance professionals reported there was someone internally who could easily step in to fill their role if they quit. Nearly half said the company would need to hire an outside candidate to fill the position. That number goes up among the executive ranks, where more than half (58 per cent) say their companies would have to hire someone new to replace them.

SKILL SETS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND JOB TITLES ARE THE AREAS IN WHICH JOB SEEKERS TEND TO STRETCH THE TRUTH THE MOST.

news

“In the event of an unexpected departure, neglecting to have preemptively instated a succession plan can prove disruptive,” said David King, Canadian president of Robert Half Management Resources. “Getting caught off-guard when an essential employee moves on, especially at the executive level, may mean an extended period of time searching for someone to replace them, leaving the company scrambling to effectively manage their responsibilities in the meantime.”

Robert Half Management Resources offers five additional tips to help businesses enhance their succession planning:

1. Start during the hiring process. In addition to the open position, think about the types of advanced roles job candidates could grow into over time. Also, gauge applicants' interest in building a career with your firm and their leadership skills.
2. Take a wide view. Only looking at the top of the company for succession planning is a mistake. Instead, develop plans for all levels. In the process, you'll identify up-and-comers aspiring to join the management ranks.
3. Check with employees. Talk to staff members about their goals, and identify specific steps they can take to reach their objectives. This is also motivational and can help with retention.
4. Bolster professional development. Building out succession plans will help you more easily identify skills gaps and the training needed to address them.
5. Communicate openly. Let staff know about your goal of preparing them for roles of increasing responsibility, making this a reward for their contributions. Explain the succession process – including what is expected of them and what they can expect from you – and provide prompt updates if there are changes along the way.

NEW JOB PORTAL HELPS YOUTH WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS FIND EMPLOYMENT

HireUp is a new website that connects employers with youth serving organizations across Canada that deliver employment and support programs for youth who have experienced homelessness. Employers who post jobs on the site access a ready source of youth talent who have undergone job skills training, onboarding support from youth employment organizations and show their commitment and leadership to corporate social responsibility.

Employers who hire youth will receive a designation as a “HireUp Employer” and have exclusive access to tools and research to guide their hiring and on-boarding processes.

HireUp was developed by Impakt, The Home Depot Canada Foundation and Workopolis.

“Homelessness comes with extraordinarily high personal and socio-economic costs,” said Deborah Berwick, senior manager,



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Community Affairs at The Home Depot Canada Foundation. "As part of the Foundation's three-year, \$10-million pledge to help end youth homelessness in Canada, we are proud to support HireUp as it creates opportunity for employers to find and engage a talent pool who will bring unique perspectives and value to their organization."

HireUp will re-invest all profits to help youth serving organizations improve employment programs for youth.

"Workopolis' mission is to help all Canadians connect with the opportunities they need to be successful," said Tara Talbot, vice president, Human Resources and Communications at Workopolis. "HireUp allows us to bring our tools and technology to a group of people who are particularly disadvantaged on the job market and we expect many employers will benefit."

As an HRPA member, your company can benefit from a 10 per cent discount. For more information about HireUp, call Olivia Larkin at 416-483-6191 ext. 27 or email olivia@impaktcorp.com.

EMPLOYERS EXPECTING SLOWED GROWTH IN SALARIES FOR 2016

Employers in Canada are expecting salaries to rise by an average of 2.5 per cent in 2016, according to Morneau Shepell's annual survey of Trends in Human Resources. This is down from the

average 2.8 per cent salary increase expected for 2015. The average includes expected salary freezes.

"With the crash in oil prices and talk of a recession in the air, employers are cautious about the coming year," said Michel Dubé, a principal in Morneau Shepell's compensation consulting practice. "The highest salary increases will be in financial services at 3.0 per cent, and professional, scientific and technical services at 2.9 per cent."

EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY A PRIORITY

In addition to looking at expected salary increases, the survey also asked HR leaders about their priorities for 2016.

"Faced with uncertain economic times, organizations will be investing in more programs designed to improve productivity," said Randal Phillips, executive vice president and chief client officer at Morneau Shepell. Sixty-six per cent of survey respondents said that improving the health and engagement of their employees is a top priority for 2016. This is up from 53 per cent last year.

"Given the pace of change today, there is a strong link between the health and coping skills of employees and their engagement at work," said Phillips. ■



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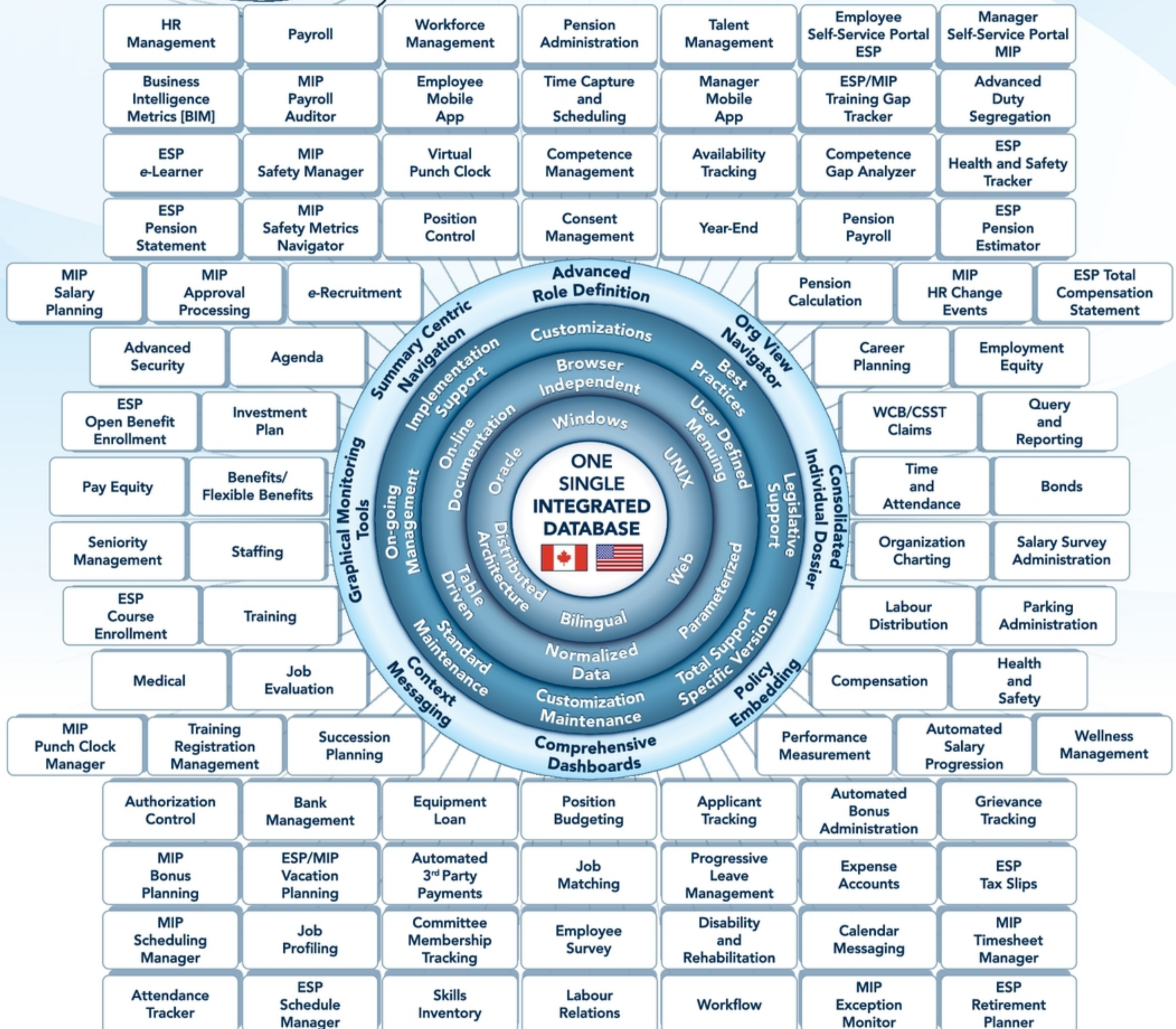
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Responding to a Union Organizing Drive

BEING PREPARED IS KEY TO EMPLOYER SUCCESS

By Thomas W. Agnew

The decision to join or not join a union belongs to the employee. The *Ontario Labour Relations Act* (the “Act”) does not permit employers to coerce, intimidate or exert undue influence on employees as they make this decision. However, employers can play an important role in the unionizing process. How an employer communicates with its employees, both before and after the union organizing campaign has begun, influences the decision-making process.

Recognizing that the unionization process is fast paced and the legal landscape can be confusing, employers should have an overview of the unionizing process in Ontario, and below is some strategic advice on how to successfully navigate a union organizing campaign.

BEING PROACTIVE AND NOT REACTIVE

The certification process typically begins long before the Application for Certification (the “Application”) is filed with the Ontario Labour Relations Board (the “Board”) and begins with the union’s organizing drive.

Unions have to garner a minimum amount of support among the employees in the proposed bargaining unit before the Application is filed. Unions will attempt to garner support in a number of ways, including by making connections with union-friendly employees

who will communicate the union’s message to their colleagues, as well as holding meetings with employees outside of work.

When a union believes it has enough support, it will file its Application. Included with that Application will be the union’s “membership evidence.” Membership evidence is typically in the form of membership cards, which are forms signed by the employees.

If the Board is satisfied that the union has at least 40 per cent support among employees in the proposed bargaining unit, the Board is required to order a representation vote. The vote is typically held within five business days following the date the Application is filed. This short timeframe makes it difficult for an employer to communicate its message to employees prior to the vote.

Given the short timeframes, employers will benefit from developing a communication strategy in advance of a union filing an Application. Being proactive rather than reactive is key to employer success. Keep in mind that it’s the union that controls the timing of the Application and, accordingly, the timing of the vote. The union will have plenty of time to plan its communication well in advance of the Application.

The Act does place limitations on what an employer can say or do in the context of a union drive, but an employer is permitted to



BEING PROACTIVE RATHER THAN REACTIVE IS KEY TO EMPLOYER SUCCESS.

engage in proactive communication. The Act specifically permits employers to “express views” on unionization.

THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: FORM AND CONTENT

Employer communications may involve letters or memos to employees, postings and bulletins, video presentations, meetings or speeches. The employer is permitted to tell employees that, while it does not intend to interfere in the rights of employees to make a decision, it would prefer to operate without the intervention of a union in the workplace. Employer communications can also include information about the union.

However, employers should also be cautious of doing or saying the wrong thing. It is important to note that the Board has the authority to certify a union regardless of the outcome of the vote, or to certify the union without a vote. To obtain this so-called “penalty certification,” the union has to prove that the employer engaged in conduct that was coercive, intimidating or threatening, or that it made promises or exerted sufficient undue influence that would make it unlikely that the true wishes of employees would be ascertained by a vote.

Effectively, employers are prohibited from either supporting employees who are “anti-union,” or penalizing “pro-union” employees. The employer cannot make promises of increased job security for voting against the union, or suggest that job security might be compromised by supporting the union. To use the wording of the Act, employers are prevented from using “coercion, intimidation, threats, promises or undue influence” when dealing with employees during a union drive.

TIMING OF EMPLOYER COMMUNICATION

The employer does not have to wait until the Application is filed before implementing the communication strategy. Often, an employer will become aware of an organizing campaign in the

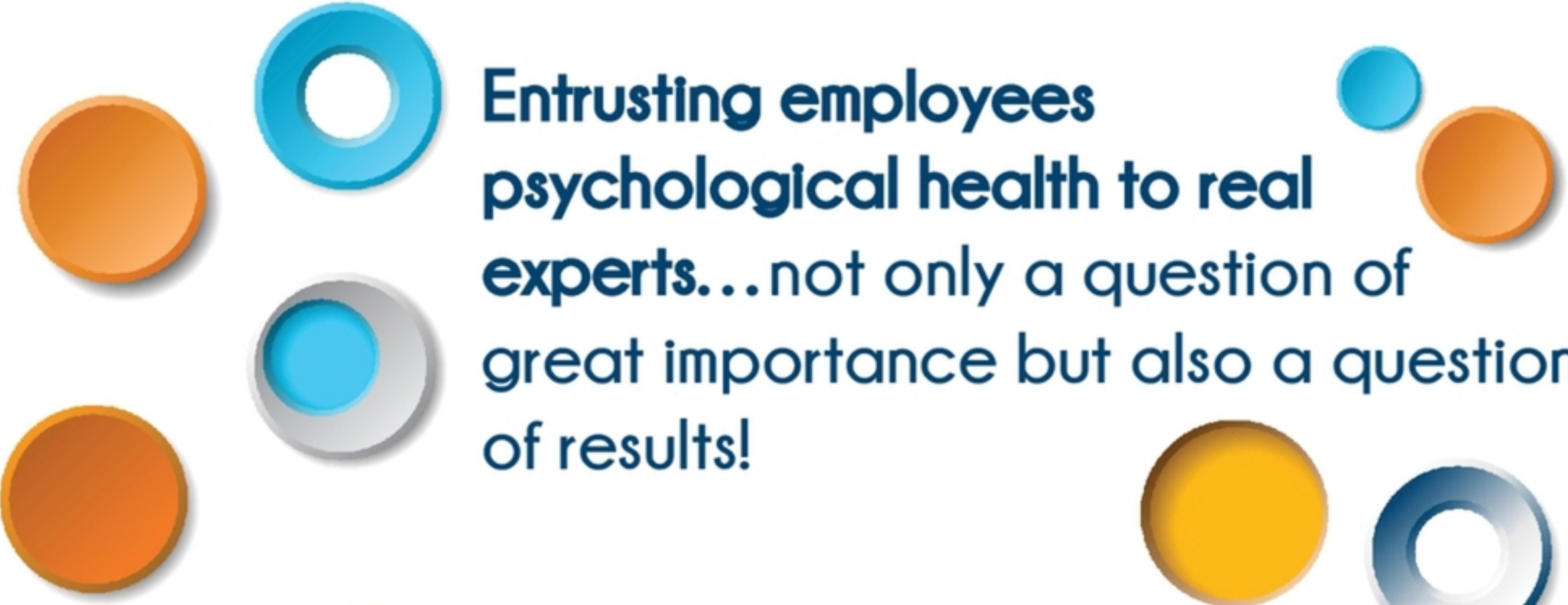
workplace before the Application is filed and may want to start its own communication campaign before any formal documentation is filed with the Board. However, employers should be cautious not to give legitimacy to a weak union campaign by implementing its own communication strategy prematurely.

Once the Application is filed, the clock is running and it is running fast. If the employer is well prepared, it can employ a coordinated and effective communication strategy in the days leading up to the vote to counter-balance the union’s message – a message that the employees may have been subjected to for weeks or longer by that point. If the employer is prepared, meetings with employees can be scheduled quickly where prepared scripts can be read. Letters can be sent to employees, and postings can go up in the workplace.

As the process moves toward the vote, encouraging widespread participation in the vote usually works in the employer’s favour. Typically, the employees who support the union make an effort to vote. Experience suggests that employees who are indifferent to the union or who would vote against the union if given the opportunity are the employees who miss the vote. Given that the outcome of the vote is decided by a simple majority of those employees who cast ballots, encouraging widespread voter participation is a good employer strategy.

The unionizing process in Ontario can be complicated and fast moving. While this article cannot cover all of the different aspects of the process, it is important to remember that employers do play an important role in shaping the outcome. Whether that outcome results in a unionized workplace or not can depend in large part on how well prepared the employer is to respond to the union campaign. ■

Thomas Agnew is an associate lawyer at Hicks Morley LLP and represents management in all areas of labour and employment law.



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THE SOCIAL LEADER

LEADING IN 140 CHARACTERS OR LESS

BY MELISSA CAMPEAU

In a 2014 *Globe and Mail* article, Tangerine CEO Peter Aceto said, “I would rather engage in a Twitter conversation with a single customer than see our company attempt to attract the attention of millions in a coveted Super Bowl commercial.”

Ten years ago, that sentence – and its sentiment – wouldn’t have been made. But oh, how things have changed.

Aceto says that we’re in the midst of at least two significant revolutions. The first and most obvious one is technological. The second is social: since the 2008 financial crisis, people are looking at organizations with a more skeptical eye. Business leaders

who are consistently transparent and open – who essentially humanize their businesses – are much more likely to win the trust of both employees and customers.

Put those two movements together and you’ve got an unprecedented opportunity to connect personally with massive numbers of people – both employees and customers. It’s like having a mom-’n’-pop-store relationship with thousands or even millions of customers. Leaders might reach them through blogging, tweeting, Facebook and LinkedIn posts, or any other social means. Aceto, for one, blogs frequently and shares thoughts and ideas freely on Twitter. He’s even been

known to personally respond to clients’ tweets on Sunday nights. All of this makes an impression: Tangerine (formerly ING Direct) regularly makes the list of best employers and most trusted brands.

Aceto is a social leader, someone the *Financial Times Lexicon* describes as having the ability to bring people together, facilitate agreements and drive efforts in the same direction. It’s not about the technology, despite the blogs and tweets. Nelson Mandela, for example, was a social leader well before Twitter existed. But any effective leader will take advantage of the best ways to meet an audience where they live. Fifty years ago, it might have been TV.



“PEOPLE ARE ALREADY OUT THERE AND TALKING ABOUT YOUR BRAND, WHETHER OR NOT YOU’RE USING SOCIAL MEDIA. WHY WOULDN’T YOU WANT TO BE THERE AND SEE WHAT THEY’RE SAYING AND GET INVOLVED IN THE CONVERSATION?”

– CHERYL FULLERTON, VICE PRESIDENT, LEADERSHIP,
HUMAN RESOURCES, MAPLE LEAF FOODS

Before that, print or radio. Right now and into the near future, there’s no denying social media is a critical part of the mix.

CHANGING EXPECTATIONS OF LEADERS

That’s not to say that everyone’s on board yet. According to *The Social CEO 2014*, a report by ceo.com and software company Domo, a whopping 68 per cent of Fortune 500 CEOs don’t have a social media presence on any major network. While that still shows evolution – no one knew what a social media presence was 10 years ago – it leaves a lot of room for growth.

While a typical CEO may not feel entirely at home with social media just yet, there are some compelling reasons to get past the fear and get on board. A *Forbes* report notes 76 per cent of executives would rather work for a social CEO, as would 80 per cent of employees in general. Plus, 75 per cent of customers say a company is more trustworthy if its high-level leadership participates in social media.

Consider, too, what a company misses out on when leaders don’t engage with social media. Pam Ross, Toronto-based culture consultant and social media expert, points out that many younger recruits witnessed U.S. President Barack Obama

master social leadership and amass millions of followers over the past several years. He’s now the third-most followed person on Twitter and personally tweets – and responds to tweets – from his own account (as well as two official ones). Your employees may have even taken part in his AMA (Ask Me Anything) session on Reddit back in 2012. He may not be *their* president, but he’s a powerful world leader who communicates on their terms and who appears entirely reachable and relatable.

“Do those same employees then look down the hall and see the closed door of the CEO’s corner office – a CEO who doesn’t know their names?” said Ross. “If

cover feature

so, there's a disconnect happening. But there's also a tremendous opportunity."

WINS FOR BUSINESS

For starters, engaging in social media platforms means you can keep an ear to the ground. As Cheryl Fullerton, vice president, Leadership, Human Resources at Maple Leaf Foods in Toronto, said, "People are already out there and talking about your brand, whether or not you're using social media. Why wouldn't you want to be there and see what they're saying and get involved in the conversation?"

When you know what people are saying, you know where your weaknesses might be. With that understanding, you can better avoid tone-deaf social media stumbles, and wade more confidently into the fray with your audience's particular needs and concerns in mind.

With social media, there's also an opportunity to involve every last one of your employees in a conversation.

"I love the democratization of this communication," said Fullerton. Because social media communication is generally perceived to be casual (messages are succinct, abbreviations abound), ideally everyone can feel comfortable joining in.

"That's the opportunity, anyway," she said. "Because it's still new, people can feel a little nervous at first. But once people start, they realize there's nothing to be afraid of."

After a training session, for example, Fullerton says that the group involved in the class can continue to learn on their own.

"The benefits from a training perspective are huge," she said. "People can support each other as they take what they learned back to their workplace, talking about what is hard, what is working, asking for reminders or help. This support from peers is a great way to drive engagement and performance."

Claudette Knight, vice president, Talent Management and Development at Meridian Credit Union in Toronto, says the potential for social media to boost morale and create excitement is critical. Meridian recently held a leadership off-site meeting where groups of staff participated in events in different locations. Knight created a hashtag for the event and encouraged updates by way of tweets and photos. It was a huge success.

"It really created a high level of connectedness," said Knight. "It gave all of us a tangible sense of the experiences that people were having, even though we were in different places. It took the buzz, the energy and the enthusiasm of the event to another level. I've never seen anything quite like it."

Twitter, LinkedIn and other platforms also offer ideal avenues for collaboration and innovation.

"You can ask people on your internal social enterprise software, 'What are your thoughts on this problem we're facing?'" said Ross, "And then involve them in solutions in ways you couldn't before."

People who might not otherwise have met may find themselves sharing ideas. It's a relatively easy way to encourage cross-functionality, without any organizational intervention. Someone from the mailroom might have an idea that helps a colleague in accounting, for example. An administrative assistant's enthusiasm about a charity run might motivate 10 more to join. Or a question posed externally to customers might just yield some great ideas and insights.

PERSONAL GAIN

The business case for getting involved in social media is compelling. But there's a lot to be gained personally, as well.

Beyond building your personal brand, many social media networks give users immediate access to a world of contacts and resources that might otherwise be tough to track down.

"Six months ago I wanted to do some research on supporting a culture of innovation," said Fullerton. "I wasn't quite finding what I wanted in a Google search, so I went to Twitter. In a tenth of the time, I found myself connected to some brilliant innovators from all around the globe, having a debate about something to do with a culture of innovation. I threw out a comment that I was listening and interested in the culture of innovation and they flooded me with resources. I was able to connect with the leader of the chat offline as well and he gave me some more information."

ROADBLOCKS TO ADOPTION

Despite all the upsides, not every executive will leap at the chance to become a social leader.

For one thing, there are a finite number of hours in a day.

"Leaders are already swamped," said Knight. "Social media doesn't replace an existing communication outlet; it becomes an addition to your toolkit. You have to keep doing those town halls, one-on-ones or walking the floor if those approaches are effective. Social media is an additional piece that can expand your reach and foster increased engagement."



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“HR KNOWS WHAT THE CULTURE IS LIKE AND CAN IDENTIFY THE GAPS AND SOLUTIONS TO HELP THAT CULTURE BECOME MORE SOCIAL.”

– PAM ROSS, CULTURE CONSULTANT AND SOCIAL MEDIA EXPERT

To begin, a leader should first find the right social media fit. Some may enjoy longer-form blog writing. Often, these can be banked ahead of time and posted at regular intervals, says Knight, which can help significantly with time management. However, if the blog accepts comments and questions – and to be considered “social,” it really should – an organization needs to consider how to handle those.

“The immediacy of social media is so important,” said Ross. “If you’re not checking at least daily and responding to complaints – I’d actually go further and say within a couple of hours – you can end up in some trouble.”

Unhappy customers can be vocal, persistent and connected. An organization can state on its profile when they’ll be monitoring the account, so customers will know when to anticipate a response.

“Even so, people expect a timely response. If you’re not going to be quick to respond, it’s something to think about,” said Ross. “But I don’t think it’s a reason to not be there, at least listening and monitoring.”

MITIGATE RISK

Putting yourself out there, while potentially rewarding, has its risks, of course. While an organization is unlikely to encounter an angry online mob just waiting to pounce

the moment they set up a Twitter account, smooth sailing isn’t guaranteed, either.

“Certainly if you don’t have the culture to back up the social leadership piece or if you’re not open and transparent, then it can backfire,” said Fullerton. If a company hopes to promote itself as an eco-crusader, for example, tweeting about an initiative will backfire if the culture isn’t already committed to environmental issues. If the cafeteria doesn’t recycle or if a production plant is in hot water over polluting practices, you can guarantee people will find out and take the organization and the initiative down, in quick and high profile fashion.

“There have been companies and individual leaders who didn’t think through their messaging. They tried to do a Twitter chat or use a hashtag to spread a positive message, but the hashtag gets hijacked by people who are really detractors from their brand,” said Ross. “That’s why listening is so important. You need to know what people think of your brand.”

It’s a risk, but not an unavoidable one.

“In order to mitigate these problems, you have to be prepared for what people might say,” said Ross. “Have some messaging to respond to it. Involve your advocates so there is someone else other than the official leaders speaking to it, and train your people on what’s appropriate or not appropriate.”

NATURAL FIT FOR HR

In many organizations, social media coaching and policy may fall under the umbrella of the marketing and communications team. But there’s a natural – and many would say necessary – connection to HR.

“When you think about the department in your organization [responsible for] listening and engaging and focusing on people, that’s what HR is all about,” said Ross. “We are the influence. Everything we do is to influence the behaviour of other people in the organization and that’s way social media is. HR also knows what the culture is like and can identify the gaps and solutions to help that culture become more social.”

“We’re on the threshold of major change,” said Fullerton. “I think HR leaders have to be ahead of the curve on this. It’s just the world we live in. There’s still this feeling out there, for some people, that using social media is frivolous. But it’s just like any other technology.” The technology itself is neutral; what we do with it makes all the difference.

Joining the social revolution may seem like a risk, but given how audiences and employees have adopted the technology, opting out may prove riskier in the long run. Done well, there’s a world of opportunity, connection and innovation that’s waiting, quite literally, at your fingertips. ■

WHERE are the Women?

ACCELERATING THE PACE OF CHANGE FOR WOMEN IN CORPORATE LEADERSHIP

By Cathy Gallagher-Louisy

We've been talking about the challenge of getting more women into leadership for decades. Articles leading up to the most recent Canadian election even questioned whether women's equality should still be on the agenda. Spoiler: yes it should, and HR professionals have an important role to play in improving the advancement of women in Canada.

While many gains were made toward women's equality in the 1970s and '80s, the pace of change has been slowing dramatically since the early '90s. According to a study released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in 2013, at the current pace of change, women won't achieve full economic and political equality in Canada for 228 years.

Research from the Canadian Board Diversity Council (CBDC) released in late 2014 showed that between 2001 and 2013, gender diversity on Canadian corporate boards has increased only 4.7 per cent – in total. Not 4.7 per cent each year – 4.7 per cent in 12 years! At that pace of change, CBDC projects we will not achieve gender parity on corporate boards until the year 2083.

SIGNIFICANT DISCONNECTS

Interestingly, the CBDC's research revealed that 78 per cent of current board directors believed their board was *already* diverse.

Clearly there's a disconnect between perception and reality, as CBDC's research also showed that at the end of 2014, women's overall representation on corporate

boards was only 17.1 per cent, and 42 per cent of Canada's biggest listed companies had *no* female directors.

Another sign of the disconnect: 91 per cent of corporate board members surveyed by CBDC said that board diversity was important to them personally, yet only a quarter had formal board diversity policies. Of the three-quarters of boards that didn't have formal policies, only a quarter of them thought they should.

No wonder the pace of change is glacial.

WHY IS BOARD AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY IMPORTANT?

A number of ethical and fairness arguments support the idea that the boards of organizations should better represent the population of employees in the organization, and the population of Canada. There are impacts for employee engagement, and employees' perceptions of their own career paths within the company. However, the strongest arguments point to the improved effectiveness of companies that have more diverse boards.

Numerous studies have found that companies with diverse boards perform better. Why? Because they avoid the risks of "groupthink" – a psychological phenomenon that occurs when a group of people who think in a similar manner have a tendency to support and reinforce each other's viewpoints. Group members often minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without a critical evaluation of alternative viewpoints, sometimes by

actively suppressing dissenting viewpoints. This is why diversity in decision-making groups can lead to innovation and alternative approaches to problem solving.

However, because of the power of groupthink to silence dissenting viewpoints, many of the studies have asserted the need for a critical mass of three or more women or non-traditional board members on the board, because it is easy to silence or override just one or two.

Research shows six major impacts to having three or more non-traditional board members:

1. Strong financial performance: A Catalyst Study of Fortune 500 companies with three or more women on their board found that, compared to their less diverse competitors, they gained more than 73 per cent return on sales, more than 83 per cent return on equity and more than 112 per cent return on invested capital.
2. Increased ability to attract and retain top talent: According to both Catalyst and Conference Board research, companies with women on their boards are better able to attract and retain excellent employees.
3. Heightened innovation: Research published in *The Journal of Management Studies* in 2009 shows that Fortune 500 companies with female directors are better than others at identifying and capitalizing on innovative opportunities.
4. Enhanced client insight: As cited in *Corporate Knights* in 2010, boards



that reflect the composition of society can better understand the needs and preferences of their clients, thus improving product development, marketing and customer service.

5. Strong performance on non-financial indicators: A 2013 study from the University of Calgary found that having three or more women on the board leads to improved performance in sustainability/corporate social responsibility.
6. Improved board effectiveness: According to a 2013 study from The Conference Board of Canada, boards that included three or more women saw improved performance in multiple areas, such as:
 - Strategy implementation and monitoring
 - Selection, orientation and performance evaluation of board members
 - Adoption of written policies to limit the authority of board directors.

With all these benefits to having women and other non-traditional identity groups represented on the board, it's a wonder that there aren't more.

DEMAND, NOT SUPPLY

One reason for the lack of board diversity often heard is, "We would gladly include more women on our board, but there just aren't any who are qualified." False: there are multiple organizations – including

QUALIFIED WOMEN EXIST – THEY NEED TO BE RECRUITED. THE PROBLEM IS THAT TRADITIONALLY A LOT OF BOARD RECRUITING COMES FROM THE PERSONAL NETWORKS OF CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS.

feature

DiverseCity Onboard, the Canadian Board Diversity Council and Catalyst – that have cultivated extensive lists of board-ready women and other executives from diverse backgrounds. Qualified women exist – they need to be recruited.

The problem is that traditionally a lot of board recruiting comes from the personal networks of current board members. This can greatly limit the reach and diversity of their candidate pools. Furthermore, unconscious bias might come into play in the selection of new board members, as current board members may be likely to prefer candidates who are similar to themselves.

Another argument that is often used for not focusing resources on diversity and inclusion goes something like this: “Since we live in a meritocracy, by virtue of the workforce becoming more diverse, talented women will naturally trickle up.” But is this actually happening?

In Canada, women have been receiving more than half of all undergraduate degrees since the 1979/1980 school year. You would think that in 35 years of more women than men graduating from university in Canada, we would see more of this “trickling up” effect. One would expect that women – being as educated and capable as men – would by now be equally represented at all levels of the corporate ladder. Unfortunately, that’s not the case. Despite the fact that in 2014 women represented

47.3 per cent of the Canadian labour force, if we look at their distribution on the corporate ladder, we see fewer and fewer women the higher we go. Women represent just 18.1 per cent of senior officer positions in Canadian FP 500 companies, just 6.9 per cent of top earners and only 5.1 per cent of CEO’s of FP 500 companies.

One of the reasons women are not climbing the ladder as quickly as men, according to an extensive research report published by Catalyst in 2009, points to the compounding effects of gender biases in the talent management processes of many of our organizations. Small decisions made by management and HR folks throughout the lifecycle of employees’ careers add up to stream men into leadership roles, and tend to help men climb the corporate ladder.

WHAT IS BEING DONE ABOUT IT?

Last year, the Ontario Securities Commission implemented new board diversity reporting requirements for publicly traded corporations. Described as “comply or explain” reporting requirements, these new stipulations require companies to publicly report on the following:

- Director term limits and other mechanisms of renewal of the board of directors
- Policies regarding the representation of women on the board
- The board’s or nominating committee’s consideration of the representation of

women in the director identification and selection process

- The issuer’s consideration of the representation of women in executive officer positions when making executive officer appointments
- Targets regarding the representation of women on the board and in executive officer positions
- The number of women on the board and in executive officer positions

If they do not have these policies or mechanisms in place, they are required to explain why.

HOW ARE CANADIAN COMPANIES DOING?

There are a number of researchers examining companies’ new diversity disclosures.

“The investment community is in favour of these new diversity disclosures,” said Michelle de Cordova, director, Corporate Engagement and Public Policy at NEI Investments. “Big institutional investors and pension funds have come out in support of this change.”

NEI Investments is a mutual fund company with over \$6 billion in managed assets which evaluates companies’ environmental, social and governance practices as part of its due diligence research for investment instruments like Ethical Funds. They have been tracking companies’ board and senior management diversity practices and disclosures for many years. They assert that the correlation between diversity and company outperformance is compelling from an investment value perspective. If companies tend to outperform when their boards and senior management are more diverse, the implication is that companies not taking steps to increase diversity are risking underperformance, and creating more risk for potential investors.

As part of their research, NEI is specifically looking at the impacts of the Ontario Securities Commission’s new requirements on companies’ disclosures.

“We’re finding a wide range in the quality of the answers companies are providing,” said de Cordova. “Many companies have taken the requirements seriously and have authentically reported on where they are and what they are doing to improve.” However, NEI has also discovered a

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number of companies using boilerplate-type language, stating that the company has no board diversity policies because they don't need them, sometimes citing meritocracy as the reason not to have such policies.

"Those companies that are doing nothing and providing poor quality answers are clearly missing the point of the OSC's requirements," said de Cordova. "We think it raises questions about management's strategic direction and ability to manage, if they have missed the point this much on such simple reporting requirements."

Thus far, NEI's research is showing correlations between those who have missed the point on diversity disclosure and underperformance in organizational management and financial performance.

WHAT DOES HR HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

Many HR professionals may be asked to contribute to their company's response on the OSC diversity disclosure requirements. Do you have good answers to provide? The quality of those answers could affect investors' decisions.

It's important that we remove biases in our talent management systems and support all kinds of talented people in becoming successful and rising through the ranks to leadership of our companies. HR professionals have a strong role to play in ensuring inclusion in their organizations and diverse representation at senior levels of management. Your influence is three-fold:

1. Ensuring that advancement policies and procedures are bias- and discrimination-free
2. Creating mandatory learning programs that address both unconscious bias and the more conscious level of stereotyping that have a direct impact on the perception of women's merit
3. Creating progress measurement parameters, with the support of organizational leaders and influencers at all levels to ensure execution

Ultimately, companies benefit when there is diversity at all levels of the company, but especially in the senior management and board of directors.

Consider the board of directors and senior leadership team of your company. What could your organization do to improve? ■

Cathy Gallagher-Louisy leads the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI)'s Research and Knowledge Services portfolio. CCDI has become the trusted advisor for all issues related to diversity, inclusion, equity and human rights management within Canada's workplaces.

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Does Your Organization Need a Leadership Contract?

ENSURE LEADERS FEEL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THEIR ROLES

By Vince Molinaro, Ph.D.

The head of HR at a financial services firm shared some of the frustrations she was experiencing in developing her company's leaders.

"We did all the right things. We identified our high potentials. We put them in development programs. We gave them all VP titles and increased compensation. And now we are waiting – waiting for them to lead," she said. "They aren't leading. They are waiting for direction from the executive team, or acting as bystanders as problems persist or projects derail. It's like they don't know what it means to be a leader."

Does this sound familiar? Similar frustrations could echo from other HR professionals and CEOs.

It seems that many leaders don't understand what it really means to be a leader today. This is called the leadership accountability gap, and it's a widespread problem in many organizations.

Earlier this year, HR People & Strategy (HRPS), the executive division of the Society for Human Resources Management, gave important insights into the state of leadership accountability in organizations today.

Over 200 senior HR leaders responded to the survey from across a wide variety

of industries, representing a number of Fortune 500 companies. The results were eye-opening:

- The survey found that nearly three-quarters of respondents said that leadership accountability was indeed a "critical business issue" in their organization.
- The survey also found that only 37 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the level of leadership accountability in their organizations.
- Only half of the respondents (55 per cent) said that their organizations effectively set clear expectations for their leaders.

Leadership

WHY DOES A LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY GAP EXIST?

We have leadership accountability challenges in our organizations because many leaders fail to understand that when they take on a leadership role, they are actually entering into a formal but often implicit contract. This is the “leadership contract.”

These are the basic terms that all leaders, regardless of size or organization or sector, need to live up to in order to produce meaningful results and earn the continued loyalty of the people they lead.

It’s a lot like conducting an online transaction – downloading music, purchasing an airline ticket or buying a pair of shoes. At some point, a window with a long list of boring, exhaustive terms and conditions pops up, and asks us to “agree.” It’s an online contract.

We all know that if we don’t accept those terms, we won’t be able to complete our transaction. So what do you do when you are multi-tasking and trying to get a lot done? You click “agree” without ever actually reading the terms of the online contract. Studies show 93 per cent of people do this – we never read the terms of online contracts.

It’s pretty clear that many leaders today have just clicked “agree” to get the promotion, the bigger paycheck, the power and the perks without truly understanding what it is they’re signing up for. If leaders sign up to be leaders without understanding what it really means to lead, they won’t be effective.

There are four areas that all leaders must fully understand before signing to take on a leadership role.

LEADERSHIP IS A DECISION

Sometimes, it’s all too easy for leaders to forget that leadership is ultimately a choice. Great leaders describe times in their careers where they had to make a conscious, deliberate decision to step into a situation and lead. But it is in these moments

when you have to be honest with yourself: are you really the right person for the job? Will you be in over your head? Is this really the role you want to fill? If you cannot answer yes to all these questions, don’t sign the leadership contract. Find other ways to add value in your organization.



LEADERSHIP IS AN OBLIGATION

Many leaders don’t appreciate the fact that leadership roles carry significant obligations. In the end, it’s not about you – it’s about your customers, your employees, your shareholders and the communities in which you do business. If you lose sight of these obligations, you will be thinking too much about how to advance your own career and personal self-interest and not enough about how to build long-term success. We need leaders today committed to leaving their organizations in better shape than they found them.

LEADERSHIP IS HARD WORK

If you’ve been leader for any period of time, you know it is hard work. You also know you need to be tough enough to guide your organization through rough

waters. Unfortunately, far too many leaders retreat when the going gets tough. They become bystanders who are afraid to tackle the tough work. Leadership involves having the courage to make difficult decisions about poor performers, holding people accountable and delivering candid feedback. Many leaders often look to HR to do this hard work for them. That’s not real leadership.

LEADERSHIP IS A COMMUNITY

Older concepts of leadership have glorified the image of the lone wolf leader who endures the trials and tribulations of the job in isolation. While it may be necessary to stand alone in some instances, in the end it does not make sense to isolate leaders. The new model is about building a genuine community of leaders. Imagine being part of an organization where instead of isolation, you experience trust, support and mutual aspiration. That is a true community of leaders.

FOUR STRATEGIES TO DRIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

There are four strategies that can help drive strong leadership accountability in your organization. They are each tied to one of the four terms of the leadership contract.

MAKE IT A BUSINESS PRIORITY

Organizations need to also make a decision, which centres on making leadership accountability a business priority. What does this mean in practice? It means that there is a shared sense of clarity among the board, the CEO and executive team and HR on the organization’s responsibility to support leaders to drive strong leadership accountability across the enterprise.

Take a moment to reflect on your own organization and ask the following two questions:

- To what extent is leadership accountability a business priority in my organization?

- In what ways can you make leadership accountability a topic of conversation for the senior management team or the board level?

SENIOR MANAGEMENT MUST BE THE EXAMPLE

Senior management and executives must set the example of strong leadership accountability. If senior leaders are not setting the tone for other leaders in the organization, you won't succeed. It's important that your senior leaders personally understand that leadership accountability starts with them.

HR NEEDS TO SET THE LEADERSHIP BAR HIGH

Often, the human resources function is at the centre of creating a leadership contract for the organization. And, just like senior management, if the HR leaders of the organization do not internalize the terms of the leadership contract, the ideas get watered down. HR has to step up to your leadership accountability. Be the leaders

LEADERSHIP INVOLVES HAVING THE COURAGE TO MAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS ABOUT POOR PERFORMERS, HOLDING PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE AND DELIVERING CANDID FEEDBACK. MANY LEADERS OFTEN LOOK TO HR TO DO THIS HARD WORK FOR THEM.

that everyone else in your company wants to emulate.

CREATE A LEADERSHIP CONTRACT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

Once your organization makes the decision to ensure that leadership accountability is a critical business priority, then you must be clear on your obligation: to create and communicate clear leadership expectations to your leaders. The best way to do this is by creating a leadership contract for your organization that clearly spells out what you expect of your leaders

and what they are signing up for when they take on leadership roles.

HR professionals can use the four terms of the leadership contract to drive greater leadership accountability in their organizations. Creating a company specific contract is a way of setting the bar high for leaders and ensuring they sign up to leadership roles for the right reasons. ■

Dr. Vince Molinaro is a New York Times best selling author, speaker and global managing director of the strategic leadership solutions practice within Lee Hecht Harrison Knightsbridge.



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Bringing Recognition into the Digital Age is Not an Issue

LOSE THE LUGGAGE!

By Jim Hemmer



The employee incentive and recognition industry began to form several decades ago with large companies looking for a way to thank loyal employees for their service with items such as gold watches and engraved crystal pieces. Jewelry companies stepped into this role, with some of them developing recognition divisions to accommodate this new business channel. Jewelry and awards selections evolved slowly to include “lifestyle” items like luggage and electronics, which were sold at large markups behind point values, which hid the real dollar values of these gifts. Eventually, simplistic websites were built to allow employees to browse and order rewards, and were often thrown in for free in exchange for promised spend on merchandise.

Over the past few years, the landscape has changed drastically, and the industry has come around to embracing a technology-first mentality. Today, more than one in three workers are millennials, and that number is growing every day. These younger employees grew up on social networks. They take great technology for

granted. They crave instant feedback. They don’t want to wait for an annual performance review to hear how they’re doing, and they want to feel that they are a part of an organization that is doing something important or positive in the world.

Most organizations have also realized that it takes more to engage their workforce than a “thank you” once every five years – if employees are even staying that long. Google and Amazon have rendered the practice of hiding marked up reward values with points almost obsolete. They have also introduced the concept of

MOST ORGANIZATIONS HAVE ALSO REALIZED THAT IT TAKES MORE TO ENGAGE THEIR WORKFORCE THAN A “THANK YOU” ONCE EVERY FIVE YEARS.

unlimited choice, which makes a catalogue filled with suitcases and last year’s TV models seem even more outdated. And companies are beginning to question what all those points have really bought them.

So, how does your organization bring its recognition program into the digital age?

- **Incorporate social elements into your recognition program:** Make sure you use a platform that has some way of socializing recognition internally. You don’t have to expose your company to Facebook or Twitter to do so. Just make sure that recognitions are made public where employees can comment on them and encourage others on their achievements.
- **Put the power in your employees’ hands:** The days of top-down recognition are over. Employees should be empowered to nominate each other for awards and become active agents in building your company’s culture.
- **Communicate your culture:** The platform should be, first and foremost, a communications tool. It should allow executives and administrators to post information, send emails and even promote some of the more compelling recognition moments. It should also be able to reflect your company’s branding and culture within the design and content.
- **Don’t obsess over points and “stuff”:** It’s nice to get a gift

every now and then, but more important are questions like “How does your platform encourage frequent participation?” or “How can your programs help reinforce our core values?” These are the important aspects of any quality recognition program.

- **Remember the business purpose:** You’re starting a recognition program to increase employee engagement and improve company culture, but you should also be able to get business value from it. Make sure to take a good look at the reporting available, as well as the company’s expertise in the area. There are a lot of new venture capital-backed startups that are building some nice-looking websites with no real engines behind them to collect and analyze data, and little means of helping their clients understand what that data means.

Software will never replace the human side of management and recognition, but especially for larger organizations, it can help to facilitate interactions that might not otherwise happen. It’s time to lose the luggage, embrace these tools, and incorporate them in a way that benefits your organization’s culture and, ultimately, its bottom line. ■

Jim Hemmer is the CEO of CorporateRewards.





Leaders, Beware of Hiring Yourself

WHY IT'S DETRIMENTAL TO A TEAM

By Connie Bentley

No one has a perfect track record when it comes to hiring decisions. The role of a leader in selecting new team members is an uneasy balance, at best. On the one hand we want to hire someone who possesses all the skills and abilities we put in the job requirements, but on the other hand we want to bring in new members to the team who will get along and fit in

with those already here. It can be quite a dilemma.

However, for leaders who want to make sure that they are leading not just a group of individuals, but also a high performance team, one of the most critical differentiators can be the hiring process itself.

In a survey conducted by Corporate Executive Board, 74 per cent of leaders confessed to hiring “in their own image”

when it came to their most recent recruit. And while it's only human for leaders to want to work with people they consider to be like-minded and who they'll be able to get along with easily enough, it's also worrying for a number of reasons.

There are barriers to team effectiveness that unintentionally can be built by leaders who hire the “right” person for them on the intuitive level, yet the “wrong” person

recruitment

for the team, the department or even the organization as a whole.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

Here's where the selection process itself can be a key factor to success in hiring. No one person should be the only point of contact for candidates. There must be several touch points with people in the organization. This way, each person who meets with the candidate or has a phone conversation can be looking for specific characteristics, traits and competencies, as well as cultural fit. The hiring leader should request certain areas to be addressed by each interviewer so that the candidate doesn't have to keep repeating things over and over.

Incorporate a method of getting at how people think, how they address stress or adversity or how they've learned their way out of a jam. Ask questions where candidates share real-life experiences. Additionally, simulations that you've built based on the role can give interviewees a chance to demonstrate their abilities on all levels. This can take the "charm halo" right out of the equation.

The benefits of these steps not only impact the team and the organization, but they also honour the fact that the decision to join a new company is just as important to the candidate as to the hiring leader. Neither of you wants to be meeting six months down the line discussing why this wasn't such a good idea after all, right?

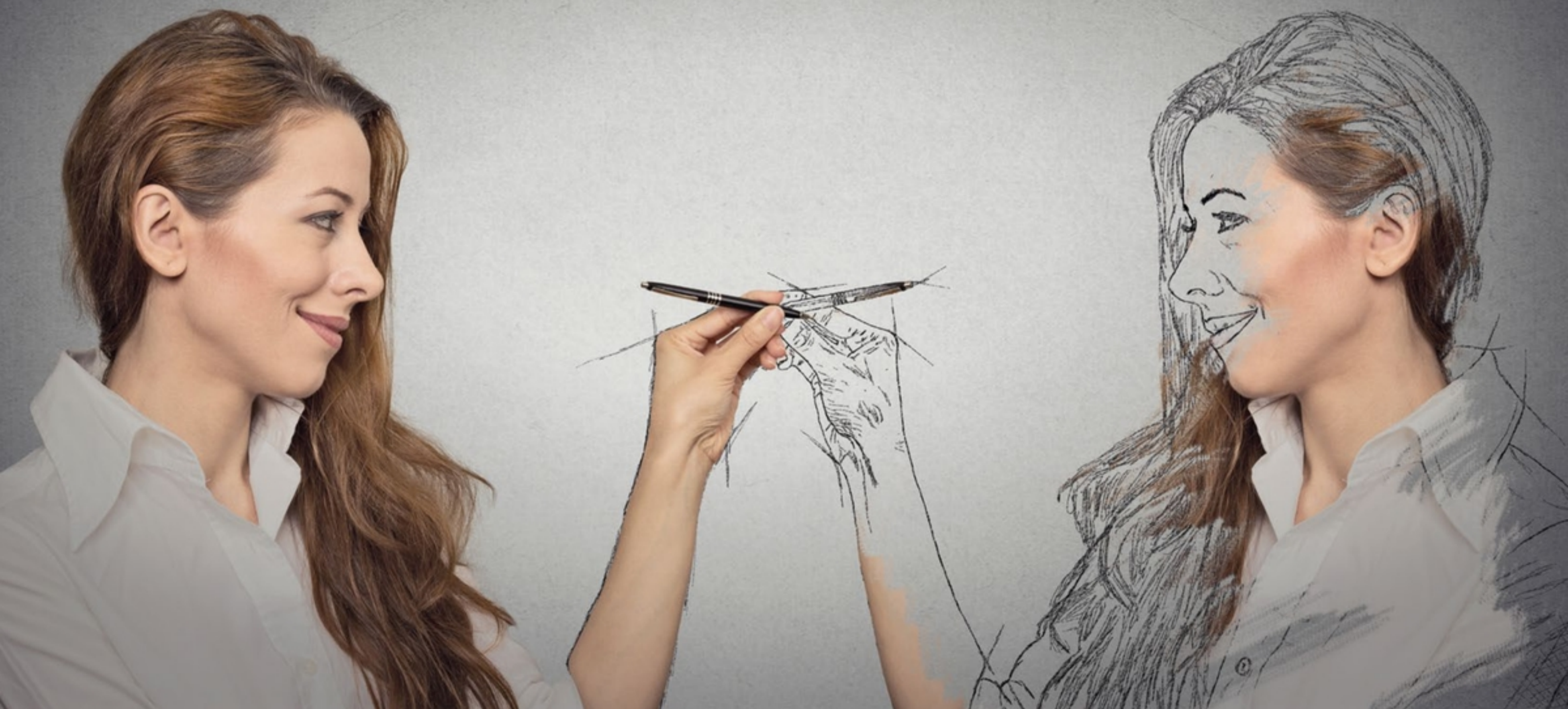
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

What we can miss when we hire people based on a personal comfort level is that without all levels of diversity, a team has little hope of high performance.

When it comes to building diversity into a team, it's not just about age, gender and ethnicity. While those are certainly necessary and desirable in any team, there are additional aspects to diversity and inclusion that can have a deep impact on a team's performance. Here is where to look for different points of view, experience and work style preferences in candidates who can round out the richness of decision-making meetings. If a group is too homogeneous, they are more likely to produce predictable and mediocre results.

**IF A GROUP IS TOO HOMOGENEOUS,
THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO PRODUCE
PREDICTABLE AND MEDIOCRE RESULTS.**

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As the body of work around diversity and inclusion tells us, leaders who are hiring people just like themselves over and over again not only run the risk of stultifying the performance of their team, they're also in danger of acting in a discriminatory manner.

BEWARE "GROUPTHINK"

A leader who is not hiring a variety of people can run the risk of embedding a very undesirable practice in their team. Back in 1972, social psychologist Irving Janis coined the term "groupthink." Groupthink is a phenomenon that occurs in homogenous groups of people, who tend to shy away from conflict and controversy – instead feeling compelled to reach a harmonious agreement among the group.

This can lead to dysfunctional decision-making, as the more unusual, less evidence-based options may generally be dismissed, in favour of safer, more traditional options. Additionally, a misplaced sense of loyalty to the team can prevent individuals from applying critical thinking or asking controversial questions and team members can begin to lack individuality, creativity and independent thinking.

It is only by consciously making the decision to hire people with different skills, work styles, beliefs and experience that leaders will be able to avoid groupthink – although it always needs to be guarded against, as it still can become prevalent in longstanding teams.

THE SKILLSET

A leader who, unwittingly, hires someone just like her/himself is possibly ignoring some of the more salient gaps in the newbie's resume. Just because they gelled on many levels at the interview, and felt they could build a solid working relationship, it



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doesn't necessarily follow that this person is able to fill the skills gaps that the leader and the team need to fill. We all take pains to write the job specifications and requirements for open positions. Hiring leaders should know those facts and be as objective as possible in making sure that the candidate has demonstrated experience and aptitude for those specific responsibilities.

Here's an example: a leader who has a real love of diving deep into data analysis will be likely to warm to someone with similar skills. But, what really is needed isn't necessarily another analyst, it might well be someone who can take the statistics and turn them into an engaging, compelling story, to help get funding and backing from the board. In the interview process, the leader may dismiss candidates who describe themselves as "creative" and a "people person" because it's not what they see in the mirror. But it's important for any leader to take a step back at this time and assess, with a cool head, what is actually

required, and not just what's familiar and comfortable.

A leader who has true self-awareness will know that the way they might choose to accomplish something is not necessarily the only way to get to the same outcome... it's just a different way.

THE PREFERENCES

It's not just an imbalance of skills that can be set off-kilter by hiring through this veil of unconscious bias, either. In the delicate eco-system of "The Team," it doesn't take too much to upset the prevailing climate.

For example, a hiring leader is a thinker, is reassured by evidence, likes to have all of the information available about every project at all times and makes sure that his team runs like clockwork. Sounds good, right?

If that hiring leader continually hires team members just like him, the outcome is going to be a team that is organized, functional and makes sound decisions. But where is the passion, the creativity, the vision – who knows where this team

is going, because no one has ever felt the need to dream up a grand purpose or mission?

A mix of introverts and extroverts, analytical thinkers and gut-feel decision makers, and ordered and unconventional work styles is what leaders need to be aiming for. It's in this variety of personalities and styles that great ideas and projects can find fertile ground.

A scalable and repeatable process can help, but in the end it all boils down to the people. In short, leaders simply must take a step back during the recruitment process, and work out what they need in their team, as opposed to what they think they want. They must be aware of unconscious bias clouding their judgment, and hold themselves to account when they feel the instinctual urge to dismiss candidates who are not like them, both for the good of the team and the organization. ■

Connie Bentley has been leading Insights' U.S. business for over five years.

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Opting In

HR'S ROLE IN TRANSITIONING WOMEN BACK INTO THE WORKFORCE

By Sarah B. Hood

Since author Sylvia Ann Hewlett sounded the alert with such books as *Creating A Life: What Every Woman Needs to Know About Having a Baby and a Career* (2002) and *Off-Ramps and On-Ramps: Keeping Talented Women on the Road to Success* (2007), there has been much discussion about the so-called “opt-out revolution,” the trend for highly skilled women to leave the workforce for several years during their childbearing years.

Some argue that the effects of this “revolution” may be exaggerated. For instance, a study by sociologist Christine Percheski

published in the June 2013 issue of *American Sociological Review* found that fewer than eight per cent of professional women born since 1956 leave the workforce for a year or more during prime childbearing years. Others believe the outflow of talented women represents a significant talent drain that companies should be eager to channel back into the workforce.

“The Canadian workplace is seeing a topping-out of female workers in the core working group, 25 to 44 years old, and participation of women with children under six is only 71 per cent,” said Geeta Sheker, director of the Initiative for Women in Business at the Rotman School of Management at the University



“OUR INDUSTRY IS ALREADY FACING A PROFESSIONAL SKILLS SHORTAGE. THESE WOMEN MAY HAVE ‘OPTED OUT’ FOR A TIME, BUT THEY DON’T LOSE THEIR SKILLS AND EXPERTISE – IF ANYTHING, THEY CONTINUE TO BUILD ON THEM.”

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of Toronto. Besides child-rearing responsibilities, she said, “It could also be for elder care or health issues.”

Another expert agrees.

“I do see them opting out and choosing to raise a family,” said personal coach Sue Austin, CEO of At the Junction Consulting Inc. She also sees many “sandwich generation” women looking after their parents for considerable periods, while others report additional factors.

For instance, Cathy Weaver, VP of human resources at Great-West Life, said, “A bigger influence is that professional women are in a financial situation of being able to remove themselves from the workplace for a longer period of time, and are fairly confident about their ability to return to work when they deem the time is right.”

“Many of them go because they’re disillusioned,” said Sheker. “Perhaps the unconscious biases are so deeply entrenched that this could be an issue, despite all the progress that organizations have made.” For these reasons, the Rotman School administers a Back to Work Program, sponsored by TD Bank Financial Group, which offers coaching, networking events and business-related assignments to women who are returning to business after an extended break.

MUCH-NEEDED SKILLS

Bringing talented professional women back into the workforce offers many advantages to the corporations that hire them, ranging from loyalty and engagement to an increased diversity of thought within the organization.

UP TO SPEED: HOW WOMEN CAN PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR JOB RE-ENTRY



In the midst of a successful career that included time as a Bank of America VP, Judy Tredgett decided she needed more flexibility to look after her family. For the next 12 years, she was self-employed. “But when I got to the point where my family commitments were more manageable, I was very keen to get back into the business,” she said.

Today, Tredgett is associate director of prime services at Scotiabank; however, she says, even after a “slow and deliberate planning stage,” it took about a year of active preparation to move back into the workforce.

She started networking and conducting job market research before successfully applying for the WCM Return to Bay Street Award. Launched in 2010 by non-profit advocacy organization Women in Capital Markets and BMO Capital Markets’ Equity Through Education program, the award is given to professional women who are relaunching a career in the capital markets industry. It provides \$5,000 towards education, a paid four-month internship, mentoring and a one-year WCM membership.

Like the Rotman Back to Work program (which Tredgett also participated in), it’s an effective tool for kick-starting

a return to the regular workplace. But even without a formal program, women can do a lot to ready themselves for re-employment.

- **Network:** “The entire time that you’re off, keep in touch with your work network. Stay up to speed on what’s going on: read the paper and industry magazines,” said Jennifer Reynolds, CEO of Women in Capital Markets.
- **Research the current job market:** “[It’s vital to match] the employment landscape and trends with your value proposition – your skills and experience,” said Geeta Sheker, director of the Initiative for Women in Business at the Rotman School of Management.
- **Take a course:** “Understand the transferable skills and capabilities that are looked for in the field that you want to enter and brush up on those,” said Cathy Weaver, VP of human resources with Great-West Life.
- **Believe in yourself:** “Don’t be apologetic: you have tremendous talent, tremendous abilities,” said Reynolds. “Have confidence in that tremendous asset you’re going to bring to that corporation when you come back.”

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“Studies of companies that have more women in senior executive roles and on their boards have shown they are more profitable and have higher shareholder return,” said Jennifer Reynolds, CEO of Women in Capital Markets (WCM), the largest network of professional women in the Canadian capital markets industry.

“Our industry is already facing a professional skills shortage,” said Weaver. “These women may have ‘opted out’ for a time, but they don’t lose their skills and expertise – if anything, they continue to build on them.”

Human resources professionals can play an important role in assisting women as they transition back into the workforce, says Mary Ann Baynton, program director for the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace. “If someone is off for 12 weeks or more – for any

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reason – then there is a need to consider a graduated return to work, retraining and reorientation to the workplace culture and the co-workers.”

When re-integrating highly skilled professional women, “get that buy-in from senior management, then make sure that there’s going to be a supportive environment,” said Reynolds. “Make sure you’ve set up mentors to help those women navigate.”

MAT LEAVE: BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

For working mothers in particular, reintegration begins with the start of parental leave.

“You need to have a process to increase engagement, to reduce alienation while they’re away and to increase loyalty,” said Sheker. “Implement a transition plan, really make them feel engaged, sending them updates on clients, any new practices, inviting them to social events, making sure they feel included.”

“They’re looking for flexibility with clear performance goals,” said Austin. She recommends a toolkit that includes “policies for how they can phase back in, courses to help update them, social media. The other piece that’s really paramount is the sense of community: mentoring, peer coaching groups, yoga at lunch.”

“Many solutions can be found under ‘Accommodation Strategies,’ on our website, workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com,” said Baynton. “The important thing is to have a conversation with the employee where you’re clear about employer expectations, but creative in helping them to come up with their own solutions.”

“We need to challenge ourselves,” said Reynolds. “There are all kinds of assumptions when women have children – are they still committed to their career? Often, if you take time off, it tends to take you off the leadership track permanently: that’s what we need to fix.”

Some of the repair work is already underway. Through initiatives like the WCM’s Return to Bay Street Program (see sidebar), a valuable talent pool is being channelled back into the workforce, says Reynolds. “We’re bringing women back in real roles.” ■

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HR CAREER PATHS:

Stephen Green

LABOUR AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

By Lisa Kopochinski



Growing up in the Ottawa Valley, Stephen Green knows a thing or two about hard work. During his summers as a teen, he worked on his grandparents' dairy farm – an experience he treasures to this day for instilling in him such a strong work ethic.

He was also an excellent student, so it wasn't much of a stretch that Green wanted to attend university – even though he would be the first in his family to do so. What was an uphill battle was affording it, since Green lost his father while still in high school and money was tight. However, his tenacity prevailed and by working part-time to pay for tuition and rent, Green graduated from the University of Ottawa with a law degree.

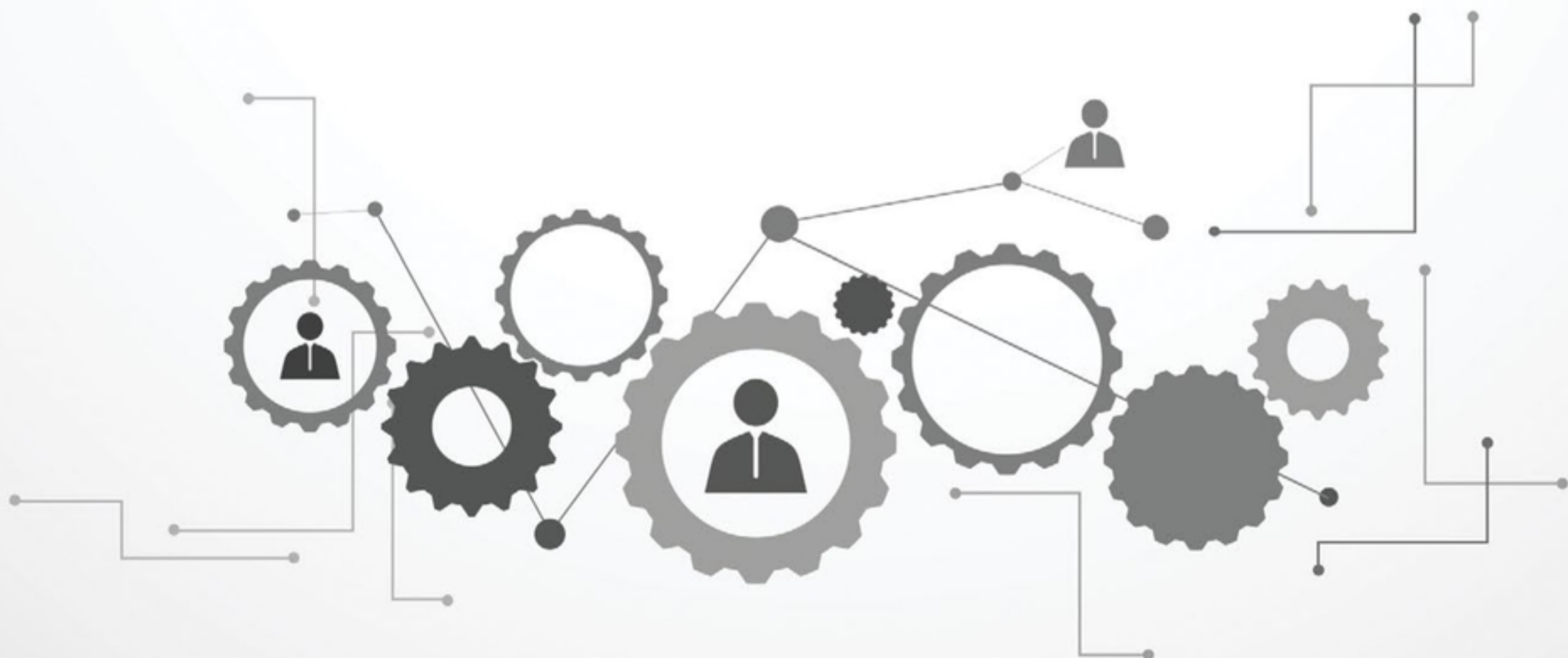
"I've always had a strong sense of justice," he said. "My love of labour law was instilled by some impassioned professors at law school. So upon graduation I articulated for a labour law firm in Ottawa, and then started my own law firm focusing on

employment and labour law. My legal practice grew quickly and was going well, but the demand made it difficult for me to spend time with my young family."

After four years, Green made the decision to enter the HR field in the hopes of achieving a better work-life balance.

"I found a position in labour relations that gave me the opportunity to use the skills I developed in my law practice, while also affording a greater opportunity to collaborate with managers and union representatives and negotiate interest-based settlements."

He was soon working on some of the most complex and demanding labour relations projects in the country, such as the amalgamation of 12 municipalities into the City of Ottawa, as well as leading collective bargaining on behalf of Ontario's 150 hospitals, which employs more than 100,000 health care professionals with a total compensation of over \$7 billion.



LABOUR RELATIONS PROVIDES AN UNCOMMON LEVEL OF EXPOSURE TO ALL AREAS WITHIN HR.



"I've also worked with provincial government officials advocating for legislative reform of labour laws, consulting on ways to improve the labour relations framework in Ontario and helping to draft legislative bills," he said.

It was his extensive experience that led NAV CANADA to hire Green when they needed someone to help support their national labour relations research program.

As the world's first fully privatized civil air navigation service provider, NAV CANADA is responsible for guiding thousands of aircraft safely through Canadian-controlled airspace every day. Formed in 1996, it has a safety record that is among the best in the world.

HR Professional recently spoke to Green about his role at NAV CANADA as labour and employee relations manager.

What are your main areas of responsibility in your current role?

Stephen Green: We have a team of dedicated professionals, most of whom are represented by one of eight bargaining agents. Generally speaking, my role is to provide advice and guidance. I do this primarily by ensuring managers and employees understand and comply with the applicable collective agreements, policies, legislation and regulations that govern our workplace. I'm also involved in workforce planning and ensuring appropriate staffing levels and for succession management.

What do you like most about your job?

SG: I'm analytical by nature and enjoy resolving disputes by finding common interests. I'm a big proponent of interest-based problem solving. By looking beyond positions to the underlying interests at play in a dispute, it's usually possible to find win-win solutions. I remember attending a labour law seminar a few years ago and the presenter showed examples of innovative and principled collective agreement language. I was pleasantly surprised to see that many of the examples used were clauses I had developed. I took that as a sign that I was on the right track with my approach.

What do you like most about human resources?

SG: It sounds like a cliché but HR truly does provide an opportunity to work with a wide variety of issues and to interact with managers, employees and union representatives from across the entire organization. In particular, labour relations provides an uncommon level of exposure to all areas within HR. New issues come up constantly, presenting new challenges and opportunities, which keeps things fresh and interesting.

What does a typical day look like?

SG: I get a hundred or more questions a day from managers, employees and union representatives. Probably due to my legal training, my first impulse is to gather as much information about the issue as possible in order to understand it fully. Many days I'm

also required to travel to cities throughout Ontario for meetings, to investigate issues firsthand or conduct disciplinary or grievance meetings.

What are some of the challenges you experience?

SG: Many of the issues I encounter are very important to the people involved. Sometimes they can get quite aggressive or even offensive in their comments and behaviour. I've seen people get hysterical and cry. In rare cases, I've seen people throw insults, books and even furniture during meetings. Sometimes, the outbursts are contrived and the person is posturing for effect, but in other cases people become genuinely unhinged and lose self-control. When emotions run high, you need a thick skin and you have to take the high road.

What skills do you possess that make you a great fit for your position?

SG: This may be more of a competency than a skill, but in labour relations it's crucial to establish integrity and credibility with stakeholders. If managers, employees and union representatives can't trust you, you aren't going to be able to negotiate agreements.

What are your career goals for the next one to three years and for the long term?

SG: My goal over the next few years is to become a chief human resources officer. Throughout my career, I've managed most areas of HR and have become familiar with all aspects through my experience in collective bargaining and grievance handling. I'd like to continue to grow and develop my leadership and problem-solving skills where I can make the biggest difference.

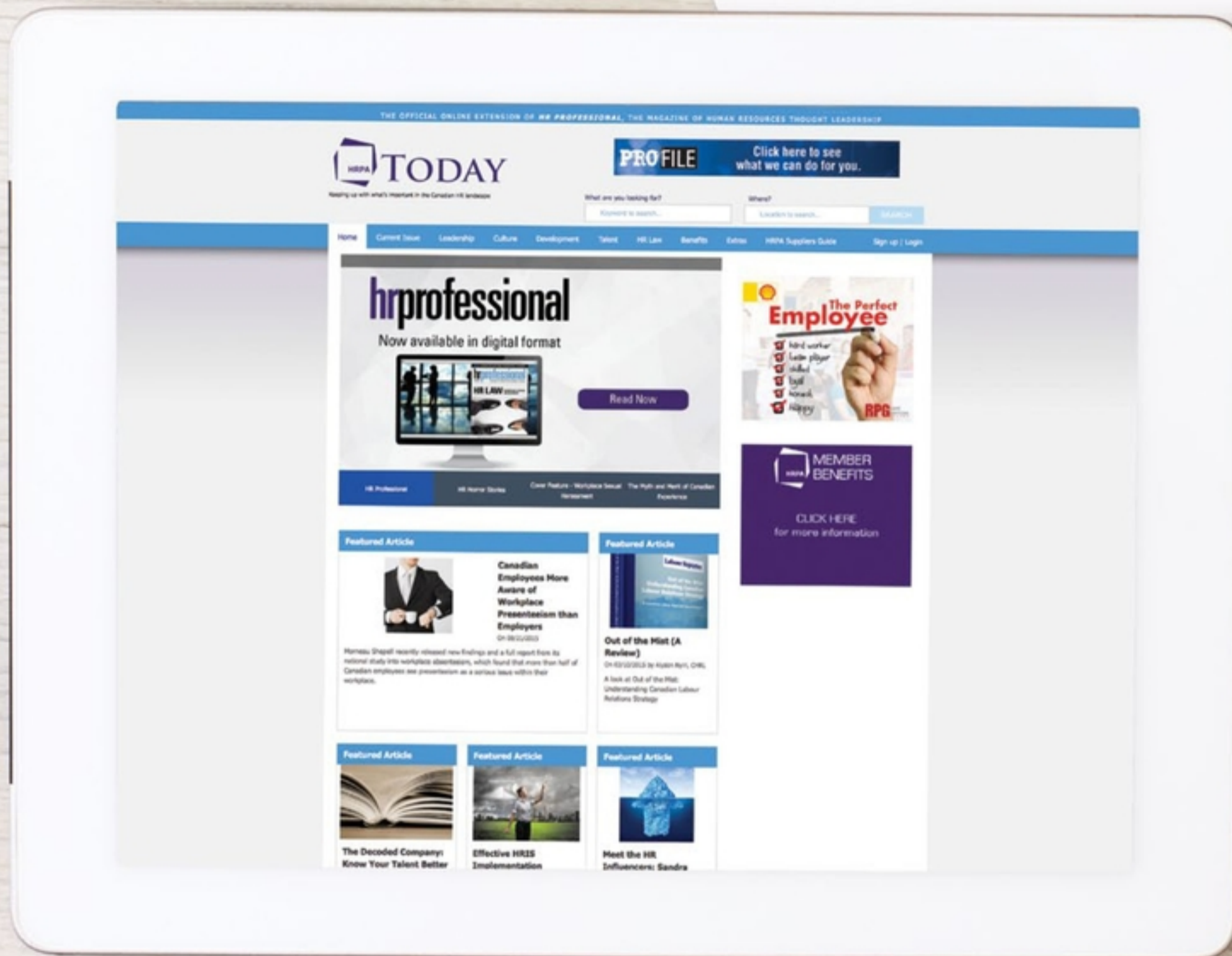
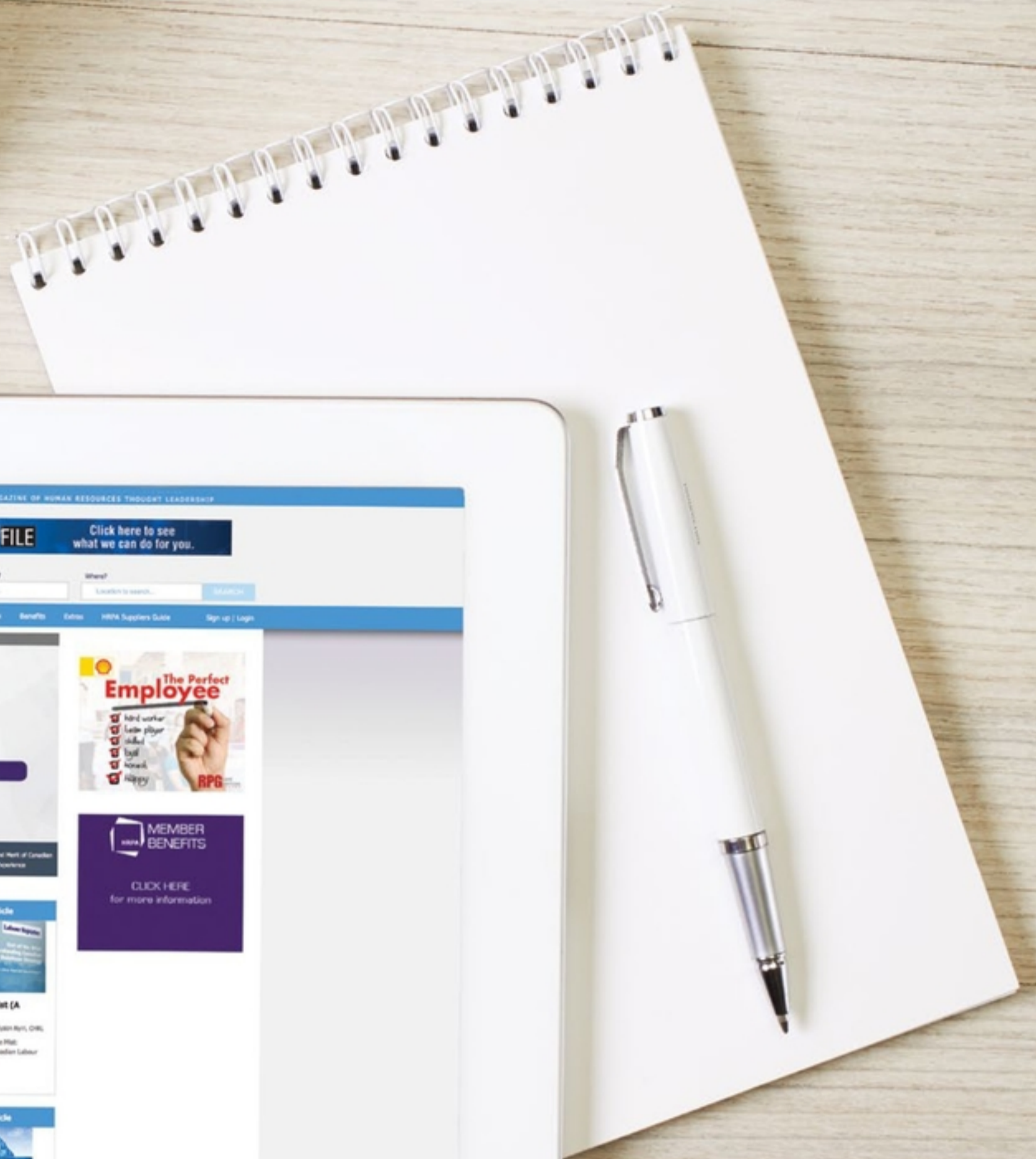
Down the road, I've often thought that it would be fun to teach at a university or college. I've guest lectured and taught classes at both college and university.

What advice do you have for others interested in pursuing a career in both labour and employee relations and HR? What about for those already in field?

SG: People thinking of entering the field should ask a lot of questions and seek advice from current HR professionals. I encourage people to take every opportunity to continue learning by taking courses or going to seminars or other forms of professional development training.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

SG: I live in Toronto, so I have the opportunity to try a lot of artistic experiences like the National Ballet of Canada, theatre, music concerts, film festivals like the Toronto International Film Festival, sports and great restaurants. I have friends who are accomplished classical musicians so I regularly go to their concerts. ■



TODAY

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MEET THE HR INFLUENCERS:

EVA BEZUGLY

CULTIVATING GROWTH FROM THE GROUND UP

By Lisa Gordon





ENSURE YOU SPEND ENOUGH TIME IN A POSITION TO REALLY GAIN THE EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO PROGRESS – YOU’RE NOT THERE JUST TO TICK THE BOX AND SAY YOU’VE DONE IT. BE A SPONGE AND ABSORB EVERY EXPERIENCE. UNDERSTAND WHY THINGS ARE DONE, NOT JUST HOW.

More than 30 years ago, Eva Bezugly took an entry-level administrative job in a major accounting firm. Opportunity knocked when the personnel assistant left the company and Bezugly added those duties to her own portfolio. The rest, as they say, is history.

Over the years, the “personnel department” morphed into “human resources” and then into “talent,” and Bezugly’s career grew and changed, too. With each progressive position, she committed to a positive attitude and made the most of every opportunity, focusing on achieving growth, development and personal excellence.

Her story is the quintessential “work your way to the top” tale. Today, Bezugly is the director of HR for EY’s Canadian tax practice. It’s been a long but enjoyable road, paved with plenty of opportunity. Recently, *HR Professional* spoke with Bezugly about the experiences and challenges that have defined her career.

When did you decide you wanted a career in human resources? Describe your first job in the field.

Eva Bezugly: In the early 1980s, I joined one of the Big Four accounting firms as an administrative assistant. When the opportunity arose I assumed some personnel duties, soon realizing that I preferred the human resources aspect of my job. During my 17 years at that firm, I grew and developed in all areas of HR. I then moved to a similar position at EY after a merger. In less than a year, I was promoted to senior manager, essentially looking after HR for the Central Tax region and leading HR operations for Tax across Canada, reporting to the director of talent. After his transfer to another service line, I was asked to take on that people leader role. The fact that I learned from the ground up and developed my HR operations skills has been the catalyst for the opportunities presented to me.

First job: Sales clerk in the houseware/hardware department of a local department store. I mixed paint, cut keys, serviced customers and ran the till (back in the days when we had to count out change!).

Childhood ambition: Work hard, and find a job that would allow me to live well. Get married, have children and travel to experience life's great adventures.

Best boss and why: I have been blessed with so many great bosses. I know that someone was looking after me. My bosses have focused on my strengths

and allowed me to lead, no matter what position I was in.

Current source of inspiration: I'm inspired by seeing people grow and develop: my children, my HR team, the Tax people with whom I work each day and who have progressed in their careers. I'm moved and motivated by their accomplishments.

Best piece of advice you ever got: As a child of immigrant parents, we were told to experience everything that life has to offer. Work hard, do it well, but ensure that everything you do, you do it with values.

Favourite music: '80s and '90s top hits – my kids continually tease me about this!

Last book you read: I love to read, mostly Oprah recommendations, life books and all sorts of fiction novels.

How you spend your time away from work: We have a cottage in the Lake of Bays area where we spend most of our free time. It is one of the only places where I can de-stress and recharge my batteries. I love to swim, kayak, go boating or tubing – pretty much anything to do with the water. Also, I am the shopping queen, have the travel bug and love to go to the movies.

Describe your current job. What are your main areas of responsibility?

EB: I am the director of talent for the Tax practice in Canada, which has more than a thousand people. I am responsible for all aspects of Talent, including operations and strategy. I am a key member of the Canadian Talent Team Executive and a trusted resource to the managing partner, Talent. Our goal is to provide our staff with exceptional career experiences to enhance their brand and the brand of the firm.

What do you love about your job?

EB: There are two components that translate into great morale: job satisfaction and a positive work environment. EY is a great place to work! First, I am fortunate to work with exceptional leaders in Tax who are genuine experts in their field; they are progressive and understand the importance of HR as their business partner. Second, we have a collegial and high-performing executive HR group. I am also very proud of my team that supports the Tax practice, as we continually strive to deliver insights to our people both from an employee and business perspective. It is extremely gratifying to work with individuals who are committed to exceptional client delivery. Seeing them grow, develop and support our team makes me very happy!

What are the challenges you experience in your job?

EB: As one of the Big Four firms, we develop our people so they become specialists in their field through formal training, on-the-job experience and with mentors and coaches. Our people are continually approached with lucrative offers to go to clients, other industry opportunities or our competitors. It is a challenge to retain and continue to recruit and replenish the best talent. In this ever-changing market where people are continually switching careers and jobs, we are faced with ensuring our people see the career value in becoming leaders of the firm. We understand the importance of having a balanced and diverse workforce, especially with our future leaders.

What's key to leading HR during a difficult time for a client organization?

EB: It's important to be aligned with the needs of the business and yet sensitive to the concerns of our people during difficult times. We need to ensure our communications and actions are open, honest and transparent, so that our people understand our decisions and the vision supporting our goals. Together with our business leaders and staff, we need to address these challenges and execute our plan.

What skills are important for success in HR?

EB: I can list a few: business acumen and problem solving; empathy and listening; positive attitude and energy to succeed; adaptability to change; and the ability to build specialist skills, ensuring exposure to various areas of HR. And you have to love what you do!

What tips do you have for new grads or those in entry-level HR jobs who want to move up the ladder?

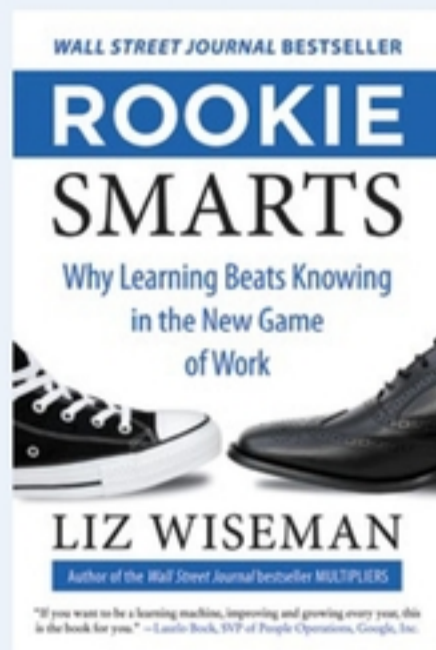
EB: Be open-minded; be willing to try different things. Be positive, because "attitude will get you altitude." Ensure you spend enough time in a position to really gain the experience, knowledge and skills to progress – you're not there just to tick the box and say you've done it. Be a sponge and absorb every experience. Understand why things are done, not just how.

What's the future of HR?

EB: Over the last 20 years, more organizations have evolved to being a strategic partner with the business and sitting at the table with leadership. In the future, I see HR as a key component to solving business problems from a people perspective. With data analytics and systems becoming an increasingly important strategy for all businesses, HR transactional services will decline. We will need to become more strategic to offer deep insight and solutions to businesses to advance their profitability and margins. ■

OFF THE SHELF

By Alyson Nyiri, CHRL



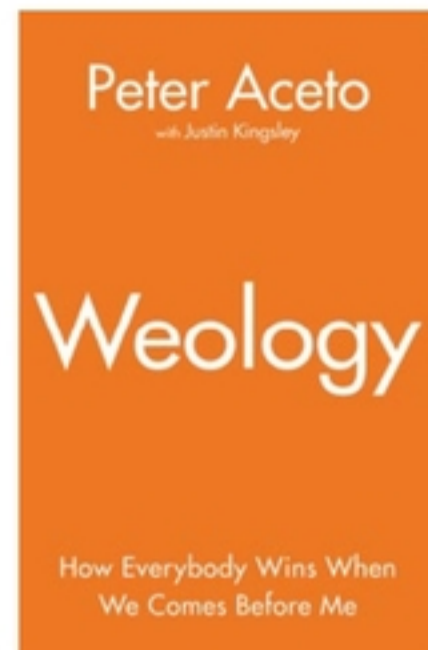
ROOKIE SMARTS: WHY LEARNING BEATS KNOWING IN THE NEW GAME OF WORK

Liz Wiseman
Harper Collins, 2014

Millennials are too often criticized for what seems to be naïve ambition. But what if not knowing is more valuable than knowing? Sometimes, experience can be a burden. Wiseman argues that it is possible to be at our best when we are under-qualified. Being stretched beyond our current capabilities can open us up to learning from others and our environment – what she calls “rookie smarts.” Rookies, however, need leadership and creating a rookie organization takes careful and sustained HR practices that challenge the experience-based HR policies so pervasive in past decades.

Talking point

Rookie talent is often unnoticed or buried. Wiseman argues those with experience have the insight to identify and promote new talent, popularize fresh thinking and challenge convention.



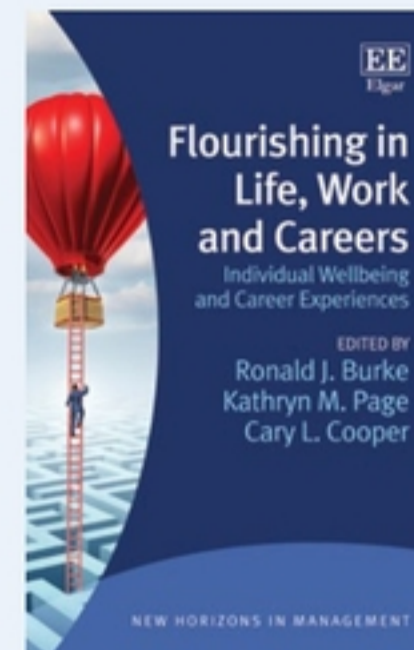
WEOLOGY: HOW EVERYBODY WINS WHEN WE COMES BEFORE ME

Peter Aceto with Justin Kingsley
Harper Collins, 2015

“A lot of my peers are worried about the new generation... too entitled, too superficial, too restless, too demanding,” writes Aceto. Where others see problems, Aceto sees potential. His view highlights the thinking at Tangerine Bank: building a culture in which individuals have the means to thrive, be happy and succeed. The culture revolves around Aceto’s philosophy, “Weology,” a way of putting people first in the short term so the company can thrive in the long term. *Weology* offers leaders practical insight on how to create, nurture and promote a culture that creates benefits for its people, customers and shareholders.

Talking point

Dress policies run the gamut. At Tangerine, the dress code is casual. Presentable is the rule. Aceto does not believe a dress code will define performance. A supportive team, strong leadership, accountability and passion will.



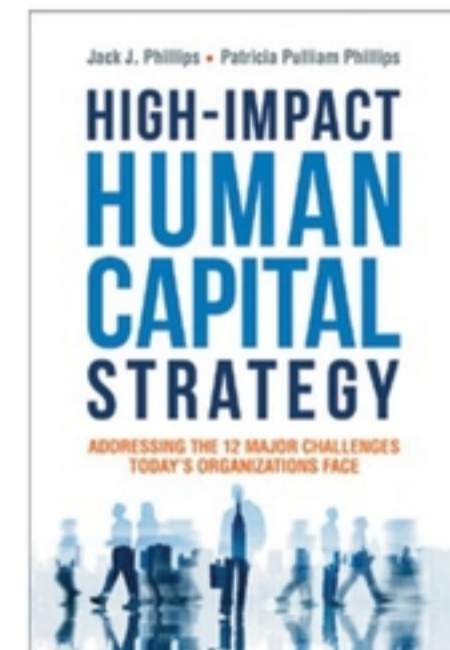
FLOURISHING IN LIFE, WORK AND CAREERS: INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING AND CAREER EXPERIENCES

Ronald Burke, Kathryn Page,
Gary Cooper, Eds.
Edward Elgar, 2015

With more employees reporting higher levels of job insecurity, stress and disengagement, there are signs that individuals are not flourishing in their central roles of family, work and careers. How well individuals sculpt their work and personal lives impacts organizational success. Employers who contribute to their employees’ ability to “flourish” in life and work reap enhanced performance, productivity and health. *Flourishing* provides new thinking on individual and organizational wellbeing from a host of Canadian and international academics.

Talking point

Canadian researchers reveal the complexities faced by the “sandwich generation,” cautioning employers to take note of the findings: the proportion of Canada’s workforce with multigenerational caregiving demands will increase in the next decade.



HIGH IMPACT HUMAN CAPITAL STRATEGY: ADDRESSING THE 12 MAJOR CHALLENGES TODAY'S ORGANIZATIONS FACE

Jack Phillips and
Patricia Pulliam Phillips
Amacom, 2015

Packed with cogent analysis and accessible tools, *High Impact* delivers a long-needed update to human capital (HC) strategy. Easily used by managers yet effective as a textbook, the authors provide an overview of the new rules of human capital management. To deliver clear and credible results, it has to have an HC strategy that focuses on 12 goals: investment, business alignment, talent management, employee engagement, performance and innovation, employee health, demographics and societal change, technology, globalization, environmentalism, global leadership and analytics and big data.

Talking point

“No function, process, or issue in an organization is more important than the human capital managed by the HR department.” ■

The Learning Question

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CONVERSATIONS (EVEN MORE) USEFUL

By Michael Bungay Stanier

It's frustrating, isn't it? You've got great opinions, ideas and solutions and you're doing your very best to help those you serve. You're drawing on years of experience, your latest reading and the latest HR trends about what really matters.

And yet...while you see people nodding and apparently agreeing with you, few actually act on your good advice.

It may be cold comfort, but it's not you. It's true for everyone. Advice and ideas are readily given out and, for the most part, ignored.

RESISTANCE

Edgar Schein in his book *Helping: How to Offer, Give, and Receive Advice* points out the paradox of trying to be helpful. Your offer to help raises your rank ("I've got the answer") and lowers theirs ("You need to be helped"). And we know from the neuroscience of engagement that reducing someone's status decreases their engagement. Ironically, the offer to help creates resistance to the very help on offer.

Schein suggests that the place to start is one of humble curiosity, where asking questions is your default behaviour, rather than providing answers. There are many of good questions to ask, but there is one in particular that has an alchemical effect of turning regular conversations into powerful learning experiences.

HOW PEOPLE LEARN

People don't learn when you tell them something. They don't even really learn when they do something. They only learn when they have an opportunity to reflect back on what just happened and extract the lesson.

Therefore, one of the most powerful questions you can ask is the "Learning Question," the perfect "last word" in any meeting.

Here it is:

"What was most useful about this conversation for you?"

ONE QUESTION, THREE BENEFITS

When you finish your conversations with the Learning Question – a variation is, "What was most valuable here for you?" – three good things happen.

The first is you help them extract and own the value in the conversation for themselves. They may entirely miss it otherwise.

Second, they give you feedback about the conversation you've just had. So often we just guess at how successful a conversation has been. You think you rocked it, while they're rolling their eyes behind your back. You worry it was a disaster, while they're marveling at your wisdom. This way, you actually find out what was useful (and by implication, what wasn't) so that next time you can do more of the first and less of the latter.

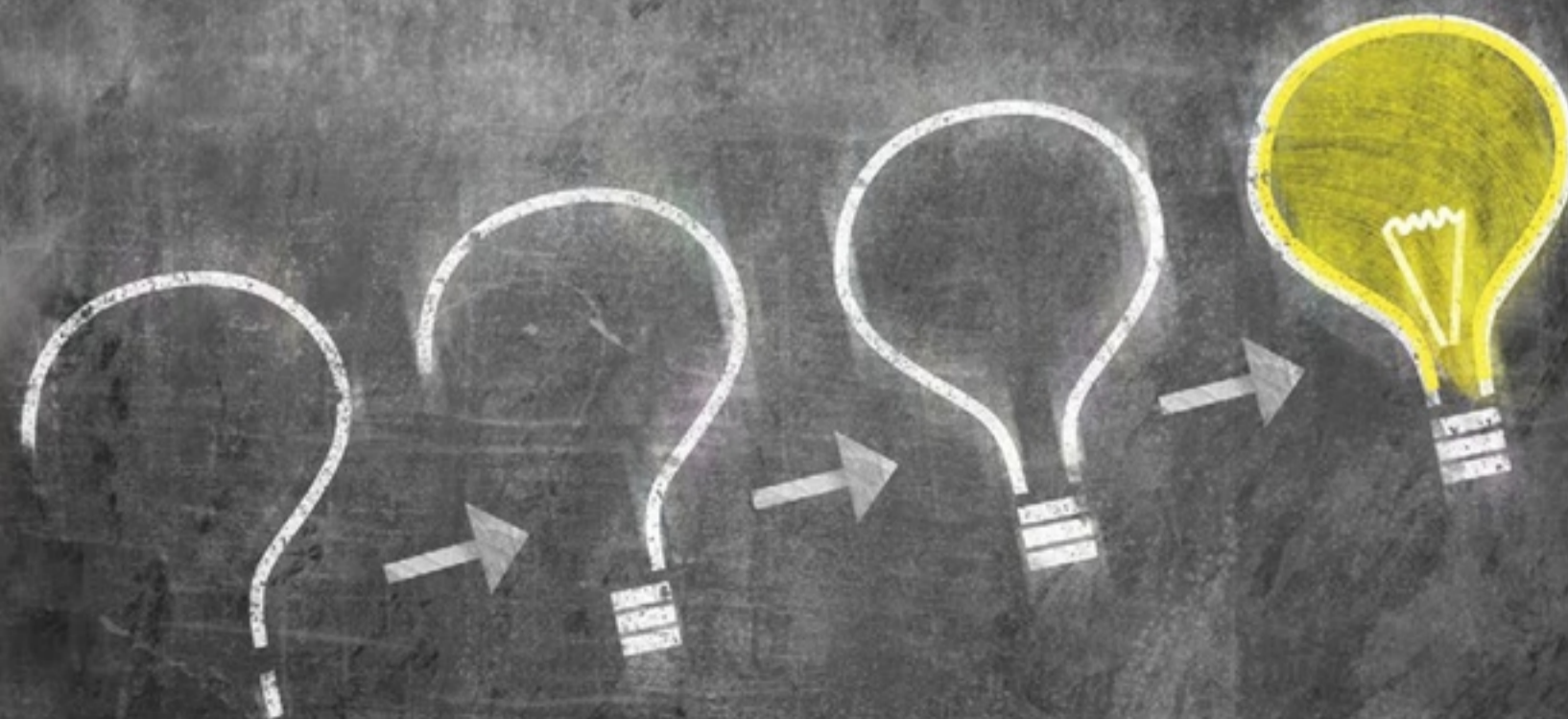
Finally, you frame every conversation with them as useful. Notice that you're not asking them, "Was this useful?" You're asking them, "What was most useful for you?" In other words, of course this was a useful conversation...now, what was the highlight?

STAY CURIOUS

As HR professionals, we're committed to providing our clients with value. Too often, our keenness to offer help actually creates resistance. Stay humble, stay curious. And help people see the value in your conversation by asking, "What was most useful here for you?" ■

Michael Bungay Stanier is the senior partner at Box of Crayons, a company that gives managers the tools they need to coach in 10 minutes or less.

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WHEN THEY HAVE
AN OPPORTUNITY
TO REFLECT
BACK ON WHAT
JUST HAPPENED
AND EXTRACT
THE LESSON.



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