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CHOOSING THE RIGHT PATH

The new year seems an appropriate time to take stock of your professional life. As a result, this issue is dedicated to discovering your—or helping your employees discover their—true path, optimize strengths and boost performance.

In preparation for this issue, I took several personality assessment tools commonly used to determine aptitudes, including the Primary Colours Assessment (created by author and entrepreneur Rick Smith), which assigns a colour

to a combination of traits, work behaviours and preferences; and the Clifton Strengths Finder (used by Gallup executive and best-selling author Tom Rath), which identifies an individual's five core talents. Each tool uses a different approach to improve work performance. Find out more by reading "Build on your Strengths" on page 22, and an interview with Tom Rath, on page 37.

In the spirit of full disclosure, my Primary Colour is the deeply dependable Chocolate Mousse and my five strengths, according to StrengthsFinder, are responsibility, learner,

harmony, relator and individualization. While this may not say much to you, reading the full analyses reveals that I'm in the right job, which is worth celebrating.

Exclusive invite

HR Professional magazine also has a lot to celebrate in 2010: we are increasing our circulation to eight issues from six and, drum roll please, the magazine turns 25 years old in February—a major publishing milestone.

To commemorate this silver anniversary, we are hosting a reception at HRPA's 2010 Annual Conference & Trade Show. Join me on Thursday, January 28 at 4 p.m. at the HRPA trade show booth to help celebrate just how far the magazine and the HR profession has come in the last two decades.

Enjoy the issue,

Meredith Birchall-Spencer

Meredith Birchall-Spencer
Editor



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RICK SMITH

Author Rick Smith explains how identifying the strengths and passions of your employees can unlock their potential and boost performance in the future, on page 22.



AMYK HUTCHENS

To determine organizational “fit,” accurately assessing past performance is critical when interviewing potential hires, says executive coach AmyK Hutchens, on page 26.



STEPHANIE KALINOWSKI

Stephanie Kalinowski, partner, Hicks Morley Hamilton Stewart Storie LLP, outlines the hidden costs of the proposed Harmonized Sales Tax on pension and benefits plans, on page 19.



JIM CLEMMER

Jim Clemmer, author, keynote speaker and leadership coach, offers sage advice on choosing optimism and leading in times of constant change, on page 46.

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LEADERSHIP MATTERS

BY ANTOINETTE BLUNT

MANAGER SHORTAGE COULD CRIPPLE ORGANIZATIONS

For those of us who will be guiding the workforces of the future, the *2009 World of Work Report* by Randstad, the second-largest staffing organization in the world, has some grim news—specifically on the management front. For the past few years, these reports have mentioned the shortage of skilled and talented employees; but this year, the survey results stress the imminent shortage of qualified managers to fill the void retiring baby boomers are already starting to create.

And there is more: Not only will there be a shortage dictated strictly by demographics, there is also a lack of will on the part of those who are currently in the workforce and could aspire to management positions.

“It is clear that finding and preparing the next generation of managers is rapidly becoming one of the most critical business needs in the modern workplace,” the report states. Further, it found that those with the most experience are the least likely to want to become management.

The report, drawn from a survey of 2,199 employees and 833 managers in the U.S., found that only 49 per cent of employees aspire to be managers and, specifically, only 42 per cent of generation Y employees (aged 18-29), 47 per cent of generation X (aged 30-44) and 50 per cent of baby boomers (aged 45-63).

The response, state the report’s authors, may be because managers do not make their jobs seem very attractive. In short, the combination of long hours, a lot more responsibility and not much more money is not motivating these folks.

What does? Respondents named sharing knowledge with others, being responsible for the success of an organization, and able to influence decisions in the organization. The idea of being responsible for budgets and working in a high-pressure environment ranked considerably lower.

Further, based on answers from younger people, in a question about what they look for in role models, the report’s authors say honour and character will always trump gamesmanship and business skills. The reality is that younger generations are more likely to name their parents, teachers and co-workers than their bosses or business leaders as role models.

So, where does HR go from here?

We need to ensure we train and support existing managers to demonstrate desirable behaviour to younger generations. In addition, we need to consider models of work that include the traits that will attract younger workers to consider moving up the corporate ladder. This can begin with hiring practices where HR can explore what the potential employee is looking for in a job. HR can also speak with existing employees about what they value about their work and what would interest them in the future, within the organization’s structure. Employees should be given opportunities to continue to learn and develop.

In addition, it’s important that employees are kept apprised of their organization’s strategic priorities and how to influence its success. The organization should also adopt a decision-making framework that considers employee input wherever possible and supports involvement in decision-making to varying degrees, depending on the nature and level of the decision. A sense of being “in on things” and having an impact on the future of the organization will sustain a feeling of belonging and worth among employees. **HR**



Antoinette Blunt is chair of the Human Resources Professionals Association's board of directors.

MONEY

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*TOTAL COMPENSATION COMBINES BASE ANNUAL SALARY OR HOURLY WAGE, BONUSES, PROFIT SHARING, TIPS, COMMISSIONS AND OTHER FORMS OF CASH EARNINGS, AS APPLICABLE.

Source: Payscale.com

OFTEN INSECURE

Bosses who feel inadequate are more likely to bully subordinates, according to new research from the University of California, Berkeley, published in the November issue of the journal *Psychological Science*.

With more than one-third of American workers reporting bullying bosses, the new study challenges previous assumptions that abusive bosses are solely driven by ambition and the need to hold onto their power.

During role-playing sessions, study participants who felt their egos were under threat would needlessly sabotage an underling's chances of winning money. In another test, they would request that a subordinate who gave a wrong answer to a test be notified by a loud, obnoxious horn, even though they had the option of choosing silence or a quiet sound.



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Participants were rated by their self-reported level of competency, allowing researchers to investigate how feelings of self-worth are tied to workplace behaviour.

"Incompetence alone doesn't lead to aggression," says study co-author Serena Chen. "It's the combination of having a high-power role and fearing that one is not up to the task that causes power holders to lash out. Our data suggest it's ultimately about self-worth."

Participants who scored high in a leadership aptitude test or recalled an incident or principle that made them feel good about themselves did not react with aggression.

Tattoo Ban

RULED DISCRIMINATORY



© MAGDALENA BUJAK / BIGSTOCKPHOTO.COM

A Quebec daycare's ban on visible tattoos for employees has been ruled discriminatory by the Quebec Superior Court.

Chicoutimi daycare worker Nadine Belisle was forced to cover her dragon tattoo because her employer—La Pirouette—had a policy forbidding visible tattoos on employees. Tattooed employees had to cover visible tattoos with clothing.

Belisle filed a complaint arguing the policy violated her freedom of expression, but an arbitrator ruled the daycare was within its rights to implement the ban.

In June, the Quebec Superior Court overturned the ban, saying it was based on prejudices and stereotypes against people with tattoos. The court did say employers could ban employees from showing "inappropriate" tattoos, including ones deemed vulgar or offensive.

"We're professionals and want to give a good example to the children. We agree that if a tattoo is sexist or racist or violent, it should be camouflaged," said union president Sylvie Blackburn to *The Globe and Mail*. "But I don't see how children are going to be traumatized by a flower on someone's ankle."

Source: *The Globe and Mail*

Three Ways to Glow at Work

Lynda Gratton, professor of management at London Business School and author of *Glow: How You Can Radiate Energy, Innovation and Success* offers three tips on how to “glow” at work.

Two colleagues are given high-level projects to work on. One, Fred, hunkers down, closes his door and starts thinking—in isolation. Frank, on the other hand, understands that in a connected, global world, you can’t do everything yourself. He turns to his network and starts bouncing ideas off people.

Guess who comes back with the innovative solutions? “Frank is a co-operative person, he’s connected, he glows,” says Gratton. “If you

want to glow, you have to learn to trust and co-operate with people.”

And you have to reach out to people who are different from you. “Innovation comes from collaborating with people of different mindsets, nationalities, ages—even companies. Building networks across a range of people is a marvellous way of ensuring that you’re always glowing,” says Gratton.

Frank also understood that to get people excited, he had to turn his task into a question or vision. “I find that people who glow are very adept at finding things that are important and meaningful to them, that excite others and create innovation.”



JEAN-FRANCOIS BERGERON, AN ELECTRICIAN AND ALIEN-WORSHIPPER WHO WAS FIRED FROM HIS JOB FOR WEARING T-SHIRTS QUESTIONING GOD'S EXISTENCE, HAS BEEN GIVEN BACK HIS JOB BY A QUEBEC LABOUR TRIBUNAL.

BERGERON, A RAELEAN (A CULT THAT BELIEVES ALIENS CREATED LIFE ON EARTH), BEGAN WEARING THE OFFENDING T-SHIRTS AT HIS WORKPLACE, DELTA TRANSFORMERS INC. IN GRANBY, QUE. HIS EMPLOYER SUSPENDED HIM SEVERAL TIMES FOR REFUSING TO CHANGE THE T-SHIRTS AND EVENTUALLY FIRED HIM IN JANUARY 2008.

HIS UNION TOOK THE ISSUE TO QUEBEC'S COMMISSION DES NORMES DU TRAVAIL, WHICH RULED IN OCTOBER THAT DELTA'S DRESS CODE VIOLATES THE CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS. ARBITRATOR RICHARD MARCHE-TERRE ORDERED BERGERON BE RE-INSTATED WITHIN A MONTH, COMPENSATED FOR LOST SALARY AND ALLOWED TO WEAR HIS SHIRTS.

BC HR ASSOCIATION

UNVEILS METRICS SERVICE

A new HR metrics service introduced by the British Columbia Human Resources Management Association (BC HRMA) allows subscribers to plug into quarterly HR data from a large cross-section of BC employers.

“What we’re providing is common ground,” says Ian Cook, BC HRMA’s director of HR and learning. Members provide quarterly HR data on a number of metrics, BC HRMA crunches the numbers and provides quarterly reports on a whole gamut of HR metrics that members can use for benchmarking. “We do the thinking,” says Cook.

The data includes a growing list of metrics (currently 95) on productivity, retention, workforce demographics and compensation. “We’re looking at things like revenue per full-time equivalent (FTE), labour cost per FTE, vacancy rate, first year turnover, diversity ratio,” says Cook.

Organizations that sign up for the service provide a minimum of 20 quarterly HR data points—headcount, terminations, union headcount, etc.—that feed into the service’s databank. BC HRMA validates and audits the data and sends out a customized metrics and benchmarking quarterly report.

Once the service has a year’s worth of data, it will begin looking at the ranges on certain metrics such as HR Costs per FTE. “We’ll see who’s best, find out how they’re achieving this, and provide lessons learned that other organizations can follow,” says Cook.

“We’ll also be looking at correlations, like exploring if organizations with high engagement scores have any relation with HR/FTE, HR spend/FTE and absenteeism, etc.”

The service currently has 31 BC organizations signed up and the association is looking to partner with other provincial HR associations to open up the service across Canada.

MODEST

PAY HIKES FOR 2010: SURVEY

CANADIAN EMPLOYERS ARE TAKING A WAIT-AND-SEE APPROACH TO SALARY INCREASES FOR THE COMING YEAR AFTER BIG CUTS TO SALARY BUDGETS IN 2009, ACCORDING TO HEWITT'S ANNUAL SALARY SURVEY.

THE AVERAGE SALARY INCREASE IS PROJECTED TO BE 2.8 PER CENT NATIONALLY IN 2010, UP FROM THE 2.2 PER CENT AWARDED IN 2009. ORGANIZATIONS IN ALBERTA AND MANITOBA ARE FORECASTING INCREASES OF 3 PER CENT AND 3.2 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY, WHILE SASKATCHEWAN FIRMS ARE FORECASTING 4.2 PER CENT INCREASES—THE HIGHEST IN THE COUNTRY.

BESIDES REGULAR SALARY INCREASE BUDGETS, 20 PER CENT OF EMPLOYERS HAVE BUDGETED EXTRA FUNDS TO REWARD HIGH PERFORMERS OR THOSE WITH "HOT" SKILLS SUCH AS I.T. AND ENGINEERING. AND ONE-THIRD OF ORGANIZATIONS ARE SETTING ASIDE SEPARATE BUDGETS TO REWARD PROMOTED EMPLOYEES DURING THE YEAR.

LAST JUNE/JULY, 387 ORGANIZATIONS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY REPRESENTING MORE THAN 710,000 EMPLOYEES RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY.

Source: Hewitt Associates

Toyota's A3 Report

We've all heard of brilliant ideas mapped out on cocktail napkins. Toyota has standardized this off-the-cuff thinking with its A3 Report—a one-page problem map that both solves problems and fosters learning.

An A3 (named after the international paper size on which it fits) is simple. It's made up of a sequence of boxes that attempts to: (1) establish the business context and importance of a specific problem or issue; (2) describe the current conditions of the problem; (3) identify the desired outcome; (4) analyze the situation to establish causality; (5) propose countermeasures; (6) prescribe an action plan for getting it done; and (7) map out the followup process.

Essentially, it's a one-page schematic that maps out the problem-solving process. Toyota finds it's an effective learning tool because it allows managers to mentor others in root-cause analysis



© FENG YU / BIGSTOCKPHOTO.COM

and scientific thinking, while encouraging productive dialogue and helping people to learn from one another.

One way to describe the A3 is as "standardized storytelling," which refers to the A3's format: it tells a complete story, with a beginning, a middle and an end, which can be traced from the upper left-hand side to the lower right side. Because readers are familiar with the format, they can

focus easily on the subject matter.

The ultimate goal of the A3 is not just to solve the problem at hand but to make the process of problem-solving transparent and teachable in a manner that creates an organization full of thinking, learning problem-solvers. In this way, the A3 management process powerfully embodies the essence of operational learning.

To see A3 examples, go to www.tinyurl.com/yceuu7.

Source: MIT Sloan Management Review

BANNING NETWORKING SITES KILL PRODUCTIVITY

New research into youth and online communications poses interesting quandaries for employers who ban social networks at work. The study—*Support: Young people's needs in a digital age*—was undertaken by Lancaster University professor Michael Hulme, looked at digital communications used among people aged 16 to 24. The study found 75 per cent couldn't live without the Internet, 45 per cent felt happiest when online and 32 per cent accessed all their information requirements online, without consulting "real" people.

With about 50 per cent of employers currently barring workers from accessing online networks like Facebook, this could cause serious morale and productivity issues for young workers, says Queen's University professor Sidney Eve Matrix.

"If we want to promote work/life balance, employers have to let workers stay connected with family and friends," says Matrix.

There's also evidence that non-work related Internet surfing boosts productivity, according to an Australian study that found workers who indulge in "leisure browsing" are nine per cent more productive than their non-surfing colleagues.

"The study found leisure browsing is tantamount to pressing reset on your brain," says Matrix. "It's odd. We're increasingly asking employees to use online networks to get jobs. You need to be socially media savvy to communicate professionally and then as soon as you get the job we unplug them."



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COURT AWARDS SEVEN YEARS' UNPAID HOLIDAY PAY

Employees may be able to claim unpaid public holiday and vacation pay they were entitled to beyond the basic limitation period of two years.

The Ontario Court of Appeal's recent decision in *Evangelista vs. Number 7 Sales Ltd.* [2008] O.J. No. 3224 (*Evangelista*) establishes that an employee may be entitled to receive unpaid public holiday and vacation time beyond the basic limitation period of two years.

In *Evangelista*, the employee had worked in the used car business for the employer since 1988. The employer approached the employee in April 2003 and proposed a reduction in the employee's compensation of gross profits from 30 per cent to 18 per cent, which the employee accepted. In March 2004, the employer attempted to further reduce the employee's compensation to nine per cent, which the employee refused to accept. The employee and employer entered into

The employer appealed the decision, claiming the trial judge "erred in allowing public holiday and vacation pay going back to 1996 notwithstanding the two year statutory limitation period in s. 96(3) of the [*Employment Standards Act, 2000*] and/or the two year limitation period in the *Limitations Act 2002*."

The Court of Appeal dismissed the employer's appeal, stating: "Section 96(3) of the [*Employment Standards Act, 2000*] does not apply to civil lawsuits. It applies to filing complaints with the ministry of labour. As for the *Limitations Act, 2002*, the [employer] first paid the respondent vacation pay in December 2003. The trial judge accepted the [employee's] evidence that he was not aware of his entitlement to vacation or public holiday pay before that time. The trial judge held that the [employee's] lack of awareness as to his entitlement went to the issue of discoverability. As a result, the [employee's] action, which was commenced in July 2004, was well within the two-year limitation period in the *Limitations Act, 2002*."

Employers should be aware of the Court of Appeal decision in *Evangelista*. The decision provides that the courts may require employers to pay employees any unpaid public holiday and vacation pay they were entitled to during their employment, but not made aware of, for as many years as it is owing, as long as the employee serves a claim for these amounts within the limits provided by the *Limitations Act, 2002*. For protection, employers should ensure their employees are made aware of the public holiday and vacation pay that they are entitled to

receive from the beginning of their employment, whether by means of a hiring letter, employment contract or policy manual. This will crystallize the date of "discoverability" as early as possible, thereby reducing the amount of unpaid public holiday and vacation pay that the employer may have to otherwise provide. **HR**

Ronald S. Minken is a senior lawyer and mediator at Minken Employment Lawyers, an employment law firm in Markham, Ont. Article prepared with assistance from Kyle Burgis and Sara Kauder.

“Employers should ensure their employees are made aware of the public holiday and vacation pay that they are entitled to receive from the beginning of their employment.”

extensive discussions regarding this issue, but no agreement was reached. The employee then commenced an action claiming constructive dismissal.

The trial judge found the employer had constructively dismissed the employee, and awarded 15 months' notice, plus an additional three months for *Wallace* damages, as well as unpaid public holiday and vacation pay owed to the employee dating back to 1996.



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HIDDEN HR COSTS OF ONTARIO'S PROPOSED HST

The Ontario government's plan to introduce a Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) has many pension and benefits implications and could lead to an increase in plan costs.

Effective July 1, 2010, a 13 per cent HST will replace the existing separate federal Goods and Services Tax (GST) and Provincial Sales Tax (PST), and will be collected and administered by the federal government. The HST will apply to many services and products not currently subject to PST, effectively increasing the cost by eight per cent. Businesses can claim tax refunds on the entire HST, not just the GST, they pay when producing their goods and services. As with the GST, the government is proposing to issue rebates to eligible Ontario taxpayers.

Effect on retirement plans

The introduction of the HST could create a double whammy effect on retirement savings plans.

Many of the expenses associated with the administration of a registered pension plan, like professional services, are not currently subject to PST but when the HST replaces the PST, those services may cost more.

On September 23, 2009, the federal Department of Finance released draft legislation that will restrict ITC claims to 33 per cent of the GST paid on plan-related expenses, and in most cases allow only the pension plan and not the sponsoring employer to claim the rebate. In addition, if an employer is not currently eligible to claim ITCs for GST (such as certain financial institutions), ITCs will not likely help in offsetting the additional eight per cent it may pay on plan-related expenses.

HST will affect pension plans and defined contribution savings plans in other ways as well. Investment funds do not currently charge PST on their management fees, but it is expected that HST will apply, increasing the investment expenses and lowering the investment returns. Members in Capital Accumulation Plans who pay the management expenses on those funds through their accounts will be affected by lower returns, as will defined benefit-plan-sponsors. In a defined-benefit plan, lower investment returns is one of the factors that can increase the employer's cost of funding the plan.

Benefit plans

Group benefits plans are another potential source of increased costs due to the HST.

Many eligible expenses, like massage therapy, are not currently subject to PST, but could be subject to HST, resulting in a higher tax rate levied on that expense. It is expected that prescription drugs and medical devices will continue to be exempt from the provincial portion of the HST, but other extended medical services may not. For

employers whose plans have maximums, their overall claims may not increase, but employees will receive less coverage because more of the maximum will be taken up by the additional tax. Employers whose policies do not have maximums may find that their claims costs increase due to the effect of the HST.

Many professions, such as registered massage therapists, have begun campaigns to the Ontario government to have their services exempted from

“If the HST results in higher costs, employees may feel the pinch as employers reduce coverage or increase co-pays or deductibles.”

Even if the expense is paid by the plan, the plan's overall, total expenses would increase, meaning the plan sponsor may ultimately need to contribute more to the pension fund to maintain its funded status. While Input Tax Credits (ITCs) will be available to some employers with respect to the provincial portion of the HST, as they are now for the GST, it is unclear how much relief these might offer for pension-related expenses.

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COMPENSATION

HST, as they are concerned that the increased cost will directly result in fewer appointments.

The direct impact on group benefit premiums will likely be more minimal, most group benefit premiums are currently subject to PST and an additional two per cent provincial premium tax. GST is not applied, other than to certain self-insured Administration Services Only (ASO) plans.

It is expected that the provincial portion of the HST will continue to apply to the same types of premiums as now. However, if the insurance companies providing group benefits are now paying more for the goods and services they use in their business, their costs may increase if they are not in turn able to claim ITC's under the new HST ITC regime. In this case, employers sponsoring group benefit plans might see an indirect effect of the HST in the way of increased premiums as the providers pass on higher internal costs.

Many employers are already investigating cost-containment under their group benefits plans due to various pressures on claims. Certainly, if the HST results in higher costs, employees may feel the pinch as employers reduce coverage or increase co-pays or deductibles, for example.

Since the HST legislation has not yet been introduced in the legislature [as of press time], it remains unknown exactly how many of the concerns outlined above will become a reality. Nevertheless, the consensus in the industry is there is reason to be concerned. **HR**

Stephanie J. Kalinowski is a partner in Hicks Morley Hamilton Stewart Storie LLP's pensions and benefits group.

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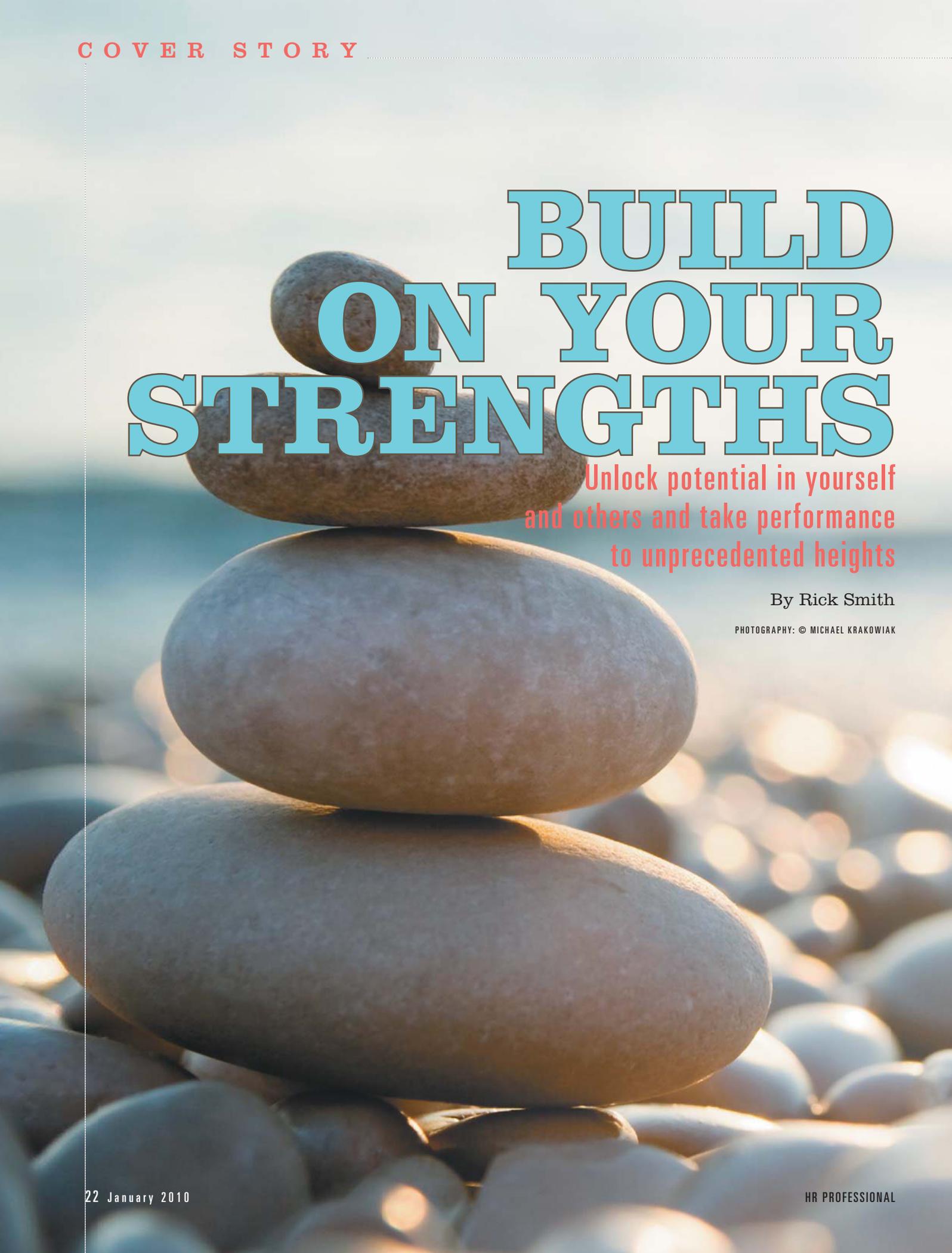
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BUILD ON YOUR STRENGTHS

Unlock potential in yourself
and others and take performance
to unprecedented heights

By Rick Smith

PHOTOGRAPHY: © MICHAEL KRAKOWIAK

AT THE AGE OF 35, I was stuck in a career rut. I was a middle-class striver—luckier than some, unluckier than others, but mostly just average for my type. My resumé up to that point could be boiled down to a few repeating words: quit, laid off, quit, laid off.

Then, unexpectedly, my life turned on a dime in an extraordinary new direction. My performance, my impact and my leadership all reached levels that neither I, nor anyone who knew me, would have ever expected. Over the course of the next 18 months, I wrote a best-selling book and then founded a company that brought me into close contact with some of the great leaders and thinkers of our time, including Bono, Jack Welch, Robert Redford, Alan Greenspan and Lance Armstrong, among

broken free from average performance and achieved extraordinary things for themselves and their companies.

Best of all, I've learned that these leaps are replicable. They follow a pattern, a set of steps that has been ingraining itself in our thinking since the prehistory of the species.

A COMMON THREAD

In a broad study on professional career success that I led while working with executive search consulting firm Spencer Stuart, I found that, on average, professionals believe that they would be 35 per cent more productive if they were in a role that fully leveraged their unique strengths and passions. Unfortunately, according to the same study, only about five per cent of professionals say that they

one of HR's most important responsibilities to help guide individuals toward roles that fully leverage their strengths and passions. The benefits of doing this successfully are tremendous for both the individual and organization.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Why aren't more people in roles that are meant for them? Two reasons. First, they don't know what their strengths and passions are. Or perhaps they have a vague sense of these things but don't have enough actionable information to proactively direct their careers. Second, even if they know their strengths and passions, they have no map or actionable plan for moving into roles that will bring these qualities to bear.

“The fact is, the world is full of ordinary people who have broken free from average performance and achieved extraordinary things for themselves and their companies.”

dozens of others. Despite limited experience and few contacts, I was able to create a successful, influential senior executive networking company that generated millions.

And as all this unfolded, I kept wondering how in the heck this had happened to me and how many others out there are like me?

After half a decade of intensive interviewing and research, what I have discovered is dramatic, counterintuitive and potentially life changing. The fact is, the world is full of ordinary people who have

are currently in such a role. This represents an ocean of unfulfilled workers and incredible amounts of untapped organizational potential.

In nearly every extraordinary leap I studied, it all began with the individual finding their way to a job in which their unique strengths were consistently called on, and their passions were fully engaged. But while most of us were left to stumble into these positions, you and those in your organization can and should be much more deliberate. In fact, I strongly believe it is

Here's where you come in. By providing employees in your organization with the right tools and practices, you'll help them *quickly* find and occupy roles (or make changes in their current roles) that will begin to unleash their full potential. Your reward? A workforce characterized by maximum productivity, high morale and employee loyalty—vital ingredients for any organization seeking



to remain competitive in today's tough business climate.

To build such a workforce, I recommend the following guidelines.

HELP EMPLOYEES IDENTIFY THEIR STRENGTHS AND PASSIONS

Encourage employees in your organization to identify their strongest passions (activities that fully engage them) and greatest strengths (the assets that produce results). If they need help, they can seek out personal coaching or take a personality/skills assessment test (see sidebar, below). When focused on activities that draw on employees' strengths

and passions—the combination of which I like to call their primary colour—professionals can accelerate their acquisition of new skills and achieve unexpected new levels of performance.

HELP EMPLOYEES MIGRATE THEIR CAREERS TOWARD THEIR PRIMARY COLOUR

FINE-TUNE RESPONSIBILITIES

For employees whose current work doesn't align strongly with their primary colour, you can help them fine-tune their job responsibilities to enhance that alignment. Encourage them to talk with their

supervisors about small changes that will enable them to engage in more activities evoking their core aptitudes and interests. For example, suppose Martha has unique strengths and passions in the area of strategic leadership but currently has no opportunity to exercise these traits. Perhaps her manager could put her in charge of a task force responsible for formulating and executing a plan for solving a particular business problem. With a little creativity, managers partnering with employees can identify numerous strategies to leverage unique strengths, while simultaneously achieving (or exceeding) the businesses goals.

“It is one of HR's most important roles to help guide individuals toward roles that fully leverage their strengths and passions.”



FINDING YOUR COLOUR

To take the Primary Colour Assessment, developed by Rick Smith, visit <http://tinyurl.com/HR-Professional>.

The Primary Colour Assessment was developed with psychologists to identify the intersection of a person's greatest strengths (the assets that produce results) and their strongest passions (activities that fully engage them). The 15-minute test is built on the assumption that there is a basic spectrum of abilities—an essential map from which strengths, passions, jobs and career paths can all be compared and analyzed, providing actionable information for leaders and individuals alike.

The test consists of a group of statements representing behavioural preferences, styles and beliefs (such as “I am best in a fast-paced environment” and “I like conceptualizing and planning new things”) that employees find important to their way of life. Employees indicate which statements are “most like me” and “least like me.”

Test results suggest where the intersection of an employee's strengths and passions (their primary colour) lies—in areas such as innovation, strategic leadership and line operation. A second group of questions helps employees identify how strongly their current job activities and requirements align with their primary colour.

The intent of this assessment was not to replace some of the more sophisticated, popular tests such as Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or Herrmann Brain Dominance Index, most often administered under strict supervision. Rather, the purpose was to engage a broader audience at a higher level, compelling them to ask the questions: What are my real strengths and passions? How important are they to me? Is my current role in alignment with my true nature? Is my career moving me toward my ideal role, or farther away? In summary, the test results are intended to provide the participant a relevant and compelling “so what.”

CAREER MAPPING

In addition, facilitate employees' research of other roles and career paths available to them within the organization. Often, there are only one or two "logical" paths for promotion within a given role—but there are roles within any company that represent a great fit for every person. Point out there isn't just one "right" path for each person. If your organization has a mentoring program, help employees find mentors who can brainstorm ideas for fine-tuning their job responsibilities. Mentors can also put protégés in touch with people inside or outside the organization who might shed additional light on possible new professional paths.

VOLUNTEERING AND INFORMAL PROJECTS

In addition, encourage employees to volunteer in new areas. For instance, someone whose primary colour test results suggest a passion for innovation might volunteer at a community organization that needs to develop new services for constituents—further developing these skills and positively representing your organization in the community.

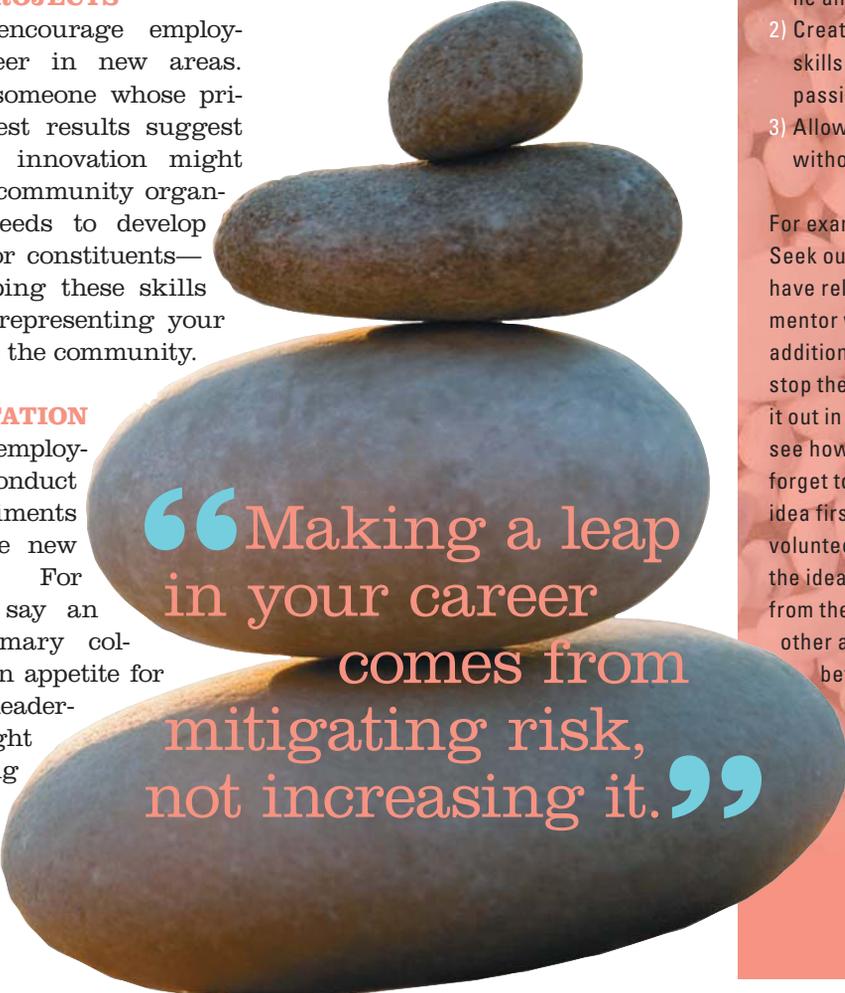
EXPERIMENTATION

Finally, show employees how to conduct low-risk experiments to test possible new job activities. For example, let's say an employee's primary colour suggests an appetite for inspirational leadership. They might try assembling and leading a small team committed to finding new cost-saving measures for

the company. Even informal roles that team members are assigned can impact their development and demonstrate the organization's commitment to their career.

Building a productive, satisfied workforce requires time and investment. But the rewards are well worth it. By helping employees find their primary colour and diagnose any misalignment between that colour and their current work role, you can help direct their careers toward greater productivity and fulfillment. Everyone wins—employees, organizations and you. **HR**

Rick Smith is the author of The Leap: How 3 Simple Changes Can Propel Your Career from Good to Great, co-author of The Wall Street Journal and Business Week bestseller The 5 Patterns of Extraordinary Careers, and is the founder of World 50, an executive networking company.



“Making a leap in your career comes from mitigating risk, not increasing it.”

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Making a leap in your career comes from mitigating risk, not increasing it. The Spark Sequence is a series of low-risk, exploratory events employed by almost everyone who has taken the leap.

The Spark Sequence:

- 1) Builds exposure to what might lie ahead
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- 3) Allows us to visit our new lives without quite going there

For example, research your idea. Seek out and talk with others who have relevant information. Find a mentor who can help you dig up additional information. But don't stop there: pilot your idea—trying it out in a contained setting—to see how people respond. Don't forget to also experience your idea first-hand; for instance, by volunteering in a role related to the idea and drawing lessons from the work. These and many other activities are all calculated bets, with large upsides and minimal downsides.

MAKE BETTER HIRING DECISIONS: GET INSIDE THE HEAD OF INTERVIEWEES

The goal of any interview is to step into the mind of the interviewee to determine if they will be a great fit for your company. If your questions can ascertain the truth of someone's past experiences, their future potential and ability to enhance your company culture, the better the hiring decisions will be for the company's long-term results.

The interview process should be built on a foundation of structure and consistency so HR and hiring managers can quantifiably compare candidates. It should also reveal important psychological aspects of the candidate to determine their learning agility and fit within the prospective role and organization.

Assessing learning agility

Past performance is an indicator of future success. But while it's important to ask about prior success, it's more important to hear about a candidate's learning agility, i.e., what the candidate learned along the way and how they will apply their skills and knowledge to current and future challenges.

“To increase the probability of a great hire, delve into the minds of candidates with thought-provoking questions.”

Key questions

Can you tell me about your most successful accomplishment leading a cross-functional team on a major project or initiative?

Top talent understands how important it is to build, lead and motivate effective, cohesive teams. This question will reveal if team leadership is an area your candidate excels at.

What constructive criticism have you received in the past that surprised you the most?

This question identifies if they can see the role they play in the bigger picture. Can they accept feedback, and have they applied that feedback for positive change?

Are you a creator or an implementer?

This is a simple yet great psych question. Utilize the criteria set in the job description and employee qualifications to look at their response from a leadership/strategic/execution standpoint.

Please walk me through how you would go about achieving _____ in our environment.

This question serves as a springboard to find out how they can accomplish the company's specific goals and objectives and should not be used in the first round of interviews. The underlying goal is to create a dialogue that will allow you to discern if this person is able to adapt to your specific situation, environment or timeline, whether they understand what's different in terms of size, scope, culture and industry and if they ask intelligent questions to better answer this question. Note: sometimes the questions the interviewee asks are better indicators than their actual answer.

Quantify responses

For each question asked, create a defined rating scale in which each prospect can be evaluated. One might represent no applicable experience and four identifies a candidate that meets and exceeds requirements. This allows you to objectively review a candidate's responses. It is much easier to compare data over time than it is to compare gut feelings.

The goal of any interview is to make the best hiring decision. To increase the probability of a great hire, delve into the minds of candidates with thought-provoking questions to assess skill levels and how readily those skills can be applied to the company's needs. **HR**

AmyK Hutchens, founder of AmyK Inc., is a speaker, consultant and executive coach.



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HELPING GEN X PLAY TO WIN

Generation X employees, now in their 30s or 40s, have witnessed a period of unprecedented economic growth. It is commonly described as a “reactive” generation that is more focused on money, promotion and respect. So how does a results-focused generation handle a global financial crisis?

A global survey assessing the mindset impact of the economic crisis conducted by performance consultancy rogenSi recently revealed that gen X employees in their early 30s are feeling the most amount of stress. They have significantly lower stability in motivation, are less adaptive and less sure about how to handle market instability, while at the same time more stressed, more doubtful and more distracted than their older colleagues. Not surprisingly, they have also lost faith in their leaders and their organizations as a whole.

Focusing on results in an uncertain market, along with the generational experience of thriving times and fast results, is making it hard

determination, coping, focus—and above all else, a positive and mentally tough mindset that believes goals can be achieved through perseverance and patience,” he says.

“Leaders are currently faced with the dual challenge of delivering fast results while simultaneously retaining and developing a pipeline of engaged employees capable of carrying the business forward,” says Middleton. “Sometimes these twin goals coexist happily together, but our global research suggests the current focus on delivering business results is fueling the fire of anxiety and reducing engagement for many generation X employees.”

Creating a map for team success

“Leaders need to create an environment where people can be motivated despite adversity and pressure,” says Middleton. “Exceptional performance (the activity) and the best results (the outcome) are achieved most consistently through a joint focus on both the process and

the goals. High-performing teams don’t just focus on the results—they are the ones that take aim at a result and then work away at mastering the process of achieving it.”

Leaders who keep their generation X employees playing to win do so by balancing the performance process with the results being

pursued. This is done, individually or as a team, by defining the critical variables and activity inputs that will generate a desired result. Focusing your efforts on executing these activities consistently will allow the desired results to take care of themselves.

It is the people and the organizations who continue to play to win, who thrive on the experience of challenging themselves through adversity, that perform best during tough times. Instead of fuelling anxiety for generation X employees, leaders have an opportunity to fuel the future by creating an environment where all employees can be motivated. **HR**

Alex Jakobson is director, North America, at rogenSi.

“The current focus on delivering business results is fueling the fire of anxiety and reducing engagement”

for generation X to keep playing to win. These tight conditions are driving increased workloads, job intensification and employee burnout.

Mental toughness

When it comes to exceptional business performance, optimistic and mentally tough people do better. Something about their mindsets allows them to continue delivering exceptional results even during trying times. Dr. Cory Middleton, a recognized expert on mental toughness, draws on more than 70 years of research to understand how employees today interact successfully with adversity. “Employees who adjust well and continue winning during tough times have strong levels of self-belief,

TALENT MANAGEMENT

BY CARLA SANDRIN

CREATING A MODEL OF HUMAN CAPABILITY

Talent management should leverage the capability and potential of employees to achieve an organization's strategy. Unfortunately, for organizations that have invested in talent management (TM), these systems often ignore or marginalize the vital roles of an employee's manager and manager-once-removed (MoR). "It is a question of focus and balance," says Julian Chapman, VP coaching and facilitation at Forrest & Company Limited. "Getting it right is doable, but may involve HR and managers adopting different perspectives." Inadequate TM can result in losing valuable employees, paying out costly severance packages, scrambling to find new talent and dealing with internal disruption.

For TM to be effective, HR must focus on facilitating, promoting and maintaining the system among the organization's leaders and culture. Assessment and implementation, on the other hand, are the focus of managers and MoRs. "HR and managers are partners in talent management," says Chapman, "but it's important to understand the terms of that partnership, particularly regarding accountabilities."

HR should look at the system as a whole while recognizing that, although they feel responsible, they are not accountable for the performance and advancement of employees. HR's accountability is to facilitate the TM system by building a framework for understanding human capability, which reinforces managers' judgment and empowers them with accountability for assessment.

Balanced model of human capability

Assessing talent consistently requires a universal model. In some cases, talent manifests organically—meaning the "cream rises to the top" while less promising talent is weighed down. When talent potential is not as easily identified, however, employee assessment should incorporate the following components in a balanced model of human capability:

Skills and knowledge: Has the employee amassed sufficient information and facility regarding the role?

Attitude and motivation: Does the employee value the work? Do they willingly engage their skills and knowledge to tasks?

Temperament: Are there issues beyond the employee's control affecting their capability?

Cognitive capacity: Does the employee have the ability to handle the complexity of the role?

Before the model can be effective, the organization must embrace role clarity. Role clarity clearly defines the work and accountabilities of each role at all levels and across functions of the organization. With role clarity, managers can easily identify roles more appropriate to the employee and, combined with assessment, make possible lateral career movement to other realms and experiences.

Management system of accountability

An effective TM system has two people watching over a person's career: a manager who is nurturing current capability and a MoR who is fully engaged in assessing potential. Both are accountable for building individual capability. This is where coaching comes in. Senior managers must spend time developing managers who report to them, who will in turn develop their people. A cascade of accountability ensures that leaders are held accountable for knowing their people and promoting their growth. When this function is neglected, mistakes are made, people quit or are laid off and companies end up hiring from the outside, wasting their homegrown potential.

Effective talent management requires the participation of both HR and managers. Using the model of human capability, managers will be better equipped to assess talent. The challenge is to bring the framework into practical application so that an organization and its employees can achieve their potential. **HR**

Carla Sandrin is a Toronto-based business writer.



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Background checks are more important during a recession

It has been fascinating to watch that during the first 12 months of recession **BackCheck "red flag" rate increased by staggering amounts – on average about 60% higher.** For example, BackCheck customers experienced a 10% increase in applicants with criminal records. Another example, Reference Interview and Employment Verification "red flags" increased from 21% to just under 30%.

Why is this? I think there are a few reasons: In desperate times, some people will do desperate things. Also, in early recession days, organizations will typically shed their worst performers first, thereby negatively impacting the hiring pool even further.

The conclusion is: It has never been more important to screen your finalist applicants to ensure you **Know Who You're Hiring.**

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Dave Dinesen
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MEETINGS: THE FIVE RULES OF SPARRING

When meetings are effective, the power of the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts. Individuals are challenged to think and rethink their ideas.

New ideas are created. Better solutions result. Team cohesion improves.

But all too often, meetings degenerate. To counter that try introducing sparring—a method of verbal fighting whose purpose is to enable participants to acquire new skills and abilities. Similar to sparring in boxing, the goal is not to determine a winner, but improve. Unlike boxers, when sparring in the office, nobody's throwing real punches; they're trading safe jabs with the verbal equivalent: Candour.

Benefits of candour

When candid exchanges between people collide, the fusion generates entirely new insights, ideas and approaches that might never have been considered independently. Candid sparring gives us the ability

“Similar to sparring in boxing, the goal is not to determine a winner, but improve.”

to take risks, preparing us to solve problems collaboratively with better results than we would have achieved alone. It also creates a more caring and connected leadership, which paves the way to a better work environment for everyone.

Ground rules

Total candour, even when delivered with a shared feeling of care and respect, often pushes people's buttons. Given that, it's important to win buy-in from your team around established ground rules.

1. Safety first

Each participant needs to check their ego at the door. This isn't about winning arguments; it's about finding the best solution. The best way to

create a safe place for candour is to pave the way with generosity and vulnerability. The closer your team, the more they'll trust each other to speak freely, to listen and to be flexible and creative when it comes to new ideas.

2. Owning the process

Meetings are most effective when the manager or leader makes clear at the onset that they have the ultimate decision-making power. The sparring process creates inputs to lead to the best solution. Establishing this upfront sets expectations around results and helps everyone involved recognize they're participating in a group process.

3. Socratic Method

Instruct your team in the Socratic Method, widely used in law school and psychotherapy. In simple terms, one person's point of view or idea is refined or refuted by the process of other people asking questions about it. This forces the source to recognize weaknesses in his or her solution or argument without getting defensive. Through this process flaws are exposed and new insights revealed.

4. Don't pull any punches

Sparring can get heated because sometimes someone needs to make sure their point is genuinely heard. But participants need to express they're getting upset because they feel an important point is being ignored—not because of a difference in opinion.

5. Leave ample time for thoughtful listening

Employ active listening, which involves repeating back what the speaker has just said in an attempt to clarify any confusion as well as to confirm that you actually heard it. Don't interrupt while someone is talking.

It is vital to create a supportive environment, which requires establishing close relationships between employees. Over time, open channels of communication build trust—and a solid basis for candour in a more public setting. **HR**

Keith Ferrazzi is the CEO of Ferrazzi Greenlight, Inc. His latest book is Who's Got Your Back.

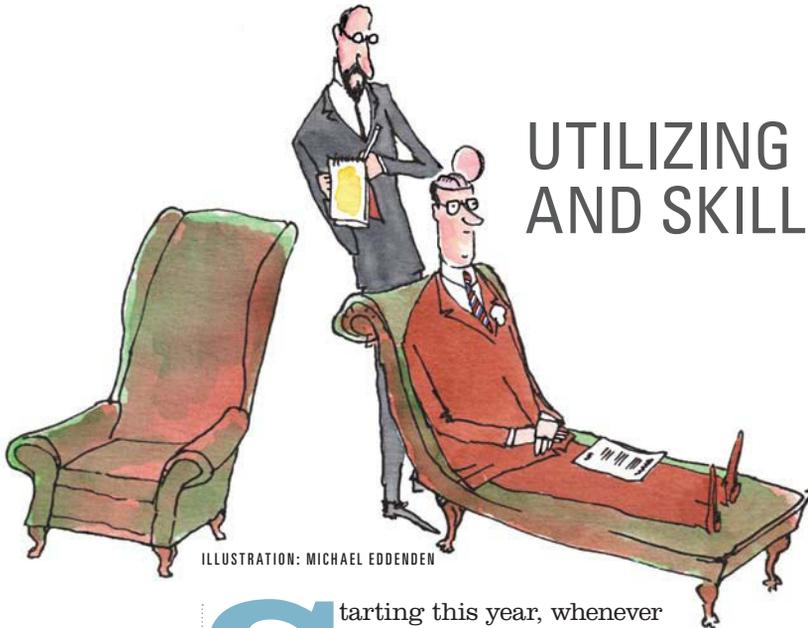


ILLUSTRATION: MICHAEL EDDENDEN

UTILIZING PERSONALITY AND SKILLS ASSESSMENTS

Starting this year, whenever Lafarge North America hires new skilled tradespeople for its cement-making operations, there'll be a little piece of the company's best-and-brightest in every new hire.

That's because the company, as part of its new assessment testing for skilled tradespeople, benchmarked key plant positions against its very best hourly staffers in eight plants across North America. Through the use of personality, integrity, science and skills testing, the company created ideal profiles against which all new millwrights, electricians and control room operators will be measured.

Considering the safety-sensitive nature of Lafarge's 24/7 cement operations and the fact that the average Lafarge tradesperson spends their entire careers with the firm—averaging 30 to 35 years—ensuring fit is crucial.

"We want to test if the person works well as a team member, if they accept new knowledge, have an interest in acquiring new skills, if they have problem solving/critical thinking skills, are professional, have pride and respect for environment and safety, assess risks, are action-oriented, responsible, accountable, with integrity and leadership—all kinds of skills, competencies and core Lafarge values," says Francois Boucher, area HR manager, Lakes and Seaway Lafarge Canada Inc.

The assessments involve tests from several vendors, including WorkKeys (www.act.org/workkeys) for science knowledge, Valpar testing (www.valparint.com) for essential skills and 16PF personality testing (www.ipat.com).

And for potential hires that are used to working around machines, even the act of testing reveals a

lot. "It's a full day of assessment and it's exhausting," says Boucher. "We're taking tradespeople out of their comfort zones and observing them, which provides a lot of information."

Custom association publisher Naylor LLC uses the Harrison Assessment (www.harrisonassessments.com)—a job-suitability index that looks at people's preferences and tendencies—as part of its hiring process.

"It's an assessment that's based on performance enjoyment theory—that you excel at the things you like to do best," says Chip Sharkey, Naylor vice-president, human resources.

An individual's assessment is compared against generic templates for job types—such as sales manager, middle manager, specialist—that have been developed by Harrison. "But what we're really looking at is the individual," says Sharkey. "There's no pass/fail. What we get are data to focus on in interviews. For example, if someone has a low organization or planning score, and the job demands those skills, we'll focus in on that during interviews to explore past experience."

And while Sharkey says there's no absolutes in the assessments and hiring, when a person's profile points out glaring differences between personal preferences and job requirements, "there's not likely going to be a fit."

It's an approach shared by Wells Fargo Financial Canada with its use of predictive index testing for sales hires.

"With all assessments, if it's done right, you should be benchmarking against what a top performer looks like within your company, whatever the role, and not necessarily trying to hire a perfect match, but not hiring an inverse match," says Wells Fargo's Canadian HR lead, Rhys Spencer. "You don't want to hire an introvert for a sales job."

Spencer uses a Canadian testing company called Predictive Success (www.predictivesuccess.com)—a predictive index system that asks potential hires to select what they think best describes them from a series of competencies. The software then provides a two-page report that details the needs and drives of the individual.

"Ultimately, assessment testing is about validation," says Spencer. "It's a postscript. Here's

the job description, the job ad, and that's the profile from which the interview questions are built on. The test is the validation against the process—is the person who we think they are from what we've discussed with them?

“The risk of not doing [testing] is that hiring managers will hire someone just like themselves. And when you do that, there are bound to be hiring failures along the way.”

Although hiring against a profile will typically mean interviewing more candidates and a longer hiring process, it should translate into better fit and retention. Spencer attributes assessments to a big reduction in sales force turnover at Wells Fargo—44 per cent year over year since 2008. “The economy's probably the biggest reason, but I think a big piece has been knowledgeable HR consulting against our screening tests,” says Spencer.

Strategic hiring

While it's all well and good to aid your quest for the perfect hire with some well-interpreted assessments, what's often ignored by HR professionals is the prep work: especially a solid understanding of the role you're hiring for, says Rick Lash, national practice leader, leadership talent, at the Hay Group.

To get the most out of assessments, says Lash, “you really need to understand the role's key accountabilities—what are the critical few capabilities that differentiate average from superior performance in that role? Or, if the organization's strategy is changing, what implications does this change have on what the role has to deliver on?” Lash points to the example of a hospital that had a reputation for research excellence thanks to the top-notch scientists they hired to work in their labs. When the organization decided it needed to turn its research area into a revenue stream, it changed the scientists' job requirements from not only research excellence, but also entrepreneurial skill—“all of which has implications on what you're assessing for,” says Lash.

Spencer agrees: “Assessments allow you to examine changes in strategic direction and how that affects certain profiles,” he says. “You can shift your business thinking on who you want to hire, how you want to hire and who you want to promote, and provides the personality profile to do that. I think it directly links to your talent management strategy.” **HR**



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STRENGTHS-BASED MANAGEMENT ICON TOM RATH REVEALS WHAT CORPORATE AMERICA DOESN'T GET ABOUT EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

North Americans are obsessed with the idea of overcoming obstacles to succeed—we love rags-to-riches stories. But, instead, what if we focused on developing the things we do best? Author Tom Rath wants to show that personal and professional fulfilment actually lies in concentrating on your strengths. This best-selling author has helped millions of people with his books including *How Full is Your Bucket*, *Strengths Finder 2.0* and *Strengths Based Leadership*. He also leads Gallup Press's workplace research and leadership consulting practice.

IN A NUTSHELL

First job: At age 9, I opened a little snack stand that eventually expanded to 20 employees.

Childhood ambition: To play pro basketball.

Mentor: I have had several great mentors over the years ranging from my grandfather Don Clifton to a couple of very gifted editors (Geoff Brewer and Kelly Henry) who taught me how to be a much more effective writer across the five books we worked on together.

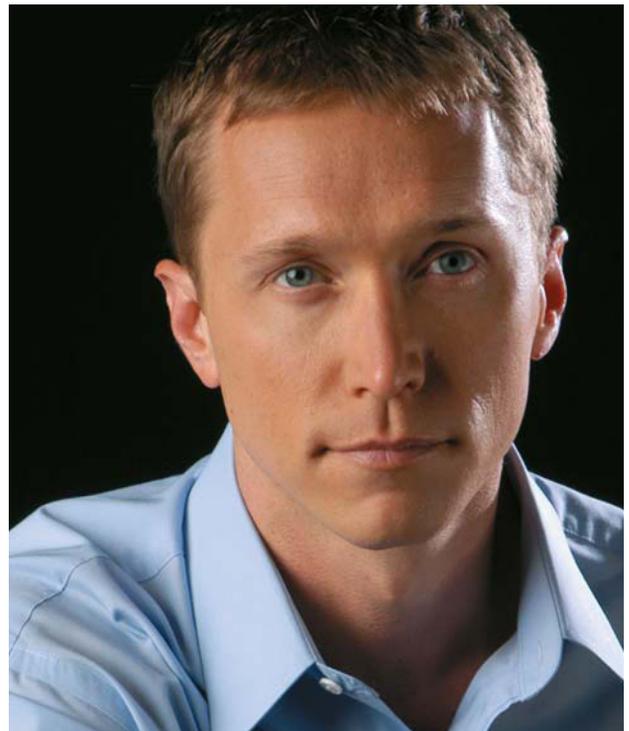
Next move: Studying the core elements of well-being in countries around the world. We plan to publish our findings on this topic early next year.

Ideal retirement destination: I've always been a big fan of San Diego, but I think I would miss the buzz of living in Washington.

Last iPod download: "Wonderwall" by Ryan Adams

Best book I have read in the last year: *Sway* by Ori and Rom Brafman. In the opening section of the book, the authors make you feel as if you are literally in the cockpit of a doomed 747 as they reveal how our irrational decisions can have profound implications.

The best piece of advice: A couple years ago, I read an interview with Pepsico CEO Indra Nooyi in which she talked about the way she "assumes positive intent" in her meetings and conversations throughout the day. This stuck with me and is something that I try to keep in mind, especially when trying to see a challenging issue through the perspective of someone that my gut instinct disagrees with. Personally, I think half the fun in life is learning something new every day...and that cannot occur unless you try to be as openminded as is humanly possible.



HRP: In your opinion what's the most critical issue facing organizations today?

TR: I think the most important thing leaders and organizations can do is ensuring everyone has the chance to be engaged and help people connect what they are doing and their own strengths with the mission of the organization.

The most admired organizations still have pockets of both excellence and active disengagement. No matter how much a company's leader encourages people to use their strengths, it doesn't make a difference unless each line manager understands and applies that on a day-to-day basis. HR leaders have to influence managers to create engagement on a unit-by-unit level.

HRP: Shining a light on positive behaviours makes great sense but that doesn't eliminate the negative. How do you deal with problems like performance issues, or do you just ignore them?

TR: Ignoring peoples' weakness is reckless. There is absolutely a place for conversations about how people's actions cause real performance problems.

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INTERVIEW

A few years ago, a study looked at where leaders focused their attention during performance reviews and the relationship to net gains. The greatest impacts came from focusing on an individual's performance strengths. The thing that's really damaging is when a manager focuses on an individual's personality weaknesses. It's the same thing we see in our personal relationships. If you use words in conversations that are blaming and accusatory, that can be pretty damaging. But if a manager manages around weaknesses and is smart about describing performance gaps and helping an employee see the steps needed to correct those gaps, then it can be a productive conversation that is not defeating to the individual.

HRP: So how can we identify the strengths of our teams and team members?

TR: It starts with looking for natural cues such as seeing what people enjoy most on a given day and what they seem to have success with. Of course, it's not realistic for someone to spend all their time using their strengths every day. Not even I get to do that. But good managers are always on the lookout for those elements.

Once you've identified what team members' strengths are, either through testing or informal observation, you should have a collective dialogue about strengths. Go around the table and have each person describe their strengths. Talk about which ones resonate with them and which ones they want to build. It is through this conversation that your team gets to know each other a bit better, and you each learn who should take what responsibilities and who might want these responsibilities. Simply having that discussion is a really important part of the process.

HRP: What do you do if someone on your leadership team doesn't have the right strengths?

TR: We've yet to find any grouping of strengths that aren't the right set of strengths for leadership. What we did find studying good leadership teams is they all have balance. If you have many people on a leadership team with influencing and persuading talents, and some with executing talents—which you see a lot of on high-level teams—but you don't have any relationship builders, that's a gap you need to fill. As you bring new people onto the team, it's important to consider those strengths gaps in addition to the technical competencies required. This might help you build a more cohesive unit.

HRP: Shouldn't the leader of an organization be well-rounded and isn't the strengths-philosophy counter to the concept?

TR: The broad findings from our research indicate that great leaders don't tend to be well-rounded, but their leadership teams are. The best leaders are good at getting people that have strengths to counterbalance their weaknesses. There are a lot of big-picture leaders that know they wouldn't get far without people who can make things happen. The literature I've read that speaks to the need of leadership well-roundedness talks about effective delegating, which means the two concepts aren't as far apart as they seem.

HRP: How can we combat employee disengagement on a daily basis?

TR: It starts with some basic things. Do people know what they are expected to do when they show up to work every morning? And do they have the materials and equipment they need to get the job done? It's very hard for people who don't know what they are supposed to do, and don't have the tools they need, to be effective. Encourage regular discussions about those basic elements. Simply helping line-level managers see how refocusing on the basics will improve productivity leads to a safer environment and reduces turnover. When they can see those returns on the effort, they will quickly adopt that approach.

HRP: What are the best ways to recognize employees and how do you know if your recognition is effective?

TR: One of our scientists did a study looking at what had a more positive or negative impact: insincere positive comments or a direct negative comment. It turned out that the direct negative comment was not as damaging as an insincere positive comment. If you are doing things from a recognition standpoint that don't have sincerity and aren't deserved, they'll backfire pretty quickly. That's something companies need to be aware of.

The awful whose-turn-is-it-next, employee-of-the-month programs don't usually work out. We've found that the keys to recognition have been: is it deserved and is it individualized? So what means the most to me doesn't necessarily mean the most to someone else. A good manager needs to ask some questions to get to the bottom of that: do people like to be recognized in front

INTERVIEW

of a big crowd, or do they like it one-on-one from someone they admire?

There is another piece to this: specificity. If you just say, “great job” it doesn’t have the same meaning and impact as “I sure admired what you did in Section 22 of the proposal when you used the chart to show XYZ.” Also, if it’s specific, it will highlight the behaviour you want to see repeated. We get very specific when we criticize people but we don’t use the same level of detail when we recognize someone. That’s the challenge.

Work is personal, people need to remember that. If you have a manager that doesn’t know the name of your spouse or your kids, then you don’t have the kind of relationship you really need to be fully engaged in your job.

HRP: Surely, no matter what you do, some people are going to be disengaged, right?

TR: Five years ago, that was my assumption. Gallup classifies active disengagement as rampant negativity, someone who is really frustrated in

their job. I thought these were people you either needed to work out of your organization or work around. But our findings at Gallup indicated the reality is very different.

We’ve specifically been studying what happens when a manager focuses on an employee’s strengths, weaknesses or ignores them completely. We’ve found that if someone’s manager ignores them, there is a 40 per cent chance of them being actively disengaged in their jobs. That’s really high. If their manager focuses on their weaknesses, things improve because at least your boss is paying attention to you. But if your manager focuses on your strengths, then your chances of being disengaged goes down to one in 100.

This suggests to me that the epidemic of active disengagement could be more curable than I originally thought. Now, having a great manager who focuses on your strengths isn’t going to ensure three-quarters of people are totally engaged in their jobs, but it’ll prevent active disengagement. **HR**



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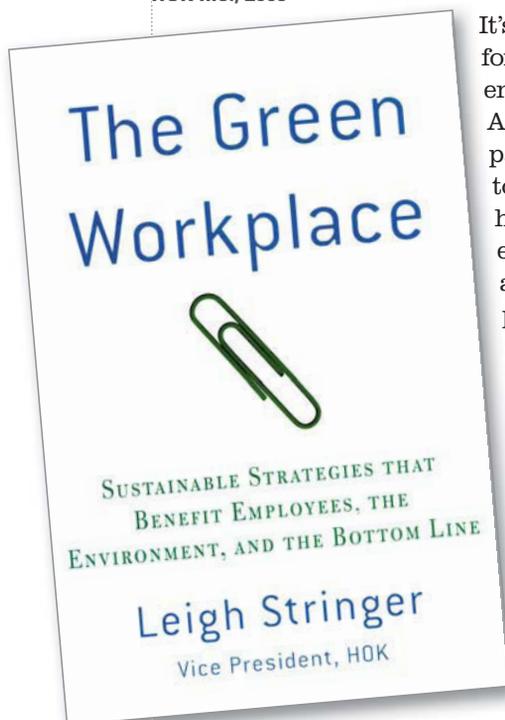
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WHAT'S WORTH READING

The Green Workplace: Sustainable Strategies that Benefit Employees, the Environment, and the Bottom Line

By Leigh Stringer
HOK Inc., 2009



It's no longer up for debate: we've entered the Green Age, where companies and customers alike have embraced environmentalism as an integral part of life. For companies, this means it's no longer enough to showcase your product offering as green—how your business operates is just as important. But don't worry, green strategies

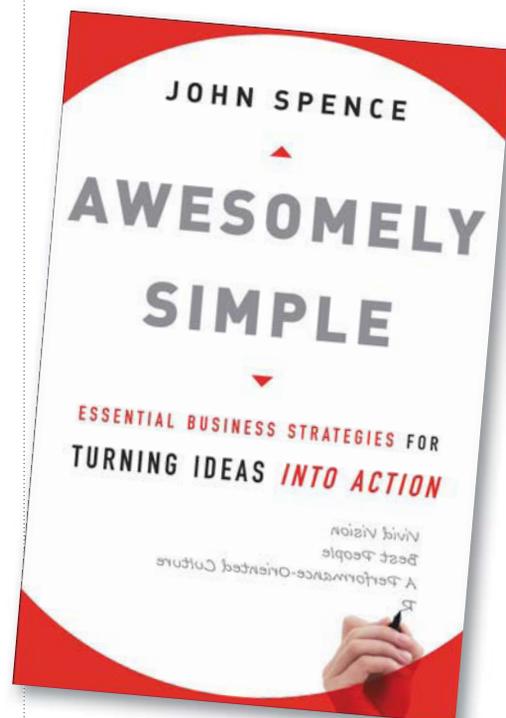
benefit more than the planet; employees and your bottom line also profit. So, how does one get started?

Good question. Luckily, author Leigh Stringer has done the legwork for you. As vice-president of global architecture firm HOK—a company well-known as a green trailblazer for firms aiming for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design accreditation, Stringer delves into both the “why” and the “how” of green workplaces.

While the why of green workplaces is well entrenched or at least understood by most people, the how still baffles us, especially managers who have been handed the task of changing the company mindset toward a green-minded future that covers everything from technology to recruiting to office design. Stringer's book offers concrete ideas particularly useful for HR professionals.

For example, the Index includes 45 how-to references relating to everything from measurement methods to minimizing rumours.

With so many “green” books now sold on business-book shelves, this tome is a welcome addition backed up by documented research. Oh, and it's a pleasure to read, to boot.



Awesomely Simple: Essential Business Strategies for Turning Ideas into Action

By John Spence
Jossey-Bass, 2009

Have you ever walked out of a strategic planning meeting more confused than when you entered? Too often, strategy gets bogged down in unnecessarily complicated language and procedure, when really, the success of every business—big or small—hinges on the same simple foundation based on good people carrying out best practices. Keep things simple, argues author and management consultant John Spence, and you will guarantee success.

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OFF THE SHELF

Delivered in a straightforward manner, complete with equally approachable and actionable ideas, Spence divides *Awesomely Simple* into six main chapters relating to vision, “best” people, robust communication, how to act quickly but with disciplined execution and, finally, what he calls “extreme customer focus.” These six strategies are core to every company’s success.

Ending each chapter with a summary, reader’s audit and a section on “things to think about and discuss,” Spence goes beyond rhetoric to actually help the reader figure out how to make use of the book. Moreover, he also provides clear, illustrative real-world examples and then adds a detailed action guide for each chapter.

As you might have already guessed, this book isn’t exactly complex, and some readers might find it a bit pedestrian. After all, this is hardly a Six Sigma approach. But then that’s its genius. After all, competitive advantage always comes back to who you surround yourself with and how you communicate and sell your ideas. It’s that simple. **HR**

NEW, INTERESTING READS:

Twitterville: How Businesses Can Thrive in the New Global Neighborhoods, by Shel Isreal

Strategy and the Fat Smoker: Doing What’s Obvious but Not Easy, by David Maister

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LEADING THROUGH CHANGE

There's plenty of evidence to show that we're in the midst of yet another major world shift. Part of nature's rejuvenation is a phase of cleansing, making room for a new order. This usually rocks our current frameworks and expectations.

Years from now, we will look at this hinge of history as an era of upheaval and renewal that inspired us to a higher and different order of prosperity.

The best, or the worst of times?

In the opening lines from *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens contrasts the two ends of what I call the "range of reality". These are the focal points for the perspective we bring to our every thought and action throughout any given day.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair..."

This illustrates the sharp contrasts at each end of the "range of reality." In human nature, it is most clearly evidenced in pessimism and optimism. The *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* defines **pessimism** as the tendency to take a gloomy point of view or expect the worst outcome. On the other end of the spectrum, **optimism** is characterized as the inclination toward hopefulness and a tendency to take a favourable view of circumstance or prospects.

Martin Seligman, the Robert A. Fox leadership professor of psychology in the University of Pennsylvania's department of psychology and director of its Positive Psychology Center,



ILLUSTRATION: BRIAN FRAY

has spent his career researching optimism and pessimism. In his book *Authentic Happiness*, he outlines how people are influenced by these two mindsets.

"Pessimists are up to eight times more likely to become depressed when bad events occur; they do worse at school, sports and most jobs than their talents suggest; they have worse physical health and shorter lives; they have rockier

interpersonal relations.

"Optimism and hope are quite well-understood, they have been the objects of thousands of empirical studies, and best of all, they can be built. Optimism and hope cause better resistance to depression when bad events strike, better performance in work, particularly in challenging jobs, and better physical health," says Seligman.

Depending on our perspective, a hinge of history like we're currently experiencing is either an invigorating or a cursed time to be alive. If you choose to thrive on turbulence and change, this time is a rare gift to participate in and help shape new ways of doing and being in our personal lives, organizations, communities and societies. Where you choose to spend most of your day on the "range of reality" will determine not only your professional success but will also impact your health, happiness and well-being. **HR**

Jim Clemmer is a keynote speaker, workshop leader and management team developer on practical leadership. His seventh book is Growing @ the Speed of Change: Your Inspir-actional How-To Guide For Leading Yourself and Others through Constant Change.

Do your workplace investigations measure up?

Almost all employers have faced complaints of discrimination, harassment, or violence in the workplace.

Knowing what to do next is essential.

With changes to legislation requiring employers to address psychological harassment and violence in the workplace, it's unacceptable to simply sweep complaints under the rug. Minimize the risk and protect your company from liability by conducting thorough workplace investigations and taking appropriate corrective action.

We can help.

Workplace Investigation Training for HR Professionals

At Rubin Thomlinson, we literally wrote the book on workplace investigation. We offer a comprehensive workplace investigation curriculum – including basic and advanced courses – to support and train human resources professionals at all levels of skill and experience.

We'll prepare you to conduct your own investigations through hands-on practical training designed to meet the specific challenges facing human resources professionals. And we'll help you broaden your current "respect at work" or "human rights in the workplace" policies so they're up-to-date with the newest legislation. We even offer a workshop on report writing.

To learn more about our training programs and when they are available, please visit www.RubinThomlinson.com/InvestigationTraining



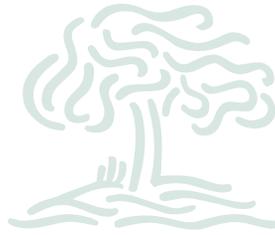
The workplace is changing.
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February 22 - 24, 2010, Toronto, ON

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- What triggers an investigation
- Whether it should be conducted internally or externally
- How to determine your mandate
- What to include in pre-investigation communications
- Who to interview, and in what order
- How to prepare for and conduct interviews
- How to collect and record evidence
- How to avoid common pitfalls

Participants will practice their investigation skills by conducting a live interview with a complainant, respondent or witness.

PLUS!

Attend an optional half-day report writing workshop & learn how to:

- Write a thorough and defensible report that will “stick”
- Determine what should be included and how it should be organized
- Deal with credibility issues
- Deal with tricky evidentiary issues

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Get ready.



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Basic Workplace Investigation & Report Writing Workshops

REGISTRATION FORM

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Food Accommodation (if req'd): _____

List of Attendees: _____

Basic Workplace Investigation Techniques

Feb. 22 & 23, 2010
(Early Bird: Jan. 31, 2010)

May 12 & 13, 2010
(Early Bird: Apr. 30, 2010)

Report Writing Workshop

Feb. 24, 2010
(Early Bird: Jan. 31, 2010)

May 14, 2010
(Early Bird: Apr. 30, 2010)

Early Bird Special (see above for dates)	Fee	Discount	Total	GST	Total/Person	# of Attendees	Total
Basic Workshop	\$1,795.00	\$95.00	\$1,700.00	+ \$85.00	= \$1,785.00	_____	_____
Basic Workshop + Report Writing	\$2,095.00	\$110.00	\$1,985.00	+ \$99.25	= \$2,084.25	_____	_____
Report Writing Only	\$400.00	\$20.00	\$380.00	+ \$19.00	= \$399.00	_____	_____
Group Discount (3 or more)	Fee	Discount	Total	GST	Total/Person	# of Attendees	Total
Basic Workshop	\$1,795.00	\$55.00	\$1,740.00	+ \$87.00	= \$1,827.00	_____	_____
Basic Workshop + Report Writing	\$2,095.00	\$65.00	\$2,030.00	+ \$101.50	= \$2,131.50	_____	_____
Report Writing Only	\$400.00	\$10.00	\$390.00	+ \$19.50	= \$409.50	_____	_____
Early Bird + Group Discount	Fee	Discount	Total	GST	Total/Person	# of Attendees	Total
Basic Workshop	\$1,795.00	\$150.00	\$1,645.00	+ \$82.25	= \$1,727.25	_____	_____
Basic Workshop + Report Writing	\$2,095.00	\$175.00	\$1,920.00	+ \$96.00	= \$2,016.00	_____	_____
Report Writing Only	\$400.00	\$30.00	\$370.00	+ \$18.50	= \$388.50	_____	_____
Standard Fees	Fee	Discount	Total	GST	Total/Person	# of Attendees	Total
Basic Workshop	\$1,795.00	N/A	\$1,795.00	+ \$89.75	= \$1,884.75	_____	_____
Basic Workshop + Report Writing	\$2,095.00	N/A	\$2,095.00	+ \$104.75	= \$2,199.75	_____	_____
Report Writing Only	\$400.00	N/A	\$400.00	+ \$20.00	= \$420.00	_____	_____

<p>Workshop Location Verity (Toronto Room) 111D Queen Street East Toronto, ON M5C 1S2 416-368-6006</p> <p>Time Basic Workplace Investigation Techniques 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM Report Writing Workshop 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p>	<p>Payment Total # of Attendees _____ Total Cost _____ Visa _____ Mastercard _____ Cheque _____ (make payable to Rubin Thomlinson LLP) Number: _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ Expiry ____ / ____ Signature: _____</p> <p>Mail registration form and payment to: Rubin Thomlinson LLP 20 Adelaide Street East, Suite 1104 Toronto, ON M5C 2T6 OR Fax to: 416-847-1815 OR Call: 416-847-1814</p>
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Optimal legal solutions to challenging workplace issues

Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided at all workshops (excluding Report Writing – continental breakfast only).

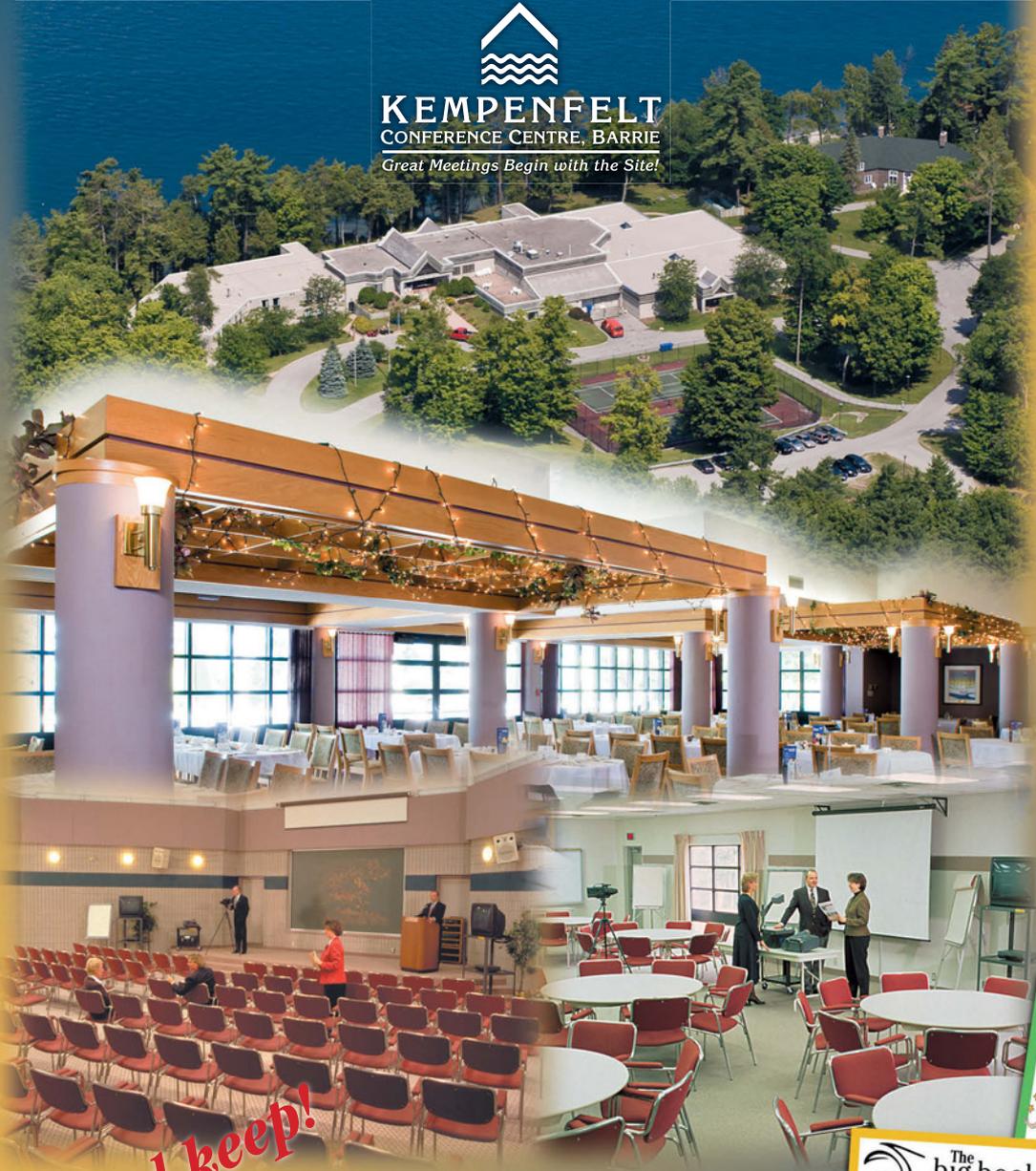
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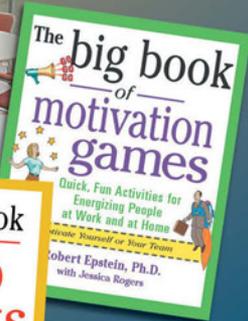
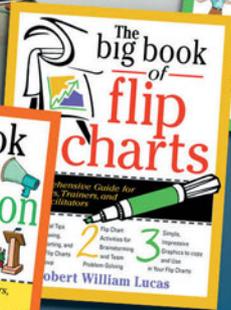
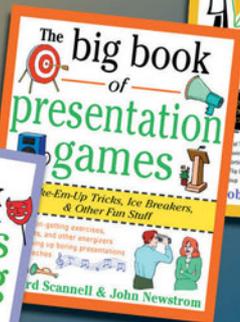
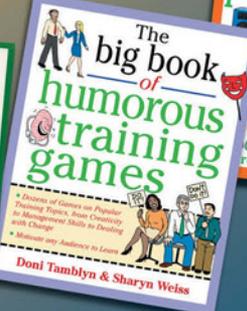
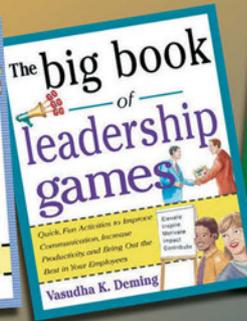
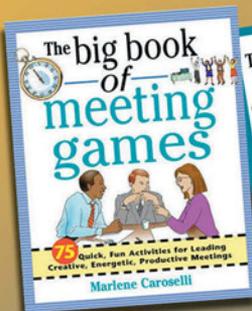
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