

HRMA  
**PeopleTalk**

**Effective Communications  
and HR:** Making the Connection



**Communications à la MODE:**  
Engaging a Multigenerational  
Workforce

**Conference 2014:**  
A Spotlight on  
HR Excellence

**The Power of Empathy:**  
Leadership and Listening

**Of Messages and Mediums:**  
Face-to-Face vs. Facebook

# Working Because You Want To... Not Because You Have To

Could it be that “Freedom 55” is dead. Given the various issues complicating retirement decisions in today’s environment, most people are looking at retiring later in life. However, let us consider the idea of redefining what we mean by retirement.



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# PeopleTalk

CONTENTS

V21 | N2 | Summer 2014



26



22



## association news

- 7 **president's message**
- 8 **editor's message**
- 9 **contributors**
- 14 **members' corner**

Introducing BC HRMA CEO Anthony Ariganello  
"Change Starts Here" @ Conference 2014

### A Spotlight on HR Excellence

- Award of Excellence: HR Professional of the Year—Christine Maassen, CHRP
- Rising Star Award—Fiona Ho, CHRP
- Award of Excellence: Innovation, Jay Sharun

## cover story

- 22 **Effective Communications and HR: Making the Connection**  
By Nancy Painter

*"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said."*

—Peter Drucker

*"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."*

—George Bernard Shaw

*"In the last analysis, what we communicate far more eloquently than anything we say or do."*

—Stephen Covey

## departments

- 10 **upfront and online**  
HRVoice.org, LinkedIn and Twitter highlights
- 12 **people and perspectives**  
What defines effective communications for you?
- 26 **recruitment and retention**  
Face-to-Face with Critical Conversations  
By Amelia Chan, CHRP  
  
The Power of Empathy: Leadership and Listening  
By Isabelle St-Jean
- 30 **CHRP update**  
The Changing Faces of CCHRA  
By Kelly Mills
- 32 **training and teambuilding**  
What's Your Trust Bank Balance?  
By Doug Turner
- 34 **leadership**  
Communications à la MODE: Engaging a Multigenerational Workforce  
By Bernadette Smith  
  
To Be Believed is To Be Heard: Communications Fundamentals and Customer Experience  
By Adam DiPaula, Mary Bacica and Julie Winram

- 38 **workplace wellness**  
Psychological Health an Increasing Issue in Workplace  
By Lindsay Macintosh, CHRP  
  
Communications Key To Benefits Plan Value  
By Joe Demelo and Craig Hewson
- 42 **peopletech**  
Of Messages and Mediums: Face-to-Face vs. Facebook  
By Kristin Zehnder, CHRP
- 43 **off the shelf**  
Team Renaissance: The Structure and Process of Success  
By Raluca Manolache
- 44 **raising the bar**  
Harassment Too Costly to Ignore  
By Graeme McFarlane
- 45 **bottom line**  
Temporary Foreign Workers: The Debate Heats Up  
By Jock Finlayson
- 46 **voice and vision**  
Christine Maassen, CHRP: 2014 HR Professional of the Year  
By Jason McRobbie

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# Effectively Communicating HR's Value

I HOPE THESE WORDS AND THIS ISSUE OF *PeopleTalk* find you warm, well and in the company of family and friends. Moreover, I hope that amidst work-filled weeks and sun-drenched weekends, fingers-crossed you have set time to be inspired.

With the longer hours of sunshine bringing flowers to bloom and gardens to flourish, no other season displays the natural potential for growth like summer. It's also the time most of us leave work behind for a while to relax, recharge and return with a refreshed perspective. A good read and a back-to-basics retreat can work wonders and this edition of *PeopleTalk* with its theme of effective communications delivers on both accounts.

Regardless of industry or role, communication drives success in business. As HR professionals, the importance of effective communications is impossible to overstate. In our varied roles as leaders, learners and bellwethers of a better way of doing business, our shared goal is to keep people first in the minds of decision-makers.

Who, what, where, when, why—without a doubt, keeping the five W's in mind can help to tailor communications for any given audience. Truly effective communications emerge, however, when we ask how, as HR professionals, can we most positively impact the overall productivity of our workplaces?

For the past 10 years, our association has pursued a mandate of "Voice, Value and Viability" in meeting member needs. Similarly, within our varied organizations, we have applied the same tenets as they apply to HR's impact on multiple bottom lines. Beneath



Shannon Joly, CHRP

the unifying and evolving banner of the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation, HR has never played as strategic a leadership role as we do today in the business community.

A big part of that comes down to the ongoing efforts of each and every one of us as BC HRMA members—with particular individuals and organizations inspiring us further with their truly extraordinary efforts and achievements. As has become tradition, this year's 2014 HRMA Conference+Tradeshow showcased the winners and finalists in our *Rising Star* and *Awards of Excellence* for both *Innovation* and *HR Professional of the Year*.

This year's conference also gave us the opportunity to recognize the achievements of outgoing CEO Simon Evans,

CHRP, and welcome BC HRMA's new CEO Anthony Ariganello. With over 1,000 in attendance, it also provided the ideal forum for a sneak peek of a whole new logo and look for our association that you will find highlighting the next edition of *PeopleTalk*. Stay tuned online for an even earlier introduction.

"Change Starts Here" was an effective theme for this year's conference, but it speaks equally well to the focus on communications in this issue—happy good change hunting.

Shannon Joly, CHRP  
President, BC HRMA  
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# Listen, Learn, Lead

FROM TIN CANS TO TWEETING, WE HAVE COME A long way on the communications technology front. Regardless, the cover image remains such an apt metaphor for present day challenges.

As a species with a singular gift for language and a pantheon of technological tools at our disposal, how is it that we miscommunicate so often? As we explore this issue, the matter lies within the words we choose, as well as the skill sets we choose to exercise.

Interestingly, with all the technologies in play, most employees prefer face-to-face communications above all, as per recent research by the Canadian Management Centre (CMC) (p.34).

Admittedly, "Making the Connection" in the workplace (p.22) remains an ongoing challenge. As per Nancy Painter's cover story, effective communications and HR are inseparable. From capturing the corporate vision to crafting appropriate job descriptions to building a culture that profits all involved—effective communications define the organizational impact of HR.

They also begin with effective listening. Isabelle St-Jean's article, "The Power of Empathy: Leadership and Listening" (p.28) and our back page interview with Christine Maassen, HRMA's 2014 HR Professional of the Year (p.46) certainly convey the virtues of doing so—more honestly and more often.

That weight does rest not upon HR alone, of course. As per Raluca Manloche's article "Team Renaissance: The Structure and Process of Success" (p.430), creating a such results hinges upon a top-down willingness to revisit nine core building blocks in the story arc of their organizational success—or lack thereof.

"What's Your Trust Balance?" is a question posed by Doug Turner in an attempt to turn around the tough figures surrounding trust in the workplace. His findings concur with the Sentis Research findings this issue in "To Be Believed is To Be Heard" (p.34) which encourage a return to communication fundamentals—and making that connection.

The challenges and opportunity of making that connection meaningful for all parties is further as Amelia Chan, CHRP brings us "Face-to-Face with Critical Conversations" (p.26) and Kristin Zehnder's, CHRP "Of Messages and Mediums" (p.42).

That effective communications build dream teams and bottom lines alike, was a message carried strongly throughout this year's HRMA 2014 Conference+Tradeshaw (p.15). From the presentation of the annual HRMA awards (p.18) and honorary life memberships to Col. Chris Hadfield's adventures in space, the lessons and inspirations were many.

Also delivered upon was the promise of the theme "Change Starts Here" with the announcement of past-BC HRMA CEO Simon Evans, CHRP—and a warm welcome HRMA's new CEO Anthony Ariganello, FCGA (p.14). We offer an introduction this issue, but know this—Anthony also prefers meeting face-to-face.

The other change announced at Conference 2014 will bring further evolution to these pages with our upcoming "Women in Leadership" issue. With a new look and name for the Association approved at the June AGM, expect a refreshed look and feel for *PeopleTalk* come fall.

Jason McRobbie  
editor, *PeopleTalk*  
jasonmcr@telus.net



Jason McRobbie



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Each issue of *PeopleTalk* draws upon the HR expertise of our Advisory Council and the editorial acumen of thought-leading professionals. It is our pleasure to introduce some of those effectively communicating within our summer edition.



**Nancy Painter**  
**Effective Communications and HR:  
Making the Connection** p. 20

Nancy Painter, ABC, is an internationally accredited, award-winning writer and communications consultant. Her business, Paint A Story Communications, is based in Surrey BC. She has worked as a communicator in the real estate development industry, post-secondary education, health care, a crown corporation and other industries. She is currently the VP, Professional Standards, for the BC chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators.

**Amelia Chan, CHRP**  
**Face-to-Face with Critical  
Conversations** p. 26

As the founder and principal consultant of Higher Options Consulting Services (hr-options.com), Amelia Chan is passionate about operational excellence and employee engagement. Her boutique consultancy provides a wide range of human resources and immigration services to small to mid-sized businesses. While holding her CHRP, Amelia is also a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC) and a BC Commissioner of Oath who enjoys volunteering with various non-profit organizations to support educational opportunities for training and development.



**Isabelle St-Jean**  
**The Power of Empathy: Leadership  
and Listening** p. 28

Speaker, author, life and business coach Isabelle St-Jean brings over 20 years of communication, leadership and personal effectiveness experience to her audiences, readers and clients. Through her work, she integrates leading edge ideas and tools from the fields of psychology, philosophy, neuroscience and human potential development. She is the co-author of the award-winning anthology, *Einstein's Business: Engaging Soul, Imagination and Excellence in the Workplace*, and her own book, *Living Forward, Giving Back: A Practical Guide to Fulfillment in Midlife and Beyond* received great endorsements.

**Doug Turner**  
**What's Your Trust Bank Balance?**  
p. 32

Over the course of Doug Turner, MSc., MBA's professional life, spanning 30 years in procurement and contract management, mentoring and tutoring have always been his hallmark. Credentialed by the International Coach Federation, in 2003 he started True Balance Coaching to help people of all ages discover that it is indeed possible to achieve their desired level of success, and well beyond. Doug is an active volunteer with Junior Achievement and is a mentor with the Leaders of Tomorrow program at the Vancouver Board of Trade.



**Bernadette Smith**  
**Communications à la MODE:  
Engaging a Multigenerational  
Workforce** p. 34

As VP, talent development solutions with the Canadian Management Centre (CMC), Bernadette Smith understands the value of investing in people to create an engaged, high-performance team that achieves results. Her passion and drive for results has created a culture that encourages collaboration and inspires creativity and innovation. Prior to joining CMC, her professional experience involved holding senior level marketing leadership positions in Canadian divisions of global organizations in a variety of industries including Bayer Consumer Care, Mattel, and Telemedia.

**Lindsay Macintosh, CHRP**  
**Psychological Health an Increasing  
Issue in Today's Workplace** p. 38

Lindsay Macintosh, CHRP, graduated with a B.A. (Honours) from Queen's University. She has over 20 years experience in payroll and benefits in the retail, food service, and logging industries. Lindsay served as advisor on HR policies/procedures and volunteer co-ordinator for non-profit organizations as well as interviewer for Volunteer Richmond's 2010 Information and Volunteer Program.



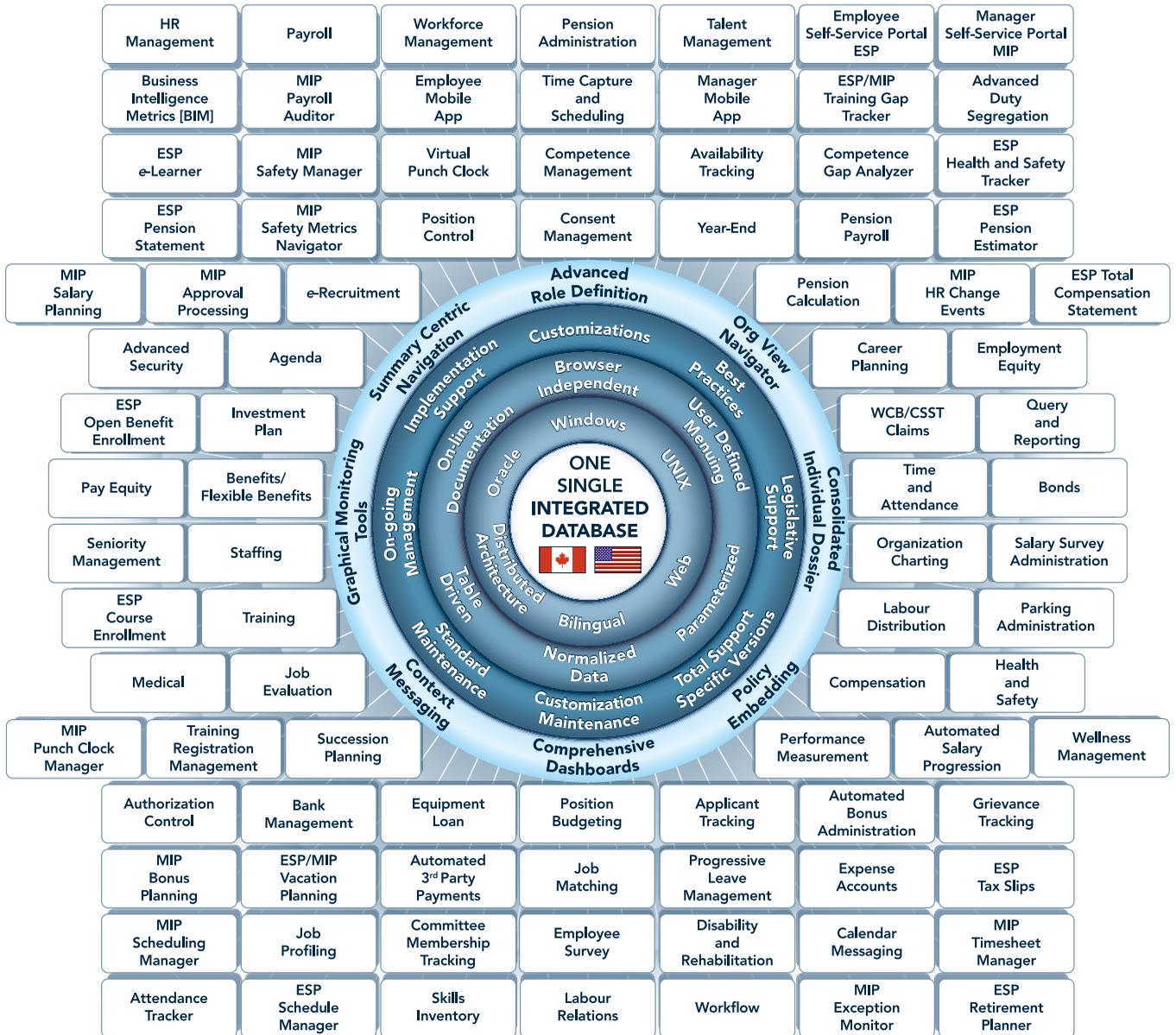
*"Eloquence is the power to translate a truth into language perfectly intelligible to the person to whom you speak."*—Ralph Waldo Emerson

*"The void created by the failure to communicate is soon filled with poison, drivel and misrepresentation."*—C. Northcote Parkinson



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### Avoid Communication Pitfalls in the Workplace



By **Bruna Martinuzzi**

There is a large body of work concerning the way women's communication style differs from that of men. But a more reliable way of looking at the issue of communication styles is to look at personality, which is independent of gender. Bruna Martinuzzi offers tips for both 'feelers' and 'thinkers' in the workplace.

<http://tinyurl.com/owrq65a>

### Upward Communication: Ensure Management Hears Your Message

By **Merge Gupta-Sunderji**

Working closely with senior leaders in an organization can be very rewarding. But it can be just as frustrating if you feel that your voice isn't being heard. Often though, the seeming lack of interest from above is not because of the quality of the information you have to offer, but rather because of HOW you are communicating.

<http://tinyurl.com/kn8a4bm>



### Clear Communication Reduces Conflict: Listening?

By **Carol J. Sutton**



Clear communication is the key to conflict resolution. Not many people would disagree with that in principle, and yet when we open our mouths the words that emerge are often the antithesis of clarity. Why don't we just say what we mean and ask for what we want?

<http://tinyurl.com/pyxnsl>

### Cut the Noise and Cut to the Chase: Tips for Streamlining Workplace Communication

By **Michael Feuer**

Technology has provided us with an increasing number of ways to share information in the business world. But too often the point gets lost in the shuffle. Entrepreneur Michael Feuer shares seven strategies to make sure communication is clear and to the point for your organization. <http://tinyurl.com/okuatmr>



### Key Tips for Effective Meetings

By **Janna Steinthorson, CHRP**

Meetings can be one of the most useful tools in all forms of business when it comes to sharing information, planning and making important decisions. But in many organizations, meetings are considered to be just a waste of time. Meetings can be longer and more frequent than necessary, while not producing the intended results. Many people just consider meetings as taking away time that they could be using for other more valuable work. So what can you do in your workplace to ensure your meetings are more productive and effective?

<http://tinyurl.com/khrw8z8>



### FMIOSA Safety asks:

What is the percentage of businesses/ organizations which conduct exit interviews? Are they becoming a thing of the past? I remember exit interviews becoming 'the' thing several years ago, but have heard very little on the topic in recent years. Has it been a successful experiment or has it fizzled out?

### Debbie Bortolussi, CHRP, MBA responds:

I still conduct exit interviews! As long as you can have an honest discussion with the person that is exiting. There is always a jewel to be found out of these conversations.

### Farshid Zavosh, MBA responds:

There's the old saying, people don't quit their jobs, they quit their managers—and exit interviews help validate some concerns.

### Karen Biddlecombe responds:

I agree with Farshid, the typical reason is direct or indirect manager and exit interviews can be very helpful if indeed the interview is handled correctly.

### Slavica Petkovic asks:

Who writes job descriptions in your company, HR or department managers?

**Lynn Corrigan responds:** Rather than one or the other, it's best to have a collaborative approach. Either can start the process, both need to sign-off. Both HR and managers have important contributions and insights to contribute.

### Top BC HRMA Tweets

Effective communication is more art than a science, requiring practice, diligence, and follow-up. <http://ow.ly/xcfNw>

**@MellyMo:** Great time at the HR Cafe! Tons of food for thought [#hrcafe2014](https://twitter.com/BCHRMA)

Noisy workplaces reduce productivity by 66% & are bad for mental / physical health. How do you get some quiet. [ow.ly/xcaKf](http://ow.ly/xcaKf)

Conflict happens in all workplaces but don't blame personalities [ow.ly/x41SQ](http://ow.ly/x41SQ) via [@HarvardBiz](https://twitter.com/HarvardBiz)

Wave makers are essential to making innovation happen [ow.ly/x3Xzw](http://ow.ly/x3Xzw) via [@TLNT\\_com](https://twitter.com/TLNT_com)

# “What defines effective communications

Cindy Martin, CHRP



HR director,  
Peak Group of Companies

*With over 20 years of generalist experience, Cindy Martin has focused her career in the Canadian retail and distribution sectors. Cindy approaches her work with dedication, a “roll up your sleeves” accountability, humour and honesty. She believes that great teams form the backbone of great organizations. Cindy is currently the director of human resources at the Peak Group of Companies.*

We are increasingly working in an environment where our team members may work off-site, often in different time zones. In these reporting relationships, effective communication becomes a non-negotiable driver of success. Ultimately, keeping the lines of communication open with your off-site reports is one key to keeping an engaged and top performing team.

Building the relationship through phone conversations, where you are asking questions about work, but also personally, makes a big difference. This is where you establish the strong bond. This bond is critical during times of stress.

As much as we have the ability to connect via e-mail, phone, video conference and Skype, nothing can replace the live face-to-face visit with your direct report. I recommend the supervisor make a personal visit to the employee’s location or have them come visit the supervisor at their location no less than annually.

The ability to observe the direct report in action in their place of work is critical to ensuring the supervisor fully understands some of the daily challenges they face. A picture truly speaks a thousand words.

Tanzin Begum, CHRP



HR communications specialist,  
Ledcor Group of Companies

*Tanzin Begum is an eager and motivated HR professional with over six years of experience in recruiting and HR programs development and delivery. As the HR communications specialist at Ledcor—a multi-disciplinary construction company—Tanzin is primarily focused on employer branding via web, print and social media. Internally, she also supports employee communications for all things HR. She holds a Bachelor’s of Commerce degree from the University of British Columbia and has been a BC HRMA member since 2008.*

If you want your message to be heard and understood, it has to be clear, concise and compelling. Over the years, and with the help of many great mentors, I’ve learned that no one communication style or format fits all.

Effective communication requires a defined purpose, and a solid understanding of your audience. What is it that you want to communicate? Why is this relevant to your audience? What do you want the audience to do with the information? Is it purely informational, or is there a call to action? If there is a desired action or outcome, did you make that clear and easy to understand?

Effective communication, for me, is the thoughtful approach to crafting a message that is engaging and meaningful; putting yourself in the shoes of the audience and asking the question: how would I want to receive this message?

Nicole Whitaker, CHRP



HR manager,  
RONA

*Nicole Whitaker is a human resources manager for British Columbia at RONA. She has over 14 years of HR experience and has worked in the legal, manufacturing and retail sectors in both the UK and Canada. Nicole has a passion for developing people and partnering with operations to achieve business results through people solutions.*

A great mentor taught me ‘the only thing worse than bad is uncertain.’ I carry those words with me every day. When my operations partners ask me how they can better engage and motivate our employees my first response is usually “communication.” But what does that mean?

In order for communication to be effective, the following elements are essential:

1. **Timely:** Waiting too long to deliver a message—good or bad—leads to uncertainty, which leads to loss of engagement and productivity. Early communication keeps everyone focused on the business.
2. **Honest and constructive:** No matter how difficult a message is, leaders who can deliver it with honesty, integrity and positive intentions will always be respected.
3. **Varied delivery:** We all have different methods of processing information so taking a blanket approach to communication is ineffective. Use a variety of methods to reach your audience to maximize receipt and understanding.

*“Precision of communication is important, more important than ever, in our era of hair trigger balances, when a false or misunderstood word may create as much disaster as a sudden thoughtless act.” —James Thurber*

# for you?"

Joan Kleinsteuber, CHRP



HR advisor,  
Okanagan College

*Joan Kleinsteuber is a member of the BC HRMA Southern Interior Advisory Council and a human resources advisor with Okanagan College in Kelowna. She has 20 plus years in human resources and office management which has included developing job descriptions and classifications, compensation and benefits, organizational development, accounting, health and safety, labour relations, negotiations, mentoring and all aspects of recruiting and staffing employees including hiring employees to work in remote work sites and other countries.*

Effective communications for me means that the message you want to send is the message that is received, and you listen to others. To create trust and respect, open and honest communication delivered in a respectful manner is imperative.

We may not always think about how we are communicating or the style of communication that we present to others. This can lead to misinterpretation and potentially even conflict that you did not ever intend to have happen. When you are having a difficult conversation, it is important to consider your tone and body language. Other barriers to effective communications include distractions; noise; words sounding the same but have different meanings; the use of jargon or difficult words. Effective communication is critical in today's workforce and can improve relationships, teamwork, decision-making, and problem solving.

Jocelin Caldwell



career coach/recruiter,  
Engaged HR Inc.

*Whether her role is as a workplace facilitator, career coach or recruiter, Jocelin Caldwell's goal is to create innovative work environments led and staffed by the very best people. For Jocelin, nothing is more rewarding than successfully connecting people to meaningful work and workplaces where they will thrive. In addition to a BA from the University of Victoria Jocelin holds an RRP (Registered Rehabilitation Professional) ACC (Associate Certified Coach) and CCDP (Career Development Practitioner) designation.*

I have witnessed communication breakdowns between individuals or group members because people often listen with judgment. There are many instances where participants only hear what is easy to hear or they are preoccupied with their own problems (or cellphones) and are not focused on the discussion.

For me, effective communication recognizes that each person is unique and has something important to share even if it takes time to identify that importance. It means really connecting with another person in a way that allows you to see his or her point of view. A frequently quoted statistic is that 93 per cent of daily communication is nonverbal. Effective communication requires listening to what is being said with both your eyes and ears. When you are fully present in a conversation and give time for silence, this connection builds trust and a mutual understanding. It is this mutual understanding that really defines effective communication.



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# BC HRMA CEO Anthony Ariganello: Success Breeds Success

By Jason McRobbie

**A**S AN ARTICULATE ACCOUNTANT and accomplished leader with over three decades of business experience, Anthony Ariganello remains guided by a personal motto that has served well throughout—“success breeds success.”

The saying has served Ariganello well, as well as those he has served.

“I believe that if you’re successful, you can only be more successful, so I always tell people to look for things they can achieve. Have objectives and go for them,” he explains. “Success requires passion and a lot of it is mental. If you condition yourself to believe you can do anything you want in life and understand that you will have some defeats, over time you’ll have many victories. Those victories are all the sweeter when they serve a larger picture, in this case a dynamic and thriving membership of HR professionals.

Appointed CEO of the BC Human Resources Management Association (BC HRMA) upon the retirement of outgoing CEO Simon Evans, CHRP, Ariganello has plenty of success to build upon. With student memberships burgeoning and overall membership having doubled in the past decade, the 5,500 members spread over eight regions covering BC and the Yukon are indicative of the growth of the HR profession and the Association alike.

However, it is the tripling of the number of Certified Human Resources Professionals (CHRP) within BC HRMA that elicits the greatest interest from Ariganello. As the president and CEO of CGA-Canada since 2003, his passion for building the recognition and reputation of the CGA designation bodes well for the CHRP’s ongoing evolution.

“There is room for our designation to gain even greater recognition, both in Canada and on the international stage. I see an opportunity there and I think I can improve our position even from where we are today,” said Ariganello. “I believe that because of what I’ve done personally and the fact that I can bring my corporate experience to help our Association. I see that as a big win-win, as I will learn something new while contributing to making our designation better and stronger.”

A Fellow CGA himself since 1982, Ariganello was born and raised in Montreal, and holds a bachelor of commerce from McGill University along with membership with the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and is a fellow from the UK-based Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).



Anthony Ariganello, CPA, FCGA; ICD.D

The move to Vancouver over 10 years ago with his wife Mary and daughter Melissa marked far more than a geographical change.

For Ariganello, the move to become president and CEO of CGA-Canada marked a significant period of transition—and a step away from the corporate world where he had spent more than two decades. After 10 years with Nortel and a similar stretch as president of Avon Canada, what Ariganello found in CGA-Canada was the opportunity to bring his years of operational experience to bear with a completely different focus.

“Our goal was brand recognition for CGA nationally and internationally. I went to work with our affiliates to make sure the designation was recognized for who we are and what we represent. Without a doubt, I see a similar opportunity with the CHRP designation and my new role as CEO of

BC HRMA,” says Ariganello. “Some great work has been done here and I look forward to working together with the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers to move us further forward. I want to focus on the organization, our strategy and what it is that our members need. Defining where we want to go and what we want to accomplish over the next year is a top priority.”

The roll-out of a new brand for BC HRMA is near the top of that list, and Ariganello likes what he has seen and hopes the members do too. “From the peek we had at the annual conference and what I have seen since, I think the new look and feel is refreshing and very much in keeping with how the HR profession has evolved. There is a polish and personality that really reflects the dynamism of our membership.”

As per his days with Avon-Canada, what Ariganello looks forward to the most in his inaugural year as BC HRMA’s CEO is traveling to meet the membership.

“The piece I like best is the networking piece. For example, Avon is a direct-selling company, but the company itself is all about relationships. If you were not able to influence people to do something—to buy your product, to sell your product, to meet other people—then you would not be successful. I have a penchant for building relationships,” says Ariganello.

“With BC HRMA, I am looking forward to networking with my counterparts across the country—people who influence our profession. The CHRP designation has made some great strides since its inception and I am excited about influencing further positive change.”

# “Change Starts Here” @ Conference 2014: Happiness and the Power of Negative Thinking

By **Jason McRobbie**

**H**OW MUCH DOES HAPPINESS MATTER in business?

According to psychologist, consultant and author Shawn Achor, happiness counts in large amounts—and as CEO of GoodThink Inc., his research has found a warm reception in *Forbes* and with Fortune 500 companies alike.

As the first of the four plenary speakers at the recent 2014 HRMA “Change Starts Here” Conference+Tradeshow, Achor’s findings were similarly well-received by the 1,000+ audience of HR professionals and business leaders gathered at the Vancouver Convention Centre West on April 15-16, 2014.



## Happiness is Serious Business

Achor’s research does not so much negate the thinking that success brings happiness as it turns such thinking on its head—successful people are happy because they are happy. Drawing upon his own studies at Harvard University—including a survey of 1,600 high achieving undergraduates—together with supporting research from around the world, Achor is a strong and energetic proponent of positive psychology.

What the studies revealed were seven basic principles, captured by Achor in *The Happiness Advantage*, which reflect our personal and professional levels of success. Leveraging positive mindsets, learning to look for patterns of possibility instead of failure and investing in relationships that sustain such thinking are all on the list—topping it is the happiness advantage itself.



**Shawn Achor**

As to just how much punch happiness packs at work, Achor shared the following figures as published in the *Harvard Business Review* in 2012. Happy people on average generate 37 per cent greater sales, are 31 per cent more productive, three times more productive, display 23 per cent fewer fatigue syndromes, are 40 per cent more likely to be promoted and are up to 10 times more engaged—all of which bodes well for any business.

## ‘Onlyness’ Counts For Everyone

For fellow plenary speaker Nilofer Merchant, that happiness and productivity is tied directly to the successful identification of our ‘onlyness’ as both individuals and organizations. While underlying values and shared goals are essential, defining and honing the differentiators provides inestimable drive and far greater potential for innovation.



**Nilofer Merchant**

Having worked for major companies like Apple and a number of early Internet startups, Merchant has since personally launched over 100 products worth \$18 billion in sales and become a sought after

advisor by companies seeking to develop new strategies worldwide. Awarded Thinkers50’s “Future Thinker Award” in 2013, she was named the number one person most likely to influence the future of management—and encouraged HR to think boldly about its role moving forward.

What Merchant acknowledged throughout was the impact of the individual in the new social era—wherein connected individuals can now do what once only centralized organizations can do. Where the opportunity exists for business leaders is to recognize this, admit to the newfound lack of central control, and combine the efforts of such social era super stars to create a greater constellation and culture of guided potential. In doing so, recruiting and HR become both dynamic contributors and “Curators of Greatness” as per the title of her presentation.

Drawing upon her own failures as much as her successes, Merchant stressed the importance of lifetime learning—and a willingness to unlearn.



**Dave Ulrich**

## HR’s Six Core Competencies

For those seeking HR essentials, the second day began with an unrivaled presence in the HR world. When Dave Ulrich talks HR, business listens—for good reason. Presented a lifetime achievement award in 2012 recognizing him as “the father of modern of human resources by” *HR Magazine*, Ulrich has published over 200 articles and two dozen books on the topic.

As a professor at the Ross School of

Business and a partner at the RBL Group, what Ulrich and company have been tracking for the past 25 years are the core competencies for effective HR as they relate to organizational success. Six waves of global data collection from both HR and non-HR professionals have provided the core of a body of research.

What Ulrich drove home was the continued evolution of HR's critical business input. As innovators and integrators, strategic positioners, capability builders, change champions, technology proponents and credible activists—the top six core competencies identified—HR's potential contributions are considerable.

As per Ulrich's findings, HR's role as a credible activist is considered integral both by non-HR peers, as well as by HR professionals, as an assist in achieving personal effectiveness. However, the degree to which that attribute is perceived to help achieve business results is low. Where HR's opportunity to grow business results showed through most clearly in the research was in the areas of technology, capability building, and as innovators and integrators.

Moreover, while he stressed the importance of HR knowing the business inside out, he encouraged a S.T.E.P.E.D. approach to considering the impact of the social, technical, economic, political, environmental and demographic trends and their inevitable impact on the best laid plans.

### The Sky Is Not the Limit

With Ulrich providing a solid HR anchor, the final plenary speaker provided glimpse after fascinating glimpse of a bigger picture few ever see—planet Earth as viewed from the International Space Station (ISS).



Col. Chris Hadfield

In a lifetime of firsts, it was as commander of the ISS that Col. Chris Hadfield stepped boldly into the public imagination. Sharing his crew's journey in stunning pictures, insights and song via social media, Hadfield's passion for communication changed the way a great many look at the skies above.

As per the title of his plenary presentation, "The Sky is Not the Limit", Hadfield's insights went to the heart of HR's most enduring challenges and realms of opportunity in the fields of leadership, teamwork and collaboration. Working in close confines with an international crew, Hadfield re-iterated the importance of effective communications and celebration in any team setting.

Moreover, in what seems apparent contrast to popular thought, Hadfield espoused the power of negative thinking. As per

within "An Astronaut's Guide to Life", he explained that such thinking—hinged upon thinking through every possible thing that can go wrong and addressing those fears head on—is what keeps astronauts alive and gives any team a winning edge by clearing the way for focused achievement of any goal imaginable.

### HR Celebrates Success and Change

Celebration played a key role as always at the 52nd Annual HRMA Conference+ Tradeshow with the recognition and revealing of the 2014 winners of the Rising Star Award and Awards of Excellence: Innovation and HR Professional of the Year.



In addition to the presentation of four honorary life memberships, the plenary stage also swelled with a full orchestra to honour outgoing BC HRMA CEO Simon Evans, CHRP—and later introduce BC HRMA's new CEO Anthony Ariganello.

### Save the Date

The 53rd Annual HRMA Conference+ Tradeshow is slated to return to the Vancouver Convention Centre West on April 28-29, 2015. 

## How Do You Connect?

BC HRMA offers a bundle of ways to connect with HR professionals and business leaders. Explore *PeopleTalk*, E-blast and HRVoice.org opportunities today.

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# A Spotlight on HR Excellence

On April 16, 2014, the BC Human Resources Management Association (BC HRMA) announced the recipients of its annual awards – the HR Professional of the Year, Innovation, Rising Star and BC HRMA Honorary Life Member. BC HRMA's Professional Awards are sponsored by *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Province*.

## Award of Excellence: HR Professional of the Year

**Christine Maassen, CHRP**—Sr. VP, HR, SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts, Vancouver

**W**HERE OTHERS MIGHT HAVE only seen the obvious perils, when approached by SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts in 2010, Christine Maassen, CHRP saw only the potential to put to practice the experience of a lifetime—her own.

Maassen has served as a strategic partner to senior leaders from the start—always keeping people impact at the forefront of decision-making. From day one at SilverBirch she articulated the need for a performance-driven culture through the definition of values, improved communication and investment in employees.

As a business partner first and an HR practitioner second Maassen provides a study in affecting change from within. Her goal is “to create corporate cultures that foster high levels of employee engagement, bringing about strong results and ROIs” and stems most directly from her years of experience in the hospitality industry—both operationally and later as executive director of human resources for the Canadian Tourism Commission.

Decades later, she remains compelled by the need to shift today's workplace into one that respects and values its employees as people. Moreover, Maassen has proven a propensity for being able to affect that shift by balancing a solid bottom line focus with the bigger picture of “bringing humanity back to the workplace” in a culture of listening, empathy and respect, above all, for each individual.

Developing the tools to affect that change, Maassen gained her CHRP designation in 2006, a certification in executive coaching in 2008 and a Master of Arts in Leadership in 2011. Along the way, she developed a passion for scouting talent that has served countless individuals and particular organizations tremendously well since.

When Maassen joined SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts as senior VP, HR with an employee base of 3000+, it was at a time of full-steam growth and resultant organizational change. From a transition to institutional ownership to a fundamental shift in brand strategy and 100 per cent turnover in senior leadership, the past three years have witnessed no small amount of challenge.

More telling are Maassen's accomplishments over the same span of time. She has since successfully rolled out a corporate values program, enhanced collaboration and re-negotiated insurance plans, while creating a salary structure and developing bargaining tools and processes for dealing with nine separate bargaining agents—all in the last three years. She also successfully



**Christine Maassen, CHRP**

renewed 11 collective agreements across seven provinces.

Increasing employee engagement from 82.9 per cent in 2010 to 86.5 per cent in 2013, Maassen not only maintained the esprit de corps, she contributed to the organization earning five prestigious international awards, and being named one of the Achievers 50 Most Engaged Workplaces™, as well as an Employer of Choice at four locations.

A portion of this success can be attributed to a campaign Maassen initiated in 2012 to keep collaboration top of mind. Collaboration scores increased by over nine per cent in a single year.

What underpins and continues to make possible such successes is the creation of a values-based culture. With strong support from company president, in 2011 Maassen

spearheaded a collaborative, company-wide campaign to write, roll out and live the values of SilverBirch.

Transforming the reactive energies of a strategic core of general managers, corporate directors and HR practitioners into a high performance team, while drawing upon external agencies as required in development and delivery, Maassen brought a values-based culture home at SilverBirch. As of 2013, more than 87 per cent of the employees believe the company to be living by its values—the company's highest measure of approval to date.

In a separate, though not unrelated, initiative, Maassen improved the existing benefit plan offerings, beginning by trimming their number. With input from the HR committee of the Board and tactical assist, that initiative alone has gained the company an annual savings of \$130K and improved benefits offerings across the board.

All of these efforts are testament to Maassen's overarching goal and ongoing mission to create effective workplaces and top line results.

Maassen serves as a pro-bono coach through pm-volunteers.org™, where she focuses her coaching on developing leaders at turning points in their careers. She also shares as a “knowledge philanthropist” through Vantage Point, facilitating workshops to help leaders define their organization's strategic needs.

In keeping with the full spectrum of her experience, Maassen has also served as a director on the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council since 2012, providing her support during a period of transition for the national body.

## 2014 HRMA Rising Star Award

**Fiona Ho**—HR generalist, Fortinet Technologies (Canada) Inc., Burnaby

**W**HEN FORTINET TECHNOLOGIES hired Fiona Ho, freshly graduated from UBC's Sauder School of Business in 2011 with a specialization in HR, it was without reservation, only hope; the work volume and complexity of the HR coordinator role had already proven too much for two others. Ho has never been happier.

She has since defined her own path as an HR generalist while rotating time between different HR specialties, most specifically, performance management, HRIS and recruitment.

Fortunately for Ho and Fortinet, she has always seen potential where others see problems. Despite being a company of 2300+ employees, growing at a rate of 15 to 20 per cent annually and largely on an international basis, the organization has always had a very lean HR team with little in-house specialist support. With HR covered in only four of the 20+ countries where Fortinet is represented worldwide, Ho's passion for process, people and research quickly benefited the bigger picture.

With an eye for detail as bright as her personality, she researched and learned best practices wherever Fortinet lacked local HR support or knowledge. Then she turned her attention to the processes which would support the entirety of the expanding organization—beginning with an antiquated performance management system.

The previous process had proven an increasing challenge, with all reviews done manually and countless weeks spent collecting and consolidating salary and stock recommendations. Ho not only brought processes online and into the new millennium, she saved Fortinet over \$100,000 by leading the development team to create an in-house system; the cost saving in terms of hours saved within the HR team is ongoing.

Moreover, by providing managers an online solution for providing feedback, the participation rate has doubled, enabling more comprehensive feedback and generating positive feedback for HR and Ho.



**Fiona Ho**

When a time of high turnover in the US team left a critical HR specialist gap in 2012, Ho stepped up, and effectively lived out of her suitcase to expand and apply her multi-faceted skill set. Her success might be measured by the fact that Fortinet's CEO, who lives in Sunnyvale, wanted her to stay in the US rather than return to Canada. She became Fortinet's global lead for several HR programs and systems in the same year.

Fortunately for Fortinet Canada, Ho returned to address the bigger picture of local recruitment. She changed that facet of Fortinet in 2013 when she took over the New Grad Hiring Program, building key relationships with industry and edu-

cational institutes to promote Fortinet as an employer of choice. Doubling the number of industry events attended and partnering with Fortinet's management team has increased both participation and effectiveness of these efforts.

While the acclaim of her initiatives in the professional forum are impressive, they also tie back directly to Ho's volunteering and pioneering spirit. An early advocate of HR from high school onwards, while at UBC she served for a year as a Post Secondary Representative with BC HRMA.

Joining the BC HRMA Coastal Vancouver Advisory Council in 2011, she applied that experience directly as co-chair of the Post-Secondary portfolio. She went on to find myriad ways to connect students and HR clubs across the Lower Mainland with the career potential of HR, and has since created and chairs the New Professionals Roundtable. Mission accomplished on the school front, Ho now co-chairs the CHRP/Professional Development Portfolio and has created a Roundtable Chair Roundtable to foster further collaboration and enhance the roundtable experience.

Most recently, Fiona became involved with the REVEAL Business Group, a nonprofit organization that supports young business leaders' personal and professional development.

## Honourary Life Members

Four Honourary Life Memberships were also presented at the 2014 HRMA Conference + Tradeshow. Honourary Life Memberships are granted to

### **Simon Evans, CHRP**

As the CEO of BC HRMA for the past decade, Evans has brought his lifetime of experiences in both the corporate and non-profit sectors to the betterment of both the Association and the broader industry of HR professionals. With a strategy of Voice, Value and Viability, he managed to financially stabilize the Association within three years, as well as address greater issues of membership satisfaction and growth. Membership growth of 100 per cent and the number of members holding or pursuing their CHRP designation tripling in the last decade, is a testament to Evans' leadership.

### **Hugh Finlayson, CHRP**

Throughout his 25 year career, Finlayson has remained committed to advancing the principles of strategic HR and ongoing education alike. That combined focus has served many well, both at the negotiation table, as well as within the 60 member agencies of the BC Public School Employers' Association. As CEO of the BCPSEA since 1999, Hugh has developed and led a series of initiatives, which have contributed to shifting the association focus from labour relations to a fundamentally more dynamic HR. A strong proponent of the Certified Human Resources Professional designation, Finlayson served a year as president of the Board of Directors from 2000-2001.

## 2014 Award of Excellence: Innovation

Jay Sharun, CHRP—negotiator, Western Industrial Relations, West Kelowna

**I**N THE EYES OF BC TREE FRUITS, LABOUR relations consultant Jay Sharun, CHRP not only achieved the previously-thought impossible—he did so within three months.

BC Tree Fruits credits Sharun's innovative approach to negotiations as a shining example of how positive labour relations and out of the box thinking can benefit any unionized environment.

When retained in summer 2013, it was in the midst of an ongoing crisis which threatened to reach a financial breaking point between BC Tree Fruits and the employees' union. The union was facing job losses and wanted more money, as well as to protect against the increased use of contractors while at the same time reducing costs.

Looking for a new consultant with a labour relations approach geared to decrease the resultant workplace tensions while exploring cost saving opportunities, they discovered Sharun—who brought a whole new attitude and approach. Brought in to promote positive labour relations, reduce unnecessary litigation and find the potential in the problems that had historically plagued the company's labour relations history, he changed the game entirely.

Going in, Sharun promised that the collective bargaining process would be a fun one—without a hint of irony. Although BC Tree Fruits and its union had a checkered history, wherein issues were dealt with via litigation and collective bargaining achieved through arbitration, Sharun changed that in short order—by encouraging his client to open up collective bargaining 12 months early to find the needed cost savings.

While it had been assumed that the union would push the organization for improvements they could not afford or wait for expiration of their agreement to bargain hard with the ability to strike, Sharun proved correct the old adage of assumptions. Not only did the union agree to enter discussions early, Sharun opened many eyes to a new way of collaborating with the union to get meaningful results.



Jay Sharun, CHRP

The more traditional approach had both parties exchanging long lists of proposals and spending long days in antagonistic bargaining. Aside from bringing a more personable approach, Sharun also challenged both parties to limit the demands they would bring to the table.

Sharun challenged BC Tree Fruits to bring one proposal to the bargaining table as opposed to a lengthy list, effectively turning a prior process of “game playing” into a “game changing” approach to negotiations.

As a result, BC Tree Fruits proposed an alternative scheduling process to realize the necessary cost savings and it worked beyond all client expectation. Giving the

union little choice but to focus on and address the lone issue in exchange for dealing with their priorities.

While a key component of Sharun's success is directly attributable to his experience and expertise, having negotiated more than 350 collective agreements, it was his collaborative approach as spokesperson for the company that created the unexpected “win-win.” Removing all animosity to focus on resolutions, the tone of the negotiations became one of key points and common focus.

As a result of his innovation, over the short course of a series of productive meetings, Sharun led the bargaining team to negotiate a collective agreement that will save BC Tree Fruits \$10 million over seven years, largely through productivity gains.

Even more impressively from the employer's perspective, base wage rates will not increase over the next seven years. Instead, the agreed upon deal pays out lump sums every two years while keeping BC Tree Fruits competitive in the long-term. This unprecedented outcome is directly attributed to Sharun, who has remained at hand to ensure smooth implementation of the agreement.

That the agreement was reached in 10 days only underlines the ROI of Sharun's contribution—and has won the “fist bumping” respect of the entire organization. Moreover, BC Tree Fruits insists they actually did have fun with the process at every innovative step.

BC HRMA members who have made a sustained and significant contribution to the association and to the human resources profession in BC.

### Simon Mason, CHRP

A true pioneer of human resources in British Columbia, and particularly the province's Central Interior, Mason celebrates 37 years of HR leadership this year. Despite ‘officially’ retiring in 2007 from School District 73 where he served for 20 years, he remains an active mentor to future generations of HR leaders. As a member of BC HRMA throughout, Mason helped found the Association's Central Interior ‘chapter’ in 1987 and his efforts served as a catalyst for increasing the membership value for members outside the Lower Mainland.

### Eileen Stewart

For over 35 years, Stewart has been making HR work for businesses, educational institutions and the greater community. Having worked in leadership positions for The City of Vancouver, UBC, BCIT, UVIC and Vancouver Coast Health, her efforts have arguably shaped the working experiences of a great many who live and work in the Lower Mainland. Stewart has been involved with BC HRMA on many levels since 1985 and has served as president from 1988-89, as well as chair of the Leadership Forum for many years.

# Effective Communications and HR: Making the Connection



By **Nancy Painter**

**H**R IS EXPECTED TO DO A LOT—establish or change culture, manage change big and small, develop leaders, engage employees—all major contributors to an organization’s bottom line.

What was once considered a tool in HR’s strategic leadership is now almost universally recognized as a strategic necessity—effective communications.

At a time of high expectations and unprecedented changes in the workplace and workforce, communication is key to the success of all HR functions.

“A great HR person really understands the value of communication and is willing to listen to and take advice from communications colleagues,” explains Ron Shewchuk, a North Vancouver consultant who specializes in internal communications and employee engagement.



**Ron Shewchuk**

“Communications understands the challenges faced by HR and helps them deal with them.”

## **Workforce Changes Driving Expectations**

Fundamental changes in workforce composition are impacting employees’ expectations, as well as HR’s approach to communicating with its multi-generational audience.

“Each generation has a different communication style and preferences,” Shewchuk says. “We cannot take the monolithic, one-size-fits-all approach to communication. Print, audio, video—they all must combine to tell the story.”

Different generations “speak different languages in terms of expectations, what they want from work and life,” according to Tammy Tsang, principal and office

godmother of My Loud Speaker Marketing and founder of the XYBoom conference and organization. She points to the Silent or Traditional Generation's view of work being the central focus of life; Baby Boomers' view of life with a strong work component; Generation X wanting a clear balance between work and life; and Generation Ys, who see work and personal life as a smooth integration without separation.

They can all share the same vision, Tsang explains. "A vision is what you're working toward; how you get there differs." For example, communication can be quite fluid for the Millennials who believe in work-life integration, while the key to reaching the Silent Generation is to appeal to their loyalty and to build relationships, preferably face-to-face.

### Technology Changes 'Standard' communications

Developing technology has changed the landscape forever for HR and communications.

"Technology is helping blow apart that traditional model of management control of all information," Shewchuk says. "It's really easy for employees to communicate with each other. HR and communications are evolving into the role of facilitating the gaining and sharing of information—it's a big change."

"Everyone is a communicator," he continues. "There is so much technology and so many tools in the hands of employees that if we don't find ways to add value, we risk becoming marginalized even further."

In the world of Twitter and Facebook, information sharing is instantaneous. "Communication has permeated organizations much more deeply now," says Dr. Eliza Chavez, a change and transition professional, formerly principal of Cambiar Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness, now leading clinical and systems transformation in Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and the Provincial Health Services Authority.

"Everyone has a role to play," she continues. "Information is in our face so much more. People are working in informal networks. Those in HR who are working in tandem with communications and leaders of the organizations will be the most successful."

HR is using other technologies for



Tammy Tsang

recruitment, including SnapChat and LinkedIn, Tsang points out. And different generations prefer different technologies for communication. "I'm a Millennial; on a regular basis I'm on my phone using instant messaging and apps, so I have a natural tendency to prefer that."

## Different generations "speak different languages in terms of expectations"

### Leverage Mediums to Reach Further, Deeper

We can leverage technology to improve communication in ways we couldn't even imagine a few years ago," Shewchuk says. "We need to create opportunities for positive shared experiences, to keep people informed, to recognize accomplishments and to engage employees. Social and digital media have huge power to create those experiences and help bind organizations together."

"Video and audio are hugely powerful tools to get meaningful and useful

information to the workforce. And we can now search videos for words or groups of words through meta-tagging," he explains. "We can cover distances in a geographically spread workforce, sharing video and audio through broadband. We can reach everyone at once. Mobile is super important; people in the field often have no access to computers."

Mike Desjardins agrees about the power of video. He's the co-founder and current CEO and driver of VIRTUS, an organizational and leadership development firm based in Vancouver. He recalls a hotel business that was launching new core values, which it had determined by interviewing people within the company and creating videos of employees telling stories.

"I watched one video, about how managers came together during a strike to work as a team, and I had tears in my eyes. I couldn't believe I was watching a corporate video." The key was honest, heartfelt stories, told directly by employees.

Informal videos are the most powerful, Desjardins adds. "Fireside chats with small groups and a leader, lunch and learns, online conversations, virtual town hall meetings—they're all examples."

Moreover, Shewchuk says, "Studies have shown that the quality of communication in the workplace has a direct and measurable influence on performance and profitability and efficiency."

### Team Up to Support Organizational Goals

communications and HR both need to support their organization's business goals. They are even more powerful when working together to do it, and when they set measurable objectives that can demonstrate the difference they are making to the bottom line—whether through lowered recruitment costs, less turnover, more efficient work or helping reach other organizational strategic goals.

One way they can do that is in facilitating change. "Communication is the number one way that change happens," according to Dr. Chavez. "And not just from a corporate communications standpoint, but in all the ways that people communicate."

Change communication includes leadership laying out what is going to change and what isn't, but also includes

the conversations that happen when employees go to their direct managers with concerns and questions.

"They won't say 'I'm afraid' or 'I'm anxious', but they are, and that requires solid communication between the person experiencing the change and their manager," she explains. "Communication is the conduit by which change happens, whether individual, team or organizational communications. In every way and at every step of change, there has to be two-way communication."

### Affect Change with Effective communications

Organizations that do a good job of blending change strategy with communication and sponsorship strategies "are going to be infinitely more successful than those who don't think of communication and sponsorship as part of change," Dr. Chavez adds.

Successful change contributes to organizational success. "If we're changing anyway, we can make the process less painful. Perhaps it will go quicker, we won't lose valuable people along the way, which saves both the hard dollar cost and the knowledge cost. We can keep on time and on budget. Resistance will always be there, but we need to deal with it through big and small communications," she says. "Seventy per cent of organization change projects fail. That's billions and billions of dollars gone out the door—that's a lot of money."

Change requires some specific messages, she adds. "These are the basics I sing from the mountaintops."

- Why are we doing this, and what are we getting out of it?
- What do we know, what do we not know and when will we know it?
- What is changing and what is not changing?

### Honesty and Transparency are Essential

The last thing an organization wants is for its employees to hear about change from outside sources before they hear it from the company.

"Our first urge is not to communicate until a problem is completely solved. That's the wrong kind of thinking—the rumour mill will fill in any gaps," explains

Shewchuk. "Give people updates. If you let people in on your struggle, they're more likely to be sympathetic. You lose trust and credibility if you only report on it after the problem is solved."



Elisa Chavez

Honesty and transparency are the building blocks of good communication. "Employees absolutely see through communication that isn't honest and transparent. Ask yourself, what damage can we cause by not being transparent?" asks Dr. Chavez.

**"Employees absolutely see through communication that isn't honest and transparent."**

Honesty also builds trust, she says. "It lets our employees be in this conversations with us."

"The fear that often holds people back is that there will be difficult conversations

as a result of being open. There will be, and that's okay. Decisions have to stand up to scrutiny. It's only by walking through the difficult conversations that we can come out on the other side, a changed organization," Chavez explains.

While the traditional HR function has been about controlling information and maintaining privacy, Shewchuk adds, HR pros need to work at being open and transparent while respecting needs for individual confidentiality.

### Culture is a Constant Communicator

Culture contributes to successful change, too. "I fundamentally believe leaders shape culture," Chavez says. "How communication works in an organization is typically a reflection of the culture we have or the culture we are trying to create."

Communicating a strong culture externally through marketing can save a business big bucks in recruiting, according to Tammy Tsang—and for the younger generations in the workplace, culture is often a deciding factor. "

Youth are looking for more meaning behind what they do and in the jobs they're looking for. They're seeking organizations that have strong cultures, ones that align with their values and will move them to contribute to the culture," says Tsang.

Having to sell the company and culture to every candidate complicates recruitment, taking more time and money. A strong culture will attract strong candidates who already know about the company. "Especially for recruitment and retention, it's important for a company and its employees to have that visible pride in the company." Marketing the company's culture as its brand pays off in recruiting—Tsang points to Google, Electronic Arts, TOMS shoes and the Great Little Box Company as examples.

### Reach and Grow Tomorrow's Leaders

Younger employees have been taught to critique the status quo, she adds, to build their own philosophies within a generation of growth. They have a strong desire to impress and improve, and to make things better together.

"There's a fine line between respecting the experience of your elders and helping

fuel innovation,” Tsang says. “They can step on toes in the beginning.”

However, she maintains organizations must give younger generations the chance they need to get started. “Ten to 15 years down the road, you’re going to need them and they’re not ready yet. There’s been a real loss in mentorship. It’s time to take a closer look at how we pass on knowledge and communicate what we’ve learned, and give that generation a chance to get on their feet.”

Desjardins excels at leadership development, specifically growing leaders internally. “It’s very hard to hire leaders off the street. We have to get leaders excited about career development, and help them create and implement a development plan that fits their strategic goals,” he says. “We need leaders and they’re not ready. There’s a gap between Baby Boomers and Generations X and Y, a real vacuum there with quite a difference in experience just because of the age difference.”

### Open Channels to Develop Leaders Within

Once a leadership development plan that supports an organization’s goals is in place, communication is necessary both to those involved in the program and those who are not, according to Desjardins. “We need to share wins, keep people abreast of changes and keep the momentum going. And individually, we need to let people know if they’re not ready yet and what they need to do differently to get ready, or what their responsibilities are as part of the program if they are ready.”

In large organizations, communication lets employees know what courses are available to them, and how the different options can be blended together to create the program that’s right for each individual.

“At the end of the day, communication is the only thing that connects us as human beings,” Desjardins says. Change, in culture or other areas, “happens when leaders model the behaviour they want to see in the organization, and when we tell our stories to each other.”

While the style of communication can be different for different generations, he adds, we need to connect with all of them. Just as teachers use audio, visual, feeling

and kinesics methods to reach more learners, HR and communications need to use all applications to connect with all their audiences.



Mike Desjardins

### Don't Stop Asking Questions

The first thing Shewchuk does when hired by a company to improve its internal communication is to evaluate what’s in use already. That includes meeting with leaders and front-line employees.

“HR without communication is like waving to a person in the dark.”

“Those on the frontline often have great ideas and excellent observations. They can share their frustrations with the current state, as well as tell us what works best,” says Shewchuk. “We get a real sense of where the strengths are and where the gaps are. Communication is much more complex than it used to be. We find out how employees communicate with each

other, and what mechanisms are in place for feedback up the organization.”

He advises HR professionals to think about communication is three areas:

- **How information is organized**—how easy is it for employees to find and share information?
- **Storytelling**—putting a human face to the organization tell compelling stories of change through the people it on the frontline.
- **Strengthening the community at work and the social work space**—facilitating the sharing of information, helping collaborators get together in communities of practice and interest; finding new ways to work together successfully.

### Effective communications Generate Results

Great communication is about driving business results, Shewchuk adds, whether that be improving safety, reducing costs or increasing productivity. By using the tools available in an integrated way, content will be consistent and complement other sources across the spectrum.

Objectives can be as simple as getting employees to buy into their benefits program. Desjardins recalls a client whose employees hated their benefits plan, even though it was one of the best in their industry. Research showed that a full 30 per cent of the benefits were unknown to employees; once a new program was implemented to explain the plan, people felt listened to and loved it.

“Programs don’t fail because they’re bad initiatives, they fail because of poor communication,” Desjardins says. “Communication has to be planned from an organizational perspective, outside of individual departmental silos.”

From understanding benefits to sweeping change, communications and HR are inextricably linked in successful organizations, he adds.

“There’s no way to separate the two. HR without communication is like waving to a person in the dark. I know what I’m doing but they have no idea.”

Nancy Painter is a freelance business writer and a member of the the International Association of Business Communicators.

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HR Generalist, Fortinet Technologies (Canada) Inc., Burnaby

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# Face-to-Face with Critical Conversations



By **Amelia Chan**, CHRP

**“WE NEED TO TALK.”** While this phrase is heard often enough by HR professionals, for many in the workplace it generates reactions ranging from nervousness to dread. In an era with such a variety of communications choices, how is it that face-to-face conversations have become connected with such a red flag that even a simple request to talk can evoke a fear response? Problematically, if we only talk to each other ‘as required’, our most natural and effective means of communication atrophies.

When we don’t seize the moments to communicate, the “human” in our human resources function loses its effectiveness. Moreover, small dramas can become major traumas left unaddressed.

## Common Misconceptions and Fears

As human resources professionals, mastering face-to-face communications is considered a key component of the toolkit, yet even HR benefits from ongoing coaching in this area. After all, it is widely assumed that others understand what our message is because “we know” what we are saying. However, each person brings their own attitude, perception, emotions and thoughts to the table. Miscommunication is often the standard—which becomes even more challenging when truly critical conversations are required, as they are so often in HR.

Aside from maintaining a strong focus on daily rapport building opportunities and listening actively to the employees and executives alike, critical conversations

lie at the heart of many core HR functions ranging from hiring to firing.

Bear in mind that at least part of the reason the words “I really need to talk to you” carry a negative connotation is that they precede genuinely challenging conversations. How then might HR diminish the knee-jerk negativity and generate positive outcomes for the organization and individual?

## Welcoming the Elephant in the Room

That is a question that Diane A. Ross took to heart when authoring *The Elephant in the Office: Super-Simple Strategies for Difficult Conversations at Work*—and addressed from the heart at the recent 2014 HRMA Conference + Tradeshow. As a prior litigator, Ross was inspired to make a change and founded Elephant Conversations Ltd., a business devoted to teaching people practical skills for difficult conversations based on real and respectful communication.

While Ross respects that courage is required to initially engage in difficult conversations, what holds many people back is as much a fear of their own reactions as the individual or group being engaged. What Ross considers essential to navigating the uncharted waters which such conversations can broach is a change of mindset—and a plan. The first is achieved, Ross shares, when we do away with the anxiety of facing tough reactions and step forward more confidently with a results-oriented approach.

As for the plan, Ross is a proponent of preparing for worst case scenarios. Let’s be honest, no one wants to be in a volatile

or potentially hurtful situation. By anticipating difficult conversations, we can be equipped to deal with potentially dramatic or traumatic exchanges beforehand so we are empowered—and remain calm. Preparing takes fear away, regardless of the content or context of any interaction.

## Four Step Stigma Reduction

Following with Ross’ simple four step strategy<sup>1</sup>, the stigma of difficult conversations is greatly alleviated.

**Step One:** Prepare to Talk

**Step Two:** Reaction Management

**Step Three:** Deliver Your ABC (Accurate Brief Clear) Message

**Step Four:** Respond, Don’t React

Now that we have the tools to deliver difficult messages, we need to align these exchanges with positive outcomes. It may seem very HR-oriented to paint a good picture and talk a rosy glasses kind of game. How can we set a different tone at the very core of our organizations and not just in a superficial way?

## A Change of Tone Inspires

As founder of Clarion Enterprises Ltd. and a business columnist for American Express, Bruna Martinuzzi is both a gifted speaker and committed to sharing the answer to exactly that type of question. With over 25 years of leadership experience and fluent in six languages, she has trained and coached hundreds of leaders internationally—in both start-ups and Fortune 500 companies—to become more effective communicators.

As author of *The Leader as a Mensch: Become the Kind of Person Others Want to Follow* and, most recently, *Presenting with Credibility: Practical Tools and Techniques for Effective Presentations*, Martinuzzi brings the substance of style and presentation to the forefront in her presentations and published mediums alike.

In short, Martinuzzi walks her talk, and knows well the power words can wield—for practiced better or unconscious worse.

### The Heart of the Matter

In her “How to Speak in a Way That Inspires” session at the HRMA conference, Martinuzzi stressed—without stressing—the importance of allowing ourselves as leaders to speak like human beings and hear with ears attuned to the emotions in the room.

As per Martinuzzi’s wisdom, bringing a measure of grace to even the water cooler conversation can only serve us better when critical conversations flare up. We need to remove the fear from the words “we need to talk” by making them ordinary and usual, not random and unexpected.

Philosophically attuned to the positive

outcomes of challenging conversations, Martinuzzi speaks to a truth often forgotten in the moment—while people may not remember all the details of a conversation, they will always remember how you made them feel<sup>2</sup>. To have impact involves addressing the emotional aspect; it is here that authentic—and thus effective—conversations and communications begin.

Where they lead is largely a matter of mindset and the questions in mind.

### Always Asking (Better) Questions

A key component is to revisit the areas where critical conversations most commonly occur, and look for ways to turn the transactional into the transformational. Asking new questions can play a pivotal role—both in terms of the knowledge gained and defusing assumptive thinking.

Most importantly, as driven home by Ross and Martinuzzi, critical conversations are already an essential aspect of human resources. Using them consistently and wisely enables HR to both advance the core principles of humanism with improving organizational profitability.

After all, with the challenging conversations addressed, mutual respect and shared innovative potential begins. As important as the information is the presentation—the approach, the reception and response.

All the one directional newsletters, memos and letters will not carry the same amount of power as active (and regular) exchanges. Information is valuable; effective communications are invaluable. Moreover, the key lies in consistency—through the good times and bad, daily mundane to the pivotal moments—punctuated with critical conversations openly engaged by all parties with positive expectation. **P**

Amelia Chan, CHRP, RCIC is founder and principal consultant of Higher Options Consulting Services (hr-options.com), providing a wide range of HR and immigration services for small to mid-sized businesses.

<sup>1</sup> Diane A. Ross “Difficult Conversations Mind Map” Elephant Conversations Ltd.

<sup>2</sup> A nod to Maya Angelou for this is so true in critical conversations.



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# The Power of Empathy: Leadership and Listening

By Isabelle St-Jean, RSW, PCC

**A**T THE RECENT 2014 HRMA Conference + Tradeshow in Vancouver, opening speaker Shawn Achor brought home the importance of how we feel about the work we do.

As the author of *The Happiness Advantage* and *Before Happiness*, Achor's positivism sparkled on stage, but it was his body of research on positive psychology that anchored the importance of his message. Amidst a wealth of facts and findings, one stood out of particular importance to HR professionals, recruiters and managers alike—only 25 per cent of job-related success results from “skills and smarts.”

A full 75 per cent of success is being generated by each individual's level of optimism—which gives us the ability to reframe stressors as surmountable challenges—combined with the depth, breadth and meaningfulness of their relationships.

## Leadership and the Language of Empathy

A strong resonance carried over in a subsequent breakout session, “*Why Empathy Should Matter*” led by Dr. Craig Dowden. Via awareness generating exercises and a list of recommended reads on the subject, Dr. Dowden made an eloquent case for the importance of empathy in the workplace.

Citing *The Narcissism Epidemic*, which measures a drop of empathy in our culture of 30 per cent in the past few decades, Dr. Dowden focused on what can be done to turn the tide on such numbers. Once again, learning to listen—and with more than our ears—is key.

In *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't*, author Simon Sinek stresses that exceptionally successful organizations all have a culture in which leaders listen and protect from above while people on the ground look out for each other. Dr. Dowden points out that in such companies, empathy provides an invaluable bond woven throughout every layer of the organization; this is what inspires their employees to push hard, take risks and dwell in loyalty.

Dr. Dowden re-iterated what many in HR already recognize in their communications if not the figures involved—our verbal output only carries seven per cent of the meaningful input received. A full 55 per cent is communicated through visual cues and tone alone accounts for 38 per cent in equating the meaning derived.

## Core Empathy Traits of Leaders

The Center for Creative Leadership highlights four indicators of empathy among successful leaders:

- being sensitive to others' signs of overwork;
- showing interest in others' needs;
- being consistently willing to help; and
- the ability to convey compassion.

For a multitude of productive reasons, an assessment for those indicators would be wise to add in the selection process for a manager on any team. Core to all four traits is the ability to listen with focus and intent.

## Listening Styles: What is Yours?

While everyone has their own style of communication, listening is a matter of style and commitment. On the spectrum from disengaged and lacking focused attention, to fully present and actively engaged, here are four common listening styles:

**Inactive:** You are not fully engaged, may be self-effacing or passive aggressive.

**Reactive:** You are primarily in a defensive stance; you aim to oppose and prepare your response while appearing to listen.

**Pro-active:** You are leading, initiating, may be a step ahead and have a tendency to control.

**Interactive:** You are fully present, empathically responsive and allowing the flow of communication.

## Multiple Dimensions of Listening

In her book *Speaking As A Leader*, Judith Humphrey, founder and president of The

Humphrey Group, explains that effective listening actually requires simultaneous attention on three levels: the physical, mental, and emotional. She points out that physical listening begins with where one chooses to sit or stand and what is conveyed through body language, posture, facial expression, and eye contact.

Humphrey explains that mental listening represents the capacity to open one's mind to others' views and build upon them in constructive ways. This level of listening also involves the intention to hear *everything*, without editing out what we don't want to hear—a common habit, especially in people with interests in driving certain outcomes.

Emotional listening involves a desire to give empathy, convey caring and support others. It includes taking responsibility for embracing an unconditional positive regard towards others in the process of communicating, building rapport and nurturing good working relationships. Keeping negative emotions in check also allows leaders to provide the “space” for others to express themselves and embrace an attitude of inclusiveness.

## Inclusiveness around the Café's Table

That inclusivity generates its own outcomes was further illustrated at the rotating “World Café” discussions facilitated by Lisa Ryan, CHRP, VP, talent management with Right Management. Ryan has used the World Café format effectively for team sessions and strategic planning processes alike. As a means of preventing employees from getting stuck in a rut, spontaneously generating and harvesting insights, and identifying the collective progress made—the format works.

In an environment in which all voices are equally valued, this model of conversation fosters a dynamic exchange of ideas. With each round of conversations guided by a host listening and stimulating the conversation with powerful questions, the insights that can be captured in a remarkably short span of time is impressive. With the host sharing the insights of each preceding group, the collective intelligence is set ablaze.

## Improvisation to Unleash a Leader's Best

A change of setting (or tables) goes a long way towards changing our communication skills and expectations. Another innovative way of freeing a rich flow of ideas while cultivating a listening presence was showcased by Ken Lawson, lead facilitator with the Vancouver Theatre Sports League.

Grounded in humour, humility, deep listening and quick thinking, improvisation has gained increasing recognition for its benefits in leadership development. Lawson regards improv as the ultimate tool for learning to create something that would be impossible to do on one's own.

Given that the working world is recognizing the increased importance and power of creativity, authenticity and innovation in the workplaces, the improv stage levels the playing field like few other group exercises. As to its effectiveness, Lawson points out that even business magazines such as *Forbes* have published articles on the benefits of improvisation.

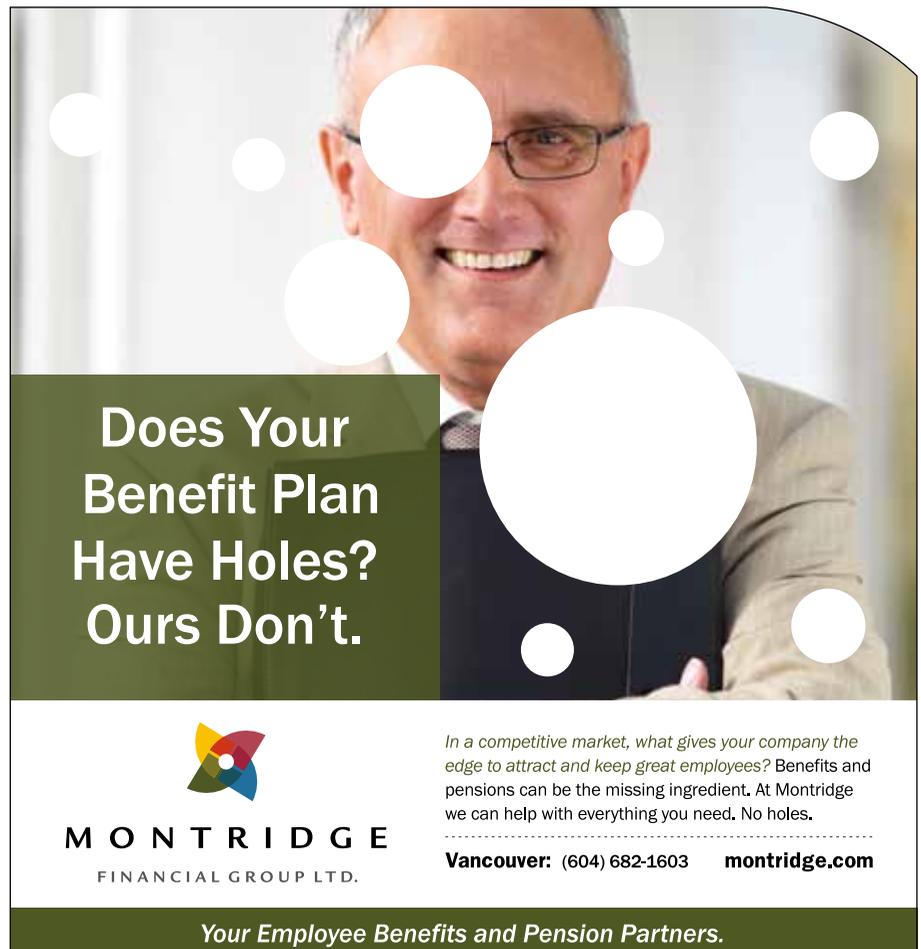
## The Functionality of Fun

Moreover, these days, when everyone wants a workplace that is fun and engaging, improv can help generate that fun in a way that also enables people to say "yes" to other people's ideas and build on them.

In *Leadership Agility: Using Improv to Build Critical Skills*, Kip Kelly of UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School says that improv is really about being spontaneous, imaginative and open to playing in a collaborative way. Not only does this activity encourage team building, active listening and effective communication, it is also precisely what helps to make enterprises more creative, responsive and agile. These qualities and skills in turn help people to bring out their best from within.

After all, today's true leadership is not about emulating the greatest leader we know—it's about unleashing the best version of the most authentic and unique person that resides within each of us. **▶**

Professional speaker, author, life and business coach, Isabelle St-Jean, RSW, PCC brings to her clients a decade of experience in leading, educating and providing practical solutions to major work/life challenges and transitions. ([inspiredmomentum.com](http://inspiredmomentum.com)).



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# The Changing Faces of CCHRA

By Kelly Mills

## BC Represents On National Level

CCHRA is pleased to announce the appointment of Shannon Joly, CHRP, as the chair of its Standards Advisory Committee (SAC), effective January 2014. Joly is the president of BC HRMA, a member of the CCHRA Board of Directors and is the director of human resources for School District 41 in Burnaby. She has also been a dedicated volunteer with BC HRMA since 1998. The CCHRA's SAC oversees the core function of the national organization—building and maintaining its quality designation and national core standards.

CCHRA is also pleased to announce the appointment of Susan J. Ryan, CPA, CMA, CHRP, as an advisor to the Board. Ryan will provide her financial expertise to the CCHRA Board and to the Audit and Finance Committee of the Board. Employed for the past 10 years by the Nanaimo & District Hospital Foundation as VP and CFO, she, she previously held similar positions with the Yukon Workers' Compensation Board, and the Government of Yukon, Department of Justice.

Ryan is currently a member of the BC HRMA Board of Directors and is a member of the Board of Governors for Queen Margaret's School on Vancouver Island. Previous Board positions include president, Certified Management Accountants Society of Yukon; board member, Society of Management Accountants of Canada; board member, Institute of Public Administration of Canada; treasurer, Whitehorse Minor Hockey; board member, Kaushee's Place Women's Transition Home, Yukon; and treasurer, Diocese of Yukon.

## Cheryl Newcombe New CCHRA Board Chair

In January 2014, Cheryl Newcombe became chair of the CCHRA Board of Directors. She is also the President of the Human Resources Association of Nova Scotia (HRANS.) Before her appointment as CCHRA chair, Newcombe served on the CCHRA Board as the Nova Scotia representative and as the chair of the CCHRA Standards Advisory Committee.

Newcombe is also a leader in the charitable and professional



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communities in Nova Scotia, as well as a proud foster mom. She is currently a member of the Human Resource Association of Nova Scotia, Fall River Ratepayers Association, the Halifax Stanfield International Airport Authority, Trade Centre Limited and she is the program coordinator at the Windsor Junction Community Centre.

### Angèle Mullins Becomes Chair-Elect

Angèle Mullins of Calgary has been appointed as the new chair-elect of the CCHRA Board, effective June 1, 2014. Mullins currently serves as the chair of the Governance and Nominating Committee of the CCHRA Board and served as a director of the Human Resources Institute of Alberta from 2008 to 2012. Mullins is currently director, Human Resources & Administration at NAL Resources Management Limited, a mid-sized energy company in Calgary. Mullins has been involved as a volunteer in the HR community in Alberta since 1996, enjoys mentoring newcomers to the HR profession and has also been an active volunteer for various community non-profit organizations.

### CCHRA Board Represents HR Across Country

At the February 2014 Board meeting, the CCHRA Board welcomed four new member association representatives: Roma Thorlakson, chair-elect of the Human Resource Management Association of Manitoba (HRMAM); Greg Honey, president of the Saskatchewan Association of Human Resources Professionals (SAHRP) and Pierre Simoneau, president of the Human Resources Association of New Brunswick (HRANB).

With Newcombe taking on the role of chair of CCHRA, Stephen Pamerter becomes the representative for HRANS on the CCHRA Board. Joining the CCHRA Board in June 2014, will be Shannon Friesen, past chair of the Human Resources Institute of Alberta (HRIA) to replace Mullins who assumes the chair-elect role at this time.

Philip Wilson, chair of the Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA), in Ontario and Heather Joyce, president of the Human Resources Professionals of Newfoundland and Labrador, continue as member association representatives.

### Farewells and Thank You's

After more than four years of service, two as chair and two as past chair, Patrick Hartling of Nova Scotia finished his term with the CCHRA Board. Antoinette Blunt, most recently director at large on the CCHRA Board also completed her term with the May 2014 meeting.

BC HRMA CEO Simon Evans retired in June 2014 after a decade with the association. The CCHRA Board, volunteers and staff would like to thank Hartling and Blunt for their years of dedicated service to the national HR professional organization and Evans for his contributions as a member of the Chief Staff Officers' group of the CCHRA.

"Patrick, Antoinette and Simon have all made lasting contributions to the CCHRA," said CCHRA executive director Sharon Lee. "We will all miss their insights, generosity and knowledge and wish them all the best in their future endeavours." 



BC Human Resources Management Association

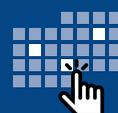
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# What's Your Trust Bank Balance?

By **Doug Turner**

IN THE SPRING 2013 EDITION OF *PeopleTalk*, JOHN WRIGHT, CEO of the Canadian Management Centre (CMC) documented the sorry state of affairs in Canadian businesses today in regards to the levels of trust and confidence in the workplace. The most alarming statistic is that 61 per cent of Canadian employees don't trust their senior leaders.

While an alarming enough statistic, its impact is even greater when one considers that such trust is integral in order to achieve effective communication, innovation, engagement, efficient operations and ultimately, optimum organizational results.

Perhaps there is a temptation to dismiss this as being obvious. The words have all been used and overused, but perhaps lacking appropriate context to build a better business case. It helps to see that trust and communication are inextricably linked. They are each an "end" and a "means to an end". Effective communication won't happen in a low trust environment and trust won't happen if there isn't honest and clear communication.

## Answering 'WIIFM?'

While what leaders say is a key element of communication, they must also be aware of and accountable for how their message lands. This is critical. Effective leaders make the extra effort to understand what people are expecting, what their priorities are, what they want and so forth.

In short, leaders must not only acknowledge the basic "What's In It For Me?" (WIIFM)—effective leaders answer that question. The communication is not relayed until the sender confirms that the intended message was received and interpreted correctly by the receivers. The CMC article aptly suggested that leaders should not "Just push information", but should also solicit responses and provide context. It all ties back to the WIIFM question.

## Developing Trust as a Leader

It is often said that the best way to communicate what is expected is to lead by

example. Leaders must articulate what is expected and then demonstrate what success looks like. In order for staff to trust and embrace what the leaders are saying, they must see that the leaders are genuine and that they are believable.

To achieve this trust, leaders must pay close attention to the kind of behaviours that are seen to be, or perceived by staff to be, rewarded. Leaders must not ask for one thing and then reward, or even be perceived to reward, something that is different and possibly inconsistent with what was requested.



**“Effective communication won't happen in a low trust environment”**

A weekly or monthly personal "note from the President" to all staff with specific congratulatory messages is an ideal place to show everybody what kind of behaviour gets acknowledged and rewarded. By publicly rewarding solid examples of "collaboration", "high standards", "customer focus", or whatever else may be desired, leaders will build that aspect into the culture as a result of enhanced levels of trust.

## Trust Fosters Autonomy and Success

Let's examine trust in more detail. Why does it matter? It matters because there is a preponderance of evidence to show that when there is more trust in a given situation, more things can be achieved in a shorter time and the cost of achieving those things goes down.

For example, when there is more trust, there is less need for regulations, rules, procedures, policies—all of which are

better known collectively as bureaucracy or red tape. Staff can make more autonomous decisions and business moves faster with less cost. People feel better and the business is more profitable—a win-win situation.

While "trust" and "confidence" are often used as separate terms, they are really the same thing. Trust can be defined as confidence in a person (or organization) as result of the qualities that person is perceived to have. The key words here are "qualities" and "perceived." The questions then are, "what qualities?" and "how do you achieve the correct perception?"

## Character and Competence Key

Stephen M.R. Covey in his seminal book *The Speed of Trust* describes the essential qualities associated with trust as character and competence. Character is composed of intent and integrity. Competence is made up of capability and results. People trust people who they perceive to be of "good character" and who are competent at what they do.

Demonstrating competence is relatively straightforward, but critically important.

The other side, character, is a bit trickier and requires conscious effort. People will only trust leaders when they know what those leaders' interests really are, what their objectives are and what their agenda is. This is collectively known as intent and it is likely the most common cause of distrust in the corporate environment.

As per CMC's "Build a Better Workplace" report, 61 per cent of employees don't trust their leaders; that is likely due to lack of visibility of the intent of those leaders. Comments such as "I don't know what is going on", "my boss is just out to make himself look good", "priorities seem to change frequently without notice" and the like, come directly from this lack of confidence in the intent of leadership.

Leaders must convey their intent, and do it in such a way that is believable and verifiable, which is the essence of integrity.

## The Arithmetic of Integrity

Integrity means consistency. Think of a simple arithmetic addition:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{MIND} \\ + \text{MOUTH} \\ + \text{HEART} \\ + \text{FEET} \\ \hline = \text{INTEGRITY} \end{array}$$

In this little construct, MIND represents what you are thinking. MOUTH represents what you say, how you speak. HEART represents what you are feeling and FEET represent what you do, your actions. If what you think is consistent with what you say, and if what you say is consistent or congruent with what you feel, and if what you feel is the same as what you do (your actions match your feelings, words and thoughts)—then, you are “living in integrity.”

**“Leaders must articulate...and then demonstrate what success looks like.”**

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to be perfectly aligned all of the time. However, everything leaders do and say must be verifiable because people will definitely check up on them. Any inconsistencies are potential trust destroyers.

## The Bank of Trust

We all know and seem to accept that trust has to be earned over time. We also know, through experience or otherwise that trust can be destroyed very quickly.

Think of a bank account that is shared by any two people that have a relationship that involves trust. The balance in the account is the amount of trust in the relationship. Each person makes deposits into the account and the occasional withdrawal. Deposits tend to be small and frequent, while withdrawals are larger and infrequent. Indeed, one withdrawal can wipe out the account altogether, if the betrayal of trust is serious enough and there is insufficient trust in the account to allow one party to forgive the other.

It is important that leaders be aware that they have these joint accounts with everybody in their organization and all of

their actions are contributing to or withdrawing from the “trust accounts.”

Advice like “we must communicate better” is of very little use unless there is a specified objective of the improved communication. In HR’s case, the goals are to improve the efficiency of operations, increase innovation, improve engagement, and achieve greater organizational success. These all require greater trust.

Fortunately, as shown, greater trust and ensuing results emerge if leaders:

- communicate their intent;
- ensure their communications are received and interpreted correctly;
- act in such a way that their communications can be verified;
- communicate by demonstrating and rewarding what is asked for; and
- show that they have everybody’s interests at heart. **P**

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# Communications à la MODE: Engaging a Multigenerational Workforce

By **Bernadette Smith**

**E**FFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE workplace is critically important to keeping employees engaged and focused on achieving results. It is the means by which performance expectations are set, relationships develop, trust grows, and collaboration is enabled to get things done. It takes on many forms and occurs at all levels of the organization. Making the right choice in selecting a communication method is further complicated with four generations in the workplace with diverse preferences. Finding the right balance of communication vehicles to appeal to your employee base will enhance your communication effectiveness.

### Study Reveals Room to Improve

In 2013, Canadian Management Centre (CMC) partnered with Ipsos Reid to release the findings from a national employee engagement study that revealed that only 46 per cent of all Canadians were satisfied with internal communications in their workplace, identifying a need for real improvement.

It's important that employees receive a timely flow of information about changes and workplace initiatives, especially when it impacts them. Communication of relevant information at the right time enables employees to focus on the right priorities, projects and tasks to serve the best interests of their organization and their customers. Ineffective communication results in confusion, conflict and a misdirection of resources, leading to lost productivity, poor quality and service, difficult interpersonal relationships among leaders and employees, and ultimately a decrease in employee engagement and organizational performance.

### Driving Employee Engagement

Leadership and communication are key drivers of employee engagement. Leaders

are the creators who build and promote a culture of open communication and collaboration in their workplace. They play a critical role in sharing the organization's vision, what's happening across the workplace and ensuring the flow of communication between leaders and employees. When communication is effective and timely, they build trust and confidence in leadership, create buy-in and motivate employees by clearly connecting the work they do to business priorities. The more connected employees are to the business itself, the more likely they are to go above and beyond to achieve the desired results.

**“Leadership and communication are key drivers of employee engagement the challenge is choosing the right balance of communication vehicles”**

The proliferation of social media vehicles in the last several years has changed the way people communicate at home and at work. These new channels have created new opportunities for organizations in internal and external communications, including building employee engagement, recruiting, learning, collaboration and public relations.

### Connecting By Generation

The challenge, however, is choosing the right balance of social media vehicles over the more traditional forms of communication to appeal to the preferences of all generations of employees currently in the workplace. A 'one size fits all' approach is no longer appropriate, so how do you maximize your message impact across this diverse group?

Each generation has communication method preferences based on what they have grown accustomed to. Even though these preferences are stereotypical and may vary by individual, having awareness of potential differences is helpful in choosing appropriate vehicles.

Baby Boomers generally prefer in-person discussions and face-to-face meetings. E-mails are good sources of information for them too. On the other hand, Gen Xers prefer to start the exchange of information with an e-mail and, for efficiency, follow-up with in-person communications if necessary.

Millennials need a bite-sized approach to communication with a more frequent flow of information. Contrary to popular belief, they do not completely rely on social media, nor do they want to be communicated to through those vehicles exclusively. Like their Boomer colleagues, they appreciate in-person interactions, but prefer short duration touch points via different modes. A multi-modal approach to disseminating organizational information to this diverse audience will improve the effectiveness of communication overall.

### Communicating Preferences

The methods of communication used in Canadian organizations is expansive. They range from the more common methods of email, phone, face-to-face meetings, and company intranets to newer social media tools. While there is a belief that the usage of the newer tools is

widespread, our national research shows that the proportion of Canadians who actively use these tools in the workplace is very small.

Employees still prefer to use the more traditional methods of communication like all-staff emails (74 per cent), face-to-face meetings (64 per cent) and by telephone (31 per cent) compared to social media (four per cent), LinkedIn (one per cent) and podcasts (one per cent). The top methods used and preferred by highly engaged employees are consistent with the general employee population as well.

### Communications a la MODE

Choosing the method of communication is just as important as creating the message. Leaders will use their communication skills to inform, instruct, inspire, influence or inquire. The modes chosen should be linked to your desired outcome, the message that is being delivered and the target group receiving the communication.

Canadian Management Centre has created a reference tool called MODE to help evaluate which messages should be delivered face-to-face or through other modes.

**MESSAGE:** What is the type/topic of the content you are communicating?

**OUTCOME:** What is the expected outcome you desire from this communication?

**DISTRIBUTION:** Who is the audience?

**EXPECTED RESPONSE:** How do you anticipate the receivers will respond to the message?

Depending on the situation, a blend of two or more communication modes may be used to appeal to a diverse employee population. As a general guideline, if the following conditions exist the message should be delivered face-to-face or in a live virtual vehicle if face-to-face is not an option:

- **MESSAGE:** if the message is negative or sensitive
- **OUTCOME:** resolving a misunderstanding
- **DISTRIBUTION:** the relationship is new or fragile
- **EXPECTED RESPONSE:** you expect an unfavourable response or need immediate feedback

### Social Media Savvy Supports

Social media vehicles can play a role in enhancing information sharing internally and externally, as well as in improving collaboration in the workplace. While our research showed that social media vehicles are not a preferred choice among employees, they still can be used to enhance mainstream workplaces messages—such as policy changes, project updates and newsletters shared through the company intranet, e-mail or face-to-face discussions first. Links can be attached to internal discussion forums or breakout rooms where employees can brainstorm ideas or offer their feedback. Some CEOs use blogs to share news and invite comments from employees. These vehicles enable employees to have a voice and to contribute their ideas.

Public vehicles like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are more appropriate for sharing organizational information with external stakeholders: issuing media releases, gathering customer feedback and marketing intelligence and promoting events for example.

Collaborative technologies like Google Drive or Yammer enable individuals and teams to work more effectively together. They build relationships, encourage brainstorming and innovation and improve knowledge sharing among colleagues as well. They work well with globally dispersed groups where teams can work on projects across time zones. Social media vehicles will rise in popularity as organizations recognize the value that they can bring to improving workplace productivity.

While there is not one perfect approach to delivering effective communication, it is important to understand your unique employee base and how they prefer to receive timely information that impacts them. Taking a multi-modal approach will improve your message delivery effectiveness with a generationally diverse group. Improved communication and collaboration will improve employee engagement and will help set them up for success to achieve business results. **📢**

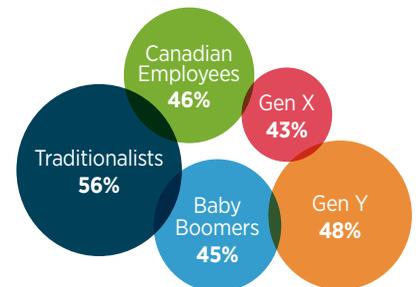
Bernadette Smith is vice president, talent development solutions at Canadian Management Centre ([www.cmcoutperform.com](http://www.cmcoutperform.com))

## Employee Opinions on Workplace Communication

Canadian Management Centre partnered with Ipsos Reid to conduct a nationwide engagement study of 1200 employees across Canada called 'Build a Better Workplace: Decoding Employee Engagement for Leaders'. Results showed that when it comes to effective communication in the workplace, surprising statistics revealed that almost half of employees feel that their organization falls short and that they prefer traditional methods of communication over social media vehicles.

### How satisfied are you with internal communication in your workplace?

#### Level of Agreement by Generation



### What is your preferred method of receiving workplace communication?



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# To Be Believed is to Be Heard: Communication Fundamentals and Customer Experience

By Adam DiPaula, Mary Bacica and Julie Winram

IF YOU'RE A MANAGER OR SUPERVISOR YOU PROBABLY SPEND TIME TRYING to figure out how to best communicate with your employees. If you're like most, you fret over what words to use, how to deliver your message and what will maximize its effectiveness.

Step back for a second. Have you ever thought about how many employees actually listen to your message? The first step toward effective communication in the workplace is getting employees to listen to your message. As it turns out, despite the ever-expanding channels available, employees who listen to your carefully worded messages are not in abundant supply.

## If I Don't Believe You, Why Would I Listen to You?

While there are a variety of reasons why employees don't attend to your message, there is one factor that lies at the core of much of employees' inattention—many simply don't believe what you have to say.

**"How many employees actually listen to your message?"**

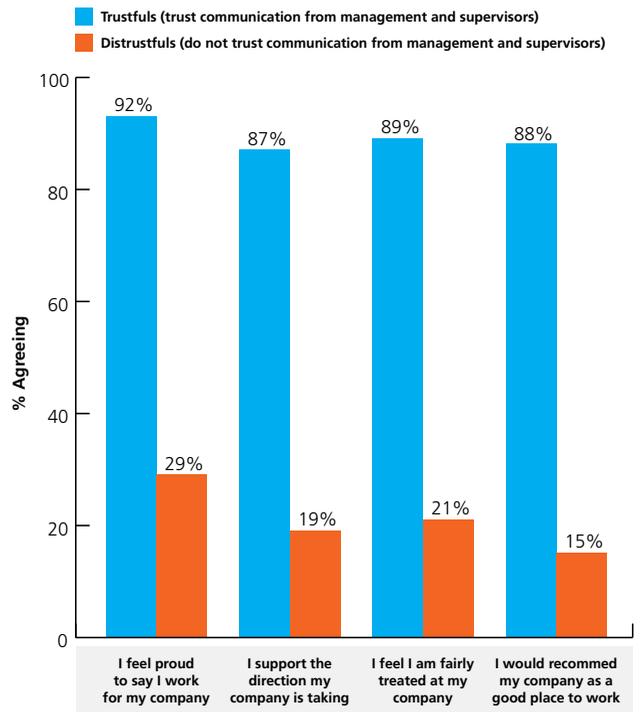
In Sentis' Canadian Employee Benchmark survey, we found that over one-third of employees did not believe that their immediate supervisor encourages open, honest two-way communication. We also found that 40 per cent don't believe that their organization's senior leaders communicate honestly with employees.

It is tempting to view this positively: "Hey, we've got the majority believing what we have to say." However, such figures are not the picture of organizational health for two primary reasons.

First, given the time, effort and money spent trying to communicate with employees, the fact that four in 10 employees don't believe what management has to say should trigger a significant rethink in management's approach to communications. Second, whether or not employees view management as communicating honestly has a huge impact on employee morale, retention and support for the organization.

## The Disparity of Distrust

To illustrate this impact, we compared two groups on key measures from Sentis employee benchmark survey. One group, the 'Trustfuls', agreed that supervisors and senior managers communicate honestly with employees. The other group, the 'Distrustfuls', disagree. The chart shows the percentage of



Source: Sentis Research Canadian Employee Engagement Benchmark Survey

employees in each group who feel proud to say they work at their company, support the direction their company is taking, feel that they are treated fairly, and who would recommend their company as a good place to work.

The disparity in the attitudes and behaviours of 'Trustful' versus 'Distrustful' employees is striking and drives home how important it is for organizations to focus on establishing the conditions that will make employees believe you, and believe in the organization's vision and mission.

## How Do You Move the Needle on Believability?

Our research and that of others points to two approaches that managers can take to improve their credibility. One involves managers following some basic principles, "communication fundamentals." These are the table stakes for creating a culture in which employees believe what you have to say. The second encourages letting the customer do the talking and brings the customer experience closer to the employee.

## Establishing Communication Fundamentals

*People are more likely to believe things when they hear them from other people, not from organizations.* In other words, communications should be personal and come from

a person or persons. “News from the HR Department” or “A Senior Executive Team Update” doesn’t cut it. Name names and take ownership of the message. Employees want to know who is talking to them.

In several employee engagement studies, we have also found that employees respond well to ‘face-time’ with senior management. However, ‘face-time’ should take the form of regular dialogues with employees, not ‘talking heads’ at the front of the room. Fred Hassan termed this approach ‘leading from the front’ in his May 2011 *Harvard Business Review* article<sup>1</sup>.

Hassan discussed the positive impact of CEOs and other senior managers interacting directly with small groups of frontline managers on a regular basis. Employees perceive these unfiltered exchanges as sincere actions on the part of management to listen to employees and take what is learned to inform decisions.

**Motivations should be pure of heart and focused on the intended audience:** People can usually sense the underlying motivation of communications. Before crafting your communications piece, ask yourself: “Why do employees need to know this?” and “What do I want them to think upon hearing this?” Remember, you need to be generous in your motivations; this is about them, not you.

**Muster up your courage, tell it like it is and own it:** No one wants to hear bad news, but sometimes that’s the story. It takes a lot of courage for organizations to be upfront and transparent in their communications, especially when the news is not good. Given that some bad news can reach employees and beyond extremely quickly through social media channels, it’s best to err on the side of transparency. When you own the bad stories and stop trying to control them, you can own the good stories too.

### **Bring the Customer Experience Closer**

There is now a growing body of research illustrating the benefits of bringing the customer experience closer to the employee. These benefits include enhanced credibility of the organization in the eyes of employees, as well as big increases in employee motivation and listening skills alike.

In fact, research by Adam Grant and his associates reported in *Harvard Business Review* shows that employees feel that their organization’s customers are more credible sources of information than their organization’s leadership. Whenever possible, managers should get out of the way and give employees direct access to customer feedback. Grant calls this “outsourcing inspiration”.<sup>2</sup>

**“you need to be generous in your motivations; this is about them, not you.”**

For the greatest impact, employees should be given direct unfiltered access to customer feedback. Employees will buy into making the customer happy not because management wants them to, but because they want to. Seeing how their work affects customers affirms that the job they do matters and that gives them purpose.

**“employees should be given direct unfiltered access to customer feedback”**

Grant has illustrated the powerful impact that outsourcing inspiration can have on employee motivation. In one study, a university scholarship recipient visited with fundraisers responsible for soliciting donations by phone for the university. The student explained how the fundraisers’ work had paid for his scholarship and how much he appreciated their efforts. The student’s five-minute interaction with the fundraising staff led to a 142 per cent increase in call volume

and a 171 per cent increase in donations. The fundraisers were inspired by this first-hand account of their impact.

There are a few basic steps organization can take to ensure the customer experience is kept close for your employees.

**Open up and share the data:** Ironically, while most organizations collect customer experience data, little is shared with the frontline employees who had a big hand in creating the experience. When data IS shared it tends to be in the form of general performance scores that tell employees very little about the kind of impact they’re having. Giving employees greater access to the voice of the customer—be it positive or negative—will enhance management’s credibility and inspire employees to find ways to improve the customer experience.

**Determine if the ‘middle man’ is really necessary:** Organizations often benefit when managers get out of the way and let employees hear the voice of the customer directly. However, many organizations have practices in place that prevent these opportunities from happening.

Consider a very common approach organizations take to understand and improve the customer experience—focus groups. The observers behind the glass are typically managers who have very little direct contact with the end-users in front of the glass. Moreover, the workers who do have the most contact with end-users are typically not invited to these sessions.

What if they were? What if employees could directly see and hear customers telling their stories? While it’s not always appropriate to bring customers in front of your employees in such a direct way, consider how you might build better bridges. The insights and affirmations they offer to your frontline go a long way towards anchoring the ‘worth believing in’ status of your organization. 🗣️

Sentis founder Adam DiPaula, MBA, VP Mary Bacica, CMRP and managing partner Julie Winram, CMRP merge their passion for employee research at Sentis Research ([www.sentisresearch.com](http://www.sentisresearch.com)).

<sup>1</sup> Hassan, F. (May, 2011). *The frontline advantage. Harvard Business Review.*

<sup>2</sup> Grant, A. (June 2011). *How customers can rally your troops. Harvard Business Review.*

# Psychological Health an Increasing Issue in Workplace

By **Lindsay Macintosh**, CHRP

**P**SYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH HAS BEEN A LONG-STANDING challenge that has greatly impaired the productivity of organizations and the wellbeing of workers. There was a time when psychological health carried a stigma and was simply not talked about. Although psychological health and safety (PH&S) has been identified as a critical issue in recent years, many employers still have not been addressing it.

## Responsible to Promote and Maintain Health

The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, known as Bill 14—which came into effect in July 2012—and stronger WorkSafeBC regulations on the prevention of bullying and harassment in the workplace—which came into effect on November 1, 2013—place uniform demands on employers to take action in promoting and maintaining psychological health and safety.

The workplace can be a stressful environment that can contribute to psychological health problems that hamper workers' ability to be productive and reach their potential. Psychological health problems have a strong impact on employee engagement, attendance, safety, and

retention, and are an increasingly important issue. It is clear they are a major contributor to reduced organizational productivity and, in some cases, the organization's reputation.

## Nearly a Quarter of Canadians Affected

According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, one in five Canadians will experience a psychological health problem in any given year. Nearly 25 per cent of Canada's workforce have psychological health issues that lead to absenteeism, turnover, and decreased productivity that impact the organization's bottom line.

Psychological health problems are the fastest growing cause of short and long term disability claims. It is expected that more than half the total disability claims will be due to psychological health within the next five years. Recent estimates report that psychological health problems account for \$35 billion in costs to the Canadian economy.

Ignoring psychological health and safety in the workplace poses high risks.

Dr. Dan Bilsker, adjunct professor, Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction (CARMHA), Simon Fraser University, says, "This will lead to rapidly increasing claims in psychological

**"Nearly 25 per cent of Canada's workforce have psychological health issues"**

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disability, high levels of absenteeism and presenteeism associated with psychological health problems, and organizational vulnerability to regulatory or legal sanctions if seen negligent in preventing psychological harm to its employees.”

### A Strategic Approach Required

Currently, there is considerable variability across sectors of the economy and organizations in attention and effort to address psychological health and safety. Some organizations such as Great West Life and Vancity have already developed a strategic and comprehensive approach to addressing their particular PH&S needs.

Dr. Bilsker says, “Others have largely ignored the issue or have off-loaded the issue to an EFAP provider with the flawed belief that they have it all covered.” In response, Bill 14 serves to place uniform demands on organizations to take action in addressing the issue.

Bill 14 allows BC employees to make a claim for psychological stress conditions resulting from workplace trauma or significant cumulative stress. Significant cumulative stress includes bullying and harassment, or a series of such stresses arising in the workplace. It encourages BC employers to actively promote psychological health in the workplace and support employees with psychological health issues.

### Fundamental Employer Commitments

Obligations which employers must take to promote psychological health and safety include:

- a policy statement saying bullying and harassment is not tolerated;

- an action plan to prevent and minimize bullying and harassment;
- a communications strategy for management and employees;
- procedures to report incidents and complaints;
- procedures on how to deal with incidents, complaints, investigations, and corrective actions;
- a risk assessment dealing with job stressors and environmental, interpersonal, and human resources high risks;
- incorporating the requirements into the organizational culture and strategy;
- a training program to identify risks and incidents and outline investigation procedures; and
- an annual review of policies and procedures.

### A Psychologically Healthy Toolkit

What steps are being taken in your organization to create greater awareness and promote psychological health and safety?

CARMHA at Simon Fraser University has been creating practical tools available to employers and employees at no cost. These tools include “Guarding Minds@Work”, “Psychological Health and Safety - An Employers Action Guide”, and “Antidepressant Skills@Work.” CARMHA has also developed a strategic planning workshop to help organizations to take action regarding psychological health and safety. “For further information, visit [www.carhma.ca](http://www.carhma.ca). 

Lindsay Macintosh, CHRP has over 20 years experience in payroll and benefits in the retail, foodservice and logging industries.

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# Communications Key To Benefits Plan Value

By Joe Demelo and Craig Hewson

IMAGINE THREE COMPANIES WITH GROUP BENEFIT PLANS. ABC company's plan costs \$254 per employee per month, DEF company's cost is \$205 and GHI company's cost is \$401.

Plan sponsors will often view a benefits plan offering as a way to show how much they care for the health and wellness of their employees, especially in the event of a death, a disability, high health and dental costs or when an employee retires. However, in general, employees might not always have the right perception of the value of the benefit offering. This perception doesn't differ much one plan to another regardless of the overall comprehensiveness of the plan.

How can a plan sponsor bridge the gap between perception and reality? The answer may be obvious to some, but perhaps not so simple. Effective and targeted employee communication is the only way to give employees an accurate understanding of the true value of a benefits plan. Not only is communication the best way for employees to understand the value of what the sponsor is providing, it also helps the employer to effectively manage a group insurance plan and ensure it operates efficiently through a engaged and cooperative employee group.

## Strategies to Strengthen Success

For a plan sponsor, an effective communication strategy on employee benefits is a delicate balance of communicating the value of the benefits to employees while trying to meet specific company objectives. It becomes even more challenging if the central theme is a sensitive issue, such as rising healthcare costs and trying to engage and change employee behaviour to help control rising costs.

So, how does an employer effectively communicate around these sensitive issues and still leave the employee with the perception of value? Whether the employer has chosen to hold an employee meeting or issue an employee memo, the following strategies can strengthen the effectiveness of the communication:

1. *Set an appropriate frequency and tone for employee communication.* Group insurance plans renew annually—a perfect time to meet face-to-face with employees to answer any questions they may have and to reinforce the value of the plan to the employees. Any changes or updates throughout the year might warrant a memo to ensure that the employees understand what is happening and why. Some companies

**“How does an employer effectively communicate around these sensitive issues?”**

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communicate more frequently and less formally, choosing a specific benefit to highlight with each communication, again enforcing the value of the benefits plan. In every case, remember to set the stage so that their feedback is welcome.

- 2. Determine the objective behind the message.** The issue must be worth communicating. Is the purpose to inform employees their plan is changing, or to ask employees to be more accountable when they purchase benefit related items? If the employer is unclear about what the objective is, the results will certainly fall short or the employees will be left confused and possibly annoyed.
- 3. Be clear about the message.** Concise communication that is straightforward is essential. Don't expect the employees to read between the lines and pick up on the hints being dropped. If the objective is to inform employees that their individual choice in pharmacy may have a direct relationship to their out of pocket costs, it should be stated clearly.
- 4. Don't be afraid to bring others into the conversation when crafting the message.** An abundance of information is available from third-party resources, insurance companies and independent advisors. Use these resources to support the intended message.
- 5. Use positive language.** Think about how many announcements start with a negative proposition followed by an unpleasant consequence. Avoid saying, "if claim costs are not cut and controlled, some benefits may have to be cut or the employee-share in the cost might have to increase." Try to focus on the advantages of shopping around for low cost

pharmacies and then explain how employees can really make a difference to their costs and the sustainability of the plan. This will empower your employees to be part of the solution.

- 6. Try to be on the same page as the employee.** Employees tend to have very little understanding of the intricacies behind the sustainability of their benefits plan, particularly when it comes to their healthcare benefits. Case in point, employees take their prescription to the pharmacy without much thought beyond what they may need to pay out of pocket. In general, they do not understand, nor do they necessarily care, if their health care benefit is over-utilized. As an employer, explain why changes were made to the benefits plan. If it's about sustainability and cost—tell them. Also, remember to use language that the employees understand, rather than industry jargon.
- 7. Be available for questions.** In order for the employees to fully understand their benefits plan, they will undoubtedly have questions. Let them know that they can talk to a responsible person at any time and that their questions will be answered.

When used appropriately, these strategies work well to communicate a benefit plan's value. The added bonus is that, in time, employees will play a key role in cost management and make the benefits plan more sustainable. **P**

Associate Joe Demelo and principal Craig Hewson help communicate better benefits as part of TRG Group Benefits & Pensions Inc.

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# Of Messages and Mediums: Face-to-Face vs. Facebook

By **Kristin Zehnder**, CHRP

**R**EMEMBER WHEN PALM PILOTS WERE introduced at work? They were coveted, cool and replaced the need for pocket-sized paper calendars, clunky cell phones, pagers and walkie-talkies alike. Naturally, they carried a stiff cost, so not everyone piloted by palm.

“Land line” versus “mobile” became terms of distinction and those chosen few treasured their new technology like a status symbol – or so it seemed.

## Not All Change For Better

I remember a distinct change in our daily operations meetings once the Palm Pilots arrived. Those that had them were so busy checking them and “click, click, clicking” away to enter data with their stylus that they missed half of what was said at the meeting. Simply put, the quality of the meetings declined because the focus changed from attentive interactive communication to distracted and disjointed communication.

Fast-forward to today. New technologies have vastly increased our ability to communicate with one another through a variety of easily accessible mediums. The result? Communication has become individually instantaneous and global. Information has become easily accessible and virtually limitless, but at what cost?

## The Unexpected Cost of Connectivity

Think about some of the new technologies. Wireless. Social media. Smart phones. How have these changed our communication? We no longer wait to share information. Now we can snap a ‘selfie’ and post it online for the world to see and comment in real time. We can participate in virtual meetings across the globe without the need to travel. Clearly technology has had a profound and positive impact on communication, but again, at what cost?

There is an unexpected cost; technology has had an adverse influence on human-to human interaction and interpersonal skills.

## Direct Impact on Customer Experience

I recently attended a hospitality industry conference where one of the discussions entailed measuring guest service standards. The two standards being measured were universal (standards applying to all associates regardless of position) and operational (specific standards which are unique to the position). Many of the standards involved direct guest interaction. These standards would involve greeting the guest and using the guest name in their conversations. Measurement scores are typically provided through quality assessments (a.k.a. secret shoppers).

The speaker brought forward the issue of a disturbing trend—scores were noticeably decreasing in all categories involving direct guest interaction. The speaker jokingly said, “Don’t worry, it’s not just your location, it’s all over North America.”

Imagine the effect this information had on the audience. The speculations as to ‘why’ were immediate. People were quick to blame younger generations because they epitomize technological dependence. However, this trend is not generation-specific; just think of all the varied ages tapping on their tech at inappropriate times.

## Social Media’s Anti-Social Impact

Have we become anti-social by avoiding face-to-face communication because of social media?

Consider following definition of “communication” from Wikipedia:

*“The activity of conveying information through the exchange of ideas, feelings, intentions, attitudes, expectations, perceptions or commands, as by speech, gestures, writings, behaviour and possibly by other means such as electromagnetic, chemical, or physical phenomena.”*

Technological communication is missing the non-verbal cues people use to relate to one another. Sure we sometimes use emoticons to help us show our feelings, but have you ever misread or read unintentional tone into a message? How do we accurately interpret human behaviour when we are out of practice?

## Eyes Open to Non-Verbal Communication

That brings us back to non-verbal cues and interpersonal skills. Animals, for example, are social creatures that interact frequently with humans through non-verbal communication. Have you ever had the sense that your dog knew when you were feeling a bit blue? Similarly, have you seen a range of emotions in your pet’s eyes and behaviour—curiosity, excitement, fear, love?

Have you noticed that many people have a difficult time maintaining direct eye contact with others? Eyes are the windows to the soul. This is true not only with animals, but with people. When we are able to communicate with eye contact, we see an array of emotions which provide an invaluable overlay of non-verbal information.

## Manage Your Mediums

The draw of being connected, virtually, via social media is strong. The lure is the immediate connection with people worldwide in an omniscient way.

However, while social media has amazing and impactful merits, it is diminishing the desire and reality of people connecting face-to-face with one another. As evidenced in the decreasing usage of standards involving direct interactions with guests, we are either choosing not to interact with people directly, or we are no longer comfortable with these direct interactions.

Changing this behaviour is a tedious task at best. Technology is a means to support and enhance human connection and interaction. However, we need to train and review interpersonal connectivity in order to improve it. Take the time to slow down and be present in the moment. I invite you to take a step back from technology to practice and embrace face-to-face interaction. 📞

Kristin Zehnder, CHRP is director of human resources for Harrison Hot Springs Resort and Spa.

# Team Renaissance: The Structure and Process of Success

By **Raluca Manolache**

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world.”

—Margaret Mead

**N**OW ASK, ‘WHAT MIGHT THOSE groups accomplish within the workplace?’

While the quest to increase organizational effectiveness is not a new one, it has become an indispensable need, rather than an option for companies of all sizes. In an information-saturated era of rapid and constant change, much has been written on the value of every individual’s intrinsic energies as they pertain to innovation and productivity.

However, as recognized by Richard Spoon and Jan Richer, co-authors of *Team Renaissance: The Art, Science and Politics of Great Teams*, the structures and processes inherent within many organizations prevent and discourage the fullest expression of those energies.

## Process and Team Potential

Even though there is nothing inherently negative about processes, in time they become static, then similarly derided and upheld as “the way things are done here.” In a competitive business environment, the result damages the overall performance throughout an organization. In contrast, an ongoing revision and renewal of processes strengthens teams with newfound clarity, fosters engagement and allows individuals, teams and organizations alike to thrive.

As Spoon and Richer artfully illustrate throughout—and anchor visually with ‘the Arch’—processes can be used to instill positive patterns within an organization. Supported by principled leadership, accountability and autonomy, processes bring out passion in people, both ‘allowing’ and aligning their intrinsic energies to optimum organizational potential.

Intrinsic energies are both voluntary and extraordinary. While employees are paid for a function, people volunteer their creativity. Herein every individual holds the potential to become actively involved on a whole other level of productivity.

## The Arch-itecture of Successful Teams

What the authors of *Team Renaissance* provide is equal parts impetus, architecture and insights to sustain for organizational effectiveness. If there is a formula for success, Spoon and Risher make a strong case for it waiting to be found in structure, tools and teams. They also provide a working model with in the Arch.

The Arch supplies both an apt visual metaphor and a useful tool for any organization seeking to improve core processes. Just as the classic arch provides strong support to a physical structure, well-thought core processes support strong teams.

## Nine Building Blocks of Better Teams

What the authors anchor with their Arch are the nine key performance characteristics of exceptional teams—providing a roadmap for HR professionals, managers and anyone with an interest in personal leadership and tapping team potential.

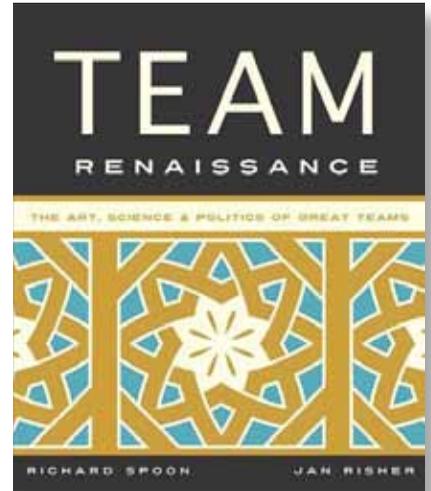
To unlock those ‘Go Team!’ energies is neither a riddle nor a puzzle in the pages of *Team Renaissance* which encourages the consideration of nine basic building blocks:

1. *Clear Direction*
2. *Common Measures*
3. *Efficient Practices*
4. *Defined Roles*
5. *Sharp Insights*
6. *Relevant Rewards*
7. *Consistent Communication*
8. *Solid Culture*
9. *Team Leader*

## Clear Direction and Strong Leadership

Clear direction is the keystone. Defining purpose and direction gives teams a clear line of sight. Given clear, inspiring direction, people are far more likely to share hidden or latent talents. Spoon and Richer pull a good quote from George Lucas on the matter: “Everybody has talent—it’s just a matter of moving around until you’ve discovered what it is.”

To recognize, regard and put to good purpose those individual talents requires a team leader with a firm grasp of the roadmap and its responsibilities. As a “chief possibilities officer”, the team leader can



empower and inspire most by improving process.

Most employees within any organization want to be involved; all leaders seek to reduce turnover, inspire innovation and create a happier, healthier, more productive workplace. This is why the authors hold it essential that team leaders go deeper to explore not only the potential of their people, but the underlying organizational processes.

## The Sum of Synergy

The benefit of doing so results in synergy in its most fundamental form. As throughout *Team Renaissance*, Spoon and Risher tap into another authored authority on such matters, Stephen R. Covey, who sums it up well: “What is synergy? Simply defined, it means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Synergy is the essence of principle-centered leadership. It catalyzes, unifies and unleashes the greatest powers within people.”

Likewise, the nine building blocks of the Arch—anchored by clear purpose, fueled by constant communications and driven by empowering and insightful team leaders—open new doors of opportunity within any organization. 📌

Raluca Manolache is a driven HR professional with experience in media, government and not-for-profit organizations who enjoys growing her HR knowledge through good books and great people.

# Harassment Too Costly to Ignore

By **Graeme McFarlane**

**D**OES YOUR BUSINESS HAVE A SPARE \$400,000 lying around? Do you know how your supervisors are treating their subordinates? It may be a good idea to find out and deal with any problems—right away.

## **Boucher v. Wal-Mart Canada Sets Precedent**

The Ontario Court of Appeal has just issued a decision in which the employer was ordered to pay \$410,000 to an employee who had been harassed at work and whose complaints had been ignored. The decision of *Boucher v. Wal-Mart Canada Corp.*, 2014 ONCA 419 included elements for damages in lieu of notice, aggravated damages, punitive damages and damages against the harasser.

The employee had been working for approximately nine years when she became involved in a dispute with her immediate supervisor when she refused to falsify a work log. When she refused to do so, her supervisor subjected her to a disciplinary “coaching” session.

As a result, the employee engaged the company’s communication policy regarding the discipline together with his use of profane and disrespectful language. Notwithstanding that such information was to be confidential, the supervisor learned of the complaint and became increasingly hostile. He would often abuse her in front of other employees calling her “stupid” and telling her to “let [him] know when [she] can’t f\*@\$ing handle it anymore. There were many other examples of very serious abuse at the hands of this individual. One manager counseled the supervisor to ease back on his criticism of the employee to which the supervisor replied “not until she f\*@\$ing quits.”

## **Due Diligence = Proper Investigations**

The employee then raised the matter further in accordance with the employer’s other harassment type policies. She made two formal complaints. The employer gave evidence that it had investigated the employee’s allegations, but found them to be unjustified and that she would face

some sort of action for bringing the complaints. The employer concluded that the employee was trying to undermine the supervisor’s authority. It appears that the investigators either did not investigate the matter properly or they ignored the numerous incidents where the supervisor acted inappropriately towards the employee.

Eventually, the employee quit and sued the employer for constructive dismissal, aggravated damages with respect to how the dismissal occurred and for punitive damages. At trial, a jury awarded her \$1,450,000 against the employer and against her harasser. Both appealed the award.

**“The employer concluded that the employee was trying to undermine the supervisor’s authority”**

During the appeal, both the employer and the harasser argued that the aggravated damages claim should be set aside because the trial judge made a mistake when giving the jury instructions on the elements needed for such a claim to succeed. They also argued that the punitive damages claim should also be set aside because even if the conduct was true, it was not so serious to cause a court to issue judicial punishment.

## **Courts Uphold Aggravated Damages**

The appeal court upheld the aggravated damages awards against both the employer and the harasser. It said that the harasser’s “conduct was flagrant and outrageous. He belittled, humiliated and demeaned [the employee] continuously and unrelentingly, often in front of co-workers, for nearly six months.” While the award for intentional infliction of mental suffering was high, it was not unreasonable in the

circumstances given the seriousness of the harm.

With respect to the employer, the appeal court said that it “took no steps to bring an end to [the harasser’s] misconduct. It did not take the [employee’s] complaints seriously, finding them unsubstantiated despite substantial evidence from co-workers that they were well-founded. It failed to enforce its workplace policies, which on their face were designed to protect employees from the kind of treatment [the harasser] subjected [the employee] to. And it threatened [the employee] with retaliation for making her complaints, an especially vindictive act.” Accordingly, the aggravated damage award of \$200,000 against the employer and \$100,000 against the harasser were appropriate.

## **Managing Managers a Must**

The court did, however, substantially reduce the punitive damages award. For the employer it reduced the amount from \$1,000,000 to \$100,000 and for the harasser from \$150,000 to \$10,000. Its rationale was essentially that each defendant already was liable for substantial compensatory awards and that those would carry strong punitive elements. Furthermore, such large punitive awards were not rationally connected to the wrongs committed in this case.

This decision shows the importance of why an employer should be carefully monitoring the goings on in the workplace. Courts are becoming increasingly willing to punish employers for the wrongdoings of its managers. Investigations must be done properly and company policies followed without prejudging the outcome. This case will be especially interesting in British Columbia because the courts have yet to decisively say whether such an outcome remains possible given the implementation of WorkSafeBC’s harassment regulations. Stay tuned. **📌**

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

# TFWs: The Debate Heats Up

By **Jock Finlayson**

**R**ECENT MONTHS HAVE SEEN A HIGH-profile debate over the role of temporary foreign workers (TFWs) in the Canadian economy. While the main focus has been on the practices of a handful of companies alleged to have violated the rules of the federal government's TFW program, the underlying public policy question revolves around whether and to what extent Canada should be relying on temporary foreign workers in the first place.

## Low-Skilled TFWs Spark Industry Moratorium

The backdrop to the debate is a steep increase in the number of TFWs in Canada, following the progressive relaxation of the program's rules starting in 2002. By last year, 338,000 TFWs were in the country, up from 100,000 a decade earlier, with most of the growth occurring in the western provinces.

There are several different channels through which employers can bring in temporary foreign workers: under the provisions of international trade agreements, such as NAFTA; based on reciprocal arrangements between Canada and other Commonwealth nations (e.g., the UK and Australia); as academic researchers; via the movement of intra-company transferees; based on the seasonal agricultural and live-in caregiver streams of the TFW program; or when an employer applies for a Labour Market Opinion (LMO) allowing the selection of a TFW for a position that can't be filled by a qualified Canadian.

It is the growing number of relatively low-skilled foreign workers entering under the LMO process that has been attracting considerable media and political attention—and that prompted the federal government to announce, in April, a moratorium on new LMOs for the restaurant industry.

## Questions Surround New Policy

For understandable reasons, policy-makers want Canadians to have priority for vacant jobs. Under the LMO stream, employers

must demonstrate that they have looked for Canadians to fill positions before they can obtain approval for a TFW. But how extensive a search should they be required to conduct? In the local labour market only, or right across the country? Is it reasonable to expect an employer to undertake a national search for entry-level workers? How many unemployed or underemployed Canadians are prepared to move to a different province for a job—especially a relatively low-paying one? Finally, is the quality of Canadian labour market information sufficient to determine whether and where skill or broader labour shortages exist—and whether letting in more TFWs will adversely affect domestic workers? These are difficult questions, the answers to which bear on the design and scope of a sensible TFW program.

## Critics Cite Unemployment Impact

Critics maintain that imposing a higher cost for using the TFW program would strengthen incentives for employers to find domestic candidates and also nudge businesses currently dependent on TFWs for lower-skilled jobs to boost wages. Some recent academic studies suggest that the expansion of the TFW program starting in 2002 contributed to higher unemployment rates for Canadians with qualifications suitable for entry-level positions.<sup>1</sup> Federal government ministers responsible for immigration and employment matters appear to share this assessment, which means that more changes to the TFW program are probably in store.

## Legitimate Opportunities for TFWs

Canada needs a well-designed TFW program. I would argue that accessing TFWs should be seen as a legitimate option in the following cases:

- To recruit hard-to-find skills in occupations where the domestic labour supply is insufficient. An example could be foreign welders and pipefitters needed to help build large industrial projects in northern B.C. These kinds of skilled trades personnel are in short supply across the country.

- To recruit workers with varying skill levels into service-sector jobs in smaller or remote communities where the local labour pool is very limited or non-existent. Here, an example might be using TFWs to staff positions in the tourism or restaurant industries in smaller communities that are distant from populated urban centres.
- To access a specific group of foreign workers for well-defined purposes, such as seasonal agricultural workers or live-in caregivers.

## Big Cities and Better Information

On policy grounds, it is hard to justify the presence of large numbers of TFWs in entry-level service jobs in big cities where, in theory, there are plenty of unemployed/underemployed domestic candidates. Canada has a market-based economy in which changes in prices are used to address situations where demand and supply diverge. In the labour market context, wages play a role analogous to prices as a means to help bring demand and supply back into alignment when imbalances develop. There is a risk that a large-scale temporary immigration program focused on relatively low-skilled workers could prevent the wage adjustment process from operating effectively.

That said, at this stage I would argue that the most pressing task for the federal government is not to tinker further with the TFW program. Instead, Ottawa needs to make a firm commitment to improve the quality and timeliness of labour market information in Canada so that we can all acquire a better idea of the nature of job vacancies and the extent to which there are shortfalls in the supply of qualified domestic workers on both a regional and an occupational basis. **D**

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

<sup>1</sup> Dominique M. Gross, "Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada: Are They Really Filling Labour Shortages?", *C.D. Howe Institute Commentary*, Number 407, April 2014.



## Christine Maassen, CHRP: 2014 HR Professional of the Year

People have asked me, “What is different about you in HR?” I always say, “I don’t do cupcakes.” I don’t want to organize the birthday parties either. Don’t get me wrong, I respect what these things do, but that’s not what I do. If you’re looking for someone to run your social department, I am not it. I am a business person and I am going to drive the results AND take care of people—without cupcakes.

### What has been the single greatest motivation in your career as an HR professional?

My first passion is people. I love people’s stories. I don’t just work with individuals who perform tasks. I want to know who they are. I want to know what’s going on to the extent that they’re willing to share. My other passion is creating workplaces where people are looking forward to showing up to work.

I actually chose to redirect my career to HR because I was in operations for many, many years. I noticed that, for reasons that I did not understand at the time, I was repeatedly being given disgruntled, dysfunctional teams and being told to, “Go clean that up.” Within a few weeks or months I would end up with a very high performing team. I thought, well I am no smarter than others, but I am doing something differently, so, “What is that about?”

Comfort is very uncomfortable because in my mind I am not learning, I am not growing, I am not contributing. I had a very successful career in food and beverage. I opened and ran three 5-Diamond restaurants. I was being given great opportunities. I didn’t run away from what I was doing, but I felt I had accomplished what I wanted to in food and beverage. I thought, “Okay, I know I can do this, but I am too young to be out of a dream. So what is my next dream?”

So, from operations, I went on to study industrial psychology to find out what I was doing differently. I got to understand how we react in the workplace and what motivates us. I’m also an avid reader and constantly poking around for answers to my questions.

From what I learned through my

studies, I chose to go into HR because very humbly I wanted to change to a place of peace. I wanted to be in HR and show organizations that you can take care of your top line, your bottom line AND your people. It’s not enough to take care of one or the other. I was really determined to show up in HR, have it my way and prove that it works.

### What would be your best piece of advice you wish someone had given you at the start of your career?

I’m a coach and a big believer in supporting people. There are two things: one piece of advice I wish someone had given me and another that I give to others often. The piece of advice is to find something that puts some bounce in your step regardless of what that is. Otherwise, it makes for very long days.

In the hospitality industry, we interact with people all of the time and it is both rewarding and extremely demanding. I tell people, “If you don’t get a kick out of making a client happy, if it doesn’t bring a smile to your face when you know you have delivered an amazing customer service experience, then get out.” Otherwise, everyday is going to feel like forever.

I work with young people and I push and push, “What do you like? What do you get lost in? What have you been doing when you’ve been at something for two hours and did not notice that time had flown by?”

We’re here to take care of human beings. We’re not just hiring employees. Regardless of what is going on with the business, my team and I always have time; a call from a colleague, an employee, an associate—that’s the priority. People know that, “Okay, even if things get rough,

someone is there to care about how we’re doing.”

### What do you see as the biggest opportunities/challenges that have you most inspired about HR’s future?

We’re becoming change agents. With that change comes a need for a different leadership. I lovingly refer to a bunch of old dinosaurs, including yours truly, that are leading some organizations. We are going to have to redefine what is excellence in leadership behaviour. We need to accept the fact that it is okay to be human in the workplace. It’s not easy for a leader to admit what they don’t know.

Yes, we need to keep an eye on the numbers because a business that doesn’t make money, doesn’t make sense. We need to become absolutely and fully aware of the business inside out. We have to know the key drivers, what we’re after and where we can make a positive impact for the organization. So, of course, we have to drive the results—and we have to take care of the people. Otherwise, that is a short term equation that doesn’t work.

We have to create a set of leadership behaviours and competencies relevant for now; I promote and advocate for values-based leadership and I am not talking about Anthony Robbins and being on top of the world. I am talking about being predictable, being kind, caring for one another, bringing the individual into the equation.

It’s about being business people first and earning the trust of employees; my operators and departments that support them are my clients and it is helpful to approach it that way.

For our full interview, visit: [hrvoice.org/christine-maassen](http://hrvoice.org/christine-maassen). 

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