

Worldwide Training Industry News (Jan 11)

Stop Blaming Your Culture

Strategy & Business (01/11) Katzenbach, Jon; Harshak, Ashley

An organization's culture usually is defined as the deeply set behaviors, beliefs, and mindsets that determine how the organization carries out its activities. Those within an organizational culture share a common understanding of how the world works, their place in it, the dimensions of their workplace, and the value of their actions. Organizational culture strongly influences everyday actions, even though it may not always be obvious. Such cultures are slow to change, so leaders who wish to alter their company or institution are most likely to succeed by using the existing culture to change behaviors. These gradual changes in behavior can lead to business results that will lead to desired changes in the culture. Many blame company culture when meeting resistance to change, but extreme attempts to make wholesale cultural change often are costly and time-consuming and can lower morale. On the other hand, leaders may try to ignore company culture and suppress it, but hidden culture often can disrupt strategic aspirations. Aggressively fighting the organizational culture or ignoring it entirely will only frustrate leadership's efforts. Instead, leaders must use their company culture purposefully to enact change, first by discerning the cultural elements that fit with their strategy. They must be aware of the organization's culture and how it affects behavior throughout the team, for good or bad. Leaders also should determine which of the old constructive behaviors can be used to bring about desired changes and which elements should be suppressed to bring about change. Encouragement should be given to employee behaviors that reinforce the desired company values; such behavior will lead to changes in culture. Likewise, undesirable behaviors should be penalized or discouraged. At the same time, leaders must provide guidance for expected new behaviors and make it clear why the company considers them important. Organizations also should have role models for the changed behavior that employees can follow to know what is expected.

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Sudden Leader Loss Leaves Firms in Limbo

Wall Street Journal (01/24/11) Light, Joe

More than 20 percent of senior managers say their companies are "not at all prepared" for the sudden loss of a key member of the company's senior management team, according to a newly released December survey of 1,098 senior managers by the American Management Association. "For the last few years, companies have been in survival mode and losing sight of the things they need for the future," says Sandi Edwards, a senior vice president at AMA. As the stock market comes back, companies may have to face more retirements by senior executives who stayed on due to the severe hit their retirement savings took during the recession. About 39 percent of managers surveyed said their own company's leadership pipeline is inadequate, compared to only 10 percent who described it as "robust." David Larcker, professor at Stanford Graduate School of Business, says firms often acknowledge that leadership development is important but rarely back that up with action. He notes that compensation programs, for example, rarely factor in how well the manager has planned for his own succession. Larcker adds that even when a succession plan is in place, some companies find they are not really committed to it when it comes time to replace a leader. "You need to make sure people believe in the plan. You don't want to go months without senior leadership," he says. According to the AMA survey, about 34 percent of managers said senior management often ignores the management-succession plan and recruits from the outside instead.

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Mentoring Missteps

Human Resource Executive (01/05/11) Prost, Marlene

Mentoring produces different results in men and women, according to a study by women's advocacy group Catalyst. The study observed that men with MBAs who are mentored obtain higher pay and more promotions compared to women with mentors, largely because men link their future paths to higher-ranked executives. Catalyst's report focused on a longitudinal study of 4,143 high-potential MBA alumni who graduated between 1996 and 2007 from 26 top business schools, of whom 26 percent were women. The study found that more men (62 percent) than women (52 percent) had a mentor at the CEO or

senior-executive level. "Mentoring is important, but to make it to the top, someone needs to be pulling you up," observes Christine Silva, a director of research at Catalyst and an author of the study. She says the study shows that what really matters is how highly placed the mentors are, irrespective of gender. Higher ranking mentors go beyond just providing advice, guidance, and navigating the office--they also provide sponsorship, Silva explains. She advocates that companies expand their mentoring efforts by including "elements of sponsorship, focusing on how to advance someone instead of [just] developing them." Furthermore, companies should form a talent-identification system that encourages high-level executives to sponsor the progress of high-potential employees. This approach facilitates the identification of top-talent and taking them to the next level, says Silva. Kerrie Peraino, a chief diversity officer for American Express, says women should secure a sponsor earlier in their careers.

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Knowledge Management: The Key to Success

Knowledge Management (12/10) Campbell, Susan J.

Knowledge management -- the ability to gather, assimilate, and synthesize the information available about the market, competition, and customers of a given product -- is becoming a high-demand skill in the business world. As a result, post-secondary education students from all over the world increasingly are demanding education in knowledge management. The passage of the Foreign Universities Act in India, which provides for the creation and regulation of high-quality institutions of higher education, is anticipated to increase competition among universities and extend opportunities for global education in knowledge management. Currently, many students from India and China travel to other countries in search of high-quality business education. Traditionally, the United States attracted the majority of these global students. Canada and Singapore also are becoming popular destinations for these students, who benefit not only from the quality of the education offered but also from the exposure to different cultures. As the need for global managers with backgrounds in knowledge management grows, so too will the international educational landscape.

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Best in Class

Chief Learning Officer (12/10) Elkeles, Tamar

Recently named Chief Learning Officer of the Year Tamar Elkeles, CLO and vice president of learning and development at Qualcomm, discusses the three key elements of her success. First, she recommends hiring people with a passion for learning to help establish a learning culture in the organization and giving those people strategic roles in all initiatives and deliverables. "It's important for CLOs to have a vision, create a learning strategy, and obtain management support, but I don't do that alone," observes Elkeles. It also is important to build collaborative partnerships with outside trainers, consultants, and professors who can lend their expertise to the organization's goals. This "allows me to have a larger staff of talented individuals who can impact on my organization," she says. Finally, Elkeles constantly seeks to advance her own knowledge from her colleagues within and outside of the organization. She finds diverse organizations operating in different environments with different foci offer her the broadest range of innovative ideas and perspectives. "The collaboration and cooperation we share as learning professionals is truly remarkable," she says of her colleagues in the field.

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Museums A Popular Place to Boost Morale Amid Monets

Workforce Management (12/10) Salopek, Jennifer

As companies try to save money in a rough economic climate, a number of museums across the country have developed new training programs that tap their collections and creative environments for the benefit of corporate clients. These innovative team-building programs have the ability to foster respect, uncover possible team-member contributions, and encourage creativity. According to a professor of management and organization at the Robert H Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland Kathryn Bartol believes the programs are very successful for teams that can encourage risk taking and whose work is interdependent. Bartol said, "Interpersonal relationships are strengthened in an environment where mistakes don't count, and divergent thinking is good for creativity." Since knowing more about other team members can mean better collaboration, some companies use this type of program to see their co-workers in a "different light." At some point, many participants come to the point where they can see they

really need every member on their team to act like a leader. Senior manager of corporate marketing at B2B trust Rhonda Hogan said, "In this economic climate, we are all trying to do more with less." Her company uses the museum-training as something fun to do as a group that will allow them to learn along the way.

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An Exploration of Managerial Discretion and Its Impact on Firm Performance: Task Autonomy, Contractual Control, and Compensation

International Business Review (12/01/2010) Vol. 19, No. 6, P. 521 Yan, Yanni; Chong, Chan Yan

Managerial discretion refers to coherent, rational, and unified decisions made by managers with the objective of achieving organizational development. A recent study tested a managerial discretion model that theorizes that overall firm performance hinges on the degree to which task autonomy, contractual control, and management compensation influence the managerial discretion exercised in international joint ventures. Using survey data from 136 international joint ventures in China, the authors state that the relationship between the level of organizational commitment of international joint venture managers and the exploitation of firm-specific capabilities tends to increase when managers have the appropriate levels of discretion. Essentially, contractor control does not engender a statistically significant relationship between greater managerial discretion and superior firm performance. The study contributes to strategic management and managerial capitalism theory by demonstrating that as international joint venture managers obtain more managerial discretion, their task autonomy and compensation improve the relationship between discretion and performance. The study shows how managerial discretion relates to firm performance from a practitioner's point of view, with managers creating greater firm-based competitiveness by manipulating their managerial discretion in line with their strategic imperatives. The results of the study will help extend managerial capitalism theory regarding the deployment of task autonomy, contractual control, and management compensation.

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Vision, Mission, Values; Guideposts to Sustainability

Organizational Dynamics (Fall 2010) Vol. 39, No. 4, P. 316 Mirvis, Philip; Googins, Bradley; Kinnicutt, Sylvia

Despite the fact that over 75 percent of executives worldwide say that they believe sustainability is important to their companies' financial success, only about 30 percent to 40 percent are taking serious steps to implement sustainable business practices. One reason for the discrepancy is that many companies do not have a clear, defined, or agreed upon view of sustainability. Companies that do take it seriously generally have more expansive and integrative perspective on sustainability, beyond simply examining factors like greenhouse gas emissions, energy use, and waste management. Another reason for the gap is that there is no alignment across business on who is responsible for environmental, social, and governance issues, or any agreement on how to handle such issues. Many companies also do not make a strong enough commitment to sustainability, with competing priorities pushing sustainability to the background in favor of short-term profit and other factors. Research shows that individual values are a major factor behind personal responsibility, and the same may be true of corporate values and responsibility. A Booz Allen Hamilton/Aspen Institute survey found that 89 percent of companies worldwide have written value statements. However, much depends on how the values are developed and practiced throughout an organization.

The Pitfalls of Poaching Your Competitors' Talent

Canadian Business (01/18/11) Castaldo, Joe

Luring employees away from competitors carries a number of risks, including companies overpaying for talent and resentment toward the new hire from existing workers. However, the core argument of the new book "Chasing Stars: The Myth of Talent and the Portability of Performance" by Harvard Business School Professor Boris Groysberg is that a star recruit's performance can deteriorate after defecting because it is impossible to simply transplant outstanding performance. This conclusion is based on Groysberg's study of job shifts among 366 equity analysts between 1988 and 1996 using data from Institutional Investor magazine. His research implies that our work environments and relationships with colleagues play a larger role in shaping our performance than first thought. For instance, the job of the equity analyst depends greatly on a broad network of co-workers. Cultivating a new network from scratch at another

company is a time-consuming process, and colleagues at the new company may not be as proficient. Team dynamics are another factor uncovered by Groysberg. It is his suggestion that poaching talent from rivals should be done more precisely, and he recommends drawing leading performers from smaller companies with a lower profile, as smaller firms usually have fewer resources employees can depend upon, yielding a clearer view of their own skills.

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Businesses Send Out for Customer Service Training

Morning Sentinel (ME) (01/16/11) Robinson, David

The Maine Woods Consortium, a group of nonprofit organizations, businesses, and government agencies trying to increase tourism in Maine, started employee training programs last year after a survey found building strong customer service skills was the biggest concern for many businesses. The training features regional and statewide programs that focus on customer service, according to Shaunacy Cobb, project manager, and has resulted in current plans to expand the program into other counties this year while funding new training opportunities. The group is now giving businesses access to online workshops, DVDs, and customer service workshops meant to provide more options to train the state's workforce. Many businesses have sent employees to workshops planned in cooperation with business groups, says Cobb, who works for PlaceWorks Consulting, which was hired by the group as project manager for its tourism initiative.

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The Tussle for Talent

Economist (01/08/11) Vol. 398, No. 8715, P. 68

Private sector companies are continuously working to locate and retain the most talented individuals. They seek to attract talent by offering substantial salaries, additional training, robust mentors, and challenging assignments. Deloitte and other consultancies note that as the economy starts to rebound, companies are trying harder to cultivate or attract talent. This is because companies want to have sufficient brainpower to seize new opportunities as they arise, especially amid today's rapidly changing environment. A recent book called "The Talent Masters" by Bill Conaty and Ram Charan examines talent-focused companies like GE and Procter & Gamble (P&G), observing that these companies concentrate on measuring and differentiating talent. Employees at these firms are frequently assessed comprehensively and solicited for feedback. Drug firm Novartis, for example, requests high achievers to produce "leader plans" that are shared with their mentors and peers. Novartis regularly sends these individuals to offsite training sessions, while P&G focuses on on-site training dubbed "accelerator experiences" and "crucible roles" and overseas assignments. Leading companies also make sure to include senior managers in their talent development efforts and integrate talent development into their broader strategy.

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When You Don't Want Employees to Agree

Chief Learning Officer (12/10) Loehrke, Katie

Arriving at a consensus when making business decisions is desirable, but only if the process is not a result of "groupthink," which limits input and creative problem solving. Groupthink happens when some members of a team dominate discussions, team members are afraid of rejection if they disagree with the group "consensus," or if members see a problem with the group's decision but cannot offer a better proposition. Steps to combat this kind of limited involvement from the team include, removing or repositioning intimidating team members. For example, the boss should refrain from sharing opinions with the team at the beginning of discussions, since most people refrain from disagreeing with authority. Ask other dominant leaders in the team to soften the way they deliver their ideas, and encourage passive members to contribute. If the team arrives at consensus too easily, challenge members to find flaws with the plan, giving team members a safe space to play devil's advocate. Lastly, asking people to prepare ideas ahead of meetings may help bring out more creative thinking and different perspectives.

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10 Steps to Improve Employee Engagement and Drive Results

Becker's Hospital Review (12/08/10) Dunn, Lindsey

Bob Kelleher is the CEO and founder of the Employee Engagement Group and author of "Louder Than Words: 10 Practical Employee Engagement Steps That Drive Results." He believes that employee engagement is closely linked to organizational success, but it differs from employee satisfaction. "Employee satisfaction might be a byproduct of engagement, but engagement is more about employees working toward an organization's goals and the company's overall well being, which is critical to an organization's performance," he explains. In his book, Kelleher notes that employee engagement is associated with high performance, so organizations need to align the evaluation of employee performance to measurable targets. Kelleher also believes it is important to form a motivational culture. This calls for managers to examine such things as whether the manager provides opportunities for advancement, whether employees' ideas and opinions are asked for, whether there open and regular communication, whether employees are empowered to make decisions, and whether there is a culture of recognition. It also is useful to conduct 360-degree feedback programs to assess managers, but Kelleher says organizations should conduct training before deploying the approach. "You want to make the focus on staff development, not an exercise to criticize," he asserts.

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Organization Development Quality Improvement Process: Progress Energy's Continuous Business Excellence Initiative

Journal of Business Case Studies (12/01/2010) Vol. 6, No. 6, P. 7 McCuiston, V.E.; DeLucenay, A

Due to the recession, many organizations are reexamining their work processes to assess both efficiency and quality enhancement possibilities. While executives focus on such efforts as ways to contain costs, they also can result in productivity and productivity confidence improvements. Among executives, the most common factor is not downsizing, but rather a redesign of the work process, paired with quality and continuous improvement efforts, strong leadership, and employee engagement. In a study of Progress Energy's Continuous Business Excellence strategy, the majority of surveyed organizations deployed quality or continuous-improvement strategies, placed more importance on quality programs in 2008 than in 2005, and spent more than they did in 2007. Progress Energy's Continuous Business Excellence strategy is designed to address the new realities of the current economic climate, including increasing fuel and commodity costs and the need for significant capital investment. Executives rethinking strategies also are changing the tools they use to manage business. Many organizations use quality or continuous-improvement strategies, but the use of satisfaction levels on specific quality tools vary according to multiple global surveys. Effectively deploying new strategies can remove blockages and excesses that have largely been embedded in both public and private sectors.

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How to Make Your Employees Smile

Inc. Magazine (12/01/10)

Paul Spiegelman, founder and CEO of Beryl, a call-center company in Bedford, Texas, offers tips on how to keep your workers happy. "Listen to what your employees say," says Spiegelman. "And don't just listen – implement the ideas that they have, and give them credit for those ideas ... It is often better to let workers tell you what the answers are and give them credit." Organizations must make room for fun, and Spiegelman is an advocate of unusual team-building exercises. He once staged a murder mystery on the call-center floor and gave teams eight weeks to solve it. "Do little things that make people step out and enjoy what they do," he says. "I don't care what the setting is." Finally, as a leader, you have to play by the same rules as everyone else, even when it is inconvenient. "It's important for us as leaders to bring ourselves to the same levels as everyone else, because we are at the same level. We are no different," Spiegelman says.

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Moving Beyond Catch 22: Making Performance Management Work

WorldatWork (12/01/10) Becom, Angelita ; Inslar, David

Most organizations have not made many strides in successfully adopting strong performance management efforts since 2007, according to the 2010 Study on the State of Performance Management

survey conducted by Sibson Consulting in conjunction with WorldatWork. In many companies, performance management is viewed as just another HR process and is not seen as critical to the company's success. However, those companies that have adopted strong performance management practices are realizing financial gains. In these top-performing companies, performance management is visibly and actively supported by senior management. In the survey, 87 percent of respondents from top performing companies said senior management publicly supports performance management processes, and 55 percent said the president/CEO champions performance management processes. Employees in these companies view performance management processes as business-critical because company goals are well-articulated, and all employees -- from senior management to non-supervisory employees -- understand how their efforts further the company's goals. Performance expectations are clear, and there is frequent feedback. The processes for performance management are transparent and credible. Top performance is tied to promotions, raises, and other long- and short-term incentives. While effective performance management takes commitment and effort, top companies show that it is a worthwhile investment.

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Get Used to Older Workers

Vancouver Sun (Canada) (01/07/11)

As early as 2016, some estimates conclude that more people will be leaving the labor force in Canada than entering it. Since 2001, the number of people 65 years and older has increased by 11.5 percent, while the number under 15 has declined by 2.5 percent. By 2031, 25 percent of Canada's population will be over age 65. Canada is not alone in coping with this demographic issue. Japan's population began shrinking three years ago, and a quarter of its people are over age 65. A similar story exists in Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea. Given this scenario, societies will be challenged to remain productive and sustain prosperity. Much needs to be done in both the public and private sectors to accommodate an older workforce. Older workers bring much to the table - experience, wisdom, loyalty, and work ethic - but employers will have to invest more in safety, training (especially in new technologies), and programs that promote well-being to keep them on the job.

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Bosses Need to Keep Talking About the Big Picture

New York Times (01/01/11) Bryant, Adam

Catherine Winder, president and executive producer of Rainmaker Entertainment, an animation studio, says leaders need to constantly check that all their employees are pulling in the same direction, no matter how obvious or straightforward the company's goals may seem. "It's key to give everybody context and vision and clarity. . . . You have to make sure that those parameters are set, and that everybody's working toward the same goal," she says. Winder notes her business is a collaborative effort, entailing hundreds of people at times. "We need people who are open to partnering with everybody on the team. So I like to hear how they handle those kinds of situations. When someone is giving them feedback, how do they like feedback to be given? How do they like to communicate with their teams?" Winder emphasizes the importance of leaders inspiring their team. She says her firm wants "everyone to think of themselves as storytellers, so we have an open-door policy for anyone in the company to pitch ideas."

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Demanding Diversity

Chief Learning Officer (12/10) Nikravan, Ladan

The current generation of young adults in the United States is more culturally diverse than ever before and brings a global perspective to the workplace. The majority of this generation celebrates ethnic diversity, supports equal rights, and feels that immigrants strengthen the country, according to a recent study by the Pew Research Center entitled, "Millennials, A Portrait of Generation Next." Forty-three percent of people under 20 years old in the United States are from racial and ethnic minorities. Rather than expecting everyone to assimilate into the nation's culture, this generation believes different cultures should maintain their cultural perspectives and practices. The Millennials, exposed to other cultures through global media throughout their lives, are primed to interact globally and want international perspectives on current issues. They feel that diversity enriches and enhances the workplace.

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'This is the Era of Knowledge Management'

Economic Times of India (12/16/10)

International business schools are expecting to be able to set up shop in India, while several Indian business schools have attempted to expand globally. Nitish Jain, the Singapore-based president of the SP Jain Center of Management, says that India has the world's second position in sending students for studies in foreign countries. Singapore is a popular destination for international education because of its reputation, its development as an educational hub, and its transparent government and economy. Management education has seen a recent paradigm shift in the way it is imparted across business schools. Nowadays, knowledge must be assimilated, synthesized, and appropriately employed. Besides management knowledge, companies are looking for critical thinking, problem solving, brain storming, and decision-making skills, as well as adequate thinking and behavioral skills. Companies need global managers that can adapt to the external environment and embrace diversity, ambiguity, and complexity. Many schools can succeed by acclimatizing to globalization and the information technology revolution. Exposure to various cultures is vital for the success and survival of global managers. The SP Jain Center of Management offers faculty from all over the world to add a global perspective. The school also updates its curriculum every 6 months to keep up with business world, with its one-year program offering students time management and stress management skills.

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Smart Firms Focus on Executive Development

The Nation (12/03/10)

Talent management is a business priority of corporate executives, and organizations that invest in leadership development tend to have superior financial performance, according to recent studies. Leading organizations are taking leadership development to the next level by engaging in experiential learning, special assignments, development roles, one-on-one coaching, and mentoring. The 70-20-10 model has been very effective: 70 percent focus on on-the-job experiential and activity-based learning; 20 percent on mentoring, coaching and performance feedback; and 10 percent on formal learning programs. Leadership development organizations usually have talent leaders either report directly to the CEO or to the head of human resources, who then reports to the CEO. These talent-forward organizations combine succession planning and leadership development to get the best of both: attention to the skills needed for senior management positions along with an educational system to help managers develop leadership skills. They use quantitative methods to assess leadership development, such as spending invested, candidates' diversity and readiness, and the number of internal appointments to leadership positions; and qualitative measures, such as impact evaluation, assessment of the strength of its culture, and involvement of the executive team in leadership development. Viewed in terms of risk management, many organizations see vacancy, readiness, transition, and portfolio risks in succession planning and talent development. There is no single best model for developing future leaders, but companies should focus on their needs and pay attention to the latest trends in training and development.

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HR Trends Likely to Affect Everyone in the New Year

Winnipeg Free Press (Canada) (12/26/10) Bowes, Barbara

Several human resource development trends are likely to have a major impact on employees and businesses in 2011. As more immigrants and visible minorities are joining the work force, companies will direct more resources at in-house training or apprenticeship programs to better integrate these employees. Younger people joining the workforce are demanding more flexible and balanced lifestyles. Companies will respond with more flexible work arrangements, such as compressed work weeks, telecommuting, part-time work, and job-sharing. Time-pressured senior supervisors, mid-managers, and executives will seek executive coaching to build skills and confidence rather than attend training seminars, which are costly and time-consuming. As a result, the executive-coaching industry will become more professionalized and address its accreditation processes. To help maintain rising health-care costs, companies will offer more wellness programs to employees. Technology will dominate the workplace, from using social networks to attract new hires to webinars and computer simulation to create e-learning situations. Companies may need to hire more HR professionals or contract with HR consultants to keep up with increasingly complex rules and regulations for hiring and managing employees. In addition,

companies will administer more online pre-employment assessments to potential employees to ensure that new hires have the requisite skills and knowledge to perform their jobs. To contain costs, many companies may establish variable pay scales, which reflect the company's profits, while keeping base salaries relatively low. Career ladders will address CEO and manager succession, giving employees opportunities while maintaining continuity in the company.

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21st Century Talent

Public Utilities Fortnightly (12/10) Vol. 148, No. 12, P. 56 Synylo, Victor; McLemore, Philip

Many utilities are addressing the challenges of a multi-generational workforce as they simultaneously implement innovations such as smart grid, alternative fuel, and new nuclear generation technologies, which require them to have the skills and workforce in place to successfully implement and sustain these innovations. This makes the utilities industry a potentially attractive career option for young professionals, but utility companies must abandon their square image characterized by outmoded technologies and a reluctance to change if they want to appeal to the next generation of workers. Each company must work individually to market itself as part of a technology-intensive sector that gives its employees challenging opportunities and safe, friendly, and flexible work environments. The next generation of workers values challenging, family-friendly work environments and non-traditional work arrangements over stable salaries and rigid hours. They fully expect to switch jobs multiple times during their careers. Unfortunately, these values frequently conflict with those of older employees who are used to nine-to-five work days and traditional hierarchical leadership systems. As these workers approach retirement age, companies can work to retain their skills and expertise by heeding their concerns about maintaining their health, financial stability, and mental engagement. Another reality is that utilities have a harder time retaining young workers than they do attracting them. A number of strategies can serve to give younger workers the things they seek from their employers, such as coaching and mentoring programs that pair novice and veteran workers. This can significantly help the formation of multi-generational employee relationships. Other methods include giving young leaders challenging development assignments and networking opportunities.

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Telltale Signs That You Don't Have a Pay-for-Performance Culture

WorldatWork (12/01/10) Holcomb, Richard

Highly successful companies motivate employees with strong performance management practices. These practices include meaningful merit rewards for high performing employees, ongoing assessments and feedback of employee performance, and clearly linking the company's goals and mission to employee performance. Companies make several common mistakes in performance management. For example, some managers practice "ratings-inflation," diluting performance assessments by attempting to give the highest salary increases to the highest number of people, or worse yet, giving across the board annual increases, communicating that superior effort is not valued or rewarded. Effective managers find that merit increases that are even 0.5 percent higher can make employees feel that their efforts matter. Conducting annual performance reviews can decrease employee motivation and performance if opportunities for learning and growth are not provided throughout the year. This practice also can create an adversarial relationship between managers and employees. Conversely, when assessments and guidance are offered throughout the year, employees are empowered to improve performance, and managers can build positive mentoring relationships with their employees. Linking performance improvements with company goals also helps employees feel that their efforts are part of the company's ultimate success. Taken together, true merit increases, ongoing assessments, and linking performance to the organization's goals are effective performance management policies.

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Utilities Seek Fresh Talent for Smart Grids

New York Times (12/30/10) Zeller, Tom

Lisa Magnuson, director of marketing for Silver Spring Networks, which produces hardware and software to make the electric grid as smart as the phone network, is part of an effort to persuade students to put their creativity to work in the power industry once they graduate. "We want to help make utilities cool again," she says. The power companies need a jolt of youthful energy, as the industry and the distribution

system it manages are on the cusp of a major technological overhaul just as about half of electric utility employees are expected to retire in the next five to 10 years. At the same time, the federal government and utilities are spending billions of dollars to upgrade the electric grid with intelligent digital technology. The upgrade would give the power generation and distribution network the sort of nervous system it has lacked since its inception. To push along the transformation, educators and government officials, often in partnership with utilities, are drawing up smart grid curriculums for elementary classrooms, vocational schools, and university laboratories. In the spring of 2010, DOE Secretary Steven Chu awarded \$100 million in stimulus money to 54 training programs in the smart grid aimed at high school and college students around the country. The Energy Department estimates that some 30,000 workers will be trained because of the grants, which range from \$87,000 for the Preparing Occupations for Lineman Education, or Pole, program in the Austin Community College District to \$5 million to Florida Power & Light to develop its Gateway to Power Program, which aims to bring industry and academia together to develop power system and smart grid education. To address the shortage of trained workers, utilities have been working jointly through organizations like the Center for Energy Workforce Development, which concluded in a survey last year that retirements and attrition would force the energy industry to replace roughly half of its engineers and skilled technicians by 2015.

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KM Past and Future: Fixing the Pain Points

KMWorld (01/11) Lamont, Judith

Knowledge management in 2011 will include progress on such issues as making sense of social media content and dealing effectively with video. The emergence of vast quantities of social content, much of it outside those formal enterprise systems, poses problems for organizations that want to tap into the value presented by its candid and spontaneous nature. Provo Craft and Novelty manufactures precision equipment for use in the craft, hobby, and education markets. The company is now using social media effectively for purposes such as introducing new products. Users also share their projects in other social media environments, such as Facebook. According to Cisco, use of video will increase sixfold from 2009 to 2014. Video increasingly is being used to record nuggets of know-how from individuals who are about to retire or to present brief instructional modules. However, finding information within a video is time-consuming and tedious from a user perspective. Panopto has developed an end-to-end solution called Panopto Focus for video capture and presentation, which is suitable for many settings to capture video and other simultaneous input such as a PowerPoint presentation. The video shows up in one window and the presentation in the other, so the camera does not have to pan back and forth. The lack of metadata associated with rich media, compared to that available in text documents, poses problems for integrating video content information into knowledge management solutions. A software service from RAMP automatically generates text transcriptions and metadata from audio and video content so that it can be integrated into existing ECM systems and located using their search engines.

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Executive Training Ground

Virginia Business (12/29/10) Loughran, Tim

Executive MBA programs (EMBA) provide effective training for mid-career managers. EMBA programs are offered at 140 universities nationally and take an average of 20 months to complete, including some study abroad, at an average cost of \$65,000. In the current economy, many businesses have cut tuition benefits. Still, approximately one-third of EMBA students are fully sponsored by their companies, one-third pay part of their tuition, and one-third shoulder the full cost themselves. Most programs require applicants to have bachelor's degrees, strong GMAT scores, and six to 10 years of experience with good references from employers. "It remains a common misconception that modern executive MBA programs are sort of an 'MBA light,' says Virginia Tech's Charles Jacobina, "But it's perhaps even better than the degree that someone would earn if they had the time to study business and management full time." These programs offer students opportunities to learn from other managers from diverse backgrounds through a team approach to case management. Because companies can little afford to give valuable managers time off for classes, some schools, such as the Darden School and Old Dominion University, provide online courses, allowing students to study while working full-time.

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Mentors' Position Key to Higher Pay

The Star (Toronto) (12/13/10) Mathieu, Emily

The number of women advancing to senior executive positions in Canada and the United States has remained flat over the past few years, according to an examination of five different reports, including Census data. For example, only 15.7 percent of top board positions were held by women in the United States in 2010, a scant improvement over 15.2 percent in 2009. In Canada, women held only 1.8 percent more corporate officer positions in 2008 than in 2006. A new study, *Mentoring: Necessary but Insufficient for Advancement*, shows that having a high-level executive as a mentor may change this trend. While only slightly more than one fourth of MBA graduates have a mentor in their first job, of those who do, men with mentors earn over \$9,000 more than men without mentors, and women with mentors earn an average of \$661 more than those without mentors. The study showed that those with mentors who had high positions in the company received more compensation and promotions. Because women tend to seek out other women as mentors, their mentors are less likely to hold high positions. "It should be the role of the corporation to ensure entry level men and women are being advocated for equally, regardless of who they are aligned with on a personal level," says study author Christine Silva.

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Vintage Leadership

Chief Learning Officer (12/10) Billington, MaryAnn

The E. & J. Gallo Winery recently overhauled its leadership development program in an effort to strengthen the company's future. In 2009, Gallo added two major systems to its people development initiative: a bottom-up, homegrown management fundamentals curriculum and a top-down leadership academy. "When we started to brainstorm all the subjects that fall under 'leadership,' the project just got too big," notes Kristi Marsella, Gallo's vice president of talent management. "We split it into two projects: Gallo Management Fundamentals (GMF) and Gallo Leadership Fundamentals (GLF)." The GMF targeted entry-level supervisors and focused on tactical execution and strategy. That training was designed by Gallo leaders from various functions and sources: Gallo-created, AchieveGlobal content, facilitated by Gallo, and handled by external training partners who customized the training. "When a Gallo leader is first assigned direct reports, he or she will go through six days of GMF training in two three-day chunks," says Marsella. The GLF series, meanwhile, focused on the more strategic aspects of a leader's role. Jeff Bland, vice president and the head of production, operations, and global supply chain for Gallo, says he initially questioned the company's directive to have vice presidents facilitate GLF after they go through the course themselves. The company currently has a dozen vice presidents that facilitate the training for the director and senior manager levels.

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Virtual Training Gets Real!

University of Leeds (12/02/10) Gould, Paula

University of Leeds researchers are leading the ImREAL project, which is developing a virtual-reality training tool aimed at creating a simulated learning environment that responds and adapts to users' behavior. The project also involves researchers from Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, and will focus on training workers for business, academia, and volunteering. "Simulated environments provide a cost-effective alternative to standard face-to-face training, but they need to incorporate the cognitive, social, and emotional aspects of the activities that are being modeled," says Leeds' Vania Dimitrova. The ImREAL project will focus on developing systems for interpersonal communications, which are important for managing relationships, customer service, and providing advice. The project also will develop tools that help trainees learn how communication and social cues vary across different cultures. The researchers plan to develop a self-growing adaptive simulation that uses a virtual mentor to help users learn about the experience as they work through it. "By the end of three years, we aim to have two fully functioning demonstration simulators up and running that incorporate these new ideas and illustrate highly innovative technologies for learning," Dimitrova says.

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The Writing on the Wall

CMA Management (11/10) P. 36 Cooper, John

Literary skills are a vital component of a safe workplace, as workers are better able to follow safety rules and respond to emergencies when they have proficient reading and writing skills. Establishing literacy programs in the workplace, then, can help reduce accidents and therefore reduce costs. In the Conference Board's new report "What You Don't Know Can Hurt You: Literacy's Impact on Workplace Health and Safety," author Alison Campbell examines workplace literacy programs and their impact on safety. Many employers are not even aware of how low their workers' literacy levels are, with many unable to do something as simple as reading a safety manual. If they are insufficiently aware of the problem, they are unlikely to invest in the appropriate training to fix it, Campbell says. But accidents caused by low literacy represent a real cost to companies that can be reduced by adding training, she says. At De Beers Canada, for example, where a large number of workers are from Aboriginal communities, a literacy program was launched for both the company and the community. It includes a learning center that is open seven days a week and staffed by instructors committed to literacy and adult learning. There are always five or more workers involved in a literacy program at any time, the company says, and it also offers equal paid time off for learning opportunities elsewhere. There is much more awareness of health and safety in the workplace thanks to the literacy program, company officials say, and they are working with other companies to implement similar programs.

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Time to Re-Engage

Human Resource Executive Online (12/01/10) Shelly, Jared

Strong employee engagement initiatives can influence the success of companies in today's volatile economy by facilitating a happy and motivated workforce that satisfies customers, inspiring workers to expend discretionary effort, re-energizing workers during the recovery and helping keep high performers from looking for new positions as the job market strengthens, according to experts. Monitoring and managing employee engagement is a common thread of the companies in Hay Group's lists of "Most Admired for HR" for Fortune magazine and "Most Admired for HR" for Human Resource Executive. "A big reason that 'Most Admired' companies are where they are, reputation-wise, is because of their focus on people," says Mark Royal, a senior consultant at Hay. To keep people bought in and committed, "We have to help people grab on to their possible future [with] the organization." Companies are pushing employee engagement because it can keep workers smiling and affect the bottom line. In the Fortune "Most Admired" report, 94 percent of companies said employee engagement "created a competitive advantage," 94 percent said it "reduced turnover," and 84 percent said it "strengthened customer relationships." W.W. Grainger, No. 15 on the "Most Admired for HR" list, has created an effective culture of commitment and engagement by putting more money in its profit-sharing trust, divided among employees every year, as business results improve. Also, Grainger engages employees through five-minute meetings every day with branch managers to discuss goals and offer recognition, blogs by company leaders, and a private social-networking site.

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