

# Strategic Workforce Management “The Human Factor”

By Ron Gardner

**W**ith the significant trends and changes in today's economy, we must not overlook the “Human Factor” of strategic workforce management and reform. The pace of modern day life has picked up. It is much harder for employees to achieve balance between their work and personal lives. What is the result? Employees eventually become less productive, unhappy with their job, unhappy at home and start missing time from work due to stress related illness. These symptoms should serve as an early warning sign to support the need for a workforce management strategy that places more resources into “The Human Factor.”

How does all this translate into the bottom line figures? The results are stress, burnout, lower productivity and increased time off the job from illness and other related disabilities. Employees simply cannot cope with the pressures. The cost to employers can be significant.

In a landmark survey published by the United Nation's International Labor Organization, stress and burnout were reported to be at epidemic levels and spiraling out of control. The report warned that anxiety levels are set to dramatically increase as globalization continues its relentless march. The cost factors will be significant

and include; health care related costs, increased recruiting cost and the cost of training replacement workers. The cost of productivity and absenteeism alone can be devastating to your bottom line. Often these costs are racked up in ways an employer might not notice.

As the workplace shifts into a new paradigm, consider some positive recommendations and solutions. First, we should consider the old adage of “People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” It is now more important than ever to focus on workforce development. Employers can consider stepping up the pace of interpersonal development to match the speed of change faced in the lives of the workforce.

The new model could be one in which the employer helps workers achieve balance through programs to empower the workforce with the skills necessary to change how they perceive and process the situations surrounding them brought on by the relentless pace of change and globalization. It is also critical in the new workplace model that the man-

agement team “put down the mask” and acknowledges to subordinates that they also experience fears and concerns with the pace of change in the new employment model. How can this be accomplished? Employees can improve their self-esteem in the workplace. Education programs that help employees develop new and sustained self-management skills and how to maintain and sustain a healthy attitude would have a positive impact. This type of investment in the employee has in many cases been overlooked as the key to hidden bottom line results.

Once the newly educated workforce has the ability to adapt to the relentless pace, the statistics referred to earlier regarding stress-related illness and its economic impact could decrease. There is reason for much hope if we respond now. As the new employment model continues to develop, The “Human Factor” will play an ever increasingly important role.

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