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Bringing Work to Life

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Welcome

Welcome to the latest issue of Bringing Work to Life. Last month we explored seven key aspects of the organizational and business drivers for workforce development in an article titled "Opening the Door for Workforce Development" (http://www.elsdon.com/july_2004.htm). This month we explore what development means for each of us and for our organizations in "May You Live All The Days of Your Life".

May You Live All the Days of Your Life

"May you live all the days of you life" said Jonathan Swift. How often we wish that for our colleagues, for those close to us, and for ourselves, and yet how hard this can sometimes seem in today's organizational world.

We worked together for almost a year, my client, a vice president in financial services and I. We will call her Karen. It began when Karen sensed problems with her current organization, which was recently acquired by a regional competitor. Her extensive experience and knowledge of the industry meant little in the political mayhem that followed the acquisition. It was no surprise when she lost her job about two months after we met. There followed a time of introspection, some self-recrimination, and some depression. We explored Karen's aspirations in depth and she began to realize that a new life could come out of this loss. This new life could offer Karen the expression of her natural gifts in her work, the opportunity to join an organization that matched her values and relocation to a place that she and her husband desired. In short, it could provide alignment of who she was with how she worked and lived. Or as Brewi and Brennan (Mid-Life Psychological and Spiritual Perspectives, 1989) describe it, "the spirit within us, found in the core of our own Selves . . . slowly and painfully weaves its way through anxiety, confusion, tension and conflict to hear the rhythm of our own personal tune made up of choices and values that are truly our own. This becomes our great contribution to the world."

So with growing elation and some anxiety, over the following months, Karen gradually developed a finely tuned sense of who she was and where she could best

through revitalized workforce relationships and leadership practices. Prior to establishing his practice, Ron held senior leadership positions at diverse organizations.

Ron is also author of *Affiliation in the Workplace: Value Creation in the New Organization* (2003), a book describing leadership approaches to integrate the needs of the individual with the needs of the organization for the benefit of both. Ron holds a Ph.D. from Cambridge University in Chemical Engineering, an M.A. from John F. Kennedy University in Career Development and a first class honors degree from Leeds University in Chemical Engineering. With his co-author he was awarded the Walker Prize by the Human Resource Planning Society for the paper that best advances state-of-the-art thinking or practices in human resources.

express this. It was no surprise when she located an organization that valued her innovative and slightly irreverent style. It was in the location she wanted and it needed her knowledge and expertise. So they came together, Karen and the organization, and they crafted a path forward that was better for both of them. They crafted a path forward that was fulfilling for Karen and that generated value for the organization. They crafted a path forward based on mutual affiliation.

Now, what is unusual about this story? Certainly not her job loss. In the 1980s, 90s and 2000s downsizing has been a corporate mantra. Not the roller coaster of emotions that Karen felt as time passed. These are natural responses to this traumatic event. The unusual aspect is the extent to which Karen was able to completely redefine her life and find alignment where there was little previously. Part of this alignment was affiliation with an organization, a community, which shared her values. Part of it was a rebalancing of her life to meet her spiritual, psychological and practical needs. This was a transforming experience, which led to a fundamental re-expression of her humanity. And for the organization that was fortunate to employ her? Here we see the seeds of transformation due to the infusion of her new ideas expressed through her engagement and commitment.

It illustrates principles that guide the choices made by individuals for themselves and for their organizations. As Izzo and Withers indicate (Values Shift, 2000) that “when 1,000 working adults were asked whether they would rather earn high salaries or earn ‘enough’ doing work that makes the world a better place, 86% chose the latter.” Selling (out) to the highest bidder was not acceptable. Izzo and Withers also quote David Packard, the co-founder of Hewlett-Packard, as saying “I think people assume, wrongly, that a company exists solely to make money. Money is an important part of a company's existence, if the company is any good. But a result is not a cause. We have to go deeper and find the real reason for our being. . . . [A] group of people get together and exist as an institution that we call a company, so that they are able to accomplish something collectively that they could not accomplish separately—they make a contribution to society.” So it is not just about money for the organization either.

Put another way, how can we avoid an ethical lobotomy in establishing an organizational perspective? Lynn Rhodes, from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California poses three questions that get to the heart of the individual, organizational and community issues. These questions challenge us to consider fundamental values in wrestling with the tensions inherent in the relationships between individuals, organizations and communities. The questions are as follows:

- How do we as a community honor work that sustains and supports our lives?
- How do we support each person in expressing the unique gifts they have to offer?
- How do we integrate meeting our individual aspirations with seeking the common good?

Acknowledging and responding to such questions will ask much of us. We will need courage to:

- Honor values that ennoble others and build strength and affiliation in organizations and communities

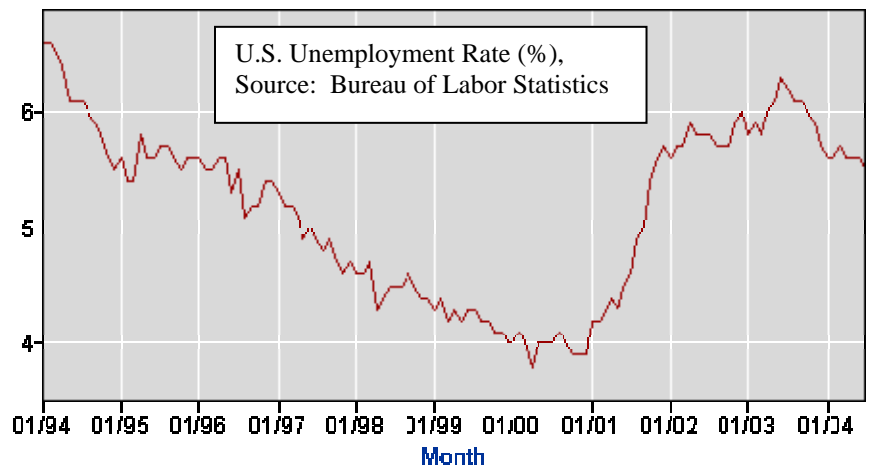
- Support organizations in meeting the diverse needs of each segment of their workforce
- Look beyond today to the needs of tomorrow so that the legacies left by our organizations and communities are legacies for generations to come
- Know and respect the various constituencies that are part of the extended organizational and community families.
- Balance equitably the needs of these constituencies, knowing that in so doing some will find fault.

We have an opportunity to be advocates for a new, brave organizational world in which each person is respected, in which partnerships are built and in which local and global communities are strengthened. And that voice needs to be heard.

This article will be published in the October, 2004 issue of the California Career Development Association Newsletter. Much of the article is extracted from Affiliation in the Workplace: Value Creation in the New Organization (Praeger, 2003) by Ron Elsdon.

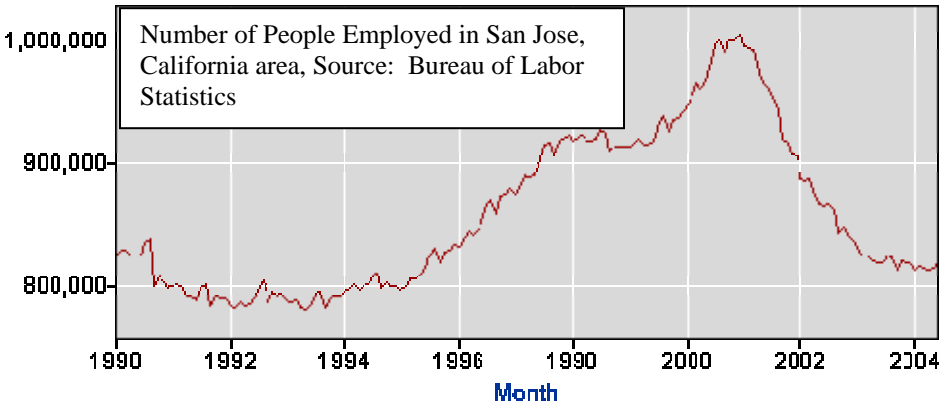
Employment Trends

U.S. unemployment rates have remained elevated since the economic slowdown in 2000/2001. The unemployment rate fell slightly to 5.5% in July 2004 from 5.6% in April, May and June as shown in the figure below.

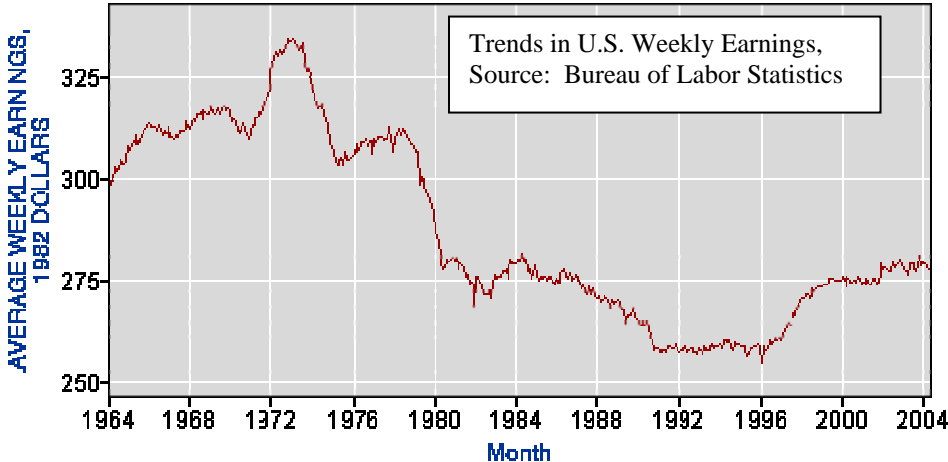


Challenges in the high tech arena are reflected in the drastic reduction in the number of people employed in the San Jose region as shown in the figure below.

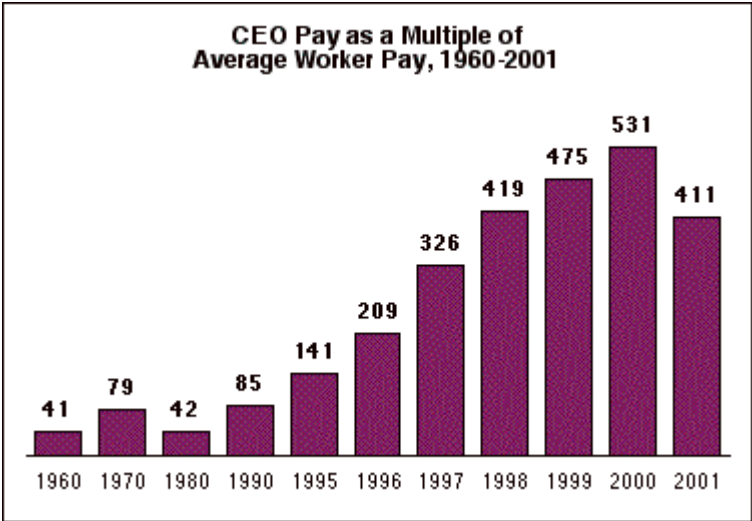
employment



These challenges are accompanied by significant erosion in average weekly earnings in the U.S. since the late 1970s as shown below.



This is in stark contrast to the increase in CEO compensation as a multiple of average worker pay (from inequality.org):



We are challenged to create organizations that respect the needs of all their constituents, not simply those with the most power. If we ignore these legitimate interests we will place organizational sustainability at risk. In respecting the needs of all constituents we will create a firm foundation for sustained growth and prosperity.

Quote

“And we shall, I am confident, if we maintain the pace, in due season reap the kind of world we deserve and deserve the kind of world we will have.”

John. F. Kennedy, 1963.

Upcoming Elsdon Organizational Renewal (EOR) Events

- Staying Career Fit. Annual Career Workshop, French-American Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco.
([Bubble Lounge Networking](#))
 - August 26, 2004, Bubble Lounge, San Francisco, CA
- Building Affiliation: Workforce Leadership in Action. HR Southwest Concurrent Session.
([HR Southwest](#), <http://www.hrsouthwest.com>)
 - October 7, 2004, Fort Worth Convention Center, TX
- Becoming Career Fit in Turbulent Times. Project Management Institute - SF Bay Area Chapter Meeting Presentation
([Project Management Institute SFBAC - San Francisco Bay Area Chapter](#), http://www.pmi-sfbac.org/index.phtml?menu=other_page&menu2=51)
 - October 21, 2004, Courtyard Marriott, San Francisco, CA
- Global Issues Forum. International Career Development Conference (ICDC) Panel Discussion
([International Career Development Conference - Career Assistance](#), <http://www.careerccc.com>)
 - October 27, 2004, Sacramento Convention Center, CA
- Opening the Organizational Door for Career Development. International Career Development Conference (ICDC) Concurrent Session
([International Career Development Conference - Career Assistance](#), <http://www.careerccc.com>)
 - October 29, 2004, Sacramento Convention Center, CA
- Building Employee Commitment in a Growing Economy. 56th Annual California Groundwater Association Convention and Trade Show Concurrent Session
([California Groundwater Association Events](#),

<http://www.groundh2o.org/events/events.html>)

- November 6, 2004, Silver Legacy Resort and Casino, Reno, NV

About EOR: Our Value Contribution

We enhance your workforce, leadership and organization by:

- Using proprietary approaches to understand workforce and leadership challenges
- Creating tailored action plans and solutions to strengthen workforce and leadership practices
- Building individual capabilities and contributions

We enable you to focus on external results and building value, confident that your organization and leadership are operating at peak effectiveness.

Our Mission

To support your organization by enhancing **performance, productivity and effectiveness** through revitalized workforce relationships and leadership practices.

Our Approach and Values

We tailor our engagements to the needs of each organization with a process designed to surface critical issues, identify root causes, build effective solutions, monitor progress and implement.

With a scope that ranges from system and organizational interventions to work with individuals, our focus is on the heart of the relationship among the individual, the organization and the community. We believe that organizational and community prosperity are built on enabling each person to fulfill his or her potential.

Our Services

We work with individuals and groups in your organization to drive performance and development for both the short and long term. As result people will choose to work in your organization and will prosper there.

We bring solutions when you need to:

- Reverse declining revenues and performance
- Revitalize your workforce
- Stem the loss of key talent
- Redirect your organization to new areas
- Stop losing customers or market share
- Penetrate new markets

- Combat aggressive competitors
- Handle major change
- Break down communication barriers
- Energize your leadership team
- Successfully build on an acquisition or merger

Our proprietary services include:

- State-of-the-art tools to take the pulse of your organization and then move to action
 - Web enabled systems
 - Experts to gather and analyze information, moving your organization to action
- Individual leadership coaching to give you world class leadership capabilities
 - Leaders who know themselves and their aspirations, build their capabilities and become catalysts developing others
- Workshops to build interpersonal skills in your organization so that:
 - Communication is timely, concise, accurate and personal
 - People listen to each other
 - Negotiations are quick and effective
 - Differences create rather than destroy value
 - Teams move forward, get results and quickly commercialize new products and services
 - People understand and link their motivations to your organizational needs
 - Your teams understand what it takes to create a committed, energized workforce
 - People use their time well
- Systems that make it easy to drive performance and build capabilities by:
 - Linking objectives throughout the organization
 - Strengthening key competencies
 - Making sure you have the bench strength where and when you need it
 - Giving people tools to take charge of their own careers, development and have a major long term influence on your organization
- Proprietary simulation and modeling techniques that let you explore how to maximize the value of your workforce
 - Move from guessing what might happen to looking in depth at the financial impact of different approaches