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Bringing Work to Life

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## Contact Us

Elsdon Organizational  
Renewal (EOR)

[www.elsdon.com](http://www.elsdon.com)

[renewal@elsdon.com](mailto:renewal@elsdon.com)

Tel. 925 838 2362

## Welcome

Welcome to the latest issue of Bringing Work to Life.

We explored the following topics in the past twelve issues (all newsletters are available at [www.elsdon.com/newsletters.htm](http://www.elsdon.com/newsletters.htm)):

- Stewardship and governance (November/December 2007)
- Finding the peaks (September/October 2007)
- Career plateaus – what to do about them (July/August 2007)
- Workforce planning (May/June 2007)
- Assessing your organization (March/April 2007)
- Individual change (January/February 2007)
- Guiding organizational change (November/December 2006)
- One to one (September/October 2006)
- New horizons (July/August 2006)
- Our greatest asset (May/June 2006)
- Bringing development and performance home (March/April 2006)
- Progressing in your organization (January/February 2006)

In this issue we address “Transforming a Human Resources (HR) Career.”

## Transforming a Human Resources (HR) Career

“So, while each of us faces - at one time or another – the prospect of driving alone



Ron Elsdon, Ph.D., is founder of *Elsdon Organizational Renewal* (a division of *Elsdon, Inc.*), which focuses on supporting organizations enhance effectiveness through revitalized workforce relationships and leadership practices. Prior to establishing his practice, Ron held senior leadership positions at diverse organizations. Ron is also co-founder of *New Beginnings Career and College Guidance*, which provides caring and personalized help to individuals and families in career guidance, coaching and college planning.

Ron is 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.

down a dark road, what we must learn with experience is that the approaching light may not be a threat, but a shared moment of trust.” These deep words from Warren Christopher in “This I Believe” caused me to think on a recent personal challenge. We were at Project Homeless Connect, a one day event, in this case in the Bay Area, to help link those who are homeless with community resources. The day was well on track with many people receiving support when, all of sudden, at mid-day, as a friend and I were helping point to resources, a person headed in our direction, muttering to herself, disheveled, making strange noises. I heard someone suggest that she was psychotic and this person went for help, I held back not knowing what to do and my friend reached out with a kind word. At which point the distressed figure came to us and began explaining her situation. She was fully present and completely lucid. It saddens me that she has to contend with a life of such hardship. The courage and compassion of my friend was just what was needed, it contrasted with my own, inappropriate, reticence. May I behave very differently should such a situation arise again. And I am struck by the parallel for those charged with leadership in HR, which means all in HR. The need for advocacy in circumstances that might be difficult and uncomfortable. Let’s examine the attributes that will be important for those wishing to create an HR path in the future, first by looking at the context within which this takes place.

A recent survey by IBM of more than 400 HR practitioners from 40 countries points to the following primary workforce-related issues facing organizations.

What do you see as the primary workforce-related issues facing the organization?

(Percent)



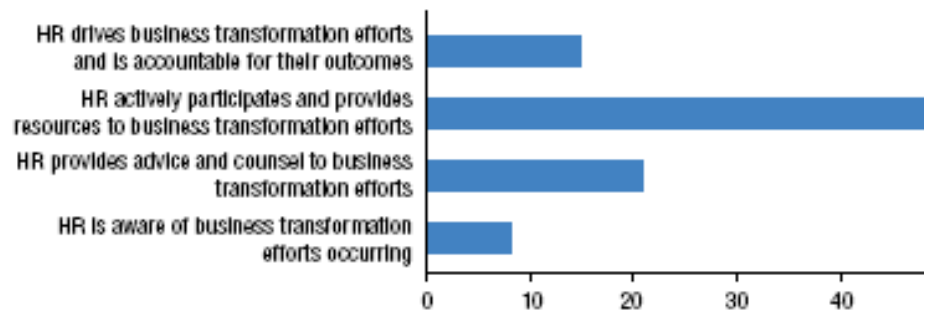
Source: IBM Global Human Capital Study 2008.

We see a wide range of issues linked to building and sustaining workforce capabilities to meet organizational needs. Development of people is a core skill need. In meeting such organizational needs there is a perception within the HR community that HR is an active participant in organizational transformation efforts as shown in the following figure from the same study:

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.

**How would you best describe HR's role in ongoing business transformation efforts?**

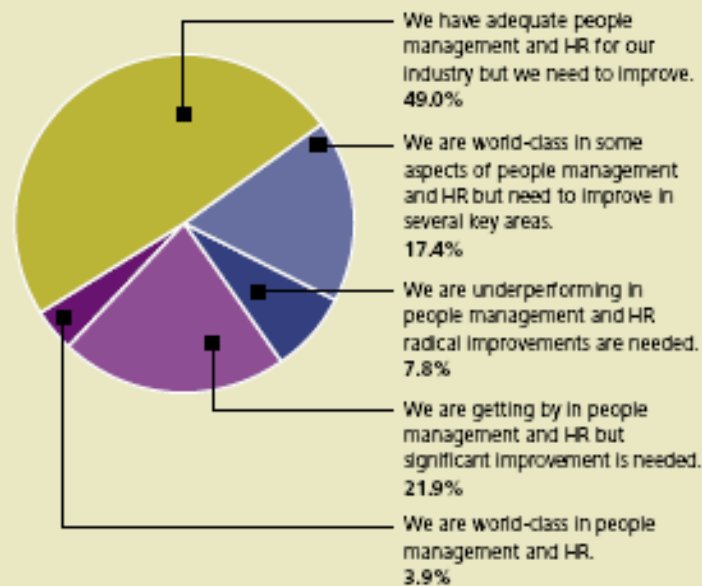
(Percent)



Source: IBM Global Human Capital Study 2008.

However a 2007 study by Deloitte and the Economist Intelligence Unit points to the challenges still faced by HR since only 3.9% of senior business executives indicated that their organizations are world class in people management and HR, as shown in the following figure:

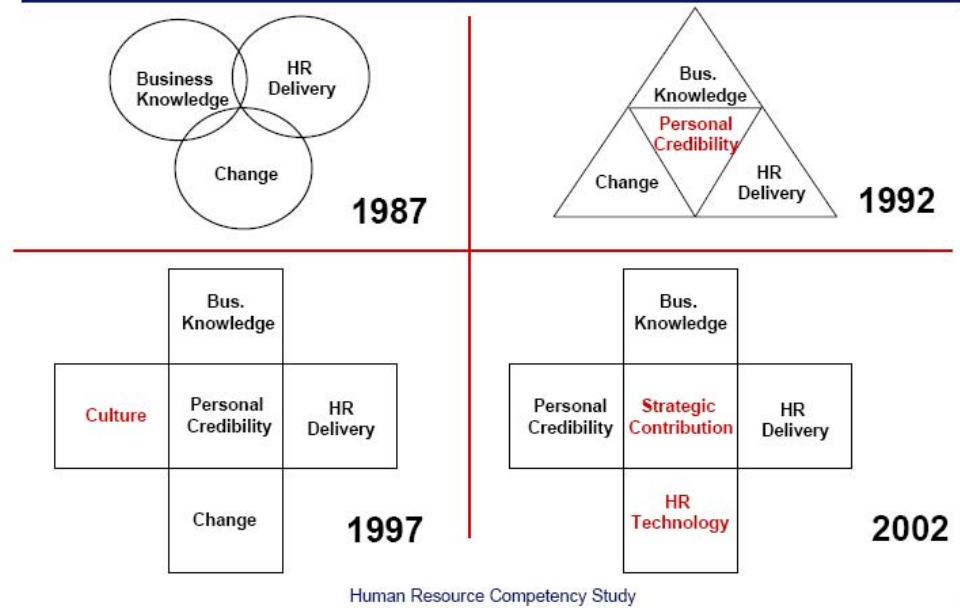
**Figure 4. Which of the following statements best describes the overall state of your organisation's management of people issues?**



Results based on senior business executives.

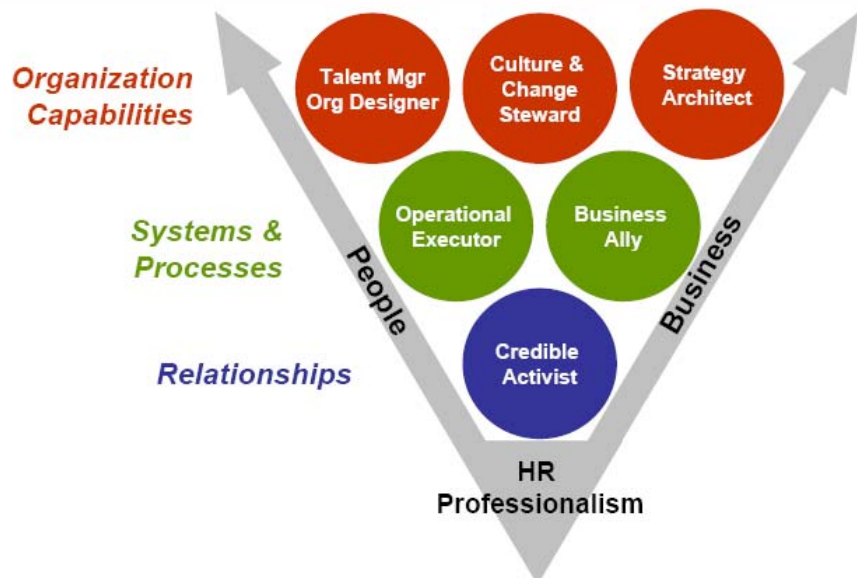
How can we relate these challenges, driving forces and needs to competencies required of HR practitioners that will energize future HR careers? Work from the University of Michigan and the RBL group sheds light on this question (thank you to Dani Johnson of the RBL group for making this available). Studies by these groups over twenty years show core competencies for those in HR evolving as follows for the period from 1987 to 2002 (where HRCS refers to the Human Resource Competency Study):

## HRCS Model: Evolution



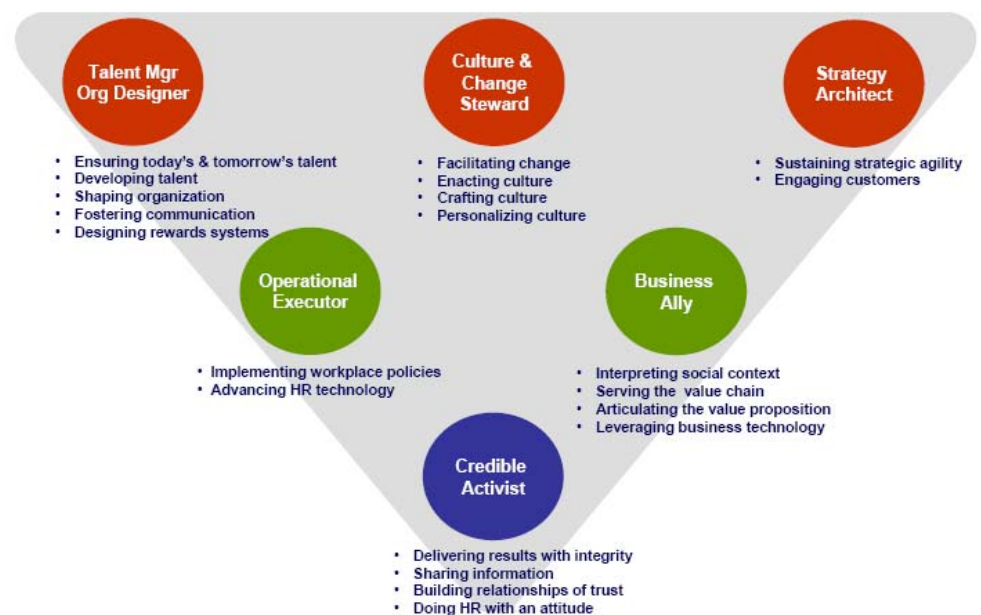
The clustering of competencies evolved over this period with the addition of the items shown in red each time the study was conducted every five years. The latest study in 2007, shows further evolution as follows:

## 2007 HRCS Model



The competency of credible activist is at the fulcrum of the two key dimensions of people and business, speaking as it does to building strong relationships and being clear about the importance of effective advocacy. Indeed in this latest study, willingness to be a clear and effective advocate is the single most important HR competency. It supports those competencies needed to build effective systems and processes and those that strengthen organizational capabilities. The elements of each of these competency clusters are summarized in the following figure:

## HRCS Model: 2007



Human Resource Competency Study

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This is not the HR of acquiescence, rather it is the HR of determination and transformation. What steps can we take to be clear about what we stand for and build these necessary competencies to be effective?

May Sarton expressed it well:

“Now I become myself.  
It's taken time, many years and places.  
I have been dissolved and shaken,  
Worn other people's faces ....”

It starts with knowing ourselves and those parts of who we are, where as Frederick Buechner observed, “our deep gladness meets the world's deep need.” This means taking time to reflect on our life and work experiences and the meaning they hold for the future. It means taking advantage of the many instruments that can help us discern more of who we are, whether in terms of our personality preferences, interests, skills or values (more information about assessment instruments is in the October 2005 issue of *Bringing Work to Life*).

Building on this foundation of knowing ourselves and what we stand for, we are then ready to examine a future transformational path. A critical early step is that of assessing the organizations with which we are affiliated, either as employees or as service providers. Assessing them to be sure they honor stewardship of the workforce and community, for example by equitable compensation practices that do not disproportionately reward those at the top, and by protecting the physical environment. We can, and should, become credible activists only with, and for, those organizations that practice values with which we are aligned.

Having built internal clarity and external alignment we can then begin to chart a personal development path forward. This is built on purpose, aspirations, and the form of employment relationship sought, for example whether traditional employment, or a contract or entrepreneurial undertaking. For many people a written development plan can be helpful. This development plan, or blueprint for the path forward, may build on the following framework:

- Defined short and long term personal targets
- Identified competencies to develop, how this development will happen and measures of success
  - Incorporating the learning modes of practical experience, mentoring and training
    - Examples:
      - Seeking on-the-job activities to develop new skills
      - Identifying and engaging with a mentor or mentoring a colleague
      - Attending professional association meetings
      - Requesting feedback about strengths and areas for development
      - Identifying learning programs to further career exploration
- Clear goals and objectives to address performance expectations
  - SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, time bound)
- Involvement and support from others

These elements blend the short and long term of both meeting immediate objectives and building long term strength. A development plan structure that can work well includes the following components:

- Personal Characteristics
- Mid to Long Term Goal
- Development Objectives for the Coming Year
- Actions for the Coming Year
- People Who Can Provide Support

Creating a path forward is an intensely personal experience. Given that caveat, here are some steps to consider in transforming an HR career:

- Take and reflect on self-assessments to provide foundation and direction
- Complete a development plan and discuss with a mentor or manager

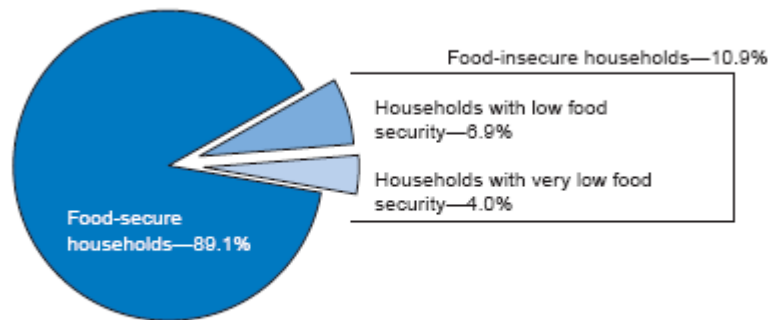
- Connect with others in areas of interest
- Stay current on emerging trends and their influence
- Create and communicate your portfolio
- Continue learning and developing
- Begin now

In taking these steps and engaging with organizations that honor and respect the workforce and community, we enable our own path and ennoble organizations and communities. Our advocacy then becomes the shining light on the road.

## Hunger

When confronted by recent information about hunger in the U.S. I was reminded again of Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus' statement: "If we had believed that poverty should not belong to a civilized human society, we would have created appropriate institutions and policies to create a poverty-free world. We wanted to go to the moon --- so we went there. If we are not achieving something, my first suspicion will fall on the intensity of our desire to achieve it." The following figure shows statistics for 2006 (low and very low food security are euphemisms for hunger).

U.S. households by food security status, 2006



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from December 2006 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Nord, Mark, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. *Household Food Security in the United States, 2006*. ERR-49, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv. November 2007.

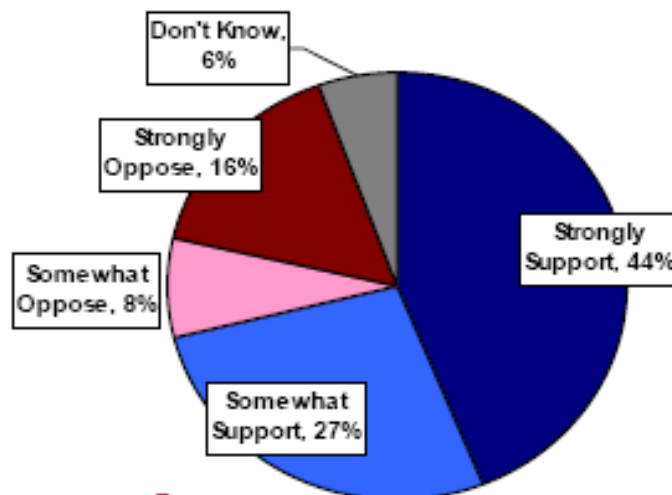
More than 10% of people in our country had low or very low food security. These 12.6 million households were uncertain at times of their ability to obtain sufficient food due to lack of resources. Of this group, in 4.6 million households, one or more members of the family went hungry at least some time during the year because they couldn't afford enough food. The following figure shows some of the concerns that people had:



Nord, Mark, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. *Household Food Security in the United States, 2006*. ERR-49, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv. November 2007.

This raises the question, how concerned are we as a nation about supporting people in poverty and suffering from hunger. Perhaps surprisingly, given these statistics, we find strong support for dedicating additional resources to assist those in poverty as shown in the following figure:

**Figure 2 - Would you support or oppose the United States dedicating an additional 1% of the federal budget to the needs of the world's poorest people, including aid for education, hunger, poverty, clean water, children's health and AIDS treatment?"**

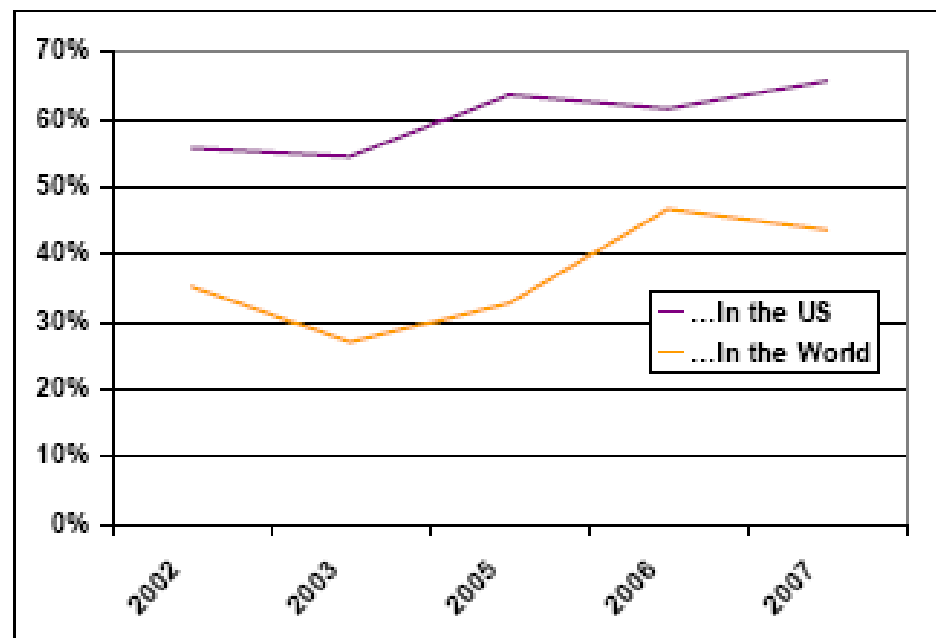


Source: *bipartisan U.S. poll by the Alliance to End Hunger, October 2007*

More than two thirds of people surveyed either supported or strongly supported dedicating additional resources to the needs of the world's poorest people. In addition 66% of people said they would be willing for the country to spend \$18 billion a year to cut hunger and food insecurity in half in the U.S. by improving and expanding programs like food stamps and school breakfast programs for children. Support crossed political boundaries.

As shown in the following figure a majority of people in the U.S. believe that we spend too little on reducing domestic hunger and more than 40% believe we spend too little on reducing world hunger.

**Figure 3 - Percent of likely voters who believe the U.S. spends too little on reducing the hunger problem.**



Source: *bipartisan U.S. poll by the Alliance to End Hunger, October 2007*

Both percentages have increased significantly over this decade. It appears that we have a society ready and willing to address the problems of hunger and poverty. We need leadership with the same social conscience.

## Quotes

“wherever you are, be there.”

Elizabeth Deutsch Earle

“one human being who meets with injustice can render invalid the entire system which has dispensed it.”

Leonard Bernstein

“Albert Einstein once observed that westerners have a feeling the individual loses his freedom if he joins, say, a union or any group. Precisely the opposite is the case. Once you join others, even though at first your mission fails, you become a different person, a much stronger one. You feel that you really count, you discover your strength as an individual because you have along the way discovered others share in what you believe, you are not alone; and thus a community is formed. I am paraphrasing Einstein. I love to do that; nobody dares contradict me.”  
Studs Terkel

All from “This I Believe” edited by Jay Allison and Dan Gediman

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## Elsdon Organizational Renewal (EOR) Recent Mentions

- Reviews of “Affiliation in the Workplace: Value Creation in the New Organization.” Ron Elsdon. Praeger, Westport, CT (2003)
  - Harvard Business School
    - [HBS Working Knowledge: Organizations](#)
  - Global Diversity Institute
    - [Global Diversity Institute - The Journal of Diversity Praxis](#)
  - Journal of Asian Economics
    - [ScienceDirect - Journal of Asian Economics : Ron Elsdon, Affiliation in the Workplace: Value Creation in the New Organization, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT \(2003\) 280 pp. \(hardcover\), ISBN 1-56720-436-8, \\$49.95.](#)
  - Greenwood Publishing Group
    - [Affiliation in the Workplace — www.greenwood.com](#)
- Chapter titled “How Can You Grow Your Practice with Purpose?” in National Career Development Association Monograph, “Starting and Growing a Business in the New Economy” Edited by Sally Gelardin, 2007
- Recorded Webinar for Project Management Institute
  - “Becoming Career Fit in Turbulent Times”
    - <http://pmi-issig.org/Default.aspx?tabid=319>
- “Building a Strong Workforce Through Affiliation.” Chapter 26 in “On Staffing: Advice and Perspectives from HR Leaders.” Eds. Nicholas Burkholder et al, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken NJ (2004)
  - <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0471410691,descCd-tableOfContents.html>
- “The Growing Divide Calls for Advocacy.”
  - Article in March, 2007, NCDA Career Convergence magazine

- <http://209.235.208.145/cgi-bin/WebSuite/tcsAssnWebSuite.pl?Action=DisplayNewsDetails&RecordID=947&Sections=&IncludeDropped=1&AssnID=NCDA&DBCCode=130285>
- “Reaching for Our Deep Gladness”
  - Article in May, 2005, NCDA Career Convergence magazine
    - <http://209.235.208.145/cgi-bin/WebSuite/tcsAssnWebSuite.pl?Action=DisplayNewsDetails&RecordID=625&Sections=6&IncludeDropped=&AssnID=NCDA&DBCCode=130285>
- Mention in article on cost of turnover
  - East Bay Business Times, April 2005
    - [Turnover costs exceed employers' estimates - 2005-04-25](#)
- “Worklife Survival: Finding a Fit”
  - Article for HR West, February 2005 (Northern California Human Resource Association)
    - <http://www.nchra.org/StaticContent/Download/EXT0205007.pdf>
- Interview in the education field “Affiliation as a Unifying Principle in Education”
  - Career Pro News
    - [Affiliation and Education](#)
- MBTI Step II workshop
  - CCDA News, April 2005
    - [Local Chapter News](#)
- Review of ICDC Global Issues Forum
  - CCDA, January 2005
    - [ICDC Global Issues Forum](#)

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## 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.

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## Our Mission

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

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## 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.

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## Our Services

We work with individuals and groups in your organization to drive performance and development for both the short and long term. As a 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 and 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