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Bringing Work to Life

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Welcome

Welcome to the latest issue of Bringing Work to Life. With this new year we have introduced a new symbol into the newsletter title line above. This symbol represents our work, and the newsletter content, addressing the heart of the relationship between the individual (shown by the left leaf), the organization (shown by the right leaf) and the community (shown by the circle). As before, each newsletter will start with an article that speaks either to each of us as individuals or about our work with organizations (addressing both over time), and an article that speaks to the community context within which we work. This latter article will usually be more quantitative. We will continue to include a quote that we find meaningful. To accommodate extensive and growing client engagements we will issue the newsletter on a bi-monthly basis this year. Our plan is to create six newsletters in 2006. We welcome your feedback and thoughts about these newsletters.

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

- Bringing our best to work (December 2005)
- The promise of affiliation (November 2005)
- Nothing business, it's just personal (October 2005)
- Who are you? (September 2005)
- Leadership roles (August 2005)
- Leadership courage (July 2005)
- The real scoop (June 2005)
- Listening to the organization (May 2005)
- A kinder, gentler place (April 2005)



Ron Elsdon, Ph.D., is founder of *Elsdon Organizational Renewal*, 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. With his co-author he was

- Accelerating into your new position (March 2005)
- Workforce leadership (February 2005)
- Searching for success (January 2005)

This month we begin a series of articles that speak to individual development. The first article, titled “Progressing in Your Organization” explores development within an organization, from the perspective of each of us as individuals finding our path forward.

Progressing in Your Organization

“This is such a good organization, it is stimulating, exciting. We are breaking new ground each day, I am always learning.” These are typical of the words of someone growing and developing in their organization for the benefit of both the organization and themselves. You might identify with these thoughts and feelings or perhaps with a different perspective “I was stuck, not going anywhere, with so much more to give.” These are the kind of words we sometimes hear during exit interviews.

In the first case we see someone building a fulfilling path forward; in the second case we see frustrated hopes and dreams. Let’s explore the steps that can take us along that fulfilling first path. This journey begins with our becoming clear about what we stand for (September 2005 newsletter) and continues with finding an organization that fits our values and aspirations (October November 2004 newsletter). Let’s presume we have built such personal clarity, found a good organizational match and navigated those perilous early stages in the new position successfully (March 2005 newsletter). These are not small feats. So now we are ready to progress, to spread our wings. What should we do?

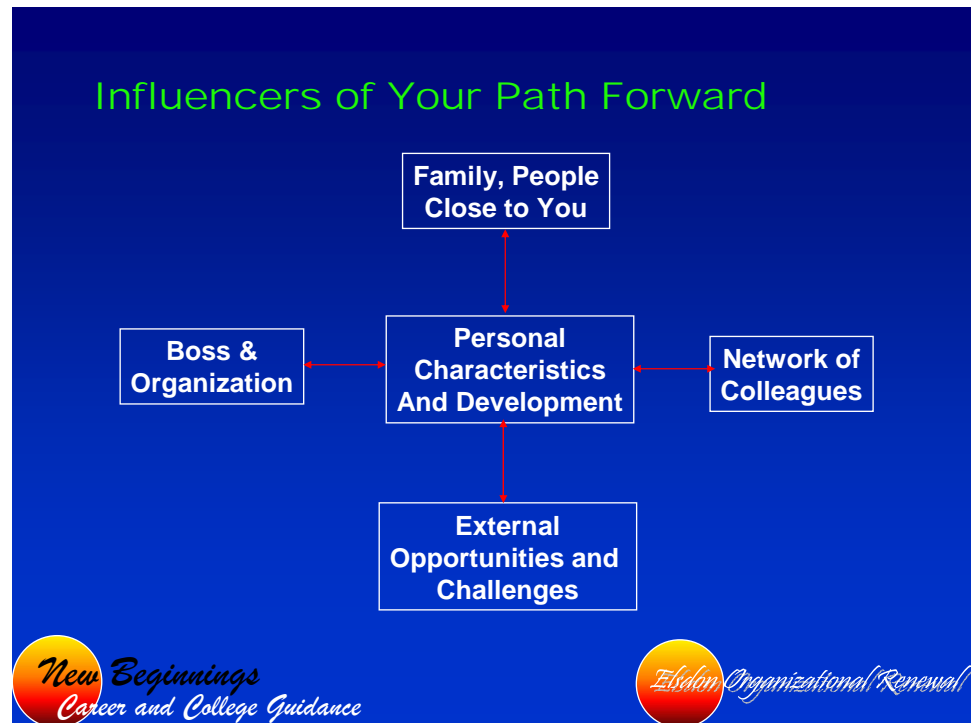
First re-examine beliefs about what progressing means. This is a personal issue for each of us, intimately interwoven with our definition of success (January 2005 newsletter). However, in a work world increasingly demanding more complex skills and flexibility rather than hierarchical work relationships, progressing does not always mean promotion; it does always mean individual growth. Keep asking yourself the question whether you are learning and developing and, if not, change your situation. Then be clear about your role in guiding your own career. Your organization and manager make important contributions, but they are passengers in the car you are driving. Scott McNealy, the CEO of Sun Microsystems, used to frame this as “the employee has 51% responsibility for his or her career; the organization has 49% responsibility.” We need to ask what are we doing with our 51%? And we also need to know where our organization stands, is it 51%/49% or more like 90%/10%.

Having set the ground rules, we can now focus on key factors influencing progress, namely generating present success and guiding our path forward. Let’s look at each in turn. It may seem obvious, but still a good reminder that success in an existing role is a necessary prerequisite to progressing in an organization. Demonstrating and communicating strong current performance provides a foundation for growth. Present success is driven by our ability to perform well in a variety of leadership roles (August 2005 newsletter) and to deliver a range of competencies (December

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.

2005 newsletter) needed for our present position. Increasingly we are called to demonstrate effective interpersonal skills, whether in understanding ourselves or interacting with others. The growing complexity of our work and the context within which it takes place, crossing cultural and geographic boundaries, requires parallel growth in interpersonal skills, for example in generating excitement, in building shared ownership, or in managing conflict well.

The second aspect, guiding our path forward, means first being clear about influences on that path. Here is one perspective:



These people and elements come together through you and they are central to your moving forward. In crafting this path forward others in the organization will seek to understand the suitability of your skills, your fit in new settings and your enthusiasm for changes in your path. They will also wonder how a change for you will affect them.

Guiding your path forward also means being clear about what this means for your development:

- Understanding the direction of your organization
- Knowing what is important to your fulfillment
- Knowing and developing the form of mastery you seek
 - For example technical/functional, administrative, or organizational leadership
- Creating networking and learning opportunities
- Continually aligning your work with your aspirations
- Knowing the skills you need to develop

Part of this clarification comes through conversations with others in the organization. Some clarification can come through more structured processes such

as 360 degree feedback. Development clarity also means creating your own development plan that incorporates input from others, along with realistic measures of progress and a variety of learning activities. Learning is often most effective when driven by actual assignments, rather than simply traditional academic engagement. This development plan should be owned by you, not by your organization, even though the organization may provide support, for example through on-line development planning systems. Your development plan should include at least the following components:

- Personal Characteristics
 - ▶ For example personality preferences, interests, values and developed skills
- Mid to Long Term Goal
 - ▶ Three to five years into the future
- Development Objectives for the Coming Year
 - ▶ Specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and time bound
- Actions for the Coming Year
 - ▶ Supporting your development objectives
- People Who Can Provide Support
 - ▶ Your personal “board of directors”

Let’s look at an example. Howard wishes to become head of a business unit in his organization that delivers complex financial services to customers. Howard is currently director of HR.

In the new role of interest to Howard he would need attributes that include well honed business savvy, an understanding of the financial instruments that are central to the organization’s business success, an ability to relate well to customers and an ability to generate enthusiasm and build commitment within the organization.

He is currently strong in the interpersonal area, able to work and relate well to people in many different capacities in the organization. He has created an effective HR organization that has met or exceeded objectives and is highly oriented to customer service.

The major gaps in Howard’s skill base relate to direct business experience and in-depth knowledge of the company’s financial services capabilities. Howard consults with his boss and peers, and talks with his family about priorities. He then devises a development plan that includes the following components:

- A six-month rotational assignment in an operating division as part of a marketing function, focused on growing a new business unit
- Taking courses from a local college that provide a foundation of knowledge in financial analysis.
- Identifying a mentor in senior leadership who will provide feedback on progress and access to the strategic planning process at senior levels in the organization
- Administration of a 360 degree feedback instrument annually to gather input about his developing leadership competencies
- Joining a financial executives network and attending the monthly meetings

of this group to become conversant with current thinking and to build an outside network

Howard created a written version of this plan with specific development targets over a three year period. Howard and his boss acknowledge that if opportunities don't develop internally he may need to explore options outside the organization. With his game plan in place Howard can now focus on implementation.

In summary then, as you think about progressing in your organization:

- Demonstrate and communicate strong current performance
- Clarify your purpose and values – speak with your voice
- Understand the direction of your organization
- Align your work with your aspirations
- Gather feedback from others
- Create your development plan and preferred next stage
- Build relationships to open opportunities
- Give of your insights and knowledge

By taking these steps you will move closer to expressing who you are for your benefit and for the benefit of those around you.

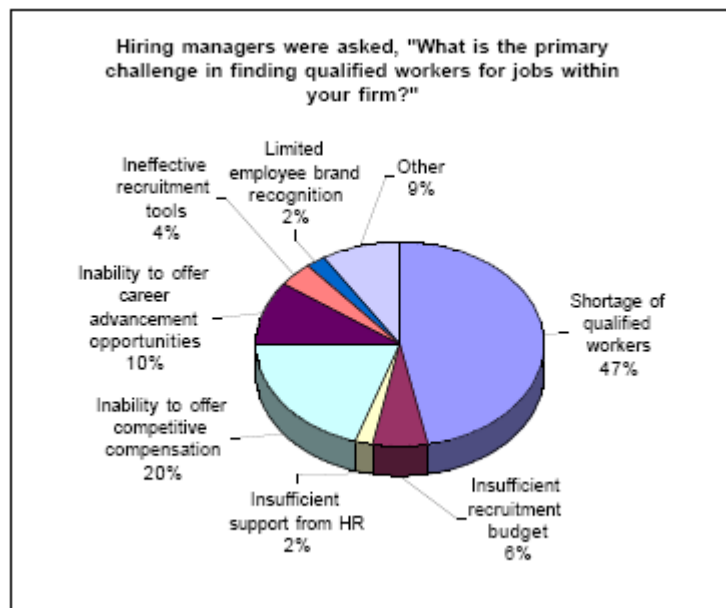
The Job Market

A perspective on the evolving job market and some signals of change can be gleaned from a survey conducted by Robert Half International and CareerBuilder.com in August 2005. The following figures are from this survey which focused on 600 hiring managers in the U.S. and 1,450 U.S. employees. The signals of an increasingly difficult environment for finding people with needed skills are evident with hiring managers on balance anticipating the hiring market becoming more competitive over the coming twelve months as shown in the following figure. This is consistent with demographic trends we discussed in the April 2005 newsletter.



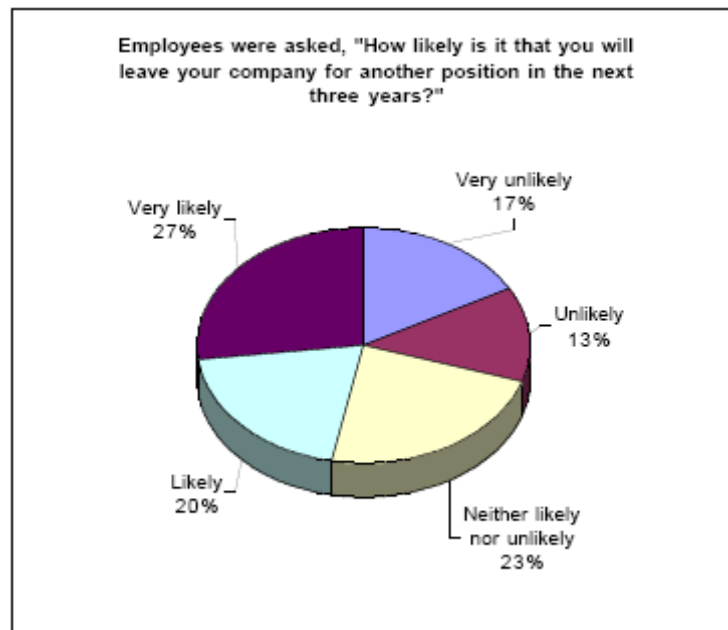
Source: Robert Half International Inc. and CareerBuilder.com survey of 600 hiring managers

Hiring managers identify the shortage of qualified workers as the most significant challenge as shown in the following figure.



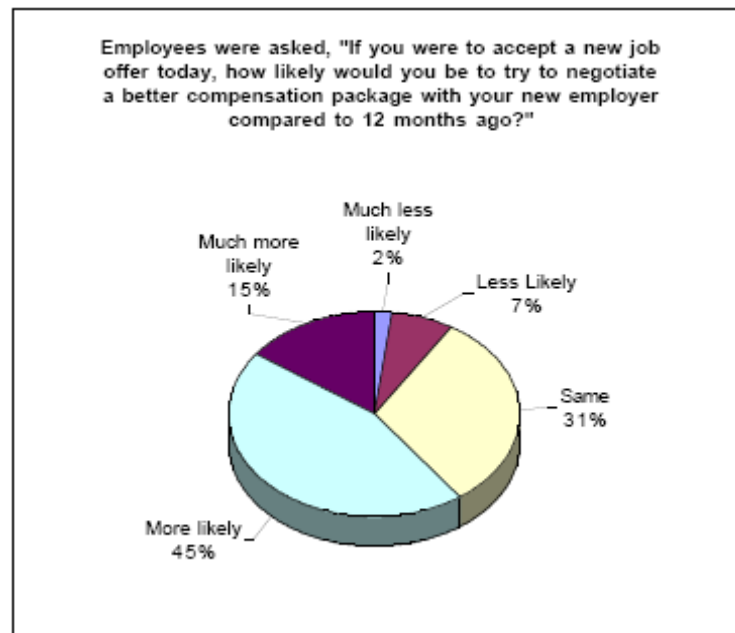
Source: Robert Half International Inc. and CareerBuilder.com survey of 600 hiring managers

Building strong relationships with current employees will become increasingly important. This is borne out by the following perspective that shows 47% of employees likely or very likely to leave their company for another position in the next three years.



Source: Robert Half International Inc. and CareerBuilder.com survey of more than 1,450 U.S. employees

While individuals are still nervous about the employment market according to this study, they are more or much more likely to try to negotiate a better employment package than 12 months ago, as shown in the following figure.



Source: Robert Half International Inc. and CareerBuilder.com survey of more than 1,450 U.S. employees

As individuals we can anticipate more options and employment choices in the coming months and years. For those in organizations, understanding the reasons for, and reducing, unwanted employee attrition will increasingly emerge as a key strategic issue.

Quote

“I have an urgent message for you. Everyone feels like a fraud ... Separate yourself from your work. A book you made isn't you any more than is a chair you made, or a soup. It's just something you made once. If you ever want to make another one, it, too, will be just another hat in the ring, another widow's mite, another broken offering which God has long understood is the best we humans can do – we're forgiven in advance.”

Annie Dillard quoted by Philip Yancey in *Soul Survivor*, 2001.

Upcoming Elsdon Organizational Renewal (EOR) Events and Recent Mentions

Upcoming Events

- Presentation for UC Berkeley Haas alumni association, Berkeley
 - January 10, “Progressing in Your Organization”
- Workshops for UC Berkeley Haas School of Business
 - January 7, “Career Shifting for Engineers” and “Negotiating Entry”
 - January 14, “Accelerating into Your New Position” and “Progressing in Your Organization”
- Presentation for UCLA Anderson School of Management Bay Area Alumni, San Francisco
 - January 24, “Career Fitness in the New Economy”
- Workshop for UCLA Alumni and UCLA Anderson School of Management Baby Boomer Career Conference, Los Angeles
 - January 28, “Career Fitness in Turbulent Times: Maintaining Job Search Readiness”
 - http://www.seasonedpro.com/ucla_boomer_saturday_details.asp#bo_23

Recent Mentions

- Reviews of “Affiliation in the Workplace: Value Creation in the New Organization.” Ron Elsdon. Praeger Publishers, 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.

- “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 Alliance of Chief Executives
 - [Alliance of CEOs - Ron Elsdon](#)
- “Integrating Into Your New Position.”
 - Article in September 1, 2005 issue of Career Tips and Tactics from executiveagent.com
 - [Executive Career Strategies at ExecutiveAgent.com](#)
- “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>
- Review of MBTI Step II workshop
 - CCDA News, April 2005
 - [California Career Development Association - Articles](#)
- Recent 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>
- Recent interview in the education field “Affiliation as a Unifying Principle in Education”
 - Career Pro News
 - [Affiliation and Education](#)
- Review of ICDC Global Issues Forum
 - CCDA, January 2005
 - [California Career Development Association - Articles](#)

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 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