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Bringing Work to Life

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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):

- 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)
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- Nothing business, it's just personal (October 2005)
- Who are you? (September 2005)
- Leadership roles (August 2005)
- Leadership courage (July 2005)

In this issue we address "Individual Change".

Individual Change

"When faced with the prospect of needing to change or proving that we don't need to, most of us get busy on the proof" is an astute observation I recall hearing. It is



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

certainly true for me. Here's an example of this challenge of change from Elting Morison's book *Men, Machines and Modern Times*. It complements another case from this book described in the last issue of "Bringing Work to Life." The latest example concerns the use of armaments in the Second World War. In the early part of the war, when armaments were in short supply, the British were using a particular piece of field artillery towed behind trucks. This field gun was handed down from the Boer War many years earlier. There was a consensus at the beginning of the Second World War that the speed of fire could be increased, so a time and motion expert was called in. He filmed the firing sequence. On reviewing the film he was puzzled by a three-second segment when two members of the gun crew stopped all activity and stood to attention. Baffled by this he asked an experienced colonel of artillery about the reason for this behavior. The colonel looked at the film, and after a few moments' reflection said: "Ah. I have it. They are holding the horses."

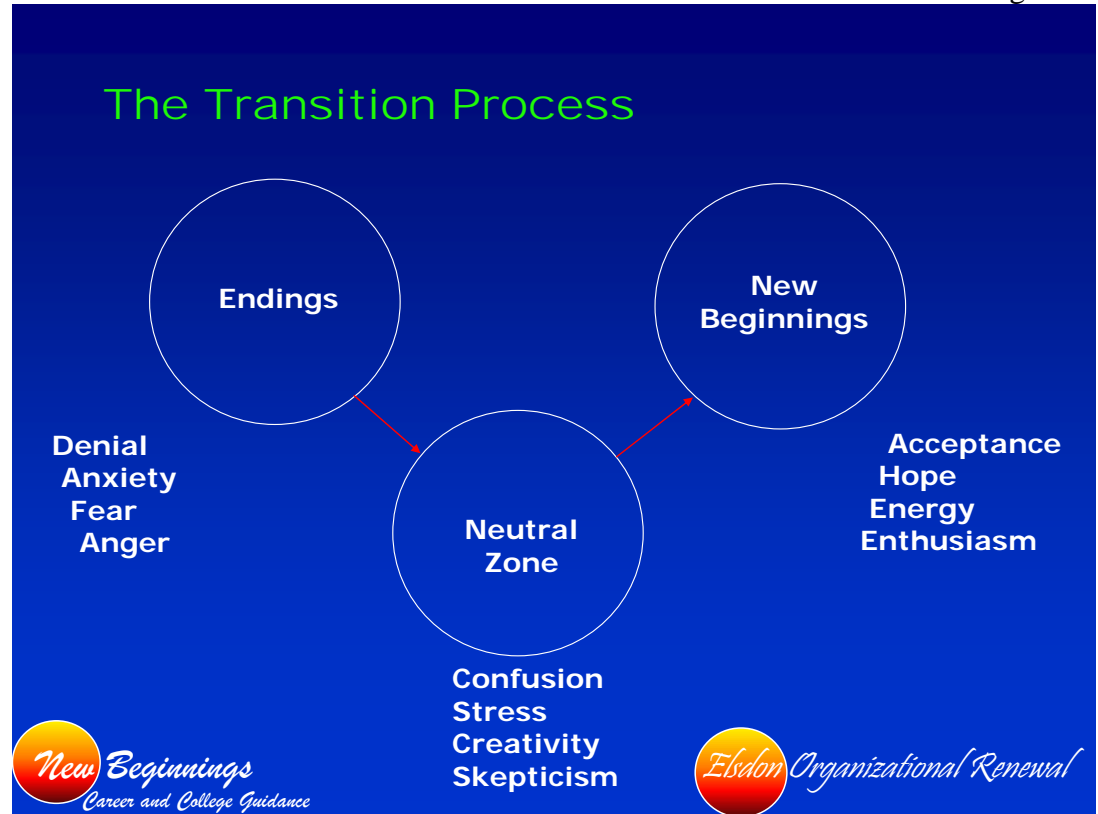
Here we see the difficulty of letting go of institutionalized habits that are no longer relevant. We see how difficult it can be to change as individuals. Securing organizational change begins with change within each of us. Perhaps this poignant quote from an Anglican bishop found inscribed on his tomb in Westminster Abbey (mentioned by Richard Leider in *Coaching for Leadership* by Goldsmith et al) captures what this means in our lives "When I was young and free and my imagination had no limits, I dreamed of changing the world. As I grew older and wiser, I discovered the world would not change, so I shortened my sights and decided to change only my country. But, it too seemed immovable. As I grew into my twilight years, in one last desperate attempt, I settled for changing only family, only those closest to me, but alas, they would have none of it. And now as I lie on my deathbed, I suddenly realize, if I had only changed myself first, then by example I would have changed my family. From their inspiration and encouragement I would then have been able to better my country and, who knows, I may have even changed the world."

Let's look at what is involved in changing ourselves. In doing this we will build on the transitions framework developed by Bill Bridges. Bridges distinguishes between change and transition as follows:

- Change
 - A situational event
 - External
 - Often starts with a new beginning
- Transition
 - A gradual reorientation process over time
 - Internal
 - Must start with an ending

Noting that it is the transition over time that is the real challenge and opportunity. Factors that drive change can be external, for example a new job opportunity, or internal as our needs and priorities shift. They will occur at multiple times in our lives. Indeed given the turbulence and uncertainty of today's work world the flexibility to handle change has become a critical life survival skill. Here is a characterization of the transition process building on Bridges concepts:

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.



It begins with an ending, a stage of disengaging from the old way of doing things and letting go of who we were. The gun crew members in Morison's example are struggling with this. Indeed even acknowledging that an ending needs to take place is often difficult. Some of the emotions that can surface in this stage are denial, anxiety, fear and anger. These are natural emotions and we can anticipate that a person in this stage will speak of these and similar emotions. It can be a time of disengagement and disenchantment.

The next stage is the Neutral Zone, that confusing in-between state, where we may be disoriented, disconnected from who we were but still not sure of where we are going. Emotions such as confusion, stress, creativity and skepticism are likely to surface here. Here it is important to find a regular time and place to reflect on what the transition means and what is important moving forward.

The final stage is that of New Beginnings. Here we welcome the new reality that change represents and are likely to experience emotions such as acceptance, hope, energy and enthusiasm. This is a stage of action, of embracing a new direction. The emotions that surface in this complete cycle, which will occur repeatedly throughout our lives, are natural and often simply acknowledging this fact eases our path, and the path of others, through the process.

Bridges provides a series of pointers for supporting this path through transition:

- ▶ Take your time
- ▶ Arrange temporary structures
- ▶ Don't act for the sake of action
- ▶ Recognize why you are uncomfortable

- ▶ Take care of yourself in little ways
- ▶ Explore the other side of the change
- ▶ Get someone to talk to
- ▶ Find out what is waiting in the wings of your life
- ▶ Use this transition as the impetus to a new kind of learning
- ▶ Recognize that transition has a characteristic shape
- ▶ View it as a rite of passage: a lens through which to magnify the experience

Reflecting on past transitions, and the experiences of others, can point to which of these and other steps are most helpful for each of us. Kevin Cashman in the book *Leadership from the Inside Out* offers this view of individual change: “Sometimes I feel that my life is a series of trapeze swings. I’m either hanging on to a trapeze bar swinging along or, for a few moments in my life, I’m hurtling across space in between trapeze bars. Most of the time, I spend my life hanging on for dear life to my trapeze-bar-of-the-moment. It carries me along at a certain steady rate of swing, and I have the feeling that I’m in control of my life. I know most of the right questions and some of the right answers. But once in a while, as I’m merrily (or not-so-merrily) swinging along, I look out ahead of me into the distance, and what do I see? I see another trapeze bar swinging towards me. It’s empty, and I know in that place in me that knows, that this new trapeze bar has my name on it. It is my next step, my growth, my aliveness coming to get me. In my heart-of-hearts, I know that for me to grow, I must release my grip on this present, well-known bar to move to the new one.”

It is in reaching for this new bar, with all the uncertainty that it represents, that we can express who we are and bring the beauty of that expression fully to life.

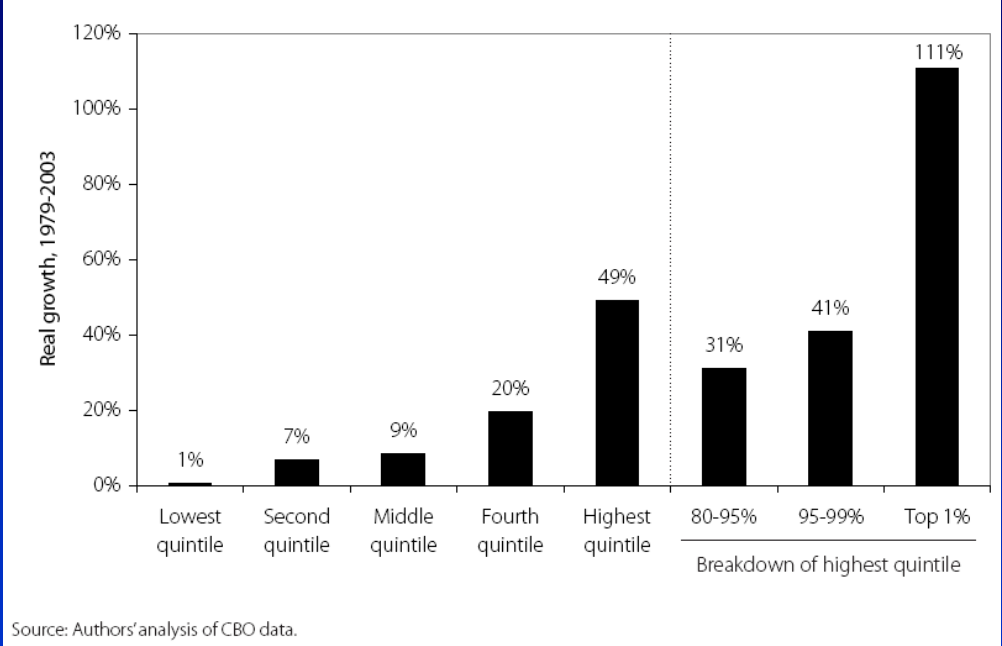
Some of the material in this article is extracted from *Affiliation in the Workplace* by Ron Elsdon, Praeger, 2003.

The Growing Divide

Studies within the U.S. and across nations show happiness rising rapidly as people are lifted out of poverty and then quickly leveling off at a modest income level. The African Maasai, *Forbes* magazine’s richest Americans and the Pennsylvania Amish share an equally high level of life satisfaction even though they have vastly different levels of income (Diener, 2004). However those in abject poverty, homeless people in Calcutta, India, or Fresno, California share an equally low level of happiness. Our ethical systems seek to distribute resources to all, since then our overall community well-being is greatest. A little more wealth for Bill Gates does little for his happiness; it makes an enormous difference to a poor person.

So how are we doing in the U.S. in addressing the broad needs of those in our society, especially those who are most disadvantaged? The following figure shows growth in household income from 1979 to 2003 by economic group:

FIGURE 10 Growth in real household income, 1979-2003



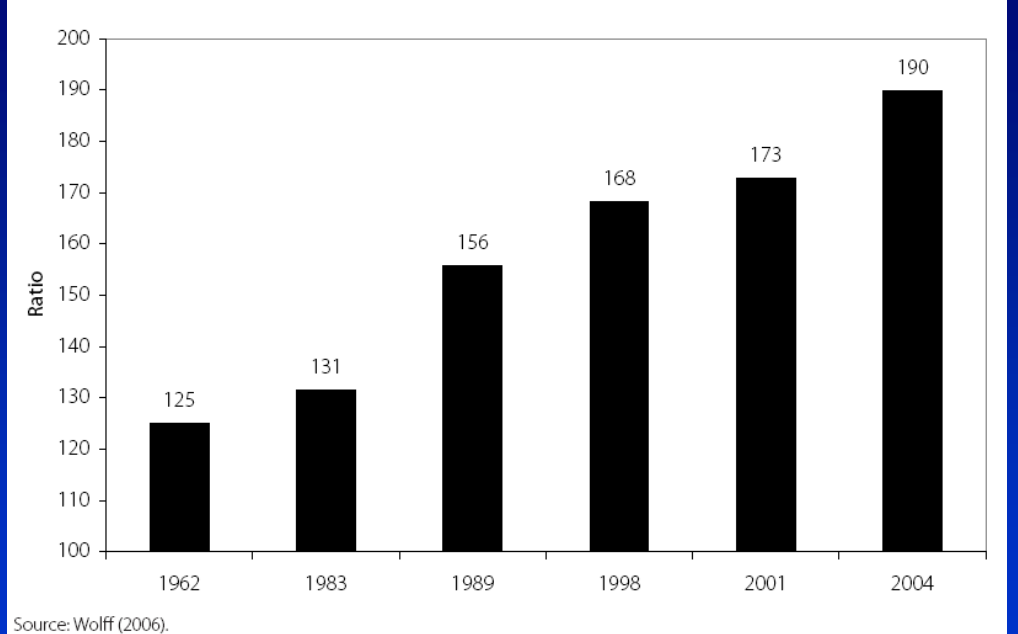
New Beginnings
Career and College Guidance

Source: The State of Working America, 2006/2007
Economic Policy Institute

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The top 1% have enjoyed rich pickings, true also for the top quintile (20%). On the other hand the poorest quintile has seen effectively no growth in real household income over this 24 year time frame. As a result the wealthiest 1% of our population captured a growing share of the nation's wealth, increasing to 190 times median wealth in 2004 as shown in the next figure.

FIGURE 5B The ratio of the wealthiest 1% to median wealth in the U.S.

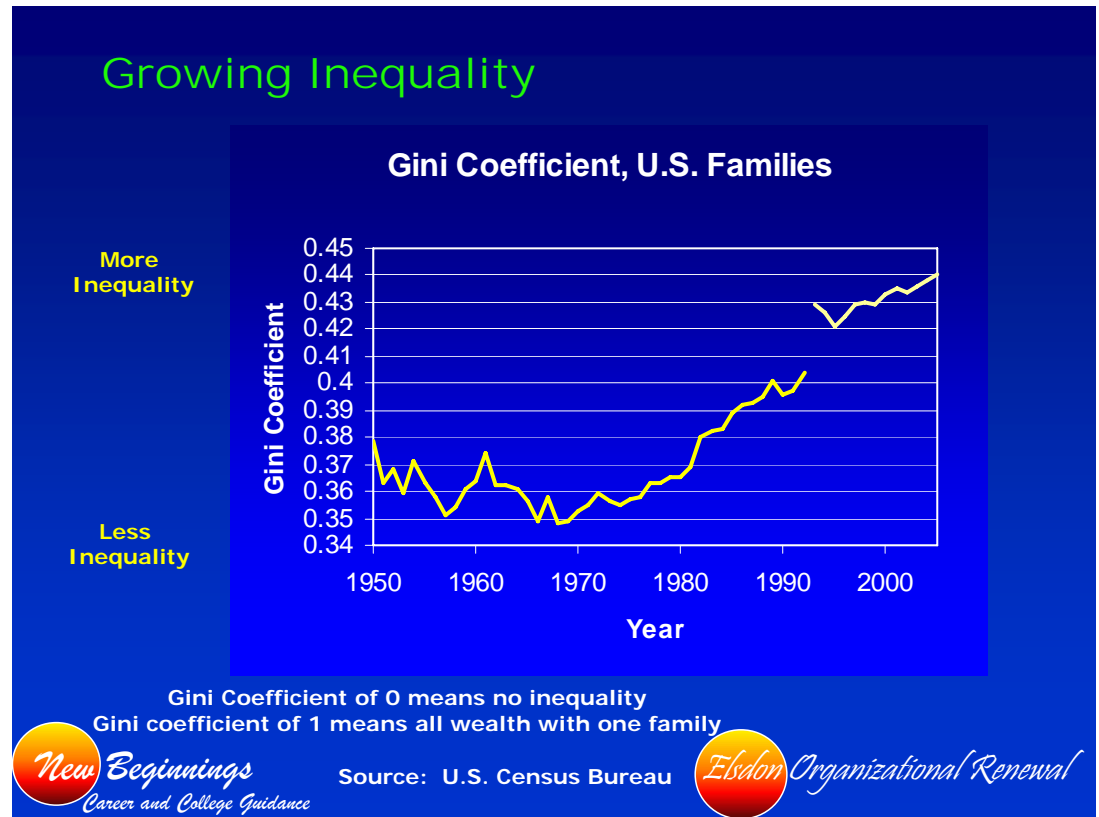


New Beginnings
Career and College Guidance

Source: The State of Working America, 2006/2007
Economic Policy Institute

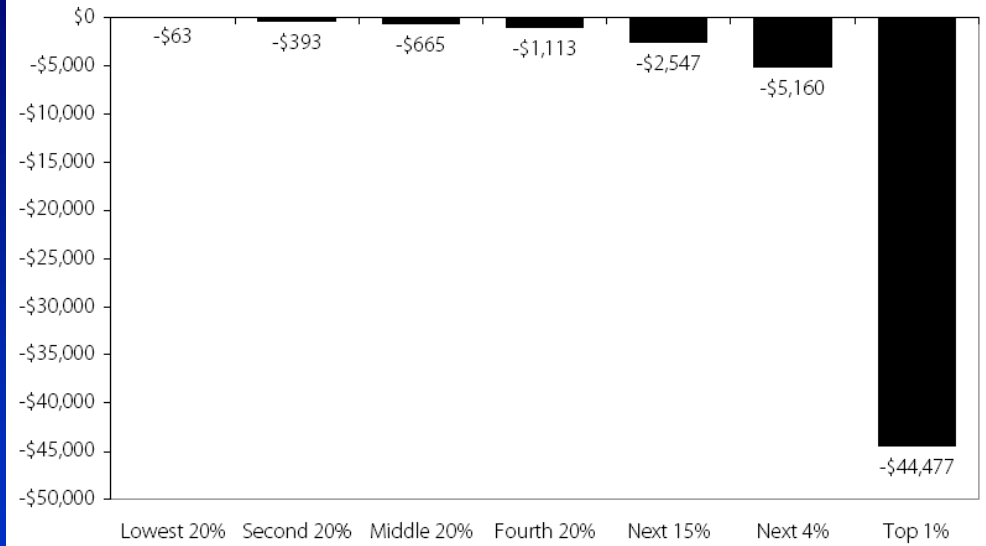
Elsdon Organizational Renewal

Not surprisingly, as a result, we see a continuing trend of growing inequality from the early 1980s through 2005, as measured by the Gini coefficient (an index that varies from 0 for complete equality to 1 when one family holds the entire nation's wealth), as shown in the following figure:



We might ask, is this just the natural order of things? Not at all, this inverse Robin Hood approach, which runs counter to the fundamental ethical systems we hold dear, is driven by deliberate choice, the following figure shows how recent Bush tax cuts favor the wealthy:

FIGURE 1R The value of the Bush tax cuts by income class, 2006



Source: ITEP Tax Model, June 2006.

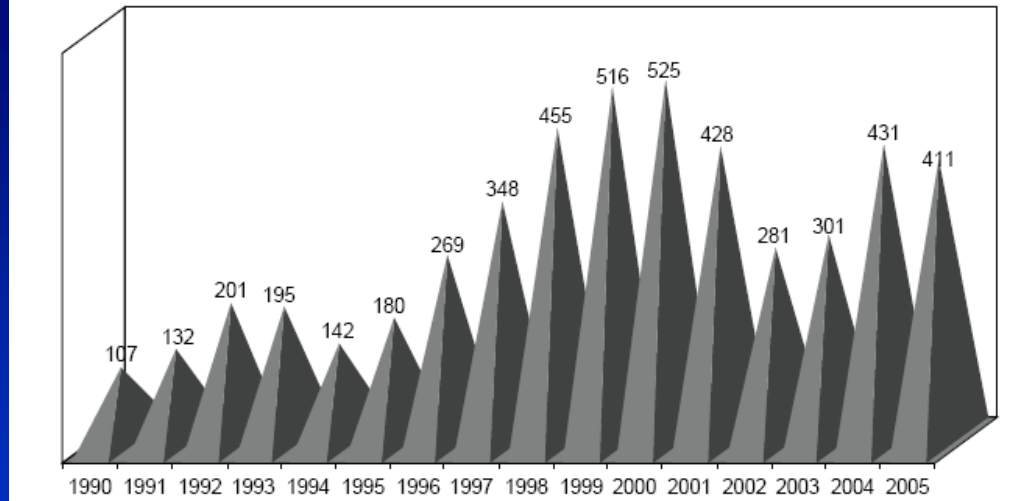
Dollar amounts shown are average tax cuts

Source: The State of Working America, 2006/2007
Economic Policy Institute



Perhaps more shameful is the behavior of many CEOs who have enriched themselves at the expense of employees and shareholders. The following figure shows the ratio of average CEO to average worker compensation, now at more than 400:

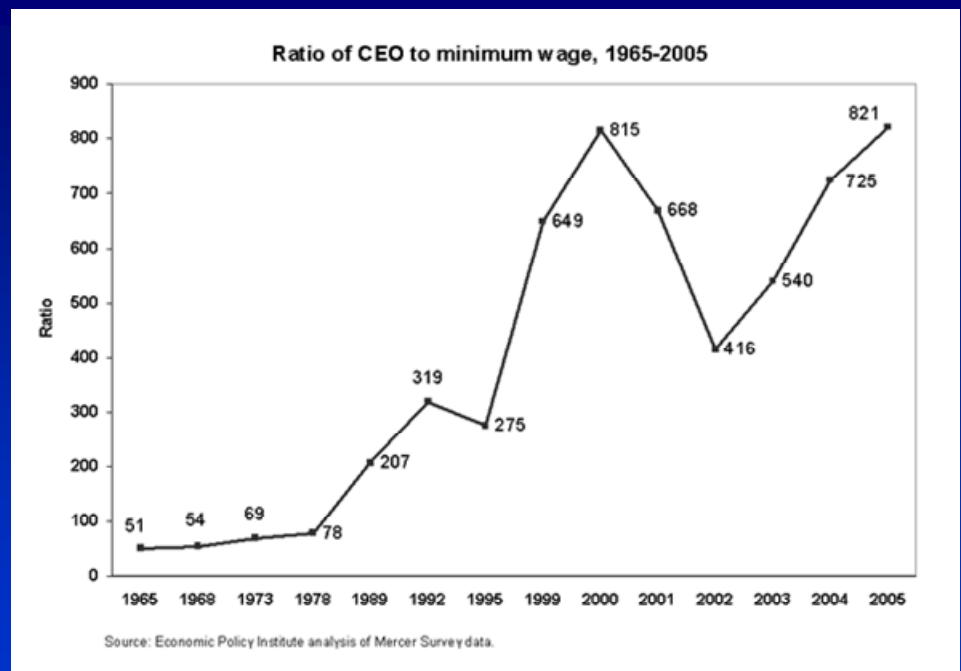
Figure 10: Average CEO to Average Worker Pay Ratio, 1990-2005



Source Executive Excess 2006, August 30, 2006
Sarah Anderson and John Cavanagh, Institute for Policy Studies
Chuck Collins and Eric Benjamin, United for a Fair Economy



This is even more appalling when referenced to the minimum wage as shown in the following figure, which shows the ratio of CEO pay to the minimum wage since 1965:



Indeed the authors of this study observe that the average CEO earns more before lunchtime on the very first day of work in the year, than a minimum wage worker earns all year. Perhaps bearing out the maxim: “there is enough for man’s need but not for man’s greed.” Here is how Barbara Ehrenreich, the author of *Nickel and Dimed* suggests we approach this: “People often say if I talk about these things, “Well, well, what a mystery. What could be done?” So much of what needs to be done is to stop what is being done now. Employers could stop making it impossible for workers to organize into unions. And it is just about impossible now. We could stop the relentless decline in affordable housing. It is getting to the point where the number one public housing project our government has is the penitentiary system. Everything else is disappearing. We have got to start shaming those employers, those CEOs who make tens of millions of dollars a year while other people literally go hungry or live in substandard housing or cannot make it from month to month. We have to start shaming them. We have to start going to the balls or wherever they gather, or the spas, with placards, with signs, with posters. We have to be in their face about it.”

Let me suggest also that we need to make choices as leaders, employees, investors and customers to only affiliate with those organizations that seek equity in their dealings with their various constituencies and in so doing make a contribution to society. We need to learn how organizations actually choose to distribute their resources and then support organizations that provide adequate compensation and benefits to their employees, while openly disclosing and intentionally restraining excessive compensation at senior management levels. We need to withdraw as

leaders, employees, investors and customers from those organizations that fail to seek such equity.

Quote

“I cannot tell you with what weapons mankind will fight World War III, but I can assure you that World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.”

Albert Einstein, quoted by The Peace Alliance, Campaign to Establish a U.S. Department of Peace.

Upcoming Elsdon Organizational Renewal (EOR) Events and Recent Mentions

Upcoming Events/Publications

- Recorded webinar for Project Management Institute
 - “Becoming Career Fit in Turbulent Times”, now available at:
 - <http://pmi-issig.org/Default.aspx?tabid=319>
- 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
- Ventura County – National Human Resources Association, January 24, 2007, “Building Affiliation.”
- HR Week West Conference, Santa Clara, February 21, 2007, “Finally, a Change Management Model that Works!”
 - <http://www.hrweekwest.com/agenda.html#bpc1>
- Article for National Career Development Association Career Convergence magazine, likely publication date March 2007, “Rising and Falling Tides.”

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](http://www.greenwood.com)
- “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>
- “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&DBCode=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](#)

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