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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):

- 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)
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- Bringing our best to work (December 2005)
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- Nothing business, it's just personal (October 2005)
- Who are you? (September 2005)
- Leadership roles (August 2005)

In this issue we address "Assessing Your Organization".

Assessing Your Organization

"I think I should have thought more about the idea that the grass is always greener on the other side. I was interested in analytical work and I assumed finance was the



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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

answer. Well the truth is, while the work is great - culturally I think working at a bank is a mismatch for me.” For this person, now is a time of re-assessment, a time to decide whether and how to take a different path forward. Such re-assessment can be prompted by a reaction to changing external events or changing internal priorities. It is important to listen to such prompts. However, a reflex response to external events may be limited by those immediate options that happen to be available, or unduly influenced by immediate emotions. Let’s examine a better way, so our lives count for something every day. We will look at this in the context of your relationship with your organization.

Let’s start on the basis that you have a strong sense of what you stand for and value (discussed in the September and October 2005 issues of *Bringing Work to Life*). The question then becomes “To what extent does your organization support and nurture this?” If it does provide such support then you will likely develop and grow in your contributions. In the absence of such nourishment you may stagnate.

One way to determine whether you are on track is to create an assessment that outlines your expectations of your organization, just as many organizations will create performance plans that describe their expectations of you. Your assessment of the organization can include parts that speak to your purpose, values and aspirations. It is about your relationship with the organization. These are examples of elements you may wish to incorporate:

- Organizational practices and values relative your own, to be sure that the organization is worthy of your efforts. For example, does the organization:
 - Honor stewardship of its workforce and its community
 - Ensure that compensation at senior levels is equitable relative to others
 - Value and provide appropriate employee benefits
 - Recognize and honor community responsibility
 - Understand and protect the physical environment
- Strong and sustained individual development
 - The extent to which you are learning and building skills, for example general management skills or in-depth functional knowledge depending upon your aspirations
 - The extent to which you are becoming more marketable
- Accomplishments
 - The extent to which the organization is providing you with opportunities to demonstrate and contribute significant accomplishments
- Importance of your function
 - The extent to which the organization values your functional area as evidenced by resource provision and leadership engagement
- Decision making and responsibility
 - The extent to which you are given autonomy and responsibility for decision making
- Support
 - The extent to which the organization supports your personal needs for time or place flexibility recognizing other responsibilities that exist in your life

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.

- Financial rewards
 - The extent to which the organization provides compensation that meets your needs
- Risk
 - The degree of stability offered by the organization as demonstrated by treatment of others in the workforce

Your priorities will likely change over time and it is important to incorporate these changes into your on-going assessments. Consider creating a template that includes items such as those listed above and a numerical rating scale, to assess the organization's performance against your criteria. Completing such an assessment at least once a year, can provide you with a basis for making a good decision about your path forward on a regular basis.

Let's consider your options after completing the assessment. If the organization passes with flying colors then let those around you at work know of your appreciation for this relationship and communicate what is meaningful for you going forward. If the organization fails in key aspects, then consider having conversations with people at work, for example mentors or bosses, about your concerns and what needs to change.

Regardless, it is important to have an exit strategy in place at all times so that you are not beholden to the organization. This exit strategy should be developed when you join the organization and updated regularly so that you retain control over your own destiny. You may or may not choose to execute it, but it is central to your work life survival. These are important components to consider in this exit strategy:

- Maintaining and nurturing your network of contacts outside of your organization, for example colleagues in professional organizations and alumni groups
- Paying close attention to emerging skill needs in your area of interest and staying current in those skills, for example with development activities in your current position or through on-going education
- If you are interested in building a portfolio career in the future (it contains several elements rather than being defined by a single employment relationship) beginning to include key elements on a part time basis, for example adjunct teaching at a local college
- Maintaining your resume current so you are able to provide it immediately if needed
- Regularly reassessing your priorities, using the many excellent assessment tools that are available (the October, 2005 issue of *Bringing Work to Life* gives some examples), so that you can adjust your path as needed

There is a story about one of the colleges at a long-established university in England (Max, DePree, *Leadership Jazz*). A committee had been formed to discuss the renovation of one of the beautiful halls in the university. The roof of the hall was deteriorating. As the committee debated its task it became concerned about its ability to find wooden beams long enough to replace those that were in need of repair. The architect hired for the renovation project and the committee representatives understood that their predecessors had made provision for this

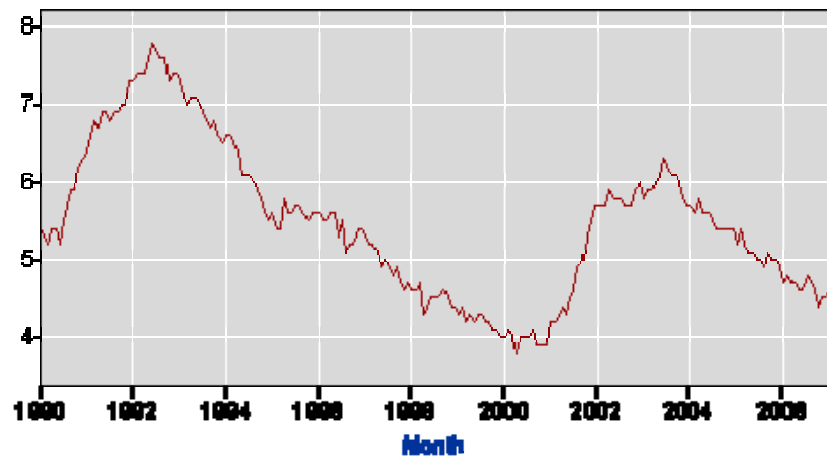
situation. They visited a nearby wood, finding a grove of oak trees planted a century earlier from which the replacement beams could be hewn.

Plant and nurture your own grove of trees so it is available when you need it. By continuing to assess the extent to which your organization meets your needs and acting accordingly, and by maintaining an exit strategy, you will help ensure that every day you are in an environment that values the many gifts you bring to your work.

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

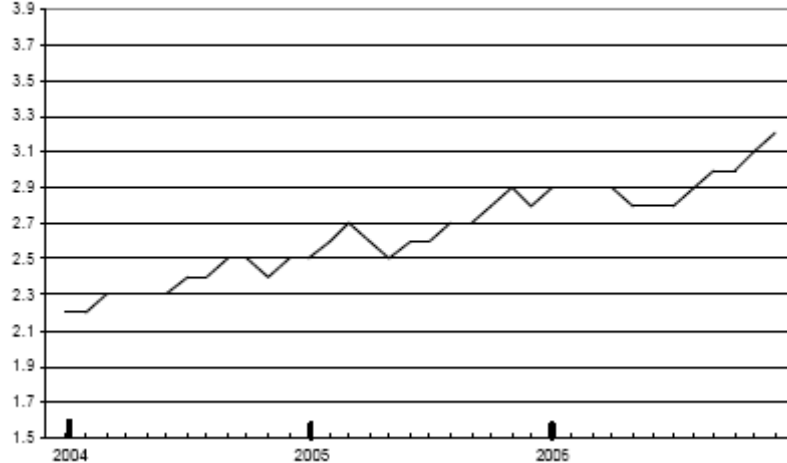
Workforce Trends

Let's examine recent workforce trends and the nature of the tightening labor market. We saw previously the longer term demographic trend of slowing growth rate of the U.S. workforce (*Bringing Work to Life*, April 2005), which is the supply side of the employment picture. Not surprisingly there is continued evidence of a tightening labor market with unemployment rates falling significantly since late 2003 as shown in the following figure. This shows the % unemployment rate in the U.S., seasonally adjusted, from 1990 through January 2007 (source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics):



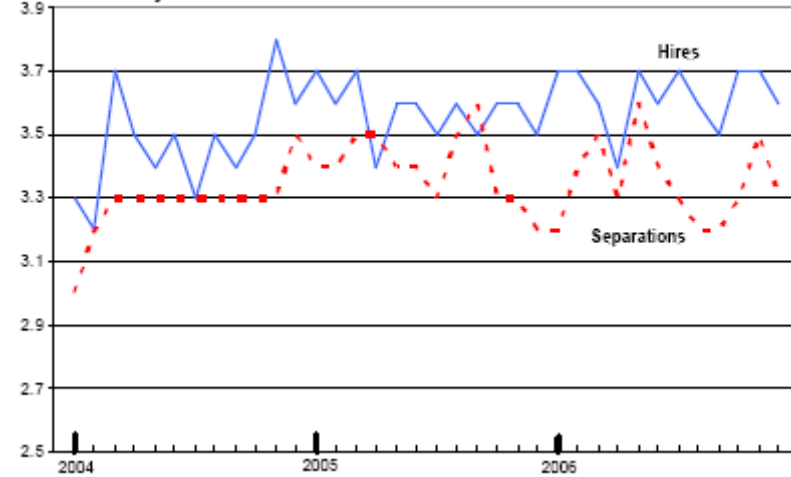
In concert with this falling unemployment rate, the job openings (or vacancy) rate increased by 45% from 2.2 to 3.2% from January 2004 to December 2006. This is the demand side of the employment picture as shown in the following figure (source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics):

Chart 1. Job openings rate, seasonally adjusted, Percent January 2004 - December 2006

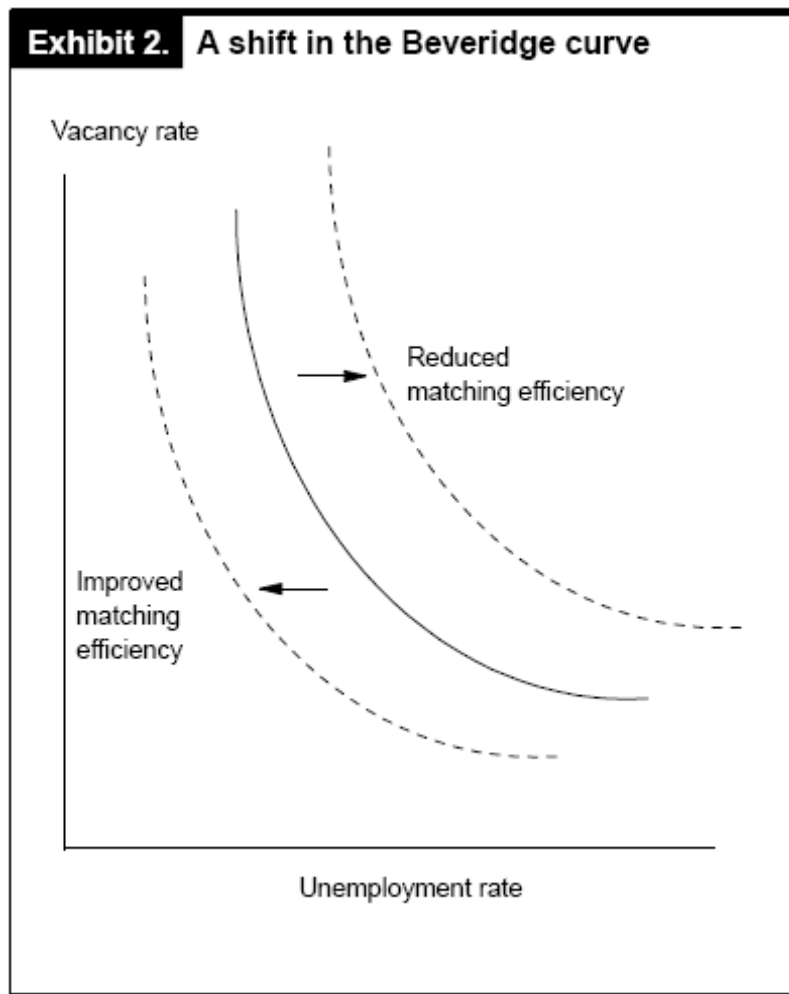


Hire rates have exceeded separation rates over most of this time period, with the gap widening recently as shown in the following figure (source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics):

Chart 2. Hires and separations rates, seasonally adjusted, Percent January 2004 - December 2006

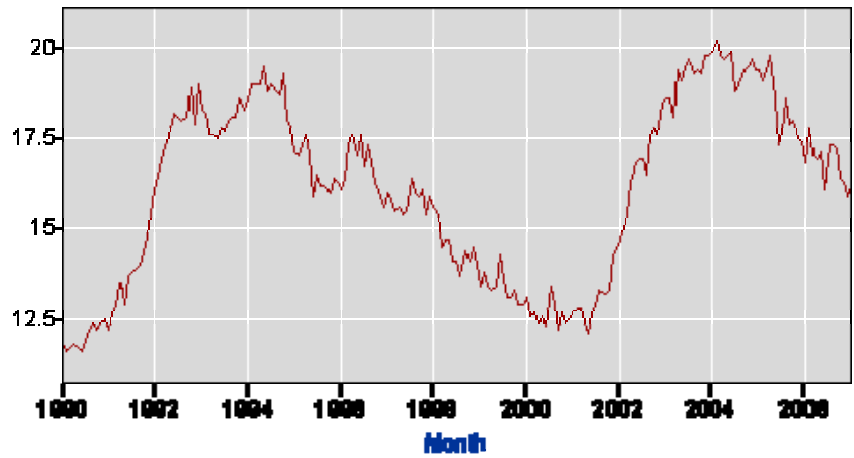


The relationship between the unemployment rate and the job openings (vacancy) rate is generally expected to follow a pattern known as the Beveridge curve as shown in the following figure (source: Clark and Hyson, Monthly Labor Review, BLS, December 2001).

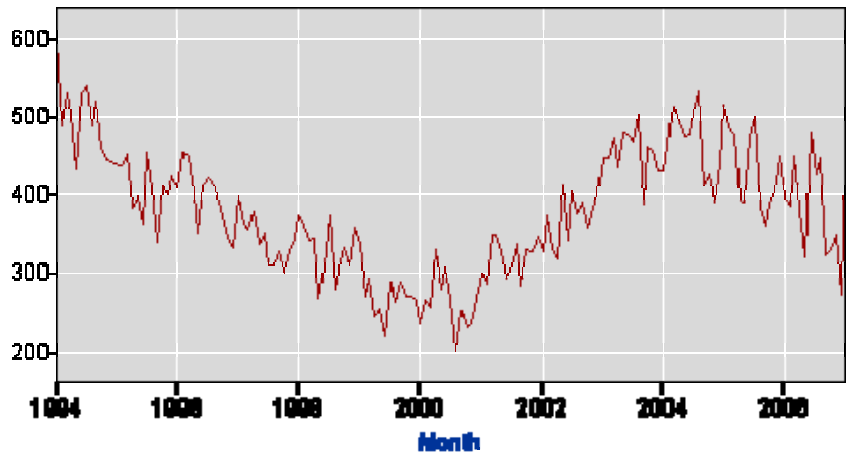


For example an expansion in the economy leads to job creation that increases the vacancy (job opening) rate and reduces the unemployment rate. The reverse occurs during an economic contraction. The vacancy (job opening) rate typically leads economic activity at the peak of an economic cycle and lags at troughs (Clark and Hyson). Firms tend to reduce job postings before cutting their workforce when business conditions slow, and during expansion tend to increase work hours before engaging new hires. If structural changes in the economy occur, for example growth sectors emerge that require skill sets different from the current workforce, then the curve in the preceding figure moves to the right. Conversely, increased matching efficiency of people to jobs, for example through on-line resources, moves the curve to the left.

Further evidence of a tightening short term labor market is the recent rapid drop in average weeks of unemployment as shown in the following figure (source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics):



And a drop in the number of discouraged workers, those not currently looking for work and not in the labor force, as shown in the following figure in thousands:



Not surprisingly mass layoff events and claims (at least 50 people over a five week period) also show a general downward trend, with some evidence of a more recent slight upturn (source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics):

Chart 1. Mass-layoff events, seasonally adjusted, January 2002-December 2006

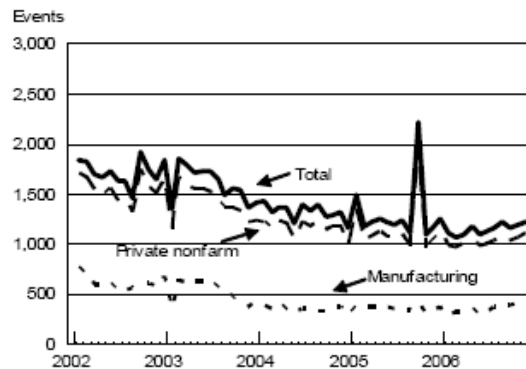
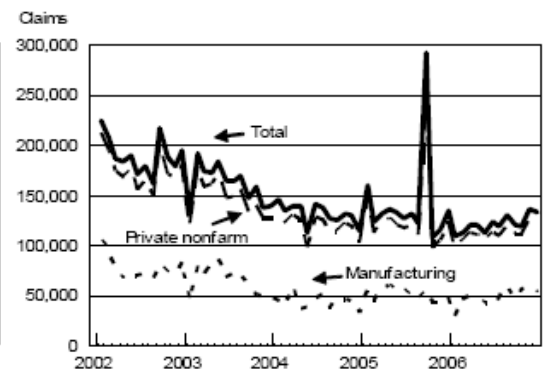


Chart 2. Mass-layoff initial claims, seasonally adjusted, January 2002-December 2006



These trends of a tightening short term labor market, overlaid on a longer term

declining workforce growth rate, underline the importance of organizations adopting a supportive approach that honors all in their workforce. This is a very different pattern from the hubris exhibited by those CEOs in recent years who have extracted excessive compensation at the expense of shareholders and employees. Current corporate governance, or more correctly the lack thereof, allows this behavior. We all have an obligation and a responsibility to support those organizations that deal equitably with all of their employees, including curbing excessive compensation at senior levels, and withdraw as customers, shareholders and employees/leaders from those which do not.

Quote

“Remembering the stable where for once in our lives
Everything became a You and nothing was an It.”

W.H. Auden, 1944, “For the Time Being.”

Upcoming Elsdon Organizational Renewal (EOR) Events and Recent Mentions

Upcoming Events/Publications

- HR Week West Conference, Santa Clara, February 21, 2007, “Finally, a Change Management Model that Works!”
 - <http://www.hrweekwest.com/agenda.html#bpc1>
- Presentation for U.C. Berkeley. Haas School of Business, March 20, 2007, “The First 90 Days.”
- Presentation for Silicon Valley Chinese Engineers Association, March 24, 2007, “Accelerating into Your New Position.”
- Presentation for U.C. Berkeley, Haas School of Business, April 18, 2007, “Progressing Outside Your Organization.”

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)
- 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>
- “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

