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

- 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)
- Accelerating into your new position (March 2005)
- Workforce leadership (February 2005)
- Searching for success (January 2005)
- Ethics and leadership (Year End 2004)
- Linking workforce development to value creation (November December 2004)
- How to decide if an organization will be a good fit for you (October November 2004)

This month we continue our exploration of personal development with Nothing Business, It's Just Personal.

Nothing Business, It's Just Personal

“Keep your work and personal lives separate.” Those stout words were offered as advice to me and other new supervisors during our first dose of supervisor training. That was in the days when, after a two-year mating dance with the organization, and being deemed acceptable, a thirty year process of sculpting to fit the corporate mold

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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 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.

began. It seemed odd at the time requiring a peculiar separation of the brain (and heart). Today it is completely unrealistic. Our work and personal lives are intimately intertwined. Indeed when they seriously conflict, our exit interview studies show how often we disengage from our organizations, to their detriment.

Many factors are pulling the personal and work aspects of our lives together. Elizabeth Warren and Amelia Warren Tyagi in *The Two-Income Trap* (2003) point out how much less flexibility we have today than a generation ago, as our discretionary income has barely shifted but we now usually need two incomes to cover greatly increased core expenses (such as child or elder care, or another car for a second commute to work). The Warrens make this disturbing observation “This year, more women will file for bankruptcy than will graduate from college.” A stark reminder of the intertwining of work and personal lives.

Constant, immediate and boundary-less communication and information flow today lead others to expect response speeds that dwarf those of a generation ago. It is challenging to disconnect from work for long, even if we want to. If we do disconnect beware the avalanche of e-mails waiting. Furthermore, the half-life of knowledge and technology has fallen from several years to several months. This means that we must continually re-learn, with learning becoming another work related piece to continuously integrate into our lives. As one person observed, we have moved from a four year degree to a forty year degree.

Add to all of this the ability to work independently of location and organization, supported by technology, and our work lives may seem to surround us. Meanwhile our personal lives may now include the need to care for aging parents as well as children. This may mean being present for our families during otherwise conventional work times. So we need flexibility of time and place to make these accommodations work. We cannot simply exclude one of work or personal life at the expense of the other.

Our response to these dilemmas, according to its nature, can cause greater discord or greater harmony in our lives and the lives of those around us. Harmony depends upon our being clear about who we are. Today we are called to be ourselves as May Sarton so beautifully observed (quoted in Parker Palmer’s *Let Your Life Speak*):

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

For it is in first becoming ourselves that we can define how the pieces of our lives best fit together. Our personal lives and our work lives come together and both become expressions of who we are. Not as separate places but familiar rooms in the same home that we inhabit as we need, freely moving from one to the other and back again. Let’s explore how we can walk down this path.

Last month we looked at being clear about, and honoring, what we stand for. There are other aspects of who we are and how we can make that visible first to ourselves and then to others. They call on our head and our heart, our intellect and our emotion. A good starting point in this internal exploration is with books that

encourage reflection about purpose and meaning, *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker Palmer and *Passion for Life* by Anne Brennan and Janice Brewi are such books. Because others have walked a similar path before us we can also use assessments that help in our quest for deeper self understanding. Some we can access directly and others benefit from interpretation and prior experience. We can explore these tools in community with others, guided by wise counsel, or on our own according to our preferences.

Some of these assessments may be familiar, others new. Each can provide special insight, none are complete by themselves. We can think of them in three broad categories starting with the most analytical and moving to the most conceptual.

1. Standardized assessments

- Well constructed standardized assessments build on much data gathered from surveying others, to create valid and reliable instruments.
- Generally results show our responses compared to the results from many others. As Tom Ritchey (then President of Carlson Learning) put it, they can address the “I wonder questions” such as “I wonder why I behave the way I do.” “I wonder why others behave towards me the way they do.”
- Examples of such instruments include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (from CPP, www.cpp.com), which provides insights into our personality and its meaning for our work and personal lives; the Strong Interest Inventory (also from CPP, www.cpp.com), which highlights themes and work settings that are likely to appeal to our interests; and the Personal Learning Insights Profile (from Inscape Publishing, www.inscapepublishing.com) that highlights how we prefer to learn. There are many other comparable, standardized assessments available.

2. Structured assessments

- Structured assessments build on concepts and frameworks that often involve practical exercises such as card sorts. Some people enjoy their tangible nature. While effective structured assessments are based on extensive descriptive research, they lack the statistical rigor of the standardized assessments. This may be offset by greater descriptive breadth.
- Examples of such instruments include Leadership Architect (from Lominger, www.lominger.com) and SkillScan (from SkillScan, www.skillskan.net) both of which can help clarify our understanding of those things we do well and enjoy doing, or those things that can cause burnout.

3. Conceptual assessments

- Conceptual assessments are based on descriptive approaches that enable us to build a deeper understanding of ourselves - our purpose, values and motivation. Through a window that may include narrative or visual descriptions they draw on our work and life experiences, to illuminate our hopes and our dreams. They are typically quite unstructured calling on our creativity and insights. As such they are the most personal of all the assessments.
- Examples include assessments that explore our preferred

relationship with our work, learning from important life experiences and past working environments, characteristics of an ideal work day that could ignite passion within us, and an exploration of what we would like to bring forth in our life and work (Susan Abbott).

These are examples of assessments that can help build our understanding of who we are and the courage to be that person. They can provide insights and a depth of self-understanding that inform our decisions and strengthen our ability to communicate our contributions. As such they can help us bring together our work and personal lives so both benefit. It is in this sense of becoming, of being part of the sculpting our lives that we can bring forth our beauty and mystery. We can then express who we are for the benefit of ourselves, those close to us, our organizations and our communities.

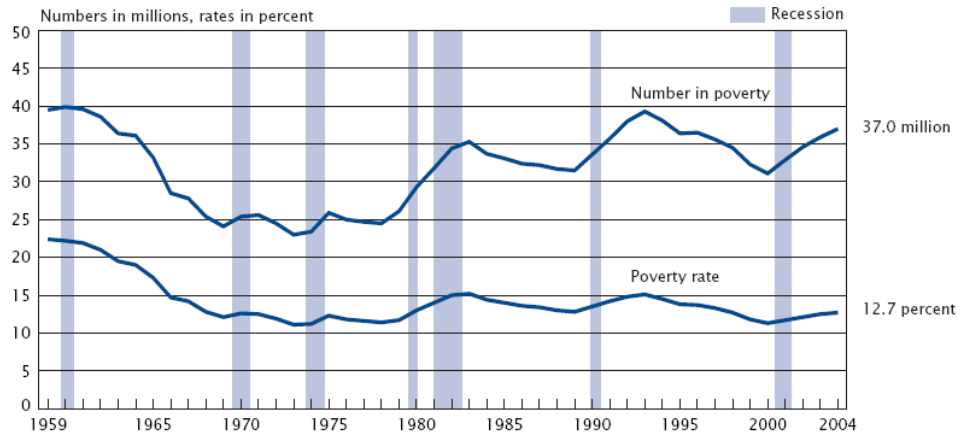
(Should you wish to know more about our comprehensive individual assessment processes please feel free to contact us at renewal@elsdon.com, 925 838 2362)

Living in the Third World

Some events speak to us on a deep level, offering a glimpse of grace while exposing our flaws. Recent hurricanes were such events. In the midst of such dire need and terrible devastation we saw heroism. The staff of the Hancock Medical Center in New Orleans staying for their patients, treating 150 people in the first twelve hours after the storm, for as hospital administrator Hal Leftwich said “Most of us got into this profession to help people.” (MSNBC.com, Mississippi hospital offers hope to survivors, September 2, 2005.) And what a wonderful act of courage by the staff of this hospital.

However, hurricane Katrina exposed an equally terrible reality in our country, the chasm separating rich from poor. The following figure (as with the other figures in this section) is taken from “Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance in the United States: 2004”, U.S. Census Bureau, August 2005. It shows a rapid rise in the number of people in poverty since 2000 to 37 million people, up by 1.1 million people since 2003. The poverty rate also increased to 12.7% in 2004. This during a sustained economic recovery (for the wealthy). As MSNBC points out “that’s a nation of poor people the size of Canada or Morocco living inside the United States.” Poverty is defined as having an annual income below a specified and low level, for example below an annual income of \$9,827 for a single person under 65 years of age.

Figure 3.
Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate: 1959 to 2004

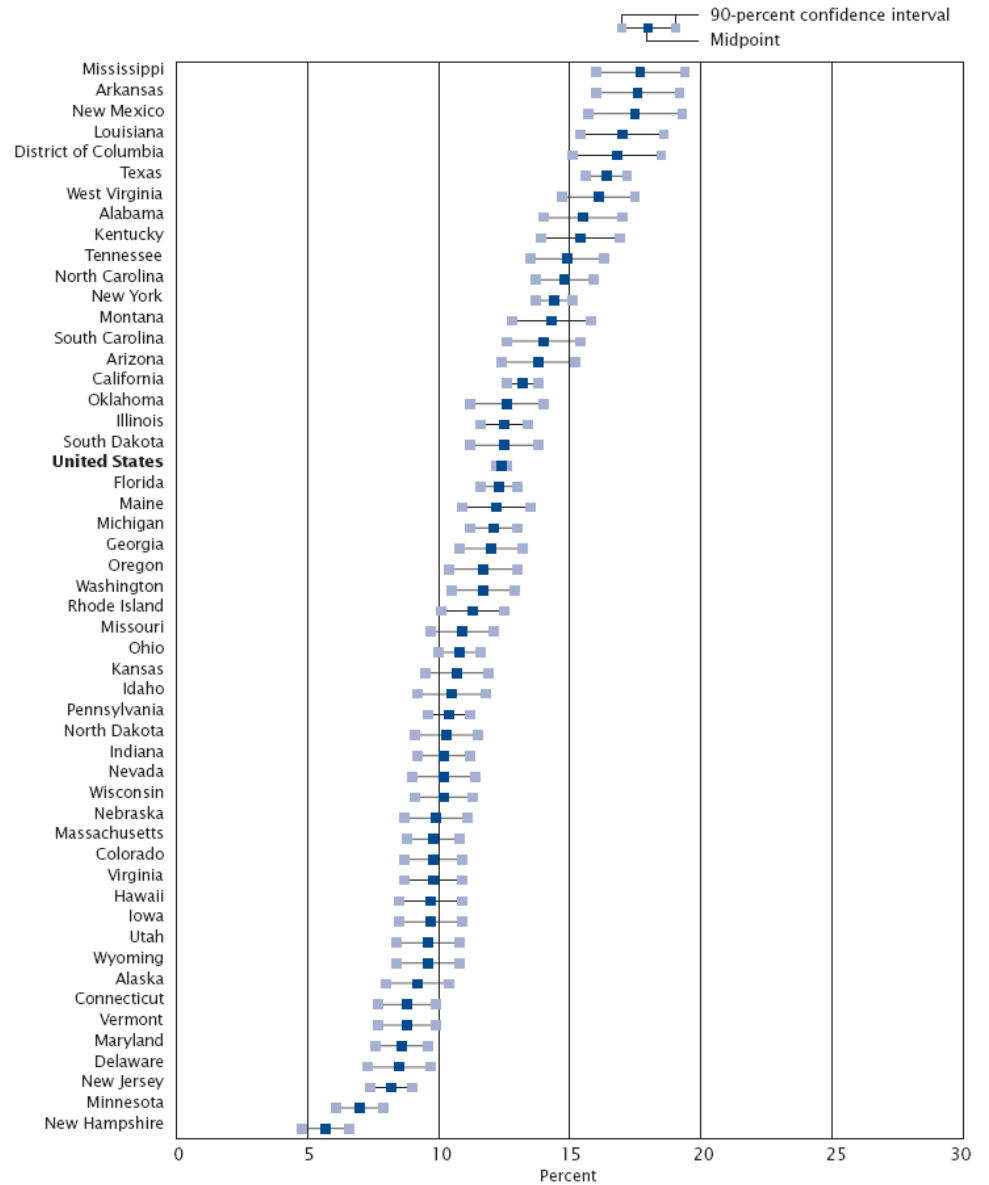


Note: The data points are placed at the midpoints of the respective years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960 to 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

It is perhaps not surprising to find Mississippi as the State, on average, with the highest poverty level over the past three years as shown in the following figure:

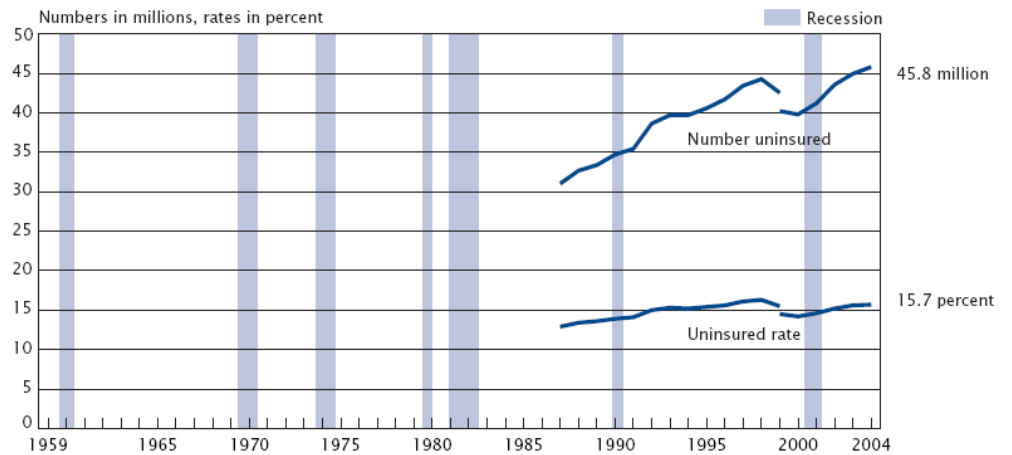
Figure D-2.
Three-Year-Average Poverty Rate by State: 2002 to 2004



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2003 to 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

In parallel with this expression of dire poverty in the midst of great wealth, we are failing to provide basic healthcare as shown in the next figure, where the number of people uninsured has grown dramatically since 2000 to reach a new high of 45.8 million people, in the most advanced country in the world.

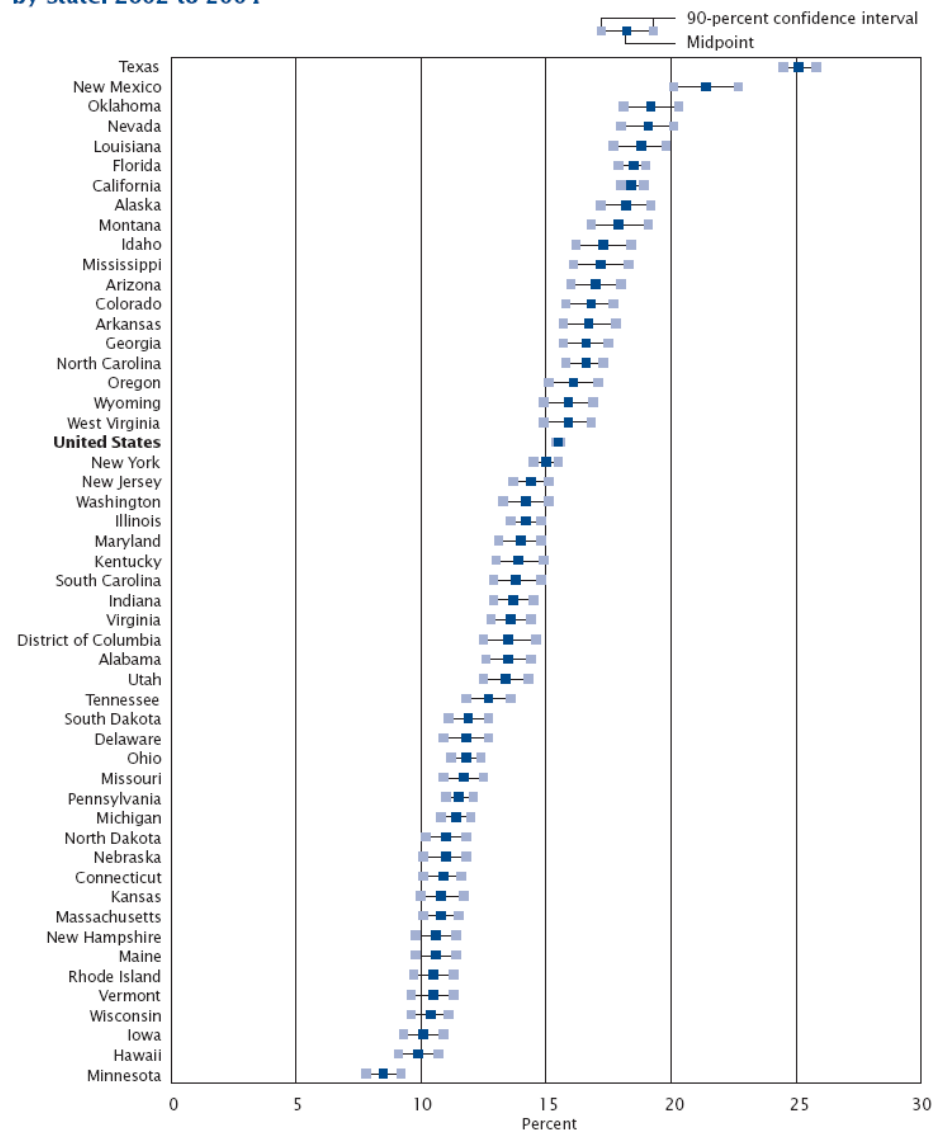
Figure 5.
Number Uninsured and Uninsured Rate: 1987 to 2004



Notes: Respondents were not asked detailed health insurance questions before the 1988 Current Population Survey. Implementation of Census 2000-based population controls occurred for the 2000 ASEC, which collected data for 1999. These estimates also reflect the results of follow-up verification questions which were asked of people who responded "no" to all questions about specific types of health insurance coverage in order to verify whether they were actually uninsured. This change increased the number and percentage of people covered by health insurance, bringing the CPS more in line with estimates from other national surveys. The data points are placed at the midpoints of the respective years.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1988 to 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

It would seem that such a statistic would appall our political leaders. That it doesn't is perhaps explained by State uninsured levels as shown in the following figure, where the percentage of those uninsured in Texas far surpasses that of any other State.

Figure D-3.
Three-Year-Average Percentage of People Without Health Insurance Coverage by State: 2002 to 2004



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2003 to 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

Unfortunately, images of the U.S. after the hurricane resembling a third world country are not momentary aberrations. Rather our inequality of income and wealth distribution is that of a third world country (see the November/December 2004 issue of *Bringing Work to Life*). This gross inequity raises questions about how we respond on a personal, organizational and community level. It means creating policies in our society that adequately protect weaker members. It means matching the personal courage of Hal Leftwich and his colleagues in how we run our organizations. So that we build organizations respecting the needs of all with whom they interface, rather than simply lining the pockets of those who have grabbed power. It means supporting those organizations such as Costco, Southwest Airlines, and Starbucks where honoring employees is both a core philosophy and an effective business practice. It means questioning association with organizations having gross inequities (see the September/October 2004 issue of *Bringing Work to Life* for related trends). In times such as these we are particularly called to grace, to honor those who have suffered through tragedy, and to build a better place for all of us.

Quote

“I hope we realize that the people of New Orleans weren’t just abandoned during the hurricane. They were abandoned long ago – to murder and mayhem in the streets, to substandard schools, to dilapidated housing, to inadequate health care, to a pervasive sense of hopelessness.”

Senator Barack Obama on the floor of the U.S. Senate, September 2005, quoted in “The Other America” MSNBC.com, September 19, 2005, Newsweek.

Upcoming Elsdon Organizational Renewal (EOR) Events and Recent Mentions

Upcoming Events

- “Building Affiliation” presentation for Integrated Insurance Seminar, Ojai
 - October 5, 2005
- “Emerging Issues for HR” panel discussion for HR workshop, Cupertino
 - October 8, 2005
- “Career Shifting for Engineers” workshops for U.C. Berkeley, Haas School of Business, Berkeley
 - October 31, November 7, 2005
- “Research in Career Development” course for MA in Career Development, John F. Kennedy University, Pleasant Hill
 - October, November, 2005
- “Becoming Career Fit in Turbulent Times” breakout session for John F. Kennedy University Alumni Day, Pleasant Hill
 - November 13, 2005
- “Career Transitions” workshop for Experience Unlimited, San Francisco
 - November 24, 2005
- Workshops for the UC Berkeley/Columbia University MBA program on “Progressing in Your Organization”, “Negotiating Entry” and “Accelerating to Opportunities”, Berkeley
 - November 12, 18 and December 8, 2005

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&DBCode=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